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The Role of the Sidoarjo Regency Government in Supporting SDGs 4 Through the 2025 Educational Scholarship Program

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of the Sidoarjo Regency Government in supporting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4 on quality education, through the 2025 education scholarship program. The study aims to analyze the government's role in expanding educational access and supporting inclusive education through scholarship policies. This research used a descriptive qualitative approach through document analysis. Secondary data were obtained from official government documents, scholarship program information, and relevant scientific journals. The findings show that the 2025 scholarship program contributed to improving educational access, with 2,007 beneficiaries receiving various amounts of financial assistance. The program reflects the active role of the local government in supporting human resource development and achieving SDGs 4. However, several challenges remain, including targeting accuracy, unequal distribution, and limited monitoring and evaluation systems. The study concludes that the scholarship program is a strategic policy for supporting quality education, but improvements in implementation, evaluation, and governance are still needed to maximize its impact on sustainable educational development.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini membahas peran Pemerintah Kabupaten Sidoarjo dalam mendukung pencapaian Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) khususnya tujuan keempat (SDGs 4) melalui program beasiswa Pendidikan tahun 2025. Permasalahan yang diangkat adalah bagaimana pemerintah daerah berperan dalam meningkatkan akses dan kualitas Pendidikan melalui kebijakan beasiswa di Tengah masih adanya kesenjangan Pendidikan. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis peran pemerintah daerah dalam pelaksanaan program beasiswa serta mengidentifikasi efektivitasnya dalam mendukung Pendidikan yang inklusif dan merata. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif melalui studi dokumen dengan memanfaatkan data sekunder dari dokumen resmi pemerintah Kabupaten Sidoarjo, informasi program beasiswa, serta berbagai jurnal ilmiah yang relevan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa program beasiswa Pendidikan tahun 2025 memiliki kontribusi dalam memperluas akses pendidikan dengan jumlah penerima sebanyak 2.007 orang dan besaran bantuan yang bervariasi. Program ini juga mencerminkan peran aktif pemerintah daerah dalam mendukung Pembangunan sumber daya manusia dan pencapaian SDGs 4. Namun, pelaksanaannya belum optimal karena masih terdapat kendala dalam ketepatan sasaran, pemerataan distribusi, serta belum maksimalnya sistem monitoring dan evaluasi program. Kesimpulan dari penelitian ini adalah bahwa program beasiswa merupakan kebijakan strategis dalam mendukung Pendidikan berkualitas, tetapi perlu didukung oleh perbaikan implementasi, penguatan evaluasi, serta peningkatan kualitas tata Kelola agar memberikan dampak yang lebih optimal.

Education is a basic need that plays a critical role in society. It functions not only as a means to acquire knowledge, but also as a primary factor in enhancing the quality of human resources. Through education, people can develop better skills, capabilities, and mindsets, enabling them to participate in both social and economic development. Consequently, education is often viewed as a long-term investment in a nation's progress. The better the quality of a country's policies, the greater the opportunity to create a productive, independent society capable of competing in the era of globalization. UNESCO emphasizes that education is a fundamental human right that must be accessible to everyone equally, regardless of social or economic background (UNESCO, 2015). Furthermore, the World Bank (2018) explains that education is closely linked to improving societal welfare, as it drives economic growth and reduces poverty rates.

In the context of global development, education is a primary focus of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically Goal 4: Quality Education. SDG 4 highlights the importance of providing inclusive, equitable, and quality education, as well as promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all (United Nations, 2015). This goal demonstrates that education is understood not merely as access to schooling, but also as something tied to the quality of the learning process, equal educational opportunities, and students' abilities to adapt to changing times. Quality education is expected to cultivate competent, competitive human resources capable of supporting sustainable development. Achieving SDG 4 requires collaboration among various stakeholders, including central and regional governments, educational institutions, and the public. In its implementation, SDG 4 emphasizes not only expanding access to formal education, but also improving the quality, equity, and relevance of education to meet societal needs. This approach demands integration between national policies and local-level execution, as regional governments serve as the key actors in ensuring educational policies fit local contexts.

In Indonesia, efforts to achieve SDG 4 still face several challenges. One lingering issue is the inequality of educational access across regions and social groups. Differences in economic conditions, educational facilities, and educator quality mean that not all community members enjoy the same opportunities. Individuals from low-income families generally face difficulties continuing their education to higher levels due to financial constraints. Beyond economic factors, educational inequality is influenced by the effectiveness of regional fiscal policies in allocating budgets to the education sector. Regional governments play a strategic role in ensuring that budget allocations go beyond administrative requirements to directly impact public access to education. Public spending on education thus becomes a vital instrument for driving human resource quality at the regional level. The effectiveness of education spending is measured not just by the size of the budget, but by how well those policies reach economically vulnerable groups. Research by Susanto et al. (2025) indicates that educational access inequality in Indonesia remains significantly influenced by social and economic conditions. This highlights that educational issues involve not only teaching quality, but also the public's ability to obtain decent access to education. Additionally, research by Lidyanti and Hanifa (2022) shows that poverty and unemployment rates in Sidoarjo Regency affect regional economic growth. This reinforces the idea that educational policies, such as scholarship programs, play a strategic role in reducing socio-economic inequality by broadening educational access.

