UMPR

SULUH
JURNAL BIMBINGAN DAN KONSELING
https://journal.umpr.ac.id/index.php/suluh/index
Vol. 11, Special Issue-1, 2025, PP. 43-49
ISSN: 2460-7274, E-ISSN; 2685-8045, DOI: 10.33084/suluh.v11iSpesial-1.12332

The Impact of Scholarships on Students' Career Development: A Comparative Study in Higher Education Institutions

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Article Information

Received:
April 2025

Accepted:
May 2025

Published:
June 2025

ABSTRACT

Background: Higher education plays a crucial role in improving the quality of human resources. However, not all students have equal access to resources, particularly in terms of educational financing. Scholarships serve as one solution to expand access, yet their impact on students' career development has not been widely examined. *Aim:* This study analyzes the relationship between scholarship status and students' career development. Method: The method employed is a quantitative, comparative design that compares scholarship recipients and non-recipients across career development categories. *Results and Discussions:* The results indicate that scholarship recipients tend to demonstrate better career development, with the majority falling into the "High" category. In contrast, students who do not receive scholarships are predominantly classified in the "Moderate" category. The discussion highlights that scholarships have a positive impact on career development by reducing financial burdens, thereby enabling students to focus more on competency development. *Conclusion:* Scholarship status has a significant influence on students' career development, and it is recommended that higher education institutions enhance scholarship programs integrated with career development initiatives.

Keywords: Career Development, Higher Education, Scholarships, Students, Work Readiness.

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Citation Information: Farahdiva, S. ., Apriliardo, S., Julianti, R. T., Karyanti, K., & Solikin, A. The Impact of Scholarships on Students' Career Development: A Comparative Study in Higher Education Institutions. *Suluh: Jurnal Bimbingan Dan Konseling, 11(Spesial-1),* 43–49. https://doi.org/10.33084/suluh.v11iSpesial-1.12332

INTRODUCTION

Higher education has long been regarded as an important pathway to social mobility and the development of students' professional capacities. In reality, however, not all students have equal access to resources, particularly in terms of educational financing. Many students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds face financial pressures that can affect their ability to focus on career development, including participation in training programs, internships, or other competency-building activities. Therefore, scholarships serve as a strategic tool to provide students with opportunities to develop their career potential without being burdened by economic constraints. In this context, students' career development is not limited to academic achievement, but also encompasses readiness for the world of work, the development of soft skills, and future professional planning. A systematic review by Nugroho et al. (2024) indicates that Indonesian students' work-readiness is influenced by institutional support, access to career-related activities, and the quality of self-development experiences, thereby reinforcing the relevance of scholarships in supporting students' work-readiness.

Several previous studies have explored the impact of scholarships on various aspects of student success. For example, the study *Effect of Scholarships on Students' Social Development at University Level* found that scholarships have a significant effect on students' social development in the university environment, including aspects of social participation and networking (Shabeena Shaheen et al., 2020). Recent literature in the field of employability also emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach to students' career development, highlighting that financial, academic, and career-related aspects must support one another to maximize graduates' potential (Healy, 2023). Accordingly, this study positions itself within the need to further explore the relationship between scholarships and students' career development in a local context.

Based on the preliminary findings of this study, several research questions are proposed for empirical investigation. First, do students who receive scholarships demonstrate higher levels of career development compared to non-scholarship students? Second, to what extent do scholarships contribute to categories of students' career development, such as work readiness and engagement in career-related activities? Third, what mediating factors explain the relationship between

scholarships and students' career development, such as access to training, organizational involvement, or individual motivation? These questions guide the analysis in this study and distinguish it from previous literature by focusing more specifically on the influence of scholarships on students' career development.

By addressing these questions, this study is expected to make an empirical contribution to the literature on scholarships, students' career development, and higher education policy. Furthermore, the findings are anticipated to serve as a basis for reflection for higher education institutions and policymakers in designing scholarship programs that not only alleviate financial burdens but also holistically support students' career development, thereby enhancing their readiness to enter the workforce and their competitiveness after graduation.

