

*Full Length Research*

# The effects of home-based lunch provision on child retention in primary schools in Mbita Sub-county Kenya

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Despite the introduction of Free Primary Education in 2003 by the Kenya government in its quest to increasing access, retention and equity in education provision, child survival rate in primary schools in Mbita Sub-county is still 85.2% and is below the national survival rate of 97.1%. It was due to this low retention rate that the study was set to investigate the effects of home-based lunch on child retention in the primary schools in Mbita. To achieve this, the study was set on a specific objective focused on identifying the effects of home-based lunch, on child retention in the primary schools. To realize the set objective, the study was based on a conceptual framework drawn from the Classical Liberal Theory focused on Equity of Opportunity in education provision as postulated by an American Educator Horace Mann. The framework explains the relationship between the dependent and the independent variables in home-based lunch provision. The study used descriptive survey design which was conducted in 42 public primary schools sampled from the 98 primary schools in Mbita Sub-county. The study used the precision rate and confidence level derivative to obtain the sample, where the sample size  $n = z^2 \cdot p \cdot q \cdot N / e^2$  ( $N-1$ ) +  $z^2 \cdot p \cdot q$  defined the 42 schools. The study also adopted the stratified random sampling to accommodate social, economic, physical and environmental differences in the regions of the study. To obtain the stratum sample size, the proportionate stratification was used based on each stratum's share where,  $n_x = n \cdot X / N$  defined the stratum sample size for the Island, Urban and Rural regions of Mbita Sub-county. Data was collected using questionnaires sent to head teachers and class teachers of the sampled schools, while interview schedules were used with class prefects to collect more information regarding the effects of home-based lunch on retention in the study area. The SPSS program for MS windows was also used to analyze the questionnaires. The study used frequencies and percentages because they easily communicated the research findings to majority of the readers. The study found out that home-based lunch provision contributed to absenteeism, lateness, transfers, attrition thus reducing child retention capacity of schools in Mbita. It was also noted that home-based lunch resulted to children walking long distances to and from schools, preparing lunch, not getting lunch at home, becoming truant and others incur accidents as they walk home every other day.

**Key words:** Free Primary Education, access, retention and equity in education provision, Mbita Sub-county, public primary schools, Island, Urban and Rural regions.

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

Education is a basic human Right that fosters economic growth and human development (Okidi, 2004). A study on education for development observed that primary

education brought in high social rates of return that is estimated to be 27 percent among people who complete Primary Education and 15-17 percent for Secondary Education. The study indicated that the private returns to education were higher than the social returns reaching 49 percent for primary and 26 percent for Secondary, hence education remains a profitable venture (Psacharopoulos, 1985). This study however is focused on educational development through increased child retention in the

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**Table1.** Child Enrollment In Kenya Regional Statistics.

Region	No. of schools	GER %	NET %
Coast1136		69.5	52.7
Central	1855	105.2	82.8
Eastern	4142	99.2	72.8
Nairobi	250	52	44.9
Rift Valley	4678	88.3	66.9
Western	1971	93.3	72.7
Nyanza	4027	89.2	74.7
North Eastern	173	22.8	14.5
National		91	70.7

Source: UNESCO Statistical Institute (2009)

primary schools.

To promote economic growth through human capital development the World Bank called for various studies on child attrition to be carried out in various regions, countries, and localities to minimize attrition and improve efficiency in education (UNESCO, 1998). In this respect, countries that are signatories to the Universal Primary Education accord are focused on attainment of 100 percent completion rate in both primary and secondary education (Lewin, 1993).

In Africa, the achievement of 100 percent child retention index in the primary schools is a hard task for countries like Chad with 72 % child attrition rate and Angola and Uganda both with 68% , Ethiopia with 71% child repetition rate and Kenya with 76.8 % child survival rate to last grade (UIS, 2009). The retention gap indicated in this study bring into mind the need to study education inequalities that hinder child retention in the primary schools (World Bank, 1980). These inequalities observed can be classified as Home-based factors and School factors that include household economic disadvantages, social expectations and poor quality school environment (Sendwal and Kamat, 2008). This study is focused on the effects of Home- based lunch factors since no study had been carried out about it in the study area.

In Africa countries such as Lesotho, Mozambique, Ghana, Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Cameroon, Malawi, and Uganda have adopted the Free Primary Education with the aim of increasing equal opportunity in education provision (UIS, 2009). This education provision is hoped to achieve its focus through increased access, retention and attainment of 100% enrollment as per the Education For All strategies in the countries that embrace the recommendation (Al-Sammaria, 2003; Bisika, 2005). Despite embracing FPE as early as 2002 none of these countries have achieved a hundred percent primary schoolchild survival rate to the last grade. Ghana recorded child survival rate of 63.3%, Kenya 75.3%, Tanzania 75.8%, Malawi 43.8% while Uganda attained 63.6% (UNESC3O, 2006). Based on these statistics, there is persistent low child retention in the primary

schools despite the Free Primary Education addressing school factors.

In 2003, the government of Kenya declared Primary Education free and compulsory. This was in line with the Millenium Development Goals (MDG), Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Empowerment Creation goals of achieving Universal Primary Education and Education For All by 2015 (Gatimu, 2005). To date, achieving a hundred percent child retention in the primary schools is far off as the disparity between the Gross and Net enrollment ratio indicates low child retention in the public primary schools in Kenya as shown in Table 1 (UIS, 2009).

