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Practices, Compliance, and Difficulties Encountered by Teachers in the Implementation of School-Based Feeding Program in the New Normal

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Abstract:

This study assessed teachers' practices, compliance, and challenges in implementing a school-based feeding program in a fourth-class municipality in the central Philippines during the School Year 2021-2022. The study involved 149 respondents classified by age, grade level assignment, and number of years as feeding implementers. A descriptive research design and a researcher-made survey were utilized, with data analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, and the Mann-Whitney U test. Findings revealed that most respondents were older, assigned to intermediate levels, and had less than three years of experience. Teachers' practices during the pre-implementation, implementation, and post-implementation phases were rated at a "very high level," and their compliance was assessed as "very great extent." Difficulties were rated as "moderate" during pre-implementation and "low" during implementation and post-implementation phases. There were no significant differences in practices or compliance across age, grade level assignment, or number of years as feeding implementer. However, significant differences in the level of teachers' difficulties in the implementation were observed. During the pre-implementation phase, difficulties varied by years of experience. In the implementation phase, differences were noted based on grade-level assignment and number of years. For the post-implementation phase, difficulties varied by age and grade-level assignment. The results underscore the importance of tailoring support strategies based on specific difficulties encountered during different program phases. Findings serve as a foundation for creating an action plan to enhance the implementation of school-based feeding programs in similar contexts.

Keywords: Academic performance, student's performance, student's proficiency.

Introduction:

Nature of the Problem

DepEd Order No. 23, s. 2020 mandates strict adherence to health standards in the School-Based Feeding Program (SBFP), aiming to combat hunger and malnutrition, encourage enrollment, and improve learners' nutritional status. Implementers have adopted best practices to ensure effective feeding program implementation despite the pandemic. Compliance with these practices is crucial in addressing malnutrition during these challenging times (Latar, 2020; Rivera, 2017).

During the pre-implementation stage, challenges included parent and stakeholder hesitancy due to COVID-19 fears, as well as difficulties in identifying beneficiaries, maintaining a steady supply of fortified foods, and managing budget allocations. Agujar et al. (2020) noted that feeding schedules were disrupted due to inadequate storage and limited parent volunteer support, compounded by necessary COVID-19 protocols.

In the post-implementation phase, some beneficiaries did not complete the program due to food aversion or embarrassment, and some schools faced delays in assessing nutritional status due to health protocols (Corpuz & Quiambao, 2020).

As the school's Quick Nutritional Status Report (QuickNSR) coordinator, the researcher faced challenges related to the consistent implementation of SBFP. These issues across all phases of implementation motivated the researcher to investigate the practices, compliance, and difficulties faced by schools in executing the program.

Current State of Knowledge

Wang (2021) discusses the significant benefits of college feeding programs for school-age children and adolescents, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), highlighting their impact on physical, mental, and psychological development. While these programs are widespread in LMICs, their exact benefits remain unclear. This systematic review and meta-analysis aimed to assess the effects of college feeding programs on academic performance and health outcomes for children and adolescents in these countries. Nutrition during school years plays a crucial role in the physical, mental, and behavioral development of children and adolescents

aged 6 to 19. It is estimated that 66 million school-age children in the developing world are hungry, with 23 million of them residing in Africa. Hungry children struggle to realize their full potential, making it difficult for them to thrive academically and socially. Therefore, school feeding programs are essential not only for providing necessary nutrients but also for enhancing academic performance and promoting overall well-being. Wang (2020) emphasizes the need for sustained political commitment and funding to support the expansion and improvement of these programs. A strong evidence base is required for designing and implementing effective school feeding programs, grounded in the positive effects of such initiatives on educational and health outcomes.

Dimaculangan (2019) emphasizes that the success of School Feeding Programs (SFPs) hinges on proper implementation and adherence to established practices aimed at reducing the number of malnourished students. Proper nutrition is fundamental for both physical health and cognitive development. Dimaculangan recommends specific practices for improving the SFP, including educating parents about the program's goals and objectives, providing additional training for school administrators in budgeting and food handling, and enhancing hygiene and sanitation practices. Teachers are encouraged to closely monitor students' hygiene and instill the importance of good nutrition for maintaining health.

School feeding programs play a crucial role in encouraging school attendance by offering nutritious meals in exchange for participation. In addition to addressing hunger, these programs can improve cognitive development by enhancing attention spans and overall nutrition (Azubuike & Mbah, 2019). Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also play a vital role in integrating nutrition services into broader health and social platforms. For instance, Chanani et al. (2019) note that NGOs have successfully implemented community-based child nutrition programs in partnership with health services, leading to reductions in both severe and moderate malnutrition. Further implementation research is needed to optimize the integration of nutrition services through well-coordinated NGO-public partnerships across health and social sectors (Perez-Escamilla & Engmann, 2018).

Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, school-based feeding programs have continued through partnerships and direct distribution of food to learners' homes. DepEd (2021) reports that, in some areas, parents or guardians collect weekly food rations along with educational materials. Malipot (2021) highlights that the Department of Education (DepEd) has maintained its commitment to providing good nutrition to students, even during the pandemic, as outlined in the Operational Guidelines for the School-Based Feeding Program (Department Order No. 23, Series of 2020). This program continues to serve as a critical tool for ensuring that learners receive the necessary nutrients to support their growth, development, and academic success.

Mohammadreza (2021) argues that, while children may not be directly affected by the COVID-19 virus, they face significant risks due to the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic and the mitigation measures taken to curb its spread. The effects of this crisis are expected to be especially detrimental to children in the poorest countries and disadvantaged situations, potentially causing long-term harm to their development. The pandemic has disrupted children's access to education, nutrition, and health services, with lasting effects on their well-being. This crisis underscores the importance of continued support for programs like school feeding, which can mitigate some of the negative impacts on vulnerable children.

