

Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) Program and Poverty Reduction in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the role of the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programme in contributing to poverty reduction and household welfare improvement in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, Nigeria. Anchored on Amartya Sen's Capability Approach as the theoretical framework, the research employed a survey research design with a sample size of 300 respondents. The analysis focused on two objectives: assessing the extent to which the CCT contributes to poverty reduction and identifying the major challenges affecting its effectiveness in Abuja. Findings revealed that the CCT has positively enhanced household welfare by improving the ability of families to meet basic needs, increasing school attendance among children, and promoting better utilization of healthcare services. The programme was also found to reduce reliance on borrowing for essentials, thereby serving as a viable social safety net. However, several challenges undermine its effectiveness, including irregular and late payments, inadequate transfer amounts amidst inflation, targeting errors that exclude eligible households, and weak monitoring and enforcement of conditionalities. These systemic issues limit the programme's long-term sustainability and developmental outcomes. The study recommends that government should strengthen CCT implementation by ensuring regular and timely disbursement, increasing the transfer amount to reflect the rising cost of living, and improving targeting accuracy through the National Social Register. Furthermore, lifting the suspension on the CCT since the onset of the Tinubu administration, digitalizing payment systems, and strengthening monitoring frameworks will be critical in ensuring that transfers translate into sustainable poverty reduction and enhanced human development outcomes in the FCT.

Keywords: Conditional Cash Transfer, Poverty Reduction, Social Protection, Household Welfare, Federal Capital Territory

1.0 Introduction

Poverty remains a global challenge, undermining human development, social stability, and economic growth. Despite notable progress over the past decades, the World Bank (2022) reports that about 659 million people still live in extreme poverty, surviving on less than \$2.15 per day. Recent global shocks ranging from the COVID-19 pandemic to inflation, climate-related disruptions, and geopolitical conflicts have reversed earlier gains, pushing an additional 70 million people into extreme poverty in 2021 alone (World Bank, 2023). These developments underscore the vulnerability of low-income households and the urgent need for robust social protection mechanisms.

Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programmes have emerged globally as innovative policy instruments for poverty reduction. By providing financial assistance to poor households' conditional upon meeting specific requirements such as children's school enrolment or health visits—CCTs

combine short-term poverty alleviation with long-term human capital development (Fiszbein & Schady, 2009). Notable examples include Mexico's *Progress/Opportunities*, which improved school attendance and healthcare utilization (Parker & Todd, 2017), and Brazil's *Bolsa Família*, which reduced inequality and lifted millions out of extreme poverty while promoting educational and health outcomes (Lindert et al., 2022). More recently, countries like the Philippines and Indonesia have scaled up similar initiatives, demonstrating their effectiveness in advancing Sustainable Development Goals (Gérard, Naritomi, & Souza, 2024).

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, faces persistent poverty despite its resource endowment. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2022) estimates that 133 million Nigerians live in multidimensional poverty, characterized by deprivation in education, healthcare, and basic services. Structural challenges, including dependence on oil revenues, high inflation, unemployment, and insecurity, continue to exacerbate poverty and inequality (IMF, 2023). To address these vulnerabilities, the Federal Government introduced the Conditional Cash Transfer Programme in 2016 under the National Social Safety Nets Programme (NASSP), supported by the World Bank and other development partners. The programme targets extremely poor and vulnerable households, linking financial support to improvements in school enrolment, healthcare utilization, and household welfare (World Bank, 2020; Federal Government of Nigeria, 2021).

While evidence suggests that Nigeria's CCT programme has improved food security, children's school attendance, and access to healthcare among beneficiaries (Ifatimehin, Isyak, & Omale, 2020), persistent challenges such as irregular payments, weak monitoring, limited coverage, and political interference undermine its effectiveness (Akinola, 2023). These constraints raise important questions about the sustainability of the initiative as a national poverty reduction strategy.

The Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, presents a unique context for examining the effectiveness of CCT interventions. Despite its status as Nigeria's political and administrative capital, the city exhibits stark socio-economic inequalities. According to NBS (2022), about 40.1% of Abuja's population live in multidimensional poverty, with peri-urban and rural communities facing significant deprivation in education, healthcare, and sanitation. Rapid urbanization, a high cost of living, and rural-urban migration has intensified poverty pressures in the FCT (UN-Habitat, 2021). In response, the CCT programme has been implemented across the six Area Councils—Abaji, Bwari, Gwagwalada, Kuje, Kwali, and Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) providing monthly stipends to vulnerable households and linking transfers to education and health conditions (Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, 2022).

However, local challenges persist. Limited programme coverage, irregular cash disbursements, inflationary erosion of transfer value, and weak monitoring frameworks constrain the impact of the initiative in Abuja (World Bank, 2020; Timeline Nigeria, 2024). Despite these constraints, the CCT programme has provided some relief by improving household consumption, keeping children in school, and enhancing access to healthcare services (NBS, 2022).

Against this backdrop, this study interrogates the Conditional Cash Transfer programme as a poverty reduction mechanism in the FCT, Abuja. Nigeria.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Poverty remains one of the most pressing socio-economic challenges in Nigeria, undermining human welfare, social stability, and sustainable development. Despite various policy interventions, including the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP), poverty levels remain alarmingly high. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2022) reported that 133 million Nigerians are

multidimensionally poor, lacking access to education, healthcare, and basic infrastructure. In the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja—often considered a symbol of national affluence—over 40% of residents still live below the poverty line, especially in peri-urban and rural communities (UN-Habitat, 2021). These statistics underscore the persistence of poverty despite the existence of government-led social safety net programmes.

The Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) Programme was introduced as part of the NSIP in 2016, with the objective of providing financial assistance to extremely poor households, conditional on meeting human capital development requirements such as enrolling children in school and accessing primary healthcare (World Bank, 2020). Evidence from international contexts such as Brazil and Mexico demonstrates that CCTs can effectively reduce poverty and improve long-term welfare outcomes (Fiszbein & Schady, 2009; Lindert et al., 2022). However, the Nigerian experience presents a more complex picture. While some studies indicate that beneficiaries have improved access to food, education, and healthcare (Ifatimehin, Isyak, & Omale, 2020), persistent challenges such as irregular payments, weak institutional monitoring, and political interference limit the programme's transformative impact (Akinola, 2023).

In the FCT specifically, the programme is implemented across the six Area Councils—Abaji, Bwari, Gwagwalada, Kuje, Kwali, and the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC). Yet, beneficiaries frequently complain of delayed payments, limited coverage, and inadequate sensitization on programme conditions (Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, 2022). Moreover, the high cost of living in Abuja, coupled with food inflation, erodes the purchasing power of transfers, leaving many households unable to meet basic needs despite receiving support (Timeline Nigeria, 2024). This raises doubts about whether the CCT can meaningfully reduce poverty in the FCT or merely provide temporary relief without addressing structural vulnerabilities.

The central issue, therefore, is whether the Conditional Cash Transfer programme in Abuja is achieving its intended goal of reducing poverty and enhancing household welfare. While global and national studies on CCTs exist, little scholarly attention has been devoted to the specific effects of the programme within the unique socio-economic context of the Federal Capital Territory. Understanding these dynamics is critical, given Abuja's dual identity as both a hub of wealth and a locus of severe deprivation. This study, therefore, seeks to interrogate the extent to which the CCT programme contributes to poverty reduction in the FCT, Abuja, while identifying the key challenges that constrain its effectiveness.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the extent to which the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programme contributes to poverty reduction among households in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.
2. To identify the major challenges affecting the effectiveness of the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programme in addressing poverty in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

2.0 Conceptual Framework

2.1 Concept of Poverty

Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon that transcends income deprivation and extends to the lack of access to basic human needs, essential services, and opportunities for social mobility. Traditionally, poverty was measured through income or consumption levels, with the World Bank (1990) defining the poor as those living below a global poverty line. However, this narrow approach

has been criticized for failing to capture the broader experiences of deprivation faced by vulnerable populations. The World Bank (2022) now conceptualizes poverty as pronounced deprivation in well-being, encompassing dimensions such as inadequate access to education, healthcare, clean water, and housing.

