

Mapping the knowledge Structure of Self-Help Groups and Women Empowerment under Mission Shakti: Towards an integrated Research Framework.

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Abstract

The self-help groups (SHGs) have received a lot of interest as institutions of grassroots activating women empowerment, financial inclusion, and developing communities especially in developing economies. Although the research in this field has expanded rapidly, the current body of work is still disparate in terms of the disciplines, including the field of public health, development economics, and gender studies. The proposed research suggests a bibliometric and science-mapping analysis of the available literature to systematically map the intellectual framework and thematic development of the research on self-help groups and women empowerment (Donthu et al., 2021; Zupic & Čater, 2015). The Scopus and Web of science databases were searched according to PRISMA guidelines and included publications of 1993 to the year 2026. The end dataset has been analysed with the Bibliometrix (Biblioshiny) package in R. Various bibliometric methods have been applied to study the evolution of research field, the performance analysis, citation analysis, the key words co-occurrence analysis, three-field plot analysis, the thematic mapping analysis, the thematic evolution analysis, collaboration network analysis. The results indicate that the academic output has grown significantly in the last ten years. The previous research emphasized more on the peer-support system and the process of addiction recovery, in contrast to the recent studies which put an emphasis on microfinance, women empowerment, rural development, and the formation of social capital. It also determines the key authors, journals, and key countries contributing to the field, which is analyzed. Comprehensively, the study gives a detailed insight into the changing knowledge base of SHG studies and gives research and policy implications of underdeveloping and reinforcing women empowerment and inclusive development.

Keywords: Self-help groups; women empowerment; bibliometric analysis; microfinance; financial inclusion; community development.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of Self-Help Groups and Community Support Systems

Self-help groups (SHGs) have become important grassroots institutions that facilitate collective action and mutual support as well as social-economic development among marginalized communities. The self-help groups concept is pegged on the notion that individuals with similar predicaments can join forces in order to mobilize resources, share knowledge, and offer emotional and social support to one another. Self-help groups predominantly developed in the domain of social health and recovery of addicts, where the concept of peer-support mechanisms became an effective intervention to manage complicated behavioural and psychological issues (Davidson et al., 1999; Laudet, 2007). These groups act as informal social networking groups that facilitate mutual learning, emotional strength, and behaviour modification among members. Health and rehabilitation research studies have established that peer-based support systems play a significant role in recovery measures and psychosocial health. Indicatively, the literature review of peer-support networks in people with severe mental illness demonstrates that mutual support networks have the potential to increase social integration, coping methods, and recovery (Davidson et al., 2006). Likewise, attendance to organized self-help groups like Alcoholics Anonymous has been found to decrease the likelihood of relapse and improve the long-term recovery outcome due to enhanced social network and increased self-efficacy in an individual (Kelly et al., 2012; Kaskutas et al., 2014). These results indicate that self-help groups are important in provision of supportive environments that lead to behavioural change and psychological resilience. Community based support mechanisms have also been found to be effective in several health behaviour interventions. Research that has given attention to lifestyle and health promotion programmes suggests that self-help and peer-support intervention strategies have a potential to make a significant impact on behaviour change and enhance health outcomes. As an illustration, motivational counselling and self-help strategies based interventions have been effective in influencing the members of the community to adopt healthier dietary habits and make up to positive lifestyle changes (Resnicow et al., 2001). Equally, studies conducted on smoking cessation reveal that smokers who make use of self-help and counselling support systems have a greater chance of long-term behavioural change than those who seek to make behavioural change on their own (Zhu et al., 2000). Besides the health applications, the self-help groups have slowly gained recognition as effective means of dealing with the social and economic problems. Substance abuse treatment empirical research findings have identified that an attendance of community-based support groups has the potential to supplement formal treatment systems, as well as, strengthening the social support networks and promoting the continued participation in recovery programmes (Ouimette et al., 1998; Cohen et al., 2007). Moreover, qualitative studies of people who had undergone substance use disorders also emphasize the importance of community-based resources, such as self-help groups, in terms of offering protective social support mechanisms that minimize the threat of relapse and optimize the rehabilitation process (Binswanger et al., 2012). The idea behind the self-help groups has over time spread out of the health sector and has been popularly embraced as an approach to development, especially in the developing countries. SHGs have emerged as the foundation of development programmes based on microfinance that have been established in India to facilitate the financial inclusion of marginalized women and empower them. Microfinance programs associated with SHGs have been extensively propagated owing to its possible ability to enhance access to credit, economic empowerment, and household/community level power of women (Swain and Wallentin, 2009). Available empirical evidence indicates that SHGs are potentially very useful in promoting the empowerment of women since they help women to confront the status quo as well as have greater influence on the management of their own financial resources and also engage more in socio-economic decision-making processes (Swain and Wallentin, 2009).

