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**GRT** A STUDY ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE AND  
RESEARCH CULTURE OF PH.D. RESEARCH  
SCHOLARS IN TIRUCHIRAPPALLI DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU



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**Abstract:** Research culture is an emerging trend in the context of higher education in India. The present study was organized to find out the socio-economic profile and research culture among full time research scholars. A sample of 200 full time research scholars in the departments of a state university and 9 arts and science colleges in Tiruchirappalli district, Tamil Nadu was selected on the basis of purposive sampling for the present study. The findings of the study reveal that most of the research scholars are from lower and middle layer of socio economic structure. The study also found that the research culture prevailing in the study area in terms of research discussion, research training, paper presentation, paper publication, research critique and membership in professional organizations is not upto the mark.

**Key words:** Socio-economic profile, research culture, Ph.D., Research Scholars

**INTRODUCTION:**

India's higher education system is the third largest system in the world, next to the United States of America and China. Higher education is of vital importance for the country as it is a powerful tool to build knowledge-based society. In the learning environment of Ph.D research scholars, student support services, faculty and self-motivation of the research scholars are very important factors in determining the qualitative contribution in terms of research output and the overall performance of the research scholars. The quality performance would pave the way for creativity and innovation which are pre-requisites for the development of the country. In this context, it is imperative to study the Ph.D research scholars' socio-economic profile and the research culture existing in educational institutions. Hence the present study was undertaken to find out the factors which promote qualitative research contribution as well as the constraints which are preventing the development of good research practices.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Ann E. Austin (2000) recommended for strengthening doctoral education as a socialization experience for aspiring faculty. The recommendation included: 1. Systematic and developmentally organized opportunities for students 2. Periodic feedback and assessment by the supervisor. 3. Fostering socialization 4. Encouraging systematic self-reflection. These recommendations envision a doctoral education with explicit attention to the various roles and responsibilities that typically characterize the life and work of a faculty member, the

differing cultures and emphases of the various institutional types that comprise the higher education expectations, norms and values of the specific discipline or field. Rosemary S. Caffarella and Bruce G. Barneth (2000) focused on teaching doctoral students to become scholarly writers in preparing and receiving critiques in intellectual aspect from peer colleagues and professors. Moreover, the most influential elements of the critiquing process is helping to improve the doctoral students written products without feeling personally attacked, to review their drafts prior to submission. In addition, this study also focused on difference between students' perceptions about providing and receiving feedback on emotional responses such as disappointed with the lack of useful feedback from their peers and frustrated with the problem of dealing with conflicting feedback from different professors. The authors further stressed that preparing and receiving critiques from professors and peers was perceived to be the most influential element in helping them to understand the process of scholarly writing and in producing a better written product. Rosemary Deem and Kevin J. Brehony (2000) suggested that international students and part-time students have the most difficulty in accessing peer cultures and academic cultures. However, international students are much more favourably disposed towards research training cultures than other students. Some evidence of gender differences affecting student experiences was found but was not as widespread as other differences. Abbe H. Herzig (2002) adopted Tinto's model of the persistence and attrition of mathematics doctoral students and to find out the problem of high attrition rates and small number of students to do doctoral programme in

