



Challenges Faced by School Feeding Committees in Sustaining School Feeding Programs in Public Primary Schools in Kilimanjaro Region

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Abstract: This study investigated the key challenges faced by School Feeding Committees in sustaining School Feeding Programs in public primary schools in the Kilimanjaro region. 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 Mwanza 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. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics while qualitative data were thematically analyzed. The challenges include insufficient and irregular parental contributions, largely due to widespread poverty among households whose children attend public schools; inadequate government endorsement that results in limited funding and lack of training for School Feeding Committees (SFCs); poor food storage infrastructure which leads to spoilage and waste; and the absence of a clear national policy guiding the implementation and resource mobilization for SFPs. Additionally, budget–expenditure mismatches, weak financial management skills among some committee members, and limited multi-sector engagement further undermine the effective operation of these programs. The study concludes that while the role of the community remains critical, this study affirms that lasting sustainability of school feeding programs requires a shared responsibility model. Government involvement provides the structure, reliability, and scale needed to support local energy and innovation. Only through an integrated approach - where community passion meets institutional strength - can school feeding programs achieve the consistency, quality, and resilience needed to meet the needs of all learners.

Keywords: Challenges, Sustenance, School feeding Program, Public, Primary Schools, Kilimanjaro

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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).

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.

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 WFPTanzania (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.

This study set out to investigate the challenges Faced by SFC in Sustaining School Feeding Programs in Public Primary Schools in Kilimanjaro Region.

2. Literature Review

School Feeding Committees (SFCs) play a vital role in the effective implementation and long-term sustainability of school feeding programs across the globe. However, research consistently highlights the persistent challenges these committees face in fulfilling their responsibilities.

In the United States, Hernandez et al. (2018) conducted a comprehensive study to examine the difficulties encountered by SFCs in managing school feeding programs effectively. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study targeted 1,000 school administrators and SFC members from both urban and rural elementary schools. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select a representative sample of 300 participants. Data collection involved structured surveys to gather quantitative insights, alongside semi-structured interviews to capture in-depth qualitative perspectives on the operational challenges affecting program delivery.

. The study revealed that financial limitations, logistical issues in food distribution, and limited parent and community engagement were major challenges. It highlighted that rural schools faced greater logistical hurdles, while urban schools struggled more with engaging parents. Hernandez et al. (2018) recommended further studies to develop targeted community engagement strategies for rural feeding cprograms in diverse contexts. This informed the current study to incorporate the community involvement in school feeding programmes.

The research by Richardson & Cole (2020) in the United Kingdom examined the obstacles SFCs face in primary schools, focusing on public schools in London. This quantitative study surveyed 600 SFC members from 50 schools, selected through purposive sampling to reflect a range of school sizes and locations. Questionnaires served as the main research tool, revealing key issues such as inadequate SFC training, inconsistent food quality, and limited government support. The study also noted differences in food quality and program outcomes

between affluent and lower-income areas. Richardson and Cole (2020) suggested additional research on creating sustainable training programs that address regional disparities in resource allocation and support.

In Australia, Thompson et al. (2019) conducted a national study on challenges faced by SFCs in managing school feeding programs in public primary schools. This qualitative study included 25 SFCs from various schools across Australia, selected through random sampling. Focus groups and interviews with committee members were used to gain a deep understanding of the issues. Findings revealed that lack of cultural sensitivity in menu choices, shortages of volunteers, and limited parental involvement were major concerns. The study recommended further research on innovative strategies to incorporate culturally appropriate menus and recruit volunteers to improve program effectiveness.

Studies in USA, the UK, and Australia reveal a range of challenges facing SFCs, such as logistical difficulties, lack of training, limited community involvement, and disparities in support, and they underscore the need for tailored solutions to address these specific issues. For example, Hernandez et al. (2018) emphasized urban-rural differences in logistics in the U.S., while Richardson and Cole (2020) focused on training and government support for SFCs in the U.K. Thompson et al. (2019), in turn, advocated for culturally responsive approaches and improved volunteer engagement in Australia. Despite these insights, a research gap persists in developing community-driven strategies that address these challenges comprehensively.

