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The Influence of Government Sponsorship on the Academic Performance of Sponsored Students in Public Secondary Schools in Lugari Sub-County, Kenya.

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ABSTRACT

Government sponsorship programmes have become an important policy intervention to improve access to secondary education for learners from economically disadvantaged households in Kenya. Despite the expansion of bursary schemes, concerns remain regarding their effectiveness in improving students' academic performance. This study examined the influence of government sponsorship on the academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Lugari Sub-County, Kakamega County, Kenya. The study employed a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between sponsorship and academic achievement. A sample of 376 respondents comprising sponsored students, class teachers, and parents was selected using purposive sampling. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and interview schedules. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), while qualitative data were analysed thematically. The findings revealed that government sponsorship had a statistically significant positive influence on students' academic performance. Pearson correlation analysis demonstrated a strong positive relationship between government sponsorship and academic performance ($r = 0.818$, $p < .001$). Qualitative findings further showed that bursary support reduced financial constraints, improved school attendance, enhanced access to learning materials, and enabled learners to concentrate on their studies. The study concludes that government sponsorship contributes significantly to improved educational outcomes by reducing financial barriers that hinder academic success. The study recommends increasing bursary allocations, ensuring timely disbursement of funds, and strengthening monitoring mechanisms to maximize the effectiveness of government sponsorship programmes.

Keywords: Government sponsorship, academic performance, bursary programmes, secondary education, socio-economic status.

INTRODUCTION

Education remains one of the most effective instruments for promoting social mobility, reducing poverty, and fostering sustainable national development. Investment in education equips learners with the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary to participate productively in society while improving individual and household livelihoods (Khan, Fazal & Nazir, 2024). However, access to quality education continues to be constrained by socio-economic inequalities, particularly among learners from low-income households. Financial hardship often limits parents' ability to meet school-related expenses, resulting in absenteeism, poor academic performance, delayed progression, and, in some cases, school dropout (Wilson-Strydom, 2015; Gore, 2021).

In several global locations, academic achievement significantly influences prospects and quality of life; Ghana is no different (Adu Boahen & Yamauchi, 2018; Boateng, Asare, Manu, Sefah, & Adomako, 2021). However, the academic performance of students is influenced by a myriad of factors, among which the socio-economic status of parents is particularly significant. Socioeconomic status, encompassing elements such as income, educational attainment, and occupational status, plays a crucial role in shaping the educational experiences and outcomes of students (Khan, Fazal & Nazir, 2024). In the context of Ghana, and particularly in the Northern

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Region, socio-economic disparities are stark and pervasive. This part of the country is said to have higher poverty rates and less educational performance in comparison with the rest of the nation (Aheto-Tsegah, 2011). These socio-economic challenges have profound implications for the educational system and student performance. The Northern Region's unique socio-economic landscape makes it an important focus for understanding how parental socio-economic status influence student academic outcomes.

In Kenya, the government has implemented various education financing initiatives aimed at promoting equitable access to secondary education. Among these initiatives are the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) bursaries, county bursaries, and other government sponsorship programs designed to support learners from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. These interventions seek to reduce financial barriers by assisting students in meeting school fees and other educational expenses, thereby improving retention, completion rates, and academic achievement. Such programs are consistent with the national commitment to achieving equitable and inclusive quality education as envisioned under the national education policy framework and the global Sustainable Development Goal Four (SDG 4), which advocates inclusive and equitable quality education for all.

Although government sponsorship programs have expanded educational access, evidence regarding their effectiveness in improving academic performance remains mixed. Several studies have reported that financial assistance enhances school attendance, reduces absenteeism, improves learners' psychological well-being, and increases access to essential learning resources (Murphy & Tobin, 2011; Jensen, 2013; Pungello et al., 2009). Conversely, other studies argue that financial support alone may not guarantee improved academic outcomes because academic achievement is also influenced by household socio-economic conditions, parental involvement, school environment, learner motivation, and the availability of instructional resources. These inconsistencies suggest that the relationship between government sponsorship and academic performance remains context-specific and requires further empirical investigation.

Lugari Sub-County presents a suitable context for examining this relationship because many households depend on small-scale agriculture and informal economic activities that generate unstable incomes. Consequently, a substantial proportion of students rely on government bursaries to remain in school. Despite these interventions, schools in the sub-county continue to report varying levels of academic performance among sponsored learners, raising questions about the extent to which government sponsorship contributes to improved educational outcomes (Mutisya, M., & Ngware, 2022).