The Indonesian government has implemented various policies to improve the quality and equity of education, notably through educational assistance and scholarship programs. Scholarship programs represent a public policy aimed at helping students

continue their education without being hindered by costs. Through these programs, the government strives to expand educational access, particularly for low-income communities and high-achieving students. Aside from financial assistance, scholarships are expected to boost students' learning motivation and academic performance. Research by Meiriza et al. (2023) explains that scholarship programs, including KIP Kuliah, positively influence learning motivation and higher education participation among university students. With financial support, students can focus more on their learning process, increasing their chances of educational success. Similarly, research by Amelia and Arisetyawan (2024) demonstrates that public expenditure on education at the regency/city level in East Java significantly impacts the Human Development Index (HDI). This underscores that regional government investment in education is a crucial factor in building human resource quality and achieving sustainable development. However, the success of scholarship programs depends not only on the amount of aid given, but also on the quality of policy implementation and public service delivery by the government. Inaccurate targeting, lack of transparency, and suboptimal oversight systems can diminish the effectiveness of scholarship programs in reaching their educational goals. Research by Khoiriyah and Ahmad (2023) shows that scholarship implementation in Indonesia has helped expand access, though challenges remain regarding equitable distribution and policy execution. Madani et al. (2025) similarly state that scholarship programs contribute to expanding higher education access for low-income groups, yet require further optimization to exert a broader impact on educational quality. Moreover, research by Saputra et al. (2025) indicates that scholarship utilization positively correlates with student learning outcomes, signifying that educational aid enhances recipients' academic competence. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of these programs must be continuously evaluated to ensure benefits extend beyond the short term to support long-term human resource development. Thus, scholarship programs should be viewed not just as financial aid, but as strategic instruments for educational development and social inequality reduction.

At the regional level, local governments play a key role in supporting the SDGs through educational policies tailored to local needs. Regional governments are responsible not only for providing educational services, but also for creating policies that foster equal access. One manifestation of such policies is local government scholarship programs. Sidoarjo Regency is one area executing a scholarship program to enhance human resource quality and expand educational opportunities. These scholarships are awarded to students across various categories as a form of local government support for education.

However, research specifically examining the role of the Sidoarjo Regency Government in supporting SDG 4 through its 2025 scholarship program remains relatively limited. Most studies discuss scholarships broadly without linking them to SDG achievement at the local government level. Therefore, this study offers novelty by analyzing the scholarship program not only from the perspective of expanding access, but also by connecting it to the regional government's role in supporting SDG 4. Additionally, this research focuses on the public service implementation of the scholarship program in Sidoarjo Regency.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the role of the Sidoarjo Regency Government in supporting the achievement of SDG 4 through its 2025 educational scholarship program. The study also examines the execution of the scholarship program

as a public service in education and its contribution to improving public access. Through this research, it is hoped that a clear picture of the regional scholarship implementation will emerge, serving as evaluation material for the government to enhance future educational policy effectiveness.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive method using document analysis or literature review. A qualitative approach was selected because this study focuses on understanding in depth the role of the Sidoarjo Regency Government in supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4: Quality Education (SDG 4), through the implementation of the 2025 Educational Scholarship Program. This approach is used to comprehend public policy phenomena more comprehensively based on data and information obtained from various written sources. The descriptive method is used to systematically describe conditions, program implementation, and the forms of contribution made by the local government to increase public access to education through the scholarship program. According to Fadli (2021), descriptive qualitative research aims to understand social phenomena through the collection of descriptive data, thereby providing a deep overview of the research subject.

The research was conducted with a focus on the 2025 Educational Scholarship Program organized by the Sidoarjo Regency Government. This study falls under document-based research as all data utilized comes from written sources without direct field data collection. The selection of this method is based on the consideration that official government documents, policy reports, and scientific literature can provide relevant information regarding the implementation of the scholarship program and its connection to the achievement of SDG 4. In addition, document analysis is considered appropriate for analyzing public policy because it allows the researcher to examine policy content, program objectives, and implementation in greater depth.

