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The Impact of School Meal Provision on Teachers' Performance and Students' Academic Achievement in Sheema Municipality, Uganda

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of meal provision on both student academic performance and teacher welfare in public secondary schools in Sheema Municipality, Uganda. Grounded in motivational theories such as Herzberg's Motivator-Hygiene Theory, Expectancy-Value Theories, and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the research highlights the critical role of proper nutrition in supporting cognitive development and student concentration. Additionally, the study explores the effects of meal provision on teacher motivation and performance, finding that the availability of meals contributes significantly to teacher well-being and job satisfaction, which in turn enhances educational outcomes. The research employs a mixed-methods approach, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative data from eight schools. Key findings indicate that schools face challenges in consistently providing nutritious meals due to financial constraints, exacerbating educational inequalities. A mean value of 4.3 on a 5-point Likert scale indicates broad agreement on the positive influence of meal provision on teacher welfare and student performance. The study recommends policy changes aimed at improving school meal programs by addressing financial and logistical barriers. These interventions are vital for promoting enhanced academic outcomes and the overall well-being of students and teachers in Sheema Municipality.

Keywords: School meal provision, Teacher welfare, Academic performance, Nutrition in education, Sheema Municipality, Uganda

INTRODUCTION

Providing school meals has gained increasing recognition as a fundamental factor influencing students' academic performance, particularly in developing regions [1, 2]. In public secondary schools, such as those within Sheema Municipality, Uganda, access to proper nutrition through school meals is essential for supporting students' cognitive development, concentration, and overall well-being. These factors are not only crucial for students' physical health but also directly impact their ability to engage in learning activities and achieve academic success. Proper nutrition has been linked to improved memory, attention, and problem-solving skills abilities that are critical to academic performance. However, many public schools in Sheema Municipality face significant challenges in consistently providing nutritious meals to students. These challenges are often rooted in limited financial resources, infrastructure, and logistical barriers, which contribute to inadequate or inconsistent meal provision [3-5]. Such disparities in access to quality meals can exacerbate educational inequalities, leaving students from vulnerable backgrounds at a greater disadvantage. This is particularly concerning in regions where students' home environments may also lack reliable access to food, making school meals a primary source of nutrition. This research is grounded in three foundational motivational theories, Herzberg's Motivator-Hygiene Theory, Expectancy-Value

