

Role of self help groups in socio economic sustainability- a study of punjab region

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Abstract

For sustainable growth, Micro Finance through Self help Groups promise to deliver poverty alleviation and results in Financial Inclusion. The main purpose of the research work done is to answer whether the women who have joined Self Help Groups became more economically empowered as compare to those who are still not the members of any SHG. Self help group is the homogeneous group of 10-20 members who belongs to same category and of same economic class basically poor. The members in the group are self selected on the basis of mutual trust, they meet regularly and makes a common fund in which they pool their savings and get loan from that pool whenever needed. The aim of this research is to examine the need and benefits of joining these groups which helps in the socio economic development of the poor population especially women basically in the rural areas, the empowerment status of the women members after being employed by taking help of financial institutions. To meet the objectives, primary data has been collected with personal interview and structured questionnaire in the major districts (with high population) from the regions of Malwa, Doaba and Majha of Punjab.

Keywords. *Financial Inclusion, SelfHelp Groups, Empowerment*

1. Introduction

In the developing countries like India, there are many issues that stand in the way of development of nation and poverty is one of the top issues faced by India. Microfinance had emerged as the industry and since 2000's it has been playing a part in reducing the scale of poverty in our country as well as in other countries too. Grameen bank of Bangladesh seeded the idea of the self help group that was given by Muhammad Yunus. Self help groups were started and formed in the year 1975 and the basic purpose of Self Help Groups is to provide the new life to the poor women in the rural areas with the purpose for social and economic prosperity. More than 80% of the women are involved in this programme. The basic idea is to generate financial help which helps in the development of women and to make them independent so that they can contribute in their family income and can be self employed. With this economic independence there is increase in self esteem, self respect, more confidence, self independence and other form of women empowerment programmes

consists of officials, Non Government Organisations and institutions at the village or rural level.

2. Review of literature

The study reasoned that the development of SHGs can fundamentally contribute towards the decrease of poverty and unemployment in the provincial area of the economy and the SHGs can change the perspective regarding monetary improvement and the social change. "Women Empowerment through Self Help Groups in Andhra Pradesh, India" in "International Research Journal of Social Sciences" was studied [1]. Women participation in Self Help Groups have clearly made a colossal effect upon the standard of living and style of rural poor women and have empowered them not only on individual basis but also as a family member, members of the community and the society, nation as well. The women gathered and formed groups for the purpose to solve their common major problems through self-help groups and mutual cooperation and help. Gayathiri (2014) writes on the "Impact of Self help

Group in Socio-economic Development” in “International Journal of Scientific Research and Management”. The main aim and objective of the present paper is to examine the impact of Self-helpGroup in Socio-economic development of the country [2,3&4].

“Impact of Self Help Groups on Women Development in Salem District” in the International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention was studied [5]. Gender equalities are important for economic necessity and to be fair and equitable. To overcome the existing gender gaps in education, employment and entrepreneurship are key fields of action. It shows the influence and impact of the social status of women members towards changes in financial decision-making, building of confidence level and skill development level.

3. Need of the study

Microfinance has its unique feature that it focus on the women empowerment [6]. More than 80% of the women are involved in this programme. The basic idea is to generate financial help which helps in the development of women and to make them independent so that they can contribute in their family income and can be self employed. With this economic independence there is increase in self esteem, self respect, more confidence, self independence and other form of women empowerment programmes. The women empowerment process is not automatic but it relies on the different factors which include environment, initiative, ability and their status.

There is no such study which gives its conclusion that microfinance totally improves the status of women and their families, she can move independently to run her own small business independently, she can earn more respect in the family ever than before, more participation in social meetings and decision making. It may happen because of her financial support to the family. Micro Finance is not the end of all the problems that are faced by the poor population but it is the solution or a way to solve the problem. It helps in the social, economic or political empowerment so the beneficiaries should efficiently and smartly use the loan amount or financial help provided to establish their small scale business which results in the women empowerment and leads to the improved

standard of living. This chapter deals with the socio economic impact of microfinance in the empowerment of women with respect to economic as well as social empowerment.

4. Objectives of the study

1. To study the demographic profile of SHG women in rural areas of Punjab.
2. To study the socio economic status of women Self Help Groups.

