

National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme and Socio-Economic Development in Gwer East Local Government Area, Benue State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme on socio-economic development in Gwer East Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria. The methodology adopted for the study was survey research design with questionnaire being adopted as the instrument for data collection. A sample of 360, comprising of teachers, local farmers and vendors/cooks was used for the study. Literature was also explored for secondary data generation. The data collected were analyzed using Mean, Standard deviation and Chi-square. The Change-Model theory was adopted as a guide for theoretical framework of the study. The findings of the study revealed that, the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme has contributed in terms of increased enrollment of out-of-school children back to school in the area. Also, further findings revealed that, it has improved on the health status, nutrition and academic performance, as well as the reduction in absenteeism among school children. Equally, it was found that, local farmers were not given the access market to sell their produce as contained in the policy document due to hijack of the process in supply of food by politicians in the state. Finally, it revealed that, the programme even though boosted the cooking skills of vendors, the recruitment process was equally inflicted with several manners of gratification to officials of the programme. In line with these findings, the study recommended that, there is need to strengthen the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme towards creation of access market to local farmers to boost the local economy in Benue State, strengthen the recruitment process to be devoid of gratifications to officials and need for policy continuity to bring more benefits to increase socio-economic development in Gwer East Local Government Area of Benue State.

Keywords: National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme, Socio-Economic, Economy and Development.

INTRODUCTION

Humanity right from time immemorial has been sustained by the economic and social components of society in which it exists. These economic and social components satiate the primary, secondary and tertiary needs of man when it is in adequate supply, but when it is in short supply, the reverse is the case. Hence, human beings are seen scampering and seeking for the economic and social sources that would increase their welfare from any means possible both positive and negative (Tochukwu, 2019).

Inevitably, in every society, there exists some social and human issues. These issues are in the spheres of politics, economic, education, agriculture, health communication, housing and transportation among host of others. Nigeria like other developing countries of the world has since independence in 1960, been faced with some of these social and economic issues. As averred by Omoligho (2022), of all these social and economic issues faced by Nigeria, unemployment and poverty are the major problems as they are regarded as causal agents of frustration, dejection and high dependence on family members and friends for survival. Thus, it is the desire and responsibility of every state (Nigeria inclusive), to provide and make available welfare packages through designed policies which should aim at developing the society that will be comfortable for its citizenry. Nigeria, having been regarded all over the world as developing economy in African continent, has over the years desired to develop in the areas of education, agriculture, healthcare and water among others (Obona, 2016).

In a bid to attain these needs, government over the times has always designed social and economic policies aimed at tackling these needs with a focus on achieving national development for the well-being of the citizens. As a low-income country with extreme poverty status, which is characterized by a very large informal sector, the National Social Investment Programmes (NSIP) was launched by President Muhammadu Buhari in 2016 with a vision for graduating Nigerian citizens from poverty circles through capacity building, investment and direct support. According to Nwoabi (2023) National Social Investment Programme was a holistic approach for delivery of social investment portfolios, with the N-Power in-charge of job creation and youth employment, Government Enterprise and Employment Program, Conditional Cash Transfer supporting the low income household earners, and the National Home Grown School Feeding Programme focusing on combating hunger and malnutrition among school children with the aim of increasing their enrolment and as well targeting the socio-economic development of small farm holders.

The National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP) is a federal government led programme designed to feed school children using food locally grown by small farm holders. The programme was essentially with dual objectives of increasing national food production as well as ensuring that truancy is curtailed among school children. Nwoabi (2023, p.3), noted that, it was done to combat hunger, increase primary school enrolment and as well encourage local and state-wide economic growth. It is a targeted social safety net aimed at providing both educational and health benefits to the most vulnerable children in Nigeria with the desire of increasing their enrolment rates, reduction in absenteeism with improvement in food security at the household level.

Thus, the general objective of this paper is to assess the impact of National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme on the socio-economic development of the people of Gwer East Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria, with a focus on the achievements, challenges and the way forwards.

