

**Research Article**

## **Attitudes of Lecturers Regarding Integration of Food and Nutrition Security and Right to Food into Njala University Curriculum**

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### **Abstract**

This study was a descriptive, quantitative research design that was built from a phenomenological, qualitative study. The SWOT analysis methodology was used to describe the curriculum integration of food and nutrition security and right to food into Njala University. A sample size of 215 lecturers was selected using the random sampling technique. Data were collected using structured research questionnaires. Findings of the study revealed that i) Lecturers perceived the integration of FNS and RtF into the NU's curriculum as a positive idea to integrate FNS and RtF in its curriculum. ii) Lecturers acknowledged that home economics and agriculture students should take compulsory FNS and RtF courses and it should be included in science and teacher training programmes. iii) Most lecturers agreed that NU has the strengths to integrate FNS and RtF, they indicated that opportunities exist in the global market. FNS and RtF courses and programmes should be integrated into various NU curricula, and to be enhanced by supporting science education and collaborations with other organizations and government institutions. NU and its supporting partners should be prepared to address potential undesirable consequences, such as resistance to change, etc. Recommendations made were i) more female lecturers should be recruited.

**Keywords:** Attitudes, Food, Security, Right, Curriculum.

### **Introduction**

The economic, strategic, and political significance of the food subsector in both developed and developing countries is unquestionable. Food sustains life and adequate food intake is critical for good health and increased productivity. Drimie and Ruysenaar (2010) claimed poorly executed institutional arrangements as well as uncoordinated and disintegrated strategies and interventions pose a major constraint to improved food and nutrition security in Sierra Leone. There should be more emphasis on agriculture. Achieving food security is hinged primarily on the strength of the agriculture industry and a precondition for a country and its people to become competitive, secure, and thriving. People must have access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food all the time to live an active and healthy life. Therefore, developing strategies on right to food in order to ensure the realization of Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) in parts of the sub-Saharan Africa industry with policies, programmes, constraints and resources. FNS is a condition when all people, at all times have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food, which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for active and healthy life (Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO], 2000). However, achieving Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) has become a general phenomenon and common practice in some international agencies, such as IFPRI, UNICEF, and FAO (IFPRI, 1999).

According to Rosales *et al.*, (2009), the purpose of a good curriculum is to strengthen a country's capacity of individuals responsible for educating the populace about their right to adequate, safe and nutritious food. Every individual responsible for disseminating information about RtF must have to be given the prerequisite training that is relevant and well organized. This training requires a curriculum that can be adapted in a specific context with learning objectives embedded within instruction strategies. The curriculum outline should serve as a guide for instructors and trainers who develop courses and training programs on RtF.

The curriculum can be used as a reference guide by course instructors and trainers when developing specific courses or complement training programmes, and by commissioned lesson authors. It guides what

knowledge and skills may be needed to improve the capacity of certain target learner groups to protect and actively work for the realization in the country of the right to adequate.

Addressing food insecurity, malnutrition, and poverty in Sierra Leone should involve a comprehensive understanding of availability, accessibility, utilisation, and stability elements, which by its nature is multi-disciplinary. The key challenge concerning coordination is the poor clarification of roles and responsibilities for the various sectors involved and agencies across departments that are responsible for the implementation of food and nutrition-related programmes. Pereira and Ruysenaar (2012) noted that food and nutrition security require multi-dimensional stakeholders and does not fit easily into the existing structures.

Globally, more than 8 million people in developing countries are chronically hungry and poor (FAO, 2009). In Sierra Leone, a significant proportion of the population has been unable to experience their individual rights to adequate food and freedom from hunger. Even though international laws recognize the right of everyone to adequate food and the fundamental right to be free from hunger, abject poverty and deep hunger afflict more and more people. Food sustains life and adequate food intake is essential.

It is based on this backdrop that the Sierra Leone Government, FAO, NU and other stakeholders have been engaged in developing programmes geared towards improving the food and nutrition situation and foster the realization of FNS and RtF in the country. They have conducted training and planning workshops and engaged in sensitization activities in the country (FAO Report, 2013). Furthermore, NU faculty members have been engaged in integrating FNS and RtF concepts, courses and programmes into various NU curricula.

