

A CASE STUDY TO EXAMINE THE FEEDING PRACTICES OF PUPILS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN KAYUNGA DISTRICT, CENTRAL UGANDA. A DESCRIPTIVE CROSS-SECTIONAL SURVEY STUDY.

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Abstract

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Background

This study aims to document the feeding practices of pupils in primary schools in Kayunga district, central Uganda. Feeding is the provision of meals to a person or animals. In children, feeding occurs in the context of the caregiver-child dyad. Feeding practices in this context are arrangements of providing food to school children. For this study, feeding practices are home-packed food, school-prepared food, and commercialized food outlets. Feeding practices are an important determinant of children's nutritional status, which is directly related to the risk of becoming sick and dying. Kayunga district is one of the districts in the central region of Uganda with many pupils as the leading population of learners. Therefore, feeding is one of the basics to support an education. Therefore, this study seeks to assess the feeding practices of pupils in primary schools in Kayunga district, central Uganda.

Methodology

This study used a descriptive cross-sectional correlational survey design and adopted a mixed research approach.

Results

The findings showed that 59% of the pupils were getting meals prepared at school, 36% of the pupils get meals from home and 5% of the pupils are getting meals from food outlets.

Conclusion

There were three main feeding practices in primary schools in Kayunga District. Namely; package food from home, school arranged feeding and food from outlets like canteen and restaurants. The study documented that among the three main feeding practices, most pupils are fed from school on the school management arrangements in Kayunga District.

Recommendation

Schools should also provide storage places for meals of students. This will help students to have meals at the appropriate time and use available time to read without interruptions.

Keywords: Feeding, Practices, Primary schools, Kayunga, Uganda.

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Background of the study

Feeding is the provision of meals to a person or animals. Feeding practices are arrangements to provide food to school children. For this study, feeding practices are home-packed food, school-prepared food, and commercialized food outlets. Feeding practices are an important determinant of children's nutritional status, which is directly related to the risk of becoming sick and dying (Ganga, 2020).

Institutionalized feeding refers to an arrangement where the feeding of people is created, controlled, and monitored by an established institution such as schools, hospitals, care facilities, and Universities (Moding & Fries, 2020). According to Chakraborty (Kayunga District Education Report, 2020) feeding in schools can be on Home-Packed Food, school-cooked food, canteen-prepared food, NGO-prepared food, and other practices of feeding children at school. It involves pupils carrying packed food from home for consumption at school during the midmorning break

(especially for lower-primary learners who attend half-day) or at lunchtime for upper-primary learners who spend the full day at school (Ruffini, 2022). In districts such as Kibaale, schools adhere strictly to this modality. In the central and eastern regions, it is one of the options used by school pupils, whereas in the northern region, it is the least desired option for sociocultural reasons (Muhirwe et al., 2021).

Preparation and provision of hot meals to pupils at school is another practice that prevails in schools outside the WFP areas of Karamoja but to a much lesser degree (Nabugoomu, 2019). Initiation of this practice involves discussions among the parents through the School Management Committee (SMC). Information on agreed modalities is communicated to parents through existing institutions, including the local council meetings and prayer sessions, school notice boards, and school open days (whenever they are held) (Namugumya, Candel, Termear, & Talsma, 2021). Of importance is that this

modality is considered illegal in rural schools by all national and district officials talked to, and getting information on practicing schools was no mean feat. However, the Education Act of 2008, article 15(5), provides room for schools to engage parents in this regard as earlier indicated; therefore, the few practicing schools should be protected under this provision (Kim & Jun, 2022). The research findings indicate that the implementation of this school feeding option is enabled by in-kind food contributions by parents, cash contributions toward school meals, and food harvests from the school gardens. Each of these modalities has its unique characteristics as indicated in the following subsections.

