
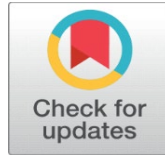
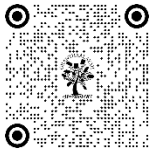


ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SELF-HELP GROUP IN ALAPPUZHA

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ABSTRACT

Self-Helping Groups play a vital role in the upliftment of the rural population and plays a prominent role in poverty alleviation. Especially in Kerala, the Kudumbashree scheme introduced by the Kerala government with the slogan “Reaching out to families through women and reaching out to the community through families” is playing a dynamic role in the upliftment of socially and economically backward communities. In this quantitative study, we evaluate the performance of the self-help groups in the Alappuzha district by collecting the required data from 50 active beneficiaries of the 10 Kudumbashree units using a self-made questionnaire. The study corroborates that the Kudumbashree mission is one of the most effective schemes for the upliftment of rural masses especially women micro-entrepreneurs.

Keywords: Kudumbashree, SHG, Effectiveness Evaluation



1. INTRODUCTION

The performance evaluation of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in the Alappuzha district is a significant endeavour in understanding their impact on rural development and poverty alleviation. Self-Help Groups have been pivotal in fostering community-based financial intermediation, especially among women, who are often marginalized in traditional banking systems. The evolution of SHGs in India has been shaped by various stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), financial institutions, and government initiatives, leading to a multifaceted approach towards sustainable development. According to Ramanathan (2016), the linkage between banks and SHGs in Sri Lanka offers valuable insights into the potential of such collaborations to enhance financial inclusion and economic empowerment. This study aims to delve into the effectiveness, challenges, and overall impact of SHGs in Alappuzha, drawing from both qualitative and quantitative data to provide a comprehensive evaluation.

The concept of SHGs is not novel; it has its roots in the collective action and mutual aid traditions observed in many cultures. In India, SHGs have gained prominence as a mechanism for economic empowerment and social change, particularly among rural women (Das Gupta, 2001). The proliferation of SHGs in the Alappuzha district can be attributed to various factors, including government policies, NGO interventions, and the inherent resilience of the rural population. Dadhich (2001) highlights the role of microfinance in poverty alleviation, emphasizing that well-structured SHGs can act as a panacea for poverty. The case study of the Oriental Grameen Project exemplifies how targeted microfinance initiatives can lead to sustainable economic development. By

examining the operational dynamics of SHGs in Alappuzha, this article seeks to understand their contribution to the socio-economic upliftment of their members and the broader community.

The role of SHGs in catalysing rural development is well-documented. Tripathy (2004) argues that SHGs act as catalysts for rural development by fostering a culture of savings, entrepreneurship, and collective action. The sustainability of SHGs, however, is contingent upon various contributory factors, including effective leadership, robust financial management, and continuous support from external agencies (Bhanot & Bapat, 2019). In Alappuzha, the performance of SHGs can be seen through their ability to generate income, enhance social capital, and improve access to essential services. This article will explore these dimensions, providing a critical analysis of the successes and limitations of SHGs in the district. By leveraging empirical data and case studies, the study aims to offer policy recommendations that can enhance the efficacy of SHGs, ensuring their long-term sustainability and greater impact on rural development.

The performance evaluation of SHGs in the Alappuzha district offers a valuable opportunity to understand their role in fostering economic empowerment and social change. Drawing from a rich body of literature and empirical evidence, this article will provide a nuanced analysis of the factors influencing the success and sustainability of SHGs. By highlighting best practices and identifying key challenges, the study aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on microfinance and rural development, offering actionable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders involved in the SHG movement.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In this comprehensive study, our primary objective is to unravel key insights surrounding the promotion and functioning of Kudumbashree, addressing pivotal research questions. Firstly, we delve into the multifaceted role played by government and various agencies in fostering the growth of Kudumbashree. Understanding their contributions is imperative for shaping effective policies and interventions. Secondly, a thorough examination of socio-economic challenges encountered by Kudumbashree units is undertaken, shedding light on the intricacies of their operational landscape. This analysis serves as a foundation for targeted support and empowerment initiatives. Moving forward, the study scrutinizes the current activities undertaken by Kudumbashree units, offering a real-time snapshot of their endeavours. Lastly, the research investigates the level of awareness among Kudumbashree members pertaining to crucial aspects such as information technology, marketing channels, and emerging production methods. Unveiling this awareness quotient is pivotal for enhancing the adaptability and resilience of Kudumbashree units in an ever-evolving socio-economic landscape. Through these inquiries, our study endeavours to contribute valuable insights that can inform strategic decisions and further the sustainable development of Kudumbashree initiatives.

3. RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

Today Kudumbashree is one of the largest women empowering schemes in the country. This has been successful in giving hope to many impoverished and their families in Kerala. This study is conducted to study the overall working pattern and performance of Kudumbashree units in the Alappuzha District.

3.1. OBJECTIVES

- To examine the role of government and other agencies in the promotion of Kudumbashree
- To analyse the socio-economic problems faced by Kudumbashree units
- To ascertain the current activities and operational efficiency of Kudumbashree units
- To know the awareness level of Kudumbashree members about Information Technology

Hypothesis

1. H0: Opinion regarding the role of government in the promotion of Kudumbashree is not equal to average
2. H0. There is no significant difference in the awareness level of a member on information technology and new production methods among different educational groups

4. METHODOLOGY

The study is descriptive and analytical in nature. The population of the study consisted of Kudumbashree members of 10 units at Ambalappuzha taluk. The data were collected from the 50 active beneficiaries of the 10 units. Convenient sampling was used as a sampling technique. The data required for the study were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data is collected from the respondents using a structured questionnaire. Secondary data for the study is collected from the internet and various publications, books, published research articles and journals. Data collected from various sources were analysed with the

help of tools like percentages, one-sample t-test, one-way ANOVA, and software packages such as SPSS and MS Excel were used. This study followed all ethical considerations of the research.

5. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The following sections deal with the analysis and interpretation of the study. Tables are used to explain it. They are as follows, Classification based on a period of membership

Most of the respondents (50 per cent) of the respondents have become part of their unit for above 5 years, 46 per cent of them for between 3 and 5, and the remaining 4 per cent for between 1 and 3. Survey details are given in Table No.1.

Table No.1

Period of Membership

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Between 1 and 3	2	4
Between 3 and 5	23	46
Above 5	25	50
Total	50	100

Source Primary data

Support from family members

Table 2 shows that (100 per cent) of the respondents have support from the family to do Kudumbashree activities.

Table No.2

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	50	100
No	0	0
Total	50	100

Source Primary data

Activities of the unit

Most of the respondents (54 per cent) were providing loans, 40 per cent have Balasabha, 4 per cent have house construction, 2 per cent were providing each with food products and engaged in other activities. Survey details are given in Table No.3.

Table No. 3

Activities of the unit

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Providing loans	27	54
Balasabha	20	40
House construction	2	4
Food products	1	2
Total	50	100

Source: Primary data

Major Problems

Most of the respondents (42 per cent) faced the problem of lack of experience and training, 36 per cent faced the problem of insufficient government support and the remaining 22 per cent faced the problem of conflict among members in the unit. Survey details are given in Table No.4.

Table No.4
Major problems

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of experience and training	21	42
The conflict between members in the unit	11	22
Insufficient government support	18	36
Total	50	100

Source: Primary data

Level of performance

Table No. 5 shows the level of performance, most of the respondents (58 per cent) had a good opinion about the performance of Kudumbashree, 36 per cent had an outstanding opinion and the remaining 6 per cent had an excellent opinion about Kudumbashree.

Table No. 5
Level of Performance

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Outstanding	18	36
Excellent	3	6
Good	29	58
Total	50	100

Source Primary data

Information Technology

Most of the respondents (64 per cent) were fully aware of Information Technology and the remaining 36 per cent were partially aware of Information Technology. Survey details are given in Table No.6.

Table No.6
Information Technology

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Fully Aware	32	64
Aware	18	36
Unaware		
Total	50	100

Source: Primary data

Assistance from Government

Table No.7, shows that 50 per cent of the respondents got assistance from the government and the rest 50 per cent of the respondents believed that they did not get any assistance from the government.

