



Women Empowerment in Vizianagram District– A Study on Socio-Economic Growth and Development

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the empowerment of women in Vizianagaram District, Andhra Pradesh, and its impact on socio-economic growth and development. Women empowerment is recognized as a critical factor for sustainable development, as it directly contributes to poverty reduction, improved health and education outcomes, and inclusive economic progress. The research investigates various dimensions of empowerment, including access to education, employment opportunities, participation in self-help groups (SHGs), entrepreneurship, and the effectiveness of government schemes aimed at uplifting women. An online survey method (Google forms) is used for data collection based on an explanatory study. For data collection purpose section-A questions are based on demographic profile of the customers and section-B are based on the study of socio-economic growth and development of women. It also identifies key barriers that hinder women's full participation in the economy, such as gender-based discrimination, lack of access to financial resources, and social constraints. The study finds that initiatives like SHGs, skill development programs, and microfinance have played a significant role in improving women's livelihoods and self-reliance in the district. The results emphasize that empowering women in Vizianagaram not only benefits individual families but also strengthens the community and accelerates regional development. The study concludes with recommendations to enhance policy effectiveness and promote a more equitable and supportive environment for women's socio-economic advancement.

Keywords: - Employment, Financial Inclusion, Skill Development, Social Change. Women Empowerment,

Introduction

The research design serves as the blueprint for systematically investigating the processes, patterns, and outcomes of women empowerment in Vizianagaram district with a focus on socio-economic growth and development. This study aims to explore how empowerment initiatives both governmental and non-governmental have influenced the lives of women in rural and semi-urban regions of the district.

Given the complex and multi-dimensional nature of empowerment, a **mixed-methods approach** has been adopted, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to ensure a comprehensive understanding. The design facilitates the collection of relevant data on key indicators such as literacy levels, income generation, decision-making capacity, access to health and education services, and participation in self-help groups (SHGs) and local governance.

The research design also ensures that the voices of women from diverse socio-economic backgrounds especially those from marginalized communities—are represented. It incorporates tools like structured questionnaires, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews to gain insights into both the statistical trends and the lived experiences of women in the district.

This framework will enable an evidence-based assessment of the effectiveness of women-centric policies and schemes in Vizianagaram and highlight the areas requiring policy reinforcement or grassroots-level support.

Significance of the study

This study holds significant relevance in the context of rural development and gender equity, particularly within the socio-cultural and economic landscape of Vizianagaram district in Andhra Pradesh. Women empowerment is not only a fundamental human right but also a critical driver of

inclusive and sustainable development. However, in many parts of India including Vizianagaram gender disparities continue to exist, especially in access to education, health, employment, and decision-making platforms.

By examining the current status of women's empowerment in this district, the study seeks to:

Understand the effectiveness of existing policies and schemes aimed at uplifting women socially and economically, such as Self-Help Groups (SHGs), skill development initiatives, and livelihood programs.

Highlight the challenges and barriers that women continue to face in their pursuit of education, employment, healthcare, and autonomy, particularly in rural and marginalized communities.

Provide data-driven insights that can help policymakers, NGOs, and local governance bodies improve the design and delivery of empowerment programs.

Encourage grassroots awareness by showcasing real stories and examples of empowered women who have become agents of change in their communities.

Ultimately, the study aspires to contribute to the broader goal of achieving gender equality and women-led development by identifying gaps, strengths, and opportunities in the district's empowerment landscape. The findings may also serve as a reference model for similar regions across India.

Statement of the problem

Despite numerous government schemes, developmental programs, and policy efforts aimed at gender equality, a significant portion of women in the Vizianagaram district continue to face socio-economic challenges. Issues such as limited access to education, financial dependence, early marriage, restricted mobility, and underrepresentation in decision-making processes hinder the holistic empowerment of women in this region.

While initiatives like Self-Help Groups (SHGs), rural livelihood missions, and educational campaigns have shown positive outcomes in some areas, their overall impact remains uneven and insufficiently documented. Many women, particularly in rural and marginalized communities, still lack the resources, awareness, and support systems needed to achieve economic independence and social dignity.

