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RESEARCH ARTICLE

EFFECTS OF SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMME ON PARTICIPATION OF HIV/AIDS AFFECTED LEARNERS IN KENYA.

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Abstract

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Feeding programme, learner participation, play activities, physical health cognitive development.

This study sort to determine the effects of school support activities on participation of learners affected by HIV/AIDS. The objectives of the study was to examine the effects of school feeding programme on participation of learners affected by HIV/AIDS. The outcome of the study indicated a positive effect of school feeding programme on the cognitive development of the HIV- AIDS affected ECDE children hence enhancing optimal learner participation.

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Introduction

In spite of all the efforts by so many organizations during the past years to prevent the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), the HIV/AIDS pandemic continues to be one of the biggest challenges faced by countries worldwide. Parental death due to AIDS may have a lasting negative impact on all aspects of children's life. By 2005, 15.2 million children had been orphaned by AIDS worldwide as stated by (Goodwin, J. 2002). Based on current trends, it was estimated that the number of AIDS orphans worldwide could reach 25 million by 2010 and 40 million by 2020 (Hodge M. 2004). Many of these children lack sufficient school support services and activities like food, shelter, psychosocial support, protection, education and medical care (Goodwin, J. 2002). The global crisis of AIDS orphans has attracted increasing attention and a number of studies have been carried out to explore the effect of AIDS orphan hood on the children's wellbeing including school education. Education plays an important role in child development and it is generally accepted that parental death from AIDS has a serious negative effect on children's education (Breakwell, 2000). In Africa, HIV/AIDS is a major public health concern and cause of death in many parts. Although the continent is home to about 15.2 percent of the world's population, Sub-Saharan Africa alone accounted for an estimated 70 percent of all people living with HIV and 70 percent of all AIDS deaths in 2011 (WHO, 2011). According to a 2013 special report issued by the AIDS. The number of HIV positive people in Africa receiving anti-retroviral treatment in 2012 was over seven times the number receiving treatment in 2005, "with nearly 1 million added in the previous year alone". (UNAIDS 2005). In the case of Kenya, AIDS orphans usually lack parental care and financial resources for education (Berer, 1993). Therefore, AIDS-related parental deaths could influence orphans' school attendance, school performance and school completion. However, the majority of existing studies regarding AIDS orphans' education have mainly focused on the issue of school attendance. In Baringo sub-county, most AIDS deaths are between the ages of 25-35 for men and 20-30 for women which are the most productive age. HIV prevalence varies markedly between regions within the county but all regions are affected and over 40% of hospital beds are occupied by HIV/AIDS patients, (MOE, 2011). However, there is limitation in school support activities for instance provision of psychosocial support, supporting and protecting child-headed households, introduction of feeding programs in preschools, medication, among others by the community to enable children affected by AIDS participate fully in learning activities. In

addition, most of the existing studies have been carried out in Sub-Saharan Africa countries. Accordingly, this study designed to examine school support activities and participation of learners affected by HIV/AIDS-related parental illness. This study, examined whether orphans and vulnerable children equally participate in activities when provided with food in school in comparison with their peers who did not experience HIV/AIDS in their families.

Materials and methods

A mixed methodology involving both quantitative and qualitative data procedures was applied in the study. General systems Theory guided the study. Descriptive survey design was employed in the study. It sampled 101 teachers from a population of 507 teachers in Baringo Central sub-county ECDE centers. Questionnaire and interview schedule were used to collect data. Simple random sampling was used to select teachers in the sampled ECDE centers. Descriptive statistics involving mean, mode, percentages and frequencies were used to analyze data.

