



IMPACT OF MAHILA SAMAKHYA PROGRAMME FOR THE EMPOWERMENT OF SCHEDULED CASTE WOMEN IN KERALA

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Abstract

The development of the country is possible only through the development of women folk. Women of our country face a lot of issues that need immediate consideration. It has been observed that social, economic and political status of women particularly Scheduled Caste women in Kerala is very low. Various empowerment strategies are implemented for the upliftment of women especially of the disadvantaged sections of the society. This study assesses the impact of Mahila Samakhya for the empowerment of Scheduled Caste women in Kerala. The present study is an attempt to investigate how decision-making ability, educational background, socio-economic conditions, social awareness, self-confidence, self-esteem, leadership qualities are in a way to achieve the goals of women's empowerment. The researcher undertook the study to explore the impact of Mahila Samakhya programme upon the Scheduled Caste and general beneficiaries of the programme concerned. Impact has been measured by comparing the participants of the programme among Scheduled Caste and general categories. Women empowerment was measured by nine dimensions of empowerment i.e. Household decision making, Self-confidence, Education, self-esteem, Health awareness, Political Decision Making, Economic decision making, Legal awareness and Leadership. The present study also discusses the limitations of the existing functioning of the programme as well. The study dealt with the challenges and prospects of the Mahila Samakhya Programme. On the basis of the findings of the study some suggestions have been given to improve the effectiveness and to remove various problems associated with the design and implementation of the programme concerned.



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Introduction

Education has a major role in fostering higher social participation among individuals in the society. It helps to develop a sense of motivation to attain maximum coveted goal. Hence education has been recognized as an essential impetus for social change and development in any society. As such the harmonious development of the society without providing education to women is not possible. As it has been rightly believed that to Educate a woman is to educate

the whole family. The status of women is affected by the level of their education. As the quality of female education increases, it improves the status of women and has larger impact on demographic behaviour. A mother's education level has a very strong and positive impact on morality and upbringing of her off springs. The decision-making powers of women as a category nowhere hold formal power, publicity, or recognized authority equivalent to that held by men. Women's formal power also varies by class, culture, race, religious and national status, but it is always less than that of men in the same position. The status of women in complex society like ours is not uniform. Scheduled Caste women who constitute sizeable population of India is subjected not merely to gender bias, but also to indignities arising out of the age-old tradition of untouchability, marginalization and exploitations from which incidentally the entire social group of Scheduled Cates suffer. The empowerment approach arises from a strong commitment to women's rights and capacity to make their own decisions about development strategies. Women's educational empowerment is absolutely essential for realizing their status in society.

The Mahila Samakhya Programme was launched in 1988 in pursuance of the goals of the new education policy (1986) and the Programme of Action as a concrete programme for the education and empowerment of women in rural areas particularly of women from socially and economically marginalized groups. Mahila Samakhya views literacy as one of the skills which will help women empower themselves. The critical focus in Mahila Samakhya is recognizing the centrality of education in empowering women to achieve equality. Mahila Samakhya (women's empowerment) 'presupposes that education can be an effective intervention in the process towards women equality'.

Education in Mahila Samakhya is understood not merely acquiring basic literacy skills but as a process of learning to question, critically analyzing issues and problems and seeking solutions. It endeavours to create an environment for women to learn at their own pace, set their own priorities and knowledge and information to make informed choices. It seeks to bring about change in women's perception about themselves and the perception of society with regard to women's "traditional roles". Mahila Samakhya addresses itself to enabling a greater access to educate for women, adolescent girls, generating a demand for education and builds capacities and strengthens women's abilities to effectively participate in village level educational process.

Key terms

Impact

According to Illustrated Oxford Advanced Dictionary impact is the strong impression or effect. In the present study impact is the effect of the Mahila Samakhya programmes implemented for the well-being of women in the project area.

Scheduled Caste

Scheduled Caste constituted as a protected class, apart from any conditions of backwardness, as specified in Article 15(4) state is entitled to do everything for the fulfillment of members of these caste and tribes, to make reservations for their admission to educational institutions and impose such conditions as would make the reservation effective. It follows that the government may make relaxation of the rules for admission of such institution or for selecting to government employment. Say by lowering the minimum qualifying marks or other conditions; or by offering them two avenues for promotion in place of one for the rest of the people: or reservation of selected posts for them. A Scheduled Caste is not a caste within the meaning of that word in art.15(1) and 16(2) it has special meaning, namely a caste as notified by the president under article 366(25), -having regard to their abysmal backwardness.

