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DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC FRAMING OF PUBLIC HEALTH INFORMATION: A THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF OSUN STATE SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMS

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ABSTRACT: This research work was a conceptual discussion on the strategic framing of the promotion of nutrition messages in school feeding programs in Osun State. It investigated the role of a good nutrition communication strategy as a precursor to feeding programmes to reinforce nutritional knowledge and practices, to stimulate the desired child health to achieve the school feeding initiative. In executing this, a qualitative, non-empirical case study research method, through document review, with evidence collected from relevant textbooks, policy papers, and academic journals, was examined. This led to the conclusion that the communication strategies for disseminating nutrition messages in schools on proper dietary habits are an integral part and parcel of the intervention programme. Challenges encountered included: shortage of funding, lack of clear-cut interaction amongst institutions and discrepancies in dissemination of nutrition messages. The work concluded the desirability of reforming the strategy that informs health-promoting activities contained in nutrition campaigns.

Keywords: Strategic Framing, Nutrition Campaigns, School Feeding Programme, Child Health Outcomes, Nutrition Communication, Osun State, Social Cognitive Theory

INTRODUCTION

The number of children suffering from malnutrition is one of the leading public health concerns worldwide, with numerous school-age children in the developing world who lack adequate dietary access. Malnutrition can cause problems with growth in young school children, cause weakness in immunity and brain function, and retard their educational quality (Fauziyah et al., 2024). Many governments have decided to incorporate dietary nutrition into the primary school programmes, and also make it part of their teaching academic curriculum, in order to help increase nutrition for school-age children, as well as enhance their education and well-being in schools, and even promote changes in dietary habits, behaviours, and eating patterns of children (Andam et al., 2025).

Strategic framing involves messages deliberately constructed and communicated in such a way as to influence the beliefs, perceptions, knowledge and behaviour of individuals toward a particular

issue (Van Hulst et al., 2025). Regarding nutrition campaigns as part of school feeding programmes, this includes messages that influence the perceptions of students, their parents, teachers and communities about the food, diet and health. These nutrition campaign messages can adopt approaches to health education, behavioural change communication, advocacy and community engagement in order to develop healthy food attitudes and behaviours in children. In particular, when a message is perceived to be simple and easy to communicate, and culturally meaningful, it has been observed to influence healthier food habits among school children (Asogwa et al., 2025).

School feeding programmes have become complex, holistic interventions aimed at supplementing children with nutrients while also facilitating health and education activities (Dorlach et al., 2025). This holistic approach aims to reduce short-term hunger and promote optimal development in physical growth, cognition, and school participation and achievement through the provision of regular and nutritious school food. In addition to the nutrition promotion messages that accompany school feeding, nutrition campaigns encourage the development and sustained practice of healthy lifestyles through improved eating habits in the school and home environments. Thus, communications interventions that enhance school feeding programs should ensure clear messages are conveyed.

A significant initiative on school feeding schemes in states like Osun State has developed one of Nigeria's outstanding feeding initiatives aimed at tackling child malnutrition, raising the rate of enrolment in primary schools, and bolstering agricultural production by sourcing food from farmers (Andam et al., 2025). The programme, while highly praised, continues to raise some concerns about the impact of nutrition information dissemination during the intervention phase of the programme. Child consumption of healthy diets can be impacted by factors such as message framing, stakeholder participation, parental support, and socio-cultural factors related to nutrition.

Though there has been significant financial investment into feeding programmes within the school system, very little research work has been conducted into how, if at all, child health impacts would differ when nutrition communication was strategically targeted, at least within Osun State (Ikuemonisan et al., 2025). There is a need to assess how nutrition communication acts as a supplement to meals supplied to promote and instill long-term nutritional behavior changes in school children. Data from this study would be used by policy makers, program managers, educators and public health professionals to promote improved health in children by influencing better nutrition communication.

Statement of the Problem

Even with the existence of school feeding programmes to enhance the nutrition and education of primary school children, malnutrition and poor nutrition continue to be problematic for a large proportion of Nigerian children in most parts of the country, including in Osun State (Orji, 2024). Even though nutrition is generally considered important, most of the work that has focused on the use of school feeding to improve health outcomes has focused on delivering nutritious food to the children. There is much less work that has explored how the communication strategies associated with nutrition campaigns have been used to impact the decisions that children make about the

food that they eat and the general health outcomes. Without effective messaging, poor targeting of information, lack of buy-in from key actors and limited use of nutritional education, it might not be possible to achieve a more substantial or lasting effect on children's health with school feeding.

