



AN ANALYSIS OF EMPOWERMENT OF SCHEDULED CASTE WOMEN THROUGH SELF-HELP GROUPS (SHGs) – WITH REFERENCE TO PRAKASAM DISTRICT OF ANDHRA PRADESH

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Abstract:

Generally, women have multi-faceted personality. Traditionally, women are thought to be the symbol of sacrifice. They play a simultaneous role of a daughter, sister, wife, mother and their activities were mainly conformed within the boundary of four walls. Rural women participated in several agricultural activities. But, most of the South Asian Countries, the status of women is low and their socio-economic conditions are much more depressed than that of men. Regional variations and disparities make them even more vulnerable. In this stage, the Self Help Groups in Andhra Pradesh has been a revelation in bringing economic and social empowerment among the women in rural areas and a silent revolution towards the change for better. It is envisaged that the Self Help Groups would help to improve socio economic status of the rural women in general and social inclusion of the Scheduled Caste women, the most downtrodden, in particular. The Scheduled Caste Women suffered from twin disadvantage, one because of their caste and the other because of their gender; as a result their exclusion was complete and comprehensive. They were underprivileged among the under-privileged and discriminated among the discriminated. This paper focuses on scheduled caste women empowerment through SHGs.

Key Words: Women, Empowerment, SHGs, Scheduled Caste, Social, Economic

Introduction

Women in India, although constitute almost fifty percent of its total population, remain to be a neglected section of our society. In this modern sophisticated world, women are treated as the second citizens and are subordinated to men. “Though men and women are declared to be equal before the law and though discrimination on the basis of sex is forbidden by the constitution, it is common knowledge

that women are still at a disadvantage in India in many areas of life". According to FAO, "the most disadvantaged section of the society is the women; they are the "silent majority" of the world's poor. Seventy percent of the world's poor are women. They face peculiar social, cultural, educational, political and allied problems."

The situation of SC women in India needs special attention. They are one of the largest socially segregated groups anywhere in the world and make up two per cent of the world's total population. They are poor, they constitute half of the 200 million SC population and 16.3 per cent of the total Indian female population. The traditional taboos are the same for Dalit men and SC women. However, Dalit women have to deal with them more often. SC women are discriminated against not only by people of higher castes, but also within their own communities. Men are dominant in SC communities.

The scheduled caste women in rural areas are suffering from deprivation in educational, socio-economic, political and religious aspects. Apart from such deprivation, there are also evil social practices such as child marriage, Devadasi, etc that are prevailed in few of these backward castes, which also degraded the status of women in these castes. Due to such deprivation, the Scheduled Caste girls can't able to participate in productive sector of employment equally with all in the society. Hence, empowerment of such rural scheduled caste women is needed.

1. Scheduled Castes in Andhra Pradesh

History tells us that Scheduled Castes have no history of their own. They have been marginalised as objects of the state rather than being treated as the subjects. They are treated as targets of philanthropic and social work rather than citizens of a nation who have equal rights as other citizen to all the benefits that are given to them as worthy citizens. Instead, they have been pushed around and subjugated and exploited at every point in their life. Thus, their status needs to be uplifted and all the atrocities meted out against them, put to an end.

Table – 1

Scheduled Caste Population in Andhra Pradesh as per 2011 Census

S.No	District	SC Male Population	SC Female Population	Sex Ratio
1	Prakasam	3,97,242	3,90,619	983
2	Kunool	370215	367730	993
3	Ananthapur	292379	290756	994
4	Krishna	435412	435651	1001
5	Nellore	332673	333915	1004
6	Cuddapah	232123	233671	1007
7	Guntur	476333	481074	1010
8	West Godavari	403693	408005	1011
9	East Godavari	468883	476386	1016
10	Chittoor	389582	396178	1017
11	Visakhapatnam	162873	166613	1023
12	Vijayanagaram	121493	126235	1039
13	Srikakulam	125214	130450	1042
Total		4208115	4237283	1007

Source: Population Census 2011

2. Empowerment of Women

Women are significantly superior to men in several facets of development, according to recent trends in India and even globally. The only issue is that women have had fewer opportunities to pursue many spheres of economic activity in the past. As a result, it is vital to develop women today by providing them with the means to engage in a variety of economic activities, allowing them to become economically independent and socially confident in their endeavors. As a result, in recent years, women's empowerment has been recognized as a critical factor in determining their status. Empowerment is a process that allows women to fully understand their identity and authority in all aspects of their lives.

