

2023

## **Kudumbashree Mission's Community-Based Enterprise Strategies for Increasing Female Labor Force Participation**

Deepak Chandran Chandran  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

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Deepak Chandran

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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the review committee have been made.

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2023

Abstract

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by

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MBA (Energy & Sustainability), University of Cumbria, 2019

M.Phil. (Management), Walden University, 2022

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Management

Walden University

August 2023

## Abstract

Various facets of gender inequality continue to deter women from participating in the formal economy. Deployment of a significant level of capital from global sources and attention from the global academic community have not succeeded in addressing the persistence of economic marginalization of women. This study's purpose was to identify appropriate community-based enterprise (CBE) strategies for empowering women to overcome barriers and enter the labor force. The research questions addressed the study purpose and how the social capital and collective experiences of the community influenced the success of CBE strategies. Based on the CBE conceptual framework, this qualitative descriptive case study design included a purposeful sample of 12 participants drawn from members of the selected CBE, Kudumbashree Mission. An inductive analysis of the data collected through semi structured interviews and focus group discussion led to emergence of themes. The results showed that the barriers to women's participation in the labor force are many and varied, and different combinations of strategies are needed to address those barriers. Results also showed that the CBEs can use social capital and collective experience of their members, for creating social value by addressing social and economic stresses within the community. The findings addressed a gap in the literature about effective CBE strategies for increasing women's labor force participation and affirmed the CBE theory. The social change implications are that the findings will be useful for development agencies and enterprises engaged in increasing women's labor force participation, for making their strategies more efficient.

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## Dedication

"The roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet." - Aristotle

I dedicate this dissertation to my skeptics, parents, spouse, children, friends, siblings, academic mentors, and academic fraternity, all of whom immensely provided me with motivation, inspiration, courage, strength, and financial and academic support during the darkest and brightest days of this academic journey. I want to thank all my skeptics who indirectly motivated me to push myself beyond my limits during challenging times. To my parents for their belief in me, for always telling me never to quit, and for their selfless love and inspiration. To my spouse, for her unwavering faith and patience, and my children, who give me joy and determination. I hope this work will inspire my children in their future academic career as much as they inspired me to pursue my dreams fearlessly. To my siblings for always considering me brilliant and persevering. To my mentors and teachers, without whose guidance and wisdom I could not have accomplished this work. I have learned from them the importance and beauty of pursuing knowledge.

I wish to conclude with a message of hope for all those who find their life's purpose in pursuing knowledge – that we never stop learning and growing. I dedicate this work, filled with years of hard work, endless cups of coffee, and countless sleepless nights, to all of you.

## Acknowledgments

"It always seems impossible until it's done." - Nelson Mandela

I owe a debt of gratitude to numerous individuals as I close an important chapter in my life. It would not have been possible to complete this dissertation without their constant support.

First, I am grateful to the Chair of my dissertation committee, Dr. Raghu Korapatti, for his guidance, inspiration, and feedback, and to Dr. Keri Heitner, the second member of the committee, who has been equally supportive throughout this process.

I thank Dr. Holly Rick (University Research Reviewer), my former Chair Dr. Kenneth Sherman, Dr. Sandra Kolberg, and Dr. Sara Witty for making this journey possible through their suggestions and guidance at various stages.

I am grateful to Karolina Gorzelanczyk, the International Enrolment Advisor, who first motivated me to join Walden University. I thank my external professional mentors, Mr. Jayasankar Keezhayi, author and legal consultant, and Dr. Jeff Zuckermann, for their valuable insights and support.

I am forever grateful to all those officials and members of the Kudumbashree Mission for facilitating this study and to everyone else I did not mention but contributed in various ways to the successful completion of this dissertation. My journey to achieving this Ph.D. has been long and challenging but knowing that such a supportive and caring community surrounded me made every step worth it. My deepest thanks to all those who have been a part of this journey. This accomplishment is as much theirs as it is mine.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

A low rate of women's participation in the labor force is detrimental to a country's potential for economic growth and causes the persistence of gender inequality (Cuberes & Teignier, 2014; Jaishankar, 2013; McKinsey Global Institute, 2016; Moulabuksh et al., 2021). According to the International Labor Organization, current global rate of labor force participation for women and men is 47% and 72% respectively (ILO, 2022). Lack of gender diversity in the workforce also affects the long-term competitiveness of an organization adversely (World Economic Forum, 2014). Various social practices and cultural norms that foster gender inequality deter women from becoming a part of the formal economy (Ferrant & Nowacka, 2015; ILO, 2022). Examining the strategies employed by organizations for successfully promoting female participation in the labor force might help the practitioners and development institutions engaged in mitigating gender inequality and promoting women empowerment.

I designed this qualitative descriptive case study to examine the community-based enterprise (CBE) strategies employed by the Kudumbashree Mission of Kerala, India, in successfully promoting female participation in the labor force. Labor market inequality is known to reinforce inequality in other aspects of gender dynamics, such as education, health, and political participation (Juhn et al. 2014). Therefore, the findings from this study might result in a significant impact on positive social change through mitigation of gender inequality.

In this chapter, I will introduce the critical elements of the study. I will also present the background of the study, the problem statement, purpose, nature of the study,

research questions, and the conceptual framework. I will define the key terms. This chapter also contains the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations guiding the study, and the significance of the study, including the potential for positive social change from its findings. The chapter ends with a summary and transition to Chapter 2.

### **Background of the Study**

Gender inequality in the labor force participation is a universal problem. After reviewing the evidence available from cross-country studies, Bandiera and Natraj (2013) concluded that the gender gap in economic participation is persistent in both developed and developing countries. Various studies from diverse countries from North America, Latin America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia have all demonstrated the existence of the gender inequality in their respective labor forces (Alecchi, 2020; Bawazir et al., 2022; Beletskaya & Elena, 2020; Mažuolienė, 2020). A study from the Ukraine showed that even the gender equality principles getting enshrined in a country's laws may not be sufficient to prevent the workplace gender inequality (Klemparskyi et al., 2022). The gendered social and cultural factors existing in different societies affect women's participation in entrepreneurial activities (Pathak et al., 2013).

The adverse impact of a lower rate of female participation in the labor force is multifaceted. Researchers from the McKinsey Global Institute (2016) estimated that achieving the best-in-region rates of gender equality by all countries has the potential to add US\$ 12 Trillion, by the year 2025, to the combined annual gross domestic product (GDP). Cuberes and Teignier (2012) estimated that excluding all women from the labor force could cause a significant loss of productivity, and a decline in the per capita income



of a nation by almost 40%. On a microlevel, the competitiveness of an organization is also affected in the long term, by the lack of gender diversity in its workforce (World Economic Forum, 2014).

The problem of gender inequality in the labor force is acute in India, with women constituting only one fourth of its labor force (Jaishankar, 2013). Jaishankar (2013) estimated that an improvement in the gender equality has the potential to add 203 million women to India's workforce, leading to an increase of US\$ 900 billion to the economy. India has the largest relative potential to increase its GDP by about 16% or US\$ 0.7 trillion, by the year 2025, through gender equality in the labor force (McKinsey Global Institute, 2015). Beyond the economic cost of being a hindrance to development, the gender inequality in labor force also causes significant losses to both individual wellbeing and social development (Moulabuksh et al., 2021).

A meaningful and sustainable change is not taking place despite the millions of dollars spent on improving the lives of beneficiaries from developing economies (Knife et al., 2014). Despite all the attention and significant level of investment for improving the economic status of women from national governments and international development agencies, marginalization and inequality persist (Klugman et al., 2014). Even the legislative measures adopted for ensuring gender equality in the workplace are often seen inadequate in containing the problem (Klemparskyi et al., 2022). The slow progress in making changes to women's conditions is because various factors affect women's participation in the labor market, and economic growth alone is insufficient to overcome those factors (Grown & Gooptu, 2015). The COVID-19 pandemic and its aftereffects on

the labor market have substantially dented the fragile improvement achieved toward improving gender equality at the workplace. Kabeer et.al. (2021), using data from 11 countries of Asia-Pacific region found that the pandemic has forced more children out of school, increased the need for elderly and sick family members at home, and generally increased the demand for women's domestic unpaid work. The researchers showed further that women are bearing a disproportionate impact of the labor market disruptions (Kabeer et al., 2021).

The term *social value creation* is defined as the process of improving the well-being of marginalized and disadvantaged sections of society (Kroeger & Weber, 2014). A gap in the current literature is how to create social value by helping women to overcome gender inequality and marginalization from the labor force (Fotheringham & Saunders, 2014). Fotheringham and Saunders (2014) argued that even though such strategies have not received much attention from research scholars, social enterprises could play an active role in helping marginalized women. With their dual focus on social value creation and profit generation, social enterprises are in a better position to undertake activities for empowering marginalized women (Kumar, 2019). Torri and Martinez (2011) noted that most CBE programs for women have failed to make any significant impact.

The absence of effective strategies and models for helping women overcome gender inequality and marginalization is one of the reasons for the ineffectiveness of social enterprises (Fotheringham & Saunders, 2014). Collective enterprises are recognized as an effective technique for alleviating poverty and empowerment of women (Okolie et al., 2021). Jones et al. (2012) argued that organizing into collective enterprises

provides marginalized women, considerable social and economic benefits. Pierre et al. (2014a) and Valchovska and Watts (2016) noted that the CBE model did not receive adequate attention in the academic literature. Soviana (2013) discussed the gap in the literature on the models, strategies, and processes for the effectiveness of CBE. The theoretical model of CBE, proposed by Peredo and Chrisman (2006), is not receiving adequate attention from the social enterprise researchers (Pierre et al., 2014a).

Studying the CBE strategies employed by an organization that has succeeded in promoting female participation in the labor force might help policymakers and practitioners in devising suitable strategies for addressing specific gender issues prevalent in different societies. Kudumbashree Mission, with its success in integrating more than 4.5 million women beneficiaries with the formal economy, through CBE model, is an appropriate case for studying the CBE model for promoting female participation in the labor force. Kudumbashree Mission is an outlier in addressing the gender inequality related barriers to labor force participation (Kudumbashree, 2022). The Mission's success is even more noteworthy because in the state of Kerala only about 30% of the women participate in the labor force despite a relatively high rate of economic growth and female literacy (Arora, 2012; Labour Bureau, 2012). The low rate of female labor force participation despite high rate of economic growth and female literacy countervails the norms and makes Kerala a unique situation.

### **Problem Statement**

The general management problem that I addressed in this study is the gender discrimination and associated economic marginalization of women, which sustain the

barriers to improvement of women's social and economic status (Bandiera & Natraj, 2013; Juhn et al., 2014; Kazemikhasragh et al., 2022). Globally, the rate of women's participation in the labor force has remained nearly static over the last 3 decades, with only about 50% of the women of working age being able to take part in the labor force (World Bank, 2022a). A lower rate of female labor force participation adversely affects a country's economic growth (Cuberes & Teignier, 2014; Jayachandran, 2015; McKinsey Global Institute, 2016). The resulting lack of gender diversity also affects an organization's long-term competitiveness (World Economic Forum, 2014). The workplace gender diversity enhances the organizational performance (An & Lee, 2022). The specific management problem is that despite the attention and deployment of a significant level of capital from global sources into community-based social enterprises for improving the status of women, the economic marginalization of women persists (Grown & Gooptu, 2015; Klugman et al., 2014; Knife et al., 2014; Oberhauser & Aladuwaka, 2020; Torri & Martinez, 2011). Appropriate CBE strategies for creating social value through helping women to overcome gender inequality and marginalization from the labor force is a gap in the literature (Fotheringham & Saunders, 2014).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive case study was to identify the strategies formulated and implemented by a CBE for successfully empowering women to become active participants in their local labor force. A secondary purpose of this study was to understand how the social capital and collective experiences of the members of this CBE influenced the success of its strategies for creating social value through increased

participation of women in the labor force. The CBE that I selected for the study was the State Poverty Eradication Mission (commonly known as the Kudumbashree Mission) of Kerala, a state in India.

### **Research Questions**

The central research questions for this study were framed with the objective of seeking means to address the specific problem of persisting marginalization of women from the labor force. Mitigating the specific problem may be possible by addressing a gap in appropriate CBE strategies for helping women to overcome gender inequality and marginalization from the labor force. The gap in the existing literature could be filled by identifying the strategies employed by a successful CBE to promote female labor force participation, and examining how the social capital and collective experiences of the community members influenced the success of those strategies. Accordingly, the central research questions (RQs) for this study were:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What are the strategies formulated and implemented by Kudumbashree Mission for successfully empowering women to become active participants in their local labor force?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): How do the social capital and collective experiences of the community influence the success of Kudumbashree Mission's strategies for creating social value by increasing female participation in the labor force?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The central phenomenon that I examined in this study was the CBE strategies adopted and implemented by Kudumbashree Mission. The other concepts forming part of

the conceptual framework were gender inequality, female participation in the labor force, women entrepreneurship, barriers to female participation in the labor force and entrepreneurship, and women empowerment. The importance of female participation in the labor force in addressing gender inequality and promoting women empowerment received attention more than a half century ago (Lechman & Kaur, 2015). In 2006, the World Bank accepted gender equality and female participation in the labor force as smart economics. The concept of CBE was introduced by Nottingham (1975). Peredo and Chrisman (2006) proposed the theory of CBE. The main premise of CBE theory is that the small communities from underdeveloped economies can use their rich social capital and collective experiences to identify and capitalize opportunities triggered by social or economic stress. The objective of a CBE is to achieve the common good of the community by creating value through multiple social and economic goals. According to Peredo and Chrisman, the distinguishing factor of a CBE is the community acting as both the entrepreneur and enterprise, in pursuing the common goals of the community. A review of the literature on CBEs by Suriyankietkaew et al. (2022) identified five essential characteristics of a CBE. The identified characteristics were community-ownership of assets, operation and management by community members, profits shared among community members or reinvested in community business, objective of solving social and environmental problems of community, and financial self-sustenance (Suriyankietkaew et al., 2022).

For the conceptual framework for this study, I integrated the above discussed concepts to indicate how the CBE strategies can promote women empowerment by

helping women to overcome barriers caused by gender inequality and participate in the labor force. I used this conceptual framework to guide the research questions, research design, sample selection, and methodology for the study.

Through the theory of CBE, Peredo and Chrisman (2006) provided a framework of propositions to study CBE. The main propositions of the theory are related to the characteristics, outcomes, and determinants of the success of CBE. The outcomes of CBE include both economic and social development of the community and increased acceptance of individual entrepreneurship in the community. The determinants of a successful CBE are the social or economic stresses affecting the community, collective organizational experiences of the community members, and social capital and social resources vested in the community. Dependence on community participation, reliance on the skills available in the community, and multiplicity of social and economic goals are the characteristics of a CBE (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006). These propositions are explained in detail in Chapter 2.

The theory of CBE was the descriptive theory (Yin, 2014) that I used for data collection and the analysis process of this descriptive case study. I used the propositions of CBE theory to create the questions for semistructured interviews and focus group deliberations. The theory supported the exploration of how the Kudumbashree Mission formulated and implemented strategies for successfully empowering women to become active participants in their local labor force. Apart from facilitating the design of the study, the presence of a descriptive theory and theoretic propositions also helped in analytic generalizations from the findings of the study (Yin, 2014). If the analytic

generalization of the findings revealed that the CBE strategies adopted by Kudumbashree Mission have helped in empowering the women to overcome barriers and enter the labor force, it would have affirmed the CBE theory.

The framework is composed of CBE strategies used by the Mission to empower women to overcome the barriers to their participation in the labor force, and thereby to improve the rate of female participation in the labor force. The propositions of the theory of CBE provided a rich and thick description of how Kudumbashree Mission harnessed the community's social capital and the collective experience in creating social value with strategies for women's empowerment and participation in the labor force. A case study by Valchovska and Watts (2016) was an example of the use of CBE theory as the framework for the case study of a CBE.

### **Nature of the Study**

The research method and design should facilitate the research by providing a structured process suitable for conducting the study (Major, 2016). The purpose of a study is critical in choosing an appropriate method and design. My objective for this study was to address the specific problem of persisting marginalization of women from the labor force by identifying the strategies formulated and implemented by a CBE, for empowering women to become active participants in their local labor force. The central phenomenon of the study was the strategies adopted by a CBE for empowering its members to overcome different types of barriers and participate in the labor force. The role of community's social capital and collective experiences in making those strategies



successful were also explored in this study. The stated objectives of the research called for an in-depth study.

When the research involves an in-depth study of some phenomenon, the appropriate research method is the qualitative method (Patton, 2015). When the study involves unknown variables, the qualitative method is appropriate (Yazan, 2015). Because this study involved an in-depth examination of the currently unknown strategies employed by a CBE and the role of community's social capital and collective experiences in making those strategies successful, the qualitative method was appropriate. The mixed-methods approach was not suitable as the study involved a single organization and, therefore, generalizations or formulation of hypotheses was not feasible. Because there were no hypotheses suitable for testing through statistical data, the quantitative method was also not appropriate for this study.

Out of the many research designs available within the qualitative method, the descriptive single case study was the most suitable design for this study. The other qualitative designs that I considered for this study were the exploratory case study, grounded theory, and ethnography. An exploratory case study design is suited for preliminary studies in areas that were not subject to scientific inquiry in the past (Yin, 2014). Because there is an existing theory of the CBE, which could be applied to the selected phenomenon, the exploratory case study design was not suitable. The grounded theory design is suited when the study involves developing a theory that can explain some observed phenomenon (Patton, 2015). Because this study was for theory affirming, and not generating a new theory, the grounded theory was not appropriate. The

ethnographic design is appropriate when the culture of a group of people is the focus of a study (Patton, 2015). The focus of this study was not on the culture of group members, but the strategies adopted by the selected CBE for creating social value. None of these alternate designs was opted, for the reasons stated above.

The choice of the descriptive case study design facilitates an in-depth study of a phenomenon, through the collection of data from the participants' setting (Hyett et al., 2014). Within the case study design, the descriptive case study design is appropriate when the purpose is to describe a phenomenon within its natural context (Yin, 2014). The descriptive single case study design is appropriate when a study involves a single case, selected for being either a representative case or an exceptional case (Yin, 2014). The descriptive case study design is also useful in theory affirmation through analytic generalization from the findings (Yin, 2014).

The analysis of findings from the study revealed that the CBE strategies are useful for Kudumbashree Mission in creating social value through increased female participation in the labor force, affirming the CBE theory. A descriptive single case study aligns with the prevalent practice among researchers for studying CBE. Many researchers have used the qualitative method and case study design in previous studies involving different aspects of CBE (Gajjar, 2016; Handy et al., 2011; Valchovska & Watts, 2016).

I chose Kudumbashree Mission as the case for this study. Kudumbashree Mission is an outlier among CBE for its success in empowering women to become a part of the local workforce. The unit of analysis for the case study was the CBE strategies adopted by a neighborhood group (NHG) of the Kudumbashree Mission, for social value creation

through increased participation of women in the labor force. I selected NHGs based on meeting certain criteria of success in promoting female participation in the labor force through a CBE. The study took place in one of the NHGs selected randomly from those NHGs meeting the selection criteria. The data collection was from the natural settings of the participants, who were members of the selected CBE. I used a list of questions that I developed to guide the semistructured interviews and focus group discussions, involving voluntary participants. I used field notes to capture nonverbal behaviors observed during the interviews and focus group deliberations. I also interviewed certain external parties such as Mission's officials for additional information on the strategies and functioning of the CBE. I also sourced data in the form of documents and information related to strategies and functioning of the CBE, from concerned Kudumbashree Mission offices.

I analyzed and interpreted the collected data using a theme-based, pattern-matching, and rival explanation inductive analysis. I used NVivo software to organize and analyze the data (QSR International, n. d.). The theory of CBE (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006) was the descriptive theory to guide the data collection and analysis. The expected outcome of the study was an in-depth description of the Kudumbashree Mission's strategies that empower women to overcome barriers and participate in the labor force. Chapter 3 contains details of the methodology for the study and rationale for selecting the specific research method, design, and methodology. The results of the study are presented in Chapter 4, in the form of a detailed descriptive analysis. Chapter 5 contains a discussion of the findings from the study, including placing those findings in the context of the existing literature.

## Definitions

This section contains only the terms having unique meanings in the context of this study.

*Barriers to female participation in the labor force:* Barriers to female participation in the labor force are the social, economic, and cultural factors that prevent or discourage women of Kerala from taking part in the labor force, despite the state of Kerala having a relatively high rate of economic growth and female literacy (Arora, 2012; Jabareen, 2015).

*Community-based enterprise (CBE):* A CBE is a community that functions as both the entrepreneur and enterprise, in pursuing common goals that include social and economic good of the community (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006).

*Female participation in the labor force:* Female participation in the labor force is defined as the participation by women in the labor force as workers or entrepreneurs for earning a wage or profit. Unpaid work within the household is excluded from the definition (Szulga, 2014).

*Gender:* Gender is the “socially constructed differences between men and women, and the beliefs and identities that support the difference and inequality” (Acker, 2006, p. 444).

*Gender inequality:* Gender inequality is the systematic disparities between men and women in their participation in power and decision making, and access and control over resources, goals, and outcomes, existing in a society or organization (Acker, 2006).

*Kudumbashree Mission:* More formally called the State Poverty Eradication Mission, Kudumbashree Mission is a poverty eradication and women empowerment program initiated by the Government of Kerala, a provincial state in India.

Kudumbashree Mission is a community network of women spread across the state of Kerala (Kudumbashree, 2022).

*Neighborhood groups (NHG):* Neighborhood groups are the primary units of the Kudumbashree Mission, consisting of one adult woman from each of the 10 to 20 low-income families in the neighborhood. Kudumbashree members undertake economic activities through CBE created under the NHG (Kudumbashree, 2022).

*Social value creation:* Social value creation is the process of improving the well-being of marginalized and disadvantaged sections of society (Kroeger & Weber, 2014; Lorenzo-Afable et al., 2020).

*Women empowerment:* Women empowerment is a multidimensional process that enables women to overcome the gender inequalities existing within the society and make choices and take decisions affecting their lives (Gupta & Srivastava, 2012).

### **Assumptions**

I based this study on the assumption that the selected CBE, Kudumbashree Mission, is an outlier in addressing the gender inequality related barriers to labor force participation. Published reports have shown the success of Kudumbashree Mission in promoting CBEs by its women members in different fields (Kalyani & Seena, 2012; Malcom & Bhandari, 2021; Parvathy, & Kumar, 2022; Reshmi & Nair, 2014). The Mission succeeded in bringing more than 4.5 million women beneficiaries in contact with

the formal economy through its activities. In designing this study, I assumed that the entry of Kudumbashree members in the labor force as workers or entrepreneurs is an outcome of the CBE strategies adopted by the Mission. Another assumption is that the strategies employed by all NHGs of Kudumbashree Mission are common.

A critical assumption for this study was that the self-developed protocols for semistructured interviews and focus groups discussions would be effective in collecting the required data, for answering the research questions. I conducted a field test of the interview and focus group questionnaire before commencing the main study. Another key assumption was that the participants would provide necessary information to identify and describe the strategies employed by Kudumbashree Mission. The participation was to be voluntary, without any incentives or threats, to eliminate the possibility of any motivated answers.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

Gender discrimination and associated economic marginalization of women, which together sustain the barriers to improvement of the economic and social status of women, are a complex and broader problem than what a single dissertation can address. To make the study practical and manageable, I delimited the boundaries of this study by defining the scope. Delimitation helps in defining and restricting the scope of the study to manageable levels (Simon & Goes, 2013).

This study's scope was delimited to the CBE strategies that might help women in overcoming various barriers to their participation in the labor force. The conceptual framework for the study was the theory of CBE (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006). In this

study, various other modes for improving the rate of female participation in the labor force and gender equality, such as improving female education, increasing the economic growth, and changes in labor regulations, were ignored. The study's scope was also delimited by selecting one outlier CBE, the Kudumbashree Mission. The strategies employed by this outlier CBE for achieving an increase in the rate of female labor force participation limit the potential transferability of the findings from this study to other agencies engaged in women empowerment.

### **Limitations**

The chosen design for this study, a descriptive single case study, is amenable to only analytic generalization of the findings (Yin, 2014). The objective of the research was limited to describing the CBE strategies adopted by Kudumbashree Mission for increasing the female participation in the labor force. While useful in theory affirming, the findings may not be amenable to replication by other agencies or CBEs engaged in similar objectives. The unique characteristics of the society of Kerala where the rate of female participation in the labor force remains low, despite the relatively high economic growth and female literacy also limits the transferability of the findings from this study. The study design itself may be replicated or transferred to other CBEs, based on the perceptions of the researcher as to how they choose to identify and describe the strategies employed for increasing female participation in the labor force.

This study was also susceptible to the common problems that affect the dependability of qualitative research. I was not in any power relationships with the Kudumbashree Mission or the participants. The researcher bias could still be a threat due

to the researcher being an instrument in this study and the researcher's predispositions to the creation of questions and analysis of data. The credibility of the study could have been affected by the participants' biases or willingness to share the required information or their answers or statements being affected by social desirability, particularly in the focus groups. I sought to reduce this limitation, which is common to all qualitative studies, by triangulating the findings through data from multiple sources. I kept a journal for describing the case and noting researcher observations during the data collection, which also reduced the extent of participant and researcher biases. A data audit of these records could assist in enhancing the degree to which the findings may be confirmed by others.

### **Significance of the Study**

World development institutions and national governments have initiated various measures to combat the extreme poverty existing in the developing countries. These initiatives have benefited many people, but more than half of humanity continues to exist in poverty and deprivation (Gauri & Sonderholm, 2012; World Bank, 2014). If the core human needs are considered, instead of an artificial economic level of less than 2 US\$ per day as the measure of deep deprivation, the World Bank's estimate of poor people would increase as much as by 30% (Deeming & Gubhaju, 2014). Any efforts toward removing such a level of poverty cannot succeed without including women who constitute half of the world population (ILO, 2022). Poverty is a multidimensional issue, which includes the gender inequality and other burdens placed on the women (Noh & Kim, 2015).



Promoting female labor force participation is one of the strategies that can help in empowering women to overcome poverty. Discrimination and marginalization of women sustains the barriers to improvement of women's social and economic status. The impact of COVID-19 pandemic induced disruptions within the labor market has placed a disproportionate burden on the women and, thereby, increased gender inequality (Kabeer et al., 2021). Lack of gender diversity in the workforce adversely affects the long-term competitiveness of an organization (An & Lee, 2022). The lower rate of female participation in the labor force is also detrimental to a country's potential for economic growth (Cuberes & Teignier, 2014; Jaishankar, 2013; McKinsey Global Institute, 2016). Gender inequality in the labor market causes harm to individuals and the society and act as a hurdle for development (Moulabuksh et al., 2021). As Juhn et al. (2014) discussed, the labor market inequality reinforces inequality in other aspects of gender dynamics, such as education, health, and political participation.

Organizing into CBE can help women overcome the barriers to gender equality (Jones et al., 2012; Okolie et al., 2021). The current literature has a gap on the appropriate CBE strategies for helping women to overcome barriers that sustain gender inequality and marginalization from the labor force (Fotheringham & Saunders, 2014). By identifying the strategies of a successful CBE for enabling its women members to overcome the social and cultural barriers and enter the labor force, this study has made a significant contribution to the identified gap in the literature. The findings might also have significance for policy, practice, theory, and positive social change as detailed in the following subsections.

**Significance to Practice**

Findings from a descriptive single case study are not amenable to generalization. However, the description of strategies employed by the selected CBE might provide valuable insights to the practitioners and policymakers who are engaged in poverty reduction and women empowerment. The findings might also help executive managers of social enterprises and international development agencies to devise or refine strategies that are appropriate for promoting gender equality in the workplace. The findings might also be helpful in combating the high level of gender inequality in India, ranked at 114 in the 142-nation Gender Gap Index (Strachan et al., 2015). The study contributes rich and thick descriptors of how stakeholders of CBE can create social value and contribute to positive social change by helping more women overcome the cycle of poverty, unemployment, and gender inequality.

**Significance to Theory**

This study of a successful outlier contributes to further advancement of the theory of CBE. Contributors to the scholarly literature on social enterprises and CBE might benefit from the findings, as the study addressed a gap in the literature by examining the role of CBE in overcoming barriers to women's participation in the labor force. The literature on gender inequality, women empowerment, and female participation in the labor force may also benefit from this study.

**Significance to Social Change**

Gender equality in the workplace is not just a development or management issue, but a matter of social and human rights (United Nations Development Program [UNDP],

2014). Any findings that might contribute toward overcoming the barriers to female participation in the labor force could have a significant impact on positive social change. Identifying strategies that helped women members of the Kudumbashree Mission to become a part of the labor force might assist in the development of individual women, communities, and the societies at large.

### **Summary and Transition**

Chapter 1 contains an overview of the research and serves the purpose of introducing and sensitizing readers about the contents of this report. The purpose of this qualitative descriptive case study was to identify the strategies formulated and implemented by a selected CBE, Kudumbashree Mission, for successfully empowering women to become participants in the labor force. A secondary purpose was to understand how the social capital and collective experiences of the members of Kudumbashree Mission influenced the success of the Mission's strategies. This chapter contains the background, objective, and rationale for choosing the topic, research method, and research design. The chapter began with a description of the background and rationale for choosing the topic of low rate of female participation in the labor force and the case of Kudumbashree Mission. After developing the research problem and identifying the gap in the literature, the research questions were stated. A conceptual framework, integrating the CBE theory and concepts of gender inequality, female participation in the labor force, women entrepreneurship, barriers to female participation in the labor force and entrepreneurship, and women empowerment, was presented. The rationale for selecting the qualitative method and descriptive case study as the nature and method of the study

was also summarized. The definition of critical terms, assumptions, delimitations, and limitations that determine the scope and nature of the study were narrated. The potential significance of the study for practitioners, scholars, and positive social change was explained.

Chapter 2 contains a review of the existing literature that forms the basis for this proposal. The review includes the strategy used for conducting the review and an analysis of the literature related to the research design, conceptual framework, and key concepts forming part of the study.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The general problem for this study is gender discrimination and associated economic marginalization of women, which sustain the barriers to improvement of women's social and economic status. The specific problem is the persistence of economic marginalization of women, despite all the attention and deployment of a significant level of capital from global sources for improving the status of women. The purpose of this qualitative descriptive case study was to identify the strategies formulated and implemented by a selected CBE for successfully empowering women to become active participants in their local labor force. A secondary purpose was to understand how the social capital and collective experiences of the members of the selected CBE influence the success of its strategies for creating social value through increased participation of women in the labor force.

The review of the literature showed that development practitioners and scholars are aware of the pitfalls of a low rate of female participation in the labor force and the role of social enterprises and CBE in increasing such participation. Appropriate strategies that CBEs can adopt for increasing the rate of female participation in the labor force was a gap in the literature. This gap in the literature has resulted in the persistence of the specific problem.

The remaining part of this chapter includes a description of the strategy that I employed for identifying the literature for this review. The next section contains a review of the literature that formed the basis for the conceptual framework for the study. This section also contains the justification for use of the theory of CBE as the descriptive

theory for the case study and its propositions as the mainstay for the conceptual framework. After that, I review the current literature related to each of the concepts that form part of the framework. I conducted the review with a focus on establishing the relevance of the problem from what is already known in the existing literature and identifying the gap existing in the literature. The following section contains a brief description of the current literature related to the problem and theoretical and conceptual foundations of the study. The chapter ends with a summary section that includes the conclusions from the review, gap in the literature, and transition to the next chapter on methodology.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

Historically, the concepts forming part of the framework for this descriptive case study have developed independently. The relevant historical literature is found in varied disciplines of management, economics, sociology, and gender studies. The different aspects of the general problem of persisting gender inequality have received attention for many decades. In this review, I focused mainly on the relevant literature published since the year 2012. The discussion of the older literature is limited to providing a historical context for the present study.

The starting points for the literature search were the Thoreau search engine for multiple databases from Walden University library and Google Scholar search engine. I also used other databases, ABI/INFORM Complete, Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, Dissertations & Theses at Walden University, Emerald Insight, and SocINDEX. I checked the databases

and search engines with the key terms: *gender equality*, *gender inequality*, *female/women's labor force participation (FLFP)*, *women entrepreneurship*, *barriers to FLFP*, *barriers to women's entrepreneurship*, *women empowerment*, *social enterprise*, *community-based enterprise*, and *Kudumbashree*. Another source for the literature was the reference sections of articles and dissertations already shortlisted. The search results were limited by conditions of peer review and period of publication. I also added a few articles from non-peer-reviewed journals and reputed periodicals dealing with specific case studies or statistics to the review. I only included the articles published since 2012, except in the cases where a particular resource was valuable from the historical perspective. A classification of the resources covered in this review, per the corresponding key terms and year of publication, appears in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Reviewed Resources: Classification and Year of Publication*

Key terms used in search	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	Prior	Total
Gender Equality	6	2	25	12	12	4	2	63
Gender Inequality	6	2	30	16	11	4	2	71
Female/Women's Labor Force Participation	9	3	11	8	6	1	2	40
Barrier +FLFP/Women's Entrepreneurship	1	1	3	5	3	2	1	16
Women Entrepreneurship	2		5	2	1			10
Women Empowerment	5	1	7	8	3	2	4	30
Social enterprise	2	4	10	8	7	9	3	43
Community-based Enterprise	3	2	1	5		2	3	16
Kudumbashree	3	1	1	3	1	2	1	12

I shortlisted the resources through perusal of the title and abstracts, to examine the relevance of each resource to the chosen concepts and framework. I checked the peer-

review status of each Journal included in this review and verified it against Ulrich's (2017) periodical directory. For the most part this review included only the articles from peer-reviewed journals, along with some reports and studies from reputed international organizations, and several books and periodicals. I did not include any dissertations in this review, except as case studies or to show the relevance of the chosen theory and conceptual framework for similar studies. Table 2 contains a breakdown of the type of resources included in the review.

**Table 2**

*Types of Resources Included in the Review*

Peer-reviewed Journal articles	Other articles	Books	Dissertations	Research Papers and Reports	Organizational Web Pages	Total
112	16	7	4	18	1	158

I continued the search and review until all the resources that were related to the chosen keywords and published since 2012 were checked for relevance to this review. I reviewed all the shortlisted resources and synthesized to create this literature review. I repeated all the steps of literature review discussed herein for the resources published during the period up to the year 2022 because there was a delay in completing the dissertation. I incorporated the new resources identified during the additional review before finalizing this chapter on literature review.

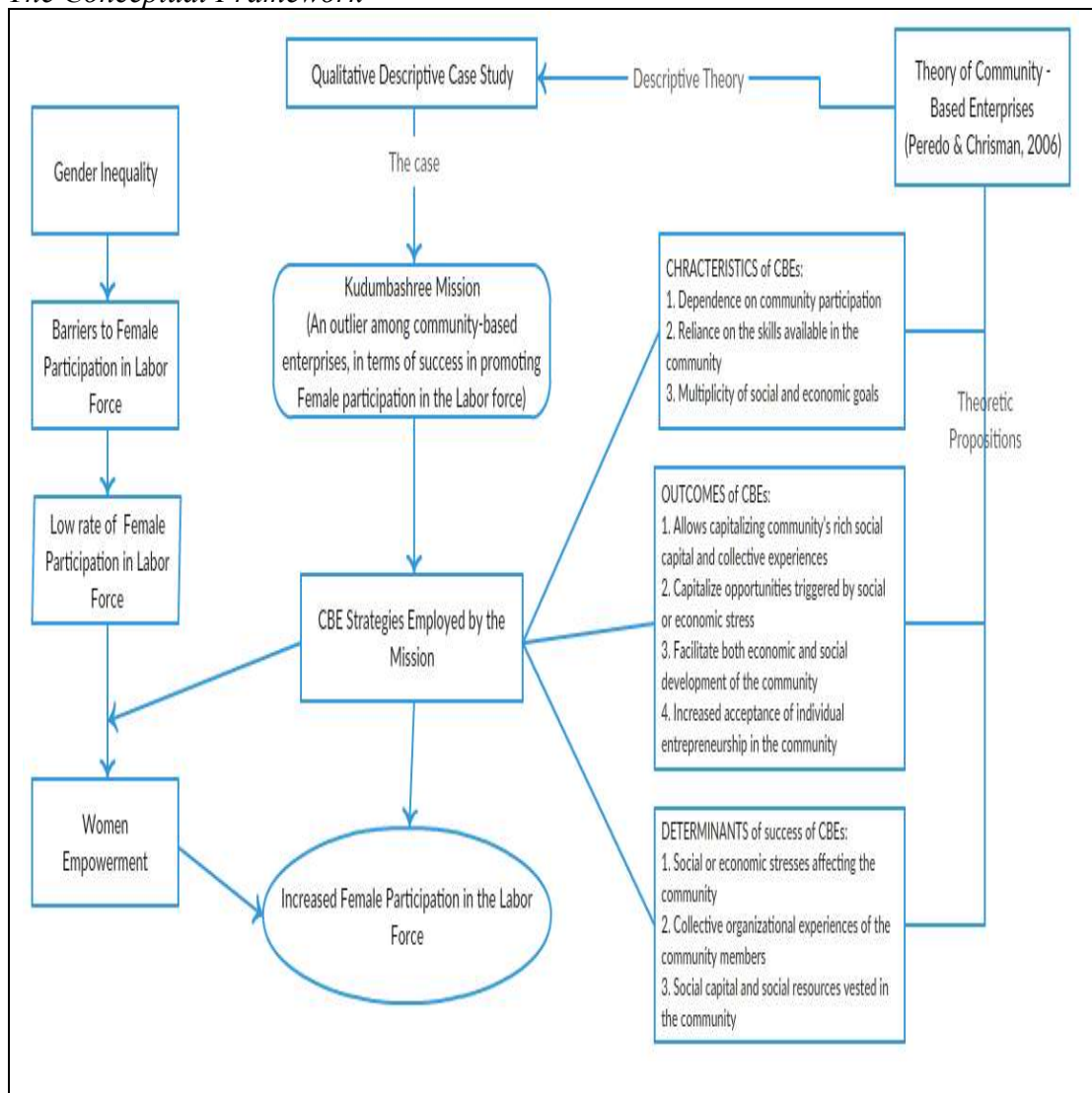
### **Conceptual Framework**

I created the conceptual framework to guide this study by integrating the central phenomenon of CBE strategies with other concepts, gender inequality, female



participation in the labor force, women entrepreneurship, barriers to female participation in the labor force and entrepreneurship, and women empowerment. The resulting conceptual framework was useful to me to indicate how the CBE strategies could promote women empowerment and increased female labor force participation, by helping women to overcome various barriers caused by gender inequality and participate in the labor force. Chapter 1 contained definitions of each of the concepts forming part of the framework and are further explained in this chapter.

