

LIVED EXPERIENCES OF EDUCATIONAL DROPOUTS AMONG THE KATTUNAYAKAN TRIBAL COMMUNITY

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Requirements for the Master of Social Work Degree Examination*

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

This is to certify that this dissertation entitled “**Lived Experiences of Educational Dropouts among the Kattunayakan Tribal Community**” is a record of genuine work done by **Ms. Meghna M** a fourth semester Master of Social Work student of this college under my supervision and guidance and that it is hereby approved for submission.

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DECLARATION

I, **MEGHNA M**, do hereby declare that the dissertation entitled “**Lived Experiences of Educational Dropouts among the Kattunayakan Tribal Community**” is the result of my original research conducted during the academic years 2024-2026. This work is submitted to the University of Kerala as part of the requirements for the Master of Social Work Degree Examination. I confirm that it has not been previously submitted for any other degree, diploma, fellowship or similar academic recognition.

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ABSTRACT

Education is essential for the social and economic development of tribal communities. However, educational dropout remains a significant concern among the Kattunayakan, one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in Kerala. This study, titled “Lived Experiences of Educational Dropouts among the Kattunayakan Tribal Community”, explores the lived experiences of educational dropouts and examines the factors contributing to educational discontinuation.

The study adopted a qualitative research approach with a phenomenological research design. Seven educational dropouts from the Kattunayakan community residing in Muddakkadav Settlement, Nilambur, Malappuram District, were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and analysed using thematic analysis.

The findings revealed that educational discontinuation was influenced by multiple interconnected factors, including financial hardship, family responsibilities, geographical isolation, inadequate hostel facilities and limited access to higher education. Although participants generally received encouragement from their families and support from teachers, these were insufficient to overcome the socio-economic and institutional barriers they encountered. The study also found that Model Residential Schools (MRS) significantly improved access to school education, while the transition to higher education emerged as the most critical stage leading to dropout.

The study concludes that educational dropout among the Kattunayakan community is the result of interconnected socio-economic, geographical, cultural and institutional factors rather than individual choice. It recommends strengthening financial assistance, hostel facilities, educational support services and culturally responsive interventions to promote educational retention among tribal students.

Keywords: Kattunayakan, Educational Dropout, Lived Experiences, Tribal Education, PVTG, Kerala.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Education is widely recognized as one of the most powerful instruments for individual and social development. It promotes knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that enable individuals to participate effectively in society and improve their quality of life. Beyond academic learning, education contributes to personality development, critical thinking, social integration, economic productivity and democratic participation. It plays a crucial role in reducing poverty, promoting gender equality, improving health outcomes and creating opportunities for sustainable livelihoods. Recognizing its importance, the international community has identified inclusive and equitable quality education as one of the major goals of sustainable development. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) emphasizes ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all, highlighting education as a fundamental human right and a prerequisite for sustainable development (UNESCO, 2023).

Education serves as a foundation for human capital development and social mobility. It empowers individuals to overcome social and economic disadvantages while enabling communities to achieve overall progress. Through education, people acquire not only literacy and vocational skills but also the confidence and capability to participate in decision-making processes and contribute meaningfully to society. Educational attainment is closely associated with improved employment opportunities, higher income, better health and enhanced social well-being. Consequently, governments across the world have invested significantly in expanding educational access and improving the quality of educational institutions to ensure that no individual is deprived of learning opportunities because of social or economic disadvantages (Government of India, 2020).

Despite considerable improvements in educational access across the world, educational inequality continues to persist among socially marginalized communities. Children belonging to economically weaker sections, indigenous communities, remote rural areas and socially excluded groups often experience barriers that prevent them from completing their education. These barriers include poverty, geographical isolation, inadequate educational infrastructure, discrimination, cultural differences, language barriers and

limited institutional support. As a result many children discontinue their education before completing secondary or higher secondary levels, thereby restricting their future opportunities and reinforcing existing cycles of disadvantage (UNESCO, 2023).

Educational dropout remains one of the most significant challenges affecting equitable educational development. A dropout refers to a student who discontinues formal education before completing the prescribed level of schooling without obtaining the intended educational qualification. Educational discontinuation is rarely the result of a single factor; rather, it emerges from the interaction of personal, familial, institutional, economic and structural circumstances. Students who discontinue education often face reduced employment opportunities, lower income, social exclusion and limited access to higher education, thereby affecting both individual well-being and national development (UNESCO Institute for Statistics [UIS], 2012).

In India, substantial progress has been achieved in expanding school enrolment through various educational policies and welfare programmes such as the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, Samagra Shiksha, residential schools, scholarships and mid-day meal schemes. However educational discontinuation continues to remain disproportionately high among marginalized populations, particularly Scheduled Tribes. Although enrolment has increased significantly over the past decades, retention beyond elementary education remains a major concern. Financial hardship, geographical isolation, inadequate educational facilities, language differences, limited parental education and socio-cultural factors continue to influence educational continuation among tribal children (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2023).

Among the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in Kerala, the Kattunayakan community represents one of the most socially and economically marginalized populations. Traditionally dependent on forest-based livelihoods such as honey collection and minor forest produce, the community has historically experienced exclusion from mainstream educational and developmental processes. Although government initiatives have improved access to schooling through residential schools, scholarships and tribal welfare programmes, educational discontinuation continues to affect many children within the community, particularly during the transition from secondary to higher secondary

education. Understanding these experiences requires moving beyond statistical indicators to explore how individuals themselves perceive and interpret their educational journeys.

The study therefore focuses on the lived experiences of educational dropouts among the Kattunayakan tribal community in Nilambur, Malappuram District, Kerala. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, the study seeks to understand how personal experiences, family circumstances, institutional factors, community realities and structural barriers shape educational discontinuation among Kattunayakan youth. By exploring participants' narratives, the study aims to provide deeper insights into the realities underlying educational dropout and contribute to a better understanding of educational exclusion among Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups.

Education

Education is a fundamental process through which individuals acquire knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary for personal growth and active participation in society. It is a lifelong process that promotes intellectual, social, emotional, moral, and economic development. Recognized as a basic human right, education plays a vital role in achieving equality, social justice, and sustainable development.

Education extends beyond formal classroom learning to include non-formal and informal learning experiences gained through family, community, culture, and everyday life. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2012), education is an organized process designed to facilitate learning through the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, and competencies.

At the individual level, education enhances critical thinking, communication, creativity, self-confidence, and employability, thereby improving quality of life. At the societal level, it contributes to human capital development, economic growth, democratic participation, social cohesion, and the reduction of inequalities.

The capability approach proposed by Amartya Sen emphasizes that development involves expanding people's capabilities and freedoms. Education strengthens these capabilities by enabling informed decision-making, improving employment opportunities, and enhancing social and economic well-being. Similarly, John Dewey (1916) viewed education as a

continuous process of learning through experience, while Paulo Freire (1970) regarded it as a means of empowering marginalized communities through critical awareness and participation.

Education also promotes social mobility by creating opportunities for disadvantaged populations to improve their socio-economic conditions. However, equal access alone does not ensure educational success. Educational equity recognizes that marginalized groups often require additional support, including financial assistance, culturally responsive teaching, language support, transportation, hostel facilities, and counselling services to overcome structural barriers.

Quality education involves more than school enrolment and completion. It requires inclusive learning environments, effective teaching, adequate infrastructure, learner participation, and culturally responsive curricula that promote meaningful learning and lifelong development. This is particularly important for indigenous and tribal communities, where education should respect local languages, cultural identities, and traditional knowledge while expanding opportunities for socio-economic advancement.

From a social work perspective, education is both a developmental resource and a means of empowerment. It influences employment, health, awareness of rights, and social participation, while reducing poverty and social exclusion. Consequently, social work practice emphasizes promoting educational access, preventing school dropout, strengthening family and community support, and advocating for inclusive educational policies.

Thus, education is not merely a means of acquiring academic knowledge but a transformative process that promotes individual empowerment, social inclusion, and sustainable development. This broader understanding provides the foundation for examining the lived experiences of educational dropout among the Kattunayakan tribal community.

Educational Dropout

Educational dropout refers to the permanent discontinuation of formal education before completing a prescribed level of schooling. According to the UNESCO Institute for

Statistics (2012), it is the permanent withdrawal of a learner from the formal education system without completing the intended level of education. Unlike temporary absenteeism, dropout represents a complete break from formal schooling and is recognized as a major educational and social concern because it limits individual development and hinders national progress.

Educational dropout is increasingly understood as a gradual process rather than a single event. Factors such as declining academic performance, irregular attendance, low motivation, financial hardship, family responsibilities, and social exclusion often accumulate over time, eventually leading students to discontinue their education.

The causes of educational dropout are multidimensional and interconnected. Individual factors include poor academic performance, health problems, low self-confidence, and language barriers. Family-related factors such as poverty, parental illiteracy, unemployment, migration, and lack of educational support also contribute significantly. School-related factors, including inadequate infrastructure, poor teacher–student relationships, discrimination, rigid curricula, and limited academic support, further increase the risk of dropout. Community-level factors such as geographical isolation, cultural practices, child labour, early marriage, and limited educational opportunities also influence educational continuation.

Economic hardship remains one of the strongest predictors of educational discontinuation, particularly among marginalized communities. Although tuition may be free in many government schools, indirect expenses such as transportation, study materials, uniforms, hostel fees, and examination costs often become barriers. In economically vulnerable households, children may also be required to contribute to family income or household responsibilities, making education secondary to immediate livelihood needs.

The consequences of educational dropout extend beyond the individual to families and society. Students who discontinue education often face limited employment opportunities, lower income, restricted access to higher education, and reduced social mobility. Educational discontinuation also contributes to psychological distress, economic insecurity, and the intergenerational transmission of poverty, ultimately affecting community development and national human capital.

Educational dropout is particularly significant among tribal communities, where historical marginalization, geographical isolation, socio-economic disadvantage, cultural differences, and limited institutional support continue to affect educational participation. Although government initiatives have improved enrolment among Scheduled Tribes, retaining students beyond the elementary level remains a major challenge. Many discontinue their education during secondary or higher secondary stages due to financial constraints, limited educational support, and difficulties in adapting to mainstream educational environments.

Among the Kattunayakan tribal community, educational dropout reflects broader socio-economic and structural inequalities rather than an educational issue alone. Poverty, dependence on forest-based livelihoods, geographical isolation, and limited access to educational opportunities continue to shape educational experiences. Exploring the lived experiences of Kattunayakan youth therefore provides valuable insights into the complex factors influencing educational discontinuation and contributes to the development of inclusive and culturally responsive educational interventions.

Tribal Education

Tribal communities are among the most socially, economically, and educationally marginalized groups in India. Despite their rich cultural heritage, indigenous knowledge, and distinct social identities, many continue to experience limited access to quality education and development opportunities. Education is widely recognized as a powerful means of empowering tribal communities, reducing socio-economic inequalities, and promoting inclusive development.

The Constitution of India provides special safeguards for the educational and socio-economic advancement of Scheduled Tribes through Articles 15(4), 46, 275(1), and 330–342. In particular, Article 46 directs the State to promote the educational and economic interests of Scheduled Tribes and protect them from social injustice and exploitation. These provisions have led to the implementation of various educational welfare programmes aimed at improving literacy, enrolment, retention, and access to higher education.

Although tribal literacy has improved due to initiatives such as residential schools, scholarships, hostels, and free educational support, educational disparities continue to persist. Many tribal students face barriers including geographical isolation, inadequate educational infrastructure, poverty, language differences, limited parental education, and cultural disconnect between tribal communities and mainstream educational systems. These factors often affect educational participation and increase the risk of dropout, particularly beyond the elementary level.

Economic disadvantage remains a major challenge, as many tribal families depend on agriculture, forest-based livelihoods, or daily wage labour. Financial constraints often limit their ability to meet educational expenses, while children may also contribute to household livelihoods, reducing opportunities for continued education. In addition, differences in language and culture can create learning difficulties and weaken students' sense of belonging within educational institutions.

To address these challenges, the Government of India has introduced several initiatives, including Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS), pre-matric and post-matric scholarships, hostel facilities, fellowships, vocational education programmes, and financial assistance for higher education. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 further identifies Scheduled Tribes as a Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Group (SEDG) and recommends multilingual education, improved infrastructure, strengthened residential schooling, financial support, and greater community participation to enhance educational retention and completion.

Despite these interventions, educational discontinuation remains a significant concern, especially during the transition from secondary to higher secondary education and from school to higher education. Financial constraints, academic challenges, social adjustment, and limited institutional support continue to affect students' educational journeys. These challenges are particularly evident among Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), highlighting the need for community-specific studies that examine the social, cultural, and economic realities shaping educational experiences.

Understanding tribal education is therefore essential for examining the lived experiences of educational dropout among the Kattunayakan tribal community, whose educational participation is influenced by multiple structural and socio-cultural factors.

Tribal Education in Kerala

Kerala is well known for its high literacy rate and educational achievements. However, educational disparities continue to exist among Scheduled Tribe communities due to geographical isolation, socio-economic disadvantage, and unequal access to educational opportunities. Although enrolment has improved considerably, ensuring educational retention and successful completion remains a major challenge.

According to the Scheduled Tribes Development Department, Government of Kerala (2013), the state has 36 Scheduled Tribe communities, of which Kattunayakan, Cholanaiakan, Kurumbas, Koraga, and Kadar are classified as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). These communities differ in their language, culture, settlement patterns, and socio-economic conditions, resulting in varied educational experiences.

To improve educational participation, the Government of Kerala has implemented several initiatives, including Model Residential Schools (MRS), scholarships, hostel facilities, free textbooks, uniforms, bridge courses, and other educational incentives. Residential schools have played a significant role in increasing access to education for tribal children living in remote areas by providing accommodation, academic support, and essential learning resources.

Despite these efforts, many tribal students face challenges in continuing education beyond the secondary and higher secondary levels. Financial constraints, limited transportation, inadequate access to higher educational institutions, and difficulties in adapting to mainstream educational environments often contribute to educational discontinuation. Language differences, cultural transition, and limited parental educational support further influence students' academic performance and educational continuity.

Educational experiences also vary across tribal communities in Kerala. While some groups have shown considerable improvement in literacy and school completion, Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups continue to experience greater educational disadvantage due to

persistent structural, economic, and socio-cultural barriers. Therefore, understanding educational realities requires community-specific studies rather than treating all tribal communities as a homogeneous population.

Within this context, the Kattunayakan community remains one of the most educationally marginalized PVTGs in Kerala. Examining their lived experiences of educational dropout provides deeper insights into the complex factors influencing educational continuation and supports the development of culturally appropriate and inclusive educational interventions.

Kattunayakan Tribal Community

The Kattunayakan community is one of the oldest indigenous tribal groups in South India and is recognized as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) by the Government of India due to its socio-economic vulnerability, low literacy, dependence on forest-based livelihoods, and distinct cultural identity. The term *Kattunayakan* is derived from the Tamil words *Kādu* (forest) and *Nāyakan* (leader), reflecting the community's long-standing relationship with forests and nature.

