



Parents' Awareness, Forms and Extent of Participation in Supporting Pre-Primary Schools' Feeding Programmes in Tanzania

Mussa Julius Swila*, Abdallah Jacob Seni* and Haruni Machumu†

Abstract

This study examined parents' awareness, forms and extent of participation in supporting pre-primary schools' feeding programmes. Data were collected in Mvomero District, where pre-primary schools employ a variety of school-feeding practices. A mixed research approach was used to gather qualitative and quantitative data from 130 respondents. Data were collected using focus group discussions, interviews, and questionnaires involving head teachers, teachers, district education officers, ward education officers, parents, and school committee members. Quantitative data were analysed through descriptive analysis, while qualitative data were analysed through thematic analysis. Findings revealed that most parents did not visit the school to evaluate and monitor the programme; moreover, their contribution level in terms of money (36%) and materials (20%) was also low. The only activity in which most parents engaged was joint planning for the programme (70.0%), usually done at the beginning of the programme. The study concluded that most parents did not adequately fulfil their roles in supporting the implementation of school-feeding programmes. The study recommends intervention by the government and development stakeholders to educate parents on playing their part according to national guidelines for school feeding. This will help prevent school-age children from

* University of Dodoma, 1 Benjamin Mkapa road, 41218 Iyumbu, Dodoma; United Republic of Tanzania; ajseni@gmail.com; jswila@gmail.com

† Mzumbe University, P.O. Box 1, Mzumbe, Morogoro, United Republic of Tanzania; hmachumu@mzumbe.ac.tz

vulnerability to malnutrition and enhance sustainable growth and practical learning.

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Introduction

The early years between birth and eight are the most critical periods for child development. The quality of learning experiences young children acquire during these early years significantly determines their future success in schooling and life. Investment in early childhood education through school feeding programmes (SFPs) not only prepares young children to succeed at school and in life but also improves the efficiency and effectiveness of education systems (Wall et al., 2015; Accad et al., 2017; Wang & Fawzi, 2020). Such investment in SFPs generates high returns in four critical areas: increasing human capital; providing safety nets for poor children and their families; enhancing local economies, especially the earning power of women; and supporting peace-building, community resilience, and preventing future conflict (WFP, 2018; UNWFP, 2020). Good nutrition plays a crucial role in children's learning at home and school, as reflected by their class performance and participation in curricular activities (Kitta & Tilya, 2018; Metwally et al., 2020; Flores, 2023). Hunger and malnutrition are common in most developing countries, resulting in children being less fed at home and most schools lacking school feeding programmes (Maijo, 2028; URT, 2020). Literature shows that providing nutritious meals in day schools, specifically pre-primary and primary schools, improves pupils' health, increases attendance and academic achievement, and reduces absenteeism (Maijo, 2018; URT, 2020).

As of 2023, global data show that 418 million children receive school meals, which is 30 million higher than the 388 million children who did so before the epidemic in the first half of 2020 (WFP, 2023). Several reports indicate that a daily school meal is provided to around 41% of primary school-enrolled students, with a higher percentage of 61% in high-income countries (WFP, 2013; 2018; 2020; ten (Hove et al., 2019). However, existing empirical evidence reveals that SFPs in high-income countries like the United States of America (USA), commonly known as the National School Lunch Program

(NSLP), were introduced in 1964 (USDA, 2023). The NSLP is a widely accepted programme in the USA that provides nutritionally balanced lunches at affordable or no cost to students in public and nonprofit private schools, as well as residential childcare facilities (Dunifon & Kowaleski-Jones, 2003; USDA, 2024). It bears similarities to the widely known SFPs and that of Finnish School Food, which has provided free-of-charge school meals since the 1940s, aiming to support children's learning, nutrition, and health (Pellikka et al., 2019; Finland Toolbox, 2021; Education Finland, 2024).