This study therefore examined the influence of government sponsorship on the academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Lugari Sub-County. Specifically, it assessed whether government sponsorship significantly influences academic performance and explored how financial support contributes to improved learning outcomes. The findings provide empirical evidence to inform education financing policies and strengthen interventions aimed at improving academic achievement among learners from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds.

Objective of the Study

To evaluate the influence of government sponsorship on the academic performance of sponsored students in public secondary schools in Lugari Sub-County, Kenya.

Research Question

What is the influence of government sponsorship on the academic performance of sponsored students in public secondary schools in Lugari Sub-County?

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory (Maslow, 1962; 1970a; 1971), a motivational theory in psychology that explains human behavior in terms of a five-tier model of needs: physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. According to Maslow, needs lower in the hierarchy must be

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satisfied before individuals can effectively pursue higher-order needs. In the context of education, this implies that learners cannot fully concentrate on academic tasks unless their basic needs are met.

For students from low socio-economic backgrounds, unmet physiological needs such as food, clothing, and shelter may hinder their ability to focus and retain information in class. Similarly, the absence of safety—whether in the form of financial insecurity, unstable home environments, or unsafe school conditions—can create anxiety that interferes with learning. Belonging needs are also critical; learners who feel socially excluded due to poverty or stigma may lack the peer support and classroom collaboration necessary for academic success. At the esteem level, students require recognition, encouragement, and self-confidence to engage fully in learning activities. Finally, at the self-actualization stage, students are able to explore their creativity, set personal goals, and pursue excellence once the foundational needs are adequately met.

Maslow's theory is particularly relevant to this study because sponsorship programs for students in public secondary schools in Lugari Sub-County aim to bridge socio-economic gaps by meeting the basic physiological and safety needs of learners. For instance, bursaries and school feeding programs address food security and tuition requirements, thereby creating an enabling environment for learners to progress to higher levels of the hierarchy. When these needs are satisfied, students are more motivated to engage academically, develop self-esteem, and eventually reach their potential in self-actualization.

While Maslow's framework provides a strong basis for linking socio-economic background and sponsorship to academic performance, critics argue that human needs are not always strictly hierarchical and may vary across cultural contexts. Nevertheless, its holistic approach to human motivation offers a useful lens for understanding the challenges faced by sponsored students. This framework thus guides the study in examining how sponsorship influences learners' academic achievement through the satisfaction or frustration of various levels of need.

Government Sponsorship and Academic Performance

Government sponsorship has increasingly become an important policy strategy for promoting equitable access to education, particularly among learners from socio-economically disadvantaged households. Financial support programmes seek to reduce educational inequalities by enabling vulnerable students to meet school-related expenses, remain in school, and complete their education. According to the World Bank (2023), financial barriers remain one of the leading causes of educational exclusion in low- and middle-income countries, particularly among learners from poor households. Consequently, governments have continued to invest in bursaries, scholarships, and other education financing programmes to improve access, retention, and academic achievement.

Education financing has been identified as a key determinant of learners' educational outcomes because it reduces direct and indirect schooling costs that frequently disrupt learning. School fees, textbooks, uniforms, transportation, examination fees, and other instructional materials constitute substantial financial obligations for many households. Families with limited financial resources often struggle to meet these costs, exposing learners to absenteeism, psychological distress, poor concentration, delayed progression, and, ultimately, poor academic performance (Khan, 2024). Government sponsorship therefore serves as a social protection mechanism by reducing the financial burden on households and creating favourable conditions for learning.

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated a positive relationship between financial assistance and students' academic performance. Reardon and Portilla (2016) observed that learners from financially stable households generally outperform those from economically disadvantaged families because they have better access to educational resources, supportive learning environments, and opportunities for cognitive development. Similarly, Jensen (2009) argued that financial deprivation affects learners through inadequate nutrition, chronic stress, poor health, and limited access to learning materials, all of which undermine concentration, motivation, and academic achievement. These findings suggest that financial support programmes improve learning outcomes by addressing some of the socio-economic barriers that hinder educational success.

