METHODOLOGY
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The methodology followed for the present study titled "Lifelong Learning Aspirations and their Correlates of Rural Women in Dindigul District" is discussed under the following headings:

1. Type of Research
2. Description of the Study Area
3. The Data and the Sources of Data
4. The Sample of the Study
5. Selection of the Sample
6. Data Collection Instruments
7. Method of Data Collection and Field Work
8. Selection of the Variables
9. Data Processing and Analysis Plan
10. Duration of the Study
11. Limitations of the Study

1. Type of Research

There are four types of research namely, historical, descriptive, experimental and exploratory research. Of these, descriptive research explains the present through a description of what now exists (Hopkins, 1976). According to Best and Khan (1995) descriptive research deals with the
relationship between variables, the testing of hypotheses, the development of
generalizations and prediction of future phenomena (Best and Khan, 1995).
The present study is a descriptive study as it explains the present condition of
the lifelong learning aspirations of rural women in a selected area as well as
the relations among selected variables. The study also attempts to test the
hypotheses framed for the study.

Hopkins (1976) pointed out that the description of the present condition
is meant for two basic uses. One is to assist administrators and education
personnel in making decisions within a limited area and the other is to
generate generalizable knowledge and add to the body of knowledge. These
characteristics are applicable to the present study also as the findings are
expected to contribute to strengthening the lifelong education of women and
also to add to the existing knowledge on lifelong education.

The present study employs the survey method to collect data. According to Krishnaswami (2000) a survey is a 'fact-finding' study. "It is a
method of research involving collection of data directly from a population or a
sample thereof at a particular time". In the present study, a survey of lifelong
learning aspirations has been done among selected rural women. Data
related to lifelong learning aspirations among the illiterate, school dropouts,
graduates and women who have completed higher secondary education in
Dindigul District were collected with the help of an interview schedule and a
questionnaire.
2. **Description of the Study Area**

Dindigul District was chosen to study the lifelong learning aspirations of women. It is one of the 30 districts of Tamil Nadu and was formed by bifurcating the erstwhile Madurai District on September 15, 1985. The headquarters of the district is Dindigul, one of the historical cities in Tamil Nadu. It is located 400 kilometers from the state capital of Chennai and 65 kms from the temple city of Madurai, and 100 kms from the rock city of Trichy in the south-western part of Tamil Nadu. The map of the area studied is given in Figure 1.

The district comprises three revenue divisions, namely, Dindigul, Palani and Kodaikanal and 7 taluks, namely, Dindigul, Kodaikanal, Natham, Nilakottai, Oddanchatram, Palani, and Vedasandur. There are 358 hamlets and 304 village Panchayats in the district. The village Panchayats are governed by 14 panchayat unions. There are 24 town Panchayats.

There are 14 blocks in Dindigul District. The present study was carried out in the Athoor, Dindigul, Nilakottai and Vedasandur Blocks of Dindigul District. The profiles of the four blocks are given hereunder.

**Dindigul Block.** Dindigul Block is situated in the middle of Palani, Batlagundu and Natham Blocks. It consists of 18 revenue villages, two town Panchayats and 169 hamlets. There are a number of leather tanneries which provide employment opportunities to nearly 2000 workers and earn foreign exchange. Agriculture plays a minimum role in providing employment opportunities. The industries and business centres in Dindigul Town and suburbs provide most of the employment opportunities to the people.
The total number of population engaged in own cultivation is 10,074 (male 6893; female 3181). Agricultural labourers are 23,560 (male 11910; female 11650). Apart from these the population engaged in manufacturing and processing work is around 1751 (male 1120; female 631). Besides, 17,110 people (12,200 male; 4910 female) are engaged in other occupations (Dindigul District Statistical Handbook 1999-2000, as quoted in Sudhir et al., 2003).

There are 125 primary schools, 23 middle schools, 8 high schools, 12 higher secondary schools, three arts and science colleges and two technical institutions (Engineering Colleges) in this block.

