



Social-Empowerment of Owner-Members of Women Micro-Enterprises in Malabar Region of Kerala State

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Abstract

Women's Neighbourhood Groups (NHGs) under the Kudumbashree Mission in Kerala State are responsible for the formation of women's microenterprises. Government initiatives to eradicate poverty or promote self-employment have enabled them to operate. Women entrepreneurs are considered owners, members, and employees of these organisations. The goal of the current study is to evaluate the social empowerment of women who own micro-businesses.

The nature of the current study is both descriptive and inferential. The sample consisted of 150 women who run micro-entities. The primary data were collected by using a pre-tested interview schedule with closed-ended questions and Likert scales. The statistical techniques used in this study are percentage, mean, standard deviation, independent sample t-test, and analysis of variance. The study points out that the social empowerment of women entrepreneurs who own micro-units considerably enhanced their involvement in micro-business/enterprise activities. Based on the classification, the social empowerment of owner-members of women micro-entities is not significantly influenced by ownership or the type of activity. Locality, on the other hand, has a significant influence on the social empowerment of women who own microbusinesses. The establishment of women's microenterprises in Women's Neighbourhood Groups (NHGs) of the Kudumbashree Mission under Kerala State. Government initiatives to eliminate poverty or encourage self-employment have enabled them to operate. Women entrepreneurs are regarded as owners, members, and employees of these organisations. Assessing the social empowerment of women who own micro-businesses is the objective of the current study.

Keywords: Women Micro-enterprises, Neighbourhood Groups, Social Empowerment.



Introduction

The objective of the present study titled “Social Empowerment of Owner-Members of Women Micro-Enterprises in the Malabar Region of Kerala State”, reveals the extent to which social empowerment has helped owner-members of women-owned micro-enterprises under the auspicious Kudumbashree Mission in Kerala. In the event that positive change in social empowerment is required, sufficient and adequate support is to be provided, and this kind of study assists the total development and entrepreneurial development of owner-member-employees of WMEs.

Workers at microenterprises who actively participated in Kudumbashree’s women-led campaign to end hunger were empowered as entrepreneurs. It is observed that the owner-members’ perspectives on every facet of social empowerment clearly changed in connection with once they were involved in the business operations concerns of MEs. Kudumbashree operates as a community movement made up of Kerala women’s neighbourhood groups. Kudumbashree, a successful method for fostering the empowerment of women, has gained widespread recognition and support throughout Kerala. This research conducts an analysis of the entrepreneurial development of members of such entities.

Micro Enterprises and Women Empowerment

Neighbourhood Groups (NHGs) are a component of Kudumbashree, the Kerala government’s official initiative to eradicate poverty. Its goal is to develop microenterprises so that they can engage in economic activity and ultimately empower women and people in general. In this case, women microbusiness owners have contributed pertinent information about their MEs, and the research and study have been conducted using the replies thus gathered. Based on a survey of the literature, the researcher has developed three primary factors (criteria) to evaluate women’s empowerment: political, social, and economic empowerment.

Through the establishment of Women Micro Enterprises (WMEs), the Kerala government’s official initiative, overseen by the Kerala Kudumbashree Mission, seeks to reduce poverty. With regard to its style of activity and participation in service, business, and production-cum-distribution processes, MEs have transformed the disadvantaged members of society who have poor socio-economic conditions and indicators into owners, members, employees, and managers. MEs have demonstrated their tenacity and capacity to liberate the impoverished and disenfranchised by giving them a job and a daily income, which has an impact on



their social and economic empowerment, entrepreneurial growth, and quality of life. Kudumbashree Mission is making great progress by making sure these components are relevant to both life and business. As part of this objective, NHGs transform into MEs that can support livelihoods, guaranteeing livelihood development and business development that boosts the local economy and improves social life quality. In summary, the growth of women-owned microbusinesses benefits many facets of social life.

Social Empowerment

Social empowerment means the process of the take-charge individuals or groups to take charge of their lives, make good decisions, and actively participate in society. Key aspects of social empowerment are autonomy, participation, access to resources, self-confidence, etc. Autonomy refers to having the freedom to make choices of decisions by owner-members of women micro-enterprises. Participation is the act of taking part in decision-making processes that affect one's life. Access to resources refers to having equal access to education, healthcare, work, and other possibilities. Building self-esteem and having faith are the important aspects of self-confidence.

