

National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme Management: Implementation, Supervision and Monitory in Nigeria

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Abstract

The study focuses on the management of National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP) in the areas of its implementation, supervision and monitory. Since its creation in 2016, the dynamics and manifestations of poverty and out of school children is not just in recurring decimals in Nigeria but have increased in an alarming rate. It has been alleged that poor implementation, inadequate supervision and monitoring, among others have undermine NHGSFP. Consequently, the study will examine the nexus between the management of NHGSFP vis-à-vis its implementation, supervision and monitory in Nigeria in general with special focus on Benue state. To investigate this, the study employed a mixed method research design with content analysis to gather comprehensive data. The study adopted the institutional theory of corruption as its theoretical framework. The finding show thatthe management of the procurement of home-grown food products was undermined as a result of the poor implementation, supervision and monitory of the programme. This in turn undermined the objective of NHGSFPincreasing school enrollment in Benue State. The study thus, recommends for among other things that government should track the management of NHGSFP via proper implementation, supervision, monitory and the involvement of stakeholders.

Keywords: *School Feeding Programme, National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme, Accountability, Transparency, Corruption, Nigeria, Benue State*

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Background to the Study

School feeding programmes (SFPs) are commonplace in many parts of the world today, and they are commonly seen as integral to social investment programmes (SIPs) (Hemerijck, 2015). Although the history, dynamics, and manifestations of SFP may be traced back to high-income countries, SFPs are widely used in many low-income countries (Alderman & Bundy, 2011). According to the World Food Programme (2020), around 163 nations have an SFP in place, with 75% coming from low-income countries. Scholars, public policy analysts, think tanks, governments, and others believe that SFP is the magic wand for addressing poverty, increasing school enrolment, and improving student performance and health (Taylor and Ogbogu, 2016).

As a result, several African governments grappling with the hydra-headed concerns of poverty and low school enrolment have looked to SFP as a solution. This is because it is predicted that over 478 million Africans are extremely poor, with over 33 million children out of school (World Poverty Clock, 2020; World Report, 2018). As a result, Fominyen (2019) reported that around 30 African countries are boosting their investment in SFP by developing suitable legal frameworks, improving capacity, and reorienting their communities to increase participation. To be more specific, SFP is viewed as a targeted social safety net that provides both educational and health benefits to underprivileged children in society, with the goal of increasing school enrolment and attendance, hence promoting cognitive development and food security (World Food Programme, 2015). One of the most common SFPs, particularly in low-income countries, is the Home Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP) (Aliyar, Gelli, & Hamdani, 2015). It is viewed as a springboard to galvanise local economies by providing small-scale farmers with opportunities to earn a living while meeting the nutritional needs of schoolchildren through familiar food (Bundy, de Silva, Horton, Jamison, & Patton 2018b).

Nigeria is one of many African countries that have resorted to SFP to address the dual problems of poverty and low school enrolment. To be more exact, over 87 million Nigerians live in poverty, and over 10.5 million children do not attend school (United Nations Children's School Fund (UNICEF), 2021; Brookings Institute, 2018). As a result, Nigeria is now the world's poorest country and has the highest number of out-of-school children. Although SFPs have grown in popularity in Nigeria in recent years, the Federal Ministry of Education established the first SFP in 2005 (Taylor & Ogbogu, 2016). Currently, the Nigerian state has its own National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP), established in 2016. It was tested in 18 states, with the objective of expanding to 36 states to feed 24 million schoolchildren per day. Currently, NHGSFP promises to give 9 million students a meal every day at school, making it one of Africa's largest SFPs (Daily Trust, 2019; World Food Programme, 2019; N-SIP, 2018). The core mandates of the NHGSFP include, but are not limited to, improving students' health and educational outcomes in Nigeria, utilizing locally produced food items from smallholder farmers to cater for school children's nutritional mid-day meal, connecting farmers to school feeding markets, and supporting local food incomes by patronising caterers, cooks, and supervisors, among others (Igboji, 2020, et al.).

