

Siri Gramodyoga Samsthe and Women's Empowerment: A Pathway to Rural Transformation

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Citation: SV, P. & Kumari, S. (2026). Siri Gramodyoga Samsthe and Women's Empowerment: A Pathway to Rural Transformation. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Commerce, Management & Social Science*, 09(01(II)), 80–92. [https://doi.org/10.62823/IJARCMSS/9.1\(II\).8604](https://doi.org/10.62823/IJARCMSS/9.1(II).8604)

ABSTRACT

Women empowerment is a critical topic of discussion towards sustainable rural development, as empowered women significantly contribute to socio-economic growth and community resilience. In rural India, women often face many challenges such as limited access to education, financial resources, skill development, and decision-making platforms. Institutions like SIRI Gramodyoga Samsthe (SGS) step forward in addressing these challenges by promoting livelihood opportunities, self-help initiatives, capacity building training, micro-enterprise creation, social awareness and empowerment among rural women. This study highlights the role of SIRI Gramodyoga Samsthe in fostering women empowerment and facilitating rural transformation. It explores how SIRI Gramodyoga Samsthe interventions enhance economic independence, social participation, and leadership capacity among women, thereby contributing to inclusive and sustainable rural development. The paper underscores SIRI Gramodyoga Samsthe as a grassroots model that links women empowerment with holistic rural transformation.

Keywords: Women's Empowerment, Rural Transformation, SGS, Decision-Making, Social Awareness.

Introduction

Rural development remains one of the most challenges concepts in developing economies, particularly in India with a vast population resides in rural area. Despite the effort of brining progress in economic growth, rural areas continue to fight back with poverty, unemployment, gender inequality, limited access to resources, and socio-economic marginalization. Within this context, women play a crucial yet often underutilised force for rural transformation. Empowering rural women is not merely a matter of social justice but a strategic necessity for achieving sustainable and inclusive growth. When women get empower, she gain access to education, skills, financial resources, and decision-making power, they contribute directly to household welfare, community development, and national progress.

Women empowerment refers to the process of enabling women to have control over their lives by giving them freedom to choices, enhancing their capabilities, and strengthening their participation in social, economic, and political spheres. In rural areas, however, women face multiple challenges. Traditional norms, low literacy levels, lack of property rights, limited employment opportunities, and restricted mobility often confine women to unpaid domestic and agricultural sector. These constraints restrict women to access income-generating activities, approach financial institutions, and lack leadership roles. Addressing these challenges requires tailored made, community-based interventions that sort-out the actual realities of rural women.

Thus, the intervention of government and non-governmental institutions play a fundamental role in bridging the gap between policy framed and ground-level implementation. An institution with one such goal and vision, SIRI Gramodyoga Samsthe (SGS) has emerged as a significant means for women empowerment and rural progression. Rooted in principles of self-reliance, encouraging dignity of labor, and decentralized mode of development, SIRI Gramodyoga Samsthe focuses on boosting sustainable livelihoods, capacity building, skill enhancement, and social-economic empowerment among rural women. By adopting various participatory and inclusive approaches, the organization enables women to become active agents of change within their families and communities.

SIRI Gramodyoga Samsthe functions with the belief that socio-economic empowerment of rural people is the foundation for sustainable development. The organization facilitates the formation and strengthening of Self-Help Groups through microfinance, which serve as platforms for income creation, collective savings, access to credit, mutual support, and capacity building. Through SHGs support, women gain exposure to financial literacy, leadership training, and entrepreneurial skills. These groups not only enhance women's income-earning capacity but also foster self confidence, and collective bargaining power. As women begin to contribute economically to their households, their status within the family and society improves, leading to greater participation of women in decision-making processes.

Thus, the relevance of studying SIRI Gramodyoga Samsthe lies in its successful women-centered rural development activities. In an era of digitalisation where policy frameworks emphasize on rural digital literacy, inclusive growth and gender equality, understanding the role of leading institutions provides valuable insights for policymakers, development practitioners, and researchers. This study seeks to examine how SIRI Gramodyoga Samsthe interventions contribute to women empowerment and how empowered women, in turn, drive sustainable development.

Statement of the Problem

Despite various rural upliftment initiatives, policies, schemes and programme undertaken by government and various development agencies, women in rural areas still faces socio-economic challenges that restrict her participation in development processes. Rural women often experience, limited access to education, financial resources, skill training, employment opportunities, and decision-making platforms which lacks herself confidence. Deep-rooted social norms, economic dependency on men, low awareness of her rights, and restricted mobility further marginalize women, withholding them from achieving economic independence and social empowerment. As a result, rural development efforts frequently remain unreached, failing to address gender disparities effectively.

In this era of digitalisation women empowerment has emerged as a critical pathway for sustainable rural transformation. However, the success of these empowerment initiatives depends largely on the effectiveness of policy maker and institutions that successfully plan and implement development programs at the community level at large. While organizations such as SIRI Gramodyoga Samsthe (SGS) have been actively engaged in promoting livelihood development, self-help groups initiatives, skill enhancement and capacity building activities, social awareness and economic well being among rural women, there is a need for systematic evaluation of their role and impact. Limited empirical studies have examined how SIRI Gramodyoga Samsthe interventions contribute to economic independence, social participation, and leadership development of women, as well as their broader influence on rural sustainable development. Thus this research intent to study the role of SIRI Gramodyoga Samsthe and the Pathway to Rural Transformation.

