



Women Empowerment Through Self-Help Groups (SHGs)

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Abstract

Women empowerment is steady process to make women capable to have equal opportunities, equal rights and freedom to choose education, participation in political decision making, take decisions regarding career and personal decisions in all respects of life. The women symbolize the half population of the world. The women empowerment also increased after connecting with SHGs in areas of psychological, political, economic and social. We should educate and provide equal opportunities to the women in the society that helps the women to gain knowledge and skill to strength value like equity, solidarity, justice among exploited groups in the society.

Keywords: *Women, empowerment, SHG, issues*

1. Introduction

Women play a vital position in the society. In ancient time of Indian society, women worshiped as goddesses. But in the middle age the values of women got down and consider performing the responsibilities like household activities, caring family members, bring up children etc. (Sama, 2017). In the modern era; the position of the women has been changed. At present time scenario women are professional and doing the work related to home also such as look after family members and other domestic works. Women empowerment is steady process to capable women to have equal opportunities, equal rights and freedom to choose education, participation in political decision making, take decisions regarding carrier and personal decisions in all respects of life. It means to create control in persons above their own culture, in their circle and over their lives. Women are empowered then, they have access the opportunities without restrictions and limitations (Rani and Mecry, 2019). "Once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves, the nation moves". Women empowerment is dynamic and ongoing progression which increases the efficiency to change those ideologies and structures which keep them subordinate. This type of process enables women to control over economic activities, their lives and receiving more autonomy (Bhasin, 2016). Now these days in India the women empowerment is very important and effective tool for the progress of society and country; women working as a leader surpassing other in all the spheres of life across the world. The women symbolize the half

population of the world. They are the largest group not included in the fiscal and social progress. The work participation ratio of the females is less than males' population. A large number of the active women continuously to be confined to small scale, micro and informal sector. So exclusive notice is required to the development of nation through women empowerment (Verma, 2022).

Self-help group (SHG) is a voluntary and community-oriented organization in which members collect savings and make arrangement of loans to each other to meet their needs related to finance. The SHGs principle is "by the women, of the women and for the women". The SHGs concept was came from the brain child of Bangladesh Grameen Bank in the year 1975 which was established by Prof. Mohammed Yunus, Chittagong University (Nagar, 2018). Micro-credit is the provision of little loans to small earnings community who have not contact to the conventional banking system. SHG work as a system to provide micro credit to the poor portion of the society and assist to generate income related facilities and economic empowerment. The reach to microcredit can enable women to do their small business and economic independence. The activities of SHGs have empowered the women in the rural areas (Swamy and Saini, 2022). SHGs have a favorable impact on women's empowerment. The access to microcredit has empowered the women to invest in small size business and contribute to household finances (Henriques, 2025). The decadal hard works bringing women into the main stream line of society.

2. Review of Literature

Madheswaran & Dharmadhikary (2001) attempted to analyses the impact of SHGs in giving credit to women of rural area to facilitate them encourage their financial position through a survey of 3 villages of Pune district in the year 1999. The study showed that the feasibility of non-farm fiscal actions is the key challenge for micro-credit scheme. The two major problems such as marketing of the produce and second to find an economic activity to cover up the interest rate of loans. The status of women has been improved within and outside the household. Krishnan et al. (2008) analyzed the formation of SHGs, determined the changes in social and fiscal status of females and also analyzed the role of NGOs in formation of the SHGs. Both descriptive and exploratory methods were adopted. A representative sample of 350 SHGs respondents was chosen by means of stratified random sampling method and 30 animators were chosen adopting quota sampling method from 30 villages for the study. The result exposed that the functioning of SHGs and their impact on the members in reference to socio-economic changes. The results also exhibited that the savings is the basis for poor women's collective initiative to socio-economic empowerment.

Saikia (2014) studied empower impact of SHGs on women member in Jorhat district of Assam by using structured questionnaire from 300 respondents. The results of the study showed that 47 per cent respondents related to the self-help groups which were established 5 years ago, 25 per cent were less than 3 years ago. 69.3 per cent taken 2-3 loans and 8.33 per cent respondents repay the 4-6 loans out of total sample. The study also showed that the main reason to join the SHGs were not only for credit also for the empowerment process. Sandhu (2015) considered the effect of SHG on the socio-economic position of women, pattern of savings and the factors inspiring the members to join these types of help groups. The data were composed primarily from

SHG members conducting with the help of interview method from 9 SHGs selected randomly that located in Jalandhar district. The outcome of the study showed that 36 per cent members were studied up to primary level. The result also exhibited that 60 per cent women associated with nuclear family unit; and 40 per cent related to combined families. 43.3 per cent women wanted to become a member of SHG to improve their financial position. The major problem faced due to lack of awareness regarding the new facilities, new schemes, administrative knowledge. Among out of total respondents 81.1 per cent women left the SHG loan amount due to insufficient to meet their needs.

