

IMPLEMENTATION, BENEFITS, AND CHALLENGES OF THE GULAYAN SA PAARALAN PROGRAM IN LILA DISTRICT, BOHOL

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ABSTRACT

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The Gulayan sa Paaralan Program (GPP) is a flagship initiative of the Department of Education that aims to promote nutrition, food security, environmental awareness, and learner participation through school-based gardening activities. This study assessed the implementation of the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program in the schools of Lila District, Division of Bohol, Philippines. Specifically, it examined the level of program implementation, the benefits gained, the problems encountered, the relationships among the study variables, and differences in perceptions among stakeholder groups. A quantitative descriptive-correlational research design was employed. The participants consisted of 60 respondents, including school heads, Gulayan sa Paaralan Program coordinators, School-Based Feeding Program coordinators, and Parents-Teachers Association officers. Data were gathered using a researcher-developed questionnaire anchored on DepEd Memorandum No. 223, s. 2016. Descriptive statistics and Spearman's rank-order correlation were used to analyze the data. The



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findings revealed that the overall implementation of the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program was less implemented. Among the implementation dimensions, roles and responsibilities at the school level and the establishment and maintenance of school gardens were implemented to a moderate extent. At the same time, capability building, program monitoring, sustainability mechanisms, and program evaluation were less implemented. Respondents generally perceived the program as moderately beneficial and reported that implementation-related problems were less serious. Significant relationships were found between the level of implementation and both benefits gained and problems encountered. However, no significant relationship was observed between benefits gained and problems encountered. The findings suggest that strengthening implementation mechanisms, capacity-building initiatives, monitoring systems, and sustainability strategies may enhance the effectiveness and long-term impact of the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program. Greater stakeholder collaboration and institutional support are recommended to maximize the program's nutritional, educational, and community-development outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

School-based gardening projects have received increased attention as practical solutions for promoting nutrition, food security, environmental awareness, and experiential learning among school-aged children. School gardens are not only a source of fresh food but also a tool for learners to gain agricultural knowledge, develop environmental responsibility, foster collaboration, and cultivate good living habits. School gardens are useful platforms that integrate learning, community engagement, and sustainable food production as institutions of education continue to address challenges related to nutrition and food poverty. In cognizance of the power of school gardens to contribute to the well-being of learners, the Department of Education (DepEd) institutionalized the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program (GPP) through DepEd Memorandum No. 223, s. as part of its larger aim of improving nutrition outcomes and strengthening food security in schools. In 2016, schools were urged to construct and maintain vegetable gardens nationwide to complement the school meal program, provide learning opportunities, and promote environmental responsibility among learners. The initiative also promotes partnership among school workers, parents, LGUs, and community stakeholders to ensure the sustainability of the gardening activities.

More studies show that schoolyard programs improve health and academic performance. School gardens have been linked to improved nutrition knowledge, a more positive attitude toward eating vegetables, greater environmental awareness, and stronger relationships between schools and the community (FAO, 2010; Chan et al., 2022). Studies have also shown that gardening tasks are great ways to learn by doing, as they encourage student

participation and personal growth (Kolb, 1984; Schreinemachers et al., 2019). The results suggest that school gardens could be useful places to teach children about eating, involve them in their communities, and let them learn by doing in a real-life setting. There are, however, many planning and practical issues that need to be thought through for school garden projects to be successful. Resource availability, expert competence, community involvement, tracking systems, and long-term survival have all been looked at in previous research (Hoover et al., 2021; Holloway et al., 2023). Many studies have shown that school gardening projects benefit children. However, few studies examine how execution methods affect program outcomes and longevity, especially in public schools in the Philippines.

Also, most of the local research to date has focused on specific farming techniques, dietary outcomes, or case studies of a single school. Implementation factors such as building skills, tracking methods, sustainability plans, program evaluation, and stakeholders' views have not been examined extensively in research. More information about how the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program is being used in schools and with different interest groups needs to be gathered at the district level as well.

