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## A STUDY ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH SELF HELP GROUPS IN MALAPPURAM DISTRICT

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**Abstract:** *The individual identity of women in today's world has changed significantly. Women empowerment help them to build an identity of their own. Women empowerment includes different activities undertaken helping in improving their social, economic and political status in the world. It also equips them to improve their wellbeing. It gets reflected both in external and internal qualities. Self-help Groups (SHG) are novel and innovative organizational setup in India for the women upliftment and welfare. Self-help groups are informal groups of individuals who come together and find ways to improve their living conditions. The study is designed to assess the women empowerment through self-help groups in Malappuram district. Methodology adopted for the study is survey method and sample consists of 200 self-help group women. The study was conducted with specially formulated interview schedule. The study reveals that the life style of the subjects showed improvement by joining the SHG's. The respondents attained decision making skills and better status in the family and society. Majority of respondents showed better and greater awareness of nutrition and food hygiene practices. In short, the empowerment of women enhanced their social and economic independence.*

**Keywords:** *Women Empowerment, Self-Help Group (SHG), Awareness, Nutrition and Food Hygiene Practices*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Women are an important element of our Society. The modern society has started recognizing the individual identity of women. She is believed to have her aspiration, abilities and qualities as a man does have and it is also agreed that she should have the opportunities to develop her capabilities and to express them according to her own choice. The woman is now an important instrument of social change. The extent of women's participation in the corporate life is thus the measure of social change in India.

Women empowerment is also defined as a change in the context of a women's life, which enables her increased capacity for leading a fulfilling human life. It gets reflected both in external qualities (viz. health, mobility, education and awareness, status in the family, participation in decision making, and also at the level of material security) and internal qualities (viz. self-awareness and self-confidence).

A self-help group is a "self-governed, information group of people with similar socio-economic background and

having a desire to collectively perform common purpose." Self-help groups are empowerment resource centers for the women and has a multiple effect in improving the status of women in society as well as in the family. It helps them to save an amount out of their earnings and thus help to recycle the resources generated for meeting the emergent needs of members of the group.

SHGs are innovative organizational setup in India used as an effective strategy for human development and social empowerment. SHGs help women from economically weaker sections and improve their existing sources of livelihood. It also help them to emerge as a prospective entrepreneur and a skilled worker. As a social movement with government support, SHGs have become more or less a part and parcel of the society uplifting the social and economic status of the rural and poor population.

SHGs group in Kerala work as channels for ensuring micro finance assistance to the poorer groups of the state for the rural development and at the same time it acts as stimulants

ensuring women empowerment in the state. SHGs bring together those women category having limited financial resources but abundant capabilities and make optimum use of them. Some of the activities/business of SHGs in Kerala include tailoring, pickle making, broom-stick making, jewelry making, preparation of snacks, bamboo products manufacturing etc.

SHG participation lead to women’s empowerment because of improvements in income, savings and /or loan repayments and skills developed after they are exposed to group support and their participation in regular meetings. Thus they gain access to resources in the form of credit, training, loans or capital. It is thus a platform for women to interact with each other, understand their common problems, channel their savings and encourage education of their children. Thus the participation of women in self-help group (SHGs) make a significant impact on their empowerment both in social and economic aspects. Hence the present study attempts to assess the role of SHGs in improving the socio-economic status of women.

**II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To study the socio economic status of the subjects
- To evaluate the economic activity of the subjects
- To examine the impact of training

To analyze the income, expenditure and saving patterns of SHG women

- To assess the knowledge on nutrition and food hygiene practices of the respondents

**III. METHODOLOGY**

The methodology adopted for the study includes a ground survey. The area selected for the study is Malappuram district. A sample of 200 SHG women has been selected for the study. Purposive sampling technique is used for the selection of sample. An interview schedule was formulated for collecting information relating to individual profile, economic activity, impact of training, information relating to income, savings and loan, problems faced, assess their knowledge on nutrition and food hygiene. The data was collected with the help of the structured interview schedule. Nutrition education was imparted to the subjects on the importance of nutrition in daily life, food containing nutrients, best cooking, cutting and other methods to conserve nutrients and food hygiene practices.

**IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Survey reveals that 30% respondents belong to the age group of 36-40 year, 27% under the age group of 31-35 years, 26.5% and 9% under the age group of 41-45 and 25-30 years respectively. A minimum of 7.5 percent of subjects were above 45 years of age. It was found that 77 percent of them

had high school education. 12% had higher secondary qualification and 11 % completed primary education.

**1. Economic Activity**

Table 1 shows the economic activity of the selected samples.

**Table 1**  
**Economic activity**  
**N=200**

Sl.NO.	Variables	Category	Number	Percent
1	Activity undertaken	Catering	137	68.5
		Eatable items	12	6.0
		Cultivation of vegetables	34	17.0
		Tailoring	17	8.5
		Others	0	0
2	Place of sale of products	Village level	54	27.0
		Block level	16	8.0
		District level	130	65.0
		State level	0	0
		Others	0	0
3	Marketing facilities	Exhibitions	162	81.0
		Bazaar	0	0
		house hold level	2	4
		Local market	36	15
		Others	0	0

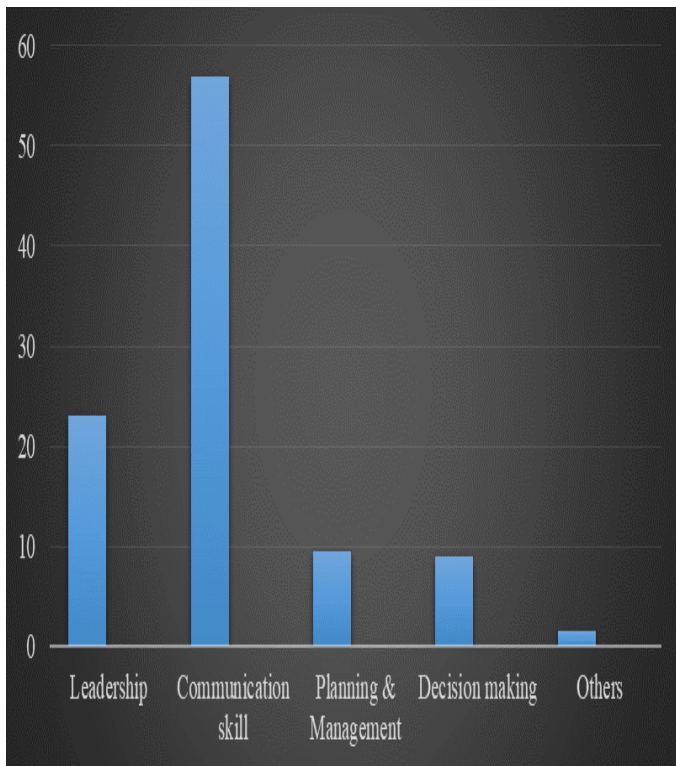
Majority of the subjects take up catering services, 17 percent undertake vegetable cultivation and 8.5 percent undertake tailoring. 6 percent of them produce snack items.

65 percent and 27 percent of the subjects sell the products at district level and village level respectively. 8 percent sell the items at the block level.

Subjects also exhibit their products for marketing and sale Products are also sold in the local market and also supplied at home.

**2. Impact of Training**

Training undergone by the samples enhanced their performance. It includes an increase in communication skill, leadership quality, planning and management ability and decision making. Figure 1 shows the impact of training.



**Fig 1. Impact of training**

**3. Income, Expenditure and Saving pattern**

Table 2 presents the Income, Expenditure and Savings of the samples.

