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. Inspite 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.

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 GII 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, etal, 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 development 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
• Their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just and economic orders, nationally and internationally.

Kudumbashree

Inaugurated on 17 May 1998, by the then Prime Minister of India, Shri. Atal Bihari Vajpayee in Malappuram, "Kudumbashree" 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 people.

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°56’56”N to 10°21’29”N and longitudes of 77° 48’ 31”E to 77°16’14”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.
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, familial, and economic, social and political empowerment. The response was marked in a three point (Always, Sometimes, and Never) 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>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>N= 120 Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low level (less than 30%)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium level (30-40%)</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High level (Above 40%)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Level of Empowerment of the members

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>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Empowerment level &amp; Age</th>
<th>Low level</th>
<th>Medium level</th>
<th>High level</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N %</td>
<td>N %</td>
<td>N %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-25 years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-30 years</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-35 years</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Empowerment level &amp; Caste</th>
<th>Low level</th>
<th>Medium level</th>
<th>High level</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N %</td>
<td>N %</td>
<td>N %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBC</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OEC</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*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

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

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

While comparing the empowerment level and income 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.
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.

**References**

3. Rural women: the invisible mainstay of sustainability, Statement by Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women, on the International Day of Rural Women, 15 October, 2017