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Household uplifting programme and food security: Evidence from rural southwestern Nigeria

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Abstract

Food insecurity remains a major challenge among vulnerable rural households in Nigeria despite ongoing social protection interventions. This study examined the impact of the Household Uplifting Programme/Conditional Cash Transfer (HUP/CCT) on household food security in Southwestern Nigeria by assessing participation in programme training activities, benefits derived from the programme, and the food security status of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. A quasi-experimental design was adopted, and data were collected from 564 respondents comprising 282 beneficiaries and 282 non-beneficiaries selected through multistage sampling and Propensity Score Matching (PSM). Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, composite food security indices, and t-test at 5% significance level. Results revealed high participation in programme training activities with a grand mean score of 3.78, particularly in financial literacy ($\bar{x} = 3.96$), cooperative formation ($\bar{x} = 3.96$), entrepreneurship ($\bar{x} = 3.78$), and livelihood skills training ($\bar{x} = 3.77$). Major benefits derived included affordability of better-quality food ($\bar{x} = 2.39$), income supplementation ($\bar{x} = 2.38$), and improved livelihoods and savings ($\bar{x} = 2.33$). Food security categorization showed that 74.8% of beneficiaries were food secure compared with 35.1% of non-beneficiaries. Beneficiaries also recorded a higher mean food security score (15.79 ± 3.19) than non-beneficiaries (13.78 ± 3.86). The t-test indicated a significant difference in food security status between both groups ($t = 4.86, p < 0.05$). The study concluded that HUP/CCT significantly improved household food security and recommends increasing and regularly adjusting cash transfers to match inflation and household needs, while strengthening livelihood support and nutrition education to enhance income and dietary outcomes.

Keywords: Household uplifting programme, conditional cash transfer, food security, rural households

Introduction

Food security remains a critical development challenge in Nigeria, particularly among rural households whose livelihoods depend largely on agriculture and informal economic activities. Food security exists when all people always have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food required for an active and healthy life. However, many rural households in Nigeria continue to experience food insecurity due to poverty, low agricultural productivity, limited income opportunities, and inadequate access to social protection programmes. Recent empirical evidence shows that a significant proportion of rural households still face challenges in meeting their minimum dietary and nutritional requirements due to unstable income and rising food prices (Ibok, Okon, Akpan, and Isip, 2025) ^[14]. In response to the persistent challenges of poverty and food insecurity, the Federal Government of Nigeria introduced several social protection interventions under the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP), including the Household Upliftment Programme/Conditional Cash Transfer (HUP/CCT). The HUP/CCT programme was designed to provide regular financial support to poor and vulnerable households to enhance their consumption capacity, improve access to basic needs such as food,

education, and healthcare, and strengthen their livelihood resilience (Akerete and Ubong, 2025) ^[2]. The programme specifically targets rural and vulnerable households, aiming to break the cycle of poverty and improve their overall welfare and food security status.

Conditional cash transfer programmes have been widely recognized as effective social protection tools for improving household welfare and reducing poverty. These programmes provide financial assistance to vulnerable households, which enables them to increase food consumption, improve dietary diversity, and invest in productive activities (Eluwa *et al.*, 2023) ^[10]. In Nigeria, the HUP/CCT programme has played a significant role in supporting vulnerable households, with millions of beneficiaries receiving financial assistance to cushion the effects of economic hardship and improve their livelihoods (Ibok *et al.*, 2025) ^[14]. Despite the implementation of the HUP/CCT programme, food insecurity remains prevalent among rural households in Nigeria. Studies have shown that although conditional cash transfers provide short-term financial relief, their impact on improving food production, dietary diversity, and long-term food security outcomes has been mixed due to structural challenges such as inadequate transfer amounts, irregular payment schedules, and limited complementary support

services (Okoma and Iheobom, 2025) ^[17]. Maitalata and Aliogba (2023) ^[15] observed that while cash transfers improved household income and savings capacity, their effectiveness in ensuring sustained food security depends on how beneficiaries utilize the funds and the availability of complementary livelihood support. Furthermore, rural households in Southwestern Nigeria are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity due to declining agricultural productivity, climate variability, limited access to credit, and inadequate institutional support. Social protection programmes such as the HUP/CCT have the potential to enhance household food security by improving income stability and strengthening consumption capacity.

