



EMPOWERING WOMEN'S PSYCHE THROUGH SHGS – AN ANALYSIS

Dr. (Mrs.) J. Jayalakshmi

Assistant Professor of Economics, Ayya Nadar Janaki Ammal College for Women, Sivakasi.

Abstract

The women empowerment and eradication of poverty are made possible through formation of Self Help Groups (SHGs). SHG is a group of rural poor, who had volunteered to organize themselves into group for the eradication of poverty among the members. This movement stems from the people desire through the principle of “by the people, for the people and of the people”. SHGs are a novel strategy developed and promoted by NABARD. The participation of women in Self Help Groups enables them to acquire an ultimate psychological benefit to rise up psychologically powerful which is the essence of women empowerment in any socio-culture and economic environment. Women participating in SHGs have obviously created tremendous impact upon the life pattern and style of women especially in rural areas. Psychological empowerment explains the women's sense of inclusion and entitlement. Self confidence is essential to meet the critical situations in life courageously. Human warmth and affection are the factors, which strengthen one's self trust. Thus, SHGs facilitate women to enhance psychological empowerment. In this context, an attempt has been made to study the behavioural change of women SHG members and their psychological empowerment.

Introduction

Empowerment of women is a holistic concept. It is multi-dimensional in approach and involves a basic realization and awareness of one's powers and potentials, capacities and competencies and of one's right and opportunities for development in important spheres of life. Such dimensions of development or empowerment are discussed in this chapter.

Self Help Groups (SHGs)

The participation of women in Self Help Groups enables them to acquire an ultimate psychological benefit to rise up psychologically powerful which is the essence of women empowerment in any socio-culture and economic environment. Women participating in SHGs have obviously created tremendous impact upon the life pattern and style of poor women especially in rural area. As a group oriented model, SHGs have evolved as mechanism or movement for women development to bring in individual and collective empowerment.

Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment explains the women's sense of inclusion and entitlement. Self confidence is essential to meet the critical situations in life courageously. Human warmth and affection are the factors, which strengthen one's self trust. Each person can strengthen her self confidence through proper understanding which paves the way for promoting positive attitude towards life. Self reliance capabilities are to develop a favorable opinion of oneself. Positive motivation alone helps the women to empower themselves.

Behavioural Change

Behavioural change is a part of the psychological empowerment. For the purpose of assessing the change in the behaviour of the sample members due to their association with the SHGs, a set of different situations like verbal abuse, physical violence, neglect, emotional abuses have been identified and the reactions of the members to such situations have been obtained during the survey.

Statement of the Problem

SHGs facilitate self-help and mutual help among the members. Women organize themselves into group and create collective awareness of injustice and potential of mobilization of resources. As it is an organized group, it creates a sense of empathy in the minds of the members. In turn they help each other and also counsels others who suffer. When women become members of SHGs, they automatically become partners in all the economic activities. Thus SHGs facilitate the women to enhance psychological empowerment. In order to examine this, a study has been carried out.

Scope of the Study

The present study is confined to behavior changes of women before and after joining in SHG and psychological empowerment. The study area is limited to Virudhunagar district.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To examine whether there is a behavioural change among women before and after joining in SHG.
2. To study whether the women SHG members are psychologically empowered or not.



- To offer suggestions on the basis of findings of the study.

Research Methodology

The present study is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data has been gathered from 300 women SHG members residing at Virudhunagar through interview schedule by adopting multistage sampling method. The secondary data has been gathered from books, magazines, journals and websites. The primary data has been analyzed with the help of Cronbach Alpha Reliability test and t-test.

Analytical Framework

't' test has been used to analyse the behavior changes of women SHG members. Cronbach Alpha Reliability test has been used to analyse the psychological empowerment of women SHG members.

Behavioural Change

For the purpose of assessing the change in the behaviour of the sample members due to their association with the SHGs, a set of different situations like verbal abuse, physical violence, neglect, emotional abuses have been identified and the reactions of the members to such situations have been obtained during the survey.

The distribution of the members according to the reactions of the verbal abuses before and after joining SHGs has been presented in Table 1.

Table 1, Members' Reactions to Verbal Abuses Before and After Joining SHGs

Sl.No.	Reactions	Number of Members	
		Before Joining SHGs	After Joining SHGs
1.	Remain passive	46(15.3)	64(21.33)
2.	Resist	83(27.3)	69(23)
3.	Lodge a complaint	103(34.3)	92(30.7)
4.	Warn the wrong doers	69(23)	75(25)
	Total	300(100)	300(100)

Source: Primary data

Figures in Parenthesis represent percentages to total

Table 1 discloses that out of 300 respondents, about 92 (30.7 per cent) respondents lodge complaints since they feel safer and secure and 75 (25 per cent) warn the wrong doers after becoming a member of the collective group.

Physical Violence

The distribution of the members according to the reactions of the physical violence before and after joining SHGs has been presented in Table 2.

Table 2, Members' Reactions to Physical Violence Before and After Joining SHGs

Sl.No.	Reactions	Number of Members	
		Before Joining SHGs	After Joining SHGs
1.	Remain passive	71(23.67)	33(11)
2.	Resist	46(15.33)	45(15)
3.	Lodge a complaint	113(37.67)	141(47)
4.	Warn the wrong doers	70(23.33)	81(27)
	Total	300(100)	300(100)

Source: Primary data

Figures in Parenthesis represent percentages to total.

It is concluded from Table 2 that 141 (47 per cent) respondents have lodge a complaints against physical violence after joining the groups. Addition, the respondents have shown courage to warn the wrong doers after their association with the SHGs.

