

**Impact Measurement and Strategic Discovery of
Needs of The Straits Times School Pocket Money STSPMF**

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1. Executive Summary

This report presents the findings from a mixed-methods impact evaluation of The Straits Times Pocket Money Fund (STSPMF), designed to assess its effectiveness in supporting low-income students and their families across several key developmental domains. The study was initiated to understand the current impact of the Fund, identify the evolving needs of its beneficiaries, and recommend refinements to better align resources to these needs.

Using a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach, the evaluation comprised two phases: a quantitative survey administered to students and parents to assess general trends, followed by in-depth qualitative interviews to explore the lived experiences behind the data. Data collection focused on four research questions:

- (1) What is the impact of STSPMF on student attendance in school, academic performance and non-academic performance?
- (2) Does STSPMF help to improve quality of life for beneficiaries and their families?
- (3) Does STSPMF encourage better financial management?
- (4) Does STSPMF impact the development of a child in terms of their overall well-being (physical, social and emotional)?

Likert-type response formats were used to capture both frequency and intensity of responses, while qualitative interviews added depth to key findings and surfaced emerging themes not initially anticipated.

Key Findings:

- **Increased school engagement and holistic development:** The Fund enables students to participate more fully in school life, including co-curricular activities and enrichment programmes. Both parents and students highlighted improved access to essential items such as transport and learning materials, reducing barriers in school.
- **Financial relief for families:** Although modest in amount, the Fund eased household financial pressures, allowing families to cover daily essentials such as meals and transport. Parents reported improved household budgeting and the ability to provide more nutritious meals, while students described fewer instances of skipping meals and greater inclusion in school activities.
- **Responsible financial behaviour:** Beneficiaries demonstrated prudent money management, including saving, goal setting, and contributing to household needs. Survey responses showed an increase in saving habits compared to earlier cohorts, suggesting that the Fund may encourage financial literacy and independence.
- **Students' Social and Emotional Health:** Students expressed healthy levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to succeed academically and personally, often citing family

aspirations as key drivers. They also reported healthy levels of social well-being, supported by having good friends and regularly meeting them for activities. While STSPMF alleviates background stressors, internal factors and social support appeared to be equally significant in building confidence and resilience. Additionally, as motivation and resilience lack prior benchmarks, the data were collected to establish a baseline for comparison in future studies.

- **Areas for improvement:** While the perceptions of STSPMF were positive, parents and students noted limitations in the duration and amount of support, as well as inconsistent awareness of eligibility and application processes. Gaps were also identified in social-emotional and developmental support, with parents expressing interest in enrichment workshops and even parental upskilling opportunities.

Recommendations

The evidence suggests that STSPMF does meet immediate needs while contributing to longer-term student well-being. To further enhance the impact that STSPMF has, we would like to propose the following refinements:

- **Shift from giving to empowering:** Strengthen support for primary-level students with larger and more flexible funding that includes academic and emotional development. Continue support at secondary level with a stronger focus on services and prioritise career and networking opportunities over direct aid for post-secondary students.
- **Leverage The Straits Times' assets:** Capitalise on The Straits Times' unique networks, advocacy platform, and skilled volunteers to provide shared services such as enrichment opportunities, mentoring, and family support alongside financial aid.
- **Evolve the delivery model:** Move from a purely monetary fund to a shared-services hub, linking families to affordable goods, developmental programmes, and partner services through schools and community networks.

2. Introduction

The Straits Times School Pocket Money STSPMF (STSPMF) is a charity with Institution of a Public Character (IPC) status that provides financial support to children & youths in need to pay for school-related expenses and support their social & educational development since 2000. In 2009, an exploratory study (Han & Rothwell, 2011) was conducted aimed at identifying the extent to which this nationwide cash transfer program was associated with the educational performance of these children.

In the last 16 years, following the exploratory study and its recommendations, as well as various internal reviews, there have been significant changes to the disbursement of the funds. To illustrate, STSPMF now extends to include older school-going children in polytechnics and Institute of Educations (ITEs), increasing the maximum duration a family can stay in the program and staggering the quantum that children of different ages can receive.

While the first study showed a positive correlation between STSPMF's financial support and student's school attendance, it was timely to review the program's impact and provide implications for improvement of the program. Since STSPMF's inception in 2000, there are a number of factors that could have potentially impacted STSPMF beneficiaries and their family.

Firstly, Singapore's Ministry of Education (MOE) has been shifting towards a more holistic approach in student development since 2019. One of the major shifts implemented was in reducing the number of school-based assessments for both primary and secondary schools, so that there is more time for students to strengthen holistic development, self-discovery and engaged learning. Secondly, the cost of living in Singapore has increased noticeably: from Goods and Services Taxes (GST) rising to 9% since 2024, a YoY increase in average household electricity bills due to global energy market volatility, and an average 1.2% price hike in essential groceries (Department of Statistics Singapore, 2025). Thirdly, the aspirations of Singapore's youths have also evolved over the years, where 40% of youth respondents rank having a job with purpose as the most important factor influencing their choice of career (SUSS, 2022).

Our objective was to evaluate the current scheme and understand beneficiaries' needs to refine the program and align STSPMF's resources to these needs. We examined the (i) families' engagement with the program, (ii) student attendance in school, academic performance and non-academic, (iii) nutritional habits and choices, (iv) their life aspirations, and (v) their emotional well-being through a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design to this research study. Our research questions guiding our methods are as follows:

- (1) What is the impact of STSPMF on student attendance in school, academic performance and non-academic performance?
- (2) Does STSPMF help to improve quality of life for beneficiaries and their families?
- (3) Does STSPMF encourage better financial management?
- (4) Does STSPMF impact the development of a child in terms of their overall well-being (physical, social and emotional)?

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

To ensure objectivity and consistency in the survey design, based on our research (Ang, 2025a, 2025b), we developed a structured social barometer focused on three core domains: **School Excellence, Satisfaction Levels, and Well-being**.

The domains were further segregated into aspects and indicators that served as the conceptual framework from which all survey questions were derived. In developing our social barometer, we drew upon established local benchmark indices, including the National Council of Social Service (NCSS) Quality of Life Study on Children and Youth in Singapore, as well as internationally recognised measures such as the 5-item World Health Organisation Well-Being Index (WHO-5).

We undertook a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design to this research study. In the explanatory-sequential design, there were two phases to the data collection and analysis. The goal was to first use quantitative data collection and analysis to provide a general understanding of the impact of STSPMF. Following that, the qualitative data and analysis delved into the statistical results by thoroughly examining participants' perspectives on STSPMF.

3.2 Data Collection Methods

3.2.1 Phase 1: Quantitative Data Collection – Surveys and Report Card Analysis

We used two types of data collection methods in the first quantitative phase of the study.

Firstly, online surveys were used to gather responses from each family. To triangulate the data regarding students’ school attendance and academic performance, we gathered the relevant data from their school report cards both before and after they were receiving STSPMF. This allowed for a comparative analysis of academic outcomes associated with STSPMF participation.

3.2.2 Phase 2: Qualitative Data Collection - Semi-structured Interviews

Following the initial data analysis, we proceeded to Phase 2, which involved qualitative data collection and analysis to deepen our understanding of the emerging patterns. From the pool of families who responded to the survey, we identified and contacted 154 families for the interview process. We conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with a smaller group of families, using interview questions specifically designed to explore and elaborate on key themes emerging from the survey findings.

The semi-structured interview questions were developed after analysing the survey results, with a primary focus on the three core domains while also addressing any unexpected findings. All interviews were conducted in person, either at the beneficiaries’ homes or at a location of their choice. Since participation in the interviews was voluntary, 45 families initially agreed to be interviewed, and 33 ultimately completed the interview process.

3.3 Procedures of Phase 1: Quantitative Data Collection

3.3.1 Survey Questions

In Phase 1, we gathered quantitative data through close-ended surveys to the families. We created survey questions based on the three core domains, aspects and indicators:

Domain	Aspect	Indicator
School Excellence	Student Attendance	Attendance Rate
		Punctuality
		Access to Transport for School
	School Performance	Academic Outcomes <i>(Exam Grades / Study habits)</i>
		Non-Academic Outcomes <i>(Leadership, Class Participation, CCA, Competitions)</i>
Satisfaction Levels	Engagement with STSPMF	Outreach to Beneficiaries
		Knowledge of STSPMF
		Support by Disbursing Agency / School

	Perception of Outcomes from STSPMF	Effectiveness of STSPMF
		Financial Management
Well-being	Physical Health	Fitness
		Nutrition
	Social Health	Friendship
	Emotional Health	Intrinsic Motivation <i>(Curiosity, Sense of Accomplishment, Knowledge)</i>
Extrinsic Motivation <i>(Parent / Teacher Approval, Social Status, Future Opportunities)</i>		

We used separate questionnaires for parents and children. The questions were designed with the intent to understand the parents’ and children’s perceptions of the usefulness, effectiveness and impact of STSPMF in relation to the three core domains. Most sections were measured using a Likert-type scale ranging from (1) = ‘strongly disagree’ to (5) = ‘strongly agree’. Some sections were measured using a Likert-type scale ranging from (1) = ‘none of the time’ to (4) = ‘all of the time’ to eliminate a neutral midpoint and encourage respondents to express a clearer stance.

We chose a target sample of families with a child between Primary 3 to Post-sec education. Primary 1 and 2 students were excluded from the study as it would be methodologically challenging to assess changes in academic performance between kindergarten and Primary 2, making it difficult to attribute any observable academic outcomes to the impact of STSPMF. We also derived ideal sample sizes for each of the three educational stages (Primary, Secondary, and Post-secondary).

Using the contact information from the sampling frame (N = 2,234), the STSPMF team sent out invitation emails with the survey links on 18 Nov 2024. A reminder email was sent on 25 Nov 2024. A targeted survey was sent out on 5 Dec 2024 to post-secondary participants with the help of respective Institutes of Higher Learning (IHL) staff due to shortfall. We called /messed 202 families of post-secondary students as a final reminder to complete the survey. Survey participation was completely voluntary, and responses were kept confidential. The research procedures were reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of the Singapore University of Social Sciences. The survey fieldwork was completed with 689 families on 14 Jan 2025. One parent and one child were surveyed per family. However, only 569 of the survey were fully completed.

The survey sampling was designed with a 95% confidence level and a 6% margin of error. However, it is important to note that the post-secondary group remained underrepresented due to challenges in achieving the targeted sample size for this segment.

3.3.2 Report Cards

Report cards were used to triangulate the data from both quantitative survey and qualitative interview. By analysing the grades and overall academic progress reflected in these report cards and further substantiated by qualitative data from the interviews, we could determine whether the support provided by STSPMF had a positive impact on the students' education. Improvements in school attendance and grades could indicate that the financial aid helped reduce stress and allowed students to focus better on their studies, thus serving as a measure of the program's effectiveness. We collected and analysed the report cards of 426 students across all three educational stages.

3.4 Sample (Demographics)

Table 1 presents socioeconomic demographics of parents and guardians of the SPMF survey. We note some key observations. First, 41.3% of families had up to \$300, and 5.7% had more than \$300 balance of income at the end of the month, which indicates these families are able to save some money. Also, this correlates with the findings that 67.5% of the families don't have any consumer debt. On the flipside, 35.4% of families had \$0 and 17.5% of families were in debt. Second, majority of parents (62.4%) had attained an educational level of secondary school or below. Third, 66.5% of these families have their own home which is significantly lower than the homeownership rate (88% in 2024) of the Singapore population. Fourth, majority of the households (76.4%) had gross monthly household income of \$3,000 or less, which is much lower than the national median of \$11,297 in 2024 (Baharudin & Chin, 2025). Fifth, over one-third of parents (35.6%) reported their health status as either fair or poor.

These findings suggest that STSPMF participants more likely vulnerable in terms of social and economic status.

