Asian Review of Social Sciences
ISSN: 2249-6319 (P) Vol.7 No.3, 2018, pp.97-102

DOI: https://doi.org/10.51983/arss-2018.7.3.1460

Formal Structure and Efficiency of Self-Help Groups: An Economic Analysis

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(Received 6 October 2018; Revised 15 October 2018; Accepted 29 October 2018; Available online 6 November 2018)

Abstract - **Self-help groups are generally seen as instruments for goals including empowering women, poverty alleviation, developing leadership qualities among poor and needy people. SHGs bridge the gap between haves and have-nots. These groups have become basic sources of village capital. Self-help group's (SHGs) have had a record of success, but they are gradually losing their significance as an instrument of micro-finance and financial inclusion. The persistence of poverty and gender inequality on the scale at which they still exist are not acceptable. This reflects that SHGs face the issues of declining efficiency and quality, although their quantity is alright. Further, the natures of formal structure within which SHGs operate and function have a fundamental effect on their functioning and efficiency and on the efficiency of micro-finance and inclusion programmes. If the problems of these groups are addressed efficiently and are provided with sufficient institutional and financial support, the efficiency of these groups will improve and "efficient and viable self-help groups could do wonders". Due to enhancement in efficiency and sustainability, self-help could improve the social capital base not only of members but also of non-members. It is in this background that this paper attempts to identify the particular parameters/elements that must be present uniquely in the formal structure of all SHGs so that all SGHs may follow a unique logical architecture in their functioning. This study also attempts to analyze the relationship between the formal structure of SHGs and their total savings, their lending capacity, total amount left after disbursements and number of beneficiaries. Finally, this study also attempts to analyze the impact of their formal structure, bank loans received the ability to repay received bank loans, regularity/irregularity towards savings on their frequency of using the bank. From the obtained data and statistical analysis, the study found that the majority of SHGs function independently of their organizational structures. This mars their overall efficiency because the formal structure has its significance in achieving group goals and thereby, increases the level of work quality. Working of SHGS according to a well-established structure positively and significantly impacts their savings, borrowing capacity, lending capacity and a number of beneficiaries. Referred to the data, we can conclude that those SHGs use their operational bank accounts frequently that have a well-established logical structure, received and repaid banks loan since their inception, maintained regularity in group savings and participated in income generation activities than those which lack a formal structure, were unable either to receive or repay bank loans, faced irregularities towards group savings and not participated in income generation activities. So SHGs should pay specific attention towards the formulation of logical structures to work on, maintain regularity in their savings and should participate in income generation activities. Further, banks should provide sufficient loans to these voluntary saving groups and should increase the loan repayment period for them so that these group may become able to maintain their sustainability in the long-run.**
Keywords: **Self-help Groups, Microfinance, Formal Structure, Savings, Bank Account Usage, Borrowing, and Lending**

I. INTRODUCTION

Over time various institutions have evolved to cater to the needs of downtrodden sections of the society. One such institution represents self-help groups, a concept evolved in Bangladesh. Since their inception, the SHGs have played an appreciable role in hastening economic development of various countries, especially of low developed countries (Pangannavar, 2015). SHGs have now evolved as a movement in such low developed countries (Rana and Ansari, 2017). These groups play an important role in elevating the economic status of their members as well as of non-members (Ravi and Vikkraman, 2012). The basic cause of gender inequality in the world around is poverty (Rathinam and Akudugu, 2014). Indeed, the struggle against lack of access and control over productive resources by the poor and vulnerable is the real battle against poverty (Quibria, 1995; Findlay and Wright, 1996; kyeyune and Goldey, 1999; Nandal, 2005; Kyaw and Routray, 2006; Bastos et al., 2009). In the present-day world, actions and working of self-help groups ultimately reflect the aims and objectives of micro-finance and financial inclusion programmes. To accelerate women empowerment and the poverty alleviation, the micro-finance has emerged as a powerful instrument in developing economies and the self-helps groups have become main instruments of micro-finance and financial inclusion programmes (Rathinam and Akudugu, 2014). How far self-help groups have succeeded in achieving the aims and objectives of micro-finance and financial inclusion programmes, is a very intriguing question.

