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Article

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THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY ACTION RECOVERY AND ECONOMIC STIMULUS (KG CARES) PROGRAMME TO LOCAL MARKETS AND DISTRIBUTION NETWORKS IN KOGI STATE

Osebi Sophia Balogun ¹

Abdullahi Mohammed Yamma ²

Mohammed Bello Baban'Umma ³

Department of Political Science, Federal University Lokoja, Kogi State, Nigeria ¹

Department of Political Science, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nigeria ^{2 & 3}

Corresponding Email: osebi.balogun@fulokoja.edu.ng ¹

Abstract

Food is paramount for the continual survival of the living. This is why countries around the globe formulate short-term and long-term policies and strategies to ensure their citizens are food-secured. Nigeria is one of such countries that battles food insecurity which is felt in every region within the nation. Kogi state, which is part of the country's north-central region, is not spared. Despite policies initiated by past state government administrations, the menace of inadequate food remains. The introduction of the Kogi Community Action Resilience and Economic Stimulus (KG CARES) programme by the immediate past administration of the state was to help reduce the state's hunger level. The policy's main objective is to expand access to livelihood support and food security services. The study examines role the programme, KG CARES contributed to ensuring food security by improving the abilities of local markets and distribution networks. The study adopts the Social Exchange theory which assists research in understanding the cost-benefit relationship between partners that shape decision-making processes and resource allocation for promoting food security. Data was collected through questionnaires (the distribution of 400 questionnaires to randomly selected poor households from six local government areas) as primary sources and secondary sources (books, journal articles, and internet information), focusing on household food security and market access in Kogi state. The findings reveal that while the policy, KG CARES, provided temporary relief, challenges remain in enhancing food security due to disruptions in food supply chains and limited access to essential resources. The study recommends that the Kogi State

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government make targeted policies to strengthen local food systems, and enhance the lives of vulnerable livelihoods, local farmers, and food producers.

Keywords: Food Security, KG CARES, Local Markets, Distribution Network, Vulnerable Households.

Introduction

Food is essential for the survival of any population, which is why it occupies the top tier of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Only those who are nourished can think clearly and function effectively, both mentally and physically. This underscores the crucial role food plays in societies around the world. However, merely having food available is not enough; the food's nutritional quality ensures food security within a community. Food security is a complex issue involving global availability, access, utilization, and stability of food resources. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) defines it as a condition in which all people always have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for a healthy and active life (FAO, 2021).

The concept of food security has gained significant attention, especially considering global challenges such as climate change, population growth, economic inequality, and geopolitical tensions. At its core, food security revolves around the relationship between food production and the socio-economic conditions that allow people and communities to access that food (Pinstrup-Andersen & Watson, 2011). While the world produces enough food to feed everyone, access and distribution are disproportionately uneven. Poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and political instability can severely impede food access, leading to malnutrition and hunger in various regions. With the global population projected to reach approximately 9.7 billion by 2050, food production systems face considerable challenges (Godfray et al., 2010). To meet rising demand, food production will need to increase by an estimated 70%. Achieving this goal requires not just boosting agricultural output but also ensuring that food systems are sustainable and resilient to external disruptions. Climate change is another crucial factor affecting food security, as it impacts agricultural productivity through shifting weather patterns, more frequent extreme weather events, and changes in pest and disease dynamics. These alterations threaten the livelihoods of countless farmers, particularly in vulnerable areas dependent on stable climate conditions (Meyer, 2019).

Additionally, food security is closely linked to economic stability. In many low-income countries, economic limitations restrict individuals' ability to buy sufficient and nutritious food. Global economic policies, trade agreements, and market fluctuations can further influence food prices, intensifying food insecurity for the most disadvantaged populations (Thorn-Lyman, 2010). Addressing food security requires a multifaceted strategy that promotes sustainable agricultural practices, invests in rural infrastructure, improves food distribution networks, and creates social safety nets for vulnerable communities. International cooperation and policy platforms, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals—particularly Goal 2, which aims to end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture are essential for tackling food insecurity worldwide (HLPE, 2017). Food security remains a critical issue requiring united efforts from governments, organizations, and communities around the globe. It is not solely about the availability of food; it is also about ensuring that every individual can access and use the food necessary for a healthy life. Effectively addressing the complexities of food security is vital for achieving broader objectives related to health, economic stability, and social equity.

In Nigeria, food security is a significant concern shaped by various factors such as economic conditions, climate change, conflict, and agricultural practices. As Africa's most populous nation, Nigeria faces substantial challenges in ensuring that its citizens reliably access sufficient, safe, and nutritious food. One of the key obstacles to food security in Nigeria is poverty. A large segment of the population lives below the poverty line, severely limiting their ability to afford food. Reports indicate that around 40% of Nigerians live in extreme poverty, further exacerbating food insecurity (Adebayo & Adebayo, 2020). Climate change is also a crucial factor affecting the largely rain-fed agricultural sector. Variations in weather patterns, including inconsistent rainfall and extended droughts, have reduced agricultural productivity. Kogi state, in the Middle Belt of Nigeria, has a significant proportion of households' experience food insecurity. This could be because of the poverty level, limited access to and affordable foods, poor distribution networks, among others.

