Addressing Malnutrition: A Qualitative Study on the Supplemental Feeding Program in Tagum City, Davao Del Norte

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the implementation of the Barangay-Level Feeding Program in Tagum City, Davao del Norte, focusing on the practices, challenges, and insights of Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNSs). A qualitative descriptive research design was employed. Ten BNSs from the most populous barangays in Tagum City were purposively selected as key informants based on their direct involvement in program implementation. Data were collected through semi-structured Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis framework. To ensure trustworthiness, the study employed purposive sampling, expert review of the interview guide, audio-recorded interviews, and systematic documentation of data collection and analysis procedures. Findings showed that program implementation involved systematic program management, technology-assisted data management, sanitary and nutritious food preparation, and community participation. Major challenges included beneficiary non-cooperation, logistical and resource constraints, and limited parental engagement. The findings also underscored the importance of responsible parenting, collaborative partnerships, coordinated planning, and community empowerment in sustaining program effectiveness. The study concludes that while the program generally complies with national nutrition standards, improvements in parental involvement, monitoring systems, and inter-agency collaboration are needed to enhance efficiency and sustainability. The findings may inform policy enhancement and future community-based nutrition interventions.

Keywords: malnutrition, health, supplemental feeding program, Barangay Nutrition Scholar, qualitative research

INTRODUCTION

Malnutrition remains a significant public health issue in developing countries (World Bank, 2021). More specifically, child malnutrition is one such issue that continues to act as a check on the growth, health, and development of children. In 2022, approximately 149 million children under 5 years old experienced stunting, as they were significantly shorter than expected for their age. Moreover, around 45 million children were considered wasted, implying that they were underweight relative to their height, and 37 million were overweight or considered obese. Concomitantly, nearly half of deaths among children below five years old were linked to undernutrition, primarily present in low and middle-income countries (World Health Organization, 2019).

The Global Nutrition Report (2021) also confirms that malnutrition is not a phenomenon limited to particular regions, but an international challenge faced by countries worldwide. In Nigeria, the spread of severe malnutrition is alarming, especially among children. An increase in the cases of severe malnutrition has

reportedly been staggering, with about 100 percent in some parts of the Northern part of the country due to several socioeconomic and environmental factors (Vanguard News, 2024).

In South Africa, malnutrition is acute, characterized by immediate weight loss or failure to gain weight. It remains a primary contributor to the deaths of children below five years old (Mathosi et al., 2025). The prevalence of acute malnutrition is caused by a complex interplay of structural and environmental factors, including deep-rooted poverty, recurrent food insecurity, climate change, and weak health systems (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2022; United Nations Children's Fund, 2024). These aspects hinder access to diverse, nutrient-rich diets and essential maternal and child health services, thereby burdening child health outcomes (Akombi et al., 2017; Mathosi et al., 2025).

In the Philippines, undernutrition is a pressing conundrum. For 30 years, there have been limited developments in addressing undernutrition in the country. One in three children below five years old was stunted, being of a small size for their age (World Bank, 2021). Specifically, in Navotas City, there were more malnutrition-related deaths recorded in 2021 than in any province in the National Capital Region (NCR) of the Philippines (Balita, 2024). The malnutrition death rate recorded in Navotas City is strongly associated with its poverty rate, food insecurity, poor access to proper healthcare service, as well as nutrition service, issues that are exacerbated by its population density and use of fishing as the primary source of income. The same applies to Quezon City, a city with a greater resource base that experiences economic disparities, thereby subjecting marginalized populations to a risk of poor health outcomes due to limited access to affordable, nutritious food and essential health services (United Nations Children's Fund, 2020).

In the Davao region, malnutrition increased slightly in 2024, according to the recent Nutrition Situation Report. The underweight existence rate increased to 2.95% in 2024 from 2.8% in 2023. Stunting also increased from 1.4% to 1.53%, whilst obesity rose from 5.2% to 5.86%. The only exception is in the wasting part, where a decline was noted, from 0.8% in 2023 down to 0.78% in 2024 (SunStar Davao Digital, 2025). In terms of wasting status, Davao City has recorded a slight increase from 0.32% in 2023 to 0.65% in 2024, which is considered the most severe form of malnutrition. These children are too petite, and their weakened immune systems make them susceptible to late-onset illnesses and death (Teman, 2025).

In light of the foregoing, it is evident that malnutrition is indeed a pressing problem and concern not only in the Philippines but also in other developing countries. To address such nutritional issues among children, the Philippine government, through Republic Act No. 11037, established a National Feeding Program with the ultimate objective of mitigating the effects of hunger and undernutrition among Filipino children by providing them with at least one fortified meal per year. It requires the provision of the Supplemental Feeding Program (SFP) for daycare children aged 3-5 years, carried out by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in collaboration with the Local Government Units (LGUs) and parent groups, and the school-based Feeding Program to remain in place (kindergarten to Grade 6) by the Department of Education (DepEd) (Senate of the Philippines, 2018).

This directive was later elaborated in the following Administrative Orders (AOs) issued by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). AO 03-2017 aimed to streamline nutrition through standardized menus, enhanced monitoring, and intensified community and LGU collaboration to achieve better nutritional outcomes among 2-5-year-olds. Meanwhile, AO 04-2016, also issued by the DSWD, harmonized financial and workflow practices with the national nutrition standards, which means it focuses more on ensuring the program's implementation practices and budgeting procurement conform to the nutritional guidelines and operational protocols and local sourcing of ingredients (Department of Social Welfare and Development, 2016). On the regional level, from the data provided by the City Government of Tagum, these national policies were operationalized in Tagum City through Ordinance No. 927-2021, which pooled resources and cross-sector cooperation to support community-driven sustaining of the barangay-level feeding programs to support the higher-order goal of the SFP, countering child malnutrition with nutritionally acceptable and community-driven meals.

Despite the presence of these policies and programs, child malnutrition is still a chronic issue. This current problem highlights the fact that the challenge of food provision is only part of a larger issue, which is more a

product of the overall social situation, as outlined by the Social Determinants of Health Theory (WHO, 2019). This understanding has led to an examination of how health inequalities emerge due to the poor conditions under which humans are born, grow, live, and work, such as poverty, inadequate education, limited access to food, and inadequate social support.

In this regard, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory suggests that a child is influenced by the layers of the environment in which they develop, including the family, community, and policy systems (Cherry, 2023). Such theoretical frameworks offer a perspective on empirical evidence by providing an understanding of why malnutrition persists despite the presence of feeding programs, attributing it to factors not directly related to food, such as patient care behavior, the ability to engage with local government, and socioeconomic disparities.

In understanding its relevance, studying malnutrition, especially in children, is crucial due to its drastic effects on physical and cognitive development, health, and future productivity (Suryawan et al., 2021). The repercussions of malnutrition can be long-term, including stunted growth, increased susceptibility to illness, poor academic performance, and reduced economic capabilities (Wagner, 2024). Childhood malnutrition is an ongoing issue in the Philippines and numerous countries of the developing world and requires specific interventions to reduce the cycle of poverty and malnutrition.

