

Influence of Participation in Self-Help Groups on Self Confidence of Women in Tigania West Sub-County, Meru County, Kenya

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Abstract: Women's participation in self-help groups' activities is mostly geared towards their empowerment. The world today takes issues on women empowerment to enhance international development and poverty reduction. In Tigania West Sub-county there was insufficient well documented information that could be used to enhance support for the self-help groups by development agencies. The purpose of this study was to establish the influence of participation in self-help groups on self-confidence. The study was guided by the family systems theory. Target population was all women in self-help groups in Tigania West Sub-County and accessible population was 3610 women from 25 registered self-help groups. The sample size of the study was 150 respondents. The reliability was estimated through a test-retest method. The threshold of 0.7 was used to check to establish the reliability of the study. In this context, the achieved coefficient of stability for the test-retest reliability test achieved was, 0.82 for self-confidence. Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24 computer programme. The study established that women's participation in self-help groups had statistically significant influence on their self-confidence at $p < 0.05$ significance level. The study concluded that participation in self-help groups helped in improving on the confidence of the group members in Tigania West Sub-County.

Key words: Self-help, Empowerment, Confidence, Socio, Women, Participation.

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I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In the world today the issue of women empowerment is taken as a major drive of international development and a component of poverty reduction. This idea attracted a lot of attention during the two and a half decades beginning 1990 to 2015. This idea took the center stage during the International Conference on population and development that was held in Cairo Egypt back in 1994 also during the Fourth world Conference on Women, in Beijing in 1995. According to the African Regional Shadow Report on Beijing plus 5-2009, women's role in development had began earlier at grassroots level though no attention was paid. It was during the Cairo and Beijing International Conferences where International development agencies were asked to view women as major players in development who have rights (FEMNET, 2009). This led to the United Nations to incorporate the component of women empowerment in their development agenda systems. The key highlight was of this enlightenment was on how an assessment could be carried out to facilitate creation of right confidence to ensure involvement of both women and men in development plans and integrating component of poverty reduction strategies into women development programmes.

The idea of both genders' participation in development enabled development agencies to shift resources to promote women in development. This was enforced by the grassroots groups' efforts that were geared towards empowering poor communities to ensure women had self confidence in taking an upper role in development (FEMNET, 2009). Women's participation in self-help groups at grassroots was greatly involved in changing and shaping the development agenda. As a result, the world started appreciating the role played by women in reducing poverty. This led to establishment of institutions such as the microfinance programmes in line with the livelihood interventions build confidently among women. The aim was to empower women to manage their groups so that they could get good results as stated by International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) (2003).

Women's participation in socio-economic activities is always geared towards their empowerment (Eyben, Kabeer, & Cornwall, 2008). Empowerment is a process whereby individuals psychologically think and act positively while acquiring skills on issues that affect them individually and at social levels. This includes individual self-efficacy, positive self-image, perceptions, personal control and competence (Zimmerman, 2000).

Self-help groups enable women have enhanced self-confidence and efficiency. With this redemption of women participating in self-help groups are empowered to make life choices which can alter their way of spending and saving culture. This leads to their empowerment in changing life choices to individual desired action which culminate to individual self confidence.

According to Hora (2014) women's participation in groups or organizations face a lot of challenges that prevent them from active participation. Among the key constraints they face are poor social structures. Negative attitude towards women can also be a hindrance to their participation which goes hand in hand with the traditional and cultural roles the society bestows on women. Over burdening and stereotype ideologies restrain women from social economic empowerment. As reported by United Nations (2015), the secretary general reminded the delegates of member countries as they commemorated the twentieth Beijing declaration that it was also a moment of ushering in the continuous fight against poverty by embracing of sustainable development goals by the year 2030. The secretary general added that the process of women's empowerment remained a key issue and though their lives had improved, the rate of improvement was still wanting among and within countries. The report recommended that stakeholders such as the governments, researchers, development organizations and everyone in the world would participate to ensure women enjoy but not endure human rights and also get empowered to explore their potential.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2016) report on Africa Human Development highlighted that social issues among women cannot be separated with economic opportunities in African continent if there is gainful development to be realized. Deliberate effort to do away with traditional social norms and culturally outdated practices that create negative impact on women empowerment require attention by all. This calls for collaboration between all development agencies such as NGOs, FBOs, CBOs, local governments and National governments. The report further suggest that as governments in Africa strive on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, gender equality that translates into women empowerment deserve proper support. A report by Nabarro (2016) the special adviser of the United Nation secretary General on 2030 Agenda for sustainable Development and climate change states that, one year after the promulgation of sustainable development goals, the world was on the right track. It also states that stakeholders must ensure that inclusive social participation is upheld, meaning women participation in development agenda is undebatable in achieving all the sustainable development goals.

