

TRANSFORMING LOCAL ECONOMIES THROUGH WOMEN-LED MICRO ENTERPRISES IN VIKSIT BHARAT

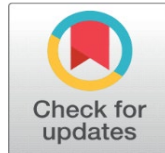
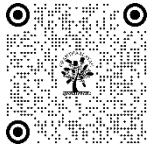
Dr. Ruby S¹✉, Dr. Vijila V²✉, Dr. Sajeev H³✉, Dr. Anilkumar. M⁴✉

¹ Associate Professor, PG Dept. of Commerce, BJM Govt. College, Chavara, Kollam, Kerala

² Associate Professor, Dept. of Commerce, Govt. Arts College, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala

³ Associate Professor, Dept. of Commerce, Govt. Arts College, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala

⁴ Assistant Professor, Dept. of Commerce, Govt. Arts College, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala



Corresponding Author

Dr. Ruby S,

rubysivanandini1984@gmail.com

DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i6.2024.2975](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i6.2024.2975)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Copyright: © 2024 The Author(s). This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

With the license CC-BY, authors retain the copyright, allowing anyone to download, reuse, re-print, modify, distribute, and/or copy their contribution. The work must be properly attributed to its author.



ABSTRACT

This study examines the function of Local Self-Government Institutions (LSGIs) in facilitating forward-thinking micro-enterprises managed by women to stimulate local development. This study analyses the adoption and diffusion of innovations among these firms using the framework of Innovation Diffusion Theory. To evaluate the influence of LSGI efforts on women's entrepreneurship and community development, a conventional theme analysis is performed, which specifically examines personal, production, money, labour, marketing issues, and innovation potential. The Innovation Diffusion theory is a significant and influential factor in the growth of enterprises and the societal welfare of women. The results illustrate the substantial influence of Kudumbashree WME on the process of societal change, by promoting the advancement of local women and thereby contributing to the well-being of Kerala. The study confirms the practical significance of Innovation Diffusion in empowering micro-organisations led by women with the assistance of Local Self-Government Institutions (LSGIs).

Keywords: Innovation Diffusion, Women Micro Enterprises (WMEs), Local Economic Development, Viksit Bharat, Kerala

1. INTRODUCTION

Women-led micro-enterprises are essential for local economic development as they promote economic autonomy and social progress within communities. Local Self-Government Institutions (LSGIs) in India have played a crucial role in facilitating these efforts, namely through programmes such as Kudumbashree in Kerala. Notwithstanding these endeavours, numerous units run by women encounter substantial obstacles that impede their capacity for innovation and expansion. The present study investigates the efficacy of LSGIs in facilitating the dissemination of innovative practices within these firms.

Background

The prosperity and advancement of a nation are contingent upon the inclusion of women at the core of its development. Entrepreneurship is a highly effective economic empowerment method for women, as it offers a plethora of opportunities for personal growth and self-esteem enhancement. The global business landscape is anticipated to undergo a transformative impact as a result of the anticipated increase in the number of female entrepreneurs, as their effective ventures are expected to bring about substantial changes in traditional business practices. (Sushma, 2015).

Kerala Industrial Policy The primary objective of 2023 is to establish a dynamic startup ecosystem that will facilitate the emergence of self-employment opportunities and, in the end, the establishment of aspirational positions for all (Directorate of Industries and Commerce, n.d.). In order to establish one lakh MsMes in Kerala, the financial year 2022–23 was designated as the "Year of Entrepreneurship." (Uncategorised, 2023). Kerala is well-suited for the development of entrepreneurship and start-ups due to its relatively robust infrastructure, availability of highly qualified human resources, and strong communication network. India has the highest number of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises in the world, with over 63 million business owners, second only to China. Nevertheless, women hold only 20.37% of these positions. (Nune, 2022)

