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Microfinance: Driving Empowerment of Women

Prashant Dev Yadav¹ and Anshul Verma²

¹Assistant Professor, ITS Engineering College, Greater Noida, Delhi NCR

²Associate Professor, IMT, Ghaziabad, Delhi NCR

ABSTRACT

The reduction of gap in economic opportunities for men and women in society is linked with enhanced pace of economic development (IMF, 2006). Microfinance reduces the gap by serving women across the world. Economic empowerment of women contributes in gender equality that also found to be positively associated with per capita GDP, human development indicators and the level of competitiveness (World Economic Forum, 2014; Duflo, 2012). United Nations sustainable development goals (SDGs) also consider gender equality crucial for sustainable development. Hence, mainly women are targeted by MFIs and SHGs across the world to provide microfinance.

Empowerment of women refers to improving and increasing the economic, social, political and legal strength of the women. Empowered women acquire the capabilities to improve their economic status and wellbeing in the society.

The present study focuses on the relationship in accessibility of microfinance and empowerment of women. For the purpose, primary data was collected from the microfinance beneficiaries of MFIs and SHGs in Delhi NCR. Data analysis was done through AMOS 18 and relationships are studied with the help of structural equation modeling. The outcomes demonstrate that accessibility of microfinance leads inclusive empowerment of women in terms of economic, social and decision making.

Keywords: Microfinance, Economic Empowerment, Decision making Empowerment, Social Empowerment, SEM JEL classification: Z10, Z13, G21

1. INTRODUCTION

Microfinance is being recognized as an effective tool to raise standard of living and improving quality of life of very poor people (Gaonkar, 2001; Nadarajan & Ponmurugan, 2006; Paul & Woldemicael, 2007; Nasir, 2013). This acknowledgment has facilitated outreach of microfinance in the remote areas as well promoted at global level. Microfinance through SHGs and MFIs has become a ladder for the poor to bring them up not only economically but also morally, socially culturally and in decision making hence microfinance acts as the instrument for empowerment (Yadav & Verma, 2015).

Mamun and Fontaine, (2008), stated that “Microfinance is a logical approach to development because it functions at the grassroots level, can be sustainable, is capable of involving large segments of population, and builds both human and productive capacity”. Microfinance address two forms of capital – human capital through education and vocational training while social capital addressed through building local organizations, promoting democratic systems, creating representative and strengthening human rights also, creates access to productive capital – enables people to move out of poverty. For the very poor, microfinance becomes a liquidity tool to reduce their level of vulnerability and helps smooth their consumption patterns (Otero, 1999).

The world over microfinance oriented development provides a special focus on women. They pose as major clientele. Targeting the women found to be quite logical as reported by World Bank that gender equality is good for everybody. According to World Bank, (2001) Societies that differentiate on the basis of gender cause for greater poverty, weaker governance, slower economic growth, and a lower standard of living. Reports from countries such as South Africa, China, Brazil, India and United Kingdom found the women spend more towards children food and education as they get greater control over resources either through own earnings or cash transfers (World Bank, 2011). Women become change agent in society when they get empowered economically, socially and politically (Beaman et al., 2011).

Microfinance has also been recognized as an important tool to bring poor in mainstream of financial services across the world and proved its worth in credit disbursement, repayment of loan and reduction of poverty. As it has been suggested and experienced by practitioner across the world that poor need hassle free and repetitive credit which has become the hallmark of microfinance. A number of countries like Bangladesh, Indonesia, Philippines, Kenya and Bolivia have employed microfinance program with encouraging results (Singh, 2012). Microfinance reduces overall vulnerability of the beneficiaries along with economic security. Microfinance contributes in both gender and development strategies due to its capability of reducing poverty and empowering women (Johanson & Rogaly, 1997).

The usefulness of Microfinance in women empowerment has attracted the interest of several researchers from India as well as abroad. It is a fact that, lot of work has been done in southern and rural part of India. It is also seen that most of this work is based on SHG linkages and its impact on poor people. However, very little literature is available in context to urban area i.e. Delhi NCR through MFIs and SHGs. This study is an endeavor to bridge the aforementioned gap. In addition, the how women are being empowered through microfinance in urban and semi-urban areas is an important point to ponder. Thus the study aimed to provide useful information regarding the following objectives.

