



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Education

A STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF ECONOMIC STATUS ON THE OPINION OF BENEFICIARY CANDIDATES OF THE SCHEME OF DEVELOPING HIGH QUALITY RESEARCH ABOUT THE SCHEME BENEFITS

KEY WORDS: SHODH – ScHeme Of Developing High quality research, Beneficiary Ph.D. Scholars, Economic Status, Opinions, and Scheme's Benefits.

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ABSTRACT

Continuous improvement and evolution in various fields are crucial to ensure a better living environment for everyone. To achieve this, researchers have a significant responsibility to produce valuable research in concerned areas. However, dedicated researchers often face various obstacles, such as financial stress, which can hinder their ability to conduct research. To support Ph.D. scholars, many central and state government funding agencies offer financial assistance schemes. In this regard, the Government of Gujarat has initiated a scheme called SHODH – ScHeme Of Developing High quality research to provide financial support to Ph.D. scholars from recognized universities/institutes of the state to produce quality research in various disciplines. However, it is essential to understand the impact of the scheme's benefits from the perspective of the beneficiary candidates, especially those belonging to different economic statuses. Therefore, a study has been conducted to explore the opinions of beneficiary candidates of the SHODH scheme about the scheme's selected aspects and whether their opinions differ based on their economic status. The study adopts a causal-comparative research method to gain insight into the requirements of research scholars belonging to different economic statuses. This information will enable better facilitation of scholars to produce meaningful research in their respective fields.

INTRODUCTION

Researchers play a critical role in identifying contemporary issues, finding solutions to problems, and producing valuable research for future development, making them valuable assets to our nation. However, producing meaningful and quality research requires dedication, focus, support, motivation, and incentives. Financial assistance is one form of support that can help Ph.D. scholars overcome financial stress and conduct the research efficiently. The scheme of developing high quality research, also known as SHODH, is an initiative of the State government of Gujarat aimed at providing financial assistance to Ph.D. scholars from recognized universities/institutes of Gujarat to produce quality research in various disciplines. The abbreviated term "SHODH" is a significant Gujarati word that translates to "research" in the English language, reflecting the scheme's focus on promoting and supporting quality research among Ph.D. scholars in the state.

The scheme aims to provide financial assistance to full-time Ph.D. scholars who are pursuing their research from recognized universities/institutes in Gujarat. Eligible candidates must have enrolled in the course after July 2018 and scored a minimum of 55% in their graduation and master's degree (with a relaxation of 5% for reserved category candidates). During the two-year tenure of the scheme, scholars are entitled to a monthly stipend of Rs. 15,000 and a contingency amount of Rs. 20,000 per year, making the total benefit up to four lakh rupees. The selection process is based on the quality of research proposals and is not based on merit, caste/category, or any additional qualifications like NET/GSET. However, scholars selected for the scheme cannot receive any other income during the tenure of the scheme or avail of any other similar scheme's benefits.

While the SHODH scheme is designed to support Ph.D. scholars, it is crucial to understand the meaningfulness of its benefits from the perspective of beneficiary candidates, particularly those belonging to different economic statuses. To this end, a study has been conducted to explore the opinions of beneficiary candidates of the SHODH scheme and determine whether their opinions differ based on their economic status i.e., Lower, Lower Middle, Middle, and Upper economic statuses because beneficiaries from different

economic statuses may have diverse experiences and challenges that could impact their ability to produce quality research.

This will provide valuable information for tailoring the scheme to meet the unique needs of different economic classes. The study utilized quantitative data to obtain a clear understanding of the relationship between economic status and beneficiaries' opinions on the scheme. The results will contribute to enhancing the effectiveness and relevance of the research scheme for diverse economic classes.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The researcher has formulated the following objective for the presented inquiry.

1. To study the opinions of the beneficiaries of the scheme regarding the scheme benefits with respect to their economic status.

Variables

The independent variable of the study is the economic status, which has been categorized into four levels: Lower, Lower Middle, Middle, and Upper economic status. The dependent variable is the opinion of the beneficiaries on the benefits of the scheme.