Correcting these shortcomings is important since success is the foundation upon which program benefits and long-term sustainability rest. Stakeholders' understanding of GPP implementation, its benefits, and implementation challenges can provide important information to improve program delivery and inform future actions.

While school garden programs have been widely examined in relation to nutrition education and learner participation, fewer studies have evaluated the quality of implementation of the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program across capability-building, monitoring, sustainability, and evaluation mechanisms. This study addresses this gap by examining GPP implementation in Lila District from the perspectives of key school stakeholders. Hence, this study assessed the status of the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program in the schools of Lila District, Division of Bohol. Specifically, it examined the level of program implementation, the benefits gained, the problems encountered, the relationships among these variables, and the differences in perceptions among stakeholder groups. The findings may help improve program implementation and provide evidence-based input to enhance school gardening initiatives in public schools.

Theoretical Background. This study is anchored in the Health Promoting Schools framework, Experiential Learning Theory, and Program Implementation Theory. These perspectives provide a basis for understanding how the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program (GPP) functions not only as a school gardening initiative but also as an intervention in health, nutrition, learning, and community engagement.

The Health Promoting Schools framework emphasizes that schools are important settings for developing healthy behaviors, supportive environments,

and community-based health practices. The Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion identifies the creation of supportive environments and the development of personal skills as essential strategies for improving health outcomes (World Health Organization, 1986). In the context of GPP, the school garden serves as a health-promoting space where learners, teachers, parents, and community partners may work together to support nutrition, food awareness, and environmental responsibility.

The study is also supported by Experiential Learning Theory, which posits that learning is more meaningful when individuals actively engage in concrete experiences, reflect on them, and apply what they have learned in practical situations (Kolb, 1984). Through school gardening, learners engage in hands-on activities such as planting, watering, composting, crop maintenance, and observing plant growth. These activities may strengthen their understanding of food production, environmental care, responsibility, and healthy eating practices.

Program Implementation Theory further informs the study by emphasizing that the success of any intervention depends on how well it is delivered, monitored, supported, and sustained. Fixsen et al. (2005) noted that effective implementation requires clear program structures, trained implementers, administrative support, monitoring mechanisms, and continuous improvement. This is relevant to the present study because the implementation of GPP depends on capability building, school-level roles and responsibilities, garden maintenance, stakeholder participation, program monitoring, sustainability mechanisms, and evaluation.

Taken together, these theories suggest that the effectiveness of the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program depends not only on the physical establishment of school gardens but also on the quality of implementation, stakeholder participation, and the continuity of monitoring and support. When the program is implemented systematically, schools may gain benefits in nutrition, learner participation, environmental awareness, and school-community partnerships. However, when implementation mechanisms are weak, schools may face challenges with resources, space, monitoring, sustainability, and stakeholder involvement.

Related Literature. School gardens have increasingly been recognized as practical interventions for improving food security, nutrition education, and healthy eating behaviors among school-aged children. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) emphasizes that school gardens provide learners with opportunities to understand food production while promoting dietary diversity and nutrition awareness. When integrated with nutrition education, school gardens can positively influence children's food choices and increase vegetable consumption (FAO, 2010). Furthermore, school gardens serve as living laboratories where learners acquire practical knowledge about agriculture, environmental stewardship, and sustainable food systems.

In the Philippine context, the Department of Education institutionalized

the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program (GPP) to address malnutrition, strengthen food security, and support the School-Based Feeding Program. Through DepEd Memorandum No. 223, s. 2016, schools are encouraged to establish and sustain vegetable gardens that can serve as sources of nutritious food and experiential learning opportunities for learners. The program also promotes stakeholder participation and environmental awareness within the school community.

Educational and Developmental Benefits of School Gardening.

Beyond nutrition, school gardens contribute to educational development. Research indicates that gardening activities promote experiential learning by allowing students to apply classroom concepts in real-world settings. Participation in gardening activities has been associated with improved environmental awareness, responsibility, teamwork, and problem-solving skills. School gardens also provide opportunities for hands-on learning that can increase student engagement and motivation.