The variations between the gross and net enrollments seen in this statistic calls for a study to explain the effects of other educational intervention strategies (Nyamesa, 2008; Muindi, 2010; Oriedo, 2010). Other than FPE, the study is focused on the effects of various household factors challenging child retention in the primary schools in Kenya. This is in line with other studies (Peasgood and Al-Sammaria, 1998) which called for a study on the unclear effects of home-based factors such as food availability, household work patterns, distance to school and other environmental aspects on education. Lunch provision is not met in the FPE and 78.7 % of Kenyan school-going children are dependent on the home-based lunch while only 21.3 % get World Food Program and Government assisted meals (USDA, 2010).

In Mbita Sub-County, the introduction of FPE has not resulted to Education For All, as the fate of many primary school children who walk home for lunch cannot be explained (Concern Worldwide, 2005).A report from Mbita Sub-County education office (Mbita EMIS 2012) indicates primary school child attrition rate of 14.4% and is far above the national rate of 4.9 % , as shown in Table 2.

From this information child survival rate across all grades in the five zones in Mbita Sub-County is 85.2 % and is below the National rate which is 97.3 % while attrition rate is 14.4 % in Mbita and is above the National rate which is 4.9 % (ROK,2010). Just like in all

**Table 2.** Child Retention in Primary Schools in Mbita Sub- County.

Zone	Drop Out Rate %	Survival Rate%
Mbita East	13.3	86.7
Mbita West	11.1	88.9
Rusinga	8.8	91.2
Mfangano	10.1	89.9
Lambwe	15.7	84.3
Sub-County	14.4	85.2

Source: Mbita Sub-County EMIS (2012)

other sub-counties the FPE provided funds for instructional materials, quality assurance, infrastructure, and teachers (ROK,2003), hence there is need to investigating the effects of home- based lunch factors on the higher attrition rate and the low primary school child survival rate observed in the Sub- county since no research had been carried out about it in the study area.

### Statement of the problem

Children in the public primary schools in Mbita Sub-County are dropping out of schools, despite the home-based lunch provision embraced in the public primary schools .The average child attrition rate among the primary schools children in Mbita Sub-County is 14.4%. The causes of this high attrition rate among pupils in the public primary schools in Mbita Sub-County were not established. The higher attrition rate observed was causing disquiet between the Sub-county education officials and the community in Mbita, who were demanding an explanation about the high child attrition rates that was threatening the education standards in the entire Sub-County (Republic of Kenya, 2010).

With the Free Primary Education policy that offers Learning Resources and Quality assurance to public primary schools, one wondered what contributed to such high drop- out rates among pupils in the primary schools in Mbita Sub-County. It was therefore important to determine whether home-based lunch provision among primary school pupils in Mbita Sub-County contributed to the high attrition rates from schools.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to find out the effects of home-based lunch provision on child retention in the public primary schools in Mbita Sub-County.

### Research Objectives

The study was guided by this objective:

1. To identify the effects of home-based lunch provision on child retention in the public primary schools in Mbita Sub-County.

### Research Questions

The following research questions were developed to guide the study:

1. What are the effects of home- based lunch provision among pupils in urban primary schools in Mbita Sub-County?
2. What are the effects of home- based lunch provision among pupils in primary schools within the Island regions of Mbita Sub-County?
3. What are the effects of home- based lunch provision among pupils in rural primary schools Mbita Sub-County?

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Lunch provision circumstance among public primary school pupils in Mbita Sub-County was studied as an input factor that influenced child retention. The conceptual framework indicated the perceived relationship between home-based lunch provisions variables and child retention indicators. The arrows indicate that children walk home from school and back from lunch. In the event of walking home from school for lunch the children cover long distances, do not get lunch, prepare lunch, involved in child labour activities, while others truant to other places. These factors were perceived to influence the home-based lunch provision and served as the independent variables that link up between school and home as shown in the conceptual framework. Between home and school the independent variables translates their effects onto the dependent variables (child retention indicators).

The arrows show that there is a link between walking home for lunch and child retention in the primary schools. However, other intervening variables such as peer influence and rigid school rules were also thought to have some direct impact on child attrition.