Literature Review

Scholarships and Academic Achievement in Higher Education

Previous studies have consistently shown that scholarships are positively correlated with students' academic achievement. For instance, a literature review entitled *Studi Literatur Pengaruh Beasiswa terhadap Prestasi Belajar Mahasiswa* (2022) reported that, among the 11 studies reviewed, most found that scholarship recipients demonstrated significantly higher academic performance than non-scholarship students (Noviyanti & Dermawan, 2022). These findings provide a basis for understanding scholarships not merely as financial assistance, but also as a form of social and motivational capital that supports students in pursuing higher education.

In line with these findings, the study *The Impact of Scholarships on Student Success: A Case Study of the University of Turbat, Pakistan* (2025) revealed that need-based scholarships significantly improve student success outcomes, including academic performance and study retention, whereas merit-based scholarships did not demonstrate a similarly significant effect (Shah & Ahmed Qureshi, 2025). This finding suggests that students' socioeconomic context and financial needs are critical factors in determining the effectiveness of scholarships, distinguishing them from scholarships awarded solely based on academic merit.

Scholarships, Mentoring Support, and Career/Competency Development

Beyond providing academic support, integrated scholarships with mentoring programs and career development activities have been shown to have a more comprehensive impact on students' professional development. Mentoring programs that include guidance, competency training, and career counseling offer students opportunities to develop practical knowledge and expand professional networks. In the context of modern higher education, integrating financial support with capacity-building initiatives has become increasingly important in response to the growing complexity of labor-market demands. Scholarships combined with competency-strengthening activities not only alleviate students' economic burdens but also create a more conducive learning environment for career-readiness development. Thus, the effectiveness of scholarships is highly dependent on the institutional support provided during students' career development.

In addition to financial support, the availability of structured career guidance services is a key factor in enhancing students' work readiness. Research conducted by Haryati et al. (n.d.) at UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu indicates that career guidance services play a significant role in improving students' work readiness through career counseling, labor market information provision, and individual career planning assistance. These findings emphasize that strengthening students' capacities requires collaboration between financial support and sustained institutional support. Similarly, Anggriani et al. (2025) found that scholarship alumni who received soft skills training demonstrated greater work-readiness than those who received financial assistance alone. Soft skills such as communication, teamwork, self-management, and adaptability are crucial factors in supporting graduates' transition into the workforce. Therefore, scholarships should be strategically used through non-academic competency development programs to maximize their impact on career development.

This multidimensional approach aligns with the framework proposed in *Careers and Employability Learning: Pedagogical Principles and Priorities for Higher Education*, which emphasizes that students' career development should be designed holistically, encompassing academic, psychosocial, and employability skill development (Healy, 2023). The literature underscores that career readiness is built not only through academic achievement but also through learning experiences that promote self-reflection and employability enhancement. In a similar vein, Berlanga and Corti (2025) demonstrated that scholarship recipients tend to exhibit higher levels of engagement in institutionally supported competency-oriented activities due to the financial stability they obtain. Furthermore, Isbah et al. (2023) highlighted that institutional strategies such as strengthening career services, developing competency-based curricula, and expanding professional networks are key factors in improving the employability of higher education graduates in Indonesia. Collectively, these findings affirm that scholarships supported by institutional strategies and career mentoring play a strategic role in facilitating students' sustainable transition into the workforce.

Limitations and Variability in Scholarship Effectiveness and Policy Implications

Although numerous studies indicate that scholarships contribute positively to academic achievement and broader access to higher education, their effectiveness is not uniform across students. Research by Arham and Nio (2025) shows that students' career readiness is strongly influenced by psychological factors such as academic stress, emotional pressure, and social support, which are often not fully addressed even when students receive financial assistance. This

study highlights that non-academic pressures can reduce students' ability to fully utilize scholarship opportunities, particularly in developing career-related competencies. Moreover, unstable psychosocial conditions may hinder students' focus on learning and participation in relevant self-development activities. These findings suggest that scholarships should be accompanied by support for student well-being to optimize their impact on career development. Consequently, higher education institutions should consider additional interventions to address the psychological barriers faced by scholarship recipients (Ulil Arham & Suci Rahma Nio, 2025).

