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An Overview Of Impact Of Micro Finance In Empowering Women

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Abstract: Population of every economy of the world consists of both men and women. Women are an integral part of every economy and empowering them is essential to promote economic development. Development in the economy happens when both men and women work together and enjoy equal status in the society to bring affluence. But the access to the resources among men and women vary all over the world and this difference of resource access is more evident in developing nations. In developing countries, there are structural impediments that prevent and keep women from contributing in the decision making process. This unprivileged status of women is the due to multiple factors such as illiteracy, joblessness, early marriages and familial violence which have prohibited women from attaining greater elevation. Further, they are financially and as well as socially reliant on the masculine member of the family. They don't enjoy the same standing as men in many aspects. It is considered that women earn less than men and hence have less prospect for growth. Women in the society is always granted the secondary role in the family. Though they are aware about the gender inequalities, women are trying to overcome them. Lack of understanding of various laws of legislation and very poor enactment of these laws has reduced the competence of women to raise their voice for their rights and also gives raise to three factors that becomes the basis for women disempowerment. The first basis is women having lesser job opportunities, the second is having not considered to take up decision or withdrawing decision making power or can make benefits which should lead for benefiting of others first. The aim of empowering women is to equally distribute the power between both the Genders. Both genders (men and women) should always be benefited with equal economic, political and legal, and social rights for their development on every aspects. When considered women empowerments, this can be achieved by increasing their rights towards taking decision, and their capacity towards taking decision, their dignity, their choices and voices, their opportunities and power towards achieving their rights. As women starts to participate in the economic activities, it reduces scarcity in the economy which results in increased fabrication through women who can support their families and can also become owners of property and can accelerate growth. This will surely bring development in the economy. Women's relative economic power is conceptualized in terms of degrees of control of key economic resources: income, property, food and other means of production. Greater the women's relative economic power, the greater is their control over their own lives. Women should acquire equal dissemination of power and their participation in decision making at their home, in their society, towards economy and politics through women enablement. Women empowerment has been considered as both cause and effect of economic growth and development. It is considered that economics grow when more and more women lean towards

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working. It is believed that increase in female participation in labour force or a reduction in the gap between women and men labour being participated, the economics literally grow faster. It is also believed and observed that contribution towards higher economic growth can happen through girls and women getting educated. It is observed that to accelerate development empower of women should take place. Social scientists and policy makers have focused more on one or the other considering these relationship. It is being argued that policy makers should focus more on creating circumstances for economic growth and opulence, which helps in maintaining the level playing fields for both men and women. There should be any specific strategies which helps in improving the living condition of women Micro-finance programs should be considered as the main strategy through addressing the development issues throughout the nation and this has been happening for the last three decades. It is needed to forecast women participation towards nation building but has become a major concern for many governments all over the world.

Key words:economic empowerment, Microfinance programs, economic development, women empowerment.

Introduction:

History has witnessed that the banking services have always been for those who have money and not for the customers with very less cash or no cash income at all.This led to the need to provide wide variety of financial services such as money deposits, issue of loans and payment services for various services etc. to poor and low-income households. As an answer to this need there was rise of a new and celebrated poverty –fighting strategy in past decades: Micro-finance. In the words the vision of micro-financial system worldwide is to serve the impoverished majority, help them to uplift them out of poverty, and make them full participants in their country's social and economic development. It is being witnessed that contribution has been made not only to poverty lessening and financial sustainability but also contributing to a series of honourable spirals of economic enablement, through increasing well-being through bringing social and political enablement for women by addressing the goals for gender equality and empowerment. Therefore, Micro-finance is considered an important tool for women empowerment and it can help women to meet their basic financial needs, better manage risks, and contribute to sustainable social and economic development. The justification for absorbing women access to micro-financing services is through inhabiting gender inequalities by bringing growth and development under the women class. The growth and development makes women economically independent and also involve in investing capital and financial resources to the required source. Women acquire higher bargaining in their house, community's power through economical independence and also results to greater prestige and self-esteem. Micro-finance helps women, her family and the society as a whole through cooperative action for development. Microfinance is capable to empower women who can then overlay the way for social and economic expansion. During the introduction of micro-finance in many of the countries across the globe many programs pertaining to micro-finance has been increasing their activities to lighten poverty and empowering women. Micro-finance organisation, by definition, provides financial services to poor entrepreneurs, most commonly small loans. It also includes the provision of other services such as savings opportunities and micro-insurance to the poor. Micro finance has also attempted to improve the access of

