ABSTRACT

Discrimination against the girl children is a multidimensional issue and strikes at the heart of our society. The issue necessitates a multidisciplinary approach for efficient progress for mitigation of such discrimination keeping status of women a paramount significance in the process of empowerment.

Amongst several governmental and non-governmental endeavours, SHG programme is a structural initiative, which emphasizes upon strengthening women at multiple levels- cognitive, psychological, economic and social. SHG is a structural arrangement which stresses the need for empowerment of members without any redistribution effort of the extant power structure. The emphasis is on status enhancement of women with intrinsic and extrinsic ramifications.

However, questions asked whether it would be an enduring arrangement to target huge section of human resource at their adulthood. As women empowerment is a holistic and multidimensional process, it entails a careful collaborative effort to tackle the problem at their rudimentary stage. Thus, being a SHG member not only holds the responsibility of making themselves strengthened at social, economic or political level but also to create a conducive environment for their subsequent generation by making requisite systemic arrangement for girl children, making them free from gender discrimination, thus shaping the journey of girl children to women-healthy, resourceful and valuable for themselves, families, communities and nation as a whole. Therefore present study is an effort to study the impact of women in self-help group on their daughters with following objectives-

1- To create an in-depth understanding of the process through which women of Self Help Group (SHG) evolve in transforming their status of empowerment with respect to their level of economic independence, awareness and participation in decision-making process.

2- To compare and understand the perception and contribution of women towards the status of girl children with focus on education, nutrition, health care, participation in domestic activities and traditional practice.
3- To Compare and analyze the experience of girl children and their perception of the mother’s role in their upbringing.

4- To analyse the possible implication of intergenerational change in women’s role on the status of girl children.

The comparative and qualitative data from seven SHG women and seven Non-SHG women along with their respective daughters (of age between 10-14 years) from two SHGs in the slum Dharavi, Mumbai gave an insight about the impact of SHG or Non SHG women on their daughters upbringing. The methods such as in-depth interview, anthropometric measurement (weight and height), dietary survey (24 hours dietary recall) were applied to extract necessary subjective and objective information from the target group.

The qualitative data analysed under emerging themes i.e- 1-Empowerment through SHG- a structure to rediscover herself. 2- Empowered mothers-Aspiring and nurturing the preadolescence of girl children.3-Empowerment is a process-it’s translation and factors at play.

Findings of the study were briefed as under:

(i) Supporting the theory that empowerment can’t be gifted to anyone and one has to rebuild and experience it through opportunities, SHG creates opportunities to enhance the functional capacity of women bringing lots of difference in the status of women at individual, family and community level. (ii) Empowered mothers focus most on the education of girl children assuring them to realize their aspiration. Both formal and vocational education are encouraged by empowered mothers to choose in contrast to acknowledging only formal education as the pathway to economic independence by patriarchally influenced non-SHG mothers. Again poor financial condition pushed Non-SHG mothers to be biased to conform to the age old defined sphere on the basis of gender. The most significant finding under the indicator education is even among SHG mothers, mothers of only girl children were more enthusiastic to support the education of girl children. (iv) With economic independence, empowered mothers bring changes in the budget of food for the family but quality in terms of nutritious food as per developmental stage of girl children is ignored due to lack of knowledge and awareness. (v) Women’s role in the healthcare
of her daughter is determined by her awareness, her status and financial condition of the family. (vi) Birth order, family size, financial condition, mother’s employment, capacity to afford advanced household equipments, mother’s childhood experience, traditional practice played vital role in deciding the extent of participation of girl children in domestic activities irrespective of empowerment status of mother though the participation in domestic activities of girl children of empowered mothers are not encouraged at the cost of education. There is an evident correlation between the encouragement of education for girl children by mothers irrespective of their empowerment status and the extent of participation of girl children in domestic activities. (vii) The findings under harmful traditional practice for girl children revealed more the encouragement for the education of girl children by mothers , the less the mothers aspire to get their daughters married in the mid-way of their education or before giving them opportunity to become financially independent. (viii) The translation of empowerment in girl children is one of the milestones of empowerment process has been achieved predominantly in dimension viz. education conquering over traditional practices i.e early marriage and age old defined gender role . Other dimensions such as nutrition, reproductive health are needed to be reworked and incorporated in the framework of SHG with nutrition education and awareness of importance of developmental stage for the overall health of women in future. (ix) The significant finding of the study revealed that empowered mothers played an ideal model for the tender mind of girl children whom they automatically identify and look upto by ingraining the similar strengths from within as that of their mothers. The impact of ubiquitous factors like patriarchy and gender inequality are not completely ruled out in the translation of empowerment which again needs to be redefined.

Gender inequality is an issue which can not be resolved overnight. The entrenched unacceptable practices due to gender inequality can not be rooted out fully at a time. But there is no denial that the movement for gender equality has been started. There is wide acceptance of gender equality which is clearly reflected in the upbringing of girl children but still needs intermediation from time to time at every stage of their development. In this context, the findings of the present study would definitely help to
analyse the cause and effect of translation of empowerment by taking a step ahead in the process of empowerment.

The findings can be used to redefine the role of various participants viz. State, NGOs, other formal organizations like banks etc. in playing their developmental role. It may help to incorporate the strategic intervention in women development programmes to uplift the status of girl children as each and every stage values a lot for the next. By empowering a group of women for a particular time, the challenge to empower the huge human resource would not be over. It is something i.e. to be captured and facilitated from its rudimentary stage and can be strengthened through different empowerment interventions from time to time. Similarly the programmes enshrined for the development of girl children, can be strengthened by making their mother empowered because mother is the first and best teacher for the child. Empowerment of women is a process of development of marginalized - girl children or wives or mother or huge human resource as a whole, whose development are interconnected and interdependent.