In a field replete with published empirical work examining the physical, health and educational impact of school feeding programs, studies predominantly highlight food distribution channels at the relative expense of the potential of health communication to deliver program impacts (Tsagem & Idris, 2025; Aremu, 2025). No studies in the existing academic literature examine how nutrition messages are framed strategically and, in theory, integrated in public health interventions, as is evident from evaluation efforts focused on food distribution delivery in massive school feeding intervention programs, such as the Osun State school feeding programs. By presenting Osun State School feeding programmes as an analysis case, this paper conceptually disaggregates nutrition messaging for strategic framing to theorize a framework that facilitates enhancement of nutrition messaging as well as interventionist practices.

Objective of the Study

This paper mainly explores a conceptual examination of nutritional communication campaigns by focusing on the strategic formulation of communication messages, using the school feeding programme in Osun State as a case. This study mainly aimed at;

i. analyzing the strategic framing of nutrition campaigns in the implementation of school feeding programmes in Osun State;
ii. exploring the implication(s) of the strategically framed nutrition campaigns on child health outcomes in Osun State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nutrition is the most critical factor for healthy development in the areas of growth, learning and health in children (Okolo-Obasi, 2025). Good-quality nutrition in the earliest years of life supports physical development, a strong immune system, and optimal brain function, allowing children to perform best at school. However, the opposite is also true – poor nutritional intake contributes to a higher risk of disease, deficiencies and poorer school attainment. Thus, nutrition is one of the key areas that many governments and global organisations are working to improve through school-based interventions to increase positive impacts on child health and educational attainment (Ndamobissi et al., 2024).

According to Sanni (2025), most often implemented school-feeding interventions are purposely meant to fight child hunger, increase school attendance, and improve the learning of primary school-aged children through nutrition for children and school-feeding interventions, which provide children with access to sufficient daily food during school hours, a form of social safety net for children of poor households. School feeding projects aim not just to increase enrolment and attendance; they may also help in concentration, active participation of classroom, and improve their physical development if implemented well (Mu'azu, 2025). In the long term, this school meal programme is useful for complementary strategies to implement education on

nutrition, the active participation of the community and other approaches that may enhance the implementation and results of the school meal programme.

Strategic framing is the deliberate selection of certain aspects of a social issue, and how they are communicated in ways that influence audiences' interpretation, comprehension, response, and decision-making (Ihediwa, 2024). In health communications, framing can also be used to highlight the desired positive behavior to the audiences through carefully crafted messages. Therefore, nutrition-specific health messages use strategic framing to disseminate adequate nutrition messages about a balanced diet to children, parents, caregivers, and the entire community, resulting in enhanced understanding and compliance to recommended nutrition guidelines (Oparah, 2025).

Nutrition communication campaigns form a critical attitudinal dimension of school feeding programmes, as they combine diet provision with awareness and nutrition education (Obiezu-Umeh, 2026). Through the engagement of stakeholders such as communities and the use of educational materials, school feeding campaigns aim to build nutrition capacity among school-age children by using channels that range from school-based instruction to posters and communication materials. Several studies show that Children who participate in consistent and regular nutrition programmes and initiatives tend to be more inclined to consume healthy diets and enhance family hygienic practices, as well as having improved diets within the family setting. Such programmes offer a sustainable base to nutrition component of school feeding initiatives (Assefa, 2025).

Child Health Outcomes are seen as improvements in child well-being, in terms of physical and nutritional dimensions and mental attributes resulting from health and nutrition interventions. Among indices for measuring these outcomes include changes in nutritional status, rate of body growth, levels of disease, levels of learning ability and physical capacity (Huni et al., 2025). Various researchers have noted that when a balanced diet is accessed through school feeding programmes coupled with sound nutrition awareness, it helps children achieve improved growth rates and levels of ability in the school-age population.

A study carried out by Dorlach et al. (2025) on school feeding programs at various times and in various regions of the world has noted positive effects on school enrolment, school attendance, nutrition outcomes and educational performance. Ezekannagha et al. (2024) inferred in their work that health messages and nutrition communication can have an effect on children and their caregivers' knowledge of nutrition, attitudes toward foods and intention to have good nutrition diets. In Nigeria, not much research attention was paid to school feeding programmes' communication strategies and their effect on children's nutrition practices, particularly within the framework of the public primary school environment in Nigeria, which this paper work tries to find a solution to.