The UNESCO (2024) further emphasizes that equitable education financing is essential for achieving inclusive and quality education as envisioned under Sustainable Development Goal Four (SDG 4). According to UNESCO

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(2024), targeted financial assistance enables disadvantaged learners to participate fully in schooling by reducing dropout rates, increasing attendance, and improving educational completion. Such interventions are particularly important in developing countries where poverty remains a significant obstacle to educational participation.

Beyond improving school attendance, government sponsorship contributes to academic performance through several indirect pathways. Financial support reduces anxiety associated with unpaid school fees, improves access to textbooks and instructional materials, facilitates participation in examinations, and allows parents to allocate limited household resources towards complementary educational needs such as uniforms, transport, nutrition, and healthcare (Murphy & Tobin, 2011). Learners who consistently attend school and access adequate learning resources are generally more likely to perform better academically than those whose education is frequently interrupted by financial constraints.

However, the literature also demonstrates that financial support alone may not guarantee improved academic achievement. Academic performance is influenced by numerous interacting factors, including parental education, household income, school environment, teacher quality, learner motivation, parental involvement, peer influence, and availability of learning resources (Adepoju, 2003; Gorski, 2013). Consequently, although government sponsorship addresses financial barriers, its effectiveness depends on the broader socio-economic and educational environment within which learners' study.

Within Kenya, government bursary programmes administered through the National Government Constituencies Development Fund (NG-CDF), county governments, and other public agencies have significantly expanded educational opportunities for learners from disadvantaged households. These programmes are intended to enhance educational equity by supporting learners who would otherwise be unable to complete secondary education due to financial hardship. Nevertheless, several studies have reported variations in the effectiveness of bursary programmes because of delayed disbursement, inadequate allocations, weak targeting mechanisms, and increasing educational costs (Khan, 2024). Such challenges may reduce the extent to which sponsorship translates into improved academic outcomes.

Lugari Sub-County presents an important context for examining this relationship because most households depend on small-scale farming and casual employment, both of which generate unstable incomes. As a result, many students rely on government sponsorship to meet educational expenses. Despite continued government investment through bursary programmes, differences in academic performance among sponsored learners remain evident. These variations raise important questions regarding the effectiveness of government sponsorship in improving educational outcomes within the local context.

Although previous empirical studies generally agree that financial assistance improves educational access and retention, fewer studies have specifically examined the influence of government sponsorship on academic performance among students in public secondary schools in Lugari Sub-County using both quantitative and qualitative evidence. Most existing studies have concentrated on educational access, school completion, or general socio-economic status without adequately explaining how sponsorship influences academic performance within rural Kenyan secondary schools. This contextual and methodological gap justified the present study.

Conceptual Framework

Source: Field Data (2026)

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the influence of government sponsorship on the academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Lugari Sub-County, Kenya. A mixed-methods approach was considered appropriate because it provides a comprehensive understanding of a research problem by combining numerical evidence with participants lived experiences, thereby strengthening the validity and interpretation of findings (John W. Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Quantitative data established the statistical relationship between government

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sponsorship and academic performance, while qualitative data complemented these findings by explaining parents' and guardians' experiences regarding sponsorship and educational outcomes.

The study was conducted in Lugari Sub-County, Kakamega County, Western Kenya. The sub-county was selected because it has a relatively high enrolment of students benefiting from government sponsorship programmes and because many households depend on small-scale farming and informal economic activities as their primary sources of livelihood. These socio-economic characteristics make the area appropriate for examining the influence of government sponsorship on academic performance.

The target population comprised 16,910 respondents, including 8,385 students, 8,385 parents or guardians, and 140 class teachers drawn from 34 public secondary schools in Lugari Sub-County. Using the sampling table developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), a sample size of 376 respondents was determined to be adequate for the study population. The final sample consisted of 171 sponsored students, 171 parents or guardians, and 34 class teachers. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, whereby only students who had benefited from government sponsorship from Form One to Form Four, their parents or guardians, and class teachers responsible for sponsored students were included. Purposive sampling enabled the researcher to obtain information-rich participants who possessed the knowledge and experience necessary to address the study objectives (Orodho, 2019).

