

Lived Experiences of the Beneficiaries and Stakeholders on School-based Feeding Program in Selected Public Elementary Schools: Basis for the Development of an Action Plan

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ABSTRACT

This study dwells on the lived experiences of parents, teachers, school leaders, and program implementers of the School-Based Feeding Program (SBFP) in selected public elementary schools in Los Baños, Laguna. Using a phenomenographic approach, it looked into insights that shaped a practical and community-driven action plan. Four key themes emerged: (1) Stakeholder roles- teachers, administrators, and parents worked together to implement and monitor the program; (2) Enabling factors- collaboration, volunteerism, nutrition and hygiene education improved program delivery; (3) Challenges- budget delays, logistics issues, limited engagement, and misaligned schedules affected sustainability; and (4) Lived Experience and Recommendations- routine health checks, stronger partnerships, improved infrastructure, and policy support were suggested. Guided by the WFP-UNICEF Theory of Change, the study reveals that school feeding programs thrive not only through policy but also through people, when communities are empowered, voices are heard. Support systems work together to achieve better nutrition and learning for all children.

1. Introduction

Rethinking food systems, from production to consumption, has never been more urgent. The world is facing a global nutrition crisis, with malnutrition affecting most of the population, either as hunger, food insecurity, obesity, or diet-related diseases. Many countries experience multiple malnutrition burdens simultaneously, and very few are on course to meet nutrition-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) ("School meals: A unique opportunity to address multiple food systems challenges," n.d.)

The right to food and freedom from hunger is a basic human right. The right to adequate food is embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on

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Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. The 1987 Philippine Constitution, Article XV Section 3 provides “*that the state shall ensure the right of children to proper care and nutrition.*” However, the right to adequate food does not mean simply giving away free food. Instead, it means making sure people can feed themselves with dignity. The government's duty, as a duty bearer, is to help protect this right, while the people, as rights holders, also have the responsibility to respect and support it.

Local Government Units (LGUs) have a key role in promoting this right by creating and carrying out nutrition plans and programs in their communities. If they fail to do so, they can be held accountable by the people. This means that LGUs must make sure food is available in their areas so that everyone can live without hunger and with dignity. The Department of Education (DepEd), with its supportive Department Orders (DO), has implemented the School-Based Feeding Program (SBFP) since the early 1990s. The program aims to improve the learning performance of primary school children by providing them with nutritious meals in school. The DepEd has developed an integrated nutrition intervention program to address malnutrition. This program is formulated under the leadership of the National Nutrition Council (NNC), which serves as the coordinating body for implementing nutrition-related programs and projects of the government, especially the DepEd DO No. 39, series of 2017.

The *Masustansyang Pagkain para sa Batang Pilipino Act or Republic Act 11037* institutionalizes a National Feeding Program for Undernourished Children in Public Day Care, Kindergarten, and Elementary Schools. It promotes addressing undernutrition and hunger by targeting SBFP primary beneficiaries with hot meals for at least 120 feeding days to ensure the improvement in nutritional status and to reduce micronutrient deficiencies for the enhancement of school participation and learning outcomes of learners.

Despite these interventions, malnutrition remains a major concern in the Philippines. According to Mojica-Sevilla and Hanzel (2023), millions of school children are still at risk of undernutrition, which can hinder their cognitive development and long-term productivity. Interventions like SBFP are considered crucial as they not only address immediate hunger but also serve as social safety nets that support learning, health, and the right to adequate food. Viajar et al. (2020) and the Department of Science and Technology–Food and Nutrition Research Institute (DOST-FNRI, 2020) affirm that SBFP implementation has led to measurable improvements in BMI-for-age, weight-for-age, and height-for-age among school children. Teachers and parents have also reported improved alertness, school attendance, and academic performance. School food procurement is part of a broader global approach to sustainable public food procurement, which is expressly recognized by the SDGs (Target 12.7, Promote public procurement practices that are sustainable) as a key instrument to promote more sustainable consumption and production patterns (“School meals: A unique opportunity to address multiple food systems challenges,” n.d.)

