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An Analytical Study on Management Traits of Women Self Help Group Members with Special Reference to Madurai District, Tamil Nadu, India

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Abstract:

Since year 1989, a large number of rural people particularly women have been mobilized into Self Help Groups in state of Tamil Nadu. This has built the social capital among the rural people in the State. SHG movement in the state has not only provided economic benefit to its members but more importantly created viable social capital in the form of an empowered community. However, critical gaps have been observed in the management of day to day activities of the Self Help Groups relating to different group dynamics, organizational management, financial management, arrangement of livelihood activities, internal monitoring, accountability etc. the present has been carried out by the researchers with the view to address the capital gaps in the area of management of women self help groups by applying certain management traits for their effective functioning in the study area. For this purpose the researchers have chosen Madurai district of Tamil Nadu.

1. Introduction

Since year 1989, a large number of rural people particularly women have been mobilized into Self Help Groups in state of Tamil Nadu. This has built the social capital among the rural people in the State. SHG movement in the state has not only provided economic benefit to its members but more importantly created viable social capital in the form of an empowered community. However, critical gaps have been observed in the management of day to day activities of the Self Help Groups relating to different group dynamics, organizational management, financial management, arrangement of livelihood activities, internal monitoring, accountability etc. the present has been carried out by the researchers with the view to address the capital gaps in the area of management of women self help groups by applying certain management traits for their effective functioning in the study area. For this purpose the researchers have chosen Madurai district of Tamil Nadu.

1.1. Concept of Self Help Groups

A Self Help Group is conceived as a small, economically homogenous and affinity group of poor, voluntarily coming together with the objectives viz. (1) to save small amounts regularly (2) mutually agreed to contribute to a common fund to meet their emergency needs and (3) to provide collateral free loans to members with terms decided by groups and resolve conflicts through collective leadership and mutual discussion. The size of the group is restricted to small numbers ranging from five to twenty to ensure the group solidarity. These group based credit program equip the poor with access to financial services on easy terms and conditions. The SHG is formed and groomed by a NGO or a Bank branch or Government Agency acting as a SHPI. Linked with Micro Finance, the SHG movement has now been accepted as an effective intervention strategy for women empowerment.

1.2. Management Traits in Self-Help Groups

Strong savings and credit groups owned and managed by the community itself need competent and committed development facilitators, strong cadre of leaders, and enlightened and alert members. Hence the management and governance of Self-Help Groups that promotes democratic traditions is crucial for its success. Evolution of norms or rules and regulations for self-governance, participatory decision-making, diligence and self-discipline among group members coupled with strong enforcement mechanism for control over affairs are sufficient conditions for transparency in group operations. These rules and regulations are not mere statements but reflect the understanding of group norms by members through their conduct in group activities. Rules and regulations of the group, therefore, need to apprehend conflict situation in day-to-day functioning of group and provide ready solutions. To function effectively these groups and its members need few traits which would broadly cover:

1.2.1. Leadership

It is apt to realize that leadership in a self help group is a verb and not a noun. The range of leadership responsibilities includes identification of problems faced by the group members, organizing, implementing and coordinating the group plans, assisting and motivating the members in information sharing, maintaining records of accounts, resolving conflicts and disputes among group members, representing group's interest to outside bodies, developing systems and procedures for group members in discharging their

routine functions, making negotiations and doing business with other organizations, conducting meetings and facilitating group decisions and ensuring transparency in group functioning.

1.2.2. Group Meetings

Group meetings include times when members gather either periodically or at short notice to discuss the activities of the group and decide on its future actions. All activities in self-help group revolve around meetings at which members' access savings and credit services, share ideas and experiences, learn from each other and also receive education and training. Active participation in the deliberations by all members must be encouraged with expression of free and frank views.

1.2.3. Decision Making

Self help groups and village organizations are grass root level democratic institutions of rural people. Decision making plays an important role in the management of these institutions of rural poor. Being institution of people, decisions are bound to be taken in the management of their day to day activities. The collective decision making of SHG members should lead to sharing of responsibilities, transparency of operation, conflict resolution, increased participation and improved social cohesion among members which will in turn lead to sustainability of their institutions.

