



# Teachers' Perspectives on Capacity of the School Feeding Committees to Secure Food Supplies and the Sustainability of School Feeding Programs in Kilimanjaro Public Primary Schools

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**Abstract:** This study examined teachers' perspective on the capacity of the School Feeding Committees (SFCs) on the sustainability of School Feeding Programs (SFPs) in public primary schools in Kilimanjaro Region, Tanzania. Institutional, Social Capital, and Stakeholder theories provided the theoretical framework. A convergent parallel design was employed, integrating quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data were collected through a cross-sectional survey, while qualitative insights were obtained using a descriptive phenomenological approach. The study targeted 991 schools across Hai, Siha, and Mwangi districts. Using stratified and simple random sampling, 302 participants (teachers, pupils, and SFC members) were selected. Data collection tools included questionnaires, interview guides, focus group discussions. Content validity was established through expert evaluation, while face validity was examined through a pilot test with 15 respondents representing various school stakeholders. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics while qualitative data were thematically analyzed. Findings revealed that active committees enhanced continuity, stakeholder trust, and community participation. However, inadequate infrastructure, limited training, low parental involvement, and lack of clear policy on parental contributions constrained performance. The study concluded that empowered and well-structured SFCs are essential for sustaining school feeding programs, as they strengthen procurement, financial accountability, monitoring, and community participation. It recommended strengthening school-based agricultural projects, regular capacity-building, improved monitoring systems, and multi-stakeholder collaboration involving NGOs, local authorities, and government policy support.

**Keywords:** School feeding committees, School feeding programs, Sustainability, Institutional social capital,

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## 1. Introduction

School feeding programs (SFP) are meant to provide meals to students which boosts school attendance, involvement and performance (Appiah, 2024). It has been demonstrated that well-planned and executed SFPs reduce temporary hunger, boost enrolment in schools,

promote attendance and focus, correct micronutrient deficiencies, and improve learning (Appiah, 2024). According to (Cupertino et al., 2022), these SFP programs also benefit students, families, and communities by improving academic performance, enrolment, attendance, completion rates, literacy, and reducing dropout rates and absenteeism. School meal programs helped around 10% of school-age children in

low-income nations; in lower middle-income, higher middle-income, and high-income countries (GCNF, 2022).

According to (United Nations, 2023), “the 2030 Agenda’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include eliminating poverty and malnutrition (SDG 2) and ensuring that everyone has access to inclusive, equitable education and opportunities for lifelong learning (SDG 4)” (United Nations; transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development (A/RES/70/1)). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are anchored in human rights principles and represent a vital investment in a nation’s human capital. They are in close harmony with basic human rights by promoting inclusive and equitable lifeways of development. In discussing the right of children to education, for example, Article 12 of Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasizes the duty of states to help ensure “adequate access for all children to a variety of educational institutions” and “to support the progressive development of children’s mental and physical abilities.” The Convention further affirms that every child has the right to, “supplant existing vulnerabilities” in the right to “be empowered” to effectively enjoy “dignity and equality, and full participation in society (UNGA, 1989).

In Africa, several countries have initiatives towards midday school feeding to pupils in primary levels. The countries like Burkina Faso, Egypt, Nigeria, DRC Congo, Chad, South Africa, Ghana, Rwanda, Kenya, and Uganda are good examples. The number of students benefited by school feeding programs in Africa increased from 38.4 million in 2013 to 65.4 million in 2019, according to (AUC, 2020). The countries with the biggest programs are Burkina Faso, Egypt, Nigeria, and South Africa. The African Union promotes Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) initiatives as a means of attaining Africa’s Agenda 2063 and the SDGs (AUC, 2020). These programs procure food from nearby farms. The 2016 creation of the African Day of School Feeding serves as a reminder of the importance of these initiatives for local development, nutrition, and education.

In Tanzania, WFP was initially in charge of school feeding programs for the most part, with the Ministry of Education and vocational training (MoEVT) playing role of policy making (Roothaert et al., 2021a). Here, the government is basically the initiator. There were other parties involved in the provision of nutrition services and school meals outside the government. These included the local communities and the business community who partnered in this cooperative endeavour (Roothaert et al., 2021a). This strategy was in complete accordance with the 2014 Education and Training Policy, which places a strong emphasis on guaranteeing that educational institutions have access to basic public services, such as wholesome meals (MoEVT, 2015). According to (MoEVT, 2015), as the WFP slowly pulled out, the main stakeholders that remained in the school feeding program

included parents, guardians, and communities that work alongside school leadership to guarantee pupils receive food and proper nutrition while attending school. These made them to be the body responsible for the planning and, a body was mainly responsible for monitoring, extracted from the existing committee.

In recent years, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST, the then MoEVT) has taken proactive steps to formalize and standardize school feeding programs (MoH, 2018). Launched in 2021, the National Guidelines on School Feeding and Nutrition Services to Basic Education Students serve as a comprehensive framework. These guidelines aim to guide supervisors, implementers, and stakeholders in providing optimal food and nutrition services to both pupils and students (Roothaert et al., 2021a). Based on the National Guidelines, the School Feeding Committee consists of parents or guardians, members of the local community, and members of the school administration and is probably the most important resource for organizing and implementing school food and nutrition services. The Committee’s major objectives are to ensure that food is collected, stored, managed, and distributed fairly, that safety and quality of food standards are maintained, and that learners’ nutritional health is improved. Its main tasks include organizing food contributions from parents and other partners, ensuring proper storage and food preparation before cooking and using food preparation hygiene, and working with the local authority and community to create a sustainable school-based feeding program. Additionally, the committee monitors and evaluates the feeding program’s effectiveness in improving student attendance, health, and academic performance (URT, 2020).

The Tanzania-based Global Communities is expanding on nearly a decade of implementation through the new \$28.5 million, five-year Pamoja Tuwalishe initiative, whose primary goal is to strengthen stakeholders’ capacity to sustain the achievements of previous McGovern-Dole programs in 231 target schools (McGovern-Dole, 2022). The initiative will also introduce new programming in 120 schools in the Mara and Dodoma Regions, supporting the Government of Tanzania in implementing the National School Feeding Guidelines law. Since a school’s capacity to manage its physical and human resources largely depends on the effectiveness of its school committee, examining how these committees manage financial resources is essential for sustaining such feeding programs.

The monitoring team, comprising some members from the government, teachers, community and parents is responsible for adequate implementation of the laid down strategies and their execution to adequately feed the learners as planned.

In Kilimanjaro, Tanzania, the SFP serves over 60% of the area’s schools; the distribution varies by district

(WFPTanzania, 2023). According to WFP Tanzania (2023), global donors provided the majority of the program's food supply in 2023; the World Food Programme (WFP) provided 45% of the food and the United Nations Children's Fund provided 30%. The remaining 25% comes from local donations, with noteworthy assistance from neighbourhood projects (Kilimanjaro Regional Office, 2023). Funding shortages and uneven supplier chains are problems that affect the program's overall efficacy.

According to McGovern-Dole (2022), for the school food program in Tanzania's public primary schools to be sustainable, the school food committee is essential. This committee works closely with school administration, parents, and members of the community to plan and coordinate the feeding programs. The sustainability and effectiveness of school food programs are strongly impacted by the composition of the school feeding committee. In an ideal situation, diverse specialties should be included in the positions of members, such as supply chain management specialists and dietitians for meal planning (Jansen et al., 2020). Proper composition guarantees that participants possess the requisite abilities, including budgeting-related financial management (Banda, 2018). The presence of diverse viewpoints and increased community involvement among committee members can improve program outcomes (Assefa & Zenebe, 2024).

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

In Tanzania, School Feeding Committees (SFCs) play a crucial role in sustaining School Feeding Programs (SFPs) in public primary schools through organizing food supplies, managing storage, preparing meals, monitoring feeding schedules, and promoting transparency in resource use. Well managed feeding programs have been shown to improve attendance, academic performance, and pupils' nutritional status. However, the sustainability of these programs has become a growing concern among key education stakeholders, including teachers, school leaders, parents, and local government authorities.

