



Type of article: Research Article

Teachers' Perceptions of Influence of Daily School Feeding Programs on Student Participation and Dropout Rates

Onesme Niyibizi¹ ^{*}, Ananias Micomyiza² , Gratiem Bibakumana³ , Marie Claudine Uwitatse¹ , Vedaste Mutarutinya¹ 

¹University of Rwanda, College of Education, Rwanda

²University of Lay Adventist of Kigali, Rwanda

³Kigali Independent University, Rwanda

Abstract

This qualitative study explored teachers' perceptions of how daily school feeding programs influence student participation and dropout rates in selected public day secondary schools. Using semi-structured interviews with twenty purposively selected teachers, the research highlighted the positive effects of school feeding programs on various aspects of student engagement. Teachers reported that these programs improved student attendance and punctuality, enhanced participation in classroom activities, and improved academic performance. Additionally, the guaranteed provision of meals alleviated stress and anxiety, enabling students to focus more on their education. Teachers also noted that school feeding programs raised a sense of community and belonging, further motivating students to engage actively in school. The study found consistent improvements in student attendance, concentration, and overall participation while also noting a reduction in dropout rates. These findings emphasize the crucial role of nutrition in supporting student engagement, particularly in public day secondary schools. Based on these insights, the study proposed several recommendations for policymakers, including enhancing support and resources for school feeding programs to ensure their sustainability and effectiveness and implementing continuous monitoring and evaluation to identify areas for improvement. Addressing these recommendations could strengthen the impact of school feeding initiatives, ultimately improving student participation and reducing dropout rates.

Keywords: Dropout rates, Public day secondary schools, School feeding programs, Student participation, Teachers' perceptions

* **Corresponding author:** Onesme Niyibizi: niyibizionesme12@gmail.com

Article information

Received: 11/10/2024;

Reviewed: 17/11/2024;

Revised: 22/11/2024;

Accepted: 23/11/2024

How to cite this article: Niyibizi, O., Micomyiza, A., Bibakumana G., Uwitatse, M.C., and Mutarutinya, V. (2024) 'Teachers' Perceptions of Influence of Daily School Feeding Programs on Student Participation and Dropout Rates', *Journal of Classroom Practices*, 3(1), pp. 26–39. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.58197/prbl/HIHA7266>.

Introduction

School feeding programs have been shown to significantly increase student attendance, especially in regions where food insecurity is a major issue. In many developing countries, students from low-income families often miss school due to hunger, leading to poor academic performance and a higher risk of dropping out. The provision of daily meals helps address this barrier, ensuring that students are more likely to attend school regularly (Cohen et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021). In Rwanda, for example, public day secondary schools have adopted feeding programs that provide essential nutrition and incentivize students to remain in school. Teachers report that students are more alert and engaged in lessons when well-fed, which further reinforces the importance of such programs in improving attendance rates.

Malnutrition has long been recognized as a major factor hindering academic achievement, particularly in low-income settings. Students who suffer from chronic hunger or undernutrition face challenges in concentration, cognitive development, and overall health (Adekunle & Christiana, 2016). By implementing school feeding programs, Rwanda aims to mitigate these issues by offering balanced meals that provide essential nutrients for physical and cognitive growth. Teachers in schools where feeding programs are in place often note a marked improvement in student engagement and participation in class activities. This is particularly important in secondary schools, where academic performance is more closely tied to future opportunities. The positive impact of these programs on student health and well-being is a critical component of their effectiveness.

Despite the positive outcomes observed by school administrators, there is limited research on how teachers perceive the effectiveness of school feeding programs, particularly in student engagement and dropout rates. Teachers in Rwanda have shared mixed views, with many acknowledging the benefits of feeding programs in keeping students energized and attentive. However, some teachers also note that while these programs have improved student participation in the short term, they may not be sufficient to address deeper systemic issues such as poverty and lack of parental support. Teachers emphasize that feeding programs should be complemented by other initiatives, such as academic support and psychosocial counseling, to ensure long-term success in reducing dropout rates (Muchlisin et al., 2020).

One of the key outcomes of school feeding programs is their potential to reduce student dropout rates. In many parts of Rwanda, families facing economic hardship struggle to support the costs associated with education, including transport, uniforms, and school fees. For students in these situations, a daily meal at school can be a crucial motivator to stay in school. Teachers observe that students who participate in the feeding program are less likely to drop out, as the meal often represents a primary source of sustenance for them. Additionally, better-nourished students are more likely to stay focused and perform well academically, reinforcing their commitment to completing their education (Rustad et al., 2020). However, teachers argue that dropout prevention is a multifaceted issue, requiring more than just nutritional support to address the complex factors leading to school attrition fully.

