

Awareness of Students on different Scholarship Schemes

ABSTRACT

Various academic scholarship schemes are introduced in India with the aim of inspiring students for better academic performance. However, for availing such scholarships it depends largely on the level of awareness among the students about the scholarship schemes. Though a considerable number of scholarship schemes are available, level of awareness regarding scholarship among students are not known. The present study was conducted to assess the level of awareness of the students on different types of Scholarship schemes. Two hundred forty undergraduate students from Assam Agricultural University were included as respondents by using stratified random sample method for the study. One questionnaire was prepared on "Google Form" for collection of data and data was collected online. Frequency, percentage, Mean, Standard Deviation and chi square test were used for analysing the data statistically. The findings reveal that majority of the students of Assam Agricultural University had awareness on Ishan Uday Scholarship and State Merit Scholarship for Assam, half of the respondents were aware about National Talent Scholarship. Only a negligible percentage of respondents were aware about other types of scholarship schemes.

KEYWORDS: *Level, Awareness, Student, Scholarship Scheme, Financial Support*

INTRODUCTION

The rising cost of higher education in India, both in the private as well as the government institutes, is a major cause of worry for Indian parents. Most middle-class families somehow manage to put their children through a decent education by sometimes spending more than half of their pay on their child's education. The students who come from low-socio economic families suffer the most in college attainment because of high fee or cost of higher education. These students look for financial assistance to pursue the higher education. A scholarship is a grant or financial aid that can be applied to educational costs, such as tuition, books, fees, etc. It is a financial award given to a student on the basis of academic achievement and other criteria. Scholarships are directed towards acknowledging exceptional students for their achievements in the fields of academics and educational competency. Unlike educational loans the scholarship doesn't have to be repaid. They act as positive reinforcements for the students which can prove to be a huge boost for the students. Students become free from financial stress if they get such scholarships and have more time to study for securing better grades. While some scholarships are for instilling academic competency, others may include need-based scholarships, which are directed towards fulfilling some particular social, psychological, physiological or even economic shortcomings. Scholarships contribute in the student success by providing financial flexibility for education and thereby making education easier and attainable. Further, getting scholarship for education can increase maximum chance to reduce the

dropout rate. Different types of scholarship schemes are available in India instituted either by government or other institutes for helping the students. Though a considerable number of scholarships are available, accessibility of such scholarship schemes to the students largely depends on the level of awareness among the students regarding such scholarship schemes. It is not known how far the scholarships are being availed by the students and how much they are aware about the scholarship schemes for which they are eligible. Review of literature reflects that unawareness regarding educational schemes is one of the factors leading to deprivation of study in spite of having many different scholarship schemes. According to report of Ministry of minority affairs (2013) more than 80.00 per cent rural students both - beneficiary and non-beneficiaries, felt that there was lack of awareness about the Pre-matric scholarship schemes. Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Higher Education, Government of India (2018) reported that total 82000 number of scholarships per year are awarded in India for students of higher education in colleges and universities and also for professional courses. However, for availing such scholarships it depends largely on the level of awareness among the students about the scholarships. Study on students' awareness regarding scholarship schemes will provide input for formulating strategies to make the students aware about such schemes. Awareness will in turn help the students in availing scholarship and will increase competitiveness among the students for higher education. There are several scholarships for which students of agricultural universities are eligible including *Ishan Uday Scholarship* which is a special scheme for educational development of the North East India, launched by Government of India. Similarly, *State Merit Scholarship (Assam)*, *State Merit Scholarship (Other than Assam)*, *National Talent Scholarship*, *Defense Scholarship* are some of the scholarships for which students of Assam Agricultural University (AAU) are eligible. Moreover AAU has provision for *Financial Support to the Economically Backward Students*. The present study explores the level of awareness among the Under Graduate students of Assam Agricultural University regarding different type of scholarships schemes for which they are eligible.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Sampling procedure and population

The study was conducted among the undergraduate students of Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat, Assam. Two Colleges i.e. College of Agriculture, Jorhat and college of community Science, Jorhat were selected purposively. 30 students from each class of B.Sc. degree programme were selected using stratified random sample method. 120 of respondents were selected from each college and thus the total number of respondents was 240.