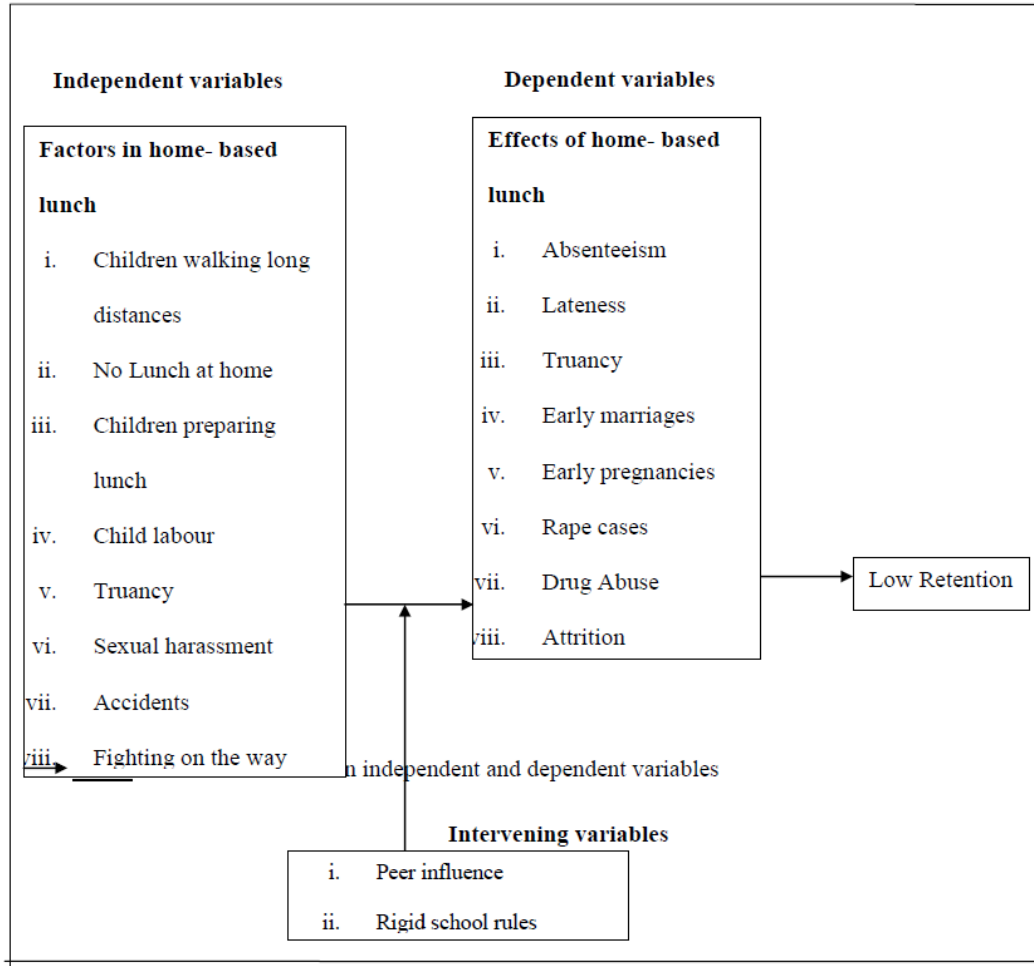


Figure 1. Perceived effects of home-based lunch on child retention in school.

The conceptual framework describes a relationship that explains the Classical Liberal Theory of Equity of Opportunity in education provision as indicated by an American educator Horace Mann in the year 1912. The theory explains that an education system should be designed to remove barriers of any nature e.g economic, geographical, nutritional, gender and others that prevent pupils from equal access to primary education provision (Orodho, 2008).The home-based lunch provision was studied in its entirety as a process that propagates social inequality among pupils and increases child attrition from the primary schools in Mbita Sub-county.

The introduction of Universal Free Primary education in Kenya (Republic of Kenya, 2003) was an indicator to the relevance of the Classical and Liberal Theory prospects in the school lunch provision in Mbita and Kenya at large. The theory postulate that, the cumulative effects of independent variables in the framework in Figure 1 on the dependent variables was the cause of low child retention

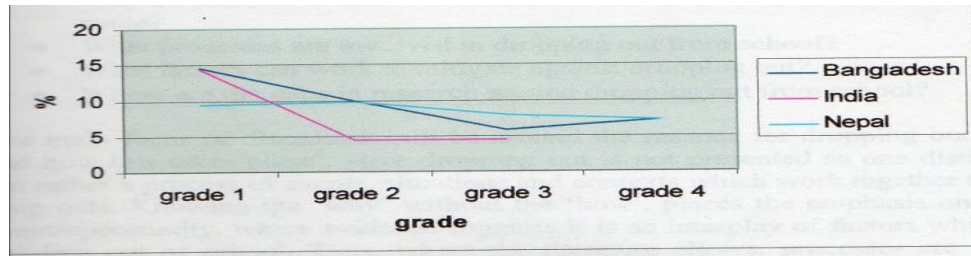
rates in the public primary schools in Mbita Sub-County. Rigid school rules and peer influence are perceived to impact on the dependent variables and goes a long way to reduce child retention (Republic of Kenya, 2010)

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

This review examines literature that address lunch provision in primary education both in developed and developing countries. The information gathered helps to draw a critical analysis on the effect of lunch provision on child retention in the primary schools in MbitaSub-County of Homa-Bay County.

**Effects of home- based lunch on child retention in the primary schools in Mbita Sub-County**

School attendance patterns are dependent on the child's socio- economic background and parental level of education (Vaizey, 1983; Ersado, 2005; Al-Sammaraia,



**Figure 2.** Drop out by grades in primary schools in South Asia.  
Source: UNESCO (2006)

2001). While the survey observed varied patterns in primary school attendance, the proposed study seeks to determine the effects of providing lunch at home on child retention in the primary schools in Mbita Sub-County.

In the Southern Asian countries child attrition is a challenge to the success of Universal Primary Education as envisioned in the Millennium Development Goal (UNESCO, 2005). In the countries of Bangladesh, India and Nepal different patterns of child attrition are observed as indicated in Figure 2 (UNESCO, 2006).

As indicated in Figure 2, Bangladesh and India both have higher child attrition from grades one indicating 14.6 % and 14.4 % respectively. The attrition levels decrease in grades two and increases as children transit to higher grades. In Nepal child attrition is constant between 7-10 % across the grades. While this study observed child retention across the first four grades in the primary education, the proposed study seeks to determine the effects of providing lunch at home on child attrition in the primary schools in Mbita Sub-County, Kenya.

