

**EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN THROUGH MICRO-
ENTERPRISES: A STUDY OF SHG WOMEN IN
CHITTOOR DISTRICT OF ANDHRA PRADESH**

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SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

5.1 SUMMARY

Women empowerment is internationally recognized as a fundamental objective in achieving progress in all the areas of development and it refers the economic stability and improving the quality of life of women. Women comprises nearly half of the national population of any country and hence, development of any country is inseparably linked with developing the status of women. In this context, women empowerment is one of the millennium development goals. Since 1980s Women Empowerment has grown to be popular in the field of women's studies. It is vividly recognized that women empowerment is more essential for sustainable economic growth and reduction in poverty in developing countries like India. Empowerment may be understood as enabling people especially women to acquire and possess power resources in order to make decisions on their own or resist decisions that are made by others that affect them. Empowered women tend to be more independent, self-reliant and have control over their lives.

Employment and education opportunities are not made available on an equal basis to women and it impairs women's contribution to development. The high illiteracy among women is a major constraint on their scope for employment and better social status. In many traditional areas of women employment, technology replaced women and worsened the employment and health conditions of women. The profit of technology is for eliminating women's drudgery from her day-to-day life.

Gender discrimination to a greater extent affects girls and women all through their life with limited access to education and employment.

Economic empowerment demands changes in two major aspects. Firstly, it demands changes in the women's labour pattern and secondly, the changes in women's access to and control over resources. Economic empowerment also necessitates ample access to income and income yielding assets such as agriculture land so as to stand on their own legs. Thus, economic empowerment is sought to be achieved through promotion of employment and income generation activities.

Achievement of social empowerment demands changes in women's mobility and social interaction. Women who had hitherto lived in a secluded life confining to their homes should come out and should move out to outside world to carry out activities without any assistance from their father/husband/ward. They should have interaction with other members of the society to take up development activities not only for themselves but also for the society.

Women had hitherto been excluded from politics and administrative powers where policy making and implementation are done. Reservation of women in the rural and urban local bodies through 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Indian Constitution had enabled representation of nearly a million women at the grassroots level political organization. These women play a very important catalytic role in transforming society. Similar representation in State Legislature and Parliament would further strengthen the process of empowerment of women. Experiences since the 73rd amendment have demonstrated that when women gain voice in decision making in their villages or towns, they address issues that are critical to meeting basic needs of the villages/towns. They take action against dowry, domestic violence, child marriage

and child labour. Women in position of leadership begin to transform gender relations and call into aversion the deeply entrenched patriarchal system. They help other women to gain knowledge over their rights and responsibilities.

Empowerment is a long process. It has to pass through different stages. In the first stage, women should be trained to look into the situation from different perspectives and recognize the power relations that perpetuate their oppression. At this stage, the women share their feelings and experiences with each other and build a common vision and mission. In the second stage, the women tried to change the situation by bringing about a change into the gender and social relations. In the third stage, the process of empowerment makes them more mature to realize the importance of collective action. As empowerment seeks to alter the gender and power relations, there could be a certain social or gender conflicts. The process of empowerment could also face certain obstacles emanating from the patriarchal system, traditional beliefs and political system. The results of empowerment, however, will not be confined to women. The other members of the family will also benefit from the empowerment process.

The empowerment of women through Self Help Groups would lead to benefits not only to the individual women and women groups but also for the families and community as a whole through collective action for development. These groups have a common perception of need and impulse towards collective action. Empowering women is not just for meeting their economic needs but also through more holistic social development.

Empowerment would become more relevant if women are educated, better informed and can take rational decisions. It is also necessary to sensitize the other

sex towards women. It is important to usher in changes in societal attitudes and perceptions with regard to the role of women in different spheres of life. Adjustments have to be made in traditional gender specific performance of tasks. A woman needs to be physically healthy so that she is able to take challenges of equality. But it is lacking in a majority of women especially in the rural areas. They have unequal access to basic health resources and lack adequate counselling.

The integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) accorded priority to women headed households. A new scheme Development of women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) was started in 1982-83 as pilot project in 50 Blocks of the country. Self Help Groups were set up in Andhra Pradesh in 1992. It started as a Total Literacy campaign in Nellore district which led to the anti-arrack movement. At a village meeting in Leguntapadu, the District Magistrate suggested the savings of a rupee a day by women, leading to the formation of savings and credit groups. In Maharashtra, NGOs like Chaitanya and BAIF have been active in forming SHGs for over fifteen years. The government-supported programme started in twelve districts in 1994 with IFAD funding and was implemented by the Women's Development Corporation (Growth of SHG in India).