mathematics particularly from women and minority and ethnic groups. Further, the study gave importance to socialization among students, department faculty particularly advisor for academic integration and doctoral degree progress. The study discussed the various factors to become intellectual and social integration among students and faculty are: faculty attitudes and beliefs toward the teaching and learning of mathematics, the structure of the programme, participation in course work and relationships with faculty outside of the classroom and deciding to leave and stay. Though this study is conducted in mathematics department in U.S, it could have applicable to all over the world and even other discipline namely science and social science too. Abbe H. Herzig (2002) found that the students experienced four types of obstacles to their participation: obstacles stemming from the program structure, obstacles to participation in class, obstacles to participating with faculty outside of class, and obstacles stemming from faculty beliefs about teaching and learning. John C. Weidman and Elizabeth L. Stein (2003) addressed the socialization of doctoral students to the academic norms of research and scholarship. They presented about the perceptions doctoral students in a social science discipline (sociology) and in educational foundations at a major research university have of the scholarly and collegial climates of their departments. Chun-Meizhao et al., (2007) explored that the factors affecting students' satisfaction with the advising relationship. Both the criteria used in selecting an advisor and reported advisor behaviours influence satisfaction. Moreover, there are pronounced disciplinary differences in both choice criteria and advisor behavior, and these are more robust predictors of satisfaction than in individual characteristics. Nataliya V. Ivankova and Sheldon L. Stick (2007) found the factors which are responsible for students' persistence in the doctoral programme are analyzed into both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative factors are 1. Programme 2. Online learning environment, 3. Faculty, 4. Students support services; and 5. Self motivation. Qualitative factors are 1. Quality of the programme and other related academic experiences, 2. The very nature of the online learning environment, 3. Support and assistance from different sources; and 4. Students self-motivation. Lewis Z. Schlosser and Pamela F. Foley (2008) explored the ethical issues pertaining to student-faculty mentoring relationships in graduate training programs, with a specific focus on understanding these concerns within a multicultural context. Multiculturalism, although broadly defined, is limited herein to race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, age, religion and ability status. Susan K. Gardner (2008) reported the effects of the socialization process upon doctoral student success and retention in the disciplines of chemistry and history at two institutions in United States. The report highlighted a disparate experience for women, students of color, students with families, part-time students and older students. This study further suggested for policy, practice and further research are included. Benita J. Barnes and Ann E. Austin (2009) showed that effective advising is complex rather than formulaic. That is, the advising described in this study involves multiple actions (eg. Assessing students' areas of weakness and strength; fostering professional growth; and

helping students negotiate projects doctoral committees, professional conferences and publishing). It also involves attention both to the research development of students as well as to their overall development as professionals. Additionally, this study showed that exemplary advising includes both an intellectual dimension and an effective dimension focused on caring, support and friendliness. Rajesh (2010) explained that existing formal system of education focuses only on the educational needs of the students and does not address the mental, physical, socio-cultural and life skills development of the students. Further he felt that multi-centric and intra-departmental activities and coordination were lacking at the university and college level. Gupta, Namrata (2010) marked that doctoral students do not constitute a homogeneous, monolithic block. They have identities based on region, caste and gender. Such identities create differentiation, with some groups being more privileged than others, reflecting the socio-cultural system. Those at the bottom of the social hierarchy perceive certain disadvantages in the informal milieu which goes contrary to the 'rational spirit' of the scientific institutes. Further these identities may have consequences for 'social capital'.

#### **NEED FOR THE STUDY**

The Ph.D. research scholars who are undergoing their Ph.D. programme in the arts and science colleges and university departments are mostly from the bottom layer of socio-economic status. Therefore the study of socio-economic profile and research culture of the Ph.D. research scholars becomes important to find out the ways and means to improve the quality of research output and speed of completion of Ph.D. work. Hence, the present study is focused to understand the socio-economic status and research culture of Ph.D. research scholars.

#### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To study the socio-economic status of the Ph.D. research scholars in Tiruchirappalli District, Tamil Nadu.
- To find out the research culture prevailing among Ph.D. research scholars.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

The researcher has used descriptive design in this study. This study aims to get accurate description on the socio-economic conditions and research culture of full-time Ph.D. research scholars in Tiruchirappalli district, Tamil Nadu. The sample for this study consisted of 200 Full-Time Ph.D. research scholars selected on the basis of purposive sampling from One State University and Nine Arts and Science Colleges which are having research departments with full-time research scholars.

