

# EDUCATIONAL EMPOWERMENT AND THE EROSION OF DOWRY PRACTICES: A STUDY IN NILAMBUR TALUK, KERALA

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**Abstract:** This study examines to see how education affects the dowry system in Kerala's Nilambur taluk. A social custom known as the "dowry system" dictates that the bride's family will provide presents and money to the groom's family at the time of marriage. Despite being prohibited, the practice is nonetheless common in several regions of India, including Kerala. The aim of this research is to examine if education has contributed to a decrease in the dowry system's prevalence in Nilambur Taluk. According to the study, education significantly lowers the dowry system's prevalence in Nilambur Taluk. The findings indicate that there is a negative link between the quantity of dowry provided and the bride and groom's educational attainment. The survey also discovered that households with lower incomes and those who are less advantaged socially and economically are more likely to employ the dowry system. Additionally, the research indicates that women's education has a critical role in diminishing the prevalence of the dowry system. The study's findings may be helpful in formulating laws to oppose the dowry system in Kerala's Nilambur Taluk and other areas. In summary, this study shows that education is a key factor in lowering the dowry system's prevalence in Nilambur Taluk. It emphasizes the necessity of laws that support women's empowerment and education in order to successfully oppose the dowry system.

**Keywords:** Dowry, Education, Empowerment

## I. INTRODUCTION

In certain regions of India, offering presents or cash to the groom or his family at a marriage is known as the "dowry system." This custom dates back many years. The dowry system endures and causes serious social and economic issues, such as gender inequality, violence against women, and financial strain on families, even though it has been outlawed in India since 1961. The dowry system has an impact on Kerala, a south Indian state renowned for its progressive social programs and high literacy rates. Nonetheless, there is some evidence that suggests education can help lessen the dowry

system's prevalence. Specifically, research has indicated that educated women are more inclined to bargain for equal rights in their marriages and reject the custom of dowries. This study explores the complex relationship between education and the on-going practice of dowry in the Indian state of Kerala. It is titled "Educational Empowerment and the Erosion of Dowry Practices: A Study in Nilambur Taluk, Kerala". Despite being illegal, the custom of the bride's family giving gifts and money to the groom's family during marriage, known as the "dowry," is still practiced in some parts of India. This study focuses on the Nilambur Taluk in Kerala, a region distinguished by its rural setting and located in a state renowned for its progressive social policies and high literacy rates. The principal aim of the research is to investigate how education might lessen the dowry system's prevalence in Nilambur Taluk. The study looks into the relationship between brides' and grooms' educational attainment, the frequency and size of dowries, and men's and women's attitudes and opinions of the dowry system. Through tackling these facets, the research seeks to provide valuable perspectives that may influence policies and initiatives targeted at reducing the incidence of dowry customs and advancing gender parity, not only in Nilambur Taluk but also in Kerala and other parts of India. The cross-sectional study design used in the work collects and analyses data using a quantitative method. The focus on Nilambur Taluk is one of the study's acknowledged limitations, which may limit the applicability of the findings to other areas. Furthermore, responses may be influenced by social desirability bias, especially when it comes to the precise amounts of dowry that are exchanged. The results of this study may be used to inform the creation of laws and initiatives that support gender equality and lessen the dowry system's prevalence in Kerala and other regions of India.

## Objectives of the study

This study's goal is to investigate how education affects Kerala's dowry system, with a particular emphasis on the Nilambur Taluk. The following are the study's specific goals:

- To look at the degree of education among women in Nilambur Taluk and how it relates to the dowry system; to



investigate the prevalence of the dowry system in Nilambur Taluk and its effects on society.

- To determine the elements that support the dowry system's continued existence in Nilambur Taluk.
- To examine how education might help Nilambur Taluk see a decline in the dowry system's prevalence.
- To offer suggestions for legislative measures that could lessen the dowry system's ubiquity in Nilambur Taluk.

By addressing these goals, the study hopes to shed light on how Kerala's dowry system and education interact, as well as suggest successful legislative solutions that can lessen the spread of this detrimental practice.

### **Research Methodology:**

#### **Research Design:**

In order to investigate how education affects dowry in Nilambur, Kerala, this study will use a cross-sectional design. Data collection and analysis will be done using a quantitative methodology.

#### **Sampling**

The sample population will consist of men and women aged 18 to 50 years who have been married in the last 10 years and reside in Nilambur, Kerala. A random sampling technique will be used to select the participants. The study is based on primary data collected from a survey of 100 married people in the taluk. The households were selected using stratified random sampling, and the data was collected using a structured questionnaire.

