

# Gender Roles and Empowerment of Women-A study among Kudumbashree members

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## **Abstract**

*Women empowerment and gender equality are the major two strategies to achieve sustainable development. Economic empowerment, environmental empowerment and social empowerment are the major three dimensions of sustainable development and it is relevant in the discussions of gender equality. The existing social and cultural norms drive women to follow the existing patriarchy system and these practices results in family violence and atrocities toward women. Gender roles, existing norms and conditions of the society, patriarchal attributes and the perspective of people are the determinant of empowerment of women in a society. The researcher conducted a study among women groups of Kudumbashree, the poverty eradication mission of Kerala state. Kudumbashree mission has been functioning since 1998 and women empowerment and poverty alleviation are the dual aim of the mission. The study was conducted based on descriptive research methodology and adopted multi stage random sampling method to collect the data. Interview method had used for data collection from the respondents. The major findings of the study show that majority of the respondents are engaging three to six hours a day for domestic activities and majority of the respondents have significant involvement in the reproductive activities and they spend a major part of their time to do the household related activities. Any respondents were opinioned that they are not responsible for reproductive activities like rearing of children, cleaning, washing and other household related activities. Majority of the respondents have no membership in any organizations except kudumbashree.*

**Keywords:** Kudumbashree, Gender roles, Empowerment, Women

**Introduction**

Women empowerment is the main focus of the development practitioners to achieve the target of sustainable development. Economic empowerment, environmental empowerment and social empowerment are the major three dimensions of sustainable development and it is relevant in the discussions of gender equality. The existing social and cultural norms drive women to follow the existing patriarchy system and these practices results in family violence and atrocities toward women. Gender roles, existing norms and conditions of the society, patriarchal attributes and the perspective of people are the determinant of empowerment of women in a society.

The world Health Organization (WHO) defines gender roles as "socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women". Gender roles are productive roles, reproductive roles and community management roles (Caroline Moser). For women concerned they are more likely to involve with reproductive roles which are related to the works in household. The participation of women in productive activities as well as community management activities along with reproductive activities doubled the burden of their duties so that they couldn't time to get involved in leisure activities .

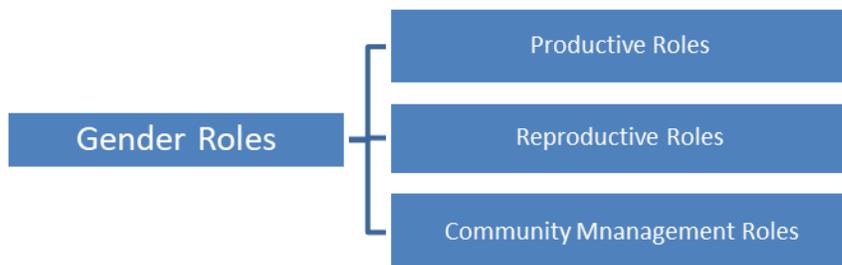


Figure 1: Gender Roles-Triple roles

Retrieved from: Pramita Majumdar(2019) <https://www.slideshare.net/paramitamajumdar/gender-responsive-budgeting-concept-and-experience-29-march-2019>

Despite having highest human development indicators of Kerala state, women face gender discrimination in both private and public sphere of their lives. As per the 2011 census the literacy rate, life expectancy and mean age at marriage kerala women have higher score when compared with women in the rest of the country. But the workforce participation rate for females is 25.51per cent against 53.26per cent for males. Several social, economic and cultural factors are associated with the women's participation in the economic sectors of Kerala.

The researcher conducted study among women groups of Kudumbashree, the poverty eradication mission of Kerala state have been functioning since 1998 in Kerala state. Gender self-learning programme of kudumbashree could break the mold of financial centered discussions which had been happened so far in the NHGs . The women centered modules developed by the mission helped kudumbashree women to see the world around them through gender lens.the process of women empowerment the women could achieve greater control over resources and achieved social mobility and dignity. The improvements in women's mobility and interactions to the outside worlds doubled their burden. The empowerment activities have not brought change in their gender roles, their participation in decision making , participation in labour ,gender inequality in the acquisition of knowledge and the power relations within the household and society. This study mainly focus on the influence of gender roles in the process of empowerment of women.

## **Review of Literature**

**S. Venkat Narayan (2006)** conducted a study among kudumbashree members in kerala .The major findings of the study was that women had achieved self -confidence and self- esteem through the activities of kudumbashree. The data had collected through interview. And the researcher found that the participants were expressed high confidence. These improvements not only improved their status but also doubled their burden. There were changes in the status of productive and community management roles. But the reproductive roles still considered as women's duties only.These have not brought about any major change in the gender roles; women still have to fulfill both productive and reproductive roles, sacrificing a major part of their leisure time. Most of the working women who were interviewed have sacrificed their leisure time for economic gain. They sleep only five to six hours a day. In addition, working women are also under the obligation to be at home before their husbands come back from work.

**B R Biswal( 2009)** The National institute of public cooperation and child development conducted gender analysis among kudumbasghree SHG (NHG) members aimed at examining the process of women empowerment through kudumbashree. The major area of the study focused on the micro credit and micro enterprises development implementing through kudumbashree and studied how it enhanced the decision making and how far gender issues are incorporated in various levels. The study was the conducted during the two weeks longer visit to kerala. The

major findings of the study was that the women are engaging more in reproductive work along with they are actively performing in community works as well as productive works. The services and activities are not largely addressing the strategic needs of women and the gender roles continue to be same. This study is an attempt to discuss about the gender role identification in household level, community level and socio-political level. women's unequal access to resources in household, community and society, how the existing gender relations affect the sustainable results in the process of women empowerment.

