CHAPTER VI

FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

Empowerment of women through SHG is the latest movement. Self Help Groups are the voluntary organizations which disburse micro credit to the members and facilitate them to enter into entrepreneurial activities and create a successful impact on their members. The SHG mechanism provides a platform for self-employment and self-reliance. A comprehensive study examining the impact of SHG members on multidimensional perspective is lacking even though the concept of SHGs has been functioning for over fifteen years.

Hence, the present study was conducted in Kanchipuram district to analyse the performance of women Self Help Groups and its socio economic impact on members as well as perception of members towards SHGs with the sample size of 350 members. The constraints and suggestions of SHG members were also focused in the present study. The major findings of the study from the analysis are presented below:

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

On the Profile of Members of Self Help Groups

1. Out of 350 samples 84.9 percent of the respondents are below the age of 30 years and therefore it is evident that the SHG concept catching among the youngsters is one of the important factors driving persons to join SHG to pursue some gainful economic activity.
2. The members with primary education constitute a higher percentage of 33.1 per cent closely followed by illiterate members with 25.1 per cent. Therefore it is evident that illiterates and primary school drop outs patronize SHG mechanism to improve their social and economic status.

3. As many as 322 members forming 92 per cent have earned income annually beyond Rs. 22,000 on an average. This clearly shows that the SHGs in the study area have helped the members to gain economic empowerment.

4. The majority of 245 members (70 per cent) comprise nuclear family in Kanchipuram District. So it can be inferred that the nuclear family system enables them to actively participate in group activities.

5. The larger families with four to five members are the core members of SHG in Kanchipuram district and their strength is 61 per cent. Therefore it is concluded that SHGs in the area under the study are dominated by members from larger families.

6. It is known that members from BC, MBC, SC/ST are more or less equally benefited through Self Help Groups. In other words people irrespective of the community become the members.

7. Most of the members i.e. 269 members (77 per cent) are Hindus in the study area may be due to non-observance of religious orthodoxy by majority of female members of Hindu religion which might have attracted more members towards SHGs.
8. About 234 members representing 67 per cent are married women. The sheer necessity to supplement the income of family in these days of sky rocketing prices might have caused the overwhelming presence of married folk in the membership profile of SHG.

9. Regarding the occupation, unemployed and self-employed members (72 per cent) show more interest in joining the SHGs.

10. As many as 212 members occupying 61 per cent from rural areas outnumber their urban counterparts that constitute 39 per cent. Therefore the SHGs in Kanchipuram district are mostly concentrated in rural areas.

**On Social Impact of Self Help Groups**

11. The perception of Self Help Group members on literacy shows that as many as 190 members (54.29 per cent) are reported to have experienced a considerable improvement in their reading ability and 192 members (54.86 per cent) give credit to SHG for their partial improvement in their writing skill. Two hundred and twenty one members (63.15 per cent) have averred considerable improvement in their arithmetical ability.

12. The percentage analysis on the awareness of Health on Self Help Group members in the study area illustrates that 331 members (94.5 per cent) have agreed that their diet pattern has improved. Regarding the awareness about cleanliness and hygiene, 321 members (91.72 per cent) have positively responded and 280 members constituting 80 per cent are firm in their view that health
care has improved. Thus, the mechanism has made a positive dent on various aspects of health in the study area.

13. Improved relationship with friends and acquaintances with a mean score of 4.71 clearly demonstrates the positive impact created by SHG on strengthening the contact with various officials as 345 members representing 98.5 per cent have strongly agreed to the impact. A positive response has been given by 346 members reflecting 98.86 per cent in the interpersonal relationship among the members. Similarly 345 members representing 98.57 per cent have averred that the SHG has helped them in nurturing positive relationship with the society.

14. The mean score of more than four testifies the fact that women are recognized as earning members. In other words, ability to participate in all decisions affecting social matters and being invited for village functions are indicative of growing recognition won by women through SHG. The role played by SHG on heightening the image of women folk in the social spectrum is indisputable.

