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LOAN MANAGEMENT OF WOMEN IN SELF-HELP GROUPS – A STUDY

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Abstract:-Women and women related issues are the most important concerns for the Governments in the World. Governments in India have been taking constant efforts to improve their socio-economic status in the society through its policies and development programme. Government of Tamil Nadu has been implementing and making a number of schemes for the overall welfare of women, particularly in rural areas. It seems that Governments in the World consider that women development is a base for their country's progress and believe that they are the change makers from bottom to top level. The long-term growth journey of women is possible only by bring them under the umbrella of viable and potential socio-economic organizations. Self-Help Group (SHG), a way for reaching the unreached in rural India through collective actions, is one such an organization being formed on the principle of sustainable development of women, especially in the villages. Women who are having common socio-economic features have come forward voluntarily and organize SHGs in their areas to improve their standard of living. Public sector and commercial banks have been providing adequate micro finance to SHGs for starting small business. SHGs get loans from the banks and involve in the production activities. Getting and using the loans from SHGs by women at the grassroots level involve numerous processes and forms. As a group/team, women are continuously working for their self and society development that takes India to the global level for its success.

Keywords: Women, Self-Help Group, and Loan Management.

INTRODUCTION

Woman is considering as an important asset in the World. Women in rural India have confined works within the four walls of their home, as they feel fear, shy and not bold enough. Women have been considered as secondary human beings by rural masses due to traditional practices in the houses, cultural factors, customs, and celebrations in the society. They could not find a proper place in the development road. In order to bring social change and economic development among women, Governments in India have been implementing various schemes and programme for their advancement. SHG is one of the active socio-economic organizations working for their sustainable progress, especially in rural India. It is a voluntary association of poor people who are from the same socio-economic surroundings. They come together for addressing their common socio-economic problems and thereby ensure their long-term development. It is an organization of the people, by the people and for the people. As a group, they learn to handle their resources in a productive manner and

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enhance their capacity. SHGs have viable potential for creating awareness among women on current events, their rights and responsibilities, promoting saving habits, increasing their socio-economic status and generating self-confidence among them to tackle their issues and concerns. It is a powerful instrument for empowering women in rural India and for reaching the unreached poor in the rural areas. Banks have been providing micro finance for starting commercial and small business activities by women through SHGs.

Through review of literature, the researcher came to know that there are studies focused on women empowerment through SHGs in different parts of the country (India) and in Tamil Nadu. But, none of the studies focused on loan management practices of women members in Women Self-Help Groups (WSHGs) in remote rural areas in Nilakottai and Athoor blocks of Dindigul District in Tamil Nadu State. In order to fill the research gap identified by the researcher, an attempt is made to examine the loan management practices by women in WSHGs.

OBJECTIVES

- ❖ To study the socio-economic background of women in WSHGs
- ❖ To learn the loan management practices by women in WSHGs
- ❖ To discover the problems faced by women in WSHGs on loan management practices, and
- ❖ To offer suggestions to overcome the problems faced by women in WSHGs

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on descriptive research method. There are 14 blocks in Dindigul District such as Palani, Thoppampatti, Athoor, Kodaikanal, Oddanchattaram, Reddiyarchattaram, Battalakundu, Vedasandur, Dindigul, Nilakottai, Guziliamparai, Vadamathurai, Nattam, and Shanarpatti. The area of the study is confined with WSHGs functioning in selected remote villages of Nilakottai and Athoor blocks. The universe of the study is cramped with only women members in WSHGs. Five WSHGs from each block were randomly selected (5WSHGs X 2 Blocks = 10 WSHGs). By applying simple random sampling method, ten women members (including President, Vice-President and Secretary) were selected from each WSHG. Thus, a sum of 100 rural women members (10 WSHGs X 10 women members = 100 respondents) from WSHGs were selected. An interview schedule was prepared, drafted and finalized through pre-test for primary data collection purpose ensuring reliability of this study. The required and relevant primary data were directly collected by the researcher from the women members in WSHGs using structured interview schedule and focused group discussion. The collected primary data were coded and edited for further processing. Secondary sources of information were also collected from published and unpublished documents. In order to analyse the collected primary data, appropriate statistical tools like tabular analysis and simple percentage were used.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

Age : Age decides the level of mind-set and maturity of the people. One can become member of any socio-economic organization after reaching 18 years with sound mind. It facilitates them to take appropriate decision on all issues (personal and organization) on time.