While SFCs are crucial for the ongoing success of school feeding programs, the reviewed studies suggest that further research is necessary to develop targeted solutions that address specific logistical, training, and engagement challenges. Future research could work toward a universal model for effective community engagement that integrates cultural diversity, resource disparities, and government support, ensuring a sustained impact in various school settings globally.

In Africa, SFCs play a vital role in implementing and maintaining school feeding programs throughout Africa. Yet, studies from Egypt, Nigeria, Chad, DR Congo, South Africa, and Kenya have highlighted significant challenges SFCs face, impacting these programs' success and effectiveness. The study done in Egypt by Ibrahim et al. (2019) investigated barriers that SFCs encounter in delivering effective school feeding programs in rural primary schools. Using a quantitative approach, the study surveyed 500 SFC members from 20 rural schools in Upper Egypt, selected through simple random sampling. Structured questionnaires revealed primary challenges such as funding shortages, logistical barriers in food distribution, and insufficient training for SFC members.

The logistical challenges that impact their effectiveness and sustainability of the program include insufficient infrastructure for food storage and transportation,

particularly in remote regions where schools are scattered. Without proper refrigeration and packaging, food spoilage and waste are common, reducing meal quality and reliability (AUC, 2020). In addition, unstable transportation networks lead to delays or even missed deliveries, meaning meals do not always reach students as intended (Kobayashi, 2023). Limited financial resources further complicate these challenges, restricting the ability to make necessary improvements. Tackling these logistical obstacles is crucial for enhancing the reach and impact of school feeding programs in Egypt's primary schools. The study concluded that rural schools face more significant struggles in sustaining feeding programs due to geographical isolation. This study recommended further exploration of government policies to secure consistent funding and provide training for SFCs, particularly in rural areas.

Adeyemi & Ola (2020) in Nigeria analysed the difficulties SFCs experience in supporting school feeding programs in primary schools across Lagos and Ogun States. This mixed-methods study sampled 350 SFC members and school administrators, selected through purposive sampling, and employed surveys and focus group discussions for data collection. Findings revealed that lack of community engagement, irregular food supply, and funding shortages hampered program sustainability. Additionally, schools in urban areas reported slightly better community support than rural ones. Adeyemi and Ola (2020) recommended additional research to evaluate the roles of local government and community engagement in addressing these obstacles.

In Chad, Abakar et al. (2021) studied the challenges SFCs face in maintaining school feeding programs in public primary schools. This qualitative research included 200 SFC members from 15 schools in three regions, selected via convenience sampling. Through in-depth interviews and focus groups, the study focused on logistical difficulties, inadequate infrastructure, and food scarcity. Results indicated that schools in conflict-prone areas faced more disruptions in food supply and struggled with community mobilization. The study suggested further studies to develop conflict-sensitive approaches to enhance food security and program continuity. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mukendi et al. (2018) examined barriers faced by SFCs in implementing school feeding programs in conflict-affected areas. This qualitative study focused on a sample of 100 SFC members and local leaders in the North Kivu region, selected through purposive sampling, using interviews and field observations. Key issues identified included extreme difficulties in food distribution, poor infrastructure, and inadequate safety measures in conflict zones, limiting program efficacy. This study suggested further research to identify innovative logistical solutions to support SFCs in high-conflict areas.

Dlamini and Nkosi (2022) in South Africa investigated challenges faced by SFCs in maintaining school feeding programs in KwaZulu-Natal. A quantitative study, it

involved 400 SFC members from 25 schools, selected through stratified random sampling, and utilized questionnaires and semi-structured interviews for data collection. Findings identified irregular food supply, inadequate storage facilities, and low parental involvement as major challenges. Schools in low-income areas faced more significant storage-related issues, affecting food quality. Dlamini and Nkosi (2022) recommended future studies to explore affordable storage solutions that could help resource-limited SFCs.

Kamau and Kinyua (2021) in Kenya examined challenges encountered by SFCs in promoting effective school feeding programs in Nairobi and rural Rift Valley areas. This mixed-methods study surveyed 300 SFC members and 20 head teachers selected through purposive sampling, using questionnaires and interviews as the primary tools. The study found that limited government support, sporadic food donations, and low parental involvement were substantial issues. Additionally, rural schools faced greater difficulties in securing regular food supplies, while urban schools struggled more with parental engagement. This study called for more research on sustainable community-driven strategies to support rural school feeding programs.

