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## Factors Contributing to the Effectiveness of Presidential Secondary School Bursary as a Social Assistance Programme: A Case of Borabu Constituency Nyamira County, Kenya

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### **Abstract:**

Since the financial year 2013/2014 to date, the Presidential secondary school bursary fund (PBSS) in Kenya which aims at enhancing secondary school enrolment, attendance and completion by the Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) has continued to identify and support these categories of students. However, despite this support system, there are cases of absenteeism and dropout cases among such children. This study therefore aimed at establishing the factors contributing to the effectiveness of this fund as a social assistance programme in Borabu Constituency. The objectives were: to examine the influence of distribution logistics on the effectiveness of the Presidential secondary school bursary fund; to assess the influence of the legal frame work on the effectiveness of the Presidential secondary school bursary fund; to evaluate the influence of household socio-economic status on the effectiveness of the Presidential secondary school bursary fund. The study was guided by John Rawls' theory of social justice and the human capital theory and applied the descriptive research design. The target population for the study was the PSSB beneficiaries for the 2019/2020 FY and the bursary committee members. The sample size was 74 comprising of 70 PSSB beneficiaries and 4 sub-committee members. A pilot test was carried out in Masaba North Sub-county in order to determine the reliability of the instrument. Data collection and data analysis applied both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The study found out that Presidential secondary school bursary publicity was high within Borabu Constituency and it reached out to the target population of orphans and vulnerable children. The timely release of funds from the national treasury had a great bearing in enhancing effectiveness of Presidential secondary school bursary (PSSB) in terms of reducing absenteeism. The study concluded that this fund has supported parents/guardians taking care of orphans and vulnerable children by catering for their school fees needs and thus fulfilling their right to education. The study attributes this fund to the reduction of dropout cases among these children. The study recommends that the National treasury should prioritize timely release of funds to facilitate timely bursary distribution to beneficiaries to avoid being sent home.

**Keywords:** Adequacy, bursary, effectiveness, secondary school, OVC

### **1. Introduction**

Obtaining a quality education is the corner stone to creating sustainable development. Education is universally recognized as a form of investment in human capital and yields economic benefits and contributes to a country's future wealth by increasing the productive capacity of its people (Woodhall, 1983). Kofi Annan asserted that 'education is a human right with immense power to transform. On its foundation lay the cornerstone of freedom, democracy and sustainable human development' (UNICEF, 1999).

World over governments are duty-bound to make sure they provide basic education to its country's population and to make all adjustments in law policy as well as practice towards this crucial end. The UNICEF annual report of 2017 documents various initiatives by different governments to finance education. Among the highlighted initiatives is the Cash Transfers (CTs). In an effort to actualize the right to education and alleviate the undesirable effects of poverty and other factors hindering access to education at all levels, the Government has implemented demand-side financing initiatives, the Presidential Secondary School Bursary (PSSB) being one such initiatives. PSSB was initiated in 2013/2014 financial year as a complementary of the CT-OVC program. The target of the PSSB is OVC's in public boarding secondary schools and its aim is to increase the number of OVC's enrolled, retained and transiting from secondary school (Ministry of Labour & Social Protection, 2018). This study set out to examine the factors contributing to the effectiveness of the PSSB as a social assistance program.

## 2. Literature Review

Social protection means 'policies and actions, including legislative measures that enhance the capacities of and opportunities for the poor and vulnerable to improve and sustain their lives, livelihoods and welfare' (National Social Protection Council Bill, 2014). Social assistance is part of the three distinctive areas of social protection. The other two are social security and social insurance. Social assistance is 'non-contributory transfers to those individuals deemed eligible for assistance by society on the basis of their vulnerability or poverty' (Kenya National Social protection Policy, 2011). It is normally given based on need and most of the time they have to be subjected to proxy mean test. It is funded from the state budget. The aim of these programmes is to cushion the vulnerable populations from shocks, promote resilience and boost their social capital base to enable them meet their basic needs. Orphan hood is one of the identified vulnerabilities for qualification for social assistance for children. (Social Assistant Act, 2013)

### 2.1. PSSB Distribution Logistics

UNICEF (2016) reveals that, in many countries, the current stock of social safety net programs lacks fiscal sustainability. Development partners fund more than half the social safety net financing in the majority of African countries and Kenya is not an exemption. There are massive coverage gaps in the Kenyan social assistance. Reviews of social assistance programmes conducted by the Government and development partners in 2005 and 2009 have demonstrated the insufficiency of the existing interventions. Although the Government utilizes about 0.9 percent of its GDP on social assistance; most of the funding of these programmes is from its development partners (estimated at 90 percent) (The Social Protection Policy, 2011).

