iJRASET
International Journal For Research in Applied Science and Engineering Technology



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR RESEARCH

IN APPLIED SCIENCE & ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY

Volume: 13 **Issue:** IV **Month of publication:** April 2025

DOI: https://doi.org/10.22214/ijraset.2025.69109

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International Journal for Research in Applied Science & Engineering Technology (IJRASET)
ISSN: 2321-9653; IC Value: 45.98; SJ Impact Factor: 7.538
Volume 13 Issue IV Apr 2025- Available at www.ijraset.com

Empowering the Next Generation: A Study of Girls' Education in Kozhikode

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Abstract: ***This study aims to investigate the factors influencing the educational attainment of Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) girl children in Kozhikode City. The research employs a des approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques.The findings indicate that socio-economic factors, cultural norms, and educational infrastructure play significant roles in shaping the educational experiences of SC/ST girls. Despite government interventions, challenges such as poverty, discrimination, and lack of quality education persist. The study highlights the need for targeted interventions to address these challenges, including improving access to quality education, providing financial support, and promoting awareness about the importance of girls' education. By understanding the complexities of these issues, policymakers and educators can develop effective strategies to enhance the educationaloutcomes of SC/ST girls and empower them to reach their full potential.***

Keywords: ***socioeconomic factors, cultural factors , educational disparities , government interventions , marginalized groups , gender inequality***

I. INTRODUCTION

According to the UN, the girl child has her rights. These rights stem from her status, a dependent, young individual who requires love, care, protection, socialization and guidance if she is to survive and develop. She needs the help of adults so that she can move gradually toward the assumption of adult roles in society. A clear enunciation of the rights of the girl child in India is necessary to heighten social consciousness toward her. The development of the girl child, the image of a happy, literate, healthy child, and the notion of every girl child having an opportunity to achieve her own full potential must be the primary goal of Indian society.

Studies show that a good number of girl children, who belong to SC and ST communities, suffer from extreme deprivations. Their parents do not see any incentives to send their girls to school even though education provides essential qualifications to fulfil certain economic, political and cultural functions and improve women's socio-economic status. At every age and level, education enhances the intellectual, social and emotional development of girls and women and enables them to meet their basic needs in daily life. It brings a reduction in inequalities in society. Only educated women can understand the needs of the family. They would never send their minor children to work, instead they would arrange for their education. They would take proper care of the health and food of their children besides protecting their intellectual and emotional development. An educated mother knows what suits her children and how they should be raised. Thus, an educated mother would promote education for all their children without discrimination. However, if a girl's child is not educated, she will not have the proper awareness to inform her children when she becomes a mother. As she is not educated, she tends to think that education is only for the well-to-do and not for the male child and not for the girl child, and she ingrains in her daughters the idea that they are inferior to their brothers. As girls are not educated, they remain dependent on their family before marriage, on their husbands after marriage and on their male children after the death of the spouse. This is the main reason for the subjugation of women in India. So if girls would be educated, they would no longer be dependent on any one and they can do much for the development of themselves and their fellow human beings, the society and the country. Many problems inthe society can eradicate by educating the girl child as education can be incentive to get married after getting an employment. Marriage at a very young age leads the female to conceive repeatedly, which affects her health negatively. Women, especially the SC and ST, are exploited, especially if they are uneducated, because they cannot demand their rights. There are millions of uneducated SC and ST women who work on farm, construction sites and other unorganized sectorsand are often denied of basic human rights. Thus, they remain oppressed and exploited persons. The research work, tries to prove that economic empowerment and human development are achievable to girl children through proper education.

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II. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

India has made significant strides in expanding access to education, particularly for marginalized groups such as Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST). However, disparities in educational outcomes persist, with SC/ST girls facing numerous challenges. These challenges stem from a complex interplay of socioeconomic, cultural, and institutional factors.

Kozhikode district, located in the southern Indian state of Kerala, presents a unique context to study the educational experiences of SC/ST girls. While Kerala is known for its high literacy rates and social development indicators, disparities still exist between different social groups. Understanding the factors that influence the educational attainment of SC/ST girls in Kozhikode is crucial for designing effective interventions to address these disparities.

