

**JUNIOR RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP IN HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES: AN EXPLORATORY
EVALUATION**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF DISSERTATION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Meaning of Fellowship

The term “Fellowship” itself conveys a broad range of meanings. Merriam Webster dictionary defines fellowship as a noun meaning (1) companionship, company; (2 a) a community of interest, activity, feeling, or experience; (2 b) the state of being a fellow or associate; (3) a company of equals or friends: association; (4) the quality or state of being comradely; (5) membership, partnership; (6 a) the position of a fellow (as of a university); (6 b) the stipend of a fellow; (6 c) a foundation for the providing of such a stipend; and as a verb (transitive verb) meaning to join in fellowship especially with a church member; (intransitive verb) to admit to fellowship (as in a church)(Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Here in this text, the word fellowship refers to the meaning stated at (6a) above, i.e., the position of a fellow.

1.2 Fellowships in India

In India, the fellowships are being provided in various disciplines for conducting research in as well as outside India. Also, the fellowships are provided to research scholars at doctoral and postdoctoral level as well as other researchers. However, the majority of the fellowships are being provided by government, and the participation of private entities and organizations is still lagging behind. Some of the major fellowship schemes provided in India other than Junior Research Fellowship and Senior Research Fellowship.

1.3 Classification of Fellowships

The fellowships that are being provided in India can be classified in different ways: based upon the career stage, or based upon the funding agency, or the tenure of fellowship, and so on. However, the researcher classifies the fellowship schemes on the basis of

funding mechanism. Funding mechanism is a type of award, including the selection, an agency makes to support a program and within which it incorporates the terms and conditions for expending the funds and performing the work. The three classes of fellowships are: Competitive Fellowships, Formula-Based Fellowships or Block Fellowships, and Need-Based Fellowships.

1.4 Fellowships: Their Needs and Implications

As discussed in the previous section, the various classes of fellowships are having their own advantages as well as disadvantages. Now, their needs and implications should be observed. The major reason of the fellowships is that majority of them come along with the financial aid which in turn is very critical for the researchers to make them able to complete on the research which they think are beneficial for the society as well as humankind, especially for the amateurs. Not all the researchers are having equal opportunities as well as resources to conduct their studies smoothly. The financial and educational barriers are the most important ones that need to be eradicated.

The funding also enables the researcher to enhance the quality and scope of their research. The other implication of the fellowships is that it provides an additional weightage to the researcher's profile, which in turn, helps in the further development of an entity into a better researcher, following the Matthew Principle that relates to accumulated advantage. The early career fellowships are also helpful in establishing researcher's credibility. They imply to others that the person is able to conduct a better research. However, still there is a debate around this point. Some fellowships also provide extended resources and training, which outlines its recipients away from other researchers. The fellowships not only help economically and socially, but also psychologically. In most of the cases, the recipients of fellowships do not need to worry about the resources thus providing them mental peace and they stay away from unusual anxiety and depression,

gaining mental strength and focus. Few of the fellowship schemes also provide specialized training which is useful for the fellows in different ways. They gain expertise in the area over time and secure their identity in the respective area. It helps them, in turn, in achieving more research opportunities related to the research area. Some fellowships also help the fellows to build the academic and research network, where they could get to know about the emerging related areas and current research developments at faster pace and also get to learn about predicting the scope of the research area through interacting with more experienced professionals.

1.5 Junior Research Fellowship in Humanities and Social Sciences

As stated earlier, Junior Research Fellowship schemes are being provided in various fields by various agencies. However, the scheme under the study is being provided by the University Grants Commission. While the University Grants Commission is also providing the Junior Research Fellowship in some applied science and technological areas, the present study is delimited to the fellowships provided by the commission in the disciplinary areas of humanities and social sciences only. The scheme of Junior Research Fellowship is having several stakeholders involved in the rolling out of the scheme. These stakeholders are having their own roles and have to dispose their responsibilities. The first of the stakeholder is the UGC itself. Apart from the UGC, the National Testing Agency plays a vital role of selector in this scheme. The NTA UGC NET/JRF examination is conducted twice in a year and any of the candidate who meets the eligibility criteria of having a post-graduation degree in the respective subject from any UGC recognized university with minimum of 55% marks in post-graduation (50% for reserved categories) is eligible to write the examination. The examination is conducted in online mode i.e., it employs Computer Based Testing. And Evaluation.

After securing position in the merit list based upon the performance in this examination, the candidate is required to be enrolled in the M.Phil. or Ph.D. program in any university of India recognized by UGC in the particular or allied discipline within 3 years from the date of declaration of the result. However, for the scholars already enrolled in the M.Phil. or Ph.D. program prior to the declaration of result, the fellowship tenure would be counted from the date of declaration of the result. Meeting all these criteria, the participant has to fill up the form through their department. After this, the scholar becomes the fellow and start receiving the financial remuneration of INR 31,000 per month and certain amount of HRA that is based upon the category of the city where the researcher is residing. The financial remuneration is transferred directly to the bank account of the fellow through Direct Benefit Transfer that has been initiated by the central government from 1 January 2013. Earlier, the fellowship remuneration was disbursed through the universities.

