

Women Empowerment, Social Change, and Decision Making through Self-Help Group – A Study in Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh

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ABSTRACT

Women and men are equally important for society and contribute equally toward the development of the society, subsequently the nation. However, gender inequalities have still a major issue and challenge for society. The judgment against women as male-female forms a core of the gender-biased system. Hence, women are, more poor and restricted than men and they are subjected to various social constraints. These conditions are more severe in the rural and backward zones. Self Help Group (SHG) is one of the important and viable tools to empower women in rural as well as urban women. In this paper, a detailed analysis of social empowerment as social change and decision making after the association of SHGs of women has been carried out. The study is carried out for two blocks of Bilaspur division of Chhattisgarh with the help of a well-organized question and interaction with the women SHG members. The frequency has been recorded for each factor and the analysis of the data has been carried out using the Friedman Test with the help of statically data analysis software tool SPSS. Significant social changes and empowerment have been observed during the study.

1. INTRODUCTION

Women empowerment passes on, to an increase in the strength of women such as religious, political, community and economic. The most common definition of women empowerment is “the ability to eliminate full power over one's actions”. Thus, women empowerment occurs in reality when women attain increased power and sharing in decision making; which leads to their improved access to resources. Many studies have been carried out by the various researcher to identify the women empowerment rating and the factors affected the same. It was reported that the SHG played a vital role in the empowerment of women. It provides lots of opportunity to rural women to get exposure to society.

Manonmani and Prabhakaran (2011) conducted a study on women empowerment through SHGs for K Usilampatti, Madurai, Tamilnadu. It was concluded that mainly members joined SHGs to avail the loan facility and endorse their own savings, subsequently improve the social status. Garai et al. (2012) presented Empirical evidence for Women Empowerment through SHGs of Nadia, West Bengal, India. They compared the results between the SHG members and non-members. Thangamani and Muthuselvi (2013), discussed in their report about women empowerment through SHGs of Mettupalayam in Coimbatore Tamilnadu. The results indicated that SHGs had a greater effect on the social and economic status of the members. Sahoo (2013) has done an analysis of the performance of SHGs in women empowerment, social harmony, and social and economic improvement, in Cuttack District, Odisha, India. It was concluded that women through the SHG drive have asserted a notable position and improved their decision making capability. Later, Thimmaiah (2013) has concluded his study based on social exclusion of women and inclusion by the third sector through SHG that the NGO involvements created enormous benefits for the society, especially the women living in the rural areas. Tirkey and Masih (2013), studied the empowerment of women of Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, through SHGs. The focus was on rural women in psychological, social and economic needs with the help of NGOs by developing skills and Talents. Jain and Nai (2013) carried out a study on the role of SGHs in Women Empowerment for Ratnagiri, Maharashtra, India, The results indicated that the women are aware of financial inclusion and want to contribute to the economy and wish to develop themselves. Rosita (2014) reported that women empowerment is the only solution for the pitiful and worried situation of women, predominantly in rural areas. The study was focused on Madurai District, TamilNadu, based on the liberating women, from caste biases, worthless social restrictions, and males' conservative thoughts. Kabde (2015), have done a case study on the empowerment of slum women through SHG at Greater Hyderabad, India. It was concluded that the slum women have a greater scope for growth, but they need support from family to join and take training from SHGs. It was found that many women are not able to avail complete benefits due to their social limitations and underprivileged economic status. Varghese (2016) explore the insight of women empowerment in various aspect in Ramsai Hills, Assam India. It was concluded that certainly, the improvement was noticeable in all domains after joining SHGs.

Archana and Gnanaprakasam (2018) presented a study based on the rural part of Dindigul District, Tamil Nadu, India. They found a significant development in the economic, social and cultural empowerment of rural women members of SHGs. Similarly, Som and Mishra (2018), Present a study to explore the realistic picture of the family welfare activities in Sagar District, Madhya Pradesh, India. They also tried to identify the reason for not successfully implement the program. The above study was mainly on well stable states. However, Chhattisgarh is one of the newly formed states, which has its own challenges in women empowerment. This study is mainly focused on the Bilaspur division of Chhattisgarh state, to analyze the women empowerment (social changes) after the association with SHG.

2. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The study has been carried out in two blocks i.e. Pali and Kota, of Bilaspur division, Chhattisgarh. The data has been collected through the random sampling of approximately 360 women from 185 different SHG. The demographic profile of the respondents is given in Fig.1. It is observed that the majority of the member comes under the age group of 26-35 year (43.1%), followed by 46-55 year (20%) and 36-45 (19.7%). The majority of women are married (85.5%), whereas divorcee (10%), unmarried (1.7%), and widow (2.5%). The educational status shows that majority of the women are either illiterate (28.3%) or under the primary education level (38.6%). The respondent's profile of their family type, it was observed that the around 80.8% of the respondent belongs to nucleus family, whereas only 19.2% belongs to the joint family.

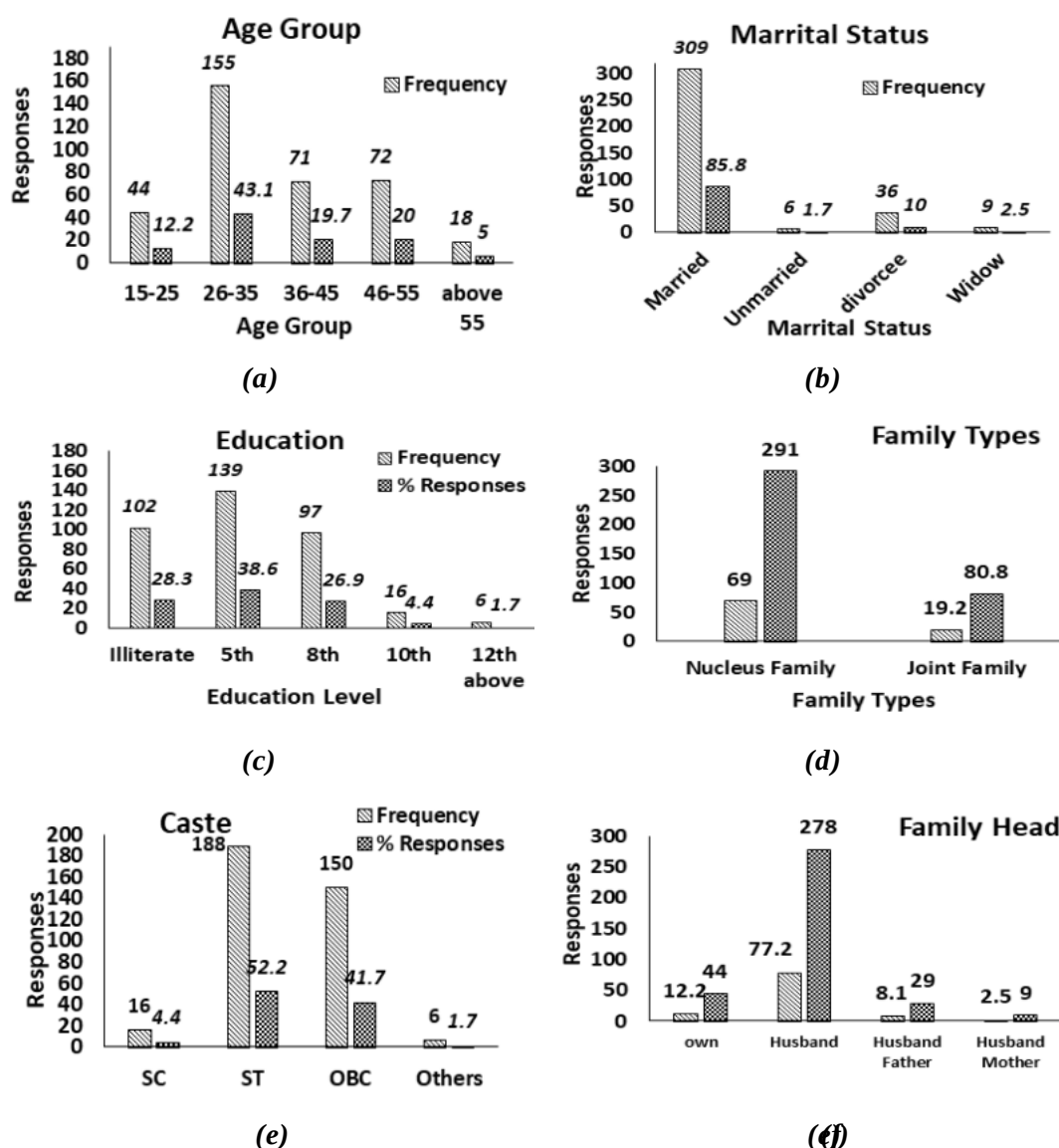


Fig-1: Profile of the respondents

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analysis of social changes and social empowerment after joining SHG has been carried out. There are three major parameters i.e. participation in various decision making in the family, participation in village-level social activities and decision making, and availing benefit of govt. schemes have been broadly considered. These parameters are further categorized as different indices and analyzed individuals using the Friedman Test with the help of SPSS tool.

Table 1.1: Who takes the decision on the following parameters								
Parents (1) Husband (2) Both, Husband and Wife (3) Own (4)								
1.1.1. Purchases of daily household needs								
	Before Joining				After Joining			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Frequency	16	273	29	42	7	9	244	100
Percentage	4.4	75.8	8.1	11.7	1.9	2.5	67.8	27.8
Mean Rank	1.10				1.90			
Chi-Square	289.0							
Asym P.	0.000 Significant							
1.1.2. Purchases of major household needs								
	Before Joining				After Joining			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Frequency	16	274	30	40	11	100	185	64
Percentage	4.4	76.1	8.3	11.1	3.1	27.8	51.4	17.8
Mean Rank	1.25				1.75			
Chi-Square	175.52							
Asym P.	0.000 Significant							

