When Women Rise, Communities Thrive: Impact of Mission Shakti in Koraput

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ARTICLEINFO	ABSTRACT
	This study explores the impact of Mission Shakti, a prominent program, on empowering rural women through self-help groups (SHGs) in the Koraput District of Odisha. Using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), the research examines how elements like capacity building, entrepreneurship, and empowerment are connected. The findings reveal that while certain efforts have a positive effect on women's empowerment, the overall impact remains modest. This highlights the need for focused strategies and continuous assessment. The study stresses the importance of enhancing rural development programs to improve socio-economic conditions, support gender equality, and reduce poverty in underdeveloped areas. It offers valuable insights for policymakers, managers, and rural development workers, guiding the creation of more effective and sustainable initiatives. **Keywords:** Rural Women Empowerment, Self-Help Groups, Mission Shakti, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), Livelihood

1. Introduction

Gender equality and women's empowerment are key factors in achieving development goals, as emphasized by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Mahatma Gandhi once said, "Train a man, and you train an individual. Train a woman, and you build a nation." This shows how crucial women's empowerment is for societal progress. The term "Women's Empowerment" was formally defined during the United Nations' 1995 Beijing Conference, focusing on five main aspects: self-worth, freedom of choice, access to resources, control over one's life, and the ability to influence social change (United Nations, 1995). In India, particularly in Odisha's Koraput district, the Mission Shakti program has played a major role in empowering women through self-help groups (SHGs). Launched on International Women's Day in 2001, the Mission Shakti initiative seeks to strengthen women financially by offering support, skills training, and market access through SHGs. The program provides seed money, revolving funds, and interest-free loans to help women achieve financial independence. Women who are part of SHGs experience improved income, increased savings, and enhanced skills, which leads to greater empowerment. Regular SHG meetings help women form strong social networks and gain access to resources, enabling them to make empowered decisions and contribute to sustainable development in their communities (United Nations, 1995).

2. Background and Literature of the study

India has placed a strong emphasis on empowering women for its social and economic development. The Mission Shakti program, launched in Odisha in 2001, has played a crucial role, especially in rural areas like Koraput. Numerous studies have demonstrated the positive impact of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Mission Shakti on women's empowerment, financial inclusion, and social standing in Odisha (Satapathy & Prusty, 2018; Patnaik & Biswal, 2021; Singh et al., 2021). However, more research is needed to deeply explore how these programs empower rural women and address their challenges (Mohanty & Pattanaik, 2019).

The unique socio-economic conditions in Koraput make it important to thoroughly assess how Mission Shakti impacts SHG participation, financial inclusion, and livelihood improvements. This evaluation will help inform strategies to increase the program's effectiveness in empowering women in this region (Pani & Mohapatra, 2021; Dash & Sahoo, 2021). Mission Shakti supports Women-led Self-Help Groups (WSHGs) to improve the economic, social, and political status of women. In Koraput, which has a large tribal population and difficult terrain, the

program has been essential in providing microcredit, improving financial inclusion, and boosting livelihoods for rural women (Mishra & Hota, 2015; Panda & Rath, 2020). Empowering women is essential for the social and economic growth of developing countries like India. Mission Shakti has become an important initiative, especially in rural areas such as Koraput, to promote WSHGs. Studies have shown that the microcredit support provided by Mission Shakti has greatly helped in achieving financial independence and improving the livelihoods of rural women (Mishra & Hota, 2015; Panda & Rath, 2020).

Access to credit through SHGs enables women to gain financial independence, a critical element for their empowerment. Studies by Satapathy and Prusty (2018), Patnaik and Biswal (2021), and Singh et al. (2021) highlight the significant role of SHGs in improving women's social status and participation in the economy. These studies demonstrate that SHG involvement enhances income, savings, and skills, which contributes to women's empowerment. Even though the benefits of programs like Mission Shakti, more research is needed to understand the challenges rural women face in achieving empowerment. Mohanty and Pattanaik (2019) suggest that exploring these barriers, and finding ways to overcome them, is crucial. Koraput, with its tribal population and challenging geography, requires a careful evaluation of Mission Shakti's impact. Pani and Mohapatra (2021) and Dash and Sahoo (2021) stress the importance of focusing on SHG participation, financial inclusion, and improving livelihoods. These evaluations will help shape strategies to improve the empowerment of women in rural areas.

