

**EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS WHO HAVE ENTERED HIGHER
EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS THROUGH AFFIRMATIVE ACTION
IN KERALA**



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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation titled “**Experiences of students who have entered Higher Education Institutions through affirmative action in Kerala**” is the bonafide record of my original research. It has not been submitted to any other university or institution for the award of any degree or diploma. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been duly acknowledged in the text.

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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation titled “**Experiences of students who have entered Higher Education Institutions through affirmative action in Kerala**” is a record of the research work undertaken by Dr. Aparna Sasi in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of “Master of Public Health” under my guidance and supervision.

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GLOSSARY

ARTS – Subjects of study that are not science, such as history, languages, etc.

STEM - Stands for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

OBC- Other Backward Class

OEC- Other Eligible Class

EWS- Economically Weaker Sections

RGNF - Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship

SC- Scheduled Caste

ST- Scheduled Tribes

e- grant - financial assistance for educational purposes to those students who belong to SC/ST communities, studying +1 and above. At present the Post matric Scholarships are being distributed online through E-grants systems. Online applications are to be submitted in the beginning of the year.

Post matric hostel - This hostel comes under Government of India catering to the educational needs of the SC/ST/OEC/OBC communities. There are facilities for entertainment such as sports, games and library facilities in the hostels

SC/ST cell - Help the universities in implementing the reservation policy with regard to the admission of students and the recruitment of teaching and non-teaching staff at various levels. Its function is also to help the SC/ST categories to integrate with the

mainstream of the university community and to remove difficulties, which they may be experiencing. It is formed under the 10th plan profile of UGC.



ABSTRACT

Background: Caste discrimination is the unjust treatment, segregation, and oppression faced by individuals based on their hereditary caste status, perpetuated through social, religious, and economic practices, resulting in systemic inequalities and violence against marginalized groups. Reservations in India seek to ensure the participation of historically marginalized communities in employment, education, and legislative representation, ensuring that these areas are more equitably accessible to these communities; primarily by the Dalits and Tribals who occupy the lowest strata in the social hierarchy. Given Kerala's reputation as a progressive society with a high literacy rate and successful implementation of reservation policies, it is crucial to explore the inclusivity and educational experiences in these higher educational spaces.

Methodology: This is a Qualitative study taking the perspective of the students; 20 in depth interviews were conducted with students who entered Higher Education Spaces through affirmative action. Initial informants were selected purposively, followed by snowball sampling. Coded data were organized and analyzed using open code software.

Result: Dalit and tribal students are struggling to survive in higher education spaces. The exclusion of Dalit and tribal students is predominantly brought about through stereotyping, targeted discrimination, and humiliation and through other structural ways. Administrative issues like e-grant delay leads to hunger, lack of food, course work delay, lack of access to basic needs like medication and psychological stress. The involvement of political parties significantly hampers the survival attempts made by Dalit and tribal students in the campus. Students have had to resorted to coping mechanisms like social avoidance, maintaining silence, and denying discrimination; occasionally those with

support have also protested and taken legal action by filing cases to address these injustices.

Conclusion: Dalit and tribal students experience a profound sense of “not belonging” in higher education environments. The combined challenges of insufficient support and socio-economic disadvantage further amplify the struggles experienced by Dalit and tribal students in higher education. Students are relying on personal coping mechanisms, protests, and legal assistance to navigate and survive in higher education. The impacts of dealing with discrimination resulting in psychological challenges and academic stagnation. The exclusion, inadequate structural support, and various impacts and disadvantaged socioeconomic background contribute to the mere survival, rather than thriving, of Dalit and tribal students.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

SDG 10.2 aims at promoting the social, political, and economic inclusion of all people, regardless of their various identities; age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status (United Nations, 2015). In the Indian context, this goal is particularly significant for communities such as Dalits and Tribals, who have historically faced systemic discrimination and exclusion due to their lower caste status in hierarchy of caste system. Even after 74 years of the Indian Constitution, which guarantees equal protection under the law in Article 14 and prohibits caste-based discrimination in Article 15, Dalits and Tribals continue to experience widespread discrimination and exclusion across various sector of society. To ensure economic, educational, and political participation, the Government of India implemented a reservation policy that secures a percentage of seats for Dalits and Tribals in education, employment, and political representation. For Scheduled Castes (SC), the reservation is set at 15 percent, and for Scheduled Tribes (ST), it is 7.5 percent (Press Information Bureau and Government of India, 2023)

Education is crucial in empowering marginalized communities by bridging social gaps and achieving inclusivity. It serves as a transformative tool that not only provides essential skills and knowledge but also opens up opportunities for economic advancement and social integration. According to 2021- 22 AISHE (All India Survey on Higher Education) by Government of India shows among the total 4.13 crore students enrolled in higher education; Scheduled Caste (SC) students make up 15.3% of the total enrolment, while Scheduled Tribe (ST) students account for 6.3% (Ministry of Education GOI, 2022). It is

notable that enrolment rates for SC/ST communities have increased over time; but while reservation policies ensure entry into higher education spaces, the actual attainment of education cannot be successful without additional support from educational institutions.

In higher education; Students from upper castes, who have a history of education over multiple generations, accumulate cultural capital that equips them with a deep understanding of and adaptation to the culture of elite institutions. This accumulated cultural capital not only enhances their familiarity with academic culture but also provides them with the essential skills required for comprehending and navigating educational institutions (Brown Richard, 2018). But, lower-caste students most of them being first generation learners often find themselves lacking the necessary cultural capital affect both their personal and academic prospects. Dalits and tribal student in the higher education faces various forms of discrimination discriminations; isolation, stigmatization, structural exclusion (N. Sukumar, 2023). Many institutions fail to support Dalit and tribal students when they face social boycotting. As a result, these students are forced to find alternative coping strategies, which is crucial to understand because these coping mechanisms can themselves trigger further suffering.

A number of committees instituted by the UGC and Government of India including more recently the Thorat committee appointed to enquire the allegations of differential treatment of SC/ST students in the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), have pointed out the continuing discrimination being faced by students from SC / ST categories. These committees and their reports are thus clear indicators of persistence of caste discrimination in higher education spaces.

Exploring this topic from a public health standpoint is essential, as it highlights the extent to which institutional frameworks and interpersonal dynamics within these educational

institutions work as critical social determinants of health including directly contributing to the mental health struggles of Dalit and tribal students, even leading them to consider ending their lives

1.2 Rationale

Kerala as the highest literacy rate in the country, with 96.1 percent of individuals aged 7 years and above being literate (NSS division Department of Economics and Statistics, 2014), highlighting its status as a progressive society. Moreover, in Kerala, pursuing higher education is increasingly essential for securing jobs, especially as more individuals attain higher levels of education. Dalits and tribal communities in Kerala have successfully achieved higher education enrolment rates that are proportional to their representation in the population. Specifically, the gross enrolment rates for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) in higher education are 28.3 percent and 28.9 percent, respectively (Bureau, 2024a). This is significant when compared to their respective population proportions of 9.1 percent for SCs and 1.45 percent for STs. This indicates a positive trend in educational access and participation among these historically marginalized groups in Kerala, suggesting effective implementation of reservation policies in higher education. Kerala is often regarded as a progressive society due to its high literacy rates and forward-thinking politics. Despite this, it is essential to thoroughly explore the possibility of caste discrimination within its educational system to gain a full understanding. Given this notable achievement, it is of important to scrutinize and understand the extent to which educational spaces within Kerala cater to the needs of scheduled group students; which is the focus of the present study.

1.3 Research Question

What are the experiences of caste-based discrimination in Higher Education centres in Kerala?

1.4 Objectives

1. To document the lived experiences in interpersonal relationships of students (who have entered through reservation) that are indicative of caste-based discrimination in Higher Education Centres.
2. To document the lived experiences of students (who have entered through reservation) within institutional structures that are indicative of caste-based discrimination in higher education institutions.
3. To identify different coping mechanisms adopted by students to deal with discrimination arising from interpersonal relationships and institutional structures in higher education.
4. To understand the effect of these experiences on mental wellbeing of students

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The first section of the literature review addresses discrimination broadly, exploring various forms and contexts in which it manifests. The second section looks into the specific issue of discrimination, examining its consequences and impacts. The third section narrows the focus to caste discrimination within the realm of higher education, exploring different forms of discrimination described in the broader literature. The final section highlights the public health relevance of the study; the relevance of present study.

2.1 Purpose of literature review

Purpose of literature review is done systematically to search for and assess relevant articles, books and reports that focus on the issue of caste discrimination within higher education settings. Also, this review will highlight the current gaps and areas that have not been extensively covered in the existing academic literature, as well as provide broad conceptual categories used to study this form of discrimination.

2.2 Key words and strategy used

The literature search was done using the search engines Google Scholar, Research Gate, PubMed.

“Discrimination”, “caste discrimination + higher education”, “Discrimination + mental health”, “Caste discrimination and mental health”

2.3 Discrimination

Statistics revealed that one in every six people around the world experienced some type of discrimination, disproportionately affecting women and individuals with disabilities. Furthermore, the year saw a record-breaking 34.6 million people displaced as refugees, the highest figure ever recorded (United Nations, 2023).

The Lancet Series on racism, xenophobia, discrimination, and health; In the article they describes discrimination as more a structural issue rather than purely an ideological or individual level concept. They introduce the concepts of 'Separation' and 'hierarchical power' as core principles of structural discrimination. These principles are evident in various systemic structures that impact governance and social interactions at many levels. They demonstrate how historical governance frameworks have incorporated racist and xenophobic beliefs, utilizing legislation to enforce social hierarchies and maintain power disparities. Colonization and racial capitalism are prime examples, where economic and social frameworks have exploited racial distinctions for financial advantage. Contemporary examples include international laws and actions like the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines, which show on going racial preferences that benefit historical colonial powers. Political dynamics contribute as well, with leaders leveraging ethnic and religious differences through exclusionary populism to solidify their control by deepening societal splits. Additionally, corporate involvement in reinforcing racial inequalities, via targeted advertising or environmental harm, highlights the economic aspects of structural discrimination. Collectively, these factors illustrate a global framework where structural discrimination is deeply entrenched, widespread, and sustained through various interconnected mechanisms (Devakumar et al., 2022)

Historically, discrimination is understood as behavior that adversely affects groups traditionally marginalized or oppressed, due to their association with specific social categories such as race, religion, or sexual orientation. This viewpoint generally considers discrimination to be unidirectional, suggesting that it flows from dominant groups to those that are subordinate.

Intersectionality emphasizes that an individual may experience layered forms of discrimination that are distinctively different from those faced by people who belong to just one group (Altman, 2020),(Crenshaw, 1991)

Discrimination affects both individuals and communities across several dimensions. Individually, it can cause psychological distress, such as stress, anxiety, and depression, and also can lead to physical health issues. Economically, discrimination restricts job opportunities and equitable pay, while academically it limits access to resources and lowers academic achievements. On a community level, discrimination fosters social exclusion and segregation, leading to isolated and under-resourced communities (Williams et al., 2019)

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) is a UN convention that pledges its signatories to eradicate racial discrimination and foster mutual understanding among different racial groups(United Nations, 1965). Preamble of universal declaration of human right recognizing and respecting every person's fundamental right and that is important for achieving global freedom, justice, and peace. It highlights how neglecting human rights has led to severe atrocities, protecting human rights through legal means is necessary to prevent individuals from turning to rebellion against oppression and injustice (United Nations, 1948).

2.4 Caste discrimination

The caste system is a hierarchical structure of social stratification found predominantly in South Asia. It involves the transmission of specific lifestyles through heredity, often determining occupation based on the principles of “varna” and “jati.” This system assigns individuals to distinct societal groups, with their roles and social statuses largely set from birth. The caste system is defined by multiple important aspects: it is passed down through generations and typically requires marriage within the same caste, it is deeply connected to religious and social customs, it revolves around ideas of "purity" and “pollution” and it organizes society into a hierarchy where higher castes dominate lower ones; Dalits and Tribals (Krishnamurthi and Krishnaswami, 2020)

Caste discrimination is the unjust treatment, segregation, and oppression faced by individuals based on their hereditary caste status, perpetuated through social, religious, and economic practices, resulting in systemic inequalities and violence against marginalized groups(Krishnamurthi and Krishnaswami, 2020)

Article 15 of the Indian Constitution prohibits caste discrimination. In India, achieving equality before the law will not lead to significant changes unless caste discrimination is explicitly prohibited (Ministry of Education, 2024).

Reservations in India aim to promote equitable access to employment, education, and legislative representation for historically marginalized communities like Dalits and Tribals, helping make these spaces more representative of society(Press Information Bureau and Government of India, 2019)

Current research shows that while there have been improvements in social mobility and reduction in overt caste-based discrimination, deep-seated prejudices and practices of untouchability persist, particularly in rural areas and among lower-ranked castes. Despite legal protections and affirmative action policies, the struggle against caste discrimination continues, with caste identity still playing a crucial role in social stratification and political organization in India (Mosse, 2018).

Caste-based discrimination in the labor market results in significant inefficiencies, including improper labor distribution, wage inequalities, and stunted economic growth. The caste system limits occupational mobility for lower caste individuals, barring them from higher-paying and prestigious jobs, thus perpetuating economic disparities and adversely affecting overall economic development (Deshpande and Newman, 2007)

A review conducted to understand health care utilization among Dalit in India found that health disparities arise from their lower socioeconomic standing, restricted access to education, and limited opportunities for skilled, well-compensated jobs. These economic challenges are further aggravated by minimal land ownership and constrained occupational mobility, which perpetuate poverty among Dalits and expose them to workplace discrimination and societal stigmatization.

Health disparities significantly affect Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) in India, particularly evident in maternal health and elderly care. SC and ST women experience a disproportionately higher rate of maternal deaths, and their babies are more likely to have low birth weights compared to those from other communities. Additionally, elderly SC and ST individuals receive less medical attention before death compared to their upper caste Hindu counterparts. These issues highlight critical inequalities in

healthcare access and quality for these marginalized groups.(T.K. Sundari Ravindran and Rakhal Gaitonde, 2018)

2.5. Reservation – India’s affirmative action policy

The Indian Constitution provides for equality and prohibits discrimination, but recognizing the need to address historical injustices faced by marginalized groups, it includes specific provisions for affirmative action. Articles such as 14, 15, and 17 establish a framework of legal equality and outlaw ‘untouchability’. However, these alone were not enough to ensure equitable representation of marginalized populations. Thus, Article 46 was introduced, promoting the educational and economic interests of weaker sections, particularly Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), through reservations. The beneficiaries of these reservations, determined by population proportions, include SCs, STs, and Other Backward Classes (OBCs), with specific provisions made in government jobs, educational institutions, and the legislature to protect these groups from social injustice and exploitation.

Implementation of Reservation in Higher education Centre

Reservation percentages for SC and ST, at the all-India level for admissions through open competition are 15 percent, 7.5 percent, and 27 percent, respectively. For admissions outside of open competition, the percentages are 16.66 percent, 7.5 percent, and 25.84 percent, respectively(Press Information Bureau and Government of India, 2023). These percentages also apply to job opportunities. Besides reservations, there are provisions to assist the target groups in overcoming eligibility barriers, such as age relaxation, fee concessions, and lower cut-offs in qualifying examinations. Article 15(2) assures that states can make special provisions for the advancement of SC/ST or other backward

communities, which might be challenged by Article 15 and Article 29(2). Article 29(2) ensures the prevention of denial of admission to educational institutions based on caste, religion, race, language, or any of these factors (Deshpande Ashwini, 2013)

Debate over reservation

The effectiveness of affirmative action in India has triggered extensive debates, with critics highlighting various concerns. These include the significant number of vacant reserved positions, an imbalance in representation that tends to favor more privileged individuals within disadvantaged communities, another one is those from these groups pursuing higher education tend to choose fewer challenging subjects (Sowell, 2004). Another noteworthy issue is the high dropout rates and instances of stagnation, with students repeating courses due to failure or attendance gaps. But one thing that is being emphasized in many studies is that many of these students are able to enter into and study in elite institutions only because of affirmative action (Weisskopf, 2004). There is a lack of effort to study the underlying factors causing these challenges, and insufficient measures are taken to address them.

Sukhadeo Thorat, Nitin Tagade, Ajaya K Naik oppose the idea of economic reservation; because which overlooks the primary goal of reservations: to protect against caste-based discrimination, not merely economic disadvantage. Thus, even economically better-off members of Scheduled Castes (SCs) require reservation to ensure fair access to essential resources, as discrimination doesn't discriminate by economic status. Limiting financial aid for wealthier SCs is reasonable, but excluding them from reservations is not, as these protections are vital to combat ongoing discrimination (Sukhadeo Thorat et al., 2016).

The effectiveness of any policy relies on continuous monitoring and addressing identified gaps. However, the reservation policy in India lacks proper monitoring and evaluation, primarily due to a lack of political will.

