



# “A STUDY ON STATUS OF WOMEN IN KUZHUPILLY GRAMA PANCHAYATH”

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“If you want to see which way a country is headed, look at the Country’s budget and how it allocates resources for women and children”-Pregs Govender, MP, South Africa

**ABSTRACT:** In the development of the society the women had played a significant role. Since ages she engaged herself in domestic environments. The modern women are well awakened and are engaged to solve her social problems. Like race, ethnicity, class, gender is also a category that decides the social and economic participation of citizen. Gender gaps are wide spread in access to and control of resources. Thus in no region of developing world are women equal to men in legal, social and economic rights. Gender equality is a core development issue – a development objective in its own rights. Despite the progress significant gender inequalities in rights, resources and voices persist in all developing countries – and in many areas the progress has been slow and uneven. In no region do women and men have equal social, economic and legal rights. In a number of countries women still lag independent rights to own lands, manage property, conduct business or even travel without their husband’s consent.

**KEY WORDS:** Women, Gender, Empowerment, Equality

## INTRODUCTION

Women of the world are imposed to greater insecurity. They have been affected more by poverty, lack of opportunities and facilities. In last 25 years there has been a global effort with a strong support from the United Nations to understand the discrimination and restore a status to women. The slogan was “equality, development and peace”<sup>1</sup>

Women of Kerala enjoyed a lot of liberty from early days. They occupy high positions in all fields of public activity - educational, judicial, medical and engineering professions. She is an equal partner with man. Kerala leads India in women's education. According to 2001 census the female literacy rate is 87.86 per cent. It has a favourable sex ratio of 1058 females per 1000 males. Literacy and employment gave financial independence to women in Kerala. Though Kerala rank top in women's literacy rate and education, the work participation sex-ratio shows a decline.

This in turn indicate that women's share of “earned income” in the state is only 12%. This shows that these factors are not a sufficient condition for gender equality in work.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

According to UNDP, gender equality and women empowerment is not only a human right but also are a pathway to achieve sustainable development. It aims to main stream gender in all its programmes and to further the advancement of women as one of its four major focus areas. The achievement of human development is heavily dependent on the development and empowerment of millions of women and girls across the country. <sup>3</sup>

According to Dr: B.R Ambedkar, The progress of a country is measured by the degree of progress which women have achieved. Dr.Ambedkar tried an adequate inclusion of women’s rights in the political vocabulary and constitution of India. He provide a powerful source of inspiration to formulate a feminist political agenda which simultaneously address the issues of gender in the contemporary socio-political setup which still keeps conservative values on gender relation. <sup>4</sup>

The National Policy for the empowerment of women 2001 also admits “the underlying cause of gender inequality is related to social and economic structure and practices. Consequently, the access of women, particularly those belonging to weaker sections to education, health and productive resources, among others is inadequate. Therefore, they remain largely marginalised, poor and socially excluded”. <sup>5</sup>

According to Fourth World Conference of Women, Beijing (September 1995) “Women’s empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society including participation in the decision making process and access to power is fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace” <sup>6</sup>

To quote, The Department of Women and Child Development “Women as a mother hood of the nation should be strong, aware and alert for a better future of the nation.”

### **Objectives**

1. To analyse the educational, social, political and economical status of women with respect to Kuzhupilly Panchayat.
2. To measure the status of women like relative control and access to resources and education, decision making power etc.
3. To analyze the standard of living of women in all spheres of life.

### **Present relevance of the study**

- Women have been oppressed, suppressed and marginalized by men for many centuries. They have been confined to their home by men very carefully and systematically. Women are subject to discrimination not just on the basis of gender but on the basis of numerous other factors such as caste, community, religion and class.

- Despite many positive developments in securing women's human rights, discrimination against women continues. Since the poor families have little interest in educating girls they do not get opportunities to achieve a better position in society. Women had to face problems outside and they are paid very low wage.

### **Definitions and concepts**

**Gender:** Gender is the socially and culturally constructed goals, responsibilities, privileges, relations and expectations of women and men, girls and boys. Because these are socially constructed they can change over time and differ from one place to another.

