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Research Article

Education and Skill Development Schemes of the Scheduled Caste Development Department of Kerala and Role of Enhancing Employment among the Marginalised Communities

Indhu T R*

Research Scholar, Department of Social Sciences, Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation (GIFT), Affiliated to Cochin University of Science and Technology, Thiruvananthapuram, India

Corresponding Author: *Indhu T R

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Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between participation in skill training programmes offered by the Scheduled Castes Development Department, Kerala (SCDD), and employment outcomes among marginalised individuals. Using a Chi-square test, the study empirically analyses whether participation in these skill development courses is significantly associated with improved employment prospects, particularly in securing jobs that align with participants' educational qualifications and acquired skills. The statistical analysis enables an assessment of the extent to which skill training interventions contribute to better labour market outcomes for disadvantaged groups.

The findings reveal a statistically significant association between participation in SCDD skill training programmes and favourable employment outcomes. Individuals who have completed SCDD-sponsored training are more likely to obtain employment that matches their level of education and skill competencies when compared to non-participants. This indicates that structured skill development initiatives play an important role in bridging the gap between formal education and labour market requirements. The programmes appear to enhance job readiness by equipping participants with industry-relevant skills, thereby improving their employability and job–skilling.

Moreover, the results suggest that SCDD skill training programmes serve as an effective policy intervention for promoting inclusive growth and socio-economic mobility among marginalised communities. By increasing access to skill-oriented education and targeted training, these programmes help overcome structural barriers that often limit employment opportunities for disadvantaged individuals. The positive association identified in this study underscores the importance of integrating skill development with broader employment strategies to ensure that educational investments translate into meaningful and sustainable livelihoods. Overall, the study highlights the critical role of government-supported skill training initiatives in improving employment quality and fostering equitable development outcomes.

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KEYWORDS: Scheduled caste development Department, Pre-examination Training Centres, Industrial training Institute, Marginalised Communities.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education offers benefits to the scheduled castes as well, and individuals from these communities can secure gainful employment or engage in various services, leading to more comfortable lives. Despite acknowledging the positive impact of education, they face a significant hindrance in their inability to educate their children. The government's provision of free education and stipends for scheduled caste pupils is an attempt to support their educational pursuits. Due to the economic conditions, they are unable to send their children to school. This economic deprivation lies at the core of their challenges, with all other problems being closely related to their poverty. In essence, while education has the potential to uplift scheduled caste communities, the prevailing poverty remains a formidable barrier that prevents them from fully accessing and benefiting from educational opportunities. Economic disparities and providing additional support could play a vital role in empowering these communities to break free from the cycle of poverty and enhance their access to education (L.P. Vidhyarthi and N. Mishra, 1977)

Education has been a key focus of programs, which have included laws against untouchability and caste-based discrimination, as well as the reservation of seats in educational institutions and employment opportunities. Education is a means to empower the Scheduled Castes and enable them to succeed in a society where status is determined by merit rather than social background. (Suma Chitnis in 1972)

By allocating resources efficiently and implementing them effectively, public expenditure can help narrow socioeconomic disparities and create a more inclusive society. This review will not only shed light on the intricacies of the problem but also enable us to identify the mechanisms by which public expenditure contributes to a higher level of human development (Sharma, 1994).

Public education expenditure plays a critical role in shaping human capital and labour market outcomes, particularly for marginalised communities. Studies found that increased government spending on education can improve skill levels, job access, and income mobility (Tilak, 2015).

The effectiveness of various government educational programs on different caste groups. The study revealed that these initiatives had a significant positive influence on the education of the target population. Both parental motivation and the government's welfare policies played crucial roles in inspiring and supporting students' educational progress. However, despite these efforts, educational advancement was not uniform across all caste groups. The study identified the utilisation pattern as a primary factor contributing to this unevenness in educational progress. Some caste groups benefited more than others due to varying degrees of access to resources and opportunities. Occupation serves as a crucial indicator of an individual's socio-economic status, as it is closely linked to their educational background and income level. Society's hierarchical order is partly built on occupational gradation, in which certain professions hold higher prestige and social value. In contrast, others are regarded with less regard and are placed lower on the social scale. The significance attached to various occupations influences how they are perceived and valued in society. (Santhakumari, 1976)

This study examines the association between participation in SCDD skill training courses and employment outcomes among marginalised communities. The Scheduled Caste Development Department (SCDD), Government of Kerala, runs a range of skill-training and livelihood initiatives targeted at Scheduled Caste youths and households. Major components include a state network of SCDD Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) delivering NCVT trades, short-term skill development courses, self-employment assistance linked to training, and targeted budgetary allocations under the Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan for gap-filling livelihood projects. The contribution to this study is to examine how the education and skill schemes of the scheduled caste development department lead to employment among the scheduled caste communities, and to analyse the purpose for which the schemes are implemented and whether they have achieved their objectives.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature is thematically organised to highlight the key aspects of education and skill development. The significance of education in empowering Scheduled Caste communities and reducing social inequalities, and the role of skill development in enhancing employability among the youth. The provision of hostel and scholarship facilities has led to a drastic increase in the enrollment of scheduled caste students in schools and colleges, and such support systems play a crucial role in encouraging and motivating them to pursue their education. (Sharma K.L. 1974).