Empowerment

Dictionary meaning of the term empowerment is to give power, to give them capacity to perform some physical or mental activities to delegate authority, to give legal rights, to enable, to entitle, to endow (invest with powers). “Empowerment” means the restoration to individuals of a sense of their own value and strength and their own capacity to handle life’s problems.

Empowerment of women

Women’s empowerment is a state of determination to use one’s physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual resources to protect, nurture and sustain values that guaranties gender equity at personal, household, social, political and other institutional levels.

Objectives

1. To study the educational empowerment programmes implemented by the Central and state Government for the empowerment of scheduled caste women.
2. To study the structure and functioning of Mahila Samakhya programmes in empowering Scheduled Caste women.
3. To assess the role of Mahila Samakhya programme of Government of India in empowering scheduled caste women in Kerala.
4. To assess the participation of scheduled caste women in Mahila Samakhya programme .

5. To study the impact of Mahila Samakhya programme in the socio- economic status of the scheduled caste women.

6. To find out the impact of Mahila Samakhya programme on the empowerment of scheduled caste women based on the following empowerment dimensions.

- Household decision making
- Self confidence
- Education
- Self esteem
- Health awareness
- Political decision making
- Economic decision making
- Legal awareness
- Leadership

7. To find out the impact of Mahila Samakhya programme on the overall empowerment of scheduled caste women.

Methodology

Normative survey method was used for the present study. Considering the different aspects of the study stratified random sampling method was used. Women aged fifteen years and above and are the beneficiaries of the programmes Mahila Samakhya (Scheduled Caste and General Categories) were taken as the population. The sample consists of 159 Scheduled Caste beneficiaries and 166 General beneficiaries and the total sample size was 974. The sample were collected from the empowerment programme implemented area that is, from Chirayankeezhu (Trivandrum) Districts of Kerala. Due representation was given to the demographic variables selected for the study. To collect the required data from the beneficiaries of the programme various tools were used in the present study. The tools used for the study were the interview schedule, socio-economic status scale, and women empowerment scale. The tools used for the study were constructed and standardised by the investigator with the support of research guide. The data collected is consolidated and tabulated using appropriate statistical techniques and subjected to analysis. The statistical techniques used are t-test, Analysis of variance, and Scheffe's F test.

Variables of the Study

A variable is the characteristic or attribute of an individual, group, educational system, or the environment that is of interest in a research study. The variables of the study are selected as Mahila Samakhya and Empowerment of Women. Among this Mahila Samakhya is taken as independent variables and empowerment of women is taken as dependent variable.

Sample Selected for the Study

In the present study in order to obtain a sample representative of its population, random sampling technique has been employed. Random sampling is a technique in which every single unit of the population has an equal chance of being selected.

The sample consists of Scheduled Caste and General women beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya were included.

In Kerala, the empowerment strategy Mahila Samakhya is implemented in the districts Thiruvananthapuram, Idukki, Malappuram, Wayanad, Palakkad and Kasargod. From these six districts, Thiruvananthapuram (Chirayankeezhu) was selected for the present study.

The beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya, are classified in to two categories, Scheduled Caste and General category of women. Sample is selected by using the random sampling technique from these categories. The break-up of the sample is presented in following table.

Table 1 Break-Up of the Sample Selected for the Study

Empowering strategy	Details of Beneficiaries			
	Scheduled caste		General	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Mahila Samakhya	159	33.26	166	33.47

Tools Used for the Study

The tools used in the study are;

1. Personal Data Sheet
2. Interview schedule
3. Socio-Economic Status Scale
4. Women Empowerment Scale

Statistical Techniques Used

The main objective of the study was to find out the effectiveness Mahila Samakhya, for the empowerment of women. For the purpose of analysing the data, t-test for testing the group difference, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Scheffe's were used in the present study.