### **Purpose and Objectives of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the attitudes of lecturers regarding the integration of FNS and RtF into NU curricula.

- 1) Describe lecturers' perceptions regarding the integration of FNS and RtF into NU curricula.
- 2) Describe lecturers' perceptions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of NU to integrate FNS and RtF into its curricula.
- 3) Describe lecturers' perceptions regarding opportunities and threats to the integration of FNS and RtF into NU curricula.
- 4) Describe selected personal and professional characteristics of NU lecturers.

### **Methodology**

This study was conducted at Njala University (NU) in 2013/2014. Njala campus has a location each at Njala (Mokonde) and Freetown while Kowama (former Paramedical School) and Towama locations constitute the Bo Campus. Faculties at NU are now called Schools and the institution is composed of seven schools: The School of Agriculture; School of Community Health Sciences; School of Education; School of Environmental Sciences; School of Natural Resources Management; School of Social Sciences; and School of Postgraduate Studies (Njala University, 2014).

This study was a descriptive, quantitative research design that was built from a phenomenological, qualitative study the researcher conducted in the 2012/2013 academic year at NU, which explored the knowledge and perception of lecturers in the School of Agriculture vis-à-vis the integration of FNS and RtF into NU curricula (Quee and Moriba, 2014).

The target population of this study consisted of NU lecturers during the 2013/2014 academic year. A sample of 215 lecturers was selected using the random sampling technique (Creswell, 2008).

Data were analyzed to measure lecturers' perceptions regarding the integration of FNS and RtF into NU curricula. The researchers used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 16) to perform statistical analysis on the data.

### **Findings and Discussions**

#### **Lecturers' Perceptions Regarding the Integration of FNS and RtF into NU Curricula**

NU lecturers responded to 11 perception statements regarding the integration of FNS and RtF into various NU curricula. On a scale of "1" to "5" with 1(strongly disagree) and 5(strongly agree), lecturers rated the

following statement highest, in the range of strongly agree ( $M = 4.6$ ;  $SD = .90$ ); All home economics students should take a compulsory FNS and RtF course (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Perceptions of lecturers regarding the integration of FNS and RtF into NU curricula during the 2013/2014 academic year ( $n = 143$ ).

Perception statements		M*	SD
A. Taking FNS and RtF courses	All home economics students should take a compulsory FNS and RtF course	4.6	.90
	All agriculture students should take a compulsory FNS and RtF course	4.4	1.04
	All NU students should take a compulsory FNS and RtF course	2.8	1.38
	Environmental and physical science students should take FNS and RtF courses	3.6	1.09
	Only interested students should take FNS and RtF courses	3.2	1.53
	Students training to become teachers are not required to take FNS and RtF courses	2.1	1.03
B. Integrating FNS and RtF courses	FNS and RtF should be integrated into various NU curricula	4.1	1.22
	FNS and RtF should be infused into selected courses only	3.5	1.21
	Integrating FNS and RtF into NU curricula will not increase students workload	2.8	1.16
	Integrating FNS and RtF into NU curricula will have unwanted consequences on some courses	2.4	1.17
C. New FNS and RtF	NU does not need new FNS and RtF programmes or courses	1.7	1.00
*“Real limits” of the scale: 1.00 to 1.49 (strongly disagree), 1.50 to 2.49 (disagree), 2.50 to 3.49 (not sure), 3.50 to 4.49 (agree), and 4.50 to 5.00 (strongly agree).			

#### Lecturers’ Perceptions Regarding Strengths and Weaknesses of NU to Integrate FNS and the RtF into its Curricula

NU lecturers responded to 14 perception statements regarding the strengths and weaknesses of NU to integrate FNS and RtF into various NU curricula. On a scale of “1” to “5,” with 1(strongly disagree) and 5(strongly agree), lecturers rated the following statement highest, in the range of strongly agree ( $M = 4.6$ ;  $SD = 1.00$ ); “NU has a strong track record for providing quality education” (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Perception of lecturers regarding strengths and weaknesses of NU to integrate FNS and RtF into its curricula during the 2013/2014 academic year ( $n = 143$ ).

