CHAPTER III
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This particular chapter deals with the information about research tools used in the present study. Data collection methods, choice of the study area, design of the questionnaire and sampling procedure are the parts of research methodology.

3.1. The Research Problem

The present research has a major thrust to find the role of NGOs in the socioeconomic development of Women in Iran by enhancing education and empowerment opportunities to Iranian women. Therefore, the present study is descriptive in nature.

The representation of women in the field of education is getting higher in urban areas of Iran but education with skills may have more significance as far as women’s economic empowerment is concerned.

Importance of education in human life is unquestionable. So to empower women, education is a first crucial stage. Literacy among women opens the possibility of unlimited exposure to new information and more importantly to new ways of thinking and perspectives on existing information. Education of women will place them on an equal footing with men in decision making in economic and political fields. Empowerment of women through education will lead to their greater participation in government and community institutions and better
entrepreneurial opportunities. (Sushama Sahay, 1998). In short, making women literate and educate them is prerequisites not only for their equality and empowerment but for the development of the nation.

Therefore, mere thinking of development excluding women’s role in the development is making handicaps to development thoughts. It is also producing insufficient results, which are against gender justice.

It is obvious that the main thrust of this research is to address these questions. In short, the role of non government organizations (NGOs) in educating and empowering women in Iranian population is going to be investigated.

3.2. Objectives

Keeping this broad perspective in the mind, the study sets forth the following specific objectives and hypotheses.

1. To study the contemporary development problems of women in Iran.

2. To study the selected role of NGOs regarding the education and empowerment of women in Iran.

3. To study the impact of the educational programmes on the target group for development and empowerment.

4. To identify the obstacles for implementing the innovative educational programme and restructure the innovative educational programmes.

5. To record the opinions of women and NGOs to the development of women.
3.3. **Major Hypotheses:**

1. The effectiveness of the NGOs’ attempts to empower the women is correlated with the type of role played by the NGOs.

2. The NGOs involved in the attempts to educate the women are effective and productive.

3. NGOs can be catalyzed and highly effective instruments in empowering the women in the context of social, economic and cultural diversity.

3.4. **Limitations of the Study**

This research study has its limitations.

1. The research study is mainly concentrating on Iranian women’s empowerment and educational development.

2. Since the universe of the study is Hamadan province of Iran, the results from data collections are useful to explain the empowerment and socio-economic condition of women from this particular area rather than women from the whole region of the Iran.

3. This study is based on sample survey of 110 households and 7 NGOs from Hamadan province of Iran.
3.5. **Selection of the Study Area**

Subject matter of the study is the role of non government organization (NGOs) in educating and empowering women in Hamadan province (Iran). Considering the subject matter, we have chosen the area in Iran where general characteristics of Iranian community have been existed for a plenty of years. Likewise various places for study were available for choosing as the study area.

There are various factors behind choosing Hamadan province as the area of study. These factors are appropriateness of study area to facilitate in studying of the subject matter and objectives, non existence of extreme conditions like natural disaster, wide range of social disputes and political unrest-ness etc, economy in research expenditure and advanced knowledge of study area etc. Broadly speaking, the study area should be microcosm of a bigger study area or a whole community.

The Hamadan province has been chosen for the survey study. In Hamadan province, percentage of population is around 1.20 % of total population of the country. Hamadan province is located at the northwest part of Iran. Hamadan province extends over 19493 Sq. Km. and comprises 2.5% of Iran’s land. This province includes population of which 57.6 per cent are living in cities and 42.4 per cent reside in villages. Of all high school girls, 63.94 per cent cannot achieve a diploma and abandon school. Of all university students from this state 60 per cent...
are girls but unfortunately 8 per cent of them can graduate and get university degree.

According to the census record (1986), the ratio of literacy among male and female was 56.8 percent. However, in the year 1996, while the proportion of literacy of the male population has increased to 77 per cent where as in the case of women, it has declined to 3 per cent from that of 8 per cent. This situation clearly indicates that in the forthcoming years the literacy among the women may decline further. As after the 1996 census the next attempt will be published only in 2006.

In recent times various NGOs starts operating to uplift the various problems that the women are facing by empowering and educating their rights. There are presently 58 NGOs active by working in the field of educating and empowering women of the province. Around 20 NGOs are functioning in the urban area while the remaining are operating in the other parts of the province. The extent of NGOs activities on education practices include: 1) technical and professional practices such as carpet production industry and handicrafts, 2) literacy practices and 3) scientific and research deviations etc.

