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## Effectiveness of Communication Strategies Employed in the Management of Bursary Funds in Kenya: A Case of Embu County in Kenya

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### **Abstract:**

*This study intended to help increase the effectiveness of communication in managing bursary funds in Kenya with a focus on Embu County in recognition of the critical role communication plays in increasing access and uptake of the programs to target beneficiaries, thus reducing exclusion rates. The study sought to determine the effectiveness of communication strategies employed by institutions offering bursary funds in Kenya and specifically establish the channels of communication employed, determine the preferred channels by those seeking bursary funding, and determine the appropriateness of the information provided by institutions in facilitating application decisions. The study was premised on an increasing number of students who cannot transit to secondary schools and increased absenteeism and dropout rates due to inability to pay school fees, as well as increased complaints of exclusion of needy students. Embu County was chosen as the context of the study as most of its population are peasant farmers earning very low incomes and highly dependent on bursaries and scholarships to educate their children.*

*The study involved a total of 30 parents from Embu County with children in school schools and who depend on bursary funding. Parents were taken as the right respondents to the study since the children in school schools who fall in the age category of 15-17 years are considered minor and not able to legally transact any business on their own. The data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising both closed and open-ended questions where some parents were able to fill out the questionnaires on their own, but others were assisted by researchers. The data was checked for completeness and analysed using factor analysis using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies and percentages were used. The findings of the study revealed that a variety of channels of communication were employed in disseminating information on bursary funds by various institutions offering bursary funds. However, the study registered very low responses in some of the channels, implying that they were not popular with the respondents either because they were not aggressive and regularly used or not appropriate for target beneficiaries.*

*With regard to preferred channels of communication, the study established that all the channels were important. However, some, such as through religious institutions, mass media, and social media and through friends, were more popular than others. The study also established that information required by bursary funds applicants, such as where to get application forms, the deadline for submitting applications, eligibility criteria required and documents required to accompany the application, was given. However, information about the contact/ liaison person in case one required clarification or other form of assistance was not available. In addition, there was no information on how a dissatisfied applicant would lodge a complaint or appeal, which is essential in such circumstances.*

*Going by the findings and conclusions and in consideration that bursary funds target the poor and disadvantaged groups in society, the study recommended that institutions offering bursary funds in Kenya should consider increasing their coverage and access to such minority groups by increasing the number of channels used in the dissemination of information on bursary funds. Mass media provide awareness of the existence of the bursary fund but might not provide detailed information on how to apply and other required information. Further, most disadvantaged families might have no access to mass media and information passed by friends may be incomplete and/or distorted. In addition to mass media, consideration should be given to other channels that are readily accessible to most disadvantaged groups. Channels such as institutions of religion, local administration, that is, chiefs' Barazas, Social media platforms and notices at convenient public places such as markets should be considered. While home visits by bursary funds officials could be explored, their administrative costs could be too high for institutions. However, where the benefits of making such visits outweigh the costs, then they should be considered. Such visits could be ideal as they could offer opportunities for verifying the information given by beneficiaries.*

*Although the study, to a great extent, managed to address the research objectives, a few limitations were noted that required further research. The study concentrated on the demand side, that is, communication strategies applied with respect to beneficiaries, while the supply side was not addressed. This was an area that required to be researched as the effectiveness of communication on the supply side does, to a great extent, affect that of the demand side. The study also failed to establish which of the channels used provided the most appropriate information and only generalized the findings. This, therefore, was another area that required further research, given that different channels have unique strengths and weaknesses. Overall, the study provided insights into improving communication strategies for managing bursary funds in Kenya and, specifically, in Embu County.*

**Keywords:** Education, secondary schools bursary, Kenya, Embu County

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background of the Study

Education is a critical aspect of every person's life and even more crucial for the social and economic development of every society, and every effort should be made to ensure every child, irrespective of family background, is given the opportunity to access basic education. According to B. Chazan (2022), education is the conscious effort to equip the young with facts, knowledge, and skills that enable them to function as adults in a specific society. Lawrence Cremin, in his book *Public Education* defines education as the deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to transmit, provoke or acquire knowledge, values, attitudes, skills, or sensibilities, as well as any learning that results from the effort. Education is a purposeful activity that can happen within a wide range of frameworks and not only in buildings called schools.

The above definitions attempt to underscore the critical importance of education in developing a person's capacity to grow as a responsible, independent and productive person capable of contributing to the social and economic development of their society and, to a great extent, help alleviate poverty. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) no. 4 provides that every country should ensure the provision of inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Universal Declaration of Human Rights article 26 provides that everyone has the right to education. That education shall be free, at least, in the elementary and fundamental stages and that elementary education shall be compulsory. The Constitution of Kenya 2010 article 27 (1) states that every person is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law. Article 27 (2) states that equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and fundamental freedoms and section (3) provides that women and men have the right to equal treatment, including the right to equal opportunities in political, economic, cultural and social spheres. This article hence provides for equal opportunity to education, which empowers a person politically, economically, and socially, enhancing their capacity to participate in political, economic and social activities (Constitution of Kenya 2010).

As a result of the aforementioned, education should be seen not just as a basic necessity but a right and every effort should be taken to ensure accessibility by all persons of schooling age. While the government in Kenya has put in place measures to enhance accessibility to basic and primary levels of education through free primary education, there is a need for more interventions to facilitate the attainment of secondary education. The cost of secondary education is way above affordability by the majority of citizens of Kenya, where an estimated 40% of the population is considered to be living in poverty. The majority of children from poor backgrounds, despite passing national examinations, are unable to pay the fees required for entry into secondary schools and even those who join fall out prematurely before completing the schooling due to lack of fees.