1.2.4. Resource mobilization

Resource mobilization is, perhaps, the most important function in self-help group. Some of the best practices include Minimum compulsory thrift contributions to be made by all members, periodicity and quantum of thrift decided by group members themselves keeping in view the ability of poorest member among them to pay the agreed amount at predetermined intervals, thrift collections must be utilized for lending to group members and must not be kept idle, penal provisions like fines, penalties, etc. must be enforced against late payment or default in thrift. Hence, continuity of thrift is a regular group process and any attempt to obstruct or discontinue it after receipt of revolving fund, subsidy, grant or even a bank loan can only be a self-inflicting move.

1.2.5. Resource Utilization

Providing credit access to members of poor household on sustainable basis is the primary objective of self-help group. A well conceived loan programme in a self-help group will enhance its attractiveness to the members. These loans are often given for various purposes without insistence on collateral but are available at cost. There is no compulsion to avail the loan facility, as such those who avail loans have to make a choice to pay the cost, or have no credit at all. Some of the best practices in the area of resource utilization include: offering small, short-term loans for meeting emergent and consumption requirements only to their members, the internal lending must preferably commence from the date of first pooling of savings, need based lending is strongly recommended by active groups, □group must have a system of giving differential priorities to several purposes for taking loaning decisions, where in urgency of purpose is given precedence while selecting a borrowing member.

1.2.6. Financial Sustainability

Mobilizing micro-thrifts is only part of comprehensive savings serve Self- Help Groups. Small savings from resource-poor households need operative protection against loss of deposits. Misappropriation in savings and credit groups as well as imprudent lending from internally generated deposits threatens the security of savings programme. They have to be shielded against the financial and non-financial risks. It is, therefore, considered necessary that high standards are set in the area of financial sustainability. Managing of savings account with local branch is another important area in financial management. All cash collections made at a meeting may be deposited into the bank and withdrawals made for disbursing the loans. While members could take turns for depositing the cash into bank, the persons authorized and the borrower concerned could draw the money from bank. However, groups maintaining up to date records could consider extending loans out of pooled fund during the meetings itself. Periodic reconciliation of accounts with bank transactions is considered useful.

1.2.7. Record Maintenance

Record keeping is possibly the most crucial function in a self-help group often confined to the periphery. An efficient record keeping assumes significance for promoting transparency in the system considering the need for providing safety of micro-deposits pooled in savings and credit programmes. An effective information system that supports their self-management efforts is sine-quo-non for sustainability of self-help groups. Such system can be considered effective when it is easily understood and appeals to cognitive abilities of ignorant and illiterate community. Besides, it must be credible, verifiable and facilitate quick recall of stored information in the perception of users.

1.2.8. Group Dynamics

The forces that result from the interactions of group members are often referred to as group dynamics. Group dynamics influences the behavior of both individual group member and the group as a whole. A thorough understanding of group dynamics is useful for practicing effectively with any type of group. Although many theories have been developed to conceptualize group functioning, fundamental to all of them is an understanding of groups as social systems. A system is made up of elements and their interactions. As social systems, therefore, task and treatment groups can be conceptualized as individuals in interaction with each other. In-depth

knowledge of group dynamics is essential for understanding the social structure of groups and for developing beginning-level skills in group work practice.

1.2.9. Conflict Resolution

Conflicts are natural to social life. People have different personalities, family backgrounds, life experiences, attitudes and interests. These lead to disagreements and disputes and, if they are not solved amicably will lead to conflicts. Usually in almost all social groups, conflicts arise out of sub group formation due to several reasons. If appropriate action is taken in time, the minor conflicts can be resolved easily. SHGs are no exemption in this regard. According to social work theory, the principles of group dynamism explain various stages of group functioning. Sub group formation might adversely affect the performance of the group. Timely intervention by the group leader revives the group dynamism and enables the group to achieve the objectives. In the case of SHGs, the involvement and the support of members especially during the initial stages are very crucial for the smooth functioning of the SHGs.

1.2.10. Capacity Building

Capacity building enhances the ability and skills of the SHG members at the individual level to realize her full potential and live a more happy and meaningful life. This is an enabling and empowering process to work as a group and play different roles, necessary for development and maintenance of the group. It is important from the point of view of empowerment that women are not only capable of functioning as a group, but also are able to effectively participate in the process of economic activity undertaken by the group of women. Capacity building of women in the areas of planning, executing, and monitoring and all aspects of the economic activity is equally desired in this context.