In Bangladesh, an evaluation of Food for Education initiated by the World Bank (WFP, 2005) indicated an increase in attendance by 20% among children in the participating schools while there was a decline of 2% in the none participating schools. While the study in Bangladesh observed the impact of school feeding, this study seeks to determine the effects of providing lunch at home on child attendance in the primary schools in the study area.

In Latin America, teenage pregnancies, early marriages and poor academic performance in the primary and secondary schools are contributing to child attrition (UNDP, 2002). Higher child attrition cases were observed in Honduras and Guatemala among boys and girls in both rural and urban regions, the range were between 40% to 70% (Birdstall *et al.*, 2005). This study focused on teenage pregnancies in both primary and secondary education and did not determine which level of education was affected the more. The proposed study is focused on determining the effect of home-based lunch on the primary school child pregnancy, early marriages and poor academic performance in the study area.

About 100 million school age children are married before the age 18 years, household poverty, cultural and

religious obligations are the reasons for such early marriages (ICRW, 2008). Most of the early marriages occur in the Sub-Saharan Africa and Asian continents (Boyle *et al.*, 2002). In Niger 77% of the marriages are child marriages while in Southern Sudan out of the 34% gross enrollment ratio for girls only 6.2 % survive to the last grades in the primary education (ICRW, 2008). The study by ICRW presents a wider scope of household factors that contributes to early marriages among the girl-child, the proposed study is focused on the effects of going home for lunch on child attrition in the study area.

The rising opportunity cost of schooling and household income exert pressure that result to child drop out to attend to child labour activities (Njeru, 2005). A similar observation is also made where linkage between educational access and child labour are also gendered and frequently affecting the girl-child. In many instances girls take on heavier workloads within the household that may include preparing meals, water and fuel collection whereas the boys might be involved to a lesser extent in agriculture duties (Coulombe *et al.*, 1997). The type of work carried out has implications on both initial and sustained access to schooling and rural girls are affected more than girls in the urban areas (Ersado, 2005). While the study was focused on the rising opportunity costs of schooling, the proposed study determined whether going home for lunch exposed children to child labour activities resulting to attrition from schools in the study area.

In Africa, a survey by UNESCO Institute of Statistic (Bruneforth, 2006), Figure 3 shows that large percentage of child attrition are in grades one and decreases in grades two to four, then rises in some countries. In Malawi and Uganda the statistics reflects 24% and 23% child attrition respectively from grades one while in Mozambique and Rwanda child attrition from grades five rose to 20% in 2003. The percentages indicate significant attrition from the primary schools hence non-completion of the basic education cycle. This study finding provides an opportunity to identify the effects of providing lunch at home on the child retention factors in the study area.

In South Africa, increased child absenteeism among children whose parents died of HIV/AIDS often leads to child retention challenges in the primary and secondary schools, some children become heads of households and



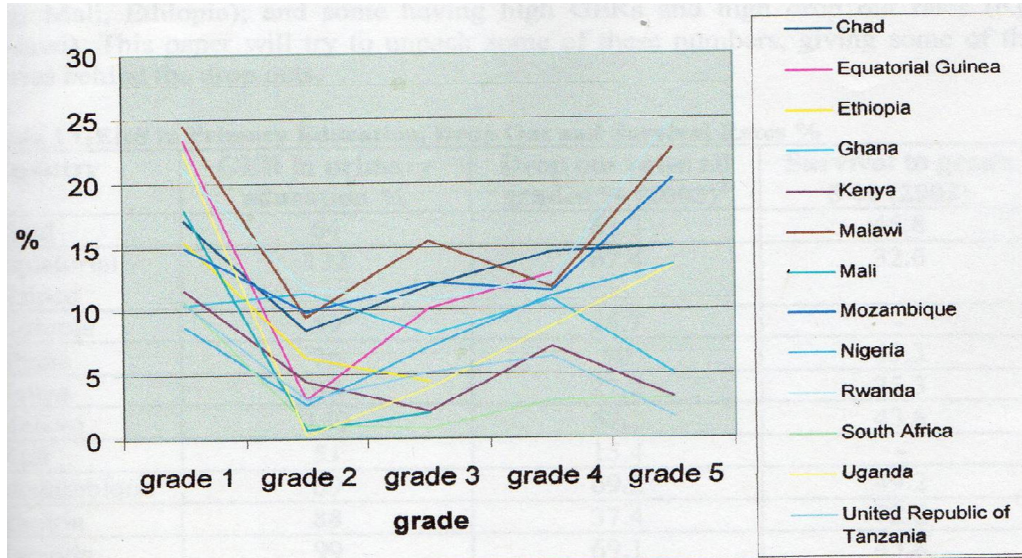


Figure 3. Drop out rates by grades in primary schooling in Africa. Source: UNESCO (2006)

fends for their siblings (Coombe, 2000). This study makes its conclusions on the effects of home-based lunch based on the assessments of such family challenges on the retention of children in the primary schools.

In Ethiopia, absenteeism, child transfer and low achievement in schools affects the education of the girl-child in the rural areas and Arid and Semi-Arid regions (UNESCO, 1999). This study is focused on both sexes to ascertain the effects of home-based lunch on child retention in Mbita.

