

**Assessment of the 2014 Pilot Sokoto State Schools Feeding Programme
vis-à-vis Pupils' Interest to Enrol in School and their Aspiration to
Complete Basic Education**

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Abstract

This study ascertained if there was any difference in interest to enrol in school and to complete basic education between pupils on the Sokoto State pilot feeding programme and those not on the programme. Ten schools were selected for the study and school interest and aspiration questionnaire (reliability .74) was used to collect data from 381 proportionately selected respondents from a population of 56,339. Chi-square test was used to analyse the collected data. Findings from the study revealed that there was a significant difference in the interest to enrol in school – χ^2 (35, N = 381) = 230.67, $p = .00$, and the aspiration to complete basic education – χ^2 (33, N = 381) = 269.39, $p = .00$, between pupils on the Sokoto State pilot schools feeding programme and those not on the programme. The study found that the pupils on the pilot programme had higher interest to enrol in school and higher aspiration to complete basic education than those not on the programme. It was therefore concluded that the pilot school feeding programme has proven to be an effective tool in increasing the enrolment of pupils and improving their aspiration to complete basic education. The study recommends that the programme be implemented in all primary schools in the state and that sensitization of parents on the need to enrol and retain their children at school should be a periodic and continuous process.

Keywords: schools feeding, pupils' interest, pupils' aspiration

Human beings receive numerous stimuli every second from the environment, but for an individual to give persistent attention to any feature of the environment, interest is usually a prerequisite. It is a spontaneous positive predisposition that leads a person towards offering required effort with a view to completing a task. When there is interest to conduct an activity, the herculean nature of a task cannot be a deterrent nor its difficulty. The vigour in which children conduct activities for which they have interest in, is usually different from that in which they have no interest in. This is because in the latter, the required support for it to be perfected is more when compared to the former.

Daniel and Nobuhide (2010) are of the view that the major impetus children in Sub-Saharan African countries lacks is the interest in school. In countries such as Nigeria and Niger there are instances where children would prefer to do menial labour work at the expense of going to school or at times remain idle at home unwilling to go to school. Conceivably it forms part of the basis why UNICEF reports that there are currently over 10.5 million out of school children in Nigeria (Daily Trust, 2022) thus leading to an empirical fact that Nigeria has the highest population of out of school children in the world.

This suggests that for enrolment in school to be improved, there is need to proffer proactive ways to prompt the interest of young children in schooling. Even equally important is the interest of parents. Mokomane (2012) explained that rural parents have a generalized perception that school tends to deter the capacity of children to engage and master inherited family trades and disciplines. This tends to reduce the meagre interest that parents and children have in school. In fact, the family has enormous contributions to make in terms of developing the interest of their wards in school. This is because, what the efforts put in by the family to improve their child's interest in schooling contributes more to a child's success at school than how much money the family makes or how much education the parents have (Spellings, 2005). By showing interest in their children's education, parents and families can spark enthusiasm in the children and lead them to a very important understanding, that learning can be enjoyable as well as rewarding and is well worth the effort invested (Maitafsir, 2019).

Countries in Africa were found to have the least indicator value for children's school interest and that was linked to be among the major causes of fanaticism, radicalism, banditry, terrorism and other social vices that have bedevilled communities in both rural and urban settlements (Abdullahi & Abdullah, 2014). Low interest to enrol in school is not the only peculiar educational problem of Africa and specifically Nigeria. Another major problem of the education system in Nigeria is the high prevalence of dropout at basic education level (Abdullahi & Abdullah, 2014) which is caused partly by students' poor aspiration to complete basic education. The menace is not only observed at primary school level but it is also recorded across the country in post-primary school levels of education.

Poor aspiration to complete basic education was at an alarming rate in Sokoto State of Nigeria as statistics have shown that only 50.57% of the students enrolled in basic education in Sokoto State could complete the programme (Federal Ministry of Education, 2017). The causes of this menace are varied. Spates of insecurity where girls were abducted from schools in neighbouring states is major factor towards increasing dropout rate (Musa, 2018). More so, Kainuwa and Yusuf (2013) noted that poor aspiration to complete basic education especially among female students in the rural areas is caused by early marriage where the girls are predominantly married off at the ages that they ought to be at school.

However, there are researchers with a differing view point that considered increasing prevalence of low aspiration to complete basic education by students in Sokoto State to be caused by poor school environment (Inuwa & Yusof, 2013). They argued that most of the public schools in the state do not have sufficient instructional materials necessary for effective teaching and learning. This therefore creates an annoying feeling in the students about the uncertainties and the bleak educational future that lies ahead which then results to sudden decline in aspiration and consequent dropping out of school by the students. It is expected that if the afore mentioned factors are controlled, aspiration of students can increase. But then, there are communities in Sokoto State where despite provision of basic infrastructures and necessary human resources, the aspiration to complete basic education fell below required level (Annual School Census, 2015).

