



Research Article

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## Youth Perceptions on State Institutional Capacity for Their Empowerment in Yobe State, Northern Nigeria

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### Abstract

*There has been growing concern over the state's inability to effectively respond to Nigeria's persistent rise in poverty and unemployment. This concern is more among the youth, who feel they have not been empowered enough. This article examines the nature of Yobe State's institutional capacity, its impact on youth empowerment, and its implications on employment and poverty reduction. It is based on a study that adopted a mixed-methods sequential approach combining quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. In the first phase, 393 randomly selected respondents were interviewed using a semi-structured questionnaire. In the second phase, data were collected on key informants and youth participants' opinions, views, and experiences using key informant interviews, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. The findings reveal that most youth are not confident of the state's institutional capacity to implement youth empowerment programs effectively. Most of the youth participants and key informants are not satisfied with the expertise of the state empowerment institutions to manage the implementation of the empowerment programs in the state. The factor analysis shows a 64.4% variation in institutional capacity to implement youth empowerment programs, meaning improvement in state capacity and state competence in implementing youth empowerment programs may lead to 64.4% towards youth empowerment in the state. Therefore, the study recommends that Yobe State Government strengthens its institutions responsible for designing and implementing empowerment programs through adequate funding and recruitment of adequate, relevant, and professional staff to ensure policy sustainability.*

**Keywords:** State, Capacity, Youth, Empowerment. Poverty, Unemployment, Institutions and Factor Analysis

## 1. Introduction

State capacity, as a concept, defied a single definition given that scholars have given it various definitions. Tilly (1990), cited in Besley & Persson (2011), argued that state capacity is a state's institutional capacity to implement policies to provide infrastructure and services that benefit communities. They posit that state capacity developed in response to war needs and governments focused on tax sources and created motivations for raising institutions primarily for revenue. In Mainwaring (1994) and Geddes (1994), state capacity is viewed as implementing state-initiated policies or programs. State managers conceive it as the level of control over resources, activities, and persons within a given jurisdiction (McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly, 2001). However, the conceptualisation of state capacity is highly influenced by the source of capacity programs and the non-state actors in funding program implementations. Research agendas for state capacity programs, for example, tend to be primarily determined and driven by the needs of state managers and international economic players, especially the International Monetary Funds (IMF), World Bank, World Trade Organisations (WTO), and non-government organisations instead of scholars. International economic drivers often design existing actions (Lindvall & Teorell, 2016). Another challenge is that the literature on state capacity is Western-oriented, which impliedly addresses the Western development problems (Lindvall & Teorell, 2016) or development problems perceived from the North.

State capacity is an essential element for the development of any state including Nigeria. State capacity is critical to achieving any youth empowerment programs to develop the state. Failure of the state to achieve development, including youth empowerment, is attributed to weak state institutions to achieve such goals. On the other hand, there are many other scholarly debates on empowerment which, for example, define empowerment as a process where vulnerable people stretch their assets and capabilities to participate in the negotiation, control, and influence to hold responsible the institutions that design and implement the policies that affect their lives (Narayan, 2002). In relation to state capacity, understanding empowerment's conceptual and practical usefulness gives more insight into the meaning of empowerment and strengthening state policies for socioeconomic development. From this perspective, it is believed that using state developmental policies effectively will result in poverty alleviation or youth empowerment to be self-reliant (Hennink, Kiiti, Pillinger & Jayakaran, 2012).

In order to effectively implement youth empowerment programs, it is crucial to understand whether it can implement programs to achieve its goals. Through its institutional capacity, the state is able to understand the failures or successes in implementing youth empowerment programs. In this article, we explain how the Nigerian government has implemented many developments or intervention programs since the 1970s to improve the well-being of its citizens, whose more significant proportion is the youth. Despite implementing several poverty programs, by 2020, the national youth unemployment rate (15-34 years) was still high at 42.5%, while the underemployment rate for the same age group was 21.0% (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS] 2021). In Yobe State, poverty was 76.3% compared to the national prevalence of 69.12% (Kharas et al., 2018; NBS, 2021). State institutional capacity is responsible for designing policies, coordinating and mobilising the needed resources to effectively implement the programs to empower the youth to overcome their development barriers in the state. This article examines the state institutions' capacity to design policies and effectively implement the various poverty alleviation programs to empower the youth to be self-reliant in Yobe State, Nigeria.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

A state may use various approaches and techniques to meet its (particularly) citizens' needs. Fighting poverty through empowerment has taken centre stage in national government agenda and policies, particularly in Nigeria (Alabi, 2014). The Marxian perspective of state and unemployment is used to give an insight into the state's institutional capacity for youth empowerment. Although Marx and

Engels have never put a single presentation of the state theory, their viewpoint is critical to the concept of the state (Tabor, 1995). The theory of the state, as argued by Tabor (1995), holds the following assumptions, the basis on which the theory is applied and the Nigerian State concerning youth empowerment is discussed;

1. Society's structure is divided into two; the economic base and the superstructure, and the economic base defines the forces and relations of production.
2. The economic base determines the superstructure, i.e., political, social classes, and ideology in society.
3. The economically viable elites always control the state by influencing the less privileged class.
4. The state is part of the superstructure based on the economy, that is, the infrastructure. Marx and Engels' conception divides society into a material base and a superstructure that rests on it.
5. The nature of a state's mode of production or base determines the state's superstructure or development.

In line with the above assumptions, the theory argued that scarcity partly played a role in the state's emergence and sustenance (Tabor, 1995). While under capitalism, the state's material basis is relatively scarce, and people produce surplus food to fend for a living; while the food produced would not be enough for all the members of the society, it manifests a divided class in society. The division breeds conflict between the two opposing classes of the bourgeois and the proletariat. Each class tries to achieve their interest over the other. As a result, there were constant clashes of interests that became irreconcilable. The state wealth is owned and controlled by the elite class, who also possess the means of production—leaving the members of the oppressed class with the option of selling their labour to survive. These class differences and unequal wealth distribution perpetuated and maintained by the elite become the state's components (Marx & Engels, 1968; Tabor, 1995; McLellan, 2009).

