

Government Intervention and Poverty Reduction Strategies in Adamawa State: A Case Study of PAWECA Skill Acquisition Programme

Madube Tumba Kwabe¹, *Mustapha Yusufu²

¹Department of Geography, School of Arts and Social Sciences, Federal College of Education, Yola, Adamawa State

²Department of Economics, School of Arts and Social Sciences, Federal College of Education, Yola, Adamawa State

*Corresponding Author

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ABSTRACT

Government intervention continues to play a vital role in Nigeria's efforts to reduce poverty, particularly in Adamawa State, where unemployment and inequality remain widespread. This study examines the effectiveness of the Poverty Alleviation and Wealth Creation Agency (PAWECA) skill-acquisition programme as a strategy for improving livelihoods. It focuses on two key aspects: the extent to which the programme is accessible to its target population and the degree to which beneficiaries utilise the skills they acquire. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design and collected data from 400 respondents across selected local government areas using a structured questionnaire. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics with SPSS version 25. The results unveiled that accessibility to the programme is moderate, with challenges including limited public awareness, high transport costs, and administrative delays. Utilisation of acquired skills was also moderate, hindered by inadequate funding and weak post-training support. Regression analysis revealed that both accessibility ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.05$) and utilisation ($\beta = 0.55$, $p < 0.05$) significantly contribute to poverty reduction and livelihoods. The findings support the Human Capital Theory, which links education and training to improved productivity and income. The study concludes that while the PAWECA programme has made positive contributions to poverty alleviation, its impact is constrained by operational and institutional limitations. It recommends greater public sensitisation, simplified enrolment procedures, stronger post-training support, improved monitoring, and collaboration with private firms and non-governmental sectors to enhance the programme's sustainability and effectiveness.

Keywords: Government intervention; poverty reduction; skill acquisition; PAWECA.

INTRODUCTION

Since its inception, the government of Adamawa State has participated in the federal government's poverty reduction programme. Government intervention in poverty reduction has remained a key element of Nigeria's development agenda across the nation's states. Programmes such as the Better Life Programme (BLP) for rural women, which focused specifically on improving the lives of rural women, the family support programme (FSP), and the family advancement economic programme (FEAP) were strongly supported, particularly in the state where unemployment and inequality persist (Onah, 2020). Despite participation in implementing the programmes, Adamawa State still faced widespread poverty among its citizens, arising from limited access to education, a decline in traditional supportive livelihoods, and rampant corruption. The state's present government cracked down on the situation and established the Poverty Alleviation and Wealth Creation Agency (PAWECA) in 2020. The programme aims to empower youth, women, and other vulnerable groups through vocational training in entrepreneurial skills to improve citizens' livelihoods (PAWECA, 2025).

Despite several other alleviation programmes established, such as the poverty eradication programme (PEP), the national economic empowerment and development strategies (Vision 2020), and N-Power, among others, the persistence of poverty suggests that these intervention programmes did not achieve their intended goals. (Onah, 2020) Work identified challenges to success, including limited accessibility, weak institutional coordination, inadequate funding, and poor monitoring. Business Day (2024), Daily Post Nigeria. (2025), and Insight North East NG (2025) explain the purpose of such programmes as tools for promoting livelihoods. In line with this, the PAWECA programme in Adamawa was launched to train youth, women, and vulnerable people in the state, empowering these groups. However, the extent to which such opportunities reached the intended beneficiaries, and whether the acquired skills are being effectively used to enhance self-reliance and income generation, remains unclear.

Nevertheless, the major problem is not the absence of government intervention but the uncertain degree of accessibility and utilisation of the programmes among the target population. Accessibility is the extent to which potential beneficiaries are aware of the initiative, can register, and are supported to complete the training (Ibrahim and Mohammed, 2023). Utilisation is the extent to which participants apply the skills they have acquired to generate income for a sustainable livelihood. (Adebayo and Olagunju, 2020). Usually, with such programmes, if participants are limited and the skills acquired are underused, the fundamental objective of reducing poverty remains unfulfilled. Unlike other prior programmes, the empirical basis of PAWECA is limited. Such a development limits the availability of evidence for policy development, thereby hindering effective targeted improvement of government human resources.

