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Correlates of empowerment of farm women in agriculture through entrepreneurship development

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SUMMARY : Empowerment enables women to realize their potential and power in all spheres of life. The present study was designed to throw light on empowerment of farm women entrepreneurs and reveal its association with selected independent variables. The empowerment was divided into three dimensions 'economic empowerment', 'social empowerment' and 'political empowerment'. The study was conducted in Sivasagar district of Assam. A total 120 respondents have been selected. The study revealed that age, annual income, experience, self confidence, education, sources of finance, sources of borrowing and training exposure were positively and significantly related at 0.05 and 0.01 level of probability with economic empowerment. While social empowerment is positively and significantly related with annual income, self confidence, family type and training exposure at 0.05 and 0.01 level of probability and independent variables like annual income, self confidence, education and training exposure is positively and significantly related with political empowerment at 0.05 and 0.01 level of probability. The correlation co-efficient in respect of rest of the variables were found to be non-significant which indicated that they were not deciding factors of economic empowerment, social empowerment and political empowerment of farm women entrepreneurs.

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BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Basically empowerment is the expansion of choice and action to shape one's life. It is an active, multi-dimensional process which enables women to realize their potential and powers in all spheres of life. Women's empowerment is a process in which women gain greater share of control over resource material, human and intellectual, like knowledge, ideas and financial resources like money and control over decision making at

home, in society and in the nation and to gain power (Kapur, 2001). Empowerment can give power to women to have control over the circumstances of their lives. It includes both control over resources and ideology, greater self confidence and an inner transformation of once consciousness that enables one to overcome external affairs. Empowerment of women is critical not only for own welfare but also for the development of the country (Sharma and Varma, 2008). Women in India

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are relatively backward economically, socially and politically compared to other developed countries. History shows that out of all underprivileged groups in the world women have suffered the most. Women are the victims of social, political, religious and economic subordination and poverty in Indian society. Democracy becomes meaningless if fifty per cent of its population do not participate in democratic decision making process and join in economic, social and political activities. Therefore, to make democracy sustainable it is necessary that both women and men participate equally in development activities, commonly it is term as gender equality which can be achieved mainly through women empowerment.

Entrepreneurship development happens to be one of the best ways towards self-sufficiency and poverty alleviation for women in a country. Globalization and Liberalization of markets has encourage women to come forward to become an entrepreneur. Women entrepreneurs may be defined as a "Woman or a group of women who initiate, organize and run a business enterprise". Government of India has defined women entrepreneurs based on women participation in equity and employment of a business enterprise. Accordingly, a woman who runs an enterprise is defined as "an enterprise owned and controlled by a woman having a minimum financial interest of 51 per cent of the capital and giving at least 51 per cent of the employment generated in the enterprise to women. (Usha and Raghavendra, 2013).

Women entrepreneur has been recognized during the last decade as an important untapped source of economic growth. Women entrepreneurs create new jobs for themselves and others. It is estimated that women entrepreneurs comprise about 10.00 per cent of the total number of entrepreneurs in India, with the percentage growing every year. If the prevailing trends continue, it is likely that in another five years, women will comprise 20.00 per cent of the entrepreneurial force (Saidapur, 2012).

Assam is one of the eight states of north east India, bordering seven states like Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and West Bengal. The geographical area is about 78,438 sq.km *i.e.* about 2.4 per cent of the country's total geographical area. Assam has a population of 31,160,272 as in 2011 census of which 15,954,927 are male and 15, 214, 345 are female (Devi, 2013). Assam is not lagging behind the rest of the country in respect of women entrepreneurship. This

is evident from the fact that Assam accounts for 18.00 per cent women entrepreneurs as against 7.70 per cent in the country. The potential for developing women entrepreneurs in Assam is, therefore, very high (Das, 2012).

