



WOMEN ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT THROUGH SELF HELP GROUPS IN KARUR DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Microfinance has evolved over the past quarter century across India into various operating forms and to a varying degree of success. One such form of microfinance has been the development of the self-help movement. Based on the concept of “self-help,” small groups of women have formed into groups of ten to twenty and operate a savings-first business model whereby the member’s savings are used to fund loans. The results from these self-help groups (SHGs) are promising and have become a focus of intense examination as it is proving an effective method of poverty reduction. This study examines the impact of microfinance on women empowerment of SHGs in Karur District. In this research, an attempt is made to find out the purpose for which the various components of Micro finance, Self Help Group and their Empowerment. For the purpose of analysis, 550 sample respondents have been considered from 2195 Self-Help Groups of Karur District by using pre-tested and validated interview schedule. The study is based on purely from primary and secondary sources. The study concludes by an observation that micro finance through self help groups supported to Women Empowerment.

Keywords: MICRO FINANCE, POVERTY, SELF HELP GROUPS, AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

Indian economy. India has 6.40 lac villages and its 68.84% (2011-Census) of the population is living in rural areas. Since female population is 48.25% of the total population, the major chunk of it is living in rural areas. The majority of rural women are from the category of living below the poverty line. So rural poverty means rural poor woman hence there is feminization of poverty. This rural segment is the biggest segment and the backbone of Indian Economy. The rural woman always remains the centre of rural development in terms of alleviation of rural poverty and rural empowerment. Among the Government initiated rural development programs women self-help group programme is a best participatory approach to rural empowerment via the rural development as a policy-measure of eradication of rural poverty. Really it is a new experiment on rural empowerment.

Women Empowerment

Women are an integral part of every economy. All round development and harmonious growth of a nation would be possible only when women are considered equal partners in progress with men. Empowerment of women is essential to harness the women labor in the main stream of economic development. Empowerment of women is a holistic concept. It is multi-dimensional in its approach and covers social, political, economic and social aspects. Of all these facts of women's development, economic empowerment is of utmost significance in order to achieve a lasting and sustainable development of society.

A majority of micro finance programmes target women with the explicit goal of empowering them. Some argue that women are amongst the poorest and the most vulnerable of the under privileged. Others believe that investing in women's capabilities empowers them to make choices, which is valuable in it and also contributes to greater economic growth and development.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To highlight the distinct features of SHGs.
2. To evaluate the impact of microfinance on the empowerment of women in Karur District.

3. IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY:

Micro finance is necessary to overcome exploitation, and to create confidence to the economic self reliance of the rural poor. This research puts forward how micro finance has received extensive recognition as a strategy for economic development. This research seeks to find out the impact of Micro finance with respect to poverty alleviation and SHGs economic development, and the empowerment of rural poor.

4. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The present study is an attempt to provide answer following question and thereby to bring forth practical solution to concentrate on the Impact of Microfinance on economic empowerment of Self Help Groups in Karur District.

Whether the microfinance on the empowerment of women in Karur District has got any positive impact?

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this research, an attempt was made to find out the aspects such as Micro finance, Self Help Group and their Empowerment. For the purpose of analysis, 550 sample respondents have been considered from 2195 Self-Help Groups in Karur District. This paper is basically descriptive and analytical in nature. In this paper an attempt was made to analyze the economic empowerment in Karur district. In this research, Friedman test has been used to find out whether there is a significant difference between Socio-Economic factors and Empowerment and simple average also used.

Hypothesis:

H_0 :There is a no significant difference between Socio-Economic factors and Empowerment.

H_1 :There is a significant difference between Socio-Economic factors and Empowerment.

6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The SHG members were hesitant to give all the required data. Thus the study was based on available data collected from respondents.
- Economic considerations meant the sample size was confined to 550.
- The study's findings are only appropriate to the district studied

7. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

It is desirable to review the relevant literature while handling a research problem. A review of literature places a research study in its proper perspective by showing the amount of work already carried out in the related areas of the study.

Adams et al (1992) The provision of micro-finance for women is now also regarded not only as an instrument for poverty alleviation but also for women's empowerment. Whilst Filipino women have traditionally not had access to resources, in the latter part of the 1980s, a trend emerged towards increasing women's participation in socio-economic work. This case study, therefore, intends to find out the impact that micro-finance programs and services have had on the lives of Filipino women, and how it affects women's participation in political life and the quality of political governance by local government units / agencies.

Sidney Ruth Schuler et al (2010) This article explores the changing dimensions of women's empowerment over time in three Bangladesh villages where one of the authors has been conducting research since 1991. The article discusses theoretical issues related to the measurement of women's empowerment, and describes findings from a recent study in the villages exploring the current salience of indicators developed for a 1992 survey. In the article we discuss the types of social, economic, and political change that affect the measurement of women's empowerment; propose and explain a new set of indicators for the rural Bangladesh setting; and discuss implications for measuring women's empowerment in other settings.

Arjun. Y. Pangannavar (2015) This paper focused on holistic role of SHGs in rural woman empowerment as a paradigm of rural empowerment through rural development activities. Regional inequality is the basic feature of Indian Economy. Rural area being the biggest segment is the backbone of the Indian economy. The rural woman is the centre of rural development in terms of alleviation of rural poverty with economic growth and stability. The paper focuses on the rural empowerment through women empowerment programs. These programmes mainly aimed at to solve the three major problems of rural India namely, (i) poverty (ii) unemployment and (iii) food-insecurity.