Sen's (1999) capability approach broadened the understanding of poverty by framing it as the inability of individuals to achieve valuable life outcomes. From this perspective, poverty is not merely a lack of income but the deprivation of substantive freedoms and opportunities to live a dignified and fulfilling life. This shift has influenced international development policies by highlighting the importance of human development indicators, such as literacy, health, and empowerment, in measuring poverty reduction outcomes (Alkire & Foster, 2011).

In Nigeria, poverty remains a deeply entrenched problem despite periods of economic growth. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2022) reports that 133 million Nigerians live in multidimensional poverty, representing over 60% of the population. The Nigerian Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) goes beyond monetary poverty by incorporating education, health, living standards, and access to infrastructure such as sanitation and electricity. For instance, while income poverty may suggest that households have some resources, MPI data often reveal deeper vulnerabilities, including malnutrition, lack of school attendance, and inadequate housing conditions (NBS, 2022).

This multidimensional conceptualization is particularly significant in addressing poverty within urban and peri-urban contexts such as the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, where inequalities are sharply visible. Despite Abuja being the administrative and political hub of Nigeria, large sections of its population, especially in peri-urban settlements like Bwari, Gwagwalada, and Kuje, face severe deprivation in education and health services (UN-Habitat, 2021). This reflects the paradox of national wealth coexisting with localized poverty, underscoring the need for policies that address both income and non-income dimensions of poverty.

Consequently, poverty reduction strategies such as Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programmes have gained prominence. Unlike traditional income-support schemes, CCTs target both the immediate financial needs of households and their long-term human capital development by linking transfers to conditions such as school enrolment and healthcare utilization (Fiszbein & Schady, 2009). By addressing poverty in its multidimensional sense, CCTs offer a more comprehensive approach to breaking intergenerational cycles of deprivation and promoting inclusive growth.

2.2 Concept of Social Protection

Social protection is increasingly recognized as a vital policy tool for addressing poverty, vulnerability, and inequality, particularly in developing countries. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2017) defines social protection as a set of policies and programmes designed to reduce poverty and vulnerability by promoting efficient labor markets, reducing people's exposure to risks, and enhancing their capacity to manage economic and social shocks. At its core, social protection ensures that individuals have access to basic income security and essential services, thereby safeguarding their well-being in times of hardship.

According to Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2004), social protection can be categorized into four key functions: protective, which serves as a safety net to cushion against poverty and vulnerability; preventive, which provides insurance mechanisms against life-cycle risks such as unemployment or illness; promotive, which focuses on enhancing household income and livelihoods through skills development and access to opportunities; and transformative, which addresses structural causes of

poverty and inequality, including social exclusion and power imbalances. This framework underscores the multidimensional role social protection plays in development.

Cash transfers, both conditional and unconditional, have emerged as a central component of social protection systems worldwide. Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs), in particular, have been widely adopted in Latin America, Africa, and Asia as tools to both protect households from short-term income shocks and promote long-term human capital development. By requiring beneficiaries to meet conditions such as enrolling children in school or attending health clinics, CCTs combine immediate poverty alleviation with investments in education and health that can disrupt intergenerational cycles of poverty (Fiszbein & Schady, 2009; Bastagli et al., 2016).

In Nigeria, social protection has gained increased policy attention as a response to rising poverty and unemployment. Programmes such as the National Social Safety Nets Project (NASSP), implemented under the World Bank and Federal Government partnership, integrate CCTs as a means to provide targeted support to the poorest households while promoting human capital development (World Bank, 2020). This highlights the dual role of social protection in both addressing immediate welfare concerns and fostering inclusive growth.