15. The overall impact of type of family on social variables is significant as shown by the p value of 0.003 from student t test analysis carried out between the social variables and type of family. The members from nuclear family may have better prospects to improve their literacy level, also spend more on health care aspects and those from joint families may score higher on social relationship and social acceptance facets.
16. The mean scores of locality groups shows that urban members have been affected by variables like literacy and health care with higher mean scores of 7.28 and 12.64 respectively. The extent of social relationship and social acceptance is deeper in rural members than in their urban counterparts as evidenced by the mean scores of 18.94 and 18.96 respectively. Therefore it can be concluded that locality has impact on the rural and urban members differently on different variables. As for the overall impact of locality on social variable, it can be inferred that the locality factor has played a significant role with the p value 0.046 derived from ‘t’ test on social variables.

17. The ANOVA analysis made between the age group and social variables shows that the higher mean scores of 7.35 of the age group falling between 25 and 30 has been significantly affected by literacy. Health care women members above the age of 30 with mean score of 13.02 have gained a higher level of consciousness than the other age groups. Similarly women members above the age of 30 have significantly improved the social relationship as evidenced by the mean score of 19.93. The same finding holds good for social acceptance variable as well. As regards the overall impact of age on social variables, the statistical results confirm that the age has played a definite role in social variables but the significance is more in the age group of those above 30 years of age in most of the variables.

18. Duncan multiple range tests applied to know the level of impact on different groups establishes the fact that illiterate groups and those with primary education have been highly affected by SHG while
other groups with high school, higher secondary and degree holders have been comparatively less impacted. As regard the overall impact of educational status on social aspects, it is illiterate and those with primary education have been impacted significantly as the p value is 0.015. Thus the impact of SHG might be more pronounced in the case of illiterates and those with primary education.

19. The result of the one way ANOVA analysis proves that the level of income has not significantly influenced the literacy level as the p value is 0.732. The other social variables i.e. health, social relationship and social acceptance in those groups whose income is beyond Rs. 37,500, have been highly affected as the mean values of this group are higher than that of other income groups and the p values are significant at five per cent level.

In other words, the rise in income level enables the members to focus more on health aspect, on building social relationship and on gaining social acceptance. The overall impact of average annual income on social variables is significant as the p value is 0.038.

20. The marital status does not have significant impact on the literacy of members as the p value 0.324 is not significant. A close examination of mean scores reveals the fact that the married members become more conscious in health aspect than the other groups as shown by their mean score is 13 and unmarried and others members are more equally concerned about their health aspect as evidenced by the mean score of 12.8. The fact of marital status
significantly influencing the health aspect is further borne out by the significant p value of 0.041.

The comparison of mean scores of different groups discloses the fact that the married and unmarried groups have significantly been affected in the dimension of social relationship in terms of significant p value which stands at 0.003. The impact of married and unmarried members is significant with the p value 0.052 on social acceptance parameter. As regards the impact of marital status on all the parameters covered, the social dimension, the married and unmarried groups have been significantly affected as the p value is 0.005.

21. A cross table analysis of correlation between the social variable shows that the level of literacy is positively and significantly correlated with social relationship and social acceptance. The health variable, is however, not correlated significantly with social relationship and social acceptance since there may not be any connection between health and social relationship and social acceptance. Social relationship has a positive linkage with social acceptance to a significant extent of 0.182.

**On Economic Impact of SHG Members**

22. The increase in number of members in the post membership period in income slabs above Rs.30,000 is a pointer to rise in the economic status of the members.
23. The paired t test analysis made for income earned by sample respondents in the pre and post membership period has confirmed that the income level of respondents has considerably improved after they joined the SHG.

24. Increase in food, clothing, and health expenses signals the rising lifestyle of the members, while reducing the expenditure on festival and recreations indicates progressive mindset of the members thanks to their membership in SHG.

25. The higher presence of members in the high expenditure bracket indicates their higher capacity to bear the expenditure. This clearly demonstrates that the SHGs in the study area have helped SHG members in no small measures to enhance the capacity of members to meet the rising cost of living out of rising income.

26. The result of paired t test analysis carried out between expenditure incurred by the sample members before and after joining the SHG shows significance at one per cent level. It can be stated that the members have increased the level of expenditure in the post-membership period due to higher level of income earned through ventures sought through SHG. The SHG has really brought about a significant change in the expenditure pattern of the members.

