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**Narrative of Rural People on Income Generation Trainings and Empowerment in
Kapilbastu: A Case Study**

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Abstract

Income generation training plays a major role in empowering people. Empowering starts at the individual level and then reaches the community. Once the community is empowered, it helps to empower society as well. People get empowered in different ways, such as economically, socially, physiologically, and personally. The purpose of this research is to explore how income generation training contributes to people's livelihoods and the impact of the training on poor, disadvantaged, and marginalized people. This study uses a qualitative approach, and participants share their experiences on how income generation training has helped them empower themselves. The research participants shared that income generation training helped greatly with social, economic, personal and psychological empowerment, which is the key factor in transforming their lives. Some modifications to the training modules and amendments on training delivery will help to transform society.

Key Words: Income Generation Training, Empowerment, Skill Development, Financial Empowerment

Introduction

As per Page & Czuba (1999), empowerment has been defined in many disciplines and it has got meaning in different social contexts. In general, empowerment can be defined as a multi-dimensional social process. Some dimensions where it occurs are sociological, psychological, and economic. Similarly, empowerment can occur at different levels, such as individual, group and community levels. Narayan (2002) has also defined empowerment as a process that helps enhance an individual's capacity and ultimately helps groups and communities. Similarly, empowerment helps transform those individual or group choices into desired actions and outcomes. Kanter (1977) expressed similar views regarding empowerment as he mentions empowerment can influence decisions and outcomes. He also stresses providing people with the authority, resources and information they need to take initiative and make positive life changes.

Income generation training programs are now seen as tools that provide financial stability and prosperity. In many countries, it has been widely accepted that such training programs help individuals gain knowledge, skills and confidence, which ultimately generate income and play a supportive role in breaking the chain of poverty. Increasingly, income generation training is viewed as more than just learning how to make money but equipping people with skill to create a better future for themselves and their families. Furthermore, income generation training is important as it helps reduce poverty, promote entrepreneurship, provide financial empowerment, and promote skill development (Rodwell, 1996). The research assesses how income generation training helps empower poor and marginalized people.

This study builds on the theory of empowerment by Rappaport (1981), and according to Rappaport, empowerment may occur at multiple levels of analysis. It is also regarded as a process where an individual gets empowered first, and then the community gets empowered, ultimately bringing change to society through empowered change. Furthermore, empowerment is a process in which efforts to exert control are central. This theory also suggests that participation/collaboration with others is vital to achieving the goal, and it is an ongoing process centred in the local community through which people gain greater control over the resources.

Julian's theory of empowerment (1981) is about empowering an individual first; once it happens, it impacts society and communities. Income generation training can also play an important role in the empowerment process. Depending on the need and interest, a person might enrol in income generation training from 7 days to 3 months. During that period, participants learn the skill and develop other social skills/soft skills such as teamwork and communication skills, which help them socially empower.

Methodology

This study is a qualitative inquiry and uses narrative inquiry methodology. The researcher mainly used interviews and field notes as information-generating techniques in this study. To do so, the researcher used the semi-structured interview technique as the information and knowledge-generating technique. Interview is one of the most common ways of generating qualitative data (Dwyer & Emerald, 2017). The researcher prepared interview guidelines, especially focusing on the research purpose and question and formulated the research themes for the interview. As this topic is novel in Nepal, the researcher used field notes as an information gathering technique in addition to an interview. It helped the researcher understand the crux of the research topic and note the critical information, which gave a new insight into the topic. During the field note process, the researcher noted down some important points. The researcher chose Kapilbastu District as a research site. The rationale to select Kapilbastu District is that most of the income generation training events were conducted by Stromme Foundation (In Partnership with Local NGO) in Kapilbastu compared to other program districts.

Interest in people joining in income generation training is increasing day by day. About Twelve Federal Ministries are involved in training, ranging from 1 day to 3 months (TVET Annual Report, 2075). Major development partners in Nepal also support the government in different modalities to implement income generation training. In this context, Stromme Foundation (A Norwegian NGO) has worked in the income generation sector, training poor, disadvantaged, and marginalized people and communities. Stromme Foundation implements its program through its partners in different districts. Kapilbastu district is one of the districts where the program has been implemented for many years. Siddhartha Social Development Center (SSDC) is the local NGO through which income generation training is carried out.

Some of the trainees who graduated from SSDC were asked whether the income generation training helped increase their livelihood and what impact such training had on people who took part in the training. Four training graduates (2 males and 2 females) took the training, ranging from 7 days to 3 months, were chosen. All the training graduates had their training in different occupations (Off-season vegetable producer, motorcycle mechanics, home garden management and farm management).