V.S.Ganesamurthy 2007]Mahatma Gandhi says “...India lives in her seven hundred thousand villages...”and the soul of India lives in her villages. So the empowerment of India depends mainly on empowerment of women.

8. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Lalitha (2003)Poverty alleviation on a large scale is possible through the promotion of sustainable livelihoods by providing easy and affordable access to credit and other complementary services. Micro finance through SHGs is considered as a potential instrument for combating poverty in a sustainable manner. Under the new liberalized financial policies, it is all the more important that the group finance be encouraged. In this research a modest attempt is made to analyze the impact of micro finance on their problem after joining in the group growth and economic development of SHGs.

Table. 1

IMPACT OF MICRO FINANCE ON PROBLMES (MULTIPLE RESPONSES)

Problems	Strongly Agree	Agree	Moderate	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Women are economically empowered	226	143	131	20	0	550
Micro finance reduce poverty	244	109	117	62	18	550
Employment oppportunity in rural areas	194	212	101	43	0	550
Creation of assets in rural areas	208	192	143	7	0	550
Relief from clutches of Money lender	309	166	75	0	0	550

Source: Primary Data

Women are economically empowered after joining in SHG and get Micro finance. 244 respondents reported that the poverty level reduce by participating micro finance programme. 194, 212 respondents were strongly agree, they agree the employment oppportunity in rural areas

respectively. 208 respondents reported the creation of assets in rural areas and one third of the respondents say that relief from the clutches of money lenders.

PROBLEMS FACED BY SELF HELP GROUP WOMEN

The following table explains the problems faced by SHG women. In every meeting, the SHG should be encouraged to discuss and try to find solutions to the problems faced by the members of the group. Individually, the poor people are weak and lack resources to solve their problems. When the group tries to help its members, it become easier for them to face the difficulties and come up with solutions.

TABLE - 2

PROBLEMS FACED BY WOMEN

Problems	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor	Total
a) Scarcity of water	148 (27.0)	184 (33.45)	91 (16.55)	81 (15.00)	46 (8.00)	550 (100)
b) Unemployment	130 (23.64)	115 (20.91)	98 (17.82)	137 (24.90)	70 (12.73)	550 (100)
c) Improper Transportation	135 (24.55)	96 (17.45)	117 (21.27)	163 (29.63)	39 (7.10)	550 (100)
d) Atrocities against women	114 (20.73)	92 (16.73)	130 (23.64)	185 (33.63)	29 (5.27)	550 (100)
e) Problem of health & the unavailability of sanitary block	109 (19.82)	96 (17.45)	113 (20.55)	191 (34.73)	41 (7.45)	550 (100)
f) Men in the village are alcoholic	76 (13.82)	101 (18.36)	150 (27.27)	186 (33.82)	37 (6.73)	550 (100)
g) overall feeling of problems faced by women	108 (19.64)	91 (16.55)	89 (16.18)	213 (38.73)	49 (8.9)	550 (100)

Source: Primary Data

The table clearly explains that feelings about problem faced by women. 33.45 per cent of the respondents feel as good about scarcity of water. 24.90 per cent of the respondents feel as poor for unemployment. 29.63 per cent of the respondents feel as poor to improper transportation. 33.63 per cent of the respondents feel as poor about atrocities against women. 34.73 per cent of the respondents feel as poor about Problem of health & the unavailability of

sanitary block. 33.82 per cent of the respondents feel as poor about alcoholic men. Thus in all, 38.73 per cent of the respondents feel as poor on overall feeling of problems faced by women.

Table .3

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS AND EMPOWERMENT

SL. No.	Factors relating to respondents	Mean Rank	Chi-square	Inferential statistics
1	Age	4.26	219.934	N = 550 Df = 7 0.000*
2	Education level	3.86	267.086	
3	Marital Status	1.53	1.76E3	
4	Region	2.03	901.029	
5	Religion	1.53	1.178E3	
6	Occupation	4.50	174.202	
7	Type of family	1.72	1.070E3	
8	Place of residence	1.80	1.022E3	
9	Income satisfaction	5.39	320.342	
10	Expenditure satisfaction	4.80	233.973	
11	Savings Satisfaction	5.12	259.670	
12	Loan Satisfaction	5.46	321.711	

Hypothesis: There is a significant difference between Socio-Economic factors and Empowerment.

Friedman test has been used to find out whether there is a significant difference between Socio-Economic factors and Empowerment, namely Health awareness feelings, scarcity of water, unemployment, improper transportation, atrocities against women, health and unavailability of sanitary block and alcoholic men. Religion and Marital status placed first rank. Type of family was ranked second. Place of residence were ranked third.

This table explains that there is a significant difference between Socio-Economic factors and Empowerment. Here the hypothesis is accepted. The P value (.000) is less than Chi-square value.

9. CONCLUSION

In India majority of the people live in rural areas and are engaged in agriculture earning a substantial wage. Self Help Groups can be defined as supportive educational and usually change

oriented mutual aid group that addresses life problems or conditions commonly shared by all members. The formal sector credit was very limited and hardly available for small borrowers. SHGs have broken this trend and it has seen that only small borrowers are members of SHGs.

In India, Micro finance scene is dominated by Self Help Group (SHGs), as a cost effective mechanism for providing financial services to the “Un reached poor” which has been successful not only in meeting financial needs of the rural poor but also strengthen collective self help capacities of the poor, leading to their empowerment. In this research, the relationship between SHGs and empowerment shows that the empowerment of SHGs is also supported by religion, type of family, marital status, place of residence and region etc. Finally the research concludes that after joining in the groups as a women member, their economic empowerment improved to stand their own legs.

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