Conceptual Clarifications

National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP)

According to Sitali (2021), National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP), is an intervention programme to link agricultural development with school feeding. To Nwaobi (2023), the programme is adequately designed and implemented to contribute in narrowing gender gaps to education as well as breaking the vicious cycle of discrimination against girls and other vulnerable group which can contribute to more inclusive trajectories.

Amee (2021) on his part considers Home Grown School Feeding Programme as a government policy designed to address the issue of poverty, stimulate school enrolment and enhance human capital development of pupils' performance in Nigeria. It is a scheme to encourage massive enrolment in public schools, throughout the federation, most especially for children born to poor parents. According to Osibanjo (2016), Home Grown School Feeding Programme aims at providing free school meals with food procured

from local farmers which seeks to strengthen communities across the country. The objectives of National Home Grown School Feeding Programme are to; increase school enrolment, retention, completion and reduce school dropout rate; improve child nutrition and health as Nigeria has the third largest population of chronically undernourished children in the world; strengthen local agricultural economics by providing a school feeding market in which farmers can sell their products and; to create employment opportunities with jobs in catering processing and farming, to mention a few (Ndifon and Bassey 2018).

Socio-Economic Development

Development, according to Reem (2018), development is the progress towards complex goals such as the elimination of poverty, provision of employment, the reduction of inequality and the guarantee of human rights.

Socio-economic development generally means the sustained or concerted actions of policy makers and communities aimed at promoting the standard of living and economic well-being of citizens in an area. According to Todora and Smith (2015), socio-economic development implies the improvement of the way endowments such as goods and services are used within (or by) the system to generate new goods and services in order to provide additional consumption and/or investment possibilities to the members of the system.

Tweheyo (2021), socio-economic development is about incorporation of public concerns in developing social policy and economic initiatives. The ultimate objective social development is to bring about sustained improvement in the well-being of the individual, groups, family, community and society at large. It involves sustained increased in the economic standard of living of a country's population, normally accomplished by increasing its stock of physical and human capital and thus improving its technology. Thus, Socio-Economic Development can be seen as a general level of improvement in the quality of life of individuals in a given society. It has to do with improvement in level of poverty, and income which are the indices of measuring the well-being of citizens. That is, it has to do with the improvement of people's social living which means their lifestyle must improve through education, income, skills development and employment. To Udechukwu, Okwueze, Udentia and Eze (2024) socio-economic development is the process of social and economic improvement in society and is measured with life expectancy, quality lives, literacy level, rate of employment etc. That is why it is referred to as the process of economic and social transformation with regards to the social and environmental factors.

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopts the Theory of Change Model as its theoretical framework. The theory concerns itself with the methodology or a criterion for planning, participation, adaptive management, and evaluation that is used by companies, philanthropists, non-profit bodies, international development agencies, researchers and governments to promote social change in the state. The theory of change emerged from the field of programme evaluation in the Mid-1990s as a new approach of analyzing policies and programmes as well as initiatives for social and political change.

The origin of this theory can be traced from the writing of Peter Drucker in his articulation about Management By Objectives (MBO), which was popularized in his book "The Practice of Management in 1954 (Radim, Trunecek, Ivan & Peter, 1997). To him, Management By Objectives requires identifying higher-order goals, and lower-order objectives which, if achieved, are expected to result in the goals being achieved. Theory of Change extends beyond goals (commonly named outcomes) and objectives to include impact, that is, the anticipated result of achieving stated goals. With evaluation practice, the theory of change model emerged in 1990s at the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change as a means to model and evaluate comprehensive community initiatives. Notable among the proponents were Huey-Tsyh Chen, Peter Rossi, Quinn Patton, Helene Clark, and Carol Weiss (Radim, Trunecek, Ivan & Peter, 1997).

Carol Weiss popularized the theory of change model as a way to describe the set of assumptions that explain both the mini-steps that lead to the long-term goal of interest and the connections between programme activities and outcomes that occur at each step of the way.