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piggy banks also known as small deposits and smaller loans for poor and women who are neglected by various banks.

Evolution of Micro-Finance: The development of micro finance stated in India long time back and can be aged at 1970's when an organization pertaining to self-employed women's association which was widely known as SEWA. This organisation or commonly known as urban co-operative bank was stated in Gujarat State which was popularly known as Mahila SEWA Sahakari Bank. This bank was providing facility and services especially to the economically backward women who were unemployed or was in an intension for starting their own house hold craft in the unrecognized locality in Ahmedabad City. The first and the major effort of these banks were to reach the poor and rural uneducated people through providing them financial needs through formal financial system which started off in the financial year 1986-87. This was also backed up by funds and action to be taken by self-help groups like saving and credit management groups which was part of Mysore resettlement and development authority popularly known as MRDA. The government of India has also emphasised on providing financial help and services to the under-privileged since the time of independence. Working in this direction, the Indian Government nationalised commercial banks in 1969 and directed them to lend at loans and financial support at discounted rate to the important sector such as agriculture and other home industry, rural sector including the weaker section of the society. Small Farmers development programs was also started for the benefiting the farmers with lesser interest rate through government of India. Due to lots of mal-practices and middle men intervention and poor execution these programs being set by the Government did not perform well and the could not reach the desired goal. IRDP was considered to be a good scheme initiated by Government of India to supplement the efforts of micro-credit. In this scheme the commercial banks started providing loans to socially weaker section and the sum involved was less than Rs. 15,000/-. The total investment that the bank distributed was around 250 billion and this money was distributed to around 55 million families across Gujarat. Through the government had setup this program apart ignoring the deficit of economy it was from realizing its desired goal. The IRDP had a bad experience which it witnessed for the last two decades had an effect on the credibility of micro-borrowers in view of bankers and also had a hindrance to access of less educated people towards banking services. The program what government had organized had a serious and long term impact on the development process of women entrepreneurship and also among the unprivileged of the society. Thus this program of world largest microfinance programme because a utter failure due the political involvement and leakage of funds through middlemen. In 1997, planning commission constituted a committee to review the effectiveness of wage employment and self-employment programmes.

The concept of Micro-Finance: using outmoded collateral scheme, micro-finance activities delivers a wide range of financial services to the urban people who literally have nothing or have very less or nothing to improve their assets through serving crisis and helping them to institute them to setup their business to overcome poverty. This innovative idea and program is being reached out to the economically backward people especially women who is intended and interested to establish new and small business to overcome poverty. Microfinance in India has evolved to overcome or fuel the efforts of rural development, women empowerment and generation of wealth through providing small scale savings, credit insurances and other small financial services provided to poor and women with low income. This is

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also helping the women to enter into various skill development programs, capacity building programs through providing motivation for generating activities to enhance credit productivity

Micro-finance and Micro-credit:

