

EXPLORING COLLEGE STUDENTS' AWARENESS ABOUT THE TAMIL PUDHALVAN SCHEME: A COIMBATORE DISTRICT PERSPECTIVE

Dr. N. Ponsabariraj, Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce (E-Commerce), Nallamuthu Gounder Mahalingam College (Autonomous), Pollachi – 642 001, Coimbatore (Dt), Tamil Nadu,

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Tamil Nadu government has initiated several schemes to promote the socioeconomic empowerment, skill development, and entrepreneurship among youth. Perhaps the most popular among them is the Tamil Pudhalvan Scheme, an all-encompassing scheme that was designed to assist students, particularly those who belong to downtrodden groups, in attaining their highest level of studies and entrepreneurial capacity. The Tamil Pudhalvan Scheme, which was officially launched by the Chief Minister in Coimbatore in August 2024, pays ₹1,000 per month as a stipend to male government and government-aided school students pursuing college education. This scheme's intention is to motivate higher studies among economically backward male students who have studied in Tamil medium in government/government-aided schools from class 6 to class 12.

In a bid to emulate the success of the Pudhumai Penn Scheme, which has been giving identical benefits to girls since September 2022, this scheme is aimed at improving the admission of boys in colleges.

The program aims to increase the number of boys enrolling in college as it takes a cue from the Pudhumai Penn Scheme, which has been providing female students with equal opportunities. The impact of the Pudhumai Penn Scheme has been substantial, with over 3 lakh girl students being enrolled under the scheme. It has greatly increased women's enrollment in higher education, with government spending at ₹100.11 crore in 2022–23 and ₹271.66 crore in 2023–24. In addition to the funding, the Tamil Pudhalvan Scheme also places great emphasis on entrepreneurial development. The scheme provides funding for the purpose of enabling students to make their business ideas into successful businesses, and guidance and training to empower them with the ability to start and run successful businesses. Through entrepreneurship and self-reliance, the initiative aims at transforming student-introduced ideas into successful businesses. This scheme is part of a larger strategy of economic opportunity generation, reducing the educational and economic barriers, and empowering Tamil Nadu's youth.

KeyFeatures: Tamil Pudhalvan Scheme provides some of the most important features for encouraging higher studies among economically poor male students in Tamil Nadu. To qualify for the scholarship, male students have to study classes 6-12 in the state-run or government-aided schools within the state in the Tamil medium. Every eligible student is given a stipend of ₹1,000 per month, which will be directly transferred to their bank account. Notably, there is no cap on the number of beneficiaries belonging to one family, provided that all of them meet the eligibility conditions. The process of application has been streamlined and transparency has been brought through way of the Unified Mobile Application for Students (UMIS) portal. Possession of an Aadhaar card is a condition for registration under the scheme. Further, a separate Programme Management Unit (SPMU) has been established to oversee the execution of the scheme and independently assess its effectiveness in order to ensure accountability and improvement.

1.2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ravichandran & Latha (2023) conducted the research on the title: "Barriers to Accessing Government Welfare Programs in Tamil Nadu" The study centered on the barriers experienced by beneficiaries such as unawareness, bureaucratic red-tapism, and digital illiteracy. The authors preached simplified procedures, mobile awareness camps, and the incorporation of local languages in the promotional messages to make it inclusive.

Kumar, S & Rani (2022) in their research article titled: "Effectiveness of Government Welfare Schemes in Enhancing Higher Education Among Rural Students – A Case Study from Tamil Nadu". This paper identifies the desirable influence of scholarship schemes in enabling higher education for economically backward students. It has revealed that specialized schemes greatly enhanced enrollment and continuation, particularly where awareness campaigns were integrated.

Anitha M (2021) conducted the research titled: "Awareness and Utilization of Educational Welfare Schemes Among Girl Students in Tamil Nadu". The study found that programs such as Pudhumai Penn had a very positive impact on girl college enrollment. But it also identified the fact that awareness level was still low in rural areas, and large numbers of eligible families were not adequately aware of the application procedure or the advantages. The author suggested more school and local body involvement in spreading awareness.

