

A Qualitative Inquiry into the Challenges faced by the Researchers and possible threat to Quality of Research in India

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ABSTRACT

Research is a multifaceted initiative undertaken by different scholars belonging to different fields. Many Indian National and State level institutes/bodies like University Grant Commission, National Council of Educational Research and Training, Indian Council for Social Science Research, Indian Council of Philosophical Research, Indian Council of Historical Research, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Panjab University, and more such institutions are engaged in promoting excellence in research in higher education by supporting various research grants, scholarships, workshops, and other programs in several disciplines. In today's dynamic globalized era, the nation's development demands equal focus on volume and quality in research work.

When research standards in India are compared with International setups, International standards outshine the Indian standards by a fair distance. The research standard in past decades in Social Sciences has become an issue of national concern for research conducting and promoting entities. It has been revealed in the studies that the quality of research has been compromised due to numerous reasons. On most occasions, promotion, degrees, jobs, scholarships, etc. are found to be the objective of researchers behind conducting research which impacts the quality of research at the end, and on other instances, the challenges reasons are found to be lack of proper facilities for the researchers before going to the field, on the field, and after field-work. These limiting factors are the major roadblocks in producing trustworthy work.

In this descriptive study, the researcher presented the challenges faced by the doctorate students and also attempts to highlight the factors responsible for low-quality research work. The non-probability sampling technique selected the sample of 100 research scholars from different parts of the country (25 from North India, 25 from South India, 25 from West India, and 25 from East India). The questionnaire, Interview, and Focussed Group Discussions (on the conference call) were used to collect data. In the finding section of this paper, the challenges of research scholars were presented under different dimensions. These dimensions were structural challenges (pertains to the structure of the Ph.D. program), functional challenges (the processing aspect of Ph.D.), administrative challenges (relates to administration and supervision), and personal challenges (includes researcher's limitations w.r.t. research). It was found that the intensity of challenges was more in the personal, emotional, and administrative dimensions. The problems reported were related to the general working process, domain-specific expertise, supervision, scholar preparation, and resources, etc. This study is submitted with suggestions for education experts, policy framers, the institution of state and national level, government, and other stakeholders of education. The paper leaves space for further dialogue, brainstorming, and debate for setting research quality parameters and quality excellence research framework in India.

Keywords: Challenges, Quality Research, Research Excellence Framework, Ph.D. Scholars and Qualitative Research.

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UNDERSTANDING QUALITY IN RESEARCH: AN INTRODUCTION

Research is undertaken in education specifically to improve on the instructions and education in general. As per its nature, it is believed that norms, policies, structures, methodology, and curriculum will be upgraded and polished so that the process and product will become more effective and efficient. Education is a dynamic and continuously evolving system but at the same time a crisis-laden institution also. It needs to be studied persistently for revisions and required modifications. Such activity can be carried out by means of researchers who are engaged in finding out areas of weaknesses, the nature of these weaknesses, and the extent to which these faults affect the educational system, and consequently, possible solutions found. The ultimate aim of educational research is the improvement of the scientific basis for the analysis and implementation of educational policies. Research and development activities are used to strengthen policy and to make workable plans from the policy. They are used to identify and manage available resources for plan implementation, formulate new

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theories, and acquire new knowledge for improved learning and teaching. In India, five apex bodies are responsible for research and development. They are a) Indian Council of Medical Research; It is the apex body for the formulation, coordination, and promotion of biomedical research, b) the Indian Council of Agricultural Research; an autonomous body that coordinates guides, and manages research and education in agriculture including horticulture, fisheries, and animal sciences, c) Indian Council for Social Science Research; It was established in 1969 by the Government of India to promote research in social sciences, d) Council of Scientific and

Industrial Research; It was established in 1942 as an autonomous body and India's largest Research and Development organization. Its activities include various fields like aerospace engineering, structural engineering, life sciences, environment, etc., and e) Tata Institute of Fundamental Research. It is a research institution in Mumbai dedicated to basic research in Mathematics and sciences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Madhan M., Gunasekaran S. and Arunachalam S. (2018) conducted a study on evaluation of research in India and looked at two issues that characterize Indian science, viz (i) the misuse of metrics, particularly impact factor (IF) and h-index, in assessing individual researchers and institutions, and (ii) poor research evaluation practices. It was discussed in the study that research has to be evaluated for rigor, originality, significance, and that cannot be done routinely. Evaluation could become more meaningful with a shift in values from scientific productivity to scientific originality and creativity, but the funding and education systems seem to discourage originality and curiosity. The paper also highlighted that research councils and universities need to undertake a radical reform in research evaluation. When evaluating research proposals, originality and creativity should be considered rather than feasibility, and a greater emphasis should be laid on previous achievements rather than the proposed work.

