



Impact Analysis of Government Scholarship and Support Programs on Academic Performance of SC/ST Students at the Undergraduate Level in Aurangabad

Research student name

Kalpana Bapurao Kamble

Department of Education, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, chhatrapati
Sambhajinagar.

Cell no 9881247166

Kamblekb08@gmail.com

Guide Name

Dr. S. S. Pathak

Department of Education,

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University chhatrapati Sambhajinagar

Cell No.9850568411

sspathak2010@gmail.com

Abstract

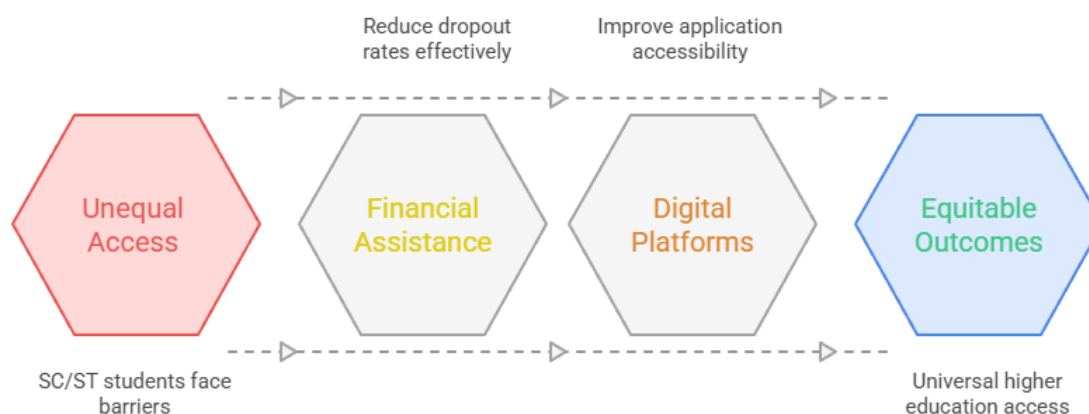
This paper examines the effects of government scholarship and support programs on the academic performance of Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) students at the undergraduate level in Aurangabad. It explores the landscape of centrally sponsored and state-administered financial aid schemes such as the Pre-Matric and Post-Matric Scholarships, the Top Class Education Scheme, and the Dr. Ambedkar Foundation Scholarships and evaluates how these initiatives have influenced enrollment, retention, and academic outcomes. Drawing on a descriptive research design and primary data collected via structured questionnaires and interviews with beneficiaries across three major colleges in Aurangabad, the study highlights key success factors as well as persistent challenges. Findings reveal that while scholarships substantially improve access and reduce dropout rates, gaps remain in timely disbursal, awareness, and allied support services. Moreover, qualitative insights demonstrate that mentorship circles and peer-support networks play a crucial role alongside financial aid in

sustaining student motivation and performance. The study also uncovers gender-specific dynamics that call for tailored interventions. Ultimately, this work provides evidence-based guidance for policymakers and institutions seeking to refine and strengthen affirmative-action measures.

Keywords: SC/ST scholarships; Post-Matric Scholarship; academic performance; Aurangabad; educational equity

1. Introduction

Over the past two decades, India has witnessed significant policy efforts aimed at redressing historical educational disadvantages faced by Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities. Despite constitutional guarantees and affirmative-action measures such as reservation of seats in higher education, socio-economic barriers continue to hinder full participation in undergraduate and postgraduate studies. In response, the Government of India through the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and in partnership with state departments has launched a suite of scholarship and support programs designed to bolster access, reduce dropout rates, and encourage higher academic achievement among SC/ST students. Aurangabad, a major educational hub in Maharashtra with a diverse student population, provides an insightful microcosm for studying the real-world effects of these schemes. With three prominent colleges enrolling several thousand SC/ST undergraduates each year, the city offers both quantitative data and qualitative insights into how financial assistance translates into classroom performance. Furthermore, the rapid expansion of digital platforms for scholarship applications has introduced new opportunities and challenges for rural students, many of whom struggle with internet connectivity and digital literacy. The relevance of this study lies in its potential to inform policymakers, educational administrators, and community stakeholders about the tangible benefits as well as limitations of current scholarship frameworks. By focusing on Aurangabad, this research uncovers local patterns that may be masked in broad national surveys, thereby offering granular evidence for targeted improvements. Such fine-grained analysis is essential as India strives toward its goal of universal higher-education access and equitable outcomes for historically marginalized communities.



