



ISSN Print: 2394-7500
ISSN Online: 2394-5869
Impact Factor: 8.4
IJAR 2023; 9(7): 12-21
www.allresearchjournal.com
Received: 15-04-2023
Accepted: 16-06-2023

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An action research: A study on women empowerment through student self-help groups in higher education institutions

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Abstract

Women's empowerment in India is heavily dependent on many different variables which enable or harm them to function independently. Education is a milestone of women's empowerment because it enables them to respond to challenges, confront their traditional roles and change their life. The participation of women in students self-help Groups (SHGs) significantly impacted their empowerment in social and economic aspects. This study addresses women empowerment through student self-help groups in Higher Education Institutions of Punjab and Haryana. This research has the ultimate aim of making use of only critical data. The critical information was collected. via a field summary, the size of the 50 women self-help groups. The results of the study revealed that the SHGs have had a greater impact on both the economic and social aspects of the beneficiaries.

Keywords: Bioactive compounds, solvent extract, anti-microbial activity, skin treatment

Introduction

Every economy depends on women in some way. The advancement and prosperity of a nation depend on the empowerment of women. Women should be viewed as equal partners in endeavors with men. In this context Higher Education Institutions plays an important role through Self-help Groups. Women's freedom is crucial for the nation's economic development as well as for community improvement. The hypothesis of deprivation serves as a barrier to transformation for women. The economic development that addresses social, economic, and societal well-being requires the empowerment of women. The fast expansion of student self-help groups in higher education institutions has now completely changed the country. The SSHG model has set the stage for addressing the aforementioned facets of women's empowerment. Student self-help groups raise women's social, economic, and political status. Student self-help groups guiding principle is group dynamics. A small group of economically and socially disadvantaged rural residents, particularly women, form SSHGs to develop their skills, abilities, and capabilities in order to increase their empowerment. SSHG architecture is a country's seminary reinforcement. Women contribute the potential for women to develop self-assurance, position, and family function, among other things.

Social Empowerment

Social Empowerment Building social capacity, social status, and opportunities for individuals, classes, and communities who lack access to these essential components of social life is the primary focus of social empowerment. The social structure of Indian society, where caste, class, and gender discrimination has been widespread since time immemorial, is the primary source of marginalization in the Indian context. The social status of various castes and sexes was governed by deeply ingrained concepts of purity and pollution. The various varnas were also thought to have different moral standards, as were men and women. and a legal system that carefully regulated privileges and disadvantages based on caste and sex served as the foundation for the social hierarchy.

Conceptual framework of the study

Women's empowerment through students self-help groups (SSHGs) plays an important role in the advancement of women in order to help the women in securing inspirational and supportive services from within and outside such groups.

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Women's Empowerment refers to an increase in the strength of women in such areas as spiritual, political, social, or economic. The most common explanation for "Women's Empowerment" is the ability to exercise full control over one's actions. Thus, women's empowerment occurs in a real sense when women achieve increased control and

participation in decision making which leads to their better access to resources. It often involves the empowered developing confidence in their own capacities. Therefore, given below diagram figure 1 clearly states that self-help groups had given a space for women to empowered themselves.

