

Study on Attitude of Students Learning in Tamil of Secondary School Students

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigates the attitudes of secondary school students toward learning Tamil in Kanyakumari District, recognizing language as both a medium of instruction and a vital element of cultural identity. Attitude, comprising cognitive, affective, and behavioural components, influences student motivation, engagement, and achievement. While previous research has largely focused on adult learners and broader language policy, few studies have examined the perceptions of secondary school students toward regional languages in formal educational contexts. Using a descriptive survey method, an *Attitude of Students Learning Scale* was developed and validated by the investigator. A sample of 1,000 secondary school students was selected through simple random sampling. Data were analyzed using percentage analysis, t-test, ANOVA, and Chi-square test with SPSS software. The results revealed that the majority of students demonstrated a moderate level of attitude toward learning Tamil. Gender was not a significant factor, indicating equal exposure and experiences in Tamil learning across boys and girls. However, significant differences emerged with respect to school type, where government school students showed higher mean scores compared to aided and private schools, suggesting greater emphasis on Tamil instruction in government schools. Furthermore, the educational qualifications of Tamil teachers significantly influenced student attitudes, with higher qualifications associated with more positive learner perceptions. The findings highlight the importance of supportive pedagogy, qualified teachers, and enriched curricula in fostering positive attitudes toward Tamil. The study recommends learner-centred teaching practices, revised assessment methods, and greater opportunities for cultural engagement through Tamil to sustain students' motivation and preserve the language for future generations.

Keywords: Tamil language learning, student attitude, secondary school education, teacher qualification, type of school.

INTRODUCTION

Language is not only a medium of instruction but also a vital marker of cultural identity, and in Tamil Nadu, students' attitudes toward learning Tamil significantly influence academic achievement, participation, and the preservation of the language. Attitude encompasses cognitive (beliefs about the language), affective (feelings toward learning), and behavioural (willingness to use the language) components, all of which shape how students engage with Tamil. For secondary school students, who are at a crucial stage of identity formation and academic specialization, attitudes toward Tamil are affected by social prestige, the perceived utility of the language, home practices, and classroom experiences. Positive attitudes foster motivation, persistence, and improved performance, while negative ones can result in disengagement, poor achievement, and a shift toward dominant languages such as English. Although much research on language attitudes has focused on adult learners or policy contexts, relatively few studies examine the perceptions of secondary students toward regional languages like Tamil within school environments characterized by formal curricula, high-stakes examinations, and multilingual exposure. This study therefore investigates the attitudes of secondary students toward learning Tamil, considering demographic, instructional, and motivational factors, with the aim of generating insights to guide effective teaching practices, curriculum design, and strategies for sustaining the language.

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

A focused investigation into secondary students' attitudes toward learning Tamil is essential because attitudes strongly predict learning outcomes and influence the long-term status of the language. While Tamil has deep cultural roots, it faces challenges from globalization and the dominance of English, making student perceptions critical to whether it remains a vibrant medium in higher education and professional life. Secondary schooling is a formative stage when learners make

academic and vocational choices, and the attitudes shaped during these years affect subject preferences, engagement with Tamil literature, and willingness to use the language beyond school. Negative experiences—such as rote-based instruction, inadequate materials, or low teacher enthusiasm—can undermine students’ motivation, while positive and engaging classroom practices foster pride and intergenerational transmission. Furthermore, variations in school type, teacher training, assessment methods, and language policies mean that attitudes differ across contexts, requiring tailored interventions. Teacher professional development, enriched curricular materials, and assessment reforms that reward creativity can enhance student engagement. At a broader level, Tamil serves both as an identity marker and a tool for communication, and documenting students’ attitudes supports cultural preservation while balancing modern skills like English and digital literacy. Such evidence is vital for policy, curriculum design, and sustaining Tamil in education.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To find out the levels of attitude of student learning in Tamil of secondary school students.
2. To find out the significant difference between in the attitude of student learning of secondary school students with respect to gender.
3. To find out the significant difference among in the attitude of student learning of secondary school students with respect to type of school.
4. To find out the significant association between in the attitude of student learning of secondary school students with respect to educational qualification of Tamil teacher.

NULL HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

1. The levels of attitude of students learning in Tamil of secondary school students is moderate.
2. There is no significant difference between in the attitude of students learning of secondary school students with respect to gender.
3. There is no significant difference among in the attitude of students learning of secondary school students with respect to type of school.
4. There is no significant association between in the attitude of students learning of secondary school students with respect to educational qualification of Tamil teacher.

