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Focus on ohe Cooperative Credit Scheme in Coimbatore District and Its Impact on Women Beneficiaries: A Case Study

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Abstract
The present study is based on primary as well as secondary data. The personal interview method has been adopted to collect primary data. For this, a well designed and a pre-tested interview schedule was prepared to collect the information relating to the study. With a view to identify the growth of cooperative credit scheme, the researcher had an in depth review of previous studies undertaken, relating to the topic of the present study. Further, the researcher had preliminary discussion with the officials of the women cooperative credit scheme and few NGOs registered in women cooperative credit scheme, Coimbatore District. The secondary data were collected from books, journals, RBI Bulletins, NABARD, annual reports and reports of the project implementation unit, women cooperative credit scheme in Coimbatore district.

Keywords: Cooperative Credit Scheme, Coimbatore District, Women Beneficiaries.

Introduction
A financial organization owned and controlled by its members, who can borrow at low interest rates from an amount of money they have saved as a group. Credit co-operatives provide financial services to poor and low-income people in many countries. Financial cooperatives such as credit unions offer sustainable finance for local people excluded from the traditional banking system. Because they are run by and for people at a community level, and they lend cautiously, credit unions offer a safe approach to savings and loads. For a small business that sells specialized services or more up-market goods than its peers, this can mean losing some profit. It also means reduced competition between the cooperative's members, who are often operating in the exact same niches.

Cooperative Credit Scheme

The Co-operative credit in India is divided into a structure of the three tier system. These includes: State Co-operative Banks- At the apex point of the Co-operative banking system in the country is the State Co-operative Bank. These are coordinated to draw in stores from the rich metropolitan classes, with that comes community respect, political legitimacy and influence." Cooperatives allow women who might have been isolated and working individually to band together and create economies of scale as well as increase their own bargaining power of the market.

1. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Rency Desai (2024) in today's contemporary landscape, the pivotal role of women entrepreneurs has emerged as a cornerstone in the global business arena, playing a vital part in both economic advancement and societal development.

Despite their significant contributions to society, women's entrepreneurial potential remains underutilized, primarily due to their marginalized status in Indian society. This article aims to delve into the current state of women entrepreneurs in India, shedding light on the underlying reasons for women's entrepreneurial pursuits. Additionally, it scrutinizes the effectiveness of Indian government policies pertaining to women entrepreneurship, evaluating their impact on fostering growth in this sector. The study not only explores the primary motivations driving women to embrace entrepreneurship but also examines the various institutions that empower women to translate their ideas into tangible actions. As part of this comprehensive analysis, the paper puts forth suggestions aimed at fostering a conducive environment that encourages and nurtures the entrepreneurial spirit among women, ultimately paving the way for their success in the business realm.

Hiba Khan (2024) increasingly, women worldwide are starting and running profitable companies because of advancements in educational fields, employment prospects, and economic opportunities. This will transform the standing of women in those cultures and have a positive impact on the financial systems of nations where enterprises are run by women. Nowadays, we have reached a stronger place where the inclusion of women in business is growing rapidly, and there are initiatives underway on a global and national scale to increase community representation in manufacturing enterprises. This is primarily due to a shift in mind - set, a shift away from a traditional mind frame in culture to one that is more contemporary, the courage and risk-taking skills of women, the encouragement and collaboration of the community, modifications and mediation in government actions, and the provision of numerous youth empowerment programs to women entrepreneurs. When the new century gets underway, it seems that this will be the age of the businessman in principle and of the female entrepreneur. The study considered 313 women from rural and urban areas of the country to explore different factors that determine the features of government credit schemes in supporting women entrepreneurs in India. It concludes that all factors such as affordability and support, concessions and subsidies, accessibility and loan repayment, and interest on preferences for government credit schemes.

Shaharba (2018) Financial Inclusion, which promotes access and the use of high-quality financial services, particularly among poor people, is crucial to achieve inclusive growth. Women disproportionately face financial access barriers that prevent them from participating in the economy and from improving their lives. Access to credit can open up economic opportunities for women, and bank accounts can be a gateway to the use of additional financial services. However, women entrepreneurs and employers face significantly greater challenges than men in gaining access to financial services. Just like any Country, India is also working to promote financial inclusion for women to help to achieve gender equity and poverty reduction. The Women‘s Co-operative societies can help and guide to establish the industrial estates by providing financial assistance to the women in the urban and rural areas. Women‘s co-operative societies can help women to form the women‘s consumer co-operative societies that will create a congenial atmosphere for the development of entrepreneurship among women. Most women co-operative societies are small and have a narrow range of financial services, limited to financial resources and have small workforce. There is no basic difference between the co-operative societies in general and the women‘s co-operative societies. However, one difference must be accepted and that is, women‘s co-operative societies have been formed with a social purpose and therefore, it needs special encouragement from the government and the society. Present study is an attempt to link gender and financial access, by focusing on efficiency of operation, progress and challenges faced by women co-operative societies in Kannur district of Kerala state.

