INTEGRATED DISCUSSION

In this chapter the findings of the present research entitled on Gender and Development: A Study on Dalit Women in Villupuram District Tamilnadu is reported in the form of integrated discussion. The summary of the study concerning economic participation of women, economic opportunity of women, political empowerment of women, educational attainment of women and health and well being of women are briefly stated in the following paragraphs.

7.1 Economic Participation of Dalit Women

Economic participation by dalit women is analyzed through perceptions on their standard of living, income earned as well as their share in family income, their self confidence level, the reasons for the support they get from family members, the restrictions faced by them in availing the economic opportunities viz., employment in various sectors, the gender relationship in society, the job satisfaction and the control over their life without depending on others in the family.

In general, the industrial workers felt that their standard of living was better than farm workers since they got regular income. They strongly opined that their income could be enhanced only through permanent employment rather than savings and the development of entrepreneurship. More than half of the sample dalit women’s perception is that for enhancing self confidence, motivation to perform anything successful is mostly needed. Agricultural women workers felt that their share in family income would be nearly 75-100% than the industrial workers. Educational Attainment being at low level, the dalit women were not able to utilize the economic opportunities.

Moreover being women, the reason for their support in the family was, their earnings helped the families to reduce the poverty level to a greater extent. The male domination in the society was not questioned by them since they were still considered as inferior sex, but at the same time, majority of the women were able to have control over their lives which means that they were able to take independent decisions. Because of their regular incomes in their respective employments they were all satisfied in their present jobs and their families also supported them for their employment. They opined that their self esteem could be raised by the support they give to women in their families and majority of them could take independent decisions. Most women are tradition and culture bound and they wanted to achieve higher educational level to understand societal
problems. Most dalit women were ready to do farm and allied agricultural works and they wanted increased wages in their respective works to improve their economic participation.

7.2 Economic Opportunity of Dalit Women

The dailt women expressed that they were not working in their own or in leased farms. They were engaged as daily wage workers and most women also performed hundred days employment under Employment Guarantee Scheme. Because of their lower educational level, they could not choose skilled jobs and most of them were employed in informal sector. The employment opportunities available to them were known through friends and relatives and majority of the women expressed that removal of wage discrimination would increase their employment opportunities. Age discrimination in doing works in their respective jobs were felt by the women. Moreover they expressed that employment opportunities were less for women and they got lower wages because of wage discrimination as a result of gender discrimination and lower skills. Regarding the support they received from their parents/ husbands, they expressed that majority of them could get support to serve the society. They also opined that they had to do hard physical work since they lacked skill. They were not provided good sanitation facilities in their work spots. They were of the opinion that they were not given sufficient wages for the works they performed.

7.3 Political Empowerment of Dalit Women

The women respondents expressed that they had awareness, about political participation. They opined that they were aware of the involvement of women actively in politics but they had no idea about the number of women ministers in parliament/state governments.33% reservation policy for women was known to majority of the women respondents and they opined that they had not experienced gender discrimination in politics and also they had knowledge about the age limit for political participation viz., for voting and for contest of election. They stated that there was no caste hindrance to contest in gram panchayat elections. Majority of the women wanted only dalit women and men to be their ward counselor or president for their area. They also expressed that they voted according to their wish in elections but they were not given permission in their homes to attend political meetings. Majority of the women expressed that politics was male dominated and gender balanced representation was needed. Since they lacked family support, they could not actively involved in politics and only through political involvement by majority women would solve their problems.
7.4 Educational Attainment of Dalit Women

The dalit women in total expressed that they had financial constraints in continuing education and also they lacked self-confidence. Cultural constraint is also a major factor hindering the educational attainment of dalit women. Majority of the women expressed that education was important not only to improve their well being but also their family members well-being. Majority felt that educational attainment would help them to care their families and would improve their decision making capacity. Since they lacked encouragement from family and relatives, they could not achieve higher educational level. Moreover the sexual harassment problem and the lack of accessibility of educational institutions nearby to their villages, early marriage of girls, gender discrimination was some of the obstacles in getting education for them. Even though there were no cultural constraints in getting education, psychologically, they were afraid of attending educational institutions to study. They expressed that government should encourage women’s education by various schemes and the cost of higher education should be reduced so that women’s educational attainment could reach a higher level.