Esmail Zaei et al. (2018) examined the influence of programs of micro-credit programs on empower of self-help group women members. The study used survey research method and quantitative approach with the help of planned questionnaire to collect the information. The sample size was 114 respondents from which information were collected. The result showed that micro credit helped the SHGs to notably influence the life of Punjab state women lived in rural area. Chaudhary (2018) organized a study to know the function of SHGs with special reference to micro-credit in women empowerment from 100 respondents. The empowerment, age, caste, micro-credit were used as dependent and independent variables. The results revealed that non-government supported SHGs were aware about loan taken (showed that 40 per cent) and out of total respondents 23 per cent non government supported respondents were aware and knowledge about cash in hand from SHGs. About 70 per cent self-help groups enlarged their business after receiving micro-credit from government and nongovernment supported SHGs.

Sarkar and Chattopadhyay (2018) analyzed the importance of SHGs for rural area women by using a case study method under National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRML) and information were collected from the members of SHGs and organizers. The study observed that the members of SHGs have important change in women's living in reference to social mobility, skill development and awareness. Prajapati and Prajapati (2025) examined the function of SHGs in promoting women empowerment in the selected tribe district of Madhay Pradesh to find out the SHGs operation in term of credit to the needy, repaying loans, mobilizing savings and social benefits of members with the help of survey conducted from 150 SHGs. The study showed that SHGs had bank credit and members busy in various economic activities. The study also showed that the women empowered and achieved societal improvement after joining as the member of SHGs.

3. Objectives of the study:

- To identify the roles of SHGs in women political, psychological, social and economic empowerment
- To know the key issues of SHGs with reference to women's empowerment

4. **Methodology:** The study is based on secondary source of data and has been composed from a variety of records, articles, journals, books etc. Searching information through internet is also a very important source of the present study.

5. Discussion

5.1 Women Empowerment: It refers to the improvement of women's empowerment with reference to economic, social, psychological and political. In reality the empowerment of women occur when she has the ability to take decision and control over action and free from the restriction to think for their welfare and development. The women may be empowered through various ways. But SHGs are one of them (Manzoor and Ganie, 2014).

(a) Economic Empowerment of Women through SHGs: A large number of Indian's population lived in rural area. The government of India also launched the NRML scheme through self-help groups in 2011 to address the issues of poor and rural people. Their life is full of challenges how to manage their business and family together. But various organizations are working to initiate the scheme. To create SHG is very easy portion of this system (Soti, 2023). The women of rural as well as urban area faces economic and financial problem in the society. The women participation through Self-help groups plays a very significant role in the society and family for the economic empowerment. The SHGs provides the facilities of finance to the deprived females and become strong. They can earn money and use them for the welfare and fulfillment of their family needs. They become self dependent to take decision and grow their own business in the economy (Sharma and Sharma, 2014).

Women contribute in weekly and monthly meeting of SHGs. Empowered women are better feeling self-confidence, autonomy and self-efficiency. Women are feeling free and happy to transform their choices in to desired opportunities and actions. Women can experience as increased in their skill, income, savings and development. The empowerment of women can be measured in term of female ownership in land and assets, expenditure system, paid employment, income earned by women, financial decision taken by women, partition of household decision between males and females.

(b) Women's Psychological Empowerment through SHGs: The SHGs provide the freedom to the backwards women to make choices and do work according to their desires. They feel happy and autonomy. They realized that their self-esteem is improved in the community. The women who have joined SHGs feel sense of self-worth. The members of the SHGs are more psychological empowered and feel easy and able to speak before other people after joining such type of SHGs get more enjoy and respect from their husbands and other family member in the society (De Hoop et al., 2019).

(c) Social Empowerment of women through SHG: The women values have been improved in the society after connected to the SHGs in reference to community respect, family respects, improvement in social network and unity among the women in the Indian society. The SHGs increase the women mobility and judgment making command in relation to the size of family. The united women have more power like "one stick can be broken and a bundle of sticks cannot" (De Hoop et al., 2019). The member of SHGs become social empowered by network and connect with other women in the society, attending meeting and taking the benefits of financial services of the banks. Women contribution in judgment making procedure in the family has very importance. The role of women improved after connecting to the SHGs and availing the microfinance

(Amutha, 2011). The SHGs women are more empowered than non SHGs members and their social status also improved.

