



## Attitude of Tribal Students Towards Online Classes in Kerala

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**Abstract-** The Right to Education is a Fundamental Right of an individual enshrined in the Constitution of India to provide free and compulsory education of children up to the age of 14. As tribal students come from a different and peculiar background, the school dropout rate is very high among this segment of students when compared to those from other segments of the population. As per the available reports the educational level of tribal students is exceptionally low, and the number of those who acquire higher education is low too when compared to non tribal people. In the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic situation, the education system is facing an unprecedented crisis and many States are considering the proposition of cancelling the annual examinations to promote the student to the next level. Based on this situation the Department of Education Government of Kerala introduced a new method to continue the academic activities through the online platform, named as the First bell.

This study focuses on the attitude of the tribal students towards the new online educational initiative introduced in the State in the backdrop of the pandemic. The researcher adopted the experimental research design and convenience sampling method to identify the respondents. The sample size of the respondents is 121, and it is collected from Wayanad District in the State. It mainly focuses on the responses of high school and higher secondary school students who are regularly attending the online classes. The result showed that the majority of the tribal students are not interested to attend the classes through the online system and some of them have a neutral viewpoint. Different opinions are highlighted in the study.

**Keywords:** Online classes, attitude of students, Issues experienced by students and educational system in Kerala.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a pivotal role in nurturing an individual, to develop the potential in a person besides build the capacity to address the different situations in life. The Government of India provides free and compulsory education to students up to the age of 14 and enacted the Right to Education Act for the betterment of children. The act includes education as a fundamental right which is compulsory and every citizen of the country is entitled to. Mahatma Gandhi defined education as an all-round process that would nurture the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of a child. The process of education helped to develop the moral, mental, and emotional wellbeing of an individual. On the other side education has been described as the total experience that an individual acquired from the time of birth till death. Education does not begin from the time a child enters formal institutions like school but it begins from home, sibling contact and other circles where the child grows up.

The atmosphere in the school and the attitude of teachers play an important role in the life of students and equip them to adjust with the institution's environment. Educational institutions played an important role in the social and psychological development of a child since a child spent a lot of time in the school in the company of the teachers. The attitude of teachers and the other staff members will have an indelible influence on the daily activities of a student. Such support and positive responses will help them in planning their life in the future too.

Only limited studies have been undertaken on the impact of school climate on the life of children and results of those conducted indicate that positive support of teachers helps students to overcome their academic difficulties. The available studies provide different views about the school atmosphere. Cohen *et al.*, (2009) opine that the school atmosphere defined the quality and character of a student, which includes the school's norms, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching practices and organizational structures. It is opined that the school atmosphere influenced the academic performance of the students and their interpersonal relationship with others (Freiberg & Stein, 1999). A comparative study focused on the academic performance of students with positive and negative school atmosphere and it found that the

students from the school with the positive atmosphere have good academic performance than the students in negative school climate (Dwivedi, 2005). Vasalampi *et al.*, (2009) explained that the child's school adjustment is connected with different aspects such as academic performance, school satisfaction, involvement in the school activities and other social behaviour. Non adjustment to the school atmosphere may lead to poor academic performance, behavioural problems and also dropping out from schools. Such a situation would make their life more difficult than other people. A majority of the tribal students are unable to adjust to the school environment because they are close to their family and are different from the others (Margetts, 2002).

The Indian Constitution lists tribal people as Schedule Tribes with a view to provide them basic support to overcome the issues from the general people. According to the 2011 Census 10.43 crore people in the country belong to the tribal category which means 8.6% of the total population. In Kerala tribal people are included in the marginalized category and considered as the vulnerable group. Based on the research findings and other documents confirmed that the dropout among tribal students is very high, and show wide disparities between the general and tribal people in the educational field. Majority of the tribal population in Kerala live in the northern part of the State especially in the Wayanad, Malappuram and Kannur districts. As per the 2011 Census, 1.45% of the total population in the State of Kerala fall in the Scheduled Tribe category and the majority of them are in Wayanad district (18.35%). As per the 2011 Census, Kerala has the highest literacy rate in the country with Kottayam district accounting for the highest number of literates and Wayanad district registering the lowest literacy rate in the State.

Shelly (2017) analysed the adjustment problems that tribal students encounter in the educational institutions; the data has been collected from the 9 tribal groups in Wayanad district. The respondents from Kurichyar and Kurumar tribes account for the highest number of respondents when compared to the other tribal groups as the population of these tribes is high in Wayanad district and these are the most advanced and they attach importance to education. It is also found that majority of the respondents experience different types of problems in the educational institutions such as difficulty to understand the language of teachers, the inability to concentrate in class and difficulties in following the curriculum. Though the students are interested to come to school most of them are not interested to attend the classes as they are not able to follow the syllabus and do not concentrate in the sessions conducted.