Statement of the Problem

Despite various measures, programmes and projects formulated and implemented by countries across the globe, the menace of food insecurity still rages, and Kogi State, Nigeria is no exception. In Kogi, existing challenges in food security are already influenced by factors such as poverty, inadequate infrastructure COVID-19 pandemic, and climate change. All these affected farmers' ability to access markets, purchase inputs, and engage in agricultural activities. This disruption has led to reduced agricultural productivity and a subsequent decline in food availability. This has resulted in increased food prices, making it difficult for low-income households to afford basic food items. Many families in Kogi rely on daily wages for their livelihoods; thus, reduced incomes from sales of farm produce and compromised their ability to secure adequate nutrition. Additionally, the disruption of supply chains has resulted in food spoilage and waste, particularly for perishable goods. The impact on food systems has been compounded by the challenges of accessing health care and nutrition education, which are crucial in ensuring food security and promoting healthy diets. One major objective for the implementation of the Kogi Community Action Resilience and Economic Stimulus (KG CARES) programmes is to reduce the hunger level of its citizens, among others. The study, therefore, seeks to examine the effectiveness of the KG CARES programme on food security in Kogi State.

Research Questions

- i. What roles have local markets and distribution networks, in collaboration with KG-CARES, played in ensuring proper food utility in Kogi State?
- ii. How effective has the KG CARES programme been in restoring livelihoods and stabilizing the food supply chain in Kogi State?

Research Objectives

- i. To examine local markets and distribution networks' role in ensuring food utilization in Kogi State in collaboration with KG-CARES.
- ii. To understand KG CARES programme has been restoring livelihoods and stabilizing the food supply chain in Kogi State.

Conceptual Framework

Food Security: Food security is defined as the condition in which all individuals have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. This concept encompasses several dimensions, including availability, access, utilization, and stability of food supplies. The Food Agricultural Organization (FAO), provides a widely accepted definition, stating that food security exists “when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (FAO, 1996). It is largely accepted because it is not only concerned with the availability of food but also magnifies the importance of accessibility and utilization of food. Amartya Sen has contributed significantly to the understanding of food security by emphasizing entitlements and access. In his work, “Poverty and Famine” (1981), Sen argues that food security is not solely about the supply of food but is closely linked to individuals’ ability to acquire food through various means, including purchasing power and social safety nets. His analysis reveals that famine can occur even when food is available, illustrating the importance of accessibility as a key factor in food security. Furthermore, the World Food Summit (1996) reinforced the importance of food security as a global issue, defining it in terms of ensuring that food is available, accessible, and utilized in a way that maintains a healthy and active life. This definition has been adopted and adapted by various governments and international organizations to guide policies and interventions aimed at enhancing food security at national and worldwide levels. The dimensions of food security can be further elaborated as follows: Availability: The physical presence of food in sufficient quantities. Access: The economic and physical access to food, which includes income, purchasing power, and distribution systems. Utilization: The proper use of food, which involves nutritional quality and dietary diversity. Stability: The consistency of food availability and access over time, ensuring that fluctuations do not lead to insecurity.

Food Availability: Scholars define food availability as the physical supply of food in desired quantities and quality within a specific geographical area. Food availability is a key component of food security, along with access, utilisation, and stability. Production, distribution, and storage factors influence food availability. Scholars have studied this complex concept extensively in various fields, including agriculture, economics, nutrition, and public health. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) defines food availability as "the supply of food available for human consumption, taking into account factors such as production, stocks, imports, exports, and losses" (FAO, 2001). This means that the presence of food is key to human survival. The World Food Programme (WFP) defines food availability as "the amount of food available for consumption per person per day" (WFP, 2010). This definition differs from that of the former. It is concerned with daily consumption per person. Another definition is given by The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and which defines food availability as "the amount of food produced, stored, and imported, minus losses and exports" (IFPRI, 2014)

Food Accessibility: Food accessibility, a critical component of food security, refers to the ability of individuals and households to acquire adequate amounts of food. It encompasses both physical and economic dimensions. The World Food Programme (WFP) (2010) defined Food Accessibility as "the ability to acquire sufficient quantities of food of acceptable quality to meet dietary needs." Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (2001), defined "Ensuring that all people,

at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life." The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) (2014) also defined food accessibility as "the ability to obtain sufficient quantities of food, of appropriate quality, to meet dietary needs." By understanding these definitions and factors, researchers and policymakers can develop strategies to improve food accessibility and address food insecurity.

Food Affordability: This is a critical component of food security, referring to the capacity of individuals and households to purchase enough inexpensive, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs. It's a complex issue influenced by various economic, social, and environmental factors. The World Food Programme (WFP) (2010) defined food affordability as "the capacity to pay a market price for food compared to the proportion of a household's income and other expenses." Furthermore, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) (2014) also explained food affordability as "the ability to acquire sufficient quantities of food, of appropriate quality, to meet dietary needs." The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) (2015) opined that food affordability is "the ability of at-risk households to afford available foods."

