

Empowerment of Rural Women in Kolhapur District of Maharashtra State

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Abstract—The realization of women's full potential is crucial to the overall socio-economic development and growth of a society. Women's empowerment is critical to the socio-economic progress of the country. The study was conducted to assess the extent of empowerment of rural women members through SHGs in Kolhapur District of Maharashtra State by interviewing 120 rural women from 10 Self Help Groups. A study was undertaken on different aspects of women empowerment i.e. psychological, cultural, social, economical and political empowerment. The results of this study in psychological empowerment that maximum numbers of women were feeling secured in their family and minimum in career ambition. In cultural empowerment, highest beneficiary women had freedom for deciding (food) menu and very less women had freedom wearing a kind of dress. In social empowerment, majority women participate in decision about education of children and minimum in access to modern technology. In economic empowerment, majority of women had freedom for offering presents to relatives and minimum in participation in decision about marketing of produce. The political empowerment in different point was very low because they are not aware about their rights.

Keywords: Self Help Group, Rural Women, Empowerment.

1. INTRODUCTION

Women are the key factor in the process of change and development, yet in many countries they are underestimated. Empowerment is a process of change by which individuals or groups gain power and ability to take control over their lives. It involves increased well being, access to resources, increased self confidence, self esteem and respect, increased participation in decision making, bargaining power and increased control over benefits, resources and own life. Women's empowerment thus requires addressing women's status and women's rights as a group member in order to enable them to make use of resources. The goal of this is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women through a process of change in societal attitudes towards women, elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and active participation of women in all spheres of life which will empower women both socially and economically.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Hatkanagle and Shirole talukas of Kolhapur district of Maharashtra state were selected randomly for this study. From each talukas 12 villages and one SHG from each village was selected and from each SHG ten respondents were selected randomly by lottery method. Thus, 120 SHG members were included in the sample for the study. Data were collected from personal interview. For measurement of Women empowerment scale was used which is developed by Vidya Tayde (2006).

3. RESULTS

Psychological empowerment

Data in Table 1 showed that (100.00 %) women were feeling secured in their family, followed by items of psychological empowerment in following descending order: self confidence (80.00 %), self reliance (70.00 %), self image (66.66 %), courage (63.33 %), and career ambition (59.16 %).

Empowerment of women through SHGs.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents of each of the sub items in women empowerment

Sr. No.	Indicators	Number (n=120)	Percentage (100 %)
A)	Psychological empowerment		
1	Self confidence	96	80.00
2.	Courage	76	63.33
3.	Self reliance	84	70.00
4.	Feeling of security in family	120	100.00
5.	Carrier ambition	71	59.16
6.	Self image	80	66.66
B)	Cultural empowerment		
1.	Freedom to interact with male outside family	95	79.16
2.	Freedom for taking a kind of food	88	73.33
3.	Actual participation in festivals	97	80.83

4.	Freedom for performing festival ceremonies	112	93.33
5.	Freedom for wearing a kind of dress	50	41.66
6.	Freedom for attending pilgrim/religious place	85	70.83
7.	Freedom for deciding (food) menu	117	97.50
8.	Liberty for attending marriage ceremony	97	80.83
C)	Social empowerment		
1.	Self education	70	58.33
2.	Freedom to work outside family	77	64.16
3.	Freedom to visit hospital/doctor	82	68.33
4.	Freedom for adopting practices for maintaining health	84	70.00
5.	Participation in decision about family planning	103	85.83
6.	Participation in community action	86	71.66
7.	Feeling of social security	110	91.66
8.	Participation in decision about education of children	117	97.50
9.	Participation in decision about girls marriage	91	75.83
10.	Possessing desired social status	95	79.16
11.	Healthy social environment	100	83.33
12.	Appreciation by family members for significant contribution	102	85.00
13.	Access to modern technology	66	55.00
14.	Freedom to mix with (women)friends	114	95.00
15.	Access to water	84	70.00
16.	Access to fuel/energy	84	70.00
D)	Economic empowerment		
1.	Opportunity for economic development	103	85.83
2.	Freedom for selection of job	94	78.33
3.	Personal saving in form of fixed deposit	90	75.00
4.	Operating account in bank	75	62.50
5.	Participation in decision about adoption of modern technology in home/enterprise	100	83.33
6.	Participation in decision about purchasing building/house	101	84.16
7.	Participation in decision about marketing of produce	75	32.50
8.	Participation in purchase of input for family enterprise	99	82.50
9.	Authority to employ laborer's	85	68.33
10.	Freedom for spending on entertainment of guest	106	88.33
11.	Freedom for offering presents to relatives	107	89.16
E)	Political empowerment		