Research Problem

Kerala is globally renowned for its scenic landscapes, (Thomas, 2023) impressive literacy rates, and ethical tourist practices (Chaudhury et al., 2023). However, it is also the birthplace of a groundbreaking women's organisation. Kudumbashree, originally named "prosperity of the family" in Malayalam, the indigenous language of Kerala, is a poverty elimination initiative that commenced in 1980 and was officially established as a nationwide project by 1998. The achievements of Kudumbashree are remarkable. At now, it services a community network of over 4.6 million women located throughout Kerala and has successfully lifted a remarkable number of individuals from poverty. The organisation has established a mechanism for women to convene in small groups to mutually assist one other and enhance their financial resources. This achievement has been facilitated by the effective utilisation of local resources and the implementation of a democratic and bottom-up leadership approach. [Dutta & Fischer, 2021]. It is hardly surprising that the Kudumbashree model is imitated throughout India and has, in modified form, exerted influence on foreign organisations for instance the United Nations. The fundamental tenet of Kudumbashree is to unite individuals in order to collaborate as a society in combating poverty. Starting with extremely small initiatives such as waste management or organic farming, this community involvement incorporates an element of 'social engineering' where individuals are empowered and society is restructured by granting local people authority over decision-making procedures. The inclusive membership philosophy of Kudumbashree, which encourages participation from all women, enables the organisation to adjust and expand in response to changing circumstances and cultural shifts. Furthermore, this implies that Kudumbashree lacks, and should not possess, a strictly standardised framework for development. The references cited are Manoj (2020), Rajagopal (2020), and Venugopalan et al. (2021). The remarkable quality of this contemporary social movement lies in its vitality and resilience. The profound influence of Kudumbashree has resulted in significant legislative reforms and the development of woman empowerment policies not only in India but also in other regions. This serves as a remarkable illustration of the transformative power of grassroots efforts in improving lives and society. Although Local Self-Government Institutions (LSGIs) have made significant progress in assisting women entrepreneurs, they nevertheless face ongoing issues related to personal, production, financing, labour, and marketing. The objective of this project is to investigate how Local Small Graphic Industries (LSGIs) might surmount these obstacles and foster creativity within units run by women, therefore contributing to the sustainable development of the local area.

Objectives

To assess the impact of Local Self-Government Institutions (LSGIs) on facilitating the spread of innovation among micro-enterprises managed by women.

To analyse and assess the primary obstacles encountered by these units in the domains of personnel, manufacturing, finance, operations, and marketing.

To evaluate the capacity for innovation in these units and suggest methods to improve the efficiency of LSGI interventions.

Research Questions

How do Local Self-Government Institutions (LSGIs) promote the acceptance and spread of innovations among micro-enterprises managed by women?

What are the main obstacles encountered by these units in the areas of personal, production, finance, labour, and marketing?

How many Local Self-Government Institutions (LSGIs) augment the innovation capacity of these firms to make a more impactful contribution to local development?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Innovation Diffusion Theory

Innovation Diffusion Theory, created by Everett Rogers, elucidates the mechanism via which innovations are transmitted, embraced, and disseminated within a social organisation. The theory delineates crucial factors, including the innovation itself, communication channels, time, and the social structure, that exert an impact on the pace and efficacy of innovation dissemination. The importance of social networks and cultural elements in accelerating or delaying diffusion processes has been extensively investigated in recent studies, emphasising the significance of understanding innovation adoption in a context-specific manner (Rogers, 2003; Greenhalgh et al., 2004; Robinson, 2009). In the context of micro-enterprises managed by women, this theory offers a framework for comprehending the introduction and maintenance of new ideas and practices with the assistance of LSGIs.

2.2 The Role of LSGIs in Women Empowerment

In the realm of women empowerment, Local Self-Government Institutions (LSGIs) assume a crucial function by facilitating grassroots engagement, augmenting economic autonomy, and advancing social integration. The implementation of decentralised planning and resource allocation in Local Self-Governance Institutions (LSGIs) has facilitated the participation of women in decision-making processes, therefore enhancing their agency and leadership within the community (Raj & Raj, 2016). Schemes such as Kudumbashree in Kerala demonstrate how Local Self-Governance Institutions (LSGIs) can establish opportunities for women to establish self-help organisations, obtain microfinance, and cultivate entrepreneurial abilities, resulting in substantial enhancements in their socioeconomic position (Thomas & Zacharias, 2020). In addition, Local Self-Governance Institutions (LSGIs) have played a crucial role in enacting policies that are sensitive to gender-related concerns, including gender-based violence, health, and education, thereby promoting a fairer society (Biju, 2017). These endeavours highlight the significance of local government systems in promoting sustainable development and achieving gender equality at the local level.