HYPOTHESES

The researcher has framed null hypotheses for the presented study as follows,

- H₀₁ There is no significant difference between the opinion of the beneficiaries belonging to the lower and the lower middle economic status regarding the scheme benefits.
- H₀₂ There is no significant difference between the opinion of the beneficiaries belonging to the lower and the middle economic status regarding the scheme benefits.
- H₀₃ There is no significant difference between the opinion of the beneficiaries belonging to the lower and the upper economic status regarding the scheme benefits.
- H₀₄ There is no significant difference between the opinion of the beneficiaries belonging to the lower middle and the middle economic status regarding the scheme benefits.
- H₀₅ There is no significant difference between the opinion of the beneficiaries belonging to the lower middle and the upper economic status regarding the scheme benefits.
- H₀₆ There is no significant difference between the opinion of

the beneficiaries belonging to the middle and the upper economic status regarding the scheme benefits.

TYPE OF RESEARCH AND RESEARCH METHOD

The presented study can be classified as applied research, focusing on quantitative data. The research method employed was the ex-post-facto research method. In this study, the independent variable is the economic status of the beneficiaries, while the dependent variable is their opinion regarding the benefits of the scheme of developing high-quality research. This method was chosen to understand the relationship between economic status and beneficiaries' opinions on the research scheme. By using this approach, the study aimed to gain insights into how economic status may impact opinions about the research scheme.

POPULATION & SAMPLE

The study population consists of 2676 Ph.D. scholars who are beneficiaries of the scheme of developing high-quality research from recognized universities/institutes in the Gujarat state of its first three batches. For the presented study, a purposive sampling method was used to select a sample of 636 Ph.D. scholars. The sample includes 150 beneficiaries from lower economic status, 271 from lower middle economic status, 118 from middle economic status, and 97 from upper economic status. This sampling approach was employed to ensure representation from different economic classes for a comprehensive analysis of the beneficiary candidates' opinions on the scheme.

RESEARCH TOOL

The study utilized a questionnaire constructed by the researcher to collect data. The questionnaire included four items related to scheme benefits, such as tenure, monthly stipend, and contingency; these items were carefully chosen to align with the objectives of the study and to collect relevant data. Respondents were asked to indicate their response as either 'Yes' or 'No' using the provided options in the questionnaire. This binary response format was likely chosen to streamline the data collection process and make it easier for respondents to provide their answers. The concerned items are as follows,

1. Should the tenure of the scholarship be increased?
2. Is the amount of monthly scholarship sufficient for monthly livelihood?
3. Is the amount of contingency sufficient to fulfill the research requirements?
4. Should the contingency amount be paid every three months?

DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATIONS

In the study, the data has been analyzed using two different methods. Firstly, descriptive statistics in the form of frequency distributions were utilized to describe the responses of the beneficiaries. This allowed the researchers to provide a clear overview of the distribution of responses for each component of the scheme. Secondly, as the collected data was in a nominal scale of measurement, non-parametric inferential statistical methods were employed to test the hypotheses of the study. Specifically, the chi-square test, which is commonly used for nominal data, was applied.

This allowed the researchers to assess the associations or differences between variables related to the scheme benefits. Each component of the scheme benefits was analyzed separately based on the formulated hypotheses of the study.

H₀₁ There is no significant difference between the opinion of the beneficiaries belonging to the lower and the lower middle economic status regarding the scheme benefits.

Table – 1 Calculation for the Responses* of Beneficiaries from Lower and Lower Middle Economic Status Regarding the Scheme Benefits

Economic Status Item No.	Lower		Lower Middle		Chi-Square
	YES	No	YES	No	
1	81.33	18.67	81.18	18.82	0.04
2	36.00	64.00	30.63	69.37	1.40
3	45.33	54.67	48.71	51.29	0.39
4	72.67	27.33	67.16	32.84	1.53

*Responses of 'yes' and 'no' are presented in percentages

The calculated values of the Chi-square for all the questions regarding the benefits of the scheme 0.04, 1.40, 0.39, and 1.53 are respectively less than the Chi-square table values of 3.84 and 6.63 at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected for all the questions at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance. It can be said that the opinions of beneficiaries belonging to the lower and the lower middle economic status regarding the scheme benefits are at the same level.

H₀₂ There is no significant difference between the opinion of the beneficiaries belonging to the lower and the middle economic status regarding the scheme benefits.