1.2.11. Relationship with Stakeholders

The members of self help groups must possess a good amount of knowledge about establishing relationships/linkages with other social institutions around them. The major objectives of this aspect of relationship building is to exchange information freely, to get access to resources and facilities, to develop the required infrastructure, to benefit from Government schemes for which women are eligible, but may be currently deprived of due to the absence of linkages and to lessen exploitation through collective strength.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

1. To explore the important Management traits practiced by women self-help groups members in the study area.
2. To offer suggestions for effective functioning of self-help groups in the study area.

1.4. Reviews of Literature

1. Adela Kazmi and Sharma (2014) in their study on "Literature review of behavioral themes on women in management" have identified five broad behavioral themes in the literature. These are: attitudes, communication, leadership, and motivational pattern and personality traits. According to the authors all these behavioral themes have contributed to successful management of tasks by women.
2. Judge, Timothy and piccolo, et al (2009) in their study on "The bright and dark sides of leaders' traits: A review and theoretical extension of the leader trait paradigm" have presented a conceptual model that considers the sources of leaders' traits, emergence of leaders and effectiveness of leadership. They have taken in to consideration both bright side traits (self-evaluation, Intelligence and charisma) and dark side traits (dominance, hubris and Machiavellianism).
3. Lata Krishnan, (2008) analyzed the formation and functioning of SHGs and the impact on socioeconomic status of underprivileged women. A pre-tested structured schedule was administered to collect the primary data from 350 SHG members and 30 animators. The study revealed that women come together as SHGs as they were able to get hassle-free and timely loans to meet emergence needs with thrift. Team sprit was acting as a binding factor to bring unity and cohesiveness among the group members. The SHG approach, apart from generating incremental income, helped them to upgrade the economic and social status along with a sense of recognition contributing to the process of empowerment.
4. Suja, (2012) found out in her study that Association in Self Help Groups has enabled women to gain greater control over resources like material possession, intellectual resources like knowledge, information, ideas and decision making in home, community, society and nation. The SHGs crosswise states have paved attention on skill improvement, facilitating invention, gaining access to credit from financial institutions for micro enterprises / projects, inculcating of frugality: and supervision of credit for the economically destitute sections of women. Since Government is concentrating on women Self Help Group for the economic growth and poverty elevation, this study becomes the need of the hour.
5. Thalavai Pillai and Nadarajan (2010) in their study stated that the impact of managerial competency is commendable in courage, self-confidence, self-worthiness, skill development, awareness about environment, peace in the family, reduction of poverty improving rural savings, managerial ability decision making process and group management.

1.5. Methodology

1.5.1. Sampling Design and Statistical Tools

The appropriate statistical tools have been deployed such as Descriptive analysis and inferential statistics. The researcher has used in this the specific statistical tool exploratory factor analysis, Confirmatory factor analysis; the application of statistical tools in the study is necessitated to check the validity, independence, correlation, variation and consistency of the data.

The researcher has used systematic random sampling technique of Probability sampling. From the Total SHGs in the study area every fifth member was selected from the study area. The sample size is 400 members. The data collected were analyzed with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The data were tested for normality to ensure it represents the true population and to avert any skewness in the data. The multivariate technique – Factor Analysis was used to reduce the number of variables/impact into few so that the impact can be analyzed with and in the presence of other variables with the aid of statistical tools.

The Primary data were collected from the sample respondents using a Structured Interview Schedule. The secondary data have been collected from the brochures and records of Mahalir Thittam in Madurai District, various magazines, websites, books, National and International journals and dailies.

As Against this backdrop the following chapter presents the results of the data analysis.

1.5.2. Identifying Important Management Traits in SHG's

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to identify the important management trait dimensions of women self-help group members. For this, 33 statements relating to management traits based on previous studies were selected so as to identify the significant and important dimensions with the help of factor analysis technique.