In Uganda, (Nyanzi, 2002) early marriages, pregnancies and child abuse are the main causes of low survival rates in both primary and secondary schools. The boys drop out due to lack of interest and child labour activities. Similar challenges were observed as violation of children's Rights (UNICEF, 2002). This study identifies the contribution of home-based lunch on early marriages, pregnancies and child labour activities among primary school pupils in the study area.

In Kenya, girls are ascribed the role of domestic labour and child care and the girl-child contribution is unquestionable in some communities in Kenya (Legget, 2001). A study by Kakonge and others concur that the large disparity between the national gross enrollment ratio for girls of 88 % and that of Wajir sub- county which is less than 20% shows that besides domestic child labour, other factors also keep girls out of schools (Kakonge *et al.*, 2001). However, this study is focused on identifying the effects of other factors related to home-based lunch on child retention in the primary schools in Mbita Sub- County. A study by the Kenya National Examination Council in 2009 revealed that 70% of pupils in grade three regularly miss school due to lack of uniforms, sickness, while others stay at home to do family

chores (Muindi, 2010). Though the results were limited to grade three, a survey by UNESCO Institute of Statistics observed that child attrition at primary level in Kenya is also higher in other subsequent classes (UIS, 2009). This study intended to identify whether absenteeism, child transfers and sicknesses observed among primary school pupils were as a result of home-based lunch provision.

In Mbita Sub-County, children provided more household labour, these activities often take precedence over schooling (ROK, 2009). The survey indicated that in Mbita 73% households possessed primary level of education while the main occupation was fishing 30.7%, farming 30.1%, and small traders 19.6%. This study was focused on identifying whether going home for lunch contributes to school children going into the cited labour activities thus dropping out of schools. In Mbita, early marriages and teenage pregnancies were observed among children of primary school going age (Concern Worldwide, 2004). A survey by Concern Worldwide reported dropout rates ranging from 5% to 40% in both Mbita and Suba Sub- counties. However, no study had been carried out in this area to identify whether there was a link between home-based lunch and the retention challenges observed in Mbita, hence the necessity of this study. The head teacher and class teacher respondents were issued with the questionnaires and were required to indicate the effects of lunch provision variables on child retention in the public primary schools.

**METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted descriptive survey technique, the design helps in exploring the effects of independent

variables, in this study on child retention factors, (Kothari, 2009). In this technique the findings are described and presented using percentages and frequencies to explain the effect of particular variables in the study. The technique can be used with the different methods of analysis and presentation adopted in the study.

The descriptive technique was useful in exploring the qualitative and quantitative data drawn from the questionnaire.

To make the study more feasible, the Sub-County was stratified into three study strata namely; Mbita Township, the Island and the Rural areas. The target population for the study were public primary school head teachers and the standard six class teachers sampled across the entire Mbita Sub-County. A total of 42 head teachers answered the questionnaires. The class teachers were included in the study since they are involved in maintaining the enrollment records and kept the profiles of the class attendance and management.

The study employed a combination of the stratified and simple random sampling technique to obtain the sample for this study. The study sample size (n) was determined through the use of Precision Rate and confidence level derivative (Kothari, 2009). The sample was drawn from a population of 98 public primary schools at an estimated value of (e) within 5% of the true value and at a confidence level of 95%. The derivative  $n = Z^2 p \cdot q \cdot N / e^2 (N - 1) + Z^2 p \cdot q$  was used to define a sample size of 42 schools for the study. Z- Values in the matrix represents area under normal curve at 95% confidence level while P is the sample size proportion and  $q = 1 - p$ .

Where n - Sample size

e – Estimated value of error

Z – Area under frequency distribution curve

N – Total population

p – Proportion of sample size from frequency distribution table

q - Deviation of proportion from the unit value

$$n = \frac{z^2 pqN}{e^2 (N-1) + z^2 pq}$$

$$N = \frac{(1.96)^2 \times 0.05 \times 0.95 \times 98}{(0.05)^2 \times (98 - 1) + (1.96)^2 \times 0.05 \times 0.9}$$

$$n = 42$$

The upper primary classes were purposively sampled for the study to enable the research process to determine the influence of lunch provision on full school day as per the objectives. The lower primary classes do not return to school for the afternoon session and fell below the study expectation of 'a full day effects' of the home-based lunch variables on child retention factors. The purposive sampling technique provided an opportunity for selection

for the convenience of the study between lower and upper primary classes (Kothari, 2009). From an array of the 5 upper classes 4,5,6,7, and 8, the statistical central tendency approach involving the calculation of the median value was used to obtain standard six as the sample class for the study (Saleem, 2009). To obtain the sample size of each stratum, the study employs Proportionate Stratification based on each stratum's share, where the derivative  $n \times n_1 / N$  defines the stratum's sample size where, N is the total study target population, in this case 98 primary schools, n is the desired sample size and  $n_1$  total population of each stratum (Kothari, 2009).

In view of this, the Island stratum size;

$$n = \frac{n \times n_1 = 42 \times 30}{N \quad 98}$$

Where n = 13 school.

For the township schools the stratum size is

$$n = \frac{n \times n_1 = 42 \times 19}{N \quad 98}$$

Where n = 8 school

and for the rural schools, the stratum size is

$$n = \frac{n \times n_1 = 42 \times 49}{N \quad 9}$$

Where n = 21 school.