Apply the theory of change model is first, to identify a workable long-term goals and outcomes. The long-term goals have to be something the initiative can realistically achieve, and that which everyone involved understands. Thus, the theory of change is a purposeful model of how an initiative such as policy, a strategy, a programme, or a project contributes through a chain of early and intermediate outcomes to the intended result which brings about transformative change. Concisely, the theory seeks to explain how and why a sequence of logically linked policies like National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme which serve as an intervention required producing early and intermediate outcomes that are preconditions to a long-term change. The theory of change model is essentially a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why the desired change in socio-economic development is expected to happen in a particular context. Hence, the improvements in the social and economic status of the vulnerable school children, vendors and small-scale farmers in Gwer East Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria.

It is focused particularly on mapping out or “filling-in” what has been described as the missing middle between what a programme (National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme) does as an intervention policy. The framework provides for basis of intervention such as National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme which makes it possible to measure progress towards the achievement of long-term goals that go inform of socio-economic development in Gwer East Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper depends on both primary and secondary sources of data which the primary data were obtained through questionnaire, and secondary from the scholarly views in journals, government reports and publications, books both published and unpublished. The primary data generated through questionnaires were analyzed with the use of Mean and Standard Deviation for research questions and Chi-Square for testing hypothesis in tabular form, while the secondary data generated were analyzed through the use content analysis method and presentations were made thematically using subheadings to captured issues based on the paper objectives. A total of 360 respondents were drawn from vendors, small farm-holders and parents of the school children in Gwer East Local Government Area of Benue State through simple random sampling.

Historical Overview of National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme in Benue State of Nigeria

African governments in their bid to restore agricultural growth, food security, adequate nutritional levels and rural development in the continent of Africa, in 2003 endorsed the Home-Grown School Feeding Programme of the Comprehensive African Development Programme (CADP), (Cummings & Kulutuye, 2017). In relations to this, New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), also in its communiqué 2003 noted that, home grown school feeding programme has immediate impact on the food security in Africa, with the potentials of contributing to long term development goals. This position was supported by United Nations World Summit in 2005. The summit recommended the “expression of local school meal programmes, using home-grown foods where possible” as one of the quick impact initiatives to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, especially for rural areas bedeviled with dual challenge of high chronic malnutrition and low agricultural productivity (Solomon & Yusuf, 2022). Relatedly, the African Union Special Food Summit in 2006, reaffirmed this initiative and recommend for the implementation of Home-Grown School Feeding Programme to be expanded by the member states by 2008(Ba, 2016).

Thus, to achieve this initiative, New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), and World Food Programme (WFP), signed a memorandum of understanding to enhance cooperation towards Home-Grown School Feeding Programme. Consequently, twelve countries were chosen as pilot countries namely;

Angola, DR. Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Ghana, Mozambique, Mali, Uganda, Senegal, Zambia and Nigeria. The essence was to implement the novel programme. As a result of this, the Federal Government of Nigeria already with the Universal Basic Education act in 2004, which enables the implementation of the Home-Grown School Feeding and Health Programme which was central to nutrition of school children, launched the home-grown school feeding programme and health programme in 2005. The overall goal of the school feeding programme in Nigeria was to reduce hunger and malnutrition among school children and enhance the achievement of Universal Basic Education (Adeaga, Olubunmi, Adeoye & Awe, 2021). The programme was launched in 13 states and the FCT. However, the pilot couldn't last for more than a year with Osun and Kano States continuing with it independently. It was averred that, one of the reasons for the failure was inability of the ministry of education to persuade other line ministries to support the programme, hence government policies need collaboration of multiple sectors for a successful implementation.

