

Analysis of Role of Self-Help Groups for Women Empowerment in Oman

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Abstract

Women have been playing a crucial role in the family, society, state, governance and economy. The national governments have focused on encouraging, educating and uplifting women to increase their participation and utilize the potential for nation-building activities. Women who are able to organise themselves in this way are more likely to be able to challenge and overcome their own subordination. United Nations Organization considered women empowerment as one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under Vision 2030. The development of women, the enhancement of their status, and the facilitation of their integration into the overall social development remain the priority. This is one of the national priorities and objectives of the Human Resource Development Strategic Plan. The primary objective of this research article is to evaluate the level of women's freedom of movement, economic decision-making capacity, and household decision-making capacity in Oman in order to measure the level of women's empowerment in that country and provide recommendations and suggestions to increase it. The study is significant since revolutionary initiatives and thought-provoking ideas would define the future of Arab Islamic World.

Keywords: *Self-Help Groups, Women Empowerment, Income, Analysis, Oman*

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Background to the Study

No country can achieve true socioeconomic progress unless it prioritizes the empowerment of its female population. It is imperative that women take part in the expansion of any economy in an equal capacity if that economy is to thrive over the long run. Any economy that chooses to ignore the issue of gender equality is free to go on with its expansion strategy. Because India's GDP growth rate as well as its national debt have reached all-time highs, the country is now experiencing the most severe economic crisis it has encountered since it gained its independence. Both investments and consumption have seen a significant decline. It is now going through a period in which it is experiencing hardships, such as retrenchment, unemployment, and poverty. It is now more vital than ever before to make drastic reforms in order to achieve long-term prosperity and harmony.

Background of Study

The United Nations and its specialized organisations have been making strenuous efforts to promote societal shifts and improve the position of women in the workplace and the society at large. The economic and social shifts that have taken place in the Sultanate of Oman over the course of the last few decades have been of significant assistance to the advancement of women's rights, which is one of the most essential targets of the Millennium Development Goals set by the United Nations. Multiple studies have demonstrated that a nation's economy improves when women do well, and many of these studies have also urged that governments aggressively encourage women's involvement and leadership in all aspects of society. These findings have led to a number of policy recommendations.

In Oman, there exist disparities between the sexes in a number of spheres, including but not limited to the following: the ability to own property; one's own personal safety; participation in political life; access to education, healthcare, and the workforce; and prospective earnings (Yordanova, 2011). The government of Oman takes measures to ensure that the economic and material aspects of life, in addition to the social and personal aspects of life, are taken into consideration throughout the development process. At the worldwide conference in 2005, all nations concluded that "success for women is progress for everyone." Since then, Oman has entered a new era, and a big part of the credit for this goes to the forward-thinking policies that have been implemented by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said. In order to ensure the continued development of his nation, His Majesty made certain that the country's population was its most important and precious asset. In spite of the fact that nationalization has been an essential factor in the development of Oman's economy, female workers have been actively encouraged to work side-by-side with their male counterparts. The Sultanate of Oman, which is now witnessing substantial transformations in its developmental policies, acknowledges the need for Omani women to be empowered in order to improve the future of the country in all domains (Shakilaa, 2021).

Significance of Study

The Guidelines for the Empowerment of Women that were established in 2001 by the United Nations place an emphasis on the significance of women having a sense of self-worth, the freedom to make and act on their own choices, equal access to opportunities and resources,

control over their own lives at home and in the workplace, the capacity to influence social change, and the capacity to establish more than just social and economic order at the national and international levels. All of these factors are emphasised in the Guidelines for the Empowerment of Women. The goal of women empowerment can be achieved through various factors such as increase in income. The entrepreneurs focus to expand, the potential to increase household income will raise thereby increasing the purchasing power, contributing to society, as they need to manage both personal and professional life, also enable in uplifting the society for national growth and raise their voices for all-round development to enable in protecting their rights and be respected equally (Times of Oman, 2021).

Review of Literature

A survey conducted Chhabra, (2020) of 400 women revealed that 67% of respondents who had received government-provided trainings assessed them as "extremely significant" for their organisation. This was the finding from the poll. The trainings have resulted in the acquisition of useful skills by the women, which in turn has spurred them to launch their own companies. The author suggests that trainings be carried out according to a predetermined plan and that their significance should increase along with the expansion of SHGs. It became abundantly obvious after talking with the female members of the SHG when it was discovered that women seldom controlled the household finances. When they were in need, rural inhabitants depended on credit the majority of the time. Since joining a SHG, women have reported an increase in their income, as well as a marked improvement in their capacity to save money and a heightened feeling of independence with regard to their financial situation.

