



HUNAR- A STUDY ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Dr. Meghna Aggarwal¹

Abstract

Purpose- Through Thematic Analysis the study aims to promote women empowerment through skill development. The objective is to focus on the feasibility of attaining self-reliance and financial independence for the poor communities through sustainable skill development.

Design/ Methodology/ approach- The study is designed as an explorative qualitative study to gain motivation through the social entrepreneurship approach. The focus group interviews are analysed through Qualitative tools using NVivo by word frequency and thematic analysis exploring various themes and sub themes by purposive sampling through saturation.

Findings- Woman should be strengthened at the grass root level to end their subordination and is perceived as a potential game-changer for booming economic growth. ‘Hunar’ developed the creativity of the students to carve their own destinies through stitching. It is a journey of the needy to become a skilful, independent person through sustainable skill development.

Originality/value- This is a case write up on an initiative ‘Hunar’ by a NGO for socio-economic development of women. Women empowerment is a priority of international development policies which affects not only the lives of the women, but also their children, families, and the society at large.

Keywords- Skill-development, social entrepreneurship, Socio-economic independence, Sustainable development, Women empowerment

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce and Business Management, Amardeep Singh Shergill Memorial College (A University College of GNDU, Amritsar), Mukandpur. Dist SBS Nagar. 144507.

INTRODUCTION- Women Empowerment

Women's empowerment is an essential priority of international development initiatives (Hazarika, 2011 ; Bosma et al., 2016). Women globally, play an essential role in the creation of a good nation and society (Kalam, 2013). Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru viewed that “To awaken the people, it is the women who must be awakened. Once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves, the nation moves” (Ajabani, 2019). Women when empowered can contribute in the socio-economic progress, growth and development of a nation (Nayak & Mahanta, 2009; Sharma, 2020). United Nations (2010) has defined women’s empowerment to generate women’s sense of self-worth which includes the women’s right to determine their choice; to have access to equal opportunities and all kinds of resources; the power to regulate and control their own lives; and her ability to contribute in creating a just, social and economic order (Nayak & Mahanta, 2009; Kandpal, 2022). “United Nations Women works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and favours her equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on four strategic priorities including women participation, income security, decent work and economic autonomy” (UN-Women, 2020). Government of India through various five-year plans has shifted from welfare oriented to developmental approach to empower women (wcd.nic.in) and attain sustainable development (Bhowmik, 2021). Women empowerment is important for the holistic development of the country assuring a society with stability which affects not only the lives of women, but also the lives of their children and other dependents (Kalam, 2013; Sell & Minot, 2018). Empowerment provides the women freedom to take her life’s decisions and to live safely without any harassment. Empowering women economically involves improving their economic status, power, and agency. Women are empowered economically when they have the ability to succeed, the power to make economic decisions, resources to compete in the markets, as well as fair and equitable access to economic institutions (Golla et al., 2011; Hazarika, 2011;). Education, especially professional and technical education - is likely to enhance women's economic viability by equipping them with the skills needed to take paid employment. At the national level, educating women has led to better productivity, financial upgrading, and economic development impacting the quality of life through various dimensions like education, health services, nutrition, housing and modernization (World bank, 2001; Kandpal, 2022). Women's economic empowerment involves creating "enabling environment" that remove barriers and provide supporting structures for the socio-

economic development of a happy society which will develop at a greater pace (Kalam, 2013; Sell & Minot, 2018; Chhabra et. al 2021).

NEED OF THE STUDY

Women should be organized and strengthened at the grass root level to end their subordination and is perceived as a potential game-changer for reasonable and booming economic growth (Kamaludin et al., 2021). Poverty, illiteracy, and the law in rulebooks adds to the vulnerable state of Indian women. Apart from income, women need to rely on men for anything and everything. When men are also unemployed, the issue gets worse. There is a need to recognize and emphasize the diverse roles of women in family and social management. The key lies in the empowerment of women in economic independence and the high levels of awareness in social, political, and legal issues (Bhowmik, 2021). The barriers experienced by women include formal education and training, poor infrastructure, access to business development services and finance, and social and cultural barriers in their mobility. Education is a milestone enabling women empowerment to respond to challenges for a changed life (Sell & Minot, 2018; United Nations, 2010). Skill formation is important to nurture growth not only for women in civic activities but also to lay a better foundation while rearing children (Nayak & Mahanta, 2009). It is an essential driver of economic growth that promotes innovation to exploit new opportunities, promote productivity, and create employment through sustainable development (Kamaludin et al., 2021; Bhowmik, 2021). Women as Ela Bhatt who established SEWA and the initiators of Shri Mahila Griha Udyog Lijjat Papad are examples to strengthen other Indian women to attain freedom from the conditions of acute poverty and unemployment. Being a matter of human rights and equality, women's economic empowerment is essential to the sustainable social and economic development of local and national communities (Zhang & Swanson, 2014; Chhabra et.al 2021). The 'smart economics' of women's economic empowerment is crucial to economic growth and prosperity for women individually, their families, their communities, and their country (Rosca et al., 2020). Many of the Indian women who are unable to overcome the gender stereotype, intends to work and initiate to begin small enterprises to support their family environment (Goyal & Parkash, 2011; Ramakrishna & Sudhakar, 2015). Driven by the independence in economy and better standard of living, gradually more women are getting attracted towards various professions adding to the economic development of the nation

