EFFECTS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS PROJECTS ON POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN THE SELECTED LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF BENUE STATE

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ABSTRACT: *This study examined the effect of sustainable development goal projects on poverty alleviation in Benue State. The population of the study consists of 1,332,200 beneficiaries of sustainable development goals projects in selected local government areas of Benue state. The study made use of purposeful sampling to sample 400 beneficiaries drawn from six local government areas from the three senatorial zones in the state comprising of zones A, B and C. The data was sourced with the use of a structured questionnaire. The data was analysed using binary logistic regression. Findings from the study revealed that SDGs projects on water were significant as residents had access solar powered/hand pumped boreholes as their source of drinking, projects on health centres were found to be significant as residents had access to primary health centres, projects on educational facilities were found to be significant as there were improvement in the physical condition of the schools, projects on skills acquisition centres were insignificant as residents were not gainfully employed. The study recommends residents' engagement in the formulation and implementation of SDGs-based projects.*

KEYWORDS: Development, Poverty, Sustainable.

JEL Classification Codes: O10, I32, Q01

INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a social problem globally, and it affects continents, nations, and peoples differently. It affects people in various depths and levels at different times and phases of existence. According to Osinowo, Sanusi, and Tolorunju (2019), poverty in the face of abundance is now the world's greatest challenge, and the major developmental objective is the achievement of equality in the distribution of income and reduction of poverty (Adegoriola & Ben-Obi, 2024). The World Bank (2020) report shows that 689 million persons of the world's population live on less than $1.90 purchasing power parities (PPP) US dollars. Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) accounted for more than 60% of the world population below the international poverty line (IPL) and had the highest regional poverty rate at 40%.

Poverty has gained the attention of the international community, with the first sustainable development objective being the global eradication of all forms of poverty (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). The United Nations (UN) Millennium Summit was held in New York from September 6 to 8, 2000, at which 189 UN member nations agreed to meet some of the development goals outlined in the Millennium Proclamation. The first millennium development goal was to halve the number of people living on less than $1 per day between 1990 and 2015. As a result, the failures of the Millennium Development Goals might be justified by the formation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the UN General Assembly Resolution 70/1 on September 25, 2015. This resolution is a universal call to action. It is about eradicating poverty, conserving the environment, and ensuring peace and prosperity for everyone. In this approach, the SDGs aim to build on what the United Nations considers the successes of the previous Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which did not entirely fulfill their objectives.

It seems that little to nothing has been accomplished despite the policies, programs, and initiatives put in place in Benue state to help address the needs of the vulnerable and lessen poverty in the state, such as the Local Empowerment and Environmental Management Programme (LEEMP), Community and Social Development Agency (CSDA), Sure-P, N-Power, and NAPEP. The state's low level of living is mostly due to the state's still-poor infrastructure, which includes bad roads, insufficient water supplies, and other problems. (BENSEEDs, 2005). However, the government has not completely disregarded or abandoned the issue of poverty in Nigeria, particularly in Benue State. Despite poverty reduction measures implemented in Benue state, the situation has worsened, with a poverty rate of 32.90% (NBS, 2018). Hence, this study answers the following research questions:

i. What are the SDG projects that have significantly reduced poverty in the selected local government areas of Benue State?

ii. What are the challenges of implementing SDG projects targeted at alleviating poverty in some selected local government areas of Benue State?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Clarifications

Sustainable Development Goals

The World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) defined sustainable development as progress that meets present needs without endangering the capacity of future generations to meet their own. Since eradicating poverty is a key component of both the Sustainable Development Goals and the Millennium Development Goals, sustainable development is one of the concepts discussed the most in contemporary development discourse.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a series of seventeen (17) explicitly stated global goals and 169 targets that the United Nations, in collaboration with various governments and agencies of member nations, devised to ensure global sustainable development by 2030. A wide range of social and economic development issues were intended to be addressed by the 17 broad goals, which included poverty, hunger, health, education, gender equality, water and sanitation, energy, economic growth, innovation and infrastructure, reduced inequalities, sustainable cities, consumption and protection, climate change, water, land, social justice, and partnership.

