

# INFLUENCE OF CRITERIA USED IN ALLOCATION AND DISBURSEMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION CONSTITUENCY DEVELOPMENT BURSARY FUND ON RETENTION OF STUDENTS FROM VULNERABLE BACKGROUND IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN KIMININI SUB-COUNTY, KENYA

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## Abstract

The Secondary Education Constituency Bursary Fund (SECBF) was created to enhance high school enrollment and retention among the underprivileged and other vulnerable groups; however, there have been several concerns about some kids leaving school early. Thus, the purpose of the study was to evaluate the influence of criteria used in allocation and disbursement of SECBF on retention of students from vulnerable background in public secondary schools in Kiminini sub-county, Kenya. It adopted a descriptive survey research design, with a target population of 333 persons including 109 parents, 109 Principals/head teachers in secondary schools, 6 members of the CDF committee, and 109 beneficiaries. The sample size of 182 persons was determined using the Krejcie & Morgan table (1970). The researcher collected data using questionnaires and interview guides. The instruments were validated by experts in the area of study. Reliability of the instruments was determined through a pilot study where Spearman's rank correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) was analyzed for the two scores and found to be 0.78, which implied that the instruments were reliable. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics and presented in tables, while qualitative data analyzed in themes and sub themes and presented using quotations. The study established that Secondary Education Constituency Bursary Fund practices such as criteria used in allocation and disbursement significantly ( $p=0.000$ ) influence retention of students from vulnerable background in public secondary schools. It was therefore recommended that there should be a consideration of criteria used in allocation and disbursement, public awareness, proportion allocated and consistency in allocation and disbursement as this will enhance retention of students from vulnerable background in public secondary schools. The information provided by this research will benefit policymakers, community members and academicians.

**Keywords:** criteria used in allocation and disbursement, retention, students from vulnerable background

## INTRODUCTION

The government established regulations about the minimum amounts that applicants from the various sorts of secondary schools must be paid. The secondary schools get KES 5,000 for day schools, KES 10,000 for boarding institutions and KES 15,000 for national schools. This made the constituency bursary fund garner a lot of attention, but there were still concerns in relation to its efficiency. Recipients were getting a disbursement of KES 3000 for all those attending daytime schools as well as KES 5000 for those attending provincial residential institutions, according to reports at CDF offices (CBR, 2011). The existing system does not always guarantee that only students who are truly in need receive this financial aid. The criteria for granting bursaries to certain pupils, according to Oyugi, Riechi, and Anupi (2010), include full orphan, partly orphan, needy single parent, and needy both parents. The beneficiary's social and economic background will change because of the latter two criteria, but the first two criteria cannot be changed back. Mahonga (2015) conducted a study on the level of effectiveness in distribution of Constituency bursary awards, to enhance deserving students' access to public secondary school education in Trans- Nzoia West Sub- County, Kenya between 2006 and 2009. The mechanisms and criterion used by bursary awarding bodies have continued to leave out many deserving students in Trans- Nzoia West Sub- County. Therefore, this study explored the effectiveness of Constituency bursary awards in enhancing deserving students' access to public secondary school education in Trans-Nzoia West Sub- County, Kenya. The research design used was a descriptive survey. It was noted that the set criteria of bursary award are not adhered to in selection of beneficiaries; thus, there was no transparency and accountability. Inferential statistics specifically one way-ANOVA was used. The results of this study indicate that the bursary awarded to students in Trans-Nzoia West Sub- County is quite ineffective in enhancing deserving students' access to public secondary school education.

Flora, Mumukha, Ndiga, Mwala and Njagi (2014) conducted a study on effectiveness of Decentralized Education Bursary Fund in Enhancing Equity in Access and Participation in Public Secondary Schools, in Kajiado County, Kenya. The study specifically looked at the trend in allocation of decentralized bursary fund in the years 2008-2011, the relationship between socio economic status and bursary demand and supply, the challenges, and the policy reforms in tackling the bottlenecks. The Findings of the study observed that: The number of bursary applicants has continued to increase but there is reduction in amount being allocated to each constituency; the bursary award has no relationship with the beneficiary's socio-economic and the average amount of money distributed depends more on the location than ones socio economic status; More boys than girls get Bursary fund allocation; that there is no statistically significant difference in allocations between students in provincial and district schools; the students from private and day schools have been included to benefit leading to awards spread thinly to many students. From the findings, the reforms needed include: a policy on inclusion of day and private schools students as beneficiaries of bursary, needs to be clear and documented; the use of locations to consider those with high population and it be based on poverty index of each location and number of needy students; there is need for an independent structured management team to be instituted whose work is monitoring and to evaluate the work of CBC and the DEB body at county level.