The word micro-finance is normally termed as micro credit or also popularly known as micro lending indicating making necessities for self-employed or economically backward self-employed seeking personals through providing them working capital in small quantities. It is also understood that micro-credit is an extension for providing small and medium loans on a multiple doses or requirements which is based on the engagement of the personals who are considered as beneficiaries, who are considered and filtered to emerge out to qualify for regular banks who do not have any collateral security being deposited for acquiring loans. It is further defined that micro credit is the credit facility provided to the recipient's requirements who can do the repayment in a eased manner through an appropriate interest rate or low minimal rate of interest. Micro finance is also considered as the programs that has been initiated to provide credit for starting one's own business along with other financial and business services to economically backward people. The concept of micro finance can be considered as a financial services of very small quantity which is felicitated by financial institutions to the poor people. When considered these financial institutions this adds things such as credit business, providing insurance to the business, renting a property, transfer of money, equity transaction and many more things. The two key factors that is considered for providing customers to come across their financial benefits are (a) The customer should be poor and (b) the business value or the transaction amount should be minimal or small. Micro finance is considered as wide range of financial service along with non-financial benefits which includes up gradation of skills of an individual or a business men along with providing support to the poor through enabling them towards overcoming poverty. This also helps the poor especially women for entrepreneurship development through empowering them to have a better life in the society. When considered the operational framework of micro finance it essentially rests on the platform that the formation of a self-development or employment enterprise is a feasible can be an alternative way or lessening poverty. Lack of access of investment and assets which acts as a restriction on the present and impending micro-enterprises and poor class are accomplished towards saving few rupees in spite of their poor income.

Models of Micro Finance: Grameen Bank Model:

This model was the first of its kind and was the most successful model which started in the early days when micro finance began. Its beginning was in Bangladesh, where the contributors get organized into 5 group's members who take the major contribution to save the group and start projecting fund. Each member has his or her own individual contribution or savings which gets linked to the bank where the individual members of the group loan amount from the bank based on the savings fund or amount which they have deposited for a fixed time. The members of the group are not required to provide any guarantee for repayment of the funds towards its members. Since there is no surety it normally rests on the person who has borrowed the funds and has no form for joint accountability this indicates that the members who has introduced the members will not be subjected to repay or will have no responsibility of repaying the loan amount. The loan payment and the duration would be for six months to one year but here the individual has to repay once in a week. The bankers maintain individual account and report, records of the members through which the ease of maintain their information and working structure can be utilized

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properly for empowerment of the women class or the respective member. ASSEFA abbreviated as Association for Servaseeva farms in India and many other solidarity groups follow this model. Apart from the above there are many other groups such as **Joint liability Group model** in which 4 to 15 individual members are organized. These members can obtain loan from the bank through mutual guarantee without any collateral or condition on their saving amount. Here all the members of the group sign a joint accountability contract and make each other jointly accountable for repaying the loan amount taken by the members of the group, can be individually also. NABARD is currently using this model through providing loans to talented farmers for cultivating their lands either as oral occupants or shared croppers. This can also be availed by the farmers who do not possess proper document for their existing land. There are various other models such as Individual lending model, the group approach model, Village banking model which is also called as community banking, Credit unions and co-operative banking models, and Self-help groups. We are interested to emphasize on self-help groups in this research.

Important Characteristics of Self-Help Groups- SHGS create a co-operative fund by subsidising small savings on a regular basis.

- They usually have a flexible system of operations seeking help of the nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) most of the times and manage their common and collective resources in a autonomous manner.
- The group loan requests are usually considered in meetings that takes place regularly, with contending claims on limited or very limited possessions being settled by consent which is related to the greater needs.
- When one considers loans it is mainly considered on the basis of mutual understanding and needs along with very minimal documents. It also involves without any tangible security.
- Loans are mainly provided on the basis of conjoint need and trust with least Papers or documents and without any perceptible security.
- Loans provided are small, common and is for short period.

Functions of SHGs: SHGs help women class to become self-confident and self-sustained.

- SHGs provide a platform to members for debating their societal and financial problems.
- SHG enhances the societal status of members are thefeature of their membership to the group.
- SHG fosters the spirit of conjoint help and collaboration or assist among members.
- SHGs provide organisational strength to members
- Helps providing literacy and increases general awareness among members.
- Educates poorer class with basic necessity skills required for understanding financialcommunications.

