

## **ABSTRACT**

In Nigeria, the youth comprise sixty percent of the population. Most of them are unemployed and ultimately poor despite the government's implementation of various youth empowerment programs. Poverty reduction requires effective and empowering policies to ensure a better life for the youth. This study examined the State's capacity to effectively plan and implement youth empowerment programs in Yobe State, northern Nigeria. The study adopted a mixed-methods sequential design combining quantitative and qualitative methods. In the first phase, 393 randomly selected respondents were interviewed using a semi-structured questionnaire. In the second phase, data were collected on the opinions, views and experiences of poverty alleviation programmes using 12 key informant interviews, 12 in-depth interviews and 30 focus group discussions. The study findings show that most of the youth respondents understand the meaning of empowerment as presented by the Nigerian State. Many empowerment programs have been implemented but have had a limited impact on the youth. The attitudes and experiences of the youth show a lack of satisfaction with the nature of youth empowerment. They are also dissatisfied with and lack confidence in the State's institutional capacity to implement the empowerment programs. As a result, the intermediate nature of Nigeria State contributes to the various challenges affecting poverty alleviation interventions. Without understanding and providing for the needs of the youth whose wellbeing is supposedly improved, empowerment initiatives meant to be supportive are likely to be dissatisfying and disappointing. The disempowered youth do not believe that they have the opportunities to develop themselves out of poverty. Such disempowerment compromises their citizenry roles. When most youth in a country are poor and unemployed, they severely threaten the State's security and economic development. Therefore, there is a need for Nigeria to reposition itself as a developmental state of embedded autonomy in order to assume its custodian, demiurge, midwife and husbandry roles to ensure an improved economy and the youth's well-being.

