

Research Article

## Economic Empowerment of Women Working in Khadi Village Industries (KVI) in Aligarh

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### ABSTRACT

Empowerment is comprehensive and multi-dimensional. It has cognitive, economic, social, and political dimensions. Economic empowerment is to make women take economic decisions and act on them. Women are the nucleus of a family and responsible for change, transformation and mobilisation. Acknowledging this fact and also women's individuality, government make interventions for their economic empowerment. Khadi and Village Industries (KVI) is a similar intervention for economic empowerment of marginalised women and other groups. It is an amalgamation of *Gandhian* philosophy of self-reliance and sustainability. It is significant to study KVI intervention as it is the oldest movement of mass-mobilisation and recognition of marginalised women. It intends to acknowledge women's capacity of balance and contribution to their family economy. The purpose of this study was to analyse the role of KVI intervention in the economic empowerment of rural women. The objectives of the study were to explore the demographic profile of women working with KVI and to measure the economic empowerment of women through KVI interventions. The study locale was Aligarh. A sample of 120 participants was selected randomly. The data was collected through semi-structured interview scheduled under the guidelines provided by the International Centre for Research on Women (Golla, Malhotra, Nanda, & Mehra, 2011) (ICRW, 2011). As per ICRW there are three key indicators of economic empowerment (Reach and Process Indicators; Economic Advancement Indicators; and Agency or Power Indicators). For the purpose of the study, power indicator was selected. Tabulation and representation of data were done through measures of central tendency. Data was analysed through a qualitative approach. Due to intervention there was less gender segregation of work, more equity of domestic loads and contribution of other members in household work. Hence, along with providing avenues for income generation KVI is also empowering marginalised rural women.

**Keywords:** Empowerment, Economic Empowerment, Women, Khadi, Village Industries, Work

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## INTRODUCTION

Economic empowerment of women through Khadi and Village Industries (KVI) intervention means the steps taken by the government as intervention for the marginalised rural women for their economic empowerment. Economic empowerment is the capacity of women to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways which recognise the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth (Eyben *et al.*, 2008). Economic empowerment increases women's access to economic resources and opportunities including jobs, financial services, property and other productive assets, skills development and market information. A woman is economically empowered when she has both the ability to succeed and advance economically and the power to make and act on economic decisions. To *succeed and advance economically* means women need the skills and resources to compete in markets, as well as have fair and equal access to economic institutions. To *have the power and agency* is to benefit from economic activities, women need to have the ability to make and act on decisions and control resources and profits. Economic empowerment is one of the most powerful routes for women to achieve their potential and advance their rights. Since women make up the majority of the world's poor and marginalised, meeting development goals requires addressing women and their economic empowerment. National economies lose out when a substantial part of the population cannot compete equitably or realise its full potential (Golla *et al.*, 2011). If women have the right skills and opportunities, they can also help in businesses and markets will eventually grow.

KVIs are an amalgamation of Gandhian philosophy of self-reliance and sustainability (Verma, 2012). The handloom industry was still the largest employer in the country after agriculture, with over 13 million weaver families drawing sustenance from it apart from the loom and reel makers, dyers, warp winders, sizers and other support specialists (Krishnakumar, 2003). KVI has a wider social and economic objective. It aims to create employment opportunities in the non-farm sector in the rural areas in the form of wages/earnings which are, at least, comparable to the prevailing levels of wages in the farm sector during the non-peak season (Social objective); to produce saleable articles to provide services for which there is effective demand (Economic objective); and to support rural development in its widest sense and to improve the quality of life (Wider objective) (KVIC, 2009). Khadi movement was not only a mass mobilisation movement against anti-imperialist struggle; it was also a social movement of recognising

women's capacity as economical being (Bayly, 1986). KVIs generate avenues of employment by utilising locally available raw material and manpower. Rural industrialisation provides clinical remedies to many socio-economic ills prevalent in rural society. KVIs have a capacity to create more employment opportunities with low investment and shorter gestation period (Thakur, 1985; Bharde, 1972).

According to Indian perspective, women are the bearers of culture, traditions, norms and family integrity. Women who are economically empowered contribute more to their families, societies and national economies. It is found that women invest their income in children and family welfare providing a route to sustainable family development. Their work and family interface provides the opportunity of interplay. The woman at work influences woman at home. Their ideologies, perspectives and personality are challenged. This marks a positive change in the family system and family dynamics. Further, the change in their ideologies instils the changes in community and so on (Hareven, 1976). The absence of a democratic context has contributed to slow progress in empowering women, particularly in South Asia. Integrated development, economic empowerment and consciousness rising are needed to be analysed. The reason for women's powerlessness is poverty and lower access to resources, economic vulnerability and subordination within patriarchal societies and socioeconomic inequalities (Batliwala, 1994). Motivation and conscientisation strategy is effective in empowering marginalised women. Awareness generation and motivation along with economic intervention are required for their welfare (Sakuntala, 1999).