1.2 Problem Statement

Although the academic literature on self-help groups (SHGs) has grown significantly, the literature is still disjointed in terms of different perspectives of the field. Previous research mostly considered self-help groups in healthcare, addiction recovery, and mental health support system and the issue of peer support in terms of behavioural change and long-term recovery outcome (Davidson et al., 1999; Kelly et al., 2012; Kaskutas et al., 2014). These research papers were able to underscore the value of social networks, mutual assistance, and community involvement in enhancing treatment outcomes and increasing quality of life in people with health-related problems (Laudet, 2007; Gil-Gonzalez et al., 2020). The idea of self-help groups though has been slowly changing outside the health sector in terms of conceptualization to include wider socio-economic and developmental goals. Over the past few decades especially in the developing economies, SHGs have become the most popular tool of microfinance, poverty reduction and women empowerment. The inclusion of SHGs in financial inclusion programmes has empowered the marginalized women to access credit, and save together in collective savings and engage in income generation activities. Empirical research in India indicates that joining SHGs can play a major role in the socio-economic empowerment of women by improving the level of autonomy in decision-making, augmenting the level of financial autonomy, and disrupting established gender norms (Swain and Wallentin, 2009). SHGs have thus come to the forefront of most national and international developmental projects to enhance inclusive development and gender equality. Even though the literature on SHGs has also developed significantly within the last three decades, a number of limitations can still be observed.

1.3 Research Gap in Self-Help Groups and Women Empowerment Literature

To begin with, much of the research available is field-specific and studies have sprung up in isolation of disciplines including those of public health, psychology, development economics, and social policy. It is this disciplinary fragmentation that has led to the absence of a cohesive conception on the intellectual formation and development of SHG research. Second, most of the research is based on case studies, programmes in a region, or a specific result of an intervention, which restricts the capacity to define the more general research patterns and new themes in the field. Third, although more and more empirical research is conducted to identify the effects of SHGs on community development and women empowerment, there is scanty systematic analysis which identifies global research landscape, contributory work, and research networks which are forming this field.

Learning the way the research of SHGs has been developing throughout the years, the research themes prevalent in the field, and the new areas of exploration is essential in contributing to the academic discourse as well as policy interventions. Considering the above gaps, the current research is based on the concept of a bibliometric and science mapping approach to the systematic analysis of the current literature on self-help groups and women empowerment. Through analysis of a massive collection of scholarly articles, entry-level databases will index the study to trace the intellectual framework, the development of the themes, as well as the networks of collaboration of the research in the field. This approach would allow seeing the development of SHG research in the wide range of disciplines and along with offering perspectives of future research directions that could enhance theoretical and policy-focused debate on the topic.

1.4 Research Objectives and Contributions of the Study

Despite a significant growth in the number of studies on self-help groups (SHGs) in various fields of study, including those focused on public health, development economics, and gender studies, the literature is still fragmented and it has not been synthesized or made to constitute an intellectual framework. The earlier literature has given more attention to peer-support mechanisms and addiction recovery (Davidson et al., 1999; Laudet, 2007; Kelly et al., 2012), but more recent ones have highlighted on how SHGs empower women, include them in financial matters, and develop communities, especially in developing nations such as India (Swain and Wallentin, 2009). In spite of such an accumulated literature, minimal focus is put on the systematic mapping of the development of the study of SHG and recognizing its most dominant subjects, thinkers, and collaborations.

In order to fill this gap, the current research is based on the bibliometric and science-mapping review to investigate the knowledge base of the literature on self-help groups and women empowerment. In particular, the research will seek to:

- To review the trends of growth and publication of the research on SHG
- To determine the most powerful authors, journals, and countries in the discipline
- To find out how the literature is conceptualized using keyword and thematic analyses
- To study the developmental trends and collaborative patterns in the field of the research.

Through this, the study would also add value to the literature by offering a systematic review of the intellectual growth of SHG research, as well as providing the input that could guide academic research and policy agenda in future regarding women empowerment and community-based development programmes.

2. Conceptual Foundations and Literature Background

2.1 Concept of Self-Help Groups

Self-help groups (SHGs) are community-based collective institutions that comprise people, who assemble to deal with a common social, economic or health-related problem via collective support and collaboration. Self-help groups started being conceptualized in community support systems where people who had a common experience could share coping strategies, emotional support and knowledge (Davidson et al., 1999). Initial studies mainly studied SHGs in the health and rehabilitation settings, especially in addiction recovery and mental health support system where peer-based interactions were identified to play a significant role in the behaviour change and recovery outcomes (Kelly et al., 2012; Kaskutas et al., 2014).

2.2 Self-Help groups and Women empowerment.

As time went on the role of the self-help groups widened with support in their health issues and became a significant development alternative to enhance the socio-economic status of women. SHGs have been popularized in most developing countries particularly in India as a tool of financial inclusion, poverty eradication, and female empowerment. SHGs enjoy participation will help women gain access to credit, become more financially literate and increase their ability to make decisions both at household and community levels (Swain and Wallentin, 2009). SHGs can help enhance social and economic independence of women through their joint efforts and support.

