

A study on Participation of Self-Help Group (SHGs) Tribal Women in Economic and Social Developmental Activities in Bastar Plateau

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ABSTRACT

The Bastar district of Chhattisgarh is known for its rich tribal culture, with approximately 70% of the population being tribal. The major tribes in the region include the Gond, Abhuj Maria, Bhatra, Halbaa, Dhurvaa, Muria, and Bison Horn Maria. These tribes have distinct cultures, dialects, customs, and traditions. During the year 2017, a study was taken up among the tribal women in the Bastar district purposively to assess the extent of participation of tribal women Self-help Groups (SHGs) members in various developmental and social activities. Out of 7 blocks of the district Bastar, two blocks namely Darbha and Bastanar blocks were selected based on the presence of NGOs specifically working for the women tribes. Total ten SHGs have been randomly selected for the study. Ten members from each selected SHGs have been randomly selected comprises with Halbaa and Dhurvaa women tribes to make a sample size of 100. The results of the study indicated that that tribal women were relatively more participating in find out the income generating opportunities and running the commercial enterprise more among all the groups under the economic activity. It is implicated also that the tribal women from Halbaa and Dhurvaa community were not in more inter-tribal communication nature due to their living style, dominant cultural differences of another tribe, differences in language, customs, beliefs system and friction. The group facilitators of each tribal women self-help group were observed to have motivated the members to involve themselves in social welfare activities in their own community only.

Keywords: Self-Help Group, Participation, Economic Development, Social Development, Bastar Plateau

Received 02/03/2017

Revised 24/04/2017

Accepted 01/06/2017

Citation of this article

P.K. Tiwari. A study on Participation of Self-Help Group (SHGs) Tribal Women in Economic and Social Developmental Activities in Bastar Plateau. Int. Arch. App. Sci. Technol; Vol 8 [2] June 2017:85-88.

INTRODUCTION

The Bastar district of Chhattisgarh is known for its rich tribal culture, with approximately 70% of the population being tribal. The major tribes in the region include the Gond, Abhuj Maria, Bhatra, Halbaa, Dhurvaa, Muria, and Bison Horn Maria. These tribes have distinct cultures, dialects, customs, and traditions. The tribes of Bastar have a rich oral tradition, unique festivals like Bastar Dussehra (which is dedicated to local deities, not just Lord Rama as in other Dussehra celebrations), and distinctive arts and crafts. Many tribes still live in deep forests and maintain their traditional ways of life, cherishing their unique cultural heritage [1].

Many NGOs viz. RSS- Division Office South Bastar Division, Saathi Samaj Sevi Sanstha, Bastar Samajik Jan Vikas Samiti, Arya Prerana Samiti, Gram Vikas, PRADAN-Professional Assistance for Development Action, BADAL: (Bastar Academy of Dance Art Literature Language), Noor E Hidayat Foundation, World Human Organization Sewa Sanstha and many other NGOs are working in various capacities to support the tribal communities of Bastar, addressing issues like education, healthcare, livelihood, cultural preservation, farm-based interventions etc. to create their sustainable livelihoods. To meet out these focused development, all existing NGOs are formulating the SHGs of tribals in different forms and provide all kind of possible empowerments for their overall development. SHGs represent an opportunity for social action and empowerment through women's involvement in considering, addressing and participating in issues that affect their members and their communities, including issues that affect women in particular [2-4].

Particularly in the tribal society, the tribal women have adjusted themselves to live a traditional life style in the local environment and followed occupations based on natural resources. [5]. But they face problems

and challenges in getting a sustainable livelihood and a decent life due to environmental degradation and the interference of outsiders [7]. Due to the steps taken by the NGOs, the tribal women have begun participating actively in the functioning of SHGs which in turn has led to their empowerment and their own community [6,8]. Thus this investigation has revealed in depth the results of the extent of participation of SHG tribal women in the Bastar district of Chhattisgarh.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present study is carried out in the Bastar district of Chhattisgarh during 2017. The Bastar district was selected purposively because it is one of the district where the percentage of tribal population is higher and the tribal SHGs are actively functioning. Jagdalpur and Bastanar blocks were selected based on the presence of NGOs specifically working for the tribal women. Among these NGOs, Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN) of Darbha block and Bastar Samajik Jan Vikas Samiti (BSJVS) of Bastanar block were selected purposively because both the NGOs strive for the upliftment of the tribal communities' viz., Gond, Abhujmaria, Bhatra, Halbaa, Dhurvaa, Muria, and Bison Horn Maria. Among these tribal communities, Halbaa and Dhurvaa were selected because of the fact that these communities have more number of women SHGs engaged in the entrepreneurial activities. Based on this, a sample of five SHGs from PRADAN and five SHGs from BSJVS were selected randomly. A sample of ten members from each selected SHG was considered for the study. Thus, eight SHGs and a sample of 100 members were considered as respondents for the study. The data were collected and recorded with the help of well-structured pre-tested questionnaire through personal interview method. The responses of the respondents were analysed, computed and tabulated with the use of suitable statistical tools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Participation in economic developmental activities: Participation in economic development activities refers to the involvement of individuals, communities, or other entities in activities that contribute to the growth and improvement of a region's economy. This can encompass a wide range of actions, from individual entrepreneurship to community-level initiatives and is crucial for sustainable and inclusive economic progress. The distribution of the respondents of Halbaa and Dhurvaa community according to their participation in economic development activities is presented in Table 1.