Strength statements	M*	SD
NU’s collaboration with other organizations will support FNS and RtF integration	4.3	1.02
The school of agriculture has programmes that will match FNS courses	4.1	.91
NU can integrate FNS and RtF into its curricula	4.1	1.08
A strategy that will ensure the realization of FNS and RtF in the country is integrating the concepts into the NU curricula	3.8	1.19
The school of agriculture has programmes that will complement RtF courses	3.8	1.01
NU has an established structure that will support FNS and RtF integration	3.7	1.02
Most NU students have a strong science background	3.5	.99
Weakness statements	M*	SD
Effective collaborations do not exist among NU faculty members	3.0	1.15
NU does not have adequate teaching and learning materials to teach FNS and RtF courses	3.0	1.19
NU does not have enough facilities and resources to integrate FNS and RtF	2.9	1.32
NU does not have qualified personnel to teach FNS and RtF concepts and courses	2.5	1.45
NU does not have a strong science-policy to support FNS and RtF integration	2.5	1.29
Lecturers are unwilling to accept change	2.3	1.17
*“Real limits” of the scale: 1.00 to 1.49 (strongly disagree), 1.50 to 2.49 (disagree), 2.50 to 3.49 (not sure), 3.50 to 4.49 (agree), and 4.50 to 5.00 (strongly agree).		

### Lecturers' Perceptions Regarding Opportunities and Threats to the Integration of FNS and RtF into NU Curricula

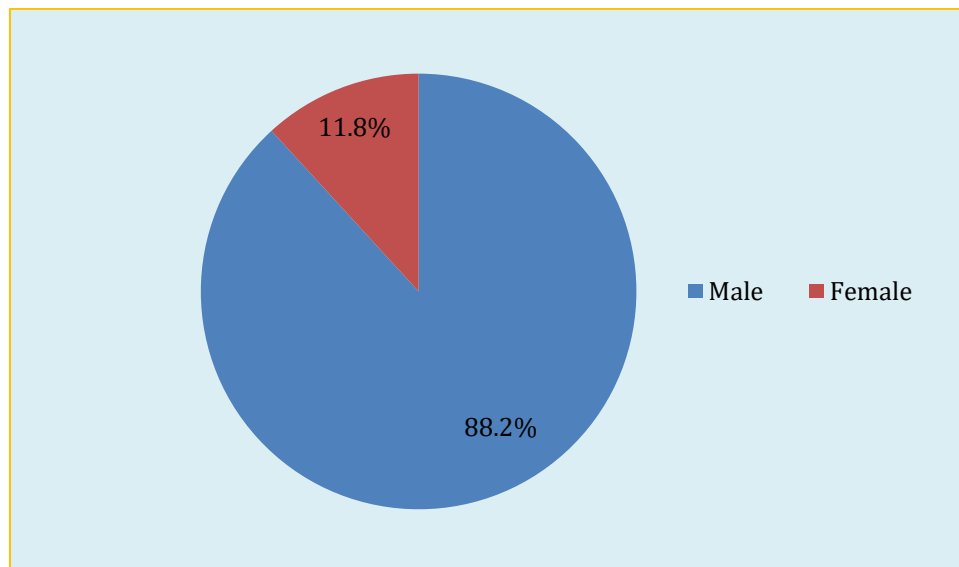
NU lecturers responded to 11 perception statements regarding the integration of FNS and RtF into various NU curricula. On a scale of "1" to "5," with 1(strongly disagree) and 5(strongly agree), lecturers rated the following statements favorably, in the range of agree; "Numerous opportunities exist in the global market regarding FNS and RtF. The statement lecturers rated the least, in the range of not sure, was; "Competition will prevent NU from realizing the benefits of FNS and RtF integration (M = 1275; SD = 1.04) (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Perception of lecturers regarding opportunities and threats to the integration of FNS and RtF into NU curricula during the 2013/2014 academic year (n = 143).