During the Jonathan administration, an attempt was made to revive the programme in his agricultural transformation agenda which was targeted at renewing the home-grown school feeding as a way of accelerating locally produced agricultural products for local consumption with the aim of creating local market and increasing farmer's income, thereby creating employment opportunities. However, the plan was cut short with the end of Jonathan's administration in 2015. Despite the change in national government, the interest in school feeding programme was high as the then President Muhammadu Buhari made some clear promises to reduce poverty and bring tangible benefits to the poorest Nigerians, which school feeding programme was among the strategies. In order to fulfill these promises, in June 2016, President Muhammadu Buhari re-launched the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme alongside with programmes such as Conditional Cash Transfer, Government Enterprises and Empowerment Programme and the N-Power Programme, all under the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP). National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme was to feed at least 10 million primary school pupils in grade 1-3. It was also predicted that with the state government cooperation, a further 5 million pupils in grade 4-6 would be included (Adeaga, Olubunmi, Adeoye & Awe, 2021). The programme strategy was to partner with donor agencies and other non-governmental organizations as well as some United Nations specialized agencies such as; New Partnership for Africa's Development, World Food Programme, United Nations international Children's Education Funds, Gates Foundation, World Bank and the Vitrol Foundation. It took a year for the implementation of the programme, which came to reality in 2017. Funds were disbursed in January 2017 to five states; Anambra, Ebonyi, Ogun, Osun, and Oyo states. Few months later, 14 more states were added, with federal government announcing the sum of 4.3 billion naira being spent for the implementation targeted at 5.5 million pupils (51%), fed so far by August 2017. These states include; Anambra, Benue, Bauchi, Abia, Taraba, Oyo, Ebonyi, Delta, Plateau, Kaduna, Zamfara, Enugu, Osun and Ogun states. Concisely, by 2020, the Federal Government disclosed that about 56,000 public primary schools in 35 states have benefited from the programme with an estimation of 7.5 million pupils being fed (The Punch, 27th November, 2020).

Benue state was among the states in Nigeria that benefitted from the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme of the National Social Investment Programme (N-SIP), alongside others schemes like N-Power, Conditional Cash Transfer and Government Enterprises and Empowerment Programme. The state commenced the programme across all the public primary schools in the 23 local government areas of the state after being launched at LGEA Primary School, Wurukum, Makurdi on the 3rd March, 2017. As stated by the then Senior Special Assistant to the Former Governor Samuel Ortom, Terhile Utaan on social investments in June, 2017, 272,818 pupils from primary one to three in all state owned public primary schools were mapped as beneficiaries of the programme (the Sun, 6th June, 2017). He further noted that, the targeted beneficiaries which were drawn from public primary schools were given a daily meal at ₦70 per child respectively. As of 2019, a total number of 3,865 cooks were recruited in the state for the programme with the use of community-based targeting approach for the recruitment of the vendors out of the 16,000 applications received by Home Grown School Feeding Programme Office desk with 447,215 pupils been fed respectively (Benue State Social Investment Office, 2019). The Benue State Social Investment Office in collaboration with Center for Food Technology and Agriculture (CEFTA), and Benue State University,

Makurdi carried out a successful training for the recruited cooks on food safety and hygiene across the 23 local governments areas of the state with the certificate issued to all participants, together with matching of their Bank Verification Numbers with their bank accounts for onward transfer to social investment banking partners.

As revealed from other literatures by some scholars, such as Sitali (2021), and Ameer (2021), the hallmark of the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme was to link agricultural development together with school feeding towards addressing the issues of poverty, hunger and stimulating school enrolment in order to enhance human capital development of pupil's performance as well as improve on the well-being of the local small farm holders and processors. The essence was to create and stimulates productivity of the farmers with the aim of supporting their local skills development, thereby reducing hunger, poverty and malnutrition of both parents and school children. The programme was to impact through the enhancement of small farm holders within communities to have access to markets and contribute to rural transformation through assistance of capacity for provision of a stable food supply. To Development Initiative (2017), National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme was cost effective school feeding programme that used food grown locally by small, resulting in a triple win action that improves nutrition, school attendance, and farmers' livelihood as well as that of the vendors accordingly.