(d) Women's Political Empowerment through SHGs: Women contribution is an essential requirement for gender fairness and authentic democratic system. The efficiency to contribute in judgment making and to take decisions regarding wealth. Political empowering women play a major part in a nation growth such as awareness of rule and regulations, laws, rights. The women aware their rights and power regarding their vote, proper ownership, ability to gain leadership in the government and society. The members of the SHGs may be have the awareness and energy to change the political environment and their status in the society. The SHGs members are more engaged in political activities. They are significantly more probable to avail schemes related to community right than non SHGs members (Kumar et al., 2019). The welfare activities of SHGs served for the poor women political betterment and empowerment. The constitution provides equal right and opportunities to all men and women. India is the biggest democracy country in the world. But the women presentation in the activities of politics is very less. Women's empowerment in politics may be possible through the economics activities (Sreeramulu and Hushenkhan, 2008).

5.2 Key issues of SHGs with reference to Women's Empowerment: In the present scenario the self-help groups are a very powerful device in the women's hands for their empowerment, but they face number of challenges and issues that can barrier on effectiveness of self-help groups working. The SHGs basically work for women empowerment and poverty mitigation. SHGs are established by government and NGOs. Some of the key issues of women SHGs faced in India that hinder their performance are as under:-

- (i) Women have little independence at home level. The traditional gender system of India continues to restrict the women leadership contribution for empowerment (Maity and Shukla, 2025).
- (ii) The traditional burden of children and family of women among the society limits their energy and time to SHGs activities regarding business etc.
- (iii) The training facilities given to the SHGs member always not proper. The training regarding packaging, marketing, production and technical knowledge not adequate. The provision of different type of skill to SHGs women is needed but found insufficient among SHGs (Vasantha Gouri, 2025).
- (iv) Traditional gender system also checked on the development of women. The girl child has not preferred to business activities and they married at early stage. The women always consider the weaker part of the society in comparison to men. This system affects the women empowerment in the area such as nutrition, care, health, education, job etc. (Sama, 2017).
- (v) Ignorance of member creates many problems. Many SHGs member are not aware the new policies and schemes. So they left better opportunities.
- (vi) The women SHGs also face the marketing related challenges. For example lack of sufficient number of orders, poor package system, and lack of proper sales promotion measures. The SHGs despite have good quality of products but due to lack of marketing support and efficient marketing linkage not avail the opportunities (Gupta, 2020).

- (vii) Number of women SHGs lack of financial resources as well as infra and technical facilities to operate their business to produce quality products. The formal financial sector not effectively provides the services for rural population (Sharma and Sharma, 2014).
- (viii) SHGs have bank linkage project, but there is insufficient reach of banks system in the rural area of our country to avail credit in time. The credit availability of SHGs lies in the difficult with irregularity in payment got by them (Gupta, 2020).
- (ix) There is also shortage of trained personnel to provide help the SHGs members for upgrade their skill and knowledge. Some of the SHGs member facing production related problems due to lack of infrastructure, trained manpower, lack of skill and knowledge (Garg and Mittal, 2023).
- (x) Due to proper monitoring and supporting system of government various schemes are not implemented effectively. Political interference also disrupts the focus of the groups.
- (xi) Due to varieties of financial services and poor accounting practices some SHGs faces the issues of NPAs.
- (xii) Lack of financial literacy among the members creates difficulties regarding maintaining accounts records, loans and taking decision for investment. Women loss one day labour due to walk so much and be short of transport capability (Panwar, 2015).
- (xiii) Many women in SHGs are illiterate or have low education that can affect their decision making process, self-esteem etc. Education is considered one of the most important tool and medium for women empowerment (Jena and Ojha, 2021). Most of the rural women are pushed to early marriage and have either illiterate or less educated (Vasantha Gouri, 2025).
- (xiv) To maintain long term quality and operation of SHGs also a very difficult task. The women empowerment is also a political process and the motive is changing the existing power relationship between men and women (Bhasin, 2016).

6. Conclusion: Women have the important place in the society as well as economy. The women empowerment increased after connected to the self-help groups in area of psychological, political, economic and social. Without cooperation of women, a family or a society are unable to face the challenges. The credit facilities should be reaching to the rural women for their empowerment. We should educate and equal opportunities to the women in the society that helps the women to gain knowledge and skill to strength value like equity, solidarity, justice among exploited groups. Various types of marketing facilities also provided to the SHGs like exhibition, fairs to promote their products and services.

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