Gupta M., Gupta R., and Kumbar (2013) revealed in their study on India's performance in social sciences researches that India has great potential in giving and sustaining still higher publication growth in social sciences in the coming years as compared to other countries. Achieving this will depend in part on the increased investment in research and development and higher education, strengthening the educational and research infrastructure, increased deployment of qualified manpower, better interaction amongst the professional community, increased international cooperation with other countries, stricter evaluation, and monitoring system in promotions, in awarding degrees, research grants, and research projects.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

Research Questions

The thought of conducting this research was based on one basic question that provoked the researcher to work in this area. The question was "how significant is research in social sciences in India, and what is the contribution of Indian social science researches, specifically the education discipline to Global society? In order to find out the answers to these major questions, the basic questions were required to be explored. Hence, the researcher framed some basic and field-based questions for the current study. The questions:-

- What are the challenges of researchers doing Ph.D. in India?
- How the challenges faced by the researcher impact the quality of research produced by them?
- What can be done to improve the quality of research in Indian Institutions?

Objectives of the Study

General Objective: The study intended to voice the researcher's voices by reporting their challenges while researching and pursuing their Ph.D. in Education in India. The study was also aiming to explore the impact of these challenges on the quality of research

and further possible threat to quality in educational research in India.

Specific Objectives:

- To find out the major challenges faced by research scholars in pursuing their Ph.D. in the discipline of Education in India.
- To deduce the impact of identified challenges on the quality of research in education.

Operational Definitions

Challenge

A challenge was defined as something which is new and difficult for the research scholar and requires great effort (mental & physical) and determination to be handled successfully. The areas in which challenges were explored in this study:-

Structural Challenges: It included issues concerning the structure of Ph.D. courses in India i.e., the course work (its curriculum, period & assessment), assessment criterion of the Ph.D., period of Ph.D.

Administrative Challenges: It included issues related to supervisor, whole management, infrastructure.

Personal Challenges: It included issues with respect to the skills of the scholar (writing, presenting, and research skills of the scholar)

Financial Challenges: It included the issues related to monetary support provided to research scholars in India. (Scholarship disbursement process, scholarship amount, norms and rules of scholarship)

Emotional Challenges: It included the issues which impact the emotional stability of the scholars. (stress due to lack of support, lack of research skills, length of research). The statements included in the tool helped the researcher to know the level of stress, exhaustion, lack of interest, anxiety.

Impact on Quality of Research

The impact on research quality was defined as the strong effect or influence caused on the quality of research or the degree of excellence of research impacted due to the challenges faced by the researchers.

Delimitation

This study was delimited to:-

- The Doctorate students, pursuing a Ph.D. in India.
- The scholars of education discipline only were taken in the research.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample and Tool: To explore the challenges of researchers, descriptive survey design was used by the investigator. The survey conducted was cross-sectional as the data was collected to make inferences about the population of interest at one point in time. The survey design helped the researcher explore, describe, and present the challenges that exist, the opinion held by the mass, processes that were going on, and the developing trend. Through the non-probability sampling technique (purposive sampling), the researcher selected 100 Ph.D. scholars (Ph.D. in Education) from different parts of the country. To seek adequate answers for the research questions, both quantitative and qualitative instruments were used. These instruments consisted of a mixed questionnaire (with closed and open-ended questions), interview, focussed group discussion, and educational institute's documents/ websites. The questionnaire had three sections. The section A consisted of questions related to the background information of the scholar,

section B had closed-ended questions and section C had open-ended questions. It had in all 52 questions. The interview and FGD had 6 questions each for discussion. Qualitative instruments were used because of the nature of some of the research questions and the intent of the researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the issue under study.

