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Ubale Amol Baban





WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH COLLECTIVE SELF ESTEEM

Ms. E. Lisa,

Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work.

Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur.

Abstract:

Collective self-esteem is a concept originating in the field of psychology that describes the aspect of an individual's self-image that stems from how the individual interacts with others and the groups that the individual is a part of. Empowerment is the process of obtaining basic opportunities for marginalized people, either directly by those people, or through the help of non-marginalized others who share their own access to these opportunities. Empowerment also includes encouraging, and developing the skills for, self-sufficiency, with a focus on eliminating the future need for charity or welfare in the individuals of the group. Empowerment is a choice of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, to a greater decision making power and control and transformation action. (Bhari Josi, 2007, pg.28). Both Self Esteem and Empowerment both has a link between one and the other and there can be Hypothetical Question setup using these two components like, Increase in Collective Self Esteem Increase in Empowerment. Women are considered to be Vulnerable or Marginalized but now they have proved their self esteem through various initiatives. Self Help Groups are considered as a strategy evolved by the devolving nations to empower women especially rural women to leap from the state of powerlessness to powerfulness. Empowerment is the expansion of freedom of choice and action. Through Self Help Groups Women develop their skills and self esteem in various fields and try to live their life independently. A study was conducted with fifty SHG Women in Tirupattur to know how they were empowered and how far their collective self esteem was improved. The Researcher used Descriptive Design and Stratified Disproportionate Simple Random Sampling technique in specific Random Sampling to select the Samples. The data will be analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) and various tests like Single frequency, Cross Tabulation and Relationship test will be used and Interpreted.

Key Words: *Collective Self Esteem, Empowerment, Women*

Introduction:

In sociology and psychology, self-esteem reflects a person's overall emotional evaluation of his or her own worth. It is a judgment of oneself as well as an attitude toward the self.



Self-esteem is a term that reflects a person's overall evaluation or appraisal of her or his own worth. Self-esteem encompasses beliefs (for example, "I am competent", "I am worthy") and emotions such as triumph, despair, pride and shame. Self-esteem is a confidence in oneself, a satisfaction of what one is and the self-respect that confidence brings. It is the appraisal or assessment of a person on one's self worth. It encompasses belief about one's capacity and worthiness. Low level of self-esteem has been linked to behavioral problems and poor school performance (Agarwala & Raj, 2003).

Self-esteem and collective self-esteem are viewed as vicious cycle. Low self-esteem and collective self-esteem result among many behavioral problems and depression is among one of them. Depression among adolescents has become a very common problem. The literature survey depicts that self-esteem and collective self-esteem play a very important role in every individual's personality. Low level of self-esteem and depression create hindrance in balanced and positive development of personality. There is dearth of researches which examine the relationship between depression and collective self-esteem but low self-esteem and depression are negatively correlated, it has been found in many researches.

In common collective self esteem collectively results in Empowerment of an individual and Group. Empowerment refers to a range of activities from individual Self- assertion to Collective resistance, protest and mobilization that change basic power relations. Empowerment therefore is a process aimed at changing the nature and direction of systematic forces, which marginalize women and other disadvantaged sections in a given context. The goals of women empowerment are to challenge patriarchal ideology to transform the structures and institutions that reinforce and perpetrate gender discrimination and social inequality and enable poor women to gain asses to and control of, both material and informational resources.

Tamil Nadu is one of the States which have paved a leading role in the empowerment and development of women. "Empowerment of Women" has become a fashionable term now a days but long before the term became vogue and feminine movement which came into existence during the period of Periyar E. V. Ramasami. He gave equal priority for raising the status of women abolition of untouchability and criminal based on caste. He also suggested many things



for the empowerment of women. During his period many schemes and programs for the welfare and empowerment of women was introduced.

The heart numbing realities are the flagrant contradictions of women development and the mockeries of women empowerment. Pious platitude and rhetoric, high sounding resolutions and planning are poor consolations when we look at depressing social landscape in which our women still live and which shows that the female species is still “expendable”. The much hyped saying was “Women Empowerment remains a Distant Dream”. (Shaliy Bhashanjaly, 2002 pg.21). But through this research the former saying is proved false. This study was done to bring out the empowerment of women through their collective self esteem.