Findings of the study

Impact of Selected Strategic Efforts on the Socio-Economic Status of Scheduled Caste Women

Table 2 Distribution of beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya to the level of their socio – economic status

Sl.No.	Level of socio-economic status	Number and percentage of beneficiaries (SC)		Number and percentage of beneficiaries (General)	
		No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage
1.	Lower	-	-	-	-
2.	Lower Middle	140	88.05	143	86.14
3.	Middle	12	7.55	13	7.83
4.	Upper Middle	4	2.52	6	3.61
5.	Upper	3	1.89	4	2.41

The table gives a clear picture of the socio – economic status of the members of the Scheduled Caste and general population who are the beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya. It is seen that a very marginal percentage of members belongs to the middle, upper middle and upper categories. Majority of Scheduled Caste (140 & 88.05%) and general populations (143 & 86.14%) who are the beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya belongs to the lower middle category on the basis of their Socio – Economic Status.

Table 3 Result of Test of significance of difference between mean scores of Socio – Economic Status of Scheduled Caste and General Beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya.

Groups	N	Mean	SD	t	Sig.
SC	159	6.31	1.98		
				0.68	P>.05
General	166	6.49	2.57		

From the table it is clear that the obtained t value is not significant at .05 level of significant. It inferred that there exists no significant difference in the mean scores of socio – economic status of Scheduled Caste and general population of beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya programme. Hence it can be concluded that the mean scores of socio – economic status of scheduled caste and general beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya are equal.

The mean scores of socio-economic status of Scheduled Caste beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya were compared using one-way ANOVA and the summary of result is given in following table.

Table 4 Mean and standard deviation of Socio – Economic Status of Scheduled Caste beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya

Empowerment programme	N	Mean	SD
Mahila Samakhya	159	6.31	1.98

Mean and standard deviation of Socio – Economic Status of general beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya

Empowerment programme	N	Mean	SD
Mahila Samakhya	166	6.49	2.57

Impact of Mahila Samakhya on the Empowerment of Scheduled Caste Women Based on Different Empowerment Dimensions

In this section the investigator compared the empowerment of Schedule Caste women with the general category women as well as the empowerment of both the categories on empowerment programme. Comparison is done for the whole empowerment and its components separately for the programmes Mahila Samakhya.

The empowerment dimensions considered for the study are (1) household decision making, (2) self-confidence, (3) education, (4) self-esteem, (5) health awareness, (6) political decision making, (7) economic decision making, (8) legal awareness and (9) leadership. The nine dimensions of women empowerment and the whole empowerment of Scheduled Caste members are compared with that of general category women. The result of the comparison is presented in following tables.

Household Decision Making

Test of significance of difference between the mean scores of general and Scheduled Caste respondents with respect to household decision making for the programme Mahila Samakhya is presented in the following table.

Table 5 Test of significance of Difference between the mean scores of respondents with respect to household decision making of the programme Mahila Samakhya

Group	Number	Mean	SD	t	Significance
General	166	13.44	1.63	2.630	P<0.01
Scheduled Caste	159	13.90	1.52		

Table reveals that Scheduled Caste women have a mean score of 13.90 with a standard deviation of 1.52, whereas the members of the general categories have the mean score of 13.44 with the standard deviation 1.63. The household decision making is higher for Scheduled Caste (13.90) than general (13.44). The t value obtained for the difference of mean score is 2.630. It is greater than the value for significance at 0.05 levels, which is 1.96. Hence the difference between the mean scores of empowerments of Scheduled Caste and general population are significant at 0.01 level of significance. It indicates that there exists significant difference between Scheduled Caste and general members of Mahila Samakhya programme with respect to their house hold decision making. It is important to note that the household decision making is higher for Scheduled Caste than general population.

Table 6 Test of significance of difference between the mean scores of respondents with respect to self-confidence of the programme Mahila Samakhya

Group	Number	Mean	SD	t	Significance
General	166	16.19	2.55		
Scheduled Caste	159	15.55	2.47	2.316	P<0.05

The table reveals that Scheduled Caste women have a mean score of 15.55 with a standard deviation of 2.47, whereas the members of the general categories having 16.19 as the mean score and the standard deviation shows 2.55. It implies that the self confidence is higher for general (16.19) than Scheduled Caste women (15.55). The critical ratio obtained for the difference of mean score is 2.316. Hence the difference between the mean scores of self-confidence empowerment of Scheduled Caste and general population are significant at 0.05 levels. It indicates that there exists significant difference between Scheduled Caste and general members of Mahila Samakhya with respect to their self confidence level. It is noted that respondents among the general population are showing more self-confidence rather than the Scheduled Caste beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya.

