

Parents' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Ghana's School Feeding Programme in Improving Household Income: A Case Study of Assin South District in Ghana

Alexander Tetteh Kwasi Nuer ^{a, *}, Daniel Adjei ^a, Benjamin Chris Ampimah ^b,
Selorm Omega ^a

^a University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana

^b Cape Coast Technical University, Cape Coast, Ghana

Abstract

In pursuit of the United Nations Development Goal of universal primary education, the Ghanaian government implemented the Ghana School Feeding Programme to increase school enrollment and mitigate poverty. This paper aims to determine whether or not the program has successfully enhanced the financial circumstances of parents in each district. The philosophical paradigm of pragmatism was used, and an explanatory sequential mixed design was employed for the study. A basic random sampling procedure was utilised to select 63 samples out of a total of 109 respondents for the study. The study gathered respondents' perspectives and perceptions through questionnaires, informal interviews, and focus group discussions. The findings indicate that parents regarded the school nutrition program as efficacious in encouraging them to enrol their children due to alleviating feeding cost burdens (mean = 3.95, SD = 0.21). Furthermore, it was found that parents perceived the school nutrition program as a means to augment their income (Mean = 3.73, SD = 0.45). It was discovered that the number of dependents, age, marital status, and gender of the parents all had a statistically significant impact on the perceived efficacy of the school feeding program. The research findings indicated that the school nutrition program significantly aided in the rise in student enrollment by relieving parents of the financial strain it imposed. The study suggests that the school feeding program be expanded to include private schools and other institutions not currently included in the program. The study contributes to advancing social support system fields of inquiry that suggest that external support and public good incentives significantly improve households' efforts to enrol their children in formal education. It also improves governance and policy decision-making, especially among governments and development partners connected with developing countries. Theoretically, this study contributes to the Incentive Theory of Motivation, which is extrinsic and applied in this field of inquiry.

Keywords: Assin South District, Ghana's Food Feeding Programme, Income status, Parents.

1. Introduction

Education, in general, is considered a fundamental human right that must be enshrined in a country's policies. Article 26 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights unequivocally

* Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: alexander.nuer@ucc.edu.gh (A.T.K. Nuer)

Received: 11 August 2024 Revised: 20 January 2025; 02 April 2025 Accepted: 03 April 2025

Published: 30 April 2025

affirmed this, stipulating that all individuals deserve to be educated, regardless of gender, religion, ethnic origin, or social standing (Mahama, 2018). A high-quality education system is essential to a nation's economic, social, and political development. Education serves as a conduit by which a person gains myriad physical and social competencies required by a particular society into which they are born (Dangara, 2016). According to the World Development Report (WDR) for 1998/1999, education is significantly associated with both poverty reduction and economic expansion. Quality education accounted for approximately 25 % of the per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increase in the United States of America between 1939 and 1982 (Mahama, 2018).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics (UIS) data in 2019 indicates that 19 % of children between the ages of six (6) and eleven (11) are not enrolled in school in low-income countries. The observation compares to a mere 2 % of school enrollment recorded in high-income countries. This number rises to approximately 61 % among children aged between 15 and 17 in low-income countries. The number is again compared to 8 % in high-income countries. Approximately 43% of the high enrolment rate is located in sub-Saharan Africa, and 53 % of them are female (UNESCO, 2019). Additionally, it has been verified that due to poverty and malnutrition, the projected number of children not enrolled in schools in sub-Saharan Africa increased from 29 million in 2008 to 31 million in 2010 (World Food Programme [WFP], 2013).

Children of school-going age must be adequately nourished in order to develop and concentrate on their studies. Continued obstacles identified to contribute to low high school enrollment and against retention rates, are malnutrition and poor health (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2019). Although adequate food remains a universally recognised fundamental right for children, most children attending school cannot satisfy their dietary needs (UNICEF, 2019). Poverty poses a significant risk to the nutritional well-being of children attending school, particularly in sub-Saharan African countries (Bain et al., 2013).

