

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN THROUGH SELF HELP GROUP

Kinitoli Ayemi¹, Mary N. Odyuo,² Sentinungshi³ and Debika Nongmaithem⁴

ABSTRACT

Women's economic empowerment is a key factor in achieving economic development, social justice, and gender equality. Studies have shown that Self Help Group (SHG) have significantly increased economic empowerment of women. The study was carried out in the state of Nagaland in the year 2023. Kohima district was selected purposively for the study with an objective to study the economic empowerment of women through SHG. Kohima block and Jakhama Block was purposively selected for the study. 20 SHG from each block were selected for the study. After the selection of the SHG, 3 SHG members with an experience of 3 years and above as an active member of SHG respectively was selected from each group, making a sample size of 120 respondents. Majority (81.67%) of the respondents were economically empowered falling under the medium category. 100.00 per cent of the respondents reported that credits were easily accessible, income level increased, their basic needs were fulfilled, more acceptance in the family and they could make economic contribution to the household after joining SHG. Access to finance, source of information, training and access to market had positive significant relationship with economic empowerment of women through SHG. To encourage SHG to perform better the study recommended that the state government should take more initiatives to organise more of sales cum exhibition programs at the district and state levels.

(Key words: Empowerment, economic, Nagaland, SHG, social)

INTRODUCTION

The term women empowerment implies that women have the power and ability to regulate their own lives in social, political, and economic terms - power that enables them to move from the periphery to the centre stage (Rangoli and Renu, 2015). Economic empowerment of women is one of the most significant aspects contributing towards equality between women and men. Economic empowerment of women is the process of providing women with the resources, skills, and opportunities necessary to participate fully in the economy and achieve financial independence. Women's economic empowerment is a key factor in achieving economic development, social justice, and gender equality.

Women empowerment aims to expand society more broadly and holistically. It has been observed that socially mobilizing women, particularly underprivileged rural women, into Self help group (SHG) is an effective way to alleviate poverty (Kusuma, 2021) and help poor rural women increase their income level and improve their living standards (Velmurugan and Mathiyalagan, 2014). Self help group have significantly increased economic empowerment of women (Fernando and Azhagaiah, 2015). The goal of SHG is usually to help members improve their economic and social situation by providing support, advice, and resources.

Self-help groups can provide a variety of economic opportunities for women (Rajalaxmi and Indra, 2023). These can include income generation activities such as micro-enterprises, small business development, and agricultural production. SHG's are found to have increased financial independence and security of women (Thilagaraj, 2020). Self-help groups can also provide access to resources such as capital, technology, and information, which can help women increase their earning potential. Additionally, these groups can provide access to financial services such as savings, credit, and insurance. The dramatic development of SHG have been accepted as an effective strategy for poverty alleviation of the masses, especially for the BPL families. It has a tremendous impact upon the income, employment, saving, expenditure and above all the status of rural women have changed remarkably due to the SHG movement (Mohapatra *et al.*, 2015).

SHG are set up by groups of women who share a common interest or problem and support each other in achieving their goals. These groups provide women with a platform to discuss their problems, share ideas, and come up with solutions. SHG also help women build their confidence and provide them with a safe space to express themselves. The members of the group become a support system to each other and encourage in times of need. It helps in promoting self-employment, credit, awareness, and

1. P.G. Student. Dept. of Rural Development and Planning, SAS, NU Medziphema Campus, 797106

2. Assoc. prof. Dept. of Agricultural Extension and Education, SAS, NU Medziphema Campus, 797106

3. Res.Scholar. Dept. of Rural Development and Planning, SAS, NU Medziphema Campus, 797106

4. Asst. Prof. Dept of Agronomy, SAS, NU Medziphema Campus, 797106

savings. Through SHG, women can learn about the resources available in their community and access them to improve their quality of life. SHG enable women to coordinate their efforts to help themselves and their families financially, develop new skills and knowledge, and support each other better in social, economic, and political aspects. They can also use the platform to become self-reliant. SHG can also empower women by giving them access to financial resources, such as micro credit to start their own businesses which can help them become financially independent and help them in economic growth (Jayanti *et al.*, 2023).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out in the state of Nagaland in the year 2023. There are 16 districts in Nagaland namely Kohima, Dimapur, Kiphire, Longleng, Mokokchung, Mon, Peren, Phek, Tuensang, Wokha, Zunheboto, Noklak, Niuland, Chumukedima, Tseminyu and Shamator. Out of these districts, Kohima district was selected purposively for the study because it is denominated by a good number of functional SHG. There are 6 rural development blocks in Kohima district, out of these Kohima block and Jakhama Block was purposively selected as good number of SHG are functioning actively in these blocks. A list of SHG was made and altogether 40 active SHG from 2 blocks, 20 SHG respectively from each block were selected for the investigation. After the selection of the SHG, 3 SHG members who has an experience of 3 years and above as an active member of SHG respectively from each group selected for the study, were purposively selected as respondents, thereby making a sample size of 120 respondents.

