B1INDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITY

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

AN EVALUATION ON HOW SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMMES CAN ENHANCE ACADEMIC SUCCESS AMONG STUDENTS. THE CASE OF WAYERERA SECONDARY SCHOOL

BY

OBERT MADZIVANZIRA

(B223814B)

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE BACHELOR OF SCIENCES HONOURSDEGREE IN SOCIAL WORK.

SUPERVISOR: DR CHIKONO

2026

DECLARATION

I, Obert Madzivanzira studying for the Bachelor of Science Honours Degree in Social work, cognisant of the fact that plagiarism is an academic offense and that falsifying information is a breach of the ethics of Social Work research, I truthfully declare that:

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Student's Name Obert Madzivanzira Signature  Date 10/06/2026

Permanent Home Address:

4137 Chiwaridzo Phase 2

Bindura

Zimbabwe

APPROVAL FORM

Supervisor

I certify that I supervised Obert Madzivanzira in carrying out this research tittled: **An intervention on how school feeding programmes can enhance academic success among students. The case of Wayerera Secondary School**, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Science Honours Degree in Social Work and recommended that it proceeds for examination.

Supervisor Name G. Chikono Signature  Date 10/06/2026

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The Departement Board of Examiners is satisfied that this dissertation report meets the examination requirements and therefore I recommend to Bindura Universty of Science Education to accept this research project by Obert Madzivanzira tittled: **An evaluation on how school feeding programmes can enhance academic success among students. The case of Wayerera Secondary School**, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Scienece Honours Degree in Social work.

Name……Signature……..Date……..

AKNOWLEGEMENTS

First and foremost, I give thanks to God, whose care and blessing carried me through this entire journey. I am sincerely grateful to everyone who stood by me during my dissertation. My supervisor, Dr Chikono, played a pivotal role in guiding my research, offering invaluable expertise and constant encouragement. My colleagues and friends created a warm sense of belonging and shared experience that made this process far more rewarding. Most of all, I am deeply thankful to my family, whose unwavering love, support and confidence in me kept my drive and determination alive every step of the way.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my beloved father and Mother whose unwavering love, support, and sacrifices have been the foundation of my academic journey. As well to my church members who continue to support my academic journey

LIST OF ACRONYMS

FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FEWS NET	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
GMB	Grain Marketing Board
MoPSE	Ministry of Primary and Secondary Eduation
PNAE	Programa Nacional de Alementaco Escolar (Brazil National School feeding Programme)
UNESCO	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WFP	World Food Programme
ZimLAC	Zimbabwe Livelihoods Assessment Committe

ABSTRACT

The study aimed to design an intervention on how school feeding programmes can enhance academic success among students. Its objectives were threefold firstly, to examine how school feeding programmes influence students' concentration and classroom participation, to explore the perspectives of beneficiaries on the impact of school feeding programmes on academic success and to propose an intervention model that strengthens scholastic achievement through feeding initiatives. The study is anchored in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the study recognized that meeting students' physiological and safety needs through consistent nutrition is a prerequisite for higher-order outcomes such as learning, self-esteem, and self-actualization. A qualitative case study design was adopted, with purposive sampling selecting teachers, students, and caregivers as participants. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, guided by semi-structured instruments. Findings revealed that while school feeding programmes improved attendance and reduced hunger, their academic impact was constrained by socio-economic deprivation, inconsistent meal provision, weak infrastructure, and limited financing. Participants emphasized that poverty and inadequate resources undermined sustainability, leaving students vulnerable to poor concentration and reduced performance. The study concludes that sustainable academic success requires a feeding model that prioritizes nutritional equality, diversified financing, infrastructure development, and holistic interventions. Recommendations urge policymakers, educators, and communities to integrate school feeding into child development frameworks, advancing inclusive interventions aligned with Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 strategy and the Ubuntu philosophy of collective responsibility.

Keywords: School Feeding Programmes, Academic Success, Students Concentration.

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CHAPTER 1

1.0 Introduction

In Zimbabwe education is widely recognized as a fundamental driver of national development. However, its effectiveness has often been undermined by persistent socio-economic challenges such as poverty and food insecurity. For example, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) has consistently reported since 2015 that millions of Zimbabweans face crisis level food insecurity during lean seasons with rural households particularly vulnerable (FEWS NET, 2019, 2023). Similarly, UNICEF highlighted that in 2023 that over 580,000 young children in Zimbabwe are living in severe food poverty, a condition that directly affects their growth, development and ability to learn (UNICEF, 2023). These realities mean that many students especially in remote areas and attend school without adequate nutrition, which hinders their concentration and academic performance. In response, the Government of Zimbabwe through the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education has introduced school feeding programmes over the past decade, offering meals to students during school hours to improve both health and educational outcomes. This chapter therefore introduces the study, which focuses on the influence of school feeding programmes on academic performance in Zimbabwean primary schools, emphasizing qualitative outcomes and the perceptions of both primary and secondary stakeholders. The main aim is to contribute to evidence based policy and integrated development strategies in education.

1.1 Background to the study

Globally, school feeding programmes are increasingly recognized as vital social safety nets that enhance child nutrition, school attendance and learning outcomes. Recent scholarship underscores their role as strategic investments in human capital and local economies. For example, Gelli et al. (2016) highlighted how school meals contribute to both educational participation and agricultural development while Aurino et al. (2019) also emphasize their positive effects on child nutrition and gender equity in education. The World Food Programme (WFP, 2018), further reports that more than 310 million children benefit from school meals worldwide with large scale initiatives in countries such as India, Brazil and China

demonstrating their transformative potential. Despite this widespread adoption evidence on the academic impact of these programmes, particularly on cognitive development and scholastic achievement remains limited with most evaluations focusing on enrolment and attendance rather than direct educational performance (Gelli and Daryanani, 2020, Kristjansson et al., 2021).

On the regional level, Sub-Saharan Africa continues to face severe food insecurity, affecting an estimated 250 million individuals(Wudil et al., 2022). Poverty rates remain high with about 41% of the population living below the poverty threshold (World Bank, 2020). School feeding programmes have therefore been promoted as critical interventions to address hunger and improve school participation. However, studies reveal that mixed results for example Rwanda's National School Feeding Programme improved attendance but had limited measurable effects on academic performance (Munyehirwe and Ndokoye, 2024), while Zambia's programmes enhanced food security and participation but yielded inconclusive scholastic benefits (Chansa and Chanda, 2023). In addition, Kenya's long standing school feeding programme has shown improvements in enrolment and retention, particularly in arid regions (World Bank, 2024), while Ghana's School Feeding Programme, launched in 2005 and expanded in recent years, has been linked to increased attendance and local agricultural support, though its academic impact remains debated (BudgIT Ghana, 2025).

Locally, Zimbabwe as a Southern African country has implemented also school feeding programmes for decades in collaboration with international organizations such as the WFP. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) has prioritized school feeding as part of its inclusive education strategy to enhance learner retention and performance(Chipenda & Cochrane, 2024). According to the Zimbabwe Livelihoods Assessment Committee (ZimLAC, 2024), over 9,000 metric tonnes of maize meal and grain were delivered to schools under the Emergency School Feeding Programme to mitigate the effects of the El Niño induced drought. In Mt Darwin District, the programme is implemented through a collaborative model involving MoPSE, local school authorities, and community stakeholders, with the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) supplying staples. Meals typically consist of maize porridge or sadza with beans and legumes, supplemented occasionally with vegetables from school gardens. However, the consistency and nutritional quality of meals vary depending on resources and community support. While these programmes aim to improve educational outcomes, most evaluations in Zimbabwe focus on nutrition and attendance, overlooking cognitive engagement

and academic achievement. Given the widespread poverty and food insecurity in Bindura Wayerera, understanding the educational value of school feeding programmes is both urgent and essential. This study therefore adopts a qualitative approach to explore how school feeding influences academic performance, drawing on insights from teachers and parents to provide a holistic view of the programme's impact.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

According to the World Food Programme (2018), school feeding programmes are vital social safety nets that improve child nutrition, attendance and learning. They are seen as investments in human capital. Yet their academic impact, particularly on cognitive development and performance, remains underexplored (Mainje et al., 2024). Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa shows mixed results, Rwanda's programme improved attendance but not achievement (Munyehirwe and Ndokoye, 2024), while Zambia's enhanced food security and participation but offered inconclusive scholastic benefits (Chansa and Chanda, 2023). In Zimbabwe, initiatives in districts like Bindura address food insecurity caused by drought and economic instability (Chikowore et al., 2020), but evaluations focus mainly on nutrition and attendance, overlooking academic outcomes. Similarly, Kenya's Home Grown School Meals Programme improved attendance but faced sustainability challenges (Ngugi and Muthoni, 2021). Ghana's School Feeding Programme also boosted enrolment and retention especially among girls, though its academic impact remains debated (Afoakwa et al., 2022). Policymakers therefore risk investing in interventions that fail to meet educational expectations. The problem lies in both design and implementation, weakened by limited resources, poor monitoring, and lack of community driven planning. Efforts to expand coverage have not improved scholastic success, constraining the social work profession's developmental mandate. Thus, school feeding programmes must be reoriented towards models that explicitly enhance academic achievement.

1.3 Justification

This study contributes to evidence based policy formulation in Zimbabwe's education and public health sectors by explicitly linking nutrition to academic outcomes. While previous research has emphasized the importance of school feeding in improving attendance and nutritional status, it has offered limited insight into how such programmes can be operationalized to enhance scholastic achievement. Similarly, global studies have highlighted the intersection of nutrition and education **(**Angood et al., 2025**),** yet their scope has often been

narrow, overlooking context specific challenges in low income settings such as Zimbabwe. This research seeks to fill these gaps by examining the academic implications of school feeding programmes in Bindura District, thereby supporting integrated development approaches and informing more effective resource allocation. Students participating in this study will benefit from evidence that connects nutrition to cognitive development and educational success, while policymakers and practitioners will gain clearer guidance on designing interventions that move beyond welfare relief to developmental impact. The education and social work professions stand to benefit significantly, as they will be better positioned to craft socially productive interventions that align with long term developmental goals. Government ministries, NGOs and international donors will also enhance their efficiency, coordination and overall impact. Ultimately, society will experience improved educational outcomes, reduced inequality and stronger human capital formation. This study does not aim to discard existing school feeding programmes, but rather to revisit and reframe them to meet evolving educational and developmental needs. Such is the significance of this research.

1.4 Aim of the study

To design an evaluation on how school feeding programmes can enhance academic success among students.

1.5 Objectives of the study

1.To examine how school feeding programmes influence students' concentration and classroom participation

2.To explore the perspectives of beneficiaries on the impact of school feeding programmes to their academic success

3. To propose an intervention model that enhances academic success through school feeding programmes

1.6 Research Questions

1.How do school feeding programmes influence students' concentration and classroom participation?

2.What are the perspectives of beneficiaries on the impact of the school feeding programmes to their academic success?

3. What can be done to enhance academic success through school feeding programmes?

1.7 Delimitations of the study

The delimitations of this study on an intervention examining how school feeding programmes can enhance academic success among students are defined by the boundaries intentionally set to keep the research focused and manageable. The study will be geographically limited to selected districts such as Bindura, rather than covering all regions of Zimbabwe and will concentrate on secondary school students enrolled in schools with active feeding programmes, excluding primary or tertiary students as well as those without such initiatives. Stakeholder perspectives will be restricted to students, teachers, and parents, leaving out policymakers, NGOs and community leaders whose insights though valuable and fall outside the scope of this research. In terms of programme type the study will focus on government implemented school feeding initiatives excluding privately sponsored or NGO led efforts. The time frame will be confined to a single academic year which may not capture long term impacts. Furthermore, the study will emphasize academic success indicators such as concentration, classroom participation, and performance, while excluding broader developmental outcomes like social skills or career prospects. Nutritional assessment will also be limited relying on observable outcomes and reported experiences rather than detailed biochemical or medical evaluations. Access to some participants may have been reluctant to fully disclose their socio-economic circumstances or criticize existing feeding programmes for fear of jeopardizing their access to benefits. The study relied on self-reported data from interviews and focus group discussions, which is subject to recall bias and social desirability bias. Time and resource constraints further limited the scope of data collection to a single academic year, restricting the ability to observe long-term trends in academic performance. Nonetheless, the researcher employed triangulation of data sources and methods to mitigate these limitation and enhance the credibility of the findings.

These delimitations ensure that the study remains feasible while still generating meaningful insights into how school feeding programmes can be reoriented to enhance academic achievement.

1.8 DEFINATION OF KEY TERMS

1.8.1 Intervention

According to High Speed Training (2023), interventions are focused teaching sessions or targeted actions designed to close gaps in progress and attainment.

1.8.2 School feeding

The World Food Programme (WFP, 2020) defines school feeding as *"the provision of meals or snacks to children while they are in school, either through in-school meals or take-home rations."*

1.8.3 Academic Success

UNESCO (2020) emphasizes that academic success is not only about grades but also about "quality learning that develops cognitive, emotional, and social skills to thrive throughout life"

1.8.4 Students

UNESCO (2020) defines students as "individuals engaged in the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes through formal or informal education."

1.9 Dissertation Outline

This entire dissertation is divided into five chapters as follows:

Chapter one : is the introduction. This chapter provides a background to the study, objectives as well as the scope of the study.

Chapter two : covers the related literature in detail for the subject under study, in chronological order.

Chapter three : is for research methodology employed for the completion of this research. The study is largely informed by the qualitative research methodology in order to exploit the strengths of descriptive data.

Chapter four : is mainly data presentation, analysis and interpretation. Here data are provided in different ways that project the issues under study, qualitative method will be utilized to put sense into expressions.

Chapter five : is summary, conclusion and recommendation.

1.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the introduction, background of the study, problem statement, research aim, research objectives and justification of the study. The next chapter reviews related literature on the topic. The problem statement highlights how inadequate feeding undermines concentration, attendance and academic success. The research aim is to propose an intervention model that leverages feeding initiatives to improve learning outcomes. The objectives focus on assessing beneficiaries' perspectives, measuring impacts on attendance and performance and exploring community involvement. The justification emphasizes the importance of school feeding as a sustainable strategy to enhance equity, retention, and overall academic achievement.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical framework and literature review that underpin the study *"An evaluation on how school feeding programmes can enhance academic success among students. The case of Wayerera Secondary School."* The purpose of this chapter is twofold firstly to outline the conceptual lenses through which the research is examined and secondly to review existing scholarly work on school feeding programmes and their impact on educational outcomes. By combining theory and empirical evidence the chapter establishes a foundation for understanding how school feeding can be positioned as a developmental intervention that promotes academic success particularly in rural contexts.

The theoretical framework guiding this study draws upon Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Maslow's theory, first articulated in 1943 and later expanded in 1954. It emphasized the layered nature of human motivation beginning with physiological needs and progressing through safety, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualization. Within the context of school feeding programmes, Maslow's framework highlights the critical role of nutrition in satisfying basic physiological needs, thereby enabling students to concentrate, participate and ultimately achieve higher order academic success. The theory provides a psychological lens for examining how meeting foundational needs creates conditions for educational attainment.

Following the theoretical framework, the literature review examines empirical studies on school feeding programmes at global, regional and local levels. The review is organized into four subthemes derived from the study's objective which are nutritional adequacy and cognitive outcomes, attendance and retention effects, educational integration and pedagogy and community participation and sustainability. Each subtheme explores how school feeding contributes to academic success and it is supported by evidence from international, African and Zimbabwean contexts. The review also identifies gaps in existing research particularly in relation to rural settings, methodological approaches and theoretical grounding.

This chapter provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing the impact of school feeding programmes on academic success. It establishes the conceptual and scholarly foundation upon

which the study is built ensuring that the investigation at Wayerera Secondary School is situated within both theoretical discourse and practical realities.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is examined through the lens of Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs which provides the conceptual foundation for understanding how school feeding programmes can enhance academic success among students. The theory was propounded by Abraham Maslow in 1943 and later expanded in 1954, as a response to psychological models that narrowly focused on behavior without considering the holistic development of human motivation. Maslow's theory emerged to address the need for integrated strategies that recognize the layered nature of human needs, particularly in contexts where deprivation undermines learning and personal growth. The theory emphasizes five core levels of needs which are physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. These elements advocate for interventions that begin by satisfying basic needs such as food and security thereby enabling individuals to progress toward higher order achievements such as confidence, creativity and academic excellence. It is upon these principles that this research seeks to assess and question the applicability of Maslow's hierarchy of needs in relation to school feeding programmes in Zimbabwe with specific focus on Wayerera Secondary School.

Among the core tenets of this theory there is physiological need, which Maslow identifies as the foundation of human motivation. Abraham Maslow theory emphasizes that without meeting basic needs such as food, water and shelter, individuals cannot effectively pursue higher order goals. Therefore, the theory advocates for interventions that prioritize nutrition and health as prerequisites for learning. Applying this lens to school feeding programmes the researcher seeks to investigate whether the provision of meals enables students to overcome hunger, concentrate in class and engage meaningfully in academic tasks. This principle challenges traditional educational models that assume students can perform optimally without addressing their basic needs. School feeding programmes therefore must do more than provide temporary relief but rather they must equip students with the capacity to sustain attention and energy for academic success. Supporting this notion, (Kristjansson et al., 2016)

More so, the safety need is another foundational principle of Maslow's hierarchy emphasizing the importance of stability and security in fostering human development. This implies that students must feel secure in their environment to focus on academic tasks. Maslow postulate

that developmental interventions must not only provide food but also create a predictable and safe environment where students are assured of consistent support (Tamiru et al., 2024). This perspective is also supported by Barnabas et al. (2024**),** who assert that predictable feeding programmes enhance attendance and retention, as students and parents view them as dependable sources of support. Hence, the researcher seeks to critically examine the extent to which school feeding initiatives at Wayerera Secondary School incorporate mechanisms that guarantee consistency and security for students.

The love and belonging need is also central to Maslow's hierarchy emphasizing the role of social relationships and community in human motivation. Maslow theory postulates that individuals thrive when they feel connected and valued within a group. Participation in shared meals enhances social cohesion and reduces stigma associated with poverty, ensuring that vulnerable students feel a sense of belonging (Juvonen et al., 2019). This perspective is supported by Adelman et al. (2018), who note that nutrition sensitive interventions embedded in school routines promote both academic and social outcomes by reinforcing community bonds. In practice, this principle invites scrutiny of how school feeding programmes in Wayerera Secondary School contribute to building a supportive and inclusive learning environment.

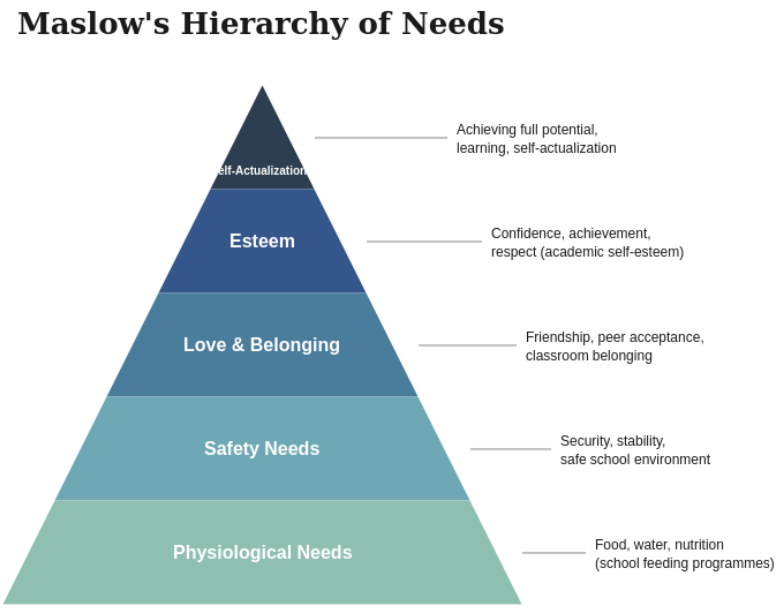
The esteem need emphasizes the importance of recognition, achievement and self-confidence in human development. Maslow hierarchy of needs clearly highlight that once basic and social needs are met, individuals strive for respect and accomplishment. School feeding programmes contribute to this principle by enabling students to perform better academically, thereby gaining recognition from teachers and peers. Improved concentration and participation foster a sense of achievement, which builds self-esteem and motivates students to pursue further success. Patel (2015) supports this notion by arguing that developmental interventions must empower individuals to improve their own conditions through access to resources and opportunities. In this context, school feeding programmes empower students by removing barriers to learning and enabling them to demonstrate their capabilities.

Finally, the self-actualization need represents the pinnacle of Maslow's hierarchy highlights the realization of one's full potential. Maslow also mentioned that individuals reach self-actualization when they are able to pursue creativity, problem solving and personal growth. School feeding programmes contribute to this principle by creating conditions where students are not hindered by hunger or insecurity, allowing them to focus on higher order academic

tasks. Sustainability of feeding programmes ensures that students can consistently progress toward self-actualization, achieving not only academic success but also personal development. Mainje et al. (2024) argue that sustainable interventions integrated into national policy frameworks promote long-term transformation and also enabling individuals to achieve their fullest potential**.** In assessing Wayerera Secondary School, the researcher intends to interrogate whether current feeding initiatives are structured to support students' progression toward self-actualization.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs provides a robust lens through which to examine the nature and impact of school feeding programmes on academic succes. Safety demands consistency and predictability in feeding initiatives (Yendaw & Dayour, 2015). Love and belonging emphasize inclusivity and social cohesion. Esteem highlights the importance of recognition and achievement. Self-actualization insists on long term sustainability and personal growth. Therefore, this study seeks to examine how school feeding programmes at Wayerera Secondary School align with these five components, and whether they enhance academic success by enabling students to progress through the hierarchy of needs.

Fig 1: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, adapted for the study of school feeding programmes and academic success (Maslow, 1943)



2.2INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMMES ON STUDENTS PERFORMANCE.

