SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL ONE AND POVERTY REDUCTION IN NIGERIA: THE ROLE OF THE ENUGU STATE GOVERNMENT.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined Sustainable Development Goal One (SDG 1) and poverty reduction in Nigeria, with particular emphasis on the role of the Enugu State Government. Despite several government policies and interventions and global development efforts focused on the welfare of its citizens, poverty continues to be one of the biggest socio-economic problems facing Nigeria. The study examined the poverty reduction programmes of the Enugu State Government according to SDG 1, the impact of the programmes on poverty reduction and the perception of the people about the effectiveness of the implementation. Three objectives, research questions, and hypotheses guided the research of the study. The study used a descriptive survey research design and questionnaires and oral interviews were used to collect the data from the respondents. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 232 respondents which included programme beneficiaries and programme officers. The collected field data was presented and analyzed by descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentage, mean score) and hypotheses formulated were tested using Pearson's correlation coefficient to arrive at the relationship between poverty reduction programmes and poverty reduction outcome in Enugu State. The results of the study indicated the policies of the Enugu State Government under Sustainable Development Goal One (SDG1) are some of the poverty reduction policies, which the government has put in place, these are skills acquisition schemes, empowerment schemes, agricultural support schemes, micro credit, and social welfare schemes. The results also indicated that these programmes had significant positive impacts on poverty reduction, in terms of improved household incomes, employment opportunities, food security and access to basic social services. The study also found that residents' perceptions of the success of government poverty reduction policies are “moderate” in the face of low funding levels, weak implementation mechanisms, corruption and poor monitoring and evaluation systems. The study found that although the Enugu State Government has taken actions to achieve SDG1, there is need for increased commitment, transparency and effective policy implementation for sustainable poverty alleviation. The study proposed adequate funding of poverty reduction programmes, streamline monitoring and evaluation system, involvement of the communities and transparency and accountability in the implementation of the programme to improve the results of poverty reduction in Enugu State.

CHAPTERONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Backgroundof theStudy

Nigeria, despite its huge human and natural resource base, still faces poverty as one of its most intractable socio-economic problems. Since independence, there has been a succession of poverty alleviation strategies focused on reducing poverty and enhancing economic inclusion in order to improve living standards. In the early post-independence development plans agricultural modernization and rural development were the key concerns, while subsequent programmes including the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), the Green Revolution, the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and the like aimed to tackle unemployment, inequality and social deprivation. However, the efforts have fallen short of results, and poverty rates continue to be high, underscoring the underlying structural and governance issues in the Nigerian state (Aguene, 2024).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations in 2015 constitute another milestone in the international and national struggle to eradicate poverty. SDG 1 (end poverty in all its forms everywhere) focuses on eradicating the poorest poverty, increasing social protection, ensuring equal economic opportunities and reducing the vulnerability of disadvantaged groups (United Nations, 2015). Nigeria later incorporated the SDGs into its national development programme at the Federal and State level. This was an evolution from single poverty alleviation programmes to a wider and more concerted approach to development that integrates poverty alleviation and institutional accountability, inclusive governance, and sustainable economic growth (Edokobi, 2024).

Yet, with these pledges, there is still cause for concern about Nigeria's ability to achieve SDG 1 goals by 2030. The high rate of inflation, high unemployment, insecurity, poor infrastructure and reduced purchasing power have negatively impacted the lives of many Nigerians, especially in the rural areas and for vulnerable groups. Poverty in Nigeria is not just about income, it is also about access to various services such as health, education, potable water, housing, etc. (Aniebo & Elekwa, 2024). The federal government has developed programmes like Conditional Cash Transfers (CCT), N-Power and the Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP) but these have been badly implemented and plagued by corruption, insufficient funding and weak monitoring (Onah & Ugwuibe, 2022).

In Nigeria, the federal structure of government places a critical role on the state governments to translate the national policies and global commitments into programmes that are practicable in the local context. This renders the sub-national level of SDG implementation of utmost significance. Like many States in Nigeria, development agenda has been linked to SDG framework and that the State of Enugu has shown commitment to poverty alleviation through youth empowerment programmes, agricultural support programmes, infrastructural development projects and social welfare programmes (Enugu State Government, 2025). However, poverty is still a reality that can be seen in many areas of the state with little jobs, poor infrastructure and reduced economic opportunities in rural areas.

The issue of poverty's persistence in Enugu State has been found to be a problem that goes beyond formulation of policies to governance capacity, policy implementation, coordination and policy accountability. Research in some parts of the state suggests that the challenge of corruption, unemployment, poor political commitment and weak institutions still pose a threat to the effective implementation of poverty reduction initiatives in the state (Adibe, 2023). Likewise, it has been found that good governance has important implications for poverty reduction outcomes, being related to better human capital development, job creation and better service delivery (Anazodo, 2023). This means that attaining SDG 1 in Enugu State will not only require poverty alleviation programmes to exist but must also depend on the efficacy of the administrative structures charged with implementing poverty alleviation programmes.

While poverty reduction programmes, governance challenges, socio-economic development and development among others have been investigated, there has been little focus on SDG 1 implementation in Nigeria and Enugu State through public administration lens. Most studies have been on specific intervention programmes or on the general poverty causes without a critical discussion on the way SDG 1 policies are translated to the state level, coordinated, monitored and implemented. In addition, there is insufficient empirical focus on whether the poverty reduction strategies undertaken by the Enugu State Government are off target and/or do not reflect SDG 1 targets and principles, and whether institutional and administrative barriers to implementation are an issue. This is therefore the need for a concerted study of the role of the Enugu State

Government in the implementation of SDG 1 to the poverty reduction.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

After years of poverty alleviation efforts and international development assistance, poverty continues to be a major developmental problem in Nigeria. Nigeria has large human and natural resources but a large percentage of its population remains to be in a state of multidimensional poverty defined by low income, unemployment, food insecurity, poor health, poor education and limited access to basic social services. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2022) reported a multidimensionally poor population prevalence of 63% among Nigerians, higher in rural areas compared to urban areas. In the same vein, Nigeria has been ranked as one of the countries with the highest number of people in extreme poverty in the world by the World Bank since 2005 (World Bank, 2024). The statistics suggest that the country's poverty alleviation achievements have not been in line with national development goals and global sustainability goals.

To combat the global poverty crisis, the United Nations set the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 and SDG 1 is dedicated to eradicating poverty in all forms and dimensions, in all countries. Nigeria embraced the SDG framework and incorporated them into the national and sub-national development policies. Progress toward SDG 1 has, however, been slow, as SDG progress reports in recent years indicate, with weak institutions, insufficient financing, insecurity, policy inconsistencies and difficulties in implementation all inhibiting progress. (United Nations SDG Report, 2024) This situation poses a question on the effectiveness of governance structures and policy mechanisms put in place to implement Nigeria's poverty reduction programmes.

In the sub-national context, the Government of Enugu State has enacted a few poverty alleviation and empowerment initiatives including youth employment, agriculture, skills training and social welfare. Despite these steps, poverty is prevalent in many rural areas of the state, with the lack of employment, low farm productivity, lack of adequate facilities, and lack of social services to combat poverty.. Data from the National Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) indicate that Enugu State records significant levels of multidimensional poverty, with reports placing the state around the national poverty threshold and showing that many households continue to experience deprivations in health, education, living standards, and access to basic services (NBS, 2022). Recent poverty assessments also estimate multidimensional poverty in Enugu State at over 60% of the population, particularly affecting rural communities (National MPI Report, 2022).

Empirically, most existing studies on poverty reduction in Enugu State and Nigeria have focused largely on the causes of poverty, the impact of specific intervention programmes, or the relationship between governance and development outcomes. Few studies have critically examined the implementation of SDG 1, particularly regarding how state governments operationalize, coordinate, monitor, and evaluate poverty reduction policies. This creates an empirical gap in understanding whether state-level interventions are effectively aligned with SDG 1 targets and whether such programmes are producing measurable and sustainable poverty reduction outcomes. There is also a policy gap because despite Nigeria’s adoption of SDG 1 and the formulation of several poverty alleviation initiatives, implementation at the state level appears inconsistent and poorly coordinated. Existing policies have not adequately addressed multidimensional poverty, especially among vulnerable rural populations. Furthermore, there is a knowledge gap regarding the institutional and administrative factors affecting SDG 1 implementation in Enugu State, as previous studies have paid limited attention to governance processes, implementation challenges, and policy effectiveness within the context of sustainable development targets.