1. To measure the significance of microfinance accessibility in economic empowerment of women.
2. To examine the effect of accessibility of microfinance in social empowerment of women.
3. To measure the association of accessibility of microfinance with decision making empowerment of women.

Microfinance and empowerment of women : Over the past decade, microfinance has been considered as magic bullet for many problems across the world to growth through women empowerment and a great extent of time has been devoted by researchers to understand the role of microfinance in these issues. Reports by the several researchers range from journalistic, anecdotal, village level ethnographies to professionally run large scale impact assessments at national and international level and rigorous methodologies have been employed to define and opine about the role (Sinha, 2005). Although opinions have been divided on impact among who see it as magic bullet and who reject its contribution (Basu & Srivastava, 2005; Kabeer, 2005; Lakwo, 2006; Mahmud , 2006; Wrigley-Asante, 2011). Hence contribution of microfinance is often contested on economic and other fronts.

However, evidence favors microfinance in general, where it has positive impact on beneficiaries in form of their increased income and reduction in vulnerability, although effects are small and not benefitted all women equally (Mayoux, 1995b; 1997). The role of microfinance has been favored by several researchers and at the other end it also attracted criticism by many.

Although, the role of financial inclusion through SHGs and MFIs in empowering women, growth has become most appealing enquiry among academicians, policy makers, development theoreticians and activists of Non Government Organizations. As the growth of SHGs and MFIs are phenomenal not only in India but also in most of the developing countries, the literature on SHGs, MFIs and their contribution either in growth, inclusive empowerment of women is copious.

Evidence from other Countries : According to the report of United Nations Capital Development Fund, (2005) that focuses on the role of microfinance is encouraging equality between financial power, poverty and women. Economically strengthen women are more capable to improve other areas of their and their children's lives. A report by Littlefield et al., (2003) also emphasizes that because microfinance programs have commonly make financial services accessible to women that facilitate them to be more assertive, confident, and encourage them to be participative in family and community decisions, and find in better position to deal with systemic gender inequities. This has also been reported that women are in the process of empowering themselves with respect to the control of resources, changes in behaviour and decision-making.

In the same line there are several studies asserts that microfinance has become extremely significant in improving the economic and social welfare of the beneficiaries (Hossain, 1988; Remy & Benjamin, 2000; Otero & Rhyne, 1994; Khandker, 1998). The study by Mosley, (2001) describe that the microfinance achievements in lowering the poverty in Bolivia, Bangladesh and Indonesia was extremely notable and served plausibly large number of poor (not the vulnerable poor or extreme poverty). The involvement of households in microfinance programme makes positive impacts on beneficiary income, production, and employment, especially in the rural non-farm sector. In the line studies by (Hashemi *et al.*, 1996; Goetz & Gupta 1996; Schuler & Hashemi, 1994) demonstrated that participation of beneficiaries in microfinance programme made statistically significant impact on various aspects of women empowerment i.e. intra-household decision making, use of contraceptive.

Hulme and Mosely (1996) explained on the basis of comprehensive study that well-designed microfinance programs are capable in increasing the income to bring out poor from the poverty. Microfinance programs are capable to address economic as well as social poverty through the credit and non-credit services. This differentiate microfinance program from credit to "credit plus services" (Edgcomb & Barton; 1998; Zohir *et al.*, 2001) explains that they offer services (such as savings, insurance, health services, adult literacy) or

training that move ahead to financial services. However, the effects of microfinance differ from individual to individual due to different backgrounds and their productive activities. Sometimes, poor women are not able to get benefit of the microfinance program due to lack of skills, contacts and resources whereas already better-off women reap the benefits. (Mayoux, 1997)

Evidences from India : The achievements of Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) like that MYRADA (Mysore Resettlement and Development Agency) established in 1968 in Karnataka, SEWA (Self Employed Women's Association) established in 1972 in Gujrat, persuaded the government to change its stance in strategy of development and empowerment of women in the country. Pioneering efforts in group-lending of these success stories paved the ways for several other such kinds of institution which established later. Meanwhile Government of India also initiated programmes like RMK (Rashtriya Mahila Kosh), SJSRY (Swarna Jayanti Shahari Swarojgar Yojana), and SGSY (Swarnjayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana) to reach poor. Further linkage of Self Help Groups with banks has been revolutionary for financial inclusion. The cooperation between banking institutions and MFIs has also been encouraging. Microfinance has emerged as an effective tool for women empowerment and eradicating poverty. Microfinance can be described as access of small loans without physical collateral to the poor, especially to women, while encouraging them to save regularly in order to combine thrift and self-help for their own development (Porkodi and Aravazhi, 2013; Rajeswari, 2011).