5. Research methodology

The study has been taken in the three regions of Punjab namely Malwa, Doaba and Majha. Multistage random sampling technique is adopted for selecting the sample SHGs.3,4 The field survey has been done from three stratas of Punjab, of which six populated districts have been selected:

MAJHA: 1) Amritsar 2) Gurdaspur

MALWA: 1) Ludhiana 2) Patiala

DOABA: 1) Jalandhar 2) Hoshiarpur

Both Primary and Secondary data has been used to carry out the research. A pre tested and structured questionnaire was formed for the collection of data from 500 respondents. In addition secondary data has been taken from journals, internet and magazines. Different statistical tools such as percentage, weighted average mean, spear's man rank correlation and ANOVA has been applied on sample data.

6. Demographic Profile of Women SHG members

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of women Self Help groups in rural areas of Punjab. In terms of age 62.6% of the women respondents lies in the age group of 31-50 years, followed by the age group of 18-30 with 21.8% who are actively participating in the socio economic activities. The aged women members of above 50 years also involved themselves in these empowering activities. To be a part of group, education is not a big concern, as training programs are provided to them but for better understanding, to manage their accounts, education is important, 40.6% of the members had achieved basic primary level education, 24.8% of members were still illiterate

which is a matter of concern as government nowadays providing free education to girl child, 27% of the women attained education upto a middle level and very few 7.6% have qualification upto secondary level and above and they were engaged in managing the accounts and finance of the entire group. As per analysis 79.6% of the women members were married and who really wanted to attain good standard of living for their families and 20.4% were single either unmarried, divorcee or widow who want to be self reliable and independent by earning bread. 51% of the women members were doing labour, 23.6% were engaged themselves in farming and few are engaged in service sector.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Women SHG members

Determinants	Measuring Groups	No. of Members	Percentage to total
AGE (in years)	18-30	109	21.8
	31-50	313	62.6
	Above 50	78	15.6
	Total	500	100
Educational Background	Illiterate	124	24.8
	Primary	203	40.6
	Middle	135	27
	Secondary and Above	38	7.6
	Total	500	100
Marital Status	Married	398	79.6
	Single	102	20.4
	Total	500	100
Occupation	Farming	118	23.6
	Labour	255	51
	Housewife	45	9
	Service	82	16.4
	Total	500	100

(Source: Primary Data)

7. Socio- Economic Impact of Micro Finance on SHGs which leads to Women Empowerment

Microfinance has its unique feature that it focus on the women empowerment. More than 80% of the

women are involved in this programme.^{5,6} The basic idea is to generate financial help which helps in the development of women and to make them independent so that they can contribute in their family income and can be self employed. With this economic independence there is increase in self esteem, self respect, more confidence, self independence and other form of women empowerment programmes. The women empowerment process is not automatic but it relies on the different factors which include environment, initiative, ability and their status.

8. Indicators of Women Empowerment:

Mostly, empowerment indicators are proxy variables. A number of questions were asked during the field survey to know about the decision-making process, choice and controlling process. For the process of women empowerment, such questions act as helpful source and also act as an effective representation. The below mentioned empowerment indicators are based on the field survey questions.

Table 2. Women Empowerment Indicators

DOMAINs	INDICATORS
1. Economic Empowerment	1.1 Easy access to the credit facility
	1.2 Less dependent on money lenders
	1.3 Economically independent
	1.4 Control over family financial resources and households
	1.5 Increase in savings
	1.6 Minimized family indebtedness
	1.7 Improved food consumption pattern
2. Social Empowerment	2.1 Social Recognition
	2.2 Participation in family decisions
	2.3 Participation in social services
	2.4 Self Dependent
	2.5 Awareness of government schemes
	2.6 Better contact with outsiders
	2.7 Increased standard of living
	2.8 Participation in institutional matters
	2.9 Good schooling to children
	2.10 Increase in confidence level
	2.11 Increase in level of communication

(Source: Self made)

The collected responses are specific and have its relevance in the particular social context. However, it points towards the impact of intervention (in this case microfinance programme) on the condition and process of the women empowerment.

9. Economic Empowerment

Micro finance through self help groups helped the poor to have linkages with the formal institutions i.e. banks who provide them the small loans and encourage them to have their own micro enterprises. The formation of SHG's helps the women to become self employed with which they can increase their income and standard of living and make them more economically empowered.