An additional advantage of SFPs, as seen in concrete data, is that they have created jobs in food preparation for residents living close to schools, helping local chefs and small catering businesses. Through the SFP, the highest echelons of national political leadership, the rule of law, and parental concerns in high-income countries have fueled this extraordinary and swift recovery. India now feeds more than 100 million children; Brazil 48 million; China 44 million; South Africa and Nigeria each more than 9 million. These meals are provided not once but every day of the school year (UNWFP, 2020). However, the investment is not growing fast enough for the most vulnerable children in the worst-affected countries (WFP, 2018a; Bundy et al., 2018; WFP, 2020). In Kenya, for instance, most households are food insecure, and children usually go to school on empty stomachs (Chelangat, 2016; Matengo, 2016). In many public pre-primary schools, providing meals to learners is a challenge, as most of those who take their children to public schools have low sources of income (Langat, 2020).

In Tanzania, as in Kenya and other developing countries, pre-primary school children enrolled in public schools mainly come from low-income families (Maijo, 2018; Lukindo, 2018). Given such inhibiting contexts, the need for SFPs becomes imperative. SFPs refer to the delivery of food to children in school. There are two school feeding programmes: in-school feeding (children are given food in school) and take-home rations (given to children's guardians). SFPs are universally considered one factor that enhances students' attendance, enrolment, performance, and active participation in learning activities in school (Sanya, 2015). Children who experience food and nutrition insecurity face permanent obstacles to their physical and mental growth, which can result in stunting, poorer

health, reduced educational success, and decreased productivity throughout their lives (MINEDUC, 2019). Additionally, the availability of school feeding programmes reduces absenteeism and dropout among children who fail to get an education due to the shortage or absence of meals during school hours (Roothaert et al., 2021). Implementation of school feeding programmes depends on different factors, including the participation of various stakeholders during the implementation of a given school feeding programme (World et al. [WFP], 2020).

In Tanzanian public pre-primary education, school feeding is a crucial service emphasised by the government. Providing SFPs is usually assigned to educational stakeholders, including parents around the specified schools. Parents are always responsible for feeding their children and ensuring they attend school. Other stakeholders involved in school feeding programmes include local public and private organisations such as financial institutions and non-governmental organisations close to the school (GRM, 2016). Generally, school-feeding services are among the physiological needs of children and humans at large, the lack of which for an extended period of the day may affect pupils academically and healthily (Ann & Mwangi, 2019; Wang et al., 2021).

SFPs have been mentioned in several policies and documents specific to the Tanzanian context. The Tanzania National Nutrition Strategy, the National Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Action Plan (NMNAP), the Education and Training Policy of 2014, the National Strategy for Growth and Poverty Reduction (NSGRP II), and Education Circular No. 3 of 2016 (Nemes, 2018; Roothaert et al., 2021). Another document is the National Guidelines on School Feeding and Nutrition Services in Basic Education of 2021, which lists various stakeholders, including parents. It specifies their primary responsibilities for school feeding programmes (URT, 2020). These documents represent policy commitment for SFPs in Tanzania.

SFPs can increase child school attendance and enrolment rates (Borkowski et al., 2021). It also lowers children's school drop-out rates, encouraging them to try their best in the classroom and actively participate. Parents are encouraged to contribute to the SFPs

everywhere to meet these expectations (Yendaw & Dayour, 2015). Children can feel safe and at ease by implementing a school feeding programme while actively engaging in educational activities. Therefore, the importance of SFPs in getting children back to school and helping them succeed cannot be overstated.

Even though schools have parents who can assist in the smooth operation of SFPs, not all public pre-primary children receive school feeding services. This is due to inconsistent implementation of SFP policies. The problem arises from educational stakeholders' poor participation in deciding whether or not SFPs should be offered to children in pre-primary grades. Unfortunately, Educational Circular No. 3 of 2016 made parental involvement in SFPs optional, meaning they should determine what they need for their children (URT, 2016).

