

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Scholarship Information Sources Among Student Scholars

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ABSTRACT

Background: Ensuring equitable access to scholarship opportunities requires a clear understanding of how students discover and evaluate information on available grants. This study investigates the sources through which student scholars learn about scholarship funding and assesses the perceived effectiveness and accessibility of various communication channels.

Methods: A total of 82 student scholars participated in the study through a structured survey questionnaire.

Results: Findings indicate that while social media is the most common initial source of scholarship information, the school/university website is perceived as the most effective source overall. However, despite its high effectiveness rating, the university website was also considered "somewhat difficult" to navigate when searching for scholarship information. Notably, it remains the most preferred source among students. The application process emerged as the most sought-after information by students, and the accuracy of content was identified as a key determinant of source effectiveness. A significant barrier reported was the prevalence of outdated information across platforms.

Conclusion: These findings underscore the need for institutions to improve the accuracy, usability, and timeliness of their communication strategies to ensure equitable access to scholarship opportunities for all students.

Keywords: scholarship information; communication channel; student perception

How to cite this article: Dematawaran IJ, Lacostales JL, Pascual V. Evaluating the Effectiveness of Scholarship Information Sources Among Student Scholars. *Int J Drug Deliv Technol.* 2026;16(13s): 395-403. DOI: 10.25258/ijddt.16.13s.43

1. Introduction

The Access to information is essential among students. Particularly, when it comes to accessing funding through scholarships. Access to scholarships can help shape their study progression. Scholarships are a vital source of funding for students who wish to pursue higher education (Borinaga et al, 2023; Londoo vélez et al 2023; e Habiba& Liaqat, 2022). This can mitigate the financial obstacles that often hinder access to learning opportunities. Scholarship aid, including that from the private sector given to deprived and marginalized scholars, was vital in achieving students' academic goals (Zabala & Gutierrez, 2017).

Scholarship assistance varies from various grants from the local, national, and private sectors. However, students'

awareness of available opportunities and their ability to navigate the complex processes of scholarships influence the effectiveness of scholarship programs (McKinney & Novak, 2015).

Students can find information on scholarship programs from a wide range of sources. This can include websites, social media, and online forums. Universities have also established conventional channels like financial aid offices, where students can access information about scholarship grants (Ware & Ramos, 2013). However, the effectiveness of these sources can affect students' decision-making in scholarship applications.

It is important to understand what type of information students seek when navigating scholarship opportunities. This information will help design targeted strategies and maximize communication efforts (Kumar & Nanda, 2019). Ensuring equal access to scholarship opportunities is also crucial to allow students to obtain scholarships regardless of background or circumstances.

At Cebu Technological University Barili Campus, the Scholarship Office serves as an intermediary between students and scholarship opportunities. However, there is no empirical data that identifies the primary sources from which students initially learn about scholarship grants.

In literature, while some studies (Bettinger et al. 2012; Pahlevan Sharif & Naghavi, 2020; Harper et al., 2021) have looked at general patterns of information-seeking behavior among students, this study offers a new perspective by examining the various sources through which scholarship information is accessed and disseminated (Elliott & Lewis, 2014; Bora, 2021). This study investigates the following: (1) Sources from which students learn about scholarship funding; (2) Efficiency of different communication channels in reaching and educating students about scholarship opportunities.

The findings of this research will have significant implications for educational institutions and scholarship providers seeking to enhance the accessibility and effectiveness of scholarship programs. By identifying the most effective communication channels and addressing potential barriers to access, this study aims to contribute to the promotion of educational equity and student success by ensuring that all students have equal opportunities to access and benefit from scholarship grants.

2. Materials and Methods

This study was conducted at Cebu Technological University Barili Campus. The respondents in this research comprised undergraduate students who are currently receiving scholarships. These included students under various scholarship programs, either government or private foundation scholarships.

A purposive sampling technique was used to identify and select the respondents. This non-probability sampling method

was used because the research focused specifically on a defined group of individuals (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). Only students in undergraduate status, currently receiving a scholarship, and enrolled at CTU Barili during the academic year 2024-2025, were included in the study.

