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Perceived Effectiveness of the Jóvenes Escribiendo el Futuro Scholarship, evidence from University Students in Southeastern Mexico

Percepción de efectividad del uso de la beca Jóvenes Escribiendo el Futuro en estudiantes del sureste de México

Percepção da efetividade da bolsa Jóvenes Escribiendo el Futuro entre estudantes do sudeste do México

Abstract

Introduction: in Mexico, social cash transfer programs aimed at higher education students have become established as a government policy instrument focused on promoting school retention. **Objective:** to analyze the perceived assessment of the Jóvenes Escribiendo el Futuro scholarship among students of the Instituto Tecnológico Superior de Calkiní, considering its perceived effectiveness, contribution to study continuity, the use of financial support, and the primary grievances associated with the program. **Method:** a descriptive, quantitative, non-experimental, and cross-sectional study. A survey was administered to 200 scholarship beneficiaries through a questionnaire and non-probabilistic sampling. **Results:** 83% of respondents rated the scholarship as good, 80.5% considered it effective, 93% stated that it contributes to the continuity of their studies, and 83% reported that the support is primarily allocated to school expenses. The main grievances identified were the insufficiency of the amount (52%), payment delays (33%), and the bimonthly frequency of the support (15%). **Conclusion:** the scholarship is valued as a relevant resource for sustaining academic continuity and covering expenses related to the university trajectory.

Keywords: school dropout, higher education, educational equity, social mobility, social policy

Resumen

Introducción: en México, los programas sociales de transferencia monetaria orientados a estudiantes de educación superior se han afianzado como un instrumento de política gubernamental enfocado a favorecer la permanencia escolar.



Objetivo: analizar la valoración percibida de la beca *Jóvenes Escribiendo el Futuro* en estudiantes del Instituto Tecnológico Superior de Calkiní, considerando su valoración de efectividad percibida, su contribución a la continuidad de los estudios, el destino del apoyo económico y las principales inconformidades asociadas al programa. **Método:** estudio descriptivo, cuantitativo, no experimental y transversal. Se realizó una encuesta aplicada a 200 estudiantes beneficiarios de la beca mediante un cuestionario y muestreo no probabilístico. **Resultados:** el 83% de los encuestados valoró la beca como buena, el 80,5% la consideró efectiva, el 93% señaló que contribuye a la continuidad de sus estudios y el 83% reportó que destina el apoyo principalmente a gastos escolares. Las principales inconformidades fueron la insuficiencia del monto (52%), los retrasos en los pagos (33%) y la periodicidad bimestral del apoyo (15%). **Conclusión:** la beca es valorada como un recurso relevante para sostener la continuidad académica y cubrir gastos relacionados con la trayectoria universitaria.

Palabras clave: deserción escolar, educación superior, equidad educativa, movilidad social, política social

Resumo

Introdução: no México, os programas sociais de transferência de renda voltados a estudantes do ensino superior consolidaram-se como um instrumento de política governamental focado em favorecer a permanência escolar. **Objetivo:** analisar a avaliação percebida da bolsa *Jóvenes Escribiendo el Futuro* em estudantes do Instituto Tecnológico Superior de Calkiní, considerando sua avaliação de eficácia percebida, sua contribuição para a continuidade dos estudos, o destino do apoio financeiro e as principais insatisfações associadas ao programa. **Método:** estudo descriptivo, quantitativo, não experimental e transversal. Realizou-se um inquérito aplicado a 200 estudantes beneficiários da bolsa por meio de um questionário e amostragem não probabilística. **Resultados:** 83% dos entrevistados avaliaram a bolsa como boa, 80,5% a consideraram eficaz, 93% indicaram que contribui para a continuidade de seus estudos e 83% relataram que destinam o apoio principalmente a gastos escolares. As principais insatisfações foram a insuficiência do valor (52%), os atrasos nos pagamentos (33%) e a periodicidade bimestral do apoio (15%). **Conclusão:** a bolsa é valorizada como um recurso relevante para sustentar a continuidade acadêmica e cobrir gastos relacionados à trajetória universitária.

