

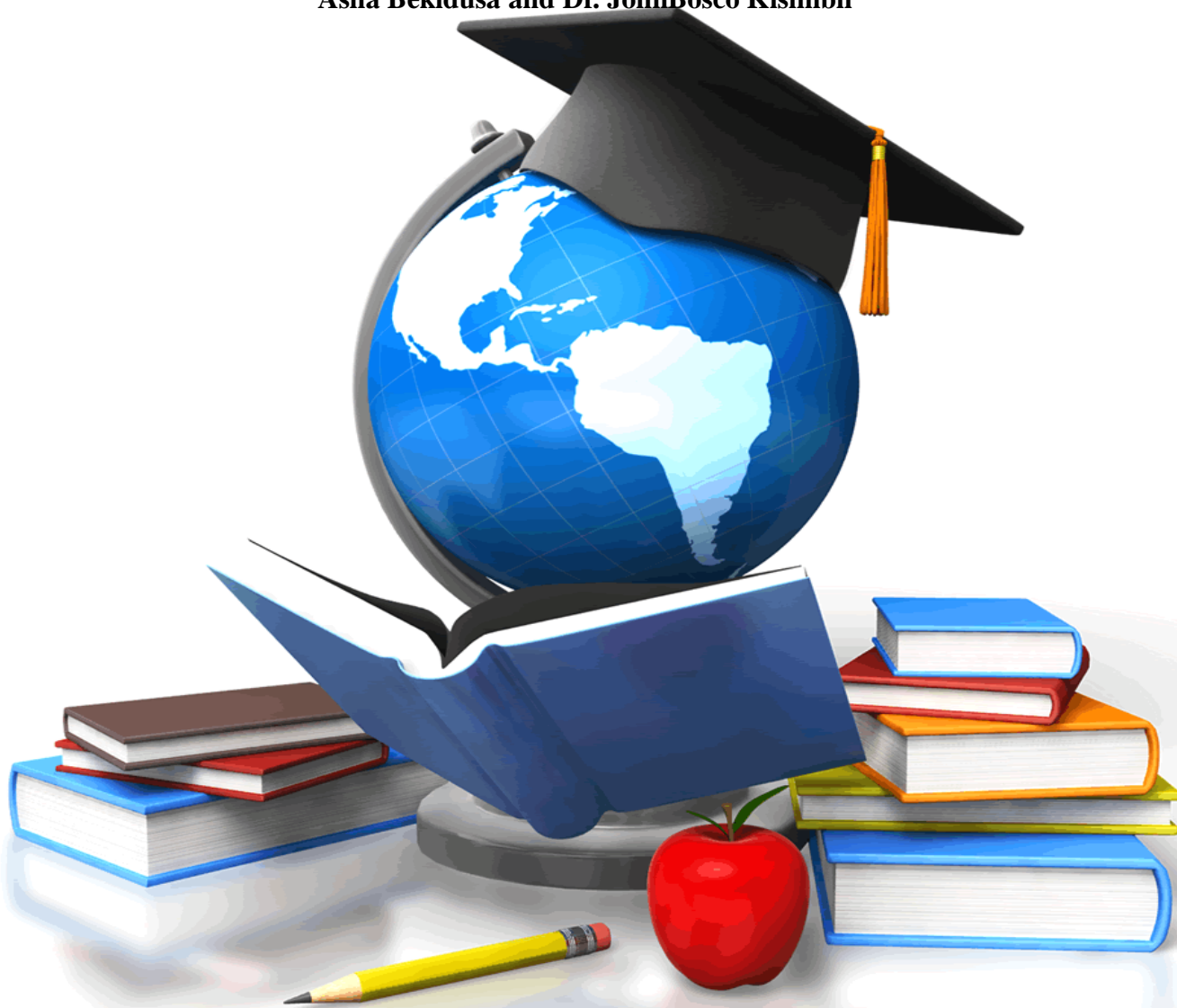
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**INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAM ON
THE RETENTION OF LEARNERS IN PUBLIC PRIMARY
SCHOOLS IN KENYA; A CASE OF MOMBASA COUNTY**

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INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAM ON THE RETENTION OF LEARNERS IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN KENYA; A CASE OF MOMBASA COUNTY

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of the study was to establish the influence of school feeding program on the retention of learners in public primary schools.

