KUDUMBASHREE AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN KERALA – AN OVERVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT

Self-help groups led to an increase in social recognition of self, status of family in the society, size of social circle and involvement in intra family and entrepreneurial decision making (Sharma, 2008).Government should put more efforts to further popularize this concept by strengthening SHGs in such a way that suits their women citizens' requirements (Basha, 2014). The paper will reflect in understanding the various areas of Kudumbashree towards women empowerment in a hierarchical manner and highlighting the areas which needs immediate attention at every level. The major issue under investigation is to assess the contribution of Kudumbashree for women empowerment. The researchers have done a Literature Review which is considered as a base for deriving the Variables for developing ISM Model. The latent constructs are grounded in theory. Interpretive Structural Modeling is an approach which drives the researchers to study various aspects and correlation between Kerala SHG and Women Empowerment. It is vital for the researchers to gain significant insights into relationship between Kerala SHG and Women Empowerment. The empowerment of women is the best strategy for poverty eradication; process of empowerment becomes the signal light to their children, their families and the society at large (Nidheesh, 2009).

Keywords: Kudumbashree, self-help group, women empowerment, Interpretative Structural Modeling.

Introduction:

Kerala Model of Development is widely discussed throughout the world. Kerala had witnessed the radical reforms like caste reform movements of 19th and 20th centuries and the peasant and labour movements in the second half of the 20th century. The Government of Kerala (GOK) initiated Kudumbashree in 1998 to alleviate poverty in the state by 2008 by empowering women through collective action. Micro-finance plays a very vital role in creating employment and alleviating poverty and to cater to the needs of

women. Kudumbashree with the active support of Government of India and NABARD for wiping out absolute poverty from the state within a period of 10 years through micro finance. (Deepika, M. G., & Sigi, M. D., 2014) examined microenterprise model of **Kudumbashree to** capture the multidimensional features. Credit plays an important role in rural development and poverty alleviation (Pitt and Khandker, 1998). As per NABARD 2005, micro-finance programme plays a significant role in uplifting the life of the poor. (Nabard, 2005). One of the biggest contributions of microfinance is for women's

empowerment (Lakshmanan, S. ,2001). Women-groups got recognition as social intermediaries and their importance increased in financial matters and decisions related to their family also it induced interest and ambition in election politics (Purnima, K. S., & Bhagyalakshmi, K. ,2000). The entrepreneurial ability of the SHG group members to intimately relate their environment to the opportunities that it presents; which had been enabled through activities conducted by the NGOs, governmental programs etc. (Vijaykumar, 2009).

Theoretical Background:

Prospects for earning through deposits and higher off-farm activities progress their disposable income (Namboodiri and Shiyani, 2001). For meeting financial requirements, the SHG has become an opportunity for exchange of experiences and ideas over and above social participation by members, especially women. (Tilekar et al, 2001). Access of women has improved due to participation in SHGs. There is more investment in economic activities through credit obtained from SHG. This has helped women in reducing their dependence on moneylenders. They have **added value** to the occupational diversification at the house- hold level. (Galab, S., & Rao, N. C. ,2003).The women command more respect, get their due affection and rightful place in the family. Their involvement in family decisions has been substantially enhanced (Dadhich, C. L. ,2001). The women members of SHGs seem to have focussed on the non-traditional tasks like marketing and non-traditional economic activity. The women status have improvised control over their labour to this extent. (Galab, S., & Rao, N. C. ,2003; Nithyanandhana, S. H., & Mansorb, N. ,2015).

The SHG programme has been executed with the intention of improving the standard of living of the people in rural areas. It is achieving its goal through economic activities and continues earnings. (Roy, P. B. ,2011).The role of SHGs has relatively been more pronounced on social issues than on the economic issues (Puhazhendhi, V., & Satyasai, K. J. S. ,2001). The SHGs employ a group-based approach that enables poor women to collect capital by way of small savings and facilitating their access to formal credit facilities (Shylendra, H. S. ,1998).

The SHG system has proven to be very relevant and effective in offering women the possibility to expand their skills and stay away from exploitation and isolation. Though Women can empower themselves in various aspects through Self Help Groups. (Durgarani, M., & Gokilavani, R., 2015). The women members of SHGs perceive that involved in money lending to their group members is the major economic empowerment indicator. Overall improvement of the power is known as women empowerment. The Government is taking initiatives to concentrate on women Self Help Group

for the economic growth and poverty elevation. (Suja, S., 2012)

Empowerment of women is to bring about a change in the process in which women challenge the existing norms and culture, to effectively promote women well-being. SHG provides mutual help and solution to common problems through attractive schemes and good efforts. Consequently women entrepreneurship is encouraged through financial support. Microenterprise credit for women has become increasingly common as a poverty mitigation involvement in developing countries globally. (Hashemi, S. M. et al,1996). (Oommen, T. K., 2008) found that there is a correlation between SHGs and local politics; through membership of SHGs. (Jerinabi, U., 2006) studied women entrepreneurs who are talented and popular for their administration.