The School Feeding Programme (SFP) is one of the policy interventions implemented by governments in many developing countries to combat threats to adequate nutrition and food security (WFP, 2013). The GSFPs have been implemented since the inception of the United Nations Development Goals in 2000. The aim of the programme has primarily been to mitigate the issue of malnutrition among school-going-age children classified as living within the poverty and hunger class spectrum. An additional objective of the GSFP is to contribute to the realization of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) objective (Tagoe, 2018). Since 2005, the program has been operating fully as part of the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP). Further, the implementation of the GSFP is in fulfillment of the initial and subsequent Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which aim to eliminate extreme poverty and hunger, as well as establish Universal Primary Education (UPE) across countries.

The SFP's fundamental objective in Ghana was to ensure that children attending public primary and kindergarten schools are provided with a single, nourishing meal per day, comprised of locally sourced ingredients. Since its establishment, the programme has achieved notable outcomes in student enrolment, retention, academic achievement, attendance, and school attrition (Adjei et al., 2024; Mahama, 2018).

Major accomplishments of the GSFP have been the reduction of gender disparity in fundamental education, increased school enrollment, and improved student retention (Mahama, 2018). The provision of one daily, nourishing, hot meal was associated with higher enrollment, attendance, and retention rates among students, according to a study conducted in the Tamale Metropolis of Ghana (Awojobi, 2019). Similarly, enrollment increased in elementary schools in the Atwima Mponua and Atwima Nwabiagya Districts of the Ashanti Region, where meals were provided (Serebour, 2017).

Furthermore, there was an increase in the number of females able to attend school within the Wa Municipality after the school feeding intervention was implemented (Mahama, 2018). Enrollment in primary education was also significantly impacted by the SFP in the Northern Region's Telensi District (Awojobi, 2019). According to the study, there was a 213-student increase in school enrollment in the district after the implementation of the programme (Awojobi, 2019). To strengthen the aforementioned indicators regarding the contributions of SFPs to increased enrollment, retention, and attendance, it is necessary to expand our focus beyond the borders of Ghana.

An evaluation of the efficacy of SFP in Burkina Faso found a positive correlation between school canteens and increased enrollment, as well as consistent attendance at school (Kamaludeen, 2014). In his study detailing the effects of the GSFP on student enrollment and retention, Mahama (2018) noted that the initiative sustains 1.6 million students across Ghana. Extensive research has been conducted on the program's influence on the mentioned academic achievements and other noteworthy outcomes. Nevertheless, there is a dearth of literature regarding the perceived effectiveness of the school feeding program by parents, which creates a knowledge gap regarding its effect on parental income across the board. This study sets the pace with a focus on unravelling this at the district level. The study aims to address this deficiency by conducting a methodical investigation to determine whether or not the program has successfully enhanced the financial circumstances of parents at the district level. The research aims to concentrate on the subsequent objectives: (a) examine parents' perceptions of the extent to which the SFP has been effective in motivating them to enrol their children, (b) examine parents' perceptions of the extent to which the SFP has been effective in improving their level of income and finances, and (c) determine the relationship between the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of parents and their perceptions on the extent of effectiveness of the SFP.

This study contributes to the existing corpus of knowledge on the SFP, as prior research has primarily focused on the effects of the intervention from the students' standpoint, specifically regarding enrollment, retention, and academic performance. Furthermore, the study's findings serve as valuable insights and provide a foundation for policy development by governmental and private entities. The results also guarantee the program's sustainability and enhancement at the district level, and, by extension, developing economies that use such business models in the education sector.

Theoretical Framework

Burrhus Frederick Skinner (1904–1990), formulated the Incentive Theory of Motivation. As defined broadly by Huitt (2011), motivation is the aspiration or desire that drives and directs individuals to engage in goal-oriented conduct. Olusegun (2012) also defines it as the capacity to induce behavioral change. A motivation for action exists because human conduct is oriented toward specific objectives (Olusegun, 2012). Accordingly, motivation is intrinsic when an individual's drive originates internally and is predicated on their aspirations and desires. In contrast to intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation is characterised by the influence of external factors, including promotions, rewards, and praise, on an individual's motivation. The extension of the theory is evident in the social and human capital theories.

