
SHG Play a Big Role in the Economic Empowerment of Women

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Abstract: *Women make up half of India's 1.39 billion populations; however they are still denied access to resources such as economic activity, self-determination, education, and improved health. In Young India 1930, Mahatma Gandhi stated that there is a need to equip village women with access to economic activities in order to unlock their hidden potential and power, which they are now unaware of. Women can contribute to home finances but are unable to participate in income-generating activities. Where India sits on the global arena, women's participation is just as crucial as men's in strengthening the Indian economy. Women face barriers to economic success due to patriarchal society, socio-cultural difficulties, home duties, and gender discrimination. SHGs assist rural women in obtaining low-interest loans from banks, allowing them to start their own businesses. There are 78, 32,327 SHGs in India, with 8, 50, 07,507 members. The state of Bihar in India has the most SHGs. Women in India lead more than 50% of the small-scale industry, with 527,000 SHG members, demonstrating that SHGs play an important role in the development of women's entrepreneurship. The major purpose of this study is to investigate the extent to which SHGs help women achieve economic empowerment. Women's empowerment entails not only empowering women, but also empowering their families, societies, states, and countries. The IFMR study found that women who received assistance from SHGs had above 10% savings ability, indicating their economic empowerment. SHGs serve as a tool for women to develop socioeconomic self-confidence. The findings revealed that SHGs support economic activity because when women earn income, they become economically empowered, and only when they are economically empowered do they become socially and politically empowered.*

Keyword: *SHG, Economic Empowerment, Self-Confident, Self-Dependent.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The expanding population, inadequate education, bad health, unemployment, and poverty all impede India's economic advancement. The village's underprivileged women, in particular,



face significant challenges in obtaining the loan. One must take out high-interest loans from moneylenders while simultaneously becoming victims of exploitation. The government of India has launched numerous plans to boost women's engagement, such as Mudra Yojana, Stand up India, and Annapurna Yojana, but the financial system continues to be a major obstacle. In India, NABARD was established between 1986 and 1987. However, the actual attempt became enthusiastic about the implementation of the SHG bank linking programmed with other banks in 1991-1992. SHG served as a forum for women to gain access to microfinance. Along with this, SHGs have made major contributions to the development of self-determination and self-confidence by providing people with the opportunity to participate in a variety of economic activities while also improving their abilities through accurate training and direction. SHGs are village-based financial systems in which 10-20 women save consistently and hold frequent meetings. According to the NRLM study, there are 78, 32,327 SHGs in India with 8, 50, 07,507 members. The state of Bihar in India has the most SHGs. Women get together to learn about their rights, promote savings, obtain low-interest loans, and address common concerns. In the bank linkage programmed, SHG created a revolutionary wave by connecting persons who had never had bank accounts with them. SHGs assist rural women in obtaining low-interest loans from banks, allowing them to start their own businesses. These not only make SHG members self-confident, self-sufficient, and self-employed, but they also provide women with self-employment training, financial support, socioeconomic development, a reduction in family violence, the ability to save, increase knowledge, political participation, and the opportunity to interact with others. It is also making an important role to improving people's lifestyles.

In Young India 1930, Mahatma Gandhi stated that there is a need to equip village women with access to economic activities in order to unlock their hidden potential and power, which they are now unaware of. In India, the SHG movement was formed to promote small savings and loans, with a goal to empower underprivileged village women. And now, SHG serves as a large-scale institutional platform for impoverished women. This proved beneficial to India's poor Bihar state, where women were excluded from economic activity. Bihar has the most self-help groups 10, 03,243, with 1, 16, 13,430 women.

Women Economic Empowerment

Women's economic empowerment is defined as having complete control over how they spend their money. When women are economically powerful, their confidence grows, and they can face any situation without fear; they can exercise their rights and make their own decisions, empowering them socially, culturally, and politically. Economic empowerment of women is a technique for achieving gender equality and female empowerment. Women's economic empowerment not only fosters good development, but it also boosts productivity. The more women work, the more the economy grows. The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda seeks to empower women in the economy and close the gender gap. Women's engagement in any country is assessed by their economic activities; hence it is critical to connect them to non-economic activities in economic activities. Women, as the nation's principal stockholders, use economic empowerment to not only contribute to national progress but also to bring sweetness and light into family life. SHG programs mark a new

chapter in the empowerment of rural women, providing them with complete economic freedom.