In addition, previous studies on conditional cash transfer programmes in Nigeria have largely focused on poverty reduction, household welfare, mitigation of poverty vulnerability, and income improvement, with limited attention to the specific impact of the HUP/CCT programme on household food security, particularly in Southwestern Nigeria (Alabi, Oyesola & Ajuwon, 2025; Akerete and Ubong, 2025) ^[5, 2]. While some studies have examined the impact of cash transfers on food security in other regions such as Akwa Ibom State, there is insufficient empirical evidence comparing the food security status of beneficiary and non-beneficiary rural households in Southwestern Nigeria (Ibok *et al.*, 2025) ^[14]. Furthermore, there is inadequate information on the extent of rural household participation in training activities under the HUP/CCT programme, the benefits derived from the programme, and the specific challenges that limit beneficiaries from achieving improved food security outcomes. Most existing studies have focused on general programme outcomes without examining the relationship between participation intensity, programme benefits, and household food security status in the Southwestern region. This represents a significant knowledge gap that limits the effectiveness of policy interventions aimed at improving food security through social protection programmes.

The persistence of food insecurity among rural households despite the implementation of the HUP/CCT programme raises important questions about the effectiveness of the programme in achieving its intended objectives. Without adequate empirical evidence on the impact of the programme on household food security, policymakers may be unable to make informed decisions on programme improvement, expansion, and sustainability. Therefore, there is a need to critically examine the impact of the HUP/CCT programme on the food security status of rural households in Southwestern Nigeria. Specifically, this study seeks to: assess the respondents' participation in the training activities under the HUP/CCT programme; identify the benefits derived from HUP/CCT by rural households in Southwestern Nigeria; and assess the level of food security among rural household beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of the HUP/CCT programme in Southwestern Nigeria.

Methodology

The research design used was a quasi-experimental design to compare the food security statuses of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. The study area was Southwestern Nigeria, one of the six geopolitical zones of the country, comprises six states: Oyo, Ogun, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti, and

Lagos. The region lies approximately between latitudes 6°30' and 8°00'N and longitudes 3°00' and 6°00'E. It is characterized by a tropical wet and dry climate, with a distinct rainy season (April–October) and dry season (November–March), and mean annual rainfall ranging from 1,200 mm to 2,000 mm. The region's vegetation consists primarily of forest–savannah mosaic and derived savannah, supporting a variety of agricultural activities. Agriculture is the mainstay of the population, with smallholder farming dominating food and cash crop production, including cassava, maize, yam, cocoa, and oil palm. Rural households often face seasonal food insecurity and limited livelihood opportunities, making them key targets for social protection interventions. The Household Uplifting Programme (HUP/CCT) aims to improve food security, income, and empowerment among these vulnerable households. The study focused on households registered as beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of HUP/CCT programme within the study area. A six-stage sampling procedure was adopted to select respondents. Ekiti, Osun, and Oyo States. Ten percent of the Local Government Areas (LGAs) were purposively selected, comprising two LGAs in Ekiti State, three in Osun State, and three in Oyo State. From each selected LGA, two political wards were randomly selected, followed by the random selection of one community from each ward. Subsequently, a sampling frame consisting of 4,026 HUP/CCT programme beneficiaries and 40,499 non-beneficiaries were obtained. Using proportionate random sampling, 7% of beneficiaries and 0.8% of non-beneficiaries were selected, resulting in an initial sample of 583 respondents (282 beneficiaries and 324 non-beneficiaries) drawn from the National Poor and Vulnerable Register. Propensity Score Matching (PSM) was then applied to identify 282 non-beneficiaries with similar socio-economic characteristics as the beneficiaries, yielding a final sample size of 564 respondents, comprising 282 beneficiaries and 282 non-beneficiaries. The reliability of the research instrument was assessed using Spearman's Ranked Order Correlation Coefficient, which produced a value of 0.882, indicating a high level of reliability and confirming the instrument's suitability for the study.

Participation in HUP/CCT training activities was measured using a 4-point scale of "Never" (1), "Rarely" (2), "Occasionally" (3), and "Regularly" (4) across areas such as life skills, financial literacy, and health and nutrition education, with Weighted Mean Scores (WMS) computed to reflect participation levels. Similarly, benefits from the programme were evaluated using a three-point Likert scale (low = 1, moderate = 2, high = 3), and analyzed using frequencies, percentages, and WMS to rank the perceived benefits. Household food security status was measured using the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS) across nine indicators including worry about food, eating disliked foods, skipping meals, and going without food, with frequency recorded as "Never" (0), "Rarely" (1), "Sometimes" (2), or "Often" (3), converted into WMS to compare beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. Weighted Mean Scores (WMS) were calculated for each HFIAS item to summarize the average intensity of food insecurity and rank the severity of experiences among households." Household food consumption was measured using food frequency over seven days for twelve food categories,