2.3 SHGs in microfinance and Financial Inclusion.

Microfinance programmes that are identified with SHGs have been instrumental towards the widening of financial services to the marginalized populations. These programmes make small savings and credit mechanisms available to women to help them participate in income generating activities and other enterprises. It has been established that SHGs based on microfinance can increase economic opportunities and in addition lead to social empowerment and community engagements among women (Swain and Wallentin, 2009). As a result, SHGs have gained prominence as key subjects in several rural development and livelihood initiatives in third world economies.

2.4 Multidisciplinary Characteristics of SHG Studies.

The studies on self-help groups are across several fields such as public health, psychology, development economics and gender studies. Previous investigations were rather concerned with peer-support in addiction recovery and rehabilitations of mental health (Laudet, 2007; Kelly et al., 2012). However, more recent works have stressed on the expanded developmental role of SHGs in empowering women, forming social capitals and developing sustainable communities. This interdisciplinary character of SHG research indicates that the literature should be systematically synthesized to be aware of its intellectual organization and new themes of research.

2.5 Requirement of Bibliometric Synthesis.

Despite the growing body of literature on self-help groups (SHGs) within many other fields including public health, development economics, and gender studies, the available literature is much disjointed. Previous research has mostly concentrated on the aspect of self-help groups within the framework of peer-support, addiction recovery and mental health rehabilitation (Davidson et al., 1999; Laudet, 2007; Kelly et al., 2012), with the most recent research continuing to place more emphasis on how these groups contribute to the empowerment of women, microfinance and community building, especially in developing nations (Swain and Wallentin, 2009).

This interdisciplinary growth has created a heterogeneous fragmented research field such that one is unable to gain a holistic picture of the intellectual organization and thematic development of the field. Bibliometric analysis in this case offers the method of systematizing the large amounts of academic literature and discerning the main tendencies in academic output. Bibliometric methods allow the researcher to analyze trends in publications, active authors, most popular journals, collaboration networks, and the changing topics of studies in a particular sphere.

Through these techniques, researchers will be able not only to map the structure of knowledge and thematic development of a research area but also to detect upcoming trends of research.

That is why the literature review of the self-help groups and female empowerment should be structured through a bibliometric synthesis that could help to give the systematic view of the sphere. This analysis is not only useful in establishing the contributions that come out and the prevailing themes in research undertaken in this field, but also in providing the clues on the future direction taken by the research conducted in this field, especially with respect to development programmes and policy initiatives towards women empowerment and inclusive socio-economic development.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This paper takes a bibliometric and science- mapping methodology to review the research environment of self-help groups (SHGs) and women empowerment in an orderly manner. Bibliometric analysis makes it possible to quantify scientific publications using patterns of authorship, citation, keywords, and collaboration networks (Ellegaard & Wallin, 2015). The method is popular in finding influential publications, new topics of research, and intellectual organization of a research area.

3.2 Data Sources and Search Strategy

Two large academic databases were used to gather data on this study, namely the Scopus and Web of Science (WoS). The choice of these databases was informed by the fact that they have a wide coverage of peer-reviewed scholarly publications and are reliable to do a bibliometric analysis. On 15 February 2026, the literature search was performed by the following search query: "Self Help Groups OR SHG and Women empowerment". To guarantee a thorough literature review, Web of science and Scopus was limited to 1993 2026 and 1998 2026 respectively.

3.3 Study Selection and Screening Procedure

The current study has employed the Preferred Reporting Items of Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) model in order to maintain clarity and a systematic way of identifying, screening and selecting the pertinent literature of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and women empowerment. Two large academic databases, i.e., Scopus and Web of Science (WoS), were searched on 15 February 2026 in terms of a comprehensive literature search. The search strategy used the terms Self Help Groups OR SHG and Women empowerment* to search a wide range of articles that were related.