2.6. Caste Discrimination in Higher Education

A study examining the challenges SC/ST students face in utilizing fellowships for higher education reveals significant delays and a lack of cooperation from administrative staff, including non-responsiveness to inquiries. Even schemes intended to be inclusive are sometimes viewed negatively by teachers, staff, and other students. There is a perception among some staff that SC students receive the Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship (RGNF) undeservedly, considering it a waste of government funds. Occasionally, academic advisors delay signing necessary reports and documents, and some even contact the UGC to halt the students fellowships intentionally. Additionally, certain instructors purposefully fail these students in their courses, creating further barriers to their fellowship applications (Bhoi and Lakra, 2022)

Another study finding is that upper caste students and faculty often question the merit of reserved category students, perceiving their presence as undeserved and attributing their admissions to affirmative action rather than talent. Upper caste students typically perceive their own performance as inherently superior, attributing their success to genetic traits and downplaying the achievements of lower caste students. It discusses how caste and class influence friendships and social interactions on campus, with relationships often being superficial and marked by a sense of charity rather than genuine friendship. The study highlights how stigma rooted in academia leaves students feeling isolated and inferior (Gaurav J. Pathania & William G. Tierney, 2018)

At the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bangalore, the organization of dining facilities illustrates and reinforces caste distinctions. Separate dining areas are provided, with one exclusively offering vegetarian options preferred by Brahmins, and others serving a variety of dietary choices. This segregation by dietary preference not only reflects but also perpetuates traditional caste identities within the academic setting, emphasizing the ongoing influence of caste-based practices in educational institutions (N. Sukumar, 2023).

Deshpande critiques the traditional view of merit as neutral in his essay, highlighting how it often reinforces existing caste hierarchies in India's higher education sector. He cites a comprehensive survey by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) from 1999-2000, showing an imbalance in higher education: Hindu Upper Castes (UCs), constituting about 37% of the urban population, disproportionately claim nearly two-thirds of all professional and higher education degrees. In stark contrast, communities such as Hindu Scheduled Castes (SCs), who account for roughly 13% of the urban population, hold less than 4% of degrees across all higher education fields (Deshpande Satish, 2006).

Despite excelling in written exams, SC, ST, and OBC students frequently receive disproportionately low scores in oral exams. The format of these interviews, which involves a single student facing a panel of numerous faculty members, can be especially intimidating for marginalized students, particularly if they are first or second-generation learners. This intimidating environment tests not just their subject knowledge but also their cultural capital, confidence, and language skills, which may be less developed than those of their upper-caste or more economically advantaged peers. The subjective nature of these interviews allows for personal biases, stereotypes, and prejudices of the interviewers to influence their judgment, often to the detriment of students from less privileged backgrounds ; this was found in a study conducted among major universities in Delhi (Pathania et al., 2023).

The Thorat Committee was established to investigate claims of unequal treatment of SC/ST students at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS). Report on AIIMS uncovers various types of discrimination occurring in multiple areas, including classrooms, laboratories, examinations, hostels, spaces for cultural activities, and administrative settings. In the report 72% medical students from SC/ST stated that they experienced discrimination during teaching sessions, primarily in the form of avoidance, contempt, lack of cooperation, discouragement, and unequal treatment by teachers toward Dalit and Tribal students. The report also highlights instances where students mentioned that examiners in viva voce examinations inquired about their caste background, and this seemed to influence their grades (Thorat et al., 2007)

Dr. N Sukumar in his book “Caste Discrimination and Exclusion in Indian Universities” describe the use of derogatory terms and discriminatory practices on college campuses highlights the challenges that students from reserved categories, particularly Dalits, face in their academic environments. Terms like "quota's children," "category waalas," bakasuras', 'kumbhakarnas,' 'paraya', 'pulaya' are used to mock and stigmatize these students based on their caste status and the perception that their admission is undeserved. These terms not only reflect a hostile atmosphere but also reinforce stereotypes and social segregation. Pejorative labels such as "behenji" is used for female Dalit students, in particular, face additional scrutiny and ridicule about their attire, language skills, and even their names, which are often used against them as markers of identity in a demeaning way(N. Sukumar, 2023).

A study conducted in Himalaya University in Uttar Pradesh describes self-devaluation; which means an individuals or groups devalue themselves and accept inequalities as legitimate or preordained. This mindset isn't inherent but is cultivated through social devaluation. As a result, many Dalit students exhibit behaviours like submissiveness,

avoidance of interaction, and a lack of assertiveness in educational settings, contributing to on going cycles of discrimination and injustice(Maurya, 2018)

Sonal Desai and Veena Kulkarni through their studies found; the educational disparity decreased at the primary school level but not at the college level. College admission quotas have faced significant public opposition, and the data indicates no positive change in fact; a slight decline - in college graduation rates for Dalits, which raises concerns about the success of these policies(Sonalde and Kulkarni, 2008).

2.7. Public Health Relevance

Discrimination has a complex impact that affects various domains of public health, particularly hindering equity in access to healthcare, influencing psychological well-being, and impacting educational attainment.

The health systems described are significantly impacted by discrimination, manifesting in inadequate services and accessibility issues, particularly for marginalized groups.

Discrimination affects the provision and quality of healthcare through insufficient language services, cultural insensitivity, and systemic biases within medical practice.

These barriers lead to poor health outcomes by hindering effective communication, reducing treatment compliance, and exacerbating healthcare worker stress and burnout.

Moreover, systemic racism and implicit biases in healthcare protocols continue to compromise care for racially and ethnically minoritized populations (Selvarajah et al., 2022)

Mental Health

According to the social stress theory, perceived discrimination is considered a stressor that adversely affects various physical and mental health outcomes, similar to other

psychosocial stressors. When individuals become consciously aware of discriminatory incidents, it triggers a series of cognitive and emotional responses that are perceived as stressful. This sequence of events can lead to harmful health consequences. The negative emotions generated from these experiences can deteriorate one's psychological well-being, leading to distress symptoms and possibly elevating the risk of particular psychiatric conditions (Williams et al., 2019)

The study explored the mental health effects of perceived discrimination on Korean adults in Canada, discovering that problem-focused coping reduced stress while emotion-focused coping was associated with increased depression levels. Problem-focused coping consists of proactive behaviours aimed at directly addressing the root cause of stress, potentially through actions like filing complaints, engaging in advocacy, or seeking legal remedies against discrimination. Conversely, emotion-focused coping involves controlling one's emotional reactions to the stressor instead of tackling the problem itself. Techniques used might include denial, engaging in wishful thinking, distracting oneself, seeking emotional support, or expressing emotions (Noh and Kaspar, 2003).

Another study discovered that subtle forms of discrimination (such as micro aggressions, which subtly but effectively communicate inferiority or marginalization) were strongly associated with increased suicidal ideation among African American adolescents. This association was both concurrent and longitudinal, suggesting that these experiences of subtle discrimination have a lasting impact on mental health over time (Madubata et al., 2022).

A review of literature on caste discrimination in universities showed that; it is distressingly common for caste prejudice to be deeply rooted in elite professional institutions, becoming a normalized aspect of their culture. Many recent student suicides

at the college level have been attributed to discrimination and social exclusion. While some students manage to endure these explicit and harsh forms of discrimination, others are overwhelmed by the constant pressure of on-going caste bias. This pressure, along with negative attitudes and exclusion from peers, as well as a lack of institutional support, leads some students to view suicide as a final act of protest (Vaishnavi Raj Laxmi Singh, 2022).

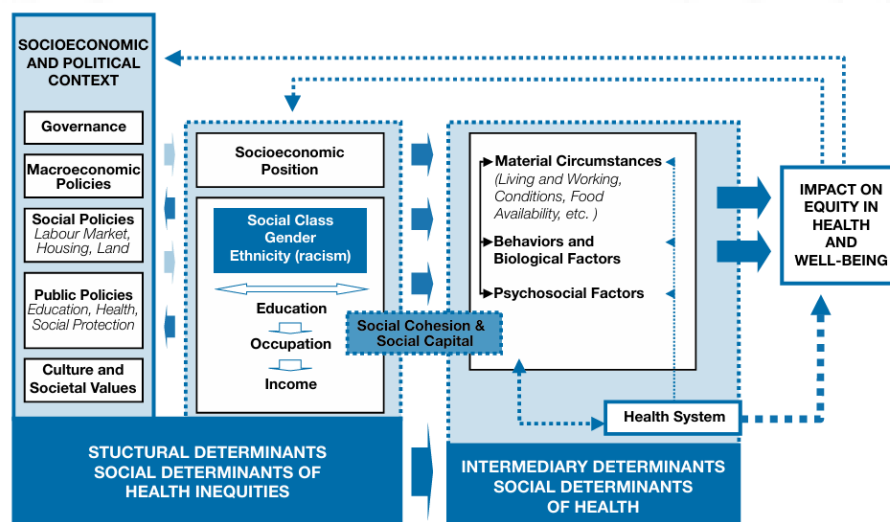
In a study conducted by major universities in Delhi reveals the prevailing social stereotypes that target lower caste students can significantly erode their self-esteem and threaten their sense of identity. This on going negative societal perception is a key factor contributing to feelings of depression, anxiety, and insecurity among students who gain admission through quotas(Pathania et al., 2023).

Discrimination has profound and multifaceted effects on individuals, influencing their behaviour and physiology. Behaviourally, experiences of discrimination can lead to changes in physical activity, nutrition, sleep patterns, and can either discourage or encourage health-seeking behaviour depending on the individual's coping strategies. Physiologically, the stress caused by enduring discrimination can lead to hormonal imbalances and epigenetic changes that may affect health across a person's lifespan. These effects demonstrate how deeply discrimination can penetrate into the daily lives and well-being of individuals, shaping their health outcomes and overall quality of life(Devakumar et al., 2022).

Education

According to WHO; “social determinants of health (SDH) encompass the non-medical influences on health outcomes. These are shaped by the environments in which individuals are born, develop, live, work, and age, along with broader economic, social, and political forces. These factors include economic and development policies, societal norms, and political landscapes”. Social determinants are important due to inequities in various health outcomes.

Figure 2.1 CSDH Conceptual Framework



Structural mechanisms contribute to societal stratification, which in turn shapes the social positions of individuals or groups. Key factors driving stratification include income, education, occupation, class, gender, and ethnicity.

Together with the broader socioeconomic and political context, these mechanisms and the resulting socioeconomic positions constitute what are known as structural determinants of health, which are also recognized as social determinants of health. These structural factors influence society through intermediary determinants. These include material conditions

such as housing quality and the ability to afford essential goods, psychosocial factors including stressors, stressful life conditions, and levels of social support and coping mechanisms, and finally, behavioural and biological factors, which cover dietary habits, physical activity, tobacco and alcohol use, and genetic influences.

Discrimination in the education system has academic impacts that may lead to dropouts from either school or higher education systems. Education is an important factor for Dalit and Tribal communities for their upward social mobility. Additionally, education is directly and indirectly related to health outcomes, as demonstrated through the CSDH framework.

Direct health advantages include improved health literacy, which helps individuals understand health information, and empowerment through education, which enhances their ability to make informed health choices. Indirectly education contributes to health by enabling individuals to attain higher education levels, which often lead to secure, well-paying jobs and subsequently, a better income. A solid financial foundation allows for greater access to healthcare, improved nutrition, quality housing, and favourable living conditions. These elements collectively lead to a less stressful life compared to those who lack such benefits.

Literature suggests that higher educational attainment is linked to have jobs with healthier working conditions, better health benefits, and higher salaries. Furthermore, greater education is associated with higher social standing and increased social support, enhancing overall well-being (Hahn and Truman, 2015).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study aims to understand the experience of caste-based discrimination among Dalit and Tribal students in higher education institutions in Kerala. The study particularly focuses on the experience of caste-based discrimination in the interpersonal relationship domain and within institutional spaces and resulting from institutional rules and structures. It also explores how students cope with discrimination and navigate academic spaces. The study also examines the impacts they face as a result.

3.1 Study Setting

In this sub-section I cover the setting in three broad areas – one is the general socio-economic background from which the Dalit and Tribal students who are the participants in my study hail from, the second are the various government schemes introduced to help overcome the challenges faced by these students due to t socio-economic background, and the third is a brief note on the NGOs who supported the study by introducing me to a few participants initially. These are important contextual features are elaborated upon in order to make full sense of the data and the way these have been analyzed in this study.

Socio-Economic Background of Dalit and Tribal Participants in the Study

Dalits and Tribals constitute 9.1 percent and 1.45 percent of the total Kerala population, respectively(State Planning Board Kerala, 2017). Despite government initiatives to uplift both these communities in Kerala they still face discrimination and exclusion in society. Majority of the tribal population lives in settlements, where access to road facilities, educational institutions, and government offices is very poor. The literacy rate of

Scheduled Tribes in the state is calculated as 74.44 percent, and that of scheduled caste is 88.7 percent when compared which is lower than the State average literacy of 93.91 per cent (2011 census). Approximately 7.72 percent of parents of ST students are engaged in occupations related to the forestry sector, including the collection of forest produce and herbal plants, as well as traditional occupations. The main source of family income for the majority of students is agricultural labor (84%), and hence financial constraints may be consider a major contributor towards dropout in tribal communities. The dropout rate in Graduation is 15.38 percent and in Post-Graduation it is 72.39 percent (Scheduled Tribes Development Department, 2024).

Basic amenities such as roads, electricity, and drinking water are inadequate in many habitats of Scheduled Castes. The percentage of households without land is greater among the Scheduled Caste community than in the overall population. Most Scheduled Caste houses are unsuitable for living, with lack of sanitary latrines. The majority of employed persons work in the service sector as wage laborers. Unemployment rates are high among educated individuals belonging to the Scheduled Caste community (Kerala State Planning Board, 2017). Kerala Dalits achieved 87.46 percent of the HDI of the Non-SC/ST population in Kerala. Thus, Dalits lag by, but need 12.54 percent to match non-SC/STs. The ST shortfall is just under 10 percent (S V Hanagodimath, 2020)

Government Schemes for Supporting Dalit and Tribal Students in Higher Education in Kerala

According to the Kerala State Higher Education Council survey, the gross enrollment rates for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in higher education are 28.3 percent and 28.9 percent, respectively (Bureau, 2024). Various schemes are available to support students from Dalit and Tribal communities in higher education. Post-matric scholarships

are provided to Dalit and Tribal students as educational assistance; in Kerala, it is known as e-grant. Seventy five percent of the e-grant amount is centrally funded, and twenty five percent of the funds are state-supported. Previously, e-grant was directly deposited into the college account, which was used for distribution or payment of mess bills. However, starting from last year, it changed to direct deposit into the student's account. Therefore, students in college hostels now have to directly pay the mess bill. Usually, students apply through Akshaya centers (centers set up to help citizens navigate e-governance schemes. These centers are quite widely spread in Kerala) when informed by the college. In Kerala, for degree students, the amount is Rs 1190, for postgraduate students it is Rs 1570, and for professional courses, it can be up to Rs 3130 as per Scheduled Caste Development Department website(Scheduled Caste Development Department, 2024). Another scheme to support students is the post-matric hostel, which are hostels run by the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Development Department. In Kerala, there are 20 post-matric hostels for students who are studying in higher education under this scheme. In addition to Dalit and Tribal students, some seats are reserved for OBC/OEC (OBC – Other Backward Caste, OEC-Other Eligible Communities) in post-matric hostels. Laptops are provided to students enrolled in professional courses in Kerala, distributed through the district Tribal Development Office or the District Scheduled Caste Development Office. Additionally, cash awards are given to high-performing students in undergraduate and postgraduate programs. There is also initial financial assistance of Rs 10,000 for medical students and Rs 5,000 for engineering students providing for one time.

Collaborating NGOs

The study was conducted in higher education institutions in Kerala, in collaboration with two local NGOs. One of the organizations is Dhisha Kerala and other is Adishakthi

Summer School. Both are based in Ernakulam district of Kerala. Dhisha is a voluntary organization of youth, registered as a non-profit organization under the Societies Registration Act, 1960. Working on the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA), advocate for the rights of marginalized. Dhisha primarily offers legal aid to students in need, organizes workshops to empower marginalized communities, and provides financial assistance to students. They also have an in-house counseling service for psychological support of students ([Dhisha_Kerala](#)).

Adishakthi Summer School is an educational initiative of the registered organization-indigenous peoples collective (IPC), working towards the Tribal- Dalit-backward students in Kerala. It is aimed at supporting higher education of Dalit and Tribal students, especially from Wayanadu, Idukki, Malappuram, Trivandrum districts. They support students belonging to Tribal and economically disadvantaged Dalit communities in obtaining admissions to various colleges throughout Kerala, while also addressing the challenges these students face([Adishakthi_summerschool](#)). Initial participants enrolled based on introductions by the NGO, following that snowball sampling will be done.

3.2. Study Design

The study is a qualitative study, which primarily uses a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is a qualitative approach which seeks to explain the phenomenon through the perspective of people who have experienced it (Rietmeijer and Veen, 2022). This method of research helps to document the lived experience of people, and how they understand and perceive phenomena. It totally relies on the meaning people give to their experiences.