Women empowerment and its dimensions:

Women are always considered as the fundamental and essential part of the economy. They have an important role in building up of the economy. When considered for all round development and symphonic grown of an nation it would be possible only when one considers women as equal partners on all aspects along with men. If one has to stress on economic growth and overall development of the nation, women capabilities and empowering them has to increased understanding their capabilities through empowering

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them. It has to be considered as an indispensable tool towards progressing development and reducing poverty. As the word empowerment suggest that women class has to be empowered through enabling them to do certain things. The deeper one understands the word the higher it throws light on many of the magnitudes. At the very outset, empowerment of women section systematically seeks to safeguard an justifiable division of resources through shaping a clear picture of them in decision making. When considered empowerment it is a multi-dimensional system or process which enables women section to understand their full distinctiveness which powers all domains of life. This leads through providing a access to information and properties or resources bigger autonomy in decision making, much greater capability to plan in their lives, and overcome the circumstances that influence their lives through getting freedom from the manacles which gets generated on them by tradition greater belief and practice.

Enablement means equal status to women. In light of this, the current research attempts to explain the present the concept and related review of literature of-

- Meaning of term “Empowerment” and “ Women Empowerment
- Measurement of Women Empowerment

Objectives of the Study:

To be meaningful, every work needs to device the objective of the study. The broad objective of the study is to understand as to how microfinance leads to economic development by contributing to women empowerment. The specific objectives of the study are –

- To identify the difference between the SHG-Members and Non-Members with respect to their economic empowerment
- To identify and understand the difference between the SHG-groups and NON-SHG groups with respect to their social empowerment
- To identify the difference between the SHG-Members and Non-Members with respect to their political empowerment
- To identify the difference between the SHG-Members and Non-Members with respect to their personal empowerment
- To identify if there is any numericallymomentous difference in the economic authorisation of SHG-groups is based ondifferent levels of group members income
- To identify if there is any numerically momentous difference in the economic authorisation of SHG-Members based on the different levels of savings.
- To identify if there is any numerically momentous difference in the economic authorisation of SHG-groups based on the different levels of credit availed.
- To identify if there is any numerically momentous difference in the social authorisation of SHG-Members based on the different levels of income
- To identify if there is any numerically momentous difference in the social authorisation of SHG-groups based on the different pointsor plans of savings.
- To identify if there is a numericallysubstantial difference in the social empowerment of SHG-Members based on the different levels of credit availed.

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- To identify if there is a statistically significant difference in the political empowerment of SHG-Members based on the different levels of income.

The conceptual framework: Based on the review of literature, this research investigates the contributions made by SHGs in empowering women. The study carries out comparative analysis between the SHG-Members and NON- Members to identify the mean difference in the level of empowerment. The women empowerment in the present study is considered under four dimensions: economic, social, political and personal. For carrying out the comparative analysis, participation in SHG is taken as an independent variable. Women empowerment considered under four dimensions: economic, social, political and personal serves as the dependent variable for the comparative analysis. The study also aims to find if there is any significant difference in the levels of economic, social, political and personal empowerment based on the different levels of income, savings and credit availed of the SHG-Members.

Research Problem: Globalisation has been projected as a new era of gender equality and gendermovement. It is argued that globalisation has increased the employmentopportunities for women. The well- connected world and extended network ofthe information technology is also providing new avenues of interaction amongthe women movements. The concepts of inclusive growth, womendevelopment and empowerment along with gender sensitive development inIndia have been evolved by globalised India.The researchers and women activists have argued that globalisation affectsdifferent groups of women in different places in different ways. On the onehand, it may create new opportunities for women to be forerunners in economicand social progress. But on the other, it is proving as a bane to the uneducatedand unskilled women as they are not able to cope up with or adopt newtechnology of production. The advent of global communication networks andcross-cultural exchange has no doubt influenced on the lives of women acrossthe boundaries‟ both in negative and positive ways. The wide spread networkof communication technology has promoted ideas and norms of equality forwomen in implicit and complicit ways. It has, no doubt, brought aboutawareness and acted as a catalyst in their struggle for equitable rights andopportunities but the rise of fundamentalism, global terrorism and complexcultural set-up and the global propaganda of the fundamentalist groups may ledto the further marginalisation of women and put them on the peripheries of thesocio-economic and political set-up of the traditional societies.The legislative frame-work of the national governance and the InternationalConventions on the rights of women became a matter of serious concern notonly for the women group but also forthe national governments due to theinternational pressure of the women groups.

