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National Directorate of Employment Programmes and Job Creation Empowerment in Nigeria's North Central Zone

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Abstract

General Background: Job creation and youth empowerment remain critical policy priorities in developing economies facing persistent unemployment challenges. **Specific Background:** The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) implements several intervention programmes aimed at improving employment opportunities and economic empowerment among Nigerian youths. **Knowledge Gap:** Despite the existence of these programmes, limited empirical evidence compares the contributions of vocational skills development, small-scale enterprise support, agricultural employment programmes, special public works, and rural employment promotion to job creation and empowerment outcomes in North Central Nigeria. **Aims:** This study examined the contributions of NDE programmes to job creation and empowerment in North Central Nigeria. **Results:** Using survey and documentary research designs, data collected from beneficiaries, programme officers, trainers, and mentors were analyzed through descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression. The findings showed that vocational skills development, small-scale enterprise support, and agricultural employment programmes significantly contributed to job creation and empowerment, while special public works and rural employment promotion produced positive but statistically non-significant results. **Novelty:** The study provides a zonal regression-based assessment of five NDE programme components within a single analytical framework. **Implications:** The findings suggest the need to prioritize skills development, enterprise support, and agricultural training while strengthening weaker programme components through improved funding, monitoring, mentoring, and post-training support.

Keywords: Job Creation, Youth Empowerment, National Directorate of Employment, Vocational Skills Development, Employment Programmes

Key Findings Highlights

Skills acquisition generated stronger employment outcomes among beneficiaries.
Entrepreneurship support improved self-reliance and income-generating capacity.
Agricultural training demonstrated meaningful contributions to livelihood opportunities.

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Introduction

The creation of employment has been a major focus of development policy in the world since poverty can only be reduced through decent jobs, which are needed to enhance productivity and social stability [7], [9]. More recently, labour-market interventions have been more concerned with vocational training, entrepreneurship, promoting public works and rural enterprise development due to the lack of growth in conventional wage employment to absorb young labour-market entrants [6], [8]. At the regional level, African nations have remained a reliant on skills training and small-business promotion as tools in tackling youth unemployment and informality [9]. On the national level, Nigeria has been undertaking job creation policies via the National Directorate of Employment with its mandate: development of vocational skills, development of small-scale enterprises, special public works and rural employment promotion [1], [6]. The NDE functions in the North Central Zone via state offices which train the unemployed, connects beneficiaries with master craftsmen, promotes small enterprises and rural livelihood schemes. Nevertheless, it is yet to be established whether these programme elements have had any substantial positive impact on job creation and empowerment in the zone. The reason is that although the training activities and regular recruitment of beneficiaries has been conducted, the issue of poor start-up capital, lack of a good labour-market match, lack of tools and lack of follow-up support [10], [14] continue to be raised. Recent data indicate that Nigeria had an unemployment rate of 4.3 percent, youth unemployment of 6.5 percent and informal employment of 93 percent in Q2 2024 meaning that most workers are in vulnerable and unproductive jobs [2]. Recent research like Garka [10], Isa [11] and Medun and Bello [12] discovered that Vocational training enhances employment results, but limited interaction to North Central evidence, multiple NDE programme proxies and regression-based clarification undermines the literature. On this ground, the paper analyses the effects of NDE programmes on job creation and empowerment of the Nigerians in the North Central Zone.

1.2 Problem Statement: The paper examined the extent to which Nigerians in the North Central Zone of the country have been empowered through the National Directorate of Employment. It was required due to continuous unemployment, high informality, skills misalignment, poverty, poor start up support and poor business sustainability post training in Nigeria [2], [7], [9]. The study determined the degree to which the NDE programme have enhanced the employment status, income level, job stability, acquisition of skills, decision making ability as well as economic independence. To deal with these issues, the NDE launched the vocational skills development, small-scale enterprise development, agricultural employment training, special public works development, and rural employment promotion as the measures to alleviate unemployment and encourage self-reliance [1], [6]. These interventions are focused on the unemployed, school leavers, graduates, women, vulnerable group and rural residents. Empirically, with such attempts, there is little evidence as to the particular effect of NDE programmes in the North Central Zone. The empirical literature of NDE and employment creation indicates positive but skewed results. Garba [10] established that development of vocational skills led to youth employment in Kaduna State, and Isa [11] established that NDE skill acquisition programmes in Taraba State enhanced employability, but were limited by gaps in resettlement. Medun and Bello [12] also exposed that vocational skills training is also correlated to employability and job creation in Lagos State. Nonetheless, these works were done on other states, tighter proxies or correlation analysis. The problem statement thus is to determine whether NDE programmes have had any significant effects on job creation and empowerment in North Central Zone of Nigeria.

