

*Original Research Report*



## Exploring Career-related Strategies for Strengthening Poverty Reduction Programmes in Nigerian Communities: A Qualitative Study

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**Abstract:** This study was designed to explore career-related strategies for strengthening poverty reduction programmes in Nigerian communities. Using a phenomenological framework and interpretive paradigm, the study used a qualitative research design. The participants of this study consisted of five key officers working in the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation (FMHAPA) in Nigeria and five counsellors working in Nigerian secondary schools. The participants were selected through a purposeful sampling process. Data collection measures include interviews, focus group discussion, and document analysis. All participants were interviewed to collect data, which was analyzed using thematic analysis. To identify themes and patterns in the responses provided by the participants, the interviews were recorded and transcribed. In accordance with the findings of this study, career-related strategies for strengthening poverty reduction programmes in Nigerian communities include employability skills development, access to quality education, job creation and entrepreneurship, supportive networks, social justice and corporate responsibilities, and appropriate work policy. A major contribution of this study is the identification of career-related strategies to help strengthen poverty reduction programmes in Nigerian communities. Another contribution is the implications that can be drawn for career counselling.

**Keywords:** Career Counselling, Career Counsellors, Nigerian Communities, Poverty Reduction, Secondary Schools

## 1. Introduction

Poverty reduction initiatives have been at the forefront of global efforts to address social injustices and economic disparities. In Nigeria, with its significant population of impoverished individuals, the implementation of effective poverty reduction programmes is crucial. However, it has been discovered that a number of poverty reduction initiatives in Nigeria, launched by both organisations and the government with the intention of battling and lessening poverty, have failed (Taiwo, 2016). While reducing the rate of poverty is the sole objective of these initiatives, they often operate to deplete the nation's resources by focusing on political interests, which promotes dishonesty and corruption, instead of career interest. As a result, the financial needs, issues, and difficulties facing Nigerian communities are growing quickly.

The increasing unrest around the world, including inflation, insecurity, insurgencies, discrimination, imbalances, inequality, conflict, and pandemics, is also attributed to this growth. For example, according to UN estimates, in 2015 more than 700 million people were unable to meet most of their basic physiological needs (health, education, access to water, sanitation) (United Nations, 2022). In another estimate, 71 million people are driven into poverty by the COVID-19 pandemic (United Nations, 2020b). This means, many people lack food, clean drinking water and sanitation. People living in Low-Income countries, and those residing in local communities are more vulnerable to poverty. There is more to poverty than a lack of income and productive resources. Hunger and malnutrition are some of its manifestations, as are limited access to education and basic services, social exclusion, and lack of participation in decision-making. Poverty is disproportionately experienced by various social groups (United Nations, 2020a). From UN report, there are 821 million people estimated to be chronically malnourished as of 2017, often as a direct consequence of environmental degradation, drought and biodiversity loss. Over 90 million children under five are hazardously underweight. Malnutrition and severe food insecurity appear to be increasing in almost all regions of Africa, as well as in South America. Life-threatening hunger and malnutrition remain a huge barrier to development in many other countries.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Report 2021 (United Nations, 2021) shows that in 2020, the global extreme poverty rate rose largely and pushed an additional 119–124 millions of people back into extreme poverty and chronic hunger. The report also shows that 22% of children (149.2 million) under 5 are stunted; 6.7% of children (45.4 million) under 5 suffer from wasting; and 5.7% of children (38.9 million) under 5 are overweight. Also, one third of women of reproductive age suffer from anaemia, in part nutrition deficiencies. Sadly, 2.37 billion people are without food or unable to eat a healthy balanced diet frequently despite the poverty reduction programmes in many countries. Many nations, including Nigeria, use agriculture, rural development, basic education to form human capital, skill acquisition, and good governance as strategies to reduce poverty. (Ogwumike, 2005). However, the World Bank's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper stated that strategies for reducing poverty should be led and owned by the country; they should be based on wide-ranging participatory processes for formulation, implementation, and outcome-based monitoring; they should be results-oriented, emphasizing outcomes that would benefit the poor; they should be comprehensive in scope,

