

Self-Help Groups (Shgs) As A Means Of Women Empowerment

¹Shibashish Sahu, ²Satya Gopal Das, ³Dr. Sitaram Das

¹Lecturer in Commerce, Rairangpur College, Rairangpur, Mayurbhanj, 757043,
shibashishrrp@gmail.com

²Research Scholar, Dept. of Commerce and Management, Maharaja Sriram Chandra Bhanja
Deo University, Baripada, Odisha.

³Assistant professor, Dept. of Business Administration, Maharaja Sriram Chandra Bhanja
Deo University, Baripada, Odisha.

The empowerment of women is one of the most important goals that should be pursued in the attempt to create inclusive development on a global basis. It has been shown that the establishment of Self-Help Groups (SHGs), which are particularly common in developing countries like India, is a significant instrument for accomplishing this purpose. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the impact that SHGs play in the empowerment of women in terms of both their political and social standing. The study provides an illustration of the possibilities that are associated with empowerment driven by SHGs absed on 460 randomly selected members of SHG from Mayurbhanj district of Odisha.

Keywords: SHG, women empowerment, microfinance, social empowerment, income generation.

Introduction

The progress of a country is intrinsically linked to the social and economic status of women in that community. Engagement in self-help organizations (SHGs) may result in substantial enhancements in the living situations of women in developing nations. The main aim of SHG is to provide assistance to underprivileged persons and promote their empowerment. A SHG is a systematic framework that facilitates the voluntary association of a considerable number of (10-20) women with common objectives to participate in developmental initiatives. These actions include saving, credit, and income generation, therefore promoting economic autonomy. The SHG phenomenon cultivates collective consciousness among women, and boosts self-confidence. Joining a group that understands her rights, responsibilities, benefits, and obligations as a member of society may help her achieve what she is unable to do on her own. SHGs enhance the social and economic status of women, hence fostering national development in India, where a significant segment of the female populace continues to endure disadvantage, educational deprivation, exploitation, and the absence of fundamental social and economic rights. Recent experiences of SHGs in several nations demonstrate considerable success as an effective strategy and methodology. SHGs in India function as a collective

framework aimed at promoting women's progress, facilitating both individual and communal empowerment by enhancing women's 'condition' and 'position.' Presently, women in India are mobilizing to confront concerns like domestic abuse, rising expenses, legal inequities, sexual assault, child marriage, and several other types of violence. This approach aims to empower women by using many sources of strength. The SHGs have used several features and techniques that have significantly influenced women's empowerment. These groups are proliferating daily, offering extensive support and prompt guidance for the management of familial and entrepreneurial responsibilities, as well as leadership and decision-making acumen.

Economic development of any nation is substantially impacted by women, who represent about half of the world population.

The historical narrative reveals that women residing in rural areas, particularly within economically disadvantaged communities, have faced persistent systematic discrimination and inequitable treatment. The identified limitations prevent women from accessing education, financial services, and property rights, leading to their social and economic exclusion (Kabeer 2001; Sen 2001). Global development frameworks, along with national agendas, have recognized the empowerment of women as a fundamental cornerstone for achieving sustainable development and fostering inclusion (United Nations, 2015). The rural population in India, dependent on informal subsistence work, necessitates the empowerment of women to address developmental needs while also achieving strategic policy goals concurrently. This investigation examines the function of SHGs in facilitating the empowerment of women in Mayurbhanj district of Odisha.

Review of Literatures

Rajendran and Raya (2010) illustrated that income generated from SHG-driven enterprises enabled families to cover their expenses and empowered female members in financial decision-making. Swain and Wallentin (2009) demonstrated that women participating in SHGs experienced significant increases in their financial income as well as enhanced control over their assets. According to the findings of Puhazhendi and Badatya (2002), members of SHGs demonstrated improved access to loans from formal financial institutions. Furthermore, the enhanced earning potential of SHG members highlighted by Galab and Rao (2003) indicates that SHG income often supports children's educational and healthcare requirements. Garikipati (2008) demonstrated that managing income is a vital component for sustainable empowerment, which is effectively supported by SHGs for their members. According to Johnson (2004), SHGs serve as secure environments where women can voice their concerns and engage in collective efforts.