Concept of Poverty Alleviation

According to Oviasuyi (2020), the term "poverty alleviation" encompasses all strategies, tactics, or approaches used by the state, non-governmental organisations, or affluent individuals in an effort to lessen or completely eradicate poverty within a community. In this study, the concept of "poverty alleviation" refers to the range of methods, acts, or processes performed by people, organisations, pertinent governmental authorities, or entities at the local and global levels in the form of projects, policies, and programs that are aimed to lower the harshness of poverty.

According to Ijaya, Ijaya, Bello, and Ajayi (2011), since Nigeria gained its independence, several governments have adopted several policies with the goal of reducing poverty and empowering the people to make their own economic decisions.

Theoretical Review

Human Capital Theory

One of the main factors influencing poverty is the notion of earnings known as "human capital." The idea was first presented by Becker and Mincer in 1962 and explains why people choose to invest in education and training, as well as why people's lifetime earnings tend to follow a certain pattern. Human capital, broadly speaking, refers to the personal investments people make in themselves that have a favorable impact on economic production. A person's strength and vitality, which are based on their health and nutritional status, as well as their learned knowledge and abilities, are all considered to be part of their human capital, which is a wide term used to describe acquired human attributes that generate income. This theory's attraction stems from the idea that investing in human capital yields returns in the form of personal financial success and

accomplishment. The fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), education, has been seen as a key tool for raising people's skills and capacities and lowering poverty.

Cultural Belief System Theory of Poverty

The cultural theory of poverty, which was put forth in the late 1950s, was propounded by Oscar Lewis (1950) and holds individuals accountable for their poverty due to their culture. It is also relevant to this examination. Lewis asserted that "people held an attitude of fatality" (i.e., they felt that trying to change their circumstances would be futile) and "present time orientation" (i.e., they live for now instead of tomorrow). According to the theory, there are specific patterns of values, attitudes, and behavioural norms that the rich and the poor adhere to. Abiniku (2006) claims that a lot of stress is placed on fatalism and resignation in the theories that explain the predicament of the poor in colonial civilisations or the early phases of capitalism.

Vicious Circle of Poverty

The most widely propagated explanation for why poor, underdeveloped countries have failed to grow economically is that they are trapped in vicious circles of poverty. These vicious circles of poverty operate both on the supply and demand sides of capital formation. The supply side of capital formation refers to savings required to accelerate capital formation to raise productivity and per capita income. The demand side of capital formation refers to the inducement to invest, that is, investment demand which depends on the size of the market that is level of demand which is small in underdeveloped countries. Ragner Nurkse attributed the persistence of poverty in undeveloped countries to vicious circles of poverty. Both these vicious circles take poverty as their starting point. He further noted that to break away from the vicious circles of poverty, adequate foreign aid or foreign direct investment to the underdeveloped countries and the strategy of balance growth.

Theoretical Framework

The vicious circle of poverty theory was used in the course of the study. Ragner (1950) developed the vicious cycle of poverty in the early 1950s, and the model appeared to depict the state of many developing nations closely at the time. Based on the idea that one of the main things impeding growth and development is a lack of capital, this theory of poverty is among the most well-known theories of poverty. He went on to say that the vicious circle of poverty is a circular constellation of forces that tend to act and respond among themselves in a way that perpetuates poverty in a poor nation.

The theory that most accurately captures Benue State's poverty status is the vicious circle of poverty. The majority of people are farmers with crude, local implements, which results in low productivity, which leads to low income because most people are involved in substantial production, which lowers demand and, consequently, lowers investment, which results in insufficient capital. This low income is a characteristic of most individuals. The majority of families barely make ends meet and rely on a limited quantity of food. Surviving on a short supply of food may cause them to underfeed, which could weaken their health and physical capacity.

Empirical Review

Rabiu, Ibrahim, Ali, and Nasiru (2022) examined the study, Sustainable Development Goals and Poverty Reduction in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects. The study, which employed qualitative analysis, found that, when compared to the 1960s, poverty is still rising despite the implementation of the SDG programs. Increased unemployment, particularly among young people, corruption, debt load, lack of political will, inadequate infrastructure, and insecurity are all factors linked to poverty. The study concluded that in order to successfully construct a solid and dependable framework for the purpose of ending poverty in Nigeria, coordinated and group activities are required.

