

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE & MANAGEMENT

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CONTENTS

Sr. No.	TITLE & NAME OF THE AUTHOR (S)	Page No.
1.	A STUDY ON FORECASTING BSE SENSEX BY USING HOLT-WINTER METHOD <i>DR. M. SHEIK MOHAMED, DR. M.A.SHAKILA BANU & B.DEEPA LAKSHMI</i>	1
2.	GLOBAL MARKET & GLOBALIZATION DRIVE – THE STRATEGIC NEED FOR BRANDS & PRODUCTS: A BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE ANALYSIS <i>DR. S. P. RATH</i>	6
3.	MEASUREMENT OF FRANCHISEE SATISFACTION BASED ON THEIR PERCEPTION ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE OF THE FRANCHISERS <i>DR. MANISH SIDHPURIA</i>	13
4.	IMPACT OF GAAR ON INDIAN EQUITY MARKET: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY <i>DR. SANJIV MITTAL, DR. SUNIL KUMAR, DR. PRADEEP AGARWAL & DR. MOHINDER KUMAR</i>	17
5.	CHANGING FACE OF INDIAN RETAIL INDUSTRY <i>DR. ANIL CHANDHOK</i>	22
6.	ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN INDIA: REVIEWING THE RELEVANCE OF THEORY <i>DR. PAWAN KUMAR SHARMA</i>	26
7.	A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH SELF HELP GROUPS (SHGs) <i>U.DHANALAKSHMI & DR. K. RAJINI</i>	29
8.	CONSUMER PERCEPTION TOWARDS BRAND PREFERENCE OF MOBILE PHONE SERVICE PROVIDERS <i>A. MUTHUKUMARAN & DR. M. MATHIVANAN</i>	35
9.	CORPORATE GOVERNANCE IN INDIA: EVOLUTION AND EMERGING ISSUES <i>DR. BADIUDDIN AHMED, RAFIUDDIN & IRFANUDDIN</i>	40
10.	STUDY OF FINANCIAL INCLUSION IN BANKING INDUSTRIES IN INDIA <i>PAVAN KAPOOR</i>	44
11.	SCM PRACTICES AND ITS IMPACT ON TURNOVER, PROFITABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY IN INDIAN BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT <i>VIVEK PANDEY</i>	49
12.	ENCOURAGING POSITIVE WORKPLACE BEHAVIOUR: ETHICS ON THE JOB <i>GEETU SHARMA</i>	54
13.	A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PROFITABILITY OF TWO COMPANIES – A CASE STUDY <i>A. S. MANJULAKSHMI</i>	58
14.	A STUDY ON EMPLOYEE RETENTION STRATEGIES AT JAMMU & KASHMIR BANK LTD, AT MISSION ROAD, BANGALORE <i>S. POORNIMA</i>	65
15.	TYPE – A TRAIT FOR EFFECTIVE MANAGER <i>ANASUYA SWAIN</i>	75
16.	IMPORTANCE OF MEASURING HR'S EFFECTIVENESS: A DRIVE TO HR METRICS <i>P. AKTHAR</i>	78
17.	IMPULSIVE BUYING BEHAVIOUR OF RURAL PEOPLE: WITH REFERENCE TO FMCG PRODUCTS <i>J. JOSEPHINE LALITHA & DR. N. PANCHANATHAM</i>	82
18.	AN INTRODUCTION TO EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: SOLUTION FOR EFFECTIVE HRM WITH REFERENCE TO EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT MODEL <i>B. KALAIYARASAN & DR. GAYATRI</i>	87
19.	FDI IN INDIAN RETAIL: CHALLENGES <i>DR. MANOJ KUMAR SHARMA</i>	90
20.	WORKING CAPITAL PERFORMANCE: A CASE STUDY ON DABUR INDIA LTD. <i>NIRMAL CHAKRABORTY</i>	93
21.	A STUDY ON PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF PUBLIC & PRIVATE SECTOR MUTUAL FUNDS IN INDIA <i>DR. BHUPENDRA SINGH HADA</i>	98
22.	HUMAN RESOURCE ACCOUNTING: REDEFINING HUMAN CAPITAL INVESTMENT IN CORPORATE SECTOR <i>MONIKA KHEMANI</i>	104
23.	THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PATERNALISTIC LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR–THE MEDIATING EFFECTS OF ETHICAL CLIMATE <i>MENG-YU CHENG, LEI WANG & SRI-DWIJAYANTI LESMANA</i>	108
24.	AIRLINE INDUSTRIAL UNREST AND STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PRACTICES <i>AHMED ABDIKARIM HASSAN & KARIM OMIDO</i>	118
25.	INTEREST RATE DEREGULATION AND DEMAND FOR MONEY IN NIGERIA (2000-2011) <i>ODITA ANTHONY OGOMGBUNAM</i>	124
26.	REDINGTON IMMUNIZATION THEORY APPROACH TO HEDGING INTEREST RATE RISK IN INSURANCE COMPANIES IN NIGERIA <i>AFOLABI, TAOFEK SOLA</i>	130
27.	MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES IN WEST BENGAL: AN EVALUATION <i>SOUMYA GANGULY</i>	136
28.	ETHICS IN MARKETING IN REAL ESTATE INDUSTRY IN PUNE FOR CUSTOMER SATISFACTION <i>MEERA SINGH</i>	142
29.	THE EFFECTS OF STRATEGIC MARKETING ON SAVING AND CREDIT CO-OPERATIVES PERFORMANCE: A SURVEY OF SELECTED SAVING AND CREDIT CO-OPERATIVES IN MOMBASA COUNTY <i>ELISHA MKOFIRHA ADE & KARIM OMIDO</i>	146
30.	BUYING BEHAVIOUR - AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE: AN ANALYSIS OF AN IDEAL MUSLIM BUYING BEHAVIOUR <i>TAHIR AHMAD WANI</i>	152
	REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK	156