Narayanan R. & Selvi K (2020) examined "Government Schemes and Socio-Economic Empowerment: A Study of Youth Beneficiaries in South India". The research analyzed the overall effectiveness of several central and state-level schemes to empower youth. It was revealed that the schemes were well-meaning and effective but were restricted by awareness gaps, particularly among rural and marginalized populations. The research highlighted the utilization of digital media and grassroots networks to enhance outreach.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The government has launched various welfare schemes, like offering ₹1,000 per month to boys studying in state government schools and pursuing college, in an effort to benefit students effectively and promote higher studies. But one problem still persists: few students are not well aware of the schemes, and they are satisfied with the offered benefits only to a certain extent. This research endeavors to assess the level of knowledge on the part of college students with regard to welfare schemes provided by the government of Coimbatore district, their views and the problems associated with accessing the benefits, and examine effective remedies for widening the scope and betterment of operations.

The study aims at specifically examining the awareness and effects of these schemes on students availing higher education in Coimbatore. The Central and State Governments have initiated a number of programs to foster the growth of students, but the success of these schemes is based on the degree of their adoption among the target beneficiaries. Facts do exist that show only a fraction of the eligible are availing these schemes, suggesting the possible ignorance or unawareness. This study, therefore, tries to examine how informed students of Coimbatore colleges are regarding these government schemes and identify gaps that serve as hindrances to their implementation.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What is the demographic profile of the college students surveyed in Coimbatore district?
- To what extent are college students in Coimbatore aware of the Tamil Pudhalvan Scheme?
- What are the key findings regarding student awareness of the Tamil Pudhalvan Scheme?
- What suggestions can be proposed to improve awareness and accessibility of the Tamil Pudhalvan Scheme among college students?

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To know the demographic profile of the respondents
- To understand the awareness about the Tamil Pudhalvan Scheme among the college students.
- To offer Findings and Suggestions to the study

1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The sample size of respondents for the study is limited due to time constraints. The research is limited only to the Coimbatore district, and results cannot be extended to other districts.

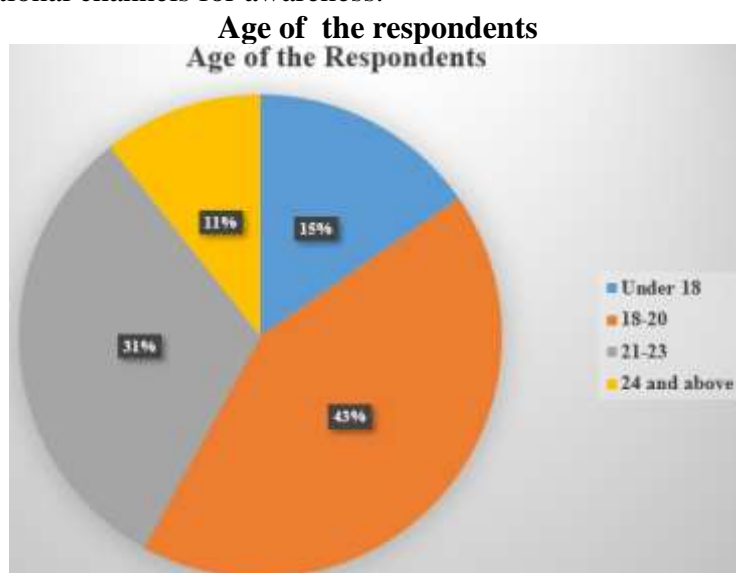
1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is mainly based on primary data gathered with the help of a structured interview schedule from 150 college students in the Coimbatore district through a convenient sampling method. Secondary data was collected from multiple sources such as magazines, academic journals, and trustworthy websites. Percentage Analysis, Chi-square tests were utilized for hypothesis testing, and Garrett Ranking Method to rank the factors as per the preferences and responses of the students.

