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Contributing Factors for the Empowerment of Women in Tamil Nadu – A Critical Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The study focused to assess the contributing factors i.e. association and contribution of socio economic characteristics with empowerment of Pudu Vazhvu project women members. The study carried out in Namakkal district because it is one of the districts in Tamil Nadu where Pudu Vazhvu project was implemented. A sample of 132 respondents were selected from two blocks (six villages) by using Proportionate Random Sampling technique. Correlation and Multiple Regression analysis were used to draw meaningful interpretation by using IBM SPSS software. The results inferred that occupational status (X_3), leadership abilities (X_{10}) had positive significant association with empowerment at five per cent level of probability. Information sharing behaviour (X_{14}) had significant contribution at one per cent level of probability. Age (X_1) had significant contribution at one per cent level of probability but the contribution was negative. The results inferred that a unit increase in occupational status, leadership abilities, and information sharing behaviour would result in 1.692, 0.654 and 1.765 units increase in the level of participation respectively. A unit increase in age will decrease in the level of participation by 0.378 unit.

Key words: Empowerment of women; Correlation and regression in empowerment; Pudu Vazhvu Project.

Empowerment as a concept was introduced at the international women's conference in 1985 at Nairobi. The conference defined empowerment as a redistribution of social power and control of resource in favour of women. Exposure of women to a world outside their home is a result of education and modernization of culture and society. The term empowerment has been widely used in relation to women. Empowerment is a process, which challenges traditional power equations and relations, abolition of gender-based discrimination in all institutions and structures of society and participation of women in policy and decision-making process at domestic and public levels are but a few dimensions of women empowerment (Goel, 2009). Empowerment of women and gender equality recognized globally as a key element to achieve progress in all areas (Meetei et al., 2015).

Sandhu (2015) stated that the cohesive Self-regulatory group processes and the motivational efforts of the NGO makes success of the SHGs exceptionally promising and effective. The study also revealed that

there is a need for media awareness about ongoing schemes and facilities for these groups.

In Tamil Nadu, women were engaged more in agriculture than in manufacturing or service sector. Prema and Veeramuthu (2019) stated that the position of rural women in the state has remarkably changed with the formation of SHGs, which started on an experimental basis in 1989 in the rural areas. It helped poor rural women to enter the entrepreneurial world and it also helped them to develop self-confidence, communication, independence, mobility, management and technical skill.

Pudu Vazhvu Project was approved and launched in November 2005 and it was implemented over a six-year period with World Bank assistance. The target population of this project will be poor households, the most vulnerable sections including the physically challenged and the marginalized communities. The target population is identified by village communities using participatory methodologies. The project implemented in 2,509 Village Panchayats in 70

backward blocks spread over 15 districts. The goal of the project is reduction of poverty among the rural poor and other vulnerable groups and to promote their empowerment, through targeted assistance for productive livelihood activities, in a more enabling village environment, adopting Community Driven Development (CDD) approach. The project is based on cardinal principles of equity, inclusion, facilitation, participation, transparency and accountability which are adopted as key non-negotiable principles.

The responsibility for implementation of the project vests with the Vazhndhu Kaattuvom State Society at State level and District Vazhndhu Kaattuvom societies in the project districts. At the Village Panchayat level, the implementation agency is an inclusive community organization by name Village Poverty Reduction Committee (VPRC). VPRC is a community organization formed under the project pre-dominantly with representatives of the target population. Each hamlet of the panchayat is represented by a woman SHG member from the target population in the VPRC. All SHGs in a Village Panchayat form a federation. The Panchayat level federation of SHGs is a forum to share their experience and to voice their problems. PLFs provide sustainability and self-reliance to the SHGs.

