

Managing Covid related morbidities, Mitigation and Home Schooling of Children among Dalits

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Since the outbreak of covid 19 pandemic, Dalits and Adivasis have been the most impacted. Therefore, it is imperative that the caste dynamics and social realities of the COVID-19 pandemic debate be clarified. The primary objective of this research is to determine the degree to which the Dalits are capable of adapting to the shift in their sources of livelihood that was brought on by the Covid-19 virus. The researchers also attempted to explore the viability of Homeschooling as an educational option for Dalit community pupils who were already attending schools. Dalits who live in colonies have a tough time gaining access to the public distribution system as well as medical services because of the restricted land resources available to them and the fact that their homes are located inside the city and village borders. It has been noticed that students attending public or publicly supported schools are more likely to be excluded from class regularly compared to children attending private schools. Innovative technologies have made the digital divide wider and more intractable.

Keywords: Covid-19, Dalit, Homeschooling, Education, Digital divide

"The covid-19 virus doesn't see Caste, Religion, Race, Colour, Creed, Language and Borders" was the statement put forward by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This message gives the Covid-19 virus the status of "Great Equalizer," as it is unbiased of human-made stratifications (The Print, 2020). However, its impact on various social groups depends on their vulnerability based on access to health care services, potable drinking water, ration, and other provisional services. The sudden implementation of the first lockdown in March 2020 forced the country's general population to follow social distancing and the use of masks. Those travelling across the country in pursuit of safety were considered the carriers of the virus. Hence this unplanned health emergency affects the living conditions of migrant workers and the person who lives on the Tenth floor of a luxury apartment differently. Historically, it is an overt fact that any disaster or pandemic made the Dalit and Adivasi its worst victims (Ram & Yadav, 2021). Since this is the case, it is of the highest significance to shed light on the caste dynamics and social reality concerning the discourse on the COVID-19 epidemic (Mondal & Karmakar, 2021).

Around 25 per cent of India's 1.3 billion people belong to the Scheduled Castes (Dalits) and Scheduled Tribes (Adivasis). Both of these social groups have been socially and economically marginalised for ages. Because of this historical segregation, there is a grave risk that the rapid development of covid and the efforts used to combat it may be exacerbated by societal ostracisation. Cleaners, waste pickers, and manual scavengers are among the professions that economically disadvantaged Dalits and Adivasis have been obliged to take for millennia. These social groups are at a higher risk of contracting the virus due to the nature of their professions (Sur, 2020). The medical procedure for Covid-19 is unviable to the living conditions of Dalits living in colonies. The Land reforms Act re-amended in 1969 limited the land ownership among Dalit colonies up to 4 to 5 cents per household. These lands are often unsuitable for the family to live in due to Intergenerational subdivision and fragmentation of holdings. The Dalit settlements in the state are usually situated either in marshy lands or in hilly areas. As these areas are away from the public gaze, this would limit the Dalits from accessing the broader Social and political system. Due to limited land resources, the houses are adjacent to each other. As the medical procedure for Covid-19 demands social distancing and self-isolation, the Dalits within these households have little aid to cope with the Health emergencies created by the coronavirus (Mohamed, 2020). In a country, for over 1000 years, the living conditions of its citizen have been determined based on caste (Ray, 2016) it is high time to preview the Caste dynamics in line with the impact of the Covid-19 virus on the country's masses. The study was carried out with the following objectives: To understand the socio-demographic profile of the respondents. To assess the strategies adopted by families to mitigate the effect of Covid-19. To understand the impediments in Home Schooling for Children of Covid affected families.

The central aim of this study was to assess how far the Dalits adapted to the change in livelihood caused by the Covid-19 virus. The researchers also tried to investigate the effectiveness of Homeschooling among the school-going students in the Dalit community. A Descriptive research design was followed in this study. The data were collected from three Dalit colonies of Balaramapuram Panchayath of Thiruvananthapuram District of Kerala. An interview schedule was used to collect data, and 80 samples were collected from covid- recovered families using the Purposive sampling technique. Data were collected from January 2022 to March 2022. Confidentiality of the subjects was assured throughout the study period. The data were analysed using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS Statistics 20).

Findings and Discussion

The findings and discussion of the inferential analysis are reported below. The hypotheses were tested using non-parametric tests, viz. Mann-Whitney U Test, Chi-Square Test, and Spearman's Correlation.

