

Evaluation of the Women Entrepreneurship Mission of the Government of Kerala in Alappuzha District: Empowering Women Entrepreneurs and Driving Inclusive Growth

Discipline: Commerce

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Abstract

The Women Entrepreneurship Mission shortly referred to as 'WE Mission' is a programme organized by the Government of Kerala in order to support and elevate the economic progress of women through entrepreneurship initiatives. The mission has a prominent role in the district of Alappuzha for supporting women to become self-reliant by offering appropriate training, financial assistance, mentorship, and market backings. The mission aims at the enhancement of the competency of women, fostering innovation, and strengthening their aptitude by paying special attention to rural and semi-urban regions of the state. In its initiatives, the mission joints hands with 'Kudumbashree' and other allied organizations. The WE-mission has extended valuable support for the growth of large number of businesses ventures by women across various domains such as coir, handicrafts, food processing, and tourism. The study throws light on the impact of WE- Mission in the Alappuzha district of the state of Kerala by assessing its effectiveness in empowering women entrepreneurs and its role in inclusive economic development. It underlines the merits, hindrances and scope for improvements. The results unveils that the WE-Mission facilitates improvements in economic and social conditions as well as creates a more inclusive and a conducive environment for entrepreneurship.

Key Words: Women Entrepreneurship, WE-Mission, Inclusive Growth, Self-employment Skill Development, Sustainable Growth, Gender Equality.

Introduction

Women entrepreneurs in the district of Alappuzha in the state of Kerala are making remarkable advancements particularly in the fields of food processing, tourism and handicrafts. There are lot of Government sponsored programmes and schemes working in this direction for the empowerment of women. The Kudumbashree mission is a prominent organization in this context which provides

various supports and programmes for fostering the economic and social development of women. Several government programs and NGOs also contribute by offering financial help, training, and infrastructure to women who start their own businesses. As time passed, the way we think about entrepreneurship has changed, and now it's viewed as a part of leadership, as explained by Schumpeter. In this decade, women entrepreneurship has picked up speed, giving women the chance to become self-dependent and self-reliant. There are five key aspects of women's empowerment: feeling confident in one self, having the freedom to choose, accessing opportunities and resources, managing life both inside and outside the home, and the ability to bring about changes that create a more equal society, as described by Killby (1971). Ways to support women's empowerment include learning, gaining guidance, raising awareness, building self-confidence, improving access to services, and working to end gender-based segregation and inequality. In India, after independence, women's freedom wasn't highly valued, and women's entrepreneurship was largely limited to the agro-food sector, including spice processing, juice making, incense stick production, and pickle making. However, in recent years, women have started to expand into other fields like engineering and medicine. Entrepreneurship has become a significant factor in women's empowerment. The role of women in business has transformed society as a whole. In Kerala, women have a strong influence on the state's social and economic development. According to Desai (2003), a woman entrepreneur is expected to take risks, make decisions, manage responsibilities, and come up with new ideas. Because of urbanization, development, and independence, women in Kerala, who have a higher literacy rate than women in other parts of the country, are moving towards empowerment and making money from their ventures. This puts them in a unique position, as they have responsibilities both as members of their households and as parents, while also competing with men in business and industry. In this context, Ganeshan S (2003) has suggested identifying the key technologies that can allow a woman to be a successful entrepreneur without affecting her personal goals.

Objectives of the Study

- To assess how much the WE-Mission has improved the entrepreneurial skills and ability of women beneficiaries in Alappuzha district to generate income.

Hypothesis of the Study

- **H0 (Null Hypothesis):** The WE-Mission has not made a significant improvement in the entrepreneurial skills and ability to earn income for women beneficiaries in Alappuzha district.
- **H1(Alternative Hypothesis):** The WE-Mission has significantly enhanced the entrepreneurial competency and aptitude to generate income for women

beneficiaries in district of Alappuzha.

Research Methodology

The study has a descriptive framework. 38 women entrepreneurs in the Alappuzha district of Kerala were randomly selected for gathering data for the study. Google Forms were issued to the respondents to collect the relevant information. The study was performed between June and July 2025.

