



Attributes Required for Entrepreneurs of Self-Help Groups (SHGS) Involved in the Development of Microenterprises

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Under the pathetic and uneasy conditions the rural poor face, microfinance activity acts as the saviour to redeem them from the clutches of poverty and unemployment. The present study was conducted to examine the influence of entrepreneurial attributes of members of SHGs in the effectiveness of microfinance services for agro-enterprise development by the Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in Kerala. The study was conducted in ex-post facto design, in the three purposively selected districts of the three zones of Kerala, namely, Thiruvananthapuram, Thrissur and Malappuram. The effectiveness of microfinance services was calculated individually from the scores obtained for each respondent and the average score of members in a group constituted the effectiveness score of the

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group. The independent samples t-test was employed to find out the significant difference in entrepreneurial characteristics score with the effectiveness of microfinance services. Also, a correlation analysis was performed between entrepreneurial characteristics and the effectiveness of microfinance services. The correlation analysis of the entrepreneurial characteristics of the SHG members and the effectiveness of microfinance services revealed that 'achievement motivation', 'innovativeness', 'thrift tendency', 'strategic visioning' and 'internal locus of control' were positively and significantly correlated with the effectiveness of microfinance services at one per cent level of significance, whereas 'economic opportunism' was positively and significantly correlated with the effectiveness of microfinance services at five per cent level of significance. The independent samples t-test revealed that the entrepreneurial abilities of the members of SHG largely influenced the effectiveness of microfinance services for agro-enterprise development rather than other factors like the nature of agro-enterprises which was usually selected through micro screening techniques. The study necessitates a severe need of the establishment of business schools for youth to develop their entrepreneurial traits as well as better governance, especially in the agro sector.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurial characteristics; effectiveness; microfinance; self help group.*

1. INTRODUCTION

"Despite recent advancements, around 1.4 billion adults still lack any formal financial account, predominantly in low- and middle-income countries" (CGAP 2023). "Finance is widely acknowledged as one of the crucial resources for entrepreneurial development and poverty alleviation in developing countries" (Lwesya 2023). "Microfinance is one of the methods of building the limits of poor people and shaping them to self-employment" (Tria et al., 2022). "Statistics indicate that some 45 per cent of all the people in the world who use microfinance services are living in South Asia" (Sakshi and Karoly 2018; Yunus, 2016).

To enhance international development, the United Nations Organization (UNO) announced the millennium development goals, aimed to eradicate poverty by 2015 (UN 2015). "In this regard, microfinance is the form of financial development that has its primary aim to alleviate the poverty. In the recognition of microfinance, the UNO celebrated the year 2005 as a year of micro-credit (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2005). The growing impact of climate change further exacerbates challenges in financial accounts, disproportionately affecting low- and middle-income countries. This highlights the critical need for a broader range of financial services in low- and middle-income countries" (Meki and Quinn 2024).

"Entrepreneurship can be defined as the capability to undertake substantial amount of risk while managing and organizing a new or existing business enterprise with the solitary object of making profits" (Okezie et al., 2021). "Entrepreneurship development has made

significant contribution in providing employment to millions of people, generating foreign exchange for the growing economy, producing import substitutes, contributing to value addition and utilizing the vast human and natural resources of the country (Ahamed et al., 2020). In view of the above contributions, entrepreneurship development through small enterprises has come to occupy crucial role in the economic progress of the nation" (GOI 2021; Mekki & Quinn, 2024). "In developing countries like India, planning and implementation for development of entrepreneurial programmes are essential for raising the living standard of the vast majority of the backward regions because of their over-dependence on agriculture for employment" (Uplaonkar and Biradar 2015). No country whether large or small, developed or developing can undermine the immense potential and contribution of the small enterprises. They have become more essential in vision of globalization and liberalization (Misal, 2013). Thus, enterprise development appears to be the best substitute to find employment opportunities, income generation, poverty reduction and improvements in nutrition, health and overall food security in the national economy (India Brand Equity Foundation [IBEF], 2013).

The aim of the Government is to create employment opportunities for youth. Entrepreneurship Development is one of the mechanisms adopted by the Government towards the creation of job opportunities. There have been notable efforts taken by the Government by announcing conducive policies towards the promotion of innovation for entrepreneurial development such as establishment of National Skill Development

Agency (NSDA), National Skill Development Fund (NSDF) and new initiatives like Startup funds, Startup Village, Incubation Centres, Make in India, Digital India and standup India are roadmaps towards this direction. In this backdrop, the characteristics and attitudes moulding the entrepreneurs into a successful ones are crucial to study.