Additionally, the Social Protection Policy 2011 expounds that, vulnerability-focused programmes mostly have only limited geographic coverage. Meaning that majority of potential beneficiaries are locked out since they may not meet the eligibility criteria. This is attributed to the narrow coverage provided for in the current legal framework translating to majority of the underprivileged populations like OVC having inadequate access to social protection initiatives. Low coverage rates are exacerbated by the fact that numerous programs are small or temporary initiatives implemented in segregation, in limited geographical areas, or among isolated populations. Program replication is common, coupled with weak institutional environment.

The United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child (UNCRC) report 1998-2004 on the implementation of the UNCRC reporting on the constrains of Article 29 on education indicates that there is insufficient budgetary allocation that does not decipher to better quality education as the major fraction of the budget goes into paying teacher's salaries. It further indicates that the bursary given to students is inadequate (UNCRC, 2005). This inadequacy of bursaries also relates to PSSB since it is also a key education financing option and therefore impacts on its effectiveness. Several studies done in Kenya on bursaries have confirmed the inadequacy of bursaries and how it affects their effectiveness. Kirigo (2008) in her study to assess the effectiveness of bursaries in enhancing retention in secondary schools in Mombasa District, established that bursary fund had no significant impact on the retention in Mombasa District, based on the fact that 53.3% of those who received bursaries were sent home over three times due to inadequacy of funds set aside for bursary and unpredictability of the funds.

In another related study, Mwawughanga (2008) set out to assess the impact of Constituency Bursary Fund (CBF) on girl-child secondary education in Wundanyi Division of Taita District. The study established that the Constituency Bursary Fund did not have a significant impact on girl-child's access and retention in secondary school in Wundanyi Division of Taita District. The main reasons for this were that the bursary fund allocated to individual girls is not adequate to sustain girls in school, and as such most girls were still sent home for fees; poor academic performance of girls disqualifies most of them from accessing the fund; there is lack of information about the bursary fund as evidenced by students who reported that they did not know how to apply for the fund; and the attitude of the community towards education for the girl- child education was negative, as reported by 76.7% of the teachers, and thus girls were not encouraged to take advantage of existing opportunities.

Mwaura (2006) in his study on government bursary scheme and its role in enhancing secondary school participation of the poor and the vulnerable learners in Thika District found that the CBF was ineffective in that it was inadequate in the sense that it was thinly spread, unpredictable and very few students had been retained by the fund up to Form Three in 2005. He also observed that the awarding criteria were not very clear especially on how to finally arrive at a student to be awarded a bursary in each category. On the other hand, the award criteria released by the government were not followed and it was not fair since it was said not to target the poor. Other concerns have also been raised concerning bursaries in other studies. For instance, Njeru Enos and Orodho (2003) in their study of Education financing in Kenya; Secondary school bursary scheme implementation and challenges noted that 'The operation of the Ministry of Education Science and Technology bursary scheme is crippled by insufficient guidelines with regard to the amounts to be allocated per student; poor criteria for selection of genuinely needy students; insufficient awareness creation about the scheme's existence and operations; limited funds hence narrow coverage; poor co-ordination and delays in funds' disbursement; and lack of monitoring mechanisms by the MoES&T at the school and higher levels. Resulting to lack of transparency and accountability, nepotism, among other aspects of mismanagement' (Njeruet.al, 2003).

In summary the key logistical issues that mostly impact on the effectiveness of bursaries range from the application procedures, low awareness, insufficient amounts to cover the school fees requirements, poorly sequenced allocation timelines, unclear selection criteria coupled with floated implementation guidelines.