**Gender Bias:** gender Bias is an approach that impacts more positively on male than female or on female than on male.

**Gender equality:** An approach that results in just/ fair treatment of women and men and recognition and appreciation of both women's and men's potential.

**Women empowerment:** Women empowerment is a process in which women gain greater share of control over resources- material, human and intellectual like knowledge, information and access to money and control over decision making in the home, community, society and nation and to gain power.

### **STATUS OF WOMEN IN KERALA**

Provisional data on Kerala Population 2011 (Census 2011) shows that female population of Kerala rose marginally from 51.42% of the total population in 2001 to 52.01% of the total population in 2011, i.e., an increase of 9.96 lakh. Sex ratio is one of the most important social parameters indicating the balance between males and females in the society. The overall sex ratio in Kerala continues to be favourable to women, being 1084 in 2011 compared to 940 for the country as a whole. Further the sex ratios in all the districts of Kerala also are favourable to the females.

	Total	Male	Female	Female/ Male Sex ratio	
KERALA	33387677	16021290	17366384	1058 (M)	1084(F)

### **KUZHUPILLY: AN OVERVIEW**

Total Population : 11446

Population Density : 1987

Males: 5550

Female : 5896

Male- Female Proportion : 1062

Total Literacy Rate : 91.93

Male Literacy Rate : 95.84

Female Literacy Rate : 88.42

Total Number Of Elected Female

Member(through reservation) : 7

Table No: 1:1: Percentage of Male and Female Representatives

Total number of ward members in the panchayath	No: of Female representatives	%	No: of Male representatives	%	No: of female members interviewed	%
13	7	53.8	6	46.15	7	100

Female reservation fixed by the Government is only 33% but in Kuzhupilly the female participation is 53.8%. This shows that women are actively participating in the political system.

Table No: 1:2: Age of the representatives

Age	% of Female	% of Male	Total %
20 – 30	0	0	0
31 – 40	28.5	16.66	23.07
41 – 50	71.4	66.66	69.23
51 – 60	0	0	0
61 – 70	0	16.66	7.69
Total	100	100	100

There are no female and male representatives from the age group of 20–30 and 51 – 60. Most of the representatives are from the age group of 31 – 40 and 41 – 50 in which female percentage (28.5% & 71.4% respectively) is higher than male percentage. While there are 16.66% of males from the age group 61 – 70; number of females from the same age group is zero.

Table No: 1:3 : Educational qualification of the representatives

Gender	Below SSLC	SSLC	PDC	Degree	P.G	Total
Female	0	71.42%	28.57%	0	0	100
Male	0	33.33%	66.66%	0	0	100

There are no highly qualified persons in the political field. Even though the 71.42% of females have passed SSLC only 28.57% went for higher education. While, only 33.33% of male passed SSLC, 66.66% of them went for higher education. This shows that the number of women who go for higher education is very less.

**Table no: 1:4: Motivation behind Political Participation**

Motivation	Number	Percentage
Family	2	28.5
Friends	2	28.5
Party Decision	2	28.5
Social Commitment	1	14.2

Support from family and friends (28.5%) along with party decision (28.5%) are the motivational sources behind political participation of women. A point to be noted is that there is no voluntary female participation.

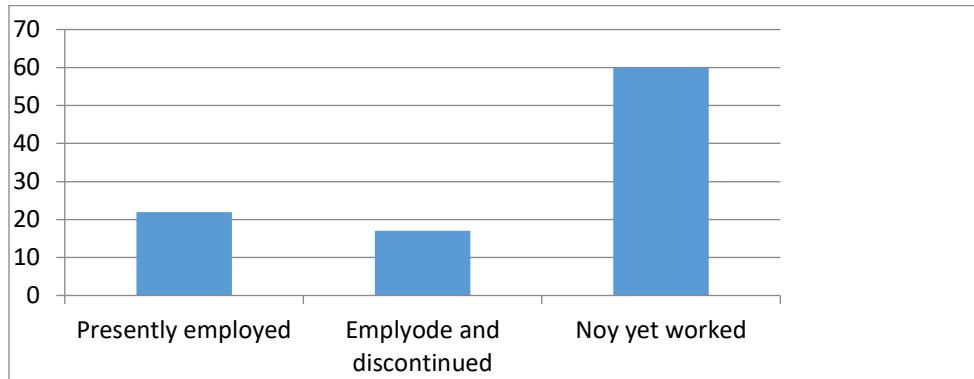
No male members spent time for household works while females spent up to 8hrs in household works. Time spent by male and female members in panchayath works is almost equal. But it is to be noted that female spent 5-7 hours in Panchayath activities in spite of their household works. One out of six males spent eight hours in social work whereas others spent only 1-3 hours. The time spent by female members in social works varies from 3- 7 hours. Male rest 5-8hours a day while female rest only 4-6 hours. This shows that even though the total time spent for work by female is more than male the time spent by them for rest is comparatively less. This shows the commitment of females towards family and society.