In-kind contributions are not sufficient to earn children a meal. Additional cash payments are made to facilitate grain processing or milling and food preparation processes, which include purchasing firewood, paying cooks' wages, and buying water (reported in schools without safe water sources) (Namugumya et al., 2021). As is the case with food quantities, complementary cash contributions toward a solid meal varied from a low of U Sh 1,500 in Mukwanya Primary School of Busia district to a high of U Sh 10,000 in Ambekua Primary School of Maracha district. However, the complementary cash contribution toward semisolid meals varied narrowly from a low of U Sh 500 in Kataleba Primary School of Amolator district to US 2,500 in Madibira Primary School of Busia district. Processing and labor costs are expected to vary from one location to another, which may largely explain the variations in the cash contributions that complement the in-kind food contributions (Namukwaya, 2019). Harmonization of those costs may not be easy even within districts and calls for a better understanding of the local markets, including the availability of certain services such as milling within reasonable reach of schools (Sseguya, Matovu, Swann, & Draper, 2020).

A voluntary contribution of an agreed sum of money by parents that is used by the school administration to purchase food items is another school feeding practice observed in the sampled schools and was reported to be the most common and legally practiced modality in urban and peri-urban areas (Iragaba et al., 2021). Where this modality was observed (except Kampala schools), schools used it as a voluntary but special consideration for the candidate classes (Primary 7 and in a few instances Primary 6) in a bid to alleviate the short-term hunger that was likely to affect students' concentration and lead to anticipated poor performance especially in the final examinations. Teachers in some of the practicing schools are allowed to contribute toward their meals although the charge was found to be higher than that paid by pupils (Ocen, Acanga, & Mwesigwa, 2022).

Some schools, especially in rural areas, have school gardens where food is grown and harvested for consumption at the school level. Availability of school gardens of ample size is a very rare occurrence in densely populated areas and at times is complicated by land ownership norms (Khalidi & Gen, 2020). Food vending is

a supplementary source of food for pupils who are given money by their parents to buy edible items at school during the midmorning or lunch break. In most schools, food vending operates alongside other food options (Pineda, Swinburn, & Sassi, 2019). Participation depends on a child's ability to pay for what is being sold. Food vending is undertaken as follows: The school administration allocates space. This area can be a small room or canteen in the case of Kampala schools or a small part of the school compound where food vendors operate during breaks and lunchtime, as is the case for most rural schools. Vending is done by community members, school parents, or even the pupils themselves. In some instances, pupils were found to be involved in food vending, and head teachers reported that pupils used the proceeds to buy scholastic materials such as books, pens, and pencils (WHO, 2021).

Therefore, the objective of this study is to assess the feeding practices of pupils in primary schools in Kayunga district, central Uganda.

Methodology

Research Design

During the study, a descriptive cross-sectional correlational survey design was used. Also, the study employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches in analyzing data for this study.

The researcher used a descriptive research design to explain the findings of the study using mean, standard deviation, and frequency tables. The study was cross-sectional since data was collected at a point in time from respondents and covered a short period. It was also correlational since it established the relationship between the study variables in line with the objectives.

A qualitative approach was employed in examining the non-numerical findings of the study such as gender and attitudes of the respondents which were coded and categorized to produce descriptive findings. The quantitative approach was used in manipulating the data obtained from questionnaires and the use of frequency tables to make the data more meaningful findings.

Study Population

A population is the entire group of people, events, or things that a researcher wishes to investigate. The study targeted 3 primary schools namely; Gospel Valley Primary School, Kyanya Church of Uganda Primary School, and St. Bruno Kanjuki RC. A total of 30 School Management Committee members, 3 Headteachers, 47 teachers, 60 student leaders, 15 parents, and 2 District Education officials were included in the study thus 157 respondents were used as the population size. This population was targeted because it covered all the stakeholders in the education process and the researcher believed they had the right information as regards to feeding and academic performance of pupils in primary schools.

Table 1: Population size, sample size, and sampling techniques

Category	Population Size	Sample size	Sampling technique
School Management Committee	30	09	Convenience sampling
Headteachers	03	03	Purposive sampling
Teachers	47	40	Simple random sampling
Parents	15	12	Convenience sampling
Student leaders	60	44	Simple random sampling
District education officials	02	02	Purposive sampling
Total	157	110	

Source: *Kayunga District Education Department (2022).*

Sample Size

The researcher took a sample of the target population. A sample is a subset of the population that comprises members selected from the population. The sample size was determined at a 5% level of Confidence, 110 respondents were selected as the sample size of the study as shown in table 1 above.