Ochonogor and Iheoma (2021) investigated Benue residents' participation, media agenda-setting, and understandability in order to achieve sustainable development goals. The research employed primary data. A weighted mean score, a frequency distribution table, and a basic percentage were used to examine the data. The results demonstrate that while some individuals were influenced by the media, the majority of inhabitants were unaware of the SDGs' targets 7 through 17. The results also showed that out of the 17 SDGs, locals participated and gave priority to objectives 1 through 5. The study suggested that in order for the media agenda to reach the intended audience, there should be a methodical and deliberate media strategy that would raise public awareness of the issue and encourage participation.

Kabari and Nwogo (2021) studied the effects of the SDGs on rural development and poverty reduction in Nigeria between 2015 and 2020. The study used qualitative data. The study also prioritised the following objectives: no poverty, no hunger, food security, the advancement of sustainable agriculture, the health sector, infrastructure development, gender equality, and international cooperation. According to the study's findings, Nigeria's rural development and poverty have not been substantially improved by SDG initiatives. The study suggested that in order to improve poverty reduction and rural development in Nigeria, governments at all levels should make sure that SDG programs and initiatives are properly planned and carried out.

Vehe and Ijuo (2020) in a study on micro-scale businesses and poverty alleviation in Benue State's Makurdi Local Government Area. Using a stratified sampling approach, 247 sample sizes were selected from a population of 3325 participants. A systematic questionnaire was used to gather the data, and logistic regression was used for analysis. It was discovered that Benue State's micro-scale businesses greatly aid in the fight against poverty. It was discovered, specifically, that running a microbusiness and having access to healthcare facilities lower the likelihood of being poor by 2.19 and 2.16 percent, respectively, and that having more revenue from microbusinesses lowers the likelihood of being poor by 0.002 percent. The study proposed that in order to fully realise the potential of micro companies in the state, the government, organisations, and concerned individuals should develop and promote initiatives aimed at fostering the growth of micro-scale firms.

Buba *et al.* (2018) in a study aimed at transferring the focus from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGS) to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS) in northern Nigeria, An examination of a few markers of maternal and reproductive health from 2003 to 2017. The research employed secondary data and analysed results from national surveys, several indicator cluster

surveys, and the 2012 MDGs performance monitoring survey. The findings demonstrated that, given the performance of the set targets both nationally and in northern Nigeria, the maternal and under-five mortality rates in the region continue to be high. In contrast, other important reproductive and maternal health indicators for the achievement of the MDGs and the SDGs remain low. The study suggested that the government hire the necessary number of highly qualified workers, particularly front-line healthcare providers in rural areas. It also suggested that all levels of health care should be provided at subsidised costs, with a focus on the underprivileged and rural populations because of their socioeconomic standing.

Kemal and Chinedu (2018) examined poverty reduction and sustainable development in Nigeria. While per capita income and literacy rate were used as proxies for long-term progress, the study used the Error Correction Model (ECM) on time series data, such as the Human Development Index (HDI), to represent poverty eradication. The research states that HDI had a beneficial influence on both the literacy rate and per capita income during the study period. The study discovered that a decrease in poverty reduction was connected with an increase in sustainable development over time. It also urged that effective policies be developed and implemented to eliminate poverty.

Aminu, Abdulkadir, Jamilu, and Mohammed (2018), in a study on poverty alleviation and sustainable development, looked at both past and present initiatives to reduce poverty in order to analyse the results and difficulties associated with putting these initiatives into practice in Nigeria. Data from secondary sources were used in the study. According to the report, poverty is a widespread issue that will take time and effort to eradicate but can be lessened with cooperation from all parties involved. The study's conclusions also showed that a number of programs aimed at reducing poverty that have been implemented by governments in the past and present face numerous obstacles that prevent them from working.

Abdu and Anam (2018) studied driving inclusive sustainable development goals for Nigeria's industrial development and economic growth. For the study, secondary data covering the 34-year period from 1981 to 2015 was used. The study's multiple regression model was developed, and STATA was utilised to analyse the findings. The findings showed that government policies have not promoted industrial development in Nigeria to bring about the necessary economic growth and that industry has no discernible impact on the country's economic progress. The study suggested that in order to support local companies, the necessary infrastructure should be established.