2.3 Challenges in Women-led Micro-Enterprises

Micro-enterprises established by women encounter numerous obstacles that impede their development and long-term viability. Prominent financial limitations are compounded by gender prejudices in lending institutions, resulting in restricted access to credit and financial services. Recent research emphasises that a significant number of female entrepreneurs face challenges related to insufficient collateral and elevated interest rates, which hinders their ability to obtain essential financing (Tambunan, 2019). Moreover, female entrepreneurs frequently face the challenge of restricted market access, exacerbated by insufficient business networks and marketing expertise, therefore limiting their capacity to grow their customer base (Alvarez & Barney, 2014). Socio-cultural obstacles, such as biased treatment based on gender and domestic obligations, additionally hinder women's entrepreneurial endeavours, impacting their ability to manage time and make decisions (Marlow & McAdam, 2013). In addition, micro-enterprises managed by women consistently face obstacles associated with inadequate levels of education and business skills, which restrict their ability to innovate and manage their businesses effectively (Brixiová et al., 2020). The absence of adequate infrastructure, such as childcare facilities and transit, presents an additional level of challenge, especially in rural regions (Naudé & Havenga, 2005). Confronting these issues necessitates a comprehensive strategy that includes policy interventions, capacity-building initiatives, and improved availability of financial and non-financial resources.

2.4 LSGI Interventions and Local Development

Local Self-Government Institutions (LSGIs) are essential drivers of local economic growth through a range of initiatives. These institutions, particularly in autonomous governance systems, have played a crucial role in advancing inclusive economic development, alleviating poverty, and strengthening community engagement in economic endeavours. Scholarly investigations emphasise the substantial influence of LSGI initiatives in areas such as agriculture, micro-enterprise development, infrastructure, and social welfare, which actively contribute to the establishment of sustainable local economies. Local Sustainable Growth Initiatives (LSGIs) enable the efficient use of local resources, establish essential infrastructure, and guarantee the efficient provision of services, therefore fostering a favourable climate for economic activities. Research indicates that the success of Local Small-Grant Industries (LSGIs) in promoting local economic growth depends mostly on the extent of their independence, the sufficiency of financial resources, and the level of community participation in the planning and implementation processes (Bardhan & Mookherjee, 2006; Oommen, 2008; Heller, Harilal, & Chaudhuri, 2007). Moreover, the incorporation of novel methodologies, such as participatory budgeting and social audits, has improved the responsibility and openness of Local Social Governance Institutions (LSGIs), resulting in more focused and influential actions (Isaac & Franke, 2000; Menon, 2009). Nevertheless, obstacles such as political intervention, insufficient technical knowledge, and limited financial resources frequently impede the complete capacity of Local Small-Grant Institutions (LSGIs) in fostering local economic growth. This calls for the implementation of stronger policies and measures to enhance their capabilities (Rajaraman, 2003; Nair, 2013).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research approach:

The study utilises a qualitative research approach, consisting of traditional theme analysis, to investigate the experiences and challenges faced by WMEs and the function of LSGIs in fostering creativity.

3.2 Collection of Data:

Primary Data: Comprehensive interviews conducted with female entrepreneurs and officials from LSGI, as well as focus group talks with specifically chosen units run by women.

Secondary data in this study includes a comprehensive analysis of pertinent literature, government publications, and LSGI documents.

3.3 Sampling Methodology:

This study specifically examines micro-enterprises operated by women in three Panchayats in Kerala. To identify people who are engaged in LSGI programs and have different degrees of innovation potential, a purposive sampling approach will be employed.

3.4 Analysis of Data:

Manually conducted was the conventional method of thematic analysis. The data will undergo coding and categorisation according to the identified major themes, including personal, production, finance, labour, marketing issues, and innovation potential. Analysis of patterns and linkages will be conducted to derive significant insights.

3.5 Assessment of Validity and Replicability:

This study employs triangulation to establish validity by comparing results obtained from interviews, focus group discussions, and secondary sources. Enhanced reliability will be achieved by adhering to a uniform methodology for data coding and analysis.

4. THEMATIC ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

An assessment of the impact of Local Self-Governance Institutions (LSGIs) on fostering innovation among Women Micro Enterprises (WMEs) and the challenges they encounter requires a systematic and rational methodology, focussing specifically on a qualitative research carried out in three Panchayats in Kollam District of Kerala. This research involved interviewing eight Kudumbashree WMEs using a set of 10 predetermined questions. The purpose of the interviews was to get their viewpoints on their challenges, the function of LSGIs, and the potential for innovation in relation to Innovation Diffusion theory. Thematic analysis was performed according to conventional methods, without the use of any program.