Theoretical Underpinnings

The study is grounded in three key theories: Practice Theory (Bourdieu, 1972), Compliance Theory (Lunenburg, 2012), and Gestalt Theory (Wertheimer, 1959), which collectively support its investigation into the practices, compliance, and challenges teachers face in implementing the School-Based Feeding Program (SBFP) in the new normal.

Practice Theory explains social and cultural practices through the interplay of habitus, field, and capital. Habitus refers to ingrained dispositions that shape an individual's understanding of their social world; fields are systems of power relations; and capital encompasses socially valued resources. This theory is relevant to the study as it helps analyze how repetitive SBFP activities contribute to achieving program goals and provides a framework for strategic planning.

Compliance Theory focuses on organizational dynamics, emphasizing the alignment of members' behavior with organizational standards through belief, acceptance, and action. In the context of the SBFP, compliance from all stakeholders—teachers, students, and the community—is essential for successful implementation. It highlights the importance of adherence to rules and shared commitment to program objectives.

Gestalt Theory addresses how individuals approach and solve problems by reorganizing their perceptions. This theory aids in understanding how teachers manage difficulties in implementing the SBFP, emphasizing the need for adaptive problem-solving to achieve program success.

With the essence of these theories, the researcher finds it complete with supporting and justifying the contents of the present study on the practices, compliance, and difficulties encountered by teachers in implementing the SBFP in the new normal.

Objectives

This study aimed to determine the level of practices, the extent of compliance, and the level of difficulties encountered by teachers in the implementation of school-based feeding programs in the new normal in a fourth-class Municipality in Central Philippines for the School Year 2021-2022 as a basis for an action plan. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions: 1) the level of practices of teachers in implementing a school-based feeding program in terms pre-implementation, implementation and post-implementation phase; 2) the extent of compliance of teachers in the implementation of school-based feeding programs according to the aforementioned areas; 3) the level of difficulties encountered by teachers in the implementation of a school-based feeding program according to the aforementioned areas; 4) significant difference in the level of practices of teachers in the implementation of school-based feeding programs when grouped and compared according to the aforementioned variables; 5) the significant difference in the extent of compliance of teachers in the implementation of school-based feeding programs when grouped and compared according to the aforementioned variables, and 6) the significant difference in the level of difficulties encountered by teachers in the implementation of a school-based feeding program when grouped and compared according to the aforementioned variables.

Methodology:

This section presents the discussion of the research methodology used, the subjects and respondents of the study, the research instruments used, the validity and reliability of the instruments, the procedure for data gathering, and the statistical tools and procedure for data analysis.

Research Design

This study utilized the descriptive research method to answer the objectives specified in this study using a self-made survey questionnaire to determine the level of practices, the extent of compliance, and the level of difficulties encountered in implementing school-based feeding programs in the new normal. Descriptive research is valuable in providing facts in which scientific judgment may be based on assessing the present study. Furthermore, a descriptive design is appropriate for studies that aim to find out what prevails in the current conditions or relationships, practices, held opinions and beliefs, processes and effects, and developing trends. This research design is a scientific method that involves observing and describing the behavior of a subject without influencing it in any way (Carlson, 2018). Since the study also aims to determine and describe the conditions of things in their present state, practices, beliefs, effects, and difficulties being felt by the implementers. Thus, the researcher believed that a descriptive research design is suitable for the present study.

Study Respondents

The respondents of the study are 149 teachers from a total population of 242. Since the number of respondents is quite large, the researcher used the Cochran formula to determine the sample size. The Cochran formula allows the researcher to decide the desired level of precision, confidence level, and estimated proportion in the population to calculate the ideal sample size (Whitehead et al., 2016). After the sample was determined, stratified sampling was used. In stratified sampling, the population is divided into subgroups called strata. To get the sample, the respondents coming from each school are divided by the total number of respondents and multiplied by the sample size.

Instruments

This study used a self-made questionnaire to gather all the data, mainly from teacher-respondents It was subjected to validity (4.62-excellent) and for reliability (the computed alpha for the Level of Practices was 0.961, interpreted as "Good." The Extent of Compliance was 0.976, interpreted as "Excellent," and the Level of Difficulties Encountered was 0.991, interpreted as "Excellent."). All of them were interpreted as worthy and good; respectively. It was divided into two parts. Part I contain queries on respondents' profile such as age, grade level assignment, and several years as a feeding implementer. Part II was the questionnaire proper consisting of 30 items on practices, 30 items on compliance, and 30 items on difficulties encountered in the implementation of a school-based feeding program with 10-line items per area. The respondents were given options for their answers. The assessment of the level of practices, the extent of compliance, and the level of difficulties in the implementation of school-based feeding programs in each item under the areas mentioned above was measured from the continuum of 5 to 1 using the Likert scale rating with 5 as always, 4 as often, 3 as sometimes, 2 as rarely and 1 as almost never.

Data Gathering Procedure

For the smoother conduct of the study, the researcher employed the following procedures. A letter of request addressed to the Schools Division Superintendent for the conduct of the study was submitted for approval. Upon approval, a letter request was distributed to the school head of all component schools. After securing the approval for the second request, questionnaires were administered to target respondents. The data gathered from the respondents' responses were tallied and tabulated using the appropriate statistical tools. The raw data were transformed into numerical code guided by a coding manual. This will be allowed computer processing, statistical derivations, and tabular presentation. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used in the computer processing of the encoded data.

Data Analysis and Statistical Treatment

Objective No.1 used the descriptive analytical scheme and mean to determine the level of practices of teachers in implementing school-based feeding programs in the new normal in the pre-implementation phase, implementation phase, and post-implementation phase.