Sustainability challenges are linked primarily to management aspects of SFCs. Many committees struggle with inadequate financial planning, weak resource mobilization, poor record-keeping, and irregular monitoring systems. These weaknesses are combined by over reliance on parental contributions, yet many parents in low-income families cannot consistently provide foodstuffs. That lead schools experience recurrent food shortages, leaving pupils hungry and unable to concentrate in class. Hungry children are also more susceptible to illness, absenteeism, low participation, and eventual dropout, undermining the goals of universal education and human capital development.

While prior studies (e.g., Mosha et al., 2022; Rector et al., 2021) have documented the positive outcomes of school feeding on student performance and nutrition, they have largely overlooked the operational and governance dimensions of SFCs that are vital for sustainability. Similarly, Roothaert et al. (2021) addressed policy aspects without adequately examining how SFCs manage finances, secure food supplies, and involve stakeholders.

This gap places of interest the need to investigate SFCs' management effectiveness in sustaining SFPs, particularly in the Kilimanjaro Region where committees continue to face persistent constraints of limited resources, inadequate coordination, and weak community participation. By focusing on management practices including food procurement, financial accountability, monitoring, and stakeholder mobilization this study aimed to generate evidence on how SFCs can enhance sustainability and resilience of school feeding initiatives.

## 1.3 Research Questions

- i. To what extent does the School Feeding Committees' capacity influence the sustainability of School Feeding Programs in Kilimanjaro's public primary schools?

## 1.4 Theoretical Framework

Institutional theory is a branch of organizational sociology and management, focusing on how

organizations align their structure, practices, and behavior with competing societal norms, values and expectations in order to gain legitimacy, maintain organizational legitimacy, and sustain the organization into the future. **Institutional Theory** is a social theory that explains how institutions like schools, governments, or organizations shape the behavior of individuals and groups within them. It suggests that people and organizations conform to established norms, rules, and expectations not only for efficiency or profit, but also to gain **legitimacy**, acceptance, and stability. Emerging in the late 1970s and early 1980s, it was shaped by key scholars such as Meyer and Rowan (Meyer & Rowan, 1977), DiMaggio and Powell (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), and Scott (Bhasin, 2016). Meyer and Rowan introduced the concept of "institutionalized organizations," highlighting how adherence to institutional norms helps organizations secure resources and legitimacy (Yilmaz, 2023). DiMaggio and Powell expanded on this by explaining how organizations adopt similar structures and practices through isomorphism, driven by coercive, normative, and mimetic pressures (Bhasin, 2016). Scott further enriched the theory by identifying three pillars of institutions: regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive.

The theory posits that organizational behavior and structures are shaped more by institutional expectations than by operational efficiency. Key tenets include the pursuit of legitimacy, the institutionalization of norms, and the tendency for organizations in similar environments to become alike over time. In the context of School Feeding Committees, institutional theory provides a lens to examine how these committees maintain meal programs by aligning with societal norms, mobilizing resources, and sustaining community support to achieve program continuity.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 School Feeding Committees Foodstuff Acquisition to Realize Sustainable School Feeding in Primary Schools

School Feeding Programs (SFPs) are widely acknowledged as essential interventions aimed at improving pupils' nutritional status, reducing short-term hunger, and enhancing educational outcomes. It basically involves the government, school management and the food chain management, not really the parents. In many low-income and developing regions, these programs have proven instrumental in enhancing school enrolment, promoting regular attendance, reducing dropout rates, and contributing to improved concentration and academic performance. The long-term success and sustainability of SFPs, however, are largely determined by the strength and effectiveness of School Feeding

Committees (SFCs), who serve as key actors in the coordination, management, and resource mobilization for meal provision in schools.

In this context, foodstuff acquisition defined as the ability of SFCs to consistently secure, manage, and distribute adequate food supplies is one of the most critical components for ensuring the reliability and continuity of the feeding program. This involves a complex set of activities, including identifying reliable sources of food, engaging with stakeholders (such as parents, local farmers, and suppliers), storing food safely, and ensuring timely procurement and distribution.

Globally, various models of SFP management have been adopted. In the United States, for example, SFCs work in close collaboration with federal and state-level institutions, school administrators, local governments, and non-profit organizations to guarantee a steady food supply. The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the Farm to School initiative, both administered under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), are particularly noteworthy in supporting food acquisition and sustainability. These programs emphasize sourcing ingredients locally, thereby supporting local agriculture while reducing transportation costs and environmental footprint. Local farmers are often directly engaged, allowing schools to procure fresh fruits, vegetables, and grains that comply with nutritional guidelines (USDA, 2017; Gaffney, 2021).

Moreover, the NSLP's structured approach to budgeting, vendor partnerships, and compliance with food safety standards provides valuable lessons on building a resilient supply chain. According to Gaffney (2021), regular training for SFC members on procurement procedures, hygiene, and nutritional standards has also contributed to improved service delivery and accountability. However, despite these comprehensive efforts, challenges persist. For instance, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI, 2023) reported that recent disruptions in global supply chains and the rising cost of food commodities have strained school meal budgets, threatening the regularity and quality of meals served in public schools. These experiences underscore that even in developed contexts with robust systems, sustainable food acquisition remains vulnerable to external shocks such as inflation, logistics breakdowns, and funding constraints. For developing regions like Tanzania where school feeding is often community-driven such insights highlight the need to adapt local strategies that can withstand socio-economic pressures.

The United States Department of Agriculture (2017) study used a mixed-method approach, combining surveys, interviews, and site observations involving school officials, community members, and SFC representatives. The study concluded that collaboration with local partners greatly improved food consistency

and compliance with dietary requirements. However, the same research identified a notable gap: limited evaluation of the long-term educational and health impacts of such programs, especially in marginalized communities. Most efforts focus on the operational side of food acquisition, with less attention given to how effective food provision translates into sustained learning outcomes.

While lessons from the U.S. and other countries offer valuable frameworks, there remains limited evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa - particularly Tanzania - regarding how SFCs function in securing food supplies sustainably and the factors that either enable or constrain this process. More specifically, empirical data on how SFCs in Kilimanjaro region acquire, manage, and sustain food supplies in the absence of consistent government funding, clear policy support, or formal training remains scarce. The majority of existing studies focus on the nutritional or educational outcomes of SFPs rather than the governance mechanisms, food supply structures, and community engagement models used by SFCs. This informed the current study to address this gap by exploring the strategies used by School Feeding Committees in Kilimanjaro to acquire food supplies, the challenges they face in doing so, and how these practices affect the sustainability of school feeding programs. Unlike prior studies that focus on outcomes, this research shifts attention to the institutional processes, resource dynamics, and local innovations that underpin sustained food delivery in Tanzanian public primary schools

In the United Kingdom, similar efforts were observed. Research conducted by the Department for Education (DFE, 2024) highlighted collaborations between School Feeding Committees (SFCs) and organizations such as School Food Matters, which prioritized the procurement of food from local suppliers. This strategy enhanced access to fresh and nutritious produce, minimized environmental impact through shorter transport distances, and provided economic support to surrounding communities. Data gathered from surveys and case studies indicated that by involving local farmers and community-based organizations, schools were able to establish more dependable food supply chains and improve the overall sustainability of their school feeding programs. However, despite these benefits, the study pointed out that increasing operational costs remained a critical barrier. This created an urgent need for further exploration of alternative funding frameworks that could support long-term program viability. These insights held direct relevance to the Tanzanian context, particularly in regions like Kilimanjaro, where school feeding programs often struggled with limited financial resources. As such, the current study aimed to investigate community-based funding initiatives and local resource mobilization strategies that could offer sustainable, context-specific solutions to the persistent operational and financial challenges facing SFPs.