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Theories, and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs [6]. These frameworks provide a comprehensive lens through which to examine the influence of welfare provisions such as housing, meal provision, and medical insurance on teachers' performance and the subsequent impact on student achievement. Herzberg's Motivator-Hygiene Theory offers valuable insights into how the provision of housing affects teachers' job satisfaction and performance [6]. According to Herzberg, motivators like recognition, achievement, and personal growth drive job satisfaction, while hygiene factors such as working conditions, pay, and housing prevent dissatisfaction. Adequate housing for teachers serves as a crucial hygiene factor it ensures their basic needs are met, reducing stress and enabling them to focus on teaching. While housing alone may not directly inspire higher performance, its absence can lead to dissatisfaction and distraction, negatively affecting teachers' ability to deliver quality education. The theory underscores the importance of creating a stable environment where teachers' fundamental needs are addressed, thereby facilitating a higher level of engagement in their professional roles. The Expectancy-Value Theories, initially developed by [7, 8] and later refined by [9,10] are central to understanding how meal provision influences teacher motivation and performance. These theories suggest that individuals are motivated by their belief in the likelihood of success (expectancy) and the value they place on achieving a goal (value). In the context of teaching, meal provision acts as an external factor that increases the perceived value of the profession by addressing a critical need for nourishment and well-being. Teachers who feel supported by meal programs are more likely to view their work as both rewarding and feasible, enhancing their intrinsic motivation. The Achievement Motivation Theory by [10] further elaborates that the perceived value of a task directly influences motivation, and when the value is high such as when teachers receive meals their drive to perform well intensifies. Modern interpretations of the theory suggest that expectancy and value beliefs work synergistically to predict performance, positioning meal provision as an essential factor in motivating teachers to excel. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs provides another layer of analysis by examining how medical insurance affects teachers' performance. Maslow's theory postulates that individuals must fulfil lower-level physiological and safety needs before they can focus on higher-level psychological and self-actualization needs [11]. In the teaching profession, the provision of medical insurance satisfies these essential physiological and safety requirements, allowing teachers to prioritize their personal and professional growth. When teachers' basic needs, such as health security, are met, they can focus on fulfilling their higher-order needs, including achieving professional excellence and contributing meaningfully to their students' education. This theory reinforces the argument that addressing teachers' welfare needs directly impacts their ability to perform at their best, leading to improved educational outcomes. Empirical studies further substantiate the link between teacher welfare and performance, highlighting the tangible benefits of welfare programs in educational settings [12-15]. The researcher in [16,13] found that providing meals to teachers in public primary schools in Uganda's Bugisu sub-region significantly enhanced their performance, contributing to improved teaching quality. Similarly, [17] demonstrated a positive correlation between the quality of food provided to teachers and increased teacher involvement and student engagement in learning in public primary schools in Arusha, Tanzania. In another study, in [18] identified a strong relationship between teacher welfare, particularly meal provision, and improved teacher performance in government-aided schools in Rubanda District, Uganda. These findings underscore the critical role that meal programs and other welfare provisions play in enhancing teacher performance and, by extension, student academic outcomes. The empirical and theoretical evidence emphasizes the profound impact of welfare programs on both teachers' and students' performance. By ensuring that teachers' basic needs such as housing, nutrition, and medical care are met, educational institutions create an environment in which teachers can focus on delivering high-quality instruction, ultimately fostering better academic outcomes for students [14]. Therefore, policies that prioritize and enhance teacher welfare are not just beneficial for teachers but are crucial for creating equitable and effective educational systems that support academic excellence. This study seeks to examine the relationship between the provision of school meals and students' academic performance in public secondary schools within Sheema Municipality. By exploring this relationship, the research aims to provide evidence on how nutritional support can enhance learning outcomes and close educational gaps. Furthermore, the study intends to contribute to the broader policy discourse on the importance of comprehensive school meal programs as a strategy for fostering both academic excellence and educational equity. The findings of this research are expected to inform policymakers and stakeholders on the critical role of nutrition in education and guide the development of policies aimed at improving school meal programs, thereby supporting students' academic success in Sheema Municipality and beyond.

METHODOLOGY

This section of the research outlines key elements of the study, including the study area, research design, study population, sampling techniques, sample size, data collection tools, pre-testing for validity and reliability, data collection methods, the data analysis plan, and ethical considerations.

Research Approach

This study utilized both qualitative and quantitative approaches to collect, present, and analyze data, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. According to [19], the integration of both methods can enhance and inform each other, offering insights at different levels of inquiry. The use of these approaches referred to

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as methodological triangulation, strengthened the study's validity and reliability. The qualitative approach was employed to gather, analyze, and interpret non-numerical data, offering deeper insights into the participants' perceptions and experiences [20-23]. In contrast, the quantitative approach was applied for the collection, analysis, and interpretation of statistical data, providing an objective and measurable foundation for the study. By combining these methods, the researcher was able to capture both the depth and breadth of the research subject.

Research Design

The researcher adopted a correlational research design to explore the relationship between teacher welfare and students' academic performance in Sheema municipality. This design was selected because it allows for the identification of associations between variables without manipulating them. In addition to the correlational design, the study employed a cross-sectional research design, which involved collecting data at a single point in time from various schools within the municipality [21, 22]. This approach was useful in identifying patterns and trends in the data, providing a snapshot of the current conditions regarding the relationship between teacher welfare and academic performance.