Engel (1968) further argued that the state is a product of development at a particular stage of societal development, which is inherent in an irreconcilable contradiction of class differences opposed to each other. Understanding the class theory's application in the Nigerian context is in terms of inequality generated by the capitalist economy, which Nigeria is part of, where wealth is concentrated in the hands of the elite minorities who possess power and the means of production. The poor and unemployed members of the subject class, especially the youth in Nigeria, own only their labour, which they must sell for wages. This unequal relationship and class distinction are responsible for the working class to remain poor as long as capitalism continues (Alabi, 2014; McLellan, 2009 & Alanana, 2006).

The social class theory articulates that the condition of the working class will raise their consciousness. The theory also argues that in a developing nation like Nigeria, controlled by a capitalist economy, there is a limit at which the state can alleviate the suffering of the working class. Scott (2006) argued that capitalism is a system of indirect rule for economic relationships, where market forces exist within institutional frameworks provided by the governments. He maintained that government is responsible for controlling the institutional frameworks such as infrastructure and laws and modernising such frameworks through political power to suit specific circumstances (Scott, 2006). The capitalist, for instance, will not want to increase the wages of the working class because this will affect their profit margin (Jencks 1996). Therefore, youth unemployment and poverty are integral to Nigeria as part of the global capitalist economy (Jencks 1996).

In a related development, the social class theory argues that poverty and unemployment are prominent features of a capitalist economy. In capitalist economies like Nigeria, the economy is owned and controlled by politicians and the wealthy elites who desire to maximise profits in their investments. Consequently, the elite class used the machinery of government at their disposal to influence policies and enact laws that always protect their interest to the detriment of the proletariat or the have not, who are the majority in the state. Therefore, youth unemployment is part of Nigeria's

capitalist economy (McLellan, 2009; Akande, 2014).

Nigeria's capitalist system benefits from youth unemployment and underemployment because unemployment lowers the salary and wages and raises the profit margin of the owners of the industries and organisations. At the same time, the rent, water, electricity, and other essential state services bills and taxes paid by the proletariats are not reduced or subsidised (McLellan, 2009; Alanana, 2006). Moreover, the Nigerian politicians, the wealthy, have formed a cabal that controls the state in terms of laws passed by the national assembly and other state policies to the detriment of the working class (Alanana, 2006).

While workers received the minimum wage of N18,000 (Eighteen thousand Naira), for example, many states failed to pay their salaries and other entitlements for months. Consequently, an army of youth nationwide, particularly in Yobe State, have no employment, including those with educational qualifications, skills, and good health. The politicians only use these youth to achieve their political ambitions, while others are engaged in drug trafficking and crimes. These severely affect democracy in the country (Alabi, 2014). Having explained Nigeria's situation, this theory remained a relevant tool in explaining the nexus between the state's capacity and youth unemployment, particularly in Yobe State.

The article used two theories of state capacity by Lindvall and Teorell (2017) and Zimmerman (2000) and Perkins & Zimmerman (1995) empowerment/ecology theory to strategically address the growing concern of poverty and unemployment among youths. The researchers used the cause-and-effect relation theory of state capacity to explain how nations utilise resources to improve the efficacy of policy instruments to improve the well-being of their citizens. Fundamental in providing a state capacity theory with the essential elements to maximise utilising available resources, to use policy frameworks for individuals and state development, Weber's (1978) position on his ideal type of nation is integrated. Hence, our attention will focus on Dahl's conception of power that fits with the doctrines of the theory of causality (Lindvall & Teorell, 2017). The causal relationship between the state and institutional capacity is the causality theory's primary assumption. The method is unique to cause and effect relations, especially while examining state capacity and empowerment (Lindvall & Teorell, 2017). Therefore, the Yobe state provides a good reference point for applying the theory's assumptions. In Yobe, the State capacity influences youth empowerment and the institutional capability to design and implement proactive youth empowerment programs. The theory does not claim universal applicability but is situational and contextual.

On the other hand, theories of empowerment consider both processes and results, contending that structures, activities, or acts may be empowering and that such processes lead to a degree of empowerment (Zimmerman, 1995). He further maintained that the outcome of empowerment processes differs in reality in their form because of the lack of a unified standard that contains its whole meaning in all contexts or populations. In other words, it is nation-specific. Therefore, empowerment theory suggests the participation of all stakeholders to achieve the set goal, the effort to gain access to resources, and explicit knowledge of the social and political landscape as critical to achieving empowerment (Perkins and Zimmerman, 1995).

Zimmerman's (2000) and Perkins & Zimmerman's (1995) theories of empowerment and ecology explain the state's context and link to youth empowerment in Nigeria. The methods related to state capacity and youth empowerment hold that providing empowerment programs ensures positive youth development and enables skills acquisition. They assert that their significant assumptions' centrality provides an opportunity for youth involvement in socio-political processes toward positive developments. Furthermore, the theorist argues that empowering staff and youth helps in participating in the process of decision-making. Decentralising decision-making empowers youth to acquire the necessary skills and training for societal development. The theories highlighted processes and outcomes to develop strategies for youth empowerment that focus on results. The theories discuss the importance of youth development through appropriate programs to improve youth well-being. The techniques also encourage youth to use relevant abilities to help their society thrive (Zimmerman, 2000; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995).

The ecological paradigm concentrates on the environmental side of empowerment. The strategy creates enabling conditions, such as schools, hospitals, roads, vocational training centers, and other relevant social amenities, where people can learn necessary skills for their development and the development of their communities. Applying these theories' assumptions would help Yobe State's youth develop by teaching them essential skills to speed their transition to maturity (Zimmerman, 2000; Zimmerman & Perkins, 1995).