Negligence

The distribution of the members according to the reactions of the negligence before and after joining SHGs has been presented in Table 3.



Table 3, Members’ Reactions to Negligence Before and After Joining SHGs

Sl.No.	Reactions	Number of Members	
		Before Joining SHGs	After Joining SHGs
1.	Remain passive	153(51)	61(20.33)
2.	Resist	79(26.33)	175(58.33)
3.	Lodge a complaint	12(4)	35(11.67)
4.	Warn the wrong doers	56(18.67)	29(9.67)
	Total	300(100)	300(100)

Source: Primary data

Figures in Parenthesis represent percentages to total.

It is observed from Table 3 that out of 300 respondents, 175 (58.33 per cent) resist when they are ignored after joining SHGs and 61 (20.33 per cent) express their opinion that they choose to remain passive when they are ignored after joining as a member of the group.

Emotional Abuses

The distribution of the members according to the reactions of the emotional abuses before and after joining SHGs has been presented in Table 4.

Table 4, Members’ Reactions to Emotional Abuses Before and After Joining SHGs

Sl.No.	Reactions	Number of Members	
		Before Joining SHGs	After Joining SHGs
1.	Remain passive	61(20.33)	10(3.33)
2.	Resist	82(27.33)	62(20.67)
3.	Lodge a complaint	127(42.33)	154(51.33)
4.	Warn the wrong doers	30(10)	74(24.67)
	Total	300(100)	300(100)

Source: Primary data

Figures in Parenthesis represent percentages to total

Table 4 reflects that about 62 (20.67 per cent) respondents resist the psychological attack after becoming the members of the SHGs whereas 154 (51.33 per cent) respondents have lodged complaints after becoming the members of SHGs.

Results of Paired ‘t’ test on reaction of members to behavioural changes before and after becoming the members of the SHGs

In order to test the null hypothesis that there is significant difference in the behavioural changes of the members in problematic situations before and after joining the SHGs, the paired ‘t’ test is used.

Results of Paired ‘t’ test on reactions of members to behavioural changes before and after becoming the members of the SHGs are given in Table 5.

Table 5, Results of Paired ‘T’ Test on Reaction of Members to Behavioural Changes before and After Becoming the Members of the SHGS

Sl.No.	Problematic situation	‘t’value	Table value at 5 per cent level
1.	Verbal Abuses	3.524*	1.96
2.	Physical violence	2.353*	1.96
3.	Negligence	4.224*	1.96
4.	Psychological and emotional abuses	2.446*	1.96

Source: Primary data

*Significant at 5 per cent level

It is evident from the Table 5 that the calculated values of the ‘t’ test for all the various types of abuses are found to be higher than the table value (1.96) at 5 per cent level. Hence, the null hypothesis has been rejected. Thus, there is a remarkable change in the behaviour of the members after joining SHGs.

Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment measure consisted of 11 statements with which sample members were asked to express their opinion on Likert’s five point scale such as strongly agree (5), agree (4), moderate (3), disagree (2), strongly disagree (1). Item content is indicated in Table 6. With appropriate reversals, items were summed to produce a scale for which scores could range between 11 and 55, and high scores represented positive attitude towards psychological empowerment after joining Self Help Groups. The Cronbach Alpha Reliability of the scale is 0.8789 which shows that the 11 attributes are reliable towards psychological empowerment.



Table 6 narrates the percentage of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with attributes of psychological empowerment.
Table 6, Percentage of Respondents Who Agreed or Strongly Agreed With Attributes of Psychological Empowerment

Sl.No.	Psychological Empowerment	Self Help Group Members Strongly Agree and Agree
1.	Self confidence	21.0
2.	Self Reliance	36.0
3.	Positive attitude towards life	81.3
4.	Control over earning and spending	4.7
5.	Knowledge of choice	5.3
6.	Sense of liberty	11.6
7.	Problems solving capacity	14.6
8.	Intensify responsibility	59.0
9.	Sense of empathy	13.7
10.	Expressing opinion freely	15.0
11.	Counseling others	14.0

Source: Primary data

Descriptive analysis of Table 6 has furnished the information of percentage response regarding attributes towards psychological empowerment after joining Self Help Groups. 81.3 per cent have said that there is a positive attitude towards life, 59 per cent have expressed that SHGs has intensified responsibility, 36 per cent have revealed that self reliance has been improved, 15 per cent feel that they can express the opinion freely, 14 per cent are able to counsel others, 21 per cent have gained self confidence, 13.7 per cent have developed sense of empathy, 14.6 per cent have developed problem solving capacity, 11.6 per cent enjoy a sense of liberty, 5.3 per cent have raised the knowledge of choice and 4.7 per cent have attained control over earning and spending.

Among the respondents after joining the SHGs, there is a notable change in the principal instrument of psychological empowerment.

Suggestions

Some suggestions are offered on the basis of findings of the study.

1. Women have to come forward to develop their knowledge to counterpart their lives in the modern society.
2. They have to enlarge a sense of courage among themselves to face the society.
3. They have to look at an assortment of source of earnings and prefer the pre-eminent source which is suitable to their potentials and develop their caliber.
4. To empower women, it is necessary to make women as equal partners with liberty at home and in society.
5. They have to equip themselves to make choices in order to actualize their self-worth.
6. They have to take efforts for resource development in the spheres of education, health care, sanitation, food security, population education and domestic resource mobilization.

Conclusion

Women's involvement in the process of decision making and creating awareness are the most urgent requirements of a modern society. SHGs have inculcated a great confidence in the minds of rural women to succeed in the challenges of the life. Thus, SHGs have proved that they could bring about a change in the mind set of the highly conservative and tradition bound illiterate women in rural areas.

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