

Towards empowerment: An empirical study on rural women in dairy cooperatives

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Abstract

Women are part and parcel of holistic development of India. Their contributions for the advancement of the culture, customs and the social order are inevitable and wider in rural India. The main purpose of this empirical research study is to investigate the personal, family, social, and economic empowerment of rural women members in dairy cooperatives functioning at the villages in Dindigul and Batlagundu blocks in Dindigul District of Tamil Nadu State in India. Primary data were directly collected from 120 rural women members through structured interview schedule in the evening time. Percentage analysis was used to analyse their personal, family, social and economic empowerment. Correlation analysis was used to know the relationship between their social and economic empowerment. The foremost findings of the study reveal that rural women members in dairy cooperatives have gradually improved their personal, family, social and economic empowerment, after becoming the members of dairy cooperatives. Further, it mainly suggested that the State government and the Department of Cooperation have to take appropriate/immediate measures to increase the milk procurement price as early as possible which paves the way for their long-term socio-economic development. Dairy cooperatives bring silent socio-economic revolution through empowering rural women.

Keywords: women, socio-economic standing, dairy cooperatives and empowerment

1. Introduction

Women and women development related issues are the imperative concerns for the governments and socio-economic development organizations in the world. They have been implementing a number of socio-economic development programme exclusively for women. In India, both the Central and the State governments have been implementing various welfare programme and schemes for improving the socio-economic status of women, especially in rural areas, through concerned departments and diverse socio-economic organizations. Dairy cooperatives (particularly Primary Milk Producers Cooperative Societies - PMPCSs) as socio-economic organizations at the village level have been functioning for the long-term development of dairy farmers, particularly women and underprivileged section. Dairy cooperatives are the grassroots level democratic organizations of the people, by the people and for the people. Government of Tamil Nadu has also been implementing numerous welfare schemes and programme for the social and economic upliftment of rural women through dairy cooperatives. Therefore, it necessitated knowing the current realities about the socio-economic development of rural women members in dairy cooperatives and their level of empowerment through an empirical study. In this background, an attempt was made to study the socio-economic empowerment of rural women members through dairy cooperatives in Dindigul and Batlagundu blocks in Dindigul District of Tamil Nadu State in India.

2. Objectives

- 1) To find out the socio-economic status of rural women members in dairy cooperatives
- 2) To identify the level of personal, family, social and economic empowerment of rural women members in dairy cooperatives

- 3) To discover the problems of rural women members in dairy cooperatives for their overall empowerment, and
- 4) To provide suggestions for the personal, family, social and economic empowerment of rural women members in dairy cooperatives

3. Methodology

The current study is based on empirical research method. The areas of the study are dairy cooperatives (Primary Milk Producers Cooperative Societies - PMPCSs) functioning in Dindigul and Batlagundu blocks in Dindigul District of Tamil Nadu State in India. These blocks have officially been classified as dry and wet areas respectively and were randomly selected for this experimental research exercise. From each block three PMPCSs were randomly selected. From each PMPCS ten rural women members were selected using simple random sampling method. The universe of the study is rural women members of haphazardly chosen from selected PMPCSs. Thus, a sum of 120 (2 blocks X 6 PMPCSs X 10 women members = 120 respondents) rural women members in PMPCSs constituted the core of this empirical study. An interview schedule was initially prepared, drafted and administered with randomly selected women members in PMPCSs. Then, the interview schedule was finalized through pilot study and the same was used for primary data collection. The required data were collected from the selected rural women in their households as well as in their milch animal sheds, mostly during evening time as convenience to them. Primary data were analysed using percentage. Correlation analysis was used to know the relationship between social and economic empowerment of rural women. Further, observation method was used to know the realities at the grassroots level.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Age

It decides the maturity level of any person irrespective of their gender and thereby increases their awareness level on their surroundings, society, social and economic development organizations and its functioning.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Age

Sl. No.	Age (in years)	Respondents	
		Number	Percent
1	18 – 28	18	15.0
2	29 – 38	62	51.7
3	39 – 48	33	27.5
4	Above 49	7	5.8
	Total	120	100.0

Source: Computed from primary data

This table shows that 15.0 percent of the respondents were in

Table 2: Opinion of Respondents on Selected Indicators on their Personal Empowerment