For the purpose of this study, the Incentive Theory of Motivation, which is extrinsic in nature, is applied. This theory states that human actions change towards a positive direction when positive external forces or motivators activate these actions. The theory emphasises that human actions are repeatedly observed as long as these external forces remain and one continuously becomes attracted to them.

In most deprived communities, the daily cost of feeding at school represents a major challenge for most parents and guardians. They would quickly respond to the school feeding package by encouraging their school-going children to take advantage of it. Similarly, parents would be encouraged or motivated to develop a savings attitude by responding to the feeding package.

2. Materials and Methods

Research Philosophy/ Paradigm

In this paper, the pragmatist's philosophical paradigm is employed. It emphasizes the research gap (problem) identified and assumes that knowledge about the identified gap can be obtained using different methods. Creswell (2014) also perceived the philosophy of pragmatism as a research paradigm that permits the researcher to choose from a range of techniques, approaches and processes that are presumed to be suitable for meeting the purpose for which a study is conducted. The rationale for selecting this paradigm for the research was to utilize an explanatory sequential mixed method to provide a more comprehensive qualitative explanation for the quantitative findings after their occurrence (Creswell, 2014).

Research Design

The research employed an explanatory sequential mixed design, which facilitated the acquisition of more reliable and comprehensive findings by supplementing the explanations of quantitative data

results with subsequent qualitative data results (Creswell, 2014). A combination of quantitative and qualitative data acquired from participants (via interviews and questionnaires) was analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively as part of the mixed methods design of the study.

Study Area

Assin South District (Figure 1) is a constituent of the 22 Municipal and District Assemblies in the Central Region and one of 260 Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies in Ghana (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013). The geographical coordinates of Assin South District are 10° 2' W longitude and 50° 30' N latitude. Its neighbouring districts are Abura Asebu Kwamankese District to the south, Asikuma Odoben-Brakwa and Ajumako Enyan Essiam to the east, and Assin North Municipality to the north (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013). As of 2013, the Assin South District has a recorded population of 104,244 individuals (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013). The composition of the 104,244-person population is as follows: 50,936 males comprise the remaining 48.9%, while 53,308 females comprise 51.1%. Also, 77.3% of the population aged 11 and older are literate, while 22.75% lack literacy. Males constitute a greater proportion (85.3%) of the literate population than females (70.0%). Agriculture is a significant economic sector comprising approximately 68% of the district's economy. Additionally, small-scale cottage industries are present to facilitate the refining of oil palm, palm kernel, and cassava as value-added agribusinesses. These constitute the primary means of subsistence for the populace. The district cultivates cassava, plantain, maize, and legumes as its primary agricultural products. Cocoa, citrus, and oil palm comprise the component of cash commodities that sustain the population's way of life.