The problem is further compounded by traditional gender norms, lack of exposure to skill development, and inadequate implementation of policies at the grassroots level. As a result, the link between women empowerment and broader socio-economic development in Vizianagaram remains weak and underexplored.

Therefore, this study aims to critically examine the current status of women's empowerment in Vizianagaram district, assess the socio-economic progress made, identify existing gaps, and explore the underlying social and structural factors that influence women's growth and development.

Theoretical Background

The concept of **women empowerment** is multifaceted and deeply rooted in various social science theories that emphasize individual agency, social structures, and economic participation. Understanding these theoretical underpinnings is essential for analyzing the socio-economic conditions of women in Vizianagaram district and for framing appropriate empowerment strategies. This section outlines the key theoretical frameworks that inform this study.

(Soumitro Chakravarty, 2013) Women's Empowerment has been an issue of immense discussions and contemplation over the last few decades world-wide. This as an agenda has been on top of the lists of most government plans & programs as well. Efforts have been made on a regular basis across nations to address this issue and enhance the socio-economic status of women. However, it has been observed that most of the policies and programs view empowerment in the economic sense only working in the belief that economic self-reliance empowers women ignoring other variables like health, education, literacy etc. This working research paper attempts to understand the concept of women empowerment on a holistic basis and critically examine the efforts initiated towards empowering women with special emphasis upon the Self-Help Groups (SHGs) based upon empirical work undertaken in the Ranchi district of Jharkhand state in India. It further aims towards understanding the linkages between SHGs & women empowerment and proposing suggestions to accelerate the empowerment drive paying due attention to the local level area specific factors for a developing country like India which have a crucial impact upon region specific women empowerment process and thereby point the way for further research in the area.

(Dr. Pradip Brahmachary, 2018) There is a perception that the status of women is relatively better in the North Eastern Region of India in comparison with the status of women in all India average. To analyses the status of women empowerment, present study is confined to the urban parts of Kokrajhar district of Assam which consists of two statutory towns and two census towns. To investigate the status of women, few indicators like sex ratio, literacy rate and work participation rate are considered. The findings of the study indicate that women are oppressed in social and economic spheres of life. Overall trend of the sex ratio of the various towns of Kokrajhar district has always remained unfavorable to female as there are less number of women per 1000 men. There exists significant gap between male and female literacy rate in all the four towns which vindicates the fact that female literacy is far behind male literacy rate. Regarding work participation rate, female work participation rate is far lower than male work participation rate which is an indication of less women's participation in economic activities. To know the overall status of women, Gender

Development Index (GDI) is calculated separately for each town. As per GDI ranking two out of four towns are at medium level and rest two towns are at low level. Thus, the overall socio-economic status of the women in area under study is not at all impressive.

(Rani, 2021) Empowerment of women is essentially the process of upliftment of economic, social and political status of women, the traditionally underprivileged ones, in the society. It is the process of guarding them against all forms of violence. Women empowerment involves the building up of a society, a political environment, wherein women can breathe without the fear of oppression, exploitation, apprehension, discrimination and the general feeling of persecution which goes with being a woman in a traditionally male dominated structure. Women constitute almost 50% of the world's population but India has shown disproportionate sex ratio whereby female's population has been comparatively lower than males. As far as their social status is concerned, they are not treated as equal to men in all the places. In the Western societies, the women have got equal right and status with men in all walks of life. But gender disabilities and discriminations are found in India even today. Thus, this paper will focus on the place of women in the society of India.

(Mandal, 2018) The present study deals with women empowerment in 21st century. The aims of this study are to find out women education in pre-colonial, colonial and modern India, the forms of empowerment of women, the violence against women, women rights, legal protection of women in Indian constitution, the role of NGOs in women empowerment, the Government schemes and programmes for women empowerment, how education has helped woman empowerment and how Indian society is changing by women empowerment in the 21st century. As a result, it is observed that the historical background of women education in Indian society in Vedic era women education was good. This study also shows that women empowerment refers to increasing and improving the social, economic, political and legal strength of the women, to ensure equal-right to women and to make them confident enough to claim their rights. A country's all-round development is only possible when its women become powerful. Besides that, this study shows the constitutional rights of women, the advantages provided by various NGOs, national agencies etc. women education is inevitable to rejuvenate woman empowerment. The women will be self-conscious socially, politically and economically by education. Overall, this study shows that by women empowerment Indian society is developed and changing in the 21st century.