Kumar and Singh (2018) point out that access to microcredit enables women to engage in income-generating activities, which boosts financial independence and supports entrepreneurship, ultimately improving their economic situation (Rao & Kaur, 2020). Additionally, Gupta and Sharma (2019) found that SHGs promote women's collective action and decision-making. Participation in SHGs increases confidence and social status, allowing women to contribute more effectively to community development.

1.1. Research Gap and Statement of Problem

There is a noticeable gap in existing research on how Mission Shakti specifically impacts women's empowerment in the Koraput district of Odisha. This gap particularly pertains to areas such as participation in Self-Help Groups (SHGs), financial inclusion, livelihood improvement, and social empowerment. While many studies have analyzed microcredit programs and SHGs in general, there is a lack of focused research on Koraput, which has distinct socio-economic and geographical challenges. Despite the government's efforts, the actual effects of Mission Shakti on rural women in this region are still not well understood. This study seeks to address this gap by evaluating how Mission Shakti contributes to women's empowerment in this unique context. By closely examining the outcomes and challenges of the program, this research will provide valuable insights for policymakers and development practitioners. These insights can guide future strategies to enhance women's empowerment in rural areas like Koraput.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The primary goal of this study is to evaluate the impact of the Mission Shakti program on rural women's empowerment in the Koraput district of Odisha. The specific objectives are: Specifically, the objectives include:

a. To assess how Mission Shakti influences socio-economic empowerment.
b. To examine its role in forming and sustaining Self-Help Groups (SHGs).
c. To analyze the factors that influence women's participation in SHGs.
d. To investigate the program's impact on financial inclusion and improving livelihoods.

These objectives aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of Mission Shakti's effectiveness in promoting women's empowerment through self-help groups in this region.

1.3. Hypotheses of the study

The study hypothesizes that the Mission Shakti program positively impacts rural women's empowerment in Koraput district, Odisha, particularly through the formation and functioning of self-help groups (SHGs). The specific hypotheses are:

H1: Access to Financial Resources (AFR) has a significant positive effect on Empowerment of Rural Women (ERW).

H2: Capacity Building and Skill Development (CBSD) has a significant positive effect on Empowerment of Rural Women (ERW).

H3: Entrepreneurship and Livelihood Promotion (ELP) has a significant positive effect on Empowerment of Rural Women (ERW).

H4: The effect of Entrepreneurship and Livelihood Promotion (ELP) on Empowerment of Rural Women (ERW) is significantly mediated by Mission Shakti (MISS).

H5: The effect of Access to Financial Resources (AFR) on Empowerment of Rural Women (ERW) is significantly mediated by Mission Shakti (MISS).

H6: The effect of Capacity Building and Skill Development (CBSD) on Empowerment of Rural Women (ERW) is significantly mediated by Mission Shakti (MISS).

2. Methodology

The This study adopts a descriptive, cross-sectional research design to evaluate the impact of the Mission Shakti program on women's empowerment in the Koraput district of Odisha. The research collects **primary data** through structured surveys targeted at Self-Help Group (SHG) members, beneficiaries, and program coordinators. The surveys explore various aspects such as SHG participation, financial inclusion, and livelihood improvement.

To avoid **selection bias**, participants are carefully selected from SHGs that have benefited from loans under

Mission Shakti. **Descriptive statistics** are used to summarize key indicators, while **inferential statistics**—such as correlations and regression analysis—are employed to explore relationships between variables and test the study's hypotheses. This approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of the program's effectiveness.