SHGs improve individual social welfare while also serving as a driving force for broad community development and fostering inclusive engagement in civic activities. SHGs enhance personal social welfare and act as a catalyst for extensive community development, promoting inclusive participation in all activities. Political empowerment encompasses active involvement in decision-making entities, participation in electoral processes, and contributions to civic initiatives. SHGs serve as an essential platform for women to comprehend political frameworks and enhance their leadership abilities. Bhatia and Bhatia (1997) noted that participation in SHGs resulted in heightened engagement with Panchayati Raj Institutions

(PRIs), frequently serving as a catalyst for the advancement of local political leadership. Panda (2004) highlighted that numerous women from SHGs took on leadership positions within village councils. Datta (2004) noted that SHGs empowered women to express their needs, develop community charters, and engage in negotiations with local authorities. Singh (2007) observed that women involved in SHGs frequently engaged in Gram Sabha meetings and played a role in the planning of village development initiatives. Pankaj and Tankha (2010) observed that women engaged in SHGs played an active role in campaigns aimed at enhancing political awareness and educating voters. Kurian (2005) observed that the political awareness of SHG members was enhanced through capacity-building initiatives implemented by NGOs and government entities. Swain and Wallentin (2009) observed that women in SHGs exhibited increased confidence when engaging with government offices and demonstrated a greater inclination to report corruption or seek accountability. Devika and Thampi (2007) indicated that involvement in SHGs transformed women's perspectives on power and politics, frequently resulting in collaborative initiatives to advocate for local services. Furthermore, SHG networks have played a crucial role in improving political representation for marginalized communities. Essentially, SHGs function as democratic entities that enable women to participate actively in public discussions and governance activities. Mayoux (2000) highlighted that SHGs fostered self-confidence, particularly through the encouragement of public speaking and leadership roles. Kumar (2009) observed that participants in SHGs cultivated essential negotiation and communication skills necessary for engaging with financial institutions and local authorities. Bali Swain and Wallentin (2008) utilized empowerment indices to demonstrate a quantifiable enhancement in self-esteem and autonomy among women in SHGs in India. Narayan (2002) noted that SHGs fostered a collective identity, a unified goal, and a conviction in the possibility of transformation, which subsequently diminished fatalism and reliance. Vijayanthi (2002) observed that women in SHGs exhibited an increased inclination to question conventional roles and assert their autonomy in making decisions related to their children's education, healthcare, and marital choices. Lakshmi and Vadivelu (2011) observed enhanced risk-taking capabilities and a diminished fear of failure among SHG entrepreneurs. Ravichandran and Babu (2008) illustrated a connection between participation in SHGs and reduced stress levels, along with enhanced mental health, attributable to the benefits of peer counseling and the sharing of personal challenges. Banu (2009) proposed that this particular type of collective therapy was particularly advantageous for women dealing with domestic violence or financial difficulties. Tesoriero (2006) proposed that psychological empowerment frequently precedes economic and political empowerment, as it entails a significant shift in personal beliefs and aspirations. A study by Holvoet (2005) discovered that SHG enhanced women's mobility, empowered household decision-making and fostered community participation. Sahu and Tripathy (2005) discovered that members of SHG actively supported child education and took a stand against spousal violence. Tripathy (2003) discovered that SHGs fostered community solidarity and facilitated collaborative resolution. According to Jha (2004), SHGs enhance the social standing of women and mitigate biases related to caste and class. A study by Parida and Sinha (2010) demonstrated that Self Help Groups were instrumental in empowering women through awareness programs and social audits.

The literature review elucidates the ways in which SHGs facilitate the empowerment of women across economic, social, and political dimensions. Current studies yield valuable results, but

they concentrate on wider national or regional regions and states like Kerala and Andhra Pradesh, which differ from Odisha in social, economic, and cultural factors. There is a scarcity of research that delves into particular aspects of the Mayurbhanj district, particularly concerning tribal and rural populations whose attributes encompass unique socio-cultural dimensions, economic constraints, and a diverse demographic composition. This study explores the existing knowledge gap by employing both qualitative and quantitative methods to assess the empowerment effects of SHG on the female population in the Mayurbhanj district of Odisha. The study aims to generate contextual insights that will enhance existing academic inquiries and examine geographical disparities by using SEM.