Method: A questionnaire was prepared by the researcher, validated by the experts, and was sent to 140 research scholars pursuing Ph.D. in Education discipline in different parts of India (north, west, south, and east India) in the form of Google form through social networking websites/ apps. The researcher received 109 filled-in forms and had included 100 forms for data analysis (the incomplete forms were excluded). Out of these 100 Ph.D. scholars, 30 Ph.D. scholars were selected randomly and contacted for approval to participate further in the study for interview and FGDs. Due to geographical limitations, the researcher arranged the interview and FGD on an audio/ video conference call.

Data Analysis: Quantitative data collected through a closed-ended questionnaire was analyzed by descriptive statistics such as percentage analysis and is presented in graphical form in the analysis section of this paper, followed by a pertinent explanation or description. The qualitative tools like interview and FGD were analyzed using coding, thematic and verbatim quotes. Based on the collected data, analysis, interpretation, and discussion were made to reach a certain conclusion. Finally, based on the results, some recommendations were made.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Objective 1

To find the major challenges faced by research scholars in pursuing their Ph.D. in the discipline of Education in India.

Tool: Questionnaire

Analysis and Findings: Questionnaire: Section A

Analysis of Respondents' Background Information: To obtain the respondent's background information, the questions were prepared in the first section of the questionnaire (section A) (Table 1).

Analysis of Section B: Closed-ended Questions:

On analysis of the data, it was revealed that:

- The research scholars who were at later stages of Ph.D. work face more challenges as compared to the scholars who were at the initial phase of their research. (More than half of Ph.D. scholars who were at a later phase of the research reported challenges in different dimensions). 75% of the senior research scholars reported problems in almost all the dimensions, especially reported emotional and psychological issues more as compared to the junior research scholars.
- Full-time scholars were facing relatively more challenges as compared to part-time scholars. (More than half of the full-time scholars reported challenges). 80% of Full-time scholars reported problems.
- The intensity of challenges faced by male researchers was more as compared to female researchers. (All the male scholars reported challenges in different dimensions and maximum in financial dimension). 65% of male research scholars reported problems.
- The challenges about financial, emotional, personal, and administrative dimensions were more as compared to structural and functional dimensions.
- More than half of the scholars (60%) in the study reported challenges related to financial, emotional, and administrative dimensions.

DIMENSION WISE ANALYSIS (Please refer Table 2 and

Figure 1)

- 80% of research scholars agree and strongly agree with the challenges related to financial issues.
- 75% of research scholars agree and strongly agree with the challenges related to emotional issues.
- 65% of research scholars agree and strongly agree with the challenges related to administrative issues.
- 50% of research scholars agree and strongly agree to the challenges related to personal issues.
- 35% of research scholars agree and strongly agree to the challenges related to structural (course structure) issues.

Table 1: Respondents' Background Details

S.No.	Components	Total Sample	Percentage-wise presentation in the Sample (%)
1	Full-timers		70
2	Part-timers		30
3	Phase of Research		Initial phase: (course work & Literature Review): 20 Middle Phase: (data collection): 50 Last phase: (Data Analysis and submission): 30
4	Total No. of Years as a researcher	100	1 year: 15 2 years: 5 3 years: 41 4 years: 17 5 years: 22 6 years: None
5	Scholarship holders (centrally sponsored scholarship/ State Sponsored Scholarship /University-sponsored scholarship)		Yes: 42 No: 58 If Yes, Centrally Sponsored Scholarship: 23 State-Sponsored Scholarship: 2 University Sponsored Scholarship: 19
6	Gender	100	Male: 48 Female: 52



Table 2: Dimension wise Percentage Analysis

Research Scholars Challenges (Dimensions)	N	Strongly Agree	Agree	Can't Say	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Structural Dimension		20%	15%	0%	40%	25%
Personal Dimension		20%	30%	0%	40%	10%
Emotional Dimension	100	30%	45%	2.5%	15%	7.5%
Administrative Dimension		25%	40%	5%	25%	5%
Financial Dimension		60%	20%	0%	15%	5%