Table 1 – Socioeconomic demographics of parents / guardians

Variable	%	Variable	% Mean (SD)
Gender		Health status	
Male	26.2	Poor	6.2
Female	73.6	Fair	29.4
		Good	49.4
Marital Status		Very good	9.9
Single	4.9	Excellent	4.9

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29 Sep 2025

Married	66.5		
Separated	3.9	Balance of income at the end of month	
Divorced	18.8	More than \$300	5.7
Widowed	5.7	\$1 - \$300	41.3
		\$0	35.4
Highest level of education		Less than \$0 – In debt	17.5
Primary school or less (PSLE or equivalent)	21.4		
Secondary school (N-Level or O-Level Certificate)	41.0	Consumer Debt	
Post-Secondary - Institute of Technical Education (ITE) Certificate	17.7	I don't have any	67.5
Post-Secondary – Junior College (A-Level Certificate)	1.7	Less than \$6,000	16.7
Post-Secondary – Polytechnic Diploma (Or equivalent, e.g., NAFA, Lasalle College of the Arts, private diploma etc.)	12.2	\$6,000 - \$12,000	6.1
University Degree	5.8	More than \$12,000	9.6
Gross Monthly Household Income Before CPF Deduction		Home Ownership	
Below \$1,000	23.8	Own	66.5
\$1,001 - \$2,000	22.9	Rented	21.4
\$2,001 - \$3,000	29.7	Staying with friends or family	8.7
\$3,001 - \$4,000	16.2	Interim rental housing	2.6
\$4,001 - \$5,000	5.4	Transitional Shelter	0.1
\$5,001 - \$6,000	1.3	Crisis Shelter	0.3
\$6,001 and above	1.6	Homeless	0
		Condominiums & Other Apartments / Landed Property	0.1
		Number of household members	
		Adults (21 years and older)	2.1 (0.9)
		Children (Under 21 years old)	2.7 (1.3)

We also asked parents on what other government and community schemes they applied for their children. A large majority of students had applied for MOE Financial Assistance Scheme (FAS) as it is one of the most accessible schemes for low-income families that provides up to 100% subsidies for school fees, textbooks, uniforms, school meals, and public transportation expenses for the children. To also note that some STSPMF families would have applied for more than one of the grants below concurrently.

Schemes (Non-exclusive)	Students
MOE Financial Assistance Scheme (FAS)	535
School-Based Financial Assistance Scheme	89
Edusave (Edusave Merit Bursary)	86
Edusave scholarship	86
Student Care Fee Assistance	73
NTUC-U Care STSPMF	53
Childcare Financial Assistance	51
Post Secondary Education Account (PSEA)	44
Kindergarten Financial Assistance	40
Mendaki Tertiary Tuition Fee Subsidy (TTFS)	34
Higher Education Community Bursary & Higher Education Bursary	29
Independent Schools Bursary	14
MSF Home Ownership Plus Education (HOPE)	12
Citizens' Consultative Committee (CCC) Bursary	8
Community Development Council Programme for Children	7
Others	57

4. Findings from Surveys

4.1. School Excellence

Student attendance serves as an important indicator of the fund's effectiveness in enabling children to access education, whether through improved attendance rates or better access to transport for school. School performance provides further insight into the fund's impact, capturing both academic outcomes and non-academic outcomes such as participation in co-

curricular activities and competitions. Additionally, these indicators reflect the extent to which the fund supports holistic development by ensuring students not only remain in school but also thrive in their learning and growth.

4.1.1 Student Attendance

We measured student attendance before and after receiving STSPMF by the method of student attendance ratio. We calculated this ratio by dividing the total attendance days of a student by the total school days per semester / term as indicated in their report cards. We then compared the mean attendance ratios before and after STSPMF participation. We did these comparisons across the three educational stages.

4.1.1.1 Attendance Rate

Overall, as seen in Table 2, there was a slight increase in mean school attendance of 1.22 after receiving STSPMF funding. This is statistically significant due to our large sample size. When segregated by level, the results from Table 3 show that the most significant change would be for primary school students, with a mean increase of 3.83 which is statistically significant as $p\text{-value} < 0.05$. For secondary school students, based on the results from Table 4, there was a mean decrease of 0.07 ($p > 0.05$) which was not significant, likely to have occurred by chance. For post-secondary school students, based on the results from Table 5, there was a mean decrease of -2.85 ($p > 0.05$) which was not significant that was likely due to the small sample size.

Therefore, we can ascertain that even though the increase in attendance ratio for all students ($M=1.22$) is modest, the result is statistically significant ($t = -2.113, p = 0.036$). This is particularly noteworthy given the already high baseline mean attendance ratio of 92.28%.

We also did a comparative analysis of primary and secondary school student mean attendance ratio from our 2025 report and the previous exploratory study (Han & Rothwell, 2011). Post-secondary students are left out as there was no post-secondary STSPMF support back in 2011.

Table 6 showcases the results of the analysis, highlighting that the students in 2025 started with a lower baseline attendance (92.13%) compared to students in 2011 (95.24%). Despite lower starting attendance, the 2025 cohort shows a greater improvement (+1.37%) after

receiving STSPMF as compared to 2011's smaller gain (+0.6%). It is also important to note that the 2011 sample size (N=131) is substantially smaller than the 2025 sample size, which may influence the comparability of the results.

Table 2. School attendance changes before and after STSPMF participation – All students

	Mean of Attendance Ratio	Mean difference
Before receiving STSPMF	92.28	1.22
After receiving STSPMF	93.50	

Note: $t = -2.113$ [Rejection against null hypothesis]

$p = 0.036$ [Only 3.6% chance that observed difference happened by chance under null hypothesis. Lower than $p < 0.05$ (5%) chance which is common benchmark]

Table 3. School attendance changes before and after STSPMF participation – Primary School Students

	Mean of Attendance Ratio	Mean difference
Before receiving STSPMF	89.67	3.83
After receiving STSPMF	93.50	

Note: $t = -3.53$ [Rejection against null hypothesis]

$p = 0.001$ [Only >0.1% chance that observed difference happened by chance. Lower than $p < 0.05$ (5%) chance which is common benchmark]

Table 4. School attendance changes before and after STSPMF participation – Secondary School Students

	Mean of Attendance Ratio	Mean difference
Before receiving STSPMF	93.58	-0.07
After receiving STSPMF	93.51	

Note: $t = 0.109$ [value near 0 indicates high chance of null hypothesis]

$p = 0.91$ [91% chance that observed difference happened by chance]

Table 5. School attendance changes before and after STSPMF participation – Post-Sec School Students

	Mean of Attendance Ratio	Mean difference
Before receiving STSPMF	96.25	-2.85
After receiving STSPMF	93.40	

Note: $t = 1.041$ [value near 0 indicates high chance of null hypothesis]

$p = 0.33$ [33% chance that observed difference happened by chance]

Table 6. School attendance comparison for combined primary and secondary school between 2011 report and 2025 report

	Pri and Sec Sch - 2025		Pri and Sec Sch – 2011	
	Mean of Attendance Ratio	Mean difference	Mean of Attendance Ratio	Mean difference
Before receiving STSPMF	92.13	1.37	95.24	0.6
After receiving STSPMF	93.50		95.84	

T = -2.332 [Rejection against null hypothesis]

$p = 0.021$ [Only 2.1% chance that observed difference happened by chance under null hypothesis. Lower than $p < 0.05$ (5%) chance which is common benchmark]

The findings indicate that both parents and children hold consistently positive views regarding school attendance, with over 97% in both groups reporting that the child attends school on most days.

Table 7. Perception on School Attendance

	Yes (%)
Parent feels child goes to school on most days	97.2
Child feels he/she goes to school on most days	97.4

Note: The item responses are Yes or No

4.1.1.2 Punctuality

Similarly, findings indicate that both parents and children hold consistently positive views regarding punctuality for school, with over 95% in both groups reporting that the child attends school on most days.

Table 8. Perception on Punctuality

	Yes (%)
Parent feels child is early or on time for school on most days	95.8
Child feels he/she is early or on time for school on most days	95.7

Note: The item responses are Yes or No

4.1.1.3 Access to Transport for School

Access to reliable and affordable transport is a key factor influencing school attendance, particularly for children from low-income families. For many STSPMF beneficiaries, the STSPMF helps cover daily transport costs, reducing barriers to consistent school attendance. Without this support, some students might face difficulties getting to school regularly, especially those living farther from their schools or lacking safe, accessible public transport options.

Our results in Table 9 show that both parents (M=4.01) and children (M=3.88) agree that it is now easier for the child to attend school, showing a clear benefit of STSPMF on transport-related barriers. Low scores for both parent and child (M=2.26 and M=2.27) indicate that most children are not forced to walk to school due to lack of STSPMF. The high scores from both parents (M = 3.69) and children (M = 3.77) indicate that students generally have sufficient transport allowance.

Similarly, the strong ratings for CCA participation (M = 3.85 for parents, M = 3.80 for children) suggest that STSPMF meaningfully supports key costs that enable students to attend co-curricular activities, thereby contributing to their holistic development in school.

Table 9. Access to Transport for School

	Mean (SD) of Parent	Mean (SD) of Child
1. STSPMF has made it easier for (my child/me) to go to school now	4.01 (0.98)	3.88 (0.89)
2. (My child/I) only walks to school because	2.26 (1.11)	2.27 (1.11)

(he/she/I) (is/am) unable to afford public transport		
3. (My child/I) has enough money to take the bus or train to school	3.69 (1.02)	3.77 (0.91)
4. STSPMF has made it easier for (my child/me) to attend CCA	3.85 (0.90)	3.80 (0.88)

Note: The item responses range from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

4.1.2 School Performance

Overall school performance serves as a crucial indicator of STSPMF’s impact on students. Beyond helping to improve attendance, the STSPMF aims to support students’ academic outcomes by reducing financial stress and enabling better focus on studies, as reflected in improvements in grades. Additionally, with transport and incidental costs eased, more students can participate actively in class and engage in co-curricular activities (CCA), contributing to these non-academic outcomes in school. Together, these academic and non-academic outcomes highlight the broader value of STSPMF in supporting well-rounded student growth.

4.1.2.1 Academic Outcomes

We collected and analysed 426 report cards from students across the three education stages. Overall academic performance was determined from report cards obtained before and after students received STSPMF assistance, with grades categorised as either Pass or Fail. However, as many students also received support from other grants, distinguishing the specific contribution of the STSPMF remains challenging.

Based on our results in from Tables 10, 11, and 12, the baseline pass rates were notably high, with 94.4% of primary school students, 95.2% of secondary school students, and 98.7% of post-secondary school students passing their exams after receiving funding.

It is also noteworthy that some students moved from failing to passing during the time they received support from STSPMF support. Specifically, as seen in Table 10, among the 13 primary school students who had previously failed their exams, 7 (54%) successfully passed in the subsequent year following the receipt of STSPMF assistance. Likewise for Table 11, which shows the results for the secondary school students, out of the 12 students who previously failed their exams, 10 (83%) passed in the subsequent year after receiving STSPMF. From the results in Table 12, we observed an outlier among the post-secondary students, 1 student did not pass despite receiving STSPMF. Additionally, the data from tables 10, 11, and 12 are known to be statistically significant since $p < 0.001$.

Table 10. Overall Grade Changes Before and After STSPMF Participation - Primary School Students

Overall Grade	After STSPMF: Fail	After STSPMF: Pass	Total
Before STSPMF: Fail	6	7	13
Before STSPMF: Pass	4	161	165
Total	10 (5.6%)	168 (94.4%)	178

Note: Chi-Square = 25.94; p < .001

Table 11. Overall Grade Changes Before and After STSPMF Participation - Secondary School Students

Overall Grade	After STSPMF: Fail	After STSPMF: Pass	Total
Before STSPMF: Fail	2	10	12
Before STSPMF: Pass	10	226	236
Total	12 (4.8%)	236 (95.2%)	248

Note: Chi-Square = 25.94; p < .001

Table 12. Overall Grade Changes Before and After STSPMF Participation – Post-Secondary School Students

Overall Grade	After STSPMF: Fail	After STSPMF: Pass	Total
Before STSPMF: Fail	0	0	0
Before STSPMF: Pass	1	76	77
Total	1 (1.3%)	76 (98.7%)	77

Note: Chi-Square = 25.94; p < .001

We also measured the overall grades changes for primary and secondary school students between our 2025 study and 2011’s exploratory study (Han & Rothwell, 2011) and have summarised the results in Table 13.

First, we have found that the overall pass rate for primary and secondary school students in 2025 is much higher (94.8%) as compared to 2011 students (72.4%) which comes up to a 22.4% increase in overall pass rate.

Second, the number of students in the 2025 study who transitioned from failed to pass in is also higher, with 17 (68%) out of 25 students passing after receiving STSPMF support, as compared to 15 (40.5%) out of 37 students passing in 2011 which adds up to a 27.5% increase in improvement rate. This is further evidenced in the statistical power that 2025’s sample size (426) is significantly larger than 2011’s (134). Additionally, given the multi-faceted nature of academic excellence, this study cannot conclusively determine a direct cause-and-effect relationship between STSPMF and academic outcomes. More

comprehensive and targeted research is needed to better understand the potential impact.

Table 13. Overall Grade Changes Before and After STSPMF Participation – Primary and Secondary school comparing with 2011 report

Overall Grade	2025 Study		2011 Study	
	2025: Fail (%)	2025: Pass (%)	2011: Fail (%)	2011: Pass (%)
Before STSPMF: Fail	8 (1.9%)	17 (16.5%)	22 (16.5%)	15 (11.2%)
Before STSPMF: Pass	14 (3.3%)	387 (90.8%)	15 (11.2%)	82 (61.2%)
Total	22 (5.2%)	404 (94.8%)	37 (27.6%)	97 (72.4%)

Note: Chi-Square = 25.94; p < .001

Table 14 reports both parents' and students' perceptions of academic performance in exams and tests, alongside reported study and revision habits. The scores in this section are generally high, aligning with the elevated pass rates and observed improvements among students surveyed in 2025.

