



Research Paper

Quality Of Life of Kadar Tribes in Thrissur District

¹VINEETHA K M and ²Dr. K. PARTHASARATHY

¹Research Scholar, PG & Research Department of Social Work, Sree Saraswathi Thyagaraja College (Autonomous), Pollachi

²Associate Professor, PG & Research Department of Social Work, Sree Saraswathi Thyagaraja College (Autonomous), Pollachi

Abstract

The quality of life of the Kadar Tribe has been significantly impacted by environmental degradation, displacement, and limited access to essential services, disrupting their traditionally self-reliant lifestyle. Nevertheless, initiatives such as eco-tourism and honey cooperatives that merge indigenous knowledge with modern opportunities provide a sense of optimism. Ensuring the community's resilience and well-being in the future requires an inclusive and sustainable strategy that safeguards their cultural heritage while improving access to education, healthcare, and livelihood opportunities. This study adopted a descriptive, cross-sectional research design to evaluate the quality of life among Kadar tribes in Thrissur, Kerala. A purposive sampling method was used to select 326 individuals across various settlements, ensuring diversity in terms of age, gender, and socio-economic background. The data were analyzed using tools like SPSS and Excel, applying descriptive statistics along with Z-test, Chi-square, and ANOVA to explore relationships between socio-demographic factors and quality of life. Findings indicated that a majority of the Kadar population experiences a low quality of life, particularly in areas such as physical health, mental well-being, and social relationships. Contributing challenges include inadequate healthcare access, economic instability, social marginalization, and restricted access to education and employment. Although some individuals report better conditions, the overall picture highlights a need for focused interventions in healthcare, education, and community support systems. The analysis also uncovered notable differences in quality-of-life perceptions based on gender, socio-economic status, and educational attainment. Gender-based disparities were evident, as were strong links between socio-economic and educational factors and overall well-being. To address these issues, the researcher recommends promoting sustainable livelihood opportunities—such as eco-tourism and forest-based industries—facilitating easier access to government welfare programs related to housing, food, and employment, and empowering women and youth through greater involvement in community development initiatives.

Key words: Quality of Life, Sustainable, Indigenous, Livelihood. Eco-Tourism

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I. INTRODUCTION

The quality of life of the Kadar tribe is shaped by a complex interplay of historical, environmental, social and economic factors. Traditionally, the Kadars lived in harmony with nature, sustaining themselves through forest-based activities such as hunting, gathering and fishing (Debnath et al. 2024). This symbiotic relationship with the Western Ghats not only provided them with nutritious food, herbal medicine and eco-friendly shelter but also fostered a deep cultural and spiritual connection to the land. Their minimalistic lifestyle, rooted in sustainability and self-sufficiency, ensured a degree of health and resilience even in isolated conditions (SenthilKumar et al. 2024). However, this equilibrium has been significantly disrupted in recent decades due to deforestation, environmental degradation and restrictive forest policies that limit access to their ancestral lands. Forced displacement and exposure to mainstream economic systems have left many Kadars vulnerable, pushing them into unstable and low-paying jobs, thereby deepening poverty and economic insecurity (Bagavandas, 2021 and Nazii, Arul Actovin & Hilalulla 2021). Access to basic amenities such as healthcare, education, clean water and sanitation remains limited, particularly in remote settlements, leading to issues such as malnutrition, preventable diseases and low literacy rates (Vinod, Abraham & Narayanan 2024). Moreover, cultural alienation in formal education systems and healthcare settings exacerbates their marginalization. Despite these challenges,