Major findings of the study were the following

- Income generation activities could help women to improve the skills ,mobility and access to supporting networks and knowledge and thereby improve the status of women within the community.
- Male had a greater control over the micro-credit and loans and which had adverse effect on the positive steps towards women empowerment.
- Gender roles continued to be same in all levels of life. Women have to perform most of the reproductive, productive and community management roles ,But their contributions remains unrecognized by the family members.

**Kavita Baliyan** discussed about the factors which influencing the participation in household decision making processes. The study sought to determine participation of women in decision making .The paper is based on a study conducted in the agriculturally progressive regions of Uttar Pradesh .Multi stage random sampling had adopted to collect data from a sample of 120 farm households. The major findings of the study were the following

- Majority of the women said that most of the members in the family are agree with the decisions related to the household affairs.
- Few of them said that they could take final decision and a good number of women (26%) said that the male members did not agree with the decisions taken by them.
- 31 percent said that they were not participate in the decision making process.

## Materials and Methods

The researcher made an attempt to find out the influence of gender roles in the process of empowerment of women. The study had conducted based on descriptive research methodology and adopted Multi stage random sampling method to collect the data. Interview method had used for data collection from the respondents. The data had collected from kudumbashree members belong to Thrissur district.

## Results and Discussion

**Table 1**

**Distribution of the Respondents by their working hours of domestic activities.**

Sl.No	The working hours of domestic activities	Frequency (n=148)	Percent (100per cent)
1	less than one hour	4	2.7
2	one hour-three hours	30	20.3
3	three hours - six hours	74	50.0
4	six hours - nine hours	30	20.3
5	nine hours to twelve hours	4	2.7
6	above 12 hours	6	4.1

The above table shows the duration of household works doing by respondents.50.0per cent of the respondents are engaging three to six hours a day for domestic activities. 20.3per cent of the respondents are engaging one to three hours a day for domestic activities.20.3per cent of the respondents are engaging six hours to nine hours a day for domestic activities. 4.1per cent of the respondents are engaging more than twelve hours a day for domestic activities.2.7per cent of the respondents are engaging less than one hour a day for domestic activities.2.7per cent of the respondents are engaging nine hours to twelve hours a day for domestic activities.

Majority of the respondents are engaging three to six hours a day for domestic activities. Majority of the respondents have significant involvement in the reproductive activities and they spend a major part of their time to do the household related activities. None of the respondents did not exclude from the reproductive activities.

**Table 2**

**Distribution of the Respondents by their working hours for earning purpose.**

Sl.No	The working hours for earning purpose	Frequency (n=148)	Percent (100per cent)
1	less than one hour	2	1.4
2	one hour-three hours	12	8.1
3	three hours - six hours	18	12.2
4	six hours - nine hours	42	28.4
5	nine hours to twelve hours	2	1.4
6	above 12 hours	6	4.1
7	not doing	66	44.6

The above table shows the duration of working by respondents for earning purpose. 28.4 per cent of the respondents are working six hours to nine hours a day for earning purpose. 12.2 per cent of the respondents are working three hours to six hours a day for earning purpose. 8.1 per cent of the respondents are working one hour to three hours a day for earning purpose. 4.1 per cent of the respondents are working above twelve hours a day for earning purpose. 1.4 per cent of the respondents are working nine hours to twelve hours a day for earning purpose. 1.4 per cent of the respondents are working less than one hour a day for earning purpose.

Majority of the respondents (44.6%) were not performing reproductive roles. Only 28 percentage of the respondents were participating in the reproductive activities. And they were involving six to nine hours in a day to perform reproductive roles.

**Table 3**

**Distribution of the Respondents by their membership in other organizations than kudumbashree.**

Sl.No	The membership in other organizations than kudumbashree	Frequency (n=148)	Percent (100per cent)
1	Trade Unions	8	5.4
2	Religious groups	32	21.6

3	Women organisations.	14	9.5
4	group of social workers	6	4.1
5	resident association	6	4.1
6	School PTA	2	1.4
7	no membership	80	54.1

The above table shows that 54.1per cent of the respondents do not have membership in any organizations except kudumbashree. 21.6 per cent of the respondents having membership in religious groups. 9.5 per cent of the respondents having membership in women organisations. 5.4 per cent of the respondents having membership in trade unions.4.1 per cent of the respondents having membership in social work forums. 4.1 per cent of the respondents having membership in resident association. 1.4 per cent of the respondents having membership in School PTA. Majority of the respondents have no membership in any organizations except kudumbashree. The result shows that the women have less involvement in the community management roles.

### Major Findings.

- ❖ Majority of the respondents are engaging three to six hours a day for domestic activities.
- ❖ Majority of the respondents have significant involvement in the reproductive activities and they spend a major part of their time to do the household related activities.
- ❖ None of the respondents did not exclude from the reproductive activities.
- ❖ Majority of the respondents (44.6%) were not performing reproductive roles.
- ❖ Only 28 percentage of the respondents were participating in the reproductive activities. And they were involving six to nine hours in a day to perform reproductive roles.
- ❖ Majority of the respondents have no membership in any organizations except kudumbashree. The result shows that the women have less involvement in the community management roles.

### CONCLUSION:

Gender roles, existing norms and conditions of the society, patriarchal attributes and the perspective of people are the determinant of empowerment of women in a society. The major findings of the study show that majority of the respondents are engaging three to six hours a day for domestic activities and majority of the respondents have significant involvement in the

reproductive activities and they spend a major part of their time to do the household related activities. Any respondents were opinioned that they are not responsible for reproductive activities like rearing of children, cleaning, washing and other household related activities. Majority of the respondents have no membership in any organizations except kudumbashree.

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