A survey conducted by the DSWD in the Philippines analyzed the impact of the Supplemental Feeding Program (SFP) on various regions of the country, including highly vulnerable areas such as the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). The finding was that nutritional programs, such as SFP, in conjunction with other initiatives, such as the Bangsamoro Umpungan sa Nutrisyon (BangUN) project, played a significant role in improving the health of children and mothers, thereby reducing malnutrition. These results reinforced the value of holistic efforts to balance food security and healthcare delivery, generating lasting gains, especially in disadvantaged communities (Alzate, 2024).

Similarly, a study on SFPs both in the Philippines and other countries found that the programs ease the burden of malnutrition, especially in high-risk areas. These studies demonstrate the importance of integrating nutritional food supply and educational elements to develop long-term nutrition habits (Xu et al., 2021). Investing in children's nutrition also benefits national economies, as a healthy, productive generation emerges as they mature (Buttner et al., 2023). Supporting this perspective, the 2024 report of the United States Joint Economic Committee, access to healthy food during childhood is also categorized as an essential economic investment (Joint Economic Committee Democrats, 2024).

Nonetheless, while these programs might aid in addressing imminent food insecurity, they fail to capture the context in which implementers facilitate, transform, and maintain them in local settings. Most evaluations focus on program outputs rather than the ground realities where program implementers work. To illustrate, Haniarti et al. (2025) noted that socio-cultural influences have a strong impact on feeding behavior and nutritional outcomes, which means that any intervention should consider local beliefs and norms in order to succeed. This lack of qualitative understanding poses a constraint on efforts to create more adaptive, context-specific interventions, particularly in Tagum City, where child malnutrition is an acute issue.

To address this gap, the interpretivist paradigm underpins this research work, as it focuses on explaining the connotation of subjective meaning and the lived reality of people in a specific social setting (Nickerson, 2024). In contrast to trying to generalize the findings, the interpretivist approach aims at investigating how implementers of the Supplemental Feeding Program in Tagum City work out meaning (construct meaning) through their experience and practice. Drawing on the perspectives of Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNS), this paradigm advocates the use of qualitative approaches to uncover insights that are often overlooked in mathematical analyses. It considers social reality as created through interactions (Nickerson, 2024); the thoughts of implementers are essential in designing responsive and effective community-based nutrition interventions. To elaborate further on these views, the study draws on theoretical connections to interpret the broader causes and implications of malnutrition.

This study is anchored on two essential theoretical frameworks that define the relevance and potential of supplemental feeding interventions. First, the need to be fulfilled due to these basic physiological needs, which food is an integral part of, is referred to as Abraham Maslow's Theory of the Hierarchy of Needs (1943). In this hierarchy, food must come first in the child development process before higher levels of need, such as learning and self-actualization, can be realized. Second, the Conceptual Framework on Malnutrition, presented by UNICEF (2021), sheds light on malnutrition by identifying its direct, underlying, and fundamental causes, including poor dietary intake, inadequate caregiving, food insecurity, and, at a broader scale, socioeconomic conditions.

To complement these notions, the World Bank (2021) notes that every dollar spent on nutrition for children and mothers yields significant returns, including improved health and economic productivity. Although these frameworks emphasize the importance of feeding programs, their successful implementation must consider the local context, particularly in locations such as Tagum City, where resource constraints, community diversity, and government restrictions influence program delivery. Thus, the implementation needs to be based on dignity, inclusion, and the lived experience of the implementers.

The relevant terms related to child malnutrition and the Supplemental Feeding Program in Tagum City are as follows: malnutrition, a condition characterized by insufficient or unbalanced nutrient intake that may lead to various health issues in children (WHO, 2024); Supplemental Feeding Programs (SFPs), government initiatives that provide additional meals to undernourished children to help improve their overall health outcomes (DSWD, 2024); and socioeconomic factors, such as income, education, and employment, which influence access to nutrition. Stunting, the failure of a child to achieve optimal height due to chronic undernutrition (Ritchie & Roser, 2024), and moderate acute malnutrition (MAM), defined in this study as a weight-for-height measurement between −3 and −2 z-scores or a mid-upper-arm circumference of 115 mm to 125 mm in children aged 6 to 59 months (Drhunny, 2021), serve as two fundamental indicators of malnutrition. Lastly, social desirability bias refers to the tendency for informants to respond in ways they think will be favorable, thereby elevating positive behaviors or underreporting negative ones (Ingram, 2023).

The research gap of this study lies in the limited exploration of how barangay- level feeding programs are actually implemented at the community level, particularly in terms of the practices of program implementers, the challenges they encounter, and the insights and lessons they gain in carrying out the program. While existing studies often focus on nutritional outcomes or program impacts, fewer studies examine the firsthand experiences and operational perspectives of Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNSs), who directly manage the feeding activities in their respective communities. This lack of qualitative research focusing on program implementers limits the development of interventions that are more effective and responsive to the needs of local communities.

This gap is particularly crucial in Tagum City, as issues of malnutrition, which have been slowly addressed, remain a significant concern to the general community, especially in densely populated barangays. Without a clear understanding of the day-to-day realities faced by implementers, strategies for strengthening feeding programs are likely to be incomplete. Hence, it is necessary to revisit the current implementation to make timely improvements that may help address existing gaps and prevent further deterioration in the health of vulnerable children.

The purpose of this study was to determine how the Supplemental Feeding Program (SFP) has been implemented in Tagum City through the perspectives and experiences of the present implementers of the program, that is, the Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNSs). The research adopted a qualitative descriptive design to understand how the implementers of the feeding program perceive and derive meaning from their experiences in their respective barangays. Semi-structured key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNS) from the ten most populous barangays of Tagum City to gather detailed accounts of their practices, challenges, and insights.

The interview responses were transcribed and analyzed through thematic analysis, which enabled the researchers to identify recurring patterns and extract meaningful information. The credibility of the analysis was strengthened through peer review during the coding and theme development process. The specific

research questions that the study sought to answer were: (1) What are the practices of the implementers in the implementation of the barangay-level feeding program? (2) What are the challenges of the implementers in the implementation of the barangay-level feeding program? and (3) What insights and lessons have the implementers learned during the implementation of the barangay-level feeding program?

The study is critical both globally and locally in mitigating the threat of malnutrition, which continues to harm children. Globally, the study contributes to existing knowledge based on community-based nutrition interventions by providing qualitative insights into implementation practices, barriers, and challenges in developing countries. The study highlights the importance of implementation research in local contexts for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 2: Zero Hunger, SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being, and SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals). Locally, it promotes the process of ensuring children's right to health and proper nutrition.

The immediate beneficiaries of this study are the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Local Government Units (LGUs), the City Health Office of Tagum, Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNSs), and barangay officials, who were considered key stakeholders in the program planning and delivery. The study may also serve as a reference for educational institutions in the fields of public administration, program evaluation, or public health. Furthermore, the implementation dynamics, policies, and grassroots enhancements of health programs in related environments and situations can be informed by the findings of this study, allowing other researchers to propose future studies.

