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Challenges to the Implementation of the National School Feeding Programme in Primary Schools in Imo and Anambra States

*Ngozi Ihebuzo Peters and C. N. N. Vincent
Department of Nursing Science, Faculty of Health Sciences, Imo State University, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria
petersngozika@gmail.com

Abstract
A survey conducted by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in 2019 indicates that the population of out-of-school children in Nigeria has risen from 10.5 million to 13.2 million, the highest in the world. To address the above issues, the provision of School Feeding Programmes (SFPs) has been a key factor in achieving ideal child growth, improved academic performance, and increased enrolment and focus. The study aimed to investigate the challenges to the implementation of the National School Feeding Programme (NSFP) in primary schools in Imo and Anambra States. The study used the descriptive survey design to find answers to two research questions and two hypotheses that heralded the study objective. The target population was all the food vendors and teachers in the public Primary Schools in Imo and Anambra States. A multistage sampling technique was used to select participants for the study using arbitrary fixed inclusion criteria. The instrument, a questionnaire used for data collection, was explicitly designed for the study. The instrument was validated by experts and subjected to a reliability test by pre-testing respondents outside the study area. A reliability coefficient of 0.75 and 0.88 for the instrument's parts I and II respectively, were obtained using Cronbach Alpha statistics. Ethical approvals were obtained from the ethics and research committee of the States' Universal Basic Education Board. Research assistants were used to collect data. Data was collected from 404 primary school teachers and 427 food vendors from the 10 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the two states. The research questions were answered using mean scores and standard deviation while hypotheses were tested using z-test statistics and chi-square. The findings showed that there is generally a high extent of implementation of NSFP in the primary schools in Anambra and Imo states but no significant association between the extent of implementation of NSFP and the states. The study concluded that NSFP is implemented extensively in Anambra and Imo State primary schools with no significant association between the extent of implementation of NSFP and the states.

Keywords: *School Feeding, National School Feeding Programme, Challenges, Implementation*

Introduction
Education is a powerful tool and the key to progress, which lifts millions of the world's underprivileged out of poverty.[1] It is a transformative instrument and has contributed to the decrease in poverty. Education reduces negative parts of life, such as child labour, increases productivity and health, and empowers people.[2] From the foregoing, it is obvious that education

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does not only engender just wages but also the general performance of the workforce, fair participation in the labour market, employment in modern industries, and the ability to make a consistent income from employment.
Despite all the efforts, it is unfortunate that many children are not enrolled in school. Over 130 million primary school-age children globally and 10 million children in Nigeria do not attend school, according to a report.[3]

Moreover, it has been shown that more than 60 million kids globally go without food daily; around 40% of these children are found in Nigeria and other African nations.[4] Furthermore, children from low-income households frequently have nothing when they go to school, according to studies from the World Food Programme.[5] Furthermore, a large number of these school-age children are forced to learn while suffering from starvation.[6] Starving children are more likely to find it difficult to concentrate and finish difficult tasks. Skipping breakfast hinders memory and learning, which affects children more severely when malnourished than when well-nourished.[7] This transient hunger is often experienced by children who do not eat before school, which may interfere with their capacity to learn. Ignoring the nutritional requirements or general health of school-age children is no longer acceptable.

Method

The study utilized the descriptive survey design to investigate the challenges to the implementation of the National School Feeding Programme (NSFP) in primary schools in Imo and Anambra States. Imo and Anambra States are situated in the southeast of Nigeria. Imo State got its name from the Imo River. The state is situated between latitudes 4°45'N and 7°15'N and longitudes 6°50'E and 7°25'E. Its total area is approximately 5,100 sq. km. The state has a population of about 4.8 million people with a population density per square kilometre ranging from 230 to 1,400 people. Anambra State, on the other hand, derived its name from the Anambra River and has a population of about 9 million inhabitants lying adjacent to the North of Imo State. The population of this study is 18008 comprising all the 4502 food vendors and 13506 teachers in the 2251 public primary schools in Imo and Anambra States. Imo State has 2554 food vendors and 7662 public primary school teachers. Similarly, there are 1948 food vendors and 5844 public primary school teachers in Anambra State.

The sample size for the study is 831 comprising 404 teachers and 427 food vendors in the area. The sample size was computed using the Power analysis formula: The primary schools are clustered into urban, semi-urban, and rural which are further clustered into the 48 Local Government Areas (LGAs). The researcher randomly sampled 20% of 48 LGAs in the Imo and Anambra States, giving approximately 10 LGAs. Using a simple random sampling technique through balloting with replacement, the researcher selected 62 primary schools. Further, there is approximately a teacher per class from primary 1 to 6 in the 62 primary schools. This gave rise to 404 primary school teachers in the two states. Further, simple random sampling was used to select

427 food vendors from the 10 LGAs. The sampling technique adopted was multi-stage sampling. This is the case since the LGAs form a cluster of schools.