The type of data used in this study is secondary data. Secondary data was obtained from various sources relevant to the research topic, such as official documents from the Sidoarjo Regency Government, announcements and information related to the 2025 educational scholarship program, educational statistical data, government policy reports, and scientific journal articles addressing education, scholarship programs, public service, and SDG implementation. Furthermore, this study also utilizes supporting sources in the form of reports from international organizations such as the United Nations and the World Bank related to sustainable educational development. The use of these diverse data sources aims to strengthen the analysis and enhance the research's validity.

Data collection techniques were carried out through documentation and literature review. The documentation technique was conducted by gathering, reading, reviewing, and identifying various documents related to the educational scholarship program in Sidoarjo Regency. The analyzed documents include information on scholarship recipients, program categories, educational assistance amounts, and local government policies regarding education. Meanwhile, the literature review was conducted by reviewing various theories, previous research findings, books, and scientific journals relevant to the research theme. This technique was used to establish a theoretical foundation while strengthening the analysis of the local government's role in supporting

quality education through scholarship programs. In this study, the researcher also conducted a data selection process to ensure that the data used aligned with the research focus. The gathered data was then classified based on specific themes, such as educational policy, scholarship program implementation, educational access, and the program's contribution toward achieving SDG 4. The data classification process was performed to make the analysis more focused and to help the researcher understand the relationships between data findings throughout the study.

Data analysis techniques used the interactive analysis model developed by Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman. This model consists of three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The data reduction stage was performed by selecting, simplifying, and focusing data relevant to the research objectives. At this stage, the study filtered various information gathered from documents and literature so that only data directly related to scholarship program implementation and SDG 4 achievement was used in the analysis. The next stage was data display. The reduced data was systematically arranged in descriptive narratives to make it easier to comprehend and analyze. Data display was carried out by linking research findings with relevant theories and previous studies. Thus, the research not only describes data descriptively but also provides an interpretation of the local government's role in supporting quality education through scholarship policies.

The final stage is drawing conclusions. Conclusions were derived based on a comprehensive interpretation of the analyzed data. At this stage, the researcher identified the role of the Sidoarjo Regency Government in supporting SDG 4 through the 2025 educational scholarship program, including various supporting and hindering factors in the program's execution. Through these analytical steps, the study is expected to provide a clear picture of the scholarship program's implementation as a form of public policy in the field of education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Education is closely linked to sustainable development because it enables people to build their capacity, skills, and critical thinking abilities to address both social and economic challenges. Within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), education is set as Goal 4, which emphasizes the importance of inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all. Kioupi and Voulvoulis (2019) explain that sustainable education serves as a systematic framework supporting SDG implementation by strengthening individual competencies and community social development. Education is viewed not merely as a process of transferring knowledge, but also as an instrument for character building, raising social awareness, and fostering public participation in development. Consequently, the success of the SDGs is heavily influenced by the quality of educational policies enacted by local governments. Furthermore, Leal Filho et al. (2019) highlight that education plays a vital role in accelerating SDG implementation by fostering public awareness of sustainability issues and enhancing human resource quality. Quality education yields a more adaptive and innovative society capable of navigating global developments. In the context of Sidoarjo Regency, the 2025 educational scholarship program represents an integration of local policy with global development agendas aimed at expanding public educational access.

From a public economics perspective, the scholarship program can also be understood as a regional government fiscal intervention designed to address market failure in the education sector. When market mechanisms fail to guarantee equal educational access, the government intervenes through redistributive policies in the form of educational assistance. This policy serves not only as a social instrument, but also as a long-term investment in human capital development. Expanding access to education through scholarship programs is expected to boost labor productivity, ultimately driving regional economic growth. Moreover, policy effectiveness depends significantly on consistency between budget planning and field implementation; discrepancies between the two can prevent policies from meeting their intended targets. Therefore, strengthening transparent, performance-based regional fiscal governance is necessary to ensure every spending decision in the education sector delivers measurable improvements to public welfare.

From a public governance perspective, the local government's role in the education sector cannot be viewed simply as a service provider, but as part of an interconnected policy system. Regional governments function as key actors integrating educational planning, execution, and evaluation into a continuous cycle. This encompasses a regulatory function regarding technical policy formulation, a distributive function through the delivery of educational aid, and a control function ensuring program implementation aligns with principles of effectiveness and social justice. Additionally, local governments act as coordinating entities bridging the interests of the public, educational institutions, and national policy objectives. In this context, the scholarship program should not be seen as a standalone measure, but as part of a complex regional educational governance system. Program success relies heavily on the local government's capacity to integrate data-driven planning, transparent execution, and outcome-based evaluation.

