



RESEARCH ARTICLE

A study on women empowerment by enhancing saving capabilities – through self-help groups

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Abstract

Women comprise almost half of India's population. Most rural women confront "information poverty," a problematic disadvantage. Despite this, women in rural India contribute substantially to the overall economy. Women work longer hours and earn more money for their families than men, yet they are not accorded the same level of respect in the workplace. Providing 'financial independence' is one of many ways to improve their standard of living. This article attempts to explore the correlation between improved savings and its impact on improving the standard of living of rural women. Self-help groups (SHGs) play a dynamic role in enhancing the saving capabilities of their members, as the primary objective of these groups is to enhance the savings and thrift of the members and lend financial assistance at the time of need on the 'Joint Liabilities' principle. Data was collected from 100 respondents belonging to different SHGs functioning in Ramanagara Taluk, selected on the basis of Simple random sampling. The findings of the work re-iterate the fact that improved savings have a constructive impact on improving the standard of living of the members, which was evident from a comparative study of their consumption expenditure before and after joining the SHGs. The paired T-Test confirms the significant changes in their monthly expenditure. This method is a workable model, which can be easily replicated, contributing significantly in women's empowerment. This article identifies that providing financial independence for rural women results in their empowerment and considers enhanced savings as an independent factor and standard of living as a dependent factor for the purpose of analysis.

Keywords: Capability, Economic dependency, Empowerment, Improved SOL, Saving enhancement, Self-help groups.

Introduction

India's economy is one of the world's healthiest due to rising incomes, living standards, and significant changes in consumer preferences, lifestyle and mentality. A prime example of this vitality is rural India, which has undergone accelerated transformation over the past two decades. In 2017, approximately 69% of India's population resided and rural India contributed 49% of the country's GDP. Numerous national development programs have made 'eradicating persistent poverty' a top priority (Tripathy, 2004). Since gaining independence, the government has implemented several anti-poverty programs that have generally benefited

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the rich class but fell short of their goals in uplifting the people living below the poverty line. Due to their dearth of resources and access to capital, economically vulnerable sections cannot take advantage of the opportunities created by economic growth. Promoting women's economic independence to eradicate poverty is a tried-and-tested method. Even though their socio-economic conditions have significantly improved since independence, women are still the poorest. It is difficult to combat the poverty, illiteracy, lack of skills, ignorance, etc., that plague rural economies on an individual basis. Still, these obstacles can be overcome with a coordinated group or community effort. The maxims "Unity is strength," "Self-help is the best help," and "United we stand, divided we fall" are reflected in these ideologies. Therefore, it is more effective to tackle the issue as a group through a coordinated approach. Such groups are called self-help groups (SHGs). Such a group comprises around 20 members from the same village belonging to an economically vulnerable section of society.

Such communities both model and promote a genuinely democratic culture in which every participant has a voice in policymaking. The group admits impulsive new members and conducts regular meetings to promote savings and

thrift. Regularly, all participants contribute to a group's savings account known as the "Group Common Fund (GCF)." In addition to member contributions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the SHG's promoter, the government through various initiatives, and member penalties all contribute to the aggregate fund. All group expenses shall be covered by the 'Group Common Fund.' From the group's collective savings and surplus, short-term loans could be made available to all group members at an interest rate determined by the group (Das, 2013). When members share similar social status and income backgrounds, disagreements and conflicts are less likely to occur. These SHGs, which were primarily constituted to promote savings and thrift amongst members, have further gone to create first-generation entrepreneurs (Lakshmikandan, 2000). Many women who earlier used to work as domestic help or agricultural laborers are now self-employed and engaged in income-generating activities on their own. The seed capital to start their own venture is assured by the group. Therefore, the current study highlights the changes in their income and savings capabilities after becoming members of the group and, how their economic and social profile has experienced transitional changes, and how the group is directly or indirectly responsible to it.

Review of Literature

Dolly and Pereira (2010) argue that providing self-employment opportunities to the poor and disenfranchised in rural areas is a crucial strategy for reducing poverty and enhancing rural communities. They assert that any established organization in society does not represent the societal organization, and they argue convincingly that establishing relationships between SHGs and institutions can facilitate financial inclusion. The article defines SHGs as a new archetype for development that improves the subsists of poor rural women in India by enabling them to launch their own trading activity. However, this article fails to identify the contribution of SHGs in creating micro-entrepreneurs, which play a vital role in enhancing women's social status.