A systematic review by Chan et al. (2022) found that school garden-based programs can improve children's nutritional knowledge, attitudes toward vegetables, and healthy eating practices, particularly when combined with nutrition education and parental involvement. The review further suggested that school gardens are most effective when supported by collaborative efforts among schools, families, and communities.

Sustainability and Community Participation in School Garden Programs. The sustainability of school garden projects mostly depends on stakeholder engagement, institutional support, and good monitoring methods. Community connections, parental involvement, and administrative dedication are recognized as criteria for the sustainability of school gardens. Studies have indicated that schools with high stakeholder participation are more likely to maintain gardening programs and achieve the greatest educational and nutritional benefits. Successful implementation also requires sufficient resources, capacity-building initiatives, monitoring mechanisms, and assistance from local government entities and community organizations. Without these support structures, schools typically face issues with finance, personnel, garden upkeep, pest control, and sustainability.

Related Studies. Several research in different educational contexts have investigated the implementation and results of school gardening initiatives. Internationally, Schreinemachers et al. (2019) showed that combining school vegetable gardens with nutrition instruction boosted students' awareness, understanding and acceptance of vegetables. Their findings underscored the need to combine gardening activities with other educational interventions to enhance program success. Likewise, Holloway et al. (2023) found favorable results in fruit and vegetable intake, nutrition awareness, health behaviors, and student well-being in their systematic evaluation of school gardening programs. The review found that school gardens are a promising intervention for health promotion and educational development when implemented

regularly and supported by stakeholders.

In the Philippines, Velza (2023) explored the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program among school garden coordinators and found that schools typically practice organic farming and use school gardens to support food programs. Program implementers, however, consistently cited issues with pest management, water, labor, and gardening supplies. Recent research has also underscored the necessity of sustainability measures to maintain school garden projects. A case study of GPP implementation revealed that although school gardens help achieve the goals of nutrition and food security, long-term sustainability depends on good leadership, stakeholder involvement, resource mobilization, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation. School gardening initiatives have also been found to strengthen school-community partnerships. Gardening projects foster collaboration among teachers, parents, local government entities, and community members, thereby establishing social support structures that enhance program sustainability.

Despite the growing body of literature on school gardens and the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program, significant gaps remain. School gardens have been studied extensively for their nutritional, pedagogical, and environmental advantages. At the same time, there has been less in-depth research on implementation issues such as capacity development, monitoring systems, sustainability strategies, and program evaluation. Secondly, prior Philippine studies have been limited to individual schools or to garden production techniques, with no information on the overall state of GPP adoption across all stakeholder groups. Third, there is no local study that examined the level of implementation concurrently, the advantages received, and the challenges faced in the program. Thus, further exploration is needed to enhance the overall evaluation of GPP implementation and to provide evidence to inform program development and sustainability efforts at the district level.

As one of the School Gulayan sa Paaralan (GPP) Coordinators, the researcher conducted this study to determine the status of the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program (GPP) in the Lila District, Lila, Bohol, for SY 2022-2023. It seeks to answer the level of implementation of the said program, the benefits gained, and the problems encountered for the eight elementary public schools and one secondary public school in the Lila district, Bohol. Any deficiencies in the program's implementation shall be addressed in a proposed improvement measure.

Statement of the Problem: This study assessed the implementation of the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program (GPP) in the public elementary and secondary schools of Lila District, Division of Bohol.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of implementation of the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program in terms of:
 - 1.1 capability building;
 - 1.2 establishment, maintenance, and sustainability of school gardens;

- 1.3 roles and responsibilities at the school level
 - 1.4 Program monitoring
 - 1.5 sustainability mechanisms; and
 - 1.6 Program Evaluation?
 2. What benefits have been gained from the implementation of the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program?
 3. What problems have been encountered in the implementation of the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program?
 4. Is there a significant relationship between:
 - 4.1 The level of implementation and the benefits gained from the program;
 - 4.2 The level of implementation and the problems encountered; and
 - 4.3 The benefits gained and the problems encountered?
 5. Based on the findings of the study, what enhancement measures may be proposed to strengthen the implementation and sustainability of the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program?
- Statement of Null Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