Ongaga (2015) conducted a study on the influence of constituency development bursary fund on retention of students in public secondary schools in Kisii South Sub-County. The study was guided by the following objectives: to examine the criteria employed in awarding Constituency Development Bursary Fund in public secondary schools. The target population of the study was 24 principals, 35 class teachers, 1434 form four students, 5 area chiefs and 1 Sub- County Education Officer (SEO). Saturated sampling was used to select 24 schools, 24 principals, 35 class teachers and 5 chiefs and simple random sampling to select 143 students. Purposive sampling was used to select the Sub- County Education Officer (SEO). Socialist economics theory of education was used to guide the study. Descriptive survey research design was used to shape the research. Data collection was carried out using questionnaires and interview schedules. To ensure validity of instruments the instruments were developed under close guidance of the supervisors. To test for reliability, test-retest technique was applied and a correlation coefficient of 0.70 was obtained. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentages and frequency counts while qualitative data was analyzed thematically. From the study findings, it was found that qualification criteria were very low in secondary schools and therefore the deserving students did not apply for the CDBF. The criteria used in awarding bursary funds were family background, academic performance, and discipline. The study recommended that the government should review the guidelines on allocation of CDBF to ensure that the deserving students benefit from the funds and bursary funds should be devoid of political interference.

A 2007 World Bank study discovered that children who had lost their mothers but not their fathers were most likely to stop schooling. Societal and financially viable inequalities substantially broaden at the post-primary level. Initiated by the authority, the Rwanda Genocide Fund (RGF) concentrates on this educational level. Recipients of this money are the orphaned children, and financing will continue if these youngsters are enrolled in the system. As a result, there is a fair amount of representation for orphans in secondary education. According to Wachiye and Nasongo (2010) in research examining accessibility towards secondary school education through the constituency bursary fund in Kandunyi constituency, the Kenyan government is, believed to have started the bursary program for secondary schools during the 1993/1994 fiscal year. The bursary was created to aid individuals in disadvantaged groups, such as children from shantytowns, orphans, girls, and those living in high-potential regions including dry as well as semi-arid regions. The study did find, however, that the bursary-awarding process had come under heavy fire for being overly bureaucratic and for preserving inequity by giving scholarships to deserving students and individuals with credentials. The amount of bursary help given to those with high socioeconomic backgrounds was more than that given to those with low

socioeconomic backgrounds. This oddity was ascribed to the incorrect selection criteria used to choose the bursary winners, which is why the area's transition rates remained low.

Ochieng' (2019) a study on the contribution of County Bursary Fund on Access and Equity in Financing Public Secondary School Education in Siaya County. Objectives of the study were to establish extent to which bursary allocation to the recipient is equitably distributed in Siaya County and to determine access rate in secondary school education in the county after the establishment of the Fund. The theoretical framework guiding the study was based on the socialist economics theory of Louis Blanc that aims to redistribute income to create equality of well-being. Descriptive survey and correlational research designs were used in the study. Questionnaires were used to collect data from principals and students while interview schedules were used to collect data from County Executive Committee Member for Education and Ward Administrators. The researcher established that Siaya County Education Bursary Fund benefits majority of the needy cases as it is allocated based on the need of applicants, however, there was unequitable distribution of the bursary fund depicted by the Gini Coefficient of 0.39 due to political influence and inadequate funds. The researcher recommends that; more funds should be allocated to the county education bursaries to ensure that all needy students receive the fund to cater for their education and proper mechanism free from corruption and nepotism should be established for equitable distribution of funds.

