

## School Feeding Programme and Academic Performance of Pupils in Public Primary Schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

*It is unfortunate to observe that each day, millions of children around the globe including Akwa Ibom State go to school on an empty stomach. This is counterproductive because hunger affects concentration and ability to learn, hence, the establishment of school feeding programme with the sole aim of facilitating access to education and increase performance and school attendance. The aim of this study is to examine how school feeding programme affects academic performance of pupils in public primary schools in Akwa Ibom State. The study adopts Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs as its theoretical framework. The study employs survey method which involve the administration of questionnaires on 648 respondents from the three (3) Senatorial District in Akwa Ibom State. The study reveals that school feeding programme has actually increased pupils' performance in public primary schools. The study further reveals that the introduction of school feeding has equally increased school enrolment and attendance in public primary schools. On the strength of this, the study recommends that Akwa Ibom State government should ensure timely release of fund to enable the programme run smoothly in the State. Also, the government should ensure that all public primary schools in the State benefit from the programme.*

**Keywords:** School feeding, Programme, Academic performance, Pupils, Public primary, School, Akwa Ibom

### Introduction

It is estimated that at least 368 million children globally are fed daily at school through school feeding programmes that are managed in varying degree by national governments. School feeding not only nurtures children and improved their health, but they are also key in facilitating access to education as they increase school performance, enrolment, attendance and completion (Home Grown School Feeding Programme, 2017).

The introduction of the school feeding programme by the federal government of Nigeria is a demonstration of the commitment of the government to ensure the progressive actualization of the right of every child in Nigeria to free, compulsory and universal basic education. This programme is intended to give effect to three distinct rights namely: the right to food, right to education and right to freedom from disease or right to health.

School feeding is part of an integrated school health and nutrition package which supports children to become better learners in schools and improve their overall wellbeing having in mind that sick and hungry children cannot attend school. It is equally

believed that for the more vulnerable students, enrolling in school, attending regularly and learning is often made more difficult by illness, hunger and malnutrition. In some parts of the world especially developing countries, children from vulnerable families are often pulled out of school when they are needed to work at home or hawk on the street to help their families. For these groups of students and their families, a daily meal or snack can be a strong incentive for families to keep their children, especially girls, in school (WFP, 2020; Alderman, 2015 & Eyango et al, 2015).

### **Statement of the Problem**

It is sad to observe that each day, millions of children around the globe go to school on an empty stomach. This is counterproductive because hunger affects their concentration and ability to learn. Also, there are millions of children especially girls, who cannot go to school because their families need them to help in the farm, hawk on the street and or perform domestic chores (Drake et al 2016 & National Home Grown Feeding, 2020).

Against this backdrop, the establishment of school feeding programme which is generally considered to be education intervention that facilitate access to education and increase attendance and retention rates while improving the nutrition of school children. It is equally believed that school feeding programme contributes to children learning and health, increasing their productive potential in life. The essence of this study is to see how school feeding programme has helped to enhance school performance, enrolment and reduce the current dropout ratio of 30% from public primary schools in Akwa Ibom State (WFP, 2017; Godwin, 2018 & NHGF, 2020).

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of the study is to examine the impact of School Feeding Programme (SFP) on the performance of pupils in public primary schools in Akwa Ibom State. This study is equally designed to achieve the following specific objectives:

- i. To assess the impact of school feeding programme on academic performance of pupils in public primary schools in Akwa Ibom State.
- ii. To determine the effect of school feeding on number of dropouts in public primary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

### **Research Questions**

- i. How does school feeding programme affects academic performance of pupils in public primary schools in Akwa Ibom State?
- ii. Does school feeding programme affects the number of dropouts in public primary schools in Akwa Ibom State?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses are:

- i. There is no significant relationship between school feeding programme and academic performance of pupils in public primary schools in Akwa Ibom State.
- ii. School feeding programme does not significantly affect the number of dropout in public primary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

### **Study Area**

The study area is Akwa Ibom State. Akwa Ibom State is one of the 36 States in Nigeria. It has an estimated current population of 3.44 million (NPC, 2006). The state was created on 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 1987. It is the tenth largest State in the country with 31 Local Government Areas. The State covers a total area of 7,246.499 square kilometres. It is situated at the South-eastern corner of Nigeria and lies approximately between latitudes 4°32' and 5°33' North and Longitude 7°21' and 8°25' East. It is bounded in the North by Abia State, in the West by Rivers State and in the East by Cross River State (Ekpo & Umoh, 2007).

