ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Writing the doctoral thesis within a stipulated time frame in mind, remains one of the most significant academic challenges I have faced so far. It is very important to mention that without the support, patience and guidance of my supervisor, teachers, colleagues, friends and well-wishers, this task would not have materialised. To all of them I owe my deepest gratitude.

I would like to thank the almighty for this special grace to complete my dissertation in time. I thank the management of Christ University especially Dr. (Fr.) Thomas C. Mathew, the Vice-Chancellor and Dr. (Fr) Abraham V.M, the Pro-Vice Chancellor and Dr. (Fr.) Varghese K J, the Finance Officer and the Director of the Department of Economics, Dr. Anil Pinto, the Registrar of Christ University, for their continuous support. Also my special thanks go to Dr. John Joseph Kennedy and Dr. Mallika Krishnaswami, Deans, Humanities and Social Sciences for their constant support and guidance. It is indeed an occasion to express my sincere gratitude to the Center for Research, in particular Dr. Tony Sam George, the Additional Director, Dr. Sebastian, Associate Director and Mr. James Kurian, Assistant Coordinator, for their constant push and encouragement.

This research work would not have moved past its initial conception, was it not for the tireless and astute guidance of my supervisor Dr. V Basil Hans, Associate Professor, St. Aloysius College, Mangalore. His unbridled enthusiasm and support for this research work provided me the much needed drive and inspiration to overcome the hurdles that I encountered in the course of completing the work. I wish to express my most sincere gratitude and appreciation to my supervisor for his guidance, patience and encouragement that led me the right way.

I express heartfelt thanks to colleagues, Dr. Adaina K C, Dr. Rajeshwari U R and Dr. Divya Pradeep, at the Department of Economics, Christ
University for their support and guidance with valuable inputs whenever needed. Dr. Adaina has contributed immensely in conceptualising the topic and developing it into a significant research issue. Dr. Rajeshwari has extended her support in data analysis and also provided her expertise in the interpretation of results. Dr. Divya Pradeep’s inputs during the thesis writing provided the necessary courage in maintaining the much needed logical flow from the beginning till the end. In addition to this, my colleagues Dr. Greeshma Manoj and Dr. Sheetal assisted in formatting the thesis and in clarifying some of the policy recommendations of this study. Also my sincere thanks go to all other colleagues in the Department of Economics for supporting me with valuable inputs as and when required. It is indeed a great privilege to have a strong group of colleagues in order to find instant solution to some of the issues I have encountered. In addition, a special note of gratitude to former Head of the Department of Economics, Prof. Emmanuel P J, former Additional Director of Center for Research, Dr. Srikantaswamy and former colleagues Dr. Xavier V K and Dr. Santhoshkumar P K, for their whole-hearted support and motivation. In addition, a very special note of gratitude to my favourite teachers of Economics, Dr. Martin Patrick and Dr. Muraleedharan from Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala for instilling the interest in different dimensions of the discipline. Also my heartfelt thanks go to M. A. Applied Economics students, Alan Abraham and Sree Shalabha for extending their support in the final editing and formatting of the thesis.

This section would be incomplete without expressing my deep gratitude to my family members. I am sincerely grateful to my parents, sisters, in-laws, wife and children, for helping me look past small obstacles and focusing on the milestones ahead. A special word of gratitude to my wife Diptty, whose motivation and support have always boosted my confidence level up, driving myself towards the accomplishment of targets.

Joshy. K. J.