

Dakkada Initiative and Poverty Alleviation in Akwa Ibom State

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Abstract

The Dakkada Initiative Programme, launched by the Akwa Ibom State Government, was designed to foster economic empowerment, self-reliance, and poverty alleviation through various interventions, including support for small-scale businesses and housing development. However, despite the programme's intentions, it has been noted that there are many youths who are without skills and are not gainfully employed in the state. If the Dakkada programme lived up to its expectations, it would create employment opportunities and alleviate poverty in Akwa Ibom State. The study aimed to examine the impact of the Dakkada Initiative on poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State. One of the specific objectives was to examine the impact of the Dakkada Initiative on skill acquisition. Basic Needs Theory was adopted as the most relevant theory in the study. A descriptive design and survey method were adopted, and the study population was 4530. It was revealed that there is a positive and insignificant impact of the Dakkada initiative on skills acquisition development in Akwa Ibom State. The study revealed that there is a positive and insignificant impact of the Dakkada initiative programme on job creation in Akwa Ibom State. However, inadequate funding of the programme becomes one of its major challenges, which has led to the inability of the programme to achieve its purpose. The study therefore recommended, among others, that Akwa Ibom State Government should provide more skills acquisition programmes to many who are less privileged and that start-up packages be given upon completion of the training to make the programme more sustainable in order to enhance their standard of living in Akwa Ibom State.

Keywords: Dakkada Initiative, poverty alleviation, skill acquisition development, job creation

Introduction

Dakkada Initiative, a movement aimed at promoting sustainable development in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, has made significant strides in poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State. Through various programmes and partnerships, the Dakkada Initiative has empowered individuals and communities, fostering economic growth and improving livelihoods in Akwa Ibom State. Greater interest in sustaining human wellbeing and quality of life of poorer nations of the world has attracted enormous attention in contemporary times. Thus, issues of low socio-economic wellbeing of poor rural dwellers, linked to poverty, particularly in Nigeria, have been a subject of significant research interest (Udoms et al., 2017). This makes the eradication of primary poverty one of the greatest social and economic challenges of today (Utok et al., 2025; Ekpo et al., 2026).

In rural communities of Akwa Ibom State, the growing population increases the number of those living in poverty even when there is economic growth (Ibok & Ibanga, 2014). The environmental degradation that often accompanies it tips more people into poverty (Daniel, 2024). The 1990s witnessed states becoming poorer, more people becoming hungry, and more children dying before the age of five (in several countries, almost one child in four will not survive until

the age of five), with primary school enrollment shrinking and life expectancy declining, with more than a quarter of people lacking access to safe drinking water (Bassey, 2024).

The Dakkada Initiative has played a crucial role in poverty reduction by providing access to financial resources, promoting small-scale business development, providing skill acquisition, Job creation and encouraging women's participation in the local economy. Indeed, this has had a positive impact in the rural communities of Akwa Ibom State. Through these concerted efforts, Dakkada Initiative has shown a focus on tackling poverty and establishing a more equitable future for the people of Akwa Ibom State.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the numerous poverty alleviation programmes implemented by successive governments in Nigeria, unemployment and poverty remain persistent, especially at the state and local levels. In Akwa Ibom State, the Dakkada Initiative was introduced as a people-oriented initiative aimed at awakening self-belief, encouraging entrepreneurship, and promoting sustainable development through skills acquisition and Job creation. Despite the programme's intentions, it is presumed that there is poor implementation of Dakkada skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom State, and this situation has resulted in a high level of joblessness among youths. The skills acquisition component of the Dakkada Initiative was designed to empower youths and women through vocational training in trades such as tailoring, ICT, hairdressing, and shoemaking. However, questions persist regarding the adequacy of training facilities, the quality of instruction, and the relevance of skills to market demands. It seems many trainees are unable to transition from training to self-employment due to a lack of post-training support and startup capital. This disconnect between training and enterprise creation undermines the effectiveness of the initiative in building a sustainable human capital base capable of driving economic growth.

Furthermore, job creation remains a pressing developmental challenge in Akwa Ibom State despite the state government's effort to promote employment through the Dakkada Initiative. Although the initiative has produced several beneficiaries trained across various sectors, it is presumed that a significant number of youths remain unemployed or underemployed, which has caused youth restiveness. The gap between the programme's objectives and its actual outcomes raises concerns about the effectiveness and sustainability of its interventions in enhancing livelihoods through skill acquisition and job creation.