Finally, this study acknowledges its limitations and delimitations. Given the nature of qualitative research based on Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), the results of the research may be influenced by the personal perceptions of the implementers, who may introduce partiality due to social desirability bias. Each barangay was identified by only one informant, which can narrow the range of perspective. Moreover, the interviews were conducted in English and translated into Cebuano, which may also have led to translation issues that affected the interpretation of the data, such as the potential loss of cultural nuance, changes in the meaning of words, simplification of local expressions, and alteration of tone or emotional accent, which can also affect the quality of qualitative analysis. Regarding its scope, the research solely focused on the current implementation of the Supplemental Feeding Program (SFP) in the ten most populous barangays of Tagum City. These barangays were chosen due to their relevance to the research topics. The other related programs and health initiatives are not involved, as only Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNS) are the subject of interest, and the study focuses solely on the current implementation, not on past or future implementations of the program.

METHOD

Study Participants

Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNSs) were the primary subjects of this research, as they implemented the Community-Based Supplementary Feeding Program in Tagum City, Davao del Norte. These are community-based, unpaid volunteers who have been trained to provide basic nutrition and health services and have become crucial in the battle against child malnutrition in the barangay where they are assigned, especially in urban areas where the program is making its most significant impact (Salalima, 2025). According to Presidential Decree No. 1569, BNS is required to undertake a 10-day training program covering nutrition, health, food production, and environmental sanitation. This training program is then followed by a 20-day practicum in their assigned barangay, under the supervision of the local training team and in coordination with the provincial, municipal, and barangay nutrition committees.

Given their roles and involvement at the grassroots level, BNSs are best suited to provide detailed, comprehensive information on how the program was implemented. The participants were selected based on these specific inclusion criteria. Only those BNSs who had served their role for at least one year to ensure sufficient familiarity with program processes and community dynamics. These BNSs were officially designated in the barangays within Tagum City. They were also actively involved in implementing local nutrition programs (e.g., Operation Timbang, feeding programs, micronutrient supplementation, nutrition education) within the last 12 months. Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNSs) who are no longer active in service,

who declined to take part, or who, on personal grounds, were unable to attend were excluded. The participants were informed that they would not be forced to continue if they wished to leave on their own free will. Both the participants and the interviewer were free to stop at any time if either felt anxious or if an ethical issue arose.

The study employed Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with one BNS per barangay, involving a total of 10 barangays. This sample size conforms to qualitative research guidelines and meets the requirement of data saturation, as noted by Hennink and Kaiser (2022), indicating that focused interviews with a few carefully selected 10 informants can yield rich thematic data. Specific criteria were used to select the program implementers, allowing for comprehensive information to be gathered on the practices, challenges, and lessons learned in the feeding program. The barangays selected for this study are listed in the table below. Based on data from the City Government of Tagum as of 2024, these are the top 10 populous barangays in Tagum City out of 23 barangays.

Table 1. Study Participants

BARANGAY	**POPULATION (as of 2024)**	**KEY INFORMANT**
Mankilam	42,540	1
Visayan Village	40,921	1
Apokon	40,500	1
La Filipina	23,556	1
San Miguel	23,022	1
Madaum	15,454	1
Magugpo East	15,065	1
Cuambogan	13,416	1
Magdum	13,331	1
Canocotan	9,510	1
	Total:	10

Tagum City is the largest component city in the Davao Region, with a population of 300,042, as reported by the Philippine Statistics Authority (2025). It is the provincial capital of Davao del Norte and spans 195.80 square kilometers, accounting for 5.72 percent of the province's total area. The city is further divided into 23 urban and rural barangays, where community-based health and nutrition programs are consistently implemented by the City Nutrition Office, in collaboration with barangay-based volunteers, specifically the Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNSs). The City of Tagum was specifically selected as the study venue due to its ongoing implementation of a city-wide community-based supplementary feeding program aimed at addressing malnutrition among children, particularly in urban barangays, where cases of undernutrition remained high.

A purposive sampling technique was employed in this study to select those with direct experience with the program. This ensures that those who are most relevant to the study's objectives are included. The practice was used to collect information from individuals, most likely to provide abundant, context-specific information, in accordance with the study's purpose. The method of purposive sampling is beneficial when a researcher seeks detailed answers to their questions from a key informant on a particular phenomenon or situation (Hassan,

2024). Their attention to these qualified participants provided the study with detailed data on program practices and difficulties, as well as on the perceived effects of the program on child nutrition.

Materials and Instruments

The researchers developed an Interview Guide Questionnaire (IGQ) that aligned with the study's core objectives. A panel of experts reviewed the IGQ to capture the experiences of the implementers, so most attention was given to program practices, challenges encountered, and lessons learnt. To carry out Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), the researchers had arranged appointments with the program implementers. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, using an interview guide. Participants were given copies of informed consent forms before the interviews to confirm that they had volunteered to serve as the primary source of information. The researchers used a well-established set of interview questions to understand each implementer's experience better. The qualitative method, semi-structured interviews, uses an open-ended format of prepared questions, and participants can provide feedback in their own words (Mashuri et al., 2022). This conversational design was helpful to the researchers in probing original or ad hoc themes as they arose, without necessarily addressing essential issues aligned with the research aims. Using this method, the objective is to collect rich, detailed data and to understand better what implementers think of the program (Smith & Doe, 2020).

Design and Procedure

This research applied a qualitative descriptive research design. In descriptive research, the emphasis is on observing, describing, and recording phenomena in their naturally occurring variations, with variables not manipulated (Bhat, 2024). It is particularly appropriate when a research design aims to gain deeper insight into a given phenomenon, population, or context (Creswell, 2014). The researchers began by seeking the approval of the institute dean to initiate the research process. After the institute dean's approval, the researchers sought approval from the city mayor through the program administrator of Tagum City's Supplemental Feeding Program.

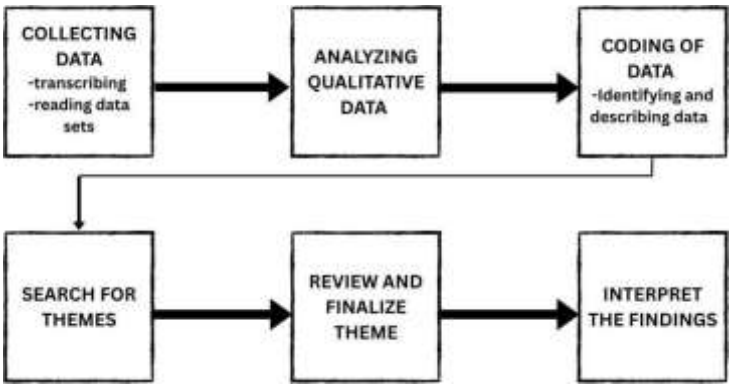
During data collection, participants remained anonymous to maintain confidentiality, and all collected data were analyzed and interpreted in line with the study's objectives. The data were collected in two weeks in March 2025. This data collection was conducted through key informant interviews, which took place face-to-face at the selected barangay health centers within Tagum City, Davao del Norte. With participants' permission, the interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accurate transcription and analysis. Interviews were scheduled in advance to avoid inconveniencing Barangay Nutrition Scholars and to consider the current state of program activities. This duration was sufficient to allow the researchers to conduct thorough one-on-one interviews and to transcribe the gathered information promptly.

Open-ended, semi-structured interview questions were used to elicit in-depth and first-hand experiences regarding the collection of data. Thematic analysis, as suggested by Kiger and Varpio (2020), was the most helpful approach for this study's data analysis, as it enabled the researchers to identify patterns and themes that were re-examined to answer research questions about the nature of implementation practices, challenges, and lessons learned. The method provided experiential and contextual knowledge about program delivery at the community level, along with evidence that was useful in informing the development of improved policies and programs related to child malnutrition.

