



Economic, social, psychological and political empowerment of dairy farmers through dairy co-operatives in Palakkad district

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Abstract

Dairy co-operatives provide a stable source of income for thousands of dairy farmers in Palakkad district of Kerala. The rural people are primarily involved in farming activities such as animal husbandry and dairying. The research was carried out with an objective to study the empowerment of dairy farmers who were members of dairy co-operatives in Palakkad district. The primary data were collected from 200 active members of the four dairy co-operatives, namely Moolathara milk producer's co-operative society Ltd. No. P 65 (D), Kunnankattupathy milk producer's co-operative society Ltd. No. P 126 (D), Menonpara milk producer's co-operative society Ltd. No. P 281 (D), and Attappadi milk producer's co-operative society Ltd. No. P 558 (D). Structured interview schedule was used for data collection. The data were analyzed by using the index method. The selected dairy co-operatives in the Palakkad district play an important role in the economic, social, psychological, and political empowerment of its member dairy farmers. The dairy farmer members make significant contributions to dairy development in Palakkad. Their involvement in dairy farming is regarded as an important tool for alleviating poverty and improving the rural community's quality of life.

Keywords: Dairy co-operatives, Dairy farmers, Economic empowerment, Political empowerment, Psychological empowerment, Social empowerment.

India is an agriculture-based economy with majority of working population in the country still being engaged in agriculture and related activities directly or indirectly. According to the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (2021), 54.6 per cent of the population is engaged in agriculture and allied activities. The share of agriculture & allied sectors in Gross Value Added (GVA) of the economy is 17.8 per cent. The government has allocated 2.83 lakh crore rupees for agriculture and allied activities and irrigation in the 2020-21 budget (Economic Survey, 2019-20).

The dairy industry in India is instrumental in providing cheap and nutritional food to the vast population of India and also generates huge employment opportunities for people in rural areas. Milk is the most prominent product from the agriculture and allied sector in India. It contributes around 26 per cent of total agriculture Gross Domestic Product (GDP). India's milk production was 187.7 million tonnes in 2018-19 registering a growth rate of 6.5 per cent over the previous year. The per capita availability of milk has reached a level of 394 grams per day during 2018-19 (Economic

Survey, 2019-20).

Kerala currently represents the twelfth largest dairy market in India. The share of livestock in Gross State Value Added (GSVA) from agriculture sector in Kerala is above 27 per cent. Livestock population in Kerala was 38.36 lakh in the year of 2019 (Economic Review Report, 2019). Kerala has 13 milk processing plants and it now produces more than 12.50 lakh litres of milk per day (KCMMF, 2021).

Dairy co-operatives are functioning to support dairy farmers in processing and selling of milk and milk products. The demand of milk producers is to obtain a fair price for their milk and this is fulfilled through collective marketing. Milk is considered to be the most sensitive product requiring special and timely care and this can be provided through collective operation of dairy co-operative societies. Apart from the collection and marketing of milk, other services, such as dairy inputs, extension services, veterinary health care, artificial insemination services, provision of animal feed, fodder seed, planting material, training and education to the farmers, are also provided through dairy co-operatives. It acts as business associations owned and operated by members for their own benefit.

Khan et. al. (2014) conducted a study on “Role of dairy co-operatives in the socio-economic development of dairy farmers in Moradabad district-UP”. The study revealed that, Regular payments, essential medical support, and high demand for milk had contributed for the socio-economic development of the people involved in dairy farming in Moradabad district.

Niketha et. al. (2017) assessed the level of empowerment of members through women dairy co-operatives (WDC). The study was conducted in Karnataka by selecting three districts by proportionate random sampling method. A total of 6 WDCs and 240 members of WDCs constituted the sample of study. Majority of the respondents had

a medium level of social, cultural, psychological, economic, and technical empowerment, whereas the majority had a low level of legal and political empowerment. The psychological component of empowerment was reported to be the strongest, while the political component was found to be the lowest. Dairy women’s empowerment was found to be positive and highly significantly linked with herd size, milk productivity, milk sale, earnings from dairying, social engagement, and training received.