Table 14. Study habits and results

	Mean (SD) of Parent	Mean (SD) of Child
1. (My child/I) (does/do) well in exams and tests in schools	3.64 (0.89)	3.60 (0.87)
2. (My child/I) regularly completes (his/her/my) homework	4.04 (0.83)	4.04 (0.80)
3. (My child/I) regularly revises for tests / exams	3.81 (0.88)	3.83 (0.83)

Note: The item responses range from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

4.1.2.2 Non-Academic Outcomes

To get a holistic view on a child's school performance, we posed various questions on their motivation to learn in school, their engagement rate in school activities and CCA, and whether they enjoy going to school.

From our findings in Table 15, we observed that most children enjoy going to school and participating in activities, regularly communicate to their parents about school, and they find that they are learning important things. Furthermore, as displayed in Table 15, in comparison to the results from the 2011 exploratory study (Han & Rothwell, 2011), students in the current cohort reported higher levels of participation in representing their class or school in competitions, involvement in CCA and engagement in leadership roles within the school. Some items reflect broader satisfaction or communication patterns, which are better explored through qualitative analysis or subsequent studies.

Table 15. Non-Academic outcomes

	Mean (SD) of Parent	Mean (SD) of Child	Mean (SD) of Child – 2011
1. (My child/I) (is/am) learning important things in school	4.15 (0.73)	4.17 (0.72)	
2. (My child/I) regularly tell(s) (me/my parents) about (his/her/my) activities in school	4.09 (0.90)	4.03 (0.87)	
3. (My child/I) enjoy(s) going to school	4.10 (0.86)	4.06 (0.87)	
4. (My child/I) participate(s) in school activities, e.g., school performances, learning journey/ excursions etc.	4.26 (0.80)	4.24 (0.75)	
5. (My child/I) has represented (his/her/my) class/school in competitions	3.61 (1.14)	3.61 (1.11)	3.39 (1.17)
6. (My child/I) attend(s) (his/her/my) CCA regularly	4.23 (0.89)	4.22 (0.84)	3.80 (1.00)
7. (My child/I) hold(s) leadership/key roles in school, e.g., Librarian, prefect, class monitor / monitress, student leader etc.	3.50 (1.16)	3.52 (1.14)	2.76 (1.21)

Note: The item responses range from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

These results from the quantitative survey are corresponded to the interviews that were conducted. For instance, beneficiaries did mention that STSPMF did enable them to attend CCA by providing them money to eat before CCA activities or to travel for CCA.

Yes, definitely the STSPMF help me in attending CCA. I remember doing my P4, I still had the funds. I had basketball training. With the STSPMF, I had the money to travel, so I used it then I can join them. (41C)

Yes, because for CCA, right, it's like after school...So also need to make sure that I eat before CCA and everything. So definitely it helped me, because I'm able to eat in school after that when play basketball, like my CCA, Play properly. (18C)

4.2 Satisfaction Levels

Satisfaction levels serve as an important indicator of program effectiveness in addressing the immediate needs of beneficiaries. They also provide insight into the efficiency and accessibility of the STSPMF's implementation and processes, particularly in terms of families' ability to understand and utilize it. Additionally, satisfaction encompasses perceptions of outcomes across key domains, including education, well-being, and financial resources.

4.2.1 Engagement with The Straits Times School Pocket Money (STSPMF)

This section presents the beneficiaries' knowledge about the STSPMF and the support that is present within the STSPMF. Under engagement with The Straits Times School Pocket Money (STSPMF), we look into three key areas – outreach to the beneficiaries, knowledge of the STSPMF, and the support the disbursing agency/school provides the beneficiaries.

4.2.1.1 Outreach to Beneficiaries

We asked some questions to STSPMF parents whether they would like to be more involved in STSPMF outreach. As presented in Table 16, there is some interest from the parents to attend upskilling workshops to help in their professional and personal development (M=3.33, SD = 0.96).

Table 16. Outreach to STSPMF beneficiaries (Parents)

	Mean (SD)
1. I am interested in attending workshops to upskill myself if offered E.g. Career coaching, financial literacy, caregiving, healthy cooking, fitness etc.	3.33 (0.96)
2. I would like to take on an active role as a volunteer to organise future STSPMF events	2.94 (0.88)

Note: The item responses range from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

4.2.1.2 Knowledge of the STSPMF

When asked about their mode of application and details, our findings from Table 17 and 18 indicated that most participants are aware about the respective details, with most participants understanding details about STSPMF such as application organisation, amount disbursed, duration of disbursement, qualifying criteria, etc. (M=3.8, SD=0.84), with most participants

applying STSPMF via schools (96%) and a small portion applying it via social service agencies (3.9%).

Table 17. Disbursement of STSPMF

	Agency (%)	School (%)
1. Where did you apply for STSPMF from?	3.9	96.1

Table 18. Details of STSPMF

	Mean (SD)
1. I know the details of STSPMF that apply to me (e.g. Amount disbursed to us, duration of disbursement, qualifying criteria etc.)	3.80 (0.84)

Note: The item responses range from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

4.2.1.3 Support by Disbursing Agency / School

Some students, less than 50% (M=2.86, SD=0.93), have participated in programmes organised by their disbursing agency / school as summarised in Table 19.

Table 19. Disbursement of STSPMF

	Mean (SD)
1. My child has participated in programmes organised by my respective disbursing agency / school	2.86 (0.93)

Note: The item responses range from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

4.2.2 Perception of Outcomes from STSPMF

This section presents beneficiaries' perceptions of the outcomes associated with receiving STSPMF support. It explores how recipients and their families view the program's impact across various domains, such as educational progress, overall well-being, and household financial stability. The findings provide insights into how the STSPMF is experienced at the individual and family level, complementing quantitative measures of program effectiveness.

4.2.2.1 Brand Perception

As per Table 20's results, we asked parents on how the brand perception of STSPMF, and most of them are aware of STSPMF's mission and vision (M=4.10, SD=0.78). This moderately high brand perception suggests that STSPMF is effective in communicating the

fund's mission and vision to its beneficiaries.

Table 20. Perception of STSPMF brand

	Mean (SD)
1. I believe that STSPMF clearly communicates its mission and vision to me	4.10 (0.78)

Note: The item responses range from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

4.2.2.2 Sufficiency of Funding

As shown in Table 21, students across three educational levels were asked to report the amount of monthly pocket money they received from their parents. Among primary school students, 96.3% reported receiving an amount equal to or greater than the STSPMF quantum of \$65. The majority (35.8%) reported receiving between \$65 and \$80, followed by 19.5% receiving \$81 to \$99, and 19.0% receiving \$100 to \$124. Only 3.2% reported receiving \$40 or less per month, where 4 primary school students indicated that they received \$0 for pocket money.

Among secondary school students, 38.7% received an amount equal to or greater than the STSPMF quantum of \$100. The largest proportion (41.0%) reported receiving \$40 or less, followed by 17.8% receiving between \$100 and \$124, and 15.3% receiving more than \$150. A smaller group (14.1%) received between \$65 and \$80. Amongst the students receiving \$40 or less, it is notable that 15 secondary school students indicated that they received \$0 for pocket money.

For post-secondary school students, 41.8% reported receiving an amount equal to or exceeding the STSPMF quantum of \$125. The largest proportion (40.5%) fell into the "more than \$150" category, while 22.6% received between \$100 and \$124. Notably, 27.4% reported receiving \$40 or less per month, where 10 post-secondary school students reported receiving \$0 for pocket money.

Table 21. Amount of pocket money per month

	Up to \$40	\$41 ~ \$64	\$65 ~ \$80	\$81 ~\$99	\$100 ~ \$124	\$125 ~ \$150	More than \$150	Total
Primary School Children	6 (3.2)	1 (0.5)	66 (35.8)	36 (19.5)	35 (19.0)	28 (15.2)	12 (6.5)	184 (100.00)
Secondary School Children	99 (41.0)	13 (5.4)	34 (14.1)	2 (0.83)	43 (17.8)	13 (5.4)	37 (15.3)	241 (100.00)
Post- Secondary School Children	23 (27.4)	3 (3.5)	4 (4.7)	0	19 (22.6)	1 (1.2)	34 (40.5)	84 (100.00)

* 4 primary school respondents indicate \$0 for pocket money.

* 15 secondary school respondents indicate \$0 for pocket money.

*10 post-secondary school respondents indicated \$0 for pocket money

As summarised in Table 22, parents were asked to rate potential limitations of the STSPMF scheme. The two highest-rated concerns were that “*the maximum period of assistance is too short*” (M=3.63, SD=0.97) and “*the amount disbursed is too little*” (M=3.49, SD=0.90). These concerns were also raised in the 2011 study, where the mean ratings for the same items were 3.60 (SD=0.93) and 3.42 (SD=0.90), respectively. The similarity in mean scores across both studies suggests that these perceptions have remained consistent over time.

Other items, such as “*eligibility guidelines are too strict*” (M=3.10, SD=0.85) and “*application procedure is too complicated*” (M=2.87, SD=0.88), were rated less strongly, while “*the method of disbursement is not convenient*” received the lowest agreement (M=2.43, SD=0.89).

Table 22. Limitations of The Straits Times School Pocket Money STSPMF

	Mean (SD) of Parent	Mean (SD) of Parent - 2011
The maximum period of assistance is too short	3.63 (0.97)	3.60 (0.93)
The amount disbursed is too little.	3.49 (0.90)	3.42 (0.90)
Eligibility guidelines are too strict	3.10 (0.85)	2.98 (0.98)

The application procedure is too complicated	2.87 (0.88)	2.79 (0.97)
The method of disbursement is not convenient for me and my child	2.43 (0.89)	2.53 (0.90)

Note: The item responses range from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

These results were also reflected in our interviews with the beneficiaries and their parents. Several parents mentioned about the unclear criteria were obstacles for them

You have no idea how come you're no longer eligible when nothing has changed.
(36P)

I tried to apply this year, but I don't know, somehow never get I'm not sure, because maybe I just promoted. (43C)

Other parents mention that they did not know when the funds were dispersed.

I only know... for my number two, but still not receive yet, the teacher told me that on June that we received, we applied already for him ah now, because he just became primary one right, so maybe by June lah, but I don't know when is that. (34P)

Some even mention that they did not know about STSPMF.

I was not even aware that there is this [Straits Times Pocket Money Fund]. It's only I got to know from my elder son's Primary School. (22P)

4.2.2.3 Perceived effectiveness of STSPMF

As shown in Table 23, both parents and children were asked a series of identical questions adapted from the 2011 exploratory study (Han & Rothwell, 2011) to assess the perceived effectiveness of the STSPMF scheme across various areas.

Overall, responses in 2025 were consistent with those reported in 2011. As presented in Table 23, most parents reported positive perceptions of STSPMF's impact, particularly in improving their family's quality of life (M=4.09, SD=0.80), financial situation (M=4.09, SD=0.80), and reducing economic hardship (M=4.04, SD=0.82). Parents also perceived improvements in their child's school attendance (M=3.84, SD=0.94), nutrition (M=3.92, SD=0.88), and spending autonomy (M=4.01, SD=0.84). Similar ratings were observed among children, with means ranging from 3.69 to 4.03 across the same items. Compared to 2011, the mean scores for most indicators remained stable, suggesting a consistent perception

of effectiveness over time.

Table 23. Perceived effectiveness of STSPMF

	Mean (SD) of Parent	Mean (SD) of Child	Mean (SD) of Parent - 2011
1. Has helped improve the quality of life for my family	4.09 (0.80)	4.03 (0.79)	
2. Improved family budgeting or financial practices for my family	4.09 (0.80)	3.98 (0.80)	4.01 (0.55)
3. Reduced economic hardship for my family	4.04 (0.82)	4.00 (0.82)	4.04 (0.54)
4. Improved (my child's/my) school attendance	3.84 (0.94)	3.83 (0.91)	3.93 (0.58)
5. Improved (my child's/my) academic performance	3.76 (0.91)	3.69 (0.91)	3.80 (0.64)
6. Increased (my child's/my) participation in school CCA	3.79 (0.93)	3.79 (0.94)	3.80 (0.69)
7. Resulted in positive changes in (my child's/my) education plan	3.83 (0.89)	3.83 (0.86)	3.87 (0.59)
8. Improved the relationship with (my child/my parents)	3.85 (0.92)	3.88 (0.88)	3.86 (0.59)
9. Improved (my child/my) nutrition	3.92 (0.88)	3.77 (0.85)	3.85 (0.60)
10. Increased (my child's/my) self-esteem	3.83 (0.88)	3.82 (0.85)	3.85 (0.61)
11. Gave (my child/me) more choices about how to spend (his/her/my) money.	4.01 (0.84)	3.97 (0.83)	3.83 (0.64)
12. Made little influence on my parenting practices	3.48 (0.92)		3.16 (0.83)
13. Made little influence on the development of my child	3.39 (0.96)		3.11 (0.83)

Note: The item responses range from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

These results correspond the interviews which we had conducted, where many of the parents mentioned that STSPMF did improve the lives of the families as the funds were critical for the children's daily lives.

