



ISSN: 2231-5063

IMPACT FACTOR : 4.6052 (UIF)

VOLUME - 11 | ISSUE - 3 | SEPTEMBER – 2021

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH SKILL DEVELOPMENT: A STUDY OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN CACHAR, ASSAM

Sabina Begam Ahmed

Doctoral Research Scholar, Department of Social Work, Assam University, Silchar.

ABSTRACT :-

Women empowerment is considered as a yardstick for women development and that development becomes sustainable if the women find themselves financially in affluent position. Talking about women in general and Muslim women in particular lies difference. The socio-economic backwardness of Muslim community is always posing a threat to Muslim women. Different studies revealed the deplorable condition of Muslim women especially those who belong to poor socio-economic status with lower level of education in terms of their status in family and society at large. Subsequently they become victim of different forms of violence. In order to raise the status of Muslim women and to make them empower, identification of their skills and utilising these skills gets priority, furthermore ensuring their own safety and security. Therefore, skill development programmes plays a vital role. In Cachar there are a good number of NGOs, Youth Clubs who have been facilitating women with skill development training. Therefore, the present study made an attempt to understand how far skill development programmes made Muslim women empower. For that purpose, 50 respondents who had availed the benefits of different skill development programmes were selected purposively from the organisation that facilitated them with such skill development programmes. The exploratory nature of study found that after availing training many of the respondents became a member of self help group and had taken loan to start their business. This is how they started standing upon own feet and setting an example of women empowerment.



KEYWORDS : Skill Development, Women Empowerment, NGO's, Youth Club, Income generation, Cachar.

INTRODUCTION:-

Women play an important role in the development of a country, a family and a society at large. From the last few decades, Indian women are actively participating in various economic & social activities, but due to illiteracy among Muslim women and lack of exposure to realities adversely affected the socio-educational status of the community, pushing it further deeper in to poverty. Perhaps many

middle class women who have requisite qualifications are not allowed to seek employment because 'community respectability' is likely to get smeared. This has resulted in general backwardness of Muslims and particularly Muslim women in India. In this male-dominating society, they are still subjected to discrimination in the social, economic and educational field. Muslim women are not only managing their families but are also playing an important role in the development of entire society. Making women aware of their rights and developing their confidence and empowers them, is a central issue. Women empowerment means giving them freedom or power to live the way they want. It allows them to identify their skills, knowledge & abilities to make their own decisions. It is a dynamic & growth process for women which include awareness, attainment and actualization of skills. For socio-economic development of Muslim society, women empowerment is essential. Skill development is a key to success which improves productivity, employability and earning opportunities for Muslim women. A large effort of non-government organisations (NGO's) and government organisations (GO's) are needed to create a skilled workforce for creating an economic prosperity. The aim of skill development, in case of Muslim women, is not just simply preparing them for jobs; but also to boost their performance by improving the quality of work in which they are involved. Looking at the importance of the role Muslim women play in the development of a nation, one can sense that there is a long way to go in that direction. Therefore, the present study made an attempt to understand how far skill development programmes run by NGO's, made Muslim women empower in Cachar district, Assam.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Unni, Jeemol & Uma (2004) have observed that there is a need to bring change in the status & image of women and the attitude of society towards them. There is a demand to create awareness among the rural women who are unemployed to gain self-esteem & confidence.

Ahmed, S. & Mistry, M. (2010) in their empirical study on Modern Education and Socio-Economic Change revealed that with the influence of considerably better educational background of the parents and other family members, awareness was emerging among Muslim women and the attitudinal change was significant and encouraging among Muslim's educated women.

Dhruba Hazarika (2011) has felt that women are future of a country's development. Empowering women will be the right approach for growth in this competitive world.

Vijaya & Lokhandha (2013) suggested that skill development will boost the women empowerment with high productivity & earnings. Skills lead to women confidence and to be more innovative.

Mamta Mokta (2014) revealed that women need to find their own way in this male dominated society. They should be motivated for growth & empowerment by self-help groups, NGOs, government policies & micro finance institutions.

Asharani and Sriramappa (2014) in their study have observed that women are very good entrepreneurs and prefer to choose entrepreneurship as they can maintain work life balance. Educated women are involved in entrepreneurial activities in urban areas. Family support is found to be essential for successful entrepreneurship. The RUDSETIs and SHGs movement, banking facilities and skill awareness programs are helping in promoting women entrepreneurs.