Puhazhendhi and Satyasai, (2000) examined the effect of joining SHGs in their study commissioned by NABARD. This study approached 560 sample households from 223 SHGs stretched over 11 states across India. For the purpose, an index was calculated by employing scoring technique to measure economic and social empowerment in pre and post SHG membership situation. The outcomes of this study were impressive. Income registered average growth of 33 percent after joining SHG. 40 percent income came through non-farm activities. 17 percent growth was registered in employment of the households. Beneficiaries had taken 200 additional economic activities by employing 85 percent fund for productive purposes. Beneficiaries were also empowered socially in terms of self-confidence, better communication, participation in decision making. The share families below poverty line had been reduced by 20 percent in post SHG situation.

Parmanik and Lavoori, (2014) conducted research in Andhra Pradesh to find out the impact of microfinance programme on the lives of poor. The study reported that the income of beneficiaries and their husband, size of family and frequency of self help groups had positive effect on women empowerment. the study also reported positive impact of microfinance on income, loan amount, age and income of SHG beneficiaries, their household income. Microfinance contributed in transforming the life style of women.

Chatterjee, (2014) studied contribution of self help groups in empowerment of women in West Bengal. SHG facilitated to make a group of women voluntarily that emerged as saver-cum-borrower. The study reported positive change in economic condition of women. Their income had increased and as an outcome also had positive impact over expenses on consumption in education and general, health, social and familial status of beneficiaries.

Kaur, (2015) evaluated the impact of access of finance through SHGs on women in Patiala, Punjab. The study reported tremendous effect on women at grass root level in form of improved decision making by 80 percent beneficiaries, 92 percent reported improvement in self-confidence, improvement in economic status by 86 percent, betterment in quality of life by 60 percent and delegation in social activities by 58 percent. Self help groups become extremely important to provide affordable financial services and entrepreneurial approach to women as well. The study also reported financial issues with beneficiaries lead small effect on quality of life.

The most of the studies revealed that microfinance is a powerful tool for empowering women. This facilitates women to take their part in to the economic activities through making decision regarding starting microenterprises, spending on children education, spending on health needs. Microfinance further helps in reduction of gender inequality, improvement in the status of the women in family, social betterment and give courage to take risk. Few studies contradict the success of microfinance in reduction level of poverty, ability to reach lower income individuals, productive use of group loans and utilization of loans by women. The review of literature provides insights in both positive and negative aspects of microfinance. In India, the south and central region had most of the studies. There is a dearth of research in to central and northern part of India. There is hardly any study in the area of Delhi and NCR. Therefore, the present study is an endeavourer to bridge the existing gap.

Therefore the researchers proceeded with their hypotheses to be:

H1: Accessibility of microfinance has significant positive relationship with economic empowerment of women.

H2: Social empowerment of women and microfinance are positively associated.

H3: Decision empowerment of women is significantly affected by accessibility of microfinance.

2. METHODOLOGY

An empirical design is being employed for the study, wherein, primary responses were collected through a self-administered structured questionnaire from the beneficiaries of microfinance. 24 items were generated to capture various dimensions of women empowerment and accessibility of microfinance. A 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree) was used to gather the responses. A preliminary study was carried out with 85 microfinance beneficiaries to pre-evaluate the questionnaire. The items with high standard deviation (>3) and low correlation were dropped to further purify the scale.

Scale was reduced to 20 items after all reductions. The Cronbach alpha for remaining 20 items satisfied the criteria of .70 (Nunnally, 1978).

For present study stratified random sampling was adopted. The sample size of 505 was determined for main study.