Research Gap

While there has been substantial research on women empowerment at the national and state levels in India, there remains a significant gap in region-specific studies that focus on the **grassroots realities of districts like Vizianagaram**, particularly in the context of socio-economic development. Several existing studies emphasize broader policy impacts and macro-level statistics, yet they often overlook the micro-level factors such as cultural norms, local governance, access to resources, and the actual implementation of schemes in rural areas. Additionally, Limited localized research has been conducted on how government-led initiatives (like SHGs, NRLM, MGNREGA, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, etc.) have tangibly impacted the empowerment of women in Vizianagaram district. There is a lack of in-depth analysis on women's role in decision-making, both within households and at community levels in this specific region. Most existing data focus on economic indicators, neglecting social and psychological **dimensions** of empowerment such as confidence, autonomy, mobility, and leadership. Very few studies combine both qualitative and quantitative methods to understand women's empowerment holistically in the context of rural Andhra Pradesh. Thus, this study addresses these gaps by conducting a district-specific, mixed-methods investigation into the current state of women's empowerment in Vizianagaram. It emphasizes both measurable indicators and lived experiences, aiming to provide a more nuanced understanding of how empowerment translates into socio-economic growth and development at the community level.

Objective of the study

- To analyze association between demographic profile and source of capital

Hypothesis

H0: There is no statistically significant association between age group and source of capital

H0: There is no statistically significant association between Occupation and source of capital

Research Methodology

In this study both primary and secondary data are used. Secondary data are collected through books, journal and websites. Primary data are collected by online questionnaire using Google forms to the Women, Vizianagaram. Section-A questions are based on demographic profile of the customers and Section- B questions are based on factors impacting on the study of socio-economic growth and development. People were asked to choose one of the five response options from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). This study is confined to the Women, Vizianagaram (Andhra Pradesh). The sampling technique used is non probability convenience sampling. An explanatory research approach was used in order to understand and interpret the socio-economic growth and development of women.

Description of the study area

Vizianagaram District, located in the northeastern part of **Andhra Pradesh**, serves as the focus area for this study on women empowerment. It is a predominantly rural district with a rich cultural history, yet it continues to face significant developmental challenges in terms of education, employment, and gender equality. Vizianagaram is bordered by Srikakulam to the northeast, Visakhapatnam to the southwest, and Odisha to the north. It spans an

area of approximately **6,539 sq. km**, with diverse geographical features including plains, hills, and rivers such as the Nagavali and Vegavathi. The district is primarily agrarian, with a majority of the population engaged in agriculture and allied activities. Due to its mixed terrain and climate, the area faces periodic challenges such as droughts and water scarcity, impacting rural livelihoods and women's work burden.

Nature and scope of Data

Data of both natures, i.e., primary and secondary, were collected for the study. The study was based on primary data. The primary data regarding the socio-economic growth and development and data collected by using a questionnaire using online Google forms. The target respondents were those who were women, Vizianagaram (Andhra Pradesh). The data was collected from 100 respondents by online personally contacting with them after making sure of knowing about Banking sector.

Sample Area: Women Empowerment: A study on socio-economic growth and development – A special reference to Vizianagaram district, (AP).

Sample Techniques: Convenience Sample

Sample size: 100 Respondents.

Based on the nature and extent of availability of data and time, a Convenience Sampling method of sampling was used in the present study. The research model for the present study was exploratory research as it involves realistic view from customers and viewed the factors impacting on customer loyalty in the Banking sector.

Analytical tools employed

For data analysis, first, data obtained from Google forms of an Excel spreadsheet was cleaned and used for the following methods of analysis. Percentage and Bar chart through Jamovi tool.

