

Development of Socio-economic Status Scale for Women Self-Help Group Members

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Abstract

Over the past two decades, considerable efforts have been made to increase the quantum of institutional credit for rural development in order to reduce the extent of dependence of rural households on exploitative and non-institutional sources. There is, however a general feeling that the increased flow of institutional credit has not yielded the expected results. The vast majority of rural people were not involved in the development activities because they lacked the economic based frame to intervene in the local development process. In this scenario, the challenge was to develop a village centred development strategy for the marginalised rural poor who always experienced the shortage of liquidity to respond to new investment opportunities, especially in agriculture. The strategy was to develop in such a way that people can 'plan' for their means and have the 'power' to implement their programmes. Analysing this possibility, the non-governmental organisations decided that the strategy can be made possible by putting together small groups of poor people with similar interests and other homogenous factors. The present study was undertaken with the objective to study the development of socio-economic status scale for women self help group members.

Keywords: Rural development, rural people, power, socio-economic status

An important trend in social sciences during the past few decades has been an increasing emphasis on the development of measuring instruments. Such instruments are commonly referred to as standardized scales. These scales were used to study the socio-economic status of communities, housing conditions and social institutions. Among the social variables, the socio-economic status has its own significance. A lot of confusion, ambiguity and variation exist regarding the meaning and the concept of socio-economic status among different workers. Socio-economic status is generally considered as an important variable both in planning of development programmes and in researches. Socio-economic status influences values and norms of behaviour, social participation, pattern of leadership, motivation for improvement

and communication in a community. Improvement in living standards of poor rural households and empowerment of women are the broad objectives for formation of women Self Help Groups. Therefore, it was felt necessary to develop a scale to measure the socio-economic status of SHG women members. The assessment of socio-economic status of SHG members will be helpful in the selection of SHG women in order to ensure participation in development programmes and for effective transmission of technological information to the SHG women, since it is highly influenced by the socio-economic status of the SHG women. Chapin (1955) defined socio-economic status as 'a position of an individual or a family occupied with reference to the prevailing average standards of cultural possession, annual income, material

possession and participation in the community. English and English (1958) defined status as state or condition of affairs of person accorded formally or informally to a person in her own groups. Drever (1961) defined social status as the position assigned to an individual in her social groups, as determined by the attitude of the other members of the social groups towards her.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The first attempt of constructing scale for measuring rural family living was made by Kirkpatrick in 1948. He developed a series of cost of consumption unit scales for farm families. First, the list of socio-economic status indicators was prepared. Selection of items was done based on judges opinion. The agreement among the judges in allotting the score was determined by working out the weightage.

Procedure followed in forming among the Socio-Economic Status scale for SHG members

1. Collection of items
2. Selection of items
3. Item analysis
4. Item weightage
5. Categorization of socio-economic status

Collection of items

The list of items of socio-economic status was prepared on perusal of relevant literature, observation in the village, by discussion with SHG women, NGOs and officials of Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women. The selected items are given below.

- (a) Educational status
- (b) Caste
- (c) Occupation
- (d) Nature of family
- (e) Farm size
- (f) House owned
- (g) Farm power
- (h) Livestock possession
- (i) Material possession
- (j) Social participation

Selection of items

The criteria followed by Trivedi (1963) and Santha Govind (1992) were used for the selection of items and they were viz.:

1. The item should be suitable to the study area.
2. The item must be objectively observable
3. The item must be a good indicator of socio-economic status
4. The item should be measurable
5. The item should be clear and specific
6. Duplication of item should be avoided.

Item analysis

An interview schedule was prepared with the selection items and categorized under suitable sub-headings. Item analysis was accomplished by criterion of internal consistency technique to assess the discriminating power of the items.

Item weightage

A schedule comprising of the main items and sub-items was distributed among judges so as to assign scores the sub-items under each of the main items, based on their importance in contributing to the determined of socio-economic status as given in Table 1.

Table 1: Classification of selected dimensions for assessing the socio-economic status

Sl. No.	Dimension	Categories	Scores
1	Educational status	i. Illiterate	1
		ii. Can read only	2
		iii. Can read and write only	3
		iv. Primary education	4
		v. Middle education	5
		vi. Secondary education	6
		vii. Higher secondary education	7
2	Caste	i. SC/ST	1
		ii. OBC	2
3	Occupation status	i. Agriculture as the main occupation	2
		ii. Agriculture as the subsidiary occupation	1
4	Nature of family type	a. Family type	
		i. Joint family	1

		ii. Nuclear family	2
	b. Family size	i. Upto 5 members	2
		ii. above 5 members	1
5	Farm size	i. Marginal farm (less than 2.5 acres)	1
		ii. Small farm (between 2.5 -5 acres)	2
		iii. Big farm (more than 5 acres)	3
6	House owned	i. Thatched	1
		ii. Thatched + Tiled	2
		iii. Tiled	3
		iv. Tiled + Terraced	4
		v. Terraced	5
7	Farm power	i. Hand hoe	1
		ii. Spade	1
		iii. Bullock	1
		iv. Electric motor pumpset	4
		v. Oil engine pumpset	4
		vi. Hand operated sprayer	1
		vii. Power sprayer	2
		viii. Tractor	6
		ix. Iron plough	1
		x. Country plough	1
		xi. Levelling board	1
		xii. Power tiller	1
8	Livestock possession	i. Buffalo	1
		ii. Cow	1
		iii. Calf	1
		iv. Sheep	1
		v. Goat	1
		vi. Broiler	1
		vii. Layer	1
9	Material possession	i. Cycle	1
		ii. Moped	2
		iii. Scooter	3
		iv. Motor cycle	3
		v. Bullock cart	1
		vi. Radio/ Transistor	1
		vii. Television	2
		viii. Tape recorder	1
		ix. VCR/VCD	1
		x. Grinder	2
10	Social participation	i. No participation	0
		ii. Member in one organization	1

	iii. Member in more than one organization	2
	iv. Office bearer in one organization	3
	v. Office bearer in more than one organization	4