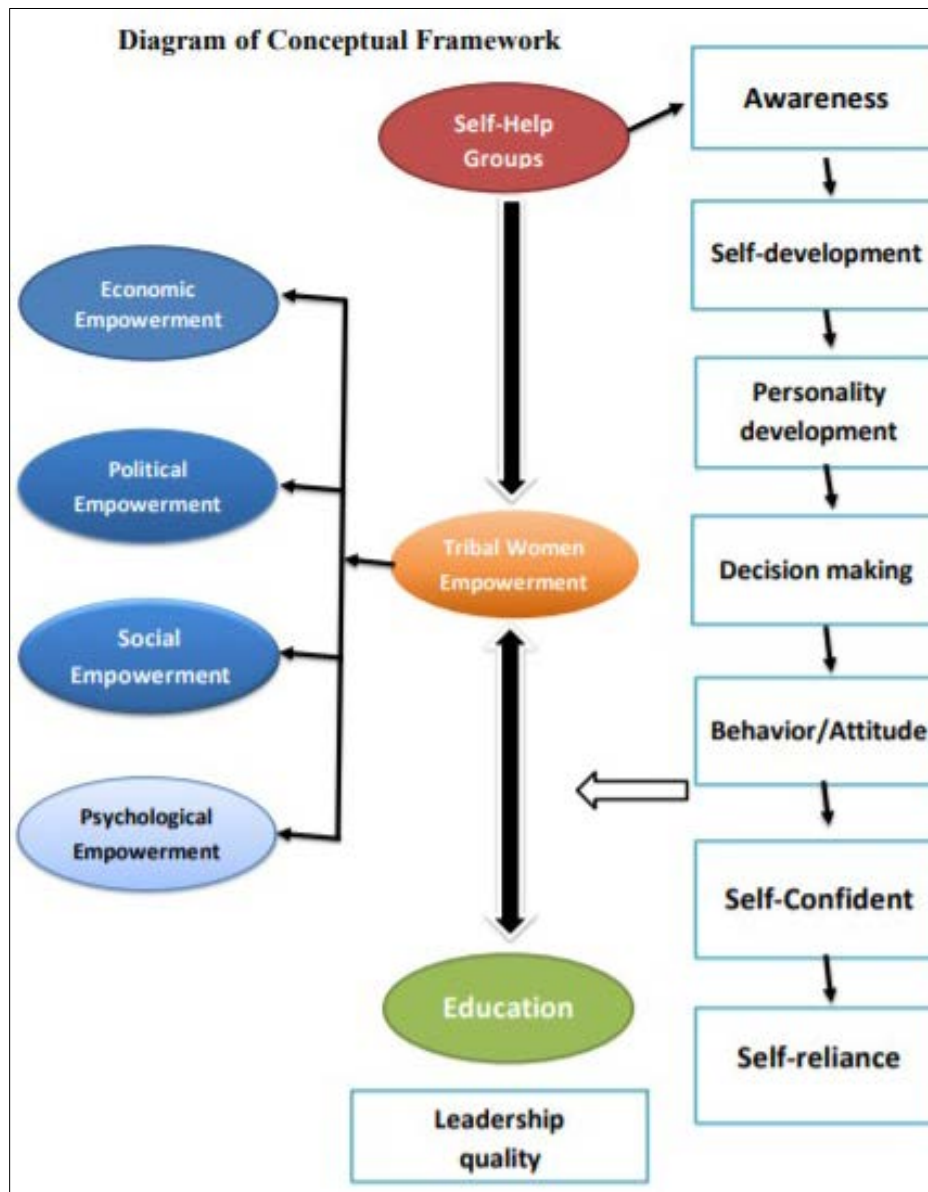


Fig 1: Diagram of conceptual framework

A brief introduction to Institutional Sustainability Ranking

MGNCRE, at the behest of the Ministry of Education, has embarked upon the National Institutional Sustainability Rankings (NISR) to create an awareness of sustainability among Higher Education Institutions and make them competitive by getting accredited. Our Educational Institutions are torch bearers of change. Now they are turning into harbingers of national movement for promoting cleanliness. Their keen interest to keep campuses clean and take this message to the communities with whom they are engaged with has been an important national contribution. Universities and Higher Educational institutions turning into green smart campuses are focusing on cleanliness, waste management, water conservation as well as wastewater management. Saving water and electricity.

Purpose of the research

1. To study and analyses the impact on income, expenditure and savings pattern of the women self-help groups members.
2. To check the level of satisfaction of women students who are a part of the students self-help group.
3. To examine the benefits to women through the students self-help group.
4. To examine how women's handles faced by them to be part of SSHGs.
5. To study future strategies and to suggest measures for the better management of students self-help groups.
6. To study how these activities empowered women's and help them in their career growth.

Objective

1. To analyse the income, expenditure and savings pattern of the women self-help group's members.
2. To study the level of satisfaction of students who are a part of the women students' self-help group.
3. To find out the benefits through the women students self-help group.
4. To find out the problems faced by the members of students self-help groups.
5. To explore future strategies and to suggest measures for the better management of Students' self-help groups.
6. To analyse the personal profile of the respondents of women SSHGs in the study area. To evolve the opinion of women members of SSHGs on their empowerment.

Review of Literature**June Sarpong, The Power of Women, HQ, 2021**

Titled "The Power of Women," this book delves into the concept of feminism, often seen as a women's movement, but highlights the fact that unleashing the untapped potential of women benefits not only women themselves but everyone, including men. By exploring personal relationships, social and cultural climates, and business and economic possibilities, this book dispels misconceptions surrounding feminism and demonstrates why an inclusive approach that brings women from all backgrounds to the forefront is crucial for individual, societal, and economic progress.

K Pradhan Victor Sarkar Avishek Saha Rema Das Bablu Ganguly C Vara Prasad Ajay Kumar, Women Empowerment through appropriate selection, Write & Print Publications, 2017

This book centers on empowering rural women in various aspects of livelihood generation and maintenance, creating an environment conducive to fostering a new wave of women's empowerment. The primary objective of this book is to empower rural women by involving them in the development process through suitable avenues for generating livelihoods. In order to address issues related to deprivation and toil, it emphasizes the crucial need to appropriately select beneficiaries who can receive the necessary benefits from different sources. With a focus on the challenges of women's deprivation and hardships caused by inappropriate beneficiary selection, this book serves as a valuable resource for enhancing knowledge, skills, and understanding for research and policy support in the realm of selecting women beneficiaries and their role in rural women's empowerment.

Abdul Raheem a Abdul Raheem, women empowerment through self-help groups, Ingram short title, 2011

Since India gained independence in 1947, the advancement and empowerment of women have been key objectives of state policies. Multiple institutions, including central, state, and local governments, non-governmental organizations, civil society, and other entities, actively work towards ensuring gender equality as enshrined in the Indian Constitution. Among these efforts, self-help groups (SHGs) have emerged as effective tools for promoting entrepreneurship and self-confidence, particularly among rural women. This book provides a detailed account of the government's measures aimed at women's economic, social, and political empowerment in India. Additionally, it explores the role of SHGs in women's development, envisioning a synergy between the formal financial system and the informal sector.

Arjun Y Pangannavar, self-help groups (SHGS) & Women Empowerment in India, New Century Publications, 2012

The family unit plays a crucial role in social cohesion and integration, and therefore, it should be strengthened. Insufficient support for women and inadequate protection for their families can have detrimental effects on society as a whole, hampering efforts towards achieving gender equality. In India, the rapid growth and proliferation of self-help groups (SHGs) have gained significant importance in the country's development landscape. SHGs are regarded as a strategy for empowering women and reducing poverty. They serve as a channel for implementing various government-sponsored development initiatives and programs. Non-governmental organizations have increasingly adopted SHGs as a means to bring women together, surpassing the collective building processes employed in the past. This book examines the role of SHGs in empowering poor rural women in India and their socio-economic development.