The research employs a qualitative analysis by means of Focus Group Discussion (FGD) interviews with female micro unit entrepreneurs who receive support from Kudumbashree through Local Self-Governed Institutions (LSGIs). The study specifically focusses on three selected Panchayats in Kollam District - Pooyappally Panchayat, Vettikkavala Panchayat, and Chavara Panchayat. The analysis aims to identify the challenges faced by these entrepreneurs, their interpretations of innovation diffusion through LSGIs, and their perspectives and recommendations for future growth and innovation potential. A comprehensive interview is conducted with each WME owners. The research findings indicated that the Kudumbashree WMEs were encountering interpersonal, manufacturing, marketing, and financial challenges. Moreover, the importance of collaborative community endeavours or WME meetings held monthly by CDS (Community Development society) in promoting empowerment became apparent within these sessions, as attendees actively participated in discussions about methods to assist each other and attain sustainable development. The examination of these discussions underlined the efficacy of the Innovation Diffusion theory in Kudumbashree, as it cultivates a feeling of unity and collaborative effort among its members through many inventive methodologies. The use of several innovative strategies by Kudumbashree Mission enables small and medium-sized enterprises (WMEs) to surpass their own viewpoints and collaboratively establish a common understanding of their objectives, resulting in successful economic expansion. Furthermore, this research emphasises how the practices of Kudumbashree support the theoretical concepts explained in Innovation Diffusion theory. This analysis highlights the significant influence of the organisation on the units and its capacity to enhance local women units through more innovative practices, so contributing to the general well-being of the state of Kerala. Upon closer examination of the many aspects of the Innovation Practices, it becomes clear that the organisation not only empowers women on an individual level but also plays a pivotal part in converting them into prosperous entrepreneurs.

The analysis focussed on the following key themes:

1. Themes	2. Sub Themes	3. Excerpts
4.	5.	6.
7. Personal, Production or Service Related Problem	8. Health Issues	"I have health issues that make it difficult for me to travel and purchase these items in person from wholesale shops..."-Parimala "Furthermore, my health concerns make it difficult for me to go to locations where I may get raw materials at a lesser cost..."-Bindu "Due to health issues, I find it difficult to travel between branches to oversee operations and ensure everything is running smoothly. This limits my ability to grow and operate my business efficiently."- Rugmini
	9. Technological Problems	10. "I also have difficulty accessing high-speed internet, which is critical for maintaining my online sales via social media..."-Parimala "One main issue I encounter is lack of advanced technologies..."-Santhamma "Initially, I cooked food in usual ways, but everything spoilt within a few days. "Ignorance of new technologies is a problem."-Suja
	11. Machine Inefficiency	12. "The new equipment has clearly improved efficiency. However, they need periodic maintenance, which is time-consuming.-Bindu
	13. Non-availability of Raw-Material	14. "I often run out of basic materials, particularly high-quality mushroom seeds. Finding dependable seeds is a significant challenge..."-Deeva "I struggle with not understanding where to find low-cost raw materials, which limits my capacity to make competitively priced products..."Omana
	15. Infrastructure bottlenecks	16. "One significant problem I have is the lack of a suitable building or shed with temperature control capabilities. This limitation restricts my ability to produce as much as I would like.-Sajitha
17. Problem due to Lack of Planning & 18. Co-ordination	19. Lack of earlier Business Planning and Co-ordination	20. "I frequently believe that my business would have performed better if I had planned more efficiently..."-Parimala "This lack of coordination and equitable allocation of work and earnings generated numerous disruptions, making it impossible to sustain the same level of enthusiasm and cooperation..."-Bindu "This lack of planning led to unforeseen expenses and operational challenges..."-Rugmini "...our venture suffered from a lack of effective planning and coordination, resulting in major clashes among the group members..."-Preetha
	21. Lack of clear marketing strategy	22. "I quickly realised that my lack of marketing preparation was a major issue. I lacked a clear strategy for reaching out to potential buyers and efficiently marketing my things..."-Santhamma
	23. Imbalance between personal and business planning	24. "Balancing the obligations of my business with my household responsibilities frequently left me feeling overwhelmed..."-Reena
	25. Ignorance in regulations	26. "The lack of foresight in understanding these regulatory criteria made it difficult to meet the standards on time..."-Suja
27. Labour Problems	28. Employee turnover and absenteeism	29. "The high personnel turnover rate is a significant challenge. Furthermore, absenteeism is common, which decreases productivity.-Parimala
	30. Lack of employee faith	31. "Managing everything on my own is difficult, but it allows me to maintain complete control over the operations and quality of service..."-Anitha
	32. Inattention and hygiene issues	33. "However, I have encountered situations in which personnel were inattentive or did not adhere to the needed cleanliness standards..."-Deeva
	34. High wage Demand	35. "They soon demanded higher salaries, which I couldn't meet." As a result, I terminated their services and took on the workload myself.-Reena

