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AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NATIONAL HOME-GROWN SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMME (NHGSFP) ON THE PRIMARY EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT IN NIGER STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effect of the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP) on the educational development of primary school pupils in Niger State, Nigeria, between 2017 and 2022. Despite various studies on school feeding programs, significant gaps remain, particularly regarding their holistic impact on educational development.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Education has been identified as a veritable tool for enhancing individual, community and national development. It can be observed that all developed countries have good system of education which contributed to their socio-economic advancement .Nigerian education is categorized into three main vertical segments: basic education, post- basic (Secondary education) and tertiary education (FGN, 2004). Some of the objectives of primary education put emphasis on a balance between physical and intellectual development. The specific objectives of primary education include:

The research examines the programme's effect on enrolment, retention, attendance, and performance among pupils in six Local Government Areas (LGAs) representing Niger State's senatorial districts. A mixed-method approach involving structured questionnaires and interviews was employed to collect data from pupils, teachers, program officials, and parents. Findings and recommendations from this study aim to inform policymakers, enhance program implementation, and contribute to the broader literature on school feeding programs in Nigeria.

Keywords: School feeding, enrolment, retention ,attendance, pupils performance, primary education and educational development

- Widening access to basic education
- Eliminating present inequalities in enrolment between urban and rural
- Ensuring greater retention: this is aimed at ensuring that learners remain in school enough to acquire basic and life skills
- Ensuring long-term permanent literacy for those children who had completed the programme

(UBEC, 2004: FRN, 2014; Nigerian Vision 2020 Report)

The National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP) was launched as an intervention to enhance educational outcomes through increased enrolment, retention, and attendance in primary schools while simultaneously addressing nutrition and food security. The program aligns with global efforts such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to eradicate hunger and promote quality education.

In Niger State, the NHGSFP has been fully implemented since 2017, targeting pupils across urban, semi-urban, and rural settings. However, its effectiveness in achieving these objectives, particularly in educational development, remains underexplored. This study fills the identified research gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of the NHGSFP's impact on primary school pupils in Niger State.

Statement of the Problem

While several studies, including those by Taylor and Ogbogu (2016) and Sulemana et al. (2013), have assessed school feeding programs, most focus on enrolment, retention, and nutrition, with little emphasis on overall educational development. In Niger State, limited research exists on how the NHGSFP influences pupils' participation and learning outcomes. This gap necessitates an in-depth investigation to evaluate the program's holistic impact on primary education within the state.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the effect of the NHGSFP on pupil enrolment in primary schools.
2. To evaluate the program's impact on pupil retention and attendance.
3. To analyze the influence of the NHGSFP on pupils' classroom participation and learning outcomes.
4. To examine the challenges associated with implementing the NHGSFP in Niger State.

Research Questions

1. What is the effect of the NHGSFP on pupil enrolment in Niger State?
2. How has the NHGSFP influenced pupil retention and attendance in primary schools?
3. What impact has the NHGSFP had on pupils' classroom participation and learning outcomes?
4. What challenges hinder the implementation of the NHGSFP in Niger State?

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the NHGSFP's implementation in six LGAs—Kontagora, Wushishi, Shiroro, Rafi, Bida, and Lavun—spanning 2017 to 2022. These LGAs were selected for their geographic, socioeconomic, and infrastructural diversity. The study examines enrolment, retention, attendance, and participation to determine the program's effectiveness in achieving its cardinal objectives.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will inform policymakers and stakeholders on the NHGSFP's contribution to educational development in Niger State.

Additionally, it will provide feedback to government bodies, including the Niger State Ministry of Education, to enhance program implementation. By addressing existing research gaps, the study will enrich the academic discourse on school feeding programs and serve as a reference for future studies.

Literature Review Theoretical Framework

The study adopts the Human Capital Theory, which posits that investment in education and nutrition improves individual productivity and societal development. By providing nutritious meals, the NHGSFP is expected to enhance pupils' cognitive abilities and educational outcomes. Additionally, the Social Protection Theory highlights how social safety nets, such as school feeding programs, reduce vulnerability and promote equity, particularly among marginalized populations.