Objective No. 2 used the descriptive analytical scheme and mean to determine teachers' compliance in implementing the school-based feeding program in the new normal according to the aforementioned areas.
Objective No. 3 used the descriptive analytical scheme and mean to determine the level of difficulties encountered by teachers in the implementation of a school-based feeding program in the new normal according to the aforementioned variables.

Objective No. 4 used the comparative analytical scheme and Mann-Whitney U test to determine the significant difference in the level of practices of teachers in the implementation of school-based feeding programs in the new normal when grouped and compared according to the variables above.

Objective No. 5 used the comparative analytical scheme and Mann-Whitney U test to determine the significant difference in the extent of compliance of teachers in implementing school-based feeding programs in the new normal when they are grouped and compared according to the variables mentioned above.

Objective No. 6 used the comparative analytical scheme and Mann-Whitney U test to determine the significant difference in the difficulties teachers encountered in implementing the school-based feeding program in the new normal when they were grouped and compared according to the aforementioned variables.

Ethical Consideration

The researchers ensured the protection of the participants of the study. The researcher gave importance to the respondents' voluntary participation, informed consent, risk of harm, confidentiality, and anonymity. In this study, for voluntary participation, the researcher asked the respondents to sign or agree to a consent form by filling out a blank line/data entry slot with respondents' initials or an alias. However, they are still free to withdraw without giving a reason. For informed consent, the researcher ensured that the respondents were fully informed about the procedures and risks involved in the research and must give their consent to participate. For risk of harm, the researcher did not put the participants in a situation where they might be at risk of harm because of their participation. If this happens, the participants can decline to answer all the questions and may withdraw their participation at any time. For confidentiality, the researcher guaranteed the participants identifying information was not being made available to anyone who was not directly involved in the study. Further, for the anonymity of the respondents, the respondents used an alias or initials to keep his/her identity anonymous to the researcher and other participants.

Results and Discussion:

This section deals with the presentation, analysis and interpretation of data gathered to carry out the objectives of this study. All these were made possible by following certain appropriate procedures so as to give the exact data and solution to each specific problem.

Table 1
Level of Practices of Teachers in the Implementation of School-Based Feeding Program in the New Normal in terms of Pre-Implementation Phase

Pre-Implementation Phase Items	Mean	Interpretation
1. Identifies all qualified beneficiaries based on prescribed criteria.	4.87	Very high level
2. Profiles each beneficiary based on his/her nutritional status.	4.91	Very high level
3. Educates the beneficiaries and their parents on the importance of proper	4.93	Very high level

nutrition.		
4. Extends effort to involve parents in the feeding program.	4.85	Very high level
5. Creates activities to meet and greet all the beneficiaries.	4.69	Very high level
6. Emphasizes the value of local vegetables and crops to augment feeding.	4.83	Very high level
7. Informs and follows the cycle of menus delivered to school thru procurement by the division office.	4.83	Very high level
8. Collaborates with the barangay in the distribution of feeding commodities.	4.48	High level
9. Creates plans that integrate feeding programs on nutrition education and academic performance.	4.71	Very high level
10. Baseline data of beneficiaries is remarkably analyzed in considering the action plan.	4.78	Very high level
Overall mean	4.79	Very high level

Table 1 shows that respondents gave an overall mean score of 4.79, interpreted as "very high level," indicating that most public elementary school teachers exhibit excellent practices in implementing the School-Based Feeding Program (SBFP) during its preliminary phase.

The highest mean score, 4.93, was for item No. 3: "Educates the beneficiaries and their parents on the importance of proper nutrition," also rated as "very high level." The lowest mean, 4.48, was for item No. 8: "Collaborates with the barangay in the distribution of feeding foods," though still interpreted as "very high level."

This suggests that while teachers excel in educating beneficiaries, some place less emphasis on barangay collaboration for food distribution, believing it unnecessary due to the school's accessibility and the SBFP implementers' efficiency. However, barangay collaboration could enhance efficiency and community awareness, encouraging broader involvement in the program.

The findings align with Lacanilao (2020), who highlights the barangay's integral role in school activities. Schools comprise diverse stakeholders with varying responsibilities: principals lead implementation, while LGUs focus on broader barangay issues, explaining their limited involvement in school initiatives**.**

Table 2
Level of Practices of Teachers in the Implementation of School-Based Feeding Program in the New Normal in terms of Implementation Phase

Implementation Phase Items	Mean	Interpretation
1. Monitors quarterly nutritional progress and academic improvement of every beneficiary.	4.78	Very high level
2. Correlates nutritional improvement with learners' academic performance.	4.74	Very high level
3. Uses calibrated anthropometric tools for accurate data collection and identification of feeding beneficiaries.	4.63	Very high level
4. Checks with teachers if beneficiaries show signs of early improvement and recovery.	4.75	Very High level
5. Follows standardized recipes suggested by DepEd.	4.79	Very high level
6. Complies with DepEd Order No. 13, s. 2017, (Policy and Guidelines on Healthy Food and Beverage Choices in Schools and DepEd Office).	4.85	Very high level
7. Implements the recommendation of the National Nutrition Council.	4.83	Very high level
8. Considers the reasonability of prices and nutritional value to address the nutritional deficiencies of beneficiaries.	4.82	Very high level
9. Works with the SBFP coordinator to determine collective improvements of the school beneficiaries.	4.81	Very high level
10. Serves iron-fortified rice, brown rice, corn grits, and vitamin-enriched/fortified cooking oil and sugar, supporting Republic Act No. 8976.	4.66	Very high level
Overall mean	4.77	Very high level

Table 2 reveals an overall mean score of 4.77, interpreted as "very high level," indicating that respondents consistently apply best practices to ensure the successful implementation of the School-Based Feeding Program (SBFP).