In recent times, the NHGSFP in Nigeria has been accused of a lack of good administration. According to the International Centre for Investigative Reporting (ICIR) (2018), Nigeria's free feeding programme has been hampered by charges of fraud and other unethical behaviour. For example, the Minister in Charge of the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs was accused of continuing to feed pupils under the Modified Home-Grown Feeding Programme during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) lockdown, even when schools were closed. Nanda (2006) discovered that there is an underlying link between excellent governance and effective implementation of government objectives and programmes. The repeated failure of Nigerian government initiatives has been attributed to a lack of good governance (Arowolo & Aluko). Using Benue State as a case study, this study investigates the links between good governance and the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP). Furthermore, the justification for the area of study and period of study stems from the fact that, with a population of 4,253,641 million people, the state accounts for over 260,000 out-of-school children in Nigeria, making it one of the states with the highest population of out-of-school children in the country, and that the state was chosen as one of the key participant states of the NHGSFP within the timeframe (Edu Celeb, 2020). In reality, it was envisaged that Benue State's selection and participation in the NHGSFP would result in higher school enrolment and income growth for small-scale farmers and other SFP income earners. However, this does not appear to be the situation in Benue State. According to Ojoye and Charles (2018), Maryam Uwais, Special Adviser to the President on Social Investment Programme, stated that harsh practices have rendered the NHGSFP mainly unsuccessful in Benue State. As a result, the central focus of this work is to investigate the relationship between the management of HGSFP and the implementation, supervision, and monitoring of NHGSFP in Benue State between 2016 and 2021, with a particular emphasis on whether the lack of transparency in the administration of NHGSFP undermines its goal of increasing school enrolment in Benue State between 2016 and 2021.

Scope of the Study

The study examines the management of the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP) in the areas of implementation, supervision, and monitoring in Nigeria in general, with a specific focus on Benue State from 2007 to 2015.

Methodology

The study used a hybrid type of research design. The study relied on secondary sources of data. Secondary data were gathered from journals, textbooks, government publications, and online sources. The secondary data were analysed using content analysis.

Literature Conceptualization

Management of National School Feeding Programme

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2004) defines governance as the exercise of profitable, political, and executive authority to manage a country's affairs in all situations. It includes the tools, processes, and institutions that allow persons and groups to express their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their scores, and resolve their disagreements. While defining governance as the exercise of political power to manage a

nation's affairs, the World Bank (2008) identified three distinct aspects of governance: the form of political governance, the process by which authority is exercised for managing a country's profitable and social coffers for development, and the capacity of governance to design, formulate, and implement programmes and discharge functions.

According to Diamond (2015), for governance to have a long-term impact in the public realm, analogous to poverty relief, the state's capacity to serve well in the service of the public good must be increased, as must its commitment to the public good. Indeed, governance must be transparent in its conditioning, including transparency about how the government makes decisions, conducts business, and spends public funds. Governance also demands autocrats follow the rule of law and be accountable to the people. However, its efficacy and effects will be far-reaching. UNDP (2010) identified inadequate governance as a serious concern and impediment to Nigerian growth and poverty reduction. The concept of governance is multifaceted. In this context, the World Bank (2007) observed that governance has three boundaries. These constraints, as emphasized by Eyinla (2006), include the nature of political administrations, the exercise of authority in the functioning of social and profitable institutions, and the capacity of government to formulate and implement policies as well as execute its tasks. These confines were specifically linked and primarily illustrated by Olowu and Erero (2009), who both conceptualized governances as relating to the "rule-sovereign-ruled relationship." Specifically, they linked the three confines of governance in the environment of "rule-sovereign-ruled relationships" as inclusive of "functionalism," "structuralism," and "normativism." According to them, governance is concerned with "rulemaking, legitimization, and enforcement," and it is structurally comprised of three separate institutions: the "sovereign or state," the "ruled or society," and the "rule of law." They defined governance as the "relationship between the state and social institutions." In the same vein, they suggested that this relationship exemplifies the principles associated with effective government. According to them, these principles include transparency, organizational effectiveness, responsibility, pungency, and legality, among others. However, these principles are frequently missing from the formulation and implementation of initiatives and projects in Nigeria.