Table 1.1.1 shows the social changes in terms of participation in decision making in the purchase of minors and major households. It is found during interaction with respondents that, before joining SHGs the majority of the decisions were taken by the husband (75.8%). It was a clear indication that there is very little participation of the women in such decision making. Whereas, after joining SHGs, they realize their importance and responsibilities, and majority of them started participating in this decision, with their husband (67.8%), followed by taking decision own (27.8%). The mean rank value has been increased and P-value is very less (closed to 0.0000 with confidence level 99%), therefore, this result shows the significant changes after joining SHG. However, their own decision making is still far less. Similarly (Table 1.1.2) for the purchase of major households, again husband was dominating (with 76.1%) before joining SHGs, whereas after joining SHG, decisions are taken by jointly (as per 51.4% respondent) and by Husband (27.8%). Based on the statistical analysis shows again the significant changes, however, these changes are quite lower in magnitude as compare to the purchase of minor households.

1.1.3. Visits to her family & Relatives								
	Before Joining				After Joining			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Frequency	108	168	43	41	29	104	155	72
Percentage	30	46.7	11.9	11.4	8.1	28.9	43.1	20
Mean Rank	1.24				1.76			
Chi-Square	186.08							
Asym P.	0.000 Significant							
1.1.4. Health care for yourself								
	Before Joining				After Joining			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Frequency	103	184	39	34	18	139	161	42
Percentage	28.6	51.1	10.8	9.4	5.0	38.6	44.7	11.7
Mean Rank	1.25				1.75			
Chi-Square	170.74							
Asym P.	0.000 Significant							

1.1.5. Health care for the child and other family members										
	Before Joining				After Joining					
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4		
Frequency	75	190	47	48	5	27	199	129		
Percentage	20.8	52.8	13.1	13.3	1.4	7.5	55.3	35.8		
Mean Rank	1.18				1.82					
Chi-Square	179.54									
Asym P.										
1.1.6. Family planning										
		Before Joining					After Joining			
	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
Frequency	45	167	101	22	25	45	79	30	161	45
Percentage	12.5	46.4	28.1	6.1	6.9	12.5	21.9	8.3	44.7	12.5
Mean Rank	1.18					1.82				
Chi-Square	179.54									
Asym P.	0.000 Significant									