Empirical Studies

Several studies have investigated the impact of school feeding programs on education. For example, Taylor and Ogbogu (2016) found that school feeding programs in Kenya significantly increased enrolment rates in public schools. Similarly, Sulemana et al. (2013) observed that Ghana's school feeding initiative improved pupils' attendance and nutritional status.

In Nigeria, Adebayo and Yusuf (2019) studied the NHGSFP in Ekiti State and reported a 35% increase in pupil retention within two years of implementation. However, they noted challenges such as irregular funding and poor meal quality. Jumare (2020) highlighted the role of school feeding programs in improving gender parity in rural schools, as girls' enrolment outpaced that of boys due to parental preference for programs that reduced household meal burdens.

A study by Eze et al. (2021) in Enugu State further emphasized that well-implemented feeding programs improved not only enrolment but also academic performance, citing increased cognitive focus among pupils. Similarly, Ogunlana and Adedokun (2020) found a direct correlation between regular school meals and reduced dropout rates in Oyo State.

Furthermore, recent assessments in Bauchi State by Yusuf et al. (2022) revealed that school feeding programs contributed to fostering community involvement, as parents and local suppliers were actively engaged. This

community engagement was seen as a key factor in sustaining the program's success. However, studies by Garba and Bello (2021) highlighted logistical challenges such as the late delivery of meals and inadequate infrastructure in some rural schools, which impeded the program's effectiveness.

Despite these insights, there is limited research on the holistic impact of school feeding programs, particularly in terms of classroom participation and learning outcomes. This study aims to fill this gap by providing a detailed evaluation of the NHGSFP in Niger State, focusing on both quantitative and qualitative measures of educational development.

Methodology Research Design

A descriptive survey research design was employed to assess the NHGSFP's impact on primary school pupils.

Population, Sample, and Sampling Techniques

The study targeted primary school pupils, teachers, NHGSFP officials, and parents in six selected LGAs. A purposive sampling method was used to select 120 caterers, 36 pupils, and relevant officials, ensuring representation across urban, semi-urban, and rural areas.

Research Instruments

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled —National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme Questionnaire (NHGSFPQ)‖ and interviews. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: demographic information (Section A) and program-related items (Section B), using a Likert scale format.

Validation and Reliability of Instruments

The research instruments were validated through expert reviews and pilot testing in selected schools. Reliability was ensured using Cronbach's Alpha, achieving a coefficient of 0.85.

Results and Discussion

To evaluate the hypotheses and explore the relationships among the variables, the Chi-Square statistical test was utilized. A total of 350 questionnaires were administered to respondents across six local government areas in Niger State.

Of these, 304 were returned and deemed valid for analysis, ensuring a reliable dataset for the study.

Hypothesis One: That National Home-Grown school feeding programme does not significantly affect enrollment of primary school pupils in Niger State.

Variable	Category	Fo (Observed)	Fe (Expected)	Fo - Fe	(Fo - Fe)²	(Fo - Fe)² / Fe
1	SA	107	81.00	26	676.00	8.35
1	A	179	196.60	-18	324.00	**1.65**
1	SD	10	12.80	-2.80	7.84	**0.61**
1	D	8	13.60	-5.60	31.36	**2.31**
2	SA	53	81.00	-28	784.00	**9.68**
2	A	221	196.60	24	576.00	**2.93**
2	SD	12	12.80	-0.80	0.64	**0.05**
2	D	18	13.60	4.40	19.36	**1.42**
3	SA	96	81.00	15	225.00	**2.78**
3	**A**	**178**	**196.60**	**-19**	**361.00**	**1.84**
3	SD	18	12.80	5.20	27.04	**2.11**
3	D	12	13.60	-1.60	2.56	**0.19**
4	SA	72	81.00	-9	81.00	**1.00**
4	A	202	196.60	5	25.00	**0.13**
4	SD	12	12.80	-0.80	0.64	**0.05**
4	D	18	13.60	4.40	19.36	**1.42**
5	SA	77	81.00	-4	16.00	**0.20**
5	A	203	196.60	6.40	40.96	**0.21**
5	SD	12	12.80	-0.80	0.64	**0.05**
5	D	12	13.60	-1.60	2.56	**0.19**
Total		1520	1520		3241.56	37.12