Economic empowerment, in this study, is referred to the process of enabling individuals or communities to gain control over their economic lives and to improve their economic status through financial independence. Economic empowerment indicators developed by Rawat (2014) was used with slight modifications and the statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, arithmetic mean and standard deviation were used to analyse the results.

Frequency

Frequency refers to the number of times that a particular event or phenomenon occurs within a given period of time.

Percentage

Percentage is a way of expressing a number or quantity as a portion or fraction of 100. It is a useful tool for comparing values, making predictions, and analysing trends. For calculating percentage, the frequency of a particular cell was divided by the total number of respondents.

Arithmetic mean

The arithmetic mean is a measure of central tendency that represents the average value of a set of numbers. It is calculated by adding up all the values in the set and then dividing by the total number of values. The formula of arithmetic mean is:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum xi}{N}$$

Where, \bar{X} = Arithmetic mean

$\sum xi$ = Summation of values

N = Number of individuals

Standard deviation

Standard deviation is a statistical measure that shows the amount of variation or spread in a set of data. It measures how much the individual data points deviate from the mean (average) of the set. The formula for calculating standard deviation is as follows:

$$\sigma = \sqrt{\frac{\sum (xi - \bar{x})^2}{(n-1)}}$$

Where,

σ = standard deviation

n = Number of individuals

\bar{X} = Arithmetic mean

X = Individual values

Correlation Coefficient (r)

Karl Pearson's correlation coefficient was used in this study to find the association between independent variable and dependent variable (economic empowerment). Correlation is a statistical measure that describes the degree to which two or more variables are related to each other. It was calculated using the following formula:

$$r = \frac{\sum (Xi - \bar{X})(Y - \bar{Y})}{\sqrt{[\sum (Xi - \bar{X})^2 \times \sum (Yi - \bar{Y})^2]}}$$

Where, X_i = i^{th} value of the independent variable X

\bar{X} = mean of the independent variables

Y = i^{th} value of the dependent variable Y

\bar{Y} = mean of the dependent variables

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Role of SHG towards economic empowerment on specific areas

Table 1 shows the categorization of the role of SHG towards economic empowerment on specific areas. 100.00 per cent of the respondents' reported credits were easily accessible, income level increased, their basic needs were fulfilled, more acceptance in the family and they could make economic contribution to the household after joining SHG

About 95.84 per cent reported 'better repayment status' as they were able to pay back their loans on time, similar results were recorded by Shanker and Srinivas (2019) whereby majority of the respondents (49.44%) strongly

agreed that regular saving habit of the respondents had increased after joining Self help group. 114 members which constituted about 95.00 per cent confirmed that they were able to make small purchase such as mobile phone, clothing etc., 83.34 per cent also stated that their savings habits improved as they were able to save from '500 to '2000 per month after joining SHG, 80.00 per cent were able to provide better education to their children and about 49.16 testified that they were able to make large purchases such as television, washing machine etc. Thus, the study concluded that the quality of life was improved after joining SHG. Similar findings were reported by George and George (2020) whereby they concluded that 95% people's life had been improved by SHG.

Overall economic empowerment through SHG

From the Table 2, it is revealed that majority (81.67%) of the respondents were economically empowered falling under the medium category followed by 16.67 per cent of the respondents were highly empowered while only 1.67 per cent of the respondents were empowered up to 'low' level. Rasool (2018) in his study also found similar findings whereby the study revealed significant increase in economic empowerment of women through SHG. Based on the analysis, 80 per cent of the respondents had attended training duration of 4-8 days and had attended different training categories on income generating activities resulting in better economic empowerment condition.

Relationship between the selected independent variables with economic empowerment

Table 3 represents the association of independent variables with the economic empowerment of the SHG members.

The correlation value between family size of the respondents and economic empowerment was $-.384^{**}$. The result was negatively correlating and statistically significant at 1 per cent level. So it can be concluded that if there are many members in a family there will be more mouths to feed hence the economic empowerment will decrease.

The correlation value between access to finance of the respondents and economic empowerment was $.387^{**}$. The result was statistically significant at 1 per cent level. So it can be concluded that if they have access to finance, higher will be the economic empowerment.

The correlation value between source of information and economic empowerment was $.219^*$. The result was statistically significant at 5 per cent level. So it can be concluded that if they have access to information, higher will be the economic empowerment.