acknowledging the multifaceted nature of poverty's causes and countermeasures; and they should be partnership-oriented, serving as a foundation for the active, coordinated involvement of development partners (bilateral, multilateral, and non-governmental organizations) in assisting country strategies. Finally, the strategies should be based on a medium- and long-term perspective for poverty reduction, understanding that sustained poverty reduction cannot be achieved overnight (Levinsohn, 2002). In addition, according to the World Bank, PRS papers should center around four main areas: how to enhance governance, including public sector financial management; what sectoral policies and programmes are appropriate; realistic costing and funding levels for the major programmes; and macro and structural policies to support sustainable growth in which the poor countries participate. To this end, the current study explores the career-related strategies that can support and strengthen poverty reduction programmes in Nigeria.

### *1.1. Statement of Problem*

Despite the efforts being made to address poverty in Nigeria, there is still limited understanding of how career-related strategies can contribute to the strengthening of poverty reduction programs. When solely focusing on poverty reduction from a government perspective, it becomes challenging to fully comprehend other parameters that can be utilized to reduce poverty. This study aims to explore career-related strategies that can be employed to support Nigeria's endeavors aimed at eradicating poverty. The primary target of the United Nations' sustainable development goal (SDG) 1, titled "No Poverty," is to achieve the following by 2030: cut in half the proportion of impoverished individuals, including men, women, and children; establish social protection policies and systems nationwide; enhance the resilience of impoverished individuals and those in vulnerable situations; and secure substantial funding for the implementation of initiatives aimed at eliminating poverty. The findings of this study will contribute to the actualization of this goal by promoting a deeper understanding of how career-related strategies can be integrated into poverty reduction programs in Nigeria.

### *1.2. Purpose of the Study*

The primary objective of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the career-related strategies that can support and strengthen poverty reduction programmes in Nigeria.

### *1.3. Research Question*

What are the career-related strategies for strengthening poverty reduction programmes in the Nigerian communities?

## **2. Materials and Methods**

### *1.1. Design for the Study*

A qualitative research design was employed in this study to explore the career-related strategies for strengthening poverty reduction programmes in Nigeria. Qualitative research methodologies are often chosen when researchers aim to gain in-depth insights into complex phenomena, such as understanding the career-related strategies for strengthening poverty reduction programmes. It is important to note that qualitative research design used in this study was primarily based on phenomenology theoretical framework. Using this framework, the researcher was interested in

participants' interpretations, assertions, and descriptions of their familiarities and acquaintances with the variables of the study (Muzari et al., 2022). Furthermore, this study employed the interpretive paradigm to explore the potential ways in which career-related strategies can be harnessed to strengthen poverty reduction programmes in Nigeria. The interpretive paradigm is a holistic and subjective approach to understanding social phenomena (Croucher & Cronn-Mills, 2018). It emphasizes the importance of context, personal experiences, and cultural factors in shaping an individual's career-related decisions and actions. In the context of this study, the interpretive paradigm allowed the researcher to delve deeper into the intricate relationship between career development and poverty reduction programmes, considering the complexities of the Nigerian communities.

### 2.1. Ethics Statement

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and their privacy and confidentiality were respected throughout the research process. The researcher ensured the anonymity and confidentiality of all participants, and any data that could identify individuals was anonymized or kept confidential. The Department of Educational Foundations, University of Nigeria Nsukka ethical committee reviewed the proposal version of this study and gave approval before the commencement of the study.