various interventions by government and non-government organizations have aimed to uplift the community through tribal welfare schemes, sustainable livelihood initiatives and infrastructural improvements (Sukumar, Joseph & Alhalabi 2024). Projects like honey cooperatives and eco-tourism ventures not only provide income but also empower the Kadar people to leverage their traditional knowledge in modern contexts (Jana & Ghosh, 2021 and Khan, Khan & Ahmad 2019). Efforts to preserve their language, customs and identity further strengthen their social cohesion and cultural pride. Ultimately, improving the quality of life for the Kadar tribe requires an inclusive, holistic approach that respects their indigenous identity while providing equitable access to modern resources and opportunities, fostering a future where tradition and progress can coexist harmoniously (Joseph & Joseph, 2021). The present study was undertaken to assess the quality of life of the Kadar Tribes in Thrissur District, Kerala.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The current study utilized a descriptive and cross-sectional research design to examine the quality of life among the Kadar tribes in the Thrissur district of Kerala. The research was carried out in selected Kadar settlements within the district, which hosts a considerable population of this tribal community. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants from various settlements, resulting in a total sample size of 326 individuals. This sample ensured adequate representation across different age groups, gender and socio-economic statuses. Primary data was gathered through a structured interview schedule that included both closed and open-ended questions. The questionnaire was divided into three main sections: demographic and socio-economic details of the respondents and quality of life of scale. Interviews were conducted face-to-face in the local dialect, with the assistance of trained field staff and community facilitators. All ethical protocols were strictly observed, including obtaining informed consent and maintaining participant confidentiality. The data collected was systematically coded and analyzed using statistical software such as SPSS or Excel. Descriptive statistics, including means, percentages and frequencies, were used to present the data. To explore the associations between socio-demographic characteristics of the Kadar Tribes and overall quality of life, statistical tests such as the Z-test, Chi-square test and ANOVA were employed.

2.1 Objectives of the study

1. To find out the level of quality of life of Kadar Tribes.
2. To assess the influence of socio-demographic profile of Kadar Tribes towards the quality of life.

2.2 Hypotheses

1. There is a significant difference in the perception of quality of life between male and female respondents among the Kadar Tribes.
2. There is a significant association between the socio-economic status of the respondents and their perception towards the quality of life among the Kadar Tribes.
3. There is a significant variance among the perception of quality of life among the Kadar Tribe respondents across different educational qualification levels.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Perception towards the Quality of Life

Table No: 1
Respondents' perception towards Quality of Life

S. No.	Perception towards Quality of Life	No. of Respondents (N=326)			
		Low	%	High	%
1.	Physical Health	180	55.2	146	44.8
2.	Psychological	181	55.5	145	44.5
3.	Social Relationship	190	58.3	136	41.7
4.	Environment	216	66.3	110	33.7
5.	Overall level of quality of life	193	59.2	133	40.8

Table 1 illustrates that more than half of the Kadar Tribes reported a low level of quality of life across several domains. Specifically, 55.2% of respondents rated their physical health as low, 55.5% reported low psychological well-being and 58.3% felt their social relationships were of low quality. Additionally, 33.7% indicated low satisfaction with their environment. Despite these challenges, more than one-third of the tribes

reported a high level of quality of life in these areas. Overall, 59.2% of the Kadar Tribes had a low level of quality of life, while 40.8% had a high level. The Kadar Tribes face significant challenges related to physical, psychological and social well-being due to limited access to healthcare, economic struggles, social marginalization and restricted educational and employment opportunities. While some members experience a high quality of life, many others face barriers that reduce overall well-being. Improving healthcare access, promoting health education, strengthening social networks and implementing targeted support programs could significantly enhance their quality of life (Timba, 2023 and Kumar et al. 2022).

3.2 Hypotheses Testing

Table No: 2

‘Z’ Test between the gender of the respondents and perception towards the quality of life of Kadar Tribes

S. No	Gender	Sample size (n=326)	\bar{X}	S.D.	Statistical Inference
1.	Physical Health				Z = 1.410 0.159 > 0.05 Not Significant
	Male	92	21.6304	3.56330	
	Female	234	22.1795	2.99389	
2.	Psychological				Z = 2.446 0.015 < 0.05 Significant
	Male	92	17.8152	2.30589	
	Female	234	18.6068	2.74669	
3.	Social Relationships				Z = 2.783 0.005 < 0.01 Highly Significant
	Male	92	9.5217	1.87803	
	Female	234	9.3419	1.86295	
4.	Environment				Z = 0.314 0.754 > 0.05 Not Significant
	Male	92	23.6957	3.38302	
	Female	234	23.5684	3.26472	
5.	Overall level of quality of life				Z = 3.811 0.000 < 0.01 Highly Significant
	Male	92	79.3261	10.03413	
	Female	234	80.2692	9.21932	

H_a = There is a significant difference in the perception of quality of life between male and female respondents among the Kadar Tribes.

H_1 = There is no significant difference in the perception of quality of life between male and female respondents among the Kadar Tribes.

