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### Schedule caste women empowerment through SHGs in Mirzapur district of the Uttar Pradesh

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#### Abstract

Farm women act as backbone of agricultural work force in rural India. Schedule Caste women are at the last in getting the benefit in the society despite their considerable contribution to the family livelihood maintenance. These women involve in livestock farming and act as agricultural laborers to contribute the livelihood of their family. Self Help Group movement made some perceptible transformation in empowering these economically and socially deprived women. The study was carried out among 100 Schedule Caste women, who were member of SHG at least for three years, from Mirzapur district of Uttar Pradesh, as this district selected randomly among the backward districts of the state. Results showed that majority of the schedule caste women perceived that their overall empowerment was in medium level. Beside this their economic and psychological empowerment found to be prominent. It was also found that social participation, Cosmopolitaness, Innovativeness, Knowledge level in livestock farming, Market intelligence and Credit utilization were the major factors affecting significantly and positively to the overall empowerment level of the schedule caste women of SHGs.

**Keywords:** Schedule caste women, self-help group, empowerment, livestock farming

#### Introduction

Women are key component in agriculture and allied sector and their contribution is more than 40% of world's labor who are engaged in the agriculture (FAO, 2011) [5]. In India, about half of the population comprises of women and majority of them are confined to the rural areas. In rural area about 61.6 million female agricultural laborers and 36 million female cultivators of our country India come from the rural background (GOI, 2011). Majority of these female laborer come from economically weaker section. Significant number of these economically backward women is under schedule caste category these schedule caste women are at the last of enjoying the social reforms. In the present changing scenario of world food production, the role of female laborers are very important where scheduled cast women are palying a vital role and thus, their skill, education and socio status must be taken care of (Farmer-Bowers, 2010) [4]. Escalating the benefits of agricultural extension system to these schedule caste women would be a tough job as the efficiency of research extension- farmer-market chain of the public sector extension of the country is continuously being questioned in the recent past (Parsai, 2010) [13]. SHGs provide an opportunity to these schedule caste women to transform them as entrepreneurs with micro-loans to sustain their businesses, while also creating an environment for them to develop their decision-making skills. In a scenario where the development of rural India is intended through the collective empowerment of the rural women, schedule caste women cannot be left undeveloped. Now a day may self-help groups are functional intended for mainly to schedule cast women.

These self-help groups need to be analyzed for their contribution to empowerment of schedule caste women. It would also help if it is understood how different factors control to empowerment in a schedule caste woman. This paper examines the level of empowerment achieved among the schedule caste women and various factors contributing to these schedule caste women empowerment.

An ex-post facto research design was used for the study and mixed methods were used for data collection. Present study was conducted in Uttar Pradesh. For the study a list of backward districts of the state was prepared and one district named Mirzapur was selected randomly. Out of 12 blocks in the district four blocks viz. Narayanpur, Pahadi, Jamalpur and Rajgarh were selected randomly. Out of these four blocks a list of SHGs containing only Schedule caste women, depend on livestock farming, having at least 10 members and operative at least for three years were prepared. Out of the list 10 SHGs were randomly selected from different blocks and 10 SHGs members were randomly selected. Therefore, a sample size of 100 schedule caste women was considered for the study.

Data collection was carried out through cross sectional field survey and focus group interview. For the study, empowerment was conceptualized as a multidimensional construct with its four dimensions viz., social, psychological, technological, and economic empowerment. It was measured as overall empowerment index which was operationalized as mean of Social empowerment index, psychological empowerment index technological empowerment index and economic empowerment index. These all indexes were calculated after converting the responses in to index through the formula as follow:

$$I_{ij} = \frac{X_{ij} - \text{Min}_{ij}}{\text{Max}_{ij} - \text{Min}_{ij}}$$

Where,

$I_{ij}$ : Index of respective dimension of empowerment

$X_{ij}$ : Value of  $i_{th}$  indicator of  $j_{th}$  dimension

$\text{Max}_{ij}$ : Maximum possible value of  $i_{th}$  indicator of  $j_{th}$  dimension

$\text{Min}_{ij}$ : Minimum possible value of  $i_{th}$  indicator of  $j_{th}$  dimension

Overall empowerment index was operationalized as mean of index value of individual dimensions:

$$\text{Overall Empowerment Index} = \frac{\text{EEI} + \text{SEI} + \text{TEI} + \text{PEI}}{4}$$

Where,

EEI: Economic empowerment Index

SEI: Social empowerment index

TEI: Technological empowerment index

PEI: Psychological empowerment index

Results were categorized and presented in low, medium and high through equal interval method.

