

SOCIOECONOMIC CHANGES AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH KUDUMBASHREE MISSION- STUDY OF MUKKAM MUNICIPALITY

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND

Development of a nation cannot be separated from or viewed in isolation from the development of women. Kudumbashree is a female oriented community-based poverty reduction project by the Govt. of Kerala which was launched on May 17, 1998, in which many developmental experiments are being tested, refined and implemented. The mission aims at the empowerment of women by providing self-employment opportunities through formation of self-help groups by which they succeed in making a significant dent on poverty.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design- Descriptive study.

Study Settings- Mukkam municipality.

Study Population – Kudumbashree members in Mukkam taluk.

RESULTS

Kudumbashree has improved the social status of women. Through Kudumbashree they have improved their confidence in banking and money transactions. They could improve their communication skills and their skills in planning and implementing projects. The participation of women in social programmes, public meetings has improved to a great extent. Kudumbashree has enhanced entrepreneurship and leadership and the capacity of women to work and earn together.

CONCLUSION

The study has provided an insight on women's empowerment acquired by Kudumbashree members after joining Kudumbashree. Economic development is the basis for other development. Economic development of women leads to a better living status.

KEYWORDS

Kudumbashree, Socioeconomic Changes, Women Empowerment.

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BACKGROUND

Women are the basic unit in the family who are shouldering almost all the responsibilities of the family. But they have to suffer inequalities and harassment in all the phases of their life from womb to tomb.¹ Poverty eradication and women empowerment are the widely discussed topics all over the world.² Development of a nation cannot be separated from or viewed in isolation from the development of women who constitute half of world's population and who can certainly play a crucial role in influencing the course of human history as well as shaping the destiny of mankind. It has been acknowledged in several studies that the social and economic empowerment of women has a positive impact on poverty eradication and economic development of the country.³

It is following this awakening that the Govt. of Kerala has taken up such a supporting project as Kudumbashree mission for women welfare and empowerment in the society.

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Kudumbashree is a female oriented community-based poverty reduction project by the Govt. of Kerala which was launched on May 17, 1998, in which many developmental experiments are being tested, refined and implemented. The mission aims at the empowerment of women by providing self-employment opportunities through formation of self-help groups and encouraging their entrepreneurial and other wide range of activities, by which they succeed in making a significant dent on poverty in the state. It also ensures that women should no longer remain as passive recipients of public assistance, but act as active leaders in development. Gurumoorthy⁴ (2000) reveals that empowering women contributes to social development.

It is important to know about the current status of the members of Kudumbashree to know about the improvements needed in the policies of the governments and also such studies have not been done in our locality so far. So, it was planned to conduct a study to assess the socioeconomic changes and empowerment of women after their participation in Kudumbashree and also how Kudumbashree participation enabled in changing the life of women of lower socioeconomic status.

Aims and Objectives

- To assess social changes through Kudumbashree.
- To assess economic changes through Kudumbashree.

- To measure the role of Kudumbashree in women empowerment.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design- Descriptive study.

Study Settings- Mukkam municipality.

Study Population- Kudumbashree members living in Mukkam Municipality.

Study Period- 14 November 2016 to 26 November 2016.

Sampling

From the total 51 different Kudumbashree units in Mukkam municipality, 100 Kudumbashree members were selected by simple random method by lot technique.

Inclusion

Members who have completed at least 3 years in Kudumbashree and are still present.

Exclusion

Members who left Kudumbashree.

Tools Used- Pretested semi-structured questionnaires.

Methodology

Data Collection

A batch of 23 MBBS students divided into six groups were assigned for data collection. Data was obtained by interviewing the Kudumbashree members using pretested semi-structured questionnaires prepared in local language.

Questionnaires

Three sets of questionnaires were used to collect the information. First set comprised of questions regarding social changes of members after joining Kudumbashree. Second set comprised of thirteen questions on economic changes and third set comprised of questions on women empowerment of members after joining Kudumbashree. These questionnaires were designed to obtain information about how Kudumbashree has helped in changing the life of its members.

Analysis

All the information collected from the members through the interviews were collated. Data entry and analysis was done using Microsoft Excel (Version: 2007).

RESULTS

	Frequency (%)
Age Category	
≤ 24 years	2 (2)
25-34 years	11 (11)
35-44 years	39 (39)
45-64 years	45 (45)
≥ 65	3 (3)
Economic Level	
Above Poverty Line	46 (46)
Below Poverty Line	54 (54)
Education	
Illiterate	1 (1)
Middle/High school	75 (75)
Higher secondary	14 (14)
College degree	10 (10)

Marital status	
Married	82 (82)
Unmarried	5 (5)
Divorced /separated/Widow	13 (13)

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Baseline Data

Out of the total 100 women studied, 45% were in the age group 45 - 64 years, 2% were below 24 years and 3 were above 65 years. More than half (54%) of the study subjects belonged to Below Poverty Line category. Majority (75%) of the study subjects had an education level of either middle or high school level, one was illiterate and ten had a college degree. Most (82%) of them were married.