Results

Effects of school feeding programme on cognitive development

The study examined the effects of feeding programme on cognitive development. Findings are summarized in table 4.1

Table 4.1: Positive Cognitive Development

Statement	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	76	75.25
Agree	16	15.84
Disagree	4	3.96
Strongly disagree	3	2.97
Undecided	2	1.98
Total	101	100.0

The findings in table 4.1 indicate that majority of the respondents 82(91.09%) agreed that school feeding programme promote positive cognitive development in learning. Pre-schools on the basis of these findings need to provide children infected or affected by HIV/AIDS to relieve them from the burden of missing meals due to poverty and parents being unable to provide because of sickness. This would enable them participate actively in school activities hence positive cognitive development of the learners. This findings agrees with Miller (1999) who argued that poor nutrition and health among pre-school children contribute to the inefficiency of educational system. Such children become diminished in cognitive abilities and naturally perform poorly and are likely to repeat classes or drop more than children who feed well and are healthy.

Effects of School Feeding Programme on Enrollment and Attendance

The extent to which school feeding programme affected enrollment and attendance was determined in the study of the study. Table 4.2 summarizes the results of the study.

Table 4.2: Effects of school feeding programme on enrollment and attendance

Statement	Frequency	Percent
strongly agree	28	27.5
Agree	59	57.8
Disagree	9	8.8
strongly disagree	4	3.9
Undecided	1	1.0
Total	101	100

Majority of the respondents 87(85.3%) agreed that enrolment and attendance rate improved when children in school especially those affected by HIV/AIDS are supplied with food in schools. This findings agrees with UNICEF (2005) that in one province in Pakistan girls' enrolment increased by 247% when the feeding programme in schools began in 1994 and 1998. This is further supported by WFP (2002) that school feeding programme has consistently proven effective in reducing dropouts among learners who starve due to lack of food in their homes. It was established that the School Feeding Programme in Baringo central sub-county had a significant impact on school enrolment and attendance.

Effects of school feeding programme on physical Health of the Children

The study examined the effects of school feeding programme on physical health of children. Table 4.3 summarizes the results of the findings.

Table 4.3: School feeding programme and Physical Health Improvement

Statements	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	35	34.65
Agree	35	34.65
Disagree	25	24.75
Strongly disagree	2	1.98
Undecided	4	3.97
Total	101	100.0

Results in table 4.3, reveals that an overwhelming majority of the respondents 70(69.3%) agreed to the fact that school feeding programme improve the physical health of the learners hence participate in the learning activities. This agrees with (FAO, 2008) which argued that the persistence of hunger, malnutrition, and micronutrient deficiencies can have long lasting effects on the health status and productivity of people and their nations. Early malnutrition can adversely affect physical, mental, and social aspects of child health, which in turn leads to underweight, stunted growth, lowered immunity, and mortality.

Effects of school feeding programme on Participation in play activities

The study further established the effects of school feeding programme on the learner participation in play activities in pre-schools. The findings are summarized in table 4.4

Table 4.4: School feeding programme participation in play activities

Statement	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	36	35.65
Agree	31	30.69
Disagree	13	12.87
Strongly disagree	4	3.96
Undecided	17	16.83
Total	101	100.0

It is clear from the table above that majority of the respondents 67(66.34%) agree that school feeding programme enables learners to participate in play activities in school. The study observed that whenever children are given food, they become strong. The energy generated from their bodies causes them to play actively. Play in children is part of learning and a sign of good health. Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) an international body that feed children in schools agrees with the findings of the study. It argued that one tenth of the poorest children globally are least likely to attend school and are most likely to end up in a perpetuation of inter-generational cycles of poverty. It indicates that if children are given food in school, they can be strong play and acquire skills for future eradication of poverty cycles.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings of this study indicate that feeding programmes in schools improves learners' positive cognitive development which is crucial in the teaching-learning process. Similarly, feeding programmes in schools increases enrolment and attendance rates besides improving physical health. In addition, the school feeding programme enable children to participate in class and play activities better. In view of the aforementioned findings, it is concluded that school feeding programmes is a crucial element of a school system especially for children affected by HIV/AIDS as this would enhance learner participation in the learning process. Consequently, it is recommended on the basis of this conclusion that policy makers at both national and county government's levels promote school feeding programmes in schools in order to maximize learner participation particularly the HIV/ AIDS affected children.

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