



## TITLE OF THE PAPER: PERSPECTIVE OF MICROFINANCE IN THE EMPOWERMENT OF SHG IN MANIPUR

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### Abstract

Microfinance nowadays encounters challenging experiment of accomplishing financial viability without sacrificing the core objective of empowering weaker section of society. The two methods which are emerging are popularly known as “minimalist” and “integrated”. While minimalist approach emphasizes only on provision of credit, integrated approach gives equal emphasis on capacity building of the clients along with financial services. This paper tries to find the association between development of “agency” or “capacity building” of microfinance clients and their empowerment level by using primary data of 349 microfinance clients from four different organizations using integrated approach for empowering SHG members. The paper accomplishes the development of “agency” plays a significant role in determining the level of empowerment of the clients. It also finds that the purposes and category of the capacity building programmes implemented by each development organization also has a bearing on the level and the dimensions of empowerment level of its clients.

**Key Words:** Micro-Finance, Capacity Building, Agency Development, SHG, Empowerment.

### Introduction

Microfinance is currently considered to be a very strong tool for empowering clients especially belonging to weaker section of society. The facility of access to financial services such as savings and credits are supposed to bring out virtuous twisting in the life of its clients through various interlinked and mutually reinforcing factors. It is expected that the access to financial services will encourage SHG clients to take up economic activities and will unleash their entrepreneurial spirits. The economic freedom along with group action to support gender justice will help women to renegotiate their positions within the households and within community and will empower them in a better way to tackle the strategic life decisions. However it is found that empowerment may not be an automatic consequence of any microfinance programmed. A meager access to financial resources may not lead to empowerment if the client do not have a capability to use these resources in a meaningful way. The significance of ‘capacity building’ programmes or non-financial services cannot be undermined in the empowerment process. The paper aims to evaluate the impact of ‘capacity building’ programmes on the empowerment level of the microfinance clients.

### Microfinance And Empowerment Of clients

The exclusive feature of microfinance is that it has a potential to make a significant impact on lives of millions of poor clients by providing opportunity to overcome socio-economic barriers by giving access to financial services, involving them in income generating activities, improving their bargaining position and decision making power in social and political sphere and making their voice heard to bring out the structural changes in patriarchal economy through collective action. The empowerment approach which had its origin in the experiences of organizations from the working at grass root level from the Third World, focuses on the mobilization of clients by instilling greater self-reliance and enhancement of their economic roles by capacity building and accumulate their control over crucial material and non-material resources (Moser. 1993, Mayoux : 1995, Karl: 1995).

In the broad sense empowerment means extension of freedom of choice and action. It also means increasing one’s authority and controller over the resources and decisions that affect their lives. It is also dissimilar from self-development. Rowlands, J (1997) defines empowerment as a procedure whereby women become able to organize themselves to increase their own self-reliance, to assert their right to make independent choices and to control resources which will assist in challenging and eradicating their own subordination. Empowerment is more closely associated to the people who are powerless due to some socio-economic and cultural barriers in the society of which they are part. The choices of powerless people are extremely limited due to absence of resources and lack of better negotiations with the range of formal and informal institutions. Since this powerlessness is embedded in the institutional relations, the empowerment as an idea also needs to be defined in a broader framework.

Mayoux (1997) states that empowerment is a multi-dimensional and interlinked process of change in power relations for the people who are disempowered and are most deprived. Capacity to make active choices to bring out desirable changes in one’s life has been a central idea of empowerment (Alsop, R. and Heinsohn, N. 2005, Mahmud; 2003). It is a shift from passive acceptance of well-being enhancing aid to one of active participant in attaining it. The degree of empowerment depends on numerous aspects such as asset endowments in items of material, psychological, informational, organizational, social assets,



etc. it is stated by many researchers (Martimex, E. and Glenzer, K. 2005, Lincoln et al. 2002) that any empowerment associated intervention requires development of positive self-image and freedom from physical coercion along with physical resources. The concept of empowerment of the weaker section is grounded in the socio-economic environment in which people live and how they themselves use their local knowledge, resources, creativity to cope with the challenges which they observe to be important. Thus, it is a process that increases the consciousness of the target population by putting values to what they have in their surroundings, in what they do, how they do it and how they can use their indigenous knowledge to sustain themselves independently without outside assistance or intervention (Singh, A. 1999). Hence, any development programme concentrating on empowerment cannot be thrust from the downwards, but has to see what range of choices people have, how the local systems of management can be built and how the target population is involved in decision making.