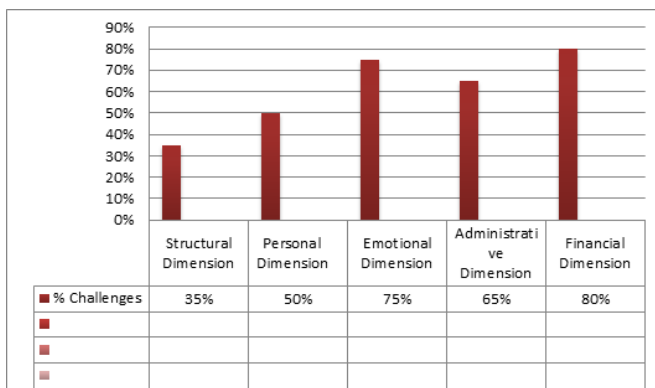


Figure 1: Graphical presentation of Dimension wise Percentage Analysis

Analysis of Section C: Open-Ended Questions:

Section C of the questionnaire had 5 questions and were analyzed through content analysis.

- **Do you think that you require some additional support for your Ph.D. study? Yes/No, If you do, what kind of support would it be? Why?**

Analysis: 65% of the scholars agreed on 'Yes' and 35% on 'No' Kind of support the Ph.D. scholars require: The identified codes were:-

Print out facility, access to literature as and when required (online journals), proper sitting arrangement in the department, un-interrupted internet & computer facility, workshops, need of researchers development program, hands-on experience on statistical tools and software, provision of purchase of expensive books by the department for research, reach to experts of other disciplines in case of inter-disciplinary researches, secretarial assistance, training on research writings, financial help in the form of scholarship to every student, grant of research leaves.

- **How do you see your role in the scientific community as a doctorate?**

Analysis: 15% of Ph.D. scholars answered in negative and 85% of Ph.D. scholars answered in positive.

Identified codes were:-

Codes identified in Negative responses were:-

Ph.D.s are not given much of value, No role, no comment, Can't say right now, not much important, as a doctorate only.

Verbatim of one of the scholars who answered in negative:

"Not too impactful. Since the quality of research is getting deteriorated day by day due to lack of proper- continuous supervision, unnecessary compulsory attendance, bureaucracy, and lack of technical and academic support."

Codes identified in Positive responses were:-

As a lifelong researcher, contributor to the repository of knowledge, as an integral part of this community, information seeker and distributor, as a Policy Framer, as a changing agent. As an expert.

Verbatim of one of the scholars who answered in positive:

"I see myself as a Scientist, a problem solver.....who keeps on researching and finding solutions of the problems encountered by different stakeholders in the area of Education."

- **Have any come across such a situation that had led to a delay in your Doctoral study? If yes, please share.**

Analysis: 40 % answered 'No,' and 60 % answered 'Yes'

Codes identified were:-

Major changes suggested at the last stage of the Ph.D., opinion difference with the supervisor, job obligations, lack of time management, lack of proper guidance, lack of digital knowledge, delay in research assessment sessions, poor skills in research writing, mental harassment in scholarship disbursement.

- **What is your opinion on the impact of quality of research due to administrative, functional, structural, personal, and other challenges, which the research scholar faces while pursuing the Ph.D. course? Please share.**

Analysis: All the scholars agreed that such challenges create mental tension, stress, increases anxiety, depression in the life of scholars.

The codes identified were:-

Lack of support from institutions for data collection and no permission for research leave creates the possibility of data manipulation by the scholars in social sciences. The lack of administrative support leads to early and improper disposal of the thesis. Lack of continuous guidance leads to submission of poor quality research work.

Verbatim of one of the scholars:

"Such challenges create mental tension and stress in the life of a scholar due to which the scholar is not able to concentrate fully in research work. A mentally unstable researcher can never produce good and quality work. Sound research can only be produced from a sound mind. Quality of research is 100% compromised.....scholars submit Ph.D. at the earliest, that too half-heartedly just to get escape from such problems"

- **Would appreciate if you will share some valuable suggestions to improve the system.**

Analysis: Codes identified were:-

- The attitude of the researchers: The attitude of the scholars needs to be worked on, need to develop respect for research ethics and values among researchers.
- Course work: needs to be restructured and taken up seriously.

