

EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL WOMEN THROUGH SELF-EMPLOYMENT - A STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO IDAPADI TALUK IN SALEM DISTRICT

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Abstract

The present study examined the empowerment of women in Idapadi town of Salem District. This paper focuses in economic empowerment of several women involved in self-employment from rural area of Idapadi, Salem District. The analysis indicates that self-employment not only helps the respondents to produce extra income but also enables them economically independent and self-sufficient. The study reveals that income, expenditure and savings of the respondents before and after self-employment differ significantly. Women involved in self-employment feel self satisfaction, independence and their sense of determination helps them to achieve success. The study concludes that a change has to be brought about not only in the status of women but in the attitude of the society towards them. Priority has therefore necessarily to be given to changing image of women, from a passive onlooker and recipient, to that of a positive doer and achiever. The implications of these findings and the importance of this study are discussed.

Keywords: Economic empowerment, Personal empowerment, rural women, Self-employment.

Introduction

The present the social order is moving towards development only when it accepts the women participation, grants responsibility and utilizes her ability. By the end of twentieth century, India has witnessed a positive transformation in women's employment and economic development. Women in Idapadi town play a vital role for the development of economy. Idapadi is one of the most important textile areas. Most of the population is depending on Power Loom weaving. There is thousands of power looms standing idle due to a workforce that is focused on migrating to other towns in search of higher pay in other industries. The main reason for the poverty of Idapadi is the lack of viable entrepreneurial opportunities, electricity and a strong work force.

Today it has been accepted by all that the role of the women goes much beyond the home and the bringing up of children. Women are now adopting the careers of their own and sharing equally with men the responsibilities for the development of society in all

aspects in Idapadi. Women have been taking increasing interest in recent years in income generating activities, self employment and entrepreneurship. Self - employment is an occupation in which an individual employs himself either in producing goods or providing services. Whether working from home, running a home-based business, selling material to others etc, there are various reasons for preference of self - employment over wage-employment like provides opportunities for using one's own talent, possible without large resources, Independent work, and economic gains, from job seeker to job-creator, sovereign status than a subservient , Image of prestige and status, Inner satisfaction etc. Self employment provides an opportunity to make the women economically empowered and they are in position to face any challenges in their lives.

Review of Literature

There is a steadily increased number of unemployed youth registered in employment exchanges. The concept of self-employment arises in the context of finding solution to solve the problem of unemployment. To make rural women self employed, it is necessary to impart self employment skills through training. The training programmes should enable the rural women to take up individual and entrepreneurial activities, to impart skills in the selection of a product and to provide skills in managing the enterprise effectively. But it was found in research that entrepreneurs training given by the DICs should be made more meaningful and be conducted more frequently and made compulsory for all applicants before disbursement of loan (Caroline, 1991). The beneficiaries in many cases selected self employment activities without evaluating the feasibility and profitability of such activities. The guidance of the District Industries Centre officials was found to be not at all helpful. Too much emphasis was laid on importing theoretical training ignoring the significance of practical technical training (Mohan Reddy Gopal Krishnaiah and Sivarami Reddy, 1990).

Women entrepreneurs are a vital source of growth that can power our economies for decades, yet they face tremendous challenges to their full economic participation. The GEM Women's Report provides important data which is critical to our understanding of women-run SMEs, said Melanne Verveerin (2010).

A survey was conducted by Women's Web in 2012, where 100 Indian women entrepreneurs were interviewed and some of the findings of this survey were very interesting. Majority of the respondents were small & medium business owners. It also clearly indicates the confidence of women in India and how even at a young age, they are rearing to actualize their dreams.

Statement of the Problem

Women development plays an important role in nation's economy. Since they constitute half of the total population, they have to play a significant role in the

development of the country. Several development programmes have been implemented by the Government with a view to make women as job providers instead of job seekers. Women take up business enterprise to tide over monetary difficulties when responsibility pushes upon them due to family circumstances. These groups of Women entrepreneurs are illiterates and financially weak. In this context an attempt has been made to examine the demographic, social and economic empowerment of rural women through self-employment.

Objectives of the Study

The present study has been undertaken with the following objectives:

- To analyze the demographic and employment profile of the rural self-employed women in Idapadi town.
- To measure the socio- economic empowerment of rural self-employed women town.
- To present productive suggestions based on findings.

Methodology

The present study is undertaken to assess the women empowerment by self employment. The study has been conducted in Idapadi town, which is located 37 Kms away from the industrial town of Salem District. As of 2001 India census Idapadi had a population of 48,804. Males constitute 52% of the population and females 48%. Idapadi has an average literacy rate of 62%, higher than the national average of 59.5%: male literacy is 71%, and female literacy is 51%. In Idapadi, 11% of the population is under 6 years of age.

To meet the objectives of the study both primary and secondary data have been collected. Structured questionnaires have been constructed and administered to a sample of women entrepreneurs. The study has been carried out from 150 women entrepreneurs engaged in unorganized sectors like Beedi making (Indian local cigarette made of tobacco), handicrafts, tailoring, petty shop, vegetable and fruit vendor, preparing snacks or food products etc. using non-random convenience sampling technique. The data relating to socio-demographic and entrepreneurial profiles of women entrepreneurs was collected using interview schedule. Secondary data were also collected from related publications and websites.

