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The Empirical Study on Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women in Tamaraipadi Village, Dindigul District, Tamil Nadu.

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Abstract:

This paper explores local governance and development as critical processes of instrument for women's empowerment. It delves into the socio-economic empowerment of women in the Tamaraipadi rural region of Dindigul district, Tamil Nadu. This paper focuses on education, health care, and decision-making authority as the major factors for women's empowerment. It uses quantitative data collection method and analyses of data using simple random sampling, based on an interview schedule and a structured questionnaire. The study's findings and suggestions focus on rural women's limited educational attainment, barriers to their decision-making autonomy, and the status of women's healthcare and sanitation facilities. The study concludes with policy recommendations to empower rural women economically and socially at both the household and societal levels.

Keywords*: women empowerment, local development, decentralization, social empowerment, economic empowerment.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The core theme of the paper is bringing down the ideology of development of India in 2047, In which the paper focus on the sub-theme of governance, institution and India's global responsibility. The core concept of this paper focus on women empowerment through local government. History demonstrates that out of all deprived groups in the world women have suffered the most. Their suffering knew no bounds based on culture, race, region or religion. They have been victims of abuse, molestation, violence, rape, poverty, malnutrition, ill treatment and deprivation. But until recently, scholarly attention was not focused enough on subjects related to empowerment of women. *(Mandal, 2013)*. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru once said: "If you educate a man, you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman, you educate a whole family. Women empowered means mother India empowered". When women who constitute almost half of the population are empowered it will strengthen the national economy. *(Shetty & Hans, 2015)* India as a country known for its rich heritage, customs and diversity also has a darker side to it, "Status of Women." In a country where women have been worshipped as Goddess Durga, there has been "Sati" too. Findings from numerous studies reveal that social -economic empowerment of women is the back-bone of our nation, as women constitutes 52% of our total population. They can rightly be called as "Change Agents". Hence, women ought to be socially empowered by eradication of evils and crimes of socio-economic origin. *(Jain, n.d.)*. Women empowerment is a debatable subject. Women have equal right and status with men in all walks of life. But gender disabilities and discriminations are prevailing in India even today. The paradoxical situation was such that women was sometimes worshipped as Goddess and at other times despaired as slave. *(Hazarika, n.d.)*. This paper explores local governance and development as critical instrument for women's empowerment through an empirical study in rural India. The paper deals with socio-economic empowerment of women in the Tamaraipadi rural region of Dindigul district, Tamil Nadu.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

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Origin of the Term Empowerment

It is interesting to note that most of the dictionaries only shows a pre-twentieth century definition of the verb empower meaning 'to empower', and 'to give power to'. The word was first used in the 17th century and has meanings like 'authorize', 'delegate', or 'enable'. The issue of 'women empowerment' is now a global phenomenon. Since the origin of the United Nations Organization, the issue of women's development has attracted the attention from the scholars worldwide, and the concept has come in the political agenda of a large number of countries. At present, the term "empowerment" has replaced the erstwhile term "development". Though the term 'empowerment' had become a 'buzzword' in the sixties, it was not discussed so extensively in literature until the eighties. It took about twenty-five years for the United Nations to proclaim the year 2001 as the 'International Year for Women's Empowerment' after declaring the 'Women's Decade' in 1975. India also declared the year 2001 as the 'Women's Empowerment Year'.*(Mandal, 2013)*

Definition of the Term Empowerment

According to Sushama Sahay (1998), "Empowerment is an active, multi-dimensional process which enables women to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life". It implies decentralization of power and authority in the deprived, oppressed and powerless people who have not been able to participate in decision making and implementation of policies and programs of both government organizations as well as in societal matters. Empowerment of women is not only essential but also imperative for all round development of a country. Goodrich describes empowerment as "a benevolent but unilateral transaction in which one person enhances another's ability to feel competent and take action, that is, enhances another's power-to" (Patricia, Darlington & Mulvaney, 2003, p. 12).(Mandal, 2013)

Social Empowerment

Empowering the women socially in very simple terms is, when she is free from clutches of social **evils,** she herself being a sole entity have discretionary power to take decisions, act upon it and enjoys freedom to her life and choices. It also refers to providing an environment where she can breathe and not sigh; she is endowed with liberty and autonomy. She is respected in the society with high self-esteem and pride in herself without prejudice. She is free to explore and discover anything and everything.

The Inter-American Development Bank (2010) defined women social empowerment in terms of Expanding the rights, resources and capacity of women to make decisions and act independently in socio-economic and political spheres.

