

# Whether they are Empowered in Usage of Financial Services: A study among Kudumbashree Workers

**SISHINA.O.C**

Assistant Professor of Economics, Government Arts and Science College, Nadapuram, Kozhiodde, Kerala

**Abstract:** Women's Empowerment can be defined as promoting women's sense of self work, their ability to determine their own choices and their rights to influence social change for themselves and others. The empowerment of women is an essential factor for the sustainable growth of society. In Kerala, a southern state of India Kudumbashree, the women's empowerment organisation, has given. women have social and economic equality. Kudumbashree is a group of women working under the Kerala State Poverty Eradication Mission and under the jurisdiction of local self-government institutions. State government established a poverty alleviation and women's empowerment program at the time of covid 19 that is Janakeeya hotels. Janakeeya Hotel is a food distribution system implemented by the State Government through local bodies with the objective of providing low cost food to all as part of the Covid control program. The scheme is fully implemented through Kudumbashree. This study is conducted among 40 Janakeeya hotel workers who are members of Kudumbashree. The aim of the study is to understand whether they were empowered in using financial services or not.

**Keywords:** Financial Inclusion, Financial empowerment, Women, Kudumbashree,

## I. INTRODUCTION

Empowering women is very important today to improve a nation's overall development. Times are changing now, women are becoming more independent, fierce and skilled to influence real change in terms of growth and development. Women empowerment encompasses a range of initiatives and actions aimed at enhancing women's social, economic, and political status. It involves providing women with access to education, healthcare, employment opportunities, and a seat in decision-making processes, enabling them to fulfil their aspirations and contribute meaningfully to society. Empowerment of women is the fundamental right of women. Women's education is one of the foremost means for empowering women to become knowledgeable, skilled and self-confident to fully participate in the country's development process. When women are empowered, they become agents of change, driving economic growth, nurturing healthier communities, and fostering innovation and creativity.

Kudumbashree: one of the most important women empowerment projects in Kerala, is Asia's largest women's network. The organization has played a crucial role in several sectors, succeeding in improving the social, economic and political upliftment of women in its 25 years of existence. The group's success has also been attributed to its diverse membership, which cuts across religious and communal boundaries. Founded on May 17, 1998, with the goal of eradicating poverty in the state by the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government led by the late E K Nayanar, Kudumbashree has diversified to multiple domains. It covers three core areas of economic development, social development and women empowerment. Kudumbashree is the poverty eradication and women empowerment programme implemented by the State Poverty Eradication Mission (SPEM) of the Government of Kerala. The name Kudumbashree in Malayalam language means 'prosperity of the family'. The name represents 'Kudumbashree Mission' or SPEM as well as the Kudumbashree Community Network. What is commonly referred to as 'Kudumbashree' could mean either the Kudumbashree Community Network, or the Kudumbashree Mission, or Kudumbashree was set up in 1997 following the recommendations of a three-member Task Force appointed by the State government. Its formation was in the context of the devolution of powers to the Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) in Kerala, and the Peoples' Plan Campaign, which attempted to draw up the Ninth Plan of the local governments from below through the PRIs. Kudumbashree is the poverty eradication and women empowerment programme launched in 1998. It is implemented by the State Poverty Eradication Mission (SPEM) of the Government of Kerala. It was renamed Kudumbashree Mission in 1999 and began to function under the local self-government department Kudumbashree. Kudumbashree community network was extended to cover the entire State in three phases during 2000-2002. Kudumbashree membership is open to all adult women, limited to one membership per family. In 2011, the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Government of India recognised Kudumbashree as the State Rural Livelihoods Mission (SRLM) under the National Rural Livelihoods Mission.

## **II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Empowerment of women is an essential factor for the sustainable growth of the society. Kudumbashree is a woman development organisation. Under Kudumbashree programs women get job opportunity, financial development etc. Janakeeya hotel is a Kudumbashree organisation started for women's empowerment and poverty alleviation. Janakeeya Hotels were started in the context of the Covid pandemic as part of the Hunger Free Kerala Scheme introduced in the budget of the State Government. The present study covered 40 members of Kudumbashree and they earn their income by working Janakeeya Hotels which was functioning purely under Kudumbashree. The study intended to analyse whether low income females can have access financial services and whether were capable to use such services. In that perspective tried to understand whether they financially included in the formal financial sector or empowered in usage of financial services.

## **III. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

To evaluate the usage of financial services among females belong to lower income group and find out whether they empowered or not in that sense

## **IV. METHODOLOGY**

The study mainly focused on low educated and low income females and whether they can access financial services and their access to usage of such services. For gathering relevant informations 40 samples who are working in Janakeeya hotels in various parts of Vadakara taluk situated in Kozhikode district in Kerala state, which is a venture of Kudumbashree mission were selected.

## **V. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

**Jayakumar Devika, Binitha V Thambi(2007)** in their paper critically assesses the claims of the Kerala government's poverty eradication programme, the Kudumbashree, which combines a microfinance model with other elements through critical feminist lenses. Further, they attempt to place this programme within Kerala's own historical experience of empowering the poor. Given the fact that this major effort to popularise micro-finance in Kerala has the twin aims of poverty alleviation and women's empowerment, this seems justified. They try to place the 'microfinance revolution' in Kerala within the larger historical trajectory of successive 'regimes of empowerment' in order to understand the different political stakes in each, and their implications for gender politics. While using some of the available tools that employ indicators of gender effectiveness to assess the impact of microfinance in empowering women is certainly a basic exercise, the present approach allows us to draw lessons for effective gender politics through a comparison with earlier modes of empowering the deprived classes in Kerala.