Hypotheses

H1: There is no significant relationship that exists between income and expenditure of the respondents before and after self-employment.

H2: There is significant relationship that exists between income and savings of the respondents before and after self-employment.

H3: There is significant relationship that exists between expenditure and savings of the respondents before and after self-employment.

Analysis and Interpretation Demographic Profile

Age draws the picture of experience for pioneering spirit, foresight, determination to succeed and positive thinking ability to take risks. Education is the best means of developing man's resourcefulness, which encompasses different entrepreneurship. An individual's responsibilities increase after marriage. They may even have to take risks in order to improve the economic position of her family. Hence the married state may throw challenges and create situations which urge one to develop entrepreneurial qualities. Nature of the family and its size are also important to determine the support, which an entrepreneur gets from her family. Such support influences the success of women entrepreneurs. Therefore, the demographic profile of the respondents are analyzed which reveals that the majority of respondents belonged to the age group of 30-40 and 59.3 per cent of the respondents have their educational qualification only up to school level. A vast majority of 63.3 per cent of the respondents got married, 70 per cent of the respondents are living in joint family and 50.6 per cent of the respondents have more than 5 members in their family. It is clear from the analysis that women with large families enter into entrepreneurship. Table 1 shows the above fact.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Socio-Economic Profile		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Age(in years)	Below 30	40	26.6
	30 - 40	54	36
	40 - 50	31	20.7
	50 and above	25	16.7
Educational Qualification	Up to school level	89	59.3
	Any Diploma/Degree	52	34.7
	Any other	9	6
Marital Status	Married	95	63.3
	Single	43	28.7
	Widow/Separated	12	8
Type of Family	Nuclear	45	30
	Joint	105	70
No. of Members	Less than 3	17	14.7
	3-5	67	34.7
	5 and above	66	50.6

Source : Primary Data

Employment Profile

Self-employment provides a plenty of opportunities for women to earn money independently. Large numbers of women are engaged in Beedi making (Indian local

cigarette made of tobacco) handicrafts, tailoring, petty shop, vegetable and fruit vendor, preparing snacks or food products etc. The business profile of the respondents surveyed indicates that out of 150 respondent only 28 per cent of women entrepreneurs have business experience before get on the business and only 20 per cent of respondents received skill oriented business training. 29.3 per cent of women entrepreneurs invested only below 5000 for their business and 48 per cent have 5 -10 years of experience. Number of hours devoted for business is one of the important factors for the success of any business. 49.3 per cent of women entrepreneurs are devoting more than 6 hours.

Table 2 Employment Outlines of the Respondents

Business Profile		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Nature of Self-employment	Beedi making	52	34.7
	Vegetable and fruit vendor	19	12.7
	Tailoring	17	11.3
	Pickle and Masala Products	11	7.3
	Beauty Parlour	9	6
	Petty shop	9	6
	Others (towels and lungies manufacturing, etc)	33	22
Prior Experience	Yes	42	28
	No	108	72
Skill Oriented Training	Yes	30	20
	No	120	80
Amount Invested	Less than 1500	64	42.7
	1500 - 5000	44	29.3
	5000 - 7500	37	24.7
	7500 and above	5	3.3
Experience (in years)	Less than 5	26	17.3
	5 - 10	72	48
	10 and more	52	34.7
Number of hours devoted for business	Less than 4	10	6.7
	4-6	66	44
	More than 6	74	49.3

Source: Primary Data

Economic Conditions: Income is an important factor enabling people to lead a happy life. The income determines the spending pattern and savings pattern of the family. The study shows that the income of 22 per cent of the respondents fall below 2000 before they enter

into self-employment but it has considerably increased after they took up an enterprise. Like, there are notable changes in the amount of expenditure and savings of the respondents after self-employment. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Economic Conditions of the Respondents

Before Self-employment		After Self-employment			
Economic Conditions		No. of Respondents	Percentage	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Monthly Family Income	Less than 2000	33	22	17	11.3
	2000 - 3000	61	40.7	47	31.3
	3000 - 4000	32	21.3	42	28
	4000 - 5000	14	9.3	29	19.3
	5000 and above	10	6.7	15	10
Expenditure	Less than 1500	21	14	15	10
	1500 - 2000	54	36	47	31.3
	2000 - 2500	38	25.3	42	28.0
	2500 - 3000	21	14.0	26	17.3
	3000 and above	16	10.6	20	13.3
Savings	Less than 500	11	7.3	06	4
	500 - 1000	63	42	56	37.3
	1000 - 1500	41	27.3	48	32.0
	1500 - 2000	27	18	25	16.7
	2000 and above	8	5.3	15	10.0

Source: Primary Data

The overall improvement of the respondents in economic conditions like income, expenditure and savings are given in Table 4.

