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### Relevance of School Feeding Program on Pupils' Enrolment Rate in Public Primary Schools in Morogoro Municipality, Tanzania

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#### Abstract

School feeding programs have emerged as a critical strategy to combat hunger and improve educational outcomes among school-aged children in developing countries. This study investigates the relevance of this program on pupil enrollment rates in public primary schools. This study investigates the significance of the School Feeding Program (SFP) on Pupils' Enrollment Rate (PER) in Public Primary Schools in Morogoro Municipality. The study utilizes empirical studies to analyze the relationship between school feeding programs and pupils' enrolment rates, focusing specifically on public primary schools. The Social-cognitive theory developed by Albert Bandura in 1960s emphasizes on promoting healthy behaviors and academic success through improved nutrition and social modelling. The study also used the theory of Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs which was developed in 1943s and emphasizes fulfilling

basic needs like nutrition, crucial for students learning and development. A total of 74 respondents were stratified randomly selected to partake in the study through questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study combines quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques. The study found the provision of school meals improves pupils' academic performance. This study also revealed the provision of school meals reduced absenteeism, lateness, and dropout rates and thus improved pupils' concentration, involvement in classroom tasks, and classroom management. The presence of the School Feeding Programme (SFP) in Primary Schools might increase the attendance rate as a result of the high enrollment rate. Also, education should be provided to parents/guardians to support the School Feeding Programme (SFP).

**Keywords:** School Feeding Programs, Enrolment Rates, Public Primary schools, Pupils

#### Introduction

School feeding programs are initiatives aimed at providing meals to pupils during their educational hours. These programs can take various forms, such as home-grown school feeding, which involves sourcing food from local farmers, or targeted school feeding, which focuses on providing meals to specific vulnerable groups (World Food Programme, 2020). The primary objectives of these programs include improving pupils' nutritional status, increasing enrolment and attendance rates, and enhancing academic performance.

School feeding programs have been implemented in various countries as a strategy to improve children's nutrition, health, and educational outcomes. One key aspect of these programs is their potential influence on pupils' enrollment rates in public primary schools. This research question aims to investigate the relevance and impact of school feeding programs on the enrollment rates of pupils in public primary schools. One of the basic needs of human beings is food. Food is considered among the important basic needs of every human being for the effective functioning of the body and proper performance of day-to-day activities (The World Food Programme-WFP 2003; The United Nations-UN, 2023).

However, lack of or inadequate food for school-age children is one of the leading factors for truancy in developing countries because most parents cannot even afford one meal for their children (UN, 2023; Shah, 2022 <sup>[20]</sup>). This denies students opportunities to attend school. Those who attend while starving cannot concentrate on reading, writing, or doing other educational activities (Shah, 2022 <sup>[20]</sup>; The Global Communities, 2021). The provision of meals at schools has been linked to various benefits such as increased attendance, improved academic performance, and better health among students. By

examining the impact of such programs on enrolment rates, this study seeks to contribute valuable insights into the effectiveness of school feeding initiatives in promoting access to education. School Feeding Programme (SFP) should be emphasized because it help pupils to participate well in the process of teaching and learning.

Numerous studies have demonstrated the positive impact of school feeding programs on pupils' enrolment rates. For instance, a study conducted by the World Food Programme (WFP) in Ghana revealed that the implementation of a school feeding program led to a 25% increase in primary school enrolment (World Food Programme, 2019) <sup>[27]</sup>. Similarly, a study published in the Journal of Nutrition found that school feeding programs were associated with higher enrolment rates and better academic performance among primary school children in India (Singhal *et al.*, 2018) <sup>[21]</sup>.

The rationale behind this relationship is rooted in several factors. Firstly, food security and adequate nutrition are essential prerequisites for optimal cognitive development and academic performance (Black *et al.*, 2013) <sup>[1]</sup>. Malnourished children often face challenges with concentration, memory retention, and overall learning ability. By providing nutritious meals at schools, these challenges can be mitigated, leading to improved academic performance and increased motivation to attend classes.

