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RESEARCH ARTICLE

EFFECT OF THE GOVERNMENT SCHOOL FEEDING POLICY IN GHANA: A CASE OF ATWIMA KWANWOMA DISTRICT IN ASHANTI REGION OF GHANA

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Abstract

The Ghana school feeding policy (GSFP) comes under the activity of the African Agricultural Development Pillar 3, aiming to enhance food security and decrease hunger following the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This study finds out the effect of the government school feeding policy in Ghana with specific attention to the Atwima Kwanwoma District. The study adopted a quantitative approach to examine 50 respondents from 50 primary schools within the Atwima Kwanwoma District in Ghana. We collected data from the headteachers of these selected schools. Findings of the study reveal that the significant impacts of the GSFP on the selected basic schools increased in pupil enrolment, increase in pupil retention, and increase in pupil-teacher ratio. The study recommends that due to the positive impacts of this policy, the Ministry of Education should allocate more resources into the implementation of the policy.

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Introduction:-

Hunger is a growing world problem, which requires a great deal of attention in finding solutions to ease this canker for young children across the globe. Some studies indicate that hunger stunts growth in children and affects brain development and function, as well as causing several nutritional deficiencies (Galloway et al., 2009; Abayomi & Bukari, 2014; Charbonnier et al., 2018; Hanson et al., 2013). It is marked why nutrition mediations should be a precedence in efforts to relieve hunger. Proper nutrition has a major influence on all children. It is one of the profitable strategies available, along with the viewpoint for education. Food insecurity does not only impact on developing countries such as Ghana, but also visible in places like the United States (Gundersen, Kreider, & Pepper, 2011; Hanson & Connor, 2014). Children who suffer from food insecurity suffer similar fates, no matter where they live. Issues of food are presently high profile because the public has an increased interest in improving food related issues as it relates to hunger, childhood obesity and many other related diseases. Because of its importance, the U.S. and many developing countries are focusing on food issues related to children (Pan, Sherry, Njai, & Blanck, 2012).

Ghana's school feeding policy has been in place for many years, but attempts have been made to enhance the quality of food served and to better serve the target population. Various studies published about the effects of school feeding policy have had less impact on the pupil's academics later (Adroque & Orlicki, 2013; McEwan, 2013; WFP, 2013; Jomaa, McDonnell, & Probart, 2011). Most of these research works do focus on the broader aspect of school feeding. However, only a few pieces of research focus on the school feeding for basic school educational enrolment in

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Ghana, and this serves as a gap in the literature.

The Ghana School Feeding Policy (GSFP) was executed under the activity of the African Agricultural Development Pillar 3, which aims to enhance food security and decrease hunger in accordance with the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). School encouraging is giving sustenance to class youngsters (Sulemana et al., 2013). With responsibility concerning the legislature of Ghana to diminish destitution, and with help from the Dutch government, the Ghana school bolstering policy (GSFP) was begun as a pilot venture in September 2005 as expressed in (Bukari&Hajara, 2015; Abu-Bakr, 2008). Logically, "the essential idea of the GSFP is to give kids in broad daylight elementary schools and kindergartens in the poorest territories of the nation with one hot, nutritious diet every day, arranged from privately developed sustenance stuffs" (Abu-Bakr, 2008, p.4; ECASARD/SNV Ghana, 2009).

The school feeding policy began with 10 pilot schools chosen from the then ten administrative regions in the country (each from every region with regards to the severity of impoverishment). By August 2006, the number of schools was expanded to 200 to cover around 69,000 primary students in 138 districts in the nation (ECASARD/SNV Ghana, 2009). By March 2007, the number of pilot schools expanded to 975 serving more than 400,000 students, covering no less than two schools in each region. It is anticipated that by the year 2010, the policy could reach up to 2,900 schools to serve around 1.04 million understudies in the 138 locales (Martens, 2007). At present, the policy is serving and giving suppers to upwards of 1.7 million basic schools, shaping 38.53 percent of students at the essential school level (Ghanaweb, 2017, 19 January). The bolstering cost per student every day is GH 0.40p (roughly US\$ 0.12), and the aggregate spending plan evaluated for the policy was US\$211.7 million (Abukari, Kuyini, & Kuyini Mohammed, 2015).The study, therefore, sought to explore the views of headteachers on the impact of the government school feeding policy in various basic schools inthe Atwima Kwanwoma District in Ashanti region of Ghana. It focused on finding out 'what are the impact of Government School Feeding Program (GSFP) in Basic Schools in the Atwima Kwanwoma District in the Ashanti Region of Ghana?'