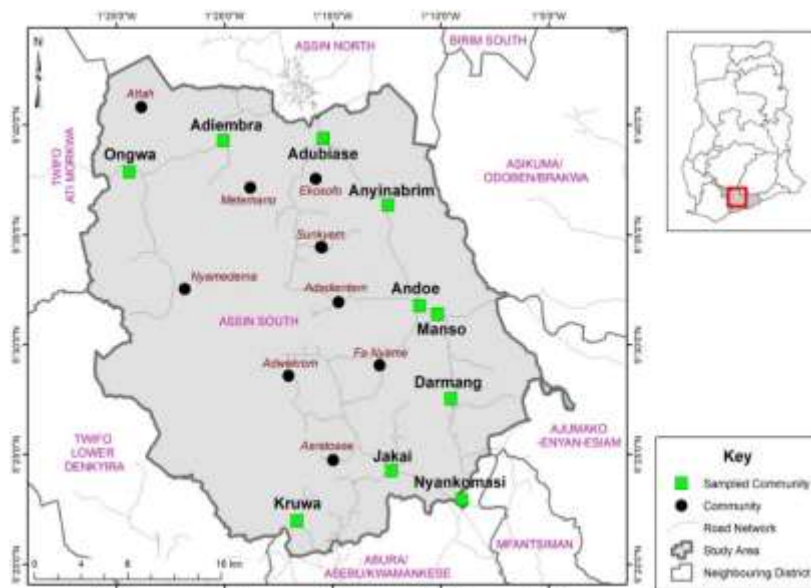


Fig. 1. Map of Assin South District showing the Study Area in Black Dots (Department of Geography and Regional Planning, UCC)

Sampling Procedure and Sampling Size

The study used 109 beneficiary parents (Table 1). The number of parents was obtained from the 10 Educational Circuits in the district. The breakdown of the number of parents from the 10 Educational Circuits is represented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Population of Parents from the 10 Educational Circuits in the Assin South District

Names of Circuits	Number of Parents
Adiembra	10
Andoe	10
Manso	13
Darmang	12
Ongwa	11
Jakai	10

Names of Circuits	Number of Parents
Kruwa	10
Nyankumasi	13
Adubiase	9
Anyinabrim	11
Total	109

Parent respondents were randomly selected from each of the 10 Educational Circuits schools' admission registers. Names of parents in the admission registers for each of the selected schools (Table 2) were listed. Respondents' names were randomly selected with the help of class teachers. Table 2 presents the number of parent respondents selected from the 10 Educational Circuits.

Table 2. Names of Circuits and Number of Parent Respondents

Name of Circuits	Number of Parents/Guardians
Adiembra	8
Andoe	7
Manso	8
Darmang	8
Ongwa	5
Jakai	5
Kruwa	4
Nyankumasi	8
Adubiase	5
Anyinabrim	5
Total	63

Data Collection

Quantitative data were gathered through the administration of questionnaires, while qualitative data were acquired through informal interviews. The combined research approach influenced our selection of these instruments. Additionally, variables such as the perceived effectiveness of SFP in motivating parents to enroll their school-going children and the perceived effectiveness of the SFP in improving the income level and finances of parents were measured on a Likert-type scale from 0 to 5 and interpreted as follows: 0 (cannot tell), 1 (Very Lowly Effective), 2 (Lowly Effective), 3 (Moderately Effective), 4 (Effective) and 5 (Very Effective).

A total of ten parents participated in the interview segment (Sarfo et al., 2021). We administered the validated and pretested research instruments to the participants in their native dialect. The participants' responses were meticulously and precisely documented to streamline the data analysis process. Respondents were informed of the study's objectives and guaranteed that any information they provided would be used solely for academic purposes and would be treated with the utmost confidentiality before administering the instruments. Additionally, the timetables of the respondents were considered to ensure that their daily activities did not disrupt the scheduled meeting hours.

Data Processing and Analysis

For the purpose of employing mixed methods in the study, data processing and analysis were done in two different stages. The quantitative data obtained from administered questionnaires were coded and entered into SPSS Version 25 during the initial phase. The rationale is to produce the necessary and suitable statistical tools for the analysis, including frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, and correlations.

In the second stage, the qualitative data collected through informal interviews were manually transcribed and analysed using thematic content analysis. The study conducted audio-recorded interviews in Fante and was verbatim transcribed by the research team. Here, the transcribed data were read through to identify meanings and patterns. The identified meanings and patterns were coded and categorized into basic themes. This was followed by grouping and sorting the basic

themes into organising themes. The organising themes were then sorted, and similar themes merged into concluding themes, such as:

- A. Perceived Effectiveness of SFP
 - i. Efficacy in Motivating School Enrollment
 - ii. Impact on Parent's Financial Well-being

These themes were made to constitute the general themes for interpretation and reporting.