Food Stability: Food stability is a crucial dimension of food security, ensuring consistent access to food over time. It involves the reliability of food supplies, the resilience of food systems to shocks and stresses, and the predictability of food prices. The World Food Programme (WFP, 2020) defined food stabilization as "the ability to access sufficient quantities of food consistently." Food Stability deals with the problems of ensuring that food security is free from fluctuations of food supply over time. It deals with food supply adjustment to meet change in population and adequacy in food supply through dynamics in time (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 2001),

Food Utilization: This refers to the body's ability to use the nutrients from consumed food to support growth, development, and overall health. It encompasses various factors, including dietary intake, nutrient absorption, and metabolic processes. Though there is no single universally accepted scholarly definition, the concept is often explored within the context of food security and nutrition. It is closely intertwined with the other dimensions of food security: availability, access, and stability. While there may not be a specific definition, food utilization is often discussed in the context of food security and nutrition. Several organizations and researchers have contributed to this body of knowledge. The World Food Programme (WFP, 2020) emphasizes the importance of adequate dietary intake and nutrient utilization for achieving food security. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO, 2001) views food utilization in the role of food in promoting health and well-being, which includes proper use of food available and proper diet combination. Also, the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) addresses issues related to nutrition, including dietary intake and nutrient absorption. It's important to note that food utilization is influenced by various factors, including individual health status, genetics, and environmental conditions. Understanding these factors is crucial for addressing malnutrition and promoting optimal health outcomes.

Literature Review

The presence of sufficient food and getting these foods is subject to how often the people can get food. This is dependent on the distribution network available. Such as local markets and accessible roads to these markets for farmers and traders. Ajibade, Onimisi, Yusuf and Achor (2022), in their study on fishmongers in the Ofu local government area of the state, observed that it was a major trade for women in that area. The study used the multi-stage sampling technique to randomly select 120 respondents from three major markets in the Local Government Area. Primary data was used for the study through a well-structured questionnaire. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics, gross margin analysis, multiple regression model and mean score. Also, the results indicated an average household size of 6 persons per household and a mean marketing experience of above 10 years. Furthermore, 55.0% of the marketers had primary education. The results derived from the study indicated that marketing experience and household size had a significant influence on fish profitability, and the major challenge faced by these fishmongers (marketers) is inadequate credit facilities. It suggests that the state government provide them with soft loans to expand their trade (Ajibade et al, 2022). This will enhance the ability of the traders to market their products not only in the Ofu local government area but other parts of the state. Davies et al (2022) argued on the importance of local markets in rural areas, particularly in sub-Saharan African societies, in ensuring food security. They opined that, aside from providing more affordable and physically accessible food to low-income consumers, traditional markets serve as wholesalers to street vendors, create market entry points for smallholder farmers, and provide essential employment opportunities for sellers. The study adopted Ostrom's design principles for enduring common-pool resources in investigating the study area, which is 81 urban cities in Zambia, which assisted the researchers in understanding the role of markets and government institutions in sustaining food supply. This, they say, is prevalent in most sub-Saharan African societies, for which Kogi state, Nigeria, is a part.

The above works of literature indicate that more needs to be done by researchers and policymakers in creating awareness regarding the role of local markets in ensuring food security. This is because they are necessary to meet the needs of low-income earners. Also, it is an avenue where small-scale farmers of different farm produce could trade their goods. Policy actors, too, have a tremendous role to play in resuscitation the economy. As Ojide, Ogu, Ohaleté and Chinanuife (2021) opined that those who influence policymaking in one way or the other are required in any venture to uplift the downtrodden Nigerian economy if success is to be achieved. In their study, they sample policy actors randomly from Civil Society Organizations, the Private sector, the public sector, Academia, Research Institutes, Non-governmental organizations, NGOs, etc., by interviewing 35 persons from the above groups. They used a participatory development theory in explaining the part played by policymakers in Nigeria's economy. These include the provision of employment, improved educational technology and export substitutes apart from crude oil to diversify the nation's economy. The results were descriptively analysed. The study then recommended that direct cash transfers be made to households, and small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) to be encouraged as the policy option that would have a huge impact in reducing the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on the people and the economy. However, they were not clear on the medium this cash can be made available to the extremely poor societies in the country with no financial institutions or those without bank accounts.

Chinonso and Uwajumogu (2020), in their study, tried to review the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic on the nation's food supply and the measures taken to solve the problem.

The study adopted the Rentier State Theory and Qual-dominant approach to explain the strategy the government of Nigeria were employing in tackling the consequences of the pandemic in the nation. It sourced its data from secondary sources, comprising both qualitative and quantitative data, which were descriptively analysed. The results of the study indicate that though the price of oil had plummeted because of the pandemic, the nation's economy still depended on oil rents to recover its economy, and this slowed down the recovery process. Furthermore, the research shows that agriculture, which is the main sector for ensuring a constant food supply, was one of the sectors given the least attention, with only ₦ 110.24bn of the 2021 budget. (Chinonso and Uwajumogu, 2020). The work recommended that more attention be given to crucial sectors such as agriculture, science and technology and promote the growth of domestic and home-made industries, which is vital to economic growth and development. Although the foregoing dwells on the general recovery of the Nigerian economy, ensuring that a society is nutritionally secured should be stressed, without which full economic recovery will be hampered.