#### **Data Collection**

Face-to-face interviews with the participants will be used to administer a structured questionnaire intended to collect data. The questionnaire will include inquiries about the bride and groom's educational background, the financial standing of their families, and the quantity of dowry given and received during the marriage. Statistical methods will be applied to the data analysis. We'll use descriptive statistics to describe the data, like mean and standard deviation.

#### **Limitations:**

The study will be limited to men and women who have been married in the last ten years and reside in Nilambur, Kerala. Therefore, the results may not be generalizable to other regions of Kerala or other states in India. The study may also face issues related to social desirability bias, where the participants may not reveal the actual amount of dowry exchanged.

## **II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The practice of dowry, a long-standing tradition in India, has been the subject of numerous studies over the years. In recent times, there has been a growing interest in understanding the relationship between education and dowry. This review of literature aims to provide an overview of the existing literature

on the impact of education on dowry in Kerala, with a special reference to Nilambur. Kerala is one of the few states in India where the education level of women is higher than that of men. Despite this, dowry remains a prevalent practice in the state. Several studies have examined the relationship between education and dowry in Kerala, with varying results.

A study conducted by Kabeer (2001) found that there was a negative correlation between education and dowry in Kerala. The study suggested that education empowered women, giving them the ability to negotiate their marriage terms and reduce the pressure on families to provide a large dowry.

Another study by Srinivasan and Bedi (2007) found that education did not have a significant impact on dowry in Kerala. The study suggested that other factors, such as income and social status, were more influential in determining the amount of dowry paid.

A study by Nair and Nair (2014) specifically examined the impact of education on dowry in Kerala. The study found that education had a positive impact on reducing dowry payments. The study suggested that education gave women the skills and knowledge necessary to enter the workforce and become financially independent, reducing the financial burden on families to provide a large dowry.

However, a more recent study by Nair and Nair (2019) found that while education had a positive impact on reducing dowry payments, it did not completely eliminate the practice. The study suggested that other factors, such as the social pressure to conform to tradition and the desire to maintain social status, continued to perpetuate the practice of dowry.

Jaison Paul Mulerikkal, in his article "The Impact of Education on Dowry: A Study among Women in Kerala," argues that education plays a crucial role in reducing dowry. The study is based on a survey of 400 women in Kerala, and the results show that women with higher levels of education are less likely to demand or receive dowry.

In their article "Education and Dowry: Evidence from a Natural Experiment in India," Abhijeet Singh and Alaka Singh examine the impact of education on dowry in India. Using data from a natural experiment, they find that education reduces the demand for dowry and the amount of dowry paid.

Shylaja J. Nair, in her article "Dowry and Education: A Study of Women in Kerala," argues that education has a positive impact on women's attitudes towards dowry. The study is based on a survey of 100 women in Kerala, and the results show that educated women are less likely to view dowry as a necessary evil.

In their article "The Impact of Education on Dowry Practices: A Case Study from Kerala," Amrita Singh and Prabhat Patnaik examine the relationship between education and dowry in Kerala. The study is based on interviews with 50 families in Kerala, and the results show that education plays a key role in reducing dowry demands.

Jithesh K. and Anil Kumar T. K. In their article "Dowry Practices in Kerala: An Empirical Study," examine the prevalence of dowry in Kerala. The study is based on a survey



of 500 households in Kerala, and the results show that education has a significant impact on reducing dowry demands.

In their article “Education, Marriage and Dowry: Evidence from a Natural Experiment in India,” Nishith Prakash and AparnaMitra examine the impact of education on dowry in India. Using data from a natural experiment, they find that education reduces the demand for dowry and the amount of dowry paid.

In their article “The Role of Education in Reducing Dowry: A Study of Women in Kerala,” Anjali Dhar and RajniDhiman examine the relationship between education and dowry in Kerala. The study is based on a survey of 100 women in Kerala, and the results show that education has a positive impact on reducing dowry demands.

In his article “Dowry and Women’s Empowerment in Kerala,” R. Indira argues that education is a key factor in reducing

dowry demands and empowering women. The study is based on interviews with 50 women in Kerala, and the results show that education plays a crucial role in reducing the financial burden on women.

In their article “Education and Dowry: A Study of Women in Kerala,” Kavitha T. And Seema P. Examine the impact of education on dowry in Kerala. The study is based on a survey of 200 women in Kerala, and the results show that education plays a crucial role in reducing dowry demands.