Prasanna Kumar (2014) stated that it is the people need to identify the areas where women are still facing problems and are unable to access resources, institutional knowledge & basic education.

Kittur Praveen (2014) has felt a study in order to encourage women entrepreneurship, a special training course for women entrepreneurs must be started to improve their skills.

Devi, L. (2014) in his study on Socio-Economic Development of Muslim Women reveals that education is necessary for Muslim women to improve socio-economic status and suggested that state governments need to make special provisions for Muslim girls for education.

Saswati Basu & Parikshit Basu (2015) conducted an empirical study on the economic development programmes by the NGOs and GOs in a case study area provided them credit to run their businesses. The income generation activity of the NGOs increases economic empowerment and overall empowerment of women more than government organisations.

Preethi K A (2017) in his empirical study observed that programmes that are introduced by NGOs for providing employment opportunities, assumes path-breaking and ameliorating forms. The NGOs along with other self-employment programmes had positive effect and empowered women entrepreneurs.

Kar, N. B. & Ghosh, B. N. (2017) in their study on Education and Socio-economic Marginalization of Muslim Women reveals that literacy of Muslim women is an ultimate solution to reduce existing group disparities in socio-economic development of Muslim women in West Bengal.

OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of the paper are:

- ✓ To determine the types of business adopted by Muslim women after receiving skill development training programmes run by NGO's in Cachar District of Assam.
- ✓ To determine the impact of skill development programmes on Muslim women empowerment.

METHODOLOGY:

Study Area: The Assam state consists of two valleys-The Barak valley and the Brahmaputra valley. The Barak valley is situated in the southern part of Assam and it consists of three districts, i.e., Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj. Cachar is the oldest district of Assam surrounded by Barail and Jayantia Hill ranges in the north, the state Mizoram in the south, Manipur in west and Karimganj and Hailakandi in west. The district Cachar has 15 development Blocks and 163 Gaon Panchayats.

Universe of the Study: All the Muslim women who received skill development trainings constitute the universe of the study.

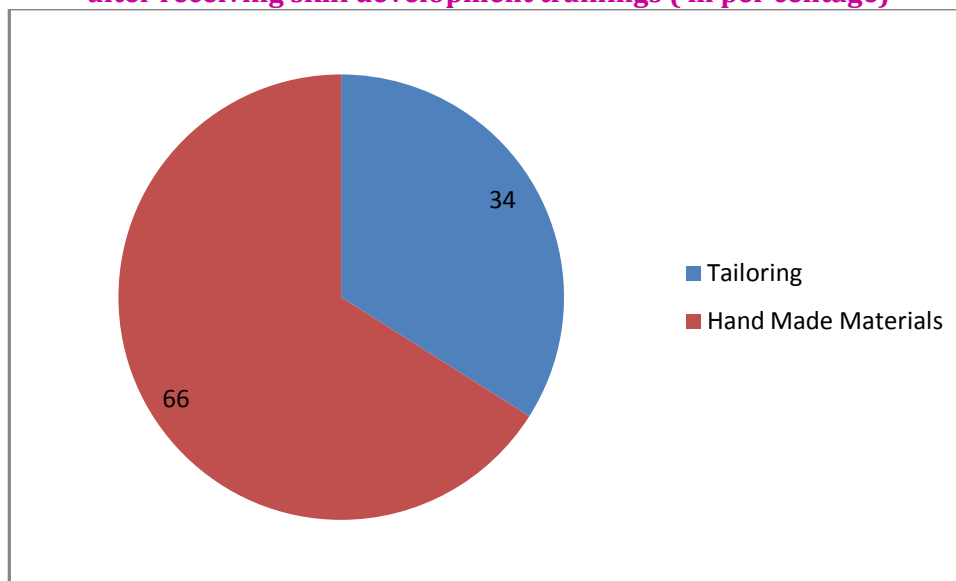
Sample and Tool: For the purpose of the present study, both primary and secondary data have been collected. For collecting primary data, a total of 50 Muslim women beneficiaries who agreed to take part in the study have been interviewed using the interview schedule. Name and address of the beneficiaries have been collected from Woodwichee (Swadhar Greh) and Naba Prayash Welfare Society, NGOs engaged in imparting skill development trainings to women in Cachar District of Assam, India. Naba Prayash Welfare Society is a Non-Government Organisation located at Cachar District of Assam (Reg. No- RS/CA/243/G/285). The organisation is working since 2008 on key issues such as Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Dairying & Fisheries, Art & Culture, Children, Civic Issues, Differently Abled, Disaster Management, Education & Literacy, Aged/Elderly, Health and Family Welfare, Legal Awareness and Aid, Micro Finance (SHGs), Micro Small and Medium Enterprises, Rural Development & Poverty Alleviation etc. There is a Swadhar Greh in Cachar district of Assam which is run by an NGO called Wodwichee. Swadhar Greh Scheme targets the women victims of difficult circumstances who are in need of institutional support for rehabilitation so that they could lead their life with dignity. The Scheme envisages providing shelter, food, clothing and health as well as economic and social security for these women. Thus, these two NGOs mentioned above were contacted to identify the name of the beneficiaries. Besides, books, journals, newspaper reports etc were consulted as secondary data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-Economic Background of the Respondents: All the respondents in the present study belong to Bengali Muslim community. Among the respondents, 76% represented joint families where as 24% represented nuclear families. The majority (63%) of women had up to secondary level education, 27% had up to upper primary level education, 15% had higher education and rest 5% were illiterate. 53% respondents were married, 25% were unmarried 12% were separated and 10% were divorcee. It was found that 62% respondents belong to age group 18-28 years, 32% belonged to 29-39 years and 6% belonged to 40-50 years. It was also found that 65% respondents received skilled development trainings from Woodwichee and 35% from NabaPrayash Welfare Society.