This study aims to delve into the multifaceted issues affecting the education of SC/ST girls in Kozhikode. By examining the socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors that shape their educational trajectories, the research will provide valuable insights into the challenges they face and propose strategies to improve their educational outcomes

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite significant progress in education, SC/ST girl children in India continue to face numerous challenges that hinder their educational attainment and overall development. In particular, girls from marginalized communities often encounter barriers related to socioeconomic status, cultural norms, and limited access to quality education.

This study aims to address the following specific problem: What are the factors that contribute to the educational disparities between SC/ST girl children and other groups in Kozhikode City, and what strategies can be implemented to improve their educational outcomes?

To delve deeper into this problem, the study will explore the following sub-problems:

1) Socioeconomic Disparities: How do factors such as poverty, parental education, and occupation influence the educational attainment of SC/ST girls?
2) Cultural and Social Barriers: What are the cultural and societal norms that hinder the education of SC/ST girls?
3) Quality of Education: How does the quality of education, including teacher training, infrastructure, and curriculum, impact the learning outcomes of SC/ST girls?
4) Government Interventions: Are government policies and programs effectively addressing the educational needs of SC/ST girls?

By addressing these sub-problems, this research seeks to identify the root causes of educational disparities and propose evidence-based solutions to improve the educational outcomes of SC/ST girl children in Kozhikode City.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the analysis of the results and discussion, the following research questions can be formulated:

1) *Socioeconomic Factors:*
- How do socioeconomic factors such as parental education, family income, and occupation influence the educational attainment of SC/ST girl children?
- What are the specific challenges faced by SC/ST girls from marginalized backgrounds in accessing and completing education?

2) *Family Environment and Parental Attitudes:*
- How does the family environment, including parental attitudes and expectations, impact the educational aspirations of SC/ST girls?
- What are the factors that contribute to the lower educational aspirations of ST girls compared to SC girls?

3) *School Environment and Teacher Support:*
- What is the quality of education provided in government schools, especially for SC/ST girls?
- How effective are teachers in supporting the learning needs of SC/ST girls?
- What are the challenges faced by teachers in providing quality education to SC/ST students?

4) *Government Policies and Interventions:*
- How effective are government policies and interventions in addressing the educational disparities faced by SC/ST girls?
- What are the barriers to implementing effective policies and programs?

5) *Future Aspirations and Career Choices:*
- What are the educational and career aspirations of SC/ST girl students?
- How do these aspirations differ between SC and ST girls?

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- What are the factors that influence their career choices?

V. OBJECTIVES

Based on the analysis of the research findings, the following general objectives can be formulated:

1) To understand the socio-economic and cultural factors that influence the educational attainment of SC/ST girl children in Kozhikode City.
2) To identify the challenges faced by SC/ST girl children in accessing and completing their education.
3) To explore the impact of educational interventions and policies on the educational outcomes of SC/ST girl children.
4) To develop recommendations for improving the quality and accessibility of education for SC/ST girls in Kozhikode City.

Methodology of the study:

The methodology of the study is developed to elicit data to get better and cogent interpretations. The study shall help to have a deeper understanding of societal behavior towards girls and women in Indian society. The design of the study helps to have such an analysis. It is also directed towards eliciting possible theories in economics and development with special reference to the education of the SC and ST girl child.

The nature of the study:

The study is an analytical one. It analyses the possible correlations of the different variables. As it is analytical, it is intended to discover the significant variables as well as the relationship among them. The study is designed to achieve as far as possible the above-mentioned objectives. So the area of the study is delimited scientifically and the data collection process shall be controlled by a fair degree of personal interview, scientific observation, discussion,and dialogue with the girl child, parents, and teachers.

The universe sample design of the study:

The universe of the study constitutes all the Government schools situated in Kozhikode city. Among these schools, five primary schools and five high schools shall be randomly selected constituting a total of 10 schools. The total number of students and especially SC and ST girl students are not known at this point as the schools are not yet been selected for the study. Assuming that these 10schools have a total number of 500 SC and ST girl children, the probable sample size shall be randomly selected from this universe of 500 students. The respondents shall be the students, their parents and teachers.

VI. TOOLS AND METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION AND PROCESSING

A study of the present nature requires large amount of primary and secondary data. Forthe collection of primary data, a structured interview schedule and a structuredobservation schedule shall be developed. An unstructured discussion cum dialogue guideshall be prepared for collecting data from parents and teachers. Hence, the main tools ofprimary data shall be:

1) Structured Interview Schedule;
2) Structured Observation Schedule; and
3) Unstructured discussion and dialogue guide.