The community is primarily distributed across Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu. In Kerala, Kattunayakans are mainly concentrated in Wayanad, Malappuram, Kozhikode, and Kannur districts, with settlements generally located near forest fringes where access to education, healthcare, transportation, and employment opportunities remains limited.

Traditionally, the Kattunayakan community depended on honey collection and the gathering of minor forest produce for their livelihood. However, restrictions on forest access and changing socio-economic conditions have led many families to shift towards daily wage labour, agriculture, plantation work, and government-supported employment. Despite these changes, the community continues to preserve its indigenous knowledge, cultural traditions, language, and close relationship with nature.

The Kattunayakan community continues to experience socio-economic challenges, including poverty, inadequate infrastructure, irregular income, and limited access to quality education and other essential services. These conditions significantly influence educational participation and increase the risk of educational discontinuation.

Although educational opportunities have improved through various government welfare programmes, many Kattunayakan students continue to face barriers such as financial hardship, geographical isolation, language differences, limited parental educational support, and inadequate institutional resources. At the same time, educational aspirations among the younger generation have increased, with many viewing education as a pathway to improved livelihoods, social mobility, and dignity while striving to preserve their cultural identity.

Understanding the socio-economic and cultural context of the Kattunayakan community is essential for interpreting the lived experiences of educational dropout. Examining these experiences provides valuable insights into how structural, familial, institutional, and community factors shape educational discontinuation and can inform culturally responsive and inclusive educational interventions.

Lived Experiences

Lived experiences refer to the personal meanings, perceptions, emotions, and interpretations that individuals attach to the events and situations they encounter in their lives. Rather than focusing solely on objective facts, this concept emphasizes how individuals understand and make sense of their experiences. In qualitative research, particularly phenomenology, lived experiences provide deeper insights into people's perspectives and the meanings they assign to a particular phenomenon.

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), phenomenology seeks to understand the essence of individual's lived experiences by exploring their subjective realities through their own narratives. This approach enables researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of complex social issues that cannot be adequately explained through quantitative methods alone.

In the field of education, exploring lived experiences helps understand how students perceive their educational journey, the challenges they encounter, and the factors influencing their educational decisions. In the present study, examining the lived experiences of educational dropouts among the Kattunayakan tribal community provides deeper insights into how personal, familial, institutional, community, and structural factors

contribute to educational discontinuation. Such understanding is essential for developing inclusive, culturally responsive, and context-specific educational interventions.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Education is widely recognized as a fundamental human right and a key instrument for promoting social inclusion, empowerment and sustainable development. Although India has implemented several policies and programmes to improve educational access among Scheduled Tribes, educational inequalities continue to persist, particularly among Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). Despite improvements in school enrolment through initiatives such as residential schools, scholarships and other welfare measures, many tribal students discontinue their education before completing higher secondary or higher education. This indicates that improving access alone is insufficient to ensure educational continuity.

The Kattunayakan community, one of the five Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups in Kerala, continues to experience multiple socio-economic and educational disadvantages. Factors such as economic hardship, geographical isolation, limited access to higher educational institutions, inadequate educational support systems and changing family responsibilities continue to influence educational participation. Although various government interventions have expanded educational opportunities, discontinuation of education remains evident among many young people within the community. Such educational discontinuation affects not only individual educational attainment but also employment opportunities, socio-economic mobility, and the overall development of the community.

Previous studies on tribal education have primarily focused on literacy levels, enrolment, educational access and the socio-economic factors associated with educational disadvantage. While these studies have contributed significantly to understanding the structural barriers affecting tribal education, comparatively few have explored how tribal students themselves experience educational discontinuation. Quantitative indicators explain the extent of dropout but often fail to capture the personal meanings, emotions, challenges and circumstances that shape the educational journeys of students. Understanding these lived experiences is essential for identifying the complex interaction

of personal, family, community, institutional and structural factors influencing educational discontinuation.

The study therefore seeks to explore the lived experiences of educational dropouts among the Kattunayakan tribal community in Nilambur, Malappuram district. By adopting a qualitative phenomenological approach, the study aims to understand educational discontinuation from the perspectives of the participants themselves. The findings are expected to provide a deeper understanding of the realities faced by Kattunayakan youth and contribute to the development of more inclusive, culturally sensitive and context-specific educational policies and interventions for tribal communities.

1.3 Background of the Study

Education is widely recognized as a fundamental human right and a key driver of individual, social, and economic development. It empowers individuals by enhancing their knowledge, skills, confidence, and opportunities while contributing to poverty reduction, social inclusion, and sustainable development. Although India has made significant progress in improving access to education through various constitutional provisions, educational policies, and welfare programmes, disparities in educational attainment continue to exist among marginalized communities, particularly Scheduled Tribes and Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). These communities often face multiple barriers, including poverty, geographical isolation, limited educational facilities, language differences, and socio-cultural disadvantages, which affect their educational participation and continuation.

The Kattunayakan community, recognized as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group in Kerala, continues to experience educational challenges despite targeted government interventions such as residential schools, scholarships, and other tribal welfare schemes. While many children are enrolled in schools, educational discontinuation remains a persistent concern, especially during the transition to higher secondary and higher education. Educational dropout among Kattunayakan children is shaped by a complex interaction of personal, family, socio-economic, cultural, and structural factors. Understanding these experiences is essential for identifying the barriers that prevent

educational continuation and for developing more inclusive educational policies and support systems. Therefore, the present study explores the lived experiences of educational dropouts among the Kattunayakan tribal community to understand the realities behind educational discontinuation and to contribute to the development of effective interventions that promote educational inclusion and equity.

1.4 Relevance and Significance

The study is significant because it provides an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of educational dropouts among the Kattunayakan tribal community, one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in Kerala. While several government initiatives have improved access to education among tribal communities, educational discontinuation continues to remain a concern, particularly during higher secondary and higher education. By documenting the experiences of individuals who have discontinued their education, the study brings attention to the realities that often remain unexplored in official reports and educational statistics. It highlights how economic conditions, family circumstances, educational transitions, geographical accessibility and community contexts interact to influence educational decisions. Understanding these experiences can help identify the specific needs of the Kattunayakan community and support the development of educational interventions that are sensitive to their social and cultural context.

The study contributes to a better understanding of educational dropout among tribal communities by moving beyond enrolment figures and literacy rates to explore the actual experiences of students. Educational discontinuation is often viewed only as an educational issue however, the findings of this study indicate that it is closely linked with poverty, livelihood insecurity, access to educational institutions, family responsibilities and broader structural inequalities. The study therefore provides valuable insights for educational planners, tribal development departments, schools and higher educational institutions to strengthen existing support mechanisms for tribal students. The findings may also assist in improving hostel facilities, counselling services, financial assistance, academic support and transition programmes that encourage students to continue their education. In the long term, reducing educational discontinuation can contribute to improving employment opportunities, socio-economic mobility and the overall development of tribal communities.

The study makes an important contribution to the field of social work by documenting the lived experiences of educational dropout from the perspectives of the participants themselves. Social work emphasizes understanding people within their social environment and this study demonstrates how personal, family, community, institutional and structural factors collectively shape educational outcomes. The findings provide useful knowledge for social workers engaged in tribal development, child welfare, community organization, educational support programmes and policy advocacy. The study highlights the importance of adopting culturally responsive, participatory and rights-based approaches while working with tribal communities. It also emphasizes the need for collaboration among families, schools, communities, government agencies and social workers to address educational challenges in a holistic manner. The study serves as a reference for future researchers interested in tribal education, educational exclusion, educational retention and the lived experiences of marginalized communities.

The findings of the study may also be useful for government departments, non-governmental organizations and agencies working in the field of tribal welfare and education. By identifying the factors that contribute to educational discontinuation from the perspectives of the participants, the study provides practical insights that can support the review and strengthening of existing educational programmes. The findings may encourage greater attention towards student support services, career guidance, community awareness, financial assistance and educational continuity among tribal students. Although the study is limited to the Kattunayakan community in Nilambur, the insights generated may also contribute to discussions on improving educational inclusion among other marginalized tribal communities facing similar challenges

1.5 Chapterization

Chapter I – Introduction: This chapter presents the introduction to the study, statement of the problem, background of the study, relevance and significance of the study, chapterization and conclusion. It establishes the context and rationale for the research and outlines the overall framework of the study.

Chapter II – Review of Literature and Theoretical Framework: This chapter reviews the existing literature related to education, educational dropout, tribal education,

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), the Kattunayakan tribal community and lived experiences. It also presents the theoretical framework guiding the study and identifies the research gap that forms the basis for the present investigation.

Chapter III – Research Methodology: This chapter describes the research methodology adopted for the study, including the research approach, research design, study area, sampling design, data collection methods, tools used for data collection, techniques of data analysis, ethical considerations, limitations and scope of the study.

Chapter IV – Case Presentation: This chapter presents the demographic profile of the participants followed by the individual case presentations. The narratives describe the participants' personal background, educational journey, circumstances leading to educational dropout, present life situation and future aspirations, providing a contextual understanding of their lived experiences.

Chapter V Data Analysis and Interpretation: This chapter presents the thematic analysis of the qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews. The findings are organized into themes and sub-themes based on the objectives of the study and interpreted in relation to the existing literature and theoretical framework.

Chapter VI – Findings, Suggestions and Conclusion: This chapter presents the major findings of the study by integrating the qualitative results. Based on these findings, suggestions are proposed to strengthen future rehabilitation initiatives, followed by the policy and social work implications of the study.

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented an overview of the research by introducing the issue of educational dropout among the Kattunayakan tribal community and highlighting its significance in the context of tribal education and social development. It discussed the background of the study, statement of the problem, need and significance of the study, objectives, research questions, scope and limitations, and the definition of key concepts. The chapter establishes that educational dropout among tribal children is a multidimensional issue influenced by socio-economic, cultural, familial, institutional, and geographical factors. Understanding the lived experiences of educational dropouts is

essential for identifying the challenges they face and for developing more inclusive and culturally responsive educational interventions. The succeeding chapter reviews the existing literature and theoretical perspectives relevant to the study, providing the conceptual foundation for the present research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

A review of literature provides a comprehensive understanding of the existing body of knowledge related to the research problem and helps identify gaps that justify the need for the present study. It enables the researcher to examine previous findings, understand theoretical and empirical developments, and establish the context for the investigation. For the present study on the lived experiences of educational dropouts among the Kattunayakan tribal community, the literature review explores existing research on tribal education, educational exclusion, school dropout, government interventions, and the socio-cultural realities influencing educational participation among tribal communities. The reviewed literature also examines studies related to Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), educational inequality, and the lived experiences of tribal children in India, with special attention to Kerala. The chapter is organised under thematic headings to provide a systematic understanding of the existing knowledge, identify research gaps, and establish the conceptual foundation for the present study.

2.2 Review of Literature

A review of literature provides a comprehensive understanding of the existing body of knowledge related to the research problem and helps identify gaps that justify the need for the present study. It enables the researcher to examine previous research findings, understand theoretical and empirical developments and establish the context for the investigation. A well-organised review of literature not only highlights the major concepts and issues related to the study but also provides a foundation for interpreting the research findings and selecting an appropriate theoretical framework.

The present review focuses on studies related to the educational status of tribal communities, educational dropout among tribal children, factors influencing school dropout, educational challenges experienced by the Kattunayakan and other Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) and issues related to educational inclusion and retention. The reviewed literature helps identify the existing research gap regarding the lived experiences of educational dropouts among the Kattunayakan tribal community in Kerala, thereby providing a strong conceptual foundation for the present study.

2.2.1 Tribal Education in India

Education is widely recognized as an important instrument for the social, economic, and cultural development of tribal communities. It enhances literacy, improves livelihood opportunities, strengthens participation in society, and promotes social inclusion. Despite various constitutional safeguards and educational schemes implemented by the Government of India and state governments, educational attainment among tribal communities continues to remain lower than that of the general population. Factors such as geographical isolation, poverty, language barriers, inadequate educational infrastructure, and socio-cultural differences continue to influence educational participation among tribal children.

In Kerala, although the state has achieved high literacy rates, tribal communities continue to experience disparities in educational access and outcomes. Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), including the Kattunayakan community, continue to face challenges related to enrolment, retention, language of instruction, and educational achievement. Existing literature suggests that improving tribal education requires culturally responsive educational practices that recognize indigenous knowledge, local languages, and community participation.

Krishnan A et.al (2024), in their study titled “Tribal Education in Kerala and Achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)-4: Prospects and Challenges”, examined the educational status of tribal communities in Kerala in relation to Sustainable Development Goal 4. Using a case study approach involving tribal students, tribal promoters, counsellors, educationists, and social activists, the study found that although several government initiatives have improved educational access, tribal students continue to experience barriers such as geographical isolation, language differences, economic hardship, and limited parental awareness. The study concluded that community participation, culturally appropriate educational practices, and social work interventions are essential to improve educational inclusion among tribal communities.

Manojan K. P. (2023), in the study “Indigenous Knowledge in Education: A Study among Paniya Tribes in Kerala”, explored the relationship between indigenous knowledge and formal education among the Paniya tribe of Wayanad. Adopting a mixed-method approach,

the study revealed that mainstream education often neglects indigenous knowledge systems and cultural practices, resulting in reduced student engagement and learning conflicts. The study emphasized that integrating indigenous knowledge into school education could improve educational participation, preserve cultural identity, and create a more inclusive learning environment for tribal children.

R. R. Patil (2020), in the edited volume “Tribal Development in India: Challenges and Prospects in Tribal Education, compiled studies examining educational experiences of tribal children across different Indian states”. The volume highlights persistent issues including high dropout rates, poor educational infrastructure, inadequate residential schools, linguistic exclusion, and socio-economic disadvantages. The contributors argued that tribal education should move beyond increasing enrolment and focus on improving educational quality, cultural relevance, and equitable learning opportunities.

Malli Gandhi (2014), in the study “Mother Tongue Education for Tribal Children”, discussed the importance of using tribal languages in early education. The study found that children who begin schooling in unfamiliar languages often experience learning difficulties, reduced classroom participation, and poor academic performance. The author emphasized that mother tongue-based multilingual education strengthens learning outcomes, preserves indigenous culture, and facilitates a smoother transition into formal schooling for tribal children.

The reviewed literature indicates that tribal education is influenced by multiple structural, cultural, linguistic, and economic factors. While educational policies have expanded access to schooling, many tribal children continue to face barriers that limit meaningful educational participation. The literature also highlights the importance of culturally responsive education, mother tongue instruction, and community involvement in improving educational outcomes. These studies provide the broader educational context for the present research, which seeks to understand the lived experiences of educational dropouts among the Kattunayakan tribal community, with particular attention to how educational experiences contribute to school discontinuation.