Sampling technique

The researcher used convenience sampling, purposive and simple random sampling techniques in determining the respondents of the study. Convenience sampling was used to select School Management Committee members and parents who participated in this study. The method was used because the respondents of this nature are not always at school, thus the researcher used convenience sampling to select parents who were available or near the selected schools.

Purposive sampling was used to select the head teachers and district officials who participated in this study. These were selected because they had key information on academic performance, school policies on feeding, and other relevant information hence key to this study.

A simple random sampling technique was used to select teachers and student leaders who were participating in this study. The method was used to eliminate bias by giving everyone a chance to participate in this study.

Research instruments

The researcher used a questionnaire and interview guide to collect primary data for this study and a documentary review method to collect secondary data for the study.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was used as a tool that aided in gathering information during the survey. A questionnaire is defined as a carefully designed tool for collecting data

by specification of research questions. It is a research instrument that gathers data over a large sample and it gives important information about a population that's why many quantitative researchers use it as the main method of collecting data. In addition, a questionnaire can collect large amounts of information in a reasonable quick space of time and at the same time minimizes bias on the side of the researcher and respondents. In this study, the researcher used a questionnaire to gather data from teachers and student leaders of the selected school. Open-ended and closed-ended questions were used to access first-hand information. Close-ended questions were used to give respondents alternative answers and to avoid wasting time thinking.

Interview Guide

An interview guide is a written list of questions, open or close-ended, prepared for use by an interviewer in a person-to-person interaction. This may be face-to-face, by telephone, or by other electronic media. In this study, the researcher used an interview guide to collect data from district officers, head teachers, parents, and school management committee members. Face-to-face questions were orally asked the respondents and answers on the relationship between feeding practices and academic performance of pupils in Kayunga district were noted down by the researcher. This method was employed because it allowed a much greater depth of information regarding the study objectives.

Documentary Review Checklist

These were mainly secondary sources. Information was sourced from documents related to the area of study. These documents were studied and critically reviewed while keeping ethical standards in mind. They were used to examine the effectiveness; relevance and appropriateness of the language including those related to

the policies and background information of the organization mainly the end-of-term reports, and general staff meeting minutes.

Research Procedure

The study was conducted in a planned way in which the Researcher first obtained a letter from the University introducing him to the District local authorities and head teachers of the selected schools who then introduced him to the respondents. The researcher then gave out his questionnaires and also arranged for interview sessions with respondents.

Validity and Reliability

These were used for the evaluation of research instruments.

Validity

Validity has to do with how accurately the data obtained in the study represents the variables in the study. Several methods were used during the process of data collection to ensure quality data for the research. Personal prejudices and biases were avoided, systematic and accurate recording of observations was made by listening carefully, and establishment of trust with the interviewee was also employed to ensure validity.

The research instruments were issued to the research supervisor for expert judgment.

A content validity index (CVI) was used to measure the accuracy of the research instrument using the formula:

$$CVI = \frac{\text{The number of relevant questions}}{\text{The total number of questions}}$$

based on the expert judgment (Supervisor), the content validity index (0.89) was greater than 0.7 and was thus a good measure of validity to collect data relevant to the study.

Reliability

Reliability is a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent data results or data after a repeated result. This refers to how consistent the research instrument is. Amin (2005) contends that the instrument is reliable when it produces the same results when it is used repeatedly hence ensuring dependability and precision. To ensure reliability, the researcher will pre-test the questionnaires on 5 respondents one week before

going to the field and the Cronbach's coefficient alpha (α) will be used to compare findings from the first and the second test with 0.70 as suggested by (Amin, 2005).