Despite numerous studies on SBFP, there remains a lack of focused research exploring the extent of policy implementation in selected public elementary schools in the Philippines, particularly from the perspectives of the primary and secondary beneficiaries and stakeholders. While quantitative data on nutrition outcomes and attendance rates are available, there is limited qualitative evidence capturing the lived experiences of students, parents, teachers, and program implementers. This gap hinders a more grounded understanding of how policies translate into practice at the school level. Lived experiences, as interpreted through one’s lifeworld, shape the meanings and interpretations that influence individual choices (Newbuaer et al., 2019, as cited in Midkiff, 2025). Studying these lived experiences requires decoding conversations provided by study participants to highlight how their perceptions of being shaped their decisions (Newbuaer et al., 2019, as cited in Midkiff, 2025).

Furthermore, existing evaluations tend to emphasize either logistical or nutritional outcomes, often overlooking how policy execution is experienced and perceived by those directly involved. The voices of those most affected—students and school personnel—are frequently underrepresented in the literature. Additionally, localized studies that consider the unique challenges and strengths of individual schools or regions are scarce, despite the decentralized nature of the implementation. There is also a shortage of studies that utilize these lived experiences as a foundation for developing context-specific action plans aimed at improving the program. As such, the current research intends to address these gaps by examining the policy extent of the SBFP through the lived experiences of its stakeholders in selected public elementary schools, ultimately serving as a basis for formulating a responsive and practical action plan.

This study is grounded in the Theory of Change (ToC) adapted from the frameworks of the World Food Programme (WFP) and UNICEF, which illustrates a structured pathway from inputs to long-term outcomes, emphasizing community involvement, government accountability, and sustainable system building. It also incorporates Amartya Sen's Capability Approach, which underscores the importance of freedom and agency in achieving well-being. Complementing the theoretical foundation is the study's conceptual framework, which highlights the core components of the SBFP, such as the roles of stakeholders, facilitating and hindering factors, program processes, and the significance of lived experiences. This integrated framework supports a phenomenographic inquiry into how the SBFP is experienced by its beneficiaries and stakeholders and how those experiences can inform the development of a context-based action plan.

Aiming to examine the extent of policy implementation of the School-Based Feeding Program (SBFP) in selected public elementary schools in the Philippines, this seeks to understand how the program is experienced by its primary and secondary stakeholders and to use these insights as the foundation for developing a context-specific and responsive action plan, ultimately serving as a basis for formulating a responsive and practical action plan.

2. Methods

This study employed a qualitative research design using a phenomenographic approach. Phenomenography is an interpretative research methodology that focuses on identifying and describing the different ways people experience, understand, perceive, and conceptualize a phenomenon. This approach allows the researcher to decode the participants' conversations to focus on the underpinnings of their perceptions of being and how these shape the decisions they make. The study was conducted in four selected public elementary schools in Los Baños, Laguna: Lalakay Elementary School, Bambang Elementary School, Los Baños Central Elementary School, and Mayondon Elementary School. These schools were chosen based on their implementation of the School-Based Feeding Program (SBFP) and their varying contexts.

Data were gathered through qualitative methods such as Key Informant Interviews (KII), Focus Group Discussions (FGD), document analysis, and observation. The KIIs were conducted with four school heads, four SBFP focal persons, and three parents per school, totaling 12 parents, using validated interview guides and observation checklists. FGDs were held with the same set of parents per school to validate the data collected and allow participants to share and reflect on their collective experiences. Purposive sampling was used to select participants based on their direct involvement in the implementation and experience of the SBFP. Inclusion criteria included: school personnel currently assigned to the participating school implementing SBFP, and parents or guardians responsible for SBFP beneficiaries in the same schools.

Before data collection, an Informed Consent Form was signed by all participants to ensure ethical standards were upheld. Observation checklists were utilized to examine program facilities and processes such as kitchen setup, storage areas, hygiene and sanitation facilities, and the presence of "*Gulayan sa Paaralan*" or school gardening. These observations helped validate the information shared during the interviews and focus groups and provided contextual support to the study's findings. To ensure data credibility, triangulation was applied through the use of multiple data sources and techniques. The recorded interviews and discussions were transcribed verbatim, translated into English when necessary, and analyzed through thematic coding. The research process also included validation of data through member-checking and peer debriefing.