Palavras-chave: evasão escolar, ensino superior, equidade educacional, mobilidade social, política social



Introduction

The *Jóvenes Escribiendo el Futuro* (JEF) scholarship program represents a public and social policy strategy designed to promote access and retention among university students experiencing conditions of vulnerability, thereby influencing their educational trajectories and fostering opportunities for social mobility (Villa, 2020). This intervention is particularly salient in a context where Mexican higher education confronts significant challenges stemming from the socioeconomic conditions of families (Blanco, 2023).

Scholarships and educational grants function as mechanisms of economic compensation that mitigate socioeconomic vulnerabilities and material constraints related to school supplies, thereby incentivizing continued enrollment (Santana & Santana, 2025). The importance of such financial aid lies in its role as an indispensable resource for ensuring university admission, persistence, and graduation (Reyna, 2023). By providing recipients with a greater likelihood of completing their studies, these programs enable aspirations toward improved living standards through upward social mobility (Márquez, 2019). Rochin (2021) notes that social and economic inequality constitutes a decisive factor in the consolidation of higher education attainment among youth.

In Mexico, dropout rates at the basic education level have trended downward, with a recent national average of 0.5%. In contrast, the university-level attrition rate stands at 8.8%, representing the second-highest rate behind only upper secondary education (11.6%). Nevertheless, the situation in the state of Campeche is particularly acute. With a dropout rate of 12.8%, Campeche ranks among the top ten states with the highest levels of university attrition nationwide (INEGI, 2026). Bernés et al. (2023) identify key contributing factors to these figures, including academic difficulties, economic limitations, personal circumstances, and sociocultural barriers. Cárdenas (2020) characterizes the phenomenon as a multifactorial manifestation, categorizable into internal issues, represented by socio-familial and personal situations, and external issues, where structural factors predominate. Regional research, such as that conducted by Delgado-Aguilar et al. (2023), indicates that 18.64% of dropouts are attributable to economic factors. This underscores the critical importance of monetary support in mitigating university attrition, especially given that in Campeche, the average age of dropout ranges from 16 to 17 years (Mendoza, 2016), precisely the age at which young people typically commence higher education (Ramírez et al., 2019). Notably, studies in rural regions with significant agricultural activity suggest that scholarship interventions can achieve effectiveness rates of up to 43% (Isaac et al., 2018).

During the 2018-2024 period, the *Jóvenes Escribiendo el Futuro* (JEF) program was implemented with the objective of supporting undergraduate and technical higher education students enrolled in public institutions, enabling them to continue and complete their university studies (Coordinación Nacional de Becas para el Bienestar Benito Juárez [CNBBBJ], 2025). By the end of 2025, the program had reached 409,226 beneficiaries, each receiving a monthly stipend of 5,800 pesos, amounting to a total investment exceeding 28 billion pesos (SEP, 2026).

Despite these figures, entities such as the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL, 2020) have underscored the need for

adjustments concerning the program's coverage in priority attention regions, the eligibility criteria for the scholarship, and the indicators employed to measure outcomes and impact on beneficiaries, particularly regarding the efficacy with which program objectives are met (Olvera, 2026).

Furthermore, the effectiveness of these programs' implementation, as perceived from the students' perspective, remains an underexplored area (TECNM et al., 2024). In the case of the Higher Technological Institute of Calkiní, the analysis holds particular relevance due to the institution's location in a semi-urban region with a documented Indigenous population presence (Bienestar, 2025) and established patterns of socioeconomic lag (Martínez, 2023).

This study analyzes the assessment and perception of JEF program beneficiaries by addressing the following research question: What is the perception of students at the Higher Technological Institute of Calkiní regarding the utility of the scholarship, its relationship to their academic continuity, the allocation of the awarded funds, and any grievances associated with the *Jóvenes Escribiendo el Futuro* scholarship?