### 2.2. Population and Sample

The participants of this study consisted of five key officers working in the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation (FMHAPA) in Nigeria and five counsellors working in Nigerian secondary schools. This sample was purposively chosen to provide insights into career-related strategies for strengthening poverty reduction programs in the country. The selection of participants was based on their expertise and knowledge of poverty reduction programs in Nigeria. The FMHAPA officers were selected based on their leadership positions and involvement in developing and implementing national strategies to alleviate poverty. Similarly, the counsellors were selected based on their experience working with students in secondary schools and their understanding of the challenges associated with poverty in education. By including both practitioners from FMHAPA and counsellors from secondary schools, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of career-related strategies for strengthening poverty reduction programs. The insights from the officers and counsellors will provide helpful insights into the challenges faced by professionals working in different sectors and their potential contributions to poverty reduction efforts. Also, the inclusion of participants from FMHAPA and secondary schools ensures that the perspectives of both policymakers and implementers are considered. This purposive sample allows for the integration of theory and practice, which can help in developing effective strategies for poverty reduction. The FMHAPA participants were labeled participants 1-5, while the counsellors labeled participants 6-10 throughout the study.

### 2.3. Data Collection Technique

Data were gathered using a range of qualitative research techniques:

**2.3.1. Interviews:** Five key officers working in Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, and Poverty Alleviation and five counsellors working in Nigerian secondary schools were interviewed

virtually. The purpose of these interviews was to get more in-depth details regarding the participants' career-related strategies and how they saw these strategies' effects on reducing poverty.

2.3.2. *Focus Groups:* To obtain a group of participants' thoughts and viewpoints, focus groups were held. Through the conversations, the researcher was able to investigate a range of career-related approaches to reducing poverty.

2.3.3. *Document Analysis:* Relevant materials, including policy documents, reports, and research papers, were reviewed in order to gain a more thorough understanding of the present career-related strategies for reducing poverty in Nigeria.

#### 2.4. *Data Analysis Technique*

An analysis of the collected data has been conducted using thematic analysis, which is an objective and systematic process for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data. Based on the results, themes emerged that captured career-related strategies that can strengthen poverty reduction programs in Nigeria and the impact they have on those efforts. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the data, the first step in thematic analysis was to read all scripts and transcripts several times. During this process, the text from documents, case studies, interviews and focus group discussions was carefully reviewed. In addition, notes were made, and significant or recurring themes were highlighted. Following a thorough review of the data, the researcher coded it. To accomplish this, the researcher assigned meaningful labels to segments of the data that were representative of the main ideas or concepts. The coded data were then organized into themes. In the analysis, recurring patterns emerged as themes. The themes represent distinct and coherent sets of codes. Finally, interpretations were provided for the identified themes. By using this approach, career-related strategies were identified for strengthening poverty reduction programs in Nigerian communities.

### 3. Results and Discussion



**Figure 1:** Career-related strategies for strengthening poverty reduction programmes

As presented in figure 1, the findings of this study highlight the key career-related strategies that can be employed to strengthen poverty reduction programmes in Nigerian communities. The following strategies were identified:

### **3.1. Theme 1: Employability Skills Development**

Participants emphasized the importance of equipping community members with relevant employability skills, such as literacy, numeracy, critical thinking, and digital competence. According to them, individuals can increase their chances of securing stable employment, thereby reducing poverty and promoting economic empowerment when these skills are enhanced. The following direct statements from the participants confirm this point:

**Participant 6:** *"Based on my experience working as a school counselor, I think that improving employability skills is one of the career-related strategies that might support, or boost programmes aimed at reducing poverty. These employability skills help people to successfully navigate the labor market. Of course, poverty will decline when many people have fulfilling careers. I think a lack of jobs contributes to poverty in certain ways. Therefore, improving employable skills should be one strategy for combating poverty. Poverty will decrease if all school graduates are able to find employment across numerous industries."*

**Participant 2:** *Alleviating poverty is a collective effort. The FMAPA alone cannot handle it. For instance, the education sector must play a vital role, especially in helping young people to inculcate the 21st century employability skills like critical thinking, problem solving and others. If people can think critically, they might be able to come up with better solutions to the country's problems, rather than criticizing the government. Many people are blaming the government for everything. But only a few can think critically, reimagine the situations around them and find a way out of poverty. If poverty is classified first as a mindset, then proper thinking can be the first solution.*