### 3. Research Methodology

The study adopted a mixed-method, philosophical approach combining qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The mixed-method approach aimed to generate generalisable data and address each method's weaknesses by complementing each other (Jick, 1979; Creswell, 2002). In the first phase, using a semi-structured questionnaire, we collected quantitative data on the perceptions of state institutional capacity for youth empowerment in Yobe State from a randomly selected sample of 393 respondents. In the second phase, we collected qualitative data on perceptions, opinions, and experiences of the youth and key informants on state institutional capacity for youth empowerment programs using Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The key informants include the 21 purposely selected officials of the Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and youth empowerment, experts on poverty alleviation from academia, members of Civil Society Organizations, Community leaders, and Youth and Women Leaders. In addition, Focus Group Discussions were administered to 30 randomly selected youth groups.

The data collection instruments included but were not limited to, Key Informant Interviews, Focus Group Discussions, and Open-Ended Questionnaires. The secondary information came from a rigorous examination of academic papers, youth policies, reports, and official publications. We categorised the quantitative data and used SPSS version 24 to analyse it to obtain frequencies, percentages, tables, and correlations. This allowed us to define and analyse the state's institutional capacity to carry out youth empowerment initiatives and their effects in Yobe State. While Q-D Miner was used to coding and thematically analysed the qualitative data.

### 4. Results and Discussion

In order to make sense of the collected data and provide insight into state institutional capacity and youth empowerment in Yobe State, Nigeria, we present the findings, interpretation, and scholarly discussion on the perceptions of state institutional capacity to implement empowerment programs and its positive impact on the youth in triangulation forms. The state's institutional capacity to implement youth empowerment programs is crucial to understanding whether it can implement programs to achieve its objectives. In addition, this helps to understand whether the failures and successes in implementing the youth empowerment programs result from institutional capacity. The social indicators used in determining the institutional capacity include the institution's expertise, the clarity of the roadmap on empowerment, ecology, capital to support youth, selection of beneficiaries, and the positive impact of the programs on the youth in the state.

Capacity is a continuous process regarded as a more dynamic perspective by which individuals, groups, institutions, organisations, and societies develop their abilities to sustainably identify and meet development challenges (Land, 2000). According to the OECD (2006), capacity development refers to individuals, organisations, and society creating and maintaining the capacity to achieve their objectives. Institutional Capacity is essential in achieving the goals and objectives of youth empowerment programs because it enhances capacity, technical capacity, and individual skills and knowledge (UNDP, 2009). Dichter (2014) focuses on institutional problem-solving and learning. To him, capacity development enhances an institution's ability to identify and solve its problems and that of its beneficiaries. In this case, the youth adjust to changed situations and learn from experiences. In addition, while agreeing with the problem-solving approach, Andrews et al. (2017)

added that institutional capacity is the capability of an organisation to equip its staffers to do the right thing at the correct time in the right circumstances to achieve a normative policy objective. The Institutional capacity includes the experts in poverty, staff strength, road maps, and other related indicators to ensure the success of the empowerment programs they implement in Yobe State. Table 1 below shows the youth perception and rating of institutional capacity.

**Table 1:** Rating of the Institutional Capacity to Implement Youth Empowerment Programs

Indicators for the Institutional Capacity to Implement Youth Empowerment Programs	Rating of Institutional Capacity to Implement Youth Empowerment Programs (Percent and Frequency)					Mean	Average rating
	SA	A	U	D	SD		
	The ministry has the expertise to manage the empowerment Programs	30 (91)	31 (95)	12 (38)	17 (49)		
Ministry has a clear roadmap to empower Youths	21 (63)	39 (117)	14 (43)	18 (54)	8 (26)	2.55	Agree
There is an enabling environment for youths empowerment in the state	16 (48)	35 (106)	22 (68)	19 (58)	8 (23)	2.68	Neutral
Trainers Support Youths with Capital at the end of the empowerment	13 (41)	34 (104)	22 (66)	20 (59)	11 (33)	2.80	Neutral
The selection of Beneficiaries was transparent	14 (43)	29 (88)	20 (60)	20 (60)	17 (52)	2.97	Disagree
The ministry succeeded in the implementation of the programs	13 (41)	27 (81)	25 (75)	22 (68)	13 (38)	2.94	Disagree
Have you benefited from any Empowerment Programme	14 (43)	19 (58)	17 (50)	23 (70)	27 (82)	3.30	Disagree

KEY: SA= Strongly Agreed A=Agree NS= Not Sure D=Disagree SD=Strongly Disagree

Table 1 shows that most youths agree on two facts: the poverty alleviation ministry has the relevant expertise in some aspects. Secondly, the ministry has a clear roadmap for achieving the set objectives of poverty alleviation among the citizens. However, the findings also reveal that many youths are unsure of the enabling environment to implement various empowerment programs. Most youths are also unsure if trainees are supported with capital to set up their businesses at the end of their training. The findings also reveal that most youth disagreed with the following three issues. One, the youth disagree that the selection of beneficiaries for the empowerment programs was transparent. They disagree that the poverty alleviation ministry has successfully implemented various intervention programs. Three, the youth disagree that they have benefitted from the empowerment programs.

Despite some youths' agreement that the poverty alleviation ministry has some expertise and a clear roadmap to implement the empowerment programs, the findings imply that most youth have mixed feelings about the institutional capacity of the ministry to manage implementation of the empowerment programs in Yobe State due to many problems bedeviling the implementation of the programs. The percent of youth who believe that the ministry lacks the expertise to manage the State's empowerment programs further reveals that the youth are facing the challenges of unemployment, high levels of poverty, and lack of entrepreneurial skills among the youth, which are still visible in the State. In addition, most youth participants believe the ministry has a clear roadmap to empower youths. However, this statement is refuted by the youths who believe that the ministry does not have a clear road map to empower them. Despite the implementation of various empowerment programs (see Table two), many youths remain in absolute poverty without any skills.