While school feeding programs are widely regarded as a positive intervention, there are challenges associated with their implementation and sustainability. Teachers in Rwanda have highlighted logistical issues such as delays in food distribution, irregular supply chains, and inadequate

infrastructure for storing and preparing meals. These issues can affect the consistency and quality of the meals provided, which may reduce their impact on student participation and academic performance. Additionally, there is the concern of dependency, where students and families may begin to rely on the school for regular meals, which could limit the program's long-term effectiveness in addressing broader socio-economic challenges. Teachers suggest that school feeding programs should be integrated with other community-driven efforts to ensure that they are not a temporary solution but part of a comprehensive strategy for reducing poverty and improving educational outcomes (Zenebe et al., 2018; Mughal, 2020).

Related Literature

School feeding programs and dropout rates

The role of daily school feeding programs in enhancing student participation has garnered significant attention in educational research. Studies have shown that these programs can positively affect student attendance and engagement (Bundy, 2019; Appiah, 2024). For instance, Mohamed (2015) found that school feeding initiatives in developing countries improve student attendance and increase classroom participation. Teachers often perceive these programs as essential for addressing hunger-related distractions, allowing students to concentrate better and actively participate in learning activities (Mary & Lusaka, 2018). This suggests that school feeding programs are crucial in raising a conducive learning environment vital for academic success.

Previous studies highlight the role of school feeding programs in improving nutritional status, cognitive function, and academic performance (Cohen et al., 2021). Student participation is critical for academic success and includes attendance, active involvement in class, and extracurricular activities (Kim et al., 2020). Factors such as socio-economic status, health, and school environment influence participation (Tomaszewski, Xiang, & Western, 2020).

Moreover, the impact of school feeding programs on dropout rates has been a focal point in numerous studies (Jomaa, McDonnell, & Probart, 2011; Appiah, 2024). According to Bundy et al. (2009), providing meals at school mitigates dropout rates by addressing one of the key barriers to consistent school attendance (Ahmed, 2004). Teachers have reported that students who benefit from these programs are less likely to drop out, as their basic nutritional needs are met, allowing them to focus on their studies rather than worrying about where their next meal will come from (Adekunle & Christiana, 2016). This relationship underscores the importance of integrating school feeding programs as part of broader strategies aimed at reducing dropout rates in public day secondary schools. High dropout rates in secondary schools are a significant concern, often attributed to economic hardship, family responsibilities, and lack of motivation (Mughal, 2020; Muchlisin, Zuber, & Haryono, 2020).

Despite the evident benefits, teachers also identify several challenges associated with implementing daily school feeding programs. These challenges include logistical issues such as the timely delivery of food supplies, maintaining the quality and nutritional value of meals, and ensuring equitable distribution among students (Zenebe et al., 2018). Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts from policymakers, school administrators, and the community to ensure that school feeding programs can be sustained and scaled effectively. School feeding programs are posited as a potential solution to mitigate these issues (Rustad, Rosvold, & Buhaug, 2020; van Ginkel & Biradar, 2021;

Gaspard-Richards, Banunle, & Osuolale, 2021).

Earlier studies have extensively acknowledged the positive effects of school feeding programs on nutritional status, cognitive function, and academic performance. However, there remains a significant gap in understanding how these programs impact student participation and dropout rates. Student participation, which encompasses attendance, active class involvement, and engagement in extracurricular activities, is vital for academic success and is influenced by various factors, including socio-economic status, health, and school environment. Despite high secondary school dropout rates linked to economic hardship, family responsibilities, and lack of motivation, the potential of school feeding programs to address these issues remains underexplored. The current study targeted to fill this gap by investigating teachers' perceptions of the influence of daily school feeding programs on student participation and dropout rates in public day secondary schools.

Theoretical Framework

The main theory that guided the study was Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. This theory posits that human needs are arranged in a hierarchical order, starting with basic physiological needs and progressing to higher-level needs such as safety, social belonging, esteem, and self-actualization (Zalenski & Raspa, 2006; Taormina & Gao, 2013; Sohail, 2023). In the context of the present study, daily school feeding programs address students' physiological needs by ensuring they receive adequate diet. This, in turn, influenced their ability to participate effectively in school and reduce dropout rates by creating a more conducive learning environment and supporting their overall well-being. By understanding teachers' perceptions through this theoretical lens, the study explored how meeting students' basic needs through feeding programs impacts their academic engagement and retention.

