



# A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW ON THE EFFECT OF COOPERATIVES IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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## ABSTRACT

The Cooperatives are pioneered to function as platforms of social and economic policy and have inherent merits in strengthening the efforts, leading to economic stability, together with the prosperity of economy with employment, improved livelihood, security and social systems. With Cooperatives which served as powerful medium for empowering women. They act as a catalyst through which women gain access to income-generating sources, financial services, and markets that were previously difficult to access. This requires an imperative study to understand the role of cooperatives for the women empowerment. The present study aims to review the scholarly work of different researchers to examine the effect of cooperatives in the empowerment of women. For the dedicated study, the systematic review of literature was done. The research methodology with VOS viewer software to identify most cited literatures. The findings suggest the work of cooperatives work as an instrument for social empowerment, growing massive networks, and women empowerment which is important for sustainable development. The research paper makes some suggestive measures to cooperatives for enhancing the empowerment of women.

*Keywords: Cooperatives, Women Empowerment, Social Empowerment, Women political empowerment.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The notion of women empowerment is quite observant and has multiplied considerable momentum across the world. Women's empowerment is gaining more importance in aspect of achieving sustainable development, inclusive in terms of social, economic, and political progress of the women. The Cooperatives as an association for the purpose of promoting gender equality and empowering women. The voluntary associations made by individuals originating among the weak and conducted always in fair order on such terms that all who are prepared to assume the duties of membership may share its rewards in proportion to the degree in which they make use of the associations. The cooperative model focuses and insights the well-being of members and emphasizes equitable involvement and making it a natural fit for initiatives to women empowerment. The cooperatives help in women's empowerment is by promoting economic self-reliance and decision-making. On connection with cooperatives, women gain access to the sources of earnings, economic services, and accessibility to markets that were causing hindrances to subject. The Cooperatives contribute in the advancement to training, skills development, and mentorship. The voluntary association contributing towards economic development, as to enable economic independence, allowing women to produce and contribute to household income, ensure the livelihoods, and break the vicious cycle of poverty. Moreover,

cooperatives also nurture social inclusion and strengthen the social fabric of people. Women in such associations build networks of mutual understanding, keeping solidarity, integration and collective action, allowing them to encounter discriminatory social norms and practices. The combined efforts and assuming duties enable women to break gender stereotypes, improve their social status and gain appreciation for their economic standards and contributions. Cooperatives also play a pivotal role in women's political empowerment by offering breaks for leadership and decision-making. Under the structure of democratic form of governance, women participate in shaping the policies, plans, and priorities of their cooperatives. As they gain experience and self-confidence within the cooperative movement, women often spread their leadership roles to community organizations and public institutions. The Cooperatives provide an advancement to training place for women to develop necessitate skills such as negotiation, conflict resolution, and strategic planning. Against this backdrop it is important to examine the indulged mechanism of cooperatives for the women empowerment. The significant study aims to provide the scholarly work of different authors to critically review the role and importance of cooperatives in women and to have better insight on the relevant topic. The study is guided by the following research objectives.

## II. REVIEW OF EARLIER STUDIES

In recent decades, the Cooperatives have gained much attention as an indulged medium for women empowerment, providing avenues for financial aspects, social empowerment and political advancement. This systematic literature review intends to investigate the existing researches in regards to the role of cooperatives in empowering women. The purpose of this critical review is to build understanding on how cooperatives have been intricately connected in enhancing the socio-economic well-being of women, upgradation through empowerment. Several research studies have demonstrated the positive influence of cooperatives on women's economic empowerment which is important for sustainable development.

An early study conducted by Baden and Green, (1994) investigated on the participation of women in savings and credit cooperatives in Nepal, further study revealed that cooperative membership allowed women with a voice in decision-making, building social networks, and challenging gender norms.

Doss and Morris, (2001) confirmed that women who are actively participated in agricultural cooperatives have more access to credit, market linkages, and procured resources, also this leads to higher incomes and better livelihood-standards .

In this pattern, Aliber, (2003) highlighted the importance of addressing restrictions, specifically based on gender, other hindrances such as time poverty and limited mobility to ensure more phases to women's engagement and involvement in cooperatives.

Similarly, A study by Prowse, (2003) showed the gender biases and power dynamics that hinder women engagement and decision-making within cooperatives.

Kabeer and Mahmud, (2004) conducted research in Bangladesh and underscored that women involved in craft cooperatives were more likely to be participative in public affairs, overcoming gender inequalities, and influence policy-making processes.

Another study by Abeyasekera and Petchey, (2009) examined the political engagement of women in fishing cooperatives in Sri Lanka and revealed that cooperative membership provided women with series of opportunities for leadership, decision-making, and representation of their points.

Narula and Santos-Paulino, (2010) analyzed the case of SEWA Bank in India and found that the involvement of women in cooperative enterprises led to increased political awareness, capacity-building, and leadership development.

In addition, Vassil and Banda, (2012) conducted research in Malawi and acknowledged that women involved in cooperatives experienced high self-esteem, expanded social connectivity and improved standard of living.

A study by Dev and Rogaly, (2015) on agricultural cooperatives in Andhra Pradesh, India showed that women contributing in cooperatives have increased access to credit, markets, and productive resources, which leads to improved earning capabilities and better livelihoods.