- H₀₁. There is no significant degree of correlation between the:
- 1.1 level of implementation and the benefits gained;
 - 1.2 level of implementation and the problems encountered; and
 - 1.3 Benefits gained and the problems encountered.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design. This study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design. The descriptive component was used to determine the status of the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program (GPP) in terms of its implementation, benefits gained, and problems encountered. In contrast, the correlational component examined the relationships among these variables. The design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to describe existing conditions and determine associations among the study variables without manipulating the research environment (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Research Setting and Participants. The study was conducted in the public elementary and secondary schools of Lila District, Division of Bohol, Philippines, during School Year 2022–2023. The district comprises eight public elementary schools and one public secondary school that implement the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program.

A total of 60 respondents participated in the study, representing key stakeholders involved in implementing GPP. These included school heads (n = 5), Gulayan sa Paaralan Program coordinators (n = 9), School-Based Feeding

Program coordinators ($n = 9$), and Parents–Teachers Association (PTA) officers ($n = 37$). School heads, GPP coordinators, and SBFP coordinators were selected through complete enumeration, while PTA officers were selected through random sampling.

Research Instrument. Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire based on the provisions of DepEd Memorandum No. 223, s. 2016, entitled *Strengthening the Implementation of the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools Nationwide*. The instrument consisted of three sections corresponding to the study variables: (1) level of implementation, (2) benefits gained, and (3) problems encountered.

The implementation component assessed six dimensions: capability building, establishment and maintenance of school gardens, roles and responsibilities at the school level, program monitoring, sustainability mechanisms, and program evaluation. Responses were rated using a four-point Likert scale. Before data collection, the instrument was validated by the specialists in educational management and program execution. Their recommendations were incorporated in the revisions. Then, a pilot test was conducted among the responders outside the research region. The reliability study produced .901 for the implementation scale, .819 for the benefits scale, and .872 for the difficulties scale, showing strong internal consistency (Taber, 2018).

Data Collection Procedures. Prior to data collection, approval to conduct the study was secured from the appropriate educational authorities and school administrators. Eligible participants were informed of the purpose of the study and that participation was voluntary. The researcher personally administered the questionnaires. Respondents were provided sufficient time to complete the instrument, and clarifications were given when necessary. Completed questionnaires were retrieved, checked for completeness, coded, and prepared for statistical analysis.

Ethical Considerations. The study was reviewed by the University of Bohol Research Ethics Committee prior to implementation. Ethical principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, beneficence, and non-maleficence were observed throughout the research process. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, their right to decline participation, and their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. No personal identifiers were included in the data analysis and reporting.

Data Analysis. Descriptive statistics, including weighted mean, composite mean, frequency counts, percentages, and ranking, were used to determine the level of implementation of the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program, the benefits gained, and the problems encountered. The data were first tested for normality before inferential analysis to select suitable statistical techniques. Because the data on implementation and benefits did not meet the requirements for normality, nonparametric statistical approaches were used. Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient (ρ) was utilized to correlate the level of

implementation, advantages achieved, and issues encountered. The statistical significance was tested at the .05 level. All statistical analyses were conducted using appropriate statistical tools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of Implementation of the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program. The findings showed that the overall implementation of the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program (GPP) in schools in the Lila District was largely limited. Some elements of the program were executed to a moderate level, while key elements related to capability building, monitoring, sustainability, and assessment were considered to require further improvement. This means that even if schools have begun implementing the program, the level of implementation is insufficient to achieve the expected results fully.

Capability Building. The findings suggest that opportunities for training and technical assistance in vegetable production, organic farming, seed propagation, and school gardening may not have been consistently provided. Capacity development is widely recognized as a critical component of sustainable school garden programs because it equips implementers with the knowledge and skills necessary to maintain productive gardens and support nutrition-related initiatives. Limited training opportunities may therefore affect the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of the program. The relatively low level of implementation of capability-building activities suggests that schools may have prioritized establishing gardens over developing technical competencies among implementers. This pattern reflects a common challenge in school-based agricultural programs, in which infrastructure is established before adequate human resource support systems are institutionalized (Fixsen et al., 2005).

