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COLLECTIVE ACTION - KEY ELEMENT FOR RURAL WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

SUJATA PARMAR[1], R. M. JADEJA [2] & MINAKSHI BARIYA[3]

[1,3]Reserach Scholar, Department of Agricultural Extension, J.A.U., Junagadh, Gujarat, India

[2]M.Sc. Student, Department of Agricultural Econom, J.A.U., Junagadh, Gujarat, India

ABSTRACT

Women constitute half of the world's population perform nearly two-third of its work hours, receives one-third of the world's income and own less than one-hundredth of world's property. In the present study an attempt was made to find out collective action of SHGs which influences empowerment of women. Group dynamic effectiveness index is very helpful in this matter, so with the help of primary data calculated a group dynamic effectiveness of SHGs. Through it also find out rural women's behavior in group which is directly or indirectly affects on empowerment of women. Papers also contain information regarding different income generating activities performed by women which is ameliorating their socio-economic empowerment.

KEYWORDS: Collective Action, Empowerment, Group Dynamic Effectiveness Index, SHGs

INTRODUCTION

"*Drops in separation could only fade away; drops in co-operation make the ocean*".

-**Mahatma Gandhi**

Human beings need membership in small groups for many reasons. They need it to meet distinctly the need of inclusion, affection and control, the need to belong or be included with other, a need for love, and a need for power in relation to both other persons and environment (Schutz, 1958). 'The existence of individual is very difficult in prevailing era, and the group will always survive'. Then what do we mean by group? How it functions and what is the role of the groups in all round development of the individual?

Collective action is traditionally defined as any action taken together by a group of people whose goal is to enhance their status and achieve a common objective. It is enacted by a representative of the group.

A group is a cluster of two or more individuals who interact with each other in relatively enduring basis, identify themselves as belonging to distinct unit and sharing certain common activities and values. Members of the group relate to each other in some way that is united by common ties, believes and perceptions in a relatively sustained and structural basis.

Group dynamics effectiveness is operationalized in this study as the interaction forces among group members in the group, how the group were formed, their structure, process, and how do they function and effect on individual members, other groups and the organization. In the present study, "Group Dynamics Effectiveness" of the SHGs and its members were quantified with the help of an index called "Group Dynamics Effectiveness Index (GDEI)" developed by Purnima (2005).

Hersey and Blanchard (1995) in a detailed study of group dynamics gave emphasis on helping and hindering roles

individuals play in groups such as establishing, aggressive persuading, manipulative, committing, dependent, attending and avoidance. Group provides an environment where the individual's self-perceived level of responsibility and authority is enhanced, in an environment where accountability is shared; thus providing a perfect motivation through enhanced self-esteem coupled with low stress.

Women constitute half of the world's population perform nearly two-third of its work hours, receives one-third of the world's income and own less than one-hundredth of world's property. Moreover, they are the active agents of change, the dynamic promoters of social transformation, and play a vital role in shaping the destiny of future generations. Yet, in the gendered social formations, they are placed below the hierarchy of men.

Empowerment of women means strengthening of their capacities in the social, political and economic sphere. Power is the key word in the concept of "empowerment", and it is the power of patriarchal ideology, which subordinates women, especially as women need to be changed. Women's empowerment and material advancement helps them to improve their status in the society and strengthen their economic position.

One of the powerful approaches to women empowerment and rural entrepreneurship is the formation of the Self Help Groups (SHGs) especially among women. This strategy had fetched noticeable results not only in India and Bangladesh but world over. Women SHGs are increasingly being used as a tool for various developmental interventions. Credit and its delivery through SHGs have also been taken as a means for empowerment of rural women. This integrated approach, whereby, credit is only an entry point, and an instrument to operationalized other aspect of group dynamic and management.

NABARD (1995) defined SHG as a homogenous group of rural poor voluntarily formed to save whatever amount they can conveniently save out of their earning and mutually agree to contribute to a common fund of the group, to be lent to the member for meeting their productive and emergent needs.

The concept of SHGs exists prior to any intervention. These are the thrift and credit groups that provide the benefits of economics to its members in certain areas of production process by undertaking common action programmes like cost- effective credit delivery system, generating a forum for collective learning, promoting democratic culture, fostering an entrepreneurial culture, providing a firm base for dialogue and co-operation in programmes with other institutions, possessing credibility and power to ensure participation and helping to assess the individual member′s management capacity (Fernandez, 1995).

Genesis of SHGs

- Prof. Mohammed Yunus (Bangladesh, 1976), started women's groups and developed thrift and savings among the poorest of poor. Now, it has been developed in to bank named "Bangladesh Grameen Bank".