Saradha (2021) reported that as there has been a continuous development in technology, changes in social well-being of the people, upliftment in literacy level, there is a change in the mind set of women that encourages them to occupy a place in supporting their family along with men folks (*Mary, 2012*). In order to provide support and motivate the needy, the Government has implemented many schemes and programs. The SHG is one where the women who do not have adequate financial support may join together with a focus to improve their social and financial background (*NABARD, 2009*). Microfinance is emerging as a powerful instrument for poverty alleviation in the new economy (*Vetrivel, 2010*). SHGs have now evolved as a movement. Mainly, members of the SHGs are women. Consequently, participation of women in the country's economic development is increasing. They also play an important role in elevating the economic status of their families (*Saravanan, 2016*).

Sathiabama (2010) revealed that the Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have paved the way for economic independence of rural women.

Hence, the study aimed to study the association

and contribution of socio-economic characteristics with empowerment and level of participation in Pudu Vazhvu project activities.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Namakkal district in Tamil Nadu because it is one of the districts in Tamil Nadu where Pudu Vazhvu project was implemented and also number of blocks of Pudu Vazhvu Project Implemented was higher in Namakkal district. Erumapatti and Vennandur blocks were selected based on year of implementation of Pudu Vazhvu project. Three villages from each block (Totally six villages) were selected based on year of implementation of Pudu vazhvu project. A sample of 132 respondents were selected from six villages following the Proportionate Random Sampling technique. Data were collected with the help of a well-structured and pre-tested interview schedule and analyzed with suitable techniques. Correlation and Multiple Regression analysis were used to draw meaningful interpretation by using IBM SPSS software.

RESULTS AND DISSCUSSION

Association and contribution of socio-economic characteristics of Pudu Vazhvu project women members with empowerment : From Table 1, it could be inferred that out of fourteen, four variables viz., mass media exposure (X_6), attitude towards self-employment (X_{13}) had shown positive significant association with empowerment at five per cent level of probability.

Age (X_1) and achievement motivation (X_7), had negative significant association with empowerment at five per cent level of probability. The variables namely occupational status (X_3), leadership abilities (X_{10}), showed a positive and significant association with empowerment at one per cent level of probability.

Subsequently, the multiple regression analysis was performed to find out the extent of contribution of each variable towards the empowerment of Pudu Vazhvu project SHG members in developmental activities.

Table 1 indicates that the R^2 value was 0.52 which revealed that 52.00 per cent variation in the empowerment was explained by fourteen independent variables selected for the study. The 'F' value was significant at one per cent level of probability.

Since the 'F' value was significant, the prediction equation was fitted for the empowerment of SHG members and the same is given below.

Table 1. Correlation and Multiple regression analysis between the socio-economic characteristics and empowerment of Pudu vazhvu project women members

Variables	Correlation coefficient (r) value	Partial Regression Coefficient (b)	SE	't' value
Age	-0.180*	-0.402	0.148	-2.709*
Educational status	0.003 ^{NS}	-1.271	0.971	-1.309 ^{NS}
Occupational status	0.261**	2.199	0.800	2.749*
Annul income	0.053 ^{NS}	-1.296E-6	0.000	-0.185 ^{NS}
Social participation	-0.004 ^{NS}	-0.215	0.211	-1.022 ^{NS}
Mass media exposure	0.202*	0.313	0.374	0.838 ^{NS}
Achievement motivation	-0.199*	-0.352	0.455	-0.774 ^{NS}
Attitude towards group activity	0.013 ^{NS}	-0.166	0.258	-0.643 ^{NS}
Self confidence	-0.065 ^{NS}	-0.424	0.212	-1.996**
Leadership abilities	0.274**	0.553	0.191	2.895*
Decision making behavior	-0.081 ^{NS}	0.109	0.377	0.289 ^{NS}
Awareness on women development programmes	0.057 ^{NS}	-2.105	2.065	-1.019 ^{NS}
Attitude towards self-employment	0.190*	0.113	0.167	0.675 ^{NS}
Information sharing behaviour	-0.090 ^{NS}	1.537	0.789	1.949**

R²= 0.52; F= 10.2**; **Significant at 0.01 level; *Significant at 0.05 level; NS=non significant