3.1. Research Instruments

The study uses structured questionnaires to assess different aspects of women's empowerment through SHGs. These questionnaires are designed with **Likert scale items** adapted from established scales to ensure reliability and validity.

3.1.1. Formation and Functioning of SHGs

This instrument evaluates how well SHGs promote collective action, mutual support, and socio-economic development. Questions focus on the formation of SHGs, regularity of meetings, decision-making processes, and socio-economic benefits. Sample questions are included like: "How often do your SHG meetings occur?"; "To what extent does your SHG provide mutual support?"; "What socio-economic benefits have you experienced?".

3.1.2. Capacity Building and Skill Development

This instrument assesses the impact of training programs on women's skills and confidence in income-generating activities. It measures the effectiveness of training, new skills learned, and their practical application. Sample questions are encompassed, such as, "How would you rate the effectiveness of the training programs?";"What new skills have you learned?"; "How confident are you in applying these skills?"

3.1.3. Access to Financial Resources

This instrument examines women's access to microcredit, savings, and financial services. It evaluates how Mission Shakti has improved access to these resources, alongside saving behaviours and financial resilience. Sample questions consist of like: "Have you received microcredit through your SHG?"; "How has your saving pattern changed?" ;"How prepared do you feel to handle financial emergencies?"

3.1.4. Entrepreneurship and Livelihood Promotion

This instrument measures how livelihood promotion initiatives impact women's economic independence and sustainability. It evaluates support for entrepreneurship and economic gains from micro-enterprises. Sample questions comprise like: "What type of livelihood activities have you engaged in?";"How has your economic situation improved?"; "What challenges have you faced in sustaining your enterprise?"

3.1.5. Empowerment through Collective Action

This instrument assesses the sense of solidarity, leadership, and collective action within SHGs and their communities. It looks at leadership opportunities, group cohesion, and collective benefits. Sample questions include such as: "Do you feel a sense of solidarity with other members of your SHG?"; "Have you taken on leadership roles?"; "What collective actions has your group undertaken, and what were the outcomes?"

3. Data Analysis and its Interpretation

Data analysis transforms raw information into valuable insights using both quantitative and qualitative methods. In this study, quantitative techniques such as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) (Hair et al., 2014) are combined with qualitative thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to provide a comprehensive understanding of Mission Shakti's impact on women in Self-Help Groups (SHGs). This approach integrates statistical methods with an analysis of the women's lived experiences, shedding light on how SHG participation influences their economic, social, and psychological empowerment (Kabeer, 1999).

A two-stage Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach was employed to validate the proposed model. The initial stage consisted of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), which confirmed the reliability of the measurement model. Following this, a structural model was created to examine the relationships among the variables (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2013). To ensure reliability and validity, Cronbach's alpha, Fornell-Larcker Criterion, and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio are used. These methods confirm the constructs' discriminant and convergent validity and the significance of the hypothesized relationships. Scale reliability was assessed using SPSS 26 and Smart PLS4. The Cronbach's alpha values for the constructs showed good to excellent internal consistency: Capacity Building and Skill Development (CBSD) had a value of 0.818, Entrepreneurship and Livelihood Promotion (ELP) was 0.895, Empowerment of Rural Women (ERW) was 0.939, Functions of Self-Help Groups (FSHG) was 0.861, and Mission Shakti (MISS) was 0.785, as presented in Table-1. These results indicate that the scales reliably measure their respective constructs, ensuring the consistency and dependability of the data for further analysis (Nunnally, 1978).