Certain vital aspects to be included in the interview schedule are as follows:

- Basic data regarding age, class in which the girl child is studying; place ofresidence, type of dwelling place, etc.;
- Parents' education, their work and income, assets,etc.;
- Data on siblings, their education, work, etc.;
- Respondent's attitude towards study, employment, income, etc.;
- The socio-economic milieu in which the respondent comes from;
- The attitude towards girl's education, her equality, freedom, etc.;
- Parents' opinion on economic empowerment of women, equity, etc.;
- Teachers' opinion of girl students position in the school and their future;
- Opinion on skill development, income generation, self-employment, professionalcourses and career;
- Data on human development and economic freedom of women.

The main methods of data collection include interviewing the respondents from the schools and homes. The interview shall be conducted by the researcher herself. Privacy shall be maintained during the interview and the data thus collected shall be treated as confidential. Data also shall be collected through a structured observation schedule, where the investigator observes the environment in which the house of the respondent is located, and its physical condition.

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Observation of the physical infrastructure of the school is an important source of data. Detailed discussion and dialogue with the parents and teachers shall also be conducted. Secondary data shall form a valuable part of the study. The government of India, the Government of Kerala, the UNICEF, and WHO reports shall be analyzed to strengthen the study.To bring the data thus collected to bear upon the objectives, they shall be marshaled and edited to remove inconsistencies. A few un-coded responses shall be scrutinized, edited, classified, and coded. The code sheet shall be compared with the original interview, observation schedules, and discussion and dialogue guides. A master sheet shall be developed entering all coded data. Tabulation shall be done to test the hypotheses. For this purpose, bivariate tables shall be developed. Much care shall be taken in the analysis and interpretation of data. Reporting shall be done based on such an analysis and interpretation.

VII. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1) Socioeconomic Background

- Majority: SC/ST girls come from rural areas with limited access to education for siblings.
- Housing: More SC girls live in "pucca" houses compared to ST girls.
- Parental Education: Low levels of education among parents of both groups.
- Occupation: Parents are primarily engaged in semi-skilled work.

2) Family Environment and Educational Aspirations

- Family Size: ST families tend to have more daughters than SC families.
- Income: ST families have lower income compared to SC families.
- Educational Priorities: SC girls and their parents generally prioritize higher education, while ST families prioritize marriage and self-reliance for their daughters.
- Parental Support: SC girls receive more parental support for education compared to ST girls.

3) Aspirations and Visions for the Future

- Higher Education: SC girls are more enthusiastic about continuing education.
- Motivations for School Attendance: Both groups are motivated by scholarships and resources like free meals.
- Safe Learning Environment: SC girls value a safe and disciplined learning environment more than ST girls.
- Parental Influence: SC parents are more involved in their daughters' education compared to ST parents.
- Economic Independence: Both groups view education as a path to self-sufficiency.
- Technical Careers: SC girls have a better understanding of technical career options compared to ST girls.
- Job Preference: Both groups prefer jobs (government) over staying home.

4) Societal Factors Affecting Education

- Cost and Distance: Both groups face challenges due to high costs of private schools and long distances to government schools, with some ST girls relying on hostels due to distance.
- Discrimination: SC girls report more academic discrimination than ST girls, who seem less aware of it. This might explain SC girls' greater parental support and focus on education.
- Parental Preferences: Traditional gender roles persist, with some ST parents prioritizing marriage over education for daughters.

5) Education, Employment, and Empowerment

- Education-Employment Disconnect: A majority of both groups believe education doesn't guarantee employment, especially true for ST girls.
- Economic Empowerment: Education and income are linked to breaking the cycle of poverty and achieving human development. SC girls seem more interested in employment after education.
- Breaking the Cycle of Violence: Economic independence can empower girls and reduce gender-based violence.