Methodology: This study was conducted through a descriptive survey research design. A descriptive survey is a present oriented methodology used to investigate populations by selecting samples to analyze and discover occurrences. The survey focused on 60 out of the 188 head teachers and teachers who are beneficiaries of school milk program in all the six sub counties in Mombasa i.e. Mvita, Kisauni, Likoni, Nyali, Jomvu and Changamwe. This gives 31.9 % of the total number of participants in this project. To obtain the study sample for descriptive studies 10% of the accessible population is enough. Simple random and purposive sampling procedures were used in this research.

Results: School feeding program influences retention of learners in public primary schools with a reliability value of 0.8 which is considered minimal acceptable thus rejecting null hypothesis therefore meaning that school feeding program has a significant effect on retention of learners in public primary schools.

Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy: School feeding programmes are often designed to enhance academic performance and cognitive development. Improved nutritional status of school-age children leads to better attention and cognition, and thus, better educational outcome. School feeding can improve attentiveness in class by reducing short-term hunger many children come to school on an empty stomach, yet they remain surrounded by the distracting and disturbing facets of the crisis. The study recommends that the ministry of education should review the School feeding Programme

and extend it upper primary classes. They should prioritize supply of food to ensure continuous provision and adequate supply of food for pupils.

Keywords: *Sustainability, Alleviation of Hunger, Retention.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Children yearn for the opportunity to fulfill their dreams. Children who are enrolled in formal schooling do not have a guarantee that they internalize the information from the lessons they learn. The most prominent obstacles hindering the child's learning process is hunger. Among major contributors in low school enrolment in most developing countries is chronic hunger. The major problem that plagues most school going children in primary schools especially in low income area is poverty. So when there is no food in the house, going to school is not a priority. Chronic hunger can prevent students from making the most of a formal education, no matter how hard they try to ignore its effects. The sad truth is that hunger can have physical and psychological effects on young people that make learning substantially difficult. Malnutrition remains one of the major obstacles to human well-being and economic prosperity in developing countries (Ecker & Nene 2012; Stevens et al., 2012).

In Botswana the government has successfully implemented its national school feeding program continuously for 45 years, witnessing enrollment growth and school attendance rates that are highly associated with the availability of food at school. There are a number of strengths; however, there is still room for improvement, and a need for more robust data, analysis and reporting. (Drake, Woolnough, Burbano & Bundy, 2016)

In Kenya, the school feeding programs were introduced in the year 1966 by the school feeding council. And in 1979 school milk programs were introduced to all public primary schools in Kenya. The program was started to boost the health and diet of children and was fully funded by the government. However, these gains were eroded during the 1990s due to the introduction of cost-sharing policies which required households to contribute more towards the cost of education.

Although school feeding can provide an incentive for increased school attendance, such crises also tend to pull children into the workforce either as formal labour or as child soldiers. In the case of formal labour, successful school feeding programmes in emergency situations should constitute an income transfer sufficiently large enough to outweigh an alternative income that children might earn elsewhere (Glewwe, Jacoby & King, 1996).

1.1 Statement of the problem

When hunger strikes a community it hurts children the most, draining them of their will to play and learn but instead search for food to eat. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) estimates that 115 million school-aged children do not go to school. Ninety seven per cent of these children live in developing countries. For poor families the food that the child gets at school means that the family gets at least one meal a day, and in many cases this is a good enough reason to send a child to school. (UNESCO; 2005).

Kenya's school feeding program has experienced continued expansion and refinement, especially during the past decade. Since the introduction of free compulsory primary education for all Kenyan children in 2003, the WFP-assisted feeding program has developed alongside national policies of increased student health, attendance, and performance (MoE, 2003). From its inception, it has targeted food inequality in the most vulnerable areas of Kenya, including school. Districts in the arid and semi arid regions and the informal urban slums of large cities such as Nairobi and Mombasa (Espejo, 2009).