Table-1: Convergent Validity test of Measurement Mode-Cronbach's alpha, Composite reliability (rho_c), and Average variance extracted (AVE)			
Constructs	**Cronbach's alpha (standardized)**	**Composite reliability (rho_c)**	**Average variance extracted (AVE)**
CBSD	0.818	0.820	0.532
ELP	0.895	0.895	0.589
ERW	0.939	0.976	0.887
FSHG	0.861	0.905	0.654
MISS	0.785	0.790	0.510

Source: Author's Estimation

3.1.Exploratory Factor Analysis

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was carried out to evaluate how well the proposed items fit with their respective categories or constructs. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistic was 0.880, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (χ^2 = 5454.328, p < 0.05) confirmed that the sample size was adequate and the data was suitable for factor analysis (Hair et al., 2013), as shown in Table-2.

All proposed items showed significant loadings on their respective factors, with all loadings exceeding the acceptable level of 0.40. For Capacity Building and Skill Development (CBSD), the items had loadings between 0.643 and 0.800, indicating a strong connection to the CBSD construct. Items for Entrepreneurship and Livelihood Promotion (ELP) had loadings ranging from 0.723 to 0.809, showing they are effective in measuring this category. The items for the Functions of Self-Help Groups (FSHG) had loadings between 0.709 and 0.779, suggesting they are reliable measures of FSHG functions.

The items for Mission Shakti (MISS) showed loadings from 0.428 to 0.831, with one item (MISS2) at 0.428 indicating a weaker correlation, which may require further examination. Finally, the Empowerment of Rural Women (ERW) items showed high loadings between 0.806 and 0.898, confirming their strong alignment with the ERW construct.

Table-2: KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.880
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	5454.328
	Df	276
	Sig.	.000

Source: Author's Estimation

3.2. Measurement Model Assessment (CFA)

The measurement model was assessed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), which examines the relationships between constructs and indicators by measuring Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). These metrics help evaluate the internal consistency and convergent validity of the model (Sarstedt et al., 2014). CFA also includes goodness-of-fit indices for each construct, both individually and together in a combined model (Schreiber et al., 2006).

When testing for multivariate normality, it was found that the data did not follow a normal distribution, which suggests that the maximum likelihood (ML)-based chi-square values might be inflated (Curran et al., 1996). The five-factor pooled measurement model was checked for common method bias (CMB) as outlined by Podsakoff et al. (2003). The pooled model confirmed convergent validity, with AVE values above 0.5 and CR values over 0.7 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), as shown in Table-1. Discriminant validity, which ensures that constructs are distinct from one another, was assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. All HTMT values were below 0.85, confirming that discriminant validity was achieved (Kline, 2015). This was supported by diagonal values that exceeded the correlations in the corresponding rows and columns, indicating valid differentiation between constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

