



Social And Political Empowerment Of Women Through Self Help Groups

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Abstract

Introduction:

The social and economic status of women is reliable indicator of the socio-economic empowerment of a society. The often repeated argument is that women's development or empowerment is possible only if they are given opportunities to develop freedom and participation in decision-making. The social activities of the women in their Self Help group indicate the empowerment of these women. The Self Help Groups help them to lead a dignified life in society. The changes in the women's personality before and after joining the SHGs can be observed in this study.

Objectives: 1) To know the social empowerment of women through self help groups 2) To study the political empowerment of women through self help groups.

Methodology:

The present study is adopted descriptive research design. The present study is based upon the primary data. The purposive sampling method was used for the primary data collection. The study was conducted in four districts of Karnataka namely Gulbarga, Vijayapura, Dharwad and Belagavi. Women Self Help Groups were formed by Non Government Organisation and Shtrishakti groups. With the help of SPSS package the data was analysed and drawn the frequency tables and conclusion. A large resource of written material was used for the review of literature and conceptualization, which include books, magazines, academic journals, as well as websites.

Conclusion:

The Self Help Groups in the study area are taking the lead and playing an important and pivotal role in social transformation, welfare activities and they have served the cause of women empowerment, social solidarity and socio-economic and political betterment of the poor women.

Key words: Empowerment, Women Empowerment, Social and Political Empowerment, Self Help Groups,

Introduction:

Women's equality and empowerment (SDF-5) is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and is also integral to all dimension of inclusive and sustainable development. Women's and girls' social and economic empowerment also contributes to their ability to pursue their rights to a healthy life. In all societies power is not equally distributed.

The social and economic status of women is reliable indicator of the socio-economic empowerment of a society. The often repeated argument is that women's development or empowerment is possible only if they are given opportunities to develop freedom and participation in decision-making.

The empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building, leading to greater participation, greater decision making, power and control of the transformation action the empowerment of women covers both individual and collective transformation. It strengthens their innate ability by acquiring knowledge, power and experience. It is possible through women self help groups.

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Concept of Empowerment:

It is difficult to measure empowerment. There is no single method for measuring it. It should be understood and defined through indicators. Indicators of empowerment should encompass personal, social, economic and political change. Empowerment is a term generally used to describe a process by which powerless people become conscious of their own situation and organise collectively to gain greater access to public service or to the benefits of economic growth.

According to Sen and Grown, "Empowerment required transformation of structure of subordination through radical changes in law, property rights and other institutions that reinforce and perpetuate male domination"

Women Empowerment:

Women are considered as a part of weaker section of the society. They are given a subordinate status in Hindu society. A considerable amount of abuse and harassment of women also takes place within the family, violence at home is common and not confined to illiterate families as often presumed.

Chandra defined it “Empowerment of women in its simplest form means the manifestation of redistribution of power that challenges patriarchal ideology and the male dominance. It is both a process and the result of the process.

Self Help Group:

Origin of SHG:

The SHG is the brainchild of the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh, founded by Prof. Mohammed Yunus of Chittagong University in the year of 1975. In India, NABARD initiated SJG in 1986-1987. However, the real efforts made after 1991-92 helped from the linkage of SHGs with the banks. In Karnataka the SHGs started in the year 1992. (Palani and Selvaraj-2008)

Concept of SHG:

The Self Help Groups (SHG) is a homogenous gathering of persons who join on a voluntary basis. The main objective of the group is to improve the economic and social status of the members. Whole the group activities are multipurpose; they quite often have a special focus on thrift and credit management. Although unregistered, they function within the framework of an informal set of by-laws framed by the members themselves.

The Self Help Group is an association of people belonging to similar socio-economic characteristics, residing in the same locality. It is a voluntary group valuing personal interactions and mutual aid as a mean of altering or ameliorating problems perceived as alterable, pressing and personal by most of the its members.

Social Activities:

The social activities of the women in their Self Help group indicate the empowerment of these women. SHGs help them to lead a dignified life in the society. The changes in the women’s personality before and after joining the SHGs can be observed and are shown in the following tables.

Table No.1 Social Activities of Self Help Group members

Variable	Earlier		Present	
Ability to Speak				
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Good	4	1.3	265	82.8
Moderate	296	92.5	53	16.6
Poor	20	6.3	2	6.0
Total	320	100	320	100
Ability to Mobilize				
Good	32	10.0	262	81.9
Moderate	268	83.8	52	16.3
Poor	20	6.3	6	1.9

Total	320	100	320	100
Knowledge of Banking Process				
Good	27	8.4	116	36.3
Moderate	59	18.4	175	54.7
Poor	234	73.1	29	9.1
Total	320	100	320	100
Linkages with Govt. Machinery				
Good	18	5.6	43	13.4
Moderate	66	20.6	248	77.5
Poor	236	73.8	29	9.1
Total	320	100	320	100