As per Yin (2015), a sense of trustworthiness about the research depends on the explicit and methodical selection of the study topic, study site, participants, and specification of the data collection approach. To gain trustworthiness in a research study, researchers met all participants at their homes/workplaces at Kapilbastu. The repeated physical and virtual meetings, formal and informal discussions and the in-depth interviews helped the researcher understand how income generation training was helpful to increase livelihood and its impact on the participant. The researcher is fully aware of the importance of ethical considerations, and most of the participants in this research are ordinary people (Shrestha & Bhattarai, 2022). So, research participants were also concerned when the researcher approached them and was fully aware of the standard principles of ethical consideration.

Result/Findings

The research participants were interviewed individually on two major areas: the impact of income generation training and how income generation training has contributed to people's livelihoods. In addition, looking at the response of the participants, they were mainly empowered socially, psychologically, economically and personally. Responses of the participants

Social Empowerment

Social empowerment is strengthening women's position in society as well as their social relation (Mandal, 2013). Furthermore, there are different types of social discriminations such as discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion or gender which are prevalent in the society and socially empowering women could be one of the solutions of it. The first participant of this study also comes from ethnicity which is often treated as inferior, and she is a female Tharu community. She lives in Babani, Kapilbastu and feels fortunate to get the opportunity to take part in the training. During the interview she showed her gratitude towards Stromme Foundation and its local partner, Siddhartha Social Development Centre (SSDC) for the opportunity. She took off-season vegetable farming training for about 45 days. To complete one and a half months of training, she had to visit SSDC, where the training was conducted at least 15 times. The training was conducted in modular form, and trainees like her would go to the training centre for 3 three days to complete one module. There would be at least a one to two-weeks gap between the modules so that the training graduates could implement the learning in the field. During those three days, they would learn and implement all the necessary skills in the field. When they visit the center for the next module, they would share the progress and practical difficulties they encountered while implementing the skill and knowledge in the field. The support of NRs 100,000 that the participant got from Stromme Foundation was vital for herself and other team members to start vegetable farming and their own business. During the conversation, she shared:

Prior to attending the training, I could hardly speak in front of a group. I would be shaking when I had to stand up and talk, even if it was for a brief time period. I had no self-confidence and used to think about what I would do in my life. The future seemed to be very uncertain to me as I had to be dependent on my husband's income even for a single penny.

However, things changed when I enrolled in the training. I learned technical skills and life skills, which taught me how to talk to people, work on a team and most importantly, lead a team. Currently, I lead a team of women called "Janachetana Swabalaban Team" and we do business as a team. The skill that we learned during the training is being implemented in our team, and it has helped us increase vegetable productivity. The vegetable we produce is sold in local market and all the group members can earn pocket money for themselves. We are also helping to pay fee of our children and provide some money for the kids' snacks at school. (Field Note, 10 June, 2023)

Talking about how socially empowered the first participant through the training is beyond measurable. She has transformed herself from being a shy lady who could barely talk into a community leader. Similarly, training has also provided her with financial freedom, as she loves to call herself an entrepreneur now. Gangrade (2001) regards women empowerment as having equal status and freedom similar to male and the first participant has also been able to maintain that equal status through the training. Similarly, as Kabeer (1999) states socially empowered women are able to make strategic life decisions and this participant also started deciding what is good for her and without consulting other family members, she started taking decisions in life. People in her community take her as an example for changing not only her life but also the lives of other group members, and it has motivated her to move ahead. As this research participant has started contributing in society and being recognized, this also can be

regarded as socially empowered (Manohar, 2001). This research participant is willing to take advanced training on vegetable farming if there is an opportunity, and she suggested incorporating a marketing skill component in the training, which is vital for entrepreneurship. Along with other group members, she is lobbying with the local government to manage a proper irrigation system to enhance productivity.

Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment is defined as presence of four cognitive assessments: impacts, meaningfulness, competence and choice/self-determination (Thomas, & Velthouse, 1990). The second female participant who belongs to the same community as first one and a permanent resident of Padampur, Kapilbatu feels that she is psychologically empowered. She participated in the Home Garden Management training held at SSDC, which Stromme Foundation also supported. The training lasted only for a couple of modules; however, she learnt some life changing skills even in that short period. She learned about pesticide management, preparing organic fertilizer and how to keep the farm area clean. At the end of the training, she got financial support for making the tunnel and nursery. With the support from Stromme Foundation, she built a small shed for pigs and started pig farming. According to her, when she joined the training, she didn't expect much from it; however, once she saw the content of the training, she was excited as the deliverables of the training were all related to the things that she had been doing for a long time. She started paying more attention to the training. By the time it ended, she learned how to manage things around home and make them beneficial to every single member of her family. She shared her will as:

The training provided me some key skills to manage various things around my house, such as pig farming, fishpond management, vegetable farm management and goat shed management. I am not willing to make it commercialized; however, my will is to feed pesticide-free fruits, vegetables, and meat to my family members by using the skills that I have learned through home garden management training. Before the training, I used to buy vegetables, fruits, meat and my daily need from the market; however, now, I only buy salt from the market, and rest I grow at home. So, this training has provided me with skills to manage my home surroundings, and at the same time, productivity has also increased. (Field Note, 10 June, 2023)