The problem therefore lies in the persistent prevalence of poverty in Enugu State despite multiple interventions and official commitment toward achieving SDG 1. This study is therefore different because it specifically evaluates SDG 1 implementation, focusing on governance structures, policy implementation mechanisms, institutional challenges, and poverty reduction outcomes in Enugu State within the context of the 2030 sustainable development agenda.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to examine Sustainable Development Goal One (SDG 1) and poverty reduction in Nigeria, with particular emphasis on the role of the Enugu State Government.

The specific objectives of the study are:

To evaluate the poverty reduction programmes implemented by the Enugu State Government in line with Sustainable Development Goal One (SDG 1).

To determine the relationship between Enugu State Government poverty reduction programmes and poverty reduction in Enugu State.

To assess residents' perception of the effectiveness of Enugu State Government implementation of Sustainable Development Goal One (SDG 1) related programmes.

1.4 Research Questions

The study formulated the following research questions to guide the study:

What poverty reduction programmes have been implemented by the Enugu State Government in line with Sustainable Development Goal One (SDG 1)?

What is the relationship between Enugu State Government poverty reduction programmes and poverty reduction in Enugu State?

How do residents perceive the effectiveness of Enugu State Government implementation of Sustainable Development Goal One (SDG 1) related programmes?

1.5Statement of theHypotheses

Inline withthe objectivesof the study, the following research hypotheses are formulated:

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between poverty reduction programmes and poverty reduction in Enugu State.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between implementation effectiveness and residents perception of Sustainable Development Goal One (SDG 1) related programmes.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The theoretical and practical perspectives of this study are discussed. Theoretically, the study will help fill gaps in the literature of poverty reduction, sustainable development and public administration, at the sub-national level. It will contribute to filling in knowledge gaps on the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal One and the extent to which such implementation is reflected in poverty reduction results in State Governments of Nigeria. It will also be a locus material for the students and researchers interested in the sustainable development, governance and poverty-related studies.

On a practical note, the study findings will help the policy makers and administrators in Enugu State, to achieve their objectives, as it will give them knowledge of the effectiveness of the existing poverty reduction programmes. It will help government bodies to define which areas need to be improved in programme implementation and policy making. The results could also be useful for development partners and non-governmental organizations in the enterprise and operation of poverty alleviation programs. Finally, the study should aid in making appropriate policy decisions that could improve the poverty reduction efforts and sustainable development in Enugu State and the entire Nigeria.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The study is limited to Enugu State, Nigeria. It is geared towards Sustainable Development Goal One (SDG 1) and poverty eradication emphasizing the responsibility of the Enugu State Government. The study will involve selected respondents namely, the people living in Enugu State which is to be collected using questionnaires. The scope of content addresses poverty reduction programmes, policy implementation and residents' perception of government efforts. The study is limited in time between 2015 and 2024, aligning with the adoption and implementation of the SDGs.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

There are some limitations in the study, which in turn may have limited the scope and depth of the study. A key constraint was the subjectivity of the answer that some of the respondents may have given based on their own experience, their political views or their expectations about the government's programmes of mitigating poverty. This could have an effect on the validity of data collected using questionnaires and interviews.

Limited access to official government records and documents on poverty reduction programmes, implementation reports, funding allocations and programme outputs were another limitation. The analysis of secondary data was limited by the fact that some relevant data were not available, inaccessible or poorly documented. Time constraints was also a problem because the researcher was only given a limited time to undertake extensive research in all the areas of Enugu State. This impacted access to and length of data collection activities. Likewise, the funding constraints restricted transportation and logistics, as well as the size of the sample size, impacting the scope of the study.

A limitation of the study was also the political and security issues. Some respondents were reluctant to provide information due to the sensitivity of issues on government performance and poverty. Further, ease of movement and access to some respondents was hampered by security concerns in some areas during data collection. Notwithstanding the limitations, good attempts were made to ensure the reliability and validity of the study by selecting appropriate respondents, administering research instruments correctly and utilizing appropriate and credible sources of data.

1.9 Operational Definition of Terms

Sustainable Development Goal One (SDG 1): SDG 1 refers to the global development goal aimed at ending poverty in all its forms everywhere, with emphasis on income poverty, social protection and access to basic services.

Poverty Reduction: Poverty reduction in this study refers to measurable improvements in income, employment opportunities, access to social services and livelihood outcomes resulting from Enugu State Government programmes.

Enugu State Government: This refers to the executive, legislative and administrative institutions responsible for governance and policy implementation in Enugu State.

Poverty Reduction Programmes: These are policies, projects and interventions implemented by the Enugu State Government to improve the welfare of citizens and reduce poverty levels.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Sustainable Development Goal One (SDG 1)

The United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015 and the first goal is No Poverty (SDG 1). It seeks to eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions globally by 2030 through economic, social and institutional means. The objective represents a major paradigm shift in the concept of development in comparison with previous initiatives like the Millennium Development Goals, which focused mainly on the reduction of income poverty.

SDG 1 acknowledges that poverty is not just a lack of income, but also a lack of access to basic services like education, healthcare, clean water, sanitation, housing and social protection. It thus encourages actions that tackle short-term deprivation and long-term structural weaknesses. These include strengthening social protection systems, equal access to economic resources, ownership rights and strengthening resilience of vulnerable groups (United Nations, 2015).

Regardless of this comprehensive framework, however, there is no agreement among the scholars as to how poverty reduction should be understood and how it should be achieved under SDG 1. The dominant view, which is fundamentally from the neoclassical economic tradition, is that the most fruitful way to reduce poverty is through sustained economic growth. In contrast, supporters like Todaro and Smith (2015) argue that as economies expand, there is a corresponding rise in employment, and incomes gradually follow, and poverty naturally falls. In this sense, the main policy priority should be macro-economic stability, investment promotion and creation of jobs.

The growth-driven approach, however, has been much criticized for not offering a solution to the ongoing inequalities and structural deprivation in the developing world. Experience in Nigeria and other developing nations indicates that economic progress does not necessarily lead to significant increases in poverty reduction. This has given way to alternative approaches that have gained momentum, such as the approach to capability promoted by Sen (1999) and implemented by Alkire and Foster (2011). These scholars believe that a person's state of poverty should be defined by not having capabilities, not just a low income. From this perspective, people can have a job but be poor because they don't have the education, health, political or other freedoms needed to develop human beings.

The conflict between these two views poses an important policy question for SDG 1 implementation: how many dimensions can the design of interventions support, and which developing countries are sticking to interventions based on income? This leads to a gap between the policy intentions and reality of national implementation. It also illuminates why poverty continues to be a problem even in the face of several intervention programmes.

In addition, while SDG 1 has specific targets, including eliminating extreme poverty, reducing national poverty rates, establishing social protection systems and ensuring equal access to economic resources, achieving these targets relies heavily on institutional capacity and governance effectiveness. Research indicates that in developing countries, weak institutions, corruption, lack of funding, and co-ordination systems have all significant negative effects on the effectiveness of poverty reduction policies (World Bank, 2022). This means that SDG 1 is not just a technical development programme, but a governance-driven programme.

SDG 1 is incorporated into national development plans and is a component of the political processes that govern national and federal policy formulation in Nigeria. But poverty's harsh multi-faceted reality persists. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2022), reported that a considerable percentage of Nigerians is multidimensionally poor, with rural residents more affected than their urban counterparts. These deprivations are manifested in the lack of access to health care services, low educational results, poor housing conditions, and the lack of infrastructure, such as electricity and clean water.

A number of poverty reduction programmes, in line with SDG 1, have been introduced, such as social investment programmes and empowerment programmes, but progress is slow and uneven across regions. This does not mean that the problem is lack of policy frameworks; it means it is the effectiveness of the implementation structures at various levels of government. It also underscores the role of sub-national governments, including states, to implement SDG commitments into action, and in a context specific manner.

2.1.2 Concept of Poverty

Poverty is a multidimensional and complex concept that has come to have a wider meaning than it did in the past, from a narrow income-based definition to a wider understanding including deprivation of capabilities, opportunities and social inclusion. Poverty has traditionally been conceived primarily in economic terms as the failure of an individual or a family/household to achieve a minimum standard of living based on income or consumption. This traditional perspective often has been linked to the early development economists like Todaro and Smith (2015) which held that poverty can be solved mostly through economic growth and income re-distribution.

