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Members Through Mahalir Thittam in Cuddalore
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Sociological Empowerment of Women Self Help Group Members Through Mahalir Thittam in Cuddalore District of Tamil Nadu

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ABSTRACT

Women empowerment alludes to the formation of a natural for women where they can settle on choices of their own for their own advantages just as for their general public. Women empowerment implies extending and improving the social, financial, political and legal nature of the women to ensure equal right to women and to make them adequately sure to ensure their benefits. The present study was conducted in Cuddalore Block of Cuddalore District. Proportionate random sampling procedure was applied to select 120 respondents. They were the members of women Self Help Groups of Mahalir Thittam project under the organizational efforts taken by Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women (TNCDW). They were selected from six villages namely Gunduuppalavadi, Kondur, Thiruvandipuram, Kudikadu, Pathirikuppam, Pachayankuppam. The Overall sociological empowerment of women SHG members results that, three-fifth of the respondents (60.00 per cent) were in medium level followed by 28.33 per cent of respondents were in high level and 11.67 per cent of respondents were in low level of sociological empowerment. Result of the study reveal that 97.50 per cent of the respondents were Better understanding about group co-operation followed by Joint decision making at all levels (95.00 per cent), Improvement in educational status (85.83 per cent), Members are highly informative (83.33 per cent) and Improvement in social status (82.50 per cent). The findings of the study on the profile of Mahalir Thittam women members indicated a differential pattern in respect of their sociological characteristics. This has been much emphasized on sociological empowerment of women Self Help Group members.

Key words: Sociological empowerment, Gender equity, Educational status, Women rights

Women empowerment alludes to the formation of a natural for women where they can settle on choices of their own for their own advantages just as for their general public. Women empowerment implies extending and improving the social, financial, political and legal nature of the women to ensure equal right to women and to make them adequately sure to ensure their benefits, such as driving existence with the feeling of self-esteem, regard and pride, have unlimited oversight of their life, both inside and outside of their home and working environment, to settle on their own decisions and choices, have equivalent rights to partake in social, strict and open exercises, have equivalent rights for social and monetary equity, deciding the money related and financial decisions, getting equivalent open door for training, getting equivalent business opportunity with no sexual orientation inclination and getting sheltered and happy with workplace [1]. Women empowerment is a set of measures designed to increase the degree of autonomy and self-determination in women and in

communities in order to enable them to represent their interest in a responsible and self-determined way, acting on their own authority [2]. Through economic empowerment, one can be empowered socially, physically, mentally and through all these she is sure to be empowered politically. In this empowerment process, Self-Help Groups help the women to empower economically [3]. The economic empowerment requires transferred of skills of management and control of the economic activities, which enable them to feel confident and being involved in the decision-making process (4).

Self-Help Group is a small voluntary association of poor people, preferably from the same socio-economic background. They come together for the purpose of solving their common problems through self-help and mutual help [5]. The Self-Help Group promotes small savings among its members. Self Help Group is a group of rural poor who have volunteers to organize themselves into a group for eradication of poverty of the members [6]. Women's Self-Help Groups are transforming the face of Indian villages and strengthening the fabric of gender equity. Economic independence and trainings have empowered the women. The Self-Help Groups provide a forum for women to interact with each other, understand their common problems, channel their savings and encourage the education of girls [7]. SHG aims to improve the quality of life of women by self-reliance, up grading their

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skills and ensuring sustainability of groups. Self Help Groups have the potential of enhancing poor women's access to available opportunities to income enhancement and self-reliance [8].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was taken-up in Cuddalore district of Tamil Nadu. Out of the thirteen blocks in Cuddalore district, Cuddalore block was selected based on the maximum number of Self-Help Groups in Cuddalore district. A sample size of 120 Self Help Group members was selected by using proportionate random sampling technique. Thirteen variables were selected for this study and they were measured by using appropriate tools and techniques. In order to identify the sociological empowerment level of SHG members, their

responses were collected on three-point continuum viz., fully, partial and nil with the scores of 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The data were collected by using well-structured interview schedule, containing appropriate questions for bringing the required data. Percentage analysis, Mean and Cumulative frequency method were used for the analysis and interpretation of the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overall sociological empowerment of women SHG members are presented in (Table 1). It is evident from results that three-fifth of the respondents (60.00%) were in medium level of sociological empowerment followed by 28.33 per cent of respondents were in high level and 11.67% of respondents were in low level of sociological empowerment [9].