	36. Incompetence of workers	37. "Some employees lack the expertise and attention to detail needed for this type of employment...."-Rugmini "Only trained persons can complete the tasks, and recruiting such skilled workers is tough..."-Biji
38. Marketing Problems	39. Stiff Competition and Threat of Online Shops	40. "We already handle local orders, but expanding beyond our district is difficult due to stiff competition from larger cities..."-Bindu "With the rise of budget medical stores and online pharmacy apps, people are becoming more price-conscious..."-Anitha "Our textile business faces stiff competition, aggravated by the shift to internet shopping platforms...."-Reena
	41. Modern Technology lead to mass distribution at low cost	42. "Their ability to supply retailers at a reduced cost has influenced demand for our homemade mushrooms...."-Deeva
	43. Market Saturation and Unpredictable Demand	44. "...While hurdles remain, such as market saturation and unpredictable demand, we are committed..."-Rugmini
45. Financial Problems	46. Time -consumption in Lending Institutions	47. "The whole process was so complicated and time-consuming that I grew overwhelmed. I declined due to the excessive paperwork and time-consuming procedures.-Parimala
	48. Too much Documentaion	49. "...The bank insisted on so many documentation, which felt really overwhelming..."-Bindu
		50. "Financial institutions require a huge amount of documentation, and the formalities are extensive. As a result, I was forced to borrow from private lending institutions.-Reena
51. Innovative Practices	52. Skill Enhancement	"The government institution is helping us by providing skill enhancement training to the maximum..."-Parimala
	53. Collective Actiivity	"The kudumbasree helps to create women collectives for the mutual benefit of units..."-Bindu
	54. Leadership	"They helped to co-ordinate several awareness programs and so got an indirect training for leadership quality enhancement..."-Deeva
	55. Organisation Ability	"Kudumba sree mission has helped to increase the organisation ability by providing knowledge sharing from various resource persons..."- Anitha
56. Innovation Potential	57. Clustering	"Clustering of Similar micro units well help to withstand severe competition from rivals..."-Reena
	58. Unique Brand and package	"The brand value of the Kudumbasree mission should be spread to each unit through a unique brand and similar good package..."-Rugmini
	59. Technical Training	It is better to Provide advanced training in areas like digital marketing, e-commerce, and the use of technology in production processes..."-Deeva
	60. Collaborative Platforms	"It will be good if platforms were created for women to share ideas, collaborate on projects, an collectively market their products..."-Parimala
	61. Innovation Hubs or Technology Partnerships	Foster groupings between women micro-enterprises and tech companies to facilitate the adoption of innovative solutions..."-Deeva

5. DISCUSSIONS AND INSIGHTS

5.1 Personal, Production and Service related Problems:

Micro-entrepreneurs encounter a multitude of obstacles that affect their business operations and expansion. Health problems greatly impede their capacity to travel, thus making it challenging to procure raw materials at wholesale rates or oversee operations at several sites. In addition, the availability of cutting-edge technology and dependable high-speed internet is a matter of worry, as it impacts online sales and the efficiency of production. Insufficient awareness of emerging technologies results in product deterioration and inefficiency, while the necessity for regular equipment upkeep contributes to increased time and exertion. The task of sourcing superior raw materials, such as mushroom seeds, continues to pose a difficulty, so constraining their capacity to manufacture products that are priced competitively. Moreover, the insufficient infrastructure, such as the lack of temperature-regulated facilities, limits their ability to produce.

5.2 Problem due to Lack of Planning & Co-ordination:

The micro-entrepreneurs encountered a multitude of obstacles in efficiently overseeing their enterprises, primarily as a result of insufficient planning and organisation. Several individuals believed that more effective strategizing may have

greatly enhanced their business outcomes. The absence of coordination and fair distribution of tasks and income resulted in disruptions, which hindered the ability to sustain excitement and cooperation among team members. The absence of proper planning also resulted in unexpected costs and operational difficulties, exacerbating the burden on business operations. Occasionally, the lack of efficient marketing methods posed difficulties in reaching prospective buyers and effectively promoting products. The entrepreneurs frequently had a sense of being overwhelmed as they tried to manage their company commitments alongside their household duties. Moreover, a failure to anticipate and comprehend regulatory obligations posed difficulties in achieving timely compliance with established standards. These several problems cumulatively impeded the expansion and long-term viability of their business endeavours.