Yes, I think it made a great impact on my child, because it help you for the like school expenses, like school, eating, lunch, transport... we still manage to get through from organization, just tap in then we just, like, calculate everyday expenditure like this go

through lor, sometimes not enough. (18P)

So when I applied for her, her brother and her sister, I mean, it covers their pocket money, you know, like covers the food. For transport, luckily for both of them, except for the brother, he needs to take bus, but at least it covers the everyday expenses. They have their own pocket money, like, Ma, I don't need any extra, you know, this is sufficient. It does cover. (41P)

There are times whereby, we really barely have nothing, and then suddenly, like when I check the account, oh, STSPMF is in. Okay, so there's something to actually to spend for the house now (17P)

4.2.2.4 Financial Management

We asked parents how they used the fund from STSPMF. As seen in Table 24, majority of parents reportedly use the STSPMF for their child's pocket money (58.3%), bought groceries for cooking (31.3%), and paying utility bills (6.8%). It is positive to observe that the funding was being applied to address essential requirements for the family.

Table 24. Usage of STSPMF funds

Items	Yes (%)
1. Provide pocket money for my children	58.3
2. Buy groceries to cook at home	31.3
3. Pay utility bills	6.8
4. Pay for handphone and/or internet bills	5.0
5. Pay other outstanding bills	4.3
6. Eat out	2.9
7. Pay medical bills	2.9
8. Buy clothes	2.1
9. Pay for mortgage/rent	0.8
10. Pay credit card debt	0.7

We asked students to rank how they usually spend their pocket money with rank 1 being the most important and rank 9 being the least important. We also conducted a comparison of the findings with responses to the same question from the 2011 exploratory study (Han & Rothwell, 2011). From our results in Table 25, it is significant that the top five items in 2025 were ranked in the same order by children in the 2011 study. This suggests that, despite the passage of more than a decade, current STSPMF recipients continue to exhibit similar spending patterns, with a primary focus on essential needs.

Table 25. Students' Pocket Money Expenditure Patterns

	Items - 2025	Items - 2011
1 st	Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner (61.6)	Lunch
2 nd	Transportation (23.8)	Transportation
3 rd	Snacks and drinks (8.4)	Snacks and drinks
4 th	Buying stationery / textbooks (3.9)	Buying stationery
5 th	Saving (1.3)	Saving
6 th	Hobbies - Interests, Sports, Movies (0.4)	Paying handphone bills
7 th	Others -Medical fees, long-term saving, tuition etc. (0.3)	Gaming
8 th	Paying handphone bills (0.1)	
9 th	Shopping (Including online shopping) (0)	

Note: Number in parentheses indicate percentages.

Apart from spending habits, students were also asked about their saving and budgeting habits. As seen in Table 26, findings show that 88.6% of children try not to spend money that they have saved, higher than the results (74%) of the 2011 study (Han & Rothwell, 2011). Also, the proportion of students who had a savings goal in 2025 was also higher (51.9%) than the 2011 students (44.3%). It is also notable that 84.8% of students attributed saving more money to STSPMF, and 73% discuss their spending and saving habits with their parents.

Table 26. Saving and budgeting habits of students

Items	Yes (%) [2025]	Yes (%) [2011]
1. I try not to spend money that I have saved.	611 (88.6)	(74.0)
2. I have a savings goal (e.g. \$500 for a new handphone)	358 (51.9)	(44.3)
3. I discuss my spending and saving habits with my parents	504 (73.0)	
4. The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund makes me want to save more money	585 (84.8)	

Note: The item responses were either Yes or No.

These results were aligned with the insights that we have uncovered during the interview process, where many of the beneficiaries, both parents and children, indicated that STSPMF helped them save money.

I do keep for like rainy days, or, like, for example, if ... [the] educational material is pretty expensive. Then usually I wouldn't go to ask my parents, I'll just take out more

money that I saved. (18C)

I make sure I have enough savings, then whatever balance I can spend it on whatever that is needed. Saving is very important for me. I tend to save a lot when I get the School Pocket Money. I see the plus side in my bank, I still save. Saving for, like, rainy days, anything can happen. (33C)

Because he started learning how to, you know, start savings into his hand, how to think and use it. Previously, he was like, Mommy, can I go MacDonalD? ... but now, ...He said, never mind, I think I should keep this pocket money. Maybe for next month I will buy this thing. So, he's learning on a saving. (22P)

4.3 Well-being

Overall well-being is essential for STSPMF children as it supports their holistic development and ability to succeed in school and life. When children are physically healthy, socially connected, and emotionally supported, they are more likely to attend school regularly, stay engaged, build positive relationships, and cope with challenges. Fostering well-being lays the foundation for their long-term growth, learning, and resilience. As many items in this category lack prior benchmarks, the data was collected to establish a baseline for comparison in future studies.

4.3.1 Physical Health

Physical health contributes to the students' ability to attend school regularly, perform adequately, and participate in physical activities. Poor physical health which is derived from inadequate exercise and nutrition, can affect cognitive functioning and long-term development.

4.3.1.1 Fitness

Out of the 421 students who recorded their most recent National Physical Fitness Award (NAPFA) test, a majority of the students (82.4%) achieved at least a pass (Bronze) as seen in Table 27. This finding from Table 27 is consistent with the findings in Table 28, where children reported that they engage in regular exercise at least some of the time, reflecting a positive correlation between their self-reported exercise habits and their NAPFA test outcomes.

Table 27. NAPFA test results for students

Item	Fail (%)	Bronze (%)	Silver (%)	Gold (%)	Have not taken NAPFA test yet
I achieved the following result in my most recent NAPFA test.	74 (10.7)	167 (24.2)	116 (16.8)	64 (9.3)	269 (39)

Table 28. NAPFA test results for students

Items	Mean (SD) of Parent	Mean (SD) of Child
1. (My child/I) exercise(s) regularly on (his/her/my) own to keep healthy.	2.44 (0.83)	2.46 (0.81)

Note: The item responses range from None of the time (1) to All of the time (4).

4.3.1.2 Nutrition

In our findings, as seen in Table 29, most children stated they have money to buy meals / snacks when they are in school (M=2.93) most of the time, and they have enough to eat till they are full (M=3.01).

Table 29. Nutrition of students

Items	Mean (SD) of Parent	Mean (SD) of Child
1. (My child/I) (has/have) money to buy meals/snacks when (he/she/I) (is/am) in school	2.93 (0.78)	2.93 (0.79)
2. (My child/I) eat(s) foods like instant noodles, potato chips, sweets and chocolate	2.33 (0.61)	2.96 (0.65)
3. (My child/I) (has/have) enough food to eat till (he/she/I) (is/am) full	3.00 (0.74)	3.01 (0.77)

Note: The item responses range from None of the time (1) to All of the time (4).

As shown in Table 30, when presented with the My Healthy Plate (MHP) visual guide developed by the Health Promotion Board (HPB), students reported moderate adherence to healthier eating guidelines. The mean ratings indicated that students consumed at least a quarter of a plate of protein-rich foods such as meat, fish, eggs, or tofu (M=2.83, SD=0.77), a

similar amount of carbohydrates such as rice, bread, or noodles (M=2.45, SD=0.77), and at least half a plate of fruits and vegetables (M=2.80, SD=0.85). Parent-reported responses closely mirrored those of the students, with mean values ranging from 2.45 to 2.82. The similarity in parent and child responses suggests a high degree of agreement in perceptions of the child’s dietary habits.

Table 30. Adherence to Healthier Eating Guidelines

Items	Mean (SD) of Parent	Mean (SD) of Child
1. (My child/I) eat(s) at least half a plate of vegetables and fruits every day	2.73 (0.85)	2.80 (0.85)
2. (My child/I) eat(s) at least a quarter of a plate of meat, fish, seafood, eggs, tofu, or nuts every day.	2.82 (0.76)	2.83 (0.77)
3. (My child/I) eat(s) at least a quarter of a plate of brown rice, wholemeal bread, white rice, bread, noodles, or pasta every day.	2.45 (0.80)	2.45 (0.77)

Note: The item responses range from None of the time (1) to All of the time (4).



4.3.2 Social Health

Social health, which means having good relationships and communication skills, affects how well a child does in school. Children with strong social health and social networks are more likely to be motivated and do well in school performance.

4.3.2.1 Friendships

As shown in Table 31, students were asked about the quality of their friendships and their social interactions. Most students reported having good friends in school (M=4.15, SD=0.83) and engaging in social activities with them (M=3.97, SD=0.88). Parent responses closely aligned with those of their children, with similar mean ratings for both items. These findings indicate a generally positive social experience among students.

Table 31. Friendships of students

Items	Mean (SD) of Parent	Mean (SD) of Child
1. (My child/I) (has/have) good friends in school	4.09 (0.80)	4.15 (0.83)
2. (My child/I) meet(s) (his/her/my) friends to engage in social activities	3.94 (0.86)	3.97 (0.88)

Note: The item responses range from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

4.3.3 Emotional Health

Emotional health plays an important role in supporting a child’s overall well-being and learning. Students who are emotionally resilient and motivated are more likely to navigate challenges and develop holistically. The following sections report on various aspects of emotional health, including resilience, intrinsic motivation, and extrinsic motivation.

4.3.3.1 Resilience

As summarised in Table 32, students demonstrated positive signs of resilience. Many reported having previously overcome difficult problems on their own (M=3.86, SD=0.81) and expressed confidence in their ability to improve academically even after receiving disappointing grades (M=4.02, SD=0.77). Parent responses were similarly positive, indicating a shared view of the child’s capacity for resilience. While parents and children reported moderate levels of worry (M=2.94 and Mean=3.04, respectively), the overall results suggest that most children exhibit healthy coping mechanisms.

Table 32. Resilience of students

Items	Mean (SD) of Parent	Mean (SD) of Child
1. (My child/I) (has/have) overcome difficult problems & situations on (his/her/my) own before	3.77 (0.85)	3.86 (0.81)
2. When (my child/I) get(s) a grade that is not as good as expected, (his/her/I) still (has/have) confidence (his/her/I) can do better next time round	4.00 (0.76)	4.02 (0.77)
3. (My child/I) (worries/worry) a lot	2.94 (0.96)	3.04 (1.05)

Note: The item responses range from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

4.3.3.2 Intrinsic Motivation

As shown in Table 33, students reported healthy levels of intrinsic motivation. They strongly agreed that they want to do their best in life (M=4.46, SD=0.67), enjoy learning new things (M=4.31, SD=0.71), strive to do their best in all tasks (M=4.28, SD=0.70), and are able to

self-motivate (M=4.12, SD=0.75). These responses indicate a strong internal drive toward learning and personal growth.

Table 33. Intrinsic Motivation of students

Items	Mean (SD)
1. I want to do my best in life	4.46 (0.67)
2. I like to learn new things	4.31 (0.71)
3. I do everything to the best of my ability	4.28 (0.70)
4. I can motivate myself to excel in what I do	4.12 (0.75)

Note: The item responses range from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

These results were also reflected in the interviews, where some of the participants did mention that they are able to self-motivate when they do not do as well as they hoped.

Actually, the start of my year one... I didn't get a very good GPA, like, it was only, like, 2.4... just kept trying very, very hard... Then just continue studying until I reach my goal, which I technically did, like I only graduated in like a 3.04 (18C)

Because of the people around me, I see they are getting so good. Never about me. I only get a little bit only. So I want to be like them. I want to get better. (38C)

4.3.3.3 Extrinsic Motivation

As shown in Table 34, children also reported healthy levels of extrinsic motivation. Most students expressed a desire to do well in school for their own future (M=4.40, SD=0.69), for their parents (M=4.26, SD=0.80), and for their teachers (M=3.83, SD=0.96). In addition, many indicated that they have clear academic goals, such as specific results they aim to achieve for major examinations (M=4.02, SD=0.83). Parent responses were generally in agreement, though slightly lower in magnitude. These results suggest that students are not only internally motivated but also driven by external goals and social expectations.

Table 34. Extrinsic Motivation of students

Items	Mean (SD) of Parent	Mean (SD) of Child
1. (My child/I) want(s) to do well in school for (his/her/my) own future.	3.86 (0.90)	4.40 (0.69)
2. (My child/I) want(s) to do well in school for (me/my parents)	4.39 (0.80)	4.26 (0.80)
3. (My child/I) want(s) to do well in school for (his/her/my)	3.78 (1.04)	3.83 (0.96)

teachers		
4. (My child/I) know(s) what results (he/she/I) want(s) to get for PSLE/O Levels/A Levels/ITE/Polytechnic exam etc..	3.50 (1.04)	4.02 (0.83)

Note: The item responses range from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Our interviews seem to reflect something similar.