**Table 2:** Strategies for Poverty Alleviation Intervention in Nigeria by Successive Governments

S/N	Program	Year	Target Audience	Aim and Objectives
1.	National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFP)	1972	Farmers	To educate farmers, fund agriculture, and increase food production
2.	Nigeria Agricultural and Cooperative Bank (NACB)	1972	Farmers	Agricultural financing
3.	Operation Feed the Nation (OFN)	1976	Rural Dwellers	To educate farmers, increase food production, and economic stimulation



S/N	Program	Year	Target Audience	Aim and Objectives
4.	Green Revolution	1979	Countrywide	Reducing imports of food, increasing agricultural output, and using mechanised farming
5.	Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI)	1986	Countrywide	Rehabilitating feeder roads, supplying rural areas with water, and electrifying remote areas
6.	National Directorate of Employment (NDE)	1986	Vulnerable Youth	Skill acquisition; Self-employment; Labour intensive work scheme; Training, Financing, and guidance
7.	Better Life Programme (BLP)	1987	Rural Dwellers	Self-help and rural development programme, skill acquisition
8.	Peoples Bank of Nigeria (PBN)	1989	Underprivileged Adult Nigerians	Encourage saving; provision of loans and credit facilities
9.	Community Banks (CB)	1990	Urban microbusinesses and people of the countryside	Securing loans and available credit
10.	Family Support Programmes (FSP)	1994	Both urban and rural families	Providing medical services, protection of children, advancement of young people and better diets for families
11.	Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP)	2001	Vulnerable Youth	Increase adult literacy and provide medical care, decrease unemployment and crime, grow small companies, establish a loan supply chain for agriculturalists, and equip and establish freshly graduated students.
12.	NAPEP	2001	Countrywide	Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES); Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS); Social Welfare Service Scheme (SOWESS); Natural Resources Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS).
13.	National economic empowerment strategy (NEEDS)	2004	Countrywide	Government reformation, growing private sector, access to health education, welfare, employment, empowerment, security, and participatory governance
14.	Seven point Agenda	2007	Countrywide	The seven-point agenda accommodates power and energy, food security and agriculture, wealth creation and employment, mass transportation, land reform, security, and qualitative and functional education
15.	Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (You Win)	2010		Encourage innovation and job creation by establishing new businesses and expanding existing ones.
16.	Subsidy reinvestment program (Sure P)	2012	Vulnerable Women and Youth	It is meant to engage unemployed graduates in firms and institutions for one year to acquire skills and experience and enhance their employability.
17.	N-Power	2015	Vulnerable Youth	To tackle youth joblessness issues and improve the young people's social development in Nigeria.

Source: Ugoh & Ukpere, 2009; Taiwo & Agwu, 2016

Smith (2005) argues that the country requires experienced staff members as technocrats to spearhead the successful implementation of youth empowerment programs. Scholars and politicians have attempted to explain the present failures of initiatives to raise the poor out of poverty through various empowerment schemes and improve the living standards of the young as a long-standing solution to poverty among this class over the years.

On the other hand, different theoretical traditions have blamed all poverty reduction efforts on state institutional ability, class, gender discrimination, ethnicity, civil society weakness, and empowerment. In addition, concerning the enabling environment as one of the crucial factors in achieving empowerment, Besley & Perrson (2013) argues that achieving effective youth empowerment programs requires a favourable environment. Between the lines, one could figure out the sensitive role of state institutional capacity, which, according to the World Bank, operates as a link between policy and implementation in addressing the challenges of youth unemployment through empowerment programs (World Bank, 2014a; Smith, 2005). This statement concurs with what Besley and Perrson (2013) call the primary feature of State capacity that determines the understanding of social and institutional variables responsible for coordinating socioeconomic and political relationships, which every institution of poverty represents. Regarding the transparency in selecting

empowerment beneficiaries by the ministry responsible, most youth participants generally disagree with the statement because of the lack of transparency and politics involved in the selection criteria of the beneficiaries. Youth believe that the selection process is not transparent, affecting the program's outcomes in meeting the intended program objectives. Biased selection of beneficiaries, as reported by the youth participant, that one has to belong to a particular ethnic or political party before they are considered for selection is attributed to influences of politics or ethnicity, which often leads to poor outcomes of intervention schemes. This translates to the state's failure. In line with this finding, Brautigam, Fjeldstad, & Moore (2008) assert that the state as an institution is responsible for promoting and coordinating citizens' socioeconomic, political, educational, and psychological facets. The state's clear duty is to lift the youth out of poverty by empowering them with relevant skills and empowerment intervention schemes to be self-reliant. Therefore, the state must be able to design, coordinate and implement poverty alleviation programs, particularly on youth empowerment strategies, through clear objectives that create youth employment and proper skills.

In support of the quantitative findings on the State of Institutional Capacity to Implement Youth Empowerment Programmes, the qualitative findings reveal the level of the state capacity and challenges bedevilling the institution, as explained by the respondents,

*"They have their personnel that go-round for monitoring and other activities, starting with those in administration aspects that discharge their responsibility for proper implementation. Therefore, they have the expertise, but the overall implementation is not commensurate with their expertise" (KII, Male Participants).*

It implies a lack of genuine willingness among those who implement the program to commit to the work done to reflect the quality of skills and knowledge possessed by the expert. As a result, the implementation process has all the experts in place, but the quality of the work done does not reflect these experts. This means that whereas government empowerment programs are in place, those who oversee their implementation do not have the zeal and commitment to ensure those program objectives achieve the necessary output. Rico and Trucco (2014) argue that there are stark inequalities in capacity building in terms of access to education and the completion of schooling, and development skills of a high enough quality to enable those who possess those skills to perform well in the knowledge society.

One of the respondents explained that the study reveals unfairness in selecting beneficiaries due to corruption in the selection process.

