

# A Study on Women Empowerment Through SHGs in Thindal, Erode District, Tamil Nadu

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## Abstract

Women empowerment is the concept of developing and empowering women in all aspects. Traditionally, women involved mainly in routine household activities and in bringing up their children. As there has been a continuous development in technology, changes in social well being of the people, upliftment in literacy level, there is a change in the mind set of women that encourages them to occupy a place in supporting their family along with men folks. In order to provide support and motivate the needy, the Government has implemented many schemes and programs. Among them, Self Help Group (SHG) is a successful scheme that has brought out many skilled women into forum. The Self Help Group is one where the women who do not have adequate financial support may join together with a focus to improve their social and financial background. There are many NGOs (Non-Government Organizations) who supports the formation of Self Help Groups. They also assist the members in getting financial assistance, procuring raw materials, arranging for training programs and also in marketing the produce. Thus, Self Help Groups promote the self sustainability of economically downtrodden women. In this aspect, the research has been made with an aim to analyze the empowerment of women through SHGs in Thindal, Erode District. The data was collected from 50 respondents by employing simple random sampling technique. It was found that most of the respondents are motivated towards Self Help Group as it helps them to earn income for the family.

**Keywords:** Livelihood, Self-Employment, Self Help Group and Women Empowerment

## 1. Introduction

The role of women plays a vital role in every family. Women acts actively in the family by earning income, raising the children and doing all household activities amidst various hurdles. In many places, women's rights still remain an important issue. Even though, women are willing to involve in many activities, there are certain social and economical aspects that hinders the empowerment of women. In this scenario, the empowerment of women is quite essential to self sustain the family. The various organizations involve themselves through the schemes provided by the Government to uplift the standard of women. Self Help Group is one of such schemes that has

been brought out by the Government wherein group of women folks can participate in activities that will empower them and enhance their social and financial set up. This may give them self confidence in facing the difficulties in the society. The Self Help Group will act as an arena for the members and combine their skills that provide space and support to each other. It is the mantra which helps the women to get established in the society by supporting the family. It will also lead to individual growth. The Government has also formulated many policies and special programs for giving training to the women beneficiaries under Self Help Group. The recent technological developments are also imparted to women through capacity building activities. The steps taken by

the Government helps the women to have sustainability in their life. Hence, in this context, the study considered the analysis of women empowerment through SHGs in Thindal, Erode District.

## 2. Review of Literature

Kumari Archana<sup>1</sup> stated that the exclusive form of microfinance in India helps in strengthening the marginal section of the society. The study explained the weakness of majority of the people in availing these facilities, the way to start an SHG and the important aspect of SHG which is to build the functional capacity of the poor. The study concluded that SHGs is a community platform where women became active in village affairs, decision making and election process and also stands for social issues. The Times of India<sup>2</sup>, a National Newspaper stated the difficulties of SHG in its day to day activities, where they found themselves helpless after demonetization. It also stated that many women across the country depend on SHGs for its source of revenue but the sudden result had badly hit the business. The article talked about the views of some of the SHG workers. Manisha<sup>3</sup> evaluated the effect of SHG in social-economic development. The study found that SHGs had played considerable role in improving the personal traits, skills, communication level of members and also the life style of the people through SHG Programmes. Thangamani and Muthuselvi<sup>4</sup> analyzed the empowerment of women through SHGs by adopting random sampling method. It was found that SHG had improved social and economical aspects of SHG members. Seetharaman and Ganesan<sup>5</sup> examined the variations in micro credit between various years and sites in Cuddalore district, Tamil Nadu. The findings revealed that the number of SHGs had increased significantly over the study period that led to increase in revolving fund and bank loans. The study recommended for the establishment of more SHGs which may result in increase of revenue resources available to women thereby improving their wealth status.

## 3. Objectives of the Study

- To know the demographic profile of the respondents.
- To identify the income, expenditure and savings of the SHGs members and,

- To evolve the association between family income, expenditure and women empowerment.