- Reconsideration of scholarship disbursement norms and process.
- Guidance and counseling facilities for the scholars till the submission of Ph.D.
- Timely six-monthly research assessments and accountability of department for the same.
- provision of alternate supervisor, to share and have a second opinion on work.
- Credit to experts for tool validation.
- Data collection leave for every scholar irrespective of part-time or full-time, if the part-timer can get data collection leave, only then he/ she may be given admission for the Ph.D. or else Ph.D. through part-time mode may be canceled by UGC.
- Proper vigil on the behaviour n treatment of supervisors with their scholars.
- UGC or Universities may organize researcher Development Program.

Objective 2

To deduce the impact of identified challenges on the quality of research in Education discipline.

Tool: Interview and Focussed Group Discussion

Analysis and Findings:

For analysis, data collected through Focussed Group Discussion and interview transcripts was coded manually and then categorized by the researcher. The coding was done based on the codes that emerged and those that were predetermined. Thus, both the inductive and deductive methods were used to create the codes. The codes were categorized as per the following dimensions:- The predetermined dimensions:- (a) structural dimension, (b) emotional dimension, (c) administrative dimension, (d) financial dimension, and (e) personal dimension; and the emerged dimensions:- (a) weak policies, poor planning and government support and (b) need of right based attitude and (c) need to develop values and respect for research ethics among researchers. Then, the codes were connected to form categories for findings and concluding.

The key findings related to challenges faced by the researchers in India were:-

Financial Challenges: It was revealed that most of the research scholars find participation in conferences, seminars, and workshops very difficult as they charge high registration fees for the same. The participation fee starts from 500 to 50,000. Very few academic institutes make the registration of academic meetings free of cost. And, in such institutes, where the participation is free of cost, the opportunity of presentation becomes very low due to high competition. This makes the sharing of research findings limited to Ph.D. thesis or university only. Reaching to a larger audience becomes difficult for research scholars. Few of the scholars also expressed their concern about the charges related to the publication of the research paper. 80% of the scholars agreed on the lack of enough financial support for the Ph.D. Even the scholars who were getting a scholarship do not find the scholarship amount enough to support the research work and feel depressed about not being able to work as they want. One of the disappointed scholars shared during the interview that:-

"What is the use of me putting so much effort in data collection and then on analysis and findings when the system has no standard provision for getting the results shared with a large audience. There are a lot of predatory conferences and journals, which makes money in the name of academic meetings and writings."

The other scholar stated that:-

"Research is my passion, though after completing my M. Phil. and a JRF in my discipline, I could have got a job with a decent package but, I took admission in Ph.D. I have left all that with an aim to contribute to the research community. As a scholarship in humanities, I get Rs 32,000. As per the norms of UGC, India, the scholarship holder is not permitted to engage in any other revenue-earning assignments. As a married male, it is difficult for me to support my family financially. In such conditions, don't you feel that how I would feel proud to be a part of the research community? With time, one feels demotivated, and hence the interest and quality of research is getting compromised in India."

More than half of the scholars strongly agreed on the fact that though they love the title/ theme/ area of their Ph.D. research, they feel as they could have done far better than what they have done so far due to lack of financial assistance. Almost all the full-time scholars acknowledged the delay in scholarship disbursement. During the discussion, it was also revealed by one of the scholars that:

"In my university, despite being a rank holder and a meritorious scholar, I was denied of scholarship, on the ground of being overage. In a country like India where cultural and socio-economic conditions are such that women have to postpone their education time and again, not only this, other conditions often force her to take an early exit from education and job.the government must reconsider the age capping of scholarship and motivate women by providing scholarship even after being overage."

Few of the female research scholars expressed that despite having intelligence, interest, knowledge, and skill, it becomes demotivating for the researchers who are more than 35 to enter into the research field.

Emotional disturbance dimension: More than half of the scholars admitted that the stress, anxiety, pressure and frustration are an inseparable part of Ph.D. Some experiences it due to the lack of money, knowledge, skills, patience, etc.