“An agro-enterprise is the entrepreneurship programme in the field of agriculture. It provide value-adding goods and services and take title to inputs and/or outputs within the agro-food system” (Yoganandan and Vignesh 2017).

“A Self Help Group is a group which involves of 15 to 20 people in number, from a homogenous class, who come collected to form savings and credit organization” (Anupam 2012).

“SHG and microfinance has become a stepping stone for the underprivileged, allowing them to rise not only economically, but also socially, psychologically, and emotionally” (Sarumathi and Mohan 2011). The SHG movement, which is linked to the microfinance approach, is now widely recognised as an effective intervention tool for decreasing poverty, producing income, empowering the poor, and lowering unemployment.

The microfinance services have a positive impact on SHGs by creation of employment, capital accumulation and subsequent increase in the income and consumption at the household and community level. Murugan (2023) revealed that while measuring the standard of living of SHG entrepreneurs, in terms of nine dimensions like ‘employment days’, ‘food consumption pattern’, ‘housing type’, ‘clothing’, ‘health care’, ‘education of children’, ‘assets creation’, ‘hygiene and sanitation’ and ‘recreation’; before the commencement of microfinance services, 34.28 per cent, 41.90 per cent and 23.81 per cent of the members of SHGs belonged to low, medium and high standard of living classes respectively, whereas it was 24.28 per cent, 46.19 per cent and 29.52 per cent respectively after availing the microfinance services.

In spite of all these international consecration, micro credit indebtedness is common across developing countries including India. Keeping this question in focus, the present study was conducted to examine influence of entrepreneurial attributes of SHG members in the effectiveness of microfinance services for agro-enterprise development by the Self Help Groups (SHGs) in Kerala.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in ex-post facto design, in the three purposively selected districts of the three zones of Kerala, namely, Thiruvananthapuram, Thrissur and Malappuram. Two blocks, from each of the selected districts, were identified through purposive sampling. Seven SHGs were selected from the selected two blocks of each district, through proportionate random sampling, forming 21 SHGs and ten members were randomly selected from each of these selected SHGs, constituting a sample size of 210 agripreneurs, ensuring representation of different agro enterprises. The data was collected from these 210 SHG agripreneurs through personal interview and was analyzed by using suitable statistical techniques.

A list of 12 entrepreneurial characteristics was framed after thorough study and review of literature and then sent to 60 judges (experts) for eliciting their relevancy on a five-point continuum. The judges comprised experts in the field of agriculture and agribusiness management, such as Scientists of Kerala Agricultural University (KAU), Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) and University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS), Acharya N G Ranga Agricultural University (ANGRAU), Anand Agricultural University (AAU), Professors and researchers in Department of Economics at Kerala University and Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala - Scientists in Krishi Vigyan Kendras, Experts and officials of Extension Training Centers etc.

Reasons for venturing into agripreneurship, economic motivation, risk orientation, internal locus of control, attitude towards self-employment, economic opportunism, achievement motivation, innovativeness, management orientation, thrift tendency, dealing with failure, strategic visioning were the entrepreneurial characteristics framed and send to the judges for rating.

The A relevancy index was worked out for the twelve entrepreneurial characteristics mentioned above and six entrepreneurial characteristics which secured a relevancy index of 75 and above were selected for the study.

Relevancy index =

$$\frac{\text{Total score obtained on each item}}{\text{Maximum possible score}} \times 100$$

The six entrepreneurial characteristics finally selected were economic opportunism, achievement motivation, innovativeness, thrift tendency, strategic visioning and internal locus of control.