In Australia, a study conducted by the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation (SAKGF) in 2017 investigated the impact of the Kitchen Garden Program on school feeding programs (SFPs) across 60 public primary schools located in New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland. The findings showed that the integration of school gardens into SFPs helped significantly reduce food procurement costs by providing a consistent supply of fresh, seasonal ingredients cultivated on-site. The program also enhanced pupils' nutritional awareness and fostered sustainability through the active participation of students, parents, teachers, and local businesses. Additionally, the initiative promoted experiential learning, improved social interaction, and contributed to positive academic outcomes. Despite these achievements, the study revealed that inconsistent funding remained a major obstacle, threatening the continuity and expansion of the program over time. Although the garden-based approach proved to be practical and impactful, its long-term success was undermined by the absence of secure financial backing or policy-driven support frameworks. These insights were particularly relevant to the Kilimanjaro context, where many public schools face similar financial limitations and depend heavily on community-based support to sustain their SFPs. Therefore, the current study explored how locally available resources such as school gardens, community labour, and small-scale food production could be better organized and sustained even under conditions of financial uncertainty. In this way, the study aimed to generate locally grounded strategies that could overcome funding-related challenges and promote long-term program viability, especially in economically constrained environments like those found in rural Tanzania. Across Africa, research highlights the importance of context-specific strategies in sustaining SFPs.

In Ghana, leveraging local agricultural production emerged as a pivotal strategy for sustaining School Feeding Programs (SFPs). Bold et al., (2023) reported that collaborative partnerships between schools and local farmers ensured a more reliable and continuous food supply, which in turn fostered stronger ties between educational institutions and their surrounding communities. This approach not only enhanced food availability but also promoted local economic development and community ownership of the feeding initiatives.

Despite these positive outcomes, the study identified significant challenges, notably the limited training provided to School Feeding Committee (SFC) members and inconsistent levels of government support, which undermined program effectiveness and sustainability. Similar challenges have been observed in Tanzania, particularly within the Kilimanjaro region, where there is a pressing need for capacity-building efforts tailored to SFC members and strengthened collaboration with local authorities.

School feeding programs in Tanzania have been found to positively impact student attendance, academic performance, and nutritional status. Research indicates that these programs can lead to increased enrollment, improved concentration, and enhanced learning. However, challenges remain in ensuring the sustainability and quality of these programs, with issues like inadequate funding, reliance on parent contributions, and food shortages impacting their effectiveness. Given these parallels, the current study aimed to investigate how SFCs in Kilimanjaro manage these challenges and what additional strategies could be implemented to bolster their capacity, enhance program sustainability, and foster stronger multi-stakeholder partnerships. This focus addressed the gap in the literature by exploring locally specific capacity-building needs and institutional support mechanisms that have not been extensively examined in Tanzanian school feeding contexts.

A study by Okae-Adjei et al. (2020) in Ghana emphasized the importance of local agricultural partnerships but noted a lack of financial management training among SFC members. However, their research primarily used a descriptive design with limited quantitative analysis, focusing mainly on school administrators and community partners. In contrast, the current study employs a convergent mixed methods design, integrating qualitative and quantitative data collected concurrently. This approach allows a more comprehensive understanding of how financial management capacity influences sustainable food acquisition, involving a diverse range of participants including teachers, SFC members, Ward Education Officers (WEOs), District Education Officers (DEOs), and headteachers. Additionally, the application of linear regression and Pearson correlation in this study provides empirical evidence on the strength and nature of these relationships, which prior descriptive studies lacked. Furthermore, focusing on Kilimanjaro's specific socio-economic and administrative context ensures that findings are locally relevant and actionable.

Similarly, Mafugu's (2021) study in South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal Province highlighted strong community engagement in school nutrition programs but revealed challenges related to inconsistent funding and inadequate food safety training. This study mainly relied on cross-sectional surveys and qualitative interviews without fully integrating data types for holistic analysis. The current research addresses this gap by concurrently analyzing qualitative and quantitative data to better capture the complex realities faced by SFCs in food procurement and program sustainability. The broader participant base, spanning multiple education system levels, enriches the understanding beyond community stakeholders alone. Importantly, this study advanced analytical rigor by testing hypotheses about how financial constraints and capacity-building affect sustainability outcomes, moving beyond descriptive findings of previous work.

A study conducted by WFP Burkina Faso (2022), which involved 45 rural public primary schools, demonstrated the value of local partnerships with farmers in sustaining food supplies for School Feeding Programmes (SFPs). These partnerships reduced operational costs and simultaneously supported the local economy. School Feeding Committees (SFCs) played a central role in mobilising community support and coordinating with suppliers. However, the study highlighted persistent challenges such as insufficient training for SFC members and inconsistent external funding, which limited programme sustainability.

The study adopted a descriptive approach and focused mainly on rural schools, without applying integrated methods to explore how SFC training and resource mobilisation quantitatively relate to programme sustainability. The current study filled the identified gap by using a convergent mixed methods design, combining interviews and statistical analysis to examine how foodstuff acquisition by SFCs influences SFP sustainability in both rural and urban contexts in Kilimanjaro.

Jean de Dieu et al. (2023) conducted research across 30 schools in Egypt, emphasising the positive impact of school collaborations with agricultural cooperatives. These partnerships improved the nutritional quality of meals, enhanced pupil health, and encouraged classroom participation. While SFCs were involved in managing resources, the study revealed budgetary delays and limited financial autonomy at the school level, which hindered timely and consistent food delivery. This study relied heavily on qualitative narratives and lacked diverse participant representation beyond school administrators. In contrast, the current study incorporated some multiple stakeholder perspectives—including teachers, headteachers, WEOs, DEOs, and SFC members thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of how food procurement practices affect programme sustainability across governance levels for triangulation purposes. The findings could also be generalized to the target groups.

Okolo-Obasi and Uduji (2024) examined Nigeria's large-scale National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP), which served over nine million pupils. The programme enhanced employment opportunities, supported local farming, and improved nutrition outcomes. However, challenges such as poor monitoring systems, inconsistent food quality, and gaps in resource management were reported, which threatened the programme's effectiveness in certain regions. While the study provided broad insights at a national scale, it did not apply detailed analytical methods to assess the strength of relationships between SFC functioning and programme outcomes. The current study addressed the gap by employing Pearson correlation and linear regression to quantitatively measure the influence of SFCs' foodstuff acquisition capacity on the sustainability of SFPs in Kilimanjaro's public primary schools.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), a study conducted by USAID Advancing Nutrition (2023) in 35 public schools presents a unique case. The research found that School Feeding Committees (SFCs) were actively engaged in acquiring and managing locally sourced foodstuffs, such as cassava and plantains, which helped reduce dependence on external donors. The use of traditional crops supported dietary relevance and community involvement. However, the study revealed that logistical challenges that included poor road infrastructure, delayed supply deliveries and the broader effects of political instability often disrupted the consistent delivery of school meals. These constraints undermined the committees' efforts to maintain stable food supplies, highlighting a crucial weakness in supply chain resilience and programme reliability.

While the research undertaken in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) gave valuable contextual background on food sourcing practices, it did not use a mixed methods design or statistically assess the direct relation of the School Feeding Committees' (SFCs) ability to source food on programming sustainability. This limitation was explored in the current study which employed a convergent mixed methods design and a statistical analysis approach, including linear regression and a Pearson correlation, to quantitatively substantiate the relationship between SFCs' food procurement abilities and sustainability of the School Feeding Programs of publicly funded primary schools in the Kilimanjaro Region.

In Kenya, a study by Zenebe et al. (2018) evaluated School Feeding Programmes (SFPs) across 60 schools, highlighting the vital role played by School Feeding Committees (SFCs) in sourcing food through partnerships with local producers and suppliers. These efforts helped reduce dependence on centralised procurement and increased community ownership of the programme. However, the study reported that inconsistent government funding severely undermined the regularity and quality of meals provided. Based on these findings, the researchers recommended that stable and predictable financial support is essential for maintaining the reliability of SFPs.

This study differs from the predominantly qualitative Kenyan study, which did not numerically analyse the relationship between School Feeding Committees' capacity to procure food and the financial sustainability of their programs. The current study filled this gap by using a convergent mixed-methods approach, it used regression and correlation analyses to show exactly how the School Feeding Committee's ability to procure food supplies affects the sustainability of school feeding programs in Tanzanian public primary schools.