Pangannavar Arjun Y self-help groups (SHGS) & Women Empowerment in India, New Century Publications, 2012

As per the 2011 Census, the population of India increased from 1.03 billion in 2001 to 1.21 billion in 2011, marking a 17.6% increase or 180 million individuals. Out of this total, 624 million (51.6%) were males and 586 million (48.4%) were females. Women play a critical role within the family, which serves as the fundamental unit of society. Strengthening the family unit is essential for social cohesion and integration; any lack of support for women and insufficient protection for their families have broader repercussions on society and hinder efforts to achieve gender equality. The significant emergence and proliferation of self-help groups (SHGs) based on microcredit has become a phenomenon of increasing importance in the development landscape of India. Governments and non-governmental organizations view SHGs as a strategy for both women's empowerment and poverty reduction. This book provides an explanation and examination of the role of SHGs in the socio-economic empowerment of impoverished rural women in India.

Research Hypothesis**The hypothesis are as follows:**

1. Women Empowerment through student Self-help Groups in Higher Education Institutions
2. Explore future strategies and to suggest measures for the better management of women students self-help groups.

Challenges in Research**1. Lack of stability and cohesion among women-dominated SSHGs**

When it comes to self-help groups (SSHGs) primarily composed of women, a lack of stability is observed due to women frequently relocating, which hinders their ability to actively engage with the group. Additionally, personal reasons contribute to a lack of unity among women members.

2. Insufficient Financial Support for SSHGs

A common issue faced by many SSHGs is the inadequate financial assistance provided by colleges, which fails to meet their actual needs and requirements.

3. Shortage of trained and competent staff to address challenges

The staff of rural development departments often exhibit an unenthusiastic attitude and lack the necessary training to effectively tackle the challenges faced by SSHGs and empower them towards self-sufficiency.

4. Pressure to conform to traditional gender roles

In India, women are expected to adhere to patriarchal norms and fulfill predefined gender roles. They are often burdened with the responsibility of their family's welfare and household chores, leading to conflicts when pursuing entrepreneurial aspirations. Family pressure pushes many women entrepreneurs to abandon their startup dreams and prioritize conventional roles focused on their families.

5. Limited Mobility

Unlike their male counterparts, women entrepreneurs in India encounter mobility issues. Concerns regarding solo travel result in restrictions that impede their participation in activities organized by colleges under student self-help groups.

Actions planned to address the challenges

1. Personal counselling of the women SSHGs

The HEIs provides one on one counselling to the students and motivate them to participate in the entrepreneurship activities held in the college

2. Connected them with NGOs or encouraged self-investment.

Students' self-help groups can connect to the NGOs for their financial requirements as well as they can get encouraged for self-investment to fulfil their actual requirements. This will increase their confidence to earn while studying.

3. Encourage staff to motivate the students

Student Self Help Groups were encouraged by the staff of the college. The staff gives the training to accept the challenges and equip the SSHGs with self-reliance.

4. Break the stereotype

With the help of SSHGs we can learn about how the mind works; we can start to see and disable our stereotypes and unconscious bias. We can learn to weaken their effect on our perception of ourselves and of others by assessing them rationally. So, several women entrepreneurs can't be pressured by their families to give up on their start-up dreams and opt for conventional roles in order to prioritize focus on their families.

5. Arrange stalls in the campus.

SSHGs can organize the stalls in campus. They prepare their product and organize, day-long, bazaars and other entrepreneurial activities.

Research Methodology

Sample Size

A sample can be defined as the selection of a part or a group or an aggregate with a view to obtaining information about the whole population. For this study, 800 women student self-help groups data is collected. For the purpose of the proposed study, both primary as well as secondary data shall be used. The primary data shall be collected through a well-structured questionnaire. The relevant secondary data shall be collected from journals periodicals, newspapers, internet, Opinion, and interviews.

Information of State/District/HEIs Covered

Table 1: District, State, No. of Students and No. of HEIs

S. No.	District	State	No. of Students	No. of HEIs
1.	Ludhiana	Punjab	168	10
2.	Kapurthala	Punjab	173	09
3.	Barnala	Punjab	38	11
4.	Hoshiarpur	Punjab	239	12
5.	Mohali	Punjab	74	10
6.	Bhiwani	Haryana	108	08

Data Interpretation

Are you part of student self-help group in your college?

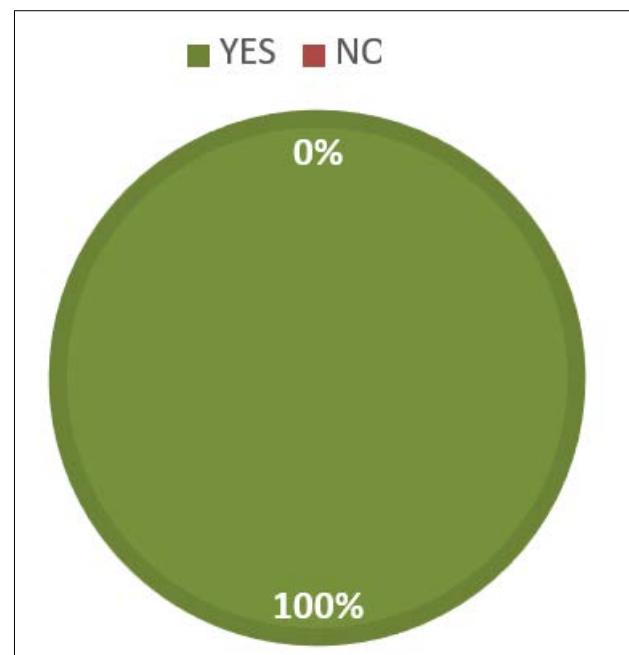


Fig: Responses for "Are you part of student self-help group in your college?"