1.6 Statement of the Problem

The scheme selected for the study is the Junior Research Fellowship Scheme in Humanities and Social Sciences, which has been implemented by UGC. Over the years, substantial changes have been made in the examination pattern, evaluation, eligibility criteria, age limit, and validity of award for JRF. However, the credibility of the examination has been questioned, particularly regarding how it tests the subject knowledge and scientific or research aptitude, and whether it does serve its intended purpose. The debate also revolves over the remuneration or financial assistance provided under the scheme. Meanwhile, the quality and scope of research output presented by the participants under this scheme are also often questioned.

It reflects the basis, and thus the researcher has conducted an evaluation as stated below:

“Junior Research Fellowship in Humanities and Social Sciences: An Exploratory Evaluation”

1.7 Aims of the Study

The present study aims to get greater insights about the Junior Research Fellowship scheme. The study aims to understand why the scheme was implemented and get in-depth knowledge about the objectives of the scheme under study i.e., JRF in Humanities and Social Sciences. The study focuses on whether the stated objectives of the scheme are being fulfilled or not. The study tries to analyze the selection process through which the National Testing Agency, which is the selector agency in this context, selects the eligible candidates. There may be a difference in the perceptions of the fellowship scheme among the various stakeholders, so there is an interesting question of the inquiry whether that is the case for the JRF scheme too. Apart from this, the study also looks for the unintended outcomes of the schemes and figure out whether they are positive or negative in nature. The study also like to see whether the scheme has any effect on the professional as well as the personal life of the fellows, academic and research institutions and communities, and the society.

1.8 Need and Significance of the Study

The Junior Research Fellowship scheme of UGC is one of the major, popular and longest running fellowship schemes that provides the fellowship to the research scholars working in the disciplines of humanities and social sciences. In the development of research community and strengthening of the research power of India, the scheme plays a vital role. Such a scheme should be reviewed from time to time to enhance its effectiveness and maintain its vitality. Now, with the introduction of New Education Policy 2020, it has been significantly affirmed that the due reforms would be rolled over to enhance the research productivity along with greater inclusion. With the help of present

study, we would be able to know that how the scheme is performing and how it is being perceived by the academic community. It will help us to find out the areas where the modifications may be needed to enhance the productivity of the scheme.

1.9 Rationale of the Study

All the reviewed studies have been conducted outside India where the structure of fellowship schemes is different from those provided within India. Also, in India, no formal study has been conducted yet to study any fellowship scheme. However, various internal committees and bureau under UGC study the scheme and offers recommendations to UGC's administration related to the modification of the JRF scheme. But the reports are not diffused in the public domain.

1.10 Research Question

The main or central research question of the present study is

“How different aspects of the Junior Research Fellowship scheme provided in the disciplinary areas of humanities and social sciences work, for whom, and in what context?”

1.11 Delimitations of the Study

An ideal evaluative study involves a large number of participants and analyzes all the documents related to the scheme. However, due to some practical constraints like limitation of time, unavailability of funds, and the accessibility of the resources, either human or documents, the ideal study is not possible in the present case. The present study has been delimited to the analysis of documents that were readily available to the researcher. The participants do not include the employees of UGC, who are one of the crucial stakeholders of the scheme. The accessible population for qualitative data collection was also constraint to the states of Uttar Pradesh and Delhi only. Moreover, the

qualitative sample selection criteria have been used in the present study that restricts the generalization of the findings of the present study.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Summary of the Review of Related Literature

The present review of related literature signifies the rationale of the undertaken evaluation, as well as suggests the key areas to focus upon, based upon the prior studies. All the evaluation studies of different fellowship programmes have been carried outside India. Researcher could not locate any evaluative study regarding the evaluation of any fellowship scheme in India. However, a few of the studies that have been conducted in Indian context discusses about the research output and research quality(Mahajan & Chauhan, 2013; Mukherjee, 2016; A. S. Ray et al., 2016).