2.2.2 Educational Dropout among Tribal Communities

Educational dropout among tribal children remains a significant challenge despite various government initiatives aimed at achieving universal education. Although enrolment of Scheduled Tribe children has improved over the years, a considerable number continue to discontinue their education before completing secondary schooling. Educational dropout is influenced by multiple factors such as poverty, language barriers, geographical isolation, family circumstances, cultural practices, poor school infrastructure, and limited parental awareness. Understanding the nature and causes of dropout is essential for developing effective educational interventions and promoting educational inclusion among tribal communities.

Recent studies from both Kerala and different parts of India indicate that educational dropout among tribal students is not merely an educational issue but also a social, economic, and cultural concern. The following studies provide insights into the extent of tribal educational dropout and the factors contributing to it.

Babuji K. R. (2024) conducted a study titled “The Impact of Medium of Instruction on Dropout Rates and Academic Performance: A Case Study of Tribal Students in Wayanad District, Kerala”. The study examined how the language of instruction affects educational continuity among tribal students in Wayanad. Using a case study approach, the research found that the sudden transition from tribal languages to Malayalam and English created learning difficulties, resulting in poor academic performance and increased dropout rates. The study concluded that multilingual and culturally inclusive education can improve retention among tribal children.

Subhash V. S. (2020) conducted a KIRTADS research study titled “Educational Backwardness of Paniya Community of Wayanad”. The study analysed the educational status of Paniya children through interviews with students, parents, and teachers. The findings revealed that poverty, parental illiteracy, seasonal migration, poor learning support, absenteeism, and low academic motivation contributed significantly to school dropout. The study recommended strengthening residential schooling, parental awareness programmes, and educational support services.

Prasoon C. P. (2024), in a doctoral thesis titled “Inclusive Practices of Formative Assessment for Self-representation of Culturally Marginalised Tribal Students”, examined how school assessment practices influence educational participation of tribal children in Wayanad. The study found that conventional classroom assessment often excluded culturally marginalised tribal learners, leading to poor classroom engagement and eventual dropout. It recommended inclusive assessment practices and culturally responsive pedagogy to improve retention.

Bhukya, Channaveer, and Sathu (2024) conducted a systematic review titled “Antecedents of Children Dropout in Tribal Schools of India”. The review analysed existing research on tribal school dropout across different Indian states. The findings showed that poverty, long travel distance, language differences, inadequate school infrastructure, teacher absenteeism, discrimination, and family responsibilities were the most common causes of dropout. The study emphasised the need for region-specific educational policies for tribal communities.

Parida and Das (2026) conducted a mixed-methods systematic review titled “Barriers and Facilitators to Education for Tribal Populations in India”. The review synthesised evidence from 47 studies published between 2010 and 2024. The findings revealed that Scheduled Tribe students continue to experience disproportionately high dropout rates because of socio-economic deprivation, language barriers, geographical isolation, lack of qualified teachers, and limited access to secondary education. The review also identified scholarships, residential schools, community participation, and culturally appropriate teaching as important factors supporting educational retention.

The reviewed literature indicates that educational dropout among tribal children results from the interaction of educational, socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors. While Kerala has made considerable progress in improving educational access, tribal communities such as the Paniya and Kattunayakan continue to face challenges that interrupt educational continuity. Similarly, studies conducted across India demonstrate that dropout remains a persistent concern among Scheduled Tribe populations. However, very limited research has specifically explored the lived experiences of educational dropouts

among the Kattunayakan tribal community in Kerala, thereby creating the need for the present study.

2.2.3 Factors Influencing Educational Dropout among Tribal Children

Educational dropout among tribal children is influenced by a combination of socio-economic, cultural, educational, geographical, and institutional factors. Rather than resulting from a single cause, dropout often reflects the interaction of poverty, parental illiteracy, language barriers, poor access to schools, discrimination, inadequate learning support, and the cultural realities of tribal communities. Understanding these factors is essential for developing effective interventions that promote educational retention and inclusion among tribal children.

Studies conducted in Kerala and other parts of India consistently indicate that educational dropout among tribal children is shaped by structural inequalities and the limited responsiveness of the education system to tribal contexts.

Rupavath (2016) conducted a field-based study titled “Tribal Education: A Perspective from Below”. The study critically examined tribal education policies in India by analysing the educational experiences of tribal communities. The findings revealed that poverty, cultural alienation, language differences, insensitive school environments, and curriculum that ignored tribal knowledge discouraged many tribal children from continuing their education. The study concluded that tribal education should become culturally responsive rather than merely increasing enrolment.

Government of Kerala – Scheduled Tribes Development Department published the Report on the Socio-Economic Status of Scheduled Tribes in Kerala. The report analysed educational conditions among Scheduled Tribes across Kerala. It found that financial difficulties, academic failure, family problems, inaccessibility of educational institutions, and feelings of social alienation were the major reasons for discontinuing education among tribal students. The report recommended strengthening educational assistance, hostel facilities, counselling services, and community support for tribal learners.

Sahu, Mallik, Bankira, Sahu, and Sahoo (2025) conducted a study titled “Tribal Education in India: Socio-cultural, Institutional and Economical Constraints”. The study examined

the major constraints affecting tribal education across India. The findings indicated that poverty, inadequate school infrastructure, parental illiteracy, gender discrimination, language barriers, teacher shortages, and culturally inappropriate curricula contributed significantly to educational discontinuation. The authors recommended culturally relevant teaching practices and improved institutional support to enhance educational retention among tribal children.

Thamminaina, Kanungo, and Mohanty (2021) conducted a systematic review titled “Barriers, Opportunities, and Enablers to Educate Girls from Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)”. The review analysed 45 studies focusing on education among PVTG girls in India. The findings showed that early marriage, household responsibilities, discrimination, inaccessible schools, language barriers, and poor parental awareness limited educational participation. The study emphasised that educational interventions should be community-based and culturally sensitive, particularly for PVTGs.

Das (2025) conducted a study titled “An Overview of School Absenteeism among Students of the Paniya Tribes in Mananthavady Panchayat of Wayanad District, Kerala”. The study investigated absenteeism among Paniya tribal students and identified poor parental awareness, poverty, seasonal labour, low educational motivation, and inadequate academic support as major contributors to irregular attendance, which frequently resulted in school dropout. The study recommended strengthening school–community partnerships and improving parental engagement in children's education.

The reviewed literature indicates that educational dropout among tribal children is shaped by interconnected socio-economic, cultural, institutional, and geographical factors. While studies from Kerala highlight issues such as poverty, absenteeism, financial hardship, and social alienation, research conducted across India emphasises language barriers, culturally insensitive schooling, gender disparities, and inadequate educational infrastructure. Although these studies identify the major determinants of educational discontinuation among tribal communities, very few have specifically explored how these factors are experienced and interpreted by educational dropouts belonging to the Kattunayakan tribal community in Kerala. This gap forms an important basis for the present study.

2.2.4 Educational Challenges among Kattunayakan and Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)

The Kattunayakan community is one of the five Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in Kerala and is recognised as one of the most educationally and socio-economically disadvantaged tribal communities in the state. Although several welfare programmes, residential schools, scholarships, and educational support schemes have been introduced, educational attainment among Kattunayakan children continues to remain comparatively low. Their dependence on forest-based livelihoods, geographical isolation, poverty, language differences, limited parental literacy, and cultural practices continue to influence educational participation and continuity. Studies focusing on PVTGs suggest that educational exclusion among these communities extends beyond school access and is closely linked with broader socio-economic and cultural realities.

Anusree G. I. and Umajyothi V. (2022) conducted a study titled “A Case Study of the Educational and Socio-Economic Status of the Kattunayakan Community in Kerala”. Using a case study approach in Wayanad district, the researchers examined the educational and socio-economic conditions of the Kattunayakan community. The study found that educational attainment remained low because of poverty, low parental literacy, inadequate motivation, dependence on forest-based occupations, and limited utilisation of government educational schemes. The authors recommended community-specific educational planning, improved educational awareness, and skill development programmes for sustainable development.

Ajmal K. Ayoob, Manisha Priyadarshini Bhagat, and Nishant Singh (2022) conducted a study titled “Digital Education among Tribal Children – A Study on the Effect of the Corona Pandemic”. The study explored how the COVID-19 pandemic affected tribal children's education in Wayanad, Kerala. The findings revealed that lack of digital devices, poor internet connectivity, financial hardship, and limited parental educational support widened educational inequalities among tribal children. The researchers concluded that these barriers increased the risk of absenteeism and educational discontinuation among vulnerable tribal groups.

Government of Kerala – Scheduled Tribes Development Department published the Report on the Socio-Economic Status of Scheduled Tribes in Kerala. The report highlights that dropout rates remain particularly high among PVTGs, including the Kattunayakan community. It identifies poverty, educational backwardness, limited access to higher education, geographical isolation, and weak educational support systems as major barriers affecting educational continuity. The report recommends targeted educational interventions, hostel facilities, scholarships, bridge courses, and community-based educational support for PVTGs.

Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India (2023) published PM PVTG Development Mission – Guidelines, which identifies education as one of the major priorities for PVTG development. The document highlights that educational deprivation among PVTGs results from poor infrastructure, low literacy, difficult geographical conditions, and limited access to quality educational services. It recommends integrated educational support through residential schools, scholarships, digital learning, transportation facilities, and community mobilisation to improve educational participation

The reviewed literature indicates that Kattunayakan and other Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups continue to experience significant educational disadvantages despite various welfare initiatives. Studies from Kerala highlight low educational attainment, poverty, forest dependence, digital exclusion, and limited awareness regarding educational opportunities, while national reports emphasise structural barriers such as remoteness, inadequate infrastructure, and socio-cultural exclusion. Although these studies provide valuable insights into the educational challenges faced by PVTGs, very limited research has explored the lived experiences of educational dropouts specifically among the Kattunayakan tribal community in Kerala. This gap justifies the need for the present study.

2.2.5 Educational Inclusion, Retention and Lived Experiences

Educational inclusion aims to ensure that every child, irrespective of social, cultural, or economic background, has equal opportunities to access, participate in, and complete education. For tribal communities, educational inclusion extends beyond school enrolment and involves creating culturally responsive learning environments, ensuring retention, and addressing the lived realities that influence educational participation. Although several

educational policies and welfare programmes have improved access to schooling for tribal children, studies indicate that many continue to face barriers that affect their educational experiences and persistence in school. Understanding these lived experiences is essential for developing inclusive educational policies and practices.

UNESCO (2020), in the Global Education Monitoring Report: Inclusion and Education – All Means All, examined educational inclusion among marginalised populations worldwide. The report emphasised that inclusion is not merely about providing access to schools but ensuring meaningful participation, equitable learning opportunities, and a supportive educational environment. It highlighted that indigenous and tribal learners often experience exclusion due to socio-economic disadvantage, discrimination, language barriers, and culturally inappropriate educational systems. The report recommended inclusive policies that recognise learners' cultural identities and promote equitable educational outcomes.

Ministry of Education, Government of India (2020) introduced the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which gives special emphasis to the educational inclusion of Scheduled Tribes and other socio-economically disadvantaged groups. The policy recommends multilingual education, flexible learning approaches, improved teacher preparation, community participation, and strengthened support systems to improve enrolment, retention, and educational achievement among tribal learners. It recognises that educational equity requires addressing both academic and social barriers faced by disadvantaged communities.

Mohanty and Mishra (2019) conducted a study on “educational inclusion among tribal children in Odisha”. Using qualitative interviews with tribal students, parents, and teachers, the researchers found that although government schemes improved school access, many tribal students continued to experience feelings of exclusion, lack of belonging, communication difficulties, and low confidence within school environments. The study concluded that educational success depends not only on enrolment but also on creating inclusive school cultures that respect tribal identities.

The reviewed literature demonstrates that educational inclusion involves more than ensuring school access; it requires creating supportive, culturally responsive, and equitable

learning environments that enable tribal children to remain in school and succeed academically. International organisations, national policies, and empirical studies consistently highlight the importance of addressing socio-economic disadvantage, cultural diversity, language barriers, and institutional exclusion to improve educational retention among tribal communities. However, very limited research has explored these issues through the lived experiences of educational dropouts belonging to the Kattunayakan tribal community in Kerala. The present study addresses this gap by understanding how educational, social, cultural, and family-related factors shape the lived experiences of Kattunayakan educational dropouts.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework provides the conceptual foundation for a research study by explaining the theories that guide the understanding and interpretation of the research problem. It helps establish relationships between the concepts under investigation and provides a framework for analysing the findings in a systematic manner. In the present study, the theoretical framework facilitates an understanding of the lived experiences of educational dropouts among the Kattunayakan tribal community by explaining how individual, family, school, community, and structural factors interact to influence educational participation and school continuation. The study adopts Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Cultural Capital as its guiding frameworks. These theories are considered appropriate because they explain educational experiences as outcomes of multiple interacting social, cultural, economic, and institutional influences rather than individual factors alone.

2.3.1 Ecological Systems Theory (Urie Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

Ecological Systems Theory, proposed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979), explains that human development is influenced by multiple environmental systems that interact with one another. According to the theory, an individual's behaviour and development cannot be understood in isolation but must be examined within the context of family, school, community, culture, and broader social and policy environments. Bronfenbrenner identified five interrelated systems: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem,

macrosystem, and chronosystem, each contributing to an individual's developmental experiences.

In the context of tribal education, children's educational participation is influenced by interactions within their immediate environment, including parents, teachers, peers, and schools, as well as wider factors such as poverty, geographical isolation, educational policies, cultural practices, and social exclusion. These interconnected systems may either support or hinder children's educational opportunities and increase the likelihood of school dropout.

Ecological Systems Theory is highly relevant to the present study because the lived experiences of educational dropouts among the Kattunayakan tribal community are shaped by multiple interacting factors rather than a single cause. Family economic conditions, parental support, school environment, language barriers, cultural traditions, community attitudes, and government educational provisions collectively influence children's educational experiences. The theory therefore provides a holistic framework for understanding how these interconnected factors contribute to educational dropout among Kattunayakan children.

2.3.2 Theory of Cultural Capital (Pierre Bourdieu, 1986)

The Theory of Cultural Capital, developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1986), explains how differences in cultural resources influence educational opportunities and academic achievement. According to the theory, children from different social backgrounds possess varying levels of cultural capital, including language, knowledge, values, communication styles, and educational experiences acquired through their families and communities. Schools often recognise and reward the dominant culture, placing children from marginalized communities at a disadvantage.

For tribal children, differences in language, cultural practices, learning styles, and limited exposure to formal education may create barriers to educational participation and success. The mismatch between tribal culture and mainstream school culture can result in learning difficulties, low academic confidence, social exclusion, and eventually school dropout.

Educational inequality therefore reflects not only economic disadvantage but also unequal access to cultural and educational resources.