The purpose of factor analysis is to interpret the structure within the variance-covariance matrices of the multivariate data collection made on the different factors related to management traits. The technique uses extraction of the Eigen values and eigenvectors from the matrices of correlations or co-variances. The basic mathematical operations in factor analysis are done with many embellishments on the procedures. Factor analysis is a deep and complex methodology. It is one of the most widely used multivariate procedures. The model is based on several unique assumptions. For one, the precise number of factors is assumed prior to the analysis. The factors extracted, or rather the number of factors, are validated by the variance each of them explain to the total. There is a progressive decline in the value of variances with the increasing number of factor dimensions. The first, or the main factor dimension, has the highest of the total variance explained and the bipolar the next highest and so on, resulting in progressively declining variances.

In order to identify the underlying dimensions, an exploratory factor analysis with principal components was carried out. The respondents were asked to rate 33 trait related variables using 5-point Likert scale, which ranged from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The inter-item consistency reliability of these 33 variables was tested before factor analysis was carried out. Before carrying out factor analysis, in order to test the appropriateness of the factor model, Bartlett's test of sphericity was used to test the null hypothesis that the variables are inter-correlated in population. The test statistic for sphericity is based on a Chi-square transformation of the determinants of the correlation matrix.

In order to test whether it was appropriate to apply the exploratory factor analysis technique to this dataset, we used the Kaiser Meyer Olkin test as a measure of sample adequacy. This measure varies between 0 and 1, and values closer to 1 are better. Kaiser (1974) recommends accepting values greater than 0.5 as acceptable, whereas the level of significance in Chi-square test is at 5 per cent level.

The results in Table 1.0 reveal that the KMO value is 0.724 which denotes that the factor analysis is applicable with the current data. The chi Square value for Bartlett's test of Sphericity is 7278.347 and the significant value is 0.000 which is significant at one percent level of confidence. Hence it is clear that the data is suitable for factor analysis. Communalities symbolized as h^2 shows how much of each variable is accounted for by the underline factor taken together. The amount of variance, a variable share with all other variables included in the analysis is referred to as communality. The co-variation among the variables is described in terms of a small number of common factors plus a unique factor for each variable. These factors are not over observed. A high value of communality means that not much of the variable is left over after whatever the factors represents is taken into consideration.

The factors with factor loadings of 0.5 or greater are considered significant factors. This limit is chosen because it has been judged that factors with less than 50 per cent common variation with the rotated factor pattern are too weak to report

The factor analysis yielded ten important dimensions of management traits. The number of variables loaded under each factor, its reliability, Eigen value, and the per cent of variance explained by the factors are explained in Table 1.0

Items	Rotated Factor Loading									
	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9	F10
Rmu3	.928									
Rmu2	.919									
Rmu4	.902									
Rmu1	.827									
Fin2		.951								
Fin3		.949								
Fin1		.919								
Cap6			.885							
Cap2			.841							
Cap4			.805							
Rec1				.871						
Rec2				.867						
Rec3				.780						
Gdy1					.958					
Gdy3					.946					
Gdy2					.673					
Stk1						.781				
Stk4						.770				
Stk3						.744				
Stk2						.715				
Lea1							.780			
Lea3							.742			
Lea4							.731			
Lea2							.704			
Dec2								.874		
Dec2								.854		
Dec3								.827		
Con1									.855	
Con2									.831	
Con3									.778	
Met3										.861
Met2										.825
Met1										.682
KMO	0.724									
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Approx. Chi-Square					7278.347*					

Table 1: Rotated factor matrix for Identifying Management Traits in SHG's
* Significant at five per cent level - Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

➤ Scree Plot

Scree plot is used to graphically determine the Eigen values for each factor and suggest the predominant factor. A scree plot is a plot of Eigen values against the number of factors in order of extraction. As shown in Figure 4.14, it indicates that there are ten factors which have Eigen values greater than one based on 33 variables.

According to the screen test criterion, ten-factor structure was thought to be meaningful because the break between the steep slope and levelling off was between factor numbers ten and eleven.