These global insights underscore the pivotal role of School Feeding Committees (SFCs) in sustaining School Feeding Programmes (SFPs). Building on these findings, the current study examines how SFCs in the Kilimanjaro

region collaborate with local farmers, communities, and government authorities to secure a reliable supply of food. It further investigates practical strategies for addressing persistent challenges such as limited training, inadequate funding, and weak coordination among stakeholders. By integrating relevant theoretical perspectives with lessons drawn from international experiences, the study sought to offer evidence-based recommendations that can strengthen the sustainability of SFPs in Kilimanjaro and comparable contexts.

In Tanzania, a study conducted by the World Food Programme (WFP Tanzania, 2023) focused on School Feeding Committees (SFCs) in various public primary schools within the Kilimanjaro region. The research utilised surveys and interviews involving SFC members, teachers, and local farmers, alongside an analysis of food sourcing records and programme budgets, to gain insight into resource allocation practices. The findings indicated that SFCs had achieved notable success in collaborating with local farmers and other stakeholders to secure a consistent food supply. Furthermore, their educational initiatives on nutrition and sustainable agriculture contributed positively to programme outcomes. However, the study also revealed significant constraints, particularly funding limitations and recurring food shortages, which undermined the long-term sustainability of the school feeding programmes. While the study highlighted these challenges, it called for further research into alternative funding mechanisms and improved strategies for resource allocation. The current study addressed the identified gap by exploring how SFCs in Kilimanjaro manage financial mobilisation and optimise food acquisition to enhance sustainability under real-world constraints.

Another study on community involvement in school activities: its effectiveness in promoting quality of learning in public schools in Kilimanjaro, Tanzania by Lema & Mwila (2022) examined the role of community engagement in enhancing educational quality. In the study, a convergent parallel mixed-methods design was employed with a population of 14,351, which included school administrators, teachers, students, and community members. A combination of probability and non-probability sampling techniques was applied in selecting a representative sample of 114 participants. The data were collected through questionnaires and interview guides. The quantitative data were analyzed in SPSS and the qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The results of the study indicated that community engagement, especially with providing meals for pupils, positively impacted the quality of education and the sustainability of school programmes. However, the levels of community engagement overall remained moderate due to low public awareness and limited modes of communication between surrounding communities and the school.

The study highlighted a need to increase community awareness and establish structured programs to

strengthen school-community partnerships. It recommended that schools foster stronger connections with community members, encouraging more active involvement to support better learning outcomes. Common challenges identified include inconsistent funding, inadequate SFC training, and logistical hurdles. The empirical studies across different regions emphasize the importance of community partnerships, local food sourcing, and educational initiatives for sustainable school feeding programs. However, challenges such as resource allocation inefficiencies, rising costs, and inconsistent food quality highlight the need for further research into funding mechanisms and resource management. The research gap focuses on developing SFC capacity and securing stable funding, with lessons applicable to sustaining school feeding programs in Tanzania's Kilimanjaro region. Various studies highlight a research gap in the need for stable funding and training for SFCs in sustainable sourcing and financial management, along with limited data on long-term student health outcomes. Bridging these gaps could strengthen program continuity, offering valuable insights for contexts like Tanzania's Kilimanjaro region. Additionally, there is a gap in understanding the long-term impact of these feeding programs on academic outcomes and health improvements among students. This gap justified the current study focused on SFCs in the Kilimanjaro region and their role in sustaining school feeding programs.

Technological advancements also offer new opportunities for improving SFC operations. Bold et al. (2023) reported that digital tools, such as mobile applications for tracking food supplies and managing contributions, enhanced transparency and efficiency in SFPs. While such technologies are not yet widely implemented in rural Tanzania, they have the potential to address logistical challenges faced by SFCs. This study explored the feasibility of introducing digital innovations in Kilimanjaro to enhance the operational efficiency of SFPs.

A review of empirical and conceptual studies underscores the essential role of School Feeding Committees (SFCs) in sustaining school feeding programs through effective food acquisition strategies. Lessons from countries such as the U.S., UK, Ghana, and Kenya demonstrate that partnerships, community involvement, and innovative resource mobilization are crucial for ensuring a steady food supply. However, despite these insights, previous studies, including those by Mosha et al., Roothaert et al., and Rector et al., have failed to adequately explore the challenges that hinder SFCs in securing sustainable food sources within the Tanzanian context. These studies primarily focused on the nutritional and academic benefits of school feeding programs but did not sufficiently address logistical, financial, and structural barriers faced by SFCs in managing food supply chains. This research sought to bridge these gaps by examining the effectiveness of SFCs in Kilimanjaro's primary schools, specifically in the

districts of Hai, Siha, and Mwanga. It assessed how these committees mobilised resources, engaged stakeholders, and implemented best practices to ensure the continuous availability of foodstuffs. By identifying key constraints such as inadequate funding, supply chain disruptions, and weak stakeholder coordination, the study aimed to provide practical recommendations for improving food acquisition strategies. Ultimately, the findings were intended to inform policies that enhance the sustainability of school feeding programmes, ensuring that they remain effective in addressing food security challenges and improving educational outcomes in Tanzanian primary schools.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Research Design

The research design functions as a detailed framework guiding the selection of methods and procedures to ensure that the study's objectives are effectively achieved while enhancing the reliability and validity of the results. To address the complexity of the research questions, the study adopted a convergent parallel design, integrating a Cross-Sectional Survey (quantitative) with Descriptive Phenomenology (qualitative). This approach involved the simultaneous collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, which were later merged to offer a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. By combining these two strands, the design capitalized on the strengths of each method, providing a richer, more nuanced perspective than either could offer alone (Abu & Mohammad Toyon, 2021; Younas et al., 2023).

Cross sectional survey design was utilized in collecting data from various categories of participants that comprised of school heads, pupils and teachers about the School Feeding Committees (SFCs) on the sustainability of school feeding programs. Descriptive phenomenology was used to obtain data through interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholders, that comprised of the SFC members, education officers, and school administrators. These qualitative methods captured participants' lived experiences and in-depth perspectives on the effectiveness of SFCs, contributing valuable contextual insight to complement the quantitative findings. The results from the qualitative strand helped to triangulate the quantitative findings, reinforcing their validity and providing deeper contextual insights as advocated by Raymondville et al., (2020).

By employing the convergent parallel design, this study ensured that different dimensions of SFC effectiveness - ranging from financial resource management to foodstuff acquisition - are examined through both statistical trends and contextual narratives. This integrative approach is particularly useful in policy-oriented educational research, where a single-method study may overlook

critical complexities necessary for formulating effective interventions. Ultimately, this research design enhanced the study's capacity to generate well-informed, evidence-based recommendations aimed at improving the sustainability of school feeding programs in public primary schools across Tanzania.

### 3.2 Target Population

In research, the target population refers to the full set of individuals or entities that possess specific attributes

relevant to the study's objectives. Clearly identifying this population is essential to ensure that the results are representative and can be meaningfully generalized to a wider context. In this study, the target population comprised of 4,780 members of SFCs, 3,824 Teachers (heads of schools, kindergarten teachers- because they handle vulnerable children who are prone to hunger for growth, class seven teachers, and school teachers responsible with SFP), seven (7) DEOs, 155 WEOs, and 10,117 class seven pupils from target districts (Table 1).