Micro- enterprises are important sources of income and employment for a significant proportion of the rural poor. In fact, this sub-sector is perceived to be an essential part of survival strategy of poor households. The relationship between micro enterprises and poverty reduction is coming up for serious consideration among the policy makers and development programme implementers.

In Andhra Pradesh, Government and Non-government organizations are implementing programmes for the empowerment of women through their collectives,

commonly known as Self-Help Groups (SHGs). Initially, NGOs were in the forefront in organizing women SHGs. In the later stage, government programme, viz. SERP, Indira Kranthi Patham or Velugu too organized women collectives. These organized women groups conducted meetings, savings and credit operations (also called Micro-finance) within each group. They also actively participated in community development activities, educational programmes and group management trainings.

With the technical and institutional assistance from the promoting agencies and other related agencies, the women groups took up micro-entrepreneurial activities both individually and collectively. In this context, the present study made an attempt to find out to what extent the micro-enterprises of SERP, I.K.P. and the NGOs have contributed to the empowerment of women and to what extent these achievements have contributed to their overall transformation. Several studies indicate that self-help group programmes often in the form of credit or micro credit schemes and savings have succeeded in changing the lives of poor women by making way for enhanced income and increased self-esteem. This is evident from the mushrooming growth of self- help groups in the state. This study is undertaken to analyse the structure, conduct and performance of self-help groups and their impact on the women. The study also attempts to find out to what extent the I.K.P. and NGOs have contributed to the effective functioning of the micro-enterprises. Hence, the present study is titled "Empowerment of Women through Micro-enterprises: A study of Self-help group of Chittoor District in Andhra Pradesh".

5.2 METHODOLOGY

The Methodology part (a) covering the objectives, theoretical frame work, Hypotheses, Universe of the study , operational definition, pilot study, sample size,

variables of the study, tools of data collection, methods of data data analysis, and limitation of the study. Part (b) provides profile of Chittoor district with a sport light on SHG and micro-enterprises

MAJOR OBJECTIVES:- The present investigation “ Empowerment of women through Micro – enterprises: A Study of SHG women in Chittoor District of A.P. primarily attempts to probe into the questions based on the following objectives.

1. To study the socio-economic profile of the self- help group members.
2. To examine the Micro - enterprises initiated by the SHG through bank loans.
3. To assess the different dimensions of empowerment of women members after joining the SHG.
4. To assess the relationship between empowerment and other independent variables
5. To identify the strategies to empowering women members in SHG through Micro- Enterprises

A multistage random sampling method was adopted for selecting the sample. Accordingly in the first stage, three Revenue Divisions viz, Tirupati, Chittoor, and Madanapalli were selected on the basis of regional representation. Chittoor and Madanapalli were selected on the basis of maximum number. of Micro-enterprises groups under SERP, IKP or Velugu in that region and Tirupati on the basis of Maximum number of NGOs having enterprises groups in that region. The list of the NGOs was available from different sources like women’s commission, all India directory of voluntary organizations etc. The State Velugu Samakhya office (SERP) provided the information on district mission offices of Velugu or IKP. In the second stage, from each division, an NGO and Velugu or SERP, IKP were selected using

simple random sampling method by taking in to consideration of the following criteria.

- a) The promoting agency should have at least 10 (ten) group enterprises.
- b) The Micro-enterprises should have at least five members and
- c) The Micro-enterprises should have completed a tenure of five years.

TIRUPATI DIVISION

In the Tirupati Division, i.e. Urban 150 members were selected from Rastriya Seva Samithi,(NGO) and Sri Padmavathi Mahila Abhyudaya Sangham an NGO and Indira Kranthi Patham a Governmental bodies. 50 members were selected from each of the Institutions. In Semi Urban 4 mandles were selected on random basis.

CHITTOOR DIVISION

In Chittoor Urban 150 members were selected from Pragathi Yuvajana Sangam, an NGO, Society for Upliftment of poor in rural target an NGO, Indira Kranthi Patham (IKP) 50 members were selected from each of the institutions. In the Semi urban 4 mandals were selected on random basis.

MANDANAPALLI DIVISION

In Mandanapalli Urban 150 members were selected from Gramajyothi Society, an NGO, Shilpa Adarsha Mahila Mandali, an NGO and Indira Kranthi Patham (IKP) 50 members were selected from each of the Institution in semi urban 4 mandals were selected, on random basis.