According to Boeninger (1991; 2002), governance is the good government of society. According to this expert, governance has three boundaries: political, specialized, and institutional. Further, Graham, Amos, and Plumtre (2003) defined governance as the process by which a society forms important judgements, determines who is involved, and how they are held accountable. More exactly, governance refers to the various methods, processes, relationships, and institutions that persons and groups use to express their interests, exercise their rights and scores, and intervene in their disagreements (Keping, 2018). On the other side, recognizing some variations in the role and importance of public, social, and profitable governance in a society leads to supporting the primacy of public governance. The state is more significant than civil society or the commercial sector because it provides organisational dynamics as well as political and jurisdictional structures for both social and profitable governance. In a similar vein, Ansah (2007) defined governance as a state's institutional and structural structures, decision-making process and perpetration capabilities, and the

interaction between government officers and the public (Kamal & Batool, 2021). In this context, Madhav (2007) says that good governance is linked to the ethical foundation of governance and must be evaluated in relation to specific morals and objectives as may be established. Governance refers to how people are governed and how the operations of the state are administered and regulated. It relates to how a nation's politics are carried out (Adedayo, 2021).

Thus, governance is more than just how a government and social associations interact and relate to citizens (Graham, Amos, & Plumptre, 2003), but it also includes the state's ability to serve citizens and other actors, as well as how public functions are carried out, public coffers are managed, and public nonsupervisory powers are exercised (European Commission, 2003). In this context, Idowu (2021) defined governance as the functions assumed by a government to maintain a cohesive state, defend its territorial integrity, and operate efficiently. It (inversely) refers to the effective and efficient functioning of government in ensuring the well-being of its citizens (Chauhen, 2021). Thus, good governance is an extension of republicanism and refers to responsive governance. Its emblems include the rule of law and the operation of a fair and effective judicial system; nonetheless, this classification is contentious because it limits good governance to popular countries and thus excludes non-democratic countries (Banguara, 2011). This assertion is value laden. Good governance also entails increasing broad and popular participation in political, social, and profitable activities; developing the capacity to manage growth; and fostering a culture of accountability and transparency in the administration of public affairs (Oyugi, 2004; Addink, 2019).

School Feeding Programme (SFP)

SFP is a social strategy developed solely for the purpose of feeding schoolchildren (Sulemanaetal, 2013). It is a type of provisional transfer that has emerged as a key policy option in developing nations as well as among low-income populations in industrialized countries (Buttenheim, Alderman, & Friedman, 2011). In a similar vein, Mohammed and Sakara (2014) described SFP as tailored safety nets that provide both educational and health advantages to needy academy students in order to raise registration rates, minimize absenteeism, and alleviate food insecurity. Alternatively, SFP can be described as the provision of food to academy children, either during the academy period or as a take-home meal, in order to improve academy registration and children's health. According to Del Rosso (1999), SFP, also known as the Food for Education Programme (FFE), can be viewed as a policy alternative aimed at addressing some of the health and nutritional issues faced by academy-aged children and families. Lawson (2012) identifies three forms of SFP. The first one focuses on providing reflections for academy scholars. In this form of SFP, the student eats in the classroom or at a specified location on the academy grounds. Many home-grown SFPs are based on this paradigm. Devereux et al. (2010) argue that, while homegrown SFP has considerable potential to improve the lives of frames, culinarians, and other secondary heirs, it has received little philosophical attention. The alternate bone, which is the primary interpretation of SFP, is packed meals delivered to the academy. This form of SFP is typically connected with multinational groups seeking to use education to increase academy registration and participation (Lawson, 2011). It was widely regarded as the most popular

type of SFP advocated by organisations attempting to improve the nutritional intake of a group of individuals in a region. The third sort of SFP is take-home meals. This one is not only intended for the youngster but also for other members of his family who are in desperate need of food and other nutritional input (Ahmed, 2004). This form of SFP does not interfere with academy time or other classroom conditions because the students are expected to take the food home (Lawson, 2011).

