Relationship between Timeliness and Consistency in Disbursing Bursary Funds to Needy Learners and Equity in Access to Secondary School Education

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ABSTRACT

The government of Kenya has put in place various measures such as constituency bursary fund in her effort to enhance equity in access to secondary education. However, access to secondary school education in Kenya and Sub-Counties such as Koibatek is linked to one's demand for education. Equity in access to education may be attributable to timeliness and consistency of bursaries allocated to needy learners in secondary schools. This study examined the relationship between timeliness, consistency of bursary allocation and equity in access to secondary school education in Koibatek Sub-County, Kenya. This study was guided by the classical liberal theory of equal opportunity. It adopted concurrent mixed method research design. The target population comprised of 42 school Principals, 560 class teachers and 7 members of the Constituency Bursary committee in Koibatek Sub-County. Stratified, proportionate and simple random sampling techniques were used to select 36 principals and 226 class teachers who took part in the study. All the 7 members of the Constituency Bursary Committee (CBF) were also involved in the study. A principals' and class teachers' questionnaires, and CDF committee members' interview guide was used to collect data. Face and content validity of the three instruments were determined through expert judgement. The principals' and class teachers' questionnaires were piloted for reliability. They were deemed reliable as their coefficients were 0.832 and 0.801 respectively. Data was analyzed with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Science. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically while hypotheses were tested at .05 significance level using the Pearson correlations test. The study established that timeliness in disbursement [r(28) = .512, p = .004 were significantly related to equity in access to education. However, the relationship between consistency of amount of bursary allocated and equity in access to education was positive but not statistically significant, r(28) = .058, p .763. The study concluded that timeliness in disbursement influenced equity in access to education while consistency of amount of bursary allocated did not. The findings of the study are expected to provide useful data for education stakeholders to come up with the right policies to guide disbursement of bursaries to needy secondary school learners in the country.

Key words: Timeliness, consistency, Needy learners and Equity in access to Education

INTRODUCTION

Most governments around the world finance education because education demand is to large extent tied to its monetary and non-monetary returns. The 2021/2022 Global Educational Monitoring Report by UNESCO avers that there is a direct relationship between education and productivity, peace, fertility, agriculture, democracy and environment among other returns Canton, 2021). There is a strong correlation between secondary school enrollment and economic growth, as well as social development indicators such as wage growth, reductions in fertility and child mortality and better health and nutrition for the population as a whole. This, then means that inadequate education can make individuals less competitive in the global market thereby hindering equity in access to opportunities. This rationale supports targeted interventions, such as bursaries, to achieve equity, retention and completion of secondary school education. Despite the progress made in the education sector, there were 91 million and 137 million children still out of lower and upper secondary school education worldwide by 2019 (UNESCO, 2021 Global Education Monitoring report). The report noted that in low-income countries only 29% of girls and 38% of boys complete secondary school education. raising concern over persistent gaps in

educational equity. Sub- Saharan Africa had the highest rates of out-of-school youth, with nearly one- third of the children of secondary school age not in school and many in school do not complete even lower secondary school education (World Bank, 2021)

Secondary school education is critical in every country for a number of reasons. First, it is central to development because it provides insights, skills and competencies that are needed for economic growth and national development. Secondly, it is at this level that learners consolidate their basic knowledge gained in primary school and acquire the common culture that will enable them to be useful citizens in the future (World Bank, 2010). Despite the notable importance of education, a proportion of learners from most developing countries do not access education because of many factors including high poverty levels at household level.

The Government of Kenya has implemented strategies to reduce costs of education for poor parents at secondary and university levels. These strategies are made during the budgetary allocation process as the core poverty intervention mechanisms. The secondary schools Constituency Bursary Fund is one such strategy for needy learners' retention in secondary education. The bursary should be equitable to ensure that needy learners are able to access secondary education through financial support in order to boost their retention at secondary school education level. However, on the basis on the 2019 census report, a total of 6.8 million children of school going age were out of school. Of these, 2.1 million (30%) were of pre-primary age, 1.9 million (28%) primary and 2.9 million (42%) secondary school -going children aged 14 to 17 years and 7.1 million have never gone to school (KNBS, 2019).According to Kedu and Jebichi (2021) about 35000 school going children are out of school in Baringo County due to drought, floods, insecurity and retrogressive cultural practices such as early marriages, child labour and female genital mutilation. Bursaries were meant to ensure that children from such backgrounds are not disadvantaged in accessing education. The amount awarded varies across different regions. Even where the amounts allocated are adequate, issues of consistency and timely disbursement of bursaries are not adequately addressed