Table 2 indicates a significant gender-based difference among respondents in certain dimensions of quality of life, such as psychological and social relationships. However, no significant gender differences were found in other dimensions, including physical health and environment. Additionally, a significant difference was observed between gender and the overall level of quality of life ($Z=3.811$, $p<0.01$), suggesting that gender influences the overall quality of life of the Kadar Tribes. The mean score (80.26) reveals that female respondents report a higher level of quality of life compared to their male counterparts. Hence, research hypothesis accepted (Ahmed Munavvir & Yesuraja 2022).

Table No: 3

Association between the socio-economic status of the respondents and perception towards quality of life of Kadar Tribes

S. No	Socio-Economic Status	Quality of Life		Statistical Inference
		Low	High	
1.	Physical Health	n=180	n=146	$\chi^2 = 7.280$ df = 1 0.007 < 0.01 Highly Significant Contingency Co-efficient=0.148
	Poor	179	138	
	Middle Class	1	8	
2.	Psychological	n=181	n=145	$\chi^2 = 7.392$ df = 1 0.007 < 0.01 Highly Significant Contingency Co-efficient=0.149
	Poor	180	137	
	Middle Class	1	8	
3.	Social Relationships	n=190	n=136	$\chi^2 = 10.729$ df = 1 0.004 < 0.01 Highly Significant
	Poor	186	131	
	Middle Class	4	5	

				Contingency Co-efficient=0.278
4.	Environment	n=216	n=110	$\chi^2 = 14.474$ df = 1 0.000<0.01 Highly Significant Contingency Co-efficient=0.321
	Poor	211	106	
	Middle Class	5	4	
5.	Overall level of quality of life	n=193	n=133	$\chi^2 = 15.240$ df = 1 0.000<0.01 Highly Significant Contingency Co-efficient=0.334
	Poor	191	126	
	Middle Class	2	7	

H_a= There is a significant association between the socio-economic status of the respondents and their perception towards the quality of life among the Kadar Tribes.

H₂= There is no significant association between the socio-economic status of the respondents and their perception towards the quality of life among the Kadar Tribes.

The analysis of Table 3 shows a strong and significant link between the socio-economic status (SES) of the Kadar Tribes and their quality of life across physical health, psychological well-being, social relationships and environmental conditions. A chi-square value of 15.240 and p-value below 0.01 confirm this association, supporting the research hypothesis. Individuals with lower SES reported poorer quality of life, reflecting the impact of poverty and limited access to resources. While SES is a key factor, other elements like cultural practices, education and community support also play a role. The findings highlight the need for targeted policies to improve SES, such as poverty reduction, better healthcare, education access and basic services, to enhance overall well-being in the community (Sarojini et al. 2023).

Table No: 4
One way Analysis of Variance among educational qualification of the respondents and perception towards quality of life of Kadar Tribes

S. No	Source	SS	Df	MS	\bar{X}				Statistical Inference
1	Physical Health				G1=	21.5455	G4=	23.1212	F= 2.454 0.033<0.05 Significant
	Between Groups	120.539	5	24.108	G2=	21.6449	G5=	21.4286	
	Within Groups	3143.264	320	9.823	G3=	22.1061	G6=	23.3333	
2	Psychological				G1=	18.2597	G4=	18.6818	F= 0.570 0.723>0.05 Not Significant
	Between Groups	20.167	5	4.033	G2=	18.1776	G5=	18.5714	
	Within Groups	2262.903	320	7.072	G3=	18.4697	G6=	20.0000	
3	Social Relationships				G1=	9.1429	G4=	9.4242	F= 2.427 0.035<0.05 Significant
	Between Groups	41.348	5	8.270	G2=	9.2056	G5=	9.2857	
	Within Groups	1090.394	320	3.407	G3=	10.0303	G6=	8.0000	
4	Environment				G1=	23.2338	G4=	24.3636	F= 4.742 0.004<0.01 Highly Significant
	Between Groups	93.404	5	18.681	G2=	23.2056	G5=	23.1429	
	Within Groups	3432.550	320	10.727	G3=	23.8485	G6=	26.3333	
5	Overall level of quality of life								F= 2.159 0.058<0.05 Significant
	Between Groups	946.983	5	189.397	G1=	78.6104	G4=	81.6212	
	Within Groups	28078.014	320	87.744	G2=	78.6262	G5=	82.2857	
					G3=	81.1212	G6=	84.3333	