3.3. Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was confirmed among all study constructs. The HTMT technique, proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981), evaluated the inter-correlations between each construct and other indicators in the model. Values below 0.85 indicate successful discriminant validity (Kline, 2015). Table-3 presents the HTMT ratio coefficients for the latent variables: Capacity Building and Skill Development (CBSD), Entrepreneurship and Livelihood Promotion (ELP), Empowerment of Rural Women (ERW), Functions of Self-Help Groups (FSHG), and Mission Shakti (MISS). All HTMT ratios were below 0.85, confirming good discriminant validity. Key ratios include CBSD and ELP (0.389), CBSD and ERW (0.361), and CBSD and FSHG (0.402), showing moderate correlations. The pairs CBSD and MISS (0.087) and ELP and MISS (0.092), highlighted in Table-3, indicate low correlations, confirming that each construct is distinct (Kline, 2015; Gaskin & Lim, 2016).
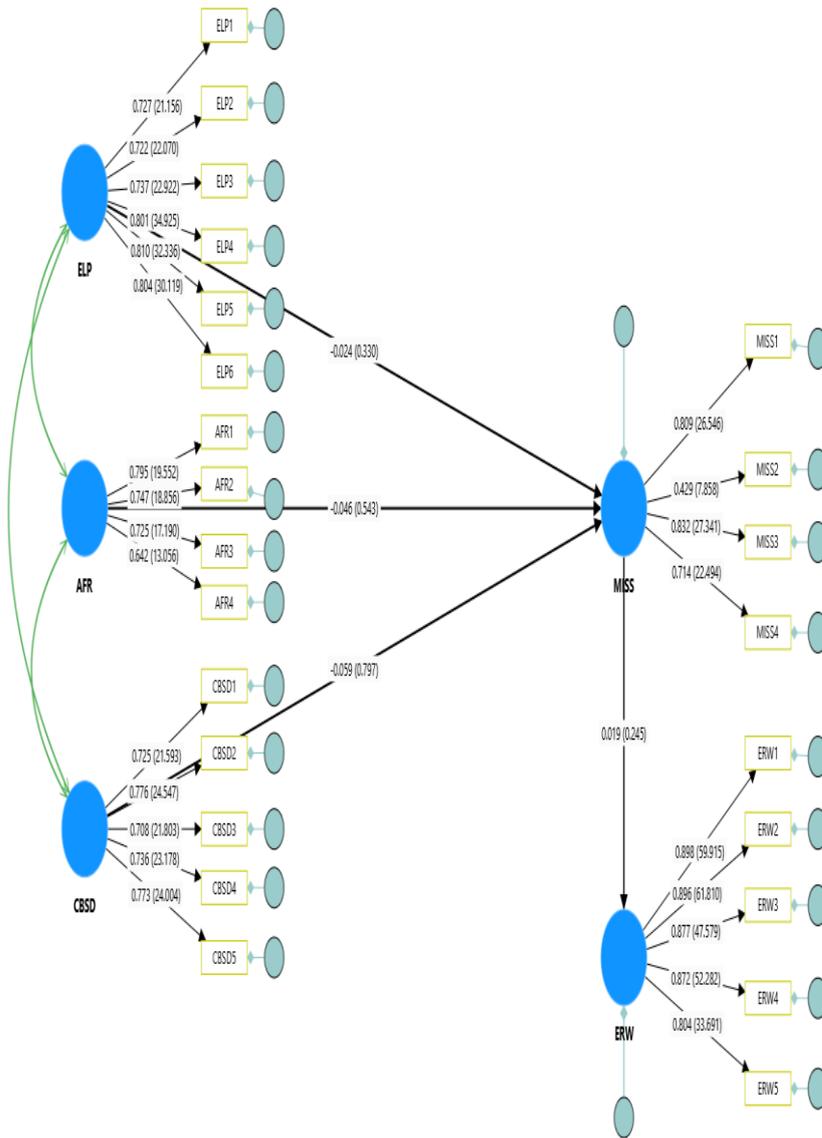
Figure 1: Five factor Structure Model

Table-3: HTMT Ratio-coefficients					
Latent variables	CBSD	ELP	ERW	FSHG	MISS
CBSD					
ELP	0.389				
ERW	0.361	0.284			
FSHG	0.402	0.546	0.311		
MISS	0.087	0.092	0.049	0.089	

Source: Author's Estimation

4. Structural Model Assessment

The proposed theoretical framework was assessed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with maximum likelihood estimation. The factor loadings and parameter estimates from SEM are essential for understanding the relationships between hidden (latent) constructs and the observed indicators (Bollen, 1989; Kline, 2016). Factor loadings, which are standardized coefficients, show the strength and direction of relationships between latent variables and their indicators. They indicate how much of the variation in each observed variable is explained by its corresponding latent variable (Brown, 2015). Parameter estimates include path coefficients, error variances, and covariance, which provide insights into the hypothesized structural relationships and help evaluate the model's fit (Kline, 2016; Kaplan, 2009). The T-values and p-values linked to these estimates reveal the statistical significance of the relationships, which is important for testing theoretical hypotheses (Brown, 2015). The structural model is illustrated in figure-1

Table-4: Structural Model Fit Indices	Estimated model	Null model
Chi-square	919.201	8406.278