This methodology allowed for a thorough exploration of the lived experiences of SBFP stakeholders, revealing the dynamics of implementation and providing insight into factors that affect the program's effectiveness in selected public elementary schools.

3. Results and Discussion

Findings were obtained from the lived experiences, feedback, and recommendations of participants during KIIs and FGDs, and were analyzed thematically.

Table 1. Summary of the Thematic Analysis in relation to the Research Questions

RQ	Theme
1. What roles do stakeholders (school administrators, teachers, and program implementers) and parents play in ensuring the implementation of the School-Based Feeding Program?	1. Coordination with local government units (LGUs) and other stakeholders,
	2. Supervision of the feeding program
	3. Integration of nutrition topics into the curriculum
	4. Documentation, reporting, monitoring, and recording
	5. Provision of parental consent
	6. Participation as food preparation volunteers
	7. Identification of beneficiaries
2. What are the facilitating factors that influence the efficiency and effectiveness of School-Based Feeding Programs?	1. Collaborative efforts of stakeholders
	2. Effective implementation of monitoring and program evaluation
	3. Receptive feedback mechanisms
	4. Supportive orientation sessions and integration of values and hygiene education
	5. Committed volunteerism
	6. Responsive realization of academic and health objectives as reinforcement
3. What challenges, limitations, and hindering factors do stakeholders (teachers, administrators, and program implementers) and parents encounter in implementing the School-Based Feeding Program? And how do these affect sustainability?	1. Budget limitations and operational gaps
	2. Logistics and delivery constraints
	3. Food preferences and eating behavior of beneficiaries
	4. Monitoring, reporting, and staff workload
	5. Volunteer fatigue and weak stakeholder orientation
	6. Communication gaps
	7. Limited parental engagement
	8. Misalignment between feeding and academic schedules
	9. Reimbursement-based funding delays.
4. What insights and recommendations can be drawn from the lived experiences of beneficiaries and stakeholders to enhance the School-Based Feeding Program and serve as a basis for the development of a sustainable action plan?	1. Community involvement and stakeholder engagement
	2. Monitoring and evaluation
	3. Meal quality and nutritional relevance
	4. Program infrastructure and sustainability
	5. Integration with educational outcomes
	6. Policy and systemic change, particularly in scaling up and benchmarking for replication.

Table 1 summarizes the major themes, while subsections 3.1 to 3.4 discuss these in detail. This research concludes with the proposed Action Plan (Figure 1), which consolidates stakeholder insights into a roadmap for sustaining the SBFP in Los Baños.

This section, as shown in the table, **Summary of the Thematic Analysis in relation to the Research Questions**, presents findings drawn from the lived experiences of stakeholders and beneficiaries of the SBFP. The analysis is structured around the study's primary research questions and aligns with the theoretical foundations of the ToC adapted from WFP-UNICEF, as well as the conceptual framework highlighting the multifaceted nature of nutrition, education, and community involvement.

3.1. Stakeholder and Parental Roles in SBFP Implementation

The first major theme highlighted the diverse and pivotal roles assumed by stakeholders — including school administrators, teachers, program implementers, and parents — in ensuring the effective delivery of the School-Based Feeding Program (SBFP). These roles were highly interdependent and reflected a strong participatory governance model, aligning closely with the principles of the Revised School-Based Management (SBM) Framework as stated in DepEd Order No. 83, s. 2012.

Among the core responsibilities identified were the coordination with local government units (LGUs) and other external partners, active oversight of feeding operations, and the seamless integration of nutrition-related topics into classroom instruction. School heads and teachers were found to play critical roles in monitoring program progress, recording daily activities, and ensuring strict adherence to established policies and standards. Meanwhile, parents participated in significant ways — granting consent for their children's involvement, volunteering in food preparation and distribution, and aiding in the identification of students most in need of the program.