The study by Onuko (2012) explained the detailed composition of bursary committees, with the CBC Chairman having a minimum qualification of Form Four certificate with no political affiliation; same to the treasurer who was also to be a prudent financial manager. What was not highlighted was how the elaborate procedures impacted on the needy students, and extent to which the processes enhanced participation of learners who needed financial assistance. While it was possible and easy to ascertain academic documents before appointing them into the constituency bursary committees, it was not easy to ascertain their political affiliation if the patron of the committee was the area member of parliament who could be more interested in votes from the catchment area. Musee (2013) conducted a study on factors influencing allocation of bursaries to students in public secondary schools in Central division, Machakos District. The objectives of this study were: to establish the extent to which family characteristics influence allocation of bursaries, to examine how gender consideration influence allocation of bursaries, to assess the extent to which students' performance in class influence allocation of bursaries and to establish how political patronage influence allocation of bursaries. The findings of this study were: there is a significant relationship between family characteristics and bursary allocation. Children from poor families were considered for bursary allocation more than those from rich families. Also, there was a significant relationship between gender and bursary allocation. The girls were being considered more for the bursary allocation than the boys. This was done to encourage the girl participation in education. The study revealed that there is a significant relationship between student's performance and bursary allocation. The bright children from poor families were benefiting more from bursary allocation than those who were not bright. It was finally established that there was a significant relationship between political patronage and bursary allocation.

Orodho and Njeru's 2003 study on the secondary school bursary program identified several key flaws, including a lack of transparency, insufficient funding, fluctuating amounts allocated, delays in disbursement, a nonexistence of identical measures for identifying the neediest students, besides insufficient fairness considerations. However, the bursary money distribution procedures were altered beginning with the fiscal year 2003/2004, and monies are distributed directly to the 210 constituencies at the district level. The first KES one million is given to each constituency, and the remaining KES is distributed according to the number of pupils enrolled in the constituency and the District Poverty Index. The chosen secondary school pupils are subsequently given the cash (Nyawira, 2015). There is no proof that comprehensive studies have been done to determine the efficiency of constituency bursary funds in boosting disadvantaged students' retention in secondary school education, despite the stakeholders' grave concerns about low retention.

The study by Obiero (2014) was conducted before more aggressive policy directives were issued, like the policy enacted by the government in 2016 on paying examination fees for all candidates, the 2018 policy on extra levy, and the 2018 presidential declaration of 100 percent transition which demanded that government officers in the Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government and the Ministry of Education physically peruse through villages to ensure every student who was called to join secondary school is not hiding anywhere but is in school. The study by Obiero could however not have concentrated on the policy directives beyond its time of study. The current study endeavored to cover these latter policies for more inclusivity of ideas. Kiprotich (2013) conducted a study on Modalities of Constituency Bursary Fund Allocation & Their Effect on Access and Retention in Nairobi County. The study revealed that the guidelines stipulated by the government on the award of bursaries are not followed by the Constituency Bursary committee while allocating bursaries in Nairobi County constituencies. Therefore, the evaluation criteria should be restructured in such a way from one beneficiary is assured of continued support until the finish form four.

Results of an IPAR research on education finance in Kenya from 2003 showed that the Ministry of Education had not provided schools with sufficient instructions on how to identify deserving pupils for bursary grants. The Ministry's broad recommendations did not specify how much money should be given to each student to make a substantial difference; instead, they merely told the schools to provide the funds to the needy, intelligent, and well-behaved children. Schools employed a variety of criteria and techniques to distribute the bursaries because there were no clear rules. As a result, most head teachers misused the system by giving the bursaries to their relatives, some of whom came from less worthy

circumstances. In other cases, it is reported that DEOs and politicians put undue pressure on head teachers to grant bursaries to members of their family, depriving eligible students of the opportunity. Hapompwe, Siwale and Taulo (2021) conducted a study on Impact of Bursary Scheme on Girls' Transition from Public Secondary Schools to Tertiary Education in Lilongwe, Malawi. The specific objective was to determine the criteria used to identify needy students in secondary schools; and to assess the impact of bursaries on secondary school girls' transition to tertiary level. The study revealed that the criteria used to identify needy students is not very transparent and accountable which motivated the study to recommend that the scheme be revisited to explicitly outline evaluation and monitoring mechanisms as well as make bursary information available and accessible to the public.