2.2.1 Improved Attendance

One of the most critical outcomes of school feeding programmes is improved learner attendance. This is not merely a logistical benefit but a structured educational tool designed to align students' daily presence with developmental and academic expectations. As Adelman and Gilligan (2020) emphasize, consistent attendance is a prerequisite for sustained learning, participation and performance (Nibret, 2025). From a social control perspective, regular attendance strengthens bonds between students and conventional institutions, limiting opportunities for truancy and discouraging disengagement from school.

Globally, case studies consistently highlight the protective role of feeding programmes in promoting attendance. In Brazil, the National School Feeding Programme (PNAE) has demonstrated success in increasing enrolment and reducing dropout rates by embedding meal provision into educational policy (Neervoort et al., 2021). In India, the Mid-Day Meal Scheme has been credited with improving attendance among disadvantaged students, showing that when schools provide meals, children are more likely to remain enrolled and participate consistently (Aurino, 2020). These examples illustrate that across diverse contexts, feeding functions not only as a nutritional intervention but also as an educational retention strategy.

Regionally, African evidence reinforces this global trend. In Ghana, Masset (2022) found that school feeding programmes reduced absenteeism and improved punctuality, particularly among children from food insecure households. UNICEF (2019) documented in Kenya that community-based feeding initiatives strengthened attendance, leading to improved classroom participation and reduced dropout rates. In Nigeria, Adebayo (2019) observed that adolescents attending schools with feeding programmes were less likely to miss classes, underscoring the regional relevance of feeding as a protective factor against absenteeism. These findings confirm that in contexts marked by poverty and social instability, feeding remains a critical determinant of learner attendance.

In Zimbabwe, however, schools often struggle to sustain feeding programmes due to economic pressures and reliance on donor support. High unemployment and limited government funding force communities to depend on irregular contributions, leaving students vulnerable to absenteeism when meals are unavailable (Boyden, 2018). In Bindura Urban, these challenges

are particularly pronounced, with students frequently missing classes when feeding programmes are disrupted. Without structured support, schools may find it difficult to balance economic survival with consistent meal provision. Research by Chikadzi (2017) highlights that weak feeding structures in Zimbabwean urban centers correlate strongly with absenteeism and poor participation, as hungry children are more likely to skip school or disengage from learning.

Critically, improved attendance must be understood as both a micro-level outcome and a structural issue. While individual schools can provide meals, broader socio-economic conditions often constrain their capacity to do so. For Bindura Urban, where economic hardship and migration weaken household stability, feeding support models must prioritize strengthening attendance through community-based initiatives, sustainable financing and structured policy integration. The feasibility of such interventions is strongly supported by global and regional evidence, while locally implemented models provide a practical foundation for replication. This study therefore situates improved attendance as a critical factor in both the prevention of dropout and the promotion of academic success, emphasizing the need for integrated interventions that enable schools to balance economic survival with consistent feeding provision.

One of the most critical impacts of school feeding programmes is their role in reducing dropout rates among vulnerable students. This is not merely an incidental benefit but a structured educational tool designed to align children's daily schooling with developmental and social expectations. As global surveys such as the World Food Programme's State of School Feeding Worldwide (2020, 2025 editions) and the Global Child Nutrition Foundation's Global Survey (2019) emphasize, school feeding programmes reach hundreds of millions of children and are strongly associated with retention gains. By ensuring consistent access to meals, caregivers and institutions alleviate household financial burdens, support vulnerable students, and sustain educational retention until completion. From a social control perspective, daily meals strengthen bonds between students and conventional institutions, thereby limiting opportunities for dropout and discouraging disengagement from school.

2.2.2 Reduced dropout's rates

School feeding programmes have proven vital in reducing dropout rates by addressing hunger a structural barrier to consistent learning. Recent evidence shows that when meals are

guaranteed, children are more likely to remain enrolled. For example, the World Food Programme (2023) documented that meals reduced absenteeism by 6% and increased enrolment by 9% across low income countries. UNESCO, Global Education Monitoring Report (2023), further confirm that school meals across Africa consistently motivate students to stay in school. Thus, school feeding programmes are essential in reducing dropout's rates and lead to academic success.

Globally, case studies consistently highlight the protective role of feeding programmes in promoting retention. In São Paulo, Brazil, evaluations of the National School Feeding Programme (PNAE) confirm that consistent access to meals has reduced dropout rates among low-income students (Neervoort et al., 2021). In New Delhi, India, studies have reinforced that the Mid-Day Meal Scheme contributes to lowering dropout rates, particularly among girls, by providing both nutritional support and an incentive for continued schooling (Aurino, 2020). These examples illustrate that across diverse contexts, feeding functions not only as a nutritional intervention but also as an educational retention strategy. However, global evidence also highlights limitations: feeding programmes alone cannot fully address structural drivers of dropout such as child labour, early marriage and household poverty.

Regionally, African evidence reinforces this global trend. In Northern Ghana, specifically in the Upper East Region, Aurino et al. (2019) found that the Ghana School Feeding Programme improved retention, with students staying in school longer due to the assurance of daily meals. In Turkana County, Kenya, Gelli et al. (2019) showed that the Home-Grown School Feeding Programme reduced dropout rates in droughtnprone areas where hunger previously forced children to abandon schooling. In Lilongwe District, Malawi, systematic reviews highlight that feeding programmes remain critical for retention but face sustainability challenges. These regional experiences demonstrate that feeding programmes are effective in reducing dropout, but challenges remain in sustaining funding and ensuring equitable access for the most vulnerable students.

Despite these successes, a regional gap persists. African studies have largely employed quantitative approaches such as randomized evaluations and econometric modelling. While these demonstrate measurable improvements in retention, they do not explain how feeding programmes influence learner motivation and psychological needs in rural African schools. This gap can be addressed by applying psychological theory such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs. By linking feeding programmes to the satisfaction of physiological needs, researchers

can explain how students are enabled to pursue higher order needs such as education, belonging, and self-actualization.

Locally, in Bindura District, Zimbabwe, the School Feeding Programme has acted as a lifeline in drought-prone areas, ensuring that children remain in school even during food shortages. A qualitative study by Mago and Hofisi (2016) revealed that schools offering meals report students are more likely to remain enrolled, with feeding programmes sustaining attendance during scarcity. More recent reports, such as the Zimbabwe Livelihoods Assessment Committee (ZimLAC, 2024), show dropout rates remain high nationally, with 22.3% of school age children not in school, and even higher in provinces like Mashonaland Central. UNICEF and WFP's 2024 case study on Zimbabwe's School Nutrition Guidelines further emphasizes the importance of integrated feeding and nutrition programming for retention. These findings underscore the importance of feeding programmes in retaining students who might otherwise be withdrawn due to poverty, hunger, or the need to contribute to household labour.

Despite these successes, several national gaps remain in the literature. First, most studies focus on national or regional programmes but rarely examine specific rural secondary schools, leaving a gap in localized evidence. Second, existing studies often lack a strong theoretical framework linking feeding programmes to learner motivation and retention. Few explicitly apply psychological theories such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which explains how meeting physiological needs (food) enables students to focus on higher-order needs like education. Third, much of the evidence is quantitative, relying on surveys and enrolment statistics, with limited qualitative exploration of students' lived experiences and perceptions of feeding programmes.

This study seeks to complement these gaps by focusing on Wayerera Secondary School in Mashonaland East Province, Zimbabwe, a rural setting that provides localized evidence of how school feeding programmes operate at the community level. It applies Maslow's hierarchy of needs to explain how feeding programmes satisfy basic physiological needs, thereby enabling students to remain in school and pursue academic success through higher-order needs such as belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. Furthermore, it employs a qualitative methodology to capture the voices and experiences of students, teachers and parents, thereby enriching the predominantly quantitative evidence in existing literature. This approach provides a deeper, context specific understanding of how school feeding programmes reduce dropout rates and

promote academic success in Zimbabwe's rural schools. While also bridging the global and regional gaps identified in earlier studies.

2.2.3 Greater Equity in Education

School feeding programmes have increasingly been recognized as powerful interventions for enhancing academic success by improving attendance, reducing dropout rates and promoting greater equity in education. Daily meals provided at school mitigate socio-economic disparities, foster inclusion and also ensure that disadvantaged students have equal opportunities to thrive academically. As Bundy et al. (2018) emphasize, these initiatives are not simply nutritional interventions but mechanisms for advancing equity within education systems, while the World Food Programme (2025) highlights their role as instruments of social justice that foster inclusion and reduce disparities in educational outcomes.

Globally, school feeding programmes have been credited with reducing dropout rates and narrowing performance. In New Delhi, India, evidence from the Mid-Day Meal Scheme confirms that participation among girls and disadvantaged castes has increased, reducing inequalities in access to education (Badyal and Moffat, 2025). These global experiences demonstrate that school feeding programmes are powerful tools for equity and retention, though they also caution that gains are not automatic and require careful targeting and monitoring.

Yet, a global gap persists. This gap can be filled by employing qualitative tools such as interviews and focus groups to capture learner perceptions, providing a deeper understanding of how feeding programmes foster inclusion, belonging and motivation (Kristjansson et al., 2019b). Regionally across Africa, school feeding programmes have demonstrated notable impacts on attendance, dropout reduction and equity. In Northern Ghana, Upper East Region, Aurino et al. (2019) found that the School Feeding Programme improved participation among rural students, especially girls, who are often withdrawn from school to assist with household chores. In Turkana County, Kenya, Gelli et al. (2019) showed that the Home-Grown School Feeding Programme reduced dropout rates in arid and semi-arid regions where hunger disproportionately affects school attendance and performance. In Lilongwe District, Malawi, a systematic review by Mainje et al. (2024) highlighted that school feeding programmes remain critical for equity and retention but face sustainability challenges, particularly in reaching the poorest households. These regional experiences confirm that feeding programmes promote

equity and retention, though they also reveal persistent challenges in sustaining funding and ensuring consistent access for marginalized students.

Nevertheless, a regional gap also remains as African studies have largely employed quantitative approaches such as randomized evaluations and econometric modelling. While these demonstrate measurable improvements in equity and retention, they do not explain how feeding programmes influence learner motivation and psychological needs in rural African schools (Noltemeyer et al., 2021). This gap can be addressed by applying a psychological theory such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which links feeding programmes to the satisfaction of physiological needs and explains how disadvantaged students are enabled to pursue higher-order needs such as education, belonging and self-actualization.

Nationally, in Bulawayo Central District, Zimbabwe, a qualitative study by Chikuni (2023) explored the opportunities and challenges of school feeding programmes in Early Childhood Development centres. The study revealed that malnourished and hungry children often struggle to grasp concepts during teaching and learning, but feeding programmes significantly improved attendance, concentration, and participation. By using qualitative methods, Chikuni captured the voices of teachers and administrators, highlighting that school meals not only reduced absenteeism but also promoted equity by ensuring disadvantaged students were not excluded from education due to hunger. In Mudzi District, Zimbabwe, UNICEF (2024) reported that the government's home-grown school feeding programme, supported by UNICEF and the German government, transformed the schooling experience for rural children by ensuring that a hot, nutritious meal awaited them each day. Similarly, in Nyanga District, ActionAid (2025) documented how school feeding programmes strengthened community ties and reduced absenteeism among disadvantaged students. These findings underscore the importance of feeding programmes in promoting equity and retention, particularly for orphans and vulnerable children in drought-prone areas.

Still, several national gaps remain in Zimbabwe. Most studies focus on national or regional programmes but rarely examine specific rural secondary schools, leaving a gap in localized evidence (Kristjansson et al., 2019c). Furthermore, existing studies often lack a strong theoretical framework and remain dominated by quantitative surveys and statistics, with limited qualitative exploration of students' lived experiences. This study seeks to complement these gaps by focusing on Wayerera Secondary School in Mashonaland East Province, Zimbabwe, a rural setting that provides localized evidence of how school feeding programmes

operate at the community level. It applies Maslow's hierarchy of needs to explain how feeding programmes satisfy basic physiological needs, thereby enabling disadvantaged students to remain in school and pursue academic success. Furthermore, it employs a qualitative methodology to capture the voices and experiences of students, teachers, and parents, thereby enriching the predominantly quantitative evidence in existing literature. This approach provides a deeper, context specific understanding of how school feeding programmes reduce dropout rates, sustain attendance and promote greater equity in education, while also bridging the global and regional gaps identified in earlier studies.

2.3 BENEFICIARIES PERSPECTIVES ON HOW SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMMES CAN LEAD TO ACADEMIC SUCCESS

2.3.1 Improve Students' Concentration and Academic Performance

School feeding programmes are directly linked to academic success because they improve students' concentration and classroom participation. Adequate nutrition is a foundation for cognitive development and when children receive daily meals they are better able to focus, engage and perform in school. Scholars such as Kristjansson et al. (2021) and Hodges (2024) provide strong evidence that feeding initiatives reduce short term hunger, enhance attention spans, and lead to measurable improvements in test scores and subject performance. This therefore connects school feeding programmes to the improvement of student's concentration and academic performance.

Globally, Kristjansson et al. (2021) conducted a systematic review across low and middle income countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The study synthesized findings from 16 randomized controlled trials and revealed that children who received daily meals at school demonstrated improved attention spans and higher test scores compared to those without access to such programmes. The review concluded that school feeding not only alleviates short term hunger but also contributes to better educational attainment globally, highlighting its role as a critical intervention for concentration and learning outcomes.

Regionally, in Sub-Saharan Africa, Hodges (2024) carried out a quantitative study in Gasabo District, Rwanda, involving 333 pupils. The research found a positive correlation between school feeding and improved academic results, with pupils reporting higher motivation and reduced absenteeism. Specifically, students in schools with feeding programmes scored significantly higher in mathematics and language subjects compared to those without such

interventions. This regional evidence underscores the role of feeding initiatives in bridging educational inequalities and ensuring that students from disadvantaged backgrounds can concentrate and succeed academically.

Locally, Marenga (2020) conducted a process evaluation of the Relief and Recovery School Feeding Initiative (RRSFI) in Zvishavane District. The study highlighted that school feeding improved students' punctuality and reduced dropout rates, with beneficiaries more likely to remain in school and perform better in continuous assessments. However, challenges such as inconsistent food supply and reliance on donor funding were noted, limiting sustainability. Complementing this, UNICEF and WFP (2024) developed school nutrition guidelines in Zimbabwe, emphasizing that integrated feeding programmes are critical for supporting both health and academic success. These findings confirm that feeding initiatives are essential for improving concentration and performance in Zimbabwean schools, though sustainability remains a pressing concern.

Scholarly evidence support the above, Bundy et al. (2018) argue that school feeding programmes are vital educational interventions because they simultaneously address hunger and promote learning outcomes. While global and regional studies demonstrate consistent positive impacts, replication in Zimbabwe requires careful consideration of contextual challenges such as economic instability and resource constraints. This highlights the need for qualitative exploration of beneficiaries' perspectives, as in the case of Wayerera Secondary School, to understand how students themselves perceive the link between feeding programmes and academic success. Such qualitative insights will complement existing quantitative evidence and provide a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of students

2.3.2 Enhanced Nutrition Boosts Students' Focus and Academic Success.

School feeding programmes are directly connected to academic success because they improve students' concentration and classroom participation. Adequate nutrition is a foundation for cognitive development and when children receive daily meals, they are better able to focus, engage and perform in school. Scholars such as Kristjansson et al. (2021) and Hodges (2024) provide strong evidence that feeding initiatives reduce short term hunger, enhance attention span and lead to measurable improvements in test scores and subject performance. This, therefore connects the broader school feeding programme to the specific outcome of improved concentration and academic achievement.

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Locally, School feeding programmes have increasingly been recognized as a critical intervention in promoting student retention and academic success. Locally, Marenga (2020) evaluated the Relief and Recovery School Feeding Initiative (RRSFI) in Zvishavane District, Zimbabwe. The findings revealed that the programme improved students' punctuality and reduced dropout rates, with students who benefitted from the initiative more likely to remain in school and perform better in continuous assessments. These outcomes demonstrate the potential of school feeding to address barriers to education, particularly in contexts where

poverty and food insecurity undermine student attendance. However, despite these positive contributions, Marenga's study left several important gaps that warrant further exploration.

One notable limitation of the evaluation was its narrow focus on attendance and retention, without adequately examining how feeding programmes influence students' concentration and engagement during lessons. Concentration is a vital determinant of academic performance, and while improved attendance ensures that students are present in class, it does not necessarily guarantee active participation or comprehension. This gap is particularly significant given that the dissertation topic seeks to establish how feeding interventions can enhance academic success, not only by keeping students in school but also by improving their ability to focus and learn effectively.

Furthermore, Marenga's (2020), concentrated on continuous assessments as the primary measure of academic outcomes. While this provides useful insights, it does not capture the broader spectrum of academic achievement, such as performance in final examinations, comprehension levels, or cognitive development. By limiting the scope of academic indicators, the study overlooked critical dimensions of success that are central to understanding the full impact of school feeding programmes. The present dissertation addresses this gap by adopting a more holistic view of academic success, incorporating both classroom engagement and performance outcomes.

Another gap relates to the nutritional adequacy of the meals provided. Marenga (2020) highlighted that challenges such as inconsistent food supply and reliance on donor funding but did not assess whether the meals met students' nutritional needs. The quality and diversity of food are essential in determining whether feeding programmes can genuinely improve concentration and learning outcomes. This dissertation, guided by Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, situates school feeding within the broader framework of satisfying physiological needs as a foundation for higher-order needs such as motivation, self-esteem and ultimately academic achievement. By applying this theoretical lens, the study seeks to demonstrate how meeting basic nutritional requirements enables students to progress toward self-actualization in their academic pursuits.

Additionally, Marenga's (2020), evaluation was geographically limited to Zvishavane District, which restricts the generalizability of its findings. Different schools and communities face unique socio-economic and cultural challenges, and the effectiveness of feeding programmes

may vary accordingly. This dissertation, focusing on Wayerera Secondary School, provides context specific insights that enrich the understanding of how feeding initiatives operate in diverse settings. By adopting a qualitative methodology, the study captures the lived experiences of students, teachers, and parents, offering a deeper exploration of how feeding programmes influence concentration, motivation and academic success beyond statistical measures.

Finally, while Marenga (2020), acknowledged the challenge of donor dependency, the study did not propose sustainable strategies for ensuring the long term viability of school feeding programmes. This omission leaves unanswered questions about how such initiatives can be maintained once external support diminishes. The current dissertation seeks to complement this gap by exploring community driven and school led approaches that can strengthen sustainability and ownership of feeding programmes.

2.3.3 Reduced Absenteeism.

School feeding programmes are widely recognized as effective interventions for reducing absenteeism and dropout rates, as they provide incentives for students to remain in school while addressing hunger that undermines participation. Students who miss classes consistently fall behind, lose motivation and disengage from school. The school feeding programme has emerged as a practical intervention to reduce absenteeism by addressing hunger and motivating daily participation. Supporting this, Sabates et al. (2022) found that school feeding programmes fostered fairness and inclusion, encouraging vulnerable students to attend regularly and remain engaged in the classroom.

Globally, The World Food Programme (2023), in its State of School Feeding Report, documented that school meals increased enrolment by nearly 9% and reduced absenteeism by 6% across 41 low income countries. In India the mid-day scheme has been credited with improving attendance among disadvantaged students, ensuring that students remain enrolled and participate consistently (Aurino, 2020). In Brazil also The National School Feeding Programmes (PNAE) demonstrated success in increasing enrolment and reducing meal provision into educational policy (Neervoort et al., 2021). The outcomes demonstrated that children are more likely to remain in school when meals were guaranteed, making feeding programmes a critical tool for reducing dropout rates internationally. Similarly, Wang and Fawzi (2020), in a systematic review of school feeding interventions in low and middle income

countries, found that feeding programmes consistently improved attendance and retention, particularly among vulnerable populations, while also contributing to gender equity by encouraging parents to keep girls in school. These findings highlight the potential of school feeding initiatives to promote educational continuity and protect disadvantaged students.

While these global studies provide important evidence, several gaps remain. Firstly, most surveys focus largely on enrolment and absenteeism without examining how feeding programmes influence students' concentration and academic performance in the classroom. Secondly, broad cross country quantitative approaches, though useful for identifying general trends. It often overlooks contextual differences in how feeding programmes operate within specific schools and communities. Thirdly, the nutritional adequacy of meals is rarely assessed, yet the quality and diversity of food are essential in determining whether feeding programmes can genuinely improve cognitive development and academic success. Finally, sustainability challenges such as reliance on external funding and limited community ownership remain unresolved.

Regionally, recent African studies provide comparable insights. In Malawi, Mainje et al. (2024) found that school feeding programmes reduced absenteeism and dropout rates in rural districts, with students reporting greater motivation to attend classes regularly. Teachers observed that feeding initiatives acted as protective factors against educational inequality, ensuring that vulnerable children had a more consistent learning experience. In Kenya, Mwangi (2021) highlighted that home grown school feeding programmes improved attendance in arid regions, where food insecurity often forces children out of school. These findings underscore the role of feeding initiatives in bridging educational inequalities in Sub-Saharan Africa, though challenges such as inconsistent food supply chains and limited long-term data persist.

Locally, in Zimbabwe, UNICEF (2024) reported that integrated school health and nutrition programmes improved attendance and reduced dropout rates, particularly in drought prone areas where food insecurity is acute. The report emphasized that feeding programmes not only kept children in school but also enhanced classroom participation by reducing fatigue and hunger. Hove and Samkange (2026) also found that school feeding in Mberengwa District reduced absenteeism and improved punctuality, particularly during lean seasons when household food supplies are scarce.

Complementing this, Gross et al. (2017), argued that school feeding programmes in Zimbabwe act as social safety nets for vulnerable households, while also promoting educational

achievement. However, both studies noted challenges such as reliance on donor funding, inconsistent food supply and limited monitoring of nutritional adequacy.