**Participant 3:** *I strongly believe that apart from the efforts of government and non-governmental organizations, providing community members with employability skills plays a vital role in poverty reduction and economic empowerment. By equipping individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge, we have the potential to break the cycle of low-skilled jobs and enable them to secure better opportunities. Poverty reduction is a complex issue that requires a multi-pronged approach. While governments and organizations play a crucial role in developing and implementing policies and programs to alleviate poverty, empowering individuals through employability skills can have a significant impact. One of the key challenges in poverty reduction is the cycle of low-skilled jobs. Many individuals find themselves trapped in a cycle of low-wage jobs with limited prospects of upward mobility. By focusing on employability skills, we can create a pathway out of poverty by providing individuals with the necessary skills to secure higher-paying positions or start their own businesses.*

### **3.2. Theme 2: Access to Quality Education**

Access to quality education plays a crucial role in breaking the cycle of poverty. Participants emphasized the significance of providing equal access to education, particularly at the secondary and tertiary levels, to enable individuals to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills for employability and future opportunities. This theme is supported by the following direct statements of the participants:



**Participant 1:** *I think education is a powerful tool that can lift individuals out of poverty. By investing in quality education, we can empower individuals to break free from the cycle of poverty. Education equips individuals with the necessary skills, knowledge, and opportunities to secure better livelihoods. Education plays a crucial role in breaking the cycle of poverty. It provides individuals with the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate the complexities of the modern world. Access to quality education allows individuals to acquire the necessary qualifications for gainful employment, which is essential for escaping poverty.*

*Education exposes them to new ideas and perspectives, enabling them to think critically and develop innovative solutions to poverty. Education fosters critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making abilities, which are essential skills for individuals to thrive in a rapidly changing world. Furthermore, education provides access to opportunities that can help individuals break free from poverty.*

**Participant 7:** *Education is the key to social mobility. Without access to quality education, individuals are limited in their ability to climb the economic ladder. Education opens doors to higher education, job training, and career advancement, enabling individuals to achieve their full potential and break free from the cycle of poverty. But the question is, has this been our experience in Nigeria? Maybe we should have hope that a better education will emerge to equip our people with the tools they need to equip themselves economically.*

**Participant 3:** *Education is the foundation for sustainable development. In my opinion, quality education will therefore be seen as that type of education gives sustainable economic development to both individuals and society. If a greater number of educated people are living in poverty it is a sign that they did not have quality education. Both the government and education sector must ensure that the individuals are well educated to the point they can be economically stable. I hate to see graduates, especially those with doctorate degrees, looking poor. I keep wondering about what exactly they were taught that cannot produce tangible results in their lives. It is high for us to learn or borrow ideas from countries like China, Japan, etc. to see how they are able to structure education to the point that it improves economy. Quality education not only equips individuals with the tools for academic success but also instills a sense of self-worth and empowerment. It empowers individuals to make informed choices, pursue their dreams, and contribute to their communities.*

### **3.3. Theme 3: Job Creation and Entrepreneurship**

Participants emphasized the need for job creation and entrepreneurship initiatives in Nigerian communities. They firmly believe that the availability of job opportunities can empower individuals to escape poverty and contribute to the overall development of the community. Here are some direct quotes from the participants:

**Participant 1:** *"Job creation is of utmost importance in alleviating poverty in Nigeria. when individuals are provided with meaningful employment opportunities, they may be able to uplift themselves and their families out of poverty. Also, entrepreneurship is the lifeblood of any community. To reduce poverty, individuals should be encouraged to start their own businesses, creating job opportunities and driving economic growth."*

**Participant 8:** *"I'm sure Job creation and entrepreneurship initiatives may reduce poverty to a large extent. I also think that more effort should be made by the government to prioritize job creation and entrepreneurship in the Nigerian communities. This will enable individuals to thrive and relieve themselves from poverty. However, the government, private sector, and community organizations must work together to create an environment that fosters job creation and entrepreneurship."*