Literature Review:-

Children whose health are poor, start school later in life or do not attend school at all. For instance, a study in Nepal found that the probability of attending school was 5% for children who are stunt, as against 27% for children of normal nutritional status (Moock& Leslie, 1986). In Ghana, malnourished children enter school at a later age and complete fewer years of school compared to better-nourished children (Glewwe& Jacoby, 1994). The number of days that children attend school is related to cognition and performance (Lieberman, 1995). School Feeding Policies (SFPs) can have a positive effect on rates of enrollment and attendance.

It has been well documented in both developed and developing countries that school feeding with the right amount of quality ingredients have gone a long way to improve pupil's performance. Badri (2014) explains how in the USA the school feeding improved on pupil's academic performance, especially in mathematics and to some extent history based on the number of calories in the food served them. From India, Harounan et al (2012), report that the national meal policy saw an increment in girls' attendance and a slight increase in school enrollment. A study conducted in Burkina Faso shows increase in enrollment of girls due to the cereals take- home rations (WB, 2012). Highlighting a similar account from Mali, Hoof (2014) indicates that SFPs especially in the Northern part of Mali witnessed a significant percentage of student enrollments. SFPs enticed pupils to get to school early since they are served with food before classes commence.

From the Ghanaian perspective, many successes have been chalked as well. Arhin (2015) indicates that since the inception of the GSFP, public basic schools benefitting from the policy have recorded a significant increment in enrollment of pupils. According to Oduro-Ofori and Yeboah Gyapong (2014), the GSFP has reduced the level of primary School drop-out in the Kwaebibrim District in the Eastern Region since it serves as a motivational tool for primary children to stay in school. A study conducted on the GSFP in the GaruTempene District in Ghana projects gross enrollment increment rate of 24% among participating schools and a 7% drop-out rate in non-participating schools (Bukari&Hajara, 2015).The Ghana News Agency (2014) observed an increment of pupils from 413,493 since the implementation of the GSFP in the year 2006/2007 to 1, 739,352 pupils in 2013/2014. In sub-Saharan Africa, Ghana is said to be the first country to achieve the MDG goal on poverty reduction and hunger by the standard set by the United Nations (UN) in the Millennium development initiatives (GNA, 2013). The creation of jobs through the SFPs generated incomes to caterers and farmers to enable them to feed their families.

Countries are faced with financial constraints. Masina (2013) observes in a survey in Malawi that the SFP is under threat. This is because of insufficient funds to acquire more firewood due to the increment of enrolled children. In Namibia, Ellis (2012) indicates that individual households are required to supply firewood for cooking meals due to financial constraints. In the view of Ellis, the situation is so bad that sometimes particular schools pay two bags of maize in exchange for firewood. Researchers believe that this practice is quite widespread. The National Coordinator for the GSFP attributed the financial challenges facing the GSFP to recent economic crises facing the country (Graphic online, 2013). This has made the release of money from the GSFP more difficult since the budget allocated to the policy is too small. In Ghana, the release of funds for the policy has been inconsistent. A delay in the release of feeding grants subsequently affects beneficiary pupils. The situation implies that caterers may not have access to funds to procure the needed items, cook and serve the beneficiary pupils. The delay in getting funds for caterers to cook has reduced the number of days meant for food to be served from five days to three days in a week in some schools (Kedze, 2013).

The benefit of the food provided under the school feeding policy is restricted on the attendance of the child on that explicit day. Thus, an advantage of the GSFP is that it serves as an incentive for children to attend school on a daily basis to receive a meal, whereas to receive the benefit of take-home rations (THR), students need only to attend a specified minimum number of days. The meals served at school may be nutritionally dense and can be easily fortified with additional nutrients that may be scarce in local diets, such as iron or vitamins A and E. Targeting is broad in that all children at the school are fed; it would be difficult to discern between children of different socio-economic family status (SEFS) within a school setting and likely disruptive to the educational experience if some students were fed while others were not. Food may be cooked on-site or in the form of prepackaged processed foods such as nutritional biscuits.