Review of Literature and Conceptual Frame Work

Women's involvement in entrepreneurship has a significant impact on both the socially empowered status of the individual and the overall economic success of a country. Numerous national and state-level studies have been conducted on entrepreneurship among women in India.

Rai et al. (2019) pointed out in their study entitled "From depletion to regeneration: Addressing structural and physical violence in post-conflict economies." According to the research work, participation of women in economic and financial operations will improve their status and enable them to involve themselves in the core administrative process.

Praveena K, Deepa Babu K G, and Ardra Anilkumar (2024), titled "A study on women's empowerment through entrepreneurship: a study with reference to small Kudumbashree (self-help groups) units of Kerala, India." The study found that the elements of women's empowerment that contribute to, influence and lead to the entrepreneurship of women entrepreneurs through their business activities. The study focuses on small-unit entrepreneurs and found that self-satisfaction, facilitating conditions, and improvement in socioeconomic status motivate women to turn to entrepreneurship and that the empowerment they experience is driven by



personal, economic, and political improvement. The study emphasises the freedom women enjoy through entrepreneurship and the role of government support through Kudumbashree units (self-help groups).

Dewal, Keerti (2021), in their study, entitled “Entrepreneurship among Small Scale Entrepreneurs of Rajasthan – A Psychological Inquiry”, pointed out that “It goes without saying that because entrepreneurship is one of the most dynamic and unexpected careers, entrepreneurs’ effectiveness and general well-being occasionally suffer. Having the required personality qualities boosts the likelihood of making the proper decisions and conquering challenges since personality is basically a disposition to act.”

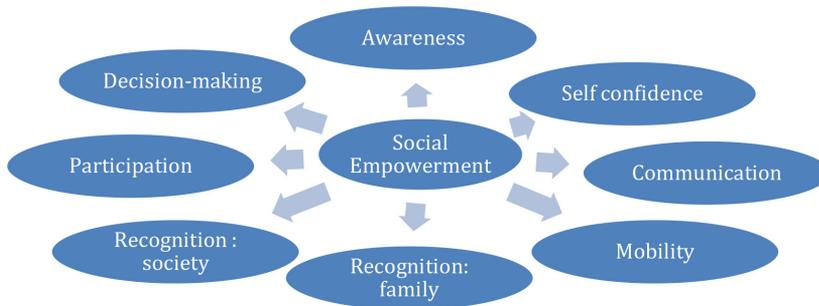
Ghumare Milind Ravindra (2022) states that the study titled “Entrepreneurs and work-life balance: A critical study in urban areas of Thane district” found that entrepreneurs may have the largest level of happiness and fulfillment in connection with every stage of their lives. In short, work-life balance promote to overall wellbeing of the entrepreneurs. Emotional balance, personal energy, life satisfaction and enjoyment all decrease with increasing the friction between work and life. As the tension between work-life and personal life increases, so does the potential to significantly lower absenteeism, raise employee self-satisfaction, and maintain adherence to regulatory requirements, especially in difficult economic times. Obtaining trade success considerate of entrepreneurial initiatives is most important, and establishing trade success also involves addressing external factors like finance, labour, and economic problems. This is so that trade growth and success in emerging nations may be attributed to the expansion of internal and external features or aspects. Thus, a complete understanding and development of innovative tools to determine the success of enterprises is essential, and such innovative instruments are 1. instruments for business progress in their modernisation and growth processes and 2. instruments for management to increase creative strategies to preserve and illustrate financial development.”

Puhazhendhi and Satyasai (2001) attempted to evaluate the success of SHG performance, particularly in connection with social and economic empowerment. Basis of the analysis of the primary data collected by using a standardised questionnaire from 560 samples in 223 SHGs operating in 11 states that represent different regions of the country. The investigation’s conclusions of the present study show that SHGs as an organisational structure may positively affect the social and economic empowerment of the rural areas.



Social Empowerment

The conceptual framework of social empowerment is the process of the take-charge individuals or groups to take control of their lives, make good decisions, and actively participate in society. Important components of social empowerment are autonomy, participation, access to resources, self-confidence, etc. In order to promote inclusion, equity and dignity, it encompasses improving the capacity of owner-members to make their own decisions, have an impact on decision-making processes, and make significant contributions to political, cultural, and economic life. Economic, political, legal, health, social inclusion, cultural, psychological, and educational empowerment are the elements that encompass social empowerment. The elements of the current study, which takes into consideration the socio-cultural context of owner-member women entrepreneurs of WMEs in Malabar, include general awareness, self-confidence, communication, mobility, social and familial recognition, engagement in social activities, and decision-making.



Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the social empowerment of owner members of women microenterprises in the Malabar region of Kerala State.
2. To compare the social empowerment of owner members of women microenterprises in the Malabar region of Kerala State before and after the entrepreneurship.
3. To find out the influence of locality, ownership and type of enterprise on the social empowerment of owner members of women microenterprises in the Malabar region of Kerala State.



Hypotheses

1. Social empowerment of owner members of women microenterprises in the Malabar region of Kerala State is significantly high after the entrepreneurship.
2. There is no significant difference in the social empowerment of owner members of women microenterprises in the Malabar region of Kerala State based on locality.
3. There is no significant difference in the social empowerment of owner members of women microenterprises in the Malabar region of Kerala State based on ownership.
4. There is no significant difference in the social empowerment of owner members of women microenterprises in the Malabar region of Kerala State based on activity.

Methods

Survey method was adopted to gather data from the owner members of Women Micro Enterprises of Malabar region. In the present study, the investigator developed and used a pre-tested interview schedule with closed-ended questions and Likert scales to collect the primary data. The aim of this study was to assess the Social Empowerment of owner members of Women Micro Enterprises in Malabar region of Kerala State.

Tool used for the study

In the Malabar region of Kerala State, the researcher created a method to evaluate the social empowerment of women microbusiness owners. The tool utilised was derived from a conceptual framework created especially for this investigation. Likert-type answer scales are used to measure general awareness, self-confidence, communication, mobility, social recognition, participation in social activities, and decision-making. It is divided into two sections: demographic profiles and social empowerment. Internal consistency of dependability was employed by the researcher to guarantee the reliability. To evaluate the reliability constant of the developed tool, Cronbach's alpha was computed. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of social empowerment is 0.789, which indicates that all items exhibit high levels of reliability.

Sample

The Malabar region consists of the districts of the northern area, which includes Kasaragod, Kannur, Wayanad, Kozhikode, Malappuram, and Palakkad.



The districts of Kozhikode and Palakkad were taken for the area to gather data for the present study. The population of the study consists of the women entrepreneurs of micro-entities in the districts of Kozhikode and Palakkad in the Malabar region. Within these two districts, 150 women entrepreneurs of 76 WMEs participated in the survey. Women micro-entrepreneurs from the districts of Kozhikode and Palakkad that were chosen for the current study are profiled in Table 1.

Table 1: Profile of the owner members of Women Micro Enterprises

Variable	Group	Number	Percentage
District	Kozhikode	75	50.00
	Palakkad	75	50.00
Locality of the enterprise	Rural	75	50.00
	Urban	75	50.00
Type of enterprise	Group	64	42.67
	Single	86	57.33
Type of Activity	Manufacturing	88	58.67
	Trade	30	20.00
	Service	32	21.33
Total		150	100.0

It is seen from Table 1 that of the total respondents, 50.00% of the women micro-enterprise owners belong to Kozhikode and Palakkad districts; similarly, 50.00% of the respondents fall in rural as well as urban areas. Considering the ownership of enterprise of the respondents, 42.67% of respondents belong to group activity, and 57.33% of entrepreneurs are representing single ownership. Based on the type of activity of the respondents, 58.67% of the respondents belong to manufacturing, 20.00% represent trade and 21.33% have service as their activity.

Scope of the study

Women micro-enterprises are formed by the Kudumbashree Mission's Women Neighbourhood Groups (NHGs) in Kerala State. They have been made possible by government programmes that fight against poverty or encourage self-employment. These groups recognise women entrepreneurs to be their owners, members, and staff. The current study aims to evaluate women who own microbusinesses in terms of their social empowerment. The scope of the present investigation is to



gauge the socially empowered status of Malabar area women microentrepreneurs. Comprehending the social empowerment of women microentrepreneurs aids them in expanding their capacity to produce and market their own goods and services in the age of competitive markets. It is anticipated that this study would be helpful to microentrepreneurs and entrepreneurial policymakers who intend to create and carry out entrepreneurial endeavours.

Data collection procedure

In order to gather information, the respondents were given the instrument to evaluate the socially empowered status of owner-members of women's microbusinesses in the Malabar area.