Review of Literature

Lewis and Kanji (2009) examined the role of non-governmental organizations in development processes. They argued that NGOs play a crucial role in empowering marginalized groups through participatory approaches, capacity building, and advocacy. Their work highlights the significance of grassroots institutions like SIRI Gramodyoga Samsthe in addressing local development challenges. **Desai and Thakkar (2007)** analysed women's participation in Self-Help Groups and found that group membership enhances women's social networks, confidence, and leadership skills. The study emphasized that SHGs contribute not only to economic empowerment but also to social and psychological empowerment. **Sinha (2008)** studied the SHG-Bank linkage program and observed significant improvements in women's confidence, leadership abilities, and participation in community activities. The study noted that SHGs act as platforms for collective learning and social empowerment, enabling women to address common issues and engage with local governance institutions. **Pitt and Khandker (1998)** analyzed the impact of microcredit programs on women's empowerment in rural

households. Their findings indicated that access to microfinance increases women's involvement in household decision-making and income-generating activities. However, the study also suggested that credit alone is insufficient unless supported by training and capacity-building initiatives. **Ellis (2000)** focused on rural livelihood diversification as a strategy to reduce poverty and vulnerability. He emphasized that skill development and non-farm employment opportunities are essential for sustainable rural livelihoods. His work supports the importance of training and enterprise development programs implemented by grassroots organizations for empowering rural women economically.

Scope of the Study

The present study aims in examining the role of **SIRI Gramodyoga Samsthe (SGS)** in promoting women empowerment and brining rural transformation. The scope of the study is confined to understanding the economic, social, and institutional dimensions of empowerment among rural women beneficiaries associated with SGS programs. It primarily focuses on the initiatives undertaken by SGS such as formation of Self-Help Groups (SHGs), livelihood development activities, skill training programs, micro-enterprise promotion, and social awareness initiatives.

Objectives

- To assess the effectiveness of SIRI Gramodyoga Samsthe's initiatives in enhancing women's empowerment and their contributions to social development.
- To assess the role of SIRI Gramodyoga Samsthe towards socio-economic empowerment of women

Hypotheses Considered

Table 1: Hypotheses Considered in the Study

Sl. No.	Null Hypothesis (H_0)	Alternative Hypothesis (H_1)
1	H_0 : There is no association between education and the department where they work.	H_1 : There is an association between education and the department where they work.
2.	H_0 : There is no association between education and job designation.	H_1 : There is an association between education and job designation.
3.	H_0 : There is no significant difference in the savings before and after joining SIRI.	H_1 : There is significant difference in the savings before and after joining SIRI.
4.	H_0 : There is no significant difference in the Expenditure before and after joining SIRI.	H_1 : There is a significant difference in the Expenditure before and after joining SIRI.
5.	H_0 : There is no difference in the median level of income before and after joining SIRI	H_1 : The median level of income after joining SIRI is greater than the before joining SIRI.
6.	H_0 : There is no difference in the median level of Decision Making before and after joining SIRI	H_1 : The median level of decision making after joining SIRI is greater than the before joining SIRI.
7.	H_0 : There is no difference in the median level of social status before and after joining SIRI	H_1 : The median level of social status after joining SIRI is greater than the before joining SIRI.
8.	H_0 : There is no difference in the median level of confidence before and after joining SIRI	H_1 : The median level of confidence after joining SIRI is greater than the before joining SIRI.
9.	H_0 : The median level of public speaking before joining SIRI is equal to the median level of public speaking after joining SIRI.	H_1 : The median level of public speaking after joining SIRI is greater than the before joining SIRI.
10.	H_0 : There is no difference in the median level of owning asset before and after joining SIRI	H_1 : The median level of owning asset after joining SIRI is greater than the before joining SIRI.

11.	H_0 : There is no difference in the median level of skill development before and after joining SIRI	H_1 : The median level of skill development after joining SIRI is greater than the before joining SIRI.
12.	H_0 : There is no difference in the median level of involvement in the society before and after joining SIRI	H_1 : The median level of involvement after joining SIRI is greater than the before joining SIRI.
13.	H_0 : There is no difference in the median level of consideration for decisions in family matters before and after joining SIRI	H_1 : The median level of consideration for decision after joining SIRI is greater than the before joining SIRI.
14.	H_0 : There is no difference in the median level of freedom to take independent decision before and after joining SIRI	H_1 : The median level of freedom to take independent decision after joining SIRI is greater than the before joining SIRI.
15.	H_0 : There is no difference in the median level of involvement in social development activities before and after joining SIRI	H_1 : The median level of involvement in social development activities after joining SIRI is greater than the before joining SIRI.

Research Methodology

This study examines the effectiveness of SIRI Gramodhyoga Samsthe's initiatives in enhancing women's empowerment and their contributions to social development. The study is based on responses from employees of SIRI Gramodhyoga Samsthe.