This definition has been criticized, however, for failing to adequately reflect the nature of deprivation for individual people, especially in developing countries, which is more about the lack of something rather than the presence of something. Income is not a measure of people's access to basic services, including education, health care, housing, sanitation, and political participation, critics say. In consequence, a multi-dimensional poverty approach was developed by some scholars, including Sen (1999) and Alkire and Foster (2011), which takes a conceptual view of poverty as a lack of certain basic capabilities to live the life people value.

There is a sense that poverty is not just an absence of income, it is also an absence of choices and ability to enjoy well-being. A family can be earning income over a poverty line, but still be poor if they do not have access to good health care, good education, or safe drinking water, for instance. This new insight has had a profound impact on development policy globally, such as the design of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the SDG 1 being the most affected.

Although there has been a theoretical development toward multidimensionality, there is still an enduring debate among academics about measurement and policy use. The capability approach gives a more complete picture of poverty, but is also problematic because it is hard to operationalize because it uses non-monetary indicators. However, income-based methods can be more easily measured and compared and may overlook the multidimensionality of poverty. This tension has led to the lack of clarity in the definition and action-to-poverty relationship in various countries' policy practices.

Poverty is a recurring and ingrained issue in developing nations like Nigeria. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2022) reported that large number of the population is living in multidimensional poverty, especially in the rural areas where infrastructure and social services are limited. These are the deprivations that occur due to lack of health facilities, lack of education, lack of jobs, poor housing conditions and lack of electricity and clean water. This highlights the fact that poverty in Nigeria is not just about lack of income, but also about structural inequalities.

As more, poverty in Nigeria is not evenly distributed, that is, rural people are more affected than the urban. This inequality is associated with rural poverty, low industrialization, reliance on subsistence agriculture, and low government presence in rural areas. Besides, poverty is exacerbated by other factors like corruption, unemployment, inflation and insecurity, which constrict the economic opportunities and reduce the resilience of households.

In addition, scholars stress the connection between poverty and vulnerability and exclusion. Vulnerability is the risk of becoming poor as a result of a shock like an illness, unemployment, inflation or an environmental disaster, or a combination of these. Exclusion, on the other hand, is when a specific group of people is not able to fully engage in the economic, social and political life. Vulnerable groups like women, youth and people in rural areas are more affected in Nigeria because of structural disadvantage and unequal access to opportunities.

Inter-generational poverty is another important aspect of poverty. Research indicates that poverty is trans-generational, partly as a consequence of a lack of education, nutrition and social capital. Those who grow up in low-income families stand a higher chance of staying that way through adulthood, thus continuing the cycle of low income. This underscores the need for specific support measures including education support, social protection programmes, empowerment activities and strategies to break the poverty cycle.

2.1.3 Concept of Poverty Reduction

Poverty reduction is an intentional policy, strategy, and institutional process to raise the living standards of individuals and families by lowering their level of deprivation in income, service coverage, and human development outcomes. In most traditional approaches to poverty reduction, the focus is primarily on economic growth and income growth, and it was assumed that growth in a country's wealth would automatically lead to better welfare for the poor (Todaro & Smith, 2015).

But this growth-based presumption is revisited in the development literature. Many empirical studies in a number of developing nations, including Nigeria, reveal that economic growth does not always lead to poverty reduction unless it is inclusive and supported by redistributive and social welfare policies. This has necessitated the movement towards more multidimensional and targeted poverty reduction strategies, which include income support, social protection, and human capital development (Ravallion, 2016).

Current poverty reduction strategies therefore focus on a mix of strategies instead of one single strategy. They involve community-driven development, human capital investment, empowerment programmes and social protection programmes. Social protection includes government interventions, including cash transfers, unemployment benefits, health insurance and food support systems, which help vulnerable groups to withstand economic shocks (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2017). The interventions are especially critical in situations where markets fail to ensure equal access to basic needs.

Empowerment-based approaches, however, move away from increasing the productive potential of individuals by raising their capabilities and potential through education and vocational training and by providing them with credit facilities. The capability approach (Sen, 1999) goes beyond income to building the capability of the poor to enjoy a meaningful and productive life. This implies that poverty reduction should be more than merely short-term relief, it requires long-term capacity building and structural transformation.

While these theoretical progressions have been made, there is considerable controversy in the literature about what is meant by effective poverty reduction. Some academics believe that direct financial supports like cash transfers bring immediate welfare gains, others believe that these direct financial interventions are not sustainable without institutional change, job creation and economic restructuring. One of the main weaknesses of a lot of poverty reduction initiatives is that they concentrate on alleviating poverty rather than changing the status quo.

Poverty reduction in Nigeria is achieved through both federal and state level poverty reduction initiatives, especially under the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) which contain schemes like Conditional Cash Transfers, N-Power, and Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP). These programmes focus on various aspects of poverty, such as joblessness, income poverty, and reduced access to financial resources (Aguene, 2024).

But research indicates that the impact of these programmes is rather inconsistent. Some beneficiaries report better accomplishments in terms of income, procurement of basic needs while others show more favourable assessments of the impact of structural problems, including poor targeting, weak institutional capacity, corruption and inadequate funding, in the long term (Olorunfemi & Egwuma, 2024). This implies the success of poverty reduction programmes is related to the design of the programme, as well as the quality of programme implementation or governance systems in place.

One of the other key aspects of poverty reduction is community involvement. The literature on development has increasingly recognised that a bottom-up approach with beneficiaries involved in the planning, implementation and monitoring is more effective than a top-down approach (Chambers, 2006). Community-based solutions increase accountability, local ownership and better match interventions to the real needs of the poor.

However, participatory poverty reduction strategies are not well implemented in Nigeria. There is widespread central design of programmes, with little community involvement causing targeting errors and reduced effectiveness. This is a trend in the Nigerian public sector, where, in many instances, weak decentralization coupled with inefficient bureaucracy makes effective service delivery difficult. The issue of poverty reduction is also closely related with human capital development. Education, healthcare and skill development is considered a key strategy to lift people out of poverty. If human capital development is not given due importance, the poverty alleviation works are bound to have short term effect which is not sustainable. This is especially true in rural areas of Nigeria where access to better education and health care still remains a bottle neck in achieving long-term development.

2.1.4 Role of Government in Poverty Reduction

Governments have the authority, fiscal power, and institutional framework to develop and execute policies that seek to alleviate poverty so they play a key role in poverty reduction theory. In classical development economics, the role of governments is to address market failures, to deliver public goods and to achieve equitable distribution of resources so as to enhance welfare (Todaro & Smith, 2015). Yet, contemporary development thinking highlights the importance of institutional quality and implementation capacity, as well as the quality of the policy design, when it comes to the effectiveness of government interventions.

Theoretically, poverty is seen as the absence of basic capabilities, not income, in the capability approach advocated by Sen. Governments are thus expected to enhance the freedom of people by investing in education, health and social protection systems (Sen, 1999). This is echoed by the arguments of Alkire and Foster (2011), who highlight the importance of multidimensional poverty measurement, which means that governments must focus on non-income deprivations.

New evidence from around the world confirms the significance of governance quality for poverty reduction. Even with the implementation of several poverty reduction and social protection programmes in many developing countries, World Bank (2024) suggests that poverty reduction is yet to be significant because of the problems of weak institutions, macroeconomic instability, and inefficiencies in public service delivery. This implies that with good governance systems, there must be government action, but it is not enough.

In Nigeria, poverty reduction policies are adopted at the Federal and State levels, such as social investment programmes, conditional cash transfers and empowerment programmes. But it is proven that despite all these initiatives, poverty rates have stayed high. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2022), multidimensional poverty is prevalent among Nigerians, especially in rural areas where they are deprived of access to basic services.

Governance quality is a key determinant of the effectiveness of the government in reducing poverty. Governance is a concept that involves transparency, accountability, efficiency and rule of law in public administrations. Inadequate governance mechanisms can lead to corruption, improper identification of beneficiaries, and inefficiency in resource allocation, thereby lowering the effectiveness of programmes (World Bank, 2024). Thus, poverty reduction programs designed well may not be effective in helping to reduce poverty.