Types of business adopted after receiving skilled development trainings by Muslim women: The present study reveals that after receiving the skill development training programmes, with the help of the SHGs, the respondents takes loans from formal and informal organisations and started business. It is found that 66% respondents are engaged in making Hand Made Materials and 34% respondents adopted tailoring as a profession as shown in Figure 1.

Figure: 1: Pie Diagram showing the types of business adopted by Muslim women after receiving skill development trainings (in per centage)



Skilled Muslim Women and Economic Empowerment : An attempt has been made in the present study to understand the income variation of respondents before and after receiving skill development trainings. Table 1 reveals that before receiving skill development trainings, 30% women have no income at all, 50% women have less than Rs.1000 and only 16% have income in the range of Rs. 1001-3000. After receiving skill development trainings from the NGOs and after started their business, the income level of 54% respondents have increases in the range of Rs. 3001-5000, 24% have income in the range of Rs 1001-3000, 12% women have income in the range of Rs. 5001-7000 and 10% have above income above Rs.7001.

Table 1: Monthly Income of women respondents, before and after receiving skill development Programme

Average Monthly Income (in Indian Rupees)	Before		After	
	Number	%	Number	%
No Income	15	30	Nil	Nil
Less than 1000	27	54	Nil	Nil
1001-3000	08	16	12	24
3001-5000	Nil	Nil	27	54
5001-7000	Nil	Nil	06	12
7001 and above	Nil	Nil	05	10

Skilled Muslim Women and Social Empowerment*Business Knowledge and Marketing Links Established by women-*

The trained women respondents from the NGO's were asked questions regarding whether they had knowledge of:

- ✓ The wholesale price of raw materials;
- ✓ Different marketing sources for selling their product;
- ✓ Government credit facilities; and
- ✓ The exploitation of middleman traders;

Women were also asked whether they had established any marketing links for:

- ✓ Buying raw materials at cheaper rates and
- ✓ Selling their products at market prices.

The trained Muslim women replied positively and the results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 shows that 64% of the total trained Muslim women have knowledge about the price of raw materials and about different marketing sources for selling their final products. The study also reveals that 30% of the total trained women have knowledge about the exploitation by middleman traders, 48% of the total trained women have knowledge to establish market links for collecting raw materials at cheaper rate and 34% of the total trained women have knowledge about established market links for selling product at market prices. A major percentage of women i.e. 70% do not have proper knowledge to take loan from government organisation or they do not get opportunity to take loan from government organisation.