A study found that the 81.3% of the students have difficulties in following the lessons primarily because they have problems in following the language and the content of each lesson. The students experienced difficulties in following the lessons in English and the method of teaching. These problems have been increasing as time passed because the teachers are not in a position to address the problems properly, and 61.3% of the student respondents experienced a negative response from the teachers regarding their day to day studies (Shelly, 2017).

Meanwhile only very limited information is available on the attitude of students towards the online learning practice in Kerala. Most of the countries have advanced systems of e learning methods to improve the quality of education among the students as it helps to open a wide range of knowledge. Many studies clearly suggest that assessing the attitude of students towards the online learning process is important as it will help in improving the system (Berge, 1997; Stocks & Freddolino, 1998; Rhema & Miliszewska, 2014). Society today is much dependent on modern technologies and online learning is a workable method to improve the quality of education (Palmer & Holt, 2009). Haresh Suthar (2013) found that tribal students are silent and introvert by nature because of the difficulties they faced in expressing themselves in the common language. Also because of this anomaly they avoided participating in the discussions and other public platforms to express their point of view.

According to UNESCO (2006), most of the developing countries view online learning as a reflective method of teaching and hence there is a need to have a good proportion of skilled teachers who are adept to handle this method of learning. Online learning is being provided through different medium such as TV, computer and mobile phone and it is also known in different name and terms like online learning, learning through visual media, and m-learning. The online learning is all set to change the traditional pattern of academic process and introduce the modern methods for acquiring new knowledge (Asabere, 2012). Berteau (2009) defines that online education is an important process, and applying the online source provide better understanding through rapid communication. This process of learning involves integration of multiple technologies which are imparted through distance education.

The student's attitude is the most important aspect in the online learning process, how they dealt with the different issues and besides their awareness in using online media and other computer skills (Aixia,

2011). Students preferred mobile learning most and trying to learn through the mobile phone. It is an easy process as the wireless network provides easy ways to search for information and work independently in their own time and collect the materials or resources in a short time (Al-Fahad, 2009). Another finding proves that adoption of online learning is time consuming and some difficulties are experienced to collect the information (Woo and Reeves, 2007). A study conducted on students frequently using Web CT related to the course of Social work, reveals that majority of the respondents used course materials through online and it proved beneficial to their overall learning experiences. The online learning process helped them to overcome the hassles of collecting the study materials, and reduced the difficulties to achieving their needs (Warnet *et al.*, 2000).

There are very limited studies that try to assess the cognitive, affective and behaviour domains of students. Paris (2004) conducted a study to assess this domain among 52 students in Australia and also selected the students who are studying in public school. The study mainly focused on the attitude of students towards the e learning process and the result showed that the students have a better response and positive attitude towards online learning programmes. He also found the same result after a gender wise comparison which meant that all students are ready to follow the online learning process and it helps them to easily assess the system. A similar result emerged in another study conducted among nursing students and their attitude towards the online distance learning programmes. The positive attitude has helped in implementing programmes that are feasible as a new way learning (Yang, 2006)

Some students have a negative attitude towards online learning because of the unavailability of resources. Some of the reasons identified for this negative attitude are the low level of technical knowledge and skills, problem of computer hardware, poor study skills, low motivation from family and teachers and inability to work individually (Smith, *et al.*, 2000; Govindasamy, 2001). The online classes also lead to some kind of psychological problem because there is no close relationship with teachers and friends with the result that some of the students experienced feelings of loneliness and stress when they attended the online classes through computer. The existing negative environment was also one of the main reasons that influenced the attitude of students towards the virtual classes.