The *Jóvenes Escribiendo el Futuro* program as a social development policy

Mexico implemented cash transfer programs beginning in the 1990s with the aim of disrupting the intergenerational cycle of poverty and inequality (Ricardi, 2022). In the twenty-first century, the Oportunidades program served as a significant precursor by explicitly linking the allocation of economic resources to educational objectives, thereby demonstrating its efficacy in promoting academic success (Salgado-Hernández et al., 2018). In this vein, social programs seek to bolster student retention (Reyna, 2023) by facilitating access to the education system and promoting persistence in academic pursuits (Reyna, 2024).

Currently, the National Coordination of Benito Juárez Scholarships in Mexico administers the *Jóvenes Escribiendo el Futuro* program to support students in continuing their education and attaining professional qualifications (Gobierno de México, 2025). This social program is regarded as a public policy instrument for social development aimed at guaranteeing priority attention rights (Ramos & Márquez, 2022), encompassing economic, social, and cultural dimensions in areas such as education, health, and social security (Santos-Camacho et al., 2021).

The right to education access

According to the Grupo Banco Mundial (2022), each additional year of schooling in a population increases the likelihood of higher earnings by up to 10%, thereby contributing significantly to social welfare (Solano, 2023). However, access to such welfare conditions in Mexico faces challenges, including low higher education coverage and high rates of economic inequality (Aguirre, 2020). In response, the Mexican state, adhering strictly to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (ONU, 1948), mandates through the General Education Law that education be provided on a compulsory and free basis. Regarding higher education, Article 47 of this law stipulates that educational authorities are obligated to establish policies promoting the enrollment, continuation, and graduation of registered students. It is imperative that the population gains access to higher education (Cámara de Diputados, 2019).

Overview of university attrition in Campeche

According to the Educational Services Atlas of the State of Campeche (Dirección General de Planeación, Programación y Estadística Educativa [DGPPYEE], 2022), enrollment in higher education institutions totaled 30,340 students in 2022, representing approximately 11.8% of the total student population enrolled in any formal education system during the 2021-2022 academic cycle. This percentage reveals a concerning scenario for higher education in the state, as it constitutes the lowest proportion compared to all other educational levels in Campeche. Moreover, this low enrollment share does not align with the state's demographic distribution, wherein the age cohort with the highest population concentration is the 15-to-24-year-old range (accounting for 16.16% of the total population) (Data México, 2025).

Methods and materials

The unit of analysis for this research comprised student beneficiaries of the *Jóvenes Escribiendo el Futuro* scholarship enrolled at the Higher Technological Institute of Calkiní (ITESCAM), a public higher education institution located in the municipality of Calkiní, Campeche. The study employed a quantitative, non-experimental, cross-sectional design.

The sample consisted of 200 students (11.26% of the total population), encompassing both female and male participants ranging from 18 to 25 years of age. Participants were drawn from various academic programs and were registered in the 2023-2024B and 2024-2025A academic semesters. A non-probabilistic convenience sampling method was employed, as the sample was derived from students accessible to the research team during the data collection phase who demonstrated willingness to participate in the study. Data collection was carried out over an extended period from May to December 2025, constituting a single cross-sectional wave with prolonged field implementation.

The data collection instrument was a structured survey questionnaire comprising both closed- and open-ended questions. The questionnaire consisted of 30 items distributed across the following dimensions: overall assessment of the scholarship, perceived effectiveness, academic continuity, allocation of funds, and grievances regarding the program. Responses were recorded via multiple-choice and open-ended questions. Ten pilot tests were conducted, and necessary adjustments were implemented accordingly.

The variables investigated were: 1) Scholarship effectiveness, measured through the perceived value of the scholarship in relation to the objectives of supporting students who lack economic resources and preventing school dropout; and 2) Perception, interpreted as the qualities (both positive and negative) and personal experiences of students concerning the scholarship.