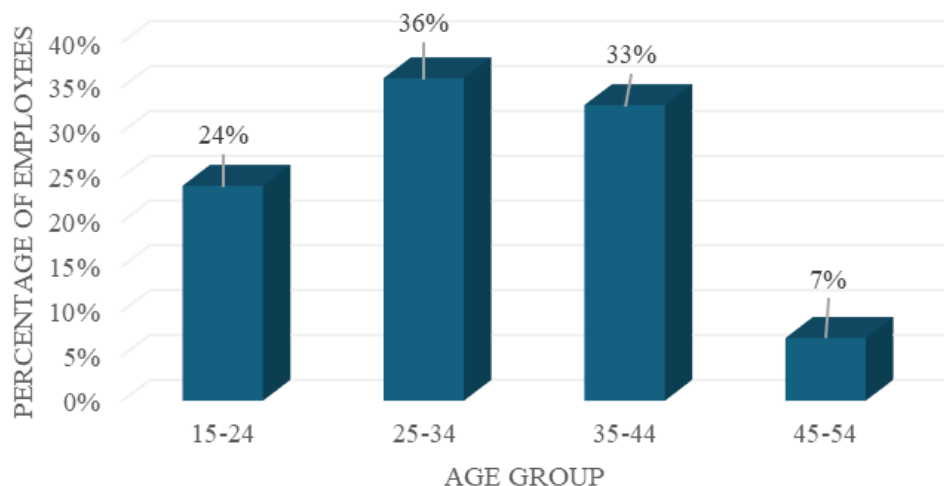
Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire, and a convenience sample of 102 Women respondents was selected for the study. The analysis was carried out using both qualitative and quantitative techniques. The effectiveness of SIRI GramodhyogaSamsthe was assessed through various factors such as savings, expenditure, and the empowerment level of women before and after joining SIRI.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

R and Excel software were used for the analysis. The analyzed data has been presented both graphically and in tabular form. Statistical techniques such as Fisher's exact test and the Wilcoxon signed-rank test were used to interpret the results.

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Fig. 1: Distribution of Employees by Age Group



From the figure1 it can be observed that 69% of the employees of the age group in between 25 to 44. This says that the workforce is primarily composed of young to middle-aged adults.

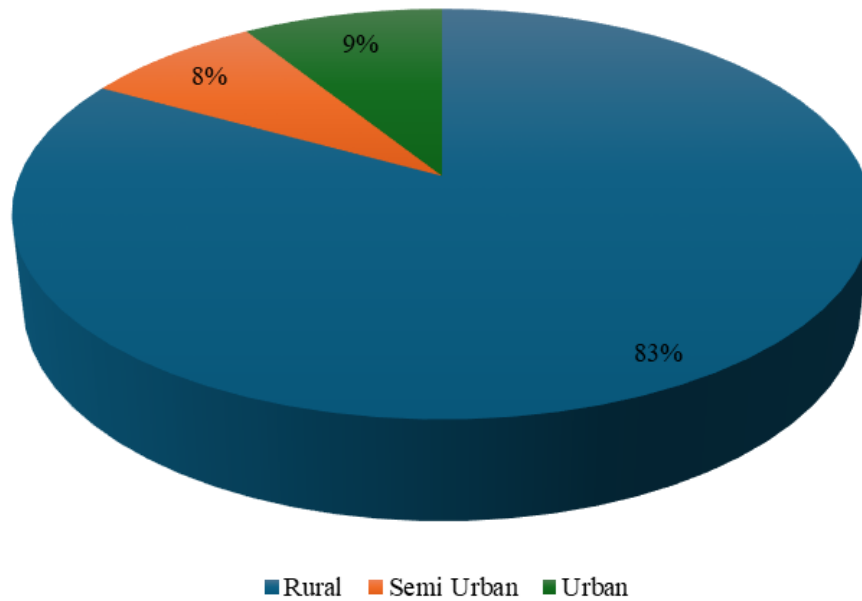


Fig. 2: Distribution of Area of Residency

Figure 2 reveals that geographically, the employee base is overwhelmingly rural, accounting for 83% of the total population, while urban and semi-urban residents make up a very small minority.