Secondary education in Kenya is based on the cost-sharing system where the government, through the Ministry of Education, provides education capitation for every learner on a yearly basis and the parents are expected to shoulder the remainder of the cost in the form of school fees. Even with the introduction of a government capitation system, the majority of children from poor backgrounds are still unable to pay the remaining part of the cost, necessitating the introduction of education bursary programs.

### 1.2. Education of Bursary Schemes

Bursary refers to a monetary grant given to needy children to facilitate their schooling. Bursary funds, like other social protection benefits, aim to alleviate poverty and reduce inequality in a society. In Kenya, Bursary schemes are offered by the government, private organizations, Non-governmental Organizations and even individual persons targeting children from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as those from poor households such as slums, orphans and those from marginalized areas in arid and semi-arid (ASAL) areas. Government bursary scheme was established in the financial year 1993/ 1994, administered through the Ministry of Education and disbursed through District Education Boards. In 2003, the Constituency Bursary Fund was introduced under the parliamentary jurisdiction and aimed at increasing efficiency and equitability in response to increased complaints of unfair allocations by the Boards (Wachiye & Nasongo, 2010).

The other types of Bursary schemes in Kenya are those offered by private and Non-governmental organizations. These included Equity Bank Wings to Fly Scholarship, Cooperative Bank of Kenya, KCB and Family Bank Foundation Scholarships. Others include Helping Youth through Educational Scholarships, Madeira Scholarship, Kenya Community Foundation scholarship, Jomo Kenyatta Foundation Scholarship and Hilde Back Education Fund Scholarships, all aimed at improving access and quality education for needy children. ([www.advance.africa.com](http://www.advance.africa.com))

### 1.3. The Embu County

Embu County is one of the 47 counties in Kenya located approximately between latitude 0o 8' and 0o 50' South and longitude 37o 3' and 37o 9' East of the country. It borders Kirinyaga County to the West, Kitui County to the East, Machakos County to the South, Murang'a County to the South West, Tharaka Nithi County to the North and Meru to the North West. The county is divided into four constituencies, namely: Runyenjes, Manyatta, Mbeere South and Mbeere North and covers a total area of 2,818 sq. km. Manyatta and Runyenjes are agriculturally productive, while Mbeere North and Mbeere South are semi-arid areas and less productive. Embu County is occupied indigenously by the Embu, Mbeere and AKamba ethnic communities and is projected to have a total population of approximately 593,651 by 2022 based on KNBS population and Housing Census 2009 projections. Agriculture is the main occupation of the Embu people, with the sector employing 70.1 percent of the population and 87.9 percent of the households engaged in agricultural activities. The areas of Manyatta and Runyenjes sub-counties are agriculturally productive areas growing crops such as coffee, tea and macadamia as their main cash crops and maize, beans, cowpeas, green grams, bananas, sorghum, tomatoes, pawpaw,

avocado and citrus fruits grown as main food crops. Mbeere North and Mbeere South sub-counties are largely semi-arid with very little agricultural activities, but Miraa is grown as a cash crop. Despite Manyatta and Runyenjes being agriculturally productive, there is a very high population density of 661 and 645, respectively, resulting in small-scale production per household and, thus, very low incomes that could barely meet their needs. For this reason, the majority of Embu populace depends on bursary funds for their secondary school-going children (Embu County Government, 2019). A report by KNBS indicated that Embu County has 20% of residents with no formal education, 22% with a primary level of education, and 28% with a secondary level of education or above working for pay. The report further stated that only 2% of Embu County population utilizes liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), 4% use paraffin, 81% use firewood, and 11% use charcoal. Only 14% of Embu County citizens utilize electricity as their primary source of lighting. An additional 36% utilize lanterns, 44% use tin lamps, and 1% use fuel wood [Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) and Society for International Development (SID), 2013]. The main issues affecting education in Embu County were found to be a lack of school fees, substance abuse, child labour, school dropouts, and increased absenteeism among students (National Council for Population and Development, 2017). All the above information is an indicator of poverty among the majority of people in Embu County.

#### 1.4. Research Problem

Bursary schemes, as earlier stated, are forms of monetary grants established to improve access to education for needy and vulnerable children such as orphans, those from the slums and Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL). Despite the availability of numerous bursary funds by both the government and private organizations, cases of children failing to transition to secondary schools or prematurely dropping out of school due to a lack of schools still persist. The study carried out by Wachiye et al. (2010) aimed at establishing the extent to which there was equity in the distribution of bursary funds among secondary school students in Busia district in Kenya found that there was an unfair selection of students with high levels of exclusion of needy students. A study conducted by Odalo (2000) asserts that although government expenditures on education are high, they rarely benefit the most needy and that most students with exemplary performance in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education Examination (KCPE) are unable to proceed to secondary schools because their poor parents can hardly afford the required fees (Odalo, 2000). There was a lot of inequality in bursary allocation, where students from needy households either missed out or got lower bursary allocations (Odalo, 2000). Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS Economic Survey 2022) also registered a decline in children's transition to secondary school rate from 95 percent in 2020 to 75.8 percent in 2021. This could be attributed possibly to a lack of awareness of the availability of alternative sources of funding as the majority of students rely only on government bursary funds. Studies have been carried out on bursary management in Kenya. Odebero et al. (2007) carried out a study on equity in the distribution of bursaries to students in secondary schools in Busia County, Kenya. Wachiye et al. (2010) carried out a study on access to secondary school education through the Constituency Bursary Fund in Kanduyi Constituency, Kenya and another study by Kiprotich S. (2013) on modalities of Constituency Bursary Fund Allocation & their effect on access and retention in Nairobi County and some of the studies carried out on Bursary management in Kenya. There is limited information on the mode of communication employed by the different organizations offering bursaries to needy students in Kenya. However, the success of any program highly depends on the communication system employed. The channels and media of communication used for the clarity and adequacy of the message are critical in increasing the uptake of the program by intended beneficiaries. This study sought to establish the effectiveness of communication strategies employed in managing Bursary schemes in Kenya, specifically focusing on Embu County. The study sought to specifically establish the channels of communication used in the dissemination of bursary funds information in Embu County and determine the preferred means of communication by the bursary applicants as well as the appropriateness of information provided to facilitate application by potential beneficiaries. It intended to answer three research questions, namely:

- What are the channels of communication used in the dissemination of bursary fund information in Embu County?
- What were the preferred channels of communication?
- Was the information provided appropriate to facilitate the application of bursary funds, receiving feedback and lodging complaints by target beneficiaries?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Introduction

Literature review forms the framework within which research findings are interpreted and help acquire and demonstrate familiarity with the existing body of knowledge, such as theoretical models, strategies, procedures and measuring instruments that have been found useful in investigating similar problems to the one at hand. With regard to theoretical models, there are a number of models that have attempted to delve into factors to be considered in designing communication systems that are likely to contribute to the effective implementation of programs. However, this study considered only two of the models, namely the media richness model (Richard L. Daft & Robert H. Lengel, 1984) and the information-seeking behavior model (Thomas D. Wilson, 1981).

Media richness theory is largely used to define and assess the efficacy of communication methods of an organization. The goal of media richness theory is to give managers a way to describe and later explain communication challenges that organizations face, such as a lack of information needed to perform a task at an expected level of performance or mixed or conflicting interpretations of a specific task, objective, or goal. Although media richness theory is concerned with media usage rather than media selection, empirical investigations of the theory have frequently focused on

what medium a manager would choose to communicate through rather than the implications of media use. Thus, the theory underscores the need for careful selection of the media for information dissemination, advocating for tailored communication channels dependent on the purpose and characteristics of intended recipients.

Information seeking behavior model, on its part, focuses on the way humans search for and use information. Wilson defined information behavior in 2000 as the sum of human behavior in regard to information sources and channels, encompassing both active and passive information-seeking and information usage. He characterized information-seeking behavior as the intentional pursuit of information to achieve a specific purpose. Information-seeking behavior is the micro-level of behavior used by the searcher in engaging with various types of information systems, whether it is between the seeker and the system or the pure process of establishing and following up on a search.

The model attempts to emphasize the importance of program administrators understanding the information-seeking behaviors of their target beneficiaries, what they like, want and need and their search habits and align their systems and channels to satisfy the expectations (Thomas D. Wilson, 1981). In bursary management, the institutions offering bursary funds should make an effort to understand the information-seeking behaviors of their target beneficiaries and customize their systems of communication to increase accessibility and uptake.

## 2.2. Bursary Schemes in Kenya

As earlier stated in this study, bursary schemes or what others call scholarships are offered by government, private institutions, Non-governmental organizations and even individual persons all over the world to enable needy and vulnerable students to access education. Almost all the countries in the world have bursary schemes. The government of Singapore has a bursary scheme referred to as the Edusave Merit Bursary Scheme that targets children whose household incomes fall below \$ 4000 a month. In Namibia and Malawi, nearly 70% of the students are entitled to bursary funds, while the United Kingdom (UK) has a bursary scheme known as YPLA (W. Benjamin et al., 2017).

In Kenya, bursary schemes are managed by the government, private institutions and non-governmental organizations. Government Bursary schemes were first introduced in 1993/ 1994 and aimed at enabling children from very vulnerable backgrounds, such as orphans, those from the slums and Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL), to transition to secondary schools. The bursary was managed by Ministry of Education Headquarters and disbursed through District Education Boards (DEB) that were responsible for selecting the recipients (Wachiye et al., 2010). In 2003, bursary management was decentralized with the establishment of Constituency Bursary Fund, where the selection of recipients was carried out by a committee consisting of members of the community. The intention was to increase transparency and enhance fairness in the selection process. This notwithstanding, studies carried out assert that unfair practices in the selection of beneficiaries still suffice. The study carried out by Wachiye et al. (2010) was aimed at establishing the extent to which there was equity in the distribution of bursary funds among secondary school students in Busia district in Kenya. The study found that there was an unfair selection of students with high levels of exclusion of needy students. A study conducted by Odalo (2000) asserts that although government expenditures on education are high, they rarely benefit the most needy and that most students with exemplary performance in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education Examination (KCPE) are unable to proceed to secondary schools because their poor parents can hardly afford the required fees (Odalo, 2000). It was also noted that the transition to secondary schools rate declined from 95 percent in 2020 to 75.8 in 2021 (KNBS economic survey 2022), an indication that government bursary fund in Kenya is still facing challenges that are hampering the realization of the intended objectives of making education accessible to needy children as echoed by Bridge Kenya Managing Director who called on the Government to make education affordable especially to low-income families if the 100 percent transition rate was to be achieved (Capital fm).