These collaborative roles mirrored the community-based approach advocated by the WFP-UNICEF Theory of Change, which emphasizes strengthening existing national structures rather than creating parallel or competing systems (Goldsworthy, 2021). The findings underscored that the success of the SBFP depended not only on institutional planning and policy support but also on the active, grassroots collaboration of stakeholders, wherein schools and parents acted as genuine co-implementers rather than passive beneficiaries.

3.2. Facilitating Factors for Program Efficiency and Effectiveness

The study identified several factors that positively influence the SBFP's efficiency and impact. Notably, collaborative stakeholder engagement emerged as a recurring theme. Teachers, school administrators, community leaders, and health professionals working together help maintain a stable and well-monitored implementation cycle. The presence of systematic monitoring and feedback mechanisms further supports program refinement and transparency.

Orientation sessions, integration of hygiene and values education, and the sustained commitment of volunteers enrich the program beyond mere food delivery. These elements reflect the ToC's emphasis on preventive action and systems strengthening, particularly through multi-sectoral approaches that combine health, nutrition, and education.

The conceptual framework highlights how supportive relationships across institutions and community actors enhance program adaptability and promote shared ownership. As suggested by the positive deviance lens (NNC-NPM, 2021), some communities surpass expected outcomes through proactive behaviors, such as innovation in meal planning and continuous volunteer engagement. These facilitating factors are vital in reinforcing the SBFP's core objectives, especially in fostering improvements in nutritional status and academic attendance.

3.3. Challenges, Limitations, and Hindrances Affecting Sustainability

Despite strong community participation and support systems, the program encounters persistent challenges that threaten its long-term sustainability. Budget limitations, logistical delays, and constraints in food delivery systems are among the most pressing operational issues. These are intensified by delayed reimbursements, which often place financial pressure on schools and volunteers tasked with maintaining food supply chains.

Moreover, the program must cope with children's food preferences and inconsistent eating behaviors, which can hinder nutritional outcomes. Additional concerns include the growing workload of teachers, limited parental involvement in some areas, and weak stakeholder orientation factors that lead to fatigue and disconnection among implementers.

Critically, misalignment between feeding schedules and academic calendars disrupts both learning and feeding processes, highlighting a need for more coordinated program planning. The lack of strong communication channels among stakeholders further hampers efficiency and may obscure feedback from beneficiaries. These findings resonate with the conceptual framework's acknowledgement of systemic barriers and logistical constraints, reinforcing the need for responsive strategies and adaptive leadership.

Recognizing these challenges, the WFP-UNICEF ToC highlights the importance of building resilient supply chains, improving data systems, and investing in early warning mechanisms to mitigate such risks (Reinholz & Andrews, 2020, as cited in Goldsworthy, 2021). In the SBFP context, this would mean equipping school-based management teams with the training, tools, and institutional support needed to respond quickly and effectively to disruptions.

3.4. Lived Experiences and Recommendations for Sustainable Improvement

The final set of themes centered on insights drawn from the lived experiences of program beneficiaries and implementers. Participants emphasized the vital role of community involvement — not only in mobilizing resources, but also in building trust, fostering inclusion, and strengthening accountability. These findings reaffirmed the rights-based approach embedded in the Theory of Change (ToC), which highlights the importance of meaningful community engagement as a cornerstone of sustainable health and nutrition interventions.

Several participants underscored the need for improved meal quality and culturally relevant nutrition planning. They advocated for enhancements to program infrastructure, including the upgrading of school kitchens and storage facilities, as well as closer alignment of nutrition services with academic objectives. Moreover, they called for systemic reforms in policy design and implementation, aligning closely with the ToC's call for multi-sectoral collaboration, locally tailored solutions, and evidence-based approaches that can be effectively scaled and replicated.

Robust monitoring and evaluation emerged as central supports for sustaining program gains. Regular feedback mechanisms were identified as vital tools for ensuring that the program remained responsive to stakeholder needs, while well-defined indicators were seen as critical guides for ongoing improvement. In addition, participants advocated for stronger linkages between nutrition and learning outcomes, suggesting that educational support — such as the integration of nutrition topics into the curriculum and the promotion of behavior modeling — could deepen the program's developmental impact.