The programme was focus on promoting agricultural development through increase in demand for produce by vendors who use locally grown food in providing meals to children in public primary schools across the 23 local government areas. These activities have tailored towards increasing productivity, access market; crop production of better quality and management of resources (both human and material); in a way that sustainable socio-economic development can be achieved. This was a result of the full incorporation of various stakeholders of the programme as it allows the development of resilient value chains for small farm holders. It targeted at stimulating local food production with the increase in farmers' income through the purchase of their locally food produced and brought in their markets.

FINDINGS

An Assessment of National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme in Gwer East Local Government Area of Benue State towards socio-economic development.

The achievement of the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme in Gwer east local government area of Benue State towards socio-economic development can be measured in terms of its impacts on school children, small farm holders and vendors accordingly.

Thus, the presentation and analyses of data has been conducted in respect to responses of the respondents, with a start with socio-demographic status. The presentation and analysis were done base on the frequency count using the simple percentage with 360 respondents comprising vendors, small farm holders and parents which the children were the main target of the programme.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Analysis of Respondents.

Attributes	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	132	36.67%
Female	228	63.33%
Age		
18-30	78	21.67%
31-50	260	72.22%
50 and above	22	6.11%

Marital Status		
Single	64	17.78%
Married	296	82.22%
Occupational Status		
Vendors/cooks	165	45.83%
Small farm holders	152	42.22%
Parents	43	11.94%
Total	360	100%

Source: field survey, 2024

Table 1 reveals that, male respondents were 132 (36.67%) and female were 228 (63.33%), which shows that, the female respondents were higher than that of the male. With respect to age range, those between 18 and 30 were 78 (21.67%), 31 and 50 years were 260 (72.22%) and those 51 and above were 22(6.11%).

This shows that, those between 31 and 50 were higher than the rest as they represent 72.22% of the whole respondents. Regarding the marital status, 64 respondents represented by 17.78% were single, 296 respondents represented by 82.22% were married. This shows that, the married respondents were higher than the single ones.

In terms of occupational status, the number of vendors/cooks was 165 respondents represented by 45.83%, small farm holders were 152 represented by 42.22%, whereas parents 43 respondents represented by 11.93%. From the occupational status of the respondents, it shows that, the number of vendors/cooks was higher than that of other respondents.

Assessing the impacts of National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme on Socio-Economic Development in Gwer East Local Government Area of Benue State.

The remark on the mean is based on the range of the mean as follows: 0.01-2.49 Low Impact (LI) while 2.50 -4.00 indicate high Impact (HI). Data related to research questions and hypotheses are presented on a separate table to aid comprehension of the analysis and interpretation of the results. The decision rule is that reject null hypotheses if the p-value is less than 0.05, however, if otherwise do not reject.

Table 2: Assessing the impact of National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme on the Parents of School Children in Public Primary Schools in Gwer East Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria

S/No	Item Description	SA	A	D	SD	X	SD	Remark
1	National School Feeding Programme has increased children enrollment and attendance in public primary schools in Benue State	205	80	21	54	3.21	1.09	HI
2	The meal provided by the programme has improved the health status of school children and their cognitive development across public primary schools in Benue State	188	98	11	63	3.14	1.11	HI

3	The programme has improved the nutrition, academic performance, and reduction in absenteeism among school children in Benue State	201	91	17	51	3.22	1.06	HI
Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation						3.19	1.09	HI

Source: field survey, 2024

Table 2 shows that all the items 1, 2 and 3 recorded mean of 3.21, 3.14 and 3.22 indicating high impact. The standard deviation with standard deviation of 1.09, 1.11 and 1.06 indicates that the individual responses of the items cluster around the mean value and are not widely dispersed. Furthermore, the cluster mean is 3.19 and standard deviation of 1.09 is greater than the cut-off point of 2.50. This implies that respondents strongly agreed that, the national home-grown school feeding programme had impacted positively on the school children enrollment and attendance in public primary schools, improved the health status of school children and their cognitive development across public primary schools and improved the nutrition, academic and reduction in absenteeism among school children in Benue State.