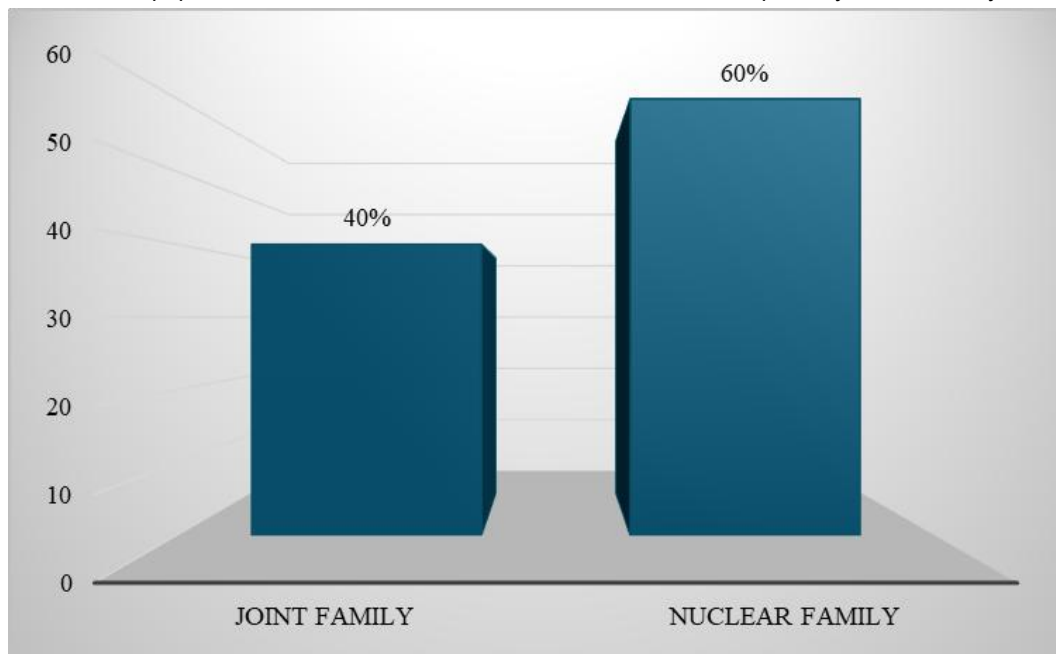


Fig. 3: Distribution of Type of Family

Figure 3 says that, in terms of domestic life, nuclear families are the most common living arrangement at 60%, though a significant 40% still live in joint family structures.

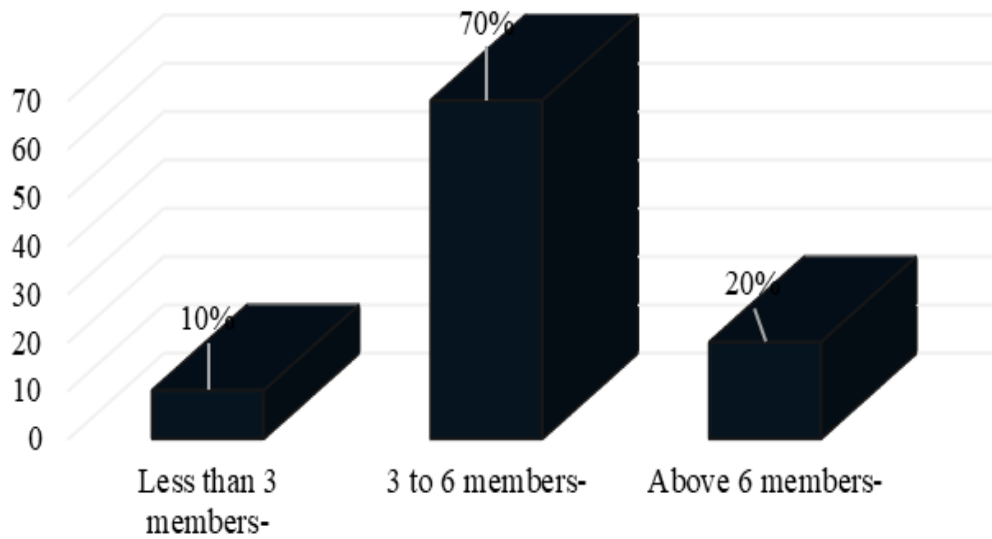


Fig. 4: Distribution of the Size of the Family

From figure 4, most employees reside in medium-sized households, with 70% reporting a family size of 3 to 6 members. Conversely, very large families (above 6 members) and very small families (below 3 members) are much less frequent. Overall, the data depicts a mature, rural-based workforce with stable, mid-sized family responsibilities.

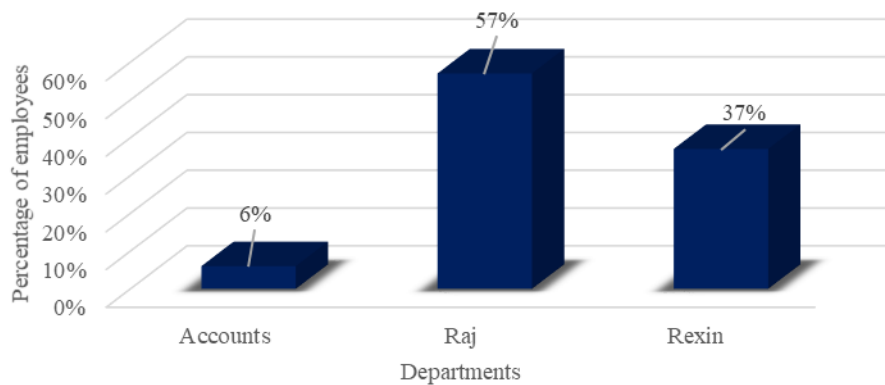


Fig. 5: Distribution of the Departments of the Employees

From figure 5, it can be concluded that the organization is a labor-intensive operation where 57% of employees work in the Textile production (Raajmahal department) and 37% work in Bag Manufacturing (Rexin departments).

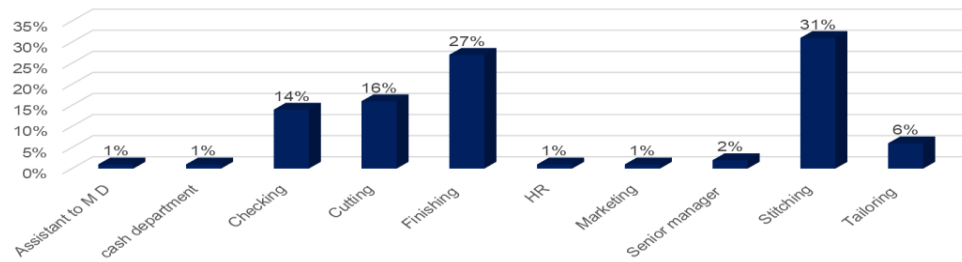


Fig. 6: Distribution of the Designation of the Employees

The workforce is primarily dedicated to production, with Stitching and Finishing roles alone making up 58% of all staff. Administrative, management, and marketing positions are minimal, collectively representing only about 5% of the total headcount.