Although the second participant is not currently thinking of using the skills that she learnt from the training for commercial production, she is willing to learn pig farming skills. Batool et al., (2016) further elaborated one of the four components of cognitive assessment which is self-determination mentioned by (Thomas, & Velthouse, 1990) as autonomy in making decisions, taking initiatives and degree of autonomy in work, relationships and behaviors. In line to above researcher's definition, this participant is also self-determined to utilize the skills in various areas of house management. As she is able to increase productivity using the training skill, she is mulling to make pig farming as an occupation for a living if she gets the opportunity to take such training. Home garden management training has given her confidence that if you have proper skills, you can succeed in any business. She is eyeing to start a business once she has learnt proper the skill. Nevertheless, she has been learning through YouTube videos regarding pig farming and already bought one pig to give it a go.

Economic Empowerment

The third participant of this research is male and he is economically empowered through the training. He has been running a workshop at Machkune Danda and resides in Motipur, Kapilbatu. Golla et al., (2011) defines economic empowerment in terms of ability to make and act decision that involve the control over allocation of financial resources. This took Motorcycle

Mechanics training, which lasted for three months. At the end of the training, he sat for the skill test and successfully passed it. The test which he was able to succeed was skill test level 1 training certificate on Motorcycle Mechanics. Like other participants, he also got financial support from the Stromme Foundation, which he used to buy the tools he needed in the workshop. The support helped him to make his business functional. He has been running the workshop for two years now. This workshop is his sole income source, and he has managed his expenses from the earnings of the workshop. As he is the only breadwinner of his five-member family, he spends around 12 hours in this workshop. Prior to joining the training, he had thought of going abroad for livelihood; however, he changed his mind once he attended the training. He got motivated after he got skills, and the financial support was crucial for him to plan for self-employment. He shared:

In the initial days of training, I was not confident about the skill that I was learning would be beneficial to me. But when I learned that I would also get support from the organization if I performed well, it motivated me to pay attention towards the training. As the days passed, I was allowed to repair bikes under the supervision of garage owner, and it boosted my faith that I can work independently. Towards the end of the training, I started dreaming of having my own workshop and abandoned my plan to go abroad. To sharpen my skill, even after I finished my training, I requested the garage owner to allow me to work there for some time which was crucial to learn how to run a garage. When I was confident enough, I started my own business; this training has been life-changing for me. (Field Note, 11 June, 2023)

Lots of training which is in similar nature to the one that third participant took are going on around the nation; however, a firm determination and little support has changed the life of not only the third participant but also his family. He further added:

He is willing to take additional training on electrical and digital parts of the motorcycle/scooter as the level 1 course didn't cover these things in depth. He also suggested conducting training on electric bikes/scooters as he sees it as the future. He is also contemplating adding some tools/equipment in the workshop if he can secure some funding. (Field Note, 11 June 2023)

Personal Empowerment

Individual empowerment is a multidimensional complex psychological process (Myers, 1993). The fourth participant is a well-known farmer in the Banganga area and resides there. He has been running vegetable farming for over two decades, and his family is also fully involved in business. He grows both seasonable and off-season vegetables. He was residing in the adjacent district Rupandehi and running his business. Because of urbanization, he was not able to expand his farming area, and there was a demand to grow more vegetables. So, he decided to move from Rupandehi and bought land in Kapilbastu. His farm is expanded to about one hundred and fifty thousand sq. ft. (2 Bigaha). Regarding the training provided by Stromme Foundation in collaboration with SSDC, he has the following things to share:

I took part in the training SSDC provided regarding vegetable farming, which lasted about 3 days. There was nothing new to learn as I have been doing the same thing for over 20 years. Though meeting new people and sharing my experience with them was nice, I couldn't learn much from the training session. In some cases, I had to guide the trainer and even had to correct them regarding the terms and process of vegetable farming. (Field Note, 11 June, 2023)

Though this research participant took training for couple of days only, he felt personally empowered by sharing his experience to fellow participants. Personal empowerment is about taking control of own life and he is He shared that he is selling all his products in the local

market, and selling his vegetables does not take long. Everything is in cash at the local hat bazaar, so he prefers to sell it there rather than selling it to hotels and other shops. He would love to get training in areas where he feels helpful in increasing his business. According to him, these areas could include:

I would love to get training in financial management, tunnel, and pesticide management. Financial management training would help me track down all my expenses and income digitally, and I can go back and check these records anytime I want. Similarly, pesticide management training would help me to understand its effective use. Similarly, I don't have experience growing vegetables in tunnels, and I have heard that using tunnels could save vegetable from many diseases. So, I am keen to take training in these areas. (Field Note, 11 June, 2023)

Unlike other participants, the fourth participant has not taken any financial support from anyone, and he would love to get some support on making a quality tunnel, which will eventually help increase productivity. He also expects some help making irrigation canals so he can produce vegetables throughout the year. Regarding the training, he suggested providing the training in a need-based manner. Before selecting the participants for the training, a proper need assessment needs to be followed up by a training plan for those trainees who wish to participate. If we could do these things then only the training would be beneficial to the participants.