Data-analysis procedures

The complexity of the interactions between the variables in the research was studied with the use of structural equation modeling (SEM), which resulted in the acquisition of in-depth insights for the evaluation of the theoretical model. According to Byrne (2010), the model provides researchers with the ability to analyze a number of nuanced hypotheses; this is accomplished by analyzing a variety of independent and dependent variables within a consistent framework. The structural equation modeling (SEM) technique has the potential to aid researchers in appreciating the linkages among numerous components, hence increasing the analytical framework of the study by revealing processes that were not previously known.

Objective

The study intends to find the effect of SHG social empowerment (SE), economic empowerment (EE) and political empowerment (PE) .

Hypothesis

SHG has positive and significant effect on SE, EE and PE.

Methodology

In this study, a random sample approach was used, and a comprehensive questionnaire of thirty questions was designed based on the findings of prior research. A total of 460 individuals were selected as the sample size for this investigation. The items under each of four construct (The items associated with each of the four constructs (Income Generation, Social Empowerment, Economic Empowerment, SHGs' activities) were selected from different literatures. A total of five hundred questionnaires were issued to members of SHGs in the Mayurbhanj district of Odisha in order to collect primary data about the ways in which members of SHGs in the district achieve women's empowerment with those groups. Only, 460 questionnaires were considered valid for the final research after being subjected to a comprehensive evaluation. The researcher examined and restructured each question to ensure its relevance and consistency with the study's primary purpose. Participants were instructed to evaluate each of the 30 measurement items on a five-point scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree".

Reliability and validity

Examining a scale's internal consistency using the coefficient alpha method allows researchers to learn how well the scale measures the same underlying components. Table 1 shows the Cronbach's coefficient alpha values for each instrument. Scales are deemed reliable in this study if they are more than or equal to 0.70, as suggested by researchers (Hair et al., 2010). Validity is established using the metrics: Factor loadings, Composite reliability (CR), and Average Variance Explained (AVE). Table 1 displays the computed AVE and CR values; these values are higher than the suggested cutoffs of 0.7 for CR and 0.5 for AVE; moreover, there are substantial factor loadings (C.R. > 1.96) that are greater than 0.50, as stated by Hair et al. (2010).

Table -1: Reliability and validity

Construct		Construct	Estimate	AVE	CR	Alpha
SHG9	<---	SHG	0.752	0.62	0.98	0.932
SHG8	<---	SHG	0.698			
SHG7	<---	SHG	0.811			
SHG6	<---	SHG	0.88			
SHG5	<---	SHG	0.834			
SHG4	<---	SHG	0.671			
SHG3	<---	SHG	0.885			
SHG2	<---	SHG	0.503			
SHG1	<---	SHG	0.936			
SE1	<---	Social Empowerment	0.87	0.64	0.97	0.928
SE2	<---	Social Empowerment	0.86			
SE3	<---	Social Empowerment	0.848			
SE4	<---	Social Empowerment	0.893			
SE5	<---	Social Empowerment	0.766			
SE6	<---	Social Empowerment	0.624			
SE7	<---	Social Empowerment	0.69			
PE1	<---	Political Empowerment	0.81	0.73	0.98	0.95
PE2	<---	Political Empowerment	0.69			
PE3	<---	Political Empowerment	0.981			
PE4	<---	Political Empowerment	0.775			
PE5	<---	Political Empowerment	0.967			
PE6	<---	Political Empowerment	0.905			
PE7	<---	Political Empowerment	0.839			
EE7	<---	Economic Empowerment	0.314	0.55	0.94	0.898
EE6	<---	Economic Empowerment	0.324			
EE5	<---	Economic Empowerment	0.973			

EE4	<---	Economic Empowerment	0.752			
EE3	<---	Economic Empowerment	0.976			
EE2	<---	Economic Empowerment	0.831			
EE1	<---	Economic Empowerment	0.725			