Thus, social protection, particularly through CCTs, serves as a crucial mechanism not only for reducing vulnerability but also for advancing broader development goals, including the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on poverty, health, and education (UNDP, 2021).

2.3 Concept of Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT)

Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) are targeted social protection interventions designed to provide financial support to poor and vulnerable households, contingent upon fulfilling certain behavioral requirements such as children's school attendance, regular healthcare visits, or participation in community development programmes (Fiszbein & Schady, 2009). The logic underpinning CCTs is twofold: in the short term, they provide immediate income support to reduce poverty, while in the long term, they promote investments in human capital by ensuring that beneficiary households have access to education, healthcare, and other social services (Rawlings & Rubio, 2005).

Globally, CCTs have been adopted as effective policy tools in addressing multidimensional poverty. In Latin America, landmark programmes such as Brazil's Bolsa Família and Mexico's Progresa/Oportunidades have demonstrated remarkable success in improving school enrolment, reducing child labor, enhancing maternal and child health outcomes, and raising household consumption levels (Lindert et al., 2022; Parker & Vogl, 2018). These programmes show that linking cash transfers to specific conditions creates a virtuous cycle that reduces immediate poverty while breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

Beyond Latin America, CCTs have been successfully replicated in Asia and Africa with modifications to suit local contexts. For instance, in the Philippines, the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Programme has expanded access to education and health services among marginalized communities (Chaudhury et al., 2013). Similarly, in sub-Saharan Africa, CCTs have gained traction as part of broader poverty reduction and social protection strategies, addressing structural inequalities and vulnerabilities (Garcia & Moore, 2012).

In Nigeria, the implementation of CCTs under the National Social Safety Nets Programme (NASSP) represents a strategic attempt to integrate poverty reduction with human development. The programme provides cash transfers to poor households, with conditions such as ensuring children's school attendance and participation in health programmes, thereby aligning with both protective and

promotive functions of social protection (World Bank, 2022). This approach recognizes that addressing poverty requires more than income supplementation—it necessitates fostering long-term opportunities for education, health, and empowerment.

2.4 Concept of Human Capital Development

Human capital development refers to the process of enhancing individuals' knowledge, skills, health, and overall abilities with the aim of increasing productivity and improving quality of life (Becker, 1993). The theory of human capital posits that education and health are not merely consumption goods but critical investments that yield long-term economic and social returns (Schultz, 1961). This perspective highlights the role of individuals as key drivers of economic growth and national development, emphasizing that the productivity of a nation is strongly tied to the quality of its human resources.

Education plays a central role in human capital development by equipping individuals with cognitive and technical skills needed for labor market participation and innovation (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2018). Similarly, investments in health ensure that individuals remain physically and mentally capable of contributing productively to society (Bloom, Canning, & Sevilla, 2004). A healthy and educated population is more likely to break free from cycles of poverty, achieve upward mobility, and contribute to sustainable national development.

Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) are deeply rooted in the concept of human capital development. By tying financial assistance to conditions such as school attendance, immunization, and maternal healthcare visits, CCTs directly incentivize behaviors that foster long-term investments in children's education and health (Parker & Todd, 2017). The logic is that while the cash addresses immediate consumption needs, the conditions promote accumulation of human capital, thereby reducing vulnerability to poverty in the future (Fiszbein & Schady, 2009).

Empirical evidence supports this linkage. For instance, Brazil's Bolsa Família and Mexico's Progresa/Oportunidades demonstrated how CCTs improved school enrolment rates, reduced child labor, and increased healthcare utilization, thereby enhancing human capital outcomes over time (Lindert, Linder, Hobbs, & Brière, 2022). In the Nigerian context, the National Social Safety Nets Programme (NSSNP), which includes the CCT initiative, reflects this global model of leveraging human capital investments to reduce poverty and inequality (World Bank, 2020).