Establishment, Maintenance, and Sustainability of School Gardens. The establishment, maintenance, and sustainability of school gardens were assessed as moderate. Generally, respondents reported availability of gardening tools, sufficient gardening sites, and stakeholder support in maintaining school gardens. The results show that the fundamental criteria for physical facilities for carrying out horticultural activities in schools are met. However, lower scores for seed production, crop diversification, and the use of garden products in school meals suggest that some of the intended program components have yet to be fully integrated into routine school operations.

The results highlight the challenge of moving from creating a garden to its continual production and consumption. The FAO (2010) has argued that school garden programs need to be sustained over the long term and require not only physical resources but also systematic planning, technical support, and ongoing stakeholder engagement to be effective.

Roles and Responsibilities at the School Level. Among the implementation elements, roles and duties at the school level were rated most

favorably. Respondents felt that GPP had been included in school programs, and community and family gardening projects had been supported in general. Results show that school staff recognize the need for the program and have made efforts to support its implementation in their schools. The limited execution of this facet may also indicate the collaborative nature of the school garden programs, which rely on the engagement of school heads, teachers, feeding coordinators, parents, and community stakeholders. Effective job demarcation is vital to ensuring program continuity and accountability.

Program Monitoring. Monitoring of the program appears to be less well implemented. Some documentation and record-keeping strategies were observed, yet regular monitoring, assessment, and reporting appeared to be performed inconsistently. Limited monitoring activities might reduce opportunities to identify operational challenges, document best practices, and support evidence-based decision-making. Monitoring is an important part of program administration since it provides feedback on implementation status and helps schools make relevant revisions. The findings point to the necessity for more comprehensive monitoring mechanisms to guarantee continuous growth and accountability in the program.

Sustainability Mechanisms. The program's sustainability mechanisms were also inadequately implemented. There were some accountability measures and stakeholder participation, but collaboration, resource mobilization initiatives, and long-term sustainability strategies seemed inadequate. The outcomes of these studies suggest that it is difficult to maintain school gardens once they are established. Previous studies have indicated that good connections with local government units, agricultural agencies, parents, and community organizations generally promote effective school garden projects. Such alliances offer technical expertise, resources, and institutional support that help ensure program durability and effectiveness.

Program Evaluation. Program evaluation was also seen as less implemented. According to the respondents, actions related to evaluation, impact assessment, and acknowledgment of excellent implementation were not carried out regularly. This means schools may have limited opportunity to evaluate program outcomes and determine if GPP objectives are being met. Continuous assessment is critical to understanding program impact and opportunities for improvement. Schools may struggle to monitor the impact of school gardens on nutrition, student growth, and community involvement without structured assessments.

Overall Assessment. Taken together, the data imply that the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program has laid the groundwork for implementation in schools in the District of Lila. Positives were noted in the allocation of duties and the construction of school gardens. However, gaps in capacity building, monitoring, sustainability, and assessment reveal areas that need more attention. These findings point to the need for increased institutional support, enhanced technical capacity, and the establishment of sustainable monitoring

and evaluation systems to maximize the program's educational, nutritional, and communal benefits.

Extent of Implementation of the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program. The findings indicate that the implementation of the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program (GPP) was generally limited across the participating schools. Although some respondents perceived the program as moderately implemented, a considerable proportion viewed its implementation as needing further strengthening. This pattern is consistent with earlier findings showing that while schools have established gardens and assigned roles and responsibilities, other essential dimensions, such as capability building, monitoring, sustainability mechanisms, and program evaluation, remain less developed. The findings imply that although schools have put in place the essential infrastructure to administer the program, there may be issues with sustaining and institutionalizing it. The success of school garden projects depends not only on physical inputs and stakeholder involvement but also on methodical planning, technical assistance, monitoring mechanisms, and ongoing assessment. The findings consequently provide opportunities to enhance implementation methods to ensure that the GPP's objectives are met and sustained over time.