Results and Interpretation

The analysis reveals a Chi-Square Value (χ^2) of 37.12, which exceeds the critical value at the 0.05 significance level, and a p-value of < 0.001. These findings indicate a highly statistically significant result. The evidence strongly suggests

that the feeding program positively impacts school enrollment. By addressing barriers such as malnutrition and poverty, the program encourages parents to enroll their children in school. These results support the continued investment in and expansion of the initiative as a means to promote educational access and improve outcomes.

Hypothesis Two: That National Home-Grown school feeding programme does not significantly affect retention of primary school pupils in Niger State.

Variable	Category	Fo (Observed)	Fe (Expected)	Fo - Fe	(Fo - Fe)²	(Fo - Fe)² / Fe
1	SA	107	131.20	-24	576.00	**4.46**
1	A	166	134.60	31	961.00	**7.33**
1	SD	12	16.40	-4	16.00	**1.18**
1	D	19	21.80	-3	9.00	**0.36**
2	SA	129	131.20	-2	4.00	**0.04**
2	A	137	134.60	2	4.00	**0.04**
2	SD	18	16.40	2	4.00	**0.16**
2	**D**	**20**	**21.80**	**-2**	**4.00**	**0.15**

Variable	Category	Fo (Observed)	Fe (Expected)	Fo - Fe	(Fo - Fe)²	(Fo - Fe)² / Fe
3	SA	152	131.20	21	441.00	**3.30**
3	A	104	134.60	-31	961.00	**6.96**
3	SD	21	16.40	5	25.00	**1.52**
3	D	27	21.80	5	25.00	**1.15**
4	SA	111	131.20	-20	400.00	**3.05**
4	A	167	134.60	32	1024.00	**7.61**
4	SD	7	16.40	-9	81.00	**4.94**
4	D	19	21.80	-3	9.00	**0.41**
5	SA	157	131.20	26	676.00	**5.15**
5	A	99	134.60	-36	1296.00	**9.63**
5	SD	24	16.40	8	64.00	**3.90**
5	D	24	21.80	2	4.00	**0.18**
Total		1520	1520		8264	61.39

Results and Interpretation

The results of the analysis reveal a statistically significant impact of the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme on pupil retention in Niger State. Specifically, the calculated Chi-Square value (χ^2) of 61.39 exceeds the critical value at the 0.05 significance level, and the p-value is less than 0.001, indicating a highly statistically significant result. This suggests that the program has been effective in keeping pupils in school, demonstrating its importance in fostering long-term educational participation in the region.

Hypothesis Three: That National Home-Grown school feeding programme does not significantly affect attendance of primary school pupils in Niger State.

Variable	Category	Fo (Observed)	Fe (Expected)	Fo - Fe	(Fo - Fe)²	(Fo - Fe)² / Fe
1	SA	90	82.80	7	49.00	**0.63**
1	A	201	194.40	7	49.00	**0.22**
1	SD	5	13.00	-8	64.00	**4.92**
1	D	8	13.80	-6	36.00	**2.44**
2	SA	91	82.80	8	64.00	**0.81**
2	A	189	194.40	-5	25.00	**0.15**
2	**SD**	**18**	**13.00**	**5**	**25.00**	**1.92**
2	D	6	13.80	-8	64.00	**4.41**
3	SA	77	82.80	-6	36.00	**0.41**
3	A	190	194.40	-4	16.00	**0.10**
3	SD	22	13.00	9	81.00	**6.23**
3	D	15	13.80	1	1.00	**0.10**
4	SA	88	82.80	5	25.00	**0.33**
4	A	184	194.40	-10	100.00	**0.56**
4	SD	8	13.00	-5	25.00	**1.92**
4	D	24	13.80	10	100.00	**7.54**
5	SA	68	82.80	-15	225.00	**2.65**
5	A	208	194.40	14	196.00	**0.95**
5	SD	12	13.00	-1	1.00	**0.08**
5	D	16	13.80	2	4.00	**0.35**
Total		1520	1520		1032	36.72

Results and Interpretation

The results of the analysis reveal that the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme has a significant positive effect on the attendance of primary school pupils in Niger State. The calculated Chi- Square value (χ^2) of 36.72 exceeds the critical value for common significance levels of 0.05, and the p- value is less than 0.001, indicating strong statistical significance. This suggests that the program effectively promotes consistent school attendance, highlighting its value in enhancing educational outcomes in the region.