This study aimed to understand teachers' perceptions of how these programs influence student participation and dropout rates, focusing on the following objectives:

1. Assess how teachers view the impact of daily school feeding programs on student participation in public day secondary schools.
2. Evaluate teachers' opinions on how daily school feeding programs affect student dropout rates in public day secondary schools.
3. Identify issues teachers believe hinder the effectiveness of daily school feeding programs in improving student retention and participation.

Methods

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative approach to capture in-depth insights from teachers about the impact of school feeding programs on student participation and dropout rates. A case study design focused on a purposively selected public day secondary school in Gasabo District, Rwanda. This design allows a detailed exploration of teachers' perceptions within a specific context (Humaira & Rachmadtullah, 2021).

Instruments

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 teachers from the selected public day secondary school. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 teachers from selected public day secondary schools to gain comprehensive insights into the effects of daily school feeding programs. These interviews explored three key areas: teachers' perspectives on how these programs influence student participation in school activities, their opinions on the role of daily school feeding in reducing student dropout rates, and the challenges they believe limit the effectiveness of such programs in enhancing student retention and engagement. By focusing on these aspects, the study aimed to understand the multifaceted impact of school feeding programs through educators' practical experiences and observations, providing valuable input for improving these initiatives. The interviews were designed to produce detailed responses about the perceived effects of school feeding programs (Tavory, 2020; Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021).

Data Analysis

The interview data were transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis, a method renowned for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data. This approach facilitated a rich, detailed, and nuanced exploration of teachers' perceptions (Peel, 2020; Xu & Zammit, 2020; Christou, 2022). The analysis aimed to address three critical objectives: assessing how teachers perceive the impact of daily school feeding programs on student participation in public day secondary schools, evaluating their opinions on the programs' role in reducing student dropout rates, and identifying the challenges teachers believe limit the effectiveness of these initiatives in improving student retention and participation. The thematic analysis provided a comprehensive understanding of the educators' viewpoints, capturing their diverse experiences and insights regarding the implications and challenges of school feeding programs.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure validity and reliability, the study employed triangulation by cross-verifying information and member checking was also used, where participants reviewed and confirmed the accuracy of the transcriptions and interpretations (Motulsky, 2021; CohenMiller, Saban & Bayeta, 2022).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained. Informed consent was secured from all participants, ensuring confidentiality and the right to withdraw from the study.

Results and discussions

Twenty interviewed teachers, comprising eight men and 12 women with over three years of teaching experience, shared their views, which were analyzed thematically in line with three key objectives: assessing how teachers perceive the impact of daily school feeding programs on student participation, evaluating their opinions on the effects of these programs on student dropout rates, and identifying the challenges teachers believe hinder the effectiveness of school feeding programs in improving student retention and participation.

Theme 1: Impact on Student Participation

Teachers have observed that school feeding programs have enhanced attendance and regularity, as students are encouraged to attend school with the prospect of receiving meals. Additionally, increased energy levels and improved concentration in class have been noted, as reflected in the subthemes.

Increased Attendance Many teachers strongly believed that daily school feeding programs significantly enhance student participation. They observed that students who receive regular meals at school are more likely to attend classes consistently. One teacher noted,

"The introduction of the school feeding program has greatly reduced absenteeism. Students are motivated to come to school knowing they will have something to eat."

Improved attendance was a common theme among the interviewed teachers. They reported that the assurance of a daily meal encourages students to attend school regularly.

Improved Classroom Engagement Several teachers highlighted the direct correlation between nutrition and student engagement in classroom activities. They pointed out that well-nourished students exhibit higher energy levels and better concentration. As one teacher stated,

"When students are not hungry, they can focus better on their studies, which leads to increased participation in class discussions and activities."

Teachers noticed a positive change in the classroom dynamics with the implementation of the school feeding program. They observed that students were more eager to participate and collaborate.

Promoting Equity Teachers also emphasized the role of school feeding programs in promoting equity among students. They mentioned that these programs help level the playing field for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. One teacher commented,

"School feeding programs ensure that all students, regardless of their socio-economic status, have the same opportunity to learn and participate in school activities."