#### **3.4. Theme 4: Supportive Networks**

The participants highlighted the importance of establishing supportive networks within communities. These networks can provide mentorship, resources, and opportunities for upward mobility for individuals living in poverty. The direct views of some participants are as follows:

**Participant 9:** *"Creating supportive networks is vital because it fosters a sense of belonging and empowerment. When we come together as a community, we become stronger and more capable of overcoming obstacles. It is important for individuals who have limited resources to have access to mentors who can guide them and provide advice on various aspects of life, such as education, employment, and financial literacy."*

**Participant 10:** *"Supportive networks are essential for those living in poverty. They serve as lifelines, providing emotional support, guidance, and a sense of community. Through mentorship, individuals can learn from those who have already overcome similar challenges and gain valuable insights into making positive changes in their lives. In addition, these networks can link individuals to resources such as education, job training, and financial assistance, helping them escape the cycle of poverty."*

**Participant 5:** *"Building supportive networks goes beyond providing tangible support. It also includes fostering a culture of empathy and understanding. This will break down barriers and stereotypes and create an environment where individuals feel valued and empowered. This sense of community helps build resilience and encourages individuals to strive for a better future."*

**Participant 4:** *"Supportive networks can bridge the gap between individuals and the resources they need. They can connect individuals with mentors, job opportunities, and educational scholarships. This not only alleviates the burden of poverty but also empowers individuals to advance their education and careers."*

#### **3.5. Theme 5: Social Justice and Corporate Responsibilities**

Participants highlighted the need for social justice and for companies to take responsibility for their social impact. They emphasized the importance of fair wages, worker protection, and corporate social responsibility initiatives, which can help alleviate poverty and contribute to the well-being of the Nation. Fair wages were a top priority for participants. They believed that companies have a responsibility to ensure that their employees receive a fair and equitable salary, considering their skills and experience. This not only helps to improve employees' standard of living but also incentivizes them to contribute to the success of the organization. Worker protection was another crucial issue that participants raised. They emphasized the need for companies to implement robust safety measures and policies to protect employees from harm. This includes providing adequate training, safety equipment, and a safe working environment. Participants also highlighted the importance of fair labor practices, such as ensuring compliance with labor laws, preventing discrimination and harassment, and ensuring



fair working hours. The direct opinions of some participants are as follows:

**Participant 6:** *"Fair wages are a fundamental right for all workers. Companies should ensure that employees receive a fair and competitive salary that enables them to meet their basic needs and provide for their families."*

**Participant 7:** *"Worker protection is of utmost importance. Companies must prioritize the safety and well-being of their employees. Investing in safety measures and training programs will help prevent accidents and injuries."*

**Participant 5:** *"Social justice and corporate responsibility are not merely nice to have; they are critical for a company's long-term success. When companies prioritize social justice, they build a positive brand image and attract customers who value ethical practices. Fair wages enable employees to better support themselves and their families, leading to increased productivity and reduced turnover. Worker protection safeguards the rights and well-being of employees, ensuring a fair and dignified workplace. Corporate social responsibility initiatives foster community partnerships, support education, and promote sustainable development."*

### **3.6. Theme 6: Appropriate Work Policy**

Participants highlighted the need for appropriate work policies that promote decent work conditions, fair wages, and job security. They emphasized that this would help to strengthen poverty reduction programmes in Nigeria. Participants statements are pointed out below:

**Participant 8:** *"To effectively combat poverty, it is crucial to establish fair work policies that prioritize workers' rights and ensure decent working conditions. This will contribute to increased productivity and efficiency. Also, implementing policies that guarantee fair wages is essential in ensuring that workers have adequate purchasing power and meet their basic needs. This, in turn, can contribute to poverty reduction efforts."*

**Participant 3:** *"Job security is important for reducing poverty. When workers have stable employment, they are better able to plan for their future and invest in their families' well-being. This includes access to healthcare, education, and other essential services."*