We have studied the economic impact of the respondents by taking different indicators and found that:

1. When studied the easy access to credit facilities we have observed that more number of members that is 3.82 in Majha have access to credit facility as compared to 3.592 in Doaba. In all the three regions values are more than 3 which shows that after joining the SHG women get easy access to credit in form of micro loans from the group itself or from the formal financial institutions.
2. The weighted average mean scores (3.45 in Malwa, 3.684 in Doaba and 3.88 in Majha) are more than 3 which indicates that mostly the members became less dependent on money lenders after joining the groups. Money lenders usually charge high rate of interest on the lended amount from the members. And as a group member now they get micro loans/credits from the groups itself and from the banks at the low rate of interest.
3. Maximum women members in Majha with weighted mean score of 3.41 found that they are economically independent followed by Malwa with the mean score of 3.26 and Doaba with an average of 3.06. Micro finance programmes helped the women to be self employed by setting up their own micro enterprises like embroidery, stitching, making soaps, candles, pickles, jam, chalk, soft toys, mats, making ropes and garlands, juttis etc.
4. Micro finance programmes helped the women in having access and control over financial resources

and household resources which includes possession of land, jewellery, house, gold etc by which they gained more respect and feel more secured. In all the regions of Punjab women members have more control over financial resources and households after joining the self help groups which are shown in the table above as the values are 3.5, 3.4 and 3.3 in Malwa, Doaba and Majha respectively.

5. The women members who are the part of self help groups inculcates the habit of bank savings in themselves as it is compulsory for them to make monthly savings to get access of micro credit facility. It is considered that if the women saves regularly she is considered to be economically aware as compared to those who do not take initiative to save. It has been observed that in Doaba an average of 3.42 of women members have increased their savings as compared to Malwa and Majha. But there is a massive improvement in the saving habits of the members after joining the group.

6. As per the data collected more people in Malwa and Doaba (3.67,3.61) followed by the Doaba region have minimized their family indebtedness with the help of micro finance programme which leads to women empowerment with the formation of self help groups. With the increased income and pooled savings they have returned the borrowed money and reduced the indebtedness of their family.

7. The micro credit taken from the formal institutions with the help of SHG's can be used for productive purpose by establishing their own micro enterprises which leads to increase their income level. The increased income further helps to live better life style and have better food consumption pattern i.e. ability to spend their money and same results are shown in the study from the data collected from three regions of Punjab. Malwa is leading with better food consumption pattern with the weighted mean score of 3.84 followed by Doaba and Majha.

11. Social Empowerment

Developing a social behaviour is as important as of economic development. Micro finance programme through self help groups helps in inculcating the Social Behaviour within the group members - the cooperation with each other, how to deal with other

Table 3. Economic Impact on Self Help Group members

Sr no.	STATEMENTS	WEIGHTED SCORE MALWA	WEIGHTED SCORE DOABA	WEIGHTED SCORE MAJHA	Rank 1 Malwa	Rank 2 Doaba	Rank 3 Majha
1	You have an easy access to the credit facility	3.78	3.592	3.82	2	3	2
2	Your family is less dependent on money lenders	3.45	3.684	3.88	5	2	1
3	You are economically independent	3.26	3.062	3.41	6	7	5
4	You have control over family financial resources	3.52	3.48	3.3	4	4.5	6
5	You have increased your savings	3.09	3.242	3.14	7	6	7
6	You have minimized family indebtedness	3.675	3.48	3.61	3	4.5	3
7	You have improved the food consumption pattern	3.84	3.78	3.46	1	1	4

(Source—Field survey)

Note: * Significant at 5% level

- The figures came from the Weighted average mean score of Likert's 5 point rating scale.
- Ranking has been given on the basis of weighted average mean of each region i.e. R1, R2, R3.
- Spearsman Rank correlation has been applied which gives the result R1= .995, R2=.994, R3= .991.

It shows that the values among three regions are highly positively correlated.

- ONE WAY ANOVA has been applied on the above collected data and the results are as follows:

members of the society. The women members are given opportunity to have social meetings, interact with fellow members by coming out from the four walls of their homes. This leads to social and cultural empowerment.

Social impact of the respondents have been studied for all the three regions namely Malwa, Doaba and Majha, we have taken the weighted average of the data for analysis.

- With the formation of self help groups women are getting social recognition by interacting with their group members , managers and officials of bank while financial transactions, government officials

etc. They are becoming more confident in communicating their beliefs and facts. As per study it has been analysed that women members in Majha region are more socialising with the weighted average score of 3.85 and so in the case with Malwa which is 3.7 and Doaba with 3.685.