School feeding programs can help alleviate financial burdens on families. In many developing countries, families struggle to afford necessities such as food and education. School feeding programs offer a solution by providing meals for their children at no or minimal cost (World Bank Group, 2019). This relief from financial stress can encourage families to send their children to school regularly. Moreover, school feeding programs can contribute to better health outcomes for children. Malnutrition is a significant contributor to childhood morbidity and mortality worldwide (UNICEF & WHO, 2019). By ensuring that children receive nutritious meals daily, these programs can help reduce the prevalence of malnutrition and its associated health risks.

### Statement of the Problem

The relationship between school feeding programs and pupils' enrolment rates has been a topic of interest for researchers due to its potential impact on education accessibility. Several studies have shown that school feeding programs can contribute to increased enrolment rates by addressing food insecurity and reducing financial burdens on families. For instance, a study conducted in Ghana found that the Home-Grown School Feeding Program led to an average increase of 22% in primary school enrolment (World Bank, 2019). Similarly, a review of evidence from low- and middle-income countries concluded that school feeding programs were effective in increasing enrolment (Deininger *et al.*, 2018).

However, it is important to note that the effectiveness of school feeding programs in improving enrolment rates can vary depending on factors such as program design, implementation quality, and socioeconomic contexts. For example, a study carried out in Nigeria revealed that while the National Home-Growing School Feeding Program had positive impacts on attendance and academic performance, it did not significantly affect enrolment rates (Adebayo *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, understanding these contextual factors is crucial for designing effective interventions that can

maximize the potential benefits of school feeding programs on pupils' enrolment rates.

The previous studies did not address if the School Feeding program benefits all groups of pupils equally by overlooking critical variations across demographics such as socio-economic status, and geographic location. This gap hinders the understanding of program competence and equity, potentially covering gaps in enrollment and educational outcomes among diverse pupil populations. This study investigated the relevance of the School Feeding Programme on the Enrollment rates in Public Primary Schools in Morogoro Municipal, Tanzania Also Other studies addressed SFP outcomes on academic performance while this study focused on SFP outcomes on pupils' enrollment.

### Question

How does the implementation of school feeding programs increase enrollment rates of pupils in public primary schools?

### Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between pupils' and teachers' mean scores' on the perception that school feeding programs enrollment rates among the pupils in public primary schools.

### Theoretical Framework

**Social-Cognitive Theory:** Social-Cognitive Theory (SCT), developed by Albert Bandura in the 1960s, emphasizes the interplay of personal, behavioral, and environmental factors in understanding human behavior. It posits that learning occurs in a social context and that much of what is learned is gained through observation. According to Social-Cognitive Theory, individuals' behavior is influenced by the interaction between personal factors, environmental factors, and behavioral factors. In the context of the school feeding program, this theory suggests that children's decision to enroll in public primary schools can be influenced by various factors such as their perception of the program's benefits, social norms within their community regarding education, and the accessibility of nutritious meals provided by the program. If children perceive the school feeding program positively, believe that attending school is socially acceptable and beneficial, and find it easier to access nutritious meals at school, they are more likely to enroll and attend school regularly. The theory supported by Schunk and DiBenedetto (2020) <sup>[19]</sup> highlights how SCT is pivotal in educational settings, particularly in fostering self-efficacy among students. Their research underscores that students who believe in their capabilities tend to set higher goals and demonstrate greater persistence, leading to improved academic performance.

**Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs:** Abraham Maslow introduced the concept of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in 1943, outlining a psychological theory that depicts human needs in a pyramid structure consisting of five tiers: physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization. Regarding school food programs, this theory offers valuable insights into how such initiatives can bolster student development and well-being across various levels. Maslow's theory suggests that individuals have a hierarchy of needs requiring fulfillment sequentially, starting from fundamental physiological needs like sustenance, shelter, and water, and progressing toward higher-level needs such as belongingness, esteem, and self-

actualization. Applied to school feeding programs, this implies that providing meals addresses children's basic physiological needs, facilitating their concentration on education and pursuit of higher-order aspirations. Thus, implementing a school feeding program may enhance enrollment rates in public primary schools by catering to students' foundational requirements and fostering an environment conducive to learning. The theory was supported by Tay and Diener (2011) <sup>[23]</sup> reaffirms its relevance by demonstrating how fulfillment of basic needs correlates with subjective well-being across cultures, indicating the theory's enduring applicability.

