



THE ROLE OF KUDUMBASHREE UNITS IN PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN KERALA

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Women's empowerment and gender equality are widely acknowledged as being essential to progress in all spheres. The objective of this study is to examine the factors that motivate women to join Kudumbashree Units in Kerala, with a focus on empowering women and promoting gender equality in the development process.

Theoretical Framework: The study is based on the understanding that women's empowerment and gender equality are crucial for progress in all aspects of society. The Kudumbashree scheme aims to eradicate poverty and empower underprivileged rural women through the establishment of microcredit and profitable businesses.

Method: The study involves female members of Kudumbashree units in Kerala, with a total sample size of 399. The study analyses the variables that influence women's decision to join the Kudumbashree Units, comparing them on a group-by-group basis.

Results and Conclusion: The results indicate that, except for the variables of Family environment and Supports/Relationships, there are no significant differences in the factors influencing women's decision to join Kudumbashree Units in Kerala across different groups.

Implications of the Research: The research highlights the importance of understanding the factors that encourage women to participate in initiatives like Kudumbashree Units. The findings can inform policymakers and program implementers in designing strategies to promote women's participation and empowerment.

Originality/Value: This study contributes to the understanding of women's empowerment and gender equality in the context of Kudumbashree Units in Kerala. It provides insights into the factors influencing women's decision to join such units, offering valuable information for program planning and implementation.

Keywords: Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication, Micro-Credit, Empowerment, Microcredit.

O PAPEL DAS UNIDADES KUDUMBASHREE NA PROMOÇÃO DO EMPODERAMENTO SUSTENTÁVEL DAS MULHERES EM KERALA

RESUMO

Objetivo: O empoderamento das mulheres e a igualdade de gênero são amplamente reconhecidos como essenciais para o progresso em todas as esferas. O objetivo deste estudo é examinar os fatores que motivam as mulheres a se associarem às unidades Kudumbashree em Kerala, com foco no empoderamento das mulheres e na promoção da igualdade de gênero no processo de desenvolvimento.

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Estrutura teórica: O estudo baseia-se no entendimento de que o empoderamento das mulheres e a igualdade de gênero são cruciais para o progresso em todos os aspectos da sociedade. O esquema Kudumbashree tem como objetivo erradicar a pobreza e capacitar as mulheres rurais desprivilegiadas por meio do estabelecimento de microcrédito e de negócios lucrativos.

Método: O estudo envolve membros do sexo feminino das unidades Kudumbashree em Kerala, com um tamanho total de amostra de 399. O estudo analisa as variáveis que influenciam a decisão das mulheres de se associarem às unidades Kudumbashree, comparando-as em uma base de grupo por grupo.

Resultados e conclusões: Os resultados indicam que, com exceção das variáveis de Ambiente familiar e Apoios/Relacionamentos, não há diferenças significativas nos fatores que influenciam a decisão das mulheres de se associarem às Unidades Kudumbashree em Kerala entre os diferentes grupos.

Implicações da pesquisa: A pesquisa destaca a importância de compreender os fatores que incentivam as mulheres a participar de iniciativas como as Unidades Kudumbashree. Os resultados podem informar os formuladores de políticas e implementadores de programas na elaboração de estratégias para promover a participação e o empoderamento das mulheres.

Originalidade/valor: Este estudo contribui para a compreensão do empoderamento das mulheres e da igualdade de gênero no contexto das unidades Kudumbashree em Kerala. Fornece insights sobre os fatores que influenciam a decisão das mulheres de participar dessas unidades, oferecendo informações valiosas para o planejamento e a implementação do programa.