Women will be able to define their own attitudes, values, and behavior in accordance with their own true interests as a result of empowerment, and will be able to finally liberate themselves of male-dominated culture and society. Empowerment has nothing to do with being better than men or holding prominent positions; rather, it focuses on societal equality. Equality refers to the ability to labor together, receive equal rewards, and earn the same amount of money. Empowered women use their talents to earn a living, and they contribute to the empowerment of all women by putting all of their strength into the pressures of family, religion, and job. Empowered women are the ones that determine their own values and ideas. They gain strength from the support of other women and maintain their own moral ideals. Their behaviors are guided by their own set of values. Women who are empowered can be found in any social group and in any society.

3. Review of Literature

Kiran Rana and Ansari M.A (2019) In their article, they found that women are not participating in all socially and economically useful activities because of the concept of Self-Help Groups (SHGs). Women's monthly earnings are on the rise, and they are keeping pace with their monthly expenses. Women have asserted a dignified place in the household and in society as a result of the SHG movement. Their ability to deceive has greatly increased, not just in their family but even in society.

Gangisetty (2018) Women with SHGs were studied to see how they functioned and what problems they had. Women are becoming more empowered as a result of economic, psychological, and societal issues. The research was carried out using a primary survey in which data was collected from 6 SHGs with 180 rural respondents. The study's findings revealed that MFI increased respondents' confidence, courage, and skills, improved their literacy, and reduced poverty. In comparison to women who are not members of SHGs, the study found that women who are members of SHGs are more open with their thoughts and beliefs. Women took part in a variety of activities as well as training programs.

4. Objective of the Study

The main objective of this paper Impact of Self Help Groups on Scheduled Caste Women Empowerment in Markapur Mandal of Prakasam District in Andhra Pradesh.

5. Methodology

Purpose of the present study, 100 Scheduled Caste Women samples from Markapur Mandal of Prakasam District are selected. Of this, four villages, Rayavaram, Pedda Yachavaram, Idupur and Gajjalakonda were selected for this study. 25 samples from each village for this study. The majority of the sample respondents are chosen using simple random sampling. In this study primary data were collected from directly respondents by pre-designed interview scheduled. Simple percentage, graphs and other relevant statistical techniques were adopted.

6. Result and Interpretation

The distribution of sample respondents by age is shown in Table 1. It was found that 37 percent of respondents are between the ages of 20 and 40 years, 35 percent are between the ages of 40 and 50 years, 15 percent are under the age of 20 years, and 13 percent are above 50 years. The majority of women in SHG are found to be relatively young.

Table – 1
Age of the respondent

Age	Percentage
Less than 20	15
20 to 40	37
40 to 50	35
50 above	13
Total	100

Source: Primary data

Table 2, shows the distribution of sample respondents according to their level of education. It is observed that 47 percent of the respondents are illiterate. 22 percent with primary education, 8 percent

with above inter education, 10 percent with inter education, 7 percent with secondary level education and 6 percent of the respondents are high school level education.

Table – 2
Educational Status of the respondents

Education Level	Percentage
Illiterate	47
Primary Level	22
Secondary Level	07
High School Level	06
Inter	10
Above Inter	8
Total	100

Source: Primary data

The distribution of sample respondents by occupation is shown in Table 3. Agriculture employs 52 percent of respondents, followed by caste-based services with 34 percent, and other sources with 14 percent. As a result, agriculture is the most common occupation among respondents.