The Theory of Cultural Capital is particularly relevant to the present study because it helps explain how the educational experiences of Kattunayakan children are influenced by cultural and social factors beyond individual ability. Language differences, limited parental literacy, unfamiliar school environments, and the absence of culturally responsive educational practices may contribute to educational exclusion and dropout. The theory enables the study to interpret participant's lived experiences by examining how cultural disadvantage influences educational participation and continuity.

2.4 Research Gap

Education among tribal communities has received considerable attention from researchers, policymakers and development agencies. Existing studies have examined literacy levels, educational access, enrolment patterns, dropout rates and barriers affecting tribal education in different regions of India. Research has also highlighted the educational disadvantages experienced by Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), including the Kattunayakan community.

Several studies have identified factors such as poverty, parental illiteracy, geographical isolation, inadequate educational facilities, language barriers and community influences as contributors to educational discontinuation among tribal students. Research conducted in Kerala has documented the educational challenges faced by tribal communities and has reported high dropout rates among Kattunayakans compared to many other tribal groups.

Despite these contributions, certain gaps remain in the existing literature.

Most studies have focused on statistical indicators such as literacy rates, enrolment patterns and dropout percentages. Limited attention has been given to understanding educational dropout from the perspective of the students themselves. The personal meanings, emotions, aspirations and lived experiences associated with educational discontinuation remain insufficiently explored.

Many studies have treated dropout primarily as an educational outcome rather than as a complex social experience shaped by multiple interacting factors. There is limited

qualitative research examining how personal, family, community and institutional factors collectively influence educational discontinuation among members of the Kattunayakan community.

Studies specifically focusing on the lived experiences of educational dropouts from the Kattunayakan Tribal Community in Nilambur are scarce. Existing literature provides limited understanding of how students interpret their educational journeys, the challenges they encounter and the consequences they experience after discontinuing their education.

The study attempts to address this gap by exploring the lived experiences of educational dropouts from the Kattunayakan Tribal Community of Muddakkadav Settlement, Nilambur. Through a qualitative approach, the study seeks to understand educational discontinuation from the perspective of the affected individuals and contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors influencing educational dropout among tribal youth.

2.5 Conclusion

The review of literature provides a comprehensive understanding of the existing knowledge on tribal education, educational dropout, and the socio-cultural, economic, and institutional factors influencing the educational experiences of tribal children. The studies reviewed indicate that educational dropout among tribal communities is a multidimensional issue shaped by poverty, parental education, livelihood patterns, geographical isolation, language barriers, inadequate educational facilities, cultural differences, and limited access to supportive learning environments. The literature also highlights the importance of government interventions and educational policies in improving access to education among tribal populations, while revealing persistent challenges in ensuring retention and educational continuity.

Although several studies have examined tribal education and school dropout in India and Kerala, limited research has specifically explored the lived experiences of educational dropouts among the Kattunayakan tribal community. Most existing studies have focused on enrolment, educational attainment, policy implementation, or statistical trends, with comparatively less attention given to the personal experiences and perceptions of children who discontinued their education. This gap underscores the need for the present study,

which seeks to understand educational dropout from the perspectives of the Kattunayakan community. The literature reviewed provides a strong conceptual foundation for the study and supports the selection of the theoretical framework adopted to interpret the lived experiences of the participants.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research methodology adopted for the present study. It explains the research approach, research design, study setting, population, sampling technique, sampling criteria, data collection methods and tools, procedure of data collection, methods of data analysis, ethical considerations and limitations of the study. The methodology provides a systematic framework for understanding the lived experiences of educational dropouts among the Kattunayakan tribal community and ensures the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings.

3.2 Title of the Study

LIVED EXPERIENCES OF EDUCATIONAL DROPOUTS AMONG THE
KATTUNAYAKAN TRIBAL COMMUNITY

3.3 Research Questions

General Research Question

- What are the major reasons that influence educational dropout among Kattunayakan children in Nilambur?

Specific Research Questions

- In what ways do personal, family, and community factors shape the experiences of educational dropout among Kattunayakan children?
- How do dropout students describe their experiences in educational institutions and the reasons for discontinuing their education?
- What are the perceived consequences of educational dropout for the students and their community?

3.4 Definition of Concepts

3.4.1 Conceptual and Operational Definitions

Conceptual Definitions

- **Lived Experiences**

Lived experiences refer to an individual's personal perceptions, feelings, meanings and interpretations of events encountered in everyday life. They represent how people experience and make sense of their social reality from their own perspective. According to Max van Manen (1990), lived experience is the immediate experience of life as it is consciously lived and interpreted by individuals before it is conceptualized or theorized.

- **Educational Dropout**

Educational dropout refers to the discontinuation of formal education by a student before completing the prescribed level of schooling or education for reasons other than successful completion. According to UNESCO, a school dropout is a learner who leaves the education system before completing the level of education in which they were enrolled.

- **Kattunayakan Tribal Community**

The Kattunayakan are one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) recognized by the Government of India. Traditionally dependent on forest-based livelihoods such as honey collection, gathering forest produce, and hunting, they are primarily distributed in the forest regions of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The community possesses a distinct language, culture, customs, and traditional way of life. (Government of Kerala, Scheduled Tribes Development Department)

- **Barriers to Education**

Educational barriers refer to the social, economic, cultural, institutional, geographical, and personal factors that hinder children's access to, participation in, and completion of formal education. According to UNICEF, barriers to education include poverty, discrimination, language differences, inadequate school infrastructure, family circumstances and social exclusion that prevent children from realizing their right to education.

Operational Definition

- **Lived Experiences**

In the present study, lived experiences refer to the personal experiences, perceptions, emotions and interpretations shared by Kattunayakan tribal individuals regarding their educational journey, the circumstances that led to school dropout, the challenges they encountered before and after leaving school and the impact of dropout on their present lives.

- **Educational Dropout**

For the purpose of this study, educational dropout refers to Kattunayakan tribal children and adolescents who discontinued their formal education before completing their intended level of schooling and are no longer enrolled in any educational institution at the time of the study.

- **Kattunayakan Tribal Community**

In the present study, the Kattunayakan Tribal Community refers to members of the Kattunayakan tribe residing in Nilambur, Malappuram District, Kerala, who have experienced educational dropout and participated in the study by sharing their lived experiences.

- **Barriers to Education**

In the present study, educational barriers refer to the various personal, family, school, community, cultural and socio-economic factors that influenced Kattunayakan tribal children to discontinue their education.

3.5 Research Approach

The study adopts a qualitative research approach to explore the lived experiences of educational dropouts among the Kattunayakan tribal community. Qualitative research is appropriate when the objective is to understand individuals' experiences, perceptions, meanings and interpretations of social phenomena from their own perspectives. It enables the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of complex human experiences within

their natural settings rather than measuring them numerically. According to John W. Creswell (2013), qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. In the present study, the qualitative approach facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the educational experiences of Kattunayakan tribal children, the factors that contributed to their educational dropout and the impact of dropout on their personal and social lives. By focusing on participants' narratives, the study seeks to understand educational dropout from the perspectives of those who have directly experienced it.

3.6 Research Design

The present study adopts a phenomenological research design. Phenomenology is a qualitative research design that seeks to understand and describe the essence of individual's lived experiences regarding a particular phenomenon. It focuses on how people perceive, experience and interpret events in their lives, allowing the researcher to understand the meaning participants attach to those experiences. According to Clark Moustakas (1994), phenomenological research aims to describe the common meaning of lived experiences shared by individuals who have experienced a particular phenomenon.

The phenomenological design is appropriate for the present study because it seeks to explore the lived experiences of educational dropouts among the Kattunayakan tribal community. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, enabling participants to share their educational journeys, the circumstances that led to school dropout, the challenges they encountered and the impact of discontinuing education on their lives. The study also incorporated field observations to understand the participants' social and cultural context. By adopting a phenomenological design, the researcher is able to gain a deeper understanding of the meanings participants attach to their experiences and to identify the common themes that characterize educational dropout within the Kattunayakan tribal community.

3.7 Universe and Unit of Study

The universe of the study consists of all educational dropouts belonging to the Kattunayakan Tribal Community residing in the Muddakkadav Settlement of Nilambur, Malappuram District. The study focuses on individuals who have discontinued their formal

education before completing their intended level of schooling. These educational dropouts constitute the population from which the participants for the present study were selected.

The unit of study comprises individual educational dropouts from the Kattunayakan Tribal Community residing in the Muddakkadav Settlement. The respondents were selected from among members of the community who had experienced educational dropout and were willing to share their lived experiences. Individuals who had successfully completed their education or who did not belong to the Kattunayakan Tribal Community were excluded from the study.

3.8 Sampling Design

Sampling Technique

The study employed Purposive Sampling.

Purposive sampling involves selecting participants based on specific characteristics relevant to the research problem. This technique is widely used in qualitative research because it enables researchers to identify information-rich participants who can provide detailed insights into the phenomenon being studied.

Participants were selected based on their educational dropout status and their willingness to participate in the study.

Inclusion Criteria

- Members of the Kattunayakan Tribal Community.
- Individuals residing in Muddakkadav Settlement.
- Individuals who discontinued formal education before completion.
- Individuals below the age of 24 years.
- Individuals willing to participate in the study.

Exclusion Criteria

- Individuals who have completed their intended educational programme.
- Members of other tribal communities.
- Individuals above 24 years of age.

- Individuals unwilling to participate in the study.

3.9 Data Collection

Both primary and secondary data were used in the study.

Primary Data

Primary data were collected directly from participants through in-depth interviews. Interviews were conducted in Malayalam to facilitate comfortable communication and enable participants to express their experiences freely.

The interviews focused on educational experiences, factors influencing educational discontinuation, family and community influences, present circumstances and future aspirations.

Secondary Data

Secondary data were collected from books, journal articles, government reports, census reports, research studies, policy documents, dissertations and online resources related to tribal education and educational dropout.

3.10 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted prior to the main study to assess the feasibility of the research design, data collection procedures, and the suitability of the interview guide. The pilot study was carried out with one educational dropout from the Kattunayakan tribal community who possessed characteristics similar to those of the study participants but was not included in the final sample. The pilot study helped the researcher assess the clarity, sequence, and relevance of the interview questions. The findings of the pilot study provided valuable insights into the appropriateness of the research instrument and the overall data collection process, thereby enhancing the credibility and feasibility of the main study.

3.11 Study Area

The study was conducted in Muddakkadav Settlement Nilambur, Malappuram District, Kerala.

The settlement is inhabited predominantly by members of the Kattunayakan Tribal Community, one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in Kerala. The community has historically depended on forest-related livelihoods and daily wage labour for sustenance.

The area was selected because educational discontinuation among tribal youth has been observed within the community, making it relevant to the objectives of the study. Conducting the study within the settlement provided an opportunity to understand educational dropout in its social, cultural, and economic context.

3.12 Data Analysis

The data collected for the present study were analysed using thematic analysis, which is widely used in qualitative research to identify, analyse and interpret meaningful patterns or themes within the data. Thematic analysis enables the researcher to systematically organise participants' narratives and gain a deeper understanding of their lived experiences. According to Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a flexible method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within qualitative data.

The data collected through in-depth interviews were first transcribed verbatim and translated into English wherever necessary. The transcripts were read repeatedly to develop familiarity with the participants' narratives. Meaningful statements and significant experiences related to educational dropout were then coded systematically, from which major themes and sub-themes were developed. These themes were interpreted in relation to the objectives of the study to understand the lived experiences of educational dropouts among the Kattunayakan Tribal Community. The thematic analysis facilitated an in-depth understanding of the personal, familial, educational, socio-economic and cultural factors that contributed to educational dropout and their influence on the participants' lives.

3.13 Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were strictly followed throughout the study.

- Informed consent was obtained from all participants before conducting interviews.
- Participants were informed about the purpose and objectives of the study.
- Participation was entirely voluntary.

- Confidentiality and anonymity of participants were maintained.
- Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage.
- Information collected during the study was used solely for academic purposes.
- Respect for the dignity, culture and traditions of the Kattunayakan community was maintained throughout the research process.

3.14 Assumptions, Limitations and Scope of The Study

Assumptions of the Study

The study is based on the assumption that the participants would provide honest, accurate, and meaningful information regarding their educational experiences and the circumstances that led to their school dropout. It is also assumed that educational dropout among the Kattunayakan tribal community is influenced by multiple interconnected factors, including personal, familial, socio-economic, cultural and institutional factors. The study assumes that the participants possess valuable insights and lived experiences that can contribute to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of educational dropout within their community.

Limitations of the Study

The present study has certain limitations that should be considered while interpreting the findings. The study was limited to seven participants belonging to the Kattunayakan Tribal Community residing in the Muddakkadav Settlement Nilambur and therefore the findings cannot be generalized to all tribal communities or educational dropouts. The study relied primarily on the self-reported experiences of the participants, which may have been influenced by memory, personal perceptions and willingness to disclose information. Also, access to the tribal settlement was limited due to restrictions on entry and the need to respect the community's cultural norms and privacy, which posed challenges during the data collection process.

Scope of the Study

The study provides an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of educational dropouts from the Kattunayakan Tribal Community. It contributes to knowledge regarding

the personal, family, community and institutional factors influencing educational discontinuation.

The findings may be useful for social workers, policymakers, educators, tribal development agencies and researchers working in the field of tribal education and community development. The study may also contribute to the development of interventions aimed at reducing educational dropout among tribal students.

3.15 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the research methodology adopted for the present study. It explained the research approach, research design, universe and unit of the study, sampling technique, sampling criteria, methods and tools of data collection, procedure of data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations. The qualitative phenomenological approach adopted in the study provided an appropriate framework for exploring the lived experiences of educational dropouts among the Kattunayakan Tribal Community. The systematic methodology ensured the credibility, trustworthiness, and ethical conduct of the research. The following chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of the data collected from the participants in accordance with the objectives of the study.

CHAPTER 4

CASE PRESENTATION

CHAPTER 4: CASE PRESENTATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the demographic profile and individual case presentations of the participants included in the study. The demographic profile provides an overview of the participants' socio-demographic characteristics, while the case presentations describe their personal background, educational journey, circumstances leading to educational dropout and present life situation. These narratives, based on in-depth interviews, provide a contextual understanding of the lived experiences of educational dropout among the Kattunayakan tribal community and serve as the basis for the thematic analysis presented in the following chapter.