In India for instance, the move towards self-help groups is a major breakthrough in improving the lives of womenfolk and alleviating rural poverty. They represent a unique community-based approach to rural development through team building, self-management and financial intermediation confidence (Manjunatha, 2013).

In Tanzania, self-help groups have acted as a platform for organizing women who form some networks and rural organizations where individual members participate and build each other's capacity. Through self-help groups, individuals have opportunity to participate and integrate their ideas with the rest of the community members in their activities. Social cohesion has been promoted through the self-help groups, fostering the member's ability in decision making leading to improvement of life among the rural women. Social change becomes eminent through self-help groups in relation to their running and design since they influence the community ideas, their values, attitude and traditional norms that hinder women from participating in decision making towards their own socio empowerment particularly on self confidence (Aikarua, Sumari & Maleko, 2014).

In 1960s during colonial rule in Kenya, women started looking for solutions to their social and economic issues. For instance in Nyeri, Kenya, a movement referred to as *mabati* movement was started. Women participation in the movement focused on empowerment. Among the issues they addressed were buying each other iron sheets to replace the thatched roofing. Their participation in women groups was perpetuated by their common need of roofing their houses. This prompted the women to engage in other social economic issues after realizing that by uniting and having common unity of purpose, they could fight poverty. The movement became infectious and agitated for women from the surrounding and other parts of the country towards engaging themselves in women groups with the aim of improving their social economic status (UNESCO, 2014).

As women participate in development activities, they must have attachment with self-help groups. Such developments ensure their inclusion in national social economic issues. This plays a key role in promoting awareness of the role self-help groups have in women social economic empowerment. Their interests are known and even needs get well understood. Wanjiku (2015) argues that the history of women participation in self-help groups has a long history in Kenya and the most commonly used word for the groups is "Chama". The groups confidently mobilize resources from members with the aim of improving the livelihood of its members.

The women participation in self-help groups has been found to have diverse effect on individual self-confidence. The self-confidence of the women members is often associated with the self-help groups through interactions with group members, exposure to a wide variety of skills and mastery of specific tasks that are undertaken within the self-help groups (Al-Hebaish, 2012).

Despite the fact that there could have benefits associated with women's participation in self-help groups, there was no empirical evidence about women self confidence in Tigania West Sub-County. This called for documentation of their involvement in self-help groups in order to enhance their support.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Participation in self-help groups activities have a lot of benefits since members are able to come together and address their common needs. Despite the fact that women showed a lot of commitment in self-help group activities in Tigania West Sub-county, there was no study that had been conducted to establish the extent to which active participation influences their socio-economic empowerment. Little information had been documented on the influence of participation in self-help groups and women self confidence. There was a need to come up with empirical evidence that would show the influence and benefits if any.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine influence of participation of women in self-help group's to their individual confidence which result to their empowerment and the benefits that were associated to this in Tigania west Sub-County, Meru County.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study was to determine the influence of women's participation in self-help groups on their self confidence in Tigania West Sub-County.

1.4 Research Hypotheses

The hypotheses of study:

H₀₁: Women's participation in self-help groups had no statistically significant influence on their self-confidence in Tigania West Sub-County.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.0 Introduction

The study used descriptive and explorative research designs. The descriptive research design was utilized for the purposes of describing the research phenomenon as it is on the ground without any manipulation of the variables. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), the descriptive research design is important in enabling an objective description of the items as they are on the ground without any manipulation. The explorative research design on the other hand was key in enabling an exploration of relationships in the research phenomenon. In this study it has been used to discover the state of affairs of the variables on the ground.