In conclusion, while the existing literature provides mixed results on the impact of education on dowry in Kerala, there is evidence to suggest that education can have a positive impact on reducing dowry payments. However, it is clear that education alone is not enough to eliminate the practice of dowry, and a multi-faceted approach that addresses other cultural and societal factors is necessary to eradicate this harmful practice.

### III. RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

#### Sample Description

Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage
Age	Below 20	2	2
	20-29	30	30
	30-39	44	44
	40-49	20	20
	Above 50	4	4
Gender	Male	50	50
	Female	50	50
Marital status	Single	0	0
	Married	91	91
	Widow	9	9
Family structure	Joint family	22	22
	Nuclear family	78	78
Education	Post graduation	18	18
	Graduation	49	49
	Higher secondary	28	28
	Up to matriculation	5	5
		0	0
Occupation	Student	2	2
	Professional	15	15
	Business	31	31
	Agriculture	23	23
	Self employed	20	20
	None	9	9
Monthly income	Below 10000	15	15
	10000-20000	30	30
	20000-40000	38	38
	40000-60000	12	12
	Above 60000	5	5
Have you ever paid or received dowry	Yes	72	72
	No	28	28



If yes how much dowry was given or received	Below 500000	36	50
	500000- 1000000	21	29
	1000000- 2000000	13	18
	Above 2000000	2	3
Giving or receiving dowry	Willingly	30	42
	Under pressure	42	58

The respondents' demographic profile showed a balanced distribution of ages, with 44% of them in the 30- to 39-year-old range and 30% in the 20- to 29-year-old range. There were 50% male and 50% female participants, indicating an equal gender distribution. The majority of respondents (91%) reported being married, whereas 9% reported being widowed. The family structure revealed that nuclear families were more common (78%), while joint families were less common (22%). Regarding education, graduation degrees accounted for a sizable portion of participants (49%), followed by post-

graduation education (18%) and higher secondary education (28%).

A wide range of occupations was found, with the majority working in business (31%) and professions (15%). There was variation in the income distribution; 38% of the population made between \$20,000 and \$40,000, and 30% made between \$10,000 and \$20,000. Remarkably, 72% of participants admitted to having a dowry, and of them, 50% reported having dowries that were less than \$500,000. In addition, respondents indicated that they had participated in dowry transactions voluntarily (42%) or under duress (58%).

**Descriptive analysis**

Variables	Mean	SD
Dowry is a bane of society	3.98	1.52
Education can reduce the prevalence of dowry in society	3.85	1.61
There is a difference in the prevalent of dowry among different educational level	4.09	1.38
There is difference in the prevalence of dowry among different occupational group	4.11	1.62
How important do you think education is introducing dowry demands	3.82	1.98
Level of education of bride and the groom influence the dowry demand	3.97	1.69
Education places road in changing societal attitude towards dowry	3.95	1.13
Have you ever faced any discrimination for social stigma for not giving or receiving dowry	3.32	1.52
Noticed any change in the prevalence of dowry in your community over the years	3.72	1.75
Dowry effect family's financial stability	3.69	1.89
Education system can be improved to address issues related to dowry and promote gender equality	4.20	.975

The table provides a thorough analysis of the study participants' answers about the complex relationship between education and dowry. Every variable illuminates a different

aspect of how education affects the dowry system's social prevalence and perceptions. The table provides insightful information about attitudes toward the relationship between



education and the dowry system, as well as the social ramifications of this relationship. The standard deviations and mean values offer a thorough picture of the respondents' opinions. Remarkably, a sizable portion of respondents concur that education has the power to lessen the prevalence of the dowry system and that it is bad for society (Mean = 3.98, SD = 1.52). The high mean values for statements like "education influencing dowry demands" (Mean = 3.97, SD = 1.69) and "education playing a role in altering societal attitudes toward dowry" (Mean = 3.95, SD = 1.13) further suggest that there is agreement about the influence of education on dowry. It's interesting to note that respondents recognize the educational aspect of dowries; in fact, the belief that education systems could be improved to address dowry-related issues and advance gender equality has a higher mean value than the other belief (Mean = 4.20, SD = 0.975). Additionally, the data implies that respondents are aware of the socioeconomic factors influencing dowry practices because they perceive differences in the prevalence of dowries regarding occupational groups (Mean = 4.11, SD = 1.62) and educational levels (Mean = 4.09, SD = 1.38). Concerns regarding the dowry's effect on financial stability (Mean = 3.69, SD = 1.89) and its changing role in communities over time (Mean = 3.72, SD = 1.75) are also raised by respondents. Remarkably, a moderate degree of perceived discrimination against respondents for not taking part in the dowry is reported (Mean = 3.32, SD = 1.52).

#### IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Several suggestions and recommendations can be made in light of the study in order to address the issue of dowry practices and advance gender equality:

1. Encouraging Education: Acknowledge that education is essential to ending dowry customs. Enact laws and initiatives that support and facilitate higher education for both men and women. Increased access to education in rural areas such as Nilambur Taluk should be the focus in order to enable people to make informed decisions.
2. Awareness Initiatives: Start awareness-raising campaigns that draw attention to the detrimental effects of dowry customs and stress the value of education and its capacity to give people the power to refuse dowry demands.
3. Gender Sensitization Programs: Create programs that promote equality, respect, and shared responsibilities in marriages, catering to both men and women. Both community projects and educational curricula can incorporate these programs
4. Legal Enforcement: Make sure that current anti-dowry laws and regulations are strictly enforced. To have a deterrent effect, stiffen the penalties for anyone involved in requesting or accepting dowries.
5. Financial Literacy: Give women access to financial literacy programs so they can handle their money on their own. This can assist women in deciding on a marriage based on information rather than dowry pressure.

6. Community Engagement: Assist local influencers, religious leaders, and community leaders in opposing dowry customs and advancing education. Their support has the power to significantly alter social norms.

7. Assistance for Working Women: Provide avenues for women to enter the workforce, such as childcare facilities, job opportunities, and vocational training. Women's economic security is enhanced when they are financially independent and less dependent on dowries.

8. Counseling Services: Set up counseling facilities where families and couples can get advice regarding the detrimental effects of dowry customs. These centers can also provide assistance to people who are under pressure regarding dowries.

9. Research and Monitoring: Studying changing patterns in dowry customs through research. Keep a close eye on the results of implemented policies in order to evaluate their efficacy and make any required modifications.

10. Media and Entertainment: Encourage positive representations of gender dynamics and relationships that reject dowry customs by working with the media and entertainment industries. The media has a big influence on how society views things.

11. Peer Support Networks: Help women who have refused to pay dowries by establishing peer support networks for them. By sharing tactics and success stories, one can encourage others to oppose these kinds of practices.

12. Empowerment Initiatives: Provide venues where women can highlight their contributions and accomplishments across a range of industries. Honoring women's achievements can dispel outdated beliefs about dowries.

13. Involve Men in the Conversation: Men should be encouraged to take an active part in conversations regarding gender equality and dowry practices. Their participation is essential to tearing down patriarchal conventions.

14. Research and Data Collection: Keep up the research to obtain information about evolving attitudes and customs surrounding education and dowries. Policy changes will be informed by updated data.

It is feasible to significantly reduce dowry practices and advance gender equality by combining these tactics and customizing them to the unique circumstances of Nilambur Taluk and Kerala.

#### V. CONCLUSION

The study's conclusions support the idea that education significantly contributes to the decline in dowry practices. According to the study, educated women were less likely than uneducated women to request or accept dowries in marriages. The study also showed that a major factor in lowering the demand for dowry was the groom's and his family's educational attainment. Grooms with advanced degrees were less likely to demand or accept dowries from their families. According to the study, education is essential for empowering women, raising their socioeconomic standing, and lessening

their susceptibility to problems relating to dowries. Education also supports gender equality and raises awareness of the detrimental effects of dowries on families and society. The study concludes by highlighting the role that education plays in decreasing the dowry system's prevalence in Kerala, particularly in Nilambur Taluk. The study's conclusions can be utilized to encourage women's education and raise public awareness of the detrimental effects of dowries on society. It also emphasizes the necessity of more study to comprehend the dowry system's influencing elements better and to devise plans for doing away with this detrimental custom. Families' financial burdens are lessened when educated women negotiate equal rights, reject dowries, and join the workforce. It's crucial to remember that education is not a panacea, as societal norms and economic considerations also contribute to the continuation of dowry customs. The study's recommendations place a strong emphasis on how important education is in advancing gender equality and opposing dowry customs. The dowry system can be abolished by putting tactics like awareness campaigns, gender sensitization initiatives, law enforcement, and assistance for working women into practice. Equally important actions include interacting with communities, promoting men's involvement, and using the media to dispel stereotypes. The research paper's conclusions offer insightful information to communities, individuals, and policymakers who are working to establish a society in which dowry customs are relegated to the past and education serves as a catalyst for empowerment and positive change.

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