Education

Test of significance of difference between mean scores of general and scheduled caste beneficiaries with respect to education-based empowerment of the programme Mahila Samakhya is presented in table mentioned below.

Table 7 Test of Significance of Difference between the Mean Scores of Respondents With respect to Education based empowerment for the Programme Mahila Samakhya

Group	Number	Mean	SD	t	Significance
General	166	11.65	1.56		
Scheduled Caste	159	13.37	2.03	8.524	P<0.01

The table reveals that Scheduled Caste women have a mean score of 13.37 with a standard deviation of 2.03, whereas the members of the general categories having 11.65 as the mean score and the standard deviation shows 1.56. It implies that the education-based empowerment of the beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya is higher for Scheduled Caste (13.37) than general beneficiaries (11.65). The critical ratio obtained for the difference of mean score is 8.524. It is greater than the value for significance at 0.01 levels. Hence the difference between the means scores of education-based empowerments of the beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya between Scheduled Caste and general population is statistically significant at 0.01 levels. It indicates that there exist significant difference of Scheduled Caste and general beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya with regard to their education-based empowerment. It is identified that education-based empowerment among scheduled caste respondents are higher than that of the general respondents.

Self Esteem

Test of significance of difference between mean scores of general and Scheduled Caste categories with respect to self-esteem for the programme Mahila Samakhya is presented in table mentioned below.

Table 8 Test of Significance of Difference between the Mean Scores of Respondents With respect to Self Esteem of the programme Mahila Samakhya

Group	Number	Mean	SD	T	Significance
General	166	17.21	1.19		
Scheduled Caste	159	17.61	0.83	3.505	P<0.01

The table reveals that Scheduled Caste women have a mean score of 17.61 with a standard deviation of 0.83, whereas the members of the general beneficiaries having 17.21 as the mean score and the standard deviation 1.19. The critical ratio obtained for the difference of mean score is 3.505. Hence the difference between the means scores of self-esteem-based empowerments of Scheduled Caste and general population of Mahila Samakhya is significant

at 0.05 levels. It indicates that there exists significant difference of Scheduled Caste and general beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya with regard to their self-esteem. It is noted that respondents among the scheduled caste population are showing more self-esteem-based empowerment than the general population.

Health Awareness

Test of significance of difference between mean scores of general and Scheduled Caste beneficiaries with respect to health awareness for the programme Mahila Samakhya is presented in table.

Table 9 Test of Significance of Difference between the Mean Scores of Respondents with Respect to Health Awareness for the programme Mahila Samakhya

Group	Number	Mean	SD	t	Significance
General	166	14.57	.92	2.738	P<0.01
Scheduled Caste	159	15.03	1.97		

The table reveals that Scheduled Caste women have a mean score of 15.03 with a standard deviation of 1.97, whereas the beneficiaries of the general categories having 14.57 as the mean score and the standard deviation shows .92. The critical ratio obtained for the difference of mean score is 2.738. Hence the difference between the means scores of health awareness of Scheduled Caste and general beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya are significant at 0.05 levels. It indicates that there exists significant difference of Scheduled Caste and general beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya with respect to their health awareness. It is identified that respondents among the scheduled caste beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya are showing more health awareness than general beneficiaries.

Political Decision Making

Test of significance of difference between mean scores of general and Scheduled Caste categories with respect to political decision making for the programme Mahila Samakhya is presented in table.

Table 10 Test of Significance of Difference between the Mean Scores of Respondents With respect to Political Decision making among the beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya

Group	Number	Mean	SD	t	Significance
General	166	13.13	1.10	0.231	P>0.05
Scheduled Caste	159	13.09	1.77		

The table reveals that Scheduled Caste women have a mean score of 13.09 with a standard deviation of 1.77, whereas the members of the general categories having 13.13 as the mean score and the standard deviation shows 1.10. The critical ratio obtained for the difference of mean score is 0.231. It is less than the value for significance at 0.05 levels. Hence the difference between the means scores of political decision-making power of Scheduled Caste and general beneficiaries is not significant at 0.05 levels. It indicates that there is no significant difference between Scheduled Caste and general beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya with regard to their political decision making.