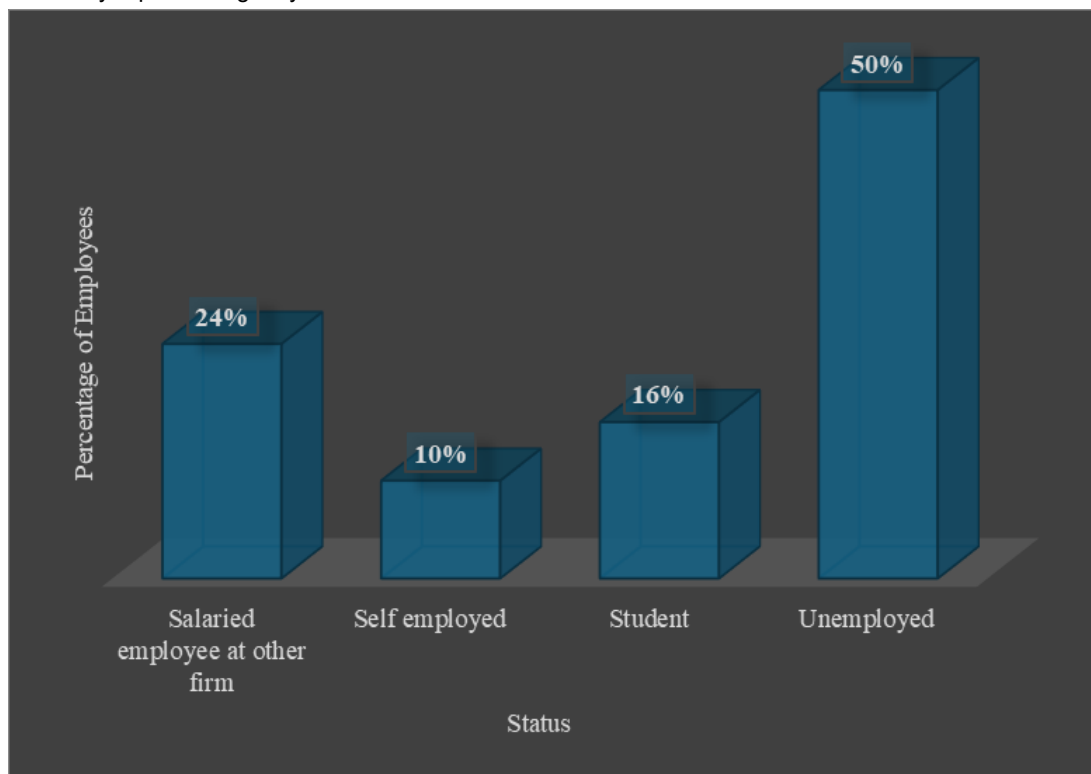


Fig. 7: Distribution of Employment Status Before Joining SIRI

Figure 7 reveals that the majority, 50%, were unemployed, indicating limited access to income-generating opportunities. About 24% were salaried employees in other firms, another 16% were students. Only 10% were self-employed, meaning very few had independent income activities before joining the SIRI.

Here most women lacked employment or self-sustaining work prior to joining SIRI, demonstrating the need for initiatives that create livelihood opportunities and empower rural women socially and economically.

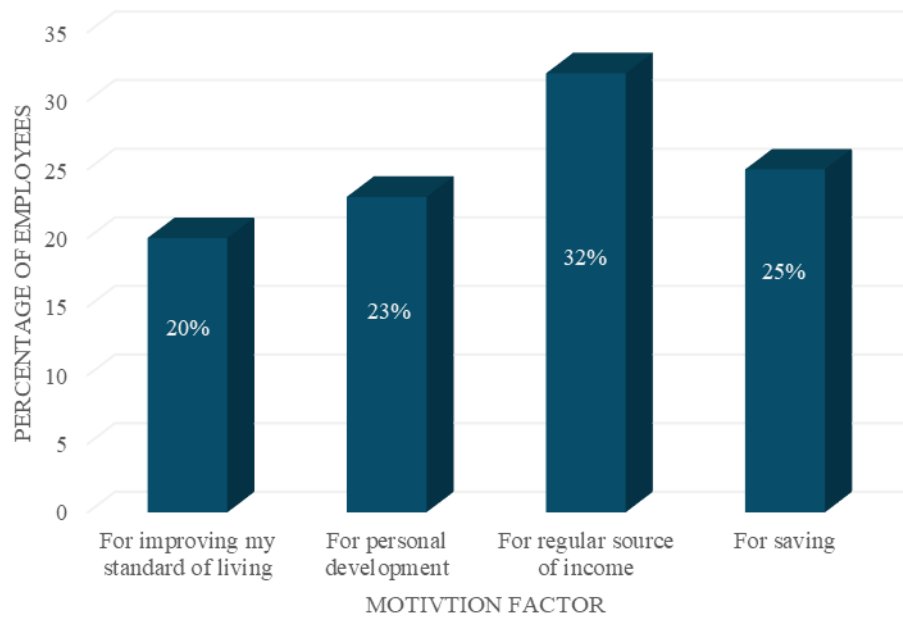


Fig. 8: Distribution of motivation to Join SIRI

Figure 8 says that the primary driver for joining SIRI is economic stability, with 57% of employees motivated specifically by the need for a regular income or the desire to build savings.