Psychological Benefits The psychological impact of regular meals on students was also highlighted. Teachers pointed out those students who are assured of a meal are less anxious and more willing to engage in school activities. As one teacher noted,

"Knowing they will get a meal at school reduces students' stress and allows them to focus more on their studies."

Academic Performance Several teachers linked improved student participation to better academic performance. They observed that students participating more actively in class tend to perform better academically. Teachers noticed a positive change in the classroom dynamics with the implementation of the school feeding program. They observed that students were more eager to participate and collaborate. According to one teacher,

"Since the school feeding program started, I have noticed a significant improvement in students' grades, which I attribute to their increased participation and focus."

Long-term Educational Outcomes Teachers also discussed the long-term benefits of school feeding programs on student participation. They believe consistent participation can lead to better

educational outcomes and higher retention rates. As one teacher explained,

"Regular attendance and participation help build a strong academic foundation, which can reduce dropout rates in the long run."

Social Aspect The social aspect of school feeding programs was another point of interest. Teachers mentioned that sharing meals fosters a sense of community and belonging among students, which can enhance participation. One teacher observed,

"The communal aspect of eating together helps build stronger relationships among students, which translates to better participation in school activities."

Overall Well-being Finally, teachers highlighted the importance of school feeding programs in supporting students' overall well-being. They argued that a well-fed student is a happy student who is more likely to engage in school. As one teacher concluded,

"When students are well-fed, they are healthier and more enthusiastic about participating in their education, which benefits the entire school community."

Triangulating the results from the themes regarding the impact of school feeding programs reveals a comprehensive picture of how these programs influence student participation. Teachers consistently observed that school feeding programs enhance student attendance and punctuality, as the promise of meals motivates students to attend school regularly. This is reflected in Theme 1.1, where increased attendance was noted, and Theme 1.5, where improved participation was linked to better academic performance. The connection between nutrition and classroom engagement, as detailed in Theme 1.2, underscores how proper nourishment translates into higher energy levels and better focus, fostering greater student involvement in class activities.

Furthermore, the promotion of equity, highlighted in Theme 1.3, ensures that students from various socio-economic backgrounds have equal opportunities to participate in educational activities, contributing to a more inclusive learning environment. The psychological benefits discussed in Theme 1.4 also play a critical role, as reduced anxiety and stress from guaranteed meals enable students to engage more willingly in their education.

Teachers noted that these programs support immediate academic engagement and have long-term educational benefits, as emphasized in Theme 1.6, suggesting that consistent participation leads to better educational outcomes and lower dropout rates. The social aspect of shared meals, as mentioned in Theme 1.7, further enhances the sense of community and belonging, which can positively influence student participation. Lastly, the overall well-being of students, discussed in Theme 1.8, highlights how a well-fed student is more enthusiastic and engaged in school, benefiting the entire school community. Together, these themes demonstrate that school feeding programs significantly impact various aspects of student participation and overall educational experience.

The present results align with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which proposes that human needs are structured in a hierarchy, beginning with basic physiological needs and advancing to higher-order needs such as safety and social belonging. Daily school feeding programs directly address students' physiological needs by providing adequate nutrition, laying the foundation for fulfilling higher-level needs essential for their overall well-being and academic engagement.

The present results also align with Cohen et al. (2021), who underscore the significance of school feeding programs in enhancing students' nutritional status, cognitive function, and academic performance. Their research demonstrates that improved nutrition directly correlates with better cognitive abilities and higher achievement levels in school settings. This reinforces the importance of such programs in fostering an environment conducive to learning and overall student well-being. Similarly, the results are consistent with Kim et al. (2020), emphasizing that student participation is essential for academic success. Their study highlights that active engagement in class, regular attendance, and involvement in extracurricular activities are critical factors contributing to students' academic achievements. These elements of participation are crucial for creating a supportive and dynamic learning environment that facilitates both personal and academic growth.

Theme 2: Impact on Dropout Rates

Teachers have noted a significant reduction in dropout rates since the introduction of feeding programs. Students from low-income families, who might otherwise leave school in search of food, are now more likely to remain enrolled, as highlighted in the subthemes.

Perceived Link between Feeding Programs and Dropout Rates Many teachers believe that daily school feeding programs have a direct and positive impact on reducing dropout rates. They argue that providing students with regular meals alleviates one of the significant barriers to education hunger, which can otherwise lead to absenteeism and dropouts. Teachers noted that students who might otherwise be unable to attend school regularly due to hunger are more likely to stay enrolled when their nutritional needs are met. As one teacher concluded,

"I strongly believe that daily school feeding programs are crucial in reducing dropout rates. When students are assured of at least one healthy meal each day, it supports their physical health, cognitive functioning, and academic performance. Many of our students come from low-income families where food insecurity is a significant issue."