Table – 2 Calculation for the Responses* of Beneficiaries from Lower and Middle Economic Status Regarding the Scheme Benefits

Economic Status Item No.	Lower		Middle		Chi-Square
	YES	No	YES	No	
1	81.33	18.67	83.90	16.10	0.06
2	36.00	64.00	24.58	75.42	6.79
3	45.33	54.67	47.46	52.54	0.01
4	72.67	27.33	67.80	32.20	0.71

*Responses of 'yes' and 'no' are presented in percentages

The calculated values of the Chi-square for questions 1, 3, and 4 0.06, 0.01, and 0.71 are respectively less than the chi-square table values of 3.84 and 6.63 at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected for the mentioned questions at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance. It can be said that the opinions of beneficiaries belonging to the lower and the middle economic status regarding the scheme benefits for questions 1, 3, and 4 are at the same level.

The calculated value of the Chi-square for the question "Is the amount of monthly scholarship sufficient for monthly livelihood?" 6.79 is greater than the chi-square table values of 3.84 and 6.63 at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance respectively. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not accepted for the mentioned question at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted for the question. It can be said that the opinions of beneficiaries belonging to the lower and the middle economic status regarding the scheme benefits for question 2 are not at the same level.

H₀₃ There is no significant difference between the opinion of the beneficiaries belonging to the lower and the upper economic status regarding the scheme benefits.

Table – 3 Calculation for the Responses* of Beneficiaries from Lower and Upper Economic Status Regarding the Scheme Benefits

Economic Status Item No.	Lower		Upper		Chi-Square
	YES	No	YES	No	
1	81.33	18.67	74.23	25.77	2.18
2	36.00	64.00	30.93	69.07	0.56
3	45.33	54.67	56.70	43.30	5.12
4	72.67	27.33	64.95	35.05	2.20

*Responses of 'yes' and 'no' are presented in percentages

The calculated values of the Chi-square for questions 1, 2, and 4 2.18, 0.56, and 2.20 are respectively less than the chi-square table values of 3.84 and 6.63 at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of

significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected for the mentioned questions at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance. It can be said that the opinions of beneficiaries belonging to the lower and the upper economic status regarding the scheme benefits for questions 1, 2, and 4 are at the same level.

The calculated value of the Chi-square for the question "Is the amount of contingency sufficient to fulfill the research requirements?" 5.12 is greater than the chi-square table values of 3.84 and 6.63 at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance respectively. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not accepted for the mentioned question at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted for the question. It can be said that the opinions of beneficiaries belonging to the lower and the upper economic status regarding the scheme benefits for question 2 are not at the same level.

H₀₄ There is no significant difference between the opinion of the beneficiaries belonging to the lower middle and the middle economic status regarding the scheme benefits.

Table – 4 Calculation for the Responses* of Beneficiaries from Lower Middle and Middle Economic Status Regarding the Scheme Benefits

Economic Status Item No.	Lower Middle		Middle		Chi-Square
	YES	No	YES	No	
1	81.18	18.82	83.90	16.10	0.270
2	30.63	69.37	24.58	75.42	1.676
3	48.71	51.29	47.46	52.54	0.004
4	67.16	32.84	67.80	32.20	0.008

*Responses of 'yes' and 'no' are presented in percentages

The calculated values of the Chi-square for all the questions regarding the benefits of the scheme 0.270, 1.676, 0.004, and 0.008 are respectively less than the chi-square table values of 3.84 and 6.63 at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected for all the questions at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance. It can be said that the opinions of beneficiaries belonging to the lower middle and middle economic status regarding the scheme benefits are at the same level.

H₀₅ There is no significant difference between the opinion of the beneficiaries belonging to the lower middle and the upper economic status regarding the scheme benefits.

Table – 5 Calculation for the Responses* of Beneficiaries from Lower Middle and Upper Economic Status Regarding the Scheme Benefits

Economic Status Item No.	Lower Middle		Upper		Chi-Square
	YES	No	YES	No	
1	81.18	18.82	74.23	25.77	2.49
2	30.63	69.37	30.93	69.07	0.05
3	48.71	51.29	56.70	43.30	2.27
4	67.16	32.84	64.95	35.05	0.06

*Responses of 'yes' and 'no' are presented in percentages

The calculated values of the Chi-square for all the questions regarding the benefits of the scheme 2.49, 0.05, 2.27, and 0.06 are respectively less than the Chi-square table values of 3.84 and 6.63 at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance.

Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected for all the questions at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance. It can be said that the opinions of beneficiaries belonging to the lower middle and the upper economic status regarding the scheme benefits are at the same level.

H₀₆ There is no significant difference between the opinion of the beneficiaries belonging to the middle and the upper economic status regarding the scheme benefits.

Table – 6 Calculation for the Responses of Beneficiaries from Middle and Upper Economic Status Regarding the Scheme Benefits

Economic Status Item No.	Middle		Upper		Chi-Square
	YES	No	YES	No	
1	83.90	16.10	74.23	25.77	4.5974
2	24.58	75.42	30.93	69.07	1.0099
3	47.46	52.54	56.70	43.30	2.6358
4	67.80	32.20	64.95	35.05	0.0003

*Responses of 'yes' and 'no' are presented in percentages

The calculated value of the Chi-square for the question "Should the tenure of the scholarship be increased?" 4.957 is greater than the chi-square table value of 3.84 at a 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not accepted for the mentioned question at a 0.05 level of significance, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted for the question. It can be said that the opinions of beneficiaries belonging to the middle and the upper economic status regarding the scheme benefits for the mentioned question are not at the same level.

The calculated values of the Chi-square for questions 2, 3, and 4 1.0099, 2.6358, and 0.0003 are respectively less than the chi-square table values of 3.84 and 6.63 at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected for the mentioned questions at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance. It can be said that the opinions of beneficiaries belonging to the middle and the upper economic status regarding the scheme benefits for questions 1, 2, and 4 are at the same level.

MAJOR FINDINGS

1. The beneficiaries belonging to the lower and the lower middle economic status are in favor of an increase in the tenure, amount of monthly stipend and contingency, and disbursement of the contingency quarterly instead of yearly.
2. The beneficiaries belonging to the lower and the middle economic status are in favor of an increase in the tenure, amount of contingency, and disbursement of the contingency quarterly. Moreover, the beneficiaries belonging to the middle economic status are more agreed to increase the amount of monthly stipend compared to beneficiaries belonging to lower economic status.
3. The beneficiaries belonging to the lower and the upper economic status are in favor of an increase in the tenure, amount of monthly stipend, and disbursement of the contingency quarterly. Moreover, the beneficiaries belonging to the lower economic status are more agreed to increase the amount of monthly stipend compared to beneficiaries belonging to the upper economic status.
4. The beneficiaries belonging to the lower middle and middle economic status are at the same level as beneficiaries from both economic statuses are in favor of an increase in the tenure, amount of monthly stipend and contingency, and disbursement of the contingency quarterly instead of yearly.
5. The beneficiaries belonging to the lower middle and the upper economic status are in favor of an increase in the tenure, amount of monthly stipend and contingency, and disbursement of the contingency quarterly instead of yearly.
6. The beneficiaries belonging to the middle economic status are more in favor of increasing the tenure of the scheme compared to the scholars belonging to the upper economic status. Moreover, beneficiaries from both economic statuses are in favor of an increase in the amount of monthly stipend and contingency, and disbursement of the contingency quarterly.

CONCLUSION

The Presented study examined the impact of economic status

on the opinions of beneficiary candidates of the scheme of developing high quality research on the scheme benefits like tenure of the scheme, amount of monthly stipend and contingency, and disbursement of contingency amount quarterly instead of yearly.

The major findings of the study suggest that beneficiaries from all economic statuses are in favor of an increase in the tenure, amount of monthly stipend, and contingency, and disbursement of the contingency quarterly instead of yearly. However, there are some differences in opinions among the economic statuses. Beneficiaries belonging to the middle economic status are more in favor of increasing the amount of monthly stipend compared to beneficiaries from the lower and upper economic statuses. Moreover, scholars belonging to the middle economic status are more in favor of increasing the tenure of the scheme compared to scholars belonging to the upper economic status.

People from different economic backgrounds may have different experiences and challenges. For example, people from lower economic statuses may have more financial problems, while people from upper-class backgrounds may have more resources and connections. Overall, the findings of this study have important implications for policymakers and funding agencies in designing and implementing effective schemes for research development that take into account the economic status of beneficiaries.

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