Interpretation

100% students are the part of student self-help groups.

How many students are in your self-help group?

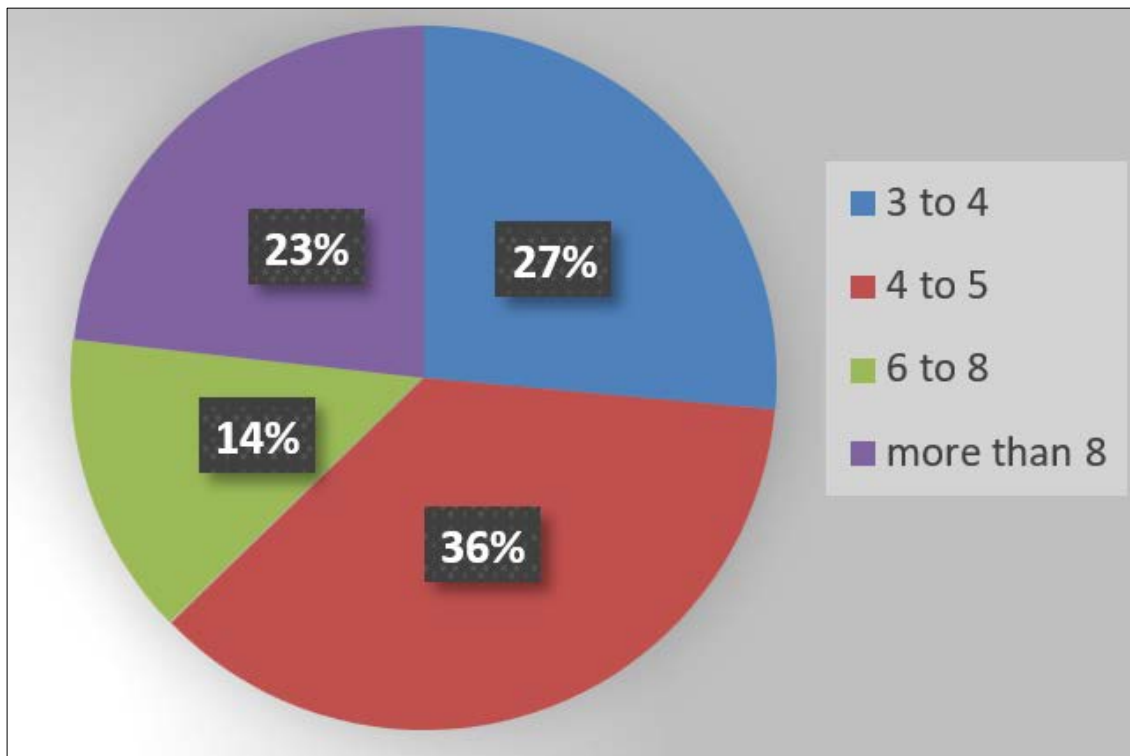


Fig 2: Responses for “How many students are in your self-help group?”

Interpretation

27% SSHGs have 3 to 4 students, 36% SSHGs have 4 to 5

students, 14% SSHGs have 6 to 8 and 23% SSHGs have more than 8 students.

How Many profits you earn through these students self-help group?

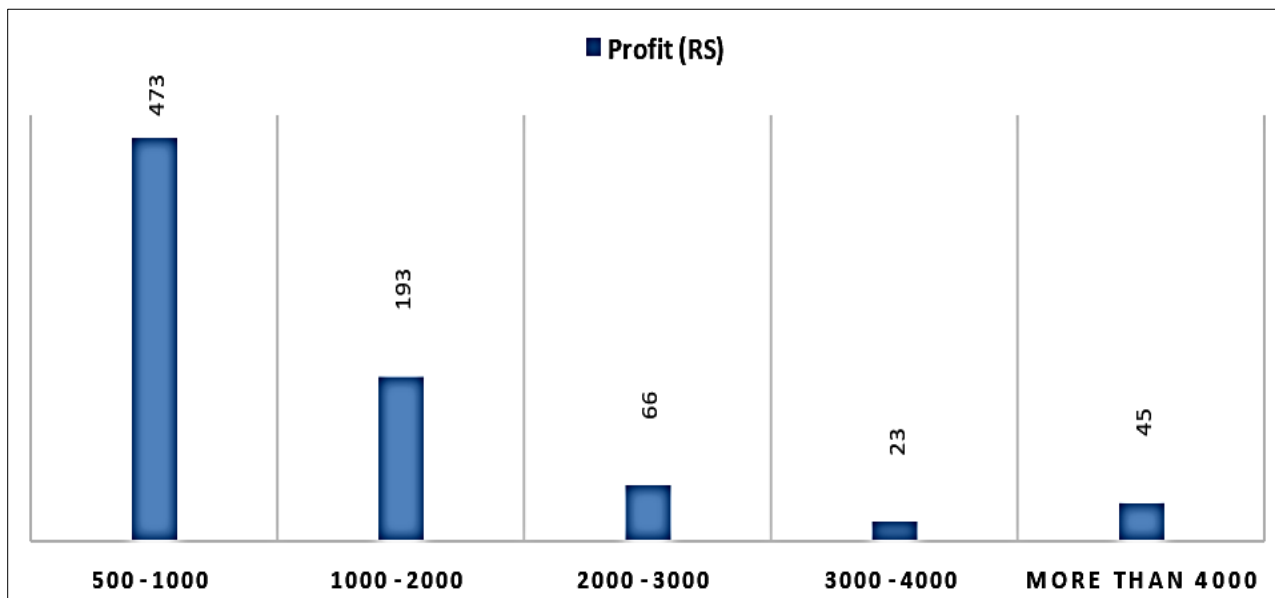


Fig 3: Responses for “How many profits you earn through these students self-help group?”