METHODOLOGY

The investigator used a descriptive survey to study the chosen variables. Attitude of Students Learning Scale was developed and validated by the investigator. A sample of 1000 secondary school students in Kanyakumari District was chosen using a simple random sampling technique. The collected data were scored and normalized. Data analysis was performed using statistics such as t-test, ANOVA, Chi square test and Percentage Analysis using SPSS software.

DATA ANALYSIS

Table No. 1 The level of attitude of students learning in Tamil of secondary school students with respect to all the background variables

Background Variables		No.	Low		Moderate		High	
			No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Gender	Boys	296	55	18.6	188	63.5	53	17.9
	Girls	704	104	14.8	518	73.6	82	11.6
Type of School	Government	320	66	20.6	168	52.5	86	26.9
	Government Aided	485	53	10.9	396	81.6	36	7.4
	Private	195	40	20.5	142	72.8	13	6.7
Educational Qualification of Tamil Teacher	B.A., B.Ed.,	300	65	21.7	153	51	82	27.3
	M.A., B.Ed.,	400	56	14	315	78.8	29	7.2
	D.T.Ed.	300	38	12.7	238	79.3	24	8
Entire Sample		1000	159	15.9	706	70.6	135	13.5

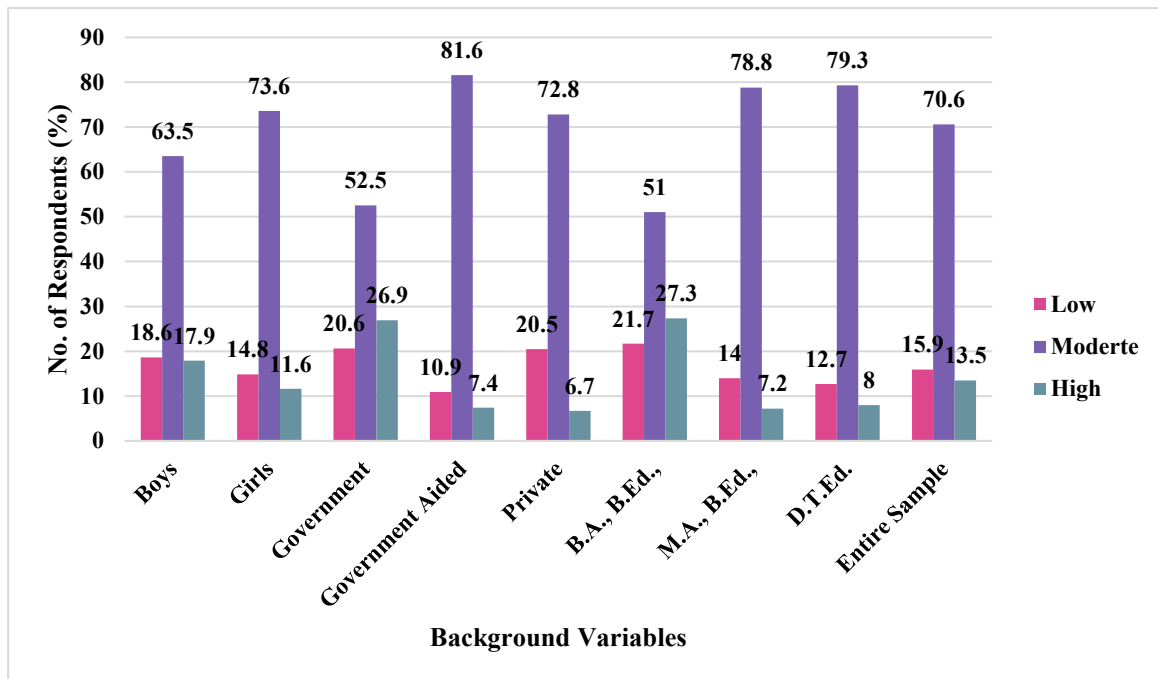


Figure: The level of attitude of students learning in Tamil of secondary school students with respect to all the background variables

Table No. 2 Difference between attitude of students learning in Tamil of secondary school students with respect to gender

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	Calculated t Value	Table Value	Remarks at 5% level
Boys	296	53.32	3.896	0.819	1.96	NS
Girls	704	53.11	3.358			

Table No. 3 Difference among attitude of students learning in Tamil of secondary school students with respect to the type of school