[My child] the one who's planning for his studies ahead, because he wants to go into army and further. He's looking for a business learning, so he wants to do MBA and stuff. (22P)

5. Discussion

This project was initiated to evaluate the current STSPMF and to gain a deeper understanding of the evolving needs of its beneficiaries. The ultimate aim is to refine the programme so that its design and delivery are more closely aligned with the real and emerging needs of the families it serves. To that end, this evaluation set out to address the following four key questions:

1. What is the impact of STSPMF on student attendance in school, academic performance and non-academic performance?
2. Does STSPMF help to improve quality of life for beneficiaries and their families?
3. Does STSPMF encourage better financial management?
4. Does STSPMF impact the development of a child in terms of their overall well-being (physical, social and emotional)?

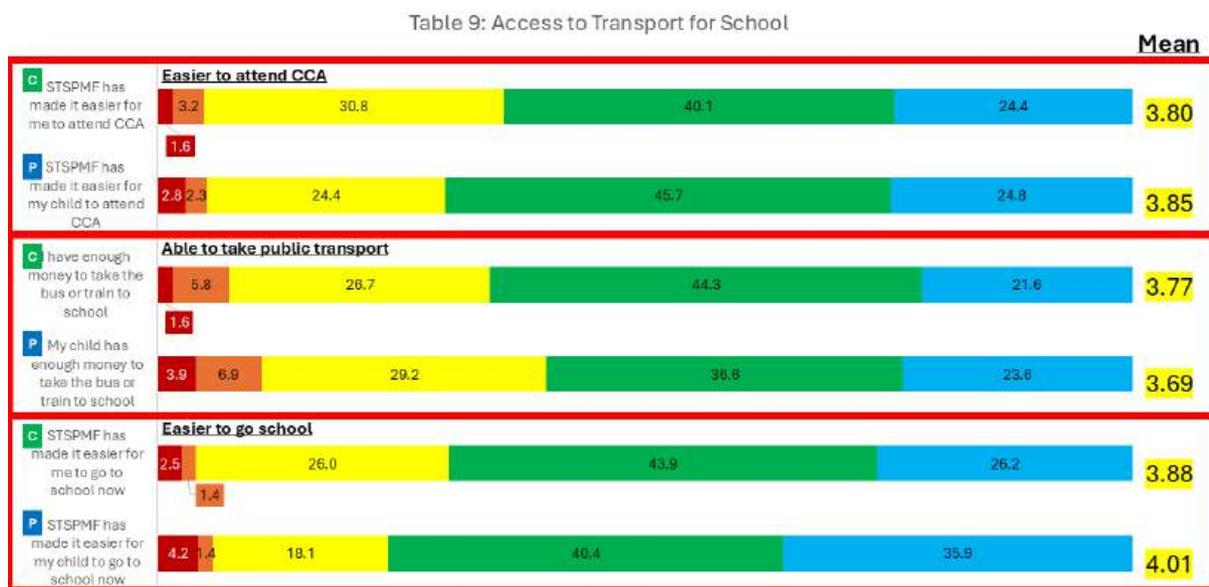
The following discussion presents five key insights drawn from quantitative data, corroborated by qualitative interviews with beneficiaries and their families, alongside two principal areas for improvement.

5.1 Key Findings

Finding 1: STSPMF Supports School Engagement and Holistic Development

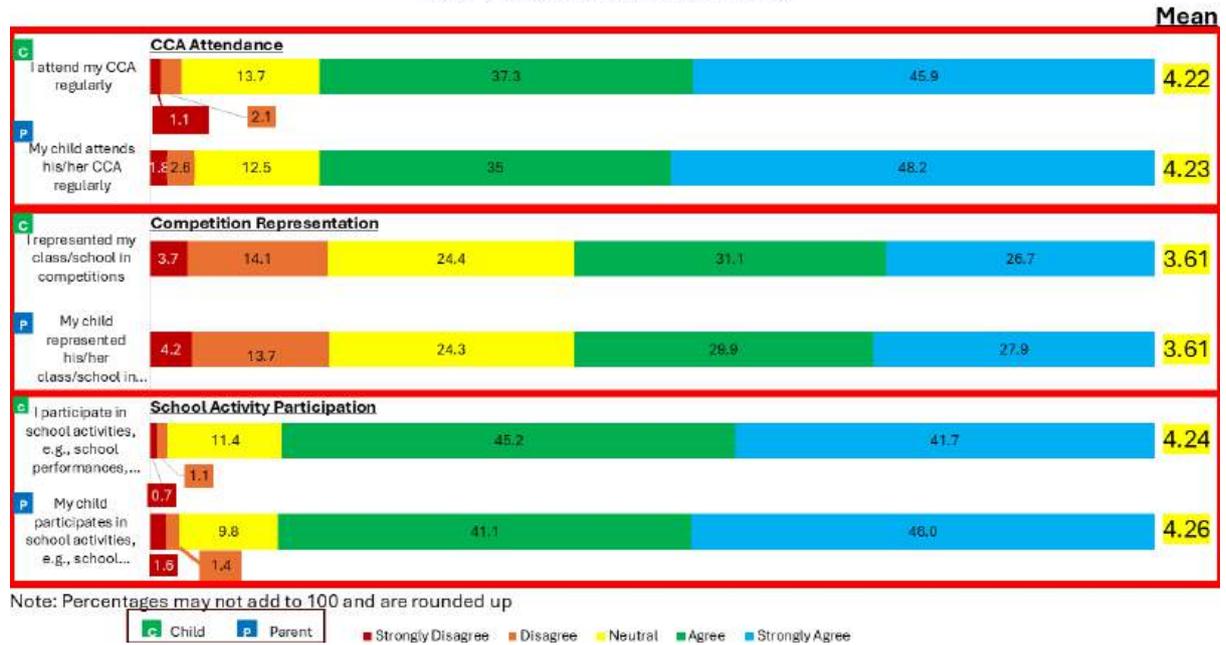
Findings suggest that STSPMF supports students' non-academic development by enabling participation in co-curricular activities (CCAs) and enrichment programmes. This conclusion is drawn from both survey data and qualitative interviews.

Survey results indicate that STSPMF contributes to greater engagement in school life, with students participating more actively in a range of school activities. Both parents (M = 4.01, M = 3.85) and children (M = 3.88, M = 3.80) agree to a large extent that STSPMF enabled access to school and co-curricular activities (Table 9). Children also reported sufficient transport support (M = 3.77), with parents echoing similar sentiment (M = 3.69).



Broader school participation was high. Children indicated frequent engagement, with mean ratings of 4.22 for regular CCA attendance, 3.61 for representing their school or class in competitions, and 4.24 for participation in school activities. Parents provided comparable assessments, reporting mean scores of 4.23, 3.61, and 4.26, respectively, for these same domains (Table 15a).

Table 15a. Non-Academic outcomes



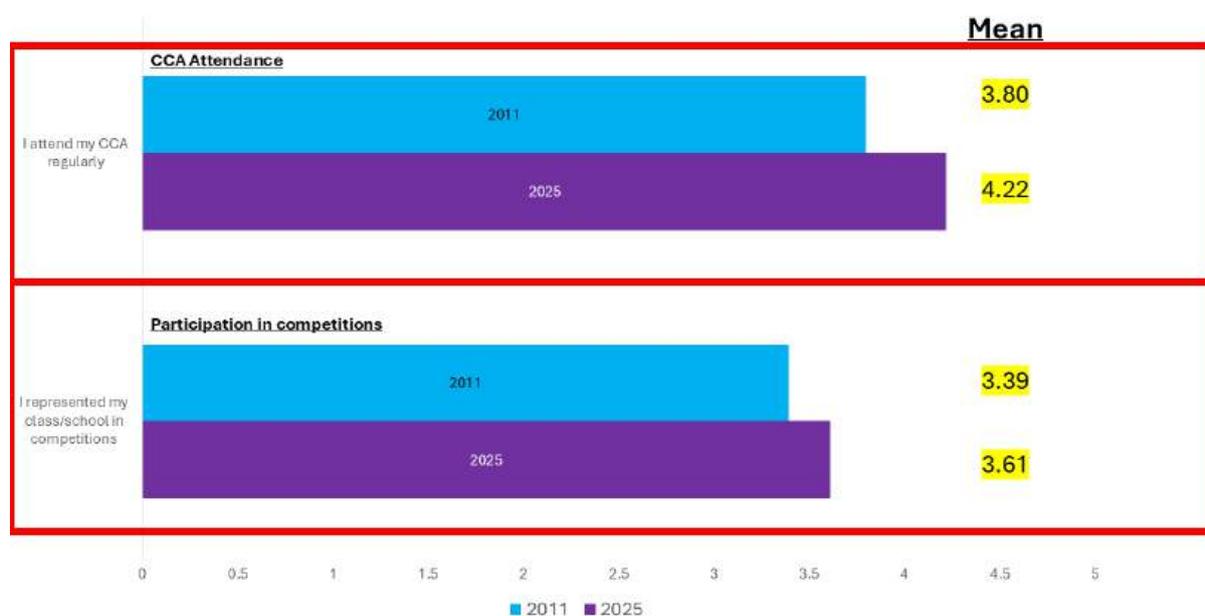
Enjoyment of school was rated positively by both children (M = 4.06) and parents (M = 4.10) (Table 15b).

Table 15b. Non-Academic outcomes



Compared with the 2011 study, there was a marked increase in participation in CCAs (M = 3.80 to 4.22) and in school or class competitions (M = 3.39 to 3.61) (Table 15c).

Table 15c. Changes in Average Non-Academic Outcomes (2011 vs. 2025)



Qualitative interviews provide examples of how the STSPMF have helped students remain in school for CCAs or afford transport to attend them. These provisions helped them engage more deeply with school life and develop confidence through peer interaction. For example, one parent shared that with STSPMF, “At least, [her son] has money to take transport” and that the fund was used “To top up the fares. Without the fund, it is really difficult.” When asked if pocket money fund made it easier for a student to attend his school CCA, the parent stated that it does indeed make it easier as “MOE and FAS only top up \$70. It’s not enough per month. So, with the \$65, it helps us to top up his EZ link when he needs it”. Another parent expressed a similar perspective, sharing that “[STSPMF] does help to actually top up, like \$10 to \$15 more on top of what we get from FAS”. One parent also noted that STSPMF does help as the fund is used to purchase art materials like “paint, colours, brushes” which is used by her daughter for her art CCA.

Students also described ways in which the scheme may have influenced their participation. One student also mentioned that the fund “was enough for me to buy a new laptop... So it helped me to smoothen my poly journey.” Another recalled, “Yes, definitely the fund help[ed] me in attending CCA. I remember during my P4, I still had the funds. I had basketball training. With the fund, I had the money to travel, so I used it then I can join [CCA].” When asked if STSPMF improve their family’s quality of life, one student responded that the fund is enough for her to “buy the school bag and the shoes”.

Overall, the data and interviews point to STSPMF providing support to the student’s non-academic development by helping to reduce potential barriers to participation in CCAs and enrichment programmes.

Finding 2: Families Report STSPMF Provides Some Financial Relief

The results from the quantitative survey and qualitative interviews suggest that the STSPMF helps to ease household financial pressures. Quantitative data indicated strong agreement from both parents and children that STSPMF improved their quality of life and helped with household budgeting. A majority of parents reported that STSPMF helped improve their family’s quality of life (M = 4.09), reduced economic hardship (M = 4.04), and improved financial planning (M = 4.09) (Table 23a).