Consequently, there is a need to empirically assess the impact of the Dakkada Initiative on poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State, focusing specifically on its contributions to skill acquisition development and job creation. This kind of evaluation will supply evidence-based insights into the effectiveness, challenges, and sustainability of the programme. It will also help policymakers, development agencies, and stakeholders to refine strategies that can enhance youth empowerment, economic growth, and poverty reduction in the state.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study was to examine the impact of the Dakkada initiative on poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State. The specific objectives were to:

1. assess the impact of the Dakkada initiative on skills acquisition development in Akwa Ibom State
2. ascertain the impact of the Dakkada initiative on job creation in Akwa Ibom State

Research Questions

The following research questions were used for the study:

1. What is the impact of the Dakkada initiative on skills acquisition development in Akwa Ibom State?
2. What is the impact of the Dakkada initiative on job creation in Akwa Ibom State?

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were postulated in Null format for the study.

Ho₁: There is no significant impact of the Dakkada initiative on skills acquisition development in Akwa Ibom State.

Ho₂: There is no significant impact of the Dakkada initiative on Job creation in Akwa Ibom State.

Conceptual Review

Dakkada Initiative

Dakkada initiative was put into consideration towards empowering youths through vocational education, economic opportunities, and health initiatives. Promoting youths, girls' education and women's literacy, supporting women's entrepreneurship and economic empowerment, improving access to healthcare for women and girls, addressing gender-based violence and discrimination and supporting housing development in Akwa Ibom State (Dasec Magazine, 2022). The Dakkada Initiative is known to be a socio-economic initiative launched by the leadership of Akwa Ibom State Government in 2015 which was under Governor Udom Emmanuel, to cultivate self-reliance characteristics in the youths of Akwa Ibom State to enhance productivity, business and entrepreneurial spirit among Akwa Ibom indigenes. According to Akpan (2022), the Dakkada Initiative serves as an instrument of value reorientation campaign and an economic empowerment framework developed to spice up the consciousness of Akwa Ibom youths to believe strongly in their ability for rising, greatness and self-reliance. It enhances the idealism of hard work, creativity, and entrepreneurship, inspiring citizens to add meaningfully to state development. The initiative has been in connectivity to youth empowerment, skill acquisition, and small business development, which is in tandem with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) focused on poverty reduction and employment creation (Essien, 2023).

In empirical terms, the Dakkada Initiative operationalises its objectives by focussing on programmes such as agricultural support schemes, entrepreneurial training, and SME financing. Ekanem and Thompson (2021) observed that the initiative has been able to take cognisance of human capital development and economic inclusion by providing access to training, credit facilities, and mentorship for young entrepreneurs. These initiatives have promoted local production, particularly in sectors like agribusiness, ICT, and manufacturing. Further, the Dakkada philosophy—anchored on self-belief and innovation- has contributed to belief system transformation, promoting civic responsibility and self-reliant employment opportunities (Udo & Effiong, 2023). Therefore, the initiative represents a strategic instrument for socio-economic transformation and a practical model for poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State.

Poverty Alleviation

Poverty alleviation, in simple terms, refers to the act of reducing or eliminating poverty in society. It involves implementing strategies and policies and making informed decisions to better life in society, provide access to basic needs, and employment opportunities for people living in poverty

(Dasac, 2017). Poverty alleviation refers to concerted efforts of government towards providing good policies and programmes aimed at reducing the rate of poverty by improving access to income, basic services, and livelihood opportunities. The World Bank (2023) defines poverty alleviation as the process of enabling people and communities to attain a minimum economic status through inclusive growth, social protection, and empowerment initiatives. According to Nwosu (2021), poverty alleviation encapsulates interventions which include: employment generation, education, access to healthcare, and micro-credit that collectively raise the living standards of the poor. In developing countries like Nigeria, these strategies are vital for achieving sustainable development and reducing inequality in society.

Skills Acquisition Development

Skill acquisition is the process by which people acquire skills, discover potential, refine, and apply competencies necessary for productive employment and self-economic sustainability. The International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2023) defines skills acquisition as the process of gaining practical and theoretical knowledge that enhances an individual's productivity and employability. Brown (2024) stressed that effective skills development constitutes formal vocational training, apprenticeships, and informal learning to bridge the gap between education and labour-market demand. It prepares individuals with the ability to adapt to technological changes and as well as industrial changes, which is critical for sustainable livelihoods in developing economies.