Research instruments

A questionnaire was prepared comprising different statements regarding awareness on scholarships. "Google Form" was used for collection of the data online.

Measurement of variable

In the present study respondents were asked whether they were aware about scholarship schemes and responses were recorded as “Yes” and “No” with code 1 and 0 respectively. Further level of awareness was asked in three point scale i.e. “fully aware”, “partially aware” and “not aware” with assigned score 2, 1 and 0. The total score of individual respondent was calculated. Based on mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (SD) of the obtained scores, the respondents were categorized into three categories as below:

Category	Score range
Low	$< \bar{x} - SD$
Medium	$\bar{x} - SD - \bar{x} + SD$
High	$> \bar{x} + SD$

Statistical analysis

To interpret the data effectively the following statistical techniques and test were used for analysing the data.

- Frequency
- Percentage
- Mean
- Standard deviation
- Chi-Square test

Statistical formulae

Formula used for calculating mean

$$\text{Mean } (\bar{x}) = \frac{\sum fx}{N}$$

Where, $\sum fx$ = Total scores

N= Total number of respondents

Standard deviation was calculated by the formula

$$SD = \sqrt{\frac{\sum (Xi - \bar{X})^2}{N}}$$

Where,

X_i = Raw score

\bar{X} = Mean

N = Total respondents

Chi- Square test

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i}$$

Where, O_i = Observed frequency

E_i = Expected frequency

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Background information of the respondents

Data presented in Table 1. indicate that highest percentage (59.20%) respondents were in the age group of above 20 years and majority (70.40 %) were female. It is observed that 42.50 per cent respondents belonged to general caste while 40.50 per cent belonged to OBC and 10.40 per cent respondents were from schedule tribe. Regarding religion, a large majority of the respondents (90.00%) were Hindu, 6.20 per cent were Muslim, 2.10 per cent of them were Christian and remaining were Buddhist and Sikh. Slightly more than 50.00 per cent respondents were from rural area and majority (75.80%) had their mother tongue Assamese. Data (Table 1) reflects that majority of the respondents (79.60%) belonged to nuclear family and most of the respondents (69.16 %) had family size up to 4. Around 57.00 per cent respondent had government service while 17.50 per cent had business and 10.50 per cent had farming as the primary occupation of their family. Less than one third (28.40 per cent) respondent had annual income above Rupees five lakhs followed by 27.00 per cent between Rupees one lakh to three lakhs. Regarding medium of education, the data reveals (Table 1) that large percentage (73.90%) respondents had English as their medium of instruction in schooling; while 22.00 per cent respondents had Assamese followed by 4.10 per cent from Hindi medium. Regarding the academic performance of the respondents, it was found that 47.50 per cent respondents scored marks between 80-90 per cent whereas, 29.60 per cent scored above 90.00 per cent in class X final examination. Similarly 47.40 per cent respondents obtained marks between 80-90 per cent followed by 38.80 per cent between 70-80 per cent in class XII final examination. In Assam Agricultural University 45.00 per cent respondents scored CGPA above 8.0 which was followed by 41.10 per cent between 7.0- 8.0 CGPA. In the University, more than 50.00 per cent respondents got admission in 1st counselling, followed by 30.80 per cent in 2nd counselling and rest 16.30 per cent in 3rd counselling for their degree programme.

Table 1. Background profile of the respondents

N= 240

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	Below 18 years	4	1.60
	18-20 years	94	39.20
	Above 20 years	142	59.20
Gender	Male	71	29.60
	Female	169	70.40
Caste	General	102	42.50
	OBC	97	40.50
	ST	25	10.40
	SC	14	5.80
	MOBC	2	0.80
Religion	Hindu	216	90.00
	Muslim	15	6.20
	Christian	5	2.10
	Buddhism	3	1.20