The study examines elementary education among the SC and ST categories and reveals that disparities in enrolment rates are due to differential factors related to household-level poverty and biases inherent in administrative systems, thereby advocating for improved funding allocations alongside targeted programs in this regard. Though there are constitutional provisions and government schemes intended to improve access to education for SCs, significant differences continue to exist (Sedwal& Kamat, 2008; Kumar, 2021)

Some groups lag in development outcomes such as education, health, poverty, and income (Thorat and Dubey, 2012).

The study asserts that despite commendable overall indicators in Kerala's schooling scenario, new forms of inequality have emerged due to the intersectionality between class and caste, thereby necessitating special attention towards SC students' situation. (Scaria 2014)

The study on Dalit empowerment, including education, employment, and socio-economic factors, therefore emphasises the need for planned policies and financial support to address the persisting educational challenges. (Thorat and Sabharwal,2014)

Ansari and Khan (2018) conducted a study on the role of education and skill development in promoting employment in India. The study analyses the current state of education regarding skill development and provides suggestions for

improvement. The study found that skill development is crucial for India from both socio-economic and demographic perspectives. It is a crucial tool for reducing poverty, enhancing competitiveness and employability, and fostering self-entrepreneurship among young people. The study also found that India needs to increase its investment in education and youth training. Should balance the investment between traditional education and training focused on academic knowledge and vocational training focused on skills relevant to the workforce.

Radhakrishnan et al. (2018) reported that a lack of awareness of different educational schemes among SC communities hinders their effectiveness. Despite progress in literacy rates and higher education enrolment among SCs, the increase in the Gross Enrolment Ratio has been slow. Land ownership initiatives and education are identified as crucial avenues for improving the socio-economic status of SCs. The studies emphasise the need for comprehensive efforts to eliminate educational disparities, increase awareness of available facilities, and empower SCs to enhance their socioeconomic conditions.

In India, much research has been done on the education status of and problems faced by Scheduled Castes (SCs), which have highlighted several barriers to educational attainment and stressed that focused interventions are critical. (Dodamani & Natikar, 2023; Radhakrishnan et al., 2018).

The study discusses diversity in the SC higher education system while pointing out that growth is taking place in terms of access, but significant caste-based discrimination persists, thus necessitating comprehensive policy reforms compounded with increased funding. (Kumar 2021)

Socioeconomic empowerment of SCs is complex, involving intersections of caste dynamics, wealth distribution, and access to services (Dodamani & Natikar, 2023).

The study on the need to bridge the skill gap between engineering and management graduates in Andhra Pradesh. She found that the current education system is not adequately preparing students for the workforce. She also found that the government has taken some initiatives to address this issue, but more needs to be done. The study found that soft skills are the most critical in the current job market, especially in technology. Soft skills are the ability to communicate effectively, work well with others, and be adaptable to change. The study found that these skills are not adequately taught in the classroom and that students need more opportunities to develop them. The study concluded that the government needs to take a more comprehensive approach to skill development. It includes increasing investment in education, reforming the curriculum, and providing more opportunities for students to develop soft skills. (Padmini,2012)

A study on Bridging the skills gap through vocational education. The study found that skills supply gaps meet industry demand. The study found that the significance of vocational education to improving the employability skills of the youth. (Gill,2015)

A major transformation of the Vocational education system is compulsory to provide employment opportunities. A new pedagogy-driven curriculum needs to be tailored to prepare the labour force for the international market. (Balasubramaniam,2015)

The vocational education system in India is reported to include Industrial Training Institutes, Industrial Training Centres, Polytechnic Institutes, the University Grants Commission, the National Institute of Open Schooling, and other informal-sector training agencies. The poor standard of mainstream education, inadequate access to and capacity of existing VET, lack of focus on the skills required for the current job market, and a poor enabling environment are the sector's chief challenges. (Pradeep Kumar,2015)