Improved Student Attendance Teachers observed a noticeable improvement in student attendance since the implementation of feeding programs. They shared those students who previously missed school frequently due to lack of food now attend more consistently. This increase in attendance is often linked to the students' increased energy and focus, which helps them stay engaged in their studies and less likely to drop out. As one teacher concluded,

"The consistent attendance of students who frequently missed school has greatly improved the overall classroom dynamics. When these students are present, they contribute to a more cohesive learning environment."

Enhanced Academic Performance Some teachers mentioned that regular meals have led to better academic performance among students. With fewer hunger-related distractions, students can concentrate better and participate more actively in class. This improved performance and engagement contribute to a positive learning environment that supports student retention and reduces dropout rates. As one teacher concluded,

"As a classroom teacher, I have seen firsthand how regular meals positively impact my students' academic performance. When students come to class well-fed, they are more attentive, focused, and ready to learn. I notice fewer disruptions and more engagement during lessons."

Support for Low-Income Families Teachers highlighted that school feeding programs provide crucial support for low-income families, who might otherwise struggle to provide adequate meals for their children. By mitigating the financial burden on these families, the feeding programs help ensure that students can remain in school and continue their education without the added stress of food insecurity. As one teacher concluded,

"The feeding program has been a lifeline for students from low-income families. It has reduced the financial burden on parents and prevented students from dropping out to work and support their families."

Impact on Student Behavior Some teachers noted an improvement in student behavior since the introduction of feeding programs. Students who previously exhibited disruptive behavior due to hunger are now calmer and more focused. This behavioral change contributes to a more conducive learning environment, which can indirectly reduce dropout rates by raising a positive school experience. As one teacher concluded,

"I have noticed a significant change in my students' behavior. Those who used to struggle with focus, often disrupting the class, are now engaged and attentive. The school feeding program has greatly impacted their ability to concentrate and participate in lessons."

Theme 2.6: Increased School Engagement

Teachers reported that the availability of school meals has led to increased student engagement in extracurricular activities and school events. Students who receive regular meals are more likely to participate in and benefit from various school programs, which enhances their overall school experience and reduces the likelihood of dropping out. As one teacher concluded,

"I have observed a remarkable transformation in student participation since the introduction of school meals. Students who previously struggled with focus and energy now actively engage in both academic and extracurricular activities."

In triangulating the influence of feeding programs on dropout rate results, the themes from teacher observations reveal a profound and multifaceted impact. Theme 2 captures this effect through several interconnected subthemes. Teachers have consistently noted that providing daily meals plays a critical role in reducing dropout rates, particularly among students from low-income families who face significant barriers due to food insecurity. As observed in Theme 2.1, the direct link between feeding programs and decreased dropout rates underscores how addressing hunger mitigates one of the major obstacles to regular school attendance. Teachers emphasize that by meeting students' nutritional needs, these programs support physical health and enhance cognitive functioning and academic performance.

Theme 2.2 highlights the correlation between improved student attendance and the availability of school meals. Teachers report that consistent meal provision increases student presence in school, which fosters a more engaged and productive learning environment. This boost in attendance is linked to heightened energy and focus, reducing absenteeism and contributing to better overall academic engagement. Moreover, Theme 2.3 connects regular meals with enhanced academic performance. Teachers have observed that well-nourished students exhibit better concentration and participation, which translates into fewer disruptions and a more effective learning atmosphere. This

improved performance further supports student retention, emphasizing the holistic benefits of feeding programs.

The support for low-income families, as detailed in Theme 2.4, is another critical factor. Teachers recognize that by alleviating the financial burden of providing meals, these programs enable students to remain in school without the added stress of food insecurity. This support extends beyond the classroom, addressing broader socio-economic challenges that can influence dropout rates. Additionally, Theme 2.5 discusses how feeding programs positively affect student behavior. Teachers have noticed a decline in disruptive behavior and improved classroom dynamics, contributing to a more conducive learning environment. This behavioral change indirectly supports retention by creating a more positive school experience.