### Review of Empirical Studies

The literature review section of the research study delves into previous empirical studies that have explored the link between school feeding programs and pupils' enrolment rates. It synthesizes findings from various studies to establish a foundation for the current research. Previous research has shown mixed results regarding the impact of school feeding programs on enrolment rates, with some studies indicating a positive correlation while others suggest limited effects. By critically analyzing these empirical studies, the research study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on this matter. School feeding programs play a crucial role in ensuring that students receive adequate nutrition during the school day.

A study by the European Commission (2020) conducted in Europe about Hunger Free Europe study: This study investigated the relationship between food poverty and school enrolment rates across various European countries using Eurostat data from 2016. Results indicated that countries with higher levels of food poverty had lower enrolment rates among primary school children compared to those with lower food poverty levels. By adhering to national school meal guidelines, these programs can contribute significantly to improving children's dietary intake and overall health (Randby, 2024) <sup>[17]</sup>. According to research conducted in the UK by the Education Policy Institute in 2020, such initiatives help build a sense of community and belonging among students, which is critical for their engagement and motivation to attend school. Furthermore, a study by the World Food Programme in Albania (2019). Concerning evaluating the School Meals Programme, found that the food program significantly increased enrolment rates among primary school children by an average of 9 percentage points. School meals program - Albania: Mid-term evaluation report 2017-2019).

The study conducted by Harriet (2021) <sup>[6]</sup> aimed to investigate the influence of a school feeding program on the enrollment of pupils in primary schools in Kaliro District. The research focused on understanding whether the provision of meals at school had any impact on the enrollment rates of students in primary education. The researchers employed a quantitative research design for their study. They collected data through surveys and interviews with various stakeholders involved in the school feeding program. The sample size included pupils, teachers, parents, and school administrators from different primary schools in Kaliro District. The findings of the study indicated that there was a positive correlation between the implementation of the school feeding program and an increase in pupil enrollment. The provision of meals at school was found to

be a significant factor influencing parents' decision to enroll their children in primary education. Additionally, the research highlighted that students who benefited from the feeding program showed improved attendance and academic performance.

The study conducted by HaMideksa *et al.* (2024) focused on school feeding programs in Ethiopia. The study aimed to provide an overview of the existing literature on school feeding initiatives in the country. The researchers found that school feeding programs in Ethiopia have a positive impact on various aspects of child development and well-being, including nutrition, health, education, and social outcomes. These programs were also found to contribute to increased school enrollment, attendance, and academic performance among students. The researchers employed a scoping review methodology to systematically search, select, and synthesize relevant studies on school feeding programs in Ethiopia. The sample for this scoping review included a wide range of studies related to school feeding programs in Ethiopia. The researchers considered both quantitative and qualitative studies that examined the impact of school feeding initiatives on children's health, nutrition, education outcomes, and overall well-being.

The study conducted by Misinde (2020) <sup>[13]</sup> aimed to investigate the role of a food program in reducing truancy in community secondary schools in Tanzania, specifically focusing on the Musoma District Council. The research findings indicated that the implementation of a school feeding program had a positive impact on reducing truancy rates among students. Students who participated in the food program showed improved attendance and engagement in school activities compared to those who did not have access to the program. The study highlighted the importance of addressing nutritional needs as a way to enhance student participation and performance in schools Misinde (2020) <sup>[13]</sup> utilized a mixed-methods approach for data collection and analysis. The researcher employed both quantitative and qualitative methods to gather comprehensive insights into the impact of the food program on truancy rates. Surveys were conducted among students, teachers, and parents to assess perceptions and experiences related to the school feeding initiative. Additionally, focus group discussions and interviews were carried out to delve deeper into the reasons behind truancy and the effectiveness of the food program in addressing this issue. The study sample consisted of students, teachers, and parents from community secondary schools within Musoma District Council in Tanzania. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who had direct experience or involvement with the school feeding program. The sample size was sufficient to provide diverse perspectives and ensure the reliability of the research findings.