Statement of the Problem

The Women Entrepreneurship Mission in Alappuzha aims at the capacity building of women entrepreneurs and fostering comprehensive development. It emphasizes the essentiality to confront the systemic weaknesses that obstruct women from actively undertaking entrepreneurship.

These weaknesses include lack of funds, lack of competency and social issues that deter women from undertaking business projects.

Relevance of the Study

The evaluation of the WE-Mission programmes in Alappuzha is considered significant as it examines how the beneficiary women entrepreneurs contribute to overall growth in the specific region. It observes the effect of women entrepreneurship on the home economy and social environment. The outcome of this study can give useful inputs for policy formulation and implementation of similar projects in other regions.

Review of Literature

- “Women empowerment includes giving equal opportunities in all areas of life” (Committee, 2011). In reality, women face many issues, such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, trafficking, and rape (Sharma, 2015).
- Women empowerment means making women strong and capable of making their own decisions. Women have faced a lot of challenges throughout history at the hands of men. In earlier times, they were treated as almost invisible, with all the rights belonging to men, even something as basic as the right to vote. As time passed, women started to realize their strength. This led to the beginning of a movement for women empowerment. (Usha Devi & Balakrishnan)
- When women were not allowed to make their own decisions, women empowerment was like a fresh breeze. It helped them understand their rights and how they could create their own space in society instead of relying on men. It also showed that things shouldn't depend on someone's gender to work out. However, there is still a long way to go when it comes to understanding why women empowerment is so important. (Combaz, 2014)

Relevance to Alappuzha District

- **Economic Development:** By encouraging women to start their own businesses, these initiatives help spread out the economy, create more jobs, and boost the overall growth of Alappuzha.
- **Poverty Alleviation:** Offering long-term job opportunities gives women and their families a chance to escape poverty and better their quality of life.
- **Addressing Gender Inequality:** Supporting women in business helps break down old ideas about gender roles and biases, leading to a fairer and more equal society.
- **Community Development:** When women run successful businesses, it brings benefits to the whole community, such as more employment, higher incomes, and better social outcomes like education, health, and family welfare.
- **Employing Domestic Resources:** These efforts can assist women to develop competencies in regional industries and resources, like coir, cashew processing, handicrafts, and eco-friendly tourism, which are popular in Alappuzha.

Women Entrepreneurship in Alappuzha

- **Food Industry:** Rural women in the district are largely involved in processing and packaging of fish, dry fish, pickles, and other seafood items. They are also engaged in the manufacturing of creating food items like jackfruit chips and other snacks from jackfruit.
- **Handloom and Handicraft Items:** Alappuzha is popular in the manufacturing of coir products, and women actively participate in the various stages of coir production, starting from the processing of raw materials to finished goods. Some women entrepreneurs manufacture innovative products from recycled materials, such as bags and other items.
- **Tourism Ventures:** Alappuzha is a famous tourist spot in the global tourism map and women are taking advantage of the scope of the business opportunities in this region. Women are largely involved in the tourism sector, running hotels, homestays, and houseboat ventures.
- **Other Segments:** Women are also concentrating on other areas of business such as digital marketing, boutiques, beauty parlors and homemade bakery products.

Government and NGO Support

- **Kudumbashree:** The Kudumbashree mission network extends various kinds of assistance to women by constituting self-help groups and undertake different

economic activities. It provides training, financial support and marketing backups to women entrepreneurs.