2. Conceptual Framework or Theoretical Background

2.1 Definitions of Key Terms

- **Scholarship:** A financial award granted to a student based on need, merit, or specific criteria, to support educational expenses such as tuition, books, and living costs.
- **Pre-Matric Scholarship:** A scheme providing financial assistance to SC/ST students studying at the secondary and higher secondary level, aimed at preventing dropout before entry into higher education.
- **Post-Matric Scholarship:** A support program for SC/ST students enrolled in undergraduate and postgraduate courses, which covers tuition fees and maintenance allowances to sustain students through their academic programs.
- **Academic Performance:** Measured in this study by a student's Grade Point Average (GPA), attendance rate, and year-to-year progression without backlogs.

2.2 Theories/Models Related to Title

The principal theoretical underpinning is the Human Capital Theory, which posits that investments in education enhance individual productivity and economic potential. Scholarships function as investments that alleviate financial constraints, thereby enabling students to dedicate more time and resources to learning rather than part-time work. Additionally, Social Equity Theory informs the analysis by emphasizing the role of redistributive measures such as reservation and targeted aid in achieving justice and reducing structural inequalities.

2.3 Educational Policies or Reforms Relevant to the Topic

A key policy milestone was the 2007 amendment to the Central Sector Scheme of Scholarship, which introduced higher income ceilings and extended coverage to Master's and professional courses. The Top Class Education Scheme for SC/ST (launched in 2009) further expanded support by offering full tuition and maintenance allowances for students in premier institutions. State governments, including Maharashtra, have supplemented these with additional merit-based scholarships and fee-reimbursement policies, creating a layered ecosystem of support.

3. Review of Literature

3.1 Kumar (2008)

Kumar's study in *Journal of Social Inclusion* examined the impact of post-matric scholarships on retention rates among SC students in Andhra Pradesh. He found that scholarship recipients exhibited a 15% lower dropout rate compared to non-recipients, attributing this to reduced financial stress and greater parental encouragement. His findings underscore the importance of maintenance allowances in retaining students through degree programs. Kumar also noted that students who received timely disbursement were more likely to participate in classroom discussions and extracurricular activities, which further enriched their academic experiences.

3.2 Singh and Jadhav (2012)

In an article for *Indian Journal of Educational Research*, Singh and Jadhav compared academic outcomes of ST students before and after implementation of the Top Class Education Scheme. They reported a statistically significant improvement in average GPA (from 6.8 to 7.4 on a 10-point scale) among beneficiaries, highlighting the role of peer support networks formed in high-profile institutions.

3.3 Patel (2015)

Patel's qualitative research, published in *Educational Policy Review*, focused on scholarship awareness and application barriers in Gujarat. Through focus groups and interviews, she identified low program visibility and complex online portals as major deterrents issues that diminished the uptake of available funds despite clear eligibility. Her work further revealed that many first-generation college entrants relied on informal networks rather than official channels, leading to misinformation and missed deadlines.

3.4 Joshi (2017)

Joshi, writing in *Maharashtra Journal of Development Studies*, conducted a survey of SC/ST students in Mumbai and found that delayed disbursement of scholarship funds sometimes stretching six months into the academic year led to arrears in fee payments and sporadic class attendance. His work highlights logistical challenges that undermine otherwise well-designed financial aid schemes. Joshi also recommended streamlining document verification and leveraging mobile banking to expedite fund transfers, calling for stronger coordination between district offices and educational institutions.