In a study, Ezeh (2018) studied the implications for sustainable development of Nigeria's need for sufficient funding for high-quality education. The explored secondary sources. The data was analysed using a qualitative content analysis methodology. The study's conclusions showed that during the colonial era, educational financing was strongly correlated with quality, which acted as a powerful incentive to guarantee educational quality. It also showed that, in Nigeria, funding for education is not only insufficient but also uneven. According to the research, Nigeria's federal government should move quickly to implement the UN's recommendation that it devote at least 26% of its whole budget to education.

Yisau (2017) in a study evaluation of poverty reduction in Nigeria towards Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The study made use of secondary sources of data. The study's quality

was also assessed. The investigation discovered that achieving the objectives was essentially quixotic and at a snail's pace. The study's conclusions also showed that progress has not been equal enough to eliminate poverty, and as a result, Nigeria was not moving forward because of the formidable obstacles to development and poverty. According to the study, the government should also actively pursue the implementation of the SDGs and improve the monitoring of them in order to achieve sustainable development or poverty reduction.

Gbeneol, Brisibe, and Ogaji (2014) in a study Performance Management of Public Interventions in Nigeria: Practice Report on the MDGs-CGS to Local Government, evaluated the effectiveness of impartial monitors who kept an eye on and oversaw the projects and programs that local governments received funding for under the OSSAP-MDGs conditional grants system (CGS) between 2011 and 2014. The research employed a qualitative analysis method. The study's conclusions showed that over the time frame, 29,465 projects were carried out using the conditional grants program. Nearly a quarter (23.8%) of the initiatives involved building new facilities, and the majority (41.1%) and health sectors (34.6%) were involved in the purchase of books and equipment related to achieving the MDGs. More than half (56.8%) of the projects were completed on schedule, while 0.3% were abandoned by the contractors. The study recommended that independent monitors should be involved in the implementation of pro-poor projects, which adds value and produces more credible reports on project performance.

METHODOLOGY

Study Area

Benue state derives its name from Nigeria's second-largest river. The state was created in 1976 and is located in Nigeria's Middle Belt. It is a region bounded by longitudes 2.75 and 14.5° East of the Greenwich Meridian and latitudes 4 and 14° North of the Equator (NPC, 2006). Benue state is divided into three geopolitical zones for administrative convenience: zone A, zone B and zone C. Farming is the primary employment for around 75% of the people who reside in rural areas. The state is spread out throughout the area, which separates savanna and forest flora. According to Akighir, Jacob, and Ateata (2020), the state is primarily an agrarian one, with over 70% of the working population engaged in agricultural activities. The term "Food Basket of the Nation" refers to Benue State's extensive agricultural production and activities. Due to financial difficulties, the state has relatively little agricultural equipment, and as a result, smallholder farmers make up the majority of the farming population. The map of Benue State is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Map of Benue State

Source: Google Map

Model Specification

In specifying the model adopted in this study, we have been guided by theoretical considerations, voluminous empirical evidence as well as the peculiarities of the Nigerian economy. The model for the study was adapted from Binuyo (2014). But for the purpose of this study, the logistic regression model was used to answer the specified research questions.

$$POV = f(SDGP)\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots..(1)$$

Indicators of Sustainable Development Goals projects (SDGP) include health centres, skills acquisition centres, referral vehicles for hospitals, essential drugs, solar powered/hand pump boreholes will be included in the model.

$$POV = f(HC, SACS, RVH, EDS, SP/HPB, EDUF)\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots(2)$$

Explicitly, the model is stated as;

$$POV = \beta_0 + \beta_1 HC + \beta_2 SACS + \beta_3 RVH + \beta_4 EDS + \beta_5 \frac{SP}{HPB} + \beta_6 EDUF + U\dots\dots(3)$$

Where:

HC = Health centres

SACS = Skills acquisition centres

RVH = Referral vehicles for hospitals

EDS = Essential drugs

SP/HPB = Solar powered/hand pumped boreholes

EDUF = provision of learning facilities

β_0 = intercept of the model β_1 - β_6 are the parameters

U = Error term

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section focuses on the analysis of the data generated from the field. The data are analyzed based on the research objectives and corresponding research hypotheses. The presentation and discussion of the study's result is structured to capture the answers provided by respondents in the questionnaire.