Status of Home Quarantine facilities and Income

H_{01} = There is no significant difference between the status of home quarantine facilities of the respondents and their income

H_{A1} = There is a significant difference between the status of home quarantine facilities of the respondents and their income

TABLE1:Result of Mann-Whitney U Test for Status of Home Quarantine facilities of the respondents and income

	<i>Status of Home Quarantine facilities</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U Value</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Income	Have Home Quarantine facilities	26	55.77	305.000	0.001
	Do not have Home Quarantine facilities	54	33.15		

Table 1 shows the result of the Mann-Whitney U Test for Status of Home Quarantine facilities of the respondents and income. P-value ($p=0.001$) is observed to be above 0.05. Thus, H_{01} is rejected, and H_{A1} is accepted. There is a significant difference between the respondents' mean ranking of home quarantine facilities and their income. The mean rank of respondents having home Quarantine facilities is higher than those who do not have Home Quarantine facilities.

A significant difference was observed between the mean ranking of home quarantine facilities and their income ($p=0.001$). The mean rank indicates that the mean income of respondents having Home Quarantine facilities is higher than those who do not have Home Quarantine facilities. Also, there existed a significant positive relationship between the income of the respondents and days of Self-Isolation ($p=0.001$). As a strategy for infection prevention and control, the Indian government mandated 'social distancing' and 'home quarantine' to restrict contact between diseased and uninfected individuals (Agoramoorthy & Hsu, 2021; MoHFW, 2020). According to this prescription, a person was required to stay in a separate room with proper ventilation and a separate or linked toilet to limit mobility within the house and to wash their hands often with water, soap, or detergent. Infectious diseases have a disproportionately negative impact on the world's most impoverished populations (Bhutta et al., 2014). The magnitude of the financial consequences is spatially uneven, and certain social groups are more damaged than average. Thus, these communities may have a longer period to recover from the consequence of the pandemic than the average (Martin et al., 2020). Other studies have also provided evidence for the relationship between income and home quarantine facilities. Many people cannot quarantine themselves because they lack adequate housing (Honig, 2020). More space for home quarantine was typically seen in single-family detached homes, more recent construction, and units occupied by households with higher incomes (Sehgal et al., 2021).

Gender and Days of Self-isolation

H₀₂ There is no significant difference between the gender of the respondents and days of Self-isolation
H_{A2} There is a significant difference between the gender of the respondents and days of Self-isolation

TABLE 2: Result of Mann-Whitney U Test for Gender of the respondents and days on Self-isolation

	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U Value</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Days on Self-isolation	on Male	35	46.44	579.500	.043
	on Female	45	35.88		

Table 2 shows the result of the Mann-Whitney U Test for Gender of the respondents and days on Self-isolation. P-value ($p=0.043$) is observed to be below 0.05. Thus, H_{02} is rejected, and H_{A2} is accepted. There is a significant difference between the mean ranking of Gender of the respondents and days of Self-isolation.

A significant difference was observed between the mean ranking of the gender of the respondents and days of self-isolation ($p=0.043$). The mean rank indicates the average number of days of self-isolation for male respondents is higher than the average number of days of self-isolation for female respondents. It was evident from the onset of the epidemic; it was evident that people would experience the crisis differently and that women, men, and other genders would be affected differently. The additional household burden may also make it more difficult for women to re-enter the workforce, resulting in long-lasting economic implications. Historically vulnerable populations of women, such as Muslim, Dalit, Adivasi, migrant, and single, separated, widowed, or divorced women, have borne the brunt of the crisis. While the Indian government played a crucial role in assisting women through large-scale welfare programmes, more should be done to address their needs and obstacles. This gap must be addressed both within the existing government apparatus and by establishing extra support structures to aid in the recovery of women (Berg, 2021). Women are expected and obligated by social standards to perform unpaid work at home. Due to their underrepresentation in the paid workforce, many women in India are forced to perform unpaid domestic labour. In practically every country, women now spend more time on housework than they did in the past, and they are the ones who have to face this added burden. The crisis caused by the COVID-19 outbreak affords fresh possibilities to analyse and re-evaluate the underlying imbalances. Inequalities in society frequently manifest in numerous forms, including class, race, ethnicity, and gender (Jasrotia & Meena, 2021).