### **Review of Literature**

In order to comprehend the role of capacity building in empowerment process, it is necessary to understand the process of empowerment. Though most of the researchers approve that empowerment touches various aspects of life, there is no common consensus on whether the process of empowerment should start by bringing about a change within or by raising collective consciousness.

Batliwala (1994) has highlighted that though the empowerment process starts from within, it may get access to new ideas and information from outside to gain new consciousness. She has pointed out that empowerment is not necessarily a result of economic improvement as even rich women have to face discrimination. She firmly trusts that in the process of empowerment women must recognize the ideology that legitimizes male dominance and build up consciousness to take action against it. Empowerment according to Batliwala is the exercise of informed choices within amounting framework of information, knowledge, analysis and processes which enables clients to discover new possibilities.

Oxaal and Baden (1007) also maintained Batliwala's views and state that empowerment corresponds to women challenging existing power structures which subordinate them. They stated that empowerment is necessarily a bottom up process and any organization's policies and structures should be framed to encourage women's participation, acquisition of skills, decision making, capacity building and control over resources. They further stated that essential to empower women comes from the realization that women in developing countries lack control over resources and opportunities to participate in decision making process. This results in having a partial effect of all the development determinations. Thus empowerment strategies are required to bring clients in mainstream programmes.

Rowlands, J. (1997) defines empowerment as a process whereby women become able to organize themselves to upsurge their own self-reliance, to assert their right to make independent choices and to control resources which will assist in challenging and removing their own subordination. She asserts that the perception of 'power' is central to the understanding of empowerment. The concept of 'power' has four dimensions namely, 'Power within' which allows clients to articulate their own aspirations and strategies for change; 'Power to' which enables clients to examine and articulate their collective interests, to organize and to achieve them and to link with other organizations for change the underlying inequalities in access to power and resources which constrain client's aspirations and their ability to achieve them.

Deshmukh Randive, Ranjani K and Murty (2007) define empowerment as a process whereby constraints that impede equal participation are reduced so that the social structure of inequality gradually moves towards becoming a structure of equality. The areas of inequality where variations must be made to move towards equality are various; education, health services, housing, employment, etc. To remove the restraints in these processes of gaining equality, expansion of spaces is required. The space refers to the place/freedom/margin to do what one intends to do. Its allotment is determined by the domestic and macro environment within which the individual works. The restriction or constriction on spaces fetches disempowerment. The resources can be both tangible and intangible. Physical space narrates to woman's ownership/access to / control of immovable or movable property and income. Socio-cultural spaces relates to woman's position within the household and also within household level where in power dynamics within household are determined along with women's admission and control over public offices. Finally the authors talk about mental space which deals with the feeling of freedom that allows a person to think and performance. The expansion of mental space is given more importance as it hints to a feeling of strength and then to an action based on change in perception. Though the expansion of economic and political spaces is essential, it is not a sufficient condition for empowerment by itself. Extension of mental space is also a pre-requisite. It is experimental by the authors that two factors such as collective action and access to information and knowledge lead to expansion of mental space. The factor is most acute to unleash a process of empowerment is knowledge of the structures of 'power within' which the lives are placed and the vital information about rights and duties as a citizen and as a member of family. Such knowledge is likely to bring about variations in self-perception and awareness about oppression and exploitation. Collective deed allows clients to express the injustices they face as a member of larger community. The expansion of physical, economic and political spaces



will lead to expansion of mental spaces, which is likely to tip to socio-cultural empowerment which can be the final stage of empowerment.

In conclusion it can be stated that the process of empowerment may take different courses such as self-awareness, consciousness raising, etc., by raising the 'power within' or by getting access to financial as well as non-financial resources by 'power to' or by raising collective action by development of 'power with'. At the same time it is also seen that development of 'agency' or having control over resources to use them for one's own wellbeing and capacity building to practice the resources productively and are crucial ingredients for attaining empowerment.