Rajendran (2012) reviewed 53 SHGs from various parts of India and concluded that additional research is required to determine whether or not women's empowerment is achieved on a holistic level through participation in such groups, even though many studies have found a positive correlation between SHG's and women's empowerment. However, this paper, does not bring out the role of these affinity groups in empowering women. How collaborated efforts improve the standard of living of women members has not been sketched in the study.

Thomas *et al.*, (2014) piloted research in Tamil Nadu using a quasi-experimental approach and discovered that while economic empowerment of women increases due to their participation in SHG's and, highlighting that participant

overall empowerment has decreased. The paper limits its discussion only to these aspects and does not cover those factors responsible for a decline in the overall empowerment of women.

Malhotra *et al.*, (2002) studied how SHGs have led to women's empowerment in the country and highlighted that economic empowerment was more prevalent in South India. The authors are of the opinion that other aspects of women's empowerment, such as social empowerment, psychological empowerment, equal participation in family decisions, and social respect, must also improve, apart from economic improvement. The article simply lists the objectives to be achieved but fails to pave the path to achieving those ideals.

Jakimow (2007) piloted a study in the state of Tamil Nadu and surveyed one hundred members of SHGs in the city of Chennai, Tamil Nadu. The results indicated that SHGs play a positive role in boosting the beneficiaries' confidence. This paper highlights the improved confidence of women after joining the group. Therefore, the social benefits of group members play a significant role in women's empowerment.

Research Gap

When women are empowered, the entire community benefits. Developing trust in one's own identity and judgment is fundamental to personal empowerment. Self-empowerment is, at its center, the procedure of enhancing one's sense of worth, honor, dignity and respect. Nevertheless, women, in general, face a number of obstacles. Collectively empowered women are able to form organizations, establish objectives and exert political and social pressure to effect change. Changing societal norms and attitudes requires a concerted effort from all parties involved. Women can address the issue of unequal access to political authority, economic advancement and academic opportunities more effectively if they collaborate. When women learn to band together, support one another, and collaborate, they can make a difference. Together, they are more powerful than individually, and they can solve the issue. Only by conducting a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the existing literature can we gain insight into previous studies on the said topic, difficulties identified, explored and evaluated for future research and development, etc. SHGs have proven to be one of the most effective cooperative and participatory instruments for empowering disadvantaged communities, particularly women. There are of course, no earlier research studies concentrate on establishing a correlation between improved savings capabilities and its impact on women's empowerment, positively changing their socio-economic profile. In order to fill this research gap, the current research has been undertaken. Ramanagara Taluk has been chosen to elicit information from the SHG members, as many SHGs are functioning really well in the region. Since SHG functions really well in rural, as personal rapport, identity, and involvement are the pre-requisites for

its effective functioning, which could be found in rural areas rather than in urban, Ramanagara was chosen as the study area because three fourth of the total population of the taluk lives in rural areas. Being close proximity to the state capital, Bengaluru, the study attempts to assess, whether the urbanization process will have a profound impact on altering the social and economic lives of women. To explore all these aspects, the present research has been undertaken.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the current research are to explore the changes in the saving capabilities of the participants of the self-group, to establish the correlation between enhanced savings and its influence on promoting a standard of living of the participants, assessed through enhanced consumption expenditure, to offer suggestions so that, this workable model is adopted at macro scale to accomplish the empowerment of rural women in particular.

Materials and Methods

Method of Data Collection

The needed information for the analysis has been procured through a questionnaire. The report is predominantly prepared based on primary data collected through field visits and personal interaction with the group members. However, to get conceptual clarity, several earlier works have been referred to and have been indicated in the reference.

Locale of the Study

Ramanagara of Karnataka state, India, has been chosen for the study. 2014 Census administered by the Government of Karnataka's Department of Planning, Program, Monitoring, and Statistics, there are a total of 10,82,636 people in the district, with 5,48,008 males and 5,34,628 females. Out of 5,48,008 males, 1,35,570 males live in cities and 4,12,438 males live in villages. Out of the total female population, 4,02,439 live in rural and 1,32,189 in urban. This shows that 75.27 % reside in rural areas.