Table 1: Distribution of the Respondents by Age

S. No.	Age	Number of Respondents	Percent
1.	18 – 30	9	9.0
2.	31 – 40	41	41.0
3.	41 – 50	39	39.0
4.	51 – 60	11	11.0
	Total	100	100.0

Source: Computed from Primary Data

The table 1 shows that 9.0 percent of the respondents were in the age of below 30 years, 41.0 percent were in the age group of 31 - 40 years, 39.0 percent were in the age group of 41-50 years and the remaining 11.0 percent of the respondents were in the age group of 51 – 60 years.

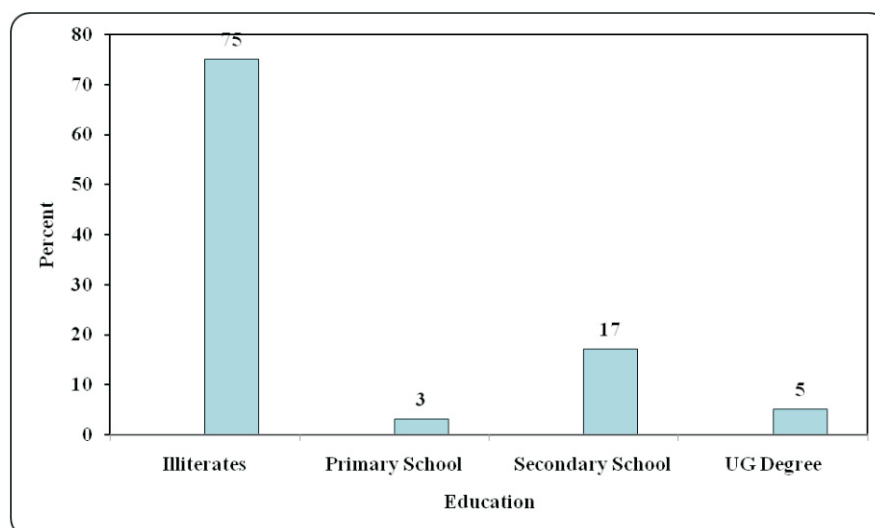
It is clear from the above table that majority (80.0 percent) of the respondents were in the age group of 31-50 years. It seems that women members in WSHGs were in the active age group in rural areas. They can work more productively, able to start small viable business and contribute economically to their families.

Education: Education is a basis for long-term development of human beings and paves the way for growth of the country. It provides new knowledge and experience to the people. It crates transformation in the society from one generation to another on their standard of living and learning. It also helps people to decide and understand what is what on every aspect of their life and to realize others concerns from their perspective.

Table 2: Distribution of the Respondents by Education

S. No.	Education	Number of Respondents	Percent
1.	Illiterates	75	75.0
2.	Primary School	3	3.0
3.	Secondary School	17	17.0
4.	UG Degree	5	5.0
	Total	100	100.0

Source: Computed from Primary Data



The above table elucidates that 75.0 percent of the respondents were illiterates, 3.0 percent finished primary schools, 17.0 percent completed secondary schools and the rest 5.0 percent were UG degree holders.

It is evident from this table that 75.0 percent of the respondents were illiterates in the study areas. Though more women members in WSHGs were uneducated, they were having higher interest to improve their standard of living by being member in WSHGs.

House: House provides a higher social status to the people, particularly in rural India. Everyone tries to possess a house for his or her living purposes. Many never come forward to help and provide loans to any person who is not having an own house. It provides an identity to everyone

in his or her areas. It is one of the indicators of a better standard of living.

Table 3: Type of House of the Respondents

S. No.	Type of House	Number of Respondents	Percent
1.	Katcha	11	11.0
2.	Pucca	35	35.0
3.	Semi-Pucca	47	47.0
4.	Hut	7	7.0
	Total	100	100.0

Source: Computed from Primary Data

This table exhibits that 11.0 percent of the respondents were living in katcha houses, 35.0 percent were living in pucca houses, 47.0 percent were living in semi-pucca houses, and the remaining 7.0 percent of the respondents were living in hut houses.

It is found from this table that majority (82.0 percent) of the respondents were either living in either semi-pucca or pucca houses. It seems that women members in WSHGs were having own houses and living comfortable in the study areas.

Occupation: Occupation provides social recognition and respect to the individuals. The nature of occupation decides the income level of the individuals. An individual may do more number of businesses to earn higher income.