Adequacy of funding is also a key factor that affects government performance. Although poverty reduction programmes need persistent investment of financial resources, in many developing countries, including Nigeria, political decision makers have competing government priorities that limit the size and continuity of poverty reduction interventions. Research indicates that if poverty alleviation programmes are not adequately funded, they may be restricted in terms of coverage and sustainability (UNDP, 2023).

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems are also important in judging the effectiveness of government action. Effective M&E provides for accountability, better targeting and evidence of policy adjustment. In many developing countries, however, monitoring capabilities are limited and make it difficult to have a clear picture of the programme impacts, which also lead to inefficiencies in programme implementation (World Bank, 2024).

Capacity of institutions is also important. It is the capacity of government institutions to be able to develop, coordinate and execute policies efficiently. Inadequate institutional capacity can lead to delays in the bureaucracy, inter-agency coordination issues, and inefficient service delivery. On the other hand, good institutions help to boost efficiency and increase the sustainability of poverty reduction programmes (UNDP, 2023).

Decentralization also influences the outcomes of poverty reduction in Nigeria. State governments, which are more geographically close to the population and are more likely to be able to implement locally appropriate interventions, are often less able to do so due to fiscal constraints from reliance on the federal government and institutional capacity of the states. This adds to the inequities in poverty reduction results across regions.

2.1.5 Poverty Reduction Programmes in Nigeria

Poverty reduction programmes are planned actions that are taken by the government and development partners to reduce poverty, improve human capabilities and sustainable livelihoods. The high rates of poverty, inequality and social exclusion in Nigeria have led to the formulation and execution of programmes by successive governments that aim at vulnerable groups. The interventions are informed by the fact that poverty is multidimensional and multiple interventions are needed to overcome poverty, including income support, social protection, empowerment and capacity building (World Bank, 2022; UNDP, 2019).

Over the years, poverty reduction policies have gone through several stages in Nigeria. The government's primary focus in post-independence era was economic growth and industrialisation as the primary means of poverty alleviation. Emphasis was placed on development plans in order to create jobs and boost income through infrastructure, industrial projects and urban development (Todaro & Smith, 2015). But these growth-oriented strategies were often not targeted towards rural poverty, regional disparities and social inequities, thus showcasing the shortcomings of economic approaches.

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed the implementation of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) under the auspices of the international financial institutions (IFIs) aimed at stabilising the Nigerian economy through liberalisation, privatisation and fiscal austerity (Aguene, 2024). Though these were intended to boost the economy and eliminate macroeconomic imbalances, they often increased poverty among vulnerable groups through poverty reduction in social spending, job loss, and rising cost of living (Okonkwo, 2018). These experiences highlighted the need for targeted poverty reduction programmes that take into account the specific needs of the marginalised groups, and not merely on trickle-down economic growth.

The current paradigm of poverty reduction policy in Nigeria is the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) which was instituted by the Nigeria federal government in 2016. The NSIP incorporates several elements that tackle various facets of poverty such as Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT), N-Power, Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP), and the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP) (Aguene, 2024; UNDP, 2019).

The Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programme is a direct cash transfer to the poorest, based on the enrolment of children in school and adherence to basic health measures. The focus of this intervention is on short-term income poverty alleviation and on human capital formation through education and health (World Bank, 2022). Research in Nigeria has been conducted to understand the impact of the CCT intervention, which has been found to positively effect school attendance, household nutrition and short-term income vulnerability (Gentilini et al., 2020).

The N-Power programme centers on creating opportunities for acquiring various skills, training, and offer temporary employment for young people who are not engaged in gainful activities and do not have formal education. In terms of its concept, N-Power is similar to the capability approach, which strengthens a person's ability to engage in the economy in an effective and meaningful way and boosts future employability (Alkire et al., 2020). N-Power has provided employment opportunities for thousands of young people, yet there have been various issues like low participation, temporary contracts, and sustainability concerns (Olorunfemi & Egwuma, 2024).

The Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP) focuses on micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and offers loans at low rates and financial assistance to the entrepreneurs, especially women and marginalised sections of the society. Access to credit plays a pivotal role in poverty alleviation as it helps household members and small businesses earn sustainable income, diversify livelihoods, and diminish market shocks' impacts (UNDP, 2019). GEEP is especially important in alleviating structural poverty by providing communities with the ability to develop local economic opportunities and resilience.

The National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP) is a programme that aims to tackle poverty and human development by supplying school children with their meals on a daily basis. The programme not only helps to address immediate food needs, but it also enhances school attendance, educational performance and nutritional outcomes, demonstrating the multi-faceted nature of poverty alleviation (World Bank, 2022). Such interventions acknowledge education and nutrition as key components of the process of building capacities and of longer term poverty reduction.

State governments in Nigeria had also put in place poverty reduction programmes with specific contextual approach to complement the national poverty reduction programmes. For example, empowerment programs for the rural communities, women and youth have been introduced in Enugu State. The thrust of these programmes is on skills acquisition, agricultural support, microcredit provision and livelihood diversification (Enugu State Government, 2025). State-level interventions are important because poverty exists in different ways in different places and state governments are more likely to know what is needed to address these needs.

Nigeria has been plagued by implementation problems of poverty reduction programmes which are well documented. Some of the challenges identified are poor funding, limited capacity of institutions, corruption, poor targeting, and lack of coordination between institutions (Aguene, 2024; Olorunfemi & Egwuma, 2024). Such restrictions tend to lessen the impact of programmes and their effectiveness in alleviating poverty. For instance, the identification errors can exclude some beneficiaries, and lack of monitoring and supervision can lead to misuse of resources by beneficiaries. Good governance, transparency, participative decision making, and evidence-based policy design are needed to tackle these challenges.

2.2 Empirical Review

Different empirical studies have focused on the effect of poverty reduction programmes and government interventions in Nigeria and other developing countries. Aguene (2024) used a mixed method design that included Household Surveys and Key Informant Interviews as part of a study on the effect of the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) on Household Welfare. The results showed that conditional cash transfers and empowerment programmes had a significant positive impact on the income, food security and access to basic services of beneficiaries. The study, however, identified the problems of targeting and administrative capacity, indicating that the effectiveness of the programme is reliant on correct identification of vulnerable groups and efficient implementation mechanisms.

Okonkwo (2018) examined the impact of Structural Adjustment programmes on poverty alleviation in Nigeria over the years. The study, based on secondary data from national surveys and economic indicators over 20 years, showed that although liberalization and privatization policies have helped boost economic growth, their effect on reducing poverty for the poor and disadvantaged population, especially in rural areas, has been weak. The study findings highlighted the importance of complementary social intervention and targeted programmes to overcome the structural poverty, which means that economic growth is not enough for sustainable poverty alleviation.

Olorunfemi and Egwuma (2024) examined the poverty reduction programmes in Enugu State with emphasis on the skills acquisition and microcredit programmes. Pre- and post-tests were used for the study, which followed a quasi-experimental design, and involved 450 beneficiaries. The results showed that incomes of the participants increased, their livelihoods were improved, and they became self-reliant. The study found that localized and context specific interventions have a higher impact in combating poverty, making the role of the state government key to complement the efforts of the Federal government in combating poverty.

A comparative study by Aryeetey et al (2020) in Ghana evaluated the effect of the cash transfer programmes on poverty alleviation and human development outcomes. The study, which utilized panel data from more than 1200 households, revealed that conditional cash transfers had an important impact on school attendance, child nutrition and household expenditure patterns. The findings highlight the multi-dimensionality of poverty and the need for government backed social protection programmes to tackle both income and non-income aspects of poverty, and offer lessons to be learnt for Nigeria's social protection efforts.

Likewise, in Kenya, Kibet and Nanaya (2018) investigated the impact of government cash transfer and empowerment programmes on rural poverty. The study used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods: Household surveys and focus group discussions and resulted in benefits identified by beneficiaries with regards to better access to education, healthcare, and income generating opportunities. The study, however, also identified a set of obstacles to progress including the lack of timely payments, communication problems and weak monitoring, pointing to the fact that the design and implementation quality of programmes are key factors in their success.

Eze and Okafor (2020) used a mixed methods design with survey questionnaires completed by 600 households and interviews with programme coordinators in a study of the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP) in Nigeria. The research found that school feeding programmes had a positive impact on children's nutritional status, attendance to school and some income constraints faced by households, which in turn, helped to reduce poverty. Challenges were noted however, including inconsistent funding; logistic inefficiencies; and programme sustainability and monitoring.