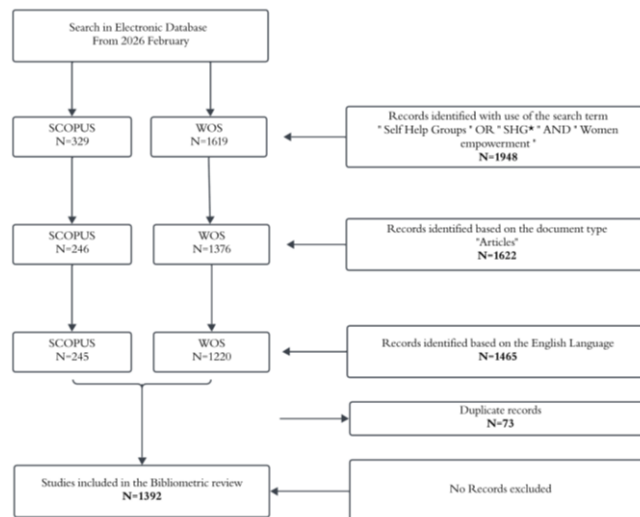


Figure 1: PRISMA Flowchart

The search within Scopus and Web of Science was limited to the number of publications between 1998 and 2026 and 1993 and 2026 respectively to address the development of the SHG-related scholarship. The initial search in the Scopus database gave 329 records, which were then narrowed down using the document type, where the records were restricted to peer-reviewed journal articles, thus narrowing down to 246 records. Additional language filtering filters were used to reduce the total number of publications to those that were written in English with a total of 245 records making it to the initial screening. Besides this, records that did not contain important bibliographic data including the name of the author, the title and abstract were not included in the dataset as it would lead to the loss of the integrity of the dataset. In the same manner, 1,619 records were found during the search in the Web of Science database in the first stage only. Upon limiting the document type to the journal articles, the amount was narrowed down to 1,376 records. This was followed by language filtering in which only English-language publications were retained and this gave 1,220 records. Similar to the Scopus data, records that had incomplete or faulty bibliographic data were discarded in order to achieve data reliability. The records obtained in both databases were then exported into further screening and analysis. Before the stage of eligibility assessment, duplicate records in databases were determined and eliminated. The other studies were then filtered according to the title of the works, abstract and their relevance to the themes of Self-Help Groups, female empowerment and community-based developments and ultimately developed the final corpus to be used in the bibliometric and thematic analysis. The whole process of selection is properly organized with the help of the PRISMA flow diagram, as the methodological transparency and the reproducibility of the study are guaranteed.

3.4 Data Analysis, Data Analysis Tools and Techniques.

The last dataset was processed with the help of the Bibliometrix package, which provides the opportunities of the global bibliometric and science-mapping analysis, in R (Biblioshiny interface) (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). The analysis methods used were as follows: Descriptive analysis of performance to investigate the trends of publications and the citations. Analysis of source and author to find out the powerful journals and researchers. Analysis of key words co-occurrence to examine the conceptual framework of the field of study. Analysis of relationships between authors, keywords, and sources using three-field plot analysis. Thematic mapping and thematic evolution analysis to find the main research themes and the way they evolved over time. Collaboration network analysis to study the research partnerships between institutions and geography. The methods applied in the analysis allow gaining a complete vision of the intellectual framework, the theme development, and collaboration patterns in the literature on self-help groups and women empowerment.

4. Results and Discussion

This section outlines the findings of the bibliometric review that was conducted on the identified literature on self-help groups (SHGs) and women empowerment. This analysis will give a detailed discussion of the research space in terms of the trends in publications, the authors and

sources that have most impacted the area, as well as the countries that have contributed to the research. Besides, the section examines the conceptual and thematic organization of the literature by analyzing the keywords, using thematic mapping, and tracing the thematic development. The results are debated in terms of different bibliometric indicators and visualization tools created with the help of Biblioshiny (Biblioshiny) tool. The outcomes contribute to determining the significant research themes, patterns of collaboration, and how the scholarly interest to the research focused on SHG develops over time. In general, the analysis provides significant ideas regarding the evolution of the research sphere and the new directions of the future research.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the bibliometric data, which is to be used in the analysis of the research landscape of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and women empowerment. The ultimate data collection was a total of 1,392 academic articles published by 752 different sources (journals, books, and other types of scholarly sources) in 1993-2026. The data demonstrates the significant development of the academic interest in SHGs and female empowerment in the last three decades. Regarding citation impact, the documents registered an average of 22.39 citations per publication, which means that the impact is rather average and shows that the scholarly community is still interested in the topic area. Analysis of authorship shows there are 4,334 researchers that have worked on this literature.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Description	Results
Documents	1392
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	752
Keywords Plus (ID)	2130
Author's Keywords (DE)	3278
Period	1993:2026
Average citations per document	22.39
Authors	4334
Authors of single-authored documents	183
Authors of multi-authored documents	4151
Single-authored documents	201
Documents per Author	0.3211
Authors per document	3.1135
Co-Authors per Documents	3.95

Out of the listed ones 183 authors were contributors to single-authored publications and 4,151 authors were contributors to multi-authored publications which points to the heavy use of collaborative research in this area. In line with this, there are 201 single-authored documents in the dataset, but most publications were created in the process of teamwork. The mean of the number of authors per document is 3.11, and the average number of co-authors per document is 3.95, which, again, supports the fact of collaboration when conducting research in the domain of SHGs and women empowerment. Also, the ratio of documents per author (0.321) indicates that the majority of authors have participated in a few publications, which is an indication of a scattered authorship group. The analysis of keywords shows a high thematic diversity of the literature, as 2,130 Keywords Plus (ID) and 3,278 author-provided keywords (DE) are found in the dataset. These keywords are conceptual in the breadth of the research area, which include the themes like socio-economic empowerment of women, microfinance, rural development, livelihood creation and community-based institutional frameworks. In general, the summary statistics show that the research area of the intersection of Self-Help Groups and women empowerment is a constantly growing and more cooperative one.