The researchers worked as active facilitators, data collectors, and analysts during the study. They were responsible for designing the Interview Guide Questionnaire, scheduling interviews, conducting Key Informant Interviews, transcribing answers, and interpreting the qualitative data. In data collection, the researchers reflected neutrality by adhering to the semi-structured interview protocol without being overly influenced by the emerging themes. To demonstrate that they developed a rapport with the participants, they clarified responses that were unclear during the interviews, and their interpretations were regularly reviewed by comparing them with the participants' own words. Such ethical and diligent work with informants contributes to the fact that the data adequately reflects the practices, promises, and observations of the Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNSs), thereby reinforcing the overall validity of the research.

Data Analysis

The data gathered in this study were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework. This method was selected because it provides a systematic and flexible approach to identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within qualitative data.



Source: Adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006).

The researchers followed the six phases of thematic analysis. First, the interview transcripts were reviewed repeatedly to achieve familiarity with the data. Second, significant statements and meaningful responses were identified and assigned initial codes. Third, related codes were grouped into potential themes. Fourth, the themes were reviewed and refined to ensure consistency with the coded data and the entire dataset. Fifth, the themes were defined and named according to their relevance to the research objectives. Finally, the themes were organized and interpreted to generate findings regarding the practices, challenges, and insights of Barangay Nutrition Scholars in implementing the Barangay-Level Feeding Program.

This analytical process enabled the researchers to systematically examine participants' experiences and develop themes that accurately represented their perspectives while remaining aligned with the objectives of the study.

Trustworthiness of the Study

The trustworthiness of this qualitative study was established through the criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability as proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

Credibility. Credibility was ensured through the use of semi-structured Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), which allowed participants to openly share their experiences and perspectives regarding the implementation of the Community-Based Supplementary Feeding Program. The Interview Guide Questionnaire (IGQ) was developed based on the objectives of the study and underwent expert review to ensure the relevance and appropriateness of the interview questions. During the interviews, the researchers sought clarification of unclear responses and carefully reviewed participants' answers to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the information gathered. Furthermore, purposive sampling was employed to select Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNSs) with direct experience and active involvement in implementing nutrition programs, thereby ensuring that the data were obtained from knowledgeable informants.

Dependability. Dependability was established through the systematic implementation of the research procedures. Data collection followed a consistent semi-structured interview protocol across all participants. Interviews were conducted face-to-face, audio-recorded, transcribed, and documented to ensure consistency and transparency throughout the research process. In addition, detailed records of data collection and analysis procedures were maintained, allowing the research process to be clearly traced and evaluated.

Confirmability. Confirmability was achieved by ensuring that the findings were derived from the participants' responses rather than the researchers' personal assumptions or biases. Interview recordings, transcripts, and documented analytical procedures were maintained throughout the study to ensure transparency and allow the

findings to be traced back to the participants' responses. The researchers also adhered to the interview guide and regularly compared interpretations with the participants' actual responses during transcription and analysis to ensure that the findings accurately reflected the experiences and perspectives of the Barangay Nutrition Scholars.

Transferability. Transferability was enhanced by providing detailed descriptions of the research setting, participants, sampling procedures, and program context. The study described the implementation of the Community-Based Supplementary Feeding Program in Tagum City, the characteristics and qualifications of the Barangay Nutrition Scholars, and the rationale for selecting the ten most populous barangays. These contextual details enable readers and future researchers to determine the applicability of the findings to similar settings, populations, and community-based nutrition programs.

RESULTS

Implementation Practices of the Barangay-Level Feeding Program

The results show that the Barangay-Level Feeding Program was carried out with both strengths and challenges. From the responses of the participants, it was clear that the program plays an important role in helping improve the nutrition and health of children in the barangay. While many good practices were observed, some difficulties were also experienced during implementation. Based on the data gathered, four key themes emerged: systematized program management, use of technology for managing records and reports, proper sanitary and nutritious food preparation, and inclusive participation of stakeholders in delivering the program. These themes reflect how the program is organized, how tasks are done, and how different people work together to make the program effective.

Table 2. Implementation Practices of the Barangay-Level Feeding Program

THEMES	DESCRIPTION	CORE IDEAS
Systematized Program Management	This describes the methodical and organized nature of planning, carrying out, tracking, and assessing programs to achieve conformity, productivity, and adherence to a specific goal.	The implementers created an activity plan, which included a weekly feeding menu to aid in fund requests and releases, as well as special weighing and monitoring after every session.
		The implementers determined that a yearly nutrition budget was needed to maintain the feeding program.
		Barangay allocates funds to buy food for the children. This is followed by a schedule usually Monday to Friday, and the parents are called together to assume responsibility for cooking the meals.
		The feeding program was implemented when it was adopted by the Barangay Nutrition Committee (BNC) during its meeting.
Utilization of Technology for Data Management	This refers to the strategic use of digital tools and collaborative networks to effectively gather, store, analyze, and share data to help inform decisions and enhance program results.	The implementers now use the Electronic OPT Plus (e- OPT+), a system that guides assessments such as weight- for-length.
		The implementers also track attendance, maintain proper documentation, take photos, and use the MUAC (Mid-Upper Arm Circumference) for monitoring.
		The implementers requested a budget from the barangay and sought support from NGOs. They also encoded children's weight data to identify cases of malnutrition.
	This refers to careful	Everyone must wash their hands before eating, and the food preparation

Observance of Sanitary and Nutritious Food Preparation Practices	meal planning and serving according to nutritional standards, as well as strict adherence to hygiene and cleanliness during food preparation, to reduce risks to consumers' health and safety, particularly children.	area must be kept clean. The city level also checks if the food is appropriate and nutritious.
		Implementers ensure beneficiaries get nutritious food and are oriented on hygiene and proper meal preparation.
		The implementers use the Pinggang Pinoy and the food pyramid as guides for meal planning.
Establishing an Inclusive Participatory Program Delivery	This refers to active engagement of various stakeholders in planning, decision-making, and program execution, with a particular interest in marginalized populations to create equitable, relevant, and community- based services.	Parents show commitment by taking charge of cooking, while implementers provide support throughout the process.
		What implementers usually do is provide transportation to pick up the beneficiaries, bring them to the venue, and send them home.
		Implementers ensure that parents prepare meals together with barangay health workers, while fostering clear communication between parents.

Systematized Program Management

Participants shared that the feeding program followed a structured implementation process through activity planning, preparation of weekly feeding menus, budgeting, regular weighing of children, and continuous monitoring of beneficiaries. Implementers also highlighted the importance of having a yearly nutrition budget to sustain the continuity of the feeding program. In addition, barangay funds were allocated for food purchases, while parents were assigned responsibilities in meal preparation and cooking. Participants further explained that the implementation of the feeding program was discussed and incorporated during Barangay Nutrition Committee (BNC) meetings.