- While working with Self help groups, participation of female in the family decisions have been improved significantly. The importance of women is adjudged by the decision making power in the family matters. In this male dominant society if women is given a change to take any decision it raises herself respect. The analysis of the study shows that

	TREATMENTS			
	1	2	3	TOTAL
N	7	7	7	21
$\sum X$	24.615	24.32	24.62	73.55
Mean	3.516	3.474	3.517	3.502
$\sum X^2$	87.008	84.869	87.028	258.906
Std. Dev.	0.27	0.25	0.26	0.252

10. Results and discussion

Source	SS	Df	MS	
Between-treatments	0.0084	2	0.0042	F=0.06009
Within-treatments	1.262	18	.0702	
Total	81.2712	20		

The value of F- ratio is 0.06009. The p-value is .941869. The result is insignificant as the value of $p < .05$.

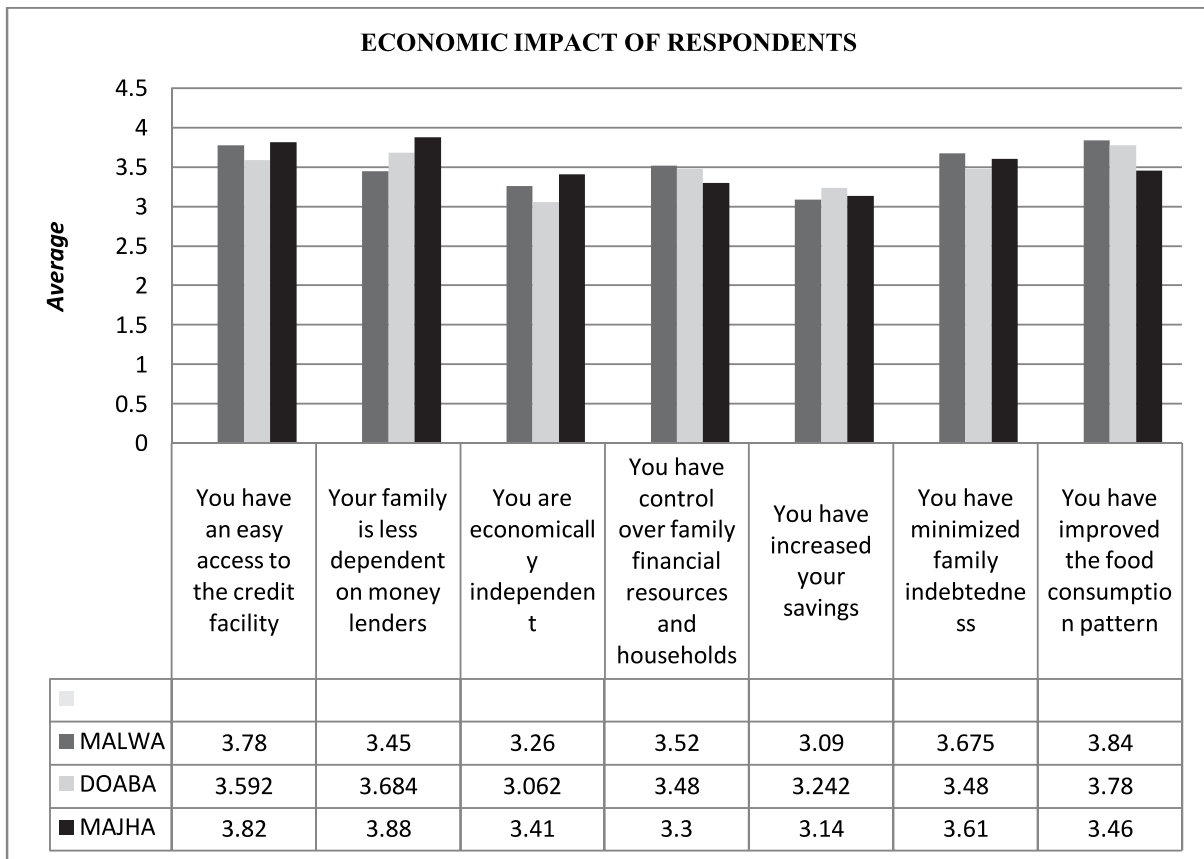


Figure 1. Economic Impact on Self Help Group members

Table 3.Social impact of self help group members

Sr No	STATEMENTS	WEIGHT ED SCORE MALWA	WEIGHT ED SCORE DOABA	WEIGHT ED SCORE MAJHA	RANK 1 MALWA	RANK 2 DOAB A	RANK 3 MAJH A
1	You are well socially recognized	3.7	3.685	3.85	3	4	2
2	Your level of participation with husband in family decisions is quite satisfactory	2.89	3.09	2.86	10	9	9.5
3	You actively Participate in social services	2.945	3.085	2.86	9	10	9.5
4	You have better contact with outsiders	2.98	3.18	2.884	8	8	11
5	You have gained self-dependence	3.99	4.12	3.49	2	1	4
6	Are you aware regarding new govt.schemes	3.65	3.6	3.82	5	5	3
7	Your standard of living increased	3.68	3.4	3.26	4	7	6
8	You actively participate in Institutional matters	2.87	2.634	2.92	11	11	8
9	You provide good schooling facilities to your children	3.43	3.824	3.15	6	3	7
10	Your confidence level has raised	4.129	3.855	4.04	1	2	1
11	Your level of communication has risen	3.415	3.285	3.34	7	6	5 9

Source—Field survey

Note: * Significant at 5% level

- The figures came from the Weighted average mean score of Likert's 5 point rating scale.
- Ranking has been given on the basis of weighted average mean of each region i.e. R1, R2, R3.
- Spearsman Rank correlation has been applied which gives the result R1= .998, R2=.992, R3= .999.

It shows that the values among three regions are highly positively correlated.

- ONE WAY ANOVA has been applied on the above collected data and the results are as follows:

	TREATMENTS			
	1	2	3	TOTAL
N	11	11	11	33
$\sum X$	37.679	37.758	36.474	111.911
Mean	3.425	3.432	3.315	3.391
$\sum X^2$	131.093	131.464	122.825	385.383
St. Dev.	0.450	0.431	0.434	0.428

12. Results and discussion

