

Social Entrepreneurship and Women
Empowerment – A study conducted in
Ernakulam District

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Abstract

Kerala has one of the largest social entrepreneur networks of women. Entrepreneurship among women has started spreading in the society only during the recent years, in comparison to male entrepreneurship, and has facilitated the employment of a large number of people especially women through social entrepreneurship. A 'Young Women Social Entrepreneurship Development Programme' recently introduced in India identified women working in social enterprises and pointed out that currently only 39% of Indian women are formally employed, compared to 81% of Indian men. This paper intends to accentuate women's participation in entrepreneurial activities, and to highlight the contribution of women to the socio economic development of the society particularly in the district of Ernakulam. The present study has selected 30 women entrepreneurs who own different varieties of small scale entrepreneurial ventures situated in Ernakulam district. The study was undertaken with the objective of understanding the contribution of social entrepreneurship in the empowerment of women. The research design used in the present study is Descriptive. The tool employed for data collection was questionnaire. The samples were selected using convenient sampling technique. The data analysis has underlined that social entrepreneurship helps women to create an opportunity to run small scale industries and assist them to become economically as well as socially empowered. The study revealed that majority of the women social entrepreneurs is able to have improved life situation and permanent source of income. The need for independence, material incentives and achievement seem to be spreading the fire of entrepreneurial spirit among women. The study reveals that care and support from the family is an important factor helping in the success of the enterprise. This paper also identifies the socio-cultural barriers encountered by women to be successful social entrepreneurs.

Key Words: [Social Entrepreneurship](#), [Women Empowerment](#), [Small scale enterprises](#), [Socio-Economic Development](#), [Kudumbashree](#).

Introduction

Social entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurship refers to the practice of combining innovation, resourcefulness and opportunity to address critical social and environmental challenges. Social entrepreneurs focus on transforming systems and practices that are the root causes of poverty, marginalization, environmental deterioration and accompanying loss of human dignity. In so doing, they may set up for-profit or not-for-profit organizations, and in either case, their primary objective is to create sustainable systems change. (www.sbs.ox.ac.uk, 2015)

Social entrepreneurship is the field in which entrepreneurs tailor their activities to be directly tied with the ultimate goal of creating social value. In doing so, they often act with little or no intention to gain personal profit. A social entrepreneur “combines the passion of a social mission with an image of business-like discipline, innovation, and determination commonly associated with, for instance, the high-tech pioneers of Silicon Valley” (Dees, 1998) cited in (Abu-Saifan, 2012)

Women empowerment

70% of the people who live in absolute poverty are women. Women in such contexts are not just in deprivation of basic wants, but are also deprived of rights denied, opportunities curtailed and voices silenced. (www.care.org). The position of women and their status in any society is an index of its civilization. Though women have been considered as equal partners of development they have not been able to rise to the expected level due to years of discrimination and suppression. Primarily women are the means of survival of their families, but are generally unrecognized and undervalued, being placed at the bottom of the pile. No country can achieve its potential without adequately investing in and developing the capabilities of women. In the interest of long term development it is necessary to facilitate their empowerment. In many developing countries, including India, women have much less access to education, jobs, income and power than men. Even after five and half decades of planned development Indian women have not achieved expected success in the mainstream of life. Our country will be unable to have a competitive edge over others until and unless the status and role of women is improved. There is the need to strengthen and streamline the role of women in the development of various sectors by harnessing their power towards nation building and to attain accelerated economic growth. (www.techno-preneur.net, 2007)

The term empowerment is currently in widespread use across a range of different organizations from women’s organizations, to NGOs, governments, bilateral and multilateral agencies. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has recently adopted a Gender in Development Goal, which includes a commitment to advocating and promoting the empowerment of women in political and economic decision-making at all levels from the household to national government and in local, national and international administrative

structures. Concretely, it is suggested that empowerment will be promoted through increasing women's decision making powers, the support of income generating activities and provision of skills and education of women.