### 3. Research Methodology

A descriptive research design was used to realize the objective of the study focusing on both primary and secondary data which was quantitative and qualitative. The research study targeted a total of 70 PSSB beneficiaries of the 2019/2020 financial year and 4 members of the bursary sub-committee all drawn from Borabu constituency which was the study site. The study adopted a census approach to get the sample, a list of which was accessed through the children office. Reliability of the instruments was ensured through the test retest technique after a lapse of two weeks, which was done at Masaba North Sub-county which implements the same programme. Validity was achieved through expert judgment of the supervisors who reviewed the items on the instrument to determine whether the set of items accurately represented the variables under study. The pretested instruments were administered by the researcher with the help of research assistants through face to face interview. Quantitative data collected by using a questionnaire and the interview guide for the key informant interviews was analysed by the use of descriptive statistics using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Qualitative data on the other hand was analysed using the thematic technique.

### 4. Data Analysis, Presentation and Interpretation

The study targeted a total of 74 respondents but only a total of 68 respondents were reached. Six out of the seventy PSSB beneficiaries were not reached out as they were not with their parents/guardians within the study area during data collection.

#### 4.1. Demographic Background

##### 4.1.1. Gender of the Students

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	33	51.6
Female	31	48.4
Total	64	100.0

Table 1: Analysis of Gender of Student  
Source; Author, 2020

From the analysis, 51.56 % of the respondents were males while 48.44% of the respondents were female. This shows that a higher number of boys than girls' transit to secondary schools and are beneficiaries of the PSSB. This is backed by assertions made by Kakwani et.al (2005) that indicate that there is a higher opportunity cost for girls attending school with most families opting to educate boys. Further commenting on the dropout rate for the beneficiaries the Sub-county Children Officer (SCCO) Borabu indicated that,

*'In the current financial year only one beneficiary has dropped out, a female and even in the previous year's only girls had dropped out and no boy so far'.*

These findings go hand in hand with information documented by UNICEF (2007) indicating that more girls record higher dropout rates as they advance to higher levels of education.

#### 4.2. Age of the Students

Age(Yrs)	Frequency	Percentage
14	1	1.6
15	6	9.4
16	16	25.0
17	25	39.1
18	12	18.8
19	2	3.1
20	1	1.6
21	1	1.6
Total	64	100.0

Table 2: Analysis of the Student's Age  
Source; Author, 2020

The age of the respondents ranged between 14 and 21 with the highest number of respondents being of the age of 17years at 39.1%. While the least number of respondents were 14 years of age at 1.6%. The extended age would be a pointer to the challenges that orphans face in the journey to education ranging from learning interruptions due to inconsistent school attendance and delayed class to class progression and grade transition. PSSB comes in handy to ensure that they get their right to education. This is well guided by the Social protection policy, (2011) that gives direction that the implementation of any social assistance programme should be guided by the potential of the programme to help the beneficiaries realize their rights.

#### 4.3. Form of the Students

Class	Frequency	Percent
Form 1	0	0.00
Form 2	22	34.38
Form 3	25	39.06
Form 4	17	26.56
Total	64	100.0

*Table 3: Analysis of the Student's Current Class  
Source; Author, 2020*

From the analysis 39.06% of the beneficiaries are in Form three, 34.38% in Form two and 26.56% in Form four. None of the beneficiaries was indicated to be in Form one. Explaining about the same the SCCO Borabu indicated that applications for the current financial year (2019/2020) had not been done in order to capture the 2020 Form one students since the office was yet to receive the second half allocation from the National treasury. This information was confirmed by the other three sub-committee members interviewed. This is an indication of delays occasioned by late release of funds and how it can translate to ineffectiveness of the PSSB in terms of timely reaching out to the target group. These findings are in line with the findings of Kirigo (2008) which established that unpredictability of funds made bursaries to have no significant impact on the retention of pupils in Mombasa District. Similar findings were also documented by Seroney (2015) who identified untimely disbursement as one of the logistical factors influencing the effectiveness of the CBF and rated its influence as the highest (80%).