Balanarayanan S (2011) Women empowerment is an important concept of Indian economy. This paper makes an attempt to discuss of the role of Self Help Groups (SHGs) in women empowerment, women entrepreneurship and economic development of Anandhavadi village of Ariyalur district, Tamil Nadu. Self Help Groups are usually in the form of informal groups with women members who have a common perception of need and importance towards collective action. The major aim of the SHGs is to promote savings and to credit for the productive and consumption purposes. This study has completely based on primary and secondary data. The primary data have been collected from two groups which consist of 15 members in each group. The primary data has collected with the help of specially prepared interview schedule. This paper has found that majority of the SHG members' belong to agriculture sector and the SHGs member income has been increased after joining the SHGs. Hence women members of the groups are independent to meet their personal expenditure, and they contribute more to their household income. Finally, this study concludes that women are empowered through SHGs and also it has enhanced their freedom and the reduced the gender bias at least at the family level.

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. To find out design of the study
2. To find out age of the respondents
3. To find out marital status among the respondents
4. To explore the residence of the women cooperative credit scheme beneficiaries
5. To find out duration of membership
6. To sources of awareness of the women cooperative credit scheme
7. The sufficiency of cooperative credit scheme amount received
8. To the reasons for getting cooperative credit scheme of the sample women beneficiaries
9. To explore the social constraints among the respondents

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research is a careful investigation, an inquiry, especially through search, for new facts in any branch of knowledge. It is also looking for new facts in any branch of knowledge. The research methodology enlightens the methods to be followed in research activities, starting from investigation to presentation. Research methodology includes selection of the study area, sampling procedure, methods of data collection, Period of study, profile of the study area, operationalization and measurement of variables, frame work of analysis and limitations.

4. SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

In Coimbatore district out of 12 blocks, women cooperative credit scheme has been implemented in all twelve blocks. According to the unpublished records of women cooperative credit scheme project unit, 10280 women have availed of the women cooperative credit scheme till the year June 2024. It was decided to take 5% of the women beneficiaries as sample from each block. Even though 5% population of women beneficiaries were of 514 in number, to make it as a round number 522 beneficiaries were taken as sample.

For analysis

Table – 1: Design of the study

Name of the blocks	*No of women availing of cooperative credit scheme*	*No of Respondents*	*Percentage*
Anamalai	613	34	6.51
Annur	626	35	6.70
Karamadai	1023	54	10.34
Kinathukadavu	889	45	8.62
Madukkarai	720	36	6.90
Periyanayakkanpalayam	1059	48	9.20
Pollachi North	1123	54	10.34
Pollachi South	1025	50	9.58
Sarcarsamakulam	959	49	9.39
Sultanpet	851	45	8.62
Sulur	678	36	6.90
Thondamuthur	714	36	6.90
Total	***10280***	***522***	***100.00***

The table lists various blocks along with the number of women availing the cooperative credit scheme, the total number of respondents, and the percentage of women availing the scheme in each block. Blocks like Karamadai, Pollachi North, Pollachi South, and Sarcarsamakulam have participation rates ranging from 9.34% to 10.34%, indicating a stronger adoption of the cooperative credit scheme. Blocks such as Anamalai, Annur, Madukkarai, Sulur, and Thondamuthur have participation rates around 6.51% to 6.90%, suggesting a lower adoption or utilization of the scheme.

Table – 2: Age of the Respondents

Age in years	*No of Beneficiaries*	*Percentage*
18 to 25	93	17.82
26 to 40	195	37.36
41to 50	171	32.75
Above 50	63	12.07
Total	***522***	***100.00***

The data presented in Table 2, analyze based on the age distribution of beneficiaries, the largest beneficiary group falls within the age range of 26 to 40 years, comprising 37.36% of the total beneficiaries. The age group of 41 to 50 years also shows substantial representation, accounting for 32.75%. The age group of 18 to 25 years represents 17.82% of the beneficiaries, indicating a moderate level of participation among younger adults. Beneficiaries above 50 years old constitute 12.07% of the total, reflecting a smaller but notable presence in the scheme.

Table – 3: Marital status among the respondents

Marital Status	*No of Beneficiaries*	*Percentage*	*Mean*	*SD*
Unmarried	36	6.90		
Married and Living with husband	436	83.52		
Divorced	19	3.64	19	185.5729
Widow	18	3.45		
Married but separated	13	2.49		
Total	***522***	***100.00***		

The majority of beneficiaries are married and living with their husbands, comprising 83.52% of the total. Unmarried beneficiaries represent a smaller proportion at 6.90%. Divorced, widowed, and separated beneficiaries together make up the remaining percentages: 3.64%, 3.45%, and 2.49% respectively.