4. Results

Socio-Economic and Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The analysis of respondents' socio-economic and demographic characteristics is displayed in [Table 3](#). A significant proportion of parents (28.6%) were found to be aged 35 years or older. The demographic composition of respondents suggests that a significant proportion of them are financially accountable and may have greater financial obligations, such as covering the cost of feeding their children. As a result, they may be more receptive to the school feeding initiative to alleviate a portion of their feeding expenses. Again, the analysis outcomes regarding the respondents' marital status are presented in [Table 3](#). The results indicate that 87.3 % of parents were married, which represents the majority of respondents' status.

Table 3. Socio-economic and Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 63)

Characteristics of Respondents	Freq.	%
Age		
≤35	18	28.6
>35	45	71.4
Marital Status		
Unmarried	8	12.7
Married	55	87.3
Educational Status		
No formal education	4	6.3
Formal education	59	93.7
Alternative source of income		
Yes	61	96.8
No	2	3.2
Number of Dependents		
≤4	16	25.4
>4	47	74.6
Source of funds for the business		
Banks	0	0.0
Personal savings	39	61.9
Others	24	38.1

The observation that higher percentages of responses are attributed to the marital status of respondents may suggest that a significant proportion of them have sizable families, which could potentially enhance the availability of labour in their daily income-generating endeavours, and consequently improve their living conditions. Conversely, a greater proportion of married respondents may indicate that the majority of them have greater responsibilities regarding their dependents, which the school nutrition initiative could assist in part with.

In addition, the analysis results regarding the respondents' educational attainment are displayed in [Table 3](#). The data in the table indicate that a significant proportion of parents (93.7 %) possessed some level of formal education, while only 6.3% lacked any formal education. This may suggest that a significant proportion of them held favorable views regarding education and was thus incentivized to enrol their offspring in school.

Furthermore, the outcomes of the analysis regarding the alternative sources of income of the respondents are presented in [Table 3](#). A significant proportion of the parents, comprising 96.8 % of

the sample, possessed supplementary sources of income. The presence of supplementary sources of income among the majority of respondents may indicate that the majority of them do not face economic disadvantages, thereby reducing their reliance on the feeding initiative as a means of subsistence. The outcomes may also indicate that the SFP has a greater potential to alleviate a portion of the financial strain experienced by parents who are unemployed.

Additionally, the outcomes of the analysis regarding the number of dependents of the respondents are presented in Table 3. Each respondent had a significant number of dependents, varying between three and eight. The findings may indicate that each respondent had a certain number of dependents who could supplement their labour requirements, thereby relieving them of the financial burden associated with labour in their economic and business endeavours and ultimately contributing to improving their standard of living. The findings may also suggest that some participants had obligations toward dependents and could have utilized the school nutrition program to alleviate some of these responsibilities.

The outcomes of the analysis regarding the sources of funds utilized by respondents for their businesses are concluded in Table 3. The data reveals that a significant proportion of the parents, comprising 61.9%, funded their enterprises with personal savings. Due to the fact that they obtained their funds from personal reserves, they may have been unable to obtain financing from financial institutions on account of insufficient collateral.

Perceived Effectiveness of SFP in Motivating Parents to Enroll Their School-Going Children

Table 4 provides the mean analysis of how parents in the Assin South District perceived the extent of effectiveness of SFP in motivating them to enrol their children. It can be observed that, for the 'reduced sickness rate' (mean = 3.21; SD = 0.57), respondents perceived the SFP as 'moderate'. It can also be observed from the table that a composite means of 3.7 with a standard deviation of 0.40 was obtained. This supports the fact that most parents perceived the SFP as 'effective' in driving them to enrol their children in school.

Table 4. Perceived Effectiveness of the SFP in Motivating Parents to Enroll Their Children

Perceived Effectiveness	Mean	SD
Burden of feeding costs alleviated	3.95	0.21
Quality and nutritious foods are served	3.70	0.46
Children eat less at home than they eat in school	3.65	0.48
Children's sickness rate is reduced due to the fortified foods	3.21	0.57
Diversity in foods served to children	3.89	0.32
Children eat whenever they attend school	3.83	0.38
Composite	3.70	0.40

Informal interviews with respondents provided the following statements, as shared on the reason they got motivated to send their children to school. A female respondent summarized this as follows:

"In fact, I can confidently say that this food intervention was brought to this village because of me and purposely to save my situation. I see no reason why I should not be motivated to let my children go to school. The cost of feeding is no longer my burden because the programme has taken care of it" [IV-Parent Respondent 1].

