

Women Empowerment through Long Term Orientation with Special Reference to SHG, Kerala Region

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Abstract: *The Women empowerment in SHGs is a widely researched topic. A large number of studies have been conducted in Kerala on the role of women empowerment with special focus on Kudumbashree units. These studies mostly focused on the financial aspects of the units, how Kudumbashree improved the status of women financially, the growth of employment, the financial support through the project, etc. The review of literature found shortage of literature on certain aspects like long term orientation, short term orientation and behavioral aspect of women working in these project. This research intends to cover the gap existing in those literature. This is accomplished through an in depth study on the long term orientation of women working in SHGs with special focus on Kudumbashree units. This study concentrates a major aspect Long term Orientation and its relevance on women empowerment. It is widely accepted that within the approach of LTO an appropriate focus towards the job and future wellbeing of a person will evolve. This positive approach promotes women empowerment.*

Keywords: Long term Orientation, Women Empowerment, Self Help Groups

JEL Classifications: E44, G21

1. Introduction

Many major studies provided insights on the importance of LTO approach. The specific objective of this study is to examine whether women employees consider the LTO approach as a requirement for their empowerment. To examine the stated objectives, a qualitative research is undertaken and data are obtained through a scheduled interview with a structured questionnaire. It is planned to conduct an interview to a total of 100 women employees from different SHG selected based on random sampling method. The results of this study are significant as it can demonstrate whether the LTO is significant in empowering women employees at work. This study also expected to add value to existing management practices focusing on women empowerment.

The study is conducted in the state of Kerala region. The state has 14 districts. All the districts have implemented Kudumbashree as a strategy for empowerment of women. The main intension of the study is to assess the level of LTO among the women members of SHG. LTO consists of four dimensions of cultural differences. This study seeks to explore the impact of participation in SHGs on the empowerment of women in the context of the great importance being given to the group approach while conceptualizing any programme for rural women. The study concentrated in the twelve districts of Kerala. The study looks at various dimensions of empowerment of women through LTO.

Literature concentrates on LTO of women in different sectors but there is scarcity of materials with respect to LTO of women in Kudumbashree units. There are limited studies which focus on Long term Orientation which leads to women empowerment.

2. Literature Review

LTO provides a holistic view, valuing longer time horizons and assigning greater importance to the future (Bearden, Money & Nevins (2006).

A study focused on the relationship between low income and low capability in different communities and between different families, different individuals, freedom of women and their empowerment,(Sen 1999).

A study revealed that an economically active woman with her own independent savings has more economic power and thus a higher bargaining power within the household, thereby making her more empowered and likely to challenge the prevailing norms that restrict her ability to make choices, (Ashraf, Karlan and Yin 2006).

The economic impact of microfinance programs, emphasized that there is increasing evidence of microfinance programs has a low-income impact but generate high repayment rate, (Copestake et.al 2001).

Women empowerment has gained significant consideration of strategy makers in the past few decades. In the International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo in 1994 women empowerment was at the centre stage of discussion and received significant attention and was further deliberated in the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing during 1995. An inclusive growth and development is incomplete and is impossible to achieve without women's participation. Women empowerment is very important for the acceleration of economic growth (Paramanandam & Packirisamy, 2015;Duflo, 2012).

According to Page and Czuba (1999), women's empowerment has a powerful influence on family, norms,

Volume 5 Issue 9, September 2016

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values and ethical laws that govern these communities. It is a vital strategy for development efforts. The rural women in SHGs were recognized as a major element for survival and growth of the backward people. The experts and academicians focused their attention more on the quality of women SHGs they reviewed the trend in a positive way. The majority of such literature explained the background of SHG, its management used in micro financing.

According to (Malhotra, Schuler, & Boender, 2002), Women empowerment as a development goal is based on a dual argument: that social justice is an important aspect of human welfare and is intrinsically worth pursuing; and that women's empowerment is a means to other ends.