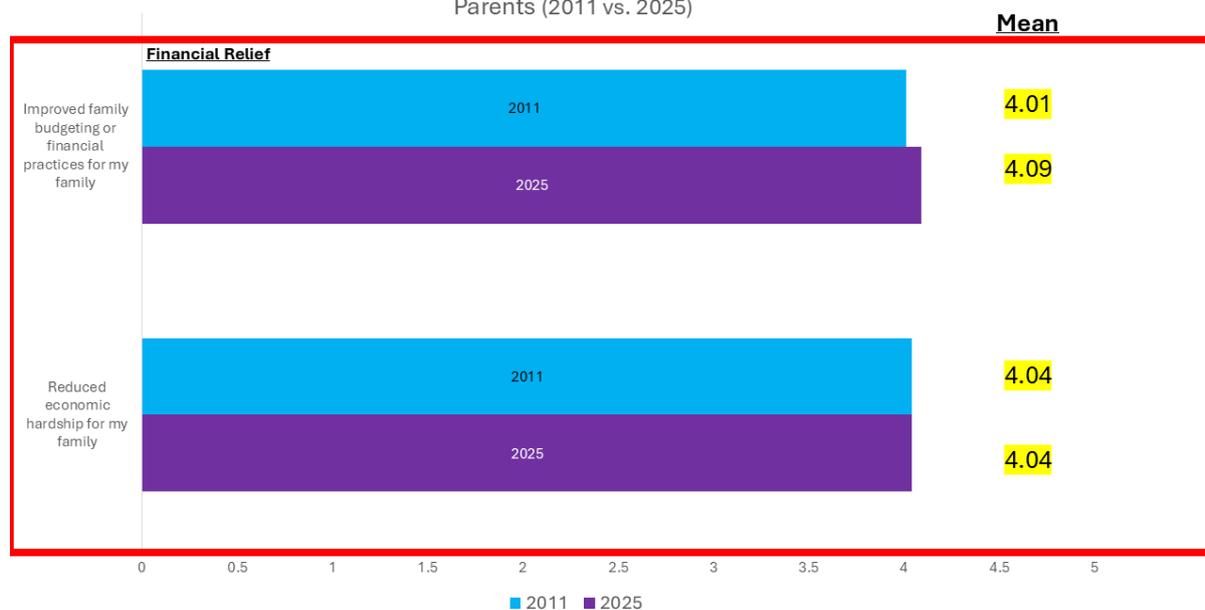
Table 23a. Perceived effectiveness of STSPMF According to Parents



Note: Percentages may not add to 100 and are rounded up
 Legend: Strongly Disagree (Red), Disagree (Orange), Neutral (Yellow), Agree (Green), Strongly Agree (Blue)

This was also consistent with the findings from the 2011 study, where a majority of parents also reported that STSPMF helped reduce economic hardship (M = 4.04), and improved financial planning (M = 4.01) (Table 23b).

Table 23b. Changes in Average Perceived Effectiveness of STSPMF According to Parents (2011 vs. 2025)



Parents reported that the assistance is mainly directed towards essential needs, such as pocket money (58.3%) and groceries (31.3%) (Table 24). This aligns with students’ responses on how they spend their pocket money, primarily on meals (61.6%) and transportation (23.8%) (Table 25a). Additionally, the responses of students from the 2025 and 2011 study agree that students spent most of their income on daily necessities such as food and transport (Table 25b).

Table 24. Usage of STSPMF funds by parents

Items	Yes (%)
1. Provide pocket money for my children	58.3
2. Buy groceries to cook at home	31.3
3. Pay utility bills	6.8
4. Pay for handphone and/or internet bills	5.0
5. Pay other outstanding bills	4.3
6. Eat out	2.9
7. Pay medical bills	2.9
8. Buy clothes	2.1
9. Pay for mortgage/rent	0.8
10. Pay credit card debt	0.7

Table 25a. Students’ Pocket Money Expenditure Patterns

	Items – 2025 (%)
1 st	Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner (61.6)
2 nd	Transportation (23.8)
3 rd	Snacks and drinks (8.4)
4 th	Buying stationery / textbooks (3.9)
5 th	Saving (1.3)
6 th	Hobbies - Interests, Sports, Movies (0.4)
7 th	Others -Medical fees, long-term saving, tuition etc. (0.3)
8 th	Paying handphone bills (0.1)
9 th	Shopping (Including online shopping) (0)

Note: Number in parentheses indicate percentages.

Table 25b. Students’ Pocket Money Expenditure Patterns

	Items - 2025	Items - 2011
1 st	Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner	Lunch
2 nd	Transportation	Transportation
3 rd	Snacks and drinks	Snacks and drinks
4 th	Buying stationery / textbooks	Buying stationery
5 th	Saving	Saving
6 th	Hobbies - Interests, Sports, Movies	Paying handphone bills
7 th	Others -Medical fees, long-term saving, tuition etc.	Gaming
8 th	Paying handphone bills	
9 th	Shopping (Including online shopping)	

This suggests that students exercise financial responsibility and that the fund is being used as intended, which is to supplement essential school-related expenses.

To better understand how STSPMF provides financial relief for the families, interviews were conducted, and they highlighted how STSPMF helps families particularly for school meals and food before or after CCA sessions. One mother explained that the fund allowed her to purchase healthier grocery options for her children, “Instead of canned food, I will buy veggie, meat, fish, whatever in the supermarket will be better healthier choice for me, healthier meal for my children.” Her child noted that after receiving the fund, she “definitely got money to buy food in school” as compared to before where she “was skipping meals” and

“[sleeping] through [her] lunch break” With the STSPMF, she is now able to “stay back in school, to do work with friends or everything, at least I know that at least I can eat in school”.

Other parents described similar experiences. One mother recalled that before receiving the fund, the family sometimes had to combine meals, saying: “No money, dinner and lunch, lunch and dinner together in one”. After receiving STSPMF, the family was able to eat “three times a day”. Another mother mentioned that the fund helped her purchase food for her child as “There are times whereby we really barely have nothing... then suddenly I check the account, oh, funds is in. So there's something to actually spend for the house.”

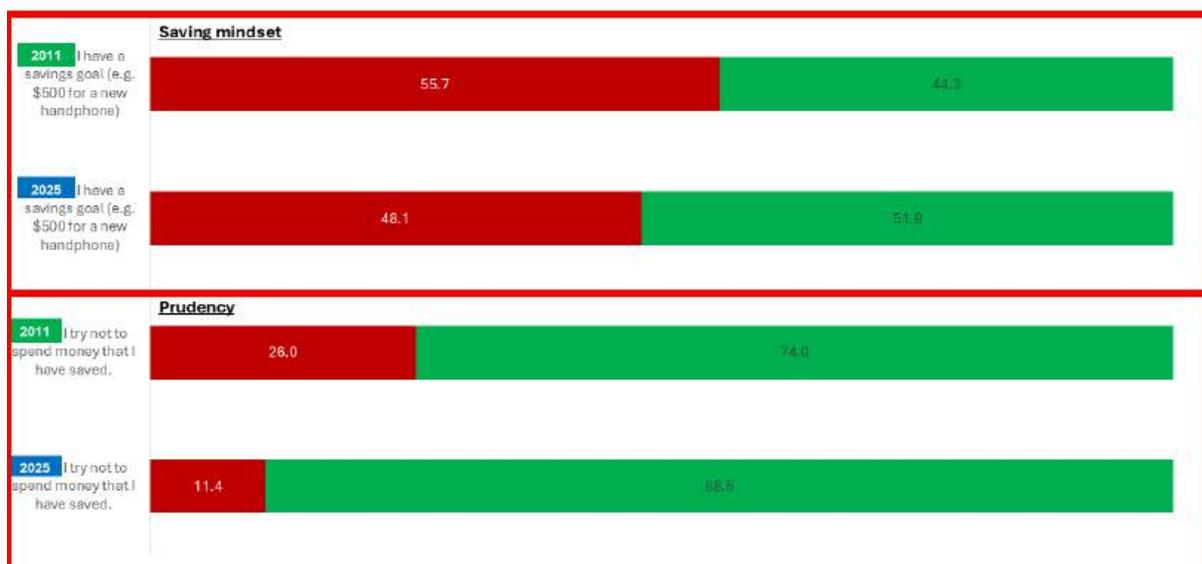
Students also reflected on the financial support by STSPMF. One shared that having the allowance allowed her to “eat before basketball CCA,” which helped her to perform better and feel more included. Another explained that the fund gave her “have more choices in buying [food] in school, because sometimes the school food there, can be quite expensive... And then if I have extra curriculums, I won't have lunch. So without fund, I have to save my stomach until I get home. Then with the fund, I get to eat moderately for my energy. Especially for my long days, so I'm quite grateful for that.” When asked if the STSPMF gave her better choices when it comes to buying food, one student agreed that it does as it “give me more choice... I don't have to worry because I have the school pocket money”

Taken together, the quantitative and qualitative findings suggest that, while modest in amount, the STSPMF does contribute to easing financial strain for recipient families. Although other factors likely also influence household financial well-being, the scheme appears to play a supportive role in helping families meet essential needs.

Finding 3: Students Demonstrate Responsible Financial Behaviour

The surveys and interviews suggest that the STSPMF may contribute to cultivating responsible financial habits among students. Many students reported saving regularly, setting personal saving goals, and discussing financial matters with their parents. Survey data indicated that 88.6% of students try not to spend their savings, 84.8% felt that the fund encouraged them to save more, and 51.9% had a savings goal (Table 26a and Table 26b). These figures showed a moderate improvement from the 2011 study (Han & Rothwell, 2011), where only 74.0% try not to spend their savings and 44.3% had a savings goal (Table 26a and Table 26b).

Table 26a. Saving and budgeting habits of students (2011 vs. 2025)



Note: Percentages may not add to 100 and are rounded up

Table 26b. Saving and budgeting habits of students



Note: Percentages may not add to 100 and are rounded up

Interview responses further illustrate how the STSPMF might help students differentiate between needs and wants, budget for necessities, and prepare for emergencies. Several parents observed signs of greater financial maturity in their children. One parent described how her child had developed a habit of saving: “Previously, he was like, Mommy, can I go MacDonald, Mommy? ... but now ... He said, Never mind. I think I should keep this pocket money. Maybe for next month I will buy this thing.” She noted that her child had saved his STSPMF and for the “last two years, he has been gifting me present on my birthday...with [STSPMF], which I told him is for him, but then he said that if this is for him, he can use something out of that to...give to me.” Her child also mentioned that he also shared his grant from STSPMF with his brother: “So then when I pick [my brother] up, I just give him a milo and drink.” It was truly heartwarming to hear that we have an example of students are saving their STSPMF, and that they are willing to step up to support their families when needed.

Other students also shared examples of saving and making deliberate spending choices. One explained, “I do keep for like rainy days... I wouldn’t go to ask my parents, I’ll just take out more money that I saved,” adding that when she has extra money, she “will just fork up a bit” to “help [her parents] cover some household expenses” like groceries, reflecting both a saving habit and consideration for her parents. Another student reported that “I just bring water bottle. Or even I bring food from home to save money,” adding that “sometimes me and my mom would go out for a meal, and sometimes I’ll pay that kind of thing”. Another student stated that having the pocket money fund motivated him to save more and that “I got more money, to give mama, to keep for me”.

These findings suggest that beyond its immediate financial role, the STSPMF serves as an entry point to encourage essential life skills in financial prudence.

Finding 4: Examining Students’ Social and Emotional Health

Examining Students’ Motivation and Social Health

Quantitative data from the surveys suggest that students display both intrinsic and extrinsic forms of motivation. Many agreed that they wanted to do well in life (M = 4.46) and enjoyed learning (M = 4.31) (Table 33), while others were driven by the desire to achieve goals for their families or future careers (M = 4.40) (Table 34).

Table 33. Intrinsic Motivation of students



Note: Percentages may not add to 100 and are rounded up

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Table 34. Extrinsic Motivation of students

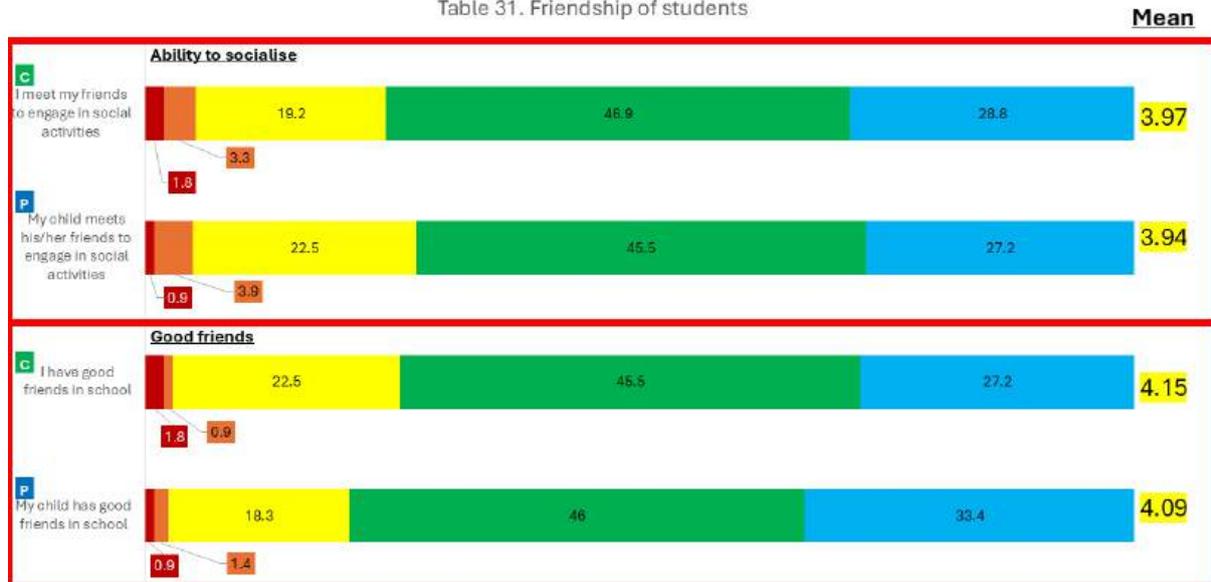


Note: Percentages may not add to 100 and are rounded up

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

In addition, both parents and students agreed that students have good friends in school (M = 4.09 and M = 4.15 respectively) and regularly meet them for social activities (M = 3.94 and M = 3.97 respectively) (Table 31). The close alignment of these means suggests that parents and children share similar outlooks.