As part of the government's strategy to enable them engage in the economy, Omani women are gaining influence and breaking stereotypes. This is happening as a direct result of the plan. Even though they are expected to conform to the norms established by patriarchal culture, women are contributing members of society who are also active participants in society. The lives of women who own small businesses are investigated in depth throughout this article. Topics covered include their histories, professions, enterprises, aspirations for the future, and challenges they face. In addition to their traditional responsibilities as wives and mothers, young Omani women are gaining the skills necessary to establish online businesses via the use of social media. However, in the process of operating their company, they run into a number of challenges, the most significant of which is a restricted access to their target market (Shakilaa, 2021). Additionally, they have commitments to their family, which interfere with their capacity to use the internet. In addition, despite their willingness to use social media, the young women are deficient in a variety of areas of expertise, including social media marketing.

Gupta (2018) conducted a study of 500 members of SHGs in India. Based on their findings, they called for the government to give training programmes in order to promote women to become owners of their own businesses. It is possible that women's participation in government-sponsored programmes designed to improve their knowledge and give assistance and resources might help enhance their motivation, which in turn could contribute to an increase in the number of women looking for work in rural regions.

Sathyadevi (2016) analyzed the influence that microcredit has on the economic opportunities available to rural women in Ghana. The region of sub-Saharan Africa serves as the setting for this investigation. A qualitative longitudinal study of women who participated in the microlending programme of an NGO found that while some women experienced a sense of empowerment as a result of having access to credit, other women experienced a sense of disempowerment as a result of the fact that they were unable to repay their loans and had no say in how their loans were utilised. Since of this, the implications were different for everyone because it depended on the resilience of the people living in the house.

According to an examination of the Pat Feeder Command Region Development programme that was carried out, women in the Nasirabad region of Balochistan now have more access to economic involvement, capacity development, and microcredit (one of the provinces that make up Pakistan) Due to the fact that women's development groups struggled to function effectively in the presence of institutional and cultural obstacles, the outcomes of the project did not endure. According to research conducted by Adoram (2011), indicators of women's empowerment in Sri Lanka include women's involvement in the decision-making process of their households and control over financial affairs. There are a number of elements that may be evaluated apart from one another, including the level of education held by both the woman and her husband, her or his capacity to get and maintain employment, and the nature of the family's current financial condition. According to the findings, one's engagement in decision-making increases along with their educational attainment and their level of paid work in terms of monetary concerns, but this correlation is not shown to hold true in the areas of social and organisational challenges.

Manson (1998) used probability sampling to research the level of female empowerment in urban households in the nations of Pakistan, India, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines. These countries were included in the study. They saw a woman's ability to make her own choices about her finances and her role in the home as evidence of her own agency. The research has considered a variety of different aspects, including the social setting of gender and family systems, women's access to land, their engagement in wage labour, and their position in relation to their husbands. In addition, the social setting of gender and family systems has been examined. They realised that the economic power of women was influenced by society in both direct and indirect ways, and they were concerned about this. The study that conducted on India focused primarily on three distinct areas: economic choice, decision about one's children, and risk. Independent variables included the differences in age between couples, dowries, marital endogamy, partners' degrees of education, and socioeconomic position. He concluded that some types of empowerments are more intrinsically linked to one another than others.

Objectives of the Study

- i. To examine the present status of women in various regions of Oman
- ii. To study the role of self-help groups and their contribution towards women empowerment in various regions of Oman
- iii. To demonstrate the relationship amongst self-help groups and income, collective development and women empowerment in Oman

Research Methodology

The descriptive research technique was chosen for performing the study, because the authors intend to conduct the research using a quantitative methodology, they obtained material for the study from a variety of primary and secondary sources. The results of a survey that was administered to female proprietors of microbusinesses are the major source of data for this study. The respondents were chosen via the use of a sample technique called convenience sampling.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

This part enables in presenting the data analysis based on the information collected by the respondents. The first step is to understand the responses pertaining to social status and taking decisions by women

Table 1: Social Status

Social Status	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	15	9.9
Disagree	4	2.6
Neutral	17	11.2
Agree	49	32.2
Strongly Agree	67	44.1
Total	152	100

From analysis it is noted that 44.15 of the women respondents stated that the involvement in SHG can contribute in enhancing their social status, 32.2% have also agreed to the same, this shows that most women individuals specified that the SHG tend to enhance their social status.

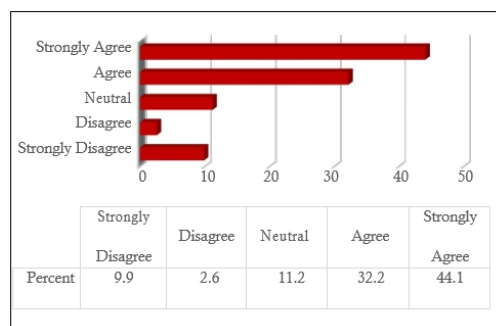


Figure 1: Social Status

The next table indicates in understanding the responses related to the role of SHG in taking decisions.