Benefits Gained from Implementing the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program. Most respondents thought the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program was somewhat helpful. One of the perks the program was praised for was its ability to strengthen connections between schools and their neighborhoods. This finding emphasizes the importance of school gardens as places where students, teachers, parents, and community members can work together. These kinds of relationships are important for encouraging everyone to take responsibility for nutrition, food production, and the care of the earth.

The results also show that the program improves nutrition-related effects, student responsibility, and community involvement. Respondents agreed that recipients' nutrition had improved, that they knew more about how food is made, and that they learned values related to farming and working together. These results are in line with other research: school gardens can be great places to learn about nutrition, get children involved in their communities, and learn through experience. The respondents also believed the benefits extended beyond the school setting. The fact that Gulayan sa Tahanan and other home-based gardening programs are being promoted suggests the programs may encourage more people to garden, which would have a greater effect on food security and nutrition. Such results back the program's main goal of promoting environmentally friendly ways to grow food in schools and the neighborhoods around them. Overall, the results show that respondents recognize the program's usefulness in supporting educational, health, and community development goals, despite its implementation difficulties. The middling level of benefits respondents think the program provides suggests that investing more money in it may yield even greater benefits if the tools for implementing it are strengthened.

Problems Encountered in Implementing the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program. The issues that arose during the implementation of the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program were often seen as less important. Still, several operational problems were pointed out, mainly those linked to the lack of a schoolroom, stray animals, and plant theft. These problems could make gardens less productive and make it harder to keep up gardening tasks at school all year. It makes sense that space-related issues are so important, since many schools have limited land, which can make it hard to grow more plants and a wider variety of them. Concerns about security and the presence of stray animals may also reduce yields and make maintenance work more difficult for school staff and stakeholders. Interestingly, problems with parents' involvement, natural disasters, and the inclusion of the schoolyard in planning papers were seen as less problematic. Based on this result, it looks like schools have mostly been able to get community support and work the program into their daily operations. However, even problems that are not considered very important should be examined because they may have long-lasting effects that make the program unsustainable. Overall, the view that the problems were not as bad may indicate that school staff and partners are ready to address problems as they arise. Still, recurring practical issues show that school gardens need preventive measures, stronger teamwork among stakeholders, and resource mobilization strategies to ensure they last over time. All of these results show that the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program has some implementation problems, but the benefits are thought to outweigh them. The program seems to help build relationships among schools and communities, support nutrition-related projects, and foster student growth. Improving how the program is implemented, especially in areas like building skills, keeping an eye on things, ensuring the program lasts, and providing resources, could make it even more useful and have a bigger effect in the long run.

Relationship Among the Level of Implementation, Benefits Gained, and Problems Encountered in the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program. The research showed a strong correlation between the extent of use of the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program (GPP) and the benefits it offers. This result suggests that schools that were better at implementing programs tended to report larger gains from them. If the plan is carried out well, it might lead to better use of school gardens, greater stakeholder involvement, and more effective integration of gardening activities into nutrition and teaching programs. These factors may make it easier for the program to produce good results for students and the school group as a whole.

Table 1. Spearman’s Rank-Order Correlation Among the Study Variables

Variables	p-value	Interpretation	Decision
Level of Implementation and Benefits Gained	.005	Significant Relationship	Reject H ₀
Level of Implementation and Problems Encountered	.017	Significant Relationship	Reject H ₀
Benefits Gained and Problems Encountered	.304	No Significant Relationship	Fail to Reject H ₀

Note. Spearman’s rank-order correlation was used because the data did not satisfy the assumptions of normality. Statistical significance was evaluated at $\alpha = .05$.