### **E learning systems in Kerala**

The online classes are not much familiar in Kerala because institutions follow the offline classes with help of e sources. The students follow the offline class through the internet facility to understand more about each session. Conducting online classes through the virtual platform is a big challenge as teachers are judged by the parents through each session (Athira and Harikrishnan, 2020). In the Covid pandemic situation, the State Education Department of Kerala implemented a new platform to continue the education of students from classes 1 to 12. The online session named FirstBellis telecasted through the Kerala Infrastructure and Technology for Education (KITE)- Vectors Educational channel. This channel is available free in all cable networks and directed through the internet all across the State. The virtual platform telecast the classes from 8.30 am to 5.30 pm on weekdays. The timetable and other details are published in advance and the students must watch the classes through the channel and the teacher will monitor the progress of each student (Tripathi, 2020). This study is trying to collect the information of students from the Schedule Tribal group and those who are studying in the high school and higher secondary classes and regularly attending the classes through the virtual platform. It is mainly concentrating on the attitude of tribal students attending the online classes in the backdrop of the Covid pandemic. On the other side, the students may be experience some difficulty to attend the classes in previous year and try to concentrate on the changes happening after the online classes. The studies clearly indicating the educational background of the tribal students and some of the time they experience the exclusion or discrimination from other students.

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

The study is drawn in a quantitative nature and the information is collected through an interview schedule. The study mainly examines the attitude of tribal students in high school and higher secondary classes towards the online classes. The close ended questionnaire was prepared by the researcher with the help of available resources and field level experience. The study adopted the exploratory research design because no information is available about the attitude of tribal students to online classes in Wayanad district because it is a newly started programme. It also used simple random sampling techniques to identify the students in Wayanad district. The researcher collected the information about the students from the Panchayat and tribal officers, besides through telephonic conversation from the

students and data from the students who are available nearby in view of the prevailing pandemic. The sample size of the study is 121 and data was collected from six tribal groups in Wayanad district of Kerala. The interview lasted 15-20 minutes and each conversation was recorded and transcribed. Before starting the conversation, we collected the consent from each respondent verbally. Participants voluntarily participated in the research work and no stipend was given for their participation. The data collected has been analysed with the help of SPSS.

### III. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

We present the paper based on the attitude of tribal students towards the online learning programmes telecast through the KITE Victors Channel in the State of Kerala. The researcher is also trying to analyse the positive and negative impact of online classes, attitude towards the new learning method and technical issues, attitude towards teachers and other connected factors. In the Covid-19 pandemic situation department of education has implemented the online learning programme for continuing the academic programme known as First Bell.

#### Demographic profile

*Table 1: Socio demographic profile of the respondents*

Variables	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Tribal Group	Paniya	56	46.3
	Kattunaykar	25	20.7
	Kurichiar	17	14.0
	Kurumar	4	3.3
	Oorali	7	5.8
	Adiya	12	9.9
Region	Rural	120	99.2
	Urban	1	.8
Education	High school	104	86.0
	Higher secondary	17	14.0
Age	10-13	40	33.1
	14-16	68	56.2
	17-19	13	10.7
Number of family members	Less than 5	47	38.8
	5-8	66	54.5
	8-11	8	6.6
Occupation of Parents	Coolie	113	93.4
	Government	1	.8
	Others	7	5.8

Monthly income of the family	Unaware	56	46.3
	<5000	40	33.1
	5000-10000	21	17.4
	10000 and above	4	3.3

The researcher collected the data from six tribal groups in the district of Wayanad. The groups like Paniya, Kattunaykar, Kurichiar, Kurumar, Oorali and Adiya. Table 1 clearly indicates the sociodemographic profile of the students. Based on that 43.6% of the respondents are from the Paniya, Kattunaykar (20.7%), Kurichya (14%), Kurumar (3.3%), Oorali (5.8%) and Adiya (9.9%) tribes. As per the living condition of the respondents, majority of them live in the rural location (99.2%) because tribal people are more interested to living in rural areas and they are connected to the forest or the environment and only one respondent is living in the urban area. The present study selected students who are in high school and higher secondary, based on that 86% of the students are studying in high school and 14% of them are only in higher secondary. Based on the categorization of age, majority of the students are in the age group of 14-16, like 56.2% of the total respondents. Other group of 10-13 have 33.1% and 17-20 age groups have 10.7%. The parent's occupation and educational status are important factors for tribal students as the parents need not be aware about the changes in the educational field. Majority of the parents are coolies (93.4%) who are daily wage earners and engaged in smallscale work, 5.8% of the parents are engaged in other occupations and only one parent is in Government service. The researcher asks the monthly income of the family, unfortunately 46.3% of the respondents are unaware about their monthly income, 33.1% of the families are earning less than 5000 in per month, 17.4% of them have 5000- 10000 monthly income and only 3.3% of the family 10000 and above monthly income.