Table 2. Association and contribution of the profile of Pudu Vazhvu project women members with level of participation

Variables	Correlation coefficient (r) value	Partial Regression Coefficient (b)	SE	't' value
Age	-0.250**	-0.378	0.129	-2.924*
Educational status	0.181*	0.164	0.846	0.194 ^{NS}
Occupational status	0.314**	1.692	0.697	2.427*
Annul income	0.063 ^{NS}	-1.832E-6	0.000	-0.300 ^{NS}
Social participation	0.098 ^{NS}	-0.162	0.184	-0.884 ^{NS}
Mass media exposure	0.263**	0.199	0.326	0.612 ^{NS}
Achievement motivation	-0.136 ^{NS}	-0.180	0.396	-0.455 ^{NS}
Attitude towards group activity	0.045 ^{NS}	-0.293	0.225	-1.302 ^{NS}
Self confidence	0.053 ^{NS}	-0.241	0.185	-1.302 ^{NS}
Leadership abilities	0.364**	0.654	0.166	3.929*
Decision making behavior	-0.208*	-0.220	0.329	-0.670 ^{NS}
Awareness on women development programmes	0.068 ^{NS}	-0.762	1.800	-0.423 ^{NS}
Attitude towards self employment	0.263**	0.053	0.145	0.363 ^{NS}
Information sharing behavior	-0.024 ^{NS}	1.765	0.687	2.569*

R²= 0.59; F= 12.49 **; **Significant at 0.01 level; *Significant at 0.05 level; NS-Non significant

$$Y = 100.95 - 0.402X_1 - 1.271X_2 + 2.199X_3 - 1.296X_4 - 0.215X_5 + 0.313X_6 - 0.352X_7 - 0.166X_8 - 0.424X_9 + 0.553X_{10} - 0.109X_{11} - 2.105X_{12} + 0.113X_{13} + 1.537X_{14}$$

It could be seen from the above equation that the variables viz., occupational status (X_3), leadership abilities (X_{10}) had shown positive significant association with empowerment at five per cent level of probability. Information sharing behaviour (X_{14}) had significant contribution at one per cent level of probability. Age (X_1) had significant contribution at one per cent level of probability but the contribution was negative. Self-

confidence had significant contribution at five per cent level of probability (X_9) but the contribution was negative.

The results infer that a unit increase in occupational status, leadership abilities and information sharing behaviour would result in 2.199, 0.553 and 1.537 unit increase in the empowerment of respectively. A unit increase in age and self-confidence would decrease in the empowerment by 0.402 and 0.424 respectively.

Majority of the respondents were found under the middle level education. This education level

would have helped them to attend the training of Pudu Vazhvu Project and aware about the programmes. Through this skill-based training attended, the women members were able to start a enterprise after joining this Pudu Vazhvu SHG. This helped in empowerment of women in psychological, economical, sociological, political aspects. This might be the reason for positive and significant contribution between the occupational status and empowerment.

After joining of Pudu Vazhvu Project, medium level of the women members had leadership abilities. The Pudu Vazhvu project SHG improved the leadership ability of women members. This leadership ability could help in empowerment of women in psychological, economical, sociological, political aspects. This might be the reason for positive and significant contribution between the leadership abilities and empowerment.

Majority of the respondents had medium level of information sharing behaviour. After joining Pudu Vazhvu project SHG, the women members attended more skill based training and exposure visits about enterprise. The women members were interested to share the training experience to friends, family members, and neighbour. This might be the reason for positive and significant contribution between the information sharing behaviour and empowerment.

Majority of the women members were found under middle age category followed by young age. Old age women members were not interested to attend the training of Pudu Vazhvu project. This may be the reason for negative contribution of age and empowerment.

Self-confidence showed negative contribution towards empowerment. The reason was that the is old age women members had not participated in trainings. *Association and contribution of the socio-economic characteristics of Pudu Vazhvu project women members with level of participation* : The association and contribution have been studied using correlation and regression analysis and the findings are presented in following Table 2.