Tigania West Sub-County which is in Meru County was the targeted area of study. The sub-county had five administrative wards namely Athwana, Kianjai, Nkomo, Mbeo and Akithi. The Sub-County is located on the slopes of Nyambene hills. It borders Imenti North sub-county to the West, Tigania East to the East, Isiolo County to the North and Tharaka Nithi County to the South. The major economic activities in this sub-county were crop farming, livestock keeping and small enterprises. The population of Tigania West was approximately 135,980, women being 70,999 and men 64,981. The Sub-County had an area of 455.10 square kilometers. Rainfall ranged from 1250mm-2514mm on the eastern and southern slopes of the Nyambene Ranges to 100mm-380mm annually in the leeward side. The areas that received high rainfall had more agricultural activities as compared to the areas that receive low rainfall (RoK, 2019).

Target population was all women in self-help groups in Tigania West Sub-County. Accessible population was 3610 women from 250 registered self-help groups. The groups must had been active for a minimum of four years, and involved in social economic development activities. The women belonged to more than one self-help group but it was a must they be actively involved in one self-help group (RoK, 2018). Sampling frame of the 250 registered self-help groups for women was obtained from the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Department of Social Development in Tigania West Sub-County. The number of women in the 250 groups was 3610. Sample size was determined using a formula by Nassuma (2008) and calculated as follows:

$$n = \frac{NC^2}{C^2 + (N-1)e^2}$$

Where n=Sample size

N=Population size

C= Coefficient of variation-which is fixed between 0-30percent

e=Margin of error which is fixed between 2-5percent

Therefore, the sample size was calculated at 25percent coefficient variation and 2percent margin of error

$$n = \frac{NC^2}{C^2 + (N-1)e^2}$$

$$n = \frac{3610(0.25)^2}{(0.25)^2 + (3610-1)0.02^2}$$

$$= \frac{3610(0.0625)}{(0.0625) + (3609)0.02^2}$$

$$= \frac{225.625}{0.0625 + (0.0004 \times 3609)}$$

$$= \frac{225.625}{1.5061}$$

$$= 149.81$$

$$= 150 \text{ (sample size)}$$

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Calculation gave a sample size of 150. The sample size also met the recommendation given by Kathuri and Pals (1993) of a minimum sample size of 100 for a major group in a study. The number of women in the 250 groups was 3610. In respect to picking the sample members from the groups, proportionate and simple random sampling was then used to select the 150 respondents from the 25 groups chosen in the five wards. Selection of members within groups was done using secret ballot. The researcher used questionnaires in data collection. Structured and semi-structured questions were included in the questionnaires. The semi structured questions gave the respondent a chance to reflect on a question before responding and freely express their feelings, views, opinions and ideas. The questions were focused, direct and simple to encourage the respondent to answer faster and correctly. In structured questionnaire, questions were asked which had list of all possible alternative answers. Respondents were required to select the answer that best suits their situation to the best of their knowledge. The questionnaire had the following sections; Brief introduction of the researcher, respondents' information relevant to the research, participation in self-help groups, individual self-confidence, social networks, credit access and individual income.

Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) define validity as meaningful and accurate of inferences which are obtained in the research results. To achieve validity the researcher used content validity in which the questionnaire was provided to give the data collection instrument to qualified professionals and research supervisors in the Department of Applied Community Development Studies Egerton University, Njoro. They checked on content and provided guidance in reference to the study objective and relevance of the questions to the study. The type of validity assessed was constructive. This helped the researcher to have valid results that correctly represented the phenomenon under study.

Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) state that for an instrument to be reliable the degree to which it yields consistent outcome must be constant after repeated trials. To test the reliability of the instrument, the researcher carried out a pre-test study in one registered women self-help group in Tigania East sub-county. Tigania East Sub-County was the neighboring Sub-county to Tigania West, the activities of women's self-help groups were similar and aim at empowering women. This helped the researcher to test the reliability of the data collection instrument without interfering with the groups in the area of study. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) recommend

that 10 percent of the sample size be used in testing the reliability of research instrument. Twenty members were involved in the pre-test. Pre-testing of the questionnaire helped the researcher to identify ambiguous items, unclear questions and any other problems encountered during the administration of the questionnaires. The reliability test was undertaken through test and retest method in which the coefficient of reliability of above 0.7 was to be achieved. In this context, the established coefficient of reliability achieved included 0.867 for participation levels, 0.824 for self-confidence, 0.844 for social networks, 0.870 for access to credit and 0.845 for income change aspects. The study variables were thus deemed reliable in nature.

