

Nature of leadership style prevailing in the self-help groups for the better performance of the groups

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ABSTRACT

A study was taken in Kolar district of Karnataka state to know the nature of the leadership styles prevailing in the women self-help groups organised by Grama Vikas and MYRADA, two non-governmental organisations (NGO), in the year 2001. The study results showed that in all the groups studied clearly indicated that the democratic leadership was prevailing in the SHGs studied. Further, under the democratic leadership, the participative type of leadership (90%) was seen in the groups organised by Grama Vikas. Whereas the groups of MYRADA, 85 per cent of the members perceived that participative type of leadership prevailing in their SHGs. Only 10 and 15 per cent of respondents of Grama Vikas and MYRADA, respectively perceived as consultative type of leadership styles were prevailing in their SHGs. These SHGs also acted as forum in shaping the women to perform the leadership role for the empowerment of the downtrodden. If the opportunity given to rural women with right kind of forum they can do wonders for the wellbeing of their own group and also the community.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership has been described as “a process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task”. For example, some understand a leader simply as somebody whom people follow, or as somebody who guides or directs others, while others define leadership as “organizing a group of people to achieve a common goal”. Studies of leadership have produced theories involving traits, situational interaction, function, behavior, power, vision and values, charisma, and intelligence, among others. But the scenario of Leadership existing in the Self Help Groups is very important as they are playing the vital role as Vehicles of Development and the Empowerment of Women. Leadership is seen as the process whereby an individual directs, guides, influences or controls the thoughts of other members in a social system. For proper functioning of an organisation, institution or groups the responsibilities must

be assigned with regard to performance of essential functions of the groups/organisation. If everyone is left to do everything, there will be confusion in the members as what should be done by whom and when. Thus, the leadership in any self help group will play a vital role in overall performance of the groups for the betterment of the members and the community as a whole.

One of the vital factor varies with leadership style is whether the person is male or female. When men and women come together in groups, they tend to adopt different leadership styles. Men generally assume an agent leadership style. They are task-oriented, active, decision focused, independent and goal oriented. Women, on the other hand, are generally more communal when they assume a leadership position; they strive to be helpful towards others, warm in relation to others, understanding, and mindful of others' feelings. In general, when women are asked to describe themselves to others in newly formed groups, they emphasize their open, fair, responsible, and pleasant communal qualities. They give advice, offer assurances, and manage conflicts in an attempt to maintain

positive relationships among group members. Women connect more positively to group members by smiling, maintaining eye contact and respond tactfully to others' comments.

Self-help groups are instrumental social groups, that are formed to accomplish specified objectives. Women in general take membership of these groups because they can seek the moral support from such groups.

Despite preconceived notions, not all groups need have a designated leader. Groups that are primarily composed of women, are limited in size, are free from stressful decision-making, or often undergo a diffusion of responsibility, where leadership tasks and roles are shared amongst members.

Indian great poet and noble prize winner, Rabindranath Tagore once said that, "Woman is the builder and moulder of the nation's destiny. Though delicate and soft as lily, she has a heart, far stronger and bolder than man... she is supreme inspiration for man's onward march." Rural women in India play a significant role in agriculture and allied fields and they are considered as an "invisible workforce" in agriculture even though they participate in most of the agricultural operations. The role played by women as decision maker or leading the group and playing the role of leadership was not up to the extent in which she is part of the system.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The research was conducted at Mulbagal and Bangarpet talukas in Kolar district of Karnataka state, where Grama Vikas and MYRADA two Non-Governmental Organisations are functioning. Three groups from each of the organization were randomly selected for the study. Twenty members from each of the groups were considered for the study making a sample size of 120. The Kolar district is purposively selected for the study because of the fact being that more number of self-help groups are functioning in the Kolar District, either that are organised and facilitated by the Non-Governmental Organizations or functioning on their own by looking into the performance and results of the other self-help groups.

One of the objectives of the study is to identify the nature of leadership existing in the Self Help Group. The leadership has been taken as one of the objective because of the fact that the Performance and the sustainability of the depends on the leader and the leadership of the groups.

Here, the leadership styles of self-help group was measured with the help of procedure developed by Chandragi

(1996) with some little modifications to suit the study. The leadership style was operationalised as "the consistent behavior pattern the leader, President/ Secretary/treasurer of the self-help group, while getting the groups tasks, opinions, suggestions etc. from their group members and as perceived by them.

The procedure consisted of 12 statements representing different dimensions of leadership was administered to the members of the Group including leaders. A three-point continuum representing agree, disagree, indifference with the scores of 2,1 and 0, respectively was assigned. The sum of all the dimensions scores yielded the overall leadership style score.