1.8 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

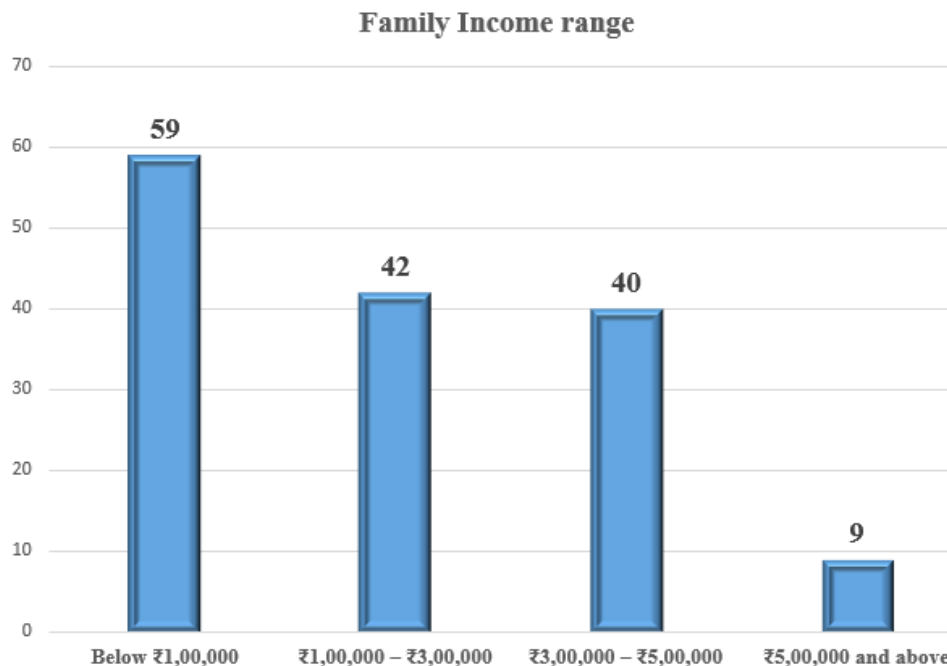
1.8.1 Percentage Analysis

Most of the participants were from rural and semi-urban backgrounds, where information access and digital infrastructure are comparatively scarce. This demographic factor was a key contributor to the awareness and ability to access the scheme. The reading of answers reflects a mixed state of awareness. While urban college students represented relatively higher consciousness due to greater exposure and institutional support, rural students were ignorant or possessed patchy information regarding the scheme. This uneven distribution is indicative of a low level of even communication and dissemination. Analysis shows that peer, teacher, and social media informal sources were responsible for the information sources used by most students. Formal sources like government portals, notice boards, or formal seminars were least accessed or found ineffective. This would indicate the need for more structured and institutional channels for awareness.



From the above chart it is clear that 43% of the respondents belong to the age group of 18 – 20 years, 31% of the respondents belong to the age bracket of 21 – 23, 15% of the respondents belong to Under 18 age bracket and the remaining 11% of the respondents belong to the age bracket of 24 and above.

Family Income Range of the Respondents



From the above chart, 59% of the respondents belong to below 1,00,000 income group, 42% of the respondents belong to 1,00,000 – 3,00,000 income bracket, 40% of the respondents belong to 3,00,000 – 5,00,000 income bracket and the remaining 9% of the respondents belong to 5,00,000 and above income bracket.

1.8.2 AWARENESS ON TAMIL PUDHALVAN SCHEME

A students may have various source to know about the scheme. The prime way to aware of the scheme to identity using Garrett Ranking.

Table :1 Awareness about the Tamil Pudhalvan Scheme

Source	Total Garrett score	Average Score	Rank
Television	7764	64.70	II
College Announcement	8442	70.35	I
Friends or Family	7065	58.88	III
Social media	6479	53.99	IV
Others	5755	47.96	V

Table 1 reveals that students have aware by college announcement followed by Television, Friends or Family, social media and others. Hence the students highly aware about the scheme by college announcement.

1.8.3 CHI- SQUARE TEST

Chi square test is carried out to know whether there exist a significant association between select variables – Area of Residence, Type of Family, Members in the Family, Earning Members in your Family, Parent Occupation, – and the level of awareness.

