Scale to measure the attitude of rural women towards self help groups

■ **M.V. KARUNA JEBA MARY** AND **V. RAVICHANDRAN**

ABSTRACT

Considering the growing significance of self-help groups for women empowerment, an attitude scale was developed to measure the attitude of rural women towards self-help groups by using equal appearing interval scale method. The present study was conducted in three blocks of Theni district with a sample size of 220 women to measure their attitude towards SHGs. For the purpose of this study, attitude was operationalized as the mental disposition of rural women about self-help groups in varying degrees of favourableness or unfavourableness. Since the selected scale values should have equal appearing interval and distributed uniformly along the psychological continuum, it was necessary to form nine compartments so as to select nine statements at one statement from each compartment. Based on high scale and low Q values, nine attitude statements were finally selected and administered for assessing the womens attitude. The nine attitude items finally selected were arranged randomly in order to avoid biased responses. A five-point continuum of 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'undecided' 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' was used as response categories.

KEY WORDS : Attitude scale, Equal appearing interval, Self-help group, Women empowerment, Inter quartile

W omen form a part of a human resource. Unless this section of the population is given opportunities to prove their capabilities, the development would be imperfect. They form the core of agriculture sector, as agricultural labourers. In spite of several progresses made since independence in the lives of women, gender analysis demonstrates that women in India continue to be relatively disadvantaged in matters of survival, health, nutrition, literacy and productivity and social and economic status

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(Manimekalai, 2004). Self-help groups have emerged as one of the major strategies for women's empowerment and various schemes of the Government of India have shown that strong women's groups could contribute substantially to the development and convergence of services and activities (Ramesh, 1996). The objectives of the SHGs go beyond thrift and credit – and include the overall development of members in the social, political, cultural and economic arena; thus the SHGs are 'credit plus' institutions (Fernandez, 1998).

Thurstone (1946) defined that attitude is the degree of positive or negative affect associated with some psychological object like symbol, person, institute, ideal or idea towards which people can differ in varying degrees. Attitude in this study was operationally defined as the respondent's degree of favourable or unfavourable views, opinions, feelings or interests towards self-help groups. In this context, it is worthwhile to develop attitude scale to know the rural women attitude towards self-help groups as one of the specific objectives of the study.

Hema (2003) reported that more than half (61.67 %) of the respondents had more favourable attitude towards group activity, followed by less favourable attitude 31.66 per cent. Favourable attitude towards group activity was found with 6.67 per cent of the respondents only.

Sujhi (2004) found that nearly two third (65.00 %) of the MFI respondents had favourable attitude towards group activity, followed by 21.67 per cent with favourable attitude towards group activity. With regard to BI respondents, nearly two third (63.30 %) were found to have more favourable attitude towards group activity, followed by 26.70 per cent with favourable and the rest 10.00 per cent with favourable attitude towards group activity.

Asokhan (2006) found that exactly cent per cent (100.00 %) had attained a medium to high level of attitude towards group activity, which was also positive.

Selvarani (2006) reported that more than half (53.85 %) of the respondents had high attitude towards group action, while more than one-fourth (28.46 %) of the respondents had low attitude towards group action and only less than one-fifth (17.69 %) of the respondents had medium attitude towards group action.

Objective of the study :
 – To measure the attitude of rural women towards self-help groups.

METHODOLOGY

To measure the degree of the rural women's like or dislike towards self-help group an attitude scale was constructed following the method of equal appearing interval developed by Thurstone (1946). Possible statements concerning the psychological object *i.e.*, 'Self-help groups' based on review of literature, discussion with scientists and extensionists were collected. Totally 81 statements were collected which were organized and structured in the form of items. The items were screened by following the informal criteria suggested by Edwards (1969) for editing the statements to be used in the construction of the attitude scale. Based on the screening, 72

items were finally selected which formed the universe of contents. The 72 selected statements were then subjected to judge's opinion on a five-point continuum ranging from most unfavourable to most favourable. The list of statements was then sent to 50 judges that comprised of scientists of State Agricultural Universities. Out of 50 judges, 30 judges responded by sending their judgements. By applying the formula as suggested by Thurstone and Chave (1929), the scale values and Q values were computed for 72 statements :

$$S \Nl < \frac{0.50 - \ddot{y}\,pb}{pw}\ i$$

where,

S- The median or scale value of the statement

l- The lower limit of the interval in which the median falls

Σpb- The sum of the proportions below the interval in which the median falls

Pw-The proportion within the interval in which the median falls and

i- The width of the interval and is assumed to be equal to 1.0

$$Q = C_{75} - C_{25}$$

where,

Q   - Inter quartile range

C_{25} - The 25th centile

$$C_{25} - l < \frac{0.25 - \ddot{y}\,pb}{pw}\ i$$

C_{75} – The 75th centile

$$C_{75} - l < \frac{0.75 - \ddot{y}\,pb}{pw}\ i$$

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study as well as relevant discussion have been presented under following heads :

Selection of attitude items :

The attitude items to be included in the final attitude

Sr. No.	Statement No.	S value	Q value	Difference between successive scale values	Cumulative value of the difference	Equal appearing class intervals	Compartments
1.	49	3.64	2.25	0.36	0.487	0.324	I
2.	27	3.39	1.76	0.20	0.741	0.648	II
3.	56	2.90	2.06	0.35	1.230	0.972	III
4.	53	2.72	2.00	0.18	1.408	1.296	IV
5.	70	2.50	2.17	0.00	1.630	1.62	V
6.	2	2.17	1.19	0.05	1.963	1.944	VI
7.	35	1.86	1.14	0.02	2.273	2.268	VII
8.	8	1.50	1.08	0.10	2.630	2.592	VIII
9.	7	1.21	0.86	0.08	2.916	2.916	IX

Table 1 : Computation of equal appearing intervals

scale were selected based on those items with high scale values and smaller Q values.