Muonde et al. (2024), who have worked on school feeding programs at various times and in various regions of the world, have noted positive effects on school enrolment, school attendance, nutrition outcomes and educational performance. Their findings reveal that health messages and nutrition communication can have an effect on children and their caregivers' knowledge of

nutrition, attitudes toward foods and intention to have good nutrition diets. In Nigeria, not much research attention was paid to school feeding programme communication strategies, their effect on children's nutrition practices, particularly within the framework of the public primary school environment in Nigeria; hence this study.

Theoretical Framework

Social Cognitive Theory, originally termed Social Learning Theory by Bandura in 1977, was a development of earlier work and was proposed in 1986 (Nickerson, 2024). It arose from Bandura's conclusion that human behaviour is learned and socially oriented; an individual can learn behaviours through the process of observing and modelling, in addition to their personal experiences of reinforcement or punishment within their environment. The resulting framework dictates that individual behaviours are determined by a mutual and ongoing reciprocal interplay between individual behaviours and environmental stimuli, as well as their internal thought and belief systems. Bandura termed this interaction 'reciprocal determinism' (Hijriyah, 2024).

The Social Cognitive Theory further suggests that several related constructs interact to enable behavioural change: observational learning, self-efficacy, behavioural capability, outcome expectations, reinforcement, and self-regulation (Rumjaun & Narod, 2025). As theory suggests, the more knowledge individuals acquire in their environment, the more confident they are about successful performance, predicted outcomes, and reinforcement, the more likely they are to undertake positive behavior and be consistent in their course of action. Therefore, the theory elucidates comprehensively how communication, education, and social context factors play a key role in molding one's attitudes and behavioral approaches towards ideal health and lifestyle.

Application of the Theory to the Research Topic

Social Cognitive Theory fits the rationale of this research because strategic framing of nutrition messages aims to alter the knowledge, attitudes, and healthy eating behaviour of children by communicating with them, observing the behaviour of others, receiving education, and interacting socially with others (Knapp et al., 2024). School feeding programmes offer the opportunity not only to communicate nutrition messages, but also to learn from teacher/ caregivers, classmates, as well as from the school environment that in turn affect dietary behaviour and child health practices. When children have numerous encounters with effectively framed nutrition messages, their level of self-efficacy towards healthy nutrition as well as knowledge of good nutrition will increase, leading to better nutritional outcome and hence good health outcomes. The Social Cognitive Theory serves as a theoretical base to investigate the effects of strategically framed nutrition campaign messages on child health outcome within school feeding programmes in Osun state.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative, non-empirical case study design was utilized in examining strategic framing of nutrition campaigns and related effects in school feeding programmes in child health outcomes in Osun State, Nigeria. The research utilized purely secondary sources derived from: peer-reviewed

journal articles, text-books, government documents, policy papers, reports from international organizations and other Scholarly sources. Data from these sources were critically reviewed and analyzed using documentary analysis. Communication strategies in nutrition interventions with children as an intervention group and its relationships with childhood nutrition, strategic framing, school feeding programmes in childhood health outcomes and specifically school feeding programmes and nutrition campaign in Osun State was explored using thematic analysis to generate insights into the core issues, communication strategies used, problems encountered during program implementation, and policy issues that affect child health.

DISCUSSION ANALYSIS

The analysis discussion is done based on the objectives of the study.

The strategic framing of nutrition campaigns in the implementation of school feeding programmes in Osun State

Strategic framing of nutrition communication involves how nutrition messages are intentionally designed and presented in a way that influences peoples' perceptions and responses towards healthy diets (Abay et al., 2021). It goes beyond merely communicating nutrition messages but aims to make communication easy to understand, relevant to audience's interest, persuasive and culture-sensitive (Adesanmi et al., 2024). In the context of school feeding program, it aims to foster healthier behavior among school pupils, teachers, parents and food vendors through successful communication. It reinforces healthy behavior by communicating adequate and balanced diet, food safety and sanitation, diverse food group and healthy lifestyle, hence increasing nutritional knowledge and enabling behavioral changes (Adeyanju et al., 2024). It therefore, enhances sustainable healthy eating habits of school children in addition to providing meals.