In the study, questionnaires and interview schedules were used to collect information from the respondents. The questionnaires were sent to the head teachers and class teachers while the interview schedules were used with the class prefects. The questionnaires were self-administered for reliability purposes and were used to obtain information from the class six teachers. The questionnaires were in two sections;

**Section one:** Seeking information concerning respondent's details.

**Section two:** Seeking information concerning problem, effects, and relationship between lunch provision at home and child retention in the public primary schools

The data analysis section involved editing of the raw data, coding, classification and tabulation of the responses. The analyzed data was presented in tables, graphs, pie charts and figures

**Table 3.** Effects of home-based lunch provision in the Island regions.

Effects	Head Teacher		Class Teacher		Mean Rate
	f	%	f	%	%
Transfers	10	76.9	11	84.6	80.8
Lateness	11	84.6	12	92.3	88.5
Absenteeism	10	76.9	11	84.5	80.7
Truancy	7	53.9	9	69.2	61.5
Attrition	9	69.2	9	69.2	69.2
Early pregnancy	5	38.5	5	38.5	38.5
Early marriages	3	23.1	4	30.8	26.9
Poor academic performance	9	69.2	10	76.9	73.1
Defilement	2	15.4	2	15.4	15.4
Indiscipline	8	61.5	7	53.9	57.7

**Table 5.** Effects of home-based lunch in the Township regions.

Effects	Head teacher		Class Teacher		Mean Rate
	f	%	f	%	%
Transfers	8	100	8	100	100
Lateness	6	75.0	7	87.5	81.3
Absenteeism	5	62.5	5	62.5	62.5
Truancy	7	87.5	6	75.0	81.5
Attrition	6	75.0	6	75.0	75.0
Early pregnancy	5	62.5	4	50.0	56.3
Early marriages	3	37.5	3	37.5	37.5
Poor academic performance	4	50.0	5	62.5	56.3
Defilement	3	37.5	3	37.5	37.5
Indiscipline	7	87.5	6	75.0	81.5

## FINDINGS

Tables 3, 4 and 5 show various responses indicated in Frequencies, Percentages and the Percentage Mean Rate per study stratum.

From Table 3, the study findings shows that lateness for school among pupils who goes home for lunch was observed in 88.5% of the schools studied in Mfangano and Rusinga Islands. The other low child retention factors observed in more than 50% of the schools in the same stratum by the head teachers and class teacher respondents were; child transfers, absenteeism, attrition, truancy and sub-average academics performance. The least observed low retention indicators among the pupils who partake home-based lunch was child defilement cases that was recorded in a paltry 15.4% of the schools in the Islands. The other low retention factors that were recorded in less than 50% of the schools were early pregnancy cases and early marriages. The finding reveals that home-based lunch exposes majority of children in the Island schools to the risk of attrition.

## Effects of Home-Based Lunch Provision on Child Retention Factors in Urban Primary Schools in Mbita Sub-county (n =8)

As opposed to the Island stratum where lateness was pompously recorded, majority of pupils in Mbita urban schools are transferred due to inconsistencies in the lunch provision. Table 4 shows that in the schools where the study on the effects of home-based lunch on child retention was carried out, child transfer were indicated in 100% of the schools. The other low retention indicators recorded in more than 50% of the schools in the same stratum were; lateness, absenteeism, truancy, attrition, early pregnancies, dismal performance in class and child indiscipline.

However, child defilement and early marriages cases are uncommon and recorded a mean rate of 37.5% as observable effects of home-based lunch on child retention in public primary schools in Mbita urban schools.

On comparative basis children in the urban schools in



**Table 5.** Effects of home-based lunch in schools the rural regions.

Effects	Head Teacher		Class Teacher	
	f	%	f	%
Transfers	16	76.2	18	85.7
Lateness	16	75.2	18	85.7
Absenteeism	17	81.0	19	90.5
Truancy	8	38.1	10	47.6
Attrition	1	61.9	13	61.9
Early pregnancy	7	33.3	8	38.1
Early marriages	10	47.6	10	47.6
Poor academic performance	16	76.2	15	76.2
Defilement	3	14.3	2	9.5
Indiscipline	9	42.9	10	47.6

the sub-county experience more retention challenges due to home-based lunch as opposed to children in the Island schools.

### Effects of Home-Based Lunch Provision on Child Retention Factors in Rural Primary Schools in Mbita Sub-County (n= 21)

Table 5 shows the variable effects of home-based lunch on child retention indicators, where child absenteeism recorded 85.8% being the highest mean rate effect observed in many schools in the rural areas. This suggests a translated effect of reduced retention rates in the rural schools in Mbita. The findings indicates that early pregnancy, early marriages and child defilement cases exists in some schools in Mbita Sub-county. However, the ratings are less than 50 %. Figure 4 shows the mean percentage rate of effects of home-based lunch provision on public primary school child retention variables. The reflected mean percentage rates represents the head teacher and class teacher responses on the general effects of providing lunch at home among pupils in the public primary school.