Statement of the Problem

The disparities in access to education highlighted in the introduction could be attributed to the issues of consistency and timeliness in the disbursement of the allocated bursaries. Consistent and timely disbursement of bursaries is crucial for ensuring equity in Kenya Education system, as delays often force needy students out of school, reducing retention rates despite subsidies. Equity in access denotes a situation where each learner can enroll and remain in school till completion regardless of their social, economic, geographical and ethnic background. While bursaries aim to increase access to education for children from humble background, unpredictable disbursement may hinder retention causing disparities in education completion. Delayed disbursement means that students from low-income families will not stay in school and this may increase dropout rates thus undermining equity goals. This study therefore sought to establish the relationship consistency and timelines in disbursing awarded bursaries and equity in access to education in Koibatek Sub County.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were:

i. to establish the relationship between timeliness of disbursement of bursary funds to needy learners and equity in access to public secondary school education in Koibatek Sub-County.
ii. to determine the relationship between the consistency of the amount of bursary allocated to each needy learner and equity in access to public secondary school education in Koibatek Sub-County.

Hypotheses of the Study

The study hypotheses were:

i. There is no statistically significant relationship between timeliness of disbursement of bursary allocated to each needy learner and equity in access to public secondary school education in Koibatek Sub-County

ii. There is no statistically significant relationship between the consistency of the amount of bursary allocated to each needy learner and equity in access to public secondary school education in Koibatek Sub-County

THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

The study was guided by the classical liberal theory of equal opportunity which defines equality as a level playing field at the starting point. It demands the removal of legal political , social economical barriers thereby ensuring all individuals have the same fundamental rights to compete and access opportunities including education. In Kenya, there are different economical classes and the poor are disadvantaged in accessing education. Bursaries are meant to enable children from poor families to access education thereby enhancing the attainment of the goal of equity in access to education.

Concurrent mixed method research design was used where both qualitative and quantitative data were collected concurrently. From a population of 560 class teachers and 42 principals, a sample of 226 class teachers and 36 principals were derived. Members of the CDF committee were interviewed for purposes of data triangulation

Questionnaires and interview schedules were used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data after being validated by expert judgement and meeting reliability index of 0.8 coefficient. The data collected was cleaned, coded and data files prepared using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The coded data were keyed into the files. Qualitative data generated through interviews and open-ended items were organized in themes pertinent to the research objectives and summarized using frequencies, percentages, charts or presented as excerpts. Hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance using the Pearson's correlation test. This statistical technique was selected because it is ideal for exploring relationship between variables measures at interval and ratio scale, and the underlying assumptions associated with inferential statistics are not violated (Ikhwan et al., 2024).

Findings of the study

Instrument Return Rates

Three instruments, namely, principals' and class teachers' questionnaires and constituency development fund committee members interview guide were used to gather data. The sample sizes of the study respondents were 36 principals, 226 class teachers and 7 constituency development committee members. Consequently, 36 principals and 226 class teachers' questionnaires were administered while 7 constituency development committee members were invited for interviews. The return rates of these three instruments are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1

Return Rates of the Instruments Used to Gather Data

Instrument	Administered/invited	Filled and returned/interviewed	Return rate in percentage
Principals' questionnaire	36	33	91.7
Teachers' questionnaire	226	215	95.1
Bursary committee member interview guide	7	5	71.4

These results indicate that the instrument return rates were high, with the teachers' questionnaire (95.1%) posting the highest percentage. The return rates of the other instruments were 91.7% for the principals' questionnaire and 71.4% for the constituency development committee members' interview guide. These results indicate that the study did not suffer from low instrument return rates. Holtom et al. (2022) contends that low instrument return rates is a common problem in surveys which use questionnaires to gather data. The high instrument return

rates were also due to various strategies adopted by the researcher to boost them. This included creating a good rapport with the respondents, repeat visits and use of the Drop-Off, Pick-Up (DOPU) later. Gathii et al. (2019) contend that DOPU generated high instrument return rates because it provides respondents with adequate time to fill questionnaires. The return rates were considered adequate for analysis given that they were above the 60% "good" mark recommended by Shiyab et al. (2023).

Relationship between timeliness of disbursing bursary funds to needy learners and equity in access to education

The study sought to establish the timeliness of disbursing bursary funds to needy learners and equity in access to education. It involved analyzing data provided by the principals, class teachers and CDF committee members. The relationship between timeliness of disbursing bursary funds to needy learners and equity in access to education was explored using the Pearson's correlations test.