At the policy level, streamlining fund disbursement, institutionalizing multi-sectoral partnerships, and benchmarking successful models for replication were identified as key reforms. These recommendations informed the development of the Action Plan (Figure 1), which translates findings into practical strategies for sustaining and scaling up the SBFP.

ACTION PLAN SCHOOL-BASED FEEDING PROGRAM IN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN LOS BAÑOS, LAGUNA 2025 -2030			
Tasks/Action Steps <i>What will be done</i>	Responsibilities <i>Who will do it?</i>	Resources <i>Funding/Time/People/Materials</i>	Timeline <i>By When? Month/Day/Year</i>
Replicate the Central Kitchen to other clustered public elementary schools in Los Baños	Technical Working Group of SBFP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food for the meeting • Transportation allowance for participants • Materials needed, as identified 	Year round
Principals from 6 public elementary schools take turns overseeing the central kitchen.	Principals and PDO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rotation plan • Transportation Allowance 	June to July 2025
Orientation for teachers about the SBFP	Principals and PDOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials for orientation (PPT) • Monitoring and evaluation forms of DepEd SBFP • Food for the orientation • Transportation Allowance (if necessary) 	Month before the start of SBFP
Orientation for parents/guardian about the SBFP	Principals and PDOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials for orientation (PPT) • Consent/Waiver form • Food for the orientation • Transportation Allowance (if necessary) 	Month before the start of SBFP
Submission of intent for additional Technical Assistant Staff for the SBFP	Technical Working Group of SBFP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy or Memo for Endorsement for the opening of the additional personnel 	First Quarter of the School Year
Recognition or Acknowledgement of the beneficiaries with their Parents/Guardians	Principals, PDO and Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificates • Token of appreciation or completion • Food for the event 	After the SBFP period with basis on baseline and endline result
Alliance or networking building with possible external partnerships	Technical Working Group of SBFP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations for the SBFP updates • Food for the orientation 	Depends on the open opportunity
Regular meeting/Updating/Monitoring and Evaluation with the stakeholders like the LGU and other government line agencies	Identified Convener	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations for updates • Food for the meeting 	Depends on the meeting if Quarterly, Monthly


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Figure 1. Action Plan for SBFP Implementation in Los Baños. Laguna

These partnerships can help secure fresh, nutritious food supplies, logistical support, and community engagement, which are critical to the program’s success. Additionally, may institutionalize routine health monitoring, such as weight, height, and BMI assessments, can enable accurate identification of undernourished learners and allow timely adjustments to feeding strategies.

To enhance program outcomes, it is also recommended that it may integrate simple nutrition and hygiene education into daily classroom activities, with active participation from parents and guardians. Conducting regular orientations for teachers and families will reinforce awareness and improve compliance with SBFP objectives. May consider recognition events for beneficiaries and ongoing program evaluations should be maintained to strengthen accountability, measure progress, and motivate continued support. Over the next five years, scaling up central kitchen operations and submitting proposals for additional technical staff may further improve operational efficiency and contribute to reducing undernutrition, improving attendance, and fostering long-term well-being among learners.

4. Conclusion

The study examined the lived experiences of parents, teachers, administrators, and program development officers engaged in the implementation of the School-Based Feeding Program (SBFP) across selected public elementary schools in Los Baños, Laguna. Guided by a phenomenographic approach, it revealed a rich array of insights that deepened understanding of how the SBFP was experienced within its specific context, and how these experiences shaped perceptions of its effectiveness, sustainability, and potential areas for improvement. The conclusions drawn from the study were framed by three core concepts: relative experience, program dynamics, and collaborative or collective engagement, synthesizing stakeholder perspectives and identifying strategic directions for future action.