In order to gain an insight of correlates of empowerment of farm women entrepreneurs, the present study was planned and conducted in Sivasagar district of Assam. Sivasagar is the 21st administrative district of Assam located in easternmost part of Assam. Sivasagar, earlier known as Rongpur was the headquarter of the east India Company. Sivasagar was the capital of the mighty Ahoms who ruled Assam for more than six hundred years, before the advent of British. The district lies between 26° 40' and 26°55' north latitude and 94°31' and 94°51' east longitude. The total geographical area of Sivasagar district is 2668 sq km, out of which 2637.65 sq km covers rural Sivasagar and only 30.15 sq km covers urban Sivasagar. So, empowerment of farm women in agriculture through entrepreneurship development is must for development of the district. Krishi Vigyan Kendra along with other organizations of Sivasagar district has been continuously putting a forceful effort in uplifting the status of women by giving them training on entrepreneurial activities. Due to this intervention, farm women of Sivasagar district has come forward and taken up some farm enterprises like poultry, mushroom cultivation, pig rearing, cattle rearing, vermin-composting etc.

RESOURCES AND METHODS

This study was conducted in purposively selected Sivasagar district of Assam. Sivasagar district is divided into two sub-divisions. Altogether there are six development blocks under these two sub- divisions *viz.*, Amguri, Demow, Sivasagar, Gaurisagar, Lakowa and Nazira. The two blocks having maximum participation of farm women in agricultural activities were selected *viz.*, Sivasagar and Nazira development blocks. Thereafter, three villages from each block were selected. The names of the villages under Sivasagar block are Decial, Gharphalia and Lalimchiga and from Nazira block the names of the selected villages are Bangmuria Konwar Gaon, Hanhchara Chetia Gaon, Pator Gaon. A total of 120 respondents was selected proportionately using two phase stratified sampling. Only those respondents were selected who are engaged in entrepreneurial activities.

Empowerment of farm women was used as dependent and age, education, marital status, family type, sources of finance, sources of borrowing, annual income, experience, training exposure and self confidence as independent variables. The relevant data were collected by administering a structured schedule.

The empowerment of farm women was divided into three dimensions, economic empowerment, social empowerment and political empowerment. The relationship between dependent and independent variables was examined by using correlation analysis, chi square test and regression analysis.

OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

The relationship between age, annual income, experience and self confidence with the empowerment (economic, social and political) of the respondent was examined by using correlation analysis. The values of the Pearson's co-efficient of correlation are reported in Table 1.

The values of correlation co-efficient reported in Table 1 show that economic empowerment of the respondent was significantly correlated with age, annual income and self confidence at 0.05 level of probability and with experience at 0.01 level of probability. The social empowerment of the respondent was significantly correlated with annual income at 0.05 level of probability and self confidence at 0.01 level of probability. The correlation in respect of other two variables were found to be non-significant. The political empowerment of the respondents is significantly correlated with annual income and self confidence at 0.05 level of probability. The correlation in respect of other two variables were found to be non-significant.

The significant positive correlation between empowerment and age, annual income, experience and self confidence suggest that respondents with more age, annual income, experience and self confidences exhibited better economic empowerment level and positive correlation between annual income and self confidence

Table 1: Relationship between selected independent variables of the respondents with empowerment

Sr. No.	Variables	Economic empowerment (r)	Social empowerment (r)	Political empowerment (r)
1.	Age	0.240**	0.106	0.133
2.	Annual income	0.363**	0.260**	0.270**
3.	Experience	0.223*	0.067	0.144
4.	Self confidence	0.452**	0.232*	0.248**

* and ** indicate significance of values at P=0.05 and 0.01, respectively

Table 2 : Association of selected independent variables of the respondents with empowerment

Sr. No.	Variables	Economic empowerment (χ^2)	Social empowerment (χ^2)	Political empowerment (χ^2)
1.	Education	63.533**	26.910	62.019**
2.	Marital status	2.976	6.082	16.121
3.	Family type	5.391	17.188**	6.646
4.	Sources of finances	36.128**	4.465	7.549
5.	Sources of borrowing	37.335**	22.531	10.363
6.	Training exposure	34.321**	24.651**	68.742**

** indicate significance of value at P=0.01

Table 3 : Association of selected independent variables of the respondents with empowerment

