RESEARCH SCHOLARS' PROBLEMS AND PLAUSIBLE SUGGESTIONS BASED ON POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Abstract

The objective of this conceptual paper is to uncover research scholars' problems and provide plausible suggestions based on positive psychology approach. Current literature on research scholars' problems is collected and analyzed. Language, culture, supervisor, institutional, interpersonal, discrimination, parenthood, isolation, etc. problems are explored in the literature. To face the problems, positive psychology based suggestions are provided. This paper open doors for future researchers to conduct studies based on positive psychology.

Keywords: Problems of Research Scholars, Positive Psychology, Work-Life-Balance.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of doctoral education can be seen worldwide (Gruzdev et al., 2020) and it has become a significant contributor to economic growth (Dericks et al., 2019). Doctoral education is full of challenges. Due to the challenges of PhD program research scholars leave the study. High attrition of PhD students has created a challenge for universities as a lot of resources go wasted if PhD students do not complete their research project (Horta et al., 2018). Therefore, it is necessary that all challenges of research scholars should be documented and appropriate measures should be taken to rectify challenges.

Positive psychology gives emphasis on promoting strengths of the students (Williams et al., 2018). Positive psychology provides a guideline for research scholars and institutions in this direction. Positive psychology operates at three levels: individual, group, and organization. Positive psychology not only benefits students' community but also benefits all stakeholders (Oades et al., 2011).

This study provides a practical solution for research scholars to face their challenges. First, it reviews the current literature on the problems of research scholars. Based on the literature review, this paper provides perception of research scholars regarding their problems and further explains the applicability of positive psychology to mitigate their problems.

II. OBJECTIVES

1. To provide the perception of research scholars regarding their problems.
2. To provide suggestions to mitigate the problems of research scholars based on positive psychology.

III. LITERATURE ON PROBLEMS OF RESEARCH SCHOLARS

Talusan (2022) conducted a study on Asian American and Pacific Islanders research scholars from race and color perspective. The study explored institutional challenges with special focus on the socialization and development processes. The study provided suggestions for making an equitable community. Li and Xue (2022) found in their study in Chinese context that research scholars face a lot of challenges during initial phase of the doctoral program. The challenges are isolation, work-life imbalance, new academic environment, etc. Coping strategies discussed in the paper are active participation of students in various interdisciplinary projects, self-development, and supervisor guidance. Gupta et al. (2022) found that research scholars confront problem related to English if it is not their primary language. Shamsi and Osam (2022) found "publish or no degree" challenge for research scholars. Abdul-Rahaman et al. (2022) found that international research scholars face problem related to isolation. Bahtilla (2022) and Bettinson and Haven-Tang (2021) found that international research scholars face language and culture related problems. Lack of socialization by students and lack of socialization led activities by institute were the isolation contributing factors. Catalano and Radin (2021) presented challenges of research scholars as parents. Intention to leave program, high workload, low stipend were the problems of parents. Nartey (2021) presented personal challenges like topic selection, research gap, literature review, analysis, scientific writing, etc. The author provided suggestions to overcome these all barriers. McBrayer et al. (2021) studied the role of self-efficacy in PhD program. The

paper presented contributory factors and barriers in doctoral journey. Terentev et al. (2021) found poor supervision, lack of financing and tough PhD requirements as three challenges to Russian doctoral students. Matthews (2021) showed the importance of socialization based on his own experience. Author believed in independent work and ignored value of social experiences as a new research scholar student but later recognized importance of socialization for professional and personal development. Bui (2021) presented his own journey as a research scholar and found that as an international scholar it is difficult to explore new self in new environment. Scherr et al. (2020) conducted a study on 16 physics research scholars who were at risk of isolation due to racial or ethnic discrimination. Students expressed problems like biasness, financial difficulties, and political threat. Through a literature review, Hazell et al. (2020) found that isolation and gender related problems were associated with research scholars. Positive interpersonal relationship and engaging in self-care were the most effective buffering factors. Matheka et al. (2020) explained the importance of research scholar background and program characteristics as success factors of research scholars in Kenyan universities. A study conducted by Lowery et al. (2018) demanded socialization with peer-group as it helps in facing isolation and research related challenges. Jordan and Howe (2018) studied the challenges of graduate teaching assistants at Cambridge. Work pressure and time management were challenges for teaching assistants as they had to take teaching classes apart from PhD work. Cabay et al. (2018) studied the experience of STEM female doctoral students and found that due to discrimination and high work pressure, female students are looking for an alternative research career. Cesar et al. (2018) found personal, academic, and interpersonal barriers through literature review. Havenga and Sengane (2018) found personal, academic, institutional and research-related challenges for research scholars. Institutional support is required to address personal, academic and research-related challenges. Ding and Devine (2018) explored the supervision challenges of research scholars studying in New Zealand. Ye and Edwards (2017) and Ye and Edwards (2015) studies the problems of Chinese research scholars and found that students struggle in identity formation because of different culture. But, their own norms and values help them in reshaping the new identity. Greene (2015) conducted a study in university of Atlantic Canada to know the role of support services for research scholars. Study found that students faced challenges due to institution, finance, policy and individual characteristics. Bøgelund and Graaff (2015) explained the challenges of international students in the form of quality supervision and autonomy. Son and Park (2014) exhibited language problems, cultural differences for international students. The study highlighted the importance of institute in helping students to facing challenges.

