



Policy Evaluation of School Meal Programmes in South Africa: A Longitudinal Impact Study

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Abstract

School meal programmes in South Africa aim to address food insecurity among underprivileged children. These programmes provide nutritious meals during school hours, supporting both academic performance and health outcomes. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining quantitative survey data with qualitative interviews of stakeholders such as teachers, parents, and students. Data collection occurred across two academic years (- and -). There is a significant improvement in student height-for-age z-scores by 15% over the study period, indicating better nutritional intake from school meals. The longitudinal impact of school meal programmes on underprivileged children's health and education has been evident, with notable improvements observed in dietary habits and academic performance. Further research should explore scalability and cost-effectiveness of these programmes to ensure sustainability. Policy recommendations include extending programme duration and expanding coverage to underserved regions. school meal programmes, underprivileged children, nutritional status, educational attainment, longitudinal impact

Keywords: *African, Geography, Evaluation, Feeding Programmes, Monitoring, Nutrition, Policy Analysis*

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