- **Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation (KSIDC):** KSIDC offers technical support and financial assistance to women entrepreneurs through the Women Entrepreneurship Mission (WE-Mission).
- **Kerala Startup Mission (KSUM):** KSUM formulates soft loans to women startups for working capital and project execution.
- **Non-Government Organizations (NGOs):** Several NGOs in Alappuzha organizes various programmes for fostering entrepreneurship. ‘Samagra Vikas Social Service Society’ and ‘Samabhavana’ are few examples. Alappuzha, a fascinating tourist place in Kerala, is now witnessing an upsurge in the volume of women-led business enterprises, particularly in the tourism sector. Women are now occupying prominent space in business by starting ventures in food processing, hospitality, beauty salons, handicrafts and many more fields.
- **Progress in the Tourism Segment:** Women are now assuming prominent space in the responsible tourism efforts of the Alappuzha district, which contributes largely to the local economy and generating high employment opportunities. Several restaurants in the sector are now owned and operated by women. Most of them are famous for authentic seafood, and other recipes.
- **Innovative Businesses:** There are many women entrepreneurs in the district who are well known for their innovative ventures in the fisheries sector. Some of them concentrate in ornamental fish farming and fish manure-based fertilizer production.
- **Support Systems:** The Kerala Startup Mission (KSUM) provides soft loans to the extent of ¹ 15 lakhs around \$18,000 USD as working capital for startup projects of women entrepreneurs. Numerous NGOs in Alappuzha have distinct schemes in support of women entrepreneurs. These schemes cover education, skill development, and financial independence of the women entrepreneurs. The Integrated Development Society (IDS) Alappuzha is a multidisciplinary NGO based in Alappuzha that works for the all-round development of marginalized communities. The Women Empowerment through Livelihood and Entrepreneurship (WeLive) programme of the IDS deliver support services such as market studies, marketing strategies, and credit linkage facilitation for women entrepreneurs.

Common Objectives of the WE Mission

- **Fostering Livelihoods:** One of the major objectives is to facilitate sustainable income opportunities for women, particularly in rural and underprivileged areas.
- **Improving Entrepreneurial Competencies:** The programmes are developed to support women to enhance their competencies in areas like idea generation planning, manufacturing, financial management and marketing.
- **Supporting Micro Enterprises:** The mission extends creative support for establishment and the development of small businesses, both at the individual and group level, across different business domains.
- **Empowering Women:** By helping women gain economic independence, the mission aims to increase their confidence, improve their ability to make decisions, and raise their social status.
- **Improving Access to Resources:** The initiative works to help women entrepreneurs get access to important resources such as loans, market access, raw materials, and technology.
- **Building Social Capital:** The mission encourages the formation and strengthening of self-help groups and community networks to build unity and support for collective business efforts.

Results and Discussion

2.Age:

35 responses

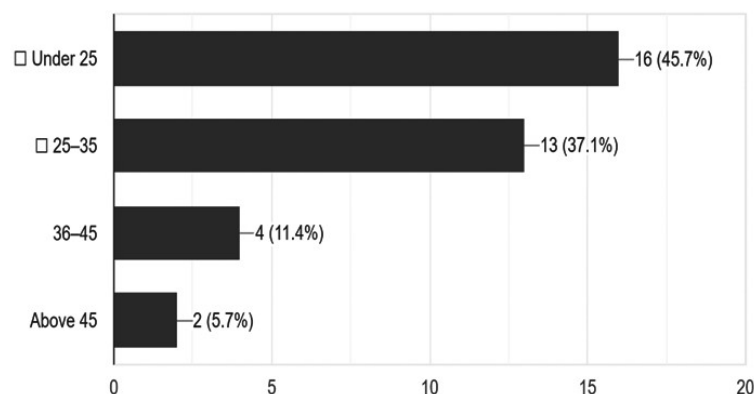


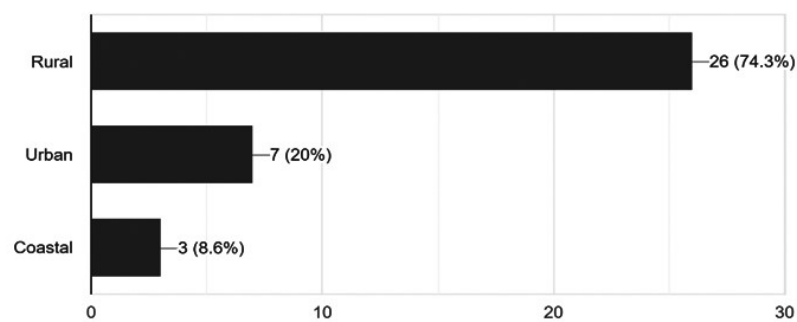
Table: Age-Wise Distribution of Respondents (WE Mission - Alappuzha)

Sl. No	Age Group	Frequency (O)	Percentage (%)	Expected Frequency(E)	(O-E) ² /E
1	Under25	16	45.7%	8.75	6.02
2	25-35	13	37.1%	8.75	2.06
3	36-45	4	11.4%	8.75	2.58
4	Above45	2	5.7%	8.75	5.20
	Total	35	100		15.86