(Kamaludin et al., 2021). This emerging trend of women all around the globe calls for a new and dynamic model of economic and social entrepreneurship.

The study reflects as an illustrative initiative of the potential economic empowerment of women. No single step can address all aspects of women's economic empowerment. It provides insights which are helpful in developing and implementing the policies, strategies, or program for women upliftment. A vicious circle of violence, exploitation, forced marriage, ill health, unemployment can be replaced by a virtuous circle of health and happiness by offering women opportunities for skill development equipping them to bring change in their communities (UN-Women, 2020). The study is pursued with an objective to study Women Empowerment through the Development of Social Entrepreneurship by HUNAR in Ludhiana District. It attempts to understand the motivation for the inception of the idea of HUNAR and pen down the skills developed in students through social entrepreneurship and the socio-economic development of women through the program. Finally, the study attempts to share the manifold impact of HUNAR on the life of its members and their families.

Research Methodology

Methodologically in line with the study objectives, the study is designed and carried out as an explorative qualitative study (Dana & dana, 2005). The field work in case site was undertaken to gain an understanding of motivation through the social responsibility initiative. It is also used to uncover trends in thought and opinions and dive deeper into the problem. The methodology to carry the study included focused group discussions, personal in-depth interviews with the women and the stakeholders, and observations of researchers as purposive sampling. The sample size depends upon the point of saturation after which no new information can be extracted from the data (Guest et al., 2006). A series of personal in-depth interviews are conducted with 55 participants and 10 focus group interviews comprising 9-10 women in each group. A semi-structured, open-ended questionnaire is used to collect response of women and all stakeholders in the research process and is audio recorded. Data analysis in relation to the benefits acquired after learning at Hunar and the hardships of women is presented through the word frequency analysis and thematic analysis through NVivo-12, a qualitative analysis software (Godau, 2004). The analysis is done from the transcribed recorded interviews highlighting the themes and sub themes of their expression.

Socio-Economic Development of Women through Social Entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneur is an individual/ group who is leading any kind of activity or initiative that has a social, environmental or community objective (Bosma et al., 2016; Kamaludin et al., 2021). They focus on creating social value through new ideas and innovations with performance-driven activities and act as a change agent to sustain societal development (Nieminen & Lemmetyinen, 2014; Ahamad et al., 2016; Bakri, 2017). They relentlessly pursue to bring a positive social change to the weaker sections by creating self-help groups (SHG's) as the case of 'Lizzat Papad' extending the social impact through the process of social return by creating employment opportunities, improvement in education, health, infrastructure and income for the families (Kamaludin et al., 2021; Sharma, 2020). The focus is to untap the means of promoting enterprise and economic development from social change (Williams 2011). Social enterprises can unravel most of the societal issues and accelerate economic growth by generating employment and thus, nurturing entrepreneurship through creative activities for the socio economic development (Rosca et al., 2020; Agarwal et al., 2020).

Inception of Idea of Hunar

HUNAR, an initiative to women empowerment was started on 18 July 2016 by an NGO- Ek Noor Sewa Kendra (ENSK) with 80 students and has trained more than 400 students in totality in small different groups. The course duration is 6 months for basic cutting, sewing, embroidery and fashion designing which is totally free of cost without any admission fees. The idea inception is from the 'helpline calls' to ENSK seeking help for the basic requirements of food or medical support when the sole bread earner is bed ridden and the female counter part found difficult to manage the household expenses. Hunar is initiated as an inspiration to motivate the women who sensed the need to work but are not acquainted to any skills (Light & Dana, 2013). They do not have permanent, dignified, sustainable livelihoods and are deprived of nutritious food, health care and minimum education. Due to lack of skills and regular income generation activities, they are below the poverty line. This creates a dire need to introduce skill training to rehabilitate suffering women's economic status by organizing and providing valuable skills to help them come out of poverty and act as drivers of change (Berkes & Hunt, 2007). Stitching garments is one job whose demand will be sustained until the survival of mankind. Technical help is provided for talent development and to handle various high-tech machines for tailoring,

embroideries, and various paintings. To fuel the initiative, training in reputed local organizations like Neva, Duke adds a lifetime opportunity to the students. The selected women could work closely to design and produce a sustainable fashion line that will echo the outcome of their continuous commitment.