The data collection instrument was validated through expert review (Herrera et al., 2022). Three of the reviewers are academics in higher education with a focus on educational program evaluation, while the remaining two experts assessed the technical soundness of the questionnaire.

Inclusion criteria were as follows: a) enrollment as a student at ITESCAM during the data collection period; b) status as an active beneficiary of the *Jóvenes Escribiendo el Futuro* scholarship either at the time of survey administration or within the immediately preceding two-month period; c) age of 18 years or older; and d) provision of informed consent to participate. Exclusion criteria encompassed incomplete questionnaires, duplicate responses, and students who, despite being enrolled at the institution, were not beneficiaries of the program.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants, with assurances that the information collected would be used exclusively for academic purposes, maintained under strict confidentiality, securely stored, and anonymized. Access to participants was facilitated through authorization from classroom instructors. Survey administration was voluntary and conducted in person.

Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 27, employing descriptive statistical methods. Absolute and relative frequencies were calculated for each variable of interest, and distribution charts were generated. Given the non-probabilistic nature of the sample, findings are interpreted strictly in descriptive terms and are not intended for inferential generalization.

The research was conducted in three sequential phases:

- Literature review, background analysis, and theoretical framework development.
- Questionnaire design, expert validation, and pilot testing.
- Fieldwork phase encompassing survey administration and data analysis.

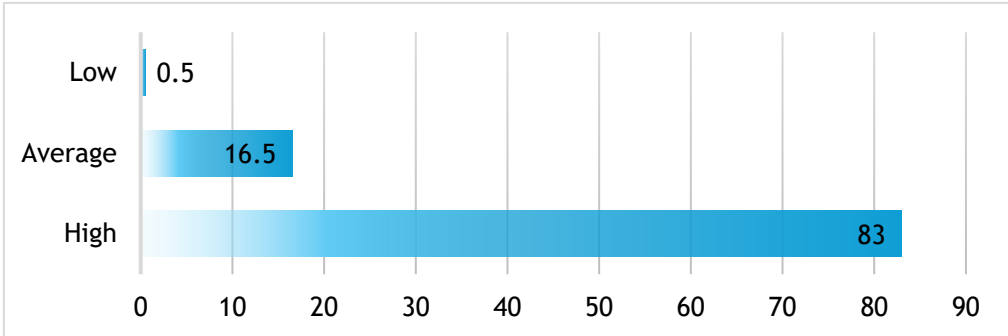
Results and discussion

Perception of the scholarship

Based on the findings obtained from the survey administered to 200 student beneficiaries of the JEF scholarship, 83% of students perceived the scholarship as favorable, representing the most substantial proportion of the entire sample. This finding underscores the importance of the scholarship for students during their academic tenure. Ranked second, 16.5% rated the scholarship as average. Finally, a statistically negligible yet present segment of the sample (0.5%) indicated a negative perception of the support received (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Overall perception of the Jóvenes Escribiendo el Futuro scholarship



Source: Authors' own elaboration using survey data (2025).

In the context of studies conducted in regions similar to the Calkiní area, these results are comparable to the data reported by Palmeros and Ávila (2023), whose research involving university students at the Universidad Juárez Autónoma de Tabasco in southeastern Mexico indicates that the perception of policies targeting students in vulnerable circumstances is favorable.

The findings described herein also align with the contributions of Álvarez and Reyna (2023) regarding satisfaction levels within the perception of financial support aimed at university student maintenance at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), where 89% of surveyed students reported feeling either satisfied or completely satisfied. According to Reyna (2024), the significance of such support lies in its function as a key instrument for reducing social and economic inequalities by ensuring that students can overcome financial barriers that constrain their academic development, thereby enabling them to persist in higher education.