4.1.1 Socio-Demographic Profile

Table 4.1.2 Socio-Demographic Details of Respondents

Sl. No	Name	Age	Gender	Educational Status	Stage of Discontinuation	Occupation of Parents	Present Activity
1	A	20	Female	Plus One	Discontinued during Plus One	Father – Coolie, Mother – Homemaker	Occasionally engaged in weaving
2	S	20	Female	Plus Two Completed	Discontinued during First Year Degree	Father – Watcher, Mother – Coolie	Folk song performer and football player
3	J	19	Male	Plus Two Completed	Discontinued during First Year Degree	Mother – Coolie, Father – Deceased	Daily wage labour and fishing
4	V	19	Male	Plus Two Completed	Discontinued during First Year Degree	Mother – Coolie, Father – Deceased	Daily wage work

5	D	17	Female	Plus One	Discontinued during Plus One	Parents engaged in daily wage work	Staying at home
6	M	21	Female	Plus Two	Discontinued after failing Plus Two	Mother – Daily wage worker, Father Deceased	Homemaker (Pregnant)
7	R	21	Female	Plus one	Discontinued during plus one	Coolie	Staying at home

4.1.3 Age Distribution of Respondents

The respondents were between 17 and 21 years of age. Most respondents belonged to the age group of 19 to 21 years, indicating that educational discontinuation had occurred during the recent past. The age profile suggests that many of them are currently in the stage of transition from adolescence to early adulthood, a period that is crucial for educational and career development.

4.1.4 Gender Distribution

Out of the seven respondents, five were female and two were male. The higher representation of female respondents reflects the prevalence of educational discontinuation among young women in the settlement. The experiences shared by female respondents reveal challenges related to family responsibilities, financial limitations, lack of hostel facilities, and restricted opportunities for higher education.

4.1.5 Educational Status

Among the respondents, three discontinued their education during Plus One, one respondent discontinued after failing in Plus Two, and three respondents discontinued during the first year of college education. This indicates that dropout is not limited to school education alone but extends to higher secondary and collegiate levels.

4.1.6 Family Occupation

Most respondents belonged to economically vulnerable households. The major occupation of parents was daily wage labour, coolie work, and watchman jobs. Two respondents had lost their fathers and were raised by single mothers working as daily wage labourers. The unstable nature of family income emerged as an important factor influencing educational continuation.

4.1.7 Present Activities

The respondents are currently engaged in different activities. Some participate in daily wage labour, some assist family members in household work, while others engage in cultural activities such as folk singing. One respondent is pregnant and remains at home. Most respondents expressed a desire to continue their education if adequate support and opportunities become available.

4.2 Case Presentation

4.2.1 Case One (Ms. A)

Ms. A, a young tribal woman from a remote tribal community, completed her schooling from 1st to 10th standard at MRS School and later pursued her Plus One and Plus Two education at Malampuzha MRS School in Palakkad. She described her educational experience as generally positive and reported that she was able to complete her schooling without major academic difficulties. Reflecting on her educational journey, she stated, *“Compared to Nilambur MRS, I felt that Malampuzha MRS was better in many ways. The overall learning environment there was more comfortable for me.”* This indicates that a supportive educational environment played an important role in her learning experience.

Ms. A expressed a positive attitude towards education and learning. She reported that she enjoyed attending classes and actively participating in school activities. She explained, *“I did not feel forced to study, but rather I had interest in it.”* This demonstrates her intrinsic motivation towards education and her willingness to continue learning.

Regarding her relationship with teachers, Ms. A described it as supportive and encouraging. She stated that teachers were approachable and always willing to help when she faced

difficulties in understanding lessons. She explained, *“They were very supportive and helpful in my studies. If I had any doubts, they were ready to explain things again.”* Such positive teacher-student relationships contributed to her confidence and academic engagement.

The language used for teaching and learning did not create major barriers for her. She reported that teachers explained lessons clearly and that she was able to understand the subjects without significant difficulty. Similarly, she did not face serious challenges in examinations and was able to manage her academic responsibilities successfully.

As a residential school student, Ms. A spent a considerable period away from her family. However, she adjusted well to hostel life and did not experience major emotional difficulties. She stated, *“I was able to adjust to that environment without much difficulty. Over time, I became comfortable with hostel life.”* This suggests that residential schooling did not negatively influence her educational participation.

Ms. A reported that her family holds a positive attitude towards education and has consistently supported her aspirations. She explained, *“My family believes that education is important. They want me to study and build a good future.”* Her family encouraged her to continue her studies and did not discourage her from pursuing higher education.

Although she had a strong interest in continuing her education, structural barriers made it difficult for her to proceed after Plus Two. She identified the lack of hostel facilities for higher education as the primary challenge. She stated, *“The main problem was not getting admission in a good college with hostel facility. Since I could not get a hostel, continuing education became difficult.”* This highlights the importance of residential facilities for students from remote tribal regions.

Distance and transportation expenses further complicated her situation. According to Ms. A, travelling from her settlement to the town required approximately ₹900, making daily commuting financially unfeasible. She explained, *“From my place, it costs around 900 rupees to reach the town. Daily travel is not possible because of this expense.”* These geographical and financial barriers significantly influenced her educational discontinuation.

Describing the process of leaving education, Ms. A explained that after completing Plus Two, she actively sought opportunities for higher education, particularly in institutions with hostel facilities. However, the absence of suitable accommodation made continuation difficult. She stated, *“After completing my Plus Two, I wanted to continue my studies. I tried to look for college admissions, especially in colleges with hostel facilities. However, I was not able to get admission in a suitable college that had hostel accommodation.”*

The decision to discontinue education was primarily her own, although it was made with the understanding and support of her family. She explained, *“The decision to stop my studies was mainly mine. I understood the difficulties I was facing regarding travel and accommodation.”* This indicates that her decision was based on practical constraints rather than a lack of family support.

Emotionally, discontinuing her studies was a difficult experience. She reported feeling disappointed because she had a strong desire to pursue higher education. She stated, *“I felt disappointed when I had to stop my studies. I had the interest to continue, so it was not an easy decision for me.”* Despite accepting the situation, she continued to hope for future educational opportunities.

After leaving education, Ms. A experienced significant changes in her daily life. She reported spending most of her time at home and occasionally engaging in tailoring, an activity that interests her. She explained that tailoring helps her remain productive, although she sometimes feels bored because she is no longer studying.

Ms. A continues to attach great importance to education. She stated, “Education is very important to me. I believe that education can help me achieve a better future.” Even after discontinuing her studies, she remains determined to pursue higher education if circumstances permit.

When discussing improvements in the education system, Ms. A emphasized the need for additional hostel facilities and support mechanisms for students from remote areas. She stated, *“I feel that there should be more hostel facilities for students from remote areas. It is very difficult for us to travel daily.”* She believes that such facilities would enable more tribal students to continue their education successfully.

The case of Ms. A demonstrates that educational discontinuation was not caused by academic difficulties, lack of interest, family discouragement, or personal health issues. Rather, structural

barriers such as the absence of hostel facilities, geographical isolation, and high transportation costs played a decisive role in her decision to discontinue higher education. Despite these challenges, she continues to value education highly and remains hopeful about resuming her studies in the future.

4.2.2 Case Two (Ms.S)

Ms. S is a young woman from a tribal community who completed her schooling up to Plus Two in a residential educational institution. She had a positive educational experience and reported that she was interested in studying and learning throughout her school life. Although she initially experienced difficulty adjusting to hostel life and staying away from her family, she gradually adapted to the residential environment and became comfortable. She maintained a good relationship with her teachers, who were supportive and approachable, and she did not face significant academic, language, health, or emotional difficulties during her schooling.

Regarding family attitudes toward education, Ms. S stated that her family highly values education and encouraged her to pursue higher studies. She explained that her parents wanted her to continue her education after Plus Two and consistently supported her educational aspirations. However, financial constraints within the family created significant barriers to higher education.

She stated: *“Paying for accommodation and food outside was not easy for my family. It became difficult to manage expenses regularly.”*

This indicates that economic challenges played a major role in influencing her educational discontinuation.

Ms. S also highlighted the influence of community attitudes on educational continuation. She explained that many people in her community prefer individuals to remain within the community rather than pursue education outside. According to her, higher education is not

common among community members, and many students discontinue their studies after school. She stated that:

“Many children in my community stop their studies after a certain level. Only a few go for higher education.”

This reflects the existence of social and cultural factors that indirectly influence educational participation and aspirations.

In relation to institutional factors, Ms. S reported that her school provided adequate facilities, including food, accommodation, books, and uniforms through government support schemes. She acknowledged that these benefits helped her complete her schooling. However, she identified the lack of hostel facilities for higher education as a major challenge. She explained:

“Because there was no hostel facility available for further education, I had to stay in a lodge outside. The cost of accommodation and food was very high.”

She further stated that financial difficulties associated with lodging expenses and uncertainty regarding rent payments made it impossible for her to continue her studies.

Describing the process of educational discontinuation, Ms. S explained that she wanted to continue her education after Plus Two but was unable to do so because of the absence of hostel facilities and the high cost of accommodation. The decision was mainly her own, although it was strongly influenced by her family’s financial situation. She emphasized that there was no single incident that caused her dropout; rather, it was the cumulative effect of financial hardship and lack of accommodation support.

Reflecting on her emotional experience, Ms. S reported feelings of sadness and disappointment when she had to discontinue her studies. She stated that she had hoped to continue her education and felt that she missed valuable opportunities. Nevertheless, she accepted the situation while maintaining hope for future educational opportunities.

After leaving education, significant changes occurred in her daily life. She reported spending more time at home and losing the structured routine that school had provided. To remain active and engaged, she participates in a singing group called Aattamakkam and is

also involved in a local football group. Although these activities provide enjoyment and social engagement, she acknowledged that they are not stable or long-term opportunities.

Ms. S expressed that discontinuing her education has affected her future prospects. She stated that she was unable to participate in certain selection opportunities and feels that her options have become limited. Despite these challenges, she continues to view education as essential for achieving a better future. She explained:

“Education is very important for a better future. Without education, opportunities are limited.”

She also expressed a strong desire to resume her studies if suitable support becomes available.

Looking ahead, Ms. S dreams of becoming a police officer and believes that continuing her education is necessary to achieve this goal. She emphasized the need for increased hostel facilities and financial assistance for students from remote and tribal communities. According to her, such support would help many students continue their education and reduce dropout rates.

Ms. S's case illustrates how financial hardship, lack of hostel facilities, geographical barriers, and community influences can contribute to educational discontinuation despite strong educational motivation, family encouragement, and positive school experiences. Her narrative also highlights resilience, continued aspirations, and a strong commitment to pursuing education in the future if adequate support becomes available.

4.2.3 Case Three (Mr.J)

Mr. J, a young male respondent from a tribal community, completed his education up to Plus Two and reported having a generally positive experience during his school years. He expressed a strong interest in learning and described school as a supportive environment where he was able to study without major academic difficulties. He stated that he enjoyed attending classes and learning new things, indicating a positive attitude towards education throughout his schooling.

Regarding relationships within the educational institution, Mr. J reported having a good relationship with his teachers. He described them as supportive and approachable, stating that they guided him in his studies whenever necessary. He also mentioned that the language used in teaching was understandable and did not create any significant barriers to learning.

Mr. J studied in a residential educational institution and stated that staying away from home did not create major difficulties for him. He gradually adjusted to hostel life and became more independent. He explained that neither health problems nor emotional issues affected his attendance or academic performance. He further stated that he remained interested in studying and never lost motivation towards education.

Concerning family support, Mr. J explained that his family highly valued education and encouraged him to pursue higher studies. He stated that his parents believed education would help him secure a better future. However, despite their encouragement, financial limitations within the family created significant barriers to continuing his education after Plus Two. He explained:

“We did not have enough financial resources to support higher education. Managing expenses for college was difficult.”

This indicates that economic hardship was one of the primary factors influencing his educational discontinuation.

Mr. J also highlighted community-related influences on education. According to him, many people in his community are hesitant about pursuing education outside the locality and often prefer that young people remain within the community. He noted that educational discontinuation is common among community members, and only a few students proceed to higher education. He explained that the traditional lifestyle of the community differs considerably from formal educational systems, creating challenges for students attempting to continue their studies.

Regarding institutional factors, Mr. J stated that he did not face major problems with school facilities or rules during his schooling. Government support through residential schooling, including food, accommodation, and study materials, significantly reduced the financial

burden on his family. However, after completing Plus Two, the absence of hostel facilities for higher education became a major obstacle. He explained:

“There was no hostel facility for college. Traveling daily was not possible.”

He further noted that financial difficulties and the lack of affordable accommodation made continuing education extremely challenging.

Describing the process of educational discontinuation, Mr. J stated that he strongly wished to continue studying after Plus Two. However, without hostel facilities, he would have been required to stay outside at considerable expense, which his family could not afford. As a result, he decided to discontinue his education. Although the decision was primarily his own, it was heavily influenced by his family's financial situation. He expressed that he did not want to increase the burden on his family.

Emotionally, Mr. J described feeling disappointed and saddened when he had to stop his studies. He explained that he had hoped to continue his education but accepted the situation because of practical constraints. Despite this setback, he continues to value education highly and remains hopeful about returning to studies in the future.

After leaving education, significant changes occurred in his daily life. Instead of attending classes, he became involved in daily wage labour and fishing activities. He stated:

“I started going for daily wage work. I also spend time fishing in the river during my free time.”

Although these activities help him manage daily life, he acknowledged that they do not provide stable employment opportunities.

Mr. J reported that discontinuing education has limited his career prospects and forced him to depend on irregular daily wage employment. He believes that higher education would have opened more opportunities and improved his future prospects. Nevertheless, he continues to view education as essential for achieving personal and professional success.

Mr. J expressed a strong desire to resume his studies if suitable opportunities and support become available. His long-term aspiration is to secure a government forest department

job. He believes that education is necessary to achieve this goal and remains determined to continue working toward a better future.

Mr. J suggested that the education system should provide more hostel facilities and financial assistance for students from remote tribal communities. According to him, such support would enable many students to continue their education without facing the difficulties that led to his own discontinuation. He advised other children to persevere in their studies despite challenges, emphasizing that education is essential for achieving a better life.

4.2.4 Case Four (Mr.V)

Mr. V is a young tribal male who studied from 1st standard to Plus Two in a Model Residential School (MRS). He later joined a degree course but discontinued his education due to financial difficulties and the lack of adequate support facilities. He comes from a remote tribal settlement and currently works as a daily wage labourer while supporting his family. Despite discontinuing his education, he continues to value education highly and hopes to resume his studies in the future.

Regarding his educational experience, Mr. V reported that he generally enjoyed attending school and had a positive attitude towards learning. He stated,

"I liked going to school and studying, so my school life was good."

He explained that studying in MRS provided him with free food, accommodation, books, and uniforms, which helped him continue his education without major financial burdens. However, he felt that studying only among tribal students limited his opportunities for broader exposure and personal development.

When discussing his transition to higher education, Mr. V shared that he was interested in continuing his studies and enjoyed college life. He stated,

"In college, I had good connections with other students, so I liked going to class and studying."

However, significant challenges emerged after joining college. He explained that the absence of hostel facilities forced students to stay in lodges, creating financial and practical difficulties.

"There was no hostel facility, so we had to stay in a lodge. Managing food and staying there was very difficult and it cost a lot of money."