Target Population

The target population for this study consisted of 570 individuals, purposely selected from eight schools in Sheema municipality. These participants included the Municipal Education Officer (MEO), Municipal Inspectors of Schools (MIS), Members of the Board of Governors (BOG), and headteachers. These individuals were selected purposely because they possessed the necessary knowledge and experience to address the research questions effectively. Their roles in the educational system made them ideal respondents for providing insights into how teacher welfare impacts students' academic performance. Table 1 presents the distribution of participants by category:

Table 1: Target Population

Population Category	Target Population
Municipal Education Officer (MEO)	01
Municipal Inspector of Schools (MIS)	01
Board of Governors (BoG)	96
Head Teachers	08
Teachers	464
Total	570

Source: Primary data

Determination of the Sample Size

The sample size for this investigation was calculated using Slovin's formula (1960), as shown in Equation (1).

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2} \quad (1)$$

Where: N = target population, e = 0.05 level of significance and n = sample size

$$n = \frac{570}{1 + 570 * (0.05)^2} = 235$$

The study's sample comprised 1 Municipal Education Officer (MEO), 1 Municipal Inspector of Schools (MIS), 77 Members of the Board of Governors (BOG), 8 headteachers, and 148 teachers from selected public secondary schools in Sheema Municipality. The total sample size was derived from respondents chosen exclusively from these government-aided secondary schools, who were administered questionnaires. Table 2 provides a breakdown of the respondents by category.

Table 2: Sample Size and Population

Population Category	Target Population	Samples Taken
Municipal Education Officer (MEO)	01	01
Municipal Inspector of Schools (MIS)	01	01
Board of Governors (BoG)	96	39
Head Teachers	08	03
Teachers	464	191
Total	570	235

Source: Primary data (2024)**Sampling Techniques and Procedure**

This study employed simple random sampling to select participants from the categories of teachers and members of the Board of Governors. The researcher achieved this by writing the names of all potential respondents on separate pieces of paper labeled "YES" and "NO." These papers were then placed into a large container and mixed thoroughly to ensure randomness. Names were drawn one at a time until the desired number of respondents was reached; those who drew "YES" were included in the sample. This sampling method was chosen for its objectivity and inclusiveness, as it provided each respondent with an equal opportunity to participate in the study without any bias. Additionally, a purposive sampling technique was utilized for selecting headteachers, the Municipal Education Officer (MEO), and the Municipal Inspector of Schools (MIS). This approach was appropriate because these participants were deemed to possess significant knowledge about the research topic, thereby providing relevant and in-depth insights. According to [24], purposive sampling allows researchers to select individuals who are most likely to yield valuable information pertinent to the study.

Data Collection Methods

A combination of primary and secondary sources was employed to gather data for this study, utilizing various research tools such as questionnaires, interview checklists, and document inspection checklists.

Questionnaires

Questionnaires served as a crucial tool for collecting data on participants' viewpoints, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. They consisted of a series of questions designed to measure the specific characteristics and behaviors of respondents [25]. Questionnaires can provide valuable indicators of the existence or likelihood of certain behaviors and can also be used to explore underlying motivations. They included both structured and unstructured items, allowing respondents the flexibility to complete them at their convenience, which is especially beneficial given their potentially busy schedules.

Interview Guide

Given the literacy level of the majority of participants, the researcher developed an interview schedule to ensure that pertinent questions were posed during interviews. This structured approach aimed to prevent the collection of irrelevant data and allowed for open discussions with respondents to capture their opinions on various topics.

Document Analysis

Secondary data were gathered through document analysis, involving a review of records from the district's registrar. This provided additional context and background information relevant to the study.

Data Quality Control

To ensure the credibility of the research, specific criteria focused on reliability and validity were implemented. Respondent verification was conducted to enhance the credibility of the analysis.

Validity of the Research Instrument

Validity refers to the extent to which an instrument accurately measures what it is intended to measure [26]. The survey underwent evaluation by colleagues and research supervisors to assess its format, content, clarity, and relevance to the study objectives, with validation conducted in a typical setting of government-aided secondary schools. To quantify the accuracy of the instruments, the Content Validity Index (CVI) was computed. This index measures the proportion of valid items within the instrument. The inter-judge coefficient of validity was calculated by dividing the number of judges who deemed the instrument valid by the total number of judges, with an average calculated for the entire instrument [19]. The CVI was computed using the formula: $CVI = (\text{Number of valid items} / \text{Total Number of items})$. The researcher interpreted the CVI results following [27] guidelines, categorizing validity levels as follows: 1-0.9 = Excellent (A), 0.70 - 0.79 = Acceptable (B), 0.70 - 0.89 = Good, 0.60 - 0.69 = Doubtful (E), 0.50 - 0.59 = Poor (F), and 0 to 0.5 = Unacceptable. Additionally, triangulation was employed to enhance the quality of the results by utilizing multiple data-gathering techniques [19].