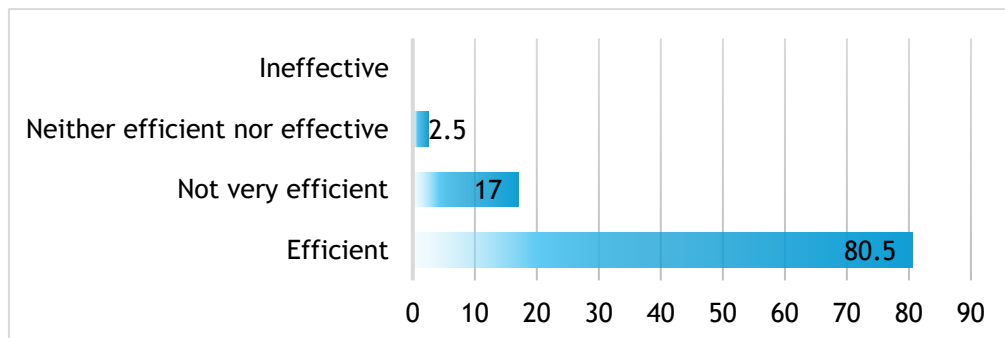
Similarly, at the international level, these results are comparable to those reported by Rojas et al. (2025) regarding students at the National University of Caaguazú in Paraguay, who expressed a satisfaction level of 75.8% with the monetary support provided to continue or complete their higher education.

Perceived effectiveness and adequacy of support

The analysis revealed that 80.5% of students consider the scholarship effective for the continuation of their studies (Figure 2). This finding indicates that, for the majority, the scholarship fulfills the program's stated objectives. Additionally, 17% of students deemed the scholarship minimally effective, a circumstance potentially attributable to issues and challenges in its implementation, while 2.5% indicated that the scholarship is neither ineffective nor effective. Figure 5 provides an in-depth examination of the primary reasons cited within the sample that account for the negative perception. It is important to clarify that efficacy refers to the program's degree of compliance with the objective of mitigating school dropout, whereas efficiency pertains to the adequacy of resources and the manner in which they are administered.

Figure 2

Perception of the effectiveness of the Jóvenes Escribiendo el Futuro scholarship



Source: Authors' own elaboration using survey data (2025).

This result aligns with the findings of Santana and Santana (2025), whose research with students at a Rural Teacher Training College in the state of Puebla, Mexico, indicated that 55% of respondents found the income from the *Jóvenes Escribiendo el Futuro* program (the same program evaluated in the present study) sufficient, with an additional 5% deeming it more than adequate to meet their financial needs. Consequently, the scholarship is regarded as effective in this respect.

Conversely, while the explicit objective of this research does not directly address academic performance, this dimension is salient within the framework of effectiveness, given that enhanced performance, as reflected in grades, facilitates progression through university under more favorable conditions, thereby advancing the goal of degree attainment. In this regard, Mejía et al. (2024) describe that students at the Technological Institute of Pinotepa (a context analogous to that of the Technological Institute of Calkiní) who receive the JEF scholarship demonstrate improved academic performance and perceive the scholarship as an incentive to complete their education; that is, the scholarship proves effective.

In contrast, the results presented here diverge from those reported by Rojas et al. (2025) among Paraguayan students, whose perceptions indicate that cash transfer support is insufficient to cover basic educational expenses. A majority (53.2%) of those respondents considered the scholarships to be only moderately effective.

As illustrated in Figure 2, a smaller yet noteworthy segment of youth indicated the limited efficiency of the scholarship they receive. In this vein, 17% attributed this to the constrained purchasing power of the allocated amount, which in 2025 corresponded to 5,800 pesos disbursed on a bimonthly basis. Respondents indicated that this sum is less than what is required to cover their academic expenses at the university, a finding consistent with the data provided by Santana and Santana (2025), wherein 40% of participants reported a similar circumstance.