Gopinath (2011) suggested that any programme offered to 'protect and promote' traditional industries either in the name of promoting 'employment generation' or in the name of 'preserving the cultural capital' of traditional industries needs to be judged with the yardstick of whether it is creating conditions of 'occupational interlocking' and 'consequent deprivation' for the 'marginalised groups' in their 'socio-economic mobility' or not. Further, it also needs to adhere to some of the basic tenets of providing 'sustainable livelihood' to people. Further, The Fawcett Society (1997) opined four Cs – Culture, Childcare, Cash and Confidence – of the problems which women often face in the work force participation. The issue of women's economic aspect and their status in society can only be dealt through the economic empowerment. The purpose of the study was to study the economic empowerment brought by the government through KVI interventions. The objectives of the study were to explore the demographic profile of women working with KVI and to study the role of KVI in economic empowerment of women workers. It is significant to learn about KVI interventions because it is the oldest philosophy of sustainability and self-reliance of marginalised. Secondly, it was started with respect to the realisation of marginalised rural women as economical

beings. Lastly, it was the successful attempt of gaining *gram swaraj* which would have been impossible without women being self-reliant.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in the Aligarh district of Uttar Pradesh. It is at a distance of 130 km from Delhi and has a good connectivity of roads and railways. Along with being an educational hub, it reverberates various business activities like lock, carpet, bakery, textile (Khan, 2003), KVIs and a number of other industries. For the purpose of the study, Khadi Village Industries Commission (KVIC) was selected as the representative of KVI. The KVIC is a statutory body established by an Act of Parliament No. 61 of 1956, as amended by Act No. 12 of 1987 and Act No. 10 of 2006. In April 1957, it took over the work of former All India Khadi and Village Industries Board (KVIC, 2009). KVIC has its district head office at Banadevi thana, in Aligarh city, with 21 other centres at different parts of the rural areas. Aligarh was selected as locale for following reasons:

- Aligarh district was covered by KVI schemes.
- It has 21 centres at present in the district.
- These centres provide employment to all and majorly women.

In Aligarh district following are the KVI centres: Bannadevi, Jattari, Tappal, Khair, Gonda, Chandaus, Iglas, Sasni, Bishawa, Mursan, Sikandra-Rao, Medhu, Harduaganj, Atrauli, Gazmabad, Bijauli, Gangiri, Charra, Gadiyaganj, Jawa, and Rasal Singh Nagar. From which Bannadevi, Harduaganj, Rasal Singh Nagar and Jawa were selected purposively because of the following reasons:

- (i) They covered maximum number of houses.
- (ii) They had maximum numbers of women KVI workers.
- (iii) They are a big production centre.

A sample of 120 women was selected randomly. Thirty women from each centre were selected through the list of employees provided by the KVI officials at each centre. The data was collected through interview schedule under the guideline provided by International Centre for Research on women by Golla *et al.* (2011). Accordingly among the three key indicators provided (Reach and Process Indicators; Economic Advancement Indicators; and Agency or Power Indicators), the power indicator was selected with its sub-categories:

- control over assets,
- decision-making,
- autonomy and mobility,
- self-confidence

- gender norms, and
- gender roles/responsibilities.

Tabulation and representation of data were done through measures of central tendency. Data was analysed through the qualitative approach. The criterion was experience of women, their feelings and satisfaction.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section is divided as per the following objectives:

- Profile of women working with KVI,
- Role of KVI in economic empowerment of women workers.

### Profile of Women Working With KVI

Profile of women working with KVI was divided into sections relevant for the study under the following categories:

#### Age

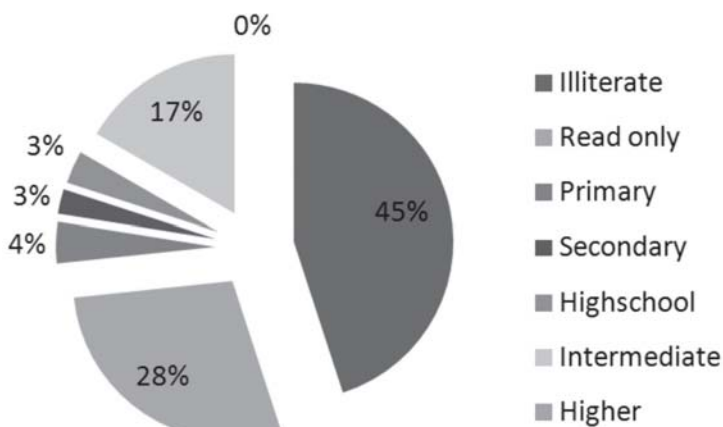
The age structure of women working in KVI is represented in Table 1. The majority of women belonged to a working age group i.e. 15–64 years of age, especially to 35–64 years of age. During this age-group women perform multiple roles. They are wife, mother, daughter and daughter-in-law, sister and sister-in-law, etc. After KVI intervention role of breadwinner was also added. The interface of these roles makes women an agent of change. Hareven (1976) also supports the fact that the changes that have occurred in the family over time have occurred in response to the changing behaviour of wives and mothers. They are a significant organism of family ecology and responsible for interchanges between the ecosystems.