Source	SS	Df	MS	
Between-treatments	0.0941	2	0.0471	F=0.24469
Within-treatments	5.7716	30	0.192	
Total	5.8657	32		

The value of f-ratio is 0.24469. The p-value is .784497. The result is insignificant as the value of p is greater than .05.

women are more actively taking family decision with coordination of husbands in the family mainly in the Doaba with the weighted mean of 3.09 as compared to Majha and Malwa with average score of 2.86 and 2.89 respectively. There is still a need for women to have more exposure in Majha and Malwa regions.

3. The women members under SHG's start their business, visit markets, purchase raw material, and sell their products which results in more gaining of self confidence and less hesitation in any dealing. They are more active in social activities; also they are having more contacts with outsiders it means more easily in conversion and public dealings. The results shows that the women members in Majha region are having more interactions within the group and outside the group as the weighted mean score is more than 3 i.e. 3.18 as compare to Malwa and Majha in which average score is less than 3.

4. Self Help Groups helps them to become more confident and attain such freedom, so that they can be considered more empowered. Such confidence comes when they socialize, when they travel and visit other places for marketing of their products in fairs,

exhibitions. Women in all the three regions have gained more self dependence as per the study. Some women do not take part in such activities and they remain laggards in the race of empowerment.

5. Micro finance programme promotes a self help group which helps in upbringing the women members and the government (NABARD along with other financial institutions) is also helping the groups to promote themselves and make their upgraded place in the society. They launch different schemes for the benefit of the members. Certain training programmes are held in which participants become more aware regarding govt. schemes and it was found that in the three regions i.e Majha, Doaba and Malwa the members are aware and getting benefits of the schemes for their upgradation.

6. The financial institutes provide micro loans to the self help groups and the members are utilising the loans in effective manner by starting their own small enterprises with leads to the rise in income and consumption pattern. With the increased income the standard of living is also increasing significantly and as per data collected it has been observed that in