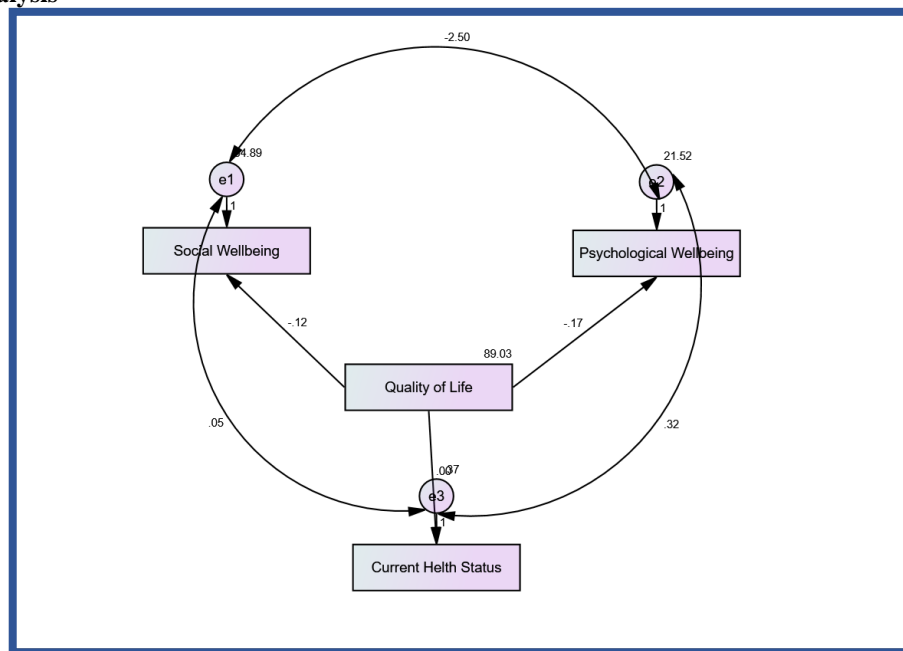
G1= No formal Education, **G2=** Primary level, **G3=** Secondary level, **G4=** Higher Secondary, **G5=** Undergraduate, **G6=** Professional Education

H_a= There is a significant variance among the perception of quality of life among the Kadar Tribe respondents across different educational qualification levels.

H₃=There is a significant variance among the perception of quality of life among the Kadar Tribe respondents across different educational qualification levels.

The findings from Table 4 conclude that educational qualification has a notable impact on the quality of life among the Kadar Tribe respondents. Although the overall statistical significance is marginal (F = 2.159, p = 0.058), the research hypothesis is accepted, indicating that education does influence quality of life. Higher educational attainment, particularly at the undergraduate level, is associated with better physical health, stronger social relationships and improved environmental conditions. These results emphasize the role of education in enhancing well-being and support the need for policies that promote educational opportunities within the Kadar Tribe to improve their overall quality of life (Chellappa, Indiran & Kumar, 2023).

3.3 path Analysis



Structural Equation Model for assessing the relationship between quality of life, social wellbeing, psychological wellbeing and current health status (SEM: Path Analysis)

Measurement of goodness fit

The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis investigates the psychological well-being, social well-being and quality of life of the Kadar Tribes in Thrissur District, Kerala. The SEM was conducted alongside an evaluation of goodness-of-fit measures to assess the model's adequacy. The results of the SEM show a Chi-square statistic of 85.789 with 1 degree of freedom ($P < 0.000$). The table below presents the selected model fit statistics, including RMSEA, GFI, NFI, CFI, IFI and TLI. As demonstrated, all the model fit statistics meet the recommended thresholds, indicating a strong model fit. Specifically, the GFI is 0.912 (greater than 0.90), NFI is 0.923 (greater than 0.90), CFI is 0.943 (greater than 0.90) and RMSEA is 0.0567 (less than 0.08). Therefore, the reported fit indices fall within the acceptable criteria for goodness-of-fit.