The highest mean score, 4.85, was for item No. 6: "Complies with DepEd Order No. 13, s. 2017," emphasizing adherence to healthy food and beverage guidelines. The lowest mean, 4.63, was for item No. 4: "Uses calibrated anthropometric tools for accurate data collection and identification of feeding beneficiaries," though still rated "very high level."

This suggests that implementers in some areas face challenges using calibrated tools for accurate data collection, especially in remote locations where health protocols limit physical interaction. Some resort to alternative or non-calibrated tools due to the unavailability of standard equipment, while others borrow tools from barangay health centers.

The findings align with Oro et al. (2018), who stress the importance of using calibrated anthropometric tools to ensure accuracy in identifying beneficiaries and maintaining consistency in nutritional assessments from baseline to end-line.

Table 3
Level of Practices of Teachers in the Implementation of School-Based Feeding Program in the New Normal in terms of Post-Implementation Phase

Post-Implementation Phase Items	Mean	Interpretation
1. Assesses the impact of SBFP on learners' academic performance.	4.78	Very high level
2. Always considers the cultural or religious orientation of beneficiaries shall also be considered in planning the menu (Ex. Halal Foods, etc.).	4.80	Very high level
3. Assesses the prices and availability of locally produced supply of vegetables and other foods.	4.82	Very high level
4. Works with the SBFP coordinator to assess the collective improvements of the school feeding beneficiaries.	4.79	Very high level
5. Correlates nutritional improvement with learners' academic performance.	4.77	Very high level
6. Compares baseline data with results to formulate a road map for a better SBFP implementation.	4.83	Very high level
7. Assesses SBFP Program implementation if it meets goals and objectives.	4.83	Very high level
8. Formulates a future action plan based on the outcome of program implementation.	4.71	Very high level
9. Recommends corrective measures.	4.77	Very high level
10. Liquidates down cash amount (allocation on feeding on time) and submit reports promptly.	4.76	Very high level
Overall Mean	4.79	Very high level

Table 3 shows that teachers' practices in the post-implementation phase of the School-Based Feeding Program (SBFP) are at a "very high level," with an overall mean score of 4.79.

The highest mean score, 4.83, was for items No. 6 and 7: "Compares baseline data with results to formulate a roadmap for better SBFP implementation" and "Assesses SBFP implementation if it meets goals and objectives." The lowest mean, 4.71, was for item No. 8: "Formulates a future action plan based on the outcome of program implementation," interpreted as "high level." This implies that not all implementers prioritize creating future action plans after program outcomes, likely due to their heavy workloads, administrative duties, and varying levels of experience with the SBFP.

The findings align with Wang and Fawzi (2020), who highlight the importance of developing action plans to sustain and improve school feeding programs, emphasizing the need for political support and evidence-based design to maximize educational and health outcomes for students.

Table 4
Extent of Compliance of Teachers in the Implementation of School-Based Feeding Program in the New Normal in terms of Pre-Implementation Phase

Pre-Implementation Phase Items	Mean	Interpretation
1. Identifies all qualified beneficiaries based on prescribed criteria.	4.83	Very great extent
2. Profiles each beneficiary based on his/her nutritional status.	4.81	Very great extent
3. Educates the beneficiaries and their parents on the importance of proper nutrition.	4.74	Very great extent
4. Extends effort to involve parents in the feeding program.	4.79	Very great extent
5. Creates activities to meet and greet all the beneficiaries.	4.67	Very great extent
6. Emphasizes the value of local vegetables and crops to augment feeding.	4.77	Very great extent
7. Informs and follows the cycle of menus delivered to school thru procurement by the division office.	4.77	Very great extent
8. Collaborates with the barangay in the distribution of feeding commodities.	4.64	Very great extent
9. Creates plans that integrate feeding programs on nutrition education and	4.75	Very great extent

academic performance.		
10. Baseline data of beneficiaries is remarkably analyzed in considering the action plan.	4.78	Very great extent
Overall mean	4.76	Very great extent

Table 4 shows an overall mean score of 4.76, interpreted as "very great extent," indicating high compliance among teacher-implementers in pre-implementation SBFP activities.

The highest mean score, 4.83, was for identifying qualified beneficiaries based on guidelines, while the lowest, 4.64, was for collaborating with barangays in food distribution. This highlights limited collaboration with barangays, partly due to safety concerns from COVID-19, despite efforts by schools and teachers to encourage LGU support.

These findings align with Shrestha et al. (2019), who identified barriers to school health programs, such as weak coordination, resource shortages, and low sustainability. They emphasized the positive impact of such programs and recommended stronger stakeholder collaboration to sustain and expand these efforts.

Table 5
Extent of Compliance of Teachers in the Implementation of School-Based Feeding Program in the New Normal in terms of Implementation Phase

Implementation Phase Items	Mean	Interpretation
1. Monitors quarterly nutritional progress and academic improvement of every beneficiary.	4.77	Very great extent
2. Correlates nutritional improvement with learners' academic performance.	4.79	Very great extent
3. Uses calibrated anthropometric tools for accurate data collection and identification of feeding beneficiaries.	4.68	Very great extent
4. Checks with teachers if beneficiaries show signs of early improvement and recovery.	4.73	Very great extent
5. Follows standardized recipes suggested by DepEd.	4.80	Very great extent
6. Complies with DepEd Order No. 13, s. 2017, (Policy and Guidelines on Healthy Food and Beverage Choices in Schools and DepEd Office).	4.80	Very great extent
7. Implements the recommendation of the National Nutrition Council.	4.81	Very great extent
8. Considers the reasonability of prices and nutritional value to address the nutritional deficiencies of beneficiaries.	4.79	Very great extent
9. Works with the SBFP coordinator to determine collective improvements of the school beneficiaries.	4.79	Very great extent
10. Serves iron-fortified rice, brown rice, corn grits, and vitamin-enriched/fortified cooking oil and sugar, supporting Republic Act No. 8976.	4.76	Very great extent
Overall mean	4.77	Very great extent

Table 5 shows that the respondents assessed the overall implementation of the school-based feeding program with a mean score of 4.77, interpreted as "very great extent," indicating good compliance by teacher-implementers. The highest score, 4.81, was for item No. 7, "Implements the recommendation of the National Nutrition Council," while the lowest, 4.68, was for item No. 3, "Uses calibrated anthropometric tools for accurate data collection and identification of feeding beneficiaries."