Statistical Techniques

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), paired sample t-test, independent sample t-test, and percentage analysis were used to analyse the data.

Social Empowerment and its components

In the context of social empowerment, the role of MEs in building awareness, self-confidence, communication, mobility, family recognition, social recognition, level of participation, involvement and decision-making has been subjected to study by analysing the state before ME and after ME activities. The result of the comparison of the social empowerment and its components is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Comparison of Social Empowerment and its components

Components	Before		After	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
General awareness	2.2067	49557.	4.0400	60067.
Self-Confidence	2.2400	70168.	4.1800	71485.
Communication	2.2533	52054.	4.2200	65405.
Mobility	2.2067	49557.	4.0333	85465.
Familial Recognition	2.3200	65865.	4.1333	70155.
Social Recognition	2.0067	91590.	4.0933	66903.
Participation in social activities	2.2600	60678.	4.0867	61236.
Decision-Making	2.2133	67144.	4.1800	60279.
Social Empowerment	17.7067	4.53258	32.9667	4.05734

Source: Primary Data



General awareness: The average score of general awareness of owner-members of women microenterprises before engaging in entrepreneurial activity is 2.20 with a standard deviation of 0.49, and it is increased to 4.04 with a standard deviation of 0.60.

Self-Confidence: In the case of self-confidence, the average score of owner-members of women microenterprises before engaging in entrepreneurial activity is 2.24 with a standard deviation of 0.70, and it is increased to 4.18 with a standard deviation of 0.71.

Communication: Considering the communication skill, the average score obtained for owner-members of women microenterprises before engaging in entrepreneurial activity is 2.25 with a standard deviation of 0.52, and it is increased to 4.22 with a standard deviation of 0.65.

Mobility: The average score achieved for mobility of owner-members of women microenterprises before engaging in entrepreneurial activity is 2.20 with a standard deviation of 0.49, and it is increased to 4.03 with a standard deviation of 0.85.

Family Recognition: Considering the familial recognition, the average score obtained for owner-members of women microenterprises before engaging in entrepreneurial activity is 2.32 with a standard deviation of 0.65, and it is increased to 4.13 with a standard deviation of 0.70.

Social Recognition: In the case of social recognition, the average score of owner-members of women microenterprises before engaging in entrepreneurial activity is 2.01 with a standard deviation of 0.91, and it is increased to 4.09 with a standard deviation of 0.66.

Participation in social activities: The average score obtained for the participation in social activities of owner-members of women microenterprises before engaging in entrepreneurial activity is 2.26 with a standard deviation of 0.60, and it is increased to 4.08 with a standard deviation of 0.61.

Decision-Making: The decision-making score obtained by owner-members of women microenterprises before engaging in entrepreneurial activity is 2.21 with a standard deviation of 0.67, and it is increased to 4.18 with a standard deviation of 0.60.

Social Empowerment: With regard to social empowerment, the mean score before MEs activities is 17.70 with a standard deviation of 4.53, and the mean score for the same after MEs activities increased to 32.96 with a standard deviation of



4.05. It is seen that there is a remarkable difference in social empowerment before (17.70) and after (32.96) the engaging entrepreneurial activity among owner-members of women microenterprises.

Comparison of Social Empowerment before and after participating MEs activities

H0: Social empowerment of owner members of women microenterprises in the Malabar region of Kerala State is significantly high after the entrepreneurship.

A paired-sample t-test was applied to compare the social empowerment of owner-members of women's enterprises before and after participating in ME activities, and it is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Comparison of Social Empowerment before and after participating MEs activities

Period	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	Significance
Before	17.7067	4.53258	29.892	0.000	Significant
After	32.9667	4.05734			

With regard to the social empowerment, the mean score before MEs activities is 17.70 with a standard deviation of 4.53, and the mean score for the same after MEs activities increased to 32.96 with a standard deviation of 4.05. The calculated t-value is 29.892 and the p-value is 0.000, and it is significant at the 5% level of significance. It can be concluded that social empowerment of owner-members of women micro-entrepreneurs is significantly increased after the participation in entrepreneurial activities. Hence, the hypothesis stated that 'Social Empowerment of owner members of women microenterprises in the Malabar region of Kerala State are significantly high after the entrepreneurship' is accepted.

Locale wise Analysis of Social Empowerment

On the basis of locale, the change experienced by owner members with regard to social empowerment after MEs activities is examined here. A comparison of social empowerment based on the locale of the women microenterprises is presented in Table 4.