Table 4 Improvement In Economic Conditions

Factors	Improved		Not Improved		Total
	No. of Respondents	Percentage	No. of Respondents	Percentage	
Income	98	65.33	52	34.66	150
Expenditure	112	74.66	38	25.33	150
Savings	95	63.33	55	36.66	150
Total	305	-	120	-	450

Source: Primary Data

In order to measure the significant difference among income, expenditure and savings of the respondents before and after self-employment, the following charts have been prepared.

Chart 1 Income and Expenditure

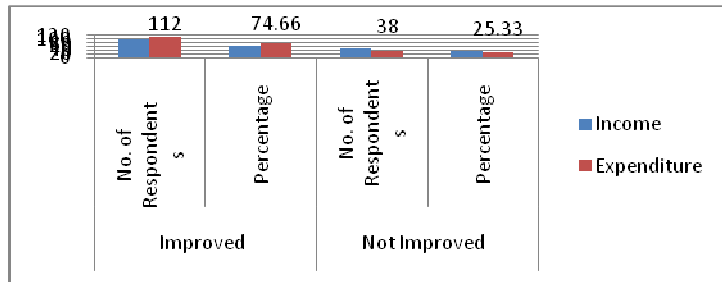


Chart 2 Income And Savings

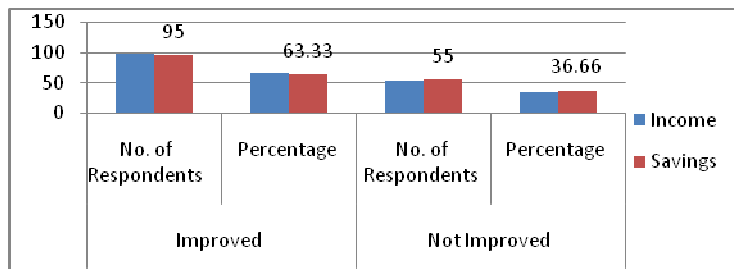
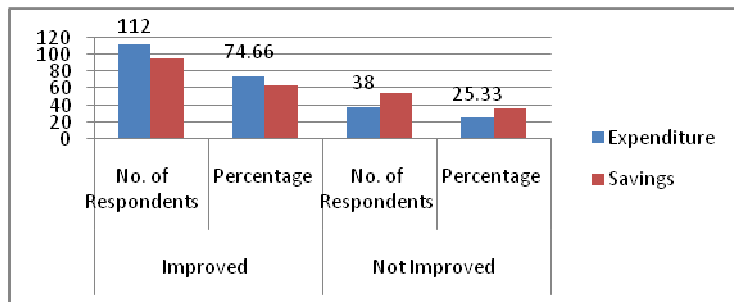


Chart 3 Expenditure and Savings



Therefore, income, expenditure and savings of the respondents before and after self-employment differ significantly.

Personal Empowerment

The need for independence and a sense of determination drive women to start their own new ventures. Table 5 proves this statement.

Table 5 Social Empowerment

SA - Strongly Disagree, A - Agree, N - Neutral, D - Disagree, SDA - Strongly Disagree

Social Empowerment	No. of Respondents					Total	Rank
	SA	A	N	DA	SDA		
Status Improvement	53	43	27	18	9	150	IV
Self confidence	51	59	29	9	2	150	III
Independent work	71	45	15	8	11	150	I
Decision making	38	21	14	46	31	150	V
Determination	65	62	9	8	6	150	II

Source : Computed Data

Findings

- Women in the age group of 30-40, who have their educational qualification only up to school level and got married living in joint family with more than five members in the families, enter into entrepreneurship.
- The business profile of the respondents surveyed indicates that out of 150 respondents, only 28 per cent of women entrepreneurs have business experience before embarking on the business and only 20 per cent of respondents received skill oriented business training.
- The analysis indicates that self employment not only helps the respondents to generate additional income but also enables them economically independent and self-sufficient.
- The study reveals that income, expenditure and savings of the respondents before and after self-employment differ significantly.
- Women involved in self-employment felt independence and their sense of determination helps them to achieve success in their endeavor.

Suggestions

For the development of rural women towards empowerment, the following suggestions are put forth by the researcher:

- Women should be made literate and employed.
- Skill oriented training should be given to rural women.
- Vocational training to acquire practical knowledge should be provided to rural women.
- Women cells should be formed at every district.
- Awareness in getting loan, acquiring raw materials and marketing their products should be given to rural women.

Conclusion

In this study we have assessed the importance of women's entrepreneurship. There are several constraints that check the process of women empowerment in India. Social norms and family structures in developing countries like India, manifests and perpetuate the subordinate status of women. Thus, a change has to be brought about not only in the status of women but in the attitude of the society towards them. Priority has therefore necessarily to be given to changing reflection of women, from a submissive onlooker and recipient, to that of a positive doer and achiever. Basically, the rural women are having basic indigenous knowledge, skill, potential and resources to establish and manage enterprise. But now, what is the need is to create awareness among the rural women, to motivate them to take-up self-employment ventures, to assist them in obtaining necessary inputs required for setting of self-employment ventures from different sources and to provide necessary follow-up assistance to the self-employed rural women for sustaining them in their market.

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