The 20 items to examine the effect of accessibility of microfinance in empowering women were subjected to Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). EFA facilitates multivariate analysis through data reduction by identifying representative variables from a larger set of variables (Hair et al., 2006). The value of Bartlett tests of sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) tests of sampling adequacy (Hair et al., 1998) were observed and provides evidence about correlation matrix under study has significant correlation among items, the value of .826 of KMO was good. Furthermore, the data was reduced by the following three methods; (i) anti-image correlation (items reduced iteratively based on value <.5); (ii) communalities (taken at .5) and (iii) rotated component matrix to remove cross loading items at .4 and above.

The initial matrix from principal component analysis demonstrated that four factors explained 73 percent variance, greater than the 60 percent threshold (Malhotra, 1999),

Further moving to apply various tools such as confirmatory factor analysis and structural modeling, the internal consistency reliability, item reliability and construct reliability have been measured (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 1998) and established. The AVE (<.5) composite reliability (0.70) and Reliability (<.60) have completed the criteria. Hence, outcomes suggest further processing of data with the same factors.

Further, CFA was conducted to confirm the construct. For the present study the convergent reliability has been established as all three criteria are achieved i) Composite Reliability (CR) should be greater than 0.7, ii) Composite Reliability (CR) should be greater than Average Variance Extracted (CR > AVE) iii) Average Variance Extracted (AVE) should be greater than 0.5 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Gerbing & Anderson, 1988).

To ascertain the discriminant validity the value of inter – construct correlation and square root of average extracted variance are compared. The value of square root of average variance extracted should be greater than the value of inter-construct correlation (Bhattacharjee & Premkumar, 2004; Wixom & Todd, 2005).

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to further analysis of data and hypothesis testing. The study finally left with 12 items with 4 dimensions of accessibility of microfinance, economic empowerment of women, decision making empowerment of women and social empowerment of women.

The study was conducted in Delhi NCR in India. The sample of this research comprises microfinance beneficiaries from different selected microfinance institutions and self help groups in NCR, India. Respondent belongs to microfinance institutions and self help groups, different backgrounds, differs in education, skill set, social setting, cast, creed and ages. Potential respondents were contacted directly after having permission from microfinance institution’s branch of a particular institution and block office for self help group in NCR. This study emphasizes only on who are active members of self help group and microfinance institution as they frequently interact with other beneficiaries, and have a good knowledge of other group members, policy practices within group, and have more holistic view of the situation as a whole.

Respondents had been visited on regular basis until 505 completed valid questionnaires were collected; this shows an effective survey responses rate of greater than 90 percent.

Final scale to measure empowerment of women through accessibility of microfinance : The final scale for measuring inclusive growth through microfinance consisted of the following items. Thus, outcomes of confirmatory factor analysis and validation of measurement model suggests that the extracted factors are ready for further analysis of data through structural equation modeling.

Table 15.1
Scale to measure empowerment of women

1.	Cost of product	Accessibility of Microfinance (ACMF)
2.	Terms and conditions	
3.	Simple and convenient process of delivery	
1.	Increase in income	Economic Empowerment of Women (EEW)
2.	Increase in the savings	
3.	Reduced dependence on money lenders	
1.	Say in small purchasing	Decision Making Empowerment of Women (DMEW)
2.	Say in large purchasing	
3.	Able to make financial decisions	
1.	Started moving independently to work	Social Empowerment of Women (SEW)
2.	Expressing views more freely and independently in the family	
3.	Ability has increased to discuss with bankers/ NGOs /Government officers.	