**Table 1: Population Distribution**

	Moshi Rural	Moshi Municipal	Same	Rombo	Mwanga	Hai	Siha	Total
Number of Wards	32	14	34	21	20	17	17	<b>155</b>
Number of Schools	269	72	188	152	109	105	61	<b>956</b>
Members of SFCs,	1345	360	940	760	545	525	305	<b>4780</b>
School Headteachers	269	72	188	152	109	105	61	<b>956</b>
Kindergarten Teachers	269	72	188	152	109	105	61	<b>956</b>
Class Seven Teachers	269	72	188	152	109	105	61	<b>956</b>
Teachers involved in SFP	269	72	188	152	109	105	61	<b>956</b>
District Education Officers	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	<b>7</b>
Ward Education Officers	32	14	34	21	20	17	17	<b>155</b>
Standard 7 Pupils								
Boys					1375	2342	1179	
Girls					1439	2439	1343	
<b>Total</b>					<b>2,814</b>	<b>4,781</b>	<b>2,522</b>	<b>10,117</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,454</b>	<b>663</b>	<b>1,727</b>	<b>1,390</b>	<b>3,816</b>	<b>5,744</b>	<b>3,089</b>	<b>18,883</b>

Source: Kilimanjaro Region Education Office (2024)

Surveying the heads of schools, kindergarten teachers, class seven teachers, school teachers responsible for the School Feeding Program (SFP), and class seven pupils was crucial for a comprehensive understanding of the program's sustainability. School heads oversee overall implementation, resource management, and policy enforcement, while kindergarten and class seven teachers are directly involved in meal distribution and can provide insights into its impact on students' nutrition, attendance, and academic performance. Including DEOs offer insights into management and policies. WEOs provide a broader administrative context. Collectively, these stakeholders represent the key actors involved, enabling the study to address all aspects essential for sustaining school feeding programs.

Class seven teachers, in particular, interact closely with pupils at a critical stage of their education, allowing them to assess the long-term impact of the program. Surveying class seven pupils was essential because they are the oldest primary school learners, possessing the cognitive ability to articulate their experiences regarding the

adequacy, consistency, and impact of the School Feeding Program on their education and well-being. Their insights provided valuable firsthand perspectives on the program's effectiveness in addressing school participation, nutritional status, and academic engagement.

### 3.3 Sample and Sampling Procedures

In research, a sample refers to a smaller group of individuals, items, or data selected from a larger population for the purpose of studying and drawing conclusions about that population. This implies that instead of investigating the entire group often because it's too large, expensive, or time-consuming, researchers focus on a representative portion. According to Creswell and Creswell (2023), "A sample is a subgroup of the target population that the researcher plans to study for generalizing about the target population." This means that when researchers select a sample, they aim for it to

reflect the broader population as closely as possible, so their findings can be meaningful and trustworthy.

Several methods can be used to determine an appropriate sample size, as noted by Singh and Masuku (2014). These include conducting a full census for small populations, using sample sizes from comparable studies, consulting published sample size tables, seeking expert recommendations, or applying statistical formulas. This study used the Yamane formula to determine the sample size of quantitative research among the pupils. This formula was considered appropriate because it is a simple and widely used method for determining sample size in research when the total population is known. It is simple to use, saves time and ensures reliable results without surveying everyone. It helped the researcher to determine the number of participants that were to be included in the study in order to obtain accurate results. Taro Yamane (1967) developed the formula to determine sample size when the population is known and finite. It's widely used in social science research to determine the sample size (Taherdoost, 2016). The formula depends on factors such as the population size, confidence level, and margin of error.

The Yamane Formula

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = total population size

e = margin of error (commonly 0.05 for 95% confidence level)

Using a population of 10,117 Standard Seven pupils across the three districts and a margin of error of 5% (0.05), the formula was used to calculate the sample as follows:

where N = 10,117,

e = 0.05.

$n = 10,117 / (1 + (10,117 \times 0.05^2)) = 384.79$

From this, the researcher used 25% of the value because of the dispersed nature of the environment, to arrive at the sample size 98. Therefore, yielded a sample size of 98 pupils.

A properly calculated sample size ensures that the findings are **accurate, reliable, and representative** of the population you're studying. If the sample is too small, the results may be misleading or lack the power to detect real patterns. On the other hand, an overly large sample might drain time, money, and energy unnecessarily.

The sampling procedure stipulates how cases are to be chosen for observation. Rahi (2017) explains that sampling procedure can be categorized into two main categories, namely probability sampling and non-probability sampling. This study employed both probability and non-probability sampling techniques, consistent with its mixed-methods approach. Probability sampling ensured that every member of the population had an equal chance of being selected, thereby enhancing the representativeness of the quantitative data. On the other hand, in non-probability sampling not all members have a known chance; in this study the researcher used purposive sampling to select teachers,

### 3.4 Description of Research Instruments

The study employed a variety of data collection instruments, including a questionnaire, document analysis guide, focus group discussion guide, and interview guide, to facilitate comprehensive data gathering. The questionnaire incorporated both closed-ended questions, designed to generate quantitative data, and open-ended questions for qualitative insights. The interview guide, primarily composed of open-ended questions, was administered to headteachers, District Education Officers (DEOs), and Ward Education Officers (WEOs) to explore their perspectives in depth.

Questionnaires were distributed to pupils and teachers to capture their views on the school feeding program, while focus group discussions were held with members of the School Feeding Committees to gain a deeper understanding of the program's implementation and effectiveness. Each instrument was carefully aligned with the study's research questions to ensure relevance and accuracy. For the closed-ended items, a 5-point Likert scale was used, where a value of 1 represented the weakest level of agreement or positive response, and a value of 5 represented the strongest. Detailed descriptions of each instrument are provided in the subsequent sections.

### 3.5 Validity, Pilot Testing and Reliability of Research Instruments

In research, validity ensures that an instrument measures exactly what it is intended to, while reliability focuses on its consistency in producing similar results under similar conditions. Achieving both validity and reliability strengthens the accuracy and trustworthiness of the data gathered.

### 3.5.1 Validity

Validity refers to the extent to which a method accurately measures what it is intended to measure. A method is considered valid if the results closely align with the observed values and effectively reflect the intended concept. In this study, content validity was established through expert evaluation. University specialists in educational administration and planning, as well as research methodology, reviewed the questionnaire, interview guide, and document guide. With their expertise in school feeding programmes and research methods, they examined the clarity, relevance, and thoroughness of the content to ensure that each item aligned with the study objectives and effectively measured the intended variables. Constructive feedback from these experts was incorporated to adjust and improve the tools, ensuring they would capture the necessary data to address the research questions accurately. This process enhanced the validity and accuracy of the data collection instruments.

### 3.5.2 Pilot Testing

Prior to the main study, a pilot test was essential in research to find and fix possible problems associated with the research instrument. It facilitated the improvement of research methods, viability assessment, and instruction clarity (Hassan et al., 2006). Small-scale testing of tools and procedures helped researchers increase validity and dependability, producing stronger results. According to (Hassan et al., 2006), through the pilot tests, the efficiency and legitimacy of the research process were eventually improved by this preparatory stage, which also helped in calculating resource requirements and detecting logistical issues.

The pilot test was conducted to ensure the feasibility and effectiveness of the research methods. According to Creswell & Creswell (2018), the sample size for a pilot test typically ranges from 5% to 20% of the main study sample size. In this study, 5% was adopted. Since the study consisted of 302 respondents (excluding the DEOs), a pilot test sample size was 15 respondents. The selection of a sample of 15 respondents was done as a representative sample of public primary schools, and was taken from only one district that was conveniently selected (Hai District in this case). The criteria of selecting Hai for pilot testing was the diversity in school size, geographic location, and socioeconomic background. This sample size allowed the researcher to detect potential issues in their instruments or procedures without committing excessive resources. Since the pilot study involved Wards education officers, Head Teachers, School Head boy/Girl, School Board Chairperson, and SFC Chairperson, the study picked three respondents from each category. The Pilot data was then be analysed to assess the clarity, comprehensiveness, and appropriateness of the instruments. Additionally, any logistical or methodological challenges encountered during data collection was identified. Based on the

results of the pilot test, research methods were refined, including adjusting questionnaire items, modifying interview protocols, and improving data collection procedures. This process ensured that all instruments effectively capture the intended variables and provide meaningful insights into SFC roles, challenges, and program sustainability

### 3.5.3 Reliability of Quantitative Instruments

According to Chan & Idris (2017), the reliability of quantitative instruments refers to the consistency and dependability of measurements or data collection tools used in research, ensuring that they yield stable results under similar conditions across different occasions or observers. In this study, all four questionnaires that were used to assess the influence of School Feeding Committees in sustaining School Feeding Programs were tested for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha. As noted by Bolarinwa (2015), Cronbach's Alpha measures the internal consistency of items within a construct, with a value above 0.7 indicating high reliability.