The credibility of self-help groups in achieving the goals of financial inclusion and micro-finance depends much on their formal structure, amount and regularity towards group savings, loans received and repaid, training, participation in income generation activities, democratic approach and common decision-making, transparency, self-helping, group development etc. (Anand, 2004; Purnima and Reddy, 2007 and Kumar and Raj, 2010). To work and develop as an organic whole and to push the society on the road of greater development is the credo of the self-help movement. By

virtue of self-help groups, individual approach to poverty alleviation is replaced by group approach (Kumaran, 2002).

Self-help group movement has accentuated the unity in diversity especially in poverty alleviation and women empowerment efforts. Indeed, in rural areas saving elasticity has been greatly strengthened on their account. SHGs are able to bring many significant changes in living conditions of the members of SHGs as they bring an increase in their income levels, asset holdings, savings, borrowing capacity, and ability to sustainably pursue income generating activities (Sharma, 2001).

The economic benefits of SHGs as revealed by existing literature are augmented access to credit and financial institutions, the habit of savings, increased income, employment generation, and improved food consumption. SHGs increase the awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation to greater decision-making power. They have become centers for initiating social action against illiteracy, alcoholism, dowry system and divorce (NABARD, 1989). To reap the benefits that emerge from the SGH kaleidoscope, our development model and efforts has become more consensual and cooperative. In developing countries, there have been efforts on the part of the government to strengthen the self-help group movement. The governments have tried to restructure these groups and with time these efforts of the governments started showing results. But the achievements are far less as compared to the requirements and as a result, self-help group movement suffered a setback. Self-help group's way of functioning lacks a systematic and organized approach. Their saving and credit functions are often market by frequent irregularities. They are not able to maintain regularity in their basic functions on account of lack of their well-established organized structures, irregularity towards group savings, inadequacies in receiving loans from banks, inadequacies to repay received bank loans, non-participation in income generation activities, inefficiencies to recover loans paid to the group or non-group members, frequent bank-usage lapses, technical inefficiencies, inefficiencies in receiving various incentives from the government and various other inadequacies. These problems are very detrimental to quality, safety, and efficiency of these groups. Therefore, it can be said that self -help group's (SHGs) have had a record of success, but they are gradually losing their significance as an instrument of micro-finance and financial inclusion (Tiwari and Arora, 2015).

The persistence of poverty and gender inequality on the scale at which they still exist are not acceptable. This reflects that SHGs face the issues of declining efficiency and quality, although their quantity is alright. Further, the natures of formal structure within which SHGs operate and function have a fundamental effect on their functioning and efficiency and on the efficiency of micro-finance and inclusion programmes. If the problems of these groups are addressed efficiently and are provided with sufficient institutional and financial support, the efficiency of these groups will improve and "efficient and viable self-help groups could do wonders". Due to enhancement in efficiency and sustainability, self-help could improve the social capital base not only of members but also of non-members. It is in this background that this paper attempts to identify the particular parameters/elements that must be present uniquely in the formal structure of all SHGs so that all SGHs may follow a unique logical architecture in their functioning. This study also attempts to analyze the impact of the formal structure of SHGs on their total savings, their lending capacity, total amount left after disbursements and number of beneficiaries. Finally, this study also attempts to analyze the impact of their formal structure, bank loans received the ability to repay received bank loans, regularity/irregularity towards savings and their participation in income generation activities on their frequency of using their operational bank accounts.

II. METHODOLOGY

The present study is primarily based on primary data and minutely on secondary data. Primary data was mainly collected with help of a well-designed questionnaire. Personal interactions, interviews, and observations with the concerned officials were also carried out to get the additional information. Primary data was collected from 60 SHGs on their existing organizational/formal structures, availing of bank loans, repayment of bank loans, group savings, lending capacity, and amount left after lending, repayment of bank loans, irregularity towards group savings, and number of beneficiaries, participation in income generation activities and on frequency of using their functional bank accounts.