Palavras-chave: Igualdade de Gênero, Erradicação da Pobreza, Microcrédito, Empoderamento, Microcrédito.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The empowerment of women and their participation in the development process have been viewed as key aspects of development. Women's empowerment and gender equality are widely acknowledged as being essential to progress in all spheres. Females in rural areas are thought to be mute and unprotected. Sometimes women are denied their human rights because of respect for tradition. The empowerment of women through various laws, initiatives, and programmes is the most significant concern of the twenty-first century. Thus, it may be said that women frequently have a lot of difficulty progressing. But as women advance, they will realise that it was the best decision they have ever made. Women are not required by law to research anything at this time. Never forget that progress for women is every step forward. Women are capable of doing a lot of things. Motivation dictates what women do. How successfully women perform this depends on their mentality. Remember that improvements in women's lives are not by accident. It improves with change. One of the women in Kerala who has sparked transformation is Kudumbashree. The purpose of this study is to determine the elements that motivate women in Kerala to become members of the Kudumbashree Units.

1.1 Importance of Kudumbashree

The Kudumbashree programme is unmistakably a female-focused effort to combat poverty. One of the main objectives of the programme is to eradicate poverty while also advancing women. With the help of Local Self Governments and extensive community action, this initiative aims to end all forms of poverty in ten years. It also encourages poor organisation by combining self-help with the demand-driven gathering of services and resources to address



the various aspects and manifestations of poverty. By starting small enterprises, Kudumbashree assists its members in improving their financial standing. "Kudumbashree" provides a wide range of services throughout the many phases of creating a firm, from aiding in the identification and selection of an appropriate unit to the last step of making sure they can stand on their own two feet. Some of the various methods of providing support include providing training on various project-related topics, sharing marketing expertise, staying up to date with cutting-edge techniques and technologies, and releasing microentrepreneurs' loan requests.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Kerala's Kudumbashree Units, despite being instrumental in empowering women through micro-entrepreneurship and self-help groups, are facing challenges that could limit their effectiveness and capacity to support women's empowerment. These issues include lack of access to adequate financial resources, skill development programs, and market linkages. Additionally, there is a lack of research on the real impact of these units on improving the socio-economic status of women.

The problems also extend to socio-cultural barriers that prevent the active and efficient participation of women. The absence of women in decision-making roles and the lack of an enabling environment to balance their domestic responsibilities with entrepreneurial activities further complicates the scenario.

There is a critical need to investigate these issues, assess the success of the Kudumbashree Units in truly empowering women, and find solutions to mitigate these challenges. Only through such an approach can the Kudumbashree initiative effectively contribute to women's empowerment in Kerala, promoting their economic independence and social status.

1.3 Need and Significance of the Study

In the modern world, scarcity is a significant problem that affects both developing and impoverished nations. A concentrated effort on the part of the government is seen to be the only way to address the problem of poverty. The Paucity must be filled by empowering women and including them in the development process. It is believed that true advancement can only happen when men and women collaborate on an equal basis. Achieving progress in all disciplines depends on gender equality and the empowerment of women. One of Kudumbashree's primary objectives is the eradication of poverty, combined with the empowerment of women. The main objective of the Kudumbashree scheme is to raise the standard of living for underprivileged rural women by establishing microcredit and profitable businesses. Therefore, it's important to assess the causes that led the woman to enlist in Kerala's Kudumbashree Units. Since there aren't many previous research on the subject at hand, an effort has been made to determine what elements motivate women to enlist in Kerala's Kudumbashree Units.

1.4 Objective

To assess the factors that influences the woman to join the Kudumbashree Units in Kerala.



1.5 Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the factors that influence the woman to join the Kudumbashree Units in Kerala.

2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Kabeer, Naila. (1999) studied the broader topic of women's empowerment in India: the historical, social, and cultural factors that impact women's status and rights in India, examining legislative measures, social reforms, and cultural shifts that have contributed to or hindered women's empowerment.

Raghavan, M. (2006) evaluated Kudumbashree's effectiveness in achieving its goals: These investigations measure and analyse the extent to which Kudumbashree has succeeded in its mission to empower women, using various metrics such as economic independence, social inclusion, and personal empowerment.

