

A STUDY ON THE ROLE OF SELF - HELP GROUPS IN ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY

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DOI: doi.org/10.34293/seamjr-v1i4-002

Abstract

Gender equality is important for the development of society and the empowerment of women. This study titled “A Study on the Role of Self-Help Groups in Achieving Gender Equality” examines how Self-Help Groups help women improve their economic and social status. The study is based on data collected from women SHG members through questionnaires and interaction. The results reveal that the Self-Help Groups are useful for women to learn saving habits, generate income, build confidence, and become involved in the decision-making process at home and in the community. Self-Help Groups increase awareness regarding education, health, and rights of women, thereby helping in their empowerment. Thus, it can be concluded that Self-Help Groups contribute significantly towards holistic gender equality.

Introduction

Gender equality is one of the major goals in the social and economic development of any society. This implies that men and women should be provided with equal rights, chances, and responsibilities in every field, including education, work, decision making, and social participation. However, there are many developing nations where women have several difficulties, such as a lack of financial

support, involvement in economic activities, and education along with discrimination within the society. Thus, empowerment of women becomes necessary for gender equality.

Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have emerged as an effective tool for women's empowerment, especially in rural and semi-urban areas. A Self-Help Group is a small voluntary group of people, mainly women,

who come together to save money, access credit, and support each other socially and economically. Through SHGs, women gain financial independence, develop leadership skills, and participate actively in community decision-making.

The promotion of SHGs in India has been strongly supported by programs such as the National Rural Livelihoods Mission, which aims to reduce poverty and empower women through self-employment and group activities. SHGs help women start small businesses, improve household income, enhance confidence, and increase awareness about rights, health, and education.

Apart from economic benefits, SHGs also play a significant role in improving women's social status. Engaging in group meeting and trainings fosters participation among women that enables them to voice their thoughts and become leaders and change the stereotypical norms associated with gender. Thus, SHGs help in decision making in the family and community level which forms an integral part of gender equality.

Hence, it becomes significant to study about the role of Self Help Groups in promoting gender equality.

Review of Literature

Chaitra C.N. and Indira M: Micro-level study in Mysore district for analyzing the effect of SHGs on the participation of women in decision-making (2024). The findings of the

study indicated that women in SHGs were more economically independent, had higher self-respect, and were actively involved in making decisions regarding education, health and property issues within the family.

Roy and Chakraborty: examined the relationship between education and women empowerment within SHGs in West Bengal (2024). The findings showed that education combined with SHG participation enhanced social awareness, leadership ability, and personal transformation among women, enabling them to challenge traditional gender norms.

Pandhare, Bellampalli, & Yadava: analyzed the role of microfinance and entrepreneurship in SHGs (2024). The research found that access to credit and livelihood opportunities through SHGs positively influenced women's economic, social, and psychological empowerment, contributing to improved gender equality outcomes in rural communities.

Monika and Marwah: studied SHGs under urban investigated the effect of micro-finance and entrepreneurship in SHGs (2024). The study showed that availability of credit facilities and livelihoods in SHGs was positively affecting the empowerment of women, and thus improving gender equality in the rural community.

Monika & Marwah: conducted their research on SHGs through urban livelihood schemes (2024) and found out that SHGs act

as a means of generating employment, training and financial inclusion of urban poor women. They emphasized SHGs as an effective tool to enhance socio-economic position of women.

Yadav and Bhaskar: investigated SHGs in the Delhi NCR region and reported that SHGs enhance women's mobility (2025), financial inclusion, confidence, and community participation. The study emphasized that SHGs act not only as financial institutions but also as social support systems promoting empowerment.

Research Methodology

Research methodology explains the methods used to collect and analyse data for the study.

Title of the Study

A Study on the Role of Self-Help Groups in Achieving Gender Equality

Type of Research

This study is descriptive research because it describes how Self-Help Groups help women achieve gender equality and empowerment.

Research Design

The study follows a survey method to collect information from women who are members of Self Help Groups.

Secondary Data

Secondary data is collected from: Books, Journals Research articles, Government reports, Websites.

Limitations of the Study

- Study limited to selected respondents
- Time and resource limitations

Research Gap

Although there is ample research regarding Self-Help Groups and women empowerment, there are limited studies concerning the extent to which SHGs can help in ensuring comprehensive gender equality, which includes social transformation, cultural transformation, digital empowerment, and long-term empowerment. Hence, this study is an effort to explore the wider role of SHGs in gender equality.

Objectives of the Study

- To study the role of Self-Help Groups in promoting gender equality.
- To examine the economic empowerment of women through Self-Help Groups.
- To analyze the improvement in women's decision-making power after joining SHGs.

Scope of the Study

The study focuses on understanding the role of Self-Help Groups in achieving gender

equality among women. It examines how participation in SHGs helps women improve their economic condition, social status, confidence, and decision-making power. The study covers women members of Self-Help Groups in the selected study area and analyses their level of empowerment and awareness about education, health, and rights. It also studies the opportunities and challenges faced by SHG members. The findings of the study may help in improving SHG programmes and promoting women empowerment and gender equality in society.

Analysis of Holistic Gender Equality

Holistic gender equality means giving equal rights and opportunities to both men and women in all areas of life. It includes economic, social, educational, and decision-making equality.

Self Help Groups help women become financially independent by providing savings and loan facilities. Women gain confidence, participate in family decisions, and take part in community activities. SHGs also create awareness about education, health, and women's rights.

Through SHGs, women improve their social status, leadership skills, and self-confidence. They also learn digital and financial skills, which help them become more independent.

Overall, holistic gender equality is achieved when women are economically

strong, socially respected, educated, confident, and actively involved in decision-making.

Conclusion

The research has shown that SHGs are significant in enhancing gender equality through economic, social and personal empowerment of women. Through SHG membership, women get financially empowered through saving and earning activities and hence become more confident and able to make decisions concerning themselves and the family. They are also made aware of education and health issues and their rights as women in the society, thus elevating their social standing. In spite of some challenges such as lack of education and social constraints, the general findings indicate that SHGs play a major role in ensuring holistic gender equality and development.

Acknowledgement

This paper was presented at the Two-Day National Level Seminar on "Realising Sustainable Development Goals in the Indian Context" held at S.E.A. College of Commerce and Arts on 5th -6th March 2026.

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