The basic premise of the conceptual framework can be described as follows. Persistent gender inequality causes the emergence of various barriers to women's participation in the labor force. These social, cultural, and economic barriers cause a low rate of female participation in the labor force. The strategies employed by a CBE for harnessing the social capital and resources can help in empowering women to overcome various barriers to their participation in the labor force. The conceptual framework, as depicted in Figure 1, shows how Kudumbashree Mission used the CBE strategies to create social value by empowering its women members to overcome the barriers to their participation in the labor force.

**Figure 1***The Conceptual Framework*

In qualitative research, the role of theory is varied. A qualitative researcher might borrow theories from other disciplines, extend the existing theories to the research questions, affirm an existing theory, or generate new theory (Haugh, 2012). A theory can also be used as a component of a conceptual framework to provide direction for the qualitative study. A researcher can use the theory as a lens or guiding light, in deciding

what, and how to study the research topic (Maxwell, 2013). The chosen theory and the manner in which it is used influence the research questions, research design, sample selection, and methodology. The theory used in qualitative research might be explicitly stated or remain implicit in the report. The theory could be either a well-accepted grand theory or a tentative theory formed to explain the prior understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Maxwell, 2013).

The theory of CBE is a critical component of the conceptual framework for this study. Peredo and Chrisman proposed the theory of CBE in 2006. Peredo and Chrisman (2006) theorized that the small communities from underdeveloped economies could use their rich social capital and collective experiences for identifying and capitalizing opportunities triggered by social or economic stress. Such CBEs strive to achieve the common good of the community by creating value through multiple social and economic goals. According to Peredo and Chrisman, a CBE is a community that functions as both the entrepreneur and enterprise, in pursuing common goals. Peredo and Chrisman proposed a framework that outlined the characteristics, expected outcomes, and determinants of the success of a CBE.

Peredo and Chrisman (2006) highlighted the shortcomings in the current efforts toward poverty alleviation and empowerment in developing economies. These efforts by international development agencies and other institutions fail to make sustainable changes in the status of intended beneficiaries. According to Peredo and Chrisman, it is important to adapt poverty alleviation and empowerment efforts to the needs of the local socioeconomic environment. The local community should be involved in conceiving,

executing, and managing the projects at the local level. By involving the community, one can use existing social capital to create and ensure the sustainability of collective ventures.

The important propositions of the theory of CBE are threefold: characteristics of a CBE, outcomes of a CBE, and determinants of the success of a CBE. The characteristics of CBEs are dependence on community participation, reliance on the skills available in the community, and multiplicity of social and economic goals. The outcomes of a CBE are multiple. A CBE is useful in capitalizing the community's rich social capital and collective experiences for common benefits and any opportunities triggered by social or economic stress. Another outcome of a CBE is that it facilitates both economic and social development of the community. Promoting the increased acceptance of individual entrepreneurship, within the community, is also an outcome of a CBE. Another set of propositions identify the factors that contribute to the success of a CBE. The social or economic stresses affecting the community, collective organizational experiences of the community members, and social capital and social resources vested in the community are the factors that determine the success of a CBE (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006).

Many researchers have used Peredo and Chrisman's (2006) theory of CBE as the framework while studying the activities of CBE. Noting the differences of livelihood entrepreneurship from the conventional forms of entrepreneurship, and its close relation with CBE, Trivedi (2014) used the theory of CBE as the framework for studying a CBE that helped livelihood entrepreneurs, in India. While doing a qualitative case study that focused on the learning processes in a rural CBE in India, Gajjar (2016) used the theory

of CBE as the theoretical framework. Valchovska and Watts (2016) used Peredo and Chrisman's theory as their framework for conducting a qualitative case study of a successful CBE project in the United Kingdom. The theory also served as the framework for a study involving the community enterprise of jasmine growers of coastal Karnataka, India (Handy et al., 2011).

Because the study involved finding out the strategies employed by a successful CBE, the theory of CBE was useful in creating an effective framework. Yin (2014) advocated the need for a descriptive theory to guide the data collection and analysis process of a descriptive case study. For this study, I used the theory of CBE as the descriptive theory of how the Kudumbashree Mission formulated and implemented strategies for successfully empowering women to become active participants in their local labor force. I employed the propositions of the theory of CBE for creating the questions that form part of the protocols for data collection through semistructured interviews and focus group deliberations. I chose descriptive case study as the research design for this study. The descriptive case study design facilitates theory affirmation (Yin, 2014).

All the main propositions of this conceptual framework were applied and articulated in previous research studies. Pathak et al. (2013) noted the role of gender inequality and the gendered social and cultural factors in reducing the rate of female participation in entrepreneurial activities. Jaishankar (2013) estimated that an improvement in the gender equality has the potential to add 203 million women to India's workforce alone. Economic growth alone is insufficient to improve the women's

conditions in society because of the social and cultural barriers to their participation in the formal economy (Grown & Gooptu, 2015). Fotheringham and Saunders (2014) pointed out that the social enterprises could play an active role in helping marginalized women. Organizing into collective enterprises provides marginalized women considerable social and economic benefits (Jones et al., 2012). By synthesizing the findings from all these previous studies, I determined that the adoption of CBE strategies by social enterprises engaged in empowering women will result in women overcoming the barriers to their participation in the labor force.

### **Literature Review**

This section contains a review of the current literature on the concepts that informed the conceptual framework. I describe the historical literature and context for the persistence of women's marginalization from the labor force and the gender-influenced barriers that prevent women from entering the formal economy, briefly. The review includes the role of social enterprises in general and the CBE, in particular, in mitigating the barriers to women's labor force participation. It also includes the rationale for choosing Kudumbashree Mission for this qualitative descriptive case study.

### **Historical Context**

In the United States, women began demanding equal rights, as early as in the 1800s. The first convention to discuss the conditions and rights of the women was held at the Wesleyan Chapel in Seneca Falls, in 1848 (Eisenberg & Ruthsdotter, 1998). The Convention declared that "the history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment

of an absolute tyranny over her” (Eisenberg & Ruthsdotter, 1998). The declaration also contained all the critical grievances, including the absence of fundamental civil, political, professional, and religious rights to women, along with the right to vote and own property. The situation has changed for the better, but gender inequality continues to persist in the United States and other developed societies (Olah & Gahler, 2014). The problem of gender inequality is even more severe in the developing countries.

Acker (2006) defined the term gender as “socially constructed differences between men and women, and the beliefs and identities that support the difference and inequality” (p. 444). Gender inequality is the systematic disparities between men and women, in their participation in power and decision making and access and control over resources, goals, and outcomes, existing in a society or organization (Acker, 2006).

The importance of participation of females in the labor force, as a means to address the gender inequality, was addressed more than a half century ago. In a paper presented at the World Population Conference held in Belgrade, in 1965, Sinha J.N. (as cited in Lechman & Kaur, 2015) stated the rate of female labor force participation in a country shares a long-term U-shaped relationship with the economic growth of that country. The issues of women and gender began receiving attention in the development discourse during the 1980s (Bergeron & Healy 2013). Female entrepreneurship began to be treated as a distinct subject within the entrepreneurship literature in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Jennings & Brush, 2013). In 2006, the World Bank accepted gender equality and female participation in the labor force as smart economics. In 2012, the World Bank

modified its stand to recognize gender equality as a critical objective of the development in itself, apart from being smart economics (Bergeron & Healy 2013).

Based on the experiences from Bangladesh, Yunus (2007) suggested the concept of social business as a tool for harnessing the survival skills of the poor people through entrepreneurship for eradicating poverty. While conventional enterprises remain focused on profit generation and maximizing value for shareholders, social and community-based enterprises emerged as an alternative device for achieving social objectives, including women empowerment and poverty mitigation. Social enterprises are, in most cases, undertakings by socially conscious individual entrepreneurs. The advantage of CBEs over generic social enterprises is the former's focus on the community and social capital for its sustenance and democratic structures for involving all the members in its functioning (Pearce, 2003). The community's involvement as both entrepreneur and enterprise is what differentiated CBE from other forms of social enterprises. The concept of CBEs was introduced by Nottingham (1975) and in 2006, Peredo and Chrisman formulated the theory of CBE.

The government of Kerala set up its State Poverty Eradication Mission (SPEM), in 1997, with the objective of achieving poverty eradication through empowerment of women (Kudumbashree, 2022). Popularly known as Kudumbashree Mission, the SPEM network uses CBE at the NHG level to achieve its two objectives of poverty eradication and women empowerment. Kudumbashree Mission was extended to the entire state of Kerala during the years 2000 to 2002. The Mission has since grown to become one of the largest networks of women throughout the world (Kudumbashree, 2022). Kudumbashree



mission is an appropriate example to study how the CBE strategies can be used to promote women empowerment and female labor force participation. Against this historical background and literature, I reviewed the current literature related to all the concepts.

### **Gender Inequality**

The general research problem for this study was the gender discrimination and associated economic marginalization of women, which sustain the barriers to improvement of women's social and economic status. The problem of discrimination and marginalization of women stems directly from the gender inequality prevailing in both developing and developed societies. Gender inequality adversely affects women. Reducing gender inequality leads to the development of both woman as individual and women as a group (Bandiera & Natraj, 2013). Inequality is inbuilt in any organization by the hierarchical nature of the organizational structures. Inequalities are prevalent even in society. Inequalities exist by multiple factors, including race, class, gender, and wealth. Gender inequality means the systemic disparities between men and women, arising out of the social, cultural, and behavioral expectations and norms of being a woman or man (World Bank, 2012).

Nearly half the world's population is female and experiences inequality in some form. Lack of gender diversity in the workforce affects the long-term competitiveness of an organization, adversely (World Economic Forum, 2014). A lower rate of female labor force participation resulting from gender inequality, also affects the economic growth of the society adversely (Cuberes & Teignier, 2014; Jaishankar, 2013). The World Bank has

estimated that removal of gender imbalance in their respective labor forces alone can help countries to increase their GDP by almost 20% on an average (World Bank, 2022b). Conversely, in a study of the manufacturing organizations of Chile, Wu and Cheng (2016) found that higher gender diversity at workplaces led to growth in their productivity. Both the elements of workplace diversity, namely, variety and disparity, are positively correlated to organizational performance (An & Lee, 2022). According to An and Lee (2022), variety refers to gender composition of the groups and disparity refers to the uneven distribution of power among genders across the hierarchy. Healey (2014) argued that gender diversity helps organizations to improve their performance by attracting and retaining better performers. Even the investors involved in equity crowdfunding are said to be favoring teams that has at least one woman involved in its governing board (Cicchello et al., 2021). This finding shows the importance of gender diversity in corporate governance.

The effects of gender inequality are not the same across societies or organizations. Gender inequality is contextual, with the issues and practices differing from one nation to another and one society to another (Strachan et al., 2015). Apart from the economic cost of discrimination, gender inequality causes significant losses to individuals as well as society. Gender inequality has adverse consequences for nations and acts as a hurdle for any development (Moulabuksh et al., 2021). Gender inequality has many facets. Inequalities in access to health and education, discriminatory property regimes, lack of agency for decision making, constraints to participation in the labor force, discrimination

at the workplace, and gender-based violence are some of the key dimensions of gender inequality (World Bank, 2012).

### ***Drivers of Gender Inequality***

The social analysis at each level, be it the individual, institutional, or interactional level, creates, maintains, and reinforces gender inequality (Risman & Davis, 2013). The discriminatory social institutions prevailing in a society drive gender inequality (Ferrant & Nowacka, 2015) and include formal and informal laws, social values, norms, and practices that influence the role and powers associated with each gender. The Development Center at the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has created the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) for measuring the impact of social institutions on gender equality. The SIGI is used to measure discrimination against women along five factors, namely, family code, physical integrity, son bias, legally secured access to land and assets, and civil liberties. The SIGI factors legal age of marriage, early marriage, parental authority, and inheritance as the elements of a discriminatory family code. The physical integrity factor includes violence against women, female genital mutilation, and reproductive autonomy. Fertility preferences and bias toward male child constitutes the son bias. Access to financial resources and legally secured access to land and no-land assets determine the factor of secure access to land and resources. Lastly, the civil liberties factors constitute access to public space and political voice of women (Ferrant & Nowacka, 2015).

In an analysis of the OECD data for 100 non-OECD countries, Branisa, Klasen, and Ziegler (2013) established that the gender-inequality-related social institutions were

associated with the dimensions of gender inequality chosen by them. The selected dimensions of gender inequality included female secondary level education, child mortality, higher fertility rates, and a higher perceived level of corruption. Branisa et al. (2013) also used SIGI to measure the women inequality caused by social institutions, at the country level.

**Gender Inequality and Poverty.** Eradicating poverty is one of the development agendas for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Despite the focus on sustainable development, more than half of the humanity is living in extreme poverty and deprivation (Gauri & Sonderholm, 2012; World Bank, 2015). If the basic human needs are considered, instead of an artificial economic level of less than US\$ 2 per day as the measure of deep deprivation, the World Bank's estimate of poor people will increase as much as by 30% (Deeming & Gubhaju, 2014). A strong correlation exists between gender and poverty, even in the developed societies. The concept of the feminization of poverty, which states that the incidence of poverty among women is higher, more severe, and increasing, has received wide acceptance among scholars and practitioners. Even within the households, there is a systematic discrimination against women and girls while distributing the income (Kabeer, 2015). Feminization of the unpaid household care responsibilities reduces the time available to women for earning an income by working outside the homes (Noh & Kim, 2015). The gender inequality is not limited to the poor, but poverty increases the impact of gender inequality due to the discriminatory allocation of scarce resources on gendered lines (Kabeer, 2015). The impact of COVID-19 pandemic is also seen to be disproportionately high among women workers. This setback is reversing the small

improvements achieved by many countries, during the recent years, in improving gender equality in labor market (Kabeer et al., 2021).

Without removing the root causes that abet poverty among women, it is impossible to eradicate the world's extreme poverty (Garikipati et al., 2014). Even enshrining the gender equality principles within the national laws is not found to be adequate in preventing the persistence of gender inequality at workplace or labor market (Klemparskyi et al., 2022). The prevailing social norms and household responsibilities where women are responsible for managing the household expenditure without having any control over productive assets force poor women to avail loans from different sources. Even the microfinance given for creating productive assets or beginning self-employment is often diverted toward families' consumption requirements (Garikipati et al., 2014).

Not all researchers agree with the argument that there is a feminization of poverty. Analyzing the latest poverty and social exclusion survey of the United Kingdom, conducted in 2014, Dermott and Pantazis (2014) showed that the difference between the level of poverty and deprivation among men and women were not statistically significant. As against 22% women, 20% men in the United Kingdom were found to be living in poverty. Martin and Edigo (2013) stated that various factors such as welfare policies, labor market characteristics, and level of inequality are likely to affect poverty, more than the gender per se. Even if the theory of feminization of the poverty is rejected, the fact remains that poverty cannot be eradicated without empowering women.

**Gender Inequality and Development.** Woman and girl are the faces of global development agenda promoted by initiatives like Millennium Development Goals and the World Bank's so-called 'Gender Equality as Smart Economics' policies. Economic empowerment of women is projected as the solution for global poverty (Calkin, 2015). The girls in developing countries are projected as the solutions for global poverty and any help extended for the empowerment of those girls is projected as sound investments with handsome returns of a world, free from HIV, poverty, and injustice (Calkin, 2015). An achievement of even the best-in-the-region reduction in gender inequality in the labor force by all countries has the potential to increase global GDP by 11%, or US\$ 12 trillion, by 2025 (McKinsey Global Institute, 2016).

The World Bank has conducted extensive studies on the impact of gender inequality on development and growth. Gender discrimination is now recognized as a human right violation and having an impact on not only women but over many development outcomes for the world as a whole. In an analysis of data from 160 countries, Ferrant and Nowacka (2015) found that the high proportion of unpaid care work for women is not merely an issue of rights discrimination. A high proportion of unpaid care work also affects women's economic empowerment as they are unable to take up other remunerative employment (Ghosh & Chopra, 2019). Similarly, the institution of early marriage for girl child prevents them from pursuing education, which in turn affects their empowerment and employability. Globally, early marriage led to cutting short the education of about 35 million girls. Such discriminatory factors cause the deprivation of a significant portion of human resources toward economic

development of the respective countries, apart from affecting the entire life of women and girls (Ferrant & Nowacka, 2015).

Two distinct streams of thoughts exist on the relationship between development and gender equality (Eastin & Prakash, 2013). The first stream represented by critical and some feminist scholars insists on the limited role of capitalist mode of economic growth on gender inequality. Some argue that it is not the economic growth but direct interventions through social engineering that can eradicate gender inequality. Other scholars have argued that economic development may contribute to worsening of gender inequality. The neoliberal scholars represent the second stream of thought and have identified direct linear relationship between economic growth and gender inequality. Any discriminatory practices would be cost ineffective. Both these streams suggest a relationship (either negative or positive) between economic growth and gender inequality.

Eastin and Prakash (2013) rejected such a monotonous U-shaped relationship and argued for an S-shaped Gender Kuznets curve (GKC) involving a three-stage interaction between economic growth and gender inequality. During the first stage of economic growth, the gender equality will increase as the growth brings in economic, social, and political improvements. This improvement in gender equality plateaus and decreases in the second stage due to a backlash from the now affluent reactionary and discriminatory institutions that limit women's economic opportunities and freedom. The third stage begins when the growth crosses a second threshold that leads to the evolution of new norms and institutions that support gender equality and makes the exclusion of women

from the labor force, costly. The S-shaped GKC shows a possible interaction between social forces and economic growth to produce a nonlinear relationship between economic growth and gender inequality (Eastin & Prakash, 2013).

After analyzing the correlation between economic development and the gender gap in poverty, Fodor and Horn (2015) stated that faster the rate of growth, a higher level of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflow and financial deregulation are positively related to a higher gender poverty gap. Fodor and Horn also established that the lesser level of welfare spending by the state, be it in the overall welfare spending, pension funding, or family-related welfare spending, is positively correlated with a higher level of the gender gap in poverty. The findings from this study by Fodor and Horn showed that the structural adjustment programs based economic growth put the women at a greater disadvantage by strengthening the factors that contribute to gender inequality. Similarly, increased investments in male-intensive sectors or female-intensive sectors of the economy can also lead to different impacts on women's participation in the labor force, affecting the shape of the GKC (Saure & Zoabi, 2014). Choudhry and Elhorst (2018) again suggested a U-shaped relationship between female labor force participation and economic development.

**Gender Inequality in India.** Traditionally, Indian society subjugated its women to an inferior position (Lama, 2014). Since the independence of the country, India has given importance to the emancipation of women through legislative and welfare measures. The Indian Constitution guarantees equality and high level of legislative rights to women. Many affirmative and protective provisions for enabling women's



participation in the labor force are also part of the regulatory framework (Strachan et al., 2015). Despite all these efforts, women continue to be deprived and without much empowerment. Many social institutions and norms contribute to gender inequality. The poor women are now forced to take up income generating work, apart from their traditional roles of childbearing, child-rearing, and household works (Lama 2014).

Despite a healthy rate of economic growth, India witnessed a steady decline in the women's participation in labor force for the last 2 decades (Lahoti & Swaminathan, 2015). The trade liberalization policies adopted by India is said to have led to an increase in gender inequality (Gupta, 2015). According to the UNDP (2016), the human development index of India is affected by gender inequality to the extent of 27.2%. India's HDI for 2015 fell from 0.624 to 0.454 when the HDI is discounted for the inequality (UNDP, 2016). Analyzing the data from national family health surveys, Arora (2012) demonstrated the paradoxes among Indian states where the positive correlation between gender equality and economic growth was nonexistent. The analysis of national data showed a general trend of negative correlation between gender inequality and economic growth represented by the per capita income. There were exceptions. The states of Haryana and Punjab showed higher gender inequality despite having higher per capita income. Another paradox noticed in the analysis was the state of Kerala, which is the focus of this dissertation. The analysis showed that the state of Kerala has the lowest gender inequality among Indian states. Kerala scored high on both gender development index and gender empowerment index, resulting in the lowest level of gender inequality

among Indian states and, yet, the participation of women in the workforce was only to the extent of 30.1% (Arora, 2012).

Jaishankar (2013) presented the economic consequences of gender inequality in India, noting that in 2010, the participation rate in the labor force was only 29% for Indian women. Jaishankar estimated that the gender equality could add another 203 million women to the Indian workforce, and this addition has the potential to increase the economic output by about US\$ 900 billion. This addition would mean an increase of about 4% in annual economic growth for the country. Jaishankar cautioned that to overcome the negative impact of gender inequality on economic growth of the country, India must adopt necessary policies and also transform its society.

Analysts from McKinsey Global Institute (2015) also made similar observations on the potential of India. India has a potential to boost its GDP by 16% on its GDP at a business-as-usual level, by 2025, if it can address the issue of extreme gender inequality. This increase in GDP growth can go up to 60% higher than business-as-usual GDP in 2025 if India can achieve total gender equality at the workplace. The increase in real terms would mean an addition of US\$ 2.9 trillion to India's GDP by 2025 (McKinsey Global Institute, 2015).

### **Female Labor Force Participation**

A low rate of female labor force participation is both a cause and an outcome of the gender inequality. The absence of regular job and income makes women dependent on male members of the family. Employment and earnings give women some bargaining power, which impacts the wellbeing of both women and children (Klasen & Pieters, 2013).

Only when women are likely to engage in remunerative work will families invest more money in their education and development of human capital. The vicious cycle of gender inequality can be broken by encouraging more women to become financially independent by taking part in the regular workforce. In 1965, J. N. Sinha (as cited in Lechman & Kaur, 2015) theorized that the rate of female labor force participation in a country shares a long-term U-shaped relationship with the economic growth of that country. Recent studies are showing that the U-shaped curve may not apply to all countries (Dogan & Akyuz, 2017; Gaddis & Klasen, 2014;). The impact of growth in the per capita income on the rate of female labor force participation differs from country to country. The cultural, legal, social, and various other factors influence the relationship between economic growth and female labor force participation (Lechman & Kaur, 2015). Even outcomes of the policies aimed at promoting female labor force participation depend on country-specific context (Cascio et al., 2015; Pfau-Effinger, 2012).

One problem with the concept of female labor force participation is the historical biases on women's work. Even in Sweden, with relatively high level of gender equality, programs aimed at increasing women's entrepreneurship suffer from the 'gender segregation' by encouraging women to take up particular types of gendered activities (Achtenhagen & Tillmar, 2013). Often women's work is treated as 'household work' and men's work as an occupation. The narrow definition of women's work treats only those women who do men's work as participating in the labor force. A wider definition takes into account not just the 'men's work' but the female work in subsistence farming, home-based manufacturing, and other sporadic work (Szulga, 2014). A narrow definition often

leads to incorrect reporting of the actual rates of female participation in the labor force. For this study, female labor force participation means the participation of women in the labor force, as workers or entrepreneurs, for earning a wage or profit, and does not include participating in any unpaid work within the household.

### ***Importance of Female Labor Force Participation***

The United Nations has recognized the need for promoting gender equality to ensure sustainable development. The UN Women, the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, was created by the UN General Assembly, in 2010 (UN Women, 2011). In 2015, the United Nations has adopted gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls as one of the 17 sustainable development goals to be achieved by 2030 (UN Women, 2016). One of the agenda for UN Women is to enhance the women's economic participation, as the economic empowerment of women can lead to a reduction in all facets of gender inequality (UN Women, 2011).

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has also been playing a key role in bringing about equality in the workplace, since the 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Women held in Beijing, in 1995. The changes at the ground level have been slow. Between men and women there is still a 27% gap in the rate of participation in the labor force. The improvement in the gender gap at workplace since 1995 was only 1% despite the fact that smaller number of men are working since the global financial crisis in 2008. The quality of jobs in which women are engaged is also a matter of concern. Nearly 46% of the women are involved in vulnerable employment, even after a significant improvement from the 53% in 1995. The pay gap between genders continues to persist, with women

earning only about 77% of what men earn, globally. The ILO estimated that the pay equity between genders will not be achieved until 2086. The ILO emphasized the need to re-focus on gender equality and women empowerment as key human rights issues and critical drivers for global progress (International Labour Organization, 2015).

The gender gap in the labor market is not limited to developing countries but extend to the developed economies as well. Cuberes and Teignier (2014) noted that the women entrepreneurship and labor market participation is one area of gender inequality inadequately explored by the researchers. The World Bank also recognized the need for promoting female participation in the labor force. The World Development Report 2012 by the World Bank stated that the gender equality in the workforce could enhance the productivity and improve development outcomes (World Bank, 2012). Apart from being a development outcome in itself, increased gender equality was also recognized as smart economics by the World Bank.

Cuberes and Teignier (2012) quantified the effect of gender inequality in an economic model they developed. This model showed that a total exclusion of women from entrepreneurship would lead to a 10% drop in the output per worker. Similarly, total exclusion of women from the labor force would result in a 40% decrease in the per capita income. The country-by-country analysis, based on the model, showed that the low-income countries lose about 15% of the per-capita GDP from gender inequalities. The total income loss because of gender inequality in the Middle East and North Africa is 27%, in South Asia about 23%, in the rest of the world around 15% (Cuberes & Teignier, 2012). The high level of losses predicted by this model shows the economic importance

of eradicating gender inequality in general and barriers to women's entry into the labor force in particular. Another study by Choudhry and Elhorst (2018) showed that there exists a U-shaped relationship between women's labor force participation rate and economic development of a country.

No organization can be immune to the problems existing in the society in which it functions. Even a reputed organization like McKinsey & Company is suffering from underrepresentation of women in its workforce, despite all its efforts to increase the gender equality (Barton et al., 2015). Only 39% of the entry-level recruits and 11% of senior leadership consists of women in McKinsey. This statistic is surprising, considering that McKinsey was among the top ten companies for women, identified by the Working Mother Magazine and the organization is a member of the United Nation's HeForShe initiative and the 30% club (Barton et al., 2015). The gendered behavior of organizations is inherent in their policies and norms that conform to the established gender roles (Mastracci & Bowman, 2015). The persistence of gender-based roles at home is one of the challenges for the women to make progress in the organization. A systematic review of the research papers on occupational health revealed that female workers suffer more job insecurity, lower control, poorer health, and worse contractual terms (Campos-Serna et al., 2013). Gender equality initiatives cannot be short-term and require transformation through broad-based interventions over an extended period (Barton et al., 2015).

### ***Female Labor Force Participation in India***

Despite high levels of economic growth, India has one of the worst gender gap in labor force participation, with women's participation being about 50% of men's

participation. Only one third of the women in the working age are working in India. An Indian man is likely to work three times more than a woman (Jayachandran, 2015). Even those women who are working are predominantly engaged in the low productivity jobs in unpaid self-employed or casual labor sectors (Sorsa, 2015). India is also characterized by large differences in the rate of female participation in the labor force across different regions (Sorsa et al., 2015). Unlike what is theorized by the U-shaped curve of female participation in the labor force in comparison with the development of the economy, India has witnessed a decline in actual participation rates for women in the labor force (Mehrotra & Parida, 2017). This decrease in the labor force participation rate is even more pronounced in the case of rural women of India (Sanghi et al., 2015). Persisting decline in female labor force participation in India even in the face of continuing growth of the economy is a puzzle for the scholars (Lahoti & Swaminathan, 2015).

In one of the OECD working papers, Sorsa (2015) examined the reasons contributing to high level of gender inequality in labor force participation, in India. While raising women's participation in the economy could be a new engine of growth for India, the supply side factors or barriers include the religious customs, social norms against women's working, wage inequality, safety concerns, and lack of infrastructure. The jobless growth is a demand-side factor that affects the female participation in labor force, even when the educated women are willing to work (Sorsa, 2015). Sanghi et al. (2015) suggested that one of the factors that cause the decline in female labor force participation in India is the increase in the income levels of households. The income of women is considered transitory and supplementary to the total household income (Mathew, 2015).

As the household income increases, women become reluctant to take up casual and subsistence level jobs. Because other preferred opportunities are not available in rural India, there is a decline in women's workforce participation as the economy develops (Sanghi et al., 2015). Mehrotra and Parida (2017) found a correlation between increasing education for females and the falling rate of their participation in the labor force. Sorsa et al. (2015) stated that the social and cultural practices are the principal factors that determine women's participation in the labor force of India.

Another peculiar scenario exists in the agricultural sector of India. An increasing feminization of the agricultural sector workforce was noticed, post liberalization of Indian economy. However, this increase in the share of women workers in the sector was due to migration of the male workers to other sectors. Now in India, 50% of the male workers are engaged in non-agricultural sectors while only a 35% of the women workers are engaged in sectors other than agriculture. The increasing share of women in the agricultural sector has also not led to their empowerment or gender equality as the wages for women agricultural workers continue to be lower than that of their male counterparts (Das, Mohapatra, & Patnaik, 2021).

COVID-19 pandemic has also impacted adversely the gender inequality. In India, the overall labor force contracted by 3% in the pandemic affected economy, during the period of November 2019 to November 2020. However, the shrinkage was more drastic for women workers as their share in the labor force shrunk by 13% against a mere 2% shrinkage for the men workers (Nikore et al., 2022).



### **Barriers to Female Labor Force Participation**

Some of the key characteristics of current economic development are believed to facilitate female labor force participation. Those key characteristics are the importance of the service sector, reduced number of childbearing and reduction in associated risks, and technological developments that facilitate home production (Jayachandran, 2015). The increased opportunities for women's labor force participation, in turn, increase the investment in girl's education and personal autonomy of women, creating a cycle of reinforcement. However, the female labor force participation is not showing such a positive correlation with economic development, in many countries. The reason for such a lag is the existence of many barriers to the participation of women in the labor force., Nikore et al. (2022) identified “occupational segregation and concentration of women in low-growth sectors, income effect of rising household earnings, increased mechanization, and gender gaps in tertiary education and skill training” as some of the leading factors causing the low level of Indian women's participation in the labor force.

The gender inequality in education and health, the higher ratio of jobs requiring physical labor and strength, and higher fertility and risky fertility are some of the barriers existing among developing countries. An analysis of the data from Middle East countries revealed that rate of urbanization, fertility rates, and access to secondary education were factors showing negative correlation with women's participation in the labor force (Bawazir et al., 2022). Cultural practices like patrilocality (a married couple living near husband's parents), support of parents by sons, dowry system, patrilineality (name and property passing to male descendants), and concerns about women's honor, also act as

barriers (Erinc, 2017; Jayachandran, 2015). Gender norms in the society, patrilocality, social pressure to get married, absence of support from husband's family, and class and caste related restrictions are factors that cause career disruptions even among the working women in India (Barhate et al., 2021). Not just in developing countries, but even in a society like Sweden where there is a relatively high level of gender equality, the emerging organizational contexts reproduce and maintain gender order (Skold & Tillmar, 2015). A study of the US, Canada, and Russian labor markets showed that female labor force participation is a complex process, requiring comprehensive measures ranging from labor policies, social protection, health and education (Beletskaya, & Zotova, 2020).

In a study conducted in China Cooke and Xiao (2021) classified the barriers to women's entrepreneurship into Macro, Meso, and Micro levels. Macro level barriers include institutional and societal factors such as lack of legislative and policy support, imperfect credit markets and supply chains, different retirement ages of men and women, disadvantage of private enterprises in Chinese system, gender prejudice and male dominated society, and gender norms that prioritizes women's social role as family oriented. Meso barriers are imbalanced distribution and structural issues existing at the industry level. Micro barriers are organizational and individual factors. These include inequality in human recourse practices, male-dominant organizational culture, gender role cognition bias, work-family conflicts, and perceived physical and psychological characteristics of women (Cooke & Xiao, 2021). Another study from the African context reported "limited access to farmlands and profitable markets, lack of business networks,

limited time, poverty and insufficient financial resources” as the main barriers that prevent women from Tanzania participating in entrepreneurship (Semkunde et al., 2022).

One of the key barriers to women’s participation in the labor market is lack of recognition and support for their disproportionate responsibilities, for care work at home (Carmona & Donald, 2014; Chopra & Sweetman, 2014). A study of the women entrepreneurs of Latin America revealed that the key barriers that prevent women from taking up business activities are “lack of access to financing sources, stereotypes, negative perceptions about women as entrepreneurs, and challenges of balancing work and family life” (Alechhi, 2020). In a study that analyzed the social-policy frameworks of European countries, Keck and Saraceno (2013) concluded that provision of generous child care services for small children has the maximum impact on the participation of mothers in the workforce. In analyzing the National Survey of Family and Households and the U.S. Census, Compton and Pollak (2014) found that even in the United States, the situation was no different. Even though market-based child care services are prevalent in the United States, mothers of minor children desire the added assurance of the proximity of mothers and mothers-in-law, for participating in the labor force (Compton & Pollak, 2014). This assurance of proximity is to take care of the children in the case of unanticipated circumstances. In a country like India, where formal childcare facilities are still nascent, the gender roles of child care can keep women away from labor force participation.

Wage inequality is another dimension of gender inequality that acts as a barrier to female participation in the labor force (Juhn et al., 2014). Among other challenges in

addressing gender inequality in the workplace, ILO considers solutions for care work as the primary challenge. This double burden on working women must be addressed to make equal opportunities meaningful. The stereotypical gender roles that make women responsible for care work and household chores cause exclusion of women from the labor force. Often, women are constrained to participate only in low-paid part-time jobs, due to their responsibilities arising out of gender roles. Another challenge identified by ILO is the different forms of violence that the women have to face at work (ILO, 2015). Any effort to increase female labor force participation should take all these barriers into account.

In a study that analyzed the data from 26 European countries, Boje and Ejrnaes (2012) found that the family policy model followed by each country has a bearing on the labor market participation of mothers with children. In a study that examined the relationship between females' participation in the labor force and democratic system of governance, Bayanpourtehrani and Sylwester (2013) arrived at an interesting conclusion. Analyzing the World Bank's World Development Indicators and Freedom House Indices of civil liberties and political rights for all countries for which the data were available from 1980 to 2005, Bayanpourtehrani and Sylwester found that the rate of female labor force participation is lower in democracies in comparison with autocracies. The reasons for this unexpected finding could be the freedom under democracy for choosing whether to work and freedom to adhere to the social and cultural preferences on women's working. The findings by Bayanpourtehrani and Sylwester could also be a result of the autocracies' tendency to force more people, both male and female, into working.

Bayanpourtehrani and Sylwester revealed the complexities and challenges involved in addressing the barriers to female participation in the labor force. Another study focusing on the German context found that the historic rates of industrialization and female labor force participation of a particular region has a significant impact on the current rate of female labor force participation. Therefore, policies that seek to improve the rate of female labor force participation should consider the historical context of each region (Wyrwich, 2019).

In a study that focused on the impoverished Arab women within a relatively affluent society of Israel, Jabareen (2015) identified four domains that affect the rate of women's participation in the labor force: the sociocultural, ethnopolitical, personal, and spatial domains. These domains account for various factors like cultural or gender factors, family traits, ethnicity, structural factors, spatial factors, human capital factors, and social capital factors that act as barriers to women's participation in the labor force. Any effort at increasing women's participation in the labor force can succeed, only if these complex domains are addressed in a comprehensive manner (Jabareen, 2015). The gender inequality in the workforce is not a phenomenon affected only by the level of economic development. Even in the most advanced countries, welfare policies or lack of it leads to gender inequality in the labor force (Kim & Choi, 2013). Even the existence of enabling factors like childcare facilities can become ineffective when a society's cultural attitude toward external childcare remains negative (Borck, 2014).

Relative to a very low and stagnating rate of female participation in the labor force in India, Klasnen and Pieters (2013) found that both demand and supply factors are

acting as barriers to women's entry into the labor force. The educated women have become choosier in selecting jobs. These women prefer not to enter the labor force unless they get their preferred jobs. As the household income has increased, there is no pressure on women to take up jobs that they consider as inferior. Another factor is the limited mobility of Indian women. Increased household income, higher education, and stigmas about engaging in menial work are some of the supply side factors affecting female participation in the labor force of India. The social stigma associated with jobs that require exposure to the outside world has had a negative impact on the female labor force participation in India (Mukhopadhyay, 2018). On the demand side, shortage of jobs that are considered appropriate for educated women forces women to withdraw from the labor force (Klasnen & Pieters, 2013).

For this study, the term *barriers to female participation in the labor force* refer to social, economic, and cultural factors that prevent or discourage women of Kerala from participating in the labor force, despite Kerala's relatively high rate of economic growth and female literacy. The scope of the term is limited to Kerala as the focus of this study is on how Kudumbashree Mission has made use of the CBE strategies to empower women to overcome the barriers existing in that society.

### **Women Empowerment**

To increase the rate of female participation in the labor force, it is not enough to make resources available. Besides the economic dimension, women empowerment programs should address other social, political, and psychological dimensions as well (Bayissa et al., 2018). A person's status acts through the medium of differences in esteem

and respect to create and perpetuate inequalities. Addressing only the resource or power factors will not succeed in eliminating inequalities as the status stabilizes the resource and power inequalities into cultural beliefs. Such cultural beliefs cause biases in social relations, evaluation of competence, associational preferences, and resistance to status challenges (Ridgeway, 2013). Negative perceptions existing within society acts as psychological barriers to women's integration with formal economy. Even as they create an enabling atmosphere and policy framework for addressing gender inequality within the labor market, the governments and institutions must endeavor to change the public perceptions toward women's entrepreneurship and participation in labor force (Ilie et al., 2021).