Objectives of the study: The examined the role of National Directorate of Employment programmes in the creation of jobs and empowerment of the people of the North Central Zone-Nigeria. Its particular objectives are to: investigate the impact of development of vocational skills on job creation and empowerment in the North Central Zone; investigate the impact of development of small-scale enterprises on job creation and empowerment in the North Central Zone; investigate the extent to which employment training in agriculture has contributed to job creation and empowerment in the North Central Zone;

Research Questions: The study attempts to respond to the following research questions: How does job creation and empowerment depend on the development of vocational skills? How does small-scale enterprise support impact job creation and empowerment? How has the agricultural employment training increased job creation and empowerment?

Research Hypotheses: The following hypotheses were drafted to guide the study: H01: There is no significant relationship between vocational skills development and job creation and empowerment in the North Central Zone. H02: There is no significant relationship between small-scale enterprise support and job creation and empowerment in the North Central Zone. H03: Agricultural employment training does not have significant relationship with job creation and empowerment in North central zone.

Significance of the study: This paper has academic, practical and policy implications. Academically, it adds to the existing empirical knowledge of employment intervention programmes by subjecting five NDE proxies to the results of job creation and empowerment. In practice, it offers evidence that can support NDE managers, state coordinators, trainers and development partners to enhance programme targeting, post-training monitoring and resettlement support. On the policy side, it provides data to enhance federal employment creation policies, youth empowerment policies and the state-level interventions in the labour-market. Researchers can also find the study useful since it combines the human capital theory and survey and documentary evidence on employment creation in Nigeria.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 National Directorate of Employment Programmes

National Directorate of Employment programmes can be said to be governmental employment initiatives that are aimed at providing the unemployed people in Nigeria with productive skills, enterprise knowledge and work opportunities so that they can be self-reliant [1]. NDE programmes have been characterised as government-led plans of designing and implementing jobs creation initiatives by developing vocational skills, developing small scale enterprises, promoting rural employment and special public works [6]. The process of acquiring productive, functional and marketable skills by unemployed individuals is referred to as Vocational Skills Development, which is done through NDE training centres, master craftsmen and mobile workshops [1]. Small Scale Enterprises support is known as the entrepreneurship training and business set-up assistance, which aims at instilling creativity, enterprise culture and self-employment orientation in the beneficiaries [1]. The Agricultural Employment Programme is the application of agricultural training and value-chain activities in generating livelihoods to unemployed individuals in production, processing and marketing. The concept of rural Employment Promotion involves utilization of rural enterprise and livelihood programs to alleviate unemployment among the rural population. Based on the above definitions, this research paper defines NDE programmes as the systematic federal employment programs involving skills training, business support, public works, and rural livelihood promotion to enhance employment and empowerment outcomes of beneficiaries.

2.2 Creation of Jobs and empowerment.

Creating jobs in the economy is termed as job creation which is the process of creating new jobs, self-employment or income-earning opportunities

that absorb unemployed and underemployed individuals into productive activities [7]. Empowerment has been defined as the process of enhancing the ability of people to learn the skills, take decisions, manage resources and gain economic independence [9]. Employment generation refers to the provision of opportunities whereby the trained individuals are absorbed as wage earners, artisans, businesspersons, farmers or service providers. The result here is economic empowerment where the beneficiaries become marketable skills, entrepreneurs, earn more money, sustain households, and experience better engagement in the economical life of the community. It is stressed by the World Bank [7] that poverty reduction and prosperity cannot be achieved without better jobs and income-earning opportunities. The ILO [9] also associates youth employment to productive and decent work. Based on the above definitions, this paper defines job creation and empowerment as the quantifiable change in employment status, income level, job stability, skill acquisition, decision-making capacity and economic independence that comes as a result of attending NDE programmes.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