Within the framework of implementing sustainable development goals—particularly in the education sector—local governments occupy a crucial position in keeping policies aligned with set directions. This role extends beyond administrative duties to include strategic responsibilities in guiding, overseeing, and optimizing local educational programs. Viewed from a public policy governance lens, regional governments perform a multidimensional role. First, as regulators, local governments are authorized to formulate technical rules governing educational programs, including recipient criteria and distribution mechanisms. These regulations provide a foundation ensuring programs operate in a structured, policy-driven manner rather than sporadically.

Second, local governments serve as facilitators, providing resource support through funding, administrative systems, and infrastructure. In this context, the Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBD) serves as the primary instrument enabling sustainable scholarship program realization. Third, regional governments function as public service providers directly responsible for field implementation. This includes registration processes, data verification of prospective recipients, and targeted aid distribution to reach vulnerable groups in need.

Fourth, the role of policy oversight is equally vital. Regional governments must ensure that all processes adhere to principles of transparency, accountability, and integrity. Oversight also involves periodic evaluations to assess program effectiveness in achieving established educational goals. Thus, the scholarship program in Sidoarjo Regency should

be understood not merely as financial aid, but as the outcome of a complex, integrated local governance system supporting SDG 4 achievement. The program's ultimate success hinges on how effectively the local government balances its roles across every stage of the policy lifecycle.

The 2025 Sidoarjo Regency Educational Scholarship Program is organized as part of the local government's priority policy in education and human resource development. According to official data from the Sidoarjo Regency Government, the total number of scholarship recipients reached 2,007 individuals, divided into several categories: 770 domestic academic scholarship recipients, 7 international academic scholarship recipients, 230 non-academic scholarship recipients, 500 low-income student scholarship recipients, and 500 religious sector scholarship recipients. Each recipient category has distinct characteristics and objectives tailored to community needs and local educational policy directions. This program is funded through the Sidoarjo Regency Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBD) as a manifestation of the local government's commitment to expanding access to higher education for the public. The scholarship is awarded as educational financial aid amounting to IDR 5,000,000 for domestic recipients and IDR 30,000,000 for international study program recipients. This policy demonstrates that the regional government is not only attempting to assist the public with educational financing, but also striving to enhance human resource competitiveness through support for international education.

The program's execution involves several administrative stages, ranging from the registration process, document verification, and administrative selection to the formal determination of recipients based on the Regent's Decree. The Sidoarjo Regency Government opened registration for the scholarship program from March 17 to April 30, 2025, through the official regional scholarship website. Upon the conclusion of the registration period, a verification team comprising several regional government agencies examined documents and evaluated candidate eligibility prior to announcing the selection results. This mechanism was designed to enhance the transparency and accountability of public services in delivering educational assistance programs. Meanwhile, eligibility criteria are tailored to the respective program categories. In the academic category, recipients are required to possess specific academic achievements and maintain active student status. In the non-academic category, evaluation is based on achievements in sports, the arts, or other skill competencies. Meanwhile, the low-income student category considers family economic conditions as the primary indicator for receiving aid. For the religious category, the local government pays special attention to students possessing competence and achievements in religious fields. This variety of categories indicates that the local government is attempting to apply a more inclusive approach in supporting equitable access to education across Sidoarjo Regency.

Substantively, the primary objectives of this scholarship program are to broaden public opportunities to pursue higher education, improve the quality of regional human resources, and support the achievement of Sidoarjo Regency's Human Development Index (HDI). Furthermore, this program serves as a component of the local government's strategy to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4 regarding quality education. With this educational assistance, the regional government hopes that economically disadvantaged individuals will retain opportunities to continue their education and enhance their skills amid increasingly competitive global challenges. Viewed from a public policy implementation

perspective, the distribution of the scholarship program in Sidoarjo Regency displays affirmative efforts toward expanding educational access. However, from a policy analysis perspective, a large number of recipients does not automatically reflect overall program effectiveness. This stems from challenges in policy targeting—specifically, ensuring that aid truly reaches the most vulnerable groups. In modern public policy, targeting precision serves as a primary indicator for assessing program implementation quality, rather than relying solely on total output volume. Additionally, limitations persist in monitoring and evaluation systems, which could potentially impact future policy decision-making. Without long-term, data-driven evaluation, scholarship programs run the risk of remaining mere administrative policies lacking significant transformational impact.