Some of the reviewed studies have proposed the frameworks for evaluating fellowships (Rotem et al., 2010; Somers, 1995; Zinovieff & Rotem, 2008). The majority of the studies regarding evaluation of different fellowship schemes have been carried out to see the effects and impacts of the fellowship programmes under study(Bartolone et al., 2014; Ehrenberg & Mavros, n.d.; Jacob & Lefgren, 2011; Joffe et al., 2014; Long, 2008; Nisticò, 2018; Raptis & Clavien, 2011; Rotem et al., 2010; Somers, 1995). However, a good amount of studies have been carried out to evaluate outputs in terms of retention or completion rate, time to completion, and dropout, and number and quality of publications (Bartolone et al., 2014; Ehrenberg & Mavros, n.d.; Hewitt Smith et al., 2018; Jacob & Lefgren, 2011; Raptis & Clavien, 2011; van der Haert et al., 2014). A few of them like (Mcdonough & Calderone, 2006; Somers, 1995; Vreeland, 2015)have carried out input evaluation, process evaluation(Gush et al., 2018; Vreeland, 2015), and context evaluation (Phillips & Bullock, 2018). A good number of studies including (Auranen & Nieminen,

2010; Bartolone et al., 2014; Ehrenberg & Mavros, n.d.; Hewitt Smith et al., 2018; Raptis & Clavien, 2011) have also focused on outcome evaluation. However, the authors were not able to differentiate between the outcome and impact evaluation, and majority of such evaluations overlap. One of the possible reasons for this overlap could be the background of the researcher or where they have conducted the study.

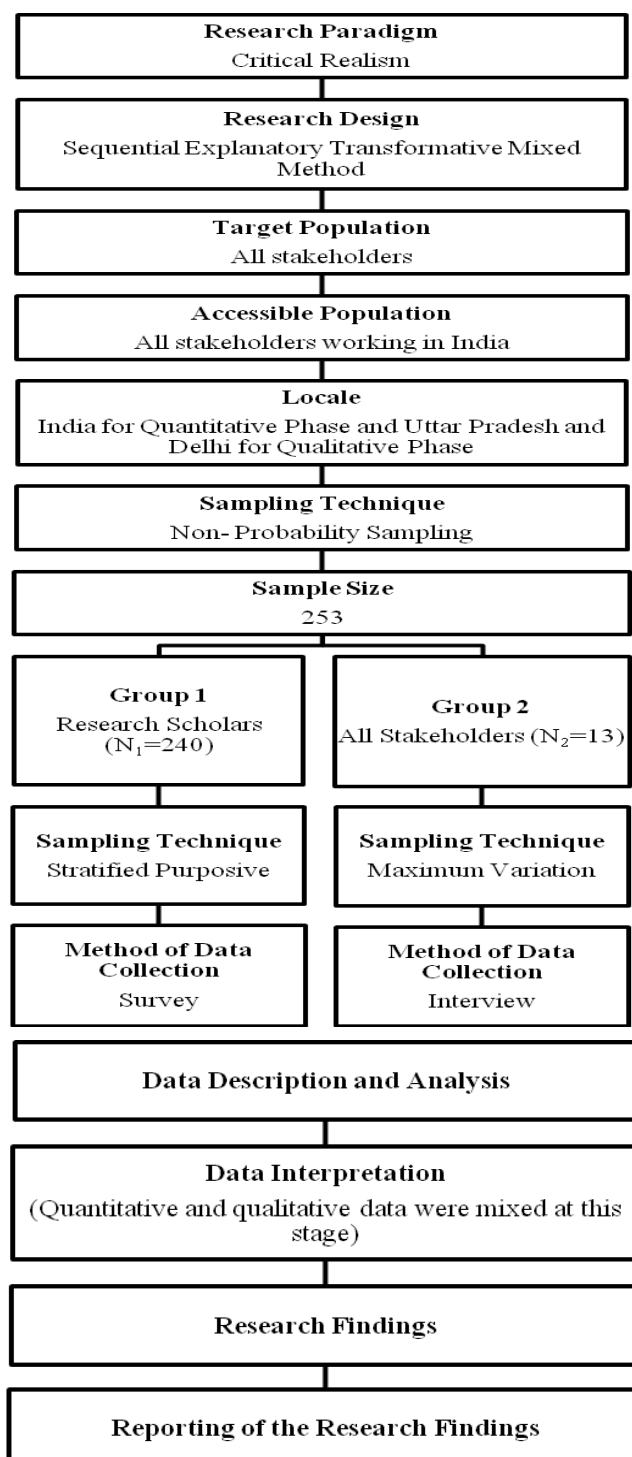
On the line of finding some alternative sources for funding, industry is recognized as one of the leading alternatives. But (Goldfarb, 2008) has discussed about the negative impacts of industrial funding. Moreover, a few of the studies such as those conducted by (Auranen & Nieminen, 2010; Zungu, 2015) have also compared different funding models available. The researcher of the present study has also gone through a number of articles based upon the research production, promotion, dissemination, and utilization that might be helpful in the present study indirectly. However, only one of these articles have been included in the present review section.

