

The Impact of Financial Supports Provided by the Government of West Bengal on Girls Pursuing Higher Education

Pronay Sen

Assistant Professor of Education(W.B.E.S.)

Email ID: pronaysen0991@gmail.com

Rathin Ray

Assistant Professor, Vidyasagar College of Education, Phansidewa, Darjeeling

Email ID: rathinray8@gmail.com

Abstract:

According to the target of UNESCO's Millennium Development Goals our country is at present trying to ensure universal higher education. In this regard Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan is continuing to implement that principles and in practically to achieve the target ours central as well as state govt. are giving different types of scholarships, fellowships or other incentives directly to the students. In this study a major focus group is targeted basically the girls. The policymaker and the stake holders are trying to motivate the girls towards their educational achievement. But we are still unaware about the influence of these incentives, What are the perception of the girl students regarding the govt. incentives and financial supports, and whether any direct positive relation with the motivation and levels of learning. This paper will try to explain the influence of these incentives (kanyashree prakalpo, swami Vivekananda merit cum means scholarship, scholarship for SC, ST students, indira Gandhi single girl child scholarship) especially for Post Graduate level students of Coochbehar Panchanan Barma University. To conduct the study purposive sampling technique used to select 60 respondents from the girls community of this university. Collected raw data qualitatively analyzed by the researcher and it will present in this paper.

Keywords: Govt. Incentives, Higher Education.

Introduction:

Incentives are either given before the act is performed or after the action. In other words, these are positive reinforcements which are assumed to have a positive relationship with the desired performance. Education is one such area where the use of incentives is fairly common; mostly to encourage children to attend school regularly or to perform better in exams, and continue higher education.

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List of scholarships for students of West Bengal

Sl. No.	Name of Scholarship	Provider Name
1.	Swami Vivekananda Merit Cum Means Scholarship for Minorities, West Bengal	Government of West Bengal
2.	Bigyani Kanya Medha Britti Scholarship, West Bengal	Jagadis Bose National Science Talent Search (JBNSTS), Kolkata
3.	West Bengal Post-Matric Scholarship for SC/ST/OBC	Backward Classes Welfare Department, Government of West Bengal
4.	Kanyasree Scheme	Government of West Bengal
5.	Yuvasree Scheme	Government of West Bengal
6.	West Bengal pre matric Scholarship for SC ST Students	Backward Classes Welfare Department, Government of West Bengal
7.	Hindi Scholarship Scheme, West Bengal	Department of Higher Education, Science and Technology and Biotechnology, Government of West Bengal

Incentives for inputs and incentives for outcomes are the two broad categories into which the incentives fall. Student accomplishment, as determined by test results or class grades, is the output of interest. Anything that may help students learn is considered an input. Incentive programs provide the chance to try out novel teaching methods and discover which student behaviours and instructional techniques are most effective. Designing successful programs requires testing incentives for creative contributions, which may also provide a more comprehensive understanding of what factors contribute to learning.

Review of Literature:

Ronald, G. (2011) found that, the impact of financial incentives on student achievement is statistically 0 in each city.

Nawani, D. (2013) conducted a study on Evaluation of Educational Incentive Schemes for Minority Communities in Maharashtra and the result showed that attendance of students had been positively impacted by these incentive.

Sushan, A. & Chandra, L. B. (2006) “conducted a research on the functioning and effectiveness of scholarship and incentive schemes in nepal. Findings of the study showed that most of the respondents agreed that the available scholarships/incentives reached the needy population, but complained that they did not cover all of the needy children. Girl’s enrolment and school attendance have increased in the selected School”.