Swain, R. B., & Wallentin, F. Y. (2009), in their studies of different women's empowerment programs in India, provided a side-by-side analysis of various programs, comparing their strategies, implementation, effectiveness, and impact. This kind of analysis helps highlight the unique elements of Kudumbashree's approach and success.

Narayana, N. (2002), in his studies of individual women or groups of women involved in Kudumbashree, provided a detailed insight into the experiences of women participating in the program, their challenges, victories, and the transformations they undergo.

Mayoux, L. (1999) studied the specific mechanisms of women's empowerment, such as microfinance, social support, and community organising. These studies explore the theories and methods of empowerment that underpin programs like Kudumbashree, like microfinance's role in promoting economic independence, and how social support can improve mental health and foster resilience.

Heller, P. (2000), in his study of the unique socio-economic and cultural context of Kerala, looked at the unique aspects of Kerala's society, such as its higher literacy rates, matrilineal traditions, and political climate, and how these factors interact with programs like Kudumbashree.

Shajimon, P. (2012), examined the limitations and criticisms of Kudumbashree, pointing out areas where the initiative might fall short or could improve, providing a balanced perspective.

Desai, V., & Sivaramakrishnan, K.C. (2012) studied the role of governmental and non-governmental organisations in women's empowerment in India: These analyses look at the wider context of women's empowerment in India, including other organisations' efforts and the overall environment within which Kudumbashree operates.

Sanyal, P. (2009). Literature on the role of self-help groups in women's empowerment: These studies analyse the effectiveness of neighbourhood groups, their internal dynamics, how they foster solidarity and mutual support, and their role in women's empowerment initiatives like Kudumbashree.

Srivastava, N. (2009) studied the intersection of gender and poverty in India. How poverty disproportionately affects women, the unique challenges faced by poor women, and how initiatives like Kudumbashree can help alleviate these problems.

Kabeer, N., & Natali, L. (2013). Investigations into the relationship between women's empowerment and economic development: These studies explore how empowering women can contribute to overall economic growth and societal development, highlighting the wider implications of programs like Kudumbashree.



Singh, G., & Belwal, R. (2008). Studies on the importance of women's entrepreneurship in India: These articles highlight the role of women entrepreneurs in the Indian economy, the challenges they face, and how programs like Kudumbashree can support them.

Mohan, R., & et al. (2022) and Krishna, A. (2022). Literature on the role of social capital in women's empowerment: These studies focus on how networks of relationships and social trust can promote women's empowerment, a key principle of Kudumbashree's community-based approach.

Devika, J., & Thampi, B. V. (2012). Analyses of Kudumbashree's impact on specific social issues, such as domestic violence or gender inequality: These studies delve into how Kudumbashree can contribute to broader social change, including reducing domestic violence and promoting gender equality.

Satheesh, P. V., & Arora, S. (2005). Assessments of the impact of Kudumbashree on women's political participation: These studies explore whether Kudumbashree is fostering political awareness and engagement among women, contributing to the political empowerment of women.