**TABLE: 1.5 : Ownership of land by Adult Women**

Ownership	No: of respondents	Percentage
Yes	16	21%
No	59	78%
TOTAL	75	100%

Ownership of land is analysed in this table. Only 21% of females had property ownership. The rest 78% of respondents did not had the property right or ownership. This shows the inaccessibility of resources of women.



employment status of women

Among the respondents only 22% are presently employed and 17% of women have discontinued their job. But majority of the respondents (60%) have not worked yet. This proves that the female work participation rate is very poor.

Table 1.6 : Occupational Structure

Structure of Occupation	No: of respondents	Percentage
Government	2	2%
Private	5	6%
Self Employed	4	5%
NREGS	3	4%
Other	3	4%
No Job	58	77%
TOTAL	75	100%

Out of total female respondents only 2% have government job and that too in lower division jobs. 5% of females work in private sector which is higher than the government sector employment. Self-employed, NREGS and other manual and unskilled workforce constitute to 4%, 3% and 3% respectively.

Table 1.7 : Reasons for discontinuation from job

Reason	No: of respondents	Percentage
Low wage	2	15%
Family Responsibilities	8	61%
Other (travelling, health)	3	23%
TOTAL	13	100

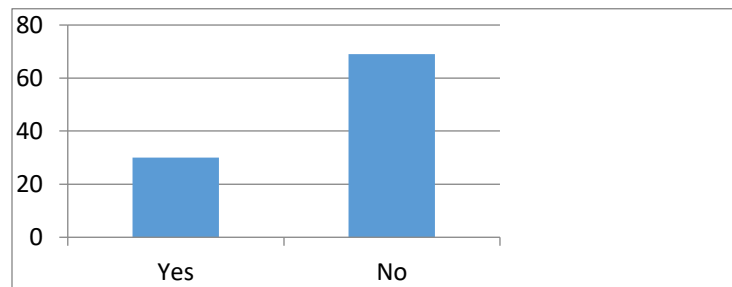
Majority of females (61%) had to discontinue their job because of family responsibilities like take care of children or elderly people in the family.

Two of the respondents (15%) were forced to quit their job due to low wage rate. The rest 23% discontinued their job because of difficulties in travelling and other health problems.

### Income/ Investment/Liability

This part of the analysis brings out the income, investment or liability status of women. This provides information about the saving and investment pattern among female respondents. This part also analyse the liabilities of women. It means any financial assistance taken in favour of women needs and its repayment liability.

Table 1.8: Income/Investment or Liability Status



Only 30% of women had any kind of savings whereas the majority (69%) were without any type of savings. This shows the poor saving ability or capacity of women in rural area.

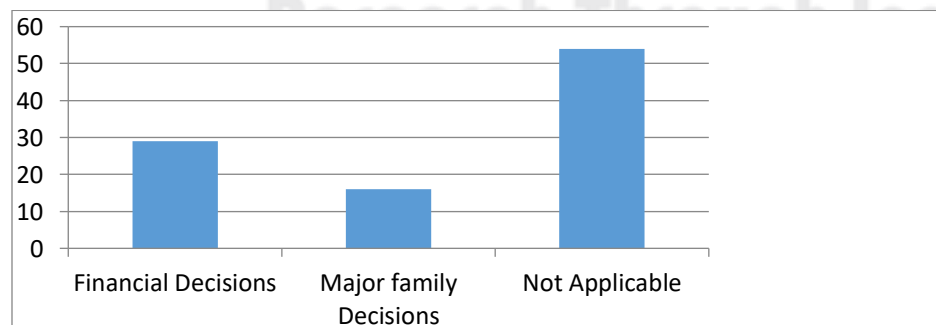
### Decision Making Power

This part analyse the decision making power of women in the family. The decision making power includes financial and other major family decisions. Decision making power is an important indicator of women status in modern era.