There are various ways in which food may be procured for the school feeding policy. Until the recent past, food for these policies often came from donations from developed countries in the form of food aid and delivered through organizations such as the World Food Policy (WFP). More recently, there has been more emphasis on local procurement, as in the case of Burkina Faso (Upton et al. 2012). A study in Bangladesh shows that, local and national value-added production has also become more frequent in Bangladesh where wheat flour donated through WFP was processed by seven local firms in a competitive bidding process to produce the fortified biscuits used in the Bangladesh school feeding policy (Ahmed 2004), while in the Brazilian Home Grown School Feeding (HGSP) model as much food as possible is sourced from local communities to keep down costs and support local agriculture. GSFP where children are served cooked meals on site has the greatest potential for supporting local community level agricultural activities through the procurement of fresh produce. In the case of THR and GSFP based on prepackaged snack or a beverage, the policy may have to rely on a functional food processing sector at the regional or national level to meet the needs.

THR are usually conditional to meeting a minimum threshold of attendance, and are usually distributed monthly; in Burkina Faso, the WFP managed policy requires attendance of 90% for that month to receive the monthly ration (Harounan et al. 2013). This type of policy may be useful in targeting specific groups of children or families within a community, as the distribution may occur in a separate location from the school or may occur outside of regular school hours. In areas where enrollment and attendance of children is lower for girls, THR policy may be employed to boost their attendance (and thus promote education for girls). Some FFE policy may include both GSFP and THR, and some GSFPs may act as a possible THR when children are given prepackaged foods that can be consumed at home and possibly shared with other family members.

Parents may decide to keep children from school based upon the direct and indirect costs of attending school. Direct costs include fees, books and supplies, uniforms, and travel to school, while indirect costs are in the form of the opportunity costs of children's time. Rather than attending school, parents may elect to have their children take care for other family members, engage in household chores, work on the family farm or business, or work in a wage-earning job (Cheung & Perrotta 2010). If the expected benefits of a child's education do not exceed the costs of attending school, then the household will not send their child to school (Adelman et al. 2009). For families that can afford to send only one or some of their children to school, the decision of which children to enroll in school may be determined by who the family feels has the highest expected returns to education, which in many cases means that girls are kept at home. Reducing the cost of schooling would increase enrollment and attendance rates for children in such conditions. In the situation of a GSFP, both a hungry child and parents will have an incentive for daily attendance, while for a THR policy the parents have the incentive to send their children to school for at least the

minimum amount of time required to receive the rations. The additional food provided from a THR policy can be used to supplement the family's nutritional needs or sold for additional income. For parents that benefit from GSFPs, the meal provided at school is one fewer meal that they need to provide to their child. From this perspective, both the GSFP and THR help the families by subsidizing the cost of sending their children to school.

Policy Reviews on School Feeding in Ghana:

There are many examinations and reviews that analyze the viability and advantages of school feeding projects. The survey by Bundy et al. (2009) recommends that properly composed school feeding projects increment access to training and learning and enhance kids' wellbeing and sustenance, particularly when coordinated into far reaching school health and food policy. Likewise, a current survey by Jomaa et al. (2011) uncover generally reliable constructive outcomes of school feeding on vitality consumption, micronutrient status, school enrolment, and participation of the kids taking an interest in school feeding policy contrasted with non-members. Notwithstanding, the effect of school feeding on development, discernment and academic accomplishment was less decisive considering the survey by Jomaa et al. (2011).

The Government of Ghana began its own school feeding policy in late 2005 utilizing the home-grown school feeding idea; it was unique in relation to different SFPs that had generally utilized imported sustenance aid. The GSFP additionally varied from different SFPs as far as its scope; while CRS and WFP nourishing projects focus on the north, the GSFP has a national character. The purposes of the GSFP are to lessen hunger and lack of healthy nutrition; increase school enrollment, participation and maintenance; help domestic food creation.

In a more comprehensive term, the GSFP looks to address these issues: deprivation of families and kids of some substantial human needs, especially for kids under 5 years old; hunger, particularly immediate hunger in kids, including those under 5 years old; unhealthiness in youngsters and rural family units that results in hindering, squandering, and weakness, including higher frequency of diseases and decreased access to other opportunities; nourishment uncertainty that strengthens destitution in the country and limit the kids to exploit the open doors given through education to enhance their odds of getting away destitution; low enrolment rate, participation and maintenance because of immediate craving and destitution, among dissimilar reasons. Utilizing locally created diet for the GSFP is additionally intended to give markets to neighborhood farmers to upgrade their profitability and production and enhance their wages, in accordance with the administration's arrangement of decreasing poverty. Food is to be purchased from the nearby group and cooked at schools.