Agu and Nwosu (2021) investigated the role of microfinance projects as implemented by the Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP) in the reduction of poverty in the south east region of Nigeria. With the assistance of 400 beneficiaries, the study employed a quasi-experimental design to demonstrate that access to low interest loans had a significant impact on the performance of small businesses, household income and self-employment. However, the research found that sometimes the effects of the programmes were not felt due to a lack of financial knowledge among the beneficiaries and in some cases due to ineffective programme supervision, suggesting that financial support should be complemented by capacity building.

Gentilini et al. (2020) conducted a cross-country analysis of social protection programmes in sub-Saharan Africa, such as cash transfer, employment and food assistance programmes. The study found that well-designed social protection policies increased the wellbeing of households, their educational outcomes, and nutritional status in Nigeria, Ghana, and Kenya using panel data from the three countries. The results highlighted the complexity of poverty and the imperative to designate more than one policy tool by the government to tackle all three aspects of poverty at once: income, human capital and social vulnerability.

Chukwu and Eze (2019) studied the contribution of the Enugu State government towards poverty alleviation in rural communities using agriculture empowerment programmes. The study employed a mixed method that involved both surveys and focus group discussions with 350 farmers and found that the provision of inputs, training and market linkages positively affected productivity and household incomes. But insufficient distribution of resources and access to extension services hampered the full potential of the programmes, demonstrating the importance of good administration and timely delivery for the potential of achieving poverty reduction outcomes.

Abdullahi and Bello (2020) used a mixed methods approach in a study that evaluated Conditional Cash Transfer schemes in northern Nigeria, involving a survey of 500 beneficiary households. The study revealed that cash transfer programs boosted the consumption levels of households, particularly their food, education, and health expenses, which ultimately led to positive welfare gains and a decrease in household poverty. But their long-term effectiveness was held back by administrative difficulties – including poor targeting, irregular payment and a lack of monitoring. The study emphasized the importance of effective governance and accountability mechanisms to effectively translate poverty reduction programmes into action.

Nnamdi and Okeke (2021) examined the effect of Youth empowerment programs under the N-Power program in the South-East of Nigeria. This study used surveys and in-depth interviews of 400 youth. Results showed that skill training, temporary employment and entrepreneurial support led to an improvement in the income level of the participants, in their self-reliance and in their independence from family support. The study pointed out, however, that the short-term nature of the programmes, and the limited support the beneficiaries are getting after training, have reduced the sustainability of poverty alleviation effects, thus necessitating long-term planning and follow-up mechanisms.

Ojo and Adebayo (2020) evaluated the effectiveness of community driven development programmes in Lagos State as a means of alleviating urban poverty. The study, which employed a mixed-methods approach with 500 households, showed that local-level initiatives, such as microcredit, vocational training and community infrastructure development, had a positive impact on household welfare and social cohesion. The study highlighted the need for participatory governance, which means engaging beneficiaries in planning and implementation, as a key element to make programmes more effective and sustainable.

Mensah et al. (2019) drew comparisons between conditional cash transfers and public works programmes in Nigeria and Ghana in a comparative study of social protection schemes in West Africa. The study has found that these programmes led to marked decreases in income poverty and better access to health and education using longitudinal household survey data. The research highlighted the importance of targeting, monitoring and transparency for the delivery of government poverty reduction interventions to their target groups and for the effectiveness of their impact.

Okeke and Chukwuma (2022) studied the impact of State Government interventions on poverty alleviation in rural areas of Enugu State. The study was conducted with a blend of household surveys and focus group discussions with 450 people and identified improved income generation and food security as a result of agricultural inputs, small business grants and training programmes. However, there were policy delays, lack of funding and follow-up, which meant that the impact was limited in the long term. The study found that good poverty reduction policies must be well resourced and well administered.

The study by Adeyemi and Oladipo (2020) examined the impacts of conditional cash transfer and empowerment programmes on the welfare of the household in the southwest of Nigeria. Using a quasi-experimental design with 600 households, the study revealed an improvement in beneficiaries' food security, education and household income. The research highlighted the importance of complementing cash transfers with capacity-building and community support to ensure sustainable poverty alleviation. In addition, the study highlighted the importance of strong monitoring and evaluation systems to prevent leakages and hold accountable.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the theoretical background of Capability Approach, this approach gives a wide range of vision for analyzing poverty and the role of the government in human development. The Capability Approach developed by Amartya Sen (1999) focuses on the lack of basic capabilities, such as education, health care and a well-functioning society, not only on the lack of income. The present study is relevant to this theory, which emphasizes the multilevel aspects of poverty and the role of the state in providing conditions that increase the freedom and choice of citizens.

2.3.1 Capability Approach

The Capability Approach is influenced by a number of concepts that guide the study of poverty reduction programmes:

Functionings: The different activities and states of being that a person can have, such as being healthy, well-educated and socially included. From a poverty reduction perspective, functionings are a concrete indicator of human well-being, and are separate from income. For instance, the conditional cash transfer programmes and skill acquisition programmes of the government in Enugu State are designed to improve certain functionings by increasing household income, access to education and livelihood opportunities (Sen, 1999; Alkire et al., 2020).

Capabilities: Capabilities are the actual freedoms or opportunities people have to attain functionings. Two families can earn the same income, but have different "capacities" because of different access to services, social infrastructure, and community support. The Capability Approach goes beyond the resources available to measure poverty reduction, and focuses on whether people are truly capable of turning those resources into something that matters to them. For example, an empowerment programme that offers financial support may not boost the beneficiaries' ability if they lack the necessary training, markets, or healthcare (Alkire & Foster, 2011).

Agency: Agency is the capacity to engage in behaviors that are important to them and to make choices that have meaning for them. The concept of agency is particularly relevant in poverty reduction studies with regard to the role of participatory governance and empowerment. Citizens' agency is strengthened through programmes, such as community-driven development, microcredit schemes and participative budgeting, that give citizens a voice in shaping their economic and social environment rather than merely receiving assistance (UNDP, 2019).

Equity and Justice: The Capability Approach also emphasizes the importance of fairness and equitable provision of opportunities. Policies and programmes which do not take into account regional disparities, gender inequalities, and social exclusion, may result in exclusion or marginalisation of vulnerable groups. For instance, research conducted in Enugu State has revealed that women and rural households are less equipped to reap poverty reduction benefits from interventions unless they are targeted to them (Eze and Okafor, 2020; Olorunfemi and Egwuma, 2024).

By using the Capability Approach in this study the process and outcomes of the study could be evaluated. It helps to determine the effectiveness of the capability building measures (including skill acquisition, cash transfer, agricultural support measures etc) implemented by the Enugu State government in reducing poverty sustainably, equitably and effectively. Moreover, the approach recognizes the interconnection between multiple dimensions of poverty—income, education, health, and empowerment—highlighting the importance of holistic and integrated policy interventions (Sen, 1999; Alkire et al., 2020).

By grounding the study in the Capability Approach, the research emphasizes that poverty reduction in Enugu State must go beyond financial assistance to consider the broader freedoms and opportunities of citizens. The framework allows the study to examine:

Whether government programmes improve citizens’ functionings and capabilities.

How interventions enhance individual agency and decision-making in economic and social activities.

The degree to which programmes promote equitable access to resources, particularly among marginalized populations such as women, rural households, and youths.

Furthermore, the Capability Approach provides a basis for linking empirical observations with theoretical insights. For instance, programmes like the Conditional Cash Transfer or skill acquisition initiatives can be evaluated in terms of their tangible outcomes (improved income, school attendance, or employment) as well as their broader impact on individual freedoms, empowerment, and social inclusion (Gentilini et al., 2020; Okonkwo, 2018).

2.4 Summary of Review of Related Literature

Table 2.1 provides a summary of empirical studies that have examined poverty reduction interventions, social protection programmes, and government-led initiatives in Nigeria and comparable contexts.