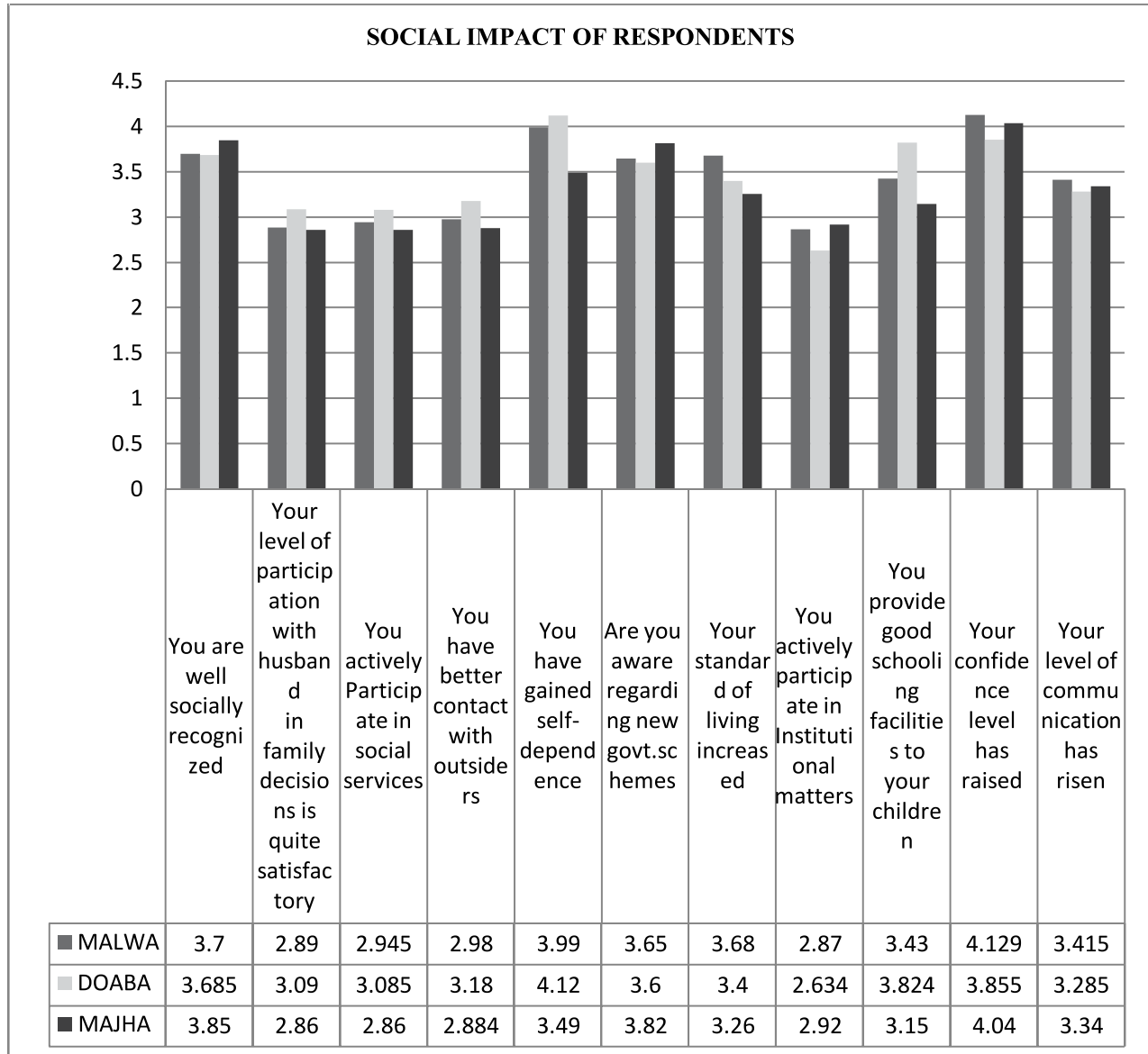


Figure 2. Social Impact on Self Help Group members

Malwa region there is a massive improvement in the living standards followed by Majha and Doaba.

7. The members of SHG generally have interactions with group members, officials, bank managers which help in raising the confidence level. But still some chunk hesitates to be a part of discussion. As per study they lacks in the participation of institutional matters as the weighted average score is less than 3 in all the regions taken for data collection.

8. As women are aware and are more connected to the society, they have started giving good education to the children. The women are considered

to be socially empowered if she will take the step to send her children to the school for the well being of her family. Education is important to make a person independent and to make him aware of the well being of the society and the nation and this awareness level is found in the three regions as the weighted score in Malwa, Doaba and Majha is 3.4, 3.8 and 3.1 respectively.

9. SHG members generally arrange monthly or fortnightly meetings in which they also discuss their social and personal problems like domestic violence, drug addiction, dowry, female foeticide etc. This kind of activities helps them to better communicate and

raise their voices against any exploitation. The level of communication has been raised in the three regions as the weighted mean score is more than 3 as per data collected.

13. Conclusion

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that a microfinance programme is a powerful tool for empowering the women economically, and socially. There is an overall development of the members participating in the self-help groups as they are provided with effective training, skill development and education by the microfinance programmes. By joining the groups there is a rise in income, communication level, confidence level, employment level, decisionmaking level among the women members as compared to those who are laggards.

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