

**IMPACT OF TRAINING ON SOCIO ECONOMIC STATUS OF RURAL
WOMEN**

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INTRODUCTION

In India, as in many other countries of the world, there is a vast difference between the idealised concept of women and the real life situation in which women find themselves. Women in the Indian society have a degraded status because of the prevalence of multiple factors such as illiteracy, exploitation, unemployment, female infanticide, child marriage, dowry, prostitution, rape, widowhood, wife beating and purdah system, all of which have prevented the Indian women from attaining greater heights. It must be remembered that women's status is not a just a matter of cultural and social history of traditions but it is basically rooted in the political and economic structure of our society which needs to be changed. Women are denied the right to own or inherit property and they become dependent on men, which renders them vulnerable to exploitation. Although the women contribute through their labour in maintaining the household, it is never recognised as productive labour. Women's contribution to the economy goes unregistered while the contribution of the males gets listed.

A majority of women especially those living in rural areas do not have a distinct identity and personality to call their own even in this day and age. This discrimination and oppression of Indian women is perpetuated in spite of the spread of education among women and their growing participation in social, economical and political life of the country. This unfortunate state of affairs is also seen in the state of Kerala, which claims a higher literacy rate and a better health care system as compared to other states. Also the sex ratio of 1084

females for every 1000 males is favourable to women in Kerala when compared to other states; unfortunately the same cannot be said for their status in real life.

Training for Rural Women

The general overall objective of the training for rural women is to equip them with the basic knowledge, attitude and skills to play effective roles in promoting the process of development. Training of women functionaries in rural development has become an important issue with special concern for women in development. While the basic concepts of training viz. transfer of knowledge, skill, and change of attitudes would remain the same for any training, the identification of the training needs of women and monitoring and evaluating such training would require greater attention.

Training brings about a change in the self image of women, awareness of their inner strength, helps them in making valuable contributions to society and enables them to take on new roles, and to develop the use of questioning and enhances their decision making skills. Training can be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. Training helps women to empower women's organisations to act as catalysts at the local level and as pressure groups with other agencies securing social and economic justice for women. It helps them to plan out their objectives and action programmes and also to identify the areas in which they need to bring a change. Training has become a need for women since they have to enhance their self esteem learn new behaviour for managing the situations and develop leadership and learn building skills. The empowerment process however may most effectively be instigated by means of implementing appropriate training programmes for the selected section of women. Empowerment is an active, multidimensional process, which enables women to realize their full identity and potential in all spheres of life. Women's empowerment can be viewed as continuums of several inter related and mutually reinforcing components.

Socio Economic Status

In determining the status of women in India, factors such as the role of women in decision making in the family and in the community, their educational status, their participation in social, political and economic activities and their position in the various professions such as well as their legal status in terms of marriage, divorce and inheritance of property should be taken into consideration. There is substantial evidence that economic

resources in the hands of male household members often do not benefit female members in an equal degree and that women in general are discriminated against and that gradually over the ages the status of women has declined. Women still remain bound by cultural, political and economic constraints that prevent them from being on par with men. However this is to be changed and one of the ways of bringing about this change is by providing and conducting training programmes for women to make a mark for themselves.

With regard to women, especially the rural women, economic mobility is all the more crucial since most other factors of social mobility such as their education, social contact, health, recreation etc depend heavily on the former. A change in the economic position is determined by an increase in income which depends on several factors such as occupation, amount of land holding and other resources. Studies have shown that women's earnings have a positive correlation with the children's health, nutrition levels and education. It also has been seen that Indian women contribute a much larger share of their earnings to basic family maintenance than men.

METHODOLOGY

Training for Women's Groups in Rural Areas

Training package for the empowerment of rural women known as 'Training for Women's Groups in Rural Areas' was selected for the study. The training was implemented by a Dutch Charitable organisation known as CEBEMO for the members of Mahila Samajams (women's organisations) and imparted through ten voluntary organisations working in ten districts of Kerala. The long term objective of the training was the empowerment and self reliance of women. The specific objectives of the training were:

1. To improve the level of awareness of women on women's rights and women's issues.
2. To change the socio economic status of women in family and society.
3. To strengthen the functioning of Mahila Samajams.