Table 2.1

2.5 Gaps in Literature

Despite the extensive research on poverty reduction, several gaps remain, particularly in the Nigerian context and with regard to Enugu State. First, while numerous studies evaluate federal programmes such as NSIP, N-Power, and GEEP, there is limited research specifically focusing on the effectiveness of state-led poverty reduction initiatives in Enugu State. Localized challenges, socio-economic conditions, and institutional capacities may influence the outcomes of interventions differently from national programmes. Second, much of the existing literature emphasizes income-based poverty measures, with less attention to multidimensional aspects of poverty such as education, health, empowerment, and social inclusion. The Capability Approach highlights these dimensions, suggesting the need for studies that assess both material and non-material outcomes of poverty reduction programmes. Finally, although some studies provide general insights into programme challenges such as targeting errors, delayed payments, and administrative inefficiencies they rarely explore how these implementation gaps affect the sustained capabilities of beneficiaries. This study aims to fill these gaps by providing a detailed, context-specific assessment of Enugu State government poverty reduction initiatives, examining both outcomes and processes, and offering recommendations to enhance effectiveness and sustainability.

CHAPTERTHREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1ResearchDesign

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which is appropriate for examining the effectiveness of poverty reduction initiatives and the role of Enugu State government in implementing SDG 1. This design allows the researcher to collect data on current conditions, perceptions, and experiences of programme beneficiaries and stakeholders through structured questionnaires and interviews. It is suitable for social science research as it enables both quantitative and qualitative insights while maintaining methodological rigor (Babbie, 2016).

3.2Area of theStudy

The research was conducted in Enugu State, Nigeria, focusing on selected local government areas where state-led poverty reduction programmes are implemented. These include skills acquisition programmes, microcredit schemes, social welfare initiatives, and other interventions aimed at reducing poverty. Enugu State was selected due to its active role in implementing poverty alleviation programmes and availability of data on beneficiaries and administrative structures.

3.3Population of theStudy

The target population consists of households and individuals benefiting from Enugu State government poverty reduction programmes, as well as programme administrators and field officers. The population includes rural and urban households across selected local government areas. A total population of approximately 500 beneficiaries and 50 programme officers was identified for this study. This figure is based on aggregated enrolment and administrative records obtained from the Enugu State Ministry of Human Development and Poverty Eradication (2025) and the Enugu State Social Investment Programme coordination unit, which maintains beneficiary registers and implementation data for state-level poverty reduction interventions.

3.4 Sample Size

The sample size for the study is 232. The researcher applied Taro Yamane formula

The formula is

n =

Where:

n is the sample size

N is the population size

e is the desired level of precision (margin of error) - this is usually represented as a decimal (e.g., 0.05 for a 5% margin of error)

n=

n=

n=

n=

3.5 Sampling Techniques

The study employed a stratified random sampling technique. The population was divided into two strata: programme beneficiaries (N = 500) and programme officers (N = 50). Proportional allocation ensured that both groups were adequately represented:

Beneficiaries: 500 ÷ 550 ≈ 0.909 → 0.909 × 232 ≈ 211 respondents

Programme officers: 50 ÷ 550 ≈ 0.091 → 0.091 × 232 ≈ 21 respondents

This approach ensures that findings reflect both the experiences of beneficiaries and insights from administrators.

3.6 Sources of Data

Data were collected from primary and secondary sources.

3.6.1 Primary Sources

Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires administered to beneficiaries and programme officers. Oral interviews with selected beneficiaries and officers provided qualitative insights into programme implementation, challenges, and impacts on household welfare.

3.6.2 Secondary Sources

Secondary data were obtained from government reports, policy documents, academic journals, books, and reputable online sources, providing contextual background and supporting triangulation of findings.

3.7 Instrument for Data Collection

The main instrument was a structured questionnaire designed to capture information on poverty levels, access to social protection programmes, programme effectiveness, and perceived impact on household welfare. Oral interviews supplemented the questionnaire, providing qualitative context and validation. Instruments were reviewed by experts in public administration and development studies to ensure clarity and alignment with the research objectives.

3.8 Method of Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequencies, percentages, and mean scores were used to summarize beneficiary demographics and programme participation. Pearson's correlation coefficient was employed to test hypotheses and examine relationships between programme participation and poverty reduction outcomes. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 21, and hypotheses were tested at a 5% level of significance with a 95% confidence interval.

3.9 Reliability of the Instrument

A pilot study was conducted with 20 beneficiaries outside the main study area. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a value of 0.782, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

3.10 Validity of the Instrument

Validity was ensured through face and content validity. Experts in public administration, social policy, and development studies reviewed the questionnaire to confirm that it accurately captured information on poverty reduction programmes and outcomes. Adjustments were made to eliminate ambiguities and ensure alignment with the study objectives (Eze & Agbo, 2005).

CHAPTERFOUR

DATAPRESENTATION, ANALYSIS ANDINTERPRETATION

4.1Introduction

This section shows the interpretationand analysisof the data obtained from the respondents on SDG1 and poverty reduction in Enugu State, with a particular focus on the Enugu State Government. Analysis was done on the responses received from the selected respondents in the structured questioner which has been distributed to them. Of the 232 questionnaires distributed, 220 have been returned, with 12 questionnaires not returned or returned but not completed properly and were not included in the analysis. This equates to a 94.8% response rate which is deemed acceptable for analysis of the data and for meaningful interpretation of the results. The data were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages and mean scores to answer the research questions and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the hypotheses formulated for the study at 0.05 level of significance. Results are presented in accordance to the aim of the study. The chapter starts by examining the demographic characteristics that the respondents have, followed by the analysis of the research questions, testing of the hypothesis, and conclusion discussion.

4.2 Questionnaire Distribution and Retrieval Rate

Table 4.1 presents the distribution and retrieval of the questionnaire administered to the respondents.

Table 4.1: Questionnaire Distribution and Retrieval Rate

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Interpretation

Table 4.1 shows that a total of 232 questionnaires were administered to the respondents. Of these 220 questionnaires (94.8%) were successfully retrieved and were appropriate for analysis, 12 questionnaires (5.2%) were not retrieved or were not completed properly. High response rate of 94.8% ensures that the respondents were actively involved in the study, which allowed for the collection of sufficient data to conduct meaningful analyses and interpretations.

4.3 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This section gives an overview of the socio-demographic attributes of the respondents such as gender, age, educational qualification, occupation, local government area of residence and involvement in Enugu State Government poverty eradication programmes.

4.3.1Distributionof Respondents byGender

Table 4.2:Distribution ofRespondents byGender

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Interpretation

The table 4.2 shows that 118 respondents were male (53.6%) and 102 respondents were female (46.4%). The gender distribution shows that there is a good representation of both males and females in this study. This balanced representation helps reduce gender bias and increases the credibility of the answers on poverty reduction programmes.

4.3.2 Distribution of Respondents by Age

Table 4.3: Distribution of Respondents by Age

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Interpretation

Table 4.3 shows that the majority of the respondents (76, 34.5%) were between 28 and 37 years, and 59, 26.8% were in the 38-47 year age group. The age group of 18–27 years old represented 17.3% and 14.1% of the respondents were in the age group of 48 to 57 years. 7.3% of the respondents were aged 58 years and above. The age distribution indicates that there were many people within the economically active age range, hence likely to have the relevant knowledge of the Government poverty reduction programmes.

4.3.3 Distribution of Respondents by Educational Qualification

Table 4.4: Educational Qualification of Respondents

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Interpretation

From table 4.4, it can be seen that the highest proportion of the respondents was those with Bachelor's Degree/HND (71, 32.3%), followed by the Secondary School Certificate holders (26.4%) and the OND/NCE holders (22.3%). Respondents that held Primary School Certificate and Postgraduate Degree made up 9.5% each. Based on the educational profile, it is suggested that the vast majority of the respondents had educational qualifications which would enable them to understand the questionnaire sufficiently.

4.3.4 Distribution of Respondents by Occupation

Table 4.5: Occupation of Respondents

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Interpretation

The table 4.5 shows that Traders and Business Owners accounted for the highest proportion (61, 27.7%), while Civil Servants accounted for the lowest proportion (21.4%). 17.7% of the farmers and 16.8% of the respondents were unemployed. Artisans constituted 16.4%. The wide spread of occupations would indicate that the study reflected the views of various socio-economic groups who had been impacted by poverty reduction programmes.

4.3.5 Distribution of Respondents by Local Government Area

Table 4.6: Local Government Area of Respondents

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Interpretation

Table 4.6 indicates the number of respondents from 5 selected Local Government Areas. The highest number of respondents, 57 (25.9%) was recorded in Enugu North while 24.5% and 23.6% were recorded in Enugu South and Enugu East respectively. Nkanu East had 14.1% of the respondents, followed by Udi Local Government Area with 11.9%. This distribution resulted in good geographic representation in the study areas selected.