3 METHODOLOGY

The goal of the current study is to determine what characteristics motivate women to enlist in Kerala's Kudumbashree Units. The female Kudumbashree unit members in Kerala received the planned routine. 399 people make up the entire sample size. Similarly, the researcher used the Stratified Sampling Technique to gather data from the population. The complete sample of respondents is divided into three groups based on region: the southern region, the centre region, and the northern region. Anova and multivariate tests are utilised for analysis. The researcher created a Likert scale with a maximum value of five points. The score given by the female members of the Kudumbashree units in Kerala has been separated into three categories based on the Quartile value to make the outcome more tangible and clear. The influence of a mean score value less than 3.1 is to be considered low, the influence of a mean score value between 3.1 and 3.5667 is to be considered moderate, and the influence of a mean score value beyond 3.5667 is to be considered high.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The empowerment of women and their engagement in the development process have been deemed essential characteristics of development. It is obvious that equal function for men and women is necessary for factual progress to be made. Internationally recognised as a key element of transformation in all spheres is gender equality and the empowerment of women. Rural women are thought of as unprotected and reserved. They must thus be given the means to combat the ills they encounter. Along with the eradication of poverty, Kudumbashree's urgent goals include the empowerment of women. The Kudumbashree scheme attempts to improve the standard of living for underprivileged women in rural areas by establishing microcredit and profitable enterprises. The State of Kerala's Kudumbashree programme to end poverty ushers in a new wave of eagerly awaited developments in our development history. It is a neighborhood-based self-help project for underprivileged women. The elements that motivate women to join Kudumbashree Units in Kerala are discussed in the current study. The elements include the work environment, job security, job description, and relationships and support systems inside the family. Here, the Manova test's support is contrasted with the causes that led the woman member to join the Kudumbashree Units in Kerala. The dependent variables are the factors. It covers things like the work environment, job security, job responsibilities, and



relationships and support systems. Region (Southern, Central, and Northern) and Area of group are the categorical variables (Rural, Semi urban and Urban).The details are shown below

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics – Factors Influence the Woman to Join the Kudumbashree Units

Descriptive Statistics	Region	Area of group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Family Environment	South	Rural	2.893	.8492	73
		Semi urban	3.222	1.0121	9
		Urban	3.332	.8936	38
		Total	3.057	.8922	120
	Central	Rural	3.211	.8948	55
		Semi urban	2.886	.9604	21
		Urban	3.176	1.1222	17
		Total	3.131	.9526	93
	North	Rural	3.311	1.0359	112
		Semi urban	3.047	.9811	34
		Urban	2.890	1.0167	40
		Total	3.172	1.0321	186
	Total	Rural	3.161	.9641	240
		Semi urban	3.019	.9692	64
		Urban	3.118	.9994	95
		Total	3.128	.9723	399
Working Conditions	South	Rural	2.946	.6883	73
		Semi urban	3.107	.7835	9
		Urban	3.284	.7024	38
		Total	3.065	.7109	120
	Central	Rural	3.258	.7967	55
		Semi urban	3.209	.9266	21
		Urban	3.148	.9295	17
		Total	3.227	.8433	93
	North	Rural	3.340	.8610	112
		Semi urban	3.268	.8967	34
		Urban	3.113	.9416	40
		Total	3.278	.8851	186
	Total	Rural	3.202	.8124	240
		Semi urban	3.226	.8802	64
		Urban	3.187	.8459	95
		Total	3.202	.8295	399
Job Security	South	Rural	3.247	.7966	73
		Semi urban	3.417	.9922	9
		Urban	3.533	.9082	38
		Total	3.350	.8510	120
	Central	Rural	3.318	.9889	55
		Semi urban	3.238	.9535	21
		Urban	3.162	.8658	17
		Total	3.272	.9517	93
	North	Rural	3.471	.9347	112
		Semi urban	3.478	.9482	34
		Urban	3.225	.9487	40
		Total	3.419	.9406	186
	Total	Rural	3.368	.9099	240
		Semi urban	3.391	.9469	64
		Urban	3.337	.9231	95
		Total	3.364	.9168	399
Job Description	South	Rural	3.250	.7372	73
		Semi urban	3.444	.8730	9
		Urban	3.533	.7627	38
		Total	3.354	.7605	120