In practice, SFPs rely on the contributions of various educational stakeholders and the community, including parents, who are key stakeholders. This means that the provision of SFPs may be ineffective if parents do not participate effectively. However, parents may improve the efficiency of SFP implementation through maximised participation in volunteerism, planning, communication, monitoring, and evaluation. To maintain SFPs for the benefit of children and the larger community, this study aims to investigate parents' involvement in school feeding in Tanzania among pre-primary pupils. To achieve this goal, the study was guided by the following specific research objectives: (i) explore parents' awareness about the school feeding programmes in pre-primary education, and (ii) examine the forms and extent of parents' participation in the school feeding programmes in pre-primary education.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation model, developed in 1969. Arnstein proposed an eight-step ladder that focuses on how citizens participate in various aspects of their lives. This ladder ranges from lower to upper levels, with lower-level participation seen as poor and higher-level participation regarded as good. Arnstein's public involvement

typology is depicted as a metaphorical ladder, with each rung reflecting increasing levels of citizen agency, control, and power. Arnstein offers a descriptive continuum of participatory power that moves from non-participation or no power through tokenism to degrees of citizen participation or actual power in his eight engagement rungs (Arnstein, 1969; Varwell, 2022).

The assumptions of the community participation model are based on top-down typologies that describe citizen power, such as citizen control, delegation, and cooperation. The second assumption is that tokenism, which involves consultation, informing, and placation, promotes participation. Another assumption is non-participation, which includes manipulative and passive engagement after decisions have already been made, as well as better kinds of participation, such as participation through consultations and material incentives, which they label as poor participation (Varwell, 2022).

Despite its strengths, the model is weak because it cannot fully capture the layered complexity and fluctuating power dynamics in real-world participatory settings. This is because communities are very complex, and not all can follow ladder sequences. Lower levels are frequently viewed as universally negative (or worse than) and higher levels as universally positive (or better), even though lower levels might be beneficial in some contexts while detrimental in others. The assumption that poor participation compared to higher levels of the ladder is considered positive participation cannot be based on universal norms; each community should establish its own levels and evaluate them contextually. Another is that "these hurdles exist on both sides of the simplistic fence," according to Arnstein, who also points out that the ladder lacks a grasp of the "roadblocks" to meaningful public engagement and empowerment (Arnstein, 1969; Gaber, 2019).

The model focuses on building strong community or citizen participation in various matters. In this case, it is about establishing and maintaining school feeding programmes for pre-primary children as initiatives to strengthen children's health and academic performance. These notions of Arnstein are supported by the government circular (URT, 2016), which insists on the role of

community participation in providing essential services such as school feeding (Lindsjö, 2018; URT, 2020). Also, the model identifies the position of effective community participation at the top level, where they can effect changes for specific programmes. The model is still crucial to this study as it indicates different roles of the community, including parents, in participating in school feeding programmes. Various typologies show the level of educational stakeholders, including parents' participation and the effects of school feeding. Furthermore, the theory points out various initiatives that educational stakeholders should make as contributions on the stage of tokenism, which insists on the role of providing contributions.

Therefore, parents' participation promotes accountability and transparency, broadens the range of available alternatives, and enables the "localisation" of decisions per local needs (Ianniello et al., 2019). On the other hand, effort is made to enhance the relationship between local government and neighbourhood community organisations using the ladder of citizen participation theory (Gaber, 2019). This study describes the theory as the local government entities that should assist parents in participating in school feeding programmes.

Importance of Parents' Awareness in Supporting SFPs

Providing SFPs to young children in preschool is not a new practice among public preschools. A study by Hussein et al. (2023) contends that in Ethiopia, students who participated in school feeding programmes have shown improved cognitive function, increased school attendance and enrolment rates, better academic performance, and reduced school dropout rates. Despite the importance of school feeding programmes, a study by Demilew and Nigussie (2020) in Nigeria explains that some families cannot provide their children with essential nutrients for growth and learning due to their social status. Therefore, SFPs supplement some parents to ensure the safety of their children and reduce the burden of meal preparation every morning before children go to school.