Despite the distinctive countenance of Adamawa State citizens, which appears to be hindering the success of the poverty alleviation programmes, the state is rife with unsavoury factors, such as corruption, income inequality, ethno-religious crises, and unemployment, among others, especially among the youth. This study presents a slant at the current poverty alleviation and wealth creation agency (PAWECA). It considers the role of government intervention in poverty reduction in relation to the accessibility and utilisation of the skills beneficiaries acquire in the state. It also works to determine the level of PAWECA, skills acquisition, the extent to which citizens access the programme, and the utilisation of the skills in real life for sustainable livelihoods. Additionally, it provides evidence on progress and the extent to which it advances poverty alleviation in the state. It also offers policy-relevant strategies to improve the design, implementation, and monitoring of the skill-acquisition programme across the state's twenty-one (21) local government areas.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The concept of accessibility in poverty reduction programs encompasses several dimensions: awareness, eligibility, affordability, and inclusion (Adesina, 2022). In the context of government-led initiatives such as the PAWECA skill acquisition program, accessibility is measured by how well potential beneficiaries are informed about the program, understand its purpose, and participate without any institutional or social barriers. It involves both the program's physical reach and the removal of obstacles to participation, such as costs, distance, or lack of information (Yusuf and Tanko, 2022). In some states, limited publicity, weak administrative capacity, and social exclusion have reduced access to PAWECA (Muibi, 2019). Even where facilities exist, people with low incomes, especially rural women and youths, often remain unaware or unable to enrol. Accessibility, therefore, forms the basic foundation of any poverty reduction effort, since an intervention that fails to reach its intended audience cannot achieve its intended purpose (Abdulkarim and Salihu, 2020).

The concept of utilisation focuses on the application of skills after training has been provided. Utilisation measures how effectively beneficiaries apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired in real-life activities that improve livelihoods. Utilisation depends on the presence of complementary support such as access to credit, markets, and continued mentorship. Evidence from various skill development programmes in Nigeria indicated that many participants who completed training lack the means to start or sustain productive ventures (Ajitomobi; Ogwu, 2018). This often results from weak follow-up strategies, insufficient start-up capital, and a mismatch between training content and market demand (Adesina, 2022). Utilisation determines whether the skills gained translate into sustainable employment and poverty-reduction outcomes. This provides the point at which empowerment is tested in practice rather than in intention.

The link between government intervention, accessibility, utilisation, and poverty reduction can be explained through human capital theory, which Becker (1964) argues that investment in education and training enhances individual productivity and income-earning potential. Within this context, accessibility ensures that individuals can participate in training, while utilisation ensures that what has been learnt is converted into productive work or enterprise. Accessibility and utilisation are indispensable; accessibility without utilisation results in a wasted investment, while utilisation without accessibility limits social reach. Government interventions that aim to reduce poverty must therefore strengthen both aspects, making programs open and attainable and ensuring that beneficiaries can apply their skills meaningfully in the economy for better livelihoods.

Both concepts, however, must be understood within the wider institutional and socioeconomic environment in which they operate. Even when programs are accessible and skills are utilised, factors such as inadequate infrastructure, limited market opportunities, weak credit systems, and cultural constraints hinder success. Across Nigerian states, poor coordination among implementing agencies, inconsistent funding, and bureaucratic delays have often undermined the long-term outcomes of skill-acquisition programmes (Ukpong et al., 2025). Effective poverty reduction, therefore, requires not only access and use of skills but also a supportive policy environment. Accessibility and utilisation are thus dynamic, interacting with broader social structures that either enhance or weaken the impact of government interventions such as PAWECA (Muibi, 2019).

Human Capital Theory, advanced by Becker (1964), provides a relevant theoretical foundation for examining government intervention in poverty reduction through skill-acquisition programmes. The theory holds that individuals and societies derive economic benefits from investing in education, training, and skill development, which enhance productivity, efficiency, and earning capacity. This implies that human capital is viewed as a form of wealth embodied in individuals, which, when developed and leveraged, enhances employability and raises income levels. Again, poverty-reduction efforts that equip individuals with vocational and entrepreneurial skills facilitate and increase the investments in a society's human capital base. Within targeted training, beneficiaries gain competencies that enhance their participation in productive economic activities, thereby contributing to household income and community development.