3.5 Concept of Poverty Reduction

Poverty reduction entails the design and implementation of strategies, policies, and interventions aimed at improving the living standards and economic opportunities of poor and vulnerable populations. It is not merely the absence of income but also the alleviation of multidimensional deprivation—such as lack of access to quality healthcare, education, clean water, housing, and decent work opportunities (Sen, 1999). Sachs (2015) emphasizes that effective poverty reduction requires both immediate relief measures that cushion households against economic shocks, as well as long-term structural reforms that address systemic issues such as inequality, unemployment, weak institutions, and social exclusion.

In this regard, Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) represent an innovative approach that combines short-term and long-term poverty alleviation strategies. By providing direct cash to poor households, CCTs immediately increase disposable income and consumption, thereby improving food security and reducing vulnerability to economic hardship (Gentilini et al., 2022). At the same time, the conditions tied to CCTs—such as mandatory school attendance and routine health checkups—

contribute to building human capital, which is essential for breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty (Rawlings & Rubio, 2005). Thus, CCTs tackle poverty from both economic and social dimensions, reflecting a comprehensive strategy that blends welfare support with developmental objectives.

In Nigeria, poverty reduction remains a central pillar of national development planning. The Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP 2017–2020) and the broader Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) prioritize inclusive growth, social protection, and poverty alleviation. Specifically, CCTs are strategically aligned with SDG 1 (No Poverty) by addressing immediate income deficits, and SDG 4 (Quality Education) by incentivizing school enrolment and reducing dropout rates among children from low-income households (World Bank, 2020). Beyond these, the program indirectly contributes to SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) by promoting healthcare utilization, and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) by targeting marginalized and vulnerable groups.

Consequently, the concept of poverty reduction through CCTs underscores a dual-impact model: alleviating present poverty while simultaneously investing in the capabilities that prevent future poverty. This integrated framework positions CCTs as both a social safety net and a development policy instrument, making them highly relevant to Nigeria's socio-economic realities, particularly in urban contexts like the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, where inequality and vulnerability remain pronounced despite national growth indicators.

3.0 Empirical Studies

Adeniran (2020) conducted a study on the impact of Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) on poverty alleviation in rural Nigeria. Using a survey of 400 beneficiary households in Ekiti and Osun States, the study sought to investigate the extent to which CCTs contributed to improving household welfare. The findings showed that households receiving transfers experienced a significant reduction in food insecurity and increased school enrollment among children compared to non-beneficiaries. However, challenges such as irregular disbursement of funds and limited coverage reduced the overall effectiveness of the program. The study concluded that strengthening monitoring mechanisms and ensuring timely payments would enhance the impact of CCTs on poverty reduction.

Osei and Alabi (2021) examined the role of CCTs in promoting educational outcomes in sub-Saharan Africa, with Nigeria as a case study. The research employed a mixed-methods approach involving surveys of 250 households and interviews with key stakeholders in education policy. Results revealed that CCTs positively influenced school attendance and reduced dropout rates among children from low-income families. However, the study also identified issues such as inadequate school infrastructure and teacher shortages, which limited the long-term benefits of the program. The authors recommended that CCT initiatives should be complemented with investments in educational facilities and teacher capacity development to maximize their effectiveness.

Gentilini, Grosh, and Rigolini (2022) carried out a cross-country analysis on the effectiveness of social safety nets, with Nigeria included as part of the study sample. Using secondary data from World Bank databases and program evaluation reports, the study assessed how CCTs contributed to poverty reduction and human capital development. The findings indicated that while CCTs provided immediate relief by increasing household consumption, their long-term success depended on the strength of complementary policies in health and education. In Nigeria, weak institutional capacity and funding inconsistencies undermined the sustainability of the program. The study recommended that governments adopt integrated approaches that link CCTs with broader development strategies, ensuring both short-term poverty alleviation and long-term human capital development.

5.0 Theoretical Framework:

The broad theoretical framework for this study is Amartya Sen's Capability Approach (CA), which reconceptualizes poverty not simply as a lack of income, but as the deprivation of basic capabilities—the freedoms and opportunities individuals require to lead lives they value (Sen, 1999). The CA emphasizes that for social protection interventions like Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) to be effective, they must expand people's substantive choices by enhancing their health, education, and livelihoods, while also mitigating vulnerability to shocks (Nussbaum, 2000; Alkire, 2002).