He was given training for forty days in different phases over a period of two years. The methodology for the training was lectures, group discussions, debates, workshops, role plays, audio-visual aids and paper presentations. As part of the training the participants were given individual assignment like preparation of essays on social problems and women issues, home

visits, conducting awareness programmes in the local areas, conducting social survey of the villages and study of the people's organisations.

Objective of the Study

- The aim of the study is to find out the changes that have occurred in the social and economic status of women in family and society through training.
- The status is discussed here in terms of participation in decision making roles, social independence, economic independence and recognition and acceptance.
- The hypothesis formulated to study this objective is that the level of participation and perception towards independence will be more for the trained women.

Universe

The universe of the study consists of 350 Mahila Samajam members who have attended the women's training programmes know as "Training for Women's Groups in Rural Areas" implemented through ten voluntary organisations working in ten districts of Kerala.

Sampling

One hundred and seventy five respondents were selected by simple random sampling method from the universe of 350 women who had attended the women's training programme. Similarly, another 175 respondents who had not attended the training programme were selected randomly for comparative purpose. They were selected from the same Mahila Samajams who attended the training programmes having similar socio economic profile. Thus a total number of 350 respondents were included in the study.

Design

The design of the study was descriptive and diagnostic in nature. While the descriptive design helps to study in depth the characteristics of individuals, group and situation, the diagnostic design helps to explain the association between variables related to the study.

Sources of Data

The source consisted of primary and secondary data. The primary data source was the respondents. The secondary data for the study were books and journals, reports and records related to the topic.

Tool of Data collection

Personal interview with the help of interview schedule was the main tool used for collecting information from both the categories of respondents. The same interviews schedule was administered for both the categories of respondents who have attended the training and who have not. Methods like observations, focused group discussions and informal discussions were also used for eliciting data. The interview schedule was very helpful in collecting information directly from the respondents and besides it was the ideal tool since the respondents were not highly educated.

MAJOR FINDINGS

The study had been conducted with the purpose of gaining insight into the empowerment of women through training programmes.

Among the 350 respondents, 121 (34.6%) belonged to the age group of 36-40 years followed by 87 (24.9%) in the age group of 31-35 years. In the group wise distribution of both categories of respondents i.e. those who attended training and those who did not attended the training programme, the highest percentage belonged to the age group of 36-40 years.

With respect to education it was found that among the respondents, 31.7 per cent are educated up to the high school level and 27.1% of the respondents have completed their SSLC. The highest level of education among respondents in both categories is the Pre-degree level but however 4.3 per cent of the respondents can only read and write. This further indicates that all the respondents are literate.

Among the 350 respondents, it is seen that 333(95.1%) are married and the remaining 17 (4.9%) are widowed.

The occupational profile of the respondents shows that the highest percentage (36.8%) is engaged in domestic work and 28 per cent in wage labour. A few respondents (3.4%) have salaried jobs and others are engaged either in cottage industries or in cultivation.

The study shows that only 4.6 per cent of the respondents are regarded as the head of the family while in the remaining cases this position is held by another member of their family. It was also seen that the majority of the respondents in both categories hold some positions in the Mahila Samajam.

Participation in Decision making Roles

The participation of respondents in decision making roles of education of children is highlighted here. It is found that participation in decision making regarding selection of school to which the children are sent, type of education, age of sending the children to school, type of dress, kind of school bag, amount to be spent for education and responsibility for taking children to school are carried out jointly by husband and wife among almost all the respondents who attended the training. Among those who did not participate in the training programme also, the decisions were taken jointly to a large extent in many of the cases but not to the extent as in the other category.