Kalu (2023) opined in his study that measures to reduce the consequences of COVID-19 in Nigeria should not be limited to food security alone. The study was aimed at discovering the reasons for the rapid spread of the virus in Nigeria and how it was managed by the government. The study relied on the conventional content analysis method. During the research, it was observed that most of the help that was received from the international community in the form of aid or loans was towards food provisions and health care services. It suggests that there is a need for the government to enact a clearly defined public policy for economic recovery and for household dignity to be restored. Notably, Kalu's (2023) argument is like that of Chinonso and Uwajumogu, (2020), in government concentrating its energy and resources in major areas which be more beneficial to the citizens and the nation's economy in post-pandemic Nigeria. Mawani et al. (2021) carried out a comprehensive study on post-pandemic societies across global, regional, and national levels. The study aimed to find out various interventions that were implemented and used in different countries as a response to the coronavirus. The method adopted was that the study gathered data from academic pieces of literature such as the Science citation index, Social Science citation index, and Emerging sources citation index. Other online databases used are the Public Affairs Information Service (PAIS) index, International Bibliography of Social Science, Left index, Gender Studies database etc. Grey sources of literature are the United Nations Digital Library, International Labour Organization (ILO), Factiva, International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Monetary Fund, World Bank Open Knowledge Repository, WHO Library etc.

The findings of the study were analysed in three parts: socio-economic interventions, protecting jobs, enterprises, and workers, to identify areas that have not been covered by the research. Importantly, the first part is related to the current study: increasing food security and safe functioning of food supply for countries post-pandemic era. The gaps identified by the study showed that more still needs to be done by various countries towards rapid economic recovery. The study therefore suggests better interventions in designing, implementing and evaluating recovery policies, effective evidence-based socioeconomic interventions, and equity-focused, redistributive, and transformative interventions. Broadly, the above works of literature have shown the nature, the cause and the consequences of the pandemic on society. They also provide the measures, programmes, and policies that have been taken by the government, particularly in Nigeria, to revive the economy. Despite the efforts made by these works of literature, very little has been done in checking the implementation levels of the programme in states, nor are there specific

pieces of literature on the implementation of the Covid-19 Action Recovery and Economic Stimulus programme in various states. This is one of the purposes of this current study.

Empirical Review

KG CARES and Stabilization of Food in Kogi State: Reviving the economies of countries across the globe is very important post-lockdown in the situation. This initiated the implementation of numerous domestic and international economic policies depending on the financial strength of each of these nations. One of the international policies adopted by Nigeria to revive its economy is the COVID-19 Action Recovery and Economic Stimulus (CARES), initiated by the World Bank and adopted by Kogi state. This is because the nation's mainstay, the exportation of crude oil, and its price had dwindled due to the pandemic. Like Nigeria COVID-19 Action Recovery and Economic Stimulus (NG-CARES), which had specific procedures for implementation. According to (Environment and Social Systems Assessment, 2020), each State in the Federation is expected to institute a State Steering Committee comprising Commissioners and Permanent Secretaries of the key sectoral Ministries and Heads of Agencies will be constituted to provide oversight and policy guidance to the programme. The report suggests that each state's steering committee is to set up a State CARES Coordinating Unit (SCCU), which will be responsible for serving as the secretariat of the State CARES Steering Committee:

- i. undertaking periodic collation of results from delivery units; and
- ii. monitoring the progress of implementation and disbursements against results.

However, as explained in the ESSA (2020) report, States were allowed the leverage of choosing their implementation agency for the programme execution. Kogi CARES chose the Kogi State Social Investment Program (KG-SIP) as its implementation agency, on the platform of the Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP) in all three Disbursement Linked Indicators (DLIS). The report used existing materials sourced from the staff of the Bank of Agriculture through a combination of reviews of existing program materials and available technical literature, interviews and extensive consultations with government staff, non-governmental organizations, regulatory agencies, farmers, private sector organizations and sector experts. The report suggests that since States are weak in delivering a comprehensive assessment of their environment, which is required in determining policy implementation and evaluation, State governments should institute a scheduled program to build and strengthen the capacity of the technical staff of the various ministries within the state.

Theoretical Framework

The Social Exchange theory is a sociological and psychological theory that studies the social behaviour in the interaction of two parties that implement a cost-benefit analysis to determine risks and benefits. Some of the proponents of the theory are Thibaut (1917-1986) and Kelley (1921-2003), who were psychologists, and Homas (1910-1989) and Blau (1918-2002), and Levi-Strauss were sociologists among others (Cook and Rice, 2006). This theory proposes that behaviours can be thought of as the result of cost-benefit analyses by people attempting to interact with society and the environment. If a person believes they can extract more of a reward through behaviour than they lose by performing it, then the person will perform it. Conversely, the behaviour will not be performed when the person feels the cost outweighs the benefit. If someone does not value

maintaining a relationship or is distrustful and does not expect others to follow through with the reward, then the balance would be shifted toward anticipating a lower worth to any social exchange. The relative costs would be higher, and the anticipated rewards would be lower. (Stafford, 2008). This theory can be used to analyze the interactions between different stakeholders in Kogi state involved in the Community Action Resilience and Economic Stimulus efforts, including policymakers, government agencies, NGOs, community groups, and individuals. It can provide insights into the social dynamics and exchanges that shape decision-making processes and resource allocation for promoting food security in the region. With the aid of this theory, the study examines the extent to which the implementation of KG CARES has helped improve food security among poor livelihoods in the state.