Human capital theory was adopted as the theoretical framework. Schultz and Becker popularized this theory by arguing that education, training and acquisition of skills are investments, which enhance the productivity of the individual, employability and earnings [18], [19]. The fundamental concept of the theory is that individuals become more economically productive when they learn to gain knowledge, technical skills and attitudes to work that enhance their ability to engage in productive activities. The theory is of the opinion that training enhances labour-market results since skill raises productivity, and it makes people more employable or entrepreneurial. The fundamental hypotheses of the research are that NDE beneficiaries who undergo appropriate vocational, enterprise and agricultural training ought to exhibit superior employment status, income level and economic autonomy as compared to those who have not undergone such training. Though the theory has been criticized to focus less on structural constraints like capital constraints, weak markets and unstable policies, the theory is still relevant as NDE programmes are essentially structured to support skill formation, enhance entrepreneurship and improve productively. Thus, the human capital theory can be used to explain how NDE programmes can be used to impact job creation and empowerment.

2.4 Empirical Literature

A research study by Omotosho [15] looked at the skill acquisition programmes of the National Directorate of Employment and youth empowerment in Cross River State. The research design embraced was the survey. The sample consisted of NDE beneficiaries and youth participants. The information was gathered through questionnaires and documents. The analysis of the data was performed with the help of the descriptive statistics. The research found that skills developed during NDE programmes enhanced self-reliance, but long-term employability was limited due to a lack of alignment between training and industry requirements. The research suggested more vigorous monitoring and labour-market-based design of the curriculum.

In another study, Medun and Bello [12] assessed the vocational skills training and youth employability in Lagos State. The research took the sequential explanatory mixed-method design. The participants in vocational training centres formed the population. The structured questionnaires and interviews were used to gather data. Pearson correlation and descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data. The analysis found that there were strong positive associations between acquisition of skills, youth employability, employment creation and the entrepreneurial capability. The research suggested better funding, extended vocation centres and better collaboration with industry.

Similar research by Isa [11] evaluated the effectiveness of skills acquisition programmes of the National Directorate of Employment in creating employment in Taraba State. The study adopted survey design. The sample consisted of NDE trainees and other concerned officials. Questionnaires and secondary records were used to collect the data. The descriptive statistics was used to analyse the data. The research found out that the acquisition of NDE skills was beneficial in the generation of employment but resettlement assistance was poor. The research suggested better start-up packages and follow-up of trainees.

A similar research conducted by Garba [10] evaluated the impact of Vocational Skill Development Programme of the NDE on the youth employment in Kaduna State. The design of the study was a survey. The sample included NDE trainees and beneficiaries in training centres selected. The questionnaires, annual reports and published documents were used to gather data. Analysis of data was done on averages, percentage, tables and Spearman rank correlation. The research found out that development of vocational skills led to generation of employment, but poor training equipment limited the outcomes. It suggested more finances and enhanced support of industrialisation.

Research by Yahaya, Mohammed and Adamu [13] evaluated the vocational skills development and small-scale enterprises programmes of the NDE in the context of self-employment in Nigeria. The research design was descriptive survey. The subjects were the beneficiaries of NDE skills and enterprise programmes. They were gathered through the use of questionnaires. Descriptive statistics were applied in analysing the data. It was found that the self-employment orientation was enhanced by skills and small enterprise training but access to credit and tools were low. It advised adequate resettlement and supervision of beneficiaries.

In South-West Nigeria, a research study by Bolaji [16] looked into NDE training and performance of chosen agricultural small and medium enterprises. Survey design was employed in the study. The sample was made up of agricultural SMEs and NDE-trained entrepreneurs. The questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used in analysing the data. The research found that training enhanced the performance of the enterprise in cases where the beneficiaries had access to finance, markets and extension services. It suggested the incorporation of agricultural training with value-chain financing.