Economic Decision Making

Test of significance of difference between mean scores of general and Scheduled Caste beneficiaries with respect to economic decision making for the programme Mahila Samakhya is presented in table.

Table 11 Test of Significance of Difference between the Mean Scores of Respondents With respect to Economic decision making for the programme Mahila Samakhya

Group	Number	Mean	SD	t	Significance
General	166	13.04	1.33		
Scheduled Caste	159	12.02	2.13	5.167	P<0.01

The table reveals that Scheduled Caste women have a mean score of 12.02 with a standard deviation of 2.13, whereas the beneficiaries of the general categories having 13.04 as the mean score and the standard deviation shows 1.33. The critical ratio obtained for the difference of mean score is 5.167. Hence the difference between the mean scores of economic decision-making ability of Scheduled Caste and general population are significant at 0.05 levels. It indicates that there exists significant difference between Scheduled Caste and general beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya with respect to their economic decision making. It is identified that respondents among the general beneficiaries are showing more economic decision-making ability than the scheduled caste beneficiaries.

Legal awareness

Test of significance of difference between mean scores of general and Scheduled Caste with respect to their legal awareness of the beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya is presented in table

Table 12 Test of significance of difference between mean scores of general and Scheduled Caste with respect to their legal awareness of the beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya

Group	Number	Mean	SD	t	Significance
General	166	15.13	2.74		
Scheduled Caste	159	13.90	2.49	4.218	P<0.01

The table reveals that Scheduled Caste women have a mean score of 13.90 with a standard deviation of 2.49, whereas the beneficiaries of the general categories having 15.13 as the mean score and the standard deviation shows 2.74. The critical ratio obtained for the difference of mean score is 4.218. Hence the difference between the mean scores of legal awareness of Scheduled Caste and general population are significant at 0.05 levels. It indicates that there exists significant difference between Scheduled Caste and general beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya with respect to their legal awareness. It is identified that the respondents among the general population are showing more legal awareness than the Scheduled Caste beneficiaries.

Leadership

Test of significance of difference between mean scores of General and Scheduled Caste beneficiaries with respect to leadership qualities of Mahila Samakhya presented in table.

Table 13 Test of Significance of Difference between the Mean Scores of Respondents with Respect to Leadership of the programme Mahila Samakhya.

Group	Number	Mean	SD	t	Significance
General	166	12.17	1.81		
Scheduled Caste	159	14.20	1.94	9.744	P<0.01

The table reveals that Scheduled Caste women have a mean score of 14.20 with a standard deviation of 1.94, whereas the of the beneficiaries of general categories having 12.17 as the mean score and the standard deviation shows 1.81. The critical ratio obtained for the difference of mean score is 9.744. It is greater than the value for significance at 0.05 levels. Hence the difference between the means scores of leadership qualities of Scheduled Caste and general beneficiaries are significant at 0.05 level of significance. It indicates that there is a significant difference of Scheduled Caste and general beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya with regard to their leadership qualities. It is identified that scheduled caste beneficiaries are showing more leadership qualities than the general beneficiaries.

Overall Empowerment

Test of significance of difference between mean scores of general and Scheduled Caste beneficiaries with respect to overall empowerment of respondents of Mahila Samakhya presented in table.

Table 14 Test of Significance of Difference between the Mean Scores of beneficiaries with respect to Overall empowerment of the programme Mahila Samakhya

Group	Number	Mean	SD	t	Significance
General	166	126.55	9.38		
Scheduled Caste	159	128.70	9.71	2.028	P<0.05

The table reveals that Scheduled Caste beneficiaries have a mean score of 128.70 with a standard deviation of 9.71, whereas the beneficiaries of the General categories having 126.55 as the mean score and the standard deviation shows 9.38. The critical ratio obtained for the difference of mean score is 2.028. It is greater than the value for significance at 0.05 levels which is 1.96. Hence the difference between the mean score overall empowerment of Scheduled Caste and General beneficiaries are significant at 0.05 level of significance. It indicates that there is a significant difference of Scheduled Caste and General beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya with respect to their overall empowerment. From table it is clear that Scheduled Caste beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya possess overall empowerment than General beneficiaries.