Sl. No.	Selected Indicators	Respondents					
		Yes		No		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	Self confidence	120	100.0	-	-	120	100.0
2	Self-esteem	120	100.0	-	-	120	100.0
3	Independent decision making on personal aspects	92	76.7	28	23.3	120	100.0
4	Leadership qualities	86	71.7	34	28.3	120	100.0
5	Individually attending socio - economic programme	83	69.2	37	30.8	120	100.0

Source: Computed from primary data

According to this table, cent percent of the respondents were having self-confidence with themselves and having self-esteem on them, 76.7 percent were making independent decision on their personal aspects and 23.3 percent were depending on their friends and family members to take decision on their personal, 71.7 percent were possessing leadership qualities and 28.3 percent were making efforts to build their qualities, and 69.2 percent were individually attending socio-economic programme and 30.8 percent were attending such programme along with others. Further, it shows that that cent percent of the respondents were having self-confidence with themselves and having self-esteem on them, majority (76.7 percent) of the respondents were making

the age group of 18 – 28 years, 51.7 percent were in the age group of 29 – 38 years, 27.5 percent were in the age group of 39 – 48 years and 5.8 percent were in the age of above 49 years. Further, it shows that majority (79.2 percent) of the respondents were in the age group of 29 – 48 years. It seems that they were in the active and productive age groups and can contribute more productively towards their long-term socio-economic development and dairy cooperatives.

4.2 Personal Empowerment

Every individual wants to improve their overall development through income generation activities and become self-sufficiency and independence in their life. It provides them individual respect in their family and society. Individual development leads to family, group and social development. Further, it paves way for areas and regional development in the country.

independent decision on their personal aspects, 71.7 percent were possessing leadership qualities, and 69.2 percent were individually attending socio-economic programme either in their native place or nearby areas.

4.3 Family Empowerment

Family is an essential social structure in the development of a society and foundation for the holistic development of the country. It is obvious fact that one has to live in the system of either joint family or nuclear family. Family size depends on the attitude and mind-sets of the individual. Further, the reputation of the family decides the individual’s socio-economic status, particularly in the villages.

Table 3: Opinion of Respondents on Selected Indicators on their Family Empowerment

Sl. No.	Selected Indicators	Respondents					
		Yes		No		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	Using all household assets	93	77.5	27	22.5	120	100.0
2	Deciding children’s education	86	71.7	34	28.3	120	100.0
3	Deciding son/daughter’ marriage	67	55.8	53	44.2	120	100.0
4	Preparing family budget	72	60.0	48	40.0	120	100.0
5	Deciding family functions	65	54.2	55	45.8	120	100.0

Source: Computed from primary data

Among the total 120 respondents contacted for this study, 77.5 percent of the respondents were using all household assets/equipments and 22.5 percent were not using those assets, 71.7 percent were deciding their children’s education and 28.3 percent were not deciding the same, 55.8 percent were deciding their son/daughter’s marriage and 44.2 were not deciding the similar, 60.0 percent were preparing their

family budget and 40.0 were not preparing such budget, and 54.2 percent were deciding their family functions and 45.8 percent were not deciding those functions. Further, this table shows that 77.5 percent of the respondents were using all household assets/equipments and others were not using those assets due to restrictions by their family members, 71.7 percent were deciding their children’s education and others

were deciding the same in consultation with their neighbours, friends and relatives, 55.8 percent were deciding their son/daughter’s marriage and others were deciding the similar in consultation with their husband, family members, neighbours, friends and relatives, 60.0 percent were preparing their family budget and others were preparing such budget in consultation with their husband and family members, and 54.2 percent were deciding their family functions and celebrations like common temple festival in their village,

their common religious festival, common community functions, etc.

4.4 Social Empowerment

Every individual wants to live and have decent life in the society through improving their socio-economic position. Society’s development is a base for country’s sustainable development.