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A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH SELF HELP GROUPS (SHGs)

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ABSTRACT

This paper looks at the literature around the self help groups (SHGs) movement in India. It is hoped that it will be useful to fellow researchers who are undertaking studies in this area. It exposes the historical background of self help groups in Indian context. This paper reviews literature on the subject's empowerment process in relation to a self-help group as well as related literature. It is important to note that most literature has been focusing on empowerment as the outcome not as the process. There have been limited studies that explore the relationship between a self-help group and the process of empowerment.

KEYWORDS

self help groups, process women empowerment, literature review.

INTRODUCTION

 self-help groups (SHGs) were piloted by NGOs, notably MYRADA in India in the mid-1980s, in order to provide financial services to poor people. What started as a pilot programme has now become a movement for social empowerment – particularly for rural poor women. The number of SHGs linked to banks has increased from about 500 in the early 1990s to more than 1.6 million in 2006. This paper documents the beginnings and progress of the self-help group movement in India and the roles played by NGOs, banks, IFAD and central and state governments in promoting SHGs and the review of literature on Self Help Groups (SHGs).

A BRIEF HISTORY

- The first people in history to demonstrate the power of self-help groups were alcoholics. Alcoholics Anonymous was started in 1935 to help "hopeless alcoholics" recover from alcoholism, something the medical profession had been unable to do. The power of self-help groups to help people suffering from other problems was not widely recognized until after World War II.
- In the 1960s, civil right movements began to evolve in many developed countries, as people became aware of their collective power. These power-to-the-people movements provided avenues for the development of the self-help group movement (Vattano, 1972). In Japan, people who had come to enjoy a free society welcomed "the peak of circle movements" in 1955 (Ōsawa, 1976), and, influenced by Western civil right movements, they promoted the establishment of similar movements.
- In the 1970s, the emphasis moved from mass movements to small group movements in some countries. In Germany, people began to be more interested in their ordinary lives than in political abstractions (Moeller, 1978) while in Japan, people with disabilities and chronic illnesses started to spend more energy on activities within their local communities rather than on political actions against the central government (Osa, 1991, pp. 43-45; Tsuda, Kida, Yamada, & Saitō, 1977, pp. 62-67). Moreover, by mid-1970s welfare states were being challenged by criticism of their rising public expenditure and inefficiency, while international economic growth rates were declining due to rising oil prices (George & Page, 1995, pp. 8-10).
- Then in 1976 a strange coincidence occurred. In North America, two edited books (Caplan & Killilea, 1976; Katz & Bender, 1976) and two journal issues (Borman & Lieberman, 1976; Riessman, 1976) written by social scientists appeared which featured self-help groups. In Japan that same year, a voluminous edited book on "small grassroots groups" was published with detailed reports on various groups, including self-help groups for people with disabilities (Shisō no Kagaku Kenkyūkai, 1976). In 1977, in the UK, and in 1978, in Germany and Belgium, research books on self-help groups were published that were clearly influenced by the studies in North America (Brankaerts, 1983; Moeller, 1978; Robinson & Henry, 1977) and in 1979, Japanese psychologists published a book on self-help groups, and introduced the studies of North America to Japanese readers (Murayama & Agari, 1979).