In addition, the study *Program Beasiswa dan Peningkatan Kinerja: Dampak Kepemimpinan, Kontribusi Sosial, dan Ekonomi Alumni* (2022) found that although scholarships provide significant benefits during the period of study, their impact is not always sustained after graduation. The study revealed that some scholarship alumni continue to face limitations in developing leadership skills, professional networks, and entrepreneurial opportunities, which ultimately affect their career mobility. This condition underscores that scholarships, as short-term educational interventions, need to be enriched with supporting programs such as entrepreneurship training, career mentoring, and alumni monitoring to ensure more sustainable long-term outcomes. (Gufron et al., 2022)

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative, causal-comparative design, comparing two groups of students based on scholarship status (scholarship recipients vs. non-recipients) to examine differences in career development. This approach allows for the systematic analysis of the independent variable (scholarship status) and the dependent variable (career category/development), as well as generalizing the findings to the student population. The design was considered appropriate because it enables objective and measurable identification of group differences (Dela Fahiran Pandiangan & Meyniar Albina, 2025).

The research was conducted at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP) of the University of Muhammadiyah Palangkaraya, targeting all active students who completed the questionnaire. A total sampling technique was used, in which all students who returned complete questionnaires were included in the research sample. Questionnaire distribution was carried out manually to allow the researchers to directly supervise the completion process and ensure a high response rate. FKIP was selected based on the accessibility of respondents and relevance to the research context. Data collection was scheduled in accordance with the academic calendar to allow students to provide optimal responses.

The subjects of this study were all FKIP students who were present during questionnaire distribution and returned the instruments in complete condition. Total sampling was used because all targeted students were willing to participate and met the data completeness criteria. Data collection was conducted directly through paper-based questionnaires distributed by the researchers and their team across several classrooms. Manual distribution was chosen so that the researchers could provide direct instructions on completing the questionnaire and ensure that no misunderstandings of item content occurred. Data collection was conducted on the same day to maintain consistency in respondents' responses. This approach is consistent with the field research guidelines described by Pandiangan and Albina (2025), which emphasize that primary data obtained directly are more valid for comparative analysis (Dela Fahiran Pandiangan & Meyniar Albina, 2025).

The research stages began with the development of instruments based on career development indicators and respondent identity variables. The researchers then designed a questionnaire distribution strategy and assigned team roles to ensure an orderly process. On the day of implementation, the researchers provided initial instructions to students regarding the purpose of the study, completion procedures, and brief explanations to ensure respondents understood the context of each statement. All questionnaires were collected immediately after completion to minimize data loss. The next stage involved checking response completeness and excluding questionnaires that did not meet the criteria. These stages followed the quantitative research procedures recommended by Pandiangan and Albina (2025), which emphasize the necessity of initial validation before data processing (Dela Fahiran Pandiangan & Meyniar Albina, 2025).

The collected data were then cleaned to ensure no duplicates, unreadable, or incomplete entries. Once confirmed to be clean, responses were entered into a recapitulation table and assigned numerical codes to facilitate analysis. Scholarship status was classified into two categories: recipients and non-recipients, while career development scores were calculated based on the total values from a four-point Likert scale. The total scores were subsequently categorized into low, moderate, and high levels according to the instrument interpretation guidelines. The organized data were then presented in frequency tables to clearly illustrate the distribution patterns of each variable.

The processed data were presented in the form of distribution tables and comparative graphs to illustrate differences in career development between scholarship recipients and non-recipients. Comparative analysis was conducted to identify trends and potential disparities between groups. Suppose differences appeared substantial, statistical tests such as the chi-square test were applied to determine whether they were statistically significant. Explanatory narratives were developed to provide a deeper interpretation of the quantitative analysis results. Data presentation and analysis were conducted in accordance with the principles of comparative analysis outlined by Pandiangan and Albina (2025).

Thus, this study provides a systematic, objective, and academically accountable empirical overview.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study reveals a significant relationship between scholarship status and students' career development categories. Students who received scholarships demonstrated better career development outcomes, with the majority (54%) classified in the "High" category. In contrast, students who did not receive scholarships were predominantly in the "Moderate" category (55%), with a smaller proportion in the "High" category (44%). Notably, none of the non-scholarship students fell into the "Low" category, indicating that scholarships positively affect students' career development.

These findings indicate that financial support through scholarships influences students' ability to focus on self-development. Scholarship recipients have greater opportunities to participate in career-supporting activities, such as training programs and internships, without being burdened by financial constraints. Conversely, non-scholarship students tend to face more limitations in accessing such opportunities, which is reflected in relatively lower career development outcomes. This evidence reinforces the importance of scholarships as a key factor in students' career development, enabling them to focus more effectively on academic pursuits and professional development.