Table No.7
Assistance from Government

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	25	50
No	25	50
Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

If yes, area of assistance

Most of the respondents (52 per cent) believed that they got assistance for the awareness campaign. This was followed by 40 per cent got financial assistance and the remaining 8 per cent got assistance for development opportunities. Survey details are given in Table No. 8

Table No. 8

Area of assistance

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Awareness campaign	13	52
Financial Assistance	10	40
Opportunities for development	2	8
Total	25	100

Source: Primary data

Testing of Hypothesis

Various tests are being conducted and results are drawn for the study. The hypothesis is tested by using a one-sample t test and one-way Anova.

H0: Opinion regarding the role of government in the promotion of Kudumbashree is not equal to average.

Table No: 9

One-Sample t-Test

<i>VARIABLE</i>	<i>DF</i>	<i>Mean value</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Q2</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Role of government in the promotion of Kudumbashree	49	2.520	0.505	6	35.308	.000**

Since P-Value is less than 0.01, we reject the null hypothesis the null hypothesis is rejected at a 1% level of significance hence concluded that the opinion regarding the role of government in the promotion of Kudumbashree is not equal to average. Based on the mean score of 2.520 opinions regarding the role of government in the promotion of Kudumbashree is above the average.

H0. There is no significant difference in the awareness level of the member on information technology and new production methods among different educational groups.

Table No: 10

One Way Anova

Group	Mean	SD	F-Value	P-value
Illiterate	2.1818	.26007	3.330	0.028
SSLC	2.0000	.34112		
Plus, Two	2.2200	.33267		
Degree/Diploma	2.4000	.12649		

Since the P-Value is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis the null hypothesis is rejected at a 0.05% level of significance hence concluded that there is a significant difference between the opinion among the different educational groups regarding awareness level on information technology and new production methods. Based on the mean score respondents SSLC (2.0000) have a better opinion regarding awareness level on information technology and new production methods than other groups.

6. MAJOR FINDINGS

Kudumbashree members exhibit a diverse demographic profile, characterized by a variety of age groups, educational backgrounds, and membership durations. A significant proportion of the respondents, 32%, were aged between 36-45 years, followed by 26% in the 56-65 age group, 22% between 46-55 years, and the remaining 20% in the 26-35 age group. This distribution indicates a broad representation across middle-aged groups. Regarding educational qualifications, 46% of the members had completed their S.S.L.C., while 22% were illiterate, highlighting the varying levels of educational attainment within the group. Additionally, 20% had finished Plus Two, and 12% held a degree or Diploma. The membership duration among respondents also varied, with half being members for over five years, 46% for three to five years, and a small segment of 4% being relatively new

members, having been with Kudumbashree for one to three years. This mix of long-term and newer members suggests a balance of experience and fresh perspectives within the organization.

Economically, the income levels of Kudumbashree members reflect modest earnings, with the majority receiving between 2000 to 4000 monthly, accounting for 58% of the respondents. Another 22% earned between 4001 to 6000, while smaller percentages reported incomes in higher brackets: 14% earned between 8001 to 10000, 4% between 6001 to 8000, and only 2 respondents received more than 10000. Despite these varying income levels, all members reported having family support for their activities within Kudumbashree, indicating a strong foundation of familial backing. The activities conducted by Kudumbashree units are diverse, with 54% involved in providing loans and 40% hosting Balasabha, a platform for children's development. Other activities included house construction (4%), food product provision (2%), and miscellaneous tasks (2%). Within Balasabha, a substantial 85% focused on conducting awareness classes, 10% on distributing study materials, and 5% on providing tuitions. Meetings are a critical aspect of their operations, with all respondents affirming that their units held weekly meetings. However, challenges in selling goods were noted, with 56% experiencing no difficulty and 44% facing challenges. When rating their performance, 52% deemed their activities as good, while 48% considered them very good.