Table 1.1.3 shows, the participation in decision making on visiting to her family and relatives house, the response shows that before joining SHG, decisions were taken by either Husband (46.7%) or parents (30%), whereas after association with SHG, they mostly take decision jointly with their husband (43.1%). Table 1.1.4 and 1.1.5 shows that, before joining SHG, mostly decisions were taken by Husbands (51-52%) in both cases, whereas, after joining SHG the situation have been improved and around 44.7% and 55.3% women participate jointly with husband about their own health and family health care respectively. The results indicate that their own health-related decision is still dependent on the husband. However, the situation much better while taking the decision for their child and family health-related decision. Table 1.1.6 shows the participation in decision making in family planning, it was observed that before joining SHG the decisions were influenced by the parents thought (46.4%) followed by husband (28.1%), the least participation were observed by women herself (6.9%) or even jointly with husband (6.1%). Whereas, after association with SHG they improved awareness and understood the importance of family planning and started taking joint decisions with their husbands (44.7%).

1.1.7. Send their child to school												
		Before Joining						After Joining				
	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4		
Frequency	31	98	175	27	29	32	8.9	18.9	148	83		
Percentage	8.6	27.2	48.6	7.5	8.1	8.9	18.9	8.1	41.1	23.1		
Mean Rank	1.27					1.73						
Chi-Square	117.85											
Asym P.	0.000 Significant											
1.1.8. Marriage of son/daughter												
	Before Joining					After Joining						
	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4		
Frequency	13	165	157	33	3	15	104	44	175	22		
Percentage	3.6	45.8	43.6	6.1	0.8	4.2	28.9	12.2	48.6	6.1		
Mean Rank	1.27					1.73						
Chi-Square	113.79											
Asym P.	0.000 Significant											

Table 1.1.7 and Table 1.1.8, show that the participation in decision making on child education and marriage of their child respectively, after joining SHG. Significant difference has been observed in the participation of women in the decision making on child education and their marriage along with husbands.

Table 1.1.9 to Table 5.1.11, shows the changes related to agriculture and their working at the field, selection seeds and the decision related to selling of their crop produced. Aforesaid changes it was observed that the women were already involved significantly even before joining SHGs, they even take much better decision as compared to men. Whereas, after joining SHGs they improved their participation and contributing more and more. Overall the participation in the field has been improved significantly after joining SHGs.

From the above discussion, related to participation in decision making in various activities of the family, it was observed that there are significant changes, before and after joining SHGs. These changes are positive after joining SHGs and make the women, confident and also make them understand their contribution as well as responsibilities toward their family. In the subsequent part of this section, the participation of women in decision making and other social activities have been analyzed.

1.1.9. Who works at field								
	Before Joining				After Joining			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Frequency	77	160	72	51	15	38	168	139
Percentage	21.4	44.4	20.0	14.2	4.2	10.6	46.7	38.6
Mean Rank	1.20				1.80			
Chi-Square	180.41							
Asym P.	0.000 Significant							
5.1.10. Seed selection for Agriculture								
	Before Joining				After Joining			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Frequency	19	79	140	122	6	13	109	232
Percentage	5.3	21.9	38.9	33.9	1.7	3.6	30.3	64.4
Mean Rank	1.29				1.71			
Chi-Square	131.95							
Asym P.	0.000 Significant							
5.1.11. Selling of crop produced from farming								
	Before Joining				After Joining			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Frequency	83	110	132	35	41	49	133	137
Percentage	23.1	30.6	36.7	9.7	11.4	13.6	36.9	38.1
Mean Rank	1.23				1.77			
Chi-Square	185.18							
Asym P.	0.000 Significant							

The discussion with women, related to social activities is mainly focused on their participation in Gramshabhas, its agenda, contribution in taking a decision, and the participation in the social development program and any social movement. The detailed analysis and responses are given in Table 1.1.12 to 1.1.15.

Table 1.1.12 shows the analysis of women about the attending in Gramsabha at their village or panchayat level, the women were not used to attend the gram sabha before joining SHGs, only 12.5% of women used to participate in Gramsabha, whereas after joining SHGs it increases to 31.7%. The analysis shows a significant change in terms of attending the Gramsabha (meetings). However, still, 68.3% do not participate in this activity.