The principals were asked to indicate when the bursaries are disbursed to schools. Slightly over three quarters (75.8%) of the principals reported that bursary funds allocated to needy students were released once a year. The rest reported that there was no order in release of funds (15.2%) and at the beginning of the term (9.1%).

With regard to how bursaries allocated to needy learners are disbursed to schools, a majority (90.1%) of the principals stated that one cheque for all needy students was written by the sponsors and forwarded to schools. About a quarter (24.2%) indicated that each beneficiary was given a cheque in the school's name.

Timeliness of bursary allocation was determined using 7 closed ended items in the principals' questionnaire. They were requested to rate the timeliness of bursary allocation processes. The rating was done using 5 points scale; 1 = Never on Time, 2 = Rarely on Time, 3 = Occasionally on Time, 4 = Often on Time and 5 = Always on Time. The responses were scored, averaged and transformed into overall mean score as given in Table 2

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations of Items on Timeliness of Allocating Bursaries

Item	n	Mean	SD
Release of information on when learners can apply for bursaries	33	3.12	0.70
Availing application form	33	2.88	1.34
Processing of application forms	33	2.45	0.83
Feedback to non-successful learners who applied for bursaries	33	1.39	1.00
Processing of funds/cheques to successful applicants	30	3.07	0.58
Release of bursaries (cheques/funds) to schools	30	3.00	0.79
Informing beneficiaries funds have been released to schools	30	3.63	0.96
Timeliness mean score	33	2.67	0.72

The results reveal that the item mean scores ranged between M = 1.39 (SD = 1.00) to M = 3.63 (SD = 0.96). Items such as informing beneficiaries that funds have been released to schools (M = 3.63, SD = 0.96) and release of information on when students can apply for bursaries (M = 3.12, SD = 0.70) posted high mean scores. The high item mean scores is a pointer that those activities are conducted on time. However, items such as giving feedback to non-successful students who applied for bursaries (M = 1.39, SD = 1.00) and processing of application forms (M = 2.45, SD = 0.83) were low. This is an indication that these activities are not conducted at all or not carried out on time. The overall mean score (M = 2.67, SD = 0.72) was low given that the rating was done using a 5-points scale. The low overall mean score implies that generally the bursary allocation process was not timely. This may have a bearing on equity in access to secondary education.

The principals were requested to suggest ways of ensuring allocation of bursary to needy learners was done on time. Their suggestions are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Ways of Ensuring Timely Allocation of Bursaries to Needy Learners is done on Time (n = 33)

Item	Frequency	Percentage
Stick to the time lines /Release funds early/on time	12	36.4
Release information on time	9	27.3
Allocation be done during holidays and disbursement immediately schools open	5	15.2
Release funds at beginning of year	2	6.1
Others (should be discussed as soon as applications is closed, Fast-track identification process	2	6.1

The principals proposed a raft of measures that could be used to ensure timely allocation of bursaries to needy students. These included sticking to the time lines /release funds early/on time (36.4%), timely release of information (27.3%) and Allocation be done during holidays and disbursement immediately schools open (15.2%). This implies that timely release of funds may lead to equity in access to secondary education.

The class teachers' views on timeliness of allocation of bursaries were also sought. They were requested to rate timeliness of bursary allocation processes using a scale Never on Time (NoT), Rarely on Time (RoT), Occasionally on Time (OCT), Often on Time (OFT) and Always on Time (AoT). Their responses were summarised using frequencies and percentages as shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Class Teachers Views on Timeliness of Bursary Allocation Processes

Process	n	AoT	OFT	OCT	RoT	NoT
Release of information on when learners can apply for bursaries	217	9.2	18.4	40.6	22.6	9.2
Availability of application form	217	12.9	29.5	41.9	13.8	1.9
Processing of application forms	212	9.0	26.9	45.7	16	2.4
Feedback to non-successful learners who applied for bursaries	217	11.5	3.7	24	21.2	39.6
Processing of funds/cheques to successful applicants	217	11.1	39.6	20.7	11.5	17.1
Release of bursaries (cheques/funds) to schools	217	9.2	36.9	24.9	18	11
Informing beneficiaries funds have been released to schools	217	17.1	41.4	22.1	10.1	9.3

The results reveal that the majority (58.5%) of the class teachers were of the view that information on the release of bursaries to schools is often done on time. Most (50.7%) of the respondents were also of the view that processing of funds/cheques to successful applicants was often done on time. However, only a few (15.2%) felt that feedback to non-successful students who applied for bursaries was often given on time. Similarly, a relatively low percentage (35.9%) was of the opinion that processing of application forms were often done on time. These findings reveal that the flow of information on issues of bursary disbursements and release of cheques on time are likely to enhance equity in access to secondary education for needy learners.