Data Analysis and Processing

Qualitative and quantitative data was analyzed, interpreted, arranged, and tabulated. Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS software. Results were presented in the form of frequency tables and interpreted accordingly. Analysis of qualitative data was through descriptions of events and occurrences as gathered from the interviewees. Content analysis was used to analyze the data which was gathered from the interviews.

Univariate analysis was carried out for individual variables using mean, frequency tables, graphs, and standard deviation. Correlation analysis was carried out using the Pearson correlation coefficient to establish the effect of feeding practices and policies on academic performance. Regressions analysis was used (multiple regressions) to establish the relationship between institutionalized feeding and the academic performance of pupils in the Kayunga district.

Ethical Consideration

The researcher sought permission from the School of Graduate Studies and Research of Team University and was given an introductory letter which he went with in the field.

The researcher sought permission from the District Education Officials and school heads to allow him to collect relevant academic information for the study.

The researcher promised participants of the study secrecy of the information provided and ensured that the provided information was only used for academic purposes.

The researcher also gave due credit through citations to all the authors whose knowledge and work contributed to this study

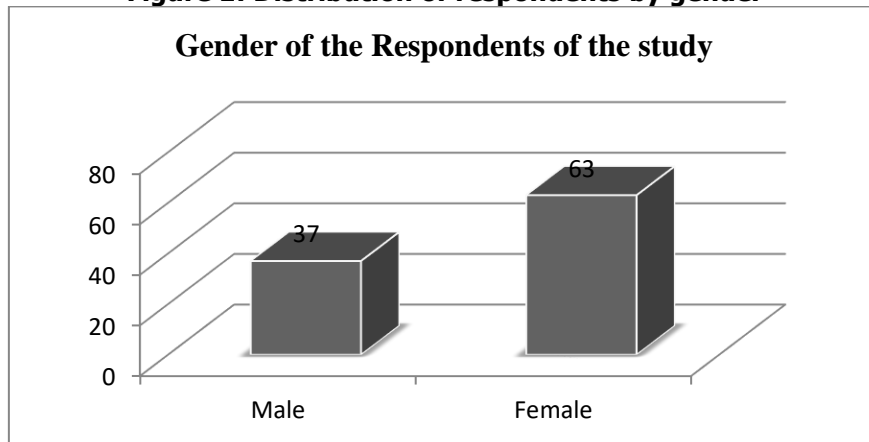
The researcher also carried out validity and reliability to ensure the consistency and reliability of the study findings.

Results

Background of the Respondents

This describes the background of respondents in terms of position, gender, age, level of education, marital status, and period spent in the selected primary school.

Distribution of Respondents by Gender
Figure 1: Distribution of respondents by gender

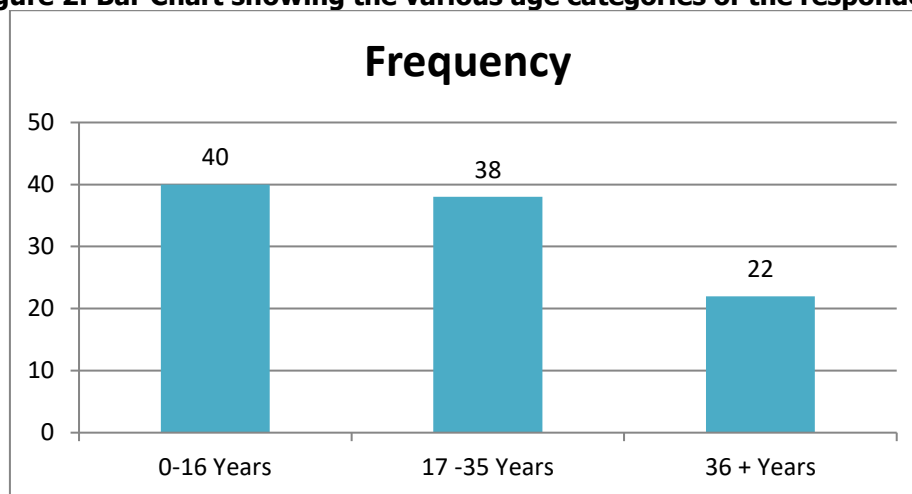


Source: Primary data 2023

Figure 1 shows that 63 respondents were female who constituted 63% while males were 37 constituting 37%. From this, it is seen that most of the people in the education sector are females in Kayunga District. This

indicated that in most cases the ratio of females to males in schools is twice males. This shows that gender significantly explains the academic performance of pupils in the Kayunga District.