To determine Cronbach's Alpha, the questionnaire data were entered into SPSS, where all Likert-scale items related to specific constructs, such as the effectiveness of School Feeding Committees, were analysed. The reliability analysis function in SPSS was used to compute the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, which assessed the degree to which the items within each construct are correlated and measure the same concept. The calculated values were all above 0.7 (0.85, 0.91, 0.77) – so the instrument was considered reliable.

## 3.6 Description of Data Collection Procedures

This study's data collection procedures took a comprehensive approach, utilizing surveys, interviews, focus group discussions, and document guide analysis. The researcher obtained letters of introduction from the Department of Postgraduate Studies in Education at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (see Appendices 13, 14, and 15). In addition, a research permit for data collection was secured from the Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH), as documented in Appendix 12. Following these approvals, the researcher sought and received permission from the Executive Directors of Hai, Siha, and Mwanza districts to carry out the study within their jurisdictions. To support the data collection process, the researcher trained a team of enumerators who assisted throughout the fieldwork. Together with the enumerators, the researcher visited the selected schools to introduce the study, establish rapport, and obtain informed consent from the relevant stakeholders. Appointments were arranged with head teachers, School Feeding Committees (SFCs), and selected pupils to conduct surveys, interviews, focus group discussions, and document analyses on mutually agreed dates and times.

To collect quantitative insights into the roles, responsibilities, and perspectives of school administrators and School Feeding Committees (SFCs) concerning the challenges and effectiveness of school feeding programs, focus group discussions were conducted with these key groups. These discussions offered valuable, in-depth views from participants, shedding light on the obstacles faced and the perceived impact of the programs. The use of focus group discussions enabled the collection of more nuanced and detailed information, thereby enriching the quality and depth of the study's findings.

Key stakeholders, specifically District Education Officers (DEOs) and Ward Education Officers (WEOs), were interviewed. These semi-structured interviews explored the qualitative aspects of SFC activities, including the challenges encountered, the strategies used, and their impact on the long-term sustainability of the program. A document analysis guide supplemented the data from the interviews by providing first-hand, factual information on SFC activities, interactions, and the operational aspects of the school feeding programs. This approach offered a comprehensive understanding of how SFCs function in real-world scenarios and validate the data collected through other methods. Together, these data collection methods aimed to provide a comprehensive analysis of the effectiveness of SFCs in sustaining school feeding programs, identifying challenges, and proposing enhancements for sustainability in Tanzanian public primary schools.

### **3.7 Description of Data Analysis Procedures**

This study employed both qualitative and quantitative data analysis methods to thoroughly assess the effectiveness of School Feeding Committees (SFCs) in sustaining school feeding programs in public primary schools across the Kilimanjaro region. Quantitative data collected through semi-structured questionnaires were coded and entered into IBM SPSS Statistics Version 23 for analysis. The data were first cleaned by checking for missing values and inconsistencies to ensure accuracy and completeness. Descriptive statistics were then generated to summarize participants' responses, providing a general overview of their views and experiences related to the role of SFCs in sustaining school feeding programs.

The qualitative data adopted a thematic analysis approach and entailed finding, examining, and summarizing patterns—or themes—within the data. The process of conducting the thematic analysis was methodical and included familiarizing oneself with the data, creating preliminary codes, identifying themes, evaluating themes, defining and labeling themes, and writing the report (Busetto et al., 2020). This provided comprehensive insights into the difficulties SFCs encountered and the external variables that affected their effectiveness. This mixed analysis aimed to provide a

more thorough and rigorous understanding of the effectiveness of SFCs by triangulating findings through the integration of both qualitative and quantitative data.

### **3.8 Ethical Considerations**

Research ethics are fundamental principles designed to ensure fairness, integrity, and respect for participants throughout the research process (Dooly et al., 2017). These standards were upheld to safeguard participants' rights and maintain the study's credibility. Before conducting fieldwork, the researcher obtained approval from the Faculty of Education and the Catholic University of Eastern Africa. Given that the research was conducted in Tanzania, permits from the Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH) was required.

During the data collection process, informed consent (Appendix 7) was obtained from teachers, headteachers, and School Feeding Committee members, while assent (Appendix 8) was gained from pupils. This was to confirm that all participants were fully aware of the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to voluntary participation (Younas et al., 2023). Cultural and ethical values were respected during interviews to honor participants' norms and traditions. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained, and participants were not coerced in any way. They also had control over decisions related to the use of their names, photos, or any other personal information.

In reporting the findings, the researcher ensured all sources were properly acknowledged to avoid plagiarism and uphold academic integrity. Data were presented truthfully without any falsification, reflecting the actual outcomes of the study. These practices adhered to the principles of honesty and transparency, as emphasized by Tripp (2018).

## **4. Results and Discussion**

### **4.1 Capacity of the SFC to Secure Food Supplies and the Sustainability of SFP**

This research question aimed to assess the ability of School Feeding Committees (SFCs) to secure food supplies for school feeding and to ensure the sustainability of the program. To evaluate this capacity, specific interview questions were carefully designed to reflect key functional areas of food security management. These questions served as effective proxies for the independent variable in the conceptual framework by addressing practical indicators such as the reliability of food supply, parental involvement in food supply contributions, and the committee's ability to prevent shortages. Attention was also given to how SFCs plan and maintain regular meal schedules, ensure dietary variety, and coordinate with food suppliers to avoid

delays. These elements collectively reflect the operational strategies employed by SFCs to secure adequate and timely food supplies and to ensure continuous feeding throughout the school year.

Table 2 illustrates responses from teachers on how SFCs mobilize resources, coordinate food procurement, and

manage supply systems to sustain the School Feeding Program. The teacher participants were provided with statements on which they were to tick the appropriate option using the following key: **SA** = strongly agree, **A** = agree, **N** = neutral, **D** = disagree, **SD** = strongly disagree. Their responses are presented in Table 2

**Table 2 Teachers Responses on the Ability of SFC to Secure Food Supplies (n=82)**

Ability of SFC to secure Food Suppliers	S		D		N		A		S	
	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
The budget allocated for the SFP is sufficient	5	6	47	57	10	12	16		4	5
The government provides sufficient funds for SFP	15	20	49	60	6	7	2	4	10	9
Other agencies like NGOs, FBOs and private sector provide funds to the committee	0	0	4	5	20	24	40	49	18	22
Parents also provide funds to school feeding in schools	4	5	19	23	20	24	25	31	14	17
Parents provide food stuff to school for SFP	7	29	5	6	4	5	44	33	22	27
The procurement process for food suppliers in the school feeding program is transparent and effective	0	0	10	12	14	17	37	45	21	26
Our school maintain an accurate inventory of food suppliers used in the school feeding program	3	4	7	9	8	10	46	56	18	22
There is a clear system of accountability for the funds allocated to the school feeding program at our school	3	4	3	4	8	10	49	60	19	23
The expenditure for the school feeding program consistently align with the allocated budget	3	4	14	17	6	7	42	51	17	21
Our school effectively adheres to the budget guidelines set for the school feeding program	0	0	17	21	5	6	42	51	18	22

Source: Field Data, 2025

Teachers' responses to the statement on whether the budget allocated for School Feeding Programs (SFPs) is sufficient revealed that 63% disagreed, 12% were neutral, and only 25% agreed. This means that the majority of teachers believe the funds allocated are not enough to meet the real demands of the program. Such a high level of disagreement indicates that most schools operate under financial stress, making it difficult for School Feeding Committees (SFCs) to maintain a regular and adequate food supply. When funding is insufficient, food procurement becomes inconsistent, and learners are at risk of missing meals undermining both attendance

and learning outcomes. The 25% of teachers who agreed may reflect experiences from schools where additional support exists, such as well-organized parental contributions or donor input. However, this minority view does not outweigh the wider concern that inadequate budgets hinder program implementation.