Experts' judgement

Each of the items in the scale were judged by the extension scientist in terms of their relevancy in contributing to the determination of socio-economic status based on their judgement, the less relevant items were deleted. Therefore the content validity of the scale was satisfied experts judgement.

Classification of socio-economic status

Classification of respondents was done based on cumulative frequency method by taking the overall total score of the dimensions. The values below L_1 as low, between L_1 and L_2 as medium and above L_2 as high classes. Accordingly it was decide to have three categories namely high, medium and low of socio-economic status as given in Table 2.

Table 2: Classification of socio-economic status by cumulative frequency method

Category	Score range
Low	Up to 33.33 per cent
Medium	Above 33.34 to 66.66 per cent
High	More than 66.67 per cent

Thus, by using the above scale, based on the overall socio-economic status score obtained by each individual, the respondents were classified under low, medium and high level of socio-economic status.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-economic status of women SHG members of Cuddalore district of Tamil Nadu

The socio-economic status of the members of the SHGs was measured under ten identified dimensions for the study. Based on all the dimension, a total socio-economic status was also calculated to bring out overall socio-economic status of SHG members. This section deals with the result obtained among SHG members with respect to individual dimensions as well as the sum total of all the

dimensions with their discussion and the results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to their dimension of socio-economic status (n=120)

Sl. No.	Dimension	Categories	f	Per cent
1	Educational status	i. Illiterate	45	37.50
		ii. Can read only	8	6.67
		iii. Can read and write only	18	15.00
		iv. Primary education	26	21.67
		v. Middle education	13	10.83
		vi. Secondary education	6	5.00
		vii. Higher secondary education	4	3.33
2	Caste	i. SC/ST	55	45.83
		ii. OBC	65	54.17
3	Occupation status	i. Agriculture as the main occupation	75	62.50
		ii. Agriculture as the subsidiary occupation	45	37.50
4	Nature of family	a. Family type		
		i. Joint family	39	32.50
		ii. Nuclear family	81	67.50
		b. Family size		
		i. Up to 5 members	81	67.50
		ii. above 5 members	39	32.50
5	Farm size	i. Marginal farm (less than 2.5 acres)	25	20.83
		ii. Small farm (between 2.5 -5 acres)	68	56.67
		iii. Big farm (more than 5 acres)	27	22.50
6	House owned	i. Low	6	5.00
		ii. Medium	73	60.83
		iii. High	41	34.17
7	Farm power	i. Low	27	22.50
		ii. Medium	64	53.33
		iii. High	29	24.17
8	Livestock possession	i. Low	23	19.17
		ii. Medium	39	32.50
		iii. High	58	48.33
9	Material possession	i. Low	12	10.00
		ii. Medium	57	47.50

	iii. High	51	42.50	
10	Social participation	i. Low	18	15.00
		ii. Medium	98	81.67
		iii. High	4	3.33

It is obvious from Table 3, that out of ten dimensions studied for assessing the socio-economic status on house owned, farm power possession, material possession and social participation were found to be medium level category. Livestock possession had found to be high.

Majority of the SHG members were illiterate, with majority of them under other backward caste and agriculture as primary occupation. Most of them belonged to nuclear family and a family size of upto five members. Two-third of the SHG members had small farm women. This finding drives support from the findings of Sujatha (1996) who also reported that similar findings in his study.

Overall social-economic status

The relevant data regarding the overall socio-economic status were presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Distribution of SHG members according to their socio-economic status (n=120)

Sl. No	Categories	Number	Per cent
1	Low	53	44.17
2	Medium	28	23.33
3	High	39	32.50
	Total	120	100.00

It could be found from Table 4, that 44.17 per cent of the women belonged to low level of socio-economic status. About 32.50 per cent and 23.33 per cent fell under high and medium level of socio-economic status categories. The low level of socio-economic status among majority of the SHG member may be accounted due to low literacy rate of the women in addition to the respondents' dependency on agriculture. Further, most of the family possessed less than 3 acres. Lack of regular interaction of the group members through periodical meeting and sharing of common problems with them requisite training from NGOs did not ensure effective improvement in their socio-economic status. The above factors would have resulted with low level

of socio-economic status among majority of the women.

CONCLUSION

Among the ten dimensions considered for calculating the socio-economic status, it was inferred that only the dimension viz., livestock possession were found to be high compared to other dimensions. Hence, efforts to improve these dimensions uniformly among SHG members should be taken up by the sponsoring agency for overall socio-economic development of SGH members.

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