In an effort to support the government, private and non-governmental organizations have introduced their own bursary programs as social responsibility initiatives. Many of the major banks in Kenya, namely: Equity Bank, KCB, Cooperative Bank and Family Bank, offer bursaries to needy students through their established Foundations. Kenya Community Development Foundation (KCDF), Elimu Fund Scholarships for High School students, Hilde Back Education Fund and Helping Youth through Educational Scholarships are among other private institutions that support the government in offering bursaries to needy students. Online application is done through the institution's website, while for physical application, application forms are collected from the institution's offices or County education offices and returned with supporting documents to the same place. Needy students in day schools with 250 marks and above are also eligible for the scholarship so long as they provide proof of being disadvantaged. ([www.advance-africa.com](http://www.advance-africa.com))

Jomo Kenyatta Foundation, founded in 1968, is a public institution that works closely with the Ministry of Education to provide scholarships and mentorship to academically promising throughout the 47 counties in Kenya, Kenyan orphans and children from poor, vulnerable backgrounds in public secondary schools. The scholarship covers tuition and uniforms as per the scholarship policy. Applications are received annually and subjected to thorough vetting of applicants, including home visits by JKF staff. The foundation hoped to increase the number of beneficiaries to 25 students per county by the year 2022 and has so far benefitted about 10,000 students. The applicants must have sat for KCPE and attained 350 marks and above. They must be needy students or from a disadvantaged background. For a student to be admitted, they must submit a certified copy of KCPE result slip, a copy of form one admission letter/ joining instructions and evidence of being an orphan or suffering from extreme poverty. The application could be made either online or physically. ([www.advance-africa.com](http://www.advance-africa.com))

*Wings to Fly* scholarship program, an initiative of the Equity Group and MasterCard Foundation (MCF), was established to support secondary education for top-performing children from financially challenged backgrounds. With support from other partners, the program offers access to leadership training to previously marginalized children in all

counties. The program offers comprehensive support for the scholars by providing tuition fees, accommodation, books, uniforms, shopping, pocket money and transport to and from school during their four years of secondary education. So far, it has supported 26,304 bright but economically challenged scholars. So far, MCF has committed to supporting 10,000 scholars through two phases of funding, with the last intake joining the program in 2021. The Equity Scholarship program was formed to aid high-performing children hailing from less fortunate backgrounds. The program beneficiaries are selected from across Kenya's 47 counties based on their performance in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examination. Awareness of the program is conveyed through public forums, i.e., administrative chiefs' forums, places of worship, radio announcements, and social media channels. Application is made at all Equity Bank branches, Equity Agents and on the Equity Group Foundation's Website. Beneficiaries of the scholarship are selected by the Community Scholarship Selection Board (CSSB), which is made up of key leaders in the community and is chaired by the County or sub-county Director of Education.

The Co-operative Bank Foundation is the Co-operative Bank's vehicle for social responsibility. The flagship project of the Foundation is an education scholarship scheme for bright but less-endowed Kenyan children who are facing difficulties in paying school fees for secondary education. The scholarship beneficiaries are selected every year from the 47 counties in Kenya and enjoy a full 4-year secondary education scholarship. Those eligible for selection must have sat for KCPE examination and attained 350 marks and above. They must be from the needy or disadvantaged backgrounds. At least one of the parents must be or must have been a member of a Co-operative society. Orphans are also considered, provided one of the deceased parents was a member of a Cooperative society and the scholarship is available to students in both private and public secondary schools. The other funds that sponsor needy students in Kenya such as Hilde Back Education Fund (HBEF), which sponsors students from Githunguri, Homabay, Narok, Kikuyu, Kibwezi, Likuyani and Tharaka; Helping Youth through Educational Sponsorships (HYTES), a not-for-profit organization, and Elimu Fund Scholarships provide for similar eligibility criteria and document requirements. Elimu fund offers full tuition fees, boarding fees, books, uniforms, travel and a monthly stipend.

### *2.3. Communication Strategies in the Management of Bursary Funds*

Communication is the lifeblood of every program. In social safety nets, communication facilitates public dialogue, participation and social awareness and provides a mechanism to enhance program implementation and performance (e.g., increasing uptake). Arshi Aadil et al. (2020), in their report on awareness, communication and outreach for social protection schemes in India during COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 asserts that less than 50% of intended program beneficiaries were aware of the program due to weak and poorly targeted communication. Poor communication results in exclusion, misinformation, and rumours, which in turn lead to a negative spiral of perceptions, lack of credibility, and reduced opportunities to optimize the uptake and impact of the programs. Communication is often ignored as a core design principle of social protection programs and is, at best, an afterthought for those who implement the programs. Effective implementation of programs depends heavily on maintaining regular and clear communication with stakeholders on both the demand and supply sides. Most programs kick off with outreach to build awareness and encourage active participation from potential applicants. The core outputs of the outreach campaigns, however, are limited to disseminating macro-level information about the programs (Arshi Aadil et al., 2020). On the demand side, program recipients or applicants need more refined information on the eligibility, registration process, entitlement, accessibility, rejection, and grievance resolution mechanism, among others. Program applicants are rarely notified of their selection in the program or rejection from it, leaving no scope for corrections if required (Arshi Aadil et al., 2020).

An effective communication strategy for program implementers to beneficiaries requires a complex range of considerations and components for different types of beneficiaries (Wright G et al., 2020). A targeted communication strategy needs to be developed, which should be audience-oriented, focusing on including the illiterate marginalized and providing information and education in an understandable format and language while avoiding stigmatizing imagery and words. In particular, vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, indigenous and migrant populations, and people who live in remote areas, are more likely to miss out on the desired information. Such people depend mostly on the informal economy, have no or poor literacy levels, and have limited access to technology and the Internet. Many women are similarly challenged due to socio-economic norms — communication strategies must, therefore, be tailored to meet the needs of such groups. Adopting a range of approaches to spreading information while ensuring all communication is an ongoing and iterative effort. Frontline workers and word-of-mouth communication are essential sources of information for recipients of social protection programs. (Arshi Aadil et al (2020). In social protection programs, such as bursary funds, effective communication is necessary to ensure target beneficiaries receive communication on the availability of different bursary schemes, requirements for qualification and procedures for application, and what to expect from each scheme and who to contact. Communication with regard to what the application/registration process consists of, such as timing, where and how beneficiaries can receive their payments, details of payment amounts/frequency; where/how to submit complaints and appeals, appeals and feedback; circumstances in which benefits may be suspended, restored or lapsed and where/how to obtain further information are all very crucial.