In Table 1, the second column indicated the statement number. The scale values were arranged in descending order of magnitude in the fourth column with corresponding Q-values in the third column. The differences between successive scale values were computed and entered in the fifth column. The cumulative total of these computed differences were worked out in the sixth column. Considering the time limitation from respondents' point of view, it was decided to select nine statements to constitute the attitude scale. Since the selected scale values should have equally appearing interval and distributed uniformly along the psychological continuum, it was necessary to form nine compartments so as to select nine statements with one statement from each compartment.

The basis for forming the compartments was that each compartment should be equally spaced in the continuum. For this purpose, the cumulative total was divided by nine, which worked out to 0.324, and this formed the width of the class intervals. The second interval was worked out by adding the value 0.324 with the width of the class interval. So, the second interval comes around 0.648. Then again adding the value 0.324 with 0.648 gives the third interval. Subsequently all the nine intervals were worked out. These equal appearing class intervals form the seventh column. The width/value of equal class interval cutting the nearest or closest cumulative value(s) of difference forms the compartment. For example the value o.324 is closest to the value of 0.487 of the cumulative value of difference. So this forms the first compartment. Subsequently nine compartments were formed.

The next stage was to select the attitude items from the nine compartments. Based on the criteria already mentioned, items having higher scale value and lower Q-value were selected from the first compartment. Same procedure was followed for selecting the items from the subsequent compartments.

Adequate care was taken to ensure that the selected items represented the universe of content. Thereby, nine statements were selected. The selected statements are given in Table 2.

Reliability of the scale :

The reliability of the scale was determined by 'Split-half' method (Garrett and Woodworth, 1973). The nine selected attitude items were divided into two equal halves by odd-even method (Singh, 2008). The two halves were administered separately to 30 self-help group women in a non-sample area. The scores were subjected to product moment correlation test in order to find out the reliability of the half-test. The half-test reliability coefficient (r) was 0.570, which was significant at five per cent level of probability. Further, the reliability coefficient of the whole test was computed using the Spearman-Brown prophecy formula given below :

$$\text{Reliability co} > \text{efficient of whole test} = \frac{2r\,\text{Reliability co} > \text{efficient of half test}}{1 < \text{Reliability co} > \text{efficient of half test}}$$

The whole test reliability (rtt) was 0.726. According to Singh (2008), when the mean scores of the two groups are of narrow range, a reliability coefficient of 0.50 or 0.60 would suffice. Hence, the constructed scale is reliable as the rtt was greater than 0.60.

Content validity of the scale :

Content validity is referred to the representativeness or sampling adequacy of the content of a measuring instrument (Kerlinger, 2007). Content validation was carried out by subjecting the selected nine attitude items to judge's opinion. Experts in the selected field of study were the judges. They were asked to indicate the extent to which each attitude item covered the different aspects of farm diversification or judge each item for its presumed relevance to the property being measured. The responses were obtained on a four-point continuum of 'most adequately covers', 'more adequately covers', 'less adequately covers' and 'least adequately covers'. Scores of 4, 3, 2 and 1 were given for the points on the continuum, respectively. Totally 30 judges responded by

Sr. No.	S value	Q value	Statement	Nature of the statement
1.	4.00	1.47	Self-help group's saving does not encourage maintaining discipline	Unfavourable
2.	3.59	1.90	Products prepared by SHG members have no market	Unfavourable
3.	3.33	2.23	Self-help group decreases self-reliance	Unfavourable
4.	2.72	2.00	Self-help group tries to tap social capital within the group for meeting collective needs	Favourable
5.	2.50	2.00	Educated persons are more likely to be good entrepreneurs in the self-help group	Favourable
6.	2.41	1.59	Self-help group breaks social, cultural and religious barriers	Favourable
7.	2.17	1.54	Self-help group promotes mutual cooperation among SHG women	Favourable
8.	1.85	0.96	Training is essential to improve the competence, understanding and professional behaviour of self-help group women	Favourable
9.	1.21	0.86	Self-help group improves the saving behaviour of the members	Favourable

Table 2 : Final set of attitude items selected with corresponding S and Q values and the nature of statement

sending their judgements. The mean score (2.5) was fixed as the basis for deciding the content validity of the scale *i.e.*, if the overall mean score of the attitude items as rated by the judges was above 2.5, the scale will be declared as valid and if not otherwise. In the present case, the overall mean score was worked out as 3.0 (most adequately covers and more adequately covers) therefore, the constructed attitude scale is said to be valid.

Administration of the scale :

The scale was administered in a five-point continuum of 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'undecided' 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'. Favourable statements (statements 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9) to the object self-help groups were considered and scored in the following pattern strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree and received the scores as 5,4,3,2 and 1, respectively. For those items that were negative (statements 1, 2 and 3) to the object self-help groups, the scoring procedure was reversed.

Score was obtained for each item. This scale was administered to obtain SHG women's responses. The score obtained for each statement was summed up to arrive at the attitude score for that respondent. The score ranged from 63 (maximum) to 9 (minimum). The responses were grouped as less favourable, moderately favourable and highly favourable based on the cumulative frequency method.

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