1.	Holding a political position at present	8	6.66
2.	Freedom for participation in active politics	32	26.66
3.	Awareness of human rights	60	50.00
4.	Awareness of legislation for women	41	34.16
5.	Awareness of political institutions	10	8.30

4. CULTURAL EMPOWERMENT

It is evident from Table 1 that items of cultural empowerment were in following descending order: freedom for deciding (food) menu (97.50 %), freedom for performing festival ceremonies (93.33 %), liberty for attending marriage ceremony and actual participation in festivals were (80.83 %), freedom for interact with male outside family (79.16 %), freedom for taking a kind of food (73.33 %), freedom for attending pilgrim/religious place (70.83 %), and freedom for wearing kind of dress (41.66 %).

5. SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT

A look at Table 1 reveals items of social empowerment in descending order: participation in decision about education of children (97.50 %), freedom to mix with women friends (95.00 %), feeling social security (91.66 %), participation in decision about family planning (85.83 %), Appreciation by family members for significant contribution (85.00 %), healthy social environment (83.33 %), possessing desired social status (79.16 %), participation in decision about girls marriage (75.83 %), participation in community action (71.66 %), access to fuel/energy, access to water and freedom for adopting practices for maintaining health were (70.00 %), freedom to visit hospital/doctor (68.33 %), Freedom to work outside family (64.16 %), self education (58.33 %), access to modern technology (55.00 %).

6. ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

It is noticed from Table 1 that items of economic empowerment in descending order: freedom for offering presents to relative were (89.16 %), freedom for spending on entertainment of guest (88.33 %), opportunity for economic development (85.83 %), participation in decision about purchasing house/building (84.16 %), participation in decision about adoption of modern technology in home/enterprise (83.33 %), participation in purchase of input for family enterprise (82.50 %), freedom for selection of job (78.33 %), personal saving in form of fixed deposit (75.00 %), authority to employ laborers (68.33 %), operating personal account in bank (62.50 %), participation in decision about marketing of produce (32.50 %).

7. POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT

It was observed from Table 1 that, awareness of human rights (50.00 %), awareness of legislation for women (34.16 %), freedom for participation in active politics (26.66 %), awareness of political institutions (8.30 %), holding a political position (6.66 %).

8. OVERALL EMPOWERMENT

It was observed that majority (58.33 %) of the respondents were in medium empowerment category followed by (15.00 %) in low, (12.50 %) from high empowerment category, (8.33 %) from very high category and (5.84 %) from very low empowerment category.

Table 2: Distribution of the respondents according to their overall empowerment

Sr. No.	Overall empowerment	No.of Respondents	Percentage %
1.	Very Low (Up to 55)	07	5.84
2.	Low (56 to 60)	18	15.00
3.	Medium (61 to 71)	70	58.33
4.	High (72 to 76)	15	12.50
5.	Very High (above 76)	10	8.33
	Total	120	100.00

9. CONCLUSION

It concluded that majority of the respondents after joining SHGs were included in high category of psychological, cultural, social, economical and political empowerment, respectively. Overall empowerment of is medium. There was a definite empowerment of rural women members of SHG's on all the dimension of the empowerment, so government agencies and private organizations should give due importance to SHG's, enroll more number of members and enhance activities of SHG's specially for women empowerment purpose.

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