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CHALLENGES OF POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN ADAMAWA STATE NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF HONG LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA.

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the challenges of poverty alleviation in Hong Local Government Area of Adamawa State, Nigeria. Despite the implementation of several poverty reduction initiatives by the Federal and State Governments, poverty remains widespread within the study area, limiting access to education, healthcare, employment opportunities, and other basic social amenities. The study population comprised beneficiaries of poverty alleviation programmes, local government officials, community leaders, and non-governmental organisation (NGO) personnel. A sample of 180 respondents was selected using a multi-stage sampling technique. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires and interviews. The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and Likert scale analysis with the aid of SPSS version 25. The findings revealed that although several poverty alleviation programmes, such as N-Power, Conditional Cash Transfer, and the National Social Investment Programme, have been implemented in the study area, their effectiveness is constrained by inadequate funding, political interference, corruption, poor monitoring and evaluation, weak institutional capacity, poor beneficiary targeting, insecurity, and inadequate community participation. The study further established that these challenges significantly reduce the effectiveness of poverty alleviation programmes and limit their sustainability. It concludes that addressing governance, funding, and implementation deficiencies is essential for achieving meaningful poverty reduction in Hong Local Government Area. The study therefore recommends improved transparency, increased funding, stronger institutional capacity, effective monitoring mechanisms, and greater community participation in programme planning and implementation.

Keyword: Challenges, Corruption, Poverty, Poverty alleviation, SPSS.

JEL Classification: *E31, I32, H53*

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1.0 Background to the Study

Poverty has remained one of the most persistent developmental challenges that developing nations, especially those in Sub-Saharan Africa, have to grapple with, where approximately 490 million people earn below the international poverty line of $3.00 per person per day measure (World Bank, 2026). In Nigeria, despite being Africa's largest economy and an oil powerhouse, poverty has continued to escalate at alarming rates (World Bank, 2022). The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reported that 40.1% of Nigerians were living below the national monetary poverty line, while 63% of the population were classified as multidimensionality poor (NBS, 2022). This paradox of poverty amidst plenty has necessitated various interventions by successive governments, but the impact of these poverty alleviation programs in grass-root areas remains questionable (NBS, 2022).

Adamawa State, which lies in the northeastern part of Nigeria, provides a special case study for understanding the issues of tackling poverty. This region has remained one among the poorest states in Nigeria, with a poverty rate estimated at 75.4% for Adamawa, see Ogwumike and Akinnibosun (2021). These challenges are further worsened by the issue of climate change, insurgency, and underdevelopment in this region. Ajakaiye and Adeyeye (2019) proposed that rural areas in northeastern Nigeria generally suffer from different dimensions of poverty, not just limited income, but limited access to quality education, healthcare, and essential services. Hong LGA, which is largely a rural and agricultural area, best typifies this, making this area an apt one for analyzing the efficacy and constraints in the interventions process for poverty alleviation.

Several initiatives to alleviate poverty in Nigeria had been carried out over the years, from the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP, 2001) to more current initiatives such as the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP, 2016). Nonetheless, authors such as Obadan in 2022, as well as Udeh & Okoye (2020), suggested that these initiatives had failed in their aim due to poor execution, corruption, insufficient funding, the absence of participation of beneficiaries, and insufficient monitoring processes. More specifically in Adamawa State, poor institutional capacity, political meddling, and program mismatch are perceived to impede initiatives to alleviate poverty, according to Tella & Alimi (2023).

Poverty has remained a persisting problem in Hong Local Government Area of Adamawa State despite several poverty reduction programs executed by both federal and state governments for many years (Onu et al 2026). It has been noted that despite the presence of several programs such as Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), National Social Investment Programme (NSIP), NGO/ Faith-based poverty programs, Home Grown School Feeding Programme aimed at poverty alleviation, the effect of these programs is still minimal. This is according to the observations found in the area, where the beneficiaries have complained about the irregular distribution of the financial resources, the inability of the programs to cover all the targeted groups, and the fact that the most marginalized are often left out of these programs. It has also been noted that the sustainability of these programs can be questioned, given that many of them are stopped at the end of a political tenure. The lack of community involvement in the design and implementation of these programs has also led to the development of programs that do not address the needs of the community.

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Accordingly, this study is aimed at discussing the challenges that have led to the ineffectiveness of the poverty alleviation programs in Hong Local Government Area of Adamawa State, Nigeria.