Number of model parameters	58.000	24.000
Number of observations	589.000	n/a
Degrees of freedom	242.000	276.000
P value	0.000	0.000
ChiSqr/df	3.798	30.458
RMSEA	0.069	0.224
RMSEA LOW 90% CI	0.064	0.220
RMSEA HIGH 90% CI	0.074	0.228
GFI	0.870	n/a
AGFI	0.839	n/a
PGFI	0.702	n/a
SRMR	0.055	n/a
NFI	0.891	n/a
TLI	0.905	n/a
CFI	0.917	n/a
AIC	1035.201	n/a
BIC	1289.150	n/a

Source: Author's Estimation

A standard bootstrapping technique was used to analyze the path coefficients, p-values, t-values, and R^2 values, using 5,000 bootstrap samples (Reinartz et al., 2009; Hair et al., 2014). For a model to be considered good, the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) should be less than 0.08 (Henseler et al., 2016; Hair et al., 2014). In this study, the SRMR value is 0.055, which is below this limit, indicating a good fit for the model. SRMR measures how closely the estimated model matches the observed data, with lower values showing better fits.The estimated model has a chi-square value of 919.201 with 242 degrees of freedom, resulting in a significant p-value of 0.000, which indicates a good fit. The ratio of chi-square to degrees of freedom (ChiSqr/df) is 3.798, suggesting a reasonable fit. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is 0.069, which is acceptable, with a 90% confidence interval ranging from 0.064 to 0.074.

The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) is 0.870, and the Adjusted GFI (AGFI) is 0.839, both indicating a good fit. The Parsimony GFI (PGFI) is 0.702, which shows appropriate model complexity. The Normed Fit Index (NFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Comparative Fit Index (CFI) values are 0.891, 0.905, and 0.917, respectively, all suggesting a good fit. The Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) is 1035.201, and the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) is 1289.150, further supporting the model's adequacy. In contrast, the null model has a higher chi-square value of 8406.278 with 276 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.000, indicating a poor fit. Its ChiSqr/df ratio is 30.458, and the RMSEA is 0.224. These results show that the estimated model fits the data well, while the null model does not, confirming that the proposed measurement structure is valid.

4.1. Hypothesis Testing

In structural equation modeling (SEM), hypothesis testing helps researchers assess the significance and strength of path coefficients, allowing them to compare the proposed theoretical model with actual observed data (Hair et al., 2019). To determine the importance of the relationships in the structural model, t-values are compared to the critical t-values at a significance level of 0.05, as shown in Table-5.

Table-5 : Path Coefficients details of structural Model						
Path coefficients-Mean, STDEV, t-Values, P-values	**Hypotheses**	**Original sample (O)**	**Sample mean (M)**	**Standard deviation (STDEV)**	**T statistics (|O/STDEV|)**	**P values**
AFR -> ERW	H1	0.334	0.343	0.083	4.041	0.000
CBSD -> ERW	H2	0.238	0.235	0.079	2.998	0.003
ELP -> ERW	H3	0.132	0.135	0.078	1.692	0.091
ELP -> MISS -> ERW	H4	-0.003	-0.002	0.007	0.356	0.722
AFR -> MISS -> ERW	45	-0.001	-0.002	0.008	0.158	0.875
CBSD -> MISS -> ERW	H6	-0.003	-0.002	0.007	0.402	0.688

Source: Author's Estimation

Table-5 shows the path coefficients, which represent the relationships between different variables in the structural model, along with their statistical details.

AFR -> ERW (Hypothesis H1): The path coefficient is 0.334, meaning there is a positive relationship between AFR and ERW. The t-value is 4.041, which is significant, as indicated by a p-value of 0.000. This suggests a strong and meaningful connection.

CBSD -> ERW (Hypothesis H2): The path coefficient here is 0.238, indicating a positive relationship between CBSD and ERW. The t-value is 2.998, and the p-value is 0.003, showing that this relationship is also statistically significant.

ELP -> ERW (Hypothesis H3): The path coefficient is 0.132, which means ELP has a positive effect on ERW. However, the t-value is 1.692, with a p-value of 0.091, indicating that this relationship is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level but is close.