The result aligns with a study on implementation, which finds that the quality and consistency of implementation significantly affect how well programs work (Fixsen et al., 2005). Studies on school garden programs have also shown that adequate support, stakeholder engagement, and well-organized implementation lead to improved nutrition knowledge, community involvement, and academic success (Schreinemachers et al., 2019). There was also a strong link between implementation levels and the issues that arose during the program’s run. This finding shows that operational problems and the steps used to perform them are closely linked. Schools that have more trouble implementing may face challenges that make it harder to offer programs. On the other hand, schools with stronger implementation methods may be better able to address or mitigate these problems. Because of this, common problems such as insufficient space, security concerns, and limited resources may hinder how well the program can be run. On the other hand, no meaningful link was found between the benefits gained and the problems faced. Based on this result, the program’s effects may persist even if it has problems running. Simply put, schools may continue to see the health, economic, and community benefits of GPP even if they struggle to implement it. The outcome suggests that problems may affect the execution process, but they do not always reduce people’s interest in the program. These results support an earlier study that found successful school garden programs can often yield useful outcomes even when resources are limited, as long as schools maintain strong support systems and stakeholder commitment (Hoover et al., 2021). These results show how important it is to improve program implementation to achieve the most positive effects and minimize problems.

CONCLUSION

The study found that the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program has been established in all participating schools, but it has not yet been used to its full potential. Schools did a fair job of implementing their school-level duties and setting up and maintaining gardens. However, they fell short in

important areas such as building skills, tracking, ensuring long-term success, and evaluating the program. These results show that the program's basic principles are in place, but more support is needed to ensure it is implemented well and will last over time. Even with these problems, most of the people who answered the survey thought the program was helpful. People thought that the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program was good for building links between schools and communities, promoting nutrition, engaging students, raising their environmental awareness, and encouraging them to grow at home. Based on these benefits, it appears the program remains a good way to integrate nutrition, teaching, and community involvement. Further, the study found that better execution was associated with greater benefits and was strongly linked to implementation challenges. This study shows how important good program management and support methods are for achieving desired results. On the other hand, the lack of a strong link between the benefits gained and the problems faced suggests that stakeholders still see the program's value, even though it is hard to run. The fact that stakeholders had differing opinions on how the program was implemented and the problems they encountered shows that different groups have varied experiences with the program depending on their roles and responsibilities. However, the fact that everyone agrees on the program's benefits shows that everyone values what it does for schools and neighborhoods. Overall, the results show that the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program needs stronger implementation systems, better teamwork among stakeholders, and built-in long-term support systems to be as successful and useful as possible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Strengthen Capability-Building Activities.** The Schools Division Office, in partnership with agricultural agencies and local government units, should provide regular training and technical assistance on vegetable production, organic gardening, seed propagation, crop diversification, and sustainable gardening practices to enhance the competencies of program implementers.
2. **Enhance Program Monitoring and Evaluation Systems.** Schools should establish more systematic monitoring, documentation, reporting, and evaluation mechanisms to track implementation progress, identify challenges, document best practices, and support evidence-based decision-making.
3. **Institutionalize Sustainability Mechanisms.** School administrators should integrate the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program more fully into School Improvement Plans, Annual Implementation Plans, and

school performance management systems to ensure continuity and accountability.

4. **Strengthen Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships.** Greater collaboration among schools, parents, local government units, agricultural offices, community organizations, and private partners should be encouraged to mobilize resources, technical expertise, and long-term support for school garden initiatives.
5. **Address Operational Challenges.** Schools may explore innovative approaches to address challenges related to limited space, crop security, and garden maintenance through container gardening, vertical gardening, protective fencing, and community-supported maintenance.
6. **Promote Home and Community Gardening.** The Gulayan sa Tahanan initiative should be strengthened to encourage households to replicate school gardening practices, thereby extending the program's nutritional and educational benefits beyond the school setting.
7. **Recognize and Incentivize Best Practices.** Recognition programs for outstanding schools, coordinators, and stakeholders may encourage innovation, commitment, and sustained participation in program implementation.
8. **Conduct Further Research.** Future studies may examine the long-term effects of the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program on nutritional outcomes, food security, environmental stewardship, learner development, and community participation, using larger sample sizes and mixed-methods approaches.
9. **Develop a Comprehensive GPP Enhancement Framework.** The Schools Division Office may formulate a district-wide enhancement framework that integrates capacity building, resource mobilization, monitoring and evaluation, sustainability planning, and stakeholder engagement to improve program implementation and outcomes.

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