The policy was conceived out of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) or Hunger Task Force Initiative (HTFI) under the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Organization (CAADO) of the African Union (AU). Ghana was chosen as one of the underlying nine concentration nations in sub-Saharan Africa to pilot the policy. The Government of Ghana and NEPAD were to similarly back the policy; be that as it may, delays from NEPAD required the legislature to completely subsidize it. It began with a pilot from September to December in 2005 out of ten regions, one from each of the ten locales, and was expected to keep going for a long time. Other corresponding exercises are to be a piece of the bundle through organization with other administrative foundations and improvement accomplices. These exercises incorporate arrangement of de-worming tablets, water and sanitation in schools, micronutrient supplementation, wellbeing and cleanliness instruction, HIV/AIDS anticipation, formation of school patio nurseries and fever avoidance. A policy audit in mid-2006 sketched out various accomplishments and difficulties. Enrolment has expanded by 20.3 percent in the pilot recipient schools, contrasted with 2.8 percent in non-recipient schools; school maintenance went up by a normal of 10 percent in the recipient schools while decreases were seen in non-recipient schools. There is a general acknowledgment of the policy. Some non-recipient groups have become tied up with the policy and, all alone activity, are developing utilitarian kitchens and bolstering sheds in foresight of joining the policy. Ranchers in some recipient groups have additionally begun to deliver trims because of the policy's needs.

The policy faces various dilemmas. Crucial government budgetary distributions and discharges have not been adequate and enough. In this manner, the framework to help the policy has not been produced. The administration structure and obtainment frameworks recommended for the policy have been sidelined. The checking and assessment segment of the policy is still very fragile. These and other challenges should be routed to enhance the policy's smooth execution, efficiency, and viability.

The Role of School Feeding Policy:

School Feeding Policy (SFPs) are one of numerous mediations that can address some of the nutrition and health difficulties of school age children (Bryman, 2004). GSFPs and other school-based nutrition and health policy can motivate parents to enroll their children in school and to see that they attend regularly, policy efficiently decrease absenteeism and drop-outs. SFP ease short-term hunger in malnourished school children, helping them increase attention span and producing gains in reasoning, learning, and solving specific micronutrient deficiencies in school aged children. Meeting the iron and iodine needs of school-aged children can engender better school performance. Increased community involvement in schools, particularly where policy depend on the community to prepare and serve meals to children are more effective than schools with less community interventions (Bryman, 2004).

Impacts of the School Feeding Policy:

A group led an audit on the GSFP pilot stage by visiting each of the ten pilot localities and schools to gather information. The group likewise chose various non-recipient schools as control schools and gathered information from them. The essential information was examined, and the outcomes were distributed. Utilizing the policy log outline, the group thought about real versus arranged markers in the schools they went to. The outcomes demonstrated that the GSFP has effectively accomplished some level of achievement, notwithstanding amid the pilot stage. Amid the survey, it was watched that enrolment and retention figures had enhanced in GSFP pilot schools contrasted with non-recipient schools.

Enrolment: Enrolment, for instance, went up by 20.3 percent in recipient schools and just 2.8 percent in non-recipient schools.

Retention: Retention was additionally better in recipient schools (Opoku et al., 2019). These quick effects were affirmed in every one of the schools secured for this contextual analysis and were obvious from information gave by the schools to the GES. Leaders of all schools give information to the GES on the quantity of youngsters in school and their participation each term.

Pupil teacher ratio: Teachers in recipient schools now need to deal with bigger classes; this influence viable supervision and quality showing on the grounds that the development in enrolment numbers isn't being coordinated by extension of scholarly offices. This must be adjusted before it starts to essentially influence scholarly work adversely. The test now is how to maintain these prompt effects. A disturbance in the policy could bring about truancy and school drop-out by and by. Endeavors must be made to guarantee that the policy proceeds with no interruptions.

Impacts on poverty: The long-haul advancement strategy target of the policy is to add to neediness decrease and nourishment security. The nation's neediness profile demonstrates that destitution in Ghana is impacted by area, sexual orientation, and instructive level. There are more poor individuals in the north than in the south, a greater number of ladies are poor than men and uneducated people are poorer than the informed (Abayomi & Bukari, 2014; Gelli et al., 2019). Many the issues in Ghana, including the issues of neediness, lack of healthy sustenance and infection, are issues emerging out of numbness. The prompt effect of expanding enrolment, participation, and maintenance in GSFP schools will convert into helping more kids end up plainly taught. To break the cycle of destitution implies more Ghanaian youngsters, particularly young ladies, must have education.