2.2 Conclusion of the Review of Related Literature

We have seen how the fellowships are playing a vital role in the research development in any country. Also, the reviews presented here suggested a wide array of tools and techniques for carrying out evaluations. However, no such evaluation study had been found which was carried in the Indian context or of the fellowship offered in India. Majority of the reviewed studies were explanatory in nature and were based on the previous studies. Also, most of them have been conducted using either online surveys or interview and focus group discussion. Only single study carried by (Hewitt Smith et al., 2018) was a mixed method research that employed both survey as well as interviews. Majority of the studies try to explore either single or at most two of the aspects of the fellowship programme. But in the present study, the researcher aims to study all the

different aspects of the fellowship scheme, so that the further studies could be based upon the exploratory findings of the present study.

3. PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS, METHODOLOGY AND INSTRUMENTS EMPLOYED



4. SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The quantitative analysis of the data gathered through survey method suggested that the sample of 240 respondents consisted of 165 (68.75%) males and 75 (31.25%) females. Out of these, 82 males and 38 females were non-JRFs whereas 83 males and 37 females were JRFs. Also, 99(41.25%) of the respondents were from the rural background as compared to 141 (58.75%) respondents that were from the urban background, suggesting the proper reachability of the scheme. Moreover, 92 (38.33%) of the respondents were married, 147 (61.25%) of the respondents were unmarried, and 1 (0.42%) of the respondent belongs to other marital status. All of the 240 respondents do belong to the disciplines of humanities and social sciences.

The range of the respondents in terms of the (probable) year of thesis submission was found to be 31 years ranging from 1993 to 2024. Based upon these years only, the sub-grouping of the samples was done creating 5 sub-groups of respondents consisting of (1) 2024, (2) 2021-2023, (3) 2020, (4) 2012-2019, and (5) 2011 and before. The sub-groups 1 and 3 were similar since it consist of single year. Also , the subgroups 2, 4 and 5 were found to be homogeneous since there was no significant difference in mean and median years of thesis submission by JRF and non-JRF participants of these subgroups.

The average time taken by JRFs to submit their thesis was found significantly greater than that by the non-JRFs. The claim is supported by the results of the t-test($t(138) = -2.47, p=.015$ and Mann-Whitney U Test $U= 1853.50, p = .012$). The mean lengths of PhD in cases of JRFs and non-JRFs were found to be ($M = 4.00$ years, $SD = 0.52$) and ($M = 3.79$ years, $SD = 0.51$) respectively. Whereas the median lengths were found to be 4 years and 3.75 years, respectively. The differences between these lengths are not much great to reach any concrete conclusion but are significant enough to suggest benefits of

being a JRF regarding the availability of the resources due to which the length of the PhD increases.

Amid the scarce but sufficient representation from the Institutions of National Importance (INI), strong association between the JRF qualification and type of PhD institution was found to be significant. The Pearson's Chi-Square Test suggested a high level of association, $X^2(3, N = 240) = 14.48, p = .002$. Most of the participants were either research scholars or the employees in higher education sector (62.50% and 23.75% respectively). Only a small proportion of the participating members were from research-oriented backgrounds, other discipline-oriented backgrounds and other non-academic and non-discipline-oriented background (3.33%, 5% and 5.42% respectively).

On the other hand, the quantitative analysis suggested that there is no significant difference in the number of participations by the respondents in research-oriented events. Both t-test $t(238) = -0.51, p = .607$ and Mann-Whitney U Test $U = 7070.50, p = .809$ were unable to detect the presence of any significant difference. However, during the interview, the participants asserted that there are few differences due to the availability of the funds with JRFs. But these differences were not reflecting in the survey results. It might be due to the fact that the participants in the survey and lying in the non-JRFs subgroup were mostly from the academia and therefore they might have made up for the differences. Similarly, there were no differences found between the two groups in terms of national and international visits during the PhDs $t(238) = -0.25, p = .800$ and $t(161.77) = -1.60, p = .111$ which might be due to the small number of affirmative responses (71 and 12).

On looking for differences within the two groups in terms of the number of publications as first author and number of publications as other authors, no statistically significant differences were found. Moreover, the differences and associations in terms of

the number of citations and awards received could not be tracked as the respondents were not able to track their citations and also due to the very small number of affirmative responses received.

Item related to change in mode of PhD showed that there is a significant association between the JRF qualification and the change in mode of PhD as chi square test results $X^2(1, N = 240) = 5.19, p = .023$ hinted the same. This association signifies that JRF holders are more often moving towards the job during their PhDs as compared to non-JRFs. Moreover, the results of t-tests have shown that there is no significant difference in perceived mean self-ratings of their theses by the two groups in terms of contribution in their respective fields, innovations, and readiness for utilization, $t(138) = -0.14, p = .888, t(138) = -0.15, p = .878$, and $t(138) = 0.43, p = .670$.