Dash et. al. (2020) studied about “the role of dairy cooperative society in empowering women in rural Odisha”. The study highlighted that the women’s socio-economic condition has improved significantly, after joining the co-operative organization of women milk producers. Women in rural Odisha started dairy farming as a business after joining dairy co-operative groups. As a result, women’s dairy co-operatives play an important role in providing employment and income for member dairy farmers, resulting in rural women’s empowerment.

Prajapati (2021) analyzed the socio-economic empowerment of member dairy farmers through dairy co-operatives. Dairy farmers in Gujarat contributed substantially to the dairy industry, and their participation showed an essential instrument for reducing poverty and improving the rural community’s quality of life. Personal income, purchase of immovable properties, access to family resources, personal insurance, and trust in financial transactions also got increased after joining dairy co-operatives. Respect from family members, respect from relatives, leadership characteristics, communication ability, and understanding of government programmes have all grown as a result of joining the dairy co-operative

Objective

To assess the role of dairy co-operatives in the empowerment of member farmers.

Methodology

This study is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected by using a structured interview schedule and the secondary data were collected from the published books, reports, articles, and annual reports.

The primary data were collected from 200 active dairy farmer respondents from four selected dairy co-operatives in the Palakkad district using a simple random sampling method. The collected data were analysed by using index methods.

The formula is as follows:

$$\text{Index} = \frac{\sum_{i=1} \sum_{j=1} S_{ij}}{\sum \text{Max} S_j}$$

- i = Respondents
 - j = Problems/constrain
 - S_j = Score of jth factor
 - S_{ij} = Total score of jth factor of the ith respondent
 - Max S_j = Maximum score for the jth factor
- Based on the index obtained, the results were compared to a standard derived:

Index Score	Problems/Constrains category
0-20	Very Low
21-40	Low
41-60	Moderately High
61-80	High
81-100	Very High

Distribution of the respondents according to different dimensions of empowerment

Economic empowerment of dairy farmers

Economic empowerment involves both the ability to succeed and the power to make and act on economic decisions. The following table measured the economic empowerment level of selected dairy farmers.

Table 1 represents the extent of economic empowerment among 200 dairy farmers. It was measured by using seven statements linked with economic empowerment. The farmers were highly

Table 1. Economic empowerment

Sl. No	Statements	Index	Opinion level
1	Society encourages the members by providing various financial supports.	80	High
2	Society enables the members to develop professional skills in dairying.	64	High
3	Society enables the members to improve their saving ability from dairying.	80	High
4	Society enables the members to achieve the goal of agricultural development.	85	Very high
5	Society enables the members to participate actively in the dairy development projects.	34	Low
6	Society enables the members to improve farm production and productivity.	83	Very high
7	Society enables the members for effective utilization of materials and dairy services.	98	Very high

empowered concerning with the achievement of agricultural development, improvement of farm production and productivity, effective utilization of materials in dairying, availability of various financial supports, and improved saving habits from dairying. They opined low empowerment with respect to participation level in dairy development projects. So, societies need to concentrate more on member participation in dairy development projects.

Social empowerment

Social empowerment is the process of developing a sense of autonomy and self-confidence and acting individually to change social relations. The succeeding data measured the social empowerment level of selected dairy farmers.