4.3.6 Participation in Enugu State Government Poverty Reduction Programmes

Table 4.7: Participation in Poverty Reduction Programmes

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Interpretation

Table 4.7 shows that 143 of the respondents (65.0%) have experienced one or more of the Enugu State Government poverty reduction programmes but 77 respondents (35.0%) did not experience any of the programmes. This means that the majority of the respondents had first-hand experience of government poverty reduction programs and were thus better placed to evaluate their effectiveness.

4.4 Analysis of Research Questions

The answers to the research questions were measured on a five-point Likert scale with Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The responses were then given a weighted value as follows:

The criterion mean was calculated as:

=3.00 Therefore, any item with a mean score of 3.00 and above was regarded as Accepted, while any item with a mean score below 3.00 was regarded as Rejected.

Research Question One: To what extent have the poverty reduction programmes of the Enugu State Government contributed to reducing poverty among residents?

Table 4.8: Responses on the Contribution of Enugu State Government Poverty Reduction Programmes to Poverty Reduction

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Interpretation

The respondents' views on the role of the Enugu State Government poverty reduction programmes in the reduction of poverty among the residents are given in Table 4.8.

The results indicated that the respondents confirmed that government empowerment programmes have contributed to raise the income level of the beneficiaries with a mean score of 3.82 and above the criterion mean of 3.00.

Respondents also agreed that government's poverty reduction programmes have created employment opportunities with a mean score of 3.82.

Furthermore, the respondents confirmed that beneficiaries are now able to access basic social services, e.g., healthcare, education and financial assistance with a mean score of 3.78.

Moreover, the mean score of 3.69 showed that the government actions have helped in decreasing poverty in the community.

Last but not least, the respondents concurred that government poverty reduction programme has improved the economic self-reliance of the beneficiaries with a mean value of 3.81.

The grand mean of 3.78 is higher than the benchmark mean of 3.00. Overall, the results showed that the respondents have positive perception of the poverty reduction programmes with respect to its contribution in poverty reduction.

4.5 Analysis of Research Question Two

Research Question Two: What are the major challenges affecting the implementation of poverty reduction programmes in Enugu State?

Table 4.9: Responses on the Challenges Affecting the Implementation of Poverty Reduction Programmes in Enugu State

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Interpretation

Table 4.9 shows the opinions of the respondents on the major challenges confronting the implementation of poverty reduction programme in Enugu State.

The findings show the respondents agreed that "Inadequate funding" has an impact on the effective implementation of poverty reduction programmes with a mean score of 4.00 which is higher than the criterion mean of 3.00.

There was also a general consensus that corruption and mismanagement cause the ineffectiveness of government poverty reduction programmes with a mean score of 3.98. This indicates that the accountability is low and the management of resources is also poor, which continues to affect the programme outcomes.

Moreover, the poor identification and targeting of beneficiaries was cited by the respondents to have a negative impact on programme success, which had a mean score of 3.91. This means that certain recipients might not be able to benefit from the programmes, and some people might benefit from the programmes and not be considered deserving.

The respondents also identified inadequate monitoring and evaluation as a problem in programme implementation which was given a mean score of 3.93. This discovery illustrates the need for regular supervision and performance evaluation in terms of achieving programme goals.

Last, respondents concurred that political interference has an impact on the continuity and effectiveness of poverty reduction programmes (mean score 3.94). It indicates that the long-term effects of programmes may be lost and their implementation may be affected by changes in political priorities and administrative decisions.

The grand mean of 3.95 which is higher than the criterion mean of 3.00 shows that the problem areas of the effective implementation of poverty reduction programmes in Enugu State are generally agreed to be inadequate funding, corruption, poor targeting of beneficiaries, weak monitoring and evaluation, and political interference.

4.6 Analysis of Research Question Three

Research Question Three: What measures can enhance the effectiveness of poverty reduction programmes in Enugu State?

Table 4.10: Responses on Measures for Enhancing the Effectiveness of Poverty Reduction Programmes in Enugu State

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Interpretation

Table 4.10 shows the opinions of the respondents on the interventions that can enhance the effectiveness of poverty reduction programmes in Enugu State.

The results showed that the respondents were in agreement that if they had sufficient resources to support the poverty reduction programmes, they would be more effective (mean score = 4.05 which is above criterion mean = 3.00). This indicates that adequate financial resources plays an important role in programme implementation.

Another measure of agreement found that transparency in selecting beneficiaries would help to improve the success of poverty reduction programmes, with a mean score of 4.01. The discovery suggests that if providing aid is to be distributed to those who deserve it, the selection of beneficiaries must be done fairly and in a transparent manner.

In addition, the mean score of respondents was 4.00 that regular monitoring and evaluation would help in implementing the programme and holding it accountable. This suggests that ongoing monitoring and evaluations are required to determine gaps in implementation and to ensure effective utilization of resources.

The respondents also agreed that the increased involvement of the community in programme planning and implementation would lead to improved programme outcomes with a mean score of 3.96. The finding indicates that community participation in decision-making helps to increase ownership, transparency and sustainability of initiatives to alleviate poverty.

Lastly, there was a general consensus that the continuous training and capacity building of programme administrators will increase the effectiveness of programme (mean score of 3.97) It means that enhancing the skills and competence of programme managers would enhance planning, implementation, monitoring and service delivery.

The mean of 4.00 is higher than the benchmark mean of 3.00, which means that generally, respondents agreed that the following are important factors for improving the effectiveness and sustainability of poverty reduction programmes in Enugu State: providing adequate funding, making the selection of beneficiaries transparent, effective monitoring and evaluation, community participation, and capacity building of programme administrators.

4.7 Test of Hypotheses

The hypotheses formulated for this study were tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) at a 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule adopted for the test is stated below.

Decision Rule

The null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected where the calculated significance value (p-value) is less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$). Conversely, the null hypothesis is accepted where the calculated significance value is greater than 0.05 ($p > 0.05$).

Hypothesis One

Ho■: There is no significant relationship between the implementation of poverty reduction programmes and poverty reduction among residents of Enugu State.

Table 4.11: Pearson Correlation Analysis of Poverty Reduction Programmes and Poverty Reduction

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Version 21 Output (Field Survey, 2026).

Interpretation

Table 4.11 shows that the Pearson correlation coefficient between the implementation of poverty reduction programmes and poverty reduction among residents is $r = 0.734$, with a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the significance level of 0.05.

This indicates a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between the implementation of poverty reduction programmes and poverty reduction among residents of Enugu State.

Since the p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected, while the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

The implication of this finding is that effective implementation of poverty reduction programmes significantly contributes to reducing poverty among residents of Enugu State.

Hypothesis Two

Ho■: There is no significant relationship between implementation challenges and the effectiveness of poverty reduction programmes in Enugu State.

Table 4.12

Pearson Correlation Analysis of Implementation Challenges and Programme Effectiveness

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Version 21 Output (Field Survey, 2026).

Interpretation

Table 4.12 indicates that the Pearson correlation coefficient between implementation challenges and programme effectiveness is $r = -0.681$, with a p-value of 0.000, which is below the critical level of 0.05.

The negative correlation coefficient shows that as implementation challenges increase, the effectiveness of poverty reduction programmes decreases. The relationship is statistically significant, indicating that implementation challenges have a substantial influence on programme effectiveness.

Since the p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected, while the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

This finding implies that reducing challenges such as inadequate funding, corruption, poor beneficiary targeting, weak monitoring, and political interference would significantly improve the effectiveness of poverty reduction programmes implemented by the Enugu State Government.

4.8 Discussion of Findings

The discussion of findings is presented in line with the research questions and hypotheses formulated for the study. The findings are also related to the empirical studies reviewed in Chapter Two and interpreted within the framework of the Capability Approach, which underpins this study.

4.8.1 Contribution of Enugu State Government Poverty Reduction Programmes to Poverty Reduction

The results of the study indicated that the poverty reduction programmes of the Enugu State Government has contributed positively to poverty reduction of the people. The programmes have generated employment opportunities, encouraged beneficiaries to increase their income, provided access to basic social services, decreased poverty in the communities and improved the economic self-reliance of the beneficiaries, respondents agreed. The overall mean score (grand mean) of 3.78 also indicated that the respondents were generally positive about the programmes.