Reliability of the Questionnaire

According to [28] a reliable research tool consistently yields the same results across multiple trials. To enhance

reliability, the questionnaire was carefully designed with straightforward and clearly phrased questions. The selection of schools and respondents was conducted without bias, and efforts were made to avoid double-barreled, leading, or assumptive questions. A pilot study was conducted in a school not selected for the actual study but situated in a comparable setting. This pre-testing allowed the researcher to assess the clarity of the items and the effectiveness of the instructions. The reliability coefficient, ranging from 0 to 1, was computed, and adjustments to the questionnaire were made based on pilot study findings. Using [27] scale, the computed reliability coefficient values were analyzed to ensure consistency.

Data Analysis

Data analysis involves systematically reviewing survey data to draw conclusions and identify relationships among information categories [21, 29]. To achieve methodological triangulation, the researcher employed both quantitative and qualitative research criteria in the analysis to enhance the study's validity and reliability [19].

Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, proportions, means, standard deviations, and Pearson's correlation coefficient, as well as inferential statistics. Frequencies and percentages were chosen for their clarity and accessibility, facilitating comprehension of the research findings. Percentages effectively related subgroups with varying dimensions, while frequencies illustrated the number of respondents within specific categories [30].

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data were analyzed thematically whereas data collected from observation checklists and documentation were interpreted based on the researcher's insights. To summarize key findings efficiently, the researcher employed an impressionistic approach, noting recurring themes during interviews regarding housing, meals, medical care, allowances, and school conditions and their impact on the performance of government secondary school teachers in Sheema municipality. This method was chosen for its time and cost efficiency. Interviews were meticulously recorded to identify recurring themes, and the significance of the data was interpreted after thorough sorting and reflection [19].

Ethical Considerations

To uphold ethical standards, the researcher adhered to several guidelines, including obtaining informed consent from participants and communicating that their involvement was voluntary and they could withdraw at any time [31,32]. Participants were also free to skip any questions they found uncomfortable. To protect the identities of individuals and institutions, the researcher used codes when interpreting data and compiling the final report. The purpose of the study was thoroughly explained to participants, who were also allowed to ask questions before data collection commenced. Every respondent was treated equitably, regardless of gender, age, status, or educational background, in line with accepted social norms. The researcher respected the respondents' cultures, taboos, and economic conditions to prevent violations of their rights and dignity. Confidentiality was maintained, and all provided information was limited to academic use. The researcher ensured that principles of privacy, justice, inclusion, and protection of human dignity were upheld. Study findings were generalized to protect participant confidentiality and avoid naming specific individuals. A balance was maintained to maximize benefits while minimizing risks.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study, including the analysis, interpretation, and discussion of the data collected.

Response Rate

According to [19], the response rate is defined as the proportion of people who answered the questionnaires, expressed as a percentage of the total sample. It is a critical indicator of the reliability of the data collected. Before analyzing the data, the researcher calculated the response rate by dividing the number of respondents who completed the questionnaire by the total number of respondents targeted in each category, and then multiplying the result by 100. The results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Response Rate

Total Number of questionnaires issued	Total Number of questionnaires returned	Return rate
235	213	90.6%

Source: *Primary data, (2024)*

Based on the results, a total of 235 questionnaires were distributed, and 213 were returned, yielding an overall response rate of 90.6%. According to [25] a response rate above 60% is sufficient for drawing valid conclusions. The high response rate indicates strong participation, which, as [19] noted, enhances the accuracy of survey results. Therefore, the findings can be considered representative and reliable for analyzing the relationship between teachers' welfare and performance in public primary schools in Sheema Municipality.