The class teachers were further requested to suggest ways of enhancing timely release of bursaries to needy learners. Their responses are shown in table 5.

Table 5

Class Teachers' Suggestions on What Needs to be Done to Enhance Timely Release of Bursaries (n = 217)

Item	Frequency	Percentage
Provide information/forms on time	108	49.0
Release funds on time	35	16.1
Reduce paper work, reduce bureaucracy, enhance efficiency	24	11.1
Plan/Set time lines	14	6.5
Rope in professionals/teachers to guide learners fill application forms	10	4.6
System is fair/transparency	9	4.1
Synchronize all bursaries	5	2.3

Table 5 reveals that the teachers suggested that information/forms be provided on time (49.0%), funds be released on time (16,1%). About 11% of the class teachers suggested that the system used is fair, teachers need to guide learners to fill bursary forms and that bursary forms need to be synchronized to enhance timely release of bursary funds. It implies that when funds reach schools at the right time, it is likely to enhance equity in access to secondary education

With regard to timely disbursement of funds allocated to needy learners, 60.0% of the CDF committee members indicated there were delays due to late release of money by from the treasury. A fifth (20.0%) of the respondents reported that the funds were released on time while the same percentage (20.0%) indicated that release of funds depended on when it was released by the government.

The findings from the principals, class teachers and CDF committee members reveal that majority were of the view that the allocated bursary funds were often not released to schools on time. These results are in tandem with those of Ngando and Muna's (2025) which showed that bursaries were not released on time. Muthama and Nyangau (2021) also noted delays in release of bursary funds, mostly in rural schools. The scholars were of the view that the delay in release of bursaries undermines the effectiveness of such programmes and limited progress toward Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) on equitable and inclusive education. According Gogo (2020), delays in release of funds are due to late release of funds by the exchequer, non-compliance with legal requirements, administrative inefficiencies and political and governance issues. The challenges could be possible causes of inequity in access to education in sub counties such as Koibatek. Addressing them may enhance timeliness of release of funds and boost equity in access to education The relationship between timeliness of disbursement of funds and equity in access to education was determined by testing hypothesis. This hypothesis stated that the relationship between timeliness of disbursement of funds and equity in access to education was not statistically significant. The Pearson's correlation test was used to determine the relationship. The results of the test are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6

Relationship between Timeliness of Funds Disbursement and Equity in Access to Education

Scale		Equity in access to education
Timeliness of disbursement of funds	Pearson Correlation	.512
	p-value	.004
	N	30

A positive relationship (r = .512) was observed between timeliness in disbursement of bursary funds and equity in access to secondary school education. The results further show that the relationship between timeliness in disbursement of bursary funds and equity in access to education was statistically significant, r(28) = .512, p = .004. These results are not in harmony with hypothesis three which states that the relationship between timeliness in disbursement of bursary funds and equity in access to education is not statistically significant.

These findings reveal that there was a statistically significant relationship between the timeliness in the release of bursary funds allocated to needy learners and equity in access to secondary school education in Kenya. The findings support those of Mutuma et al. (2025) study showed allocation of bursary funds to needy learners boosted students' access to education. The study noted that timely release of bursaries to needy learners enables them to enroll at the beginning of the term and continue with their education. The results also support those of an investigation in Kwale county conducted by Ngando and Muna (2025). The results of the study revealed that timely release of bursary funds enhanced enrolment, and retention rates of students.

These findings imply that the timing of bursary disbursements plays a critical role in ensuring that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are able to enroll, attend, and remain in school without interruption. When bursary funds are released on time, they effectively reduce financial barriers that hinder access to education, particularly among vulnerable populations (UNESCO, 2022). The statistical significance of the relationship demonstrates that delays in releasing bursary funds have direct and adverse effects on equity outcomes. Learners from low-income households often depend entirely on these funds to cover essential school-related costs such as tuition, examination fees, uniforms, and boarding fees. If funds are disbursed late, affected learners may experience interruptions in their studies, absenteeism, or even dropping out of school (Kariuki et al., 2020)).