An exploratory study of women of Middle East and North Africa recorded that women face various barriers to financial inclusion. These barriers include shortage or lack of access to resources, religious restrictions, and other members in the family already having a bank account (Kazemikhasragh et al., 2022). The calls for increasing integration of women with the labor force do not address the inequalities such as barriers to participation and gendered wages existing within the labor force (Perrons, 2015). To increase the rate of female participation in the labor force, it is necessary to empower women to overcome various barriers that prevent their entry into the labor force.

The United Nations Third International Conference on Financing for Development at Addis Ababa declared that gender equality, empowerment of women and girls, and realizing their human rights as part of the post-2015 key agendas for achieving sustainable development and equitable economic growth (United Nations, 2015). ILO

(2015) also has reiterated the need to focus on gender equality and women empowerment as critical drivers of economic growth and a basic human rights issue. The women empowerment is a multidimensional process that enables women to overcome the gender inequalities existing within the society and make choices and take decisions affecting their lives (Gupta & Srivastava, 2012; Varghese, 2019). Women's empowerment is both a process and an outcome. After reviewing 70 studies of women empowerment, Perezniето and Taylor (2014) defined the term women empowerment as a process whereby the women experience economic advancement along with a transformation in power and agency.

Perezniето and Taylor (2014) conceptualized women empowerment as four power outcomes. Those outcomes are the power within (self-belief, knowledge, skills), the power to (make decisions), power over (assets, including access to employment), and power with (cooperating with others to enhance rights and economic activities). Gupta and Srivastava (2012) listed three key domains of a women's life: economic, social, and political. Under each domain, there are five dimensions each. These dimensions are decision-making, access to and control over resources, mobility, security, and gender awareness. A woman's empowerment in each domain is a function of her empowerment in the five dimensions of that domain.

Garikipati et al. (2014) suggested the empowerment of women can be evident in their say at four levels of household decisions, namely, routine, health, children's education, and social ceremonies. Mere access to economic resources will not empower a woman economically. Only when a woman has the ability and choice to make economic



decisions, that woman is economically empowered (Faveri et al., 2015). Mukherjee (2015) suggested measurement of women empowerment as the differences in women's mobility in economic spaces, public political spaces, private political spaces, and social-cultural spaces, as a result of the intervention. Das and Chanu (2014) listed economic empowerment, human and social empowerment, political empowerment, capacity building, control and influence, familial empowerment, community development and participation, and personal empowerment as the various facets of empowerment through self-help groups.

In each society, the empowerment has different dimensions and consequences. For example, even though eliminating intimate partner violence (IPV) is one of the objectives of women empowerment, the very empowerment of a woman might also subject her to increased IPV. On one hand, empowerment through independent income and the ability to make decisions might make women able to deal with bad marriages and thereby reduce IPV. On the other hand, husbands who feel insecure by an independent and earning wife might become more violent (Rahman & Hoque, 2011). The domestic violence is as much a social issue as extreme poverty for the women. While, globally, 35% of the women experienced domestic violence, in some countries the rate of intimate partner violence exceeds 50% (Hughes et al., 2015). Incidences of domestic violence increase when the economic empowerment of women is without accompanying other complementary interventions such as capacity building, awareness, training, and behavior change. The threat to traditional gender roles played by the husbands due to increased income of the women, jealousy of men at the increased income of the women, and

women's working outside the homes are some of the factors that lead to an increase in domestic violence (Hughes et al., 2015). The influence of institutions that are discriminatory to gender equality associates women's economic empowerment with negative outcomes. Hence, theoretically, empowerment can influence the incidence of IPV, both positively and negatively, demonstrating the complexity of the concept.

After assessing the impact of a government-sponsored microfinance program in India, Mukherjee (2015) stated that the empowerment outcomes are different for different women even when the intervention is the same. The caste and religion of the beneficiaries interact with their empowerment. The credit, or provision for livelihood alone is not sufficient to empower women under such circumstances. Social institutions and cultural practices also play a significant role in women's empowerment. The social and cultural factors should be taken into account while designing the interventions and programs aimed at empowering women against poverty or gender inequality.

### ***Entrepreneurship and Empowerment***

Entrepreneurship development is a suitable strategy for the emancipation of the women from poor and marginalized sections of developing countries (Foaisal, Sagar, & Khanam, 2015). Entrepreneurship is recognized as an effective tool for reducing the absolute poverty, especially among the marginalized rural communities (Okolie, et al., 2021). Entrepreneurship is critical for economic growth and social development. Women entrepreneurs can also generate income and support their families through their business activities. Being able to contribute to the family budget improves a woman's decision making powers within the household (Wrigley-Asante, 2013). Women entrepreneurs also

serve as examples of empowerment, for other women who watch the entrepreneur-women directing their employees and managing their enterprises (Bullough et al., 2015).

Women entrepreneurship can also play a vital role in promoting sustainable development and diversified economy. With provisions for an enabling policy environment, access to training and mentorship programs, and fund support and subsidies from the government can help women entrepreneurship to gain traction. The local cultural and social traditions can act as a deterrence for women entrepreneurs. Therefore, it is necessary to increase awareness among people and ensure their support for women's entrepreneurial activities (Al-Qahtani et al., 2022).

Despite such criticality for growth and development, prevalence of gender inequality is a hindrance to the full potential of entrepreneurship for women's empowerment. Even in advanced societies, the likelihood of women taking up entrepreneurship is substantially lower than men taking it up (Phipps & Prieto, 2015). Past researchers on gender and entrepreneurship treated gender as a variable and thereby finding women inferior to men, in entrepreneurship (Marlow, 2014). The effort has been to fix the problem of women entrepreneurs, by bringing them at par with men entrepreneurs. This quest of gendered differences, under the assumption that entrepreneurship is primarily a masculine phenomenon, is continuing even today. The persistence of the assumption of gender differences in entrepreneurship was despite many studies showing that business owned by men and women show no general performance differences. From the turn of the century, however, there was a shift in the research focus. Women began to be treated as a category of entrepreneurs, and not merely as a variable.

As such, socioeconomic disadvantages for women gained attention from the researchers (Marlow, 2014). A study of the Lithuanian women entrepreneurs listed the elements of an effective policy for promoting women entrepreneurship. These elements are equal access to funds and networks, better social security systems, efficient legal framework, equality in domestic duties and childcare, augmenting business skills and confidence levels (Mažuolienė, 2020). Understanding and addressing the factors that adversely affect the women entrepreneurship will help in achieving the full potential of entrepreneurship, for women empowerment (Phipps & Prieto, 2015).

While studying how 43 Palestinian women staying in refugee camps in Jordan used the traditional home-based embroidery work to empower themselves, Al-Dajani and Marlow (2013) presented a framework for understanding the gendered interaction of entrepreneurship and empowerment. The new framework by Al-Dajani and Marlow involved three components. The first component of contextualizing entrepreneurial motivations is a recognition of the context-specific motivations behind entrepreneurial activities. The second component of the framework consists of the empowerment cycle with five reinforcing stages of welfare, access, conscientization, participation, and control, resulting from the entrepreneurial activities. The third component of the framework is the outcome of the empowerment. Increased awareness and knowledge, the assumption of accountability and responsibility, involvement in decision making and choices, assuming leadership, self-identity, poverty reduction, and the establishment of economic institutions are the outcomes of the process of empowerment (Al-Dajani & Marlow, 2013). The approach of these researchers took the debate on entrepreneurship

beyond the developed and equitable societies toward a patriarchal and marginalized world of refugee women. The findings of Al-Dajani and Marlow (2013) are useful in understanding the role of social enterprises in the process of empowerment of marginalized women.

At times, even participation in the labor force might not help women to overcome poverty. In a study of women workers in Pakistan, Shah and Zia (2013) found that despite working hard, women remained in poverty because of the lack of decision-making power and lack of information. Similarly, Blattman et al. (2013) found that the improvement in the economic situation did not necessarily result in an automatic empowerment of the women in Uganda. The Women's Income Generating Support (WINGS) program conducted by an Italian NGO working in Uganda, named AVSI Uganda, involved making cheap capital available to the beneficiaries. The results of the intervention supported the economic theory of poverty that the productivity of the poor is constrained by the lack of access to cheap capital. However, no relationship was found between the increase in income and women's independence, status, gender attitudes, or freedom from partner violence (Blattman et al., 2013). This lack of connection between income level and empowerment of women is critical for all interventions for the benefit of women. Blattman et al. suggested more research into alternative programs and interventions that can lead to the empowerment of women.

In a study of 50 women self-help groups (SHG) of Kerala, representing 22 public-private partnership models of women entrepreneurship development, Bonny and Rajendran (2013) sought to delineate the factors contributing to value creation. Bonny

and Rajendran found that successful SHGs were redirecting their surpluses toward social value creation for the benefit of their members. Another significant finding was that the economic behavior of SHGs was inconsistent with the common competitive behavior. Cooperation, collaboration, and networking beyond the enterprises helped the SHGs in their objectives of empowering women. SHGs were found useful even in the case of microfinance to reach the very needy, who are the poorest people from remote rural localities of India (Devi et. al., 2014).

Datta and Gailey (2012) demonstrated through a case study on a women's cooperative social enterprise from India, how social enterprises could become an alternate vehicle for women empowerment. Popularly known as Lijjat, this social enterprise uses collective ownership, cooperation, self-reliance, and profit sharing as the four organizational foundations for empowering its women members. Datta and Gailey demonstrated how each of these foundations enabled empowerment through interpreting the narrations of the interviewed members. The members (co-owners) of Lijjat perceived their empowerment as happening through three different ways. The first way is the economic security through flexible working hours, the ability to work from home, regular income, and profit share. The second way of empowerment is through the development of entrepreneurial behavior. The interviewed members demonstrated entrepreneurial attitude through their narratives. The third way of empowerment involves creating the ability to make increased contributions to the family. The regular income and ability to support the family have increased women's status within their families. The organization

has also helped in this process by providing various welfare measures for the benefit of members and their families (Datta & Gailey, 2012).

### ***Limitations of Economic Interventions***

The for-profit, market-based interventions for empowering women have many challenges. The challenges include damage to business from physical forces, lack of enough women with suitable skills, the disproportionate impact of market forces on the lives of women, and the double burden for women in household work and enterprise work. King et al., (2012) studied Oxfam's enterprise development program, which targeted agriculture-based, rural, small and medium enterprises, and identified the limitations of for-profit interventions aimed at women empowerment. The for-profit element of the business (even with initial grants) makes it a challenging proposition to empower women beyond mere participation in market activities through an enterprise. Empowering women requires interventions that can address the factors that lead to the feminization of poverty.

Ensuring livelihood or fair wages may not improve the life of women. Despite access to fair wages and work, others can continue to exercise control over women and their activities. For example, a woman working in the cultural context of Bangladesh may not be doing so for her well-being but for the well-being of her family (Le Mare, 2012). Amaral et al. (2015) found that an increased female participation in the Indian labor force through a government-sponsored employment guarantee scheme was correlated with an increase in gender-based violence. The local culture and gender norms have a role in the process and outcomes of women's empowerment. Institutions engaged in activities aimed

at women empowerment have to take the social factors that hinder women's empowerment into account and ensure necessary measures to overcome those factors. Without a holistic approach that incorporates measures to enhance capacity building, social empowerment, and gender equality, mere financing or developing microenterprises alone will not lead to women empowerment (Torri & Martinez, 2014).

Even where SHGs have shown positive results in women empowerment, some scholars argued that the results may be inflated. According to these skeptics, to achieve quick results, SHGs target those women who are already active in the public domain and women from non-poor households. Such self-selection results in better achievements but denies opportunities to the poor women in real need (Husain et al., 2014).

Gaddis and Klasen (2014) examined the relationship between economic development, structural change, and women's labor force participation. Gaddis and Klasen argued that while the structural changes do affect the rate of women's participation in the labor force, the effect is not significant enough to consider structural change as a key driver of women's participation. Gaddis and Klasen found no negative correlation between manufacturing growth and female participation in the labor force, unlike what was suggested by the U-shaped hypothesis. Gaddis and Klasen concluded that even if it can be shown that some of the advanced economies followed the U-shaped path in female participation in the labor force, it might not be relevant to the present developing economies. Instead, the participation rate might be affected, more significantly, by the initial conditions, factor endowments, and historical contingencies (Gaddis & Klasen, 2014).



COVID-19 pandemic made a severe dent to the moderate gains achieved in reducing gender inequality. In India, during the period of November 2019 to November 2020, women workers' share in the labor force was reduced by 13% against a mere 2% shrinkage for the men workers (Nikore et al., 2022). A similar study on the women entrepreneurs of Vietnam revealed that COVID-19 pandemic increased the challenges for women-owned enterprises compared to the challenges faced by the men-owned enterprises. As a result, the employment sector inequalities and gender inequalities have shown an increase (Maheshwari & Maheshwari, 2021). A study from the Asia-Pacific region reported how the pandemic increased the unpaid domestic care work for women by forcing more children out from their schools and confining more sick and elderly people to home (Kabeer et al., 2021).

### **Role of Social Enterprises**

The mere availability of economic resources will not result in the sustainable empowerment of poor women. Various demographic factors also affect the empowerment of women. Hence, it is necessary for organizations that seek to empower women to go beyond microfinance and other economic interventions and adopt integrated strategies to ensure women's social and political empowerment along with their economic empowerment (Rehman et al., 2015). Social enterprises can play an active role in addressing these social problems, as they are in a position to work where governments cannot work for want of resources and businesses do not want to work for want of profits (Kostetska & Berezyak, 2014). Unlike profit-oriented businesses, social enterprises can incorporate the cultural complexities of the target groups while designing

entrepreneurship programs (Peterson, 2015). Social enterprises are also in a better position to use social networks by including a variety of stakeholders in bridging capacity and building organizations (Busch, 2014). Social enterprises are better placed to use social innovations to achieve social outcomes for a targeted community (Phillips et al., 2015). Social enterprises can play a more effective role by adopting comprehensive strategies for empowering women. Collective bodies, regular meetings and discussions, skill development programs, knowledge and experience sharing, counseling, and advocacy are vital tools for empowering women against existing socio-cultural barriers that prevent their economic activities (Balayar & Mazur, 2022).

The term social enterprise encompasses varied forms of organizations (Castresana, 2013). Scholars have yet to arrive at a universal definition of social enterprises (Haugh, 2012). In an interview with Driver (2012), Michael Porter explained the concept of social entrepreneurship as a means for the transformation of capitalism toward the principle of shared value. According to Porter, shared value means the ability to create both economic value and social benefit, simultaneously. Porter suggested documentation of each success story, for using them as examples in furthering the acceptance of creating shared value and transforming capitalism. The way forward is to make the concepts of social entrepreneurship and shared value creation penetrate beyond specialists and influence the entire organizational decision-makers (Driver, 2012).

Based on a study of the social-cooperative enterprises, a dominant form of social enterprises in Italy, Travaglini (2012) stated that social enterprises could be suitable instruments to enhance the social capital of stakeholders. Social enterprises should

strengthen the interactions and participation of their weak links with the larger system to enhance the derived social capital, which is crucial for the effectiveness and sustainability of a social enterprise (Travaglini, 2012). Social enterprises are suitable instruments for creating innovative solutions for various social problems, engaging multiple stakeholders, promoting trust within a community, and engaging in capacity building (Gupta et al., 2015).

After studying the organizational characteristics of social enterprises and social entrepreneurship, Matei and Matei (2012) concluded that social enterprises and social entrepreneurship are gaining importance as solutions to the problems of local development. Social enterprises, with their hybrid organizations, are a bold and sustainable initiative that infuses humanitarian principles into the market-dominated capitalism. Battilana, Lee, Walker, and Dorsey (2012) noted that while the role of for-profit and non-profit organizations will continue to be strong, social enterprises with hybrid structure would increasingly gain prominence. Based on a study of Indian artisan women, Sharma and Kumar (2021) argued that working with social enterprises helps women gain self-confidence, increased autonomy, enhanced capabilities in economic roles, and better control over household decisions and assets.

The emerging socioeconomic factors are forcing the businesses to adopt new roles and purposes in society, new strategic orientations, new institutional contexts, and innovative ways to create value beyond profit maximization, leading to social impact (Byerly, 2014). In 1974 Peter argued profit is not an end but merely a byproduct of the business, a vision that is becoming a reality. Businesses are increasingly adopting social

objectives and integrating them into their strategy. A new institutional context is also emerging with more countries adopting suitable laws, customs, and organizational models for integrating social and commercial objectives. Byerly (2014) concluded that the social enterprises are ensuring positive social change by creating both social value and economic value. As rightly pointed out by Sinkovics et al. (2015), social value creation by social enterprises can also take place through alleviation of social constraints. The Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, the Global Social Benefit Incubator of Santa Clara University, the Ashoka Foundation, and the Skoll Foundation are some of the organizations spearheading social enterprises movement (Santos, 2013).

Seddon et al. (2014) demonstrated how interventions through social enterprises effectively reintegrate socially excluded individuals into the mainstream. Seddon et al. (2014) showed that social mission focus, heroic social entrepreneur, social impact, recidivism, the program, and program attendees are the themes from a multi-stakeholder perspective. The vision of a heroic social entrepreneur can contribute significantly to the success of a social enterprise that acts as a bridge between socially excluded persons and the formal labor market. The interventions by social enterprises help in increasing self-esteem and the desire to engage in productive work, among the participants. The real-life work experience provided by the social enterprise also helps the participants in acquiring work ethics and social relation skills needed for reintegrating with the society. Seddon et al. found that social enterprises can play a role in empowering the members of disadvantaged sections of the society.

Fotheringham and Saunders (2014) reviewed and synthesized the existing literature on social enterprises and poverty reduction among women to ascertain the possibility of using social enterprises as a strategy for reducing poverty among women. Fotheringham and Saunders presented and evaluated the public employment guarantee scheme and the microfinance and microenterprises as the two strategies being followed for reducing poverty among women. The reviewed literature showed that the effectiveness of these two strategies was insufficient, considering the enormity of existing challenges. Fotheringham and Saunders presented social enterprises as a third strategy for women empowerment and poverty reduction. Based on the existing literature, they argued that social enterprises, with their focus on both social and economic objectives, were more suited to deal with the multidimensional poverty existing among women. Further, Fotheringham and Saunders discussed one of the social enterprise strategies, Work Integration Social Enterprise (WISE), as particularly suited for poverty reduction. The WISE model involves providing training and skill development to the beneficiaries through a business that trades in the market. The potential of social enterprises as strategies to reduce poverty among women has not received adequate attention (Fotheringham & Saunders, 2014).

From the findings of two case studies in India, Singhal (2014) demonstrated how social initiatives by businesses could contribute toward women empowerment and poverty alleviation. The first case study involved Barefoot College, which trained rural women from India to install and manage solar systems and rainwater harvesting systems. Singhal found that technology was put to effective use for local community development

and women empowerment. The second case involved a project by one of the largest FMCG conglomerates in India, Hindustan Lever Limited (HLL), a subsidiary of Unilever. HLL created a network of rural women for distributing their products directly to rural customers. The program, implemented through women's self-help groups, resulted in a win-win situation for both HLL and the participants, the former clocking higher sales for its products and the latter benefiting from significant income. These cases are good examples of social initiatives that can help societies overcome factors that sustain gender inequality (Singhal, 2014).

### ***Limitations of Social Enterprises***

Conventional social enterprises have some limitations in empowering women. Social enterprises are organizations that use business ventures to achieve a social mission (Smith et al., 2013). Social enterprises also function within the existing gendered social milieu and, therefore, are affected by the gender inequalities prevalent within the societies (Gawell & Sundin, 2014). Combining the efficiency, innovations, and resources of a business venture with the passion, values, and mission of a social venture often results in inconsistencies in goals, norms, and values (Smith et al., 2013). Mauksch (2014) identified many concepts associated with social entrepreneurship, such as the harmonious relationship between social and entrepreneurial aspects of social enterprises, coherence between concept and practice, and the projection of social entrepreneurship as rational and principled persons, as mere myths. Social enterprises were seen, in reality, as entities involving complicated negotiations and political and moral struggles (Mauksch, 2014).

The conceptual premise of social enterprises also causes certain issues at the practical level. Like any emerging concept, the social enterprise also suffers from the inconsistency in definition, poor theoretical foundation, different research findings, and unclear boundaries with other disciplines (Williams & K'nife, 2012). Williams and K'nife (2012) identified the adoption of a mission or objective of creating social value and commercial operations to source the necessary funding for sustaining the social objective as the most prominent characteristics of a social enterprise. In the case of Jamaican garrison communities, a corporation is engaged in providing goods and services to needy community members who cannot afford the same through regular markets due to rampant poverty and deprivation. While the social objective brings these corporations under the definition of social enterprises, Williams and K'nife noted that the funds for their operation were sourced from the sale of narcotic drugs and violent organized crimes. The real motive behind these activities is to secure the loyalty of the community members and ensure the hegemony of the leader or boss of the criminal gang. Such situations demonstrate the negative side of social enterprises, given their current conceptual foundations.

Understanding what constitutes social value creation might be different in different contexts. Karanda and Toledano (2012) stated that while social value creation is understood more as stimulating social change and transformation in developed societies, in South Africa, it was more of ensuring a medium for survival. Similarly, analyzing the power relationships existing in social enterprises in the context of craft industry in South Africa, Daya (2014) demonstrated that the concept of empowerment was also not

uniform among all social enterprises. The current norms of social entrepreneurs view entrepreneurialism as a route to empowerment and erode social goals by encouraging competition, harassment of nonperformers, coercion, and other negative uses of power. According to Daya (2014), instead of empowering the workers by removing the structural inequalities in society, the South African craft industry's social enterprises were merely creating disciplined workers and rational economic actors. That is why traditional social enterprises, set up by well-meaning social entrepreneurs to solve social problems, may not be an appropriate solution for overcoming gender inequality by empowering women.

Another argument against social enterprises is that the regular corporations adopting the concept of shared value and engaging in socially responsible business practices will make social enterprises redundant. Such a view does not take into account the focus of traditional businesses on profit maximization and growth in shareholder value. While engaged in meeting the market expectations of higher returns, it is hard for for-profit corporations to incorporate socially responsible practices into their mainstream business. Nevertheless, practitioners and scholars should consider and address the arguments against the existing social enterprises to make the concept more robust and sustainable.

### ***Toward Alternative Models***

Despite the progress achieved so far, gender equality and women's empowerment continue to have many challenges (UNDP, 2014). Given the insufficiency of existing strategies, practitioners are experimenting various alternative models for women empowerment and gender equality.. Of late, microcredit has become one of the tools for



women empowerment through entrepreneurship and labor force participation. While this alternative model addresses the aspect of access to resources by providing loans to women for setting up their enterprises, it has not achieved its full potential due to existence of other barriers. For example, women who do not have experience in dealing with credits are not comfortable with availing the microcredits. A study of the role of microcredit in empowering women in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan showed that the group loans were more appealing to women than individual loans (Bayulgen, 2015).

SHGs are emerging as an important organizational form for social enterprises engaged in women empowerment through microfinance interventions in India. The provisioning of resources alone is not sufficient for empowerment of women. Microfinance or social enterprises, *per se*, are not able to ensure all the core elements of the women's empowerment, namely, women's agency, self-esteem, self-confidence, and awareness of gendered power structure. Women also must develop the ability to make decisions and take control of their resources (Swain & Wallentin, 2012). This empowerment is contingent upon developing of social capital and capacity building (Tavanti, 2013). SHGs can also control some of the negative aspects of microfinance in the context of integrated empowerment of women (Suresh & Saravanan, 2013).

The practitioners should be willing to redraw the boundaries of social enterprises to address the complexities and challenges in their respective societies (Seanor et al., 2014). Montgomery et al. (2012) criticized the focus of prior academic research and public narrative on social enterprises toward individual entrepreneurs. The focus on individual entrepreneurs involved the risk of overlooking the role of other internal and

external stakeholders, networks, and organizations in ensuring the effectiveness and sustainability of social enterprises. Montgomery et al. suggested collective social enterprises as the alternative. Montgomery et al. defined collective social entrepreneurship as a collaboration between different actors in applying business principles for social transformation. Collective social entrepreneurship involves three types of activities. The first type is the social movements across different fields. The second type is the community cooperatives that help different groups collaborate in enhancing the welfare of local communities. The third type of collective social entrepreneurship involves cross-sector partnerships among organizations from different sectors to address social problems (Montgomery et al., 2012). The CBE, an alternative to the individual entrepreneur centric social enterprises, falls under the second type of collective social entrepreneurship that Montgomery et al. identified. Community ownership of assets, operation and management by community members, profits shared among community members or reinvested in community business, the objective of solving problems of the community, and financial self-sustenance are the defining characteristics of CBEs (Suriyankietkaew et al., 2022).

### **Role of Community-Based Enterprises**

It is not sufficient to address the individual attitudes toward entrepreneurship or labor force participation, for promoting women's empowerment. The social institutions and structures that act as barriers to women's entry into entrepreneurship and labor force should also be addressed. The gendered institutions moderate individuals' attitudes toward entrepreneurship (Pathak et al., 2013). CBEs that are not profit oriented, but are

focused on social value creation through empowerment of their members, can play a role in addressing the problem of persisting gender inequality (Bergeron & Healy, 2013). A study of the social value creation from the perspective of the beneficiaries found that the beneficiaries perceive social value creation by a social enterprise differently.

Beneficiaries view social value creation as generating work and livelihood, fellowship with others, selflessness and service, a sense of belongingness with the enterprise, connection with diverse others, and learning and personal growth (Lorenzo-Afable et al., 2020).

Based on the experiences of women associated with the fair-trade movement, Jones et al. (2012) stated that organizing into collective enterprises helps women to overcome various barriers to their participation in the labor force and entrepreneurship. The advantage of collective enterprises is even more pronounced for women working in the informal sector. Better access to markets, pooling of resources, better training, mutual support, shared knowledge, increased negotiating power, better status, capacity building, and improved self-esteem are some of the benefits of collective enterprises (Jones et al., 2012). A study of the basket weaving CBEs of Igbo women of Nigeria showed organizing their basket weaving activities helped those women to overcome social barriers and gender inequalities and balance their domestic duties with their entrepreneurial activities (Okolie et al., 2021). Collective or community-based enterprises are also helpful in extending the social networks. Sankaran and Demengeot (2017) argued that even virtual networks can be effective enablers for community-based entrepreneurship. Working women, who are usually excluded from the male-dominated

networks, can depend on the social networks and social capital afforded by the community for acquiring additional resources for their activities (Kabir et al., 2014).

While conventional measures like resource support and microfinance might contribute to reducing poverty at an individual level, their benefits at a community level are doubtful. A study undertaken by the government of India reported that the top-down approach was failing in reducing the marginalization and gender inequalities. In order to address such widespread inequalities, the programs should result in the empowerment of women through the creation of social value and social acceptance (Kumar, 2019). To overcome such issues and ensure benefit to the community at large, CBE provide a suitable solution (Gau et al., 2014). CBEs are effective tools for mobilization and empowerment of poor and marginalized, through economic activities (Parwez, 2017). Using entrepreneurship and labor force participation as strategies to overcome poverty and gender inequalities require an understanding of the prevailing socioeconomic conditions and cultural values (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006). CBEs help in integrating the market-based, sustainable profit goals and socially and culturally sustainable community goals in poverty eradication and empowerment of weaker section of the community (Gau et al., 2014). CBEs help in empowering depressed sections like women and indigenous communities in developing countries where the traditional concepts of economic development and entrepreneurship may not be of much help (Badaruddin et al., 2021; Peredo & Chrisman, 2006). CBEs are useful in creating a sustainable and equitable community through community-oriented projects that can work with the community in solving its problems and creating socio-economic value (Pierre et al., 2014b).

The theory of CBE developed by Peredo and Chrisman (2006) brought the role of a community developing sustainable social businesses into focus. The propositions of Peredo and Chrisman's theory were already reviewed under the section on the conceptual framework. One of the essential elements of the CBEs, as theorized by Peredo and Chrisman, is the involvement and sense of ownership among the intended beneficiaries. CBE structure also facilitates utilization of the social capital and community resources, unlike in the case of programs imposed by external agencies. The democratic system of decisionmaking in the CBEs is conducive to the empowerment of their beneficiaries (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006). CBEs are not without any drawbacks. In a study that focused on community enterprises in the Netherlands, Kleinhans and Ham (2017) found that the CBEs require a lot of external support to succeed in achieving their objectives. This very external support can also cause friction with the democratic functioning of CBEs and eventually stifle their survival and growth.

### **Gap in the Literature**

In analyzing the 2012 World Development Report of the World Bank, Bandiera and Natraj (2013) found no evidence to suggest that any reduction in gender inequality will automatically lead to increased participation of women in economic activities. Social norms and discriminatory practices can have a significant influence on women's participation in the economy and politics, irrespective of the level of gender parity. Even in economically advanced countries, the gender inequality has continued to persist. Bandiera and Natraj emphasized the need for more microlevel studies to identify the

factors that affect gender parity in different societies. Only such microlevel studies can inform and guide policymaking for achieving a reduction in gender inequality.

Bandiera and Natraj (2013) echoed Arora (2012) and Sorsa (2015) on various states and regions in India not conforming to the assumption of a positive correlation between gender equality and economic growth. India is an example where an impressive economic development is not associated with an improvement in the social indicators, including women empowerment and gender equality (Kumar, 2019). The comparatively lower rate of female participation in the labor force in Kerala despite its high scores on both gender development and gender empowerment indexes, indicates a gap in the existing literature. A limited review of the theoretical and empirical literature on the link between gender inequality and economic growth, by Cuberes and Teignier (2014), also highlighted the gaps in the existing literature. According to Cuberes and Teignier, the empirical literature on the subject suffered from the absence of a strong theoretical foundation. The studies differed from one another, with even the constructs of gender inequality differing. While providing useful insights on the link between gender inequality and economic growth, these resources suffered from many drawbacks. Most of the empirical studies focused on gender gaps in education, even though education is only one of the several dimensions of gender inequality. Another drawback is the absence of a single channel that could explain how one variable affected the other. Many social, legal, and economic barriers affect women's labor market participation. The studies have also been unable to control the effects of reverse causality or omitted variables from the analysis. The absence of uniformity in the measurement of gender inequality indicators,

possibility of selection effects, and sensitivity to the measurement of gender inequality also affect the utility of such empirical studies (Cuberes & Teignier, 2014).

While social enterprises and CBEs are suitable instruments for creating social value through women empowerment and poverty mitigation, their effectiveness so far has been questionable. The benefits of organizing into collective enterprises are clear, but the process of such organizing is challenging (Torri & Martinez, 2014). Most CBE programs have not succeeded in making any significant improvement in women's economic or social conditions (Torri & Martinez, 2011). One of the reasons for the underperformance of the interventions through social enterprises and CBEs is the lack of a clear understanding of the process of social value creation (Knife et al., 2014). The existing gap on the appropriate strategies and models for helping women overcome gender inequality and marginalization is also affecting CBE's effectiveness (Fotheringham & Saunders, 2014). Pierre et al. (2014b) and Valchovska and Watts (2016) noted that the CBE model did not receive adequate attention in the academic literature. The local conditions and mindsets that motivate social entrepreneurs also differ from case to case, making any generalization a difficult proposition (Omorede, 2014). While the common characteristics of CBEs have been identified (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006), there is a gap on how much these characteristics are realized in practice and how the CBEs create social value (Soviana, 2015). The study of how and what strategies are employed by a successful CBE in empowering women to overcome various barriers to their participation in the labor force, will help in overcoming the identified gaps in the current literature.

**Kudumbashree Mission**

Highlighting success stories where women have overcome various barriers and made substantial contributions to social value creation through innovative entrepreneurship will help in understanding and promoting strategies for a more equitable and gender-neutral workspace (Marlow, 2014). Kudumbashree Mission is such a success story that has helped thousands of women to overcome poverty and barriers to participation in the labor force (Kudumbashree, 2022). Understanding the peculiarities of the society of Kerala helps in contextualizing Kudumbashree Mission.

***Kerala: A Unique Society***

Census data from 2011 indicated Kerala had the highest literacy rate of 92% for women, while the national average was only 65.46% (Labour Bureau, 2012). Kerala is famous for its social welfare-based development model that has resulted in achieving, among all the Indian states, the lowest infant mortality rate, lowest birth rate, and highest life expectancy and health standards for both men and women. According to the estimates of McKinsey Global Institute (2015), Kerala's female empowerment index is the third highest among all Indian states and the first among the larger states. Kerala has the lowest gender inequality in education and access to health among larger Indian states. Despite the lowest gender inequality, Kerala's rate of female participation in the labor force is worse than many Indian states having much higher gender inequality (Arora, 2012; McKinsey Global Institute, 2015). Kerala's workforce demography is also witnessing a disproportionate decline in the participation of educated women from well-off families, particularly in the younger age groups (Mathew, 2015). Significant achievements in



conventional indicators of women empowerment have not resulted in improving Kerala women's freedom of physical mobility or agency for decision making (Scaria, 2014).

This paradox makes Kerala a unique case for studying various barriers to women's participation in the labor force and the strategies to overcome those barriers.

### ***Rationale for Selecting Kudumbashree Mission***

Many studies in the past have brought out the important role being played by Kudumbashree Mission in empowering women. In 2011, Arun et al., described Kudumbashree Mission as a social relationship based participatory public action by the state and micro social enterprises. According to Arun et al. (2011), Kudumbashree Mission is empowering the disadvantaged members of the society, through its asset-accumulation based strategies. A survey of 1,000 members of Kudumbashree revealed that there is a significant impact of both financial capability and decision-making ability on the financial wellbeing of women (Parvathy & Kumar, 2022). Kalyani and Seena (2012) found that 53% of the respondents of their study who were beneficiaries of Kudumbashree Missions admitted that their level of confidence to take up responsibilities and join micro enterprises increased through their involvement in Kudumbashree activities. In a case study of the apparel manufacturing units under Kudumbashree Mission, Krishnakumar et al., (2017) found that the women beneficiaries of these units have got empowerment through the acquisition of individual, social, and economic skills. A qualitative study of the women contesting in local body elections in Kerala found that over one-third of the participants had cited their involvement with Kudumbashree as the motivating factor. Nearly 50% of the participants cited nomination by their respective

political parties as the motivating factor (Babu & Jose, 2020). A significant number of these women came to be noticed by their political parties because of their involvement with Kudumbashree activities. In another case study, Rashmi and Nair (2014) reported how information and communication technology (ICT) projects initiated by NHGs of Kudumbashree Mission succeeded in empowering poor women by providing them entry into the IT sector.

When high entry barriers characterize the formal sector, it may be better for women to seek participation in entrepreneurial or labor force activities through the informal sector (Chowdhury & Audretsch, 2014). Kudumbashree Mission, as the largest microfinance institution in the state of Kerala (Kalyani & Seená, 2012), helps women in undertaking economic activities within the informal sector. In a case study, Neethi (2014) discussed how the social capital created through Kudumbashree Mission's NHGs helped women workers engaged in home-based work to negotiate better terms for their services. Similarly, Das (2014) described how the involvement of Kudumbashree Mission's NHGs made a qualitative difference by directing more women to associate with the Indian Government's national rural employment guarantee scheme (MNREGS), unlike in other states of India. The gender empowerment portal named 'Sreesakthi,' being maintained by Kudumbashree Mission, is also helping women through education on various social, legal, and cultural aspects of women empowerment (Ammal et. al., 2016). The social network created by Kudumbashree helped women entrepreneurs to find better prices, better markets, and better storage facilities for their produce (Ramachandran & Das, 2020).

Various studies discussed in the previous paragraph indicated how Kudumbashree Mission has succeeded in integrating poor women from Kerala with its labor force and formal economy through various CBE. What differentiates Kudumbashree Mission from other poverty alleviation programs is the approach that poverty eradication is only possible through the holistic empowerment of women (Shihabudheen, 2013). As of September 2021, the Mission had grown into a total membership of 4,585,677 women, organized into 294,436 NHGs functioning under 19,489 ADSs and 1,064 CDSs (Kudumbashree, 2022). This immense growth also indicates that the strategy followed by the Mission is replicable among similar societies. Kudumbashree's "multiple-level engagements help enhance women's development and support broad sustainable social change, in view of their sensitivity to the embeddedness of women's agency under specific socio-political and cultural contexts" (Venugopalan et al., 2021). As Malcom and Bhandari (2021) stated:

Membership in the Kudumbashree has enabled its members to escape the clutches of poverty, improve their financial standing, become financially aware, run savings and loan schemes, acquire a sense of empowerment and dignity in their domestic and public lives, and opened up opportunities for its members to gain access to educational opportunities and skill training programs.

Kerala's paradox of high conventional women empowerment and low female participation in the labor force provided an opportunity to study suitable strategies to overcome cultural and social barriers to women's participation in the labor force. Selecting Kudumbashree Mission facilitated the study in finding out how the CBE

strategies are helping the Mission in empowering women to overcome the barriers to their participation in the labor force.

### **Literature Related to the Methodology and Design**

The qualitative approach and descriptive case study design was used in conducting this study. As Major (2016) pointed out, the choice of a method and design should be consistent with a process that is appropriate for conducting the study. The objective of this study was an in-depth understanding of the strategies adopted by Kudumbashree Mission, for empowering its members to overcome various barriers and participate in the labor force. Current literature supported the use of the qualitative method and case study design for studies that involve an in-depth understanding of some phenomenon (Hyett et al., 2014; Patton, 2015; Yazan, 2015). When the boundaries between a phenomenon and its natural context are not obvious, the case study design is appropriate (Harland, 2014; Wahyuni, 2012; Yin, 2014).

The use of a case study design was also consistent with prior studies of CBE. Gajjar (2016) used the case study design for a qualitative study of a single CBE, to understand the learning process employed by that enterprise engaged in community development. Handy et al. (2011) used case study method to understand how the independently developed CBE of the jasmine grower of coastal Karnataka in India fit with the conceptual model of CBE. In another study, Valchovska and Watts (2016) used the qualitative case study design to study the enterprise creation process in a CBE.