Adamawa State's PAWECA skill-acquisition programme exemplifies this theoretical framework as it aims to develop human capital among the poor and unemployed. The programme's objective to provide accessible and relevant vocational training is consistent with Becker's assertion that education and skill formation are essential drivers of economic advancement. However, the realisation of these benefits depends on both accessibility and utilisation. Accessibility ensures that potential beneficiaries can participate in the training, while utilisation determines whether the acquired skills are effectively applied to generate income. Thus, Human Capital Theory not only explains the rationale behind government investment in skill acquisition but also underscores the importance of translating such training into productive outcomes to achieve sustainable poverty reduction.

Some empirical studies on government interventions and poverty reduction in Nigeria have consistently highlighted the mixed outcomes of skill-acquisition and empowerment programs. Several studies indicate that while such initiatives provide temporary income support and capacity-building, their long-term effectiveness is often hindered by accessibility and implementation challenges. Omodero, (2019) observed that most government-led poverty alleviation schemes in Nigeria, especially those focused on skill development, faced challenges of weak targeting and administrative inefficiency, which limited their reach to the intended beneficiaries. Similarly, Adebayo and Olagunju (2020) maintained that awareness of government skills programs remains low among rural communities, thereby reducing participation among vulnerable groups such as women and youths. The study suggested that accessibility remains a major determinant of the success of poverty reduction strategies in Nigeria.

Studies on skill acquisition and vocational training have indicated a significant but uneven relationship between training participation and income improvement. As indicated in the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) scheme, Oladipo and Oni (2021) observed that beneficiaries who completed training in tailoring, welding, and agro-processing had improved self-employment prospects. However, the overall impact was weakened by inadequate post-training support. Similarly, Adesina (2022) explained that skill-acquisition interventions increase employability; however, limited access to credit facilities and weak market linkages hinder beneficiaries

from effectively applying their skills. The results of the studies underscore the importance of utilisation as a critical factor in determining whether skills acquired through government interventions translate into sustainable livelihoods and poverty reduction.

Studies indicated that empowerment and wealth-creation initiatives in Northern Nigeria affirmed that regional disparities and structural barriers affect both accessibility and utilisation. Ibrahim, Mohammed, (2023). They further observed that poverty reduction programs in the North-East region suffered from poor coordination between state and local authorities, thereby reducing the effectiveness of interventions. In related work, Yusuf and Tanko (2022) investigated women's participation in vocational training schemes. They observed that cultural norms, logistical factors, domestic responsibilities, and transport costs limited female participation despite their willingness to engage. The study also revealed that accessibility is shaped not only by economic constraints but also by social and cultural factors that determine who benefits from government initiatives.

Empirical research on the skill-acquisition programmes such as PAWECA remains limited, but related studies offer valuable insights. Ukpong et al. (2025) assessed community-based skill-acquisition programs in southern Nigeria and expressed that effective monitoring and stakeholder engagement significantly enhanced beneficiaries' ability to apply the skills acquired. The study further explained that, where local participation and follow-up mechanisms were strong, beneficiaries demonstrated higher rates of enterprise establishment and income growth. This aligns with evidence from the World Bank (2023), which emphasises that empowerment programmes yield sustainable outcomes only when accessibility, utilisation, and institutional support are harmonised. The findings collectively suggest that for initiatives like PAWECA to achieve lasting poverty reduction, attention must be given to improving access, strengthening post-training support, and ensuring alignment between training content and market demand.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design, which facilitates the easy collection of data, especially from a group of people at a single point in time. The cross-sectional design effectively supports measuring the prevalence of a condition in a population and greatly facilitates measuring the prevalence of participants or respondents within a specific group. The design is effective for measuring demographic variables, such as age, gender, and educational level. It aided in identifying resources for the study, as well as experiences, perceptions, and participation in the PAWECA skills acquisition programme, as it saves time by collecting large amounts of data and lowers cost.