Interpretation:

60% Students earned between 500-1000 RS while one-fourth students are earning in between 1000-2000 RS.

Around 8% Students are earning in between 2000-3000 RS and between 3000-4000 RS the composition of students is 3%, rest 4% Students are earning more than 4000 RS.

Reason for joining of self-help group members

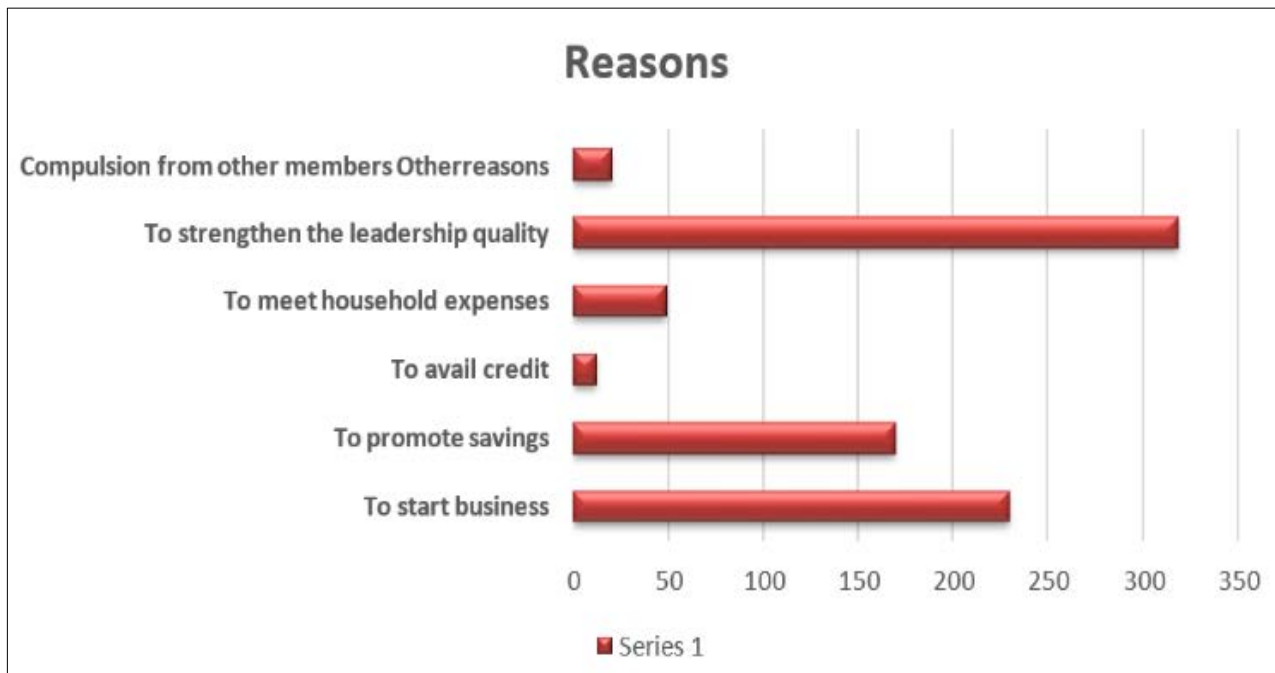


Fig 4: Reason for Joining of Self-Help Group Members

Interpretation

28% students join Self Help Group to start their business, whereas 21% students join Self Help Group to promote savings. Only 2% students join Self Help Group to avail credit and almost 6% students join Self Help Group to meet

household expenses. While 40% students join Self Help Group to strengthen the leadership quality and remaining 3% students join Self Help Group Compulsion from other members other reasons.