Review of literature: Micro-finance assumes crucial importance through emphasising and targeting women enablement through various measures. Extensive appreciation as a strategy for economically backward women for their empowerment and overall economic development. As mentioned earlier, Micro-Finance is dominated by Self-Help Group- bank association and linking program, through providing an cost effectiveness mechanism which provides economic and financial services to the poor people who are not reachable or unreached. Collateral substitute is based on the viewpoint of peer pressure and group member’s savings where the SHG has led to success which is based not only on understanding the needs of the rural poor but also has seen success in consolidating collective information from the SHG where the dimensions of the economically backward people at the local level, guiding to their empowerment. This has no shortage of literature which is related to Micro finance. Many impact

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valuation studies have been done by many philosophers in various developing countries to find the impact of Micro-Finance programme. This literature describes a various methods of findings which is related to the level of impact and the level of the program. There are numerous studies which authorise that Micro-Finance women participants enjoy greater level of empowerment in terms of economic, social, political and personal awareness. At the same time, there are some studies which shows that Micro-Finance is not reaching the targeted the society and the group loans provided are being used for personals with no income through generating activities like for meeting emergency needs, for paying old debts, for present consumption purposes etc. Many studies have also highlighted that women contributors have restricted control over the use of the group loans and they simply act as mediator in providing loans to the male member of the family using Micro-Finance facilities. This has resulted in narrowing the empowerment of women members. Thus, the said literature indicates the mixed results about the impact of Micro-Finance programme on the women participants. Some important factors relevant to this research is being emphasised.

Operations of Micro finance:Self-Help Groups (SHGs) as a worthwhilesubstitute to accomplish the objectives that has been set for rural development program through getting the community to participate in the development program events. It was anplanned set up to deliver micro-credit to the rural women on the strengths of the rural women group savings without asserting on any document needed for security for the purpose of encouraging the rural women to enter into business activities and for making them innovative women.A Study on economic space was undertaken, but did not achieve the desired objective.On the other hand, SHG-BLP had been demonstrated very efficacious for the socio-economic enablement of very poor and economically backward group through providing financial support and services to them and uplifting and encouraging them to take up economic events for poverty assuagement. Through this event of providing financial support was not a universal remedy for solving the rural poverty problems, but had an prospective for becoming a enduring system for rural loaning with formal banking system being participating in full without the hindrance from the government and its agents. A study commissioned by NABARD covered around 560 samples which included households comprising 223 SHG's being spread over 11 states around the country. For measuring the influence of the programme, aassessment of pre and post SHG position was made. Scoring methods and techniques was used and computed, indexed thoroughly by the SHG members in view to enumerate the economic and social empowerment. During the findings and the study indicated that 33% rise was seen as an average in the annual income with respect to pre to post SHG situation. The increment on the income was estimated to approximately 40% which evolved through non-farm group activities. When considered the employment days it was estimated that a household worked for almost a year that is 375 days during the times of post SHG it was also registered that a 17% increase was seen from Pre SHG situation. Sample household acquired up 200 supplementary economic events by utilizing 85% of the borrowed fund for productive purposes. A Study also found that the families who live below the level of poverty line got diminished by 20% during the post SGH situation. During the study it was also seen that the sample what SHG members had undertaken found that they had attained self-confidence, also demonstrated in decision-making, improved their communication drastically. A Study conducted by SHARE Microfinance limited which was based on the clients of Andhra Pradesh compared 125 SHARE clients with an approximate of 104 new clients who were in the system of receiving the exposure to the new program. All the clients from SHARE had attended the program for the last three financial years. Poverty index was composed