- In the 1980s, self-help support systems such as self-help clearinghouses, which provided information and referral services linking the public with the groups and assisted groups to develop, were established in North America and Germany (Matzat & Estorff, 1989; Oka, 1992; Wollert, 1987). In our opinion, it was at this point that these countries and Japan went their different ways. Although Japan had as many self-help groups as North America and Germany, it has never established any self-help clearinghouses with paid staff. Even today, Japan has only a few volunteer-based self-help clearinghouses and paid-staff-based clearinghouses catering to a limited client base, such as a women's clearinghouse (Oka, 1994a).
- Another characteristic trend of the 1980s was the development of international networks of self-help supporters. In 1980, the Regional Office for Europe of the World Health Organization established a Copenhagen-based working group on self-help and health. This resulted in an international report on self-help (Hatch & Kicbusch, 1983). In 1983, another international report was published which covered self-help groups in countries, including the UK, Germany, the US, Canada, and New Zealand (Pancoast, Parker, & Froland, 1983). As a result of this internationalization and other factors, in 1992 an international conference in Ottawa, Canada, attracted people not only from North America but also from Europe and East Asia. Two years later, the conference research committee (a Canadian, American, and an Israeli) edited a book published with papers from the conference including ones from Eastern Europe, Japan, Israel, and Hong Kong (Lavoie, Borkman, & Gidron, 1994).
- In the 1990s, a new trend appeared: online self-help groups (Madara & White, 1997). Going on-line has contributed to the self-help group movement in the following ways: first, the Internet has made it much easier for people to communicate with each other especially those who are separated by great distances. International interactions have increased (our co-authorship, for example, would be impossible if we were unable to use the Internet), and people with very rare and special needs, who naturally live great distance from each other, can now easily form groups. Second, by using searching engines, people can easily find out if groups they would like to participate in exist as long as they have web pages.

SHG

- SHG is a development group for the poor and marginalized
- It is recognised by the government and does not require any formal registration
- The purpose of the SHG is to build the functional capacity of the poor and the marginalized in the field of employment and income generating activities
- People are responsible for their own future by organising themselves into SHGs

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR FORMATION OF SHGs

The strong belief by the individual to bring about change through collective efforts

- Effort is built on mutual trust and mutual support
- Every individual is equal and responsible
- Every individual is committed to the cause of the group
- Decision is based on the principles of consensus
- The belief and commitment by an individual that through the group their standard of living will improve
- Savings is the foundation on which to build the group for collective action.

MEMBERSHIP

- An SHG shall have a membership of not less than 10 persons or more than 20.
- Members should reside in the same village
- Membership should be based on affinity
- The groups could be mixed /male or female
- The members of the groups should preferable be from the low- income group.

THE FORMATION OF SHG

Persons interested in forming SHGs should meet and discuss the following before they form

- The meaning of SHG
- The guiding principles of SHGs
- Membership in SHGs
- Management of SHGs
- Types of economic activities they would like to take up individually or as a group
- Amount of savings to be made by the members

NUMBERS OF SHGS IN A VILLAGE

There can be as many as possible SHGs in a village. In order to identify them each SHG may give themselves a name or a number e.g.

- Mawlieh village SHG- I
- Mawlieh village SHG- II and so on

MANAGEMENT OF THE SHGs

- SHG elect a member as a chairman and Secretary of the group for a period of one year.