Furthermore, the programme facilitates broader effects in the community through the agriculture sector and small-scale

entrepreneurs involved in food catering services (Sitali et al., 2020). Various studies (Roothaert et al., 2021; Murigia, 2019) acknowledge the involvement of stakeholders, including parents, in SFPs in pre-schools. As noted by Chepkwony (2013) in Kenya, SFPs are essential to child growth and holistic development. Parents should be involved in all procedures to establish functional SFPs and ensure the programme's sustainability. The successful implementation of SFPs depends on collective responsibility among community members' participation in decision-making, monitoring, and evaluation of the programme (Murigia, 2019). Existing evidence reveals that factors influencing the success of SFPs to increase the programme's effectiveness and sustainability in Arada, Ethiopia, confirm that collective monitoring and evaluation involving parents as critical stakeholders influence the success of SFPs (Genene, 2021).

Parents' Awareness in Supporting SFPs

Parents' active participation in their children's learning has considerable potential to narrow the educational achievement gap observed in impoverished populations (USAID, 2011). Research indicates that parental involvement predicts student outcomes better than socioeconomic status (USAID, 2011). Nevertheless, parents are less informed regarding the significance of their involvement in their children's learning (Edward & Shukia, 2023). The study findings by Flores (2023) indicate that mothers with higher education levels may possess a better awareness of the benefits of SFPs, leading to a greater likelihood of their participation. It also highlights the importance of educational campaigns and awareness programmes to promote programme participation and ensure that all eligible households are informed about the opportunities provided by SFPs.

Forms and Extent of Parents' Participation in Supporting SFPs

SFPs come in many forms, and the extent to which parents support their provisions differs from one school to another and from one country to another. For example, in the USA, studies show that the NSLP is based on three categories of payments: free, reduced price, and total price. The former two categories apply to children with household incomes below 185% of the poverty line (Gundersen et al., 2012). Those between 130% and 185% of the poverty line receive

reduced-price meals, costing no more than 40 cents per meal, substantially less than full-price meals. With the help of volunteers, parents, guardians, or charitable organisations, some pre-primary and primary schools, mainly privately owned and community-owned schools in Tanzania, offer SFPs (Lukindo, 2028; Maijo, 2018). A study by Flores (2023) on parental involvement in SFPs revealed that the forms and extent of parental involvement varied significantly, ranging from passive to active engagement in SFP activities. This finding highlights how parents can participate in SFPs and suggests that involvement levels may depend on parental motivation, awareness, and availability. However, parents' involvement in pre-primary and primary school SFPs takes the form of monetary donations, attendance at school-based meetings to discuss food services, donations of material resources (such as cooking energy), and human resources (Chepkwony et al., 2013; Flores, 2023).

Methods

The study used qualitative and quantitative methods, which were dominant because they aimed to explore parents' awareness of SFPs and the forms and extent to which they supported SFPs. A descriptive survey was used to explore the state of affairs in the study location. A descriptive survey design was appropriate since the researchers outlined how parents participate in SFPs. A descriptive research design was applied when researchers intended to report on what happened or is happening in the field and to capture respondents' opinions, perspectives, and experiences. Mvomero District was selected for the study because it has primary schools with a preschool facility where SFPs are practised. Additionally, Mvomero is one of the top districts that produce high-quality food, indicating good access to food, which can be a crucial component of a school feeding programme (URT, 2020). The study involved a total sample of 130 respondents. Table 1 presents the details of the sample size for each category of research participants.

Table 1
Sample Size Distribution

Sample	Sample size	Method of data collection
District education officer	01	Interview
Ward education officers	03	Interview
Headteachers	06	Interview
School committee members	20	Focus group discussion (FGD)
Teachers	50	Questionnaire
Parents	50	Questionnaire and FGD
Total	130	

The district education officer, ward education officers, and head teachers were selected for this study using non-probability purposive sampling. Respondents were chosen based on their valuable and pertinent firsthand knowledge of SFPs being implemented in their spheres of influence. Data were collected from the District Primary Education Officer, ward educational officers, and head teachers via semi-structured interviews. These respondents were well-positioned to freely share their ideas, opinions, and experiences regarding parental participation in implementing SFPs in the study location. The researchers conducted focus group discussion (FGD) sessions with parents, who shared their thoughts in a group setting. Quantitative data were collected using questionnaires administered to teachers and parents. Quantitative data were gathered, input into Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS), and analysed using descriptive statistics to provide frequency and percentage to ascertain the level of parents' participation and awareness of SFPs in pre-primary schools. To ensure the validity of the data collected, researchers used triangulation of methods, comparing research codes and participant feedback.