Hypothesis 1

H_0 : There is no association between education and the department where they work

H_1 : There is an association between education and the department where they work.

Since the expected frequency of the cell was less than 5, Fisher's exact test been carried out instead of chi-square test association. Here Fisher's exact test reveals that the p-value is 0.01858, which is less than the level of significance. Hence reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is an association between education and the department where they work.

Hypothesis 2

H_0 : There is no association between education and job designation.

H_1 : There is an association between education and job designation.

Here Fisher's exact test has been carried out to test for the association, and it reveals that p-value is 0.02544, which is less than the level of significance. Hence reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is an association between education and job designation.

Hypothesis 3

H_0 : There is no significant difference in the savings before and after joining SIRI.

H_1 : There is significant difference in the savings before and after joining SIRI.

Wilcoxon signed rank test reveals that the p-value 2.832e-16, that is less than the level of significance 0.05. Hence reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is significant difference in the savings before and after joining SIRI. To compare the women employee's savings before and after joining SIRI, box plot has been considered and depicted in figure 9. From fig 9, it can be concluded that the median and overall range of savings are noticeably higher after joining, indicating a positive financial impact. The spread of savings after joining is broader, suggesting that many women significantly increased their savings capacity.

Overall, the visualization suggests that SIRI's initiatives helped enhance the financial stability of women by improving their saving habits and enabling greater economic empowerment.

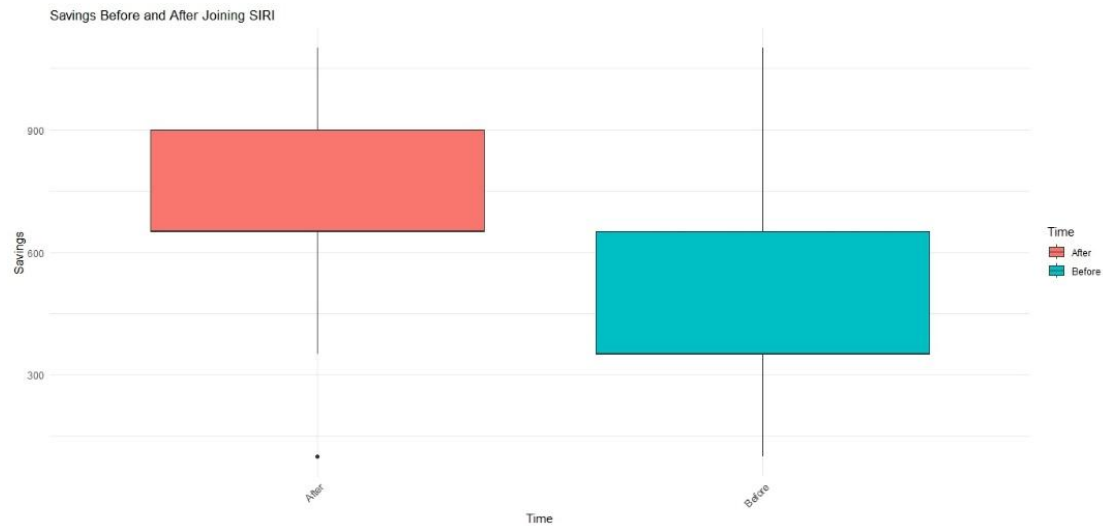


Fig. 9: Box plot of Savings After and Before Joining SIRI

Hypothesis 4

H_0 : There is no significant difference in the Expenditure before and after joining SIRI.

H_1 : There is a significant difference in the Expenditure before and after joining SIRI.

Wilcoxon signed rank test reveals that the p-value $1.123e-13$, that is less than the level of significance. Hence reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant difference in the expenditure before and after joining SIRI. To compare the women employee's expenditure before and after joining SIRI, box plot has been considered and depicted in figure 10. The boxplot shows that women's expenditure increased after joining SIRI. The median and upper range of expenditure after joining are higher, indicating that women gained greater financial capacity and were able to spend more, likely due to increased earnings. Overall, the increase in expenditure reflects improved financial stability and enhanced purchasing power after participating in SIRI's livelihood programs.