Ugoani [14] conducted another study on the National Directorate of Employment and graduate employment in Abia State. The research was based on exploratory survey design. The target population was graduates, the unemployed youths and programme stakeholders. The questionnaires and the secondary sources were used to collect the data. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse data. Investigation indicated that NDE programmes had positive employment creating implications but were affected by underfunding and coverage. It suggested increased investments, entrepreneurship and growth of training opportunities.

A similar research conducted by Okolocha, Onyeneke and Chukwu [17] evaluated the acquisition of skills and employability of youth in Nigeria. The research design was survey. The sample consisted of undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate youths in selected communities. Structured questionnaires were used to collect data. Descriptive statistics and correlation were used to analyse the data. The research found out that skill acquisition lowered unemployment predilections, enhanced entrepreneurship preparedness and enhanced economic engagement. It suggested institutional encouragement of the vocational education and funding of youth enterprises.

An analogous investigation by the World Bank [7] analyzed employment and labour in Nigeria with the help of household survey evidence. The research design was diagnostic research and was based on data of national households. Labour-market profiling was used to analyse data. The researchers found out that a significant number of Nigerians engage in low-wage informal employment and that improved employment is needed to alleviate poverty. It suggested policies which enhance productivity, job quality and income earning opportunities.

The Nigerian Youth Employment Action Plan, 2021-2024 was proposed in a study by the Federal Government of Nigeria [6]. In the plan, development of skills, support of small-scale enterprises, promotion of rural employment and public works were found to be significant youth employment responses. It showed that organizations like NDE are the heart of job creation via direct action. The plan suggested increased coordination, skills development and labour-market information systems.

Gap Analysis: Although the reviewed studies were on NDE vocational training, youth employability, enterprise support and jobs policy, they are not comparable to the current study since most of them were based on individual states, including Kaduna, Taraba, Lagos, Cross River or Abia, and employed fewer programme proxies or involved primarily descriptive and correlation methods. The present work addresses this gap by concentrating on the North Central Zone by combining five NDE programme proxies and their combined and independent effects on job creation and empowerment through multiple linear regressions.

2.5 Gaps in Literature

Empirical evidence demonstrates that the NDE programmes typically lead to increased employment, although there are some gaps. Garba [10] prioritized the development of vocational skills in Kaduna State and found that it positively impacted the employment of youths, but the analysis did not consider the combination of small-scale enterprise support, agricultural employment, special public works and rural employment promotion. Isa [11] focused on acquisition of skills in Taraba State and highlighted the poor resettlement, but omitted the North Central Zone. Medun and Bello [12] examined vocational skills training in Lagos State based on correlation analysis and Yahaya et al. [13] considered vocational skills and small scale enterprise as self employment without zonal regression model. Ugoani [14] had taken into consideration the NDE and graduate employment in Abia State, but this study was not within the present geographical region, and did not use the present dependent variable structure. Omotosho [15] found that there is limited evidence on long-term employment outcomes in the Cross River State, but the variables and the location vary. Bolaji [16] studied agricultural SMEs in South-West Nigeria and thus failed to reflect on the broader North Central NDE programme architecture. The present research addresses these methodological, geographical and conceptual gaps by examining five NDE programme proxies in Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau and FCT as well as by employing multiple linear regressions to identify the statistically significant predictors of the job creation and empowerment.

2.6 Research Model

Fig. 1: Research Model with Independent Variable, Proxies and Dependent Variable.