Table 1 presents the distribution of students' career development levels by scholarship status: scholarship recipients and non-recipients. The data are organized into high, moderate, and low career development categories, with frequency and percentage shown for each group. The purpose of this table is to provide a comparative overview of trends in students' career development according to scholarship status.

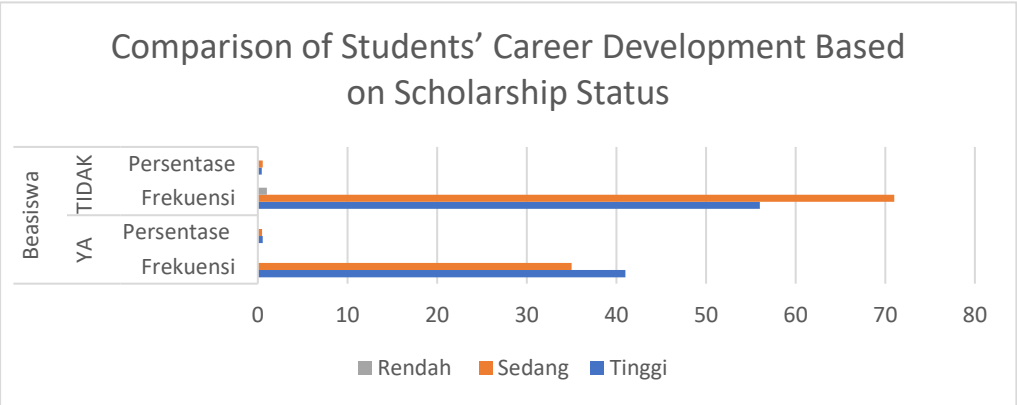
Table 1. Distribution of Career Development Levels by Scholarship Status

Category	Scholarship				Total	
	YES		NO			
	Frequency	Persentage	Frequency	Persentage	Frequency	Persentage
High	41	54%	56	44%	97	48%
Moderate	35	46%	71	55%	106	52%
Low	0	0%	1	1%	1	0%
Total	76	100%	128	100%	204	100%

Based on Table 1, students who receive scholarships tend to have a higher proportion in the high career development category compared to non-scholarship students. In contrast, non-scholarship students are predominantly found in the moderate career development category. These findings indicate that scholarship status may contribute to differences in students' career development.

Figure 1 presents a bar chart comparing students' career development levels by scholarship status. The graph is designed to clarify differences in the frequency distribution between scholarship recipients and non-recipients across each career development category. This visual presentation helps readers more easily understand the patterns of differences emerging from the research data.

Figure 1. Scholarship Results Graph



The graph in Figure 1 shows that scholarship recipients have a higher proportion in the high career development category than non-scholarship recipients. Meanwhile, the moderate career development category is dominated by non-scholarship students. This pattern reinforces the findings in the table that scholarships support students' career development, though they do not completely eliminate individual differences.

Discussion

The Effect of Scholarships on the Improvement of Career Development

This study shows that scholarship recipients are more strongly represented in the high category of career development than non-scholarship students, who tend to fall into the *moderate* category. This finding is consistent with

previous studies, including international research reporting that scholarships lead to a "significant increase in students' social and academic development" (Shabeena Shaheen et al., 2020). These results support the assumption that financial support through scholarships enables students to allocate more time and energy toward competency development, internships, and other career development activities.

Furthermore, the role of scholarships as a driving factor extends beyond academic achievement to non-academic aspects such as soft skill development and career preparation, which have gained increasing attention in recent literature. For example, scholarship programs in higher education institutions in the United States demonstrate that the combination of financial aid and career development activities (such as mentoring and training) significantly enhances overall student success (Castillo et al., n.d.). Therefore, the findings of this study strengthen the argument that scholarships—especially when accompanied by career development support—significantly enhance students' readiness to enter the workforce.

Potential Mediating Factors: Independence, Motivation, and Study Focus

The finding that scholarship recipients exhibit better career development indicates that scholarships may mediate students' psychological and situational aspects, such as independence, motivation, and focus. This aligns with studies in Indonesia that suggest scholarships encourage student independence, self-confidence, and creativity (Fadhilah et al., n.d.). With greater financial independence, scholarship recipients tend to have more flexibility to focus on self-development without economic pressure, enabling them to participate more actively in career-supporting activities.