Table 3: Assessing the impact of National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme on Small Local Farm Holders in Gwer East Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria

S/No	Item Description	SA	A	D	SD	X	SD	Remark
4	There was creation of access market for local farmers to sell their locally grown agricultural produce in Benue State	11	25	118	205	1.56	0.76	LI
5	The local economy was boosted as small farm holders were provided with access market	0	13	63	284	1.25	0.51	LI
6	Parents were given the capacity to enroll their children in schools based on the benefit of national home-grown school feeding Programme	303	33	8	16	3.73	0.71	HI
Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation						2.18	0.66	LI

Source: field survey, 2024

Table 3 shows that item 6 recorded mean of 3.73 which is above the cutoff mean value of 2.50 with standard deviation of 0.71 indicating high impact. However, items 4 and 5 recorded mean of 1.56 and 1.25 with standard deviation of 0.76 and 0.51 indicating low impact. Furthermore, the cluster mean is 2.18 and standard deviation of 0.66 is lower than the cut-off point of 2.50. This clearly shows that, there was no access market for local farm holders in Benue State as captured in the policy document, the local economy was not boosted as small farm holders were not provided with access market but parents increased enrollment of their children in schools based on the benefit of national home-grown school feeding programme.

Table 4: Assessing the impact of National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme on Vendors/Cooks in Gwer east local government area of Benue State, Nigeria

S/No	Item Description	SA	A	D	SD	X	SD	Remark
7	Vendors on the programme have improved on their cooking skills which boosted their social	129	199	17	15	3.23	0.72	HI

	responsibilities.							
8	National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme had increased business opportunities and sustainability for vendors in Benue State.	55	84	20	201	1.98	1.19	LI
9	Recruitment process of vendors was based on gratification to officials of National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme in Benue State.	209	95	14	42	3.31	0.99	HI
10	There are experiences of delayed payment of funds to vendors in Benue State to exercise their cooking responsibility.	89	185	74	12	2.98	0.77	HI
	Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation					2.88	0.92	HI

Source: field survey, 2024

Table 4 reveals that item 7, 9 and 10 recorded mean values of 3.23, 3.31 and 2.98 which are above the cutoff mean value of 2.50 indicating high impact with standard deviation of 0.72, 0.99 and 0.77 respectively. Item 8 recording mean value of 1.98 with standard deviation of 1.19 indicating low impact. Furthermore, the cluster mean is 2.88 and standard deviation of 0.92 is higher than the cut-off point of 2.50. By implication, national home-grown school feeding programme has high impact on vendors/cooks in Benue State. This clearly shows that, vendors on the programme have improved on their cooking skills which boosted their social responsibilities, recruitment process of vendors was based on gratification to officials of national home grown school feeding programme, there are experiences of delayed payment of funds to vendors in Benue State to exercise their cooking responsibility, but national home grown school feeding programme have increased business opportunities and sustainability for vendors in Benue State

Table 5: Chi-Square on impact of National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme on the Parents of School Children in Public Primary Schools in Benue State

Responses	fo	fe	x ²	df	α	P	Remark
SD	206	90	226.022a	3	0.05	0	Sig.
D	15	90					
A	84	90					
SA	55	90					

Table 5 revealed that the Chi-Square value is 226.022^a with p = 0.000 at 3 degrees of freedom. Since p = 0.000 < 0.05 where 0.05 is the level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that national home-grown school feeding programme has significant impact on the Parents of School Children in Public Primary Schools in Benue State.

Table 6: Chi-Square on impact of National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme on Small Local Farm Holders in Benue State

Responses	fo	fe	x ²	df	α	P	Remark
SD	156	90	95.489a	3	0.05	0	Sig.

D	111	90					
A	49	90					
SA	44	90					

Table 6 revealed that the Chi-Square value is 95.489^a with $p = 0.000$ at 3 degrees of freedom. Since $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ where 0.05 is the level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that national home-grown school feeding programme has significant impact on Small Local Farm Holders in Benue State.