This was confirmed by the first hypothesis that was tested and found to be statistically significant with a positive relationship between the implementation of poverty reduction programmes and poverty reduction among the residents ($r = 0.734$, $p < 0.05$). The results indicate that the implementation of government intervention programmes is a great determinant in enhancing the welfare status of the beneficiaries and reducing poverty in Enugu State.

The result is consistent with the results of the study by Aguene (2024) which found that the beneficiaries' mean food security improved, as well as their mean access to essential social services and mean household income, following the intervention of the National Social Investment Programme. The finding is also in line with the observation of Olorunfemi and Egwuma (2024) that skills acquisition and microcredit programmes that were implemented in Enugu State increased household income and self-reliance among the participants. Likewise, Adeyemi and Oladipo (2020) found that conditional cash transfer and empowerment programmes had a positive impact on household welfare by providing better access to health and education and higher income.

The discovery also lends weight to the Capability Approach, which argues that poverty reduction should be considered not just in terms of income generation but also in terms of increasing people's capacities and opportunities to lead productive, meaningful lives. The employment gains, income generation, access to services and economic independence observed illustrate that government interventions can help increase beneficiaries' capabilities and well-being.

4.8.2 Challenges Affecting the Implementation of Poverty Reduction Programmes

The study revealed that inadequate funding, corruption and mismanagement, lack of effective targeting of beneficiaries, poor monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and political interference are the great challenges confronted in the implementation of the poverty reduction programmes in Enugu State. The grand mean for each of these scores is 3.95 which reflects high agreement that these factors negatively affect programme effectiveness.

The second hypothesis also found that the implementation challenges negatively influenced programme effectiveness ($r = -0.681$, $p < 0.05$). This means that the more implementation difficulties that increase, the less successful poverty reduction programs are.

This finding corroborates earlier findings by Abdullahi and Bello (2020), who found that conditional cash transfers programmes in northern Nigeria suffered from poor targeting, irregular funding and inadequate monitoring, limiting their impact in the long run. The discovery also supports the results obtained by Agu and Nwosu (2021) who noted that inadequate supervision and reduced administrative capacity reduced the efficacy of microfinance intervention programmes. Similarly, Okeke and Chukwuma (2022) reported that some of the challenges limiting poverty alleviation programmes in Enugu State are bureaucratic delays, inadequate funding, and poor administration of programmes.

In terms of the Capability Approach, these implementation issues are barriers to beneficiaries benefiting from the government's support, and limit their capacity to access meaningful improvements in their livelihoods. When programmes are under-resourced, poorly monitored, or subject to political agenda, progress towards increasing people's capacities is hindered. As a result, the impact and longevity of poverty reduction efforts is limited.

4.8.3 Measures for Enhancing the Effectiveness of Poverty Reduction Programmes

The results of the study showed that adequate funding, transparent selection of beneficiaries, regular monitoring and evaluation of the programmes, community involvement, and continuous upgrading of capacity of the programme administrators were considered to be important interventions for the effectiveness of poverty reduction programmes in Enugu State. The overall mean score for all the respondents was 4.00, which shows great agreement among the respondents.

The finding points to the need to have well-designed monitoring systems, targeting systems and coordination of institutional support for the effective implementation of social protection programmes to obtain a poverty reduction effect that is sustainable, as Gentilini et al. (2020) argued. Likewise, Mensah et al., (2019) highlighted that the transparency, accountability and effective targeting of beneficiaries are crucial in ensuring that the government intervention programmes are targeted to those that are intended to benefit. The finding also aligns with the findings of Ojo and Adebayo (2020) which indicated that the involvement of the community in the programmes increases programme ownership, transparency and sustainability.

The results also correspond with the Capability Approach, which emphasizes policies to broaden the opportunities and reinforce institutional support systems.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

This study explored the role of the Enugu State Government in poverty reduction programmes for the achievement of SDG 1 in Enugu State. The study was driven by the fact that despite the introduction of different intervention programmes by the government to improve the living conditions of the citizens, poverty continues to exist.

The result of the research showed that the poverty reduction programmes of the Enugu State Government have positively impacted on the reduction of poverty, through the increased income of the households, job creation, better access to basic social services, and the self-reliance of beneficiaries. The study also confirmed that there exist a significant positive relationship between poverty reduction programmes and poverty reduction among the people in Enugu state of Nigeria.

The study revealed that lack of funding, corruption and mismanagement, lack of targeting of beneficiaries, in-adequate monitoring and evaluation framework and political interference are the major challenges in implementing poverty reduction programmes. These obstacles have an adverse impact on the effectiveness of the programmes, and hinder the realization of their development goals.

In addition, it was found that the adequate funding, transparent beneficiary selection, effective monitoring and evaluation, participation of the community and continuous training and building capacity of the programme administrators are all very critical to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of poverty reduction programmes in Enugu State.

5.2 Conclusion

From this study, the following conclusions were drawn: The Enugu State Government has made some meaningful efforts in attaining Sustainable Development Goal One by implementing different programmes for poverty alleviation. The impact of these programmes on the beneficiaries' socio-economic status has been positive, including on income generation, employment opportunities, access to basic social services and economic self-reliance.

But institutional and administrative issues such as lack of funding, corruption, insufficient monitoring systems, weak targeting of beneficiaries and political interference persist to limit the effectiveness of these interventions. These obstacles will undermine programme efficiency and limit the effectiveness of government interventions.

Therefore, the study suggests that in order to achieve sustainable poverty reduction in Enugu State, there is the need to continue the government's intervention programmes as well as to improve the programme planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation process. Capacity building, transparency and accountability, community engagement and policy implementation using evidence will significantly improve the effectiveness of the poverty reduction programmes to make Enugu State more able to achieve Sustainable Development Goal One.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations are made:

The Enugu State Government should enhance and expand poverty reduction programmes to improve their impact on beneficiaries. The study revealed that government poverty reduction programmes have had a positive impact on income, employment opportunities, access to social services, and beneficiaries' economic self-reliance, due to which the government should invest more in the successful intervention programmes and sustain and expand them to endemic poor households in the State. This will help to further speed up progress towards Sustainable Development Goal One.

The Enugu State Government should begin to tackle institutional and administrative issues that pose challenges in the implementation of the programme. The study revealed that lack of funding, corruption, weak targeting of beneficiaries, weak monitoring and evaluation and political interference were the big challenges in executing the programmes effectively. Thus, government should provide sufficient resources, establish regular monitoring and evaluation procedures, and implement objective and transparent criteria for identification of beneficiaries to enhance the effectiveness of programmes.

Enugu State Government should adopt participatory and capacity building methods to improve the sustainability of their poverty reduction programmes. Considering the results of this study, government should have the sense of the community as part of the beneficiaries and involve them in the design and implementation of the programmes; make sure that the programmes are monitored and evaluated regularly; have them participate in the programme through the community;

and continuously train those who will administer the programme. This will build the institutional capacity, foster ownership of programmes, increase accountability, and ensure the sustainability of poverty reduction programmes.

5.4 Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to knowledge in several important ways.

First, it provides empirical evidence on the role of the Enugu State Government in achieving Sustainable Development Goal One through poverty reduction programmes, thereby enriching the limited body of literature focusing specifically on state-level poverty reduction initiatives in Enugu State.

Second, the study demonstrates that the effectiveness of poverty reduction programmes depends not only on the availability of intervention schemes but also on the quality of programme implementation. By identifying funding, transparency, monitoring, beneficiary targeting, and political interference as significant determinants of programme success, the study provides practical insights that can guide policy formulation and implementation.

Third, the study extends the application of the Capability Approach by showing that government poverty reduction initiatives contribute to expanding beneficiaries' capabilities through improved income, employment opportunities, access to social services, and economic self-reliance rather than merely increasing financial assistance.

Finally, the findings provide useful information for policymakers, development practitioners, researchers, and public administrators seeking evidence-based strategies for improving the effectiveness of poverty reduction programmes and accelerating the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal One in Enugu State and similar settings.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Studies

The following suggestions are made for future research:

Future studies should examine the long-term socio-economic impacts of poverty reduction programmes on beneficiaries in Enugu State using longitudinal research designs.

Similar studies should be conducted in other states of Nigeria to enable comparative analyses of state government poverty reduction initiatives and identify best practices that can be replicated across the country.

Future researchers should investigate the role of digital technologies, including electronic beneficiary registration, digital payment systems, and data management platforms, in improving the transparency and effectiveness of poverty reduction programmes.

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