The study shows that among the respondents who attend the training programme the most decisions are made jointly related to building house, with regard to the selection of location, buying house, taking loans, amount of loan, spending the loan amount and repayment system. Both couple engage in decision making regarding amount to be spent for food, clothing, entertainment and furniture. In the case of majority of the respondents who did not attend the training decisions are mostly taken by their husbands. This highlights that training helps to prepare women for the responsibility of participating in decision making at all levels and enable them to participate effectively.

While taking the total participation score the attendees of training have a higher mean score (mean=123.92, SD=10.84) whereas for the non attendees mean score (mean=90.23, SD=10.64) is comparatively lesser. The two categories of respondents do differ statistically since the 't' value 29.33 is significant at 0.05 level. This highlights the fact that the respondents who attended the training have more participation skill in decision making roles when compared to the non attendees.

Social Independence

One of the indicators of women's empowerment is that they are socially and economically self reliant. It is found that women who attended the training are able to relate men on a basis of equality and partnership in a better way. They have a better role in the decision making process of the organisation and society when compared with the women who did not attend the training. While analysing different factors, it is found that that women who attended the training have more social independence. Active participation in social spheres help in enhancing the process of empowerment. It will also give women the desired self respect and socially dignity which are the requisites of empowerment.

It is found that those women who attended the training have more social mobility and wider public relations in areas such as in schools, Mahila Samajam, other organisations, government offices, festival places, towns and cities. The frequency of contacts and visits are more when compared to the women who did not attend the training. This shows that the women who attended the training have more self confidence and self esteem.

It is noticed that that women who attended the training have more involvement in different organisations like social, political, religious and economic as executive members or ordinary members.

While discussing with the respondents it was noticed that majority of the respondents who attended the training are involved in more than one organisation as ordinary members or governing body members. They were involved in organisations like credit unions, self help groups, and neighbourhood gatherings. The training helped the women to get involved in more organisations.

The women who have undergone training have a higher mean score (mean=32.99, SD=5.38) than that of the non attendees (mean=21.40, SD=2.67). The observed difference is statistically significant at 0.05 levels. Hence it can be studied that the women who attended training have more social independence.

It may be observed that only when women are allowed to handle a position of responsibility in social life, will they be able to exercise social independence and evolve into dynamic individuals.

Economic Independence

Financial management system is an important aspect for economic independence of women. Out of 175 women who attended the training, nearly three fourths of the respondents (74.3%) keep and maintain the family account jointly (husband and wife) whereas among the non-attenders of the training about 68 per cent of the cases the accounts are maintained by their husbands. This reveals the difference in financial management of the respondents in both categories.

It is found that the women who attended training have more economic independence since their mean score (mean=7.06, SD=2.43) is higher when compared to the non attendees (mean=5.06, SD=2.7) of training. This difference is statistically significant as the 't' value (7.13) is significant at 0.05 level.

Recognition and Acceptance

The study shows that educated and employed women are more accepted and respected in the society than the other women are. According to the respondents, education, employment and participation in politics bring social status to the rural women.

Regarding recognition and acceptance, those who attended training have a higher mean score (mean=7.50, SD=2.05) than the non attendees (mean=4.74, SD=1.15). The observed difference is statistically significant since the 't' value (15.55) is significant at 0.05 level. Thus it is found that the attendees of training have more acceptance and recognition than the non attendees.

It can be inferred from the above analysis and interpretation that the hypothesis is proved significant i.e. the level of participation and perception towards independence will be more for the trained women.

CONCLUSION

Here it can be seen that how the training has helped in enhancing the status of rural women. An improved economic condition gives economic power which may be converted into political and social power. Economic independence gives social respectability and social esteem. A depressed economic condition leads to illiteracy, social immobility, loss of personal freedom and eventually it may affect the development of the human personality. The findings of the study show that there were remarkable changes in women in the areas of level

of awareness and economic status in family and society as a result of the training programme. So the researcher suggests that other voluntary organisations and nongovernmental organisations could implement similar training programmes for the empowerment of women. The study shows that the educated and employed women have more acceptance and recognition in the family and society. More encouragement and motivation should be given for higher education of women.

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