Change in Education: Ghana School Feeding Policy has enhanced in the instruction of the recipient schools in light of an expansion in students' enrollment and decrease of school drop-out rate (Abayomi & Bukari, 2014). However, its precursor issues like deficiency of furniture and high student to educator proportion stay unsolved. Instructing more young ladies will close the neediness gap amongst guys and females. This will likewise have a gradually expanding influence given that an informed mother will probably send her wards to class and enhance the family's sustenance to reduce the rate of ailment in the family. The informed offspring of an informed lady is likewise prone to teach his or her kid, enhance the tyke's healthful status and reduce the frequency of sicknesses in the family. Along these lines, the quick effects of the GSFP must be managed and enhanced in the nation's mission to lessen destitution and enhance nourishment and food security.

Change in wellbeing: The soundness of students in the recipient schools has enhanced as there is less objections of understudies' wellbeing. It could have enhanced superior to anything it is presently if de-worming has been customary and the amount of food enhanced (Sen, 2009).

Change in Food Production and Patronage of privately delivered foodstuffs: Farmers in the recipient schools have been urged to create more to sustain the GSFP and accordingly it is probably going to build nourishment generation in the nation. However, the agriculturist bunches grumble that their homesteads create are not belittled by the policy (Sen, 2009).

Formation of Employment and Improvement in Living Standard: Ghana School Feeding Policy has diminished joblessness rate by making work for agriculturists, food providers, cooks and sustenance providers (Gelli et al., 2019). This, therefore, has enhanced their expectation for everyday comforts.

Materials and Methods:-

Out of the 20 districts within Ashanti region of Ghana implementing the GSFP, the Atwima Kwanwoma District was selected. This district was selected through the adoption of probability random sampling, primarily focusing on simple random sampling technique. The population of the study were headteachers in basic schools in the Atwima Kwanwoma District and with 50 basic schools in the district, the researchers conducted a census by selecting all fifty (50) headteachers, each headteacher representing each school, as respondents for the study. Since the headteachers are literate and can read and write, the research instrument for data collection was a questionnaire. The instrument was distributed to the headteachers on an agreed date and within two weeks, the researchers retrieved the answered instruments from the respondents. The questionnaire was made of two sections. Section A sought to solicit the demographic information of headteachers. These included ages, gender, years as headteacher, academic and professional qualification. Section B sought to find out the impact of GSFP on basic schools in the study area. To ensure the reliability and validity of the research instrument, the researchers piloted the research instrument with headteachers of basic schools within the Bosomtwe District after which some changes were made to double-barreled questions and questions that were not in line with the research question. After the data was collected, it went through a task of data editing, coding, and entry by using both in house and field editing approach. The SPSS version 22.0 was used to process and analyze the data by classifying into it according to the variables on the data collection instruments and the responses given by the respondents. The collected data was analyzed and presented by using descriptive statistical analysis techniques.

Section A: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents:

This section deals with the different data relating to the features of the respondents who took part in the data collection exercise. Demographic characteristics such as gender, professional qualification, academic qualification, and years of experience collected from the respondents are presented in table 1 below.

Table 1:- Demographic Characteristics of Respondents.

Demographic Variables		Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	20	40
	Female	30	60
Total		50	100
Professional Qualification	Principal Superintendent	13	26
	Assistant Director II	20	40
	Assistant Director I	15	30
	Deputy Director II	2	4
Total		50	100
Academic Qualification	Diploma	4	8
	Bachelor's degree	36	72
	Master's degree	10	20
Total		50	100
Years of Experience	1-5	10	20
	6-10	29	58
	11-15	8	16
	16-20	3	6
Total		50	100

The respondents' gender pattern shows an average domination of females as the study revealed 30 (60%) of the respondents as females while 20 (40%) were males. Aside the gender variations of the respondents, the study

revealed that majority 20 (40%) of the respondents had a professional qualification of Assistant Director II while 13 (26%) and 15 (30) of the respondents were at the rank of Principal Superintendent and Assistant Director I respectively. Regarding the academic qualification of the respondents, the study revealed that majority,36 (72%),of the respondents had a bachelor's degree while 10 (20%) had a master's degree. Even though the study revealed that only 4 (8%) of the respondents had a diploma, it was not surprising as a higher academic qualification was a requirement in being appointed as a headteacher in any basic school in Ghana. Finally, the study sought to find out how many years of experience the respondents have had as headteachers in the education service. The study revealed that majority of the respondents 29 (54%) have been headteachers between 6 to 10 years while 10 of them, representing 20%, have had between 1-5 years of experience. The headteachers who had had the most years of experience were very few. Those who had between 11-15 years of experience were 8, representing 16%, while those whose experience range between 16-20 years were 3, representing a percentage of 6.