ELP -> MISS -> ERW (Hypothesis H4): The path coefficient is -0.003, suggesting a very weak negative relationship between ELP and ERW through MISS. The t-value is 0.356, and the p-value is 0.722, showing that this relationship is not significant.

AFR -> MISS -> ERW (Hypothesis H5): The path coefficient is -0.001, indicating an extremely weak negative relationship. The t-value is 0.158, and the p-value is 0.875, meaning this relationship is not significant at all.

CBSD -> MISS -> ERW (Hypothesis H6): The path coefficient here is -0.003, suggesting a very weak negative effect. The t-value is 0.402, with a p-value of 0.688, indicating that this relationship is also not significant.

5.2. R² and f² effect size

The R² value is used to measure how much of the variability in a dependent variable can be explained by one or more independent variables (Fassott et al., 2016). In this study, the R² value is considered acceptable according to the study's criteria. Falk and Miller (1992) suggest that an R² value above 0.10 is acceptable. R² values are categorized as follows: 0.60 is considered good, 0.33 is moderate, and 0.19 is weak (Chin et al., 2003).

For the Empowerment of Rural Women (ERW), the R² value is 0.164. This means that the constructs explain 16.4% of the variance in ERW, which meets Falk and Miller's (1992) threshold of 0.10. This indicates a moderate level of explanatory power, aligning with the classification of a weak to moderate model (Chin et al., 2003). The adjusted R² value for ERW is 0.154, which accounts for the number of predictors in the model and further supports its validity.

Table-6: R-square and R-square adjusted	R-square	R-square adjusted
ERW	0.164	0.154
MISS	0.010	0.005

Source: Author's Estimation

On the other hand, the R² values for Mission Shakti (MISS) are quite low, with values of 0.010 for R² and 0.005 for adjusted R². These low values indicate minimal explanatory power, suggesting that the model is not very effective in explaining variations in MISS.

Cohen's f^2 is a measure of the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that is explained by a predictor variable, relative to the unexplained variance. A f^2 of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 is considered small, medium, and large, respectively (Cohen,1992). Cohen's f-square measures the proportion of variance in the dependent variable explained by a predictor variable relative to the unexplained variance. Table-7 presents Cohen's f² values, which help assess the effect size of different relationships in the model. The f² values indicate the strength of the influence that independent variables have on dependent variables, with specific interpretations of the effect size. For the path from AFR to ERW, the f² value is 0.050, indicating a low moderation impact. The path from AFR to MISS has an f² value of 0.000, also reflecting a low moderation impact. The relationship between CBSD and ERW shows an f² value of 0.028, which indicates a low moderation impact. Similarly, the path from CBSD to MISS has an f² value of 0.002, indicating a low moderation impact. The effect size for ELP to ERW is 0.009, suggesting a low moderation impact as well. The path from ELP to MISS also has an f² value of 0.002, reflecting a low moderation impact. Finally, the relationship from MISS to ERW shows an f² value of 0.002, indicating a low moderation impact.

Table-7: Cohen's f²and effect size	f-square	Effect
	f-square	
AFR -> ERW	0.050	**Low moderation impact**
AFR -> MISS	0.000	**Low moderation impact**
CBSD -> ERW	0.028	**Low moderation impact**
CBSD -> MISS	0.002	**Low moderation impact**
ELP -> ERW	0.009	**Low moderation impact**
ELP -> MISS	0.002	**Low moderation impact**
MISS -> ERW	0.002	**Low moderation impact**

Source: Author's Estimation

5. Implications of the Study

This This study provides important insights into improving rural empowerment programs and self-help groups, focusing on areas for social, managerial, and practical enhancements. The findings serve as a guide for policymakers and practitioners to refine their strategies and tackle challenges, aiming for more effective outcomes and lasting impacts.