Discussion

Key findings of this study has helped to identify major areas of participant empowerment which are social, psychological, economical, and personal empowerment. Among, many external factors such as income generation training by STROMME foundation influence on training transfer such as empowerments (Bhurteel & Bhattarai, 2023). These areas of empowerment are in line with the research finding of the study conducted in India by Tiwari & Malati (2023) among 317 women participants who took formal and informal training. The study revealed and confirmed five factors of women empowerment, and three factors (economic empowerment, social empowerment and educational empowerment) are similar with this study. Out of four participants who took part in this study were women and training helped them to take decision in family matter, involve in family economic activities and shared the household expenses which was found to be similar with the study conducted by various researcher Amber et al. (2021), Chinen (2017) and Elsayed & Roushdy (2017) supported the claim that the key factors of women empowerment are participation in economic activities, decision making power in the family. All the participants of this study were part of vocational skill development training ranged from (3 Day to 3 months) and similar study was carried out in another part of Nepal to see the role of Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Women empowerment (Garbuja & Pasa, 2016) and the study found that such skill development trainings play a significant role in social economic development, decision making and change agent role which aligns with the finding of this study as well.

Out of 17 SDG Goals, the fourth goal is related to achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls (SDG, 2030), and the result of this study is also in line with the goal of empowering women as the income generation training has empowered the training participants socially, economically and psychologically. In same way, among five constructs of women empowerment identified by Tiwari and Malati (2023) in the study regarding the role of training in women empowerment, half of the research participants from this study are also empowered economically and socially.

A study conducted by Basu & Basu (2003) in India regarding income generation program and empowerment conducted interview of 70 women who participated in income generation

programs. Economic and Social indicators have been used to determine empowerment, and the income per month has been considered the major indicator; business knowledge and participation in family decision-making have been regarded as social indicators. The case study analysis clearly showed that income generation programs have contributed highly to the economic and social status of women beneficiaries. Relating this case to our study, two female participants mentioned that training has contributed to uplifting their economic status. They are now able to buy things which are needed for them. In addition, they started sending their kids to private schools and offered some money for snacks. This training also helped to build confidence. The women participants also shared that they could speak freely in a mass without hesitation, and the training has contributed to this change in their lives. Similarly, Luttrell et al., (2009) mention various dimensions of empowerment, which are mainly categorized as economic, human & social, political, and cultural. Participants in income generation training were empowered economically and socially. The training helped them to have appropriate skills, capabilities, resources, and access to secure and sustainable incomes and livelihoods. Some participants could sharpen their skills, whereas others just learned the skill and applied it to their daily lives. As research participants could use the skill in their workplace, it enhanced their productivity and empowered them economically.

Another research carried out by Dangol (2010) regarding women's empowerment through an income generation program at a Village Development Committee in Lalitpur, Nepal, showed that around 80% of the women participants who participated in income generation training managed to initiate income-earning activities and engage in a related field. They even started saving money regularly and joining different saving groups and cooperative firms. It is a clear sign of the economic empowerment of women. The research also found that the income generation training empowered them economically and helped to enhance decision-making capacity in family matters. Research participants also shared that they got more respect in the family and enjoyed participating in family discussions. The women who participated in the training claimed that they had a say in the family following the involvement in income generation training.

The term empowerment is closely related to women, and a lot of studies have been conducted in the topic of women empowerment; however, human empowerment (both men and women) is the key in the fight for the elimination of hunger, poverty and address the issue of unemployment Gumbari (2011). A person with skills is the solution for afore mentioned problems. The third participant of this study who is empowered economically through skill acquisition has been contributing not only to his family but also supporting the society and Ikegwu et al., (2014) also view that skills acquisition has significant contribution to the society. Similarly, Danju (2007) opined that acquisition of skill ensures financial independence and better standard of living which is also true for the third participant as his motorcycle workshop that he is running has made him financially independent.

Conclusion

All the research participants strongly agreed that the training has empowered them financially, socially and psychologically. Research participants are involved in the same occupations where they were trained. Income generation training has been a changing experience/event, especially for females, as they have started earning money and motivating society. Once they started earning, society's perception of them changed. Even their family members have started involving them in family discussions, and they can voice their opinions. Income generation training has provided not only the skill but also Still, it has also helped the

trainees become entrepreneurs, as all the research participants have started their own businesses and contributed to the economy.

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