Table No: 1.9 : Decision making power of women

The majority (54%) of the respondents did not had any decision making power. This shows the poor status of women. Only 45% of women had decision making power that too with the consent of any other male member. This shows the lack of freedom for women taking decisions independently.

Table No: 1.10 : Nature of decision making



While 29% of females had the freedom to take financial decisions only 35% of them had the freedom to take any other major family decision which would affect the whole family. This shows the limited space

and freedom of women to participate in decision making process both independently or with the consent of any other male family members.

Table No: 1.11 : Have you given dowry

have you given dowry	No: of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	53	70%
No	10	13%
Not applicable	12	16%
Total	75	100%

Majority (70%) of marriages were performed after the exchange of dowry. Dowry was given in the form of property, house, gold etc. In this, gold was the major form of dowry given.

Table No: 1.12 : Use of dowry

Use of Dowry	No: of Respondents	Percentage
To build house	19	25%
To buy property	9	12%
For marriage of other family members	18	24%
In bank locker	7	9%
Not applicable	22	29%
Total	75	100%

SOURCE: PRIMARY DATA

The above table analyse the uses of dowry given during marriages. Majority (25%) of females responded that the dowry given was used for building house. 24% of members in the family like niece, relatives etc.

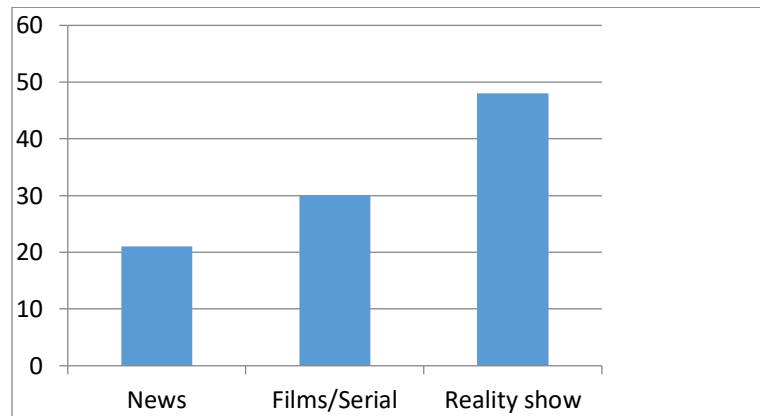
1.13 : Types of problems faced by women

Problems	No: of Respondents	Percentage
Eve teasing	32	42%
Mental harassment	6	8%
Physical harassment	0	0%
Not Applicable	37	49%
Total	75	100%



Eve teasing was found as the major problem for women while travelling. Mental harassment i.e. comment which hurts the self-esteem of women accounts to 8%. No cases of physical harassment were reported.

Table No: 1.14 : Spending pattern of leisure time of women



Reality show (48%) was the main source of entertainment for most of the respondents. Film/ Serial and News as a mode of entertainment accounted to 30% and 21% respectively.

### **FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

- Women in Kuzhupilly Panchayath are generally underrepresented.  
Out of the total respondents only 22% of women are presently employed and then have discontinued their job due to various reasons. Family responsibility (61%) was a major reason for the discontinuation of job by women. Low wage rate (15%) was also a cause for the same.
- Women have poor access to and control over resources.
- The political participation of women is very low.
- Women are mostly exempted from decision making process.
- Lack of initiativeness of women in political participation.
- Female ward members sacrifice their time and energy for panchayath activities.
- Absence of qualified representatives.

### **CONCLUSION**

Women in Kuzhupilly generally have a low status in the society. Even though they have achieved primary education, many of them did not go for higher studies; hence they do not have a proper employment. Some of them discontinued their job due to various reasons like family responsibilities, travel, safety etc. Women in Kuzhupilly also lack the power to take decisions even though they contribute to the annual income of the family. Political participation of women in this Panchayat is very limited.

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