Guided by Maslow's hierarchy of needs, this dissertation situates school feeding within the broader framework of satisfying physiological needs as a prerequisite for higher order learning outcomes such as concentration, motivation and self-actualization. By adopting a qualitative methodology, the study captures the lived experiences of students, teachers and parents, offering a deeper understanding of how feeding programmes reduce absenteeism and dropout rates while simultaneously enhancing concentration and performance (Leis et al., 2019). In doing so, the research complements global and regional evidence by demonstrating that school feeding programmes are not only about increasing enrolment but also about enabling students in rural Zimbabwean contexts to thrive academically through sustained participation and improved learning outcomes.

2.3.4 Improve Students' Health and Nutritional Status

Improving student's health and nutritional status is a critical objective of school feeding programmes, as nutrition directly influences physical well-being, cognitive development and learning outcomes. Adequate nutrition ensures that students are not only present in school but also able to concentrate and participate effectively in classroom activities. UNICEF (2024) defines nutritional well-being as "the ability to access sufficient, safe and diverse foods that support growth, health and educational achievement." Beyond food intake, nutritional status encompasses micronutrient sufficiency, psychosocial development and resilience against illness, all of which collectively shape children's life chances.

Globally, recent research consistently demonstrates the link between nutrition and educational success. Garner et al. (2025), in a Cochrane systematic review of 40 studies across low- and middle-income countries, found that school feeding programmes improved children's nutritional indicators such as height for age and weight for age, while also enhancing mathematics achievement and enrolment. Wang and Fawzi (2020) similarly emphasized that school feeding interventions contribute to both improved health and psychosocial development, reducing fatigue and illness while supporting classroom concentration. In Latin America, the World Food Programme (2023) documented that integrated school nutrition programmes reduced anemia and improved dietary diversity among students, which translated into better attendance and participation. These findings highlight that nutrition is not only a

background factor but a direct driver of educational success across diverse global contexts, operating through improved health, reduced illness, and enhanced cognitive functioning.

Regionally, African studies provide comparable insights into how nutrition shapes educational outcomes. In Malawi, Willie (2024), found that school feeding programmes improved children's nutritional status by increasing dietary diversity and reducing stunting, which in turn lowered absenteeism and improved classroom participation. In Kenya, Mwangi (2021) reported that home-grown school feeding initiatives enhanced micronutrient intake and reduced fatigue among students in arid regions, where food insecurity is most severe. In South Africa, Nkosi (2020) highlighted that school nutrition programmes reduced hunger and improved students' concentration, while also acting as social safety nets for impoverished households. These findings illustrate that nutritional interventions, compounded by weak social safety nets, create fertile ground for educational improvement by stabilizing health, reducing illness and embedding children in supportive learning environments.

In Zimbabwe, poverty and food insecurity remain significant barriers to children's health and learning. UNICEF (2024) reported that integrated school health and nutrition programmes improved attendance and reduced dropout rates, particularly in drought-prone areas. Mathe (2020) emphasized that school feeding programmes act as social safety nets for vulnerable households, while also promoting educational achievement by improving children's nutritional status. However, challenges such as inconsistent food supply, reliance on donor funding and limited monitoring of nutritional adequacy persist. Critically, nutrition must be understood not only as a root cause of educational inequality but also as a structural barrier to learning (Adom et al., 2019). Economic deprivation limits caregivers' ability to provide consistent meals, leaving children exposed to hunger and illness. For rural schools such as Wayerera Secondary, where poverty intersects with weak institutional support, integrated feeding models must address both economic and health dimensions.

This dissertation therefore identifies nutrition as a root determinant of educational success, emphasizing the need for interventions that strengthen caregiver capacity while simultaneously addressing structural deprivation. Guided by Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the study situates school feeding within a broader framework of satisfying physiological needs as a foundation for higher order learning outcomes such as concentration, motivation and self-actualization. By adopting a qualitative methodology, the research captures the lived experiences of students, teachers, and parents, offering a deeper understanding of how feeding programmes improve

health, reduce illness and enhance academic success in Zimbabwe's unique socio-economic context.

2.3.5 Enhanced Gender Equity

School feeding programmes are increasingly recognized as transformative interventions for promoting gender equity in education. By reducing hunger and providing incentives for attendance these programmes encourage both boys and girls to remain in school but they are particularly impactful for girls, who often face greater barriers to education due to poverty, household responsibilities, and cultural norms. World Food Programme (2025), state of School Feeding Worldwide report shows that school meals are increasingly recognized as national policy levers, not just donor driven projects. It shows how school feeding strengthens food systems, support rural livelihoods and promotes gender equity by increasing girl's enrolment and retention.

Globally, recent evidence demonstrates the gendered impact of school feeding. The World Food Programme (2023) reported that school meals increased enrolment among girls by 12% across low-income countries, with parents more willing to send daughters to school when meals were guaranteed. Herlitz et al. (2020), in a systematic review of school feeding interventions, found that programmes reduced gender gaps in attendance and retention, particularly in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. In Latin America, integrated nutrition and education initiatives were shown to improve gender parity by reducing dropout rates among adolescent girls, who are often at risk of leaving school early due to economic pressures or early marriage. These findings highlight that school feeding is not only a nutritional intervention but also a gender equity strategy, operating through increased enrolment, retention, and empowerment of girls.

Regionally, African studies provide comparable insights. In Malawi, Mainje et al. (2024) found that school feeding programmes reduced dropout rates among girls and improved their participation in classroom activities, with teachers noting that meals helped girls remain attentive and less fatigued. In Kenya, Taddei & Contena (2020), reported that home-grown school feeding initiatives promoted gender equity by reducing absenteeism among girls in arid regions, where food insecurity disproportionately affects female students. In South Africa, Nkosi (2020) highlighted that nutrition programmes acted as protective factors against gendered educational inequalities, ensuring that girls from impoverished households had equal opportunities to remain in school. These findings underscore the role of feeding initiatives in

bridging gender gaps in Sub-Saharan Africa, though challenges such as inconsistent food supply and limited long-term data persist. Locally, UNICEF (2024) documented that integrated school health and nutrition programmes improved gender parity in attendance in Zimbabwe, particularly in drought prone areas where girls are often withdrawn from school to support household survival. Mathe (2020) emphasized that school feeding programmes act as social safety nets, encouraging parents to keep daughters in school while also improving their nutritional status. However, challenges such as reliance on donor funding, inconsistent food supply and limited monitoring of gender specific impacts remain (Watson et al., 2019).

Guided by Maslow's hierarchy of needs, this dissertation situates school feeding within a broader framework of satisfying physiological needs as a prerequisite for higher order educational outcomes such as concentration, motivation and self-actualization. By adopting a qualitative methodology, the study captures the lived experiences of students, parents and teachers, offering a deeper understanding of how feeding programmes promote gender equity beyond enrolment statistics.

2.3.6 Strengthened Community Participation

Strengthened community participation is increasingly recognized as a cornerstone of sustainable school feeding programmes. At its core, community participation refers to the active involvement of parents, caregivers and local stakeholders in the design and implementation of feeding initiatives, which fosters shared responsibility for learner's welfare. Recent evidence underscores this connection. The Food and Agriculture Organization (2021) reported that community-based feeding initiatives enhanced parental involvement in school governance and strengthened social cohesion. Similarly, UNICEF and WFP (2025) documented that community managed feeding programmes in Malawi and South Sudan improved accountability and trust between schools and households, thereby sustaining attendance and retention. Consequently, Stanley (2025), highlights that community participation in African feeding programmes not only addresses child nutrition but also builds stronger relationships between schools and communities, creating conditions for long term educational success.

To begin with, global evidence highlights this connection. The Food and Agriculture Organization (2021) reported that community-based feeding initiatives in Latin America increased parental involvement in school governance and strengthened social cohesion. In

addition, the World Food Programme (2023) emphasized that programmes with strong community ownership were more resilient to funding challenges and better integrated into national education strategies. These findings demonstrate that feeding programmes are not only about nutrition but also about building stronger relationships between schools and communities, creating opportunities for collaboration, transparency and shared responsibility.

Moving to the regional level, African studies provide comparable insights. UNICEF and WFP (2025), in their joint report on integrated school health and nutrition programming in Eastern and Southern Africa, documented case studies in Malawi and South Sudan showing that community managed feeding programmes fostered collaboration between schools and households, improving trust and accountability. Mwalali et al. (2024), emphasized that community managed feeding programmes in East Africa fostered collaboration between schools and households, improving trust and accountability. Parents' involvement in meal preparation and food supply chains created a sense of ownership that strengthened programme sustainability. Similarly, Mwangi (2021) highlighted that home grown school feeding initiatives in Kenya promoted community participation by involving parents in food production and distribution, thereby reinforcing ties between schools and communities. Thus, regional evidence underscores the role of community engagement in sustaining feeding programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa, though challenges such as resource constraints and inconsistent food supply chains remain.

Turning to the local context, Zimbabwean studies provide further insights. UNICEF (2024) documented that community participation in Zimbabwe's school feeding programmes encouraged parents to volunteer in meal preparation, thereby strengthening ties between schools and communities. Mathe (2020) emphasized that feeding initiatives fostered a sense of shared responsibility for students' welfare, with parents becoming more actively involved in school activities. More recently, Angood and Katete (2024) highlighted promising practices in Zimbabwe's school nutrition guidelines, noting that community involvement was critical for programme sustainability in rural districts. Nevertheless, gaps remain: most studies focus on parental volunteering without comprehensively examining how community participation influences academic success such as concentration, motivation, and achievement. Furthermore, limited attention has been given to rural schools, where community participation is often more critical due to scarce resources and weaker institutional support.

From a theoretical perspective, Maslow's hierarchy of needs situates school feeding within a broader framework of satisfying physiological needs as a foundation for higher-order outcomes such as concentration, motivation, and self-actualization. Consequently, this dissertation adopts a qualitative methodology to capture the lived experiences of parents, teachers, and students, offering a deeper understanding of how feeding programmes foster community collaboration while simultaneously enhancing academic performance(Langford et al., 2020). This approach complements existing quantitative evidence by demonstrating that school feeding programmes are not only about addressing child nutrition but also about building stronger relationships between schools and communities, which are essential for sustaining educational initiatives in Zimbabwe's unique socio-economic context.

2.4 INTERVENTION MODEL FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

2.4.1 Nutritional Adequacy and Cognitive Outcomes

Nutritional adequacy is widely acknowledged as a critical determinant of cognitive outcomes among students. At its core, it refers to the provision of meals that are not only calorically sufficient but also rich in essential micronutrients such as iron, vitamin A and zinc. It directly influences concentration, memory and classroom performance. Recent studies support this link, the World Food Programme (2023) demonstrated that fortified school meals improved attention spans and academic achievement, while Garner et al. (2025) confirmed that nutritionally adequate meals enhanced mathematics performance and reduced classroom fatigue. Aurino and Gelli (2021) also showed that balanced school meals improved literacy and numeracy outcomes, and Mwangi (2021) emphasized that home-grown feeding initiatives reduced fatigue and strengthened classroom engagement. Together, these findings underscore that nutritional adequacy is not only a health intervention but also a pedagogical strategy that supports cognitive development and academic success.

To begin with, global evidence highlights the importance of nutrient density in school meals. The World Food Programme (2023), in its State of School Feeding Report, demonstrated that fortified school meals significantly improved attention spans and academic performance among primary school students across diverse regions. In particular, micronutrient rich meals, especially those fortified with iron and vitamin A contributed to better memory retention and classroom participation. Similarly, Dumez (2015), in a Cochrane systematic review of 40 studies across low- and middle-income countries, found that nutritionally adequate meals

improved mathematics achievement and reduced classroom fatigue, especially among children from food insecure households. Thus, these global findings underscore that feeding programmes are not only welfare interventions but also critical educational strategies that support cognitive development.

Moving to the regional level, recent studies in Sub-Saharan Africa confirm these outcomes. Aurino and Gelli (2021), in a multi country evaluation across Ghana and Kenya, demonstrated that school meals significantly enhanced students' attention and reduced absenteeism, with notable improvements in literacy and numeracy outcomes. Their findings emphasized that balanced meals, when consistently provided, not only supported classroom engagement but also addressed broader inequities in educational attainment among foodn insecure households. In addition, Mwangi (2021) reported that home-grown school feeding initiatives in Kenya improved micronutrient intake and reduced fatigue among students, thereby strengthening concentration and participation. Consequently, regional evidence highlights the dual role of school feeding in addressing health challenges while simultaneously improving academic success.

Turning to the local context, Zimbabwean studies provide further insights. Chikowore et al. (2020) found that school feeding programmes in drought affected districts improved concentration and reduced absenteeism mainly among vulnerable students. Teachers observed that children who previously struggled to focus due to hunger were able to participate more actively in lessons once meals were provided. Furthermore, Munyehirwe and Ndokoye (2024), highlighted that fortified porridge introduced in rural schools enhanced students mid-morning fatigue, demostrating the immediate impact of the school feeding programmes on the cognitive outcomes.

From a theoretical perspective, most existing studies emphasize caloric intake rather than nutrient density, and few explicitly link outcomes to motivational theories such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs. This limits the explanatory power of current findings, as they often fail to capture the deeper psychological and motivational dimensions of how nutrition influences learning. Therefore, this dissertation will address these gaps by using a qualitative approach grounded in Maslow's hierarchy of needs to explore how meeting physiological needs in a rural setting like Wayerera Secondary School unlocks higher order learning behaviours such as persistence, concentration and motivation. By situating the research in a rural Zimbabwean context, the study will provide context-rich explanations for observed cognitive gains, thereby

contributing to both theoretical and practical understandings of school feeding as an educational intervention.

2.4.2 Attendance and Retention Effects

Attendance and retention are fundamental indicators of educational continuity, and school feeding programmes have consistently been associated with improvements in both. At its core, these programmes act as social safety nets, reducing absenteeism and encouraging parents to keep children in school. Recent evidence confirms that the World Food Programme (2023) reported that daily school meals reduced absenteeism and increased enrolment, while Kristjansson et al. (2025) found that fortified meals consistently improved attendance and retention, alongside gains in mathematics achievement. Appiah (2024) emphasized that feeding programmes act as strong incentives for parents to retain children in school, and McGOLDRICK (1991), demonstrated that feeding initiatives significantly boosted retention particularly for vulnerable groups. UNICEF and WFP (2025) further documented that community managed feeding programmes reduced dropout rates and sustained participation. Angood and Katete (2024) argue that predictable feeding schedules in Zimbabwean schools are essential for sustaining attendance and retention especially in drought prone districts.

To begin with, global evidence highlights the strong link between nutrition and school participation. The World Food Programme (2023), in its State of School Feeding Report, revealed that absenteeism decreased by 6% and enrolment increased by nearly 9% after the introduction of daily school meals across 41 low-income countries. In particular, the impact was most significant among girls and children from the poorest households who often face barriers to consistent school attendance due to food insecurity. Kristjansson et al. (2025), in a Cochrane systematic review, confirmed that fortified school meals consistently improved attendance and retention, while also enhancing mathematics achievement among disadvantaged students. Appiah (2024) further emphasized that school feeding programmes act as strong incentives for parents to enroll and retain their children in school, thereby contributing to higher completion rates. Thus, global findings underscore the importance of school feeding as both a nutritional and educational intervention, ensuring that students remain in school long enough to benefit from instruction.

Moving to the regional level, recent studies in Sub-Saharan Africa confirm these outcomes. Aurino and Gelli (2021), in a multi-country evaluation across Ghana and Kenya found that

school feeding programmes significantly improved attendance and retention, particularly when combined with take home rations for vulnerable groups such as girls and orphans. Their findings highlighted that the promise of a daily meal provided immediate relief to households struggling with poverty, thereby encouraging parents to prioritize education. UNICEF and WFP (2025), in their joint report on integrated school health and nutrition programming in Eastern and Southern Africa, documented that community managed feeding programmes in Malawi and South Sudan boosted retention rates and reduced absenteeism, especially in rural schools. Consequently, regional evidence demonstrates that school feeding not only addresses hunger but also acts as a social protection mechanism that sustains educational participation.

Turning to the local context, Zimbabwean studies provide further insights. Hove and Samkange (2026), in their study of school of school feeding programmes in Mberengwa District, found that consistent meal provision improved the attendance of students and reduced dropout's rates, particularly during lean seasons. The findings of these scholars clearly highlighted that parental involvement in meal preparation strengthened trust between schools and communities thereby sustaining retention. In line with the above School Meals Coalition Zimbabwe (2025) reported that the adoption of home grown school feeding initiatives under the National Development Strategy 1 improved punctuality and reduced absenteeism with school mandated to provide at least one hot meal per day. These findings highlighted that government led feeding programmes when institutionalized act as reliable social protection mechanisms that sustain educational participation.

From a methodological perspective, most existing studies rely heavily on administrative data, which captures enrolment and attendance figures but fails to explain the lived experiences behind improved regularity. For example, the psychological relief of reduced morning hunger, caregiver decision-making under economic stress, and gendered attendance dynamics are rarely explored in depth. Therefore, this dissertation will address these gaps by adopting a qualitative approach situated in a rural school context. Guided by Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the research will explore how meeting physiological needs motivates consistent school participation, thereby providing explanatory depth to quantitative attendance trends. By focusing on Wayerera Secondary School, the study will capture the lived realities of students and parents in rural Zimbabwe, offering insights into how school feeding sustains attendance and retention in contexts of poverty and food insecurity.

2.4.3 Educational Integration and Pedagogy

Educational integration and pedagogy are increasingly recognized as mutually reinforcing dimensions of effective schooling. At its core, integration refers to the alignment of health, nutrition, and educational interventions within school systems, while pedagogy encompasses the teaching methods that translate these interventions into meaningful learning experiences. Scholars highlight the importance of linking feeding programmes with pedagogy. Kristjansson et al. (2025) argued that nutrition sensitive education models when embedded into classroom practices it enhance concentration and participation by addressing both physiological and motivational needs. The World Food Programme (2023) emphasizes that integrated school feeding is most effective when combined with curriculum innovations that promote active learning. Aurino and Gelli (2021) demonstrate that feeding programmes improved literacy and numeracy outcomes when paired with learner centered pedagogy. Mwangi (2021) further supported that home-grown initiatives strengthened classroom engagement by reducing fatigue. UNICEF (2024) and Angood and Katete (2024) highlight that integration of feeding with pedagogy in Zimbabwe provides a pathway for addressing structural deprivation while enabling transformative teaching practices.

Globally, school feeding programmes have increasingly been linked to pedagogy, where meals are not only seen as nutritional interventions but also as educational tools. A qualitative research by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2015) documented how school gardens and nutrition lessons improved science understanding and student engagement in countries such as Brazil and India. Teachers used meal times to teach measurement, hygiene and food groups, thereby integrating nutrition into the curriculum. Similarly, Adelman et al. (2018) argued that nutrition-sensitive schools achieved better educational outcomes when feeding was embedded within pedagogy and health promotion. These global findings highlight that school feeding can be leveraged beyond its nutritional role to reinforce classroom learning and life skills, making it a holistic educational intervention.

Regionally, in East and Southern Africa, school feeding programmes have been shown to enhance academic success when linked with teacher training and classroom practices. A comprehensive study by Gelli et al. (2016) found that stronger learning gains occurred when feeding was coupled with nutrition-sensitive pedagogy, including lessons on food groups, hygiene and agriculture. The study emphasized that children in schools where teachers integrated feeding into lessons demonstrated improved literacy and numeracy outcomes compared to those in schools where feeding was treated as a separate welfare activity. In

addition, Snilstveit et al. (2015) reported that nutrition sensitive interventions in African schools contributed to improved classroom participation and reduced dropout rates, particularly in rural settings. These regional findings underscore the importance of aligning feeding programmes with pedagogy to maximize their educational impact.

Locally, in Zimbabwe, school feeding programmes have been integrated into classroom routines with positive outcomes. Qualitative case studies conducted in 2018 reported that when teachers linked meals with hygiene demonstrations and reflective writing tasks, students showed better participation and applied vocabulary related to health and agriculture. (Nguyen et al., 2022) . Teachers in rural Matabeleland and Manicaland observed that students were more attentive during lessons when feeding was incorporated into classroom activities, such as science experiments or agricultural projects. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (2017) also noted that schools which combined feeding with nutrition education reported improved student engagement and better understanding of health related topics. These local findings demonstrate that integrating feeding into pedagogy enhances both academic and life skills, particularly in rural communities where food insecurity and limited resources challenge learning outcomes. Adelman et al. (2018) support this perspective, emphasizing that nutrition sensitive schools achieve better educational outcomes when feeding is embedded within pedagogy and health promotion. Their findings reinforce the argument that school feeding should not be treated as a separate welfare activity but rather as an integral part of the educational process.

It is crucial to mention the gape on the research, many evaluations assess feeding as a standalone input, overlooking how classroom practices mediate outcomes. There is limited evidence from rural Zimbabwe on teacher led integration and its direct links to literacy and numeracy gains. Furthermore, few studies explicitly connect feeding with motivational theories that explain why students engage more deeply when their physiological needs are met and a Maslow's theory will explore meeting psychological needs physiological needs enables students to engage in higher-order tasks such as literacy, numeracy, and esteem-building activities. By situating the study in a rural Zimbabwean context, the research will provide context rich explanations of how feeding integrated into pedagogy enhances academic success.

2.4.4 Statutory Instruments

School feeding programmes in Zimbabwe are anchored in a legal and policy framework that obligates government, schools and communities to provide nutrition support to students. The Constitution of Zimbabwe (2013) provides the overarching basis for this framework, with Section 75 guaranteeing every citizen and permanent resident the right to a basic State-funded education, while Section 81 recognises the right of children to be protected from neglect that could compromise their health, education or development.

The Education Act (Chapter 25:04), as amended, is the principal statute governing the education sector and empowers the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education to make statutory instruments and regulations addressing matters incidental to the provision of education, including learner welfare. Building on this statutory basis, the Government of Zimbabwe adopted the School Feeding Programme in 2016 to address hunger and food insecurity among students, and this initiative was subsequently formalised through Statutory Instrument 13 of 2025, which made it mandatory for schools to provide food to students (Government of Zimbabwe, 2025).