The researcher got an approval from Egerton University Postgraduate School and a permit from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). The permit and approval letter were presented to the County Commissioner Meru County seeking authorization for the researcher to carry out the study, among the women in self-help groups in Tigania West Sub-County. Self-help groups' leaders were alerted in advance about the exercise, prior to actual data collection in order to support in data collection by encouraging respondents to avail the information to the researcher. Consent to collect data was obtained from each individual respondent before process. The questionnaire was availed to each group by the researcher during group meetings. Both self-administered and researcher administered methods were used to get information from the respondents. This took care of respondents who could not read for themselves, and those who were able.

After data collection and cleaning up for any errors such as inaccurate marking of responses, data was systematically organized to facilitate analysis. Coding and recorded for analysis. Analysis was carried out using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, tables and percentages. The study used linear regression statistics to test the influence between participation, self-confidence, social networks, change in income and credit access. The results are presented in form of pie charts, graphs and tables for clarity and easier interpretation of the data. A summary of data analysis is shown on Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of data analysis

Research Objective	Independent variable	Dependent variable	Statistics
To determine the influence of women's participation in self-help groups on their self confidence in Tigania West Sub –County.	Women Participation	Individual confidence	Frequency distributions simple Regression Analysis

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Confidence in Self-Help Women Groups and Women Participation Levels

The study sought to determine the influence of women's participation in self-help groups on their self-confidence in Tigania West Sub-County. Self-confidence was taken as a measure of social empowerment of women. In this regard, the study focused on satisfaction level of members of self-help women groups, their level of self-trust and their other responsibilities outside the group.

Satisfaction Level

The study sought to establish whether the respondents were satisfied as a member of their group and whose findings are as shown in Figure 1.

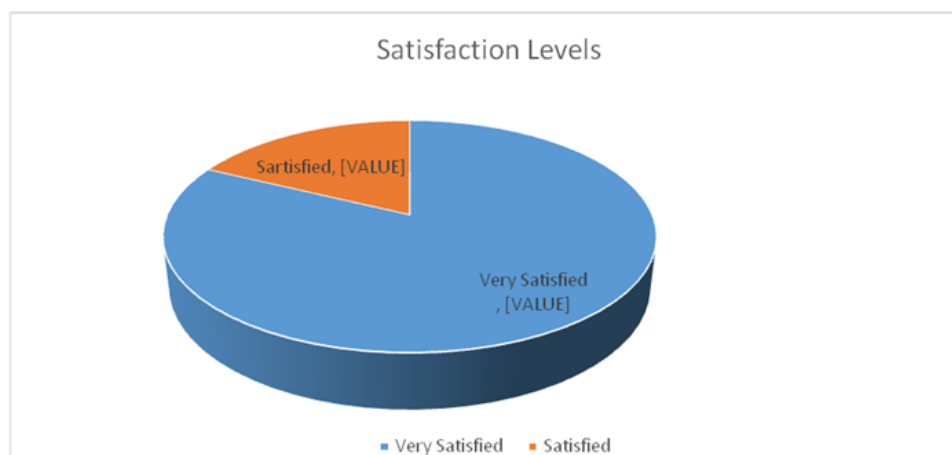


Figure 1: Satisfaction Levels

The study established that members of various self-help women groups in Tigania West Sub-county were overall satisfied by being a member of their group. In respect to this, 82.2percent were very satisfied while 17.8percent were satisfied. This implied that the respondents’ confidence in their group was high. Akkas (2014) states, women come to realization of their right when they participate in self-help groups. They are able to identify their problems, prioritize them and come up with a solution to them. Individual ideological power increase which can be referred as the power within. Within women self-help groups, members undergo trainings that enhance their self-confidence. Among the skills that members acquire include marketing skills of their farm produce, basic literacy, family planning and primary health care which enable them deal with family daily challenges amongst other aspects (Bali & Varghese, 2010).

Strength in Decision Making

The study further sought to establish the strength in decision making of members of different self-help groups. The level of decision-making is an indicator of the level of confidence a member has in regard to social empowerment. Table 2shows the results of this question.