The effectiveness of microfinance services was calculated individually from the scores obtained for each respondent and the average score of members in a group constituted the effectiveness score of the group. The scale developed by (Murugan 2023) was used. Effectiveness index was calculated based on the five dimensions above viz., micro credit, micro savings, delivery mechanism, repayment and training and advisory. The independent samples t-test and correlation analysis were the statistical tools employed.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Entrepreneurial Characteristics of Members of SHGs

1. Economic opportunism

Entrepreneurs ideally should be open to the modification of his/her policies entirely and the favourable chances or overtures offered by the environments to secure the best possible profits. The Table 1 clearly indicated that nearly two-thirds of the respondents (62.86%) fall in medium economic opportunism while 20.00 per cent comes in the low category and 17.14 per cent in the high category. The result is in agreement with the findings of Somanath (2009) Joy et al.(2008) reported that the non-performing SHGs had less scores for economic motivation which indicated that lower profit might be a reason for their failure of the SHG activity. The economic opportunism behaviour is influenced by the respondents' achievement motivation, problem solving ability, trainings received by them etc. and encouraged by the State Government and agencies like Kudumbhasree, NGOs.

2. Achievement motivation

The internal urge to succeed in any venture and to attain the desired goals is one of the most essential qualities for an entrepreneur. A critical examination of Table 1 reveals that more than half of the respondents (54.29%) had medium level of achievement motivation followed by an equal percentage i.e., 22.86 per cent with low and high

achievement motivation. These findings are in accordance with the findings of Mehta and Sonawane (2009) and Tekale et al. (2013). Better educational background and sense of empowerment would have enhanced the achievement motivation of the respondents. According to Mariammal and Seethalakshmi (2017) people who possess high achievement motive seek out, enjoy and do well at jobs that are entrepreneurial in nature. Patil et al. (2021) revealed that achievement motivation was positively and significantly correlated with the effectiveness of group dynamics within the group. On contradiction, Asha et al. (2018) reported a non-significant association between achievement motivation and performance of the SHGs.

3. Innovativeness

Burns (2003) opined that innovation is the chief tool used by the entrepreneurs to build or exploit opportunities. It was evident from the Table 1 that nearly half of the SHG members (45.71%) belonged medium innovativeness category whereas 31.43 per cent belonged to low category and 22.86 per cent belonged to high category of innovativeness. The innovative attitude of the SHG members may be due to the better basic education and skills they possess and the self - confidence they gained. The power of group or being together make them go for innovative steps in the business which will turn out better profit as innovativeness is described as a key factor in the behaviour of entrepreneurs. The results of the study were in agreement with findings of Narayan (2002), Sundaran and Sreedaya (2016) Ahuja et al. (2016), Niaz and Khan (2021) and Sreedaya (2000).

4. Thrift tendency

Thrift is the quality and practice of careful management of money. It is the behaviour of individuals to save a part of earnings before spending it. It is noticed from the Table 1 that more than half of the respondents (54.29%) had medium level of thrift tendency whereas 25.71 per cent of the respondents had low level and 20.00 per cent had high level of thrift tendency. Lokhande (2008) mentioned that 43.25 per cent of the SHG members who had monthly savings in the range of Rs. 10 - 50, were augmented in the range of Rs.50-100 after joining the SHGs, whereas 21.16

per cent of the members who had having savings between Rs.51-100, had improved significantly to Rs.101-150. In case of 17.48 per cent of the members, the monthly savings had increased from Rs.101-150 to Rs.151-200. The deferred gratification sense would have helped the members to inculcate a thrift tendency in

them which will help them to avoid unnecessary expenses and utilize the same as a lump sum amount in a future need. It also improves the financial management ability of the members. The results of the study were in agreement with the findings of Bidnur (2012) and Saini and Meena (2020).

Table 1. Entrepreneurial characteristics of SHG agripreneurs

1. Economic opportunism			
Sl. No.	Category	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
1	Low (\leq Q 1)	42	20.00
2	Medium (Q1 - Q3)	132	62.86
3	High (\geq Q 3)	36	17.14
Total		210	100.00
Q1 – 10		Q2 - 12	Q3 – 13
2. Achievement motivation			
Sl. No.	Category	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
1	Low (\leq Q 1)	48	22.86
2	Medium (Q1 – Q3)	114	54.29
3	High (\geq Q 3)	48	22.86
Total		210	100.00
Q1 - 15		Q2 - 18	Q3 – 20
3. Innovativeness			
Sl. No.	Category	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
1	Low (\leq Q 1)	66	31.43
2	Medium (Q1 – Q3)	96	45.71
3	High (\geq Q 3)	48	22.86
Total		210	100.00
Q1 - 14		Q2 - 19	Q3 – 20
4. Thrift tendency			
Sl. No.	Category	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
1	Low (\leq Q 1)	54	25.71
2	Medium (Q1 – Q3)	114	54.29
3	High (\geq Q 3)	42	20.00
Total		210	100.00
Q1 - 20		Q2 - 27	Q3 – 31
5. Strategic visioning			
Sl. No.	Category	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
1	Low (\leq Q 1)	54	25.71
2	Medium (Q1 – Q3)	111	52.86
3	High (\geq Q 3)	45	21.43
Total		210	100.00
Q1 - 26		Q2 - 3	Q3 – 56
6. Internal locus of control			
Sl. No.	Category	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
1	Low (\leq Q 1)	62	29.52
2	Medium (Q1 – Q3)	108	51.43
3	High (\geq Q 3)	40	19.05
Total		210	100.00
Q1 - 26		Q2 - 3	Q3 – 56