Hunar Responsibility Towards Women Empowerment

ENSK help the weaker sections of the economy to get their basic requirements fulfilled. The aim is to make women self-sufficient through various skill development programs which would create entrepreneurs out of them and change the course of their destiny (Ramakrishna & Sudhakar, 2015; Kandpal, 2022). The NGO members has a strong belief that communities can develop and sustain, if their citizens are adequately empowered with knowledge and skill sets (Zhang & Swanson, 2014). *Neki Ka Sikhlayi Centre* i.e., HUNAR is an empowerment initiative to provide vocational training to women to generate sustainable livelihoods. The main aim is to enhance the quality of life of women through increased knowledge and skills. The focus is to help under-privileged women who are willing to improve their life standards and have no support, with a firm belief that empowering a woman means empowering the whole family.

Hunar se Rozgar tak

The basic tailoring skills enable women to work competently with confidence. They can continue their traditional role of homemakers and also pursue their professional skills to earn their livelihood. Their earning works as a catalyst towards building their self-confidence, reducing gender inequities, and raising their status within the family and society at large.

ANALYSIS and DISCUSSIONS

The interaction with various stakeholders disclosed ‘Hunar’ to be a centre for the needy who agree to learn some skills to live a respectable life.

The Professional Instructor, Ms Jaspreet Kalra believes it as *SEWA* to “enrich a person with some skill rather than temporarily helping anyone with some money”.

The concept initiator Mrs. Gagandeep Kaur- Managing Director of ENSK viewed “*We often help the needy with money or things, but seldom give them a skill with which they don’t have to*

ask for help again and again. After learning a skill associated to clothing which is a basic requirement, they stitch clothes for themselves, their kids, relatives and even for other people. With the passage of time their skill (hunar) develops as a source of income for themselves which they possess with pride, and it does wonders to their self-esteem” she said.

Mr. Barjinder Singh an active member of ENSK said that “Honest work being done by the organization has been appreciated by the society at large. In service of the humanity lies the true essence of life, because everyone has that ‘Noor’ of the ‘Ek Almighty’, prevailing everywhere and in all of us.” He shared his views depicting the value of HUNAR possessed in a beautiful poetic ascent to conceptualise the importance of skills in life along with women empowerment. (Appendix 1)

The students at the skill learning centre, expressed their gratitude and excitement indicating the impact of ‘Hunar’ on their lives and livelihoods. Their views are expressed through the following keywords used by them shown through the Word Frequency Analysis as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Students’ Expression for HUNAR

The text derived from student's expression is based on the themes and sub themes discussing the impact of the skill development program in their lives (Table 1).

Table 1: Thematic Analysis of Themes and sub themes of student's expression

S.No	THEMES	SUB THEMES
1	DEVELOPMENT	Women development, economic development, sustainable development, innovative development, skill development, socio-economic development, talent development
2	SKILL	Skill enhancement, skill enrichment, skill development
3	ECONOMIC	Economic freedom, economic prosperity, economic independence, economic development, economic awareness, economic disparity, economic exploitation
4	OPPORTUNITIES	Entrepreneurial opportunities, employment opportunities, upliftment opportunities
5	SUSTAINABLE	Sustainable growth, sustainable development, sustainable skills, sustainable livelihood, sustainable income, sustainable empowerment
6	INDEPENDENCE	Financial independence, independence to move, economic independence
7	GROWTH	Personal growth, children growth, educational growth, growth and development, sustainable growth, growth and stability
8	ACHIEVMENT	Occupational achievement
9	LIVELIHOOD	Lives and livelihood, Improved livelihood
10	SELF	Self-sufficiency, self-reliance, self-esteem, self-change, self-help groups, self-awareness, self-employment

The participants views were in consensus with UN Women goals prioritising women participation, income security, decent work, and economic autonomy. They recognised the need for skill development to be self-sufficient due to the ensuing problems they faced in their daily lives which arose from the insufficient income of the family as the only bread earner is physically challenged or addicted to some bad habits.