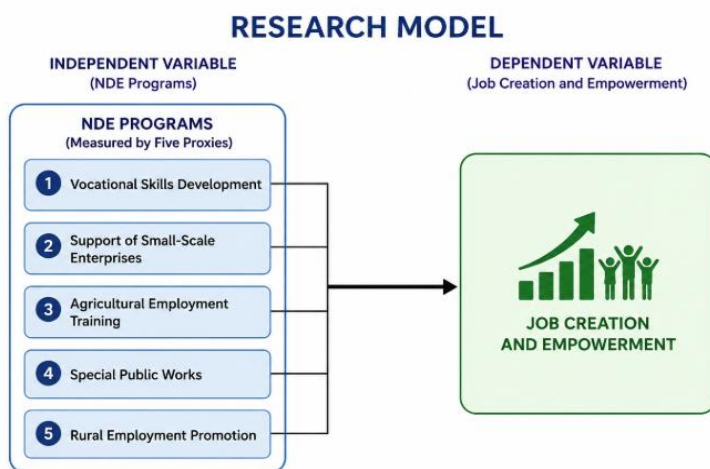


Fig. 1 shows a relationship between the independent variable, NDE programmes, and the dependent variable, which is job creation and empowerment. Five proxies are used to measure the independent variable: vocational skills development, support of small-scale enterprises, agricultural employment training, special public works and rural employment promotion. These proxies are the working plans in which the NDE tries to lower the unemployment and to encourage self-sufficiency. Development of vocational skills will enhance technical skills and employability of the beneficiaries. Small-scale business support will enhance the ability to start businesses and income generation. It is projected that agricultural employment training will be helpful in livelihood creation via farming, participation in agro-processing and value-chain. Special public works should offer work experience and income support on a temporary basis and rural employment promotion should offer rural enterprise opportunities and curb rural poverty. Job creation and empowerment is the dependent variable, which is quantified using employment status, income level, job stability, acquisition of skills, ability to make decisions and economic independence. The model is based on the human capital theory and the mandate of the NDE programmes [1], [6], [18], [19]. Its theoretical forecast is that productivity should be enhanced by investing in training and enterprise assistance, which will empower the beneficiaries economically. The model however acknowledges that there can be weak effects in some of the programmes where the tools, finance, markets and follow-up support is not sufficient.

3.0 Research Methods

The research used a survey research design, which was supplemented by the documentary research design. The survey design was employed since it helped the researcher to get standardized quantitative data of NDE beneficiaries and programme stakeholders throughout the North Central Zone, whereas the documentary design was employed because it allowed the research to refer to NDE documents, NBS labour force reports, policy documents and journal publications. The study population included the NDE beneficiaries, current trainees, NDE programme officers, trainers and selected community enterprise mentors in Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau and the FCT. These groups were pertinent since beneficiaries and trainees offered firsthand experience of Programme outcomes, whereas officers, trainers and mentors, offered information on implementation. The study had an estimated population of operations of 8,640. Out of the entire population of 8640, the sample population was estimated using Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination formula. Using $N=8,640$, $X^2=3.841$, $P=.50$ and $d=.05$, the computed sample size was approximately 367 respondents. Stratified sampling was employed to stratify the population into states and respondent groups and simple random sampling was employed to sample the beneficiaries and purposive sampling to sample the programme officers and trainers. The study data was obtained based on primary sources, such as questionnaire responses and interviews. The secondary data was found in the information of the NDE programme, reports on labour force by the NBS, the Nigerian Youth Employment Action Plan and empirical journal articles [1], [2], [6]. The questionnaire was structured, closed-ended and designed on a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire was supplemented by fifteen semi-structured interviews with programme officers, trainers and representatives of the beneficiaries. The study validity was made up of content and face validity that were established by professionals in the field of public administration and employment policy. Pilot testing was done to ensure reliability and the value of Cronbach alpha of more than 0.70 was regarded as acceptable. The data have been presented in terms of descriptive statistics through frequencies, mean and standard deviation and the data have been analysed through inferential statistics. Multiple linear regressions were done to test the hypotheses at a level of 5 percent significance. SPSS v.27 was used. The model is given as: $JCE = \beta_0 + \beta_1VSD$

+ beta2SSE + beta3AEP + beta4SPW + beta5REP + e. In which JCE = job creation and empowerment; VSD = development of vocational skills; SSE = support of small-scale enterprises; AEP = agricultural employment programme; SPW = special public works; REP = rural employment promotion; beta0 = constant; beta1-beta5 = regression coefficients; and e = error term.

Table 1: Population and Sample Allocation.

Segment	Population	Sample
Beneficiaries/Trainees	7,980	339
NDE Programme Officers	210	9
Trainers/Master Craftsmen	315	13
Enterprise/Rural Mentors	135	6
Total	8,640	367

Source: Field operational frame, 2026.