It should be noted here that the formal structure was supposed to include following seven parameters/elements; Requirement specification, group analysis, and design document, Construction or implementation, integrating, testing and correcting through regular meetings, group evaluation, group maintenance, and incentive elasticity. These parameters of the formal structure were derived from existing literature and the sampled SHGs were asked whether they have incorporated these elements in their formal structures or not. If an SHG has incorporated all these elements in his formal structure then his response was treated as 'yes' and if an SHG was not working according to this criteria then his response was treated as 'no'.

A. Study Area and Sampling Design

The present study is based on random-cum-purposive sampling. Two districts viz. district Baramulla and district Budgam were selected randomly from the 10 districts of Kashmir Valley. From each district, one block with the highest population was selected purposively. Finally, the list of SHGs working in each block was obtained from the concerned officials and 30 SHGs were selected randomly from a list of one block and 30 from the list of another block, thus, making the total sample size of 60 SHGs.

B. Statistical and Econometrical Tools used

1. Percentages: To begin with, simple tubular analysis with percentages was used to ascertain how many and what percentage of sampled SHGs are having or not having a well-established formal structure.

2. Log-Linear Regression Analysis: To know the effect of the formal structure of the SHGs on their total savings, lending capacity, total amount left after disbursements and number of beneficiaries, regression equations of the following form have been used

a. Model 1: $LnTS = \alpha + \beta FS$
b. Model 2: $LnTAL = \alpha + \beta FS$
c. Model 3: $LnTAD = \alpha + \beta FS$
d. Model 4: $LnNB = \alpha + \beta FS$
e. Where LnTS, LnTAL, LnTAD, LnNB are logged values of total savings, lending capacity, total amount left after disbursements and number of beneficiaries respectively.
f. FS = formal structure (dummy) = 1 if a SGH has a well-established formal structure or 0 if otherwise.
g. α = intercept
h. β = slope (change)

3. Logistic Regression Analysis: To analyze the efficiency of sampled SHG'S in terms of a few selected variables, the present study employed binary logistic regression. In this study, the frequency of using bank account per month has been considered as the dependent variable (defined as 0 if not uses up to 4 times during a year and defined as 1 if uses above 4 times during a year). The following logit model was estimated and binary logistic regression was run: $P(\text{Freq. using bank a/c}=1 \mid x) = \text{Log}[Pi/(1-Pi)] = \beta_0 + \beta_1$ formal structure$+ \beta_2$ bank loans received$+ \beta_3$ loans repaid$+ \beta_4$ irregularity towards savings$+ \beta_5$ participation in income generation activities $+ \varepsilon$.

Where, y is a binary variable i.e. y = usage of bank account = 0 if not used up to 4 times during a year, = 1 otherwise.
X_1 = formal structure (dummy) = 1 if formal structure is present or 0 otherwise.
X_2 = bank loans received (dummy) = 1 if received loans since group formation or 0 otherwise.
X_3 = loans repaid (dummy) = 1 if loans received from banks are repaid or 0 otherwise.
X_4 = Irregularity towards group savings (dummy) =1 if there is frequent irregularity towards group savings or 0 otherwise.
X_5 = participation in income generation activities = 1 if participates in income generation activities or 0 otherwise.

III. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

There is a strong link between structure and business or group performances. Organizational structure improves efficiency by bringing clarity in organizational goals. Formal structure improves specialization and division of labour among individuals according to their capabilities and thereby improves organizational performance and efficiency. Hence, the presence or absence of the variable 'formal structure' was investigated in the present study. Data related to the presence or absence of the variable formal structure (which was composed of seven interrelated steps) of the SHGs are presented in Table I.

TABLE I DISTRIBUTION OF SHGS BY THEIR FORMAL STRUCTURE

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	24	40
No	36	60
Total	60	100

Table I shows that 40% of the SHGs have a well-established and hierarchical structure, while 60 of them not have a logical structure. These findings show that usually, SHGs work independently of their structures. The important thing is to look at how formal structure impacts SHGs performances and how well SHGs perform independently of a well-established logical structure. This will become clear in following sections of simple regression analysis and logistic regression analysis.