- In India pioneer in this field is Self-Employed Women″s Association (SEWA) started in 1972 at Ahmadabad- Gujarat by Ela Bhatt. It has networked many co-operatives and emerged as the largest federation of co-operatives in the country. In the year 2006, there were 9,59,698 members in India and 4, 83,012 from Gujarat State.

- In southern India organizations like PRADAN, MYRADA, ASSEEFA, MALAR etc. had worked for rural credit programmes.

- NABARD was started on July 1982.It refinances the banks which lend to SHGs and also provides training support.

- Rashtriya Mahila Kosh - an organization promoted by government of India gives direct loans to NGO"s on lending with incentives for proper repayment.

The internal nature of the group and the significant forces that contribute to its performance can be studied by analyzing the dynamics of the group. These dynamic forces interplay between the members of any working group and significantly contribute to the productivity and women empowerment thus becomes very essential to study them. It directly or indirectly effect on empowerment of women. As SHG is the most successful group approach, therefore, a study to explore the status of group dynamics effectiveness among the SHGs members.

Objectives

- To measure the group dynamics effectiveness of the members
- To measure group dynamics effectiveness of urban and rural SHGs
- Income generating activity performed by women

Study Area

The study was conducted in Junagadh district of Gujarat state. Junagadh district lies between 20.44° and 21.40° northern latitude and 69.40° and 71.05° eastern longitude. The district is surrounded by Rajkot and Jamnagar districts in the north and its south lies Amreli and Bhavnagar with Barda hills and on the west lies the Arabian Sea**.**

The study was conducted in Junagadh district of Gujarat state. Among 15 Talukas of Junagadh district, two Talukas viz., Talala and Junagadh were selected randomly from Junagadh district. After selection of these two Talukas two villages from each Talukas were selected randomly. Total 120 respondents were selected from 8 SHGs and Selected 15 members from the each self help groups purposively. Four SHG's belong to rural area and another 4 SHG's belong to urban area. These SHGs were engaged in different income generating for a long time.

Methodology

This collectivization is in itself an empowerment strategy and laid the foundation for formation of self- help groups. The majority of SHGs are of women and are highly participatory providing unique opportunities to help women to grow her self-confidence and take more active role in community and decision making process which affects their own life.

In this study, an attempt was made to find out group dynamics of the SHGs and also try to find out excellence between urban and rural SHG's. Through it easy to understand what type of group activity done by women which is helpful them in different income generating activities. Because of these activities socio-economic development of women can achieve surely. Through it easily understand impact and success of the SHGs in urban and rural area. The respondent asked open ended questions to know group dynamics effectiveness of SHGs with the help of data, calculate group dynamic effectiveness of SHGs, different income generating activity done by women for their empowerment. To know the GDEI of SHGs various indicated were used like: participation, teamwork, group atmosphere, decision making, group cohesiveness, leadership, interpersonal trust, task functions, achievement of the SHGs. Formula used to calculate group dynamics effectiveness index was as under.

$$\text{Group dynamics effectiveness index} = \frac{R1}{M1} \times W1 + \frac{R2}{M2} \times W2 + \cdots \frac{Rn}{Mn} \times Wn$$

R1 R2……R$_{n=}$ score received by each respondent for each indicator

M1M2…..Mn = maximum score one can get for each indicator

W1, W2….Wn = weightage score of each indicator received from expert

Based on above formula, group dynamics effectiveness index was worked out for the all the respondents of SHGs. Based on the GDEI of the respondents an average GDEI of the SHGs were calculated.

RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

Measure the Group Dynamics Effectiveness Index

It includes distribution of the SHGs based on group dynamics effectiveness index and distribution of the respondent according to group dynamics effectiveness.

Distribution of the SHGs Based on Group Dynamics Effectiveness Index (GDEI)

People come together for achieving the common goal called the group. But when people joined with each other to achieve the specific purpose and goal, they have to passes through certain process. This process is called group dynamics, which includes many indicators, and sum of these indicators create the group performance or group dynamics effectiveness. These group activities helpful to empower women through their development in different aspect: socio-economic development. Collected information was categorized into three groups and presented in the Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of the SHGs Based on Group Dynamics Effectiveness Index n=8

Sr. No.	Category	Frequency	Percent
1	Low (< 69.98)	2	25
2	Medium (between 69.98 and 83.54)	4	50
3	High (>83.54)	2	25
	Total	**8**	**100**

Mean=76.74   S.D. 6.8

Each SHG contains 15 members. A critical examination of the Table 1 reveled that out of 8 SHGs selected for the study, two SHGs had high GDEI, four had medium and two had low level of GDIE. Majority of SHGs were distributed in the medium category.