27. Analysis of the pattern of saving of members brings to the fore the fact that members who were traditionally saving through chit funds, friends and post office have migrated their savings to SHG.
28. SHG has helped the members to improve their savings considerably. In other words, the number of persons who save more than Rs. 4,000 constitute 71 per cent in the post-membership period. This clearly manifests the impact of SHG on the saving habit of members.

29. The results of paired t-test applied to test the impact of SHG on the savings level of respondents have conclusively proved that the savings of the members have remarkably improved.

30. The number of members who availed loans above Rs. 20,000 were 135 (40 per cent) in the post-membership. There is a total change in the size of loans availed after their active membership in the SHG. The constant support extended by the group and increasing interaction with banks reflects the confidence in their repayment capacity and it mirrors a positive impact on the economic status of the members.

31. The paired t test clearly proves that the borrowing level of the respondents has significantly improved after the members joining the SHG as the t value stands at 60.302 at 1 per cent level of significance.

32. The percentage analysis of the economic activity of SHG members after joining the group shows that there is significant increase in the productive loan from 44 percent to 76 per cent and the consumption loan has come down considerably from 56 per cent to 24 per cent. Thus, the very shift in the loan pattern can be attributed to the positive impact of SHG on its members.
33. The number of members holding assets value beyond Rs. 15,000, raised to 154 (43 per cent) in the post-membership period compared to only 29 per cent in the pre membership period confirms that SHG has helped the members economically which shows the positive impact of SHG on members.

34. The investments of the members in the assets like house, vehicles, jewellery and household articles have increased in the post-membership period. Thus, the increase in investment in these assets unmistakably points to improvement in the life style of members, thanks to SHG. Similarly the downfall in the value of conventional assets further reinforces the improving life style of members.

35. The t value 51.304 which is significant at 1 per cent level derived by applying paired t-test confirms a positive fall out of SHG on assets held by the members in the pre and post membership period. Therefore the membership in SHG in the study area has significantly improved the asset holding pattern of the respondents.

On Empowerment of Self Help group members

36. The perception study on the impact of SHG members on entrepreneurial development shows that they have gained a status of entrepreneurship through membership in SHG as the t test results for the five variables are significant at 0.001, 0.003, 0.006, 0.009 and 0.010 respectively. Further the mean score of more than 4.5 of all variables connected with entrepreneurial development unmistakably points to the positive contribution of SHG on entrepreneurial development.
37. The t test analysis on impact of SHG members on personality development shows that all the five variables are significant at one per cent level and that the SHG has made a great deal of contribution to the personality development of members.

38. The perception study on impact of SHG members on independence shows that they have understood the value of mutual help as the p value is significant for all the five variables. It can be concluded that the members have gained freedom from various forms of enslavement in view of the mean values of 4.5 indicating total agreement of the view in all these statements.

39. The result of t test shows that the impact of capacity building is significant as the p values are 0.001, 0.005, 0.003, 0.001 and 0.002 respectively. It can be concluded that SHG has been helping its members to a great extent in capacity building.

40. The positive chi square value of 126.58 is significant as the p value is 0.000 at one per cent level of significance which confirms the positive association between social impact and empowerment. Thus, it shows that the various social impact variables have made a very positive empowerment on members of SHG in the study area.

41. The cross correlation analysis shows that significant correlations between personality development and independence imply that the members positive personality traits might help them carry on their ventures successfully thereby gaining economic and social independence. The existence of significant correlation between the economic and social independence with capacity building implies
that the growing independence from the various forms of suppression by undertaking various economic pursuits helps in a major way to enhance the capacity of members.

42. The results of Friedman test confirm that independence with which members pursue their ventures and improvement in the personalities of members has contributed to the empowerment.

43. The results of multiple regression analysis confirms that the overall empowerment is dependent on overall social and overall economic impact to the extent of 40 per cent and it is dependent on some other factors to the extent of 60 per cent.

On Problems faced by Self Help Group Members

44. A perception of the personal problems faced by the SHG members shows that lack of freedom to take decision with mean score of 4.42 representing strong agreement of the members and absence of smooth relationship between members and group leaders are the twin problems striking the members on their personal side.