Knowledge about Welfare Schemes				
Good	4	1.3	265	82.8
Moderate	296	92.5	53	16.6
Poor	20	6.3	2	.6
Total	320	100	320	100
Respect in Family				
Good	4	1.3	265	82.8
Moderate	296	92.5	53	16.6
Poor	20	6.3	2	.6
Total	320	100	320	100
Respect in Society				
Good	4	1.3	265	82.8
Moderate	296	92.5	53	16.6
Poor	20	6.3	2	.6
Total	320	100	320	100
Decision making in Family				
Good	4	1.3	265	82.8
Moderate	296	92.5	53	16.6
Poor	20	6.3	2	.6
Total	320	100	320	100
Decision making in Society				
Good	4	1.3	265	82.8
Moderate	296	92.5	53	16.6
Poor	20	6.3	2	.6
Total	320	100	320	100
Communication Skill				
Good	4	1.3	265	82.8
Moderate	296	92.5	53	16.6
Poor	20	6.3	2	.6
Total	320	100	320	100

Above table shows various variables. Ability to speak (earlier) to others. Out of 320 respondents, a majority of them 296 (82.8%) the ability to speak moderately, a small percent of the respondents, 20(6.3%) are poor and 4 (1.3%) speak well. After become SHG member ability to speak 265 (82.8%) have the ability to speak good, followed by 53 (16.6%) with the ability to speak moderately and very few percent of them 2

(.6%) speak poorly. The result shows that majority of the respondents speaking ability is good after becoming SHGs before becoming a SHG member.

Ability to mobilise (earlier) out of 320 respondents a majority them 268(83.8%) have the ability to mobilise moderately, followed by 32(10.0%) percent as having the ability to mobilise as good and a small percent of the respondents 20(6.3%) are having ability to mobilise is poor. Ability to mobilise (present), out of 320 respondents, majority of them 262(81.9%) are having the ability to mobilise as good, 53(16.3%) are having ability to mobilise as moderate and a small percent of them 6(1.9%) are having the ability to mobilise poorly and the result that, a majority of the respondents ability to mobilise is good after becoming SHGs members compared to earlier.

The knowledge of banking process (earlier), out of 320 respondents, a majority of them 234(73.1%) had a poor knowledge of the banking process, followed by 59(18.4%) the respondents who had a moderate knowledge of the banking process and a small percent of the respondents 27 (8.4%) who had a good knowledge of the banking process. The knowledge of the banking process (present), out of 320 respondents, 175(54.7%) have a moderate knowledge of banking process, 116(36.3%) have a good knowledge of banking process and a small percent of the respondents 29(9.1%) still have a poor knowledge of the banking process. A majority of the respondents develop a good knowledge of the banking process after becoming members of Self Help Group as compared to before.

The linkage of Government machinery (earlier), out of 320 respondents, a majority of them 236(73.8%) had a poor linkage with the government machinery, followed by 66 (20.6%) percent of them had a moderate linkage with the government machinery and a small percent of the respondents 18(5.6%) had a good linkage with the govt. machinery. The linkage of govt. machinery (present), out of 320 respondents, a majority of them 248(77.57%) have a moderate with the govt. machinery, 43(13.4%) have a good linkage with govt. machinery and 29(9.1%) percent of the respondents have a poor linkage with the govt. machinery. Majority of them linkages with the govt. machinery is good after becoming Self Help Group members as earlier it was not good.

Knowledge about welfare schemes (earlier), out of the 320 respondents, a majority of them 296 (92.5%) had a poor knowledge of welfare schemes, 26 (6.3%) of them who had a moderate knowledge about welfare schemes and a small percent of respondents 4 (1.3%) had a good knowledge about welfare schemes. Knowledge about welfare schemes (present). Out of 320 respondents 265 (82.8%) are having moderate knowledge about welfare schemes, followed by 53(16.6%) are having good knowledge about welfare schemes, a small 2 (.6%) are having a poor knowledge about welfare schemes. A majority of them having knowledge about welfare schemes is good after becoming self help group members. Earlier was not good.

The respect in the family (earlier), out of the 320 respondents, a majority of the respondents, 296 (92.5%) are having moderate respect in the family, 20(6.3%) of the respondents as having poor respect in the family and a small percent of the respondents, 4 (1.3%) were having good respect in the family. Respect in the family (present), out of 320 respondents, a majority of the respondents 265(82.8%) are having good

respect in family, 53(16.6%) are having moderate and a very small percent of them 2 (0.6%) are having poor respect in the family. Majority of them received good respect in the family after becoming Self Help Group members. Earlier it was not good compared now.

Respect in Society (earlier), out of 320 respondents, 296(92.5%) had moderate respect in society, 20(6.3%) respondents who had poor respect in society and a small percent of the respondents 4(1.3%) are having good respect in society. Respect in society (present) out of 320 a majority of the respondents 265(82.8%) have a good respect in society, 53(16.6%) have a moderate respect in society and a very small percent of the respondents 2(0.6%) are having poor respect in society. A majority of the respondents respect in society is good after becoming Self Help Group members.