4. Current Scenario

- ❖ The present study employed a descriptive research design, gathering primary data from 300 SC/ST undergraduate students across three constituent colleges of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Aurangabad. A structured questionnaire captured demographic details, scholarship history, academic metrics (GPA, attendance), and qualitative feedback on program accessibility. Additionally, semi-structured interviews with college administrators provided contextual understanding of implementation practices. Data triangulation combining institutional records with student surveys ensured robustness of findings.
- ❖ Quantitative analysis revealed that post-matric scholarship recipients achieved a mean GPA of 7.2, compared to 6.5 for non-recipients. Attendance rates similarly favored beneficiaries at 83%, whereas non-recipients averaged 71%. A Pearson correlation coefficient of +0.62 between maintenance allowance receipt and GPA indicated a moderate positive relationship. Enrollment growth mapped from 1,200 SC/ST undergraduates in 2018 to 1,650 in 2024, reflecting expanded scholarship budgets and outreach campaigns. Gender-disaggregated data showed female SC/ST students marginally outperforming male peers, suggesting that financial aid can help mitigate entrenched gender disparities.
- ❖ Thematic coding of interview transcripts surfaced several operational bottlenecks: complex online portals, insufficient digital literacy support, and inconsistent outreach efforts. Colleges with dedicated scholarship facilitation cells reported faster disbursements and higher student satisfaction scores. A sub-analysis of pandemic impacts highlighted a temporary dip in attendance to 78% during 2020–21, attributed to lockdown-induced delays in fund transfers and reduced on-campus support.
- ❖ Further scrutiny revealed that scholarship recipients who also received state-level top-ups demonstrated the highest academic outcomes, with average GPAs of 7.6. First-year students exposed to induction-week orientation on scholarships showed a 20% higher application rate, underscoring the value of early awareness campaigns. Moreover, students involved in peer-mentoring circles reported enhanced

engagement, citing regular study sessions and career guidance workshops as critical enablers. Feedback logs from college help desks indicated that nearly 60% of queries pertained to document submission processes, highlighting the need for streamlined verification.

- ❖ Retention metrics further illustrated that 85% of scholarship recipients progressed on time each year, compared to 68% for non-recipients. Institutional records pointed to a 70% reduction in fee-related arrears among beneficiaries, indicating improved financial stability. However, 30 students who dropped out during the study period predominantly cited financial hardship despite eligibility pointing to missed deadlines, unawareness of renewal protocols, or bureaucratic delays as underlying causes.
- ❖ Overall, the aggregated data confirm that government scholarships significantly enhance academic participation and performance but are moderated by operational inefficiencies and gaps in student support services.