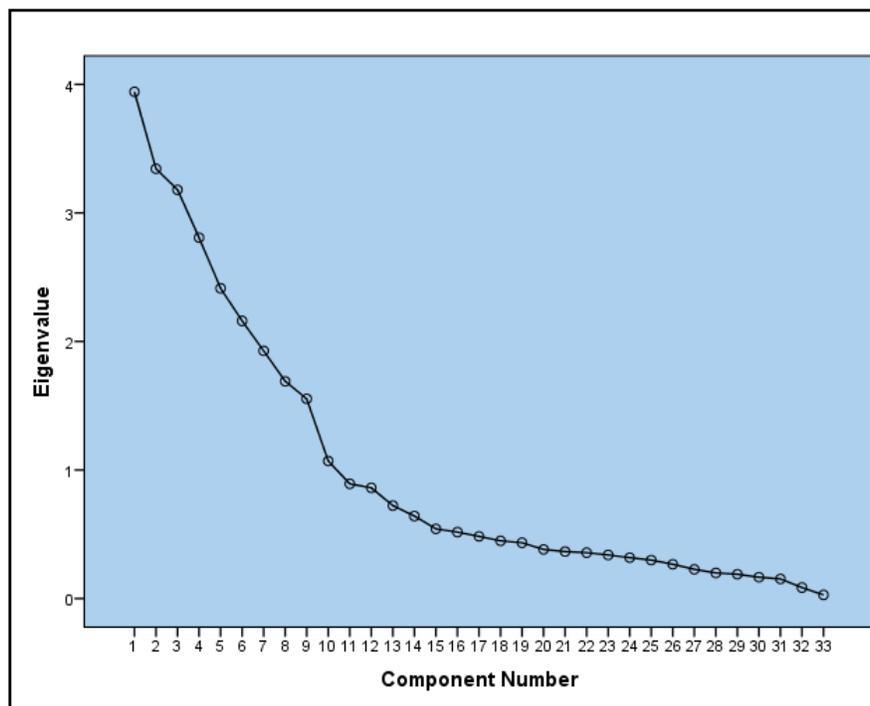


Figure 1: Screen plot

SI. No.	Factors	Variables included	Eigen Value	Percent of variation explained	Reliability Coefficient
1	Resource mobilization and Utilization	4	3.248	9.843	.918
2	Financial sustainability	3	2.720	8.243	.943
3	Capacity building	3	2.461	7.457	.881
4	Record maintenance	3	2.415	7.319	.869
5	Group dynamics	3	2.321	7.034	.838
6	Relationship with stakeholders	4	2.303	6.978	.749
7	Leadership	4	2.286	6.928	.736
8	Decision making	3	2.261	6.851	.827
9	Conflict resolution	3	2.121	6.429	.780
10	Participation in group meeting	3	1.950	5.908	.722
Total		33		73	

Table 2: Dimensions of Management Traits in SHG's
Source: Primary data

1.5.3. Findings

It is evident from Table 1.0 that all the 33 items have been extracted into ten factors. According to Table 2 it is clearly evident that the extracted ten factors explain the variables of women SHG member's management traits to the extent of 73 per cent. Based on the characteristics of each loaded variable, the ten factors were termed as "Resource mobilization and Utilization, Financial sustainability, Capacity building, Record maintenance, Group dynamics, Relationship with stakeholders, Leadership, Decision making, Conflict resolution and Participation in group meeting". The factors with identified new names are discussed below.

The most important factor explaining the self-help group members' management trait is "Resource mobilization and Utilization" with an Eigen value of 3.248 and a reliability coefficient of .918. The second most important factor is "Financial sustainability" with an Eigen value of 2.720 and a reliability coefficient of 0.943. The other factors explaining SHG member's traits are Capacity building, Record maintenance, Group dynamics, Relationship with stakeholders, Leadership, Decision making, Conflict resolution, Participation in group meeting with an Eigen value of 2.461, 2.415, 2.321, 2.303, 2.286, 2.261, 2.121 and 1.950 respectively.

1.5.4. Suggestions & Conclusion

From the analysis, it is inferred that the SHG members need to upgrade their skills to reach a larger market. The government can impart more need based scientific training to improve their functioning rather than providing conventional training programs. SHG members are of the opinion that the Government and self help promoting institutions must impart skill on day-to-day management of their social unit especially in the areas of group dynamics, collective decision making, conflict resolution and relationship building activities for their effective functioning and sustainability.

It is evident from the study that SHGs are one of the best means to counter social and financial exclusion. Women have tremendous energies to start and run their own enterprises given the right opportunities. They have developed a sense of unity, abundant self confidence and self esteem through SHG movement.

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