### Socio-economic profile of the respondents

It was found that majority (58.00%) of the respondents were in the middle age group (36 to 50 years). About half of the respondents (48.00%) were educated till primary level

followed by 24 percent of the respondent educated up to middle level. It was also found that about half of the respondents (48.00%) were found in low family income group (Less than Rs. 28000/Year) followed by about one third of the respondents (36.00%) were in medium level of family income group (Rs. 28000 to 46000 /Year). Family size for majority of the respondents (56.00%) were medium size (6 to 9 family members) followed by about one fourth of the respondents were belong to large family size group (more than 9 member). Experience in the self-help group is an important indicator of access to information and other resources. It was found that half of the respondents (50.00%) were having medium level of experience followed by low level of experience to the 30.00 percent of the respondents. It was also reported that majority of the respondents (64.00%) were in landless followed by about one third of the respondents (32.00%) were in marginal family land holding category.

### Empowerment level developed among the respondents due to SHGs

Empowerment level conceptualised and mean of psychological, technological, economic and social empowerment development among the schedule caste women members. Psychological empowerment operationalized as level of decision making ability, level of risk bearing ability, innovation proneness and level of self-confidence developed as a member of self-help group. An understanding can be drawn through a glimpse of results presented in table 1. that about equal number of respondents i.e. 45.00 percent and 43.00 percent were in low psychological empowerment level and medium level of psychological empowerment, respectively. It may be due to low level of risk bearing ability and innovation proneness.

**Table 1:** Empowerment among the schedule caste women member of SHGs (N=100)

A. Psychological Empowerment		
Category	Frequency	Percentage
Low (Less than 0.33)	45	45
Medium (0.33 – 0.66)	43	43
High (More than 0.66)	12	12
B. Technological Empowerment		
Category	Frequency	Percentage
Low (Less than 0.33)	29	29
Medium (0.33 – 0.66)	54	54
High (More than 0.66)	17	17
C. Economic Empowerment		
Category	Frequency	Percentage
Low (Less than 0.33)	26	26
Medium (0.33 – 0.66)	62	62
High (More than 0.66)	12	12
D. Social Empowerment		
Category	Frequency	Percentage
Low (Less than 0.33)	58	58
Medium (0.33 – 0.66)	29	29
High (More than 0.66)	13	13

Technological empowerment among the respondent were operationalized as mean of level of knowledge in agriculture, knowledge level in in animal husbandry and adoption level of innovative technologies in agriculture and animal husbandry. It was found that more than half of the respondents (54.00%) were in medium level of technological empowerment followed by 29.00 percent and 17.00 percent of the

respondents in low and high technological empowerment category, respectively. It showed that there is need to more supports to these respondents with extension efforts to make them more technologically empowered. Financial benefits of being the member of SHGs reflected as economic empowerment. It was found that majority of the respondents (62.00%) were in medium, level of economic empowerment category followed by 26.00 percent and 12.00 percent respondents in low and high level economic empowerment level, respectively. Economic empowerment is one of the most important indicators of overall empowerment. Once a woman became economically independent it has a multifaceted impact on the family empowerment as it not only contributed to the economic and social profile of the family but also contributed to nutritional and health security status of the family members. Similar finding was also observed by Golla et al., 2011 [7] and Shinogi et al. 2021 [16].

The main aim of self-help group is to improve the social inclusion of the people stand in last in the society. It has to improve the social participation, high credit utilization, risk orientation, market intelligent and efficient structure development. However, social empowerment is functioned simultaneously with other empowerment dimensions but expressed in last. It was found that majority of the respondents (58.00%) were in low social empowerment category followed by 29.00 percent and 16.00 percent of the respondents in medium and high social empowerment category, respectively. It means that there is need of more technical and financial supports to these communities for longer time. Provision of better market linkages to these respondents may lead to better capacity development of these schedule caste women member of self-help groups.