Knowledge and awareness levels among Kudumbashree members demonstrate a high degree of familiarity with modern practices and resources. A significant 64% of respondents were fully aware of Information Technology, while the remaining 36% were partially aware. Awareness of marketing channels was even higher, with 82% being fully aware and 18% partially aware. Awareness of new production methods was split, with 52% fully aware and 48% partially aware. In terms of knowledge regarding their line of activity, 80% were aware, 10% fully aware, and 10% unaware. Government incentives also played a role, with 78% being aware, 14% fully aware, and 8% unaware. Kudumbashree loans were utilized by 64% of respondents, indicating a reliance on this financial support mechanism, while 36% had not taken loans. Challenges faced by members included a lack of experience and training (42%), insufficient government support (36%), and conflicts among members (22%). Government assistance was evenly split, with half receiving support and half not. Among those who received assistance, 52% benefited from awareness campaigns, 40% from financial aid, and 8% from development opportunities. Employment training was prevalent, with 98% having received it. Overall, members' perception of Kudumbashree's performance was positive, with 58% holding a good opinion, 36% an outstanding opinion, and 6% an excellent opinion.

In conclusion, the study provides a comprehensive snapshot of the demographic composition, engagement, and perceptions of Kudumbashree members. Most respondents, 32%, fall in the 36-45 age group, with a significant representation from the 56-65 age group at 26%. Educationally, 46% have S.S.L.C qualifications, and 50% have been members for over 5 years. Family support for Kudumbashree activities is unanimous at 100%. Economically, 58% have a monthly income between 2000 to 4000, and 54% are involved in providing loans within their units. Meetings are conducted weekly, and 56% do not face difficulties in selling produced goods. Members generally rate their unit activities positively, with 52% considering them good and 48% very good. A high awareness level is observed in information technology (64%), marketing channels (82%), and the new production method (52%). Most members (78%) are aware of government incentives and subsidies, and 64% have taken loans from Kudumbashree. Challenges include lack of experience and training (42%), insufficient government support (36%), and conflicts among members (22%). Despite mixed opinions on government assistance, 98% have undergone employment training through Kudumbashree. Overall, 58% have a positive opinion, 36% outstanding, and 6% excellent opinion about Kudumbashree's performance. The findings suggest a generally positive outlook, emphasizing the need for targeted support to address specific challenges and capitalize on the strengths identified within the organization.

7. SUGGESTIONS

A dedicated initiative is proposed to establish a special package aimed at creating awareness and providing training programs for women groups at the block level, with the primary goal of fostering women entrepreneurship within micro-enterprises. This strategic approach seeks to empower women by equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in entrepreneurial ventures. Recognizing the importance of streamlining efforts, a single window system is deemed essential. This involves the convergence of all programs designed for women development, aiming to install confidence and motivation among women micro-entrepreneurs. The intention is to encourage participation in innovative programs while also advocating for policy modifications that enhance the overall business environment for micro-enterprises and their support institutions. The establishment of a common facility center under this mission emerges as a critical component. This center plays a pivotal role in providing access to raw materials and facilitating the marketing of finished goods. By identifying products in demand, the center promotes a quality control system, thereby aiding women micro-entrepreneurs in navigating the competitive market landscape.

Emphasizing the importance of manageable group sizes, the strategy advocates for small groups to ensure the smooth functioning of collective activities. Integrating Information Technology into the landscape of women entrepreneurship is also highlighted, suggesting that women entrepreneurs should harness the benefits of technological advancements for timely dissemination of information on processes, products, and marketing strategies.

Local self-governments are urged to prioritize micro-enterprises when allocating budgets, emphasizing the significance of supporting these initiatives at the grassroots level. To ensure the sustained success of these groups, constant vigilance from the mission is deemed necessary. This involves monitoring the progress of units, identifying challenges, and proposing remedial measures with the assistance of experts in the field. Additionally, there is a call for an attitudinal shift in consumer behaviour towards products produced by the Kudumbashree mission units. This shift is seen as crucial in a consumer-oriented state like Kerala, as it contributes to the growth of tiny units in local neighbourhoods. Ultimately, this approach aims to bring about economic and social empowerment for women and prosperity to their families.

8. CONCLUSION

The formation of self-help groups of women was a turning point in the concepts and practice of women development in Kerala. A new wave of enterprises, funded through microfinance, has pushed the state of Kerala ahead, in grass root level development activities in the country. The study corroborates that the Kudumbashree mission is one of the most effective schemes for the upliftment of rural masses especially women micro-entrepreneurs of Kerala. If the suggestions are properly implemented by the agencies concerned, we can improve the standard of living of the rural population of Kerala.

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