#### **DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION SOCIAL PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS**

**Table No. 1**

Sl. No.	Social Profile	No. of respondents (N=200)	Percentage (100%)
1.1	<b>Gender</b>		
	Male	116	58.0
	Female	84	42.0
1.2	<b>Age</b>		
	22 to 25 years	64	32.0
	26 to 30 years	116	58.0
	Above 31 years	20	10.0
1.3	<b>Marital Status</b>		
	Unmarried	165	82.5
	Married	30	15.0
	Divorced	2	1.0
	Widower	3	1.5
1.4	<b>Community</b>		
	SC	56	28.0
	ST	4	2.0
	MBC	20	10.0
	BC	110	55.0
	FC	10	5.0
1.5	<b>Religion</b>		
	Hindu	173	86.5
	Christian	23	11.5
	Muslim	3	1.5
	Others	1	0.5
1.6	<b>Mother tongue</b>		
	Tamil	188	94.0
	Telugu	5	2.5
	Malayalam	4	2.0
	Kannada	3	1.5
1.7	<b>Place of Residence</b>		
	Rural	124	62.0
	Urban	72	36.0
	Others	4	2.0
1.8	<b>Domicile</b>		
	Within Tamil Nadu	192	96.0
	Outside of Tamil Nadu	7	3.5
	Others	1	0.5

**Distribution of the respondents by gender:**

Table no. 1.1 shows that 58 per cent of the respondents belong to male category and the remaining 42 per cent are of female respondents. This study reveals that male Ph.D. research scholar's representation is more in the Ph. D programme. Thus, it can be interpreted that the traditional culture of Indian society and medically fixed optimum age for female force them to get married within 25 years. Also the research programme is very lengthy process; hence it is very difficult to complete the research programme within the stipulated period, so the women representation is low in the research programme.

**Distribution of the respondents by age:**

One third 32 per cent of the respondents belong to the age group of 22-25 years which immediately follows after the completion of PG / M.Phil. education without any break. This is the normal pattern of higher education in India. 58 per cent of the respondents belong to the age group of 26 to 30 years. Another 10 per cent are in the age group of above 31 years. It is inferred that there are various reasons for the delay in joining the Ph.D. programme. The reasons

are: 1. Non availability of Ph.D. vacancy under a particular guide 2. Availability of fellowship/project fellowship scheme 3. To fulfill family responsibility for certain period 4. Lack of self interest 5. Lack of realization of importance of Ph.D in future employment opportunity, and 6. For social status (Table 1.2)

**Distribution of the respondents by marital status:**

Vast majority (82.5 per cent) of the respondents are unmarried and only 15 per cent of the respondents are married. This study also reveals that 1 per cent of the respondents are divorcee and 1.5 per cent is widows/widower. It can be inferred that unmarried respondents can involve more in the research, because they are not having any additional family commitment compare with married respondents (Table 1.3).

**Distribution of the respondents by caste:**

One fourth 28 per cent of the respondents belong to Scheduled Caste (SC) category and 2 per cent belong to Scheduled Tribes (ST) category, 10 per cent belong to Most Backward Caste (MBC) category and 5 per cent belong to Forward Caste (FC). A majority of 55 per cent of the respondents belong to Backward (BC) category. This study can be inferred that the respondents of the BC category are more in the Ph.D. programme. However, the other communities are also making their representation remarkably in the higher education (Table 1.4).

**Distribution of the respondents by religion:**

Vast majority (86.5%) of the respondents is from Hindu religion. 11.5 per cent of the respondents are Christians, 1.5 per cent are Muslims and the remaining 0.5 per cent are from others (Buddhist) (Table 1.5).

**Distribution of the respondents by language:**

Vast majority (94 per cent) of the respondents is Tamils, 2.5% are of Telugus, 2% are of Malayalees and 1.5% is of Kannadigas (Table 1.6).

**Distribution of the respondents by place of residence:**

Majority (62 per cent) of the respondents belongs to rural area, 36 per cent of the respondents from urban areas, and 2% are from others like hilly area. Thus, it can be interpreted that the respondents who are from rural areas are showing interest in pursuing higher studies. This trend gives new impetus for the development of higher education among rural mass, who were hesitating so far either due to less awareness or due to lack of infrastructure pertaining to higher education. It also proved a fact that the rural mass are capable of endurance and prolong with difficulties to achieve their goal of higher education (Table 1.7).