Practically, the implications of the study provide a framework for continually evaluating and enhancing rural development programs. The use of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) as a solid method for assessing the

relationships between different factors and their effects on empowerment and performance is highlighted (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2019). Practitioners can use these insights to design evidence-based interventions, track their progress, and make informed decisions based on data. The study stresses the need for ongoing evaluation to ensure that programs stay relevant and effective, ultimately leading to more sustainable results (Patton, 2011).

The social implications of the study highlight the essential role of empowering rural women and the success of self-help groups in driving socio-economic growth. By demonstrating the positive effects of initiatives like Mission Shakti on rural women's empowerment, the study encourages the development of policies and programs that improve the socio-economic conditions of underserved communities. This can lead to greater gender equality and social unity, supporting previous research that identifies women's empowerment as a key factor in community development (Kabeer, 1999; Agarwal, 2018). Focusing on capacity building and entrepreneurship can also help reduce poverty and enhance the quality of life in rural areas (Smith, 2015).

From a managerial perspective, the study offers useful insights into how effective rural development programs can be. It emphasizes the importance of creating targeted strategies to strengthen the impact of self-help groups and empowerment initiatives. Managers can use these findings to improve program designs, allocate resources wisely, and adopt best practices that benefit rural women. This aligns with existing research emphasizing the need for context-specific designs in rural development (Chambers, 1983; IFAD, 2019). Additionally, the study provides a foundation for creating training and support systems tailored to the specific challenges faced by rural entrepreneurs and self-help groups (Datta & Gailey, 2012).

6. Suggestions and prospective notes for future research

Looking ahead, future research should focus on several important areas to improve our understanding of rural empowerment programs and self-help groups. First, conducting longitudinal studies would help us learn about the long-term effects of initiatives like Mission Shakti on the lives of rural women, providing valuable insights into sustainability.

First of all, expanding research to include different geographic and cultural contexts is also essential. By comparing various regions with diverse socio-economic conditions, researchers can uncover unique challenges and successes in implementing self-help groups. This approach will offer a more comprehensive view of how these programs work in different settings. Second, incorporating qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus groups, can enhance the understanding of participants' experiences. This combination with quantitative data will provide richer insights into how these programs impact women's lives. Third, exploring the role of technology is another key area for future research. Understanding how digital tools can improve access to resources and market opportunities for women in self-help groups could significantly enhance their effectiveness.

Fourth, conducting sector-specific studies would also be beneficial. By tailoring interventions to meet the specific needs of different industries, researchers can improve the relevance and success of empowerment programs. Furthermore, analyzing policies related to women's empowerment and self-help groups will help identify how regulations influence program outcomes. This evaluation can highlight areas needing improvement and inform future policy decisions.

Finally, comparing different models of self-help groups and empowerment initiatives will aid in identifying the most effective strategies. Detailed economic assessments can provide insights into the best practices that lead to successful outcomes. Developing new measurement tools and evaluation metrics is crucial for assessing these interventions effectively. This will ensure that rural empowerment programs remain impactful and continue to evolve to meet the needs of women in rural areas.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights the significant impact of rural empowerment programs and self-help groups on the lives of women in rural areas. By examining the effectiveness of initiatives like Mission Shakti, the research underscores the importance of empowering women to foster socio-economic development and promote gender equality. The findings emphasize the need for targeted strategies that enhance the capacity of self-help groups and address the unique challenges faced by rural women. Furthermore, the integration of both quantitative and qualitative methods provides a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play within these programs. This holistic approach not only validates the effectiveness of self-help groups but also offers valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners to refine their strategies.

The implications of this research extend beyond academia, providing practical guidance for implementing effective empowerment initiatives. By focusing on continuous evaluation and adapting to the evolving needs of rural women, these programs can achieve sustainable outcomes and make a lasting difference in their communities. Overall, the study serves as a foundation for future research, encouraging further exploration into the complexities of rural empowerment and the vital role of self-help groups in driving positive change.

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