In its analytical framework, this study employs the interactive model by Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, which encompasses three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The data reduction results focus on the number of recipients, program categories, and assistance amounts provided. The reduction results show that the scholarship program has a broad scope and high potential impact. This aligns with the concept of SDG 4, which emphasizes affordable and equitable education for all members of society (Gunawan, 2024). Next, during the data display stage, it becomes evident that the scholarship program does not focus solely on academic achievement, but also encompasses non-academic and religious aspects. This demonstrates that the local government is attempting a mainstreaming approach within educational policy. Critically, however, this approach leaves unresolved issues regarding targeting precision. In the Indonesian context, educational inequality remains a primary challenge driven by socio-economic factors, regional disparities, and institutional quality (Fatmawati et al., 2025). Such inequality prevents all members of society from enjoying equal access to quality education. Ingutia (2020) explains that educational marginalization can hinder the achievement of sustainable development because specific social groups continue to face restricted access to education. Therefore, despite reaching 2,007 recipients, it is not guaranteed that all most-in-need groups have been accommodated optimally.

At the conclusion-drawing stage, this scholarship program can be categorized as a distributive policy aimed at reducing educational access gaps. This policy aligns with efforts to achieve SDG 4, which globally targets quality education and lifelong learning opportunities. Education plays a strategic role in reducing poverty and social inequality; thus, providing aid through scholarships serves as a vital instrument in sustainable development (Afandi et al., 2025). In its execution, public service quality acts as a crucial factor determining the success of educational scholarship programs. Transparent, responsive, and easily accessible services build public trust in local government. Glass et al. (2019) explain that good governance is an essential factor in supporting SDG achievement through public participation, policy transparency, and service accountability. In the context of educational scholarship programs, selection process transparency and information accessibility serve as major indicators of successful policy implementation.

Furthermore, public service quality is influenced by government officials' motivation to serve the public. Schott et al. (2019) explain that public service motivation (PSM) is closely linked to the quality of services delivered by the government. Public officials with a strong service orientation tend to be more responsive, empathetic, and responsible in

carrying out their public duties. Therefore, the administrative service for scholarship programs must be conducted professionally so that the public gains fair, non-discriminatory access. Looking deeper into the perspective of educational participation, policy success should be measured not only by initial access, but also by sustained participation through degree completion (Khotimah, 2022). This suggests that Sidoarjo's scholarship program needs to be complemented by mentoring and monitoring systems for recipients to maximize its impact. Without such support, financial aid risks failing to deliver optimal long-term results. Monitoring is necessary to ensure that scholarship recipients maintain academic performance and complete their education within set timelines.

The educational scholarship program conducted by the Sidoarjo Regency Government can also be analyzed through a social development lens. Education is viewed not merely as an individual need, but as a social investment yielding long-term impacts on societal welfare. When the public gains better access to education, opportunities to improve living standards increase accordingly. Therefore, scholarship programs hold a strategic function in breaking intergenerational poverty cycles. Communities previously facing economic limitations gain opportunities to elevate their quality of life through higher education. In regional development contexts, investing in the education sector exerts significant influence over human resource quality improvement; quality education yields a workforce that is more competitive, productive, and adaptable to technological advances. This is vital because present global challenges demand that the public possess adequate academic capabilities and skills to compete in the labor market. Consequently, educational scholarship programs function not merely as financial assistance, but as a strategic approach by regional governments to strengthen future human resource capacity.

Furthermore, the implementation of the scholarship program demonstrates the local government's efforts to realize the principle of social justice in education. In social justice theory, the state bears the responsibility of ensuring that all members of society have equal opportunities to access education. In reality, however, socio-economic conditions often serve as the primary driver of educational inequality. Low-income groups tend to face barriers in pursuing further education due to financial constraints. Consequently, scholarship programs function as a government intervention to bridge this gap. Nevertheless, the success of a scholarship program cannot be separated from the quality of public policy governance exercised by the local government. Good governance encompasses transparency, which is necessary so that the public clearly and openly understands how the program operates. Additionally, accountability is essential to ensure that educational aid is delivered strictly to groups meeting the recipient criteria. Without good governance, scholarship programs risk breeding public distrust toward the government. Beyond governance aspects, the effectiveness of scholarship programs is also influenced by the quality of coordination between local government and educational institutions. Universities and schools play a vital role in supporting program success by providing academic supervision for aid recipients. Such coordination is necessary so that educational assistance is not merely provided as funds, but is also accompanied by academic mentorship and support for recipients. In this way, scholarship programs can deliver a more optimal impact on improving educational quality.

In its execution, the digitalization of public services represents a crucial step in enhancing the effectiveness of educational scholarship programs. Utilizing digital systems during the registration and selection process helps increase administrative efficiency and reduces the potential for discriminatory practices in determining aid recipients. Moreover, digitalization accelerates public access to information regarding eligibility requirements, registration schedules, and selection outcomes. Digital transformation in public service delivery forms an essential part of modernizing bureaucratic processes. However, implementing digital systems brings its own set of challenges. Not all members of the public possess adequate digital literacy to navigate technology-based services. This condition can leave certain individuals struggling to understand online administrative procedures. Therefore, local governments must provide technical support and broaden program socialization to ensure the public can utilize these services effectively. An inclusive service approach is vital so that all social groups enjoy equal opportunities to access educational scholarship programs.