5.3 Labour Problems:

Small-scale female entrepreneurs encounter many personnel-related obstacles, such as elevated rates of employee turnover and frequent absences, which directly affect the levels of production. The prevalence of autonomous operation management can be attributed to these challenges, since it is a complex and hard task, albeit it does offer quality control. Certain personnel display inattentiveness and neglect to comply with cleanliness standards, which raise issues over the maintenance of service quality. Moreover, the salary requests made by employees frequently beyond the financial capacity of the firms, compelling several entrepreneurs to terminate their personnel and assume excess workloads themselves. An inherent obstacle is the scarcity of proficient labour, as jobs necessitate trained individuals, and locating such persons is arduous.

5.4 Marketing Problems:

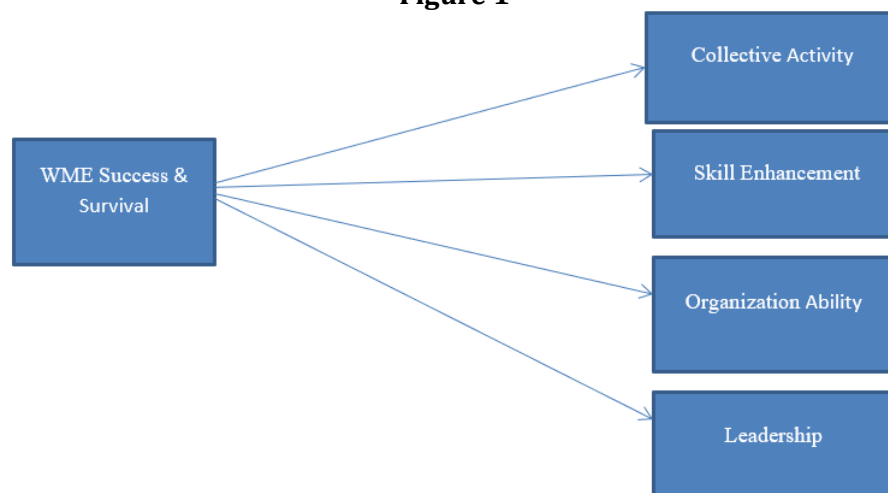
Among the obstacles encountered by women micro-entrepreneurs include intense rivalry from bigger urban areas and the emergence of low-cost medical stores and online pharmacy applications, which have heightened client price sensitivity. This price sensitivity is also affecting local textile enterprises, as the transition to online shopping platforms repels prospective clients. Furthermore, the competition is heightened by the capacity of bigger suppliers to provide products at lower prices, which impacts the market for locally manufactured goods, such as handcrafted mushrooms. Moreover, these entrepreneurs are faced with the challenge of managing market saturation and volatile demand, which poses obstacles in maintaining and expanding their enterprises outside their immediate vicinity. Notwithstanding these obstacles, they maintain their dedication to their endeavours.

5.5 Financial Problems:

The respondents voiced considerable dissatisfaction with the intricate and time-consuming procedures associated with interacting with financial institutions. They characterised the daunting scope of the substantial documentation and the multitude of processes necessary, which deterred them from seeking loans through these official avenues. This onerous process prompted some individuals to completely forsake the notion of acquiring loans from banks. Hence, they felt obligated to seek assistance from private lending institutions, albeit the frequently unfavourable conditions, because of the less rigorous processes. The general opinion was that the strict criteria set by financial institutions resulted in a barrier, therefore complicating the access to official financial assistance.

5.6 Innovative Practices:

The primary objective of the Kudumbashree mission has been to facilitate the development of creative practices among female micro-entrepreneurs through the provision of skill enhancement training, establishment of women collectives for mutual advantage, and coordination of diverse awareness initiatives. Furthermore, these programs not only provide women with the essential skills but also foster leadership attributes and organisational capabilities. By facilitating the exchange of knowledge among resource individuals, Kudumbashree has enabled women to enhance their ability to manage their businesses and make valuable contributions to local development. The extensive support system shown here serves to augment the individual capacities and collective resilience of women entrepreneurs, therefore fostering sustainable development and empowering communities.