Also, more than half of the respondents, independent of the group to which they belong, have affirmed that they are doing or have done their PhDs to gain social identity and to increase their employability, followed by the chances of getting promotion. The minimum responses were received regarding enhancing collective knowledge base and personal knowledge. It is quite interesting and indicates that the pursuance of PhD is mostly based upon the extrinsic motivation rather than the intrinsic motivation. This extrinsic motivation is susceptible to change during their career and thus it is not the ideal reason for the pursuance of a research career.

When coming to the choice of profession, the survey results suggested that the majority of the respondents like to opt for the career in academics and a fewer proportion of the respondents are seeking after the career in writing and research sectors. This is a problem for the research community of the nation as most of the aspirants which ought to be looking for research sectors are looking forward at the academia as the best career

choice. The weighted ranks of the responses indicated that full-time researcher is the least sought-after major career choices for research scholars.

When it comes to the monitoring of the research by the apex institution of University Grants Commission, majority of the respondents (50.42%) believe that the monitoring is not done by the standards laid down for the same purpose. Also, 15.42% of the respondents do not even know about the UGC monitoring, which is not a good sign and imposed that the knowledge about different aspects of conducting research and other related concerns are not properly disseminated among the community members. Also, half of the respondents do not agree that the NET/JRF examination is research oriented. With recent developments in the pattern of the examination and due to the merging of the two different examinations viz., NET and JRF, the significant representation of the research aptitude testing has significantly replaced by the teaching and general awareness component, which aims towards selecting the candidates with better general knowledge over the candidates with specialized knowledge .

It was also noticed that the respondents believed that the scheme must look out for increasing accessibility to research and adhere to research quality through proper monitoring, but they think that the scheme should not aim towards increasing the number of fellows, as it might decay the quality of research products produced under the scheme. While telling about what benefits should be included in the fellowship scheme, the respondents agreed to include financial assistance, house rent allowances, medical facilities and preference for jobs. However, the preference for jobs was suggested by mostly JRFs and this response was found to be biased on the basis of chi-square, t-test and Mann-Whitney 'U' test results $X^2(4, N = 240) = 11.80, p = .019, t(238) = 2.73, p = .007, U = 5842.50, p = .007$. Overall, on the question of whether the scheme fulfills its pre-defined objectives or not, the majority of the respondents responded in affirmation. However, the

responses of the responders were highly associated with their JRF qualification as demonstrated by the Chi-Square test result $X^2(4, N = 240) = 15.92, p = .003$. Although, there was no statistically significant difference between the perception of the two groups as suggested by the t-test and Mann-Whitney Wilcoxon test results, $t(233.79) = 1.54, p = .125, U = 6522.50, p = .176$. Also, there is a slightly affirmative response on whether the objective of the scheme is enough and complete.

Moreover, 42.92% of the received responses in contrast to 57.08% responses like to recommend changes in the objective of the scheme. However, only 49 responses were received that really recommended the changes. The most recommended change was quality assurance and internship suggested by 16 respondents each followed by inclusion (10 responses), research education (4 responses) and teaching skill enhancement (3 responses). Although the received recommendations are not proper recommendations for change in objectives but are more related to additional components that should be incorporated into the present scheme structure. The selection process of the JRF fellows has been seen positively by the respondents as 52.92% of the respondents agreed in contrast to 41.25% of the negative responses.

In response to the question that what should be bases of the selection of the fellows, the majority of the respondents (98.75%) believed that objective examination must continue followed by subjective examination (27.08%), interview (23.33%), group discussion (17.08%), and merit (3.33%). But during the interview it was found that most of the respondents believed that there must be at least two step selection process that consists of objective examination along with either subjective examination or interview. However, it could be argued that in the present scenario also there are two steps involved as the candidate along with qualifying in the objective examination has to secure admission in the PhD or M.Phil. programme which requires them to sit for interview. But

it should be noted that this interview has been conducted by the institutions and it is not standardized at the national level and some sort of discrepancies may arise due to this reason.

On the question of how much the financial assistance should be changed, the two groups have equivocally (51.67%) demanded for slight increase in the assistance. However, the researcher believes that there should not be any change in the financial remuneration provided to the fellows as the amount has been decided on the basis of the median national per capita income and it is sufficient to carry out research at the doctoral level.

The results of the survey method also indicated that most of the respondents have qualified for JRF during their PhDs (50.00%) or between their post-graduation and PhD (26.67%). Also, the fellows do not like the working of funding disbursement mechanism as 74 out of 120 respondents responded that they are not in agreement, at least to some extent with the statement that funds are disbursed at regular intervals in contrast to 27 respondents who agree to at least some extent. However, majority of them (65.52%) still believe that direct benefit transfer is better than the institutional disbursement mechanism. So, the problem is due to some discrepancies and latency in disbursement processes and not with the mechanism itself. The qualitative analysis also suggested the same problem.