Table 2: Respondents knowledge of Business (In number and Percentage)

Indicators	Number	Percentage
Knowledge of wholesale price of raw materials	32	64
Knowledge of different market sources for selling their product	29	58
Knowledge on the exploitation by middleman traders	15	30
Government credit facilities	35	70
Established market links for collecting raw materials at cheaper rate	24	48
Established market links for selling product at market prices	17	34

Skilled Muslim Women and Decision Making Power: Women's participation in intra-family decision making process indicates their level of social development. The economic independence of women and their share of contribution to the family funds are considered major factors, which influence the participation of women in intra-family decision making process. The study reveals that there are other social factors that influence the participation of women in family decision making. The results are presented in Table 3. Table 3 shows that 28% women enjoy equal responsibility of the family with other members, 22% women play the main role in the decision making process, 40% take part sometimes in the decision making process and 10% women do not have any say in the decision making process. It is observed that there are other factors that influence the participation of women in the intra-family decision making process. Some skilled women belonging to higher level family income and living with elderly parents in-laws do not have any say although they contribute major part of the income to the family. A similar situation occurs in cases where husbands have landed property and good income.

Table 3: Share of Contribution to the Family Fund and the Level of Participation in Decision-Making Process of skilled Muslim women: Percentages

Level of Participation	Number of Participation	Percentage
Participated in main role	11	22
Shared equal responsibilities with other members	14	28
Take part sometimes	20	40
Do not have any say	5	10

CONCLUSION:

Empowering women socially, economically, educationally, politically and legally is important for socio-economic development. Women are capable to manage if given opportunity. They must be treated with respect, purity, dignity and equal rights. As more and more India moves towards the 'knowledge economy', it becomes increasingly important for it to focus on the advancement of the skills and these skills have to be relevant to the emerging economic environment. The present study clearly shows that skilled Muslim women achieved a lot in terms of economic and social empowerment. NGOs are trying their best to empower women through skill-building process. Majority of the respondents are earning money by selling hand-made materials and majority of them are now getting a decent income from it. Most of the skilled women have knowledge about their business and the level of participation in decision making in families increases. However, women do not have proper knowledge to credit loan from government organisation or they do not get opportunity to access credit loan from government organisation. So, an efficient skill development system is the need for women.

REFERENCES:

- Anjali, V. (2018). The Impact of Skill Development on Women Empowerment. *International Journal of Advance Research and Development*, 3(1), pp 8-11.
- Ahmed, S. & Mistry, M. (2010). Modern Education and Socio-Economic change: A case study of Muslim women in Pune city, India. *Journal of Arts Science & Commerce*, 1(1), 139-149.
- Asharani and Sriramappa (2014). Women Entrepreneurship in Karnataka. *International Journal of Scientific Research*, 3(7), ISSN No 2277 - 8179
- Dhruba, H. (2011). Women Empowerment in India: A Brief Discussion. *International Journal of Educational Planning & Administration*, 1(3), pp 199-202.

- Devi, L. (2014). Socio-Economic Development of Muslim Women: Impact of Education. *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, 3, 660-669.
- Kittur, P. (2014). Development of Rural Women Entrepreneurs through Workshop Training. *Research Journal of Management Sciences*, 3(2), pp 15-18.
- Kar, N. B. & Ghosh, B. N. Education and Socio-economic Marginalization of Muslim Women: A Case Study of North 24-Parganas District in West Bengal. *Bangladesh e-Journal of Sociology*, 14 (1), 129-149.
- Mamta, M. (2014). Empowerment of women in India: A critical analysis. *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, 3, pp 473-488.
- Prasanna, K. (2014). Rural Women Empowerment in India. *Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, 2(1). ISSN: 2321-8819.
- Preethi, K. A. (2017). Role of NGOs in Women Entrepreneurship Development: A Grass Root Level Experience. *Amity Journal of Entrepreneurshi*, 1(2), pp 44-58.
- Unni, J. et. al. (2004). Technical Change and Workforce in India: Skill Biased Growth. *Indian Journal of Labor Economics*, 47(4).
- Vijaya, A. et. al. (2013). Empowerment of Rural Women through Vocational Education and Training. *Conflux Journal of Education*, 1(2). ISSN 2320-9305.



Sabina Begam Ahmed

Doctoral Research Scholar, Department of Social Work, Assam University, Silchar.