2.0 Conceptual Framework

2.1.1 Concept of Poverty

Poverty is a complex issue that has been described in different ways by several authors and development agencies. According to World Bank (2026), defines extreme "Poverty as living less than US$ 3.00 per person per day, measured in 2021 purchasing power parity (PPP) terms. This threshold represents the minimum standard used to compare extreme monetary poverty across countries. It is usually measured in terms of income or consumption not exceeding a certain threshold." World Bank adds that absolute poverty is: "The deprivation of the ability to attain even a minimal standard of living. It is commonly measured in terms of earnings or consumption not exceeding a certain threshold. According to Sen (1999), the definition of poverty was reconstructed using the theory of capability deprivation. This theory suggests that poverty can be viewed from the perspective of the lack of freedom in accomplishing valuable functionings and capabilities. This theoretical orientation moves away from the ends towards the goals and objectives of poverty itself. This was further supplemented by the work of Alkire and Santos (2014) through the application of the Multidimensional Poverty Index.

For its part, the notion of relative poverty was articulated by Townsend (2019) to mean “the inability to share in the customary activities and living conditions of widely approved society to which people belong.

2.1.2 Concept of Poverty Alleviation

“Poverty alleviation, therefore, is not only short-term palliative strategies for immediate relief of the poor but can be long-term strategies for tackling the root causes of poverty.” Inasmuch as this statement is very true, there is the need for clarity on what poverty alleviation entails. Based on the views of Ogwumike (2022), “Poverty alleviation aims at reducing the incidence, intensity, and effects of poverty.” Poverty alleviating strategies may include cash transfer programs, job creation schemes, skills training programs, microfinance programs, among others. Kankwanda (2020) makes a distinction between poverty eradication and poverty alleviation. He argues that while poverty alleviation aims to decrease the levels of poverty and its effects, poverty eradication involves eradicating poverty in its entirety. Services used in poverty alleviation include improving access to productive resources in society, improving human capital through investments in education and health initiatives, provision of employment opportunities for individuals, and improving social protection services.

In the Nigerian context, the alleviation of poverty has been made functional through various programs being pursued both at the federal and local levels of the government. Ajakaiye & Adeyeye (2001), for example, note that the programs aimed at alleviating poverty in the Nigerian context have developed from a welfarist strategy in the 1970s to a market strategy in the era of structural adjustments and later to social investment programs. The success of the programs remains an issue for debate among scholars and experts.

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2.1.3 Poverty Alleviation Programs in Nigeria

The history of poverty relief programs in Nigeria can be traced back to pre-independent times. According to Okunmadewa (2019), the programs can be followed chronologically from agricultural development schemes of the colonial era through the post-independent era of community development programs to modern times of social investments. In the 1970s, Operation Feed the Nation and the Green Revolution targeted agricultural productivity. In the 1980s, with the era of structural adjustment programs, the Directorate of Food, Roads, and Rural Infrastructure and the National Directorate of Employment were created.

The coming of civilian rule in 1999 marked the establishment of the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), which involved the merging of different programs focused on the eradication of poverty (Obadan, 2022). Its aims were centered on the empowerment of the youth, development of rural infrastructure, provision of social welfare benefits, and development of natural resources. Other programs introduced were the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), SURE P, and YouWin Entrepreneurship program.

Moreover, tackle this situation, the government launched the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) in 2016, consisting of four key initiatives: N-Power for job creation for graduates, Conditional Cash Transfer for the needy, Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme for market women and artisans, and the Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (also known as Akanbi, 2023). To this end, each state is also implementing specific interventions. As of 2026, several poverty alleviation and livelihood-support initiatives have been implemented under the present government such as Fintiri Business Wallet in May, 2026, Poverty alleviation and Wealth Creation Agency (PAWECA) July, 2020, skills acquisition and vocational training, Agricultural mechanization support in May, 2026, electric mobility/youth empowerment initiatives in May, 2026, social Protection Policy in 2024 to 2028. However, as noted by Udeh and Okoye in 2020, the effectiveness in this case has been hampered by several issues.

2.1.4 Challenges of Poverty Alleviation Programs

Despite huge investments made in the area of alleviating poverty in society, the incidence of poverty in Nigeria is still on the increase, which is an indication that there are huge challenges in the implementation and effectiveness of programs in Nigeria and elsewhere. Poor design is seen by Obadan (2022) as one of the basic challenges in the design of programs in society because programs are created without adequate studies and consultations with those to benefit from the programs. Corruption and mismanagement form significant challenges in the alleviation of poverty. Transparency International (2021) included Nigeria in the list of the most corrupted nations, at a place of 154 out of 180 countries on the Corruption Perceptions Index, seen as a reflection of deeply entrenched corruption, often resulting in loss of resources not going to their target groups. Illustrative instances of ghost projects, overcharging of contracts, and the diversion of resources were highlighted by the works of Okonkwo & Obinna (2020) in various poverty alleviation programs. Insufficient financing and lack of timely dispensation of allocated funds hinder the scope and viability of poverty reduction interventions. As observed by Ajayi in 2021, social interventions' budget allocation tends to be inadequate and may not be entirely disbursed when allocated. Moreover, inadequate institutional capacity in the implementation level, especially in local authorities, affects the viability of implementation efforts. Moreover, other factors include