(Vadde, V., & Ratnam, N. V. ,2014)*stated* A typical rural **women's Self-Help Group** (SHG) can build prospective entrepreneurs by developing and enhancing their decision-making capability and building on their strength and confidence. Anila, A. ,2012 studied the socio economic condition of SHG **women** Entrepreneurs and factors influencing women's entrepreneurship in SHG. (Savitha, V., & Rajashekar, H. ,2012) evaluated the role and working of self-help groups in women entrepreneurship and found that SHGs is the reason for women empowerment. Women should be trained with technical knowledge and marketing techniques in the process of establishing an enterprise by them for more sustainability. (Arul Paramanandam, D., & Packirisamy, P. ,2015)

Longer membership in SHGs positively impacts asset creation, strong to various asset specifications. (Swain, R. B., & Varghese, A., 2009) SHG is designed with the objective of bridging the prevailing gap in the financial linkage and scattering **banking** facilities to the poor in rural and urban areas. (Tripathi, A. K., 2014)(Basu, P., 2006) examined the financial performance of Self Help Groups (SHGs).

SHG-Banking has come up as a new dimension of quality portfolio with very low risks and with marginal increase in operating costs. (Kropp, E. W., & Suran, B. S., 2002).Ranjan, Sharad; Tyagi, Dushyant, 2015 Studied the financial aspects through credit availability, credit-deposit ratio and amount of outstanding loan are found to have positive relation to the age of SHGs. It indicated that the credit for financing both productive and consumption need. (Henriques, D. E., & Gaonkar, D. R., 2011).

Micro-credit programme are attracting world-wide attention due to their effectiveness in tackling the development requirements (SHGS, I. O. O., 2013). Women led self-help groups in many parts of the country have achieved success in bringing women into main stream of decision. Self-help groups have become a workable organisational set up to disburse micro credit to women enterpreneurs. (Mahesha, V.,

& Akash, S. B., 2011). (Karmakar, K. G., 2000) Examined the state of the rural credit system in India and discussed the important role of self-help for sustainable rural credit delivery.

When considered within constructs of empowerment, capability poverty, citizenship, and participation in democratic processes, such SHG outcomes, and the community development processes that accompany their work, can be seen to make a modest but noteworthy contribution to larger transformations of oppressive structures. (Tesoriero, F. ,2006). (Stewart, M. J. ,1990). Concluded that in developing countries, citizens acquire the appropriate virtues through participation in the programmes linked with their vision of well-being and thus strengthen the cause of citizenship. Microfinance services in India are distributed through many channels: self-help and joint obligation groups, banks, non-banking financial companies, cooperatives, and post offices. Setting up governance and financial systems can, however, be subdued by low incomes and low literacy of members, and attitudes and rules of government and banks. (Chidambaranathan, M., & Premchander, S.,2013)

Based on the Literature Review carried out the following variables have been identified for Model Development

Table 1: Variables identified for ISM Model

Social and Economic Empowerment of Poor (Up liftment of Poor)	V1
Women Empowerment	V2
Women Entrepreneurship and Asset Creation	V3
Inadequate Capital and Banking Habits	V4
Self-Employment	V5
Micro Credit Needs	V6
Education	V7
Reach ability and Accessibility	V8
Income Volatility and Saving	V9
Mutual Help ,Community Involvement	V10

Research Methodology:

The study is based on primary and secondary data collected from different sources. It includes extensive literature review, survey-based research, interpretative structural modeling from Ebsco, Emerald, Scopus, Jstor, Thomson Reuters and Google Scholar. Information regarding SHG's and Kudumbashree has also been collected from secondary data sources such as books, articles that aid the study. Based on the literature review, it is evident that there is a strong relation between SHG and Women Empowerment. To understand the relationship among various variables that play a vital role in SHG and Women Empowerment modeling technique(ISM) proposed by Warfield in 1973 is used. This model is further analysed using MIC MAC analysis.

Identification of variables:

The preliminary ten variables based on literature review have been discussed in the previous section of literature review. The researchers have considered both Indian and foreign studies inorder to provide a broader understanding about the variables. These are the variables that have occurred multiple times in the review of literature and hence hold considerable importance in this area of research.

ISM Modeling:

ISM methodology is an important technique when there is a shortage of literature to support the relation among various variables. This method was first proposed by Warfield in 1973. The characteristic of this method is that it permits the individual or group to manage the interrelations between two or more elements at a time without compromising and deviating from the actual properties of the original elements/issues (Morgado et al., 1999; Mishra et al., 2012).ISM method gives the researchers more flexibility than many conventional quantitative modeling approaches. It offers a qualitative modeling language for structuring complexity and thinking on an issue by building an agreed structural model (Morgado et al., 1999).