Table 2: Level of Decision Making

Level of Decision Making	Frequency	Percent
Very strong	103	79.2
Somewhat strong	40	19.4
Not sure	3	1.4
Total	144	100.0

The findings in Table 2show that 79.2percentof the respondentshad a very strong level of decision making while 19.4percent indicated that they had a somewhat strong decision-making capacity. However, 1.4percent of the respondents were not sure of their capacity to make decision in their group matters. This implied that the women’s confidence level was high in regard to decision making in women self-help groups. The participation in groups enables decision-making. These results are consistent with Mahmudul & Rahman (2015b) assertionsthat women get empowered with managerial skills such as planning, decision making, group facilitation skills and enterprise management. Through self-help groups women are given trainings for self-employment, income generation, education health and other services thus becoming empowered through collective identity and solidarity.

The strength in decision making results are consistent with Quasba et al (2016) findings. Through self-help groups, women can lobby for actions in addressing social problems such as gender biasness, irresponsible alcohol consumption in their villages, community dowry payment, girl child education and water shortage thus promoting sustainable development (Quasba, *et al.*, 2016). Through socio-economic empowerment, members of women self-help groups have become self dependent and economic decision designers and not recipients of decision made by others. The confidence has made women to occupy the centre stage in productive engagements competing positively with men (Selvi & Shanmughun, 2016c).

Self-Trust of Members

The study sought to establish whether the self-help women groups had any long-term effect on the level of self-trust of the individual member. Self-Trust is individual what she does is right according to her understanding. This checked on the individual member trust in them as a result of belonging to a self-help group. This characterized a belief in one’s self ability. The results are as shown in Figure 2.

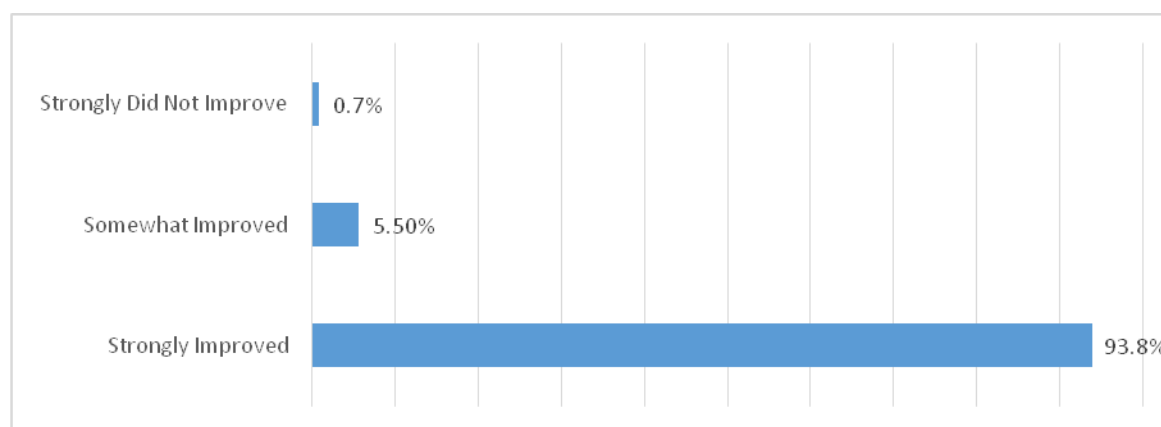


Figure 2: Self Trust of Self Help Group Women

The study revealed that 93.8percent of the women in self-help group in Tigania West Sub-County strongly improved their level of self-trust as a result of being a member of the group. It was also established that 5.5percent of the respondents somewhat improved their level of self-trust as a result of joining a self-help women group. Only 0.7percent of the respondents indicated that their self-trust did not improve at all as result of joining the self-help women group. This implied that the respondents improved their self-trust as a result of joining the group. The participation in groups could lead in self-trust in many ways. The group members through socialization, undertaking of entrepreneurial trainings and diverse social economic projects leads to process of learning from peers.