In a similar informal interview, a 42-year-old smallholder farmer articulated why she got motivated to send her children to school:

"Through the efforts of our local leaders, we are now enjoying the programme. My children can now boast of enjoying foods like 'gari and beans' with fried plantain, banku and okro stew, rice and stew, and others which they (my children) did not have the opportunity to eat at home" [IV-Parent Respondent 2].

Perceived Effectiveness of the SFP in Improving the Income Level and Finances of Parents

The mean analysis of parental perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the school nutrition program in enhancing their financial situation and income level is displayed in Table 5. Regarding

‘increased income level’ (mean = 3.73; SD = 0.45) and ‘provision of financial support to some family members’ (mean = 3.11; SD = 0.41), Table 5 indicates that parents regarded the SFP as ‘effective’. Furthermore, the results illustrate a composite mean of 3.24 and a standard deviation of 0.43. This result indicates that a significant proportion of participants assessed the program’s efficacy in assisting them in enhancing their financial situation and income as “moderately effective.”

Table 5. Perceived Effectiveness of the SFP in Improving the Income Level and Finances of Parents

Perceived Effectiveness	Mean	SD
Increased income level	3.73	0.45
Decreased my debts.	3.33	0.48
Saved money on healthcare	3.13	0.42
Settled some financial commitments.	3.14	0.43
Increased savings with banks.	3.25	0.44
Paid school fees for my children in tertiary schools.	3.06	0.35
Acquired an appreciable loan amount due to increased	3.14	0.43
Saved money to support some family members.	3.11	0.41
Composite	3.24	0.43

Notes: n = 63

A respondent in an informal interview expressed her views and opinions as to how the SFP has brought improvement to her finances:

“I have taken advantage of the SFP to save some money to take care of other expenses. This has been possible because the afternoon meal served to my children at school is able to sustain them till evening, so the issue of spending money on food for lunch is no longer a problem. I also do not spend much on food for supper because they come home with their stomachs already filled” [IV-Parent Respondent 3].

Relationship between Parents’ Demographic and Socio-economic Characteristics and their Perceptions on the extent of Effectiveness of the SFP

The objective of this study was to examine the correlation between the perceived efficacy of the SFP by participants and their demographic and socio-economic attributes. The correlation coefficients (r) and p-values for the different independent variables were calculated through analysis utilising the Pearson moment Correlation Coefficient.

The relationships between respondents’ demographic and socio-economic characteristics and the perceived efficacy of the program in improving their standard of living are displayed in Table 6. The findings suggest that the perceived efficacy of the program is positively or negatively correlated with the gender of the respondents. A clear correlation can be observed between the perceived efficacy of the program and the gender of the respondent. This implies that male and female participants might have distinct perspectives regarding the program’s influence on their means of subsistence.

Although educational achievement is correlated in a positive way with the perceived efficacy of the program, parental educational achievement does not inherently dictate the program’s effectiveness. The aforementioned discovery underscores the intricate nature of the correlation between education and program outcomes. Individual motivation, resource accessibility, and skill development may exert a more substantial influence on the efficacy of programs than parental educational attainment in isolation.

Table 6. Relationship between Parents’ Demographic and Socio-economic Characteristics and their Perceptions on the extent of Effectiveness of SFP

Y=Perceived effectiveness (Dependent Variable)			
Independent Variables (X)	Correlation Coefficient(r)	p-value	Type of correlation
Sex (X ₁)	0.31*	0.014	Point biserial
Age (X ₂)	-0.31*	0.013	Pearson

Marital Status (X ₃)	-0.42**	0.001	Point biserial
Educational Level (X ₄)	0.02	0.875	Spearman
Number of Dependents (X ₅)	-0.42**	0.001	Pearson
Alternative Sources of Income (X ₆)	-0.10	0.459	Point biserial

Notes: n= 63, **p<0.01, *p< 0.05.