This statutory instrument gave legal force to what had previously been a policy directive, thereby compelling schools nationwide, including Wayerera Secondary School, to institutionalize feeding as part of routine school operations rather than treating it as an optional or donor-dependent welfare activity. In support of implementation, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, working with UNICEF and the World Food Programme, developed school nutrition guidelines and promoted a home-grown school feeding model that encourages the use of locally sourced food to simultaneously support learner nutrition and local agricultural development.

Complementary legal instruments also shape the operating environment of school feeding. The Children's Act (Chapter 5:06) obligates the State and its agencies to safeguard the welfare of children, including their nutritional wellbeing, while the Public Health Act (Chapter 15:17) provides for the regulation of food safety and hygiene standards applicable to food prepared and served within institutions such as schools. Taken together, this framework of statutory instruments and Acts situates school feeding not merely as a humanitarian gesture but as a binding legal obligation, reinforcing the argument advanced in this study that feeding programmes must be treated as a structural component of the education system rather than a peripheral intervention.

2.4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the theoretical framework and literature review underpinning the study. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs was adopted as the guiding theory, illustrating how the satisfaction of physiological and safety needs through consistent nutrition creates the conditions necessary for students to pursue higher-order outcomes such as belonging, esteem and self-actualization within the school environment. The literature review examined global, regional and local evidence on how school feeding programmes influence attendance, dropout rates and equity in education, as well as how beneficiaries perceive the impact of these programmes on concentration and academic performance. The chapter further explored intervention models centered on nutritional adequacy, attendance and retention, and the integration of feeding with pedagogy. The review of statutory instruments demonstrated that school feeding in Zimbabwe is underpinned by a binding legal framework, most notably Statutory Instrument 13 of 2025, which obligates schools to provide food to students. Collectively, the theoretical grounding, empirical literature and legal framework reviewed in this chapter provide the foundation for the research methodology presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This study adopts a qualitative methodology to investigate how school feeding programmes enhance academic success among students at Wayerera Secondary School. Qualitative research is chosen because it allows for in depth exploration of lived experiences, perceptions and contextual realities rather than limiting findings to numerical data. Alharahsheh and Pius (2020**)** emphasize that qualitative approaches provide rich, contextualized insights into social phenomena, enabling researchers to capture the complexity of participants' perspectives and lived realities. Unlike quantitative approaches that emphasize measurement and generalization, qualitative inquiry provides rich descriptions and nuanced insights into how and why feeding programmes influence learning outcomes **(**Aspers and Corte, 2021**).** This is particularly important in a rural Zimbabwean setting where cultural, economic, and social factors interact to shape educational experiences. Kivunja and Kuyini (2021) note that qualitative methods capture marginalized voices, ensuring that interventions are understood from the perspective of beneficiaries themselves. The research design employed is a case study, focusing on Wayerera Secondary School as a bounded system where the intervention can be examined in detail. Ridder (2020) defines case study research as an empirical inquiry that investigates phenomena within their real life context, making it ideal for this study. Compared to surveys or experiments, case studies provide holistic, context rich insights and allow triangulation of data sources such as interviews, observations and documents **(**Gaikwad, 2022 Makateng and Mokala, 2025**).** These scholars further argue that case studies generate practical recommendations applicable to similar contexts enhancing policy relevance. Thus, the qualitative case study design is justified as it captures the complexity of school feeding programmes, situates them within the realities of Wayerera Secondary School and produces findings that are both explanatory and applicable to rural education interventions.

3.1 Research philosophy

This study is guided by the interpretivist philosophy, which emphasizes understanding social phenomena through the meanings and experiences of participants rather than relying solely on objective measurement. Interpretivism is particularly suited to the topic because the research seeks to uncover how students, teachers and community members perceive and experience

school feeding programmes in their everyday educational context. Positivist approaches, which prioritize quantifiable data and generalizable laws, would limit the inquiry to attendance figures or test scores, overlooking the deeper social and psychological dimensions of feeding programmes. By contrast, interpretivism allows the researcher to capture the subjective realities and contextual nuances that shape academic success in rural schools. Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) note that interpretivist approaches are valuable when studying complex social issues that cannot be fully understood through numbers alone. In the case of Wayerera Secondary School, the impact of feeding programmes extends beyond measurable outcomes to include how students feel, how teachers observe changes in classroom participation and how communities perceive the programme's role in supporting education. Kivunja and Kuyini (2021) emphasize that qualitative interpretivist research situates findings within the specific cultural, social and economic realities of participants, ensuring that results are meaningful and applicable to the local context.

Interpretivism also provides flexibility in research design, enabling the researcher to adapt questions and methods as new insights emerge. Aspers and Corte (2021) argue that this responsiveness is essential for exploring social programmes, as it allows the researcher to follow participants' narratives and uncover unexpected themes related to empowerment, participation, or sustainability. The philosophy aligns closely with the case study design adopted in this research, which requires deep engagement with a bounded system. Makateng and Mokala (2025) emphasize that interpretivist case studies are particularly effective in applied fields because they generate practical insights that inform policy and practice. For Wayerera Secondary School, this means the findings will not only describe outcomes but also explain how and why feeding programmes contribute to academic success. Interpretivism therefore provides the most appropriate philosophical foundation for this study because it prioritizes participant perspectives, situates findings within rural Zimbabwean realities and supports the case study design in ensuring that school feeding programmes are understood not only as interventions measured by outcomes but as social processes that shape the holistic academic success of students.

3.2 Research Design

This study adopts a case study design to investigate how school feeding programmes can enhance academic success among students at Wayerera Secondary School. A case study is appropriate because it allows for an in depth examination of a bounded system within its real-

life context, capturing the complexity of the intervention and the socio-economic realities of a rural Zimbabwean school. Ridder (2020) defines case study research as an empirical inquiry that explores phenomena in their natural settings, making it ideal for understanding how feeding programmes operate in practice. Unlike surveys that provide breadth but little depth, or experiments that isolate variables while ignoring lived realities, case studies enable triangulation of multiple data sources such as interviews, observations and documents producing holistic insights **(**Gaikwad, 2022**).** Makateng and Mokala (2025) further highlight that case studies generate practical recommendations applicable to similar contexts, ensuring that findings are both explanatory and relevant to policy and practice. By focusing on Wayerera Secondary School, this design situates the research within its cultural and developmental context, offering a comprehensive understanding of how school feeding contributes to academic success.

3.3 Targeted Population

Willie (2024) defines a targeted population as the specific group of individuals from whom a researcher intends to collect data in order to address the research problem and achieve the study objectives, and for this study the population comprises students, teachers and parents at Wayerera Secondary School. These groups are directly connected to the school feeding programme and provide diverse perspectives essential for understanding how such interventions enhance academic success. Students are the direct beneficiaries whose experiences reveal how nutrition influences concentration, participation, and performance. The teachers observed daily changes in learner behaviour, attendance and outcomes, making them key informants on programme effectiveness and parents contribute by supporting and sustaining feeding initiatives through community participation while offering insights into household welfare and educational decisions. Including these participants ensures that the research captures lived realities, professional observations and community perspectives, thereby strengthening credibility and producing a holistic understanding of how school feeding contributes to academic success. Triangulating data from these groups provides depth and context, ensuring findings are both explanatory and practically relevant to rural education in Zimbabwe.

3.4 Study Setting

This study is situated in a rural setting at Wayerera Secondary School, a deliberate choice informed by the realities of rural Zimbabwe where poverty, hunger and limited resources often hinder academic success, making rural schools critical sites for examining how school feeding programmes can enhance learning outcomes. Unlike urban schools that benefit from better infrastructure, easier access to food markets and stronger institutional support, rural schools face harsher conditions such as drought and household food insecurity which make the role of feeding programmes more pronounced. Previous studies in Zimbabwe have shown that school feeding schemes in urban schools improved attendance and nutrition outcomes, yet these findings reflect contexts where students already have relatively better access to resources. By focusing on Wayerera Secondary School, the research addresses this gap by investigating whether similar or different outcomes occur in rural areas, thereby generating insights into how feeding programmes meet physiological needs (Maslow, 1943) and contribute to empowerment, participation, equality and sustainability (Midgley, 1995). This rural focus ensures that the study captures the lived realities of students, teachers and parents in a community where feeding interventions are not only educational but also vital for survival, producing findings that are contextually grounded and directly relevant to rural education policy and practice in Zimbabwe.

3.5 Sampling Techniques

This study employs purposive sampling, a non probability technique where participants are deliberately selected based on their relevance to the research objectives. As Patton (2015) explains, purposive sampling is appropriate when the researcher seeks information-rich cases that provide deep insights into the phenomenon under study. For the topic purposive sampling ensures that the chosen participants students, teachers and parents are directly involved with or affected by the school feeding programme, making their perspectives essential for understanding its impact. Students are selected because they are the direct beneficiaries whose experiences reveal how feeding influences concentration and performance. Teachers also, are included as they observe daily changes in attendance, participation and academic outcomes. Parents are also engaged because they contribute to sustaining feeding initiatives and provide insights into household and community perspectives. The advantage of purposive sampling in this context is that it allows the researcher to focus on participants who can provide rich, contextualized data, ensuring that findings are both meaningful and applicable to rural education interventions in Zimbabwe.

3.6 Data Collection Techniques

3.6.1 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Focus group discussions will be conducted with students as they are the direct beneficiaries of school feeding programmes and their collective voices provide valuable insights into how nutrition influences concentration, participation and academic success. Focus Group Discussions encourage interaction among participants, allowing them to build on each other's ideas and experiences, thereby revealing shared perceptions and attitudes toward the feeding programme. As Ning, et al., (2024) explain that focus groups are effective in capturing the social dimensions of a phenomenon, making them suitable for exploring how students experience feeding interventions in the school environment.

Focus group interventions have increasingly been recognized as powerful tools in educational and social research because they allow participants to collectively construct meaning around shared experiences. Recent studies emphasize that focus group discussions not only capture perceptions but also empower marginalized voices by creating a participatory environment where students feel valued and heard. For instance, Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick, and Mukherjee (2018, updated discussions in 2021) highlighted that focus groups facilitate deeper exploration of context-specific issues, making them particularly relevant in rural education settings where cultural and social dynamics shape programme outcomes. Similarly, Simeonova and Fitzgerald (2023) argue that FGDs provide nuanced insights into group interactions, enabling researchers to identify patterns of consensus and divergence that might be overlooked in individual interviews. In the context of school feeding programmes, such interventions help uncover not only the direct nutritional effects but also the broader psychosocial impacts on learner motivation, peer relationships and classroom participation.

3.6.2 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with teachers and parents to capture individual perspectives on the impact and sustainability of school feeding programmes. This instrument is flexible, allowing the researcher to probe deeper into specific issues while maintaining a guiding framework of questions **(**Kallio, Pietila at el., 2021**).** Teachers provide professional observations on how feeding influences attendance, classroom participation and performance, while parents contribute community and household perspectives on the role of feeding in

supporting education. Using semi-structured interviews ensures that the study gathers rich, context specific data from key stakeholders, complementing the learner's voices and producing a holistic understanding of the programme's contribution to academic success at Wayerera Secondary School.

3.7 Data collection Instruments

3.7.1 Interview guide

An interview guide is a structured research instrument that outlines the key questions and themes to be explored during qualitative data collection. According to Alsaawi (2020), an interview guide serves as a roadmap that ensures consistency across interviews while allowing flexibility for probing deeper into participant's experiences. Similarly, Kallio et al. (2021) emphasize that interview guides enhance reliability by aligning questions with research objectives and theoretical frameworks, thereby reducing bias and ensuring that data collected is both relevant and comprehensive. More recently, Braun and Clarke (2022) argue that interview guides are critical in qualitative research because they balance structure with openness, enabling researchers to capture rich narratives while maintaining focus on the study's aims.

In this study, the interview guide will be used to collect data from teachers, students and caregivers at Wayerera Secondary School regarding the impact of school feeding programmes on academic success. The guide will be designed around the core inputs of the intervention model holistic interventions, nutritional equality, sustainable financing and infrastructure development. For example, questions will explore how feeding programmes influence attendance and concentration, whether all students benefit equally from meals provided, how funding mechanisms affect programme continuity and how facilities such as kitchens and storage impact reliability. By structuring the guide around these inputs, the data collected will directly inform the analysis of the model and its effectiveness in enhancing academic success.

The justification for using an interview guide lies in its ability to generate in depth, context specific insights that cannot be captured through surveys alone. As Nowell et al. (2022) note, interview guides facilitate systematic exploration of participants lived experiences, which is essential when studying complex social interventions like school feeding programmes. Furthermore, Guest et al. (2023) highlight that interview guides improve comparability across participants, making it possible to identify recurring themes while still respecting individual

perspectives. In this study, the guide ensures that all respondents address the same thematic areas, thereby strengthening the validity of findings and enabling triangulation with other data sources.

Therefore, the interview guide is not only a methodological tool but also a strategic mechanism that aligns the research process with the theoretical framework and practical realities of Wayerera Secondary School. It guarantees that the voices of students, teachers and caregivers are systematically captured, analyzed and integrated into the proposed School Feeding Achievement Model, ensuring that the final intervention is both evidence-based and contextually grounded.

3.7.2 Focus group guide

A focus group guide is a structured instrument that outlines the themes and questions to be discussed within a group setting, enabling the researcher to capture collective perspectives and interactive dynamics. According to Nyumba et al. (2020), focus group guides provide a framework that ensures discussions remain aligned with research objectives while allowing participants to freely express their views. Similarly, Morgan (2021) emphasizes that focus group guides enhance the richness of qualitative data by facilitating dialogue among participants, which often reveals shared experiences, disagreements, and consensus that individual interviews may not capture. More recently, Guest et al. (2022) argue that focus group guides are critical for exploring social phenomena because they generate insights through group interaction, thereby strengthening the validity of findings. In this study, the focus group guide will be used to collect data from groups of students, teachers and caregivers at Wayerera Secondary School. programme.

It is a justifiable fact to use focus group guide which lies in its ability to capture interactive, community based perspectives that are essential for understanding the broader impact of school feeding programmes. As Kitzinger and Barbour (2021), noted that focus groups allow participants to build on each other's ideas, challenge assumptions, and co-construct meaning, which enriches the data beyond what individual interviews can provide. Furthermore, Braun and Clarke (2022) highlight that focus group guides improve comparability across groups while still respecting the diversity of opinions expressed. In this study, the guide ensures that discussions remain systematic and relevant, while the group setting fosters openness and shared reflection among participants.

Therefore, the focus group guide is not only a methodological tool but also a participatory mechanism that aligns the research process with the lived realities of Wayerera Secondary School. It guarantees that collective voices are systematically captured, analyzed and integrated into the proposed Sustainable School Feeding Achievement Model, ensuring that the final intervention reflects both individual experiences and community perspectives.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

To ensure validity and reliability, the researcher pretested the research instruments at Kaitano Secondary School in Mt Darwin District, a school with similar characteristics to Wayerera Secondary School. Pretesting provided the opportunity to refine questions, identify ambiguities, and assess whether the instruments effectively captured the intended data. As Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) note, piloting research tools enhances both validity and reliability by ensuring that instruments are contextually appropriate and capable of producing consistent results. In relation to this study, pretesting allowed the researcher to confirm that students, teachers, and parents could understand and respond meaningfully to the focus group and interview questions, thereby strengthening the credibility of findings and minimizing measurement errors.

The study also acknowledges the importance of researcher positioning, which refers to the stance and role the researcher assumes in relation to participants and the research context. Positioning is critical because it shapes how data is collected, interpreted, and presented, ensuring transparency and reflexivity in the research process (Berger, 2015). In this study, the researcher's positioning as an observer and facilitator promotes trust, encourages openness among participants, and reduces bias, thereby enhancing the authenticity of the data. By recognizing positionality, the research ensures that findings reflect participants' lived realities rather than being distorted by researcher assumptions.

Finally, the study acknowledges the role of theoretical choice in shaping validity and reliability. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs provides the guiding framework, situating school feeding programmes within the broader context of students' physiological and psychological needs. By grounding the study in this theory, the instruments are validated against a well-established model that explains how meeting basic needs supports higher order achievements such as academic success. This theoretical alignment strengthens reliability by ensuring that data collection consistently reflects the relationship between feeding programmes and educational

outcomes, while also enhancing validity by linking findings to a recognized conceptual framework.

3.9 Data presentation and Analysis

This study will employ thematic analysis as the primary technique for analyzing qualitative data, which is particularly suitable for exploring meanings, perceptions, and experiences. Mwita and Mwilongo (2025) describe thematic analysis as a systematic process of coding and categorizing data into themes that capture patterns and insights, making it highly effective for qualitative studies that seek to understand social phenomena. In this research, data collected through focus group discussions with students and semi-structured interviews with teachers and parents will be transcribed, coded and organized into themes that reflect the impact of school feeding programmes on attendance, concentration, performance and community support. Thematic analysis is advantageous because it allows the researcher to move beyond surface responses to uncover deeper insights into how feeding interventions meet students' physiological needs and contribute to higher order achievements, consistent with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. By applying this technique, the study ensures that findings are credible, contextually grounded and capable of informing both educational practice and policy in rural Zimbabwe.

To ensure rigor and transparency, thematic analysis was conducted through the following stages:

1. ***Familiarization with the data***- the researcher transcribed recorded interviews and focus group discussion from Shona into English, reading and re-reading transcripts to ensure authenticity and immersion in participant's experience.

2. ***Generating initial codes***- Recurring patterns and meaningful segments were systematically coded.

3. ***Searching themes***- The codes are grouped into broader categories such as the how part of the school feeding programmes, beneficiary's perspectives and the recommendations.

4. ***Reviewing themes***- Preliminary themes were checked against the coded data and the entire dataset to ensure accuracy and representativeness. Weak or overlapping themes were refined, combined or discarded.

5. ***Defining and naming themes***- Each theme was clearly defined and labeled to reflect its importance.

6. ***Producing the report***- The researcher integrated his findings to the case study report by providing some of the narrative explanations supported by the direct participant's words or voices. The literature and theoretical framework were used to interpret themes and ensuring that findings were both grounded in the lived experience and connected to a broader scholarly debates

3.9 Feasibility of the Study

The feasibility of this study is strengthened by the accessibility of Wayerera Secondary School and the willingness of its stakeholder's students, teachers, and parents to participate, ensuring that relevant data can be collected within the available time and resources. The school shares similar characteristics with other rural institutions in Zimbabwe, such as limited resources, food insecurity, and socio-economic challenges, making it a practical and representative site for examining how school feeding programmes enhance academic success. The researcher has already pretested instruments in a comparable rural school, Kaitano Secondary in Mt Darwin District, which confirmed the suitability of the tools and demonstrated that participants can engage meaningfully with the research process. This prior experience reduces risks of methodological challenges and increases confidence in the reliability of data collection. Furthermore, the study is feasible because it aligns with existing educational priorities in Zimbabwe, where school feeding programmes are recognized as critical interventions for improving attendance and performance. By situating the research in a rural context, the study not only ensures practical implementation but also addresses a gap in literature that has often focused on urban schools, thereby producing findings that are both achievable and highly relevant to policy and practice.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

This study will adhere to strict ethical standards to protect the rights and welfare of all participants. Informed consent will be obtained from all adult participants to ensure voluntary participation with full knowledge of the study's purpose and procedures. For students, parental consent and child assent will be secured, recognizing the importance of safeguarding minors and respecting their autonomy. Anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained throughout the research by ensuring that participants' identities are not disclosed and that all information is treated with the highest level of privacy. Data will be securely stored and used solely for academic purposes, preventing misuse or unauthorized access. In addition, child protection protocols will be strictly followed to guarantee that students are engaged in a safe environment and that their participation does not expose them to harm. As Wa-Mbaleka (2019) emphasizes, ethical practices in qualitative research require careful attention before, during and after data collection to ensure respect, trust and integrity in the research process. By integrating these measures, the study ensures that it is conducted responsibly, ethically and in line with contemporary academic standards.

3.11 Possible Limitations

Despite its strengths, this study may face certain limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the use of purposive sampling means that findings cannot be generalized beyond Wayerera Secondary School, as participants are deliberately selected for their relevance rather than representativeness. Etikan et al. (2016) noted that, purposive sampling is effective for depth but limits generalizability. Second, the reliance on qualitative methods such as focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews may introduce subjectivity, since data interpretation depends on participants' willingness to share openly and the researcher's ability to analyze responses without bias, a challenge highlighted by Nowell et al. (2017) in qualitative research. Third, logistical challenges common in rural settings, such as limited resources, poor infrastructure and potential disruptions due to food insecurity or drought, may affect the consistency of data collection, echoing findings by Mupfumira (2019) on rural education constraints in Zimbabwe. Fourth, students' responses in focus groups may be influenced by peer pressure or social desirability, which could limit the authenticity of their contributions, a limitation discussed by Guest, Namey and McKenna (2017) in group based qualitative methods. Finally, while the study is grounded in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, theoretical framing itself may restrict interpretation by focusing primarily on physiological and psychological needs, potentially overlooking other socio-economic or cultural factors

influencing academic success. These limitations however, do not undermine the value of the study but rather highlight the contextual boundaries within which its findings should be understood.

3.12 Delimitations of the Study

This study was intentionally bounded in scope to keep the research focused and manageable. Geographically, the study was confined to Wayerera Secondary School in Bindura District, rather than covering all schools operating feeding programmes across Zimbabwe, meaning that the findings reflect the specific socio-economic and infrastructural realities of this setting rather than a nationally representative picture.

In terms of participants, the study restricted itself to teachers, students and caregivers directly involved with the school feeding programme, excluding the perspectives of policymakers, non-governmental organisations and community leaders whose views, though valuable, fell outside the scope of this research. The study also limited its focus to government-implemented school feeding initiatives, excluding privately sponsored or NGO-led feeding efforts operating in other schools.

Methodologically, the study adopted a qualitative case study design using purposive sampling, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, rather than a quantitative or mixed-methods approach that could have produced statistically generalizable results. The time frame of data collection was similarly confined to a single academic term, which may not capture how the feeding programme's impact evolves over a longer period.