Hence, there was an immediate need to find solutions to these problems. Five villages of Silame and Wamakko Local Government Areas were involved and that necessitated the experimentation of school feeding programme for them. This approach has helped in other parts of Nigeria (such as Kano and Osun States) to motivate parents and increase the interest of children to be enrolled into school, and to improve the aspiration of students to complete basic education (Cummings & Kulutuye, 2017; Taylor & Ogbogu, 2016). This study therefore sought to investigate the impacts of the feeding programme in Sokoto State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Lack of basic school infrastructures has been identified as one of the Africa's major causes for low interest to enrol in school (Abdullahi & Abdullah, 2014; Daniel & Nobuhide, 2010). That when classrooms, laboratories, libraries, toilet facilities, playgrounds and other necessary teaching / learning facilities are readily available, children tend to develop interest in the need to be at school and consequently develop interest to be enrolled in the school. Based on this premise, similar gestures were accorded to communities of Betare, Kubodu, Kwaggyal, Rundi (Silame Local Government Area) and Dankyal (Wamakko Local Government Area) all in Sokoto State of Nigeria. In these communities, classrooms were built and furnished, qualified teachers were employed and deployed to them, but the enrolment was far below expectation owing to the little or no interest the children and their parents had in schooling. This is despite the many advocacy visits by teachers and officials of State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) Sokoto to the same communities on the need for children to be enrolled at school. Worried by the outcome of events, State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) Sokoto in 2014 introduced school feeding programme (as a pilot scheme) at the said communities.

But as a pilot scheme that may be sought to be implemented across the state, there is need to properly assess its outcome in a bid to know its viability especially on pupils' interest to enrol and their aspiration to complete basic education, and also how the outcome differs from pupils in schools where school feeding is not offered.

Research Objectives

The specific objectives of this paper were to;

- i. Ascertain if there is any difference in interest to enrol in school between pupils of schools on the pilot feeding programme and those not on the programme.
- ii. Ascertain if there is any difference in aspiration to complete basic education between pupils of schools on the pilot feeding programme and those not on the programme.

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance;

H₀1: There is no significant difference in interest to enrol in school between pupils of schools on the Sokoto State pilot feeding programme and those not on the programme.

H₀2: There is no significant difference in aspiration to complete basic education between pupils of schools on the Sokoto State pilot feeding programme and those not on the programme.

Methodology

This study adopted a cross-sectional research design. The current study collected data from different levels of primary education (primary 4, primary 5 and primary 6) and thus the cross-sectional design was appropriate because the design produces snapshot of a population through systematic collection of data across levels at a time and the consequent generalization of findings to the entire population (Cohen et al., 2007).

The population for this study comprised of 56,339 public school pupils of Silame and Wamakko Local Government Areas of Sokoto State, Nigeria. The samples for this study were drawn from the five schools at which the Sokoto State pilot schools feeding programme is conducted as well as other five schools having very similar demography (within the same LGEA) but in which the feeding programme is not offered. Hence, purposive sampling technique was used to select the 10 schools from which respondents were drawn through the use of stratified random sampling technique. On the selection of pupils, Krejcie and Morgan (1970) suggested that for a population of 56,339, the number of samples sufficient should be 381. Hence, 381 pupils were selected.

The instrument for data collection was School Interest and Aspiration Questionnaire (SIAQ). SIAQ is a five-point Likert self-developed instrument that measures the extent of pupils' interest on school before enrolment and the degree of aspiration to complete basic education. SIAQ has items including "If I'm giving an option to choose a school, I will select the school that gives food", "It has been my dream to be in this school" and "I like to learn how to read and write". The instrument was made to be administered for children only (in primary

schools) and for this reason, the choice of words and approach were simplistic in tandem with the level of the intended respondents.

The instrument consisted of three sections, Section A was on demographic variables where respondents indicate their school, gender, age and class. Section B was on Interest for Enrolling in Primary School, it is made up of 12 items. Cognizance was given to the two main types of interest; individual interest of the pupils and situational interest. Section C was on aspiration to complete basic education. It also comprised of 12 items. The reliability of SIAQ was determined using test-retest method at a pilot study and was found to have .74 reliability index.

Quantitative approach was used to analyse the collected data. This involved inputting responses of the pupils to Statistical Package and Service Solution (SPSS) computer software. Thereafter, the computer was used to make an in-built analysis using chi-square. Chi-square analysis was used because the data collected for the current study was at ordinal level measurement scale. This type of data does not assume normality of distribution and therefore the statistical tool to be used should be such that do not make assumption for normal distribution of data. Hence, chi-square was found to be an appropriate tool for making the analysis. Furthermore, chi-square can determine whether or not an observed or apparent difference between the scores of two groups is due to the inherent differences in the groups or just due to mere chance alone (Marczyk et al., 2005).

Data Presentation and Analysis

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in pupils' interest to enrol in school between pupils of schools on the Sokoto State piloted schools feeding programme and those not on the programme.

The hypothesis was tested by subjecting the scores of the pupils to a chi-square test analysis as presented in Table 1.

