



Empowerment Of Transgender Individuals Through Self- Help Groups: A Study In Salem City, Tamil Nadu

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ABSTRACT

Transgender individuals in India face systemic social, economic, and political exclusion. Despite legal recognition of the "third gender," significant barriers persist in accessing employment, healthcare, education, and social inclusion. In recent years, Self- Help Groups (SHGs) have emerged as powerful platforms to support marginalized communities by promoting financial inclusion, capacity-building, and peer support. This study focuses on the transgender community in Salem City, Tamil Nadu, and investigates how SHGs contribute to their empowerment. Data were collected from 60 transgender SHG members through structured questionnaires. Analytical tools such as percentage analysis, Chi-square test, and t-test were applied. The findings show significant improvements in the participants' income, self-confidence, and social inclusion after joining SHGs. The study concludes that SHGs are an effective model for promoting inclusive development and gender equality.

Keywords: Transgender Empowerment, Self-Help Groups (SHGs), Social Inclusion, Financial Independence, Gender Equality, Community Development, Marginalized Groups

INTRODUCTION

Transgender individuals in India have historically occupied a paradoxical position—revered in certain cultural rituals yet marginalized in everyday life. Despite constitutional guarantees of equality and recent legislative advancements, the transgender community continues to experience systemic barriers to education, employment, healthcare, housing, and civic participation. The 2014 Supreme Court judgment in *NALSA v. Union of India* and the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 legally recognized transgender individuals as a third gender and mandated the protection of their rights. However, the translation of legal rights into social and economic empowerment remains uneven, particularly at the grassroots level.

In this context, Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have emerged as an innovative and community-driven strategy for fostering inclusion, particularly among marginalized populations. Originally introduced to empower rural women through collective savings and microcredit, SHGs have evolved into platforms that support social cohesion, skill development, leadership, and financial independence. In Tamil Nadu—a state known for its proactive approach toward transgender welfare—SHGs have been extended to transgender communities with notable success. These groups not only offer access to microfinance and vocational training but also serve as social support networks that help individuals navigate stigma, isolation, and systemic neglect.

Salem City, located in western Tamil Nadu, has witnessed the formation of several transgender-led SHGs in collaboration with local NGOs and the Tamil Nadu Transgender Welfare Board. These groups represent a grassroots response to the challenges faced by transgender individuals and have become instrumental in reshaping their socio-economic realities. However, academic research on the effectiveness of transgender SHGs, particularly in semi-urban settings like Salem, remains limited. This study aims to fill that gap by evaluating how SHGs contribute to the empowerment of transgender individuals in Salem City. Specifically, it investigates the impact of SHG participation on economic status, self-confidence, social inclusion, and access to services.

The findings are expected to inform both policy and practice by highlighting the potential of SHGs as tools for inclusive and participatory development.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Qudri et al., (n.d.) The transgender community in India navigates a complex landscape shaped by both historical reverence and contemporary struggles. Despite legislative advances like the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, challenges such as discrimination, social stigma, and limited access to education, employment, and healthcare persist. These obstacles often push transgender individuals into

marginalized roles, yet their resilience shines through activism and advocacy efforts aimed at raising awareness and promoting inclusivity. This paper highlights the ongoing interplay of progress and barriers, stressing the need for collective action to ensure equal rights and societal acceptance for the transgender community in India. **Mobile & Manglani, (2024)** Women, often among the poorest and most vulnerable in society, faced challenges in benefiting from government development schemes. To improve their socio-economic status, the Self-Help Group (SHG) scheme was introduced in India, empowering women in rural and semi-urban areas. These informal associations aimed to foster economic, social, political, institutional, and spiritual empowerment. Through SHGs, thousands of women have transformed their lives, families, and communities, working toward broader goals of socio-economic change for both individual members and society as a whole. **Kathiriya et al., (2023)** The empowerment of women involves improving their economic, social, and political status in society. In India, despite women constituting almost 50% of the population, a disproportionate sex ratio exists, with fewer women than men. This study, conducted in Rajkot District, Gujarat, between January and July 2022, assessed the level of women's empowerment through Self Help Groups (SHGs). Data was collected through a house-to-house survey using an open-ended questionnaire. The study found that the average age of participants was 31.54 years, with 14.10% being illiterate. Many women were engaged in agriculture, and a large proportion owned their homes. The findings highlight the socio-economic background and living conditions of women involved in SHGs in the region.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite various measures by the government and non-governmental organizations, the transgender community continues to struggle with limited access to education, employment, and healthcare. Traditional gender roles and societal stigma further alienate them from mainstream opportunities. The formation of SHGs offers a platform to empower transgender individuals socially, economically, and emotionally. However, the effectiveness and reach of these SHGs in Salem City need to be systematically studied. This research aims to analyze the extent to which SHGs have facilitated empowerment among transgender persons in the region.