Sample Size

Using Slovin's formula, the appropriate sample size was determined. Cochran (1977) presents the following method for calculating the sample size when working with a finite population and straightforward random sampling with replacement (Cochran, 1977).

$$n = \frac{n_0}{1 + n_0 / N}$$

Where $n_0 = Z^2 P (1-P)/e^2$

To arrive at Slovin's formula, we assume 95% confidence level with a 5% level of significance or margin of error so that the Z value is approximately 2. At 95% confidence level, Z score is 1.96 and the error value at 5% is 0.05. By substituting the value, the Sample size has been obtained as 102 and for

the convenience of analysis, the adjusted sample size has been rounded off to 100. Therefore, the sample size is 100.

Survey Instrument

A questionnaire sample was developed. When necessary, new terminology was introduced, and ideas were debated and refined. To facilitate the new order, some of the queries were rearranged. Several queries that appeared unnecessary were eliminated. Therefore, some additional terms were added.

Sampling Technique

Gram panchayats and respondents were selected using a simple random sampling technique.

Sources of Primary Data

Primary data needed was collected using (a) Direct Personal Interview (b) Personal Observation Method (c) Method of Questionnaire and (d) Method of Schedule.

Secondary Data

Information required for writing this report was collected from various departments of government, reports of the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD's SHG Wing), National Rural Livelihood Mission, Department of Revenue and Panchayat Raj, Government of Karnataka has been referred. Articles published in various Journals, published reports, earlier conducted research studies and few websites have been used. Necessary citations have been made, and sources have been mentioned in the reference section.

The data so collected was put into a paired t-test, comparing and analyzing their income-earning capabilities, saving capacity, and consumption expenditure prior to and later joining the group. Improvement in these variables over the years is assumed to improve their standard of living, and changes in their social life have been assessed, whether economic independence has given them recognition and respect. Whether they are considered in the decision-making process in the family and at the village level has been identified. These changes mark the real empowerment of women.

Research Hypothesis

H_0 : Enhanced Savings Capabilities do not have any impact on the standard of living of the participants.

H_1 : Enhanced Savings capabilities have a positive impact on the standard of living of the participants (Tables 1 and 2).

The income earning capacity of the respondents from Ramanagara Taluk has shown significant improvement after joining SHGs. Respondents who were in the income bracket of less than Rs. 2,500 per month have graduated to a high-income level, as can be observed from Table 3. In Ramanagara Taluk, earlier 48 respondents had reported having a monthly income of less than Rs. 2,500 before joining

Table 1: Age composition of SHG respondents of Ramanagara Taluk

Age group	Number
Less than 20 years	04
21–30 years	31
31–40 years	47
41–50 years	11
51 and above	07
Total	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 2: Education level of SHG respondents of Ramanagara Taluk

Educational Qualification	Number
Illiterate	Nil
Less than SSLC	34
SSLC	43
PUC	20
Degree & above	03
Total	100

Source: Primary Data

the group. After joining the group only nine respondents have replied that their monthly income is still less than Rs. 2,500, recording a staggering fall of 81.25%. Similar is the case with 26 respondents, who had reported that their monthly income was in the class interval of Rs. 2,500 to Rs. 5,000 before joining the group. Most of their monthly income also has changed after taking SHG membership, and now only six respondents out of 100 from Ramanagara Taluk have replied that their monthly income is still in the class interval of Rs. 2,500 to Rs. 5,000, recording a fall of 76.92%. What is more fascinating to notice is that there were only 14 respondents who earlier had reported a monthly income of Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 7,500. After joining the group 32 respondents from Ramanagara Taluk had reported that their monthly income in the class interval of Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 7,500, recording a whopping 128.57% growth. In the field study it was observed that eight respondents from Ramanagara Taluk had reported to have an income of Rs. 7,500 to Rs. 10,000 before joining the group. Around 40 respondents had reported having an income base of Rs. 7,500 to Rs. 10,000 after joining the group registering a remarkable growth

of 400%. Similar is the case with respondents reporting to have a monthly income of Rs. 10,000 or more. Earlier, only four respondents had opined this monthly income and now 13 respondents have reported rise in income level of more than Rs. 10,000 per month, making it a 225% increase. All this reflects that, the income level of the respondents from Ramanagara Taluk has seen tremendous growth after joining the group. Therefore, it is evident that the group has played a considerable role in enhancing the monthly income level of the respondents.