Type of economic activity taken up by the SHG Members

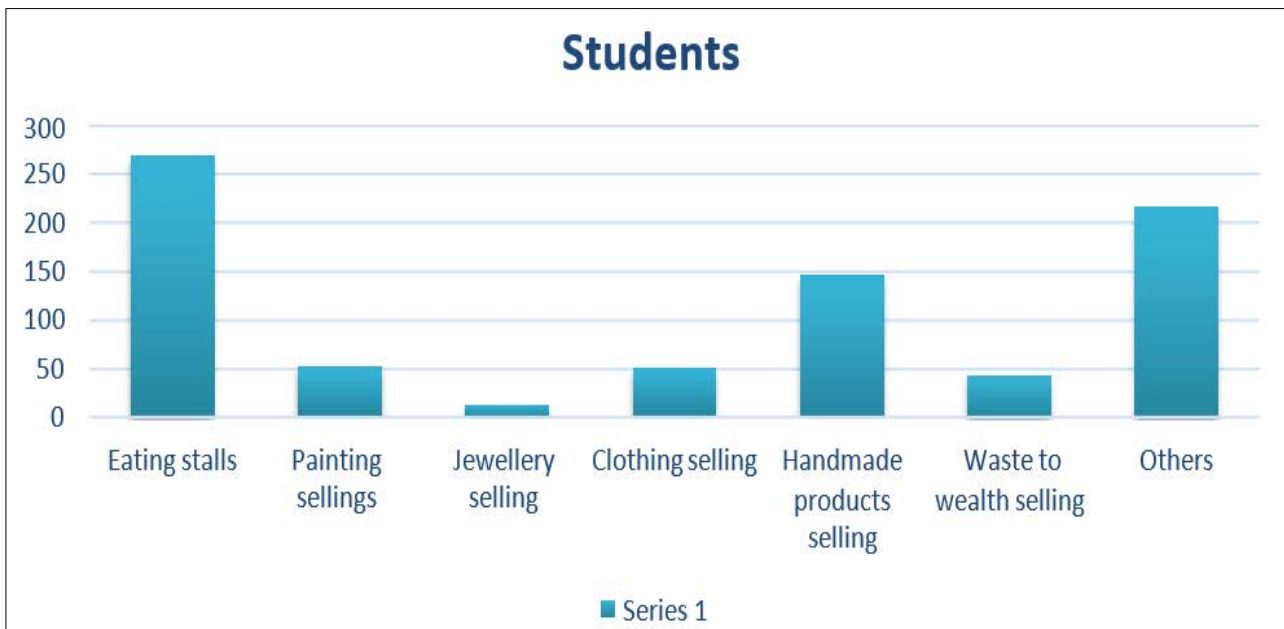


Fig 5: Type of economic activity taken up by the SHG Members

Interpretation

It is interpreted that 270 students organized eating stalls to taken up their economic activity, whereas 53 students earn their livelihood by selling paintings. The least engagement is seen in jewellery selling i.e., 12 students, on the other hand

50 students sell clothes. 146 students taken up handmade products selling as their economic activity, while 43 students earn by selling of waste to wealth. Remaining 216 students perform other economic activities.

Do these activities help you to Increase in income as a result of joining student’s self-help groups?

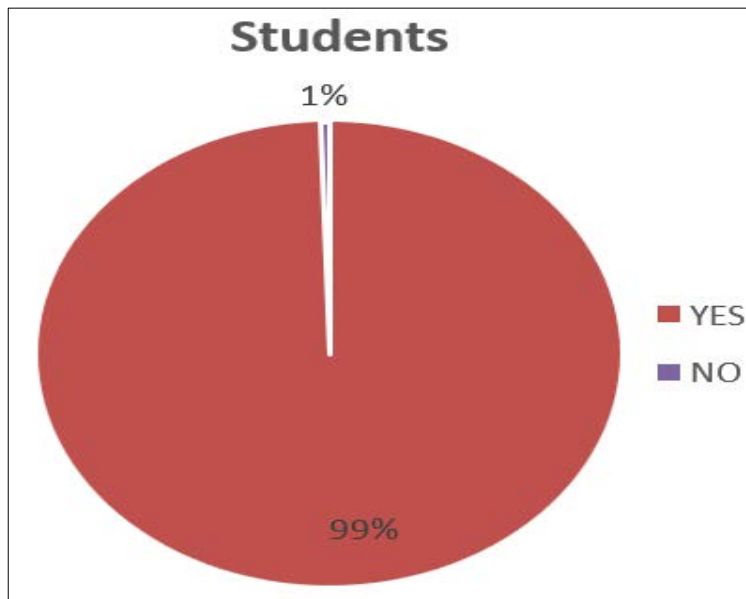


Fig 6: Responses for “Do these activities help you to Increase in income as a result of joining students self-help groups?”

Interpretation

Out of 100%, 99% students agree that these activities help

them to Increase in income as a result of joining students self-help groups on the other hand only 1% disagrees.

What are the challenges you faced by joining students self-help groups?

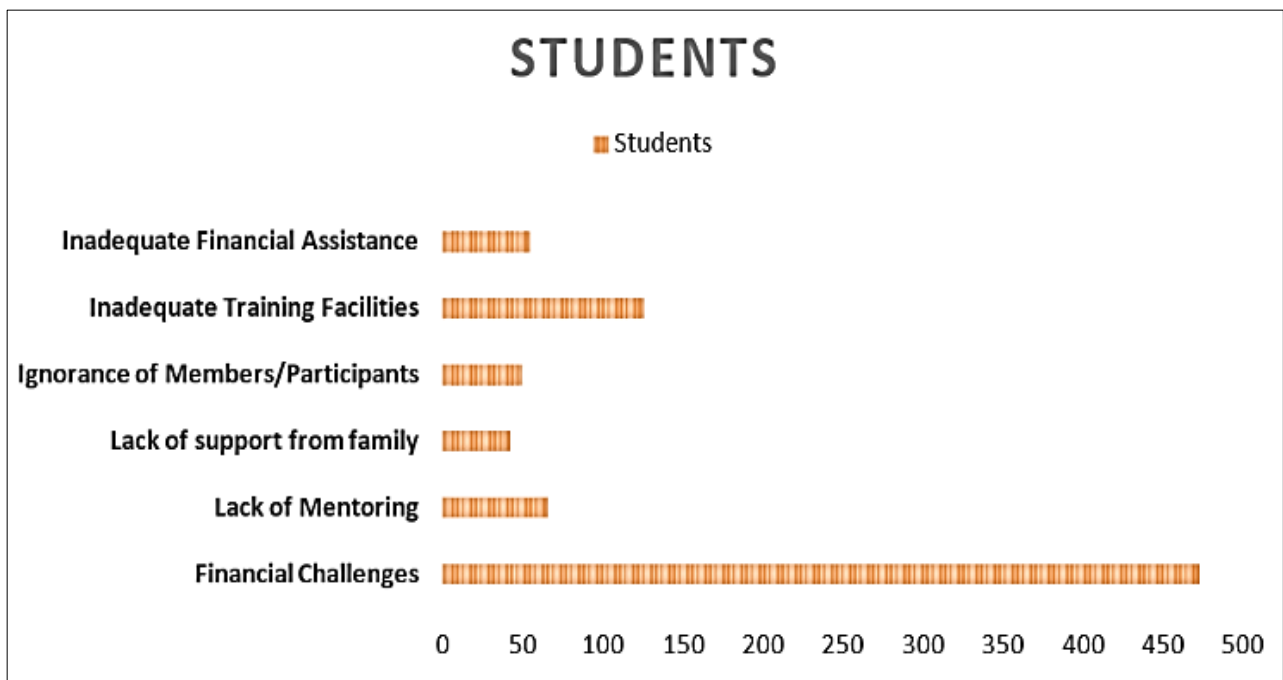


Fig 7: Responses for “Do these activities help you to increase in income as a result of joining students self-help groups?”