A list of all student scholars was obtained from the scholarship office. A letter of request was sent to the scholarship office at CTU Barili, requesting the list of all student scholars enrolled in the 2024-2025 academic year. From this list, only 82 student scholars from various colleges across all year levels were successfully invited and consented to participate in the survey.

The data were collected via a structured survey questionnaire. Before conducting the study, instrument validation was performed among 10 selected student participants not included in the final sample. The overall reliability of the test questionnaire was achieved, with only minor comments on question construction. The comments were addressed before the conduct of the survey.

The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, and means, were used to analyze demographic characteristics of the respondents and the responses to survey questions.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Profile of the Respondents

This study had 82 respondents who were currently enrolled in the academic year 2024-2025. There were 21 males, 59 females, and 2 who preferred not to disclose their sexual status. Almost all of them (81) are single, and one is married. As regards their year level, most of them (63.4%) are in their second year. 7.3% are in the first year, 18.3% are in the third year, and 11% are in the fourth year and above.

Table 1. Summary of respondents' profile

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Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	21	25.6
Female	59	72.0
Prefer not to say	2	2.4
<i>Total</i>	<i>82</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Civil Status		
Single	81	98.8
Married	1	1.2
<i>Total</i>	<i>82</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Year Level		
1 st Year	6	7.3
2 nd Year	52	63.4
3 rd Year	15	18.3
4 th Year and above	9	11.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>82</i>	<i>100.0</i>

3.2. Scholarship Grants

Table 2 shows the different scholarship grants received by the 82 respondents in this study. Twenty-seven students (32.9%) reported that they acquired the CHED Tulong Dunong Program (TDP). This was the scholarship with the highest number of respondents. This suggests that the CHED-TDP program plays a major role in supporting students financially, making it one of the most accessible or widely available scholarships.

The Cebu Province Grants Intended for Tertiary Students (CP-GIFTS) program had 16 recipients (19.5%), followed by TES or the Tertiary Education Subsidy, with 14 students (17.1%). These three scholarships account for more than two-thirds of all the respondents, indicating that many students rely on government-funded financial assistance.

Other respondents reported having scholarships from CHED Merit Scholarship Programs (CMSPs) (9.8%), CHED Scholarship Program for Coconut Farmers and their Families (CoScho) (8.5%), CHED Scholarship Programs (CSPs) Scholar (2.4%), and Department of Science and Technology (DOST) (2.4%). Scholarships like OWWA-Education for Development Scholarship Program (EDSP), NATURE'S SPRING Foundation, and others were only received by one respondent each.

Scholarship	Frequency	Percentage
DOST	4	4.8
EASY AGRI OF AGRICULTURAL TRAINING INSTITUTE	1	1.2
COSHO	7	8.5
TES	14	17.1
CHED-TDP	27	32.9
CP-GIFTS	16	19.5
OWWA EDSP SCHOLAR	1	1.2
CHED-CSPs SCHOLAR	2	2.4
CHED- CMSPs	8	9.8
NATURE'S SPRING FOUNDATION	1	1.2
DIAC	1	1.2
<i>Total</i>	<i>82</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Table 2. Name of Scholarship Grant

3.3. Scholarship Assistance

As regards the respondents' type of scholarship assistance received, Table 3 shows that nearly half of the respondents (47.6%) receive Type 2 assistance, which covers a living allowance. This suggests that support for daily or monthly expenses is a top priority among many scholarship providers. This was

followed by Type 4 assistance, reported by 41.5% of the respondents. This type combines tuition, living allowance, and thesis grant, indicating that many students benefit from more comprehensive support packages.

Only 7.3% of the students receive Type 1, which is limited to tuition fees. A small number, 3.7%, receive Type 3, or thesis grants, showing that support specifically for research or final academic requirements is less common. The data highlights that while tuition remains a key area of support, many students rely on scholarships that go beyond tuition, particularly to cover their living expenses during their studies.