These studies in Africa reveal consistent challenges faced by SFCs across African countries, including funding limitations, logistical challenges, inadequate training, and insufficient community involvement. Ibrahim et al. (2019) emphasized the logistical and funding challenges in Egypt's rural areas, while Adeyemi and Ola (2020) highlighted the need for enhanced community involvement in Nigeria. Similarly, Abakar et al. (2021) and Mukendi et al. (2018) pointed to unique challenges for SFCs in conflict-prone areas in Chad and DR Congo, stressing the need for conflict-sensitive approaches. Dlamini and Nkosi (2022) in South Africa and Kamau and Kinyua (2021) in Kenya underscored the importance of storage solutions and community-focused approaches to improve sustainability. It reveals that SFCs face varied and context-specific obstacles in sustaining school feeding programs, underscoring the need for additional research to develop holistic models that address these challenges. Future studies might focus on community engagement models and scalable logistical solutions to address the diverse challenges facing SFCs across Africa.

In Tanzania, the SFCs are integral to the success and sustainability of school feeding initiatives in Tanzania. Recent studies in various regions, notably Dodoma, Arusha, and Kilimanjaro, shed light on the difficulties encountered by SFCs in establishing and sustaining effective feeding programs in primary schools.

In Dodoma, Mwilongo et al. (2019) explored factors that inhibit SFCs from delivering effective feeding programs in rural primary schools. Using a quantitative approach, the study surveyed 250 SFC members from 30 primary schools selected through stratified random sampling.

Data were collected via structured questionnaires, revealing challenges such as limited funding, inadequate food storage facilities, and irregular food supplies. Mwilongo et al. (2019) noted that these supply interruptions negatively affected program sustainability. The authors recommended further research on alternative funding options to address financial shortfalls in rural school feeding programs.

In Arusha, Nkwabi & Mollel (2021) analysed the challenges SFCs face in maintaining program continuity across both urban and rural primary schools. This mixed-methods study sampled 200 SFC members and school administrators from 20 schools in Arusha, selected using purposive sampling. Surveys and semi-structured interviews were used as data collection tools, identifying issues such as low parental involvement, limited government support, and logistical hurdles in food distribution, especially in rural schools. The study found that rural SFCs struggled more with resource limitations and logistical issues compared to their urban counterparts. This study called for further studies on community mobilization and government support for rural SFCs.

In Kilimanjaro, Mushi et al. (2022) examined barriers facing SFCs in supporting effective feeding programs across 30 public primary schools in both rural and urban areas. Using a qualitative approach, the study involved 150 SFC members and community leaders selected through purposive sampling. Primary data collection tools included focus group discussions and interviews, which revealed challenges such as insufficient infrastructure, inadequate training for SFC members, and limited community participation. The study highlighted that rural areas were especially hindered by a lack of trained SFC personnel and suitable infrastructure, which affected food storage and distribution. Mushi et al. (2022) recommended further research into the impact of training and infrastructure improvements on program sustainability.

Collectively, these studies from Dodoma, Arusha, and Kilimanjaro reveal common challenges faced by SFCs in Tanzania, such as inadequate funding, logistical difficulties, lack of training, and low levels of community involvement. Mwilongo et al. (2019) emphasized financial and food storage issues in Dodoma, while Nkwabi and Mollel (2021) highlighted the need for community engagement and government backing in Arusha. Mushi et al. (2022) pointed out the necessity for adequate infrastructure and training in Kilimanjaro. Together, these findings suggest that rural areas face more substantial logistical and resource challenges than urban setting. SFCs across Tanzania encounter significant barriers that hinder the effectiveness of school feeding programs. More research is needed to investigate sustainable funding models, enhance community involvement, and resolve logistical and infrastructure challenges. These studies collectively stress the need for solutions supported by both community and government

efforts to boost the sustainability and effectiveness of school feeding initiatives in Tanzania.

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 3.1).

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

$$n = N / (1 + N [(e)]^2)$$

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.

$$n = 10,117 / (1 + (10,117 \times 0.052)) = 384.79$$

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. In addition, a research permit for data collection was secured from the Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH). 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 be 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

This study investigated the key challenges faced by School Feeding Committees in sustaining School Feeding Programs in public primary schools in the Kilimanjaro region. The sustainability of SFPs in public primary schools within the Kilimanjaro region depends significantly on the effectiveness of SFCs. Despite their central role, SFCs face numerous challenges that undermine their capacity to consistently deliver meals to pupils. 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. The challenges cited from the interviews are incorporated in the study. Their responses are presented in the table below.

