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Attitudinal model constructs towards alternate livelihood avocations among women in fisheries enterprises – a case study in Ernakulam District Kerala

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ABSTRACT

Involvement of women in productive activities is a very important strategy for poverty alleviation in the society and for the overall empowerment of women. Presently, participation of women in fisheries related livelihood options is limited but there exists enormous potential for enhancing their participation. However, the attitude of women in self help groups (SHG) to initiate the entrepreneurial activity by investing their savings corpus or institutional finance utilising labour resources from among themselves is important. Location-specific and need-based training programmes for fisherwomen can enhance their level of awareness and technical know-how to start gainful employment ventures. These ventures can be taken up by fisherwomen SHGs taking advantage of participatory action to ensure earnings and sustainability. Micro-enterprises by women should not be seen only as a means for economic empowerment, but also can prove to be an important tool for social and political empowerment. In this context, a study was conducted in Moothakunnam Village in Vadakkekara Panchayat of Ernakulam District, Kerala to assess the attitude of women SHG groups to take up entrepreneurial activities. It was found that women in groups were found to have a positive attitude towards establishing micro-enterprises to enhance their livelihood options by utilising leisure time and locally available resources.

Keywords: Alternative avocations, Attitude, Empowerment, SHGs

Fisheries sector in India has great importance in terms of employment, income generation, poverty alleviation, export promotion and foreign exchange earnings. Fisher's access to new knowledge and information needs to be strengthened so as to empower them to harness the new market and trade opportunities as well as to face the new challenges. Emerging challenges in livelihood security necessitate group action in rural (fisheries) system, development of social capital and capacity building of fisher families, especially the womenfolk as well as diversification in livelihood options with adequate integration of rural enterprises. Female empowerment is about improved ability to bring about changes that will enhance women's well-being at the household, community and national levels. Bringing about such well-being requires that women first acquire the power to change their social environment. This can be achieved by training in livelihood options. Involvement of women in productive activities is a very important strategy for poverty alleviation in the society and for overall empowerment of women. Micro-enterprises by women should not be only seen as

means for economic empowerment. Any initiative related to micro-enterprises with women, designed with a right frame and implemented with a right approach can prove to be an important tool for social and political empowerment along with economic empowerment (Thacker, 2007). Gendered lens has been increasingly adopted by the development interventions which can play a significant role in developing and disseminating successful strategies to mitigate rural poverty. For achieving this objective, it is essential that the extension system need to be re-oriented and revitalised with new knowledge base in emerging technologies and methodologies. Besides effective cooperation and coordination among the stakeholders, what is most essential is to infuse positive and favourable intentions and attitude, self-confidence and capacity for self-determination among the clientele system.

In general, attitudes are very important in that they can influence subsequent behaviour. Thus, attitudes related to the social change with the openness to adapt to changes play a major role in deciding the success rate of

empowerment. Attitude has been used as a hypothetical construct by the researchers to explain the phenomenon of interest. Attitude measurement was attempted by Thurstone (Thurstone and Chave, 1929) and even now the methodology developed by Likert (Likert, 1932) is followed. In the subsequent decades, the concept of attitude lost much of its breadth and is largely reduced to its evaluative components (Meena *et al.*, 2008).

The acceptance of entrepreneurship as a vital force for development by itself will not lead to rural development, and advancement of rural enterprises. What is needed in addition is an environment enabling entrepreneurship in rural areas. The existence of such environment largely depends on policies promoting rural entrepreneurship (Petrin, 1994). Location-specific and need-based training programmes for fisherwomen can enhance their technical know-how and awareness enabling them to start gainful employment ventures. This paper highlights the results of a baseline survey conducted during 2009-10, to analyse the attitude of women SHG members of Moothakunnam Village in Vadakkekara Panchayat of Ernakulam District, Kerala towards adoption of alternative livelihood avocations.