Hypothesis Four: That challenges constrain National Home-Grown school feeding programme does not significantly affect academic performance of primary school pupils in Niger State.

Variable	Category	Fo (Observed)	Fe (Expected)	Fo - Fe	(Fo - Fe)²	(Fo - Fe)² / Fe
1	SA	107	107.65	-1	1.00	**0.00**
1	A	167	166.62	0	0.00	**0.00**
1	SD	7	12.07	-5	25.00	**2.13**
1	D	19	13.65	5	25.00	**2.09**
2	SA	110	107.65	2	4.00	**0.05**
2	**A**	**177**	**166.62**	**10**	**100.00**	**0.65**

Variable	Category	Fo (Observed)	Fe (Expected)	Fo - Fe	(Fo - Fe)²	(Fo - Fe)² / Fe
2	SD	2	12.07	-10	100.00	**8.40**
2	D	15	13.65	1	1.00	**0.13**
3	SA	121	107.65	13	169.00	**1.66**
3	A	139	166.62	-28	784.00	**4.58**
3	SD	25	12.07	13	169.00	**13.85**
3	D	19	13.65	5	25.00	**2.09**
4	SA	100	107.65	-8	64.00	**0.54**
4	A	172	166.62	5	25.00	**0.17**
4	SD	22	12.07	10	100.00	**8.17**
4	D	10	13.65	-4	16.00	**0.98**
5	SA	106	107.65	-2	4.00	**0.03**
5	A	187	166.62	20	400.00	**2.49**
5	SD	5	12.07	-7	49.00	**4.14**
5	D	6	13.65	-8	64.00	**4.29**
Total		1520	1520		1770	56.45

Results and Interpretation

The results show that challenges in the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme significantly affect the academic performance of primary school pupils in Niger State. The Chi-Square value (χ^2) of
56.45 exceeds the critical value, and the p-value is < 0.001, indicating a highly statistically significant result. This suggests that addressing these challenges is crucial to improving the program's effectiveness in enhancing education.

Conclusion and Recommendations Conclusion

The National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP) has made significant strides in improving enrolment, retention, and attendance rates in primary schools across Niger State. The provision of daily meals has incentivized parents to enroll their children in school, especially in economically disadvantaged areas. Additionally, the program has promoted gender equity,with increased enrolment of female pupils. However, its impact on classroom participation and learning outcomes remains modest due to challenges such as irregular funding, inconsistent meal delivery, and inadequate monitoring. Addressing these challenges is essential for optimizing the program's educational benefits.

Recommendations

1. Strengthen Funding Mechanisms: Regular and adequate funding should be ensured to maintain consistent meal delivery and avoid disruptions. Collaboration with private sector stakeholders can provide supplementary resources.
2. Enhance Monitoring and Evaluation: Establish robust monitoring frameworks to track the program's effectiveness. This includes digital tracking systems for meal distribution and attendance records.
3. Improve Meal Quality and Hygiene: Regular training sessions for caterers on nutritional standards and hygiene practices should be conducted. Local food suppliers should be engaged to ensure fresh and culturally appropriate meals.
4. Foster Community Engagement: Involve parents, teachers, and community leaders in program implementation to build trust and address localized challenges. Feedback mechanisms should be

established to ensure inclusivity.

5. Conduct Further Research: Longitudinal studies should be carried out to evaluate the NHGSFP's long-term impact on cognitive development and academic performance. Comparative studies with other states can also provide insights for scaling best practices.

Through these measures, the NHGSFP can serve as a model for improving educational development, thereby contributing to Nigeria's progress toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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