Opportunity statements	M*	SD
Numerous opportunities exist in the global market regarding FNS and RtF	4.0	.90
NU stands to benefit financially from enrolment into FNS and RtF programmes	4.0	.91
Many job opportunities are available for graduates in FNS and RtF	3.9	.70
Many agencies and organizations are interested in supporting institutions that provide learning experiences in FNS and RtF	3.8	.93
Not many opportunities exist outside NU for applying FNS and RtF concepts	2.8	1.04
Not many opportunities exist outside NU for sharing knowledge about FNS and RtF	2.6	1.09
Threat statements	M*	SD
High prices of commodities will have a considerable impact on the integration of FNS and RtF into the NU curricula	3.2	1.10
NU will not be affected by bad media or press coverage for integrating FNS and RtF	3.1	1.22
The economic decline will not affect the integration of FNS and RtF into the NU curricula	3.0	1.16
The competition will prevent NU from realizing the benefits of FNS and RtF integration	2.5	1.04
*“Real limits” of the scale: 1.00 to 1.49 (strongly disagree), 1.50 to 2.49 (disagree), 2.50 to 3.49 (not sure), 3.50 to 4.49 (agree), and 4.50 to 5.00 (strongly agree).		

### Gender of NU Lecturers

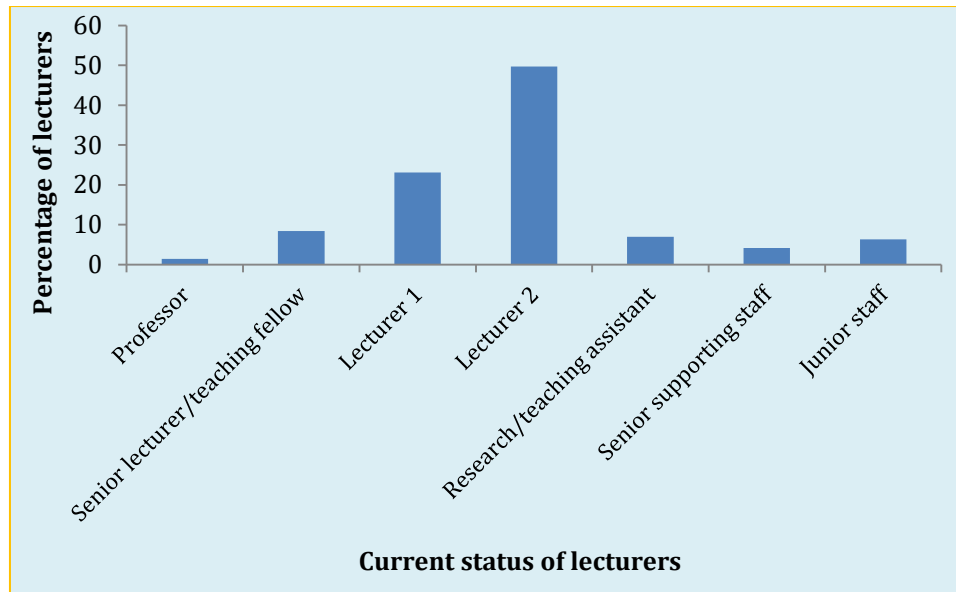
Approximately 88.2% of the NU lecturers who participated in the study were male and 11.8% were female (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Gender of Njala University lecturers during the 2013/2014 academic year (n = 143).