Table 2: Access to Primary Health Centres/Medical Supplies

	Before the Project		After the Project	
Local Government	Traditional source	PHC/Drugs	Traditional source	PHC/Drugs
Tarka	5.88 (2)	94.12 (32)	0.00 (0)	100.00 (34)
Agatu	30.43 (14)	69.57 (32)	0.00 (0)	100.00 (46)
Oju	48.72 (19)	51.76 (20)	0.00 (0)	100.00 (39)
Ohimini	17.24 (5)	82.76 (24)	3.45 (1)	96.55 (28)
Ushongu	30.38 (24)	69.62 (55)	0.00 (0)	100.00 (79)
Gboko	27.56 (43)	72.44 (113)	6.41 (10)	93.59 (146)
Resident area				
Rural	29.57 (68)	70.43 (162)	0.87 (2)	99.13 (228)
Urban	25.49 (39)	74.51 (114)	5.88 (9)	94.12 (144)

Source: *Field Survey, 2024*

Note: Number of observations=383; statistics are presented in percentages and frequencies in parentheses.

The percentage distribution of sample characteristics' access to primary health centers and medical supplies before and after the intervention is displayed in Table 2. According to the local government's distribution, traditional medicine was used by Tarka 5.88(2), Agatu 30.43 (14), Oju 48.72 (19), Ohimini 17.24 (5), Ushongu 30.38 (24) and Gboko 27.56 (43) people. Prior to the intervention, primary health centers were utilised by Tarka 94.12(32), Agatu 69.57(32), Oju

51.28(20), Ohimini 82.76(24), Ushongu 69.62(55), and Gboko 72.44(113). Following the intervention, primary health centers and medical supplies were accessible to Tarka 100 (34), Agatu 100 (46), Oju 100 (39), Ohimini 96.55(28), Ushongu 100 (79), and Gboko 93.59(146), yet traditional medicine is used by Tarka 0(0), Agatu 0(0), Oju 0(0), Ohimini 3.45(1), and Gboko 6.41 (10).

According to the distribution by resident area, prior to the intervention, 83.91(193) rural residents and 85.62(131) urban residents had access to health centers and medical supplies, whereas 16.09(37) rural residents and 14.38(22) urban residents used traditional sources. However, following the intervention, 58.26 (134) rural residents and 37.91 (58) urban residents used traditional medicine, while 41.74 (96) rural residents and 62.09 (95) urban residents needed to visit health centers or buy medical supplies.

Table 3: Access to Educational Facilities (Education)

Local Government	Attendance Before the Project		Attendance After the Project	
	One -Three	Four – Five	One-Three	Four-Five
Tarka	73.53 (25)	26.47 (9)	17.65 (6)	82.35 (28)
Agatu	91.30 (42)	8.70 (4)	19.57 (9)	80.43 (37)
Oju	87.18 (34)	12.82 (5)	20.51 (10)	79.49 (31)
Ohimini	96.55 (28)	3.45 (1)	34.48 (14)	65.52 (4)
Ushongu	79.75 (63)	20.25 (16)	17.72 (14)	82.28 (49)
Gboko	76.92 (120)	23.08 (36)	6.45 (10)	93.55 (84)
Resident area				
Rural	84.78 (195)	15.22 (35)	15.65 (36)	84.35 (194)
Urban	76.47 (117)	23.53 (36)	13.82 (21)	86.18 (131)

Source: *Field Survey, 2024*

Note: Number of observations=383; statistics are presented in percentages and frequencies in parentheses.

Table 3 shows the percentage distribution of pupils' attendance before and after the intervention by sample characteristics. The attendance distribution by local government shows that Tarka 73.53(25), Agatu 91.30 (42), Oju 87.18 (34), Ohimini 96.55 (28), Ushongu 79.75 (63) and Gboko 76.92 (120) pupils attended public schools one to three times weekly. On the other hand, 26.47(7) pupils from Tarka, Agatu 8.70(4), Oju 12.82(5), Ohimini 3.45(1), Ushongu 20.25(16) and Gboko 23.08(36) had a weekly attendance of four-five times before the intervention. After the intervention, Tarka 17.65 (6), Agatu 19.57(9), Oju 20.51(8), Ohimini 34.48(10), Ushongu 17.72(14) and Gboko 6.45 (10) had a weekly attendance of one-three times whereas Tarka 82.35(28), Agatu 80.43(37), Oju 79.49(31), Ohimini 65.52(19), Ushongu 82.28(65) and Gboko 93.55(145) had a weekly attendance of four-five times.