Each division constitutes a total of 250 and overall chittoor district 750 members are selected on using simple random sampling method to analyse the empowerment of women through Micro-Enterprises. Among the 750 members were interviewed, 450

members are individually using a business (or) Micro-Enterprises and the remaining 300 members running a Micro-enterprises as a group

5.3 MAJOR FINDINGS

The present investigation “Empowerment of women through Micro-enterprise. A Study Of SHG women in Chittoor District of A.P”. primarily attempts to probe into the questions based on the following objectives.

- Around 52 per cent of the beneficiaries are under the age group of between 26 and 40 years.
- Out of 750 members (42.70 %) are possessing primary education
- Majority of the SHG members are Hindus constituting 76 per cent.
- BC community which constitutes the highest (45.70 %) of the total beneficiaries under the study.
- More than 69 per cent of the respondents have petty business.
- Most of the SHG members (74.50 %) are married
- Around 75 per cent of SHG members are possessing white card.
- Nearly half of the SHG members (48.80%) have the facility of municipal water.
- An over whelming percentage (92.30 %) of SHG women started to have been used LPG gas for cooking.
- Around 62 per cent of the families are nuclear.
- Around 45 per cent of the respondents earned above Rs 4000/- per month.

- More than 86 per cent of the respondents undertook the business on their own
- Around 42 per cent of the respondents have petty shop business.
- Eighty two per cent of the respondents of SHG earned more profit
- More than 65 per cent of the SHG respondents worked for running the unit on their own.
- Around 88 per cent of the respondents accepted that their empowerment has been increased after taking up micro - enterprise.
- About 60 per cent of the selected respondents expressed that they have been benefited from 1KP.
- Around 32 per cent of the respondents have expressed that their turnover crossed 10,000.
- Slightly more than 50 per cent (51.10 %) of the respondents took loan from amongst themselves, i.e. generating income from Self Help Group members by taking loan.
- Around 43 per cent of the SHG members availed loan in between Rs 10,000 and 50,000.
- Slightly more than half (52.70%) of the respondents received loan through Bank.
- Around 42 per cent of the respondents availed loan from Sathagiri Grameena Bank.
- Majority of the SHG women preferred to repay the loan in monthly instalments (84.10 %).

- It is observed that 89.50 per cent of the members took loan as group
- Most of the SHG members under take the micro – enterprise exclusively to earn money whose number is 208 constituted 27.70 per cent.
- Around 38 per cent devised their strategy in accordance with fluctuations in price of the product.
- Around 58 per cent of them categorically stated that after joining Self Help Groups and taking up micro – enterprise, they started saving the amount.
- More than 83 per cent of the respondent satisfied with the banker’s contribution for undertaking and the development of micro-enterprises.
- More than 84 per cent said that they have availed subsidy for loan amount.
- More than 52 per cent of the respondents of SHGs have medium social and economic empowerment
- More than 51 per cent has medium political empowerment.
- Exactly 56.0 per cent have medium educational empowerment.
- Still more than 50 per cent of the respondents are not firm in taking decisions in spite of the empowerment of women increased in all aspects.

5.4 STATISTICAL SIGNIFICANCE

- In case of division wise empowerment, the mean value and standard deviation is found more in Tirupati division in almost all the factors in terms of social, economic, political, educational and general empowerment of women besides decision- making empowerment.

- As far as age is concerned, the mean values were found more in the age group of 40 years and above the almost all dimensions of empowerment as their mean values are 48.79, 43.08, 59.26, 43.71, 76.62 in Economic, political, educational, decision -making empowerment of the respondents respectively.
- Regarding literacy, illiterate respondents have more empowerment in terms of social, economic, political, educational, empowerment besides decision-making empowerment.
- Empowerment of women as a whole is taken into consideration, the respondents of OC category dominated in all aspects, followed by BC and SC community and the least empowerment is found in ST category.
- With regard to economic empowerment, the respondents of married women enjoyed when the value is observed, but as per the std. Deviation, more empowerment lies with 'single 'women
- There is no different between nuclear and joint families where two or more families.
- The respondents who undertook the micro-enterprise collectively had become more empowered the all aspects then the women respondent who run the business individually.
- Profit earning respondents generally have confidence in all aspects, hence exhibit empowerment more comparatively with the respondents who couldn't succeed in running the business and c type of pessimism prevails in them, hence cent take decisions boldly but profit makers can do that.