*The state usually comes up with many such programs, but how programs are executed used to be the problem. Moreover, certain factors come into play by selecting the programs' beneficiaries. For example, you must be somebody's son and belong to a particular political party before you qualify because politicians handle it instead of civil servants (KII Female Participants).*

This implies that selecting beneficiaries in these government empowerment programs depends on whom you know to benefit from them. The process of selecting beneficiaries is based on political affiliations; when one belongs to a particular political group, one may or may not qualify to benefit from the empowerment program. This means that all beneficiaries who do not have influential people to second them or even when they do not belong to a preferred political party may not benefit from the program. It suggests that some underprivileged adolescents have not benefited from these initiatives and, as a result, have not been empowered. According to Edginton (2005), youth participation in decision-making is generally tiny, and creating official or informal frameworks for youth to express their views is insufficient. As a result, distinguishing between formal and substantive, transformative participation is essential. Youth engagement can only result in positive outcomes when they can influence actively. The findings also reveal limited expertise in managing the poverty alleviation programs implementation. As one of the respondents explained,



*“The ministry does not have sufficient expertise in managing these programs because they have different aspects to it, in which you need an expert in all the aspects to address the problems” (IDI Female Participant).*

Impliedly, there is a significant lack of expert personnel in implementing youth empowerment programs in this community. Moreover, different components create many deficiencies in the success of these programs empowerment process, benefiting less of the intended youth. Kohtamäki, Kraus, Mäkelä, & Rönkkö (2012) argued that implementing the strategy is very crucial to success.

To successfully implement strategies, organisations need capabilities to develop them so that their personnel will commit to implementing them (Miller, 2020). Because the personnel's commitment to strategy implementation positively affects the success and rapidity of the strategy implementation (Nwachukwu et al. 2018). As a result of commitment, employees are more motivated, strategies can be implemented more quickly, and the business climate may change quickly. (Nwachukwu et al., 2018).

The Qualitative study revealed that the implementation of the programs faces many challenges in terms of corruption in the implementation process, explained one respondent;

*Generally, the ministries have bottlenecks such as corruption, where the allocated resources for the programs do not go to the beneficiaries. In addition, many influential people hijacked programs or diverted them from less privileged to privileged individuals or communities. Moreover, sometimes the prominent politicians will divert the whole materials meant for the entire community to their constituencies or locality by depriving other citizens who were not from their side (KII Male Participant).*

Another IDI youth participant also said,

*I think I can talk about one or two challenges. The first is the issue of ‘whom you know that is nepotism, and the second is the issue of politics in selecting beneficiaries. In the selection process, for example, one must belong to a particular political party or ethnic group before being selected. So in some cases, you have to give some incentives or make a deal to share whatever ones benefitted before you are selected. Another issue is greediness by the youth. For example, some youth with the connection can join as many programs as possible, depriving others of benefits (IDI youth Male Participant).*

This implies that the implementing ministry has many bottlenecks in executing the empowerment programs, as one of the respondents explained that there is much corruption in allocating resources to beneficiaries. Influential people have hijacked the program and diverted them from vulnerable beneficiaries. This is a result of technical knowledge, which leads to program failure to benefit the vulnerable groups and hence no minimal program impact on the community. According to Dimant et al. (2017), corruption hurts economic growth because it causes lower levels of investment, lower quality investment, greater levels of indirect taxation, and resource misallocation due to warped incentives. Increased corruption leads to increased inequality and poverty. The findings also reveal the challenges in the implementation process of the poverty alleviation programs, as one of the respondents explained that:

*If you look at it from Nigerian or Yobe State perspectives, competency and technical expertise usually do not count because of nepotism, ethnicity, or politics. Most of the officers entrusted with the programs to handle do not have the requisite expertise to design excellent programs and implement them to the latter. In most cases, these are the people brought to serve the interest of those who give the opportunities. Be that as it may; still, the programs have yielded some positive results. However, we are saying that more needs to be done if the government wants to be serious about absorbing youths. Let there be a qualified technical expert or training and re-training for the personnel managing these programs to achieve the purpose of its creation for good (KII Female Participant).*

This implies a lack of expert advice or consultancy concerning the design and proper implementation of government empowerment programs to impact positively on the target audience. In addition, there is a lack of honest and proper advice to the management of government programs managers on the weaknesses and flaws in the program. This affects the achievement of the intended objectives of government programs in the community, attracting many failures to achieve the intended objectives. Adler (2001) explains that explicating strategy and personnel involvement in strategic discussions improves employees' understanding of the plan.

A better understanding of an organisation's strategy should also stimulate a feeling of belonging and increase employee willingness to work towards shared goals (Miller, 2020). From the above results, it is clear from most respondents that, despite having the ministry in charge of poverty alleviation, the implementation's overall outcome is not good enough due to the ministry's myriad of challenges. For example, some identified challenges are lack of proper guidance in selecting beneficiaries and not involvement of consultants, which impede poverty alleviation programs' success. Therefore, all the respondents agreed that the ministry in charge of the poverty alleviation programs or the government responsible for implementing the programs lacks institutional capacity. However, few respondents have agreed that the programs are youth-centred. In other words, the ministry in charge cannot effectively implement poverty alleviation programs. In line with this finding, the OECD (2006) stresses that successful implementation of youth empowerment programs requires a technical capacity to conceptualise and understand an idea through its intended use. Alleviating poverty and developing a foundation or design for institutions to reduce poverty are driven by innovative minds, promoting the technical capacity to ensure sustainable change (OECD, 2006).

Technical Capacity is the ability of an institution to perceive an idea and see its effective implementation. The capacity includes the process of skill acquisition, poverty reduction, and building the needed framework driven by innovation to achieve its goals (OECD, 2006). Technical Capacity is critical to implementing all aspects of youth empowerment, such as education, agriculture, skills acquisition, services delivery, logistics distribution, and other related components (OECD, 2006). United Nations Development Programme (2009) identifies four core capacity-building elements. These include institutional arrangement, which connotes rules, policies, practices, inspiration, and motivation. Secondly, a knowledge that educates the youths on what the programs are. Thirdly, accountability, implementing programs as planned effectively, and reaching out to the youths for input. Fourth, institutions are willing to provide systems and mechanisms to engage youths, use such platforms effectively, and collect and utilise the youths' feedback to improve their capabilities. Finally is transparency, which carries all the stakeholders along in designing and implementing all programs and monitoring. Therefore, technical capacity implies the process of developing youths to strengthen their skills, competence, and abilities in order for them to overcome their challenges and take charge of their lives (UNDP, 2009).