Advancements in information technology have driven transformations in public service governance, including within the education sector. Digitalizing public services enables governments to deliver faster, more efficient, and more transparent services. In the 2025 Sidoarjo Regency Educational Scholarship Program, the implementation of digital-based registration and selection systems reflects local government adaptation to bureaucratic modernization demands. Applying digital systems offers several advantages, such as expediting administrative processes, lowering service costs, improving data accuracy, and broadening public access to information. Furthermore, digitalization has the potential to minimize discriminatory practices during the selection process, as decisions can be made based on more objective and measurable data. Therefore, digital transformation serves as a critical factor in enhancing the implementation effectiveness of educational scholarship programs.

Furthermore, policy evaluation forms an essential part of measuring the effectiveness of educational scholarship programs. Evaluation must focus not only on the number of aid recipients, but must also measure the long-term impact of the program on society. Evaluation indicators may include recipient academic completion rates, improvements in quality of life, employability, and contributions to regional development. Through comprehensive evaluation, the government can assess how well the scholarship program achieves its established policy goals. The importance of policy evaluation also relates to the long-term sustainability of the program. Scholarship programs oriented solely toward fund distribution without clear evaluation will struggle to measure real-world impacts on the community. Consequently, local governments need to establish an integrated monitoring system to periodically track recipient progress. Such monitoring helps the government identify obstacles faced by recipients throughout their educational journey.

Educational scholarship programs not only impact access to education, but also contribute to improving human resource quality. Education supported by scholarship aid yields individuals with superior academic abilities and skill sets, enabling them to compete in the job market. McCowan (2023) explains that higher education exerts a broad impact on SDG achievement because it enhances human resource quality, strengthens social development, and drives economic growth. Consequently, local government investment in the education sector through scholarship programs can be viewed as a long-term investment in regional development. Furthermore, from a policy

evaluation perspective, it is crucial to assess program success not merely by outputs, but also by outcomes and impacts. A study by Irawan et al. (2024) emphasizes that SDG-based policies must utilize indicators capable of measuring real-world impacts on society. In this regard, Sidoarjo's scholarship program still tends to focus on the number of recipients, leaving long-term impact evaluations—such as graduation rates, quality of life improvements, and contributions to regional development—unclear.

The successful implementation of an educational scholarship program depends not only on the number of recipients or the size of the budget allocated by the local government, but also on the quality of policy governance applied. Within a good governance framework, effective public policy must satisfy principles of transparency, accountability, participation, effectiveness, and responsiveness. These five principles serve as a vital foundation ensuring that implemented policies deliver fair and sustainable benefits to the public. In the context of the 2025 Sidoarjo Regency Educational Scholarship Program, transparency represents a critical dimension regarding information openness concerning eligibility criteria, selection processes, recipient standards, and aid distribution mechanisms. Public disclosure is necessary to build public trust in the local government and prevent negative perceptions surrounding program execution. Additionally, accountability must be strengthened through reporting and evaluation mechanisms that demonstrate the extent to which the program meets its established objectives.

Public participation also plays an essential role in supporting successful program implementation. Community members serve not only as beneficiaries, but also as a source of feedback for government policy refinement. Higher public involvement during policy evaluation increases the likelihood of creating programs aligned with public needs. Therefore, local governments must establish more open communication channels so citizens can actively participate in educational policy development. Unterhalter (2024) notes that effective educational governance requires strong coordination among the government, educational institutions, and the public to achieve sustainable development goals. Thus, the success of the Sidoarjo Regency Educational Scholarship Program hinges not only on financial resources, but also on governance quality across planning, execution, and evaluation stages.

Although the 2025 Sidoarjo Regency Educational Scholarship Program contributes positively to expanding educational access, from a public policy perspective, several aspects require critical academic examination. An evaluation of this policy is essential to ensure that program implementation yields not just administrative outputs, but substantive impacts on educational quality and social equity. A primary issue to address is the potential dependency of recipients on educational aid. In the long run, policies focused solely on financial support without building recipient self-reliance risk creating dependency on government intervention. This condition can undermine the empowering, transformative potential of educational policy.

Additionally, disparities in beneficiary distribution remain possible. Although the program covers various recipient categories, a selection process that is not entirely needs-based risks misallocating aid. This can create inequities in aid distribution, particularly if the most vulnerable groups are not fully accommodated. Another critical issue is the limited transparency regarding scholarship recipient data. Incomplete information access can foster perceptions of ambiguity surrounding selection

procedures, ultimately eroding public trust in local government. Under good governance standards, transparency remains a core principle that must be upheld in public policy implementation.