**Distribution of the respondents by domicile:**

Vast majority (96 per cent) of the respondents is from within Tamil Nadu, 3.5% are from outside Tamil Nadu, and remaining 0.5 % is from other country (Table 1.8).

**EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION OF PARENTS OF THE RESPONDENTS**

**Table No. 1.9**

Education	Father		Mother	
	n	%	n	%
Illiterate	29	14.5	60	30.0
Below SSLC	81	40.5	91	45.5
HSC	12	6.0	24	12.0
UG	18	9.0	11	5.5
PG	26	13.0	7	3.5
Diploma	6	3.0	3	1.5
PUC	17	8.5	4	2.0
Others	11	5.5	0	0
NA	0	0	0	0

58 per cent of the respondents fathers educational qualification is below Under Graduate (UG) level, 14.5 per cent of the respondents fathers are illiterate, 27.5 per cent of the respondents fathers educational qualification is UG level and above. Only 9 per cent of the respondents mothers' educational qualification level is UG and above. Thus, it can be inferred that majority (72.5 per cent) of the respondents are first generation students. Compare with other students the first generation students are facing many problems like lack of exposure, lack of guidance, poor communication skill, and inferiority complex. Hence, first generation students should be given extra attention or extra guidance so as to equate themselves with other student in academic or research performance (Table 1.9).

**OCCUPATION OF THE PARENTS**

**Table No. 1.10**

Occupation	Parents	
	n	%
State government	48	24.0
Central government	16	8.0
Private	14	7.0
Entrepreneur	21	10.5
Agriculture	51	25.5
Unorganized	1	.5
Nil	49	24.5

50.5 per cent of the respondents parents are engaged in agriculture and not having any job. Thus it could be interpreted that the most of the respondents are in need of some financial assistance for their studies. Hence, the students should be provided with fellowships and scholarships to meet out their expenses related to their research work and others (Table 1.10).

**RECEIVING ANY FELLOWSHIP/SCHOLARSHIP**

**Table No. 1.11**

Sl. No	RECEIVING FELLOWSHIP/SCHOLARSHIP	No. of respondents (n=200)	Percentage (100%)
1.	Yes	113	56.5
2.	No	87	43.5

56.5 per cent of the respondents have received the fellowship/scholarship. The remaining 43.5 per cent of the respondents are not receiving any fellowship / scholarship. Thus, it could be inferred that the most of the respondents are in need of financial assistance. Hence, the research scholars who are not getting the fellowships like Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) Project fellowship, CSIR, etc. should be given institutional/departmental fellowship generated internally.

**RESEARCH CULTURE**

**Table No. 2**

Sl. No	Particulars	Yes	No
<b>2.1</b>	<b>Mode of discussion with guide</b>		
	In person	187(93.5%)	13(6.5%)
	Over the phone/ mobile	49(24.5%)	151(75.5%)
	Through E.Mail	49(24.5%)	151(75.5%)
	Through online chatting	11(5.5%)	189(94.5%)
	Others	5(2.5%)	(97.5%)
	None	3(1.5%)	197(98.5%)
<b>2.2</b>	<b>Research Training Offered</b>		
	To clear the subject doubts on theory methodology and review of literature related with research work	113(56.5%)	87(43.5%)
	To train on journal writing	85(42.5%)	115(42.5%)
	To train on dissertation writing	64(32%)	139(68%)
	Internet browse training	41(20.5%)	159(79.5%)
	Other training	12(6%)	188(94%)
	Everyday seminar	17(8.5%)	183(91.5%)
	Weekly seminar/ research forum	73(36.5%)	127(63.5%)
	Fortnightly seminar /research forum	12(6%)	188(94%)
	Monthly seminar/research forum	37(18.5%)	163(81.5%)
<b>2.3</b>	<b>Need of research training in the department</b>	152 (76%)	48 (24%)
<b>2.4</b>	<b>Having membership in any professional organization</b>	30 (15.0%)	170(85.0%)
<b>2.5</b>	<b>Getting a research critique from peer</b>	81(40.5%)	119(59.5%)
<b>2.6</b>	<b>Getting a research critique from other professors</b>	69(34.5%)	131(65.5%)

**Mode of discussion with guide:**

Vast majority (93.5 per cent) of the respondents said

that they use the mode of discussion with guide was in person. Because being a full-time research scholar they have an opportunity to meet the guide every day. And moreover, another advantage in discussion with guide in person is that they can take down the points, can raise doubts and questions, and can save money and time. Also this study found that majority (70 per cent) of the respondents being a first generation, they have an inner fear, so they can't move with the guide indirectly with other mode of discussion, and hence they prefer to do their discussion in person with guide (Table 2. 1).