2. RELATED WORKS

Julia Wiklander's (2010) study on women's empowerment in rural India looked at hurdles to gender equality. Women's empowerment encompasses family decision-making, mobility, reduced domestic abuse, and property rights. The factors that influence women's empowerment differ among states. According to Esher Duflo (2012), there is a strong correlation between women's empowerment and economic progress. There is still a long way to go in achieving gender equality; therefore, policy actions must continue. Economic development and women's empowerment are not quick fixes; it will take time to address them.

Objective

- To explore SHG is playing a big role in making women economically empowered
- To examine the impact of SHG in Covid-19

In this study, the researcher attempted to determine the effect of SHGs in women's economic empowerment. In this regard, the researcher analyzed the success stories of SHG women from various states using newsletters and periodicals.

3. METHODOLOGY

The data used in this paper are from secondary sources. The statistics were gathered from official websites, annual reports, and public sources. Published sources include research articles in general and government publications.

Success Stories of SHG Women in Different States

Success Story of Bihar - 1

SHG women in Bihar's West Champaran district established a nursery in partnership with the Environment, Forest, and Climate Change Departments under the JEEViKA Yojana. Nursery livelihood proved to be a windfall for the JEEViKA Didis, as it provided them with a source of income while also raising their awareness of environmental issues. Women who were imprisoned in the house's border wall until yesterday are now earning \$75000 to \$100,000 per year. This has boosted their self-confidence. 1.80 lakh seedlings were planted in a nursery in West Champaran district with the assistance of the forest department, and the plants were purchased for 11 rupees. In this way, the JEEViKA Didis are earning a good living from nursery work. They are inspiring others. This year's "Harit Jeevika Harit Bihar" programmed aims to plant 6 lakh 15 thousand saplings. JEEViKA Didis started by planting 42000 seedlings on Environment Day. In this way, women participate in income-generating activities while also contributing to the state's environmental sustainability.



Success Story of Kerala - 2

One of the country's community forums is the Kudumbashree network, which is located in Kerala. In Kerala, there are 2, 53,021 SHGs, with 36, 43,780 members. Her years of catering experience prompted him to open a kitchen as a source of income, which was also subsidized by the government. Given the country's mounting issues, these groups increased their efforts via plays, and today, 1300 kitchens operate around the state. It not only provides healthy meals to patients, but also to the handicapped, offices, and home delivery. Because of their hard work and dedication, their work is expanding, increasing their income, stimulating economic activity, and contributing to the Indian economy. There are now over 10,000 community kitchens operating across the country.

Success Story of Uttarakhand - 3

Parkul Stree Shakti trains SHG women in Uttarakhand's Dehradun district in handicrafts. These women create gorgeous patchwork quilts that are popular both domestically and internationally. Women who used to feel helpless and afraid to leave the house now have a lot of confidence, in addition to being monetarily powerful. SHG women generate cash from their handicrafts in the country and abroad while also providing work for others. Many of these women's children now receive a high-quality education abroad.

Success Story of Uttar Pradesh - 4

The women of Makhrai village in Mathura district, Uttar Pradesh, used to work as laborers in the fields harvesting crops, but with the support of SHG, they purchased sewing machines and began creating Lord Krishna's clothing. The women in the organization prepare approximately 5000 garments per day. Lakhs of devotees visit Mathura district on a daily basis, therefore there is no shortage of clothing for sale; dresses made by these ladies are shipped from Mathura to Delhi and other states. Previously, women relied on family members for work, but now they make 300-400 rs. Each day while sitting at home. Women have gained self-confidence, they have created their own identity, which was before fascinated by pai-pai, and they are now self-sufficient and content.

Success Story of Jharkhand -5

Sonamani Lohar of Bhatia Panchayat of Potka Block, who joined the Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society, has not only improved her family's financial situation but also provided her children with an excellent education. In 2016, she became the SHG's bookkeeper, and after a year, she was assigned the duty of bank BC on behalf of the Mechu branch of Bank of India, with the obligation of ensuring that the women of the group did not have to visit the bank and that the organisation's money transactions did so. She purchased a laptop and began working by setting up a mini bank at her own house. People began to come to him because of his superior job. People know her as Bank Wali Didi. It used to solely handle transactions, but it now offers account opening, money transfers, insurance, old age/widow incentive allowance, pension, and door-to-door banking service. Every day, it serves more than 50 people and processes between 80 thousand and 1.50 lakh transactions. In this way, she earns between 8,000 - 10,000 thousand per month.