"I am a full-time scholar and so very tensed about my future after Ph.D. as I see so many Ph.D.'s sitting idle and struggling for getting a job in Education discipline. Even if they get a job in colleges, they were most of the time hired on a contractual basis or on a very low salary. What is the motivation for getting into the field of research in India when a doctorate is also getting a salary equivalent to a clerical staff?"

Few of the scholars showed concern about their future after Ph.D. in social science. They stated that their future seems to be in the dark in such a scenario in India. The competitive and demotivating environment among Ph.D. scholars somewhere impacts the quality of the research. Some of the scholars agreed that Ph.D. study had become stressful, and they feel nervous about the quality of their work. The workload and deadlines make them tensed.

Structural Dimension: Few students believe that the coursework in the Ph.D. program does not provide enough opportunity to understand what and how research is carried out. They find the coursework just a formality. Due to this, the research knowledge scholars have makes them timid to take up any challenging study. All the scholars agreed that the coursework structure in Ph.D. must be revised and more attention should be given to making the research scholars statistically skilled, irrespective of the type of study. It is interpreted that lack of expertise in statistical calculation and Data analysis makes the analysis part of the study challenging for the scholars. Due to this, most of the students who were not of commerce or science background face a terrible problem and find themselves dependent on others for analysis. Scholars acknowledged that having good statistical knowledge is important for every researcher, be it a qualitative research person or quantitative. All the scholars raised an issue of not getting research



leave and 'no norm from the government or the institute for the compulsory leave for research/ data collection'. It is acknowledged by all the scholars that irrespective of the mode (full-time/ part-time) of a Ph.D., every researcher must get a minimum period of research leave, depending on the kind of study. In sciences, the research scholar is expected to spend a defined period in the Lab or on the field but in Social sciences, due to no provision of getting permission from the university or from the workplace to go on research leave and lack of much exposure on the field the quality of the research gets impacted. One of the scholars stated that:-

"India has a number of excuses and reasons to cut the wings of the scholar. There were very few opportunities to encourage talent in higher education in India, especially in social science and humanities, which promotes the issue of brain drain. We want to be a super-power and counted to be amongst developed countries, but without education and research, how will we solve our country's problems? One can't always depend on knowledge from outside as there are lots of cultural differences and practically it is neverone size fits all..... we need to be engaged in research all the time"

Some of the scholars revealed that the lack of frequent discussions/brainstorming sessions on the research area, access to the experts for extended guidance on the research, and the busy schedule of experts leads to compromise in the quality of the research.

Administrative Dimension: Most of the scholars reported that they do get constructive feedback from their supervisors, but there were some of the scholars who revealed the limited support from the supervisors and shared that even the liberty of selecting the topic of research is not as per their interest. There is sometimes a delay in supervisor allotment and title approval of the scholar from the department, which extends the whole period of Ph.D. for that scholar. Sometimes, the difference in the opinion between the supervisor and the scholar creates tension and fear in the mind of the researcher. This impacts hugely on the quality of the research the scholars deliver at the end. Some of the scholars reported that the problem increases manifold when the permission to work in the field (schools, colleges, and institutes) for the desired period, during the data collection, needs to go through different levels of approval.

Furthermore, few scholars reported that they experience a fear of presenting the correct data at times in the research papers and are psychologically forced to report the finding in the so-called 'sugary' language or 'politically correct language. All the full-time Ph.D. scholars reported a lack of administrative support (sitting arrangement, paper, print-out facility, books, etc.) from the department. Some of the scholars stated that they are assigned different department tasks, which makes them busy all of the time and due to which their Ph.D. work gets impacted. The lack of proper scheduling of the research progress assessment meetings organized by the department was also pointed out during some scholars' discussion. It was also highlighted during the discussion that some of the universities or colleges did not have research software like for statistical analysis and plagiarism check, which are considered to very important in the research. All the Ph.D. scholars addressed that for data analysis and plagiarism check, they become dependent on third party institutions (for which they pay huge amounts at times), ultimately compromising the quality of the research.

