

Evaluate the impact of school feeding on enrollment and attendance in Nigerian primary school: A case study of Ikere local government areas of Ekiti state

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Abstract

Most African countries have recently established social safety net programmes as parts of a broader strategy to assist the poor and protect vulnerable. The study investigates the impacts of school feeding programme on pupil's enrolment and attendance in primary school in Nigeria focus on Ikere Local Government Areas of Ekiti State; it will examine the level of awareness among the illiterates especially in the villages that constitute Ikere local government. Also the study will investigate the militating factors confronting the success of the programme in the study area with a sample of 200 respondents including 80 pupils, 40 teachers, 40 parents, 30 school administrators were surveyed using structured questionnaire and Focus Group Discussion (FGDs). The data were collected through both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected using questionnaire interview and focus Group Discussions (FGDs) secondary data were gathered through textbooks, journals, and internet materials relevant to the study. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation to access the relationship between school feeding programme and pupil's enrolment and attendance. Three hypotheses were tested using Pearson correlation method to evaluate the imperative of school feeding programme on pupil's enrolment and attendance. It was relevant in the study, a strong positive correlation between school feeding programme and improved school attendance, with a Pearson correlation coefficient +1 and statistical significant P-value. The study concludes that there is need to encourage school feeding programme to bring more children to school, also the study recommends sustainability of the programme in terms of funds, vendors and improve the quality of the meals available to the pupils.

Keywords: Social Safety Nets; Poverty; School; Feeding; Programme

1. Introduction

Conditional cash transfer (CCT) programmes have become widespread in developing and under developing countries in a way to alleviate current poverty and provide investments in human capital that could lead families to better life condition in the long run. The first goal is accomplished when poor families receive money from government on monthly basis, as a complementary income source. The second goal is reached by conditional cash transfer on certain behaviours, such as visiting health facilities, Immunizing children, and enrolling children in school (Ferro, 2007).

Social safety nets are non - contributory programmes targetting the poor or vulnerable. They may be designed, implemented and supported by government, international organization or non - governmental organizations (NGOS). Their distinguished feature is their non - contributory nature; that is beneficiaries do not have to contribute financially to receive benefits. This differentiate them from contributory forms of social protection, whereby prior contribution and participation in the labour market determines benefits eligibility.

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To compare effectively across countries and regions for social safety nets programmes may be classified into eight groups building on Grosh et al (2008) as follows cited in Damp and Dalalen (2017).

- Cash Transfer programmes
- Old-age pensions - Lesotho targeted on the poor elderly
- Food - based transfer
- Work programmes - Ethiopia productivity safety net programmes
- Emergency support programmes
- Fee waivers and scholarships
- Other social safety nets
- School feeding programmes supply meals for children at school to encourage their enrolment and attendance and improve their international status and ability to learn. These programmes sometimes also include take-home food rations for children families. School feeding programmes in the region include the Burkina Faso and South African programme for primary - school children.

Nigeria Government under Muhammadu Buhari established school feeding programme too, to encourage pupils in primary schools towards enrolment and attendance, so that there will be no excuse for children especially in the northern part of Nigeria where school enrolment and attendance was too poor, Due to inability of parents to send their wards to school. After few months of inception of this programme in the north, it was made to cover the whole countries Globally, school feeding programmes have proven effective in increasing enrolment and attendance rate, According to a report by the World Food Programme (WFP) school feeding programmes contribute significantly to improving educational outcomes by encouraging regular attendance and enhancing learning capacity (WFP, 2021). In several countries, including Brazil, India and Ghana these programmes have led to significant increases in school enrolment and a reduction in dropout rates (Uwaezuoke and Chukwudi, 2022).

United Nation Sustainable Development Goal(SDG), which focuses on ending hunger, underscores the importance of such activities in promoting food security and improved nutrition. By producing meals to pupils, government not only succeeded in combating malnutrition but also after one of the major reasons for truancy-hunger.