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inadequate monitoring and evaluation procedures, lack of coordination among those responsible for implementation, inadequate targeting methods in which the poorest tend to be excluded, and the lack of exit strategies creating dependency (Tella & Alimi, 2023).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Vicious Circle of Poverty Theory

This theory, developed by Ragnar Nurkse (1953), argues that poverty generates poverty and that all poor countries are trapped in a circular pattern of forces acting and reacting upon each other so that a poor country can never be freed from poverty. The supply side of a poor country will have low income, low savings, low investment, low productivity, and consequently low income. Similarly, the demand side will have low income, low purchasing power, low market size, low investment inducements, low productivity, and low income.

This theory is most applicable to the condition prevalent within the Hong Local Government Area concerning the persistence of poverty. The major population, being rural, is involved in agricultural activities, thereby providing little or no surpluses to save and invest. A little capital accumulated makes it difficult to adopt better technology and enhance production activities. A low product translates to low income, thereby nurturing the vicious cycle, which can be changed by interventions by programs meant to alleviate the problem of poverty.

2.2.2 Culture of Poverty Theory

The Culture of Poverty theory has been conceptualized by Oscar Lewis (1966) based on ethnographic research conducted in Mexico and Puerto Rico. This theory postulates that poverty is not only the lack of economic resources, and it also entails a specific cultural pattern or lifestyle that the poor individuals transmit from one generation to the next. According to the Cultural Theory of Poverty, the poor have developed the following feeling-based adaptations for dealing with their condition and at the same time maintaining it.

Culture of poverty is marked by poor family structures, absence of childhood as a phase of life, early initiation to sexuality, consensual marriages, high instances of abandoning wives and children, female-oriented families, high tendency towards authoritarianism, poor ego structures, lack of impulse control, time-bound orientation and poor ability to delay gratification, and fatalism (Lewis, 1966). These cultural features are passed down as a result of socialization and produce subculture irrespective of the structural conditions. This theory was met with criticism for its stigmatization of the poor for their poverty. Valentine (1968) suggested that those behaviors labeled as part of a culture of poverty are instead adaptations to certain structural disadvantages. Despite its criticisms, it is clear that a mindset shift in area of poverty relief is important to include items such as future orientation, entrepreneurial personality, and self-efficacy.

2.2.3 Structural Theory of Poverty

The Structural theory of poverty emphasizes that poverty results from structural characteristics of society with economic structures, politics, and social stratification and not because of failing individuals. This theoretical position has been supported by scholars such as Herbert Gans in 1973 and William Wilson in 1987 who propose that poverty is created and sustained by institutional structures and power and resource allocation that has a systematic representative among groups.

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As cited from Gans (1973), poverty continues to exist because it has functions for the non-poverty class, such as offering cheap labor, offering jobs for professionals working in the poverty industry, using poverty as a reference for norm, and offering economic activities. The spatial concentration of poverty in the inner-city areas due to de-industrialization, capital flight, and racism is seen by Wilson (1987) to result in social isolation.

Based on Hong Local Government Area, the structures that promote the persistence of poverty include lack of government outlay in rural infrastructure development, marginalization of rural areas in the distribution of resources, market structures that are exploitative of farmers, land tenure structures that limit the potential of women to access resources, and the absence of representation in political decision-making. According to this theory, poverty can only be alleviated through the transformation of structures.

2.4 Empirical Review

International research yields important insights into the effectivity or challenges of poverty alleviation. For instance, Yusuf et al (2026) assessed poverty alleviation strategies in Nigeria from 2023 to 2026 and used systematic desk-based methodology to review multi-sectoral secondary data in evaluating the efficacy of poverty alleviation strategies. Anchored on the Structural Theory of Poverty, the paper revealed an upward trajectory in the national poverty rate which climbed from 56% in 2023 to peak at 63% in 2025 leaving an estimated 141 million citizens below the poverty baseline of $1.90 dollar per day. The recent macroeconomic adjustments such as fuel subsidy removal, hyper-inflation, and currency floatation have exacerbated severe cost-of-living crises for both rural and urban people. The findings revealed that interventions routinely failed to achieve long-term efficacy due to systemic institutional bottlenecks, widespread corruption, politicization, poor data targeting and a lack of administrative continuity. These programmes functioned as short-term political palliatives which failed to insulate vulnerable groups from macroeconomic shocks and cannot provide sustainable and structural economic reforms. The study concluded that superficial welfare programmes cannot break the cycle of deprivation. In addition, Isana & Ademeso (2025) analysed Nigeria's policies and programmes for poverty over a period of more than six decades, from 1960-2024. The research provides a meticulous examination of the historical context, policy structures, and implementation methods utilized across different government administrations. The study assesses the efficacy of a wide range of initiatives, encompassing social welfare schemes, economic development projects, and interventions targeted at specific sectors. The analysis pinpoints crucial obstacles that impede poverty alleviation efforts, including insufficient funding, flawed implementation, corruption, a lack of coordination, and inadequate participation from stakeholders. Furthermore, Tella and Alimi (2023) researched poverty alleviation in Adamawa State, highlighting weak institutional capacity at local government levels, insecurity disrupting program implementation, political interference in beneficiary selection, and an inability or inadequacy in adapting to local contexts as major binding constraints. In light of the results, the study recommended capacity building at the local government level, assurance of security for implementation areas, and designing context-appropriate interventions. Udeh & Okoye (2020) analyzed the National Social Investment Programme, with mixed findings. School feeding increased enrollment, but cash transfer coverage rates remained low, with employability post-N-Power for program graduates being a challenge. It cited delays in payments,