Finally, the study concentrated on academic success indicators such as concentration, classroom participation and performance, rather than broader developmental outcomes such as long-term career prospects or social skills development. These delimitations were necessary to ensure that the study remained feasible within the available time and resources while still generating meaningful, context-rich insights into how school feeding programmes influence academic success at Wayerera Secondary School

3.13 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the methodology guiding the study. Wayerera Secondary School was chosen as the setting, with purposive sampling used to select students, teachers, and parents

directly involved in the feeding programme. Data were collected through focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews, ensuring triangulated perspectives. Validity and reliability were enhanced through pretesting at Kaitano Secondary School, careful researcher positioning, and grounding in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Thematic analysis was adopted to identify patterns in the qualitative data. The study was shown to be feasible given stakeholder willingness and alignment with national priorities, while ethical standards such as informed consent, confidentiality, and child protection were strictly observed. Finally, possible limitations were acknowledged, including the non-generalizability of purposive sampling, subjectivity in

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter builds upon the foundations established in the preceding chapters, where the study's background was outlined, relevant literature was critically examined, and the qualitative research methodology was employed to guide data collection. The themes derived from the study objectives are now presented and analyzed in relation to the theoretical framework underpinning this research Maslow's Hierarchy of needs. The theory provides a critical lens for understanding how school feeding programmes contribute to academic success. The Maslow's framework underscores the importance of school feeding programmes not merely as welfare initiative but as developmental interventions that enable student to climb the hierarchy of needs and achieve academic success. The chapter presents and analyses data collected through ten interviews and two focus group discussions with teachers, school head, parents and students. The findings interrogate whether government led school feeding programmes at Wayerera Secondary School adopts a social development stance in addressing the needs. The emerging themes highlights practical challenges, institutional gapes and opportunities for enhancing academic success through rights based and community driven approaches. The analysis is structured around the study objectives outlined in Chapter One and connected to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and relevance throughout the discussion

TABLE 4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS

PARTIPANTS NUMBER	LEVEL OF EDUCATION	GENDER	AGE	BENEFICIARY/ PROFESSION	TIME SERVED
Participant 1	Degree	Male	47	School Head	11 years
Participant 2	Degree/ GNC certificate	Female	40	Teacher	9 years
Participant 3	Degree	Female	30	Teacher	5 years

Participant 4	'O' level	Female	35	Parent	17 years in marriage
Participant 5	Form 3	Male	15	Beneficiary	3 years
Participant 6	Form 3	Male	14	Beneficiary	3 years
Participant 7	Form 1	Male	13	Beneficiary	1 year
Participant 8	Form 2	Female	14	Beneficiary	2 years
Participant 9	Form 4	female	16	Beneficiary	4 years
Participant 10	Parent	Male	45	Beneficiary	25 years in marriage
Participant 11	Form 2	Female	14	Beneficiary	2 years

TABLE 4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS KEY INFORMANTS

Key informant number	Level of education	Gender	Age	Profession	Time served
Key informant 1	Degree	Male	47	School Head	11
Key informant 2	'O' level	Female	35	Unemployed	17 years in marriage
Key informant 3	Degree and GNC certificate	Female	40	Teacher	9 years

Key informant 4	'O' level	Male	45	Parent	25 years in marriage

The wide range of participants interviewed validates inclusivity across all operational levels within Wayerera Secondary School and its surrounding community, providing a balanced spectrum of perspectives from students, teachers, parents and school administrators. The diversity of voices, views, opinions, and lived experiences was of great significance to the study. This enabled a rich variation in responses, making them highly reliable and contextually grounded. The table above shows the distribution of participants by age, gender, level of education, professional role and beneficiary status. While the distribution may not be even, the disparities resulted from the availability and consent of participants, which were beyond the control of the researcher. The dominance of both female and male participants was due to the fact that both participants are directly engaged into the programmes.

It was also important to pay attention to the age of the participants, wherein the study included both mature adults and younger individuals. The mature adults, particularly teachers, parents, and administrators, provided rational and experience based insights that were critical in understanding institutional practices, policy implementation, and household challenges. Younger participants, especially students, offered lived experiences that were essential in unpacking how the school feeding programme directly influences attendance, concentration, participation and academic performance. The views of the participants were regarded as informative, especially when considered alongside the length of time they had either worked within or benefited from the programme.

Given the nature of the issues explored in this study, the educational qualifications and professional roles of the participants were equally important in shaping how they understood and interpreted the objectives, delivery mechanisms, and challenges of the school feeding programme. Furthermore, the researcher encountered emotionally sensitive issues, particularly when engaging with vulnerable beneficiaries who had directly experienced the shortcomings or successes of the programme. This was especially evident among girls and boys, who lived in disadvantaged households, whose testimonies were central to the thematic analysis. Their contributions provided depth and authenticity to the findings, ensuring that the study captured both institutional perspectives and grassroots realities.

4.1 HOW SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMMES INFLUENCE STUDENTS' CONCENTRATION AND CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION

4.1.1 Students Shift Competition

The findings from the participants interviewed it was clear that school feeding programme at Wayerera Secondary School reduced competition for food among students and redirected their focus towards academic participation. Before the programme students often competed for scarce food resources, which created tension and distracted them from learning however, with the introduction of feeding programmes, this competition taking from the participant was minimized, and students reported that they could now concentrate on their studies. This was detected from participant 5 who had this to say,

> *"patinodya tese kuchikoro hapasisina kukwikwidzana kwechikafu, tinotanga kukwikwidzana muzvidzidzo which makes our grades to improve zvekuti tava necompetition pakati pedu muclass hapana ava kuda kukundwa nemumwe kune masubjects ese" ("when we eat together at school there is no longer competition for food, instead we now compete in academicswhich makes our grades to improve that there is now competition between us in class and no one want to be left out in all the subjects").*

Key informant 3 concurred with participant 5 and was quoted verbatim saying,

"Kubva pakatanga kupihwa vana chikafu kuchikoro ndirikuona kuti vashanduka mumadzidziro avo vave kuratidza kuti munezvedzidzo pava nemakwikwi zvinove zvakuita is sea teacher tava kuona shanduko muzvidzidzo''. ("Since students began receiving food at school as teachers we have we have observed a change in their learning. They are now showing competitiveness in their studies which has made us as teachers to notice improvement in academic performance.")

Participant 10 was also in line with the same view and had this to say,

"Ndirikuona kuti kubva ndisiye basa ndaita dambudziko pakutengera mwana zvekutakura kutyoro asi pakatanga chirongwa chekupa vana chikafu kuzvikoro mwana wangu ava kunyatsokwikwidzawo nevamwe, nekuti patakanona mabhuku avo ndakaona shanduko zvinove zvakanaka" ("I can see that when I left my job I was struggling to buy food for my child to take

to school. But when the school feeding programme started my child is now very attentive and when I checked the books I have seen very positive changes."

This finding can be linked to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. By satisfying physiological needs through the provision of food, students are freed from the anxiety of hunger and competition. Once these basic needs are met, they progress to higher order needs such as belongingness and esteem. Shared meals foster a sense of equality and community, while the removal of food competition allows students to channel their energy into academic pursuits, thereby moving towards self-actualization (Bell, 2024). The findings also align with the literature review which highlighted that school feeding programmes are not only nutritional interventions but also social equalizers. Studies such as Aurino et al. (2020) in Ghana emphasized that feeding reduced disparities among students and fostered fairness, while Ndayambaje (2022) in Rwanda showed that feeding promoted unity and redirected students' efforts towards group learning and sports. These findings resonate with the voices of students at Wayerera, confirming that feeding programmes reshape classroom dynamics by reducing competition for food and enhancing academic focus.

The above findings can further evidence by Silva et al. (2023) on Brazil's National School Feeding Programme (PNAE). The study found that consistent provision of meals reduced inequalities among students, minimized stigma, and shifted focus from survival struggles to academic engagement. Teachers observed that students were more cooperative and competitive in academics rather than in food access. This mirrors the situation at Wayerera, where feeding programmes learner's competition into constructive education outcomes.

Recent scholars also support this perspective. Bundy et al. (2021) argued that feeding programmes create enabling environments where students can concentrate on academics rather than survival. APHRC (2024) emphasized that school meals promote equity and cohesion, reducing exclusion and competition for resources. Together, these scholarly views affirm that feeding programmes are developmental tools that shift students' priorities towards education.

The evidence from Wayerera Secondary School demonstrates that school feeding programmes are transformative in redirecting students' competition from food to academics. By satisfying physiological needs, feeding programmes eliminate hunger driven rivalry and foster a sense of equality. This creates space for students to engage in healthy academic competition, which strengthens participation and concentration. The case study from Brazil and supporting scholarship confirm that this shift is not unique to Wayerera but is a broader outcome of well

implemented feeding programmes. Thus, the findings validate Maslow's hierarchy of needs, showing that one basic physiological needs are met students can progress to esteem and self-actualization, as expressed through constructive academic competition and improved scholastic achievements.

4.1.2 Reduction of Hunger

The participants accounts revealed that the school feeding programme at Wayerera Secondary School has played a significant role in reducing hunger among students, thereby improving their ability to concentrate and participate in classroom activities. Students expressed that before the programme, hunger distracted them from lessons and made it difficult to remain attentive. With the introduction of feeding, they reported feeling more settled and able to focus on learning. Participant 7 explained that,

> *"Kana tichidya kuchikoro hatichanzwi nzara, tinokwanisa kuterera mudzidzisi zvakanaka uye tava kuwana simba kunyangwe rekusimudza maoko tichipa mhinduro yemibvunzo inege yabvunza nematicha edu" ("When we eat at school we no longer feel hungry, and we are able to listen to the teacher properly even raising our hands providing some answers for the questions put forward by our teachers").* Participant 7

Key informant 4 also mentioned that,

> *"Since my child started being fed at school I have noticed some changes in his studies. I can see it in his report that his grades have been improved since the school feeding programme started its clear that he is concentrating more."*

School feeding programmes were recognized as the significant measure in eliminating hunger which is a hindrance to academic success. The reduction of hunger enabled the students to concentrate and participate in classroom. Maslow's hierarchy of needs provides useful lens for interpreting the findings, where the physiological needs meet such as food which are the foundation of human functioning. It shows that when hunger is alleviated, students are freed from survival anxieties and can progress to higher order needs. The satisfaction of hunger creates a sense of security, enabling students to concentrate on lessons and participate actively in classroom activities. The above further supported by Bundy et al. (2021), highlighted that alleviating hunger through school meals directly improves learner's concentration as nutrition

is foundational to cognitive engagement. Feeding programmes, therefore act as enablers of educational success by meeting the most basic human requirement.

The interrogation from the above participant can also be evidence by Aurino et al. (2020), which found that the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP) reduced hunger and improved students' attentiveness. Teachers observed that children who received meals were more focused and less fatigued, while parents reported improved school attendance. Similarly, Silva et al. (2023) in Brazil highlighted that consistent provision of meals under the National School Feeding Programme (PNAE) reduced hunger and created equitable learning environments. These findings mirror the situation at Wayerera, where feeding programmes directly reduced hunger and enhanced concentration. The above finding also conquer with the literature review which emphasized that hunger is a structural barrier to learning. Studies such as Ndayambaje (2022), in Rwanda showed that feeding programmes reduced hunger and promoted unity, while APHRC (2024) emphasized that school meals are platforms for reducing exclusion and ensuring equity. These studies confirm that addressing hunger is not only a nutritional intervention but also a prerequisite for educational participation. Recent scholars further support this perspective. Bundy et al. (2021), argued that feeding programmes are essential for reducing hunger and enabling students to engage meaningfully in education. UNICEF (2024), emphasized that hunger reduction through school feeding is foundational to achieving equitable learning outcomes, particularly for vulnerable children. Together, these scholarly views affirm that feeding programmes are critical interventions that reduce hunger and create enabling conditions for concentration and participation. The evidence from Wayerera Secondary School demonstrates that school feeding programmes are transformative in reducing hunger, which is a fundamental barrier to learning. By satisfying physiological needs, feeding programmes eliminate distractions and create space for students

4.1.3 Energy Provision for Active Engagement

The findings revealed that the school feeding programme at Wayerera Secondary School provided students with the physical energy required to actively engage in classroom activities. Students expressed that meals gave them the strength to answer questions, complete assignments, and participate in group work. Participant 8 explained,

> *"Chikafu chinotipa simba rekupindura mibvunzo uye kuita basa rese pasi ratosiya nekuti simba tinenge tinaro ritinenge tawana muchikafu kunyanya patinopihwa sadza*

rinotipa simba rakanyanya" ("Food gives us the strength to answer questions and do all the tasks and due to the energy we get from food which is provided especially when we eat sadza it gives us a lot of energy"). Participant 8

Participant 8 also added that,

"Chikafu chinotipa simba rekupindura mibvunzo uye kuita basa rese pasi ratosiya nekuti simba tinenge tinaro ritinenge tawana muchikafu kunyanya patinopihwa sadza rinotipa simba rakanyanya." ("Food gives us the strength to answer questions and do all the tasks, and due to the energy we get from food especially when we eat sadza it gives us a lot of strength.") Participant 8

Moreover, Participant 9 added on that,

"Kana tichidya mangwanani kuchikoro tinokwanisa kugara kusvika pakupera kweclass tichipindura mibvunzo nekuti tinenge tisina kuneta." ("When we eat in the morning at school, we are able to stay until the end of class answering questions because we are not tired.") Participant 9

Energy provision for active engagements another positive outcome of the school feeding programmes which enhances concentration and classroom participation which lead to the academic success. The above finding, can be linked to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, particularly the progression from physiological needs to safety and esteem. By satisfying hunger, students gain the energy and confidence to participate in academic tasks. Consistent meals also create a sense of security, as students trust that their basic needs will be met. This security fosters esteem, as students feel capable of performing and being recognized for their contributions in class. This also further supported by the literature review which postulates that school feeding programmes are not only nutritional interventions but also catalysts for active participation. For example, Aurino et al. (2020), in Ghana emphasized that meals improved students' energy levels and classroom engagement while Silva et al. (2023), in Brazil reported that feeding programmes enhanced students' ability to participate in group discussions and practical exercises. These studies confirm that energy provision is a critical mechanism through which feeding programmes influence academic success.

The above finding can be complemented by Ndayambaje (2022), which found that in Rwanda school feeding programmes boosted students' stamina, enabling them to participate in both academic and extracurricular activities such as sports and group projects. Teachers observed

that students were more energetic and cooperative, while parents noted improvements in performance and motivation. This mirrors the situation at Wayerera, where feeding programmes provided students with the energy to engage actively in classroom learning. Recent scholars further support this perspective. Bundy et al. (2021), argued that feeding programmes enhance students' energy and stamina, enabling them to participate fully in education. APHRC (2024), emphasized that school meals are platforms for promoting active participation and reducing exclusion, as they empower students to engage in both academic and social activities. Together, these scholarly views affirm that feeding programmes are essential for transforming students into active participants in the classroom.

The evidence from Wayerera Secondary School clearly demonstrates that school feeding programmes are transformative in providing students with the energy required for active engagement. By satisfying physiological needs, feeding programmes enable students to move beyond survival and focus on academic participation. The case study from Rwanda and supporting scholarship confirm that energy provision is a consistent outcome of well-implemented feeding programmes. Thus, feeding initiatives are not only nutritional interventions but also educational strategies that empower students to participate actively, build confidence, and achieve academic success.

4.1.4 Attendance and Punctuality

School feeding programmes proved to be an essential instrument to students as it was highlighted by the findings were it revealed that the school feeding programme at Wayerera Secondary School encouraged students to attend school regularly and arrive on time. Students expressed that the assurance of meals motivated them not to miss classes, as they knew their basic needs would be met at school. This idea was captured from participant 7, who was quoted saying verbatim saying

> *"Kana tichiziva kuti tichawana kudya, hatimbosii chikoro uye tinoenda kutyoro nenguva zvirikuita kuti kudzidza kwedu kutinakidze uye tikufarire zvirikuita kuti kana kuterera kwedu kuwedzere mukirasi." ("When we know we will get food, we never miss school and will be punctual to school, this makes our learning enjoyable and making us to pay more attention in class").* Participant 9

Participant 10 remarked,

> *"Kubva patakatanga kupihwa chikafu kuchikoro vazhinji haticharovha kuschool tavakutongogara tiri present muclass. Ndichibva kumba kana ndakangofunga chikafu ndinobva ndatowana simba rekuti ndiende kuchikoro nekuti kudya ndokuda." ("Since we started receiving food at school, many of us no longer skip classes, we are now consistently present in the classroom. When I leave home, just thinking about the food gives me the strength to go to school because eating is what I desire.").* Participant 10

Moreover, Participant 4 explained

> *"Chirongwa chekupa chikafu kuchikoro chakatibatsira zvikuru. Vana havachadi kuramba vari kumba, nekuti vanoziva kuti kuchikoro kune kudya. Izvi zvaita kuti vana vave nenguva dzose vari muclass." ("The school feeding programme has helped us a lot. Children no longer want to stay at home because they know there is food at school. This has made students consistently present in class.").* Participant 4

This testimony highlights how feeding programmes act as incentives for attendance and punctuality, ensuring that students remain consistent in their educational journey. This finding can be linked to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, particularly the safety needs. When students trust that meals will be consistently available, they feel secure and motivated to attend school regularly. This sense of security reduces absenteeism and lateness allowing students to progress to higher order needs such as belongingness and esteem, where they can participate actively and gain recognition in the classroom. These finding align with, Silva et al. (2023), in Brazil consistent meals encouraged students to remain in school. These studies confirm that attendance and punctuality are critical mechanisms through which feeding programmes enhances concentration and classroom participation.

WFP (2023), provides better lens in relation with the above findings, were in Tanzania it highlighted that school meals reduced dropout rates and improved punctuality. Parents reported that children were eager to attend school because they knew meals would be provided which strengthen participation in class and enhance concentration. Nkosi (2021), also argued that feeding programmes in South Africa improved punctuality and reduced absenteeism which strengthened classroom participation. UNESCO (2024), highlighted that school feeding programme is a fundamental to equitable education as it ensures regular attendance and strengthens learner's ability to concentrate. These finding demonstrates that school feeding programmes enhance attendance and punctuality which lead to better educational outcomes.

The evidence from Wayerera Secondary School demonstrates that school feeing programmes are transformative in promoting attendance and punctuality which directly enhances concentration and classroom participation. By satisfying physiological and safety needs feeding programmes create trust and security motivating students to attend school consistently. The recent scholarship confirm that attendance and punctuality are consistent outcomes of feeding programmes. Thus feeding initiatives are not only nutritional interventions but also education strategies that strengthen participation and reduce dropout's rates and foster academic success

4.1.5 Social Integration

Participants explained that the school feeding programmes has played a significant role in strengthening social integration among students as they eat together and without any discrimination. The participants explained how the programmes make them feel as one family. The participant expressed that sharing meals created a sense of unity and belonging. The above words were detected from participant 8 who was of the view that,

> *"patinodya tese kuchikoro tinonzwa sekuti tiri mhuri imwechete nekuti tinenge tichishandira pamwe hapasisina kusarurana as we used to do" ("when we eat together at school, we feel like one family we now work together in groups and no longer isolate ourselfs as we used to do").* Participant 8

Participant number 1 also conquered with the above notion as he said that,

> *"vana vava kushanda pamwe chete mumapoka, havachazvitsaurira sezvavaimboita" ("students now work together in groups, they no longer isolate themselves as they used to").* Participant 1

Participant 4 also has the same view of the above notion. As a key informant 3 remarked that,

> *"vana vese vanodya pamwe chete, hazvina basa kuti vanobva kupi, izvi zvave kuita kuti vave nehukama hwakanaka" ("all children eat together regardless of where they come from, and this has helped them build good relationships").* Key informant 3

Students teachers and parents provided their insights towards the school feeding programme since it makes them to be one without an exclusion. This makes them to only focus only with academics eliminating all other things that can distract their learning process. Maslow's

hierarchy of needs can provide better view on the programmes, firstly the school feeding programmes first satisfies physiological needs by providing food and once hunger is addressed, students progress to safety needs, were meals will be consistently available. Importantly shared meals also foster belongingness needs, as students feel part of a community where no one is excluded. Lastly a sense of belonging is fostered were it strengthens esteem needs and children gain confidence and recognition in a support environment.

The above findings can further be supported by Osei-Mensah (2022), found that the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP) significantly promoted social integration. Students reported that eating together created a sense of unity and reduced stigma between children from wealthier and poorer households. Teachers observed that shared meals encouraged group participation and strengthened peer relationships. Parents emphasized that the programme fostered equality, as all children had access to meals regardless of background. The Ghanaian case study aligns with the voices of the participants, confirming that school feeding programmes are not only nutritional interventions but also social instruments that build belongingness and cohesion. The findings are supported by Ndayambaje (2022) in Rwanda who highlighted that school feeding programmes promote unity and strengthened peer relations, with sports and group activities flourishing alongside academic gains. African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC, 2024), further emphasized that school meals are platforms for promoting social cohesion, gender equity, and community integration, beyond their nutrition role, however some scholars in Chapter 2 cautioned it for example Kristjanson et al. (2021) cautioned that while feeding programmes promote cohesion, disparities in food quality or irregular provision can undermine integration. Bundy et al. (2021) argued that long term social integration requires embedding feeding programmes within broader education and health reforms. This makes it clear that while feeding programmes are powerful tools for social integration sustainability and consistency are essential for lasting impact.

Overall the participant's views at Wayerera Secondary School resonate with the study from Ghana and broader scholarly views by meeting the Physiological needs, school feeding programmes create opportunities for students to interact, collaborate, and build relationship, thereby fulfilling Maslow's belongingness needs. The scholarly evidence showed that shared meals reduces stigma, promote equality and strengthen social bonds and the critiques emphasize that sustainability, funding consistency and integration with wider educational frameworks but overall the evidence demonstrates that school feeding programmes are strong interventions that foster integration and academic success in Wayerera Secondary Schools.