Utilization of Technology for Data Management

The findings showed that technology was utilized in monitoring and managing nutrition-related data within the feeding program. Participants reported using the Electronic Operation Timbang Plus (e-OPT+) system to guide nutritional assessments and identify cases of malnutrition. Implementers also shared that attendance, documentation, and photographs were regularly monitored and recorded. Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) measurements were also used to monitor children's nutritional status. Furthermore, participants revealed that they sought support from barangays and NGOs while encoding children's weight data to assist in identifying malnourished beneficiaries.

Observance of Sanitary and Nutritious Food Preparation Practices

Participants emphasized that hygiene and cleanliness were consistently observed during food preparation and feeding activities. Implementers shared that beneficiaries and parents were oriented regarding proper hygiene and healthy meal preparation. They also ensured that beneficiaries received nutritious meals suitable for their nutritional needs. In addition, participants mentioned that visual nutrition guides such as Pinggang Pinoy and the Food Pyramid were used during meal planning and nutrition orientations.

Establishing an Inclusive Participatory Program Delivery

The findings revealed that parents were encouraged to actively participate in the feeding program, particularly in meal preparation and cooking activities. Participants shared that transportation support was also provided to beneficiaries to ensure attendance and participation in feeding sessions. Meals were likewise prepared together with Barangay Health Workers at the center, promoting collaboration and shared responsibility among implementers and community members.

Challenges of the Implementers in the Implementation of the Barangay-Level Feeding Program

The findings revealed that the implementers encountered several difficulties during the implementation of the Several barriers often hinder the use of community-based health and nutrition programs, especially at the grassroots level. The findings of this study highlight three major themes that describe the challenges encountered by implementers of the barangay-level feeding program: non-cooperation issues among beneficiaries, logistical and resource constraints, and lack of parental response despite implementers' efforts.

Table 3. Challenges of the Implementers in the Implementation of the Barangay-Level Feeding Program

THEMES	DESCRIPTION	CORE IDEAS
Non-cooperation issues among beneficiaries	This theme describes the challenges that emerge when the target participants express little interest, low commitment, or inconsistent participation in program activities, and can prevent the success and effectiveness of service provision.	Despite being given proper attention and intervention, some beneficiaries continue to show limited cooperation and must be personally reached out to.
		The beneficiaries are the ones receiving the food provisions, yet they still cause delays.
		There are times when parents don't cooperate with the given schedule, such as when they fail to show up even though a specific number is expected to attend.
		The real challenge lies in convincing parents that their active participation is essential for their children's well-being.
Logistical and resource constraints	This theme refers to the constraints in transportation, personnel, budgetary support, equipment, and supplies that impede smooth planning, delivery, and sustainability of programs or services.	Implementers go house to house, like when selling 'binignit', to reach beneficiaries, even using the barangay vehicle to deliver food and supplies.
		The implementers had a minimal budget due to the barangay's small size.
		The implementers' first struggle was the lack of transportation for the beneficiaries
Lack of parental response despite implementers' efforts	This theme captures the sense of frustration and emotional letdown experienced by program implementers when the expected support and participation from beneficiaries failed to match their dedication and hard work.	The implementers were disappointed because, despite all the preparations and the letters sent, many parents still failed to attend on the actual day.
		The implementers sent a Cebuano consent form to inform parents that their child is a beneficiary, not as a summons. Yet, many parents still didn't show up.
		The implementers issued memos and involved the barangay captain, but despite their efforts and signed waivers, many parents still didn't participate, which felt discouraging.

Non-Cooperation Issues among Beneficiaries

Participants shared that some beneficiaries and parents showed limited cooperation and inconsistent participation in feeding activities despite repeated follow-ups and interventions from implementers. According to the participants, some parents failed to attend feeding sessions, ignored schedules, and required house-to-house visits before participating in the program. Implementers also observed that some beneficiaries arrived late during feeding schedules despite already receiving food assistance and support. In addition, participants emphasized that one of the major challenges was convincing parents to understand the importance of their participation in supporting their children's health and nutrition.

Logistical and Resource Constraints

The findings also showed that logistical challenges and limited resources affected the smooth implementation of the feeding program. Participants revealed that implementers conducted house-to-house visits and personally delivered food and supplies to beneficiaries, particularly those living in distant areas. Due to transportation difficulties, some feeding sessions were clustered by purok to make the program more accessible to beneficiaries. Implementers also shared that limited budget allocations, especially in smaller barangays, restricted their ability to fully implement planned activities and provide adequate support to all beneficiaries. Moreover, participants identified lack of transportation among beneficiaries as one of the primary barriers affecting regular attendance and participation in feeding sessions.

Lack of Parental Response Despite Implementers' Efforts

Participants expressed disappointment regarding the lack of parental participation despite their extensive preparation and continuous efforts to encourage involvement in the feeding program. Implementers shared that letters, consent forms, memos, and reminders were distributed to parents to inform them about the feeding activities and the nutritional condition of their children. Some implementers also involved barangay officials and required signed waivers to strengthen participation. However, many parents still failed to attend feeding sessions and cooperate with program activities. According to the participants, this lack of parental response became discouraging for implementers, especially because their primary goal was to improve the health and nutritional condition of the children.

Insights and Lessons Learned from the Implementation of the Barangay-Level Feeding Program

The implementers were asked to share their reflections and lessons learned during the barangay-level feeding program. From their responses, four key themes emerged.

Table 4. Insights and Lessons Learned from the Implementation of the Barangay-Level Feeding Program

THEMES	DESCRIPTION	CORE IDEAS
Strengthen Child Well-Being through Responsible Parenting	This theme explains that a child's well-being and development depend heavily on informed, responsible parenting, especially in supporting their nutrition, health, and overall growth.	They regard the successful rehabilitation of those children made possible through parental support and involvement as a significant accomplishment.
		Implementers emphasize that parental responsibility and appropriate childcare is critical in facilitating healthy development and well-being of a child.
		They emphasize that caring attentively for children is essential; neglecting them will ultimately result in serious long-term consequences and suffering.
	This underscores the need	Implementers are urged to seek support from NGOs or sponsors,

Collaborative Partnerships for Resource Mobilization	to develop and engage with local leaders, NGOs, and community groups to secure additional support, resources, and stakeholders to maintain and grow the feeding program.	rather than relying solely on barangay or city budgets.
		The implementers emphasize the need to increase the budget, as it is sometimes insufficient to meet the program's needs.
		The implementers stress the need for a sufficient budget to properly implement the program, as well as full support from the council or NGOs.
Coordinated Planning Engagement for Effective Program Delivery	The main idea is that close cooperation and solid planning by the major stakeholders are essential to ensure a smooth and desired course of action for carrying out the program.	Implementers coordinate with the barangay captain and officers to plan, obtain approvals, and budget for the program before starting.
		The 120-day duration is sufficient with the beneficiaries' commitment and cooperation.
		They coordinate feeding programs by first engaging barangay officials and stakeholders, then actively involving the community.
Empowering Communities for Integrated Livelihoods, and Health Support	This theme describes the importance of empowered communities, with the knowledge, skills, and support they need to improve their health and livelihoods, and to ensure that the learning opportunities accessible are inclusive.	Implementers teach mothers through livelihood programs, including initiatives like Bio-Intensive Gardening (BIG).
		Implementers take the opportunity to educate mothers on the importance of starting prenatal care early.
		They distribute medicines and vitamins, educate mothers on which foods are beneficial and which to avoid, and use the DOH's "Purok para sa Kalusugan" program to bring health services to communities.