Vedasandur Block. Vedasandur Block is situated in Vedasandur Taluk of Dindigul District. The boundary of the block in the North is Tiruchirappalli District, in the West Ottanchatram Block, in the South Dindigul Block, in the East Vadadur Block and in the North-East Guziliamparai Block. It has 23 revenue villages with two town Panchayats, 22 village Panchayats and 266 hamlets. Generally this block is a drought prone area.

There are 8 pre-primary schools, 95 primary schools, 11 middle schools, 4 high schools, 4 higher secondary schools and 2 matriculation schools. Three spinning mills and the Gandhi Seva Sangam provide employment, particularly to women, for improving their socio-economic condition. The total population of this block is 1,04,292 (Male 53,871; female 50,421).
**Athoor Block.** Athoor Block is situated 16 kms South-West of Dindigul. Athoor Block is bound by Reddiarchatram Block in the North, Dindigul Block in the East, Nilakottai and Batlagundu Blocks in the South and Kodaikanal Block in the West. This block consists of 21 revenue villages, 3 town Panchayats and 186 hamlets. The population of this block is 1, 36,099 and the total area of this block is 26639.63 hec. The Gandhigram Rural University, the Lakshmi College of Education, the Kasthuriba Hospital, and the Institute of Rural Health and Family Welfare Trust are situated in this block.

The major occupation is agriculture. In addition to this, manufacturing units like spinning mills and iron works are also running. Some of the population are involved in occupations such as transport and cooly work (Dindigul District Statistical Handbook, 1999-2000, as quoted in Sudhir et al., 2003).

There are 74 primary schools, 13 middle schools, 16 high schools and 3 higher secondary schools in this block.

**Nilakottai Block.** Nilakottai Block is situated 24 kms on the southern side of Dindigul. This block is surrounded by Athoor Block in the North, Usilampatti Block in the South, Batlagundu Block in the West and Vadipatti in the East. This block has 23 Panchayats, 2 town Panchayats, 28 revenue villages and 156 hamlets. There are 135 pre-primary schools, 87 primary schools, 5 high schools, 4 higher secondary schools, one matriculation higher secondary school, one Government Arts and Science College and one Industrial Training Institute.
There are a few fabrication units, paper mills and soap factories and a number of small scale industries in this block providing employment opportunities to the rural people.

The density of population per sq.km is 527 and is very high in villages like Oruthattu, Silukuvarpatti, Ethilodu and Jambuthuraikottai. The Scheduled Castes population and the Scheduled Tribes population number 31,610 males and 28,063 females (Dindigul District Statistical Handbook, 1999-2000, as quoted in Sudhir et al., 2003). The major occupation is agriculture.

Reasons for Selecting the Area

The government's Continuing Education Programme was started in Dindigul District in 2003. It was thought that the findings of the present study will be very helpful to the continuing education personnel to start relevant continuing educational courses for women. Another reason for selecting the area for the study was that no study has been conducted on the lifelong learning aspirations of rural women in this area. Yet another reason was that Dindigul District is the nearest district which would enable the researcher to collect data from the optimum number of respondents.

Figure 2 shows the blocks and the Panchayats wherein the study was conducted.
Figure 2

Area of Study

Dindigul District

Dindigul Block

Nilakottai Block

Vedasandur Block

Panchayats

Kuttam

Nagampatti

Kovilur

Maram badli

Pilaiyarn atham

Vilam patti

Jambuh urai kottai

Pallapatti

Mullipadi

Bala Krishna puram

Chettinai ckanpatti

Alamara thupatti

Vakkam patti

Palayan kottai

PANCHAYATS COVERED IN THE STUDY
3. **The Data and the Sources of Data**

Data were collected on two major aspects. One aspect was the socio-economic background of the sample. It included particulars related to age, educational and occupational status of women, family income, community, marital status, type of family, number of children, youngest child’s age and husband’s educational status.