recorded as 0 days (0), 1–2 days (1), 3–4 days (2), and 5–7 days (3), while Dietary Diversity Score (DDS) was calculated as the proportion of households consuming foods from eight major food groups, with responses coded as Yes (1) or No (0). Food security of the households (beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries) was examined using three indicators: HFIAS, DSS, and household food consumption pattern. The level of food security was computed from the scores of these three components. The scores were standardized using Z-scores and then combined to form a composite score. The resulting composite scores were used to categorize households into food secure and food insecure levels of food security. Data analysis included descriptive statistics such as percentages, frequencies, mean scores, standard deviation, and inferential statistics using T-test.

Results and Discussion

Participation of respondents in Training Activities under HUP/CCT Programme

Table 1 reveals the participation of respondents in training activities under the HUP/CCT programme. The high participation in financial literacy training ($\bar{x}$ = 3.96) and cooperative formation ($\bar{x}$ = 3.96) indicate that these components are central to how beneficiaries engage with the HUP/CCT programme. Financial literacy equips households with budgeting, savings, and expenditure-planning skills, which directly enhance their ability to convert cash transfers into improved food access. This aligns with Ogunniyi, Kehinde, and Adeyemi (2022) ^[16], who found that financial management training significantly improves rural households' welfare and food security by strengthening their financial capital. Similarly, the strong participation in cooperative formation reflects the importance of social

capital in rural livelihoods. Cooperatives provide access to credit, group savings, and collective purchasing power, which are essential for stabilizing food consumption.

The high engagement in entrepreneurship ($\bar{x}$ = 3.78) and vocational skills training ($\bar{x}$ = 3.77) further suggests that beneficiaries view income diversification as a pathway to long-term food security. This corroborates Oyibo (2015) ^[21], who demonstrated that livelihood training increases income-generating capacity and reduces food insecurity among rural households. Participation in health and nutrition education ($\bar{x}$ = 3.73) also supports improved dietary practices, consistent with Grace *et al.* (2018) ^[11], who found that nutrition education enhances household dietary quality and utilization.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) provided further insights into these findings. One participant stated: "The financial training taught me how to budget my cash transfer; now I can buy enough food for my family and save a little each month." Another participant highlighted the value of cooperative and group dynamics training: "Joining the cooperative group allowed us to access loans and buy farming inputs together, which we could not have done alone." These qualitative insights corroborate the quantitative results, showing that high participation in HUP/CCT training has enhanced both individual skills and collective resource access. The high participation across the training components indicates that the HUP/CCT programme has strengthened beneficiaries' financial capacity, livelihood skills, and social capital, thereby improving food access, income stability, and overall household food security, consistent with the findings of Oyetunde-Usman and Olagunju (2019) ^[20].

Table 1: Participation of respondents in Training Activities under HUP/CCT Programme (n = 282)

Training Activity	Regularly (Freq /%)	Occasionally (Freq /%)	Rarely (Freq /%)	Never (Freq /%)	WMS	Rank
Financial literacy training	271 (95.8)	10 (3.5)	1 (0.4)	1 (0.4)	3.96	1 st
Group dynamics / Cooperative formation training	278 (98.6)	2 (0.7)	1 (0.4)	1 (0.4)	3.96	1 st
Life skills training	236 (83.7)	36 (12.8)	6 (2.1)	4 (1.4)	3.78	3 rd
Entrepreneurship & small business development	247 (87.6)	26 (9.2)	8 (2.8)	1 (0.4)	3.78	3 rd
Livelihood / Vocational skills training	237 (84.0)	35 (12.4)	7 (2.5)	3 (1.1)	3.77	5 th
Health and nutrition education	230 (81.6)	39 (13.8)	8 (2.8)	5 (1.8)	3.73	6 th
Civic education and rights awareness	233 (82.6)	39 (13.8)	7 (2.5)	3 (1.1)	3.73	6 th
Parenting and childcare education	203 (72.0)	59 (20.9)	12 (4.3)	8 (2.8)	3.52	8 th

Source: Field survey. 2026 WMS- Weighted Mean Score Grand Mean = 3.78

Benefits Derived by Households from the Household Uplifting Programme/Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) Programme