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communication, and the lack of exit strategies as key problems. Ibrahim and Umar (2020) investigated insurgency and poverty in northeastern Nigeria. They found that the conflicts caused displacement of populations, destroyed productive assets, disrupted market opportunities, and diverted resources to security, thereby exacerbating poverty. Poverty alleviation programs were also affected by the insecurity that could limit access, displaced persons disrupting the continuity of programs, and trauma impinging on beneficiary capacity. The study underscored the need for conflict-sensitive programming and psychosocial support. Adeyeye (2019) assessed the effectiveness of the NAPEP project in southwestern Nigeria. They found that though the project had reached some of the beneficiaries, it could not greatly impact them due to funding constraints, corruption, targeting, and unsustainable objectives. The beneficiaries declared that the microfinance provided to them could not be beneficial for enterprise development. Oduro (2018) examined poverty relief interventions that employed participation in rural Kenya. Results indicated better intervention success when beneficiaries were involved in design compared to top-down projects. Context-appropriate design was said to be vital to success. Banerjee et al. (2015) performed randomized controlled trials in six different countries to examine ultra-poor graduation programs that delivered cash transfers, skills training, and mentor support. Outcomes revealed strong effects on consumption expenditures, asset holdings, and psychosocial functioning that sustained well into post-intervention years. Program success was attributed to holistic comprehensive interventions, sustained mentor engagement, and sufficient intervention duration.

Fiszbein & Schady (2009) studied conditional cash transfer programs in Latin America. They concluded that programs such as Bolsa Família in Brazil and Progresa in Mexico were successful in combating poverty and enhancing health and education outcomes. Still, they cited benefit adequacy, accuracy of targeting, monitoring capacity, and supplementary expenditures on school and health infrastructure on the supply side to be critical to success.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Area

The study was conducted in Hong Local Government Area of Adamawa State, Nigeria. Hong Local Government Area is located in the central part of Adamawa State with its headquarters in Hong town. The local government has an estimated population of over 200,000 people based on projections from the 2006 census figure of 157,112. It covers a land area of approximately 2,095 square kilometers and comprises several districts including Hong, Uba, Hildi, Hushere, and Gombi. The area is predominantly rural with agriculture as the main occupation of the inhabitants. The major ethnic groups are Kilba, Marghi, and Fulani, while Christianity and Islam are the dominant religions.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of this study consist of all stakeholders involved 180 in poverty alleviation programs in Hong Local Government Area. This includes beneficiaries of poverty alleviation programs in the selected communities, local government officials responsible for implementing poverty alleviation programs, community leaders who facilitate program implementation at the grassroots level, and staff of non-governmental organizations working on poverty alleviation in the area. Given the large and dispersed nature of this population, particularly the beneficiaries, it was impractical to study the entire population, hence the need for sampling.

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3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size for this study were 180 respondents drawn from the study population. The distribution of the sample was as follows: 150 beneficiaries of poverty alleviation programs, 15 local government officials, 10 community leaders, and 5 Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) staff. This sample size is considered adequate for generating reliable data while remaining manageable within the constraints of time and resources available for the study.

The sample size for this study was determined using Taro Yamane's formula for finite population:

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

Where:

n = Sample size

N = Total population (500)

e = Level of significance (0.05)

$$n = \frac{500}{[1 + 500(0.5)^2]}$$

$$n = \frac{500}{[1 + 500(0.0025]}$$

$$n = \frac{500}{[1 + 1.25]}$$

$$n = \frac{500}{[2.25]}$$

$$n = 222.22$$

n ≈ 222

However, considering logistical constraints, time limitations, and financial resources available for the study, the researcher will work with 180 respondents, which represents 81% of the calculated sample size and is still considered adequate and representative for generating reliable data.

