



FACTORS INFLUENCE ON RURAL WOMEN EMPOWERMENT OF KUDUMBASHREE PROGRAMME

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ABSTRACT

Though Kerala stands unique among the states of India with high indicators of human development. The proportion of women is higher than that of men in Kerala. In spite of higher literacy rate, the employment opportunities for men and women are relatively less. As per census 2011, Kerala has population of 3.45 crores. Out of this 1.73 crores are women. Nearly 92 % of women are literate, while the national literacy rate is 74.04 %. Consequently, the number of educated women, seeking employment has aggravated the unemployment problem in the state. This problem of educated unemployment among the women leads to frustration and psychological imbalance. But in the recent past, “Kudumbashree” has influenced a drastic change in the life of women in Kerala. This development of the women community through the activities of Kudumbashree in various fields and their improved standard of living forced the investigator to find out the factors influence on empowerment of women through Kudumbashree. The main aim of the study is to identify the effects of various variables on women empowerment and to find out factors that influence on women empowerment.

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INTRODUCTION

There is not tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women

Kofi Annan

Kerala has got an appreciable track record of women empowerment in the whole of India. Apart from improving the socio-economic status of women, there is significant political empowerment also as they become participants in the decision-making process as members of various committees¹. Among the Indian states, Kerala is known for its impressive human development achievements. With regard to the HDI components, the indicators of maternal mortality rate, adolescent birth rates and proportion of adult females with secondary education are impressive in Kerala. But the indicators of labour market participation and proportion of parliamentary seats occupied by females show that, Kerala’s performance is poor and is below all India average. Hence, a paradoxical situation of high achievements and equality in health and education dimensions with poor performance and inequality in terms of economic and political participation exists in the State². Women and girls are central to the sustainability of rural households and communities, improving

rural livelihoods and overall wellbeing, but their role and significance is often overlooked³.

Concept of women empowerment

Empowerment of women would be able to develop self-esteem, confidence realize their potential and enhance their collective power⁴. (Hajra, et al, 2005)Choudhary (2008) defined, Empowerment has a broader connective particularly in relation to women as it has many dimensions such as inheritance and ownership of the property, sexual equality in all social economic and political spheres, illusion making etc. Empowerment of the women refers to greeting situation in which they can decide their own destiny and also participate as equal partners in various developmental activities⁵. Rosa (2010) states that empowerment of women is a holistic concept. It is multidimensional in approach and involves a basic realisation and awareness of one’s powers and potentials, capacities and competencies and one’s rights and opportunities for development in important spheres of life⁶.

Components of Empowerment

According to Latha (2013) states that women empowerment has five components

- Women sense of self-worth
- Their right to have and to determine choices
- Their right to have access to opportunities and resources
- Their rights to have the power to control their own lives both within and outside the home

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- Their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just and economic orders, nationally and internationally⁷.

Kudumbashree

Inaugurated on 17 May 1998, by the then Prime Minister of India, Shri. Atal Bihari Vajpayee in Malappuram, "Kudumbashee" Meaning Prosperity of the family, is the state poverty eradication mission initiated by the Government of Kerala for de rooting the absolute poverty from the state. It is a holistic, participatory, women oriented innovative poverty reduction approach implemented through Local Self Governments. The Mission follows a process approach rather than a project approach. 'Kudumbashree' envisages prosperity of the poor families in the state with multiple programmes that will provide them information, create awareness, build up their capability and capacity, enhance their confidence and show them opportunity for better social security and empower them physically, socially, economically and politically. Thus it works for eradicating the poverty by enhancing the capabilities and entitlements of the poor people⁸.

Objectives of the study

- To examine the socio economic profile of the respondents
- To identify the effects of various variables on women empowerment
- To find out factors that influence on women empowerment

METHODOLOGY

The locale selected for the present study is high range mountain landscape of Devikulam Taluk, which is located on the eastern slopes of Western Ghats. The study area stretches between the latitudes of 9^o56'56"N to 10^o21'29"N and longitudes of 77^o 48' 31"E to 77^o16'14"E. Geographical area covered by Devikulam 1140 Km² which comprising 11 Village Panchayats with population of 1, 77,621 persons in 2011 census. The influence of Kudumbashree on women is assessed by the field surveys and personal interviews. A field survey was carried out covering rural areas. Ten NHG units of Kudumbashree in Devikulam Block were selected by random sampling method and members of the selected units are the respondents. There are 9 Panchayaths in Devikulam Block. Ten NHG units are selected on random basis from these Panchayaths. Each unit consists of 12 members. So a total of 120 members from 12 units are taken as sample respondents for the purpose of study. An interview schedule was used to elicit the socio-economic status of Kudumbashree members. A three point empowerment scale was used to assess the empowerment of women in selected Kudumbashree units. It includes 25 statements. The three points were Always Sometime and Never. All the statements were positive and thus were given a score of 3, 2 and 1. Thus the maximum score obtained by a sample is 75 and a minimum score obtained is 25. Statistical techniques like percentage, mean, standard deviation, Chi square test etc are used for analysis for data.