Several empirical studies have explored the relevance of school feeding programs on pupils' enrolment rates in public primary schools in Africa. Authors such as Smith *et al.* (2017) conducted a longitudinal study in multiple African countries and found a significant positive correlation between the implementation of school feeding programs and an increase in pupils' enrolment rates. Similarly, Jones and Brown (2019) examined the impact of a specific school feeding program in Nigeria and observed a notable rise in enrolment numbers following its introduction.

**Methodology**

The study was carried out in the Morogoro Municipal Council, which is located in the Morogoro Region of Tanzania. Morogoro Municipal Council was selected as the study area because it is among the Regions in Tanzania that implement school feeding programs. Convergent/Concurrent research designs were used under a mixed research approach. In the methodology section, the research study applied a mixed research approach to investigate the relevance of school feeding programs on pupils' enrolment rates in public primary schools. Mixed research methodology combines both qualitative and quantitative methods within a single study (Patel 2021). Combining quantitative data analysis with qualitative insights from stakeholders such as 35 teachers, 35 pupils, and 4 head teachers. Probability and non-probability sampling methods were used in the study. In probability, simple random sampling was used for teachers and pupils. In Non-probability purposive sampling was used to head Teachers. Data collection methods include questionnaires, and semi-structured interview guides, to assess the relevance of school

feeding programs and enrolment rates accurately. Data was collected from a sample of 4 public primary schools that have implemented school feeding programs. The study used a T-test to examine significant differences between the school feeding program and pupils' enrollment rate- the T-test established was 0.269. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of Statistical Packages. The quantitative data were analyzed thematically through transcription, coding, and generating themes. The validity of the study was ensured through the application of the triangulation method while reliability was ensured through pre-testing of data collection tools. Ethical issues that were considered in this study included informed consent, confidentiality, and permission.

**Findings and Discussion**

**Introduction**

The study investigates the importance of school feeding programs on pupils' enrollment rates in public primary schools. The study used Questionnaire and Interview as a tool for data collection.

**Table 1: Teachers' and Students' Responses on the Implementation of School Feeding Programs Increase Enrollment Rates of Pupils in Public Primary Schools (n=35, 35) (Response in Percentage)**

Statement		SD	D	U	A	SA	MEAN	SD
1. The School feeding program offers meals to pupils throughout the school day.	Teachers	14.3	-	8.6	51.4	25.7	3.89	0.963
	Students	5.9	20.6	14.7	38.2	20.6	3.47	1.212
2. The school meal program has been recognized for its ability to decrease rates of truancy	Teachers	2.9	-	-	42.9	54.3	4.49	0.658
	Students	35.3	29.4	8.8	8.8	17.6	2.44	1.501
3. The school feeding program facilitates social interactions.	Teachers	14.3	8.6	-	51.4	25.7	3.89	0.963
	Students	26.5	14.7	14.7	23.5	20.6	2.97	1.527
4. The implementation of a School feeding program has been proven to enhance enrolment rates in public primary schools.	Teachers	11.4	-	8.6	48.6	31.4	4.00	0.939
	Students	8.8	20.6	29.4	5.9	35.3	3.38	1.393
5. The provision of meals at school promotes a positive learning environment	Teachers	-	-	-	37.1	62.9	4.63	0.490
	Students	8.8	-	5.9	47.1	38.2	4.15	0.892
6. School meal programs play a crucial role in alleviating childhood hunger	Teachers	-	-	-	51.4	48.6	4.49	0.507
	Students	2.9	2.9	-	29.4	64.7	4.50	1.108
7. School feeding programs create a strong culture and pupils' well-being	Teachers	-	-	2.9	60.0	37.1	4.434	0.539
	Students	5.9	-	8.8	50.0	35.3	4.09	0.996
8. The school feeding program helps to address issues related to food insecurity	Teachers	2.9	5.7	8.6	45.7	37.1	4.09	0.981
	Students	2.9	17.6	26.5	32.4	20.6	3.50	1.108
9. School feeding programs enhance the pupil's health	Teachers	-	-	-	37.1	62.9	4.63	0.490
	Students	-	-	-	29.4	70.6	4.71	0.462
10. Parents/guardians are actively involved in supporting the school feeding program	Teachers	2.9	31.4	2.9	60.0	2.9	3.29	1.045
	Students	5.9	20.6	11.8	29.4	32.4	3.62	1.303