House ownership and status of Home Quarantine facilities

H₀₃ There is no association between House ownership and Status of Home Quarantine facilities
H_{A3} There is an association between House ownership and the Status of Home Quarantine facilities

TABLE 3: Result of Chi- Square Test for House ownership and Status of Home Quarantine facilities

		<i>Status of Home Quarantine facilities</i>			<i>χ² Value</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
		<i>Have Quarantine facilities</i>	<i>Do not have Home Quarantine facilities</i>	<i>Total</i>		
House ownership	Own house	4	19	23	3.359 ^a	.045
	Rented house	22	35	57		
Total		26	54	80		

Table 3 shows the Chi-Square Test result for House ownership and Status of Home Quarantine facilities. P-value ($\chi^2=3.359^a$, $p=0.045$) is below 0.05. Thus, H_{03} is rejected, and H_{A3} is accepted. There is an association between House ownership and the Status of Home Quarantine facilities.

There was an association between House ownership and the Status of Home Quarantine facilities ($\chi^2=3.359^a$, $p=0.045$). Many houses do not have Home Quarantine facilities. Even among rented houses, the availability of Home Quarantine facilities was observed to be minimal. This points to the fact that many respondents do not have land or own shelter. The 1970 Land Reforms Act, which was intended to provide land to the landless, benefited a select few, while the vast majority received just pennies in the so-called "colonies" established for them. The Act contributed to the formation of Dalit

and Adivasi colonies. Recent research indicates 12,500 Dalit colonies and 4,083 Adivasi colonies in the state (Rammohan, 2008). However, even after decades of the act being in force, the government mechanisms have failed to provide at least a small plot of property for shelter for all Dalits and Adivasis, which adds a burden to their livelihoods (Devika, 2010). This is the primary reason for the continued backwardness of Dalits and Adivasis in Kerala, despite the implementation of Land Reforms. It contradicts Kerala's social development success, generally hailed as the "Kerala Model." This demonstrates that they are excluded from Kerala's success story (Arya, 2017).

*Age of the respondents and income and days of Self-Isolation;
Income of the respondents and days of Self-Isolation*

- H₀₄** There is no significant positive relationship between the age of the respondents and their income
H_{A4} There is a significant positive relationship between the age of the respondents and their income
H₀₅ There is no significant positive relationship between age of the respondents and days of Self-Isolation
H_{A5} There is a significant positive relationship between age of the respondents and days of Self-Isolation
H₀₆ There is no significant positive relationship between income of the respondents and days of Self-Isolation
H_{A6} There is a significant positive relation between the income of the respondents and days of Self-Isolation

TABLE 4: Result of Spearman's Correlation results for Age, Income and Days of Self-Isolation of the respondents

		Age	Income	Days of Self-Isolation
Spearman's rho	Age	1.000	-.048	-.037
	Income		1.000	.886**
	Days of Self-Isolation			1.000

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 shows Spearman's Correlation results for Age, Income and Days of Self-Isolation. P-value is observed to be above 0.05 in the case of H₄ and H₅. Thus, H₀₄ and H₀₅ are accepted. However, for H₀₆, the p-value (p=0.001) is less than 0.01. Thus H₀₆ is rejected, and H_{A6} is accepted. There is a significant positive relationship between the income of the respondents and days of Self-Isolation. Loss of income during quarantine and loss of work following quarantine are two of the most significant barriers people face while complying with requests to enter a quarantine (Rothstein & Talbott, 2007). This shows income has a greater significance than the number of days of self-isolation.

Status of online classes and poverty line

- H₀₇** There is no association between the status of online classes and poverty line
H_{A07} There is an association between the status of online classes and the poverty line

TABLE 5: Result of Chi Square test for status of online classes and poverty line

		<i>Poverty line</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>χ² Value</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
		<i>Below Poverty Line</i>	<i>Above Poverty Line</i>			
Status of online classes	Had online classes	26	25	51	4.769 ^a	.035
	Did not have online classes	22	7	29		
Total		48	32	80		

Table 5 shows the result of the Chi-Square Test for Status of online classes and the poverty line. P-value ($\chi^2=4.769^a$, $p=0.035$) is below 0.05. Thus, H₀₇ is rejected, and H_{A07} is accepted. There is an association between the status of online classes and the poverty line.