Case study design is further classified into explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive case study designs (Yin, 2014). When a study requires describing a

phenomenon in its natural context, the descriptive case study design is the appropriate design (Hyett et al., 2014; Yin 2014). Major (2016) used the descriptive case study design to understand the strategies employed by small business owners to reduce voluntary turnover among the employees. Nicks (2016) used the descriptive case study design to understand the strategies employed by organizations to retain expatriate employees, on their repatriation. The descriptive case study design facilitates theory affirmation through analytical generalization of findings from the study of a case (Yin, 2014). The descriptive case study designs can be used in studying a single case or multiples cases. The descriptive single case study design is appropriate when the case is selected for being either a representative case or an exceptional case (Yin, 2014). The literature and prior studies reviewed in this section were also supportive of the selection of qualitative method and descriptive single case study design for this study. More details on the rationale for selecting the descriptive single case study design, as against other available designs are included in Chapter 3.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

From the reviewed resources, it was evident that the persistence of gender inequality, and the consequent low rate of female labor force participation, has both economic and social consequences. When a large proportion of women, who constitute about half of humanity, is excluded from participating in the formal economy, the growth of the economy is affected adversely. Gender inequality in society and the workplace also contributes to the feminization of poverty. Gender inequality is a human rights violation in itself. The conventional organizational systems have not succeeded in arresting the

vicious cycle of gender inequality and marginalization of women, despite all the focus and resources being dedicated to this issue by international development agencies and practitioners. Social enterprises were considered to be an appropriate tool in combating gender inequality and barriers to female participation in the labor force. Microfinance was another strategy for dealing with these issues. However, experiences from across the world, and especially from the developing societies showed the limitations of social enterprises and microfinance in combating gender inequality. The provision of economic resources alone was not sufficient for empowering women to overcome various barriers to their participation in the formal economy.

One of the alternatives available to overcome the shortcoming of social enterprises and microfinance was the CBE. CBEs are useful in involving the community in empowering women. The social capital and support available from CBE help women to overcome various challenges, which they may not be able to deal with on an individual basis. While the current literature had many success stories of CBEs, the full potential of CBEs in empowering women has not been realized. This under-realization of potential is primarily due to the gap in the literature on how the CBE characteristics are realized in practice and how CBEs create social value. Not knowing the strategies that helped successful CBEs in empowering women and increasing female participation in the labor force limited the replication of such CBE strategies among more communities.

Kudumbashree Mission, a CBE initiative from the Government of Kerala, has succeeded in empowering thousands of women and integrating over 4.5 million women with the formal economy. Studying the strategies employed by Kudumbashree Mission in

successfully empowering women, and how the social capital and collective experiences of the community influenced the success of those strategies could help in filling the identified gaps in the literature.

The following chapter, Chapter 3, contains a description of the research design and methodology used for undertaking the descriptive case study of selected CBE, Kudumbashree Mission, to understand the CBE strategies used to empower their members. Chapter 3 elaborates the opted research design and the rationale for opting that design. The Chapter also contains the role of the researcher, methodology for data collection, including development of the instrument and its field test, data collection plan, and the issues of trustworthiness. Chapter 3 ends with the summary and transition to Chapter 4.

### Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive single case study was to identify the strategies formulated and implemented by Kudumbashree Mission, a selected CBE, for successfully empowering women to become active participants in their local labor force. A secondary purpose of this study was to understand how the social capital and collective experiences of the members of Kudumbashree Mission influenced the success of the Mission's strategies for creating social value through increased participation of its members, in the labor force. The problem of women's marginalization in the labor force is persisting despite all the attention and deployment of resources from national governments and international agencies (Grown & Gooptu, 2015; Klugman et al., 2014). A study of the strategies employed by a successful CBE would be useful in addressing the issue of women's marginalization in the labor force. The findings might also contribute toward positive social change by helping gender equality and workplace diversity through increased participation of women in the labor force.

This chapter contains five sections dealing with different aspects of the methodology adopted for the study. The first section contains a description of the rationale for selecting the specific research tradition and design. In the second section, I discuss various aspects of my role as the researcher in conducting this study, the relationship between the researcher and participants, measures for protecting confidentiality and privacy of the participants, ethical issues, and matters relating to researcher biases. The following section contains a description of the methodology adopted for the study, including the population and participant selection strategy, data



collection instruments, mode of data collection, and data analysis strategy. In the fourth section, I analyzed the issues related to the study's trustworthiness in detail. The chapter ends with a summary and transition into Chapter 4.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The objective of this study was to address the specific problem of persistence of marginalization of women from the labor force, by understanding the strategies employed by a CBE to successfully integrate a large number of women with the formal economy. I used the following two research questions for understanding the strategies used by the selected CBE:

- RQ1. What are the strategies formulated and implemented by Kudumbashree for successfully empowering women to become active participants in their local labor force?
- RQ2. How did the social capital and collective experiences of the community influence the success of Kudumbashree Mission's strategies for increasing female participation in the labor force?

The central phenomenon of the study was the CBE strategies employed by Kudumbashree Mission in empowering its members, to overcome different types of barriers and participate in the labor force. A secondary purpose of the study was to explore the role of community's social capital and collective experiences in making those CBE strategies successful.

The three research methods available to a researcher are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. The quantitative approach is useful in generalizations about some

phenomena, by aggregation of statistical data through measuring reactions of a significant number of people to predetermined close-ended questions (Patton, 2015; Yilmaz, 2013). The qualitative approach is useful for attaining an in-depth knowledge about a selected small population or problem, facilitating better solutions (Patton, 2015). A mixed-method study involving the elements of both qualitative and quantitative methods is suitable for formulating hypotheses based on an in-depth study of the phenomenon, followed by testing of those hypotheses against statistical data (Venkatesh et al., 2013).

The nature of a study and its research questions are the factors used by a researcher in determining the choice of a specific research method. I, as the researcher, did not know the strategies employed by the selected organization. Identifying those strategies required an in-depth study. The mixed methods approach was not appropriate as the study involved only a single case, which is an outlier in its success, and not suitable for statistical generalizations and formulation of hypotheses. The quantitative method was also not appropriate as there were no hypotheses for testing against quantitative data. The qualitative method is useful in finding answers to the selected research questions that involve identifying unknown variables (Yazan, 2015). Hence, I opted for the qualitative method as appropriate for this study.

The qualitative method encompasses several research designs. The choice of a particular research design depends on factors like the purpose, research questions, and desired outcomes of the study. The core question of this study involved an in-depth understanding of the strategies adopted by the selected organization. The ethnographic design is suited when the core question relates to the culture of a group of people. While

the culture prevalent within the case was relevant for the study, the focus was on understanding the strategies adopted for achieving the desired objective. The core question in a grounded theory design relates to developing a theory that can explain the observed phenomenon. The shared meaning and essence of a lived experience of the phenomenon, for a person or group, is the core question suited for the phenomenology design (Patton, 2015). The case study design is useful for investigations of a contemporary phenomenon in its natural context (Wahyuni, 2012). A case study design is suited, particularly when boundaries between the phenomenon and its natural context are not clear (Harland, 2014; Yin, 2014). Because my objective was to gain an in-depth understanding of the strategies adopted by the selected CBE, a case study design was the most appropriate. The case study design facilitates the in-depth understanding of a phenomenon (Hyett et al., 2014).

Yin (2014) classified cases studies into explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive case study designs. The exploratory case study design is useful for preliminary research into areas that were not subject to scientific inquiry for determining research questions for a subsequent study. The explanatory case study design extends beyond exploration and description and seeks to explain the causal relationship between phenomena. The descriptive case study design is appropriate when the purpose is to describe a phenomenon within its natural context (Yin, 2014). The descriptive case study is useful for interpretation of data and theory development. The analytic generalizations in a case study design also facilitates affirmation of an existing theory (Yin, 2014). A descriptive case study can be a single case study or a multiple case study. In descriptive multiple case

study, it is possible to include more than one cases to arrive at cross-case conclusions. The selection of multiple cases can be for the expectation of similar or dissimilar findings across the cases (Yin, 2014). The descriptive single case study involves a single case, selected for being either a representative case or an exceptional case (Yin, 2014). The descriptive single case study was appropriate for this study because the purpose was to identify the strategies employed by an outlier organization, Kudumbashree Mission, for creating social value through increased female labor force participation.

### **Role of the Researcher**

In case study research, the researcher plays a critical role. The functions of a case study researcher may include teacher, advocate, observer, evaluator, interviewer, reader, interpreter, and consultant (Stake, 1995). A qualitative researcher must determine the most appropriate combination of roles to play while collecting and analyzing the data. In this study, my role as the researcher was to identify and evaluate the strategies adopted by Kudumbashree Mission for helping women to overcome barriers that prevent their integration with the labor force. My role did not include participating in any of the activities or in the decision-making process of the selected NHGs. I only observed these processes, for triangulation of the collected data.

A review of the literature, dealing with topics of gender inequality, women empowerment, female labor force participation, social enterprises, and CBE formed the necessary backdrop for understanding the strategies employed by the NHGs. In a case study, the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection (Nicks, 2016). As the primary instrument of data collection, I conducted semistructured interviews with the

participants and external agencies and coordinated the focus groups deliberations. I also did the selection of participants, management of the data collection process, and data analysis. My proficiency in both English and Malayalam, the main language of the participants, helped in data collection, accurate translations and reverse translations, and interpretation.

In qualitative studies, the researchers should reveal any potential biases and assumptions that may have a bearing on the conclusions (Yin, 2014). I did not have any personal or professional relationship with the Kudumbashree Mission or any of the participants, reducing the possibilities of a researcher bias or power relationship. The researcher bias could still be a threat due to the researcher being an instrument in this study and the researcher's predispositions to the creation of questions and analysis of data. I adopted steps like maintaining detailed notes, recording and reviewing all the interviews, and backing all interpretations with sufficient data, as outlined by Nicks (2016), to ensure elimination of any chance for personal biases. I also made use of triangulation of the findings and use of multiple sources of data for eliminating biases. Because most of the participants were women from economically and socially disadvantaged sections of the society, I remained conscious of the ethical issues or possible harm to the participants, from any quarters at any stage of the study.

### **Methodology**

The choice of methodology has particular importance in ensuring the reliability of a study. Sufficiently describing the methodology used in data collection and analysis helps any subsequent researcher to arrive at substantially similar findings by replicating

the methodology, in the context of the same case or cases (Yin, 2014). This section contains descriptions of the methodology adopted for participant selection, data collection, and data analysis.

### **Participant Selection Logic**

Selecting the population and participants for any study depends on that study's purpose and research questions. As the purpose of this study was to identify the strategies formulated and implemented by a CBE, for successfully empowering women to become active participants in their local labor force, the population consisted of successful CBEs for women. The Kudumbashree Mission, a network of women's CBEs, is successful in empowering and integrating women into the formal economy (Babu & Jose, 2020; Kalyani & Seena, 2012; Malcom & Bhandari, 2021; Reshmi & Nair, 2014). At the time of the selection, Kudumbashree Mission had a membership of over four million women, representing more than 50% of the households in India's Kerala state, organized under over 258,000 neighborhood groups (Kudumbashree, 2017). In Kerala, only about 30% of the women participate in the labor force despite a relatively high rate of economic growth and female literacy (Arora, 2012; Labour Bureau, 2012). The Mission's success in integrating its 4.3 million members with the local labor force was significant, making its selection for this study, appropriate.

Selecting the right unit of analysis is a critical decision in designing a case study. Kudumbashree Mission functions through a three-tier system consisting of the neighborhood groups (NHG) at the grassroots level, area development societies (ADS) at the local self-government's ward level, and the community development society (CDS).

The Kudumbashree Mission's functional unit is the neighborhood group. Implementing strategies for empowerment and integration of women occurs at the NHG level. The women function as a community within their respective NHG and, therefore, the NHGs were thought as the appropriate unit of analysis for this descriptive case study. In a study of the strategies of Kudumbashree Mission, the target population was its 258,000 NHGs.

Sampling is a critical decision in any qualitative design (Robinson, 2014). Both internal and external validity of a study depends on the adequacy and suitability of the sample to the research objectives (Uprichard, 2013). Patton (2015) stated that the fundamental difference between qualitative and quantitative methods is in the underlying logic for their respective sampling strategies. Researchers using quantitative methods depend on randomly drawn larger sample sizes, which allows generalization of findings (Patton, 2015; Yilmaz, 2013). Researchers using qualitative methods focus on relatively smaller samples, which could even be a single case, facilitating an in-depth study of a phenomenon or detailed understanding of the meaning ascribed to a phenomenon (Patton, 2015). The qualitative samples are usually purposefully selected for a specific objective, unlike in the case of random sampling (Patton, 2015). For a qualitative study, what matters is not the size of the sample but the saturation of data (Major, 2016). I adopted a hybrid approach for data saturation. I applied a priori thematic saturation for assessing the dependability and transferability of the use of the theory of CBE as the descriptive theory. In a priori thematic saturation, collection of data is done with the objective of exemplifying a theory at the codes and themes level and not for creating or refining a theory (Saunders et al., 2017). I used data saturation for ensuring completeness and

reducing chances of missed themes. If gathering any data from further samples is not likely to reveal any more themes or insights, the sample size is said to be saturated (Dworkin, 2012).

For this study, I adopted a purposeful sampling strategy as defined by Patton (2015). I considered under the purposeful sampling only those NHGs that were in existence and have been operating a commercial enterprise profitably, for at least the past 5 years, for selection. The presumption behind this criterion was that a profitable enterprise in existence for a reasonable period must have employed successful strategies to integrate its women members with the formal labor force. Only those shortlisted NHGs from which a minimum 10 members consented to participate in the study were eligible for selection. The study began with an in-depth examination of one NHG that meets the selection criteria and consents to participate. An in-depth study of one NHG was adequate for the purpose of this study because the strategies employed by Kudumbashree Mission are common for all NHGs. The needs of a priori thematic saturation and data saturation was to determine the final number of NHGs, in the study. I expected that a final sample size of two or three NHGs would meet the criteria of saturation.

The participants for the study were the beneficiaries of the selected NHG. All contact with the Kudumbashree Mission and potential participants were done only after the approval from Institutional Review Board of the Walden University (Walden University IRB). The first step in the participant selection was obtaining the written consent of the Kudumbashree Mission. Based on the inputs from the Mission officials, I shortlisted 15 NHGs in the district of Ernakulam. I made the choice of Ernakulam district



for two reasons, being the logistics convenience to conduct data collection and availability of a fair number of successful CBEs under the Mission. The CBEs being managed by the shortlisted NHGs ranged from food manufacturing units to dry cleaning units and jewelry making units to beauty parlor units. After telephonic inquiry with the Team leaders of the units, I shortlisted five NHGs that employed more than 20 women and were willing to cooperate with the data collection. I also noticed that all the CBEs set up by the selected NHGs have grown beyond the NHG itself and were employing members from multiple NHGs. The availability of members from multiple NHGs working in a single CBE would provide an opportunity to know about the practices and strategies employed by multiple NHGs. One of the shortlisted NHG was selected randomly through a lottery. . Keralashree promptly gave permission to collect data and arranged a meeting of the women who were working in its Railway parking service, to brief them about the study and seek their informed consent to participate in the study. A total of 30 women from three locations of the parking service attended the meeting. In case there were more than 15 willing participants, 10 members were to be selected through a lottery drawing. This lottery drawing was not employed as the final number of participants did not exceed 15. A Total of 16 members initially expressed their willingness to participate. Out of these 16 members, four members could not proceed further with the informed consent and interviews due to personal inconvenience. Twelve members agreed and signed the informed consent forms.

The selected participants of interviews who were also willing to participate in the focus group discussions, constituted a separate focus group. In total, 10 members

consented and participated in the focus group deliberations. I obtained the data from the participants by way of semistructured interviews and focus group deliberations. Apart from the women beneficiaries, I also interviewed one official of the Kudumbashree Mission at the district level and one official from the management level of Keralashree. I selected these external participants through a snowball sampling strategy. A snowball sampling strategy involves referrals from the participants (Major, 2016) and reduce the sampling bias and facilitates finding different perspectives of the research topic (Petty et al., 2012). I used the referrals from participants to identify the officials who could provide maximum information on the adoption, implementation, and outcomes of Kudumbashree Mission's strategies.

### **Instrumentation**

The role of the researcher as a primary instrument of data collection is one of the defining characteristics of qualitative research (Turner & Norwood, 2013). The researcher needs to act as an instrument for capturing and interpreting participants' worldviews and perspectives (Nicks, 2016). In my role as the instrument of data collection, I used semistructured interviews and focus group discussions to capture participant perspectives. Semistructured interview, using open-ended questions is a common instrument for data collection in case study research (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). The focus group discussions further enhance the data by allowing spontaneity, openness to communicate more information, and generation of more interactive data (Coenen et al., 2012; Dilshad & Latif, 2013). I developed the questions for guiding

semistructured interviews and focus group discussions on the basis of the research questions and the descriptive theory and its propositions.

I collected data from the 12 participants, using the semistructured interviews and focus group discussions. In addition, I also interviewed the two external expert participants. Only if there was any further scope for saturation, the data collection was to be extended to more participants from other shortlisted NHGs. Because the strategies employed by different NHGs of the Kudumbashree Mission follow similar patterns, and the selected CBE employed members from multiple NHGs, the in-depth interviews of participants from Keralashree was adequate to answer the research questions. One focus group was to be selected from the participants who were willing to participate in the focus group deliberations. In case any interviewee was unwilling to participate in the focus group she was to be exempted from the focus group. Two of the total 12 interviewee participants could not take part in the Focus Group due to their personal inconveniences. Because the members of an NHG conduct regular meetings and deliberations on their enterprise's affairs and decisionmaking, the focus group deliberations were also efficient and rewarding.

The questions for guiding the semistructured interviews and focus group discussions drew from the following central research questions:

- RQ1. What are the strategies formulated and implemented by Kudumbashree for successfully empowering women to become active participants in their local labor force?

RQ2. How did the social capital and collective experiences of the community influence the success of Kudumbashree Mission's strategies for increasing female participation in the labor force?

The theory of CBE, as the descriptive theory, guided the process of finding answers to both the research questions. The use of the theory of CBE presupposed that the Kudumbashree Mission is a CBE.

Twenty open-ended questions falling under eight focus areas appear in Appendix A. A proposition map, showing how the descriptive theory and its propositions are guiding the research questions, data collection, and data analysis appear as Appendix B. The first set of questions were for establishing whether Kudumbashree Mission has the characteristics of a CBE. Guiding the first set of questions were the propositions that the characteristics of a CBE are: dependence on community participation, reliance on the skills available in the community, and multiplicity of social and economic goals (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006). The second set of questions were for exploring various barriers that prevent women of Kerala from participating in the labor force. The third set of questions were to help in finding out the strategies employed by Kudumbashree Mission to empower women to overcome different barriers to their participation in the labor force. The fourth set of questions were for exploring how the strategies adopted by Kudumbashree Mission align with the outcomes of a CBE. The guiding propositions were that the outcomes of CBEs are capitalizing community's rich social capital and collective experiences, capitalizing opportunities triggered by social or economic stress, facilitating the economic and social development of the community, and increasing the

acceptance of individual entrepreneurship by the community (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006).

I expected the first to the fourth set of questions to be useful in finding answers to the RQ1.

The basis of research question RQ2 was the theoretic premise that the social capital and collective experiences of the community has a critical role in the success of a CBE. The propositions were that the determinants of success of a CBE are social or economic stresses affecting the community, collective organizational experiences of the community members, and social capital and social resources vested in the community (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006). The interview questions for exploring the participants' views on RQ2 formed part of the fifth to the seventh set of questions. The fifth set of questions were on how the social and economic stresses that affect the community are influencing an CBE's initiatives and their success in empowering its members. The sixth set of questions were for exploring how the Kudumbashree Mission makes use of the collective organizational experiences of its members, for empowering its women beneficiaries. The seventh set of questions were to explore how the Mission makes use of the social capital and social resources for ensuring success in increasing female labor force participation. The last set consisted of open questions about any additional views from the participants.

I expected the responses to research questions RQ1 and RQ2 through the eight sets of interview questions described above to provide sufficient data to analyze the role and characteristics of the CBE, and the strategies employed for improving the rate of female participation in the labor force. The target population for this study was unique in

that they were all members of a particular organization. The findings from this study may be specific to the organization, and not applicable to other CBEs for women. Even though the objective of a descriptive case study is not to generalize the findings, it may still be possible to identify strategies and processes that are useful for other organizations with similar objectives.

The questions for semistructured interview, with the omission of questions that were personal in nature, also formed the basis for focus group discussions. I was to use any insights from the interviews to modify the questions so that the focus group could provide more clarity on the emerging themes. The questions listed in Appendix A were based on *etic* issues developed by the researcher without any in-depth knowledge of the case. It was possible that during the study, many *emic* issues might emerge, based on the responses from the participants and the emerging *emic* issues might lead to changes in the list of questions (Stake, 1995).

This study also involved interviewing some external persons connected with the CBE. Such external participants selected through referrals and snowballing technique were to include Kudumbashree Mission officials at different levels and elected representatives and officials of local self-government bodies, connected with the functioning of CBE. Relevant documents related to the strategies and functioning of the CBE were also to be sourced from these agencies and NHGs as further data for the study. The external participants and documents were expected to be helpful in triangulating the findings from interviews and focus groups, thus increasing the reliability of the findings.

**Field Test**

When a researcher develops a previously untested data collection instrument, the instrument's adequacy and validity should be tested. Validation is even more critical when instruments involve translation, as in the present study. I validated the semistructured questionnaire prepared for facilitating the data collection, through a field test. Appendix C contains the request letter sent to a panel of scholarly experts, identified for the field test. The request letter contained the purpose of the research, research questions, and the questionnaire for semistructured interviews and focus group discussions. The panel of experts reviewed the questionnaire to check whether the questions were clear and comprehensible, and likely to generate data required for answering the research questions. The experts also checked if there was anything in the questions, which the participants might find objectionable. The experts in the field study did not answer the questions per se and were not a part of the data analysis. I modified the questionnaire, based on the experts' feedback during the field test.

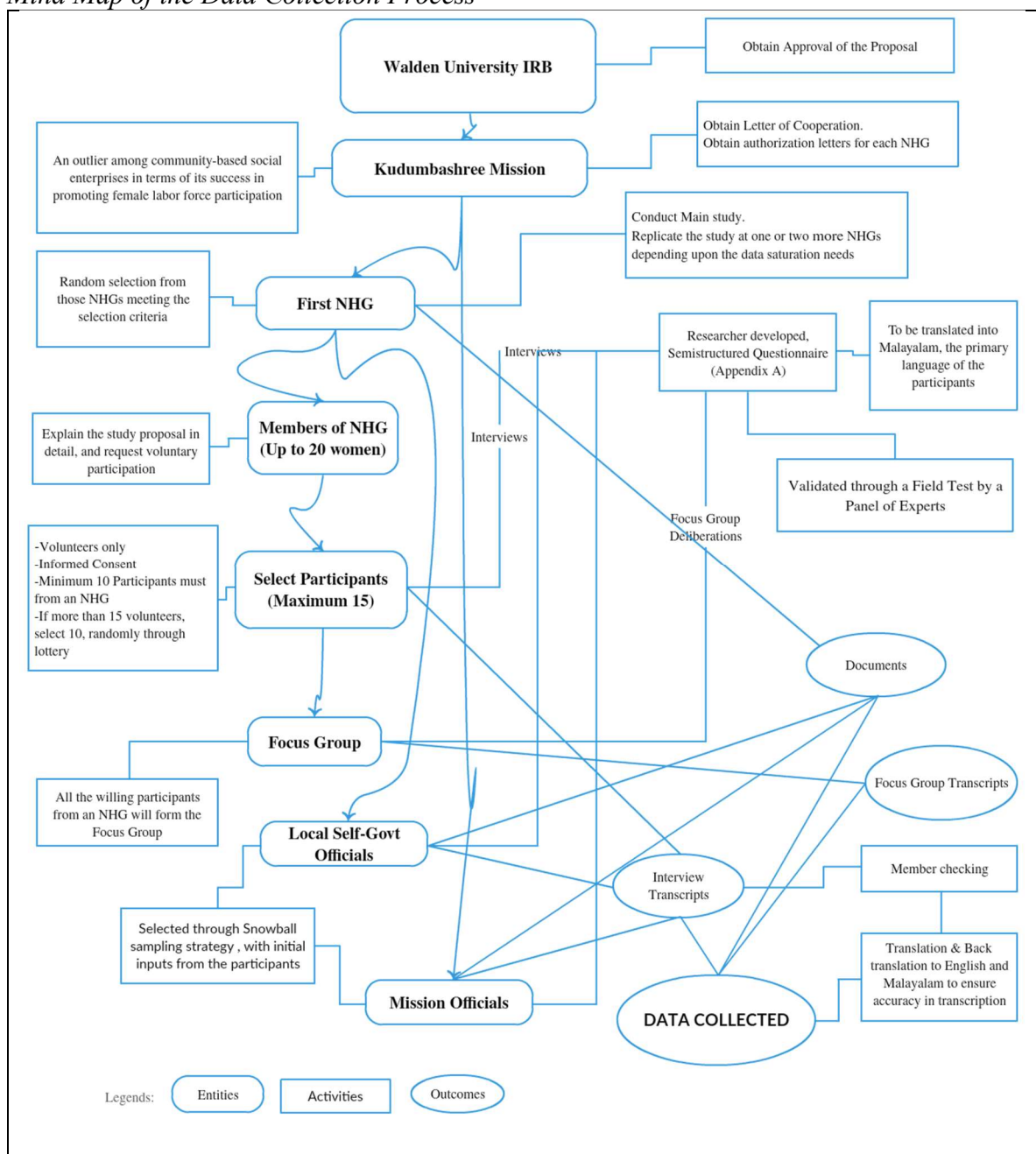
**Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

The process of data collection, including recruitment of the participants, began after the Walden University IRB approved (#08-13-18-03727333 dt August 13, 2018) the proposal. I then approached the head office of Kudumbashree Mission with a proposal to conduct the study. Kudumbashree Mission was open to such studies, and I did not face any difficulty in obtaining permission for conducting the study. This section contains the detailed procedures followed for the recruitment of the participants and data collection. A

mind map depicting the flow of the processes involved in data collection is included at Figure 2.

**Figure 2**

*Mind Map of the Data Collection Process*





With the help of Kudumbashree Mission, I identified 15 NHGs meeting the selection criteria within the district of Ernakulam. I obtained a letter of cooperation and authorization from the Mission, to undertake the study and collect data from any of these NHGs. I contacted the identified NHGs telephonically and based on their willingness and employment of a minimum of 20 women, shortlisted five of them. I selected the first NHG for the study, randomly, from the shortlisted NHGs, by drawing a lottery. I approached the selected NHG, in person, with the authorization letter from the Mission and obtained the consent for meeting the potential participants. The selected NHG was operating a CBE named Keralashree that employed over 850 women in various outsourced services. I attended a meeting arranged by Keralashree of its members who were working at the Railway parking services at three different locations and explained the process and importance of the research. The attendees were briefed on the voluntary nature of the participation and requested to participate in the study. I also explained to the members their right not to take part in the research and to withdraw from the study at any stage. I did not offer or provide any monetary benefits for participating in the study.

After briefing them about the process, I issued informed consent forms to all willing participants. The consent forms contained the details about the process and purpose of the study. The consent form also informed the potential participants about their right to withdraw at any stage of the study. I gave the members 3 days to decide, fill out, and return the consent forms. Since the number of members was limited and they were in constant interaction, it was not feasible to maintain any confidentiality on whether a specific member was participating in the study, or not. The presumption was

that the information about those who were willing to participate was available to other members of Keralashree. I sensitized the members about the possibility of others being aware of their participation, and their right not to participate in the study without any consequences. I obtained separate consents from the participants, for semistructured interviews and focus group discussions. The interviews were to begin only if a minimum of 10 participants were available from the selected NHG. In case there were not enough volunteers in the selected NHG, I was to approach another shortlisted NHG and continue the process. If there were more than 15 volunteers from the selected NHG, the final number was to be restricted to 10 by adopting a random selection through the drawing of lots. A total of 12 members from the Railway parking service of Keralashree gave informed consent to participate in the interviews. These members belonged to different NHGs and were now working in the Railway parking service of Keralashree. Since the number of participants was within the limits set by the research plan, there was no need for the random selection through drawing of lottery.

The semistructured interviews with each participant took place at a location and time mutually agreed upon with the participant. Unless otherwise suggested by the participant, the venue was to be one of the places where the routine meetings of the NHG took place. Because the participants had to come from three different locations and none of those locations, being public parking places, were suitable for an interview, the participants agreed to come to an office arranged by me. I conducted all the semistructured interviews in Malayalam, the common language of the participants. Each interview was estimated to last about one hour. The shortest interview was of 36 minutes

and the longest of 64 minutes. Apart from answering the questions, the participants were given an opportunity to state any additional information or comments, having relevance to the questions or topic of the study. I captured the interviews on a voice recorder, with the consent of the participant. I also took notes on all observations made during the interview. Recording the interview and its subsequent transcription helped in ensuring the accuracy of data. I also adopted the technique of member checking to ensure the accuracy of data capture. I gave all interviewees an opportunity to read the transcripts of their interviews and make suggestions for any changes or corrections. In case the suggested changes were significant, follow-up interviews were to be conducted to understand the reasons for such changes and ask interviewees for their approval. Three to four days of interviewing was envisaged in each NHG. However, it took seven days to complete the interviews with the 12 participants and the two external expert participants, primarily because the interviews had to be scheduled as per the convenience of the participants who had to be on 24 hours duty followed by 24 hours rest and mutually adjust their shifts to take part in the interviews. I first translated the transcriptions of the responses into English and then back-translated to Malayalam. All participants signed the back-translated Malayalam transcripts as evidence for their acceptance of the accuracy.

After completing the semistructured interviews of all participants, I scheduled the focus groups discussions for a time that was convenient to all the participants. Once again, I informed the participants about the importance of the study and possible benefits to the world in general and underprivileged women in particular, from the findings. The participants were also reminded about their right not to participate in the focus group and

to withdraw from the study, by giving me a written letter to this effect, at any time of their wish. I obtained a separate informed consent from those participants who were willing to take part in the focus group discussions. I also recorded the focus group deliberations on audio, and it was expressly stated that the recordings will be retained despite any subsequent discontinuance by any participant. I moderated the focus groups' deliberations, by guiding the discussions toward the research questions. The interview questions, with the omission of questions that were personal in nature, were also the discussion points for the focus group.

After completing the interview and focus group discussions, I asked the participants to provide their feedback in writing about the interactions and topics of discussions. This feedback was also to include any concerns regarding confidentiality or clarifications about the future of the research. I was to meet each participant separately and address their concerns and clarify their feedback, by way of an exit interview. However, no such issues or concerns were raised by any of the participants. I also informed the participants that in case of any need for clarification on any part of the interview or focus group discussion during the analysis I might contact them through Keralashree.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

Analysis means taking something apart (Stake, 1995). Data analysis means taking the impressions and observations gathered during the research apart to give meaning to the parts. According to Stake (1995), there are two strategic ways to conduct data analysis. One way is to make direct interpretation of each instance, and the other way is

to aggregate all similar instances. A descriptive case study may use both these ways for analysis. A particular instance of data might provide significant insights into the topic of research. In other situations, the significance might arise from the recurrence of the same theme across data sources. A case study researcher has to be vigilant for both individualized themes and collective themes while conducting the analysis (Stake, 1995). According to Yin (2014), there are various ways to analyze the data. Yin suggested juxtaposing data from different sources, placing data into different arrays, creating a matrix of categories, generating data displays for examination of patterns, tabulating frequency of occurrence of similar points, and organizing data in chronological or such other schemes. Pattern matching, explanation building, time-series analysis, logic models, and cross-case synthesis are the common techniques for analysis of case study data (Yin, 2014). Conducting a manual analysis of the enormous amount of data generated during a qualitative study is a challenge for any researcher. The introduction of qualitative data analysis software has made the task of analyzing qualitative data, relatively easier.

In analyzing the data from this study, I used the interpretivism and constructivism perspectives. The interpretivism perspective treats reality as constructed subjectively by the people's perceptions, and not as something positive (Wahyuni, 2012). An interpretivist assumes the constructivist epistemology, concerning how learners construct knowledge (Andrews, 2012). In-depth interviews are useful in interpreting individual perspectives and constructing the knowledge based on those individual perspectives (Stake, 1995).

I checked all the data collected through the interviews and focus groups deliberations for any discrepancies, at the time of transcription and translation. Wherever necessary, I was to contact the participant again, and get the discrepant data remedied. Where such remedy was not feasible for whatever reason, I was to delete the discrepant data from the compilation. However, no such issues came up during the data collection. I compiled the English translation of the data and the researcher notes taken during the data collection in the NVivo software. NVivo 12 is useful to organize and analyze qualitative data to find out insights and possible answers to research questions (QSR International, n. d.) through the five-step process of compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpretation, and conclusion (Yin, 2012). The compiled data were disassembled into fragments by using the coding and labeling facilities of NVivo, which cluster and categorize the data in order to unearth patterns and frameworks. I did the interpretation of reassembled data and the revealed patterns to arrive at conclusions. Apart from the coding by NVivo, I also undertook manual coding and theme recognition, using the printouts of the data. Both manual and NVivo coding were compared and adjusted to arrive at better results by way of pattern recognition. All the data were treated as subjective and expressing individual perspectives. I only made any generalizations based on patterns across the data, corresponding to the pattern matching technique suggested by Yin (2014).

I did the initial coding against the specific questions to which the participants provided the answers. I used the responses to the semistructured questions, Q1.1 to Q1.12 of Set 1 to Set 4 to find the answers to the first research question RQ1. I analyzed the responses to questions Q2.13 to Q2.17 of Set 5 to Set 7 for finding the answer to the

second research question RQ2. A proposition map, showing how the descriptive theory and its propositions guided the data collection and analysis against each research question appears as Appendix B. I used the generic questions G18 to G20 of Set 8 in supplementing the data for answering research questions RQ1 or RQ2. The objective of review and coding was to recognize patterns across data sources that can help in answering the two research questions. The theoretical propositions from the theory of CBE (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006) formed the basis for analysis, in identifying themes and patterns. While NVivo permitted the use of pre-codes, the data analysis did not involve any precoding (Miles et al., 2014). The use of pre-codes was limited for a priori thematic saturation of the data. Pre-coding obstructs the inductive process in which codes are allowed to emerge from the data. The analysis might get restricted to the pre-codes, leaving the researcher oblivious to the unexpected patterns existing in the data. Pre-coding is effective when the nature of research is etic, and the researcher is approaching the study with a specific preconception of the social setting, which is considered superior to other constructions for whatever reasons. Pre-coding could become an obstacle for efficient coding and analysis if the researcher creates the start list based on immature expectations about the outcomes of the research (Gough & Scott, 2000). I pieced together the codes and themes emerging from the analysis of data to create possible patterns and framework. Through these patterns and framework, I sought to unearth the collective perspectives of participants about the CBE strategies employed by Kudumbashree Mission in empowering the women to overcome barriers and become a part of the labor force.

I ensured the robustness of the analysis through triangulation. The process of triangulation was useful to confirm whether the propositions of the descriptive theory remained valid against data collected from across the data sources. I subjected the inference from any data from one source to triangulation with data from other sources. Triangulation, as summarized by Miles et. al., (2014) is a series of analytical manipulations inclusive of activities such as comparing arrays of information across data sources for similarity and examining data across sources for common temporal schemes. Data collected through semistructured interviews, focus group discussions, and interviews with external participants addressed the same questions and helped in triangulating the findings.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

Unlike quantitative research, wherein validity and reliability define the quality of a study, there are no universally accepted criteria to assess the rigor of a qualitative study. Different scholars suggested different criteria (Patton, 2015). The criteria of trustworthiness, advanced by Lincoln and Guba are the most widely accepted test of quality for qualitative research among scholars (Elo et al., 2014). Credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability are the criteria prescribed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) for validating a qualitative study.

### **Credibility**

Credibility of a qualitative research study depends on the study's internal validity. Credibility of a study means the ability to identify with its findings and interpretations and the confidence in making decisions based on those findings and interpretations



(Zitomer & Goodwin, 2014). Various strategies exist to enhance the credibility of a study. The strategies for ensuring the credibility of this study included triangulation, member checking, peer review, and saturation.

I triangulated the findings and interpretations using multiple sources of data. I used semistructured interviews, focus group discussions, and interviews of external parties to prevent any spurious conclusions arising out of over-dependability on any particular source. I subjected all the data collected through semistructured interviews and focus group discussions to member checking, preventing any researcher bias in recording or interpreting the participants' versions. Member checking allowed the participants to remove any misrepresentations of their views, provide additional information, and strengthen their arguments (Zitomer & Goodwin, 2014). Review by the dissertation committee members, at all stages of the research, also helped in enhancing the credibility of this study. Saturation of data, until no further insights are available from any new data, was another strategy for ensuring credibility. The study design provided for saturating the data by extending the study to one or two more NHGs, if necessary. However, there was no need for such an extended study as the data from the first set of participants was sufficient for the required saturation. A combination of these strategies was adequate for ensuring the internal validity of the study.

### **Transferability**

The transferability or external validity of a study means whether it is possible to apply the findings and inferences from the study to other cases involving similar situations or contexts (Houghton et al., 2013). The transferability of a case study depends

on the extent to which analytic generalizations can be arrived at from the findings (Yin, 2014). In this study, I used the strategy of the thick description to ensure the transferability of the findings. The report includes a thick description of the case, providing details of the context, participants, researcher's reflections, and conclusions, allowing the readers to make an informed judgment on the applicability of the findings to any given situation. Yin (2014) suggested using theoretical propositions as another method for increasing the transferability of a case study's findings. Use of propositions of the theory of CBE helped in increasing the possibility of applying analytic generalizations from this study to other CBE seeking to empower women. The availability of participants from multiple NHGs in the same CBE selected for the study also enhanced the transferability of the findings from the study.