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consisting of 4 elements they were root cause for the income, dynamic assets, quality of housing, household enslavement burden, (this is calculated as numbers of members present in the house divided by number of members who are earners).
The index score helped to recognize the extent to which customers or group members had moved out of shortage of finance. According to the results and the analysis it showed that 76.8% of the total members of the groups or clients had undergone an experience in the reduction of their financial status including 38.4% had shifted from very poor category to a reasonable poor category, apart 17.6% of the total members had overcome the poverty entirely. It was also analysed that the new incoming customers were mature customers or so called clients were in a position to send their kids to school and invest more money for health and other purposes. Based on the study that was conducted on social and economic impact of microfinance in the state of Uttar Pradesh, it was found that during the pre SHG situation most of the member was leaning on the income that they could get from their labour, but during the post SHG situation dairy had become their main source of income. It was discovered that the average asset value of asset increased by 46% and the annual revenue income per house had increased to 28% during the post SHG periods. This drastic change took place due the compulsory savings that each member had to undertake through downsizing their unnecessary expenditures. The recovery rate shot up to an average of 95% to almost 100%. The study also discovered that the commercial banks were bit lagging towards linking SHG groups for issuing loans.

The socio economic analysis that took place through SHG in Sloan district located in Himachal Pradesh revealed that the group members were mainly involved in small or very small business and service profession. A Study was conducted based on the data sample collected from 54 SHG groups, where six SHG groups were subjected to development of the district. When interest rates were considered the internal lending groups charged around 24% to 60% while the bank were charging only 12.5%. The recovery performance both for the internal and bank loans was 100%. The study also found that there was a constant raise in the annual income during post SHG period. While considering the social impart this had an great impact through empowering women group, this gave raise to educational development of their children and women got liberated from the social evil like husbands coming home drunk etc., it was overall seen that there was a considerable improvement in the societal conditions of SHG members who participated in various activities after they joined the Group. A Study also recommended that there should be an constant promotion of SHG groups in rural areas, providing training to the members and making them involve them in the local NGO’s through building SHGs for their overall existence and improvement. While evaluating the micro-credit with respect to the women empowerment it was found that 37% of the women respondents had full control over the loan that they had acquired for their business while 17% had very moderate control and 21.8% had no control at all. While digging deep it was discovered that the women’s loans were being used they their husbands while 28% of these loans were being utilized for female industrial activities and 56% of this amount was being utilized for male industrial activities and the rest of the percentage was utilized for their family. The study also reported that 60% of women, who were widowed, disconnected and divorced retained full control of loans, as against 10% of married women.

Literature Gap: Few studies contradict the success of microfinance programme, particularly regarding the ineffective reach to the poorest, lower amount of bank loans, unproductive use of group loans, mis-

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targeting of the programme , failure in improving women status in decision making. The review of literature provides an insight into both bright and dark side of the Micro-finance and gives mixed results. Also, most of the studies in India had been carried out in central and southern regions and there is lack of studies measuring the impact of Micro-finance in empowerment of Women in Northern region of the country. In light of this gap, the current study is an attempt to measure the impact of Micro- finance in women empowerment in the capital city of Karnataka (Bangalore District).

Research Methodology:

This research methodology describes and provides a broad objective through identifying the contribution made by Micro-Finance in empowering women, the design of the methodology was based on prior research into these relationships. It describes the various methods of data collection, the variables used to test the hypothesis and statistical tools employed to report the results. When economic and social research is considered both the methods must be aligned with the theoretical archetype. This prototype refers to the set of theories and expectations about the best suited techniques for the specific analysis. This also describes to the acceptance and selection of what is to be understood or taken into account, and how the research was proceeded. What are aspects that need to be emphasised, what type of data had to be collected and how it had to be construed or interpreted. The main two research prototypes what was undertaken was phenomenological or positivist. Under the phenomenological context, the researchers are considered as a part of the research proceedings rather them considering them being independent. It depends on the people being taken as a sample for studying, where they come out with their own elucidation of their situation and actions. This can be explanatory, physiological, inductive, and ethnographic or an research in action.