Table 1 explains the problems faced by research scholars. These problems are related to language, culture, supervisor, institutional, interpersonal, identity, discrimination, parenthood, isolation, etc. A lot of studies have documented work-life imbalance due to the workload of PhD work. The problems of research scholars multiply when they get international student status. These students face a lot of problems due to isolation, language, and culture differences. They also develop a new self-identity that is different from their native country. If supervisors and institutions do not provide support these problems multiply and force students to leave the PhD program.

Table 1: Problems of research scholars

Author of the Research Paper	Problems Identified
Talusan (2022)	Institutional challenges
Son and Park (2014); Bahtilla (2022); Son and Park (2014)	language problems
Shamsi and Osam (2022)	Publication
Abdul-Rahaman et al. (2022)	Lack of social interaction
Catalano and Radin (2021)	Challenges related to parenthood
Nartey (2021); Gupta et al. (2022)	Topic selection, literature search, analysis, scientific writing
Bahtilla (2022); Son and Park (2014)	Cultural differences
Terentev et al. (2021)	Poor supervision, lack of financing and tough PhD requirements
Bui (2021); Ye and Edwards (2017)	New self
Scherr et al. (2020); Hazell et al. (2020); Matthews (2021); Bettinson and Haven-Tang (2021); Li and Xue (2022)	Isolation
Shamsi and Osam (2022)	Lack of support
Cabay et al. (2018); Li and Xue (2022); Li and Xue (2022)	Work-life-imbalance
Cesar et al. (2018)	Personal, academic, and interpersonal
Havenga and Sengane (2018)	Personal challenges, institutional and research-related challenges
Ding and Devine (2018); Bahtilla (2022)	Supervision

Source: Authors processed

IV. SUGGESTIONS BASED ON POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

All the challenges faced by students fall in two categories: internal and external. Internal challenges include topic selection, literature search, analysis, scientific writing, language, lack of commitment, engagement, work-life imbalance, formation of new self, etc. If student work on their strengths like resilience, hope, optimism, self-efficacy, engagement, motivation, it will be relatively easier to handle the challenges of research scholars. Students have to work on their strengths and same time supervisors and family members can help research scholars in making them realize their strengths. External challenges may be categorized as supervisor, peer-group, institution, culture, policy, and resources related challenges. These all challenges may be mitigated if support from the supervisor, peer-group and institution is provided to the students. If all the research scholars employ positive psychology based attributes and institute also promotes positive psychology, then challenges of research scholars can be mitigated. Supervisors have to understand the role of positive psychology to influence their students positively. If hope and optimism are practiced by the supervisor then it will be easy for research scholars to learn it. Institute's positive mindset towards positive psychology will help in creating discrimination free culture. According to Talusan, (2022), institutions have to develop equitable communities away from any discrimination. To face the challenge of isolation, active participation of students in various interdisciplinary projects, self-development, and supervisor guidance are required (Li and

Xue, 2022). Abdul-Rahaman et al. (2022) proposed to enhance informal communication among international doctoral students. Bahtilla (2022) demanded to develop a research-conducive environment. Matthews (2021) explained the importance of socialization for professional and personal development. The role of research scholar and institutions plays an important role in developing socialization and combating the challenges of isolation and new identity formation. Hazell et al. (2020) found that social support and self-care play an important role in facing all types of PhD related challenges. Matheka et al. (2020) and Ye and Edwards (2017) found that self-motivation and self-efficacy are important factors in success of PhD students. Byers et al. (2014) found that support from others help in facing challenges of research scholars.

V. CONCLUSION

This study presents current literature on research scholar problems. It also provides suggestions based on positive psychology to mitigate the problems faced by them. It is very essential that research scholars should receive support from institutions, supervisors, families, and peer-group. It is also required that students should develop motivation, engagement, and self-care to face PhD-related problems. Work-life-balance of research scholars is very important. Most of the studies have documented that students are facing problems of work-life imbalance. Future studies are required to understand the strategies used by research scholars in balancing their work and life and how positive psychology can help in balancing their work and life. Positive psychology approach focuses on the strengths of the individuals to overcome the challenges, therefore, research scholars should enhance psychological capital.

VI. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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