Methods

This study sourced both qualitative and quantitative data to aid its analysis. The research design used for analysis is the thematic analytical method for the qualitative data and the descriptive method for the quantitative data, respectively. Below is the summary of the data collected in bar chart form.

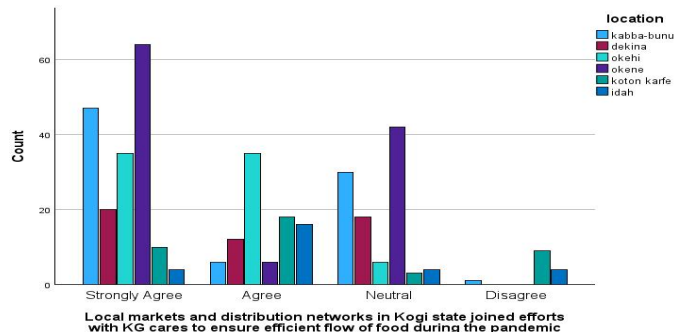
Questionnaire Summary

Local Govt	No of Questionnaires	Questionnaires Received
Kabba-Bunu	84	84
Dekina	51	50
Okehi	76	75
Okene	112	112
Koton Karfe	40	40
Idah	28	28
Total	391	389

Data Presentation and Analysis

Objective 1: The role of Local markets and distribution networks in collaboration with KG CARES played in ensuring food availability and accessibility in Kogi state:

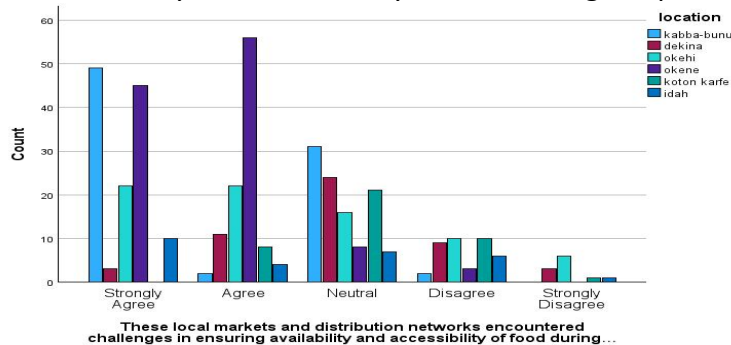
- Local markets and distribution networks in Kogi state joined efforts with KG CARES to ensure efficient flow of food



The above indicates that 46.2% of respondents strongly agreed that local markets effectively partnered with KG CARES their respondents expressing certain level of satisfaction with these

collaborative efforts of the programme. However, at varying levels in suggest that the perceived impact of these efforts was notable in these local governments. In addition, 23.8% of respondents agreed with the statement, showing a more moderate but positive view of the collaboration. likely because a larger share of respondents in these local governments had already expressed strong agreement. Neutral responses made up 26.4% of the total respondents while disagreement responses were relatively low overall, with only 3.6% of respondents disagreeing with the statement. This illustration indicates that the KG CARES programme enhanced significantly to the flow of food products in its local markets.

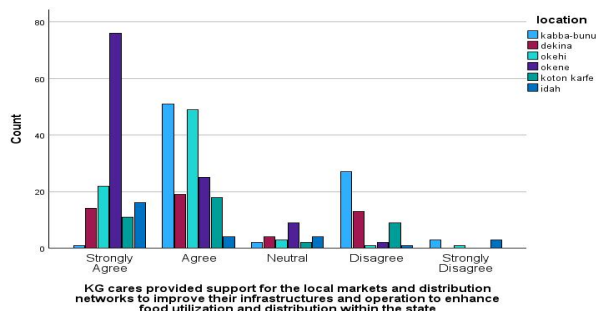
- ii. These local markets and distribution networks encountered challenges in ensuring the availability and accessibility of food during the pandemic



33.1% of the total respondents strongly agreed that local markets faced significant obstacles. Kabba-Bunu had the highest rate of strong agreement, with 58.3% of respondents indicating that these challenges were pronounced, suggesting that disruptions in food distribution may have been particularly impactful there. In addition, 26.4% of respondents agreed that local markets faced difficulties in maintaining food access during the pandemic.

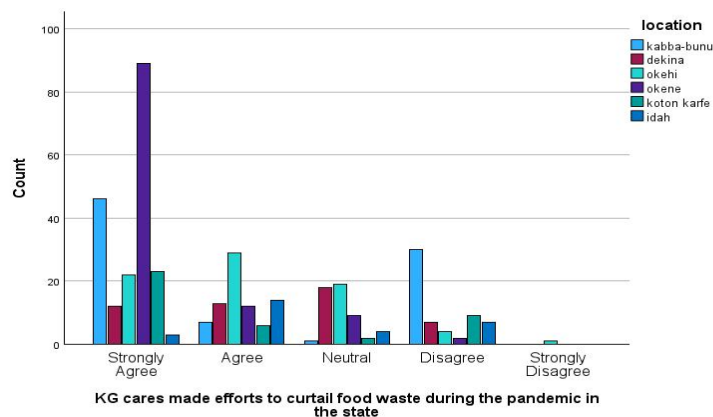
Neutral responses accounted for 27.4%. This high rate of neutrality in these local governments suggests that a significant portion of respondents were uncertain about the impact of the programme or did not observe pronounced challenges, indicating some mixed perceptions within the local governments areas being studied. Respondents who disagreed was relatively low overall, with only 10.3% of respondents disagreeing that local markets faced challenges.