Scholarship Assistance Type	Frequency	Percentage
Type 1	6	7.3
Type 2	39	47.6
Type 3	3	3.7
Type 4	34	41.5
<i>Total</i>	<i>82</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Table 3. Scholarship Assistance Type

Legend: Type 1-Tuition; Type 2-Living Allowance; Type 3-Thesis Grant. Type 4-Combination of the above categories

3.4. Scholarship Grantees

Table 4 shows the distribution of when the respondents became scholarship grantees. A majority of students (67.1%) received their scholarships in 2023, followed by 26.8% in 2024. Only 6.1% were granted scholarships in 2022. This pattern may reflect either an increase in scholarship availability in recent years or improved access and awareness among students.

Year Granted	Frequency	Percent
2022	5	6.1
2023	55	67.1
2024	22	26.8
<i>Total</i>	<i>82</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Table 4. Year of being a scholarship grantee

3.5 Number of Times Applied for Scholarship Grant

Table 5 reveals that the majority of respondents (69.5%) applied for a scholarship only once, suggesting that many students were successful in securing financial assistance on their first attempt. This could indicate that the application process is relatively accessible or that students are well-prepared and informed before submitting their initial application.

Meanwhile, 17.1% of the respondents reported applying twice, while smaller portions applied three times (6.1%) or four

times or more (7.3%). These figures suggest that several students faced challenges in securing a scholarship and needed to apply multiple times before being granted one.

Table 5. Number of Times Applied for Scholarship Grant

Number of times	Frequency	Percentage
1 time	57	69.5
2 times	14	17.1
3 times	5	6.1
4 times or more	6	7.3
Total	82	100.0

3.6. Sources of Information on Scholarship Grants

One of the objectives of this study is to determine the sources from which respondents learn information on scholarship grants. The respondents were asked to rank the sources where they first learn about scholarship grants. The data in Table 6 shows the ranking of information, wherein social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, X, etc., ranked first as the primary source of initial scholarship awareness among respondents. School/University websites occupied the second position, indicating their significant role in initial discovery. Family or friends ranked third, demonstrating the importance of personal networks in scholarship awareness. Other scholarship websites ranked fourth, while professors or school advisors ranked fifth as sources of initial scholarship information. This indicates that in-person communication is less used in scholarship information dissemination than electronic forms of information dissemination.

Table 6. Sources where respondents first learn about scholarship grants

Sources of Information	Rank
Social media (Facebook, Instagram, X, etc.)	1 st
School/University Website	2 nd
Family or Friends	3 rd
Other Scholarship Websites	4 th
Professors or School Advisors	5 th

On the other hand, Table 6.1 presents the ranking of information sources most frequently utilized by respondents when seeking scholarship information. School/University websites ranked first as the most commonly used source. This indicates its primary role in ongoing scholarship information gathering. Social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, X, etc.) ranked second in frequency of use. Other scholarship websites ranked third among most-used sources. Family or friends ranked fourth

in terms of usage frequency, while email from school/university ranked fifth as a regularly used information source.

3.7 Source of information most used for scholarship grants

The respondents were asked how frequently they use the different communication sources to learn about scholarships. Table 6.2 reveals that students frequently use digital platforms. Social media has the highest weighted mean of 3.987805, which indicates that it is often used resource to access scholarship information. Khatri (2021) indicated that in terms of information sources for academic and non-academic activities, undergraduate students rated social media sites as the most crucial source, especially for accessing academic information. The school/university website is the second often used resource, with a weighted mean of 3.731707.

The other five sources were only used occasionally. The scholarship website, with a weighted mean of 3.646341, is the highest among all the occasionally used sources. This was followed by family or friends (3.256098), an email from the school/university (2.646341), professors or school advisors (2.756098), and flyers/posters on campus had the lowest frequency of usage.

Table 6.1 Source of information most used for scholarship grants

Sources of Information	Rank
School/University Website	1 st
Social media (Facebook, Instagram, X, etc.)	2 nd
Other Scholarship Websites	3 rd
Family or Friends	4 th
Email from School/University	5 th

Table 6.2. Frequency of Use of Resources to learn about scholarship

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Sources	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
School/University Website	3.731707	Often
Social media	3.987805	Often
Scholarship Websites	3.646341	Occasionally
Email from School/University	2.646341	Occasionally
Family or Friends	3.256098	Occasionally
Professors or School Advisors	2.756098	Occasionally
Flyers/Posters on Campus	2.280488	Occasionally