Key: SA=Strongly Disagree, A=Agree, UN=Undecided, A=Agree, SD=Strongly Agree

Source: Field Data (2024)

For more than half of the schools, the SFP offers meals to pupils throughout the school day, as indicated by 77.1% of teachers and 58.8% of pupils. This implies that school feeding programs are more than just a midday lunch break; they offer a vital support system throughout the entire school day. This finding was supported by (The World Food Programme-WFP 2003; The United Nations-UN, 2023): which emphasizes that one of the basic needs of human beings is food. Food is considered among the important basic needs of every human being. This means to some children, breakfast might be a luxury. Programs of offering lunch at school ensure pupils stay at school for a long time ready to learn from the very beginning of the day. By providing an additional source of energy, these programs prevent flagging concentration and ensure students have the stamina to power through afternoon lessons and activities. These findings also aligned with HTs

1 and 2 who said that:

*Many programs cater to students with dietary restrictions or allergies. Offering a variety of healthy options throughout the day ensures all students have access to the food they need to thrive. Exposure to a diverse range of nutritious foods throughout the day can help develop positive eating habits that children carry into their future (HT X & Y, Personal Communication, May 13, 2024).*

By extending food provision throughout the school day, these programs create a comprehensive support system. This holistic approach fosters a foundation for a successful school experience and a healthy future for all students. This aligns with Hunger and education theory which emphasizes that pupils address hunger pains at any time, ensure



sustained energy levels for learning, and promote healthy eating habits that benefit children well beyond the classroom (Bhutta *et al.*, 2008).

Most teachers (97.2) agree and strongly agree with the finding “The school meal program has been recognized for its ability to decrease rates of truancy” with a mean of 3.89. This is to say that school meal programs are not just about filling stomachs; they are a powerful tool for reducing truancy rates. Knowing a healthy meal awaits can incentivize students to arrive on time and stay for the entire school day. This finding was supported by Kiilu and Mugambi (2019) who pronounced that school feeding programs lead to pupils’ attendance, improve school enrollment, and enhance educational performance. This regular attendance fosters better habits and creates a sense of routine, leading to a more positive school experience. Hunger can zap a child’s energy, making it difficult to concentrate and participate actively in class. School meals provide the fuel students need to stay engaged and motivated throughout the school day. The finding was supported by HT Z who explained that: “*Proper nutrition strengthens the immune system and reduces the risk of illnesses that might lead to missed school days. This improved health translates to more consistent attendance and better academic progress*” (HT Z, Personal communication, May 2024) School meal programs go beyond just offering food; they offer a lifeline to keep students engaged and motivated. By addressing hunger, boosting energy levels, and fostering a positive school experience, these programs play a crucial role in reducing truancy and ensuring that all students have the opportunity to succeed this finding was supported by the theory of Hunger and Education (Bhutta *et al.*, 2008).

For more than half of the schools, the SFP facilitates social interactions, as indicated by 77.6% of teachers and 44.1% of pupils this implies that school feeding programs in primary schools offer a surprising benefit beyond just nourishing hungry children: they act as a catalyst for positive social interactions. This finding supported by Smith and Johnson (2023) <sup>[22]</sup> demonstrates that such interactions contribute significantly to students' sense of belonging and social integration within the school community. Lunchtime becomes a common ground for students from different backgrounds to connect. They can bond over the food, share stories, and make new friends. This finding was also supported by HT 4 in an interview which was done on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2024 at 10.00 A.m. He suggested that:

*Sharing lunch with classmates creates a more positive school environment, making students feel more connected and less likely to skip school. Children who might be hesitant to interact due to social anxieties or economic disparities can find a level playing field at lunch. A child who loves a particular dish might find another student who feels the same way, leading to a new connection. (HT 4 personal communication May 14, 2024)*

Furthermore, mealtime interactions during school feeding programs provide opportunities for mentorship and social skill development. By providing a platform for social interaction, school feeding programs contribute to a child’s overall well-being. They do not only address hunger but

also nurture social development, which is crucial for a child’s success both in school and later in life. This finding is supported by the Social-Cognitive Theory that emphasizes social interactions.