The chairman acts as the representative of the groups and chairs group meeting while the secretary maintain records

- Every decision of the group must be shares consulted and agreed by everyone
- The group frames rules and regulations
- The group must open an account with a bank
- They must meet at least once a month
- Maintenance of records. The following books are maintained by SHG
 - Register of Minutes
 - Register of accounts (Cash Book/ ledger/ vouchers/ receipts etc)
 - Admission register
 - Attendance register
- SHGs will close the annual account on the 31st march every year and the secretary will present the annual reports related to savings loans activities etc.
- The agenda of each group meeting shall consist of the following
 - Monthly savings accounts reports and bank account reports
 - Monthly savings
 - Other matters

INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITIES AND LOAN SYSTEM

- SHGs must save for at least 6 months before they can be linked to a bank credit or provide loans to its members
- The rate of interest in lending among members from the groups fund will be decided by the group as well as the amount to be given and the rate of interest to be charged.
- Loans may be given to members for either productive or consumption purposes subject to the groups decision
- All types of Income generating activities of SHGs must be supported by a brief market survey
- All income - generating activities require functional skills. SHGs must promote its members to be trained in their selected activity to enhance their capability for sustainable surplus production

THE EARLY YEARS

Self-help groups (SHGs) first emerged in MYRADA (Mysore Resettlement and Development Agency) in 1985. In 1986/87 there were some 300 SHGs in MYRADA's projects. Many had emerged from the breakdown of the large cooperatives organized by MYRADA. In these areas, a number of members asked MYRADA to revive the credit system. They usually came in groups of 15-20. When reminded of the loans they had taken out from the cooperative, they offered to return them to MYRADA, but not to the cooperative, which in their experience was dominated by a few individuals. MYRADA staff suggested that they return the money to themselves – in other words to the members who had come in a group to present their case to MYRADA. After some hesitation, they decided to continue meeting in these smaller groups. MYRADA staff realized that they would need training: how to organize a meeting, set an agenda, keep minutes, etc. Efforts were made to train the members systematically. On analysis it emerged that the members were linked together by a degree of affinity based on relationships of trust and support; they were also often homogeneous in terms of income or of occupation (for example, agricultural labourers), but not always. Caste and creed played a role, but in several groups affinity relationships and economic homogeneity were stronger; as a result, several groups included different castes and creeds. From the time that the first SHGs emerged in 1985 to the inclusion of the SHG strategy in the annual plan for 2000/01 (Government of India, 2000), several important steps were taken by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and leading NGOs, as well as by multilateral agencies, particularly IFAD.

The SHG strategy is an important component of the Government's overall thrust to mitigate poverty and has been included in every annual plan since 2000. This period of 20years can be divided broadly into two phases.

PHASE I: FROM 1987 TO 1992

During this phase – largely omitted in recent studies – NABARD focused on supporting NGO initiatives to promote SHGs and on analysing their potential and performance. In 1987 NABARD first put funds into the SHG/SAG (SELF HELP AFFINITY GROUPS) movement (in response to a proposal from MYRADA submitted in 1986). In 1987 it provided MYRADA with a grant of 1 million Indian rupees (Rs) to enable it to invest resources to identify affinity groups, build their capacity and match their savings after a period of 3-6 months. The grant was based on MYRADA's experience in promoting SHGs since 1985 and the initiative of the NABARD chairperson at that time, Shri P.R. Nayak.

PHASE II: FROM 1992 ONWARDS – THE SHG-BANK LINKAGE PROGRAMME

The programme began in 1992 with a two-year pilot project to link 500 SHGs. It was indeed the pilot of the SHG-Bank Linkage Programme, although not of the SHG movement, with which NABARD had already been involved since 1987. Without that 1987 investment, the SHG movement would not have had official recognition and ownership. The SHG-Bank Linkage Programme was slow to take off, but has been speeding along since 1999. It has received unstinting support from RBI, the central and several state governments of India – notably Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka – and thousands of NGOs and the banking sector, as well as multilateral agencies, notably IFAD.

The process of SHG formation requires activities that can be divided into three broad groups:

1. identification of an affinity group – this requires experienced NGO staff and does not pay for itself;
2. Institutional capacity-building – this requires numerous training models over 14 sessions. The training must be subsidized and costs Rs 5 000-10 000 per group. This investment in capacity-building (management and livelihood skills, basic numeracy) must be initially made as grants by various institutions. Non-formal education must go beyond just literacy if it is to provide a basis for livelihoods. IFAD has included this investment in all its projects in India since 1995 (and in some other countries, for example Indonesia); and
3. 'loaning activity', which includes visits to the SHG, assessment, etc. The cost of this activity can be covered by the MFI/FI within three to four years. In the case of the MFI Sanghamithra, it took three years. The first two sets of activities must be handled by an NGO or a good promoting institution; the third by the MFI/FI. After breaking even, Sanghamithra invests its surpluses in the first and second set of activities. A not-for-profit MFI is more easily able to make this investment.