The research initially maps the various experiences recounted onto key areas where students may experience discrimination within educational spaces. It also maps the

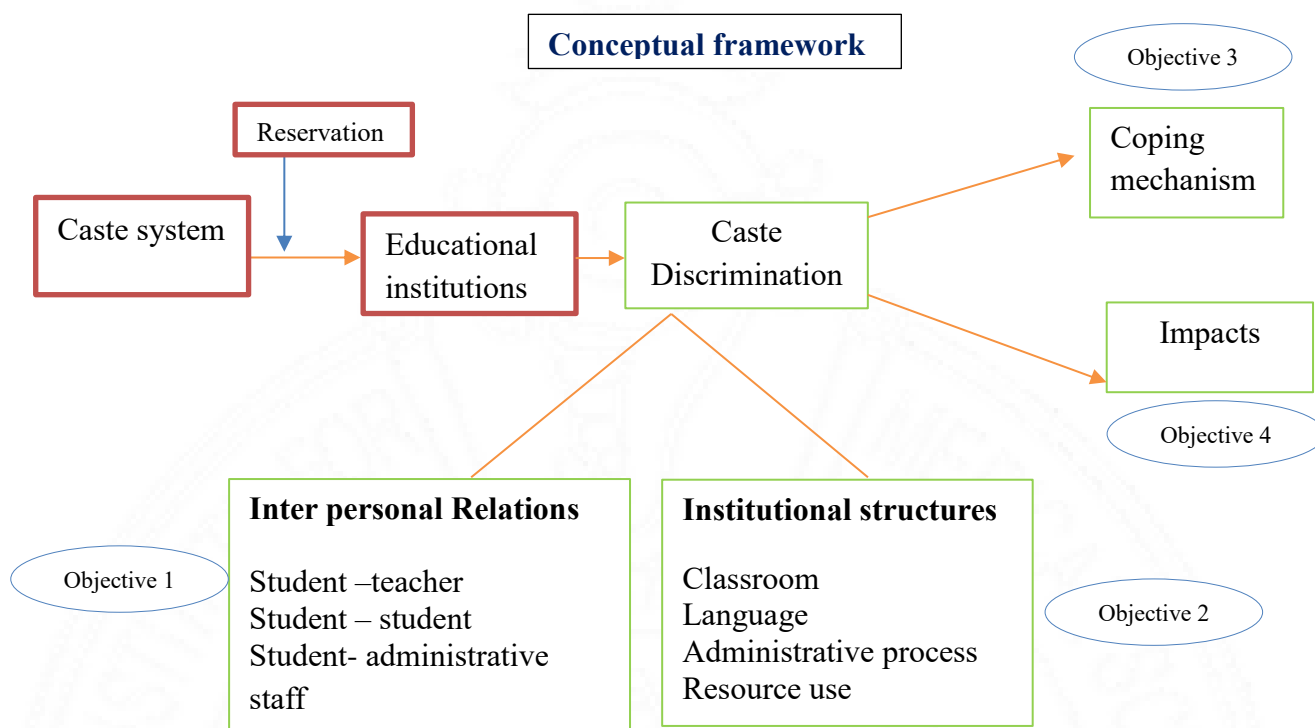
perpetrators of these acts of discrimination. It further focuses on various coping strategies they employ to deal with unfavourable conditions in academic spaces and the impact of experiencing and struggling to cope with these issues. I use in-depth interviews to collect my data.

Conceptual Framework

The main domain of the study is the experience of caste discrimination in higher education. The study maps the various experiences of discrimination onto specific academic (classrooms, hostels etc.,) and administrative spaces and processes (like exams and fellowships).

Study focus on interpersonal relations and institutional structures. In interpersonal relations, Study focus on the relationships among teachers and students, within peers, and between students and administrative or technical staff. Institutional structure, in this context, encompasses the classroom environment, pedagogy, language, resource use and all administrative processes related to students at educational institutions. Coping mechanisms are strategies students use to deal with stressful conditions at academic spaces, further it focuses on the impact of discrimination; mainly mental health. This conceptual framework illustrates that students come from a larger society where a caste system operates, and they gain entry into higher education through reservations. The reservation system and the caste system, and entry into educational institutions are depicted in different colors to indicate that this study does not focus on those areas. Instead, this study concentrates on the lived experiences of students with respect to interpersonal relationships (Objective 1) and within institutional structures (Objective 2), which are indicative of caste-based discrimination

Figure 3.1 Conceptual Framework



The third objective is to identify the coping mechanisms students adopt to handle the discrimination they face in the above two areas. The fourth objective explores the impacts of facing discrimination, specifically focusing on mental health.

3.3 Sampling

This study employed purposive sampling for initial enrollment of participants with the help of the two NGOs and followed by snowball sampling technique to find other participants.

Sample Selection: Inclusion criteria

- Students belong to scheduled group who have entered Higher Education Institutions through affirmative action in Kerala

- Students should be in their second or final year for UG and PG
- For PhD students will be at least in their 3rd year.

Exclusion Criteria

- Students belong to scheduled group but pursuing distant education
- Students belong to scheduled group but who are studying outside of Kerala
- Students who belong to OBC, EWS, other minority groups who have entered Higher Education Institutions through Reservation.
- Students belong to scheduled group (who have entered Higher Education Institutions through affirmative action) from other state pursuing UG, PG PhD in Kerala.
- Students belong to scheduled group who are transgender.

Number of Interviews:

Total 20 interviews conducted among Dalit and Tribal students drawn from the following categories till information saturation attained.

- a) Male and Female students
- b) ARTS and STEM Subjects
- c) UG, PG, PhD

Number of participants category wise

Table 3.1 Number of participants in Gender

Sl. No	Subcategory	Number of participants
1.	Male	10
2.	Female	10

Table 3.2 Number of participants in stream taken

Sl. No	Subcategory	Number of participants
1.	ART Subject	15
2.	STEM Subject	5

Table 3.3 Number of participants in level of education

Sl. No	Subcategory	Number of participants
1.	UG	7
2.	PG	3
3.	PhD	10

3.4 Study tool

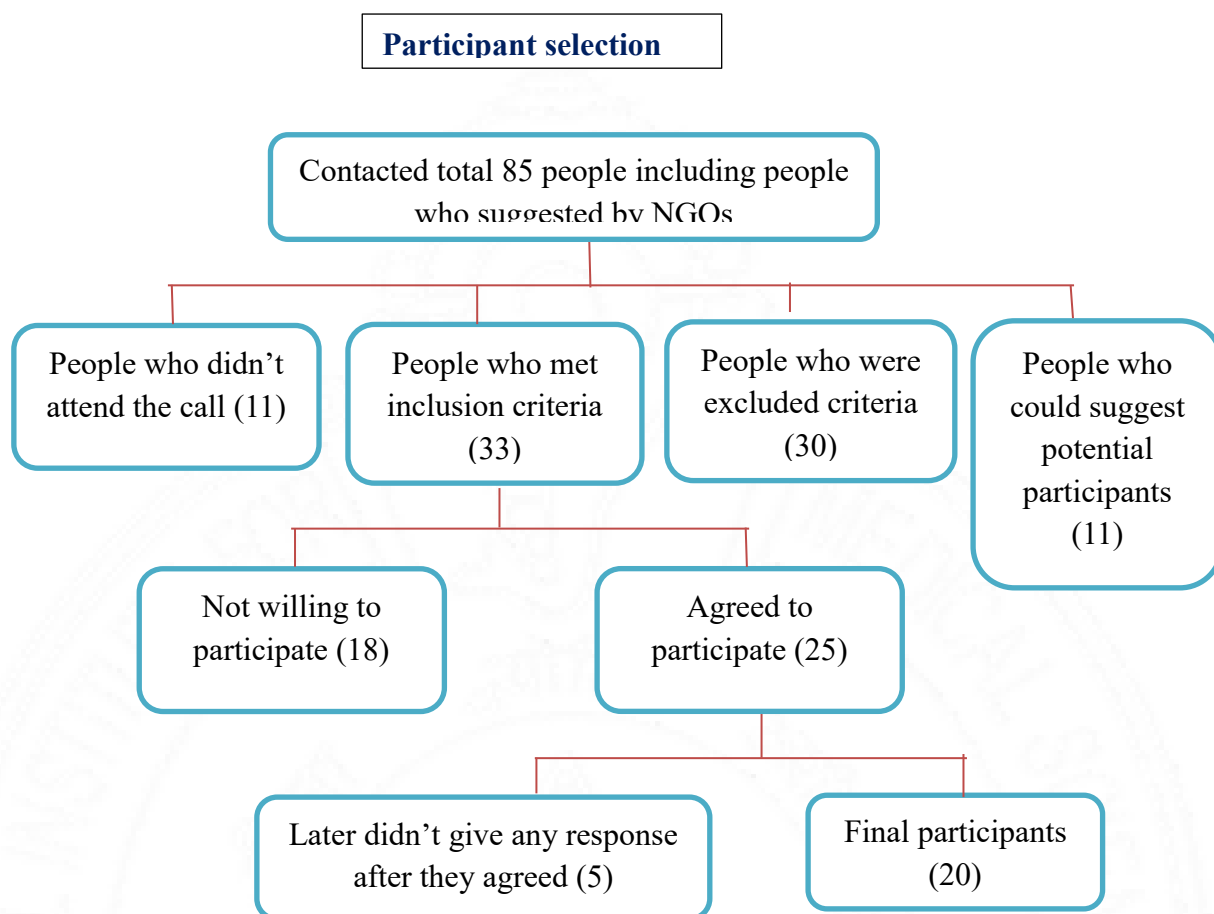
The principal investigator conducted interviews using an IDI guide. The IDI guide was translated into Malayalam, and the interviews were conducted in Malayalam. In the IDI guide, some questions are specifically designed for research scholars. The IDI includes questions about the process of selecting the courses that the students are currently pursuing, with further probes into family support and consultations taken before choosing a course. Questions regarding relationships with teachers cover their support in academics, mentorship, and more. Questions about relationships with fellow students explore support in studies and dynamics with them. Concerning administrative staff, the

questions address issues students approach them with, and how they assist in resolving administrative problems. Stipend-related questions include the duration of delays, reporting these delays, and other financial resources available for daily expenses. The IDI also addresses topics such as affirmative action, resource utilization, classroom dynamics, cultural participation, and includes questions about past educational experiences, specifically mentioning school experiences. Most interviews however covered a much larger canvas, and these specific questions worked as mere entry points into life worlds of these students in higher education institutions.

3.5 Data Collection Techniques

Figure 2 shows a flowchart representation of the participant selection process. The principal investigator (PI) initially contacted collaborating NGOs to obtain participants contacts. These NGOs first communicated with all the contacts they provided. Among these contacts, some were excluded from the study due to specific criteria, others were able to recommend additional participants (mostly students actively involved in student issues), and a portion did not respond to the call. The remaining individuals were potential study participants. Some declined to participate, citing time constraints or a preference not to discuss the topic. Among those who initially agreed, some later became unresponsive when the PI attempted to contact them for follow-up via calls or messages. Efforts to reach them through other contacts were unsuccessful. One individual, scheduled for an interview twice, cancelled at last minute stating various reasons. Ultimately, the participants who both initially agreed and remained responsive formed the final study group. Of these final participants, five were active NGO volunteers.

Figure 3.2 Participant Selection



Interviews were conducted in locations chosen at the convenience of participants. These turned to be primarily in college campuses and public parks, as well as occasionally in the NGO office. Additionally, five interviews were conducted over the phone. The consent form was provided in both English and Malayalam. All the interviews were audio recorded; the duration of interviews ranged from approximately 40 minutes to 3 hours, with an average of 1 hour 30 minutes.

Participants who did not meet the inclusion criteria but had relevant experiences were engaged in informal discussions with the principal investigator, and notes were taken accordingly. These notes were not used directly in the analysis, but helped the investigator

get a broader sense as well as the finer nuances of the context. In addition to this, field diaries and observation notes were maintained. Following each interview, main points, new points were carefully noted. Saturation was confirmed when no new points emerged from interviews and similar types of experiences were repeatedly reported.

3.6 Analysis

All the interviews were audio recorded transcribed verbatim in Malayalam and then translated to English. Digital tool open code version 4.03 was used to code interviews, observation and field notes (OpenCode 4. University of Umeå, Sweden, 2015). Principle investigator went through the transcripts repeatedly to get familiarized with the data. Initial codes were generated using the inductive coding method. These initial codes were discussed with the guide who had independently coded a few of the same interviews. Different approaches to coding were discussed and clarified before coding proceeded. Codes are grouped together into categories based on their similarity or relevance. Thematic analysis was employed to identify emerging themes from the data. The principal investigator referenced Jennifer Attride-Stirling's work 'Thematic Networks as an analytical tool for qualitative research' for generating themes (Jennifer Attride-Stirling, 2010). Regular discussions were held with the guide to address reflections, confusions, and burnout.

Table 3.4: Sample coding process

QUOTES	CODES	CATEGORIES
<p>“They hesitated to talk with me and left no seat available. Every time, I had to ask for some space to sit. I hoped it would change over time, but it never did”</p>	<p>The tribal student felt isolated from their classmates</p>	<p>Isolation of Dalit and tribal students in academic space</p>
<p>“I had another unfortunate experience with a faculty member named XX. He was in charge of the light music competition during a festival at the college. There was a notice inviting names from students who could sing. Along with some friends, we went to submit our names. However, he wasn’t happy seeing us, i was with my seniors. When he asked us about the songs we planned to sing, he replied, "Oh, Neethu Kurian has already chosen this song, and another song has been taken by Angel John." Every time, he found a reason to reject us. At that moment, we were wondering what we could do. My seniors were also from the SC category. In the end, he said, "Three of you can together sing any of Kalabhavan Mani's songs” (Kalabhavan Mani was a film actor and folk song singer from Dalit community). That's when we realized his discriminatory actions, and we were deeply hurt”</p>	<p>The faculty denied the Dalit student’s participation in cultural.</p>	
<p>“So, for one subject, I only got a D+, just passed. What XXX Miss has done, she read grammar mistakes in my paper in front of everybody, all the 32 students in the class. She hasn't done this with any other student in that class”</p>	<p>Embarrassing Dalit students in the classroom</p>	<p>Targeting of Dalit and Tribal students in academic spaces</p>
<p>“They wouldn't sign records for us; I drew more perfectly than other students. Yet, they wouldn't sign our records, and they wouldn't provide any specific reasons; they simply said, "Redraw it." If I submitted 7 records, they would sign for a maximum of 1 or 2. This is the situation for other Dalit students as well. They give a lot of corrections”</p>	<p>Unfair evaluation of records of Dalit students</p>	

3.7 Expected outcome

The study will enable us to identify and understand the various struggles that Dalit and Tribal students face in higher education institutions. The ultimate outcome of the research is to raise awareness about the perspectives of Dalit and Tribal students regarding discrimination in higher education among others also Generating evidence to strengthen the supporting system in higher education.

3.8 Ethical consideration

The study proceeded following review and approval by the Ethics Committee of Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology (SCT/IEC/2182/DECEMBER/2023)

A. Confidentiality

The principal investigator ensured the privacy and confidentiality of the participants. Interviews were conducted in comfortable environments chosen by the participants. All collected information was securely stored and shared only with the guide, in addition to the principal investigator, both during and after the interview. The recordings and interview transcriptions were securely stored on a computer with a password lock, accessible only to the Principal Investigator (PI). Each interview and audio recording was assigned unique codes known only to the PI.

B. Consent

Before each interview, the principal investigator spoke with every participant to ensure their willingness to participate and provided them with the Participant Information sheet and a briefing about the study details. Consent for being interviewed and audio recording was obtained from every participant. One participant who was unwilling to sign the

consent form, but was keen on participating provided verbal consent instead, which was recorded.

D. Risk

Taking part in the study and discussing their personal experiences related to discrimination and mental health was, at times, emotionally demanding and could lead to feelings of unease or discomfort. Very few participants cried during interviews. The PI underwent a training session with the psychologist affiliated with the collaborating NGO to manage any psychological distress participants may have experienced during interviews. During emotional outbursts of participants, the PI ensured that counseling services were available to them, although the situations encountered in the present study turned out to be self-manageable.

D. Positionality

As someone from the medical field without any background in social science subjects, PI faced difficulties in grasping certain concepts. However, PI's identity as a member of the Dalit community helped to build rapport with the participants, enabling to understand and relate to the experiences participants shared.

CHAPTER 4

RESULT

This section takes you through the journey of students from the most disadvantaged backgrounds in this country through their experiences in higher education institutions within the state of Kerala. For every Dalit and Tribal student, reaching the level of higher education is a fight against their poor surroundings, societal norms, and neglect from the system; but it also highlights the extraordinary resilience shown by these students and their families as they struggle towards a social change that realizes a society that is inclusive for all. Yet, the findings of this study reveal that their struggles continue even within higher education institutions.

The themes that emerged during the analysis include the Exclusion faced in multiple spaces, failure of coping mechanism introduced by the government (which I refer to as structural coping mechanisms) in fulfilling their objective in many cases, the consequent reliance on informal coping mechanism, and the various impacts of discrimination. The first theme Exclusion faced in multiple spaces, addresses the first two objectives of the study: the lived experiences of students in interpersonal relations and within institutional structures that are indicative of caste-based discrimination. This is detailed in the first section of this chapter. The third objective is to identify the coping mechanisms adopted by the students to deal with discrimination, which is answered by the themes failure of structural coping mechanism, reliance on informal coping mechanism. The mental health impacts of discrimination, which fulfil the fourth objective, are covered in the theme various impacts of discrimination, detailed in the third section of this chapter.

4.1 Exclusion faced in multiple spaces

Classrooms are spaces where knowledge is primarily produced, through continuous interactions, asking questions, expressing opinions, and engaging in discussions. However, this dynamic can be compromised if faculty do not appreciate students for raising doubts or fail to acknowledge their contributions to answers, which can lead to a lack of student engagement and a decrease in participation, ultimately hindering the learning environment. One participant share her experience in the classroom;

“No... No... (Her tone was strong). In any way, that was not possible. If we asked something (doubt clearing) their reactions are like, "Oh, you don't know this?"

They would label us as if we knew nothing. So out of fear, we usually don't go for any clarification.”