Table – 3
Occupation of the respondents

Occupation	Percentage
Agriculture	52
Caste based Services	34
Others	14
Total	100

Source: Primary data

Table 4, shows the distribution of sample respondents by monthly income. Prior to joining SHGs, 49 percent of respondents had a monthly income of less than Rs.2000. Following that, 31% of respondents got between 2001 and 4000 Rs, 12 percent of respondents got between 4001 and 6000 rupees, and 8 percent of respondents got more than 6000 rupees. After joining SHGs, 37% of respondents earned between Rs 2001 and 4000 per month, followed by 28% who earn less than Rs 2000, 19% who earn between Rs 4001 and 6000, and 16% who earn more than Rs 6000 per month. As a result, the majority of responders increased their monthly income.

Table – 4
Income of the respondents

Before Joining Monthly Income		After Joining Monthly Income
Income	Percentage	Percentage
Less than 2000	49	28
2001 - 4000	31	37
4001 - 6000	12	19
6000 above	8	16
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

Table 5, shows the percentage of sample respondents who joined self-help groups for various reasons. There are 42 percent of respondents for their family support, followed by 21 percent respondents are for getting loans, 10 percent of respondents are for business purposes, 18 percent of respondents are

for increasing their savings, and 09 percent of respondents are for other purpose. As a result, the majority of respondents said that for family support.

Table – 5
Reasons for joining for SHGs

Reasons for joining for SHGs	Percentage
For the support of the family	42
For increase Saving	18
For getting loan	21
For business	10
For other purpose	09
Total	100

Source: Primary data

The distribution of sample respondents by investment for future money growth is shown in Table 6. It has been discovered that 59 percent of respondents invest in order to grow their money, whereas 41 percent do not invest in order to grow their money. After receiving a loan, the majority of respondents investment in various fields.

Table – 6
Investment for the growing of money

Purpose of Investment	Percentage
Yes	59
No	41
Total	100

Source: Primary data

Table 7, shows the distribution of sample respondents based on their knowledge of society and community. According to the results, 72 percent of respondents are aware of society and community, and 28 percent of respondents are not aware of society and community. Most of the Self Help Group members are aware about society and community.

Table – 7
The responders' awareness of society and community

Awariness	Percentage
Yes	72
No	28
Total	100

Source: Primary data

The distribution of sample respondents by Communication skills is shown in Table 8. It was found that 61% of respondents have improved their communication skills with others and would communicate with their mandal level officers, whereas 39% have not improved their communication skills with their officers.

Table – 8
Communication Skills of respondents

Communication Skills	Percentage
Increased	61
Constant	39
Total	100

Source: Primary data

The distribution of sample responses by decision making is shown in Table 9. It has been found that 51% of respondents have increased their decision-making in the agriculture sector, while 49% have not made any decisions in agriculture. 56 percent of respondents have increased their decision-making in other family activities, while 44 percent have decreased their decision-making in other family activities.

Table – 9
Decision making of the respondents

Decision Making	Agriculture	Other Activities
Increase	51	56
Constant	49	44
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

Findings of the Study

- The majority of women in Self-Help Groups are in their early thirties.
- 47 percent of the respondents are illiterates, while 22% have only received primary school education.
- Agriculture is the most common occupation among the respondents.
- Before joining SHGs, 49% of respondents had a monthly income of less than Rs.2000, and after joining SHGs, 37% of respondents have a monthly income of between Rs 2001 and Rs 4000.
- The majority of the respondents said that they were joined in SHGs for family support.
- After receiving their loan, the majority of respondents invest their money in various fields.
- 72 percent of the respondents are aware of society and community.
- 61 percent of respondents said their communication skills have improved.
- 51 percent of respondents have increased their decision-making in the agriculture sector, and 56 percent have increased their decision-making in other family activities.

Conclusion

Self-Help Groups are proving to be an effective best weapon for women's empowerment. Self-Help Groups are rural poor organizations, primarily of women, that provide Micro-Credit to enable them to engage in self-employment and income-generating activities. Women's empowerment can be achieved through self-employment or income-generating activities. The study's main findings support the SHGs' stronger role in enhancing women's empowerment by making them financially strong and enabling them to save money for future development. Self-help groups have been successful in empowering rural women through income-generating activities, according to the findings of the study. Schedule Caste Women's abilities in the fields of income, expenditure, savings, decision-making, and external relations are improving as a result of SHGs' operations in Prakasam District.

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