Table 4: Occupation of the Respondents after joining WSHGs

S. No.	Occupation	Number of Respondents	Percent
1.	Dairying	6	6.0
2.	Small Business	92	92.0
3.	Agriculture related	2	2.0
	Total	100	100.0

Source: Computed from Primary Data

The above table illuminates that 6.0 percent of the respondents were involving dairying, 92.0 percent of them were doing small businesses, and 2.0 percent were involving occupation related to agriculture.

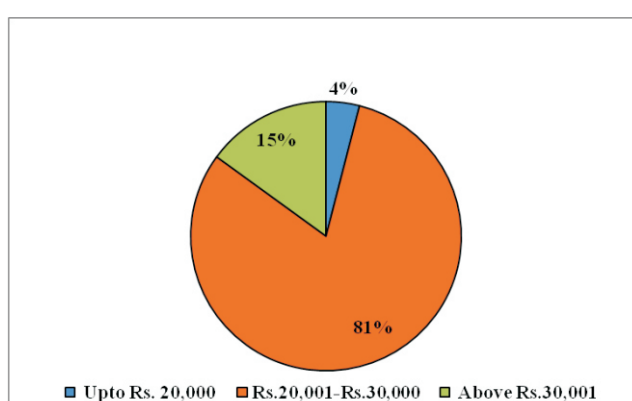
It is clear from the above table that 92.0 percent of the respondents were involving in small business activities as their primary occupation. Further, women members in WSHGs were not only involving in small business, but they also want to start new and innovative business (like mobile shop, bakery, photocopy centre etc) for increasing their income.

Income: Income decides the economic position of individual both in urban and rural areas. Everyone tries to find more income sources to get continuous earnings. It is crucial for everyone to fulfill domestic needs and live comfortable life. It requires for future savings and helps to meet out uncertainties.

Table 5: Annual Income of the Respondents after Joining WSHGs

S. No.	Annual Income	Number of Respondents	Percent
1.	Upto Rs. 20,000	4	4.0
2.	Rs.20,001-Rs.30,000	81	81.0
3. A	Above Rs.30,001	15	15.0
	Total	100	100.0

Source: Computed from Primary Data



This table explains that 4.0 percent of the respondents were earning annual income upto Rs.20,000/-, 81.0 percent were getting annual income from Rs.20,001 to Rs.30,000/- and the remaining 15.0 percent were earning annual income above Rs.30,001/-.

It is apparent from this table that majority (85.0 percent) of the respondents were earning annual income upto Rs.30,000/- after all expenditure. It shows that the respondents are becoming financially sound after becoming members in WSHGs.

Entering SHGs: Every individual has his or her own interest and purpose to become a member of socio-economic organization for his or her development. The nature and level of progress depends on holding membership and active participation in type of socio-economic organization.

Table 6: Purpose of joining WSHGs by the Respondents

S. No.	Purpose of joining WSHGs	Number of Respondents	Percent
1.	Improve the economic conditions	6	6.0
2.	Enhance both economic and social status	26	26.0
3.	Obtain financial support	68	68.0
	Total	100	100.0

Source: Computed from Primary Data

The above table indicates that 6.0 percent of the respondents joined WSHGs to improve their economic conditions alone, 26.0 percent joined WSHGs to enhance their both economic and social status, and 68.0 percent of the respondents joined WSHGs to obtain financial support.

It is evident from the table that 68.0 percent of the respondents joined WSHGs to get financial support. Further, it reveals that women joined in WSHGs mostly for getting financial assistance for different purposes including starting small business in their villages and thereby support their families.

Motivation: Motivation requires for completing any work and activity successfully on time. It may come from voluntarily by self and from others. One can be motivated through financial and non-financial assistances. It increases the efficiency and effectiveness of employees/workers to contribute towards the objectives of the organizations.

Table 7: Sources of Motivation for joining WSHGs by the Respondents

S. No.	Sources of Motivation for joining WSHGs	Number of Respondents	Percent
1.	Friends	14	14.0
2.	Members of WSHG	86	86.0
	Total	100	100.0

Source: Computed from Primary Data

The table 7 indicates that 14.0 percent of the respondents were motivated by their friends to join WSHGs and the rest 86.0 percent were motivated by the members of self-help group.

It is found from the above table that majority (86.0 percent) of the respondents were motivated by the members of WSHGs to join in WSHGs. From this, one can understand that members of WSHGs have better standard of living after joining WSHGs.

Loan Management: Loan management is the process of getting and utilizing loans from financial institutions and banks for income generation/productive purposes. It is classified into small, medium and long-term loans. The rate of interest may vary from those types of loans and purposes.