Table 2 reveals the benefits derived by households from the Household Uplifting Programme/Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programme. The findings indicate that the Household Uplifting Programme/Conditional Cash Transfer (HUP/CCT) provides substantial benefits to rural households, with a grand mean score of 2.30. Affordability of more and better-quality food ranked highest ($\bar{x}$ = 2.39), followed by supplementing household income to meet basic needs ($\bar{x}$ = 2.38) and improved livelihoods and savings ($\bar{x}$ = 2.33). This suggests that the programme has strengthened household welfare by increasing access to adequate food and improving financial capacity, which is consistent with

the findings of Ibok, Okon, Akpan, and Isip (2025) ^[14]. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with beneficiaries revealed that many households used cash transfers to purchase staple foods, improve meal quality, and invest in small-scale farming inputs. One participant explained: "Before the programme, we sometimes had to skip meals, but now we can afford to buy enough food and even improve what we eat." Another noted that "the cash helped me start petty trading, which provided additional income to support household needs."

The benefits of women empowerment ($\bar{x}$ = 2.31) and poverty reduction ($\bar{x}$ = 2.31) indicate that the programme has enhanced social inclusion and decision-making capacity for women. FGD participants reported that "We, women are now more involved in budgeting for food and household

expenditures”, confirming Chima (2021) ^[7], that cash transfers strengthen women’s agency and household welfare. Lower-ranked benefits such as access to education ($\bar{x}$ = 2.21) and reduced child labour ($\bar{x}$ = 2.18) suggest that while immediate consumption and food security outcomes are strong, long-term social and educational benefits require

additional support. This aligns with the study of Alabi and Oyesola (2025) ^[4] who noted that CCT programme has brought about tangible benefits for household beneficiaries, including meeting household needs, increasing income and purchasing power, boosting self-confidence, and enhancing food security and savings.

Table 2: Benefits Derived by Households from the Household Uplifting Programme/Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) Programme

Benefits	Low Benefit	Moderate Benefit	High Benefit	WMS	Rank
Affordability of more and better-quality food	42 (14.9)	88 (31.2)	152 (53.9)	2.39	1 st
Supplementing household income (basic needs)	45 (16.0)	86 (30.5)	151 (53.5)	2.38	2 nd
Improved livelihoods and savings	50 (17.7)	90 (31.9)	142 (50.4)	2.33	3 rd
Women empowerment	47 (16.7)	101 (35.8)	134 (47.5)	2.31	4 th
Poverty reduction	47 (16.7)	101 (35.8)	134 (47.5)	2.31	4 th
Increased social inclusion and stability	60 (21.3)	91 (32.3)	131 (46.5)	2.25	6 th
Access to education	63 (22.3)	97 (34.4)	122 (43.3)	2.21	7 th
Reduced child labour	66 (23.4)	98 (34.8)	118 (41.8)	2.18	8 th

Source: Field survey. 2026 Figures in parentheses are percentages; WMS- Weighted Mean Score; Grand Mean = 2.30

Food Security Status of Household Beneficiaries and Non-beneficiaries of HUP/CCT Programme

The findings from Tables 5a, 5b and 5c collectively provide insight into the food access, food consumption behaviour and dietary diversity of households participating in the Household Uplifting Programme/Conditional Cash Transfer (HUP/CCT) compared with non-beneficiaries.

Table 3 shows that both groups experienced some level of food insecurity, but the intensity was lower among beneficiaries. Beneficiaries recorded relatively low weighted mean scores (WMS) across most indicators, such as worrying about food availability ($\bar{x}$ = 1.53 vs 1.72), skipping meals (1.56 vs 1.71), and going to bed hungry (1.58 vs 1.72). This suggests that participation in the programme helped reduce the severity of food access constraints. This finding aligns with Daidone *et al.* (2019) ^[8] who reported that social protection programmes significantly improve household food access and reduce food insecurity intensity among vulnerable households in developing countries. FGD participants supported this observation, with one stating, “the cash transfer helps us buy food when there is no money from farming, so we worry less,” and another adding, “before the programme, we sometimes skipped meals, but now we manage the money to buy food for the household.” These responses indicate that cash transfers improved household purchasing power and stabilized food consumption.

Table 4 further reveals that beneficiaries had higher food consumption frequencies across key food groups. For example, 78.7% of beneficiaries consumed cereals 5–7 days per week compared with 57.5% of non-beneficiaries, 65.2% consumed vegetables regularly versus 36.2% among non-

beneficiaries, 36.2% consumed legumes 5–7 days weekly versus 14.9%, and 29.1% consumed fish frequently compared with 11.3%. FGD insights confirm these patterns, with respondents noting that ‘the cash allows them to buy rice, beans, fish, and vegetables more consistently’. This indicates that beneficiaries had better access to staple foods and protein sources, reflecting improved food availability and utilization.