Table 4: Opinion of Respondents on Selected Indicators on their Social Empowerment

Sl. No.	Selected Indicators	Respondents					
		Yes		No		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	Respect from family members	94	78.3	26	21.7	120	100.0
2	Respect from relatives	91	75.8	29	24.2	120	100.0
3	Respect from other caste and religion people	87	72.5	33	27.5	120	100.0
4	Individually attending family functions of relatives	76	63.3	44	36.7	120	100.0
5	Individually attending family functions of other caste people	68	56.7	52	43.3	120	100.0
6	Individually attending family functions of other religion people	57	47.5	63	52.5	120	100.0

Source: Computed from primary data

Out of the total 120 respondents interviewed for this study, 78.3 percent said that they were getting respect from their family members and 21.7 percent said that they were not getting respect from their family members, 75.8 percent opinioned that they were getting respect from their relatives and 24.2 percent opinioned that they were not getting respect from their relatives, 72.5 percent informed that they were getting respect from other caste and religion people and 27.5 percent informed that they were not getting respect from other caste and religion people, 63.3 percent said that they were individually attending family functions relatives and 36.7 percent said that they were not individually attending family functions relatives due to family situations and surrounding environment, 56.7 percent were attending family functions of other caste people and 43.3 percent were not attending family functions of other caste people due to their personal inconveniences, and 52.5 percent were not attending family functions of other religious people due to their non-

interest and 47.5 percent were attending family functions of other religious people.

Further, this table indicates that majority (78.3 percent) of the respondents were getting respect from their family members, 75.8 percent were getting respect from their relatives, 72.5 percent were getting respect from other caste and religion people, 63.3 percent were individually attending family functions relatives, 56.7 percent were attending family functions of other caste people, and 52.5 percent were not attending family functions of other religious people due to their non-interest.

4.5 Economic Empowerment

Every individual wants to improve their personal and family economic position through income generation activities and getting additional income sources. Rural economy is a base for long-term development of the national economy. It needs to be protected through various economic ways and means.

Table 5: Opinion of Respondents on Selected Indicators on their Economic Empowerment

Sl. No.	Selected Indicators	Respondents					
		Yes		No		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	Increase in own income	120	100.0	-	-	120	100.0
2	Access to family resources	83	69.2	37	30.8	120	100.0
3	Usage of family resources	83	69.2	37	30.8	120	100.0
4	Personal use of income	87	72.5	33	27.5	120	100.0
5	Savings account in bank	77	64.2	43	35.8	120	100.0
6	Personal insurance	64	53.3	56	46.7	120	100.0

Source: Computed from primary data

Of the total 120 respondents of this study, cent percent said that they have increased their personal income, 69.2 percent were having access to family resources of their families and 30.8 percent were having no access to those resources, 69.2 percent were using their family resources and 30.8 percent were not using their family resources, 72.5 percent opinioned that they were using their income for their personal purposes and 27.5 percent were not using their income for those

purposes, 64.2 percent informed that they were having savings account in banks and 35.8 percent were having no savings account in banks, and 53.3 percent said that they were having personal insurance to meet future demands and 46.7 percent were having no personal insurance. Further, it is clear from the table that cent percent of the respondents said that they have increased their income through dairying, 69.2 percent were having access to their family resources, 69.2

percent were using their family resources productively, 72.5 percent opinioned that they were using their income for their personal purposes (like medical expenditures, purchasing cosmetics, purchasing consumables/eatables, etc), 64.2 percent informed that they were having savings account in banks, particularly in public sector banks, and 53.3 percent said that they were having personal insurance to meet future

demands or uncertainties.

4.6 Correlation Analysis

In order to know the relationship between social empowerment and economic empowerment, the correlation analysis was used and exercised.

Table 6: Correlation between Social and Economic Empowerment of Respondents

		Correlation	Social Empowerment
Karl Pearson's Correlation	Economic Empowerment	Correlation Coefficient	0.314
		Significance	0.049

The results in the above table indicate that economic empowerment positively and significantly influence the social empowerment of the selected respondents at 0.05 percent level. It seems that women in rural areas have to carry out continuous economic development activities to enhance their livelihood and thereby improve their social status.

4.7 Problems and Suggestions

Problem is everywhere. It is the responsibility of the concerned persons to find out suitable remedies to overcome their problems. They have to find out sustained solutions for all problems and the same problem should not arise again.