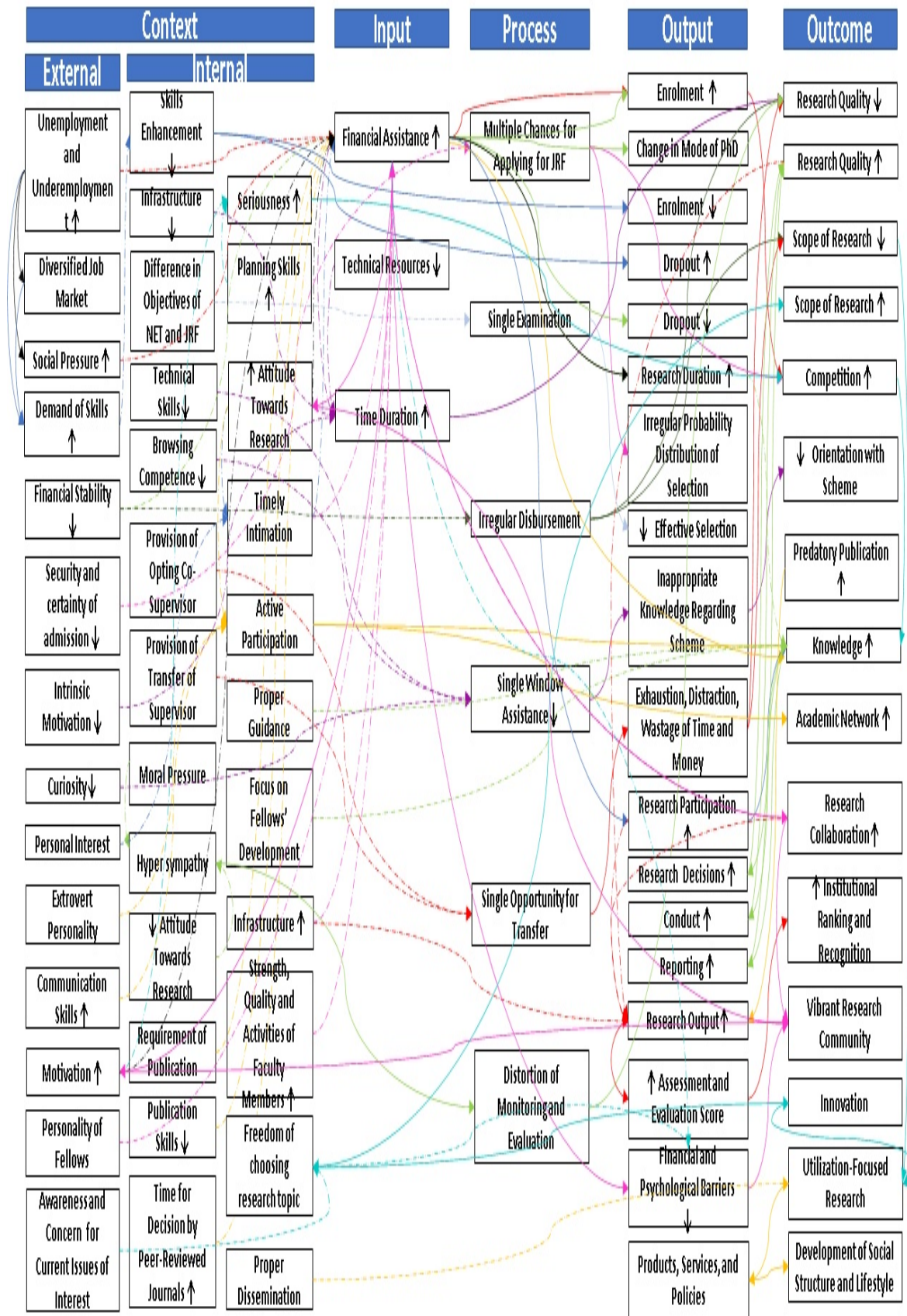
The responses also showed that there are only 24.37% of the fellows who are involved in any research ongoing in their department other than their theses as compared to 75.63% of the responding fellows who are not involved in any such researches whereas 63.03% of the fellows were involved in teaching activities going on in their department in contrast to 36.97% of the fellows who are not engaged in such activities. Both these

involvements are necessary from the perspective of development of the fellows and are suggested by the scheme.

The responses by the participants also highlighted that majority of the fellows utilize their financial assistance in purchasing stationery (82.20%), participation forms (80.51%) of various research events, books (55.08%) and library memberships (54.24%). The other areas of expenditure include research journals (43.22%), electronic gadgets (24.58%), e-journals (11.02%) and software (7.63%). The expenditure on research journals, e-journals and software seems to be less than required. During the interview, the participants have also mentioned that majority of the fellows don't want to spend much of their fellowship on their research. Instead, they like to spend it for their personal expenses and also like to save them to invest them in some other areas other than their research.