Methodology:

The researcher used Descriptive Design to describe the study as a whole. In that the samples were selected using Stratified Disproportionate Simple Random Sampling in Specific random Numbers. The Study was done with four SHG groups from Anandapatti, Tirupattur. The Data collected was analyzed using a package called Statistical Package for Social Science and Interpreted after applying various tests.

Collective Self Esteem:

Self-esteem refers to a person's beliefs about their own worth and value. It also has to do with the feelings people experience that follow from their sense of worthiness or unworthiness. Self-esteem is important because it heavily influences people's choices and decisions. In other words, self-esteem serves a motivational function by making it more or less likely that people will take care of themselves and explore their full potential. People with high self-esteem are also people who are motivated to take care of themselves and to persistently strive towards the fulfillment of personal goals and aspirations. Through the active participation of women in SHGs according to those women have increased their self esteem to some extent compared early. This was clearly shown through the answers given by the respondents to few questions which were asked to highlight their self esteem. They are,

1. Independent Decision Making:

Variable: Do you think after joining SHGs you have gained ability of taking decision by your own



Deciding is one of the most important qualities which bring in a vast difference in the lives of Human Beings. The SHGs approach helps women making their own choices, independent in decision making regard to their lives, income, and employment and makes them more active in society.

From the Data Collected it was clear that a little more than three forth (76%) of the respondents have said that they take their own decision in many times and they also say that after joining in this group they have identified their decision making ability and utilize it.

2. Raising Voice for Social Causes:

Variable: Do you agree that after becoming member of SHGs you raise your voice for any social causes?

A person Self Esteem can be highlighted when that person brings out or learns some qualities to improve one. It is not only in oneself but also when they work or think for others.

Table No: 1

Raising Voice for Social Causes

| Raising Voice | Frequency | Percent |
|----------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Agree | 40 | 80.0 |
| Disagree | 10 | 20.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 |

The above data says that Most (80%) of the respondents have agreed that after joining in SHG group they boldly involve in solving the Social Problems. It can be inferred that women in the groups gain boldness to solve social issues like water facility, street light facility, road and transport facility, etc.

3. Increase in Leadership Skills:

Variable: Do you agree that your leadership skills are identified and brought out?

Leadership Skills highlight the person belief and capabilities of their own self. It is commonly understood that a leader simply is somebody whom people follow, or as somebody who guides or directs others, but it is defined as "organizing a group of people to achieve a common goal".



Figure 1

Increase in Leadership Qualities

From the above figure it was clearly known that a little less than vast majority (85%) of the respondent have agreed that after joining in SHG they have identified and increased their leadership skills like Motivation, Problem Solving capacity, time management, positive thinking, etc.

4. Tackling any type of Issues:

Variable: Do you think now you can handle any type of issue by your own?

A woman is one who faces lot of problems in her day to day life. The problems may be in personal, social, education, employment life but facing those problems and tackling those problems by her own plays a vital role in the development and empowerment of a woman.

Table No: 2

Tackling any type of Issues

| Tackling Issues | Frequency | Percent |
|-------------------|-----------|--------------|
| To a Great Extent | 40 | 80.0 |
| To Some Extent | 10 | 20.0 |
| Not at All | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 |

The above data reveals that most (80%) of the respondents have said that to a greater extent they agree that after joining in SHG they mostly gain confidence to solve any type of problems. It can be inferred that by seeing others or by the encouragement of the other group members the women learn to develop the skill of tackling any type of issues without the help of others.

Empowerment of Women through Self Help Groups:

The empowerment of women through self help groups would lead to benefits not only to the individuals but to the group as a whole, family and community through collective self esteem and collective action for development. The SHGs have a common perception of need but also more holistic social development. The self help group programs mainly focus on empowerment of rural women and making them financially, socially, politically capable. These groups are provided with credit, and also empowerment of women socially and economically. The women in the groups are actively participating in decision making in community and local democratic sector and also women are prepared to take up leadership positions.

1. Motivation to join SHG:

Variable: What motivated you to join SHG

**Table No: 3
Reason for Joining SHG**

| Reason | Frequency | Percent |
|----------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Poverty | 6 | 12.0 |
| Own Interest | 14 | 28.0 |
| Compulsion | 3 | 6.0 |
| Fascinated by others | 5 | 10.0 |
| Savings | 10 | 20.0 |
| Self Employment | 12 | 24.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 |

From the above table it can found out that Mostly women now a day join in Self Help Group on their own interest to Employ themselves and earn money for their needs and their family. Women, Out of compulsion or by any other interest joining such groups are less only.