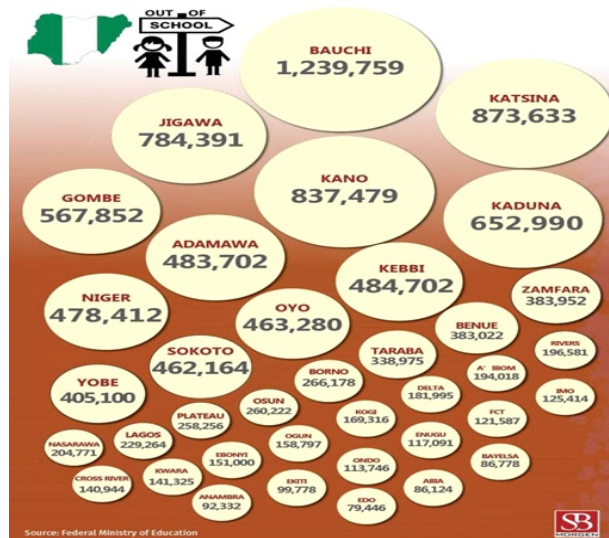
Implementation, Supervision and Monitoring of National School Feeding Programme

Although the relationship between governance and SFP is unclear in the literature, studies have examined the causes behind SFP's ineffectiveness in a variety of contexts around the world. In Nigeria, Azubuike and Mbah (2019) discovered that one of the primary causes of SFP ineffectiveness in Nigeria, particularly in south-eastern Nigeria, is corruption and a lack of efficient and effective programme monitoring. Although they agreed that the programme increased academy registration and engagement, insufficient oversight undermines the programme's goal. On the other hand, in a South East-based study by Igboji et al. (2020), they found that SFP in Nigeria is well-supervised and has inversely increased academy registration and participation. They advised that the government continue to fund the programme because it is achieving its goals and has a positive reputation among students and teachers.

Corruption in the activities of NHGSFP and School Enrollment

Despite the NHGSFP's prelude, which called for academy registration, the number of out-of-school children in Nigeria is increasing. As of 2016, Nigeria had approximately 8.7 million out-of-school children, which had climbed to 12.3 million by 2020 (Alawode, 2018; S.B. Morgen, 2021). According to UNICEF (2021), Nigeria has approximately 10.5 million out-of-school children. Despite the disagreements listed below, it has been determined that Nigeria has the greatest proportion of out-of-school children in Sub-Saharan Africa. Despite the fact that primary school education is technically free and mandatory in Nigeria, the country accounts for one out of every five schoolchildren in Africa. Indeed, Akinpelu (2021) observed that the growing number of out-of-school children in Nigeria has cast a pall over the country's education system, which will undoubtedly have an impact on the country's growth and development in the long run. The figure below depicts the situation of out-of-school children in Nigeria.

Figure 1: State by State Account of Out of School Children in Nigeria



Source: S.B Morgen (2021)

From the figure above, every state in Nigeria has hundreds to millions of out-of-school children. While Bauchi State has the most and Edo State has the fewest out-of-school children in Nigeria, Benue State, the subject of this study, has over 300,000 out-of-school children, making it one of the states with the lowest school enrolment in the nation. Further, Wantu (2018) noticed that since 2011, Benue State has been prominently highlighted among the states with poor school enrolment since 70% of schoolchildren, largely girls, do not attend school in the state. The table below shows how school enrolments in the state fell from 2014 to 2021 using the selected local government following the implementation of the NHGSFP.

Table 1: Number of selected Primary Schools Enrollment in Benue State, showing decrease in enrollment from 2014-2021

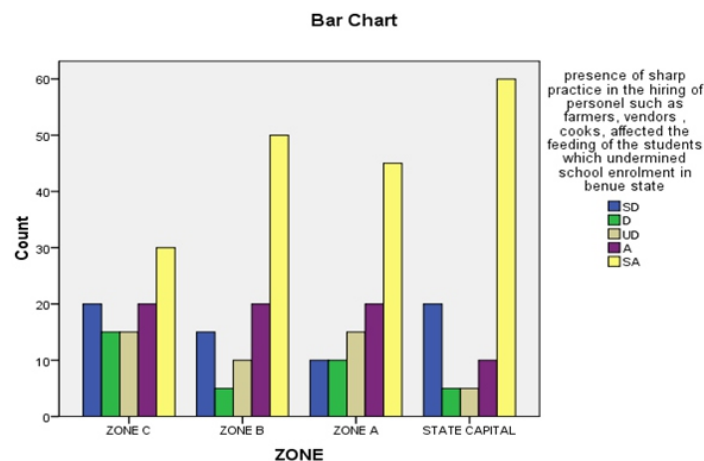
SN	Selected LGEAs	LGA	2014/2015	2016/2017	2018/2019	2020/2021
1	LGEA Vandeikya	Vandeikya	31546	21701	21232	20580
2	LGEA Ajio	Kwande	63135	30594	29214	23543
3	LGEA Gboko Central	Gboko	41109	26495	25552	23807
4	LGEA Wurukum	Makurdi	38798	22077	21366	20438
5	LGEA Oju	Oju	29449	13552	11626	9075
6	LGEA Otukpo	Otukpo	17453	14435	14315	13046
7	LGEA Ogbadibo	Ogbadigbo	31135	16460	15756	13613