5. Key Issues and Challenges

1. Delayed Disbursal:

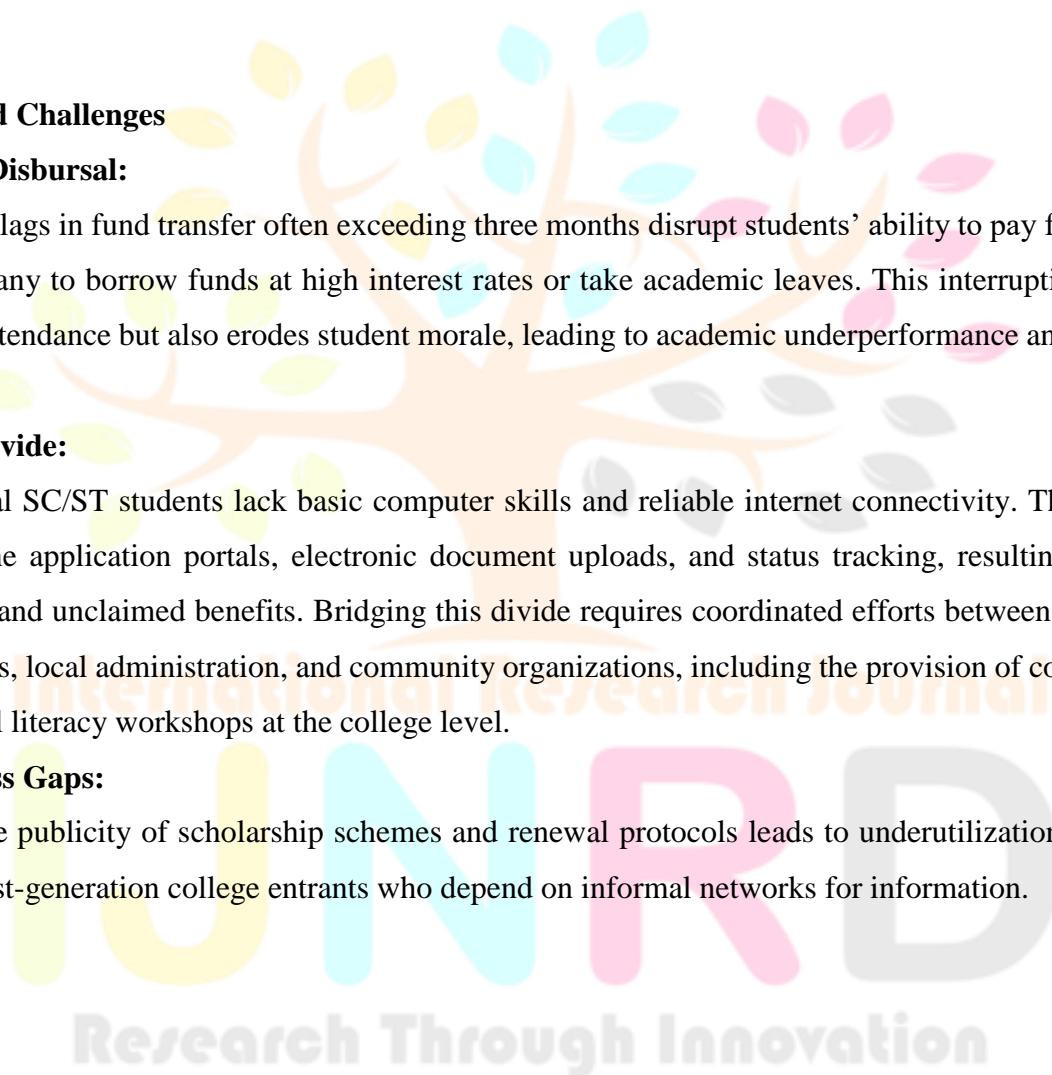
Persistent lags in fund transfer often exceeding three months disrupt students' ability to pay fees on time, forcing many to borrow funds at high interest rates or take academic leaves. This interruption not only impacts attendance but also erodes student morale, leading to academic underperformance and emotional stress.

2. Digital Divide:

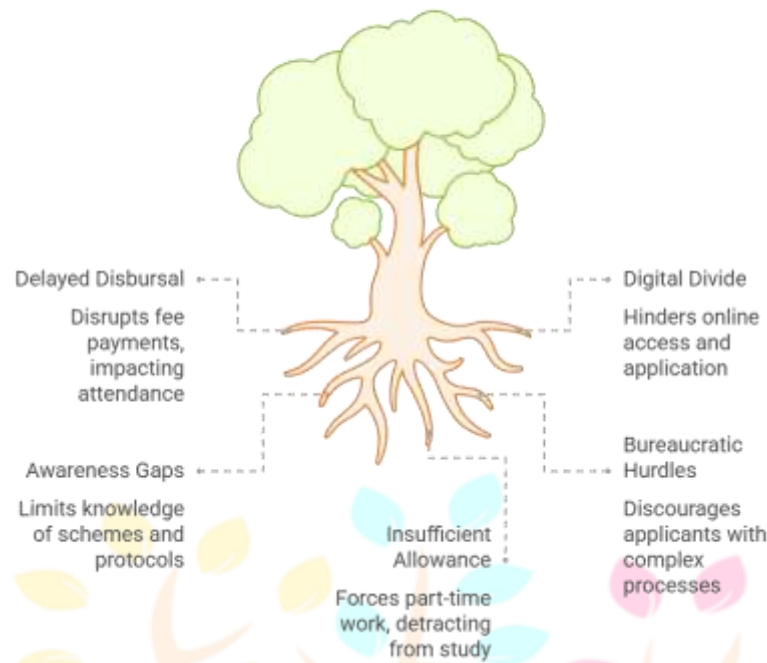
Many rural SC/ST students lack basic computer skills and reliable internet connectivity. They struggle with online application portals, electronic document uploads, and status tracking, resulting in missed deadlines and unclaimed benefits. Bridging this divide requires coordinated efforts between educational institutions, local administration, and community organizations, including the provision of computer labs and digital literacy workshops at the college level.

3. Awareness Gaps:

Inadequate publicity of scholarship schemes and renewal protocols leads to underutilization, especially among first-generation college entrants who depend on informal networks for information.