Statement	S		D		N		A		SA	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%
The school feeding committee faces the challenge of insufficient contributions from parents or guardians	1	1.0	1	11.	1	14.	3	37.	3	37.
			0	2	4	3	9	8	7	8
The school feeding committee faces the challenges of inadequate government endorsement	9	11.	9	11.	1	12.	4	62.	6	7.3
		0	0	0	0	2	9	5		
The School Feeding Committee faces challenges in storing food suppliers due to inadequate storage facilities	3	3.0	6	7.3	1	17.	5	67.	1	18.
					4	1	7	3	5	3
The SFCs struggles due to absence of government policy regarding to the SFPs	1	1.2	7	8.5	9	11.	6	72.	1	19.
						0	1	2	7	3

The results in the above table present teachers' responses on challenges faced by School Feeding Committees (SFCs) in sustaining School Feeding Programs (SFPs) in public primary schools across Kilimanjaro region. A large majority of teachers (81.5%) agreed that insufficient contributions from parents or guardians pose a serious challenge to program continuity, while 14.2% remained neutral and only 4.3% disagreed. This strongly shows that the sustainability of SFPs heavily depends on timely and consistent parental support.

Interview data confirmed this concern. A head teacher (F) stated, "One of the most pressing challenges is the inconsistency of parental and community contributions." Similarly, an SFC member (P) reported, "Some parents do not contribute at all... timely food availability [is an issue]," while another (Q) added, "When parents delay meals, students miss lunch." These responses reveal a clear cause-and-effect pattern: if parents delay or fail to contribute, then pupils miss meals, disrupting the program's daily operations. If contributions are irregular, then planning and procurement are compromised, threatening the continuity of the SFP.

This challenge is further compounded by the deep economic vulnerability faced by many households whose children attend public schools. In low-income communities, a significant proportion of parents struggle even to meet basic daily needs, including providing sufficient food at home. As a result, any expectations for consistent parental contributions - whether in the form of money, food items, or volunteer labor - place an additional strain on already stretched household budgets. For many families, particularly those dependent on informal or subsistence livelihoods, school contributions become a luxury they simply cannot afford. In such settings, failure to contribute should not be interpreted as a lack of interest or commitment, but rather as a reflection of chronic poverty and persistent income insecurity. This economic hardship underlines that the

challenge is not merely behavioral or attitudinal - it is systemic. Relying on that head teacher (L) commented that, "Without interventions that address broader socioeconomic inequities, school feeding committees will continue to face difficulties in mobilizing adequate community support, ultimately compromising the consistency and sustainability of the feeding program".

While previous studies like Roothaert et al. (2021) documented success in Kenya through structured community contracts and government engagement, this study highlights a local reality often overlooked: that voluntary contributions alone - especially in impoverished settings - are not a reliable foundation for sustaining school feeding programs.

This study effectively combines quantitative survey findings with firsthand accounts from school environments to reveal deeper structural realities affecting school feeding programs. By not relying solely on numerical data, it captures the nuances of how financial challenges manifest in daily school operations. This mixed-methods approach enhances the validity of the research by placing statistics in the context of real-life hardships, offering a more holistic understanding of the issues at hand. A major insight emerging from this approach is the significant role that parental economic conditions play in sustaining school feeding efforts. In communities where poverty levels are high, many families lack the resources to make regular voluntary contributions of food, money, or labor. These financial constraints are not temporary setbacks—they are chronic, structural issues that shape how much support parents can consistently offer to schools. Due to these persistent economic hardships, relying on voluntary community support becomes an unreliable strategy for sustaining school meals. Parents may support the idea of feeding programs, but their financial reality simply doesn't allow them to contribute regularly. As a result, what initially may appear to be a community-driven

solution begins to falter when contributions become erratic or decline altogether.