Table 7: Major Problems of Respondents and Suggestions made by them

Sl. No.	Major Problems	Respondents	
		Number	Percent
1	Lower price for milk	120	100.0
2	Insufficient loans	83	69.2
3	Inadequate fodders	67	55.8
Sl. No.	Major Suggestions	Respondents	
		Number	Percent
1	Higher price for milk	120	100.0
2	Supplementary loans	83	69.2
3	Adequate fodders	67	55.8

Source: Computed from primary data

The above table indicates that cent percent of the respondents said that they were getting lower price for milk from their respective PMPCSs, 69.2 percent were getting insufficient loans to purchase milch animals and 55.8 percent were getting insufficient fodders. Under the suggestions made by the respondents, cent percent unanimously said that they want higher price for their milk, 69.2 percent opinioned that they want additional loans to purchase additional milch animals and 55.8 percent want adequate milch animal fodders.

5. Major Findings

- It is clear from the study that majority (79.2 percent) of the respondents were in the age group of 29 – 48 years. It seems that they were in the active and productive age groups and can contribute more productively towards their long-term socio-economic development and their dairy cooperatives.
- It is obvious that cent percent of the respondents were having self-confidence with themselves and having self-esteem on them, majority (76.7 percent) of the respondents were making independent decision on their

personal aspects, 71.7 percent were possessing leadership qualities, and 69.2 percent were individually attending socio-economic programme either in their native place or nearby areas.

- It is palpable that 77.5 percent of the respondents were using all household assets/equipments and others were not using those assets due to restrictions by their family members, 71.7 percent were deciding their children's education and others were deciding the same in consultation with their neighbours, friends and relatives, 55.8 percent were deciding their son/daughter's marriage and others were deciding the similar in consultation with their husband, family members, neighbours, friends and relatives, 60.0 percent were preparing their family budget and others were preparing such budget in consultation with their husband and family members, and 54.2 percent were deciding their family functions and celebrations like common temple festival in their village, their common religious festival, common community functions, etc.
- It is plain that majority (78.3 percent) of the respondents were getting respect from their family members, 75.8 percent were getting respect from their relatives, 72.5 percent were getting respect from other caste and religion people, 63.3 percent were individually attending family functions relatives, 56.7 percent were attending family functions of other caste people, and 52.5 percent were not attending family functions of other religious people due to their non-interest.
- It is understandable that cent percent of the respondents said that they have increased their personal income through dairying, 69.2 percent were having access to their family resources, 69.2 percent were using their family resources productively, 72.5 percent opinioned that they were using their income for their personal purposes (like medical expenditures, purchasing cosmetics, purchasing consumables/eatables, etc), 64.2 percent informed that they were having savings account in banks, particularly in public sector banks, and 53.3 percent said that they were having personal insurance to meet future demands/uncertainties,
- It is clear that economic empowerment positively and significantly influence the social empowerment of the selected respondents at 0.05 percent level, and
- It is marked that cent percent said that they were getting lower price for milk due to increased cost of inputs, 69.2 percent were getting insufficient loans to purchase milch animals and 55.8 percent were getting insufficient fodders. Under the suggestions made by the respondents,

cent percent unanimously said that they want higher price for their milk, 69.2 percent opinioned that they want additional loans to purchase additional milch animals and 55.8 percent want adequate milch animal fodders

6. Major Recommendations

- Both the State government and the dairy development department have to take adequate measures to increase the milk price on par with private dairy companies
- The State government through dairy cooperatives has to create awareness among rural women about dairy cooperatives for their socio-economic development. This process may enhance the enrolment of members and business transactions in PMPCSs. Further, it may promote the rural economy.
- The State government has to ensure that adequate supply of quality milch animal fodders to the milch animals of members of dairy cooperatives
- The State government may provide sufficient loan facilities to the members of dairy cooperatives to purchase additional milch animals to enhance their income

7. Conclusion

Dairy cooperatives play a pivotal role in personal, cultural, social and economical development of people, especially for widow women, and downtrodden, by providing constant employment opportunities in their indoor houses. They have been functioning and working continuously for the personal, family, social and economic empowerment of rural women. Further, it makes them to create free, fair, equal, exploitation free society for people and thereby paves way for continuous rural development in the country.

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