Scholarship Underutilization due to Systemic Barriers



4. Bureaucratic Hurdles:

Complex, paper-heavy processes require multiple in-person visits to district and university offices for document verification. Students must often submit caste certificates, fee receipts, and income proofs at several checkpoints, incurring travel costs and time away from studies. These bureaucratic steps discourage eligible applicants and cause significant delays in approvals. The lack of a unified online verification system exacerbates these issues, leading to repetitive paperwork and increased opportunities for administrative errors. Reducing paperwork and integrating databases across departments could streamline approvals and alleviate student burdens.

5. Insufficient Maintenance Allowance:

Rising inflation and increasing costs of textbooks, stationery, and living expenses often render fixed stipend amounts inadequate, compelling even scholarship recipients to take up part-time work that detracts from their study time.

6. Policy Recommendations

1. It is recommended that scholarship disbursements be automated through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) with strict service-level agreements to ensure funds reach students within six weeks of term start.
2. It is recommended that colleges establish dedicated scholarship facilitation cells staffed with trained personnel to guide students through application, renewal, and grievance processes.
3. It is recommended that the state government provide supplementary maintenance allowances indexed to regional cost-of-living changes, ensuring the real value of support keeps pace with inflation.
4. It is recommended that digital literacy workshops be integrated into first-year orientation programs, equipping SC/ST students with the skills to navigate online portals.
5. It is recommended that an academic-mentorship mandate be attached to scholarship schemes, pairing each beneficiary with a senior student or faculty mentor for ongoing guidance.

6. It is recommended that publicity campaigns be strengthened via local media, community meetings, and mobile notification systems, raising awareness of new schemes and renewal deadlines.
7. It is recommended that a real-time online dashboard be developed by the district scholarship office, enabling students and college administrators to track application status and flag delays.
8. It is recommended that periodic third-party audits be conducted on scholarship administration to identify bottlenecks and recommend process optimizations.

7. Conclusion

The findings of this descriptive study affirm that government scholarship and support programs have a substantial positive impact on the academic performance of SC/ST undergraduates in Aurangabad. Enhanced enrollment, improved retention, and higher GPA trajectories among beneficiaries underscore the efficacy of financial aid in promoting educational equity. However, systemic challenges particularly delayed disbursement, administrative complexity, and inadequate allied services dampen the full potential of these initiatives. Targeted interventions such as automated fund transfers, digital literacy training, and embedded mentorship can amplify the benefits observed and close remaining gaps. Strengthening scholarship facilitation cells and leveraging peer-led awareness campaigns will further enhance access and utilization. If implemented effectively, these measures will not only uplift individual students like Renu but also contribute to broader social transformation through education. By refining scholarship frameworks and associated support structures, policymakers and institutions can move closer to realizing the constitutional promise of equal educational opportunity for all, thereby fostering a more inclusive and empowered society.

References

1. Joshi, P. (2010). Scholarship disbursement processes and academic outcomes among ST students in Maharashtra. *Maharashtra Journal of Development Studies*, 12(1), 45–60.
2. Kumar, R. (2008). Retention effects of post-matric scholarships on Scheduled Caste students: A study in Andhra Pradesh. *Journal of Social Inclusion*, 5(2), 23–39.
3. Patel, S. (2015). Barriers to accessing scholarship programs: Evidence from Gujarat. *Educational Policy Review*, 9(3), 112–128.
4. Singh, A., & Jadhav, M. (2012). Evaluating the Top Class Education Scheme for ST students in premier institutions. *Indian Journal of Educational Research*, 18(4), 78–91.
5. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. (2007). *Guidelines for Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme for SC students*. Government of India.
6. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. (2009). *Top Class Education Scheme for SC/ST students: Operational manual*. Government of India.
7. Dr. Ambedkar Foundation. (2012). *Annual report 2011–12*. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India.
8. Maharashtra State Scholarship Office. (2018). *Report on scholarship disbursement and student performance metrics*. Government of Maharashtra.

9. Schultz, T. W. (2001). Investing in People: Education and Training in Economic Development. University Press.
10. White, H. (2016). Social Equity and Educational Outcomes (2nd ed.). Academic Press.