Population of the Study

The study targeted population comprised all registered participants in the Poverty Alleviation and Wealth Creation Agency (PAWECA) skills acquisition programme. The population include men, women, and youths across the twenty-one (21) local government areas of the state. It includes all training centres and training in trade and other entrepreneurial skills across all local governments. It has embraced over ten thousand (10,000) individuals who have participated in various training centres since its inception in 2020.

Sample Size

The sample size for this study was determined using the Yamane (1967) formula:

$$n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$$

Where:

n = required sample size

N = population size

e = level of precision (0.05)

PAWECA (2025) records indicate that over 10,000 individuals participated in various skill-acquisition programmes in Adamawa State. Since the population is sufficiently large, Yamane's formula was applied using

$N = 10,000$:

$$n = 10,000 / [1 + 10,000(0.05)^2]$$

$$n = 10,000 / [1 + 10,000(0.0025)]$$

$$n = 10,000 / 26$$

$$n = 384.6$$

The calculated sample size was approximately 385 respondents. To improve representation, compensate for potential non-response, and obtain a more robust dataset, the sample size was increased to 400 respondents.

Sampling Technique

The study used a multi-stage sampling procedure to divide the study population into nested clusters. The study selected 400 respondents (participants) through random selection at multiple stages. Adamawa State is one of the largest states in Nigeria's North East. Using the multi-stage approach, the researchers divided the state into senatorial zones as equal treatment units. In the final selection, the local government areas in the zones were identified as cluster units for the identification of PAWECA training centres in the zones. The North senatorial zone has five local government areas, the Central senatorial zone has seven local government areas, and the South senatorial zone has nine local government areas. Arriving at another nested cluster, the researchers identified all the training centres in the senatorial zones of the state.

The senatorial zones are further broken into progressively smaller units nested within groups of the centres. To allow for random selection, the researchers used the box-picking method to select six centres across ten local governments; local government names were written on paper, folded, and picked, with six yeses recorded for each name.

Instrument for Data Collection

The researchers developed a questionnaire to collect the relevant data, in addition to the documents and journal information used in the literature. A structured questionnaire was developed and clearly structured into five Likert-scale items using a psychometric rating system, where respondents read the clear statements and choose options from strongly agree to disagree strongly. This allows the researchers to turn the subjective feelings into measurable numbers. The response scale of the research questionnaire is a systematic row of choices, where the number assigned to each choice (1-5) is summed to yield a real value.

The questionnaire items focused directly on the research variables that underpinned the study objectives. Section A of the structured questionnaire focused on demographic information; section B, on beneficiary accessibility; and section C, on beneficiary utilisation of the skills acquired from the training centres. An expert in development economics, policy analysis, and research validated the questionnaire. A pilot test with 30 respondents in other centres not part of the study yielded a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.84, indicating acceptable reliability.

Procedure for Data Analysis

Data were analysed using SPSS version 25. Descriptive statistics, such as the mean, frequency, percentage, and standard deviation, were used for demographic information and accessibility and utilisation. Inferential statistics, such as Pearson's correlation and multiple regression, were used to test relationships among program accessibility, utilisation, and poverty-reduction outcomes at the 0.05 significance level.

RESULTS AND DATA PRESENTATION

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 400)

Gender Distribution of Respondents

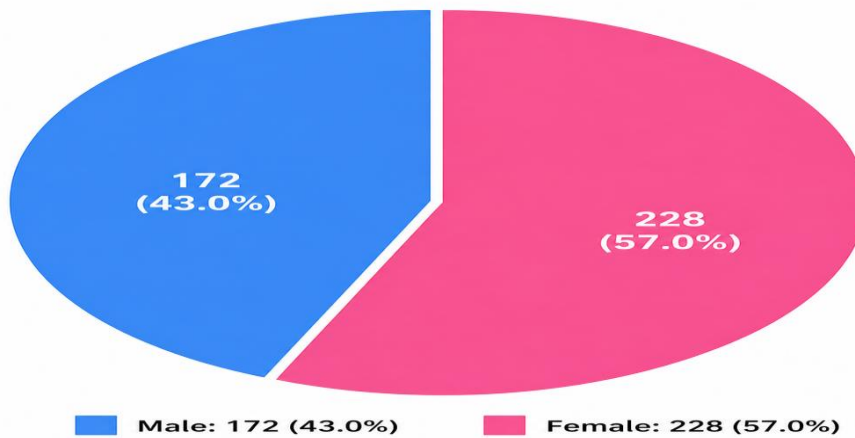


Figure 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Source: Author's Computation Using SPSS Version 25 (2026)