### **Dependability**

In a qualitative study, dependability means the ability to demonstrate that it is possible to obtain same results by repeating the process, including data collection (Yin, 2014). The dependability of a study depends on the stability of the data (Houghton et al., 2013). Various strategies were used to eliminate any researcher biases and to ensure that any other researcher would arrive at the same conclusions by following the procedure adopted for this study. The use of a list of open-ended questions ensured asking similar questions to all participants. Member checking and triangulation made sure the accuracy of the data captured. Detailed notes and journals created a trail by recording the procedures followed, reflections of the researcher, and inferences drawn, at every stage of

the research. The use of NVivo in automatic coding and generation of themes also helped in increasing the dependability of the study.

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability refers to the neutrality and accuracy of qualitative data (Houghton et al., 2013). Closely related to the quality of dependability is the quality of confirmability of research. Confirmability of research can be achieved by ensuring that the researcher's personal biases are not allowed to influence data collection or analysis. I adopted maintaining a rigorous audit trail of the processes and reflectivity as the strategies to ensure confirmability of this study. I kept detailed notes, throughout the study, which will help any reviewer or future researchers to verify and confirm the rationale for every inference or conclusion.

### **Ethical Procedures**

This research collected information from human participants, mostly women from the vulnerable sections of society. Ensuring the participants' interests was necessary to protect them from any repercussions for participating in or expressing any views during the study. Throughout the study, I focused on ensuring the confidentiality and privacy of participants. I briefed the participants on their rights, including the right to withdraw from the study at any stage. The core principles of ethical research are respect for persons, beneficence, and justice, which guided the processes of obtaining informed consent, assessing the risks, and selecting the participants (Belmont Report, 1979). Any contact with participants began only after the Walden University IRB approved the research proposal. Meeting the requirements for IRB approval ensured the study complies with

Walden University's ethical standards and applicable U.S. regulations. After receiving the approval from IRB, I approached the selected organization, Kudumbashree Mission, for permission to conduct the study. I submitted a copy of the proposal and the details of IRB approval to Kudumbashree Mission, along with the request letter. Kudumbashree Mission has no internal or external IRB. Inquiries with Indian research scholars indicated that conducting social research through interviews does not require institutional review board approval. Recently, a student at the Walden University conducted a doctoral study in India, with the approval of the university's IRB and a letter of cooperation from the concerned institution (Taneja, 2016). A letter of cooperation was obtained from Kudumbashree Mission before selecting the NHGs for the study.

I made presentations before the shortlisted NHG and sought their approval before selecting the NHG for the study. I briefed the participants about their right not to participate in the study and to withdraw from it at any stage, and that they would receive no compensation for participating. If a participant withdraws from the study at any stage, the data collected from that participant were to be excluded from the analysis. The participants were told upfront that any subsequent withdrawal would not result in the exclusion of any data relating to their participation in the focus group deliberations. The potential participants were also briefed about the measures for ensuring their privacy and confidentiality while collecting and processing the data. My familiarity with the participants' language and local culture helped in adhering to the local norms of privacy, confidentiality, and cultural sensitivities. I did not have any connection with

Kudumbashree Mission or any authorities connected with the functions of any of the NHGs, at any point in time.

The personal details of all participants will remain confidential. I assigned each participant an alphanumeric code representing the type of participation and the individual. The details of the code assignment will remain confidential and separated from the data archives, ensuring adequate confidentiality to the individual participants. The transcripts and translations of data contain only the codenames and not any identifiable details of the participants. I did all the translation and back-translation. All data is protected and will be shared only with the university officials associated with the dissertation, as needed. The CBE and Kudumbashree Mission will receive only the broad findings from the study, which will not result in identifying any view or comment to a particular individual. If any situation arises wherein any person is required to be given access to the data, the access will only be granted after that person executing a confidentiality and nondisclosure agreement.

I adopted adequate measures for ensuring data security while storing and processing the data. I stored all the data in a personal computer, with password protection and access control. Two sets of regular backups were created on external hard discs and kept in sealed envelopes at two different locations. After the dissertation is approved, the data will be removed from the personal computer with the help of a digital file shredder application. The two hard disks containing the backup data will be maintained in my safe custody, for a minimum of five years, in a sealed envelope stored in a locker. After the expiry of five years, I will remove the data from the backup discs with the help of a

digital file shredder application. I implemented the suggestion from Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) on maintaining a data accounting log to capture, at a single location, the occasion and type of data collected from different sites and participants. The access to data accounting log, data storage, and backup is restricted only to me. The guiding principle at all stages of the research was the primacy of ensuring the safety and privacy of and minimizing any potential risks to the participants.

### **Summary**

I designed this qualitative descriptive single case study to identify the strategies adopted by Kudumbashree Mission for empowering women to overcome various barriers to their participation in the labor force. I also explored how the Mission leveraged the social capital and collective experiences of the community members to create social. The study covered one CBE that employed members from multiple NHGs. I selected the NHG based on certain criteria that indicated success in increasing female labor force participation. Members' participation was voluntary and without any coercion or compensation. The code names for participants will ensure their privacy and the confidentiality of their responses. Keeping the safety and interests of the participants as the highest priority and strict adherence to the Walden University IRB's instructions ensured ethical standards throughout the study. The data collection commenced only after obtaining the letter of cooperation from Kudumbashree Mission. Because I did not have any professional relationship with the Kudumbashree Mission or its members, any possibility of researcher biases or power relationships affecting the study was low. I ensured adequate measures to prevent any residual researcher bias arising out of the

researcher collecting and analyzing the data. The familiarity with the local culture and language helped me in conducting the data collection in a manner that keeps sensitivities of the participants and data integrity in mind. My role as the researcher included developing questions for semistructured interviews, acting as the instrument data collection, and analyzing the data. I recorded, made transcripts, and translated into English all the interviews and focus groups discussions. I used NVivo 12 for Windows to organize and analyze the collected data. Various propositions of the theory of CBE (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006) were the primary basis for guiding the coding of data. The measures adopted to increase the credibility and dependability of the study included member checking of the transcripts, thick description of the context, triangulation, and maintaining an audit trail .

Chapter 4 contains the results of the research along with a detailed description of the research settings, details of the participants and data collection, data analysis, and the evidence of the trustworthiness.

## Chapter 4: Results

The primary purpose of this qualitative descriptive case study was to identify the strategies formulated and implemented by a CBE for empowering its women members to overcome various barriers and take part in the labor force. The secondary purpose of this study was to ascertain how the social capital and collective experiences of the members of the CBE influence the success of its strategies for creating social value through increased participation of women in the labor force. I formulated the following research questions to meet the purpose of this study:

- RQ1. What are the strategies formulated and implemented by Kudumbashree for successfully empowering women to become active participants in their local labor force?
- RQ2. How did the social capital and collective experiences of the community influence the success of Kudumbashree Mission's strategies for increasing female participation in the labor force?

Understanding the successful strategies of the CBE and the role of social capital and collective experiences of members in influencing that success might be useful in addressing the persistent problem of marginalization of women from the labor force.

This chapter contains the results of the study. The chapter begins with a description of the field test conducted for validating the questionnaire developed for this study. The following sections contain a description of the setting in which the study was conducted, demographics of the participants relevant to the study, the data collection processes, and data analysis processes. In the section on evidence of trustworthiness I



detail the considerations determining credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study's findings. Thereafter, I present the results from the study. The chapter ends with a summary and transition to Chapter 5.

### **Field Test**

The instrument of data collection used for this study was a questionnaire I developed based on the propositions of the descriptive theory, the theory of CBE (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006). Appendix B shows a proposition map capturing various propositions used and their linkage to specific questions in the questionnaire. I used a field test by experts to ensure the effectiveness and dependability of the questionnaire. The panel of experts consisted of three faculty members from Walden University and one Project Officer from Kudumbashree Mission. Appendix C contains the field test request sent to the experts. The experts were not expected to answer the questions per se. They were to check whether the questions were likely to generate necessary information to answer the research questions, any question was difficult to comprehend, and possibility of any of the participants finding any question objectionable. I also requested the experts to provide any additional thoughts on the questions, including suggestions for addressing any of the issues raised during the test.

All the four members gave their feedback on the questionnaire. There were no critical issues raised. The panel also did not find anything that could be objectionable to the participants. All the suggestions made by the experts were related to the clarity of questions. The questions were revised in accordance with the feedback. Three questions were subdivided into two sub questions each, to make the comprehension easy for the

participants. Appendix A contains the revised questionnaire, after addressing all the feedback.

### **Research Setting**

After conducting the field test and obtaining the letter of cooperation from Kudumbashree Mission, this study received IRB approval (#08-13-18-03727333) on August 13, 2018, for data collection. The research setting was in Kerala, a provincial state of India. Kerala provided a unique setting because despite having the lowest level of gender inequality among Indian states, participation of its women in the labor force continues to be at a mere 30.1% (Arora, 2012) which is low even in comparison with other Indian states. I had planned to travel to Kerala and complete the data collection. However, owing to certain visa-related constraints the travel could not take place immediately. I continued to interact with the Kudumbashree officials over phone and emails for shortlisting the NHG for study. The district of Ernakulam was opted for the shortlisting as it was logistically convenient for me to conduct data collection and there were many NHGs operating successful CBE units for women. Kudumbashree officials at the district office helped me in identifying 15 NHGs that were meeting the selection criteria of successful operation of a CBE for at least 5 years. Based on the telephonic interactions with the leaders of these NHGs, I shortlisted five NHGs that were employing more than 20 women and willing to cooperate with the data collection. Of the shortlisted NHGs, one NHG was randomly selected by drawing a lottery. The selected NHG was Keralashree, which is running a CBE since 2006 and has succeeded in providing employment to over 850 women beneficiaries of Kudumbashree Mission through various

outsourced services. Keralashree leaders promptly agreed to provide the consent and all the necessary help for conducting the data collection.

I could reach Kerala only in April 2019. On arrival, I met the leaders of Keralashree who arranged a meeting of the members from its Railway parking service. The Railway parking service of Keralashree was operating as a community based micro enterprise, providing paid parking services at three railway stations of the city of Kochi. The service was outsourced by the Indian Railways that owned the parking premises. The women were all members of Kudumbashree, belonging to different NHGs. Out of the total 16 members who attended the meeting, 12 agreed to participate in the interviews and gave informed consent. Out of the 12 interviewees, 10 also agreed subsequently to participate in the focus group discussions and signed a separate informed consent. I also selected two external experts, being a district level officer of Kudumbashree and a manager of Keralashree, for interviews based on the feedback from the participants. The following section contains the demographics of the participants.

### **Demographics**

Apart from two experts on the Mission and its CBE program, all the participants of this study were beneficiaries of the selected CBE and members of NHGs of Kudumbashree Mission. The expert participants were (participant code 'E') undergraduates and had managerial level expertise in their respective fields. Both expert participants were also associated with the program implementation of Kudumbashree Mission and aware of the strategies employed. One of the experts was a male and the other a female.

**Table 3***Participants Demographics and Characteristics*

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Participant Type	Beneficiary	12	100%
Gender	Female	12	100%
Age	31-40 Years	3	25%
	41-50 Years	8	67%
	51-60 Years	1	8%
Education	Primary (upto 5th)	2	17%
	Secondary (upto 10th)	8	67%
	Higher secondary (upto 12th)	2	17%
Special Skills	Nursery teacher training	1	8%
	Agriculture training	1	8%
	CDS Chairperson	1	8%
	Civil draftman diploma	1	8%
	No special skills	8	67%

Other participants (code 'P' for interview participation and 'F' for focus group participation) were beneficiaries of the partner organization and working in the Railway parking service of Keralashree, at three Railway stations of the city of Kochi. All of them were women, aged between 35 years and 55 years. The mean age of the participants was 44 years. As Table 3 shows, a majority of the participants have completed the secondary level of school education, passing 10th standard. The lowest education level was 5th standard and the highest, higher secondary at 12th standard. Some of them also had special skills by way of training or experience.

### **Data Collection**

During the collection of data for this study I followed the plan detailed in Chapter 3, except for a delay in commencing the collection due to some visa related restrictions on my travel. The preparatory work for data collection began immediately after receiving

the IRB approval #08-13-18-03727333 dated August 13, 2018. I have already detailed in the previous section on research setting the process followed for shortlisting the NHGs and random selection of the first NHG for data collection . The randomly selected first choice for data collection was the NHG operating a CBE named Keralashree.

The leaders of Keralashree promptly agreed to cooperate with the data collection. However, owing to my travel restrictions, the data collection could not commence until April 2019. After reaching Ernakulam, Kerala, I met the leadership of Keralashree and requested help in recruiting the participants for the study. Keralashree arranged a meeting of its women beneficiaries working in its Railway parking service at Kochi, on April 02, 2019. The attendance was voluntary and out of the total 30 women working in the Railway parking service, 16 attended the meeting. The attendance mainly depended on the interest of the women in participating and their duty schedule. After explaining the rationale for the study and the process to be followed, including the fact that the study was voluntary and no financial incentives were to be provided for the same, the attendees were given informed consent forms. The willing participants were to sign the informed consent forms and return it to the researcher through Keralashree within 3 days. The meeting also discussed a suitable venue for the interviews. The attendees suggested that their places of work were crowded and not conducive for the interviews. I suggested an office close to Keralashree's office and all agreed to come to that office for the interviews. I also sought their suggestions on potential external experts who can be contacted to participate in the study. The suggestion resulted in two names, one from the district office of the Mission and the other from the management of Keralashree. I

contacted both the suggested experts in person on the same day, and both agreed to participate in the study.

On April 05, 2019, I received a total of 14 informed consent forms. The participants who gave informed consent for the interviews included 12 out of the 16 women who had attended the meeting and two external experts. I then contacted each of the participants and scheduled interviews as per their convenience. The interviews with one of the experts took place in Kudumbashree's district office. All the remaining interviews were conducted in the office arranged by me. The participants came to the venue as per the agreed schedule. The interviews were based on the researcher developed and field-tested questionnaire. The first interview took place on April 08 and the last interview took place on April 15. I recorded the interviews using a voice recorder, after obtaining the participants' consent to do so. The shortest interview lasted 28 minutes and the longest interview was of 94 minutes.

After their interviews, I briefed the participants once again about the focus group and sought their voluntary participation. Two of the participants expressed their inability to attend the focus group. The expert participants were not a part of the focus group. The remaining 10 participants signed a separate informed consent form for focus group participation. Owing to the difficulties for all the 10 participants to get together due to their shift duties, the focus group meeting was held on May 01, 2019, which was a local holiday on account of the International Workers' Day. I moderated the focus group discussions based on the same questionnaire used for interviews but excluding the questions that were personal in nature. Given the fact that all the participants had enough

experience in meetings and discussions in their respective NHGs and all of them knew each other, the focus group deliberations were lively. The focus group discussion was also audio recorded and lasted 1 hour and 23 minutes.

**Table 4**

*Data Collection, Transcription, Translation, and Back Translation*

Type	Audio Recording	Trascription (Malayalam)	Translation (English)	Back translation (Malayalam)
	Minutes		No. of pages	
Interviews (Average)	51.06	15.00	12.00	14.86
Focus group	88.43	29.00	23.00	27.00
Total	803.23	239.00	191.00	235.00

I conducted all the interviews and focus group discussion in Malayalam, being the primary language of the participants. As I was also proficient in Malayalam language, it was easy to conduct the data collection. I then transcribed the audio recordings into word documents. The transcribed documents were translated into English language, and then back translated into Malayalam. Table 4 contains the average length of the audio recordings and transcribed and translated documents in respect of the interviews and the focus group. The participants member checked and signed the back translated Malayalam printouts. None of the participants pointed out any variation in the printed documents from what they stated in the interviews. Neither the audio files nor the word documents contained the names of participants. The respective files were identified with only the participant codes. I saved the personal details like names and phone numbers of the participants and the corresponding code numbers in a separate document which is password protected and in my safe custody.

Even though the original data collection plan envisaged collection of any documents that may be relevant to the study, neither the expert participants nor the district office of the Mission suggested any such document. Hence, I did not collect any documents other than the information available on the public domain and Kudumbashree website.

I reviewed collected data against a set of pre-codes, derived from the theoretic propositions guiding the conceptual framework and data collection of the study (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011). The limited purpose of these codes, as listed in Appendix D, was to ensure *a priori* thematic saturation of the data. If sufficient data was not obtained against the pre-codes, data collection process was to be replicated in second NHG and so on. The review of the data against the pre-codes showed that there was adequate saturation within the collected data. All the pre-codes were adequately reflected in the responses of participants. Hence the data collection process was completed. I did not use the pre-codes for data analysis, which would be based on codes to be derived through inductive coding.

### **Data Analysis**

The collection of data was completed in May 2019. When everything was ready for the data analysis, certain personal setback occurred on the professional front, and I was forced to take a break from continuing with the dissertation process. What was thought to be a short break turned out to be of two years, with the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting global lockdown adding to the problems. It was only in July 2022 that I could finally re-enroll to complete the research.



The data collected from the participants were all kept in safe custody in both audio recordings and word documents. After doing the interviews, transcription, translation, and back translation, I had become immersed in the collected data. The formal analysis, however, began with organizing the documents containing English translations of the interview and focus group data into a single document. The researcher notes made by me during the interview and focus group discussion also formed part of the consolidated document. The responses were collated under each question, to enable an easy analysis. I uploaded this document into the NVivo 12 software. Even though the coding was started on NVivo, I felt it more convenient to do the coding manually on the document. Manual coding is useful for focusing the attention on already familiar data, rather than the nuances of the software (Saldana, 2016). Therefore, I completed the manual coding first and then repeated the process on NVivo, to ensure completeness and correctness in the analysis.

I adopted the inductive coding strategy for data analysis. The use of pre-codes was limited to ensuring saturation of the data and not used for the analysis of collected data. I approached the data with an open mind and started creating codes based on what is found in the raw data. Therefore, I looked for nodes relevant to each research question. Typically, the nodes contained from a phrase of few words to a couple of sentences from the participant responses. A total of 639 nodes were captured in an Excel sheet along with participant code number as the source and page number where it appears in the consolidated document as the location. Each of the selected nodes were then assigned in vivo codes as suggested by Saldana (2016). Some of the nodes received more than one in

vivo code against it. The objective at this stage was not to miss anything that could be relevant even as the data was summarized. The second cycle of coding consisted of labelling the in vivo codes identified in the first cycle. I used the pattern coding strategy for labeling. In pattern coding, generic labels are assigned to the in vivo codes (Saldana, 2016). I noted the occurrence of each of these pattern codes in the data in the Excel sheet. I then repeated the coding process on NVivo software, using its coding and labelling facilities to dissemble the data into fragments to unearth patterns. The codes generated on NVivo were compared with the codes already captured in the Excel sheet. As a result of this comparison, some codes got added and some other codes renamed and recategorized. Appendix E contains the final code book consisting of 430 in vivo codes and 116 pattern codes generated through the inductive analysis.

The next stage of analysis involved grouping and categorizing the pattern codes, with the objective of unearthing themes and answers to the research questions. The analytic lens used during this stage of analysis was the theory of CBE (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006) and the conceptual framework developed for this study. The 116 pattern codes were grouped into 24 category codes. Some of the category codes were further divided into subcategories. The category codes were then grouped into eight focus areas demarcated as set 1 to set 8 in the questionnaire at Appendix A.

**Table 5***Set 1 Codes Related to the Characteristics of Kudumbashree Mission*

Pattern Code	Occurrence	Subcategories	Category
Women empowerment activities	31		
Awareness building activities	15	Women empowerment	
Discussions and collective decision-making activities	14		
Economic empowerment activities	13		
Facilitating micro-enterprises activities	21	Jobs generation and facilitation	Mission activities
Support to women activities	7		
Persistence against failure	1		
Social service activities	11	Social service	
Social development activities	24	Social development	
Poverty alleviation activities	9	Poverty alleviation	
Community appreciation	8	Community appreciation	Community involvement
Community Participation	10		
Community Support	28	Community participation	
Customer support	10		
Experts Support	12	Community Support	
Govt Agencies Support	7		
Women empowerment goals	21	Women empowerment goals	Mission goals
Women employment goals	5		
Economic empowerment goals	14	Economic empowerment goals	
Social empowerment goals	23	Social empowerment goals	

The questions in set 1 of the questionnaire were meant to test the assumption that the selected case, Kudumbashree Mission, has the characteristics of a CBE. I used the proposition of the CBE theory that the characteristics of a CBE are dependence on community participation, reliance on the skills available in the community, and multiplicity of social and economic goals for the analysis of data for this set of questions. Table 5

contains the codes, subcategories, and categories relevant to set 1. The theme emerged from set 1 codes is that Kudumbashree Mission has the characteristics of a CBE.

**Table 6**

*Set 2 Codes Related to Barriers to Women's Participation in Labor Force*

Pattern Code	Occurrence	Subcategories	Category
Initial absence of community support	2	Absence of community support	
Community mindset barrier	9	Community mindset	Barriers to participation
Spouse Resistance barrier	5		
Domination of jobs by men barrier	7		
Family resistance barrier	10		
Religious Factors barrier	2		
Gap in participation	1		
Domestic responsibilities barrier	5	Gender inequality	
Confined to home- barrier	7		
Fear barrier	12		
Gender inequality barrier	4		
Lack of confidence barrier	2		
Lack of education or skills	3	Lack of education or skill	
Low quality jobs barrier	12	Not enough quality jobs	
Not enough jobs barrier	4		
No prior work	3		
Regional disparity barrier	1		
Shortage of capital barrier	3	Shortage of capital	
Kerala ahead in participation	1	Kerala ahead in participation	Kerala ahead in participation

The questions in set 2 were to find out the barriers that prevented Kerala's women's participation in the labor force. Table 6 contains the codes, subcategories, and categories relevant to set 2. The theme that emerged from this set of codes is the multiplicity and varied nature of barriers to women's participation in the labor force.

**Table 7**

*Set 3 Codes Related to Kudumbashree Mission's Strategies to Overcome the Barriers to Women's Participation in the Labor Force*

Pattern Code	Occurrence	Subcategories	Category
By arranging capital	4	Arranging capital	
By arranging jobs	4		
By facilitating micro enterprises	3		
By generating job opportunities	8	Arranging jobs and micro enterprises	
By giving marketing support	4		
By skill development	7		
By creating awareness and motivation	14		Strategies employed
By change in income levels	3	Awareness and motivation	
By collective action and support	14		
By changing community perceptions	15	Changing community perceptions	
By easing domestic responsibilities	3		
Social and political empowerment	6	Social and political empowerment	
Encouragement	1		Facilitation of participation
Exemption from Meetings	4		
Focus on welfare	1		
Mutual assistance	1		
Work-Life balance support	10		
Protection during problems	3		
Respect for Kudumbashree identity	2		
Rest facilities	1		

Table 7 contains the set 3 codes related to the strategies adopted by Kudumbashree Mission to enable its members to overcome various barriers to women's participation in the labor force. An analysis of set 3 codes shows that the strategies employed by Kudumbashree Mission are also multipronged, to address the varied barriers identified in set 2. Questions

in set 4 were to evaluate how the strategies adopted by Kudumbashree Mission are in alignment with the outcomes of a CBE. I used the propositions of the CBE theory (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006) for the analysis of set 4 codes. As per the CBE theory, the outcomes of CBEs are capitalizing community's rich social capital and collective experiences, capitalizing opportunities triggered by social or economic stress, facilitating the economic and social development of the community, and increased acceptance of individual entrepreneurship in the community.

**Table 8**

*Set 4 Codes Related to Alignment of Mission's Strategies with the Outcomes of CBE*

Pattern Code	Occurrence	Subcategories	Category
Community orientation	7	Community orientation	Addressing community needs
Trustworthy offerings	5	Solution orientation	
Solution orientation	9		
Family empowerment	3		Contribution to community development
Social service	12		
Community development	4		
Economic empowerment of community	11		
Social empowerment of community	9		
Partnering with organizations	5		Making use of community resources
Support from external agencies	13		
Changed perceptions	18		Impact on community attitude
Increased confidence	3		
Acceptance for offerings	7		
For profit operations	1		Enterprise orientation
Some prejudices still exist	1		Some prejudices still exist

Table 8 contains the codes and categories related set 4. The main theme emerging from set 4 codes is that the strategies employed by the Mission are in alignment with the outcomes of a CBE.

**Table 9**

*Sets 5 to 7 Codes Related to Determinants of the Success of a CBE*

Pattern Code	Occurrence	Subcategories	Category
Inadequate parking space	1		
Inadequate municipal services	3		Social stresses contributing to success
Problems with existing businesses	10		
Adverse impact on Mission's enterprises	1		Adverse impact on Mission's enterprises
Financial losses from poor services	7		Economic stresses contributing to success
Natural calamities	4		
Solution to economic stresses	3		
Experience used for Awareness building	4		Use of organizational experiences
Experience used for benefit of others	5		
Complementary use of varied skills	7		
Associating with other organizations	6		Use of social capital
Collective strength	1		
For creating opportunities	10		
Financial support and subsidies	1		
For choosing interventions	1		
For marketing offerings	6		Use of social resources
For social interventions	2		
Government resources	1		
Involvement of non-members	1		
Skills and expertise	9		
Some resources not yet attracted	1		Some resources not yet attracted

I used the codes in set 5 to set 7 in answering the second research question on how the social capital and collective experiences of the community influence the success of Kudumbashree Mission's strategies for increasing female participation in the labor force. Table 9 contains the codes and categories related to sets 5, 6, and 7. I conducted the analysis based on the same set of propositions as in set 4. According to these propositions, the social or economic stresses affecting the community, collective organizational experiences of the community members, and social capital and social resources vested in the community are the determinants of the success of a CBE (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006). The themes emerging from Table 9 supported the propositions of Peredo and Chrisman (2006) on the determinants of the success of a CBE.

Set 8 of the questionnaire contained three generic questions. The first question sought participants' suggestions for Kudumbashree Mission to enable more women to participate in the labor force. Table 10 captures the codes related to these suggestions. The theme of these suggestions is mainly to do more of the same as being done now.

**Table 10**

*Set 8 Codes Related to Suggestions for Encouraging More Participation by Women*

Pattern Code	Occurrence	Category
Avoid misuse	1	
Continue to build confidence	1	
Cover more geographic area	1	
Explore more job avenues	11	
Focus beyond basic survival	3	Suggestions to increase participation
More awareness programs	3	
More quality in execution	1	
Provide best work-life balance	1	
More facilitation measures	3	
More skill development	5	



Table 11 contains the codes related to participants' responses to the second question on the impact of their association with Kudumbashree Mission. The emerging theme is of great satisfaction and a sense of achievement among the beneficiaries of Kudumbashree Mission and its enterprises. Table 12 shows the participants' responses to the last question on their feedback on the interview. All participants expressed satisfaction with the interview and its questions. One participant suggested more coverage of the role of Village Councils (Gramasabha) of the Local self-government in empowering women. Some other participants expressed a wish that the findings from the study will benefit their fellow women from other parts of the world. The results section of this chapter contains a more detailed discussion on the results of the data analysis.

**Table 11**

*Set 8 Codes Related to Impact of Kudumbashree on Participants' Life*

Pattern Code	Occurrence	Category
Changed the life for better	7	
Financially empowered	5	
Groups grown beyond expectations	2	
Mutual sharing and support	4	Impact on participant
Gained Social skills	6	
Pride in self	2	
Social Recognition	4	

**Table 12***Set 8 Codes Related to Participants' Feedback on Interview*

Pattern Code	Occurrence	Category
Utility for others	6	Suggestions on Interview
Study role of village councils	1	
Satisfied with coverage	5	No suggestions
No suggestions	3	

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

#### **Credibility**

The credibility of this qualitative case study depended on the internal validity of the processes followed during the study. To ensure the internal validity of this study, I adhered to all the steps in the approved research design. The inclusion of external experts representing the Mission and the selected CBE helped in triangulating the data collected from the beneficiary participants and vice versa. All the interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, translated, and backtranslated, and then subjected to member checking to ensure that the data captured their respective views accurately. Expert review of the researcher-developed questionnaire used for data collection and review by the dissertation committee members at all stages of the study design and execution added to the credibility. While the study design provided for the collection of data from a single NHG and extending the study to more NHGs only in case the saturation demanded it, the availability of members from multiple NHGs within the selected CBE added to the saturation of data. A preliminary analysis against a set of pre-codes confirmed the

saturation of data. A combination of all these steps ensured the internal validity of the study and credibility of its findings.

### **Transferability**

The external validity, or the feasibility of using the findings and inferences from the study to similar situations or cases elsewhere, is what determines the study's transferability. The research design for this descriptive case study prescribed thick description as the strategy for ensuring the transferability of its findings. I used thick description by including a detailed account of the case, the context, the processes for recruitment and data collection, verbatim responses from the participants, my own reflections, and the inductive process used for data analysis in the report. The thick description will allow the readers to make informed decisions on what inferences can be applied to a given case. Yin's (2014) suggestion of using the theoretical propositions to increase the transferability of the study was also adopted. The availability of participants from multiple NHGs within the same case also increased the generality and transferability of the findings.

### **Dependability**

The dependability of a qualitative study is linked to the possibility of obtaining the same results by another researcher by repeating the processes (Yin, 2014). Adherence to the approved research design, maintaining a detailed audit trail, use of a peer reviewed questionnaire for data collection, member checking of the interview data, and triangulation were the strategies used for ensuring the dependability of this study. I adhered to the strategies mentioned in Chapter 3 to eliminate any researcher bias during

the data collection and data analysis and to increase dependability. Using the propositions of an existing CBE theory, to guide the design of the questionnaire and inductive analysis of the data, also increased the dependability of this study.

### **Confirmability**

The confirmability of a qualitative study is dependent upon the neutrality and accuracy of the data collection and analysis (Houghton et al., 2013). The neutrality and accuracy of a study is dependent on not allowing any of the personal biases of the researcher to influence any of the processes. Even though I was not related to Kudumbashree Mission or any of the participants, I followed all the steps detailed in Chapter 3 to avoid any residual bias. A rigorous audit trail is maintained for all the processes followed. All the data collected are kept in safe custody, both as audio files and transcripts. All the codes used in the data analysis were directly linked to the transcripts of participants' responses. Detailed journals and notes were maintained, which will enable any reviewer or future researchers to verify and confirm the inferences and conclusions of this study.

### **Study Results**

Using the CBE theory as a descriptive theory, I sought to answer the following research questions through this descriptive case study:

RQ1. What are the strategies formulated and implemented by Kudumbashree Mission for successfully empowering women to become active participants in their local labor force?

RQ2. How do the social capital and collective experiences of the community influence the success of Kudumbashree Mission's strategies for creating social value by increasing female participation in the labor force?

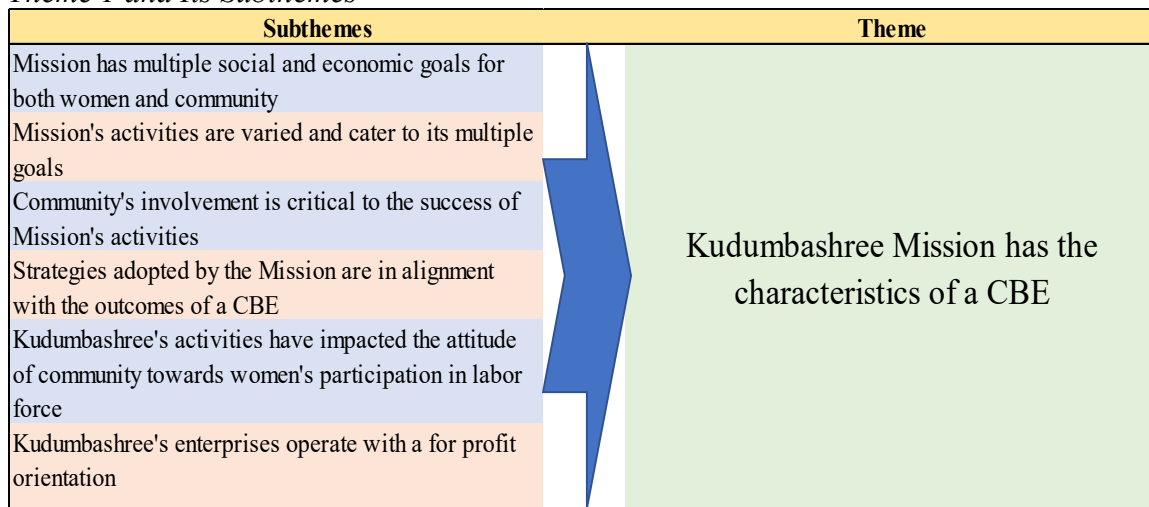
There were supplementary questions to establish whether Kudumbashree Mission indeed have the characteristics of a CBE, the impact of the Mission's membership on the participants' life, and the suggestions from the participants for the Mission to make its strategies more effective.

I subjected the data collected through interviews and focus group discussions to inductive analysis, allowing the inductive codes and themes to emerge from the data. Appendix E and the section on data analysis contain the details of the data analysis. The category codes, including subcategory codes in some cases, were further grouped based on the conceptual framework and research questions. As a result of this grouping and regroupings, five main themes emerged from the data. Appendix F shows the emergence of five themes and their respective subthemes against the relevant research questions, from the categories.

The entire process of the data analysis resulted in 5 themes and 23 subthemes. The remaining paragraphs of this section contain a detailed discussion of the themes and subthemes. I have organized the discussion as per the themes. Each theme is by the data represented by verbatim quotes from the participants.

### **Theme 1: Kudumbashree Mission has the Characteristics of a CBE**

Before answering the two main research questions, the study required to establish whether the presumption of Kudumbashree Mission being a CBE is indeed true.

**Figure 3***Theme 1 and Its Subthemes*

Responses to questions 1.1 to 1.4 and questions 1.9 to 1.12 in the questionnaire brought out six subthemes that led to the first theme, Kudumbashree Mission has the characteristics of a CBE. Figure 3 represents the theme and subthemes on the characteristics of Kudumbashree Mission.

***Subtheme 1.1: Mission has Multiple Social and Economic Goals***

In response to question Q1.4., participants talked about different goals, bringing out the varied and multiple nature of the goals of Kudumbashree Mission. Most of the participants began their responses with a reference to the women empowerment and women employment goals. P-5 stated, “The primary objective is to empower women.” F-2 expressed similar views, “The main objective is to empower women. Women are being readied to enter all fields.” P-12 stated that “it was to give employment to a lot of women that the enterprise was started.” P-4 stated, “There are a lot of women who are struggling against poverty. Providing them with some relief and help is the main objective.”

Emotional responses like, “a great blessing” (P-2) and “For me, it is like heaven” shows how the beneficiaries felt their employment and empowerment as primary goals of the Mission. The expert opinion was also in agreement with this view. E-1 stated:

There are three main objectives now. First remains poverty alleviation. The second is, as you may already know, the advancement of women, in other words women empowerment. Then social development. These are the three objectives of Kudumbashree Mission.

Financial empowerment of the community through the financial empowerment of women was another goal cited. E-2 stated, “Both Kudumbashree and Keralasree are functioning with the objective of helping the families escape from poverty, through financial empowerment of women.” Thrift funds of the NHGs play a critical role in the financial empowerment of women. “It (thrift Fund) contributes to the advancement of Kudumbashree’s objectives like women’s financial empowerment and advancement” (F-8). Social empowerment through collective solutions to social problems also found mention in responses. P-7 stated, “When these ten to fifteen women from an area get together, they are able to find solutions to their own problems as well as that of their society.” Collective solutions to individual problems is also a dominant goal of NHGs and Mission. “If any member is facing any financial or emotional difficulties, NHG tries to find solutions through collective efforts” (F-5). Social development goal of the Mission includes varied initiatives like “Balasabha or children’s assembly” (E-1), “eradication of plastic waste” (F-8), “awareness programs and other activities related to social development” (E-1), and “daytime homes for the aged” (P-1). A corollary of the

social development and women empowerment is to bring changes in the community's attitude toward women's stepping out of their homes. Acting against the community's prejudices is another goal of the Mission. F6 stated: "The society had a mindset that women should not venture out during the night. On the last women's day, at midnight, women of our area collectively walked on the roads. This program was organized by Kudumbashree.

A combined reading of all these responses leads to the subtheme, Mission has multiple social and economic goals for both women and community. Figure 4 below represents the word cloud of the Mission's goals and objectives generated by NVivo software. The frequency and clarity of words contained in the Figure 4 reveal that the Mission's objectives center around women empowerment, poverty alleviation, and social and economic development of the community, through promotion of women's participation in economic activities.



**Figure 4**

*Word Cloud of Mission's Goals and Objectives*



***Subtheme 1.2: The Mission's Activities are Varied and Cater to Its Multiple Goals***

In response to question Q 1.1, the participants listed various activities, based on their respective lived experiences. The highest cited activity was women empowerment, with 60 responses grouped under this category. P-7 stated, "Kudumbashree is striving to help women, who used to be totally dependent on husband or father for all their needs, to stand on their own legs." P-8 supported this view by stating, "Kudumbashree has made women capable of interacting with the society." The empowerment activities included providing "skill development training" (P-10), "creating micro enterprises and jobs" (E-1), helping women to develop their "Self-reliance" (E-1) and "self-employment" (P-8),

and allowing women “to lead a respectful life” (P-6). Closely linked to empowerment is the awareness building activities. According to P-9:

The objective of Kudumbashree was poverty alleviation. It sought to achieve that objective by empowering those women who were confined to the four walls of their homes. A lot of women, not just from our area, but from entire Kerala were living their life without knowing anything about the outside world. Under such circumstances, Kudumbashree endeavored to conduct a lot of classes, to generate awareness among its beneficiaries.