The 180 respondents were distributed proportionally across the study population as follows:

Beneficiaries of poverty alleviation programs: 150 respondents

Local government officials: 15 respondents

Community leaders: 10 respondents

NGO staff: 5 respondents

Total Sample Size: 180 respondents

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3.4 Sources of Data

Data for this study were obtained from both primary and secondary sources to ensure comprehensiveness and reliability of findings.

Primary data were collected directly from the field through the administration of questionnaires and conduct of interviews while secondary data were obtained from existing documents and publications relevant to the study.

3.5 Method of Data Analysis

Data collected from the field were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative techniques. For quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires, responses were coded and entered into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 25. Descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were computed and presented in tables and charts to summarize the characteristics of respondents and their responses to various questions.

Likert Scale Analysis

For questions using the 5-point Likert scale, the mean score was calculated using the formula:

$$Mean\ (\bar{x}) = \frac{\Sigma fx}{\Sigma f}$$

Where:

$\bar{x} = Mean\ score$

$\Sigma fx = Sum\ of\ the\ product\ of\ frequency\ and\ weight$

$\Sigma f = Total\ frequency$

4.0 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 4.1: Sex Distribution of Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	108	60.0
Female	72	40.0
Total	180	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.1 shows that the majority of respondents were male (60.0%), while female respondents constituted 40.0%. This distribution reflects the patriarchal nature of Hong LGA communities, where men are predominantly more accessible for formal survey interactions, though women remain significant stakeholders in poverty alleviation programs.

Table 4.2: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18 - 25 years	27	15.0
26 - 35 years	54	30.0
36 - 45 years	63	35.0

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46 - 55 years	27	15.0
56 years and above	9	5.0
Total	180	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.2 reveals that the most represented age group was 36-45 years (35.0%), followed by 26-35 years (30.0%). This indicates that the active working population constitutes the bulk of program participants, which is consistent with the target group of most poverty alleviation programs in Nigeria.

Table 4.3: Educational Qualification of Respondents

Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No formal education	36	20.0
Primary education	45	25.0
Secondary education	54	30.0
Tertiary education	36	20.0
Postgraduate	9	5.0
Total	180	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.3 shows that secondary school leavers formed the largest group (30.0%), while 20.0% had no formal education. This suggests a low level of education among a significant proportion of respondents, which has implications for program awareness, access, and utilisation.

Table 4.4: Occupation of Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Farming/Agriculture	90	50.0
Civil servant	27	15.0
Trader/Artisan	36	20.0
Student	9	5.0
Unemployed	18	10.0
Total	180	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.4 indicates that farming and agriculture is the dominant occupation of respondents (50.0%), reflecting the agrarian economy of Hong LGA. The significant proportion of traders/artisans (20.0%) and unemployed persons (10.0%) further underscores the economic vulnerability of the population.

4.2 Poverty Alleviation Programs in Hong LGA

Research Question One sought to identify the various poverty alleviation programs that have been implemented in Hong Local Government Area.

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Table 4.5: Distribution of Respondents by Poverty Alleviation Programs Known/Benefited From

Program	Frequency	Percentage (%)
N-Power	117	65.0
Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT)	99	55.0
Home Grown School Feeding Programme	90	50.0
Government Enterprise & Empowerment Programme	81	45.0
National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP)	72	40.0
State-level agricultural input support	63	35.0
NGO/Faith-based poverty programs	54	30.0
National Social Investment Programme (NSIP)	45	25.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.5 shows that N-Power had the highest awareness level (65.0%), followed by the Conditional Cash Transfer scheme (55.0%) and the Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (50.0%). The National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) recorded the least awareness (25.0%), suggesting a gap in outreach and communication by implementing agencies.

Table 4.6: Respondents' Assessment of Poverty Alleviation Program Implementation (Section B Likert Items)

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean
Programs have been widely implemented in Hong LGA.	18.3	31.7	15.0	22.2	12.8	3.21
I am aware of at least one government-sponsored program.	25.0	38.3	10.0	16.7	10.0	3.51
Programs are diverse enough to address various poverty dimensions.	11.1	22.2	16.7	30.6	19.4	2.75
Program information is adequately communicated to communities.	8.3	16.7	13.9	36.1	25.0	2.47
Objectives of programs are clearly understood by beneficiaries.	10.0	20.0	15.0	33.3	21.7	2.63
Programs have reached a significant proportion of the poor.	13.3	21.7	11.7	30.0	23.3	2.72
Duration of programs has been sufficient to create impact.	8.3	15.0	13.3	36.7	26.7	2.41

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.6 presents respondents' assessment of the state of poverty alleviation program implementation. While respondents agreed that programs exist and awareness is moderate (mean = 3.51 and 3.21 respectively), they disagreed with statements regarding diversity, communication, targeting, and duration. The consistently low mean scores on information dissemination (2.47) and program duration (2.41) indicate fundamental weaknesses in program design and communication.