From the Table 2, it could be inferred that out of 14 variables, five variables viz., age (X_1), occupational status (X_3), mass media exposure (X_6), leadership abilities (X_{10}), attitude towards self-employment (X_{13}) had shown positive significant association with participation at one per cent level of probability. This finding is in accordance with the findings of Nisha (2013).

The variables namely educational status (X_2) and

decision-making behavior (X_{11}), showed a positive and significant association with participation at five per cent level of probability.

Subsequently, the multiple regression analysis was performed to find out the extent of contribution of each variable towards the overall participation of SHG members in developmental activities.

Table 1 indicates that the R^2 value was 0.59 which revealed that 59.00 per cent variation in the level of participation was explained by fourteen independent variables selected for the study. The 'F' value was significant at one per cent level of probability.

Since the 'F' value was significant, the prediction equation was fitted for the level of participation of Pudu Vazhvu project SHG members and the same is given below.

$$Y = 54.54 - 0.378X_1^* + 0.164X_2 + 1.692X_3^* - 1.832X_4 - 0.162X_5 + 0.199X_6 + 0.180X_7 - 0.293X_8 - 0.241X_9 + 0.654X_{10}^* - 0.220X_{11} - 0.762X_{12} + 0.053X_{13} + 1.765X_{14}^*$$

It could be seen from the above equation that the variables viz., occupational status (X_3), leadership abilities (X_{10}) and information sharing behaviour (X_{14}) had shown positive significant association with participation at five per cent level of probability. Age (X_1) had significant contribution at five per cent level of probability but the contribution was negative.

The results infer that a unit increase in occupational status, leadership abilities, and information sharing behaviour would result in 1.692, 0.654 and 1.765 units increase in the level of participation respectively. A unit increase in age will decrease in the level of participation by 0.378 unit. Majority of the respondents were possessed under the middle level education. This education level could help them too aware of Pudu Vazhvu project SHG and participate in Pudu Vazhvu project SHG. After joining Pudu vazhvu project SHG, the women members were able to start an enterprise. This might be the reason for positive and significant contribution between the occupational status and participation.

After joining of Pudu Vazhvu project, medium level of the women members had leadership abilities. The leadership position will be kept in rotation each year. So all the women members would have got to be the chance to leader of SHG. This might be the reason for positive and significant contribution between the leadership abilities and participation.

Majority of the respondents had medium level

of information sharing behaviour. Attending group meetings is one of the extended roles of the women members. During the time of meeting, it is possible to share the information on various enterprises and relevant experiences of enterprises between women members. And the women members were interested to share the training experience to friends, family members and neighbour. This might be the reason for positive and significant contribution between the information sharing behaviour and participation. Old age women members had not participated in group meetings and trainings of Pudu Vazhvu project. This may be the reason for negative contribution of age and participation.

CONCLUSION

From the study, it could be concluded that occupational status, mass media exposure, leadership abilities, decision making behaviour, attitude towards self-employment, information sharing behaviour had shown the positive association and contribution to the level of participation in Pudu Vazhvu Project. However, age has contributing negatively to the participation and these are the major contributing factors to participate in the project. After joining in this project, women members became leader and managing

the SHG activities. This would develop the information sharing and decision-making behaviour of women. The women members have positive attitude towards self-employment and these results in their participation in Pudu Vazhvu project. In women empowerment, occupational status, leadership abilities, information sharing behaviour are the major contributing variables to the empowerment of women. A unit increase in these factors would increase in empowerment level of women members. Age and self-confidence were the negatively contributing factors, which decrease the empowerment at certain level. If age of the women members increases, they would not able to involve in SHG activities. As self-confidence increases after the certain level, the over confidence would affect the women members in achieving their activities. Achievement motivation has positive association with the empowerment of women members, which motivate the women members to achieve their goals. After joining the Pudu Vazhvu Project, the women members had developed their capabilities through training programmes conducted by various state departments.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors have no conflicts of interest.

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