Strengthen Child Well-Being through Responsible Parenting

Participants shared that one of the most significant achievements of the feeding program was the rehabilitation and improvement of children's nutritional condition. Implementers observed that parents became more cooperative and involved once they witnessed improvements in their children's health. They also emphasized that the feeding program helped parents better understand proper childcare, nutrition, hygiene, and healthy meal preparation. According to the participants, some parents even applied the knowledge they gained from the program to support the health of their other children at home. Implementers further stressed that attentive parenting and proper childcare are essential in preventing illnesses and promoting healthy child development.

Collaborative Partnerships for Resource Mobilization

The findings also revealed that implementers recognized the importance of seeking support beyond barangay and city budgets. Participants emphasized the need to collaborate with NGOs, Sangguniang Kabataan (SK), Kagawads, and other local sponsors to sustain and strengthen the feeding program. Implementers shared that limited budgets restricted the expansion of planned activities and services. They further highlighted that strong support from barangay councils, NGOs, and other stakeholders contributed to smoother implementation and increased community trust in the program.

Coordinated Planning Engagement for Effective Program Delivery

Participants emphasized that effective implementation of the feeding program requires proper coordination and communication with barangay officials and stakeholders. According to the implementers, program plans and activities were first coordinated with the Barangay Captain and Barangay Nutrition Action Officer (BNAO) to ensure approval and budget allocation. Participants also shared that the 120-day feeding duration was generally

effective when beneficiaries and parents consistently cooperated and participated in program activities. Implementers further noted that stakeholder involvement, beneficiary cooperation, and barangay council commitment contributed significantly to the successful implementation of the feeding program.

Empowering Communities for Integrated Livelihoods and Health Support

The findings revealed that implementers viewed the feeding program not only as a nutrition intervention but also as an opportunity to provide livelihood and health education to families. Participants shared that mothers were taught livelihood programs such as Bio-Intensive Gardening (BIG) to help families grow their own vegetables and improve food self-sufficiency. Implementers also emphasized the importance of educating mothers regarding prenatal care, nutrition, and healthy food choices. In addition, medicines, vitamins, and health education campaigns were provided through community-based initiatives such as the Department of Health's "Purok para sa Kalusugan" program to make health services more accessible to communities.

DISCUSSION

Implementation Practices of the Barangay-Level Feeding Program Systematized Program Management

The findings indicate that the feeding program followed a systematic and organized implementation process through activity planning, menu preparation, budgeting, and regular monitoring of beneficiaries. Implementers ensured that activities were properly scheduled, organized, and monitored to support the effectiveness and continuity of the feeding program. Lifecare Diagnostics (2024) emphasized that a child's health check-up cannot be limited to disease monitoring alone; it should also include evaluation of nutritional needs and growth. In relation to this, the feeding program ensured that every activity was carefully planned and evaluated, with clear schedules, objectives, and allocation of responsibilities. Such practices also helped track supply management and supported periodic monitoring of program implementation.

Consequently, implementers developed weekly feeding activities and systematic cycle menus to guide requests and releases for each feeding session. Menu planning served as an important step in optimizing preparation, budgeting, and resource allocation. Assigning authority to individuals with sufficient knowledge and experience also contributed to more efficient implementation of plans and operations, as emphasized by Ikeda et al. (2023).

The findings further revealed the importance of establishing an annual feeding budget to ensure continuity and sustainability of the program. With fixed yearly allocations, implementers were able to systematically procure resources, develop sustainable meal plans, and maintain consistency in food supply and service delivery. This structured operational and financial planning aligns with the findings of Tagros et al. (2018), who emphasized that well-planned and adequately supported feeding initiatives contribute to improved program efficiency, better nutritional outcomes, and stronger community participation.

Moreover, proper procedures were consistently observed, including regular scheduling of feeding activities, adequate funding allocation, and active parental involvement. Based on the Department of Social Welfare and Development Administrative Order 2020-020, community participation is intended to promote awareness, interest, and parental involvement in program implementation. Parents became active participants in meal preparation and feeding activities rather than remaining passive beneficiaries. Their participation promoted shared responsibility, ownership, and stronger cooperation within the community.

In addition, the Barangay Nutrition Scholar ensured that the feeding program was properly integrated into Barangay Nutrition Committee (BNC) meetings. During these meetings, planning, monitoring, reporting, and implementation concerns were discussed and aligned with the Barangay Nutrition Action Plan. According to Barangay Ubaliw (2023), BNC meetings serve as an important mechanism for ensuring proper coordination and implementation of barangay nutrition programs.

Utilization of Technology for Data Management

The findings revealed that technology played an important role in improving the monitoring and management of nutrition-related data in the feeding program. Implementers utilized the Electronic Operation Timbang Plus (e-OPT+) system to standardize nutritional assessments and identify malnutrition cases among children. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2025), OPT Plus serves as a barangay-level information system that helps identify underweight, wasted, stunted, and obese children while supporting nutrition monitoring at the community level.

The use of Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC), attendance tracking, documentation, and photo recording also strengthened the monitoring process of beneficiaries. These practices allowed implementers to consistently monitor the nutritional status and participation of children in the feeding program. Lambebo et al. (2022) emphasized that MUAC is especially useful in far-flung and emergency settings because it is simple to use and effective in identifying acute malnutrition among children.

The findings further indicate that implementers combined technology use with coordination efforts by seeking support from barangays and NGOs while encoding nutritional data to identify malnutrition cases. These efforts strengthened the effectiveness of the feeding program by improving monitoring and facilitating early identification of nutritional concerns among beneficiaries. Chavez (2023) highlighted that partnerships between local government units and NGOs strengthen the implementation of nutrition programs by ensuring that children receive appropriate nutrition and healthcare support during early childhood development.

Observance of Sanitary and Nutritious Food Preparation Practices

The findings indicate that implementers consistently observed proper hygiene and sanitation practices during food preparation and feeding activities. Participants emphasized handwashing, maintaining clean food preparation areas, and consulting city-level dietitians to ensure that meals provided to beneficiaries were nutritious and appropriate. These practices demonstrated the program's commitment to maintaining food safety and protecting the health of child beneficiaries.

Insfran-Rivarola et al. (2020) explained that food hygiene involves maintaining proper conditions and practices to ensure food safety throughout preparation and distribution processes. Similarly, Kamboj et al. (2020) emphasized that proper food handling minimizes risks of contamination and protects consumers from foodborne illnesses. These findings support the importance of maintaining cleanliness and safety throughout feeding activities.

The findings also revealed that implementers oriented parents and beneficiaries regarding proper hygiene and healthy meal preparation practices. Through orientations and nutrition education activities, beneficiaries and parents were guided on the importance of healthy food preparation and proper hygiene practices within the household. According to the World Health Organization (2024), access to safe and nutritious food is essential to maintaining good health and improving food systems within communities.

Participants further shared that Pinggang Pinoy and the Food Guide Pyramid were used as nutritional guides during meal planning and orientations. These visual guides helped parents better understand balanced meal portions and proper nutrition practices. Glorioso et al. (2022) emphasized that Pinggang Pinoy provides practical recommendations regarding balanced meal portions and supports healthier nutritional practices among Filipino families.