Nutrition interventions school feeding Programmes, can lead to a change in attitude towards proper nutrition and consumption pattern among school children as well as other food system stakeholders. Methodologies implemented such as nutrition education in classrooms, health talks, school assembly, display of educational posters, nutrition education and cookery demonstration, engagement with PTA (Parent Teachers Association), sensitization to the community, media campaigns etc are important (Aurino et al., 2023). These methods enable pupils to acquire information on what constitute a balanced diet, food safety, healthy feeding patterns from an early age (Bundy et al., 2024). The impact is based on cumulative effects, which ensure that repetition with clear, culturally appropriate messages enhances memory retention among school children, ultimately improving behavioural change (Chukwuma, 2023). Thus, communication interventions are perceived to be beneficial complements to feeding programmes in influencing a positive change in health behaviours outside schools (Devereux et al., 2018).

The Osun State Primary School Feeding programme constitutes a major regional example of the application of messaging strategy to a significant public-sector scheme (Dolan et al., 2020). As a public feeding programme, one of the leading ones in Nigeria, the rationale is primarily to tackle malnutrition among children, enhance access to primary schools, as well as drive the rural-local

agricultural economy via local purchasing of foodstuffs from nearby producers (Iheme et al., 2025). It is within this operating environment that messages associated with the meal service also deliver calls to adopt positive feeding patterns both within the school and at home. Conversely, success in adapting and framing this nutritional communication message in the Yoruba language along local culinary patterns determines, in large measure, the interpretative strategies of pupils and the community in engaging with the public-health prescriptions contained therein (Ajieroh et al., 2025).

Nutrition campaign information is disseminated effectively by providing these major networks that are fundamental communication tools and reference individuals for modeling behavioral change (Amoadu et al., 2024). Teachers, as well as the headmistress, by and large, are the immediate channel for instructional use, by making nutrition campaign information part of daily lessons, while food vendors and cook(s) are another integral communication and role modeling network that actually translate messaging by providing and cooking meals (Bello et al., 2023). Lastly, outside the school setting, the support from parent(s) and other community opinion leaders has a crucial role in reinforcing nutrition messages learned in the classroom by actually practicing healthy dietary behaviours in the home environment (FGoN, 2024). If information travels smoothly amongst the mentioned stakeholder groups, it can form a beneficial socio-cultural environment to boost self-confidence and enduring changes in the diet and behaviour.

In terms of actual practices on the ground, while it conceptually boasts some attractive elements, present communication strategies within the Osun State scheme have important strengths but significant structural disadvantages. The foremost advantage is the direct co-location of its meal distribution activities with institutional schooling, thus allowing for high contact exposure of students with the program at important developmental stages. Yet, among the strongest weaknesses is the ongoing logistical or operational policy of prioritizing the “machinery for food delivery over the machinery of health communication (Federal Ministry of Health, 2024). Evaluating some of the literature shows messages often failed to be uniformly communicated through a lack of formal training and teacher capacity in delivering health messages, and the lack of an implemented routine feedback system tracking children's perception of messages that were communicated (Gautam et al., 2023). Reconsidering, or rather, redesigning policy needs to shift communication priorities so as to match the theoretical and equal footing alongside programmatic feeding activities.

The Implication(s) of the Strategically Framed Nutrition Campaigns on Child Health Outcomes in Osun State

The influence of the framing approach is great on the cognitive learning of nutrition information among primary school students (Mohammed, 2022). The framing approach through encoding and translation simplifies dietary instructions, makes nutrition information, particularly healthy foods, easily identified and thus stimulate cognitive learning for school children based on theoretical principles of the Social Cognitive Theory, whereby increasing pupils' understanding of a range of health information and health behaviors (Megersa et al., 2023). The students' capacity and awareness for recognizing healthy food intake and basic health concepts become an adequate cognitive base with the aid of repeatedly framed messages, which change them to become active

learners from merely accepting and consuming food intake to cognizing health through diet, directly leading to vigor, vitality and body growth of an individual (Quadri et al., 2025).

Oyewo et al. (2026) aver that strategic nutrition campaigning can additionally enhance nutritious dietary habits among children as they enable the trainees to convert nutrition learning into routine nutritional practices. Through continuous nourishment guidance and interventions, school trainees can be inspired to practice sound dietary practices by eating harmonized diet plans and also more fruits and vegetables, preserve routine meals, reduce consumption of foods with poor health and wellness and those abundant in saturated fat, sodium and also sugar. In addition to that, nutrition communications can encourage parents and guardians to prepare healthier foods for the children, which can strengthen healthy eating behaviors in school. Studies have revealed that when nutrition education is integrated with food programs in institutions, it leads to a broader range of food, improved food choices, and sustained long-lasting healthy nutrition habits among trainees (Ubesie, 2025). Thus, vital nutrition communication results in behaviors that promote better diet and overall health and well-being.