Table 2 denotes the opinion of members towards the social empowerment of farmers through dairy co-operatives. The members strongly agreed that society permits the members to fight against misconceptions related to dairying. Further, they agreed that the society empowers the members to attain the goal of social freedom, for improving their social status, for upgraded social relations, for improving social responsibility, to work with social equality. They gave moderately high opinion for the support for involvement in social service and low for the fight against human rights violations. Therefore, societies must encourage their members

Table 2. Social empowerment

Sl. No	Statements	Index	Opinion level
1	Society enables the members to achieve the goal of social freedom.	65	High
2	Society enables the members to fight against misconceptions related to dairying.	89	Very high
3	Society enables the members to actively get involved in social service.	52	Moderately high
4	Society enables the members for improving their social status.	69	High
5	Society enables the members for better social relations.	72	High
6	Society enables the members for improving social responsibility.	64	High
7	Society enables the members to fight against human rights violations.	30	Low
8	Society enables the members to work with social equality.	69	High

in their efforts to engage in charitable work and protect human rights.

Psychological empowerment

Psychological empowerment is an important motivational resource that helps to enhance engagement in various activities. The following table evaluated the psychological empowerment level of selected dairy farmers.

Table 3 symbolizes the judgment of members towards the psychological empowerment of members through dairy co-operatives. The members

Table 3. Psychological empowerment

Sl. No	Statements	Index	Opinion level
1	Society enables the members to increase their confidence about their ability to do their work.	93	Very high
2	Society motivates the members to increase their participation in dairy farming.	93	Very high
3	Society helps the members to learn more about dairying.	90	Very high
4	Society supporting the members to improve the risk-taking capacity.	83	Very high
5	Society improves the decision-making capacity of member farmers.	75	High
6	Society helps to reduce the stress level of members related to dairying.	66	High
7	Society helps to improve the perception level of member farmers.	48	Moderately high

strongly agreed that the society empowers the members to raise the confidence about the capacity to do their work, to increase the involvement and to acquire more ideas about dairying, to reduce the stress level of members related to dairying, and to improve the risk-taking capacity. The farmers also agreed that the society helped to expand the decision-making capacity and to improve the perception of members on functioning of the society. The results stated that the psychological empowerment was possible through the selected dairy co-operatives.

Political empowerment

Political empowerment is the process of transferring various elements of power to those who do not have it. The following table evaluated the influence of dairy co-operative in the political empowerment of selected dairy farmers.

Table 4 indicates the influence of dairy co-operative in the political empowerment of selected dairy farmers. The respondents marked a low level of empowerment towards all statements such as the leadership development opportunities, participation in party elections, and demanding their rights and privileges of members and support in managing the political crisis. The findings show that there was no political empowerment happened among the members through the selected dairy co-operatives.

Findings and Conclusion

The dairy co-operatives are contributing

Table 4. Political empowerment

Sl. No	Statements	Index	Opinion level
1	Society enables the members to acquire leadership development opportunities.	37	Low
2	Society enables the members to actively participate in political activities.	24	Low
3	Society enables the members to manage the political crisis.	23	Low
4	Society enables the members to participate actively in elections.	21	Low
5	Society enables the members to demand their rights and privileges.	21	Low

significantly in empowering dairy farmers. The findings of the study revealed that, joining the dairy co-operatives helps to increase personal income, professional skills, saving ability, agricultural development, and farm production and productivity. Likewise, after joining the dairy co-operative, social status, social freedom, social relations, participation in social services, self-confidence, Perception level, decision-making capacity have increased. But the participation in the dairy development projects, and fight against human rights violations have scored less. The political empowerment was low among the members of dairy co-operatives.

The social, economic, and psychological growth of dairy farmers depends on dairy cooperatives. They provide financial benefits by cutting expenses and enhancing price stability and market accessibility. Additionally, they support social development through fostering a feeling of community, empowering farmers, and knowledge exchange. In a psychological sense, cooperatives help dairy farmers feel less stressed, more confident, and more a part of the community. In general, dairy cooperatives play a key role in enhancing the standard of living for dairy farmers and promoting sustainable dairy farming methods.

Suggestions

- ✓ Educate the members about the pros and cons and importance of political empowerment within the cooperative.
- ✓ Organize frequent training sessions to increase members' knowledge of political leadership, decision-making, and governance.

- ✓ Develop clear and open rules regarding decision-making about finances, governance, and planning.

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