4.1.6 Better Health Outcomes

Testimonies from the participants revealed that the school feeding programmes enhances proper health outcomes which eliminate starvation from students. The participants reported that the programmes create room for good health which lead to the better educational outcomes among the students. The participant highlighted that School feeding programmes are not only educational strategies but also public health interventions. By providing balanced meals, they improve nutritional status, reduce illness, and strengthen students' resilience. Better health outcomes directly influence concentration, attendance, and academic success, making feeding programmes a cornerstone of holistic child development. Participant 7 clearly captured postulating that the programmes improve their health outcome. He had this to say,

> *"chikafu chinopiwa kuchikoro chinondibatsira kuti ndisarware kazhinji ndava kudzidza ndine hutano hwakanaka" ("the food given at school helps me not to fall sick often now I am attending school in good health")*. Participant 7

Participant 11 had the same view as he was quoted saying,

> *"Kubva patakatanga kupihwa chikafu kuchikoro ndava kusava nematambudziko ekugara ndichinzwa nzara kana kurwara nguva zhinji. Ndava kugara ndine hutano hwakanaka uye ndinokwanisa kudzidza zvakanaka." ("Since we started receiving food at school, I no longer struggle with constant hunger or frequent sickness. I now maintain good health and can learn effectively.").* Participant 11

Key informant stressed that school feeding programmes enhances students to have a better health by eliminating hunger. This was also denoted from key informant 2 who had this to say,

> *"Sevadzidzisi tiri kuona kuti vana havachanyanyi kurwara kana kusiiwa muzvidzidzo nekuti chikafu chiri kuvapa hutano hwakanaka. Izvi zvava kuita kuti vadzidzi vave nenguva dzose vari muclass uye vachidzidza zvakanaka." ("As teachers, we are noticing that students no longer fall sick often or miss lessons because food is giving them better health. This has resulted in students being consistently present in class and learning well.").* Key informant 2

The participant's perceptions demonstrate that school feeding programmes contributes to better health outcomes by reducing malnutrition and illness, thereby supporting attendance and academic success. Maslow's hierarchy of needs can provide a better insight on better health

outcomes were physiological needs which include nutrition and health are met. It also reinforces safety were illness is reduced and absenteeism and foster belongingness were consistent participation in school life, and enable self-actualization which leads to academic achievement and personal growth. Regionally, Aurino et al. (2019) in Ghana and Gelli et al. (2019) in Kenya showed that feeding programmes improved attendance and retention by addressing hunger and health challenges. Locally, Marenga (2020) in Zimbabwe revealed that feeding programmes improved punctuality and reduced dropout by strengthening health and resilience. These insights resonate with Chapter Four findings at Wayerera Secondary School, where students testified that school meals helped them avoid illness and remain engaged in learning.

UNICEF (2024), developed national school nutrition guidelines through policy review, stakeholder consultations, and programme evaluation which compliments the above findings. Their findings revealed that feeding programmes reduced malnutrition, improved child growth indicators and enhanced students' health. Schools implementing these guidelines reported fewer absences due to illness, improved energy levels and stronger classroom participation. By ensuring meals were balanced and fortified, the programme linked better health outcomes directly to educational success. Scholarly evidence reinforces this finding. Kristjansson et al. (2021) showed that fortified school meals improved micronutrient intake, reducing fatigue and enhancing cognitive functioning. Gelli et al. (2021), demonstrated that feeding programmes in Africa improved psychosocial well-being alongside physical health. Locally, Marenga (2020) found that school feeding in Zimbabwe strengthened students' health and resilience, reducing dropout. More broadly, the BMJ Open Scoping Review (Locke et al., 2025) synthesized evidence from 44 studies across 13 countries, showing that universal feeding programmes improved healthy weight, dietary intake, and social engagement. Despite these successes, critiques remain. Powell (2022) cautioned that health outcomes depend on the nutritional adequacy of meals and poorly balanced diets may not yield long term benefits. Masset (2021) noted that while feeding improves short-term health, structural poverty and poor sanitation can undermine gains. UNICEF (2024), emphasized that feeding must be integrated with broader health and nutrition policies to sustain outcomes.

4.2 THE PERSPECTIVES OF BENEFICIARIES ON THE IMPACT OF SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMMES TO THEIR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

4.2.1 Promotion of Equality

During the interview the students consistently pointed out that the school feeding programmes makes them to be equal no differences or separating factor among them. The feeding programmes makes them to feel as one. It shows that the school feeding programme promote equality among students by ensuring that all students, regardless of their socio-economic background have access to meals. Students expressed that the programme removed the stigma associated with poverty as the Participant 6 illustrates that,

> *"kana tichidya tese kuchikoro hapasisina kusarura, tinonzwa sekuti tiri vanhu vakafanana nekuti tinenge tichidya food yakafanana uye tichidyira pamwechete" ("when we all eat together at school, there is no discrimination, we feel equal whilst we eat on the same place").* Participant 6

Key Informant 1 also added that,

> *"vana vese vanenge vakagadzirira kudzidza, hazvichabvi pakuti mumwe ane chikafu mumwe haana" ("all students are now prepared to learn, it no longer depends on whether one has food and another does not").* Key informant 1

The participant's words reflect that school feeding programmes move students from meeting physiological needs to achieve esteem and self-actualization, making them powerful tools for both educational and social development. On Maslow hierarchy of needs, the proportion of equality begins with the satisfaction of physiological needs, as all students receive food. Once hunger is addressed equally, students experience safety needs knowing that meals are guaranteed for everyone. Shared meals also create unity and inclusion. Ultimately equality in feeding enables students to pursue self-actualization, achieving academic success and personal growth in a socially cohesive environment. The findingsalign with Bundy et al. (2018) emphasize that, these initiatives are not simply nutritional interventions but mechanisms for advancing equity within education systems, while the World Food Programme (2025) highlights their role as instruments of social justice that foster inclusion and reduce disparities in educational outcomes.

The above interrogations can be further supported by Mkhize (2021), employed a case study in South Africa. The research found that the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) promoted equality by ensuring that children from diverse socio economic backgrounds shared meals together. Students reported that the programme reduced stigma and created a sense of fairness. Teachers observed that classroom participation improved because all students had

equal access to food. The programme also helped to bridge the gap between children from wealthier and poorer households, fostering unity and inclusion. The South African case study aligns with the voices of the participants, confirming that school feeding programmes are not only nutritional interventions but also social instruments that promote equality and cohesion. This can further have evidenced by Statistic South Africa (2023), reported that the government invested R8.4 Billion in school feeding schemes, highlighting their role in reducing inequality. However, they cautioned that regional disparities in implementation could limit the full equality benefits. This clearly shows that school feeding programmes promote equality by ensuring all students have access to nutrition, reducing stigma and fostering inclusion.

4.2.2 Reduced Burdens On Parents

The findings revealed that the school feeding programme has significantly reduced the burden on parents, particularly in rural households where food insecurity is common. Parents expressed relief that their children were guaranteed meals at school, which eased the financial and emotional strain of providing daily food. These words were supported by key participant 4 and had this to say,

> *"ndava kuziva kuti mwana wangu haachashai chikafu kuchikoro, izvi zvandibatsira nekuti mari yandaiwana ndava kushandisa kune zvimwe" ("I now know my child will not lack food at school, this has helped me because I can use the money I earn for other needs").* Key Participant 4

Participant 2 also add this,

> *"vabereki vava kuzorora, vana vavo vanodya kuchikoro uye vanenge vakagadzirira kudzidza" ("parents are now at ease, their children eat at school and come prepared to learn").* Participant 2

The testimonies reflect that school feeding programmes plays a crucial role in reducing parents burdens that they are now targeting other school necessities but not food which can give the power to motivate their children's to continue pursue and accelerate in their academic's journey. It is very crucial that this now prepares children to learn without any other hindrance such as hunger especially. Maslow also supports the above participant's views by linking physiological needs were meals meet basic nutritional requirements, removing hunger as a barrier to learning and also parents gain assurance that children's food security is guaranteed,

reducing household stress and creating stability, safety needs and students realized self-actualization with the household burdens reduced, students can pursue their full academic and personal potential. The World Food Programme (2020), emphasized that school feeding programmes are among the largest social safety nets globally, reducing inequalities and household burdens. Regionally Gelli et al. (2019) in Kenya confirmed that feeding programmes encourage parents to prioritize schooling by easing food insecurity. Nationally, in Zimbabwe, Mago et al. (2016) revealed that school feeding programmes sustained attendance during food shortages, directly reducing burdens on families. These insights align with the findings at Wayerera Secondary School, where students testified that school meals relieved their parents struggles and allowed them to focus on learning.

The above findings can also be complimented with a case study by Adebayo (2021) which was conducted in Nigeria which examined Home Grown School Feeding Programme. The findings were as follows parents reported that reduced financial strain , as they no longer had to provide daily meals for their children, teachers observed improved attendance and concentration, linking these outcomes to reduced household stress, students also expressed that meals gives them energy and confidence while parents emphasized that resources could now be redirected to other needs and the administrators noted that dropout rates declined , particularly among children from low income household. Chakraborty et al., (2021) further supported the case study as he found that school feeding programs reduce household food insecurity and relieve parents of daily food provision, enabling them to invest in other priorities. Mainje at al. (2024) stressed that feeding programmes promote equality and reduce parental burdens when contextualized to local needs, but sustainability requires community involvement.

In essence, school feeding programmes ease the economic and emotional burdens on parents. This makes children receive reliable nutrition at school while families redirect scarce resources towards other essentials, hence the whole evidence demonstrates that school feeding programme are powerful interventions that extend beyond the classroom to support households in rural areas.

4.2.3 Increased Attendance

The findings at Wayerera Secondary School revealed that the school feeding programme has significantly reduced the burden on parents, but this impact was most vividly expressed through

students' own experiences. Students explained that the assurance of meals at school gave them confidence and motivation to attend regularly. Participant 10 remarked,

> *"Kubva patakatanga kupihwa chikafu kuchikororo vazhinji haticharovha kutyoro tavakutongogara tiri present muclass. Ndichibva kumba kana ndakangofunga chikafu ndinobva ndatowana simba rekuti ndiende kutyoro nekuti kudya ndokuda." ("Since we started receiving food at school, many of us no longer skip classes, we are now consistently present in the classroom. When I leave home, just thinking about the food gives me the strength to go to school because eating is what I desire").* Participant 10

Participant 7 further agreed with the above view as he said,

> *"Kubva patakatanga kupihwa chikafu kuchikoro, ndava kuuya nguva dzose uye handichanonoki. Kana ndichibva kumba ndinofunga kuti kuchikoro ndichadya, zvinoita kuti ndimhanye kuti ndisasvike ndanonoka." ("Since we started receiving food at school, I now attend every day and I no longer arrive late. When I leave home, I think about the meal I will get at school, and that makes me hurry so I don't arrive late.").* Participant 7

Similarly, Key participant 3 observed that,

> *"Sevadzidzisi tiri kuona kuti vana havachanonoki kana kushaikwa muzvikoro sezvavaimboita kare. Chikafu chiri kupa vana chikonzero chekuti vave nenguva dzose vari muclass uye vanosvika nenguva." ("As teachers, we are noticing that students no longer arrive late or miss school as they used to. Food is giving them a reason to be consistently in class and to arrive on time.").* Participant 3

The above findings from the participants above shows that school feeding programme has eliminated the hindrance which is hunger that lead to absenteeism. The acted as a source of motivation among students and as they attend regularly and it create a better outcome on their academics. The increased attendance created by school feeding programmes as articulated by the respondent also aligns closely with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, food, programmes motivate students to attend school consistently. Sabates et al. (2022), concur with the above findings as he found that school feeding programmes across Sub-Saharan Africa significantly reduced absenteeism and motivated students to attend classes regularly, with students themselves identifying food security as a key driver of participation. This assurance creates safety needs were children trust that meals will be available daily and it foster belongings were

students feel included and equal in the classroom Regular attendance strengthens esteem, as students gain confidence and recognition for their commitment. Ultimately, increased attendance enables students to peruse self-actualization, achieving academic. The study can further have complimented with the literature review were the World Food Programme (2020), conducted a survey across 36 low-income countries, which revealed that school feeding initiatives increased enrolment by 9% and reduced absenteeism by 6%. The outcomes demonstrated that children were more likely to remain in school when meals were guaranteed, making feeding programmes a critical tool for reducing dropout rates internationally. The literature findings clearly show that school feeding programs has an impact on school attendance.

The above theory can be further supported by Tadesse (2023), the study documented how Ethiopia's national school meals programme reduced hunger, improved attendance, and strengthened social integration. Students reported that meals gave them energy to participate in both academics and extracurricular activities, while dropout rates declined among vulnerable students. Drake et al. (2020), found that school feeding programmes in East Africa directly improved students' classroom concentration and reduced stress among students who previously worried about food. Neervoort et al. (2021), highlighted that school meals fostered fairness and inclusion, with students themselves reporting greater confidence and participation. Sabates et al. (2022), also demonstrated that feeding programmes enhance educational equity by ensuring all students, regardless of background, focus on studies without hunger. UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report (2023) also documented that school meals across Africa increase attendance and reduce dropout rates, with students consistently identifying food security as a motivator for learning. However, this attracted criticism for example Drake et al. (2020) cautioned that while feeding programmes reduce hunger, they must be complemented by quality teaching to maximize academic gains. Sabates et al. (2022) argued that without consistent funding, students may experience irregular provision, undermining trust in the programme. Koch et al. (2024), noted that sustainability requires community involvement, otherwise students risk losing the sense of equality they value.

Overally, the case study by Tadesse (2023), demonstrates that school feeding programmes are transformative when viewed through students' perspectives. Students themselves articulated how meals reduced hunger, promoted equality, and motivated them to attend school consistently. These voices resonate with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, showing a progression from physiological security to belongingness and esteem, ultimately enabling

self-actualization. Scholars such as Drake (2020), Neervoort (2021), Sabates (2022), UNESCO (2023), and Koch et al. (2024) support these findings, while critiques emphasize sustainability and integration with broader educational reforms. Overall, the Ethiopian case study illustrates that school feeding is not only a nutritional intervention but also a social protection mechanism that empowers students to thrive academically and socially.

4.2.4 Participation in Sports and Academic Success

The findings from the participants revealed that school feeding programmes makes them able to participate in sports and it enables their minds to relax. This makes them to perform well in class since they have time to relax through sports hence, regular meals gave them the energy to take part in athletics while still maintaining focus in class. Participant 11also remarked that,

> *"kana tichidya kuchikoro tinonzwa simba, zvinoita kuti tigone kutamba mitambo yakasiyana siyana asiwo tichidzidza zvakanaka nekuti pfungwa dzedu dzinenge dzava relaxed so ptinodzoka muclass tinoisa simbaredu rese" ("when we eat at school we feel strong, which allows us to play different sports while also studying well since our mind will be relaxed and it makes us to put maximum effort in class").* Participant 11

Participant 4 also revealed that the school feeding programme does not only improved classroom engagement but also enhanced students' participation in sports, which contributed to their overall academic success and said that,

> *"Kubva patakatanga kupihwa chikafu kuchikoro ndava kukwanisa kutamba nhabvu uye kuita maexercise pasina kuneta. Izvi zvandibatsira kuti ndive nehutano hwakanaka uye ndinokwanisa kudzidza zvakanaka." ("Since we started receiving food at school, I am now able to play football and do exercises without getting tired. This has helped me to maintain good health and to learn effectively.")* Participant 4

Similarly, participant 3 also noted that,

> *"Sevadzidzisi tiri kuona kuti vana vari kutora chikamu mumitambo zvine simba uye izvi zvava kuvabatsira kuti vave nehutano hwakanaka. Hutano hwavo hwakanaka huri kuita kuti vave nekugara vachidzidza zvakanaka uye kuita zvakanaka muzvidzidzo." ("As teachers, we are noticing that students are participating in sports with energy, and this is helping them to maintain good health. Their improved health is enabling them to study consistently and perform well academically.").* Participant 3

Participant's words above reflect that school feeding programmes enhances their participation in sports were it has an impact to their educational outcomes. Sports makes their mind to be relaxed as the participant said above which gives them a healthier mind when they are in class. It makes them put maximum effort in their studies. The findings also link with Maslow's Hierarchy of needs were the Physiological Needs are meet. Meals which are provided give energy for both sports and academics activities. Safety Needs, also makes students feel secure knowing their nutritional needs are met, reducing stress. Belongingness Needs, Sports foster unity, teamwork, and friendships, strengthening social bonds. Esteem Needs are also put into recognition in sports were it builds confidence, which translates into academic motivation. Lastly self-actualization is meet were hunger is removed and confidence gained and this enables students to pursue holistic development excelling in both sports and academics.

The similar findings were also conducted by Oketch (2022) in Uganda's. Students reported that meals gave them the energy to participate in sports and remain attentive in class. Students involved in athletics demonstrated improved discipline and academic focus. Participation in sports fostered teamwork and belonging, which translated into stronger classroom collaboration. Dropout rates declined, as students felt motivated to attend school for both meals and extracurricular activities.

This Ugandan case study strongly aligns with the voices of the participants, confirming that school feeding programmes promote holistic development by linking physical activity with academic achievement. This can be further supported by Muthuri et al. (2020), found that nutrition and physical activity are interlinked, with school feeding enabling students to participate in sports, which in turn improves academic outcomes. Beattie et.al. (2021), highlighted also that sports participation builds self-discipline and resilience, qualities that directly enhance learning and classroom performance. Nabwire (2022) also documented that school meals in East Africa increased student involvement in extracurricular activities, which fostered confidence and improved academic results. UNICEF Education Report (2023), Emphasized that integrated feeding and sports programmes promote equality, reduce dropout rates, and strengthen academic success. Mwangi and Otieno (2024), Stressed that sports participation supported by feeding programmes enhances esteem needs, as students gain recognition and motivation that spill over into academics. The above findings also attract some criticisms and Muthuri et al. (2020) cautioned that while feeding programmes improve energy and participation, long-term benefits depend on sustained investment in both nutrition and structured extracurricular activities. Kahan (2021) argued that sports must be integrated into

the curriculum to maximize academic gains. Mwangi et al. (2024), noted that without consistent funding, students may lose both the nutritional and motivational benefits.

Overally the voices of students at Wayerera Secondary School resonate with findings from Uganda (Oketch, 2022) and broader scholarly perspectives. By meeting physiological needs, school feeding programmes provide students with the energy required for both sports and academics. Participation in sports fulfills Maslow's belongingness and esteem needs, as students build friendships, gain recognition, and develop confidence, which translates into improved academic performance. Scholars such as Muthuri (2020), Beattie and Kahan (2021), Nabwire (2022), UNICEF (2023), and Mwangi and Otieno (2024) support these findings, while critiques emphasize sustainability and integration with wider educational frameworks. Overall, the evidence demonstrates that school feeding programmes are powerful interventions that unite physical activity and academic success in rural contexts.

4.3 AN INTERVENTION MODEL THAT ENHANCES ACADEMIC SUCCESS THROUGH SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMMES

4.3.1 Holistic Intervention

The school feeding programme at Wayerera Secondary School was described by both the key informants as a comprehensive intervention that requires integration with other support systems to be truly effective. In passing, they emphasized that while meals provide immediate relief from hunger, the long-term success of the programme depends on engaging policy frameworks and complementary services. Key informant 3 had this to say in regard of holistic intervention,

> *"Feeding alone is not enough; it must be supported by health education, counseling, and parental involvement if we want students to succeed academically and socially."* Key informant 3

Key informant 1 was also of the same view as he was quoted verbatim saying,

> *"The programme should be linked with other policies and frameworks so that it becomes part of a wider system that promotes discipline, attendance, and holistic learner development."* Key informant 1

The findings revealed that while feeding programmes provide energy for concentration, stamina for sports, motivation for attendance, and dignity through equity and inclusion, their

success depends on integration with other support systems. Nutrition alone cannot sustain long-term educational outcomes unless complemented by health services, psychosocial support, parental involvement, and community participation. Feeding must therefore be embedded within a holistic approach that links food provision with broader educational and social interventions. This outcome aligns with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, where the satisfaction of physiological needs through feeding enables progression to safety, belongingness, esteem, and ultimately self-actualization. However, for students to reach higher levels of development, feeding must be reinforced by other systems that ensure security, belonging, and esteem such as counseling services, extracurricular activities, and inclusive teaching practices.

Several scholars emphasized the importance of linking feeding with broader frameworks. For example, Kristjansson et al. (2021) argued that school feeding is most effective when combined with health and sanitation programmes, ensuring that nutrition gains translate into educational outcomes. Bundy et al. (2021) highlighted that feeding initiatives must be embedded within national education and health policies to achieve sustainability. Similarly, Drake et al. (2020) stressed that community involvement and agricultural linkages are essential for feeding programmes to deliver long-term benefits. These perspectives confirm that feeding programmes extend beyond nutrition to embrace social, psychological, and educational outcomes, but they require complementary systems to maximize efficiency.

On page 73 it is argued that school feeding programmes are most effective when integrated with health and education policies, ensuring that students benefit from both nutrition and broader developmental support. World Food Programme (2024) emphasized that sustainable feeding initiatives must be linked with agricultural, health, and educational frameworks to achieve long-term success. Together, these scholarly views affirm that feeding programmes are comprehensive strategies that empower students academically, socially, and physically, but they require other support systems to reach their full potential.

The evidence from the participants demonstrates that school feeding programmes are holistic interventions that address multiple dimensions of learner development. Yet, for them to be more successful, they must be supported by other systems, health services, psychosocial support, parental engagement, and community involvement. By satisfying physiological needs, feeding creates the foundation for concentration, attendance, discipline, social integration, and participation in sports. But only when integrated with broader support structures and policy

frameworks can feeding programmes truly function as efficient, sustainable, and transformative educational tools that foster balanced growth, equity, and long-term success.