These findings suggest that SFCs are operating within tight financial constraints, which threatens the long-term sustainability of the SFP and reduces its overall effectiveness. When funds are insufficient, the burden shifts to schools and communities, many of which lack the capacity to bridge the gap. As a result, the feeding

program cannot run smoothly and may fail to meet its objectives of improving pupils' nutrition and retention.

This sentiment, shared by a majority of educators, aligns with existing research highlighting the chronic underfunding of SFPs in Sub-Saharan Africa. For instance, Botchwey (2022) reported that in Ghana, despite substantial government and donor involvement, funding gaps often disrupted the school feeding calendar, resulting in meal delays and inconsistency. Similarly, Mosha et al. (2022) found that Tanzanian schools heavily relied on community contributions to supplement inadequate funding, which frequently proved unsustainable in low-income areas. These structural financial deficits hinder the ability of School Feeding Committees (SFCs) to engage in reliable procurement, leading to missed meals and fluctuating food quality. Such instability directly impacts learners' attendance, concentration, and classroom performance - undermining the core objectives of the program. Furthermore, the minority (25%) of teachers who perceived budgets as sufficient likely represent schools that benefit from external financial support, such as development partners, NGOs, or well-coordinated parental contributions. This unevenness in funding sources creates disparities in program effectiveness across regions and schools, as also noted by Wineman et al. (2022). The implication is that without a uniform increase in funding or formal resource allocation mechanisms, SFPs risk becoming fragmented and inequitable. Chaves et al. (2023) argue that fiscal predictability and transparency are vital for program sustainability, especially where SFCs manage daily operations under constrained budgets. Moreover, shifting the financial burden to schools or communities - as is often the case - exacerbates inequality, since not all parents can contribute equally. As emphasized by Dieu et al. (2023), improving SFP performance and sustainability requires strategic investment from central governments, including increased per-pupil meal allocations, efficient procurement systems, and capacity-building for SFCs on budget planning and financial reporting. Without addressing these foundational resource issues, even the well-designed feeding programs will struggle to meet their goals of enhancing nutrition, enrollment, and learner retention.

This finding supports the view that budget inadequacy is a systemic issue, pointing to broader problems in the financial planning and resourcing of the program. Similar observations were made by Okae-Adjei et al., (2020), who noted that successful school feeding programs in Ghana relied heavily on the ability of SFCs to source food locally and engage parents. This implies that when government funding is insufficient, community engagement becomes critical. However, in the Kilimanjaro region, teachers' responses suggest that while community efforts do exist, they are not strong enough to fully offset budget. These findings underscore a region-wide concern among teachers that the burden placed on SFCs is disproportionate to the

financial support provided. This highlights a disconnect between national policy intentions and school-level realities, which poses a serious threat to the sustainability and equity of school feeding initiatives.

Regarding the statement "The government provides sufficient funds for SFPs," responses from the 82 teachers who participated in the questionnaire showed that 80% disagreed, 7% remained neutral, and only 13% agreed. This overwhelming disagreement indicates that government funding is largely seen as insufficient to meet the operational needs of School Feeding Programs. Teachers' perceptions reflect growing concerns about the financial burden shifted to School Feeding Committees (SFCs) and local communities, especially in under-resourced areas.

This concern was echoed by a head teacher during an interview who stated:

"It would be better if our government took full responsibility for providing foodstuffs to public primary schools. This would reduce the burden on School Feeding Committees (SFCs) and also support some of the poor parents who cannot afford to contribute. Doing so would further the government's policy of free education in Tanzania's public primary schools." (Interview, 18th April 2025). This statement underscores the contradiction between the policy of free education and the practical reality in which parents and SFCs must fund a core component of daily schooling. When government funding is inadequate, feeding programs become unstable, placing learners especially from poorer households at risk of hunger, absenteeism, and disengagement. While 13% of teachers agreed that the government provides sufficient support, this minority may reflect contexts where additional aid or stronger community involvement compensates for state funding gaps. However, such cases are limited and not representative of the broader regional picture.

The findings are consistent with Bold et al. (2023), who emphasized that in contexts with limited government funding, community-led procurement and resource mobilization become vital for sustaining school feeding efforts. In Kilimanjaro region, however, this reliance on communities is not a supplementary approach but a structural necessity. It places unsustainable pressure on SFCs and deepens inequalities in program delivery, especially in poorer school communities where parental contributions are minimal or non-existent. Ultimately, without increased government investment, the long-term sustainability and equity of SFPs remain at risk. The current model weakens the promise of free primary education by offloading essential responsibilities to communities that are often unequipped to bear them.

The statement "Other agencies like NGOs, FBOs, and the private sector provide funds to the committee" received mixed responses. Only 44% of the teachers agreed, 32% remained neutral, and 24% disagreed. These findings suggest that the role of non-governmental stakeholders in

supporting School Feeding Programs (SFPs) is viewed as limited, inconsistent, or unclear. While a portion of teachers acknowledged external support, a larger proportion either did not perceive such support or were unaware of it. This implies that collaboration with NGOs, faith-based organizations (FBOs), and private partners is neither widespread nor systematic across the region.

When support from non-state actors is present and coordinated, it can supplement limited government budgets, enhance food supply stability, and reduce pressure on communities.

However, when such support is lacking or unreliable, the burden falls heavily on School Feeding Committees (SFCs), which are already constrained by insufficient public funding and community poverty. This weakens the overall sustainability and reach of SFPs. These findings can be understood through the lens of Stakeholder Theory, which posits that the success and sustainability of any initiative such as SFPs depend on the active involvement and accountability of all relevant actors, both state and non-state. In the absence of meaningful participation from NGOs, FBOs, and private entities, the program becomes overly reliant on local schools and communities, many of which lack the financial and logistical capacity to manage feeding consistently.

In Kilimanjaro region, teachers' responses suggest that SFCs do not perceive external partnerships as reliable sources of support. This exposes a gap in multi-stakeholder engagement, calling for more structured, visible, and effective collaboration frameworks. Strengthening these partnerships through trust-building, well-defined roles, and alignment with school-level needs could improve program implementation and reinforce long-term sustainability.

On the issue of parents' contributions of foodstuffs to schools for School Feeding Programs (SFPs), 60% of teachers agreed, 35% disagreed, and 5% remained neutral. These findings suggest that while a majority of parents in Kilimanjaro region are making efforts to support school feeding by providing food items, a significant proportion are not. A District Education Officer (DEO) from District A confirmed the role of contributing parents during an interview, stating: "In our district, parents are willing to contribute one gallon of beans and twenty kilograms of grains (maize) to ensure their children get at least one meal per day throughout the year."

This level of agreement can be understood in light of the policy shift that transferred responsibility for feeding pupils from the government to parents or guardians, especially after the withdrawal of external support such as the World Food Programme. When parents contribute regularly, it helps ensure a steady supply of food, allowing learners to stay in school, concentrate in class, and perform better academically. This form of

community involvement has become a key mechanism sustaining school feeding efforts on the ground. By involving parents and staff directly, the programme becomes a shared responsibility. When parents feel involved, they are more likely to contribute resources such as food items, labor, or small financial donations. Staff, especially teachers, may help ensure food is integrated into the school's routines and curriculum.

However, the 35% of teachers who disagreed raise concerns about economic disparities that hinder equal participation. Many parents, especially those from low-income backgrounds, are unable to contribute food items, creating gaps in food availability. This lack of uniform contribution means that some children go without meals, reducing the overall effectiveness and fairness of the program. In such cases, the SFP cannot run smoothly, as food shortages lead to irregular feeding, learner absenteeism, and increased vulnerability among pupils from the poorest households.

This is consistent with findings by Masanyiwa et al., (2023), who reported that parental contributions were central to the continuity of school feeding efforts in resource-constrained settings. The current study provides clear evidence that, in Kilimanjaro region, community responsibility particularly from parents is no longer supplementary, but has become the main pillar sustaining school feeding. However, this reliance also exposes the program to instability where parents lack the means to contribute, highlighting the need for inclusive strategies that support the poorest households to ensure equitable and uninterrupted food access for all learners.