Source: State Universal Basic Education Board Makurdi, (SUBEB, 2021)

From the table above, shows that, despite the introduction of the NHGSFP in 2016, this terrible trend of school enrolment in Benue State has not been reversed, with the figure declining year after year. According to the NHGSFP (2021), the scheme has helped around 268,462 pupils and 2,571 schools. However, school enrolment in the state has not increased.

One of the goals and objectives of the NHGSFP is to increase primary school enrolment in Nigeria and lower present dropout rates. However, as seen above, data from the Ministry of Education, S.B. Morgen, and UNICEF demonstrate that school enrolment in Nigeria, particularly in Benue State, has improved little or not at all. While disputes such as herder-farmer confrontations, among others, may be to blame for this unfortunate circumstance (Safe School Initiative, 2015), the prevalence of sharp practices, including corruption, in the management and operations of the NHGSFP cannot be ruled out. For example, the federal government, through Hajiya Miriam Uwuais, Special Adviser to the President on Social Investment Scheme, accused the focal person in charge of NHGSFP in Benue State of diverting monies intended for the scheme. Furthermore, it was revealed that the number of people recruited was overstated in order to obtain additional funding from the federal government (The Guardian, 2018). Unfortunately, this was done as the programme was about to begin in the state. Although the state's governor, Samuel Ortom, answered that the NHGSFP has resulted in an increase in student enrolment, several respondents noted that corruption has prevented these SFPs from meeting their full potential. The figure below depicts the respondent's points of view.

Figure 2: Presences of Sharp Practices in the hiring of personnel for NHGSFP in Benue State



Source: Field Work (2021)

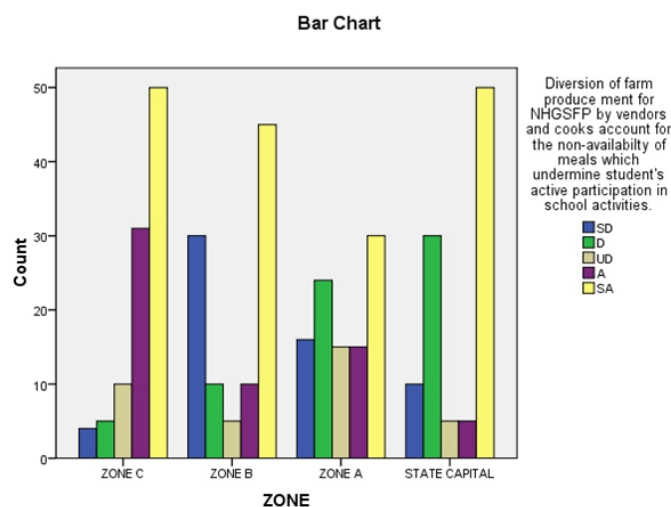
From Fig. 2 above, it can be concluded that the majority of respondents in the three Senatorial Zones and the State Capital agreed that sharp practices exist in the recruitment of workers for the initiative, which impacted the registration of kids in elementary schools in Benue State. The majority of respondents (more than 60%) in Benue's state capital agreed that the programme was not transparent. This position was supported by Hajiya Miriam Uwuais, opinion on the Social Investment Programme, who stated that the NHGSFP recruiting list for Benue was overly bloated (The Guardian, 2021). One of the food vendors indicated that the entire process has some political influence because, before being hired as a vendor, you must agree to share a portion of the total money allocated to you for the programme when payments are made (Fieldwork, 2021). This demonstrates that the process of recruiting

people for the project was not transparent and was hence characterized by aggressive practices. Focal people, merchandisers, culinarians, headmistresses, and others were all implicated in shortchanging the entire NHGSFP process, not only in Benue but also in other states. Corroborating this allegation, Jacob and Musa (2021) found that "corruption is a key concern affecting Nigeria's public feeding programme. Some authorities in charge of implementing the plan across the country have misappropriated the funds authorized for its execution.