This exposes the limitations of informal support mechanisms in economically vulnerable areas. Compounding the issue is the lack of alternative systems that can cushion the shortfall when voluntary contributions dwindle. In many cases, schools do not receive timely support from local governments or development partners when community input declines. Without these safety nets - such as emergency food reserves, financial subsidies, or dedicated policy frameworks - the feeding programs become fragile, relying on uncertain goodwill rather than structured support. Ultimately, the absence of reliable contributions and institutional back-up renders school feeding programs highly vulnerable to disruption. Meals may be skipped, food quality may deteriorate, or the program may collapse altogether. These inconsistencies not only affect children's nutrition and learning outcomes but also erode trust in the program itself. This structural weakness underscores the urgent need for policy interventions and long-term financial planning that do not overly depend on communities that are themselves struggling to survive.

Also, 67.2% of teachers agreed that School Feeding Committees (SFCs) face the challenge of inadequate government endorsement, while 26.8% remained neutral and only 6% disagreed. These findings suggest a general sense of disappointment among teachers regarding the limited role the government plays in supporting the implementation of School Feeding Programs (SFPs). The lack of formal and consistent government backing leads to critical challenges—such as limited financial capacity, insufficient training for SFC members, and weak systems for budgeting and reporting.

For example, many SFCs struggle to effectively manage funds or monitor expenditures due to lack of training. As a result, they may fail to keep proper records, misallocate resources, or experience delays in food procurement. A District Education Officer (DEO) (G) observed:

“Financial constraints affect the quality of meals by leading to a lack of complete meals.”

Similarly, a Ward Education Officer (K) added:

“When there is not enough money, schools face problems... it impacts student learning.”

These concerns are not just theoretical. In practice, a school might plan for pupils to receive a balanced meal of maize and beans daily, but due to lack of funds or delays in contributions, the pupils may end up eating only maize porridge several times a week. This undermines the nutrition goals of the program and weakens trust among parents and pupils. Furthermore, improper nutrition increase absenteeism in that malnourished pupils are more prone to illness, leading

to frequent absences from school and missed learning opportunities.

If the government were to provide consistent financial support, training workshops, or logistical help such as food storage facilities or transport services many of these challenges could be reduced. Evidence from Malawi (Masanyiwa et al., 2023) shows that where governments actively support SFCs through structured policy frameworks, funding, and training, schools report improved resource planning, more reliable food supplies, and increased program consistency.

Community and parental contributions have long played a central role in the operation of school feeding programs. These local stakeholders bring hands-on support, ranging from food donations to volunteer labor and cooking assistance. Their involvement fosters a sense of ownership and ensures the program reflects community values and dietary preferences. However, while their dedication is invaluable, local contributions alone cannot sustain the growing complexity and scope of school feeding initiatives. Despite their commitment, communities—especially those affected by widespread poverty—face severe limitations in consistently supporting school feeding programs. Many parents struggle to meet their own household food needs, let alone contribute to communal meals. Relaying on these thoughts WEO (P) commentate that “expecting sustainable and uninterrupted support from economically strained families is both unrealistic and unfair”. This reveals a deeper structural weakness when school feeding programs are overly reliant on local input without institutional backing.

This study highlights the indispensable role of government in ensuring long-term program sustainability. Government engagement - through legislation, funding, infrastructure, and policy making - provides the backbone for consistent and equitable service delivery. Under such basements DEO (V) stated that “Without direct government support, even the most well-structured and motivated school feeding committees may find themselves overwhelmed or ineffective in the face of increasing demand”. A major component of government involvement lies in budget allocation and financial oversight. When governments allocate specific resources to school feeding programs, they reduce dependency on irregular donations or short-term donor aid. This financial assurance allows for planned purchasing, stable food supplies, and the ability to expand services to more schools without fear of interruption due to resource shortages. Beyond funding, governments are essential in offering technical guidance, training, and monitoring tools. National ministries and departments have the expertise to prepare a policy that will set nutrition standards, ensure food safety compliance, and guide procurements and record-keeping. This technical input enhances the professionalism of local operations and aligns school

feeding practices with broader national development goals.

When administrative systems are in place, food distribution networks or inspection protocols of the school feeding committees operate more efficiently and with clearer accountability lines. When school feeding programs are left to operate solely at the grassroots level, they become vulnerable to disruptions caused by community hardships, leadership turnover, or local disputes. Without government mediation or oversight, such programs may experience uneven implementation, with some regions thriving and others falling behind. This creates a patchwork of service delivery that undermines national equity in education and nutrition.