## 4. Methodology

The research has been carried out by adopting simple random sampling method. The study on women empowerment through Self Help Groups is carried out with the primary data collected from 50 respondents among 1350 members of 80 Self Help Groups in the concerned area of study. The Primary data were collected from the women SHGs members of Thindal, Erode District through interview schedule. The collected data were analyzed with the help of proper tools for the effectiveness of this study. The results have been presented in the form of frequency tables, cross tables with suitable statistical tools like simple average method and chi-square test.

## 5. Hypothesis

$H_{01}$ : There is no significant association between family income, expenditure and women empowerment of SHG.

## 6. Results and Discussion

The findings of the study are:

### 6.1 Demographic Profile of SHGs Respondents

The respondents are classified based on their demographic characteristics and are analyzed by using Simple Average Analysis. The results are shown in Table 1.

Empowerment of women can make remarkable changes in entire well being of a family. SHGs were initiated with a primary motive of encouraging women to participate in various entrepreneurial activities, so that they will be able to meet out their own and their family crisis relating to income and expenditure. Table 1 shows the following.

- The respondents from the Self Help Groups are in the age group of 31-40 years, covering the highest percentage (36%), which make a stable income source to supplement their family expenditure
- It is identified that most of the respondents (48%) are categorized under scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

**Table 1.** Distribution of the respondents based on demographic characteristics

Socio-Economic Status	Characteristics	Frequency	Average (%)
Age	>30	06	12
	31 to 40	18	36
	41 to 50	14	28
	Above 50	12	24
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>
Community	BC	07	14
	MBC	14	28
	SC/ST	24	48
	Others	05	10
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>
Religion	Hindu	47	94
	Christian	02	04
	Muslim	01	02
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>
Marital Status	Married	45	90
	Unmarried/Divorce Separated	03	06
	Widow	02	04
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>
Type of Family	Joint	05	10
	Nuclear	45	90
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>
Number of Family Members	Upto three	02	04
	Four to Six	29	58
	Above Six	19	38
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>
Education	Illiterate	16	32
	Primary School level	12	24
	High School Level	09	18
	Higher Secondary level	07	14
	Degree/Diploma Holders	06	12
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

Occupational Background of Family	Business	18	36
	Labour in Farm/Non-farm Activities	32	64
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>
Nature of Work	Self-employed	21	42
	Labour in Farm/Non-farm Activities	29	58
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>
Expenditure	Food	11	22
	Cloth	10	20
	Medical	06	12
	Education	06	12
	Transport	07	14
	Social Function	08	16
	Investment	02	04
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>
Amount of Expenditure in the Surveyed Households	Below Rs. 50000	18	36
	Rs. 50000 to 100000	20	40
	Above Rs.100000	12	24
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>
Sources of Income	Self-employed	18	36
	Labour in Farm/Non-farm Activities	27	54
	SHG Activities	05	10
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>
Family Income	Up to Rs.5000	05	10
	Rs. 5001-10000	09	18
	Rs. 10001-15000	20	40
	Above Rs.15000	16	32
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>
Sources of Debt	No debt	02	04
	Bank	05	10
	Chit Fund/Money Lenders	06	12

	SHGs	37	74
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>
Purpose of the Debt	No Debts	02	04
	Education	09	18
	Business	21	42
	Others	18	36
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>
Savings	Up to Rs. 1000	21	42
	Rs. 1001-2000	15	30
	Above Rs. 2000	11	22
	Zero	03	06
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>
Motivators	Self	09	18
	Friends	22	44
	Relatives	06	12
	Government	13	26
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>
Motivation Factors	Raise Family Income	18	36
	Generate Additional Income	10	20
	Economic Independence	09	18
	Improve Standard of Living	06	12
	Support of the Family	02	04
	Productive Usage of Leisure Time	03	06
	Engage Time Fruitfully	02	04
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>
Improvement in Status	Change in Life-style	10	20
	Household Problems	09	18
	Gaining Profits	07	14
	Borrowing Loans	02	04
	Solving Personal Problems	05	10

	Banking Habits	04	08
	Status in the Society	03	06
	Decision making Power	04	08
	Increased Confidence	06	12
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Computed