**Participant 2:** *"Ensuring compliance with labor laws is important for protecting workers' rights and addressing issues such as forced labor, child labor, and exploitation. These laws can create a level playing field for all workers, including those living in poverty. Furthermore, collaboration between the government, employers, and workers is essential in developing appropriate work policies that address the specific needs of the labor force. However, it will be the responsibility of the government to unit with all the necessary sectors to develop appropriate work policy that can help strengthen poverty reduction in the Nation".*

The findings of this study revealed the career-related strategies that can be employed to further strengthen poverty reduction programmes in the Nigerian communities. These strategies encompass various aspects of career development and poverty alleviation. One key strategy identified is employability skills development. This involves equipping individuals with the necessary skills to excel in the job market. Equipping individuals with employability skills can empower them to secure stable and sustainable employment. This, in turn, can help break the cycle of poverty and contribute to

economic empowerment. The findings from this study contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the relationship between skills development and poverty reduction (King & Palmer, 2006). It reinforces the notion that investing in skills development initiatives can have a significant impact on the lives of individuals living in poverty and contribute to the overall well-being of communities. Thus, employability skills play a vital role in poverty reduction. Previous studies have shown that individuals who possess these skills are more likely to find stable employment, break the cycle of poverty, and lead a better life. Several other studies have highlighted the relationship between employability skills and poverty reduction.

The study's findings show a connection between potential decrease in poverty and employability skills. Training and skill development programmes are important for empowering individuals, generating employment, and reducing poverty. According to a number of studies, developing one's skills significantly affects creating jobs and reducing poverty in Nigeria (Itodo et al., 2023; Ojo & Nuhu, 2023). In addition, studies indicate that employability skills, including soft skills and business skills, are essential to reducing poverty in communities such as Oyo. By acquiring relevant workplace skills, individuals are more confident, motivated, and capable of succeeding in their careers and finding employment (Maigida & Raymond, 2014; Ojo & Nuhu, 2023). Nevertheless, Nigeria's skills training programmes face a few challenges, including inadequate funding and government support, as well as a lack of involvement from small and medium enterprises in designing and implementing them. The educational system must continue to provide the skills required by the job market to enhance the employability of Nigerians (Maigida & Raymond, 2014). It is imperative that the government and the responsible agencies address the problems faced by skills training centers to reduce poverty through skills acquisition effectively. For these programs to be successful, adequate funding, stable electricity supply, and collaboration with the private sector are required. Through the development of employability skills and job training in Nigeria, Nigeria can enhance its citizenry, create more jobs, and reduce poverty significantly (Maigida & Raymond, 2014; Ojo & Nuhu, 2023).

Another finding of this study pointed out that access to quality education is another important strategy for strengthening poverty reduction programmes in the Nigerian communities. It has been demonstrated in several studies that improving education can reduce poverty and promote the development of human capital in a country (Monsuru, 2020). The human capital development may in turn reduce the level of poverty. Also, study indicated that education is a pathway for poverty reduction (Sennuga et al., 2023). Education is regarded as one of the most important factors in the development of Nigeria and its reduction of poverty, according to experts. It is essential that people are equipped with knowledge, skills, and information to combat injustices, corruption, and other factors influencing poverty. The development of human capital through education enables Nigerians to achieve prosperity (Monsuru, 2020). There has been limited progress, however. Nigeria is ranked 150 out of 157 countries on the Human Capital Index, with a stagnant GDP per capita, high unemployment, and declining school enrollment. To leverage Nigeria's strengths and reduce poverty through education, it is crucial to address income inequality, strengthen institutions, and diversify the economy. In studies conducted between 1960 and 2000, it was found that increased math and science skills were responsible for up to

75% of global GDP growth (Sennuga et al., 2023). As a result, improving a nation's knowledge capital is extremely important for long-term economic growth. This includes improving educational infrastructure, providing scholarships, and promoting inclusive educational policies that cater to the needs of all individuals, regardless of their socioeconomic background.