For instance, Roy et al., (2015) conducted a study in India and demonstrated that women involved in dairy cooperatives had set to better bargaining power, enhanced control over income, and improved-quality and economic independence. Cooperatives have become powerful platforms for women empowerment, pavement for economic, social, and political advancement. Many of the studies of the researchers have confirmed the membership of women in cooperative lead them to several economic benefits, etc.

Likewise, Jyoti and Sharma, (2016) examined the role of cooperative banks in India and generalized that women economic empowerment was enhanced through their participation in SHGs (self help groups).

Jemio and Miranda, (2017) conducted a study in rural Bolivia and Karamchandani and Joseph, (2018) in Rwanda. The study demonstrated that cooperative membership provides women with opportunities for social inclusion, increased self-esteem, and broadened social networks.

Moreover, the study of Mukherjee, (2019) states that cooperatives seeks the particular interests of women, such as access to healthcare, education, and childcare services, thus helping in the overall well-being and social empowerment.

Furthermore, Bhargavi, (2022) highlighted the effect of Cooperatives in India as they play vital role in upholding gender equality and social inclusion. Women with equal rights and their representation in prime decision-making bodies, this help women to have more confidence to tackle and suppress the existing issues of gender disparities.

The aforementioned studies emphasize the role of cooperatives to provide women with trait of self-reliance, that includes economic opportunities, avenues to income, economic stability with stride to break the vicious cycle of poverty and contribute to their households and communities. Cooperatives have established themselves to be an effective platform for fostering social empowerment among women. Cooperatives also played pivotal role in women's political empowerment. Cooperatives serve as a platform for women to voice their concerns, discuss and deliberate community issues, and overcome gender norms, fostering a sense of agency and empowerment. Furthermore, cooperatives play a critical role in women's political engagement. These findings show the transformative potential of cooperatives in empowering women to participate in governance processes, advocacy for gender equality, and influence policies that affect their lives and communities. While cooperatives have established themselves to be an effective tool in women empowerment, several challenges persist.

### III.OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The fundamental objectives of the present study is to understand:

- To comprehend, investigate and assess the role of cooperatives in women empowerment.
- The research paper makes some suggestive measures to cooperatives for enhancing the empowerment of women

### IV.RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The writing is quite descriptive in nature and the methodology adopted for research paper is the systematic review of scholarly work of different researchers on the relevant topic. In total, fifteen most cited literatures are finally selected for review to understand the role of cooperatives in women empowerment. VOS viewer software is used for conducting the systematic literature search.

### V.SUGGESTIONS

The following are some of the suggestive measures for enhancing women empowerment in India are:

- **Accessibility to resources:**  
The Cooperatives should help women with improved accessibility to credit and productive resources. This fulfilment requires training on proper allocation of scared resources and connections to market segments
- **Capacity-building Programme:**  
The Cooperatives should manage to invest in several training and skill development programmes for women. Such initiatives can enhance the overall capacity of women to participate in decision-making processes with their advanced sets of knowledge, skills, and competency, etc.
- **Gender-responsive sensitivity:**  
Cooperatives should foster governance to gender sensitisation as non-disparity ensure women have equal representation in decision-making entities, management and communities.
- **Encounter gender biasness and power imbalances:**  
Cooperatives must stride towards eradication of issues based on gender biases, and mismanagement

and oppression. A managed community requires raising awareness about gender equality among the members.

- **Build networking and sponsor mentorship:**  
Cooperatives should promote networking opportunities and sponsor mentorship programs that could facilitate women to enable them to connect with other successful women entrepreneurs. The following effort can provide invaluable help, direction, inspiration and experience for women in their collaboration to entities and earnest journey through cooperative.
- **Collaborate actions with government institutions:**  
Cooperatives should framework to create partnerships with Government agencies/enterprise to implement policies and programmes that could ensure financial inclusion, socio-economic development, and political engagement of women in India.
- **Foster connections with civil societal units :**  
It is imperative for Cooperatives to focus and engage with civil organizations that aims to facilitate empowerment of women , promote gender equality and cooperative development. This collaboration can ensure adequate valuable resources, specialization, and manage in implementing gender-responsive initiatives and encounter the potential needs of women.
- **Convene timely assessments:**  
The fundamental progress of cooperative programmes and initiatives in terms of empowerment of women need to be regularly assessed. The monitoring will help to identify learned and unlearned segments, successes, deviations and areas for improvement, facilitating cooperatives to reform strategies and ensure focused direction towards empowerment of women.

## VI.CONCLUSION

The scholarly work of different researchers on the relevant topic of the effect of cooperatives in women empowerment emphasize the importance of cooperatives as powerful instrument for fostering equality in several dimensions of economic, social system, and contribution by women in society. The literature reveal that cooperatives contribute to economic empowerment of women by facilitating them to various concerns such as to have accessibility to valuable resources, linkages to markets, livelihood-earning opportunities and bringing economic stability. Moreover, cooperatives work as a force for social empowerment, building social connectivity, and robust community for all. Furthermore, cooperatives play as a strong platform for women's political empowerment by creating pavement to leadership, engagement in the process of decision-making, participation in proceeding for governance and collaboration with government and institutions. Not enough of that, more research is required to encounter challenges related to gender biases, dynamism of power, changing aspects to sectors and constraints that restricts women's full participation, engagement and decision-making within structure of cooperatives. The systematic review of literature highlighted the significance of cooperatives as catalyst for the empowerment of women, attention on the requirement of continued directions and investment in the initiatives chalked out by cooperative in order to promote gender equality, sectors-reformation ,framework of competent societies and development as a whole.