Legend: 4.21-5.00-Very Often; 3.41-4.20-Often; 2.61-3.40-Occasionally; 1.81-2.60-Rare; 1.00-1.80-Never

3.8. Effectiveness of Sources

The study also sought to evaluate the effectiveness of the different sources in providing information about scholarship grants. According to the respondents, as shown in Table 7, they perceived the school/university website as the most effective source, with a weighted mean of 4.134146, which falls under the highly effective interpretation category. Indeed, institutional websites play a big role in students' decision-making. This was evident in the study conducted by Demir and Demir (2014, when they investigated the role of institutional websites in students' school choices.

Social media and scholarship websites both attained a weighted mean slightly above 4.036585, categorized as somewhat effective. The increasing role of digital and social media channels in information dissemination is evident in this result. Sources such as family or friends are still seen by the respondents as somewhat effective, with a reported weighted mean of 3.54878. On the other hand, other sources, such as email from school/university, with a weighted mean of 3.268293, and professors or school advisors, with a weighted mean of 3.25, were perceived as neutral in effectiveness. The traditional form of communication, which is flyers/posters, was also seen as neutral in effectiveness, having the lowest weighted mean of 2.756098. This rating may be due to its lower frequency of utilization as reflected in Table 6.2.

Table 7. Effectiveness of sources in providing information about scholarship

Sources	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
School/University Website	4.134146	Highly effective
Social media	4.036585	Somewhat effective
Scholarship Websites	4.060976	Somewhat effective
Email from School/University	3.268293	Neutral
Family or Friends	3.54878	Somewhat effective
Professors or School Advisors	3.256098	Neutral
Flyers/Posters on Campus	2.756098	Neutral

3.9 Preferences and Challenges

The respondents were also assessed on their preference for communication sources and the challenges they encountered in using the various sources of information. Among the seven sources assessed, only five sources were chosen by the respondents and obtained a ranking in this section. The other sources were not preferred by the respondents as sources of scholarship information.

In terms of the students' preferred source of scholarship information, Table 8 shows that the school/university website is the students' most preferred source of scholarship information. This finding aligns with earlier results highlighting the effectiveness of university websites (Table 7).

Social media sources, such as Facebook, Instagram, and X, ranked as the second preferred source of information. Bal and Bicen (2017) indicated that students agreed that social media had an effective role in students' information obtaining and that social media enables information exchange.

The scholarship websites are also preferred by respondents, which ranked third. This was followed by family or friends, in fourth place. Lastly, email from school/university ranks fifth, indicating that although this type of communication is formal, it is less preferred by students as a primary source of information for scholarship updates.

Sources of Information	Rank
School/University Website	1 st
Social media (Facebook, Instagram, X, etc.)	2 nd
Scholarship Websites	3 rd
Family or Friends	4 th
Email from School/University	5 th

Table 8. Preferred source of scholarship information

The respondents were also asked about the type of information they seek when looking for scholarship grants. The results in Table 8.1 show that the application process is the most sought-after information by the students. This underscores students' need for clear guidance on procedural steps to apply for scholarships. This is followed by the eligibility criteria, which emphasize that the students place importance on understanding qualification requirements early in the decision-making process.

Students also reported that they prioritize details on award amounts when seeking scholarship grants. Ranked third, this indicates an interest among students in the financial benefits associated with scholarships. Deadlines are the fourth most important piece of information that students seek for scholarship grants. This highlights the necessity for timely awareness to avoid missed opportunities. Success stories were ranked as the last information students seek when looking for scholarship grants. This suggests that while inspirational content is valued, practical and procedural information is more important among students.

These findings highlight important insights for scholarship offices and university administrators in deciding what information to include when communicating about scholarship grants.

Table 8.1. The type of information respondents seek when searching for scholarship grants

Type of Information	Rank
Application process	1 st
Eligibility Criteria	2 nd
Award amounts	3 rd
Deadlines	4 th
Success Stories	5 th

The data presented in Table 2 shows the challenges encountered by student scholars in accessing information about scholarship grants. These results reveal significant barriers that affect students' experience in obtaining information about scholarships.