5. Strategic visioning

Dhar (2003) expressed that entrepreneurs along with managing their enterprises, also should be adequately strategic enough to compete and co-exist with other enterprises. It could be inferred from the Table 1 that majority of the SHG members fall in the category of medium strategic visioning, while 25.71 per cent fall in the category of low and 21.43 per cent in the category of high strategic visioning. This could be due to the experience as majority of them are middle aged than young. Education and better exposure to the environment, sensation to the instances like risk assumption, chances for profit, better leadership ability, etc. helped the members in having better strategic visioning.

The enterprise development is not only dependent on the microfinance, it also depends on the resources available, the vision of the owner, firm nature and strategic decision-making. The result is in line with the findings of Somanath (2009) Ravi and Roy (2014) found that the enterprise development is not only dependent on the microfinance, it also depends on the resources available, the vision of the owner, firm nature and strategic decision-making. Mariammal and Seethalakshmi (2017) viewed that the strategic visioning and planning ability will help out the entrepreneurs to estimate the future requirements to run the enterprise profitably, in advance.

6. Internal locus of control

The trust of the members that they are able to regulate the events and concerns in their personal and business life and the extent of individual responsibility they perceive for their activities and outcomes provides an indication of their internal locus of control. In cultures where there is a strong belief system in self-determination (internal locus of control), the entrepreneurial activity rates tends to be higher (Smith-Hunter et al., 2003). A perusal of the Table 1 reveals that slightly more than half of the respondents (51.43%) had a medium level of internal locus of control followed by low and high with 29.52 per cent and 19.05 per cent of the respondents respectively. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents belong to medium and high levels of internal locus of control.

A glance at Table 2 revealed that there was a strong relationship between the entrepreneurial characteristics of the members of SHGs and the

effectiveness of microfinance services perceived by them. The results were in line with the findings of (Rose and Jincy 2017) who did an examination on the point impact of SHG initiatives on socio economic status of members.

This shows that the effectiveness of micro finance services for agro enterprise development is largely influenced by the entrepreneurial characteristics of the agripreneurs than the factors like nature of agro enterprises, availability of inputs, marketing channels, market availability etc., as most of the enterprises were selected by micro screening techniques.

The study necessitate a severe need of establishment of business schools for youth to develop their entrepreneurial traits as well as better governance especially in the agro sector. Business schools helps to foster an entrepreneurial mindset, provide information, advice, coaching and mentoring. In tune with GoI's goal (Government of India), NABARD has developed a structured approach for addressing the skill gap in rural India through demand and outcome-based programmes through multiple stakeholders in skill development ecosystem leading to wage/ self-employment. NABARD has developed a digital platform "NABSKILL" in 2018, enabling complete digitisation of skill interventions. (www.nabard.com). Panchsutras - which includes regular group meetings, savings, internal lending, timely repayment and maintenance of accounts which results in better SHG - Bank Linkage Program could also be advised for better group dynamics.

There is a need of paradigm shift in perception of SHGs by linking them with entrepreneurship development as a strategic intervention for their overall growth and development. Entrepreneurship development (ED) refers to the procedure of enhancing entrepreneurial skills and knowledge through structured training and institution building programmes. Becoming a trained entrepreneur potentially offers benefits to the agripreneurs through deepening their human capital attributes (self-reliance, skill development) and also sensing the market pulse.