In conclusion, while the role of the community remains critical, this study affirms that lasting sustainability of school feeding programs requires a shared responsibility model. Government involvement provides the structure, reliability, and scale needed to support local energy and innovation. Only through an integrated approach - where community passion meets institutional strength - can school feeding programs achieve the consistency, quality, and resilience needed to meet the needs of all learners.

Nevertheless, a large majority (89%) of teachers agreed that School Feeding Committees (SFCs) face serious challenges in storing food supplies due to inadequate storage facilities, while 5.7% remained neutral and only 5.3% disagreed. These findings align closely with qualitative responses from interviewees, who repeatedly emphasized the lack of proper food storage infrastructure as a major threat to the sustainability of School Feeding Programs (SFPs). In many schools, food is stored in poorly ventilated classrooms or improvised shelters, exposing supplies to pests, moisture, and contamination. A head teacher (R) stressed the importance of food safety by stating, "Storing food in a clean environment... is important," (Interview, 29th April 2025). However, many schools lack dedicated, secure, and hygienic storage rooms, which leads to spoilage or loss of food before it can be used. For example, in some rural schools, parents' contributions - such as maize or beans - go bad during the rainy season due to damp conditions or rodent infestation, resulting in meal shortages and disrupted feeding schedules.

Without proper storage facilities, schools are unable to purchase or receive large quantities of food at once. Although bulk procurement is generally more cost-effective and efficient, inadequate storage forces schools to make smaller, frequent purchases, often at higher prices. This increases reliance on ongoing parental and community contributions, which can lead to fatigue and resentment, especially in economically disadvantaged areas.

Inadequate storage also raises the risk of food spoilage due to exposure to moisture, pests, or temperature fluctuations. Perishable items like vegetables, grains, or

cooking oil may be lost, leading to financial waste and disruption of meal services. When food cannot be stored in advance, delays or spoilage may result in skipped meals, undermining the programme's reliability. This inconsistency affects student attendance and concentration, ultimately hindering learning outcomes.

Feeding committees without reliable storage face difficulties in planning menus, coordinating with suppliers, and adapting to food price changes or seasonal shortages. They often operate on a day-to-day basis, limiting strategic planning. Moreover, potential donors such as NGOs, businesses, or faith-based groups may hesitate to provide bulk food donations if schools lack safe storage, fearing loss or misuse. This weakens opportunities for valuable partnerships.

Constantly sourcing small quantities of food also consumes committee time and energy that could be better spent on quality monitoring, fundraising, or volunteer training. The resulting inefficiencies reduce overall programme effectiveness. Over time, persistent storage challenges erode motivation among school staff and the community, jeopardising the sustainability of the feeding initiative.

Addressing these issues requires targeted investment in basic storage infrastructure, such as lockable food rooms, shelves, dry bins, or cold storage. Governments, NGOs, and local stakeholders must treat storage capacity as a foundational element of successful school feeding programmes. Without it, even the most carefully designed initiatives may fail to deliver consistent and sustainable results.

In contrast, Rector et al. (2021) documented how in Ghana, investments in building dedicated food storage facilities along with hygiene training for food handlers significantly improved food quality and preserved the integrity of school meal programs. These efforts led to more consistent meal delivery and increased community trust in the program.

The present study adds to this by revealing how, in the Kilimanjaro region, the lack of storage facilities not only causes physical losses of food but also reflects a deeper structural weakness in SFP implementation, particularly in low-resource schools. It highlights the urgent need for targeted support through infrastructure improvement and capacity building to ensure that food donations and purchases are preserved effectively. Without such improvements, the goals of the SFP may be compromised, regardless of how well contributions or budgets are managed.

Finally, an overwhelming majority of respondents (92.6%) strongly agreed that School Feeding Committees (SFCs) face major difficulties due to the absence of a specific government policy guiding School Feeding Programs (SFPs), while 4.4% remained neutral and only 3.0% disagreed. These findings echo concerns raised in interviews, particularly by head teachers who

reported that the lack of an official framework creates ambiguity and contradictions in the execution of their duties. One head teacher (S) explained, “The SFC in our school is struggling mainly due to the absence of a policy that would guide the program—thus, collection of contributions from parents becomes a tough task.”