To address historical primary school absenteeism among Kenya's most impoverished and traditional communities, free meals are used as an incentive to attract school-aged children to class. Within rural communities in which food is scarce, this daily meal provision relieves much of the burden of childrearing. The beneficiaries of the program are extremely poor families that are largely unable to provide the minimum recommended daily allowances (RDA) of calories, protein, and essential micronutrients to their children. These poor conditions may irreversibly stunt the mental and physical development of young children, resulting in wasted potentials and lifelong difficulties (Galal, 2005). The nutritional importance of the school meal (usually around 700kcal) is immense, representing more than half of the consumed RDA values for 40 percent of the participating students (Finan, 2010). According to field studies, the "magnet effect" of the meal programs has greatly increased school attendance rates especially among young children. Rural schools that provide meals show higher attendance rates and lower initial dropout rates than schools that do not (Espejo, 2009).

1.2 Research Objectives

The research was guided by the following objectives;-

- i. To examine the extent to which sustainable feeding program as a school feeding program influences the retention of pupils in public primary schools.
- ii. To determine the extent to which alleviation of hunger influences the retention of pupils in public primary schools.

- iii. To examine the extent to which the quality of milk influences the retention of pupils in public primary schools.
- iv. To assess the extent to which the frequency of meals influences the retention of pupils in pupils in public primary schools.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study will be guided by two theories i.e. the Abraham Maslow Theory and the Vroom Expectancy theory of Motivation. The proposal is based on Abraham Maslow's (1954) theory of basic human needs which demonstrates that once basic needs are met, people can express their other needs. He proposes a hierarchy of needs forming the famous paradigm of self-actualization. These basic needs (food, shelter, and clothing) are followed by other equally important needs such as safety needs, love needs, self esteem needs and finally self actualization. The basic needs include food, shelter and clothing. Maslow argues that if a person's basic needs are not met, that person spends time and energy trying to meet them, usually at the expense of crucial developments and self-actualization need. The needs are satisfied in a hierarchical fashion. This means that human beings focus on the basic needs first, and then, direct their energy to other needs which are more exclusive.

Therefore, if pupils lack basic needs, in this study food, they will be unable to fulfill their potential as well as participate in their education. In order for a particular need to be achieved and thereby guide a person's behavior, the lower needs in the Maslow hierarchy, which in this study are the basic needs such as food, must be met first. This means that, if children are not able to get right food rations, they are not able to learn properly. In addition, the poverty level in this region is quite high hence parents are unable to meet the basic needs of their children.

The theory is relevant to this study as it sheds light on the importance of meeting the basic need of food to hungry pupils through the SFP. It highlights the importance of food provision. It means that, developing countries like Kenya must also struggle to provide food especially amongst vulnerable groups such as pupils from the ASAL regions and even slums in cases of urban centers.

Vroom Expectancy Theory of Motivation advocated by Vroom (1964). According to this theory the intensity of a tendency to perform in a particular manner is dependent on the intensity of an expectation that the performance will be followed by a definite outcome to the individual. Vroom focuses on outcomes and not on needs. The theory states that employees' motivation is an outcome of how much an individual wants a reward

(valence), the assessment that the likelihood that the effort will lead to expected performance (expectancy) and the belief that performance will lead to a reward (instrumentality).

