



# Navigating Linguistic Boundaries: Understanding and Addressing School Alienation Among Kannada Medium Secondary School Students in Kasaragod District

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## Abstract

Kasaragod is the northernmost district of Kerala and is also known as Saptha Bhasha Sangama Bhoomi (The place where Seven languages meet). Though the administrative language is Malayalam, Tulu, Beary, Kannada, Marathi and Konkani are also used in Kasaragod. Most of the schools in Kasaragod is in Kannada, Malayalam and English medium. Tulu, Beary, Marathi and Konkani speaking students either studied in English, Malayalam, or Kannada medium. In such schools, students should opt Kannada as their first language. So, Kannada, Tulu, Malayalam, Marathi and Konkani speaking students often face language-related problems within the predominantly Kannada and Malayalam-based educational system. These problems include difficulties in comprehension, communication, linguistic alienation and a sense of cultural alienation. The lack of resources in their native languages, cultural differences, and potential isolation from the mainstream linguistic environment could contribute to this alienation. Indeed, language alienation can contribute to school alienation among students. When students face challenges in understanding or expressing themselves due to linguistic differences, it may lead to feelings of isolation, frustration, and disengagement from the educational environment. So, the investigators conducted a survey in a representative sample of 103 Tulu, Kannada, Malayalam, Konkani and Marathi speaking students studying in Kannada medium in Kasaragod districts to understand the school alienation among students. From the results, it is clear that majority of students show moderate level of alienation. There is significant difference in School alienation among gender. Boys show more school alienation than girls. The results also revealed that there is no significant difference in school alienation among Kannada medium students based on their mother tongue.

**Keywords:** Kannada, marathi, konkani, tulu and malayalam, school alienation, linguistic alienation

## Introduction

The northernmost district of Kerala, Kasaragod, is sometimes referred to as Saptha Bhasha Sangama Bhoomi, which means “the place where seven languages meet.” In Kasaragod, a significant portion of the population speaks seven different languages. Even though Malayalam is the official language, people also speak Beary, Tulu, Kannada, Marathi, and Konkani (Mrinal, M.C. 2022). In addition, the multitude of dialects and tribal languages contribute to Kasaragod’s rich cultural diversity.

Kerala state’s official language is Malayalam. Tulu is the second language that most people in the district speak after Malayalam. This area is home to about 23 distinct Tulu groups, each of which speaks a distinctly distinct dialect. A Marathi-speaking community also remained in Kasaragod long after Maharaja Shivaji’s conquest of south India. The Portuguese conquest is the reason why there are Goans who speak Konkani here. The Goans ran for their lives and sought safety in Kasaragod when strangers invaded the country where they were born. Over time, the Konkani Goan Christian and Brahmin diasporas changed and assimilated into the north Malabar population.

In Kasaragod, a group of Urdu speakers also reside in the Uppala region. They are the offspring of Muslims from the Hanafi faith, who came to this area during Tipu Sultan’s conquest. Because of the Bhatt community’s presence, which originated in Karnataka, Kannada has become very popular in Kasaragod. They are so devoted to their language heritage that they solely communicate among themselves in Kannada. Byari is a language that is specific to Kasaragod. Only the Muslim fishermen who live along the coast in Kumbala, Uppala, and the fringes of Kasaragod City speak it. Of all the languages used in the area, Byari is the one that most strongly exudes the scent of life. For Borneman (1992), borders convey a sense of inherent duality and promote a “process of mirror imaging.”

Most of the schools in Kasargod are in Kannada, English or Malayalam medium. Moreover, the language which the total children most frequently speak is a crude form of Tulu, Marathi and Kannada in Kasargod district, and therefore teachers of Malayalam medium, is general and even teachers of Kannada medium face problems in communicating with such children in the class. The same problem is often felt by these children’s classmates (Sini, M. 2021).

Since Kasaragod predominantly uses the Kannada language, many Malayalam students studied in Kannada medium schools. Malayalam students in Kannada medium schools may encounter several challenges. Malayalam-speaking students may struggle to grasp lessons taught in Kannada, leading to difficulties in understanding the curriculum and communicating with teachers and classmates. The language barrier can hinder Malayalam students’ academic performance, as they may find it challenging to fully comprehend

instructions, textbooks, and exams conducted in Kannada. Malayalam students may feel culturally disconnected in a Kannada medium school, as the cultural context and practices may differ from what they are accustomed to, potentially leading to isolation or alienation.

Marathi and Konkani students in Kannada medium may face many challenges. They may struggle to understand lessons taught in Kannada, leading to difficulties comprehending the curriculum and communicating with teachers and classmates. The language barrier can significantly impact their academic performance, as they may find it challenging to follow instructions, read textbooks, and take exams conducted in Kannada. Marathi and Konkani students may feel culturally disconnected in a Kannada medium school, as the cultural context and practices may differ from what they are accustomed to. This cultural gap can lead to feelings of isolation or alienation. The classmates of these children very often feel the same problem. The students may face challenges forming friendships and participating in social activities due to linguistic and cultural differences. They may struggle to connect with their Kannada-speaking peers, impacting their sense of belonging and well-being. Kannada medium schools may have limited resources and support services catering to Konkani-speaking students, such as language assistance or counselling. This lack of support can make it difficult for Konkani students to address their unique needs and challenges.