Table 5 shows that dietary diversity was higher among beneficiaries. For instance, 70.9% consumed fruits compared with 53.2% of non-beneficiaries, 74.5% consumed animal protein versus 60.3%, 78.0% consumed legumes versus 63.8%, and 49.6% consumed dairy products compared with 31.9%. FGD participants corroborated this, noting, “before the programme, we mostly ate Garri and soup, but now we sometimes add fruits, eggs, and meat.” These results indicate that the programme enhanced the nutritional quality of household diets by enabling households to diversify beyond staples. This supports the findings of Tirivayi and Davis (2023) ^[23], who observed that cash transfer programmes significantly increase household dietary diversity and improve nutritional outcomes among low-income households. The combined results suggest that the HUP/CCT programme improved food access, consumption frequency, and dietary diversity among beneficiary households. However, moderate levels of food insecurity persist among some beneficiaries, highlighting that cash transfers alone may not eliminate food insecurity, especially amid rising food prices and economic shocks. Strengthening the programme with higher transfer amounts and complementary livelihood interventions could further enhance household food security outcomes.

Table 3: Food Security Status of Household Beneficiaries and Non-beneficiaries of HUP/CCT Programme

Indicator	Beneficiaries WMS	Rank	Non-Beneficiaries WMS	Rank
Worry about not having enough food	1.53	7 th	1.72	2 nd
Eat a wider variety of foods	1.60	1 st	1.71	3 rd
Eat foods they disliked	1.58	3 rd	1.67	6 th
Afford nutritious foods	1.56	5 th	1.70	4 th
Afford culturally preferred foods	1.52	9 th	1.68	5 th
Reduce meal size	1.55	6 th	1.67	7 th
Skip meals	1.56	4 th	1.71	3 rd
Went to bed hungry	1.58	2 nd	1.72	2 nd
Whole day/night without food	1.54	8 th	1.67	7 th

Source: Field survey, 2026

Table 4: Household Food Consumption Pattern of Beneficiaries and Non-Beneficiaries

Food Category	Beneficiaries 0 days (%)	1–2 days (%)	3–4 days (%)	5–7 days (%)	Non-Beneficiaries 0 days (%)	1–2 days (%)	3–4 days (%)	5–7 days (%)
Cereal	1.8	5.3	14.2	78.7	3.5	10.6	28.4	57.5
Roots & tubers	3.5	10.6	28.4	57.5	10.6	21.3	42.6	25.5
Vegetables	2.8	7.1	24.8	65.2	7.1	17.7	39.0	36.2
Fruits	14.2	31.9	28.4	25.5	28.4	42.6	21.3	7.8
Legumes	7.1	21.3	35.5	36.2	14.2	31.9	39.0	14.9
Meat	21.3	31.9	28.4	18.4	35.5	39.0	17.7	7.8
Fish	10.6	24.8	35.5	29.1	21.3	39.0	28.4	11.3
Dairy	42.6	31.9	17.7	7.8	56.7	31.9	8.9	2.5
Oils & fats	1.8	3.5	10.6	84.0	3.5	7.1	17.7	71.6
Sweets	53.2	28.4	14.2	4.3	67.4	24.8	6.4	1.4
Spices & condiments	0.7	1.8	8.9	88.7	1.8	3.5	14.2	80.5

Source: Field survey, 2026 WMS (Weighted Mean Score)

Table 5: Dietary Diversity of Household Beneficiaries and Non-Beneficiaries

Food Group	Beneficiaries Yes (%)	Beneficiaries No (%)	Non-Beneficiaries Yes (%)	Non-Beneficiaries No (%)
Cereal or grains	95.7	4.3	92.2	7.8
Vegetables (leafy & others)	92.2	7.8	81.6	18.4
Fruits (fresh/dried)	70.9	29.1	53.2	46.8
Animal protein (meat, fish, eggs)	74.5	25.5	60.3	39.7
Legumes, nuts & seeds	78.0	22.0	63.8	36.2
Dairy (milk, cheese, yogurt)	49.6	50.4	31.9	68.1
Fats & oils	97.5	2.5	92.2	7.8
Sweeteners (sugar, honey)	63.8	36.2	49.6	50.4

Source: Field survey, 2026 WMS (Weighted Mean Score)

Composite Food Security Index and Categorization of Beneficiaries and Non-Beneficiaries

Food security status of households was computed from three indicators: Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS), Household Food Consumption Pattern, and Dietary Diversity Score (DDS). The scores from these three components were standardized using Z-scores and aggregated to obtain a composite food security index, which was used to categorize households into food secure and food insecure groups.