Research Design:

Literature review was used to identify variables that contributed towards SHG and Women Empowerment. Ten such variables have been identified by the researchers. A structural self-interaction matrix (SSIM) is developed for the identified variables inorder to derive a contextual relation among the variables. This matrix is then developed into a reachability matrix using binary digits. Model levels are derived by iterative partitioning of the reach ability matrix. The model is then reviewed for conceptual inconsistencies and revised accordingly.

Structural Self-interaction Matrix:

For the structural self-interaction matrix (SSIM), expert opinion was used for defining related connection among variables. Four symbols were used to denote the type and direction of relationship between a pair of barriers 'i' and 'j'. The following four symbols have been used to denote the direction of the relationship between the two variables (i and j):

1) V is used for the relation from i to j (i.e. if variable i "will help achieve" variable j).
2) A is used for the relation from j to i (i.e. if variable j "will be achieved" by variable i).
3) X is used for both direction relations (i.e. if variables i and j "help achieve each other").
4) O is used for no relation between i and j (i.e. if variable i and j are not related).

The above is represented as follows:
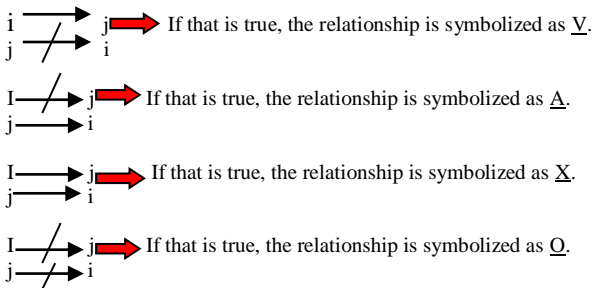
Applying the concept to the eight variables, the SSIM is as follows:

Table 2: Structural self-interaction matrix

J↓ i→	V10	V9	V8	V7	V6	V5	V4	V3	V2	V1
V1	X	A	X	X	A	A	O	X	O	
V2	X	X	V	X	V	A	A	X		
V3	X	V	X	X	X	X	X			
V4	A	X	A	A	X	A				
V5	O	X	A	V	X					
V6	X	X	A	O						
V7	O	V	O							
V8	X	V								
V9	A									
V10										

Reachability Matrix:

SSIM developed from contextual relationships was then converted into binary matrices called initial reachability matrices. The reachability matrix was developed by replacing V, A, X and O by a combination of 1s and 0s as per the rules.

Based on the reachability matrix the driving and dependence power is further derived.

Table 3: Reachability Matrix

J→ i	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	V7	V8	V9	V10	Driving Variables
V1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	5
V2	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	7
V3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
V4	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	5
V5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	8
V6	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	7
V7	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	6
V8	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	8
V9	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	6
V10	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	8
Dependent Variable	8	7	9	8	5	8	5	5	9	6	

Level Partitions:

Based on the reachability matrix, the antecedent set and reachability set is determined. The intersection of the 2 sets is then determined which helps to identify the different levels of hierarchy.

Table 4: Level Partitioning Level 1

Variables	Reachabiltiy Set(RS)	Antecedent Set(AS)	RS∩AS	Level
V1	1,3,7,8,10	1,3,5,6,7,8,9,10	1,3,7,8,10	
V2	2,3,6,7,8,9,10	2,3,4,5,7,9,10	2,3,7,9,10	
V3	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	Level 1
V4	2,3,4,6,9	3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10	3,4,6,9	Level 1
V5	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,9	3,5,6,8,9	3,5,6,9	
V6	1,3,4,5,6,9,10	2,3,4,5,6,8,9,10	3,4,5,6,9,10	Level 1
V7	1,2,3,4,7,9	1,2,3,5,7	1,2,3	Level 1
V8	1,3,4,5,6,8,9,10	1,2,3,8,10	1,3,8,10	
V9	1,2,4,5,6,9	2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10	2,4,5,6,9	
V10	1,2,3,4,6,8,9,10	1,2,3,6,8,10	1,2,3,6,8,10	Level 1

Level 1 is V3 with Branches of V1, V2 and V4, V6 on both sides

Table 5: Level Partitioning Level 2

Variables	Reachability Set(RS)	Antecedent Set(AS)	RS∩AS	Level
V1	7,8,10	5, 7,8,9,10	7,8,10	Level 2
V2	7,8,9,10	5,7,9,10	7,9,10	
V3	5, 7,8,9,10	5, 7,8,10	5, 7,8,10	Level 2
V4	9	5, 7,8,9,10	9	
V5	5, 7,9	5, 8,9	5, 9	
V6	5, 9,10	5, 8,9,10	5, 9,10	
V7	7,9	5,7	7	
V8	5, 8,9,10	8,10	8,10	Level 2
V9	5, 9	5, 7,8,9,10	5,9	
V10	8,9,10	8,10	8,10	Level 2