Data were collected using structured questionnaires administered to sponsored students and class teachers and semi-structured interview schedules administered to parents or guardians. The questionnaires generated quantitative data on government sponsorship and students' academic performance, while the interviews provided qualitative insights into how sponsorship influenced learners' educational experiences. Combining these instruments enhanced methodological triangulation and improved the credibility of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Before the main study, a pilot study was conducted in four public secondary schools that were not included in the final sample. The pilot study assessed the clarity, relevance, and suitability of the research instruments while identifying any ambiguities requiring revision (Leon, 2011). Content validity was established through expert evaluation, where specialists in educational research reviewed the instruments for relevance, clarity, and adequacy in measuring the study constructs. Their recommendations informed revisions before the instruments were administered during the main study (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, which measures the internal consistency of scale items. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.70 or above indicates acceptable reliability. All study constructs exceeded the recommended threshold, confirming that the research instruments were sufficiently reliable for data collection.

Following approval from the School of Graduate Studies, Kibabii University, research authorization was obtained from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), the County Commissioner, the Lugari Sub-County Director of Education, and the principals of participating schools before data collection commenced. Participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents provided informed consent before completing the questionnaires or participating in interviews. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process by ensuring that respondents' identities were not disclosed and that the collected information was used solely for academic purposes.

Quantitative data were coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 27. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize respondents' characteristics and perceptions regarding government sponsorship. Inferential statistics comprised Pearson product-moment correlation analysis to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between government sponsorship and academic performance, and multiple linear regression analysis to establish the predictive influence of government sponsorship on academic performance. Statistical significance was evaluated at the 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$).

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Qualitative data obtained from interviews were analysed thematically by organizing participants' responses into recurrent themes that complemented and explained the quantitative findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The use of both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, complemented by qualitative thematic analysis, enabled the study to generate robust empirical evidence regarding the influence of government sponsorship on the academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Lugari Sub-County.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Analysis of Government Sponsorship

The study sought to determine the nature of government sponsorship received by students in public secondary schools in Lugari Sub-County. Descriptive statistics were used to establish the amount of bursary received, respondents' perceptions regarding the adequacy of sponsorship, and the extent to which government sponsorship contributed to learners' educational needs.

Descriptive Statistics on Government Sponsorship and Academic Performance

To determine respondents' perceptions regarding the influence of government sponsorship on academic performance, participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with statements relating to sponsorship and academic achievement.

Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from **1 = Strongly Disagree** to **5 = Strongly Agree**. Mean scores and standard deviations were computed to determine the central tendency and variability of responses.

Table 4.1: **Descriptive Statistics on Government Sponsorship and Academic Performance**

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
I arrive at school on time, and I don't miss lessons.	1	5	3.99	.895
I concentrate in the classroom during the lesson periods.	1	5	3.97	.977
I get my 3 meals in a day whether at school or home.	1	5	3.98	.947
I have all the learning materials, including textbooks and pens.	1	5	4.03	.880
I do not have any health problems.	1	5	3.99	.893
When sick, I get medical attention on time.	1	5	3.99	.906
I have a full school uniform.	1	5	3.97	.930
I have a good study room at home with enough space and a lighting system.	1	5	3.95	.910
I have satisfactory bedding at home.	1	5	4.07	.867
I have satisfactory clothing at home.	1	5	4.12	.814
I walk a long distance to school.	1	5	4.14	.811
My family gets access to clean water at home.	1	5	4.07	.867
My family has a satisfactory shelter at home.	1	5	4.12	.814
My parents buy for me the key study materials, including exercise books and textbooks.	1	5	4.15	.764
My parents get medical attention immediately they fall sick.	1	5	4.16	.790
Our family compound is secure at night	1	5	4.14	.779

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Sometimes I am sent home to collect school fees and other fees related to academics.	1	5	4.11	.737
Valid N (listwise)	1	5	4.06	.857

Source: Field Data (2026)

Table 4.1 shows that respondents generally agreed they experienced favourable welfare, learning, health, and home conditions, as reflected by an overall mean score of 4.06 (SD = 0.857). High mean scores across all indicators suggest that most students had access to essential learning materials, timely medical care, adequate nutrition, stable housing, clean water, and supportive home environments, all of which are associated with improved academic engagement and performance (Kim, 2022; Castro et al., 2023; UNESCO, 2023; World Health Organization, 2023; Mutisya & Ngware, 2022). However, the relatively high agreement that students were sometimes sent home to collect school fees (M = 4.11) indicates that financial constraints remain a challenge despite generally positive welfare conditions, potentially disrupting attendance and learning (Wanjala, Simatwa, & Ayodo, 2023). The low standard deviations (0.737–0.977) further demonstrate consistency in respondents' perceptions. Overall, the findings support previous studies showing that adequate welfare, parental support, and financial sponsorship enhance students' educational participation and academic achievement by reducing barriers to learning (Oketch, 2007; Lewin, 2009; Dynarski, 2003; Angrist & Lavy, 2009).