Furthermore, the program continues to face challenges regarding outcome-based evaluation. To date, program evaluations have tended to emphasize output metrics—such as recipient counts and funding amounts—while long-term impacts like academic completion, quality of life enhancements, and contributions to regional development are not systematically measured. Overall, these challenges highlight that while scholarship programs play a crucial role in supporting educational access, policy governance and evaluation frameworks require significant strengthening. Reinforcing these areas is essential to ensure the program moves beyond mere distribution to deliver sustainable human resource development in Sidoarjo Regency. The 2025 Sidoarjo Regency Educational Scholarship Program makes a significant contribution to achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 across several key indicators. First, regarding inclusive education, the program provides educational access to diverse social groups without discrimination, encompassing academic achievement, non-academic skills, economic conditions, and religious backgrounds. This reflects a more inclusive policy approach in safeguarding educational rights for all segments of society.

Second, regarding equity in education, this program functions as a redistributive instrument aimed at narrowing the higher education access gap between high- and low-income groups. Educational financial assistance serves as a crucial mechanism in mitigating economic barriers, which have historically been the primary driver of regional educational inequality. Third, in terms of lifelong learning, the program supports the continuity of the educational process by encouraging individuals to continually enhance their capacity and competencies through formal education. Access to higher education enables individuals to develop skills relevant to labor market needs and technological advancements. Fourth, regarding quality education, funding support from the scholarship program provides students with the space to focus more on the learning process without excessive financial pressure. This condition has the potential to improve academic achievements and the overall quality of graduates produced by educational institutions.

The findings of this study align with those of Madani et al. (2025), which indicate that scholarship programs play a role in improving higher education access for low-income communities. This similarity is evident in the primary function of scholarship policy as an affirmative instrument to reduce economic barriers to education. Thus, both this study and prior research affirm that government intervention through educational aid remains an effective strategy for promoting equitable access. However, this study differs in its analytical focus compared to previous research. Madani et al. (2025) focused primarily on the direct impact of scholarship programs on beneficiaries, whereas this study broadens the perspective by emphasizing public policy governance, specifically the role of local governments in implementing scholarship programs as part of achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4. Consequently, this study not only examines program effectiveness from an output standpoint, but also offers a more comprehensive analysis of the policy process—from planning and execution to evaluation—within the local government context. From this perspective, local governments are positioned not merely as providers of educational aid, but as actors bearing the responsibility for planning, implementing, and overseeing public policies in the education sector.

Therefore, this study provides an additional viewpoint that places greater emphasis on governance in supporting the success of regional scholarship programs.

On the other hand, the successful implementation of SDG 4 relies heavily on synergy between the government and educational institutions. A study by Yanuarto et al. (2025) explains that achieving quality education requires policy integration, institutional quality improvements in higher education, and adequate facility support. Therefore, this scholarship program cannot stand alone; it must be integrated into a broader educational policy system to ensure its benefits are sustained over time. Furthermore, the successful implementation of SDG 4 depends not only on regional governments, but also demands participation from various stakeholders, including educational institutions, the public, and the private sector. Multi-stakeholder collaboration is essential for creating a more inclusive and sustainable educational system. The private sector, for instance, can contribute through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs that support educational funding for the public. Through such synergies, the reach of educational assistance programs can be expanded, allowing a broader population to benefit.

In the context of sustainable development, education is interconnected with various other sectors, such as the economy, healthcare, and social welfare. Individuals with higher levels of education tend to enjoy a better quality of life compared to those with lower education levels. Education also influences the public's ability to comprehend health information, increase workplace productivity, and strengthen social participation in community life. Therefore, investing in the education sector through scholarship programs yields multidimensional benefits. Educational scholarship programs can also foster social mobility—the movement of individuals or groups toward improved social status. Education often serves as the primary vehicle for upward social mobility by providing individuals with opportunities to secure better employment and higher incomes. In this context, scholarship programs act as a crucial mechanism for unlocking educational opportunities for individuals previously constrained by economic factors.

Although scholarship programs offer numerous benefits, local governments must remain attentive to funding sustainability. Budget availability is a key factor in determining the number of recipients and the quality of educational aid provided. Relying solely on regional budgets can pose challenges if policy priorities shift or fiscal constraints arise. Consequently, a more sustainable funding strategy is needed through partnerships with various stakeholders, including the private sector and educational institutions. Beyond funding, equity must remain a priority in scholarship program implementation. Local governments must ensure that educational aid is not concentrated among specific groups, but truly reaches those most in need. Equitable educational access is a vital principle in achieving SDG 4, as the primary objective of educational development is to reduce social inequality within society.