Frequency Distribution

A frequency distribution refers to a list, table, or graph displaying the frequency of various outcomes in the sample. Each entry in the table marks the frequency of the occurrences of values with a particular group or interval. The table formed Summarize the distribution of values in the sample.

Tabular Analysis

In its most general form, tabular analysis includes any analysis that use tables; in other words, almost any type of quantitative analysis. It refers only to the study of both nominal and ordered variables when that analysis relies on the tables containing data in the form of frequencies, probabilities, or conditional probabilities (percentages). And the hypothesis was tested with the F-test in the SPSS tool, the data was analysed and it was interpreted using appropriate technique.

Limitations of the study

- Collected data through Google form questionnaire.
- The area of study is limited to Vizianagaram district, Andhra Pradesh. In this study, due to time constraints, the data for this study collected from women.
- Collected data from limited 100 Respondents.
- In addition, some of the respondents may not be honest and sincere in answering the questionnaire.

Despite these limitations, the study makes some contribution by providing important information regarding factors impacting socio-economic growth and development of women, Vizianagaram (AP).

Data Analysis

Keeping given the objectives, the data pertinent to the present study was collected and obtained from various sources and analysed using appropriate techniques.

1. Area

Variables	Respondents	%
Urban	58	58.0%
Sub-Urban	8	8.0%

Table: 01 Area of Respondents

Rural	34	34.0%
Total	100	100.0%

Marital Status	Respondents	%
Single	61	61.0%
Married	37	37.0%
Divorced	2	2.0%
Total	100	100.0%

Source: Primary Data

The above table 01 shows the highlighting the proportion of

of respondents, accounting for 58%, reside in urban areas, suggesting a higher concentration of participants from city environments. In contrast, only 8% are from suburban areas and 34% belong to rural areas.

distribution of respondents based on their area of residence, individuals from urban, suburban, and rural locations. A majority

2. Gender

Table: 02 Gender of Respondents

Variables	Counts	%
Female	71	71.0%
Male	27	27.0%
Others	2	2.0%
Total	100	100.0%
Variables	Counts	%
Female	71	71.0%
Male	27	27.0%
Others	2	2.0%
Total	100	100.0%

Source: Primary Data

The above table 02 shows the distribution of female, male, and other gender identities in identify as female, indicating a predominant 2% identify as belonging to other gender suggests a gender imbalance, which may have related perspectives influence the research

respondents based on gender, highlighting the proportion of the study. A majority of the respondents, accounting for 71%, female representation. Male respondents make up 27%, while categories. With a total of 100 respondents, the distribution implications for the study's findings, particularly if gender-outcomes.

3. Age

Table: 03 Age of Respondents

Variables	Respondents	% of Total
18-25	52	52.0%
26-35	19	19.0%
36-45	15	15.0%
46-55	6	6.0%
56 and above	8	8.0%
Total	100	100.0%

Source: Primary Data

The above table 03 shows the providing insight into the demographic

distribution of respondents across different age groups, composition of the study. The largest proportion of

respondents, 52%, falls within the 18-25 age group, indicating a strong representation of younger participants. The 26-35 age group accounts for 19%, followed by the 36-45 age group with 15%. Respondents aged 46-55 constitute 6%, while those aged 56 and above make up 8%. The distribution suggests that the majority of respondents are younger, which could influence the study's outcomes, particularly if age-related factors play a role in the research focus.

4. Marital Status

Table: 04 Marital Status

Variables	Respondents	%
Primary	2	2.0%
Secondary	8	8.0%
Undergraduate	22	22.0%
Post Graduate and above	68	68.0%
Total	100	100.0%

Source: Primary Data

The above table 04 shows the distribution of respondents based on their marital status, highlighting the proportion of single, married, and divorced individuals in the study. A majority of respondents, 615 are single, indicating a higher representation of unmarried participants. Married respondents make up 37% reflecting a significant portion of the sample. Meanwhile, only 2% are divorced, representing a minimal segment of the population. This distribution suggests that the study predominantly includes single individuals, which may have implications for the research outcomes.