Table 1:

Difference in Pupils' Interest to Enrol in School

	N	χ^2	df	Sig. (2 tailed)
Pilot Centre	230	230.67	35	.00*
Non-pilot Centre	151			

*Significance level = .05

From the result of the analysis in Table 1, the p value (.00) was less than the alpha value (.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in pupils' interest to enrol in school between pupils of schools on the Sokoto State pilot feeding programme and those not on the programme is hereby rejected. Implying that there is a significant difference in pupils' interest to enrol in school between pupils of schools on the Sokoto State pilot feeding programme and those not on the programme.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in pupils' aspiration to complete basic education between pupils on the Sokoto State pilot feeding programme and those not on the programme.

The hypothesis was tested by subjecting the scores of the pupils to a chi-square test analysis as presented in Table 2.

Table 2:

Difference in Pupils' Aspiration to Complete Basic Education

	N	χ^2	df	Sig. (2 tailed)
Pilot Centre	230	269.39	33	.00*
Non-pilot Centre	151			

*Significance level = .05

Result of the analysis in Table 2 indicates that the p value (.00) is less than the alpha value (.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in pupils' aspiration to complete basic education between pupils of schools on the Sokoto State pilot feeding programme and those not on the programme is hereby rejected. Implying that there is a significant difference in pupils' aspiration to complete basic education between pupils of schools on the Sokoto State pilot feeding programme and those not on the programme.

Discussion of the Findings

This study made comparison between pupils on the pilot schools feeding centres and non-pilot schools feeding centres on the variables of interest to enrol and aspiration to complete basic education. The first comparison was done on pupils' interest to enrol in school. The result of this comparison indicates that there is a significant difference in the mean score on interest to enrol between the pupils in the pilot school feeding centres and non-pilot school feeding centres, that the pupils in the pilot school feeding centres have higher mean value on the measure of interest to enrol at school than those in the non-pilot feeding centres and that this difference is a result of the schools feeding programme. This finding is consistent to that of Kamaludeen (2014) on school feeding in Ghana and of Blom (2014) on school feeding in Ethiopia. Other factors that may possibly influence the outcome of the current study can justifiably be ruled out. For example, it could be possible that difference in the locality of the respondents can affect the findings. However, this is not the case because both the pilot centres and the non-pilot centres were located in rural settlements.

Again, unequal gender representation can possibly skew the outcome of the research where the group with high percentage of female respondents could be envisaged to have low interest to enrol and the group with high percentage of male respondents is envisaged to have high interest to enrol. Conversely, in this study, equitable percentage representation of gender for both groups was ensured and therefore the possibility of the findings being influenced by gender disparity

is also ruled out and the findings can best be attributed to one major variable (i.e., the school feeding).

Furthermore, findings of the current study are in line with the findings of World Bank (2016) who also found significant difference on interest to enrol in school between children offered school feeding and those not offered school feeding and that the children offered meals at school were more willing and more enthusiastic to be enrolled. The researchers explained that the main impetus for the surging interest of the children in school was the food they receive there. There are instances in which children below the age of five pester their parents with request to enrol them to school as a result of the food they learnt their elder siblings receive at school.

This study also made comparison on aspiration to complete basic education between pupils in the pilot school feeding centres and non-pilot school feeding centres. The study found that there is a significant difference on the measure of aspiration to complete basic education between pupils in the pilot schools feeding centres and those at the non-pilot centres and that the pupils at the pilot feeding centres have higher aspiration to complete basic education than those in the non-pilot centres. This finding is similar to that of Conradie (2013) and of Bernard and Taffesse (2012). But the findings of the current study are contrary to the explanations offered by Dheressa (2011) who argued that evidences which suggest that schools feeding programmes improves the aspiration of pupils to complete basic education are inconclusive. However, Dheressa's argument can be ruled out because the sample size in his study was inadequate having selected only 110 households as respondents from total households of 638, instead of a minimum of 234 as per Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) recommendation.

Another major bolster to the aspiration of pupils in the pilot feeding centres is the abundant parental and community support they receive as a result of attending schools. The parents and the community were aware of the benefits they derive from the feeding programme that include ready market for their farm produce and unskilled jobs in the school kitchen can easily be lost once their children refuse to attend school. Consequently, the community encourage school attendance and completion. The reverse scenario occurs in the non-pilot centres, neither the parents nor the community offer the pupils required support to remain at school and complete basic education.

Conclusion

Consequent upon the completion of the analysis and interpretation of the collected data, the following conclusions were made about the study;

The Sokoto State pilot school feeding programme has proved to be an effective tool in increasing the enrolment of pupils and improving the aspiration of pupils to complete basic education. The parents and their children have a surge in the degree of interest they have on school as a result of the introduction of the pilot school feeding programme. The pupils in the pilot feeding centres indicates

ambition to pursue careers that needs at least a basic education as a result of the improvement in their educational aspiration unlike the pupils in the non-feeding centres that mostly aspire to follow family inherited menial trades and apprenticeship.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made;

i. The Sokoto State pilot schools feeding programme has proved to be an effective tool for enhancing pupils' interest on school and increasing learner's aspiration to complete basic education, it is therefore recommended that the programme be implemented in all primary schools in the state. This should be incorporated with sensitization of parents on the need to enrol and retain their children at school.

ii. In addition to the school feeding programme, functional guidance and counselling units should also be established at each school as a way of monitoring and ameliorating pupils' interest and educational aspirations.

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