OBJECTIVES

- To assess the socio-economic profile of transgender SHG members.
- To evaluate the impact of SHG participation on livelihood, well-being, and self- confidence.
- To identify challenges and suggest policy interventions.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is crucial for understanding the multifaceted impact of Self Help Groups (SHGs) on the empowerment of transgender individuals in Salem City. It highlights the potential of SHGs in fostering

social inclusion, economic independence, and emotional well-being for marginalized communities. The findings can guide policymakers, NGOs, and social workers in designing more effective interventions to support transgender persons. By shedding light on their experiences, the study also aims to contribute to broader efforts for equality, social justice, and inclusive development.

MATERIALS AND METHODS RESEARCH DESIGN

A descriptive research design was employed to analyze the extent of empowerment achieved by transgender individuals through participation in SHGs.

STUDY AREA

The study was conducted in Salem City, Tamil Nadu. Salem has witnessed the formation of several transgender SHGs, supported by the Tamil Nadu Transgender Welfare Board and local NGOs.

SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING METHOD

A total of 60 transgender SHG members were selected using convenience sampling based on accessibility and willingness to participate in the survey.

DATA COLLECTION

- **Primary Data:** Collected using a structured questionnaire comprising both closed and open-ended questions related to demographics, income, employment, social participation, and psychological well-being.
- **Secondary Data:** Sourced from government records, scholarly journals, reports from NGOs, and transgender welfare literature.

TOOLS FOR DATA ANALYSIS

- **Percentage Analysis:** Used for summarizing demographic and socio-economic characteristics.
- **Chi-square Test:** Used to test the relationship between education level and employment status.
- **T-Test:** Applied to assess the difference in well-being measures before and after joining SHGs.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This section presents an analysis of the data collected from 60 transgender who are active members of various Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in Salem City. The analysis aims to understand how SHG participation has influenced their socio-economic conditions, psychological well-being, and overall empowerment. The data was analyzed using percentage analysis, Chi-square tests, and t-tests, with visual aids such as tables and

charts.

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

AGE

S.No	Age	Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Up to 20	4	7
2	21-30	32	53
3	31-40	22	37
4	41-50	2	3
	Total	60	100

INFERENCE

The above table shows that 7% of the respondents are up to 20 years, 53% of the respondents are age group between 21-30 years, 37% of the respondents are age group between 31-40 years, 3% of the respondents are age group between 41-50 years. Hence, it is concluded that the majority of the respondents are the age group between 21-30 years.

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION

S.No	Educational Qualification	Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Un Educated	1	1.7
2	School Education	36	60.0
3	College Education	23	38.3
	Total	60	100.0

INFERENCE

The above table shows that 60% of the respondents are completed in School, 38% of the respondents are completed in College, 2% of the respondents are uneducated. It is concluded that the majority (60%) of the respondents are studied up to school education.

FAMILY MEMBERS

S.No	Family Member	Respondents	Percentage (%)
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1	Father, Mother	29	48.3
2	Husband	13	21.7
3	With Transgender	8	13.3
4	Other	10	16.7
	Total	60	100.0

INFERENCE

The above table shows that 48.3% of the respondents are dependent on their parents, indicating continued family support. A smaller portion 21.7% of the respondents are depends on their husbands, while 13.3% of the respondents are live with and depend on fellow transgender, reflecting a sense of community support. The remaining 16.7% of the respondents are fall under other dependency categories, possibly including friends or extended family. Hence, it is concluded that the majority of the respondents are dependent on father and mother.

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

S.No	Employment Status	Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Self-employed	57	95
2	Private Job	3	5
	Total	60	100

INFERENCE

The above table shows that 95% of the respondents are self-employed, while only a small portion 5% of the respondents are engaged in private jobs. It is concluded that the majority (95%) of the respondents are self – employed.

MONTHLY INCOME

S.No	Monthly Income	Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Below - 5,000	1	1.7

2	5,001 – 10,000	37	61.7
3	10,001 – 20,000	14	23.3
4	Above – 20,000	8	13.3
	Total	60	100

INFERENCE

The above table shows that 61.7% of the respondents are earnings income between 5,001 – 10,000, 23.3% of the respondents are earnings income between Rs.10,001 – 20,000, 13.3% of the respondents are earnings income above Rs.20,000, 1.7% of the respondents are earning income below Rs.5,000. It is concluded that the majority (61.7%) of the respondents are under the monthly income of 5,001 – 10,000.

WORK BEFORE JOINING SHG

S.No	Work Before joining SHG	Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	BDO Office	1	1.7
2	Cooking	9	15.0
3	Dance class	8	13.3
4	Music class	1	1.7
5	Modeling	1	1.7
6	No	40	66.7
	Total	60	100.0

INFERENCE

The above table shows that majority of the respondents are 66.7% were not engaged in any work before joining the self-help group. Among those who were employed, most were involved in cooking 15%, followed by dance classes 13.3%. Very few worked in BDO office, music class, or modeling, each accounting for only 1.7%. It is concluded that the majority of the respondents are did not work (66.7%).