### **Rationale of the Present Study**

The two thoughts which are determining microfinance sector at present are known as 'minimalist' or 'credit only' approach and 'integrate' or 'credit plus' approach. The minimalist approach looks at credit as a missing pieces of poverty alleviation and looks empowerment in very narrow terms as economic empowerment (Saharwal, G:2002). Financial self-sustainability method or "credit only" approach states that credit represents a means for economic empowerment. When clients become independent producers and bring in cash resource to the household economy, it enhances their self-confidence and the status within the family. Thus client's empowerment is assumed to be an automatic outcome of micro finance intervention. These minimalist neo-liberal approach emphasizes on setting up viable and financially sustainable credit delivery mechanism which enables the micro finance programme to meet the operational costs. Thus the approach rationalizes in cutting down of other supportive programmes such as training, capacity building etc., large spread of programme to enjoy economies of scale. It adopts that there is a linear relationship between access to credit and lessening of poverty as access to credit will support women's entrepreneurial efforts and self-reliance which will further increase her self-confidence, status and bargaining position within the family. Thus this approach supports neo liberal ideologies of efficient use of resources and minimum state intervention.

The second approach is united or credit plus approach which attempts to deal with the structural causes of poverty through micro-finance delivery. It combines credit Facility with social mobilization, training and education so as to make the most of the impact on empowerment. This non-linear approach of empowerment stresses on increasing the capabilities and capacity to make choices and decrease the vulnerability and dependability of the poor clients. It considers that micro finance is only one of the missing associations and it needs to be supported by border marco-economic policies and social investments. Integrated approach looks at empowerment in a holistic manner in which poverty and weaker position of client is seen not only as lack of economic resources but also as a construct of historical, socio-cultural backgrounds. It goes beyond cumulative income and consumption level of poor to increase capacities and choices of poor. It tries to integrate micro level efforts with bringing out changes in macro policies. Social capital generated by peer pressure may not always have a positive impact as many times it doesn't consent individuals to move out of close circuits and explore new ideas. Secondly short term financial viability may force women to pursue their traditional roles in the economic sphere and may fortify gender bias. Though credit only approach helps to make programme economically feasible and thus has an easy scalability, it may not guarantee empowerment as mere availability of resources without development of capability to use them and having control and decision making ability to use them may not lead to empowerment.

### **Objectives of the Study**

Main objectives of the study are as follows

1. To identify the influence of capacity building programmes / agency on the level of empowerment/satisfaction of microfinance clients.
2. To expose whether difference in applying organization's objectives, and capacity building programme that results in difference affecting the type of empowerment.

### **Methodology Used For the Study**

In order to reach to rational conclusions, the data, collected have been tabulated, and then scientifically analyzed with the support of various statistical techniques. Percentages, mean, standard deviation, regression analysis etc. were used to analyze the data and then, the finding were interpreted and presented in this study. Total empowerment is expected to consist of three dimensions such as economic, self and socio-political. The study uses the data analysis of 349 microfinance clients from four institutions involved in implementing programmes. These four organizations selected for the study are located in valley areas in Manipur state of India. They differ in their objectives, target client profile, policies as well as designing and implementation of capacity building programme.



### Discussion of the Study

The following subsection gives the brief profile of the organizations selected for the research.

#### **Chanura microfinance society (Imphal West district)-**

**Chanura microfinance society (hereinafter CMS)**, started its operation in Imphal West, Manipur, India in 2007. Its CSR (Corporate Social Responsibilities) activities are mainly divided in to three categories such as education, community development and health. The community development department covers microfinance programmes, skill education programmes for youth and awareness programmes for youth and women. Today it has set up more than 110 SHGs having an average 20 members per SHGs.

#### **Socio-Eco Empowerment Pvt. Ltd. (Imphal East district, Manipur)**

**Socio-Eco Empowerment Pvt. Ltd. (hereinafter SEEP)** was established in 2011 in Manipur, India with the objective of uplifting clients mainly by creating awareness in the society about women's issues such as equality and development. The organization spread its activities in number of areas such as establishment of cultural troupe to create mass awareness about women's issues, family counselling centres, awareness campaigns against legal literacy, anti-dowry, education, etc, adolescent sensitization programmes, etc. The main objective of this programme is to address the difficulties of self employed women engaged in the menial task of collecting waste.