Major Findings and Conclusions of the Study

Analysis of the structure and functioning of Mahila Samakhya for the empowerment of women.

The structure and functioning of Mahila Samakhya

On the basis of the responses gathered from the State Project Director and district programme coordinator of Mahila Samakhya society Thiruvananthapuram a detailed picture of the Mahila Samakhya Society activities is got and details of which are to be presented here. The State Programme Director steers the programme towards its objectives and ensures that all activities are in consonance with the values and spirit of the programme. In tribal and dalit areas basic substance needs have to be addressed where as in other areas issues related to violence, mental health issues, dowry, desertion and low work participation rate, lack of access to assets and resources, low political participation, such cases are dealt with by the Mahila Samakhya Society. It always encourages the poor, marginalized and weaker sections of the

society to become the part of main stream of community life. Through Mahila Shiksha Kendra proper education are provided to the needy. It touches social well-being of the people in general and women in particular. The activities organizing for the well-being of adolescent girls are quite significant, various awareness camps and campaigns strengthen the confidence of the adolescent girls. By forming women's collectives in the form of a federation which helps the women to sit together to share their experiences and help them to organize together to fought against oppression. Adult learning centre's helps the learners to enable them to achieve their rights and entitlements. Haritha Mithram, a new venture which brings women together in to collectives and extends organic farming to ensure food security. While discussing with the State Project Director of Mahila Samakhya it is observed that they are in the way to achieve the cherished goals envisaged by the programme.

Impact of Mahila Samakhya on the socio-economic status of Scheduled Caste women.

Analyzing the socio-economic status among the beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya, it is seen that very marginal percentage of the beneficiaries are belong to the middle, upper middle and upper categories. Majority of Scheduled Caste (140 & 88.05%) whereas (143 & 86.14%) general beneficiaries are belongs to lower middle category on the basis of their socio-economic status. it is seen that the obtained t value is not significant at .05 level of significance. It is inferred that there exists no significant difference in the mean score of socio-economic status of scheduled caste and general beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya programme.

The study reveals that the calculated F value is significant at .01 level of significant at df (2/475). Hence it can be concluded that there exists significant difference in the mean score of socio-economic status of scheduled caste beneficiaries of Kishori Shakti Yojana, Mahila Samakhya and Sabla. The result of Scheffe's test shows that the mean score of socio-economic status of Scheduled Caste beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya and Kishori Shakti Yojana as well as Mahila Samakhya and Sabla are significant at 0.01level of significance. The mean score of socio-economic status of general beneficiaries of different empowerment programmes shows that Sabla programme is more beneficial to general population.

The study further reveals that the calculated F value is significant at .01 level of significant at df (2/475). Hence it can be concluded that there exists significant difference in the mean score of socio-economic status of general beneficiaries of Kishori Shakti Yojana, Mahila Samakhya and Sabla. The result of Scheffe's test shows that the mean scores of socio-economic statuses of general beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya and Kishori Shakti Yojana as well as Mahila Samakhya and Sabla are significant.

Impact of Mahila Samakhya on the empowerment of Scheduled Caste women based on different empowerment dimensions.

Household decision making

The study reveals that, in the case of Mahila Samakhya, the household decision making ability is higher (13.90) for scheduled caste than that of General beneficiaries (13.44). The difference between the mean score empowerment of Scheduled Caste (13.90) and General (13.44) beneficiaries are statistically significant at 0.05 level which indicates that there exists significant difference between Scheduled Caste and General beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya with respect to their house hold decision making ability.

Self confidence

The difference between the mean score on empowerment of Scheduled Caste (15.55) and General (16.19) beneficiaries are statistically significant at 0.05 level. It indicates that there exist significant differences between Scheduled Caste and General beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya with respect to their self confidence level. It is noted that beneficiaries among the General population are showing more self confidence level rather than the scheduled caste beneficiaries.

Education

The critical ratio obtained for the difference of mean score is 8.524 which are significant at 0.05 levels. This shows that there exists significant difference of Scheduled Caste (13.37) and General (11.65) beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya with regard to their empowerment based on education. It is important to note that empowerment based on education among scheduled caste beneficiaries is higher than that of the General beneficiaries.