#### **Attitude towards teachers and school atmosphere**

The attitude of the teachers and the school atmosphere are the most important factors that affect the students and it influences the academic performance too. The available studies related to the school atmosphere and explained that a positive environment influenced the student's performance and negative environment contributed to other different problems. The student's attitude towards the teachers is totally different from one place to another. The present findings show that, 58.7% students explained that the attitude of teachers are good and 38% them are reported very good and only 1.7% of the responses are bad about their teacher's attitude. On the other hand, tribal students also experience the discrimination or rejection from teachers and other officials but the findings show that 92.6% of the students never experience any sort of discrimination/rejection from teachers, 3.3% them have experience some sort of issues and 4.1% of have neutral responses regarding this question. Mainly they experience the discrimination from other students in the form of teasing related to financial condition, living arrangements and using derogatory words.

The other notable point is that, 24% of the students are academically backward and they do not have to much concentrate of the classes in every day and 74.4% of them are never experience any academic backwardness and the classes would help them to concentrate or actively participate in all subjected.

The government and teachers are implementing programmes to improve the academic quality of the students but it is not working effectively in some students or it may be connected with some other reason like experiences from school or family, environmental factors, etc. In the Covid-19 pandemic situation, most of the teachers and others supporting groups are trying to provide more facilities for tribal students to attend the online class without failure. Based on that majority of the students (85.1%) answered that they get more support from teachers and they are regularly monitoring the activities and there is continued follow up from their side. The regular follow up will help reduce the difficulty to concentrate on the sessions and manage the time schedule. Only 13.2% of the students are not getting any proper support and monitoring from teachers. The Education Department also publishes the time schedule in advance and also follow a structure format. Majority of the students (74.4%) support the argument but 24% of the respondents are of the view that they never follow any systematic structure when compared to regular classes. The unsystematic way may lead to increase in the absentees in class. On the other argument that online classes do not help to understand about the social behaviour like how sit in the class, how to behave with teachers and other connected factors majority of the students (57%) replied that the online classes never helped to learn about the social behaviour and 41.3% are of the view that it will help to understand about the social values and 1.7% have neutral response. This is the most

important negative impact of online classes suggested by the students and they feel that the basic social values are learned from teachers through the formal way of education.

### **Facility for online programme**

The facility and the availability of technology is the most important factor of online programmes. The study focused in the district of Wayanad which is considered as the educationally backward district of Kerala with few students passing the high school and higher secondary examinations. The district has the highest number of tribal population in Kerala. The online programme is more useful to gain new knowledge for the targeted population simultaneously and unavailability of technology is another issue. In the present study, majority of the respondents (93.4%) have facility to watch online classes through the mobile phone, Television, computer or the other facilities arranged by the schools and panchayat officials. At the same time 6.6% of the students have no facility to attend the programmes regularly and most of the time they attended the re telecast episode with the help of other people or the common facilities provided by the official bodies. The medium is another important factor of the online classes, 76.9% students are using television to follow the online classes, 14% of them are using mobile, 1.7% of the students have using computer and 7.4% the students follow through other medium. The other mediums like tablet, projector or other methods of screening in a public location. The new experiments positively or negatively influence the learning output of the students. Based on that 21% of the tribal students believe that the online classes will help to overcome the academic issues and it helps to change their life in different ways but majority of the respondents (78.5%) have opposite response regarding the influence of new method implemented and they think that the online classes never change their life in an effective way. Very few respondents have neutral response that sometimes the new technologies influence their life and sometimes not. Few respondents have positive response towards the influence of online learning, 38.5% of the students feel that the online classes will help to understand more about a lesson at any time because the online lectures are available in the online platform anytime and anywhere. 26.9% of the students responded that the classes helps to gain new knowledge from the teachers and helps to understand more about each session. 34.6% of the respondents have other opinion that it will help to improve their life situation and provide more influence in their personal life in future. At the same time the students experience some sort of difficulties to follow the classes regularly, majority of the students (58.7%) experience the power related problems like low voltage, unavailability of electricity, disconnection of cable network and other technical problems. Some of the respondents (19.8%) have experienced the low connectivity of Internet or trouble to connect to Internet and 7.4% have problems at the time of telecasting the video lecture, 3.3% of them have experience the issues of handling or unaware about the new technologies and 9.9% of them have other forms of issues like solving the technical errors.