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4.3 Research Question Two: Challenges Hindering Effective Implementation

Research Question Two sought to examine the major challenges hindering the effective implementation of poverty alleviation programs in Hong Local Government Area.

4.3.1 Administrative and Institutional Challenges

Table 4.7: Administrative and Institutional Challenges (Section C1 Likert Items)

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean
Poor coordination among agencies is a major challenge.	38.3	36.7	10.0	10.0	5.0	3.93
Lack of skilled personnel hampers implementation.	33.3	40.0	11.7	10.0	5.0	3.87
Inadequate monitoring and evaluation reduce effectiveness.	41.7	35.0	8.3	10.0	5.0	3.98
Political interference undermines program success.	46.7	31.7	6.7	10.0	5.0	4.05
Weak institutional capacity affects service delivery.	43.3	33.3	8.3	10.0	5.1	4.00
Programs discontinued at end of political tenure.	50.0	30.0	6.7	8.3	5.0	4.12
Inadequate community participation in program planning.	38.3	35.0	10.0	11.7	5.0	3.90

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.7 shows that all administrative and institutional challenges recorded mean scores above 3.50, indicating strong agreement among respondents. Political discontinuity (mean = 4.12) and inadequate monitoring (mean = 3.98) were rated highest, confirming that governance failures are a primary obstacle to effective poverty alleviation in Hong LGA.

Table 4.8: Funding and Financial Challenges (Section C2 Likert Items)

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean
Insufficient funding is a major obstacle.	51.7	30.0	5.0	8.3	5.0	4.15
Budget allocations are inadequate relative to needs.	45.0	33.3	6.7	10.0	5.0	4.03
Funds are frequently delayed or irregularly disbursed.	48.3	31.7	5.0	10.0	5.0	4.08
Misappropriation and diversion of funds is significant.	55.0	26.7	5.0	8.3	5.0	4.18
Dependence on federal funding weakens programs.	40.0	35.0	8.3	11.7	5.0	3.93

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Poor financial management affects program impact.	43.3	33.3	6.7	11.7	5.0	3.98

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.8 reveals that all funding-related challenges received mean scores exceeding 3.90, with misappropriation of funds (mean = 4.18) and insufficient funding (mean = 4.15) rated most critically. This strongly indicates that financial challenges constitute a decisive constraint on poverty alleviation program success in Hong LGA.

Table 4.9: Targeting and Beneficiary Selection Challenges (Section C3 Likert Items)

Statement	SA	A	N	D	S	Mean
Targeting is often inaccurate, excluding the most vulnerable.	43.3	33.3	8.3	10.0	5.1	3.99
Favouritism and nepotism in selection is common.	50.0	30.0	5.0	10.0	5.0	4.10
Ghost beneficiaries are a significant problem.	46.7	31.7	6.7	10.0	4.9	4.06
Women and marginalised groups are often excluded.	41.7	33.3	8.3	11.7	5.0	3.95
Beneficiary criteria are not clearly defined or applied.	38.3	35.0	10.0	11.7	5.0	3.90

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.9 shows that respondents strongly agreed on the prevalence of targeting failures, with favouritism and nepotism scoring highest (mean = 4.10). These findings confirm elite capture as a recurring problem, consistent with the literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

Table 4.10: Implementation and Sustainability Challenges (Section C4 Likert Items)

Statement	S	A	N	D	SD	Mean
Programs lack clear exit strategies for sustainability.	48.3	31.7	5.0	10.0	5.0	4.08
Inadequate infrastructure limits program effectiveness.	51.7	28.3	5.0	10.0	5.0	4.12
Insecurity has disrupted program implementation.	55.0	25.0	5.0	10.0	5.0	4.15
Climate change reduces agricultural program impact.	46.7	31.7	6.7	10.0	4.9	4.06
Programs ignore local socio-cultural context.	38.3	33.3	10.0	13.3	5.1	3.86
Poor road networks limit access to program benefits.	50.0	30.0	5.0	10.0	5.0	4.10
Dependence on external funding creates instability.	41.7	33.3	8.3	11.7	5.0	3.95
Inadequate NGO-government collaboration affects delivery.	38.3	35.0	10.0	11.7	5.0	3.90

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.10 indicates that insecurity (mean = 4.15) and inadequate infrastructure (mean = 4.12) are the most severe sustainability challenges. The consistently high mean scores across all items confirm that structural and environmental factors compound the governance and financial constraints already identified.