Ekiti state is one of the States implementing the Home-Grown School Feeding Programme, like many other states of the federation, as they have been grappling with more enrolment and attendance rates in primary schools will improve. According to the Universal Basic Education Commission(UBEC) despite the compulsory nature of primary education in Nigeria, many children in rural parts of Ekiti state are not enrolled in school talkless of attending school regularly (UBEC, 2022). These challenges are not unconnected to the high level of the poverty and food insecurity which makes it difficult for families to send their children to school. Alabi (2021) remarks that with high level of poverty and food insecurity, school feeding programme can play significant role in terms of enrolment and attendance of children from poor homes. Through free meals served in the school, it will help parents who always struggled hard to provide food for their children, it will serve as a great relief on them. Instead of thinking on how to provide food for the children, they can now use the money to finance some other financial commitments at home such as, clothing, school materials and others. In another dimension Ogunlade and Adetunji opined that to many communities, girls are more likely to be kept out of school to assist with house chores or care for younger siblings. But through school finding programme, it will alleviate the barrier to girl education, leading to increasing enrolment among female pupils. Eze and Ogbu (2022) observed that school feeding apart from boosting enrolment rates, it also plays significant role in providing children with regular nutrition meals, their health and energy levels improve, making them more likely to attend school consistently. Having Ekiti state introduced National Home-Grown School Feeding(HGSFP) in 2016 was highly welcomed by every indigenes of the state, as it will be a strong strategic intervention that will address how enrolment and attendance in primary school especially, premised on the poverty level of parents mostly found in the rural areas. Despite this laudable intention of the programme, the question still remain unanswered whether this programme actually impacts the children from poor homes to make themselves available in schools. The paper is entirely policy evaluative endeavour. The study intend to investigate the programme implementation holistically. Whether the programme is free of challenges, such as consistent delivery of food without excuses, timely presentation of the food to children without problem of mobility or transportation by the vendors and more importantly the threat of socio-economic barriers and management of resources set aside for the implementation of the programme by government agents.

2. Conceptual Clarifications

2.1. Social Safety Nets

Samson and Taylor (2015) describes social safety as social protection a broad range of public and sometimes private instrument to tackle the challenges of poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion. In another dimension Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2004) however, introduced the transformative dimension to social protection and provided definition, conceptual and operational. These definition were extensively employed by scholar and development practitioners. The conceptual definition describe social safety net as comprising all public and private initiative that provides income on consumption transfers to the poor, protect the vulnerable and marginalized groups. The operational definition define social protection as the set of all initiative, both formal and informal that provides social assistance in extremely poor individual and household, social services to groups who need special social insurance to protect people against the risks and consequences of household shocks, and social equity to protect people against social risks such as discrimination and abuse.

Nigeria account for 20% of the population of sub sahara Africa (SSA) and is projected to be the third most populous country in the world with over 400million people by 2040 it is lower-middle income country that is large and richly endowed. Yet, it host more of the world's extreme poor today than any other country (World Bank, 2019). The government of Nigeria realize the urgency to turn the tide of poverty and vulnerability in the country and has taken important steps to set up the foundations of national social protection and safety nets policy in support of the pro poor agenda.

The programme opportunidable which means opportunities (rebranded as progress as) was established in 1997 by the government of Mexico, implemented as an internal approach to poverty alleviation with emphasis on educational component to improve the school enrolment, attendance and performance of children in targeted household among other objects. Colombia familias en Accion was established in 2000 to migrate the macro economic shock which particularly adverse impact on poor household. Focusing to reduce non attendance and drop out rates among primary and high school students, to improve health comes in nutrition and easily educational development and other objective. Pilipino programme also known as (4Ps) is a poverty redemption strategic that provide grant to extremely poor household to improve their health and education particularly families within aged of 0 to 14

2.2. Poverty

Poverty is a situation of lack of basic accessities of life including basic food, shelter, medical care and satisfaction. It is acknowledged that poverty is an outcome in the various dimensions including social, political and economic. According to Hazel and Haddard (2001); poverty consist of two interacting deprivations; physiological and social. Physiological deprivation is a state of individual inability to meet basic material and physiological needs resulting to lack of income. Social deprivation refers to an absence of elements that are empowering such as autonomy time, information, dignity and self- esteem. World Bank (2001) describes that poverty can be regarded as the denial of income from making a choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. Todaro and Smith (2011) state that the poor are widely perceived to be unable to feed adequately, lack of assets and are indebted, live in an inadequate and unhygienic environment, they lack access to medical facilities water and other basic services, they mostly indulge in alcoholism, drug abuse, domestic violence they are physically handicapped and indolence. Ajayi (2006) saw poverty as either absolute or relative outcome. Absolute poverty is that which could be applied at all times all societies such as the level of income necessary for basic subsistence. In absolute poverty productivity is low; the GDP capital is less than the amount people in absolute poverty suffer from a lack of sufficient resources to provide for their daily requirements.