4.2 Annual Scientific Production

Table 2 and Figure 2 show the yearly distribution of publications and mean total citations of the research area of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and women empowerment. The review indicates a remarkable rise in the academic output over the years, especially in the past decade, which suggests the emergence of the growing academic interest in the topic. The data indicate that the year 2022 has the most amount of publications (111 articles), but then there is 2025, with 103 publications, which proves the further development of the research activity in the sphere. In the same way, 2020, 2023, and 2024 have a higher count of over 80 publications, which also points to the continuity of research. This trend of increased publications can be explained by increasing focus on the issue of women-centred development programmes, financial inclusion activities, and the development of Self-Help Group networks in developing economies, especially in India. Although in recent years, an increase in the number of publications has been observed, the years with a greater impact of citation per article are seen in the past years. As an example, 2012 registered the greatest mean number of citations per article (26.69), 2014 had 18.43 citations, and 2017 registered 14.67 citations.

Table 2: Annual publications

Year	No of Articles	Mean TC Per Article
2022	111	6.71
2025	103	0.43
2020	84	10.73
2023	83	5.45
2024	83	3.24
2017	73	14.67
2019	69	9.28
2021	69	8
2012	61	26.69
2014	56	18.43

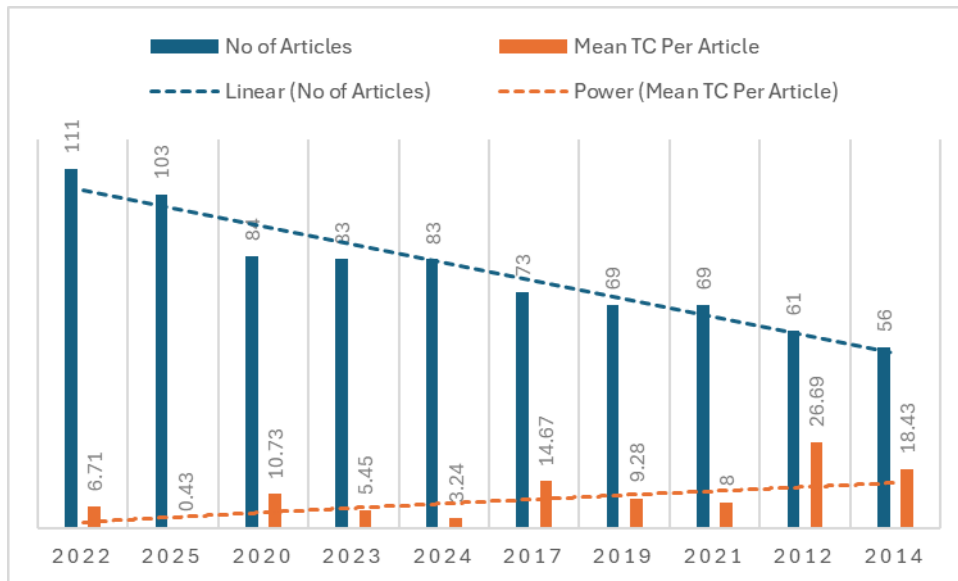


Figure 2: Top Annual Publications with Citations

The fact that the citation averages are higher implies that previous publications have been around longer to collect citation, and they have made foundational knowledge to the field. On the other hand, the recent years, like 2025 (0.43 mean citations) and 2024 (3.24 mean citations) show smaller citation averages, which can be explained by the citation time-lag effect, since studies published recently need time to be referenced in other studies. Moreover, the trend lines in Figure 2 demonstrate that the number of articles is subject to a decreasing linear trend over the years of top papers chosen, and the trend of citation has a slow developmental curve in the earlier publications. The trend indicates the active development of SHG and women empowerment research, with previous studies offering both theoretical and empirical backgrounds, and newer studies being a consequence of increasing scholarly interest in new topics, including financial inclusion, rural entrepreneurship, and community-based development. On the whole, the analysis of annual publications has shown that the research on Self-Help Groups and women empowerment had undergone consistent growth over the last thirty years, but the most impressive increase in the number of publications has occurred within the recent past, which can be attributed to the strengthening academic and policy interest of the issue in the modern development agenda.

4.3 Most Cited Sources

Table 3 and Fig. 3 provide the list of the most cited sources together with the indicators of their bibliometric impact such as Total Citations (TC), Number of Publications (NP), H-index, and G-index. This review is useful in determining the most impactful journals that lead to the development of the literature on the subject of self-help groups, social support system, addiction recovery, and related public health and empowerment research. The results indicate that the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) had the highest number of citations (4,800) even though this journal only added one publication to the data. This is to denote that there is a very powerful and widely-read article, which has exposed the research discourse to a significant extent. In the same way, the journals like Human Reproduction (HR), American Journal of Public Health (AJOPH) also exhibit rather significant citation impact, even though they release a small number of documents, which speaks in favor of the fact that their contributions are effective and are well accepted by the academic community. Among the sources that are more productive in terms of publication, it is possible to point to such journal as Drug and Alcohol Dependence (DAAD), which is 24 times published, has 1,369 total citations, H-index of 19, and G-index of 24.