[Interview 5, PhD participant, female]

For a student from tribal communities, who may lack extensive resources or a network for learning, teachers are their primary source of knowledge. When faced with situations like the one described above, where their contributions are not acknowledged or are met with disdain, it can severely diminish their interest in learning and erode their self-confidence.

Classmates play a crucial role in shaping the atmosphere and creating a sense of community within the college environment and classroom. The data from this study highlight this dynamic, revealing that some students from tribal communities felt isolated during their first year because their classmates did not engage with them. This isolation led some students to discontinue their courses. Moreover, when students were not willing to use opportunities to understand and appreciate diverse cultures, and instead engage in

"othering," it hinders the efforts to create an inclusive and welcoming space. This was underscored by a participant who was stigmatized by her classmates for being a tribal;

"Initially, nobody really spoke to me. They didn't bother to ask my name or inquire if I had eaten, and they never invited me to go out with them. In Malayalam class, we studied a novel titled "Panguru Pushpathile Theen" or something similar. This novel tells the story of an Adivasi couple who collect honey from panguru flowers and sell it in town. The characters don't wear clothes and are treated as if they are from another world. The heroine of the novel is named Chelly, which led my classmates to start calling me by that name, one thing they continue even now. They would say, "You people are like that," which was very hurtful. I tried to explain to them that their perception of tribal people was incorrect, but despite my efforts, they kept calling me that".

[Interview 3, post graduate student, Female]

Access to resources such as laboratory facilities is offered to all students enrolled in the program. However, these facilities are often denied to students from Dalit or Tribal communities solely because of their identity. This overt and subtle form of discrimination, including restrictions in the laboratory, undoubtedly affects their coursework and appears to be aimed at making them mentally unfit to complete their research and potentially forcing them to leave the institution. One participant shared her experience at college where she was denied access to materials in the lab. After filing a complaint against the professor, he openly claimed that favoring Dalit students would undermine the department's discipline. She detailed a particular incident that took place in the laboratory,

"We typically worked on Saturdays and Sundays, depending on our availability. Due to issues with XXX Sir, I had already sought permission from my co-guide and from the lab in charge. In the middle of my work, XXX Sir came and shouted at me, asking me to leave

the lab without any reason. But I continued my work because the instruments in the microbiology lab were already in operation, and I had already set the time. They had to complete their cycle. I was sitting in a laminar hood, handling infectious microorganisms, making it impossible to stop midway. I told him that I wouldn't take long once the work is finished, but he continued shouting at me. My Co-guide also came and asked me to stop the work. He was the only person supposed to help me and protect me there. I was extremely sad. I said I would stop, and I went to the lower floor to remove gloves and mask and to clean my hands. Suddenly, I heard footsteps on the staircase on the other side. Quickly, I got up, and at that moment, the XXX sir had locked the lab while I was still inside and he left. I was panic and called the police”.

[Interview 6, PhD participant, Female]

On campuses, students are given the chance to showcase their talents, improve their skills, and receive recognition. However, despite these opportunities being available to other students, who are encouraged to participate, some study participants disclosed facing discrimination when attempting to engage in these spaces. One participant described having to deal with an incident where her professors not only denied her participation but also actively discouraged her involvement in cultural events. This reflects the tendency in making these areas also inaccessible to Dalit and Tribal students.

“I gave my name for the competition, and when he asked which song I was going to sing, I replied, "Rajahamsame song." Suddenly, he reacted, "Oh, are you able to sing that song?" Before the event, practicing sections are for five days in the auditorium. The practice sessions were held after class between 3:45 and 5 pm. Despite attending practice for five days, they didn't allow me to sing. I was listed as the 12th singer, so every time my turn came, he would suddenly call another participant and give them the chance. For all

four days, he acted as if he didn't see me and allowed other students to practice. On the final day of practice, when I was singing, my voice wavered due to their attitude towards me. I couldn't sing properly, and I ended up crying.”

[Interview 5, PhD participant, Female]

In another instance, classmates discouraged a Tribal student from participating in cultural activities because of her dark complexion.

“We have a Malayali Manga competition here, but nobody from our class participated. I wanted to join because competition is not about the color; we also have to also engage in interactive section with the judges. Their criteria for a Malayali Manga seemed to be fair skin and conventional beauty. So, they (classmates) didn't allow me to participate”

[Interview 3, post graduate student, female]

Targeting by teachers is even worse in the formal academic processes like examinations and evaluations; in the examination hall, they are described as scrutinizing only the papers of Dalit and Tribal students, reinforcing the stereotype that these students are likely to cheat. Further, the practice of reducing marks in examinations, described by students in a variety of setting all over Kerala, clearly reflects the faculty's low expectations of Dalit and Tribal students. This practice seems intended to perpetuate a stigma around these students, branding them as less competent even when they are capable of earning good marks. One participant recalled her experience of bias.

“During exams, I felt my marks were reduced, even when I wrote correctly. I compared my paper with another student who received 45 out of 50; her paper was very average, and I couldn't understand how she got such a high mark without writing anything

properly. My paper being was better than hers but I was only given 35 out of 50”

[Interview 3, post graduate student, female]

Post-matric hostels, administered by the SC/ST department, are government facilities designed to provide assistance to Dalit and Tribal students pursuing higher education. The government does not charge fees for food, and other recreational facilities are also available. However, most wardens belong to general community, hold prejudiced views towards the students and openly demean them by treating them as inferior.

“In the post-metric hostel, initially, one warden was from the SC community in the tutor post, and at that time, it was okay. Then another person came, and she was from the general category. One time, everyone got a food infection, so we complained about it. She received instructions to cook more hygienically. However, she told us, "This is more than enough for people who come from places where there's nothing to eat. You guys are showing a lot of arrogance even though you come from those places.”

[Interview 3, post graduate student, female]

Situations are even worse in management college hostels, as described by another participant in this way:

“Whenever they assign rooms to us, they allocate rooms near bathrooms with fewer facilities or place us in dormitories. They provide good rooms with facilities to students of other castes and Christian students. They discriminate against us in this way. In the first year, there were three dormitories where Dalit and Muslim students and 1 or 2 Christian students who enrolled very late were staying. Other students were in rooms with good facilities. However, rooms next to bathrooms were always assigned to SC/ST students.”

[Interview 5, PhD participant, female]

Another incident of structural discrimination describing below;

“Actually, they have given my MPhil research results to a person, his name was XXX who was pursuing PhD there, and they published a paper in an international journal based on it. I filed a complaint about this at the police station, but no action has been taken”

[Interview 6, PhD participant, female]

So, it is very clear from the above findings that Dalit and Tribal students in the higher education face systematic exclusion and discrimination in various locations and from various people in academia who are actually meant to help or guide. The mechanisms through which Dalit and Tribal students face exclusion as described in the various instances listed above could be summarized as isolation, targeting, stereotyping and humiliation and structural exclusion. These are also main categories comes under the theme Exclusion faced in multiple spaces during analysis. By ‘isolation’ I refer to the exclusion of Dalit and Tribal students from their peers in the classroom; like not interacting with them, not giving a place to sit in the class, not allowing to participating in programs. By ‘Targeting’ I include mechanisms like reducing the marks in exams, asking difficult questions during their presentations, among others. In the mechanism of ‘Stereotyping’ include the normalization of negative stereotypes including; that Dalit and Tribal students are not competent, they steal, and that in the home they wear dress made up of leaves, among others. In ‘Humiliating’ I include all the activities that others do to make a Dalit or Tribal students to feel inferior; like faculties reading grammar mistakes from the exam paper in front of whole class. The findings indicate that the people and places contributing to a colorful campus life also demean and discriminate against other sections of students.

4.2 Factors that Amplify discrimination in educational spaces

While attempting to appreciate the overall experience of discrimination faced by Dalit and Tribal students in higher educational settings, we must also consider broader societal factors that contribute and I argue, amplify these experiences. Many of these students come from low-economic backgrounds, with parents who are daily-wage laborers. These families often lack sufficient funds to support their children's education. Moreover, students are unwilling to accept even the small amounts of money their parents can offer, due to the poverty at home, and the knowledge that even these small amounts are invariably the result of a sacrifice of some essential needs. Lack of funds for food, mess bills, insufficient money for coursework, inadequate clothing, and limited funds for socializing are issues that further contribute to directly or indirectly isolating Dalit and Tribal students in the higher educational settings I studied.

Another critical factor is the low social capital and limited networks, which result in a lack of support for these students both within and outside the college. The participants in my study shared that when Dalit and Tribal students report discrimination on campus, very few come forward to support them. Absence of support, coupled with strong backing for the perpetrators, intensifies their exclusion in these educational environments. In Kerala, the Dalit and tribal communities still lack significant influence within the dominant political parties. This results in political support for the invariably upper-caste perpetrators. Consequently, when incidents occur, these parties often protect the accused upper-caste individuals and pressure Dalit and Tribal students to withdraw their complaints, even if both the accused and the victim of discrimination belong to the same political party. This unfavorable political interference and the lack of networking

opportunities have led to a continued and lonely battle for students against systemic injustices.

Most Dalit and Tribal students are first-generation learners and have limited exposure to the wider world, which can diminish their self-confidence. Facing competition from peers who have benefited from quality schooling and come from families with educated, employed parents, these students often face significant difficulties to demonstrate their capabilities, which can unfairly lead to their labeling as less capable. Lack of command over English due to their poor basic school education and backwardness from less educated people in the community further compound this.

4.3 Failure of structural coping mechanism

This section of the results explores how students manage unfavorable conditions and the types of support they receive in educational settings. This study reveals that coping strategies used by students could be divided into three broad types: formal coping, informal coping, and personal coping mechanisms. Further, formal coping is subdivided into system initiatives and individual initiatives.

‘System initiatives’ refer to facilities or support mechanisms that are guaranteed by the government or integrated into the educational structure and individual initiatives include not giving individual complaint by students. The system initiatives or schemes were introduced explicitly in recognition of the various difficulties faced by Dalit and Tribal students described above in the section on Amplifiers. Examples of such initiatives include the SC/ST cell, e-grant, and post-metric hostels, which are government efforts specifically designed to assist Dalit and Tribal students in light of their disadvantaged backgrounds.

The SC/ST cell, established in every college under UGC regulations, is tasked with monitoring the implementation of the reservation policy and preparing reports on its effectiveness. Also, it is responsible for supporting students in areas where they face difficulties, such as remedial courses, issues related to e-grant, and any other challenges raised by Dalit and tribal students. But from this study data it emerges that the SC/ST cell is not functioning at most of these colleges and many of the students not aware of any service related to SC/ST cell. One participant shared:

“During the e-grant issue we required a signature from the liaison officer, who is in charge for the SC/ST cell. When we approached her for this, only then she realizes that she is in charge of it. This shows the condition of the SC/ST cell here”.

[Interview 1, PhD participant, male]

The e-grant is a financial support provided jointly by the state and central government to meet the basic needs of Dalit and Tribal students. Although it is supposed to be disbursed monthly, no student has ever received it on time during their academic life. There are two main issues with e-grant: the adequacy of the amount and the delay in its distribution. Delays range from a few months to years. Most participants reported that they had not received e-grant during their entire course period, while others experienced delays of months to years. This delay in receiving e-grant is a significant problem mentioned by nearly all participants. Such delays undoubtedly impact the coursework of research scholars, including their opportunities to attend conferences. However, the main issue is the lack of funds for daily needs, including food; one participant shared their experiences of this hardship.

“I got my first fellowship 8 or 9 months after I joined PhD, and the second one after 1 year. I joined the PhD program so happily, but soon found myself completely alone,

enduring immense suffering. I mostly stayed inside my room and avoid people, had nothing to eat, most of the days I was eating only porridge and I often vomited”

[Interview 1, PhD participant, male]

Another student shared her struggle to pay her mess bill due to the delay in receiving her e-grant.

“If I get my e-grant on time, I only have to worry about paying the remaining mess fee of either 1000 or 1500 rupees, out of the total 5000 rupees per month. It's very difficult for me to pay 5000 rupees every month. It is a college hostel, we have to pay the bill at the office, and then they send it to the hostel. So at the hostel, they question, "Why haven't you paid the bill?" Moreover, when I'm in the college, office staff inquires about the pending bill every time they see me. Every morning, we have to punch in the office and during that time, they ask "Why haven't you paid the bill?". I go to class every day, listening to these comments and worrying about how I will manage to pay the bill or whether I should quit the course. These thoughts will be on my mind when I am sitting in class. The situation will worsen if I don't receive e-grant for the coming months”

[Interview 3, post graduate student, female]

Post-metric hostels, provided by the SC/ST department, offer free accommodation and food for students. However, the number of SC/ST hostels is insufficient compared to the number of students in colleges, forcing many students to find housing elsewhere. One student shared her story of how they get in to post-metric hostel.

“The new hostel stayed closed despite the completion of all the work. We protested, and that's what led them to finally open it for us.”

[Interview 3, post graduate student, female]

Support within the educational structure includes mentorship from faculty and assistance from administrative staff. Faculty members are expected to provide academic help and mentorship, but many students report that such support is often based on caste identity. One student mentioned a faculty member who claimed there were no vacancies for PhD enrollment under his supervision, even after he approached him for 4 or 5 times yet at the same time, he invited an upper-caste student to join.

“I went to him continuously for 5 or 10 times. I know he was an associate professor then, and he could take on 6 people, but only 4 people were doing research under him. Considering my seniority, having completed MPhil and PG there, and being an average student, I wasn't weak in my studies; I had an 81% mark in my MPhil. I used to study my area very well, so he could've considered me. However, he said, "I will see later; I haven't decided to take anybody now. The seniors and juniors had a very good bond there at university. There was one junior girl, a friend of my wife who had just completed her PG. She belonged to an upper caste. She was called to his home (professor) and was informed about a vacancy, told her to apply for Ph.D. When she shared this with me, I was totally shattered”

[Interview 2, PhD participant, male]

Administrative staffs are expected to assist students with administrative tasks, including handling e-grant, but they are described as behaving as if the students are asking for favors every time they inquire about e-grant. Many students have reported that staff members do not answer their calls, leading the students to visit in person to inquire about the fund. This sometimes leads to arguments with the staff.

“I went to the SC/ST development office to inquire about the encouragement money given to students, something I had been receiving since my school days. When I called them,

they responded, "You don't have to call me every time; when it comes, I will call you and inform." Unhappy with this response, I went to the office in person. I conveyed, "We are calling to know the status of our file, and we are not calling to your personal number but the section phone number. So, if you are taking the call, talk properly; otherwise, we will file a complaint"

[Interview 2, PhD participant, male]

Individual initiatives within the system include filing complaints at the university against discriminatory actions or directly at the police station. Students who have reported discrimination by faculty members said that although the university initially orders an inquiry, the files are often shelved, and no further action is taken. In such cases, it becomes difficult for the complainants to continue after filing a complaint, they tend to be entirely isolated by other students and staff who stop communicating with them.

Another student detailed his experience of facing backlash after filing a complaint against a faculty member at the university. He pursued a court case after being denied a seat in the PhD program. During this process, another faculty member from the same department supported him, promising to consider him for supervision even after the case. However, the university eventually dismissed this supportive professor, officially for other reasons, but the student believed it was due to the unwavering support the professor had shown to him as a Dalit student.

4.4 Reliance on informal coping mechanism

Informal support for coping includes assistance from friends or faculty members, which often depends on their relationship with them. One student shared their experience of receiving help during a financial struggle caused by a delay in e-grant disbursement: a

professor paid her hostel fees and bought books for her. Other forms of support include emotional backing from friends.

“When I was doing my MPhil, 3 or 4 friends of mine stood with me in everything, from the issue till now. They never said anything bad and did their best to make me comfortable there at college after all these issues happened. They never left me alone in that college. Very few but genuine friends are now with me”.

[Interview 8, PhD participant, male]

Other forms of informal support come from NGOs, which play a significant role in the lives of students. These organizations assist in various ways, including helping students from districts like Wayanad and Idukki to secure admissions in various colleges across Kerala. They also support student protests against issues such as e-grant delays and problems with post-metric hostels. Additionally, NGOs provide legal support to students who do not receive assistance from college administrations. They provide financial assistance.

Personal coping mechanisms are by and large what all most all students deploy for everyday survival in academic spaces. It includes many ways of coping; avoiding people, remaining inside room, keeping silence, crying, denial of the discrimination etc. One participant described how she denied every time when she faces discrimination.

“When you experience something unusual, you might try to ignore it or deny that nothing has happened, reassuring yourself that it’s not discrimination, something that you’re consciously doing to protect your mental health. However, even if you deny it ninety times, eventually you must face the reality that it is indeed discrimination.”

[Interview 9, degree student, female]

Seeking medical assistance is another coping mechanism. But not every student can afford it. One participant said she could afford it because of her family support and financial better background. But another participant said she could not continue her medications for bipolar disease due to delayed grant which worsens her conditions

“By luck, I don’t have suicidal thoughts right now, but I prefer isolating myself from others. Sometimes I sit in my room without going to the department. When it gets worse, I take therapy, but one session costs around 2000 rupees. I don’t want to depend on others. When we went to see the minister and mentioned that I had mental health issues because of an e-grant delay, he responded as if no one could ever have such issues due to a delay in e-grant processing.”

[Interview 10, PhD participant, female]

Students often walk long distances to save on bus fares due to their limited financial resources and delays in receiving e-grant fund.