Figure 1

Innovative Practices leads to WME Success and Survival

5.7 Innovation Potential:

In the context of women micro-units, the innovation requirements underscore the significance of teamwork, brand identity, training, and technology integration. The consolidation of identical micro-units can enhance the competitiveness of these firms by harnessing their combined capabilities. Strengthening the brand equity of the Kudumbashree mission by implementing distinctive branding and consistent packaging would guarantee improved awareness and trustworthiness for every individual unit. Advanced education in digital marketing, e-commerce, and technical proficiency is essential for maintaining relevance and competitiveness in a dynamic industry. Furthermore, the establishment of forums for the exchange of ideas and cooperation can enable women to collaborate, therefore enhancing their ability to co-market their products with greater effectiveness. Finally, cultivating collaborations between female micro-enterprises and technology firms can expedite the acceptance of cutting-edge methodologies, thereby augmenting the effectiveness and output of these entities.

6. Evaluation in the light of Innovation Diffusion theory:

An analysis of the Kudumbashree mission's activities using Innovation Diffusion Theory demonstrates a systematic method for the acceptance and dissemination of innovative practices among female micro-entrepreneurs. The practical implementation of the goal clearly demonstrates the fundamental principles of the theory, namely innovation, communication channels, social systems, and adopter categories. Through the provision of skill development training and the establishment of women collectives, Kudumbashree enables the acceptance of new practices and technology by establishing clear communication channels and a supportive social structure. The emphasis on leadership and organisational skills corresponds to the requirement for proficient change agents to stimulate innovation. The focus of the theory on the significance of early adopters and opinion leaders is seen in the endeavours to foster brand identification and consistent packaging, therefore facilitating the progressive acceptance and standardisation of these advances. Comprehensive training in digital marketing and technology utilisation caters to the requirement for ongoing assistance and education in order to sustain a competitive edge. Collaboration and idea-sharing platforms, together with alliances with technology firms, exemplify the theory's premise of creating a favourable climate for the broad acceptance of ideas, ultimately resulting in sustainable development and community empowerment.

7. CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS IN INNOVATION DIFFUSION

Barriers such as financial limitations, labour shortages, and restricted access to essential resources can greatly impede the spread of innovation among women micro-enterprises. Financial limitations frequently hinder the capacity of these businesses to allocate resources towards new technology or enhance their current procedures, while a scarcity of workers can impede their ability to expand operations or successfully adopt innovative methods. Moreover, the absence

of adequate training and education can result in opposition or challenges in embracing novel approaches. Conversely, facilitators that encourage innovation include robust backing from Local Self-Government Institutions (LSGIs), which can offer essential financial resources, training, and infrastructure to facilitate these transformations. Furthermore, the availability of contemporary technology and information can function as a crucial facilitator, enabling female entrepreneurs to stay up-to-date with market trends and enhance their competitive advantage. Furthermore, the presence of a supporting community and the availability of networking opportunities can facilitate the interchange of ideas, hence intensifying the spread of innovation.

8. IMPLICATIONS FOR INNOVATION DIFFUSION

The results emphasise the crucial function that Local Self-Government Institutions (LSGIs) can provide as catalysts for dissemination of innovation among micro-enterprises managed by women. To optimise their efficacy, Local Small-Grant Initiatives (LSGIs) should give priority to augmenting financial assistance and offering focused grants or low-interest loans especially for projects driven by innovation. In addition, it is imperative to prioritise capacity-building efforts by providing frequent training programs that adequately equip women entrepreneurs with the essential skills required to embrace and execute novel technologies and procedures. In addition, LSGIs can enhance collaborations with technology suppliers to enhance availability of cost-effective and highly applicable technological resources. To mitigate labour shortages, LSGIs should implement workforce development initiatives that encompass instruction in specialised competencies required for cutting-edge manufacturing techniques. Establishing opportunities for networking and collaboration among female entrepreneurs can cultivate a community of practice, promoting the exchange of expertise and collaborative resolution of common challenges. By incorporating these suggestions, Local Sponsoring Groups (LSGIs) can improve their potential to facilitate the spread of innovation, therefore strengthening the long-term viability and competitiveness of micro-enterprises managed by women.

9. CONCLUSION

The successful spread of innovation among micro-enterprises run by women is essential for their development and long-term viability, and Local Self-Government Institutions (LSGIs) are well positioned to support this process. By effectively tackling significant obstacles such as budgetary limitations, skill shortages, and restricted technology availability, LSGIs can enable these businesses to fully adopt innovation. Key measures that LSGIs might embrace include implementing focused financial assistance, improving training and capacity-building initiatives, establishing collaborations with technology suppliers, and promoting networking among entrepreneurs. By implementing these interventions, Local Small-Grant Institutions (LSGIs) can serve as influential catalysts for change, fostering a climate of creativity that enhances the economic impact and competitive advantage of micro-enterprises managed by women in the community.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