The Marital status among the respondents, the respondents had mean average of 19 with the standard deviation 185.5729 seems to lie within the high distribution.

Table – 4: Residence of the Women Cooperative Credit Scheme Beneficiaries

Residence	No of Beneficiaries	Percentage
Rural	**261**	**50.00**
Semi Urban	**189**	**36.21**
Urban	**72**	**13.79**
Total	**522**	**100.00**

The table provides data on the residence distribution of beneficiaries of the Women Cooperative Credit Scheme. The largest group of beneficiaries (50.00%) resides in rural areas, indicating that the Women Cooperative Credit Scheme is significantly benefiting rural communities. Semi urban areas also have a substantial share (36.21%) of beneficiaries, suggesting the scheme's reach extends beyond rural settings into semi urban environments. Urban areas have the smallest proportion (13.79%) of beneficiaries, indicating either lower demand or possibly less targeted outreach in urban centers compared to rural and semi urban areas.

Table – 5: Duration of Membership

Duration of Membership	No of Beneficiaries	Percentage
Bellow two years	**159**	**30.46**
Two to four years	**237**	**45.40**
Above four years	**126**	**24.14**
Total	**522**	**100.00**

Analyze the table on the duration of membership of beneficiaries in the Women Cooperative Credit Scheme. The largest groups of beneficiaries (45.40%) have been members for two to four years, indicating a stable membership base within this timeframe. Substantial portions (30.46%) of beneficiaries have been members for less than two years, suggesting ongoing enrollment and possibly growth in membership. Beneficiaries with more than four years of membership constitute 24.14% of the total, indicating some level of retention and continuity in the scheme.

Table – 6: Sources of awareness of the Women Cooperative Credit Scheme

Sources of Awareness	No of Beneficiaries	Percentage	Mean	SD
Cooperative Society	**123**	**23.56**	**89**	**28.00714**
Banks	**103**	**19.73**		
Non-Government Organizations	**95**	**18.20**		
Friends & Relatives	**83**	**15.90**		
Self-help groups	**78**	**14.95**		
Advertisement media	**40**	**7.66**		
Total	**522**	**100.00**		

Based on the provided table detailing the sources of awareness of the Women Cooperative Credit Scheme, The Cooperative Society is the leading source of awareness, with 123 beneficiaries (23.56%). Banks and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) also play significant roles, with 103 beneficiaries (19.73%) and 95 beneficiaries (18.20%) respectively. Friends & Relatives and Self-help groups are also notable sources, with 83 beneficiaries (15.90%) and 78 beneficiaries (14.95%) respectively. Advertisement media has the least impact, with only 40 beneficiaries (7.66%).

The Sources of awareness of the Women Cooperative Credit Scheme the respondents, the respondents had mean average of 89 with the standard deviation 28.00714 seems to lie within the high distribution.

Table – 7: Sufficiency of Cooperative Credit Scheme amount received

Opinion	No of Beneficiaries	Percentage
Sufficient	**389**	**74.52**
Not sufficient	**133**	**25.48**
Total	**522**	**100.00**

A significant majority (74.52%) of the beneficiaries find the amount received through the Cooperative Credit Scheme to be sufficient. This indicates that for a large proportion of the beneficiaries, the scheme meets their financial needs adequately. Despite the overall satisfaction, 25.48% of the beneficiaries perceive the amount received as insufficient. This minority represents a segment that may require further assistance or adjustments in the scheme's allocation criteria.

Table – 8: Reasons for getting Cooperative Credit Scheme of the sample women beneficiaries

Factors	No of Beneficiaries	Percentage	Mean	SD
To create more income and assets	**128**	**24.52**	**94.50**	**34.87693**
Market facility	**109**	**20.88**		

Hereditary employment and experience	**99**	**18.97**		
Additional employment	**90**	**17.24**		
To avail various promotional assistance	**67**	**12.83**		
Encouragement and training received from SHGs/ NGOs	**29**	**5.56**		

To create more income and assets: This is the most significant reason cited by 128 beneficiaries, accounting for 24.52% of the sample. Market facility: 109 beneficiaries (20.88%) cited this reason, though specific mean and standard deviation values are not provided. Hereditary employment and experience: 99 beneficiaries (18.97%) indicated this as a reason. Additional employment: 90 beneficiaries (17.24%) mentioned this factor. To avail various promotional assistance: 67 beneficiaries (12.83%) identified this reason. Encouragement and training received from SHGs/ NGOs: 29 beneficiaries (5.56%) mentioned receiving encouragement and training from Self-help Groups (SHGs) or Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). The mean satisfaction score associated with this reason is 94.50, with a standard deviation of 34.87693.