On the other hand, the qualitative data were analysed through thematic analysis. The datasets were independently examined using the six stages recommended by Anderson et al. (2014): familiarising with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and report writing.

Reading and rereading the data transcription helped familiarise the researchers with the depth and breadth of information regarding participants' responses. Data familiarisation was crucial as it enabled the creation of initial or preliminary codes, which served as the foundation for creating categories. We studied our emerging data from interviews and FGD sessions to create awareness of respondents' implicit and taken-for-granted meanings.

The study's ethical considerations were upheld before, during, and after the completion of the study. The researchers first obtained a clearance letter from the University of Dodoma for conducting research. This clearance letter was used to obtain permission for data collection in the research location from the Morogoro Regional Administrative Secretary (RAS) and Mvomero District Administrative Secretary (DAS), respectively. The researchers then visited the sampled schools to inform the respondents, seek consent, make arrangements, and schedule appointments for data collection. The collected data were treated with great confidentiality for research purposes only. All participant data were kept anonymous and reported to protect the participants' privacy and safety. Thus, positions such as headteacher, school committee member, and parent were used instead of real names. Schools were also assigned letters, such as those for Schools A and B. Participants were asked to sign an informed consent form during data collection to demonstrate their willingness to participate voluntarily.

Findings and Discussions

Parents' Awareness of SFPs in Pre-Primary Education

In this sub-theme, the study investigated the level of parents' awareness regarding participation in supporting pre-primary SFPs. Heads of schools, ward education officers, and district primary education officers were asked their views about parents' awareness of SFPs for early education. They declared that parents were at the forefront of the programme's implementation. They revealed that parents knew they were responsible for contributing money or farm produce to make food available at school. This was evidenced by study participants as follows:

To a large extent, the parents know that they are the ones involved in implementing and running the exercise of food and nutrition services here at the school, and there are no other stakeholders we rely on in the provision of nutrition services (Interview, Headteacher, School A, July 2022).

The head teacher's statement above contains detailed information, revealing feelings and perspectives on SFP awareness in pre-primary schools' organisation, coordination, and implementation. In a focus group discussion, when school committee members were asked if parents were aware of the SFPs implemented in pre-primary schools they assist in managing and leading, they had the following to offer:

Parents significantly contribute to running the school feeding programme by facilitating financial contributions and material resources, including foodstuffs. However, they need to participate in meetings and give ideas to improve the food service at school for our preschool children (FGD, School Committee members, July 2022).

It could be said that the awareness of educational stakeholders in implementing SFPs in pre-primary reflects the level of understanding among stakeholders. The study findings demonstrate how parents primarily manage the school feeding programmes as critical stakeholders who take an active role. Parents also take on several initiatives independently, with less assistance from the government or other organisations. The findings that parents were aware of the school feeding programme and that they were vital stakeholders contrast with those by Ahern et al. (2021), who explained that stakeholders in SFPs are less aware of a balanced diet because other stakeholders, more so than parents, are falling behind due to a lack of awareness of their responsibility to act. Parents' awareness of school feeding programmes may result in children not having access to food even in an environment where various foods are available. Additionally, Nyakundi (2017) reveals that initiatives are being made to ensure stakeholders are drawn to and involved in the study (Abu & Quaye, 2019).

Forms and Extent of Educational Parents' Participation in SFPs

In the second objective, the study examined the forms and extent to which educational parents participate in implementing SFPs for pre-primary children. This section collected quantitative and qualitative data through questionnaires administered to teachers, FGDs with parents, and interviews with head teachers, District Education Officers, and Ward Education Officers. The objective aimed to indicate the extent to which stakeholders participated in the programme. The school feeding programme activities were first revealed in the qualitative findings and later assessed quantitatively. These school feeding programme activities included meeting attendance, programme planning, provision of monetary and material resources, visitation for quality inspection, and procurement of resources.