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4.4 Testing of Hypotheses

4.4.1Test of Hypothesis One

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between implementation challenges and the effectiveness of poverty alleviation programs in Hong Local Government Area.

Table 4.11: Impact of Implementation Challenges on Program Effectiveness (Section D Likert Items)

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean
Implementation challenges have significantly reduced effectiveness.	53.3	28.3	5.0	8.4	5.0	4.17
Poor program design limits poverty reduction outcomes.	46.7	31.7	6.7	10.0	4.9	4.06
Corruption has substantially reduced benefits to beneficiaries.	55.0	26.7	5.0	8.3	5.0	4.18
Inadequate stakeholder engagement produces mismatched programs.	43.3	33.3	8.3	10.0	5.1	4.00
Living standards have not improved despite years of programs.	50.0	30.0	5.0	10.0	5.0	4.10
Programs create dependency rather than empowerment.	46.7	31.7	6.7	10.0	4.9	4.06
Combined challenges make poverty alleviation largely ineffective.	51.7	28.3	5.0	10.0	5.0	4.12

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.11 shows that all items measuring the relationship between implementation challenges and program effectiveness recorded mean scores above 4.00, indicating strong agreement. The overall pattern confirms a significant positive relationship between identified challenges and reduced program effectiveness. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Table 4.13: Hypothesis One

H_0 Statement	H_1 Statement	Calc. Mean	Crit. Value	df	Sig. Level	Decision
There is no significant relationship between implementation challenges and the effectiveness of poverty alleviation programs in Hong LGA.	There is a significant relationship between implementation challenges and the effectiveness of poverty alleviation programs in Hong LGA.	4.10	3.00	179	0.05	Reject H_{01}

The rejection of H_{01} confirms that the implementation challenges identified in this study including political interference, poor coordination, corruption, inadequate monitoring, and insecurity collectively and significantly undermine the effectiveness of poverty alleviation programs in Hong Local Government Area. This finding is consistent with the theoretical position of the Structural

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Theory of Poverty (Gans, 1973; Wilson, 1987) and the empirical findings of Obadan (2022) and Tella and Alimi (2023).

4.4.2 Test of Hypothesis Two

H_{02}: Poor funding does not significantly affect the success of poverty alleviation programs in Hong Local Government Area.

H_0 Statement	H_1 Statement	Calc. Mean	Crit. Value	df	Sig. Level	Decision
Poor funding does not significantly affect the success of poverty alleviation programs in Hong LGA.	Poor funding significantly affects the success of poverty alleviation programs in Hong LGA.	4.06	3.00	179	0.05	Reject H_{02}

5.0 DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

Poverty Alleviation Programs Implemented in Hong LGA

The findings of this study reveal that a number of poverty alleviation programs have been implemented in Hong Local Government Area, with N-Power and the Conditional Cash Transfer scheme recording the highest awareness levels at 65.0% and 55.0% respectively. However, the study found that awareness does not translate to broad-based impact, as a large proportion of respondents disagreed that programs were diverse, adequately communicated, or sufficiently sustained. This finding aligns with Udeh and Okoye (2020), who observed that despite the proliferation of poverty programs in Nigeria, implementation gaps significantly limit their reach and impact. The low awareness of NSIP (25.0%) is particularly concerning given that it is the flagship federal social investment initiative, pointing to severe deficiencies in programme outreach within rural LGAs such as Hong.

Administrative and Institutional Challenges

The study found strong agreement among respondents that administrative and institutional weaknesses constitute a major challenge to poverty alleviation in Hong LGA. Political interference recorded the highest mean score (4.12) in this category, confirming that the selection of beneficiaries is heavily influenced by political patronage rather than objective poverty criteria. This is consistent with findings by Tella and Alimi (2023), who identified political interference as a binding constraint in Adamawa State. The discontinuation of programs at the end of political tenures (mean = 4.12) also emerged as a critical challenge, reinforcing Obadan's (2022) argument that the lack of policy continuity in Nigeria undermines the long-term effectiveness of social intervention programs. Weak monitoring and evaluation frameworks (mean = 3.98) further compound these challenges, as programs that are not adequately tracked cannot be corrected when they deviate from objectives.

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Funding and Financial Challenges

Funding challenges emerged as the most critical category of constraints in this study, with an overall mean of 4.06. Misappropriation and diversion of funds recorded the highest individual mean (4.18), confirming that corruption remains a pervasive obstacle to effective poverty alleviation in Nigeria. This finding supports Transparency International's (2021) assessment of Nigeria's deeply entrenched corruption, as well as the empirical evidence provided by Okonkwo and Obinna (2020) regarding resource diversion in social programs. The irregular disbursement of funds (mean = 4.08) and inadequate budget allocations (mean = 4.03) further demonstrate that financial management failures permeate both the design and execution phases of poverty alleviation programs. This finding provides strong empirical support for the rejection of Hypothesis Two, confirming that poor funding significantly affects program success.