A. Results of Regression Analysis

In order to predict the impact of the independent variable (formal structure) on the dependent variables (TS, TAL, TAD and NB) four regression equations were designed. These four regression equations are as fallows;

Model 1: $LnTS = \alpha + \beta FS$ (I)
Model 2: $LnTAL = \alpha + \beta FS$ (II)
Model 3: $LnTAD = \alpha + \beta FS$ (III)
Model 4: $LnNB = \alpha + \beta FS$ (IV)

Regression analysis applied on independent variable, formal structure, and dependent variables, total savings, lending capacity, total amount left after disbursements and number of beneficiaries; separately produce results as shown in Table I, which summarizes models 1-4.

In model 1, the independent variable is a formal structure (FS) and the dependent variable is total yearly savings (TS) of the self-help groups. In this model, R = 0.806, R^2 = 0.649, AR^2 = 0.643, F = 107.178 and p-value for this model is (0.000). The R-value of 0.806 implies that there is a positive and high correlation between savings and the formal structure of the self-help groups. The R^2 value of 0.649 implies that about 65% of the variation in the dependent variable (TS) is explained by the independent variable (FS) alone. The F statistic is statistically significant (at 0.01 level of significance), which implies that the model is statistically significant. In other words, the statistically significant F statistic shows that there is a significant difference in the savings of the self-help groups having different types of formal structures. The model equation for model 1 can be written as:

$TS = 3.774 + 0.405FS$ (V)

The value of the beta coefficient for the independent variable (FS) in this model equation is 0.405. This value of the beta coefficient is statistically significant at 1% level of significance. This statistically significant value of beta coefficient implies that the savings of self-help groups having well-established formal structure are higher by about 40.5 percent than those self-help groups which do not possess well-established formal structure.

TABLE II RESULTS OF REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Models	B	Standard Error	t-value	Sig.(p)	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F Statistic
Model 1 Constant FS	 3.774 0.405	 0.025 0.039	 152.638 10.353	 (0.000)** (0.000)**	0.806	0.649	0.643	107.178 (0.000)**
Model 2 Constant FS	 3.711 0.370	 0.007 0.043	 136.838 8.634	 (0.000)** (0.000)**	0.750	0.562	0.555	74.551 (0.000)**
Model 3 Constant FS	 - 2.537 0.785	 1.22 0.190	 20.836 4.132	 (0.000)** (0.000)**	0.490	0.240	0.226	17.073 (0.000)**
Model 4 Constant FS	 0.173 0.352	 0.031 0.049	 5.534 7.124	 (0.000)** (0.000)**	0.683	0.467	0.457	50.745 (0.000)**

**. Regression and F-Statistic are Significant at 0.01 Level

For model 2, the predictor is the formal structure and lending capacity (i.e. total amount lent yearly) of the self-help groups is the predictand. In this model, R = 0.750, R^2 = 0.562. AR^2 = 0.555, F = 74.55 1and p-value for this model is (0.000). The R-value of 0.750 implies that there is a positive and high correlation between lending capacity and the formal structure of the self-help groups. The R^2 value of 0.562 implies that 56.2% of the variation in the dependent variable (TAL) is explained by the independent variable (FS) alone. The F statistic is statistically significant (at 0.01 level of significance), which implies that the model is statistically significant. In other words, the statistically significant F statistic shows that there is a significant difference in the lending capacity of the self-help groups having different types of formal structures. The model equation for model 2 can be written as:

TAL = 3.711 + 0.370FS (VI)

The value of the beta coefficient for the independent variable (FS) in this model equation is 0.370. This value of the beta coefficient is statistically significant at 1% level of significance. This statistically significant value of beta coefficient implies that the lending capacity of self-help groups having well-established formal structure is higher by about 37 percent than those self-help groups which do not possess well-established formal structure.