However, inspite of all the progress being made by the NGOs, women are still facing different problems due to various social, economic and religious factors. So it is essential within this frame of diversity, to make an attempt to study the role of NGOs in educating and empowering women in Iran.
So the Hamadan province in Iran has been chosen as the study area where primary data have been collected during 3 months May 2007 to July 2007.

3.6. Source of Data

The sources for data collection are widely available as far as social research is concerned. But, it is observed that in the case of our subject of research, the sources are shrunken. Even more sources are available, in reputed magazines and journals of social sciences, on general Development Issues of Community than Women’s Development Issues. So, the finding and noting the sources of data on socio-economic condition of women and NGOs in Iran is itself an exploratory research. Thanks to Electronic Sources, data is getting available now days; it is faster and easy too.

The two main sources are used to obtain necessary data for the present study:

1. Secondary data

Data have been collected in various secondary forms like previous research studies, research reports, scholarly articles, books on Muslim’s Issues, Government agencies reports and census reports etc. Both print and electronic sources are used for collecting secondary data.

It was said that Internet (E-Source) is not scientific and just making available goody- goody things. But this is not true since a lot of scientific data is
easily accessible through internet. Articles on Iranian women by UNDP, Government Reports and Community Development Programmes, Census Reports, Planning Commission’s Reports and scholarly articles are now available through Internet. The same sources are also appropriately used as a source of secondary data in present. All these sources are noted at the end of the concerned chapter as well as in the Bibliography.

2. Primary data

Primary data in the form of responses from the women respondents and NGOs people were collected with the help of structured questionnaires.

Besides this, moral discussions were made with community leaders social and political activists from Hamadan Province in Iran. Specially, the researcher has made moral discussion with Iranian Academicians and body members of NGOs. It helped the researcher to have clarity about the opinions and attitudes of people towards education and women’s empowerment.

3.7. Sample design

The main focus of the study was to know the role of non government organization (NGOs) in educating and empowering women, and thereafter to find out status of women in education and empowerment fields. Human development thoughts which have been evaluating after the huge attempts of veteran Economists Maqbool ul Hassan and Amartya Sen have been studied in the first chapter.
'Empowerment’ is a magic word which has extensively been used in the development thoughts now days. Besides this, gender justice and women’s empowerment are the concepts without study of which, development study can not be completed.

Considering the above discourse and objectives of the study representative samples were collected from Hamada Province in Iran. Census book of 1996 census was used to understand regions and women population studying in institutions where directly or indirectly NGOs provided assistance to women. From those particular institutions the sample was selected. Initially a sample of 200 was proposed. But after pre-testing and repetition of data, the sample size was reduced to 125 women respondents. Out of 125 samples, 110 representative women actually formed the sample for data collection.

3.8. **Strategy of data collection**

Hamadan (Hamadan) is situated 400 km south west of Tehran, 190 km east of Kerman shah and 530 km North West of Isaac at the elevation of 1800 meters. The province of Hamadan covers an area of 19,546 sq. km. and is located to the west of Iran. Asad Abad, Towiserkan, Bahar, Razan, Kabudrahang, Malayer, Nahavand and Hamadan are the townships of this province. In the year 2006, Hamadan province had a population of approximately 1.7 million, of which about 57.6 % resided in urban areas, and about 42/4% in the rural areas.
There are 65 NGOs in Hamadan Province. Out of them 40 are working for education and empowerment of women. Out of these 40 NGOs, (Please see Appendix No. 1) the researcher has chosen 8 NGOs for survey. The working area of these 8 NGOs is spread allover Hamadan Province. So, working places from major regions of Hamadan like Asadabad, Towiserkan, Bahar, Razan, Kabudrahang, Malayer, Nahavand and Hamadan were selected for survey.

At first, NGOs chosen by random sampling from all NGOs active in Hamadan province were visited and NGOs questionnaires were filled. Later with help of NGOs people, actual institutions were traced to take interview of women respondents.

In institutes, the working areas of respected NGOs, researcher has made a list of available members and then selected 5 or 6 by simple random sampling.

The researcher has also visited community leaders in Hamadan province such as government officials and religion readers (Emam Jomeh the highest official religion in Hamadan province) and took interview with them and recorded their opinions about NGOs, Women’s empowerment and education to women etc.

