



**EDUCATION, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN
DIFFERENT CASTES-
A STUDY OF SOCIAL WORKER IN THEIR DEVELOPMENT**

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ABSTRACT

Women empowerment is the important factor for the uniform growth of a nation. On this aspect the self-help group plays a major role in deciding the women empowerment in the rural areas. SHG promotes the socioeconomic strength to the weaker section of the community and thereby promoting the uniform growth of the nation. This review article gives a complete picture of the success of SHG towards women empowerment. Almost all the study finds that the SHG members gain equality of status, women as participants, and decisionmakers in democratic, economic and social spheres of life. This article also, throws some of the measures to be taken for the effective implementation of SHG.

Keywords: *education, women empowerment, socio, economic, political*

1. Introduction

There has been a paradigm shift of focus on women, from the concept of ‘welfare’ towards ‘development’ and now towards ‘empowerment’ from the nineties. Several fronts have taken up different initiatives to uplift rural, semi urban and urban women and to bring them to the mainstream of a growing economy. As a part of these initiatives, the Government had declared the year 2001 as “Women’s Empowerment Year” to focus on a vision “where women are equal partners like men”¹

Empowerment is a process of awareness and conscientization of capacity building, leading to greater participation, effective decision-making power and control, leading to transformative action. This involves ability to get what one wants and to influence others on our concerns. With

¹Navya.V, “Women Empowerment and Inclusive Growth”, Paper presented in National Conference. (WCC – Chennai).

reference to women the power relation that has to be involved, includes their lives at multiple levels, family, community, market and the state².

The word empowerment is used by many in the sense of gaining power, gaining confidence in their own capacity and capability. Empowerment in general sense is giving power. The word power has many facets and is multi-complex as far as human beings are concerned. Empowerment thus is a complex and multidimensional concept and it is described as a process rather than an event. According to Kabeer's (2001) simple and illustrative definition, empowerment is the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them"³.

Empowerment helps in removing the conditions that cause powerlessness and enhances the feelings of self-efficacy. "Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance". [Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General]

Women Empowerment in India⁴

Women Empowerment in India is a challenging task as we need to acknowledge the fact that gender-based discrimination is a deep-rooted social malice practiced in India in many forms since thousands of years. The malice is not going to go away in a few years or for that matter by attempting to work at it through half-hearted attempts. Formulating laws, legislations and policies are not enough as it is seen that most of the times these laws and policies just remain on paper. The ground situation on the other hand just remains the same and, in many instances, worsens further. Addressing the malice of gender discrimination and women empowerment in India has long drawn battle against powerful structural forces of the society which is against women's growth and development.

Empowerment means involving oneself in decision-making, gaining control over their resources and to achieve a higher quality of life. One of the important objectives of the SHG approach to micro-credit is „empowering poor women“. Empowerment of rural poor women demands that these poor women have their own organizations that will address their economic and social needs

²Dr.D.Lazar and M.Meganathan, "Empowerment of SC women through Micro Finance in Ramanathapuram District, Tamil Nādu", Paper presented in National Conference. (WCC – Chennai)

³S.T.Chandrasekhar Babu, "Women Empowerment and Inclusive Growth", Paper presented in National Conference. (WCC – Chennai).

⁴<http://www.rise-of-womanhood.org/women-empowerment-in-india.html>

exclusively. SHGs aim to enable women to gain control over the sources of power through awareness and capacity building which will lead to greater participation in the decision-making process, control, and transformative action.

Measuring the Empowerment of Women

The purpose of forming SHG can be achieved only if the members are empowered. The empowerment has many facts involved. Hence an attempt has been made to analyse the extent of empowerment in the following aspects.

1. Economic Empowerment
2. Social Empowerment
3. Political Empowerment

2. Literature review

Agarwal¹ (1989), Roy.K.C, Tisdell.C.A and Blomquist.H.C² (1996) reported that in both rural and urban areas, poor women relative to men have limited access to information, about all respects of paid work. This was mainly due to a lower literacy level, less access to mass media and less social interaction which put together towards projection of low level of empowerment within the household and community.

A.K. Sen³ (1997) reported that women's access to appropriate education, which facilitates their empowerment process, was greatly influenced by the social customs of gender discrimination, which can be broadly termed as 'ideology of seclusion' or 'classic patriarchy'.

Nilanjan Sengupta⁴ (1998) in his study identified the different forms of community organizations, which involve people's participation and the role played by them for the empowerment of these organizations. He also discussed social leaning as an empowerment strategy for increasing the participation of people at the grass-root level. According to him, social awareness among the group members has to be created first and then they could move towards economic empowerment. The researcher felt that to ensure the development of skills and consciousness for sustainability of any activity in the long run, social and psychological empowerment is a must.

Ahmad.M.A⁵ (1999) through a case study on Thrift Groups in Assam, highlighted that women are coming to the administration directly for their rights and to address their grievances boldly. It proved that SHGs were successful in North East India even in the midst of insurgency.

N.Manimekalai and G.Rajeswari6 (2000) in their work analysed the women SHGs formed by the NGOs in the rural areas of Tiruchirappalli District for the purpose of promoting rural women through self-employment. The NGO namely, Society for Education and Village Action and Empowerment (SEVAE) has been working in 362 villages and helping a total number of one-lakh women beneficiaries consisting of different avenues of self-employment like petty businesses, processing, production and service units.

S.Sundari and N.Geetha7 (2000) in their work “Poverty Credit and Micro Enterprises”, examined the gender disparity in access to institutional credit. In their opinion, the disparity was gradually narrowing down over a period of time. Hence the empowerment of rural poor women will be possible only if they are trained and imparted skills for a certain employment.