The probable reason for this might be that the group members were trained for different activities. They all try to improve their socio- economic life through empowerment, but lack information regarding marketing; they had medium level of GDIE. Different activities for improving their skill development are also important reason for their effective group dynamic effectiveness index. It also indicates that majority of the SHGs had not best but good group atmosphere, group cohesiveness, and interpersonal trust. They need right direction & guidance for their overall development.

Distribution of the Respondent According to their GDEI

Women play very crucial role in the development of society. Up to now they are treated as neglected sector in society, the main role of women is considered as to help in income generation through laboring, but with continuous efforts of government and NGOs, status of women should change. Based on mean and standard devotion the respondents were

grouped in three categories.

Table 2: Distribution of the Respondents According to Their GDEI N=120

Sr. No.	Category	Frequency	Percent
1	Low (< 69.98)	26	21.66
2	Medium(between 69.98 and 83.54)	64	53.34
3	High (>83.54)	30	25.00
		120	100

Mean=76.74   S.D. 6.8

Table 2 reflects that majority of SHGs had a medium level of GDEI with 53.34 per cent followed by high and low level of GDEI with 25 per cent and 21.66 per cent respectively. The probable reason might be that all activities undertaken by the SHGs have to be accomplished with full co-operation of all members. The dynamics play a very important role in bringing about adequate group interaction and performance which is important for different income generating activity. Very less number of respondents had a low group dynamic effectiveness because of dissatisfaction with financial status of group; they have not good socio-economic status.

Table 3: Urban and Rural SHGs with their GDEI

Urban (Junagadh)				Rural (Talala)			
Sr. No.	Name of SHG	Village	GDEI	Sr. No.	Name of SHG	Village	GDEI
1.	Jay jalaram	Ivnagar	71.37	1.	Deep	Madhupur	85.80
2.	Maa durga	Makhiyala	80.91	2.	Ekta	Madhupur	84.50
3.	Ramdev	Joshipara	79.83	3.	Jay ambe	Dhanej	68.58
4.	Gram mahila	Joshipara	69.57	4.	Shakti	Dhanej	73.27
Average			75.42	Average			78.03

The Table 3 reflects that rural SHGs had a batter GDEI than urban the reason for this might be that the group members of rural SHGs had good group atmosphere, interpersonal trust, participate actively in group and team work behavior than urban women. In rural area necessity of women for better livelihood was higher than urban women.

Table 4: Different Activity Performed by the Self-Help Group Women N=120

Sr. No.	Activity	Frequency	Per cent	Rank
1.	Dairy co-operative	30	25.0	I
2.	Handicraft	28	23.3	II
3.	Readymade stall	20	16.7	III
4.	Ayurvedic product making	19	15.9	IV
5.	Credit giving	15	12.5	V
6.	Cleaning	8	6.6	VI

From the Table 4, it is concluded that majority of women were engaged in activity of dairy co-operative and secured first rank with 25.0 per cent followed by handicraft (23.3 per cent), readymade stall (16.7 per cent) and Ayurvedic product making (15.9 per cent) secured a second, third and fourth rank respectively. Whereas, less number of self-help groups women were engaged in credit giving (12.5 per cent) and cleaning activity (6.6 per cent) and were ranked fifth and sixth.

From the above discussion, the women start their own independent business to get income generating source. Through it they actively participate in group activity. Because of income generating activity, they get freedom related to take decision regarding their business. Thus it was helpful to improve group dynamics effectiveness of self-help group. Figure regarding table as below:
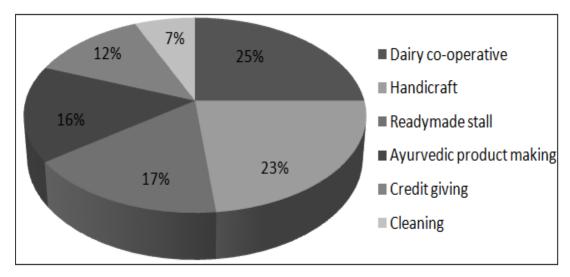
Figure 1: Different Activity Performed by the Self-Help Group Women

CONCLUSIONS

Poor rural people's empowerment is primarily their own doing. In particular, collective action often starts at the initiative of the rural women themselves, and it rests on their active participation. Because of this activate participation socio-economic status of upgrade. It is helpful to satisfy different aspect of women empowerment. In many cases, this is not a politically neutral process, as the empowerment of marginalized rural groups often entails renegotiation of power relations within societies and markets, especially at a time when market transformations often result in greater concentration of economic power in few hands. In all cases, rural women are the key actors in their empowerment process because of their active participation, good atmosphere and group cohesiveness. Different income generating activities also play an important role in empowerment of rural women.

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13. Sujata Parmar, Ph.D. Student, Dept. of Agricultural Extension, J.A.U., Junagadh-362001 Email Id: sujataparmar7@gmail.com, Phone No. : 9726802141.

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