Table 7: Chi-Square on impact of National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme on Vendors/Cooks in Benue State

Responses	fo	fe	χ^2	df	α	P	Remark
SD	48	90	116.200a	3	0.05	0	Sig.
D	52	90					
A	175	90					
SA	85	90					

Table 7 revealed that the Chi-Square value is 116.200^a with $p = 0.000$ at 3 degrees of freedom. Since $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ where 0.05 is the level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that national home-grown school feeding programme has significant impact on vendors/cooks in Benue State.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

From the data generated for the study from the field, presented and analyzed, the findings revealed that, the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme, improved the enrollment of out-of-school children back to school as there were increased in school attendance by the pupils across public primary schools in the Gwer east local government area of Benue State. This as well had improved their health status with development of their cognitive domain due to the meals provided to them by the vendors. Further findings revealed that, the nutritional status of the school children was also improved too, which lead to their improvement in academic performances and reduction in absenteeism among the school children respectively.

Regarding the impacts of programme on local farmers, the programme had not provided an access market for local farmers to boost their income which has great impact on the local economy. This has to do with the fact that, food to be purchased by vendors from the farmers was made to be providing by private farm firm owned by a politician as reveals by the vendors in their responses during field survey. The National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme had not boosted the local economy as there was no demand for local farm produce which were be patronized by the vendors for purchase. This has no impact on the improvement in their livelihood local farmers in Gwer east local government area of Benue State. Even though the programme was formulated and implemented to boost the livelihood of the local farmers as well. This goes a long way to widening the horizon of the local farmers to move from single crop farming to others which help in the improvement of access to market and bargaining power. However, parents of out-of-school children were given the capacity to enroll their children back to school base on the benefits of the programme.

The findings further revealed that, vendors cooking skills were boosted as it had improved on the social responsibilities as they given the capacity to cook for school children. However, the business

opportunities were boosted on the side of vendors as they were not given the chance to purchase food from local farmers through the supposed access markets initiated in the programme. The study further revealed that, the recruitment process of vendors on the programme was characterized by gratifications of various kinds such as bribery, and the kick-back syndrome. In conclusion, it had also revealed that, there were experiences in terms of delayed payment of funds to vendors in Benue State to exercise their duties of cooking to school children accordingly.

CONCLUSION

The National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme was launched in 2016, in a bid to reduce the growing number of out-of-school children in Nigeria, with the aims to increase school enrolment; improve nutrition and health of primary school children; stimulate local agricultural production and boost income for the local farmers; and create jobs for community members and increase their financial status through school feeding market. Although the programme was implemented and executed in every functional public primary school in Gwer east local government area of Benue State with a tendency to bring about a transformative change which seeks to produce early and intermediate outcomes that were precondition for a long term change in general well-being of the citizens, hence the improvement in both social and economic status of the less privileged such as out-of-school children, local farmers and vendors will lead to their socio-economic development.

However, the Programme like other policies in Nigeria, with a well-articulated policy thrust, the implementation of national home-grown school feeding Programme was a problem as demonstrated in responses of respondents from the data collected by the study has shown. Consequently, the following

recommendations were made;

1. There is need for government and stakeholders involved in National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme to ensure implementation of the policy in line with its policy document of creating access market to local farmers in order to boost the local economy of various communities in Gwer East local government area of Benue State.
2. In the face of previous recruitment exercises characterized by high level of gratifications, the recruitment process of the policy should be strengthened in order to curb the menace of gratifications during the recruitment exercise in Gwer East local government area of Benue State so as to give potential vendors certain level of sense of belonging into the exercise subsequently.
3. Government through the necessary agencies should take the cases of payment of funds to vendors seriously in order to give them the strength to carry out their assigned duties.
4. There is also need for strong monitoring and evaluation of the programme by the necessary authorities to ensure good policy implementation of the programme in Gwer East local government area of Benue State.
5. Politicians using government policies as a tool of compensation for their constituents or supporters to abstain from such act in order to give policy implementation a good chance in Gwer east local government area of Benue State.

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