Although he did not face major difficulties with the language of instruction, he identified English as a challenging subject. He noted that Malayalam was not a barrier because it was commonly used outside his community.

Regarding relationships within the educational setting, Mr. V described his teachers as supportive and approachable.

"If I did not understand something, I could ask them again, and they would explain it properly until I understood."

He also reported receiving adequate support from hostel staff and teachers throughout his educational journey.

Family influence played a significant role in his educational experience. While his family encouraged education, they were hesitant about him studying far from home. He explained,

"My mother especially tells me to go for studies, but she does not like me going far away for higher studies."

Although he personally enjoyed exploring new places and learning from different environments, his mother's emotional distress about his staying away from home affected him.

Financial hardship emerged as the primary factor influencing his educational discontinuation. Mr. V described the difficulties associated with travel, accommodation, and daily expenses during his college education.

"Because of these financial problems and difficulties in living, I had to stop my studies."

He emphasized that the decision to discontinue education was not entirely voluntary.

"It was not completely my personal decision. It happened mainly because of the situation."

Mr. V further explained that his family's economic condition compelled him to prioritize work over education. He chose to support his mother, who was solely responsible for the family's livelihood.

"Instead of continuing my studies, I felt that going for work and supporting my mother would be better in this situation."

Regarding community attitudes towards education, he observed that educational attainment is generally not prioritized within his community.

"Most people are not very interested in studying or continuing education for a long time."

He noted that many children discontinue their studies after school, and only a small number pursue higher education.

Despite these challenges, Mr. V continues to recognize the value of education. He expressed regret about discontinuing his studies and stated,

"Even now, I have a strong wish to continue my studies."

Currently, he engages in daily wage labour and seasonal honey collection from the forest to contribute to his family's income. Although he appreciates the opportunity to support his family, he believes that discontinuing education has limited his future opportunities.

Mr. V's case highlights how financial hardship, geographical isolation, inadequate higher education support facilities and family responsibilities contribute to educational discontinuation among tribal youth. At the same time, his continued aspiration to pursue higher education demonstrates the importance he places on education as a pathway to personal and social advancement.

4.2.5 Case Five (Ms.D)

Ms. D is a young tribal woman who studied in a Model Residential School (MRS) and later continued her Plus One and Plus Two education in Attappady. Although she initially had positive educational experiences and adequate institutional support, she eventually discontinued her studies due to health-related issues, declining motivation, and limited encouragement to resume her education. She is currently staying at home and is not engaged in any educational or occupational activities.

Regarding her educational experience, Ms. D reported that her overall schooling experience was positive. However, she felt that studying in a tribal residential school limited her exposure to broader learning opportunities.

She stated,

"Most of the students were from my own community, and they mostly spoke our own language. Because of that, I did not feel like I was learning or exploring something new."

After completing her secondary education, she moved to Attappady for higher secondary studies and found the new environment more supportive and enriching.

"When I went there, the school environment, classes, and overall experience were better, and I felt more comfortable compared to my previous school."

Ms. D explained that she initially experienced fear and tension while attending school but gradually adapted to the educational environment. She maintained good relationships with teachers and did not report any significant academic difficulties.

"I did not face any major problems with my teachers. They behaved normally and supported students in studies."

She also received adequate support from hostel staff and benefited from government-provided facilities such as food, accommodation, books, and uniforms.

A major turning point in her educational journey occurred when she developed health problems during her higher secondary education. She explained,

"Because of that, I had to come back home, and it affected my studies and attendance."

Although she initially considered returning to continue her education, she gradually lost motivation after returning home.

"At first, I thought I might go back, but as time passed, I lost that continuation."

Ms. D acknowledged that her declining interest in studies became a significant barrier. She described experiencing a lack of motivation and enthusiasm toward education.

"Even if I get a chance to continue, I feel a kind of hesitation and lack of interest."

While her family viewed education positively and did not oppose her studies, they did not strongly encourage her to resume education after she returned home.

"After I returned home due to health issues, there was no strong effort to send me back to continue studies."

She also noted that peer influence played a role in her decision-making process.

"When my friends from Attappady stopped their studies, I also stopped studying along with them."

Regarding community attitudes, Ms. D explained that higher education is not strongly emphasized within her community. Many young people discontinue their studies after reaching a certain educational level.

"Many children in my community stop their studies after some level. Only a few continue for higher education."

Reflecting on the process of discontinuation, Ms. D emphasized that there was no single event responsible for her dropout. Rather, it resulted from a combination of health issues, reduced motivation, and the absence of strong encouragement to continue.

"The main reason was my health problem, which made me return home. After that, I did not go back."

Following the discontinuation of her studies, her daily routine changed significantly. She reported spending most of her time at home without engaging in productive activities.

"I am mostly staying at home without any regular activity."

She described feelings of boredom and a lack of purpose resulting from her current situation.

"Sometimes I feel that I am just wasting time without any clear direction."

Although she currently lacks interest in returning to formal education, she still recognizes the value of education in improving future opportunities.

"Even now, I feel that education is important in a person's life."

She also expressed aspirations of obtaining a good job and becoming independent in the future.

To improve educational retention among students from similar backgrounds, Ms. D suggested providing greater exposure to diverse learning environments and opportunities for skill development.

"If there are better environments where students can improve their language and skills, it will help them to continue their studies with more interest."

Ms. D's case demonstrates how health-related challenges, loss of academic motivation, peer influence and limited post-dropout support can contribute to educational discontinuation among

tribal youth. Her experience highlights the importance of continuous encouragement, guidance, and re-engagement strategies to support students at risk of dropping out.

4.2.6 Case Six (Ms.M)

Ms. M is a young tribal woman who studied in a Model Residential School (MRS) and completed her schooling there. Although she attempted to complete her higher secondary education, she was unable to pass the Plus Two examinations despite repeated attempts. Academic difficulties, repeated examination failure, emotional distress, and limited encouragement to continue her education eventually led to her discontinuation of studies. She is currently married, expecting a child, and staying at home.

Regarding her educational experience, Ms. M described her overall school life as average. She attended classes regularly but found it difficult to cope with academic requirements during her higher secondary education.

She stated,

"I completed my schooling there, but I could not successfully complete my Plus Two."

Although she maintained a generally positive relationship with teachers and received institutional support, she gradually experienced difficulties in learning and academic performance.

"I tried to study and understand the lessons, but I felt that it was difficult for me to keep up."

The major challenge she encountered was repeated failure in examinations. She explained,

"I wrote the Plus Two supplementary exams twice, but I could not pass them."

These repeated failures significantly affected her confidence and motivation. She described feeling stressed, disappointed, and discouraged despite her efforts.

"I felt stressed because I was not able to pass my exams even after trying."

Ms. M reported that she did not experience serious physical health issues during her studies. However, emotional distress resulting from academic failure had a considerable impact on her educational journey.

"I felt disappointed when I could not pass my exams. This affected my confidence and interest in continuing studies."

Regarding family influence, Ms. M explained that her family considered education important but did not strongly encourage her to continue after repeated examination failures.

"My family did not strongly discourage me from studying. But at the same time, they did not push me much to continue after I failed my exams."

She noted that her family gradually accepted her discontinuation as they believed further attempts might not lead to success.

Community attitudes also played an indirect role in shaping her educational decisions. According to Ms. M, educational discontinuation is relatively common within her community.

"Many children in my community stop their studies after school or Plus Two. Only a few continue for higher education."

She observed that seeing others discontinue their education made the decision appear more acceptable.

"When I see others also stopping their studies, it feels normal."

Reflecting on the process of educational discontinuation, Ms. M stated that there was no single incident that caused her dropout. Instead, the decision developed gradually following repeated academic failures and loss of confidence.

"The main reason was my failure in the Plus Two exams even after repeated attempts."

She further explained that discontinuing education was primarily her own decision, influenced by her academic experiences and reduced self-confidence.

"I did not feel confident enough to continue, and I thought it would be difficult to pass even if I tried again."

At the time of leaving her studies, she experienced feelings of disappointment, confusion, and uncertainty about her future.

"I felt bored and disappointed. I had some interest in continuing, but I did not have confidence in myself."

Following her discontinuation, her daily life changed considerably. She is currently not engaged in formal education or employment and spends most of her time at home.

"I am not involved in any regular work or educational activities."

She acknowledged that discontinuing education has affected her sense of direction and future opportunities.

"I feel that I do not have a clear direction in my life now."

Despite these difficulties, Ms. M strongly recognizes the importance of education. Reflecting on her experiences, she stated,

"Education is very important in life. It helps a person to achieve better opportunities and a good future."

However, she currently sees limited possibilities for returning to education because of her present circumstances.

"I am currently pregnant, so my situation has changed. Because of this, it will be difficult for me to continue my education."

Regarding improvements in the education system, Ms. M emphasized the need for greater academic support for students facing examination failures.

"Students who fail exams should get more support. There should be better guidance and help to improve their performance."

Ms. M's case illustrates how repeated academic failure, reduced self-confidence, emotional distress, limited encouragement, and changing life circumstances can contribute to educational discontinuation among tribal youth. Her experience highlights the importance of academic counselling, remedial educational support, and continuous motivation for students at risk of dropping out after examination failure.

4.2.7 Case Seven (Ms.R)

Ms. R is a young tribal woman who studied up to the 10th standard in a Model Residential School (MRS). After successfully completing her secondary education, she enrolled in Plus One with the aspiration of continuing her studies and achieving a better future. However, she discontinued her education during the Plus One course due to a combination of academic and economic challenges.

Regarding her educational experience, Ms. R reported that she initially joined Plus One with great hope and interest in continuing her studies. However, she found it difficult to cope with the academic requirements and struggled to understand some of the subjects. She explained that her performance gradually declined, which negatively affected her confidence and motivation to continue her education.

In addition to academic difficulties, Ms. R highlighted the impact of her family's financial situation on her educational journey. She stated that her parents had an irregular income and faced difficulties in meeting both educational expenses and household needs. As a result, she felt a sense of responsibility to support her family during this period.

Describing the reasons for discontinuing her education, Ms. R explained:

“I found it difficult to understand some subjects, and my studies became harder. At the same time, my family was facing financial difficulties. I felt responsible for helping my family, and because of these problems, I gradually lost confidence in my studies and stopped my education during Plus One.”

This reflects how academic struggles, financial hardship, and family responsibilities collectively influenced her decision to discontinue her studies.

When discussing her feelings about leaving education, Ms. R expressed sadness and disappointment. She shared that discontinuing her studies was not an easy decision, as she had hoped to continue her education like her peers. She stated:

“Leaving my studies was difficult. I felt sad because I wanted to continue my education like my friends. At that time, I felt that I had no other option.”

Although she accepted the situation, she acknowledged that she still regrets discontinuing her education and occasionally thinks about the opportunities she may have missed.

At present, Ms. R stays at home and assists her family with household responsibilities and daily activities. She also occasionally helps her parents in their work. Despite not being engaged in formal education, she continues to recognize the importance of education in achieving personal growth and a better future.

Regarding her future aspirations, Ms. R expressed a desire to resume her education if adequate opportunities and support become available. She stated:

“I would like to continue my studies if I get an opportunity and support. My dream is to become financially independent and support my family.”

This demonstrates that her educational aspirations remain strong despite the challenges that led to her dropout.

Ms. R’s case highlights the combined influence of academic difficulties, financial constraints, and family responsibilities on educational discontinuation among tribal youth. Her experience also reflects the continuing desire for educational advancement and economic independence, indicating the importance of providing academic support,

financial assistance, and opportunities for re-entry into education for students facing similar circumstances.

4.3 Conclusion

The case presentations provide a comprehensive understanding of the socio-demographic background and educational experiences of the participants. Although each participant had unique life circumstances, common patterns emerged regarding the factors influencing educational discontinuation, including financial hardship, family responsibilities, geographical isolation and limited institutional support. These narratives offer valuable insights into the lived experiences of the respondents and provide the foundation for the thematic analysis presented in the subsequent section.

CHAPTER 5

CASE ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION

AND DISCUSSION

CHAPTER 5: CASE ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of data collected from seven educational dropout students belonging to the Kattunayakan tribal Community. The data were collected through in-depth interviews and analysed using thematic analysis. The analysis focuses on the lived experiences of respondents regarding their educational journey, factors influencing educational discontinuation and the consequences of dropout in their personal and social lives.

The themes emerged from the narratives are:

- Family and economic factors shaping educational discontinuation
- Community and Cultural Influences on Educational discontinuation
- Educational experience and institutional factors influencing discontinuation
- Consequences of educational discontinuation

5.2 Thematic Analysis

Theme 5.3 Family and Economic Factors Shaping Educational Discontinuation

This theme explores how family circumstances and economic conditions influenced participants' educational trajectories. While most participants reported receiving emotional support from their families, financial hardship, unstable livelihoods and limited awareness regarding higher education opportunities created barriers to educational continuation.

5.3.1 Financial Hardship as a Barrier to Educational Continuation

Financial difficulties emerged as one of the most significant reasons for educational discontinuation. Most participants belonged to economically marginalized households dependent on daily wage labour, coolie work, or irregular income sources. The inability to meet educational expenses beyond school level contributed to dropout decisions.

Participant S

“My family wanted me to continue my studies. But staying in a lodge and managing food expenses became very difficult. We could not afford those expenses regularly, so I stopped studying.”

Participant J

“My family supported my education, but we did not have enough money for higher studies. Continuing college education would have created more burden on my family.”

Participant R

“My parents had irregular income and it became difficult to manage both family expenses and educational needs. Because of these financial problems, I could not continue my studies.”

The narratives reveal that economic deprivation limited educational opportunities despite participants’ willingness to continue learning. Financial constraints affected access to higher education, accommodation, transportation, and other essential resources.

5.3.2 Family Support Accompanied by Limited Educational Awareness

Most participants reported that their families valued education and encouraged them to study. However, family members often had limited educational backgrounds and were unfamiliar with higher education pathways, admission procedures, and available support systems. As a result, encouragement alone was insufficient to ensure educational continuation.

Participant A

“My family always encouraged me to study. They wanted me to continue my education, but they did not know how to solve the problems related to hostel and admission.”

Participant V

“My mother wanted me to study, but our family situation was difficult. We did not know much about the opportunities available for continuing education.”

Participant M

“My family never stopped me from studying. They believed education was important, but they were not able to guide me regarding further studies.”

These responses indicate that emotional support existed within families. Yet limited awareness regarding educational opportunities, scholarships, hostels, and career pathways restricted their ability to assist students in continuing their education.

5.3.3 Family Responsibilities and Educational Discontinuation

Several participants experienced pressure to contribute to household responsibilities and family survival. Economic vulnerability often required young people to prioritize family needs over educational aspirations.

Participant J

“After stopping my studies, I started doing daily wage work. I wanted to help my family because our financial situation was not good.”

Participant V

“I help my mother with work whenever possible. Since there is no one else to support the family, I feel responsible for contributing.”