Sharma, V. (2019) “studied on Educating The Girl Child Role of incentivisation and other enablers and disablers, result of the study revealed that a larger proportion (40%) were not aware and/or heard of the government schemes. This highlights a significant gap in the knowledge of parents about the schemes”

.Mahara, P. (2019) “studied on Opinion: Can education incentive schemes give wings to India’s girls?. Researcher found in this study that to retain more girls in schools, a significant effort has been made by the government at the state and central in the form of the implementation of education incentive schemes for girl children”. By going through the related studies from internet, journals, and many other resources it is found that various studies have been conducted in this field. Some study conducted abroad, some in India a very few number of study also conducted in West Bengal. But there are some research gaps in those studies. Among the studies few showed similar result but other study findings are contradictory about impact of incentive in school education, parent’s perception. But still very few study conducted on incentives and financial support to girl’s students in higher education. So this field needs a special attention for intensive and details study to find-out perception or thinking about usage of these incentive schemes.

Objective:

The overall objective of the research is to investigate of scholarship impact on women’s education of students in west Bengal. Precisely, the purpose of this study seeks:

1. To study about the perception of post graduate level girls students regarding various scholarship scheme.
2. To suggesting some additional implementation strategy for increasing the effectiveness of scholarship schemes.
3. Knowing about financial incentives which helps overcome barriers to learning and skill acquisition.

Research Questions:

1. What are the perceptions of post-graduate level girl’s students regarding the objectives of scholarship schemes?
2. How should we increase the effectiveness of scholarship scheme?
3. How can financial incentives help overcome barriers to learning and skill acquisition?

Methodology:

Qualitative research approach was chosen for this study. Researcher used open ended questionnaires and semi structured interviews for the related of govt. incentives, scholarship etc. financial supports. A survey was conducted on post graduate girls students of Cooch Behar Panchanan Barma University. Purposive sampling was used for the data collection. There was a homogenous sample group maintained by researcher for appropriate result. The student of 21-23 years age group was the participants of this study. 60 participants were selected from Cooch Behar Panchanan Barma University.

Data collection:

The interview included 10 questions concerning the following topics: role educational incentives in education, thinking about uses of incentive, view toward incentive, influence on student’s outcome, experiences with incentive, and impact on family. Interview continue approximately 20 minute for each student, Throughout the process of the interviews, probes and follow-up questions were added as needed to encourage elaboration and clarify responses.

Findings:

The majority of money in incentive programs goes straight to the student’s account. The amount of money spent on administration should be minimal, but it will vary based in part on how big the incentive program is. Education may benefit greatly from financial incentives.

1. What are the perceptions of Post Graduate girl's students regarding scholarship schemes?

India is a developing country and economic backwardness of family impact on education of children. "In this regard provided by govt. educational incentive and financial support is too much help for needy family. Kanyashree Prakalpa has a positive impact in these factors (e.g., enhancing enrolment, retention, drop out attendance and of girls students) which are essential for increasing the higher level of academic performance of girl-students belonging to Bellow Poverty Line (BPL) like girls students residing in the rural areas colleges of North 24 Parganas district in the state of West Bengal" (Molla, M.K. & Sarkar, M., 2020). Conditional cash transfer of scholarships in Bihar led to significant increases in girls' enrolment and reduced dropout rates, particularly among economically disadvantaged families. (Das and Dercon, 2018). Kabeer and Subrahmanian (2019) and Parveen et al. (2020) highlight the transformative potential of scholarships in empowering girls, enhancing their self-esteem and aspirations. However, challenges related to social stigma, safety concerns, and limited support systems remain significant barriers to girls' educational advancement.

On the other hand, it noticed that there was different scenario to uses this incentive. Most of the time money of incentive spends in other perspective rather than education. In this study answered by most participant that, they are use their incentive for brother/sister education, sister marriage, shopping purpose (mobile, golden ornament for own marriage or daily use, dress, furniture), father bought a bike, making house. Not only stop here, other uses of incentive girls was bought gift for boyfriend by this incentive money. Few girls were making tour by scholarship money. Some girls fixed their incentive money in post office for a particular period; few are fixed the money if she will divorce. Even also good scenario is noticed that very few girls spend their total money for complete the education, bye books, learning material, laptop, computer course etc., some of them doing beautician course for self-dependent by this incentive. Many economically weaker families and one boy child, they prefer boys' education if they have one girl. But now scenario is change for getting the incentive money family barrier are decreased for girls' education. Many parents are forced their girl child for scholarship money, they want to have fun with it. Because of these incentives most of family given equal importance to boys and girls in higher education and pressure for delay marriage of their girls.