Mutual support and assistance extended through meeting “once in every week” (P-12) and discussing and taking collective decisions on “various issues including current social problems” (F-4) and “any domestic issues being faced by the members” (F-5) also help the empowerment of women. The NHG “got together and shared love, and discussed everybody’s domestic issues and took decisions, collectively” (P-9) and enhanced the standing and dignity of women within the community.

Another important stream of Mission’s activities related to generation and facilitation of jobs for its women beneficiaries. According to E-1:

The activities of NHGs and Mission are primarily two pronged. The first is the activities related to financial segment, such as creating micro enterprises and jobs. The second is the just discussed awareness programs and other activities related to social development.

In P-1’s division alone there are 29 NHGs and “all of which are engaged in some or other enterprise.” Micro enterprises engaged “in agriculture at our own homes” (P-2), “soap

powder manufacturing and sale” (P-5), “business of firewood” (P-9), “door-to-door distribution of provisions” (P-9), “group farming” (P-11), “pack and sell dry fish” (P-5), and “vegetable farming” (P-12) are some examples. “In order to facilitate establishing such ventures, Kudumbashree provides all necessary classes, training, and support” (P-5).

Many of the activities of the Mission had the origin in the initial objective of poverty alleviation. The Mission and its enterprises were “functioning with the objective of helping the families escape from poverty” (E-2). As a result, “Many families have escaped the clutches of poverty” (P-7). Eradicating poverty through livelihood is given the stress in all the Mission’s programs. E-1 stated:

The stress is always on livelihood. Even the funding from the central government is for improving livelihood. Mainly the central funds are allocated in two streams, namely, National Rural Livelihood Mission and National Urban Livelihood Mission. In both programs the key result area for further funding is the number job opportunities created during the previous program period. Therefore, naturally, all the programs are designed in keeping with that objective in mind.

The name Kudumbashree is a popular brand name adopted by the State Poverty Eradication Mission (SPEM), which was set up by the state government of Kerala, in 1997, with the objective of achieving poverty eradication through empowerment of women (Kudumbashree, 2022).

Even as the stress is on poverty eradication through women empowerment, Kudumbashree’s activities are designed for ensuring social service and social development. Both NHGs and the Mission incorporate social service in all their

programs. Social support to needy persons is taken up by the Mission in a variety of ways. F-5 cited the “Calling Bell initiative to take necessary help to persons who are staying alone in their homes” (F-5) as an example. The Mission undertakes many voluntary services for the benefit of the society. “When we were affected by the floods, Kudumbashree was everywhere providing help and service” (P-8).

Kudumbashree works in close coordination with the local self-government bodies in creating and implementing social development programs. According to E-1, Kudumbashree undertakes “many activities toward the social development objective. One such activity is called Balasabha or Children’s Assembly.” “Solid waste management as another focus area” (F-3) and to “take part actively in Gramasabhas and solve various problems affecting their community” (P-7) are examples of other social development activities.

***Subtheme 1.3: Community's Involvement is Critical to the Success of Mission's Activities***

Questions Q1.2(a) and Q1.2(b) were to find out the opinions of participants on the community’s participation in Kudumbashree Mission and how the community involvement is helping their enterprise. Based on the responses, the community involvement with the Mission’s activities can be categorized into three, namely, community appreciation, community participation, and community support. “Initially, people used to hold Kudumbashree in contempt” (P-8). However, “Now, people are realizing that Kudumbashree is a good collective” (P-8). The community now recognize the Mission as “the best women’s collective in the state” (E-1). People have begun

trusting Kudumbashree's initiatives. F-3 stated, "Even at railway station, people do come and request us to start an eatery besides parking. They say, they can eat at Kudumbashree joints with the same trust as in their own homes". F-5 said, "We can say the community has made our venture its own." This appreciation from the community is critical for women to step out of their homes and participate in the labor force.

The community's participation is also critical for the success of Mission's activities. "Initially, Kudumbashree was misunderstood as a program for only the women from Below Poverty Line (BPL) families" (E-1). That image has changed. F-2 stated: "Now a days, a lot of women from the more affluent families are also forming or becoming part of the NHGs. Kudumbashree has moved beyond its initial objective of poverty alleviation." As a result, now there is "participation from the wider community" (P-10) and "out of a total about 7 million families of Kerala over 4 million families are its beneficiaries" (E-1). "Socially, Kudumbashree has brought about a great change in ensuring women's participation in the community affairs and community participation in empowering women" (P-9). Initiatives like "collectives for the elderly persons and Balasabhas (for children)" (F-9) have also increased the community participation.

Community's support to the Mission and its enterprises comes in many ways. "Help of various government programs and initiatives" (E-1), help from family members and other members of the community (P-11), customer support as in "Police and Railways staff are also very helpful and supportive" (P-4) are some of the manifestations of this support. The "experts from outside who come and conduct classes to increase our knowledge and awareness" (P-6) and financial support from Banks who "provide groups

from NHGs with cheaper loans to start micro enterprises” (P-6) are other examples. The community support is very critical for women to operate a 24 hour venture like railway parking service. E-2 stated:

Let us take parking as an example. Our women are working there for 24 hours. Whenever they need any support all cab drivers and porters working in the railway station do protect them. In case any person misbehaves with our women, they all intervene immediately and inform us over telephone. They all do it only because they want our women to progress well.

This was not always the case. P-1 stated, “Initially it was difficult, because even police personnel were not familiar with us.” For P-5, even her own “family was not allowing me to join when I got the offer for the first time.” But now things have changed for the better and the community “give both support and respect to us” (P-7).

***Subtheme 1.4: The Mission’s Strategies are in Alignment with the Outcomes of a CBE***

If the Mission is a CBE, then its strategies should be in alignment with the outcomes of CBE. As per the CBE theory, outcomes of a CBE include capitalizing opportunities triggered by social or economic stress, capitalizing community's rich social capital and collective experiences, facilitating the economic and social development of the community, and increased acceptance of individual entrepreneurship in the community. The Mission, in “all its activities are functioning with a community orientation” (E-1). With the view to promoting social and economic development of community, Kudumbashree Mission is engaged in various activities. As P-1 put it, “In addition to empowering women, our enterprise is also helping to improve the society.”

For example, “The same (parking) service, which was run like extortion, is now managed with utmost love and peace by the women. This in itself is a relief for the society” (E-2). NHG plays active role in finding solutions to community’s problems. “Whenever there is any problem in the local community the members of NHG will be active in finding solutions or resolving it” (F-7).

“Meeting the need of the society to have a responsive and safe parking place for their vehicles” (P-10) is an example for capitalizing the opportunities triggered by social or economic stresses within the community. Many participants reported illegal activities such as removing of wheel and draining of fuel from cars, overcharging parking fees, and stealing of vehicle parts, by previous operators, leading to economic losses to the community. Pilferage of revenue was another issue leading to economic stress to Railways. “It is only after Kudumbashree taking over the service that Railways started getting maximum revenue from the parking. There is no pilferage from the revenue receivable by Railways” (F-10). P-8 puts it succinctly:

Our enterprise is a success because we provide an effective solution to the problem of parking vehicles at a crowded place like railway station. The rampant overcharging of parking fee and stealing of vehicle parts and fuel were all causing financial problems for the customers. Railway also was losing money under the earlier arrangement. After we took over the income of Railways also increased substantially.

“The kitchens operated by Kudumbashree Mission during the recent floods in Kerala” (E-1) was another example cited for capitalizing the social and economic stress. When the

people of Kerala suffered immense losses from the occurrence of a flood, the activities of Kudumbashree Mission toward successful control and management of such losses contributed significantly toward the success of the mission's activities. According to P-7:

Yes (Kudumbashree has the flexibility to start anything at any time, depending on the circumstances). Whenever a problem is noticed in the society, Kudumbashree will intervene and find a solution. The help that Kudumbashree provided during the aftermath of floods cannot be ignored. During those days, teams, including me, were working throughout day and night. Some NHGs had formed groups of members that undertook cleaning of houses as a business activity. Apart from that, we also provided whatever help we could as a voluntary initiative. We shouldn't be looking for profits when there is a calamity.

NHG and the Mission also strives to capitalize on the social stresses within the community. "Our NHG tries to find solutions for all problems arising in our community. We have even solved family disputes through our intervention" (p-4). "In a nearby locality, when a new toddy shop got opened, NHG took initiative in getting it closed" (P-7). These interventions capitalize on the social stresses to empower women and increase their standing within the community. Promoting sustainable development, providing clean public utilities, providing trustworthy eateries, eliminating the solid waste menace, ensuring removal and recycling of plastic waste are some of the other instances cited by the participants.

Kudumbashree units undertake organic farming not because it is profitable, but with the objective of converting unused barren lands into farming lands with the



help and support of Kudumbashree and government agencies. It is a part of promoting sustainable development (E-1).

Another example is the supply of food in running trains by Kudumbashree. It provided a solution to the problem of not getting quality food at affordable prices for train passengers. At the same time the service provided a business for the Kudumbashree venture (F-9).

These activities provide employment to the women and relief to the community from specific problems. Sometimes the opposite also happens. When a stress in the society is alleviated, it affects the activities of the Mission adversely. The commencement of Metro services in Kochi was an example, According to P-10, “Recently when the Metro service was started, it benefitted the society but adversely affected our business. There was a reduction in the number of vehicles being brought for parking.”

Unlike other contractors who are only interested in maximizing their profit, Kudumbashree ensures that it also gives back to the community by developing it. P-9 stated:

...our enterprise undertakes many development activities at the parking area at our own cost. The two air-conditioned waiting halls established at two different railway stations are examples of the development work being carried out by our enterprise, for the benefit of the community.

P-11 supports the above view. “Out of the income we generate, we spent money to maintain the roads at our parking area. We only paid money and got all the old lights replaced and ensured adequate lighting.” Apart from the specific development works

undertaken, the Mission also contributes to social and economic development of the community through its activities like increasing the women's participation in income generating activities. Providing loans at nominal rates to beneficiaries, undertaking various social services and social interventions, and providing support to families suffering from various causes including natural calamities are other such activities.

In making all its activities a success, the Mission proactively use various skills and experiences existing within the community. Participation in events and fairs (P-7, P-5), partnering with government departments and schemes (F-1, F-8), partnering with local self-government bodies (P-12, P-7) are some of the partnering initiatives undertaken for making use of community skills and experiences. The Mission also ensures support from the community by way of awareness and training classes, skill development initiatives, support from banks and other agencies, use of external experts for enterprises, and utilizing external skills and knowledge. Some of the examples of the responses that substantiate the use of community skills and experiences are:

Kudumbashree does utilize such skills and experiences in the society through various means. For example, Kudumbashree is a partner in implementing the central government sponsored Dean Dayal Upadhyay Koushal Yojana scheme for developing the skill sets of our youth, to make them employable (E-1)

Depending upon the interests of women, in all such activities Kudumbashree brings experts from outside to provide training. External experts are utilized to provide necessary skills training and other instructions to set up and manage micro enterprises (P-5)

Similarly, P-12 stated: “For example, if the venture is related to agriculture, the government and other agencies provide a lot of support by way of financial assistance, seeds, and fertilizers”

***Subtheme 1.5: Kudumbashree's Activities Have Impacted the Attitude of Community***

Another outcome of a CBE, as per the CBE theory (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006), is the impact its activities make on the attitude of the community. The responses from participants clearly showed that the attitude of both beneficiaries and larger community has undergone substantial changes as a result of the Mission’s activities. The change is evident from the fact that “Women are coming forward, ready to do any kind of work” (F-3). “Only because that attitude has undergone a change, we are able to go out and work today” (F-4). The attitudinal change has taken place at multiple levels, as the following excerpts indicate. At the individual level, “If Kudumbashree asks me to jump off from the fifth floor, I will surely do it, because Kudumbashree is able to give the confidence that they are behind us to do all the protection” (E-2). At the family level:

Initially when we used to conduct the NHG meeting men used to object. Then we made them understand by talking to them about how Kudumbashree is an organization for the welfare of women and why they should not be objecting to its activities (P-4).

At the market level, “Kudumbashree products have already gained acceptance in the market. Kudumbashree labels are helping to overcome the usual negative mindset of the community toward women’s enterprises (P-5). As E-1 stated: “Kudumbashree cannot compete with them in terms of price because the overheads are far more for these micro

units due to issues related to economies of scale. Nonetheless, people are still buying these Kudumbashree products with a lot of enthusiasm.” At the society level, “Even the heads of local self-government bodies are jealous of us because, they say, women of Kudumbashree can get done even those things that they are unable to do” (F-7). P-12 summarized the outcome by stating: “When we began micro enterprises, our society viewed it with contempt. It was a feeling that what can these women do. All that has changed now with the success of Kudumbashree’s micro enterprises.”

There are some prejudices still existing at the community level. “When it comes to some critical domains that people value a lot, they don’t have much interest in engaging women’s enterprises” (E-1). However, the prospects are still bright. “More the success of women’s enterprise, more the change in the attitude of society. The society has realized that women have now received the necessary confidence to make their enterprises a success, through the intervention of Kudumbashree” (P-11).

***Subtheme 1.6: Kudumbashree's Enterprises Operate with a For-Profit Orientation***

Another characteristic of a CBE is that it functions as an enterprise and not as a charitable institution. Even as the enterprise undertakes activities that brings community development and add social value, it is still done as for-profit activities. Even at the time of calamities, while ensuring prompt service, Kudumbashree still do it as a for-profit enterprise. “During the floods Kudumbashree established community kitchens in various parts of the state as an essential community service. Even then, it was not a charitable free service, and all the supply was for specific rates” (E-1). P-7 narrated another incident that proved the enterprise character of the Mission:

Our area is full of shrimp farms. During the last season, a lot of shrimps were dying. That caused a lot of economic stress for the people. The price of shrimp collapsed. Then there was a Kudumbashree fair. We bought shrimps in large scale, dried them, and sold them in the fair. Through that initiative the shrimp farmers got some financial benefit and we also made decent profit.

The above discussed six subthemes clearly lead to the first main theme of this study, Kudumbashree Mission has the characteristics of a CBE. The theme substantiated the assumption of the Mission being a CBE and proved the choice of Kudumbashree Mission as the case for the study right.

## **Theme 2: Barriers to Women's Labor Force Participation are Many and Varied**

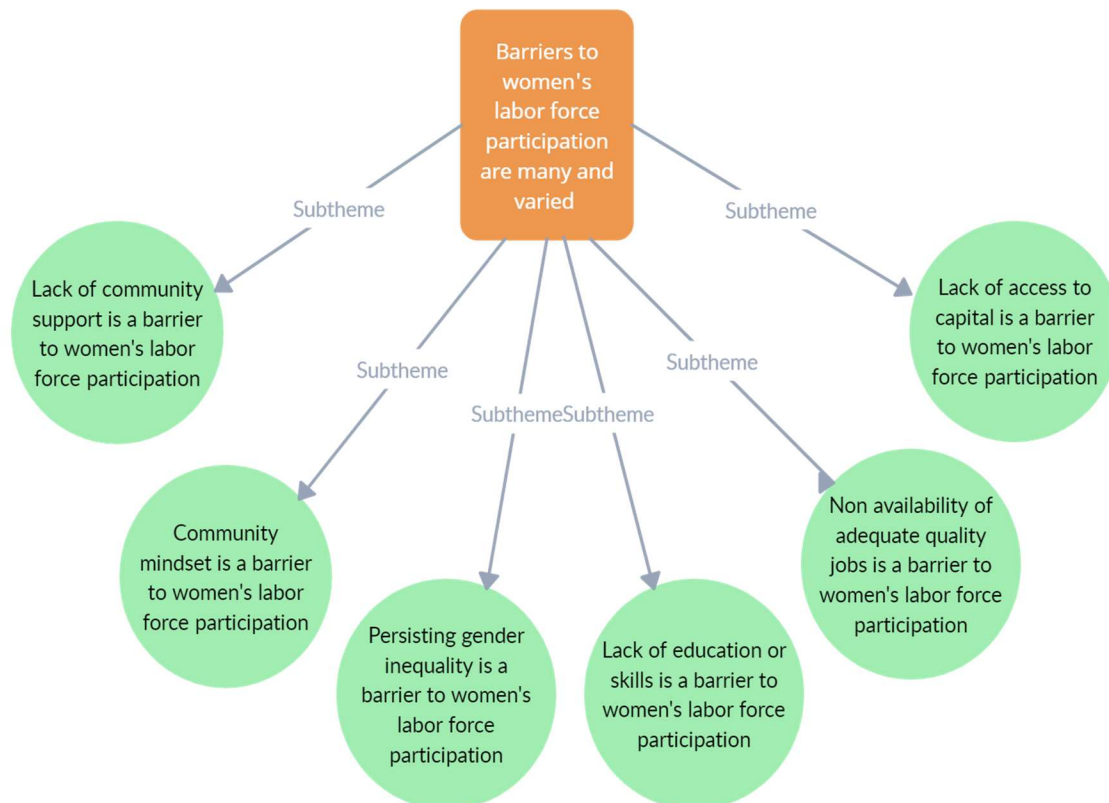
I used set 2 questions Q1.5 and Q1.6 in the questionnaire for obtaining information related the barriers that prevent women of Kerala from participating in the local labor force. The conceptual framework for the study indicated that the gender inequality existing in the society manifests in the form of various barriers and prevent women from engaging in remunerative work outside their homes. In a developing economy like India, adequate jobs not being available is a factor that causes relatively higher unemployment among people irrespective of their gender. Among those who are fortunate to be gainfully employed, the ratio of women tends to be far lower than men due to the gender specific barriers. The participants in their responses listed several barriers to women's participation in the labor force. These barriers are discussed under six subthemes that lead to the main theme, as depicted in Figure 5.

The response from the expert participant E-1 began by disagreeing with the assumption that there are barriers that prevent women of Kerala from participating in the labor force. According to E-1:

I may not be able to agree with this assumption. All these matters are relative. In my personal experience, our own family was depending on women's income.

When we compare with the rest of India, I feel that Kerala's women were ahead by one or two generations in labor force participation. In many sectors, especially sectors like nursing, the presence of women from other states in India is still very low. I believe, people of Kerala have already attained a level of physical and intellectual mindset where women can be a part of any job from any sector.

On further probing, however, E-1 agreed that "If you compare internationally with countries like the US, there will be a very wide gap. That gap is still existing" (E-1). His initial comparison was with other states of India where the condition for women's participation was much worse. E-1 went on to cite regional disparities, religious factors, absence of enough jobs for women, lack of personal ambition, and contented life as some of the factors that act as barriers to women's participation.

**Figure 5***Theme 2 and Its Subthemes*

***Subtheme 2.1: Non-Availability of Adequate Quality Jobs is a Barrier to Women's Labor Force Participation***

Other participants listed several barriers. Talking about their work experience before joining the Railway parking service, three of the 12 participants stated that they did not have any prior work experience at all. Seven of them have worked intermittently in part-time, low salary, low quality jobs like house maid, housekeeping, agriculture labor, vegetable farming, and salesgirl in a garment shop. Two participants have worked as manual labor under the employment guarantee scheme and door-to-door selling

through NHGs. Before joining Kudumbashree, E-2 had set up an enterprise for computer training, which failed for want of sufficient capital. Clearly, even for the women who were willing to take up jobs there were not enough full-time quality jobs available. The problem of shortage of jobs is not uniform across the state. “There are regional disparities with some areas having a concentration of jobs” (E-1). P-12 stated, “Our locality is a rural area. It is difficult for the women from our area to come to city for work.” Such disparities between urban and rural areas also act as a barrier to willing women.

***Subtheme 2.2: Lack of Community Support is a Barrier to Women's Labor***

***Participation***

Not having enough jobs is only one side of the problem. Women’s unwillingness to undertake the available jobs can also act as a barrier. This unwillingness is mostly caused by the community mindset. For a woman to go out to work, she still requires support of the community. Some participants listed lack of community support as one of the barriers to their participation. Women “need to have a lot of support from the family to enable us to perform our duties. Support from husband as well as elderly women at home” (F-10). Absence of permission or support from the family can be a strong barrier to women’s participation in the labor force. Noting the recent changes, F-6 emphasized the role of community:

Now, not many women are sitting back at home. Everyone is going out for jobs.

Even our children support it fully. That is the greatest change. Even we are able to do 24 hours duty only because of the wholehearted support of our children.



F-2 Agreed:

I and many others have daughters of marriageable age. We go out for 24 hours duty, leaving those daughters behind at home. They also know that we are going for the duty for including their own welfare. That is why we are able to continue without any kind of difficulties.

Operating for 24 hours in a public place like Railway parking would not be possible without the active support of the community members. P-11 stated, “Without the support of the officials and community we will not be able to continue operations in an enterprise like railway parking.”

***Subtheme 2.3: Community Mindset is a Barrier to Women's Labor Force Participation***

A community’s mindset is a critical factor that determines women’s participation in the labor force. As many as 34 responses were coded under this category of barriers. The prejudices existing within the community act through different sources. It could manifest as the resistance from the spouse, from the family, or from the community mindset. P-8 shared an instance of spouse resistance. “When he was fine, my husband never let me go for any work” (P-8). “There is also the ego. Some husbands are concerned, if their wives start earning more will they continue to respect their husbands” (P-8). “Husbands used to feel ashamed that their wives have to go out for work” (P-6).

Even where husbands are fine with it, the extended family might object to a woman’s working. P-7 said, “I know a couple of women from joint families. Even if their husbands permit them to go out and work, the rest of the family will not.” “Some families tell women to live within the available means and there is no need for the women to go

out and work for money” (P-6). Beyond the family, the community’s attitude toward, and prejudices about women’s working also acts as a barrier. According to P-3, “the society’s attitude is the primary barrier.” “Women are usually scared. There was a concern as to what will the community think about them if they go out to work” (P-4). In P-5’s experience, “main reason for not going out for work was the mentality of our society. Our society had a concern that if women go out for work, they might go astray.” Regressive religious beliefs are also a part of the community mindset that prevents women from participating in the labor force.

***Subtheme 2.4: Persisting Gender Inequality is a Barrier to Women's Labor Force Participation***

Closely linked to the community mindset and lack of support is the issue of persisting gender inequality. The gender roles assigned by the community led to gross inequality and prevented women from participating in labor force. P-1 stated the gender role of “having to do all the domestic work” as a barrier for women’s participation. In order to increase the participation, “The general feeling that domestic work is only for women and the jobs outside are only for men should change” (F-5). E-2 agrees that “responsibilities back home including the care of children and aged also acts as barriers.” It was again the gender inequality that led to a “concept that all night duties can be performed only by men” (F-6). The inequality leads to lack of confidence among women. The fear of going out is another manifestation of the persisting gender inequality. P-9 stated, “Now a days women are scared to go out alone, especially during the night, due to a large number of harassment cases.”

***Subtheme 2.5: Lack of Education or Skills is a Barrier to Women's Labor Force***

***Participation***

When the jobs are in short supply in the market, those who lack education or skills are naturally left behind in the competition for available positions. Women, who were not a part of the labor force, did not acquire any special skills to make them employable. The incentives for the families to educate their girl children were also low. Therefore, as P-10 stated, “The reasons include lack of education for some and fear of going out and facing the larger society.” “Not all women may have the ability to attend interviews and other selection processes” (E-2) and that also act as a barrier. Insufficient education usually affects the confidence of women, to go out and seek employment. P-1 stated, “Everyone in Kudumbashree used to advise me to look for some better paying job. I was reluctant since I was not sure as to who will give me a better job with my level of education.”

***Subtheme 2.6: Lack of Access to Capital is a Barrier to Women's Labor Force***

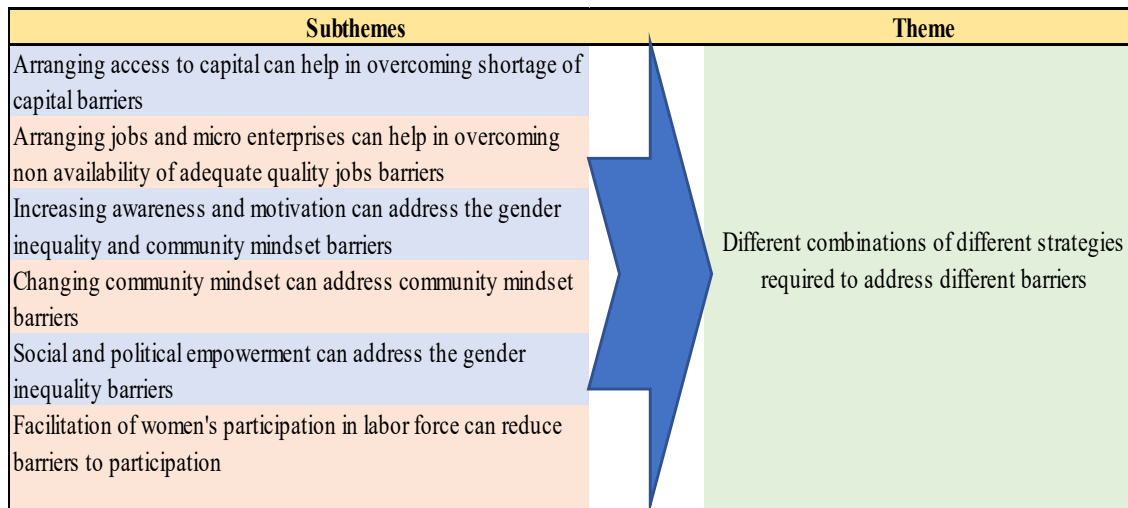
***Participation***

Apart from the shortage of employment opportunities, those women who are willing to set up microenterprises are also prevented by the shortage of funds. A lot of women never had an income or funds of her own to start anything. It was only with the Thrift funds set up by the NHGs most women began saving and accumulating some funds of their own. Being the only participant to have set up her own private venture and having experienced its failure for want of adequate funds, E-2 was clear that “Source of finances could be one of the barriers that prevent women from establishing their own

ventures.” Accessing capital from other sources is also difficult for women. “When a woman starts such a venture even her family is concerned whether it will succeed or not. Not many people do support women entrepreneurs in need of someone to support” (E-2).

### **Theme 3: Different Combinations of Different Strategies are Required to Address Different Barriers**

The main objective of Kudumbashree Mission is to alleviate poverty, but there is no charity or giveaways. Empowering women to generate income by taking up jobs or by setting up microenterprises is the chosen path to achieve the objective of alleviating poverty. Hence, all the activities of the Mission, apart from their social development and social value creation orientation, are a part of the strategies that encourage and enable women to enter the formal economy and take part in the labor force. From the discussion about the varied nature of barriers, it is already clear that sourcing or generating jobs alone will not be sufficient to increase women’s participation. Women must be encouraged and supported to overcome other barriers like gender roles and community’s mindset. Addressing different barriers will need different strategies and combines to be employed. Participants in this study have cited, based on their experiences, various strategies employed for empowering women to overcome the barriers. Figure 6 depicts these strategies grouped under the following six subthemes.

**Figure 6***Theme 3 and Its Subthemes*

***Subtheme 3.1: Arranging Access to Capital Can Help in Overcoming Shortage of Capital Barrier***

The shortage of capital barrier can be overcome by arranging funds for women willing to set up microenterprises. The strategy of arranging capital falls under two categories. The first category is through capital accumulation, using the Thrift funds at the NHG level. The funds are collected every week during the NHG meetings. As P-12 stated:

The contribution is fixed as per the amount that everyone can contribute without much struggle. The amount is decided as the amount that can be contributed by the person who can contribute the lowest amount, so that everyone deposits an equal amount.

These funds are accumulated and then given as loans at a nominal interest, to the women in need. The second strategy is arranging easy loans. The women from poor households will not be able to get loans on their own because of the requirements of credit worthiness and securities. So, “Kudumbashree helps women by providing them opportunities to establish new ventures and by arranging required loans” (E-2).

Kudumbashree arranges loans with subsidies from the banks. It also provides required training and handholding for running the venture. In addition, Kudumbashree will also oversee the functioning of the venture. If the venture fails, Kudumbashree will help to revive it by providing all help including crisis funding (E-2).

**Subtheme 3.2: Arranging Jobs and Micro Enterprises Can Help in Overcoming Non-Availability of Adequate Quality Jobs Barrier**

In an economy where there are not enough jobs for people irrespective of gender, it is important to create job opportunities for bringing more women into the labor force. Kudumbashree Mission plays an active role in arranging jobs and facilitating the setting up of micro enterprises. “Kudumbashree helps women by providing them opportunities to establish new ventures and by arranging required loans” (E-2). “There are many women who are searching for jobs, even after acquiring high qualifications. Kudumbashree is trying to create appropriate opportunities for all women” (P-8). “Keralasree was formed with the objective of providing Kudumbashree members and their dependents job opportunities, suitable for each one’s education and health level, in government and semi-

government organizations” (E-2). Talking about the role of NHGs in providing information and connecting women with available job opportunities, F-8 stated:

Primarily, NHGs discuss the new opportunities and the instructions and information received from CDS through ADS. A lot of NHG members are well educated. We mostly discuss about finding suitable jobs for those educated members and jobs or ventures for the not so educated women.

F-7 added:

Apart from placing women in suitable jobs, Kudumbashree also arranges livestock and poultry for women. These activities are for those women who are not able to go out to work, for whatever reasons. Kudumbashree also arranges all the necessary assistance for establishing micro ventures at home for producing various products like soap powder, pickles, and eatables (Everyone joins in by listing out various products and options where Kudumbashree support is available for setting up microenterprises).

Facilitating women to set up micro enterprises at their homes is very important to bring those women who are unable to go out for work due to their domestic responsibilities and other reasons to become a part of the labor force. Arranging easy linkage loans, finding markets for their products, creating brand value, and quality assurance are all strategies that the Mission employs to increase the success rate of women’s micro enterprises.

***Subtheme 3.3: Increasing Awareness and Motivation Can Address the Gender Inequality and Community Mindset Barriers***

When the barriers to participation include gender inequality and community mindset, merely making opportunities available will not succeed. It also requires a change in the mindset of the women to make them confident enough to go out of their homes and engage in income generating activities. The “Mission conducts a lot of awareness classes on the importance of working and independent income” (P-6). The Mission “empowers women through awareness and motivation classes” (P-5). “Through such awareness building Kudumbashree empowers women to overcome all barriers and fears” (P-10). Making aware of the importance of work, motivation through NHG, NHG discussions on the job opportunities, personality development training, and imparting skills training are some the activities cited by the participants as strategies categorized under this subtheme.

***Subtheme 3.4: Changing Community Mindset Can Address Community Mindset***

***Barrier***

Along with changing the mindset of women, it is equally important to bring changes in the mindset of the community toward women’s participation in the labor force. It is difficult for the individual woman to overcome these prejudices on her own. Only with the support and backing of a strong collective like Kudumbashree women can overcome these centuries old prejudices. “It is easier to begin anything collectively than attempting the same individually. We will get more courage and confidence...When everyone decides to do something collectively, it will be more powerful than an individual deciding to do it alone” (P-12). Various measures are undertaken at the NHG and Mission level to bring about a change in the community mindset. “The knowledge



we acquire from Kudumbashree helps women in convincing the men in their family.

With that the men also start seeing the light” (P-10). “We also go and talk to those men who do not allow their wives to go for jobs. We convince them by talking to them” P-6).

“When we go out and participate in good activities and people say great things about such works, the attitude of our family members undergoes a change” (P-11).

“Kudumbashree has succeeded in changing the perception that women are not supposed to go out for job” (F-9). As P-3 stated, “Yes, it (Kudumbashree) has (succeeded in changing society’s negative attitude toward women’s enterprises). That is one of the main objective and achievement of Kudumbashree Mission.”

### ***Subtheme 3.5: Social and Political Empowerment Can Address Gender Inequality***

#### ***Barriers***

Traditionally, women of Kerala did not have a space for public activities. P-9 stated, "Since the beginning we were a patriarchal society, right? It is only recently that calls for gender equality and equal rights for men and women are coming up” (P-9). Even the political activism was by and large limited to men, with only a few notable exceptions. F-5 described the situation as, “the first problem is lack of gender equality.

The gender inequality was too much. Many areas were dominated by men.” To overcome the vicious cycle of gender inequality, the Mission has undertaken to empower women.

Its efforts in this direction have resulted in both social and political empowerment of women. E-1 has expressed the process in following words:

As per the latest data over 58% of the total elected members of local self-government bodies of Kerala are women. Apart from the seats reserved for them

(being 50% of the total seats), women are also contesting and winning common seats at many places. It is also true that mostly our women are learning the basics of public service through NHGs and CDS. Those women who become a chairperson or vice-chairperson in CDS after working in NHGs, ADS, and CDS will surely have a lot of leadership qualities. Making use of those leadership skills acquired through Kudumbashree activities, these women enter active politics and public service. The other side of it is that only women who have social conscience and are already inclined toward public service can go through the stages and reach such positions within the Kudumbashree structure. Only such people can perform and prosper. Those women who are confined to themselves cannot reach such positions.

P-7 shared her experience:

I am also a member of a political party. That membership is a result of my work in Kudumbashree. When we demonstrate our leadership skills in Kudumbashree, political parties approach us and offer their membership. They don't give membership to anyone who is simply sitting at home.

These socially and politically empowered women can collectively challenge and overcome barriers imposed on them by the gender inequality and community mindset factors.

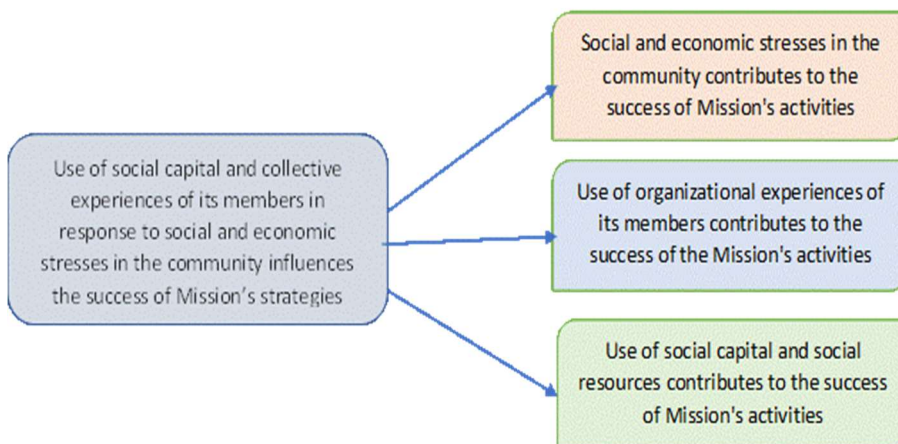
***Subtheme 3.6: Facilitation of Women's Participation in Labor Force Can Reduce Barriers to Participation***

Convincing a woman to enter the labor force is also not enough to make the changes lasting. The gender specific roles and norms are still prevalent, putting additional burden on the working women. For the participation to last, it is imperative that the working women are given support and facilitation, to make it easier for them. The participants reported various measures by the Mission and NHGs to facilitate women's participation in labor force. Easing of domestic responsibilities of providing care to the aged and children by setting up day homes and care centers is one example. Skill development, facilitating micro enterprises through easy loans and marketing of products, and providing rest facilities at the workplace also facilitate participation. Participants cited giving moral support and the backing of a strong collective, exemption from the compulsory attendance of meetings, mutual assistance, and facilitating work-life balance as facilitation measures. P-5 stated, "Whenever we have any problem at home, our enterprise helps us to address it by providing necessary leave and other helps." "NHG as a collective body is providing all the required help. At the parking enterprise also, I get all the help" (P-8). Prompt intervention and protection whenever a woman faces any problem or harassment at her workplace is another measure. "Both Kudumbashree and Keralasree and providing all the necessary support and help to us. Whenever we face any kind of difficulties at the job, they intervene and ensure resolution and protection to us" (P-9). All these strategies of facilitation of work by women are not merely ensuring their continuity in the workplace but encouraging more women to enter the labor force.

The above description of the subthemes showed that a CBE looking to increase women's participation in the labor force should be flexible in designing its strategies. The barriers that prevent women from participation must be ascertained and suitable combinations of multiple strategies deployed to help the women become empowered to overcome those barriers.

**Theme 4: Use of Social Capital and Collective Experiences of Its Members in Response to Social and Economic Stresses in the Community Influences the Success of Mission's Strategies**

In response to set 5 to set 8 questions, consisting of Q2.13 to Q2.17, the participants enumerated various examples of factors that contribute to the success of Kudumbashree's strategies. These responses were analyzed, based on the propositions of the CBE theory relating the determinants of the success of a CBE's outcomes. The objective was to answer the second research question on the role of social capital and collective experiences of the community in the success of Kudumbashree Mission's strategies for creating social value by increasing female participation in the labor force. The analysis of the related data led to the fourth theme, which states that the capitalization of stresses in the community and use of collective experiences and social capital of the members do influence the success of the Mission's strategies. Figure 7 represents that theme and its three subthemes.

**Figure 7***Theme 4 and Its Subthemes*

***Subtheme 4.1: Social and Economic Stresses in the Community Contributes to the Success of Mission's Activities***

Evaluation of the CBE characteristics of the Kudumbashree Mission has already shown that the Mission capitalizes the social and economic stresses within the community. The participants further confirmed that the capitalization of those social and economic stresses influenced the success of the Mission's strategies. The social stress factors described by participants include a rush of traffic and shortage of parking space (P-2), beaches filled with waste (E-2), the growing menace of municipal waste (E-2), poor service by previous parking contractors (P-4, P-8), and unsafe parking and rude behavior (P-10). Adulteration and lack of quality in products and eatables offered in the market (F-3), cheating by sellers (F-6), and overpricing (F-2) were also cited as social stresses capitalized by the Mission. Economic stresses cited included financial losses to

customers due to poor services (F-1), pilferage from the Railway's revenue (F-10), police imposing fines on owners of vehicles left at non-parking areas (P-6), and losses caused by natural calamities (P-5, P-7). The Mission successfully devised solutions to these problems and used those solutions to promote its primary objective of empowering women and increasing their livelihood. This response from P-7 clearly demonstrated the subtheme: "As I mentioned earlier, wherever there is a problem, Kudumbashree is finding willing members from NHGs, giving them required training, and creating an enterprise to provide a solution to that problem."