To the extent that financial resources allow, the administrative organization should make use of all appropriate mass and tailored communication strategies and all relevant languages. This would include the use of television, radio, a tailored website, toll-free call centers, posters and leaflets, social media, ad-hoc communication events within program locations, letters to households and relevant manuals, etc. Regular updates to the public on the functioning and activities of the organization should also be considered, if feasible. This is essential in the case of legislative and regulatory changes

and any delays to the payment. Messages should also be updated to react to misinformation or misinterpretations. In many countries, information is spread mouth-to-mouth and information that trickles down gets misrepresented over time.

Especially in countries with a large cadre of program staff working locally, it is essential to focus communication efforts on ensuring staff are motivated, well-informed and giving accurate information to citizens. Specialized strategies to ensure this include regular internal newsletters, ongoing training, seminars, conferences and selective dissemination of meeting notes.

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1. Research Design

The study employed a cross-sectional descriptive research design. A cross-sectional descriptive research survey allows the researcher to gather data from a relatively large number of respondents. Large samples not only represent the target population but also caution the researcher against low response rates that are common when questionnaires are used and thus ensure the reliability of the collected data. Surveys Descriptive research design is concerned with describing, recording, analyzing and interpreting conditions that exist and the researcher does not manipulate the valuables or arrange for things to happen (Kothari, 2004). Surveys allow the use of observation, interviews and questionnaires as data collection instruments. The design was selected because of its versatility and ability to lead to a large sample (Ross, 1990).

#### 3.2. Population of the Study

A population in a research study refers to the entire set of relevant units of analysis or aggregate of all cases that conform to some designated set of specifications (Chein, 1982) or a clearly defined group of objects or individuals that share similar characteristics (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The target population of this study comprised parents with children in secondary schools who depend on bursary funding for educating their children. The study targeted a total of 200 parents operating businesses at the market in Embu town (Market records May 2023). It also targeted a total of 98 staff working at Kenya School of Government Embu campus (Human Resource Records, Embu campus) to arrive at a big sample to enhance objectivity and reliability.

#### 3.3. Sampling Plan and Sample Size

A sample in a research study refers to a small part of the whole and is representative of the entire population. Sampling is conveniently used when it may not be possible to cover the entire population, especially when the target population is too large or constrained by time and resources. A sample constituting 10% of the target population was used. This gave a total of 20 respondents from the market and 10 respondents from Kenya School of Government Embu. A sample size of 10% was considered ideal for descriptive studies (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). This was to ensure that the sample was representative of the target population while taking care of time and cost constraints. A purposeful sampling technique was used where only those parents with children in secondary school were considered.

Location	Population Target	Sample Size (10% of Target Pop)
Embu Market	200	20
KSG Embu	98	10
TOTAL	298	30 (approx.)

Table 1: Sample for the Study

Source: Researchers 2023

#### 3.4. Data Collection

Primary data were used to obtain information necessary for the achievement of the objectives of the study. The data were obtained through a structured questionnaire comprising open-ended and closed questions. The questionnaire was divided into four sections: 1, 2, 3 and 4. Section 1 was designed to obtain general information on personal profiles, section 2 consisted of questions on awareness and means of receiving information about Bursary Funds/ scholarships, section 3 consisted of questions on preferred means of receiving information on bursary funds and section 4 sought to determine the appropriateness and adequacy of information given to facilitate the right action to be taken by the applicant. The section also included a few open-ended questions aimed at helping verify if the respondents indeed had knowledge of bursary funds.

#### 3.5. Data Analysis and Presentation

Before analysis, the data collected was checked for completeness and consistency. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were used to analyze the data. The results were presented in the form of tables where appropriate. Factor analysis using SPSS was used in the analysis.

Factor analysis is a general term for several computational techniques. All these techniques reduce to a manageable number of related variables with overlapping measurement characteristics. The predictor-criterion relationship that was found in the dependence situation is replaced by a matrix of inter-correlations among several variables, none of which is seen as being dependent on the other.

#### 4. Data Analysis, Results and Discussions

##### 4.1. Response Rate

Response rate indicates the total number of questionnaires that were responded to during the data collection exercise out of the total that were issued. In this study, a total of 30 questionnaires were issued to target respondents, out of which 24, that is, 80 percent of the total, were responded to. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2008), a response rate of 50 percent is adequate and capable of leading to objective research findings.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Fully answered	24	80.0
None response	6	20.0
Total	30	100.0

Table 2: Response Rate  
Source: Researcher (2023)

##### 4.2. Gender of Respondents

The study established that 17 (70.8%) of the respondents were female and only 7 (29.2%) were male, as indicated in the table below.

Gender	Frequency	Per cent
Male	7	29.0
Female	17	71
Total	24	100

Table 3: Gender of Respondents  
Source: Researchers (2023)

This implied that a significant number of respondents were female, resulting in an uneven distribution of respondents across genders. An even distribution of respondents across genders increases the objectivity of the results, making the results more credible and reliable. However, in this case, it was noted that the majority of the traders in the market and specifically those who responded to the questionnaires, were women. The case was the same in Kenya School of Government, where the majority of the respondents were also women. This could possibly be attributed to their disadvantaged position in the society. The majority of women earns meager incomes and shoulder heavy responsibilities of taking care of aging parents and are, therefore, more likely to rely on bursary funds than their male counterparts. The results are, therefore, less likely to affect the credibility of the findings.