3. Objective of the study

➤ **To study Education, Economic and Social Empowerment of Women in different castes.**

4. Methodology: *It is a descriptive study.*

➤ **Data Collection:**

Both primary and secondary data were collected. Primary data were collected by way of using interview schedule and secondary data were collected from books, Journals, websites, etc.

5. Data analysis and interpretation

▪ **Perception Of Economic Empowerment**

Positive economic empowerment is the vital aspect of one’s development. The Self-Help Groups help their members to improve their economic conditions. Members gain various economic benefits through SHGs such as increasing saving habit among members and all the members are motivated to earn more income. Employment opportunities are provided to all the members, to induce them to stand on their own feet.

Table-1
shows the perception of economic empowerment among the members.

S.NO	Perception of Beneficiary	SA	A	M	D	SD	Mean	S.D
1	Increasing saving habits among the Members	687 (85.8)	88 (10.9)	20 (2.5)	00 (0.0)	05 (0.6)	4.81	0.43
2	All members are motivated to earn more Income	281 (35.1)	403 (50.3)	93 (11.5)	16 (1.9)	07 (0.8)	4.17	0.36
3	Employment opportunities are provided to all members	304 (38.0)	274 (34.3)	150 (18.8)	40 (5.0)	32 (4.0)	3.98	0.64
4	Increasing capacity to spend more	258 (32.3)	313 (39.8)	113 (14.1)	81 (10.1)	35 (4.3)	3.87	0.72
5	SHGs induce the member to stand on their own feet.	307 (38.4)	310 (38.8)	80 (10.0)	39 (4.9)	64 (8.0)	3.95	0.81

Source of data: field study

Table-1: shows that among five economic empowerment statements, the highest mean score (4.81) has been secured by the statement, namely “Increasing Saving habit among the members.” The least mean score (3.87) is secured by the statement, namely “Increasing capacity to spend more”.

▪ **Social Empowerment**

Self Help Groups create social empowerment among the members. The perception of the social empowerment is measured with the help of the statements like improved public speaking ability, traveling alone even at night without any fear, freedom to give their opinion on social evils, enlightenment on women rights and courage to raise their voice against injustice and domestic violence.

Table-20
displays the opinion of the members on the social empowerment.

S.NO	Variables	SA	A	M	D	SDA	Mean	S.D
1	Public speaking ability has developed among the members	580 (72.5)	122 (15.4)	42 (5.2)	33 (4.1)	20 (2.5)	3.93	0.91
2	Traveling alone even at night without any fear	207 (25.8)	404 (50.8)	130 (16.2)	33 (4.1)	26 (3.2)	3.92	0.65
3	All the members have given their opinion on social evils	326 (40.7)	254 (31.7)	122 (15.4)	63 (7.8)	35 (4.3)	3.97	0.36
4	Enlightenment on women rights	258 (32.3)	313 (39.8)	130 (16.2)	63 (7.8)	36 (4.4)	3.86	0.69
5	Members raise their voice against injustice and domestic violence	302 (37.8)	257 (32.1)	139 (17.4)	50 (6.2)	52 (6.2)	3.89	0.18

Source of data: field study

Table-2, portrays that among the five statements of social empowerment, “All the members have given their opinion on social evils” has got the highest mean score (3.97) and the least mean score (3.86) has been secured by the statement, namely “Enlightenment on women rights”.

▪ **Political Empowerment**

Women’s political participation is now recognized universally. Women formed into groups, progressed economically, developed collective strength and eventually emerged as political

leaders. This process of empowering enables them to demand the benefits from the government development schemes. The National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights and legal entitlement of women. The 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) to the Constitution of India has provided for reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision-making at the local levels. On 9th March 2010, the upper house of the Indian Parliament, the Rajya Sabha, passed the bill on the reservation of 33 percent seats in the Lok Sabha. Now a days, women occupy various positions at the political level like the Prime Minister, Chief Minister, Deputy Speaker, Political leader, Panchayat Union Member and Ward Member. The Self-Help Groups identify the members for promoting stronger presence and influence of women in the political sphere. The perception of the respondents regarding political empowerment was measured to know whether the members are motivated to participate in politics, whether the knowledge in political awareness has improved among its members, whether SHG induces leadership skills in politics, whether members have involved themselves in political campaigning and protest and whether or not the knowledge of voting rights has increased.

Table-3
Gives the opinion of the members on their political empowerment.

S.NO	Variables	SA	A	M	D	SDA	Mean	S.D
1	Members are motivated to participate in Politics	646 (80.7)	78 (9.8)	58 (7.2)	09 (1.1)	090 (1.1)	4.68	0.61
2	Knowledge of political awareness improved among its members	294 (36.8)	365 (45.6)	92 (11.5)	28 (3.5)	21 (2.6)	4.11	0.47
3	SHGs induce leadership skills in politics	309 (38.6)	266 (33.3)	142 (17.8)	50 (6.2)	33 (4.1)	3.96	0.28
4	Members have involved themselves in political campaigning and protest	241 (30.1)	338 (42.3)	101 (12.7)	91 (11.3)	29 (3.6)	3.85	0.57
5	Knowledge of voting rights has increased	294 (36.8)	296 (36.9)	105 (13.1)	58 (7.2)	47 (5.8)	3.91	0.22

Source of data: field study

Table-3: reveals that among five statements related to political empowerment the highest mean score (4.68) has been given to the statement namely “Members are motivated to participate in politics”. The statement is „Members involved themselves in political campaigning and protest“ has secured at least the mean score (3.85).

6. Conclusions

- Therefore, there are significant differences among the perceptions of different income groups towards economic empowerment.
- Therefore, there are no significant differences among the perceptions of different educational level groups towards social empowerment.
- Therefore, there are no significant differences among the perceptions of different educational level groups towards political empowerment.

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