#### 4.4. Distribution Logistics

##### 4.4.1. PSSB Awareness/Publicity

An analysis of the publicity levels revealed that majority (98.44%) of the students have heard about the Presidential Secondary School Bursary against 1.56% who indicated that they did not know about this fund. The four key informants also indicated that the PSSB is widely known. This hopefully translates to increased effectiveness of the PSSB since those who are in need are aware that there is assistance that can bridge their education needs. This is a diversion from what has been witnessed in several government bursaries. As noted by Njeru & Orodho (2003) among the challenges being faced by the Secondary School bursary implementation is insufficient awareness about the existence of those bursaries. This is further backed by Nthiga (2014) who asserted that ignorance towards information on bursary allocation was a great hindrance for potential beneficiaries to access the same.

##### 4.4.2. Publicity Source

Publicity Source	Frequency	Percent
Teacher	1	1.56
Chief	6	9.38
Parent/guardian	50	78.13
Others	7	10.94
Total	64	100.0

*Table 4: Analysis of the Publicity Source  
Source; Author, 2020*

The findings indicate that the highest number of students (78.13%) heard about PSSB from a parent or a guardian. Those who heard about it from a teacher were (1.56%), from the chief (9.38%) while (10.94%) heard it from other sources apart from the one indicated in the questionnaire. The two main such sources were Member of County Assembly (MCA) and the officers from the Children's office. These findings indicate that the parents/guardians are a key pillar in the success of PSSB since they are heavily relied on by the students, to not only inform them about the PSSB but also to complement the PSSB by paying their school fees. This is more so in cases where the PSSB does not cover the full amount required for school fees. This is in agreement with the arguments of Izzo et. al (1999) who contends that the parent/guardian involvement in the learner's academic endeavours improves their retention in school and boosts their overall performance. A position maintained by Nthiga (2014) who in her study established that parental involvement had a great significance in learner's retention in public secondary schools.

#### 4.4.3. Eligibility

Eligible Beneficiaries	Frequency	Percent
All students	2	3.13
Orphans	38	59.38
Needy students who cannot afford to pay school fees	24	37.50
Total	64	100

Table 5: Analysis of Eligibility  
Source; Author, 2020

The respondents were requested to indicate who according to them is supposed to benefit from the PSSB. The analysis indicates that 59.38% pointed out that orphans are the ones eligible for the PSSB while 37.50% indicated that needy students who cannot afford to pay school fees are the ones who are eligible for the PSSB and 3.13% felt that all students should as well be considered for the PSSB. These findings echo the stipulations of Ministry Labour & Social Protection, (2018) guidelines on implementation of PSSB that clearly spell out that the orphans are the ones eligible for the PSSB.

#### 4.4.4. Application Procedures

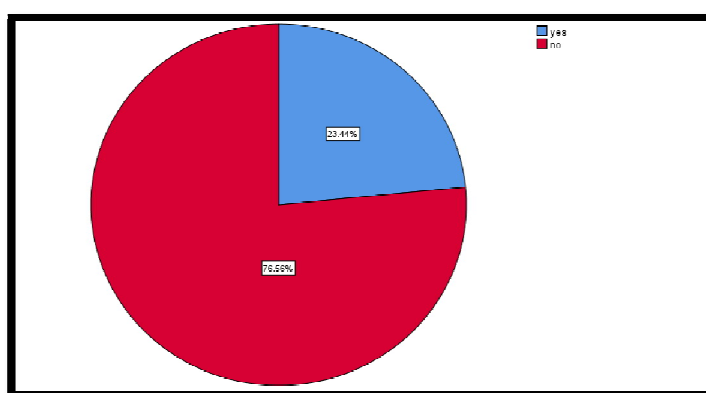


Figure 1: Analysis of the Application Procedure  
Source; Author, 2020

After sharing out the students eligible for PSSB, the respondents were asked to indicate whether they were aware of the application procedure and if yes to briefly describe it. Only 23.44% of the respondents indicated that they were well acquainted with the application procedures while 76.56% expressed reservation of the knowledge of the same. However, when the 23.44% were tasked to briefly describe the application procedure, they could hardly give the correct procedure as laid down by the PSSB implementation guidelines. All the four sub-committee members however indicated that there is an elaborate application procedure that involves application forms with elaborate bio data of the applicants as well as their photo. The application forms also have various levels of checks and balances with the applicants required to have various recommendations as stipulated in the form. Further the committee members indicated that as pointed out by the bursary Sub-committee chair,

*'We also have a score sheet that makes it very easy for the committee to score the beneficiaries on the various areas, vet them and rank them from the neediest to the least needy.'*