Targeting and Beneficiary Selection Challenges

The study established that the targeting of beneficiaries in Hong LGA is characterised by favoritism (mean = 4.10), the presence of ghost beneficiaries (mean = 4.06), and the exclusion of the most vulnerable populations (mean = 3.99). These findings corroborate the observations of Abdulai (2017) from Ghana, who found that elite capture results in more-connected individuals benefiting at the expense of the truly poor. The exclusion of women and marginalised groups (mean = 3.95) is particularly troubling given that women represent a disproportionate share of the poor in rural Nigeria. The absence of clearly defined and consistently applied beneficiary criteria (mean = 3.90) further enables arbitrary and politically motivated selection processes.

Implementation and Sustainability Challenges

Insecurity resulting from the Boko Haram insurgency emerged as the most severe sustainability challenge (mean = 4.15), followed by inadequate infrastructure (mean = 4.12) and poor road networks (mean = 4.10). These findings are consistent with Ibrahim and Umar (2020), who documented the devastating effects of conflict on poverty alleviation efforts in northeastern Nigeria. The absence of exit strategies for program beneficiaries (mean = 4.08) was also identified as a significant concern, as it fosters long-term dependency rather than economic empowerment. The finding that programs do not adequately reflect the local socio-cultural context of Hong LGA (mean = 3.86) suggests a top-down approach to program design that fails to incorporate community needs and priorities, a concern echoed by Oduro (2018) in the context of rural Kenya.

Relationship Between Implementation Challenges and Program Effectiveness

The overall finding of this study, as confirmed by the rejection of both hypotheses, is that implementation challenges have a significant negative impact on the effectiveness of poverty alleviation programs in Hong LGA. The high mean score recorded for the item stating that 'combined challenges make poverty alleviation largely ineffective' (mean = 4.12) captures this relationship succinctly. Furthermore, the agreement that programs have created dependency rather than genuine empowerment (mean = 4.06) suggests that even when programs reach their intended beneficiaries, they are not designed to produce lasting economic change. These findings are theoretically consistent with the Vicious Circle of Poverty theory (Nurkse, 1953), which posits that without meaningful capital injection and structural transformation, poverty perpetuates itself regardless of the volume of interventions.

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5.2 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To start with, poverty alleviation programs exist in Hong Local Government Area, but their coverage, effectiveness, and sustainability remain severely limited. The existence of programs does not, in itself, constitute meaningful poverty reduction, as evidenced by the continuing high poverty rate in the area despite years of intervention. The challenges confronting poverty alleviation programs in Hong LGA are systemic, interrelated, and deeply rooted in the governance architecture of public administration at the local level. Political interference, institutional weakness, corruption, and poor accountability mechanisms collectively undermine even well-designed programs. In addition, funding challenges particularly misappropriation, irregular disbursement, and inadequate allocation are the most pervasive and consequential obstacles to effective poverty alleviation. The diversion of resources meant for the poor represents a profound governance failure with direct human costs. Lastly, programs that are designed without adequate community participation, that lack clear exit strategies, and that do not reflect the local context are unlikely to produce lasting poverty reduction outcomes regardless of funding levels. Genuine and sustained community involvement is a prerequisite for effective poverty alleviation.

In conclusion, the challenges of poverty alleviation in Hong Local Government Area are not primarily a resource problem but a governance, accountability, and design problem. Addressing these challenges requires fundamental reforms in how poverty programs are planned, implemented, monitored, and sustained.

The study therefore recommendations that Government at all levels should invest in the capacity building of local government officials involved in the planning and implementation of poverty alleviation programs. This should include training in program management, data-driven targeting, financial accountability, and monitoring and evaluation. Also, an independent, technology-assisted targeting and registration system should be developed and adopted to eliminate political interference in the selection of program beneficiaries. The use of biometric registration, community-verified beneficiary lists, and social registries should be institutionalised to prevent the inclusion of ghost beneficiaries and to ensure that the most vulnerable populations are prioritised. It further recommends that Federal and state governments must significantly increase budgetary allocations to poverty alleviation programs while ensuring that disbursements are timely and consistent. Anti-corruption mechanisms, including forensic auditing of program finances, real-time fund tracking, and whistleblower protection policies, should be strengthened to reduce misappropriation. Lastly, the study also recommends that all poverty alleviation programs in Hong LGA should incorporate clear exit strategies and livelihood sustainability plans. Programs should be designed to progressively graduate beneficiaries from dependency to self-sufficiency through skills training, microfinance access, and market linkage support.

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