A number of areas of activity in development have become closely associated with the promotion of women is empowerment, such as microcredit, political participation and reproductive health and much innovative work has been done in these areas. (www.un.org)

Economic development through women's empowerment

There is a bi-directional relationship between economic development and women's empowerment defined as improving the ability of women to access the constituents of development in particular health, education, earning opportunities, rights, and political participation. In one direction, development alone can play a major role in driving down inequality between men and women; in the other direction, continuing discrimination against women can, as Amartya Sen has forcefully argued, hinder development. Empowerment can, in other words, accelerate development. Therefore gender disparity is greatest among the poor and developing countries. (Duflo, 2011)

Quality of family life of women entrepreneurs

A study conducted by Lee-Gosselin and Grise (1990), women entrepreneurs recognized that their family lives has been altered by entrepreneurship, with both positive and negative effects. The positive effect on family is a higher quality of life resulting from higher income. However, there may also be some negative effects on the families of women entrepreneurs. Women entrepreneurs may lack the time to fulfill their roles as mother and wife and their stress if integrating family and work life is more acute, since women typically assume responsibility at home. (Sandra L. Fielden, 2005)

In terms of married life, Watkins and Watkins (1983) argued that business initiation strains marital relationships if women take on the entrepreneurial roles because the men feel threatened by their wives' greater potential for economic success. Hence women entrepreneurs' relationships with their spouses may be adversely affected by their entrepreneurial role. (Sandra L. Fielden, 2005)

Small scale enterprises

A small-scale enterprise is a business that employs a small number of workers and does not have a high volume of sales. Such enterprises are generally privately owned and operated sole proprietorships, corporations or partnerships. (smallbusiness.chron.com, 2015)

Women entrepreneurs' play an important role in local economies, and a large percentage of microenterprises in developing countries are undertaken by women. Increasingly women in urban and rural areas are successfully turning to self generate employment in small scale enterprise activities in the informal sector to support their households. Rural women frequently have primary responsibility for agricultural production, in addition to domestic responsibilities and childcare. These responsibilities place heavy demands on women's time, and microenterprise activities can potentially increase the workload of women. Improving access to labor-saving technologies in any of these areas can free up time for income generating microenterprise activities. In many countries, women are the majority of workers in nonstandard work, such as temporary, casual, multiple part time, contract and home based activities.

(yesweb.org)

Research Methodology

General Objective

To study Women Empowerment through the Development of Social Entrepreneurship in Ernakulam District

Specific Objective

1. To study the socio-economic profile of the respondents.
2. To study the skills developed by Kudumbashree members through Social entrepreneurship.
3. To study the socio-economic development of women through social entrepreneurship.
4. To study the impact of enterprises on the quality of family life.
5. To find out the challenges faced by Kudumbashree members in starting up and running enterprise.

The researcher has made use of descriptive design. Descriptive designs are those concerned with describing characteristics of a particular individual or group.

Participant of the Study

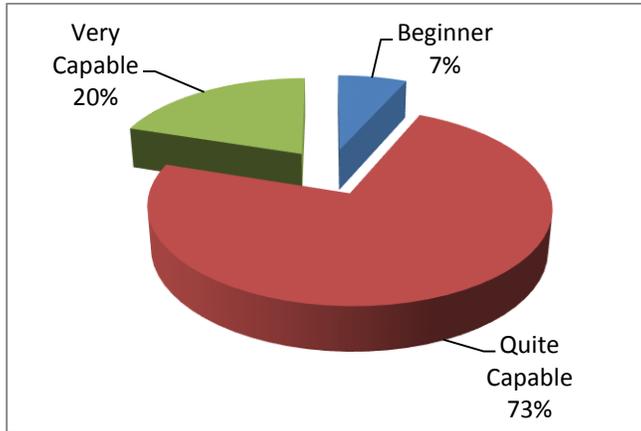
30 women entrepreneurs who own different varieties of small scale entrepreneurial ventures in collaboration with Kudumbashree mission situated in Ernakulum district. The samples were selected based on convenient sampling.

Measures Used

The tool for data collection was Questionnaire. The Questionnaire was based on the 5 different objectives. They were: Socio-economic profile, Skills Developed, Socio-economic development, Impact of Enterprises, Challenges faced.