4.3.2 Nutritional Equality

From the students interviewed, it was clear that one of the critical expectations of the school feeding programme is to provide balanced meals that meet students' nutritional needs. However, the findings revealed that meals are often limited to 'sadza', with little variety or balance, leaving students concerned about their health, energy levels, and ability to concentrate. Students emphasized that while the programme helps reduce hunger, the lack of diversity in meals weakens its protective role, as children require proteins, vegetables, and other nutrients to thrive academically and physically. Participant 7 also agreed to the above view as he was recorded saying,

> *"Most of the time we are given sadza only, without vegetables or beans. This makes us full but not strong enough to concentrate in class. Sometimes we feel sleepy after eating because the food does not give us the right energy. If the meals included beans, vegetables, or meat, we would be healthier and able to perform better in both academics and sports."* Participant 7

Key informant 4 also mentioned that,

> *"The meals are not balanced. We eat 'sadza' almost every day, and although it fills our stomachs, it does not give us the strength we need. Some of us come from homes where food is already scarce, so the school meal is our main source of nutrition. Without variety, we feel disadvantaged compared to other students who may have better meals at home. Balanced food would help us concentrate more and participate fully in school activities."* Key informant 4

The findings therefore revealed that nutritional equality is a major concern, as students felt disadvantaged by the lack of balanced meals. While 'hh4sadza' provides carbohydrates, the absence of proteins, vitamins, and minerals reduces the effectiveness of the feeding programme in supporting concentration, participation in sports, and overall wellbeing. Students highlighted that balanced meals would not only satisfy hunger but also provide the strength and energy needed for academic success and extracurricular engagement.

This resonates with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which emphasizes that physiological needs must be adequately met before students can progress to higher levels of development. While sadza addresses hunger, the lack of nutritional balance means that students' physiological needs are only partially satisfied, limiting their ability to achieve belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization. Balanced meals are therefore essential for students to reach their full potential. In Chapter Two, several scholars emphasized the importance of nutritional diversity in school feeding programmes. Adelman and Gilligan (2020) argued that balanced meals improve both cognitive performance and physical health, while Neervoort et al. (2021) highlighted that programmes relying heavily on staple foods without variety fail to deliver long-term educational benefits. Similarly, Aurino (2020) noted that nutritional equality is critical for reducing disparities among students, as children from poorer households often rely entirely on school meals for their daily nutrition.

On page 71 it is found that school feeding programmes that incorporate proteins and micronutrients significantly improve learning outcomes compared to those that provide only staple foods. FAO (2023) emphasized that nutritional equality must be prioritized, with meals designed to meet dietary diversity standards to ensure both equity and effectiveness.

The evidence from Wayerera Secondary School demonstrates that while the feeding programme reduces hunger, its reliance on sadza without balanced accompaniments undermines nutritional equality. Students require diverse meals that include proteins, vegetables, and micronutrients to support concentration, participation in sports, and overall wellbeing. Linking these findings with Maslow's theory and Chapter Two literature shows that balanced nutrition is foundational to learner development. Scholars confirm that nutritional equality is essential for equity and long-term success. Therefore, recommendations must prioritize improving meal diversity, integrating agricultural linkages, and ensuring that feeding programmes provide balanced diets that empower students holistically.

4.3.3 Sustainable Financing

From the teachers and headmaster interviewed, it was clear that one of the critical challenges facing the school feeding programme is the lack of sustainable financing. While the programme has been successful in reducing hunger and improving attendance, participants emphasized that without consistent funding, the initiative risks collapsing or becoming unreliable. They

highlighted that financial sustainability is essential to ensure continuity, quality, and expansion of the programme. Key informant 4 is of the notion that,

> *"The feeding programme is very important, but sometimes it struggles because of limited funds. If financing is not consistent, students may miss meals, and this affects their concentration and attendance. Sustainable financing means that the programme can run smoothly without interruptions, and children will always have food to depend on."* Key informant 4

The headmaster aligned with this view as the key informant 1,

> *"We need to link the feeding programme with broader financial frameworks. At times, schools depend on donations or temporary support, which is not reliable. If government policies and community initiatives can provide sustainable funding, the programme will not only continue but also improve in quality, offering balanced meals and reaching more students."* Key informant 1

The findings revealed that while the feeding programme reduces hunger and supports academic success, its effectiveness is undermined by financial instability. Reliance on short-term funding sources, such as donor support or irregular community contributions, creates uncertainty and limits the programme's ability to provide consistent and balanced meals. Sustainable financing is therefore critical to ensure that the programme remains reliable, equitable, and capable of meeting students' nutritional needs.

This resonates with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which emphasizes that physiological needs must be consistently met before students can progress to higher levels of development. Feeding programmes that lack sustainable financing risk failing to meet these basic needs, thereby weakening the foundation for belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization. Reliable funding ensures that students' physiological needs are continuously satisfied, enabling them to focus on academics, sports, and social integration.

Several scholars emphasized the importance of financial sustainability in school feeding initiatives. Tomlinson (2020) argued that feeding programmes must be embedded within national education budgets to ensure continuity and avoid dependence on external donors. Chakraborty (2021) highlighted that community participation and local resource mobilization are key to sustaining feeding initiatives, as they reduce reliance on unstable funding streams. Similarly, Masset (2022) stressed that integrating feeding programmes with agricultural and

health policies enhances efficiency and financial sustainability, ensuring that resources are used effectively.

FAO (2023), emphasized that sustainable financing requires multi-sectoral collaboration, with governments, communities, and private actors contributing to long-term funding mechanisms. UNESCO (2024) highlighted that equitable financing of feeding programmes is essential to promote inclusive education, as financial instability disproportionately affects students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The evidence from Wayerera Secondary School demonstrates that while feeding programmes are transformative, their success depends on sustainable financing. Without reliable funding, students face interruptions in meal provision, undermining concentration, attendance, and equity. Linking these findings with Maslow's theory and Chapter Two literature shows that financial sustainability is foundational to meeting students' physiological needs and enabling holistic development. Scholars confirm that embedding feeding programmes within national budgets, mobilizing community resources, and integrating with broader policies are essential for long-term success. Therefore, recommendations must prioritize sustainable financing strategies to ensure continuity, equity, and efficiency in school feeding programmes.

4.3.4 Policy Integration

From the key informants interviewed, it was clear that one of the critical challenges facing the school feeding programme is the absence of strong policy integration. While the programme has been successful in reducing hunger and improving attendance, participants emphasized that without being embedded into broader education, health, and agricultural frameworks, the initiative risks remaining fragmented and unsustainable. They highlighted that policy integration is essential to ensure continuity, efficiency, and alignment with national development goals. Participant 2 explained,

> *"The feeding programme is important, but it cannot stand alone. It must be integrated into education and health policies so that it becomes part of a wider system. If it is linked with agricultural policies, schools can source food locally, and if it is tied to health policies, students will benefit from nutrition education and medical support. Without this integration, the programme will always struggle to achieve its full potential."* Participant2

The Participant 1 also added that,

> *"We need to move beyond treating feeding as a temporary project. It should be part of national frameworks that guarantee sustainability. When policies are integrated, schools will not depend only on donor support or community contributions. Instead, the programme will be recognized as a right for students, supported by government budgets and linked with other services that promote discipline, attendance, and holistic development."* Participant 1

The findings revealed that while the feeding programme reduces hunger and supports academic success, its effectiveness is undermined by weak policy integration. Reliance on isolated initiatives or short-term projects creates uncertainty and limits the programme's ability to provide consistent and balanced meals. Policy integration is therefore critical to ensure that the programme remains reliable, equitable, and capable of meeting students' nutritional and educational needs.

This resonates with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which emphasizes that physiological needs must be consistently met before students can progress to higher levels of development. Feeding programmes that lack policy integration risk failing to meet these basic needs, thereby weakening the foundation for belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization. Strong policy frameworks ensure that students' physiological needs are continuously satisfied, enabling them to focus on academics, sports, and social integration.

Several scholars emphasized the importance of policy integration in school feeding initiatives. Sibanda (2021) argued that feeding programmes must be embedded within national education strategies to ensure continuity and avoid dependence on external donors. Moyo (2022) highlighted that integrating feeding with agricultural policies enhances efficiency and sustainability, as schools can rely on local food production. Similarly, Chirwa and Nkhoma (2023) stressed that linking feeding with health and nutrition policies ensures that students benefit from both food provision and broader developmental support.

Brown et al. (2021), found that school feeding programmes are most effective when aligned with national child health and education frameworks, ensuring that nutrition is treated as part of holistic learner development Alderman et al., (2022) emphasized that policy integration strengthened accountability and sustainability as feeding becomes embedded in government planning and budgetary processes rather remaining dependent on temporary donor project

The evidence from the participant's views highlights that demonstrates that while feeding programmes are transformative, their success depends on policy integration. Without strong frameworks, students face interruptions in meal provision, undermining concentration, attendance, and equity. Linking these findings with Maslow's theory and Chapter Two literature shows that policy integration is foundational to meeting students' physiological needs and enabling holistic development. Scholars confirm that embedding feeding programmes within national education, health, and agricultural policies is essential for long-term success. Therefore, recommendations must prioritize policy integration strategies to ensure continuity, equity, and efficiency in school feeding programmes.

4.3.5 Infrastructure Development

From the students and teacher interviewed, it was clear that one of the critical expectations of the school feeding programme is the provision of modern kitchen facilities that can support safe, efficient, and hygienic food preparation. However, the findings revealed that the current kitchens are outdated, poorly equipped, and unable to meet the demands of preparing balanced meals for large numbers of students. Participants emphasized that without modern infrastructure, the feeding programme struggles to deliver quality meals, and this undermines both nutrition and learner wellbeing. This was detected from participant 8, who had this to say,

> *"Chikafu chatinodya dzimwe nguva hachibikwi zvakanaka nekuti kicheni haina zvigadzirwa zvemazuva ano. Vakabiki vanotambura kugadzirira chikafu chedu tese, dzimwe nguva chikafu chinonoka kusvika. Dai chikoro chava nemakicheni ane midziyo yemazuva ano, chikafu chingave chiri nani, chine hutano uye chichisvika nenguva." ("The food we eat is sometimes is not well cooked because the kitchen does not have proper equipement. The cooks struggle to prepare meals for all of us and sometimes the food is delayed. If the school had a modern kitchen with enough facilities the meals would be better, healthier and served on time.")* Participant 8

Particpant 9 was of the same view that there is need of infrastructural developeent and had this to say,

> *"Chirongwa chekupa chikafu hachikwanisi kubudirira pasina zvivakwa zvakanaka. Makicheni akare uye haana midziyo yemazuva ano, izvo zvinoita kuti zvive zvakaoma kugadzira chikafu chakakwana. Kuvandudzwa kwemakicheni kunofanira kuiswa pamberi kuitira kuti chikafu chibikwe zvakachengeteka, zvine hutano uye*

zvinoenderana nemitemo yezvekudya. Makicheni emazuva ano angakurudzira vashandi uye ave nechokwadi chekuti vadzidzi vanowana chikafu chinovabatsira mukudzidza nekukura kwemuviri." ("The school feeding program is not enough without proper infrastructure. The kitchen is old and do not have modern facilities, which makes it difficult to prepare sufficient food. Upgrading the kitchen should be prioritized so that food can be prepared hygienically, nutritiously and in line with food standards. Modern kitchen encourages workers and ensure that students get food that helps them in learning and growth.") Participant 9

The findings from participants revealed that infrastructure development in the form of modern kitchens is central to the success of school feeding programmes. While feeding reduces hunger and promotes attendance, its effectiveness is undermined when meals are prepared in unsafe, outdated, or poorly equipped facilities. Kitchen modernization is therefore critical to ensure that students benefit fully from balanced, hygienic, and timely meals.

This aligns with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which emphasizes that physiological needs must be adequately met before students can progress to higher levels of development. Poor kitchen facilities compromise the quality and safety of meals, meaning students' basic needs are only partially satisfied. Modern kitchens ensure that food provision is reliable and hygienic, thereby strengthening the foundation for belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization.

Several scholars emphasized the importance of infrastructure in supporting feeding programmes. Adelman et al. (2020) argued that the quality of school meals depends not only on food supply but also on the facilities used to prepare them. Neervoort et al. (2021) highlighted that inadequate kitchen infrastructure leads to poor hygiene and nutritional outcomes, undermining the goals of feeding initiatives. Similarly, Aurino (2020), stressed that investment in kitchen facilities is essential for equity, as disadvantaged students often rely entirely on school meals for their daily nutrition. Recent scholars reinforce this perspective. Masset (2022) found that modern kitchen infrastructure improves efficiency and reduces food wastage, ensuring that students receive consistent and balanced meals. World Bank (2023) emphasized that sustainable investment in school kitchens is a key driver of inclusive education, as it promotes health, safety, and equity in meal provision.

The evidence from Wayerera Secondary School demonstrates that infrastructure development in the form of modern kitchens is a critical recommendation for improving feeding programmes. Without adequate facilities, students face challenges related to hygiene, safety,

and meal quality, which undermine concentration, attendance, and equity. Linking these findings with Maslow's theory and Chapter Two literature shows that modern kitchens are foundational to learner development. Scholars confirm that investment in kitchen infrastructure is essential for inclusive, equitable, and sustainable education. Therefore, the need to modernize kitchens to ensure continuity, efficiency, and holistic learner success.

4.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter examined the impact of school feeding programmes on students' academic success at Wayerera Secondary School, guided by behavioral and motivational theories which emphasize that learning outcomes are shaped by reinforcement, energy provision and consistent support within the school environment. The theoretical framework highlighted that feeding interventions satisfy physiological needs, reduce hunger related barriers and create conditions for sustained engagement, attendance and participation in both academic and extracurricular activities. Literature reviewed in Chapter Two underscored that effective feeding programmes must go beyond temporary relief and embed consistent nutritional strategies that address long-term risks such as absenteeism, poor concentration and health vulnerabilities.

Findings from the study revealed that school feeding programmes play multiple roles in enhancing academic success, including energy provision for active engagement, improved attendance and punctuality, better health outcomes and increased participation in sports and classroom competition. Each of these roles functions as a reinforcement mechanism: energy provision sustains concentration and classroom participation, attendance and punctuality ensure continuity of learning, better health outcomes reduce absenteeism and strengthen resilience, while participation in sports fosters teamwork, discipline, and confidence that translate into academic achievement. However, the effectiveness of these roles has been constrained by irregular food supply, limited resources and weak monitoring systems which sometimes undermine the consistency of programme benefits.

The data further indicated that vulnerable students, particularly those from impoverished households, orphans and those exposed to food insecurity, require diverse and reliable forms of nutritional reinforcement. Participants emphasized the importance of strengthening feeding programme capacity through community involvement, predictable supply chains, and integration with broader educational and health structures. The next chapter provides a

synthesis of these findings, draws conclusions, and offers recommendations. It also designs an intervention model that integrates nutritional adequacy, attendance support, health reinforcement and community participation into a holistic framework. This model situates school feeding programmes as central actors in shaping academic success, ensuring that reinforcement and motivation are consistently applied to sustain learner engagement and achievement.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter consolidates the findings presented in Chapter Four, interprets them in relation to the study objectives, and advances practical recommendations. It also proposes an intervention model that enhances academic success through school feeding programmes. The central concern is the role of school feeding in shaping students' concentration, participation, and overall academic achievement. While the programme has demonstrated significant benefits in reducing hunger and promoting attendance, its effectiveness is constrained by issues of nutritional imbalance, weak policy integration, unsustainable financing, and inadequate infrastructure. The evidence foregrounds that school feeding is not simply about food provision but is embedded in broader socio-economic and institutional realities that demand coordinated, context-sensitive interventions. Without systematic improvement, feeding programmes remain fragile and reactive, limiting their transformative potential.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The study revealed that the school feeding programme at Wayerera Secondary School influences students' concentration, classroom participation, and academic success in multiple ways. Students consistently reported that meals reduced hunger, improved attentiveness, and motivated regular attendance. Teachers and the headmaster emphasized that feeding promoted discipline, equity, and dignity among students. However, several challenges were identified. Nutritional equality was a major concern, as meals were often limited to 'sadza', lacking proteins and vegetables, which reduced their nutritional value and left students fatigued. Holistic interventions were emphasized, with teachers and the headmaster noting that feeding alone was insufficient unless integrated with health services, counseling, and parental involvement. Sustainable financing emerged as a challenge, with reliance on donor support and irregular contributions creating uncertainty and undermining continuity. Policy integration was also weak, as feeding programmes were not fully embedded in national education, health, and agricultural frameworks. Finally, infrastructure development, particularly the modernization of

school kitchens, was identified as essential to ensure hygienic, efficient, and safe meal preparation.

These findings collectively demonstrate that while feeding programmes improve attendance, concentration, and learner dignity, their long term success depends on addressing issues of nutrition, financing, policy, and infrastructure.

5.1.1 Objective One: How School Feeding Programmes Influence Students' Concentration and Classroom Participation

The findings revealed that the feeding programme significantly improved students' concentration and classroom participation. Students reported that meals gave them energy to focus on lessons, reduced absenteeism, and encouraged participation in both academics and sports. Teachers observed that students were more attentive and disciplined after receiving meals, as hunger was no longer a barrier to learning. However, the sub theme of nutritional equality highlighted that the reliance on 'sadza' without balanced accompaniments limited the full potential of the programme. Students expressed that while their hunger was reduced, the lack of proteins and vitamins sometimes left them fatigued and unable to sustain concentration throughout the day. This aligns with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which emphasizes that physiological needs must be adequately met before students can progress to higher levels of development. Thus, Objective One is addressed by showing that feeding programmes improve concentration and participation, but their effectiveness is constrained by nutritional imbalance. Diversifying meals is therefore essential to ensure sustained academic engagement.

5.1.2 Objective Two: Perspectives of Beneficiaries on the Impact of School Feeding Programmes on Academic Success

The perspectives of students, teachers, and the headmaster revealed that the feeding programme is widely valued as a driver of academic success. Students emphasized that meals motivated them to attend school regularly, reduced stigma associated with poverty, and promoted equity among students. Teachers and the headmaster noted that feeding improved discipline, attendance, and learner dignity, thereby creating a conducive learning environment. The sub-theme of holistic interventions showed that beneficiaries believed feeding must be linked with other frameworks such as counseling, parental involvement, and health services to maximize its impact. Similarly, the sub-theme of policy integration highlighted that embedding feeding

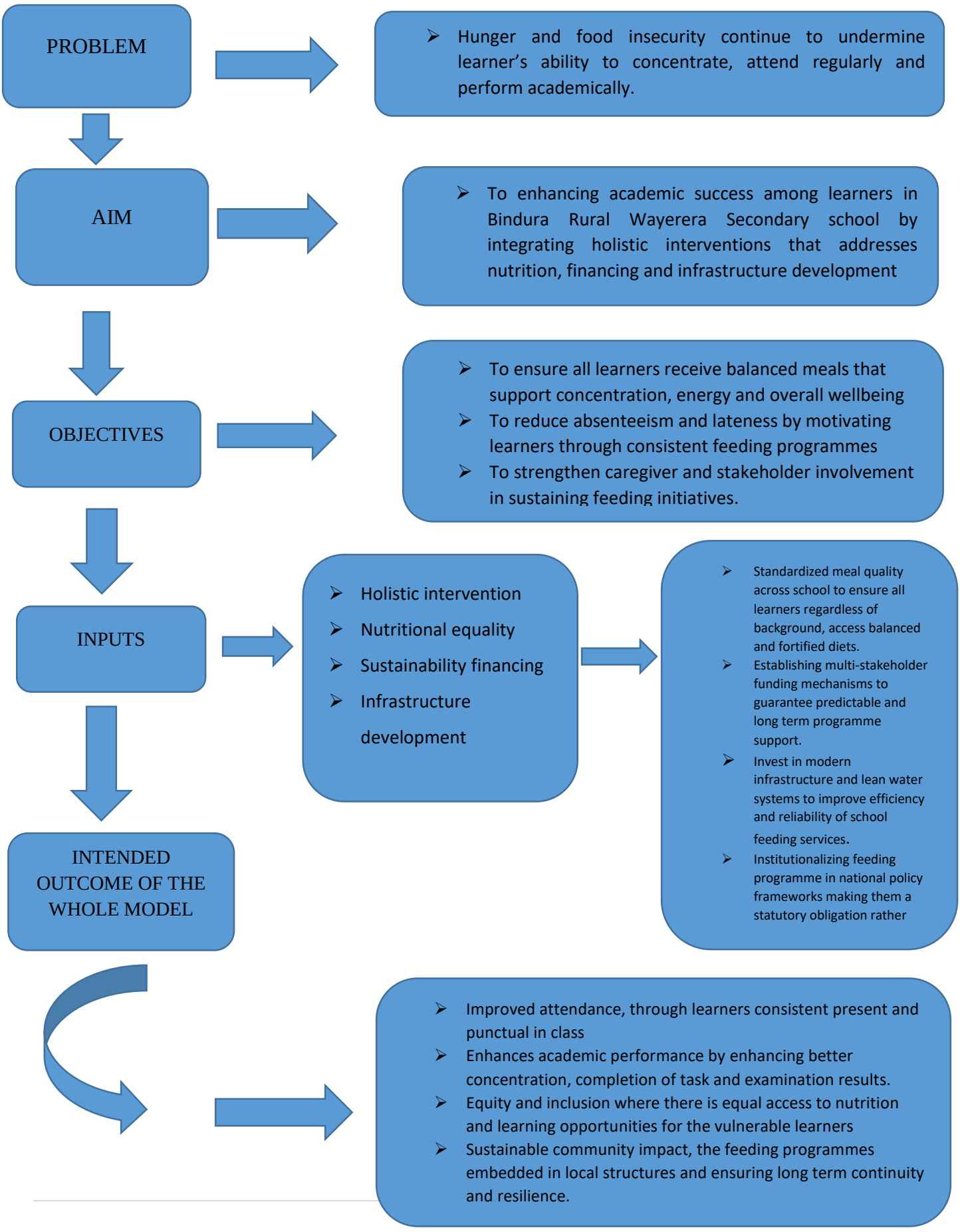
programmes into national frameworks would ensure sustainability and equity. Beneficiaries' perspectives therefore confirm that feeding programmes are not only about nutrition but also about fostering inclusion, dignity, and academic success. This aligns with Chapter Two literature, which emphasized that school meals promote social cohesion, gender equity, and learner motivation. Objective Two is thus addressed by demonstrating that beneficiaries view feeding programmes as transformative, but they call for integration with broader support systems to enhance academic outcomes.