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6) Skill Development and Future Prospects

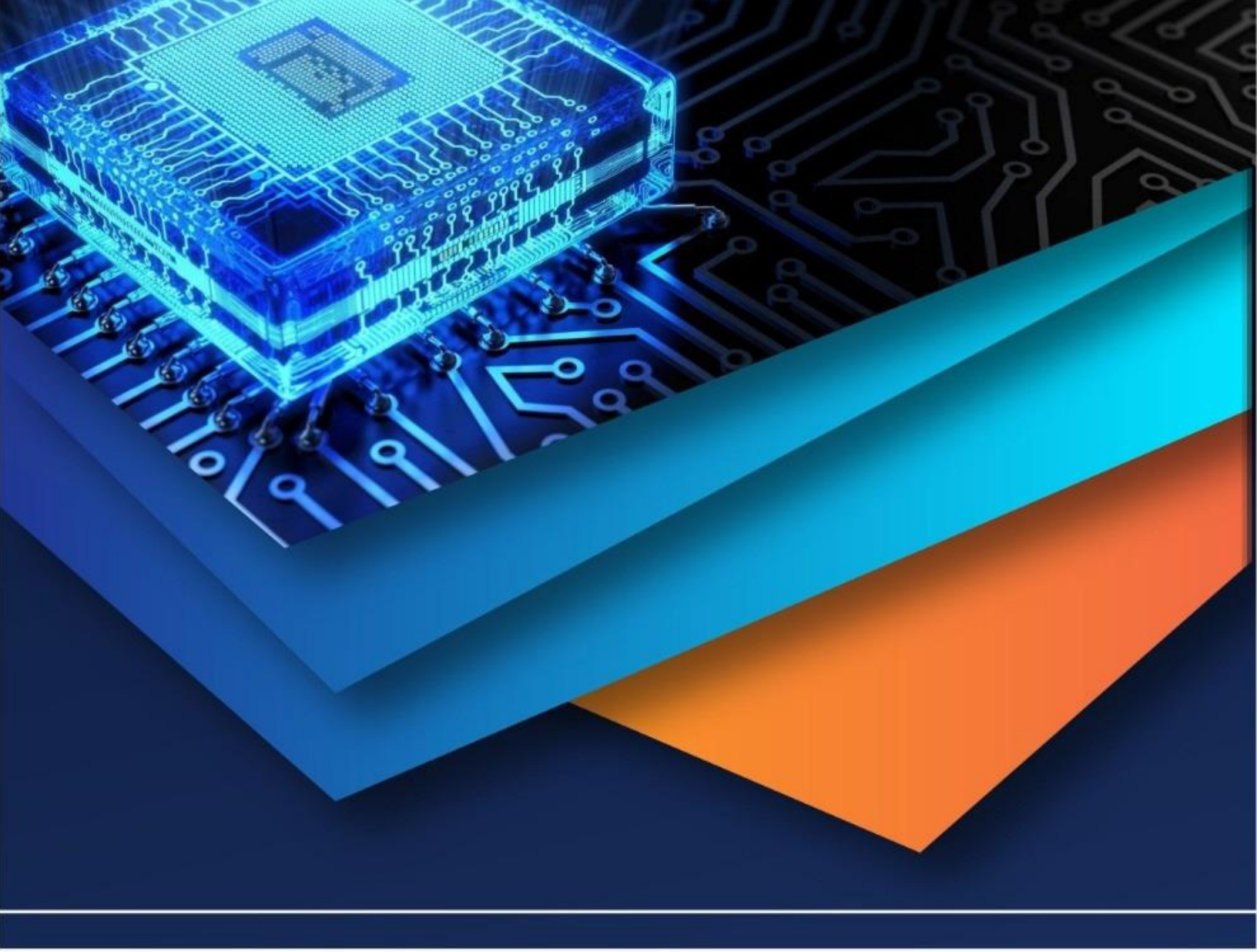
- Financial Management: Both groups would benefit from learning financial management skills to handle allowances and plan for the future. ST girls show a stronger need in this area.
- Skill Development Awareness: SC girls are more familiar with skill-based courses and their employment opportunities compared to ST girls who seem less aware.
- Parental Support and Home Environment: Lack of parental support and a poor home environment can hamper studies, especially for ST girls.
- ST girls seem more enthusiastic about attending school, possibly due to the novelty of being away from home.
- Mid-day meal schemes seem more effective for SC girls' attendance.
- The curriculum might be more challenging for ST girls compared to SC girls.
- More ST girls drop out of school compared to SC girls.

Overall, SC girls seem to face fewer social and cultural barriers in pursuing education. They exhibit a stronger understanding of the benefits of education and employment. ST girls require additional support in financial management, awareness of skill development, and overcoming challenges in their home environment. Overall, the findings suggest disparities in the educational opportunities and aspirations between SC and ST girls. SC girls generally face fewer social and cultural barriers in pursuing education.

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