This lower score suggests that some teacher-implementers face challenges in using calibrated anthropometric tools due to health concerns preventing beneficiaries from attending school for measurements. Despite this, teachers find alternative ways to gather accurate nutritional data.

This aligns with Oro et al. (2018), who emphasized the importance of trained personnel for accurate anthropometric measurements, as well as the involvement of Barangay Health Workers in areas where beneficiaries cannot attend school for these measurements.

Table 6
Extent of Compliance of Teachers in the Implementation of School-Based Feeding Program in the New Normal in terms of Post-Implementation Phase

Post-Implementation Phase Items	Mean	Interpretation
1. Assesses the impact of SBFP on learners' academic performance.	4.81	Very great extent

2. Always considers the cultural or religious orientation of beneficiaries shall also be considered in planning the menu (Ex. Halal Foods, etc.).	4.78	Very great extent
3. Assesses the prices and availability of locally produced supply of vegetables and other foods.	4.75	Very great extent
4. Works with the SBFP coordinator to assess the collective improvements of the school feeding beneficiaries.	4.77	Very great extent
5. Correlates nutritional improvement with learners' academic performance.	4.74	Very great extent
6. Compares baseline data with results to formulate a road map for a better SBFP implementation.	4.77	Very great extent
7. Assesses SBFP Program implementation if it meets goals and objectives.	4.77	Very great extent
8. Formulate a future action plan based on the outcome of program implementation.	4.74	Very great extent
9. Recommends corrective measures.	4.72	Very great extent
10. Liquidate cash amount (allocation on feeding on time) and submit reports promptly.	4.73	Very great extent
Overall Mean	4.76	Very great extent

Table 6 reveals that the extent of teachers' compliance in implementing the school-based feeding program in the post-implementation phase was very great, with an overall mean score of 4.76, interpreted as "very great extent." The highest mean score was 4.81 for assessing the program's impact on academic performance, while the lowest was 4.72 for recommending corrective measures.

This suggests that some implementers are less compliant with recommending corrective actions, likely due to concerns about added workload. These findings align with Dimaculangan (2019), who noted that school feeding programs are more effective with proper implementation, including recommendations for improvement, such as training for school administration, monitoring hygiene, and educating students on proper nutrition.

Table 7
Level of Difficulties Encountered by Teachers in the Implementation of School-Based Feeding Program in the New Normal in terms of Pre-Implementation Phase

Pre-Implementation Phase Items	Mean	Interpretation
1. Inability of parents to participate during the feeding program orientation.	2.82	Moderate level
2. There is no available barangay health worker to assist in the conduct of house visits to record and assess the nutritional status of the target learner beneficiary.	2.99	Moderate level
3. There is no active participation of stakeholders to support the feeding program.	3.04	Moderate level
4. There are wasted and severely wasted learners who refuse to enroll in the feeding program.	3.00	Moderate level
5. There is not enough time to discuss the importance of nutrition to parents due to the pandemic.	3.02	Moderate level
6. There are no available vegetables from Gulayan Sa Paaralan to augment the menu for the feeding program.	2.69	Moderate level
7. Some parents of the beneficiaries are hard to communicate with when there is an important announcement related to the feeding program.	2.93	Moderate level
8. There are no partners to tap from LGUs to assist in delivering and distributing food items to target beneficiaries.	2.66	Moderate level
9. There is a limited menu to be used for the feeding program despite the complete menu cycle provided by the feeding program due to pandemic	2.41	Low level
10. There is difficulty in engaging parents and stakeholders in complying with health protocols	2.39	Low level
Overall mean	2.79	Moderate level

Table 7 shows that respondents rated their difficulty during the pre-implementation phase of the school-based feeding program with an overall mean score of 2.79, interpreted as a "moderate level." The lowest mean score was 2.39 for difficulty in engaging parents and stakeholders in complying with health protocols, while the highest was 3.04 for the lack of active participation from stakeholders, both interpreted as a "moderate level."

This indicates limited stakeholder involvement and support, despite the efforts of implementers to encourage participation. The findings align with Torres (2020), who highlighted that stakeholder engagement in school programs can foster transparency, mutual respect, and collaboration, recommending strategies to increase their involvement in school activities.

Table 8
Level of Difficulties Encountered by Teachers in the Implementation of School-Based Feeding Program in the New Normal in terms of Implementation Phase

Implementation Phase Items	Mean	Interpretation
1. Inadequate provision of proper nutrition on given foods as prescribed under RA 8976	2.50	Moderate level
2. There is no proper observation on the prescribed menu from DepEd.	2.26	Low level
3. There is no compliance with the DepEd Order No. 13 series of 2017 as policy and guidelines on healthy foods.	2.33	Low level
4. Few parent volunteers are helping in the preparation and distribution of food for the feeding program.	2.21	Low level
5. There are not enough spaces in the school kitchen and feeding area.	2.09	Low level
6. Parent volunteers have insufficient training in preparing and handling foods for the feeding program.	2.17	Low level
7. There is no appropriate washing facility for food and utensils.	2.17	Low level
8. There is no continuous monitoring of the physical improvement of SBFP beneficiaries due to the pandemic.	2.14	Low level
9. There is no appropriate storage equipment to be used to maintain the quality of food ingredients.	2.20	Low level
10. Schedule of feeding time was not strictly followed.	2.07	Low level
Overall mean	2.21	Low level

Table 8 reveals that respondents rated the difficulties encountered during the implementation phase of the school-based feeding program as low, with an overall mean score of 2.21, interpreted as "low level." The lowest mean score was 2.07 for the difficulty of not strictly following the schedule of cooking and feeding times, while the highest was 2.50 for inadequate provision of nutrition as prescribed by RA 8976, interpreted as "moderate level."