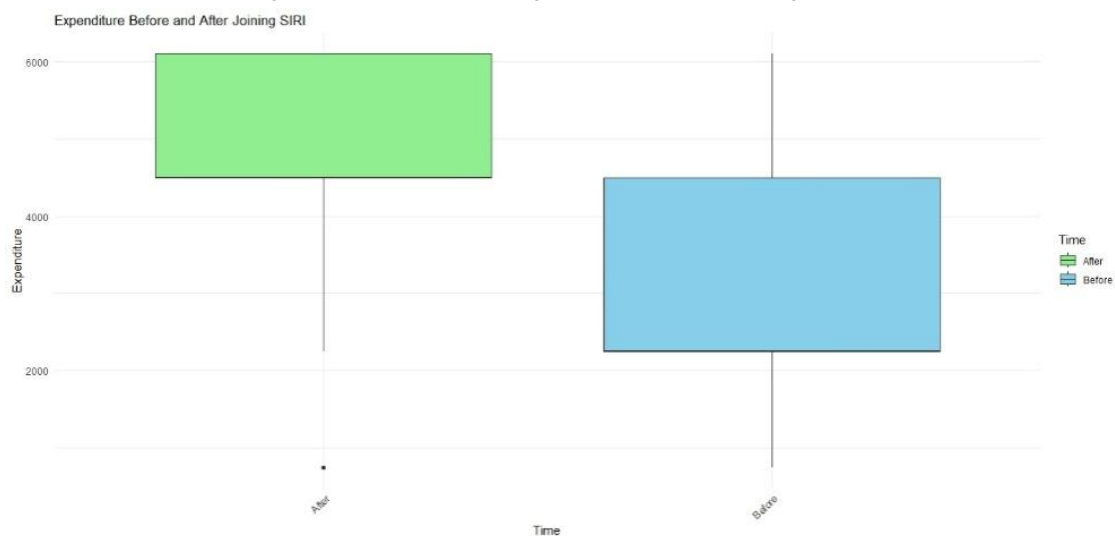


Fig. 10: Boxplot of Expenditure After and Before Joining SIRI

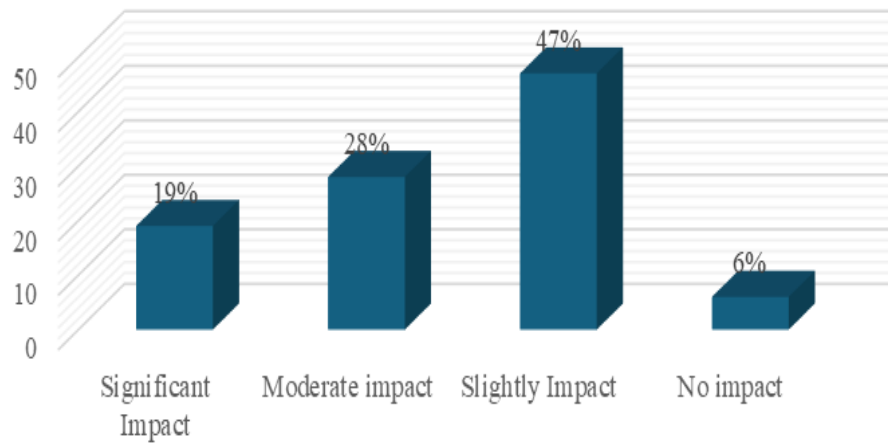


Fig. 11: Impact of Empowerment on Locality

Figure 11 reveals that 50% of respondents reported a slight impact, 30% indicated a moderate impact, and 15% perceived a significant impact, while only 5% felt there was no impact of empowerment on locality.

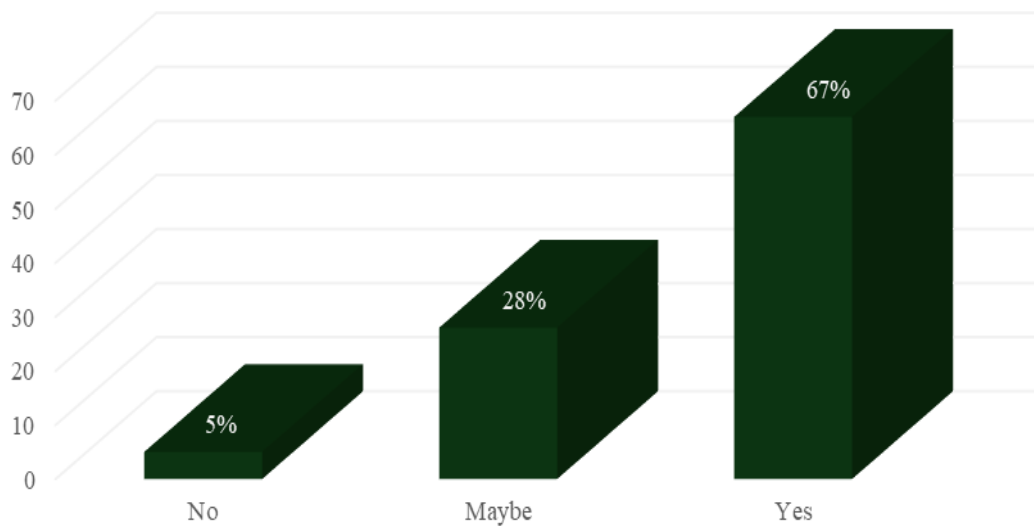


Fig. 12: Personal Empowerment in Society

Figure 12 tells about the impact of personal empowerment on society. 67% of respondents agreed that it has a positive effect, 28% felt it may have an impact, and only 5% believed it has no impact. These results strongly suggest that empowerment initiatives contribute meaningfully to social and community development.