Sr. No.	Variables	Economic empowerment			Social empowerment			Political empowerment		
		(b)	(t)	(R ²)	(b)	(t)	(R ²)	(b)	(t)	(R ²)
1.	Age	0.121	1.887*		0.028	0.767		0.008	0.846	
2.	Annual income	0.000	3.641**	0.338	6.739	2.528**	0.111	1.867	2.549**	0.132
3.	Experience	0.294	1.453*		0.003	0.028		0.026	0.846	
4.	Self confidence	2.714	4.991**		0.653	2.141**		0.190	2.264**	

* and ** indicate significance of values at P=0.05 and 0.01, respectively

exhibited that more is the annual income and self confidence better is the social empowerment and political empowerment. The correlation co-efficient in respect to other two independent variables were found to be non-significant though positive. This leads to the conclusion that these variables were not deciding factors of empowerment of farm women entrepreneurs.

As some of the selected independent variables were nominal. The association of independent variables with empowerment of farm women was examined by using chi square test. The values of chi square are reported in Table 2. The value reported in Table 2 shows that economic empowerment was significantly associated to education, sources of finance, sources of borrowing and training exposure at 0.05 level of probability. The other two variables were found to be non-significant. The social empowerment was significantly associated with family type and training exposure at 0.05 level of probability. The other variables (Education, marital status, sources of finance and sources of borrowing) were found to non-significant. The political empowerment was significantly associated with education and training exposure at 0.05 level of probability. The other variables (Marital status, family type, sources of finance and sources of borrowing) were found to be non-significant. The positive association between economic empowerment with education, sources of finance, sources of borrowing and training exposure suggested that higher the level of these variables better is the level of economic empowerment. The positive association between social empowerment and family type and training exposure suggested that the more is the family support and training exposure better the social empowerment. The positive association of political empowerment with education and training exposure suggested that more is the level of education and training exposure, better is the political empowerment. The association with respect to some of the variables were found to be non-significant though positive. This leads to the conclusion that these variables were not deciding factors of empowerment of farm women entrepreneurs.

The regression co-efficient reported in Table 3 indicate the magnitude of causal relationship between particular independent variable with empowerment of farm women entrepreneurs. The significant 't' value of regression co-efficient in respect to age, annual income, rpxperience and self confidence suggest that a unit change of age, annual income, experience and self confidence

of respondent was capable of causing increase in economic empowerment ($b= 0.121, 0.000, 0.294, 2.714$). The positive significant 't' value of regression co-efficient in respect to annual income and training exposure indicates that unit change in each of these attributes was capable of bringing change in social empowerment ($b= 0.028, 6.739, 0.003, 0.653$) and political empowerment ($b= 0.008, 1.867, 0.026, 0.190$). The regression co-efficient in respect to rest of the variables were found to be non-significant. The value (0.338, 0.111, 0.132) of determinant of multiple correlation (R^2) indicated that all the independent variables under study jointly explained 33.80, 11.10 and 13.20 per cent of variation in empowerment (Economic, social and political) of farm women.

Conclusion:

The study revealed that age, annual income, experience, self confidence, education, sources of finance, sources of borrowing and training exposure were positively and significantly related at 0.05 and 0.01 level of probability with economic empowerment. While social empowerment was positively and significantly related with annual income, self confidence, family type and training exposure at 0.05 and 0.01 level of probability and independent variables like annual income, self confidence, education and training exposure was positively and significantly related with political empowerment at 0.05 and 0.01 level of probability. The correlation co-efficient in respect of rest of the variables were found to be non-significant which indicated that they were not deciding factors of economic empowerment, social empowerment and political empowerment of farm women entrepreneurs. Therefore, it is suggested that government as well as non government organization should take initiative to increase the education level of farm women. As education enables them to understand that they require change for the betterment of themselves. The participatory training / demonstration should also be provided which will enhance their self confidence. Women could be empowered only if the mindset of women and men are changed. So, awareness programmes regarding women rights and opportunities are also necessary for achieving the desired goal of women empowerment. Further, microfinance should also be considered in rural area among farm women for their financial stability which will ultimately

leads to their empowerment.

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