Despite the positive impact of educational scholarship programs on expanding access, implementation continues to encounter several challenges, including inaccurate targeting of aid recipients, budget limitations, and uneven public access to program information. Additionally, not all community members possess sufficient digital literacy to navigate technology-based service systems. A lack of program outreach also results in some individuals failing to fully understand application procedures and requirements. Therefore, local governments need to strengthen digitalized public service systems,

expand program outreach, and conduct periodic evaluations to ensure scholarship programs operate more effectively and accurately target those in need. Strengthening monitoring and evaluation systems is essential for assessing program effectiveness and its impact on improving public educational quality. Through systematic evaluation, scholarship programs function not merely as financial aid, but as strategic instruments for sustainable educational development. Thus, scholarship programs can be understood as policy instruments that serve not only as financial assistance, but also as a local government strategy to strengthen human resource capacity. In regional development, education represents a long-term investment with broad impacts on the social and economic quality of society.

Overall, it can be concluded that the Sidoarjo Regency Government has demonstrated a strategic role in supporting SDG 4 through its 2025 Educational Scholarship Program. This program contributes to expanding educational access and opening opportunities for the public to pursue higher education. Nevertheless, policy effectiveness still needs reinforcement through improved targeting precision, stronger monitoring and evaluation systems, and integration with other educational policies. With these enhancements, the scholarship program will serve not only as a form of educational aid, but also as a strategic instrument for realizing inclusive, quality, and sustainable educational development.

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the Sidoarjo Regency Government plays a significantly important role in supporting the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 through the implementation of the 2025 Educational Scholarship Program. This program demonstrates the local government's commitment to expanding educational access for the public by providing educational aid across various recipient categories, including academic, non-academic, and religious sectors. The presence of the scholarship program is understood not merely as financial assistance, but as part of a regional development strategy to sustainably enhance human resource quality. This study shows that the scholarship program positively contributes to increasing public opportunities to pursue higher education, particularly for lower-middle-class communities. In the context of sustainable development, this policy aligns with SDG 4 objectives, which emphasize the importance of inclusive, equitable, and quality education. Beyond supporting educational equity, the program also has the potential to improve quality of life by strengthening individual capacity, expanding employment opportunities, and fostering upward social mobility in the future.

On the other hand, this study also finds that the implementation of the educational scholarship program still faces several operational challenges. Although the local government has attempted to apply principles of educational equity through a diversity of recipient categories, program effectiveness remains affected by issues of recipient targeting precision, data validation, and sub-optimal selection mechanisms. Furthermore, the quality of public service governance serves as a crucial factor in determining successful policy implementation. Information transparency, streamlined administrative procedures, and the responsiveness of government officials heavily influence public trust in the scholarship program. This research also demonstrates that

program success cannot be measured solely by the number of recipients; it must be assessed through long-term impacts on educational quality, recipient academic success, and overall public welfare. Therefore, strengthening monitoring and evaluation systems is a vital step toward measuring program effectiveness in a more comprehensive and sustainable manner. Academically, this study reinforces the view that regional educational policy implementation is closely linked to societal social and economic development, while demonstrating that successful SDG achievement relies heavily on a local government's capacity to design and execute policies tailored to local needs.

Recommendations

Based on the research results, the Sidoarjo Regency Government is expected to enhance the effectiveness of its educational scholarship program by improving policy governance and public service quality. One essential step is refining the recipient data validation system so that the program becomes accurately targeted and reaches the communities most in need. Additionally, the local government needs to increase information transparency and expand program outreach to ensure more equitable access to scholarship details. The development of digital-based services should also be strengthened to simplify registration, selection, and oversight processes, thereby rendering public services more effective, efficient, and accountable. Furthermore, establishing periodic monitoring and evaluation systems is critical for assessing how effectively the scholarship program impacts educational quality, recipient academic completion, and long-term public welfare. The regional government is also encouraged to build partnerships with higher education institutions, the private sector, and social organizations to support program sustainability and broaden community benefits.

In addition to recommendations for the local government, future research is encouraged to adopt more in-depth methodology to yield comprehensive insights. As this study is limited to document analysis, it does not capture the direct experiences of scholarship recipients or program executors on the ground. Therefore, future studies could utilize interviews, field observations, or mixed-methods approaches to gather broader, richer data on scholarship program effectiveness. Subsequent research could also focus on analyzing the long-term impacts of the program on social mobility, human resource quality improvement, and regional economic development. Lastly, investigating public service digitalization in scholarship program management remains an important avenue for research, given rapid technological developments and their growing impact on government service quality.

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