Leadership :

The role of leader and leadership is very important in any of the groups for its greater sustainability and also the deliver the needs to the dependents for which it has been established or formed. The groups have leaders who drive the leadership process. The leaders are required to have the ability to be empathic, emotionally stable, selfless, and loyal to group ideals and goals. Self-help groups it is very important to have such type of leadership that will give equal opportunity for all the members of the group for their participation and decision making process for the well being of the group.

As the majority of the SHG members are illiterate or studied primary education and mostly involved in agriculture and allied activities, it is very important to bring them to the mainstream.

OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

Here an attempt has been made to study the nature of the Leadership existing in the Groups. Each of the Self Help Group constituted three office bearers *i.e.* President, Secretary and Treasurer. These office bearers are generally known as Group Leaders. Group Leaders are generally defined as persons who keep the records of the group and attend the meeting and training programmes with the promoting institutions. There by the information dissemination has to happen at Group level to all the members of the group and take their consensus back to the source for its better execution and success.

Table 1 clearly indicates the leadership styles prevailing in the self-help groups. Based on the total scores on the leadership style statement/items leadership styles were classified into two, they were "democratic leadership" and

Leadership style	Gramavikas		MYRADA		Total	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Democratic L.S	60	100	60	100	120	100
Autocratic L.S	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	60	100	60	100	100	100

Table 2 : Nature of democratic leadership present in the self help groups organised by Gramavikas and MYRADA

Leadership style	Gramavikas		MYRADA		Total	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Participative	54	90	51	85	105	87.5
Consultative	06	10	09	15	15	12.5
Total	60	100	60	100	120	100

“autocratic” type of leadership. The self-help groups organised by both Grama Vikas and MYRADA, all the respondents have perceived (100%) “Democratic” type of leadership prevailing in their groups.

Democratic leadership works best in situations where group members are skilled and eager to share their knowledge. It is also important to have plenty of time to allow people to contribute, develop a plan and then decide on the best course of action.

Benefits of democratic leadership :

Because group members are encouraged to share their thoughts, democratic leadership can lead to better ideas and more creative solutions to problems. Group members also feel more involved and committed to group activities, making them more likely to care about the end results. Research on leadership styles has also shown that democratic leadership leads to higher productivity among group members.

Democratic leadership is conceptually distinct from positions of authority; rather, it is defined as the performance of three functions: distributing responsibility among the membership, empowering group members, and aiding the group’s decision-making process.

The possible reasons for this may be the guidelines framed by the members of Self Help Group and the respective Non-Governmental Organisations which are facilitating the whole process.

Here the members of the group felt that the leadership style *i.e.* democratic which is selflessness connotes serving the purpose of others before serving themselves. Members of the group always want their needs to be met first before the leaders meet up with their needs. Good leaders are known to be selfless. The leaders of the Groups were selected by the members of the groups depending on their earlier behavior and they were periodically changed on rotation basis and every member of the group would get the chance.

The leadership is loyal to group goals and ideals of she respects the group goals and ideals. Respect for group goals and ideals needs integrity among leaderships. This notion is very common with leadership in rural areas for developing countries like India.

Further under the democratic type of leadership two sub types were made as participative and consultative type of leadership (Table 2). Considering the maximum score of each style of leadership as cut off points (10,14 and 20) the

respondents, based on their perception of group’s leadership style were grouped into two concrete leadership styles as participative and consultative leadership styles.

It could be observed from Table 2 that, majority (90%) of the respondents were perceived as participative type of leadership in SHGs of Grama Vikas. A total of 85 per cent of the respondents from MYRADA were perceived that participative type of leadership is prevailing in their groups. and only 10 and 15 per cent of two respondents of Grama Vikas and MYRADA, respectively perceived as consultative type of leadership styles prevailing in their groups.

From the above results it could be concluded that, democratic – participative type leadership style was prevailing in the Self Help Groups of both Grama Vikas and MYRADA.

“Democratic - Participative leadership” is generally the most effective leadership style. Democratic – participative leaders offer guidance to group members, but they also participate in the group. It is a form of leadership style where in, the leader includes all the members of the Group in problem solving and goal setting aspects of the Group for better performance. All the group members are involved in the “process” but the leader retains the final/ultimate decision making authority, which will enforce the discussions held during the entire process. Group members feel engaged in the process and are more motivated and creative.

The regular leadership might be the top down approach *i.e.*, whatever the decisions taken at the top/leaders has been intimated to the members, so that they did not had any chance to make changes and their involvement in the entire process was negligible or nil.

It was also observed that the leadership rotation was in practice for giving the opportunity to all the members of the groups to shoulder the responsibility and get exposure to the outside world and mainstream with which they are supposed to be the partner for their wellbeing.

Chakravarthy and Jha (2012), Ramesh (1997) and Ofuoku and Agbamu (2013) have also made some observation related to the present investigation. Bhatnagar and Williams (1992), Fernandez (1998) and Sharma and Das (2012) have also worked on same aspects related to the present investigation.

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