The instruments used for data collection were a researcher-made questionnaire titled "School Feeding Programme Implementation Rating Scale (SFPIRS)" The SFPIRS was divided into two parts (Part I and II). Part I is to be completed by food vendors and is further divided into four sections A, B, C, and D. To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, the researcher administered it to 30 respondents in primary schools in Owerri Municipal, which have similar characteristics with the respondents used for the study. The responses of the 30 respondents were collated and the reliability (internal consistency) coefficient of the instrument was computed part by part using Cronbach alpha. Sections B, C, and D of part I of SFPIRS yielded reliability coefficients of 0.68, 0.76, and 0.81 respectively. The overall reliability coefficient for part I is 0.75, which is high enough for the study. Section B of part II yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.88. The completed rating scales were collated and scored. Data generated from this study was collated and subjected to statistical analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 27. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation. Hypothesis 4 was tested using a z-test of difference while hypothesis 3 was tested using chi-square statistics all at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Extent of implementation of NSFP in Anambra and Imo states

Characteristics	**Anambra**	**Imo**
n = 404	**203 (50.25%)**	**201 (49.75%)**
Is there a school feeding program in your school?		
Yes	149 (73.40%)	138 (68.66%)
No	54 (26.60%)	63 (31.34%)
Total	**203 (100%)**	**201 (100%)**
If yes, what are the classes covered by the school feeding program? (Tick as many as may apply)		
Primary 1 – 3 only	31(15.27%)	27(19.56%)
Primary 5 – 6 only	19(9.35%)	24(17.39%)
All Classes	99(75.38%)	87(63.05%)
Total	**149 (73.39%)**	**138 (68.65%)**
How would you rate the extent of coverage of your school with the		

school feeding programme?		
Very Low Extent	13(6.4%)	10(4.97%)
Low Extent	31(15.27%)	27(13.43%)
High Extent	90(44.33%)	81(39.90%)
Very High Extent	15(7.38%)	20(9.95%)
Total	**149 (73.38%)**	**138 (68.65%)**
How often are foods delivered to your school? (Please circle)		
Daily	15(7.38%)	20 (9.95%)
2 – 3 days a week	90(44.33%)	81(40.29%)
Twice a month	31(15.27%)	27(13.43%)
Once a month	0(0.00)	0(0.00)
Sometimes it doesn't come	13(6.4%)	10(4.97%)
	149 (73.38%)	**139 (68.64%)**

Data from Table 1 showed teachers' responses on the extent of implementation of implementation of NSFP in primary schools in Anambra and Imo states. While 149 (73.40%) respondents indicated that NSFP had been implemented in their schools in Anambra State, 138 (68.66%) indicated that it had been implemented in their schools in Imo State. In contrast, 54 (26.60%) of the respondents indicated that NSFP had not been implemented in their schools in Anambra, while 63 (31.34%) indicated that it had not been implemented in their schools in Imo State.

In Anambra state, 15.27% of the respondents indicated that the program covers primaries 1-3; 9.35% indicated that the program covers primaries 5-6 while 75.38% indicated that the program covers all the classes. Meanwhile, in Imo state, 19.56% of the respondents indicated that the program covers primaries 1-3; 17.39% indicated that the program covers primaries 5-6, while 63.05% indicated that the program covers all the classes. On the extent of coverage, Table 1 shows that 6.4% and 4.9% of respondents in Anambra and Imo states respectively agree that the coverage of the NSFP is to a very low extent; 15.27% and 13.43% respectively agree to a low extent; 60.40% and 58.69% respectively agree that the coverage is to a high extent while 10.10% and 14.49% respectively agree that the coverage of the NSFP is to a very high extent.

On how often foods are delivered to schools, 15(10.10%) of Anambra State respondents said it was daily, 90(60.40%) indicated that it was 2-3 days per week, 31(20.80%) indicated that it was twice a month, none indicated it was once a month but 13(8.70%) said that sometimes it does not come. In contrast, the respondents from Imo State indicated the following: 20(14.49%) said that food is delivered daily, 81(58.69%) said that food is delivered 2-3 times in a week, 27(19.56%) said it was delivered twice in a month, none said it was delivered once a month but 10(7.26%) said that sometimes it does not come.

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Table 2: Chi-square analysis of the difference in the extent of implementation of NSFP in Anambra and Imo states

Variable	State		Total (%)	Df	X^2	P-value
	Anambra n=149 n(51.91%)	Imo n= 138 n(48.08%)				
Extent of implementation						
High extent	105 (51.00)	101 (49.00)	206	1	.261	**0.609**
Low extent	44 (54.30)	37 (45.70)	81			
Total			**287**			

P is significant at p<0.05

Data in Table 2 show the chi-square analysis results for the extent of implementation of the National School Feeding Programme (NSFP) in primary schools and the association between states. The chi-square calculated value is given as .261 with a p-value of 0.609 which is greater than the 0.05 level of significance. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is therefore not rejected. This implies that the extent of implementation of the NSFP in primary schools does not significantly depend on the states.