More specifically, this study anchors its analysis on the human development and social justice perspective of the CA. The framework highlights that deliberate state interventions, such as targeted cash transfers linked to school enrolment, healthcare utilization, and nutritional improvements, can enhance the real freedoms of poor households, enabling them to escape intergenerational cycles of deprivation. According to Fiszbein and Schady (2009), CCTs not only provide immediate consumption support but also ensure investments in long-term human capital, which directly aligns with Sen's proposition that development should be assessed by the expansion of people's capabilities rather than GDP growth alone.

The originality of the Capability Approach lies in its dual focus on short-term well-being and long-term capability expansion. On one hand, CCTs increase household purchasing power, enabling families to meet immediate food, shelter, and health needs, thereby reducing negative coping strategies such as school withdrawal or child labor (Ibok, 2025). On the other hand, conditionalities tied to education and healthcare accumulate into future capabilities, equipping beneficiaries with the knowledge, skills, and health required to sustain poverty reduction and economic inclusion. Delivery mechanisms—whether through biometric-linked digital payments or community-based monitoring—also matter within the CA, since they influence beneficiaries' freedom to access and utilize transfers effectively (World Bank, 2025).

The relevance of the Capability Approach to this study rests on the proposition that CCTs in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, function not merely as welfare transfers but as instruments of capability expansion. By targeting poor households through the National Social Register (NASSCO, n.d.), pegging transfer amounts to real living costs (Mendes, 2023), and linking access to education and healthcare conditionalities, the program directly advances capabilities in nutrition, schooling, and health. In the short run, this fosters improved household consumption and reduced vulnerability to shocks; in the medium run, it encourages school retention, child health improvements, and gender equity in education; and in the long run, it expands beneficiaries' agency, employability, and resilience, thereby breaking cycles of chronic poverty (Gérard et al., 2024; Rougier, 2017). Thus, the CA underscores the assumption that well-designed CCTs in Abuja are not mere welfare expenditures but productive social investments that enhance freedoms, reduce inequality, and promote sustainable development.

6.0 METHODOLOGY

6.1 Research Design

This study adopted a survey research design. The survey design is appropriate because it allows for the collection of quantitative data from a representative sample of a defined population, which can then be generalized to the entire population. In this study, the design facilitated the systematic collection of data from Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) beneficiaries in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, with the aim of examining how the program contributes to poverty reduction.

6.2 Population of the Study

The population of this study consisted of all beneficiaries of the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. According to records from the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Abuja (2024), there are 1,200 beneficiaries of the CCT distributed across the six Area Councils of the FCT, namely: Abuja Municipal (AMAC), Bwari, Gwagwalada, Kuje, Abaji, and Kwali.

Table I: Population of CCT Beneficiaries in FCT, Abuja

Area Council	Number of Beneficiaries
Abuja Municipal (AMAC)	300
Bwari	200
Gwagwalada	250
Kuje	150
Abaji	150
Kwali	150
Total	1,200

Source: Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Abuja (2024).

6.4 Sample Size

The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's (1967) formula for finite populations, expressed as:

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

n = Sample size

N = Population size (1,200)

e = Margin of error (0.05 at 95% confidence level)

Substituting into the formula:

$$N = \frac{1,200}{1 + 1,200(0.05)^2}$$

$$N = \frac{1,200}{1 + 1,200(0.0025)}$$

$$N = \frac{1,200}{1 + 3}$$

$$N = \frac{1,200}{4}$$

$$N = 300$$

Thus, the sample size for the study is **300 respondents**.

A **multi-stage sampling technique** was employed. In the first stage, the population was stratified according to the six Area Councils of the FCT. In the second stage, **systematic sampling** was applied to select respondents proportionately from each stratum. This ensured that beneficiaries from urban, semi-urban, and rural councils were fairly represented.