Table 1.1.13, shows the involvement in the decision of Gramsabha meetings, there was negligible involvement of women (only 2.8%) before joining SHG. Whereas, after getting associated with SHG, they started participating in these activities. In the present conditions, only 34.4% of women participate in Gramsabha decisions, however, 65.5% still not contributing to the same.

Social Status and Participation Yes (2) No (1) NA (0)				
5.1.13. Do you attend the Gramsabha?				
	Before Joining		After Joining	
	1	2	1	2
Frequency	315	45	246	114

Percentage	87.5	12.5	68.3	31.7
Mean Rank	1.40		1.60	
Chi-Square	50.116			
Asym P.	0.000 Significant			
Social Status and Participation Yes (2) No (1) NA (0)				
1.1.13. Participate in decisions in Gramsabha?				
Frequency	Before Joining		After Joining	
	350	10	236	124
Percentage	97.2	2.8	65.6	34.4
Mean Rank	1.34		1.66	
Chi-Square	185.18			
Asym P.	0.000 Significant			
Social Status and Participation Yes (2) No (1) NA (0)				
1.1.14. Participation in any social development program				
	Before Joining		After Joining	
	1	2	1	2
Frequency	352	97.8	336	24
Percentage	97.8	2.2	93.3	6.7
Mean Rank	1.48		1.52	
Chi-Square	11.636			
Asym P.	0.01 Not Significant			
Social Status and Participation Yes (2) No (1) NA (0)				
1.1.15. Participation in social movement				
	Before Joining		After Joining	
	1	2	1	2
Frequency	351	9	342	18
Percentage	97.5	2.5	95	5
Mean Rank	1.49		1.51	
Chi-Square	6.231			
Asym P.	0.013 Not Significant			

Similarly, Table 1.1.14 and 1.1.15 show the participation of women in social development activities and any social movement, it is found that there are no significant changes occurs before and after joining SHG. It shows that women are not really participating in outside social development activities.

4. SOCIAL CHANGES AND EMPOWERMENT:

Table 2 represents the summary of social changes before and after joining SHG in women. The results indicate that from the three major criteria of social change i.e. decision making in daily life, social status, and participation. It has been found that the decision making in daily life activities changed most significantly with mean rank 1.77, and, social status and participation (mean rank 1.58). The combined analysis of the social changes has a mean rank of 1.32 (before joining SHG) and 1.675 (after joining SHG). The overall result shows significant social changes after joining SHG.

Table-2: Overall social changes after joining SHG

The decision on the following parameters?				
	Before Joining SHG	After Joining SHG		Overall Mean Rank
Purchases of daily household needs	1.10	1.90	1.22	
Purchases of major household needs	1.25	1.75		
Visits to her family & Relatives	1.24	1.76		
Health care for yourself	1.25	1.75		
Health care for the child and family members	1.18	1.82		
Family planning	1.18	1.82		
Send the child to school	1.27	1.73		

Marriage of your son/daughter	1.27	1.73	To 1.77	1.32 (before) 1.675 (after)
Who works at the field	1.20	1.8		
Seed selection for Agriculture	1.29	1.71		
Selling of crop produced from farming	1.23	1.77		
	1.22	1.77		
Social Status and Participation				
Do you attend the Gramsabha?	1.40	1.60	1.42	
Participate in decisions	1.34	1.66		
Participation in any social development program	1.48	1.52		
Participation in social movement	1.49	1.51	To	
	1.42	1.58	1.58	

5. CONCLUSIONS

The detailed analysis of the changes in women in terms of social aspects, before and after joining SHGs has been carried out. All the related parameter of social change and empowerment has been analyzed individually. The results include the frequency of each parameter and the Friedman test has been applied to analyze the significance of changes after joining SHG, with the help of statically data analysis software tool SPSS. The actual degree of changes that occurs in various aspect of the women after getting associated with SHG has been calculated. It has been found that social changes are becoming more significant when the decision needs to be taken within the family, however, the external decisions like involvement in Gramsabha, participation of women is minimum, which needs to be improved.

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