Table 3: Challenges to Implementation of the National School Feeding Implementation Programme in Anambra and Imo States

		Anambra n = 216			Imo n = 211		
S/N	**ITEMS**	$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum fx_i}{N}$	***Std***	***Remark***	$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum fx_i}{N}$	***Std***	***Remark***
1	Inadequate funding for food materials.	3.5	0.52	Agree	3.49	0.6	Agree
2	Untimely payments of cooks' salaries and food items.	3.2	0.74	Agree	3.18	0.72	Agree
3	Stress in withdrawing money from banks.	1.85	0.92	Disagree	2.49	1.02	Disagree
4	Excessive workload on the cook.	2.88	0.79	Agree	2.87	0.8	Agree

5	Unavailability of some foodstuffs due to seasonality.	3.01	0.78	Agree	2.93	0.76	Agree
6	Lack of storage facilities.	1.53	0.7	Disagree	2.17	1.07	Disagree
7	Family roles and responsibilities.	2.22	1.06	Disagree	2.37	1.09	Disagree
8	Proximity of food collection point.	3.07	0.71	Agree	3.06	0.73	Agree
9	Lack of timely and proper training of the cooks by NSFP.	2.87	0.8	Agree	2.92	0.79	Agree
10	Attitude of school management	1.65	0.77	Disagree	2.04	0.99	Disagree
		25.78	**7.79**		**27.52**	**8.57**	
	Cluster mean	**2.57**			**2.75**		

Table 3 presents the results of data analysis for the mean scores of the respondents for the challenges to the implementation of the National School Feeding Programme in Anambra and Imo States. All the items have mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, except for items 3, 6, 7, and 10. The items with mean scores above the criterion mean indicate acceptance of the item statements by the respondents as the challenges to the implementation of the school feeding program. The cluster mean is given as 2.57 for Anambra state and 2.75 for Imo state, which are all greater than the 2.50 criterion mean. This implies that the majority of the respondents are in agreement with their responses on the challenges to implementation of NFSP in both states.

Table 4: Summary z-test Statistics for Testing Hypothesis four

States	n	$\bar{X}$	S	df	P-Value	α	*Decision*
Anambra	216	25.78	4.71	424.96	0.362	0.05	Accept H_{04}
Imo	211	27.52	4.65				

Data in Table 4 showed the z-test analysis of results for differences in the response of food vendors in Anambra and Imo states on the challenges to implementation of the National School Feeding Program (NSFP) in both states. The result indicated that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of food vendors in Anambra and Imo states on the challenges to implementation of the NSFP (P=0.362).

Discussion

Findings from the study revealed that there is generally a high extent of practice of implementation of NSFP in the primary schools in Anambra and Imo state, where 71.77% of the schools who practice NSFP do so to a high extent while 28.22% implement NSFP to a low extent. The corresponding hypothesis revealed no significant association between the extent of

implementation of NSFP and the states (p>0.05). The current findings aligned with Kiilu and Mugambi[8] who found that primary school feeding programs are implemented in the majority of schools, according to 61% of pupils, 88% of head teachers, and 53% of instructors. On the challenges facing the NSFP, the result indicated that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of food vendors in Anambra and Imo states on the challenges to implementation of the NSFP (P=0.362).

This implies that the responses of the food vendors in Anambra and Imo states on the challenges of implementing NSFP in primary schools are quite similar. On aggregate, the respondents from both states agreed that the following constituted challenges facing the NSFP: inadequate funding for food materials, untimely payments of cooks' salaries and food items, stress in withdrawing money from banks, excessive workload on the cook, unavailability of some foodstuff due to seasonality, lack of storage facilities, family roles and responsibilities, proximity of food collection point, lack of timely and proper training of the cooks, and attitude of school management. Supporting this finding are the findings of Asiegbu *et al.*[9] who reported that poor program coverage, inadequate funding, and high cost of food items are challenges facing the program.

Conclusion

The study concluded that although the NSFP has been implemented to a great extent in Anambra and Imo States, the challenges facing the program in both states are similar and include inadequate funding for food materials, untimely payments of cooks' salaries and food items, stress in withdrawing money from banks, excessive workload on the cook, unavailability of some foodstuff due to seasonality, lack of storage facilities, family roles and responsibilities, proximity of food collection point, lack of timely and proper training of the cooks, and attitude of school management. By knowing the challenges facing the program, efforts can be made to improve the program by targeting solutions to the implicated problems to enhance food safety and promote health and well-being of school children across the two states and beyond.

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