These results highlights that timely bursary disbursements are just as important as the amount of funding provided. Even adequate bursary allocations lose their intended impact if they are released too late to meet school deadlines for fee payments or examinations (Ojwang, 2022). When funds are disbursed early in the school term, they allow schools to plan effectively and ensure that needy learners have the resources they need to participate fully in academic activities. This helps reduce educational inequalities by enabling vulnerable students to compete fairly with their peers from wealthier households. On the other hand, delayed bursary disbursements force families to seek alternative funding sources, such as loans or casual labor, which may not be sustainable. This often leads to absenteeism, delayed enrollment, or complete withdrawal from school by needy learners.

Relationship between Consistency of Amount of Bursary Allocated to each Needy Learner and Equity in Access to Education

This section presents the results of the objective which explored the relationship between consistency of amount of bursary allocated to each needy learner and equity in access to education. It involved establishing consistency in amount of bursary allocated to needy students. The Pearson correlations test was then used to determine the association between consistency in amount of bursary allocated and equity in access to education.

A set of four items in the principals' questionnaire was used to elicit data on consistency of amount of bursary allocated to needy learners. The principals rated the items on consistency of amount of bursary allocated using a 5 point scale; 5 = Always Uniform, 4= Often Uniform, 3 = Occasionally Uniform, 2 = Rarely Uniform, 1 = Never Uniform. Their responses to the items were, scored, summated and an overall mean score (index) computed as shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Means and Standard Deviations of Items on Consistency of Amount of Bursary Allocated

Process	N	Mean	SD
Criteria/method of identifying needy students	30	2.93	1.05
Amount allocated to a needy student	30	3.30	1.15

Time of releasing funds to schools by bursary providers	30	3.23	1.01
Continuous support to needy students throughout the 4 years secondary school cycle	30	2.47	1.38
Consistency of amount of bursary allocated overall mean	30	2.98	0.67

These results show that the item means of consistency in amount allocated to a needy student and timely releasing funds to schools by bursary providers were M = 3.30 (SD= 1.15) and M = 3.32 (SD = 1.01) respectively. These item mean scores were above the mid-point ([1 + 5]/2) mark. The item "continuous support to needy students throughout the 4 years secondary school cycle" had a low mean score (M = 2.47, SD 1.38). This suggests that support given to needy learners is not consistent through the four year secondary school cycle. The overall consistency in amount located mean score was M = 2.98 (SD = 0.67). Based on the overall mean score, consistency in amount allocated was considered below average given that a 5-point rating scale with a mid-point of 3 was used. These findings indicate that the support given to needy learners in form of bursaries in secondary schools is not consistent or continuous throughout the four years and hence does not enhance equity in access to education to a large extent.

Data from the class teachers on consistency of amount of bursary allocated to needed students was also analyzed. The class teachers were asked to rate consistency of amount of bursary allocated to needed students annually using the scale; Always Uniform (AU), Often Uniform (OU), Occasionally Uniform (OCU), Rarely Uniform (RU) and Never Uniform (NU). The ratings were summarized using percentages and frequencies (Table 8)

Table 8

Frequencies and Percentages of Class Teachers' Responses to items on Consistency of Amount of Bursary Allocated (N = 217)

Item	n	AU	OU	OCU	RU	NU
Criteria/method of identifying needy students	217	14.7	24.0	30.0	21.2	10.1
Amount allocated to a needy student	217	25.8	14.3	25.8	18.9	15.2
Time of releasing funds to schools by bursary providers	212	16.5	18.9	38.2	14.6	11.8
Continuous support to needy students throughout the 4 years secondary school cycle	217	14.3	13.8	21.7	18.0	32.2

The class teachers (54%) suggested that the consistency of the amount of bursary allocated to needy learners in secondary schools was either often uniform or occasionally uniform while (31%) of them suggested that it was rarely or never uniform. A majority of them (50%) suggested that the needy learners rarely or never got continuous support of bursaries for the four years of schooling.

With regard to consistency of the amount of bursary allocated, majority (80.0%) of the CDF committee members indicated that the amount of bursary funds allocated to needy learners was not consistent. They attributed this to lack of funds and fluctuations in amounts received from the national government. A few (20.0%) of the committee members reported that there was consistency in amount of bursary allocated to needy learners annually. This indicates that the needy learners were not able to achieve equity in access to secondary education.