Lastly, Theme 2.6 illustrates the broader impact of feeding programs on student engagement. Teachers report increased participation in extracurricular activities and school events, which enhances students' overall school experience and strengthens their connection to the educational environment, further reducing the likelihood of dropping out. Together, these themes paint a comprehensive picture of how feeding programs impact various aspects of students' educational experiences, ultimately leading to lower dropout rates and a more supportive and engaging school environment.

The present results align with those of Jomaa, McDonnell, and Probart (2011), who highlight the positive impact of school feeding on the growth, cognition, and academic achievement of school-aged children. However, while these benefits are evident, the effect of school feeding programs on reducing dropout rates remains less conclusive. The findings suggest that while school feeding enhances various aspects of children's development and academic success, additional factors may influence whether children remain in school. Similarly, the present results align with Appiah (2024), who found that school feeding programs in Ghana significantly boost student attendance and academic performance, particularly benefiting girls and children in rural areas. These programs reduce hunger, improve nutrition, and increase student engagement, leading to enhanced educational outcomes and lower dropout rates. The findings underscore the multifaceted benefits of school feeding programs, demonstrating their crucial role in supporting education and reducing dropout rates in specific contexts.

Theme 3: Challenges

Although there are benefits, teachers point out challenges like inadequate food supplies and the need for improved program management. They also emphasize the necessity of involving parents and the community to ensure the program's sustainability, as reflected in the subthemes.

Inadequate Resources and Infrastructure Many teachers highlighted insufficient resources and infrastructure to implement daily school feeding programs effectively. Schools often lack the necessary facilities, such as kitchens and storage areas, to handle the logistics of feeding many students. This inadequacy leads to inconsistent meal provision and can affect students' participation and attendance. The absence of proper facilities also means that teachers have to divert their attention from instructional activities to address these logistical issues, which further hampers the effectiveness of the feeding programs. As one teacher concluded,

"As a teacher, I see straight the challenges our school faces in providing meals to students. The

lack of proper kitchens and storage facilities often means that meals are not as fresh as they should be. This affects students' energy levels and concentration in class."

Quality and Nutritional Value of Food Another significant challenge mentioned by teachers was the quality and nutritional value of the food provided through the feeding programs. Many reported that the food served is often not up to standard in terms of nutrition, which impacts students' health and overall well-being. Poor quality food can lead to dissatisfaction among students, affecting their enthusiasm to attend school and participate actively in class. Teachers noted that the lack of variety and inadequate nutritional content of the meals might not meet the dietary needs of adolescents, thereby influencing their academic performance and engagement. As one teacher concluded,

"I've observed how poor quality food impacts my students. When students are dissatisfied with the meals provided, their focus in class diminishes, and their overall participation drops."

Inconsistent Program Implementation Teachers also pointed out the issue of inconsistent implementation of the feeding programs. In some instances, the feeding programs are sporadically executed due to delays in food supply or administrative issues. This inconsistency can lead to unpredictability in students' meal times and affect their daily routines. Teachers observed that when students are uncertain about meal provision, their motivation to attend school regularly diminishes, leading to increased absenteeism and, in some cases, higher dropout rates. As one teacher concluded,

"Delays in food supply not only disrupt the feeding programs but also create challenges in classroom management. Hungry students tend to be more irritable and less cooperative, making it harder to maintain a conducive learning environment."

Theme 3.4: Financial Constraints and Budgetary Issues

Financial constraints were frequently mentioned as a significant challenge. Teachers reported that the budgets allocated for school feeding programs are often inadequate to cover the costs of purchasing quality food and maintaining the necessary infrastructure. This limitation results in reliance on substandard or irregular food supplies, which can undermine the program's effectiveness. Additionally, budgetary constraints can lead to delays in food procurement, further disrupting the program and negatively impacting student participation. As one teacher concluded,

"I see the impact of inadequate budgets for school feeding programs on our students. Quality nutrition is essential for effective learning and development, yet the funds allocated often fall short. This shortfall limits the ability to provide balanced meals and affects the overall infrastructure needed to support a successful program."

Administrative and Policy Challenges Lastly, administrative and policy-related challenges were recurring. Teachers expressed frustration with the lack of clear guidelines and effective oversight regarding the feeding programs. Inconsistent policies and administrative inefficiencies lead to confusion and mismanagement of the program. Teachers felt that there was a need for more robust policies and better coordination between the school administration and the entities responsible for supplying and managing the feeding programs. Without clear and consistent policies, the effectiveness of the programs in improving student participation and reducing dropout rates remains compromised. As one teacher concluded,

"Inconsistent policies and administrative inefficiencies are a major obstacle to the smooth running of school feeding programs. When policies are not clearly defined or consistently applied, it creates confusion among both teachers and students."