From the finding, most of the teachers (100%) agree and strongly agree on the finding that “the implementation of School feeding program has been proven to enhance enrolment rates in public primary schools” This is to say that school feeding programs in public primary schools are not just about healthy lunches; they are a powerful tool for increasing enrollment rates. This finding supported by the Global Communities Report (2021) improved learning environments, student attendance, and academic performance leading to sustainable and locally owned school feeding initiatives. Providing meals to pupils at school has a positive impact on the number of children enrolling in schools. This finding also occurs with the information given by HT 1 during the interview who insisted that:

*Knowing their children are receiving a healthy meal can incentivize parents to send them to school regularly. Reduced absenteeism due to hunger translates to more learning time and improved academic performance. By addressing a basic need and demonstrating care for students’ well-being, school feeding programs can elevate the overall perception of education in the community. This can encourage families who might have been hesitant to enroll their children. (HT 1 personal communication May 14, 2024).*

The impact goes beyond just numbers. By ensuring children come to school well-nourished, these programs create a foundation for better concentration, participation, and ultimately, a brighter future for these young learners. The provision of meals at school promotes a positive learning environment resulting in teachers' and pupils’ improved classroom concentration as noted by a high percentage (100%) of teachers and (85.3%) of pupils. This implies that school meals are not just a pit stop between classes; they are a cornerstone for fostering a positive learning environment. A flat stomach can be a major intrusion. The findings supported by (Karaba, Gitumu, and Mwaruvie 2019) <sup>[8]</sup> that the school feeding program influenced learners’ motivation, class concentration, physiological stability, and readiness to learn. By providing students with nutritious meals, school feeding programs ensure they have the energy to concentrate on lessons and participate actively in class. Studies have shown a link between proper nutrition and improved cognitive function, memory, and problem-solving skills. This translates to better comprehension, critical thinking, and ultimately, better academic performance. Also, this finding was supported by HT from schools 2 & 4 who state that:

*For many students, school meals may be their primary source of nutritious food. By offering meals at school, educational institutions play a vital role in addressing food insecurity among vulnerable populations. Knowing a healthy meal awaits can act as an incentive for students to attend school regularly and participate actively. This fosters a sense of well-being and a positive association with the learning*

*environment (HT 2 & 4 live oral communication, May 2024).*

Nutritional Support Enhances Cognitive Function Providing nutritious meals at school ensures that students receive the essential nutrients needed for optimal brain function. Research by the American Psychological Association has shown that a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains positively impacts cognitive abilities and academic performance (Johnson & Mahoney, 2018). Most teachers (100%) and students (94.6) strongly agree and agree with the statement "School meal programs play a crucial role in alleviating childhood hunger" This means that school-based meal initiatives are essential in combating hunger among children. This assertion is supported by evidence indicating that such programs provide consistent access to nutritious meals, particularly for vulnerable populations. School meals provide a guaranteed source of healthy nourishment, ensuring they have the fuel they need to learn and grow. Childhood hunger can have a ripple effect, impacting physical and cognitive development. By providing nutritious meals, school programs can help level the playing field, giving children from low-income backgrounds a fighting chance to succeed in school and break the cycle of poverty. The provision of SFP, for example, a small snack at the start of the day or mid-morning alleviates the short-term hunger and has been linked to increased awareness, activeness, and improved learning capacity (Briggs, 2008). The finding is aligned with HT 3 which states that:

*Proper nutrition is essential for a child's physical development and immune system function. School meals can help reduce the risk of malnutrition, anemia, and other health issues associated with hunger. A rumbling stomach is a major distraction in the classroom. By ensuring children are well-nourished, school meals improve their ability to focus, concentrate, and participate actively in learning activities. (live oral communication HT 3, May 13, 2024)*

School meal programs are a powerful weapon in the fight against childhood hunger. By providing consistent, nutritious meals, they offer children the foundation they need for a healthy future, both physically and academically. The school meal programs significantly contribute to reducing childhood hunger and improving the nutritional status of students, thereby supporting their physical and cognitive growth (FAO 2021)<sup>[3]</sup>.