The efficiency of bursaries in boosting retention in secondary schools, mostly in Mombasa region was examined in a study by Kirigo (2008). The constituency bursary committee and schools in Mombasa complied with the requirements, the report claims, and 42% of eligible students, 60% from whom were female received bursaries. The study also found that the bursary fund had no discernible effect on retention in Mombasa area since 53.3% of those who got bursaries were sent home more than three times due to the insufficiency of cash set aside for bursaries as well as the unpredictability of the funding. As a result, the goal of this study was to ascertain if the government-established criteria are adhered to in the Kiambaa constituency and, as a result, to ascertain whether the findings may be generalized to the Kiambaa constituency. Ndung'u, Mbeche and Obae (2019) conducted a study on influence of Bursary Funds in Addressing Educational Wastage in Public Secondary Schools in Kandara Sub-County, Murang'a County, Kenya. It was recommended that there should be clear policy guidelines on criteria used in awarding bursary funds, so that those who apply are sure that they will be awarded.

Children from low-income households should have access to school, according to Oyugi, Riechi, and Anupi (2010) in their study on Public Expenditure Tracking of Bursary Schemes in Kenya. However, there is little in the way these students are supported. This is since recipients of SEBF bursaries are guaranteed not to receive financing until they have completed their high school studies. This is because each time they require the bursary; they must reapply be reviewed alongside fresh candidates. Additional research reveals that the funding level is also out of compliance with the needs for school fees. Approximately 83% of those who received bursaries received KES 5,000 or less. This is far less expensive than the KES 10,500, KES 22, and KES 28, 900 prices that have been authorized by the government for day schools, boarding provincial secondary schools, and national schools, respectively. This suggests that the present amount of bursary funding only covers roughly a fourth of the necessary costs, which causes students to skip class while they search for additional funding sources to complement the allocations, they get from the constituency fund.

Muriuki (2011) also studied CDF bursaries in Meru and found out that students' family status, affirmative action, character of student and gender with a bias towards girls featured prominently during the CBC vetting exercise (MOE Circulars, 2008). However, the study should have also addressed concerns such as who chairs the CBC meetings, who takes the minutes, who is the treasurer, what are the roles of the area member of parliament as a patron, what were the steps taken by the CBC after allocating the funds and specifically how the bursary awards reach the schools. The additional components this study adds to the realm of related literature is the composition of CBC that included area member of parliament as patron, Sub- County Education Officer as secretary, three representatives of faith-based groups, 2 P.A. members of 2 secondary schools, one county representative, an NGO/CBO representative, teachers' unions and 3 co-opted principals of secondary schools of whom one must hail from a girl's school. This study also found out that some chairpersons and treasurers of the constituency bursary committee in Homa Bay County were elected from the CDF office and shared political affiliation with area MP who was the patron of the committee. The secretary was the Sub- County Director of Education but occasionally the scheme's operations would be run by ad hoc committees to perform bursary disbursement. While responding to questions on the usefulness of various CBC members, respondents cast doubt on the importance of FBOs, CBOs and NGO representatives. However, it is the researcher's opinion that these individuals' contribution in the bursary scheme was relevant as they had knowledge of needy students in the community. It is also noteworthy that the girl versus the boy criterion in bursary award exercise disadvantaged the male students and was against the spirit of giving equal opportunities that guided this study and education without barriers be it gender or geographical or socio-economic.

Oyugi (2009) outlines the criteria for awarding bursaries to individual students as, complete orphan, partial orphan, single parent needy and both parents needy. Though the latter two criteria are bound to change and therefore the social economic background of the beneficiary, the former two cannot be reversed. Those considered for funding because they are either complete orphans or partial orphans of necessity should then automatically qualify for a four-year funding, which is usually not the case. Kirigo (2008), conducted a study to assess the effectiveness of bursaries on enhancing retention in secondary schools in Mombasa District. The study established that schools and constituency bursary committee in Mombasa followed the laid down criteria and that 42% of the deserving students received bursaries, 60% of whom were females. Kirigo (2008) also established that, bursary fund had no significant impact on the retention in Mombasa District, because 53.3% of those who received bursaries were sent home over 3 times due to inadequacy of funds set aside for bursary and unpredictability of the funds.