Distribution of Respondents by Age
Figure 2: Bar Chart showing the various age categories of the respondents



Source: Primary data 2023

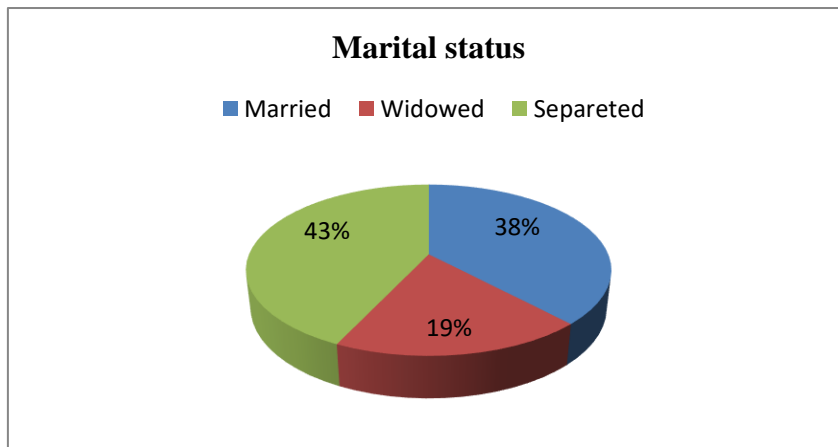
Figure 2 indicates that 40% of respondents were below 16 years, 34% of the respondents were 17-35 years and 22% of the respondents were above 36 years. This shows that 40% of the respondents were primary pupils who feed through various ways at school and 60% of the respondents were mature (parents, teachers, and head teachers) enough to understand the feeding practices in Kayunga District. This implies that age significantly determines the relationship between feeding in schools and the academic performance of

pupils in the Kayunga district.

Distribution of Marital Status

The researcher used the marital status of the parents of the pupils, and the marital status of head teachers, teachers, and School Management Committee members. This was done to obtain informed results of the findings.

Figure 3: Pie Chart showing marital status

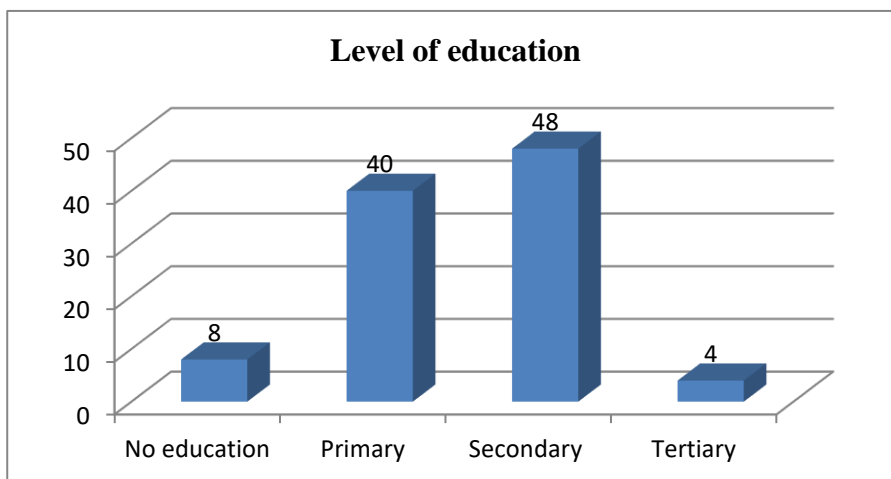


Source: Primary data

Figure 3, Shows that 43% of the parents were separated, 38% were married and 19% were widowed. This showed that 19% of the respondents are orphans 43% of the pupils come from broken families and 38% of the

respondents have both parents. This implied that the marital status of the parents has a significant effect on feeding practices and the academic performance of pupils in the Kayunga district.