However, effectively implementing poverty alleviation programs means ensuring credibility and transparency. Kharas, Hamel, & Hofer (2018) explain that in 2018 Nigeria provided an excellent example as one of the countries declared the hub of poverty, with more than 86.9 million living in extreme poverty, representing nearly 50% of its 180 million population. In Nigeria, the youth constitute 60% of the 160 million national population (Adebowale, 2015). In 2020, the youth unemployment rate (15-34 years) was 42.5 %, while the underemployment rate for the same age group was 21.0 %. These rates were the highest compared to other age groups (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS] 2021). Nevertheless, these youths are more volatile and vulnerable to slow economic empowerment (Bello, 2008; Jega, 2017). Because of vulnerability and disempowerment, Nigerian youth face poverty, hunger, unemployment, and diseases, especially STDs and HIV/AIDS. Other vulnerability indicators are a lack of appropriate self-sustenance skills, lack of primary education, and access to ICT facilities, among other things (Adebowale, 2015; Jega, 2017). From the quantitative and qualitative findings, it is clear that the state lacks the capacity to implement the various empowerment poverty alleviation programs effectively. Hence the rise in youth unemployment and

poverty in the state.

## 5. Youth Benefits from Empowerment Programs

The primary goal and objective of youth empowerment in Nigeria are to constantly empower the youth through various policies that encourage them to harness their full potentials. It is a deliberate strategy by the state to combat poverty and unemployment among the youth. The benefit of youth on various empowerment programs such as the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) of 2001, the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) 2003, Seven-Point Agenda 2007, Micro-Credit Fund 2008, and You-Win and Sure-P 2010, and the N-Power 2015, still active today (Ugoh & Ukpere, 2009; Taiwo & Agwu, 2016), implemented in Yobe State over the years is one of the social indicators to determine the institutional capacity of the relevant ministry or agency of poverty alleviation in designing and implementing the empowerment programs. These programs aim to empower the youth and other citizens to be self-reliant by providing jobs and relevant skills. It is essential to understand the institutional capacity of the establishment saddled with the responsibility of designing and implementing such programs.

According to the qualitative research, most young people have either directly benefited from such programs or know someone who has. Additionally, the N-Power program, which began in 2015, was the one from which the majority of young people benefited. The Federal Government's National Social Investment Program, or N-Power, empowers young people and creates jobs by fostering their human capital. Enhancing the human capital of the Nigerian labour force was one of the program's objectives (N-Power Information Guide, 2017; Odey & Sambe, 2019). Youth employment, addressed through youth empowerment, appears to be where human capital has increased. To ensure youth empowerment, young people must develop skills in essential fields like agriculture, health care, and education. The program's main objective was to help educated and uneducated Nigerian youth who had little hope of finding work and needed those skills to survive and raise a family to acquire and develop those skills. In order to address some of the issues in public services while also boosting the economy, the Federal Government has introduced N-Power as a structure for large-scale and pertinent work skill training and development. Under the N-Power program, the Federal Government of Nigeria employed and deployed 200,000 young Nigerians in 2016 in public primary schools and primary healthcare facilities throughout Nigeria (N-Power Information Guide 2017). When asked about the poverty alleviation programs the youth benefited from, in the FGD of the youth from Zone A, one of the participants said;

*"There are few people in my LGA. I know that benefit from the N power. Some of them are employed to teach while some enroll for computer repair and other skills under monthly stipend" (Youth FGD of Zone A).*

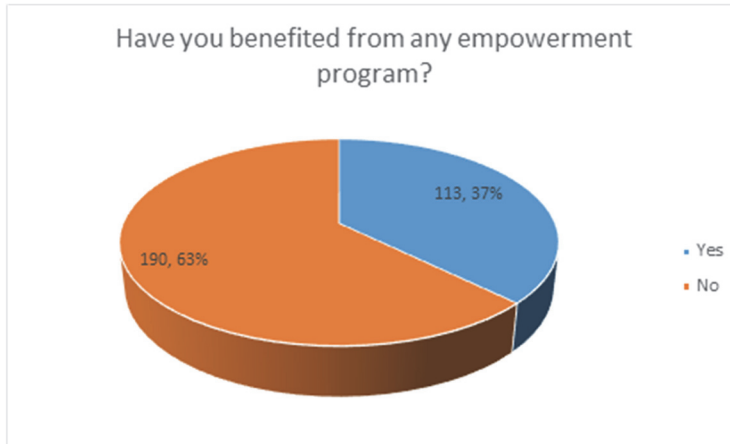
Another respondent also said;

*I have seen many programs being undertaken by the government that youths are benefiting directly from them. First, there is this youth empowerment Programme through N-Power, a government initiative in which the government pays monthly stipends to unemployed youths and assigns them to various jobs like teaching, traffic, etc. Here, the government would pay the young people stipends while tapping their talents. (IDI Male Youth Participant).*

From the qualitative findings, most youth participants acknowledge the impact of some of the poverty alleviation programs, especially the N-power, as the program the youth benefitted from in the state. The result could be attributed to the recency of the program and the focus of the other various poverty alleviation programs. While other programs generally focus on the citizens, the N Power Program focuses on the youth.

In the quantitative findings, the general impact of the programs indicates that most youth

respondents have not benefited from the empowerment programs implemented by the government. The pie chart in figure1 below presents the response of the sample youth respondents.



**Figure 1:** Youth Benefits from Empowerment Programs

Fig 1 revealed that, out of those who reported benefiting from any empowerment programme, most youth have not benefited from the implemented government empowerment programs. Some respondents reported that they benefited from the state's empowerment programs implemented by the government. From the above findings, it is clear that despite the programs' impact on some youth, the majority have not benefitted. This finding could be attributed to the lack of the corresponding impact of the programs implemented on youth poverty and unemployment in the state. Hence, the lack of profound visible impact resulted from poorly implementing such empowerment programs to alleviate poverty and provide youth jobs. Kalugho (2018) argues that scholars consider state institutional capacity the only remedy for poverty's long-standing challenges among youth in Nigeria. Achieving this needs coherent and standard poverty alleviation programs where success largely depends on the nation's economic strength, the absence of which could lead to low state capacity, which impedes the provision of social amenities to citizens (Berliner et al., 2015). The researchers acceded with Kalugho's (2018) position, who argued that it must prioritise youth empowerment to harness their full potential and capacity as state citizens for any society to achieve meaningful development.