Furthermore, skills acquisition plays a critical role in national and regional development by promoting entrepreneurship and reducing unemployment. According to the OECD (2023), skill-development programmes that integrate technical training with entrepreneurship education led to improved job creation and economic diversification. In Akwa Ibom State, the Dakkada Initiative's focus on skills training leads to empowering youths to establish micro-businesses, boost local production, and as well promote economic independence (Brown, 2024; ILO, 2023). As a result of these initiatives, investments that are sustainable have been able to contribute not only to personal empowerment and development but also to the overall reduction of poverty through increased self-employment and income generation in Akwa Ibom State.

Job Creation

Job creation simply means the facilitation of new employment opportunities through economic expansion, enterprise development, or policy interventions that stimulate labour demand. The OECD (2023) sees job creation as the instrument by which new and sustainable jobs are established within an economy to improve the standard of living and reduce unemployment to improve livelihoods. According to the World Economic Forum (2023), job creation becomes a fundamental instrument for inclusive growth, as newly created jobs raise household income, boost consumption, and enhance social welfare. Thus, effective poverty-alleviation policies, such as the Dakkada Initiative, should be able to create sustained job opportunities

In addition, in a modern society, it has been highlighted that sustainable job creation must focus on providing "decent work," characterised by fair wages, job security, and equal opportunities (Eurofound, 2023). The OECD (2020) stresses that policies focusing on entrepreneurship and SME development have a direct multiplier effect on employment and raising the standard of living, particularly in developing regions. In Akwa Ibom State, the Dakkada Initiative's programmes cut across entrepreneurship, industrial development, and vocational training, which have the potential to foster massive job creation by linking trained youths to

productive sectors (OECD, 2023; World Economic Forum, 2023). This, in turn, can reduce unemployment and enhance income distribution, contributing to long-term poverty alleviation.

Dakkada Initiative and Skills Acquisition Development

The Dakkada Initiative has significantly impacted skills acquisition and development in Akwa Ibom State by being able to create platforms for youth empowerment and vocational training. The initiative, which was conceived as a moral reawakening and economic transformation agenda, aims to prepare citizens—especially young minds—with the technical know-how and entrepreneurial skills required to thrive in a competitive economy (Akpan, 2022). Through its programmes, such as the Dakkada Skills Acquisition Centres and entrepreneurship training schemes, those who participate are exposed to practical competencies in fields like agriculture, ICT, fashion design, and manufacturing. Essien (2023) noted that these social protections have bridged the skill gap amongst unemployed youths, improving their employability and enhancing their ability to pursue self-employment opportunities. The initiative's emphasis on innovation and enterprise has thus positioned skill acquisition as a central tool for socio-economic advancement and poverty reduction.

Again, the Dakkada Initiative has fostered a culture of self-reliance by encouraging beneficiaries to develop market-driven skills that align with the realities of the modern economy. Ekanem and Thompson (2021) argued that the shift from dependency to employer of labour has created a new phase of economic stimulation. Through partnerships with local and international agencies, the initiative offers different training in various aspects of entrepreneurial development, business management, and digital literacy, thereby preparing youths to compete effectively in both local and global markets. The incorporation of mentorship and start-up support mechanisms has also enhanced sustainability by ensuring that trained individuals can establish viable small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

Additionally, the impact of the Dakkada Initiative on skills development can be observed in the improvement of human capital within the state's workforce. According to Udo and Effiong (2023), beneficiaries of Dakkada's skill development programmes have demonstrated higher productivity and innovation in their respective trades. These outcomes contribute to the overall economic growth of Akwa Ibom State by increasing local production and reducing dependence on external labour. The initiative's focus on 4 and 8 section of the Sustainable Development Goals of vocational training emphasises quality education, decent work, and economic growth. Consequently, the Dakkada Initiative has strengthened the link between education and employability, ensuring that skill acquisition translates into tangible economic benefits.