Tolman (1932) attributes the results of reinforcement to learning but not regarding reinforcement as a necessary condition for learning to take place. Hungry pupils will come to school to be free from hunger pangs and at the same time acquire education. Therefore the school feeding program is an incentive to attract children to school to enable them to learn.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

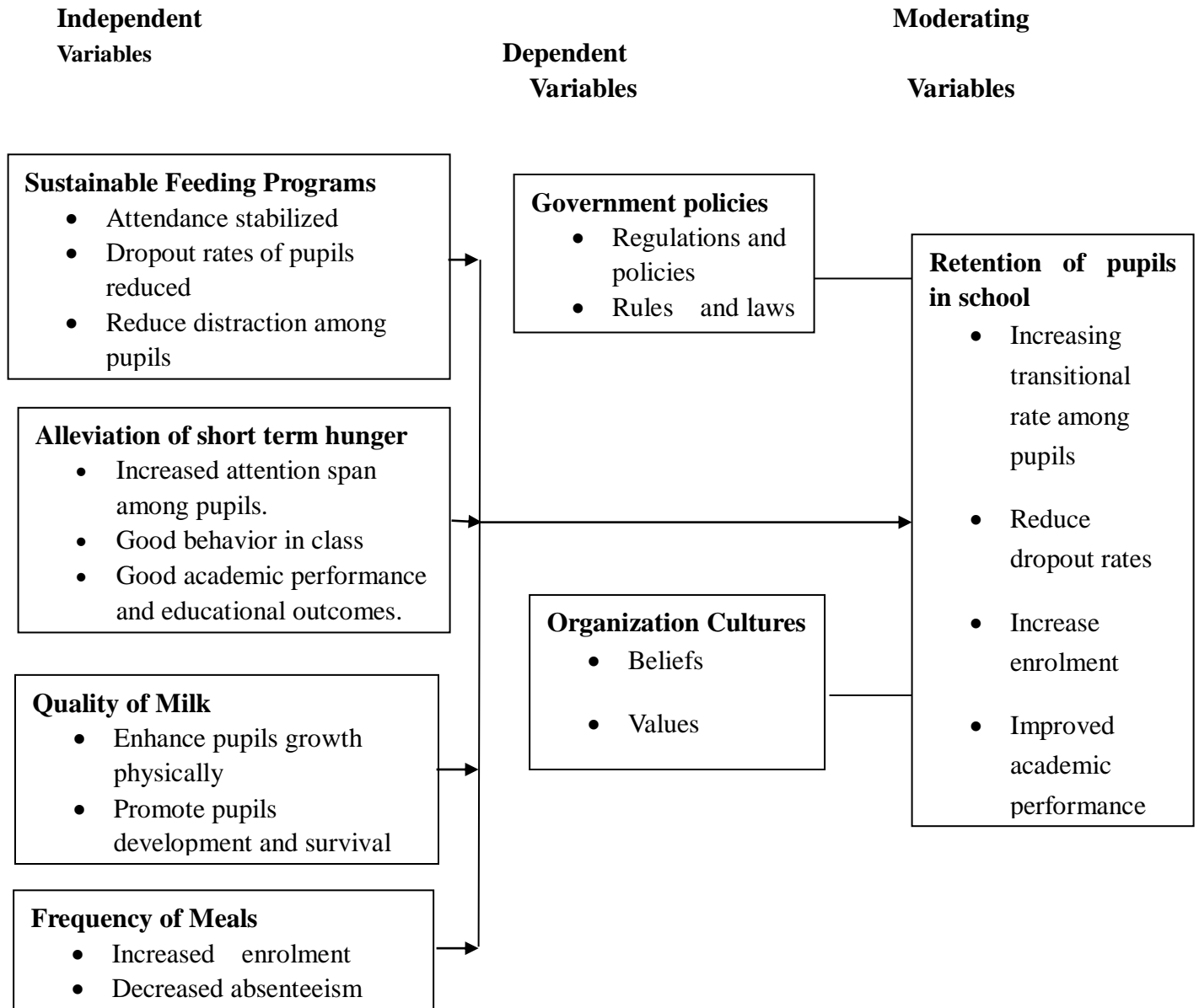


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Conceptual framework refers to a model of representation where a researcher represents relationship between variables in the study and depicts it diagrammatically or graphically (Orodho, 2005). Figure 1 explains the relationship between school feeding programme as Independent variable and children’s retention which is the dependent variable. Various factors such as sustainability of the feeding program, alleviation of short term hunger,