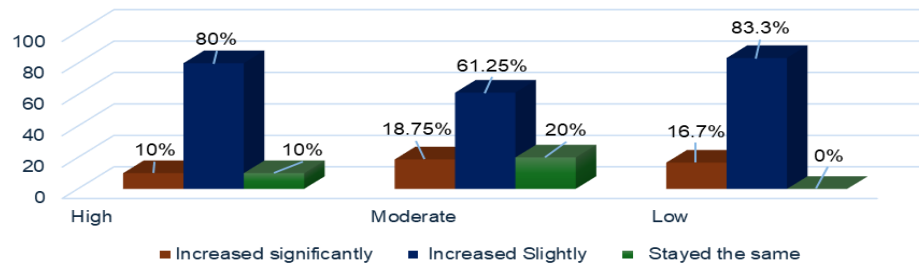


Fig. 13: Empowerment level

Figure 13 compares changes in empowerment levels after joining SIRI. Most of the respondents across all empowerment categories reported that their empowerment increased slightly, indicating consistent but gradual improvement. A significant proportion within moderate and low empowerment groups also experienced a significant increase, suggesting that SIRI was particularly effective for women who initially had lower empowerment levels. Very few respondents indicated that empowerment stayed the same, showing that SIRI's initiatives had a positive overall impact.

Table 2 represents the results of the hypotheses test based on 11 factors to check the effectiveness of SIRI Gramodhyoga Samste before and after joining SIRI. The test considered is Wilcoxon signed rank test.

Table 2: Hypotheses Test Results

Hypothesis	Factor	P-value	Decision	Conclusion
Table1-5	Income Level	1.208e-14	Reject Null	The median level of income after joining SIRI is greater than before joining SIRI.
Table1-6	Decision making	4.066e-16	Reject Null	The median level of decision making is high after joining SIRI.
Table1-7	Social Status	1.137e-14	Reject Null	The median level of social status increased after joining SIRI.
Table1-8	Confidence Level	1.889e-15	Reject Null	The median level of confidence is increased after joining SIRI.
Table1-9	Public Speaking	1.891e-15	Reject Null	The median level of public speaking skill is increased after joining SIRI.
Table1-10	Owning Asset	2.003e-15	Reject Null	The median level of asset owning id high after joining SIRI.
Table1-11	Access to Skill development	1.489e-14	Reject Null	The median level of accession to develop the skill is increased.
Table1-12	Involvement in Community	1.211e-13	Reject Null	The median level of involvement in the community is increased.
Table1-13	Consideration of decision in family matters	1.775e-13	Reject Null	The median level of consideration od decision in the family is increased.
Table1-14	Freedom to take independent decision	4.525e-14	Reject Null	The median level of freedom to take the independent decision is increased.
Table1-15	Involvement in social development	3.322e-15	Reject Null	The median level of involvement in the social development is increased after joining SIRI.

Based on the hypotheses test results for all factors, the p-values for every variable are extremely small (close to zero), indicating statistically significant differences between respondents before and after joining SIRI.

Because all p-values are below the usual significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$), the null hypothesis is rejected in every case. This means that after joining SIRI, the median levels of income, confidence, public

speaking, decision-making ability, social involvement, asset ownership, and empowerment indicators have significantly increased.

Overall, the results clearly suggest that participation in SIRI has had a positive and meaningful impact on economic development, personal empowerment, social inclusion, and decision-making autonomy of the beneficiaries.

Findings

- Most employees (70%) belong to the 25–44 age group, indicating that SIRI mainly engages young and middle-aged women.
- Most employees (83%) come from rural areas, showing that SIRI has a strong rural outreach with minimal urban participation.
- A majority of respondents (60%) live in nuclear families, while a significant proportion (40%) still reside in joint families.
- Most employees (70%) belong to medium-sized families with 3–6 members, suggesting stable household structures.
- Most employees work in textile production (57%), followed by bag manufacturing, indicating that the activities are labour-intensive.
- A majority of the employees are engaged in stitching and finishing activities (58%).
- Half of the respondents (50%) were unemployed before joining SIRI, highlighting its role in generating employment for rural women.
- The primary motivation for joining SIRI was a regular source of income (32%), followed by saving (25%) and personal development (23%).
- Education significantly influences the department and job designation of employees
- Women's savings increased significantly after joining SIRI, indicating improved financial stability.
- Women's expenditure also rose significantly, reflecting higher income and enhanced purchasing power.
- A majority of respondents reported moderate to significant impact on their locality, indicating positive community-level changes.
- Most respondents (67%) agreed that personal empowerment has a positive impact on society, reflecting broader social benefits.
- Economic empowerment is most evident through increased bank savings (76%), indicating improved financial security.
- The hypothesis tests show that for all factors; income, decision-making, social status, confidence, public speaking, asset ownership, education and skill development, community involvement, family decision consideration, independence in decisions, and participation in social development, the median levels significantly increased after joining SIRI. All null hypotheses are rejected, indicating a positive impact of SIRI on these aspects.

Conclusions

The study concludes that SIRI Gramodyoga Samsthe serves a vital role for the socio-economic empowerment of rural women. By strategically engaging the 25–44 age demographic, the organization empowers a productive workforce that was previously underutilized, with 50% of participants being unemployed prior to joining. The transition from unemployment to active participation in income generating activities like textiles and bag manufacturing has not only provided a "regular source of income" but has also fostered a culture of financial discipline through increased savings and financial inclusion. Thus, the empowerment provided by SIRI is multidimensional. SIRI stands as a successful platform for rural intervention, proving that structured capacity building training among rural women can transform unemployed into empowered social contributors for sustainable development.

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