- iii. KG CARES provided support for the local markets and distribution networks to improve their infrastructure and operations to enhance food utilization and distribution within the state



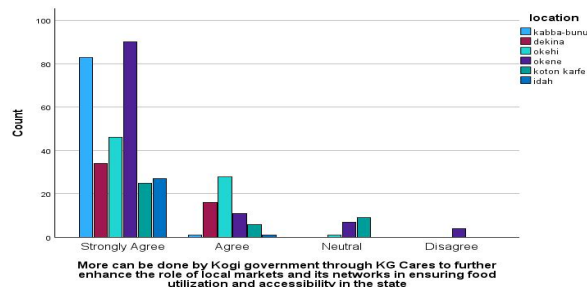
Overall, 35.9% of respondents strongly agreed that KG CARES offered substantial support for improving food distribution infrastructure. Some areas with an overall of 28.5% of the respondents agreed moderately that the KG CARES programme provided some level of support for the market and distribution networks infrastructure. Therefore, though varying in at different percentages in the various areas of the study, the result above indicates that majority of the respondents there perceived less impact from KG CARES in supporting its local markets. Neutral responses from the study area were low, with a small portion of 6.2% of total responses. This category showed relatively even distribution across local governments. Respondents who disagreed were notable in certain local governments, with 13.6% of respondents overall disagreeing that KG CARES provided adequate support. This indicates that respondents in these areas were less convinced of the program's effectiveness in improving market infrastructure.

iv. KG CARES made efforts to curtail food waste in the state



Overall, 50.1% of respondents strongly agreed that KG CARES took effective measures to curtail food waste. While the remaining percentage was shared among other respondents who had different opinions, indicating that respondents in these areas may have observed fewer noticeable improvements. In addition, 20.8% of respondents agreed with the statement, showing moderate support for the food waste reduction efforts. Neutral responses accounted for 13.6% of the total, and a smaller portion of respondents, with varying percentages across the local government areas of the study. While only 0.3% of respondents, all from Okehi, strongly disagreed with the statement, which represents minimal overall dissatisfaction with KG CARES' efforts in waste reduction.

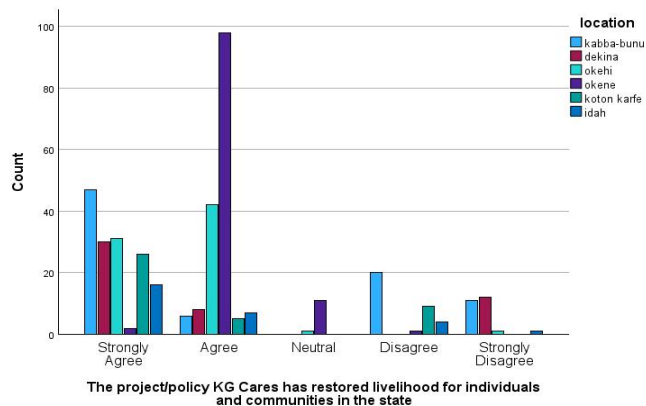
v. More can be done by the Kogi government through KG CARES to further enhance the role of local markets and its networks in ensuring food utilization and accessibility in the state.



An overwhelming majority, 78.4% of respondents, strongly agreed that more should be done, indicating broad support for additional government efforts either by the ongoing programme, KG CARES or future programmes to achieve food security in the state. In addition, 16.2% of respondents agreed that further efforts by KG CARES were necessary. A small proportion of respondents, 4.4% overall, were neutral, indicating that some respondents were uncertain about the need for further improvements. All disagreement responses came from Okene (3.6%), indicating that a small minority in this Local government felt that the current efforts were sufficient and that further measures were unnecessary. This means that though KG CARES is noted to have positive effects on food availability and access, more efforts needs to be done by the agency in this regards

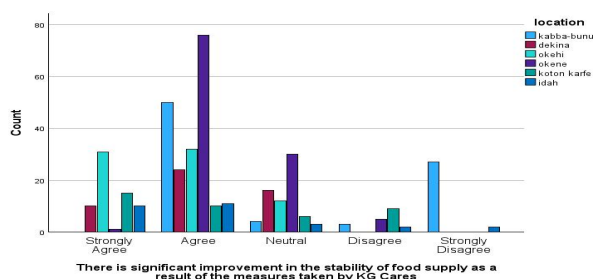
Objective 2: The government of Kogi state, through KG CARES program is ensuring livelihoods and stabilizing the food supply chain in Kogi state post Covid-19:

- i. The project/policy KG CARES has restored livelihoods for individuals and communities in the state