2. How should we increase the effectiveness of scholarship scheme?

Govt. provides funds for the development of society, but they not verify the uses of incentive money. Where students are spending the incentive money should be monitoring. A part of this money is chance to misuse, therefore is needed to monitoring and verifying by Govt. authorities and Universities. In that scenario Govt. authorities and University should be motivated to girl students to spend their incentive money for educational purpose and advice or counseling them. Parents, who are aware of the educational incentive schemes, need to tell their girls to use these incentives for their educational growth. In this way more people can be reaching to the benefits of these schemes and their daughters can be empowered too. Regular reporting should be done on student performance, participation of regular work, classes etc. Since then many scholarship programmes have been adopted by both the central and state governments such as pre-matric, post-matric, Indira Gandhi Scholarship for Single Girl Child, National fellowship for SCs, STs and OBCs, Maulana Azad National Fellowship, or now National Fellowship for Minorities. Out of 24 central government scholarship schemes for post-matriculation level, seven are means-based meant for those historically backward sections, some four are merit-based, and the remaining thirteen are means-cum-merit based scholarships (Sharma & Singh, 2020). Majority of the students belonged to rural areas and mostly the needy students are hesitant to apply for the need-based scholarships. The scholarships provide strength to the students and making them more talented and also scholarships are best reward for students in bringing a competitive environment and encouraging the students in following the rules. Students agreed on the aiding scholarships provided among them and increase the ability of empathy in the students (Habiba & Liaqat, 2022).

3. How can financial incentives help overcome barriers to learning and skill acquisition?

First, different types of incentives can drive students to exert more effort. Two themes emerged from the study—students’ academic goals and motivating students through rewards that provide relevant recognition in the short term to help students develop positive habits in the long term, and students’ recreational goals—there are many students who compromise their future lives for short-term pleasures. In that case, more immediate rewards are needed to motivate such students to study now, by convincing them that hard work now will shape their future. “Several incentive programs pay students to improve their performance so they can move toward their future goals. need-based scholarships likely reduced the burden of university related costs for male students especially that were previously covered either by their parents or by themselves. As a result, the students had more time to focus and engage in academics. Also the need-based scholarship programme appeared to be a better-targeted programme for male students in the underprivileged region” (Ahme, R. et al., 2022).Scholarship gives students a self- dependency and decreased the financial burden on parents and also decreasing the amount of loan taken for the purpose of higher education. “The scholarships interest is increase in college education, research and technical expertise. Scholarships scheme should be continued and expanded for achieving higher education goals (Santosh and Bora, M., 2020).A significant positive correlation between student financial aid and access to higher education is a well-established fact found in various empirical studies in the context of US and European countries” (Birch & Rosenman, 2019; Hansen, 1983; John & Noell, 1989; Steiner & Wrohlich, 2012).

Limitation:

1. This study is conducted only girl students of Post Graduate level.
2. This study was conducted on age group of 21-23 years girls’ students only.

Conclusion:

Incentives are a good policy to attract students to access higher education. In fact, incentives should be given more to our education. Both federal and provincial governments have taken various affirmative policy measures including reservation for different social categories, subsidies, and student financial aid programmes (Desai & Kulkarni, 2008).Incentives have created one of the avenues for women’s advancement in higher education. Government financial support is one of the main reasons; women are coming to higher education from various disadvantaged families and even from remote rural areas. However, misuse of this government financial assistance is seen in many cases. Proper information and awareness need to be created among both the college authorities handling the scholarship and the students to have better access to this facility. Extensive and repetitive paperwork and highly bureaucratic disbursement procedure are issues encountered by students while applying for the scholarship (Karna, R. K. & Swain D. K., 2022). However, the role of these government financial supports continues to play a leading role in women’s education.

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