7.5 Health and Well-Being of Dalit Women

The dalit women, in general perceived that their family members enjoy good health status. The industrial workers health status was better as compared to agricultural workers. The respondents expressed that all decisions regarding their health were made by their parents. They felt that because of household chores and having spent more time in caring children and aged members in the families, they were not able to give attention to their health. Even though they had awareness about health problems, they could not allot time to do any physical exercise or attend any health clubs. Regarding the reproductive health care, all expressed that taking nutritious food and adhering the advice of the doctors could improve their reproductive health care.

Most of the women went for free health check-up in government hospitals and all were enrolled in government. Health insurance schemes which would help them to take treatment at free of cost. The women respondents in the study area complained about stomach and leg pain and also they suffered due to uterus problem. They opted to go for government hospitals as well as private hospitals and the selection of the hospital depended upon their economic status. They opined that they were not having any mental stress and due to household works, they were not
able to do any fitness activities. They were also aware of Sexual Harassment Act and the laws against domestic violence. They expressed that the culprits should be punished before public for abusing women. Regarding the preventive health care by the women, majority expressed that they had no private health insurance policy since they were covered by Government Health Insurance Scheme. Majority of the women respondent’s families spent averagely Rs 500 per month for treatment of illness and for the treatment of major diseases they preferred to go to government hospitals.

7.6 HYPOTHESES AND RESULTS

The five aspects of development of dalit women were discussed in the above paragraphs. The context bound hypotheses framed in the study and their results are stated below.

**Economic Participation of Dalit Women**

**Hypothesis:** “Dalit women’s contribution towards family income is associated with the types of their sectoral employment”.

This hypothesis is tested with the statistical tool chi-square test. The result had given the conclusion that the contribution to the family income by the dalit women depended upon their sectoral employment. In the study, the women in farm sector were able to contribute more than the women working in beverage industry.

**Economic Opportunity of Dalit Women**

**Hypothesis:** “Age, gender and wage discriminations of dalit women are high in the industrial employment as compared to those in the agricultural employment”.

This hypothesis is tested with the statistical tool ‘Weighted Average Method’. The result had proved that the age, gender and wage discriminations were explicitly high in industrial employment than in agricultural employment.

**Political Empowerment of Dalit Women**

**Hypothesis:** “There exists variation between agricultural workers and industrial workers in political participation”.

This hypothesis is tested with the statistical tool of ‘Coefficient of Variation Method’. The coefficient variation result showed a significant variation between agricultural and industrial workers in political participation.

**Educational Attainment of Dalit Women**

**Hypothesis:** “Determinants of education vary between the dalit women workers in the agricultural sector and those in the industrial sector”.

This hypothesis is tested by applying ‘TUKEY TEST’ Tukey test result proved that the determinants of education of dalit women vary between agricultural and industrial workers as the population means significantly differ between the two groups of workers.

Health and Well being of Dalit Women

Hypothesis: “Awareness on personal health care varies between the dalit women workers in the agricultural sector and those in the industrial sector”.

This hypothesis is verified using ‘MANN WHITNEY’ test. The test gave the clear cut result that the awareness level on personal health care varies between two independent groups viz., agricultural workers and industrial workers.

7.7 SUGGESTIONS

1. Training can be arranged for dalit women in beverage industry through DIC to do various types of activities like bottle making so that their skill can be developed and earning capacity can also be improved.

2. Dalit women in beverage industry have been assigned to do monotonous work regardless of their education. Managing director can assign the work according to the levels of education to remove all types of discriminations especially wage discrimination.

3. The chairman of beverage industry can arrange awareness campaign among dalit women in beverage industry to enhance the knowledge on politics.

4. More and more schools with infrastructural facilities have to be built up in rural areas to encourage education of women (especially girl’s schools).

5. Medical camps should be organized at rural areas and health checkups should be made compulsory, so that agricultural workers come forward to take personal care about their health.

7.8 SCOPE OF FURTHER RESEARCH

1. A study of dalit women in various districts of Tamilnadu can be done.

2. Studies on dalit women with levels of education in organized sector and unorganized sector can be attempted.

3. A comparative study of dalit women and non dalit women at various levels of income may also be an interesting one.