**Table 2.**  
**Income, Expenditure and Savings**

N=200

Sl. No	Variables	Category	Number	Percent
1	Total Savings	Up to Rs 25000	162	81
		Rs 25001-50000	38	19
		Rs 50001-100000	0	0
		Rs 100001-150000	0	0
2	Balance income and expenditure	Yes	195	97.5
		No	5	2.5
3	Amount deposited in SHG ( If yes)	Rs <100	5	2.5
		Rs 100	38	19
		Rs 200	67	33.5
		Rs 300	90	45
4	Savings other than SHG	Yes	136	68
		No	64	32
5	Sources	Bank	54	27
		Post office	31	15.5

	Insurance	0	0
	Chit fund	0	0
	As jewels	0	0
	Others	51	25.5

81 percent of the subjects save up to Rs 25000 and 19% save up to Rs 50000. Some of the subjects can balance income and expenditure and 2.5 percent are unable to balance. 45 percent deposit Rs 300 in SHG and 2.5% of the subjects deposit less than 100 rupees. Subjects use bank and post office to deposit their savings other than SHGs.

**4. Knowledge on nutrition and food hygiene**

Sample’s knowledge on nutrition and food hygiene was also evaluated. 44 percent of the subjects purchased food items from the local market. 88.5 percent of the subjects used cooking cap whereas only 37% of the subjects used foot cap. Hand gloves and aprons were used by 88.5 percent of the samples. It was revealed that 81.5 percent of the samples used food colour as the food additive even though 89 percent were aware of the side effects.

Food was prepared freshly by 72 percent and coconut oil was used by 46.5 percent of the sample. It was heartwarming to know that 92 percent of the subjects did not re-use the oil. 94 percent of the samples used minimally processed foods.

The left over foods were brought home by 52 percent of the subjects. 33.5 percent of the subjects stored water and food in a protected environment. 69 percent of the subjects use boiled water for drinking where as 23 percent used it as such. 97.5 percent of the samples have definite storage facilities. 50 percent of the subjects have storage containers and refrigerator facility.

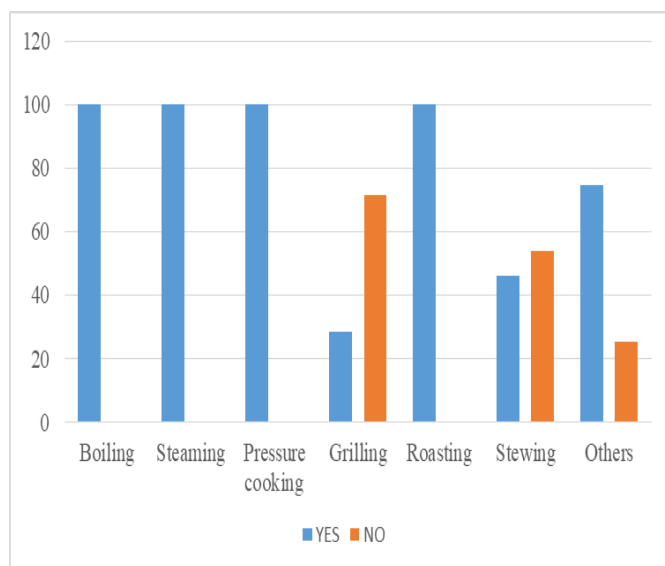
Steel vessels were used by 66.5 percent of the samples for serving whereas 33.5 percent of the samples use other different types of vessels also. The samples used plastic covers, banana leaf, thermocol boxes and butter paper as packing material. 97.5 percent of the subjects did cleaning after every serving.

It is clear that 33.5 percent and 2.5 percent of the subjects agreed to the presence of insects like cockroach and rats, and 36 percent used chalk to repel them.

100 percent of the samples washed hands before handling food. It was happy to note that all the samples used different cutting boards for vegetables and non-vegetarian foods.

It was found that 45 percent of the samples disposed the waste to produce compost and 44.5 percent of them used the waste management service of the municipality.

Different cooking methods like boiling, pressure cooking, steaming etc were used by the subjects and is presented in Figure 2.



**Fig 2. Cooking Methods**

**V. CONCLUSION**

Women are important element of our Society. SHGs has been working in the right direction in empowering women and eradicating poverty in the rural and urban area.. The life style of the subjects showed improvement by joining the SHG’s. The respondents attained decision making skills and better status in the family and society. Majority of respondents showed better and greater awareness in nutrition and food hygiene practices. Hence the study indicates that SHGs have positive effects on women’s empowerment which enhanced their social and economic independence.

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