The categorization of households based on the composite food security index (Table 5) shows a marked difference between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of the HUP/CCT programme. Among beneficiaries, 211 households (74.8%) were food secure, while only 71 households (25.2%) were food insecure. In contrast, majority of non-beneficiaries, 183 households (64.9%), were classified as food insecure, with only 99 households (35.1%) achieving food security. This stark contrast highlights the substantial impact of the HUP/CCT programme on improving the food security status of participating households. The higher mean food security score recorded among beneficiaries (15.79 ± 3.19) compared to non-beneficiaries (13.78 ± 3.86) further confirms that the programme enhanced household food access, consumption frequency, and dietary diversity. Participation in the cash transfer scheme appears to improve

households' purchasing power, allowing them to meet their basic food needs and consume a more varied diet.

These findings are consistent with previous studies. For instance, Daidone *et al.* (2019) ^[8] reported that social protection programmes increase household food consumption and dietary diversity by stabilizing income and reducing exposure to food insecurity. Similarly, Tirivayi and Davis (2023) ^[23] observed that cash transfer interventions improve food security in developing countries by increasing household food expenditure and enhancing diet quality. Handa *et al.* (2018) ^[12] also noted that regular cash transfers enable households to smooth consumption and maintain consistent food access during periods of economic shocks and seasonal shortages. Despite the overall positive impact, the presence of a small proportion of food-insecure beneficiaries (25.2%) indicates that the programme's cash amount may not fully cover the food needs of all households, particularly in the context of rising food prices or large household sizes. This suggests that while HUP/CCT significantly improves food security, additional support or complementary interventions may be required to fully eliminate food insecurity among vulnerable rural households.

Categorization of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries based on food security of households

Level of Food Security	Beneficiaries (F)	Beneficiaries (%)	Non-Beneficiaries (F)	Non-Beneficiaries (%)
Food insecure	71	25.2	183	64.9
Food secure	211	74.8	99	35.1
Total	282	100	282	100
Mean $\pm$ SD	15.79 ± 3.19	2.00–18.00	13.78 ± 3.86	1.00–18.00

Source: Field survey, 2026

Test of Difference between Food Security of Beneficiaries and Non-Beneficiaries

The t-test result shows that there is a statistically significant difference in food security status between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries ($t = 4.86, p < 0.05$). This indicates that the HUP/CCT programme significantly improved the food security status of beneficiary households compared to non-beneficiaries. The implication is that social protection interventions such as conditional cash transfers can significantly enhance household welfare and food access among vulnerable rural populations. This finding corroborates Ashagidigbi, Fale, Tejidini, and Micheal,

(2024), who found that social protection programmes significantly improve food consumption and reduce food insecurity among rural households in Nigeria. The results suggest that the HUP/CCT programme has a positive and significant effect on household food security, although increasing transfer value and integrating livelihood support interventions could further strengthen its impact on rural household welfare.

Test of Difference between Food Security of Beneficiaries and Non-Beneficiaries

Variables	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean Difference	t-value	Degree of Freedom	p-value	Decision
Food Security: Beneficiaries	282	15.79	3.19	2.01	4.86*	562	0.000	S
Non-beneficiaries	282	13.78	3.86					

Data analysis, 2026 Significant at $p < 0.05$

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study concludes that the Household Uplifting Programme/Conditional Cash Transfer (HUP/CCT) significantly improved food security among rural households in Southwestern Nigeria. Beneficiaries experienced better food access, more consistent consumption of diverse foods, and higher dietary quality compared with non-beneficiaries. Participation in programme training enhanced financial literacy, livelihood skills, and cooperative engagement, strengthening household resilience and resource management. Focus group discussions confirmed that cash transfers helped households stabilize food consumption, diversify diets, and support small-scale income-generating activities. However, a small proportion of beneficiaries remained moderately food insecure, indicating that cash alone may not fully eliminate vulnerability. The study recommended that to maximize impact, cash transfer amounts should be increased and regularly adjusted to match inflation and household food needs. Livelihood support and nutrition education should also be strengthened to improve income generation and dietary outcomes for more sustainable food security.

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