Diversion of Funds and School Participation

One of the underlying goals of SFP is to enhance children's involvement in school rather than merely their registration. In fact, a large body of literature suggests that there is a correlation between SFP and educational difficulties (Jomaa, McDonnell, & Probart, 2013). Notably, the NHGSFP also contains an ideal that attempts to address the poor nutrition and health status of children who have been affected by poor nutrition as a result of poverty, which has had an impact on the children's reading level. It is a fact that if a child's nutritional intake increases, his or her academic performance will most likely improve significantly (Alderman and Bundy, 2012).

Figure 3: Diversions of funds and availability of meals to encourage school attendance.



Source: Fieldwork (2021)

From Fig. 3 above, respondents in the three senatorial zones and the state capital strongly agreed that food items were frequently diverted by food vendors and cooks in Benue State. Many respondents in the state capital and Zone C believed that the lack of meals could be attributed to food diversion by programme vendors and cooks. To support this claim, one of the students interviewed over the course of the study observed and reported that:

"I don't like this scheme because they only give us food once a week, maybe twice, but I believe it should be given to us every day... I dislike the programme

because the persons in charge of preparing the food are rarely there, and when they do, the food does not reach all of the students" (Fieldwork, 2021).

Johnson (2019) verified this position, stating that contractors, food vendors, and cooks diverted money and food items intended for the NHGSFP. Johnson (2019) went on to say that politicians gather contracts to cook for students and give vendors 1% of the money, which amounts to nothing.

Diversion of Food Items and School Attendance

The NHGSFP in Benue State is characterized by regular diversion of food products by both food sellers and chefs, which has impacted school attendance in the state. For example, the headmaster of an elementary school that was interviewed stated:

"The programme has never been transparent right from its inception because the vendors convert the food items given to them into cash and, in turn, buy low-quality ones from the market and supply them to the pupils. This is confirmative; I personally had to call the vendor in charge of our school to order when I discovered he was not bringing meals up to the stipulated number of times, and the quantity was even not enough to go around the school pupils" (Fieldwork, 2021).

This demonstrates that the programme's management and administration face significant challenges due to a lack of openness. The sellers are diverting money and food supplies intended for the programme. However, the programme manager in charge of Benue State said that:

"The transparency of the programme is not in doubt. The DSS, desk officers at the local government, and civil society monitor this process to maintain a high level of transparency. For example, let's talk about those saddled with the responsibility of feeding the pupils, which are the vendors. All stakeholders are involved in their selection, including community leaders and political leaders, who ensure that the targeted school because they are members of the community, their engagement makes the entire process easier (Fieldwork, 2021).

This opinion was not confirmed by the responses indicated below when asked if the presence of corruption in the management and administration of NHGSFP harmed the quality of the meals provided to students, hence reducing their attendance at school in the state. The NHGSFP in Benue state is marked by frequent diversion of food items by both food vendors and cooks which has affected the attendance of school children in the state. For instance, the headmaster of a primary school that was interviewed noted that:

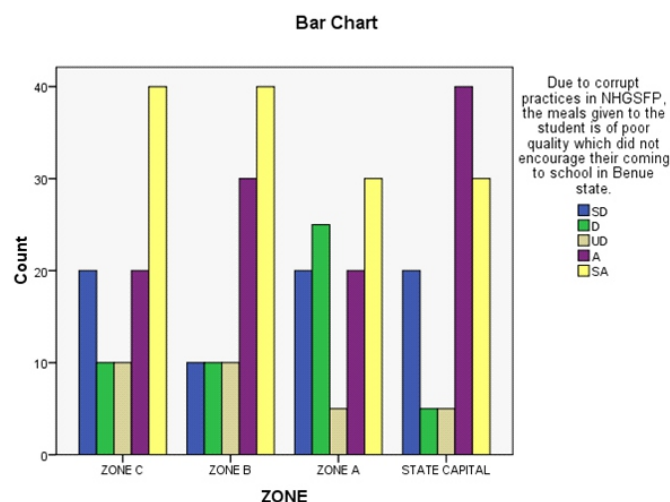
'The program has never been transparent right from its inception because the vendors convert the food items giving to them to cash and in turn buy from the market low quality ones and supply to the pupils.....This is confirmative I personally had to call the vendor in charge of our school to order when I discovered he was not bringing meals up to the stipulated number of times she should and the quantity was even not enough to go round the school pupils" (Fieldwork, 2021).