Ms. Preet Kaur expressed her views saying that *“creativity is intended to benefit us manifold acting as a virtuous circle. The skill helped me to carve out my own destiny through stitching, sewing, and earning a stable income to meet the household expenses. It not only improves the skills but also enabled to become financially independent.”*

The inability of the women to run the family on their own due to lack of sufficient education and skills and her helplessness to meet the necessities, provide good education to children and reduce the gender gap in the families left her with the feeling of helplessness.

Mrs Chandni shared that *“I was not skilled to get a respectable job. Today, I feel so happy with my occupational achievement and have started earning during my free time. I can support my children with good education and fulfill all their needs by working from home itself.”*

The realization of the need to earn to access the necessary health care facilities despite the discouraging background of the family acted as a strong motivator. The necessity for some supplementary income for widows, divorcees to be self-reliant and safeguard themselves from the economic and social exploitation urged to initiate a start-up and spend free time to develop employable skills to attain sustainable source of income and build respect in the family.

Ms. Pari expressed her happiness saying *“Now my family respect me and take my opinion in family decisions also. My living standard has improved, and I got relaxed from domestic violence. I feel stable and nobody can take my skill from me.”*

Others expressed their determination to uplift the economic condition with the provision of a better life to their family, reduce gender differences in children through good education and provide other necessities with ease to daughters as the benefits of skill learning.

The motivation to turn their hobby into profession to explore new opportunities for the growth and development of self and help similar females in their acquaintance thus, promoting the formation of Self-help groups. Collective strength will enable women to challenge the social norms by displaying their talent. At a certain stage in life when the time is not smooth and adverse situations hit, the possession of certain skills gives a confidence to handle the responsibilities with self-reliance without getting weak. They even expressed the significance of skills which enhance with the passage of time in contrast to the physical beauty of humans which fades with time. Their views showcased the impact of ‘*hunar*’ to enhance self-sufficiency and economic independence by empowering the communities, equipping them through a skill development program towards the attainment of sustainable growth. The skill development program has brought forth multiple benefits to women boosting their self-esteem and confidence level which help to generate sustainable income to support their family (Ahamad et al., 2016). The quality of living improved with sufficient resources and serve the additional demands of the family to access health care and educational opportunities (Rosca et al., 2020). Few women from ‘HUNAR’ are successfully motivated to start their business and majority are earning well by stitching dresses and fashion clothing through their boutiques. They are even providing technical and financial support to other colleagues acting as a source of income generation to others thus, uplifting the downtrodden focusing on the individual and collective well-being.

Conclusion

Empowering women economically is a critical component concerned with the nurturing of lives and livelihoods. Being a matter of human rights and equity, women’s economic empowerment is fundamental to the sustainable socio-economic development of local communities and entire country. The results attained by HUNAR go beyond the mere financial figures. The ‘*smart economics*’ of women’s economic empowerment is critical to economic growth and prosperity – for individual women, their families, their communities, and the country at large.

Implications of the Study

The study focuses on the socio-economic development of the women through skill enhancement. The social impact of skill training programme is manifold- enhancing the self-reliance to promote the self-esteem, right to mobility, and to promote the voice and participation against economic exploitation while raising awareness on women’s rights. These benefits are a sufficient argument as a step to support the remarkable contribution for the empowerment of women.

Comprehensive social policies as well as the creation of economic empowerment opportunities through the elimination of discriminatory social and cultural practices, are needed to address the situation. The improvement of social well-being of the wider community should be explicitly recognized as an objective of planned interventions, by various authorities who can contribute to the cause of social upliftment. It is an urge to the new generation entrepreneurs to focus attention to recognize and motivate the NGOs and other Self-Help Groups. Despite of infrastructural inadequacies they need to be activated to widen the self-employment choices, attain sustainable benefits and the socio-economic growth for the well-being of humanity.

Limitations of the Study

The discussion of only one case study is a limitation to the study. The study is limited only to Ludhiana with a limited sample size, so the inferences cannot be drawn for India in a broader perspective. Research on women empowerment needs to extend into new directions to focus on the success rather than the problems experienced. The authors suggest the theoretical discussion on the specificities of the problems and the benefits availed by sample population. Further studies are vital to evaluate whether similar findings are replicated and extended elsewhere.

Future Scope of Research

Future researchers can carry forward the research agenda suggested by this paper to further enrich the body of knowledge in the fields of social entrepreneurship. There is a need to advance formal efforts for women empowerment which could lead to socio-economic development with sustainable impact.

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