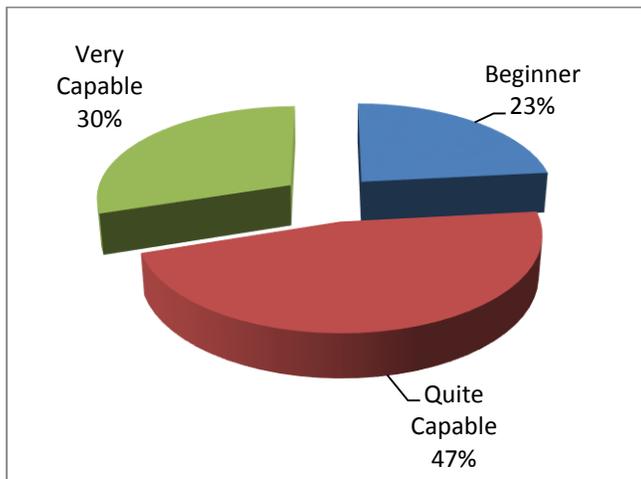
Major Findings

- **Problem Solving**



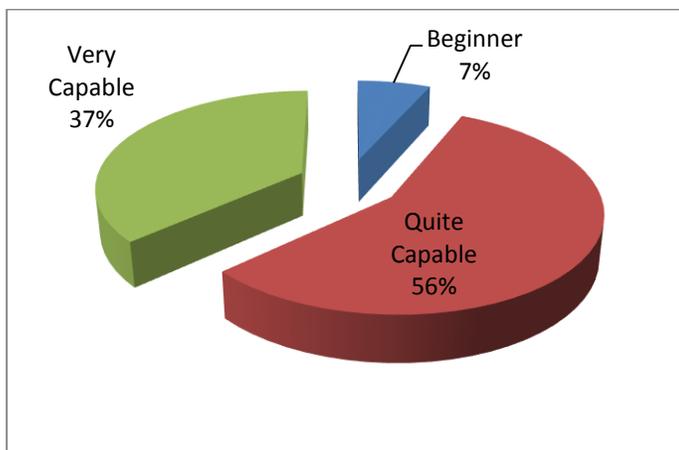
73.3% of the total 30 respondents felt that that they were quite capable in problem solving. 20% of the respondents mentioned that they are very capable in problem solving and 6.7% of the respondents are beginners in problem solving. This indicates that social entrepreneurship helps to develop problem solving skills.

- **Planning and research**



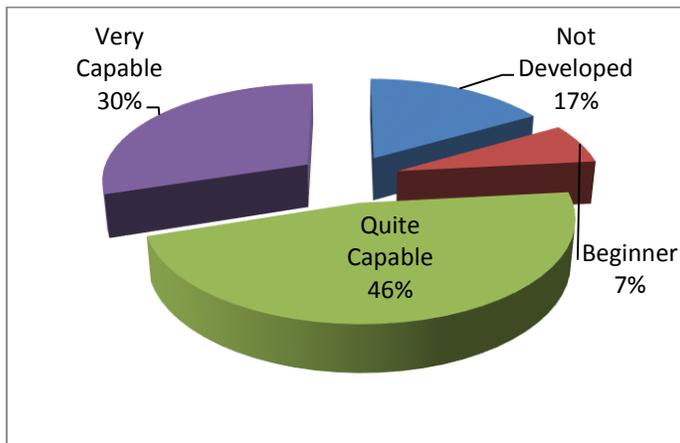
46.7% of the respondents are quite capable of planning and research. 30% of the respondents are very capable of planning and research and 23.3% of the respondents are beginners in planning and research. A higher proportion of the respondents indicated that they are quite capable of planning and research.

- **Decision making**



A larger proportion of the respondents indicated that they are quite capable of decision making which comprises of 56.7% of the total respondents. 6.7% of the respondents indicated that they are beginners in decision making which a comparatively small percentage. 36.7% of the respondents are very capable of decision making.

- **Setting priorities**



46.7% of the 30 respondents are quite capable of setting priorities and 30% of the respondents are very capable of setting priorities. 16.7% of the respondents have not developed skills in setting priorities and a very small percentage of respondents 6.7% are beginners in setting priority. This shows that a large proportion of respondents are quite capable of setting priorities.

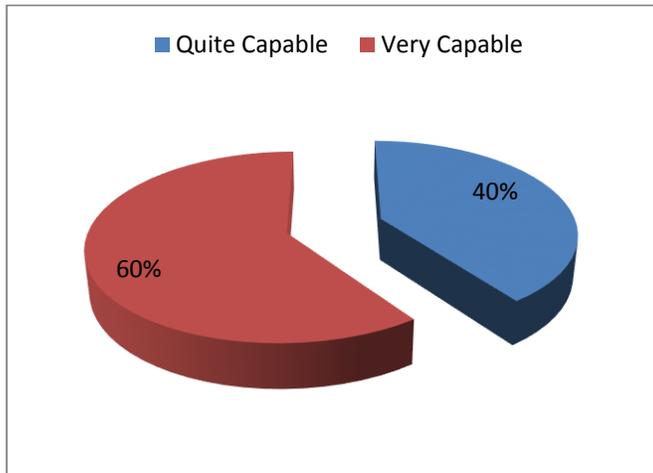
- **Speaking clearly and effectively**

Out of 30 respondents 15 are very capable of speaking clearly and effectively and 11 respondents are quite capable of speaking clearly. 4 respondents of the total are beginners in speaking clearly. This indicates that social entrepreneurship has provided with a platform to improve their speaking skills.