RESULTS

Socioeconomic profile of the Respondents

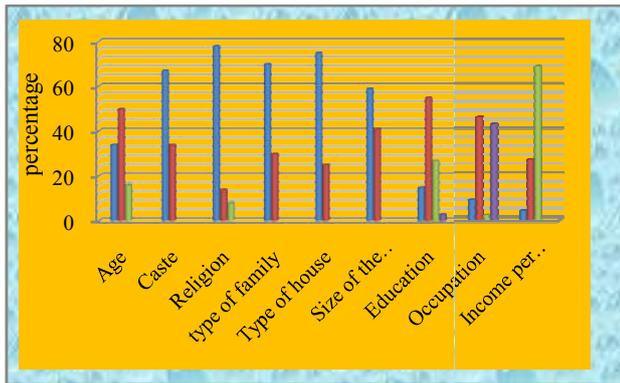
Table I explains socioeconomic profile of the Respondents.

Table 1 Socio-economic Profile of the Respondents

Sl. No	Socio-Economic Factor	Categories	N=100 Percentage
1.	Age	20-25	34
		25-30	50
		30-35	16
2.	Caste	Forward Caste	33
		Backward Caste	67
3.	Religion	Hindu	78
		Christian	14
		Muslim	8
4.	Type of family	Nuclear family	70
		Joint family	30
5.	Type of house	Owned house	75
		Rented house	25
6.	Size of the family	3-4	59
		4-6	41
7.	Education	Illiterate	15
		Primary	55
		Secondary	27
		Graduate	3
8.	Occupation	Labour	9
		Private employee	46
		Government employee	2
		House wives	43
9.	Income per month	Below 7000	4
		7000-10000	27
		Above 10000	69

Regarding the age of the respondents 50 percent of members belonged to the age group of 25-30 years, 34 percent of the members belonged to the age group of 20-25 and 16 percent belonged to the age group of 30-35 years. The caste wise breakup reveals that 67 percent come from Backward caste and remaining 33 percent from forward caste.Regarding the religion, 78 percent of the members are the followers of Hinduism, 13 percent followers of Christianity and only eight percent followers of Islam. It was heartening to note there could be not religious and caste discrimination.

Majority (70 percent) of the members belonged to the nuclear family and 30 percent belonged to the joint family. Seventy five percent of the members owning a house and twenty five percent residing in rental house. Regarding the size of the family, 59 percent of the members are having 3-4 members and 41 percent of families were 4-6 members.Out of 100 respondents 15 percent were illiterate, 55 percent of the members studied up to primary level, twenty seven percent of them were studied up to secondary level and only three percent of them were graduate. Regarding the type of occupation, 46 percent were private employees, 43 percent have no occupation, nine percent of them were labourers, and only two percent of them were government employees.It was found that 69 percent of the members have an income of above Rs.10000/-per month, twenty seven percent of them have an income between Rs.7000-10000/- and only four percent of them have an income below Rs. 7000/- per month.



C. Level of Empowerment of the Members

A three point scale was used to find out the level of empowerment of the members. It includes 15 statements regarding personal, famiielel, and economic, social and political empowerment. The response was marked in a three point,(Always, Sometimes, and Never) was given a score of 3, 2 and 1 respectively. Thus the maximum score obtained by a sample for the empowerment scale was 75 and minimum score was 25. Further the scores, obtained for the empowerment scale were categorized in to low level (less than 65%) medium level (65-70%) and high level (above 70%). The details are shown in table 2.

Table 2 Level of Empowerment of the members

Characteristics	N= 120	Percentage
Low level (less than 30%)	25	
Medium level (30-40%)	66	
High level (Above 40%)	9	

More than half of the members (66 %) had medium level of empowerment followed by low level (25 %) and nine per cent high level empowerment.

Association between empowerment level and Age

Table 3 Association between empowerment level and age

Empowerment level & Age	Low level		Medium level		High level		Total		χ^2	P
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
20-25 years	7	6	31	26	3	2	41	34	10.33	0.035**
25-30 years	11	9	42	35	6	5	59	49		
30-35 years	10	8	8	7	2	2	20	17		
Total	28	23	81	68	11	9	120	100		

**Significant at 5 % level

While comparing the empowerment level and age of the members it was found that there is a significant association between participation level and age at 5 % level. Out of 120 beneficiaries 49 percent had medium level of participation and belonged to the age group of 25-30 years.