Table 31. Friendship of students



Note: Percentages may not add to 100 and are rounded up

C Child P Parent Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Although we are unable to establish a direct causal relationship between the STSPMF programme and these motivational factors as there are multiple contributing factors like peer

comparisons, increased participation in CCA or academic scholarship opportunities, the interviews offer a valuable perspective into what motivates these students.

Several students articulated a clear sense of long-term ambition and purpose. One student described their goal as achieving “financial freedom” and that “I want to achieve that by, like, actually studying, then, like, like, reaching, like, high levels, levels of study, so I have, like, more achievements to like present myself when I have high paying jobs,” adding that he wanted to do well for his mother. Another reflected on how their social environment shaped their aspirations: “Because of the people around me, I see they are getting so good. Never about me. I only get a little bit only. So, I want to be like them. I want to get better.” These statements reflect a strong extrinsic motivation shaped by aspirations for upward mobility and social comparison.

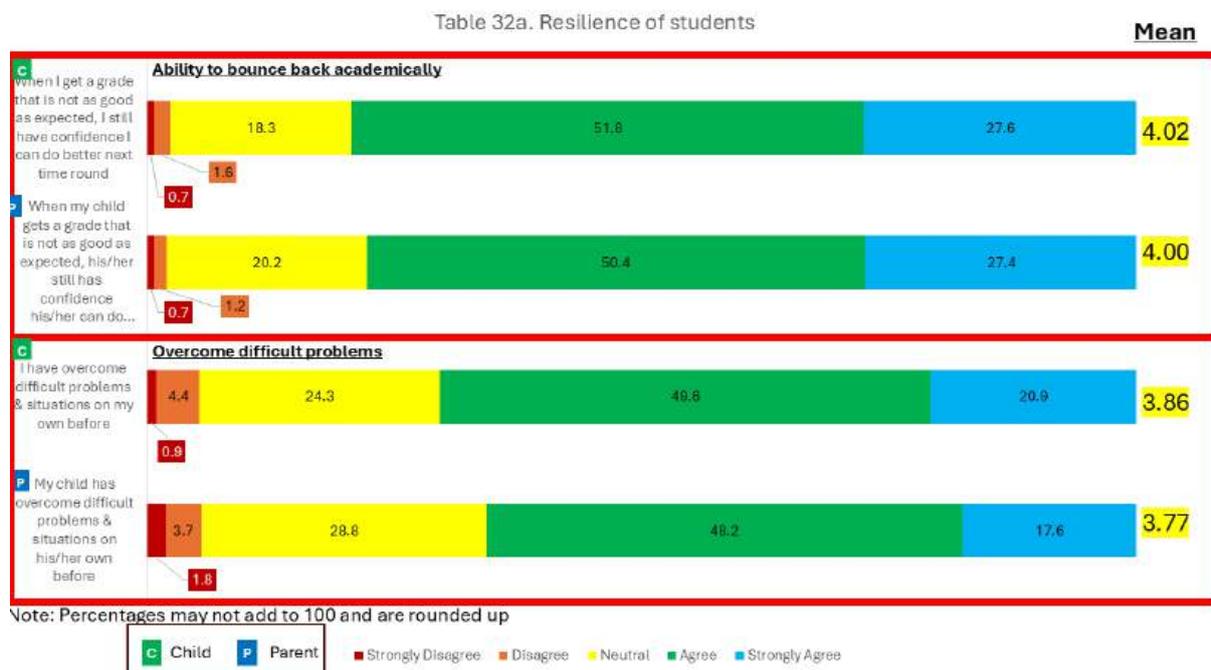
Other student interviewees emphasised a deeply personal commitment to academic achievement. One student recalled, “I just kept trying very, very hard... Then I will just continue on studying well, like making sure that I'm okay in school... I only graduated in like a 3.04. Yeah, I think the big jump of GPA is something I'm very proud of.” Another student mentioned that it was his goal in life “to do policy making because I've done a lot of hands-on work and also started on my own ground-up initiative to help youth. I like to give back to the community also, so I think beyond working in government, maybe I also like to do education also.” These accounts suggest intrinsic motivation rooted in persistence, self-improvement, and a desire to contribute to others.

Interview responses overall suggest that students are driven by a combination of internal desire to succeed and external pressures or incentives. While the STSPMF fund may contribute indirectly by alleviating background stressors (e.g., food insecurity or transport costs), the key motivational forces themselves appear largely self-directed or socially influenced. Further targeted research would be required to determine the extent of STSPMF’s influence on these factors. This also presents a potential area for STSPMF to explore, by creating programmes or shared services aimed at helping them realise their full potential.

Review of student resilience and self-confidence

Survey responses suggest that students possess a moderate degree of resilience and self-confidence. Many students reported that they were able to overcome academic difficulties (M = 3.86) and had confidence in improving after receiving a lower-than-expected grade (M =

4.02). Parents largely echoed these sentiments (M = 3.77 and M = 4.00, respectively) (Table 32a).



While a direct causal link between STSPMF and student resilience cannot be determined from the data due to the many other confounding factors that impact on resilience, qualitative interviews offer insight into how students perceive and respond to challenges. When asked whether they believed they could perform better after an academic setback, one student said, “100%. You never stop learning.” Another shared how they adapted their learning approach after failing a chemistry mock test: “I felt that if I really don’t study, I need to buckle up... the school resources... it’s like not how I wanted to learn, not effective, so I have to study on my own, bring my own textbook. I studied on my own and I managed to pull up my grades,” demonstrating a refusal to give up and a proactive effort to improve.

These accounts highlight a recurring theme of self-agency and determination. One student reflected, “You always have to take charge of your own learning,” and emphasised self-reliance: “You really need to be able to be independent and to understand that like the only thing in life you can control is yourself.” Another student explained that she is able to motivate herself to do well in school: “Sometimes when I feel very down, I just think of what I can achieve if I do well in school. and then I always think about what I can do to help others around me. That’ll help to motivate myself to do well and work hard, work smart.”

While STSPMF may help buffer some external stressors, for instance, by providing stability around meals or transport, students' resilience and self-confidence appear to be shaped more strongly by internal resolve, social support, and lived experiences. A deeper examination could explore whether and how STSPMF might complement or reinforce these traits. Beyond direct financial assistance, this could be an area where STSPMF contributes further impact, by developing shared services or programmes that foster social and emotional intelligence.

5.2 Areas for Improvement

The perceptions of STSPMF were positive, with the majority of families demonstrating an understanding of its purpose and mission, as reflected in Table 18 and Table 20.

Table 18. Details of STSPMF

	Mean
I know the details of STSPMF that apply to me (e.g. Amount disbursed to us, duration of disbursement, qualifying criteria etc.)	3.80

Note: The item responses range from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Table 20. Perception of STSPMF brand

	Mean
I believe that STSPMF clearly communicates its mission and vision to me	4.10

Note: The item responses range from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Programme Design: Duration, Amount, and Accessibility

However, through the surveys and interviews, several families expressed concerns about the current structure of the STSPMF. The short duration of support, unclear eligibility criteria, and administrative complexity were common themes. Survey results indicate that while STSPMF is helpful, there are persistent concerns about its adequacy and accessibility. Parents gave lower ratings when asked whether the amount disbursed was sufficient ($M = 3.49$) and whether the duration of assistance was long enough ($M = 3.63$) (Table 22a).

Table 22a. Limitations of STSPMF



Note: Percentages may not add to 100 and are rounded up

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

This trend was also observed in the 2011 study, where the ratings for the amount disbursed was sufficient (M = 3.42) and whether the duration of assistance was long enough (M = 3.60) (Han & Rothwell, 2011) (Table 22b). As the 2025 and 2011 study reflect similar averages, it is implied that these may be persistent problems of STSPMF.

Table 22b. Trends in Average Ratings of the Fund's Limitations According to Parents (2011 vs. 2025)



Additionally, based on our findings in Table 21, a significant proportion of beneficiaries received more pocket money than the amount provided by STSPMF.

Table 21. Amount of pocket money per month

Segment	Up to \$40	\$41 ~ \$64	\$65 ~ \$80	\$81 ~\$99	\$100 ~ \$124	\$125 ~ \$150	More than \$150
Primary School Children	3.2 %	0.5 %	35.8 %	19.5 %	19.0 %	15.2 %	6.5 %
Secondary School Children	41.0%	5.4 %	14.1 %	0.83 %	17.8 %	5.4 %	15.3 %
Post-Secondary	27.4 %	3.5 %	4.7 %	0 %	22.6 %	1.2 %	40.5 %

This suggests that many parents had to supplement their children’s allowances to ensure they had enough for school-related expenses, indicating that the current support may be insufficient. Furthermore, the rise in inflation and cost of living may have outpaced the increase in financial assistance over time. It is also possible that participants in 2025 had greater access to other financial schemes compared to those in 2011. For instance, the number of available grants taken by STSPMF beneficiaries increased from 14 in 2011 to over 18 in 2025. In addition, broader cost pressures may have been offset by enhanced national subsidies, such as U-Save rebates, CDC vouchers, and school meal subsidies.

In interviews, some parents shared confusion over application timelines and eligibility changes, while others found the support window too brief, particularly for families whose financial situation remained unchanged. For example, one parent noted that “The period when I am struggling financially and all when they stopped the funding. You don’t know what will happen in the future. That period I was still thinking it is okay, I managed to save. Once they stopped, my saving all gone.” Another stated that “You have no idea how come you're no longer eligible when nothing has changed.” One parent suggested that “If [STSPMF] can extend to a longer term, as long as that child is still having that education.”

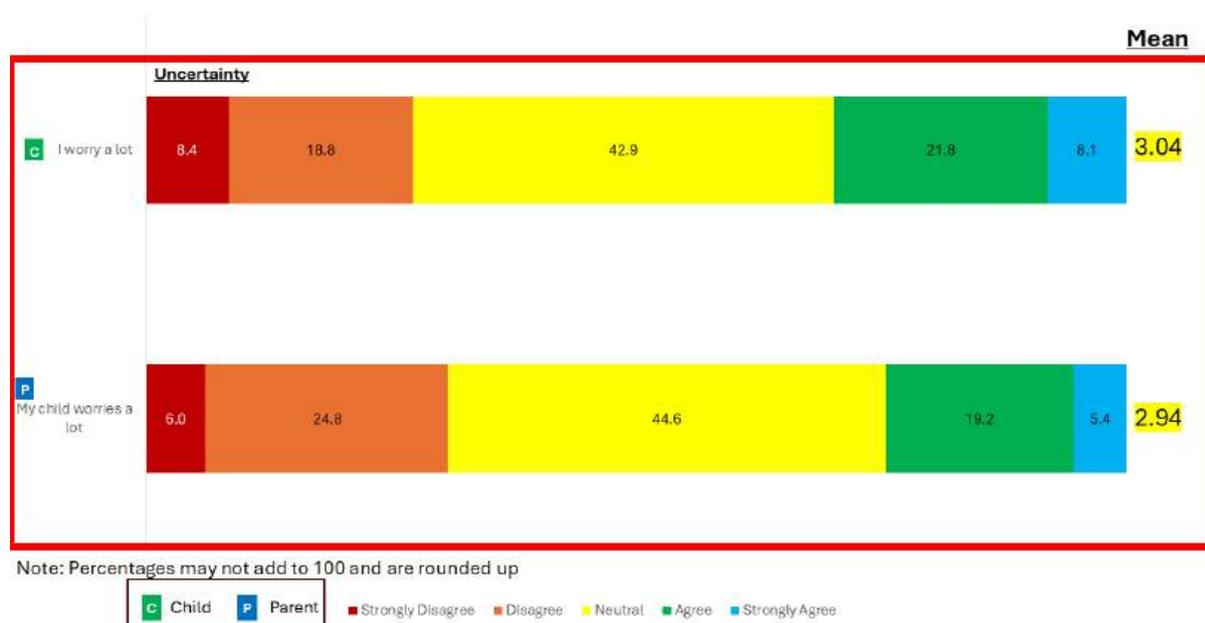
These findings suggest that a review of the assistance period, clearer communication of eligibility guidelines, and streamlined application processes could enhance accessibility and impact.