Participant R

“During that time, I felt responsible for helping my family. Because of our financial situation, continuing studies became difficult for me.”

The findings suggest that educational decisions were often linked to family survival strategies. Participants assumed responsibilities at a young age, leading them to prioritize immediate economic needs over long-term educational goals.

5.3.4 Family Influence on Educational Decisions

Although participants generally described dropout as their own decision, family circumstances significantly influenced the process. Educational discontinuation often emerged from collective family realities rather than individual choice alone.

Participant S

“The decision was mine, but I knew my family was struggling financially. Because of that situation, I felt it was better to stop studying.”

Participant J

“My family wanted me to continue studying, but I understood our difficulties. I decided not to create additional burden for them.”

Participant A

“I discussed my situation with my father before making the decision. He supported me, but the difficulties remained the same.”

These accounts demonstrate that dropout decisions were shaped through interactions between individual aspirations and family realities. Participants often internalized family struggles and made educational decisions accordingly.

Theme 2 highlights the central role of family and economic circumstances in shaping educational discontinuation among Kattunayakan youth. Although families generally valued education and encouraged their children to study, financial hardship, limited educational awareness, family responsibilities and economic insecurity restricted opportunities for educational continuation. The findings indicate that dropout was not simply an individual decision but a response to broader household and socio-economic realities.

Theme 5.4 Community and Cultural Influences on Educational discontinuation

This theme examines how community attitudes, cultural context, and social environment influenced participants' educational experiences and decisions. The findings reveal that while education is increasingly recognized as important within the Kattunayakan community, certain community perceptions, geographical isolation, and lifestyle patterns continue to affect educational continuation.

5.4.1 Community Attitudes Towards Higher Education

Several participants reported that members of their community were hesitant about young people leaving the settlement for education. Higher education often requires moving to unfamiliar places, which creates concerns among families and community members.

Participant S

“In our community, many people do not like children going far away for studies. They prefer that we stay near home and remain within the community.”

Participant J

“People in our area often think it is better to stay here rather than go outside for education. Because of that, not many students continue higher studies.”

Participant V

“There are people in the community who feel that studying far away is not necessary. This influences how students think about their future.”

The narratives indicate that community attitudes can indirectly influence educational decisions. Although education is valued, concerns regarding mobility, safety, and separation from the community sometimes discourage higher educational participation.

5.4.2 Educational Discontinuation as a Common Community Experience

Participants observed that educational discontinuation is common among young people in their settlement. Seeing others discontinue education often normalizes dropout and reduces expectations regarding higher educational achievement.

Participant J

“Many students in our community stop their studies after school or Plus Two. Only a few continue for higher education.”

Participant S

“It is common to see students leaving education after a certain stage. Because of that, dropout is not seen as something unusual.”

Participant D

“There are students who continue studying, but many stop because of different difficulties. It happens quite often in our area.”

These responses suggest that educational discontinuation has become a recurring pattern within the community. Such patterns can influence educational aspirations and shape expectations about future opportunities.

5.4.3 Geographical Isolation and Limited Accessibility

Living in a remote tribal settlement created challenges related to transportation, access to institutions, and educational opportunities. Participants repeatedly highlighted distance as a significant barrier to continuation.

Participant A

“From our place, travelling to town is expensive. It costs a lot of money and daily travel is not possible for us.”

Participant J

“After Plus Two, distance became a major problem. Without hostel facilities, continuing education was very difficult.”

Participant S

“The college was far away and staying outside required extra expenses. Because of that, continuing education became difficult.”

The findings demonstrate that geographical isolation continues to affect educational access among tribal students. Distance increases both financial burdens and practical difficulties, making educational continuation challenging.

5.4.4 Differences Between Formal Education and Traditional Community Life

Participants described noticeable differences between formal education and the traditional lifestyle of the Kattunayakan community. Education often requires adaptation to new environments, routines, and expectations that differ from community life.

Participant J

“Education requires going outside and adjusting to a different environment. Our community life is very different from that.”

Participant S

“In our community, people focus more on local life and work. Education takes us into a different world, which is not easy for everyone.”

Participant V

“Studying means moving away from the usual way of living in the settlement. Some students find it difficult to adjust to those changes.”

These narratives highlight the cultural transition involved in pursuing education. Students often navigate between traditional community life and formal educational systems, creating additional challenges during their educational journey.

Theme 3 reveals that educational experiences are influenced not only by individual and family factors but also by community and cultural contexts. Community attitudes towards higher education, the normalization of dropout, geographical isolation, and the differences between formal education and traditional lifestyles collectively shape educational continuation among Kattunayakan youth. These factors create a social environment in which pursuing higher education becomes both an aspiration and a challenge.

Theme 5.5 Consequences of Educational Discontinuation

This theme explores the impact of educational discontinuation on the lives of the participants. Leaving education affected them emotionally, socially, and economically.

Participants described feelings of disappointment and regret, changes in their daily routines, and concerns regarding employment and future opportunities. Although the reasons for discontinuation varied, most participants experienced challenges after leaving education and reflected on how their lives could have been different if they had continued their studies.

5.5.1 Feelings of Regret and Disappointment

Many participants expressed sadness and disappointment about discontinuing their education. Most of them had wanted to continue studying but were unable to do so because of various personal, family, and structural barriers. Looking back, they felt that they had lost valuable opportunities.

Participant A

“I felt disappointed when I had to stop my studies. I wanted to continue my education, but I could not get admission with hostel facilities. Even now, I feel that I should have continued my studies.”

Participant S

“I felt sad when I stopped studying. I wanted to continue my education, but the financial situation made it difficult. Sometimes I think about what would have happened if I had continued.”

Participant J

“I really wanted to continue my studies after Plus Two. When I stopped, I felt disappointed because I could not achieve what I had planned for my future.”

Participant R

“Leaving my studies was a difficult decision. I felt sad because I wanted to continue studying like my friends. Even now, I regret discontinuing my education.”

The narratives indicate that educational discontinuation was often accompanied by emotional distress. Participants viewed education as a pathway to a better future, and leaving education created feelings of loss and unfulfilled aspirations.

5.5.2 Changes in Daily Life after Dropout

Educational discontinuation brought significant changes to participants' daily lives. The structured routine associated with attending school or college was replaced by household responsibilities, daily wage work, or periods of inactivity. Many participants reported feeling bored and less productive after leaving education.

Participant A

“Earlier, I had a structured life with classes and studies. After stopping my studies, I spend most of my time at home. Sometimes I feel bored because I am not doing anything regularly.”

Participant J

“After stopping my studies, I started doing daily wage work. During my free time, I go fishing in the river. My life became very different from when I was a student.”

Participant V

“I help my mother with work and sometimes go for coolie work. Since I stopped studying, my daily routine is more focused on helping the family.”

Participant S

“After leaving education, I stayed mostly at home. I participate in singing programs and football activities when I get a chance, but it is not regular.”

The findings show that dropout resulted in major lifestyle changes. Participants shifted from educational environments to domestic responsibilities or informal work, often without clear long-term plans.

5.5.3 Limited Employment and Future Opportunities

Participants felt that educational discontinuation restricted their employment opportunities and affected their future prospects. Many believed that continuing education would have improved their chances of obtaining stable and respectable jobs.

Participant J

“Without higher education, my job opportunities are limited. I have to depend on daily wage work, and sometimes there is no work available.”

Participant S

“I feel that I lost many opportunities because I could not continue my studies. Education could have helped me achieve a better future.”

Participant A

“I feel that I am missing opportunities to move forward in life. Because I could not continue my studies, my future plans have been delayed.”

Participant R

“I want to become financially independent and support my family. I feel that continuing my education would have helped me achieve that goal more easily.”

The participants associated education with better employment prospects, economic security, and social mobility. Their narratives suggest that discontinuing education limited their access to these opportunities and created uncertainty about their future.

The consequences of educational discontinuation extended beyond leaving school or college. Participants experienced regret and disappointment, significant changes in their daily lives, and concerns about limited employment opportunities. These experiences highlight the long-term effects of educational discontinuation on the personal, social, and economic well-being of Kattunayakan youth.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented the analysis, interpretation, and discussion of the data collected from seven educational dropouts belonging to the Kattunayakan Tribal Community. The findings revealed that educational discontinuation was influenced by a combination of family, economic, community, cultural and institutional factors, which together shaped the participants' educational experiences. The chapter also highlighted the emotional, social, and economic consequences of educational dropout, providing a comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences of the participants and forming the basis for the conclusions and recommendations presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND

CONCLUSION

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the major findings of the study based on the thematic analysis of the in-depth interviews conducted with educational dropouts from the Kattunayakan Tribal Community in Muddakkadav Settlement Nilambur. The findings are derived from the participant's lived experiences and provide insights into the various factors influencing educational discontinuation, including family, economic, community, cultural, institutional and structural dimensions. The chapter also highlights the consequences of educational dropout on the participants' personal and socio-economic lives, followed by suggestions and the overall conclusion of the study.

6.2 Findings

- **In what ways do personal, family, and community factors shape the experiences of educational dropout among Kattunayakan children?**

6.2.1. Financial Hardship as a Major Factor Influencing Educational Discontinuation

The study found that financial difficulties were one of the most significant factors contributing to educational discontinuation among Kattunayakan youth. Most participants belonged to economically disadvantaged families that depended on daily wage labour and irregular sources of income. Although government residential schools provided basic educational support, participants experienced difficulties when pursuing higher education due to expenses related to transportation, accommodation, food, and other educational needs. Financial constraints often forced students to prioritize family survival and income generation over continuing their studies.

Mr. V stated that *“during my college time, there was no hostel, so we had to stay in a lodge.*

Three of us stayed together, and it cost a lot of money. Food was also very difficult to manage. Because of these financial problems and difficulties in living, I had to stop my studies.”

Ms. R explained that *“my parents had irregular income and it became difficult to meet educational expenses and other household needs. Due to these difficulties, I gradually lost confidence in my studies and decided to discontinue my education.”*

6.2.2. Family Support for Education Limited by Economic and Social Realities

The findings indicate that family members generally viewed education positively and encouraged children to study. However, their ability to support higher education was constrained by financial difficulties, limited educational awareness, and concerns about children staying far from home. While families valued education, practical challenges often prevented them from providing the necessary support for educational continuation.

Mr. V stated that *“my family members say that I should study. My mother especially tells me to go for studies, but they don't want me to go far away from home.”*

Ms. D mentioned that *“my family thinks that education is good and important. They did not oppose studying, but after I returned home due to health issues, there was no strong effort to send me back to continue studies.”*

Ms. M explained that *“my family members think that education is important in life. However, they did not push me much to continue after I failed my exams.”*

6.2.3. Family Responsibilities and Economic Contribution Influencing Educational Decisions

The study revealed that family responsibilities played an important role in educational discontinuation. Some participants felt compelled to contribute to household income and support their families during times of economic hardship. This sense of responsibility often led them to choose work over education despite having a continued interest in studying.

Mr. V stated that *“my mother is working hard alone, and the income is not enough for all the family needs. So, instead of continuing my studies, I felt that going for work and supporting my mother would be better.”*

Ms. R explained that *“I felt responsible for helping my family during this period. Because of these difficulties, I decided to discontinue my education.”*

6.2.4. Geographical Isolation and Lack of Accessibility as Structural Barriers

The findings show that geographical isolation significantly affected educational continuation among Kattunayakan youth. Many participants lived in remote settlements with poor transportation facilities and limited access to higher educational institutions. Long travel distances, high transportation costs, and difficulties in reaching colleges created barriers that discouraged students from continuing their education.

Mr. V stated that *“my college was far from my place, and reaching there was very difficult. From my home, I had to take a jeep to reach the town, then a bus and train to reach Kannur.”*

He further added that *“it would cost around 900 rupees just to travel to the town and come back. Because of this, going to college regularly became very difficult.”*

6.2.5. Educational Discontinuation as a Common Community Experience

The study found that educational discontinuation has become a common phenomenon within the Kattunayakan community. Since many young people discontinue their studies after school education, continuation to higher education is relatively uncommon. This situation indirectly shapes students' aspirations and normalizes educational discontinuation within the community.

Mr. V stated that *“in my community, many children study in MRS school, but after completing that, most of them stop their education. Only a few continue for higher studies.”*

Ms. D explained that *“many children in my community stop their studies after some level. Only a few continue for higher education.”*

Ms. M stated that *“many children in my community stop their studies after school or Plus Two. Only a few continue for higher education.”*

6.2.6. Inadequate Hostel Facilities and Support Systems for Higher Education

The findings reveal that while government residential schools provided adequate facilities, participants faced difficulties when transitioning to higher education due to the absence of hostel facilities and support systems. The lack of affordable accommodation and financial

assistance created significant challenges for students pursuing studies away from their communities, ultimately contributing to educational discontinuation.

Mr. V stated that *“when I started going to college, there was no hostel facility, so we had to stay in a lodge. Managing food and staying there was very difficult and it cost a lot of money.”*

He further explained that *“if there are facilities to study nearby or proper support systems like hostel and financial help, it will be easier for students to continue their education.”*

- **How do dropout students describe their experiences in educational institutions and the reasons for discontinuing their education?**

6.2.7. Positive Educational Experiences and Supportive Teacher–Student Relationships

The study found that most participants described their experiences in educational institutions positively. Participants reported having good relationships with teachers and receiving adequate academic and emotional support. Teachers were generally perceived as approachable, helpful, and willing to provide additional assistance when students faced difficulties in learning. This supportive educational environment contributed to positive attitudes towards schooling among the participants.

Mr. V stated that *“I had a good relationship with my teachers. They were very supportive in all matters and also good in teaching. If I did not understand something, I could ask them again, and they would explain it properly until I understood.”*

Ms. D explained that *“I did not face any major problems with my teachers. They behaved normally and supported students in studies.”*

Ms. M stated that *“teachers and hostel staff were supportive. They helped students in studies and daily activities. If we had doubts, teachers were ready to help.”*

6.2.8. Contribution of MRS Schools in Promoting Educational Access

The findings reveal that Model Residential Schools (MRS) played a significant role in facilitating access to education among Kattunayakan students. The provision of free

accommodation, food, uniforms, books, and other educational facilities reduced the financial burden on families and enabled students to continue their schooling. Participants generally expressed satisfaction with the facilities and support available within residential schools.

Mr. V stated that *“we got food, stay, books, and uniform from the school, so there were no major problems.”*

He further added that *“everything was provided free of cost because it is a government residential school. I got food, dress, books, and accommodation.”*

Ms. D explained that *“since it was a government residential school, I received all necessary benefits like food, accommodation, books, and dress, which were helpful.”*

Ms. M stated that *“government schemes were helpful during my studies. I received food, accommodation, books, and dress from the school.”*

6.2.9. Academic Difficulties as an Individual-Level Factor in Educational Discontinuation

The study found that academic difficulties were not a major reason for educational discontinuation among most participants. However, for some students, repeated examination failure, learning difficulties, and declining academic confidence significantly contributed to dropout. These experiences often resulted in stress, reduced self-esteem, and loss of motivation to continue education.