This shows that the absence of transparency is a great challenge in the management and administration of the programme. The vendors are diverting the money and food items meant for the programme. Although, programme manager in charge of Benue State argued that:

“The transparency of the programme is not in doubt. The DSS, desk officers at the local government, and civil society monitor this process to maintain a high level of transparency for instance let's talk about those saddled with the responsibility of feeding the pupils which are the vendors, all stakeholders are involved in their selection both the community leaders, the political leaders are all involved in the selection of the vendors who make sure that the targeted school pupils are served. Because of their involvement the whole process is straight forward because they are part of the community” (Fieldwork, 2021).

This view was not supported by the views of the respondents as shown below when asked if the presences of corruption in the management and administration of NHGSFP affected the quality of the meal giving to the student which undermined their attendance to school in the state.

Figure 4: Corrupt Practices Affects the Quality of Meal giving to the students which did not encourage their Coming to School



Source: Fieldwork (2021)

In Fig. 4, the views of respondents in the three senatorial zones and the state capital show that they all agree, albeit in different percentages and magnitudes, that the infestation of corruption in the management of the NHGSFP has undermined the provision of good meals, which would have encouraged students to attend school.

One of the headmasters interviewed stated that:

"There is little accountability, especially on the part of the federal government. You could see the zeal of a government ready to help the less

privileged, but sincerely, in areas like food items and good cooking, one cannot guarantee their accountability" (Fieldwork, 2021, p. 1).

Johnson (2019) highlighted that the entire process of NHGSFP in Nigeria is marked by a lack of openness. According to Adesomoju (2021), Sadiya Farouq, Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management, and Social Development, did not divulge the school or the identity of the alleged families who benefited from the NHGSFP during the lockdown. According to the above analysis, the entire NHGSFP process in Benue State was marred by irregularities and sharp practices, demonstrating the lack of transparency in the administration of NHGSFP and thus undermining its goal of increasing school enrolment in Benue State between 2016 and 2021".

The views of the respondents in the three senatorial zones and state capital shows that they are all in tandem though in different percentage and magnitude that the infestation of corruption in the management of NHGSFP has undermined the provision of good meals which would have encouraged student in attending school.

One of the Head Master's interviewed noted that:

"There is little accountability especially on the part of Federal government, you could see the zeal of a government ready to help the less privileged, but sincerely, areas like food items, and good cooking, one cannot guarantee their accountability" (Fieldwork, 2021).

No wonder, Johnson (2019) observed that the entire process involved in NHGSFP in Nigeria is characterized by lack of transparency. According to Adesomoju (2021), neither the school or identities of the so-called families that benefited from the NHGSFP during the lock down were revealed by the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development, SadiyaFarouq. Flowing from the above analysis, it is evident that the entire process of NHGSFP were marred by irregularities and sharp practices in Benue State, which shows the absence of transparency in the administration of NHGSFP and therefore undermines its objective of increasing school enrollment in Benue State, between 2016 - 2021".

Theoretical Framework

This study relies on the institutional corruption theory. The idea is founded on the work of researchers including Thompson (2018), Warren (2004), Miller (2013), and Lessig (2011). The theory, known as institutionalism in corruption, studies, tries to understand the processes and methods by which institutions, plans, rules, and routines emerge as authoritative standards for social activity (Fotaki, 2020; Scott, 2016). In terms of corruption, institutional theory demonstrates the social context and provides grounded knowledge of how organisations, institutions, and society become entangled in the web of corruption even when laws are developed and implemented to combat corrupt practices. (Luo, 2005). According to this thesis, political systems and institutions have acquired corruptive behaviours throughout time. According to this theory, public policy, political institutions, and society as a whole have

a complicated and intricate relationship with corruption, which has become normalised if not questioned and scrutinised (Debski et al., 2018; Stensöta, Wängnerud, and Svensson, 2015). The key elements of the theory relevant to this study are that corruption at both the institutional and individual levels undermine the influence and performance of government. Corruption at the individual and institutional levels clogs the governance process and outputs; the relationship between types of corruption is linked to the function of the institution or policy. The forms of corruption are inextricably linked to the functioning of policies and institutions, and the implications of corruption and their effects on individuals, policies, and institutions are mutually reinforcing.

