

Women Empowerment in Rural Areas: A Study of Charaka

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Abstract

Women are often viewed as superior economic stewards compared to men, and their entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in alleviating poverty and unemployment. The development of women is central to country's economic progress, particularly in rural areas where traditional employment opportunities may not suffice. Empowering women to create their own businesses are essential. Historically, women have contributed significantly to family and community management, yet their efforts often go unrecognized. Despite the growing momentum of women entrepreneurship as a pathway to empowerment, focusing on the "Charaka", women's multipurpose industrial co-operative in Heggodu in Shimoga District. Data were collected from 50 women members of Charaka using both primary and secondary sources and analyzed through various statistical tools.

Keywords: Women Entrepreneurship, Rural Development, Women Empowerment

Introduction

Women have historically faced systemic inequalities; restrictions on property ownership, lack of voting rights, and limited employment choices. Fortunately, society is gradually emerging from these oppressive norms. There is an urgent need for the movements which advocates for women's rights to ensure equal opportunities. Empowering women through entrepreneurship fosters social development and economic advancement. It allows them to contribute equally alongside men. Apart from this regional differentiation has urban and rural also makes a huge difference in the economic spear of life. Urban women are more advantageous than rural inhabitants in search of their livelihood. This disparity may also take into consideration for the regional imbalance. Moreover, Women entrepreneurs in rural areas leverage their skills in diverse

sectors-such as diary, sericulture, and handloom- enhancing productivity and resource utilization. Hence a study on women workers in 'Charaka' seems appropriate for a study.

Literature Review

Sharadha Ganesh, (2011), She said, "Charaka" is more than just a weaving community; it's a vibrant hub where tradition meets empowerment; nestled in the heart of the Malnad region, this cooperative has become a beacon for rural women, fostering not only the art of handloom weaving but also a sense of purpose and agency".

Rajalaxmi Kamath, Smitha Ramanathan, (2014), in the article 'Charaka women's multipurpose cooperative society. They visit hegoddu and collect the all information about Charaka. In their study they discovered how Charaka not only provided employment but

also empowered women through skill development and a supportive community. Conversations with the artisans revealed their passion for weaving, their connection to their heritage, and the pride they took in their work.

Dibyendu Bikash Datta and others (2018), concluded that member weavers are well off in terms of income and asset holdings. It may be noted co-operatives have contributed significantly to improve the economic conditions of weavers. The co-operative are now the success milestones of the co-operative movement in the handloom sector. In spite of several handicaps and obstacles in the way of their progress, they have continued with their excellence in production. However, the member of weavers of the locality under their fold is still limited.

Bhattacharya and Sen (2019), analyzed the past census carried out by the ministry of textiles, Government of India, during 2009-2010, there are 3,07,829 handlooms in west Bengal, providing employment directly or indirectly to about 65,006 people. The numbers of active co-operative societies are 474 covering 89,689 handlooms.

Sanjay Sharma and others (2021), concluded that the challenges faced by woolen handloom weavers are shortage of raw material, material, finance and the most important being competition with power loom. The data has been analyzed using simple table on the basis of age, gender, income, educational qualification, opportunities and problems of woolen handloom weavers in Himachal Pradesh. Woolen handloom weaving is one of the prominent activities of our tradition and it is keeping by the weavers all over India.

Rajendra (2023) examined the significant role in meeting the cloth requirement of masses. Still the tradition heritage handloom

kept alive by those professionally skilled rural handloom weavers. But the socio-economic conditions are very poor and facing multifarious problems. So, it needs multi-pronged approach to address the problems and protect the handloom sector of our cultural heritage.

Statement of the Problem

Empowering women is increasingly recognized as a key solution to various socio-economic challenges. Women's empowerment translates to the empowerment of families and households, ultimately fostering national development. This empowerment benefits not only individual women and their groups but also the broader community through collective action aimed a development. The various problems which are mounted for the empowerment of the women among them the following are the stated problems which prevail in the society they are: rural under development, poverty, reduced income, unimproved health, decreased productivity, unsustainable human development and greater inequality are exist across all sectors. Furthermore, it enhances prospects for future generations. This research aims to illuminate the role of women worker for facilitating women's empowerment in rural area especially Heggodu.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study aims to achieve the empowerment of women workers in rural areas. The other secondary objectives are:

- i. To highlight the projects undertaken Charaka to uplift women workers.
- ii. To understand the social-economic conditions of women before and after being empowered through Charaka.

- iii. To suggest various remedies for the improvements of financial viabilities to undertake additional activities.

Hypotheses for the Study

- i. H₁: There is a significant relationship between income and women empowerment.
- ii. H₂: There is a significant relationship between education and women empowerment.

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on analyzing the role of Charaka in empowering women, specifically examining the socio-economic conditions of women weaves engaged in the women's multipurpose industrial co-operative society located in Heggodu village, Sagara Taluk, Shimoga District Karnataka State.