This suggests that difficulties arose mainly due to the inadequate provision of prescribed nutritional foods, partly due to pandemic-related changes. The findings align with Gustilo et al. (2018), who emphasized that nutrition rehabilitation must focus on the quality, quantity, and consistency of food, as well as broader health factors like sanitation and access to water.

Table 9
Level of Difficulties Encountered by Teachers in the Implementation of School-Based Feeding Program in the New Normal in terms of Post-Implementation Phase

Post-Implementation Items	Mean	Interpretation
1. There are beneficiaries who do not complete the whole duration of the feeding program.	2.50	Moderate level
2. There is no collaboration between feeding teachers and SBFP coordinators to correlate results.	2.38	Low level
3. There is an absence of innovation as an intervention to combat the challenges experienced.	2.39	Low level
4. There is no accurate, sustainable plan for the feeding program.	2.23	Low level
5. Failure to interpret all the results of the nutritional improvement of the beneficiaries after the feeding program.	2.29	Low level
6. Defer assessment of learners' nutritional status after the feeding program due to the health safety protocols to follow.	2.44	Low level
7. Additional workload for teachers in distributing food items/milk for the feeding program.	2.67	Moderate level
8. Some beneficiaries dislike the food item/milk.	2.48	Low level
9. Some learners are ashamed of being SBFP recipients.	2.41	Low level
10. There is no feedback coming from parents and stakeholders after the compilation of the implementation of SFBP for improvement.	2.28	Low level
Overall mean	2.41	Low level

Table 9 shows that the difficulties faced by teachers in implementing the school-based feeding program during the post-implementation phase were generally low, with an overall mean score of 2.41. The lowest mean score of 2.23 was for the lack of an accurate, sustainable plan for the program, while the highest mean of 2.67 was for the additional workload in distributing food, interpreted as "moderate level."

This suggests that teachers face challenges in distributing food due to the extra burden on top of their teaching and administrative responsibilities. The findings are supported by Agujar et al. (2020), who identified similar issues, including additional workload, difficulties in recipient selection, and feeding fund insufficiency.

Table 10
Differences in the Level of Practices of Teachers in the Implementation of School-Based Feeding Program in the New Normal during the Pre-Implementation Phase when grouped and compared according to the variables above

Pre-Implementation Phase							
Variables	**Categories**	**N**	**Mean Rank**	**Mann Whitney U - test**	**Sig. Level**	***p*-value**	**Interpretation**
Age	Younger	72	76.47	2666.50		0.678	Not Significant
	Older	77	73.63				
Grade level assignment	Primary	63	72.33	2541.00	0.05	0.504	Not Significant
	Intermediate	86	76.95				
Number of years as feeding implementer	Shorter	83	78.01	2489.00		0.323	Not Significant
	Longer	66	71.21				

Table 10 shows that for the variable age, the computed U is 2666.50 with a p-value of 0.678, indicating no significant difference in teacher practices based on age. Similarly, for grade level assignment, the computed U is 2541.00 with a p-value of 0.504, and for the number of years as a feeding implementer, the computed U is 2489.00 with a p-value of 0.323, both also showing no significant differences. Therefore, the hypotheses for all variables—age, grade level, and years as feeding implementer—are accepted, indicating no variation in the level of teacher practices in the school-based feeding program's pre-implementation phase based on these factors.

This suggests that teachers' practices are consistent regardless of age, grade level assignment, or years of experience, as most teachers are well-aware of their duties. These profile variables do not significantly impact the implementation of the program, supporting findings by Mandadero (2018) that no significant differences exist in the extent of program implementation based on implementers' profile variables.

Table 11
Differences in the Level of Practices of Teachers in the Implementation of School-Based Feeding Program in the New Normal during the Implementation Phase when grouped and compared according to the variables mentioned above

Implementation Phase							
Variables	**Categories**	**N**	**Mean Rank**	**Mann Whitney U - test**	**Sig. Level**	***p*-value**	**Interpretation**
Age	Younger	72	79.51	2447.50		0.196	Not Significant
	Older	77	70.79				
Grade level assignment	Primary	63	72.47	2549.50	0.05	0.520	Not Significant
	Intermediate	86	76.85				
Number of years as feeding implementer	Shorter	83	80.39	2292.00		0.073	Not Significant
	Longer	66	68.23				

Table 11 shows that for the variable age, the computed U is 2447.50 with a p-value of 0.196, for civil status, U is 2549.50 with a p-value of 0.520, and for years as a feeding implementer, U is 2292.0 with a p-value of 0.073, all indicating no significant differences in teacher practices based on these factors. Therefore, the hypotheses for age, civil status, and years of experience are accepted, suggesting that teachers' practices in the school-based feeding program during the implementation phase do not vary based on these profile variables.

This implies that most teachers effectively implement the program, ensuring the best outcomes by adhering to its policies and guidelines, regardless of demographic factors. These findings align with Dimaculang (2019), which showed that the School-Based Feeding Program was properly implemented regardless of the implementers' demographic profile.