Structural Model

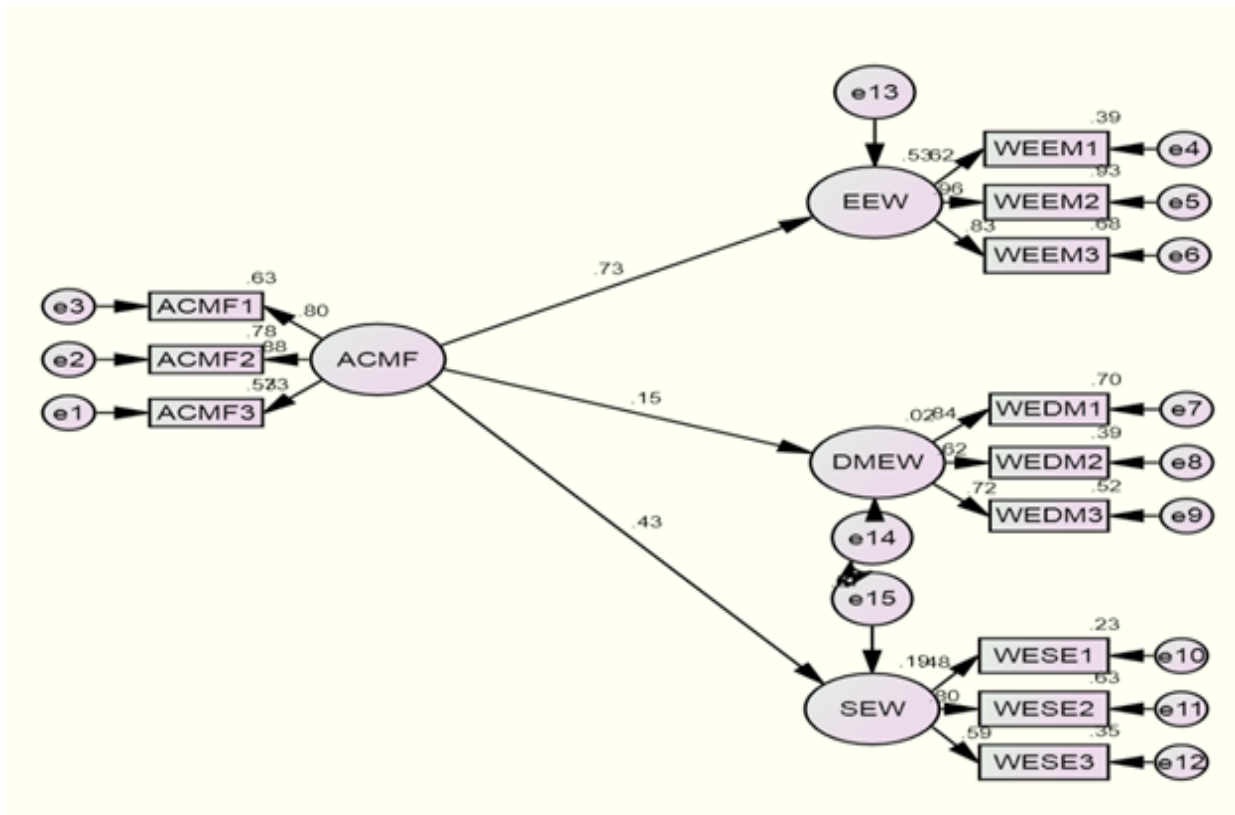


Figure 15.1: Structural model of accessibility of microfinance and women empowerment

Examining the Model Fit Indices : Hair et al., (2010) and Hu & Bentler, (1999) suggested goodness of fit measures with threshold values Chi-square/df (<3 to 5), Goodness of fit (GFI =.9), Normed fit index (NFI=.9) and Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA <.08).In line with the mentioned threshold values for the test statistics, outcomes indicated fit for the structural model. As test values are showing model fit outcomes with regard to chi-square (CMIN/DF=4.238) the goodness of fit index (GFI=.934), the comparative fit index (CFI=.939), and Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA=.080) in line.

Examination of Significance of Paths and standardized regression weights : The analysis results can be observed from Table 2 that all paths are significant in model demonstrating the significant relationship between accessibility of microfinance and economic, social and decision making empowerment of women.

Table 15.2
Structural model output - Regression Weights (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
EEW	<---	ACMF	.484	.043	11.195	***	par_9
DMEW	<---	ACMF	.163	.056	2.905	.004	par_10
SEW	<---	ACMF	.198	.031	6.287	***	par_11

Table 15.3
Standardized regression weights

EEW	<---	ACMF	.726
DMEW	<---	ACMF	.154
SEW	<---	ACMF	.431

The degree of change in dependent variable for each one unit change in the variable predicting for it has been explained by each standardized regression coefficient. As it can be noticed from the table value that when ACMF (accessibility of microfinance) goes up by 1 standard deviation, SEW (social empowerment of women) goes up by .431, EEW (economic empowerment of women) goes up by .726, and DMEW (decision making empowerment) goes up by .154 standard deviation.