4.0 Result And Discussion

4.1 Data Presentation

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of Vocational Skills Development

S/N	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1	VSD provided marketable skills for employment.	4.21	0.71	Agreed
2	VSD improved ability to start income-generating work.	4.08	0.78	Agreed
3	VSD increased confidence for self-employment.	4.16	0.69	Agreed

Data from the respondents show mean scores ranging from 4.08 to 4.21 and standard deviations from 0.69 to 0.78, indicating agreement that vocational skills development provided marketable skills, improved self-employment capacity and increased confidence for income-generating work. The low dispersion suggests that respondents shared similar views regarding the employment relevance of VSD.

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis of Small-Scale Enterprise Support

S/N	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1	SSE training improved business planning ability.	4.02	0.82	Agreed
2	SSE support increased access to self-employment ideas.	3.94	0.87	Agreed
3	SSE improved ability to manage small business income.	3.98	0.80	Agreed

Data from the respondents show mean scores between 3.94 and 4.02, with standard deviations between 0.80 and 0.87. This indicates that respondents agreed that small-scale enterprise support improved business planning, self-employment orientation and income management. However, the slightly higher standard deviations suggest variations in beneficiary access to start-up resources.

Table 4: Descriptive Analysis of Agricultural Employment, SPW and REP

S/N	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1	Agricultural employment training improved farming and agro-processing skills.	3.91	0.86	Agreed
2	Special public works created short-term work opportunities.	3.48	1.04	Agreed
3	Rural employment promotion improved rural livelihood awareness.	3.52	1.00	Agreed

Data from the respondents show that agricultural employment training had a mean of 3.91, while special public works and rural employment promotion recorded means of 3.48 and 3.52. The results suggest general agreement that the programmes support livelihood opportunities, but the higher standard deviations for SPW and REP indicate uneven programme reach and beneficiary experience.

4.2 Regression Analysis

Table 5: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	0.781	0.610	0.604	0.412	1.914

The model shows a strong correlation of 0.781 between the predictors and job creation and empowerment. About 61.0 percent of the variance in job creation and empowerment is explained by the model. The adjusted R square of 0.604 confirms a good model fit, while the Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.914 suggests no serious autocorrelation in the residuals.

Table 6: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	88.426	5	17.685	104.218	0.000
Residual	56.322	328	0.172		
Total	144.748	333			

The overall ANOVA model is statistically significant, with regression sum of squares of 88.426, residual sum of squares of 56.322, F-value of 104.218 and significance value of 0.000. This indicates that the combined NDE programme variables significantly predict job creation and empowerment at the 5 percent level of significance.

Table 7: Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	0.612	0.184		3.326	0.001
Vocational Skills Development	0.286	0.052	0.321	5.500	0.000
Small-Scale Enterprise Support	0.241	0.061	0.278	3.951	0.003
Agricultural Employment Programme	0.198	0.074	0.201	2.676	0.012
Special Public Works	0.084	0.058	0.092	1.459	0.145
Rural Employment Promotion	0.067	0.054	0.071	1.233	0.218

The coefficient of the constant is unstandardized (0.612), standardized error is 0.184 with p-value of 0.001. The result of hypothesis one shows that

vocational skills development has an unstandardized coefficient of 0.286, standard error of 0.052, beta of 0.321, t-value of 5.500 and p-value of 0.000. The null hypothesis is rejected since the p-value is less than 0.05. The outcome thus indicated that the relationship between development of vocational skills and creation of jobs and empowerment is significant. The outcome of the hypothesis two indicates that the small-scale enterprise support has $B=0.241$, standard error= 0.061 , $\beta=0.278$, $t=3.951$ and $p=0.003$. The null hypothesis is rejected, which implies that the small-scale enterprise support has significant impact on job creation and empowerment. The outcome of the third hypothesis indicates that agricultural employment programme has $B=0.198$, standard error= 0.074 , $\beta=0.201$, $t=2.676$ and $p=0.012$. The null hypothesis would be rejected, which means that it has a significant positive effect. Hypothesis four result indicates that special public works has $B=0.084$, standard error= 0.058 , $\beta=0.092$, $t=1.459$ and $p=0.145$. The null hypothesis is not rejected since $p>0.05$. The outcome of the fifth hypothesis indicates that employment promotion in rural areas has $B=0.067$, standard error= 0.054 , $\beta=0.071$, $t=1.233$ and $p=0.218$. The null hypothesis is not rejected due to $p>0.05$.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