For model 3, the regressor is formal structure and saving intensity (i.e. total amount left after yearly disbursements) of the self-help groups is the regressand. In this model, R = 0.490, R^2 = 0.240, AR^2 = 0.226, F = 17.073 and p-value for this model is (0.000). The R-value of 0.490 implies that there is a positive and moderate correlation between saving intensity and formal structure of the self-help groups. The R^2 value of 0.240 implies that 24% of the variation in the dependent variable (ADL) is explained by the independent variable (FS) alone. The F statistic is statistically significant (at 0.01 level of significance), which implies that the model is statistically significant. In other words, the statistically significant F statistic shows that there is a significant difference in the saving intensity of the self-help groups having different types of formal structures. The model equation for model 3 can be written as:

ADL = 2.537 + 0.785FS (VII)

The value of the beta coefficient for the independent variable (FS) in this model equation is 0.785. This value of the beta coefficient is statistically significant at 1% level of significance. This statistically significant value of beta coefficient implies that the saving intensity of self-help groups having well-established formal structure is higher by about 78 percent than those self-help groups which do not possess well-established formal structure.

For model 4, the independent variable is formal structure and beneficiary size (i.e. number of yearly beneficiaries) of the respective self-help groups is the explained variable. In this model, R = 683, R^2 = 0.467, AR2 = 0.457, F = 50.745 and p-value for this model is (0.000). The R-value of 0.467 implies that there is a positive and high correlation between beneficiary size and formal structure of the self-help groups. The R^2 value of 0.467 implies that 46.7% of the variation in the dependent variable (NB) is explained by the explanatory variable (FS) alone. The F statistic is statistically significant (at 0.01 level of significance), which implies that the model is statistically significant. The model equation for the model 4 can be written as:

NB = 1.73 + 0.352FS (8)

The value of the beta coefficient for the independent variable (FS) in this model equation is 0.352. This value of the beta coefficient is statistically significant at 1% level of significance. This statistically significant value of beta coefficient implies that yearly beneficiaries of self-help groups having well-established formal structure are higher by about 35 percent than those self-help groups which do not possess well-established formal structure.

B. Results of Logistic Regression

Among various factors which influence efficiency and effectiveness of SGH'S is their formal structure, bank loans received, ability to repay received bank loans, regularity/irregularity towards savings, training, various incentives received, frequency of using bank accounts, regular meetings, participation in income generation activities etc., this research considered, formal structure, bank loans received, ability to repay received bank loans, regularity/irregularity towards savings, frequency of using bank accounts of SGH'S as the key factors which influence their efficiency and effectiveness. To analyze the efficiency of sampled SHG'S in terms of these factors, present study employed binary logistic regression. In this study, frequency of using bank account per year has been considered as dependent variable (defined as 0 if not used up to 4 times during last year and defined as 1 if used above 4 times during last year). The following logit model was estimated and binary logistic regression was run: P (Freq. using bank a/c)=1 | x) = Log [Pi/(1-Pi)] = β_0 + β_1 formal structure+ β_2 bank loans received+ β_3 loans repaid+ β_4 irregularity towards savings+ β_5 participation in income generation activities + ε.

The results of binary logistic regression analysis of the data showed that the full logistic regression model containing all the five predictors was statistically significant, Chi-square = 30.238, df = 5, p < .001 indicating that the independent variables significantly predicted the outcome variable, frequency of using bank account. The results of the data analysis presented in Table 5 show the logistic regression coefficients, Wald test and Exp(B) for each of the predicted variables. The results of Cox and Snell, and Nagelkerke R squared estimates indicate that between 39.6% to 53% of variance can be predicted from the independent variables. The model classified correctly 74.1% of the SHG'S that were frequently using bank account and 87.9% of those that were not using bank account frequently, for an overall classification success rate of 81.7%. As shown in Table 5 all the predictor variables made unique and significant contributions to the prediction of using bank account frequently. Formal structure and participation in income generation activities of SHG's showed a strong relationship to use of bank account frequently. The strongest predictor of using bank account frequently was formal structure of SHG'S. It recorded an odds ratio of 14.365 indicating that when holding all other predictors constant, a SHG that that has a well-established formal structure is 14.4 times more likely to use its functional bank account frequently than a SHG which lacks a well-established formal structure. The odds for bank loan received since group inception is 5.493 which indicates that a SHG which has received a bank loan since its formation is 5.5 times more likely to use its operational bank account frequently than a group which has not received any bank loan since its inception. The odds for repayment of bank loan received is 3.541 which indicates that a SHG which has repaid a received bank loan is 3.5 times more likely to use its operational bank account frequently than a group which has not repaid a received bank loan since its time of availing, controlling for the other predictors in the model. Irregularity towards savings of the group showed a strong negative relationship with the frequency of using an operational bank account. The odds for irregularity towards group savings is -0.073 which indicates that a SHG which faces irregularity towards its savings is 0.073 times less likely to use its operational bank account frequently than a group which does not faces any regularity towards its savings. The odds for participation in income generation activities is 8.851 which indicates that a SHG which often takes part in income generation activities is 8.5 times more likely to use its operational bank account frequently than a group which does not takes part in income generation activities controlling for the other predictors in the model.