Table 3: Most Cited Sources and their Indexes

Source	TC	NP	H-Index	G-Index
JAMA	4800	1	1	1
DAAD	1369	24	19	24
HR	1287	2	2	2
AD	1268	17	16	17
PS	775	13	9	13
JOSOA	669	12	11	12
ACAER	660	11	9	11
AJOP	578	1	1	1
AJOPH	522	2	2	2
JOMIR	478	14	11	14

This reveals that the journal has been at the forefront in the dissemination of research revolving around the issues of addiction recovery, social support mechanisms and community based intervention model, which is closely associated with the overall conceptual framework of self-help groups. In the same regard, journal Addiction (AD) has been largely scholarly with 17 publications, 1,268 citations, H-index of 16, and G-index of 17 indicating that it has played a major role in researching the subject of addiction and behavioral health. Other important sources are Psychiatric Services (PS) and 13 publications and 775 citations, and Journal of Studies on Alcohol (JOSOA) with 12 publications and 669 citations that add to the literature dedicated to the subject of mental health, substance abuse, and rehabilitation based on support interventions.

Other products like the journal Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research (ACAER) and the Journal of Medical Internet Research (JOMIR) also represent a positive contribution, indicating an interdisciplinary contact between public health, clinical research, and digital health interventions.

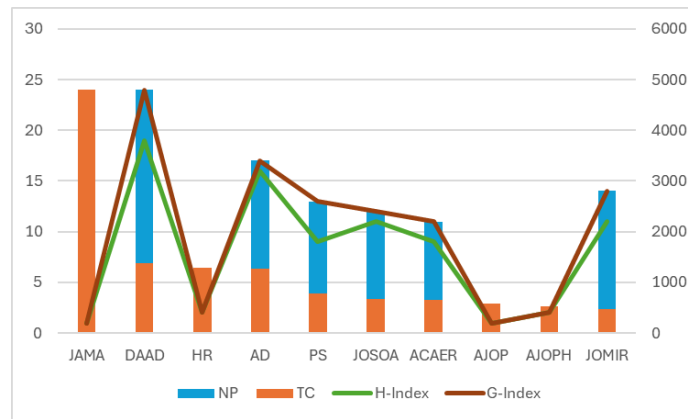


Figure 3: Top Cited Sources: Publications and Indexes

“JAMA - Journal of the American Medical Association, DAAD - Drug and Alcohol Dependence, HR -Human Reproduction, AD – Addiction, PS - Psychiatric Services, JOSOA - Journal of Studies on Alcohol, ACAER - Alcoholism-Clinical and Experimental Research, AJOP - American Journal of Psychiatry, AJOPH - American Journal of Public Health, JOMIR - Journal of Medical Internet Research”

The values of the H-index and G-index also add more credibility to the academic influence of these sources. Index values in journals such as DAAD, AD, and JOMIR are relatively high, which means that there is a stable performance in citation in several publications. Conversely, the sources of lower number of publication and high citation stress on the existence of seminal or foundational studies in the dataset. Generally, the source-level analysis points out that the area of research of self-help groups and empowerment of women overlaps with the literature of public health, addiction recovery, and social support. Self-help groups are not only discussed as a means of economic empowerment but are often analyzed as a community-based support system with references to social vulnerability issues, including alcoholism, mental health issues, and social marginalization, as well as the popularity of journals devoted to the given topic. This cross-disciplinary proliferation of resources is a manifestation of the multidimensional and compound nature of SHG research in the context of health, social development and gender empowerment studies.

4.4 Influential Authors and Countries

Table 4 and Figure 4 show the most active authors and countries that make their contributions to the scholarly literature in terms of the total citations (TC) and the number of publications (NP). The given analysis reflects the most impactful authors and the geographical dispersion of the studies related to the field of self-help groups, addiction recovery, and the role of women empowerment. Ettner S turns out to be the most influential author among the authors, with a total of 4,857 citations in two publications, which is the indication of the presence of highly influential work that has made a tremendous impact on the research area.

Table 4: Leading authors and countries: categorized by citation influence.

TC	Author	NP	TC	Countries	NP
4857	Ettner S	2	17683	USA	913
4800	Appel S	1	2451	UK	216
1503	Moos R	27	2063	India	839
1242	Kelly J	27	2034	Germany	503
1195	Bergqvist A	1	627	Sweden	38
957	Chinman M	3	584	France	56
915	Humphreys K	11	570	Canada	111
883	Davidson L	3	515	Australia	91
822	Laudet A	9	381	China	50
799	Zanarini M	2	373	Italy	50

M, Humphreys K, Davidson L, Laudet A, and Zanarini M, whose articles contribute to the overall academic knowledge on the topic of peer-support systems, rehabilitation structures, and social support networks. According to the citation trend line in Figure 5, some authors have not published many articles, but their publications have a high citation impact, indicating the existence of influential background research. On the contrary, the authors who have bigger publications output facilitate the constant progress of the research field, as well as its growth, which guarantees the knowledge advancement in the domain. Geographically, the United States is the dominant power in the world of research, having 913 publications and 17, 683 total citation, which speaks of its central role in the development of the research on self-help groups, addiction recovery, and social support structures. On the same note, Appel S has received 4,800 citations, which is a result of one publication, indicating that the article has existed as a seminal resource in the research work associated with self-help groups and support-based recovery mechanisms. Moos R and Kelly J are the most prolific with 27 publications each, and 1,503 and 1,242 citation respectively, which demonstrates their long-term impact on the literature of recovery support, addiction research, and community-based interventions.