	Sikh	1	0.50
Permanent residence	Urban	119	49.60
	Rural	121	50.40
Mother tongue	Assamese	182	75.80
	Hindi	35	14.60
	Bengali	10	4.20
	Others- Manipuri, Naga, Karbi and Tiwa	13	5.40
Type of family	Nuclear	191	79.60
	Joint	46	19.20
	Extended	3	1.20
Size of family	Up to 4	166	69.16
	5-7	44	18.34
	8 and above	30	12.50
Primary occupation of the family	Government job	131	54.60
	Private job	22	9.20
	Business	42	17.50
	Farmer	25	10.50
	Self-employed	13	5.40
	Others	7	2.90
Annual income of family	<1 lakh	51	21.20
	1-3lakh	65	27.00
	3-5lakh	56	23.40
	>5lakh	68	28.40
Percentage in Class 10th examination	60-70	14	5.80
	70-80	41	17.10
	80-90	114	47.50
	>90	71	29.60
Percentage in Class 12th examination	60-70	12	5.00
	70-80	93	38.80
	80-90	109	47.40
	>90	26	10.80
Present Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA)	<6.0	2	1.10
	6.0-7.0	23	12.80
	7.0-8.0	74	41.10
	>8.0	81	45.00
Status of admission (In which counselling student got admitted)	1 st counselling	127	52.90
	2 nd counselling	74	30.80
	3 rd counselling	39	16.30
exposure to orientation after admission	Yes	181	75.40
	No	59	24.60
Information on scholarship in orientation	Yes	133	55.40
	No	107	44.60

Awareness of students on scholarship

The study reveals that majority of respondents (88.75 %) were aware about *State Merit Scholarship (Assam)* while 83.75 per cent respondents had awareness about *Ishan Udyia Scholarship*

and 53.00 per cent respondents were aware about *National Talent Scholarship*, 2.91 per cent were aware about *Financial Support to the Economically Backward Students of AAU*. The data reflects that there is variation in awareness about different types of scholarship schemes. Similar studies were conducted by Rosa (2006), and found that majority i.e. 62.00 per cent respondents were aware about financial aid whereas Fahimuddin (2012) found that 80.00 per cent students had lack of knowledge or information on the Pre-matric scholarship.