With this support from the MFI/FI and the apex institutions that the SHGs promote, the groups have survived long after a particular project ended.

CURRENT STATUS**TABLE 1: CUMULATIVE ACHIEVEMENT UPTO 31.03.2012**

1	No. of SHGs	5,56,311
	No. of SHG Members	85.70 lakhs
2	No. of Rural SHGs	3,72,092
	No. of Members in Rural SHGs	57.37 lakhs
3	No. of Urban SHGs	1,84,219
	No. of Members in Urban SHGs	28.32 lakhs
4	Total Savings of SHGs	Rs. 3,374.60 crores
5	Revolving Fund to SHGs	4,85,822
6	No. of SHGs credit linked so far	4,85,822
	Total credit availed	Rs.15,633.83 crores
7	Economic Assistance to SHGs	61,934
	Amount released for EA	584.39 Crores
8	No. of PLFs Restructured	10,494
	No. of PLFs Registered	8,986
	No. of PLFs got Incentives	5,850
9	Bulk loan provided to PLFs	419
	Bulk loan Amount sanctioned	Rs. 100.54 Crores
10	No. of SLFs Formed	399
	No. of SLFs Registered	290
11	Youth Skill Training	1,08,496
12	EDT Programme	17,323

Source: TN Corporation for Development of Women.

WB Assisted TNEPRP Project – “PudhuVaazhvu”

- A key Project of World Bank in Tamil Nadu to address inequity and to promote inclusive growth.
- Community Driven Development (CDD) approach through pro poor community organizations.
- Focused intervention in backward Blocks aimed at empowerment of the poor, marginalised and differently abled.
- Increase in household income through promotion of sustainable livelihoods.
- Implemented in 70 blocks(2509 VPs) in Phase-I and 50 blocks (1661 VPs) in Phase –II since 2005.
- Total families Targeted – 9.63 lakhs.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of literature was added to this study by referring to different journal and studies conducted by different individuals to show relevance to the study. The review of impact assessment studies provides valuable insights into the benefits and drawbacks associated with SHG programme. Some important studies which are relevant to the present study have been discussed below:

Gurumoorthy (2000) explained the Self Help Group (SHG) as a viable alternative to achieve the objectives of rural development and to get community participation in all rural development programmes. It was an organised set up to provide micro-credit to the rural women on the strength of the group savings without insisting on any collateral security for the purpose of encouraging them to enter into entrepreneurial activities and for making them enterprising women.

Rekha Goankar(2001) in her study concluded that the movement of SHGs can significantly contribute towards the reduction of poverty and unemployment in the rural sector of the economy and the SHGs can lead to social transformation in terms of economic development and the social change.

Manimekalai and Rajeswari (2001) studied the socio-economic background of self-help group women in rural micro-enterprises in Tamil Nadu and examined the factors which had motivated the women to become SHG members and eventually as entrepreneurs. The researchers analysed the nature of economic activities and the Performance in terms of growth indicators such as investment turnover, employment, sources of finance, product marketing and other related aspects and identified the problems faced by SHG women in running the enterprises. For the purpose of the study, a sample of 150 SHG members was selected who were studied according to the nature of their activities from 5 blocks of Tiruchirapalli district of Tamil Nadu. These groups were formed and promoted by an NGO. The nature of micro-enterprises run by the groups included trade, agriculture, animal husbandry, processing of food, tailoring, gem cutting, catering, petty

shop, bamboo based units and agro-based units etc. The primary data pertained to the year 1999-2000. The SHG women were employed both in agricultural and non-agricultural activities. The study found that women SHGs earned the highest profit from agriculture, followed by trade related activities and catering services. A majority of sample units did not market their products outside the districts but sold these directly to the customers. The income of the SHG women almost doubled after taking up micro-enterprises. Majority of the respondents faced serious problems like non-availability of raw materials, lack of infrastructure facilities including marketing, lack of support from family members in running the enterprises etc. The provision of microfinance by the NGO to the women SHGs had helped the groups to achieve a measure of economic and social empowerment. It had developed a sense of leadership, organisational skill, management of various activities of a business, identifying raw materials, market and suitable diversification and modernization.