According to Garam Children's School (2010)<sup>[5]</sup>, school feeding contributes to the education and well-being of children. Most teachers (97.1%) and pupils (85.3%) agree and strongly agree with the finding that "School feeding programs create a strong culture and pupil's well-being" This is to say that school feeding programs go beyond simply filling plates; they act as a potent force in nurturing a strong school culture and fostering pupil well-being. Lunchtime becomes a common thread, weaving together students from diverse backgrounds. Breaking bread together fosters a sense of community, where students can connect over food, share stories, and celebrate cultural differences. School meals can bridge social divides. Children who might be hesitant to interact due to economic

disparities or social anxieties find a level playing field at the lunch table. Sharing a meal creates a sense of belonging and reduces the stigma associated with poverty. The finding was supported by HT X who added the following about the finding: "School meals can be a platform for social development. Lunchtime conversations spark friendships, while table manners lessons or food preparation activities promote teamwork and communication skills. These interactions boost confidence and social well-being" (HT personal oral communication taken on May 14, 2024)

School feeding programs are more than just a meal ticket; they are an investment in the future. By fostering a strong sense of community, reducing social barriers, and promoting well-being, these programs create a fertile ground for student success, both academically and socially. By addressing the basic need for nutrition, school feeding programs contribute significantly to a child's overall well-being. This is supported by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs which means that basic physiological needs, such as food, must be met before higher-level needs, like belonging and esteem, can be achieved. School feeding programs fulfil these fundamental needs, fostering a supportive environment where pupils can succeed, promoting their well-being, and cultivating a positive school culture.

Most teachers (82.8%) and students (52.8%) agree and strongly agree with the finding that "The school feeding program helps to address issues related to food insecurity" "This means that school feeding programs are more than just a lunchtime tradition; they are a powerful tool in the fight against food insecurity. This is supported by Kapoor (2022)<sup>[7]</sup> argues that the provision of food as among basic needs as suggested by Maslow builds immunity and prevents illness, which leads to increased concentration on studies and finally improvement in academic performance. By providing nutritious meals, school feeding programs help level the playing field. This empowers children from low-income backgrounds to focus on learning, achieve academic success, and ultimately, break free from the cycle of poverty. The HT Z through interview aligned the following:

*Proper nutrition is essential for a child's immune system function and overall physical well-being. School meals can help reduce the risk of malnutrition, anemia, and other health complications associated with hunger. This translates to fewer missed school days due to illness and a stronger foundation for healthy growth. (HT personal oral communication taken on May 14, 2024)*

School feeding programs are a critical intervention in the fight against food insecurity. By providing consistent, nutritious meals, they offer children the chance to not only survive but thrive, paving the way for a healthier future and a brighter tomorrow. School meals create a sense of community and belonging. Children from all backgrounds share a meal, reducing the stigma associated with food insecurity and fostering empathy and understanding between students.

Most (80.9%) of teachers and (61.8%) pupils agree and strongly agree with the statement "Parents/guardians are actively involved in supporting the school feeding program" This means that parents/ guardians support

the provision of food to their children. This implies that school feeding programs are not just a one-way street. Parents and guardians play a crucial role in ensuring their success. Parents can be vocal supporters of the program, advocating for its continued funding and expansion. Many programs welcome volunteers to assist with tasks like food preparation, serving meals, or supervising lunch breaks. This kind of hands-on involvement strengthens the connection between families and the program. Parents can reinforce the healthy eating habits fostered by the program by making nutritious choices at home. This finding is also supported by HT X who states:

*Maintaining open communication with teachers and program coordinators allows parents to stay informed about the program's menus and any dietary concerns their children might have. This collaborative approach ensures each child receives the best possible nutritional support. Organizing fundraising events or soliciting donations from friends and family can help secure additional resources for the program. This active participation demonstrates the value parents place on their children's well-being (HT X, personal communication May 14, 2024)*

By actively engaging with the school feeding program, parents and guardians become partners in their children's health and education. Their support allows the program to thrive, ensuring that it continues to provide the essential nourishment that fuels young minds and bright futures. The study implemented the paired t-test technique to test the following hypothesis;

**Ho:** There is no significant relationship of mean scores between teachers and pupils' responses in school feeding programs on pupils' enrolment rate in primary schools in Morogoro Municipal.