The study entitled Improving Skill Development and Employability Potential through Higher Education, Research and Innovations in India to study policies framed for skill development and identify the gap between the government and private programmes, discuss on the current scenario on skill development programmes, vocational education and women, private and public sources of skill development, and initiatives under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. The study findings have concluded that the private sector plays a major role in overcoming the gaps in Government policies. (Pand,2016)

The study examined the relationship between skill training for existing employees and their performance and productivity in selected Jordanian Private-Sector transportation companies in the Southern region of Jordan. He mentioned that training will help employees prepare for new roles and opportunities, meet future challenges of global competition, and meet the demands of the organisation. (Mohammed Raja Abulraheem Salah, 2016)

The study on the importance of skill development in India. They found that skill development is critical for achieving faster, sustainable, and inclusive growth on the one hand, and for providing decent employment opportunities to the growing young population on the other. The study found that India has a demographic window of opportunity that could make it the world's skill capital. India has a large and young population, and if it can properly train this population, it will be able to meet the demand for technically trained manpower not only for its growing economy but also for the ageing advanced economies of the world. (Maruthi Prasad and Prasad,2017)

The study examined the relevance of skill development in the Indian context. The study found that skills and knowledge are the driving forces of economic growth and development in any country. They have become even more important in the context of globalisation and technological change. Vocational education and industrial training can create and nurture a knowledge-enhancing and skill-development system. Skill development is a key factor in increased employability and productivity, which in turn leads to economic growth. It is also an aid to individual economic achievements as well as national development. India has the lowest proportion of trained youth in the world. 80% of entrants to the workforce have no opportunity for skill training and development. This is a major challenge for India's economic development (Parminder Kaur 2016)

A study on the impact of the Skill India training program among the youth. They found that most of the Indian-educated youth face serious unemployment problems due to a lack of skills and technical knowledge. The current state of education, skills development, and employment for Indian youth is not adequate. Most youth are unaware of modern technologies that can help develop and grow the country. The study found that the Skill India training program is a powerful tool for developing creative skills and providing technical training to the country's young population. It can motivate the youth to develop qualities of self-development and self-entrepreneurship through training in several activities and by providing financial assistance through loans at a lower interest rate. The main aim of the study was to identify the hurdles faced by the youth to achieve the Skill India development program on all fronts. (Ankul Pandey and Nema, 2017)

The study found that employability skills are essential to improve the standard of living. The study further found that technical skills, problem-solving, teamwork, interpersonal communication, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills are important skill sets required for Vocational Education and Training (VET) graduates. (Deepak 2022)

The Government planning documents and working group reviews indicate that SCDD schemes have broadened access to vocational training for SC communities, and institutional reforms have been recommended to strengthen program delivery, monitoring, and alignment with local labour markets. The Working Group report reviews past plan periods and recommends institutional revamping, better local implementation of SCSP projects, and stronger industry linkages. Curricula sometimes lag behind current industry requirements; this can reduce placement rates unless supplemented by apprenticeships or employer partnerships. The study concluded that the government needs to take a more comprehensive approach to skill development. This includes increasing investment in education and vocational training, reforming school and college curricula, and improving the quality of industrial training. The government also needs to ensure that its skill development initiatives are well coordinated and reach the most disadvantaged segments of the population. (State Planning Board, Government of Kerala,2023).

There are only a few studies examining whether skill development schemes have truly impacted the employment of marginalised communities. Although numerous studies focus on education and skill development, the crucial question remains whether these initiatives actually lead to employment. This issue is important today, as the government invests heavily in education and skill development for the marginalised. However, there has been little evaluation of whether these schemes are effectively achieving their intended goals.

RESEARCH GAP

There are only a few studies examining whether skill development schemes have truly impacted the employment of marginalised communities. Although numerous studies focus on education and skill development, the crucial question remains whether these initiatives actually lead to employment. This issue is particularly important today, as the government invests heavily in education and skill development for the marginalised. However, there has been little evaluation of whether these schemes are effectively achieving their intended goals.

DATA & METHODS

The research uses primary data to collect information about how spending on education and skill development affects the employment status of marginalised communities in Kerala. The population for this study includes beneficiaries of educational and skill schemes belonging to the Scheduled Caste (SC) communities in Kerala, totalling 3,039,573 individuals.

To ensure a representative sample, districts with the highest, medium, and lowest numbers of scheduled caste population were selected. These districts are Wayanad, Palakkad, and Ernakulam, with beneficiary populations of 32578, 403,833, and 268411, respectively. Beneficiaries from these districts were identified using a simple random sampling technique. The sample was collected from each of these districts in proportions of 5%, 57%, and 38%, reflecting the SC population proportions in each district relative to the state's total SC population.