The findings from interviews with head teachers revealed several forms in which parents participate in pre-primary school feeding programmes. In the words of one of the participant head teachers, the following quote was deduced:

Parents participate in the school feeding programme in several ways, including participating in meetings, contributing monetary and material resources, visiting the school to see the progress of the feeding programme and other children's welfare, and purchasing foodstuffs. They also plan the feeding programme through school committees and parent-teacher meetings (Interviews with head teachers, 2022).

The study findings that parents supported the feeding programme in various ways suggest their willingness and understanding of supporting their children's education. However, their willingness and understanding were not sufficient to attain the goal of providing effective feeding programmes to pre-primary school children. Thus, the subsequent findings in Table 3 further show how much parents supported the school feeding programme. These findings were obtained using questionnaires administered to parents.

Table 2

The Level of Parents' Participation in School Feeding Programme

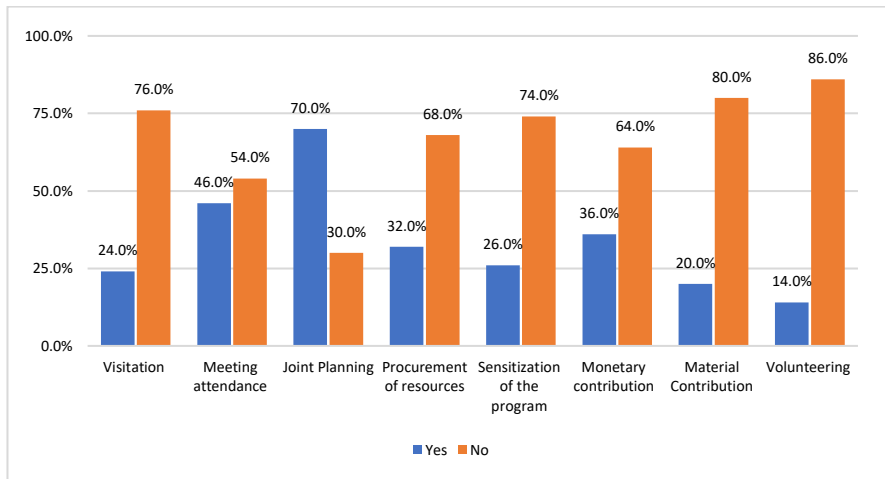
	Activity	Yes	No
i.	I visit our school to check on the quality of the feeding programmes.	12 (24.0%)	38(76.0%)
ii.	I attend meetings to evaluate and monitor the school feeding programmes.	23 (46.0%)	27 (54.0%)
iii.	We usually do joint planning with the school to implement the programme effectively.	35 (70.0%)	15 (30.0%)
iv.	As parents, we assist the school in procuring resources for school feeding programmes.	16 (32.0%)	34 (68.0%)
v.	I help the school to sensitise society and my peers to participate in the feeding programmes.	13 (26.0%)	37 (74.0%)
vi.	I contribute money for running the programme.	18 (36.0%)	32 (64.0%)
vii.	I contribute materials such as firewood and grains when asked to.	10 (20.0%)	40 (80.0%)
viii.	I usually volunteer in various programme activities such as repairing infrastructure like the kitchen.	7 (14.0%)	43 (86.0%)

The findings indicate that the extent of parents' participation in the feeding programme was shallow. Most parents did not engage in most activities linked to the implementation of the school feeding programme. The data suggests that parents were generally not interested in volunteering for activities related to the programme's implementation. Furthermore, the findings show that most parents did not visit the school to evaluate and monitor the programme. Their contribution level in terms of money (36%) and materials (20%) was also low. The only activity in which most parents engaged was the joint planning for the programme (70.0%), which was usually

done at the beginning of the school calendar. Figure 1 summarises the forms and extent of parents' participation in the school feeding programme, facilitating a quick view and better understanding of the issues under study.