#### **Atiya Microfinance (Imphal East district, Manipur)**

Atiya Microfinance has been set up as trust in the year 2012 in Imphal East district, Manipur with the objective of up-liftment of economic and social status of underprivileged class in urban areas such as domestic maids, women belonging to the class of below poverty line, low income groups, etc. The basic purposes of the organization are to increase the consciousness of these women about social and legal rights through political concretization and collective bargaining and bring them under social safety arena through various programmes such as awareness programmes, leadership building, health awareness programmes, self-help groups, domestic advisory councils, reservation for women, etc. The organization believes that helping build self-help groups through microfinance programmes is one effective way to bring and organize clients together for creating further social and political awareness about their rights. Microfinance programme is one of the activities of the organization aimed at mainly to organize clients for binging out collective action.

#### **Leima Thrift and Credit Co-operation Society Ltd (Imphal West district, Manipur)**

**Leima Thrift and Credit Co-operation Society Ltd (hereinafter LTCCS Ltd.)** today provides variety of services to its members via its other branches; it works in the area of economic empowerment of programme. It delivers the small unsecured loans are given for mainly business operations or expansion, education, housing, repayment of old debts and asset creation. It also provides vocational training, job placement programme and works in the area of health and life insurance for its members.

### Finding of the Study

In all four scales were developed to study the impact of urban microfinance on empowerment of clients. Three scales were developed to evaluate the three major components of empowerment such as economic empowerment, self-empowerment and socio-political empowerment. One more scale was develop to assess the impact on 'agency' which comprises the variables which measure the impact on capacity building and gaining control over resources which is a vital step for gaining empowerment.

The **Likert scale** was used to measure the perception of the programme participants ranging from very bad effect (1) to very good effect (5). The variables used for assessing the influence was selected from various studies conducted earlier and the indicators of impact presented in earlier studies.

For measuring economic empowerment, six variables were selected. These were regularity of getting income, security in earnings, decrease in the vulnerability at the times of crisis, reduction in dependence on private sources of finance (money lenders), increase in total monthly expenditure, and upsurge in economic independence.

In all eleven variables were studies for assessing the impact of microfinance on self-empowerment. These were related to decision making power concerning use of income, savings and expenditure, improvement in social status within household and in neighbourhood, improvement in mobility, improvement in self-confidence, self-awareness, leadership qualities, overall decision making abilities and risk abilities. Social and political empowerment was assessed by taking their consciousness level about legal issues, participation in electoral process, and overall collective action.



**Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Microfinance Clients of Selected Shgs**

Sl.no.	Particular	Number	SD
1.	Average age (years)	38.24	9
2.	Average family members	4.83	1.65
3.	Average number of earners per family	1.80	0.86
4.	Average family income (Rs.)	7,157	4960.25
5.	Average income of the clients (Rs.)	1,374.14	1443.98
6.	Average years of association with the programme	4.28	3.00
7.	% of the clients who are illiterate	30.2	-
8.	% of the clients who are educated upto matriculation	24.4	-
9.	% of the clients who are belong to lower social sector	56.00	-
10.	% of the clients who are micro entrepreneurs / self employed	40.8	-
11.	% of the clients who are not having access to formal financial institutions	59.50	-

Source: Personal calculation from primary data.

Agency related variables cover the aspects which aid in capacity building and awareness building process of programme participant which are an essential link for promoting empowerment. As seen in the literature review, access to resources may not always directly link to empowerment unless and until the participant has a control over resources and has an ability to use resources for her own benefit. In all 9 variables are studies to assess the impact on agency of the participants. These were associated to having control over earnings, savings and loans, access to business training and skill development, awareness building related to healthcare, family planning, education of children, etc. Three major components of empowerment and the total empowerment are calculated as per the following:

1. Economic empowerment = summation of all 6 shortlisted variables / 6.
2. Self-empowerment = summation of all 11 shortlisted variables / 11.
3. Socio-political empowerment = summation of all 4 variables / 4.
4. Total empowerment = summation of economic, self and socio-political empowerment / 3.