Research Methodology

The study employs both primary and secondary data collection methods. Primary data were gathered from 100 women working at Charaka using a structured interview schedule. A convenient sampling method was applied to select the sample participants.

Secondary data were obtained from various sources, including websites, academic journals and books. The collected data will be analyzed and interpreted using various statistical tools to draw meaningful conclusions.

Charaka

Charaka is a women's multipurpose industrial co-operative located in Heggodu, specializing in the production of naturally dyed cotton handloom garments. Their products, sold under the brand name 'Desi', highlight the significance of natural dyeing sustainable textile practices.

The Charaka initiated in 1994 by Prasanna, is a remarkable initiative aimed at empowering

weavers and making handloom products accessible to a broader audience, with a commitment to sustainability and community welfare. Sri. Prasanna visioned creating job opportunities, particularly for women, in the Malnad region of southern India of Karnataka state.

Begin with just 13 women and a couple of sewing machines in a modest shelter, Charaka has grown into a thriving cooperative, employing around 800 artisans across eight districts in Karnataka. This transformation challenges the notion that handloom textiles are only for the elite and highlights the potential of local craftsmanship. This made possible by eliminating unnecessary overhead costs, typically associated with high-fashion boutiques

Charaka provides affordable, high-quality handloom sarees, fabrics, and clothing, ensuring that these beautiful textiles are accessible to all. The project not only supports the livelihoods of artisans but also promotes the preservation of traditional weaving techniques in an environmentally friendly manner.

Projects of Charaka

SFURTI Project

- Project Name: Shimoga Naturally Dyed Handloom Cluster
- Sponsorship: Ministry of MSME, Government of India
- Nodal Agency: Indian Micro Enterprises Development Foundations (IMEDF)
- Technical Agency: Foundation for MSME Clusters
- Implementation Agency: DESI trust
- Beneficiary: Charaka Women's Co-operative Society
- Project Period: March 1, @019 –

December 31, 2022

- Status: Completed successfully
- Components of Support:
 - Soft Interventions: Trust-building capacity, Training programs, marketing support.
 - Hard Interventions: Construction of Common Facility Center (CFC), Machinery and equipment provision, Miscellaneous fixed assets.

i Design Intervention Project

- Supported by: TITAN Company Ltd. (CSR Fund)
- Implementation Agency: KAVI KAVYA Trust
- Beneficiary: Chakra Women's Co-operative Society
- Focus: Development of new designs for garments and fabrics
- Support Includes:
 - Designer and administrative expenses
 - Working capital skill development programs
 - Exposure visits
- Project Status: in progress, expected completion 2024

ii Off Farmers Producers Organisation Project

- Supported by: NABARD
- Implementation Agency: Charaka Women's Co-operative Society
- Objective: Train and provide livelihoods for rural women who are non-farmers or off-farmers in the handloom sector
- Project Status: In progress

Data Discussion

Socio-economic profile of the respondents

Table no.: Socio-economic profile of the respondents

Sl No.	Particulars	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Marital status	Married	70	70
		Unmarried	30	30
Total			100	100
	Education	Primary	70	70
		Matriculation	20	20
		Collegiate	10	10
Total			100	100
	Family Size	1-3	20	20
		3-5	40	40
		5-7	30	30
		7-10	20	10
Total			100	100
	Monthly Income	Below Rs.10,000	20	10
		10,000-15,000	50	50
		20,000-25,000	30	30
		Above Rs.25,000	10	10
Total			100	100

Source: Field Survey

Above table highlights the socio-economic characteristics of the women involved in the study, providing context for their entrepreneurial activities and empowerment through Charaka. Table No. 1 and figure No. 1 indicates that majority (70%) of the respondents are married. While 30% are unmarried. And a significant portion (70%) has only primary education, followed by Matriculation with 30% and with only 10% achieving collegiate education.

The most common family size is 3-5 member, representing 40% of respondents followed by 5-7 with 30%, 1-3 with 20% and 7-9 with 10%. Half of the respondents (50%) earn between Rs.10,000 - 15,000 and followed by Rs.20,000-25,000 with

30%, and below Rs.10,000 and Above Rs.25,000 least with 10%.