Of all the respondents, 57 per cent are females, a higher proportion than among PAWECA beneficiaries, while 43 per cent are males, indicating that women had greater access to the programme. Because women in Northern Eastern Nigeria are more vulnerable to poverty as a result of insurgency and more often participate actively in government empowerment initiatives. To improve household income and economic security.

Distribution of Respondents by Age

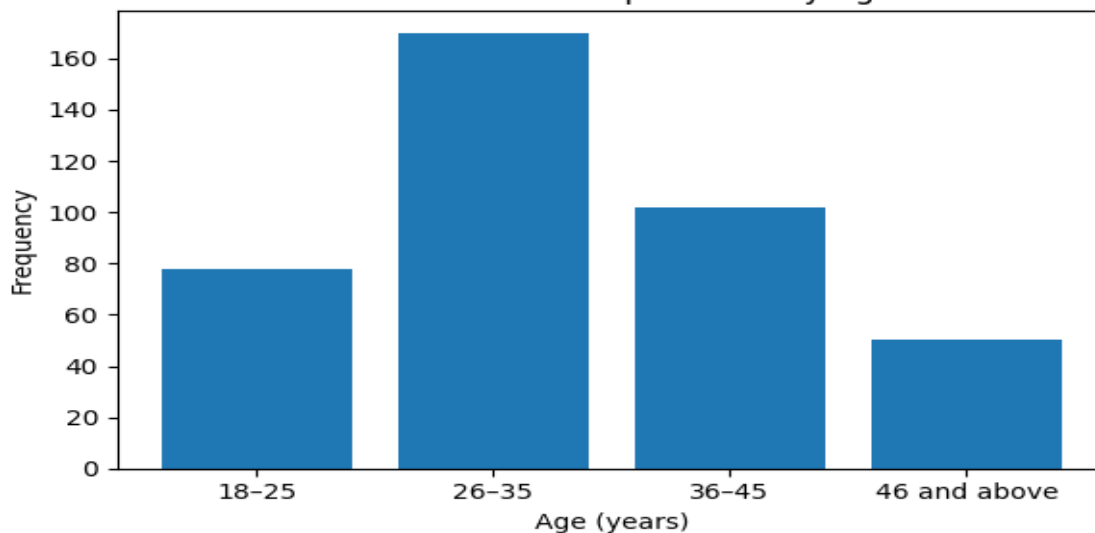


Figure 2: Age Distribution of Respondents

Source: Author's Computation Using SPSS Version 25 (2026)

The figure above shows that respondents aged 26–35 years constitute 43 per cent of respondents and represent the largest group of PAWECA beneficiaries. Those aged 36–45 years constitute 10 per cent, while those aged 18–25 years constitute 10 per cent; residents aged 46 years and above constitute 10 per cent. It indicates that the programme beneficiaries are more young and middle-aged adults, who are more motivated to acquire vocational skills to secure employment, establish businesses, and improve their incomes. It implies that vocational skills

programmes are particularly effective when targeted at economically active age groups, as these groups are more likely to translate acquired skills into productive employment and sustainable livelihoods.