The UN (2011). Defined socio women empowerment in terms of five components

1. Women's sense of self-worth.
2. Women's right to have and determine choices.
3. Women's right to have access to opportunity and resources.
4. Women's right to have the power to control their lives; both within and outside the homes.
5. Women's ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just, social and economic orders, nationally and internationally.(Jain, n.d.)

Economic Empowerment

Economic empowerment is the crying need of this hour. "Wage employment means economic power". Through employment women earn money and it enables women and girls to become 'bread earners', contributing members of households with a strong sense of their own economic independence. "Economic empowerment is a powerful tool against poverty". Economic empowerment can be described as a means by which the poor, landless, deprived and oppressed people of all societies can be freed from all kinds of deprivation and oppression, can directly enjoy the benefits from markets as well as household, can easily manage a square nutritious food and fulfil basic requirements such as house, cloth, medicine and pure water etc. SEWA (Self Employed Women's Association) has emphasized on the economic empowerment of women. It holds that raising voice and visibility is not possible unless there is an access "to the ownership of economic resources by the poor women, "women's empowerment could be described as a process in which women gain greater share of control over resources – material, human and intellectual like knowledge, information, ideas and financial resources like money and access to money – and control

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over decision making in the home, community, society and nation, and to gain power." Economic empowerment gains through equal work opportunities, equal organizational benefits, equal treatments and equal working environment. Self Employed Women's Association (SWEA) argues for women's empowerment through the attainment of full employment and self-reliance of poor and rural exploited women. It holds that, "When there is a woman's income, there is security of work; she has assets in her name, she feels economically strong, independent and autonomous".(Mandal, 2013).

Reasons for the empowerment of women

Today we have noticed different Acts and Schemes of the central government as well as state government to empower the women of India. But in India women are discriminated and marginalized at every level of the society whether it is social participation, political participation, economic participation, access to education, and also reproductive healthcare. Women are found to be economically very poor all over the India. A few women are engaged in services and other activities. So, they need economic power to stand on their own legs on per with men. Other hand, it has been observed that women are found to be less literate than men. According to 2001 census, rate of literacy among men in India is found to be 76% whereas it is only 54% among women. Thus, increasing education among women is of very important in empowering them. It has also noticed that some of women are too weak to work. They consume less food but work more. Therefore, from the health point of view, women folk who are to be weaker are to be made stronger. Another problem is that workplace harassment of women. There are so many cases of rape, kidnapping of girl, dowry harassment, and so on. For these reasons, they require empowerment of all kinds in order to protect themselves and to secure their purity and dignity. To sum up, women empowerment cannot be possible unless women come with and help to self-empower themselves. There is a need to formulate reducing feminized poverty, promoting education of women, and prevention and elimination of violence against women.(Hazarika, n.d.)

3.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To investigate the women's education and skill development on their economic development and their empowerment.
2. To examine the healthcare facilities for women.
3. To identify the barriers and constraints that limit women's access to resources, markets, and decision-making opportunities.
4. To identify the current status of women's income contribution to their family's economic development.

3.1 PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA

Tamaraipadi village in Dindigul block of dindigul district of Tamilnadu state, India. It is located 1km towards East from District headquarters Dindigul.

In village geographical aspect the total area was 659 hectares(6.59km).

The infrastructure and connectivity of the village are to the nearest town Dindigul and the police jurisdiction for village was Dindigul taluk.

Table 1: Quantitative profile of the study area

Particulars	**Total**	**Male**	**Female**
Total number of houses	902	-	-
Population	3572	1781	1791
Child (0-6 age)	383	195	188
SC (scheduled caste)	1574	781	793
ST (scheduled tribe)	0	0	0
Literacy	74.66%	83.04%	66.38%

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Total workers	1766	1044	722
Main workers	1569	-	-
Marginal workers	197	79	118

Source: author's compilation [1]

4.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sampling size and method

In this study, women of the village are taken as the respondent through simple random sampling method. The sample size adopted for this study is 50 respondent to carry out empirical study on the women empowerment in rural area.

Data collection method

This study is based on the both primary and secondary data. A schedule containing a detailed questionnaire and by using the schedule primary data has been collected. The secondary data has been collected through journals, censes data, government reports, related books, articles and the online sources available for the study.

Research design

The research design adopted is quantitative study, on the basis of which data has been collected and analysed using the statistical technique percentage analyses method is administrated and it is expressed in the table as required to fulfil the need.