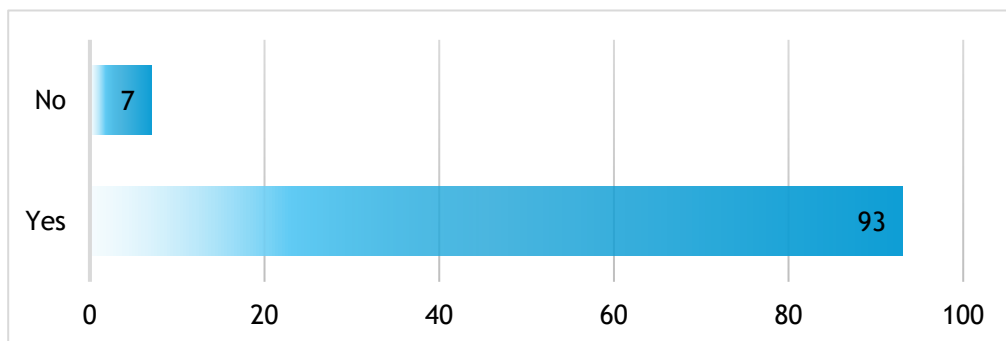
Continuity of studies

Figure 3 presents the results concerning the impact of the scholarship on the continuity of students' education. A substantial 93% of respondents reported that the

scholarship contributes to their continued enrollment, suggesting a high subjective valuation of the support in terms of perceived academic persistence. In contrast, 7% of scholarship recipients indicated that the support does not assist them in pursuing their studies.

Figure 3

Perception of the Jóvenes Escribiendo el Futuro scholarship regarding continuity of higher education



Source: Authors' own elaboration using survey data (2025).

Broadly speaking, it can be affirmed that the scholarship fulfills its role by serving as a fundamental pillar for university retention (Huamantupa et al., 2026), while also aligning with the objectives established within the frameworks of social justice and educational equity. This reflects the conceptualization of education as a fundamental human right (Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura [UNESCO], 2022). In accordance with the model proposed by Rawls (1999) about equality of opportunity, programs such as the JEF scholarship seek to level the starting conditions for students from vulnerable sectors by providing financial resources, thereby preventing economic circumstances from becoming an obstacle to access and persistence in higher education. This program prioritizes attention to students enrolled in schools located in Indigenous communities or areas characterized by high degrees of marginalization (CONEVAL, 2024).

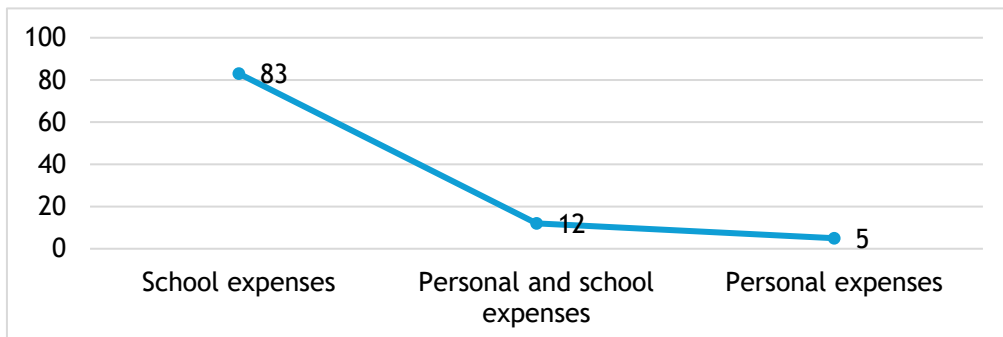
Thus, as noted by Navarro et al. (2025), the support provided through the federal government's JEF scholarship program in Mexico has, at least in the short term, established itself as a strategy yielding positive outcomes.