According to the distribution by resident area, prior to the intervention, 84.78 (195) rural and 76.47 (117) urban residents attended one to three times a week, while 15.22 (35) rural and 23.53 (36) urban residents attended four to five times a week. Conversely, following the intervention, 84.35 (194) rural residents and 86.18 (131) urban residents had weekly attendance of four to five times, while 15.65 (36) rural residents and 13.82 (21) urban residents had weekly attendance of one to three times.

Table 5: Regression Result of Sustainable Development Goals Projects on Poverty Alleviation

Variables	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
HC	0.530766	0.065759	8.071347	0.0000
SACS	-0.099512	0.047251	-2.106047	0.0359
RVH	0.073635	0.058446	1.259887	0.2085
EDS	0.131471	0.054894	2.394973	0.0171
EDUF	0.242055	0.056800	4.261548	0.0000
SP/HPB	-0.177576	0.055882	-3.177709	0.0016
C	0.276879	0.038629	7.167599	
R-squared	0.589064	Mean dependent var		0.538462
Adjusted R-squared	0.580984	S.D. dependent var		0.499205
S.E. of regression	0.323143	Akaike info criterion		0.600286
Sum squared	37.17391	Schwarz criterion		0.685938
Log likelihood	-101.2521	Hannan-Quinn criter.		0.634329
F-statistic	72.90213	Durbin-Watson stat		1.085836
Prob(F-statistic)	0.000000			

Source: *Author's Computation, 2024.*

Table 5 gives an insight on the impact of sustainable development goal projects on poverty alleviation in Benue state. The dependent variable is poverty alleviation which is represented by income. The explanatory variables are health centers, skills acquisition centers, referral vehicles for hospitals, essential drugs, educational facilities, solar powered/hand pumped boreholes which are the projects of sustainable development goals. All the explanatory variables were correctly signed and statistically significant at 5%.

The result reveals a positive association between health centres, referral vehicles for hospitals, essential drugs, educational facilities and poverty alleviation. On the contrary, a negative association exist between skills acquisition centres, hand-pumped/solar-powered boreholes, impact of sustainable development goals projects and poverty alleviation. Table 4.5 shows that the coefficient of health centres is 0.530766. This means that the likelihood of the provision of health centres increases poverty by 0.530766. However, this is not in line with a priori expectations. Skills acquisition centres have a coefficient of 0.099512. This implies that skills acquisition alleviates poverty by -0.099512. Also, Referral vehicles for hospitals have a coefficient of 0.073635. This implies that the likelihood of the provision of referral vehicles for hospitals will increase poverty by 0.073635; this finding is in line with apriori expectation. Similarly, essential drugs have a coefficient of 0.131471, thus implying that the provision of essential drugs will increase poverty by 0.131471.

Educational facilities have a coefficient of 0.242055, which means that educational facilities increase poverty by 0.242055. Solar-powered/hand-pumped boreholes have a coefficient of 0.177576, thereby decreasing poverty by -0.177576. This result is also in line with a priori expectation. This has a significant implication in increasing the well-being of the people as they are not prone to water-causing diseases such as diarrhea and typhoid amongst others, thereby making them healthy and as such more productive in their day-to-day activities. This means that these projects decrease poverty by -0.051150, but it is not significant and, therefore, has not sufficiently alleviated poverty. This confirms the findings of Kabari and Nwogo (2021) that SDG activities have not sufficiently reduced poverty and enhanced rural development in Nigeria. All variables except referral vehicles for hospitals and IMSDGP are significant at a 0.05 level of significance; this is given the probability value of 0.0000, 0.0359, 0.0171, 0.0000, and 0.0016. The variable RVH is not significant given the probability 0.3485. Thus, we will reject the null hypothesis.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study looked at the relationship between SDG projects and poverty alleviation. Based on the literature evaluated in this study, it is clear that past research has examined SDGs and poverty reduction. However, nothing is known about the impact of SDG programs on poverty reduction. The primary goal of this study is to investigate the influence of SDG projects on poverty alleviation in Benue state.