Social Changes through Kudumbashree

	Improved	Not improved
Participation in social programmes after joining Kudumbashree	89%	11%
Participation in public meetings after joining Kudumbashree	90%	10%
Improvement in confidence in banking and money transactions	95%	5%
Ability to coordinate meetings and express opinions	90%	10%
Improvement in communication skills	95%	5%

Table 2. Assessment of Social Changes through Kudumbashree

Kudumbashree has enabled social changes in the study subjects as shown in Table 2. Majority (89%) agreed that their participation in social programmes has improved after joining Kudumbashree. About 90% of study subjects responded that their participation in public meetings and ability to coordinate meetings and express opinions improved after joining Kudumbashree. Improvement in confidence in banking, money transactions and also communication skills was reported by 95% of the study subjects. About 20% of the study subjects were affiliated to one or other political party (Not shown in the table).

Economic Changes Due To Kudumbashree

	Before joining Kudumbashree Frequency (%)	After joining Kudumbashree Frequency (%)
Unemployed	74 (74)	51 (51)

Table 3. Frequency of Unemployment before and after Joining Kudumbashree

The prevalence of unemployed among the study subjects decreased by 23 points after joining Kudumbashree.

	Improved	Not improved/Increased
Family income	48%	52%
House facilities	66%	34%
Number of property owned	28%	72%

Table 4. Economic Changes due to Kudumbashree

More than half (52%) reported that their family income has not improved after joining Kudumbashree. Housing facilities improved after joining Kudumbashree in the cases of 66% women, but 72% responded that there was no increase in the number of properties they owned after joining Kudumbashree. When need arose, 59% of the women received financial support from Kudumbashree.

Women empowerment Due to Kudumbashree

	Improved	Not Improved
Decision making in household affairs	91%	9%
Decision making in property buying matters	67%	33%
Decision making about education of children	90%	10%
Expressing views in the presence of husband and family members	83%	17%
Visiting different places (market, hospital, temple, family relatives) without permission of family members.	76%	24%
Attitude of family members towards you on travelling alone	90%	10%
Confidence level in negotiating and bargaining in financial matters	86%	14%
Freedom to spend money for own needs	82%	18%
Planning and implementing projects	82%	18%
Quality of life improvement	85%	15%

Table 5. Assessment of Women Empowerment

Ninety one percent of the study subjects admitted that the decision making power in household affairs (daily affairs) greatly improved due to Kudumbashree. About 67% of the respondents said that there has been an improvement in their decision making power in property buying in the family. About 90% have said that their decision making power in education of their children improved after joining Kudumbashree. Other indicators of women empowerment such as expressing their views, the ability to visit different places (market, hospital, temple, family relatives) without permission of family members, the attitude of their family members towards their travelling alone and freedom to spend money for own needs was reported to have improved in 83%, 76%, 90% and 82% of study subjects respectively after joining Kudumbashree. Around 86% has said that their confidence to negotiate and bargain in financial matters improved after joining Kudumbashree. Ability to plan and implement projects such as health education classes, farming, and seeds distribution has improved in 82% after joining Kudumbashree. Around 85% of study subjects agreed that their quality of life has improved after joining Kudumbashree. None of the study subjects experienced domestic violence from their family members/husband (Not shown in the table).

DISCUSSION

There were many attempts to analyse the effectiveness and impact of Kudumbashree on poverty in view of changing

socioeconomic scenario and women empowerment in the state. Kenneth Kalyani,¹ Seena PC (2012) reveal that economic development is the base of other development. Economic development of women leads to better living standards. In our study, after joining Kudumbashree the socioeconomic status of the families improved.

Puhazhendhi and Sathyasai (2001)⁵ in their study attempted to evaluate the performance of Self-help Groups (SHG) with special reference to social and economic empowerment. The findings of the study reveal that SHGs could positively contribute to the economic and social empowerment of rural poor. In our study also, Kudumbashree has improved the social and economic empowerment of women. Jaya S Anand (2002)⁶ has stated in her discussion paper on Self-help groups in empowering women, that the supporting structures in delivering credit are critical to make the impact of group activity strong and sustainable.

Sri V. P Raghavan (2009)⁷ in his article stated that the poor women of the state have become participants of various antipoverty programmes. In our study also, the members actively participated in several anti-poverty programmes. Minimo MC and Mahesh KG (2012)⁸ in their study identified that intellectual empowerment is more important. In our study, 59% of the members improved their confidence in banking and money transactions.

According to the study conducted by Beena C. A. and Sari T. C⁹, level of empowerment in financial management skills was at moderate level. Freedom to spend money for their own needs represented very low level of improvement. In our study, there is 82% improvement.

In this study, only 20% of study subjects are affiliated with one or other political party, while in Dr. K. Venugopalan's ¹⁰study 31% members improved, 15% fairly improved and 53% did not improve their involvement in politics. This is because the respondents of his study were already affiliated to political parties but ours were interested only after joining Kudumbashree.

In this study, there is 76% improvement in visiting different places (market, hospital) without the permission of family members, while in Dr. K. Venugopalan's study there is 64% great improvement. This highlights the ability of Kudumbashree to empower women. In the study conducted by Santhosh Prabhu⁽¹¹⁾ in Kasargod, 40% had accessibility to loan while in this study 59% had easy access to loan. This shows that Kudumbashree in our area was more beneficial to women.

CONCLUSION

The study has provided an insight on women empowerment acquired by Kudumbashree members after joining Kudumbashree. Economic development is the basis for other development. Economic development of women leads to a better living status. The participation of women in social programmes, public meetings, and in banking and money transactions improved to a great extent. Kudumbashree has enhanced entrepreneurship and leadership and the capacity of women to work and earn together. Empowering women and improving their economic and social status are essential

for realising the full potential of economic and political development of the entire society.

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