### Current Status of NU Lecturers

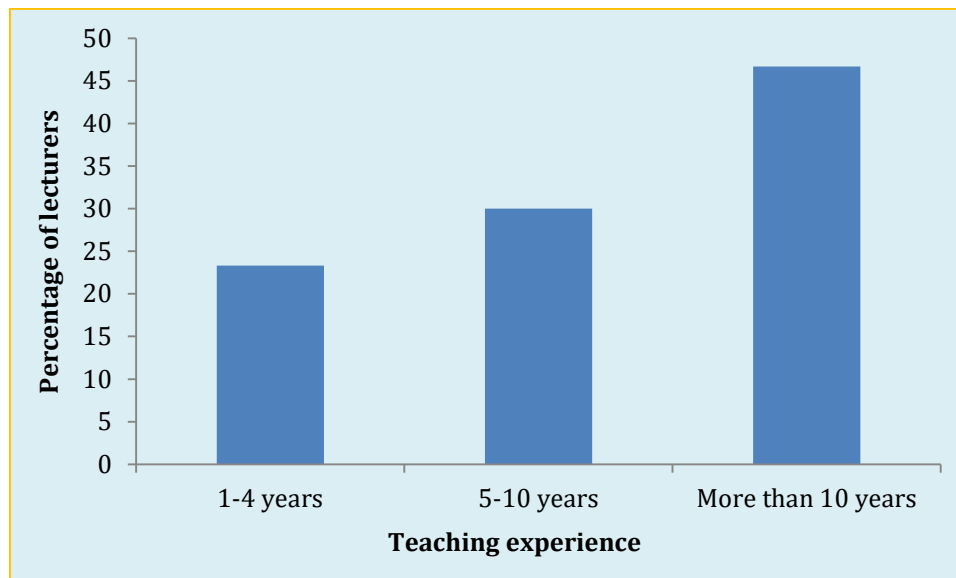
Figure 2 indicates that most of the NU lecturers who participated in the study were in the lecturer II status (49.7%). About 23.1% of the NU lecturers were lecturer I staff and 8.4% were the senior supporting staff. Only 1.4% of the lecturers were professors (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Current status of Njala University lecturers during the 2013/2014 academic year (n = 143).

### Teaching Experience of NU Lecturers

Figure 3 indicates that 46.7% of the NU lecturers who participated in the study have had more than 10 years of teaching experience. About 23.3% of the lecturers have had only 1-4 years of teaching experience (Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Teaching experience of Njala University lecturers during the 2013/2014 academic year (n = 143).

### Conclusion and Recommendations

NU lecturers acknowledged that home economics and agriculture students should take compulsory FNS and RtF courses and also agreed that the concepts should be included in various Njala University curricula, including environmental and physical sciences. Lecturers also claimed that the school of agriculture offers courses and programmes that could complement FNS and RtF courses and that a good number of NU students have a strong science background. Lecturers believed that many opportunities, including jobs, exist in the global market of food, nutrition, and agriculture, as well as health and governance, and, therefore, NU stands to benefit financially. The lecturers agreed that interested agencies and organizations would support institutions that provide learning experiences in FNS and RtF.

More male lecturers participated in the study, most of whom were young and active. However, a significant number of the participants were in the lecturer II category and a significant proportion had more than 10 years of teaching experience. Lecturers from almost all departments and schools participated in the study, but very few of them took sufficient courses in education to enable them to teach effectively.

### **Future Scope**

Before integration/infusion of materials that are not in the existing programmes/courses, the structure of the curriculum should be put in place to reduce the workload on clientele. The curriculum integration process must not increase student workload; FNS and RtF instructional materials and related resources made adequately available, and the weak science background of students in certain departments should be strengthened.

Njala University could recruit more female lecturers as a way to promote gender equality, which could serve as a motivation for girls to become interested in education and training. Njala University should recruit younger lecturers who may replace older lecturers as they approach retirement age and especially when some older individuals gradually become medically or mentally unable to perform their duties very well. This research should be conducted in other Universities and training colleges in Sierra Leone.

Limitation only lecturers at NU participated in the study. Stakeholders in FAO, MAFFS and other organizations with vested interest in ensuring the realization FNS and RtF were not surveyed. Therefore, the study's findings could not be generalized more widely. Another limitation was timeframe because the study was not longitudinal. The researcher gathered quantitative data only during the 2013-2014 academic year.

### **Declarations**

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**Author Contributions:** SSQ: Developed the topic, objectives and close ended questionnaire, data collection, interpretations of data, manuscript preparation, review, editing, literature survey, statistical analysis etc. I contributed immensely in this process as the lead author; ARK: Data collection, statistical analysis, interpretations of data, editing, revision, gathering of literature survey materials; MAA: Data collection, design, editing, and literature survey.

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