The correlation value between training and economic empowerment was $.533^{**}$. The result was statistically significant at 1 per cent level. Hence, it can be concluded that if they are exposed to more trainings, economic empowerment will be increased.

The correlation value between access to market and economic empowerment was $.302^{**}$. The result was statistically significant at 1 per cent level. Hence, it was concluded that if they have access to market, economic empowerment will be increased

It is inferred that majority of the respondents were economically empowered falling under 'medium' category. The role of SHG towards economic empowerment were found to be highest in access to easy credit, basic need fulfilled, more acceptance in the family and economic contribution to the household while it was lowest in ability to make large purchases. Self-Help Group (SHG) provides women with economic empowerment that strengthens their ability to make decisions, encourages entrepreneurship, and helps them become financially independent. Sustainable development is fuelled by this system of group support, which also raises general community well-being and lowers poverty and inequality.

To encourage SHG to perform better the study recommended that the state government should take more initiatives to organise more sales cum exhibition programs at the district and state levels. This can also provide an opportunity to showcase the products produced by SHG.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents based on the role of SHG towards economic empowerment on specific area N=120

Sl. No.	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Access to easy credit	120	100.00
2	Increase in income level	120	100.00
3	Basic need fulfilled	120	100.00
4	More acceptance in the family	120	100.00
5	Economic contribution to the household	120	100.00
6	Better repayment status of loan	115	95.84
7	Ability to make small purchases	114	95.00
8	Better saving status	100	83.34
9	Better education for the children	96	80.00
10	Ability to make large purchases	59	49.16

Table 2. Overall distribution of economic empowerment of the members**N=120**

Sl. No.	Category	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD
1	Low	2	1.66	12.14	1.14
2	Medium	98	81.67		
3	High	20	16.67		
	Total	120	100		

Table 3 Association of independent variable with Economic empowerment

Sl. No.	Independent variables	Pearson's coefficient correlation
1.	Age	-0.129 ^{NS}
2.	Marital status	0.119 ^{NS}
3.	Family size	-.384**
4.	Educational level	-0.170 ^{NS}
5.	Primary occupation	.512 ^{NS}
6.	Secondary occupation	.357 ^{NS}
7.	Access to finance	.387**
8.	Source of information	.219*
9.	Training	.531**
10.	Access to market	.302**
11.	Social participation	-0.032 ^{NS}

* = Significant at 5% level of significant

** = Significant at 1% level of significant

NS = Non-significant

REFERENCES

- Fernando, R. R. and R. Azhagaiah, 2015. Economic Empowerment of Women through Self help group. PBRI. **8** (5): 91-98.
- George, aby and J. Aaron George, 2020. A study on impact of self help group (shg) on women in champakulam village. EPRA. **7**(3): 7-13.
- Jayanti, N., Irom, Singh, Narendrajit, Maibam, Angkita Devi and J.S. Senjam, 2023. Women of Manipur with reference to the rural agricultural system. . J. Soils and Crops, **33**(2):425-432.
- Kusuma, A, 2021. Economic empowerment of women through the development of self-help groups (SHG). Int. Multidiscip. Res. J. **10**(11): 14-18.
- Mohapatra, G., R.N. Patra and M.P. Agasty, 2015. Economic contribution of women in SHG: Village level evidence from Odisha. J. financ. econ. **6**(02): 01- 08.
- Rajalaxmi, M. and T. Indra, 2023. Self-help groups and economic empowerment of women in agriculture. J. Soils and Crops, **34**(1): 146-154.
- Rangoli, C. and Renu, 2015. Women Empowerment and Self-Help Groups: An analytical view. Voice of Intellectual Man. **5**(1): 65-75.
- Rasool, M. 2018. Economic Empowerment of Women through Self help group In District Baramulla of Jammu and Kashmir. Int. J. Creat. Res. Thoughts. **6**(1): 707-714.
- Rawat, Preeti, 2014. Patriarchal beliefs women's empowerment and general well-being. Vikalpa. **39**(2) : 43:56.
- Shanker, Gunda and K. Srinivas, 2019. Members saving habits before and after joining SHG – a study. JETIR. **6**(6): 278-284.
- Thilagaraj, A. 2020. A Study On Women Empowerment Through Self- Help Group Members with special reference to Virudhunagar District in Tamil Nadu. Eur. j. mol. clin. med. **7**(3): 4218-4229.
- Velmurugan, J.S. and P. Mathiyalagan, 2014. The activities of SHG in uplifting rural poor of the economically backward areas- An View. Int. J. Sci. **3**(12): 156- 157.

Rec. on 03.07.2024 & Acc. on 29.08.2024