45. The mean score analysis on the perception of the social problems faced by the women members shows that they do not face any restriction in their social mobility as the mean score is 1.65 implying disagreement of the problem. Similarly women members do not face any problems from the society and they are not suppressed by male members as the mean scores are 2.46 and 1.66. On the other hand the political interference is hitting the members intensely as the mean score is 4.37.
46. The perception of the economic problem variables shows that all the members invariably accept that they are facing the problem of higher interest rate, lesser number of installment for repayment, insufficient loan and low income.

47. Majority of members 87.71 per cent agreed that adequate training has been given to them. As regards proper planning and management issue, a thumping majority of 86 per cent state that they have been able to plan and manage the ventures without any hindrance. Similarly all the members are one in the view that they have been imparted requisite skills to handle the implements used in the ventures. However, all the members invariably express that they have problem in marketing the products.

48. Out of 154 members 58 members (50.9 per cent) who experience moderate level of problem get a high level of social impact (50.9 per cent); while 88 members who face higher problem gain lower level of social impact (51.4 per cent). Those members numbering 108 (30.86 per cent) who suffer lower magnitude of problem gain higher level of social impact (48.1 per cent).

49. Out of 350 members 154 members (44 per cent) have disclosed that even moderate level of problem faced by them on their venture has been reduced to a moderate extent on empowerment. Eighty eight members forming (25.14 per cent) who faced higher challenges reported that they have lost social impact to a low extent (56.8 per cent). Members numbering 108 (30.86 per cent) who face lesser problem gain higher level of empowerment (59.6 per cent).
50. The results of the multiple regression analysis show that when social impact goes up by 1.232, the level of empowerment also goes up to the same extent. Similarly when overall problems of the members come down by -0.589, the empowerment has a potential to come down to the same extent. The $r^2$ square value of 0.620 indicates that the overall empowerment ($Y$) is dependent on independent variables over social impact ($X_1$) and overall problems faced by SHG ($X_2$) to 62 per cent. In other words, 62 per cent variation in empowerment is explained by the combination of overall social impact and overall problems variables.
RESEARCH BASED SUGGESTIONS

1. The funding agency should sanction additional loan as and when the members require and to those who pay off their earlier loans promptly.

2. Counseling and guidance on regular basis has to be an intrinsic part of planning, reviewing and implementing any programme for women empowerment.

3. The members of the Self Help Groups are facing stiff competition from branded products and also from large-scale units producing the identical products. Hence, it is suggested that reservation of certain products should be completely made for SHGs to protect them from the competition.

4. The local panchayats should provide market storage area for women SHGs to develop a permanent marketing arrangement for their products. The State Government should come forward to constitute a federation for marketing the products of SHGs through public distribution system.

5. Since SHGs comprise mostly illiterate and primary school drop outs women members, education for rural women needs to be continuous. Education on planning, production, marketing and evaluation of economic activities will make the rural women undertake group activities more effectively. It is, therefore, suggested that suitable sustained educational programmes should be chalked out by government and non-governmental agencies in order to enlighten the members on technical knowledge and other aspects.
6. The members should also be given education on health care, banking operations, child care, personality development i.e. self-esteem, self-confidence, communication skills, and leadership qualities.

7. Empowerment as stated by many researchers is not an automatic outcome of the microfinance program. Thus, the organizations have to develop their financial and non-financial services in such a way that they empower their members with capacity building.

8. The existing SHG groups can be further strengthened by non-financial services such as training, business skills acquisition, general awareness programmes, leadership development programmes, etc.

9. More emphasis should be given to the use of productive loans than the consumption loans. Monitoring the end use of loan by members or making productive loan an obligatory factor of the total loan can have an empowering outcome.

10. More attention should be given to capacity building of those members who belong to the socio-economically weaker section in the group. Special emphasis should be given to design special programmes and services for the class.

11. Centralized marketing of SHG products should be encouraged to solve the marketing problems faced by SHGs. Wide publicity should be given through mass media. Further in order to promote the sales, the Government can construct separate shopping complex. This will in turn increase their community participation and would also get them a unique recognition.
12. The group members themselves have to periodically organize fairs and participate in sandy’s and to put stalls on important occasions to market their products. They may also undertake visits to buyers to canvass orders. Hence, the individual efforts of the members and government patronage can help the members to combat the marketing problem.