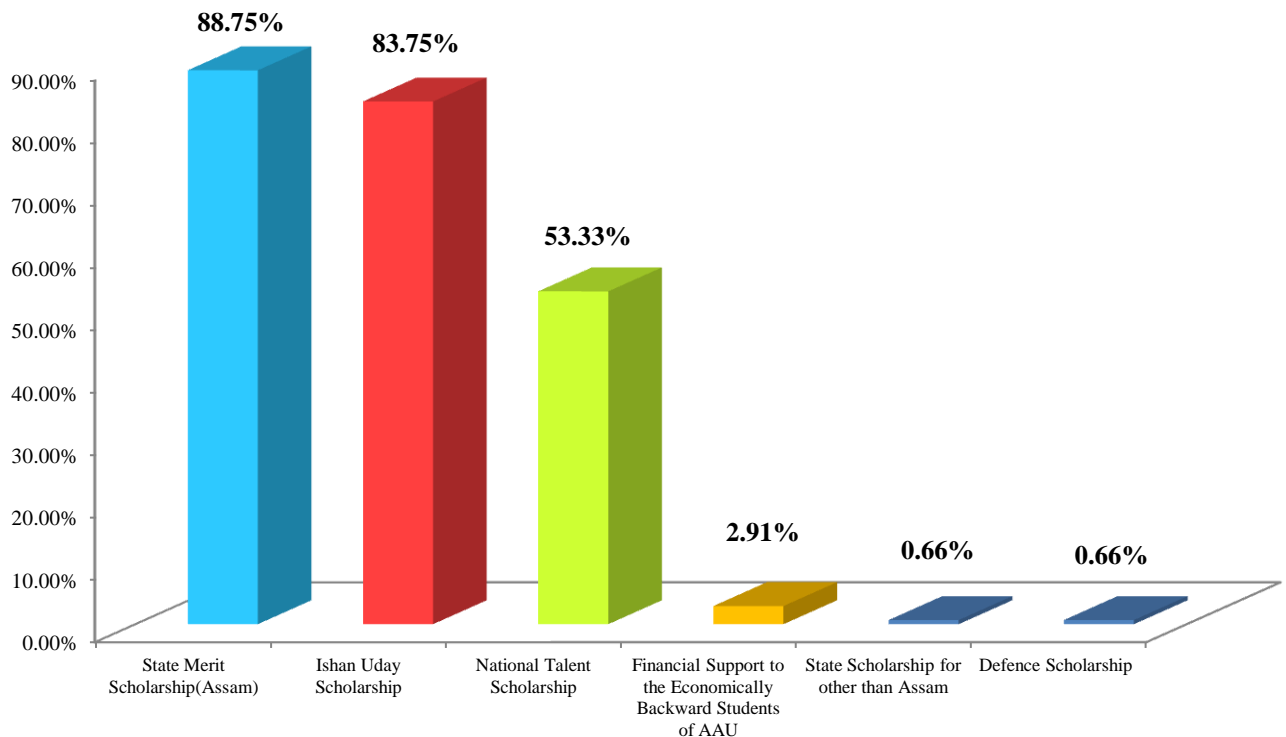


Fig. 1. Awareness of student of scholarships

Level of awareness of students on selected scholarships

Results in Table 2 revealed that highest 67.08 per cent respondents had medium level of awareness regarding *State Merit Scholarship* followed by 45.83 per cent respondents with medium level of awareness regarding *Ishan Uday Scholarship*. Around 47.00 per cent of respondents had low level of awareness regarding *National Talent Scholarship*. Almost all the of the respondents (99.16 per cent) had medium level of awareness on Financial Support to the Economically Backward Students of AAU with a very less mean and standard deviation 0.18 and 2.00 respectively reflecting very poor awareness about the financial aid among the students. The findings are in line with Long

(2010) where it was found that low level of awareness among the students and misinformation about financial aid.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents according to level of awareness regarding different Scholarship (N= 240)

Scholarship schemes	Category	Score range	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	Standard deviation
State Merit Scholarship	Low	<4.14	39	16.25	7.99	3.86
	Medium	4.14 to 11.85	161	67.08		
	High	>11.85	40	16.67		
Ishan Uday Scholarship	Low	< 6.08	57	23.75	17.72	11.64
	Medium	6.08 to 29.36	110	45.83		
	High	> 29.36	73	30.42		
National Talent Scholarship	Low	<0.28	112	46.67	7.48	7.2
	Medium	0.28 to 14.68	55	22.91		
	High	>14.68	73	30.42		
Financial Support to the Economically Backward Students of AAU	Low	< - 0.82	0	0	0.18	2.004
	Medium	-0.82 to 2.19	238	99.16		
	High	>2.19	2	0.84		

Association of awareness with selected background characteristics of the respondents

Result of the chi square test indicated the association between awareness of respondents regarding *Ishan Uday Scholarship* with class of respondents was highly significant ($p < 0.01$). Hence it may be interpreted that there is association between level of awareness of students regarding *Ishan Uday Scholarship* and the class they were studying. On the other hand no association was found between the independent variables with *State Merit Scholarship* and *National Talent Scholarship*. (Table 3)

Table 3. Association between selected independent variables with awareness regarding scholarship of the respondents

Sl.	Independent	Degree of	State Merit	IshanUday	National Talent
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No.	variable	freedom	Scholarship		Scholarship		Scholarship	
			Chi square value	p-value	Chi square value	p-value	Chi square value	p-value
1.	Gender	1	0.912	0.339	0.391	0.531	0.009	0.924
2.	Class	3	3.798	0.284	16.502**	0.000	0.268	0.965
3.	Status of admission	2	1.795	0.407	1.741	0.418	0.408	0.815
4.	Exposure to orientation after admission	1	0.091	0.762	0.426	0.518	0.026	0.872

*Significant at 0.05

**Significant at 0.01

CONCLUSION

The results indicate that students had medium level of awareness on different scholarship schemes. Majority of the respondents were aware about *Ishan Uday Scholarship* and *State Merit Scholarship* however only half of the respondents were about *National Talent Scholarship* and only a very small percentage respondents were aware about other scholarship schemes for which they are eligible. A very few respondents were aware about the Financial Support to the Economically Backward Students of AAU. It can be concluded that awareness among the students regarding different scholarship varies considerably and there is need for increasing awareness on scholarship schemes among the students, especially, about *National Talent Scholarship* and *Financial support to economically backward students of AAU*. Formulating strategies for providing necessary information regarding scholarship at right time is recommended by the study.

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