The distribution of the sample is as follows:

- Ernakulam: total SC population of 268411, and approximately 152 participants' samples were collected.
- Palakkad: total SC population of 403,833, and approximately 229 participants' samples were collected.
- Wayanad: total SC population of 32578, and approximately 19 participant samples were collected.

The urban-rural division is done based on the proportion of urban and rural populations of these districts.

This stratified sampling approach ensures that the sample is proportionally representative of the SC population across districts and domicile categories, thereby enhancing the reliability and generalizability of the study's findings. Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to capture detailed information from the beneficiaries regarding their experiences and opinions about the educational and skill schemes. This methodology ensures that the sample is representative of the diverse demographic and geographic distribution of SC communities in Kerala, providing a robust basis for analysing the effectiveness and reach of educational schemes.400 samples were collected, including 103 respondents who had completed either PETC or ITI training programs.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis is conducted in three ways. The First Chi-square test is conducted to examine the association between attending a skills course and respondents' current employment status. The hypotheses formulated for this analysis were as follows:

- Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant association between attending a skill course and being currently employed.

- Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is a significant association between attending a skill course and being currently employed.

Table 1: Skill Course V/S Currently Employed

Skill Course		Currently Employed		Total
		Yes	No	
	PETC	79	24	103
	ITI	261	36	297
Total		340	60	400

Source: Field survey

Table 2 shows a skill course and the current employment status among the respondents.

Table 2

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.497[a]	1	.006		
Continuity Correction[b]	6.646	1	.010		
Likelihood Ratio	6.949	1	.008		
Fisher's Exact Test				.010	.006
Linear-by-Linear Association	7.478	1	.006		
N of Valid Cases	400				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 15.45.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

The results of the Chi-square test are presented in the Table. The Pearson Chi-Square value was 7.497 with 1 degree of freedom, and the associated p-value was 0.006, which is less than the 0.05 significance level. This indicates a statistically significant association between attending a skill course and current employment status. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Furthermore, other tests in the output, such as the Continuity Correction ($p = 0.010$), Likelihood Ratio ($p = 0.008$), and Fisher's Exact Test ($p = 0.010$), also support this finding of a significant relationship. The test assumptions are satisfied as no cell had an expected count less than 5, confirming the validity of the Chi-square results. Among those who attended a skill course, 79 respondents were employed, and 24 were not, for an employment rate of 76.6%. On the other hand, among those who did not attend a skill course, 261 were employed, and 36 were not, resulting in an employment rate of 87.9%.

Although the Chi-square test shows a significant association, the direction of the relationship is noteworthy. Contrary to expectations, individuals who did not attend a skills course had a slightly higher employment rate than those who did. This suggests that while participation in a skill course and employment status are related, attending such a course does not necessarily increase the likelihood of employment. Factors such as the type and relevance of the training, job market demand, and individual background characteristics may influence these outcomes.

The second Chi-square test is conducted to examine the association between participation in SCDD skill training courses and obtaining a job that matches one's education or skills. The hypotheses are described below.

- Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant association between participation in SCDD skill training courses and getting a job according to one's education/skills.
- Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is a significant association between participation in SCDD skill training courses and getting a job according to one's education/skills.

Table III shows the skill training courses offered by SCDD and whether the job aligns with the education and skills received.

Table 3: Skill training courses of SCDD and a job according to the education/skills received

Skill training courses by SCDD		Whether you got the job according to your education/skill received 1. yes 2. no		Total
		Yes	No	
	Yes	52	26	78
	No	98	164	262
Total		150	190	340

Source: Field survey

The following table shows the result of the Chi-Square Test.

Table 4

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	21.677[a]	1	.000		
Continuity Correction	20.491	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	21.753	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	21.613	1	.000		
N of Valid Cases	340				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 34.98.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Chi-Square Test Results:

- Pearson Chi-Square (χ^2) = 21.677, df = 1, p = 0.000 (< 0.05)
- Cramer's V = 0.252, indicating a weak-to-moderate strength of association.
- The assumption of minimum expected cell count was satisfied (minimum = 34.98).

Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means there is a statistically significant association between participation in SCDD skill training courses and obtaining a job that matches one's education or skills.

Crosstab Findings were the following

- Among those who attended training, 53 of 79 (67%) were employed in jobs that matched their education/skills, while 26 (33%) were not.
- Among those who did not attend training, 98 out of 262 (37%) were employed in relevant jobs, while 164 (63%) were not.