#### Demographic Profile of the Surveyed Microfinance Client

Table 1 depicts the findings of the socio-economic profile of the sample of microfinance clients.

Most of the programme members married and middle aged. Their level of education is low as around 30 per cent are illiterate and only 24 per cent are educated up to matriculation. Average number of earners per family is 1.8 and average family income is Rs. 7,160/- per month for the family size of on an average 5 members. Nearly 56 per cent of the participants belong to socially weaker section of the society. Nearly 60 per cent of the participants did not have any access to formal financial institutions previously joining the programme. Thus they were heavily depending on private sources of finance and their friends and relatives for satisfying their financial needs.

**Table 2: Level of Total Empowerment of the Surveyed Microfinance Clients as Per Years of Association Category**

Sl. No.	Years of association	Number	Mean	S.D.	S.E.	Minimum	Maximum
1	Up to 1 year	75	3.27	3.23	3.31	3.00	4.08
2	2 to 4 years	133	3.74	3.70	3.78	3.06	4.76
3	More than 4 yrs	141	3.91	3.87	3.94	3.26	4.63
4	Total	349	10.92(3.71)	10.8(3.68)	11.03(3.74)	9.32(3)	13.47(4.76)

Source: Personal calculation using SPSS.

As empowerment is along drawn process which comprises consciousness rising of the clients, it is presumed that the level of empowerment would rise as per the years of association of the microfinance clients with the organization and the programme. Therefore, the programme clients are distributed in three categories such as: 1) Year of association only up to 1 year, 2) Year



if association from 2 years to 4 years and 3) Year of association more than 4 years. The data related to empowerment level is presented in table 2. The whole level empowerment which is a mean of all the three dimensions of the empowerment is found out to be 3.71 which have ranged from minimum 3 to maximum 4.76. It has increased from 3.27 to 3.91 over the three categories of participants distributed as per the years of association. The ANOVA test displays that the difference across three categories is statistically significant ( $P < .05$ ).

### Factors Affecting Empowerment-

Regression analysis was used to understand the impact of independent factors such as agency, years of association and total amount of loan taken by the clients on the total empowerment. It is presented in table 3.

**Table 3: Regression Analysis of Total Empowerment**

Sl.no.	Independent factors	B	Beta	Sig
1.	Constant	1.558	-	.000
2.	Years of association	0.018	0.142	.000
3.	Total loan amount taken by participant	.000	.147	.000
4.	Level of agency	.553	.637	.000

Source: Personal calculation using SPSS.

### Model summary

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square
1	1.558*	.575	.573

\*Predictions: (constant), years of association with SHG, amount of loan, agency

Total empowerment = + 1 (Year of association) + 2 (Total loan amount) + 3 (Agency).

Total empowerment = 1.558 + 0.142 (years of association) + 0.147 (total loan amount) + 0.64 (agency)

It states that total empowerment is influenced positively by all the independent factors designated in the equation. The empowerment would vary by 14 percent with increase in years of association, 15 percent with total loan amount, and 64 percent with the level of agency.

**Table 4: Organization Wise Level of Agency of the Surveyed Microfinance Clients**

Sl.no.	Organization	Number	Mean	S.D.	S.E.	Minimum	Maximum
1	CMS	97	3.81	.405	.029	3	5
2	SEEP	70	4.10	.358	.030	3.22	4.78
3	Atiya finance	58	3.46	.299	.027	3	4.44
4	LTCCS Ltd.	50	3.72	.346	.034	3.11	4.44
	Total	275	15.09(3.8)	1.408(.424)	0.12(.018)	12.33(3)	18.66(5)

Source: Personal calculation using SPSS.