3.9. Interview Schedule/Questionnaire

Three types of Interview questionnaires were designed according to the objectives of the study to collect primary data from the Women respondent, NGO
people and Community Leaders from Hamadan Province in Iran. The interview questionnaires consisted of the following items:

1. Background information of the respondent family.
2. Socioeconomic background information of Muslim women respondents.
3. Decision making and other socioeconomic rights to women.
4. Knowledge and insights of women towards women’s empowerment and education.
6. Government programmes etc.

Appropriate amount and the convenience sequence of the questions were considered while making the interview schedule. Keeping in mind the objectives of the research study, both quantitative and qualitative questions were included in the schedule.

Mainly two parts were made in the questionnaire: part A deals with questions related to household characteristics such as age, marital status, literacy, occupation of each member of the household. Information on socio-economic condition of the respondent households in Hamadan area was gathered by including questions on ownership of consumer durables, total monthly income of the households, household condition and the source of the water etc.
Further in Part B questions were included about women’s background characteristics, work participation, earnings by women, health condition, decision making and freedom of movement, women’s attitudes toward empowerment, education and government benefits from women welfare programmes etc.

Consent statement explaining purpose of the study and cooperation to give response has been given on second page of the questionnaire.

3.10. Pretest

When the schedule was prepared in March 2006, pre-testing was done in order to ensure against difficulties of comprehension and ambiguities of questions. While structuring the questionnaire, it was felt that more questions about status of women should be included. But considering the magnitude of the subject matter and results got through pretesting more concentration was paid on the questions related to education and empowerment of women. Likewise various criterions that can assess Muslims women’s empowerment were designed at first time, for example, knowledge of rights given by Islam to women in economic and social spheres etc.

Pre-testing of a sample of 15 women was done in Asadabad area. Results of pre-testing were valuable in constructing the final questionnaire. More questions on status of women were removed since this study basically was related to NGOs’ role in women’s empowerment and education.
Since the questionnaire was basically designed in English, modification and translation in Persian was also done after pre-testing.

3.11. Data Processing

Editing work of the collected questionnaire was basically done in the field itself to ensure the completeness, comprehensibility and consistency of the responses. Since the area code was given on each schedule, all collected questionnaires were later brought for data entry. The data entry process was done with the help of MS Excel and SPSS (Software Package for Social Sciences). The coding and initial notes were written in the excel programme. The primary data entry was done in Excel directly by sequence of answers. Later, the whole data was transformed in the SPSS programme from Excel. In SPSS, at first, various variables were put together according to the purpose of analysis.

Keeping in the mind the objectives of the study and level of reporting of the different questions, tabulation plan was prepared and later revised depending upon the nature of responses etc. Both quantitative and qualitative questions were attempted at this stage. Further, data was analyzed to get results in form of percentages and scores for a particular objective like decision making score etc.
3.12. **Key Concepts**

Key terms/ concepts such as voluntary organization, voluntary action, social development and empowerment have been used in this study. Their meaning both in the social science theory and in this study have been spelled out as follows:

3.11.1. **Voluntary Organization**

The term voluntary organization is very much synonymous with NGO. They are sometimes referred to as voluntary agencies, social work agency, social action, people’s movement group, religious group, community development organization, non-party group, charitable trust and the like. In India, voluntary organizations may be registered as societies, as charitable trusts, under the central or state laws. Some states have adopted the Societies Registration Act (1860).

3.11.1.1. **Religious Minorities NGOs**

Religious minorities in Iran are Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians. The history of their activities goes as far back as one century. Due to Iran’s culture and ethnic background, different religions are freely engaged in their services and activities based on the principle of mutual respect and understanding. Their activities are comprised of training, preservation of culture and religious heritage and charity services. Religious minorities such as charity cultural NGOs are among the oldest women’s NGOs in Iran.

3.11.1.2. **Charities Cultural NGOs**
The history of these NGOS activities goes back to before the Islamic revolution. Since fulfilling the needs of the poor and needy, nursing the ill and elderly, teaching the people to recite the Quran and religious knowledge, and supporting the orphans and guardian less women are among the greatest worships, thus the local preliminary machineries have been formed in every locality and district within the mosques in order to respond to the urgent needs of the people and to reach those in need. Charity and culture NGOs are the advanced form of the same religious bodies which are active in an expanded level and have been able to attract a wide number of charitable women to these centers.

3.11.1.3. Socio-political NGOs

These NGOs established in 1980. the very first nucleus was formed within the core of people in order to achieve the goals of the revolution and to lay its ground in the society. The leaders of these NGOs are active and informed women with outstanding political records in fighting the former regime, before the Islamic revolution.