SHGs and Level of Empowerment:

Self Help Groups are the best examples in many places to quote women empowerment socially, economically and politically.

These two variables were used to bring out whether there is any association between these variables. To test whether the women after joining the SHG group and by participating in the activities they feel they are empowered.

Table No: 4

SHGs and Level of Empowerment

| Participation | Level of Empowerment | | | Total |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| | Low | Moderate | High | |
| Larger Extent | - | 4 (40.0) (11.8) | 6 (60.0) (85.7) | 10 (100.0) (20.0) |
| Moderate | 3 (12.5) (33.3) | 20(83.3) (58.8) | 1(4.2) (14.3) | 24 (100.0) (48.0) |
| Little | 6(37.5) (66.7) | 10(62.5) (29.4) | - | 16(100.0) (32.0) |
| Total | 9(18.0) (100.0) | 34(68.0) (100.0) | 7(14.0) (100.0) | 50(100.0) (100.0) |

The above table says that nearly two third (60.0) of the respondents have said that when their participation level increases in the group they feel empowered within themselves and only few (37.5) respondents have said that to little extent they feel empowered, it may be that they may newly joined the group or would have initially started their participation.

It can be inferred that the women actively participating in the group activities and as a group they feel empowered within themselves.

Education and Empowerment:

Education is mainly to impart knowledge and skills in different fields. From birth to death education plays a vital role in individual lives. There are lots of differences between educated and uneducated. Through education a person can achieve high positions and can develop once own level and standard which is commonly known as empowerment. These two variables are used to test whether there is relationship between education and empowerment through education.

Table No: 5

Education and Empowerment

| Education | Level of Empowerment | | | Total |
|---------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| | Low | Moderate | High | |
| No Formal | 2(5.7) (50.0) | 2(5.7) (33.3) | 31(88.6) (77.5) | 35 (100.0) (70.0) |
| Primary | - | 3(60.0) (50.0) | 2(40.0) (5.0) | 5 (100.0) (10.0) |
| Middle School | 1(14.3) (25.0) | - | 6(85.7) (15.0) | 7(100.0) (14.0) |
| High School | - | 1(50.0) (16.7) | 1(50.0) (2.5) | 50(100.0) (4.0) |
| Higher Secondary | 1(100.0) (25.0) | - | - | 1(100.0) (2.0) |
| Total | 4(8.0) (100.0) | 6(12.0) (100.0) | 40(80.0) (100.0) | 50(100.0) (100.0) |

From the above table it is understood that most (88.6) of the respondents have said that they feel highly empowered but they all were women who were not formally educated. So it can be inferred that education doesn't play an important role for empowerment. Here let the person



be educated or uneducated if the person try and work hard they can learn new skills and gain knowledge which makes them empowered.

However the researcher used Chi Square test to test the relationship between these two variables.

H0 (Null Hypothesis) – There is significant relationship between Education Level and Level of Empowerment

H1 (Alternative Hypothesis)– There is no significant relationship between Education Level and Level of Empowerment

Degrees of Freedom: 8

Significance Value: .264

Since the level of significance is more than 0.05, H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted. Therefore it is said that there is no significant relationship between Education Level and Level of Empowerment.

Suggestions:

There were suggestions given based on some of the main findings. These were the suggestions given by the self help group women.

1. Training in various fields like and making them to start their own earning through employment can increase their level of Self Esteem.
2. For different category of women different programs can be organized and based upon their need and wants it can be arranged.
3. Some of the women achievers can be brought as lively examples to give some motivational talks.
4. The office Bearers can give chance to other members in turn, so that there can be chance for all to learn leadership skills and develop.
5. The Self Help Group activities and such groups can be encouraged so that such groups can be the change agents in bringing empowerment of Socio Economic Development of Women.

Conclusion:

The researcher expected to know the leadership skills, roles and functions and self esteem level of women in the self help groups and through the activities carried out by the group the



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researcher was expecting to find out the level of empowerment of the women of those groups. By knowing the improvement of family socio economic status and the savings it was clear that the women were developing their self esteem and through self esteem they were empowered in the society. The result of this mini research has also proved that apart from education level, standard of living and place the women feel developed and empowered through self help groups which contributes to such empowerment of women by developing their self esteem.

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