In Akwa Ibom State, education is a consuming passion of the people and government. No wonder from 2007 till date education in the State has moved from ruins and commodities beyond reach to citadel of equal opportunities practising well-articulated and state government fortified Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme, with government regularly raising standards to ensure greater performance.

Education in Akwa Ibom has grown in leaps and bounds to become a major component of state economic empowerment and development strategy. This is made possible with the introduction of school feeding programme which is education intervention aim at saving about 7.3 million out of school children in Nigeria. 1,500 public primary schools are currently benefitting from this programme in Akwa Ibom State (AKSME, 2020).

### **Conceptual Explication**

According to World Bank (2013), School Feeding Programme is a targeted social safety net that provides both educational and social benefits to the most vulnerable children, thereby increasing enrollment rates, reducing absenteeism, and improving food security at household levels. School feeding programme empowers girls by dissuading parents from marrying them off early, which halts their education and can result in child pregnancies. It also acts as an incentive for families to enroll and keep children in school (Awojobi & Tinubu, 2020).

School feeding programme is increasingly recognized as a major investment in both human capital and in local economies which has accelerated country-led demand. It is equally seen as playing an important role not only in emergency contexts but also in social stability, peace-building and national development. School feed goes far beyond the plate of food, but producing high returns in the areas of education and gender equality, health and nutrition, social protection, local economies and agriculture (SFP, 2019; Alderman & Bundt, 2011).

WFP (2013) defines school feeding as the provision of food to school children. It further explains that there are as many types of programmes as there are countries, but they can be classified into two main groups based on their modalities such as: in-school feeding, where children are fed in school as in Nigeria, and take-home rations, where families are given food if their children attend school. It can equally be explained further that in-school feeding can, in turn, be divided into two common categories namely: programmes that provide meal; and programmes that provide high- energy biscuits or snacks (WFP, 2016).

School feeding programme serves multiple purposes. Most immediately, it provides a safety net to families, incentivizing parents to send their children to school. The nutrients keep children focused in the classroom and ready to catch up and stay ahead in school, while also improving their health, wellbeing, physical and cognitive development. It is

interesting to say that most school meals are fortified with vitamins and minerals and provide children with their healthiest meal of the day (McCarthy, 2020; NEPAD, 2009 and Falade et al, 2012).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is predicated on Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a motivational theory in psychology comprising a five-tier model of human needs, often depicted as hierarchical levels within a pyramid. From the bottom of the hierarchy upwards, the need are: physiological (food and clothing), safety (job security), love and belonging needs (friendship), esteem, and self-actualization (Mclead, 2020).

The import of this theory is that the lower needs must be satisfied first before individuals can attend to needs higher up. So our most basic need is for physical survival, and this will be the first thing that motivates one's behaviour. Once that level is fulfilled the next level up will follow. For instance, if these basic needs such as air, food, drink, shelter, clothing, warmth, sex and sleep are not satisfied the human body cannot function optimally. Maslow considered physiological or basic needs as the most important as all the other needs become secondary, until these needs are met (Maslow, 1943).

The relevant of this theory to this study is that before a student's cognitive need can be met, they must first fulfil their basic physiological needs. For instance, a hungry student will find it difficult to focus on learning. Such students find it difficult to attend school or may drop out of school. No wonder, the government of Nigeria by way of satisfying basic need of pupils in public primary school introduced school feeding programme which aims at providing food for pupil to help improve performance and stem the tide of school drop-out in Nigeria and by extension Akwa Ibom State.

### **Materials and Methods**

This work adopted survey method as the design of this study. This method was chosen because it enabled the researcher elicit responses from respondents through the use of questionnaire instrument to determine the impact of school feeding programme on the performance of pupils in public primary schools in Akwa Ibom State. The work also benefitted from oral interview as well as comparing records of school report cards and enrollment, attendance register before and after the introduction of the programme.

The population of the study is 3.44 million being the estimated population of Akwa Ibom State (National Population Commission, 2006). The sample size is 648. Both stratified and simple random techniques were used in selecting respondents from three villages each from the three Senatorial Districts in the State namely; Uyo, Ikot Ekpene and Eket. 72 questionnaires were proportionately administered to each community. So a total of 648 copies of the questionnaire were issued out to the respondents in the nine (9) urban and rural communities namely: Uyo, Ibiono Ibom, Nsit Atai, Ikot Ekpene, Oruk Anam, Ikono, Eket, Oron and Ikot Abasi Local Government Areas.