H0: *There is no significant difference in the social empowerment of women microenterprises in the Malabar region based on locale.*

**Table 4:** Comparison of Social Empowerment based on locale

Category	Number	Mean	SD	t-Value (p-value)
Rural	75	32.2533	3.61339	2.180
Urban	75	33.6800	4.36559	(0.031)

Source: Primary Data.

In order to compare the social empowerment based on locale, an independent sample t-test was applied. In rural areas, the mean score of social empowerments is 32.25 with a standard deviation of 3.61, and in urban areas, it is 33.68 with a standard deviation of 4.36 and the p-value (0.031), which is less than 0.05. Hence, there exist significant differences in the social empowerment of owner-members of women microenterprises with regard to locale. Social empowerment of urban (33.68) respondents is significantly higher than rural (32.25) respondents. The hypothesis that ‘There is no significant difference in the social empowerment of women microenterprises in the Malabar region based on locale’ is rejected.

Owner wise Analysis of Social Empowerment

On the basis of ownership, the change experienced by owner members with regard to social empowerment after MEs activities is examined here. A comparison of social empowerment based on the ownership of the women’s microenterprises is presented in Table 5.

H0: *There is no significant difference in the social empowerment of women microenterprises in the Malabar region based on ownership.*

Table 5: Comparison of Social Empowerment based on ownership

Ownership	Number	Mean	SD	t-Value (p-value)
Single	64	32.5938	3.92679	0.971
Group	86	33.2442	4.15278	(0.333)

Source: Primary Data.



To compare the social empowerment based on ownership, an independent sample t-test was applied. The average score of social empowerment of single-owner respondents is 32.59 with a standard deviation of 3.92, and that of group-owner respondents is 33.24 with a standard deviation of 4.15 and the p-value (0.333), which is greater than 0.05. Hence, there is no significant difference in the social empowerment of owner-members of women microenterprises with regard to ownership. The hypothesis stated that ‘*There is no significant difference in the social empowerment of women microenterprises in the Malabar region based on ownership*’ is **accepted**.

Social Empowerment - Activity wise Analysis

A comparison of social empowerment based on the activity of the women microenterprises is presented in Table 6.

H0: *There is no significant difference in the social empowerment of women microenterprises in the Malabar region based on activity.*

Table 6: Comparison of Women Empowerment based on activity of Enterprises

Category	Number	Mean	SD	F-Value (p-value)
Manufacturing	88	32.7955	4.31026	0.209 (0.812)
Trade	30	33.1000	3.63271	
Service	32	33.3125	3.79675	

Source: Primary Data.

The mean scores of social empowerment-based activities such as manufacturing, trade and service are 32.79, 33.10 and 33.31, with standard deviations of 4.31, 3.63 and 3.79, respectively. Since the calculated p-value ($F=0.209$, $p=0.812$) is greater than 0.05, there is no significant difference in the social empowerment with regard to type of activity. The hypothesis stated that ‘*There is no significant difference in the social empowerment of women microenterprises in the Malabar region based on activity*’ is **accepted**.



Findings

- From the study, it can be concluded that social empowerment of owner-members of women micro-entrepreneurs is significantly increased after the participation in entrepreneurial activities.
- There exists significant difference in the social empowerment of owner-members of women microenterprises with regard to locale.
- Social empowerment of urban (33.68) respondents is significantly higher than rural (32.25) respondents.
- There is no significant difference in the social empowerment of owner-members of women microenterprises with regard to ownership.
- Ownership and type of activity have no significant influence on the social empowerment of owner-members of women microenterprises. But locality has significant influence on the social empowerment of owner-members of women microenterprises.

Conclusion

The purpose of the present investigation is to assess the social empowerment of owner-members of women microenterprises in the Malabar region of Kerala state. Studies show that social empowerment of owner-members of women micro-entrepreneurs is significantly increased after participation in entrepreneurial activities. The analysis reveals that there is no significant difference in the social empowerment of owner-members of women microenterprises in the Malabar region based on ownership and type of activity. There exist significant differences in the social empowerment of owner-members of women microenterprises with regard to locale. Social empowerment of urban (33.68) respondents is significantly higher than rural (32.25) respondents. Ownership and type of activity have no significant influence on the social empowerment of owner-members of women microenterprises. But locality has significant influence on the social empowerment of owner-members of women microenterprises.

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