Self esteem

The critical ratio obtained for the difference of mean score is 3.505 which are significant at 0.05 levels. It indicates that there exists significant difference of Scheduled Caste (17.61) and General (17.21) beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya with regard to their self- esteem-based empowerment. It is noted that beneficiaries among the Scheduled Caste are seen exhibited more self -esteem based empowerment than that of the General beneficiaries.

Health awareness

The difference between the mean score empowerment of Scheduled Caste and General beneficiaries are significant at 0.05 levels; It indicates that there exist significant difference of Scheduled Caste (15.03) and General (14.57) beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya with respect to their health awareness. It is identified that beneficiaries among the scheduled caste are seen exhibited more health awareness than that of General beneficiaries.

Political decision making

The critical ratio obtained for the difference of mean score is 0.231 which is not at all significant even at 0.05 levels which shows that there is any significant difference of Scheduled Caste and general beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya with regard to their political decision making.

Economic decision making

The difference between the mean score empowerment of Scheduled Caste (12.02) and General (13.04) beneficiaries are statistically significant at 0.05 levels. This indicates that there exists significant difference between Scheduled Caste and General beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya with respect to their economic decision-making ability. It is identified that the General beneficiaries are showing more economic decision-making ability than the scheduled caste beneficiaries.

Legal awareness

The difference between the mean score empowerment of Scheduled Caste (13.90) and General (15.13) beneficiaries are statistically significant at 0.05 level which indicates that there exists significant difference between Scheduled Caste and General beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya with respect to their legal awareness. It is identified that the General beneficiaries are showing more legal awareness than the scheduled caste beneficiaries.

Leadership

The difference between the mean score empowerment of Scheduled Caste (14.20) and General (12.17) beneficiaries are significant at 0.05 level which indicates that there is a significant difference of Scheduled Caste and General beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya with regard to their leadership qualities. It is identified that scheduled caste beneficiaries are showing more leadership qualities than the General beneficiaries.

Impact of Mahila Samakhya on the overall empowerment of scheduled caste women

The difference between the mean score empowerment of Scheduled Caste (128.70) and General (126.55) beneficiaries are statistically significant at 0.05 level. It indicates that there is a significant difference between Scheduled Caste and General beneficiaries of Mahila Samakhya with respect to their overall empowerment.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The investigator suggests the following implications on the light of the findings of the study.

Today human development is at the central stage of debate everywhere. It is a process of enlarging people's choices. In fact, balanced human development is a synonym of gender

justice, gender equality and gender equity. Empowerment can be brought about in a sustainable manner through human development of which education would be a prominent component. The co-relation between human development and empowerment needs to be appreciated in order to plan and promote education among women.

Empowerment is a multi-dimensional phenomenon. Empowerment programmes make the Scheduled Caste women more confident, gain self-respect, and create among them the feeling that they are not socially, educationally second-rate citizens, but part of main stream of national life. A remarkable and significant positive change and development is observed among the highest percentage of the beneficiaries of the empowerment programmes. Awareness in many aspects has provided a strong sense of confidence and capacities for women and further improved skills and capabilities to fabricate remedies for problems in daily life, overcome obstacles and go ahead with determination towards empowerment.

General awareness to the public about the educational empowerment programme which are in the way of uplifting the disadvantaged sections of the society and are able to make them confident to face the challenges of the day to day life.

It is identified that in the programme areas, majority of the Scheduled Caste communities are living in the poor hygienic conditions, the presence and active interventionist role of empowerment programmes leads much impact on the socio-economic status of the beneficiaries.

Many dropout children are to be motivated to attend the school regularly especially girls. The poor family backgrounds are seen a lacuna to attend school regularly. They are working in the field of various unskilled sectors to earn their daily bread. Such girls are to be identified and encouraged to motivate to attend the schools which will later help them to lead a fruitful community life.

It is identified that higher educational level of the disadvantaged sections particularly Scheduled caste communities are in general very low especially in technical based vocational education. It is very essential to provide vocational based education according to their needs and aspirations so as to attain economic self-sufficiency.

It is identified that various awareness programmes such as health awareness camps, human rights awareness, protection of civil rights, exploitation against dowry, domestic violence is helped the beneficiaries of the programme to fight against all kinds of discrimination and exploitations.

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