Discovery of hypothesis one showed that t-value 5.500 and p-value 0.000 are less than the estimated value of 0.05. The outcome is that the development of vocational skills had a substantial contribution to job creation and empowerment. This observation is not only congruent with Garba [10], who discovered that NDE VSD programme helped to generate youth employment opportunities in Kaduna State, but also with Medun and Bello [12], who also discovered that there were significant positive relationships between vocational skills training, employability and job creation in Lagos State. The human capital theory justifies the finding stating that training enhances productivity and employability [18], [19]. Discovery of hypothesis two showed that t-value was 3.951 with p-value 0.003. This means that the economic empowerment of beneficiaries was greatly enhanced by the entrepreneurship training and business support. This finding aligns with the NDE programme requirement [1], enterprise orientation, and self-reliance as highlighted by Yahaya et al. [13]. Hypothesis three finding showed that ag employment programme t-value was 2.676 with p-value 0.012. The outcome validates Bolaji, who associated agricultural training with SME performance [16], and the Nethergale of the Nigerian Youth Employment Action Plan, who found employment in rural and agricultural areas to be a significant tool of job creation [6]. Discovery of hypothesis four showed that special public works t-value was 1.459 and p-value was 0.145 which is not significant. This implies that SPW could provide short-term revenues, although the translation into sustainable empowerment might not be very significant. Discovery of hypothesis five showed that the t-value of rural employment promotion was 1.233 and p-value 0.218, which was not significant as well. This could be an indication of poor funding, access to market and poor after training support in rural areas. Generally, the findings indicate that skills, interventions based on enterprise and agriculture are more effective predictors of sustainable job creation as compared to temporary public works and under-resourced rural promotion activities.

5.0 Conclusion And Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The research concluded that NDE programmes possess great group impact on employment and empowerment within North Central Zone. It also determined that development of vocational skills, small-scale enterprise support and agricultural employment training played a big role in enhancing employment and empowerment results. The research also found out that special public works and rural employment promotion had positive but non-significant impact implying that short term work and rural programs need more robust resettlement, funding and monitoring. Thus, the study objectives were met.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the above findings, the study recommends the following:

- i. NDE should strengthen vocational skills development through industry-linked curricula, modern tools and post-training certification.
- ii. NDE and state governments should expand small-scale enterprise support by providing start-up kits, mentoring and accessible microcredit.
- iii. Agricultural employment training should be linked to value-chain finance, extension support and produce markets.

5.3 Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to knowledge by providing a zonal regression-based assessment of five NDE programme proxies and their effects on job creation and empowerment. It extends existing studies by showing that programme effects are uneven, with VSD, SSE and AEP producing stronger outcomes than SPW and REP in the North Central Zone.

5.4 Practical Implications

The practical implication is that NDE should prioritize programmes with stronger livelihood effects while redesigning weaker components. Programme managers should track beneficiaries after training, connect trainees to markets and ensure that skills acquisition is accompanied by tools, mentoring and start-up support.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

The study encountered the following limitations:

- 1 One limitation was difficulty in accessing complete beneficiary records across all state offices; this was mitigated by using operational lists and respondent verification.
- 2 Another limitation was possible response bias from beneficiaries; this was mitigated through anonymity and neutral questionnaire wording.
- 3 Another limitation was time and cost of covering all states; this was mitigated through stratified sampling and trained field assistants.

5.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues considered for the study included informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity and responsible data use. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study before questionnaire administration. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were free to withdraw without penalty. No respondent was compelled to disclose private information beyond what was required for the study. Names and personal identifiers were not reported in the analysis. Data collected were used strictly for academic purposes. Interview participants were assured that their views would be presented in aggregate form. The study avoided fabrication, falsification and plagiarism by acknowledging all cited sources using IEEE referencing style. The researcher also ensured that vulnerable participants were not exploited and that questions were framed in a non-harmful manner. Permission was sought from relevant programme contacts before data collection, and field assistants were instructed to respect respondents dignity, time and privacy. Electronic data were stored securely, while printed questionnaires were kept away from unauthorized persons. These measures ensured that the study complied with acceptable academic and social research ethics.

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