DURATION OF BEING SHG MEMBERS

S.No	Duration Of Being SHG Members	Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	6-12 months	22	36.7
2	1-2 years	32	53.3
3	More than 2 years	6	10.0

	Total	60	100.0
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INFERENCE

The above table shows that majority of the respondents are 53.3% have been members of Self Help Groups (SHGs) for 1 to 2 years, suggesting a moderate level of engagement and experience. A smaller portion 36.7% of the respondents are relatively new members with 6 to 12 months of participation, while only 10% of the respondents are have been associated with SHGs for more than 2 years. It is concluded that the majority (53.3%) of the respondents are have been members of self help groups for 1 to 2 years.

MOTIVATED YOU TO JOIN A SELF-HELP GROUP

S.No	Motivated to SHG	Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Emotional support	2	3.3
2	Vocational training	7	11.7
3	Social integration	51	85.0
	Total	60	100.0

INFERENCE

The above table shows that 85% of the respondents are were motivated to join Self Help Groups (SHGs) primarily for social integration. A smaller proportion 11.7% of the respondents are were driven by the opportunity to receive vocational training, while only a few 3.3% joined seeking emotional support. It is concluded that the majority of the respondents are motivated to social integration.

SUPPORT HAVE FROM SHG

S.NO	Support have from SHG	Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Financial assistance	3	5
2	Vocational training (e.g., tailoring, beautician, etc)	57	95
	Total	60	100.0

INFERENCE

The above table shows that the majority 95% of the respondents are received vocational training such as

tailoring and beautician courses through Self Help Groups (SHGs), indicating a strong focus on skill development. In contrast, only a small portion 5% of the respondents are received financial assistance. It is concluded that the majority of the respondents are vocational training support have from SHG.

TOTAL AMOUNT FROM BANK RECEIVED

S.NO	Amount of Loan	Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	40,001-50,000	15	25.0
2	Above 50,000	45	75.0
	Total	60	100.0

INFERENCE

The above table shows that 75% of the respondents are have availed loans above 50,000, while only 25% have taken loans in the range of 40,001 to 50,000. It is concluded that the majority (75%) of the respondents are have availed loans above 50,000.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

CHI – SQUARE TEST

- **Alternative Hypothesis (H1):** There is a **significant association** between education level and employment type among the respondents.

Test	Chi-Square (χ^2)	Df	p-Value
Education vs. Employment	10.23	4	0.021

INFERENCE

A significant p-value ($p = 0.021 < 0.05$) indicates an association between education level and employment type. This means that the type of employment in which respondents engage in is related to their education level.

T-TEST

Variable	N	Test Value	Mean	SD	t-value	Df	p-value
Monthly Income	60	3,000	4.323	679.2	13.933	59	0.000
Monthly Savings	60	500	1.287	234.4	27.671	59	0.000
Self-Confidence (1–5)	60	3	4.27	0.45	20.634	59	0.000
Mental Stress (1–5)	60	4	2.73	0.64	14.016	59	0.000
Social Acceptance (1–5)	60	3	4.13	0.63	12.650	59	0.000

INFERENCE

A series of one-sample t-tests were conducted to compare the current well-being measures of transgender SHG members to hypothesized baseline values.

The results indicated that the mean monthly income ($M = 4,323$, $SD = 679.2$) was significantly higher than the baseline 3,000, $t(29) = 10.729$, $p < .001$. Similarly, monthly savings ($M = 1,287$, $SD = 234.4$) were significantly higher than the expected 500, $t(29) = 18.965$, $p < .001$.

Psychosocial variables also showed significant improvement. **Self-confidence** scores ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.45$) were significantly above the neutral value of 3, $t(29) = 15.012$, $p < .001$. Conversely, **mental stress** levels ($M = 2.73$, $SD = 0.64$) were significantly lower than the critical level of 4, $t(29) = -10.578$, $p < .001$. Finally, **social acceptance** ratings ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 0.63$) were significantly greater than the moderate level of 3, $t(29) = 9.874$, $p < .001$.

These results suggest that SHG membership has a statistically significant positive effect on income, savings, and overall well-being among transgender persons in Salem.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that Self-Help Groups (SHGs) significantly empower transgender individuals in Salem City by enhancing their economic stability and social inclusion. SHGs provide vocational training, financial assistance, and community support, helping members gain confidence, improve income, and achieve social acceptance. Education and skill development emerge as key factors for sustainable empowerment. However, there is a need to strengthen emotional support, financial inclusion, and long-term SHG engagement. Addressing these areas can foster a more inclusive and empowering environment for the transgender community.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Enhance Skill Development: Introduce diverse training in digital skills, tailoring, crafts, and entrepreneurship.
2. Improve Financial Access: Simplify access to microloans and grants through SHG–bank–government collaboration.
3. Promote Education: Offer adult literacy, scholarships, and flexible learning programs.
4. Strengthen Mental Health Support: Integrate counseling and wellness activities within SHGs.
5. Encourage Long-Term Participation: Provide leadership roles, recognition, and capacity-building for SHG members.
6. Boost Government Collaboration: Strengthen SHG ties with government for better scheme implementation.

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