TABLE III MODEL SUMMARY

-2 Log likelihood	Cox and Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
52.339	0.396	0.530

TABLE IV CLASSIFICATION TABLE

Observed	Predicted		
	Usage of bank account		Percentage Correct
Usage of bank account	No	Yes	
No	29	04	87.9
Yes	07	24	74.1
Overall Percentage			81.7

TABLE V RESULTS OF LOGISTIC REGRESSION

Variables	B	S.E.	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Formal structure(1)	2.665	1.243	4.596	1	0.032	14.365
Bankloan(1)	1.703	0.172	97.648	1	0.000	5.493
Repayment(1)	1.264	0.473	7.153	1	0.007	3.541
Irregularity(1)	-2.612	0.732	12.739	1	0.000	0.073
IGA(1)	2.181	1.390	2.462	1	0.002	8.851
Constant	1.491	0.530	7.904	1	0.005	4.441

V. CONCLUSION

From the obtained data and statistical analysis we can conclude that majority of SHGs function independent of their organizational structures. This mars their overall efficiency because formal structure has its significance in achieving group goals and thereby, increases the level of work quality. Working of SHGS according to a well-established structure positively and significantly impacts their savings, borrowing capacity, lending capacity and number of beneficiaries. Referred to the data, we can say that those SHGs which have well-established logical structure, received and repaid banks loan since their inception, maintained regularity in group savings and participated in income generation activities, used their bank accounts frequently than those which lack a formal

structure, were unable either to receive or repay bank loans, faced irregularities towards group savings and not participated in income generation activities. So SHGs should pay specific attention towards the formulation of logical structures to work on, maintain regularity in their savings and should participate in income generation activities. Each SHG should work at least according to following hierarchical structure; Requirement specification, group analysis and design document, Construction or implementation, integrating, testing and correcting through regular meetings, group evaluation, group maintenance and incentives requirement. On the other hand, banks should provide sufficient loans to them and should increase the loan repayment period for them so that these group may become able to maintain their sustainability in the long-run (Ahlawat, 2016). If problems of these groups are addressed efficiently and are provided sufficient institutional and financial support, efficiency of these groups will improve (Tripathy, 2004) and "efficient and viable self-help groups could do wonders". Due to enhancement in efficiency and sustainability, self-help could improve the social capital base not only of members but also of non-members.

VI. LIMITATIONS

1. One of the limitations of the present study is that some of the variables, such as savings of SGHs were sensitive issues, so the SHGs were reluctant to be involved.
2. Another limitation of the present study is that it was restricted to study the performance of SHGs in specific geographical locations of Jammu and Kashmir State. Hence, the findings of the stud should be generalized with great caution to the whole state.
3. Another limitation is small sample size used in interviews and survey.

VII. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Present research unlocks the doors for future research. In fact, further research will be necessary to enhance, validate and elaborate our findings. Dynamic, complex and abundant factors affect the performance of SHGs. Addition of other variables or factors (like training, ability to recover loans paid by the group to its members or non- members, sponsorship of a group etc.) to formal structure, lending capacity, saving intensity etc. may add to clear understanding of the performance of SHGs.

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