Also, a great majority of the responses suggested that the JRF scheme is helpful in achieving financial stability (93.22%), in getting admissions into PhD programmes (86.44%), meeting academic and research expenses (86.44%), enhancing sources for study (85.59%) and enhancing their self-dependency (84.75%). A fair number of responses also suggested that JRF helps in increasing academic and research activities (64.41%), increasing the number of publications (62.71%), increasing personal knowledge (57.63%), in getting special status (52.54%), enhancing their confidence (52.54%), in increasing research orientation (50.85%), and surprisingly, in meeting their household expenditures (50%). Other areas where JRF scheme has helped its beneficiaries are in meeting their personal expenses (38.98%), in creation of professional and academic contacts (35.59%), in improving their research quality (20.34%) and disappointingly, only 3.39% of the responses have got exemptions from entrance exams for PhD, in spite of the fact that UFC has urged universities and institutions to exempt the JRF qualified candidates from such examinations held at the university level.

4.1 Comprehensive Programme Theory



There has been uprising in the unemployment and underemployment rate of the nation in past three decades and India's unemployment rate rose sharply to 7.11 percent in 2020 from 5.27 percent in 2019, as mentioned in a report published by Centre of Economic Data and Analysis (CEDA) based on the ILOSTAT database of International Labour Organization (S. S. Ray, 2021). Due to this, the job market of the nation has diversified, and more skills are asked for by the employers. It has also given rise to increase in social pressure on the fellows of getting jobs. Due to a large number of unemployed, in presence of the social pressure by the friends and relatives of yet not being employed, youth having post-graduation degree seek for admissions in PhDs to get even higher qualification. These candidates do not look PhD as a stair to research community and fellowship as prestigious assistance, rather PhD to show others that they are not unemployed and fellowships as mere source of income. It has also increased the competitive nature of PhDs and fellowships, especially where the merit comes into play. Although merit is not directly privileged but still in a corner, it plays a vital role in making decisions and predicting about the candidate.

This unemployment and diversification of the job market also gives rise to demand of skilled workforce. But during the PhDs, the skill development has been neglected for a long period of time and many voices have been raised against these. Although on papers, there have been improvement in skill development at doctoral level programmes, but these reforms have not been stringent enough to bring out development in the area. Due to this overlooking of the skill enhancement leads to decreased enrolment and increased dropout.

Not all of the fellows are equally privileged, and they also come from varied socio-economic backgrounds. Many of them do not enough funds at hand to pursue their research flawlessly without the financial assistance provided to them through the fellowship scheme. However, the majority of the fellows perceive the irregularities in fund

disbursal mechanism as a major barrier. It not only hinders the research progress, but also delimits the study and its quality may also get affected. Due to this financial instability, the majority of the fellows may utilize the funds in other areas that are not related to their research and might exceed the minimum period to complete their doctoral research so as to get maximum financial assistance through the scheme. The availability of financial assistance as one of the components of the fellowship scheme has contributed towards the increased enrolment, decreased dropouts, and enhancement of research duration. Although this enhancement in research duration not always gives positive results in terms of research quality as it may have been seen that the funds are not utilized for the research related works.

Lack of security and certainty of admission into the PhD programme in the presence of multiple chances for the candidates to sit for JRF examination in spite of the fact that they have already qualified for the same earlier gives rise to excessive and unnecessary competition and irregular probability distribution for the selection of candidates. Moreover, due to the lack of intrinsic motivation and negative attitude towards research by the fellows, the increased duration of the scheme leads to deterioration of quality of research outputs. Also, the single examination for both NET and JRF qualification in presence of the fundamental differences between the objectives of the two examinations leads to less effective selections of the candidates.

Lack of one of the major components of the scheme i.e., single-window assistance and lack of curiosity, technical skills and browsing competency of the fellows leads to inappropriate knowledge about the scheme. And in absence of this appropriate knowledge, the orientation with the scheme among the fellows decreases. The financial assistance in presence of the personal interest of the fellows and timely intimation to them about the research-oriented events facilitates their participation in such events, which in turn,

increases the knowledge level of the fellows. Active participation in such research-oriented events, in presence of the positive attitude towards research leads to increase in personal knowledge of the fellows. Whereas, in presence of extrovert personality and better communication skills it also leads to enhancement of academic networking. Also, due to the increased knowledge, the improvements could be observed in fellows' research decisions, their conduct and their reporting styles.

The financial assistance provided through the JRF scheme helps the fellows in overcoming their financial and psychological barriers and thus leads to freedom of choosing research topic as per their interest, that might be more challenging but innovative. This freedom of choosing topic in presence of awareness and concern for current issues of public and national interest among the fellows leads to increased scope of research and innovation which in turn leads to utilization-focused researches.