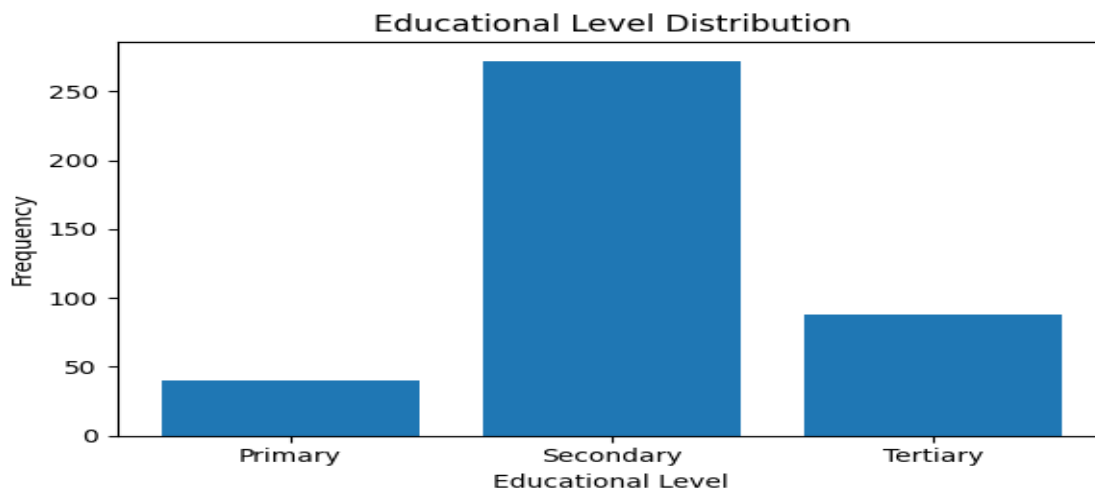


Figure 3: Level of Education of Respondents

Source: Author's Computation Using SPSS Version 25 (2026)

The figure shows that most respondents are secondary education holders, constituting 68 per cent and representing the largest proportion of PAWECA beneficiaries. Tertiary education holders follow at 22 per cent. At the same time, 10 per cent of the respondents have primary education. It indicates that those with secondary education were more likely to have access to the programme and benefit from it. It is due to their disposition as unemployed or underemployed youth who needed skills for self-employment in most communities.

Table 1: Respondents' Perceptions of Accessibility of PAWECA Programme

Accessibility Indicators	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
Awareness of the programme is high	3.85	0.92	Agree
Registration and enrolment are simple	3.41	1.04	Moderate
Programme centres are accessible	3.78	0.96	Agree
Information dissemination is adequate	3.54	1.12	Moderate
Transportation cost affects participation	3.63	1.08	Agree
Overall Mean Accessibility Score	3.64	1.02	Moderate Access

Source: Field Survey (2026).

The findings show an overall mean score of 3.64 (SD = 1.02), indicating that respondents perceived the PAWECA Skill Acquisition Programme to be moderately accessible. Respondents agreed that awareness of the programme was high (M = 3.85) and that training centres were reasonably accessible (M = 3.78), suggesting that the programme has made considerable progress in reaching its target population. However, the moderate ratings for registration and enrolment (M = 3.41) and information dissemination (M = 3.54) indicate that some eligible individuals may still face difficulties in obtaining timely information or completing the enrolment process. Respondents also agreed that transportation costs (M = 3.63) affected participation, highlighting the influence of financial and distance-related barriers on access to the programme. These findings suggest that, although PAWECA has expanded opportunities for skills acquisition, improvements in information

dissemination, enrolment procedures, and transport support would further enhance accessibility. The result supports the study's first objective. It is consistent with the findings of the International Labour Organisation (2023), which emphasised that effective access to vocational training depends on awareness, affordability, and proximity, and with the United Nations Development Programme (2024), which noted that reducing logistical barriers increases participation in poverty reduction programmes.

Table 2: Respondents' Perceptions of Utilisation of Acquired Skills

Utilisation Indicators	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
I apply the skills learned in income-generating activities	3.78	0.85	Agree
I received adequate tools or start-up kits	3.12	1.08	Moderate
Lack of capital limits my skill utilisation	3.95	0.90	Agree
I have been able to create employment for others	3.42	1.10	Moderate
I received post-training support and supervision	3.14	1.05	Moderate
Overall Mean Utilisation Score	3.48	1.00	Moderate Utilisation

Source: Field Survey (2026).