Testing significance of relationship between accessibility of microfinance and women empowerment : Outcomes in the further paragraphs are clearly indicating that accessibility of microfinance has positive contribution towards empowerment of women. These findings are similar to noticeable works by various researchers such as Kabeer, 2005; Wringley Asante, 2011; Mayoux, 1995, 1997; Littlefield, 2003; Hashemi et al., 1996; Khandker, 1998.

Testing H₁: Accessibility of microfinance has significant positive relationship with economic empowerment of women : The analysis demonstrated that that the first hypothesis related to significant positive relationship between accessibility of microfinance and economic empowerment of women is accepted ($\beta = .726, p = ***$). This is in line with the findings of (Dunn & Arbuckle, 2001; Develtere & Huybrechts, 2002) who reported significant impact in life of women in terms of increase in income, employment generation.

Testing H₂: Accessibility of microfinance has significant positive relationship with decision making empowerment of women : The outcomes indicated that availability of microfinance has contributed positively towards the increase in the role of decision making of women in the family. Thus hypothesis related to significant positive relationship of women empowerment in decision making is accepted at .05 level of significance ($\beta = .154, p = .004$). This outcome is similar to the work of (Sharma, 2007; Cheston & Kuhn 2002; Khandker, 2005; Kato & Kratzer, 2013). They reported women empowerment in terms of decision making, increased participation in household decision making, and their role in financial matters.

Testing H₃: Social empowerment of women is significantly affected by accessibility of microfinance : Microfinance is not only contributing economically but also contributing in their social uplift of beneficiaries. The results also demonstrated the significant contribution in social empowerment of women. Hence the hypothesis related to accessibility of microfinance significant relationship with social empowerment is accepted ($\beta = .431, p = ***$). This finding is similar to (Todd 1996; Paul & Woldemicael, 2007; Barinaga, 2013). They reported that microfinance facilitating women to make them more socially active and empowered.

3. DISCUSSION

Measuring Effect of Accessibility of Microfinance on Women Empowerment : In India, about 48 percent of the total population consist women (Census, 2011), that comprises about 31 percent women in labour force. It is, therefore, the role of microfinance become important because microfinance institutions

prefer women to extend their financial services (NABARD, MFIN, 2015). The involvement of women through microfinance is facilitating their participation in income generation activities that further considered as an instrument of empowering women in to various spheres i.e., economic, social, decision making. It has been recognized as a model of self-sustenance, not looking for subsidy and financial help from 'elsewhere'. The microfinance programs launched in the early 90s accompanied noiseless revolution for the empowerment of women. Women become recipients of various kinds of benefits in form of increase in income and employment and participation also led the change in social status, role, and awareness, household level, improvements in health behavior, and attitudinal change in education (Jayaraman, 2005).

Economic Empowerment of Women : Economic empowerment of women considered as an important goal of microfinance providers. Empowerment of women in economic terms can be defined as a state where the beneficiaries of microfinance programs are capable to provide reasonable opportunities for income generation through group or individual activities to fulfill their basic needs (Jayaraman, 2005). Pokhriyal et al., (2014) reported the significant positive impact of microfinance on economic empowerment of women.

Microfinance has developed its edge in transforming lives of women, their families and their communities at large. Microfinance has established much more than an instrument for them as economic empowerment of women is the pre-requisite for pro-poor growth and to achieve millennium development goals (DAC Network, 2011). According to Muhammad Yunus, founder of Grammen Bank, "Women have plans for themselves, for their children, for their home and the meals. They have a vision, "A man wants to enjoy himself" (<http://www.soc.titech.ac.jp/icm/wind/wind.html>).

Opportunities for women can be enlarged by training them in various kinds of income generation activities and support in terms of marketing, research and development and technology development. In the present study, women found to be involved in regular practice of savings, their income has increased and they were no more dependent on moneylenders for getting credit to start income generating activities and other needs. This means, relief from exploitation in terms of higher rate of interest and unclear terms and conditions of the moneylenders. Outcomes related to increase in income of women could be attributed towards enhancement their capacity for further use in other income generation activities. While increase in savings could be attributed towards enhanced shock absorbing capacity of the women.