Table 12
Differences in the Level of Practices of Teachers in the Implementation of School-Based Feeding Program in the New Normal during the Post-Implementation Phase when grouped and compared according to the variables as mentioned earlier

Post-Implementation Phase							
Variables	**Categories**	**N**	**Mean Rank**	**Mann Whitney U - test**	**Sig. Level**	***p*-value**	**Interpretation**
Age	Younger	72	75.93	2705.00		0.780	Not Significant
	Older	77	74.13				
Grade level assignment	Primary	63	70.14	2403	0.05	0.197	Not Significant
	Intermediate	86	78.56				
Number of years as feeding implementer	Shorter	83	79.39	2375.00		0.127	Not Significant
	Longer	66	69.48				

Table 12 shows that for the variable age, the computed U is 2705.5 with a p-value of 0.780, for grade level assignment, U is 2403.0 with a p-value of 0.197, and for years as a feeding implementer, U is 2375.0 with a p-value of 0.127, all indicating no significant differences in teacher practices based on these factors. Therefore, the hypotheses for age, grade level assignment, and years of experience are accepted, suggesting that teacher practices in the post-implementation phase of the school-based feeding program do not vary according to these variables.

This indicates that most teachers perform their tasks efficiently and remain committed to the program, regardless of their demographic profile. These findings align with Haile (2019), which showed that the practices, challenges, and sustainability of the school feeding program were consistent across implementers' profile variables.

Table 13
Differences in the Extent of Compliance of Teachers in the Implementation of School-Based Feeding Program in the New Normal during the Pre-Implementation Phase when grouped and compared according to the variables mentioned above

Pre-Implementation Phase							
Variables	**Categories**	**N**	**Mean Rank**	**Mann Whitney U - test**	**Sig. Level**	***p*-value**	**Interpretation**
Age	Younger	72	77.44	2596.00		0.471	Not Significant
	Older	77	72.71				
Grade level assignment	Primary	63	71.52	2489.50	0.05	0.363	Not Significant
	Intermediate	86	77.55				
Number of years as feeding implementer	Shorter	83	78.17	2476.00		0.278	Not Significant
	Longer	66	71.02				

Table 13 shows that for age, the computed U is 2596.0 with a p-value of 0.471, for grade level assignment, U is 2489.5 with a p-value of 0.363, and for years as a feeding implementer, U is 2476.0 with a p-value of 0.278, all indicating no significant differences in teacher compliance based on these factors. Therefore, the hypotheses for age, grade level assignment, and years of experience are accepted, suggesting that compliance in the pre-implementation phase does not vary by these profile variables.

This indicates that teachers' compliance in preparing for the school-based feeding program is consistent, regardless of demographic factors, ensuring smooth operations during the implementation phase. These findings align with Hugues et al. (2021), which showed similar results of poor compliance with school food environment guidelines, regardless of demographic profile.

Table 14

Differences in the Extent of Compliance of Teachers in the Implementation of School-Based Feeding Program in the New Normal during the Implementation Phase, and when grouped and compared according to the aforementioned variables

Implementation Phase							
Variables	**Categories**	**N**	**Mean Rank**	**Mann Whitney U - test**	**Sig. Level**	***p*-value**	**Interpretation**
Age	Younger	72	75.31	2749.50		0.925	Not Significant
	Older	77	74.71				
Grade level assignment	Primary	63	73.45	2611.50	0.05	0.682	Not Significant
	Intermediate	86	76.13				
Number of years as feeding implementer	Shorter	83	77.84	2503.50		0.325	Not Significant
	Longer	66	71.43				

Table 14 shows that for age, the computed U is 2749.5 with a p-value of 0.925, for grade level assignment, U is 2611.50 with a p-value of 0.682, and for years as a feeding implementer, U is 2503.5 with a p-value of 0.325, all indicating no significant differences in teacher compliance during the implementation phase. Therefore, the hypotheses for age, grade level assignment, and years of experience are accepted, suggesting that compliance does not vary based on these factors.

This implies that teachers' compliance in implementing the school-based feeding program is consistent, regardless of their demographic profile. These results align with Aldubayan & Murimi (2019), who found no significant difference in compliance with food regulations in school cafeterias, based on demographic factors.

Table 15
Differences in the Extent of Compliance of Teachers in the Implementation of School-Based Feeding Program in the New Normal during the Post-Implementation Phase, and when grouped and compared according to the variables above

Post-Implementation Phase							
Variables	**Categories**	**N**	**Mean Rank**	**Mann Whitney U - test**	**Sig. Level**	***p*-value**	**Interpretation**
Age	Younger	72	77.62	2583.00		0.416	Not Significant
	Older	77	72.55				
Grade level assignment	Primary	63	72.72	2565.50	0.05	0.532	Not Significant
	Intermediate	86	76.67				
Number of years as feeding implementer	Shorter	83	78.02	2488.50		0.278	Not Significant
	Longer	66	71.20				

Table 15 shows that for age, the computed U is 2583.0 with a p-value of 0.416, for grade level assignment, U is 2565.5 with a p-value of 0.532, and for years as a feeding implementer, U is 2488.5 with a p-value of 0.278, all indicating no significant differences in teacher compliance during the post-implementation phase. Therefore, the hypotheses for age, grade level assignment, and years of experience are accepted, suggesting that compliance does not vary based on these factors.

This implies that teachers' compliance in implementing the school-based feeding program in the post-implementation phase is not influenced by demographic factors. These findings align with Walls et al. (2020), who found no difference in compliance with school food guidelines in Mexico City, regardless of socio-economic profile.