To test the income changes of the respondents prior to and later joining the SHGs, a Paired T statistical test has been performed, and for this,

Null Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the Income-earning capability of the respondents before and after joining the SHG, i.e., $\mu=0$

Alternative Hypothesis

There is a significant difference in the Income-earning capability of the respondents before and after joining the SHG, i.e., $\mu \neq 0$ Has been formulated, and the results are as follows (Table 4):

As evident that there is a considerable difference in the variance of the two population means. A paired T-test with two samples assuming unequal variances being performed resulted in the *p-value* being 1, which means there is only a 1 percent chance to believe that variances before joining SHG and income levels after joining SHG are similar. However, the T Calculated value, the ratio between the mean value and standard error, is more than the T Critical value, meaning that the 'T' Calculated value falls under the critical or rejection region. Therefore, we fail to accept the null hypothesis. Therefore, the Null Hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted, which states that $\mu \neq 0$. This means there is a significant improvement in the income level of the respondents after joining SHG in Ramanagara Taluk at a 95% confidence Interval with a 5% significance level (Table 5).

Women pool a certain amount of money regularly, then rotate among members or invest for a collective benefit. This encourages consistent savings habits and financial discipline. Besides increased savings, other financial benefits derive from being a group member. It is clear that the savings capability of the participants from Ramanagara Taluk has

Table 3: Changes in the monthly income of respondents in Ramanagara Taluk

Income group	<2500	2501–5000	5001–7500	7501–10000	>10000	Total
Before	48	26	14	8	4	100
After	9	6	32	40	13	100
Percentage Change	-81.25%	-76.92%	128.57%	400%	225%	-

Source: Primary Data

Table 4: T-Test: Two-sample assuming unequal variances

Variable	Before	After
Sample Size	100	100
Mean	20	20
Standard deviation	17.72	15.08
Variance	314	227.5
Observations	5	5
Standard error (Standard Deviation/ \sqrt{n})	7.92	6.74
Hypothesized mean difference	0	-
D.f (n1+n2 - 2)	8	-
t Stat (Mean/Standard Error)	2.52	-
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.5	-
t Critical one-tail	1.85	-
P(T<=t) two-tail	1	-
t Critical two-tail	2.30	-

Table 5: Changes in the monthly savings of the respondents in Ramanagara Taluk

Monthly savings	Before	After	Percentage change
Less than 500	74	15	-79.73%
501-1000	11	35	218.18%
1001-2000	12	42	250%
More than 2,000	3	8	166.67%

Source: Primary Data

shown significant improvement after joining SHG. Members who were struggling to save even Rs.500 per month have moved to a higher savings level, as can be observed from the table. About 74 respondents from Ramanagara Taluk replied that they saved less than Rs.500 per month before joining SHG. After the membership, the number of respondents answering that they save less than Rs. 500 has reduced to only 15, recording a 79.73% fall in the number. This negative trend is really encouraging as these reduced numbers of respondents have moved to another savings bracket. We observe a direct and positive relationship between income and savings of a person. As the income level of a person increases, his savings ability will also go up. Because all the basic requirements are being met, when the income of a person increases, the consumption expenditure will not increase in the same proportion. This is the gist of the Keynesian Psychological Law of Consumption. Instead, more money will be saved. Therefore, the savings ability of the respondents has shown positive signs. The same is evident in Table 5, where 11 respondents replied that they saved somewhere between Rs. 500 to Rs. 1,000 before joining SHG. The number has increased by 35 after joining the group, indicating improved savings ability, as shown in Figure 1.

Table 6: T-Test: Two-sample assuming unequal variances

Variable	Before	After
Mean	25	25
Standard deviation	32.91	16.10
Variance	1083.33	259.33
Observations	4	4
Hypothesized mean difference	0	-
df	4	-
t Stat	3.10	-
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.5	-
t Critical one-tail	2.13	-
P(T<=t) two-tail	1	-
t Critical two-tail	2.77	-

Same way, the number of respondents saving Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 2,000 was 12 before, has increased to 42 later, further re-iterating the fact that group membership has improved their saving capabilities. Around eight respondents from Ramanagara Taluk have reported that their savings ability has increased after taking group membership and now they are saving Rs. 2,000 or more per month, which is definitely a positive sign.