Furthermore, the findings of this study indicated that job creation and entrepreneurship are also key factors in strengthening poverty reduction strategies. By fostering an environment that supports small businesses and entrepreneurship, communities can create employment opportunities for individuals, particularly those who are economically marginalized. This can be achieved by providing financial assistance, mentorship, and networking opportunities, as well as promoting policies that encourage entrepreneurship and investment. Several studies have highlighted the importance of entrepreneurship in driving economic growth and development. According to a study, an increase in the rate of entry into entrepreneurship will likely result in an increase in competition and innovation in the country (Garba, 2012). Also, Adenutsi (2023) put forth the argument that entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in the nation's poverty reduction strategy. This line of thought emphasizes that entrepreneurship could create employment opportunities, stimulate economic growth, and improve the overall standard of living for a nation's population. This, in turn, can help reduce poverty and promote social and economic development. Moreover, Dialoke et al. (2017) found that entrepreneurship has a significant relationship with poverty reduction. Thus, entrepreneurship allows individuals to leverage their skills, talents, and resources to create innovative solutions that meet the needs of the local market. Furthermore, entrepreneurship can drive economic growth by stimulating innovation and technological advancements. Entrepreneurial ventures often introduce new ideas and products to the market, which can attract investments, foster competition, and lead to increased productivity. This, in turn, can lead to increased income generation, improved infrastructure, and better access to essential goods and services for the nation's population.

The study's finding also showed that supportive networks is important in poverty reduction programmes. The networks can include community organizations, mentorship programs, and online platforms where individuals can connect and share resources. According to a study conducted by the World Bank and DFID, the poor in Nigeria are much more likely to rely on local community-based organizations (CBOs) than competent non-governmental organizations as a safety net. CBOs can be religious, traditional leadership, educational, women's, and financial organizations. Poverty is a consequence of individuals and households being unable to reciprocate and build social capital within the community, but local institutions playing a crucial role in providing this opportunity for reciprocity for the poor will be crucial for their dignity (Okunmadewa et al., 2005). Social capital indicators, such as interpersonal trust, civic responsibility, and volunteer activity, are positively related to poverty reduction in Nigeria. The more social capital building occurs among individuals, the more likely they are to lift themselves out of poverty (Ijaiya et al., 2012; Ikechukwu-Illomuanya et al., 2016). Thus, the present study further highlights the importance of community engagement and participation in poverty reduction programmes. When individuals have a sense of belonging and connection to their community, they are more likely to seek assistance, support, and opportunities for growth. Also, individuals with

strong social networks are more likely to have access to resources such as job opportunities, education, and financial assistance, which can greatly contribute to their economic well-being.

The findings of the present study further indicate that social justice and corporate responsibilities are also essential components of poverty reduction strategies. To achieve sustainable poverty reduction, it is crucial to address the social inequalities that exist within communities. This includes advocating for fair wages, equal opportunities, and addressing issues such as discrimination and exploitation. Hence, it is important for corporations to take responsibility for their actions and their impact on communities. This includes engaging in ethical business practices, contributing to social development initiatives, and ensuring that their operations do not perpetuate poverty. It is evident that corporate social responsibility (CSR), social justice, and poverty reduction have a direct relationship. In addition to contributing to the well-being of local communities and reducing poverty, multinational companies operating in Nigeria are required to participate in corporate social responsibility initiatives (Anam et al., 2024). It has previously been demonstrated that corporate social responsibility plays a substantial role in reducing poverty (Adeyanju, 2012). The findings of both studies underscore the importance of CSR in addressing the challenges faced by impoverished communities. Businesses can contribute to alleviating poverty by creating employment opportunities, supporting education and healthcare initiatives, and investing in infrastructure development. Moreover, the positive impact of CSR on poverty reduction is not limited to individual companies but extends to the broader socioeconomic context. When businesses adopt socially responsible practices, they not only contribute to the well-being of their own employees but also stimulate economic growth, job creation, and poverty reduction in the surrounding areas.