3.11.1.4. Cultural Training NGOs

These NGOs are mainly in the form of higher religious schools and training centers from primary, intermediate and high school to college levels. The members of these NGOs are active with the aim of training women with their own innovative methods. They were mainly established in 1980.
3.11.1.5. Governmental and Non-governmental Organizations

The members of the GOs – NGOs were generally formed by voluntary masses and gradually due to the rapid expansion in the number of its members to millions, the managerial level was strengthened and thus turned into a government organization, but the leads figures are as before, members of society who work voluntarily through a governmental system. Most of these organizations were established with the advent of the Islamic revolution. In fact, the wide need of people in national construction, the necessity of defending the country against the enemy’s attacks and sending convoys to the oppressed and war stricken people precipitated the gathering of volunteers in each motional area. Later the managerial divisions of these organizations were established under government monitoring in order to gain maximum efficiency.

3.11.1.6. Trade and Specialized NGOs

The members of the NGOs consist of women specialists and experts in various scientific fields (medical, engineering, industrial, art and human sciences). These NGOs were established after the revolution and mainly during the national reconstruction period following the war between Iran and Iraq. Each of these NGOs tries to maintain the major needs of the country by presenting the results of their work, and most of them are active in government projects. These NGOs are the largest in number.
3.11.1.7. Publications NGOs

These NGOs are involved in weekly, monthly and seasonal publications and also in publishing books related to women. Some of them were established before the Islamic revolution, but the majority of them became active during the national development period. The contents of these publications are on various issues and based on the needs of the entrepreneurs and different readers. The members of these NGOs are from the female writers and experts on women’s issues. In addition to these issues being published on the expert opinions and reflections of women’s problems, and criticism of social and legal problems, it also educates the reader and creates job opportunities for women.

Voluntary organization is a group organized in pursuit of one or several interests in common. The group is organized on the basis of voluntary membership that is neither mandatory nor gained through birth, but it is purely voluntary. It is usually initiated spontaneously, at least at the level of persons who form it and governed by its members without any external control. Also, voluntary organization is a group of persons who have organized themselves as a legal corporate body to render social services through the organized efforts. Lord Beveridge defined Voluntary organization as “an organization in which whether its workers are paid or unpaid is initiated and governed by its own members without external control”. Another definition of voluntary organization is by D.K. Sills,
explains that “as a group of persons organized on the basis of voluntary membership without state control for the furtherance of some common interests of its members”. For the purpose of the present study, the term voluntary organization has been used in the sense of an autonomous agency, which renders social service.

3.11.2. Voluntary Action

Voluntary action is little bit different from voluntary organizations, i.e., which has its common goals and collective action. It is not necessary to have registered under the charity commissioner. It mobilizes its resources within the groups or donations, and mostly they do not rely on foreign financial assistance. Voluntary action is the common goal of voluntary organization and people’s organization. The concept voluntary action has become very popular in the last three decades. Conceptually, any action by an individual, an informal group, or a duly constituted organization, which is not promoted by external pressure or self-interest, can be termed ‘voluntary action’. Voluntary action is synonymous with community action, people’s organization, social activities, social activists, action groups, voluntary agencies, non-governmental organization or non-party political processes or non-political formations. The classification of action groups is based on the activities, i.e., relief and charity; trade unions, development oriented; mobilization and organization.
3.11.3. Empowerment

There are many initiatives of empowerment strategies that have been initiated by poor people themselves, government, civil society organisations and non-state actors. The World Bank’s Empowerment Sourcebook (2002) defines, ‘empowerment is the process of enhancing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes’. Central to this process are actions, which build both individual and collective assets, and improve the efficiency and fairness of the organizational and institutional context which govern the use of these assets. The essence of empowerment is the self-determined change. The implications of policies and programmes and activities that empower poor people and those are expected to enhance development choices, and improve people’s quality of life. According to Bina Agarawal, it is a process that “enhances the ability of disadvantaged (powerless) individuals or groups to challenge and change (in their favour) existing power relationships that place them in subordinate economic, social, and political positions”. Empowerment, thus, is a process of enhancing the ability of powerless individuals/ groups aimed at changing the socio-economic and political status of the marginalized segments like women, tribes and other socially disadvantaged groups. In this sense, the term empowerment has been conceived for empirical observation on the Iranian Women in Hamadan Province of Iran.
References:


5 Agarwal, Bina: A Field of One’s Own, Gender and Land Rights in South Asia, Cambridge UniversityPress, New Delhi, 1994, P.39.)