“I strive to save as much money as possible by keeping my spending to a bare minimum. I usually don’t have much money; I manage to live on a maximum of 300 rupees for two or three weeks. To save money, I mostly walk to college even though it’s a long distance (around 7km)”

[Interview 11, Degree student, male]

One another student shared his experience when he lost paper during his first year in a technical institute; he adopt two types of personal coping mechanism; crying, studying well to get passed

“I’m a person who keeps a smile all the time. I never shared any of my problems with anyone. No one was there to comfort me. I had situations where i cried alone in my room. I overcome by my own. Later i studied well and i passed the exam”

[Interview 12, degree student, male]

There are governmental and structural mechanisms designed to support students in general, and Dalit and tribal students in particular. However, many of these support systems, such as the SC/ST cell and services like e-grant and post-metric hostels, are either delayed or insufficient due to being a low priority for the government. The only external support these students receive typically comes from friends or teachers, and this is often based on individual merit. Additionally, NGOs provide legal assistance and help organize protests for students' rights. Students rely on personal coping mechanisms to handle everyday challenges

4.5 Various impacts

By avoiding people and remaining in their rooms, students often end up isolating themselves, which can have consequences for their mental health and academic achievements. This section will discuss these effects.

Discrimination, in any form, impacts a person's mental health. This could result from others' exclusionary behaviors, delays in academic tasks, or insufficient support.

When e-grant are delayed, finding money becomes a significant challenge for students from poor backgrounds. One participant shared his experience of feeling helpless when his mother was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Without access to funds and facing the dual pressures of hunger and his mother's illness at home, he was pushed into a deeply traumatic situation that led him to consider suicide. Here are his words;

“I wasn’t in a good mood for academics and was always plagued by negative thoughts. If it weren’t for other things in my life, like family and responsibilities, I might have considered doing something like suicide. I cried a lot sitting inside my room. It’s difficult to survive in such situation; it was like there is one system, which doesn’t have to take any extra effort, but silently killing people. I wasn’t getting sleep, with bedtime occurring around 4 or 5 am every day. Friends assured me that things would get better once I received the money, but despite knowing it might happen one day, I feared I wouldn’t be able to overcome the trauma I suffered during that time”.

[Interview 1, PhD participant, male]

Another participant had to seek medical assistance upon being diagnosed with depression;

“It was not easy for me during my final year; I was diagnosed with anxiety and depression. The pressure i felt was immense, as if we have to constantly prove our worth for being here. The traumas from college have left me doubting my intelligence and ability to study”

[Interview 9, degree student, female]

Some students are able to obtain medical help for their conditions due to more stable family situations, but others cannot afford such assistance due to financial constraints or delayed e-grant. For these students, conversations with close friends often become their only source of comfort in difficult times.

Academic discrimination primarily impacts students by causing them to lose years engaged in court cases and battling the system. As one participant expressed;

“I have gone through many situations that made me to think about suicide. I’ve suffered enough physical and mental torture, and I’m still going through mental stress. I have to

follow up on the case in the high court, lower court, and find finance for it, also focus on studies. It was my social commitment that led me to go for the case; but for that I've lost 12 years. I often feel like none of this was necessary”

[Interview 6, PhD participant, female]

Everyone appreciates when someone speaks out against discrimination and pursues legal action, but the social isolation that follows the initial support can be extremely challenging to survive in academic environments.

“One day, a few XXX (political party) members came and beat me while I was in the hostel, They accused me of using weed, although I don't even smoke a cigarette. They told me “We don't allow any ‘Pulayadi Makkal’ to study here. If not polite enough on campus, you will get killed”. They slap me between my right eye and ear; I collapsed onto the floor and they had an iron rod with them. They seized my neck and suffocated me for approximately 40 minutes.”

[Interview 8, PhD participant, male]

This participant was involved in discussions about forming an Ambedkar Students Association on campus. For his efforts, he was attacked, leading him to file a complaint against student members of a major political party, and he has refused to compromise on the case. Now, he is saving money to go abroad, as he believes it will be difficult to secure a government job locally after taking legal action against the party.

However, another participant, despite completing his B.tech from the second-best technical institution in the country, is hesitant to leave his own state and seek employment elsewhere due to fears of caste discrimination, thereby missing out on many good opportunities in career.

The harsh reality of being a Dalit PhD recipient in this state is to work for a salary of 12,000 rupees, which is even less than what an average daily wage labourer earns in Kerala.

This study reveals that despite gaining access to higher education and receiving governmental assistance like e-grant and post-matric hostel facilities, Dalit students continue to struggling. They have to face difficulties including delayed academic progress, long time taken to complete course and mental health issues. Ultimately, these students continue to experience tremendous struggling to survive in academic environments.

One notable finding is that the SC/ST cell is non-functional in nearly all colleges; put another way; institutions are failing to take any initiatives to meet the needs of Dalit and tribal students. Some participants are not even aware of what is SC/ST cell. A major issue arising from the absence of the SC/ST cell is the lack of institutional forums to raise and follow-up on e-grant issues. Similarly inadequate English coaching facilities and absence of remedial courses in colleges complicating the educational journey for first-generation learners, along with other issues. Other issue is despite UGC regulations against collecting mess fees from students, many colleges continue to demand them. The attitude of administrative staff often makes it seem as though students are asking for favors when they inquire about e-grant issues or seek relaxation in fee payments. Overall, the lack of support systems reveals a broader neglect of Dalits and tribals by the government, which is also evident in these educational settings.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATION, LIMITATIONS

This section discusses the research results by highlighting three main areas: firstly, issues confirmed by this study that are also supported by other scholarly works. Secondly; the new and emerging challenges that were identified in the field of study thirdly, by outlining the results that are uncertain and require further investigation

5.1 Results in line with existing literature

Research conducted in elite institutions in India concludes that the environment of prestigious educational institutions remains influenced by the prevailing biases and stereotypes that exist within society at large, illustrating that even these elite spaces are not immune to broader discriminatory attitudes (Gaurav J. Pathania & William G. Tierney, 2018); This aligns with findings from this study where students are unfairly labelled as lacking merit, accused of cheating on exams, and stealing, ultimately facing stigmatization due to their tribal identities.

The consequences of denying equal rights based on group membership, along with mechanisms of discrimination and violence, lead to socio-psychological effects. This is because such denial indirectly undermines the fundamental human need for 'belongingness' and is likely to impede the drive for human development (Sen Amartya, 2006), which is also align with this study finding; participants mentioned non belongingness even after being a part of higher education for 10 years.

However, affirmative action and positive discrimination policies are often met with resistance within higher educational environments. According paper published in 2022, analysis, faculty members, administrative staff, and students have negative sentiments towards these initiatives(Bhoi and Lakra, 2022), which also confirmed by many participants of my study who reported that; reservation seen as easy access to everything, by students and faculty from Non-Dalit and Non-Tribal backgrounds

In one study, participants mentioned issues with delayed assignments of supervisors and lab access, which are restricted to regular office hours and require daily progress reports. Additionally, even when lab spaces are provided, there is often a lack of support in obtaining necessary experimental materials, and insufficient guidance from professors. Similar incidents were also reported by participants of this study, noting that they were asked to work without being provided the necessary materials, non-cooperation of faculties(Kumar, 2016)

First generation students often come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, typically at or near the poverty line, compared to second generation students. As they move through higher education, they face numerous challenges and develop strategies to cope with ongoing caste-based stigma, stereotypes, and emotional distress. This stigma can lead to and intensify social isolation.(Pathania et al., 2023), which is also mentioned this study through various mechanism of isolation, stereotyping, humiliation.

The impact of caste on mental health is not solely an individual concern but a collective social issue that perpetuates inequality and affects the overall wellbeing of marginalized communities. Efforts to understand and address these issues require an interdisciplinary approach that combines insights from anthropology, sociology, and psychiatry. This approach should not only focus on the psychopathology of individuals affected by caste-

based discrimination but also consider the cultural and social dynamics that perpetuate caste prejudices and the structural violence inherent in the system(Jadhav et al., 2016)

A study in Kerala's state engineering colleges found significant discrimination against SC and ST students, who are visibly targeted and stereotyped. Practices such as ragging and public listing of entrance ranks perpetuate a perception of academic inferiority. Faculty reinforce these stereotypes by treating these students as less capable, which negatively impacts their education and contributes to the stigma against them, echoing findings from this study where participants mentioned not getting appreciation for telling answers in classroom, reduce marks etc. (C M and Ilavarasan, 2016)

Structural exclusion like giving research result of Dalit student to other person is a way to isolate and exclude students from academic; But this type of incident is not only pointing academic dishonesty but also underscores a broader, systemic issue across academic settings, the undervaluation and exploitation of intellectual contributions from underrepresented groups. We can look at this issue in two ways; in one way the original Dalit student researcher loses the opportunity to gain recognition and enhance future career opportunities. On another level, the institutional tolerance of such discrimination sends a message to the student community about the acceptability of valuing academic contributions based on social identities, ultimately reinforcing the notion that only certain groups deserve to be at the forefront of knowledge production(Maurya, 2018).

5.2 Challenges faced by Dalit and Tribal students in higher education due to socio-economic situation

One emerging challenge that Dalit and Tribal students face in higher education institutions in Kerala is how poverty and hunger are created within an academic environment. Many of these students come from very low socio-economic backgrounds; their parents are daily

wage laborers, and many are farmers or engage in other manual labor. They can send their children to study and wish them well but are unable to provide the financial support that an academic setting demands. In educational institutions, there are other students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds but they do not face the same social disadvantages experienced by Dalit or Tribal students. This distinction means that other students might have alternative avenues for support that aren't available or accessible to a Dalit or Tribal students. This disparity is evident in the comments from the participants: “Everything is working normally for them, but not for us”, “They are receiving their grants on time, but we are not”, “They will be the teachers' favorites, but none among us ever will”

Many students enter higher education with the expectation that their academic needs will be met by e-grant, at least to some extent. But they experience significant setbacks when these e-grant are delayed for months, years, or sometimes not received at all during their entire course period. Such delays can lead to considerable academic difficulties and challenges in meeting basic necessities such as food, stay, dress etc. Most study participants mentioned that they often struggle to find money for food, leaving them with an empty stomach on many days. For others, eating one meal a day has become the routine; Some students try to share hostel mess with friends, but ultimately, the guilt of not paying leads them to go hungry alongside their friends. The financial support of 300 or 500 rupees that students usually receive for a month from their families is insufficient for covering both academic and basic necessities. Consequently, this often leads them to rethink about continuing their educational pursuits.

Another emerging issue is failure of formal support structures that are put in place by government considering the disadvantaged background of students to ease their academic journey such as e-grant, post metric hostel facility, SC/ST cell, fees relaxation. As we

mentioned the major challenge coming out from e-grant delay in above paragraph here we focus on others. The number of post-matric hostels is insufficient compared to the increasing number of students coming to higher education. Also, issues like failure to open fully completed hostels; forces students to protest on the streets to access the facilities that the government guarantees. Another implication of the lack of hostel facilities is that it compels students to seek accommodation externally, which doubles their financial burden. Another problem is when staff from different communities, such as wardens and kitchen or cleaning personnel in post-matric hostels, view Dalit and tribal students as inferior and immoral. These students, being new to the setting, feel disrespected when their actions are constantly criticized without consideration of their unfamiliarity with the environment.

5.3 Issues Requiring Further Investigation reflected in the study

Campuses in Kerala are well-known for political activism and their liberal stance against discrimination. However, some participants mentioned that when they filed complaints of discrimination on campus, they faced backlash from these political parties. In such instances, political parties invariably provide strong support and protection to individuals accused of caste discrimination, which significantly increases the difficulties that Dalit and tribal students face in asserting their rights; examples include the dismissal of a professor who supported a Dalit student, the withholding of reports against professor accused of discrimination, and pressuring a Dalit student to withdraw a case against an upper-caste professor, even though both individuals belonged to the same party. These examples pointing the negative political interference students experience in higher education. Clearly shows the political backing a student gains on campus is heavily influenced by their social capital and it is evident that Dalit and Tribal students are at a significant disadvantage in this regard. The way in which caste identity seems to even

override the progressive and justice oriented rhetoric of political parties in a highly politicized state like Kerala is a phenomenon worth exploring. With no strong Dalit political parties unlike in neighbouring Tamilnadu, Dalit and Adivasi students in Kerala have very little options for political support.

5.4 Between Thriving and Surviving

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP), implemented by the Government of India, (Government of India, Ministry of Education, 2020), aims to improve the quality of higher education and develop well-rounded, creative individuals prepared for fulfilling lives and significant societal contributions. It emphasizes personal growth, societal engagement, and economic independence. However, the policy has faced criticism for not addressing equity and inclusivity sufficiently in its frame work, especially for marginalized communities such as Dalit and tribal students. Its lack of concrete measures on reservation policies (affirmative action) and the encouragement of self-financed courses could undermine its broader objectives and perpetuate existing social injustices and stratification. Therefore, it is crucial to reassess the NEP framework and include measures that will acknowledge the participation which facilitate the potential thriving of marginalized students, especially Dalits and Tribals, aligning with its goals and advancing social justice.

The theories of Braxton, and others highlight the crucial link between a student's academic and social experiences in shaping their success in higher education. These theories suggest that a student's background and perceptions of an institution's commitment for student's welfare deeply influence their college journey. When universities implement active learning and create an inclusive atmosphere that aligns with the diverse values of their students, they enhance social integration(John M. Braxton et

al., 2016). This integration not only improves academic engagement but also strengthens students' ties to the campus community, significantly increasing their likelihood of persisting and thriving in their educational pursuits (Braxton et al., 2008). Dalit and tribal students often confront substantial educational challenges from inadequate institutional support. This includes insufficient implementation of essential programs such as e-grants and SC/ST cells, along with a lack of academic support. These shortcomings hinder their social integration and learning, ultimately impeding their academic progress.

Gloria Ladson-Billings' application of Critical Race Theory (CRT) to education sheds crucial light on the systemic and institutionalized racism that permeates various facets of the educational system. By dissecting the roles of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and funding, Ladson-Billings illustrates how these elements collaborate to uphold a structure that marginalizes students of colour and maintains educational inequity (Gloria Ladson-Billings, 2010). Their experiences of exclusion and discrimination are not merely the products of individual prejudices and practices, but also outcomes of deeply rooted institutional mechanisms that deliberately keep Dalit and Tribal students away from the domain of knowledge by allowing them to merely survive rather than thrive.

This study conclusively demonstrates that Dalit and Tribal students, who have historically been marginalized from educational opportunities, continue to face relentless challenges in academic environments. These struggles push them to merely survive in environments that are envisioned to enable everyone to thrive.

Their daily existence is a continual negotiation of systemic adversities prevalent throughout educational spaces. Importantly, these educational institutions have completely failed to uphold the constitutional values of equality, justice, and inclusivity, fundamental to democratic institutions. This failure affects not just the individuals within these

institutions but also erodes the societal foundation of fairness and equal opportunity that educational establishments are tasked to protect and promote.

Before concluding this discussion, I would like to echo the pressing question raised by the participants and a concern. Their question is: How many more tragedies like that of Rohit Vemula must occur before justice and dignity are served for Dalit and tribal students within academic environments? Also, their greatest concern is whether their future generations will be safe in these academic spaces that have created a sense of otherness, subjected them to humiliation and stigmatization, and stripped away all their confidence—a place where they have never felt they belonged.

Dalit and tribal students often feel a profound sense of alienation within higher education institutions. Their marginalized societal status, along with prejudicial attitudes from peers, faculty, and administrative staff, leads to experiences of humiliation, stigmatization, isolation, and targeted discrimination. Structural mechanism, such as violations of admissions regulations, further serve to exclude these students from academic opportunities.

Furthermore, the lack of sufficient institutional support exacerbates the difficulties these students face. This includes inadequate hostel accommodations, delayed e-grant, and ineffective SC/ST cells designed to resolve student complaints. These problems are worsened by the socio-economic hardships commonly experienced by Dalit and tribal students.

The consequences of experiencing such discrimination are significant, manifesting in psychological challenges including depression, suicidal ideation, and persistent mental

stress. Academically, the impacts are equally severe, evidenced by delayed academic progression, failure in courses, and higher dropout rates.

Higher education is a vital institution that shapes the next generation of leaders, thinkers, innovators, and professionals in this country, providing students with the intellectual tools and practical skills necessary to contribute meaningfully to society. It serves as a crucial platform for intellectual development, personal growth, and civic engagement. However, the experience of students from the most disadvantaged backgrounds tells a different story, one in which students struggle every day to overcome centuries-old prejudices and stigma. This leaves them merely surviving in an environment that is envisioned to enable every student to potentially thrive.

5.6 Recommendations

Immediate Recommendations that emerge from this study are;

- Urgent measures should be taken for timely dispensing of e-grant
- Establish on-campus counselling services for Dalit and Tribal students that are sensitive to their particular backgrounds and contexts, and that are functional and accessible.
- Systematic efforts to enable academic performance – especially for first generation learners and those from vernacular and poor backgrounds.
- Presently non-functional SC/ST cell in every institution, be made functional with the active involvement of SC/ST students and their networks.