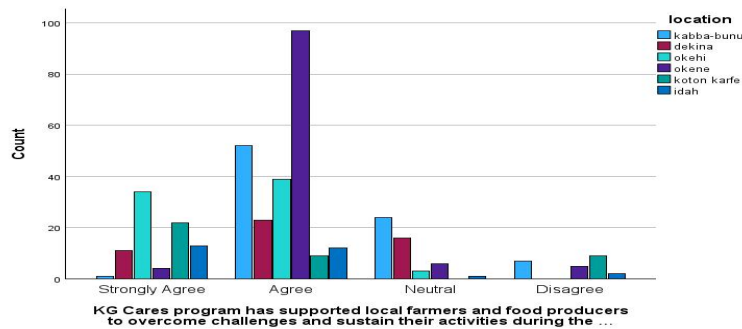
Overall, 81.8% of respondents agreed that KG CARES had successfully contributed to livelihood restoration. Although different local government areas of the study, such as show varying agreement levels of respondents recognizing KG CARES impact on livelihoods. KG CARES restored livelihoods, indicating a low perceived benefit from the program in that region. A small proportion of respondents, 3.1% in total, were neutral on the effectiveness of KG CARES in restoring livelihoods. The respondents that disagreed that the KG CARES programme had assisted in improving vulnerable livelihoods accounted for 14.1.7% of responses.

- ii. There is a significant improvement in the stability of food supply because of the measures taken by KG CARES



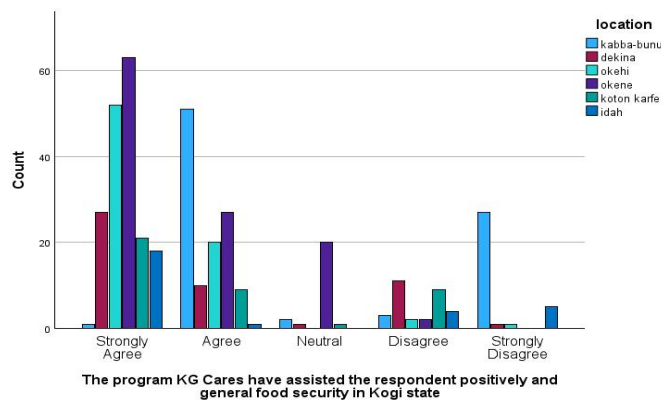
Generally, only 69.4% of respondents agreed that KG CARES led to significant improvements in food supply stability. of respondents overall agreeing that KG CARES positively impacted food supply stability. Neutral responses accounted for 18.3% of the total, indicating that a substantial portion of respondents were uncertain about the impact of KG CARES on food stability. Disagreement with the statement was relatively low, with 19.9% of respondents overall disagreeing that KG CARES improved food stability.

- iii. KG CARES program has supported local farmers and food producers to overcome challenges and sustain their activities during the pandemic



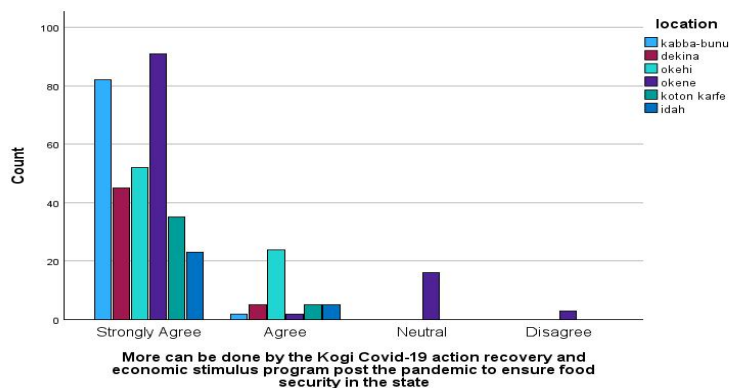
Most respondents from all Local Governments agreed that the KG CARES program helped overcome challenges. Specifically, 232 respondents (59.5% of the total) "Agree" that the program was effective. A significant proportion of respondents also "Strongly Agree" with the statement, with 85 people (21.8% of the total) indicating they strongly felt the program supported farmers in the state. Also, those with indifferent feelings were 50 responses (12.8% of the total), with notable neutral opinions. These responses suggest that while some individuals recognized the program's efforts, they were either uncertain about its full effectiveness or did not perceive it as significantly impactful in their area. There were relatively few respondents who "Disagree" with the statement precisely, (23 people or 5.9% of the total respondents) indicating that in these local governments, some farmers and food producers felt that the support measures were not sufficient to help them.

- iv. The programme KG CARES has assisted the respondent positively and general food security in Kogi state



Most respondents in most Local Governments agreed that the program had a positive impact on both their situation and food security. Overall, 77.1% of respondents agreed that KG CARES assisted them positively. This suggests that in these areas, the programme was viewed as very effective in improving food security. In total, 300 people agreed with the statement, which highlights a significant perception of positive impact across the state. A total of 24 respondents (6.2%) gave neutral responses. This suggests that some individuals were uncertain about the effectiveness of the program in enhancing food security. Those who disagreed were numbered 31 respondents (8.0%). This showed that there are some in these local government areas of the study, there were dissatisfied with the program's impact, as a portion of respondents felt it did not positively affect their situation.