Allocation of scholarship funds

The results regarding the utilization of scholarship funds indicate that the majority of students (83%) use the scholarship exclusively to cover academic expenses. Meanwhile, 12% allocate the funds to both academic and personal expenses, and the remaining 5% utilize the scholarship solely for personal expenditures (Figure 4). This distribution reflects the significance of this income as a fundamental source of economic resources enabling young people to afford expenses linked to their academic training and continued enrollment.

Figure 4

Allocation of the Jóvenes Escribiendo el Futuro scholarship funds



Source: Authors' own elaboration using survey data (2025).

According to Reyna (2023), the primary purpose of scholarships is the reduction of economic inequalities among youth, enabling them to afford essential goods and services within their educational trajectory, such as food and transportation, while also facilitating the acquisition of books, supplies, and access to information and communication technologies.

Within the state of Campeche, Rafael et al. (2024) indicate that the principal economic needs of university students pertain to food, transportation, and access to technological tools, factors whose absence predisposes students to university dropout.

The results coincide with those of Santana and Santana (2025), who report that among students at the Rural Teacher Training College in Puebla, Mexico, the funds received from the JEF scholarship are directed toward academic expenses (96%), including the purchase of technological tools such as computers and materials, as well as internet service fees, followed by family and personal expenses (2%, respectively).

Similarly, the findings are consistent with those reported by Adame and Bartolo (2022) concerning students at an Urban Teacher Training College in Guerrero, Mexico, where university students indicated that the support received is predominantly allocated to transportation costs, study and practicum-related expenses, and food.

From an international perspective within Latin America, Espinoza et al. (2022) note that among the advantages of incorporating such policies in the university sector is a generalized sense of reassurance within students' perception of their university experience, fostering a trajectory with enhanced opportunities for degree completion.

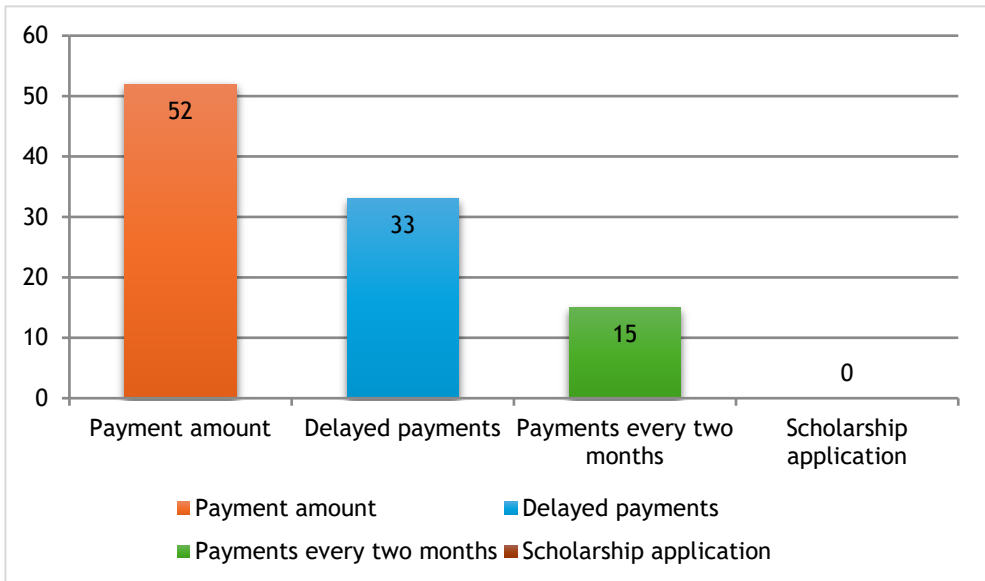
Grievances regarding the scholarship

Despite the positive effects of the scholarship, Figure 5 highlights areas requiring improvement. The data reveal that 52% of beneficiaries consider the allocated amount insufficient, as it fails to cover all their academic expenses.

Furthermore, 33% expressed dissatisfaction with the scholarship due to payment delays. An additional 15% cited discontent with the bimonthly disbursement schedule (Figure 5). This delineates a central challenge facing the program: while the support is useful for persistence, it is perceived neither as sufficient nor as entirely timely in its delivery.

