

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL FEEDING AND
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF PRIMARY THREE
CHILDREN IN BUSIA DISTRICT, UGANDA**

By

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2007/HD20/9827U

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE
STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT
FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF PUBLIC
HEALTH
MAKERERE UNIVERSITY KAMPALA**

OCTOBER 2013

ABSTRACT

Introduction and background: Good nutrition plays a major role in good academic performance in school going children. Despite the good staffing ratios, Busia district still faces challenges related to academic performance. These could be as a result of poor nutrition. With a pupil to teacher ratio of 79:1 and a pupil to classroom ratio of 59:1, Busia district remains one of the most adequately staffed and least congested districts. Despite these achievements, most primary seven leavers passed their examinations in grade two with only a few in grade one and the rest in other grades.

Study objective: This study was intended to determine the relationship between receiving porridge at break time from school and the academic performance of primary three children in Busia district.

Methodology: This was a cross sectional study that utilised both quantitative and qualitative research methods in Busia district. A total of 440 pupils from 8 schools participated. Data were collected by trained research assistants using standardized exams in English and Mathematics, health card, questionnaires and Focus group guides. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 17.0 soft ware while qualitative data was interpreted through a systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes, patterns and analyses for content.

Results: The children were aged between 8 and 12 years with the mean age being 10years. Most of them (38%) were Catholics by religion and Samia (87.7%) by tribe. Children taking mid-morning porridge at break time performed better in mathematics $p < 0.005$ (8.67, 14.79) and English $p < 0.005$ (3.08, 9.71) compared to their counterparts who did not take mid-morning porridge. Overall, the nutritional status did not differ significantly between children who take porridge (BMI-for-age 15.66) at mid-morning break and those who do not (BMI-for-age 15.59).

Some parents knew the benefits of taking mid-morning porridge while the rest did not know the benefits of children taking porridge at mid-morning break time.

Conclusion: Much as receiving porridge at break time has proved to translate into improved academic performance, the parents knowledge levels and attitude towards contribution of maize flour to the schools at the beginning of the term has not been translated into action as the observed practices of maize flour contribution at the beginning of the term were not good. The observed knowledge and practices of parents are most likely attributable to high bank interest rates, poverty and high prices offered for the maize flour in Kenya.

Recommendations: There is need for raising awareness among the parents on the usefulness of providing porridge to their children at break time while at school. It is also important for the GOU to consider subsidising farm inputs for the predominantly farming community of Busia.