More Support Needed for Social-Emotional Development

While students reported high levels of motivation, the data and interviews also pointed to gaps in confidence, emotional regulation, and clarity of long-term aspirations. For example,

from our findings, “I worry a lot” received a child-reported mean of 3.04 while parents reported a mean of 2.94 (Table 32b).

Table 32b. Resilience of students



In terms of support systems, fewer students had access to enrichment workshops or structured developmental programmes through the STSPMF initiative. These may limit students' ability to fully translate motivation into action.

Some students described feeling excluded from peer activities due to financial limitations. One student noted that “Yes, I like to social with friends, but sometimes when they go out, I have to excuse myself because I don’t have money.” Others spoke of challenges in navigating the education system, noting that they needed to adapt their own learning strategies to succeed. One student shared, “the school resources and it’s like not how I wanted to learn, not effective, so I have to study on my own, bring my own textbook. I studied on my own and I managed to pull up my grades.”

Parents expressed a desire for more structured developmental opportunities, such as enrichment workshops, peer support groups, or access to interest-based learning, that could support confidence-building and emotional growth. One of the parents mentioned that “My children always wanted extra classes, ... like join football team outside, but that will cost a lot, especially when you have five kids.” Some parents even asked for trainings for themselves. One such parent, when asked if she would attend upskilling course on topics like AI, financial planning, and mental health, she mentioned that “I think it’s very beneficial”

and she will consider taking as “Yeah, I need to upgrade myself also, you know, the skillsfuture, taking course”

These findings suggest that a review of the STSPMF programme, particularly the creation of a coordinated support structure for students, could enhance the impact of the fund.

5.3 Limitations

This study is not without limitations. The sample size, while sufficient for exploratory analysis, may not be fully representative of the broader population of beneficiaries. The data was also self-reported, which introduces the possibility of social desirability bias or recall error.

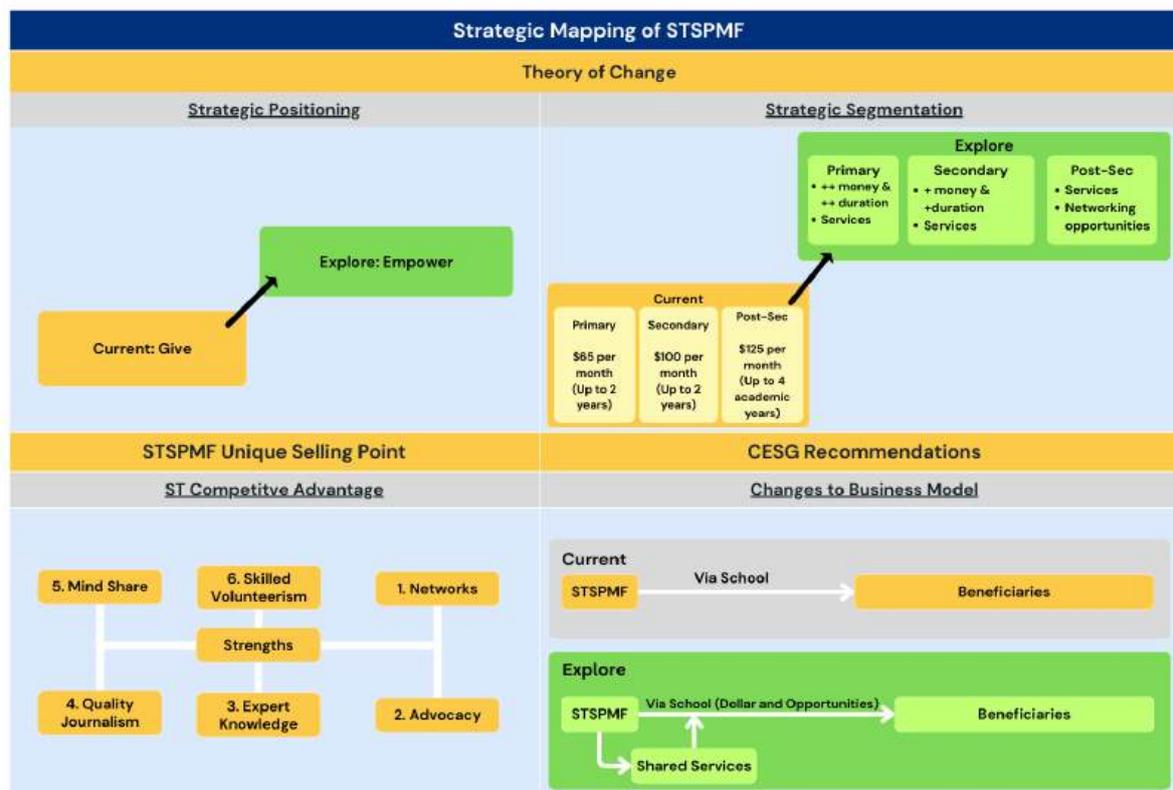
Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of the survey prevents causal inferences. The study was conducted within a limited geographic context, and findings may not generalise to other regions. Future research should consider a larger and more diverse sample and explore longitudinal methods to track developmental changes over time. It is also worth noting that some of the variables measured were newly introduced and lacked prior data for comparison. Consequently, these findings will serve as benchmarks for future studies.

5.4 Recommendations to Strengthen STSPMF

Drawing on the key findings of this mixed-methods study and research on best practices for charities, supplemented by insights from stakeholder focus group discussions, we conducted our own impact measurement analysis (Ang, 2025a, 2025b) and propose a strategic realignment of the STSPMF Fund. Visualised as in diagram 1 below, this proposal is structured around three interconnected components:

- (1) a revised theory of success,
- (2) the articulation of STSPMF’s unique value proposition, and
- (3) the evolution of STSPMF’s delivery and business model.

Diagram 1: Strategic Mapping of STSPMF



5.4.1 Revised Theory of Success

We propose two key shifts in the fund’s strategic orientation, guided by both quantitative trends and qualitative insights. These shifts aim to address identified gaps, such as the need for stronger social and emotional support, while building on the programme’s existing strengths. The first shift focuses on moving from a model of giving to one of empowerment, while the second involves changes in strategic segmentation.

Theory of Change 1: Strategic Positioning shift from Giving to Empowering

Our findings indicate that while direct financial assistance remains critical in alleviating short-term hardship, beneficiaries require broader developmental support to achieve long-term success. We therefore recommend that STSPMF evolve from a primarily financial aid model to one centred on empowerment.

This could include the integration of services such as:

1. subsidised academic enrichment (e.g., tuition, literacy, or digital skills support),
2. social-emotional learning programmes,
3. access to mental health and counselling resources, and
4. structured mentorship initiatives.

The intent is to scaffold financial aid with targeted supports that promote resilience, confidence, and long-term capability development among students.

Theory of Change 2: Strategic Segmentation of Primary School Beneficiaries

Currently, STSPMF distributes aid across primary, secondary, and post-secondary levels. While all stages of support are valuable, both our research and the wider literature highlight the importance of early interventions in disrupting cycles of disadvantage (Harland et al., 2024; Solang et al., 2024). Given finite resources, we recommend that the Fund prioritise primary-level students, thereby enabling more generous and comprehensive packages (e.g., higher grants covering tuition, co-curricular costs, and essential learning tools) as well as access to required developmental or social services (e.g., counselling and tuition). This upstream approach aligns with child development theories which identify the early and primary years as critical windows for building foundational life skills such as confidence and aspiration, which are beyond academic support.

Support for secondary students should continue but strengthened with additional developmental services. For post-secondary students, the emphasis will shift from direct financial aid towards co-ordinated opportunities such as access to services, career guidance, and networking opportunities. This would reflect their evolving developmental needs and help them transition effectively into further education or employment.

5.4.2 Capitalising on ST's Unique Value Proposition for STSPMF

We focused on the programme's unique value, as these strengths can be leveraged to implement the proposed theory of change, which centres on shared services. STSPMF occupies a distinctive niche within Singapore's ecosystem of social support and educational upliftment. Its unique affiliation with *The Straits Times* provides six synergistic capabilities:

1. **Networks:** STSPMF is well-positioned to convene industry partners, media stakeholders, and educational organisations to establish long-term partnerships that benefit recipients. Its ties to *The Straits Times* strengthen opportunities for resource-sharing, exposure, and skill-building initiatives.
2. **Advocacy:** Leveraging *The Straits Times*' journalistic reach, STSPMF can spotlight the stories of its beneficiaries, showcasing inspirational examples that highlight positive role models and bring awareness to the wider society.
3. **Expert Knowledge:** Platforms such as ST Skills allow STSPMF to curate targeted learning opportunities, including creative writing workshops for upper primary students, career talks, and enrichment courses. Extending such opportunities to

parents may also contribute to household-level upskilling and improved employability.

4. **Quality Journalism:** With access to award-winning journalism, STSPMF can provide beneficiaries with high-quality, age-appropriate news resources, expanding their awareness of current affairs and contributing to their educational development.
5. **Mind Share:** As a leading national news outlet, The Straits Times commands significant public attention. STSPMF can harness this visibility to inspire the wider society to donate or volunteer to the cause.
6. **Skilled Volunteerism:** Staff from The Straits Times bring a unique set of journalistic and professional skills, ranging from communication and storytelling to critical thinking and analysis, that can be mobilised in mentorship, training, or volunteering contexts.

We highlight these synergistic capabilities as they are most critical in addressing the issues faced by beneficiaries, particularly in the non-financial aspects of support, such as boosting resilience, enhancing study and life skills, and strengthening overall development. We highlight these synergistic capabilities as critical in addressing the challenges faced by beneficiaries, particularly in non-financial domains such as resilience, study skills, life skills, and overall development. These capabilities will serve as the foundation for building shared services. Furthermore, we propose reinforcing the current communication system to ensure that beneficiaries remain consistently informed about STSPMF initiatives.

5.4.3 Evolving the Business and Delivery Model

In light of the above, we propose transitioning STSPMF from a direct-grant model to a shared services and coordinated support model. Under this approach, STSPMF would serve as a central gateway or “shared services hub” that connects beneficiaries not only to financial assistance but also to a wider network of partner services and community resources. STSPMF would take the lead in mobilising and coordinating its partners to develop and deliver these shared services, thereby creating more holistic and sustainable support for beneficiaries.

In practice, this means that STSPMF’s role would evolve from providing funds through schools to providing both funds and opportunities through schools. These opportunities would be channelled via shared services, such as affordable access to essential goods (e.g. CCA equipment, school supplies) and low-bono or volunteer-based services (e.g. mentoring, counselling). STSPMF could curate and expand this menu of shared services by capitalising on its networks and The Straits Times’ reach, ensuring beneficiaries have access to a wider

range of resources.

The proposed work process entails STSPMF providing financial support alongside a catalogue of shared services for beneficiaries. Beneficiaries would select the services most relevant to their needs, after which STSPMF would transmit these requests to its shared service partners, who would be responsible for service delivery.

6. Conclusion

This evaluation reaffirms that STSPMF is important for the families currently receiving it. As is, its impact extends beyond meeting immediate material needs; it also nurtures some life skills such as financial responsibility and contributes to overall well-being.

Nevertheless, with strategic enhancements, such as extending the duration of support, streamlining administrative processes, and deepening investment in emotional and developmental growth, STSPMF has the potential to evolve from being primarily a safety net into a transformative force for intergenerational uplift.

On the basis of our findings, we propose the following recommendations:

1. Shift from Giving to Empowerment

A paradigm shift is needed, from focusing solely on the provision of financial aid towards empowering beneficiaries to build sustainable futures. This entails complementing monetary assistance with holistic developmental support, such as mental health counselling, social-emotional learning, parental employment and job-search support, and structured mentorship. For primary-level students, this means strengthening comprehensive support and growth opportunities. For secondary and post-secondary students, differentiated support is needed—ranging from career exposure and enrichment activities to internships and professional networks that expand future prospects.

2. Leveraging the Broader Strength of The Straits Times

We urge consideration of how the Fund might draw more fully upon the distinctive assets of The Straits Times. Beyond direct financial aid, STSPMF can amplify its impact through ST's networks, advocacy platform, expert knowledge, journalistic excellence, public mindshare, and skilled volunteer base. By doing so, STSPMF can transition from a grant-disbursement model to a coordinated ecosystem approach,

working with schools, partners, and community services to deliver shared resources and empower beneficiaries more holistically.

3. Evolve the Delivery Model

To achieve this, we propose that STSPMF evolve from a direct-grant model into a shared services and coordinated support model. Acting as a central gateway or “shared services hub,” STSPMF can connect beneficiaries not only to financial assistance but also to partner services and community resources. These could include affordable access to essentials and low-bono or volunteer-based services. By curating and expanding this menu of services through its networks and The Straits Times’ reach, STSPMF can ensure beneficiaries access a wider and more sustainable support ecosystem.

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