A paired T statistical test has been conducted to test the changes in the savings ability of the respondents from Ramanagara Taluk. For this,

Null Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the savings ability of the respondents before and after joining the SHG, i.e., $\mu=0$

Alternative Hypothesis

There is a significant difference in the savings ability of the respondents before and after joining the SHG, i.e., $\mu \neq 0$. The test results are as follows (Table 6):

As evident from Table 6, there is a significant difference in the variance of the two population means. A paired T-test with two samples assuming unequal variances being performed resulted in the *p-value* being 1, which means there is only a 1 percent chance to believe that variances in the savings before joining SHG and the savings level after joining SHG are similar. However, the T Calculated value, the ratio between the mean value and standard error, is more than the T Critical value, meaning that the 'T' Calculated value falls under the critical or rejection region. Therefore, we fail to accept the null hypothesis. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted, which states that $\mu \neq 0$. This means there is a significant improvement in the savings capabilities of the respondents after joining SHG in Ramanagara Taluk at 95% confidence interval with a 5% significance Level (Table 7).

Table 7: Variations in monthly consumption expenditure of the members in Ramanagara Taluk

Consumption expenditure	<5000	5001-7500	7501-10000	>10000	Total
Before	67	19	9	5	100
After	19	42	32	7	100
Percentage change	-71.64%	121.05%	255.56%	40%	-

Source: Primary Data

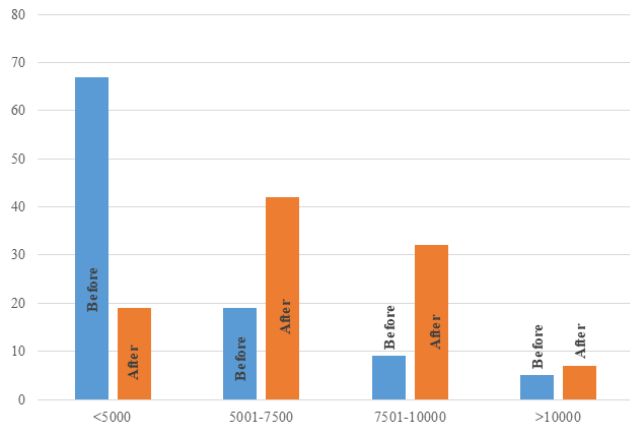


Figure 1: Variations in the consumption expenditure of group members in the study area

The consumption expenditure of the respondents from Ramanagara Taluk has tremendously increased after becoming a member of a group. About 67 respondents had reported that, their monthly consumption expenditure was less than Rs. 5,000 before joining the group. The number has reduced to only 19, registering a 71.64% decline in the total number of respondents. These reductions in number show that these respondents have graduated to higher consumption expenditure brackets over the years and the predominant credit goes to the SHGs. Enhanced savings have increased their consumption capabilities. Around 19 members have replied that their monthly consumption expenditure was between Rs. 5,001 to Rs.7,500 and this number has increased to 42, registering a 121.05% increase. This increase is phenomenal. Only nine respondents had a consumption expenditure of Rs. 7,500 to Rs. 10,000 before joining the group and after the Group membership, it has increased to 32, recording 255.56% growth. Similarly, only five members had opined that their monthly consumption expenditure was more than Rs.10,000, but after joining the group, seven respondents replied that their monthly consumption expenditure had increased to more than Rs.10,000. Increased consumption expenditure raises the demand for FMCG goods as well as durable goods. This increased demand promotes sales, which in turn increases the profitability of the companies. They will be motivated to invest more and this creates more employment opportunities. Therefore, even to safeguard the economy from the depression trap, the need of the hour will be to

increase the consumption capabilities of the consumers. Hence, SHGs play an important role in increasing the consumption capabilities of the respondents.

Other Benefits Reaped are

Prioritization of needs

After joining SHGs, many women reported an increased focus on essential expenditures. With improved financial awareness, there was a shift from non-essential expenses like luxury items to essentials like education, healthcare, and nutritious food.

Increased expenditure on education

A notable increase was seen in the expenditure towards children’s education. This can be attributed to the group’s emphasis on the importance of education as a long-term investment.

Saving themselves from ‘loan sharks’

Many respondents, before joining SHG’s, relied on zamindars or village money lenders, who levied exorbitant interest rates. After joining the group and gaining access to formal and lower-interest credit, they were able to reduce or eliminate these high-interest debts, thereby reducing monthly interest payments and saving themselves from ‘Loan Sharks’ and ‘Debt Trap.’

Investment in assets

With increased savings and access to credit, many respondents reported allocating funds towards long-term assets like land, livestock, or machinery for business purposes.

Expenditure on health

There was an increased awareness and resultant expenditure on preventive healthcare, including regular check-ups and medicines, indicating growth in health awareness.

Many respondents reported that they are now actively participating in family decisions. All these factors indicate positive social changes, which effectively play a role in women’s empowerment.