##### 4.3. Respondents' Level of Education

Responding to the question on the level of education, 13 (54.2%) of the respondents indicated having gone up to the secondary level, 5 (20.8%) of respondents had post-secondary qualifications and 6 (25%) had primary level of education as shown in the table below.

Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage
Primary	6	25
Secondary	13	54
Post-secondary	5	21
Total	24	100

Table 4: Respondents Level of Education  
Source: Researchers (2023)

Respondents with higher levels of education were considered more informed and capable of understanding the importance of the study, thus becoming more interested in answering the questions and answering questions independently, thus reducing the possibility of bias. In this study, a few of the respondents, mainly those from the marketplace, were assisted in filling out the questionnaire, but the majority filled it out on their own.

##### 4.4. Age of the Respondents

The respondents were asked to indicate their age bracket where the majority fall in the age bracket 36-45 years at 12 (50%), followed by those aged 46-55 years at 6 (25%) and another reasonable number at the age of 18-35 years at 5 (21%) as indicated in the table below.

Age Bracket	Frequency	Percentage
18-35	5	21.0
36-45	12	50.0
46-55	6	25.0
Above 55	1	4.0
Total	24	100.0

Table 5: Age of the Respondents  
Source: Researchers (2023)

The age of the respondents helps determine their ability to understand research questions, their seriousness in responding to the questions, and their level of exposure to the research topic. In this study, the majority of the respondents were in the age brackets of 36-45 and 46-55 years. These are persons in middle age, have a lot of exposure to life experiences, have knowledge on the topic of research and were more likely to take the study seriously, as they understand the importance of the study and the impact it was likely to have on them hence resulting to more objective responses to the questions.

#### 4.5. Channels Used in Dissemination of Information on Bursary Funds

The respondents were asked to state the means through which they received information about bursary funds. Appropriate media of communication is essential to ensure the majority of the potential applicants receive information in a timely manner and with the necessary information. This increases the uptake of the bursary funds, especially to target groups, namely the poor, orphans, persons with disabilities, and those from marginalized communities and regions. The study established that various channels were employed in disseminating information on Bursary funds, as indicated in the table below.

	Televisions/ Radios	Through Friends	Chief's Barazas (Public Briefings)	Announcements through Places of Worship (Churches and Mosques)	Social Media (Facebook, WhatsApp etc.)	Home Visits by Bursary Fund Officials	Notices at Public Places	Others
CBF	--	29.2	12.5	58.3	8.3	--	8.3	12.5
JKF	29.0	---	--	4.0	---	---	---	---
Cooperative Bank Scholarship	33.3	12.5	4.0	4.0	---	---	---	8.0
Equity Bank Wings to Fly Scholarship	37.5	20.8	---	12.5	33.3	---	---	16.6
Elimu Fund Scholarship	20.8	8.3	---	4.2	4.2	16.6	---	16.6
KCB Scholarship	29.2	4.2	---	4.2	12.5	---	---	12.5

Table 6: Communication Channels Used  
Source: Researchers 2023

The responses indicated that most of the respondents received information about bursary funds from mass media platforms, namely radio, Television, and print media, with Equity Bank registering the highest response at 37.5%, followed by Cooperative Bank at 33.3% of responses. KCB Bank and Jomo Kenyatta Foundation come third at 29%, while Elimu Fund Scholarship registered 20.8% response for those who received information through Mass Media. It is important to note that though the mass media seemed to be the most used channel, all six institutions registered a response rate of below 50%. This implied that there was still a substantial number of respondents who could not depend on mass media to receive information on bursary funds. The other channel of communication that comes second to mass media is the passing of information through public places such as churches, mosques and markets. This was notable in the case of Constituency Bursary Fund, where the majority of the respondents, 58.3%, indicated that they received information about bursary funds from announcements made in churches and mosques. The other channels offered for consideration, such as chief's Barazas, Social media, notices at public places and home visits by Bursary funds officials, registered very low responses. However, a substantial number of respondents indicated that they received information on bursary funds from friends with CBF and Equity Bank Wings to Fly, registering a response of 29% and 20.8 percent, respectively. All the other media registered very low responses. The results of the findings implied that there is a need to consider a variety of media when disseminating information on bursary funds, as suggested by Aadil et al. (2020).



#### 4.6. Preferred Channels of Communication

In responding to the question on preferred means of receiving information on Bursary funds, the majority of the respondents indicated they preferred announcements in the churches, mosques and marketplaces at 62.5%, followed by mass media at 45.8 %, social media at 33.3 %, followed by chiefs' Barazas at 29 % and informed by friends and home visits by Bursary officials at 20.8% as shown in table 7 below.

Channel of Communication	Yes	No	Non Response	Percentage
1. Mass media TVs, Radio, Newspaper	45.8	---	54.2	100.0
2. Informed by friend	20.8	---	79.2	100.0
3. Announcements in churches/ mosques, market place etc	62.5	---	37.5	100.0
4. Social Media e.g WhatsApp groups/ Facebook	33.3	---	66.7	100.0
5. Bursary Fund officers visiting homes	20.8	---	79.2	100.0
6. Notices placed at convenient places	16.7	---	83.3	100.0
7. Chief's Barazas	29.2	---	70.8	100.0

Table 7: Preferred Channels of Communication

Source: Researchers 2023

The above findings corroborate the earlier findings where respondents indicated that they received information on bursaries from varied communication channels. The finding implied that failure to employ various channels would result in some target beneficiaries being left out because they were not aware of the fund's existence. This is in line with Aadil et al.'s (2020) assertion that different media of communication should be employed in social protection programs to ensure wide coverage and increase accessibility by target beneficiaries.