- **Writing clearly and effectively**

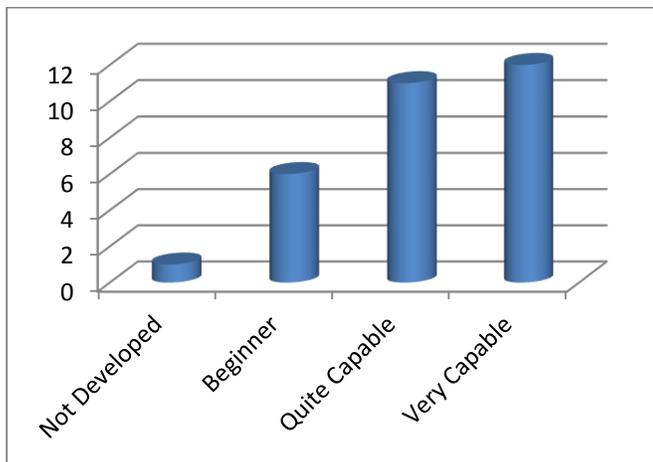
15 respondents are quite capable of writing clearly and effectively and 9 respondents are very capable of writing clearly and 6 respondents of the total are beginners in writing clearly and effectively.

- **Team building**



60% of the total respondents are quite capable in team building and 40% of the respondents are very capable of team building. This shows that most of the respondents have good team building skills.

- **Marketing**



12 respondents of the total 30 are very capable of marketing, 11 respondents are quite capable of marketing, and 6 of the respondents are beginners in marketing.

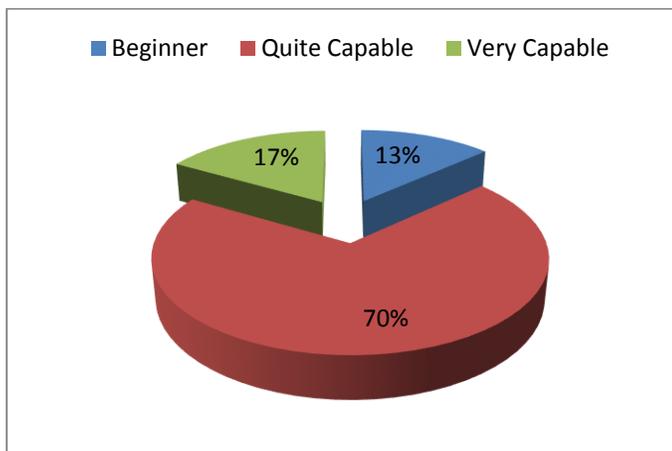
- **Finance Management**

46.7% of the respondents are quite capable of financial management and 36.7% of the respondents are very capable of financial management and 16.7% of the respondents are beginners in financial management. Financial management skill helps the respondents for better functioning of their family.

- **Record Keeping**

13 of the 30 total respondents are quite capable of record keeping and 11 are very capable of record keeping. A trend that is evident is that 1 of the total respondent have not developed the ability of record keeping.

- **Delegate responsibility**



70% of the total respondents are quite capable of delegating responsibility and 16.7% of the respondents are very capable of delegating responsibility.

- 76.7% of the family members have a very good opinion towards the participation in social enterprises. Family is one of the biggest pillar of strength for the women.
- 100% of the total respondents have stated that they improved their financial status.
- 80% of the respondents feel that their personalities have been developed through social entrepreneurship.
- 100% have felt improvement in their social interaction.
- 100% of the respondents could repay their loans on correct time.

Challenges

- 73.3% of the respondents face problems due to lack of education regarding the function of microenterprises.
- 86.7% of the respondents indicated that they are able to find out good markets in selling the product.
- 86.7% of the respondents face competition with other products in the market.

Conclusion

The need for independence, material incentives and achievement seem to be spreading the fire of entrepreneurial spirit among women. One of the major finding is that the women in such entrepreneurial activities have developed their social interaction levels and financials status as well. One of the challenges to be highlighted is the competition with other producers in the market though they are able to find good markets to sell their products. The study reveals that care and support from the family is an important factor helping in the success of the enterprise.