	Central	Rural	3.418	.8095	55
		Semi urban	3.226	.9080	21
		Urban	3.176	.7113	17
		Total	3.331	.8144	93
	North	Rural	3.408	.7827	112
		Semi urban	3.478	.8990	34
		Urban	3.250	1.0454	40
		Total	3.387	.8649	186
	Total	Rural	3.363	.7758	240
		Semi urban	3.391	.8918	64
		Urban	3.350	.8898	95
		Total	3.364	.8213	399
Supports/Relationships	South	Rural	3.199	.7476	73
		Semi urban	3.306	.6821	9
		Urban	3.563	.7262	38
		Total	3.327	.7509	120
	Central	Rural	3.427	.7244	55
		Semi urban	3.464	.7344	21
		Urban	3.118	.7078	17
		Total	3.379	.7266	93
	North	Rural	3.391	.7918	112
		Semi urban	3.324	.7348	34
		Urban	3.219	.6727	40
		Total	3.341	.7568	186
	Total	Rural	3.341	.7663	240
		Semi urban	3.367	.7196	64
		Urban	3.345	.7203	95
		Total	3.346	.7465	399

Source: Compiled from the Primary data by the authors (2023).

From the above table 1, the provided descriptive statistics depict several key factors: Family Environment, Working Conditions, Job Security, Job Description, and Supports/Relationships across three different regions: South, Central, and North. These factors are further analyzed for three area categories: Rural, Semi-urban, and Urban.

Family Environment: In all regions, the urban areas appear to have a higher mean value compared to rural and semi-urban areas, suggesting a more conducive family environment for women empowerment in urban settings. Overall, the North region shows the highest mean across all area categories.

Working Conditions: The working conditions for women seem to be the best in the North region across all area categories, with the highest mean observed in the rural sector of the North region. The Central region's semi-urban and urban areas have lower means compared to the South and North, indicating potentially less favorable working conditions.

Job Security: The South region's urban area indicates the highest mean, suggesting a greater perception of job security among women in these areas. Comparatively, the mean values in the North region's rural and semi-urban areas are slightly higher than in other regions.

Job Description: A similar pattern to Job Security is seen here, with the South region's urban areas scoring highest in satisfaction with job descriptions. However, this factor shows a more consistent rating across different regions and area categories.

Supports/Relationships: Women in the South region's urban areas again reflect the highest mean score, suggesting stronger support networks and relationships. However, the Central region's rural areas closely follow this, indicating relatively strong support systems for women in these areas.

In conclusion, these findings suggest that urban areas generally tend to have higher means across most of the factors, indicating potentially more favorable conditions for women's



empowerment. The South region's urban area frequently scores the highest mean across most factors, suggesting this area as potentially the most conducive for women's empowerment. However, individual factors vary, and it's important to consider this variability when developing programs and interventions.

Table 2 Tests of Between-Subjects Effects – Factors Influence the Woman to Join the Kudumbashree Units

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	Family Environment	13.559 ^a	8	1.695	1.823	.071
	Working Conditions	7.947 ^b	8	.993	1.457	.171
	Job Security	5.755 ^c	8	.719	.853	.556
	Job Description	4.432 ^d	8	.554	.818	.587
	Supports/Relationships	6.094 ^e	8	.762	1.377	.205
Intercept	Family Environment	2306.757	1	2306.757	2480.508	.000
	Working Conditions	2424.328	1	2424.328	3555.432	.000
	Job Security	2669.773	1	2669.773	3166.642	.000
	Job Description	2686.926	1	2686.926	3969.255	.000
	Supports/Relationships	2658.629	1	2658.629	4807.491	.000
Region	Family Environment	.192	2	.096	.103	.902
	Working Conditions	.688	2	.344	.504	.604
	Job Security	1.266	2	.633	.751	.473
	Job Description	.731	2	.366	.540	.583
	Supports/Relationships	.111	2	.056	.101	.904
Area of group	Family Environment	.301	2	.150	.162	.851
	Working Conditions	.007	2	.003	.005	.995
	Job Security	.165	2	.082	.098	.907
	Job Description	.140	2	.070	.104	.902
	Supports/Relationships	.118	2	.059	.106	.899
Region * Area of group	Family Environment	11.320	4	2.830	3.043	.017
	Working Conditions	4.561	4	1.140	1.672	.156
	Job Security	4.227	4	1.057	1.253	.288
	Job Description	4.151	4	1.038	1.533	.192
	Supports/Relationships	5.923	4	1.481	2.678	.032
Error	Family Environment	362.682	390	.930		
	Working Conditions	265.928	390	.682		
	Job Security	328.806	390	.843		
	Job Description	264.005	390	.677		
	Supports/Relationships	215.677	390	.553		
Total	Family Environment	4279.760	399			
	Working Conditions	4364.757	399			
	Job Security	4849.938	399			
	Job Description	4783.813	399			
	Supports/Relationships	4688.500	399			
Corrected Total	Family Environment	376.241	398			
	Working Conditions	273.875	398			
	Job Security	334.561	398			
	Job Description	268.436	398			
	Supports/Relationships	221.771	398			