In the same vein, Aliyu (2003) explained absolute poverty as the condition where an individual or group of people are unable to satisfy their basic requirements for human survival in terms of education, health, housing, feeding, employment, transportation etc. In contrast view "Relative Poverty" as a situation in consideration of the several undertaken by World Bank (WB), United Nation Development Programme (UNDP), Human Development Index (HDI) and. international Comparison Program (ICP) (2005) . Ultimately a poverty line refers to the expenditure level below which a household cannot attain sufficient calories (basic requirement), even spend their money on food. These are relative poverty line, absolute poverty line based on US 1\$ in a day (World Bank) 1999 - 2005, UND9, 2001.

The above analysis reveals the situation of people that are wallowing in abject poverty, it applies that such people cannot afford to send their children to school and even provide nutritions food that can help the children to grow well and have fitness mentally for academic rigours. Globally, government of every nation established social protection/social safety programmes to alleviating poverty in order to boost educational development.

School Feeding Programmes (SFDs) School feeding programmes are structured interventions designed to provide nutrition's meals and snacks to students within the school environment. These programs are implemented as part of broader strategies to improve educational outcomes, health and socioeconomic development in many countries; particularly in developing regions like Nigeria (Adesina et al, 2022). In Nigeria, the National Home - Grown School Feeding Programmes (NGHSFP) was included in 2016 as parts of the government investment Programme with the aim of providing one nutritious meal to pupils in public primary schools across the country. Basically the Programme was not only designed to make nutritious food available to primary school pupils alone, but also increase school enrollment, reduces dropout rate and to stimulates local agricultural production. The school feeding programmes well equally alleviate the financial burden on families, particularly in low - income areas. This can encourage the parents to enroll their children in schools because of the financial relief.

3. Theoretical Framework

Human capital theory is considered most relevant from the understanding of impact of school feeding programs on primary schools pupils enrollment and attendance in the study area and Nigeria as a whole. The theory was developed by Theodore Schultz (1961), Gary Becker (1962) viewed that education and training are instruments in human capital in which they yield economic returns both for individuals and society as a whole. Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2022) posited that the theory view human capital as the knowledge, skill and health accumulate over their lifetimes as a crucial factor in economic growth and development. The theory has the following principles:

- Education as investment - it conceptualized education not as consumption but as an investment that yield future returns
- Skill and productivity - it showcases that education and training enhance an individual skill leading to increase productivity and higher earnings
- Societal benefits - beyond individual returns, the theory suggests that a more educated populace contribute to overall economic growth and social development.

The synergy between school feeding programmes and human capital theory is the aim of government not only to alleviate poverty but create enabling avenue to improve education most especially the early childhood education so that the future of the country in terms of economics growth and eradication of social vices will be attainable because educated populace is safe from high risk of hoodlums, banditry, army robbery and other social vices.

4. Methodology

The study employed descriptive survey designed. Here, data were collected quantitatively through structured questionnaire administered to teachers, qualitative data were collected through interviews conducted with the school administrators also Focused Group Discussion (FGDs) were conducted among parents and pupils especially in the villages and settlements around the local government areas.

4.1. Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

The focus of this step is the systematic presentation, analysis and discussion of the data collected. The study examines how the school feeding program influences pupils enrolment and attendance. Data were collected from 80 pupils, 40 teachers, 30 school administrators in selected primary schools in Ikere-Ekiti. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to analyzed the data providing insight into how the school feeding initiative has helped pupils enrolment and attendance rates.

The majority of the pupils fall within the age of 9-12 while only 15% of the teachers fall within 27-42 and age of school administrators are between age 46-58 respectively. The largest population of the respondents are pupils owing to the fact that they are the direct beneficiaries of the school feeding programme.

The inclusion of teachers and administrators ensures that the perspective of those implementing and managing the program are also considered providing a holistic view of its impact on school enrolment and attendance. The management of this program have different view on distribution of the food 40% of the management provide regular provision of the food (on daily basis) 25%. Were in support of serving of the meal during event such as inter house sport competition, cultural day, children day etc. while 20% prefer meals provision occasionally (weekly) 18% prefer snack. Evident in the analysis above, majority of the management supported daily meal provision as a key element in ensuring the success of the school feeding program.