## 6. Relationship between Institutional Capacity and Youth Empowerment

The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient and regression analysis were adopted to test the relationship between institutional capacity and the youth empowerment construct. In addition, the study adopted a correlation analysis to determine the nature of relationships between the independent and dependent variables and measure their strength and direction.

**Table 3:** Single Correlation Analysis (Pearson Correlation Product Moment) between Institutional Capacity and Youth Empowerment

Correlations			
		Youth empowerment	capacity
Youth empowerment	Pearson Correlation	1	.222**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000

Correlations			
		Youth empowerment	capacity
	N	303	303
Capacity	Pearson Correlation	.222**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	303	303

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation table results above show that institutional capacity is significantly positively related to youth empowerment in this state ( $r = 0.222, P=00$ ). Therefore, the increase in the independent variable leads to an increase in the outcome. Notwithstanding, the institutional capacity to implement youth empowerment programs is positively associated with youth empowerment programs. Therefore, a definite improvement in institutional capacity to implement youth empowerment programs can improve youth empowerment programs in this institution. In this regard, UNDP (2009) stated that every development (youth empowerment) enterprise must have a strong locally created and sustained capacity. Without it, the integrity of development progress is jeopardised. Growth is illusory and rootless, disconnected from existing capacities and subject to the increasingly severe and complicated challenges that society's youth face.

### 7. Component Matrix for Institutional Capacity to Implement Youth Empowerment Programs

Principal component matrix analysis with varimax rotation was conducted to determine the factor loadings for each retained factor and the total variance each component's retained factors may account for (Allen, 2017). Given insight into the interrelationships between the factors, the statistical technique of varimax rotation is used at one level of factor analysis. A principal components analysis's output data must typically have its coordinates adjusted.

Adjustment or rotation was made to Maximise the variance shared among the component items. Results that maximise the shared variance more accurately depict how data correlate with each principal component. The squared correlation of items related to one factor should be increased. In contrast, the squared correlation of items related to any other factor should be decreased to maximise the variance (Allen, 2017). In other words, the varimax rotation streamlines the loading of items by eliminating the neutral zone and, more precisely, identifying the variable upon which data load. In this entry, the varimax rotation is introduced. Table 4 presents the results on institutional capacity to implement youth empowerment programs. Results in Table 4 show that seven factors extracted two-factor components for institutional capacity to implement youth empowerment programs. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) is used to measure the variables and test the data's suitability for factor analysis. Each factor loaded above 40%. of .786 was above 0.5, indicating that the study sample was adequate for factor analysis (Osborne, 2014). The seven-factor retained component had an eigenvalue above the minimum threshold of 1, explaining approximately 64.3% of the variance in understanding youth empowerment (Osborne, 2014).

**Table 4:** Component Matrix for the Institutional Capacity to Implement YEPS

Component Matrix <sup>a</sup>	Component	
	Capacity	Competence
The Ministry Has the Expertise to Manage poverty alleviation programs	.743	
Ministry have a clear roadmap to empower Youths	.750	
There is Enabling Environment for Youths to be Empowered in the State	.681	
Trainers Support Youths with Capital at the end of the empowerment	.722	
The selection of Beneficiaries was Transparent	.734	

Component Matrix <sup>a</sup>		
	Component	
	Capacity	Competence
The Ministry Succeeded in the Implementation of the Programmes	.672	.428
Have you benefited from any Empowerment Programme	.612	.439
KMO		.786
Factor one Eigenvalues (capacity)		3.463
Factor two Eigenvalues (competence)		1.044
Total Eigenvalues		3.463
%age of variance		64.392
Cumulative %age		64.392
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.		
a. 2 components extracted.		

The result in Table 4 reveal that two factors were retained from 7 components for institutional capacity to implement a youth empowerment program construct. The factors retained had Eigenvalues equal to or higher than those based Kaiser Criterion. Thus, the institutional capacity to implement the youth empowerment program has seven factors to measure factor one and four factors to measure factor two in the same variable. Factor one in this variable of institutional capacity to implement a youth empowerment program was renamed state capacity; factor two was renamed state competence. In factor one, respondents say that for the state to implement youth empowerment programs effectively, trainers must support youths with capital at the end of the empowerment; there must be a clear roadmap to empower youths in the ministry. This finding aligns with Yasunaga (2014), who argued that the organisation, training, and modalities of delivery of technical capacity building are branded with flexibility, openness to change, and innovation. Therefore, the primary goal of empowerment should be to satisfy the various learning needs of teens, youth, and adults everywhere. The youth also urge the poverty alleviation ministry to have the ability and capacity to oversee empowerment initiatives and fine beneficiary selection.

In addition, there should be indicators for success in implementing the programs with an enabling environment for youths to be empowered in the state. The youth must benefit from any empowerment program in that order. Dike (2008) argued that building capacity, sometimes called developing capacity, hinges on a theoretical framework that emphasises identifying the obstacles that stand in the way of individuals reaching their goals for advancement while strengthening their abilities to produce quantifiable and lasting effects. As a result, the capacity building frequently refers to people and communities in developing nations enhancing their skills, competencies, and capacities to address the reasons for their marginalisation and suffering. Therefore, training is invariably one of the essential strategies for capacity improvement.

Furthermore, training is critical in overcoming barriers to youngsters' well-being and eradicating elements contributing to their poverty. While also enhancing their abilities to achieve measurable and long-term results (Dike, 2008). As a result, the capacity building frequently refers to people and communities in developing nations enhancing their skills, competencies, and capacities to address the reasons for their marginalisation and suffering. Therefore, training is one of the most important instruments for creating the capacity to free citizens of the barriers that hamper their personal development and keep them impoverished.