Source: Calculated and compiled from primary data

Measurement Model

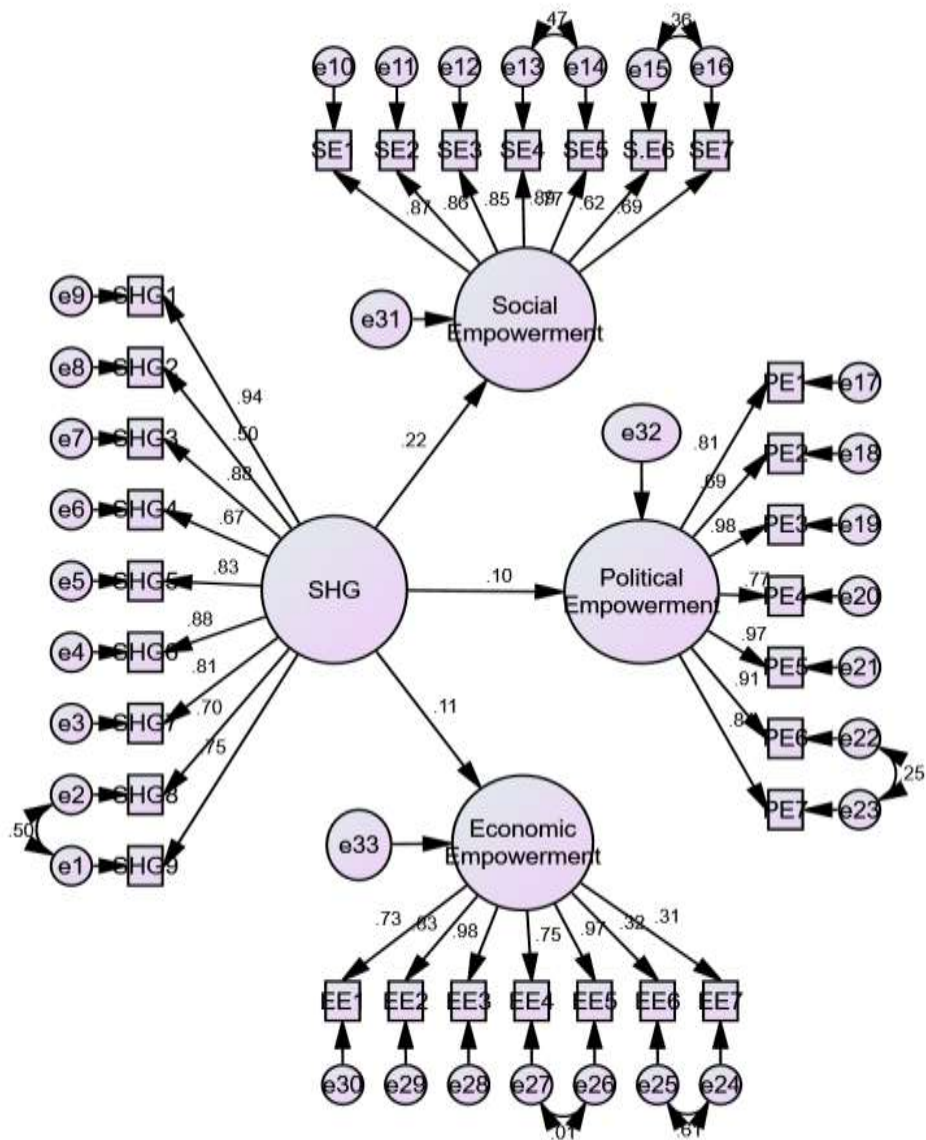
The goodness-of-fit indices for each latent construct were computed using a variety of models in accordance with the suggestions that were provided by Schreiber et al. (2006). The results are shown in Table 2, which demonstrates that the model fit indices are sufficient with suitable modifications of error terms.

Table-2: Model fit index

Indices	Value
CMIN/DF	3.496
RMR	0.263
GFI	0.841
AGFI	0.813
TLI	0.915
CFI	0.923
RMSEA	0.075

Source: Calculated and compiled from primary data

Fig.6.11: Path diagram-1 for Model



Results of Hypothesis Testing

Path analysis was used to examine the assumptions that were created (Figure 1). To help understand the significance of the relationships between the variables, Table 4 displays the critical ratio and regression weights. Social Empowerment (SE), Economic Empowerment (EE) and Political Empowerment (PE) are positively and significantly affected by SHG (***) ($p < 0.05$). So the hypothesis is accepted.