Correlation Analysis between Government Sponsorship and Academic Performance

Table 4.2: Government Sponsorship and Academic Performance

		1	2
Academic Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.818**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
Government Sponsorship	Pearson Correlation	.818**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Source: Field Data (2026)

The correlation analysis indicates a strong positive relationship between government sponsorship and academic performance ($r = 0.818$, $p < 0.001$). This means that higher levels of government sponsorship are associated with better academic performance among the respondents. The relationship is statistically significant at the 0.01 level, implying that the observed association is unlikely to have occurred by chance. Overall, the findings suggest that government sponsorship plays an important role in supporting and enhancing students' academic performance.

Regression Analysis Government Sponsorship and Academic Performance

Table 4.3: Government sponsorship on the academic performance

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.818[a]	.670	.669	3.75223

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8876.084	1	8876.084	630.438	.000[b]

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	Residual	4378.645	297	14.079		
	Total	13254.728	298			

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	6.306	1.041		6.057	.000
	Government Sponsorship	.808	.032	.818	25.109	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Academic Performance

Source: Field Data (2026)

The regression analysis examining the relationship between government sponsorship and academic performance reveals a strong and statistically significant positive association. The model summary shows a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.818, indicating a strong linear relationship between government sponsorship (independent variable) and students' academic performance (dependent variable).

The coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.670, meaning that approximately 67% of the variation in academic performance can be explained by the presence or absence of government sponsorship. The adjusted R^2 of 0.669, which corrects for the number of predictors in the model, confirms that this predictive power remains robust and is not inflated by model complexity. The standard error of the estimate, 3.75223, indicates the average deviation of observed academic performance scores from the values predicted by the model, suggesting a relatively tight fit of the regression line to the observed data.

The ANOVA table reinforces the statistical significance of the model. The regression sum of squares (8876.084) represents the variation explained by government sponsorship, while the residual sum of squares (4378.645) represents unexplained variation.

The F-statistic of 630.438 with a significance level (Sig.) of 0.000 demonstrates that the regression model is highly significant, confirming that government sponsorship is a meaningful predictor of academic outcomes. This strong F-value implies that the variability in academic performance attributable to government sponsorship is substantially greater than the variability left unexplained, highlighting the efficacy of government support in enhancing student achievement.

The coefficients provide a clear interpretation of the magnitude and direction of the relationship. The unstandardized regression coefficient (B) for government sponsorship is 0.808, indicating that students who receive government sponsorship exhibit, on average, a 0.808 unit increase in academic performance for each incremental improvement in sponsorship provision.

The standardized coefficient (Beta) of 0.818 confirms that government sponsorship is the most influential predictor within this model, demonstrating its substantial effect relative to other potential academic determinants. The t-value of 25.109, with a p-value of 0.000, further underscores the statistical significance of this effect. The constant term of 6.306 represents the baseline academic performance score for students who do not receive government sponsorship, providing a reference point against which the benefits of sponsorship can be measured.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that government sponsorship plays a significant role in supporting academic performance among students from low socio-economic backgrounds. Government sponsorship programs were found to reduce the financial burden on households, particularly by covering tuition and other key educational expenses. A strong positive relationship was observed between government sponsorship and academic performance (r =

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0.818, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that increased government support is associated with improved academic outcomes.

Recommendations

Non-governmental organizations and development partners should consider complementing government sponsorship through targeted interventions such as provision of learning materials, school feeding programmes, and infrastructure support. Such integrated support systems would help address non-tuition barriers that continue to affect academic performance among sponsored students. Partnerships with schools should be strengthened to ensure more holistic support for learners from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Suggestions for Further Research

There is a need for in-depth investigation into the psychological and behavioural outcomes of sponsored students, including motivation, self-esteem, and academic resilience, and how these factors interact with socio-economic background.

Lastly, similar studies could be replicated in other sub-counties and regions to allow for comparative analysis and generalization of findings across different socio-economic and educational contexts.

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