

## **Title: Empowering Rural Women: A Comprehensive Study in Lakshmipur village, Kushinagar. Challenges and Strategies for Sustainable Development**

• **Introduction:** Rural women constitute a significant portion of the global population, yet their socio-economic contributions and challenges remain understudied. They do not get much importance in public places. While they are a very important aspect of our life, they reproduce, regrow, and prepare daily meals for us. In reverse, urban women become a source of earning and do jobs and some minimal work in the house, gaining respect in the family because they earn. Economically independent women have the strength to fight against suppression and oppression and having autonomy in taking economic decision to act freely upon it without any coercion. This research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of societal dynamics affecting rural women, the challenges they face, and propose strategies for empowering them to contribute actively to sustainable development. Education plays a crucial role in women's lives. It enables them to read and write, empowering them to handle official documents and access support for their livelihood or Self-Help Group (SHG) programs. Lack of education often leads to fear of dealing with paperwork, causing women to avoid banks and resort to local money lenders who charge high interest rates. This can trap them in debt and sometimes even lead to loss of life. Additionally, illiteracy rates in rural areas are excessively high. Due to limited knowledge, many women miss out on government assistance programs and remain unaware of their basic rights. By providing basic education, we can significantly improve their lives and elevate their social status. In the past study, the micro-credit approach using self-help groups (SHGs) was identified as a more effective means to empower rural women. From this study, we can assess the efficacy and financial viability of the SHG mechanism in facilitating credit for rural women. They have a lot of potential; they only need a path and someone to guide them. Women not only became a source of labor but also became an entrepreneur and gained control over economic resources, as described in the case study of Rangapur. In recent years, many women businessmen emerged and established their businesses. Women are keeping pace with men in every field. To help rural women entrepreneurs who feel unsure, afraid to take risks, or lack confidence, it's important to offer support. This can be done through counseling provided by NGOs and psychiatrists. This support aims to boost their confidence and ability to take risks, addressing psychological challenges they may face. It can bring positive changes to the lives of people living in rural areas. It helps in making their lives better, supports sustainable development, and contributes to the overall growth of the economy. So, rural women starting their own businesses can act like a vehicle to improve the quality of life in rural areas. The government also initiated technological knowledge through schemes/programs for rural areas so that the digital divide between rural and urban decreased, and they also grow in their field. To empower the women Government of India declared 2001 as a "YEAR OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT". Recently, our government has approved a Central Sector Scheme for providing drones to the Women Self Help Groups (SHGs). This project plans to empower women and bring new technologies through drones in the agriculture sector. This will also provide a sustainable business and livelihood support to 15,000 SHGs and they would be able to earn Rs.1 lakh per annum. It will boost our farming sector and increase their productivity so that they can earn more and maximise their profit and yield their production.

### • Literature Review:

A case study on Handicraft worker of rural women in Rangpur, Bangladesh, in which Sarumathi and Mohan (2011) claim that gender discrimination increases poverty, disrupts good governance, and lowers living standards. Recognizing unequal treatment of women or their lower status has been seen as a barrier to achieving fairness and overall shared progress. Sen (2001) highlights women's empowerment as a central achievement. Women's active participation in economic activities works as a catalyst in Economic and Gender Development. The article focuses on the low participation rate of women in entrepreneurship, only 7.2%. The main question of the study is whether women who work in the handicraft industry feel more empowered. To figure this out, the researchers want to know how these women are currently doing economically and how their jobs and earnings affect their sense of empowerment. Did their socio-economic condition improve?