None

REFERENCES

- Alvarez, S. A., & Barney, J. B. (2014). Entrepreneurial opportunities and poverty alleviation. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 38(1), 159-184.
- Bardhan, P., & Mookherjee, D. (2006). Decentralisation and Accountability in Infrastructure Delivery in Developing Countries. *Economic Journal*, 116(508), 101-127.
- Biju, M. R. (2017). Decentralisation and Women Empowerment: Role of Local Self Governments. *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, 63(4), 765-776.
- Brixiová, Z., Kangoye, T., & Said, M. (2020). Training, credit, and labor productivity: Evidence from self-employed women in Tanzania. *Journal of African Economies*, 29(4), 409-433.
- Chaudhury, S. K., Sarkar, S., Pattnaik, C. S., & Rahman, S. (2023). Assessment of Kerala Tourism Industry-An Economic Perspective. *Dera Natung Government College Research Journal*, 8(1), 97- 110
- Directorate of Industries and Commerce. (n.d.). <https://industry.kerala.gov.in/>

- Dutta, A., & Fischer, H. W. (2021). The local governance of COVID-19: Disease prevention and social security in rural India. *World Development*, 138, 105234.
- Greenhalgh, T., Robert, G., Macfarlane, F., Bate, P., & Kyriakidou, O. (2004). Diffusion of innovations in service organizations: Systematic review and recommendations. *Milbank Quarterly*, 82(4), 581-629.
- Heller, P., Harilal, K. N., & Chaudhuri, S. (2007). Building Local Democracy: Evaluating the Impact of Decentralization in Kerala, India. *World Development*, 35(4), 626-648.
- Isaac, T. M. T., & Franke, R. W. (2000). *Local Democracy and Development: The Kerala People's Campaign for Decentralized Planning*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Manoj, P. K. (2020). Empowering the Tribal Women in Kerala: Role of Community Based Eco-Tourism Initiatives through Kudumbashree Mission. *Women Empowerment*, 122.
- Marlow, S., & McAdam, M. (2013). Gender and entrepreneurship: Advancing debate and challenging myths; exploring the mystery of the under-performing female entrepreneur. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 19(1), 114-124.
- Menon, N. (2009). Participatory Planning in Kerala: Delusion or Dialectical Change? *Economic and Political Weekly*, 44(6), 64-70.
- Nair, R. (2013). Local Economic Development: Challenges and Opportunities for Local Governments. *Journal of Rural Development*, 32(2), 101-117.
- Naudé, W., & Havenga, J. J. (2005). An overview of African entrepreneurship and small business research. *Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship*, 18(1), 101-120.
- Nune, S. (2022, October 8). Why Women Entrepreneurs Are Missing From India's Unicorn Growth Story. *Entrepreneur*. <https://entm.ag/7VirCK>
- Raj, M., & Raj, P. (2016). Role of Local Self Government Institutions in Women's Empowerment: A Case Study of Kerala. *Journal of Rural Development*, 35(3), 403-419.
- Rajagopal, N. (2020). Social impact of women SHGs: A study of NHGs of 'Kudumbashree' in Kerala. *Management and Labour Studies*, 45(3), 317-336.
- Robinson, L. (2009). A summary of Diffusion of Innovations. *Enabling Change*.
- Rogers, E. M. (2003). *Diffusion of Innovations* (5th ed.). Free Press.
- Sushma, Bave and Palker, Apoorva. (2015). Women Entrepreneurship towards Women Empowerment in India: Plan Initiatives. *Southern Economist*, 54(3), 16
- Tambunan, T. T. H. (2019). Women entrepreneurs in MSEs in Indonesia: Their motivations and main constraints. *Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship*, 24(02), 1950007.
- Thomas, J. (2023). Mgnregp As A Flagship Programme For The Sustainable Development Of Kerala: An Overview. *Journal for ReAttach Therapy and Developmental Diversities*, 6(10s), 1781-1785.
- Thomas, P., & Zacharias, M. (2020). Women Empowerment through Kudumbashree: A Study on the Role of Local Self Governments. *International Journal of Social Science and Economic Research*, 5(2), 120-132.
- Uncategorised. (2023, October 13). <https://industry.kerala.gov.in/index.php/government-orders-previous-years/2-uncategorised>
- Venugopalan, M., Bastian, B. L., & Viswanathan, P. K. (2021). The role of multi-actor engagement for women's empowerment and entrepreneurship in Kerala, India. *Administrative Sciences*, 11(1), 31.