

## RESEARCH PAPER

# Empowerment of women through self-help groups

■ **K. INDUMATHY, P. SANJEEVI AND C. DHARMADURAI**

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### ABSTRACT

The present investigation was conducted in Kancheepuram district of Tamil Nadu state. The main objective of the study was to know the empowerment of women through self-help groups. A structured interview schedule was used to collect data from 90 respondents who have participated in SHGs. The statistical methods and tests such as frequency, mean and percentage were used for the analysis of the data. The results of the study showed that most of the respondents were psychologically empowered in self-image (73.33 %) and feeling of security in family (47.78 %). (72.22 %) of the respondents were empowered in actual participation in festivals and (64.44 %) of the respondents were economically empowered to start new business.

**KEY WORDS :** Self-help groups, Empowerment, Rural women

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**W**omen constitute around fifty per cent of the total human resources in our economy. Women are the best change agent to touch the core of poverty and are very important segment in development at local to global level. To achieve these concepts, SHG's were formed as a nodal organizational set up in India for the upliftment and welfare of women. SHG's serves to underline the principle of "for the people, by the people and of the people." In spite of several progress made since independence in the lives of women, gender analysis demonstrated that women in India constitute to be relatively disadvantaged in matters of

survival, health, nutrition, literacy and productivity and social and economic status (Manimekalai, 2004). 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).

Asokhan (2006) found that exactly cent per cent 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.

### MEMBERS OF THE RESEARCH FORUM

#### Correspondence to:

**K. INDUMATHY**, Department of Agricultural Extension, Adhiparasakthi Agricultural College, G. B. Nagar, KALAVAI (T.N.) INDIA  
Email : [induagri18@gmail.com](mailto:induagri18@gmail.com)

#### Authors' affiliations:

**P. SANJEEVI AND C. DHARMADURAI**, Department of Agricultural Extension, Adhiparasakthi Agricultural College, G. B. Nagar, KALAVAI (T.N.) INDIA

### METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Kancheepuram district of Tamil Nadu. Totally thirteen blocks present in Kancheepuram district. Among thirteen blocks,

Uthiramerur block was selected purposively for the study because of more number of self-help groups functioning effectively for the more than two years. From the selected block of Uthiramerur, three villages namely Rettamangalam, Amaravathpattinam and Thottanaval were randomly selected for the study. Two self-help groups from each of the village were selected. Each group comprised of fifteen to twenty members making a

total sample of 90 women members were composed for the study.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected on overall empowerment of the women towards self-help groups have been presented in Table 1.

The overall impact of SHG on empowerment of

Sr. No.	Overall empowerment	Number	Per cent
1.	Low empowerment	03	03.34
2.	Medium empowerment	57	63.34
3.	High empowerment	30	33.32
	Total	90	100.00

Sr. No.	Indicators	Response					
		Pre-SHG		Post-SHG		Change	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
<b>Psychological empowerment</b>							
1.	Self-confidence	45	50.00	85	94.44	40	44.44
2.	Courage	39	43.34	79	87.78	40	44.44
3.	Self-reliance	41	45.56	84	93.33	43	47.78
4.	Feeling of security in family	25	27.77	75	83.33	50	55.56
5.	Self-image	23	25.56	89	98.89	66	73.33
<b>Cultural empowerment</b>							
1.	Freedom of interact with male outside the family	19	21.11	76	94.44	57	60.00
2.	Actual participation in festivals	17	18.89	82	91.11	65	72.22
3.	Freedom to take any kind of food	24	26.67	87	96.67	63	70.00
4.	Liberty to attend marriage ceremony	35	38.89	79	97.78	44	48.89
<b>Social empowerment</b>							
1.	Self-education	26	28.89	74	82.22	48	53.33
2.	Freedom to mix with friends	31	34.44	87	96.66	56	62.22
3.	Freedom of social security	36	40.00	90	100.00	54	60.00
4.	Participation in decision about girl marriage	38	42.22	82	91.11	44	48.89
5.	Appreciation by family	28	31.11	84	93.33	56	62.22
<b>Economic empowerment</b>							
1.	Freedom to start business	23	25.55	81	90.00	58	64.44
2.	Personal savings in the form of deposit	36	40.00	90	100.00	54	60.00
3.	Participation in decision about marketing of produce	33	36.67	83	92.22	50	55.56
4.	Participation in purchase of input for family enterprise	30	33.33	78	86.67	48	53.33
5.	Freedom for appending on entertainment of guest	22	24.44	69	76.67	47	52.22
<b>Political empowerment</b>							
1.	Awareness of human right	40	44.44	82	91.11	42	46.67
2.	Awareness of political institution	37	41.11	78	86.67	41	45.55
3.	Holding of position at present	34	37.77	90	100.00	56	62.22

women member was assessed by making the sum total of the five dimensions were decided for the study. Table 1 revealed that the medium level of empowerment of women through SHG could be noticed among half of the women members (63.34%) followed by 33.32 per cent of them appearing in high category of empowerment. The percentage of respondents appearing in low category of women empowerment was found to be meagre 3.33 per cent. It is noticed that medium empowerment of women in terms of psychological, cultural, social, economic and political empowerment.

### Impact on empowerment :

Self-help group provide scope for the improvement in self-confidence and development of an individual. The mind accelerates the various actions of the members and hence the psychological empowerment, cultural empowerment, economic empowerment, sociological empowerment and political empowerment of the members has been analysed. The collected data were tabulated for further analysis.

With regards to psychological empowerment, 73.33 per cent of the respondents found self-images followed by 55.56 per cent feeling of security in family, (47.78%), (44.44%) and 44.44 per cent changes were observed in case of self-reliance, courage, self-confidence (Table 2).

In case of cultural empowerment it was concluded that, 72.22 per cent in Actual participation in festivals followed by 70.00 per cent in Freedom to take any kind of food, 60.00 per cent in freedom to interact with outside persons, 48.89 per cent in Liberty to attend marriage ceremony.

In case of social empowerment it was concluded that, 62.22 per cent in appreciation by family, freedom to mix with friends, 60.00 per cent in freedom of social security, 53.33 per cent in self-education, 48.89 per cent in participation in decision about girl marriage.

As concerned to economic empowerment, it was

observed change in respondents after joining SHG was occurred as 64.44 per cent in freedom to start business, 60.00 per cent in personal savings in the form of deposit, 55.56 per cent in participation in decision about marketing of produce, 53.33 per cent in participation in purchase of input for family enterprise, 52.22 per cent in freedom for appending on entertainment of guest.

In political empowerment, more than 62.22 per cent of the respondents were holding of position at present followed by 46.67 per cent were aware of human rights ,45.55 per cent respondents were aware about political institution after joining SHG. The findings are inline with Malhotra (2004) and Mary (2013).

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