Ho: There is no significant association between the select personal variables and level of awareness

Table:2 Select Personal Variables and Level of Awareness. (chi square test)

Variables		Level of Awareness			N=12	X ²	'P' Value
		Low	Medium	High			
Area of Residence	Rural	15	31	15	61	1.311	0.859
	Semi urban	10	26	17	53		
	Urban	13	14	9	36		
Type of Family	Nuclear	19	42	19	80	7.504	0.023**
	Joint	20	33	17	70		

Members in the family	Up to 2	8	7	6	21	5.112	0.276
	3 to 5	20	54	27	101		
	Above 6	13	10	5	28		
Earning members in the family	1	10	22	14	46	12.07	0.017**
	2	11	35	15	61		
	Above 3	17	14	12	43		
Parent Occupation	Daily wage	5	1	2	8	21.43	0.091
	Agriculture	6	9	5	20		
	Business	10	14	5	29		
	Employee	8	27	13	48		
	Profession	3	7	3	13		
	Retired	3	5	5	13		
	House wife	5	4	0	9		
	Others	5	4	1	10		

Source: Primary Data

** Significant

It is inferred that among the personal variable selected there exist a significant association between Type of Family as well as the Earning Members in the Family and awareness on the Tamil Pudhalvan Scheme ($P < 0.05$), whereas there does not exist a significant association between select variables namely Area of Residence, Members in the family, Parent Occupation awareness on Tamil Pudhalvan ($P > 0.05$).

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Demographic Profile of the Respondents:

The questionnaire included a mixed sample of students belonging to various socio-economic strata from Coimbatore district. They were largely rural inhabitants and from the lower economic sections of society, and therefore the beneficiaries of the Tamil Pudhalvan scheme were likely to include them.

Awareness Level:

Although a reasonable number of students knew about the Tamil Pudhalvan Scheme, most were still short on proper information related to its eligibility, application procedure, and benefits. Awareness tended to be high among urban college students compared to rural college students.

Sources of Information:

Students who were aware of the scheme named school teachers, social media, and friends as their primary source of information. However, there was little awareness generated through formal means such as government websites or publicity campaigns.

Application and Accessibility challenges:

Among the participants who were aware of the scheme, some also struggled to understand the application procedure through the UMIS portal. Digital illiteracy in rural India and Aadhaar verification issues were also brought to the fore as hurdles.

Impact of the Scheme:

Pupils who benefited from the Tamil Pudhalvan Scheme were satisfied and noted that the funds assisted them in managing school fees, transport, and book expenses. Some, however, said that the money was not adequate in paying for the increasing fee of studies. There were significant numbers of eligible students who had not submitted their applications owing to ignorance or confusion about eligibility criteria. This points toward a gap in communication between policy makers and students.

Recommendations from Respondents:

Most students suggested stronger awareness campaigns in local languages, increased participation by schools in information dissemination, and offline centers for assistance to aid the

SUGGESTIONS

To enhance the effectiveness of the Tamil Pudhalvan Scheme in Coimbatore, several key strategies can be adopted. Firstly, there is a pressing need to expand outreach efforts, particularly in rural areas where awareness levels remain low. While urban centers like Coimbatore city have seen significant uptake, rural students often face barriers due to limited access to information. Organizing awareness campaigns in remote schools and communities can help bridge this gap. Secondly, enhancing digital literacy is crucial, as many students and their families struggle with online application procedures. Providing training and support in navigating digital platforms can make the enrollment process more accessible and efficient.

CONCLUSION

The Tamil Pudhalvan scheme has proven to be a valuable initiative in promoting higher education among male students in Coimbatore district. By addressing financial barriers, the scheme has enabled many students to pursue their educational aspirations. However, to maximize its impact, it is essential to address challenges related to outreach, digital literacy, and inclusivity. With continued support and enhancements, the scheme can play a pivotal role in shaping a more educated and empowered future for the youth of Coimbatore. By expanding outreach to rural regions, improving digital literacy, strengthening monitoring systems, increasing financial aid, and ensuring inclusivity, the scheme can become more equitable and impactful. These measures will not only boost enrollment and retention in higher education but also contribute to the broader goal of empowering youth through education, ultimately fostering social and economic development in the region.

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