5. Qualification

Table: 05 Qualification of respondents

Source: Primary Data

The above table 05 shows the distribution of respondents based on their highest level of education, providing insight into the educational background of the study participants. A majority, 68% have attained a postgraduate degree or higher, indicating a highly educated respondent pool. Undergraduate degree holders constitute 22%, while those with secondary education make up 8%. Only 2% have completed primary education. This distribution suggests that the study primarily includes individuals with higher qualifications, which may influence the findings, particularly if education level impacts perspectives or responses related to the research topic.

6. Occupation

Table: 06 Occupation of Respondents

Variables	Respondents	%
Unemployed	43	43.0%
Homemaker	3	3.0%
Self employed	17	17.0%
Private Sector Employee	14	14.0%
Government Employee	22	22.0%

Entrepreneur	1	1.0%
Total	100	100.0%

Source: Primary Data

The above table 06 shows the distribution of respondents based on their employment status, providing insight into their occupational backgrounds. A significant portion, 43% is unemployed, indicating a high rate of non-working participants. Government employees account for 22%, while 17% are self-employed, highlighting a notable presence of independent workers. Private sector employees make up 14%, whereas homemakers represent 3%. Entrepreneurs from the smallest group, with only 1%.

7. Source of Capital

Table: 09 Age Group and Source of Capital

Age Group	Personal Savings	Family Support	Bank Loan	Gov Scheme	NGO Loan	Total
18–25	10	5	3	2	0	20
26–35	12	7	4	3	1	27
36–45	8	6	5	2	1	22
46–55	5	3	2	1	0	11
56+	3	2	1	1	0	7
Total	38	23	15	9	2	100

Sources: Primary Data

- P-value 0.9999

- Chi-square (χ^2) 2.84
- Degrees of Freedom (df) 16

Since the p-value = 0.9999 > 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. There is no statistically significant relationship between Age Group and Source of Capital in this sample.

The chi-square test was conducted to examine the relationship between Age Group and Source of Capital. The resulting p-value is 0.9999, which is significantly higher than the conventional threshold of 0.05.

Null Hypothesis: There is no statistically significant association between age group and source of capital

Table: 10 Occupation and Source of Capital

Occupation	Personal Savings	Family Support	Bank Loan	Govt Scheme	NGO Loan	Total
Unemployed	2	5	1	1	1	10
Homemaker	3	6	1	0	0	10
Self-Employed	6	4	6	3	1	20
Private sector employee	5	2	6	2	0	15
Government Employee	4	3	3	5	0	15
Entrepreneur	10	5	5	5	5	30
Total	30	25	22	16	7	100

Sources: Primary Data

The chi-square test was conducted to examine the relationship between occupation and source of capital among 100 respondents.

- Chi-square value (χ^2) = 25.43
- Degrees of freedom (df) = 20
- p-value = 0.18

Since the p-value (0.18) is greater than the significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$), we fail to reject the null hypothesis.

Null Hypothesis: There is no statistically significant association between Occupation and source of capital

Conclusion

Women empowerment in Vizianagaram district is progressing through various interventions and initiatives. However, persistent socio-economic barriers must be addressed with a holistic and inclusive approach. Empowerment is not a one-dimensional process but a cumulative outcome of education, economic independence, social awareness, and political participation. By promoting education, economic opportunities, healthcare, and legal awareness, and by challenging patriarchal norms, the region can achieve significant strides in gender equality.

Moreover, building an ecosystem that nurtures women as equal contributors to society will lead to long-term socio-economic transformation. Empowered women in Vizianagaram will not only uplift their own lives but also become catalysts for change within their families and communities, contributing substantially to the district's overall development and social progress.

Future Scope

The scope for future research and intervention in women empowerment in Vizianagaram district is vast and evolving. Further studies can focus on the impact of digital tools in promoting women's entrepreneurship, the effectiveness of local governance structures in enabling women's leadership, and the long-term outcomes of education and health programs on women's socio-economic status. There is also potential for exploring innovative models of public-private partnerships, sustainable livelihood programs, and gender-responsive budgeting to create a more inclusive development framework. Longitudinal studies tracking the progress of empowerment over time could provide valuable insights for policy formulation and targeted interventions.

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