***Subtheme 4.2: Use of Organizational Experiences of Its Members Contributes to the Success of Mission's Activities***

All participants agreed that the Mission has been successful in making use of the organizational experiences of its members toward ensuring success of its activities. The Mission makes use of the members' experiences for awareness building, for the benefit of other members, and for complementary use with other members. "The prior experiences of these executive members are utilized by the Mission to promote the activities of NHG and to empower the other members" (P-6). The expert participant (E-1) agrees: "I believe the NHGs have an internal mechanism for such utilization. We are often surprised by their proposals for new enterprises, arising out of their personal experiences, and which are beyond our understanding and calculations." F-5 cited a good example for such use. "Some groups may have women who knows excellent preparation of food items... Other women from the group used to accompany her to help her. It was just for joy. However, later we decided to form a catering group." P-4 mentioned her own example. "My

experience gained by working in other organizations is utilized by Kudumbashree for conducting classes at various places. Thus, each member's special skills are utilized for the benefit of entire organization" (P-4). P-5 also stated how her prior experience was used. "When we undertake collective farming my experience in farming is made use of" (P-5).

The experiences of members also motivate other women to become part of the labor force. "We build awareness among such women by motivating them to become an integral part of the society. These things are done primarily by those members of NHG who have prior experience in organizational activities" (P-8). "Kudumbashree and CDS keep track of such experiences among NHG members and make use of it appropriately" (P-10) for furthering its strategies.

***Subtheme 4.3: Use of Social Capital and Social Resources Contributes to the Success of Mission's Activities***

Social capital consists of the societal norms, networks, and structures that regulate human interactions within the society. To ensure success of its activities meant for empowering women the Mission makes use of all the social capital and social resources accessible by it. The participants stressed that social capital, within the context of Kudumbashree mission, is seen as an integral factor of the enterprise objectives, including poverty alleviation and women empowerment in the community. They posited that the enterprise was able to create social value through the organization of various structures, networks, and intervention programs in the community. These interventions and development enable the enterprise to explore women abilities, develop their skill,

improve their mindset about participation in economic activities, and determining domains for their participation. These interventions promote the creation of values for the enterprise and particularly women in the community. E-1 stated:

I believe, the capital of Kudumbashree is primarily the social capital developed through various interventions. One of the recent positive developments is that from being a focused effort of some dedicated people toward women empowerment and poverty alleviation, Kudumbashree Mission has now grown to become a democratic collective of women. Kudumbashree is able to capitalize the opinions and suggestions arising from within the collective, common perspectives built out of such opinions and discussions, and the common possibilities that arising out of such common perspectives. Such a change is now becoming the basis for a new wealth creation culture and manufacturing process.

“Kudumbashree is able to utilize the network for direct marketing, exploring new domains for women’s participation, choosing avenues for the Mission’s interventions, and online marketing” (E-1). Various examples were cited by the participants. “Local organizations like residents associations and family trusts are used for selling and marketing Kudumbashree products” (F-6). “Kudumbashree also associates organizations like palliative care groups for its activities” (F-10). “Kudumbashree Mission is using the networks to create opportunities. It is the Mission that explores and decides as to who should be contacted for particular opportunities and who can be of help in taking it forward” (p-7). “These networks are the ones that help in exploring new job opportunities” (F-4). “Social capital is also utilized for selling the products manufactured



by women's micro enterprises. The social events like festivals and fairs are also utilized for sale of Kudumbashree products" (P-9).

"To make all these developments possible, Kudumbashree utilizes various resources available in society for women's personality development and skills development" (P-1). "Everyone works in collaboration with others, with the aim of benefit for all" (P-3). Government resources (P-9), local self-government bodies (P-5), experts for training and skill development (P-4), influencers for awareness building (P-8), non-members for social activities (P-3) were some of the social resources cited as examples. P-10 stated, "Kudumbashree tries to make use of all such (social) resources. We discuss in the NHG about available resources within the area."

Identifying and incorporating appropriate social resources allows the Mission to reduce any resistance to its activities. However, E-1 pointed out that more can be done toward utilization of social capital and social resources. "Even now there is a stigma. Therefore, the highly brilliant section of the society is not getting attracted to Kudumbashree" (E-1). "As a result, "Kudumbashree is still deprived of the contribution from what we call the top 1% of the society" and "unable to utilize fully all the social resources" (E-1).

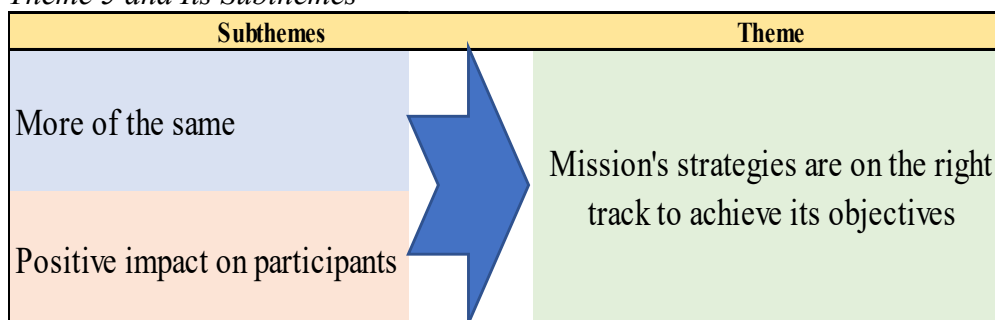
#### **Theme 5: Mission's Strategies are on the Right Track to Achieve Its Objectives**

The last set of questions in the questionnaire explored participants' suggestions for increasing the effectiveness of the Mission's interventions and the impact of Mission membership on their respective lives. Responses supported the theme that the Mission's

activities and strategies are on the right track. The theme and its two subthemes are depicted in Figure 8.

**Figure 8**

*Theme 5 and Its Subthemes*



***Subtheme 5.1: More of the Same***

This subtheme emerged from the participant responses on suggestions for improvement. Most of the responses had the word ‘more’ as the operative. “More awareness programs at the NHG level” (E-2), “more training” (F-5), “explore more job avenues” (F-10), “more day care facilities” (F-8), “explore more domains for women’s participation” (P-1) and “help more women in setting up microenterprises” (P-3) are some of the suggestions confirming the subtheme. “Most important thing is to attract more women to the labor market by beginning more quality enterprises” (P-5). The participants also suggested coverage of more geographic areas, enabling women to work in more domains, continuing the confidence building activities, and creating more ventures.

The only caution came from the expert participant. He suggested that instead of merely doing more of the same, the focus should now shift toward increasing the stability and quality of the jobs being offered to women by the Mission. E-1 stated:

To say the truth, the objectives of Kudumbashree Mission are very good.

However, the remuneration that Kudumbashree members receive from many projects undertaken by Kudumbashree are not even sufficient to cover the legal obligations. In that context, I am afraid Kudumbashree Mission might be being misused.

When the stringent minimum wages regulations make some of the low-quality jobs not attractive enough for the labor market, there is a tendency to push it to Kudumbashree. This is done to circumvent the minimum wages requirements because these women do the job as a part of their own enterprise and not as hired labor. This tendency leads to another form of exploitation and the Mission should try to avoid it.

***Subtheme 5.2: Positive Impact on Participants***

In response to the question about the impact of their joining the Mission on their lives, all the participants stated positive experiences. Overcoming shyness and hesitation (P-8), getting one's innate talents recognized by the society (E-2), best work-life balance (F-7), support and care (F-4), learning a lot including communicating with others (P-2, P-4) were cited as the impacts. Some of the indicative responses were:

Things have changed for the better. Now with a steady income, I am also getting respect and consideration from others in the family. It is not above anyone else,

but at least in par with others. The consideration I am getting from the community too. That is indeed a very big change (P-5)

I was not even going out of my home, much. Even when I go out rarely, my husband used to accompany me. I, who was living thus within the confines of my home, is here and talking to you today only because Kudumbashree made it all possible (P-8).

P-11 stated, “my family is saved from poverty, and we are able to eat properly only because of this job I got through Kudumbashree.” P-12 agreed, “It has helped me a lot, financially. Now family is faring quite well.” P-10 turned emotional at the very question. “Don’t you think Kudumbashree is the greatest thing in my life? That is all that I have to say (*turning emotional*)” (P-10). Triangulating the responses from the beneficiaries, the expert participant also stated, “There are so many such instances (of women who became a part of the formal economy through Kudumbashree growing to becoming successful entrepreneurs). There are groups that have grown beyond what we all could perceive” (E-1). The efforts of Keralashree and its leadership received appropriate recognition. “In the year 2017 Keralasree was elected as the best micro enterprise of Kudumbashree. I view all these achievements as great opportunities in my life. I could help about 850 women by finding suitable jobs for them” (E-2).

### **Feedback on the Interview**

The last question of the interview sought the participants’ feedback on the interview and suggestions for improvement. There was only one suggestion- to study the role of Village Councils in empowering the women of Kerala. Many participants

expressed hopes that the findings from this study will become useful for their sisters under similar circumstances elsewhere in the world. P-10 captured this sentiment well. “Let all women get the benefit of this study. Many women like me, not just in Kerala but across the world, are living their life without even basic necessities” (P-10). Others expressed satisfaction on the process and coverage of interview.

### **Summary**

This chapter contained the research setting, selection of the case, recruitment process and demographics of the participants, and the process used for data collection, including validation of the researcher-developed questionnaire. The chapter also included an account of the data analysis process, along with the details of various codes, categories, and themes generated. A detailed description of the results of the study followed. The inductive analysis of the data collected from the interview of participants and the focus group discussion was informed by the descriptive theory, the conceptual framework, and research questions. The analysis brought out five themes that helped in answering the research questions as depicted in Table 13. The chapter also contained a description of the steps adopted for ensuring trustworthiness of the study and its findings.

**Table 13***Summary of Themes Corresponding to the Research Questions*

Research Questions	Realated themes emerged during data analysis
RQ1. What are the strategies formulated and implemented by Kudumbashree Mission for successfully empowering women to become active participants in their local labor force?	1. Kudumbashree Mission has the characteristics of a CBE
	2. Barriers to women's labor force particiaption are many and varied
	3. Different combinations of different strategies are required to address different barriers
	5. Mission's strategies are on the right track to achieve its objectives
	4. Use of social capital and collective experinces of its members in response to social and economic stresses within the community influences the success of Kudumbashree Mission's strategies
RQ2. How do the social capital and collective experiences of the community influence the success of Kudumbashree Mission's strategies for creating social value by increasing female participation in the labor force?	

The following chapter, Chapter 5, contains an interpretation of the findings of this study, expressed in terms of five themes, in the light of the review of literature presented in Chapter 3. Chapter 5 also includes a description of how the findings of this study contribute to the existing literature and addresses the identified gap in the literature. Limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and implications of the findings for positive social change and management practice are the other sections in Chapter 5.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to identify the strategies adopted by a CBE for successfully integrating its women members with the local labor force, by empowering them to overcome various barriers that prevented their participation. A secondary purpose was to understand how the use of social capital and collective experiences of its members contributed to the success of the CBE's strategies. The CBE that I selected for this study was Kudumbashree Mission, a collective of over 4.5 million women from Kerala, India. The nature of the study was qualitative, and the methodology, descriptive single case study. The CBE theory developed by Peredo and Chrisman (2006) was the descriptive theory.

I subjected the data collected through semistructured interviews and focus group discussion to inductive analysis. The analysis led to emergence of following five main themes:

- Theme 1: Kudumbashree Mission has the characteristics of a CBE.
- Theme 2: Barriers to women's labor force participation are many and varied.
- Theme 3: Different combinations of different strategies are required to address different barriers.
- Theme 4: Use of social capital and collective experiences of its members in response to social and economic stresses in the community influences the success of Mission's strategies.
- Theme 5: Mission's strategies are on the right track to achieve its objectives.

The five themes, along with their subthemes constitute the basis for the interpretation of this study's findings presented in the following sections of this chapter. Table 14 contains the answers to the research questions, which emerged through the interpretation of the themes and subthemes. The remaining sections of this chapter include the limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and the implications for social change, theory, and practice.

**Table 14**

*Summary of the Answers to Research Questions*

Research Questions	Answers to research questions
RQ1. What are the strategies formulated and implemented by Kudumbashree Mission for successfully empowering women to become active participants in their local labor force?	Strategies of Kudumbashree Mission are flexible, comprehensive, varied, and depending on the situation and types of barriers existing in each case
	Focus is on the overall social, political, and economic empowerment of women
	The approach is to empower women to overcome all the barriers, rather than merely arranging jobs or providing capital support for them
	The role of emotional and moral support provided by a large and respected organization like Kudumbashree Mission plays an important role in the empowerment of women
RQ2. How do the social capital and collective experiences of the community influence the success of Kudumbashree Mission's strategies for creating social value by increasing female participation in the labor force?	There are focused efforts to change the community mindset toward women's participation in public affairs and labor force
	CBE can be an effective tool for women's empowerment, including participation in the labor force, provided their strategies and activities are formulated with the objective of capitalizing social and economic stresses within the community by making use of the social capital, collective experiences, and other resources existing in the community



### **Interpretation of Findings**

In this section, I connect the findings from the study to the existing body of knowledge represented by the literature reviewed at Chapter 2. How the findings from this study are confirming, disconfirming, or extending the knowledge related to CBEs, women's participation in labor market, gender inequality, and strategies for integrating women with the formal economy form part of this section. The central research questions for this study were:

RQ1. What are the strategies formulated and implemented by Kudumbashree Mission for successfully empowering women to become active participants in their local labor force?

RQ2. How do the social capital and collective experiences of the community influence the success of Kudumbashree Mission's strategies for creating social value by increasing female participation in the labor force?

I carried out the interpretation of the findings from the study, within the scope of the descriptive theory and conceptual framework. This section is organized along the main themes.

#### **Kudumbashree Mission has the Characteristics of a CBE**

While formulating the central research questions and selecting Kudumbashree Mission as the case, I had assumed based on the existing literature that the Mission is a CBE. Therefore, it was necessary to test this assumption against the perceptions of the participants who were the beneficiaries or experts of the Mission. The first theme that emerged from the data analysis confirmed the assumption. The CBE theory by Peredo

and Chrisman (2006) included various propositions relating to the characteristics, outcomes, and determinants of the success of the CBE. The participants' responses, as represented by the categories and subthemes showed that the Mission shared all the attributes of a CBE as listed under CBE theory. From the responses it emerged that the Mission has multiple social and economic goals for both its women members and the community. The Mission's activities were also varied, corresponding to its multiple goals. The objective of the Mission is to alleviate poverty, but it is not a charitable organization. All its activities are carried out with an enterprise model and for-profit orientation. The participants felt that the community's involvement and support were critical for the success of the Mission's activities. The Mission's activities resulted in outcomes that are consistent with the outcomes of a CBE. Participants enumerated examples of the Mission capitalizing on opportunities triggered by community's social and economic stresses, using social capital and collective experiences of its members, utilizing skills available within the community, and facilitating the community's economic and social development. The activities of the Mission also resulted in the increased acceptance of women's individual entrepreneurship in the community. Reading all the responses and emerging subthemes and theme established that Kudumbashree Mission is a CBE within the meaning of CBE theory formulated by Peredo and Chrisman (2006). The finding that Kudumbashree has the characteristics of a CBE engaged in facilitating women empowerment is in line with the current literature on CBEs (Ahmad & Amry, 2020). However, the CBE characteristics of Kudumbashree have not been subjected to any study as is evident from the absence of any literature thereon.

### **Barriers to Women's Labor Force Participation are Many and Varied**

The literature that I reviewed in Chapter 2 showed that the barriers to women's participation in the labor force is not merely a matter of economic development and increase in the number of available jobs (Erinc, 2017; Jayachandran, 2015; Carmona & Donald, 2014; Chopra & Sweetman, 2014). Even when the number of available jobs increase, there are various cultural, social, and gender related barriers that prevent women from integrating with the formal economy (Alechhi, 2020; Balayar & Mazur, 2022; Kazemikhasragh et al., 2022; Okolie et al., 2021). Even the political system prevalent in a country is found to be affecting the rate of female participation in the labor force (Bayanpourtehrani & Sylwester, 2013; Jabareen, 2015). The findings from the current study reinforce the existing literature. The responses from the participants of this study showed that the barriers to women's participation with the labor force of Kerala are varied and many. Lack of community support, negative mindset of community, family, and spouse, persisting gender inequality in domestic responsibilities, lack of education or skills, non-availability of quality jobs, and lack of access to capital are the subthemes that emerged as main barriers. Unless all these barriers are addressed comprehensively, any effort to increase female participation in labor force is not likely to succeed.

### **Different Combinations of Different Strategies are Required to Address the Barriers**

The strategies adopted by Kudumbashree Mission to enable its members to become an integral part of the formal economy and labor force are also varied. Subthemes emerging from the participant responses help in answering the first central research question of the study, RQ1. Various strategies being adopted by the Mission can

be grouped into three. The first group includes arranging access to capital, arranging jobs and microenterprises, and facilitating women's participation through provision of support services. The second group includes strategies for altering the community mindset toward women's participation in labor force. The third group includes those strategies for empowering individual woman to overcome the barriers. Individual empowerment takes place through awareness and motivation building activities, and social and political empowerment. Women are empowered economically through thrift funds and subsidized loans. Social empowerment is achieved through collective strength and mutual support through NHGs and the Mission. Political empowerment happens through the organizational activities of women at different tiers of the Mission and by collective participation in Village Councils and municipal administration. This empowerment leads to many women becoming active in politics and getting elected as peoples' representatives. A combined reading of the subthemes and responses shows that the Mission is successful in increasing participation of women in the labor force because of the combination of economic, social, and political empowerment strategies aimed at addressing various barriers. This finding is in consonance with the reviewed literature (Balayar & Mazur, 2022; ILO, 2015; Perrons, 2015; Ridgeway, 2013).

### **Use of Social Capital and Collective Experiences of Its Members in Response to Social and Economic Stresses in the Community Influences the Success of Mission's Strategies**

As per the propositions of the CBE theory, social and economic stresses affecting the community, collective operations experiences of the members, and social capital and

social resources vested in the community are the three determinants of the success of a CBE (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006). The inductive analysis of the participant responses of this study led to emergence of subthemes that supported the propositions of CBE theory. Participants cited various examples to show how the Mission capitalized on the social and economic stresses within the community. As P-7 stated, “wherever there is a problem, Kudumbashree is finding willing members from NHGs, giving them required training, and creating an enterprise to provide a solution to that problem.”

The participant responses showed that the Mission is making use of the social capital and collective experiences of its members for ensuring success of its strategies. Building awareness among women, generating new ideas for micro enterprises, sourcing new job avenues, motivating other women, and providing skills training to other women are some of the areas where the collective experiences of the members were made use of. For creating social value through empowerment of women against various barriers, the Mission is also making use of various structures, networks, and intervention programs in the wider community. These networks and resources are what help the Mission to generate job opportunities and to ensure markets for the products of its microenterprises. As E-1 stated, “the capital of Kudumbashree is primarily the social capital developed through various interventions.” Thus, the theme on capitalizing the community stresses and community resources for ensuring the success of its activities toward social value creation is also an affirmation of the CBE theory and its value for women empowerment.

### **Mission's Strategies are on the Right Track to Achieve Its Objectives**

The questionnaire for this study also included some general questions to ascertain the views of participants about increasing the effectiveness of Mission's strategies. Most of the responses suggested doing more of the same activities being undertaken now. The main suggestions included covering more women, covering more geographic areas, creating more facilities for working women, providing more skills training, generating more job avenues, and providing more awareness and motivation. The only deviant suggestion came from the expert participant on the need for ensuring that the Mission and its activities are not misused to circumvent minimum wage laws and the need for ensuring better quality in jobs and earnings for the women. All the participants shared positive feedback on the impact that the Mission had made in their respective lives. These feedbacks can be interpreted as indications of the success of Kudumbashree Mission's strategies for empowering and providing livelihood for its women members. This finding is in line with the existing literature dealing with the activities of Kudumbashree Mission (Babu & Jose, 2020; Malcom & Bandari, 2021; Parvathy & Kumar, 2022; Sharma & Kumar, 2021).

### **Summary of the Interpretation**

The above discussion on the interpretation of five themes can be summarized as follows. Kudumbashree Mission is a CBE within the meaning of the CBE theory. The CBE strategies being adopted by the Mission has been successful in empowering women against various barriers that prevented them from participating in the labor force. The strategies of the Mission are flexible, comprehensive, varied, and depending on the

situations and the kind of barriers existing in each case. The focus is on the overall social, political, and economic empowerment of women. The approach is to empower the women to overcome all the barriers, rather than merely arranging jobs or providing capital support for them. The role of emotional and moral support provided by a large and respected organization like Kudumbashree Mission also plays an important role in the empowerment of women. Together with the empowerment of women, there are also focused efforts to change the community mindset toward women's participation in public affairs and labor force. Active involvement of the Mission and NHGs in various activities, including the Village Council participation, aimed at community development, is helping in bringing a change in the community mindset. The success of Kudumbashree Mission shows that CBEs can be an effective tool for increasing the women's participation in the labor force, provided their strategies and activities are formulated with the objective of capitalizing social and economic stresses within the community by making use of the social capital, collective experiences, social networks, and other resources existing in the community. These findings are in consonance with the existing literature reviewed in Chapter 2 (Badaruddin et al., 2021; Kumar, 2019; Okolie et al., 2021; Suriyankietkaew et al., 2022) and affirm the CBE theory by Peredo and Chrisman (2006).

### **Limitations of the Study**

A critical limitation of the findings from this study is related to the research design itself. As Yin (2014) stated, one can only make analytical generalizations from the findings of a descriptive case study. The main purpose of the study was to describe the

CBE strategies adopted by Kudumbashree Mission for increasing the female participation in the labor force. The success of the strategies adopted by the Mission might have been dependent upon various contextual factors related to the society in which the Mission is functioning. Therefore, the findings from this study may not be generalized to all other communities and organizations engaged in increasing female participation in the labor force. Another limitation of this study is the selection process of the unit of analysis. The selection criterion was successful operation for at least five years, to meet the purpose of this study. Therefore, all the units and NHGs of the Mission that failed to make significant difference to the labor force participation rate of their members were excluded from the selection.

The study was also susceptible to the usual limitations associated with qualitative studies. A researcher-developed questionnaire was used for data collection. I, as the researcher, acted as the instrument of data collection, did the analysis of collected data, and interpreted the findings. Possibilities of researcher biases in the collection and interpretation of data places a limitation on the trustworthiness of this study, even though I had adopted all possible precautions mentioned in chapter 3 to avoid such biases. I sought to overcome these limitations by adopting a thick description of the case and backing all the findings with verbatim responses from the participants, so that the readers and reviewers can easily judge the trustworthiness of all assertions made in this study.

### **Recommendations**

The primary objective of this study was to address a gap identified in the literature on the appropriate strategies and models for helping women overcome gender inequality



and marginalization (Fotheringham & Saunders, 2014). Although the CBE model is noted as a potential tool for women's empowerment, it did not receive adequate attention in academic literature (Pierre et al., 2014b; Valchovska & Watts, 2016). The findings from this study are addressing the gap by describing the strategies adopted by a successful CBE for empowering a significant number of women to become part of the labor force. However, the very nature and design of the study placed limitations on the replicability of the findings. The recommendations for further research mostly stem from the limitations of this study and are detailed in this section.

The impact on the utility of empirical studies on women's labor force participation from the absence of uniformity in the measurement of gender inequality indicators, a possibility of selection effects, and sensitivity to the measurement of gender inequality noted by Cuberes and Teignier (2014) applied to this study as well. The barriers to women's participation being different for different persons and communities, more studies are required to find out what works and what does not work in empowering women. Even for a successful CBE like Kudumbashree Mission, there are a lot of cases where NHGs failed to make any impact on their members' participation in labor force. Therefore, the first recommendation is to conduct more case studies on NHGs that have failed to make any significant impact. Knowing what they are not doing right will complete the other side of the story on women's empowerment by Kudumbashree Mission.

Findings from this study were useful in validating the CBE theory by Peredo and Chrisman (2004). Various themes emerged from the study showed how the CBE theory

and its propositions can describe the strategies of a successful CBE working in the field of women empowerment. More empirical studies involving organizations engaged in similar activities can further validate the theory and the model for the benefit of practitioners engaged in women empowerment.

The findings from this study showed various social, economic, and political barriers that prevent women from participating in the labor force. A quantitative study, using survey method, will help in understanding the prevalence and relative gravity of these barriers on a larger community. Knowing the barriers will help in devising suitable combinations of strategies to empower women.

Owing to the limitations of the study design and the time limits permitted by the IRB, I did not attempt to contact the participants or the organization, to understand the subsequent developments including the impact of COVID-19 pandemic, if any, on the CBE and its beneficiaries. A longitudinal study using the same participants or similar cases could lead to more insights on the effectiveness of the strategies for women empowerment. The longer-term impact of the strategies on the CBEs and individual women beneficiaries will provide more information about the efficacy of the empowerment process. E-1's statement "There are so many such instances (of women who became a part of the formal economy through Kudumbashree growing to becoming successful entrepreneurs)" points to a desirable outcome of a successful empowerment strategy. Such strategies should allow the women to grow beyond the CBE and become independent entrepreneurs.

A word of caution that came up from the participants is the need to avoid any potential misuse of the Mission and its CBE strategy to circumvent labor laws related to minimum wages, leading to exploitation of women. E-1 stated, “the remuneration that Kudumbashree members receive from many projects undertaken by Kudumbashree are not even sufficient to cover the legal obligations.” A study involving survey of a larger sample of Kudumbashree beneficiaries could establish the prevalence of this problem and possible preventive measures. Such a study can also look at possible measures that can be adopted toward taking the women’s participation in labor force from the basic livelihood level to further enhancement of quality of participation and quality of life for the participants. E-1 had stated, “it is doubtful whether the jobs being offered by Kudumbashree are dependable for a steady income, beyond helping the beneficiaries for their basic survival.”

One of the participants of this study indicated the role of Village Councils (Gramasabhas), under the decentralized, three-tier local self-government system, in empowering the women socially and politically. While giving her feedback on this study P-7 stated, “One omission that I can think of is the role of Gramasabha. Today, for a community to advance, firstly it is the NHGs and secondly the Gramasabha.” More qualitative studies on the role of Village Councils in empowering women might also provide more insights into possible strategies for women empowerment, leading to their active participation in the labor force.

## **Implications**

This section contains a description of the positive contributions to social changes at various levels expected from the findings of this study. The section also contains expected implications for the theory and practice.

### **Implications for Positive Social Change**

The literature reviewed in chapter 2 established the importance of ensuring increased female labor force participation. The female labor force participation is not merely an economic issue. Apart from the substantial implications for the national economy of concerned countries (Cuberes & Teignier, 2014; McKinsey Global Institute, 2016), denial of opportunity to women has implications at social, political, and human rights level as well. Hence, the thick description provided in this study of a set of successful strategies that ensured increased participation of women in labor force will have implication at the individual, family, and community levels. Recognition and adoption of successful strategies leading to increased participation of women in the labor force will empower individual women, enhance the quality of life of the families, and the economic and social stature of community. There are also implications at the organizational level, as an increased gender equality at workplace leads to enhancement in organizational productivity (World Bank, 2012).

CBE theory proposed and this study confirmed the role of community in the success of CBE strategies for social value creation. CBE strategies capitalize social and economic stresses existing or arising within the local community. CBEs create solutions for such stresses through their community oriented and profit-oriented operations. In this

process of creating solutions, CBEs make use of the organizational experiences and individual skills of their members and the social capital and social resources existing within the larger community. Hence, the community acts as both a contributor and beneficiary of the CBE's activities. Such a two-way interaction also makes changes in the negative attitude of the community toward women's public roles. Hence, adopting CBE strategies for women empowerment has substantial implication for positive social change at the community level.

### **Implications for Theory**

CBE theory proposed by Peredo and Chrisman (2006) has not received adequate attention from the academic community (Pierre et al., 2014b; Valchovska & Watts, 2016). There was a gap in the literature on how much the propositions of CBE theory are realized in practice in creating social value (Sovianna, 2015). The findings of this study provide substantial validation of the CBE theory. All the propositions of the theory were found applicable to the strategies adopted by the Kudumbashree Mission. This finding has the implication of contributing to further development of CBE theory and enhancing its value, as a useful framework for the researchers and practitioners engaged in studying or developing appropriate models and strategies for increasing female labor force participation.

The findings of this study also have implications for the growth of the literature related to gender equality, women empowerment, and female labor force participation. Identifications of various barriers that prevent women from integrating with the formal

economy and strategies that helped in successfully empowering women against those barriers add value to the literature on gender equality and related concepts.

### **Implications for Practice**

The findings of a descriptive case study of one organization may not have universal acceptability among other organizations or communities, owing to the unique nature of the barriers existing in different communities. However, there are significant insights from this study, to be used elsewhere by the practitioners. At the individual level, the findings from this study indicate the need for comprehensive empowerment and not mere financial support or provision of jobs for women. Women are fighting against several complex barriers that prevent their participation. To help these women to overcome the barriers, they must also be socially and politically empowered. Practitioners and program managers engaged in poverty alleviation and livelihood generation need to keep this requirement in view while designing programs for different communities and regions.

The findings of this study have significant implications for the state of Kerala and India as a whole. The female labor force participation is very low in India and Kerala, in comparison with other economies (Strachan et al., 2015). The barriers of community mindset, including negative perceptions of the family and spouse, are to be addressed if female participation in labor force must be accelerated. The finding that the collective strength and support of a large organization like Kudumbashree help women in overcoming the barriers is significant in combating community mindset related barriers. Those women who are stepping out of their homes for the first time must feel confident

that there is a powerful collective body to protect and support them under all circumstances. It includes ensuring timely interventions by all authorities concerned. At the same time, awareness building activities are also to be undertaken for bringing changes in the community's mindset. The negative perceptions due to social and religious taboos should be combated and people in general made aware of the benefits of integrating women with the labor force.

Facilitating the participation of women by increasing supports like daycare centers for children and the aged, the flexible and convenient working hours, adequate resting and convenience facilities is another suggestion that can be adopted by the practitioners from the findings of this study. The gender roles of women with respect to domestic chores and childcare are a social reality that will take time to change. In the meanwhile, providing physical facilities and moral and emotional support to those women who are already a part of the labor force will motivate other women also to balance their roles and participate in formal economy.

The specific management problem addressed by this study was that despite the attention and deployment of a significant level of capital from global sources for improving the status of women, the economic marginalization of women continues to persist (Grown & Gooptu, 2015; Klugman et al., 2014; Knife et al., 2014; Torri & Martinez, 2011). Peredo and Chrisman (2006) had identified the reason for the failure of such efforts as not adapting the needs of the specific socio-economic environment. The findings of this study substantiate the view of Peredo and Chrisman. Committing capital addresses only one of the barriers. It does nothing to address many other barriers that are

equally preventing women from participating. So, one of the implications for practitioners engaged in reducing economic marginalization of women is to approach the problem as one that require overall empowerment of women.

The findings of this study also can be beneficial to the leaders of Kudumbashree Mission. While making the NHGs more inclusive and entering more and more domains for job creations, the Mission must ensure that its CBEs are not reduced to a tool of exploitation of the women. Fair compensation that meets the legal requirements of minimum wages and is adequate to ensure an acceptable level of quality of life needs to be made an integral part of planning. Not just the number of beneficiaries, but the quality of the jobs being undertaken by the women must also be ensured so that the participation is sustained in the long-term.

### **Conclusions**

Gender inequality in the labor force causes economic, political, and social problems within the community. Merely increasing the number of jobs available will not solve the problem. The barriers that prevent women's participation are multifarious and community specific. Therefore, any attempt at increasing female labor force participation requires comprehensive strategies to adequately address all the relevant barriers. Women need to be empowered socially, politically, and economically to enable them to overcome all the barriers.

A community, with its negative perceptions toward women's working can be a significant barrier. The same community needs to be converted and coopted, if the interventions to increase female labor force participation are to succeed. CBE strategies,



with the emphasis on the role of community as both a facilitator and beneficiary of CBE's activities can be effective in achieving a turnaround in the community mindset. The findings from this study confirmed the applicability and suitability of CBE strategies to increase the female labor force participation. The thick description of the strategies and outcomes of Kudumbashree Mission provided by this descriptive case study will help the academics and practitioners in understanding various barriers existing in a society and devising suitable strategies to empower women to overcome those barriers.

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## Appendix A: Questions for Semistructured Interview

Each participant of the semistructured interviews will sign an informed consent letter, before participating in the interview. The consent letter will contain introduction and description of the study and terms for the participation, including the right of participants to withdraw at any stage of the study or interview. The consent letter will also seek demographic information about the participants, including the name, sex, age, and educational qualifications. The interviews will be guided by the following questions:

### **Set 1: Characteristics of Kudumbashree Mission**

Q1.1. How do you describe the activities of Kudumbashree Mission and your enterprise?

Q1.2. (a) What is your opinion about the community participation in Kudumbashree Mission? (b) How is the community involvement helping your enterprise?

Q1.3. How does your enterprise make use of various skills available within the community?

Q1.4. What are the various goals of Kudumbashree Mission in general, and your enterprise in particular?

### **Set 2: Barriers to Women's Labor force Participation**

Q1.5. Did you engage in any remunerative work outside your home, before becoming a part of your Kudumbashree enterprise? If yes, give details.

Q1.6. What are the barriers that prevent women in your community from participating in the labor force by taking up remunerative work outside their homes?

### **Set 3: Strategies to Empower Women, for overcoming the Barriers**



Q1.7. How do you think Kudumbashree Mission is helping women in overcoming each of those barriers that prevent them from participating in the labor force?

Q1.8. (a) What are the various measures instituted by Kudumbashree Mission to facilitate women's participation in work?

(b) What are the various measures instituted by your enterprise, to facilitate your participation in work?

**Set 4: Alignment with a Community-based Enterprise**

Q1.9. How is your enterprise helping in addressing any social or economic problem or need of your community?

Q1.10. (a) How is your enterprise contributing to the social or economic development of the community?

(b) How is the Kudumbashree Mission contributing to the social or economic development of the community?

Q1.11. How does the Kudumbashree Mission make use of the skills and experiences of the larger community, to promote your enterprise?

Q1.12. What is the effect of Kudumbashree Mission's activities on the society's attitude toward women's enterprises?

**Set 5: Determinants CBE's success**

Q2.13. Please describe any social stresses that affect your community adversely, but contribute to your enterprise's activities.

Q2.14. Please describe any economic stresses that affect your community adversely, but contribute to your enterprise's activities.

**Set 6: Collective Organizational Experiences**

Q2.15. How does the Kudumbashree Mission make use of organizational experiences of the members of community, for promoting its activities?

**Set 7: Social Capital and Social Resources**

Q2.16. How does the Kudumbashree Mission make use of the social capital for ensuring success in increasing female labor force participation? The term social capital means the societal norms, networks, and structures that regulate human interactions within the society.

Q2.17. What are the social resources utilized by the Kudumbashree Mission to promote women's enterprises and participation in the labor force?

**Set 8: General**

G.18. What do you think the Kudumbashree Mission should be doing to encourage more women participating in the labor force?

G19. Please state anything that you may like to share regarding the changes in your life due to participating in Kudumbashree Mission.

G20. Do you have any questions about this study, or any suggestions to improve this interview?

## Appendix B: Proposition Map

Descriptive Theory	Propositions	Research Question	Data Collection and Analysis
<p>Theory of Community-Based Enterprises (CBE) (Peredo &amp; Chrisman, 2006)</p>	<p><b>Characteristics of CBEs are:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Dependence on community participation</li> <li>2. Reliance on the skills available in the community</li> <li>3. Multiplicity of social and economic goals</li> </ol> <p><b>Outcomes of CBEs are:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Allows capitalizing community's rich social capital and collective experiences</li> <li>2. Capitalize opportunities triggered by social or economic stress</li> <li>3. Facilitate both economic and social development of the community</li> <li>4. Increased acceptance of individual entrepreneurship in the community</li> </ol>	<p>Q1. What are the strategies formulated and implemented by Kudumbashree Mission for successfully empowering women to become active participants in their local labor force?</p>	<p>Data to be collected through semistructured interviews and focus group deliberations of beneficiary women, Mission officials, and local government authorities. Additional data from documents sourced from the Mission, NHGs, and local authorities, for triangulation.</p> <p>Collected data to be analyzed for identifying themes, patterns, and framework that might explain the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Characteristics of Kudumbashree Mission</li> <li>-Barriers that prevent women of Kerala from participating in the labor force</li> <li>-Strategies employed by the Mission to empower its beneficiary women, to overcome those barriers; and</li> <li>-Alignment of the strategies adopted by the Mission align with the outcomes of a CBE</li> </ul>

Descriptive Theory	Propositions	Research Question	Data Collection and Analysis
<p>Theory of Community-Based Enterprises (CBE) (Peredo &amp; Chrisman, 2006)</p>	<p><b>Determinants of the success of CBEs are:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Social or economic stresses affecting the community</li> <li>2. Collective organizational experiences of the community members</li> <li>3. Social capital and social resources vested in the community</li> </ol>	<p><b>Q2.</b> How did the social capital and collective experiences of the community influence the success of Kudumbashree Mission?</p>	<p>Data to be collected through semistructured interviews and focus group deliberations of beneficiary women, Mission officials, and local government authorities. Additional data from documents sourced from the Mission, Neighborhood Groups (NHGs), and local authorities, for triangulation.</p> <p>Collected data to be analyzed for identifying themes, patterns, and frameworks that might explain the determinants of Kudumbashree Mission's success in empowering its women beneficiaries. to overcome barriers to their participation in the labor force, by answering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How did the social and economic stresses affecting the community influence an NHG's activities and success?</li> <li>- How does the Kudumbashree Mission make use of the collective organizational experiences of its members, for empowering women?</li> <li>- How does the Kudumbashree Mission make use of the social capital for ensuring success in increasing female labor force participation?</li> </ul>

## Appendix C: Field Test Request Letter

Date

Hello,

I am Deepak Chandran, a doctoral student pursuing a PhD degree in Management at Walden University. For my doctoral dissertation, I am employing a descriptive case study research design. The purpose of my study is to identify the strategies formulated and implemented by a selected community-based enterprise for successfully empowering women to become active participants in their local labor force. A secondary purpose of this study is to understand how the social capital and collective experiences of the members of this community-based enterprise influence the success of its strategies for creating social value through increased participation of women in the labor force.