- A lesson from Maharashtra Rural Credit Project (MRCP): S. Madheswaran and Amita Dharmadhikary tried to help the poorest people by giving them bank loans and government support through a program called Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP). Unfortunately, it did not work, so they came up with new plans called micro-credit schemes that use self-help groups (SHGs). Now, the researcher wants to know how well this idea of using SHGs for credit is working, especially for rural women in rural areas. The study is organized to talk about the main ideas and features of the MRCP. They also want to develop a habit of saving by women so that the repayment of bank loans may should happen in time and the rural bank also may get profited.
- The Indian Government also takes steps towards women empowerment programs. The Government of India focuses on the development of rural areas so that they can match up to the level of urban areas. Many programs/schemes are organized, and private agencies, NGOs are also sponsored by the Government to uplift from the lower strata to higher strata. Recently Government has made attached farming with technology so that a high-tech model has been developed and peoples will also aware of the technology. Government tries to decrease a technological lag between rural people.
- Ghosh and Cheruvalath (2007) looked at how women who start and run their own businesses are really important for making India's economy grow and develop. They checked what the situation is like for these women entrepreneurs right now. The study found that these women face many challenges, like not having enough education and facing social and cultural restrictions. The study also gave ideas on how to make things better for women in business. They suggested providing proper training, encouraging them to think like entrepreneurs, recognizing and appreciating their efforts, understanding what motivates them, and most importantly, getting rid of unfair social expectations forced on them.

- **Research Objectives:**

- To identify the challenges and constraints faced by rural women in accessing education, healthcare, employment and social services.
- To examine the impact of cultural and traditional norms on the status and agency of rural women.
- To inculcate the sense of belongingness with other women so that they work as a team and maximize their profit.
- To develop the marketing skills among the women which help in their product promotion
- To eradicate the social evils which still persist in the society

- **Methodology:**

- **Sampling:** Random sampling of rural communities across diverse regions to ensure a representative sample.
- **Data Collection:** Employ a mixed method approach, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, including surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions. Use structured questionnaires to collect quantitative data and open-ended questions for qualitative insights.
- **Data Analysis:** Employ statistical methods for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative data.
- **Primary sources of Field study:** Participant Observations: Engaging in or closely observing the day-to-day experiences of rural women to develop a more profound comprehension of their lives, difficulties, barriers, and the environment in which they function and how they deal with the situation. Their surrounding atmosphere in which they grow and reproduce.
- **Interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** Examine subjects such as daily schedules, financial endeavors, availability of education and healthcare, and their perspectives on empowerment. FGDs serve as a medium for collective conversations, facilitating the examination of common experiences and community interactions during which we understand their mentality and how they cope with the problems.
- **Survey and Schedule:** The purpose is to gather quantitative and qualitative data on various aspects of the lives of women living in rural areas. In rural areas, many women are illiterate, so the schedule can provide genuine data that helps in our study. This may encompass demographic data, economic projects, educational attainment, and perceived obstacles to empowerment.
- **Community workshops and Participatory observations.**  
Community resource evaluations can empower women by enabling them to actively participate in the research process without any barriers, guaranteeing that their views and opinions are given importance in the study so that they can freely share their opinions without any hesitation. By combining these primary sources, one can attain a thorough and holistic comprehension of the societal dynamics, obstacles, and potential approaches to empowering rural women in the selected field research location.

- **Ethical Considerations:**

Prioritize informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for cultural sensitivities throughout the research process. Collaborate with local communities and stakeholders to ensure a participatory and ethical approach.

**Theoretical Framework:**

Develop a theoretical framework drawing on relevant sociological, anthropological, and feminist theories to guide the analysis and interpretation of data.

**• Expected Outcomes:**

- A nuanced understanding of the roles and challenges faced by rural women.
- Identification of key factors influencing the empowerment of rural women.
- Insights into successful empowerment strategies and interventions.
- Recommendations for policymakers, NGOs, and community leaders to enhance the well-being of rural women.

**• Significance of the Study:**

The research aims to contribute valuable insights to academia, policymakers, and practitioners working towards the sustainable development of rural communities. By understanding the unique challenges faced by rural women, and also focus on uplifting their children from their lower strata and linking them to the mainstream of society. This research can inform targeted interventions and policies to enhance their empowerment and overall societal well-being.

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