Level of education
Figure 4: showing the level of education of the respondents



According to findings in Figure 4, 48% of the respondents had a secondary level of education, 40% had primary education, 8% of the respondents had no education and 4% of the respondents had tertiary education. Therefore 92% of the respondents had formal

education and were literate. This shows that the level of education significantly affects the feeding and academic performance of pupils in Kayunga District.

Feeding practices in primary schools in the Kayunga district
Table 2: showing feeding practices in primary schools

Feeding practices	Frequency	Percent (%)
Packaged food	36	36
School arranged	59	59
Food outlets	5	5
Total	100	100

Sources: Primary data (2023)

According to Table 2, there are three main feeding practices in primary schools in Kayunga District namely; packaged food from home, school-arranged feeding, and food from outlets like canteen and restaurants. 59% of the respondents were on school-arranged feeding, 36% of the respondents were on home-packaged food and 5% were feeding on food from outlets.

Therefore, most pupils are fed from school on the school management arrangements in the Kayunga District.

Discussion

This study documented that there were three main feeding practices in primary schools in Kayunga District. Namely; packaged food from home, school-arranged feeding, and food from outlets like canteen and restaurants. The findings showed that 59% of the pupils are getting meals prepared by school management, 36% of the pupils get meals from home and 5% of the pupils are getting meals from food outlets. Therefore, the majority of the pupils are getting meals from school in Kayunga District. The findings of the studies are above the average.

The results of this study agreed with the findings of a study by Khalidi & Gen (2020) who explored school feeding in Malaysia and identified feeding practices. However, there was no critical evaluation of the feeding practices a gap this study fills. This study was silent on the number of times that students should be fed despite recommending feeding students a balanced diet. Also, their study suggested that school feeding should be expanded to cover all schools. Therefore, the government and parents should provide children with meals at school to help pupils excel which the researcher agrees to.

Also, a study by Moding & Fries (2020) carried out a study on Feeding practices demonstrated by parents of toddlers: An observational analysis of breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks for two years by recording them through videos. The results showed that mothers and siblings commonly ate with the toddler, especially during lunch and dinner, but fathers infrequently ate with the children during meals. Also, the results of this study demonstrate notable differences in feeding practices and environmental factors during meals at home. Despite using the observation method and longitudinal approaches, it was noted that children were receiving three meals daily a finding similar to this study. Also, the study having been carried out in

homesteads, remained silent on the school performance of children despite the same target age group of 8-14 years.

Conclusion

There were three main feeding practices in primary schools in Kayunga District. Namely; package food from home, school arranged feeding and food from outlets like canteen and restaurants. The study documented that among the three main feeding practices, most pupils are fed from school on the school management arrangements in Kayunga District.

However, the limitation of this study is that it is in one specific district and may not be easily generalizable to other regions or populations. The uniqueness of the study area might limit the external validity of the results, making it challenging to apply the findings to a broader context.

Also, the study design may focus on a specific set of variables related to feeding practices. However, other relevant factors influencing nutrition and dietary habits, such as socioeconomic status, cultural practices, or food availability, might not be fully explored, limiting the depth of the analysis.

Also, the study's sample was not fully representative of the entire population of pupils in the Kayunga district therefore, it does not accurately reflect the diversity of feeding practices in the district.

Recommendation

Schools should also provide storage places for meals of students. This will help students to have meals at the appropriate time and use available time to read without interruptions.

Acknowledgment

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List of Abbreviations

CBC	Competence-Based Curriculum
CI	Confidence Interval
CVI	Content Validity Index
KED	Kayunga Education Department
KICD	Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development
SCM	School Management Committee
SPSS	Special Package for Social Sciences
UNATU Uganda	National Teachers Union
UPE	Universal Primary Education
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organisation

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Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Author Biography

Student of Educational planning and management at Team University.

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