The results clearly show that individuals who participated in SCDD skill training courses were more likely to secure jobs aligned with their education and skills (67%) compared to those who did not receive training (37%). Although the strength of association (Cramer's V = 0.252) is moderate, the relationship is statistically significant and practically meaningful**.**

The third chi-square test was conducted to examine whether the type of training program, specifically, PETC (Pre-Examination Training Centre) and ITI (Industrial Training Institute), has a significant association with respondents' ability to secure jobs that match their skills and educational background. To determine this, a Chi-Square Test of Independence was conducted using data from 78 respondents who had completed either a PETC or an ITI training program. The hypothesis of the study is as follows:

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant association between the type of training program and securing a job relevant to the respondents' education or training.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is a significant association between the type of training program and securing a job relevant to the respondents' education or training

Table 5: Type of Training and Job according to Skill

Type of Training	**Job According to Skill**		
PETC/ITI	**Yes**	**No**	**Total**
PETC	35	6	41
ITI	17	20	37
Total	52	26	78

Source: Field Survey

Table 6: The following table shows the result of the Chi-Square Test

Chi-Square Tests					
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	13.600[a]	1	.000		
Continuity Correction	11.884	1	.001		
Likelihood Ratio	14.109	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	13.426	1	.000		
N of Valid Cases	78				
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 12.33.					
b. Computed only for a 2x2 table					

Source: Field Survey

The Pearson Chi-Square value (χ^2 = 13.600, p = 0.000) indicates that the relationship between training type and job relevance is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, confirming that the type of training program significantly influences whether respondents obtain jobs matching their skills and education.

The effect size, measured by Cramer's V (0.418), indicates a moderate association between the two variables. This indicates that while other factors may also contribute to employment outcomes, the type of training program plays an important and meaningful role. The results reveal a significant relationship between training type and employment relevance. The higher job-placement success rate of PETC graduates suggests that. PETC programs may be better structured, more industry-oriented, or provide greater practical skill exposure than ITI programs. This finding highlights the importance of curriculum design, industry linkage, and practical exposure in vocational and technical training programs. Policymakers and training institutions may consider these insights when revising training modules to enhance employability outcomes.

4. CONCLUSION

The study's findings provide strong evidence that participation in SCDD skill training courses has a significant positive impact on employment outcomes. The Chi-square analysis revealed a statistically significant association between attending training and securing jobs that match one's education or skills.

Participants who were carrying out training found relevant employment compared to those who did not participate. Although the strength of association, indicated by Cramer's V, was weak-to-moderate, the practical implications are noteworthy. This suggests that SCDD skill training programs play a crucial role in improving employability and bridging the gap between education and employment. By equipping participants with relevant skills, these programs enhance job readiness and increase the likelihood of obtaining employment aligned with their education or skills. Strengthening and expanding such training could improve the efficiency of skill-based employment and reduce job skill mismatches in the labour market. The Chi-square analysis confirms that there is a moderate and statistically significant association between the type of training program and job relevance. The results clearly show that PETC-trained individuals are more likely to secure jobs in line with their training than ITI-trained individuals, because of poor academic updates and programmes that may lack the latest technological advancements in relation to the job market. Hence, improving the structure and content of ITI training programs could be an important step toward enhancing employment relevance and effectiveness, and the study also provides strong evidence that participation in SCDD skill training courses has a significant positive impact on employment outcomes.

Policy Implications

Improving skill training programs requires a comprehensive policy approach that aligns training with industry demands and promotes employability. Regularly updated training curricula in institutions such as PETCs and ITIs, in collaboration with employers and sector skill councils, to ensure job relevance. Stronger linkages between training institutes and local industries are essential to facilitate internships, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training, enabling practical exposure and co-designed modules that enhance employability. Integrating soft skills such as communication, problem-solving, and digital literacy into training programs can further improve trainees' job readiness, confidence, and adaptability. Establishing dedicated placement cells and offering career guidance within institutions will help students secure employment that matches their skills and aspirations. Effective monitoring and evaluation systems should be introduced to track graduates' employment outcomes and gather feedback on the relevance of training, enabling continuous improvement through data-driven decision-making. Ensuring inclusive access is equally vital, with targeted support such as scholarships, outreach programs, and flexible delivery models to benefit women, rural youth, and marginalised groups. Finally, fostering a culture of lifelong learning through short-term reskilling and upskilling initiatives in emerging fields such as the green economy and digital technologies will prepare the workforce for dynamic labour-market needs and sustain employability in the long term.

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About the corresponding author

Indhu T R is a Research Scholar in the Department of Social Sciences at the Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation (GIFT), affiliated to Cochin University of Science and Technology, Thiruvananthapuram, India. Her academic interests focus on social policy, development studies, and socio-economic issues in the Indian context.