- With respect to the religion under which the respondents are identified, the maximum number of them belongs to the Hindu religion with a proportion of 94%.
- Most of the women under study (90%) are married and living within the common law. This initiative has also helped widows to take active part in such progressive activities.
- 90% of the respondents live under nuclear family system, whereas only 10% of them belong to joint families.
- The family size of most of the respondents (58%) is about four to six, comprising of their spouse and children.
- The peak numbers of participants were illiterates (32%), followed by primary level of education (24%).
- It is evident from the study that the occupation and family background of the participants is mostly related to farm and non-farm activities i.e. labours (64%).
- Women, who work as labourers in farming and non-farming deeds form the key portion (58%) in the number of participants of Self Help Groups.
- The major portion of the expenditure in the families of respondents is for food (22%) and clothing (20%).
- The annual outlay of the families of the participants is mostly between Rs. 50000 and Rs. 100000 (40%). This shows that Self Help Groups have helped their members to be financially capable to meet out their day to day requirements.
- About 40% of the respondents' families are able to turnout an income of Rs. 10001 - Rs. 15000,

tracked by 32% of families with an income of above Rs. 15000.

- The debt requirements of the participants are mostly met by the credit facilities of Self Help Groups (74%). This makes it evident that the SHGs make a commendable contribution to the monetary needs of its members.
- The capital requirements for initiating and regulating business are the most noteworthy reasons for the purpose of raising debt by women (42%).
- In the current study, it is detected that a large number of women (42%) save up to Rs. 1000 per month. Hence, it is known that the programs of the SHGs have promoted the habit of savings.
- Maximum of 44% of them are encouraged to join Self Help Groups by their friends. Also, governments' schemes have made notable influence on making women join the groups.
- The main cause behind being motivated to take part in such activities is to raise family income (36%).
- After joining the SHGs, the respondents have experienced an enhancement in their standard of living, on a very positive note (20%).

## 6.2 Association between Family Income, Expenditure and Women Empowerment of SHG

To analyze the significant association between family income, expenditure and women empowerment of SHGs, a null hypothesis is framed and chi-square test has been

**Table 2.** Association between family income, expenditure and women empowerment

Variables	Chi-square value	df	p-value	Result
Family Income	10.960	2	.012	Significant*
Family Expenditure	7.400	5	.285	Not Significant

Source: Computed

\*-5% level of Significance

applied at 5% level of significance. The details are shown in Table 2.

The Table 2 indicates the computed chi-square value as 10.960 and 7.400 for family income and family expenditure respectively. The 'p' value is below 0.05 (.012 < 0.05) for family income and more than 0.05 (.285 > 0.05) for family expenditure. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected for family income and accepted for family expenditure at its significance level (5%). Thus, it is inferred that there is a significant association only between family income and women empowerment.

## 7. Suggestions

The following has been suggested from the findings of the study:

- The study revealed that there is a significant association between family income and women empowerment and hence, the Government has to initiate various programs that will improve the income level of the SHG members thereby helping them to manage their expenditure.
- The Promoters of Self Help Groups, while forming the group should necessarily select the members from different caste, religion, languages etc., who really live below poverty line. This helps in bringing them forward in financial stability
- The authority which forms the SHGs should motivate the upper caste poor women to join with lower caste poor women in the program. It helps in removing untouchability in the society.

- The beneficiaries of the society should be given full knowledge about the successful running of the new business they undertake.
- Women doing business activities should be provided with soft loans and subsidies for motivating them to involve more into activities.
- The government should be set up a separate cell at various levels to monitor welfare programs.
- The government should conduct frequent training programs to train on professional competencies thereby improving their managerial, leadership and marketing skills.

## 8. Conclusion

The role of woman in every family is important. Woman plays an equal part of man in every aspect. The concept of Self Help Group is a boon to the woman in focusing towards the upliftment of individual and family. The present study focuses on the women empowerment through self help groups in Thindal area of Erode. The study found that most of the members of SHG had improved their family with the support of facilities provided by the schemes under SHG. The standard of living of the poor people had seen a remarkable improvement due to the involvement of women folks in SHG. The recommendations offered in the study would enable for further enhancement of standard of living of the people.

## 9. References

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