**Methodology**

The study utilized a descriptive survey research design. The descriptive survey research design was seen as practical because it does not alter the variable being studied while allowing the researcher to ascertain the current state of the phenomena. In addition; surveys are effective, inexpensive, and allow for the collecting of data from a much wider sample (Kothari, 2004). The study was conducted in Kiminini Sub County, Trans-Nzoia County, Kenya. The study targeted 333 persons associated with 109 public secondary schools. They included 109 Principals/head teachers at schools, 6 members of the CDF committee, and 109 beneficiaries. According to Burns and Grove (2001), sampling is the process of choosing a group of individuals, occasions, or behaviors to examine. Using Yamane (1967) formula for determining sample sizes a target population of 333 persons gives a sample size of 176 persons. This study then adopted stratified random sampling technique to determine the respondents per each sampled group. Considering the objectives of the study, the type of data to be collected, and the time available, structured questionnaires were used as the primary method of data collection (Oso & Onen, 2005). Parents, school principals and students completed the questionnaire, while CDF committee members were interviewed. While collecting data the researcher paid attention to the privacy and confidentiality of the respondents for the benefit of this study. The collected data was then coded into categorical categories for quantitative analysis, which were followed using statistical techniques from the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) package (Kombo & Tromp, 2009). for the inferential statistics, the researcher used Chi-square to establish the association. Tables were used to illustrate the results of descriptive statistics using frequencies and percentages that examined the objectives. The qualitative data was analyzed in themes and sub themes and later presented using quotations.

**Results**

The study adopted descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. This helped to establish the influence of criteria used in allocation and disbursement of SECBF on retention of students from vulnerable background in public secondary schools in Kiminini sub-county, Kenya. For analysis, descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, and mean distribution) for the level of agreement on a five-point Likert scale of the variable, criteria used in allocation were established and summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Descriptive statistics for criteria used in allocation and disbursement of SECBF and retention of students from vulnerable background in public secondary schools.

Statements		SD	D	U	A	SA	MEAN
Allocation of bursaries based on beneficiary’s status like being full orphan, half-orphan, needy single parent increase student retention in schools	F	4	5	12	79	66	4.19
	%	2.4	3.0	7.2	47.6	39.8	
Student retention in schools is improved by allocating and disbursing funds according to living condition of the students.	F	3	24	8	69	62	3.98
	%	1.8	14.5	4.8	41.6	37.3	
Allocation of bursaries to economically challenged backgrounds increase student retention in schools	F	4	3	27	52	80	4.21
	%	2.4	1.8	16.3	31.3	48.2	
Allocating and disbursing funds based on students gender improved schools’ retention	F	24	10	7	47	78	3.87
	%	14.5	6.0	4.2	28.3	47.0	

Table 1 shows that 79(47.6%) of the respondents agreed with the statement that allocation of bursaries based on beneficiary’s status like being full orphan, half-orphan, needy single parent increased student retention in schools, 66(39.8%) strongly agreed, 12(7.2%) were undecided, 5(3.0%) disagreed and 4(2.4%) strongly disagreed with the statement. The study findings suggested that the respondents agreed (Mean=4.19) that allocation of bursaries based on beneficiary’s status like being full orphan, half-orphan, needy single parent increased student retention in schools. This was supported by an interviewee who had the following to say;

*“... The Ministry of Education has a noble idea of issuing guidelines because the main idea is to enhance access, retention, and transition of students. Therefore, recipients of financial aid like bursaries should either be fully or partially orphaned because of their need and necessity. When this is followed, there is a fair amount of representation for orphans in secondary education...” Female Participant, 45 years, Members of the CDF committee.*

This implies that when allocation and distribution depend on a beneficiary’s status as a full orphan, half-orphan, needy single parent, or needy with both parents, student retention in schools is improved. This is in line with the findings of Oyugi, Riechi, and Anupi (2010) that whether a child is full orphan, partly orphan, needy single parent, and needy both parents determine the allocation of CDF bursaries.