- The income that earned more than Rs.4000/- has high intensity of empowerment and the respondents those who earned less than Rs.2000/- had less intensity of empowerment.
- Self-confidence has been noticed higher in the respondents of profit earners rather than the respondents of losers. Hence, it is observed that the empowerment of the profit earners respondents are higher.
- The multiple regression were used to identify the relationship between empowerment of women (Dependent variable) and independent variables. The overall findings shows that there are significant relationship between all dimensions of empowerment and some of the Socio-economic and demographical variable like Age, Education, Social category, Monthly income, Martial status, Type of enterprises. The overall findings of the study confirmed that micro-enterprises carried out by group members have more empowerment. Than individual enterprises run by SHG women.
- Area wise analyses showed that SHG groups in Tirupati Division have higher empowerment than Chittoor and Mandanapalli division.

5.5 CONCLUSION

The IKP and Non – government organisations are successfully implementing micro-enterprises by providing inputs like financial assistance through banks and skill training Programmes among SHG Women in Andhra Pradesh .

According to the present study among the SHG women most of the women 86.4 percent preferred to undertake individual enterprises than group enterprises (13.6 percent). The group members used to divide the loan and subsidy among members.

The study showed that slightly more than 40 percent of the respondents were undertaken small scale business like pettyshops, provision shops, vegetable vendors, milk vendors, etc. Another 36 percent of them have Beauty parlour and Tailoring enterprises, 17 percent of the women engaged in food related business followed by 4.6 percent of them had Xerox and computer related enterprises. Majority of the women had less education, that reflected in the type of enterprises they have selected.

Overall aim of the present study is to analyse the empowerment of women through Micro-enterprises among the SHG women in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh. For analyzing the empowerment the different dimensions of empowerment were taken into consideration they are Social, Economical, Political, Educationl, and Decision making. Further the Overall empowerment. For studying the empowerment an index of low, medium, and high empowerment, was prepared based on the value of each empowerment variable.

Throughout the study the empowerment of women is taken as the dependent variable, socio, economic variables and the variables related to micro-enterprises and SHG were taken as independent variables.

The Statistical techniques like ANOVA and multiple regression were used to identify the relationship between empowerment of women (Dependent variable) and independent variables. The overall findings shows that there are significance relationship between all dimensions of empowerment and some of the Socio-economic and demographical variables like Age, Education, Social category, Monthly income, Marital status, Type of enterprises. The overall findings of the study confirmed that micro-enterprises (Individual and Group) promoted the overall empowerment of SHG women in Chittoor District of Andhra Pradesh.

5.6 SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations are made:

- Majority of the SHG women have less education i.e. illiterate (16 Percent) Primary level of education (43 percent), hence majority of them have under taken ventures like petty shops, vegetable vending and traditional trades like tailoring, embodying and beauty parlor etc., The skill oriented computer and related enterprises are only below 5 percent .It is suggested to enhance the education level of SHG women through non-formal education and skill training to promote non-traditional enterprises.
- More than 50 per cent of the respondents are not firm in taking decisions in spite of the empowerment of women in all aspects. The microfinance institutions should give more attention to trainings to enhance self-confidence and self- esteem to help women to make better business decisions.
- The regulators of micro finance institutions should have a policy that will regulate the rate of interest charged as the women entrepreneurs felt that the interest rates were too high and hence some were reluctant to take loans.
- The design of micro savings should be changed so that it can be aligned to the client's needs such that, withdrawal procedures should be made easier and the time period for consequent withdrawals be reduced.
- Infrastructure support needs to be strengthened in divisional levels.
- Since the SHG Women have to travel frequently to attend Bank, micro finance institutions for training programme, marketing etc., more transport facilities may be arranged by the Government /NGO's in the rural area.

- . Need based skill development trainings can enhance the production capacity of the women. The training in micro-enterprises needs to be intensive and field-based and product specific. Periodic training programme may be arranged to improve the skills.
- . The economic assistance by the banks should not be considered a one- time affair and may have to continue in response to the increase in the credit absorption capacity of the groups..
- .Promote more group ventures than individual enterprises that will give more profit and confidence to the women. Financial institutions must ensure more subsidy for the group ventures.

OUTLOOK OF FURTHER RESEARCH

This study could be further developed by including more variables as mediating, moderating and or intervening in the regression model with a larger sample size. The results of which should be compared with those of this study so as to establish the relationship between micro finance intervention and empowerment of women entrepreneurs using different micro finance intervention variables. Further, a study should be carried out in other districts. This will establish more factors that are affecting the empowerment of women entrepreneurs in different constituencies of different setting such as rural versus urban based.