### **Knowledge and Attitudes towards Online Classes**

In the backdrop of the Covid pandemic, the Department of Education in Kerala started a great initiative to continue the classes through the online platform and using the KITE Victors Channel to telecast the pre-recorded lectures of all classes based on the State syllabus. The attitude and level of acceptance may differ from one person to another, the present study majority of the students (76.4%) are interested to attend the offline classes and 29.8% of them are positively responded about online classes and only one respondent has neutral response regarding the mode of study. The main reason for selecting the offline mode of study is more useful to understand about the classes taken by teachers, learn through the discussion with other students and trying to clarify the doubts immediately, 52.1% of them have the same opinion. At the same time, majority of the students (54%) who have selected the online classes responded that the online class will helps to stay at home with parents. These are the major reasons they suggested to support and oppose the online and offline mode of classes. The students are not much interested to follow the pre- recorded video lectures but majority of the respondents (72.7%) actively follow the online classes because of the regular follow up from the teachers and 24% of them are lazy to attend the session. The reported reason regarding the negative attitude regarding the online classes is lack of facility to attend the classes properly, not able to follow the classes especially the science subjects, not able to spend much time in front of visual media and much interest to attend the offline mode of classes. The researcher also trying find out the opinion of students to continue the classes through online mode but majority of the students (56.2%) reported that they are not interested to attend the classes through online because they need to meet friends (43.8%), trying learning through directly from the teachers (14.9%) and some

other reasons too. Even though, 42.1% of them are interested to continue the classes through online because it helps to save the time and get more time engaged in other activities with family (47.5%), stay with family members (35.2%), helps to reduce the psychological disturbance related to study (1.9%) and 19.6% have other reason for choosing the online mode.

The online classes will help to improve the quality of education but the tribal students opined that the online classes would not help to improve the quality of education of the students especially in tribal community, that is 61.2% while 36.4% have the opinion that it would help to improve the quality of education and only 2.5% have the neutral response. The positive side of online classes they suggested is time consuming, repeatedly watching the episodes, easy to evaluate the performance of students and parents can monitor the classes. On the other hand it will be more difficult for the students who are differently abled or having physical difficulty to attend school. The respondents point out some negative aspects of the online classes, which make it difficult to continue the classes in a proper way (21.5%), students are not given much importance in video lectures (56.2%) and reduce the competitive mind of students (21.5%). The researcher undertook a comparison between the classes related to science and art subjects. On the science subjects 55.5% are of the opinion of their inability to achieving their goal, while 42.1% of the respondents have a positive response that its very useful and they are successful in handling the online classes especially in science subjects. Among that, 34.7% of them had experienced the difficulty to follow the definitions and other connected terms in science subject and 36.4% have difficulty to clarify the doubt about the practical and theoretical aspects. Although in social science subject, majority of the respondents (69.4%) have positive responses and its helps to understand more about this subject. The pre-recorded lecture trying to explain each concept with the help of suitable picture and videos, helped to understand each concept in a better way. So they responded that it more successful than science subject, and 28.1% of them marked as its failure to convey the lecture effectively and 2.5% have neutral response among the effectiveness of handling art subject. The majority of the respondents (60.3%) are able to concentrate and follow the social science classes but 24% of them experience the difficulty to concentrate. The online classes also help to reduce the workload of the students, the result also presented 79.3% of the students replied that there is no workload experience at the time of online class compared to the offline class because online classes are telecast only for a maximum of one hour in a day and concentrate only on one or two subjects a day and also very less home based work is assigned. On the other hand, offline classes are in full day and handling more than 5 subjects a day and assigned more home based activities too. The offline classes provide more opportunity to apply the teaching methods for each subject like group discussion and activities. The student also explained that the discussion with classmates and teachers is a more effective way to learn each subject and helped to improve the academic performances, reported by 71.1%. Some of the respondents are more interested to follow the self-study method and they responded that the group discussion never helps to improve the academic performance, which is 27.3%. The researcher also assessed the overall life experiences of the student in the Covid-19 pandemic situation, and it shows that 37.2% of them are fully satisfied about their life in the particular situation, 21.6% of them are less satisfied, 19.8% neutral, 13.2% of the students are dissatisfied and 8.3% of them are completely dissatisfied with their life experience.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The Department of Education, Government of Kerala has taken a brave decision to introduce the programme named the First Bell. It helps to continue the education without any limitation and also provide more knowledge about the each subject. But in the case of the tribal students, they are not ready to accept the great changes happening in the field of education and most of them are interested to follow the traditional mode of education. It may be influenced by many reasons because the available facilities to regularly follow the programmes are very limited and different types of obstacles could emerge. Based on the research it clearly indicated that the online mode of education is more useful for the students especially the students who are not able to reach the school properly but some practical difficulties are there. Mainly the unawareness about the mode of classes, unavailability of the facility and lack of technical information could be the reasons. So let us open the doors for accepting new changes in the field education and try to accept the changes very positively.

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