#### 4.7. Appropriateness & Adequacy of Information Given

While responding to the question on appropriateness and adequacy of information given, the majority expressed satisfaction with the information given to facilitate their application for bursary funds, as shown in table 8 below.

Information Given	Yes	No	Non-Response	Percentage
1. Information on where to collect application forms	79.2	---	20.8	100.0
2. Deadline for collecting and submitting application forms	79.2	12.5	8.3	100.0
3. Requirement for applicants (eligibility Criteria) e.g Minimum marks-applicant to have got 350 marks & above, be an orphan etc))	62.5	16.7	20.8	100.0
4. Document required e.g result slip, recommendation from Head teacher, chief etc	79.2	12.5	8.3	100.0
5. Information on how to know whether the child was awarded bursary or not awarded	54.2	25.0	20.8	100.0
6. Was the address/ contact of Contact/ liaison person given?	25.0	50.0	25.0	100.0
7. Was information on appealing/ filing complaint given?	25.0	54.2	20.8	100.0
8. Was the information given in good time	58.3	20.8	20.8	100.0

Table 8: Appropriateness & Adequacy of Information Given

Source: Researchers 2023

Information on where to collect application forms, the deadline for submitting filled forms and documents required during application was given as indicated by 79.2 % of the respondents; information on eligibility criteria registered a response rate of 62.5% and information on how to receive feedback, that is whether the child was awarded bursary or not, was given as expressed by 54.2 % of the respondents. The majority of the respondents (58.3%) also expressed satisfaction with the timeliness of giving necessary information. However, it was notable that information on the address or contact of the liaison person and or how to express a complaint or appeal decision arrived at registered a very low response as only 25% of the respondents indicated they received such information. According to Aadil et al. (2020), it is essential to provide all necessary information to target beneficiaries as this, in return, enables them to provide all necessary information in a timely manner, thus increasing their chances of being considered for funding.

#### 4.8. Awarded/Not Awarded Bursary

Responding to the question on whether their child/children had been awarded bursary funds, the majority (75%) indicated they had been awarded, while only 25% indicated they had not been awarded, as indicated in table 9 below.

	Frequency	Percent
Awarded	18	75%
Not Awarded	6	25%
Total		100%

Table 9: Awarded/Not Awarded Bursary

Source: Researchers 2023

The question aimed to establish the connection between communication and the awarding of bursary funds. With the majority of respondents acknowledging having received bursary funds and satisfaction with the appropriateness of information given, it is possible to conclude that there is indeed a connection between the manner in which information on bursary funds is disseminated as well as the appropriateness of such information with the increased uptake of the funds. However, it is worth noting that not everyone was awarded a bursary by virtue of making an application but by satisfying the eligibility criteria given or other considerations due to constraints of funds available and big numbers of applicants; hence, communication is not the singular determinant of who and how many to be awarded.

#### 4.9. Name of the Bursary Fund Awarded

Responding to the question on the type of Bursary fund awarded, the majority (83%) stated CBF, while 17% did not give a response, as indicated in table 10 below.

Bursary Fund Institution	Yes	No	No response	Percentage	
	Percentage				
1.Constituency Bursary Fund	83.0	---	17.0		100.0
2.Jomo Kenyatta Foundation Scholarship	---	25.0	75.0		100.0
3.Cooperative Bank Scholarship	---	29.2	70.8		100.0
4.Equity Bank Wings to Fly Scholarship	---	25.0	75.0		100.0
5.Elimu Fund Scholarship	---	25.0	75.0		100.0
KCB Scholarships	---	25.0	75.0		100.0

Table 10: Name of Bursary Fund Awarded

Source: Researchers 2023

It was clear from the results that none of the respondents' child/ children benefitted from bursary funds other than the government of Kenya-managed CBF. This was also the only fund that popularly relied on informal channels to disseminate information, such as through places of worship. This finding tends to collaborate with the fact that tailored communication channels are more effective in disseminating information to target beneficiaries. However, further research might be convenient to shed light on the suitability of channels employed by bursary fund providers.

#### 4.10. Amount of Funds Awarded

Responding to the question on the amount of funds awarded, the majority (72%) stated they received less than Ksh 10,000, only 1 (6%) of respondents indicated receiving more than Ksh 10,000 and 4 (22%) of respondents gave no response to the question as shown in table 11 below.

	Frequency	Percent
Less than Ksh 10, 000	13	72%
Ksh 10001 to Ksh 20000	1	6%
Above Ksh 20,000	---	---
No response	4	22
Total		100%

Table 11: Amount of Funds Awarded

Source: Researchers 2023

These findings were not unexpected, considering that most of the respondents indicated they benefitted from government-controlled bursary funds. CBF was also noted to have employed channels that were popular with applicants and the majority of them must have received appropriate information in the right manner and time. That was not to say that receiving information was the sole determinant criterion for selection. The other institutions' eligibility criteria might have been too stringent for the majority of the applicants as most required the child to have attained a minimum of up to

350 marks and others like Cooperative Bank Foundation required that the parents to have been members of a saving Society.

#### 4.11. Adequacy of Amount Given

When asked to state whether the funds awarded were enough to clear the required fees, the majority (94%) responded to the contrary, while only 1 (6%) of the respondents did not respond to the question, as indicated in table 12 below.

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	---	---
No	17	94
No response	1	6
Total		100.0

Table 12: Adequacy of Funds Given  
Source: Researchers, 2023

The finding was not surprising since the majority indicated getting less than Ksh 10,000 from CBF. The fees charged in Boarding schools in Kenya are a minimum of Ksh 40,000 per year, while day schools charge a minimum of Ksh 15,000 after government capitation.