Kannada students also face many challenges in their medium. Certain Kannada-medium schools use Malayalam-speaking instructors to teach subjects in Kannada. The Kannada medium students may face many problems in the classroom, such as lack of resources, inappropriate teaching styles, lack of social connection, socio-economic disparities, peer rejection and communication barriers due to language alienation, etc., which may lead to disengagement and eventually lead to school alienation. Language alienation will likely directly impact primary and secondary school students' language learning and behavioural norms (Sun Yan, 2023). Consequently, this leads to alienation in the bilingual children, and they remain aloof from the general activities of the school.

School alienation significantly affects students' academic performance and overall well-being. According to Hascher and Hadjar (2017), school alienation is defined as a process of de-bonding and growing more aloof from the school; hence, tracking shifts in students' opinions toward school alienation over time is very helpful. In Kerala, a state renowned for its high literacy rates and inclusive education policies, school alienation takes on unique dimensions, particularly among bilingual students. Understanding the root causes of school alienation among bilingual students is crucial for developing effective interventions. Addressing school alienation among bilingual students improves their educational outcomes and promotes a more inclusive and cohesive school environment.

The investigators studied the school alienation among Kannada, Tulu, Marathi, Konkani and Malayalam-speaking students studying in Kannada medium schools in Kasaragod.

The investigator collected data from a representative sample of 102 Kannada medium students.

**Objectives**

- To find out the level of school alienation among Kannada medium students in the secondary level in Kasaragod district.
- To find out whether there exist any significant differences in school alienation among Kannada medium students in secondary level in Kasaragod district based on their mother tongue.

**Materials And Methods**

**Table 1**

*Table showing the method, sample, tools used and statistical techniques used in the research*

Method	Sample	Tools used	Statistical techniques used
Survey method	102 Kannada medium secondary school students in Kasaragod district	The Scale on school alienation (Prepared by Nimisha & Bindhu, 2022). It consists of 66 items, including 45 Positive and 21 Negative items.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preliminary analysis</li> <li>• One way ANOVA</li> </ul>

**Results and Interpretation**

**Analysis Of The Level Of School Alienation Among Kannada Medium Students In Secondary Level In The Total Sample**

The level of school alienation among Kannada medium students in the secondary level in the total sample was calculated by the percentage analysis.

**Table 1**

*Table showing the level of school alienation among Kannada medium students in the secondary level in the total sample.*

Sample size	Mean	SD	Level	sample size	Percentage (%)
102	174.88	28.00	High	20	19.6
			moderate	61	59.80
			Low	21	20.58

Table 1 shows that 19.6 % of Kannada medium students show high level of school alienation, 20.58 % students show low level of school alienation and 59.80 % students show moderate level of school alienation. Majority of students show moderate level of school alienation.

### **Comparison of school alienation among Kannada medium students in the secondary level based on their mother tongue using One way ANOVA**

To find out the significant differences in School Alienation among Kannada medium students based on their mother tongue, Kannada, Tulu, Konkani, Marathi and Malayalam using One way- ANOVA

**Table 3**

*Table showing the results of One-way ANOVA*

<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Between Groups	23061.28	4	5765.32	9.90778	8.96	2.464505
Within Groups	57026.02	98	581.8982			
Total	80087.3	102				

In the table, it is clear that the P value is greater than an alpha of 0.05 level of significance. So, there is no significant differences in the mean between and within the group. It reveals that without regardless of language difference, all students show a moderate level of School alienation.

### **Conclusion**

- From the results, it is clear that most students show moderate alienation. Language barriers, cultural disconnect, educational disparities, social exclusion, lack of representation, limited support services and educational resources, etc., may lead to school alienation among linguistic minority students. During adolescence, students' positive attitudes and motivation towards school and learning decrease, and they face motivational conflicts between leisure activities and school tasks (Hascher, 2010). The adolescent is at risk of developing school alienation (Calabrese, 1987).
- The results also revealed no significant difference in school alienation among Kannada medium students based on their mother tongue. Regardless of their mother tongue, almost all Kannada medium students show moderate School alienation. Kannada medium students may encounter similar linguistic challenges, including limited educational resources for all language learning, the potential influence of other dominant languages, and reduced exposure to their literature and cultural contexts.
- To reduce school alienation among linguistic minority students, ensure student's

voluntary participation in various activities. Also provide small school, classroom or group size. Schools should practice innovative teaching methods to draw students towards education and spark interest in them. Schools should encourage peer involvement through mentoring groups, discussion clubs and collaborative projects. Government should improve the quality of education by appointing well-trained, competent and passionate teachers. Schools should create an inclusive environment in classrooms. Provide a public library system for linguistic minority students. Provide enough books and other learning materials for students in their school libraries. The government should appoint language teachers for specific languages in schools. Career guidance and counselling cells should support linguistic minority students. Schools should provide students with alternative training options, such as evening classes, online learning programs, vocational training programs, etc.

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