5.1.3 Objective Three: An Intervention Model that Enhances Academic Success Through School Feeding Programmes

The findings from Chapter Four support the development of an intervention model that enhances academic success by addressing the limitations of current feeding practices. The sub-themes collectively inform this model. Nutritional equality requires meals to be diversified to include proteins, vegetables, and micronutrients to ensure balanced nutrition. Holistic interventions emphasize that feeding should be integrated with counseling, health services, and parental involvement to support students' overall wellbeing. Sustainable financing calls for long-term funding mechanisms established through government budgets, community resource mobilization, and partnerships to avoid reliance on donors. Policy integration requires feeding programmes to be embedded within national education, health, and agricultural policies to ensure continuity and equity. Infrastructure development highlights the need for modern kitchens and adequate facilities to ensure hygienic, efficient, and safe meal preparation.

This intervention model aligns with Maslow's theory, ensuring that students' physiological needs are consistently met while also supporting higher levels of development such as belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization. By linking feeding programmes with broader frameworks, sustainable financing, and modern infrastructure, the model provides a comprehensive approach to enhancing academic success. Objective Three is therefore addressed by proposing a holistic intervention model that integrates nutrition, policy, financing, and infrastructure to ensure that feeding programmes are sustainable, equitable, and transformative.

THE MODEL: SUSTAINABLE SCHOOL FEEDING ACHIEVEMENT MODEL



This model illustrates how school feeding programme can grow beyond basic nutrition into broader developmental strategies. By connecting resources, objectives and outcomes, it charts a clear path way toward improved attendance, stronger academic performance and greater inclusion at Wayerera Secondary school, while ensuring long term sustainability through financing, infrastructure and policy framework.

To begin with, the problem statement underpinning the model identifies hunger and food insecurity as persistent challenges that weaken concentration, attendance and academic performance. Without consistent feeding support, students remain vulnerable to disengagement from school, which undermines both individual achievement and broader educational goals.

The core aim of the intervention is to boost academic success among students at Wayerera Secondary School by integrating holistic approaches that address nutrition, financing and infrastructure development. This reflects the recognition that hunger and food insecurity are structural barriers to learning, often resulting in absenteeism, lateness and poor performance. By tackling these barriers, the model seeks to create a supportive environment where students can thrive academically and socially.

Moving forward, the objectives of the model center on holistic intervention, nutritional equality, sustainability financing, and infrastructure development. Rather than addressing isolated issues it combines nutritional diversity, psychosocial guidance, academic reinforcement and livelihood resources. In this way, feeding programmes are positioned not only as responses to hunger but as proactive developmental strategies that strengthen students' wellbeing and academic success.

The inputs of the model emphasize consistence meal quality across schools so that all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background, have access to balanced and fortified diets. This directly tackles hunger and food insecurity, which continue to undermine students' ability to concentrate, attend regularly and perform academically. The model further advocates multi-stakeholder funding mechanisms to guarantee predictable and long-term programme support. Investment in modern infrastructure and lean water systems is included as a critical input, ensuring efficiency and reliability in the delivery of feeding services. Anchoring the programmes within national policy frameworks, the model seeks to institutionalize them as statutory obligations rather than donor dependent initiatives.

Finally, the intended outcomes of the model are clearly articulated. Improved attendance is expected, as students will be consistently present and punctual in class. Academic performance will be enhanced through better concentration, completion of tasks and improved examination results. Equity and inclusion will be promoted, ensuring equal access to nutrition and learning opportunities for vulnerable students. Sustainable community impact will be achieved by embedding feeding programmes in local structures, thereby ensuring long term continuity and resilience.

5.2 Conclusions

The findings of this study demonstrate that the school feeding programme is a critical intervention in shaping students' concentration, participation, and academic success. Hunger and nutritional deprivation consistently emerged as central challenges, limiting students' ability to focus, engage, and perform effectively in the classroom. The provision of meals was shown to reduce absenteeism, improve attentiveness, and encourage active participation, thereby affirming the importance of feeding initiatives in supporting educational outcomes. However, the reliance on monotonous meals such as 'sadza' without adequate proteins and vegetables constrained the full potential of the programme leaving students fatigued and unable to sustain concentration throughout the day. This conclusion resonates with behavioral and developmental theories, particularly Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which emphasizes that physiological needs must be adequately met before students can progress to higher levels of achievement.

The study further concluded that beneficiaries which are students, teachers, and the headmaster perceive the feeding programme as transformative in promoting academic success. Students highlighted that meals motivated them to attend school regularly, reduced stigma associated with poverty, and promoted equity among students. Teachers and the headmaster emphasized that feeding improved discipline, attendance, and learner dignity, thereby creating a conducive learning environment. These perspectives affirm that feeding programmes are valued not only for their nutritional role but also for fostering inclusion, dignity and social cohesion. Yet the findings also revealed that feeding alone was insufficient unless integrated with broader frameworks such as counseling, parental involvement and health services. Policy integration was identified as critical to embed feeding programmes within national education, health, and agricultural frameworks, ensuring sustainability and equity. Beneficiaries' perspectives

therefore confirm that feeding programmes are transformative, but they call for integration with broader support systems to maximize their impact on academic success.

Finally, the study concluded that an intervention model is necessary to enhance academic success through school feeding programmes. The evidence revealed that the limitations of current practices could be addressed through a holistic model built on five key pillars: nutritional equality, holistic interventions, sustainable financing, policy integration, and infrastructure development. Nutritional equality requires diversification of meals to include proteins, vegetables, and micronutrients. Holistic interventions emphasize integration with counseling, health services, and parental involvement to support students' overall wellbeing. Sustainable financing calls for long-term funding mechanisms established through government budgets, community mobilization, and partnerships to avoid reliance on donors. Policy integration requires embedding feeding programmes within national frameworks to ensure continuity and equity. Infrastructure development highlights the need for modern kitchens and adequate facilities to ensure hygienic, efficient, and safe meal preparation. This model aligns with behavioral and developmental theories, ensuring that students' physiological needs are consistently met while also supporting higher levels of development such as belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization.

The conclusions of this study illustrate that school feeding programmes are indispensable in promoting concentration, participation, and academic success among students. Their effectiveness, however, is constrained by nutritional imbalance, weak policy integration, unsustainable financing, and inadequate infrastructure. Beneficiaries view feeding programmes as transformative, but they emphasize the need for integration with broader support systems. The proposed intervention model demonstrates how structured, integrated strategies can transform feeding programmes from fragile, donor-dependent initiatives into sustainable, inclusive, and developmental strategies. By moving beyond residual, individualized responses and embracing coordinated, developmental approaches, school feeding can foster resilience, equity, and dignity, thereby contributing meaningfully to learner success, community stability and national development.

5.3 Implications to Social Work

The implications of this study for social work practice are significant, as the findings highlight the centrality of school feeding programmes in shaping students' wellbeing and academic

success. Social workers are called to reorient their practice toward approaches that are holistic, preventive and participatory, recognizing that hunger and nutritional deprivation are not merely individual problems but reflections of broader socio-economic and institutional realities. This requires practitioners to move beyond residual responses and embrace strategies that integrate psychosocial support, nutritional education, livelihood strengthening, and community mobilization, thereby ensuring that interventions are both dignified and comprehensive.

The emphasis on resilience and equity positions social workers as advocates for inclusive development, requiring them to conduct school and household assessments, identify vulnerable students, and safeguard against exclusion errors in feeding programmes. In this context, social workers must not only provide direct services but also act as facilitators of empowerment, equipping schools, families and communities with knowledge, skills and resources to sustain feeding initiatives. The integration of parental involvement, counseling and support groups expands the scope of practice into areas of behavioral change and family resilience, where social workers mentor caregivers, facilitate peer learning and encourage investment in long-term wellbeing.

Community participation further reinforces the profession's ethos of people centered development, as practitioners engage students, caregivers and local institutions as co-creators of solutions and fostering ownership, accountability and trust. The call for modernizing kitchen infrastructure and embedding feeding programmes into national policy frameworks elevates the role of social workers in advocacy and governance, enabling them to influence policy reforms, resource mobilization and institutional resilience.

Taken together, these shifts position social work not only as a discipline of service delivery but as a transformative force in building inclusive, resilient, and sustainable futures for children and families. By embedding feeding programmes at the heart of educational success, social workers can contribute meaningfully to community stability child protection, and national development. The model presented in this study illustrates how structured, integrated strategies can transform feeding initiatives into tools for empowerment and inclusive growth, ensuring that children are not only protected from hunger but are also nurtured toward responsible citizenship and sustainable development.

5.4 Recommendations.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to strengthen the effectiveness and sustainability of school feeding programmes in promoting students' academic success. Each recommendation is directed clearly to the relevant stakeholders

- To begin with, participants such as students and caregivers should be actively involved in the design and monitoring of school feeding programmes. Their participation ensures that interventions reflect lived realities and respond to the actual needs of children. In particular, caregivers should reinforce the importance of daily attendance and provide consistent encouragement, while students should be given platforms to express their views on the quality and impact of meals. By institutionalizing participation as a foundational principle, feeding programmes will foster ownership and strengthen the social fabric that supports children's development.

- In addition, Wayerera Secondary School as an institution must enhance its capacity to implement feeding programmes effectively. Modernization of kitchen infrastructure and strict adherence to food safety standards should be prioritized, enabling the school to prepare meals hygienically and efficiently. Furthermore, the school should embed sequenced developmental pathways that graduate from basic feeding to comprehensive support, including nutritional education, mentorship, and peer support groups. By linking feeding initiatives with educational reinforcement, Wayerera can ensure that students are not only nourished but also empowered to achieve sustainable academic success.

- Moreover, social work practitioners should design interventions that are flexible and responsive to the socioeconomic realities of households. Rigid approaches often fail to account for poverty, unemployment and cultural beliefs that shape children's attendance patterns. Therefore, contextualized programming that integrates psychosocial support, counseling services, and preventive targeting will ensure that at-risk students receive assistance before hunger undermines their concentration and participation. Social workers should also collaborate closely with schools to design mechanisms that address vulnerabilities and strengthen learner engagement.

- Community Organizations and NGOs should also engage interventions to align with the contextual realities of schools and households. Rigid approaches to feeding often fail to account for the socioeconomic pressures faced by communities. Flexible programming that recognizes poverty, unemployment, and cultural beliefs allows

schools and caregivers to withstand shocks such as economic downturns, peer influence or exposure to harmful media. This requires planning mechanisms that are responsive to local rhythms and vulnerabilities, ensuring that feeding strategies remain relevant and effective.

- Policy makers and regulatory authorities have a critical role in institutionalizing holistic frameworks that embed feeding programmes into national education and social protection policies. Feeding support should be packaged in ways that combine nutritional diversity, psychosocial guidance, educational reinforcement, and livelihood resources. Predictable domestic allocations must be secured to reduce reliance on external actors, while partnerships should be pursued not only for financial contributions but also for complementary resources such as counseling services, nutritional supplements, and recreational facilities. Targeting mechanisms should be strengthened through school-level assessments and reformed eligibility criteria, ensuring that multidimensional vulnerabilities such as gender, disability, or caregiving roles are adequately captured. Furthermore, future reforms should broaden the scope of feeding programmes beyond schools alone, fostering collaboration with churches, social welfare departments, community organizations, and agricultural institutions.

- Interventions should embed sequenced pathways that enable schools to graduate from basic feeding to comprehensive developmental support. Integrating structured approaches such as nutritional education, mentorship, and peer support groups will ensure that students are not trapped in cycles of deprivation but are empowered to achieve sustainable academic success through balanced nutrition, positive reinforcement, and moral guidance. This is directed to training institutions and educational authorities.
- Regulatory authorities should modernize of kitchen infrastructure and regulation of food safety must be prioritized. Schools should be capacitated with tools and policies that allow them to prepare meals hygienically and efficiently, while simultaneously promoting constructive educational and recreational use of resources. By linking infrastructure development with commitments to school attendance and participation in community activities, schools can encourage students to invest in long-term wellbeing while fostering social inclusion.
- Participation must be institutionalized as a foundational principle of feeding programme sustainability. Caregivers and students should be recognized as co-creators

of solutions, with mechanisms such as school-community partnerships, local feeding committees, and feedback platforms ensuring that interventions reflect lived realities and foster ownership. This collective responsibility will reduce fragmentation and strengthen the social fabric that supports children's development. This is directed to local communities and school committees.

- Department of Social Developement and Education Ministries has a task on resources are provided and diversified as well as to stabilize it. Partnerships should be pursued not only for financial contributions but also for complementary resources such as counseling services, nutritional supplements, and recreational facilities. At the same time, predictable domestic allocations should be secured to reduce reliance on external actors and to build institutional resilience. By ensuring that schools have access to both material and psychosocial resources, their capacity to guide and protect students will be significantly enhanced. Churches, NGOs and local authorities should put this into consideration.
- Targeting mechanisms should be strengthened through school-level assessments and reformed eligibility criteria. Verification processes will minimize inclusion and exclusion errors, while intersectional frameworks will ensure that multidimensional vulnerabilities such as those linked to gender, disability, or caregiving roles are adequately captured. Preventive targeting should be prioritized so that at-risk students receive support before hunger undermines their concentration and participation.
- Future reforms should broaden the scope of feeding programmes beyond schools alone. Collaboration with churches, social welfare departments, community organizations, and agricultural institutions will create a more comprehensive child development system that addresses structural drivers of hunger and poor performance. By embedding intersectoral cooperation, school feeding can move toward a model that is inclusive, resilient, and developmental. Such a model will not only promote academic success but also nurture responsible citizenship, thereby contributing meaningfully to community stability and national development.

5.5 Areas for Future Research

Future research should extend this study by examining the role of other agents of socialization in shaping students' academic outcomes. While feeding programmes are central to improving concentration and participation, peers, schools, churches, media, and community organizations

also exert powerful influences on children's development. A study that focuses on these actors would provide a broader understanding of how socialization processes either reinforce or counteract the benefits of feeding interventions. This would enrich the evidence base for designing integrated models that combine nutrition, psychosocial support, and community participation to maximize educational success.

5.6 Chapter Summary

Chapter Five consolidated the study's contributions by presenting a developmental model that positions school feeding as a tool for concentration, participation, and academic success. It emphasized that Zimbabwe's school feeding programmes must move beyond residual relief toward proactive, empowering, and sustainable development. By aligning with the Education 5.0 Heritage-Based Curriculum, school feeding becomes a driver of human capital formation, innovation, and industrialization. From a social work practice perspective, feeding programmes are not only nutritional interventions but also platforms for advocacy, empowerment, and participatory development, ensuring that students are nourished, dignified, and prepared to contribute meaningfully to national development.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: SEMI-STRUCTURED IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction:

My name is, **OBERT MADZIVANZIRA** a Degree in Social Work student at the Bindura University of Science Education. I am conducting a research study in partial fulfilment of the requirements for my Degree. The case study is an intervention on how school feeding programmes can enhance academic success among students. The case of Wayerera Secondary School. Please feel free to share your honest opinions. All responses will be treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for academic

Section A: Demographic Information

What is your:

1. Age :
2. Gender :
3. Year of Study :
4. Program of Study :

Section B: Influence of School Feeding Programmes On Students Performance: (Objective ii)

1. Have you ever benefited from school feeding programmes?
2. What is your understanding of the purpose of the school feeding programme?

Section C: Beneficiaries' Perspectives On Academic Success: (Objective ii)

1. How do you see the programme as beneficial to your academic success?
2. What have you gained from the school feeding programme in relation to concentration and participation in the classroom?

Section D: What can be done to improve school feeding programmes (Objective iii)

1. What are your thoughts on the efficiency of the school feeding programme in your studies?
2. What gaps have you noticed in the programme and how can they be addressed?
3. What do you think can be done for the programme to enhance academic success?

Closing Questions:

1. Is there anything else you would like to share on issues to do with school feeding programme?
2. What do you think can be done for the programme to enhance academic success?

APPENDIX 2: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction:

My name is **OBERT MADZIVANZIRA**, a Degree in Social Work student at the Bindura University of Science Education. I am conducting a research study in partial fulfilment of the requirements for my Degree. The case study is an intervention on how school feeding programmes can enhance academic success among students: Your expertise is highly valuable. Your responses will be kept confidential and used for academic purposes only.

Section A: Experiences and Perceptions

1. Have you ever benefited from school feeding programmes?
2. What is your understanding of the purpose of the school feeding programme?
3. How do you see the programme as beneficial to your academic success?
4. What have you gained from the school feeding programme in relation to concentration and participation in the classroom?

Section B: Positive and Negative impact of school feeding on academic success

Positive impact Subtheme:

1. How has the school feeding programme helped for the academic success?
2. Are there specific improvements since the introduction of school feeding programmes either in attendance and the academic success?

Section C: Coping Strategies

1. What are the improvements that you can suggest for the school feeding programmes to enhance the academic success?

Closing Discussion

1. Are there any final thoughts or experience the group wants to share?
2. What recommendations would you give for the future improvement of the school feeding programme to enhance academic success?

OBERT MADZIVANZIRA (B223814B)

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE

Aim of the study: To develop a contextualized model that enhances the developmental approach of government programs targeting vulnerable groups in Bindura District.

Biographic information

Gender of participant ☐ male ☐ female

Age .....

Highest level of education .....

Questions

3. What is your understanding of the purpose of the school feeding programme?
4. Have you ever benefited from school feeding programmes?
5. What have you gained from the school feeding programme in relation to concentration and participation in the classroom? For students and teachers: how do you think the programme influences students' concentration and participation?
6. How do you see the programme as beneficial to your academic success?
7. What are your thoughts on the efficiency of the school feeding programme in your studies?
8. What gaps have you noticed in the programme and how can they be addressed?
9. What do you think can be done for the programme to enhance academic success?

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

Interview Consent Form

Dear Participant

My name is Obert Madzivanzira, a fourth year student at Bindura University of Science Education pursuing a Bachelor Honors Degree in Social Work. As part of the requirements of the degree, the student is expected to conduct a research project, which I cordially welcome you to participate in. Before deciding to engage in the research, you are welcome and free to ask anything you may need to know during the interview so that i can explain. I am humbly asking you to assist me in carrying out my research by sparing a few minutes of your time to respond to the following questions openly. I am undertaking a research on school feeding progrmmme. The study is going to be confidential and any responses given will be used for research study only.

Any person that is going to participate is going to do so on voluntary basis that means any person who feels uncomfortable has the power to withdrawal at any point. The discussion will not take more than 30 minutes of your time.

Tittle of the study

An Intervention On How School Feeding Programmes Can Enhance Academic Success Among Students. The Case of Wayerera Secondary School

Purpose of the study

To develop a model of Sustainable School Feeding Achievement Model

Contact details

If you feel like adding more or asking something, you can contact me on

Contact: 0780 610 338/ 0714644450 Email: obertmadzivanzira691@gmail.com

If you are free to participate in this study, please enter your information in the sections provided below.

Participant's signature (pseudonym)……. Date…….

Researcher's Signature……. Date……

Thank you.

All communications should be addressed to the
Secretary for Primary and
Secondary Education
Telephone: +263 242 794 509
Toll Free: 317

ZIMBABWE

Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
88 Kwame Nkrumah Avenue
Queen Lozikeyi House
P O Box 121
Causeway, Harare

Ref : C/426/3
3 March 2026
Madzivanzira Obert
4137 Chiwaridzo Phase 2
Bindura

RE: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT A RESEARCH IN MASH CENTRAL PROVINCE: BINDURA DISTRICT: WAYERERA SECONDARY SCHOOL.

Reference is made to your application to carry a research from the above- mentioned schools on the research title:

"AN INVESTIGATION ON HOW SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMMES CAN ENHANCE ACADEMIC SUCCESS AMONG STUDENTS: THE CASE OF WAYERERA SECONDARY SCHOOL."

Permission is hereby granted. However, you are required to liaise with the Provincial Education Director for Mash Central who is responsible for the department which you want to involve in your research. You should ensure that your research work does not disrupt the normal operations of the department.

You are also required to provide a copy of your final report to the Secretary for Primary and Secondary Education

Musingarimi H
ACTING DEPUTY DIRECTOR INNOVATION AND DEVELOPMENT FOR SECRETARY FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

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@MoPSEZhttps://www.facebook.com/MoPSEducationGovtZimbabwe y/ministrysecondary-of-education-primary--andof- -
zimbabwe/

REF: C/426/3 Mash Central

ll communications should be addressed to
The Provincial Education Director
ashonaland Central Province"
elephone:0271- 6948/6996/7134/6994
x:0271-6997

ZIMBABWE

Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
Mashonaland Central Province
P.O Box 340
Bindura
Zimbabwe

11/03/26

DSI BINDURA
BINDURA

RE: PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA FOR RESEARCH PURPOSE: MAYERERA SECONDARY SCHOOL

SCHOOLS: BINDURA DISTRICT: MASHONALAND CENTRAL PROVINCE.

Reference is made to your application to carry out research at the above district in Mashonaland Central Province on the title:

"An investigation on how school programmes can enhance academic success among students: The case of Mayerera Secondary School."

I am pleased to inform you that the Provincial Education Director has granted you permission to carry out your research in BINDURA DISTRICT.....You should, however, liaise with D.S.I BINDURA.....before you start. You should ensure that your research work does not disrupt the normal operations of the school. Where students are involved, parental consent is required.

Finally, you are advised to submit a copy of your findings to the Provincial Education Director (PED) Mash Central for Primary and Secondary Education.

DISCIPLINE
MINISTRY OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
11 MAR 2026
P.O BOX 340 BINDURA

FOR: PROVINCIAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR
MASHONALAND CENTRAL PROVINCE