#### Educational Qualification

From data it was established that 45 per cent of women were illiterate (Figure 1). Among 120 women only 28 per cent were able to read only. Only 37 per cent

Table 1: Age of the respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Below 15	0	0
15–24	12	10
25–34	48	40
35–64	56	46.67
Above 64	4	0.03



**Figure 1: Educational status of the respondents**

were educated formally. One of KVI aims was to provide income to those people who are less educated or illiterate or marginalised women. KVI provides vocational education and training to workers. Education helps to change their perspective and makes them more liberal, aware and open-minded (Sakuntla, 1999). Respondents were satisfied and motivated with initiatives taken by the KVI. Even they also accepted that their way of thinking has changed and they are more open. It is supported by their initiatives of enrolling girl child in schools, participating in community works along with men and holding administrative posts.

### **Training in Addition to Education**

As a part of the developmental programs for KVI, the government has organised various training programs to train the rural folk. In the study it was found that 100 per cent workers are trained for a minimum of 10 days and maximum of 30 days (as per Table 2). According to Bartel (2000) found that training leads to improvement in job performance. The present study found the same. It was reported by respondents that training helped them to acquaint and improve their

**Table 2: Training period of respondents**

No. of days	Frequency	Percentage
0–10	13	13
10–20	24	24
20–30	63	63
30–40	0	0

style of work. Even the officials said that training relatively improves their job performance.

### Marital Status

Majority of women were married or widow who opted for KVI as a source of income (Table 3). It was inferred that in rural society, working of unmarried girls is not encouraged and divorce cases are rarely found. On the contrary, KVI encouraged unmarried women to work by provision of work from home which blends with social norms of rural society.

**Table 3: Marital status of the respondents**

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Unmarried	20	16
Married	83	69.16
Divorced	0	0
Widow	17	14.16

### Nature of the Family

From Table 4, it was concluded that there was more prevalence of joint family than nuclear family. There were 6–10 members in majority of the families. Size of the family portrays the socio-economic status in rural society, like, joint families are considered of higher status than nuclear families. Joint families provided support to women by sharing their work load and responsibility. Even the contribution of each members earning increases the family income. So, the inputs or the resources have increased.

### Personal Income

From Table 5, it was deduced that the amount earned was meagre but it helped them to supplement their family income. The support was qualitatively more

**Table 4: Family information**

No. of members	Frequency
0–5	14
6–10	49
11–15	19
16–20	18
21–25	6

Table 5: Personal income

Income (rupees)	Frequency
0–250	0
250–500	1
500–750	4
750–1000	18
1000–1250	33
1250–1500	13
1500–1750	29
1750–2000	6
2000–2250	0
2250–2500	16

significant. The income was dependent upon the amount of *pooni* made by women workers. It was paid as two rupees per *pooni*. It also reflects the variations in working hours of women workers which depend upon the time available to them. Because of this flexibility KVI is popular among women. Secondly, as a result of earning, women are getting empowered. Now, they can decide what to do, when to do and how to do, with their own money. The dependency is gradually decreasing. Hence, the financial resources and the decision making have changed.

### Family Income

Majority families were dependent on agriculture. There were big as well as small farmers. From Table 6, it was implied that maximum respondents' family were of small farmers. It supports the finding of Krishnakumar (2003) which also found that agriculture sector is the largest employer. Though agriculture is their main source of income it also has gestation periods which make farmers seasonally unemployed. During this time KVI earnings and other earnings help them in their family survival. There is a mutual relationship of demand and supply among KVI, women and its environment. Women and its environment demand employment and services and provide raw material and labour whereas KVI demands labour, raw material and market and provides employment, services and products. Therefore, the mutual relationship forms a system.

### Economic Empowerment of Women working with KVI

Economic empowerment of women working with KVI was analysed by their experiences and feelings under prescribed subsections of ICRW.