The selected community-based enterprise for my study is the State Poverty Eradication Mission (commonly known as the Kudumbashree Mission) of Kerala, a state in India. The targeted population for my study is the women members of selected units of Kudumbashree Mission.

I am seeking your support for providing feedback as to the appropriateness of the questions being asked of the study participants, and how the questions are being asked in relation to the purpose of the study.

Below are the research questions (noted as RQ1 and RQ2) and the corresponding open-ended, semistructured interview questions and focus group questions I will be asking my participants.

RQ1. What are the strategies formulated and implemented by Kudumbashree Mission for successfully empowering women to become active participants in their local labor force?

RQ2. How did the social capital and collective experiences of the community influence the success of Kudumbashree Mission?

For your review, the primary research questions and the corresponding questions on the interview questionnaire are attached as Annexure to this Letter.

After reviewing the research questions, and the questions for the questionnaire, please respond to these four field test questions:

1. Based upon the purpose of the study and research questions, are the questions on the questionnaire likely to generate information to answer the research question?

2. Are the participants likely to find any of the questions on the questionnaire (the nature of the question or specific wording) objectionable? If so, why? What changes would you recommend?

3. Were any of the questions on the questionnaire difficult to comprehend? If so, why? What changes would you recommend?

4. Feel free to provide any additional thoughts about the questionnaire, which were not covered in questions 1 through 3, above.

Should you choose to participate in this field test, please do not answer the interview questions intended for the study participants.

Thank you in advance for your time.

Respectfully,

Deepak Chandran  
Email address  
Phone number

Annexure  
to the Field Test Request letter dated.....

#### Field Test Questionnaire

Research/ Interview Question	Q1. Based upon the purpose of the study and research questions, are these questions likely to generate information to answer the research question?	Q2. Are the participants likely to find any of these questions (the nature of the question or specific wording) objectionable? If so, why? What changes would you recommend?	Q3. Is any of these questions difficult to comprehend? If so, why? What changes would you recommend?	Q4. Feel free to provide any additional thoughts about the questions, which were not covered in Field Test questions Q 1 through Q 3.
<b>RQ1. What are the strategies formulated and implemented by Kudumbashree Mission for successfully empowering women to become active participants in their local labor force?</b>				
Q1.1. How will you describe the activities of Kudumbashree Mission and your enterprise?				
Q1.2. What is your opinion about the community				

participation in Kudumbashree Mission? How is the community involvement helping your enterprise?				
Q1.3. How does your enterprise make use of various skills available within the community?				
Q1.4. What are the various goals of Kudumbashree Mission in general, and your enterprise in particular?				
Q1.5. Did you engage in any remunerative work outside your home, before becoming a part of your Kudumbashree enterprise? If yes, give details.				
Q1.6. What are the barriers that prevent women in your community from participating in the labor force by taking up remunerative work outside their homes?				
Q1.7. How do you think Kudumbashree Mission is helping women in overcoming each of those barriers that prevent them from participating in the labor force?				
Q1.8. What are the various measures instituted by Kudumbashree Mission and your enterprise, to facilitate your participation in work?				
Q1.9. How does your enterprise help in addressing any social or economic need of your community?				
Q1.10. How is your enterprise or Kudumbashree Mission contributing to the social or economic development of the community?				
Q1.11. How does the Kudumbashree Mission make use of the skills and experiences of the larger community, to promote your enterprise?				
Q1.12. What is the effect of Kudumbashree Mission's activities on the society's				

attitude toward women's enterprises?				
<b>Q2. How did the social capital and collective experiences of the community influence the success of Kudumbashree Mission?</b>				
Q2.13. What are the social stresses that affect your community, but contributed to your enterprise's activities?				
Q2.14. What are economic stresses that affect your community, but contributed to your enterprise's activities?				
Q2.15. How does the Kudumbashree Mission make use of organizational experiences of the members of community, for promoting its activities?				
Q2.16. How does the Kudumbashree Mission make use of the social capital for ensuring success in increasing female labor force participation?				
Q2.17. What are the social resources utilized by the Kudumbashree Mission to promote women's enterprises and participation in the labor force?				
<b>General Questions</b>				
G.18. What do you think the Kudumbashree Mission should be doing to encourage more women participating in the labor force?				
G19. Please state anything that you may like to add, on the changes brought in your life by your participation in Kudumbashree Mission				
G20. Do you have any questions about this study, or any suggestions to improve this interview?				



## Appendix D: Code Book of Pre-Codes for Data Saturation Check

<b>Sl. No.</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Brief Description</b>	<b>Related Theoretic Proposition Based on the Theory of Community-Based Enterprises and Conceptual Framework for the study</b>
1	Description	To indicate how the participants describe Kudumbashree Mission	General feedback
2	Community involvement	To indicate dependence of the enterprise on community participation.	Dependence on community participation is a characteristic of a Community-Based Enterprise (CBE).
3	Community skill	To indicate reliance of the enterprise on skills available within the community	Reliance on the skills available in the community is a characteristic of a CBE.
4	Social goals	To indicate multiplicity of social goals of the enterprise	Multiplicity of social goals is a characteristic of a CBE.
5	Economic goals	To indicate multiplicity of economic goals of the enterprise	Multiplicity of economic goals is a characteristic of a CBE.
6	Social capital	To indicate capitalizing of community's social capital by the enterprise. Social capital shall mean the societal norms, networks, and structures that regulate human interactions within the society	Capitalizing community's rich social capital is an outcome of a CBE.
7	Collective experiences	To indicate capitalizing of community's collective experiences by the enterprise.	Capitalizing the community's collective experiences is an outcome of a CBE.
8	Capitalizing stress	To indicate capitalization of opportunities triggered by social or economic stress existing in the community by the enterprise.	Capitalizing the opportunities triggered by social or economic stress is an outcome of a CBE.
9	Community development	To indicate facilitation of economic and social development of the community by the enterprise	Facilitating the economic and social development of the community is an outcome of a CBE
10	Acceptance	To indicate increased acceptance of individual entrepreneurship in the community	Generating increased acceptance of individual entrepreneurship in the community is an outcome of a CBE.

Cont'd..

<b>Sl. No.</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Brief Description</b>	<b>Related Theoretic Proposition Based on the Theory of Community-Based Enterprises and Conceptual Framework for the study</b>
11	Success factors	To indicate various stresses, experiences, capital, and resources at both organizational and community level that contributed to the success of the enterprise.	Determinants of the success of a CBE are: a. Social or economic stresses affecting the community. b. Collective organizational experiences of the community members. Social capital and social resources vested in the community
12	Barriers	To indicate various barriers that prevented women from engaging in remunerative work as part of the local labor market.	Gender inequality related factors are acting as barriers to women's participation in the labor force.
13	Breaking barrier	To indicate measures instituted by Kudumbashree Mission to facilitate women's participation in work.	CBE strategies employed by the Mission are helping the empowerment of women toward overcoming the barriers and facilitating their participation in the labor force.
14	Facilitation	To indicate measures for facilitating women's participation in work.	
15	Improvements	To indicate suggestions for Kudumbashree Mission for facilitating more women participating in labor force.	
16	Change in Life	To indicate how Kudumbashree Mission has changed the life of a participant.	General feedback

## Appendix E: Code Book of In Vivo Codes and Pattern Codes derived through Inductive

## Analysis of Data

Pattern Code	In Vivo Codes (Occurrence)	Data Node- Example
Awareness building activities	Advice to take up jobs (1); Awareness activities (11); Counselling for women (3); Information sharing (2)	P9: "endeavored to conduct a lot of classes, to generate awareness among its beneficiaries"
Discussions and collective decision-making activities	Collective decisions (3); Collective groups (1); Discussions (3); Discussions- on newspaper reports (1); Discussions-sharing of information (1); Domestic issues (1); Mutual support (2); Weekly meetings (2)	P9: "got together and shared love, and discussed everybody's domestic issues and took decisions, collectively"
Economic empowerment activities	Linkage loans (1); Capital accumulation (3); Loans (4); Thrift fund (5)	P3: "learned to save funds and raise capital for setting up enterprises"
Support to women's activities	Mission support (2); Multi-tier coordination (3); Multi-tier support (2)	P7: "Kudumbashree provides all the support for smooth and efficient functioning of NHGs. Mission plays an important role in the whole affair"
Activities facilitating micro-enterprises	Agriculture (1); Anti-mosquito spraying (1); At home enterprises (1); Distribution of provisions (1); Dry fish business (1); Firewood business (1); Garments sale (1); Group farming (1); Microenterprises (10); Soap powder business (1); Vegetable farming (1)	E1: "Groups formed by beneficiaries, drawn from multiple NHGs, may also establish micro enterprises"
Persistence against failure	Persistence (1)	E2: "In 2006, Keralasree was formed as a micro enterprise, but all the women who were part of the Keralasree at the beginning left it and moved when there was no income. However, I continued with a firm conviction that once we undertake some mission, we should ensure that it is developed somehow."
Social service activities	Social support to needy (5); Voluntary service (1); Financial support to needy (3); Support to single women and widows (1); Assistance to families (1)	F5: "Kudumbashree has instituted a scheme called 'Calling Bell' to take necessary help to persons who are staying alone in their homes"

Pattern Code	In Vivo Codes (Occurrence)	Data Node- Example
Social development activities	Children's council (4); Dispute resolution (1); Improvement in living environment (1); Social conflicts resolution (2); Volunteer activities (8); Atrocities against women (4); Resolution through village council (2); Solid waste management (2)	F10: "A little more quality in all aspects of living environment is what we get from the activities of Kudumbashree"
Poverty alleviation activities	Income generation (1); Financial empowerment (4); Poverty alleviation (4)	E1: "Poverty alleviation was the initial objective of the Mission"
Community appreciation	Best women's collective (1); Community appreciation (2); Community recognition (3); Community trust (1); Everyone asking for jobs (1)	P6: "When they know we are from Kudumbashree they all interact with us with due respect. When they see us wearing the uniform with Kudumbashree Label, people tell us that they only have good words about Kudumbashree"
Community participation	4 million families participate (1); Any woman can be a member (1); Community participation (3); Even millionaires take part (1); Everyone associates (1); For all classes (2); Participation in social functions (1)	E1: "present situation is Kerala demands that every member of the community will have to associate with Kudumbashree in some or other form"
Community support	Community assurance (1); Community protection (1); Community involvement (1); Community support (18); Family support (1); Public support (4); Subsequent support (1); Support by other organizations (1)	E2: "Whenever they need any support all cab drivers and porters working in the railway station do protect them"
Customer support	Customer support (10)	E2: "I believe Railway official and RPF supports us even a level higher than the support of Kudumbashree Mission itself"
Experts support	Outside experts support (3); Experts support for enterprises (1); Personality classes (3); Skills utilization (1); Training support (3)	P11: "In my experience, many groups in our ward have received such assistance (from external experts) in setting up and managing micro enterprises"

<b>Pattern Code</b>	<b>In Vivo Codes (Occurrence)</b>	<b>Data Node- Example</b>
Govt agencies support	Banking support (1); Employment guarantee scheme support (1); Government support (4); Local self government body support (1)	P11: "Let me talk about farming venture. Everything in that venture is done in collaboration with the agriculture division of the government"
Initial absence of community support	Initial contempt (1); Initial difficulties (1)	P8: "Initially, people used hold Kudumbashree in contempt"
Women empowerment goals	Great blessing (1); Matter of pride (3); Women empowerment (15); Feels like heaven (1); No discrimination on age or education (1)	P6: "For me, it is like heaven. Reeling under the burden of debts, I used to close the doors and sit at home. I was even reluctant to interact with people. Today, it has all changed"
Economic empowerment goals	Economic empowerment of women (1); Financial empowerment of women (10); Helping families against poverty (3)	E2: "functioning with the objective of helping the families escape from poverty, through financial empowerment of women"
Social empowerment goals	Better quality of life (2); Many activities for social development (1); Resolve family disputes (1); Eradication of plastic waste (1); Managing social conflicts (1); Collective solutions for social problems (8); Collective solutions to individual problems (4); Village council participation (2); Acting against prejudices (3)	P7: "When these ten to fifteen women from an area get together, they are able to find solutions to their own problems as well as that of their society"
Domestic responsibilities	Domestic responsibilities (5)	P1: "It is mainly the problem of having to do all the domestic work"
Domination of jobs by men barrier	Domination of jobs by men (3); Men's monopoly (3); Night duties only for men (1)	F5: "gender inequality was too much. Many areas were dominated by men"
Confined to home- barrier	Confined to home- barrier	P10: "Most of the women in our village were those who never used to get out of their homes"
Fear barrier	Fear of going out (1); Hesitation among women (2); Inferiority complex (1); Fear of failure (1); Too tough initially (3); Women are scared (3); Harassment cases (1)	P4: "Women are usually scared. There was a concern as to what will the community think about them if they go out to work"

Pattern Code	In Vivo Codes (Occurrence)	Data Node- Example
Gap in participation	Gap still exists in participation (1)	E1: "If you compare internationally with countries like the US, there will be a very wide gap. That gap is still existing"
Gender inequality barrier	Gender inequality (4)	P9: "Since the beginning we were a patriarchal society, right? It is only recently that calls for gender equality and equal rights for men and women are coming up."
Kerala ahead in participation	Kerala ahead in participation (1)	E1: "When we compare with the rest of India, I feel that Kerala's women were ahead by one or two generations in labor force participation."
Lack of confidence barrier	Lack of confidence (2)	P10: "The reasons include lack of education for some and fear of going out and facing the larger society. Many women still lack the confidence"
Lack of education barrier	Lack of education (3)	P10: "The reasons include lack of education for some"
No prior work	No prior work (3)	P5: "No, I did not engage in any work outside my home."
Not enough jobs barrier	Lack of at home enterprises (3); Not enough jobs (3)	E1: "The fact is that there is not enough job opportunities for women"
Regional disparity barrier	Regional disparity (2)	P12: "Our locality is a rural area. It is difficult for the women from our area to come to city for work."
Religious Factors barrier	Religious factors (2)	E1: "There are religious factors that prevent women from working"
Shortage of capital barrier	Source of capital (1)	E2: "Source of finances could be one of the barriers "
Spouse Resistance barrier	Spouse resistance (5)	P8: "When he was fine, my husband never let me go for any work"
Low quality jobs barrier	Prior-agriculture labor (1); Low quality jobs (1); Prior-door to door selling (1); Prior-housekeeping (1); Prior-housemaid (1); Prior-Low salary job (1); Prior-under MNREGA (1); Prior- enterprise failed (1); Prior-sales girl (1); Prior-vegetable farming (1)	P12: "I used to work in a crabs processing company; I have worked in shops; The salary was very low"
By arranging capital	Arranging funds (2); Crisis funds (1); Easy loans through NHG (1)	E2: "If the venture fails, Kudumbashree will help to revive it by providing all helps including crisis funding"
By arranging jobs	Creating opportunities (2); Facilitating women's work (1); Help to establish new ventures (1)	P8: "There are many women who are searching for jobs, even after acquiring high qualifications. Kudumbashree is trying to create appropriate opportunities for all women"

Pattern Code	In Vivo Codes (Occurrence)	Data Node- Example
By creating awareness and motivation	Awareness and motivation classes (5); Making aware of importance of work (3); Motivation through NHG (2); NHG discussions on job opportunities (1); Training and awareness (3)	P3: "Kudumbashree Mission is organizing various training and awareness building classes to make us understand the need for working"
By change in income levels	Peer influence through additional income (1); Positive impact on family (1); Pressure on family income (1)	F9: "Today, even when both husband and wife are working it is difficult to meet the expenses of family and children's education"
Facilitating micro enterprises	Facilitating at home micro enterprises (1); Facilitating linkage loans (1); Facilitating micro enterprises (1)	F8: "Kudumbashree also arranges livestock and poultry for women. These activities are for those women who are not able to go out to work, for whatever reasons"
By easing domestic responsibilities	Daytime shelters	P7: "There is a Senior Citizens Club. Then Balasabha for children. Then bud schools. All these are functioning under the care of Kudumbashree and local self-government bodies"
By changing community perceptions	Changing community perceptions (5); Changing community mindset (3); Participation gaining traction (1); Convincing family members (3); Ensure quality of products (1); More time needed to remove negative perceptions (1); Overseeing functioning of enterprises (1)	P6: "We also go and talk to those men who do not allow their wives to go for jobs. We convince them by talking to them"
By collective action and support	Confidence building (3); Confidence through collective (4); NHG activities make women to step out (1); Backing of a strong collective (1); Give support to women (1); Peer influence (1); Personality development (2); Reassurance and support (2)	P12: "It is easier to begin anything collectively than attempting the same individually. We will get more courage and confidence"
By generating job opportunities	Generate new job domains (1); Govt funding for livelihood generation (2); Increase job opportunities for women (1); Information on opportunities (3); Ploughing back profits to generate more jobs (1)	P11: "Keralasree used the profit from this venture to begin many more ventures at different places. By doing so, they were able to provide jobs to a number of women from very poor families"

<b>Pattern Code</b>	<b>In Vivo Codes (Occurrence)</b>	<b>Data Node- Example</b>
By giving marketing support	Marketing products (1); Monthly fairs for products (1); Nano markets (1); Organizing fairs to market (1)	F5: "Kudumbashree also organizes various fairs to market the products of its microenterprises"
By skill development	Aviation to masonry (1); Housekeeping to nursing skills (1); Leadership skills (1); Implementing agency for skill development (3); Training and skill development (1)	F6: "There is a skill development program being conducted by the central government of India. Kudumbashree is one of the implementing agencies for the program"
Encouragement	Encouragement (1)	P1: "reason for my coming to this job itself is the encouragement of NHG. It was not my personal initiative"
Exemption from Meetings	Excuse from compulsory meetings (3); Exemption from fines (1)	P3: "If we are on duty on the NHG meeting days, they give us excuse from the compulsory attendance"
Focus on welfare	Keeping a tab on welfare (1)	P10: "facilitating our work by continuously keeping a tab on our welfare and providing all help whenever it is required"
Mutual assistance	Mutual assistance (1)	F4: "we all support and adjust the duties whenever anyone of us is facing a problem"
Social and political empowerment	Active politics and public service (1); Collaboration with local govt bodies (1); Involvement in village councils (1); Social empowerment of women (1); Women learning public service through NHG & CDS (1); 58% LSG members are women	E1: "Making use of those leadership skills acquired through Kudumbashree activities, these women enter active politics and public service"
Protection during problems	Prompt intervention and resolution (1); Protection from harassment (1); Support during problems at work (1)	P9: "Both Kudumbashree and Keralasree and providing all the necessary support and help to us. Whenever we face any kind of difficulties at the job, they intervene and ensure resolution and protection to us"
Rest facilities	Rest facilities (1)	P1: "a kiosk was set up for our resting and convenience"
Respect for Kudumbashree identity	Kudumbashree identity (1); Respect for Kudumbashree members (1)	P4: "Whatever be the job we are doing, we do get respect when we do it under Kudumbashree. That is a great thing to happen"



<b>Pattern Code</b>	<b>In Vivo Codes (Occurrence)</b>	<b>Data Node- Example</b>
Work-Life balance support	All possible help (1); All time support (1); Arranging replacements to manage domestic issues (1); Facilitating children's needs (1); Help and support to balance work-life (1); Help for childcare (1); NHG cooperating with workers (1); Support during domestic crisis (1); Work schedule rearranging (1)	P8: "Keralasree always say family is a bigger priority, and arrange replacement from somewhere. They are always providing valuable support"
Community orientation	Beneficial to society (1); Community orientation (2); Improving the society (1); Meeting needs of the society (1); Promoting sustainable development (1); Qualitative change to community (1)	E1: "Kudumbashree units undertake organic farming not because it is profitable, but with the objective of converting unused barren lands into farming lands with the help and support of Kudumbashree and government agencies. It is a part of promoting sustainable development."
For profit operations	Enterprise orientation (1)	E1: "Even then (during Kerala floods), it was not a charitable free service and all the supply was for specific rates"
Solution orientation	Community kitchens during flood (1); Eliminating problems (1); Finding solutions to problems (1); Intervention in community issues (2); relief to society (1); Solutions to community problems (3)	P4: "Our NHG tries to find solutions of all problems arising in our community. We have even solved family disputes through our intervention"
Trustworthy offerings	Customers can trust (1); Improved services (1); Neat and safe service (2); Orderly and safe parking services (1)	P8: "The fact that the customers can trust us is the most important solution that we provide to the community."
Family empowerment	Development of families (1); Employment to women (1); Helping women to find jobs (1)	E2: "the development of families take place through development of women, and development of societies take place through development of families."
Social service	Awareness building for children (1); Community work through MNREGA (1); Development of Railway stations (3); Development of society (1); Development within parking area (1); Increased income for Railways (2); Making it safe for women to travel (2); Restoration work after the flood (1); Support to suffering families	F1: "We also facilitate social advancement of the new generation, which is growing without adequate social interaction and love, by arranging awareness building through Balasabhas"

<b>Pattern Code</b>	<b>In Vivo Codes (Occurrence)</b>	<b>Data Node- Example</b>
Economic empowerment of community	Economic development of community (3); Economic empowerment of community (1); Loans at nominal interest (1); Motivating women to start working (1); Poverty eradication (1); Increasing income level of families (1); Facilitating employment (2); Financial empowerment of families and community (1)	E2: "what the Mission does is to ensure the advancement of the community, by increasing the income level of families through financial empowerment of women"
Community development	Benefits from venture to community (1); Community development through family development (3)	P9: "Through that woman, her family attains financial development. Through the development of families, the entire community gets development"
Social empowerment of community	Executing Government assigned tasks (1); Physical and financial help to needy (1); Resolving domestic problems (1); Social empowerment of community (1); social empowerment through non-discrimination (1); Help during calamities (3); Awareness campaigns (1)	F10: "even the government is entrusting its responsibilities to Kudumbashree"
Partnering with organizations	Participation in events (1); Participation in fairs (1); Partnering with Govt departments (2); Partnering with Govt skill development programs (1); Partnering with LSGs (1)	P12: "Kudumbashree has made a presence even in the world-famous Kochi Biennale art festival, by conducting an exhibition of paintings done by Kudumbashree members"
Support from external agencies	Awareness and Training classes (1); Experts and elected LSG representatives (1); Support from external agencies (1); Training by external experts (4); Use of external experts (4); Utilizing external skills and knowledge (2)	P4: "In all these activities, experts from the community and elected representatives from the local self-government bodies are involved"
Some prejudices still exist	Some prejudices still persist in critical domains (1)	E1: "when it comes to some critical domains that people value a lot, they don't have much interest in engaging women's enterprises"
Increased confidence	Women's ventures taken seriously (1); Collective strength (1); Giving confidence to women (1)	P1: "It is easy to break a twig, but not a bunch of twigs when they are tied together."

Pattern Code	In Vivo Codes (Occurrence)	Data Node- Example
Changed perceptions	Able to change perceptions (1); Attitude change in family and society (3); Attitude undergoes natural change (1); Change in men's attitude (1); Society's attitude changed (4); Community seeing and appreciating (1); Impact on society's prejudices (2); Kudumbashree can get things done (1); Positive change (1); Proved that women can succeed (1); Women are coming forward to work (1); Women easily persuaded now (1)	P9: "Kudumbashree activities are having an impact. Society had a prejudice that women cannot succeed in all areas where men are dominating, and women used to be reluctant to enter."
Acceptance for offerings	Acceptance in market for products (1); Amazon listing for 200 products (1); Positive brand value (1); More work being handed over (1); Demand despite higher cost (1); Quality assurance (1); Trust in Kudumbashree eateries (1)	P5: "Now many road travellers specifically seek out Kudumbashree restaurants for eating. That is the level of trust generated by Kudumbashree"
Inadequate parking space	Rush and shortage of parking (3)	P2: "The rush and shortage of parking at railway stations is a problem for the society but are beneficial for our enterprise"
Inadequate municipal services	Beaches filled with waste (1); Growing menace of municipal waste (1); Solutions to problems of society (1)	E2: "When our beaches are filled with waste, it is an opportunity for our venture. It is only when the beaches are dirty, our service becomes a necessity"
Problems with existing businesses	Adulteration and lack of quality (1); Cheating by sellers (1); Illegal and immoral activities (3); Only profit motive of others (1); Overpricing and adulteration (1); Poor service by earlier parking contractors (4); Unsafe parking and rude behavior (1)	F2: "Often, there are over pricing and adulterations being done by those shopkeepers, making customers to shift when they get a dependable and trustworthy alternative"
Adverse impact on Mission's enterprises	When metro services started it affected our business (1)	F1: "Recently when the Metro service was started, it benefitted the society but adversely affected our business. There was a reduction in the number of vehicles being brought for parking"

Pattern Code	In Vivo Codes (Occurrence)	Data Node- Example
Financial losses from poor services	Financial losses to customers due to theft etc by previous contractors (1); Pilferage from railway revenue (2); Overcharging of parking fee (2); Police imposing fines for parking on streets (1); Supply of affordable food in running trains (1)	P6: "One example is the chance of police charging and imposing fine on the drivers if they park their vehicles anywhere on the road. When that happens the vehicle owners are not losing merely the fine amount but also the work and wages for the day they have to be in the court. Our service is a solution to such economic stresses "
Natural calamities	Distribution of food during floods (1); Furniture repair after floods (1); House cleaning after floods (1); Loss to shrimp farms used as an opportunity for dried shrimps business (1)	P7: "there were NHG groups that created enterprises for undertaking sofa and furniture repair works (after the floods)"
Solution to economic stresses	Enterprises benefit from economic stresses (1); Mission provides solutions to economic stresses (2)	P7: "Wherever it finds an economic stress, Kudumbashree initiates some enterprise as a solution"
Experience used for Awareness building	Experience used for building awareness (1); Skills used for conducting classes and training (2); Used for organizing and motivating women (1)	P5: "Whenever NHG is conducting classes or training programs, the skilled ones are given opportunity so that their talents can be utilized for everyone's benefit"
Complementary use of varied skills	Complementary use of varied skills (1); Expert cooks used to form catering groups (1); Farming experience used in collective farming (1); Proposal for new business models (1); Proposals for new enterprises (1); Suggestions from experienced members (1); Supervisory role for leadership experience (1)	E1: "NHGs have an internal mechanism for such utilization. We are often surprised by their proposals for new enterprises, arising out of their personal experiences. And which are beyond our understanding and calculations."
Experience used for benefit of others	Used for the benefit of others (1); Keep a track and make use of experiences (1); Make use of such experiences (1); Personal experiences utilized (1); Used for empowering other members (1)	P6: "The prior experiences of these executive members are utilized by the Mission to promote the activities of NHG and to empower the other members"
Associating with other organizations	Associating with other organizations (1); Integral part of LSGs (1); LSG and representatives involved (1); Support from other organizations (1); Village Council for empowering women (1); Collaboration with others (1)	P7: "Kudumbashree enterprises are succeeding because of the full support from government, local bodies, and Kudumbashree Mission"

<b>Pattern Code</b>	<b>In Vivo Codes (Occurrence)</b>	<b>Data Node- Example</b>
Collective strength	Grown to a democratic collective (1)	E1: "from being a focused effort of some dedicated people toward women empowerment and poverty alleviation, Kudumbashree Mission has now grown to become a democratic collective of women"
For creating opportunities	For creating opportunities (1); For exploring new domains (1); For exploring new job opportunities (4); Mission ready to make use of emerging opportunities (1); Opportunities through network (1); Mission's capital is social capital (1); Growth through social networks (1)	P7: "Kudumbashree Mission is using the networks to create opportunities. It is the Mission that explores and decides as to who should be contacted for particular opportunities and who can be of help in taking it forward."
Financial support and subsidies	Financial support and subsidies (1)	P7: "The support could be financial as well as other types. Most of the loans we get are with government subsidy"
For choosing interventions	For choosing interventions (1)	E1: "Kudumbashree is able to utilize the network for direct marketing, exploring new domains for women's participation, choosing avenues for the Mission's interventions, and online marketing"
For marketing offerings	For direct marketing (1); For sale of products (3); Local organizations used for selling products (1); Sponsored entry into online sales (1)	E1: "A United States based organization of Keralites (American Malayalee Association), AMA, has agreed to sponsor Kudumbashree's entry into exclusive online sales of its products, using a model similar to the food delivery service by Swiggy and Uber eats"
For social interventions	Social resources are used for interventions (2)	P12: "All these interventions are made possible by acquiring the necessary resources from the community"
Government resources	Government resources made use of (1)	P9: "We also got some financial aid from the fisheries department of the state government in appreciation of our activities"
Involvement of non-members	Involvement of non-members in social activities (1)	P3: "we also involve others to get needy people who are not a part of NHG, to associate with NHG so that they can be get a quality life"
Skills and expertise	NHG discusses and make use of available resources (2); Skills and expertise are used (2); Use of experts for activities (2); Experts for skill development (3)	P6: "Kudumbashree uses social resources like skills and experiences of people from larger community to provide skills training to women"

<b>Pattern Code</b>	<b>In Vivo Codes (Occurrence)</b>	<b>Data Node- Example</b>
Some resources not yet attracted	Unable to utilize social resources fully (1)	E1: "Kudumbashree is still deprived of the contribution from what we call the top 1% of the society"
Avoid misuse	Avoid misuse of Mission to circumvent labor laws (1)	E1: "To say the truth, the objectives of Kudumbashree Mission are very good. However, the remuneration that Kudumbashree members receive from many projects undertaken by Kudumbashree are not even sufficient to cover the legal obligations. In that context, I am afraid Kudumbashree Mission might be being misused"
Continue to build confidence	Continue confidence building (1)	P11: "continue its efforts to make women capable of going out into the society and interacting with confidence"
Explore more job avenues	Continue enabling women to work in more fields (1); Explore more domains (2); More at home enterprises (3); Explore more job avenues (1); Focus on increasing job opportunities (1); Make more quality jobs available (1); More opportunities for self-employment (1); More opportunities for women (1)	P9: "Kudumbashree should explore new fields for women to work, and help the women to succeed in those new fields"
Focus beyond basic survival	Current focus is on basic survival (1); Increase stability and quality of jobs (1); More quality enterprises (1)	E1: "Now the focus should be on increasing stability and quality"
More awareness programs	More awareness programs (3)	P10: "conducting more awareness classes."
More facilitation measures	Day care for the aged (1); Loans and machineries for enterprises (1); Day care for children (1)	F8: "day homes like 'Thanal' program for the aged are being provided by Kudumbashree already. If the Mission can develop these facilities to benefit more families, it will help more people to go out and work"
More quality in execution	Quality in execution (1)	P6: "should ensure quality execution of all projects that it has undertaken"
More skill development	More skill development programs (2); Training and grooming (3)	P4: "Activities like candle making and soap making can be taught to such women. "
Best work-life balance	Best work-life balance (1)	F7: "We can easily say that there no institution, which can provide as much work-family balance as provided by Kudumbashree mission"

Pattern Code	In Vivo Codes (Occurrence)	Data Node- Example
Changed the life for better	A lot of change happened (1); Changed the life for better (1); Completely changed my life (1); Got a job even at the advanced age (1); Greatest thing in life (1); There is so much change (1); Things have changed for the better (1)	P10: "Don't you think Kudumbashree is the greatest thing in my life? That is all that I have to say (turning emotional)."
Financially empowered	Escaped clutches of debt (1); Good education to children (1); Helped financially (1); Saved from poverty (1); Solid financial base for family (1)	P9: "we could construct a new house, educate our children, and provide a solid financial base for our family"
Groups grown beyond expectations	Groups grown beyond imagination (1)	E1: "There are so many such instances (of women who became a part of the formal economy through Kudumbashree growing to becoming successful entrepreneurs). There are groups that have grown beyond what we all could perceive"
Mutual sharing and support	Empowerment through sharing and mutual support (1); Lot of relief from sharing one's sorrows (1); More support than family for a single woman (1); More unity and harmony than joint families (1)	F5: "Even if there is no jobs and no enterprises Kudumbashree will still be a venue where all the women can get together and share their happiness and sorrows. That sharing and mutual support itself is causing a lot of empowerment."
Gained Social skills	Became an independent personality (1); Now not scared anymore (1); Learned a lot including how to communicate with people (2); Overcome shyness and hesitation (1); This interview became possible only because of Mission (1)	P8: "Even when I go out rarely, my husband used to accompany me. I, who was living thus within the confines of my home, is here and talking to you today only because Kudumbashree made it all possible."
Pride in self	Pride in employing over 850 women (1); Respect from community is a big change (1)	P5: "Now with a steady income, I am also getting respect and consideration from others in the family. It is not above anyone else, but at least in par with others. The consideration I am getting from the community too. That is indeed a very big change"
Social recognition	Keralasree adjudged the best micro enterprise unit in 2017 (1); Opportunity to sing for a movie came through the Mission (1); Political parties approach with membership (1); Role in family decision making (1)	E2: " I used to sing reasonably well. Kudumbashree gave me a lot of stages and occasions to sing. That helped me to sing in a musical album. Now, I have been selected to sing for a movie. All these opportunities came through Kudumbashree"

<b>Pattern Code</b>	<b>In Vivo Codes (Occurrence)</b>	<b>Data Node- Example</b>
Utility for others	Hope the findings become useful for others (2); Let all women benefit from this study (1); Let it reach women from rural areas (1); Mission should cover other countries as well (1); Wish for similar movement across the globe (1)	P9: "I would like to see that by learning from our experiences and Kudumbashree's activities similar movements come up throughout India and across the globe."
Study role of village councils	Role of Village Councils can be covered more (1)	P7: "One omission that I can think of is the role of Gramasabha. Today, for a community to advance, firstly it is the NHGs and secondly the Gramasabha (Village Council)"
Satisfied with coverage	Already briefed everything (1); Covered everything (2); Felt the interview very good (1); All relevant and appropriate (1)	P11: "You have already covered everything. You touched all four corners and asked questions. I have nothing more to add"
No suggestions	First time experience (1); Happy to have participated (1); No suggestions (1)	P12: "I can't think of any (suggestions to improve the interview). For me, this interview is a first-time experience."



## Appendix F: Emergence of Themes Related to Research Questions

## A. Emergence of Themes Related to RQ1

Sub-Categories	Occurrence	Category	Subthemes	Theme
Women empowerment goals	26	Mission goals	Mission has multiple social and economic goals for both women and community	
Economic empowerment goals	14			
Social empowerment goals	23			
Women Empowerment activities	60	Mission activities	Mission's activities are varied and cater to its multiple goals	Kudumbashree Mission has the characteristics of a CBE
Jobs generation and facilitation	42			
Social service activities	11			
Social development activities	24			
Poverty alleviation activities	9			
Community appreciation	18	Community involvement	Community's involvement is critical to the success of Mission's activities	
Community participation	38			
Community support	19			
Absence of community support	2	Barriers to participation	Lack of community support is a barrier to women's labor force participation	Barriers to women's labor force participation are many and varied
Community mindset	34		Community mindset is a barrier to women's labor force participation	
Gender inequality	30		Persisting gender inequality is a barrier to women's labor force participation	
Lack of education or skill	3		Lack of education or skills is a barrier to women's labor force participation	
Not enough quality jobs	20		Non availability of adequate quality jobs is a barrier to women's labor force participation	
Shortage of capital	3		Lack of access to capital is a barrier to women's labor force participation	

Cont'd..

Sub-Categories	Occurrence	Category	Subthemes	Theme
Kerala ahead in participation	1	Kerala ahead in participation		
Arranging capital	4	Strategies employed	Arranging access to capital can help in overcoming shortage of capital barriers	Different combinations of different strategies required to address different barriers
Arranging jobs and micro enterprises	26		Arranging jobs and micro enterprises can help in overcoming non availability of adequate quality jobs barrier	
Awareness and motivation	31		Increasing awareness and motivation can address the gender inequality and community mindset barriers	
Changing community perceptions	18		Changing community mindset can address community mindset barrier	
Social and political empowerment	20		Increasing awareness and motivation can address the gender inequality barrier	
Facilitation of participation	23	Facilitation of participation	Facilitation of women's participation in labor force can reduce barriers to participation	
Community orientation	7	Addressing community needs	Strategies adopted by the Mission are in alignment with the outcomes of a CBE	Kudumbashree Mission has the characteristics of a CBE
Solution orientation	14			
Contribution to community development	39	Contribution to community development	Kudumbashree's activities have impacted the attitude of community toward women's participation in labor force	
Making use of community resources	18	Making use of community resources		
Impact on community attitude	28	Impact on community attitude		
For profit orientation	1	For profit orientation	Kudumbashree's enterprises operate with a for profit orientation	
Some prejudices still exist	1	Some prejudices still exist		

*B. Emergence of Theme Related to RQ2*

Category	Occurrence	Subthemes	Theme
Social stresses contributing to success	14	Social and economic stresses in the community contributes to the success of Mission's activities	Use of social capital and collective experiences of its members in response to social and economic stresses in the community influence the success of Mission's strategies
Adverse impact on Mission's enterprises	1		
Economic stresses contributing to success	14		
Use of organizational experiences	16	Use of organizational experiences of its members contributes to the success of the Mission's activities	
Use of social capital	25	Use of social capital and social resources contributes to the success of Mission's activities	
Use of social resources	13		
Some resources not yet attracted	1		

*C. Emergence of Themes Related to General Questions*

Category	Occurrence	Subthemes	Theme
Suggestions to increase participation	30	More of the same	Mission's strategies are on the right track to achieve its objectives
Impact on the participant	30	Positive impact on participants	
Utility for others	6		
Study role of village councils	1		
No suggestions	8		