The second aspect was related to the lifelong learning aspirations of women. It included the sub aspects such as whether they wanted to continue their studies and the reasons for continuing their education, the courses / subjects the women aspired to join or undergo, barriers to fulfilling their desires and the mode through women preferred to continue to learn. The questions asked of illiterate women were slightly different. They covered illiterate women's awareness of literacy programmes, learning facilities available in selected Panchayats, awareness of Open University, and knowledge of other non formal continuing education sources which are accessible to them.

As the study was on the aspirations of women, data were collected directly from the selected sample of women. The data were collected from different categories of women, i.e., of different educational levels. The categories included i) those who had completed their higher secondary education, ii) those who had already completed their undergraduation and postgraduation, iii) those who had discontinued their education at the middle, secondary or higher secondary school level, and, iv) illiterates from the selected area.
Women who belonged to the age group of 15-40 years were taken as the target group for the study because comparatively young people have higher number of aspirations than older people.

Comparatively lesser number of illiterate and school dropouts were selected for the study, because they were unable to fill up the questionnaire and were to be interviewed and the higher the number of illiterates the more would be the time needed for collecting data.

Moreover, while higher secondary educated women and graduate women were rather easily accessible in their houses, most of the illiterate and dropout women were not easily accessible, because they were, most of the time, out of their houses, engaged in wage work or seeking after employment opportunities. Besides, even if the illiterates and the dropouts were accessible, some of them were unwilling to respond to the questions in the interview schedule.
5. Selection of the Sample

Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select the sample for the study. Multi-stage sampling involves selecting samples from samples, each sample being drawn from within the previously selected sample (Denscombe, 1999).

In Dindigul District there are fourteen blocks. Among the fourteen blocks of Dindigul District, four blocks were selected randomly by lottery method. These were Athoor, Dindigul, Nilakottai and Vedasandur Blocks. From each block four Panchayats were selected again by random sampling method. In Athoor Block there are twenty two Panchayats. From among these Panchayats, four Panchayats were selected for the study by random sampling method. In Dindigul Block there are fourteen Panchayats. From among these, four Panchayats were selected for the study by random sampling method. In Nilakottai Block there are twenty three Panchayats. From among these, four Panchayats were selected for the study by random sampling method. In Vedasandur Block there are twenty two Panchayats. From among these, four Panchayats were selected for the study by random sampling method. Totally sixteen Panchayats were selected for the study.

After selecting the sixteen Panchayats, enumeration of illiterates, school dropouts, higher secondary educated women and graduates was done in each of the Panchayats. From the total number obtained in each panchayat 6 illiterates, 6 school dropouts, 8 higher secondary educated women and ten graduates were selected by simple random sampling method. A higher
number of graduates were selected with the intention of investigating whether undergraduate education is considered terminal education or whether graduates aspire to further their education. The inaccessibility of illiterate and dropout women and their unwillingness to serve as respondents was another reason for the different numbers of the different categories of respondents. So the total sample included 100 illiterates, 100 school dropouts, 140 higher secondary educated and 160 graduates.

6. Data Collection Instruments

Three sets of tools were prepared, one for the illiterates, another for the school dropouts, and the third for the higher secondary educated women and graduate women. The basic tool used was a questionnaire. The same questionnaire was used as an interview schedule at the time of collecting data from the illiterate respondents and the school dropouts. The questionnaire per se was used to collect data from the rest of the sample. The questionnaire was close ended.

Tools for Illiterate and School Dropout Women. An interview schedule was used to collect data from the illiterates and the school dropouts. The interview schedule consisted of two parts. The first part was about the socio-economic status of the women and included particulars related to age, educational and occupational status of women, family income, community, marital status, type of family, number of children, youngest child’s age and husband’s educational status.
The second part of the Interview schedule was about the lifelong learning aspirations of women. The questions relating to women’s aspirations such as whether they aspired to undergo or join any courses, which course they preferred to join, reasons for choosing to continue their education, the learning mode preferred to continue their studies, barriers to continuing their education, learning facilities available in their places to continue their studies and their participation in the government’s literacy programme were included in this part.