**Table 6: Family income**

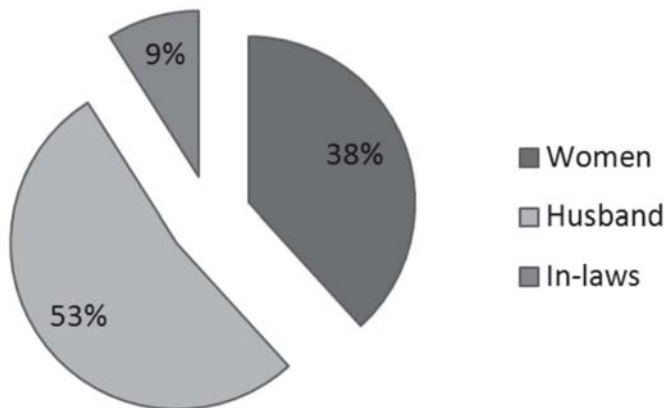
Income (rupees)	Frequency
0–2000	8
2000–4000	27
4000–6000	30
6000–8000	43
8000–10,000	12

**Women Ownership**

Less women (38%) owned houses than men (53%) as depicted in Figure 2. It was concluded that ownership of the house was still in the name of men. After KVI interventions women are becoming aware of initiatives and schemes that government provides for women like, compensation in registry amount for women, shelter schemes, etc.

**Personal Income of Women and Share in Family Income and Control Over Their Expenditure**

Income of women workers family was a sum of income earned by women and income of the other family members. The expenditure pattern of women portrayed that women spent more on food than clothing and other needs. Their education expenditure was less as their wards were studying in local government schools. Their housing expenditure was also less as they belonged to joint families and expenditure was equally distributed among them. Their clothing expenditure was controlled by utilisation of their skills. Their entertainment and communication



**Figure 2: Ownership of house**

expenditure was marginal. It was observed that there was a change in their income and expenditure pattern. So, their income and expenditure pattern revealed that money was used to get the nutritious food and rest expenditures were controlled by utilising human and community resources. The reason behind was KVI training programmes that taught them to handle their finances in a better way. It was deduced that personal income of KVI women acted as a supplementary income and also gave them more power to participate in economic decision making. As stated by Bayly (1986) that the khadi movement was a movement of recognising women's economic capacity.

### Decision-making

Women's involvement in household decision making was analysed and it was found that women have considerably better autonomy in decisions like education and marriage of children (Table 7). It was also observed that after KVI intervention there was considerable amount of joint decisions in the family of KVI women.

Table 7: Household decision making pattern

Household decision making	Women decision (%)	Joint decision (%)	Husband decision (%)
Purchase of household goods	27.25	23.5	50.25
Cooked food	37.5	32.5	30
Education of children	56.6	25	18.5
Marriage of children	43.75	25	31.25

### Access to Information and Technology

Women access to information and technology was found 58.25 per cent and 47 per cent, respectively. KVI trains them at local and district centres; communicate with them regarding new trends and scheme of KVI; and also update them regarding new technology. So, KVI acts as a connection between women and the world of information and technology.

### Autonomy and Mobility

*Permission to visit friends, relatives home:* Earlier women were not permitted to visit friends and relatives but after KVI intervention they have a reason to go out and in the meanwhile they visit their friends and relatives.

### Self-confidence

*Attitude on own self-esteem:* Women feel more confident and have high self-esteem. KVI acted for them as a source of personality development. Their training

programs, other cultural functions, group discussions and talk with other KVI officials have made them what they are today. There is articulateness and confidence in speaking to officials.

### **Gender Norms**

*Attitudes on women and work:* Earlier women were a victim of gender bias, violence and their household work was not appreciated. But now, attitude towards their work has changed. In-laws, husband and children support them in their work and share their duties and responsibilities.

### **Gender Roles/Responsibilities**

*Gender segregation of men and women work:* It was found that gender segregation of work had decreased. After KVI interventions, women's usual household gendered work is now being shared. Reason was the change in mind set of women and through them transformation in perception of family members. There was also more equity of domestic load.

### **CONCLUSION**

The connection between economic empowerment of women and KVI intervention is strong and equally significant for investigation. The objective of starting the mass mobilisation movement of Khadi is to make marginalised rural women the centre for change. It is considered that empowerment should reach the grass-root and marginalised groups without whose support *gram swaraj* is unattainable. This portrays the pivotal role that women play in the societal change and mobilisation. Along with this fact economic empowerment for rural women is really significant. From centuries they have been marginalised because of their illiteracy, gendered family responsibilities, lack of awareness and interest. The government and non-government initiatives are helping them to realise their own good. KVI is such an initiative which is making them empowered. Consequently, community and rural empowerment comes as a broader gain. KVI provided them income, awareness, motivation, decisiveness, autonomy, mobility, liberal gender norms and shared family responsibilities. Though the effect of initiatives was more psychological and qualitative but it made them economically empowered.

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