These projects align with the following SDG goals: Goal 1: no poverty; Goal 3: good health and well-being; Goal 4: quality education; and Goal 6: clean water and sanitation. Goal 8 is to provide decent work and economic progress, while goal 17 is to form partnerships to achieve these goals, which would, in turn, lead to economic growth and, ultimately, meeting the UN's set target by the year 2030. The positive relationship between these variables does not support the alternative hypothesis that sustainable development goal projects have an impact on poverty alleviation in the study area. These variables are significant except for referral vehicles for hospitals. This implies referral vehicles. Due to low socio-economic status, pregnant women who live in rural areas accompanied with bad roads experienced undesirable consequences like stillbirths because they are not able to be conveyed to the hospital in time to access obstetric care and paediatric services, thus resulting in maternal and neonatal mortality.

The significant positive effect of health centres suggests the ineffectiveness of the health centres as most are abandoned and sub-standard services are rendered at the centres. Also, there are no adequate skilled human resources for health and manpower as frontline health professionals are not willing to work and stay in rural and underserved areas, most communities and families are poor and cannot afford to pay for the services thus resort to traditional care which in turn have an adverse effect on their health status. The significant positive relationship between essential drugs and poverty alleviation implies that most of the essential drugs are still being sold at high prices instead of being free or given at a subsidised rate to the patients. This finding contradicts the work of Vehe and Ijuo (2020).

The significant positive relationship between educational facilities and poverty alleviation suggests that, inadequate school infrastructure as a result of underfunding results in the high number of school children allocated to each teacher, also low teaching proficiency as a result of untrained teachers always has negative impact on children's learning process and as such weak foundation at the early stage goes further to distort the academic progress of the affected children as they attempt to go higher in learning. There also exists a negative and significant relationship between solar-powered/hand pump boreholes. This means that the provision of solar-powered/hand pump boreholes tends to decrease poverty. Most of the beneficiaries have access to affordable and safe water, thereby not falling ill to water-causing diseases such as cholera, typhoid fever, intestinal worm infestation, nuclear waste poisoning, and lead and gold poisoning, amongst others.

This finding is in line with the work of Gbeneol *et al.* (2014) that most of the projects were in education and health sectors, a third of the projects were for the procurement of books and equipment, and about the quarter were for the construction of relevant facilities. However, this finding invalidates the study of Abiniku (2006) and Abdullahi *et al.* (2018), which revealed that

primary health centres are not very effective towards poverty alleviation. The finding validates the work of Gbeneol *et al.* (2014) that most of the projects were in education and health sectors, a third of the projects were for the procurement of books and equipment, and about the quarter were for the construction of relevant facilities.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The broad objective of this study was to investigate the impact of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) projects on poverty alleviation in some selected local government areas of Benue state. Findings from this research showed that sustainable development goal projects were carried out in the selected local areas of Benue state. Access to health services/ medical services, educational facilities, and solar powered/hand pump boreholes were of benefit and as such alleviated poverty in the selected government areas. The results of the analysis revealed that sustainable development goal projects have not significantly alleviated poverty in the selected local government areas of Benue state. The findings further revealed that there are challenges in implementing sustainable development goals targeted at reducing poverty in the selected local government areas.

The findings suggest that sustainable development objectives programs have an influence on poverty alleviation in the selected local government areas of Benue state, although not significantly therefore These SDG activities can be promoted by enhancing existing poverty alleviation strategies; individuals and organizations, rather than just the government, should be involved. Therefore, this study provided these recommendations, which are based on the findings:

i.   The state health system should also be prioritised in order to ultimately reduce poverty in local government areas. Consequently, the government ought to implement alluring compensation plans and incentives to entice primary healthcare providers to operate in remote and underprivileged regions.

ii.   The government should place a high priority on adequate building, routine maintenance, water quality monitoring, and the application of corrosion prevention techniques. Furthermore, local stakeholders can be empowered to take charge of borehole maintenance and advance sustainable water resource management techniques through community involvement and capacity-building initiatives.

iii.   Governments ought to endeavour to mitigate the obstacles encountered during the execution of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG). Additionally, they should make sure that the projects are situated in places that truly require them and are not being used to settle local government political supporters, which would further disadvantage some communities.

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