Success Story of Odisha– 6

In Odisha, poor village women who used to sew school uniforms are now sewing masks. They have made over a million cotton masks. She received orders to produce masks from a variety of places, increasing her income and making her self-sufficient.

Women's contributions to household income increased after joining SHGs, allowing them to gain self-confidence and make their imprint in society, as well as raise their awareness of access to various forms of social systems. Women in India lead more than 50% of the small-scale industry, with 527,000 SHG members, demonstrating the importance of SHGs in the development of women's entrepreneurship. According to a World Bank report, women saved \$1.4 billion and received \$37 billion from commercial banks. According to the IFMR survey, women who received assistance from SHGs had more than 10% savings ability, demonstrating their economic empowerment.

The Impact of SHG in COVID - 19

The women of SHG have stepped out to combat epidemics such as Covid 19. SHG women produce masks, sanitizers, provide health food to patients through Didi's kitchen, raise awareness of hygiene and rules, combat misinformation, manufacture protective equipment, and provide banking and financial services to remote communities all play an important role in providing facilities. Bank sakhis assisted SHG women in disbursing pensions, depositing funds, opening accounts, and conducting transactions so that they did not have to visit the bank. Banks provided cash incentives to these bank sakhis to ensure that they continued to work even during the lockdown. According to a World Bank report, 20,000 SHGs in India generated over 19 million masks, 100,000 liters of sanitizer, and around 50,000 liters of hand wash in 27 states. In Bihar, JEEViKA SHG women led the government's break the chain campaign, promoting awareness about hand cleanliness and social distancing using pamphlets, posters, phone messages, song videos, and monthly meetings. While individuals were becoming unemployed, SHG women found work, allowing them to sustain their families while also assisting the government in combating the epidemic.

Women from SHGs across the country handled the challenge of the Covid-19 epidemic with great courage. Women continue to be a shield to keep all members of the household healthy and safe, and in fighting this epidemic, they have also become a shield to keep the country's people healthy and safe. This demonstrates that if women are given equal opportunities as males, no one can prevent India's economy from becoming dominant and powerful.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This paper meticulously examines the instrumental role played by Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in propelling the economic empowerment of women across India. Through a comprehensive review of literature and a rich amalgamation of success stories spanning states such as Bihar, Kerala, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Odisha, the study sheds light on how SHGs have emerged as agents of change, fostering women's economic independence. By facilitating access to microfinance, imparting skill development, and nurturing entrepreneurial ventures, SHGs have not only enabled women to generate income but have also fortified their self-esteem and societal engagement. Particularly important is the paper's



exploration of SHGs' response to the Covid-19 crisis, highlighting their proactive involvement in producing essential commodities, disseminating health-related information, and extending financial services to remote areas. The findings underscore the resilience and indispensable role of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in safeguarding both household and national welfare during challenging times. Through empowering women economically, SHGs have brought about transformative impacts, elevating their economic status and paving the way for broader social and political empowerment. This study advocates for the expansion and reinforcement of SHG initiatives, recognizing them as potential means to not only enhance economic productivity but also foster holistic national development. By continuing to support and invest in SHGs, societies can further promote gender equality, socio-economic growth, and inclusive development, ensuring a brighter future for communities and nations alike.

5. CONCLUSION

The study of the function of SHGs in women's empowerment has yielded several significant findings, demonstrating that SHGs have the potential to spark a socioeconomic revolution among rural women in India. SHGs have not only helped women become self-sufficient, but they have also changed their societal orientation, making them more productive. According to the findings of the current study, SHGs play an essential role in providing women with bank linkage and microfinance, as well as stimulating economic activity, saving, and pulling them out of poverty. Agriculture, non-farming, animal husbandry, banking, and other livelihood activities have been linked to SHGs, and SHG beneficiaries have been given access to the market through the use of technology. The only need is that the activities of SHG should be increased further and opportunities should be provided so that employment can be created. This will make the country a more productive population, which will strengthen the economy SHGs support economic activities because when women produce income, they become economically empowered, and only when they are economically empowered do they become socially and politically empowered.

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