## DISCUSSION

The study findings recorded in Table 3, 4, 5 and Figure 4 assists in answering the research question 'what are the effects of home-based lunch provision on child retention in MbitaSub-county'

### Effects on child transfer

As shown in Figure 4, 84 % head teachers and 89.9 % class teacher respondents were of the opinion that providing lunch at home encourages child transfers from various public primary schools in Mbita Sub-county. The

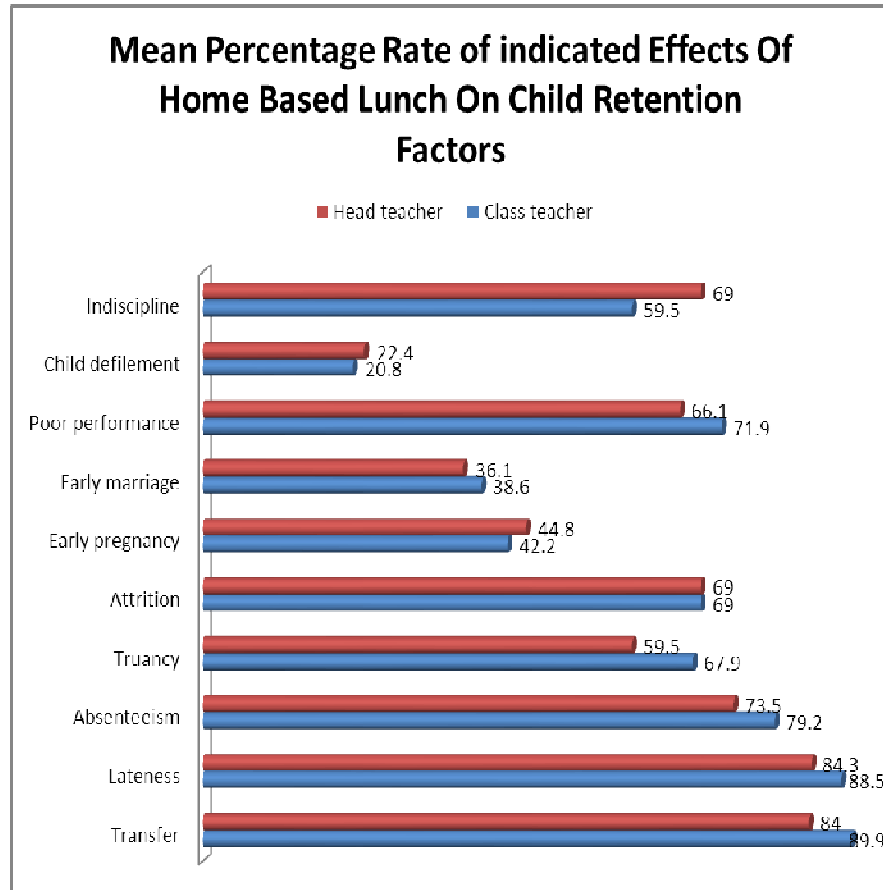
teachers attributed the transfers to the long distances some children walk home for lunch alongside other intervening factors like rigid school rules. The Ministry of Education (2010) report attributes child transfers and other child retention challenges to unfriendly school environment. The report explained that, socio-economic factors, nutritional inconsistencies and physical challenges contribute much in the low retention problems in public primary schools. Many parents transfer their children to other schools due to poor lunch provision mechanisms or due to no lunch at all

### Effects on lateness for school

Concerning the effects of home-based lunch on lateness for afternoon lessons, a mean percentage rate of 88.5 % of the class teachers and 84.3 % head teachers accepted that providing lunch a home contributes to lateness for school. In their opinion many school pupils are involved in the lunch preparation while others walk long distances home for lunch as indicated in Figure 4. These commitments results to children reaching schools late and if condition persist the child may drop out of school

### Effects on absenteeism

Absenteeism recorded a mean percentage rate of 73.5 % among the head teachers against 79.2 % rating of class teacher as another serious effect of providing lunch at home among children in public primary schools. The percentage effect is higher among schools in the rural areas of Mbita Sub-county where the responses indicated a mean rate of 85.7 %. Majority of the respondents accepted that it impacted on child retention in the region. The study concurs with Farant (2002) account on chronic absenteeism as a consequence of imbalanced socio-economic provisions to school children, which render them vulnerable to child labour activities and truancy. In



**Figure 4.** Effects of home-based lunch provision on child retention indicators in Mbita Sub-County (n=42).

Mbita Sub-county, the teachers attributed the high ratings of absenteeism indicated in Table 5 and Figure 4 to engagement of schools pupils in herding, farm activities, washing clothes, baby-sitting and other forms of child labour during lunch break.

**Effects on truancy**

Although truancy and child indiscipline are indicated as challenges in the home-based lunch provision in both the Island and Urban schools, the study shows that in Rural schools less than 50 % of the respondents observed the two as major threats to child retention in public primary schools in Mbita Sub-county.

Considering the overall ratings indicated in Figure 4, the study shows that a Mean percentage rate of 59.8 % head teachers and 67.9 % class teachers agreed that child truancy contributes to low child retention in public primary schools in Mbita.

In view of the ratings indicated together with the suggestions from the questionnaires, majority of the class teachers were of the opinion that providing lunch at home for school pupils predisposes them to truant behaviour. The study concurs with Concern worldwide (2005) report

on educational challenges in Mbita and Suba sub-counties, which besides adversely mentioning school infrastructure challenges, observed social effects such as beach life, cyber café and music theatres as some of the places where many school children truant to.