Establishing an Inclusive Participatory Program Delivery

The findings revealed that active participation and collaboration among parents, implementers, and Barangay Health Workers were important components of the feeding program implementation. Parents were encouraged to participate in meal preparation and feeding activities, while implementers provided guidance and assistance throughout the process. This participatory approach strengthened cooperation and shared responsibility among stakeholders involved in the program.

Olfert et al. (2019) found that involving parents and children in meal preparation promotes healthier dietary habits and strengthens family engagement in nutrition-related activities. Similarly, Solania and Cubillas (2021) emphasized that active parental involvement and stakeholder cooperation contribute significantly to the successful implementation of feeding programs.

The findings also showed that transportation assistance was provided to beneficiaries to improve attendance and accessibility to feeding sessions. Implementers responded to transportation barriers by fetching beneficiaries and assisting them in attending feeding activities. Starbird et al. (2018) explained that transportation support strategies significantly improve participation and accessibility in community-based programs and healthcare services.

Furthermore, implementers and Barangay Health Workers collaboratively prepared meals at the barangay center, promoting teamwork and shared responsibility within the community. These adaptive and community-based practices align with the framework developed by Colanag et al. (2025), which identified responsiveness, accessibility, and efficiency as important dimensions of effective barangay-level healthcare service delivery.

Challenges of the Implementers in the Implementation of the Barangay-Level Feeding Program Non-Cooperation Issues among Beneficiaries

The findings indicate that some mothers refused to cooperate or participate in activities despite the support and interventions provided by implementers. This situation resulted in delays during feeding sessions, low attendance, and disruptions in the overall flow of program activities. Some parents appeared preoccupied with personal concerns or lacked awareness regarding the importance of the feeding program.

Program implementers also reported that some beneficiaries often arrived late or failed to follow schedules despite already receiving food assistance and support. This created challenges in maintaining organized feeding activities and affected the smooth implementation of services. Other beneficiaries appeared less serious about participating because they believed assistance would still be provided regardless of attendance or punctuality.

Implementers further emphasized that many parents remained reluctant to participate even after reminders and outreach activities. A key challenge was helping parents understand that their involvement directly contributes to their children's health improvement. Flores (2023) explained that attendance improves when parents become more actively involved in feeding programs, as parental participation encourages children to consistently attend and consume the meals provided.

Research has also shown that parental support is associated with better nutrition knowledge and healthier eating habits among children. Angeles-Agdeppa et al. (2019) emphasized that when parents actively participate in feeding programs, they acquire valuable nutrition knowledge that helps them guide healthy eating practices at home and support long-term child health outcomes.

Overall, cooperation and consistent attendance remained recurring concerns among implementers, particularly among some parents who were unresponsive or delayed in participating despite continuous follow-up and support efforts.

Logistical and Resource Constraints

The findings showed that logistical challenges and limited resources created significant difficulties for implementers during the feeding program implementation. Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNSs) and local health personnel were not only responsible for preparing and distributing meals but also for reaching beneficiaries living in remote or hard-to-access areas. House-to-house visits became one of the primary strategies used to ensure that beneficiaries continuously received food assistance and monitoring services.

Participants revealed that transportation barriers were among the most common reasons why beneficiaries failed to attend feeding sessions. To address this challenge, implementers shifted from centralized feeding

sessions to cluster-based sessions within puroks, allowing services to become more accessible to distant beneficiaries. This adaptive strategy demonstrated the importance of considering economic and logistical limitations in planning community-based nutrition programs.

The findings also highlighted that limited funding in smaller barangays restricted the implementation of planned activities. According to Mohan et al. (2023), insufficient funding affects the availability of materials, supplies, and operational support necessary for successful nutrition programs. Budget shortages may therefore reduce program coverage and limit access to intended beneficiaries.

Another major challenge identified was the lack of transportation among beneficiaries. Implementers attempted to address this issue by fetching beneficiaries, delivering food house-to-house, and coordinating transportation assistance through Barangay Nutrition Scholars. However, these efforts remained limited by time, manpower, and available resources.

Overall, the findings suggest that stronger logistical and financial support, including additional transportation resources, personnel, and budget allocation, are necessary to ensure consistent participation and successful program implementation. This supports the findings of Jimenez (2024), which emphasized the crucial role of Barangay Nutrition Scholars in sustaining nutrition programs through household visits, nutrition education, and early intervention strategies.

Lack of Parental Response Despite Implementers' Efforts

The findings revealed that implementers experienced frustration and disappointment because many parents failed to participate despite repeated reminders, preparation, and coordination efforts. Letters, consent forms, memos, and announcements were distributed to parents to encourage participation and inform them about their children's nutritional condition. However, many parents still failed to attend feeding activities.

Sadag (2025) explained that collaborative community-based programs often weaken when parents are unable to fulfill participation commitments due to conflicting responsibilities and priorities. Poor attendance and lack of parental involvement often resulted in wasted preparation, disrupted schedules, and reduced program efficiency.

Implementers also attempted to improve communication by using Cebuano consent forms to ensure parents clearly understood the purpose of the feeding program. Despite these efforts, many parents still failed to respond or cooperate. According to Gholipour et al. (2023), low awareness and illiteracy can prevent beneficiaries from fully understanding program requirements and participating actively in community health initiatives.

The findings further showed that implementers involved barangay officials, issued memos, and collected signed waivers to strengthen parental participation. However, these efforts still resulted in limited community involvement. Ouedraogo et al. (2020) emphasized that active beneficiary participation is essential for the short- and long-term success of community programs. Without genuine cooperation, even well-prepared initiatives may struggle to achieve their intended outcomes.

In conclusion, despite limited resources, logistical barriers, and participation challenges, Barangay Nutrition Scholars remained committed to sustaining the feeding program through adaptive and community-based strategies. This finding aligns with Lagura and Ligan (2018), who highlighted the critical role of frontline implementers in sustaining public service delivery despite structural challenges at the community level.

Insights and Lessons Learned from the Implementation of the Barangay-Level Feeding Program Strengthen Child Well-Being through Responsible Parenting

The findings suggest that child rehabilitation and nutritional improvement encouraged greater parental involvement and responsibility in the feeding program. Implementers observed that parents became more active and cooperative once they witnessed improvements in their children's condition. Flores (2023)

emphasized that parental participation in feeding programs strengthens accountability and contributes to better nutritional outcomes among children.

Barangay Nutrition Scholars also highlighted that the feeding program extended beyond meal provision because it also educated parents regarding healthy meal preparation, hygiene, and proper childcare practices. Some parents reportedly applied the knowledge gained from the program to support the nutrition and health of their other children at home. This observation aligns with Ansuya et al. (2023), who found that maternal empowerment through nutrition education contributes significantly to improved nutritional outcomes among underweight preschool children.

The findings further emphasized that attentive parenting and proper childcare are essential in preventing illnesses and supporting children's long-term well-being. According to the World Health Organization (2021), active parental involvement remains a key factor in improving child health and development outcomes.

Collaborative Partnerships for Resource Mobilization

The findings indicate that implementers recognized the importance of developing collaborative partnerships to sustain and strengthen the feeding program. Participants emphasized that relying solely on barangay or city funding may not be sufficient to support long-term program implementation. As a result, implementers sought support from NGOs, local officials, SK officials, and community sponsors.