**Table 5: Organization Wise Level of Economic Empowerment of the Microfinance Clients**

Sl.no.	Organization	Number	Mean	S.D.	S.E.	Minimum	Maximum
1	CMS	97	3.91	.400	.028	3.17	4.83
2	SEEP	70	3.86	.340	.028	3.00	4.50
3	Atiya finance	58	3.84	.427	.039	3.17	4.67
4	LTCCS Ltd.	50	4.00	.491	.049	3.17	5.00
	Total	275	15.6(3.9)	1.65(.41)	.144(.017)	12.51(3)	19.00(5)

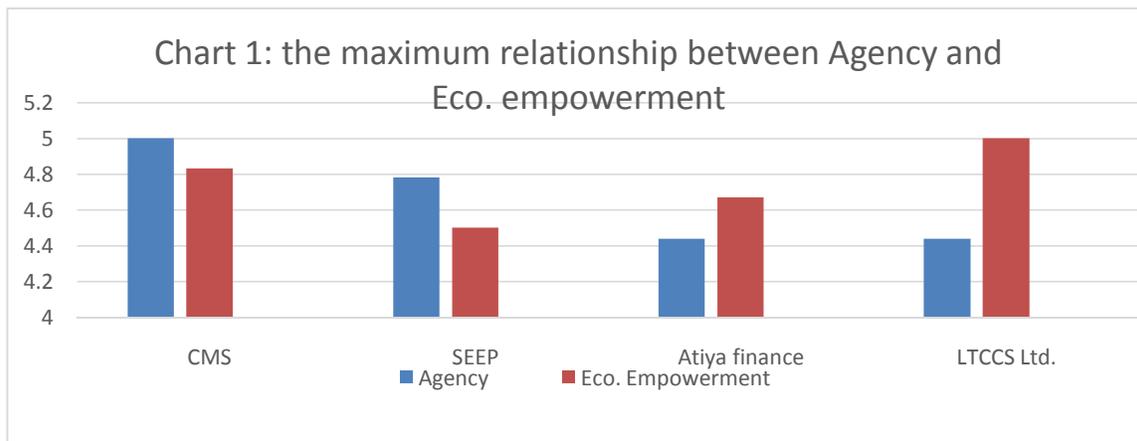
Source: Personal calculation using SPSS.

Agency or access to capacity building and awareness building is initiate to be most important variable having impact on total empowerment. The adjusted R square value is 0.57 which is significant.



### Organization and Agency

Four organizations selected in the study implement diverse capacity building and awareness building programmes for their members. These programmes differ as per the objectives and policies of the organization, requirements of the participants as well as the resources available with the organizations. Agency has established to have a very significant relationship with the level of empowerment. Hence an attempt is made to analyses the perceptions of the participants related to the opportunity verified by the organization wise comparison (presented in Table 4) is made by taking only those clients who have year of association for more than one year. Total average indicator of development of capacity building has been positive (3.80). The minimum is 3 and maximum is 5. The maximum value of agency is originated in SEEP participants (4.10) and least is found in Atiya Finance (3.46). There is a noteworthy different between four organization in the agency level ( $P < .05$ ). This relationship between the agency and empowerment of clients is displayed in chart 1. It can be understood that barring the exception of Atiya finance, agency and empowerment level of the clients go hand in hand. Higher level of agency in some organization like SEEP and CMS, also portrays higher level of empowerment of the clients.



Source: Author's calculation from field survey.

Organization wise level of Economic, Self, Socio-Political empowerment of clients-

Organization wise comparison of economic, self, socio-political and total empowerment (present in Table 5, Table 6, Table 7 and Table 8) is complete by taking only those clients who have year of association for more than one year.

**Table 6: Organization Wise Level of Self-Empowerment of the Surveyed Microfinance Clients**

Sl.no.	Organization	Number	Mean	S.D.	S.E.	Minimum	Maximum
1	CMS	97	3.97	.369	.026	2.86	4.79
2	SEEP	70	4.00	.387	.032	3.0	4.64
3	Atiya finance	58	3.94	.405	.037	3.14	4.86
4	LTCCS Ltd.	50	3.93	.448	.045	3.00	4.86
	Total	275	15.84(3.96)	1.60(.396)	0.14(.016)	12.0(2.86)	19.15(4.86)

Source: Personal calculation using SPSS.