4.1 Relative Experience

The findings reveal that experiences with the SBFP are highly contextual and shaped by the unique roles, positions, and socio-economic circumstances of stakeholders. Parents often expressed gratitude for the program as it improved daily concerns about food security. For them, the program was not merely a nutrition intervention but a form of social support that directly influenced their children's school attendance, behavior, and academic focus. Teachers and school administrators, on the other hand, viewed the SBFP through the lens of institutional responsibility, highlighting its role in improving classroom engagement and reducing short-term hunger-induced distractions. This relativity of experience is essential for understanding policy impact at the ground level. While all stakeholders acknowledged the SBFP's importance, the meaning they attributed to its success varied depending on their proximity to implementation tasks, access to resources, and exposure to program limitations. Thus, policy evaluation must accommodate these changes to ensure inclusive and equitable refinement.

4.2 Program Dynamics

The SBFP, as observed in the study, operates within a dynamic ecosystem that is continually evolving. From the logistical coordination between central kitchens and satellite schools to real-time decisions on meal preparation, distribution, and monitoring, the implementation process is both complex and adaptive. Key dynamics include: (1) Decentralized leadership through school-based management structures; (2) Stakeholder alignment, particularly through MOAs between DepEd, LGUs, and NGOs; (3) Flexible feedback mechanisms enabling real-time program adjustments. However, these strengths coexist with challenges such as inconsistent monitoring, limited parental engagement, and fluctuating resource availability. The data revealed gaps in data-sharing between schools and LGUs, delays in procurement, and inadequate training for food handlers. Such issues point to the fragility of operational systems, especially in high-pressure scenarios like the COVID-19 pandemic, which necessitated a shift to alternative feeding modalities. These findings affirm that the program's success is not static; it requires constant adjustment informed by real-world feedback, stakeholder experiences, and contextual analysis.

4.3 Collective and Collaborative Processes

Perhaps the most salient conclusion is the fundamental role of collaborative engagement in the program's functionality and sustainability. The SBFP succeeds when stakeholders actively collaborate across institutional and community boundaries. From barangay health workers assisting with feeding, to parents volunteering in meal preparation, to principals forming coordination teams with municipal offices, the program's success is tied to its collective ownership. Collaboration was particularly evident in: (1) Joint planning meetings among schools, LGUs, and the DepEd; (2) Shared digital platforms (e.g., group chats) for daily communication; (3) Parental involvement in feedback loops during SBFP implementation. Such engagement nurtures transparency, builds trust, and increases accountability. Moreover, it reinforces the SBFP not as a top-down policy, but as a community-driven intervention, a model that is both scalable and resilient.

Overall, the SBFP is more than a feeding initiative; it is a multi-sectoral, multi-layered system that intersects health, education, and community development. This research concluded that the program's real impact can only be appreciated when analyzed through the lenses of lived experience, adaptive dynamics, and collaborative practices. These elements form the

foundation of any effort to enhance, scale, or replicate the SBFP in other contexts. The study affirms that policies alone do not create change; it is the people who interpret, implement, and innovate within these policies that drive transformation. Therefore, sustaining the SBFP and maximizing its potential requires empowering local actors, continuously adapting operational mechanisms, and fostering a culture of shared responsibility.

4.4. Implications

This study explored the lived experiences of parents, teachers, administrators, and program coordinators engaged in the implementation of the School-Based Feeding Program (SBFP) across selected public elementary schools in Los Baños, Laguna. Through a phenomenographic approach, the research offered comprehensive insights into the program's on-the-ground operations and illuminated how it was experienced by those directly involved. The findings carried significant implications in three key areas: practically, by providing a foundation for strengthening policy and implementation; theoretically, by deepening understanding of participatory program delivery and educational equity; and methodologically, by underscoring the value of qualitative approaches in capturing the diverse perspectives of stakeholders.

4.4.1. Practical Implications

This study offered valuable insights for stakeholders responsible for managing and implementing the SBFP. It demonstrated that the program's success depended not only on well-crafted policies but also on how effectively it responded to the daily realities and challenges faced by schools, communities, and local government units. An important finding was the need to strengthen policy coordination and operational efficiency. Although the SBFP had a solid foundation, its outcomes were highly reliant on seamless logistics, especially the connection between central kitchens and the schools receiving meals.