Students reported that the most salient challenge they have encountered when obtaining information about scholarships is the often outdated or inaccurate information. These findings indicate the significance of the reliability and integrity of scholarship information disseminated among student scholars. Accuracy of information is also critical because exposure to inaccuracies can confuse people and even encourage reliance on the falsehoods (Salovich & Rapp, 2021).

The second challenge that most students encounter is the lack of guidance or support on how to apply. This result indicates that students value more than just the availability of information. They also need application mentorship. Applicants are not only struggling to find the information but are also inadequately supported in the crucial stage of utilizing that information to complete a successful application. This points to a need for more robust advisory services.

Moreover, students also reported that they encountered difficulty in receiving timely notifications about new opportunities, which is ranked third. This signifies a systemic failure in the dissemination mechanisms for new scholarship announcements. Delays in notification can affect the application preparation, which in turn affects the chances of securing the scholarship grant.

Navigating scholarship website platforms ranked fourth among the challenges encountered by the respondents. This highlights the issues in usability and interface design. Finally, respondents reported that they find it a challenge when scholarship deadlines are not communicated clearly. This highlights the persistent problem in the transparency and explicitness of critical application parameters.

These results are important because how users experience navigating the resources can affect how the user perceives the credibility of the information. As Lucassen and Schraagen (2011) found, source experience is an important determinant of trust in information.

Table 8.2. Challenges encountered in accessing information about scholarships

Challenges	Rank
The information is often outdated or inaccurate.	1 st
There is a lack of guidance or support on how to apply.	2 nd
I don't receive timely notifications about new opportunities.	3 rd
I find it difficult to navigate scholarship websites or platforms.	4 th
Scholarship deadlines are not communicated clearly.	5 th

Lastly, the respondents' opinions on the importance of several factors, such as the accuracy of information, timeliness of information, ease of access, clarity of instructions, and user-friendly platforms in relation to the effectiveness of scholarship information sources, were assessed.

Table 8.3 shows that, according to students, all these factors are very important. However, students identified the accuracy of content as a key determinant of source effectiveness, with the highest weighted mean of 4.634146. This indicates the non-negotiable importance of factual data in any effective communication channel. This was followed by the timeliness of information, with a weighted mean of 4.609756. The high value assigned to timeliness emphasizes that the information's utility diminishes significantly if it is not received when needed, making currentness a nearly equal priority to accuracy. Ease of access (weighted mean = 4.585366) and Clarity of Instructions (weighted mean = 4.573171) are also rated as very important. This suggests that accurate and timely information must be easily retrievable and presented in an unambiguous, comprehensible manner for the channel to be considered effective. Lastly, students identified a user-friendly platform as having the lowest weighted mean (4.463415), though still interpreted as very important. This factor relates directly to the technical interface and experience, supporting the idea that the design and usability of the platform are fundamental requirements for an effective scholarship information source.

Table 8.3. Importance of factors in determining the effectiveness of channels

Factors	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Accuracy of Information	4.634146	Very Important
Timeliness of Information	4.609756	Very Important
Ease of Access	4.585366	Very Important
Clarity of Instructions	4.573171	Very Important
User-Friendly Platforms	4.463415	Very Important

Legend: 4.21-5.00-Very Important; 3.41-4.20-Somewhat Important; 2.61-3.40-Neutral.

1.81-2.60-Important; 1.00-1.80-Not Important

4. Conclusions

This research study highlights the important gaps and opportunities in how scholarship information is shared with students. As indicated, social media plays a key role in raising initial awareness of scholarship information. However, students rely more heavily on official university websites when evaluating and acting on that information. Despite being the most trusted source, many students find these websites hard to navigate. Outdated content remains a major concern across all sources of scholarship information. Students are especially interested in clear details about the application process. And in judging the usefulness of any source, students value accuracy above all. It is therefore imperative that institutions focus on improving the clarity, reliability, and user-friendliness of their communication channels. This will ensure fair and equal access to funding opportunities. This will also ensure that more students can find and apply for the support they need. Institutions must invest in improving scholarship services on campus, and better utilization of information sources can help close the gap between awareness and access. The results of this study may not apply to scholarship recipients in other institutions or contexts.

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