**Overall Empowerment among the schedule caste women member of SHGs:** Several works have been reported on SHGs for the improvement of social structure of rural women engaged in agricultural food grain production (Deining and Liu, 2009; Singh, 2013; Mahanto, 2015; Kumari et al., 2020 and Shinogi et al., 2021) [3, 15, 12, 11, 16]. Overall empowerment among the schedule caste women was conceptualised as multidimensional construct with its four dimensions viz., Psychological, Technological, Economic and Social empowerment. The result of overall empowerment level developed among the schedule caste women member of self-help group was presented in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Overall Empowerment among the schedule caste women member of SHGs (N=100)

Overall Empowerment Level		
Category	Frequency	Percentage
Low (Less than 0.33)	41	41
Medium (0.33 – 0.66)	47	47
High (More than 0.66)	12	13

A glimpse on result, it was found that slight less than half of the respondents (47.00%) were in medium level of overall empowerment followed by 41.00 percent and 13.00 percent respondents were in low and high level of overall empowerment level, respectively.

**Factors affecting overall empowerment of schedule caste women members of SHGs**

There are many factors which affecting the overall empowerment level of the schedule caste women. Fourteen factors were considered for the study and correlation of these factors were analyzed with different dimensions of overall empowerment level of the respondents and results were presented in Table 3.

It was observed that eight out of fourteen variables were found positive and significant correlation with the psychological empowerment. It was also observed that social participation, innovativeness and marketing intelligence were significantly positively associated with psychological empowerment of schedule caste women members of self-help groups. However, only six out of fourteen variables were significantly associated with the technological empowerment developed among the schedule caste women members of self-help groups. Out of the six variables three variable viz., work experience in SHGs, knowledge in animal husbandry and marketing intelligence were showed positive and highly significant association with the technological empowerment level of the respondents. Social participation helps women to change their attitude toward the socioeconomic upliftment in the society (Jose, 2015; Anang et al., 2016; Shinogi et al., 2021) [10, 1, 16] and scarcity of active participation could be considered as the principal reason for female’s reduced involvement in Indian agriculture (Gupta et al., 2017) [8]. Marketing intelligence and better accessibility of the women to the market of their product were also reported by previous workers (Pillai and Harikumar, 2006; Bhol, et al., 2020 and Shinogi et al., 2021) [14, 2, 16].

**Table 3:** Correlation analyses between different dimensions of overall empowerment for schedule caste women members of SHGs and independent variable

Variables	Psychological Empowerment r value	Technological Empowerment r value	Economic Empowerment r value	Social Empowerment r value
Age (X <sub>1</sub> )	0.251	0.436	0.524	0.402
Education (X <sub>2</sub> )	0.646*	0.539	0.715*	0.552*
Annual Income (X <sub>3</sub> )	0.631*	0.704*	0.683	0.892
Family Size (X <sub>4</sub> )	-0.794	-0.537	-0.331	-0.521
Work experience in SHG (X <sub>5</sub> )	0.641*	0.705**	0.636*	0.545*
Land holding (X <sub>6</sub> )	0.611	0.723	0.648	0.840
Physical facility possession (X <sub>7</sub> )	0.628	0.571	0.639*	0.537
Social participation (X <sub>8</sub> )	0.238**	0.483	0.374	0.472**
Innovativeness (X <sub>9</sub> )	0.493**	0.621*	0.482	0.228
Progressive attitude (X <sub>10</sub> )	0.349*	0.462*	0.801**	0.532**
Knowledge in Animal Husbandry (X <sub>11</sub> )	0.373	0.460**	0.277**	0.291*
Marketing intelligence (X <sub>12</sub> )	0.499**	0.375**	0.160**	0.379*
Credit utilization (X <sub>13</sub> )	0.396*	0.281	0.441*	0.283
Savings behaviour (X <sub>14</sub> )	0.222	0.538	0.371	0.460

\*Significant at 5% level of p & \*\*Significant at 1% level of p

Correlation of economic empowerment level of the respondents with the seven variables out of fourteen, were found significant and positive association. Variables *viz.*, progressive attitude, knowledge in animal husbandry and marketing intelligence were showed positively and highly significant association with the economic empowerment level of the respondents. Similarly six out of fourteen variables were found significant and positive association with the social empowerment level of the respondents. Two variables *viz.*, social participation and progressive attitude of the schedule caste women members were found significantly and positively associated with the social empowerment of the respondents.

### Conclusion

The study confirmed that being a member of SHG has contributed a lot to the socio-psychological and techno-economic empowerment of the schedule caste women. Progress of the schedule caste women by transforming them economically independent need to be motivated for being the part of self-help group movement and need further support so that the overall empowerment level of the schedule caste women can be improved. Social participation, market orientation and credit utilization orientation need to be improved among the schedule caste female members of Self-help group to make them more psychologically, technologically, economically and socially empowered.

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