Table 8: Loan Management Practices by the Respondents in WSHGs

S. No.	Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percent
1.	Loan received upto Rs.40, 000/-	82	82.0
2.	No documents submitted for getting loan from WSHGs	100	100.0
3.	Loan received for starting small business	92	92.0
4.	Loan received in the form of cash	100	100.0
5.	Nil expenditure to get loan from WSHGs	99	99.0
6.	Two percent of interest paid for loan	100	100.0
7.	Interest rate fixed on the basis of bank interest	100	100.0
8.	No variation in interest rate for loan among members	100	100.0
9.	Loan amount used only for borrowed purpose	92	92.0
10.	Adequacy of loan amount	78	78.0
11.	Loan received more than four times	78	78.0
12.	No loan received to repay the old loan	100	100.0
13.	Prompt repayment of loan on specified time	98	98.0
14.	Loan sources of WSHGs from its common fund	100	100.0
15.	Saving is a basis for sanctioning loan for WSHGs by bank	100	100.0
16.	Treasurer is responsible for maintaining of financial records of WSHGs	87	87.0
17.	Monthly financial meeting held in WSHGs	96	96.0
18.	Transparency in maintenance of financial records of WSHGs	100	100.0
19.	Budget preparation by members of WSHGs	95	95.0
20.	Audit of financial accounts of WSHGs	100	100.0
21.	Treasurer is an authorized person to draw money from bank for WSHGs	87	87.0
22.	Accountant from the group members is in-charge for entering financial particulars in account books of WSHGs	83	83.0
23.	Treasurer is the custodian of financial records of WSHGs	87	87.0
24.	Subsidies received from the State Government for WSHGs	100	100.0

Source: Computed from Primary Data

Among the total 100 respondents contacted for this study, 82.0 percent of the respondents received loans upto Rs.40,000, cent percent never submitted documents for getting loans from WSHGs, 92.0 percent received loans for starting small business in their areas, cent percent got loans through cash mode, 99.0 percent spent no money to get loans from WSHGs, cent percent paid two percent as the interest for loans, cent percent said that the interest rate for loans in WSHGs was fixed on the basis of bank interest, cent percent said that there was no variation in the interest rate for loans among members in WSHGs, 92.0 percent used the loan amount only for the borrowed purposes, 78.0 percent got adequate loans from their WSHGs, 78.0 percent borrowed loans more than four times,

cent percent not borrowed loans to repay the already borrowed loans, 98.0 percent were repaying the loans promptly on specified time, cent percent said that the sources of their loans from WSHGs were from its common fund, cent percent said that loans were sanctioned by the banks based on their savings in respective banks, 87.0 percent whispered that the financial records of WSHGs were maintained by its treasurers, 96.0 percent said that meetings related to finance of WSHGs held every month, cent percent opinioned that the mode of maintenance of financial records of their WSHGs was open, 95.0 percent involved in the process of budget preparation of their WSHGs, cent percent said that the financial accounts of WSHGs were audited once in a year, 87.0 percent said that treasurers were authorized person to draw money from the banks on behalf of their WSHGs, 83.0 percent whispered that accountant from the group members is in-charge for entering financial particulars in account books of WSHGs, 87.0 percent said that their treasurers were custodian of financial records of WSHGs and cent percent whispered that their WSHGs received subsidies from the State Government of Tamil Nadu.