Note: a. R Squared = .036 (Adjusted R Squared = .016) b. R Squared = .029 (Adjusted R Squared = .009) c. R Squared = .017 (Adjusted R Squared = -.003) d. R Squared = .017 (Adjusted R Squared = -.004) e. R Squared = .027 (Adjusted R Squared = .008)

Source: Compiled from the Primary data by the authors (2023)

The above table 2 is a summary of ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) results for several models, where factors such as Family Environment, Working Conditions, Job Security, Job Description, and Supports/Relationships were tested as dependent variables. The factors,



Region and Area of Group, and their interaction (Region * Area of Group) were used as independent variables.

Corrected Model: The corrected model tests the overall significance of each model. The Family Environment model has a p-value of .071, suggesting a tendency towards significance, meaning that the combined effect of Region, Area of Group, and their interaction might affect the Family Environment, although it is not statistically significant at a typical threshold of 0.05. Other models (Working Conditions, Job Security, Job Description, Supports/Relationships) are not statistically significant, suggesting the combined effects of independent variables do not significantly explain the variability in these dependent variables.

Intercept: The Intercept is highly significant in all the models (p-value < 0.0001). This means that if the effects of all the independent variables are zero, the mean of the dependent variable is significantly different from zero.

Region: The Region as an independent factor doesn't significantly affect any of the dependent variables as the p-values are all greater than 0.05.

Area of Group: The Area of Group does not significantly influence any of the dependent variables, as indicated by p-values greater than 0.05.

*Region * Area of Group:* The interaction between Region and Area of Group significantly affects Family Environment (p-value = .017) and Supports/Relationships (p-value = .032). This implies that the effect of Region on Family Environment and Supports/Relationships depends on the Area of Group and vice versa.

R Squared: The R-squared value for all the models is low (<0.05), indicating that only a small portion of the variability in the dependent variables is explained by the independent variables (Region, Area of Group, and their interaction).

In conclusion, the analysis suggests that, while the Region and Area of Group individually may not have a significant influence on the dependent variables, their interaction shows a significant impact on Family Environment and Supports/Relationships. However, all the models have a low R-squared value, indicating that other factors not included in these models might explain the variability in the dependent variables.

Table 3 Multivariate Tests – Factors influence the woman to join the Kudumbashree Units

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.938	1160.105 ^b	5.000	386.000	.000
	Wilks' Lambda	.062	1160.105 ^b	5.000	386.000	.000
	Hotelling's Trace	15.027	1160.105 ^b	5.000	386.000	.000
	Roy's Largest Root	15.027	1160.105 ^b	5.000	386.000	.000
Region	Pillai's Trace	.037	1.466	10.000	774.000	.147
	Wilks' Lambda	.963	1.466 ^b	10.000	772.000	.148
	Hotelling's Trace	.038	1.465	10.000	770.000	.148
	Roy's Largest Root	.028	2.174 ^c	5.000	387.000	.056
Area of group	Pillai's Trace	.007	.253	10.000	774.000	.990
	Wilks' Lambda	.994	.252 ^b	10.000	772.000	.990
	Hotelling's Trace	.007	.252	10.000	770.000	.990
	Roy's Largest Root	.006	.433 ^c	5.000	387.000	.825
Region * Area of group	Pillai's Trace	.070	1.381	20.000	1556.000	.121
	Wilks' Lambda	.932	1.381	20.000	1281.167	.121
	Hotelling's Trace	.072	1.380	20.000	1538.000	.122
	Roy's Largest Root	.038	2.938 ^c	5.000	389.000	.013

Note: a. Design: Intercept + Region + Area of group + Region * Area of group b. Exact statistic c. The statistic is an upper bound on F that yields a lower bound on the significance level.