Personal Dimension: Some of the scholars shared that their limited computer knowledge put them in a difficult situation and invariably cause a delay in the submission of research. All the scholars agree that if they would be given some training in the first year or

secretarial assistance as and when required during the research, it would enhance the quality of research. Some of the scholars shared that the personal skills (for example presentation of the findings of the research in front of a large audience seems difficult to some of the scholars due to stage fear or communication problems) of the researchers also need to be enhanced during the initial months of the Ph.D. through pieces of training or workshops. Few of the scholars reported the language and writing barriers. Despite the fact that they have good research knowledge, they were not able to pen it down in a better way. Because of their poor writing skills, they postpone the writing tasks until the last moment. It was acknowledged by most of the scholars that though they love their area of research and respect the efforts they had put in so far, they feel that they could have done better than what they had delivered.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study was not to generalize the findings but to investigate the current challenges which were faced by the Indian research scholars pursuing a Ph.D. in Education. The study provides important considerations that may be useful in improving the status of researchers and the quality of research in India. It is hereby concluded that research scholars of India in the social science discipline are facing challenges related to personal, emotional, financial, structural, and administrative dimensions, which in the end is hugely impacting the quality of educational research in India. Therefore, the higher authorities need to look into the concern for consideration at the earliest.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Implications for the Scholars

Time Management: Time management is one of the most important aspects of Ph.D. work. One should therefore treat a degree of doctorate as a full-time task. A disciplined approach is required for getting feedback from the guide, as sending a large amount of work at one go may affect the quality of feedback and interest of the guide.

Building a relationship with the supervisor: A healthy guide-scholar relationship is paramount to Ph.D. success. However, problems in the relationship are very common and could be due to many reasons. As a scholar, one needs to be patient enough in handling issues.

Catching holds on to the research spirit till the end of my Ph.D.: The Ph.D.'s length and intensity make an undesirable fall in confidence, motivation, and morale, which is almost inescapable. The phenomenon of 'second-year blues' was found to be very common in the scholars as the excitement of being a doctoral research scholar dies after one year. The second-year blues can be moderated by setting realistic expectations, strong support, inspiration, and constructive feedback.

Balancing emotions and managing stress: A researcher must participate in academic meetings and remain in contact with other scholars as much as possible. Developing a network of Ph.D. students would help to have relevant guidance, support, and opportunity to work on emotions.

Implications for the Higher Authorities

Restructuring of the format of Ph.D.: The findings of the study imply that more emphasis is required on the planning and setting of the objectives of Ph.D. in India. The training through course work

must focus on honing methodological skills, statistical knowledge, substantive theory skills (not philosophy), thorough readings, field exposure, tool preparation, extensive practical research skills through broad participation in faculty research projects, constantly engagement in writing scholarly articles, submitting monthly progress report and assignments to prepare the aspiring scholars efficient not only in completing their Ph.D. successfully but also to conduct the research commendably throughout their career.

Research Leave: Every scholar must get a research leave, and a no-objection certificate must be produced from the institutes/workplaces for sending the scholars on research leave (for data collection), at the time of admission in the Ph.D. course. This would give a chance to scholars to work genuinely in their area and out of their comfort zone. It would also prohibit the practice of data fudging and compromise quality.

Removal of Language Barrier: The researcher's native language always influences his or her thinking and shapes his or her writing. Communicating in a different language substantially increases the workload. So, allowing the scholars to opt for the language of their own choice for writing the thesis could be of a great help.

Lowering the Financial worries: The scholarship amount in social sciences requires revision. The norms of attestation of scholarship forms need modification. Any opportunity of getting a research scholar harassed by higher authorities must be looked into cautiously by a government vigilance department or grievance cell.

Lessening the importance of 'quantity' in publication: The regulatory and funding agencies give too much importance to the number of papers published and use indicators such as average IF, cumulative IF, etc., the selection of researchers for awards, the selection, and promotion of faculty, awarding fellowships to students and grants to departments and institutions, and thus contribute to the lowering of standards of academic evaluation, scholarly communication, and the country's research enterprise. Such practices also motivate the emergence and proliferation of predatory journals, conferences, seminars, and workshops. The world of the academic publishing market is hugely competitive and prevents young scholars from being duped by them. They must be explained the principles of

good academic publishing and the difference between legitimate and illegitimate open access journals early on, thus selecting the best journal for their work.

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