Additionally, 69(41.6%) of the respondents agreed with the statement that student retention in schools is improved by allocating and disbursing funds according to living condition of the students, 62(37.3%) strongly agreed, 24(14.5%) disagreed, 8(4.8%) were undecided and 3(1.8%) strongly disagreed with the statement. It emerged from the study that the respondents tended to agree (Mean=3.98) that student retention in schools is improved by allocating and disbursing funds according to the living condition of the students. This implies that by students allocating and disbursing funds to students living under difficult conditions, student retention in schools is improved. This supports the findings of Wachiye and Nasongo (2010) that bursaries were created to aid individuals in disadvantaged groups, such as those living in high-potential regions including dry as well as semi-arid regions.

On whether allocation of bursaries to economically challenged backgrounds increased student retention in schools, 80(48.2%) of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement, 52(31.3%) agreed, 27(16.3%) were undecided, 4(2.4%)

strongly disagreed and 3(1.8%) disagreed with the statement. The study findings suggested that the respondents agreed (Mean=4.21) that allocation of bursaries to economically challenged backgrounds increased student retention in schools. This was supported by an interviewee who had the following to say:

“...Low participation rates are from low-income households and that the bursary fund has limited impact on ensuring that the beneficiaries are adequately supported for a full cycle. This disadvantage student from poor socio-economic backgrounds, thus, low retention in schools. Students from economically challenged backgrounds require external sources of financial resources to ensure competition in the education...” Male Participant, 54 years, Members of the CDF committee.

This implies that when allocation is based on parents’ socio-economic background, student retention in schools is increased. This is in line with Riechi, and Anupi (2010) that Children from low-income households should have access to school.

Lastly, 78(47.0%) of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement that allocating and disbursing funds based on students’ gender improved schools’ retention, 47(28.3%) agreed, 24(14.5%) strongly disagreed, 10(6.0%) disagreed and 7(4.2%) were undecided on the statement. It emerged from the study that the respondents tended to agree (Mean=3.87) that allocating and disbursing funds based on students’ gender improved schools’ retention. This implies that by allocating and disbursing funds based on gender, schools’ retention is improved. This agrees with the findings of Nyawira (2015) that bursaries were created to aid individuals in disadvantaged groups, such as girls.

These descriptive statistics of objective one was followed by a Chi-square test of association. The Chi-square test at  $p \leq 0.05$  significance level illustrating statistically significant association between criteria used in allocation and disbursement of SECBF and retention of students from vulnerable background in public secondary schools in Kiminini sub-county, Kenya is as summarized in Table 2. To achieve this, the hypothesis below was tested.

**H<sub>01</sub>:** *There is no significant association between criteria used in allocation and disbursement of SECBF and retention of students from vulnerable background in public secondary schools in Kiminini sub-county, Kenya.*

**Table 2:** Chi-square test of association between criteria used in allocation and disbursement of SECBF and retention of students from vulnerable background in public secondary schools.

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	533.464 <sup>a</sup>	132	.000
Likelihood Ratio	275.085	132	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	94.806	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	166		

a. 152 cells (97.4%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .01.

Table 2 shows that the p value ( $p=0.000$ ) for criteria used in allocation and disbursement of SECBF was less than 0.05. Therefore, the hypothesis, “there is no significant association between criteria used in allocation and disbursement of SECBF and retention of students from vulnerable background in public secondary schools in Kiminini sub-county, Kenya” was rejected. This implies that there is statistically significant association between criteria used in allocation and disbursement of SECBF and retention of students from vulnerable background in public secondary schools in Kiminini sub-county, Kenya.

### Conclusion

From the findings, the study concludes that SECBF allocation and disbursement criteria influence retention of students from vulnerable background in public secondary schools. It showed that there is a statistically significant association between criteria used in allocation and disbursement of SECBF and retention of students from vulnerable background in public secondary schools. Henceforward, when allocation of bursaries is appropriately based on beneficiary’s status, it improves the retention of students from vulnerable background in public secondary schools. It showed that there is a statistically significant association ( $p=0.000$ ) between SECBF allocation and disbursement criteria and retention of students from vulnerable background in public secondary schools.

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