The study was taken up with the objective of assessing the attitude of women in SHG groups for starting micro-enterprises as an alternative avocation and analysing the factors influencing their attitude. Primary data were collected from a sample of 52 respondents from Moothakunnam Village in Ernakulam District. The variables like innovativeness, risk orientation and economic motivation were measured with the help of scales developed/used in earlier studies (Supe, 1969; Sheela, 2004; Jeeva *et al.*, 2011). Poverty status was measured as below poverty line (BPL) and above poverty line (APL), as per the Govt. of Kerala classifications. Statistical techniques like linear regression analysis were used for the study.

Attitude of the respondents towards alternative avocations were measured through the attitude scale constructed for the study. The construction of attitude statements following the Likert summated rating scale (Likert, 1932) was followed due to its acceptability that even with fewer statements, high reliability coefficients can be obtained. The respondents were asked to rate the statements on a five point scale. The value of '1' in the scale denotes 'strongly disagree', '2' for 'disagree', '3' for 'undecided', '4' for 'agree' and '5' for 'strongly agree'. The negative statements were assigned values in the reverse order. Initially 25 statements were made relevant to attitude towards alternative avocations. Care was taken to include approximately equal number of positive and negative statements. The identified statements were

subjected to scrutiny by a panel of 25 judges comprising academia, researchers and other practitioners in the field of extension to judge their relevancy for measuring attitude towards alternative avocations. The scoring pattern of 3 (most relevant), 2 (relevant), 1 (least relevant), 0 (not relevant) was followed. The relevancy score for each item was calculated by summing up the scores of rating of all the judges and the relevancy percentage and mean relevancy score were calculated. Ten statements were selected having relevancy score of more than 85% and mean relevancy score of more than 2.5. Reliability which is the ability of the measuring instrument to yield consistent results was measured using test-retest method (Snedecor and Cochran, 1956) and validity was tested using content reliability. The scale was satisfied with respect to content validity as adequate care was taken to select statements so as to cover 'universe of content' through discussions with experts and relevant literature on the subject. The study also probed into the possibility of influence of socio-economic variables on the attitudes of the respondents through modeling technique using an attitudinal model constructed employing the linear regression technique and the goodness of fit was determined by Durbin Watson statistic (Snedecor and Cochran, 1956).

Moothakunnam Village of Vadakkekara Panchayath is located in Paravur Block of Ernakulam District. It covers an area of 11.25 sq. km. For administrative purposes, the panchayath has been divided into 12 wards. The total population of the panchayath is 31,266 of which 15004 are males and 16262 are females. The total number of households are 6196, density of population is 2779 per sq.km, the sex ratio is 1084 and the literacy rate is 93.25.

The women participated in the survey belonged to the age group of 29-68, and there was nominal participation from young women aged below 35 (Table 1). The average family size of respondents was found to be 4 indicating presence of nuclear families compared to joint families. Majority of the respondents were self employed with an average number of employment of 76 days. Innovativeness was found to be medium or high for majority of the respondents. However, 80.8% of them were averse to taking individual risk of financial activities for new generation activities.

Initiating a micro-enterprise by an SHG group is influenced by the motivational level achieved, backed by the institutional initiatives to nurture and support the initiative. The attitude towards taking up alternative avocations either singly or by group effort is important in this context. The baseline survey listed out few questions that would measure the respondents' attitude. The respondents were asked to rate the statements on a five-point scale and the responses received are presented in

Table 1. Demographic indicators of respondents

Indicators	Percentage
Age	
Young (<35 years)	13.5
Middle (36-45 years)	32.7
Old (>45 years)	53.8
Percentage of respondents involved in self/wage employment	55.76
Nature of job involved	86.20
self employment Wage employment	3.79
Average number of employment days	75.50
Average annual earnings of respondents	₹.4916
Innovativeness	
Low	9.6
Medium	44.2
High	42.3
Risk orientation	
Yes	80.8
No	19.2