**Research Training Offered:**

56.5 per cent of the respondents were given adequate training in understanding concepts, methodology and review of literature related with research work. The other areas of training were almost not given to them. Majority of the respondents have not got enough exposure in journal writing, dissertation writing, and internet browse training areas. Thus, it could be inferred that the respondents are lack of research training opportunities. Hence the research scholars should be given frequent research training programmes (Table 2. 2).

**Need of research training in the department:**

Majority (76 per cent) of the respondents are in need of research training in their departments. It can be inferred that the importance of research training is very much realized nowadays in the research institutions (Table 2.3).

**Having membership in any professional organization:**

Only 15 per cent of the respondents are having a membership in professional organization. Thus it can be inferred that the respondents are not having proper exposure, awareness about joining and getting a membership in professional organization. Also financial constraints could be the reason for some sort of students who can't afford to pay the membership fee. Hence, creating departmental fund could help the students to become a member in any professional organization (Table 2.4).

**Getting a research critique from peer:**

40.5 per cent of the respondents are getting research critique from the peers. Research critique represents dissertation work, publication, paper presentation etc. Thus it could be interpreted that the majority of the respondents are not having the habit of getting a research critique, it is due to the lack of confidence in oneself and not prevailing the culture of getting critique in the department. Hence, the culture of getting critique can be encouraged among the research scholars (Table 2.5).

**Getting a research critique from other professors:**

Only 34.5 per cent of the respondents are getting research critique from other professor of their work. Ph. D research work cannot be criticized easily by anyone unless he or she is a competent person in that participant research works. Thus, it could be inferred that the majority of the respondents are not having proper contact and network with other professors of related research area. Hence, the

respondents should be encouraged to have a wider contact and net work with other professors (Table 2.6).

**2.RESEARCH DISCUSSION WITH GUIDE**

**Table No. 2.7**

Research discussion	Male (n=116)	Female (n=84)	Total (n=200)
Very comfortable	73 (62.9%)	41 (48.8%)	114 (57%)
Comfortable	29 (25%)	35 (41.7%)	64 (32%)
Uncomfortable	14 (12.1%)	8 (9.5%)	22 (11%)

62.9 per cent of the male respondents said that they are very comfortable in research discussion with guide. 48.8 per cent of the female respondents said that they are very comfortable in research discussion with guide. Male respondents are more comfortable in discussion with research guide because they get combined work even after working hours in the lab/department or they go to the guide's house and get discussion or get opinion about the research. It is a major advantage and flexibility for male students. In contrast, the female respondents they must do research discussion within working hours as social norms; hence the research guide always restricts his discussion with the female students within that stipulated time.

Thus it could be inferred that the existence of some restrictions to the female students force them to go away from good learning opportunities and experiences. Hence, these social restrictions should be minimized gradually so as to enhance them towards better research environment (Table 2.8).

**PAPERS PRESENTATIONS IN THE SEMINAR/ CONFERENCE/WORKSHOPS/SYMPOSIUM**

**Table No. 2.8**

Papers presentation	National		International		Others	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Nil	66	33.0	100	50.0	191	95.5
One	30	15.0	33	16.5	4	2.0
1 to 5	77	38.5	54	27.0	4	2.0
6 to 10	19	9.5	13	6.5	0	0
10 & above	8	4.0	0	0	1	.5

33 per cent of the respondents have not presented any research paper in the seminar / conference/ workshops/ symposium at national level even after entering into the Ph. D programme. 50 per cent of the respondents have not presented any research paper at international level. It can be inferred that the majority of the research student's standards are not up to the mark in fulfilling the expectations of research criteria. Hence, some qualitative exposures should be given to the research scholars to attend and present the

research papers in the national and international level seminars/conference/workshops (Table 2.8).