The interview schedule was used to collect data from school dropouts also. However, with those who could read and write the same schedule was used as a questionnaire to collect data. The number of questions was slightly different for different categories of respondents. For example, dropouts were asked the reasons for dropping out.

7. Method of Data Collection and Field Work

Face to face interview was done to collect data from the illiterates and the school dropouts. After selecting the respondents the researcher went to the house of each of the respondents. Before the interview good rapport had to be established. The researcher had to be in the field for about six months for data collection. The purpose of the research and the questions framed in the schedule were explained to the respondents by the researcher. They were interviewed at a convenient time fixed by the respondents.
Pretest. Pretesting was done before finalizing the tool. Fifteen respondents, including illiterates, school dropouts, higher secondary educated women and graduates were administered the prefinalized interview schedule / questionnaire. Modifications were made in the tool in the light of the pretest.

During the pretest it was found that lack of interest on the part of the husband was one of the reasons why women did not continue their studies. As this reason was stated by the majority of the married women, this was also included in the schedule. Two courses, namely, music and dance, which were not included originally, were included as courses desired after as many of the respondents expressed a desire to do these courses.

In the case of graduates and higher secondary educated respondents a few more courses were added to the list of courses preferred by them. Some irrelevant questions were deleted.

The tools finalized after the pretest is given in Appendix I, Appendix II and Appendix III.

8. Selection of the Variables

The study attempted to study the influence of independent variables on the learning aspirations of the respondents. The selected independent variables in the study were age, educational and occupational status of women, family income, community, marital status, type of family, number of children, youngest child’s age and husband's educational status.
The respondents' age was classified into five groups, namely, 15-20 years, 21-25 years, 26-30 years, 31-35 years and 36-40 years. The community of the respondents was classified as Scheduled Castes, Backward Castes, Most Backward Castes and Forward Castes. The educational status of the women was categorized as illiterates, school dropouts, higher secondary educated and graduates. Illiterate women were those who did not know to read and write or to affix their signature. The occupation of the women was categorized as earning and not earning. The monthly family income was grouped into four categories namely, < Rs.500, Rs.501-1000, Rs. 1001-5000 and > Rs.5000. The family type was divided into three categories namely, nuclear, extended and joint family. The number of children was categorised as one, two, three, four and above. The youngest child's age was categorised as 0-3 years, 4-10 years, 11-15 years and above 15 years.

The educational status of the husbands was classified as illiterate, primary school, middle school, secondary school, higher secondary school, graduate, technical education and professional education.

A dependent variable is defined as the phenomenon or characteristic hypothesised to be the outcome, effect, consequence or output of some input variables (Ray and Mondal, 1999). The dependent variable of the study was the lifelong learning aspirations of selected rural women of different educational and age levels.

9. Data Processing and Analysis Plan

Data processing was an intermediary stage of work between data collection and data analysis. After collecting the data they were edited,
classified and coded according to the objectives and hypotheses of the study. The coded data were fed into the computer and analysed with the help of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). Statistical treatments like chi-square and correlation were carried out for meaningful analysis of the data.

10. **Duration of the Study**

The preparation of the tools required two months including pretest. The data collection was done over a period of six months. The entire study was done over a period of three years.

11. **Limitations of the Study**

1. Due to time and financial constraints as well as considerations of practical performance, the investigation was limited to four blocks of Dindigul District. For the same reason, the sample of the study was restricted to 100 illiterates, 100 school dropouts, 140 higher secondary educated women and 160 graduates, accounting for a total of 500 respondents.

2. Two methods of data collection were used, the interview method for the illiterates and the school dropouts and the questionnaire method for the educated. At the time of the interview the researcher could collect the most appropriate answer by explaining the question. However, this was not possible in the case of the use of the questionnaire, where the respondent had to interpret the questionnaire in her own way. This discrepancy in data collection was another limitation of the study.