Singh (2001) conducted a study on the socio-economic impact of microfinance programme in Uttar Pradesh. In order to study the impact, rural areas of Kanpur district were selected on account of highest number of credit linked SHGs as compared to other districts in the state. For the purpose of the study, out of 11 SHGs linked with RRB, one group in Beridayria village was selected. It was found that in pre-SHG situation most of the members were dependent on income from labour but in the post-SHG situation their main source of income was dairy. The survey showed that simple and quick credit delivery with lower interest rates in SHGs replaced the money-lenders. During pre-SHG some of the loans were taken for consumption purpose but in the post-SHG situation the loans were mainly taken for income generating purposes. The study showed that the average value of assets increased by 46 per cent and the annual income per household increased by 28 per cent in post-SHG periods. The most interesting feature of SHGs was compulsory savings even by cutting the necessary expenditures. Recovery rate was quite high which ranged from 95 to 100 per cent. The study also revealed that the commercial banks were not prompt in linking SHGs for loans.

Mishra et al. (2001) studied the impact of rural SHGs on generation of income and employment among the beneficiaries, identified the major constraints and problems faced by the groups, and suggested measures for overcoming these problems in Faizabad district of eastern Uttar Pradesh. For the purpose of the study, five SHGs in Amaniganj block of the district were selected randomly. It was observed that SHG members were mainly from OBC community whose main occupations were agriculture, small businesses, labour etc. Ninety-three per cent of the SHG members were male and only 7 per cent were female. Majority of the members lived below the poverty line. The average monthly savings ranged from Rs. 15 to Rs. 50. Repayment performance was good. The results of the survey showed that SHGs have helped to increase the income of the participants by 10 to 15 per cent. The major problems that the members faced were lack of training, credit and marketing facilities, entrepreneurship and high interest rate. It was suggested to involve Commercial Banks, RRBs and Primary agricultural co-operative societies to provide liberal credit at cheaper interest rate to the poor through SHGs.

Puhazhendhi and Badatya (2002) in a study commissioned by NABARD surveyed 115 SHG members from 60 SHGs in eastern India. They concluded that institutional credit had deepened and widened among the rural poor, while there had been substantial reduction of loans from money-lenders and other informal sources. The findings of this study showed that 52 per cent of sample households registered 23 per cent rise in annual income and 30 per cent increase in asset ownership in post-SHG situation. About 72 per cent of the bank loan was used for income generating purpose and the remaining 28 per cent was for consumption and other social functions and contingency purposes. The estimated employment days per household worked out to 405 person days during post-SHG situation that had registered an increase of 34 per cent between pre- and post-SHG situations. Activity-wise, per cent increase was higher for non-farm activities (121 per cent) followed by off-farm activities (21 per cent) and farm activities (19 per cent). The social empowerment of sample SHG members in terms of self-confidence, involvement in decision-making, better communication, etc. improved in a significant way. It was also found that members in the older groups of five years and above were more socio-economically benefited as compared to the members in newly formed groups.

One study of 291 SHGs promoted by government agencies in Andhra Pradesh (**APMAS, 2002**) found that the meetings and financial transactions of many of the groups were fundamentally 'driven' by the anticipation of subsidy, and many of the SHGs would not have qualified for loans at all under NABARD guidelines. As has already been mentioned, however, government sponsored SHGs in Andhra Pradesh are a special case; the small sample of such groups in our own study may be more typical of such groups in other parts of India.

MYRADA (2002) studied the impact of SHGs on the empowerment status of women members in southern India. The objective of the study was to establish whether and to what extent the membership in SHGs had an impact on the social status and empowerment of the women members of such groups. For this purpose, primary data was collected from the members of 12 SHGs from four states (Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh) with the help of four professionally managed NGOs, i.e. CHASS, DHAN, MYRADA and RASS. Each NGO interacted with two groups that were three years old and one group that was less than one year old. Thus, 190 SHG members were interviewed with the help of structured interview schedule. The results of the study showed that in the new groups 47 per cent of the members were earning, whereas in the old groups 66 per cent members were either the chief wage earners or other earning members of their families. Average share of earning SHG members in their family income was higher in old groups, i.e., 40 per cent as compared to 26 per cent in young SHGs. While testing the confidence level of respondents, members in old groups reported a positive influence on confidence level in dealing with other people and institutions. It was concluded that members of old groups were more confident, more aware regarding their health and hygiene, more technically skilled, financially more secure, more in control of their lives and in a stronger position vis-à-vis their family members as compared to young group members. Hence, it was concluded that if responses from the new groups were taken as benchmark, the process of empowerment seemed to have started in old groups.