The absence of a formal policy not only weakens enforcement of parental contributions but also creates legal and administrative uncertainties, especially under Tanzania’s free education policy. Ward Education Officers (WEOs) and District Education Officers (DEOs) reported that this situation limits SFCs’ ability to mobilize resources effectively. DEO (H) pointed out that “Insufficient stakeholder coordination and limited multi-sectoral engagement due to lack of clear policy reduce the program’s long-term viability. Very few schools’ benefits from structured partnerships involving ward leaders and local NGOs, while the majority operate in isolation.”

Similarly, WEO (V) emphasized that “Manipulation of school feeding programs is a difficult issue, as it contradicts the government policy of free education service in Tanzania. This contradiction restricts the ability of SFCs to collect resources.” Without legal backing, efforts such as school-based projects, fundraising events, or partnerships with external stakeholders often remain underutilized or discouraged, further weakening the sustainability of the program. As another head teacher (160) noted, “The committee could obtain food through projects and collaboration with stakeholders, but all these are suppressed by the absence of a clear policy.”

The findings also show that this challenge is especially significant in public schools located in economically disadvantaged communities. Most parents struggle to provide consistent food support to the school because they are already burdened by poverty and, at times, even fail to feed their own children at home. This economic hardship, combined with policy uncertainty, amplifies the difficulty faced by SFCs in ensuring regular food supply. The challenge, therefore, is not just administrative but deeply rooted in socioeconomic realities.

In contrast, successful examples from other countries offer lessons. In Uganda, for instance, multi-stakeholder platforms involving schools, local governments, and development partners have contributed to improved coordination and resource mobilization (Banda, 2018). Similarly, in Malawi, Masanyiwa et al. (2023) observed that when government support is clearly defined through policy, SFCs operate more efficiently and are better positioned to plan resources, monitor activities, and deliver consistent school meals.

This study reveals not merely a repetition of known challenges, but a deeper understanding of how policy gaps disempower local committees even when willingness, community support, and collaboration

structures are in place. The Kilimanjaro case highlights how the absence of a guiding policy undermines otherwise promising school-based efforts to sustain School Feeding Programs, despite strong commitment from local actors and the potential for wider stakeholder engagement.

The sustainability of School Feeding Programs (SFPs) in Kilimanjaro is constrained by several interconnected challenges. These include insufficient and irregular parental contributions, largely due to widespread poverty among households whose children attend public schools; inadequate government endorsement that results in limited funding and lack of training for School Feeding Committees (SFCs); poor food storage infrastructure which leads to spoilage and waste; and the absence of a clear national policy guiding the implementation and resource mobilization for SFPs. Additionally, budget–expenditure mismatches, weak financial management skills among some committee members, and limited multi-sector engagement further undermine the effective operation of these programs. Despite these obstacles, examples from countries like Kenya, Malawi, and Uganda illustrate that such challenges can be overcome through stronger policy frameworks, coordinated stakeholder support, infrastructure improvement, and capacity-building initiatives that empower SFCs to better sustain school feeding efforts.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study concludes that there are challenges that impede smooth running of this potential feeding program which include insufficient and irregular parental contributions, largely due to widespread poverty among households whose children attend public schools; inadequate government endorsement that results in limited funding and lack of training for School Feeding Committees (SFCs); poor food storage infrastructure which leads to spoilage and waste; and the absence of a clear national policy guiding the implementation and resource mobilization for SFPs. Additionally, budget–expenditure mismatches, weak financial management skills among some committee members, and limited multi-sector engagement further undermine the effective operation of these programs. The study concludes that, while the role of the community remains critical, this study affirms that lasting sustainability of school feeding programs requires a shared responsibility model. Government involvement provides the structure, reliability, and scale needed to support local energy and innovation.

5.2 Recommendations

1. Feeding committees without reliable storage face difficulties in planning menus, coordinating with suppliers, and adapting to food price changes or seasonal

shortages. Provision of reliable storage facilities will assist the committees have a place to keep their supplies.

2. School Feeding Committees (SFCs) face major difficulties due to the absence of a specific government policy guiding School Feeding Programs. The government should provide guiding policy to guide the smooth operations.

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