It was also observed that lack of infrastructure at the university and college levels and the lack of technical resources leads to increase in time duration of research and deterioration of research quality. Moreover, the single opportunity of transfer during the whole fellowship duration, in the presence of provisions of opting co-supervisors and provisions of transfer of supervisors leads to unnecessary exhaustion, distraction and wastage of time and money, which in turn limits the scope of research and degrades the quality.

When talking about monitoring and evaluation, the negative attitude of fellows towards research, moral pressure and obligation on supervisors to qualify the researches of the fellows and hyper sympathy of supervisors towards their researchers and moral pressure and obligation on external evaluators leads to the distortion of the monitoring and evaluation that in turn leads to deterioration of research quality.

On the other hand, the financial assistance provided to the fellows in presence of the requirement of publication for the award of PhD or M.Phil., lack of publication skills among the fellows and extended time taken by the peer-reviewed journals in making their decisions leads to the increase in predatory publication or pay-to-publish culture. It hinders proper dissemination. While in cases, when the proper dissemination is done by the fellows, it leads to utilization focused research and helps in designing better products, services and policies, that in turn leads to development of social structure and lifestyle of the general public.

In a perfect world condition, the awareness and concern for current issues of national and international interest within the fellows, given they are provided with adequate freedom of choosing their research topic and in presence of motivation and seriousness among the fellows might lead to increased scope of research that in turn leads to utilization focused research, and thus innovative practices could be achieved. However, there are problems at the level of opting research topic and the fellows have to often go for the research areas where they are not much comfortable but are advised by their respective supervisors and thus, the drop in motivation and seriousness leads to adverse results.

5. CONCLUSION

The present study shows that there are no proper signs of effect of the scheme on quality or amount of research output, however, it is perceived by the research and academic community that the scheme facilitates in enhancing research participation. Also, there was a little sign of effect of fellowship on the career choice and orientation towards research. The monitoring of the research work conducted by the fellows needs to be carried out in some standardized manner. It was also found that the scheme achieves its pre-defined objective, however, due to contextual shift, need of amelioration in the objective is suggested. It was observed that most of the stakeholders are lacking basic

knowledge about the scheme due to inadequate orientation and irregular diffusion of the information regarding the scheme. Moreover, certain activities regarding skill enhancement, providing hands-on-experience regarding various aspects of research also needs to be incorporated, so as to enhance research aptitude as well as attitude among the fellows. Morality and hyper sympathy seem to be the major barriers in the effective implementation of the scheme. The disbursal mechanism of the scheme needs to be simplified to some extent to avoid irregularities in fund disbursements. Moreover, it was also found that the fellows were engaged in teaching activities in their respective departments, but the research engagement is quite low.

The results of the present study also highlighted that the effects of the scheme are widely focused on the individual participants rather than the community or society. However, the scheme has impacted positively the facilitation of research participation. Also, as the scheme is complex in nature, it involves many agencies that adversely affects the scheme and deviates the outcomes from those intended.

5.1 Implications of the Study

Findings of this study have important implications regarding the Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) scheme. The study provides a better understanding of the scheme and the underlying mechanisms. The methods and procedures might help in development of future evaluative studies and provides a comprehensive framework to conduct evaluation of the fellowship schemes. The results of the study would be beneficial for the stakeholders to develop insights regarding the scheme, for researchers to conduct detailed confirmatory studies regarding the identified mechanisms, and the involved agencies in planning the direction of their investigations for further development of the scheme.

5.2 Suggestions for Further Research

Reviews indicate that no research is comprehensive in itself. More work always needs to be carried out to clear some doubts, more remain unclear. More answers obtained to various questions more questions get raised. The evaluation of a fellowship scheme has its own area with unclear boundaries. The evaluation could be carried out with different objectives, orientations, and using different methods and methodologies to answer a range of varying questions regarding the scheme. This study was delimited to a small sample size and consisted of the participants available in Uttar Pradesh and Delhi only. Future research could be conducted on a larger sample or extended locale. The mechanisms that have been identified in the present study can also be confirmed or refuted through the future evaluative studies. Inclusion of higher-level administrators and those working in the related bureaux and departments of UGC would unfurl more evidences and could lead to some new mechanisms. Moreover, the future researchers could use Critical Path Method and Program Evaluation and Review Techniques for estimating the duration of the fellowship, especially now when the M.Phil. programme has been completely abolished. Also, the examination pattern could be evaluated using Abel Method or any other related technique. Future researchers could also employ the game theory, system theory and decision theory to evaluate the aspects of the fellowship scheme under study. The present study touches only the surface of the issues, and a more detailed and concise study is needed.