MAJOR FINDINGS

- It is found from this study that 80.0 percent of the respondents were in the age group of 31- 50 years
- Concerning education, 75.0 percent of the respondents were illiterates and the remaining 25.0 percent were found to be educated upto UG degree
- Regarding the type of house, 82.0 percent of the respondents were either living in semi-pucca or pucca houses.
- Ninety two percent of the respondents were involving in small business activities in rural areas like petty shop, tea shop, vegetable shop, making sweets and snacks, etc after joining WSHGs
- On the subject of annual income after becoming the members of WSHGs, 85.0 percent of the respondents were earning annual income upto Rs.30,000/-. It paves the way for women to become financially sound and to made independent decision on financial and family matters.
- With regard to purpose of joining WSHGs, 68.0 percent of the respondents joined to get financial support in the form of loans from WSHGs to start small business
- Concerning the sources of motivation for joining WSHGs, 86.0 percent of the respondents were motivated by the members of WSHGs to join in WSHGs. It explicit that members after attaining a higher standard of living, they show ways to others to come up in their life.
- Concerning the amount of loan received from WSHGs, 82.0 percent of the respondents received loans upto Rs.40,000/-
- Cent percent of the respondents never submitted documents for getting loans from WSHGs
- Ninety two percent of the respondents received loans from WSHGs for starting small business in their areas (like petty shop, tea shop, vegetable shop, making sweets and snacks, morning hotel etc)
- Cent percent of the respondents got loans from their WSHGs through cash mode. It ensures transparency in financial transactions and accountability on the part of members.
- Ninety nine percent of the respondents spent no expenditure to get loans from their WSHGs
- Cent percent of the respondents paid two percent as the interest for loans
- Cent percent of the respondents opinioned that interest rate for loans in WSHGs was fixed on the basis of bank interest rate
- Cent percent of the respondents said that there was no variation in the interest for loans among members in their WSHGs
- With regard to usage of loan amount, 92.0 percent of the respondents used the loan amount only for the borrowed purposes and the rest used for supporting their families (like urgent livelihoods, children's education, children's marriage, etc)
- Concerning the adequacy of loan amount from WSHGs, 78.0 percent of the respondents got adequate loan amount from their WSHGs
- It is found that 78.0 percent of the respondents borrowed loans more than four times from their WSHGs
- Cent percent of the respondents never borrowed new loans to repay the already borrowed loans. It seems that they fully understood the purpose of getting loans from WSHGs

- Regarding the repayment of loan on specified time, 98.0 percent of the respondents were repaying loan amount on scheduled time. It is the healthy practice on the part of the respondents and ensures more financial transactions among them.
- Cent percent of the respondents said that the loan sources of their WSHGs were from its common fund
- Cent percent of the respondents said that loans were sanctioned by the banks to WSHGs based on their savings in the respective banks
- Eighty seven percent of the respondents said that the financial records of WSHGs were maintained by the treasurers of their respective WSHGs
- Ninety six percent of the respondents said that finance meetings of WSHGs held once in a month in a common place which is accessible to all members irrespective of caste and religion
- Cent percent of the respondents said that maintenance of financial records in WSHGs were open and transparent. It seems that anyone from WSHGs can refer these records at anytime.
- Ninety five percent of the respondents said that group members were preparing budget for their WSHGs. It develops team spirit and cooperation among them.
- Cent percent of the respondents said that accounts of WSHGs were audited by responsible person of a non-governmental organization. It shows that WSHGs keen in closing their financial accounts on time.
- Eighty seven percent of the respondents said that treasurers were authorized to draw money from the banks on behalf of WSHGs
- Eighty three percent of the respondents said that accountants from the group members were in-charge for entering financial particulars in account books of WSHGs
- Eighty seven percent of the respondents said that treasurers were custodian of financial records of WSHGs, and
- Cent percent of the respondents said that their WSHGs got subsidies from the State Government of Tamil Nadu

SUGGESTIONS

- As most of the members of WSHG were illiterates, the educated members in WSHGs may take efforts to provide basic education to members in WSHGs. It opens their eyes on self-development and social issues and concerns including their rights and responsibilities.
- Members of WSHGs may create awareness among other women living in their areas to join them as a member in WSHG to improve their standard of living. It expands their area of operations for business activities
- In order to expand the small business activities in rural areas, the State Government and District administration may take steps to provide adequate loans to WSHGs with lower rate of interest on time. It would strengthen the rural economy.
- Both State and Central Governments have to create awareness on importance of higher education among women in rural areas through media and other sources
- Members in WSHGs have to share their work responsibilities among themselves. This will create better work culture among them and create 'we' feeling among them to do works.
- Members of WSHGs may be allowed to pay their loan amount whenever they have money, instead of waiting for the specified period.
- The Government may conduct training programme on 'entrepreneurship development' to members of WSHGs. This will help them to start income generation activities in their areas.
- The Government may conduct short term training programme on scientific maintenance of financial records and its related transactions to members of WSHGs
- The responsible person for financial transactions has to explain all financial transactions in the group meetings of WSHGs. It ensures more transparency in financial matters and reliability of the groups, and
- Government may provide special consideration and concession for widow members in WSHGs to start new business

CONCLUSION

SHG is a viable instrument not only to bring higher socio-economic status and sustainable development among women, but it also creates a better society in the country by fulfilling the needs and wants of women in rural India through collective actions and development program. It provides platform and blueprint to women to come up in their life through entrepreneurial and financial activities.

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