Women’s participation in self-help groups improves individual’s self-trust. Through social support, individuals benefit from the group when they cooperate on issues of common interest. Members meet and share their worries or similar concerns and this enables women establish their individual self-trust. During group meetings practical skills are shared which sharpen individual’s knowledge and information that translates to empowerment. Individuals learn and develop coping mechanisms that help one to deal with day-to-day challenges and concerns. Also individual’s view of life changes as they learn from each other. This is consistent with Mok, et al., (2008) findings that one gets emotional control and acquires more skills on community issues.

Responsibilities of the Respondents outside their groups

The study further sought to establish whether the respondents had other responsibilities outside the women self-help groups they belonged. The question was a multi response question and therefore members could choose several activities. Table 3 shows the results.

Table3: Self Help Group Women Responsibilities Beside Group Activities

Responsibilities	Frequency	Percent
Church	77	73.3
Community	48	45.7
School	21	20.0
Institution	3	2.9

The study found out that 73.3percent of the respondents had other responsibilities in church, 45.7percent of them in community, 20percent in school and 2.9percent had other responsibilities in institutions. The study results revealed that a majority of the respondents had other responsibilities besides the group activities. These activities were in church as compared to community, school and other institutions. The presence of other responsibilities is critical to the self-confidence of the respondents through enabling them to be socially exposed and to be in an interactive environment with diverse social phenomenon. Individual self-confidence boosts oral expression and enhances confidence on public speaking. People with self-confidence strive to improve their performance. This is consistent with Al-Hebaish (2012) findings that without self-confidence one lacks clear understanding of what can be achieved through their own effort. With regard to self-confidence, the study established that majority of the respondents had high level of self-confidence for they were involved in other responsibilities outside the group.

Hypothesis Testing

The study sought to test the null hypothesis (Ho) that there was no statistically significant influence of women’s participation in self-help groups on their self confidence in Tigania West Sub-County. The simple linear regression was used to test the hypothesis. The ordinal data in the questionnaire was transformed through SPSS into a composite data to enable a linear regression. The data was transformed since both the independent and dependent variables had been measured as latent variables. This is due to the fact that linear regression requires continuous data. The results of the simple linear regression are presented in Table 4.

Table4: Model Coefficients^a for Self-Confidence

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	74.194	4.725		15.701*	0.000
	Participation	0.252	0.093	0.635	2.711*	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Self-Confidence
0.05*, 0.01*, 0.001*

The results indicated that participation in the women self-help groups had an influence on the self-confidence of the women. This was due to a positive beta coefficient of 0.252 with a p value of 0.000. The null hypothesis that women's participation in self-help groups didn't have significant influence on self-confidence was rejected. This was due to a p value of less than 0.05. This could have been attributed to various factors. Among the respondents, confidence in sharing information was enhanced as they participated in women self-help groups. Individual acceptance by the community improved as they participated in self-help groups leading to community giving them roles to play in joint activities. The respondents revealed that the confidence they had acquired enabled them to handle emergencies at household and community level. This is consistent with the findings by Das and Bhowal (2014) who found that women become confident because of their involvement in self-help groups would tackle business and family challenges. On the other hand, Kumar (2014) found that individual self-confidence among women had also improved, creating desire for women to form more networks within and outside their community. Ideas from different members of the groups enhanced women in Tigania West Sub- county self-confidence creating power in them to address their issues without fear. The respondents also revealed that self-confidence boosted socializing ability among women. Self-help groups' members had their self-confidence greatly improved due to mentorship practices among various groups' leaders. These results are consistent with Das and Bhowal (2014) who indicated that creativity amongst the individuals' members in the self-help group increase because of increased self-confidence among members. Member Spiritual growth improved when given opportunities to lead group's members in prayers during weekly meetings. The vision of leading bigger groups had also been created because of the confidence built as they participated in self-help groups.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

The study concluded that participation in self-help groups helped in improving on the confidence of the group members. The results established from the engagements in groups activities and the social interaction during group activities improved confidence levels among women in self-help groups. Based on the study conclusions, the study made the following recommendations; Women in self-help groups should be empowered to have confidence in decision. This can be done through trainings and capacity building. When they are empowered in decision making, their participating will be enhanced and also other skill such as managerial and entrepreneur skills which improve their livelihood. With the capacity built on women through participation in self-help groups this study recommend the development agencies to consider having more women in their development agenda since it was been established that they play key role in improvement of livelihood when their confidence is well built.

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