Additionally, while education may contribute to program effectiveness, other factors should also be considered, such as access to resources, socio-economic status, and individual circumstances. Programme evaluations should be comprehensive and consider a range of demographic and socio-economic characteristics to understand better the factors influencing program outcomes.

4. Discussion

Efficacy in Motivating School Enrollment

The results from Table 4 confirm the findings of the SFP survey carried out by Osei (2011), which showed that 92 % of parents perceived the SFP program as effective in motivating them to maintain their children's enrollment in school. This corroborates the idea that the SFP plays a significant role in improving school enrollment by easing the financial burden on families, particularly concerning feeding costs. The fact that parents attribute this motivation to non-payment of feeding fees suggests that eliminating the cost of school meals substantially impacts families, especially those facing economic hardships. This observation is also aligned with the findings from Oganga (2013), which indicated that the World Food Programme's (WFP) School Feeding Initiative in Tanzania had a similar impact on ensuring higher enrollment rates. The finding was a motivating factor for parents to keep their children in school. The consistency of these results across different geographical regions (Ghana and Tanzania) reinforces the broader applicability and effectiveness of school feeding programs in encouraging school enrollment, particularly in low-income households.

Impact on Parent's Financial Well-being

The results regarding the perceived effectiveness of the SFP in improving parents' income and financial well-being are in agreement with similar findings made by Tagoe (2018), who found that many parents in the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP) had adopted a culture of financial savings as a result of the program. According to Tagoe's study, 73 % of parents perceived the SFP as effective in improving their finances by freeing up funds that would have otherwise been spent on feeding their children at school. Additionally, the WFP (2013) report concurs with this assertion, stating that the SFP has relieved poor parents from the financial burden of providing meals for their children every school day. This aligns with the findings of Table 5, suggesting that one of the key benefits of school feeding programs is the financial relief they provide to families, which enables them to redirect resources to cater for other household needs or savings.

Complex Relationships Between Socio-economic Characteristics and Program Effectiveness

The discussion on the correlation between the socio-economic characteristics of parents and the perceived effectiveness of the SFP acknowledges the complex relationships that exist between demographic factors (such as gender, income, and ethnicity) and the program's outcomes. Studies by Hübel et al. (2023) and Behrman (2015), have highlighted the influence of gender on perceptions of socio-economic issues and program outcomes. Behrman's research in Bangladesh, for example, revealed that while stipend programs can reduce gender gaps in school attainment, they fail to address underlying socio-economic disparities that continue to affect marginalised groups.

Moreover, research in Vietnam's upland regions by Tran et al. (2022) suggests that ethnicity can play a more substantial role than gender in determining the resilience of livelihoods. However, gender disparities are still observed in such studies. These findings suggest that when designing development programs like the SFP, it is crucial to account for the intersectionality of different demographic factors, such as gender, ethnicity, income, and education. The results from these studies, which the current study supports, indicate that a program's effectiveness is determined by the overall intervention and how well it addresses the unique needs of different demographic groups.

5. Limitations

A handful of parents lacked complete cooperation with the researchers throughout the data collection phase, citing their discontent with the quantity and quality of meals provided for their children. Furthermore, this caused a significant extension in the designated timeframe for data collection for this study, as the researcher had to invest a substantial amount of time convincing these participants to partake in the study. Once more, some teachers had recently been appointed substantive head teachers and were, as a result, unaware of certain programme-related matters around the SFP within their schools. Hence, the potential existed for them to provide erroneous answers.

6. Implications of the study

The study makes a theoretical contribution to the comprehension of motivation theory through its investigation of the relationship between parental income status improvement perceptions and participation in the SFP. This elucidates the significance of community cohesion, social networks, and trust in facilitating access to opportunities and resources.