Parameter Estimates: Path coefficients in SEM

Regression Weights of the Variables Included in the Structural Equation Model

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Remarks
Social Wellbeing	←	Quality of Life	.430	.043	10.031	***	H1 Accepted
Psychological Wellbeing	←	Quality of Life	.095	.041	2.350	.019	H2 Accepted
Current Health Status	←	Quality of Life	.123	.010	12.462	***	H3 Accepted

*** Significant at 1% level ($p < 0.001$)

Standardized Regression Weights

Social Wellbeing	←	Quality of Life	.433
Psychological Wellbeing	←	Quality of Life	.101
Current Health Status	←	Quality of Life	.491

Standardized Regression Weights show predictive strength of exogenous (independent) variables measured in standard deviation units. Hence a direct comparison between the exogenous variables is possible. From the above table it can be seen that overall level of perception towards quality of life of the respondents was influenced by overall level of perception towards psychological wellbeing ($\beta = 0.101$) followed by overall level of perception towards social wellbeing ($\beta = 0.433$) and overall level of perception towards current health status ($\beta = 0.491$).

Covariance and Correlations

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Estimate
Current Health Status	↔	Social Wellbeing	.185670	.047710	3.891624	***	.180831
Social Wellbeing	↔	Psychological Wellbeing	.275054	.035052	7.847026	***	.347617
Psychological Wellbeing	↔	Current Health Status	.266494	.037862	7.038640	***	.315554

*** Significant at 1% level ($p < 0.001$)

The table above highlights that there is a significant positive covariance and relationship between current health status and social well-being. Additionally, it was observed that social well-being has a positive and significant influence on psychological well-being among the Kadar Tribes. Furthermore, a significant positive relationship was found between psychological well-being and current health status of the Kadar Tribes.

The SEM path analysis supports all three hypotheses, showing that social well-being, psychological well-being and current health status significantly influence the perceived quality of life among the Kadar Tribes:

- H1 (Social Well-being): Strong positive influence with an estimator of 0.430 and R^2 of 0.433, indicating that social well-being explains 43% of the variance in quality of life.
- H2 (Psychological Well-being): Positive but more modest impact with an estimator of 0.095 and R^2 of 0.101, suggesting it accounts for 10% of the variance.
- H3 (Current Health Status): The strongest influence with an estimator of 0.123 and R^2 of 0.491, explaining 49% of the variance in perceived quality of life.

Overall, the findings confirm that all three factors play a significant role, with current health status and social well-being being the most influential (Mohan et al. 2025 and Mahmood & Dalal 2019).

IV. SUGGESTIONS

To improve the quality of life of the Kadar Tribes, a multi-dimensional and culturally sensitive approach is essential. Based on the findings and core issues identified, here are some focused suggestions:

1. Improve Access to Healthcare

- Establish mobile health clinics in remote areas to provide regular medical checkups and emergency care.
- Train local health workers from within the community to offer basic healthcare and health education.
- Promote mental health awareness and provide access to counselling services.

2. Promote Educational Opportunities

- Set up community-based learning centers with flexible schedules to accommodate tribal lifestyles.
- Provide scholarships and incentives for higher education, especially for girls.
- Integrate culturally relevant content into the curriculum to make learning more engaging and meaningful.

3. Strengthen Livelihood and Economic Opportunities

- Offer skill development programs (e.g., in agriculture, crafts, eco-tourism, or digital skills).
- Create self-help groups to promote savings, entrepreneurship and financial literacy.
- Facilitate access to government schemes and subsidies for housing, food security and employment.

4. Enhance Social Well-being and Community Engagement

- Organize community-building activities like festivals, sports and cultural programs to foster social cohesion.
- Support women's and youth groups to increase participation and leadership in community development.
- Encourage participatory governance by involving tribal members in planning and decision-making processes.

5. Improve Infrastructure and Basic Amenities

- Ensure access to clean drinking water, sanitation and electricity.
- Improve transportation to connect tribal areas with nearby towns for education, health and markets.
- Build eco-friendly housing suited to the tribe's needs and environmental context.

6. Support Cultural Preservation

- Promote and preserve indigenous knowledge, traditions and language.
- Document and celebrate cultural practices to build identity and pride among the community.

V. CONCLUSION

Improving the quality of life among the Kadar Tribes requires a holistic and inclusive approach that addresses their physical, psychological, social and environmental needs. The findings clearly indicate that factors such as socio-economic status, education, health, psychological well-being and social relationships significantly influence their overall well-being. To create meaningful and lasting change, it is crucial to implement targeted

interventions that enhance access to healthcare, promote education, improve living standards and strengthen social support systems. Equally important is the preservation of their cultural identity and the promotion of community participation in development efforts. By adopting a culturally sensitive and community-driven development model, policymakers, NGOs and stakeholders can work collaboratively to empower the Kadar Tribes and ensure sustainable improvements in their quality of life.

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