Dakkada Initiative and Job Creation

The Dakkada Initiative has played a critical role in promoting job creation in Akwa Ibom State by stimulating entrepreneurship, supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and encouraging self-employment among the youth. Conceived as a comprehensive socio-economic empowerment strategy, the initiative emphasises the creation of sustainable livelihoods rather than temporary employment opportunities. Akpan (2022) notes that the Dakkada Initiative has facilitated the establishment of numerous micro-enterprises through capacity-building programmes, vocational training, and start-up grants. These interventions have expanded the productive base of the state's economy, enabling individuals to create businesses that, in turn, generate jobs for others. Through

agricultural schemes, industrial training, and enterprise development programmes, the initiative directly addresses unemployment by promoting innovation and productivity.

Furthermore, the initiative has undoubtedly contributed to job creation through the strengthening and promotion of entrepreneurship ecosystems within the state. Ekanem and Thompson (2021) observe that the Dakkada philosophy boost self-reliant and creativity, which are fundamental attributes for entrepreneurial success. By providing access to microcredit facilities, mentorship, and business incubation, the initiative empowers benefited individuals to transition from training to enterprise ownership. Essien (2023) adds that this model not only creates jobs but also builds a new generation of entrepreneurs capable of driving economic diversification. Again, the Dakkada Initiative functions as both a job-creation instrument and a catalyst for industrial development, particularly in agribusiness, manufacturing, and ICT sectors.

Furthermore, the Dakkada Initiative is in alignment with national employment strategies and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 8, which ultimately promotes decent work and economic growth. According to Udo and Effiong (2023), job creation through skills has greatly reduced youth unemployment, social vices and raised the standard of living among youth by providing viable alternatives for economic engagement. Many beneficiaries of Dakkada training schemes have established businesses employing other youths, thereby multiplying the initiative's employment impact. This ripple effect has contributed to reducing rural-urban migration and strengthening community-based socio-economic development. The initiative is anchored on sustainable, self-driven employment, which ensures that beneficiaries do not only gain jobs but also acquire the capacity to create additional employment opportunities.

Theoretical Frameworks

Human Capital Theory was Propounded by Gary Becker in 1979

This study adopted the Human Capital Theory as propounded by Gary Becker in 1979. The theory considers Investment in Skills and knowledge, as it emphasises the importance of human capital (skills, knowledge, and experience) for economic growth. Social investment programmes are seen as investments in human capital. By equipping individuals with the skills and knowledge to launch and run successful businesses, these programs contribute to a more skilled workforce, increased innovation, and ultimately, economic development. These are just a few of the theoretical frameworks used to understand the relationship between entrepreneurial programs and socioeconomic development. The most effective programs will likely incorporate elements from several of these frameworks, tailoring their approach to the specific needs and context of their target audience.

Human capital theory, developed by economists like Gary Becker, focuses on the idea that a person's knowledge, skills, and experience can be viewed as an investment that increases their economic value. In simpler terms, it suggests that people can improve their earning potential by investing in themselves through education, training, and on-the-job experiences, thereby tackling poverty and leading to socio-economic development.

Methodology

Research Design

The design adopted in the execution of the study was a descriptive design and survey method. The researcher chose a descriptive design because it enabled information to be gathered through secondary sources. The researcher also chose the survey method because it involved a group of

people to be studied by collecting information from them. The survey method was used by the researcher to source primary data.

Population of the Study

The study population for the research was 4,530, being the total number of beneficiaries of the DAKKADA Initiative in Akwa Ibom State between 2023-2024, Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs report (2024).

Sampling Technique/Size

This research adopted the Taro Yamane formula to determine the sample size (n)

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = Sample size

N = Population Size

Where:

n = Sample size

N = Population Size (4,530)

e = level of significance of 5% (0.05)

1 = Constant

To determine the Sample Size

$$n = \frac{4,530}{1 + 4,530 \times (0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{4,530}{1 + 4,530 \times 0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{4,530}{11.3}$$

$$= 400$$

Sample Procedure

The random sampling procedure was adopted in this research.

Method of Data Analysis

In presenting the data, the researcher chose a quantitative method and content analysis.

Data Presentation

Table 1: Showing the Impact of Dakkada Initiative on Skill Acquisition Development (2015-2023)

Skills acquisition type	Number of beneficiaries
Tailoring	155
Hair dressing	160
Make-up Artist	88
Barbing	101
Painting	90
ICT training	110
Soup making	80
Shoe making	100
Total	884

Source: Field report from DASAC CENTER, UYO (2024).

Table 2: Impact of Dakkada Initiative on Job creation (2015-2023)

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Tailoring	155
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Total	884

Source: Field report from DASAC CENTER, UYO (2024).