These findings show the principals, class teachers and CDF committee members were of the opinion that there were inconsistencies in amount of bursaries allocated to needy learners. Studies done in Kenya have found that bursary support is frequently inconsistent in amount and continuity (Onuko, 2012; Kiprotich, 2013). The findings of these studies show that many beneficiaries receive awards only once or sporadically during their secondary school cycle; amounts vary across constituencies/counties and from year to year; and a substantial share of applicants who need support do not receive it. These patterns have been linked to persistent fee balances,

interrupted schooling, and inequitable outcomes. Bursary managers should consider standardizing minimum award levels and payment schedules and ring-fencing funds to improve predictability of transfers.

The Pearson's correlation test was used to determine the relationship between consistency of amount of bursary allocated to each needy learner and equity in access to secondary school education. It entailed correlating consistency of amount of bursary allocated mean score and that of equity in access to education. The results of the Pearson's correlation test are summarized in Table 9.

Table 9

Relationship between Consistency of Amount of Bursary Allocated and Equity in Access to Education

Scale		Equity in access to education
Consistency of amount of bursary allocated	Pearson Correlation	.058
	p-value	.763
	N	30

The Pearsons correlation test results reveal that the relationship between consistency of amount of bursary allocated and equity in access to education was positive (r = .058). These results also reveal that the relationship between the two constructs was not statistically significant, r(28) = .058, p .763. It means that consistency of amount of bursary allocated does not influence equity in access to education. These findings support hypothesis two which stated that the relationship between consistency of amount of bursary allocated and equity in access to education is not statistically significant.

The study established that the relationship between consistency of the amount of bursary allocated to needy learners and equity in access to secondary school education was not statistically significant. This means that while bursaries are a critical intervention for supporting disadvantaged learners, the regularity or consistency of the amounts disbursed did not show a strong measurable effect on improving equitable access to secondary education. These findings are in harmony with those of Muthama and Nyangau (2021), who observed that inconsistent or small bursary amounts had minimal influence on reducing dropout rates in rural Kenya. UNESCO (2022) also noted that educational equity depends not just on financial consistency but also on comprehensive support systems such as inclusive policies, community involvement, and the elimination of non-financial barriers to education. However, the results do not support those of Kariuki et al. (2020) which indicated that when bursary allocations are both sufficient and released early, they lead to higher retention rates and improved equity in access to education in marginalized areas.

This finding suggests that factors beyond consistency of bursary amounts — such as the total amount of funding, the timeliness of release, and the targeting of beneficiaries — may play a more decisive role in determining whether needy students can enroll, stay in school, and complete their studies. It means that while bursaries play a crucial role in supporting needy learners, the consistency of amounts allocated alone may not lead to achievement of equity in access to secondary school education. For bursary programs to be effective, policymakers should also focus on increasing the adequacy of funding, improve targeting, ensure timely release of funds, and address other broader socio-economic barriers. This multi-pronged approach will help Kenya progress toward Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which calls for inclusive and equitable quality education for all.

Summary of Findings

Objective one explored the relationship between timeliness of disbursing bursary funds to needy learners and equity in access to secondary school education. The findings showed that timeliness of release of funds was rated at (M = 2.67 (SD = 0.72) based on a 5-points scale. The findings also showed that the relationship between timeliness in disbursement of bursary funds and equity in access to education was statistically significant, r(28) = .512, p = .004.

The second objective examined the relationship between consistency of amount of bursary allocated and equity in access to secondary school education. Consistency of amount of bursary allocated was rated at M = 2.98 (SD = 0.67) based on a five points scale. The findings revealed that the relationship between consistency of amount of bursary allocated and equity in access to education was positive but not statistically significant, r(28) = .058, p .763.

CONCLUSIONS

This study made the following conclusions:

i. Bursaries allocated to deserving learners are not disbursed on time. Despite this, timely disbursement of bursary funds influences equity in access to education
ii. The amount of bursary allocated to needy learners is not consistent and this scenario has negative implications on equity in access to secondary school education.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and the conclusions, the study made the following recommendations:

i. Fund managers and school administrators should streamline bursary funds allocation process by reducing red tapes and bureaucracy. This could improve timely release of funds to beneficiaries
ii. Bursary funds administrations should be encouraged to be consistent in their support to needy learners as a way of enhancing their access to education throughout the 4-year secondary school cycle, given that majority of this category of students have no other sponsors.
iii. Political interference if addressed would improve the efficiency of disbursement process which is critical in ensuring equity and efficiency
iv. It is important to automate the of bursary disbursement to strengthen the efficiency of disbursement process.

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