**Table 7: Organization Wise Level of Socio-Political Empowerment of the Microfinance Clients**

Sl.no	Organization	Number	Mean	S.D.	S.E.	Minimum	Maximum
1	CMS	97	3.58	.377	.027	3.00	4.75
2	SEEP	70	3.83	.552	.046	3.00	5.00
3	Atiya finance	58	3.63	.424	.039	3.00	4.75
4	LTCCS Ltd.	50	3.34	.356	.035	3.00	4.00
	Total	275	14.38(3.6)	1.709(.46)	.147(.019)	12.00(3)	18.50(5)

Source: Personal calculation using SPSS.

The whole average level of economic empowerment of the experienced or mature participants (having associated with the program for more than one year) is 3.90 ranging from minimum 3 to maximum 5. The maximum level of average economic empowerment is originate in LTCCS Ltd (4.00) and minimum is found in Atiya finance (3.84). As organization has stimulated



its clients to use loans for productive purposes and a majority of the participants of LTCCS are micro entrepreneurs running their own business, it is natural that most of them have used loans taken through the programme for their economic wellbeing. The ANOVA test displays that the difference between the four organizations is statistically significant ( $P < .05$ ), which states that organization's policies and programmes influence the economic empowerment of the participants.

The average level of self-empowerment of the matured participants is found out to be 3.96 which range from minimum 2.86 to maximum 4.86. The maximum level of self-empowerment is found in SEEP participants (4.00) and least is found in LTCCS (3.93). The various capacity building programmes realized by SEEP related to education, health, sanitation, leadership development focus mainly on development of self-awareness and self-development of rag pickers which is reflected in the high level of self-empowerment. The ANOVA test displays that there is no significant difference across the four organization ( $P > 0.05$ ). It advocates that irrespective of the differences in organization objectives and strategies, self-empowerment is the natural outcome of the microfinance programme.

The average level of socio-political empowerment of surveyed mature participants is 3.61 which range from minimum 3 to maximum 5. In comparison with the level of economic and self-empowerment it is institute to be significantly less. The level of socio-political empowerment is found to be higher in SEEP participants followed by Atiya finance participants. It is seen that SEEP participants who are mainly women rag pickers have benefited substantially through collective action and with support of the organization in reducing their economic exploitation and getting advantage from legal awareness. Similarly Atiya finance has absorbed on building gender and social awareness through variety of social actions such as rallies, cultural events, etc. In both the organization the clients who belong to lower social strata i.e. rag pickers and domestic maids are more active in all the social action as compared to other participants. The ANOVA test shows that the difference across the four organizations is significant which recommends that organization's objectives and policies play a vital role in building socio-political empowerment.

**Table 8: Organization Wise Level of Total Empowerment of the Surveyed Microfinance Programme Clients**

Sl.no.	Organization	Number	Mean	S.D.	S.E.	Minimum	Maximum
1	CMS	97	3.82	.299	.021	3.25	4.60
2	SEEP	70	3.90	.357	.030	3.14	4.56
3	Atiya finance	58	3.80	.366	.033	3.13	4.76
4	LTCCS Ltd.	50	3.76	.366	.036	3.06	4.54
	Total	275	15.28(3.82)	1.388(.344)	0.12(.014)	12.58(3.06)	18.46(4.76)

Source: Personal calculation using SPSS.

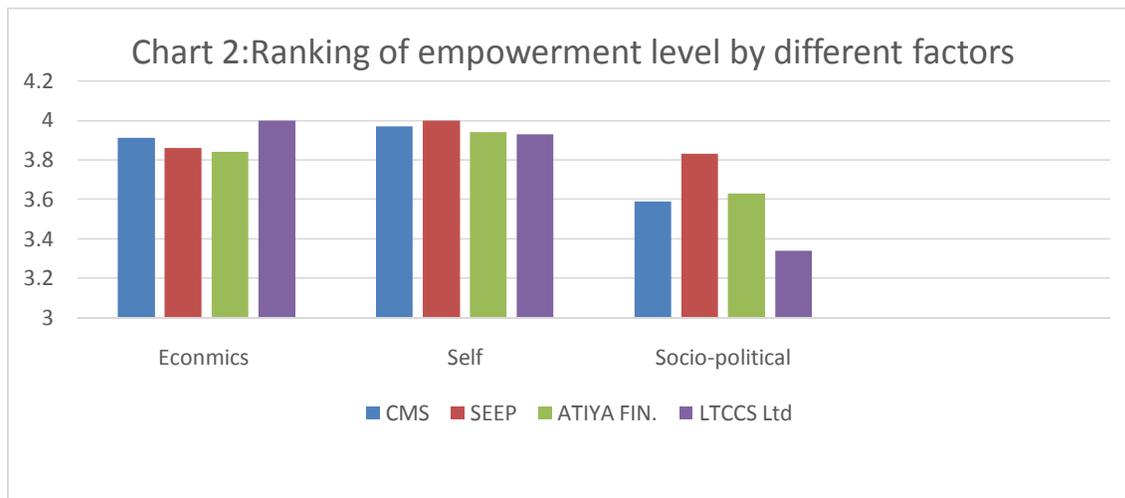
The overall average level of empowerments measured in the study is positive. The average values are as follows:

1. Economic empowerment – 3.90
2. Self empowerment – 3.96
3. Socio-political empowerment – 3.61
4. Total empowerment (summation of all three) – 3.82

**Table 9: Ranking of Empowerment Level of Four Organizations**

Empowerment	CMS	SEEP	Atiya finance	LTCCS Ltd.	Total
Economic	3.91	3.86	3.84	4.00	3.90
Self	3.97	4.00	3.94	3.93	3.96
Socio-political	3.59	3.83	3.63	3.34	3.61
Total	3.82	3.90	3.80	3.76	3.82

Source: Author's calculation from above table using SPSS



Source: Author's calculation from field survey.

It can be seen that the maximum value is found in self-empowerment (3.96) and the minimum value is found in socio-political empowerment (3.61). There is a significant difference in the empowerment levels across the organizations ( $P < 0.05$ ). The maximum level of empowerment is found in SEEP followed by CMS.

### Conclusions

1. The study tried to check two hypotheses. First hypothesis was that capacity building plays a significant role in attractive the level of empowerment of the microfinance clients. It was verified with the help of regression analysis which stated that agency is one of the most impacting variables on empowerment. The organization wise analysis also showed that the level of empowerment is positively related to the capacity building labors of the organizations.
2. The second hypothesis was that the objectives, policies and the programmes executed by executing organizations have a bearing on the type of empowerment or the dimension of empowerment of its clients. Four different organizations designated for the study focus on different dimensions of the empowerment. CMS emphasizes on self-empowerment. SEEP attentions on self as well as socio-political empowerment. Atiya finance mainly focusses on socio-political empowerment whereas LTCCS has a strong objective to build economic empowerment. These objectives and policies can be seen by the capacity building programmes launched by the respective organizations. It can be resolved that though self-empowerment comes out as a natural outcomes of any microfinance programme, the organization's policies and objectives have strong impact on economic and socio-political empowerment. It is understood that level of economic empowerment is significantly higher in LTCCS and level of socio-political empowerment is higher in SEEP and Atiya finance.

### Suggestions and Recommendations for Improving the Level of Empowerment

1. As one of the major objectives of any microfinance programme is empowerment of clients, it is suggested that capacity building of the clients should be given a high priority. The non-financial services in terms of various kinds of training programmes such as business training, skill up gradation, communication and leadership development, exposure trips, networking, awareness building, etc play a chief role in developing the confidence level of the clients to have a control over resources and use the resources for their own benefit.
2. It is also perceived from the study that the level of empowerment of the clients moves positively with the years of association with the programme. It emphasizes that empowerment is a long drawn process which comprises self-realization and consciousness raising. It is suggested that implementing organization should highlight more on repeat loan and retaining old clients rather than concentrating on getting new clients in order to scale up for economic viability.
3. As seen earlier, the objectives and policies of the executing organizations have impact on the type or dimension of empowerment on its clients. The impact can be improved if organizations are clear in mentioning these objectives right from the beginning and member the changes on various parameters from time to time.



4. One of the restraint of microfinance organizations is implementing capacity building programmes is lack of experience in the area. It is suggested that the implementing organizations can partner with other development institutions which are involved in training and capacity building and take benefit of their expertise in this area.

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