Nutrition campaigns made in a strategic way not only influence dietary changes and habits, but also help enhance different aspects of children's growth and development (Mu'azu, 2025). Proper nutrition backed by good dietary education leads to healthy growth, increased immunity, lower chances of malnutrition occurrence, and reduced vulnerability to diseases connected with nutrition among children of school age. According to studies (Okeke et al., 2025; Ogidi et al., 2025; Flax et al., 2025), well-fed children exhibit a greater degree of concentration, better memory, greater engagement in class and better performance in studies. In addition, children who are healthy are likely to attend school regularly and be more involved in the learning process. (Iornumbe, 2025). Thus, using strategic communication in the field of nutrition makes so many impacts on children's education and health.

In spite of the advantages, there remain a number of significant challenges for the effective implementation of nutrition campaigns associated with the school feeding programme in Osun State. Lack of funding, poor coordination between different agencies responsible for nutrition communication, varied messages concerning nutritional value, and shortage of nutrition educational materials have resulted in a lack of sustained, far-reaching, and accessible communication (Alhassan, 2026). School and food vendors have also not received adequate training on appropriate nutrition care, monitoring of children's nutrition status, and home parents' involvement in the education is still weak, and the impact of cultural norms on positive feeding choices (Oteh et al., 2026). Also, the persistent problem of poverty in some areas prevents parents from applying whatever advice is given through the school nutrition programme; these constraints limit the success of nutrition communication aimed at helping children maintain healthy feeding practices (Ibrahim et al., 2026).

Instances from Osun State strengthen nutrition communication in school feeding programs and improve child health. Government decision-makers must include strategic nutrition communication in schools when planning school feeding policy by delivering nutrition education alongside meal services consistently through and within schools (Ihediwa, 2025). Increased resources for teaching staff capacity development, collaboration between stakeholders,

communities, system monitoring, and public awareness campaigns will be a key prerequisite for further successes of the programme (Udoudom et al., 2025). Further increased collaboration among the government, international partners, schools, health practitioners, and the communities would bring a higher level of effectiveness into policy execution and the programme's commitment (Sofiyani & Syafiq, 2025). All these, if taken into consideration, will enhance nutrition communication, create healthier behaviors, and yield full potential for long-term child health and development.

Conclusion

The study has proved that strategically constructed nutrition campaigns are necessary for successful implementation of school feeding programs and better child nutrition outcomes in Osun State. In addition to food provision, nutrition communication can mobilize pupils, parents, teachers and stakeholders with information and motivation towards adopting healthy diets that enable physical development and cognitive function. The school feeding program in Osun State indicates the contribution of the scheme to strengthened programme outcomes and sustained health behavior through effective nutrition innovations. Nevertheless, the problems of inadequate funding, weak partnership coordination, poor nutrition communication, and low awareness about nutrition are serious challenges to the success of school feeding projects. Overcoming them with effective communication strategies, policy implementation, stakeholder partnership, and continuous education, etc., school feeding programs will have tremendous success in improving children's health and the sustainable development of the nation.

Recommendations

Based on the conceptual findings of the study, the following recommendations were made for policy makers, health officials and public relations practitioners:

1. Incorporate the application of strategic communication in school nutrition programmes by ensuring the inclusion of appropriately developed evidence-based messages in providing feeding schemes.
2. Develop a curriculum on nutrition communication for teachers, members of school staff and programme coordinators on a regular basis to promote quality service delivery to ensure quality delivery of messages.
3. Enhance collaboration between government agencies, schools, families,' health practitioners, and other relevant bodies in seeing to adequate propagation of nutritional information and proper execution of policy agendas pertaining to it.
4. Expand community awareness and participation by launching continued public communication campaigns through schools, community networks and associations, conventional media, and social media on proper dietary and eating behaviour.
5. Strengthen and establish effective systems for monitoring, evaluating and policy implementation of nutrition communications activities including quality of and consistency and impact of the communications for child growth and development through school feeding programmes so as to facilitate further ongoing improvement programmes.

6. Ensure adequate funding, including funding of educational materials relevant to the cultures of the state, including on child health, stakeholder mobilization and ongoing advocacy programmes to ensure continued and desirable child development status in Osun State.

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