Van et al. (2022) explained that multisectoral and community-led approaches improve program sustainability, strengthen community ownership, and support continuous implementation of nutrition interventions. Similarly, Mainje et al. (2024) emphasized that long-term community programs require stable funding and strong stakeholder engagement to sustain their benefits.

The findings also highlighted that active support from barangay councils and community stakeholders contributed to smoother program implementation, increased community trust, and strengthened program sustainability.

Coordinated Planning Engagement for Effective Program Delivery

The findings revealed that successful implementation of the feeding program depended heavily on coordination with barangay officials and stakeholders. Participants emphasized that program plans were first coordinated with the Barangay Captain and Barangay Nutrition Action Officer (BNAO) to ensure approval, alignment with local priorities, and budget allocation.

This finding supports Silvestre et al. (2023), who explained that the success of local nutrition programs depends on the active involvement of barangay leaders and local nutrition officers in sustaining budget support and ensuring consistent program implementation.

Implementers also observed that the 120-day feeding duration was effective when beneficiaries and parents consistently participated in the program. Viajar et al. (2020) noted that continuous caregiver participation and regular monitoring are essential in sustaining improvements in children's nutritional conditions.

The findings further showed that stakeholder support, beneficiary cooperation, and barangay council commitment contributed significantly to the successful implementation and sustainability of the feeding program.

Empowering Communities for Integrated Livelihoods and Health Support

The findings suggest that the feeding program served not only as a nutrition intervention but also as a platform for community empowerment and health education. Implementers introduced livelihood activities such as Bio-Intensive Gardening (BIG) to help families improve food self-sufficiency and nutritional practices at home.

Baliki et al. (2022) found that home-garden interventions positively contribute to vegetable production, nutrition knowledge, and women's empowerment. This supports the implementers' efforts to equip families with practical livelihood and nutrition skills.

The findings also highlighted the importance of educating mothers regarding prenatal care, nutrition, and healthy food practices. Permatasari et al. (2021) emphasized that maternal health and nutrition education improve healthy behaviors and contribute to better child health outcomes.

In addition, implementers distributed medicines and vitamins and conducted health information campaigns through the Department of Health's "Purok para sa Kalusugan" program. These community-based efforts helped make health services more accessible and inclusive for families within the barangays.

CONCLUSION

The descriptive research study on the implementation of the Barangay-Level Feeding Program in Tagum City highlighted several well-planned and well-organized community-based initiatives to address and mitigate child malnutrition. The information collected from Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNS) helped identify the major practices that make the program successful. These practices include systematized program management, utilization of technology for data management, observance of sanitary and nutritious food preparation practices, and establishing an inclusive participatory program delivery. Alongside these practices, the involvement of parents in the preparation of food constitutes a critical part of the implementation process. Such practices indicate an organized, cooperative approach that integrates program design, community involvement, and health education to achieve the program's objectives.

Nevertheless, even with these best practices in place, implementers have noted various challenges that affect the program's overall implementation. These challenges include non-cooperation issues among some beneficiaries, logistical and resource constraints, and the lack of parental response despite implementers' efforts. These circumstances make it challenging to achieve the program's full potential and pose risks to both the consistency of feeding schedules and the quality of meals served.

Upon conducting the study, the researchers concluded that barangay-level feeding programs can be challenging to implement without the full support and commitment of the people behind the program, including implementers, the community, barangay officials, local stakeholders, NGOs, and, especially, the beneficiaries and their parents. The researchers identified four key themes based on insights and lessons gained by implementers during the barangay-level feeding program. Implementers emphasized that strengthening a child's well-being is primarily in the hands of parents through responsible parenting, which is essential to their overall growth. The BNSs also emphasized the practical relevance of collaborative partnerships for resource mobilization, coordinated planning, and engagement in effective program delivery, as well as empowering communities for integrated livelihoods and health support. It became evident that the effective implementation of the feeding program depends not only on resource availability but also on the collective efforts of the stakeholders involved in the program.

To summarize, the 120-day feeding cycle has yielded positive results but still requires further improvement. The supplemental feeding program in Tagum City already employs systematic practices, including regular monitoring, e-OPT+ use, nutritional education, and community involvement. However, gaps remain in sustainability and support. Addressing these requires consistent and sufficient funding, improved logistics, enhanced technical assistance, and capacity-building for Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNS), as well as intensifying parents' commitment to nutritional support for their children. Strengthening these areas, in conjunction with public health strategies and local policies, can enhance the program's long-term impact on child nutrition in Tagum City and beyond, fostering a healthy and productive generation of future leaders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations are proposed to strengthen the implementation and sustainability of the Barangay-Level Feeding Program.

At the national level, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the Department of Health (DOH) may review and improve existing Supplemental Feeding Program (SFP) policies to simplify reporting systems and data management processes for Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNSs) and Local Government Units (LGUs). Regular impact evaluations integrating both qualitative and quantitative assessments may also be conducted to determine program effectiveness and identify implementation concerns that may guide future policy development and program improvements.

At the local level, Local Government Units (LGUs) and City or Municipal Health Offices (C/MHO) are encouraged to strengthen logistical and operational support for feeding programs. Providing transportation assistance or incentives for Barangay Nutrition Scholars may help improve the timely delivery of food supplies and monitoring activities, particularly in geographically isolated areas. Additional practical training on growth monitoring tools such as e-Operation Timbang Plus (e-OPT+) and Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC), as well as food safety practices, may also help improve the competencies of implementers. Furthermore, LGUs may allocate a dedicated Supplemental Feeding Program Sustainability Fund in their annual budgets to support long-term implementation and reduce dependency on external support.

At the barangay level, Barangay Councils and Barangay Nutrition Scholars are encouraged to strengthen regular monitoring and parental involvement in feeding activities. Institutionalizing the use of e-Operation Timbang Plus (e-OPT+) may help improve the monitoring of children's nutritional conditions and support early intervention for malnutrition cases. Community-based nutrition and food hygiene seminars may also be conducted to strengthen parental participation and encourage the continuous practice of healthy nutrition behaviors at home.

Child Development Centers (CDCs), in coordination with the City Health Office (CHO), may integrate simple nutrition education activities into their daily routines. Lessons related to Go, Grow, and Glow foods, proper hygiene, and handwashing practices may help children develop healthy nutrition habits at an early age. In addition, CDCs and LGUs may collaborate in developing standardized nutrition education modules that can be implemented across different centers to strengthen nutrition awareness among children and families.

Future researchers are encouraged to conduct quantitative or mixed-method studies to further examine the long-term effects of feeding programs on children's nutritional status, school participation, and cognitive development. Longitudinal studies may also help determine whether the positive effects of feeding interventions are sustained over time. Additionally, future studies may explore parental involvement and household practices related to child nutrition, considering the important role of parents in sustaining children's participation and nutritional improvement.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained prior to the conduct of the study. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was secured from all participants before data collection. Participants were provided with clear information regarding the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks and benefits. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study. The researchers also ensured respect for participants' welfare and cultural sensitivities during the conduct of the study. Data were collected, analyzed, and reported with integrity to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the findings.

Conflict Of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest related to this study.

Data Availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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