Table II: Sample Size Distribution by Area Council

Area Council	Beneficiaries	Sample Size
Abuja Municipal (AMAC)	300	75
Bwari	200	50
Gwagwalada	250	63
Kuje	150	38
Abaji	150	37
Kwali	150	37
Total	1,200	300

Source: Researchers' Computation (2025).

Table 1: CCT's Contribution to Poverty Reduction (N = 300)

Item Statements	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total	Mean	Decision
The CCT has improved my household's ability to meet basic needs.	120	90	30	40	20	300	3.83	Agree
The CCT has increased children's school attendance in my household.	100	110	35	35	20	300	3.78	Agree
The CCT has improved our utilization of primary healthcare services.	90	95	40	45	30	300	3.57	Agree
The CCT has reduced my household's reliance on borrowing for essentials.	80	85	50	55	30	300		

Source: Researchers' survey 2025

The analysis in Table 1 shows that the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programme has made a positive contribution to poverty reduction in the study area. A majority of respondents agreed that the CCT has improved their household's ability to meet basic needs (mean = 3.83), increased children's school attendance (mean = 3.78), and enhanced utilization of primary healthcare services (mean = 3.57). Furthermore, respondents also agreed that the programme has reduced their reliance on borrowing for essentials, although with a relatively lower mean score (mean = 3.43). Overall, the findings indicate that the CCT has played an important role in improving the welfare of beneficiary households, particularly in meeting basic needs, promoting education, and enhancing access to healthcare services.

Table 2: Major Challenges Affecting CCT Effectiveness (N = 300)

Item Statements	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total	Mean	Decision
Irregular/late payments reduce the effectiveness of the CCT programme.	130	95	25	30	20	300	3.95	Agree
The transfer amount is inadequate given current inflation and cost of living.	140	90	20	30	20	300	4.00	Agree
Targeting errors/exclusion of eligible poor households limit the programme's impact.	110	100	35	35	20	300	3.82	Agree
Weak monitoring/enforcement of conditionalities undermines intended outcomes.	100	95	40	40	25	300		

Source: Researchers' survey 2025

The results in Table 2 reveal the major challenges affecting the effectiveness of the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programme in the Federal Capital Territory. Respondents strongly agreed that irregular and late payments significantly reduce the programme's effectiveness (mean = 3.95). They also emphasized that the transfer amount is inadequate in the face of rising inflation and high cost of living (mean = 4.00), making it difficult for households to rely solely on the stipend to meet essential needs. In addition, targeting errors and the exclusion of eligible poor households were

identified as a key challenge that limits the overall impact of the programme (mean = 3.82). Similarly, weak monitoring and poor enforcement of conditionalities were highlighted as factors that undermine the attainment of the intended outcomes, with a relatively lower mean of 3.48. Collectively, these findings indicate that while the CCT programme contributes positively to poverty reduction, its effectiveness is hampered by structural, administrative, and financial challenges that require urgent policy attention.

7.0 Discussion of Findings

Objective One: To examine the extent to which the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programme contributes to poverty reduction among households in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja

The findings from Table 1 indicate that the CCT programme has made a positive contribution to poverty reduction in the Federal Capital Territory. Respondents agreed that the CCT has improved households' ability to meet basic needs (mean = 3.83), showing that financial support from the programme enables families to access food, clothing, and shelter more effectively. In addition, increased school attendance among children (mean = 3.78) demonstrates that the programme contributes to human capital development by helping households meet educational costs, in line with the programme's core conditionalities.

Similarly, households reported improved utilization of healthcare services (mean = 3.57), suggesting that the CCT encourages investment in health, thereby reducing vulnerability to illness-related poverty traps. Importantly, the programme has also reduced reliance on borrowing to meet essentials (mean = 3.43), which aligns with poverty alleviation goals by minimizing debt dependency. Taken together, these results suggest that the CCT serves as a viable safety net, cushioning vulnerable households and contributing to social protection and poverty reduction in Abuja.