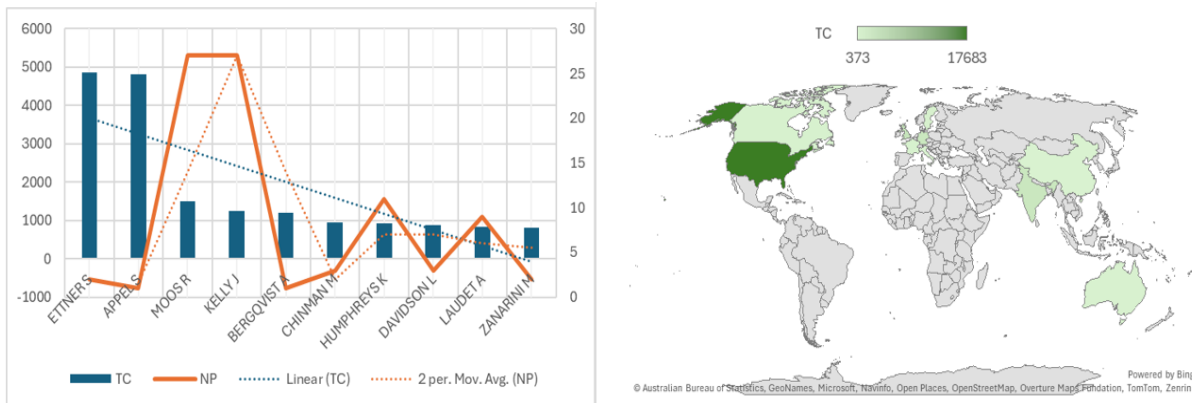


Figure 4: Author and Countries with Top Citation Records and Publications

The other significant authors are Bergqvist A, Chinman The United Kingdom has 216 publications and 2,451 citations, and India represents an important country with 839 publications and 2,063 citations as the number of academic publications on SHGs as a rural development tool and women empowerment effective device is on the rise. Scholarly involvement is also exhibited at relatively lesser levels of publication in other countries including Germany, Sweden, France, Canada, Australia, China, and Italy. The international distribution map also demonstrates that the studies in the field are most centered in the North American region and Europe and certain parts of Asia, which signify the international applicability of self-help group studies in different socio-economic settings. Specifically, the Indian contribution is very big highlighting the major role played by the country in terms of progressing research on microfinance-driven SHGs, women empowerment programmes, and community development programmes. Generally, the analysis of the author and country shows that the literature on self-help groups and empowerment is influenced by a blend of the most frequently cited works of foundation and consistent collaborative research projects in various countries. This trend shows how self-help groups are gaining significance in the world as crucial social assistance, community resilience as well as empowerment-based development interventions.

4.5 Most Cited Articles

Table 5 provides the most popular articles in the dataset, indicating the most effective academic resources contributing to intellectual progress of studies of self-help groups, social support systems, addiction recovery, and more comprehensive interventions to health in the population. The citation analysis will give the background research into the ground work studies which have played a significant role in the understanding of the conceptual and empirical of support-based community mechanisms and behavioural health interventions. The article published in Journal of the American Medical Association by Eisenberg et al. (1998), entitled Trends in Alternative Medicine Use in the United States, 1990-1997: Results of a Follow-Up National Survey has 4,800 citations, which makes it the most frequently cited article. The research is believed to be a landmark work in the context of understanding the growing demand of alternative and community-based health strategies that is indirectly connected with the overall discussion of self-help processes and support-based interventions. Kennedy et al. (2005) in Human Reproduction is another potential power source; it includes clinical guidelines of diagnosis and treatment of endometriosis and has already had 1,195 references.