Harper (2002) studied the differences, outreach and sustainability of the SHG banking system and Grameen banking system of providing microfinance. SHG bank linkage and Grameen banking systems dominated the microfinance markets in India and Bangladesh respectively. In SHG bank linkage system 10 to 20 members formed a group and this group became an autonomous financial organisation, received loans from the bank in group name and the group members carried all saving and lending transactions on their own behalf. Thus, SHG was effectively a micro bank. But in Grameen banking system microfinance participants organised themselves into groups of five members and each member maintained her individual saving and loan account with microfinance organisation and the main function of the group was to facilitate the financial intermediation process. It was also found that both systems were best suited to their prevailing environments.

SHG bank linkage system was more flexible, independence-creating and imparted freedom of saving and borrowing according to the member's requirements, so was suitable in the Indian context. But Grameen banking system was more rigid, autonomous, over disciplined and dependence creating system which was suitable in Bangladesh where people were relatively more homogeneous, very poor and had less experience of democracy. It was also found that SHGs were probably less likely to include poor people than Grameen Bank groups but neither system reached the poorest. It was also found that SHG members were free to manage the group financial affairs so they were more empowered but at the same time more vulnerable. Grameen groups were much better protected against internal and external threats. Their members were less vulnerable but also less empowered.

Malhotra (2003) described some basic and conceptual issues regarding women empowerment and had given a comprehensive framework of domains of women empowerment. She included two essential elements in women empowerment, i.e. process and agency. Women empowerment was a process of progression from one stage to other and the agency element defined that women themselves must be significant actors in the process of change that was being measured. In order to measure empowerment empirically she had given a framework of economic, socio-cultural, interpersonal, legal, political and psychological dimensions of women empowerment at household and community level.

Parveen and Leonhäuser (2004) in their paper investigated the nature and extent of empowerment of rural women, factors influencing it and further outlined a strategic framework, role of SHGs, education, training and gender awareness for enhancing empowerment. For the purpose of study, qualitative and quantitative methods were integrated and primary data was collected from 156 respondents from three villages of Mymensingh district of Bangladesh during January to April 2003 by applying stratified random sampling. For the purpose of measuring women empowerment, a cumulative empowerment index (CEI) was prepared by adding the scores of six empowerment indicators, namely, contribution to household income, access to resources, ownership of assets, participation in household decision-making, perception on gender awareness and coping capacity to household shocks. The results showed that the level of women empowerment was not very satisfactory at the household level. CEI showed that 11 per cent of the respondents fell under a very low empowerment category and just 5 per cent of them belonged to high empowerment level. Eighty-two per cent of women were concentrated in very low to moderate tail of empowerment distribution. A multiple regression technique was applied to explore the effects of seven key factors of women empowerment. The regression analysis concluded that education, training and exposure to information media had the potential to increase women's empowerment. Therefore, effective

initiatives undertaken by the concerned government and non-government agencies in improving women's education, skill acquisition training and access to information could enhance women's empowerment in order to achieve gender equality and development at all levels in the rural society of Bangladesh.

Gaonkar's (2004) research paper aimed at evaluating the role of SHGs in the empowerment of women. Primary data was collected from the state of Goa, India. Out of total 500 SHGs functioning in Goa 100 groups were promoted by National Co-operative Union of India (NCUI). Twenty-five women SHGs promoted by NCUI from Bardez and Bicholim talukas were selected on the basis of random sampling. Comparison using before and after SHG technique was made. The study concluded that the microfinance programme had made a lasting impact on the lives of women particularly in rural areas of Goa. There was an increase in income, savings and consumption expenditures. With the increase in self-confidence, the social horizon of the members had widened. It was also found that with improvements in socio-economic opportunities for women and their ability to take collective action, there had been a significant decline in gender based problems such as domestic violence, dowry, polygamy etc. Interestingly, the members were motivating other women to form SHGs so that they can also reap programme benefits. SHGs had created better understanding between the members of different religious groups. This was a welcome change to have understanding and tolerance towards the members of other religions particularly in a country like India where there was a diversity of religions and castes.