Source	Sum Squares of	Df	Mean Square Value	Calculated value F	Table Value	Remarks at 5% level
Between	225.270	2	112.635	9.212	3.00	S
Within	12190.506	997	12.227			

Table 4 Association between attitude of students learning in Tamil of secondary school students with respect to educational qualification of Tamil teacher

Variable	df	Calculated Value χ^2	Table Value	Remarks 5% level
Attitude of students learning in Tamil	4	93.304	9.488	S

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. It is inferred from the above table that 18.6%, 63.5%, and 17.9% of male students have low, moderate, and high levels of attitude of student learning in Tamil, respectively. 14.8%, 73.6%, and 11.6% of female students have low, moderate, and high levels of attitude of student learning in Tamil, respectively.
2. 20.6%, 52.5%, and 26.9% of government school students have low, moderate, and high levels of attitude of student learning in Tamil, respectively. 10.9%, 81.6%, and 7.4% of government aided students have low, moderate, and high levels of attitude of student learning in Tamil, respectively. 20.5%, 72.8%, and 6.7% of private school students have low, moderate, and high levels of attitude of student learning in Tamil, respectively.
3. 21.7%, 51%, and 27.3% of those Tamil teacher's educational qualification is B.A. B.Ed., have low, moderate, and high levels of attitude of student learning in Tamil, respectively. 14%, 78.8%, and 7.2% of those Tamil teacher's educational qualification is M.A. B.Ed., have low, moderate, and high levels of attitude of student learning in Tamil, respectively. 12.7%, 67.8%, and 14.5% of those Tamil teacher's educational qualification is D.T.Ed., have low, moderate, and high levels of attitude of student learning in Tamil, respectively.
4. It is inferred from the above table that 15.9%, 70.6% and 13.5% of secondary schools have low, moderate and high level of attitude in students learning in Tamil language respectively. The levels of attitude in teaching Tamil of secondary school students is high. This may be a positive indicator of their appreciation for the subject and could lead to better learning outcomes and sustained interest in Tamil language and literature.
5. There is no significant difference between in the attitude of student learning among secondary school students with respect to gender. This may be due to the fact that both boys and girls are provided with similar curricular exposure, instructional practices, and classroom learning opportunities in Tamil. The uniformity of syllabus, assessment procedures, and teacher expectations across genders could contribute to equal experiences in language learning.
6. There is significant difference among in the attitude of student learning of secondary school students with respect to type of school. The mean scores show that government school students (53.52) have better mean scores than government aided school (53.32) and, metric school (52.22) students in their attitude of student learning. This may be due to the fact that government schools provide greater emphasis on Tamil as the medium of instruction and as a subject of study, which fosters stronger exposure and more positive attitudes toward learning the language compared to aided and matriculation schools.
7. There is significant association between in the attitude of student learning of secondary school students with respect to educational qualification of Tamil teacher. This may be due to the fact that teachers with higher academic qualifications possess deeper subject knowledge, better pedagogical skills, and greater confidence in teaching, which positively influence students' attitudes toward learning Tamil.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights that secondary school students' attitudes toward learning Tamil are shaped by an interplay of personal, pedagogical and contextual factors. Positive attitudes were associated with supportive classroom practices, teacher enthusiasm, and curricular activities that connected Tamil learning to students' cultural lives. Negative or ambivalent attitudes were more likely when instruction emphasized rote memorization, when materials failed to reflect students' experiences, or when the perceived utility of Tamil was low compared with English or other languages. Demographic variables (such as urban–rural location and school type) moderated these relationships, indicating that contextually tailored interventions are necessary.

Practically, the findings suggest three priority areas for action. First, teacher development programs should emphasize learner-centred, communicative and culturally responsive methods that enhance affective engagement. Second, curricular materials and assessment should be revised to reward creative use, critical thinking and real-world application of Tamil rather than mere factual recall. Third, schools should create more opportunities for students to experience Tamil as a living medium — through clubs, theatre, literary projects and digital content — thereby reinforcing both competence and pride.

The study's implications extend beyond immediate pedagogical adjustments; they highlight language education's role in sustaining cultural heritage. Strengthening students' positive attitudes towards Tamil will not only improve classroom outcomes but also support intergenerational transmission and civic participation rooted in local culture. Future research should track attitude change longitudinally and evaluate the effectiveness of specific interventions (teacher training modules, revised textbooks, extracurricular programs) to establish causal pathways between pedagogical reforms and shifts in student attitude and achievement.

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