

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF EMPOWERMENT – A STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF GOVERNMENT ICT PROGRAMMES AMONGST WOMEN IN KERALA

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by

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ABSTRACT

Women have increasingly proven to be active and enthusiastic participants in a large variety of ICT enabled projects, such as computer training and data entry facilities, call centres, billing, computer repair work, and e-enabled businesses. The significance of such programmes are in its ability to outreach several households because social, economic and political uplift of women will have implications on the coming generations as well. The study was done in the context of the state of Kerala. The study targeted those ICT programmes constructed and designed for women. The research commences by reviewing the underlying agendas on empowerment programmes which utilize ICT as a tool. In the state of Kerala, only one ICT programme for women was discovered which was initiated by the State Poverty Eradication Mission (SPEM)) or popularly known as *Kudumbashree* Mission. Further discussions accentuated the specific role played by the IT enterprises in the social system of its women beneficiaries.

The analytical capabilities and methodological apparatus of actor – network theory was used to comprehend the formation of Kudumbashree IT Enterprises. The factors of empowerment were also studied along with the issues which constrained and liberated their action. The theoretical lens of the study is built upon the aspects of neo-institutionalism, functional simplification, empowerment and sociology of translation. The concepts used for the study were operationally defined using indicators obtained through secondary sources and discussions with the subject experts, key informants and authors.

The arguments are made using interpretive case study of Kudumbashree IT enterprise. The research has employed both qualitative and quantitative data for the better understanding of the field of study. The findings showcase a process of adaptation which leads to the induction of women into the process of empowerment. The research indicates that such ICT interventions are helpful in terms of uplifting women socially, economically and politically. The study has also critically discussed the process of empowerment by analysing data obtained from the ground.