When considered positivist model it takes the view of the researcher that are seen as independent throughout the research that they are conducting. This model views reality as an objective and measurement. Here human beings are considered as to be rational and here this stress on the facts and probability of looking deep into the causes and effects through explaining them. The standard process for the positivist method is to study the literature to instituteappropriate theory and cultivate the hypotheses or propositions, which can be tested against experimental evidence. This method also refers to as scientific, statistical, pragmatic and deductive. The study conducted was mainly a survey type of research therefore the prime reliance was on primary data. Primary data was collected from 50 SHG- Members and 25 Non-Members using two questionnaires, each structured differently for each group. Even though the outcomes of the study are greatly dependent on the primary data, secondary data is also required to realize the theory and definitions.
Different studies, journals, books, published and unpublished thesis as well as internet sources was utilized as secondary statistics to get appropriate material. For assessing the impact of Micro-Finance program in women's empowerment, comparative research method has been adopted.The study compares the indicators of empowerment between the SHG members and non- members belonging to similar socio-economic background. Considering the time and resource constraints, a cross-sectional study design was deemed most appropriate for the research. Questionnaire is one of the most widely used techniques for data collection. It is a method to collect data and information in social research, in which information is obtained with the help of well-prepared questionnaires. The questionnaire that was listed was given to the individuals or being posted to the respondents, few of the respondents also responded through Google

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forms who filled the forms by themselves. At few occurrences the information was gathered directly from the respondents or so called customers where a series of questions were being asked and the respective questions were replied through tick.

Limitations of the existing study

This study has also got its own limitations like any other social science research undertaken by any individual.

- This research only demonstrated a significant impact of SHGs on improving the level of women empowerment. The present study only compares the empowerment level between SHG-Members and NON- Members. There are possibilities of factors other than participation in SHGs that impact empowerment of women. However, such impacts have not been addressed in this study.
- The empowerment indicators used in this study have been determined largely on the basis of the universally accepted empowerment indicators. Thus, the results of this research may not provide the complete picture as to how SHGs impact women empowerment.
- Different demographics (age, education, employment, number of family members etc)would still matter for women found significant for their empowerment. The impact of such variables on the level of women empowerment has not been examined in this research.
- The study is restricted only to the SHGs initiated under the Mission Convergence Programme of Mandya District. Since, the study confines only with Mandya, Maddur and Channapatna, its findings may be incompatible to other areas.

Conclusions and recommendations:

The main determination of the Research was to explore how the SHGs areempowering women. By being SHG-Member, women empower themselveseconomically, socially, politically and personally. Also, study has found theimpact of different levels of income, savings, and credit availed on the levels ofeconomic, social, political and personal empowerment of women.The study is based on the quantitative survey of 50 respondents (SHGMembersand NON- Members). The 50 SHG-Member and non SHG Members belonged to the SHGsregistered with Gender-Resource Centres which works for empowerment ofwomen in backward areas of Mandya, Maddur and Channapatna and these are covered by the MissionConvergence Scheme of Karnataka Government.The descriptive statistics were used to categorize and summarise the data. Theresults of the descriptive statistics depicted that most of the SHG-Memberswere less than 40 years of age, belonged to all religion and were married. Itwas also found that majority of the SHG- members were illiterate and self-employed. They were mainly doing household chores at other's place likewashing clothes and utensils, cleaning house etc.The study found that about 56% of the SHG-Members were residing infamilies with more than 6 to 7 members including both adults and children of whichmost of the families were having more than 2 children. Only 22% of the SHGMemberswere in the income group of 12000& above and only 14% werehaving savings in the group of 1500& above. This shows that they wereeconomically weak. Almost all the respondents had taken credit from theSHGs. The credit taken was mainly used by them to meet daily expenses, topay old debts and to meet some kind of emergent need.