Section B: Impact of GSFP in Basic Schools:

Respondents were asked whether the GSFP has any impact in their respective schools. Majority of respondents 48(96%) responded in the affirmative while 2 (4%) of the respondents were of the view that there is no significant impact of the GSFP in their various basic schools. The responses of the respondents are indicated in theFigure 1 below:

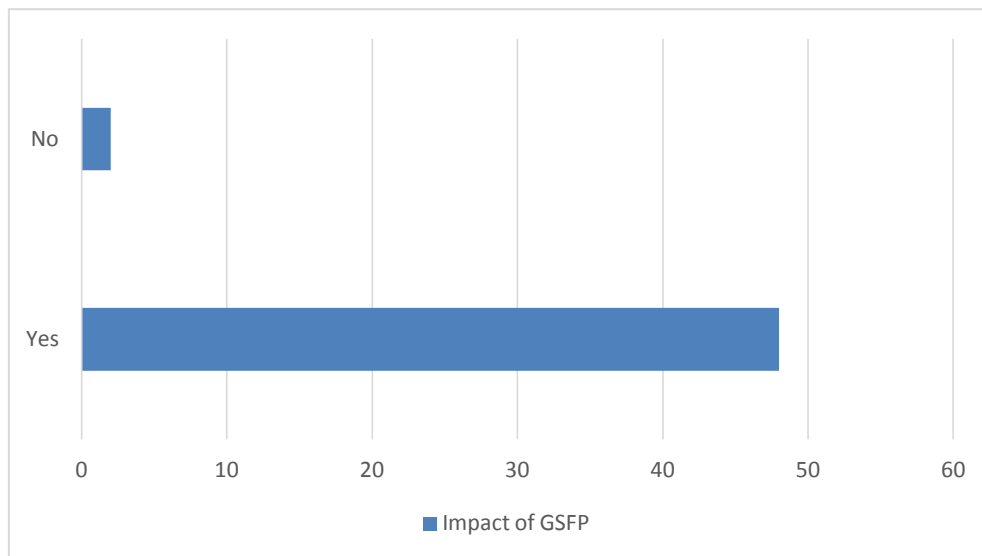


Figure 1:-

These findings from the chart are supported by the findings of Oppong (2009) who came up in his study that enrolments for the pilot schools expanded by 16 percent when contrasted with schools without the feeding policy and hence shows that GSFP has a significant effect on enrolment. After these responses, the respondents who answered yes were asked to indicate what impacts the GSFP has had in their schools. The results revealed that majority of the respondents, representing 52%, revealed that the major impacts of GSFP in their schools are increase in pupil enrolment which was followed by 20.8% of respondents indicating an increased pupil retention while only 18.7% of the respondents indicated that the impact of the GSFP has seen an increase in teacher-pupil ratio. On the other hand, the responses that came from the minority of respondents revealed 4.1% of the respondents indicating that the GSFP has brought changes in pupil wellbeing, 2% indicating change in education, and the remaining 2% indicating change in pupil wellbeing. The responses of the respondents are indicated in the table below:

Table 2:- Impact of GSFP on school enrolment.

Impact of GSFP on enrollment	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Increase in pupil enrolment	25	52
Increase in pupil retention	10	20.8
Increase in teacher-pupil ratio	9	18.7
Poverty reduction	1	2
Changes in Education	1	2

Changes in pupil wellbeing	2	4.1
Total	48	100

Conclusion:-

The study concluded that majority of respondents admitted that the GSFP was very impactful in their various schools and that the most significant impacts of the GSFP as evidenced in their schools include increase in enrolment, increase in retention and an increase in teacher-pupil ratio which was also supported by literature. This suggests that the policy is still effective achieving the purpose for which it was initiated. The study recommends that due to the positive impacts of this policy, the Ministry of Education should allocate more resources into the implementation of the policy. The study makes suggestions for further studies regarding the factors that influence government's selection of schools enrolled in the SFP. This is because the study found out that only some selected schools were included in the SFP

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