Naila kabeer (2005) in a study apparently concludes that while access to financial services can and does make important contributions to the economic productivity and social well-being of poor women and their households, it does not "automatically" empower women – any more than do education, political quotas, access to waged work or any of the other interventions.

Ranjula Bali Swain (2007) Can Microfinance Empower Women? Self-Help Groups in India" concluded many strides have been made in the right direction and women are in the process of empowering themselves and NGOs that provide support in financial services and specialized training, have a greater ability to make a positive impact on women empowerment.

It has been observed by **M. Anjugam (2007)** that socially backward, landless and marginal farm house holds participate more in the self help group programme. Possession of livestock and consumer goods by the member households has been found to deter the joining of group.

Gladis Mary John (2008) found that membership in SHG inculcated a great confidence in the mind of majority of women to succeed in day to day life. Positive change was found in the attitude of relatives and friends towards the women in self help groups.

Sangwan (2008) empirically ascertained the determinants of financial inclusion and studied the relevance of Self Help Groups (SHGs) in achieving financial inclusion. For the purpose of the study, the cross-section data of 42 Regions from different states and UTs of India was used. The coverage under financial inclusion was assessed in terms of percentage of adults having credit and saving bank accounts. In order to find out the determinants of financial inclusion a multiple regression technique was applied. The empirical evidence of impact of bank branch density, level of income, literacy and SHG membership on financial inclusion was estimated with this technique. It was found that as on March 2006, the financial inclusion of adults above 19 years of age was 63 per cent in terms of saving accounts and 16 per cent in terms of credit accounts and about 37 per cent adults in India did not use financial services. The regression equations estimated with cross section data of States revealed that the branch density had positive and significant coefficient with the percentage of adults having saving as well as credit accounts. The coefficient of per capita income was also positive and significant. Literacy percentage had surprisingly negative relationship with both percentage of saving as well as credit accounts of adults. It may be partly because of lack of financial education among the educated ones. The results substantiated that the persons having low income and less geographical access to bank (e.g., agricultural laborers, marginal and small farmers, migrant labourers, tribal and women) were excluded from the financial inclusion. The regression equations were also estimated by including percentage of adult covered in SHGs, the variable had positive association with the level of financial inclusion especially in credit accounts. It suggested that SHGs could play significant role in achieving the financial inclusion especially for women and low-income families.

Falgun Kaneria, (2012), analysed that empowering women entrepreneurs is essential for achieving the goals of sustainable development and the bottlenecks hindering their growth must be eradicated to entitle full participation in the business. Apart from training programs, Newsletters, mentoring, trade fairs and exhibitions also can be a source for entrepreneurial development. As a result, the desired outcomes of the business are quickly achieved and more of remunerative business opportunities are found. Henceforth, promoting entrepreneurship among women is certainly a short-cut to rapid economic growth and development. Let us try to eliminate all forms of gender discrimination and thus allow 'women' to be an entrepreneur at par with men.

Manjunatha S.(2013), emphasized that in India the role of Self Help Groups in the rural development has attracted attention from all over the realm of social sciences. Hence, the study is placed to evaluate the SHGs important role in increasing rural development of Karnataka state. The major findings in the study justify the greater role played by the SHGs in increasing empowerment of women, by making them financially strong, as well as it helped them to save some amount of money and invest it in further development.

CONCLUSION

The SHG's became a regular component of the Indian financial system since 1996. The SHG's are small, informal and homogenous groups. These groups have proved as cyclic agents of development in both the rural and urban areas. The SHG's after being formed started collecting a fixed amount of thrift from each member regularly. After accumulating a reasonable amount of resources, the group starts lending to its members for pretty consumption needs. If the bank is satisfied with the group in terms of (i) genuineness of demand for credit; (ii) credit handling capacity of the members; (iii) repayment behaviour within the groups; and (iv) the accounting system and maintenance of the records, it extends a term loan of smaller amount to the group. Thus, SHGs playing a vital role in the empowerment of rural women in India.

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