Table -1: Participation in economic developmental activities

Sl. No.	Category	(n=100)					
		Halbaa (n=50)		Dhurvaa (n=50)		Total (n=100) *	
		Total scores	Mean scores	Total scores	Mean scores	Total scores	Mean scores
1.	Find out income generating opportunities	128	2.56	117	2.34	245	2.45
2.	Participating in capacity building in income generating activities	89	1.78	73	1.46	162	1.62
3.	Deciding about loan lending to members	132	2.64	99	1.98	231	2.31
4.	Fixing interest percent for purpose oriented loans	93	1.86	76	1.52	169	1.69
5.	Running the commercial enterprise	127	2.54	131	2.62	258	2.58
6.	Helping to get resources from supporting institutions	136	2.72	123	2.46	259	2.59
7.	Purchasing raw materials for their enterprise	137	2.74	91	1.82	228	2.28
8.	Purchase of improved equipments for commercial enterprise	124	2.48	78	1.56	202	2.02
9.	Marketing of SHG produce	103	2.06	118	2.36	221	2.21
10.	Participation for SHG product in exhibitions conducted by Government/ SAUs/KVKs	101	2.02	107	2.14	208	2.08
	Overall mean score		2.34		2.03		2.18

* Total & Mean Score

The findings presented related to the participation in economic developmental activities in the Table 1 revealed that on the basis of higher mean score, all the respondents of Halbaa tribal community tried to find out income generating opportunities (2.56), deciding about loan lending to members (2.64), running the commercial enterprise (2.54), helping to get resources from supporting institutions (2.72), purchasing raw materials for their commercial enterprise (2.74) and purchase of improved equipments for commercial enterprise (2.48) as they secured the more mean scores than the overall mean score (2.18).

On the other hand, it is also apparent from the Table 1 that the Dhurvaa tribal women were found active in the SHGs to find out income generating opportunities (2.34), running the commercial enterprise (2.62), helping to get resources from supporting institutions (2.46), marketing of SHG produce (2.36) and participation for SHG product in exhibitions conducted by Government / SAUs/KVKs (2.14) as they got the more mean scores than the overall mean score (2.13).

It could be implicated from the above results that it is quite interesting to see that participating in find out the income generating opportunities and running the commercial enterprise in the district is relatively more among all the groups. This is an essential economic activity as the livelihood of the SHG tribal women were dependent to produce the products for marketing.

Participation in social developmental activities: Participation in social development activities is crucial for individual and community well-being, fostering a sense of belonging, promoting skill development, and enhancing overall quality of life. Engaging in community activities provides opportunities for social interaction, personal growth, and the development of valuable skills applicable to various aspects of life. Most of the tribal women participated in the village developmental works such as awareness campaign, road maintenance, rain water harvesting, tree planting and also maintaining cleanliness in the temple during festivals and functions. The responses regarding participation pattern of SHG members in social developmental activities were collected and are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Participation in social developmental activities:

(n=100)

Sl. No.	Category	Halbaa (n=50)		Dhurvaa (n=50)		Total (n=100) *	
		Total scores	Mean scores	Total scores	Mean scores	Total scores	Mean scores
1.	Participation in village development activities	139	2.78	116	2.32	191	2.55
2.	Participation in social events	123	2.46	97	1.94	177	2.20
	Overall mean score		2.62		2.13		2.36

* Total & Mean Score

It could be observed from the Table 2 that on the basis of total and overall mean scores, Halbaa tribal women' expressed their interest more participation in both in village development programmes (2.78) and participation in social events (2.46) as they secured the mean scores more than the overall mean score (2.36) while in case of Dhurvaa tribal women, it was not found similar.

Hence, it could be implicated from the above results that the tribals from Halbaa and Dhurvaa community were not more inter-tribal communication nature due to their living style, dominant cultural differences of another tribe, differences in language, customs, belief system and friction. The group facilitators of each tribal women self-help group were observed to have motivated the members to involve themselves in social welfare activities in their own community. These factors might be the reason for their high level of participation in social developmental activities.

CONCLUSION

The tribal women have become well secured in their livelihood status due to their participation in Self-Help Groups. If every effort taken results in the expected positive ways, the tribal women could visualize and experience the better side of their lives. This has been proved in the study. Inter-cultural relations between tribal communities are complex & multifaceted and successful interactions often require mutual respect, understanding and a willingness to adapt and learn from each other while preserving cultural identities of particular tribal community. Once after the introduction of Self-Help Groups, the tribal women have begun to actively participate in all spheres of social activities. The income generation before and after participation in SHG showed significant increase. It shows their empowerment status because of the stimulus SHG. This would be possible by organizing more entrepreneurial training programmes to the tribal women. Tribes with more cultural similarities may find it easier to understand and cooperate with each other within the SHGs.

DECLARATION

Nil

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