Objective Two: To identify the major challenges affecting the effectiveness of the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programme in addressing poverty in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja

The findings in Table 2 highlight several critical challenges limiting the overall effectiveness of the CCT. Respondents identified irregular and late payments as a major obstacle (mean = 3.95), which reduces household confidence and undermines the programme's consistency. Inadequacy of the transfer amount was also strongly emphasized (mean = 4.00), showing that the current stipend cannot cope with inflation and the rising cost of living, thereby limiting its real impact on poverty alleviation.

Another important challenge is targeting errors and the exclusion of deserving households (mean = 3.82), which creates dissatisfaction and reduces the programme's inclusiveness. Furthermore, weak monitoring and enforcement of conditionalities (mean = 3.48) hinder intended developmental outcomes, especially in education and health. Collectively, these challenges suggest that while the CCT programme plays an important role in reducing poverty, its long-term sustainability and effectiveness depend on stronger administrative coordination, increased transfer amounts, and improved targeting and monitoring mechanisms.

8.0 Conclusion

This study set out to examine the contribution of the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programme to poverty reduction in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, and to identify the major challenges affecting its effectiveness. The findings revealed that the programme plays a significant role in improving households' welfare. Beneficiaries acknowledged that the CCT enhances their capacity to meet basic needs, increases school attendance, improves access to healthcare services, and reduces reliance on borrowing for survival. These outcomes underscore the programme's potential as a vital poverty-alleviation strategy and a social protection mechanism capable of breaking the cycle of deprivation.

However, the study equally highlighted several challenges that threaten the effectiveness and sustainability of the programme. Irregular and late payments, inadequate transfer amounts relative to inflation, targeting errors that exclude deserving households, and weak monitoring of conditionalities collectively limit the programme's impact. These challenges undermine the ability of the CCT to achieve its long-term goal of fostering inclusive growth and sustainable poverty reduction.

In conclusion, while the CCT programme has proven to be a useful safety net for vulnerable households in Abuja, its transformative potential can only be fully realized through reforms that ensure timely disbursement, increased benefit size to reflect economic realities, accurate targeting of beneficiaries, and stronger monitoring systems. Addressing these weaknesses will not only improve the programme's effectiveness but also strengthen its role in advancing social protection and human capital development in Nigeria.

9.0 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. On the contribution of the CCT programme to poverty reduction

- The Federal Government should strengthen and sustain the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programme, as evidence shows it significantly improves households' ability to meet basic needs, supports children's education, and enhances access to healthcare.
- The amount of cash transferred should be reviewed upward to reflect current inflationary pressures and the rising cost of living in Nigeria, thereby ensuring that the programme achieves meaningful poverty reduction outcomes.
- Capacity-building initiatives should be incorporated into the CCT programme, such as linking beneficiaries to skills acquisition and income-generating activities. This would help households move gradually from dependence on transfers to sustainable livelihoods.
- Government should lift the suspension/ban on the CCT programme introduced since the coming of President Ahmed Tinubu's administration and instead re-strategize to improve its structure. Continuity and expansion of the programme will restore hope to vulnerable households and prevent a reversal of earlier poverty reduction gains.

2. On the challenges affecting the effectiveness of the CCT programme

- Timely and regular payment mechanisms must be ensured to build trust among beneficiaries and prevent disruptions that reduce the programme's credibility. Leveraging digital payment platforms can reduce delays and leakages.

- Targeting mechanisms should be improved through transparent community-based registers and data validation processes to minimize errors of exclusion and ensure that the most vulnerable households are reached.
- Effective monitoring and evaluation frameworks should be strengthened. This includes enforcing conditionalities such as school attendance and healthcare utilization to maximize the programme's intended impact.
- Collaboration with civil society organizations and local leaders should be enhanced to improve accountability, reduce corruption, and ensure that funds reach genuine beneficiaries without political interference.

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