Association between empowerment level and Caste

Table 4 Association between empowerment level and caste

Empowerment level & Caste	Low level		Medium level		High level		Total		χ^2	P
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
General	2	1	20	16	5	4	27	21	17.43	0.008*
OBC	10	9	13	11	1	1	24	21		
OEC	6	5	11	9	2	1	18	15		
SC	10	9	37	31	4	3	51	43		
Total	28	24	81	67	11	9	120	100		

*Significant at 1 % level

From the above table, it is clear that 43 percent of the members showed medium level of empowerment and they belonged to SC community. The association was found to be statistically significant at 1 % level.

Association between empowerment level and Religion

Table 5 Association between empowerment level and religion

Empowerment level & Religion	Low level		Medium level		High level		Total		χ^2	P
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Hindu	17	14	62	52	8	6	87	72	8.04	0.90 ^{NS}
Christian	9	8	11	10	2	1	22	19		
Muslim	2	1	8	7	1	1	11	9		
Total	28	23	81	69	11	8	120	100		

NS- Not Significant

Association between empowerment level and Education

Table 6 Association between empowerment level and education

Empowerment level & Education	Low level		Medium level		High level		Total		χ^2	P
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Illiterate	8	7	8	7	1	1	17	15	9.29	0.005*
Primary	13	11	48	40	4	3	65	54		
Secondary	6	5	21	18	4	3	31	25		
Graduate	1	1	4	3	2	1	7	6		
Total	28	24	81	68	11	8	120	100		

*Significant at 1 % level

The above table reveals that 54 percent of the members showed medium level empowerment. The association was found to be statistically significant at 1 % level. This means that education has its own influence on the empowerment level of the members.

Association between empowerment level and occupation

Table 7 Association between empowerment level and occupation

Empowerment level & Occupation	Low level		Medium level		High level		Total		χ^2	P
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Labour	1	1	7	5	2	1	10	7	28.3	0.000*
Govt. employee	2	1	3	2	1	1	6	4		
Private employee	21	18	32	27	1	1	54	46		
House wife	4	3	39	33	7	7	50	43		
Total	28	23	81	67	11	10	120	100		

*Significant at 1 % level

While comparing the empowerment level and occupation of the members, it was found that there is a significant association between the occupation and empowerment level and statistically significant at 1 percent level. Forty six percent of the private employees had medium level of empowerment.

Association between empowerment level and Income

Table 8 Association between empowerment level and income

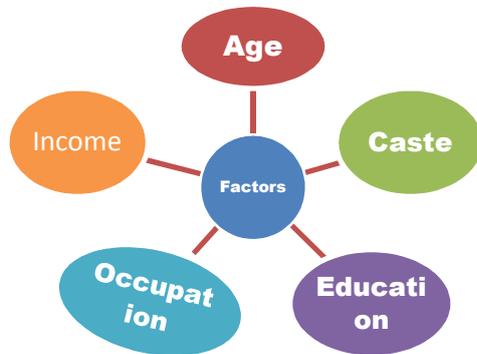
Empowerment level & Income	Low level		Medium level		High level		Total		χ^2	P
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Below Rs.70000	2	1	4	3	1	1	7	5	6.83	0.015*
Rs.7000-10000	4	3	27	23	2	1	33	27		
Above Rs.10000	22	19	50	42	8	7	80	68		
Total	28	23	81	68	11	9	120	100		

*Significant at 5 % level

It is evident from the above table there is a relationship between income and empowerment level. The association was significant at 5 % level. Forty two percent of the members had medium level of empowerment.

Factors that Influence on Women Empowerment

While comparing the empowerment level and age, caste, education, occupation and monthly income of the KDMS members, it was found that there is significant relationship between empowerment level and the related variables.



CONCLUSION

The foregoing discussion revealed that Kudumbashree is regarded as the major agent of change by participating women in various developmental activities, the morale and confidence of women has also become very high. Women empowerment is not characterised as achieving power of women to dominate others, but rather power to act with others to affect change. The formation of NHG (Neighbourhood Group) as a basis for social and economic empowerment of deprived and disadvantaged women have been found to be successful mechanism for the organisation, mobilisation and self-development of women. Women who have participated in Neighbourhood Groups have developed strong sense of self worth and faith in their ability to interact with power structures and increase in their contribution to the household.

The study clearly indicates that the NHGs movement of Kudumbashree is significantly supporting women empowerment. Findings of the study reveals that majority of the members in KDMS are between the age group of 25-30 years having primary education belonging to (Private employee) daily wage labourer category. It was found that there is medium level of empowerment among the members with respect to certain demographic variables. While comparing the empowerment level and age, caste, education, occupation and monthly income of the KDMS members, it was found that there is significant relationship between empowerment level and the related variables.

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