Interpretation:

60% students face financial challenges in joining SSHGs, whereas 8% students think there is lack of mentoring by joining SSHGs. 5% students face lack of support family by

joining groups while 6% students have ignorance of members and participants. 16% students face inadequate training facilities on other hand 5% students face inadequate financial assistance

Did your saving habit increase?

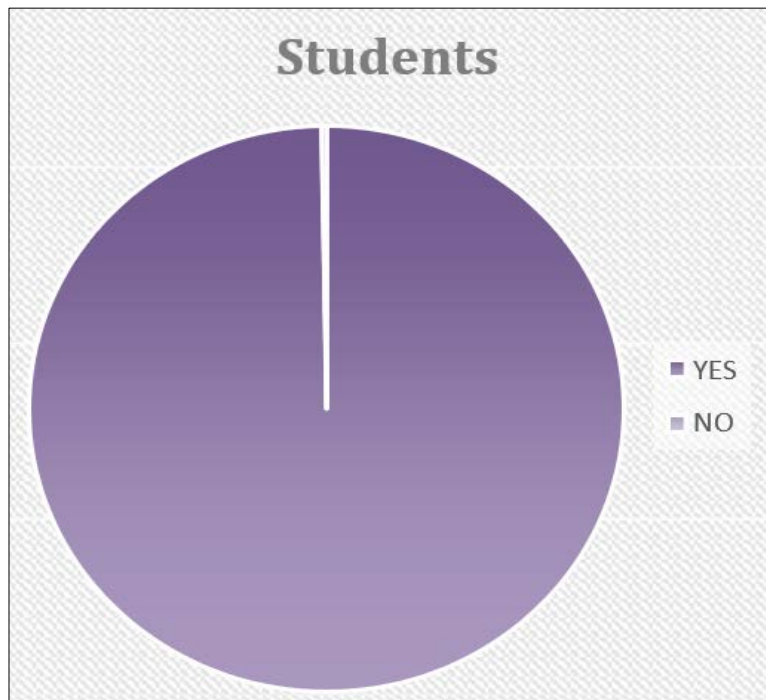


Fig 8: Responses for “Did your saving habit increase?”

Interpretation 100% students agreed that they increase their saving habits by joining Student Self Help Groups.

Did you feel empowered after participating in student’s self-help groups

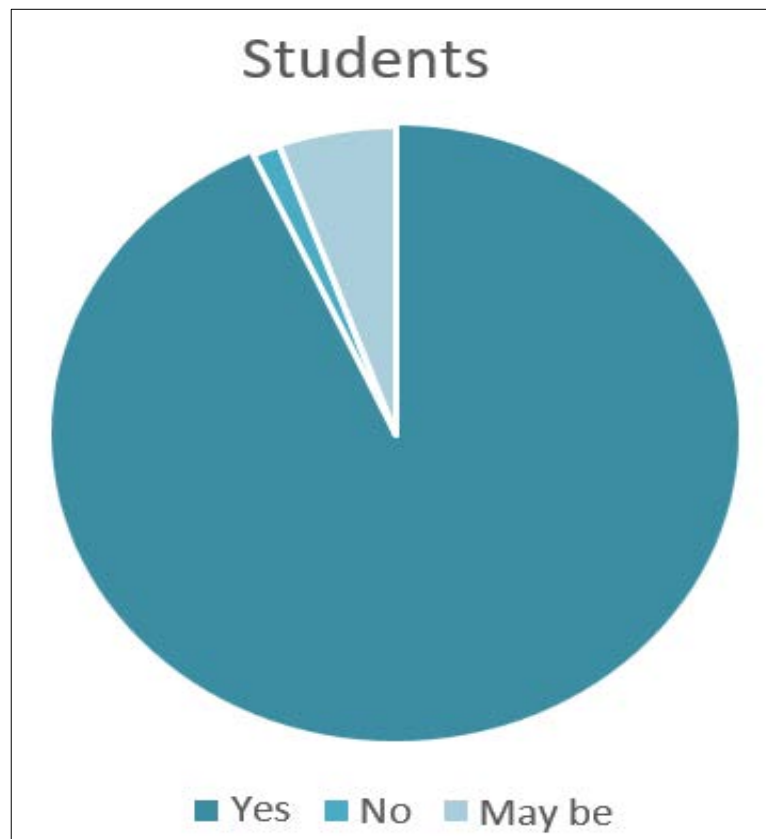


Fig 9: Responses for “Did you feel empowered after participating in students self-help groups”

Interpretation 93% students feel empowered after participating in students self-help groups whereas 6% are in doubt of maybe they feel

empowered while only 1% students feel they are not that empowered by joining students self-help groups.