Figure 1

Forms and Extent of Parents' Participation in the School Feeding Programme



In an interview session with the District Education Officer (DEO) about the forms and levels of parents' participation in supporting School Feeding Programmes (SFPs), it was revealed that while parents were aware of the importance of SFPs, this awareness was not reflected in the extent of their support. The DEO stated:

Parents are critical stakeholders in the SFP and are the ones who championed it after being enlightened on its importance by the district and school administration. Despite their awareness, their support has been dwindling. They do not volunteer in activities such as fetching water or bringing foodstuffs, and when it comes to monetary contributions, there is a problem. (Interview, District Education Officer, July 2022).

Similarly, the Ward Education Officer noted:

The parents were very active during the initial stages of the SFP. In the planning meetings, the majority participated, but later, during the program's implementation, their contributions became less impressive.

This indicates that more needs to be done to enhance effective parental participation in supporting the SFP. (Interview, Ward Education Officer, July 2022).

The study findings imply that awareness is one thing, but actual support is another. The lack of support in both kind and monetary terms could suggest financial incapability among parents. It may also imply doubts about financial accountability within the SFPs or that the level of awareness was insufficient to manifest in actual support. These findings align with Gundersen et al. (2012), who found that a broader range of cultural, economic, and attitudinal factors predict participation in SFPs, as seen in the US (USDA, 2024).

Moreover, the findings indicate that while parents were aware of the SFPs and understood their importance, their level of participation was low. This suggests that awareness and understanding alone are insufficient; a solid commitment to supporting education as valuable stakeholders is crucial. Consistent with our findings, Lukindo (2018) found that parental and family involvement in school activities enhances knowledge of SFPs, as these issues are thoroughly discussed at school but seldom at home.

The results presented here align somewhat with investigations conducted by Acheampong (2022) and Mohammed et al. (2023), which concluded that although SFPs are regarded as effective methods to improve school enrolment, learning outcomes, child well-being, attendance, retention, and parents' satisfaction with the quality of teaching and learning environments, there is persistent sidelining of the community and other critical stakeholders from participating in SFPs (Metwally et al., 2020). The finding that most parents virtually ignored supporting the SFPs reflects their lack of attention to the advantages of implementing such programmes at school. This alienation arguably strips parents of ownership, leading to a lack of parental monitoring in the program. Consequently, this compromises the program's stability, accountability, and sustainability. The findings on less participation of parents contrast with those by Middleton et al. (2015), which revealed that school-based nutrition programmes require full involvement of parents as critical stakeholders.

In this context, parents were supposed to become social agents whose insights benefit running the program. The findings on the low level of parental participation in SFPs are inconsistent with Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation model, which stresses cooperation. The low participation is also pointed out by Arnstein's model under the assumption of non-participation, which includes manipulative and passive engagement after decisions have already been made. The study findings imply that the lack of parental involvement compromises the collective planning of the program. It may also negatively impact children's learning, including increasing absenteeism. In this case, Fowler (2012) cemented that the school feeding program met stakeholder expectations by actively reducing absenteeism and truancy, improving classroom behaviour, and relieving short-term hunger.

Conclusion

It was discovered that parents are aware of SFPs for pre-primary schools, that various SFP forms are effective, and that there is little parental involvement in supporting SFPs for pre-primary schools. Findings from the study conclude that there is low parental participation in SFPs in the study's location despite the noted presence of parents' awareness and understanding of the school feeding programmes. It could be further established that pre-primary schools can harness existing parental support; however, what is missing are the fundamental principles of mobilisation, organisation, and management, as there is poor organisation to enhance parental participation in the implementation of SFPs. The study recommends that the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (Tanzania) should work with sector ministries to capacitate parents and other educational stakeholders to appreciate the need for their commitment to supporting school feeding programmes. The scope of this study was restricted to the Mvomero District; more research could be carried out in other districts to determine national trends in parents' awareness of and involvement in pre-primary education. Further studies could also examine the factors related to parents' reluctance to participate in supporting pre-primary schools' SFPs. This study calls for a wide range of awareness

among parents regarding the importance of SFPs in primary education.

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