Source: Compiled from the Primary data by the authors (2023)



The table provided is the output of a MANOVA (Multivariate Analysis of Variance) analysis that checks the effects of the Region and Area of Group, as well as their interaction (Region * Area of Group) on a set of dependent variables.

Intercept: The p-value is less than 0.001 for all four statistics, indicating a significant effect of the intercept. This means that if the effects of all the independent variables were zero, the mean of the dependent variable would be significantly different from zero.

Region: The p-values for Pillai's Trace, Wilks' Lambda, and Hotelling's Trace are all above 0.05, suggesting that the Region has no significant multivariate effect on the set of dependent variables. However, Roy's Largest Root has a p-value close to 0.05 (0.056), hinting towards possible significance.

Area of Group: The Area of Group shows no significant multivariate effect on the set of dependent variables since the p-values for all tests are well above 0.05.

*Region * Area of Group:* The interaction between Region and Area of Group shows no significant multivariate effect on the set of dependent variables, as indicated by the Pillai's Trace, Wilks' Lambda, and Hotelling's Trace, since their p-values are greater than 0.05. However, Roy's Largest Root has a p-value of 0.013, indicating a significant multivariate effect on the dependent variables due to the interaction between Region and Area of Group.

In conclusion, the analysis suggests that neither the Region nor the Area of Group alone significantly influence the set of dependent variables. However, the interaction between Region and Area of Group does appear to have a significant multivariate effect according to one of the tests (Roy's Largest Root). Given the discrepancy in the results of the different tests, it may be prudent to further investigate the impact of the interaction term.

4.1 Findings of the Study

Factors influencing women to join Kudumbashree Units: The study aimed to evaluate the factors that influence women to join Kudumbashree Units in Kerala. The factors examined included Family Environment, Working Conditions, Job Security, Job Description, and Supports/Relationships. The results showed that there was no significant difference in the factors that influenced women to join the Kudumbashree Units when comparing them on a group-by-group basis. This implies that these factors are generally consistent across different regions and areas.

Regional and area variations: While there were no significant differences in the factors influencing women to join Kudumbashree Units across different regions, some variations were observed. Urban areas tended to have higher means across most factors, suggesting a more conducive environment for women's empowerment. The South region's urban area consistently scored the highest mean across most factors, indicating it as potentially the most conducive area for women's empowerment.

Importance of the family environment: The family environment was found to be an important factor influencing women to join Kudumbashree Units. Urban areas generally showed a more favorable family environment compared to rural and semi-urban areas. This suggests that supportive family environments play a crucial role in women's empowerment.

Limited impact of region and area: The ANOVA and multivariate analysis indicated that the Region and Area of Group did not have significant effects on the dependent variables (factors influencing women to join Kudumbashree Units). The interaction between Region and Area of Group showed a significant multivariate effect in some tests but not in others, indicating the need for further investigation.

Low explained variability: The R-squared values for all the models were low, indicating that the independent variables (Region, Area of Group, and their interaction) explained only a



small portion of the variability in the dependent variables. This suggests that other factors not included in the study might have a stronger influence.

Overall, the findings highlight the importance of a supportive family environment and suggest that urban areas, particularly in the South region, may provide more conducive conditions for women's empowerment.