The score sheet is a great tool in ensuring that the neediest get assistance and thus enhance the effectiveness of the PSSB in reduction of absenteeism due to school fees and thus curb possible eventual drop out. This diverts from what has often been witnessed in a majority of government bursaries which have been accused of non-clear awarding criteria as pointed out by Mwaura (2006) in his study on CBF in Thika District. Price Water House Coopers (2008) too carried out a countrywide study whose objective was to appraise the secondary school bursary fund with an aim of generating recommendations on how this initiative could be improved. Their findings were that due to poor targeting, it was hard to ensure that only the genuinely needy students benefitted from the bursary.

#### 4.4.5. Timeliness

Timeliness was another distribution logistics variable that the researcher sought to establish how it influences the effectiveness of PSSB. From the analysis of the disbursement timeliness where the beneficiaries were asked when they received the bursary award, all the respondents indicated that they received their PSSB in the course of first term. The SCCO Borabu indicated that they had received the first quarter allocation totalling to Kshs 688,206 and had made partial payments for continuing students as they await the other allocations to pay the full allocated amount per student. The partial allocation means that the students may still be sent home for non-clearance of outstanding school fees balances thus impacting on the effectiveness of the PSSB in reducing absenteeism. The strength of the PSSB as alluded to by the SCCO Borabu is that the beneficiaries are subjected to the application procedures, explained above, only once and they get

assistance up to Form Four. This is a great diversion from other bursaries as confirmed by Obiero (2014) who in his study found out that majority of the students (63.35%) had received the bursary only once. In his recommendations he was of the opinion that the bursaries should be allocated more than once to increase the participation rate. The fact that the PSSB beneficiaries are assured of support for the four years makes it a modest program. Equally, it adds to the bulk of evidence that social assistance programs can powerfully and elaborately contribute to building resilience and boosting academic opportunities for the poor. Ketheleen et.al (2014) is of a similar view. This argument is further confirmed by the UNICEF, 2017 annual report which highlights the fact that for children from the Cash Transfers recipient households, the teachers were willing to keep the benefiting students in school as they were aware of their potential to clear the levies.

#### 4.4.6. Suggested Appropriate Time

From the indication of the time that the beneficiaries received their bursary award, the researcher sought to establish whether that was indeed the most appropriate time to receive the bursary and from the responses given, all the respondents indicated that first term was the most appropriate time to receive the bursary. This was the case this financial year (2019/20) as indicated by the respondents though this is normally varied and highly depends on the National treasury each financial year as the SCCO Borabu explained. However, almost all learning institutions are reported to be very aggressive to send learners home for school fees with the bulk of the institutions requiring more than 50% of the total fees to be cleared during the first term thus making first term the most suitable time to receive the bursary. This concurs with the recommendation of Obiero (2014) who following his study indicated that the first term carries the heaviest fees burden and many students are sent home for school fees leading to absenteeism, dropouts and repetition of classes. In view of this he recommended that the bursary allocation should be awarded during the first term of the school calendar.

### 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The timely distribution of the Presidential Secondary School Bursary funds is a key determinant of the effectiveness of the PSSB in reduction of absenteeism. Late release of the funds from the national treasury means that the funds reach the beneficiaries late in the school term when most of the beneficiaries will have been sent home for school fees occasioning absenteeism. The nonalignment of the government fiscal year to the school term dates results in frequent, prolonged periods of absenteeism by the beneficiaries and this compromises the learning of the beneficiaries. Equally, this exposes the beneficiaries to the risk of dropping out of school. However, the publicity of the PSSB is high within Borabu constituency and as anticipated by the policy makers the PSSB is reaching out to the Orphans and Vulnerable Children. There is also a recorded minimal dropout rate with this financial year (2019/2020) recording only one drop out case. However, gender disparity is still evident with more boys than girls benefiting from the PSSB. As a result of PSSB, there is reduction of school dropout hence the PSSB has been effective in this regard.

In line with the conclusion made, the study recommends that the national treasury should prioritize timely release of the PSSB funds to the county treasuries for timely distribution to the beneficiaries at the beginning of particularly first term since it carries the biggest fees burden to avert beneficiaries being sent home for school fees.

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