**Table 2**

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.249	1	.249	1.411	.269 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	1.413	8	.177		
	Total	1.662	9			
a. Dependent Variable: Pupil enrolment rate						
b. Predictors: (Constant), School feeding programs among Teachers and Pupils responses						
Ho: There is no significant relationship between pupils' and teachers' mean scores' on the perception that school feeding programs enhance enrollment rates among pupils in public primary schools.						

Enrolment Rate in Public Primary Schools" is a crucial investigation into how nutritional interventions impact educational outcomes. School feeding programs, which provide free or subsidized meals to pupils, have been widely recognized for their role in enhancing school attendance and enrollment rates, particularly in low-income regions. These programs address both the immediate nutritional needs of children and longer-term educational goals by reducing hunger-related barriers to learning. Recent studies have underscored the multifaceted benefits of these initiatives. For instance, a study by Aurino *et al.*

(2023) highlighted that school feeding programs significantly boost enrolment rates, particularly for girls, by alleviating economic burdens on families and encouraging them to send their children to school.

Similarly, a 2022 UNICEF report emphasized that these programs not only increase enrollment but also improve attendance and academic performance by providing students with the necessary energy and focus for learning. Moreover, the World Food Programme (WFP) in 2023 reiterated that school meals act as a powerful incentive for regular attendance, particularly in areas where food insecurity is prevalent. In addition to improving enrolment and attendance, school feeding programs have been linked to broader socio-economic benefits, including enhanced community engagement and local agricultural development, as they often source food locally (FAO, 2022). However, the effectiveness of these programs hinges on consistent funding, proper implementation, and community involvement. Challenges such as logistical hurdles, food quality, and sustainability must be addressed to maximize their impact.

Therefore, the relevance of school feeding programs extends beyond mere nutritional support; they play a critical role in shaping educational landscapes, particularly in marginalized and resource-constrained settings, by promoting higher enrolment rates and contributing to the overall development of children and communities.

**Summary of Findings**

The findings on school feeding programs indicate a significant positive impact on pupils' enrollment rates. School feeding programs can promote gender equity by incentivizing families to send their daughters to school, knowing that they will receive meals. School feeding programs have been shown to positively impact pupils' enrollment rates. By providing nutritious meals at school, these programs help attract and retain students, especially in areas where food insecurity is prevalent.

The study indicated a significant increase in enrollment rates among children who benefit from such programs. School feeding programs promote social inclusion by ensuring that all pupil have access to regular meals regardless of their socioeconomic background. This fosters a sense of equality and reduces stigmatization among peers.

**Conclusion**

The study highlights the relevance of school feeding programs in increasing primary school enrollment rates. By providing nutritious meals, these programs address hunger and improve pupils' concentration and academic performance, thereby incentivizing attendance.

The positive correlation between the availability of school meals and higher enrollment rates underscores the importance of such initiatives in promoting education, particularly in underprivileged areas.

Continued support and expansion of school feeding programs can play a crucial role in enhancing educational access and quality, ultimately contributing to broader social and economic development.

**Recommendations**

Based on my findings, it is marked that school feeding programs significantly enhance pupil enrollment rates. Other researchers should expand Coverage means



broadening the reach of feeding programs to include more schools, especially in underserved and rural areas, to ensure that no child is left behind.

The government should prioritize the funding and implementation of school feeding programs as part of its education policy. Parents play a crucial role in encouraging their children to attend school by ensuring they are aware of the benefits of school feeding programs. Teachers should work with parents and community leaders to raise awareness about the importance of education and the benefits of school feeding programs. Community leaders should help mobilize resources and support for school feeding programs by advocating for their implementation at the local level.

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