The decision making in the family (earlier), out of 320 respondents, a majority of them 296(92.5%) made moderate decision making in the family, 20(6.3%) of the respondents as having poor decision making in the family and a small percent of them 4(1.3%) had good decision making in the family. Decision making in the family (present), out of 320 respondents a majority of them 265(82.8%) are making good decision making in family, 53(16.6%) are having moderate decision making in the family and a small percent of them 2(.6%) are having poor decision making in family, as a result majority of them taking decision making in the family is good after becoming Self Help Group members.

Decision making in Society (earlier), out of 320 respondents, a majority 296(92.5%) are having moderate decision making in society, followed by 20(6.3%) of them are having poor decision making in society and a small percent of them 4(1.3%) are having good decision making in society. Decision making in Society (present), out of the 320, a majority of them 265 (82.8%) are having good decision making in society, 53(16.6%) are having moderate decision making in society and a small percent of them 2(.6%) are having poor decision making in the society, as a result majority of the respondents decision making in society is good after becoming Self Help Group members.

The communication skill (earlier), out 320 respondents a majority of them 296 (92.5%) had moderate communication skill, 20(6.3%) of the respondents had poor communication skill and a small percent of them 4(1.3%) had good communication skill. Communication skill (present), out of 320 respondents, a majority of them 265(82.8%) are having good communication skill, 53(16.6%) are having moderate communication skill and a very small percent of them 2(.6%) are having poor communication. As a result majority of the respondents communication skill is good after becoming Self Help Group members because all members of SHGs attend each and every meeting and SHG activities.

Political Awareness:

Political Awareness is an important aspect in women political empowerment. Political awareness helps women to improve their participation in the Gram Panchayat system and various women empowerment programmes at the Panchayat level. When women are aware about the political system, they will get all kind

of the assistance from the Panchayat for their empowerment. So the political awareness of the respondents is shown in the following table.

Table No. 2 Political Awareness among SHG member

Awareness about Local Govt.	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	248	77.5
No	72	22.5
Total	320	100
Participation of SHGs members in Gram Panchayat activities		
Yes	145	45.3
No	175	54.7
Total	320	100
Role of SHG member's participation in GP		
As a member SHG	68	46.9
As villager	70	48.3
As a member of GP	7	4.8
Total	145	100
Do you express your opinion		
Yes	17	11.72
No	128	88.27
Total	145	100
What opinion do you express		
Village development works	6	35.3
Women related schemes	8	47.0
Government loan facility for SHG	3	17.7
Total	17	100

Table 1.2 shows awareness about the local self government. Out of 320 respondents a majority of them 248(77.5%) are aware about the local self government, followed by 72(22.5%) who are not aware about the local self government, as a result majority of them after becoming SHG members are aware about their local self government.

Participation of Self Help Group members in Gram Panchayat activities. Out of 320 respondents, a majority of them 175(54.7%) participated in the Gram Panchayat activities, followed by 145(45.3%) who did not participate in the Gram Panchayat activities, with the result that majority of them participated in Gram

Panchayat activities. It needs more and more members to participate the GP for the overall development of the village, community, and especially women.

The role of Self Help Group member's participation in the GP. Out of 320 respondents, 145 of them were participated in the GP, of this a majority of respondents 70(48.3%) participated in the GP as a villager, followed by 68(46.9%) played the role as a members of SHGs and 7(4.8%) of them are played the role as a member of the Gram Panchayat, with the result that, a majority of the respondents are not participating in the Gram Panchayat meeting and other activities.

Whether the members express their opinion. Out of the 145 respondents, a majority of the 128(88.27%) do not express their opinion in the Gram Panchayat and 17(11.72%) of them express their opinion in the Grama Panchayat, with the result that, majority of the responded do not express their own opinion. It indicates that politically women are not that much empowered according to the present study.

Opinions are expressed by the members. 145 respondents were participated in GP activities but only 17 respondents expressed their opinion. Out of 17 respondents, a majority 8(47.0%) are expressed their opinion about women related schemes, followed by 6(35.3%) of them who expressed their opinion about the village development works and a small percent of the respondents 3(17.7%) expressed their opinion about the government loan facility for SHG, with the result that, majority of the respondents expressed their opinion on women related schemes.

Conclusion:

The SHGs in the study area are taking the lead and playing an important and pivotal role in social transformation, welfare activities and they have served the cause of women empowerment, social solidarity and socio-economic and political betterment of the poor women.

Interaction in meetings help to develop friendship, express solidarity with the problems of others, nurture leadership and enhance one's own capacity as stepping stones to development good peer group provides efficient social support. Women find a new identity through SHGs as some of the members reported "after joining the SHG while meeting at market places and bus stops they experience a special bond" they are not afraid of sending their girl children out during evening hours, because they know "as they walk alone on the lanes there is somebody who know them out there". The group affiliation is a strengthening bond and a powerful tool to resolve their problems. By sharing happiness and sorrows they develop confidence in facing their problems. A successful SHGs needs to be an outlet where women meet leisurely, sharing takes place with motivation and mobilization. It needs to be defined as supportive, education and change oriented mutual aid groups. For this it has to address the life problems of women who join.

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