4.1 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The collected data has been divided into four major domains those are as follows

1. Demographic profile of the respondents
2. Educational and employment status of the respondents
3. Healthcare status of the respondent
4. Level of decision-making autonomy of respondent

Table 2: demographic profile of the respondent

Sr.no	Particulars	Options	Respondents	Percentage
1	Age	18-25	17	34%
		25-35	15	30%
		35-45	10	20%
		45-50	8	16%
2	Marital status	Single	7	14%
		Married	36	72%

[1] https://www.census2011.co.in/data/village/635355-tamaraipadi-tamil-nadu.html

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		Widow	7	14%
3	Family structure	Joint family	12	24.5%
		Nuclear family	37	75.5%
		Total	50	100%

Source: author's compilation

Interpretation of the table 2:

Table 2 presents the demographic profile of the respondents. The collected data reveal that the highest proportion of respondent's 34 percent belongs to the 18–25 age group. With regard to marital status, a majority of the respondents are married, accounting for 72 percent. The study also indicates that most of the respondents belong to nuclear families, which constitute 75.5 percent of the total respondents.

Table 3: educational and employment status of the respondents

Sr.no	Particulars	Options	Respondents	Percentage
1	Educational level	Sslc	9	18%
		Hsc	7	14%
		Graduate	14	28%
		No education	20	40%
2	Reason for no education	Family responsibility	20	40%
		Cultural and traditional responsibility	14	28%
		Financial issues	15	30%
		Limited infrastructural facilities in village	1	2%
3	Family members support to education	Yes	13	26%
		No	37	74%
4	Skill development programmes	Yes	24	48%
		No	26	52%
5	Education facility around the village	Yes	48	96%
		No	2	4%
6	Employment status	Employed	33	66%
		Unemployed	17	34%
7		Full time employment	15	30%

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	Type of employment respondents employed	Part time employment	6	12%
		Self- employed	10	20%
		Contract employment	19	38%
8	Reason for unemployment	Lack of education and training	20	40%
		Lack of job opportunity	6	12%
		Family responsibility	14	28%
		Cultural and traditional restrictions	10	20%
9	Income contributor of respondent family	Father	5	10%
		Husband	20	40%
		Brothers	7	14%
		Women of the family	18	36%
10	Respondent income reflection in family growth	Yes	31	62%
		No	19	38%
11	Reflection of employment towards respondents' self-independence and self-motivation	Yes	32	64%
		No	18	36%
		Total	50	100%

Source: author's compilation

Interpretation of the table 3:

Table 3 presents the educational and employment status of the respondents, the collected data has been grouped into different domain along with its corresponding percentage, the collected data reveals the highest proportions of respondent's details are as follows, the educational level of respondent's is with no formal education which correspond to 40 percent. The reason for no education of respondent's is mostly because of the family responsibility which corresponds to 40 percent. 74 percent of respondent's does not have the family support for their education. 52 percent of respondent's has been lacking in skill development programmes and training. 96 percent of respondents responds there is an educational facility around the village. 66 percent of the respondents are employed and in which 38 percent of the respondents are belongs to contract-based employment. 34 percent of the respondents are unemployed because of the lack of education which corresponds to 40 percent. The income contributor of respondent's family is husbands which corresponds to 40 percent in which women of the family also contributes income to the family which corresponds to 36 percent. The respondent's income reflection in overall

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family growth corresponds to 62 percent. There is a reflection of employment towards respondents' self-independence and self-motivation which corresponds to 64 percent.

Table 4: healthcare status of the respondents

Sr.no	Particulars	Options	Respondents	Percentage
1	Availability of healthcare centre facilities in village	Yes	48	96%
		No	2	4%
2	Availability of proper services in healthcare centre	Yes	11	22%
		No	39	78%
3	Barriers to access healthcare system in the village	Yes	2	4%
		No	48	96%
		Total	50	100%

Source: author's compilation

Interpretation of the table 4:

Table 4 presents the healthcare status of the respondents, the collected data has been grouped into different domain along with its corresponding percentage, the collected data reveals the highest proportions of respondent's details are as follows, the availability of healthcare centre facilities in village are in good position which corresponds 96 percents but the services in healthcare centre are in poor status which corresponds 78 percent. There is no barrier for the respondents to access healthcare centres in village which corresponds 96 percent.