Source: Field Survey

Work experience in Charaka

Table No.:2 Work experience in Charaka

Sl No.	Experience	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Less than 2 years	20	20
2	2 - 4 years	24	24
3	4 - 6 years	22	22
4	Above 6 years	34	34
Total		100	100

Source: Field Survey

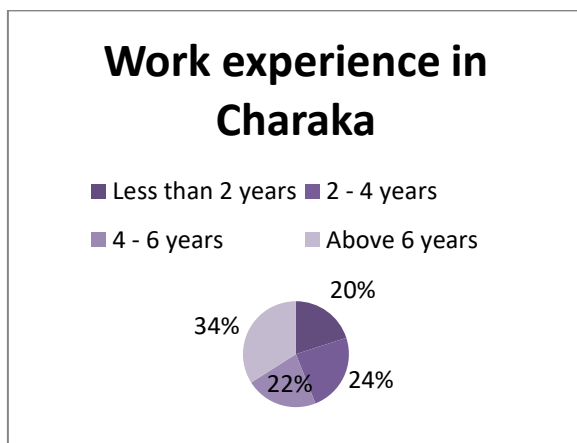


Figure: 2 Work experience in Charaka

It can be understood from table 2 and figure 2 that, majority (34%) of women has more than 6years of experience in Charaka. Followed by 2-4 year (24%), 4 -6 year (22%) and less than 2 year (20%). This data indicates a significant level of job satisfaction and stability among the employees, particularly among those with longer tenures, reflecting positively on the working environment at Charaka.

Women empowerment

Table No.: 3 Women empowerment

Sl No.	Particulars	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Feeling of equality	80	80
2	Economic Freedom	10	10
3	Liberty in decision making	10	10
4	Identifiable working status	-	-
Total		50	100

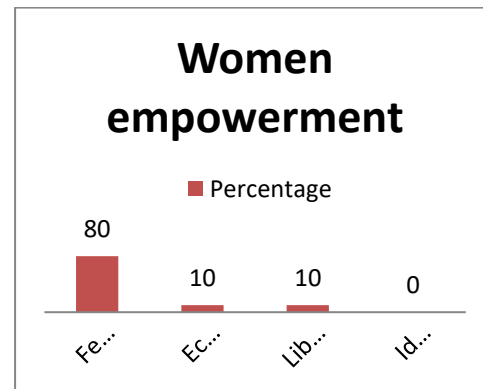


Figure: 3 Women empowerment

Table 3 and figure 3 illustrate that, 80 per cent of the women respondents feel empowered through a sense of equality. In contrast, only 10% expressed economic freedom, and another 10% reported having liberty having liberty in decision-making. These findings indicate that women have been empowered in various aspects through the initiatives of Charaka.

Hypotheses Testing

H₁: Relationship between Income and Women Empowerment

Table No.: 4 Relationship between Income and Women Empowerment

Sl. No.	Income level	Women Empowerment					
		Feeling Equality		Economic Freedom		Liberty in Decision Making	
		O	X ²	O	X ²	O	X ²
1	Below Rs.10,000	30	0.25	2	0.5	2	0.5
2	Rs.10,000-20,000	36	0.08	2	0.76	2	0.16
3	Rs.20,000-30,000	10	0.2	4	0.1	2	0.9
4	Above Rs.30,000	4	1	2	0.5	4	12.5
Total		80	1.53	10	1.57	10	14.06

Source: Field Survey

The calculated χ^2 value (16.86) is Greater than the table value (12.592) at 5 per cent level of significance, it can be inferred that, there is a significant relationship between Income level and Women Empowerment is accepted.

H₂: Relationship between Educational Level and Women Empowerment

Table No.: 5 Relationship between Educational Level and Women Empowerment

Sl. No.	Income level	Women Empowerment		
		Feeling Equality	Economic Freedom	Liberty in Decision Making
1	Primary	40	4	6
2	Matriculation	32	4	2
3	Collegiate	8	2	2
Total		80	10	10

Source: Field Survey

Since, the calculated χ^2 value (2.6807) is Less than the table value (0.612596) at 5 per cent level of significance, it can be inferred that **“There is no association between Education Level and Women Empowerment”** is accepted.

Suggestions

Following are some suggestions regarding women empowerment

- Organize workshops and seminars specially women from weaker sections to educate them about their rights, legal provisions and available support systems.
- Implement programs that promote education for girls and women, including scholarships; adult literacy classes, and vocational training.
- Collaborate with local schools and NGOs to create a supportive environment for education, ensuring accessibility and safety.
- Advocate for the rigorous implementation of existing laws and programs aimed at protecting women's rights and preventing discrimination.
- Ensure that women are provided safe working environments, including necessary facilities and support systems to address any harassment or discrimination.

- Promote equal pay for equal work and advocate for policies that support women's career advancement and professional development.

Conclusion

Charaka is making a remarkable impact on the lives of women in the surrounding villages. By focusing on economic, political, and social empowerment, they are creating a holistic approach the development. Developing entrepreneurial skills is indeed essential, as it not only provides women with the means to generate income but also boots their confidence and decision-making power. Membership and profit-sharing mechanisms can foster a sense of community and collaboration among women, helping them to reduce reliance on traditional agriculture. This approach not only enhances productivity but also promotes economic stability, allowing them to contribute more significantly to their households and communities.

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