Table 16
Differences in the Level of Difficulties Encountered by Teachers in the Implementation of School-Based Feeding Program in the New Normal during the Pre-Implementation Phase when grouped and compared according to the variables above

Pre-Implementation Phase

Variables	Categories	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U - test	Sig. Level	*p*-value	Interpretation
Age	Younger	72	69.99	2411.00		0.170	Not Significant
	Older	77	79.69				
Grade level assignment	Primary	63	82.49	2237.00	0.05	0.069	Not Significant
	Intermediate	86	69.51				
Number of years as feeding implementer	Shorter	83	68.46	2196.50		0.038	Significant
	Longer	66	83.22				

Table 16 shows that for age, the computed U is 2411.0 with a p-value of 0.170, and for grade level assignment, U is 2237.0 with a p-value of 0.069, both indicating no significant differences in the level of difficulties teachers face during the pre-implementation phase. Therefore, the hypotheses for age and grade level assignment are accepted. However, for years as a feeding implementer, the computed U is 2196.5 with a p-value of 0.038, indicating a significant difference, and the hypothesis is rejected.

This suggests that teachers' difficulties in implementing the school-based feeding program during the pre-implementation phase do not vary by age or grade level but do vary based on years of experience. Teachers with more years of experience are better equipped to handle challenges. These findings align with Agujar et al. (2020), who noted that teachers with longer experience in the program reported fewer difficulties in areas like recipient selection, food preparation, and funding.

Table 17
Differences in the Level of Difficulties Encountered by Teachers in the Implementation of School-Based Feeding Program in the New Normal during the Implementation Phase when grouped and compared according to the variables above

Implementation Phase

Variables	Categories	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U - test	Sig. Level	*p*-value	Interpretation
Age	Younger	72	68.22	2284.00		0.063	Not Significant
	Older	77	81.34				
Grade level assignment	Primary	63	83.79	2155.50	0.05	0.033	Significant
	Intermediate	86	68.56				
Number of years as feeding implementer	Shorter	83	67.39	2107.50		0.016	Significant
	Longer	66	84.57				

Table 17 shows the statistics wherein, no significant difference in difficulties during the implementation phase based on age (U = 2284.0, p = 0.063). A significant difference exists based on grade level assignment (U = 2155.5, p = 0.033), with intermediate-level teachers encountering fewer difficulties. And in terms of Number of years as feeding implementer, a significant difference exists based on experience (U = 2107.5, p = 0.016), with veteran implementers facing fewer challenges compared to novices.

These results suggest that grade-level assignment and experience influence the difficulties teachers face during the SBFP implementation phase. More experienced and intermediate-level teachers manage the program more effectively. This aligns with Walls et al. (2020), who noted challenges such as inadequate dissemination, unclear roles, and lack of training but found that experienced implementers adapted better to policy changes.

Table 18
Differences in the Level of Difficulties Encountered by Teachers in the Implementation of School-Based Feeding Program in the New Normal during the Post-Implementation Phase when grouped and compared according to the variables above

Post-Implementation Phase

Variables	Categories	N	Mean	Mann	Sig.	*p*-	Interpretation

			Rank	Whitney U - test	Level	value	
Age	Younger	72	67.30	2217.50		0.035	Significant
	Older	77	82.20				
Grade level assignment	Primary	63	83.44	2177.50	0.05	0.041	Significant
	Intermediate	86	68.82				
Number of years as feeding implementer	Shorter	83	69.16	2254.00		0.063	Not Significant
	Longer	66	82.35				

Table 18 reveals the statistics wherein, in terms of Age, A significant difference exists in the level of difficulties faced by teachers during the post-implementation phase based on age (U = 2217.5, p = 0.035). Younger teachers likely find the program more challenging. In terms of Grade Level Assignment, A significant difference exists in difficulties based on grade level assignment (U = 2177.5, p = 0.041), with primary-level teachers encountering more challenges. And in terms of Number of years as feeding implementer: No significant difference was observed based on years of experience (U = 2254.0, p = 0.063).

These findings suggest that age and grade level assignment influence teachers' difficulties in implementing the SBFP post-implementation, while Number of years as feeding implementer do not. This aligns with Agujar et al. (2020), who highlighted additional workload, recipient selection challenges, and funding insufficiency as key difficulties, influenced by age and grade level.

Conclusions:

On the bases of the foregoing findings of the study, the researcher arrived at the following conclusions:

Teacher-implementers exhibited a very high level of practice and compliance across all phases of the school-based feeding program (pre-implementation, implementation, and post-implementation). While moderate difficulties were encountered during the pre-implementation phase, fewer challenges were faced in the later phases. Practices and compliance levels remained consistent regardless of the teacher-implementers' age, grade level assignment, or years of experience. However, difficulties during the pre-implementation and implementation phases were influenced by years of experience, while age and grade level assignment affected challenges during the post-implementation phase.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations were advanced:

To enhance the implementation and monitoring of the School-Based Feeding Program (SBFP) starting from SY 2022-2023, a monthly School-LGU-Community Partnership Program should be conducted to foster collaboration. PTAs and volunteers must be encouraged to participate in SBFP planning and decision-making during both pre- and post-implementation phases. Additionally, partnering with Barangay Health Workers and volunteers for anthropometric measurements at baseline, midline, and end-line is crucial. Public School District Supervisors should also facilitate ongoing capacity-building sessions for SBFP implementers and volunteers. To ensure compliance, quarterly dialogues and orientations with implementers, volunteers, LGUs, and parents should emphasize their roles in the program, while a uniform procedure for nutritional assessments using calibrated tools must be established for consistency across all stages. The Human Resource and Training Development Office should provide specialized training on the effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of SBFP every 2nd and 4th quarter. Addressing difficulties, a public-private partnership program should be implemented to secure nutritious meals through local organizations, and regular monitoring and evaluation must be conducted to ensure objectives are met, benchmarks are established, and transparency is maintained through public reporting.

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