Table 5: level of decision-making autonomy of respondent

Sr.no	Particulars	Options	Respondents	Percentage
1	Reflection of education towards the respondent's decision making in their family	Yes	34	68%
		No	16	32%
2	Respondents' freedom towards financial resources of the family	Yes	32	64%
		No	18	36%
3	Barriers to taking decision making in the family	Family norms	20	40%
		Not generating income	6	12%
		Patriarchy system	14	28%
		Cultural and traditional restrictions	10	20%
4	Awareness on government schemes	Yes	45	90%

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		No	5	10%
		Total	50	100%

Source: author's compilation

Interpretation of the table 5:

Table 5 presents the level of decision-making autonomy of respondent, the collected data has been grouped into different domain along with its corresponding percentage, the collected data reveals the highest proportions of respondent's details are as follows, respondents' education reflects in the role of decision making in their family which corresponds to 68 percent, the freedom towards the financial resources of the family had by respondents corresponds to 64 percent. The barriers of respondents on taking decision making in the family due to the family norms which corresponds to 40 percent. Respondents correspond to 40 percent has the awareness on the implemented government schemes.

5.0 FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

Findings based on the collected, analysed and interpretated data: -

The following findings are from the study conducted in the Thamaraipadi village, in which by the analysed data, we come to know the socio- economic status of the women and to empower them socially and economically.

Limited Access to Education:

Women in Thamaraipadi village, still lack access to quality education by data collected and analysed nearly 40 percent of the women does not have the education due to the reasons of family responsibility, cultural and traditional responsibility, financial issues of the family and limited infrastructure in the village. Nearly 74 percent of women education also limited due to no support of their family member to get education and empowered.

Women in the Thamaraipadi village, nearly 52 percent does not learn any skill development programmes, this also limits their education and it also leads to the less training skills in their working sector due to this nearly 34 percent are unemployed without education and training and the 28 percent are because of family responsibility, 20 percent are because of the cultural and traditional customs following in the village, and 12 percent are because of lack of job opportunity.

Health and Safety Challenges:

In Thamaraipadi Village, there is 96 percent of availability of healthcare facilities but it does not have proper services nearly 78 percent of women in the village does not availing the services from the healthcare centre for their issues like reproductive health and for their emergency health issues they can't have services from the health centre

In the Thamaraipadi village 96 percent there is no barrier to women for accessing the healthcare centre but it does have proper Doctors and staffs for the services when the respondent needed.

Women's access to resources, markets and decision-making opportunities:

Women in Thamaraipadi village mostly access the markets through the public transport especially the free bus system scheme in Tamil Nadu (Vidiyal payanam) nearly 90 percent of them using this scheme to have access to near villages and town, this also helps the women who are self-employed to access to the market, nearly 20 percent of them using frequently. 38 percent of women doing contract employment also benefited from this.

The education of the women in Thamaraipadi village reflects toward the decision making opportunities in their family, 68 percent of women in Thamaraipadi village takes their own decision in financial matters of the family even though there is a barrier to access the resources 40 percent of the women does not take any decision in the family because of the family norms, 28 percent with reason of patriarchy system, 20 percent with reason of cultural and traditional restrictions and 12 percent due to not generating the income to the family. There is a restricted financial inclusion, many women do not have access to formal banking, credit, or investment opportunities. This also often restrict women's mobility and autonomy.

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Women as income contributor:

In Thamaraipadi village, 36percent of women are contributing their income to their family growth, in current scenario in the nuclear or in the join family there is need of women income contribution for the family growth. The income contribution also reflects towards the women self-confidence and self-independence increased in the family and society nearly 64 percent women in Thamaraipadi village are being self-confident and self-independent due to contribution of their income to the family's economic growth.

Suggestions

The suggestion mainly given based on the study conducted was to get the rural women to be well knowledgeable on the programmes implemented by the state and central government, through the implementation of the government programmes women can be empowered socially and economically.

Promote girl children education

Implement policies and incentives to keep girls in school and making them to know about the policies and programmes implemented by the state and the central government for the education of women to have complete basic education at least up to graduate level by getting scholarships and benefits from the government.

Chief Minister's Girl Child Protection Scheme:

The aim of scheme is to promote enrolment and retention of the girl child in school and to ensure her education at least up to intermediate level. Encourage girls to get married only after the age of 18 years. Protect the rights of the girl child and provide social and financial empowerment to girl child. Strengthen the role of the family in improving the status of the girl child

Skill development and economic development of the rural women in Tamil Nadu

Its all about implementing the programmes related to the economic development of the women and make them to get awareness on the state and central government programmes related to their skill development. The suggestion of state government [Tamil Nadu] welfare programmes for women to get them empowered socially and economically.