Factor two is state competence in implementing youth programs. The participants say that the ministry must have the expertise to manage the Empowerment Programs; there must be an enabling environment for youth empowerment in the state, and selecting beneficiaries must be transparent. In addition, there must be competence to ensure that all youth benefit from any empowerment Program in the state. Therefore, improving state capacity and competence ensures the effective implementation of youth empowerment programs.

In Table 4, the result shows that confirmatory analysis reduced the 7 items variables to two significant factors: state capacity and state competence. In the seven items obtained, two significant



factors contributed to 3.463 and 1.044 and Eigenvalues, respectively, contributing to  $3.463/7 \times 100 = 49.477\%$  and  $1.044/7 \times 100 = 14.915\%$ , respectively. As they were renamed from the seven (7) factors, these combined factors accounted for 64.4% variation in institutional capacity to implement youth empowerment programs. It means that improvement in **state capacity and state competence** in implementing youth empowerment programs may lead to 64.4% towards youth empowerment in the state. With these attributes, the proper beneficiaries selected to benefit from the programs the empowerment would be a significant success with competent personnel handling the process in the state. Coombs (2003) explains that expertise and skills are needed to perform or implement government programs, especially current or prospective employment and training to increase people's overall competency. In addition, training is to educate, teach, change behaviour, and acquire new knowledge and relevant skills (Dike, 2008).

Youth can also learn to change their views through training. In the broadest sense, training teaches thinking, creating, and learning (Dike, 2008). The most common kind of training is practical exposure, either informally through job experience or officially through formal institutions created to offer exposure to essential skills (Ogbimi, 2006). The training allows individuals to perform well in a specific career. Fortunately, this is the aim of non-formal education.

## 8. Policy Implications for the Low Institutional Capacity of Youth Empowerment Programs

Capacity refers to the combination of people, institutions, and practices that permits countries to reach their development goals (Lusthaus et al., 1999). Therefore institutional capacity is authorities, defined roles, responsibilities, planning, and coordination with clear guides on achieving a specified task. Other indicators of institutional capacity include staff strength with relevant skills, implementation capacity, adequate resources to operate, well-defined individual schedules, and the ability to manage and coordinate internal and external stakeholders to achieve a state mandate (UNDP, 2010). The institutions contributing the most to human development can create policies, provide services effectively, maintain high-performance levels over time, and withstand internal and external shocks. This level of change is reflected in outcomes that can be measured by outcome indicators in both the organisation and the enabling environment (UNDP, 2010). Undoubtedly the importance of institutional capacity, especially in developing countries like Nigeria, was to provide the basic requirements for public institutions to design and implement programs in the public interest (Lusthaus et al., 1999).

According to Narayan & Petesh (2002), poverty has been an issue of concern globally, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, where the situation is sore due to the pandemic. Consequently, attention was shifted to the role of institutions in combating poverty due to the inability of unpopular economic policies to combat the menace of poverty. They added that Poverty reduction has not been successful globally in recent decades. In Nigeria, the youth constitute 60% of the 160 million national population (Adebowale, 2015). In 2020, the youth unemployment rate (15-34 years) was 42.5 %, while the underemployment rate for the same age group was 21.0 %. These rates were the highest compared to other age groups (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS] 2021).

Nevertheless, these youths are more volatile and vulnerable to slow economic empowerment (Bello, 2008; Jega, 2017). Because of vulnerability and disempowerment, Nigerian youth face poverty, hunger, unemployment, and diseases, especially STDs and HIV/AIDS. Other vulnerability indicators are a lack of appropriate self-sustenance skills, lack of primary education, and access to ICT facilities, among other things (Adebowale, 2015; Jega, 2017). However, implementing various empowerment programs to combat the rising poverty and unemployment in Nigeria yielded no desired outcome, partly due to the failure of the empowerment policies to address the social problems. These failures were primarily attributed to the inability of the institutions responsible for designing and implementing these programs (Sala-i-Martin & Subramanian, 2003; Ayodele et al., 2013).

Therefore, when the institution responsible for poverty alleviation or reduction fails to achieve its objectives due to low institutional capacity or malfunction, the implications are rising poverty and

employment with its attendant consequences of crime and other social vices. Yobe State is by far among the poorest regions of Nigeria. It also has many poor and unemployed youths (NBS, 2012; YSES, 2008). Aggravating these long-existing socioeconomic challenges is the crisis of Boko Haram, which, over the last 13 years, led to unprecedented destruction of properties and displacement of people, drawing the already battered economy to an alarming state. Moreover, empirical evidence has proven that poverty and unemployment in Yobe State are the chief catalysts for Boko Haram's rise. It also served as one of the critical components that continued to draw vulnerable young men to join the insurgent group ranks (Adesoji, 2010; Onuoha, 2010).

## 9. Conclusion and Recommendations

State Institutional Capacity is the machinery an institution uses to achieve the responsibility assigned to it by the state. These types of machinery include policies, staff strength, expertise, and resources. On the other hand, youth empowerment means deliberate government policies designed and implemented to alleviate poverty and unemployment in a given society. The sole objective of the state institutional capacity is to effectively design and implement poverty alleviation programs to combat poverty and unemployment among the youth. Effective implementation of such policies will provide the youth with either education or relevant skills that make them self-reliant. However, from the perceptions and experiences of the youth in Yobe State, despite the impact of the institution's charge with handling the various youth empowerment programs, there are myriad challenges bedeviling the institution towards its mandate. These challenges include politics and ethnicity in selecting beneficiaries, lack of enabling environment, and lack of supporting trainees with capital, among other challenges. With these challenges, the youth agreed that the state has no institutional capacity to implement the empowerment programs effectively. Therefore, to address these challenges, the state governments need to seek the services of consultants in poverty alleviation, provide more funds, and ensure transparency, monitoring, and recruiting institution staff based on their qualifications and expertise. In short, state capacity and state competence must improve.

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