Table 1 Distribution of respondents according to their sociological empowerment (n=120)

Category	No. of respondents	Per cent
Low	14	11.67
Medium	72	60.00
High	34	28.33
Total	120	100.00

Sociological empowerment

Social empowerment is the process of developing a sense of acting individually and collectively to change the social relationship and institutions and discourses that exclude poor people and keep them in poverty. Data were further collected on sociological empowerment level in terms of improvement in the social status of the respondents [10]. The Mahalir Thittam project SHGs created social awareness among their members. The findings are presented in (Table 2).

It is evident from (Table 2) that almost of the SHG members (97.50 per cent) noticed that better understanding about group co-operation was an important component in the

measurement of empowerment in sociological dimension. It is because of that meeting the members regularly and makes friendly relationship among them to successfully perform their work activities which improves their unity and group co-operation among the members [11-12].

Joint decision making at all levels is also mentioned by majority of the members (95.00 per cent) as their second most measure in sociological empowerment. It may be due to that in each and every aspect of SHG they have united mobility, group activities, equal contribution of work and rights where make the members of SHG to take common decisions with joined together for all the needs [13-14].

Table 2 Component wise empowerment level of the respondents in the dimension of sociological empowerment (n=120)*

Sociological empowerment	Number	Per cent	Rank
Awareness about social recognition	82	68.33	IX
Improvement in social status	99	82.50	V
Improvement in educational status	103	85.83	III
Gender equity	80	66.66	X
Awareness about women rights	78	65.00	XI
Awareness about social development programmes	96	80.00	VI
Active involvement in addressing social issues and problems	85	70.83	VII
Members are highly informative	100	83.33	IV
Better understanding about group co-operation	117	97.50	I
Joint decision making at all levels	114	95.00	II
Social problems in the village are resolved	84	70.00	VIII
Better linkage with local institutions	76	63.33	XII
Mean percentage		77.15	

*Multiple responses

It is evident from results that 85.83 per cent of the members were expressed they had improvement in educational status, this might be the due to that learning from training program, official meeting, guidance from experts and life learning from day-to-day activities may improve their knowledge and make them as highly educated one [15]. Members are highly informative was noted by (83.33 per cent)

of the members of SHG because of their strong linkage with government officials, NGOs and private agencies in order to gathering needful information may develop the members as more informative than others in a society [16].

The results revealed that 82.50 per cent of the members expressed their improvement in social status, it may due to the empowerment in all the aspect such as economic, education,

management, communication and social participation etc. It may give the overall sociological empowerment as improvement in social status [17]. Role of Self Help Groups are more in implementation of various social development programs as grass root level so they well educated by the implementing authority on every aspects of social development programs. So, the members were transformed as more aware on social development programs reported by (80.00%) members of Self-Help Group [18-19].

Other important measures of this study on sociological empowerment expressed by the members of SHG as follows active involvement in addressing social issues and problems (70.83%), social problems in the village are resolved (70.00%), awareness about social recognition (68.33%), gender equity (66.66%), awareness about women rights (65.00%) and better linkage with local institutions (63.33%) [20].

CONCLUSION

SHG provides scope for the improvement of mind and development of the body of an individual. The mind accelerates the various actions of the members. Therefore, the present study has been undertaken to know psychological dimensions to get empowerment of SHG members. The

overall sociological empowerment of women SHG members results that, three-fifth of the respondents (60.00%) were in medium level of sociological empowerment followed by 28.33 per cent of respondents were in high level and 11.67 per cent of respondents were in low level of sociological empowerment. Among, 97.50 per cent of the respondents were better understanding about group co-operation followed by joint decision making at all levels (95.00%), improvement in educational status (85.83%), members are highly informative (83.33%), improvement in social status (82.50 per cent), awareness about social development programmes (80.00 per cent), active involvement in addressing social issues and problems (70.83 per cent), social problems in the village are resolved (70.00 per cent), awareness in social recognition (68.33 per cent), gender equity (66.66 per cent), awareness about women rights (65.00 per cent) and better linkage with local institutions (63.33 per cent). The findings of the study on the profile of Mahalir Thittam women members indicated a differential pattern in respect of their sociological characteristics. Women Empowerment include extending and improving the sociological aspects of the women to ensure equal right to men and to make them adequately sure to ensure their benefits both inside and outside of their home and society. This has been much emphasized in sociological empowerment of women Self Help Group members.

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