**Data Analysis****Table 1: Questionnaire Allocated and Returned**

S/N	Senatorial District/L.G.A	No. of Questionnaires Sent Out	No. of Questionnaire Return	% Return
1.	<b>Akwa Ibom North-East (Uyo Senatorial District)</b>			
	Uyo L.G. Area	72	72	11
	Ibiono Ibom L. G. Area	72	68	10
	Nsit Atai L. G. Area	72	60	9
2	<b>Akwa Ibom North-West (Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District)</b>			
	Ikot Ekpene L. G. Area	72	70	11
	Oruk Anam L. G. Area	72	67	9
	Ikono L. G. Area	72	68	10
3	<b>Akwa Ibom State South (Eket Senatorial District)</b>			
	Eket L. G. Area	72	71	11
	Oron L. G. Area	72	59	9
	Ikot Abasi L. G. Area	72	66	10
	<b>Total</b>	<b>648</b>	<b>601</b>	<b>90</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2021**

Table 1 shows the breakdown of questionnaire sent out, returned and percentage of returned from different Local Government Areas in the three senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State. Out of 648 questionnaires sent out 601 were returned showing 90% compliance.

## Personal Data of Respondent

**Table 2: Gender Distribution or Respondents**

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	417	69
Female	184	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>601</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2021**

Table 2 depicts that 417 respondent representing 69% were males while 184 respondents representing 31% were females. Thus, the significant number or respondents were males.

**Table 3: Age of Respondents**

Age (Years)	Frequency	Percentage
21 – 30 years	197	33
31 – 40 years	219	36
41 – 50 years	96	16
50 years and above	89	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>601</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2021**

Table 3 indicates that 33% of the respondents were between the ages of 21 - 30 years, 36% were 31- 40 years, 16% were between 41- 50 years while 15% were 50 years and above. This shows that majority of those who responded were adult with fair knowledge about school feeding programme.

**Table 4: Marital Status of Respondents**

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	423	70
Single	132	22
Divorce	46	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>601</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2021**

Table 4 shows that 70% of the respondents were married, 22% were single, 8% were widowed and widowers. This implies that majority of the respondents were married who have children in public primary school.

**Table 5: Educational Qualification or Respondents**

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
FSLC	131	22
WAEC/GCE	215	36
OND	93	15
HND/B.SC	42	24
MSC	15	2
PH.D	5	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>601</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2021**

Table 5 shows that 22% of the respondents had primary education (FSLC), 36% had WAEC/GCE, 15% had OND, 24% had HND/B.SC, 2% were M.SC holders and 1% hold a PH.D degree. This implies that most of the respondents were WAEC/GCE holders who can read and write.

**Table 6: Official Status of Respondents**

Official Status	Frequency	Percentages
Civil Servant	189	31
Self-Employ	156	26
Private staff	94	16
Teachers	162	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>601</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2021**

Table 6 reveals that out of 601 respondents 31% were civil servant, 26% were self-employ, 16% worked in private organizations while 27% were teachers in public schools.

### Testing of Hypotheses and Discussion

Null Hypothesis (Ho): There is no significant relationship between school feeding programme and academic performance of pupil in public primary school in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 7: Opinion on whether there is or no significant relationship between school feeding program and academic performance of pupils in public primary school in Akwa Ibom State

Senatorial District	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Akwa Ibom North—East	98	71	24	7	200
Akwa Ibom North—West	87	101	6	11	205
Akwa Ibom South	105	85	0	6	196
<b>Total</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>601</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2021**

**Table 8: Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) Computed table (Hypothesis)**

Variables	Fo	Fe	Fo - Fe	(Fo - Fe) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(Fo - Fe)^2}{Fe}$
Strongly Agree	290	150.25	139.75	19,530	130.0
Agree	257	150.25	106.75	11,396	76.0
Disagree	30	150.25	120.25	14,460	96.2
Strongly Disagree	24	150.25	126.25	15,939	106.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>601</b>	<b>601</b>			<b>408.3</b>

Calculated of Freedom (df) = (r - 1)(c - 1)  
 = (3 - 1)(4 - 1)  
 = 2 x 3 = 6df

The critical value or chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) from 6 degree of freedom at 5% level of significance is 12.592.

**Decision Rule**

Since the calculated chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) value of 408.3 is greater than the table value of 12.592, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected for alternate hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) which shows that there exist a significant relationship between school feeding programme and academic performance of pupils in public primary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

**Discussion**

This is supported by the fact that hunger affects concentration and ability to learn, but with the introduction of this programme in Akwa Ibom State it has helped pupils in public primary schools to concentrate which enhances their ability to learn. In one of the public primary schools visited in Uyo Local Government Area, the test as well as examination scores sheets were examined and it was discovered that majority of the public scored from 50% and above and the pass level was massive compared to an era before the introduction of the programme. The fact here is that this programme has improved pupils' cognition and behaviour and also helped them to do better in school by allowing them to pay attention and not worry about when their next meal will come from (Godwin, 2018).