However, for the immediate measure to have a long-term impact measures have to be taken to make the academic space more welcoming. Such measures could include:

- Increase the diversity of faculty members; include more faculties from Dalit and Tribal communities.
- To develop more inclusive curricula. This would include avoiding stereotypical representation, as well as challenging various dominant norms and frames that are discriminatory.
- Sensitizing people about the perspective of Dalit and Tribal students on discrimination

The ultimate solution lies in societal change to address the larger structural issue of caste discrimination. However, the recommendations from this study aim to enable students to move beyond a little beyond surviving towards thriving academically.

5.7 Limitations

- The study did not include students who dropped out of colleges, thereby omitting a potentially critical perspective; which means the research lacks insights from those experiences were perhaps markedly different and challenging enough to ultimately drive them to leave college. Understanding these absent voices could provide deeper insights into the barriers faced within the educational system.
- The study faced time constraints during data collection and analysis, limiting the opportunity to fully engage with participants and encourage them to share their experiences openly. This was particularly visible with undergraduate students, whose limited exposure to higher education and understanding of caste dynamics in academia made it challenging to share detailed responses. Allocating more time for data collection would have allowed for a deeper exploration of their perspectives and enriched the research findings.

- The potential participants who had experienced discrimination and initially agreed to participate but later did not respond may have been held back due to the potential mental stress involved in recalling their traumatic experiences. Losing their participation is a significant limitation of the study.

5.8 Positionality

As someone from the medical field without any background in social science subjects, I faced difficulties in grasping certain concepts. However, my identity as a member of the Dalit community helped me to build rapport with the participants, enabling me to understand and relate to the experiences they shared.

To mitigate potential biases associated with identity, I adopted several measures. These included regular discussions with my guide and individuals from NGOs who belong to other communities yet have extensive experience working with marginalized groups. This helped me gain diverse perspectives. Also, I engaged in discussions with research scholars who have strong backgrounds in social sciences but do not belong to the Dalit or Tribal communities. These interactions further enriched my understanding and refined my approach to the research. Additionally I read books by Dalit scholars to deepen my understanding of the issues.

5.9 Trust worthiness

To establish the trustworthiness of the findings, the four aspects of trustworthiness in naturalistic inquiry, as outlined by Deborah E. White and colleagues (Nowell et al., 2017) are explored in the section below. Table 1 explains the various strategies employed to ensure the trustworthiness of findings across the four dimensions: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Table 5.1 Dimensions of trustworthiness and strategies employed to ensure them

Criteria	Strategies	Explanation of Strategies
Credibility	Continued Engagement	<p>Spending time with collaborating NGOs and other scholars</p> <p>Reading books and watched documentaries and interviews related to area of focus</p>
	Member Checking	<p>Reiterating descriptions and clarifying implied meanings during in-depth interviews</p> <p>Discussions of final results with participants</p>
	Triangulation	<p>Sources: Discussions of study findings with non-participants, who were not engaged with the study in any manner</p> <p>Methods: Triangulating data collected on experience of discrimination through direct questions in IDI with themes generated through analysis regarding various mechanism of discrimination, coping strategy, impacts.</p> <p>Investigators: Coding of first set of interviews were done separately by PI and Co-PI, themes generated were matched for similarities and differences</p>
Transferability	Thick Descriptions	Detailed descriptions of the Study Context
		Descriptions of sampling strategy
		Descriptions of data collection techniques
		Details descriptions of data analysis process

Dependability	Triangulation	Coding of first set of interviews were done separately by PI and Co-PI, themes generated were matched for similarities and differences
Confirmability	Audit Trails	Detailed records of decisions made during the entire research process were maintained in the study journal Raw data of interview recordings and transcripts have been maintained Detailed process of data collection, along with observation notes were maintained in field diary Detailed records of the coding process (generating global themes from base codes) were maintained All documents related to the study including, TAC proposal, IEC clearance and study tools have been collected and organised in a digital file.
	Reflexive Journal	Important reflection and dilemma were recorded in the field journal

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ANNEXES

Annexure 1

Achutha Menon Centre for Health Science Studies (AMCHSS)

**Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences & Technology (SCTIMST)
Trivandrum- 11**

Participant Information Sheet

I am Dr Aparna Sasi, currently pursuing Master of Public Health (MPH) at Achutha Menon Centre for Health Science Studies (AMCHSS), Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology, Trivandrum, Kerala. I am doing a study on “Experiences of students who have entered Higher Education Institutions through affirmative action in Kerala” as a part of my course work, under the guidance of Dr Rakhal Gaitonde, Professor at AMCHSS. You are being invited to participate in this research study. Before you decide whether or not to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the information sheet and the consent form carefully and feel free to ask for clarifications you may have.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to comprehensively examine the experiences and perceptions of students who have entered Higher Education Institutions through affirmative action in Kerala. It focuses on two key aspects: the impact of their interpersonal relationships causing caste-based discrimination and the role of institutional structures in perpetuating such discrimination. Additionally, the research aims to uncover the strategies used by these students to combat discrimination and assess its psychological toll on their mental health. Ultimately, the study seeks to enhance our understanding of the challenges faced by marginalized students in higher education and inform efforts to create more inclusive learning environments.

Procedure

If you are willing to participate in the study, you will be asked to complete an interview schedule which will include questions focusing on campus life in general and interaction with teachers and other students, classroom activities etc. The interview will take approximately 45- 60 minutes of your valuable time. Interview will be recorded with due consent. Privacy will be ensured during the interviews.

Potential risks and discomforts

Taking part in the study and discussing your personal experiences related to discrimination and mental health may at times be emotionally demanding and can lead to feelings of unease or discomfort.

Possible benefits

Your participation in the study may not yield immediate personal benefits, but it holds value in alternative ways. Through sharing your insights and experiences, you contribute to heightened awareness and a deeper understanding of the challenges related to discrimination in higher education. Your involvement also offers the chance to express your perspective, fostering empowerment not only for yourself but also for others.

Cost and financial benefit

There is no cost for participation in this study. Participation is completely voluntary and no payment will be provided.

Confidentiality

Information obtained in this study will be kept strictly confidential. A participant identification number will be assigned to each participant which will help to maintain the strict confidentiality of the data collected. Your name will not be used in reporting information in publications or reports.

Withdrawal from the study

Your participation in the study will be completely voluntary. You are free and have the right to withdraw during the study at any time. There will be no penalty for withdrawal or not participating in the study.

Contact information

If you have any research-related questions or would like to verify my credentials, you may contact me or member secretary of our institute's ethics committee.

Dr Aparna Sasi
Principal Investigator
MPH 2022, AMCHSS, SCTIMST
Contact Number: 6238200875
Email: meraki937@gmail.com

Dr Srinivas G
Member Secretary
Institutional Ethics Committee
SCTIMST, TRIVANDRUM- 695011
Office: 04712524689
Email: iec.mem.sec@sctimst.ac.in

Annexure 2

**അച്യുതമേനോൻ സെന്റർ ഫോർ ഹെൽത്ത് സയൻസ് സ്റ്റഡീസ്(
എഎംസിഎച്ച്എസ്എസ്)**

**ശ്രീചിത്ര തിരുനാൾ ഇൻസ്റ്റിറ്റ്യൂട്ട് ഫോർ മെഡിക്കൽ സയൻസ് ആൻഡ്
ടെക്നോളജി**

(എ സി ടി ഐ എം എസ് ടി)- തിരുവനന്തപുരം 11

ഞാൻ ഡോക്ടർ അപർണ ശശി, ശ്രീചിത്ര തിരുനാൾ ഇൻസ്റ്റിറ്റ്യൂട്ട് ഫോർ മെഡിക്കൽ സയൻസ് ആൻഡ് ടെക്നോളജിയുടെ (തിരുവനന്തപുരം) കീഴിലുള്ള അച്യുതമേനോൻ സെന്റർ ഫോർ ഹെൽത്ത് സയൻസ് സ്റ്റഡീസിൽ (എംപിഎച്ച്) മാസ്റ്റർ ഓഫ് പബ്ലിക് ഹെൽത്ത് (എംപിഎച്ച്) ൽ ബിരുദാനന്തര ബിരുദ വിദ്യാർത്ഥിയാണ്. എന്റെ കോഴ്സ് വർക്കിന്റെ ഭാഗമായി " കേരളത്തിലെ ഉന്നതവിദ്യാഭ്യാസ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങളിൽ സ്ഥിരീകരണ പ്രവർത്തനത്തിലൂടെ പ്രവേശനം നേടിയ വിദ്യാർത്ഥികളുടെ അനുഭവങ്ങൾ " എന്ന വിഷയത്തിൽ ഞാൻ ഒരു പഠനം നടത്തുകയാണ്. എഎംസിഎച്ച്എസ്എസിലെ പ്രൊഫസറായ ഡോ. രാഖൽ ഗൈതോണ്ടെയാണ് പഠനവുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട മാർഗനിർദ്ദേശങ്ങൾ നൽകുന്നത്.

ഈ ഗവേഷണ പഠനത്തിന് നിങ്ങളുടെ പങ്കാളിത്തം ഉറപ്പുവരുത്താൻ ക്ഷണിച്ചുകൊള്ളുന്നു . ഈ പഠനത്തിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കണമോ വേണ്ടയോ എന്ന് തീരുമാനിക്കുന്നതിന് മുമ്പ്, എന്തിനാണ് ഗവേഷണം നടത്തുന്നതെന്നും അതിൽ എന്താണ് അടങ്ങിയിരിക്കുന്നതെന്നും നിങ്ങൾ മനസ്സിലാക്കേണ്ടത് പ്രധാനമാണ് എന്നു കരുതുന്നു. വിവരണ രേഖകളും സമ്മതപത്രവും ശ്രദ്ധാപൂർവ്വം വായിച്ച് നോക്കുക, നിങ്ങൾക്ക് ഉണ്ടായേക്കാവുന്ന സംശയങ്ങൾക്ക് യാതൊരു മടിയും കൂടാതെ വിശദീകരണം ചോദിക്കാവുന്നതാണ്.

പഠന ഉദ്ദേശ്യം

ഉന്നത വിദ്യാഭ്യാസ കേന്ദ്രങ്ങളിലെ ദളിത്, ആദിവാസി വിദ്യാർത്ഥികളുടെ അനുഭവങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ചും അവബോധങ്ങളേക്കുറിച്ചും സമഗ്രമായി പരിശോധിക്കുകയാണ് ഈ പഠനത്തിന്റെ ലക്ഷ്യം. ഇത് പ്രധാനമായും രണ്ട് കാഴ്ചകളിലേക്കാണ് ശ്രദ്ധ കേന്ദ്രീകരിക്കുന്നത് : വിദ്യാർത്ഥികൾക്കിടയിലെ വ്യക്തിബന്ധങ്ങളും അവിടെ ജാതി എന്നത് വിവേചനത്തിന്റെ കാരണമായി വർത്തിക്കുന്നതും അത്തരം വിവേചനം നിലനിർത്തി പോരുന്നതിൽ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങളുടെ ഘടനകൾ വഹിക്കുന്ന പങ്ക്. അതോടൊപ്പം, വിവേചനം മൂലമുണ്ടാകുന്ന അവരുടെ മാനസികാരോഗ്യത്തെ ബാധിക്കുന്ന മാനസിക ആഘാതത്തിനെ മറികടക്കുന്നതിന് അവർ തന്നെ നിർമ്മിച്ചെടുക്കുന്ന ചെറുത്തുനിൽപ്പിനുള്ള മാർഗങ്ങളെ കണ്ടെത്താനും അവയുടെ പ്രവർത്തനത്തെ മനസ്സിലാക്കാനും ഗവേഷണം ലക്ഷ്യമിടുന്നു. ആത്യന്തികമായി, ഈ പഠനം ലക്ഷ്യം വെക്കുന്നത് ഉന്നത വിദ്യാഭ്യാസ കേന്ദ്രങ്ങളിൽ പാർശ്വവൽക്കരിക്കപ്പെട്ട വിദ്യാർത്ഥികൾ നേരിട്ടുകൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്ന വെല്ലുവിളികളിലേക്ക് ശ്രദ്ധതിരിക്കുന്നതിനും പ്രശ്നത്തെ മനസ്സിലാക്കുന്നതിനും അതുവഴി കൂടുതൽ ഉൾചേർക്കലുകൾ സാധ്യമാക്കുന്ന പഠന സാഹചര്യങ്ങൾ സൃഷ്ടിച്ചെടുക്കുക എന്നതാണ്.

നടപടിക്രമം/അഭിമുഖ രീതി

നിങ്ങൾ പഠനത്തിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കാൻ തയ്യാറാണെങ്കിൽ 45- 60 മിനിറ്റ് നീണ്ടുനിൽക്കുന്ന ഒരു ആഭിമുഖത്തിൽ പങ്കാളി ആവേണ്ടതുണ്ട്. കലാലയ ജീവിതവുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെടുന്ന സാമാന്യ ചോദ്യങ്ങൾ, അധ്യാപകരുമായും മറ്റ് വിദ്യാർത്ഥികളുമായും ഉള്ള ആശയവിനിമയം, ക്ലാസ്റും പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ എന്നിവയാണ് അഭിമുഖത്തിൽ

ഉൾക്കൊള്ളിച്ചിരിക്കുന്ന പ്രധാന ചോദ്യങ്ങൾ. നിങ്ങളുടെ സമ്മതത്തോടെ സ്വകാര്യത ഉറപ്പുനൽകിക്കൊണ്ട് അഭിമുഖ സംഭാഷണം റെക്കോർഡ് ചെയ്യുന്നതാണ്.

ഉണ്ടാകാൻ ഇടയുള്ള അപകടവും അസ്വസ്ഥതകളും വിവേചനത്തേയും മാനസികആരോഗ്യത്തേയും ബന്ധപ്പെടുത്തി നിങ്ങളുടെ അനുഭവങ്ങളെ അടിസ്ഥാനപ്പെടുത്തിയ കാര്യങ്ങൾ ആണ് അഭിമുഖത്തിൽ ചർച്ചചെയ്യുന്നത്. അതിനാൽ ചിലപ്പോൾ വൈകാരികമായ ചില അസ്വസ്ഥത നേരിട്ടേക്കാം.

പഠനത്തിലെ സാധ്യതകൾ

ഈ പഠനത്തിൽ നിങ്ങൾ പങ്കാളിത്തമുള്ളതാണ് കൊണ്ട് ഉടനടി വ്യക്തിഗത നേട്ടങ്ങൾ കൈവരിക്കണം എന്നില്ല. നിങ്ങളുടെ അനുഭവങ്ങളുടെ വെളിച്ചത്തിൽ പങ്കുവെക്കുന്ന കാര്യങ്ങൾ , ഉന്നത വിദ്യാഭ്യാസത്തിലെ വിവേചനവുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട വെല്ലുവിളികളെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള അവബോധവും ആഴത്തിലുള്ള ധാരണയും സംഭാവന ചെയ്യുന്നു. നിങ്ങളുടെ പങ്കാളിത്തം നിങ്ങളുടെ കാഴ്ചപ്പാടുകൾ പ്രകടിപ്പിക്കാനുള്ള അവസരംകൂടിയാണ്. ഇതിലൂടെ നിങ്ങൾക്ക് മാത്രമല്ല ഒപ്പമുള്ളവരുടെയും ശാക്തീകരണത്തെ പ്രോത്സാഹിപ്പിക്കുന്നു

.സാമ്പത്തിക ചെലവും നേട്ടവും

ഈ പഠനത്തിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കുന്നതിന് യാതൊരുവിധ സാമ്പത്തിക നേട്ടമോ ചിലവുകളോ ഇല്ല. പങ്കാളിത്തം പൂർണ്ണമായും സ്വമേധയാ ഉള്ളതാണ്.

വിശ്വസ്തത/സ്വകാര്യത

ഈ പഠനത്തിൽ പങ്കാളിയാവുന്ന ഓരോരുത്തർക്കും വ്യത്യസ്ത തിരിച്ചറിയൽ നമ്പർ നൽകും, ഇത് ശേഖരിക്കുന്ന വിവരങ്ങളുടെ കൃത്യമായ രഹസ്യാത്മകത നിലനിർത്താൻ സഹായിക്കും. പ്രസിദ്ധീകരണങ്ങളിലോ റിപ്പോർട്ടുകളിലോ ഈ വിവരങ്ങൾ ഉൾപ്പെടുത്തുമ്പോൾ നിങ്ങളുടെ പേരുവിവരങ്ങൾ ഉപയോഗിക്കില്ല.

പഠനത്തിൽനിന്നുള്ള പിന്മാറ്റം

നിങ്ങളുടെ പങ്കാളിത്തം ഈ പഠനത്തിൽ പൂർണ്ണമായും സ്വമേധയാ ഉള്ളതായിരിക്കും. പഠനത്തിൽ നിന്ന് എപ്പോൾ വേണമെങ്കിലും നിങ്ങൾക്ക് പിന്മാറ്റം അപേക്ഷിക്കാം ഉണ്ട്. പഠനത്തിൽ നിന്ന് പിന്മാറിയപ്പോൾ പങ്കെടുക്കാതിരുന്നാലോ നിങ്ങൾക്ക് യാതൊരുവിധത്തിലുള്ള സാമ്പത്തിക ബാധ്യതയും ഉണ്ടാവില്ല

വിലാസം

നിങ്ങൾക്ക് ഗവേഷണവുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട എന്തെങ്കിലും ചോദ്യങ്ങളുണ്ടെങ്കിൽ അല്ലെങ്കിൽ എന്തെങ്കിലും യോഗ്യതയോ പരിശോധിക്കാൻ ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നുവെങ്കിൽ, നിങ്ങൾക്ക് എന്നെയോ ഞങ്ങളുടെ ഇൻസ്റ്റിറ്റ്യൂട്ടിന്റെ എത്തിക്സ് കമ്മിറ്റിയുടെ മെമ്പർ സെക്രട്ടറിയുമായോ ബന്ധപ്പെടാം.