**PUBLICATIONS DURING PH.D PROGRAMME**

**Table No. 2.9**

Publication	National		International	
	n	%	n	%
Nil	160	80.0	130	65.0
One	21	10.5	27	13.5
Two	10	5.0	20	10.0
Three & above	9	4.5	23	11.5

80 per cent of the respondents have not published any research publications at national level journals. 65 per cent of the respondents have not published any research publications at international level journals. Thus, it could be inferred that the respondents have not been trained in publication writing and the respondents have lack of exposure in publication work. Hence, they should be given an proper training in publication writing (Table 2.9).

**FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

1. More than half (58 per cent) of the respondents belong to male category.
2. More than half (58 per cent) of the respondents belong to the age group of 26 to 30 years.
3. Vast Majority (82.5 per cent) of the respondents are unmarried.
4. One third (28 per cent) of the respondents belong to Scheduled Caste (SC) category and 2 per cent belong to Scheduled Tribes (ST) category, 10 per cent belong to Most Backward Caste (MBC) category and 5 per cent belong to Forward Caste (FC). 55 per cent of the respondents belong to Backward (BC) category.
5. Vast Majority (86.5 per cent) of the respondents are from Hindu religion. 11.5 per cent of the respondents are Christians, 1.5 per cent are Muslims and the remaining .5 per cent others.
6. Vast majority (94 per cent) of the respondents is Tamils, 2.5% are of Telugus, 2% are of Malayalam and 1.5% is of Kannada.
7. 62 per cent of the respondents belong to rural area.
8. 96 per cent of the respondents are from within Tamil Nadu.
9. 58 per cent of the respondents' fathers educational qualification is below Under Graduate (UG) level and 14.5 per cent of the respondents fathers are illiterate.
10. 72.5 per cent of the respondents are first generation students.
11. 50.5 per cent of the respondents parents are engaged in agriculture and not having any job.

12. 56.5 per cent of the respondents have received the fellowship/scholarship.
13. 73 out of 116 (62.9 per cent) of the male respondents and 41 out of 84 (48.8 per cent) of the female respondents said that they are very comfortable in research discussion with guide.
14. 93.5 per cent of the respondents said that they use the mode of discussion with guide was in person.
15. 56.5 per cent of the respondents said that they were given adequate training in understanding concepts, methodology and review of literature related with research work.
16. 76 per cent of the respondents are in need of research training in their departments.
17. 50 per cent of the respondents have not presented any research paper at international level.
18. 80 per cent of the respondents have not published any research publications at national level journals.
19. Only 15 per cent of the respondents are having a membership in professional organization.
20. 40.5 per cent of the respondents are getting research critique from the peers.
21. 34.5 per cent of the respondents are getting research critique from other professor of their work.

**RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION**

Female representation in the research programme is relatively encouraging one. Availability of various fellowships and project fellowship schemes in the department can reduce the delay in joining the research programme by the respondents. Minority communities should be encouraged to increase their representation in the research programme. Rural and first generation students should be given extra attention in developing their personality as more dynamic and versatile with multiple skills. Since most of the students are in need of some financial assistance for their studies, various fellowships and scholarships can be arranged to them in order to meet out their expenses related to their research work. The female respondents and their parents should be sensitized through some awareness programmes which could minimize the social restrictions they possess in their mind and pave the way for making use of better research environment available in the department. The research scholars should be provided with all type of trainings which are highly essential to their research work. The research scholars should be motivated and trained professionally to present research papers in the seminars and conferences. Also they should be encouraged and practiced to publish their research papers in the refereed journals. Ultimately, holding a membership in the professional organization should be made compulsory. The habit of getting critique from peers and other professors should also be encouraged. These practices could increase their research culture which would make them as more innovative and creative and also maximize their contribution in the field of research.

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