**Table 9:** Opinion on whether there exist significant relationship between school feeding programme and school dropout of primary school pupils in public primary school in Akwa Ibom State

Senatorial District	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Akwa Ibom North-East	94	57	30	19	200
Akwa Ibom North-West	80	96	9	20	205
Akwa Ibom South	90	38	41	27	196
<b>Total</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>601</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2021

**Table 10:** Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) Computed Table (Hypothesis II)

Variables	Fo	Fe	Fo-Fe	(Fo-Fe) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(Fo-Fe)^2}{Fe}$
Strongly Agree	264	150.25	113.75	12,939	86.11
Agree	191	150.25	40.75	166	11.05
Disagree	80	150.25	-70.25	4,935	32.84
Strongly Disagree	66	150.25	-84.25	7,098	47.27
<b>Total</b>					<b>117.25</b>



Calculated  $\chi^2 = 117.25$

Degree of freedom (df)  $(r-1)(c-1)$   
 $= (3-1)(4-1)$   
 $= 2 \times 3 = 6 \text{ df}$

The critical value of chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) from 6 degree of freedom at 5% level of significance is 12.592.

### **Decision Rule**

Since the calculated chi-square value of 117.25 is greater than the critical table value of 12.592, we therefore reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) and the alternate hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) is accepted which states that there exist significant relationship between school feeding programme and school enrolment and drop-out of primary school pupils in public primary school in Akwa Ibom State.

This is in tandem with the fact that the introduction of this programme has proved to be education interventions that facilitates access to education which ultimately increase school enrolment, attendance, retention and completion rate. To further support this point, in one of the schools visited in Eket Local Government Area, it was discovered that before the introduction of the programme, the number of students in a class (primary 1 - 6) were not up to 15, but with the introduction of the programme, the number increases astronomically to over 50 per a class which is the approved number per a class. In another primary school in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area, it was observed from both the records and personal observation that, some classes were divided into two say primary 1a and b, primary 2a and b, 3a and b etc. to accommodate the high attendance rate. Also, the number of drop-out or out-of-school children were minimal. The programme has taken care of a situation where children from vulnerable families are often pulled out of school when they are needed to work at home or hawk to help their families. As noted by World Food Programme (2020), for these group of students and their families, a daily meal or snacks can be a strong incentive for families to keep their children, especially girls, in school. It was also discovered that since the introduction of this programme, a greater number of pupils were taken off the street. Finally, available records also showed that a greater number of students who started primary 1 completed their primary 6 on time and passed their final examination with flying colours unlike before.

### **Conclusion**

School feeding programme is education intervention aimed at serving about 7.3 million out-of-schools children in Nigeria and by extension Akwa Ibom State (Eyango et al. 2015). This study conducted in Akwa Ibom State showed that with the introduction of this programme, the academic performance in public primary school has improved tremendously. Also, the enrolment rates have equally increased and the number of drop-out students have decreased as well.

However, this study further uncovered that the implementation of this programme in Akwa Ibom State experienced some setback such as poor quality of food, insufficient and irregular supply of food, late disbursement of funds by the government. It was also discovered that a situation where two (2) pupils shared 1 (one) egg is totally unacceptable. The programme in Akwa Ibom State has been hijacked by politicians who imposed suppliers and coordinators. Also, some students are fed only once a week against five days (Monday to Friday) due to diversion of fund. Notwithstanding these common problems, a total of 1,105 schools are currently benefiting from this

programme while about 55 schools are yet to benefit from the programme in the State (The Nation, 2020).

### **Recommendations**

In order to enhance effective implementation of this programme in the State, the following recommendations are made:

1. That government should ensure timely release of fund, to enable the programme run smoothly in the State.
2. The state government should constitute a monitoring unit to oversee the implementation of the programme.
3. The cooks should be monitored to maintain high quality of food served to the pupils.
4. The government should ensure that all public primary schools benefit from the programme as it was observed that some primary schools in the State are yet to benefit from the programme.
5. From time to time government should overhaul the implementation committee of the programme to enhance effective performance.
6. That food served should be source locally so as to create jobs along the value chains.
7. The government should ensure continuity of the programme.

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