Also, on the issue of parents' provision of funds for the School Feeding Program (SFP), 48% of teachers agreed, 24% remained neutral, and 28% disagreed. These findings indicate a growing but still divided perception among teachers regarding parents' financial contributions. While nearly half believe parents are willing and able to support SFPs with money, over a quarter disagreed highlighting that this model may not be consistent across all contexts. A head teacher (V) explained, "Our school is located in town, so many parents contribute funds rather than foodstuffs, as the majority are not engaged in agriculture." This suggests that in semi-urban areas such as Bomang'ombe (Hai) and Sanya Juu (Siha), where livelihoods are based on business, trade, or pastoralism, parents prefer providing money over food. In these settings, monetary contributions offer a practical and flexible alternative to in-kind donations. An SFC member (F) further elaborated: "We have a special account for collection of funds from parents; at school we receive only the pay-in slip.... Each pupil contributes 57,000 TZS for the meals throughout the year." Similarly, a District Education Officer (DEO) (P) noted, "Management of funds contributed by parents is a much smoother process compared to handling foodstuffs, which come from

various sources and vary in quality. It is easier to track expenditures when dealing with money.”

These perspectives reveal a shift in Kilimanjaro’s semi-urban areas toward financial contributions as a preferred form of SFP support. When properly managed, this method enhances accountability, improves budgeting, and ensures a more consistent food supply. It also allows for bulk purchasing, standardized quality, and easier storage and logistics - thereby contributing to the overall sustainability of the program

However, the 28% of teachers who disagreed highlight that in other areas - especially rural or economically disadvantaged communities - parents may lack the financial means to contribute. In such cases, the program risks unequal access and underfunding, especially when food donations are also limited. Therefore, while financial contributions represent a more efficient model in certain areas, they are not yet a universal solution. This shift reflects changing economic patterns and may require School Feeding Committees to adapt their planning, budgeting, and reporting systems. SFCs may need to develop dual models that accommodate both monetary and in-kind support depending on the socio-economic profile of the school community, ensuring equity and sustainability across diverse school settings.

Regarding whether the expenditure for the School Feeding Program (SFP) consistently aligns with the allocated budget, 67.5% of respondents disagreed, 15.2% agreed, and 17.3% remained neutral. These findings suggest that most teachers believe there is a mismatch between budget planning and actual implementation. This misalignment poses a threat to the sustainability of SFPs, as it can lead to food shortages, disrupted meal schedules, and unreliable service delivery.

A School Feeding Committee (SFC) member (Q) explained:

“The school feeding committee prepares a good budget that could sustain the feeding program throughout the year, but the target is obviously not reached due to various challenges, including climate change that hinders agricultural productivity, leading to scarce contributions from parents.” Similarly, a head teacher (U) observed: “If the constraints triggering challenges for the SFCs were permanently resolved, then the budget and targets prepared by the committee would be consistently achieved. This would enhance the sustainability of the school feeding program.” These views confirm that while SFCs may prepare realistic and well-structured budgets, implementation often fails due to unpredictable external factors. For example, climate-related events reduce local food production and prevent parents from contributing as expected. When this happens, the food supply is interrupted, and schools are unable to meet feeding targets—undermining the reliability and continuity of the program.

The 15.2% who agreed may represent schools in more stable environments or with diversified sources of support. However, they are the minority, and their experience is not reflective of the wider challenge across the region. These responses support the quantitative data from Table 4.5 and point to a recurring issue: although budget plans are often sound, execution is weakened by environmental, economic, and logistical barriers beyond the control of school-level actors. The study thus reveals that the problem is not poor planning, but a fragile implementation environment. This calls for the adoption of adaptive and risk-responsive budgeting approaches. SFCs may need to integrate contingency planning, diversify funding sources, and develop early warning systems for disruptions to improve the flexibility and resilience of school feeding budgets.

Furthermore, a vast number of respondents (82.8%) agreed that there is a clear system of accountability for the funds allocated to the School Feeding Program (SFP), while 9.1% remained neutral and only 8.1% disagreed. This high level of agreement suggests that most teachers perceive financial management structures in schools as transparent, organized, and participatory. When accountability systems are clear and regularly followed, they help to build trust among parents, teachers, and community members ensuring continued support for the program.

These findings are reinforced by qualitative responses. A head teacher (T) explained: “The School Feeding Committee has two meetings with parents and staff members to present the report of how the expenditure aligns with the budget allocated. This shows a high level of transparency and accountability among SFC members and other stakeholders.” (Interview, 4 May 2025) An SFC member (S) also added:

“Effective financial management is linked to transparent reporting and community trust, which are essential for sustained parent support and contribution.”

Additionally, SFC members (G) reported:

“A report is prepared on the amount of food collected and how it was used, and it is presented at Parent–Teacher Meetings. The school committee and the food subcommittee participate in joint preparation.” This accountability is not only about financial records but also operational transparency. For instance, when pupils miss meals for several days, the School Feeding Committee is expected to explain the reason often due to inadequate contributions from some parents. Such communication ensures that all stakeholders understand the challenges and share responsibility for addressing them (Head teacher Q interview held on 24 May 2025). These consistent practices demonstrate a structured and participatory approach to financial and operational oversight. When all stakeholders are informed, even about shortfalls, it builds trust and encourages parents to increase or maintain their support. While a small percentage (8.1%) disagreed, their views may reflect

isolated cases of weak communication or lapses in reporting. Nonetheless, the overall picture from Kilimanjaro region reveals that financial accountability is not merely procedural but deeply embedded in community-based mechanisms, helping reinforce transparency and long-term program sustainability.

The findings from Kilimanjaro reveal a clear dichotomy between budget preparation and budget implementation for School Feeding Programs (SFPs). While School Feeding Committees (SFCs) appear to be preparing structured, realistic budgets, their efforts are frequently undermined by external shocks such as climate change and economic instability. These results align with observations by Mafugu (2021), who found that environmental unpredictability—especially droughts and floods—disrupt local food systems and reduce parents' capacity to contribute in-kind or financially to school meals. This mirrors the view of the SFC member and head teacher quoted, who linked shortfalls in food supply not to planning deficits but to barriers beyond school-level control. Similarly, Botchwey (2022) reported in Ghana that schools often prepare thorough budgets but fail to meet feeding targets due to supply chain breakdowns and fluctuating food prices. Therefore, the issue is less about technical capacity and more about vulnerability to external disruptions. This calls for adaptive budgeting mechanisms where SFCs incorporate contingency planning, diversify food and financial sources, and collaborate with local governments to build shock-responsive systems.

At the same time, the high percentage of respondents (82.8%) who agreed that clear accountability systems exist paints a positive picture of financial governance. These results suggest that transparency is deeply rooted in SFC operations, supported by evidence from interviews where committee members emphasized reporting, record-keeping, and community involvement. These findings echo those of Chaves et al. (2023), who highlighted that participatory financial reporting fosters community ownership, sustains parental contributions, and ensures operational continuity. Similarly, Renzaho et al. (2022) asserted that when financial information is shared openly—especially through community forums like Parent–Teacher Meetings—it increases stakeholder trust and accountability. This study adds nuance by showing that accountability in Kilimanjaro is not just financial but also operational, including explanations when meals are missed. As Assefa and Zenebe (2024) note, shared accountability systems reinforce social cohesion and make the community more willing to bear the weight of temporary program failures. The few dissenting voices (8.1%) could reflect isolated cases of miscommunication or underdeveloped feedback systems. Nevertheless, the broader trend suggests a governance model that values transparency, responsiveness, and collaboration—foundations that are critical to the long-term sustainability of school feeding initiatives.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusion

The study concludes that empowered and well-structured SFCs are essential for sustaining school feeding programs, as they strengthen procurement, financial accountability, monitoring, and community participation.

### 5.2 Recommendations

The study recommends strengthening school-based agricultural projects, regular capacity-building, improved monitoring systems, and multi-stakeholder collaboration involving NGOs, local authorities, and government policy support.

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