An appropriate work policy is also emphasized in this study. By implementing policies that protect workers' rights and promote fair labor practices, communities can create an environment that fosters productivity and economic stability. This includes ensuring fair wages, providing safe working conditions, and enforcing labor laws to protect the rights of workers. According to research, just 15% of Nigerians who are employed have wage occupations, which are linked to lower rates of poverty. With little options for specialization and skill development, most jobs are held by small businesses (Blogs, 2024). Poverty reduction is inextricably linked to the availability of decent work opportunities (Ames et al., 2001). Thus, having a set of principles that are essential for ensuring fair treatment, equal opportunities, and a decent standard of living for workers promote worker's welfare and in turn reduce poverty. Implementing fair labor practices is important for maintaining a healthy work environment and promoting economic stability. Also, fair wages ensure that workers receive a fair compensation for their labor, which helps to promote their well-being and financial stability.

The findings of this study have implications on career counselling. First, the findings implies that career counselling can be a powerful tool for promoting poverty reduction in Nigeria by helping individuals make informed career choices, develop necessary skills, and pursue entrepreneurial opportunities. However, career counselling should be enhanced to provide relevant guidance for individuals and stakeholders. Also, career counselling programme can assist individuals in choosing appropriate career paths and developing the necessary skills to succeed in their chosen fields as a

means of reducing poverty in Nigeria (Okafor, 2008). Career counselling plays a crucial role in assisting low-income individuals and communities in achieving their employment goals. Career counsellors can make a significant difference in individuals' lives by identifying, integrating, and empowering them (McMahon & Watson, 2020). Secondly, career counselling can contribute to reducing poverty by creating a more equitable and economically vibrant society (Angela, 2024). In the light of this, one of the primary benefits of career counselling is the ability to identify and develop individual talents, skills, and capabilities. Career counselling can empower them to overcome barriers and make informed decisions about their future career paths (Coetzee & Roythorne-Jacobs, 2007). It can help them match individual interests, skills, and aspirations with suitable employment opportunities, career counseling can help individuals secure stable and well-paying jobs.

Career counselling can also play a critical role in enhancing workforce readiness and promoting economic mobility (Gerryts & Maree, 2019). It can help individuals navigate the job market and adapt to changing job requirements by equipping them with skills. This, in turn, can lead to improved employability and higher incomes, reducing poverty in the long run. Moreover, career counselling can have a positive impact on society. It can contribute to economic growth and prosperity by reducing unemployment and underemployment. In addition, career counselling can contribute to increased productivity and innovation, ultimately benefiting the nation by providing individuals with opportunities that match their skills and aspirations.

Career counselling plays a fundamental role in assisting individuals in finding their purpose, reimagining their careers, and exploring and transitioning into new work opportunities (Otu, 2024; Otu & Eseadi, 2024). In today's rapidly evolving job market, individuals often face challenges in identifying their career goals, navigating career transitions, and adapting to changing work environments. This may result in helping individuals to secure satisfactory work that would help reduce poverty. Many individuals find themselves lost in their careers, unsure of what they really want to do or what brings them fulfillment. Through various assessment techniques and counselling sessions, career counsellors help individuals reflect on their values, interests, and skills, guiding them towards career paths that align with their true passions. This sense of purpose not only enhances job satisfaction but also contributes to personal fulfillment and poverty reduction.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This study has shed light on the potential benefits that can be derived from integrating employability skills development, access to quality education, job creation and entrepreneurship, supportive networks, social justice and corporate responsibilities, and appropriate work policy into poverty reduction programme. Policymakers and stakeholders can design comprehensive strategies that aim to alleviate poverty and promote social welfare using the strategies generated in this study.

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### Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest.

### Author Contributions

MSO conceived and designed the research. MSO developed the research design, instrument, supervised the collection and analysis of data.

### Data Availability Statement

The datasets generated and/or analyzed in this article can be obtained from the author on reasonable request.

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