**Rashmi Rani Agnihotri H.R and Malipatil, K.S.(2017)** in their paper entitled „A Study On Women Empowerment Schemes In India“ express that “Women's' empowerment has become a significant topic of discussion in development and economics. It can also point to approaches regarding other trivialised genders in a particular political or social context. Empowering women to participate fully in economic life across all sectors is essential to build stronger economies, achieve internationally agreed goals for development and sustainability, and improve the quality of life for women, men, families and communities.

**Jyothis Anna kaurian (2019)** The majority of elites like social scientists, economists, researchers, policy makers etc. of the present century are repeatedly emphasising on development of entrepreneurship through women's empowerment by new and innovative schemes at micro level. It is central to the issue of equality, justice and liberation. Women constitute almost half of the world's population, but are unfortunately one of the most deprived and unproductive members in the economy of many countries of the underdeveloped & developing world. Promoting various income generating activities especially among rural women is perceived as one of the most powerful means to resolve several socio-economic and even political problems.

**Hastings, J. S., Madrian, B. C., & Skimmyhorn, W. L. (2013)** in their study examined financial knowledge in any was enhanced financial awareness and personal monetary outcomes. Authors took an effort to evaluating the available literature on financial awareness and monetary benefits of consumers and suggested that there was an enumerable substitute to financial knowledge that may be used to enhance monetary outcome for consumers. It also emphasized on the influence of strong controls, stimulus of enhanced choice architecture, simple revelation on fee, term and features of product offered by financial institutions. Future research should be done by giving emphasize to financial outcomes, financial knowledge and education. This study is purely based on existing literature and which are inadequate to provide conclusions regarding the importance of financial literacy.

## VI. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The present study covered 40 samples from Vadakara taluk in Kozhikode district in Kerala state. All of them are members of Kudumbashree and currently working under Janakeeya Hotel which was a recent venture of Kudumbashree. Here tried to analyse whether low income, low educated females took their part in usage of financial services. The following tables provided an analysis of the relevant data.

### APL/BPL

Table 1.1

Category		
	No of People	Percentage (%)
APL	15	37.5 %
BPL	25	62.5 %
Total	40	100%

Source: Survey data

The table 1.1 shows whether sample respondents belong to APL or BPL. Around 62.5 % of Janakeeya Hotel members included in BPL and 37.5 % of them belong to APL category. This shows majority of the sample respondents were live in a backward economic conditions

### Educational Qualifications

Table1.2

Category	Number	Percentage
Below SSLC	18	45
SSLC	10	25
Plus Two	11	27.5
Graduation	1	2.5
Total	40	100

Source: Survey Data

Table 1.2 explains educational qualifications of sample respondents who are workers in Janakeeya hotel functioning under Kudumbashree. It can be observed from the table that 97.5 percentage of respondents have educational qualification below graduation level.

### Average Monthly Income

Table 1.3

Category	Number	Percentage
Below 5000	9	22.5
5000- 7000	18	45
7000-10000	5	12.5
Above 10000	8	20
Total	40	100

Source: Survey Data

Table 1.3 provided average monthly income of sample respondents. It is very significant in the sense that income earned by them is one of the important factor determine the usage of financial services. It can be understood that around 67.5 percentage of respondents have an income level below Rupees 7000 and only 20 percentages of them have an income above 10000.

**Possibility of Savings**

Table 1.4

Response	Number	Percentage
Always	9	22.5
Sometimes	18	45
Never	13	32.5
Total	40	100

Source: Survey Data

The table 1.4 reveals that majority of the respondents never maintain savings from the income earned by them because it is just enough to sustenance of their life. Only 22.5 percentage of the respondents avail an opportunity to save always in their account. Due to poor economic background of the family majority of the respondents were not in a position to save regularly or the were excluded from getting such an opportunity.

**Usage of Financial Services**

Table1.5

Item	No of Respondents			Percentage		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
PMJDY Account Holder	34	6	40	85%	15%	100
Other Account Holder	15	25	40	37.5%	62.5%	100
Any Saving Schemes	22	18	40	55%	45%	100
Availing Loan	13	27	40	32.5%	67.5%	100
Occupying Smartphone	19	21	40	47.5%	52.5%	100
Use Digital Payment Method	17	23	40	42.5%	57.5%	100

Source: Survey Method

Table 1.5 shows usage of financial services of samples by took into account five criteria. Most of the Kudumbasree members have PMJDY accounts and 37.5% of them have other bank account also. Around 55% of them hold some type of saving schemes. Only 42.5% of the Kudumbasree members use digital payment method and others are unaware or don't have skill in using such facilities. Above 50% of the respondents do not have access a smartphone for being digitally included. Around 32.5% of them availing any type of loan facilities.

**VII. CONCLUSION**

In the current situation of various financial inclusion missions, a wide section remains excluded from the mainstream formal financial sector, which include women and various marginalised sections of the society. The real start of massive efforts to include them in the formal sector is after the launch of Prime Ministers Jan Dhan Yojana Scheme. After such an initiative Women who take up low income jobs are still unable to overcome their socio economic disadvantage and are therefore unable to fully utilize the available financial services. But they are unaware of their limitations and they live as they are destined to roll the wheel of their day to day life, making only limited usage of such services in the midst of plenty of services available. Even after 75 years of independence, certain people are still lacking the opportunity to enter into the formal banking sector and lagging behind to access effective utilisation of available services.

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