Furthermore, the research offers valuable insights regarding the correlation between education, which is considered a type of human capital, and the SFP's perceived efficacy. Contributing to the literature on human capital theory as a component of the motivation theory, it investigates whether parents with higher levels of education perceive the program differently with regard to its effect on socio-economic status.

The study also contributes to the socio-economic status framework by examining the correlation between perceived SFP effectiveness and socio-economic status. Parental perceptions of the program's efficacy in enhancing their income status may be clarified with variables including occupation and income.

The study's practical implication is that policymakers can utilize these findings to inform their decision-making processes concerning social welfare programs and initiatives aimed at alleviating poverty in decentralized communities. Understanding how parents perceive the effectiveness of the SFP can inform policy modifications that seek to optimize the program's influence on poverty reduction and income status.

In addition to promoting community involvement and participation in the SFP, the study provides a forum for parents to express their thoughts and apprehensions. By involving stakeholders in the decision-making and planning phases, programs can increase their acceptance and sustainability.

Potential capacity-building initiatives that aim to empower parents and improve their livelihood prospects economically can be formulated in light of the study's findings. Supplementing the SFP's benefits may involve instruction in income-generating endeavors, financial literacy, and entrepreneurial competencies, which this study did not fully cover.

Lastly, the research emphasises the significance of continuous monitoring and evaluation of social welfare initiatives to gauge their efficacy and influence on recipients.

7. Conclusion and Recommendation

The Ghanaian government employs school feeding as one of its policy interventions to combat food insecurity in rural areas. The primary objective is to furnish children attending specific public primary schools and kindergartens situated in the most impoverished regions of the nation with a solitary hot, nourishing meal every day, comprised entirely of locally sourced ingredients.

The findings of the research indicated that a significant proportion of parents regarded the intervention as "effective" (mean = 3.7, SD = 0.40) in incentivizing them to register their children in school. These results offer a rationale for the recent substantial surge in student enrollment at the majority of elementary schools within the district.

The results of the study regarding parents' perceptions of the program's efficacy in enhancing their financial situation and income level indicated that majority of participants regarded its effectiveness as "moderate" (Mean = 3.24; SD = 0.43). Enrollment will increase even further, the study suggests that the Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service, and Ministry of Gender and Social Protection agency revise the program to provide two hot meals per student, as opposed to just one. Once more, it is recommended that the program be expanded to encompass private schools as well as other educational institutions across the nation.

8. Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

A letter was composed and forwarded to the Department of Agricultural Extension and Economics before the initiation of field data collection. The purpose of this letter was to request a letter of introduction from the research respondents, which ensured their willingness to participate in the study. Prior to the commencement of data collection, ethical authorization was additionally obtained from the Institutional Review Board of the University of Cape Coast (IRB-UCC). This served as ethical justification and ensured the utmost importance of the research agenda. This also ensured the consent and assent of research respondents to the study.

Consent for publication

Not applicable

Availability of data and materials

Data and other relevant documents to this manuscript are available upon request.

Conflict of interest statement

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

Authors' contributions

A.T.K.N., D.A., S.O. and B.C designed this study. S.O. collected and analysed data. All authors contributed to the writing of the paper and reviewed the manuscript. All authors read and approved the manuscript.


Funding


This research received no external funding. However, the author sincerely thanks the Centre for Behaviour and Wellness Advocacy, Ghana, for providing financial support through the Institutional Open Access Publication Fund.


Acknowledgement


We acknowledge the contribution of field enumerators and colleagues who contributed to the paper. This paper was extracted from the master's dissertation titled, "*Perceived Effectiveness of the Ghana School Feeding Programme in Improving the Socio-economic Lives of Beneficiary Communities in the Assin South District in Central Region, Ghana*".

Authors' ORCID

Alexander Tetteh Kwasi Nuer  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6646-341X>

Daniel Adjei  <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-7685-5762>

Selorm Omega  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9159-9351>

Benjamin Chris Ampimah  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2290-7853>

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