Thus, it can be concluded that microfinance is facilitating towards overall growth of women through economic empowerment of women.

Social Empowerment of Women : Social empowerment of women facilitates to acquire power and strength not only through plans or programs but through a process of regular practice, close interaction and concentrated unity to achieve certain task. Social empowerment of women is positively related to accessibility of microfinance. Social empowerment has led confidence in women to move out for their work, putting their point of view strongly in front of the bankers, NGOs and can discuss their related issues as well able to express their views in the family more generously. The finding is in line with number of other studies (Nirmala & Yephthomi, 2014; Chatterjee, 2014; Hans, 2006; Hossain, 1988; Remeny & Benjamin, 2000; Otero & Rhyne, 1994; Khandker, 1998) reported a significance impact over social welfare of women. This clearly indicates the trend of social empowerment by availability of credit in various states of India and even in other countries where microfinance is in practice.

Thus, it can be concluded that microfinance is helping to bring social change among women where they are moving out from their conventional stereo type and assuring more independence and better place in society for themselves. This kind of change could be attributed to independent movement of women, their discussion with bankers/ NGOs. One of the important achievements of microfinance is their emergence as a tool for raising the voice for issues within the family.

Decision Making Empowerment of Women : The analysis showed the positive significant relationship of accessibility of microfinance with decision making empowerment of women. This is in line with the findings of (Hashemi *et al.*, 1996; Schuler & Hashemi, 1994; World Relief Rwanda, 1999; Mula & Sarker, 2013; Sujatha *et al.*, 2015) reported statistically significant impact on decision making of women.

Although, decision making empowerment is the least affected dimension of women empowerment in comparison to economic and social. This may happen because of women still are not free to make decisions by their own as reported by Scoggins, (1999) that apart from the empowerment still women consult before making decisions on important issues with their husbands (i.e. use of loans). The default was rare as responsibility of loan repayment was felt by husbands. In the similar lines, Garikipati, (2012) explains that microcredit facilitates in enhancing male ownership of the household's productive assets, thus supports in moving away husbands from wage work (associated with low wages and status) to self-employment. In case of women's time use, little impact was found. Thus, decisions related to loan access, autonomy in working have to be supported by women and their control over loan-created assets to have an impact on empowering women. Whereas some researchers reported that loans acquired by women often controlled by their husbands, making women dependent for loan repayment and domestic discord (Goetz & Gupta, 2006; Rahman, 1999).

Domestic harmony is the most affected area by decision making and this also reveals the status enjoyed by the women in the family. The contacted beneficiaries clearly indicated their role in purchase related decision making and most importantly women became confident in dealing even with the financial matters. This means, husbands are no more only decision makers in the family, women are also participating. Thus, it can be concluded that decision making of empowerment is being ensured by the women through participation in terms of decision making in small, large purchase and ability to participate in financial decision making.

Managerial and Practical Implications : This study provides various practical implications that are described in detail such as how microfinance is leading economic empowerment of women, social empowerment of women and decision making empowerment of women while the other suggestions like difference of women empowerment among SHGs and MFIs by facts in the study has been related to the possible changes or suggestive improvements from the practitioners point of view. For all the aspects such as number of years with SHG/MFI effect on empowerment, practical angles have been explored so that theory is supported by possible practical improvements, thus, can be useful for various agencies and development institutions.

Further, as discussed (Holvoet, 2005) that if loans channelized through women's group rather than direct credit to individual, significant changes were observed in the life of women in form of major shift in bargaining power of female and longer duration made larger benefits especially when genuine social intermediation had been emphasized. Social group intermediation had further steadily transformed groups into actors of local institutional change. Thus, MFIs and SHGs may look forward to enhance greater participation in social interaction along with financial services for women group to have greater social

development. To continue progress towards development, institutions required to focus retaining of groups for longer duration. It can be achieved through training for skill development and entrepreneurship, workshops for various social and economic issues. Also, efforts should be done to inclusion of widow and separated women the mainstream.

Government and other national development institutions to promote the comprehensive eco system for empowerment, the efforts of microfinance institutions can be incentivized based on their role in social improvement in the lives of women at individual level and society at large.

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