3. Research Methodology

From the review of recent researches, the relationship between Long term Orientation and women empowerment is established. Standardized questionnaires are available to measure LTO. The pertinent question in this regard is; Whether the LTO approach in organizations builds and promotes to empowerment. In a working environment like SHGs, a team work culture is observed. Being in a group positively influence the morale of the employee. If this is true, then empowerment is the outcome of being part of a group in the work environment. This relationship though may be observed in working environment, is not subjected to statistical interpretation using quantitative data. This research is attempting to evaluate the role of LTO in improving the women employee, and its effect on women empowerment.

The construct is explained further;

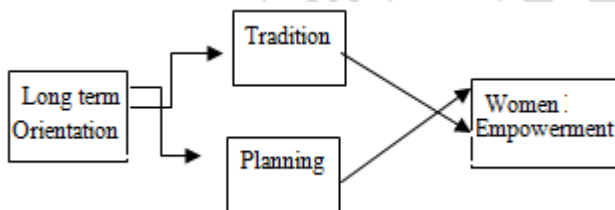


Figure 1: Relationship between LTO and Empowerment

Bearden, Money and Nevins (2006) developed a standard questionnaire for LTO and this was used for this study. Eight items were used in the tool wherein four items are used for measuring the „Respect towards tradition“ and the rest to evaluate the „Planning“ of individual. This measure had a Likert type scale ranging from 7= strongly agree to 1= strongly disagree. The questionnaire used is a strong tool and is capable of providing insights on the long-term orientation of women in SHGs. Few sample items in the questionnaire is as under:

Tradition

1. Respect for tradition is important to me.
2. Family heritage is important to me.

Planning

1. I plan for the long term.
2. I work hard for success in the future.

The tool used is reliable and valid. The Cronbach alpha of the two factors is presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Particulars regarding Cronbach alpha

| | Factor Name | No: of items | Cronbach alpha |
|---|-------------|--------------|----------------|
| 1 | Tradition | 4 | 0.83 |
| 2 | Planning | 4 | 0.71 |

The original questionnaires used in the study are in English as the SHG members are women who are mostly below the poverty line and do not have education. So the questionnaire was translated to Malayalam with the help of experts. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section focuses on the demographics pertaining to the sample. The particulars collected include the age, income, marital status and experience. A maximum of three units were covered on a particular day as the units located are far from the town.

4. Analysis of LTO among members of SHG in Kerala

The major objective of the study was to analyze the LTO of women members in SHG Kerala region. To identify the level of LTO scores in women members of SHG, the total population was divided into high, middle and low group using descriptive statistics. The grouping of members based on LTO was done as under:

High group: Those members having a score over Mean plus ½ Standard deviation

Low group: Members having score below Mean minus ½ Standard deviation

The high group score boundary was 50.56 and the low group score boundary was as 43.95. The middle score was between these two scores. Members who had scores above 50.56 are 330. The group below score 43.95 is 300. It shows that 30 per cent of the people have low long term orientation and 33 per cent of the total population have high long term orientation, whereas the women members in the middle group where 36 per cent. It can be interpreted from the descriptive statistics that there exists difference in the level of LTO among women in the total population.

5. Findings and Conclusion

Women empowerment is a process wherein it is conceptualized in terms of personal assessment, self esteem and confidence. Several schemes were made, in-order to empower women by the government and the most successful concept as SHG. It has brought new horizons to the women in the country; it opens new avenues for the development of rural women.

A finding of the study reveals no significant difference between various age groups (six age groups) or income groups with LTO. The four categories of marital status – unmarried, married, divorced and widowed. An ANOVA was done to find out if there exist any differences in LTO between these groups. The results indicated a highly significant difference between the groups.

Women empowerment raised the status of women in the society through SHGs. The women with high LTO is having a high level of traditional orientation and planning in their activities. This enabled women empowerment and social upliftment, this study has identified that the members in those SHGs carry a long term orientation in their activities. Those women who showed high level of respect towards tradition and values have a significantly high level of orientation in their activities. They also plan for their future and highly focused towards achievement. This enable them to be successful as an individual and thereby reflecting in their group works. Thus the study reveals a direct connection between success orientation through tradition and planning.

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