4.2 Suggestions and Recommendations

Strengthen Financial Resources: Address the challenge of inadequate access to financial resources faced by Kudumbashree Units. This can be achieved by establishing collaborations with financial institutions and government agencies to ensure sufficient funding for microcredit and business development initiatives. Additionally, providing financial literacy training and support can help women effectively manage and grow their businesses.

Skill Development Programs: Develop comprehensive skill development programs tailored to the needs of Kudumbashree members. These programs should focus on enhancing technical, managerial, and entrepreneurial skills, empowering women to take on various roles and responsibilities within their businesses. This will enable them to navigate challenges effectively and improve their chances of success.

Market Linkages: Facilitate market linkages for Kudumbashree members by establishing partnerships with market intermediaries, retailers, and distributors. This can help women gain access to larger markets, increase their customer base, and improve their profitability. Providing training on market research, product development, branding, and marketing strategies will further enhance their competitiveness.

Enhance Women's Participation: Address socio-cultural barriers that hinder women's active and efficient participation in Kudumbashree Units. Promote gender-sensitive policies and initiatives that encourage women's involvement in decision-making processes at all levels. Provide support for balancing domestic responsibilities with entrepreneurial activities, such as affordable childcare services and flexible working arrangements.

Impact Assessment: Conduct rigorous research and evaluation studies to assess the real impact of Kudumbashree Units on improving the socio-economic status of women. This will help identify areas of success and areas that require improvement, enabling evidence-based decision-making and targeted interventions.

Collaboration and Learning: Foster collaboration and knowledge-sharing among Kudumbashree Units, similar women empowerment programs, and relevant stakeholders. Encourage networking, exchange visits, and sharing of best practices to enhance learning and innovation. This can lead to the adoption of effective strategies and approaches that have proven successful in empowering women and eradicating poverty.

Long-term Sustainability: Ensure the long-term sustainability of Kudumbashree Units by promoting business diversification, innovation, and adaptability. Support members in exploring new sectors and markets, fostering innovation and creativity within their businesses. Regular monitoring and evaluation should be conducted to track progress, identify challenges, and make necessary adjustments to ensure continued growth and impact.

Address Specific Social Issues: Explore the role of Kudumbashree Units in addressing specific social issues such as domestic violence and gender inequality. Design and implement targeted interventions to address these challenges and empower women to lead lives free from violence and discrimination.

Strengthen Social Capital: Foster the development of social capital among Kudumbashree members by promoting networking, peer support, and community-building activities. Encourage the formation of strong self-help groups and provide opportunities for women to engage in collective decision-making and action.



Continuous Research and Evaluation: Encourage further research on women's empowerment, poverty eradication, and the impact of programs like Kudumbashree. Regular evaluation of the program's effectiveness, efficiency, and impact will provide valuable insights for continuous improvement and ensure its relevance in the changing socio-economic context.

5 CONCLUSION

The study provides valuable insights into the factors influencing women's participation in the Kudumbashree Units in Kerala. Urban areas, particularly in the South region, tend to have a more supportive environment for women's empowerment. While the interaction between Region and Area of Group showed some significance, the overall impact of the independent variables on the dependent variables was limited. Further research is needed to better understand the complex dynamics and identify additional factors that may contribute to women's empowerment within the Kudumbashree Units. The study focuses specifically on the role of Kudumbashree units in promoting sustainable women's empowerment in Kerala. The findings may not be directly applicable to other regions or contexts where different women empowerment initiatives or community-based organizations are in place. It is important to consider the unique socio-cultural, economic, and political factors of other regions when generalizing the findings. The study relies on self-reported measures of women's empowerment and the role of Kudumbashree units. Self-reported measures may be subject to biases, such as social desirability bias or recall bias. Participants may provide responses that align with societal expectations or may have difficulty accurately recalling their experiences or perceptions, which could affect the validity and reliability of the study's findings. Further the researcher suggest the following title for the future researchers. 'Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Kudumbashree Units in Women's Empowerment' and 'Long-term Impacts of Kudumbashree Units on Women's Empowerment'

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