**Effects on indiscipline**

In addition to truancy, child indiscipline is indicated by 70 % of the head teachers and 58.8% class teachers as yet another concern orchestrated by providing lunch at home among children in the public primary schools in Mbita. Once the children are out of school they flout the school rules and engage in promiscuous behaviour. Some children engage in drug abuse while others deviate to street life.

In some instances, children involve themselves in fights as indicated in Table 3. The teachers observed that lunch break created a period of unchecked peer interaction and some children misuse the freedom and ends up dropping out of schools.

In this study, factors influencing child attrition from public primary schools were studied as the basis for measuring child retention in public primary schools in

Mbita Sub-county. The impact of providing lunch at home among pupils in primary schools in the three strata for the study indicated that attrition cuts across the divide as a high rating effect with 68.7% among the teacher respondents (Figure 4). The study is consistent with World Bank (2008) report on the Impact of Poverty on Education in the Developing Countries. In the opinion of the majority of the teachers, the long distances the children cover, child labour activities, food shortage and all the other factors in the home-based lunch contribute much to the rise in child attrition in Mbita Sub-county schools. From the questionnaire, the teachers observed that not all pupils who go home for lunch access the lunch. In some households, pupils miss lunch quite often and such circumstances contribute to many child attrition cases from schools.

### **Home-based lunch accidents among school pupils**

The teachers also indicated that accident was another threat in the home-based lunch provision. In the opinion of some teachers, some road accidents are due to lack of proper judgments by pupils who are rushing for lunch. Some of the pupil victims are those who are late and want to beat time for the afternoon lessons. The study concurs with the sub county Traffic Police (2012) report, about road and water carnage estimates in Mbita. The report indicated that out of the 25 people who died in the accidents in that year, ten were children of school-going age. In the report this translated to 40 % of the effects of road and water accidents in the year. In the Islands of Takawiri, Remba and Ngodhe bouts have occasionally capsized causing accidents to children crossing over to reach home for lunch and back to school.

### **Home-based lunch and school performance**

Due to inconsistencies in the home-based lunch indicated in Figure 4, many children are frequently absent from schools. Table 3, 4, 5 and Figure 4 indicates that all the teacher respondents accepted that the studied home-based lunch provision variables affect negatively child performance in various tasks in learning.

From the questionnaires the respondents noted that fatigue due to long distances walked, hunger, accidents, lateness for school due to over engagements and all other problems in the home-based lunch recorded in Figure 4, accelerated dismal performances among pupils in different tasks in school.

### **Home-based lunch and early pregnancy among teenage girls**

In the study early pregnancies as a factor that influences child retention had a mean rating of 44.8% by head

teachers and 42.2 % by class teachers as shown in Figure 4. From Table 4, early pregnancy castings are slightly higher in the cosmopolitan urban centers as compared to Rural and Island regions of Mbita Sub-county. The higher ratings in the urban areas were attributed to the expounded problems of child truancy during lunch break to cyber cafes, video halls and music theatres. In the opinion of the teachers, a part from children in the Town schools, other children are lured into sexual immoralities due to poverty most households undergo. The girl-child is at the center of the problem especially those who truant to beaches and shopping malls due to household food shortage. People take advantage of their handicap and entice them for sexual gains. According to PATH (2007), majority of girl-child are lured into sexual activities as they walk home for lunch, to the shopping centers, on the way to the river and at the beaches. The respondents noted that home-based lunch provision exposes the girl-child to sexual harassments which ends up with pregnancy cases.

### **Home-based lunch and early marriages among school girls**

Besides early pregnancies, child retention in public primary schools is also threatened by escalating early marriages. Figure 4 shows that 38.1 % head teachers and 38.6 % class teachers indicated that providing lunch at home encourages early marriages among school girls in Mbita Sub-county. The findings concur with ADRA (2008) study observations on relative effects of HIV/AIDS in Mbita and Suba Regions. It was noted that the scourge encouraged early marriages among orphaned girl-child in the affected households. The finding was consistent with the observation made by Nyanzi (2002) concerning the effects of early pregnancies and marriages on child retention in Uganda. In the opinion of the teachers providing lunch at home encourages negative interaction behaviors predisposing the girl-child to early marriages. According to the Republic of Kenya (2010) report on school as a safe zone, nutritional inconsistencies encourages attrition and early marriages among school pupils and should be adequately planned to avoid creating risks. In Figure 4 the study indicated dismal effects of home-based lunch provision on child defilement in Mbita regions. The ratings indicated that 22.4 % head teachers and 20.8% class teachers accepted that defilement cases were also many in the home-based lunch. The study shows that the effect is quite dismal in the rural areas as compared to the urban. In the opinion of the teacher respondents, truancy, household food shortage and the distance between home and schools exposes pupils to the danger of sexual harassments.

### **Conclusion**

In view of the study findings home-based lunch provision

variables negatively impact on child retention factors in schools in Mbita Sub-county by inhibiting school accessibility. The finding concurs with Peasgood and Al-Sammarai (1998) findings asserting that household factors, work patterns and distance walked to school inhibit child retention in the schools. The topographical challenges, economic and social effects surrounding home-based lunch limits access and equality in education provision in public primary schools. This is according to republic of Kenya (2005) report on promotion of access and equity in education.

The study findings indicates that the problem in the home-based lunch transforms into segmental effects of which, low child retention rates in the public primary schools in Mbita Sub-county is one. The provision increases lateness for school, absenteeism, child attrition, truancy, increased child transfers and accidents among others

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