The findings showed an overall mean utilisation score of 3.48 (SD = 1.00), indicating that beneficiaries moderately utilised the skills acquired through the PAWECA Skill Acquisition Programme. Most respondents agreed that they had applied the skills in income-generating activities (M = 3.78), demonstrating that the programme has enabled many participants to improve their livelihoods through self-employment and small business ventures. However, respondents reported only moderate access to start-up tools or kits (M = 3.12), limited ability to create employment for others (M = 3.42), and inadequate post-training support and supervision (M = 3.14). The highest mean score was recorded for lack of capital (M = 3.95), suggesting that financial constraints remain the greatest challenge to putting acquired skills into productive use.

These findings imply that, although the PAWECA programme has successfully equipped beneficiaries with practical vocational skills, many participants are unable to realise the full benefits of the training because they lack the financial resources and institutional support needed to establish or expand their businesses. This finding addresses the second objective of the study. It is consistent with Adebayo and Okafor (2021), who found that vocational training is more effective when complemented by access to finance, business advisory services, and mentorship. Similarly, the International Labour Organisation (2023) reported that the impact of skill-acquisition programmes on employment and poverty reduction can be actualised and strengthened when beneficiaries receive start-up capital, technical guidance, and continuous post-training support.

Table 3: Regression Analysis of Accessibility and Utilisation on Poverty Reduction

Predictor Variables	Standardised Coefficient (β)	t-value	Sig. (p)
Accessibility	0.42	4.67	0.000
Utilisation	0.55	5.81	0.000
$R^2 = 0.63$	$F = 49.26$	$p < 0.05$	

Source: Author's Computation Using SPSS Version 25 (2026).

The regression analysis indicated that both accessibility ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.05$) and utilisation ($\beta = 0.55$, $p < 0.05$) had a significant positive effect on poverty reduction among beneficiaries of the PAWECA Skill Acquisition Programme. The model explained 63 per cent of the variation in poverty reduction ($R^2 = 0.63$), indicating that beneficiaries who could easily access the programme and applied the skills they had acquired in practice experienced improved livelihoods. This result reflects the first and second objectives of the study, relating to the significance of applying the skills acquired...

The influence of skill utilisation indicated that the programme's impact depends not only on enrolment but also on beneficiaries' ability to apply their skills in income-generating activities. In the absence of adequate support, such as start-up capital and mentoring, the benefits of training remain limited. These outcomes are consistent with the work of Adebayo and Okafor (2021), who emphasised that vocational training is most effective when complemented by financial and business support. Similarly, the International Labour Organisation (2023) observed that sustained post-training support enhances employment outcomes and strengthens poverty-reduction efforts.

CONCLUSION

The study established that the introduction of PAWECA as a poverty-reduction and empowerment strategy is significant and timely in promoting state government intervention to improve the livelihoods of state citizens. The programme has contributed immensely to poverty reduction and improved livelihoods by increasing incomes, fostering greater self-reliance, and improving health conditions among people in the state. Access to training and promotion of utilising the acquired skills indeed improved the lives of the beneficiaries. The PAWECA programme is a true life-changing measure for women, men, and youths in the state, especially the unemployed.

The programme has not been totally successful as expected. Because is largely due to existing social and financial obstacles, such as inequity in post-training support, inadequate resource provision, corruption, weak monitoring, transportation costs, weak implementation due to inflation, and inadequate financial support, among others. The study therefore concludes that unless the government attacks the aforementioned problems as bottlenecks to the poverty alleviation programme, with clear measures of reaching out to the rural areas, to meet the set goal and time frame of achieving the PAWECA goals, no effort to alleviate poverty in the state will remain narrow and an infatality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that the government should take strong steps to improve awareness of the PAWECA skill acquisition programme, ensuring that information reaches both urban and rural communities. The organisation should simplify enrolment procedures to reduce delays and make it easier for low-income participants to join. Support after training should include providing start-up kits, access to microcredit, and mentorship, enabling beneficiaries to put their skills into practice effectively. Additionally, a strong monitoring system should be put in place to track progress, evaluate outcomes, and address challenges as they arise. Finally, collaboration with the private sector, including microfinance institutions and NGOs, should be encouraged to increase resources, improve programme delivery, and ensure its sustainability over time.

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