There is a need to build the preparation programs given to the SHG individuals with respect to the self-improvement and enterprising expertise advancement. Better digital literacy, technology know-how, communication ability, decision making power, leadership ability, profit making technique, market research and also goal

Table 2. Comparison of agripreneurs of SHGs based on their perceived effectiveness towards microfinance services

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Entrepreneurial characteristics	Equal variances assumed	2.031	.157	24.392	98	.000
	Equal variances not assumed			24.392	93.540	.000

Table 3. Correlation between effectiveness of microfinance services and entrepreneurial characteristics

Sl. No.	Entrepreneurial characteristics	'r' value
1	Economic opportunism	.511*
2	Achievement motivation	.633**
3	Innovativeness	.656**
4	Thrift tendency	.625**
5	Strategic visioning	.652**
6	Internal locus of control	.640**

** 1% significant level; *5% significant level

setting, creative problem solving, and critical thinking, should be addressed. A higher level of entrepreneurial skills shall lead towards better utilization of loan amounts for productive purposes. Vocational training should be provided to SHG members to initiate micro enterprises. Regular monitoring and evaluation along with continuous up gradation of SHG members should also be done from time to time. Learning from peer groups and adoption of innovations also help to enhance the output.

The study conducted also revealed the fact that capacity building on financial sustainability and application of group lending help to enhance the performance of SHGs.

4. CORRELATION OF EFFECTIVENESS OF MICROFINANCE SERVICES WITH ENTREPRENEURIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Correlation analysis was performed between effectiveness of microfinance services index and six entrepreneurial characteristics under study. Table 3 shows the correlation coefficient 'r' values obtained as a result of correlation analysis.

The correlation analysis of the entrepreneurial characteristics of the SHG members and the

effectiveness of microfinance services revealed that 'achievement motivation', 'innovativeness', 'thrift tendency', 'strategic visioning' and 'internal locus of control' were positively and significantly correlated with the effectiveness of microfinance services at one per cent level of significance, whereas 'economic opportunism' was positively and significantly correlated with the effectiveness of microfinance services at five per cent level of significance.

5. DISCUSSION

This shows that the effectiveness of micro finance services for agro enterprise development was largely influenced by the entrepreneurial characteristics of the members of SHGs than the factors like nature of agro enterprises, availability of inputs, marketing channels, market availability etc., as most of the enterprises were selected by micro screening techniques.

The study necessitate a severe need of establishment of business schools for youth to develop their entrepreneurial traits as well as better governance especially in the agro sector. Business schools helps to foster an entrepreneurial mindset, provide information, advice, coaching and mentoring. In tune with GOI's goal (Government of India), NABARD has developed a structured approach for addressing

the skill gap in rural India through demand and outcome- based programmes through multiple stakeholders in skill development ecosystem leading to wage/ self-employment. NABARD has developed a digital platform "NABSKILL" in 2018, enabling complete digitisation of skill interventions. (www.nabard.com). Panchsutras - which includes regular group meetings, savings, internal lending, timely repayment and maintenance of accounts which results in better SHG - Bank Linkage Program could also be advised for better group dynamics.

There is a need of paradigm shift in perception of SHGs by linking them with entrepreneurship development as a strategic intervention for their overall growth and development. Entrepreneurship development (ED) refers to the procedure of enhancing entrepreneurial skills and knowledge through structured training and institution building programmes. Becoming a trained entrepreneur potentially offers benefits to the agripreneurs through deepening their human capital attributes (self-reliance, skill development) and also sensing the market pulse.

There is a need to build the preparation programs given to the SHG individuals with respect to the self- improvement and enterprising expertise advancement. Better digital literacy, technology know-how, communication ability, decision making power, leadership ability, profit making technique, market research and also goal setting, creative problem solving, and critical thinking, should be addressed. A higher level of entrepreneurial skills shall lead towards better utilization of loan amounts for productive purposes. Vocational training should be provided to SHG members to initiate micro enterprises. Regular monitoring and evaluation along with continuous up gradation of SHG members should also be done from time to time. Learning from peer groups and adoption of innovations also help to enhance the output.

The study conducted also revealed the fact that capacity building on financial sustainability and application of group lending help to enhance the performance of SHGs.

6. CONCLUSION

The study reveals that the entrepreneurial abilities of the members of SHG largely influenced the effectiveness of microfinance services for agro enterprise development than other factors like the nature of agro-enterprises

which was usually selected through micro screening techniques. The study necessitate a severe need of establishment of business schools for youth to develop their entrepreneurial traits as well as better governance especially in the agro sector.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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