quality of milk and even frequency of the meals given are able to contribute to positive children's participation. These factors form the inputs that interact in absence of implementation of school milk programme. These inputs will undergo various educational processes through school feeding programme to produce positive educational outcome. Once school feeding programme is implemented the education output will be positive on children's participation in terms of improved attendance, increase enrolment changes in the activity levels of children, improve academic performance and even reduce dropout rate and this leads to improved cognitive ability. If the interaction of these inputs is healthy, then the output will turn out to be positive as shown by the impact of school feeding programme.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted through a descriptive survey research design. A descriptive survey is a present oriented methodology used to investigate populations by selecting samples to analyze and discover occurrences (Oso & Onen, 2008). . The survey focused on 60 out of the 188 head teachers and teachers who are beneficiaries of school milk program in all the six sub counties in Mombasa i.e. Mvita, Kisauni, Likoni, Nyali, Jomvu and Changamwe. This gives 31.9 % of the total number of participants in this project. Questionnaires were the primary data collection instrument and the collected data was modeled and analyzed using SPSS software. Data was presented in form of comprehensive tables that depict the relationships within the variables of the research

4.0 RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Response rate

The study targeted a sample size of 60 respondents from which 46 filled and returned the questionnaire making a response rate of 76.67%. Table 1 below shows the response rate as per every targeted group.

Table 1 Questionnaire Return rate

Respondents	Questionnaire Issued	Questionnaire Returned	% Questionnaire Returned
Head Teachers	10	10	100
Teachers	50	36	72
Total	60	46	76.67

This implies that the remaining 23.33% did not consent to participate in the research data collection. Table 1 also shows that 100% of the head teachers responded while 72% of the

teachers responded to the study. The questionnaire response of 76.67% was considered by the present study as being very good and suitable to yield accurate results as per Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) , a response rate is of above 69% is very high and would lead to producing accurate results.

4.2 Sustainable Feeding Program and Pupils Retention in Public Primary School

The first objective was to examine the extent to which sustainable feeding program as a school feeding program influences the retention of pupils in public primary schools in Mombasa County. The study sought to examine sustainable feeding program as the independent variable on pupils retention in public primary schools the dependent variable using a Likert scale of 1- 5 where 1-Strongly Agree, 2-Agree, 3-Undecided, 4-Disagree and 5-Strongly Disagree .The results obtained are presented in Table 2

Table 2 Sustainable Feeding Program and Pupils Retention in Public Primary School

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Sustainable Feeding Program Stabilises Regular attendance of Pupils.	3.39	0.85
Sustainable Feeding Program Reduces Pupils Dropout rate.	3.44	1.00
Sustainable Feeding Program Improves Academic Performance.	3.62	0.88
Sustainable Feeding Program Encourages Transitional Rates.	3.32	0.89

From the study findings most respondents strongly agreed with statement that sustainable feeding program as a school feeding program initiative stabilises regular attendance of pupils as shown with a mean of 3.39 and a standard deviation of 0.85, also respondents strongly agree that sustainable feeding program reduces pupils dropout rates as shown with the mean of 3.44 and standard deviation of 1.00. Also Majority of respondents strongly agreed that sustainable feeding program improves academic performance of pupils with a mean of 3.62 and standard deviation of 0.88.

Furthermore respondents agree that sustainable school feeding program encourages transitional of pupils in public primary schools as shown with a mean of 3.3 and standard deviation of 0.88 hence influencing retention of learners. The study did not reveal about urban schools which also have school feeding programs and how the attendance is..