Level 2 is V8 and V10

Table 6: Level Partitioning Level 3

Variables	Reachability Set(RS)	Antecedent Set(AS)	RS∩AS	Level
V1	7	5, 7, 9	7	
V2	7, 9	5,7,9	7,9	
V3	5, 7, 9	5, 7	5, 7	
V4	9	5, 7, 9	9	
V5	5, 7,9	5, 9	5, 9	Level 3
V6	5, 9	5,9	5, 9	Level 3
V7	7,9	5,7	7	
V8	5, 9			
V9	5, 9	5, 7, 9	5,9	Level 3
V10	9			

Level 3 is V5 and V9

Table 7: Level Partitioning Level 4

Variables	Reachability Set (RS)	Antecedent Set (AS)	RS∩AS	Level
V1	7	7	7	Level 4
V2	7	7	7	Level 4
V3	7	7	7	Level 4
V4		7		
V5	7			

| Variables	Reachability Set (RS)	Antecedent Set (AS)	RS ∩ AS	Level
V6				
V7	7	7	7	Level 4
V8				
V9		7		
V10				

Deriving Model:

Figure 1: ISM Model
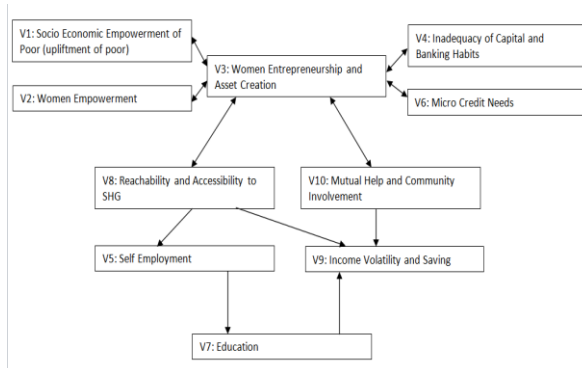
MIC MAC Analysis:

MICMAC is an abbreviation of Matriced' Impacts croises-multiplication appliqué an classment (Cross-Impact Matrix Multiplication to Classification). It is used to examine the Driving Power and Dependence Power of the variables; based on which they have been classified into four categories viz. Autonomous, Linkage, Dependent and Driving variables.
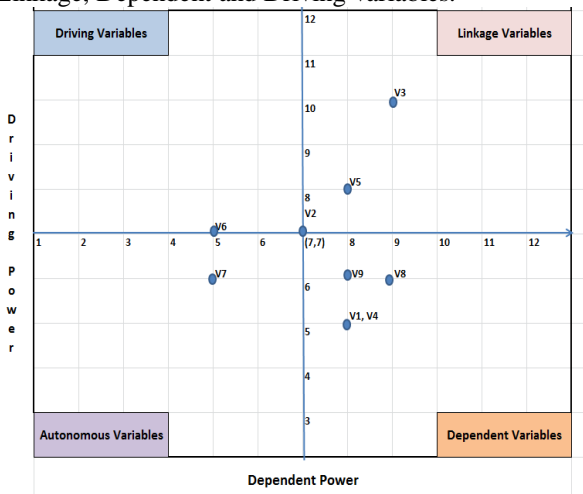
As shown in figure 2, Micro Credit Needs is the driving variable which indicates that is has strong driving power but weak dependence power. Education is an autonomous variable ie a variable that has weak driving power and weak dependence power. Social and Economic Empowerment of Poor, Inadequate Capital and Banking Habits, Reach ability and Accessibility and Income Volatility and Saving are the dependent variables. These variables have weak driving power but strong dependence power. Women Empowerment, Women Entrepreneurship and Asset Creation and Self

Employment are the linkage variables i.e. Variables that have strong driving power and strong dependence power.

Conclusion:

There is a positive impact on Social and Family Empowerment after becoming a part of SHGs . SHG has helped in getting capital and the facilities from the various banks and post offices. SHGs had helped them to get the facilities provided by the saving banks and post offices. The women who were associated with the SHG's have started their new business with the help of the loans and training which they had received from the SHG's. More entrepreneurship initiatives were taken for women to be self-sufficient to start their business and become an entrepreneur to the society.

Figure 1 depicts the mutual impact and inter relation between the ten variables that were identified through literature review. The ten variables are divided into four levels Women Entrepreneurship and asset creation is the most important variable and the major cause for joining Self-help group as this helps in Socio Economic upliftment, women empowerment which is supported by Micro credit and good banking habits. Reachability and Accessibility to SHG and community development appeared to be the second most important variables. This in turn helps to support and build self-employment, income and volatility and education.

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