Mahalir thittam

Mahalir Thittam is a socio-economic empowerment programme for women implemented by Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women Ltd. Mahalir Thittam is based on Self Help Group (SHG). The hallmark of the SHGs promoted by Mahalir Thittam is the systematic training provided to the SHG members and the office bearers. This capacity building brings about qualitative changes in the attitude of the women and promotes cohesion and effective functioning of the group.

Kalaigar magalir urimai thogai thittam

This scheme provides monthly financial assistance to eligible women heads of households to strengthen economic security and improve household welfare. It contributes to women's financial independence and social empowerment.

Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU GKY).

Skill Training for Youth

Skill training to youth is one of the major components for sustainable livelihood promotion. It focusses on identifying the aspirations of the youth, their capacity and aptitude and providing skill training based on skill demand and opportunities in the job market.

Vidiyal payanam thittam

Free travel facilities have been provided for all women including working women, Transgender and girls who are pursuing higher education in ordinary fare city buses operated under the control of the Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation since 2021.

Moovalur ramamirtham ammaiyar ninaivu higher education assurance scheme

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From the year 2022-23, Moovalur Ramamirtham Ammaiyar Ninaivu Marriage Assistance Scheme has been revamped as Moovalur Ramamirtham Ammaiyar Higher Education Assurance Scheme. Under this scheme, all girls who studied in Govt Schools from 6th Std till 12th Std and enrolled in colleges for higher education through regular course are eligible to get Rs.1,000/- per month till they complete their graduation.

Sathiyavanimuthu ammaiyar ninaivu free supply of sewing machine scheme

Free supply of Sewing Machine Scheme is being implemented by the Social Welfare and Nutritious Meal Programme Department., in order to enhance the income of widows, deserted wives, women from economically weaker sections, differently abled men and women, and socially affected women through self-employment.

The cloths for the Free Supply of Uniform Scheme are being supplied by the Department of Textiles and Handlooms to the 32 cutting centres functioning under the control of Social Welfare Department.

Service Homes

Widows, deserted wives, economically backward women and girls rescued from child marriage who are neglected by their families are taken care of in the Service homes. Seven Government Service Homes, one each at Chennai, Salem, Cuddalore, Thanjavur, Tirunelveli, Sivagangai and Krishnagiri are functioning in Tamil Nadu. The inmates can also pursue their schooling if they had discontinued their studies. A maximum of three children can be kept by a mother. While the Girl children are provided education upto XII Standard, male children are provided with the educational facility in the Service Home itself upto V Standard. Vocational skills are also provided to enable them to have economic sustainability. Life skills viz., computer training, spoken English and counseling for selection of higher studies and future career guidance are also provided in these homes.

Higher Education to Girls

To continue higher studies the Government is providing financial assistance of Rs.50,000 for pursuing professional courses and Rs.30,000 for Degree / Diploma courses to the ex-inmates who have completed +2 in Service Homes and Government Children Homes. Many girls from 26 Government Children Homes and 7 Service Homes were benefitted under this scheme. Training relating to repair of Electronic and Electrical Consumer Appliances, plumbing etc., are given under Tamil Nadu Skill Development Mission to the inmates of Government Children Home, Government Service Home and the beneficiaries of Chief Minister's Girl Child Protection Scheme.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The study conducted in Thamaraipadi village for the Socio-economic empowerment of women is critical not only for gender equality but also for sustainable development and economic growth.

Empowered women contribute more significantly to household welfare, community resilience, and national prosperity. However, persistent barriers in educational, financial, cultural, and legal must be addressed through coordinated efforts across sectors.

Governments, NGOs, and the private sector must collaborate to create an inclusive environment that ensures women can access resources, make independent decisions, and lead fulfilling lives. True empowerment lies in enabling women to take control of their futures socially, economically, and politically**.**

Empowering women and improving their study are essential realizing the full potential of economic, political and social development.

Empowering women is an important end in itself and as women economy acquire the same status, opportunities and social economic and legal rights as then, as they acquire the rights to reproductive health and the right to protection against gender-based violence, human well-being will be enhanced.

7.0 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

1. This research paper depends primarily on respondent's opinion
2. The sample size of the study was limited due to time and financial constraints
3. The research paper study is conducted in the specific rural area of Tamil Nadu, the findings may not be generalized to all other regions of state and the country

4. The study mainly concentrated on the selected Tamil Nadu rural women empowerment and their skill development.
5. The study based mainly concentrated on cross-sectional data collected during a particular period and changes in government policies implementation over time may affect the relevance of findings in the future
6. The study mainly focused on government implemented schemes by excluding welfare schemes of non-governmental organization and private institution

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