Result of the respondents on the school feeding on enrolment revealed that the result that 45% of the respondents strongly believe in the school feeding program. It shows that there is a positive correlation between school feeding and improved enrollment although, minority of the respondents claim that there is need for more enrollment. Majority of the teachers and administrators 55% and 84% respectively praise school feeding program as it has enforcement impact on the pupils attendance in school and enrolment, claimed that pupils are regular in school with enthusiasm. This result from participants of focus group discussion in Agbani village where nine were in attendance. Chief Ajayi (community) leader expresses his joy for the intervention as it goes a long way in the life of both children and parents. He claims further, that it was a great economic relief on the part of parents, while the Children are always wait for day break so that they eat the kind of food that not always available in their homes and wish to attend school regularly. Ajolagun settlement was another centre of (FGDs). There elder Ojo of (CAC church) claimed that through school feeding program both church and parents now do less work on dragging their children to school because those benefited spread the news to another children to come to school as they are going to be served free meals. Mr. Igbalajobi of Ita Olowo village spoke on behalf of other participants that if any parents still hold back their children at home and prevent such children from enjoying this gesture from government. It will be tantamount to enemy of progress especially of their children.

In another centre Ogbese settlement. Elder Ojo equally applauded the intervention but complained about the timely arrival of the meal that the pupils at times waited so long before their vendor would arrived and regular occurrence made many of the pupils famished beyond expectation before they will finally have the meals he further mentioned that quality of the food which needs improvement so that it will actually serve purpose of providing nutrition to the pupils.

5. Hypothesis Test Result

Hypothesis (H_0) school feeding program do not significantly influence pupils attendance and enrollment in primary school in Ikere Ekiti Local Government Areas.

Alternative hypothesis (H_1) school feeding program significantly influence within pupils attendance and enrollment in primary school in Ikere LGAs

98% of respondents accept that the success of school feeding in improving attendance and enrollment while only 2% respondents objected the impact of school feeding on attendance and enrollment of pupils in school Pearson's correlation coefficient (r):+1.0

P-value 0.0001

Since the p-value <0.5, we reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H_1) this shows that there is a significant positive relationship between school feeding and the pupils attendance and enrollment in Ikere LGAs .

6. Findings and recommendations

Considering that Nigeria is relatively new to social safety nets in comparison to other African countries, it is unhelpful to avoiding the inherent flaws in the current school feeding program (based on irregularity poor quality of the meals). Although it provides a powerful incentive for pupils to attend school consistently, and parents low incomes regions. The untimely arrival of the meals many a times distract the attention of the pupils to engage and participate actively in classroom activities.

It is obvious in the various data gathered that school feeding and pupils attendance and enrollment are significantly related owing to a strong positive correlation ($p=+1$) interaction a perfect linear relationship between the two variables. This interaction that the school feeding Programme significantly improved pupils attendance and enrollment rates. Asides, there's improvement in the nutritional levels of pupils, but there's need for proper supervision of the meal distributed among the pupils to avoid distractions so that they engage in their learning tasks and classroom activities. Also, school feeding programmes assist the parents greatly in their economic relief which helps them to attend to other needs financially at home such as provisions of clothes, shoes, school materials etc. Through the nutritional meal pupils health is improved and this pave way for their stability and consistence in school.

Government should consider expanding the Programme to include more schools especially the post primary schools, constituency of the meals should be encouraged and prompt delivery of the food should be adhered to so that the pupils will not be distracted by endless waiting for the meals. The management of the programmes should not see it as medium

of encouraging political patronage that will make vendors see it as avenue to have their own share from the benefit of being a member of one political party or the other, teachers and school administrators should be allowed to play more active roles in the implementation and monitoring of the programs, their involvement will help ensure that meals are distributed effectively so that some pupils will not be favoured than others. It will also help it through check on the quantity of meals, local communities, including parents and local organizations should be involved to improve the program sustainability. Community support can as well contribute to raising additional resources and providing feedback to enhance the activeness of the feeding initiative.

The general problem of corruption should be totally eliminated from the implementation of the program as it is obvious that some laudable programs in Nigeria have been shattered on the altar of corruption and mismanagement.

Lastly, the program requires adequate funding for its sustainability and policy backing from both local and national governments to ensure it continuity and expansion.

7. Conclusion

Evident in the study that school feeding programmes significantly improved attendance and enrollment among primary schools pupils in Ikere Local Government Areas of Ekiti State, Nigeria. Besides, it meets the nutritional need support health development, provides economic relief to the parents. But with many challenges such as prompts availability of the meals at the disposal of the pupil, the quantity and quality of the meal served. Notwithstanding, it is established in the study that the Programme serves as good instrument of enhancing overall wellbeing among primary school pupils in the studied areas.

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