Table-3: Regression Weights

Construct		Construct	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Social_Empowerment	<---	SHG	.252	.056	4.505	***
Political_Empowerment	<---	SHG	.110	.052	2.119	.034
Economic_Empowerment	<---	SHG	.045	.021	2.143	.032
SHG9	<---	SHG	1.000			
SHG8	<---	SHG	.927	.043	21.738	***
SHG7	<---	SHG	1.064	.058	18.389	***
SHG6	<---	SHG	1.160	.057	20.231	***
SHG5	<---	SHG	1.113	.059	19.001	***
SHG4	<---	SHG	.904	.061	14.824	***
SHG3	<---	SHG	1.162	.057	20.377	***
SHG2	<---	SHG	.677	.062	10.832	***
SHG1	<---	SHG	1.235	.057	21.793	***
SE1	<---	Social_Empowerment	1.000			
SE2	<---	Social_Empowerment	1.011	.041	24.567	***
SE3	<---	Social_Empowerment	.969	.040	23.976	***
SE4	<---	Social_Empowerment	1.030	.039	26.356	***
SE5	<---	Social_Empowerment	.908	.046	19.917	***
S.E6	<---	Social_Empowerment	.757	.051	14.930	***
SE7	<---	Social_Empowerment	.811	.047	17.160	***
PE1	<---	Political_Empowerment	1.000			
PE2	<---	Political_Empowerment	.860	.052	16.625	***
PE3	<---	Political_Empowerment	1.200	.043	28.130	***
PE4	<---	Political_Empowerment	.958	.049	19.429	***
PE5	<---	Political_Empowerment	1.198	.044	27.442	***
PE6	<---	Political_Empowerment	1.118	.046	24.548	***
PE7	<---	Political_Empowerment	1.057	.049	21.798	***

Construct		Construct	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
EE7	<---	Economic_Empowerment	1.000			
EE6	<---	Economic_Empowerment	1.000	.125	8.027	***
EE5	<---	Economic_Empowerment	3.115	.446	6.985	***
EE4	<---	Economic_Empowerment	2.431	.362	6.725	***
EE3	<---	Economic_Empowerment	3.172	.454	6.988	***
EE2	<---	Economic_Empowerment	2.697	.394	6.843	***
EE1	<---	Economic_Empowerment	2.349	.351	6.687	***

Source: Calculated and compiled from primary data

Discussion

When the critical ratios (C.R.) are more than 1.96, the path is considered significant at a 95% confidence level. Consequently, since all of the observable variables in the study have statistically significant effects, it can be said that they all have high loadings on the corresponding constructs. The study proposed the hypothesis that there is a strong and positive relationship of SHG with SE, EE and PE. The direct association between SHG and EE is shown to have a positive and statistically significant relationship, as supported and corroborated by the path co-efficient ($\beta = 0.045$, $t = 2.143$, $p < .05$). The path co-efficient of SHG to SE ($\beta = 0.252$, $t = 4.505$, $p < .05$) was determined to be positive and statistically significant. The path co-efficient of SHG to PE ($\beta = 0.110$, $t = 2.119$, $p < .05$) was determined to be positive and statistically significant, hence confirming the study's hypothesis.

Conclusion

SHGs have been recognized as an effective approach to promote women's empowerment. The quest for women's empowerment seeks to actualize their identities, agency, and potential in every facet of life. The genuine empowerment of a woman stems from improved financial skills, self-assurance, motivation, perseverance, acknowledgment, and a say in family matters, coupled with active involvement. Although it is a steady and progressive path, it is crucial for women to cultivate the mindset necessary to actively engage in their personal growth. SHGs have the capacity to greatly influence the empowerment of women. The idea of these groups has been proposed for women in rural and semi-urban areas to enhance their living conditions. The main factor driving this change is that the majority of employment initiatives now focus on strengthening grassroots organizations that support disadvantaged communities. As a result, SHGs have significantly contributed to the empowerment of women.

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