The relevance of the two questions on the number of funds given and whether the amount was adequate was to help lead to the conclusion that effective communication about bursary funds would enable applicants to explore a variety of available options, thus increasing the possibility of being considered by any of the existing funds. The over-reliance on Government CBF has contributed to some missing out and those considered receiving very little funds.

## 5. Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

### 5.1. Summary of Findings

The research findings aim to achieve the objectives of the study. The study's objectives were to determine the channels used in disseminating information on Bursary funds in Kenya, the case of Embu County, to determine the preferred means of disseminating the information and the appropriateness of the information provided. The study registered an excellent response rate as most of the targeted respondents cooperated in filling out the questionnaires.

The study established that the majority of respondents were female, indicating that women's social status put them in a disadvantaged position, hence more desiring assistance in educating their children.

With respect to age, the majority is in the age brackets of 36-45 and 46-55 years, which implies that they had a wide range of experience and exposure and are more likely to appreciate the importance of the study, hence giving factual and objective responses to the questions.

With regard to the channels used in the dissemination of information by institutions offering bursary funds, the study established that all the channels offered for selection were being used by different institutions, with mass media such as radios and televisions being used by all the institutions. However, the response for each was quite low. Communication through religious institutions registered the highest response for CBF but low for all the other institutions, hence appearing to be the most popular channel to respondents. It was also noted that a substantial number of respondents received information on Bursary funds from friends and, particularly, for CBF and Equity Wings to Fly. All the other channels, namely: chief's Barazas, social media-WhatsApp, and Facebook, notices at strategic places and visits by Bursary funds officials received very insignificant responses implying either they were not being used by the funds institutions or respondents had no means of access to them. Notably, there were other channels classified as others but also received insignificant responses. These included information given to children in school and respondents visiting cyber cafés to search for bursary opportunities on institutions' websites.

In terms of preferred communication channels, the majority of respondents preferred religious organizations such as churches and mosques, followed by mass media and social media. All other channels, such as home visits by bursary officials, chiefs' barazas, notices, and word of mouth, gained some preference from some respondents and should be considered.

Regarding the appropriateness and adequacy of the information provided, the majority of respondents were satisfied that the information provided was appropriate, adequate, and timely to allow them to apply for bursary money. However, no information on who to contact for clarification was supplied, nor were methods for filing complaints or filing appeals available.

In terms of bursary awards, the majority of respondents had received them. However, it was noteworthy that all of them had received them from the Government Controlled Bursary Fund (CBF) and none from the other institutions. These were the organizations that relied heavily on the media for information transmission. However, it was also noteworthy that the response rate was quite low, and it is possible that the few people who received information and applied did not match the eligibility criteria.

### 5.2. Conclusions

Based on the findings, the study concluded that the response rate registered was above average and likely to result in objective findings. In response to objective one, various channels of communication were used to disseminate information on bursary funds by various institutions offering bursary funds. However, the study registered very low responses in some of the channels, implying that they were not popular with the respondents either because they were not aggressive and regularly used or not appropriate for target beneficiaries.

The survey found that all channels of communication were essential. However, some, such as those through religious institutions, mainstream media and social media, and those through friends, were more popular than others.

The study also established that information required by bursary funds applicants, such as where to get application forms, the deadline for submitting applications, eligibility criteria required and documents required to accompany the application, was given. However, information about the contact/ liaison person in case one required clarification or other form of assistance was not available. Also, there was no information on how a dissatisfied applicant would lodge a complaint or appeal, which is essential in such circumstances.

### 5.3. Recommendations

In consideration that bursary funds target the poor and disadvantaged groups in society, and going by the findings and conclusions, the institutions offering bursary funds should consider increasing their coverage to such groups by increasing the number of channels they use for dissemination of information on bursary funds. Mass media provide awareness of the existence of the bursary fund but might not provide detailed information on how to apply and requirements. Furthermore, most disadvantaged families may have no access to mass media and information passed by friends may not be complete and, at other times, distorted. In addition to mass media, consideration should be given to other channels that are readily accessible to the majority of disadvantaged groups. Channels such as through institutions of religion, local administration, such as chiefs' Barazas (public briefings), Social media platforms and notices at convenient public places such as markets should be considered. While home visits by bursary funds officials could also be explored, its administrative cost could be too high for institutions. However, where the benefits of making such visits supersede the cost, they should be considered. Such visits could be ideal as they could offer opportunities for verifying the information given by beneficiaries.

## 6. Limitations of the Study

The study, to a great extent, was successful and all research objectives were addressed. However, the study concentrated on the demand side, that is, communication strategies applied with respect to beneficiaries, while the supply side was not addressed. This is an area that requires research on the effectiveness of communication on the supply side, which does, to a great extent, affect that of the demand side. The study also failed to establish which of the channels used provided the most appropriate information and only generalized the findings. This was another area that required further research, given that different channels have unique strengths and weaknesses.

## 7. Acronyms and Abbreviations

ASAL – Arid and Semi-Arid Land  
CBF – Constituency Bursary Fund  
CIDP – County Integrated Development Plan  
CSSB – Community Scholarship Selection Board  
HYTES – Helping Youth through Educational Scholarships  
JKF – Jomo Kenyatta Foundation  
KCB – Kenya Commercial Bank  
KCDF – Kenya Community Development Foundation  
KCPE – Kenya Certificate for Primary Education Examination  
KNBS – Kenya National Bureau of Statistics  
LPG – Liquefied Petroleum Gas  
MCF – Master Card Foundation  
SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals  
SID – Society for International Development  
SPSS – Statistical Package for the Social Sciences  
UK – United Kingdom  
YPLA – Young People's Learning Agency  
KIPPRA – Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis

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