What is the benefit to you to be a part of student self-help groups

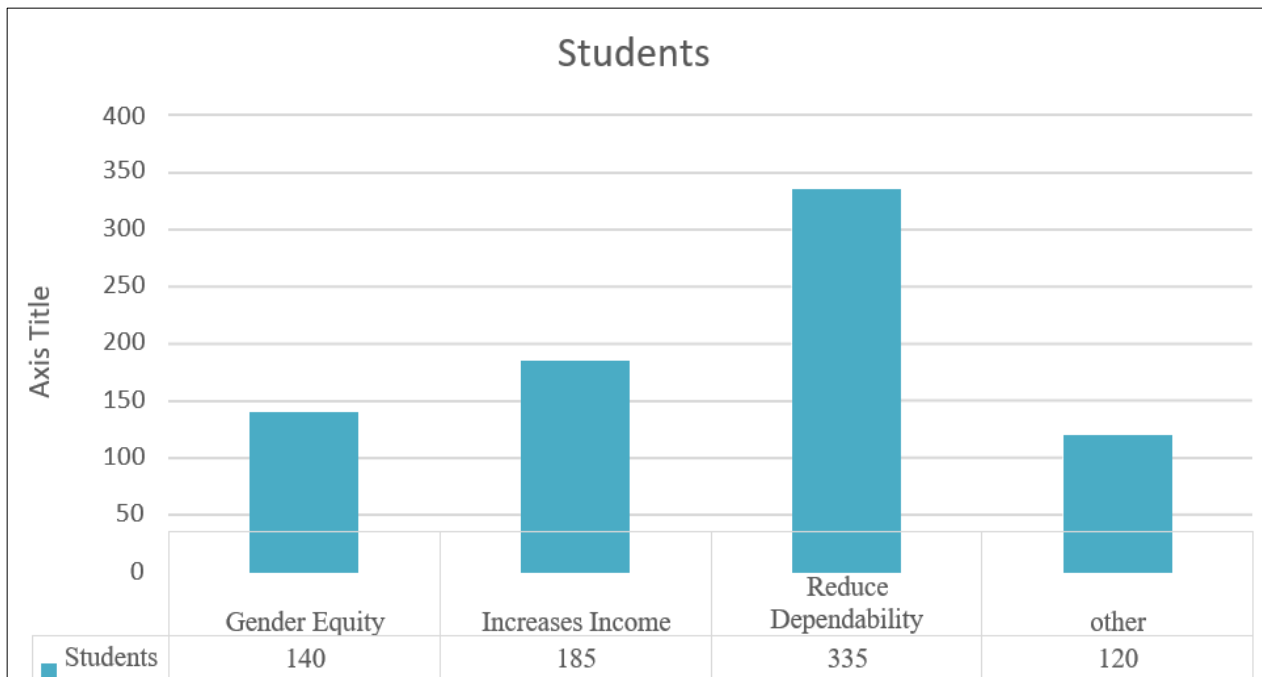


Fig 10: Responses for “What is the benefit to you to be a part of Student Self Help groups”

Interpretation

SHGs helps 43% students to reduce the dependability on the others, whereas around 23% students notice a hike in their incomes due to SSHGs. The other benefit of SSHGs is 18% that it helps to reduce the gender inequality between boys and girls. Along with this, 16% educates has other benefits through the SSHGs.

Findings and outcomes of the action research

- 100% students are the part of Student Self Help groups.
- 27% SSHGs have 3 to 4 students, 36% SSHGs have 4 to 5 students, 14% SSHGs have 6 to 8 and 23% SSHGs have more than 8 students.
- 60% Students earned between 500-1000 RS while one-fourth students are earning in between 1000-2000 RS. Around 8% Students are earning in between 2000-3000 RS and between 3000-4000 RS the composition of students is 3%, rest 4% Students are earning more than 4000 RS
- 28% students join Self Help Group to start their business, whereas 21% students join Self Help Group to promote savings. Only 2% students join Self Help Group to avail credit and almost 6% students join Self Help Group to meet household expenses. While 40% students join Self Help Group to strengthen the leadership quality and remaining 3% students join Self Help Group Compulsion from other members other reasons.
- It is interpreted that 34% students organized eating stalls to taken up their economic activity, whereas 6% students earn their livelihood by selling paintings. The least engagement is seen in jewelry selling i.e., 3.5% students, on the other hand 6.5% students sell clothes. 18% students taken up handmade products selling as their economic activity, while 6% students earn by selling of waste to wealth. Remaining 26% students perform other economic activities.
- Out of 100%, 99% students agree that these activities

help them to Increase in income as a result of joining students self-help groups on the other hand only 1% disagrees.

- 60% students face financial challenges in joining SSHGs, whereas 8% students think there is lack of mentoring by joining SSHGs. 5% students face lack of support family by joining groups while 6% students have ignorance of members and participants. 16% students face inadequate training facilities on other hand 5% students face inadequate financial assistance
- 100% students agreed that they increase their saving habits by joining Student Self Help Groups.
- 93% students feel empowered after participating in students self-help groups whereas 6% are in doubt of maybe they feel empowered while only 1% students feel they are not that empowered by joining students self-help groups.
- SHGs helps 43% students to reduce the dependability on the others, whereas around 23% students notice a hike in their incomes due to SSHGs. The other benefit of SSHGs is 18% that it helps to reduce the gender inequality between boys and girls. Along with this, 16% educates has other benefits through the SSHGs.

Conclusion

The entrepreneurship activities promote SSHG and have improved the lives of socially and economically backward women students. These activities of SSHG have also increased their financial independence and security.

Women's empowerment is possible through the development of SSHG and by continuously participating in these activities. SSHG has been identified to make the women financially stable. SSHGs have been identified as a way to women empowerment. And women Empowerment aims at realizing their identities, power and to become financially independent. These activities provide self-confidence and self-motivation, more strength, more recognition, more involvement

Through participation. Most of the students said that they become more confident by doing these activities. They got an opportunity to improve their hidden talents after joining the student self-help groups.

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