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പ്രധാന ഗവേഷക
എം പി എച്ച്:2022
എ എം സി എച്ച് എസ് എസ്
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Annexure 3

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I confirm that I have read/ heard and understood the information regarding the study “Experiences of students who have entered Higher Education Institutions through affirmative action in Kerala” as provided in the participant information sheet. All of my questions concerning this study have been answered and all the possible harms, discomforts, and benefits (if any) of this study have been explained to me. I also understand that my identity and personal information will be kept confidential. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without consequences.

By signing this form, I agree to participate in this study.

- I agree to be interviewed
- I agree to be interviewed and recorded

A copy of this form has been given to me.

Date:

Place:

_____	_____
Name of the participant	Signature/Thumb impression
_____	_____
Principal Investigator	Signature

Annexure 4

സമ്മത പത്രം

" അക്കാദമിക ഇടങ്ങളിലെ ദളിത്/ ആദിവാസി വിദ്യാർത്ഥികളുടെ അനുഭവം" എന്ന വിഷയവുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട വിവരങ്ങൾ ഞാൻ വായിച്ചും /കേട്ടിട്ടും മനസ്സിലാക്കിയിട്ടുണ്ടെന്നും ഞാൻ സ്ഥിരീകരിക്കുന്നു. ഈ പഠനവുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട എന്റെ എല്ലാ ചോദ്യങ്ങൾക്കും ഉത്തരം ലഭിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. കൂടാതെ ഈ പഠനത്തിന്റെ സാധ്യമായ എല്ലാ നേട്ടങ്ങളും കോട്ടങ്ങളും അസ്വാരസ്യങ്ങളും (എന്തെങ്കിലും ഉണ്ടെങ്കിൽ) എനിക്ക് വിശദമാക്കിതന്നിട്ടുണ്ട്. എന്റെ ഐഡൻറിറ്റിയും വ്യക്തിഗത വിവരങ്ങളും രഹസ്യമായി സൂക്ഷിക്കുമെന്നും ഞാൻ മനസ്സിലാക്കുന്നു. എന്റെ പങ്കാളിത്തം സ്വമേധയാ ഉള്ളതാണെന്നും കാരണം പറയാതെയും മറ്റ് പ്രതിസന്ധികൾ ഇല്ലാതെയും എപ്പോൾ വേണമെങ്കിലും പിൻവലിക്കാൻ എനിക്ക് സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യമുണ്ടെന്നും ഞാൻ മനസ്സിലാക്കുന്നു.

ഈ ഫോമിൽ ഒപ്പിടുന്നതിലൂടെ, ഈ പഠനത്തിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കാൻ ഞാൻ സമ്മതിക്കുന്നു.

- ഞാൻ അഭിമുഖത്തിന് സമ്മതിക്കുന്നു
- അഭിമുഖം നടത്താനും റെക്കോർഡ് ചെയ്യാനും ഞാൻ സമ്മതിക്കുന്നു

ഈ ഫോമിന്റെ ഒരു പകർപ്പ് എനിക്ക് തന്നിട്ടുണ്ട്.

തീയതി

സ്ഥലം

പങ്കെടുക്കുന്ന ആളുടെ പേര്	ഒപ്പ്/ വിരൽ അടയാളം
പ്രധാന ഗവേഷക	ഒപ്പ്

Annexure 5

IDI GUIDE

Hello, I am Aparna, a final-year MPH student at AMCHSS, Sree Chithra Tirunal Institute of Medical Science and Technology. I am currently conducting research on “Experiences of students who have entered Higher Education Institutions through affirmative action in Kerala” as part of my academic program. Affirmative policies play a significant role in helping scheduled group students gain access to higher education institutions. I am interested in understanding the students' experiences and the support they receive from these institutions once they enter these spaces. I assure you that all information will be kept confidential, with no names of individuals, places, or institutions disclosed. Your willingness to share your experiences and insights would be greatly appreciated. If you could kindly spare some time for this, it would be most helpful.

1) Could you describe about your family

[Probe: place of residence, occupation of parents, education of parents]

I. Selection of course

1) You are now studying incourse atcollege/university.

a) How did you select this course to study?

b) How does this course meet your ideas of what you thought it would be (expectations)?

c) Where does it fall short? How are you managing to deal with this lacuna (for the identified short falls)?

d) Who are the persons you consulted about taking this course?

e) Within your circle of friends and family, what kind of support did you get for making a decision about the course to study?

For PhD

a) You are now doing PhD. Why did you decide to do PhD?

b) How did you apply and come here?

- c) Was your family supportive of this choice?
 - d) What helped you to manage to come here? Can you describe this for me?
-
- 2) Could you share any challenges or difficulties you faced during the process of making a choice with regards the course and the subsequent admission process here?

II. Interaction with Colleagues

- 1) How do you feel about spending time with your classmates or colleagues?
 - a) How often do you go out with them?
 - b) What you usually do when you feel some difficulty in connecting with them?

- 2) If you skip class, how do you usually make up for it? How do your classmates help you in this?
 - a) Beyond your classmates, who else do you typically reach out to when you need help with your classes or coursework, and why?
 - b) How group projects in class usually go? How much do you like to participate in them?

- 3) What are some of the difficulties you've personally experienced or observed when it comes to interacting with your classmates?

Probe: any personal experiences or observations where language has been a barrier or challenge in the context of academic studies or social interactions within collage?

For PhD

- a) Could you please describe your day-to-day interaction with colleagues?
- b) How much these interactions helped you in academic journey?

III. Cultural

How do you personally feel about participating in cultural activities?

- a) How do your classmates/colleagues/ faculties support you for this?

IV. Regarding reservation policy

1) The Government of India has an affirmative action policy that benefits students from disadvantaged communities. These are implemented in government institutions but students may have varying opinions about such affirmative action policies.

- a) How is this policy looked at within the students/ colleagues you are working with?
- b) How do they view the beneficiaries of such policies?
- c) How does that affect your interactions with them?

V. Stipend Related

1) How are you managing your educational expenses?

2) Are you receiving any stipend? What are they?

- a) What is the process for getting your stipend?

3) Are there any issues regarding stipend that you would like to share?

b) When the stipend is delayed, how do you manage to pay the fees, hostel charges, manage day to day expenses?

4) What is the mechanism for reporting the delay in receipt of stipends?

a) What action is usually taken?

b) How does the system help?

VI. Relation with faculty

1) Faculties are meant to teach and mentor students in their academic journey. Share some ways in which faculty have supported you?

a) Share some instances when you have felt the faculty have not supported you enough?

b) What according to you are some of the reasons for this?

VII. Classroom

1) In class, when there is some lecture or demonstration going on, what are the specific difficulties you experience in understanding?

a) How do you obtain support to overcome this difficulty?

b) How do you feel when you don't understand what is being said and what do you do to deal with it?

c) How does that affect how you feel about the module or the course?

2) Can you recall any moments when something a teacher said or an example given in class made you feel uncomfortable? On the flip side, are there instances when the teacher's words or examples brought you joy or made you feel happy? Could you please share some of these instances?

Probe: How do you manage if something uncomfortable happened?

4) When it comes to making decisions that affect the class as a whole, what is the usual process?

a) How much do you voice your opinion in such situation?

VIII. Resources use

1) What are the facilities in college that you use to support your studies?

a) Could you share any instances in which using the facilities has become difficult?

b) How did you handle it if something happened?

IX. Administration

1. Have you had the opportunity to interact with the administrative staff at the office in any way? How often you go?

2. What are the types of problems you approach them for?

3. In general what has been your experience, have your problems been solved smoothly? If no what were the issues?

a) If you have had a negative experience what according to you are some of the reasons for this?

b) If smooth - what are some of the reasons according to you for your admin to be responsive?

X. Others

1. How do you feel when you compare your past school or college experiences with your current college life?

2. Could you share any incidents you've heard about from your relatives, friends, or fellow students within the Dalit or tribal community who experienced any type of discrimination on college campuses?

3. Would you like to add anything additional about the topic that we have not covered in the interview so far?

4. I am continuing to work on this issue and as part of this I have to talk to some more students who have experiences to share. Would you care to connect me with some of your colleagues who may be willing to share their experiences with me?

Annexure 6

ഇൻറർവ്യൂ ഗൈഡ്

നമസ്കരം എന്റെ പേര് അപർണ്ണ,

ശ്രീചിത്ര തിരുനാൾ ഇൻസ്റ്റിറ്റ്യൂട്ട് ഓഫ് മെഡിക്കൽ സയൻസ് ആൻഡ് ടെക്നോളജിയിലെ (എഫ്സിഎച്ച്എസ്എസ്) ലെ മാസ്റ്റർ ഓഫ് പബ്ലിക് ഹെൽത്ത് (എംപിഎച്ച്) ൽ ബിരുദാനന്തര ബിരുദ വിദ്യാർത്ഥിയാണ്. ഞാൻ ഇപ്പോൾ എന്റെ അക്കാദമിക് പ്രോഗ്രാമിന്റെ ഭാഗമായി "അക്കാദമിക് ഇടങ്ങളിലെ ദളിത്/ ആദിവാസി വിദ്യാർത്ഥികളുടെ അനുഭവം" എന്ന വിഷയത്തിൽ ഗവേഷണം നടത്തുകയാണ്. ദളിത്, ആദിവാസി വിദ്യാർത്ഥികളെ ഉന്നത വിദ്യാഭ്യാസ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങളിൽ പ്രവേശനം നേടുന്നതിന് സഹായിക്കുന്നതിൽ സംവരണ നയങ്ങൾ ഒരു പ്രധാന പങ്ക് വഹിക്കുന്നു. വിദ്യാർത്ഥികൾ ഈ ഇടങ്ങളിൽ പ്രവേശിച്ചുകഴിഞ്ഞാൽ അവരുടെ അനുഭവങ്ങളും ഈ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങളിൽ നിന്ന് അവർക്ക് ലഭിക്കുന്ന പിന്തുണയും മനസ്സിലാക്കാൻ എനിക്ക് താൽപ്പര്യമുണ്ട്. വ്യക്തികളുടെയോ സ്ഥലങ്ങളുടെയോ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങളുടെയോ പേരുകൾ വെളിപ്പെടുത്താതെ എല്ലാ വിവരങ്ങളും രഹസ്യമായി സൂക്ഷിക്കുമെന്ന് ഞാൻ നിങ്ങൾക്ക് ഉറപ്പ് നൽകുന്നു. നിങ്ങളുടെ അനുഭവങ്ങൾ പങ്കിടാനുള്ള നിങ്ങളുടെ സന്നദ്ധത വളരെ വിലമതിക്കപ്പെടും. ദയവു ചെയ്ത് കുറച്ചു സമയം ഇതിനായി നീക്കിവെക്കാൻ കഴിയുമെങ്കിൽ, അത് ഏറ്റവും ഉപകാരപ്രദമായിരിക്കും.

I. കോഴ്സിന്റെ തിരഞ്ഞെടുപ്പ്

1) നിങ്ങൾ ഇപ്പോൾവിഷയത്തിൽ..... കോളേജ്/സർവകലാശാലയിൽ പഠിക്കുന്നു.

- a) എ) നിങ്ങൾ എങ്ങനെയാണ് ഈ കോഴ്സ് പഠിക്കാൻ തിരഞ്ഞെടുത്തത്?
- b) ബി) ഈ കോഴ്സ് നിങ്ങൾ വിചാരിച്ചതിനെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള നിങ്ങളുടെ പ്രതീക്ഷകൾ എങ്ങനെ നിറവേറ്റുന്നു?
- c) സി) എവിടെയാണ് ഈ കോഴ്സ് തിരഞ്ഞെടുത്തതും കൊണ്ടുള്ള വിടവ് തോന്നുന്നത്? എങ്ങനെയാണ് വിടവ് നിങ്ങൾ പരിഹരിക്കുന്നത്?
- d) ഡി) ഈ കോഴ്സ് തിരഞ്ഞെടുക്കുന്നതിന് വേണ്ടി ആരുടെ വിദഗ്ദ്ധ ഉപദേശമാണ് നിങ്ങൾ സ്വീകരിച്ചത്?
- e) ഇ) വീട്ടുകാരുടെയും സുഹൃത്തുക്കളുടെയും ഇടയിൽ നിന്ന് ഈ കോഴ്സിന് ചേരാൻ വേണ്ടിയുള്ള എന്ത് പിന്തുണ ആണ് നിങ്ങൾക്ക് ലഭിച്ചത്?

പിഎച്ച്ഡിക്ക് വേണ്ടിയുള്ളത്

- a) എ)നിങ്ങൾ ഇപ്പോൾ ഗവേഷണം ചെയ്യുന്നു. എന്തുകൊണ്ടാണ് ഗവേഷണം തിരഞ്ഞെടുത്തത്?
- b) ബി) എങ്ങനെയാണ് ഈ കോളേജ് തിരഞ്ഞെടുത്തതും ഇങ്ങോട്ട് അപേക്ഷിച്ചതും?
- c) സി) ഈ തീരുമാനത്തിൽ വീട്ടുകാരുടെ പിന്തുണ ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നോ?
- d) ഡി)എന്ത് സഹായം ലഭിച്ചത് കൊണ്ടാണ് നിങ്ങൾക്ക് ഇവിടം വരെ എത്താൻ കഴിഞ്ഞത്? ഒന്നു വിവരിക്കാമോ?

2. കോഴ്സ് തിരഞ്ഞെടുത്തതും തുടർന്നുള്ള പ്രവേശന പ്രക്രിയയെയും സംബന്ധിച്ച് നിങ്ങൾ നേരിട്ട എന്തെങ്കിലും വെല്ലുവിളികളും ബുദ്ധിമുട്ടുകളും ഇവിടെ പങ്കുവെക്കാമോ?

II. സഹപ്രവർത്തകരുമായുള്ള ഇടപെടൽ

1. സഹപാഠികളുമായോ/ സഹപ്രവർത്തകരുമായോ സമയം ചെലവഴിക്കുന്നതിനെക്കുറിച്ച് നിങ്ങൾക്ക് എങ്ങനെയാണ് തോന്നുന്നത്?

- a) നിങ്ങൾ എത്ര തവണ അവരോടൊപ്പം പുറത്ത് പോകാറുണ്ട്?

b) അവരുമായി ഇടപെടുന്നതിൽ എന്തെങ്കിലും ബുദ്ധിമുട്ട് അനുഭവപ്പെടുമ്പോൾ നിങ്ങൾ സാധാരണയായി എന്താണ് ചെയ്യുന്നത്?

3) നിങ്ങൾക്ക് ഒരു ദിവസത്തെ ക്ലാസ് നഷ്ടപ്പെടുകയാണെങ്കിൽ സാധാരണയായി അത് എങ്ങനെ പരിഹരിക്കും? നിങ്ങളുടെ സഹപാഠികൾ ഇതിൽ നിങ്ങളെ എങ്ങനെ സഹായിക്കും?

- a) നിങ്ങളുടെ സഹപാഠികൾക്കുപുറം, നിങ്ങളുടെ ക്ലാസുകളിലോ കോഴ്സ് വർക്കുകളിലോ സഹായം ആവശ്യമുള്ളപ്പോൾ നിങ്ങൾ സാധാരണയായി മറ്റാരെയാണ് സമീപിക്കുന്നത്, എന്തുകൊണ്ട്?
- b) ക്ലാസിലെ ഗ്രൂപ്പ് പ്രോജക്റ്റുകൾ സാധാരണയായി എങ്ങനെയാണ് ചെയ്യുന്നത്? അതിൽ നിങ്ങൾ എത്രത്തോളം പങ്കെടുക്കാറുണ്ട്?

പിഎച്ച്ഡിക്ക് വേണ്ടിയുള്ളത്

- a) സഹപ്രവർത്തകരുമായുള്ള നിങ്ങളുടെ ദൈനംദിന ഇടപെടൽ വിവരിക്കാമോ?
- b) അക്കാദമിക് യാത്രയിൽ ഈ ഇടപെടലുകൾ നിങ്ങളെ എത്രത്തോളം സഹായിച്ചു?

4) ക്ലാസിനെ മൊത്തത്തിൽ ബാധിക്കുന്ന തീരുമാനങ്ങൾ എടുക്കുമ്പോൾ, സാധാരണ എങ്ങനെയാണ് ചെയ്യുന്നത്?

- a) അത്തരമൊരു സാഹചര്യത്തിൽ നിങ്ങൾ എത്രമാത്രം അഭിപ്രായം പ്രകടിപ്പിക്കുന്നു?

5) സഹപാഠികളുമായി ഇടപഴകുമ്പോൾ നിങ്ങൾ വ്യക്തിപരമായി അനുഭവിച്ചതോ നിരീക്ഷിച്ചതോ ആയ ചില ബുദ്ധിമുട്ടുകൾ എന്തൊക്കെയാണ്?

അന്വേഷണം: അക്കാദമിക് പഠനങ്ങളുടെ പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ അല്ലെങ്കിൽ ക്ലാസിനുള്ളിലെ സാമൂഹിക ഇടപെടലുകളുടെ പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ ഭാഷ ഒരു തടസ്സമോ വെല്ലുവിളിയോ ആയ ഏതെങ്കിലും വ്യക്തിപരമായ അനുഭവങ്ങളോ നിരീക്ഷണങ്ങളോ.