To triangulate the thematic results on challenges faced in school feeding programs, it is evident that a range of interrelated issues significantly impact their effectiveness. The analysis reveals a multifaceted landscape where logistical constraints, quality concerns, administrative inefficiencies, and financial limitations intersect.

Inadequate Resources and Infrastructure (Theme 3.1) and Financial Constraints and Budgetary Issues (Theme 3.4) are closely linked, as insufficient infrastructure and lack of proper facilities are often a direct result of inadequate funding. Teachers observe that the absence of essential facilities like kitchens and storage areas exacerbates the problem of delivering consistent and nutritious meals. This situation is compounded by budgetary constraints, which limit the ability to procure high-quality food and maintain necessary infrastructure. The lack of adequate resources disrupts meal provision and diverts teachers' attention from their primary educational duties, affecting overall instructional quality.

The quality and Nutritional Value of Food (Theme 3.2) and Inconsistent Program Implementation (Theme 3.3) further illustrate the consequences of these challenges. Poor-quality food and inconsistent meal provision, driven by logistical and financial shortcomings, directly impact student satisfaction and health. This, in turn, affects students' academic performance and engagement. Teachers report that dissatisfaction with meals and unpredictable meal times decrease student motivation.

Administrative and Policy Challenges (Theme 3.5) highlight the role of governance in these issues. Ineffective policies and a lack of clear guidelines exacerbate the problems associated with resources, quality, and implementation. Without robust and consistent administrative support, efforts to address logistical and financial challenges are undermined, resulting in further disruption and inefficiency.

Overall, these themes underscore the complex interplay between financial, infrastructural, and administrative factors in effectively implementing school feeding programs. Addressing these interconnected issues requires a comprehensive approach that includes better resource allocation, improved policy frameworks, and enhanced administrative oversight to ensure that feeding programs meet their intended goals of supporting student health and educational engagement.

The present results align with Zenebe et al. (2018), highlighting logistical challenges such as the timely delivery of food supplies, maintaining the quality and nutritional value of meals, and ensuring equitable distribution among students. Additionally, consistent with Gaspard-Richards, Banunle, and Osuolale (2021), the continuation of teaching and learning at early childhood, primary, and secondary education levels necessitates addressing and minimizing challenges related to student dropout rates.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study concluded that daily school feeding programs positively influence student participation and reduce dropout rates in public day secondary schools. Recommendations included increasing funding for these programs, improving management and delivery, and involving community

stakeholders to enhance sustainability. The authors acknowledged all participants involved in this study, expressing gratitude for their contributions that were integral to its completion.

References

- Adekunle, D.T. and Christiana, O.O. (2016) 'The effects of school feeding programme on enrolment and performance of public elementary school pupils in Osun State, Nigeria', *World Journal of Education*, 6(3), pp. 39–47. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5430/wje.v6n3p39>.
- Adeoye-Olatunde, O.A. and Olenik, N.L. (2021) 'Research and scholarly methods: Semi-structured interviews', *Journal of the American College of Clinical Pharmacy*, 10, pp. 1358–1367. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1002/jac5.1441>.
- Ahmed, A.U. (2004) *Impact of feeding children in school: Evidence from Bangladesh*. Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/253422918>.
- Appiah, K. (2024) 'Impact of school feeding programs on student attendance and performance in Ghana', *African Journal of Education and Practice*, 9(2), pp. 23–24. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/253422918>.
- Bundy, D.A. (2019) *Rethinking school feeding: Social safety nets, child development, and the education sector*. Washington, DC: World Bank Publications.
- Christou, P.A. (2022) 'How to use thematic analysis in qualitative research', *Journal of Qualitative Research in Tourism*, 3(2), pp. 79–95. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4337/jqrt.2023.0006>.
- Cohen, J.F., Hecht, A.A., McLoughlin, G.M., Turner, L. and Schwartz, M.B. (2021) 'Universal school meals and associations with student participation, attendance, academic performance, diet quality, food security, and body mass index: A systematic review', *Nutrients*, 13(3), p. 911. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu13030911>.
- CohenMiller, A., Saban, G.A. and Bayeta, R. (2022) 'Rigor in qualitative research', in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research in the Asian Context*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, pp. 327–343.
- Gaspard-Richards, D., Banunle, A. and Osuolale, O.O. (2021) *Preparedness and resilience of education systems to address multiple threats: Pandemics, hurricanes, drought, food insecurity*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.
- Humaira, M.A. and Rachmadtullah, R. (2021) 'Teachers' perceptions of the role of universities in mentoring programs for inclusive elementary schools: A case study in Indonesia', *Journal of Education and e-Learning Research*, 8(3), pp. 333–339. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.20448/journal.509.2021.83.333.339>.
- Jomaa, L.H., McDonnell, E. and Probart, C. (2011) 'School feeding programs in developing countries: Impacts on children's health and educational outcomes', *Nutrition Reviews*, 69(2), pp. 83–98. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1753-4887.2010.00369.x>.
- Kim, A.S., Shakory, S., Azad, A., Popovic, C. and Park, L. (2020) 'Understanding the impact of attendance and participation on academic achievement', *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Psychology*, 6(4), p. 272. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1037/stl0000151>.
- Mary, M. and Lusaka, Z. (2018) 'An exploration of the views of teachers, pupils and parents towards school feeding programme in primary schools in Ndola District', *The International Journal of Multi-Disciplinary Research*, pp. 1–81.
- Mohamed, A.O. (2015) 'Influence of feeding programs on the participation of learners at early childhood development education institutions: A case of Bungoma South district', *International Academic Journal of Social Sciences and Education*, 1(4), pp. 1–14. Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/11295/7379>.