Measure	Value
Mean	1.77
Median	2(AgeGroup:25-35)
Mode	1(AgeGroup:Under25)
Standard Deviation	0.93
Chi-square value	15.86
Degrees of freedom	3
Chi-squarep - value	<0.01(Significant)
Conclusion	Age Distribution is not Uniform

5. Residential Area

35 responses



Chi-Square Test

RESIDENTIAL AREA	OBSERVED
RURAL	26
URBAN	7
COASTAL	3
TOTAL	36

Null Hypothesis (H₀): Women are just as likely to take part from each of the three different areas-rural, urban, and coastal.

Expected Frequency: There are a total of 36 responses and 3 categories, so the expected number for each category is 36 divided by 3, which equals 12.

Table Observed Vs Expected

Residential Area	Observed(O)	Expected (E)	(O-E) ² / E
Rural	26	12	(26-12) ² /12= 16.33
Urban	7	12	(7-12) ² /12=2.08
Coastal	3	12	(3-12) ² /12=6.75
Total χ^2			25.16

Chi-Square Value (χ^2) = 25.16

Degrees of Freedom (df) = number of categories - 1 = 3 - 1 = 2

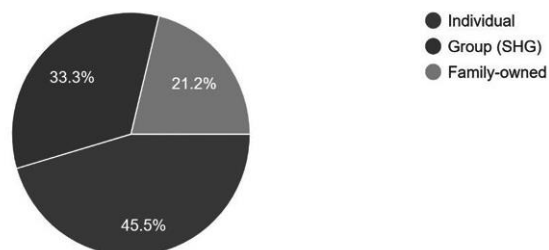
Critical values at 5% level (from chi-square table) H₀ 5.99

Since 25.16 is greater than 5.99, we reject the null hypothesis.

There is a significant difference in the participation of women from different areas. Most participation comes from rural areas, much more than expected.

8. Business ownership:

33 responses



From the pie chart:

Individual: 45.5% of 33 respondents equals 15

Group (SHG): 33.3% of 33 respondents equals 11

Family-owned: 21.2% of 33 respondents equals 7

FREQUENCIES

Individual=15 Group=11 Family=7

Business ownership	Code(x)	Frequency(f)
Individual	1	15
Group (SHG)	2	11
Family-owned	3	7

Mean:

$$\text{Mean (x)} = \Sigma(fx) / \Sigma f$$

$$\Sigma fx / \Sigma f$$

$$(15 + 22 + 21) / 33 = 1.76$$

$$\text{Mean} = 1.76$$

Median:

Business Ownership	Frequency (f)	Cumulative Frequency (cf)
Individual	15	15
Group	11	26
Family-owned	7	33

N=33, the median position=33/2=16.5, which is in the Group (SHG). So, Median =2

MODE:

The most frequent category is individual (15 responses), so Mode=1 (Individual)

Standard Deviation:

$$\sigma = \sqrt{\sum f(x-\bar{x})^2/N} \text{ Mean} = 1.76$$

X	f	x-Mean	(x-Mean) ²	f × (x-Mean) ²
1	15	-0.76	0.5776	8.664
2	11	0.24	0.0576	0.6336
3	7	1.24	1.5376	10.7632

$$SD = \sqrt{8.664 + 0.6336 + 10.7632/33}$$

$$= \sqrt{20.0608/33}$$

$$= \sqrt{0.608}$$

$$= 0.78$$

Mean=1.76

Median=2

Mode=1

SD =0.78

Conclusion

The WE-MISSION in Alappuzha, backed by the Kerala government and run by KSIDC, is an important effort. It helps women entrepreneurs and helps the local economy grow. This program offers financial help through loans and grants, enabling women to grow their businesses and contribute more to the economy. Groups like Kudumbashree play a big role in bringing women together and offering support at the community level. This helps the mission make a bigger impact in reducing poverty and empowering women. However, there are still issues with people knowing about these programs and accessing them easily. To make the mission more effective, there needs to be more efforts to reach out, make the processes simpler, and offer mentorship. The WE-MISSION can keep supporting women entrepreneurs in Alappuzha, helping to make the economy stronger and create a fairer society.

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