Key Findings

The research findings explain that the income-earning capabilities of the members have improved tremendously after joining the group. ‘Keynesian Psychological Law of consumption’ states that as the income of an individual

increases, his consumption also increases but less proportionately. But his marginal propensity to save increases rapidly. This could be practically attributed where the savings capabilities of the respondents having improved significantly after joining the group. The consumption expenditure, which is the main determinant of the standard of living, has improved because of improved income and savings of the group members. There will be demonstration effects playing an important role over here. Group members influence each other in consumption patterns. Many women reported an increased focus on essential expenditures after joining SHGs. There was a shift from non-essential expenses like luxury items to essentials like education, healthcare and nutritious food.

A notable increase was seen in the expenditure towards children's education. This social change is important, leading to women's empowerment (Geethanjali and Prabhakar, 2013). Many respondents were encouraging their daughters to go to school and even to college. The monetary requirements needed in the form of fees and other stationary requirements could be taken care of by the money borrowed from the group. Many women relied on village moneylenders for their financial requirements, who levied excessive interest before joining SHGs. After joining the group and gaining access to formal and lower-interest credit, they were able to reduce or eliminate these high-interest debts, thereby reducing monthly interest payments. Overall, they could save themselves and their families from loan sharks. With increased savings and access to credit, many respondents reported allocating funds towards long-term assets like land, livestock, or machinery for business purposes. With heightened financial awareness, there was a marked reduction in expenses related to entertainment, cosmetics and other luxury items. Apart from financial benefits, many social benefits were also derived from being a member. Improved confidence, improved communication, and networking are few to mention. Many participants opined that, now they are actively involved in the decision-making process at a family level, which was totally absent earlier. This signifies true women's empowerment. There was an increased awareness and resultant expenditure on preventive healthcare, including regular check-ups, medicines, and even health insurance.

Limitations of the Research

The study was conducted in Ramanagara Taluk by eliciting information from 100 respondents. Despite the sample size being smaller, it is sufficient to arrive at inferences. Ramanagara Taluk, being in close proximity to the state capital, Bengaluru, is a major beneficiary of the process of urbanization and opportunities. The findings of the study may be aptly applied to some of the rural hinterland as the marketing of products is easier in places which has easy and close access to well developed markets like cities. On

the other hand, the same will be difficult in the hinterlands. The research also brings out that there is a small fragment of respondents whose socio-economic life has not improved even after joining the group. They continue to live in abject poverty. The prime reason for them being left out is personal rather than the system or group to be blamed for. Opportunities were there. Many made use of it and improved and a couple of them did not and maintained their status quo.

Scope for Future Research

This system is a replicable model and could be replicated effectively for women's empowerment. If further exploration could take place in integrating companies to supply raw materials and to procure finished products from groups, it would ensure supply income flow, which is sure to bring changes in their economic and social life. Therefore, a detailed probing is needed to connect companies with SHGs to establish a win-win situation for both. Companies can tap this channel to venture into rural markets, and group members will find an alternative source of earning income for their livelihood.

Suggestions and Recommendations

Financial Training is the need of the hour, as not all members have equal access to financial literacy programs. There's a need for more consistent training sessions across all group clusters. Strategies and policy formation, aimed at creating employment avenues to be encouraged as rural areas have tremendous potential for rapid industrialization and talent pool, policies to harness entrepreneurial ability will be the game changer. Partnering with NGOs that specialize in women's empowerment to provide additional resources, expertise and advocacy for these groups. Group Members could be used to create awareness and to education on various aspects ranging from personal hygiene to environmental protection. They could really drive social transformation. Need not to say, very less initiatives have been worked out in this direction.

Conclusion

SHG plays an essential role in enhancing the consumption competences of the respondents. Joining SHG's has profoundly impacted the monthly consumption expenditure of its members. With an emphasis on essential spending, investment in assets, and reduced non-essential expenses, the members of these groups have significantly optimized their financial behaviors. With continued guidance and support, these trends can further enhance women's financial stability and empowerment in these groups. Many have started their own income-generating activities like tailoring, agarbatti making, candle making, dairy farming, poultry, etc., and the seed capital needed for these ventures, was assured from the group lending. Therefore, those who earlier used to work as domestic help or agricultural laborers

now boast of being an entrepreneur. Therefore, providing financial independence is an important milestone in achieving women's empowerment.

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