However, not all literature fully supports a uniformly positive effect of scholarships on all aspects of development. Some studies indicate that academic success and student development are also influenced by other factors, such as learning discipline, campus environment, and supporting facilities (M. Yunus et al., 2025). Therefore, although scholarships make a positive contribution, career development outcomes cannot be attributed solely to scholarships. Contextual and individual factors need to be considered as mediators or moderators in this relationship.

Policy Implications and the Importance of Integrated Programs

The findings of this study have important implications for scholarship policies and career development programs in higher education. Given evidence that scholarship recipients tend to demonstrate better career development, educational institutions should consider scholarships as part of a holistic human resource development strategy—not only as financial assistance but also as a mechanism to support students through training, mentoring, and internship opportunities. As identified in the literature, scholarship programs integrated with career development activities yield better outcomes (Castillo et al., n.d.).

Moreover, institutions need to provide additional support programs, such as professional skills workshops, career counseling, and internships, so that scholarships function not merely as financial aid but also as empowerment tools to enhance employability. This approach aligns with findings from scholarship programs in Europe, which have shown that scholarships improve study continuity and academic achievement while also supporting long-term career success (Berlanga & Corti, 2025). Thus, scholarships become more meaningful when they are systematically integrated into a comprehensive career development ecosystem.

Table II. Comparison of Research Findings and Supporting Literature

Aspect	Findings of the Current Study	Previous / Supporting Literature
Career Development	Scholarship recipients → *High* category	Scholarships are associated with students' social and academic development (Shabeena Shaheen et al., 2020)
Psychosocial Factors	Scholarships support independence and study focus	Scholarships encourage independence, self-confidence, and creativity (Fadhilah et al., n.d.)
Need for Holistic Programs	Scholarships combined with mentoring/career support yield optimal outcomes	Career-integrated scholarship programs enhance student success (Castillo et al., n.d.)

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that scholarship status is significantly related to students' career development. Based on the results and discussion, scholarship recipients tend to exhibit higher levels of career development compared to non-scholarship students. These findings indicate that financial support through scholarships provides students with greater opportunities to focus on competency development, participate in career-supporting activities, and plan for their professional futures. Furthermore, the results show that the effectiveness of scholarships is enhanced when supported by institutional services such as career guidance and soft-skill development programs. Thus, scholarships serve not only as financial assistance but also as a strategic tool for shaping students' overall career readiness. These findings are consistent with the literature, which emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach to career development in higher education.

This study has several strengths, including the use of primary data collected directly through manual questionnaire distribution, which helped maintain a high level of response validity. In addition, the causal-comparative design enabled an objective analysis of differences in career development between scholarship recipients and non-recipients. Nevertheless, the study also has limitations, particularly the limited research scope, which covered only one faculty at a single higher education institution. This limitation may affect the generalizability of the findings to broader contexts. Moreover, the study did not examine in depth other psychological and contextual factors that may mediate the relationship between scholarships and career development. Therefore, the results should be interpreted in proportion to the study's context.

Based on these findings and limitations, future research is recommended to expand the scope of participants and research settings to obtain more representative results. Further studies may also integrate additional variables, such as achievement motivation, social support, and the quality of career guidance services, as mediating or moderating factors. In addition, the use of mixed-methods approaches could be considered to gain a more comprehensive understanding of scholarship recipients' experiences in career development. From a practical perspective, higher education institutions are encouraged to design scholarship programs that are systematically integrated with career development services. In this way, scholarships will not only serve as financial aid but also empower students to achieve sustainable career readiness.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the Guidance and Counseling Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, for the academic support provided throughout the research process. Appreciation is also extended to the Head of the Study Program and the lecturers for their guidance, constructive feedback, and supervision, which enabled this study to be completed successfully. The authors are deeply grateful to all students who willingly served as respondents and actively participated in completing the questionnaires. In addition, sincere thanks are extended to the research team and group members for their collaboration in instrument development, questionnaire distribution, data processing, and the preparation of research findings. All of these contributions were invaluable in supporting the smooth implementation and successful completion of this study.

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