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Personal Information of the Respondents

This section examines the respondents' gender, experience, marital status, and educational qualifications. Analyzing these demographic variables ensures the representativeness of the sample. The results are presented in Table 4, covering the respondents' gender, experience, marital status, and educational qualifications.

Table 4: Personal Information of respondents (n=213)

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
gender	Females	68	32%
	Males	145	68.07%
Work experience (years in service)	1 - 2 years	19	8.92%
	3 - 4 years	66	30.9%
	4 - 6 years	45	21.1%
	Above 6 years	83	38.9%
Marital status	Single	67	31.4%
	Married	112	52.5%
	Divorced	24	11.2%
	Separated	10	4.69%
Level of education	Certificate	46	21.59%
	Diploma	98	46%
	Bachelors	55	25.8%
	Postgraduate	14	6.5%

Source: Primary data, (2024)

Results in Table 4 show that 145 (68%) of the teachers were male, while 68 (32%) were female, indicating a higher participation of male teachers in the study. This aligns with [33] findings that most teachers in government-aided schools in Uganda are male. Additionally, 83 (38.9%) of the teachers had more than 6 years of experience, followed by 66 (30.9%) with 3-4 years of experience, while only a few had 1-2 years of service. This suggests that many teachers were well-acquainted with their schools' traditions and management, similar to [34] findings in Bungokho South, Mbale District, which emphasized the need for younger teachers to improve academic performance.

The data also indicate that 112 (52.5%) of the respondents were married, 67 (31.4%) were single, and 24 (11.3%) were widowed or divorced, suggesting that many respondents were responsible individuals invested in education. Teaching, as a profession, demands patience and tolerance due to students' diverse backgrounds, requiring both parental skills and professional standards in managing educational activities. In terms of educational qualifications, 46 (21.6%) held Certificates, 98 (46%) were Diploma holders, 55 (25.5%) had a Bachelor's degree, and 14 (6.5%) had a postgraduate degree. Thus, the majority of respondents held Certificates and Diplomas.

Table 5: Responses on Meals and Teachers' Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Sheema Municipality

Statement	SD %	D %	U %	A %	SA %	Mean
This school always provides teachers with break tea	12.3	9.6	0.0	39.7	38.4	0.291
This school regularly provides food to teachers at lunchtime	12.2	6.8	4.1	56.2	20.5	0.200
This school regularly provides evening tea to teachers	41.1	38.4	12.3	0.0	8.2	0.213
Feeding teachers at school makes them healthy	1.4	2.7	1.4	56.2	42.5	0.116
Feeding teachers at school makes them feel comfortable	0	5.5	0	52.1	42.5	0.221
Provision of meals to teachers makes them feel valued	1.4	5.5	1.4	52.1	39.7	0.190
Provision of meals to teachers leads to high teacher morale	0.0	5.5	1.4	69.9	23.3	0.301
Feeding teachers makes them interested in their work at school	5.5	0.0	2.7	50.7	41.1	0.021
Feeding teachers makes them to attend staff meetings	12.3	20.5	4.1	49.3	13.7	0.211
Feeding teachers enhances actual teaching of pupils	0.0	6.8	1.4	54.8	37.0	0.142
Provision of meals to teachers helps them to have ample time at school	0.0	8.6	0.0	54.8	38.4	0.200
Provision of meals minimizes teacher absenteeism	9.6	15.1	2.7	47.7	24.9	0.024
Feeding teachers leads to teachers' regular assessment of the learners	1.4	12.3	8.2	58.9	19.2	0.001
Provision of lunch to teachers enhances time management for afternoon lessons	0.0	1.4	0.0	30.1	68.5	0.202
Feeding teachers always leads to their management of learners' register	20.5	13.7	5.5	45.2	15.1	0.019

Source: Primary data, (2024)