Table 2. Attitude of fisherwomen towards alternative avocations

S. No	Statements	Mean	Standard deviation
1	Exclusive dependence on fishing could not provide sufficient income for the family throughout the year (-ve)	4.08	0.62
2	Diversification is not necessary to survive during lean seasons (-ve)	4.13	0.97
3	Involvement of other family members in alternative jobs is not required (-ve)	4.21	0.50
4	Skills by the person or family is a not a prerequisite for the success of an income generating opportunity (-ve)	1.50	0.50
5	Location specific interventions are required through Institution Village Linkage Programmes cannot ensure sustainability of income through alternative avocations (-ve)	4.02	0.31
6	Lack of technical support is the most important constraint in taking up an alternative job (+ve)	3.65	0.65
7	Lack of financial assistance is the most important constraint in taking up an alternative job (+ve)	4.44	0.73
8	Success of micro- enterprises is dependent on effective backward and forward linkages (+ve)	3.94	0.54
9	Entrepreneurial activity promoted by groups are more successful than individual efforts (+ve)	4.04	0.39
10	Member participation determines success and sustainability of group activity (+ve)	4.13	0.40

Table 2. The positive and negative statements were having inverse valuations as specified in the methodology. The respondents tend to disagree with the negative statements numbered 1, 2, 3 and 5, but tend to agree with statement number 4. Positive statements numbered 7, 9 and 10 were agreed upon by the respondents while tend to be indecisive with statements 6 and 8.

It was found that the attitude towards taking up alternative avocations has been influenced by several factors including demographic and attitudinal variables. The result of the attitudinal model fitted, to analyse the influence of these variables on the overall attitude of respondents was found to be significant with a high R^2 value, implying that the model is capable of explaining 72.6% of the variations of the explanatory variables (Table 3) and had Durbin Watson statistic of 1.713. The model also had an F value of 24.653. The coefficients of the model explained the following variations of the dependent variable viz., attitude index of respondents (Table 4). It was found that influence on attitudes of

respondents was significant for poverty status ($p < 0.01$), economic motivation ($p < 0.05$ and method demonstrations attended ($p < 0.01$). The increase in level of economic well-being indicated by the poverty status was found to have negative influence on the attitude of respondents ($b = 2.054$). Alternatively this questions the sustainability of alternative avocations. Economic motivation is another significant factor affecting the attitudes. The alternative avocations are taken up for economic wellbeing. Hence it is likely that a higher level of economic motivation induces a positive attitude and *vice-versa*. Finally the method demonstrations attended as part of the trainings imparted by Government organizations, social service organizations, and research institutes was found to be significant ($p < 0.01$) in inducing proactive attitude for taking up alternative avocations. Attending method demonstrations was found to boost up the attitude by 4.99 points.

Table 3. Description of attitude model

R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the estimate	Durbin Watson statistic
0.852*	0.726	0.696	2.35546	1.713

Table 4. Coefficients of attitude model

Model	B	Std. Error	p Value.
Constant	70.058	2.706	.000
Age	.481	.419	.257
Poverty status	-2.054	.690	.005*
Occupation	1.261	.720	.086
Economic motivation	1.602	.698	.026**
Method demonstrations attended	4.994	1.007	.000*

* $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$

Emancipation of women, especially in socio-economic terms, is an essential pre-requisite for economic development and social progress. Appropriate use of science and technology can help them to accept changes in their life pattern. Technology is the key to development, to raise income productivity and living

standards of the rural poor. For technology to be adopted, it must be simple and adapted to the needs which target employment generation, reduce drudgery and promoting health and nutrition. Above all, there should be a positive attitude among the target group to adopt the transferred technology. The analysis of the survey enabled measuring the attitude of women towards taking up alternative avocations for empowerment. The attitudinal model revealed that poverty status, method demonstrations attended and economic motivation of individuals play a significant decisive factor in deciding attitude of respondents. Success of any technology transfer is undoubtedly dependent upon proactive approach towards adoption of alternative avocations.

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