III. സാംസ്കാരിക പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കുന്നതിനെക്കുറിച്ച്

സാംസ്കാരിക പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കുന്നതിനെക്കുറിച്ച് നിങ്ങൾക്ക് വ്യക്തിപരമായി എന്ത് തോന്നുന്നു?

- c) നിങ്ങളുടെ സഹപാഠികൾ / സഹപ്രവർത്തകർ / ഫാക്കൽറ്റികൾ ഇതിന് നിങ്ങളെ എങ്ങനെ പിന്തുണയ്ക്കുന്നു?

IV. സംവരണം സംബന്ധിച്ച്

പിന്നാക്ക സമുദായങ്ങളിലെ വിദ്യാർത്ഥികൾക്ക് പ്രയോജനം ചെയ്യുന്ന ഒരു സംവരണ നയം ഇന്ത്യ ഗവൺമെന്റിന് ഉണ്ട്. സർക്കാർ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങളിൽ ഇവ നടപ്പാക്കപ്പെടുന്നുവെങ്കിലും ഇത്തരം നയങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ച് വിദ്യാർത്ഥികൾക്ക് വ്യത്യസ്ത അഭിപ്രായങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ടായേക്കാം.

- a) എ) നിങ്ങൾ ജോലി ചെയ്യുന്ന വിദ്യാർത്ഥികൾ/സഹപ്രവർത്തകർക്കുള്ളിൽ ഈ നയം എങ്ങനെയാണ് കാണുന്നത്?
- b) ബി) അത്തരം പോളിസിനുള്ള ഗുണഭോക്താക്കളെ അവർ എങ്ങനെ കാണുന്നു?
- c) സി) അവരുമായുള്ള നിങ്ങളുടെ ഇടപെടലുകളെ അത് എങ്ങനെ ബാധിക്കുന്നു?

V. സ്റ്റൈപ്പന്റുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട

1) നിങ്ങളുടെ വിദ്യാഭ്യാസ ചെലവുകൾ എങ്ങനെ കൈകാര്യം ചെയ്യുന്നു?

2) നിങ്ങൾക്ക് എന്തെങ്കിലും സ്റ്റൈപ്പന്റഡ് ലഭിക്കുന്നുണ്ടോ? അവർ എന്താണ്?

- a) നിങ്ങളുടെ സ്റ്റൈപ്പൻഡ് ലഭിക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള നടപടിക്രമം എന്താണ്?
- 3) സ്റ്റൈപ്പൻഡ് ലഭിക്കുന്നതും ആയിട്ട് ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട എന്തെങ്കിലും കാര്യം പങ്കുവെക്കാൻ ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നുണ്ടോ?
 - b) സ്റ്റൈപ്പൻഡ് വൈകുമ്പോൾ, ഫീസ്, ഹോസ്റ്റൽ ചാർജ്ജുകൾ, ദൈനംദിന ചെലവുകൾ എന്നിവ എങ്ങനെ ആണ് കണ്ടെത്തുന്നത്?
- 4) സ്റ്റൈപ്പൻഡുകൾ ലഭിക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള കാലതാമസം റിപ്പോർട്ട് ചെയ്യുന്നതിനുള്ള സംവിധാനം എന്താണ്?
 - a) സാധാരണയായി എന്ത് നടപടിയാണ് സ്വീകരിക്കുന്നത്?
 - b) സിസ്റ്റം എങ്ങനെ സഹായിക്കുന്നു?

VI. ഫാക്കൽറ്റിയുമായുള്ള ബന്ധം

- 1) വിദ്യാർത്ഥികളെ അവരുടെ അക്കാദമിക് യാത്രയിൽ പഠിപ്പിക്കാനും ഉപദേശിക്കാനും ഉദ്ദേശിച്ചുള്ളതാണ്. അധ്യാപകർ നിങ്ങളെ സഹായിച്ച ചില സന്ദർഭങ്ങളെ കുറിച്ച് വിവരിക്കാമോ ഏത് ഫാക്കൽറ്റിയാണ് നിങ്ങളെ പിന്തുണച്ചത്?
 - a) അധ്യാപകർ നിങ്ങളെ വേണ്ടത്ര പിന്തുണച്ചില്ലെന്ന് നിങ്ങൾക്ക് തോന്നിയ ചില സന്ദർഭങ്ങൾ പങ്കിടണോ?
 - ബി) താങ്കളുടെ അഭിപ്രായത്തിൽ ഇതിനുള്ള ചില കാരണങ്ങൾ എന്തൊക്കെയാണ്?

VII. ക്ലാസ്റൂം

- 1) ക്ലാസ് നടക്കുമ്പോഴോ എന്തെങ്കിലും മാതൃക കാണിച്ച് വിശദീകരിക്കുമ്പോഴോ മനസ്സിലാക്കാൻ എന്തൊക്കെ ബുദ്ധിമുട്ടുകളാണ് നിങ്ങൾ അനുഭവിക്കാറുള്ളത്?
 - a. ഈ ബുദ്ധിമുട്ട് തരണം ചെയ്യാൻ എന്ത് പിന്തുണയാണ് പൊതുവേ ലഭിക്കാറുള്ളത്??
 - b. എന്താണ് പഠിപ്പിക്കുന്നതെന്ന് മനസ്സിലാക്കാതെ വരുമ്പോൾ നിങ്ങൾക്ക് എങ്ങനെയാണ് അനുഭവപ്പെടാറുള്ളത്? അത് തരണം ചെയ്യാൻ പൊതുവെ നിങ്ങൾ എന്താണ് ചെയ്യാറുള്ളത്?
 - c. കോക്ലിനെ പൊതുവേ നോക്കിക്കാണുന്നതിൽ ഈ അനുഭവങ്ങൾ എങ്ങനെയാണ് ബാധിക്കാറുള്ളത്?
- 2) ക്ലാസിൽ ടീച്ചർ പറഞ്ഞ കാര്യത്തെക്കുറിച്ച് ഓർത്ത വളരെയധികം ബുദ്ധിമുട്ട് തോന്നുകയോ അല്ലെങ്കിൽ ടീച്ചറുടെ വാക്കുകൾ വളരെയധികം സന്തോഷം നൽകിയിട്ടുള്ളതുമായ സന്ദർഭങ്ങളെ കുറിച്ച് വിവരിക്കാമോ?

അന്വേഷണം: എന്തെങ്കിലും ബുദ്ധിമുട്ട് ഉണ്ടായ സന്ദർഭം നടന്നിട്ടുണ്ടെങ്കിൽ അതിനെ എങ്ങനെയാണ് തരണം ചെയ്തത്?

VIII. വിഭവങ്ങളുടെ ഉപയോഗം

- 1) കോളേജിലെ ഏതൊക്കെ സൗകര്യങ്ങൾ നിങ്ങൾ പഠന ആവശ്യത്തിന് ഉപയോഗിക്കാറുണ്ട്??
 - a) ഏതെങ്കിലും സൗകര്യം ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്നതിൽ നിങ്ങൾക്ക് എന്തെങ്കിലും തടസ്സങ്ങളോ ബുദ്ധിമുട്ടോ നേരിടേണ്ടി വന്നിട്ടുണ്ടോ?
 - b) ബി) അങ്ങനെയുള്ള സാഹചര്യങ്ങളെ എങ്ങനെയാണ് തരണം ചെയ്തിരുന്നത്??

IX. ഭരണകൂടം

1. ഓഫീസിലെ അഡ്മിനിസ്ട്രേറ്റീവ് സ്റ്റാഫുമായി ഏതെങ്കിലും വിധത്തിൽ സംവദിക്കാൻ നിങ്ങൾക്ക് അവസരം ലഭിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ടോ? എത്ര തവണ പോകാറുണ്ട്?
2. ഏതുതരത്തിലുള്ള പ്രശ്നങ്ങൾക്കാണ് നിങ്ങൾ അവരെ സമീപിക്കാനുള്ളത്??
3. പൊതുവെ നിങ്ങളുടെ അനുഭവം എന്തായിരുന്നു, നിങ്ങളുടെ പ്രശ്നങ്ങൾ സുഗമമായി പരിഹരിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ടോ? ഇല്ലെങ്കിൽ എന്തായിരുന്നു പ്രശ്നങ്ങൾ?
 - a) നിങ്ങൾക്ക് ഒരു നെഗറ്റീവ് അനുഭവം ഉണ്ടായിട്ടുണ്ടെങ്കിൽ, നിങ്ങളുടെ അഭിപ്രായത്തിൽ അതിനുള്ള ചില കാരണങ്ങൾ എന്തൊക്കെയാണ്?
 - b) നിങ്ങളുടെ പ്രശ്നം പരിഹരിക്കപ്പെട്ടുവെങ്കിൽ, എന്തു കാരണം കൊണ്ടായിരിക്കാം അവരത് പരിഹരിച്ച് തന്നത്?

X. മറ്റുള്ളവ

1. നിങ്ങളുടെ മുൻകാല സ്കൂൾ അല്ലെങ്കിൽ കോളേജ് അനുഭവങ്ങൾ നിലവിലെ കോളേജ് ജീവിതവുമായി താരതമ്യം ചെയ്യുമ്പോൾ നിങ്ങൾക്ക് എന്ത് തോന്നുന്നു?
2. കോളേജ് കാമ്പസുകളിൽ ഏതെങ്കിലും തരത്തിലുള്ള വിവേചനം അനുഭവിച്ച ദളിത് അല്ലെങ്കിൽ ആദിവാസി സമൂഹത്തിലെ നിങ്ങളുടെ ബന്ധുക്കളിൽ നിന്നോ സുഹൃത്തുക്കളിൽ നിന്നോ സഹ വിദ്യാർത്ഥികളിൽ നിന്നോ നിങ്ങൾ കേട്ട ഏതെങ്കിലും സംഭവങ്ങൾ പങ്കിടാമോ?
3. തൊൻമുതലര അഭിമുഖത്തിൽ ഉൾപ്പെടുത്താത്ത വിഷയത്തെക്കുറിച്ച് കൂടുതലായി എന്തെങ്കിലും ചേർക്കാൻ നിങ്ങൾ ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നുണ്ടോ?
4. തൊന്നീ വിഷയത്തെക്കുറിച്ച് കൂടുതൽ മനസ്സിലാക്കാൻ ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. അതിന്റെ ഭാഗമായി എനിക്ക് കുറച്ചുകൂടി വിദ്യാർത്ഥികളോട് സംസാരിക്കണം. അവരുടെ അനുഭവങ്ങൾ എന്നോട് പങ്കിടാൻ തയ്യാറായേക്കാവുന്ന നിങ്ങളുടെ ചില സഹപ്രവർത്തകരുമായി എന്നെ ബന്ധിപ്പിക്കാൻ നിങ്ങൾക്ക് താൽപ്പര്യമുണ്ടോ?

Annexure 7

Permission letter from Disha Kerala



DHISHA

JANASEVANA KENDRAM,
THOKKAMPARA
GRHS ROAD, KOTTAKKAL, 676503
MALAPPURAM, KERALA,

To Whomsoever it may Concern

MPH student at the Achutha Menon Centre for Health Science Studies (Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology Trivandrum), approached us seeking support for her study titled 'Experiences of Students Who Have Entered Higher Education Institutions Through Affirmative Action in Kerala.'

Dhisha is a non-profit organization dedicated to empowering and supporting marginalised individuals in Kerala, India. As an organization, Dhisha aims to raise awareness about the rights and needs of people who are marginalised, provide resources and support for their overall development, and advocate for an inclusive society.

We agree to provide her with the requested support throughout the research process, ensuring that all scientific and ethical procedures are followed and criteria are met.

ANAGH

Vice President,
Academic and Research wing
coordinator, Dhisha

Annexure 8

IEC Clearance



श्री चित्रा तिरुनाल आयुर्विज्ञान और प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान, त्रिवेन्द्रम
तिरुवनन्तपुरम - ६९५०११, केरल, इंडिया
SREE CHITRA TIRUNAL INSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY, TRIVANDRUM
Thiruvananthapuram - 695 011, Kerala, India
(An Institute of National Importance under Govt. of India)

Grams : Chitramel, Phone : +91-471-2443152, Fax : +91-471-2550728 / 2446433, E-mail : sct@sctimst.ac.in, Website : www.sctimst.ac.in

Institutional Ethics Committee

CDSCO Registration No: ECR/189/Inst/KL/2013/RR-21
DHR Registration No: EC/NEW/INST/2022/2775

12.01.2024

MPH Student, AMCHSS
SCTIMST, Thiruvananthapuram

The Institutional Ethics Committee held on 30th December, 2023, reviewed and discussed your application to conduct the study titled "EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS WHO HAVE ENTERED HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS THROUGH AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN KERALA" (IEC /2182) "

Principal Investigator	
Co-Principal Investigator(s)	
Duration of the study	6 months

The following members of the Ethics Committee were present at the meeting held on 30th December, 2023

SL. No.	Member Name	Highest Degree	Gender	Scientific /Non Scientific	Affiliation with Institution(s)
1.	Smt. Sathi Nair	MA (English Literature)	Female	Lay Person	No
2.	Dr. Kala Kesavan P	MBBS,MD	Female	Basic Medical Scientist	No
3.	Adv. Priya Kaimal	LLM, MBL	Female	Legal Expert	No
4.	Dr. P. Manickam	BSMS, MSc (Epid).,PhD	Male	Health Science Expert/ Social Scientist	No
5.	Dr. Christina George	MD Psychiatry	Female	Clinician	No
6.	Dr. Narayanan Namboodiri. K K	MBBS,MD,DM	Male	Clinician	Yes
7.	Dr. Biju Soman	MBBS,MD, DPH, MSc, DLSHTM	Male	Basic Medical Scientist	Yes

The following documents were reviewed:

Original submission

1. Checklist Form
2. Covering letter addressed to the Chairman, IEC, SCTIMST dated 01.12.2023
3. Responses/Amendments made based on the Reviewer's comments
4. IEC Application Form
5. Declaration Form
6. Research Proposal
7. Participant Information Sheet and Informed Consent Form in English and Malayalam
8. IDI Guide in English and Malayalam
9. CV of Principal Investigator and Co-PI
10. SRC Recommendation Letter

Revised submission

1. Checklist Form
2. Covering letter addressed to the Chairman, IEC, SCTIMST dated 11.01.2024
3. Responses/Amendments made based on the Reviewer's comments
4. Copy of IEC Recommendation letter dated 09.01.2024
5. Responses/Amendments made based on the Reviewer's comments
6. IEC Application Form
7. Declaration Form
8. Research Proposal
9. Participant Information Sheet and Informed Consent Form in English and Malayalam
10. IDI Guide in English and Malayalam
11. CV of Principal Investigator and Co-PI
12. A Certificate from DHISHA Janasevana Kendram, Malappuram, Kerala

IEC Decision

The IEC approved the conduct of the study in the present form.

Remarks:

The Institutional Ethics Committee expects to be informed about the progress of the study, any SAE occurring in the course of the study, any changes in the protocol and patient information/informed consent and asks to be provided a copy of the final report.

There was no member of the study team / Guide who participated in voting / decision making process. The ethics committee is organized and operated according to the requirements of Good Clinical Practice and the requirements of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

Sincerely,



Dr. G. Srinivas
Member Secretary, IEC

MEMBER SECRETARY
INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS COMMITTEE (IEC)
SCTIMST, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM



Annexure 9

Plagiarism Report



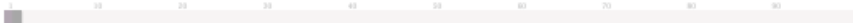
The Report is Generated by DrillBit Plagiarism Detection Software

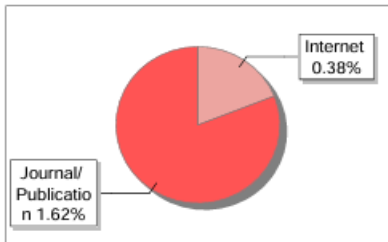
Submission Information

Author Name	Aparna Sasi
Title	Experience of Dalit/ Tribal students in Academic Spaces in Kerala
Paper/Submission ID	1707354
Submitted by	rakhal.gaitonde@sctimst.ac.in
Submission Date	2024-04-27 21:37:08
Total Pages	66
Document type	Dissertation

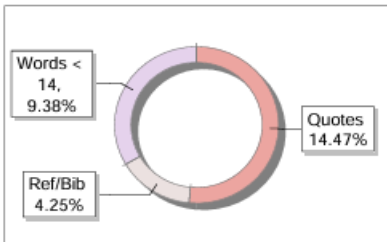
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Language	English
Student Papers	Yes
Journals & publishers	Yes
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LOCATION	MATCHED DOMAIN	%	SOURCE TYPE
1	journals.library.brandeis.edu	1	Publication
3	Changing educational inequalities in india in the context of affirmative action by Sonald-2008	<1	Publication
4	fastercapital.com	<1	Internet Data
5	law.nwu.ac.za	<1	Publication
6	files.eric.ed.gov	<1	Publication
7	www.dx.doi.org	<1	Publication
8	docplayer.net	<1	Internet Data
9	The Most Unlikely of Places Opportunities and Challenges of Location at C by Blunt-2020	<1	Publication
10	www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov	<1	Internet Data
11	www.hrpub.org	<1	Publication