4.3 Alleviation of Short Term Hunger in Pupils

The study sought to assess the influence of alleviation of short term hunger in malnourished school as an independent variable on pupils retention in public primary school as the dependent variable using a Likert scale of 1- 5 where 1-Strongly Agree, 2-Agree, 3-Undecided, 4-Disagree and 5-Strongly Disagree .The results obtained are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Alleviation of Short term Hunger in Pupils

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Well fed pupils have got increased attention span leading to improved class participation.	3.7	0.93
Concentration of pupils in class affects their interest in learning hence improving academic performance.	3.7	1.01
Alleviation of short term hunger in schools decreases the dropout rates among pupils.	3.7	0.87

From the study findings most respondents strongly agreed with statement that well fed pupils have got increased attention span leading to improved class participation as shown with a mean of 3.7 and a standard deviation of 0.93, also respondents strongly agree that concentration of pupils in class affects their interest in learning hence improving academic performance as shown with the mean of 3.7 and standard deviation of 1.01. Also Majority of respondents agreed that alleviation of short term hunger in schools decreases the dropout rates among pupils with a mean of 3.7 and standard deviation of 0.87 . The study is not clear on how alleviation of hunger is going to change educational outcome of pupils and hence their retention in schools.

4.4 Effect of Quality of Milk

Food quantity and quality should be looked into. Children should be given right nutrients to enhance their growth, development and survival in the community. The study sought to assess if the quality of milk as an independent variable affects pupils retention in public primary school as the dependent variable using a Likert scale of 1- 5 where 1-Strongly Agree, 2-Agree, 3-Undecided, 4-Disagree and 5-Strongly Disagree .The results obtained are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Effect of Quality of Milk

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Nutritious meal and quality of milk affects the retention of pupils.	3.30	1.06
Nutritious meal encourages enrolment of more pupils in school especially lower classes.	3.37	0.82
Milk quality influences age entry of pupils to enhance enrolment in primary education.	3.79	0.96

From the study findings most respondents agreed with statement that nutritious meal and quality of milk affects the retention of pupils as shown with a mean of 3.30 and a standard deviation of 1.06, also respondents agreed that nutritious meal encourages enrolment of more pupils in school especially lower classes as shown with the mean of 3.37 and standard deviation of 0.82. Also majority of respondents agreed that milk quality influences age entry of pupils to enhance enrolment in primary education with a mean of 3.7 and standard deviation of 0.87. The study did not show how healthy eating leads to retention of pupils in public primary school.

4.5 Frequency of Meals

The study sought to assess if the frequency of meals as an independent variable affects pupils retention in public primary school as the dependent variable using a Likert scale of 1- 5 where 1-Strongly Agree, 2-Agree, 3-Undecided, 4-Disagree and 5-Strongly Disagree. The results obtained are presented in Table 5

Table 5 Frequency of Meals

	Mean	Std.Deviation
Frequency of meals influences the retention of pupils in public primary schools	3.87	0.97
Frequency of meals decreases the dropout rates among pupils in school hence retention of pupils	3.28	0.87
Frequency of meals improves regular attendance of pupils hence retention of pupils.	3.7	0.96

From the study findings most respondents agreed with statement that frequency of meals influences the retention of pupils in public primary schools as shown with a mean of 3.87 and a standard deviation of 0.97, also respondents strongly agreed that frequency of meals decreases the dropout rates among pupils in school hence retention of pupils as shown with the mean of 3.28 and standard deviation of 0.87. Also majority of respondents strongly agreed that frequency of meals improves regular attendance of pupils hence

retention of pupils with a mean of 3.7 and standard deviation of 0.96 . There is no aspect which shows vulnerable families send their children to school because of food, other might be sending them simple to get education.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that sustainable feeding program as an initiative of school feeding program highly influences the pupils' retention in public primary school. The factors enhancing this includes stabilizing regular attendance of pupils, reduces pupils dropout rate, improving academic performance and encourages transitional rates of pupils in school hence enhancing pupils retention in public primary schools.

The study reveals that there exists a high and positive significant relationship between sustainable school feeding program, alleviation of short term hunger, quality of milk and frequency of meals and retention of pupils in public primary schools since the p-value for each was less than 0.05 and relationship was greater than 0.05. The study recommend that nutritionist should be involved in order to give knowledge on the amount required for pupils per day so that children have a balanced diet food in schools and also school administration together with the school feeding programme developers are sensitized on the need to provide balanced school feeding programme

Lastly the study recommends that the schools should increase the frequency of food being given to pupils in order for it to benefit more pupils

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