Table – 9: Social Constraints among the Respondents

Social Constraints	No of Beneficiaries	Percentage	Mean	SD
Family problems	**99**	**18.97**	**71**	**16.90759**
Lack of family support	**89**	**17.05**		
Multi-responsibility	**75**	**14.37**		
Lack of social contacts	**67**	**12.84**		
Political interference	**61**	**11.67**		
Want of social recognition	**55**	**10.54**		
Partiality of officers	**53**	**10.15**		
Non- co-operation from others	**23**	**4.41**		

Based on Table – 9 detailing the social constraints among the respondents of the Cooperative Credit Scheme, Family problems: This is identified as the most prevalent social constraint among the respondents, with 99 beneficiaries (18.97%) citing it. Lack of family support: 89 beneficiaries (17.05%) indicated this as a constraint. Multi-responsibility: 75 beneficiaries (14.37%) mentioned facing challenges due to multiple responsibilities. Lack of social contacts: 67 beneficiaries (12.84%) cited this as a constraint. Political interference: 61 beneficiaries (11.67%) reported facing issues due to political interference. Want of social recognition: 55 beneficiaries (10.54%) mentioned a lack of social recognition as a constraint. Partiality of officers: 53 beneficiaries (10.15%) identified this issue. Non-cooperation from others: 23 beneficiaries (4.41%) reported facing non-cooperation from others. The mean satisfaction score associated with this constraint is 71, with a standard deviation of 16.90759.

Findings of the study

- ✓ Blocks like Karamadai, Pollachi North, Pollachi South, and Sarcarsamakulam have relatively higher percentages, indicating higher participation rates in these areas. Blocks such as Anamalai, Annur, Madukkarai, Sulur, and Thondamuthur have lower percentages, suggesting lower participation.
- ✓ Beneficiaries above 50 years old constitute 12.07% of the total, reflecting a smaller but notable presence in the scheme. The age group of 41 to 50 years also shows substantial representation, accounting for 32.75%.
- ✓ The high percentage of married women participating in the cooperative credit scheme may indicate that the scheme is accessible and beneficial for women within traditional family structures.

- ✓ The scheme is effectively reaching rural populations, which often face greater financial challenges and less access to traditional banking services. This aligns with the scheme's likely goal of promoting financial inclusion among rural women.

- ✓ The presence of a considerable number of beneficiaries (30.46%) who have been members for less than two years indicates ongoing enrollment and outreach efforts, possibly expanding the scheme's reach or attracting new members.

- ✓ The Cooperative Society emerges as the most effective channel for spreading awareness about the Women Cooperative Credit Scheme, reaching nearly a quarter of the beneficiaries surveyed.

- ✓ 389 beneficiaries, constituting 74.52% of the total respondents, believe that the amount received through the Cooperative Credit Scheme is adequate for their needs.

- ✓ The predominant reason for women beneficiaries to access the Cooperative Credit Scheme is to enhance their income and assets, indicating a strong focus on economic empowerment.

- ✓ Given the prevalence of family-related issues, interventions that involve family members and provide support structures could mitigate these challenges.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, understanding the age distribution of beneficiaries provides valuable insights into designing targeted interventions and policies that can effectively cater to the diverse needs and demographics of the population benefiting from the cooperative credit scheme. Blocks with higher participation rates (e.g., Karamadai, Pollachi North, Pollachi South and Sarcarsamakulam) could serve as models for successful implementation, and their strategies could be replicated in other areas.

Understanding the marital status distribution among beneficiaries highlights the diverse backgrounds and needs of women accessing the cooperative credit scheme. The Women Cooperative Credit Scheme shows a balanced but slightly skewed distribution towards rural and semi urban areas, indicating effective targeting of underserved populations while leaving room for potential enhancements in urban outreach strategies. The scheme appears to effectively retain members while continuously attracting new ones, fostering long-term economic empowerment among women beneficiaries. The findings suggest a multi-faceted approach to enhance awareness of the Women Cooperative Credit Scheme, focusing on strengthening cooperative societies, leveraging banks and NGOs, and optimizing personal networks while reevaluating the role of advertisement media. The findings suggest overall success in meeting beneficiary needs with room for targeted improvements to enhance satisfaction and effectiveness further.

The Cooperative Credit Scheme effectively supports women in generating more income and building assets, aligning with their economic empowerment objectives. Addressing these diverse social constraints effectively can enhance the scheme's impact and ensure more equitable access and support for all beneficiaries.

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