Table 2: Take Decisions

Take Decisions	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	13	8.6
Disagree	14	9.2
Neutral	9	5.9
Agree	55	36.2
Strongly Agree	61	40.1
Total	152	100

From analysis it is noted that 40.1% of the women respondents stated that SHG enable in taking decisions, the involvement in SHG enhances the skill set and abilities of the individuals which enable in taking quick and better decisions, 36.2% have also agreed to the same, this shows that most women individuals stated that they can take better decision through the involvement in SHG.

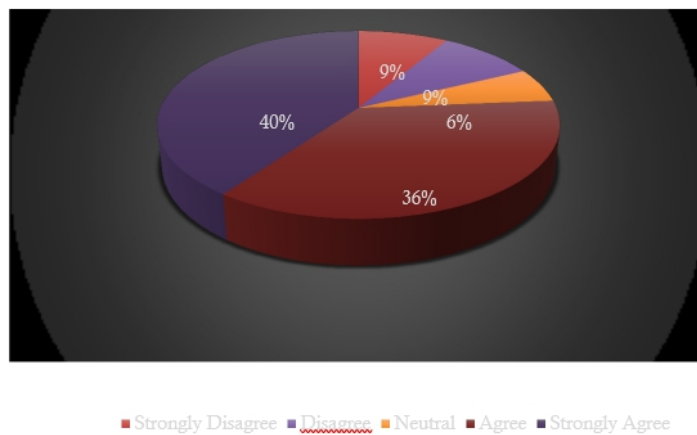


Figure 2: Take Decisions

Hypothesis Testing

The next aspect is to perform hypothesis testing using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

H0: There is no major relationship among the means between income level and women empowerment

Table 3: ANOVA test 1

Income level	SS	D.F	Mean2	F val	P val
Among Gps	154.809	4	38.702	190.265	0.00
Within Gps	29.902	147	0.203		

The ANOVA analysis states that the F value is at 190.26 with significance at 0.00 which is >0.05 , hence it can be specified that there is a it is noted that the significance level is 0.00 and hence null hypothesis is rejected, hence can be concluded that there is major relationship among the means between income level and women empowerment

H0: There is no major relationship among the means between society contribution and women empowerment

Table 4: ANOVA Test 2

Society Contribution	SS	D.F	Mean2	F val	P val
Among Gps	148.672	4	37.168	151.609	0.00
Within Gps	36.038	147	0.245		

The ANOVA analysis states that the F value is at 151.61 with significance at 0.00 which is >0.05 . It is noted that the significance level is 0.00. Hence, null hypothesis is rejected. It can be considered that there is significant relationship among the means between society contribution and women empowerment.

H0: There is no major relationship among the means between collective development and women empowerment.

Table 5: ANOVA test 3

Collective Development	SS	D.F	Mean2	F val	P val
Among Gps	146.53	4	36.633	141.04	0.00
Within Gps	38.18	147	0.26		

The ANOVA analysis states that the F value is at 141.04 with significance at 0.00 which is >0.05 . It is noted that the significance level is 0.00. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. As a result, it is clear that there is significant relationship among the means between collective development and women empowerment.

Conclusion

In an effort to increase the self-assurance and autonomy of its population, the government of Oman has initiated a number of initiatives that aim to expand the educational and occupational options open to women. Since 2012, a great number of females have participated in training, which is currently going on up to the present day. The findings of this inquiry ought to demonstrate that the Omani government is making a difference in this situation. There is still a lot of work to be done, but two ways in which the government could be able to assist in the empowerment of young women are by raising awareness and by establishing chances for capacity development.

Women get a boost in their confidence when they realise they are capable of handling difficult work circumstances on their own. These young women need to be motivated by ideas that go beyond just completing chores around the home, and they need to be made aware that the contributions they make to the economy of the country are both respected and required. In addition, with the arrival of the 4th industrial revolution and the growing use of social media, it is imperative that students learn how to effectively utilise technology to reach far-off markets and sell their goods and services to niche groups of potential consumers. This is because it is imperative that students learn how to effectively use technology to reach far-off markets and sell their goods and services to niche groups of potential consumers.

Despite the fact that more and more Omani women are venturing out on their own to launch their own businesses, there are still significant geographical disparities in terms of access to financing, training possibilities, and educational chances. Therefore, doing more study in specific locations with bigger samples in order to investigate the factors that encourage or discourage female micro-entrepreneurship in developing nations is very necessary. It would be beneficial for researchers to investigate the reasons behind why businesswomen in Wusta and Dhofar have less social and family duties than their counterparts in other regions of

Oman. It is possible that this may result in the government enacting policies that will assist women in specific areas of their economic growth.

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