The study identified both effective practices and areas in need of improvement, highlighting the significance of stronger collaboration between implementing agencies, regular staff training, and the provision of adequate material and financial resources at the school level. The role of the community was also emphasized, as active participation by parents and local officials fostered a sense of shared responsibility and contributed to the sustainability of the program. Activities such as volunteer work, nutrition education, and parent involvement in monitoring proved critical in strengthening this support.

However, ongoing issues related to budgeting and resource allocation sometimes caused delays and disruptions, underscoring the need for better planning and more robust monitoring by local authorities. The study further emphasized that the SBFP should be viewed as an integral part of a larger educational and health initiative. Through aligning it with complementary efforts such as the Gulayan sa Paaralan program, the WASH in Schools initiative, micronutrient supplementation, deworming activities, and classroom-based nutrition monitoring, its impact on both student health and learning could be significantly enhanced.

In conclusion, the study demonstrated that the long-term success of the SBFP depended not only on providing meals but also on fostering strong partnerships, nurturing active community involvement, ensuring effective program management, and maintaining a clear focus on nutrition as a foundation for children's academic and personal growth.

4.4.2. Theoretical Implications

This study contributed valuable insights to the discourse on school-based nutrition programs by reinforcing and extending existing knowledge in the fields of educational management, child health, and public policy. A key aspect of the research was its confirmation of the

usefulness of the Theory of Change (ToC) model, adapted from the World Food Programme and UNICEF. The findings demonstrated that nutrition programs were most effective when backed by strong collaboration among stakeholders and consistent policy support, leading to both short- and long-term benefits for students' health and academic outcomes.

The study also focused closely on the lived experiences of those directly involved — including parents, teachers, school leaders, and local officials — shedding light on how policies were understood, implemented, and reshaped within the school and community context. By capturing these personal narratives, the research emphasized the importance of making policies more responsive, people-centered, and rooted in local realities. It further supported the notion that engaging local communities and sharing decision-making responsibilities fostered stronger collaboration, more effective monitoring, and improved accountability, ultimately making programs more efficient and transparent.

Moreover, the study offered a nuanced view of the right to food as a lived, everyday reality. In line with the World Health Organization's assertion that the right to health is closely connected to other rights — such as access to adequate food, clean water, safe housing, and a decent standard of living — the findings demonstrated that food security was not merely an abstract legal concept but a concrete, lived experience shaped by local circumstances.

4.4.3. Methodological Implications

Beyond its practical and theoretical significance, this study offered valuable lessons for researchers examining policy implementation, school health programs, and community education projects. By exploring the complex realities of the School-Based Feeding Program (SBFP), it demonstrated effective ways to carry out thorough and ethical fieldwork in authentic educational settings. A key contribution of the study was its successful application of phenomenography, a research method that allowed for a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives.

Through this approach, the research captured how parents, teachers, school leaders, and local officials experienced and interpreted the SBFP in varied ways. The use of tools such as outcome spaces and repeated coding made it possible to identify significant differences across these perceptions, resulting in a nuanced, people-focused understanding of how policies operated in practice at the local level.

Guided by the World Health Organization's "*respect, protect, and fulfill*" framework and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the study also examined how the right to adequate food was implemented, highlighting its significance for promoting equity in health and nutrition. The research further emphasized the value of using multiple data sources — including key informant interviews, focus group discussions, document review, and direct observations — to validate findings and enhance the reliability of the results.

Moreover, the study underscored the importance of maintaining flexibility in fieldwork. Data collection coincided with busy periods in the academic calendar, but through adaptive scheduling, collaboration with local stakeholders, and adjustments to data-gathering strategies, the researcher was able to maintain the quality of the data and ensure that all voices were included.

It can be concluded that the importance of designing and implementing school nutrition programs that are tailored to local needs, inclusive of stakeholder perspectives, and supported by strong institutional systems. Its findings demonstrated that the success of the SBFP depended not only on its formal structure but also on the active involvement, support, and

collaboration of parents, teachers, and local authorities. It also encouraged moving away from one-size-fits-all approaches toward more flexible, context-sensitive strategies that responded to actual conditions and needs on the ground.

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