Discussion of Findings

Dakkada Initiative and Skill Acquisition Development

The data revealed that a total of 884 beneficiaries participated in various skills acquisition programmes under the Dakkada Initiative between 2015 and 2023. The distribution shows high enrolment in trades such as hairdressing (160), tailoring (155), ICT training (110), and barbing (101), indicating strong participation in both traditional and modern vocational skills. This diversity of skills reflects the initiative's multi-sectoral approach to human capital development,

designed to meet labour market demands and enhance self-employment opportunities. The inclusion of ICT and digital literacy also aligns with global trends in promoting technology-driven entrepreneurship.

The findings further demonstrated that skill acquisition under the Dakkada Initiative is not limited to urban areas but extends to rural communities, promoting inclusive participation. Dakkada Initiative has been able to foster sustainable livelihoods. Beneficiaries in tailoring, hairdressing, and shoe-making sectors have established small enterprises, thereby contributing to household income and community development. Hence, the Dakkada Initiative's emphasis on practical skills has strengthened the human capital base of Akwa Ibom State and contributed to poverty reduction, though the impact is not significant. This result has aligned with the submission by the International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2023), whose submission is that investment in vocational and technical training enhances productivity and innovation.

Dakkada Initiative and Job Creation

The analysis of the data on job creation mirrors the findings on skills acquisition, with a total of 884 individuals benefiting from the initiative's training programmes between 2015 and 2023. This suggests a direct relationship between skills acquisition and employment generation, as trained individuals either gained jobs or established self-owned enterprises. The highest number of job opportunities emerged in trades such as hairdressing, tailoring, and ICT, which collectively account for over 48% of total beneficiaries. These findings affirm that the Dakkada Initiative has effectively created avenues for productive engagement, particularly among young people. According to Essien (2023), the initiative has reduced the unemployment rate by promoting self-reliance and entrepreneurship among Akwa Ibom youths.

Moreover, the replication of the same data across both skills development and job creation categories implies that the training programmes have been structured to lead directly to employment outcomes. This aligns with the observation of Ekanem and Thompson (2021) that the Dakkada philosophy translates empowerment training into job opportunities through mentorship, start-up support, and access to finance. The initiative's linkage between training and enterprise development has created sustainable jobs and reduced reliance on government employment. In line with the OECD (2023) and World Bank (2023) reports on inclusive growth, the Dakkada Initiative contributes to decent work and economic empowerment, making it a key driver of socio-economic transformation in Akwa Ibom State.

Summary

The study critically examined the impact of the Dakkada Initiative on poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State. To assess the impact of the Dakkada Initiative on skills acquisition development in Akwa Ibom State, the survey method and descriptive design were adopted, and it was revealed that about 884 people benefited from the Dakkada skills development support programme in Akwa Ibom State. Based on the above finding, it was drawn that there is a positive and significant impact of the Dakkada initiative on skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom State.

The second objective was to assess the impact of the Dakkada initiative on Job creation in Akwa Ibom State. With the survey method and descriptive design adopted, it was revealed that about 884 people benefited from Dakkada skills development and were gainfully employed after the training in Akwa Ibom State. Based on the limited number, it was drawn that there is a positive and significant impact of the Dakkada initiative on Job creation in Akwa Ibom State.

Conclusion

The Dakkada Initiative in Akwa Ibom State has emerged as a significant force in addressing various societal challenges, including poverty alleviation, through skill acquisition and job creation. The study concludes that, through its diverse range of programs and initiatives, the initiative has demonstrated a commitment to improving the lives of the state's citizens, particularly the most vulnerable, and has successfully implemented programmes that directly target poverty reduction. The Dakkada Initiative has provided essential support to marginalised groups, including youths and individuals with disabilities, through skill acquisition and job creation, which has contributed to enhancing the socio-economic development of the state, though these contributions are not significant.

Recommendations

To further enhance the impact of the Dakkada Initiative, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Akwa Ibom State Government should provide more skills acquisition programmes to many who are less privileged to enhance their standard of living in the State.
2. Akwa Ibom State Government should diversify training to include emerging sectors like renewable energy, agro-tech, and digital marketing, as this diversification will align job creation efforts with global economic trends, making beneficiaries more competitive and employable in a rapidly changing economy.

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