Figure 5

Grievances concerning the Jóvenes Escribiendo el Futuro scholarship



Source: Authors' own elaboration using survey data (2025).

Mendoza et al. (2020) and data provided by the National Development Plan (Diario Oficial de la Federación [DOF], 2019) concur that, although these scholarships have exerted a positive impact in reducing dropout rates, they have also exhibited deficiencies in practical implementation, thereby affecting their long-term effectiveness. Such operational shortcomings diminish the program's long-term impact, as beneficiaries do not always have access to resources when needed, potentially compromising the academic stability the program aims to safeguard, as evidenced in the present research concerning the two-month disbursement interval.

At the national level, another area requiring attention is the automatic allocation of resources to students during their initial semesters of study. This practice can lead to the instrumentalization of funds and accelerated growth in national university enrollment without necessarily translating into a commensurate increase in graduation rates, given that some students opt to drop out once funding is disbursed at the conclusion of the first semester (Didou & González, 2024). Should these limitations remain unaddressed, the program's positive impact may be diminished, thereby jeopardizing its intended purpose.

While 93% of respondents perceive that the scholarship contributes to the continuity of their studies, the findings suggest that, from the student perspective,

the scholarship functions as a significant support mechanism for sustaining educational trajectories. Although this result does not permit demonstration of an effective reduction in dropout rates, it does reflect a widely favorable appraisal of the program in terms of perceived academic persistence.

The case of Calkiní illustrates that the perceived utility of the scholarship does not eliminate the material pressures confronting beneficiaries. Although the majority of students report that the support aids in the continuation of their studies (93%), over half consider the allocated amount insufficient (52%), and one-third identify delays in disbursement (33%). Taken together, these findings suggest that the program enjoys high subjective legitimacy as a retention mechanism yet faces constraints related to sufficiency and administrative timeliness, which may limit its perceived effectiveness.

Conclusions

The evidence indicates that the *Jóvenes Escribiendo el Futuro* scholarship is perceived by the surveyed students as a significant resource for sustaining the continuity of their studies and covering expenses associated with their university trajectory. Nevertheless, these findings do not permit the assertion of an effective reduction in school dropout rates at a macro level. Rather, the study contributes to an understanding of how student perception is configured, namely, that the scholarship is viewed positively and is directly linked by recipients to their academic persistence, in this case, within a designated priority and marginalized region. Similarly, the inadequacy of the allocated amount and delays in disbursement emerge as operational barriers that undermine the program's scope. This suggests that, although the overall appraisal is favorable, the persistence of grievances related to the sufficiency of funds and the timeliness of payments constitutes a critical area for improvement if the support is to fully fulfill its stabilizing function. Notably, such concerns have been recognized by public policy evaluation bodies since the program's initial operational phases.

Finally, it is important to specify that the present study provides descriptive and exploratory evidence regarding student perceptions of the support received. While the findings allow for a characterization of beneficiary experiences at ITESCAM, they do not constitute a measurement of causal impact, programmatic efficacy, or a rigorous outcome evaluation of the program. Such undertakings would require experimental or longitudinal designs of broader scope.

It is recommended that the administrative design of the support mechanism be strengthened and that longitudinal, comparative studies employing probability sampling be developed to enable more robust estimation of the program's effects on persistence, academic performance, and dropout rates. It is further suggested that the quantitative approach be complemented with qualitative elements capable of yielding deeper insight into the dynamics surrounding JEF scholarship support, the lived experiences of young recipients, and the individual strategies they employ to maximize the efficiency of the scholarship or to contend with obstacles such as disbursement frequency, payment delays, and bureaucratic complications

encountered during the application process. Research initiatives involving larger populations, from which conclusive findings may be derived using statistically representative samples, are strongly encouraged.

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