The study contends that individual and institutional corruption undermines the efficiency of interconnected public policies and institutions (Onuoha et al., 2021). Furthermore, it observes that by eliminating the individual from the centre of analysis and focusing on institutions, a deeper understanding of why and how policies, agencies, and institutions operate poorly can be obtained. The diversion of funds, lack of accountability, and transparency in SFP are better understood through the analytical lens of institutional corruption.

Application of Theory

The link between excellent governance and Nigeria's home-grown school feeding scheme is best understood in light of institutional corruption. This paradigm will not only increase understanding of the complexity of SFP in Nigeria but will also reveal the hidden relationships that influence its performance in the country. It will delve below the surface to identify and explain how a lack of effective governance impacts, shapes, and conditions SFP in Nigeria. The theory's application to the study is as follows: First, this theory is appropriate for this study because it will demonstrate how and why, despite the development and execution of SFP in Nigeria, poverty and illiteracy remain repeating problems in the country. This is due to the lack of accountability and transparency in the management and administration of the SFP. All of this, and much more, is evidence of the crisis and inconsistencies inherent in the Nigerian state, which prevent the implementation of SFP to improve school enrolment and alleviate poverty.

Practical Implication of the Study

The implications of this study National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP) management, implementation, supervision, and monitoring in Nigeria are wide-ranging and have significant implications for policy, education, and public welfare.

The study can inform policymakers on the strengths and weaknesses of the current NHGSFP, providing valuable insights for the enhancement of existing policies or the formulation of new ones. Policymakers may use the findings to identify areas that require additional resources, improved coordination, or changes in the programme's structure. Understanding the challenges faced during implementation can guide the development of more effective strategies. This includes addressing logistical issues, supply chain challenges, and ensuring timely delivery of meals to schools. This study may also lead to the refinement of implementation protocols, resulting in a more efficient and impactful programme. The study

highlights gaps in the supervision and oversight mechanisms of the NHGSFP. This information is crucial for authorities to strengthen monitoring systems, ensuring compliance with quality standards, and preventing misuse of resources. Improved supervision can lead to better accountability, transparency, and overall programme effectiveness.

Findings from the study can contribute to the development of robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks, allowing for continuous assessment of the programme's impact. Importantly, regular evaluations can help measure progress, identify areas for improvement, and make data-driven decisions for future enhancements. The study highlighted priority areas that require increased funding or reallocation of resources within the NHGSFP. Policymakers can use this information to justify budgetary allocations for the program and ensure that funds are directed toward areas with the greatest impact. The study can contribute to a better understanding of the programme's socioeconomic impact on beneficiaries, including improvements in nutrition, health, and school attendance. Policymakers can use this information to communicate the programme's success and justify its continuation or expansion.

Conclusion

The primary aims of the NHGSFP are to improve school enrolment and eliminate poverty in Nigeria. However, poverty and a high proportion of out-of-school children are reoccurring issues in Nigeria. This study investigated the relationship between good governance and NHGSFP in Benue State from 2016 to 2021. The research investigated the following two key issues: "how the absence of transparency in the administration of NHGSFP undermines its objective of increasing school enrolment in Benue State, 2016–2021," as well as "how the absence of accountability in the process involved in the procurement of home-grown food products undermines the utilisation of NHGSFP to alleviate poverty in Benue State, 2016–2021). Following a thorough review and analysis of the data collected, the study concluded that the NHGSFP is marked by a lack of transparency, which has resulted in the appearance of corrupt activities such as the diversion of money and food items intended for farmers, food sellers, and students, respectively. This has hampered school enrolment, involvement, and attendance across the state. Based on the foregoing suggestions, the study advised that the Nigerian government make an effort to effectively track the expenditure related to the NHGSFP not only in Benue State but also in other states of the Federation. Corrupt participants in the programme should face the consequences of the law. References

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