- Motulsky, S.L. (2021) 'Is member checking the gold standard of quality in qualitative research?', *Qualitative Psychology*, 8(3), p. 389. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1037/qup0000215>.
- Muchlisin, A., Zuber, A. and Haryono, B. (2020) 'The role of alternative education in tackling students dropout', *Society*, 8(2), pp. 719–731. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.33019/society.v8i2.199>.
- Mughal, A.W. (2020) 'Secondary school students who drop out of school in rural Pakistan: The perspectives of fathers', *Educational Research*, 62(2), pp. 199–215. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2020.1755604>.
- Peel, K.L. (2020) 'A beginner's guide to applied educational research using thematic analysis', *Practical Assessment Research and Evaluation*, 25(1). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.7275/ryr5-k983>.
- Rustad, S.A., Rosvold, E.L. and Buhaug, H. (2020) 'Development aid, drought, and coping capacity', *The Journal of Development Studies*, 56(8), pp. 1578–1593. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2019.1696958>.
- Sohail, M.S. (2023) 'Understanding self-actualization in the light of Allama Iqbal's concept of self', *Faith and Discovery*, 1(1), pp. 69–84.
- Taormina, R.J. and Gao, J.H. (2013) 'Maslow and the motivation hierarchy: Measuring satisfaction of the needs', *The American Journal of Psychology*, 126(2), pp. 155–177. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.5406/amerjpsyc.126.2.0155>.
- Tavory, I. (2020) 'Interviews and inference: Making sense of interview data in qualitative research', *Qualitative Sociology*, 43(4), pp. 449–465. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-020-09464-x>.
- Tomaszewski, W., Xiang, N. and Western, M. (2020) 'Student engagement as a mediator of the effects of socio-economic status on academic performance among secondary school students in Australia', *British Educational Research Journal*, 46(3), pp. 610–630. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3599>.
- van Ginkel, M. and Biradar, C. (2021) 'Drought early warning in agri-food systems', *Climate*, 9(9), p. 134.
- Wang, D., Shinde, S., Young, T. and Fawzi, W.W. (2021) 'Impacts of school feeding on educational and health outcomes of school-age children and adolescents in low-and middle-income countries: A systematic review and meta-analysis', *Journal of Global Health*. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13643-020-01317-6>.
- Xu, W. and Zammit, K. (2020) 'Applying thematic analysis to education: A hybrid approach to interpreting data in practitioner research', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920918810>.
- Zalenski, R.J. and Raspa, R. (2006) 'Maslow's hierarchy of needs: A framework for achieving human potential in hospice', *Journal of Palliative Medicine*, 9(5), pp. 1120–1127. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1089/jpm.2006.9.1120>.
- Zenebe, M., Gebremedhin, S., Henry, C.J. and Regassa, N. (2018) 'School feeding program has resulted in improved dietary diversity, nutritional status and class attendance of school children', *Italian Journal of Pediatrics*, 44, pp. 1–7. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13052-018-0449-1>.