Ms. M stated that *“I wrote the Plus Two supplementary exams twice, but I could not pass them. Even though I tried to study, I was not able to understand everything properly.”*

She further explained that *“I gradually lost confidence in my ability to continue education. As a result, I stopped trying further and discontinued my studies.”*

Ms. R stated that *“I found it difficult to cope with the subjects and academic pressure. I struggled to understand some lessons and my performance gradually declined.”*

6.2.10. Recognition of Education as a Pathway for Personal Development and Future Opportunities

The findings indicate that participants highly valued education despite discontinuing their studies. They viewed education as an important means of achieving personal growth, employment opportunities, social mobility, and a better future. Even after leaving formal education, many participants expressed a desire to continue their studies if appropriate opportunities and support were available.

Mr. V stated that *“for me, education is still very important. Even now, I feel that studying is valuable and it can help a person to improve their life.”*

He further added that *“if I get a good opportunity, I am ready to stop working and go back to studying.”*

Ms. D explained that *“education is important in a person’s life. I understand that studying can help in getting better opportunities and improving life.”*

Ms. R stated that *“I still believe that education is important for achieving a better future.”*

6.2.11. Transition to Higher Secondary and Higher Education as a Critical Point of Educational Discontinuation

The study found that educational discontinuation frequently occurred during the transition from school education to higher secondary or higher education. While participants were able to complete schooling with institutional support, they encountered various challenges when moving to higher levels of education. These challenges increased their vulnerability to educational discontinuation.

Mr. V stated that *“after completing Plus Two, I joined college with interest. But when I started studying there, I faced many difficulties. There was no hostel facility, so we had to stay in a lodge.”*

Ms. D explained that *“I was studying in Attappady for Plus One and Plus Two, but during that period I started having health problems, and because of that I had to come back home.”*

Ms. R stated that *“I studied up to 10th standard in MRS school and joined Plus One. However, I found it difficult to cope with the subjects and gradually discontinued my education.”*

6.2.12. Structural and Logistical Barriers Limiting Educational Continuation

The findings reveal that educational discontinuation was strongly influenced by structural barriers such as lack of hostel facilities, inadequate financial assistance, transportation difficulties, and limited educational opportunities beyond school level. These barriers created obstacles that many participants were unable to overcome despite having interest in continuing their education.

Mr. V stated that *“the main problems were the lack of hostel facilities in college, high expenses for accommodation and food, and my family’s poor financial condition.”*

He further explained that *“if there are facilities to study nearby or proper support systems like hostel and financial help, it will be easier for students to continue their education.”*

Ms. R stated that *“my parents had irregular income and it became difficult to meet educational expenses and other household needs.”*

6.2.13. Educational Discontinuation Despite Continued Interest in Learning

A significant finding of the study is that educational discontinuation did not necessarily reflect a lack of interest in education. Many participants expressed positive attitudes towards learning and a desire to continue their studies. However, socio-economic, institutional, health-related, and structural barriers prevented them from pursuing their educational aspirations, demonstrating that dropout was often a consequence of circumstances rather than personal choice.

Mr. V stated that *“I never felt uninterested in studying. I always had interest in learning and studying.”*

He further added that *“even now, I have a strong wish to continue my studies.”*

Ms. R explained that *“leaving my studies was a difficult decision. I felt sad because I wanted to continue my education like my friends.”*

Ms. D stated that *“education is important in a person’s life. Even though I know its importance, I am not able to feel the same interest to continue now because of my situation.”*

- **What are the perceived consequences of educational dropout for the students and their community?**

6.2.14. Feelings of Regret, Disappointment, and Missed Opportunities Following Educational Discontinuation

The study found that educational discontinuation resulted in feelings of regret, disappointment, and sadness among many participants. Although the circumstances leading to dropout differed, participants commonly expressed that leaving education prevented them from achieving their educational goals and future aspirations. Several participants reflected on missed opportunities and felt that their lives could have been different if they had continued their studies.

Mr. V stated that *“I felt sad when I had to stop my studies. It was difficult for me because I had interest in studying.”*

Ms. R explained that *“leaving my studies was a difficult decision. I felt sad because I wanted to continue my education like my friends.”*

Ms. M stated that *“sometimes I think about my education and feel disappointed that I could not complete it.”*

6.2.15. Transformation of Daily Life from Student Role to Household and Work Responsibilities

The findings reveal that educational discontinuation brought significant changes to participants’ daily lives. After leaving education, many participants shifted from structured student routines to household responsibilities, daily wage labour, or other livelihood activities. This transition altered their personal aspirations, daily activities, and social roles within the family and community.

Mr. V stated that *“after I stopped my studies, I started going for work with my mother. Earlier, I was mainly focused on studying, but now my daily routine changed to working and earning.”*

Ms. R explained that *“currently, I stay at home and help my family with household work and daily activities. Occasionally, I assist my parents in their work.”*

Ms. M stated that *“earlier, I had a routine of going to school and studying, but now I stay at home most of the time.”*

6.2.16. Reduced Employment Opportunities and Economic Insecurity

The study found that participants perceived educational discontinuation as a factor limiting their future employment opportunities. Many believed that leaving education reduced their chances of obtaining stable jobs and increased their dependence on daily wage labour and other insecure forms of employment. Participants associated higher educational attainment with better career prospects and economic stability.

Mr. V stated that *“if I had continued my studies, I might have had better opportunities. Now I have to depend on daily wage work, which is not stable.”*

Ms. M explained that *“I feel that my opportunities have become limited. Sometimes I feel less confident about my future.”*

Ms. R stated that *“my dream is to become financially independent and support my family.”*

6.2.17. Education as a Pathway to Economic Independence and Social Mobility

The findings indicate that participants viewed education as an important means of improving their socio-economic conditions. Education was perceived as a pathway towards better employment, financial independence, and an improved quality of life. Participants believed that educational attainment could help them overcome poverty and achieve upward social mobility.

Mr. V stated that *“education is still very important. It can help a person to improve their life.”*

He further added that *“my main wish is to study and get a job. I want to improve my situation through education and work.”*

Ms. D stated that *“education is important in a person’s life. It can help in getting better opportunities and improving life.”*

Ms. R explained that *“I still believe that education is important for achieving a better future.”*

6.2.18. Persistence of Future Aspirations Despite Educational Discontinuation

A significant finding of the study is that educational discontinuation did not completely eliminate participants' hopes and aspirations for the future. Several participants continued to express a desire to improve their lives, secure employment, support their families, and, where possible, return to education. This demonstrates resilience and continued aspiration despite adverse circumstances.

Mr. V stated that *“if I get a good opportunity, I am ready to stop working and go back to studying.”*

Ms. R explained that *“I would like to continue my studies if I get an opportunity and support.”*

Ms. D stated that *“I want to get a good job in the future. I still have that wish to do something good in life and become independent.”*

6.2.19. Intergenerational Impact of Educational Discontinuation on Community Development

The findings suggest that the continuation of educational discontinuation within the Kattunayakan community may have broader implications for long-term social and economic development. Since educational discontinuation is relatively common within the community, it may limit educational attainment among younger generations and reduce opportunities for socio-economic advancement. The normalization of dropout can influence children's aspirations and contribute to the persistence of poverty and limited livelihood opportunities.

Mr. V stated that *“in my community, many children study in MRS school, but after that most of them stop their education. Only a few continue for higher studies.”*

Ms. D explained that *“many children in my community stop their studies after some level. Only a few continue for higher education.”*

Ms. M stated that *“many children in my community stop their studies after school or Plus Two. Only a few continue for higher education.”*

6.3 Suggestions

The findings of the study indicate that educational discontinuation among Kattunayakan youth is influenced by multiple factors including financial hardship, geographical isolation, limited hostel facilities, family circumstances and lack of educational support. Based on these findings, the following suggestions are proposed.

- Strengthen financial and infrastructural support by providing adequate scholarships, hostel facilities, transportation assistance and other educational support for tribal students pursuing higher secondary and higher education.
- Improve access to higher education by expanding educational institutions, vocational training opportunities, and support services in or near tribal areas to reduce geographical barriers.
- Enhance academic and psychosocial support through mentoring, counselling, remedial education and regular follow-up for students who are at risk of educational discontinuation.
- Promote parental and community awareness regarding the importance of higher education, available educational schemes, and long-term educational opportunities through community-based awareness programmes.
- Strengthen coordination among educational institutions, Tribal Development Department and other welfare agencies to ensure continuous monitoring and support for tribal students during educational transitions.
- Encourage positive educational aspirations by organizing career guidance programmes and introducing successful tribal role models who can motivate students to pursue higher education.
- Increase the involvement of social workers in educational settings to provide counselling, facilitate access to welfare schemes, advocate for students' educational rights and mobilize community support for educational continuation.

- Develop educational retention programmes that identify vulnerable students at an early stage and provide timely academic, financial, and emotional support to prevent educational dropout.

6.4 Social Work Implications

The findings of the study have important implications for social work practice, policy formulation, educational interventions and tribal community development.

Implications for Social Work Practice

The study highlights the need for social workers to actively engage in promoting educational inclusion among tribal communities. Educational discontinuation should not be viewed merely as an individual issue but as a social concern influenced by structural and environmental factors. Social workers can play a significant role in identifying students at risk of dropout, providing counselling, facilitating access to educational resources, and advocating for educational rights.

Implications for Community Development

Education is an important component of community development and social empowerment. The findings suggest that strengthening educational opportunities within tribal communities can contribute to improved employment prospects, enhanced social participation, and better quality of life. Community-based educational initiatives can help address barriers that contribute to educational discontinuation.

Implications for Educational Institutions

Educational institutions need to recognize the unique challenges faced by students from tribal communities. The study indicates the importance of creating supportive learning environments that address academic, social, and emotional needs. Institutions should strengthen mentoring systems, counselling services, and student support mechanisms to enhance educational retention.

Implications for Policy and Programme Development

The study emphasizes the need for policies that specifically address barriers faced by students from Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). Strengthening hostel facilities, financial assistance, transportation support, and educational guidance services can contribute significantly to reducing educational discontinuation. Policy interventions should focus not only on enrolment but also on educational retention and completion.

Implications for Future Research

The study focused on a small group of educational dropouts from a single settlement. Future studies may explore educational discontinuation among larger populations across different tribal communities. Comparative studies between tribal and non-tribal students, gender-based analyses, and longitudinal studies can provide deeper insights into the issue.

6.5 Conclusion

Education plays a crucial role in promoting individual development, social inclusion, and community empowerment. For tribal communities, education serves as an important pathway towards improved livelihood opportunities, social mobility, and participation in the broader society. Despite various initiatives introduced by the government and tribal welfare departments, educational discontinuation continues to affect many tribal students, particularly during the transition from school education to higher levels of learning.

The study explored the lived experiences of educational dropouts among members of the Kattunayakan tribal community residing in Muddakkadav Settlement Nilambur. Through qualitative inquiry, the study examined the factors that influenced educational discontinuation, the experiences of participants within educational institutions, the role of family and community contexts, and the consequences of leaving education.

The findings reveal that educational discontinuation is not the result of a single factor but rather the outcome of multiple interconnected circumstances. Financial difficulties, geographical isolation, lack of hostel facilities, limited educational opportunities, family responsibilities, and community influences collectively shaped participants' educational journeys. While many participants reported positive experiences within educational

institutions and received encouragement from teachers and family members, structural barriers often prevented them from continuing their education.

The study also demonstrates that educational discontinuation has significant personal and social consequences. Participants expressed feelings of regret, disappointment, and concern regarding their future opportunities. Many experienced major changes in their daily lives after leaving education and perceived that discontinuation restricted their employment prospects and career development. At the same time, the findings reveal that educational aspirations remain strong among many participants. Most continued to value education and expressed a desire to resume their studies if adequate support became available. Their aspirations for stable employment, financial independence, and personal growth highlight the importance of creating supportive educational environments that enable tribal students to achieve their goals.

The study concludes that reducing educational discontinuation among Kattunayakan youth requires a comprehensive approach that addresses both individual and structural barriers. Strengthening educational support systems, improving hostel facilities, enhancing financial assistance, increasing awareness regarding educational opportunities, and providing continuous guidance can contribute to improved educational retention among tribal students.

Educational inclusion is not merely a matter of increasing enrolment but also of ensuring that students are able to continue and successfully complete their educational journeys. Supporting tribal students in overcoming barriers to education is essential for promoting social justice, community development, and equitable opportunities for future generations.

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ANNEXURE

SOCIO – DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENT

A. Basic Information

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Tribe / Community:

Current place of residence (settlement/hamlet):

Type of family:

B. Family Background

Total number of family members:

Who is the primary caregiver?

Parents' marital status

C. Educational Background

Age at school entry:

Type of school attended:

Medium of instruction:

Highest class completed:

Age at school dropout: _____

D. Occupational and Economic Background

Father's occupation: _____

Mother's occupation: _____

Main source of family income: _____

Do you currently engage in any work?

E. Living Conditions

Type of house:

Availability of basic facilities:

Drinking water:

Electricity:

Toilet facility:

F. Language and Cultural Background

Language spoken at home: _____

Are you comfortable speaking Malayalam?

Do you participate in traditional cultural practices?

G. Current Status

Present educational status:

Present living arrangement:

INTERVIEW GUIDE

- Can you tell me about your school and classroom experience?
- How did you feel while attending school?
- What kind of relationship did you have with your teachers?
- Was the language used in school easy or difficult to understand?
- How did you feel about stay in the residential school away from home?
- How did you feel about studying and learning in school?
- Did you face any difficulties in understanding lessons or exams?

- Did you ever feel stressed, tired or uninterested in school?
- What do your parents or family members think about education?
- Did your family encourage or discourage you from going to school?
- Did any family situations influence your decision to stop school?
- What do people in your community think about going to school?
- Are many children in your community attending or leaving school?
- Did friends or other children influence your decision?
- Do cultural practices or traditions affect schooling in your community?
- Did you face any problems related to school facilities or rules?
- Was the school far or difficult to reach?
- Did you receive enough support from teachers or hostel staff?
- Were government schemes or benefits helpful to you?
- What problems in the school system made it hard to continue?
- Can you describe how the decision to stop schooling happened?
- Was it your decision or someone else's?
- Did anyone try to convince you to continue education?
- Was there any specific incident that led to dropout?
- How did you feel at the time of leaving school?
- What changes happened in your life after leaving school?
- How do you feel now about not continuing education?
- What kind of work or activities are you doing now?
- Do you feel any difficulties because you left school?
- How has your dropout affected your family or community?
- Do you wish you could continue your studies in the future?
- What are your dreams or plans for life?
- What changes do you want in schools for children like you?