- v. More can be done by the Kogi Covid-19 action recovery and economic stimulus program post the pandemic to ensure food security in the state



A significant majority of respondents (84.1% of the total) believe that more can be done by the Kogi Covid-19 program to ensure food security, with the highest level of agreement in Kabba-Bunu (97.6%) and Dekina (90.0%). These percentages reflect strong support for further action by the program in these areas. In total, 328 respondents (84.1% of the total sample) strongly agreed with the statement, indicating a widespread belief that the program could continue to contribute positively to food security beyond the pandemic. This sentiment is particularly strong in Kabba-Bunu, where nearly all respondents expressed the need for continued efforts, as well as in Dekina and Okene, where large majorities (90% and 81.3%, respectively) agreed. In contrast, a smaller percentage of respondents (11.0% of the total) agreed. The highest agreement rate was found in Okehi (31.6%) and Idah (17.9%), showing that while these areas are supportive, the level of urgency or commitment expressed is somewhat less than in other regions like Kabba-Bunu and Dekina. The "Neutral" and "Disagree" categories account for a very small portion of the responses. Only 16 respondents (4.1% of the total) were neutral, with all of them coming from Okene (14.3% within the Local Governments), which suggests that in Okene, some individuals were uncertain about the effectiveness or necessity of further action. Also, only 3 respondents (0.8% of the total) disagreed, all of whom were from Okene, indicating minimal opposition to the idea of further program involvement.

Summary

The data above shows that local markets and distribution networks, in collaboration with KG CARES, played an essential role in maintaining food accessibility during COVID-19. However, significant challenges persisted, especially in areas like Kabba-Bunu, where food availability was a more pressing issue. KG CARES made notable efforts to improve infrastructure and reduce food waste, with effectiveness varying across regions. Despite these efforts, a substantial majority of respondents believe more can be done to reinforce the role of local markets in ensuring food accessibility and minimizing waste during crises. Furthermore, the study suggests that KG CARES made significant strides in restoring livelihoods and stabilizing the food supply chain in Kogi State after the COVID-19 pandemic, but the program's impact varied by Local Governments. While areas like Koton Karfe and Okehi showed strong positive responses to KG CARES' initiatives, other regions, especially Kabba-Bunu, felt the measures were less effective or needed further enhancement. Overall, there is broad consensus on the need for ongoing and increased support from KG CARES to fully address food security challenges and reinforce the state's food supply chain stability.

Discussion of Findings

The Role of Local Markets and Distribution Networks in Collaboration with KG CARES Played in Ensuring Food Utilization in Kogi State: The data shows that 50% of respondents credited financial support for boosting food availability and affordability. Cash transfers have been shown to reduce poverty and food insecurity by increasing household purchasing power (Hidrobo et al., 2014). The 41% of the respondents who cited advanced farming techniques reflect a growing understanding among farmers that modern methods, such as improved seeds, fertilizers, and mechanization, enhance yields. Feder et al. (1985) argued that such technologies are essential for productivity growth in low-income countries. However, it is worth noting that uptake of new techniques often depends on farmers' education, extension services, and risk perception, suggesting the need for comprehensive support systems (Doss, 2006). These findings further align with the assertion by Dercon and Gollin (2014) that targeted rural interventions, including access to credit and modern agricultural practices, are pivotal for food security in developing economies. Similarly, Feder et al. (1985) emphasized that access to finance can significantly improve productivity by enabling farmers to adopt better inputs and technologies.

Kogi State Government and the KG CARES programme in Restoring Livelihoods and Stabilizing the Food Supply Chain: According to Kogi Enterprise Development Agency Report (KEDA 2024), KG CARES programme provided for over 1,826 smallholder farmers across the 21 local government areas of Kogi State received support. Inputs that were delivered were approximately 180 metric tons of improved seeds (rice, maize, and cowpea), 350 metric tons of NPK and urea fertilizers, and 5,000 litres of herbicides were distributed. Furthermore, capacity-building sessions were organized in partnership with state extension agents to train farmers on modern agronomic practices, ensuring the effective use of inputs. Support was also provided through collaboration with cooperatives and aggregators to guarantee off-take of farmers' produce at fair prices, reducing post-harvest losses and stabilizing farm incomes. The findings from the beneficiaries in this regard reveal that 39.1% of the total respondents strongly agreed that CARES initiative had successfully contributed to livelihood restoration. In summary, the data obtained from both the questionnaire and the interview reveals a mixed impact and perception on food stability in the state, with

disparities in the LGAs highlighting both the positive and negatives of the program. Though high level of respondents believed the program had a positive impact, the relatively low strong agreement and a significant level of neutrality points to areas that needs improvement.

Conclusion

Conclusively, the CARES from the data gathered, it is evident that there was a significant impact and level of success on the program as its impact has been said to be positive on the beneficiaries with a large percentage of the total respondents as indicated above either agreeing or strongly agreeing to its effectiveness. It is also imperative to address the significant variation in response from other local government areas of the state that had negative responses as regards the effectiveness of the program. This calls for future social programs to ensure that consistent and transparent implementation of initiative goals must be well articulated and taking care of while also ensuring the need for addressing local concerns.

Recommendations

- i. The study suggest that Kogi State government need to take cognisance of local markets located in local government areas in the state where the KG CARES programme has given little or no assistance since the programme is still on going to ensure every part of the state feels the positive impact of the programme which is to provide food security and help vulnerable households.
- ii. Kogi State government and KG CARES need to do more apart from giving cash grants for vulnerable livelihoods in the state that will be sustainable for such households over a long period of time. This could include, providing hybrid seeds, fertilizers, for local farmers and soft loans for small-scale business owners in these areas.

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