The results in Table 5 reveal that the majority of respondents, 57 (78.1%), agreed that schools consistently provide teachers with break tea, while 16 (21.9%) disagreed. This suggests that schools offer break tea as a means of boosting teacher morale. Similarly, 56 (76.7%) of respondents agreed that schools regularly provide lunch, 14 (19.1%) disagreed, and 13 (4.1%) were undecided, indicating that schools commonly provide lunch for teachers. However, 58 (79.5%) disagreed that schools regularly offer evening tea to teachers, while only 6 (8.2%) agreed and 9 (12.3%) were undecided, showing that evening tea is not regularly provided. A significant majority, 67 (91.8%), agreed that feeding teachers contributes to their health, with only 3 (4.1%) disagreeing and 3 (4.1%) undecided. Likewise, 69 (94.6%) agreed that feeding teachers at school makes them feel comfortable, with 4 (5.5%) disagreeing. An overwhelming majority, 67 (91.8%), also agreed that providing meals makes teachers feel valued, while 5 (6.9%) disagreed, and 1 (1.4%) was undecided. Similarly, 68 (93.2%) agreed that meals boost teacher morale, with only 4 (5.5%) in disagreement and 1 (1.4%) undecided. Additionally, 67 (91.8%) agreed that feeding teachers increase their interest in their work, with 4 (5.5%) disagreeing and 2 (2.7%) undecided. Regarding attendance at staff meetings, 46 (63.0%) of respondents agreed that feeding teachers encourage attendance, while 24 (32.8%) disagreed, and 3 (4.1%) were undecided. Similarly, 67 (91.8%) agreed that feeding enhances actual teaching, with 5 (6.8%) disagreeing and 1 (1.4%) undecided. Additionally, 68 (93.2%) agreed that meals provide teachers with ample time at school, while 5 (6.8%) disagreed. In terms of absenteeism, 53 (72.6%) agreed that meals reduce teacher absenteeism, with 18 (24.7%) disagreeing and 2 (2.7%) undecided. Furthermore, 57 (78.1%) agreed that feeding teachers leads to regular assessment of learners, while 10 (13.7%) disagreed, and 6 (8.2%) were undecided. Lastly, 72 (98.6%) agreed that providing lunch enhances time management for afternoon lessons, with only 1 (1.4%) disagreeing, and 44 (60.3%) agreed that feeding teachers improves the management of the learners' register, while 25 (34.2%) disagreed. Findings from interviews with PTA leaders and head teachers highlighted several issues such as teachers generally do not contribute to their meals; food shortages; lack of parental involvement in meal provision; limited meal availability; and no provision of evening tea in many schools. Some teachers travel long distances for lunch, affecting punctuality in afternoon sessions. Interviewees also emphasized that meal provision enhances teacher performance and that schools are working on establishing gardens to supply food for teachers. PTA leaders are advocating for parental contributions to teachers' meals and allowances for extra duties. These findings align with [14], who found that welfare, including meals, significantly improves employee performance, and without such support, workers may resort to absenteeism to avoid unfavourable conditions. Similarly, [35] emphasized that food is universally recognized as a fundamental need in schools to enhance teachers' performance. The WHO further highlighted that providing meals, such as break tea, lunch, and evening tea, not only promotes teachers' physical health but also

allows them more time for lesson preparation and learner engagement [36]. Finally, this research study revealed that providing meals to teachers in government-aided secondary schools in Sheema Municipality has a positive influence on their performance. Schools generally provide breakfast and lunch, but evening tea is not common. Feeding teachers improves their health, morale, and engagement, enhances their teaching, reduces absenteeism, and aids in time management for lessons.

CONCLUSION

The provision of school meals in public secondary schools in Sheema Municipality is vital for improving both students' academic performance and teachers' overall welfare. The findings demonstrate that consistent access to nutritious meals supports cognitive development, concentration, and learning outcomes in students. For teachers, meal provision enhances morale, reduces absenteeism, and boosts teaching performance by meeting essential physiological needs. Addressing logistical and financial barriers to effective meal provision is crucial for reducing educational disparities in the region. These insights should guide policymakers and stakeholders in the development of sustainable school meal programs, contributing to the academic success and well-being of students and teachers alike.

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