I thank God Almighty for showering his blessings and grace on me through all the stages of this humble endeavour.

There are many persons that I am grateful to and am indebted to who have helped me during the various stages of the study.

I wish to express my profound sense of gratitude and indebtedness to my supervising guide Dr. Zakkariya K.A, Reader, School of Management Studies, CUSAT, for his invaluable and untiring guidance, constructive suggestions and continuous encouragement all through the tenure of my research work. Without his intellectual inputs and constant support, this work would not have been complete, in any respect. His strenuous efforts in reviewing the thesis and his creative suggestion are gratefully acknowledged. I solemnly submit my honest and humble thanks to him for bringing my dreams into reality.

Special thanks to my doctoral committee member, Prof. (Dr.) Meera Bai, Head, Department of Applied Economics, for her encouraging, positive and supportive attitude throughout the process.

I am also fortunate that I had the opportunity to start my research under the supervision of Prof. (Dr) K.C. Sankaranarayanan, Former Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences and Former Head, Department of Applied Economics, CUSAT. I am profoundly obliged to him for his valuable comments and suggestions. His immeasurable expertise and willingness to help played a significant role in completing my thesis.

My grateful thanks are extended to Prof (Dr.) D. Rajasenan, Prof (Dr) S. Harikumar, Prof (Dr.) P. Arunachalam and Dr. P.K, Manoj of Department of Applied Economics for their enthusiastic encouragement, suggestions and useful critiques of this research work.

I express my sincere thanks to Prof. (Dr.) Anandakutan B. Unnithan (Associate Professor, IIM Kozhikode) for providing insightful advice during the analysis phase.