There is an association between online classes' status and the poverty line ($\chi^2=4.769^a$, $p=0.035$). Very few of the children below the poverty line had the opportunity to have online classes. Although economic, social, and cultural capital is the primary axes of inequality, one agrees with (Bourdieu, 1986) that "technological capital" plays an important role. The economic consequences will be felt more keenly by students from underprivileged backgrounds. All signs suggest that adolescents whose families are less able to fund out-of-school learning will experience greater learning losses than their more privileged peers, which will result in greater lifetime earnings losses. The sudden lockdown policy upset the daily wage employees, but it also placed an incredible emotional strain on their children (Agoramoorthy, 2021). Two interrelated long-term economic cost sources are crucial to this debate. First, pupils whose education has been disrupted by the epidemic will incur long-term wage losses. Second, national economies that go forward with a less-skilled labour force will experience slower economic growth, which is detrimental to society's well-being (Woessmann & Hanushek, 2020).

Attendance in online classes and type of school

H₀₈ There is no association between attendance in online classes and type of school

H_{A08} There is an association between attendance in online classes and type of school

TABLE 6: Result of Chi Square test for attendance in online classes and type of school

		<i>Attendance in online classes</i>		<i>Total</i>	χ^2 <i>Value</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
		<i>Regularly attended online classes</i>	<i>Did not regularly attended online classes</i>			
Type of school	govt school	15	15	30	6.149 ^a	.046
	govt aided school	14	9	23		
	private school	20	7	27		
Total		49	31	80		

Table 6 shows the result Chi-Square Test for attendance in online classes and type of school. P-value ($\chi^2=6.149^a$, $p=0.046$) is observed to be below 0.05. Thus, H₀₈ is rejected, and H_{A08} is accepted. There is an association between attendance in online classes and the type of school.

In the study, it was found that there is an association between attendance in online classes and type of school ($\chi^2=6.149^a$, $p=0.046$). It is observed that the students of government-owned or funded schools regularly missed classes compared to the students of private schools. The advent of new technology has further exacerbated the digital divide. New degrees of connectedness leads to a wide variety of digital inclusions and exclusions; this gap is not binary (Seah, 2020). This digital gap, which is most obviously seen in ordinary household life, has been brought to light due to the development of COVID-19 (Watts, 2020).The government of Kerala has instructed school administrators to establish 'neighbourhood study centres' to provide students without access to digital devices with access to virtual classrooms under its 'First Bell' initiative. The combined efforts of the local government bodies reportedly yielded positive results (Anupama & Sreekala, 2020). However, the data from this study negates those results. Results from other studies also point to this fact. With the closure of schools and loss of parents' income, dropout rates have increased as children do not have access to the virtual world of education and have to assist their families in survival. (HRLPR, 2020).

Conclusion

The 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is rapidly spreading around the globe, and it is having severe effects on patients, health care professionals, health systems, and the economy. There is mounting evidence that the initial outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic had immediate effects on health and society, with some socioeconomic groups being disproportionately impacted by these effects (Bong et al., 2020; Kumar & Shetty, 2021). The pandemic starts an already existing debate over Dalit's ownership of land. With limited land resources and houses within the city and village limits, Dalits living in colonies find it difficult to access public distribution systems and health care services. The Dalits, who were once "*the true owner*" of the land, are now forced to fight for a plot of land to survive. This became an essential factor in perpetuating the backwardness of Dalit groups in Kerala. To construct a classless and casteless society in Kerala, wealth must be distributed equally. A second

land reform campaign is necessary to achieve an ambitious goal (Arya, 2017). It is preferable to build houses in Dalit colonies with at least two rooms and one room with an attached toilet. Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) houses should be designed to address pandemic or other epidemic diseases in the future and to provide a more comfortable living environment. The number of interactions between students and teachers has decreased from pre-COVID-19 levels in households with school-aged children (Josephson et al., 2021). The exclusion of socioeconomically disadvantaged students from learning chances would result from the launch of massive online education without adequately addressing the enormous access gap and discrepancies in digital infrastructure. Moreover, such exclusion may worsen the enormous socioeconomic differences in educational opportunities and achievements (Vaidehi & Reddy, 2015). Both the state and the central governments must take the necessary steps to enhance internet connectivity throughout remote regions. The provision of electronic devices and Internet data packs is very much requested to carry out online classes effectively. In a similar vein, actions must be taken to initiate offline classes, which must be planned in such a way as to cater to the emotional and social requirements of disadvantaged children. The question of caste and gender dynamics should be addressed with utmost importance to unveil the social realities in our country. Similarly, understanding intersectionality is vital for identifying solutions to the daily inequalities people experience (UBC, 2021).

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