The qualitative and quantitative analysis gives significant results to understandthe positive impact of SHG on women empowerment.The findings of the study establish that SHG-Members are contributing more

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tothe income and savings of the family when compared to Non-Members. It wasalso identified that after participation there was a higher level of freedom indecision-making related to income and savings compared. Further, studyrevealed positive impact of SHGs in improving the standard of living andfinancial decision –making of women SHG-Members. Thus, it is concludedthat there is a significant difference in the average economic empowermentlevel of SHG-Members and Non-Members. Study also carried out analysis tofind the impact of different levels of income earned, savings made and creditbut as per the results there is nosignificant impact of different levels of credit availed on economicempowerment. Study is silent related to the direction of these impacts.Moving further, the study also foundthat participation of women in SHG hasincreased the household expenditure onthe direct well-being items. This hasrepercussion effects as improvement in expenditure on health and educationwill result in better bringing-up of the children and this will set the ball ofdevelopment keep rolling in the right direction.With regard to the social empowerment, the findings of the study establish thatthere are positive impacts on social empowerment of women. After forminginto SHGs, women are free to move out of the four walls. Their participation inskill based activities, in educational programmes and in social awarenessprogrammes has improved. This again contributes positively in the economicdevelopment of the country. Thus, the empirical analysis proved that SHGWomenare socially more empowered than the Non-Member. Throughanalysis it was also found that different levels of income earned has asignificant impact on the levels of social empowerment but no significantimpact was found through different levels of savings made and different levelsof credit availed on the level of social empowerment.

In terms of political empowerment,the findings of the study specify that there isimprovement in the level of knowledge about constitutional rights, about rightsrelated to women and rights related to children with participation in SHG. Withimproved knowledge of their rights they can better bargain for their resourcesand improved knowledge of children’s rights will help them to position theirchildren better in the society. Thus, participation in SHG led to politicalempowerment of women. This was supported by empirical evidence in thestudy which concluded that there is significant difference in the average levelof political empowerment between SHG-Members and Non-Members.Further, impact of different levels of income earned, savings made and creditavailed was studied on the level of political empowerment. The study foundthat the impact of all these variables is insignificant onthe level of politicalempowerment.

Recommendations: Women empowerment is a very wide area of study. The present studyhighlights some of its aspects and recommends further studies in this area. Theinspiration following the efforts employed in this research resulted from theneed to understand how micro-finance can lead to economic development, it itsefforts are directed towards women empowerment. The main purpose of thisstudy was to further investigate the empirical association between microfinanceand women empowerment. On the basis of the findings, followingrecommendations have been made.

Micro-finance is an appropriate tool for empowering women. It isrecommended that policy-makers should formulate methods to invest in humancapital and making resources available to poor women.Further, efforts should be made to wider the micro-finance network. This canbe done successfully by establishing more institutions dealing with microfinanceactivities and also by dealing in larger areas to provide ease to moreneedy people.Awareness concerning micro-finance program is necessary to improve theactivities related to women empowerment.Since micro-finance institutions provide collateral- free credits and that to atleast rates of interest, it is suggested that more and more women should beencouraged

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to make savings and avail credits so that they can empowerthemselves and improve their standards of living. In this direction, the microfinanceofficers should also make efforts to ensure that women are takingdecisions on the credits availed in their names and the credits should not beused as per the directions of the other family members. If this check is notmade, the objectives of empowering women in the true sense will not beachieved and women will be only burdened with extra responsibility ofrepayment of credit taken.Another major effort at the end of the micro-finance facilitators is to encouragewomen to use the loan amount for investing purposes or in income generatingactivities rather than consumption purposes as this hinders economicdevelopment.Further, Policy reforms are needed for micro-finance programs andcooperatives to grow. The ceiling on individual micro-finance loans isconstraining programs that want to loan out higher amounts without collateralto their deserving members.Finally, more special need-based programs should be incorporated within theSHG to address issues related to "problem families." For example, specialtraining or counselling services that are geared towards helping such familiesresolve their problems should be incorporated within the programs.