Table 5: Top Cited Articles

Author	Year	Title	Source	TC
Eisenberg D; Davis R; Ettner S; Appel S; Wilkey S; Van R M; Kessler R	1998	Trends In Alternative Medicine Use in the United States, 1990-1997 -Results of A Follow-Up National Survey	Jama-Journal of the American Medical Association	4800
Kennedy S; Bergqvist A; Chapron C; D'hooghe T; Dunselman G; Greb R; Hummelshoj L; Prentice A; Saridogan E	2005	Eshre Guideline for The Diagnosis and Treatment of Endometriosis	Human Reproduction	1195
Bender D; Dolan R; Skodol A; Sanislow C; Dyck I; Mcglashan T; Shea M; Zanarini M; Oldham J; Gunderson J	2001	Treatment Utilization by Patients with Personality Disorders	American Journal of Psychiatry	578
Davidson L; Chinman M; Sells D; Rowe M	2006	Peer Support Among Adults with Serious Mental Illness: A Report from the Field	Schizophrenia Bulletin	470
Cohen E; Feinn R; Arias A; Kranzler H	2007	Alcohol Treatment Utilization: Findings From the National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions	Drug And Alcohol Dependence	392
Davidson L; Chinman M; Kloos B; Weingarten R; Stayner D; Tebes J	1999	Peer Support Among Individuals with Severe Mental Illness: A Review of the Evidence	Clinical Psychology-Science and Practice	389
Resnicow K; Jackson A; Wang T; De A; Mccarty F; Dudley W; Baranowski T	2001	A Motivational Interviewing Intervention to Increase Fruit and Vegetable Intake Through Black Churches: Results of the Eat for Life Trial	American Journal of Public Health	370
Zhu S; Melcer T; Sun J; Rosbrook B; Pierce J	2000	Smoking Cessation with and Without Assistance - A Population-Based Analysis	American Journal of Preventive Medicine	335
Binswanger I; Nowels C; Corsi K; Glanz J; Long J; Booth R; Steiner J	2012	Return To Drug Use and Overdose After Release from Prison: A Qualitative Study of Risk and Protective Factors	Addiction Science & Clinical Practice	249
Laudet A	2007	What Does Recovery Mean to You? Lessons From the Recovery Experience for Research and Practice	Journal Of Substance Abuse Treatment	237

The article represents the medical research context in general, even though it is mainly set in the framework of healthcare, where the support of patients and collaborative care models are gaining more and more significance. Bender et al. (2001) in the American Journal of Psychiatry discusses utilization of treatment in 578 citations in their study that indicates that structured mental health interventions and support networks are hypothetical in the treatment of patients with personality disorders. On the same note, Davidson et al. (2006), which is published in the Schizophrenia Bulletin, makes substantial contributions to the literature by looking at the peer support among adults with serious mental illness with 470 citations. This study also mentions the increased awareness of the importance of peer-led support groups as a significant part of recovery in mental health. Additional sources are Cohen et al. (2007) in Drug and Alcohol Dependence, which examines alcohol treatment utilization pattern, and Davidson et al. (1999) in Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice, which includes the detailed review of the evidence concerning peer support among people with severe mental illness. These papers support the relevance of community-based recovery models and peer support

mechanisms which have similar conceptual assumptions with self-help group structures. Other articles of note are Resnicow et al. (2001) in the American Journal of Public Health, which dwells on motivational interviewing interventions in enhancing health behaviour; Zhu et al. (2000) in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine, which explores smoking cessation interventions; Binswanger et al. (2012) in the Addiction Science and Clinical Practice which discusses the risks of relapse and overdose following prison release and Laudet (2007) in the Journal of Substance Abuse Treat Altogether, these highly referenced works reveal that the intellectual basis of the research area is firmly based on the concepts of public health, addiction treatment, mental health recovery, and behavioural intervention models. The outstanding feature of peer-support and recovery-oriented studies implies that the notion of the self-help groups has a firm theoretical and practical links to community-based health support systems. These seminal works have thus been instrumental in the development of future studies discussing the collective support systems, empowerment, and community resilience to overcoming social and health-related issues.

4.6 Keyword Analysis and Research Focus

Table 6 and Figure 6 shows the most recurrent keywords found in the bibliometric dataset, which offer the idea of the prevailing themes of research and conceptual target of the literature on self-help groups and women empowerment. The frequency analysis of keywords is useful in acquiring an idea of the intellectual organization and thematic inclination of the research area. The findings demonstrate that the most common keyword is that of Self-Help Groups happening 284 times, which demonstrates that the very notion of SHGs is the locus of the research field. The next one is Women Empowerment (103 occurrences), which means that a significant part of the literature is analyzing SHGs as the means to improve social-economic status and decision-making power of women. The words like Empowerment (77) and Women (48) also support the gender-based character of the research, and it is focused on the role of SHGs in solving the problems of gender inequality, financial inclusion, and social participation.

Table 6: Most Frequent Words

Words	Occurrences
Self-Help Groups	284
Women Empowerment	103
India	78
Empowerment	77
Microfinance	74
Self-Help Group	59
Alcoholics Anonymous	56
Women	48
Self-Help	46
Social Support	41

The other keyword that has been of high frequency (78 occurrences) is that of India, which indicates the high geographical focus of the research on the Indian situation. This eminence can be greatly attributed to the prolific application of SHG-based development programmes in India such as microfinance schemes and government-sponsored livelihood missions to ensure that the socio-economic status of women in rural and semi-urban regions are improved. Recurrence of the term Microfinance (74 times) shows how much SHGs and financial inclusion strategies are closely tied. The SHGs have microfinance mechanisms, which allow women to get access to credit, savings opportunities, and income generating activities leading to their economic independence and empowerment. In like manner, key words, such as Social Support (41 times) signify the role of SHGs in the capacity of being collective platforms that offer emotional, informational, and community-based support to members.



Figure 6: Word Cloud

Surprisingly, such terms like "Alcoholics Anonymous" (56 occurrences) and Self-Help (46 occurrences) imply that the literature also provides conceptual similarities of SHGs with self-help models applied in addiction recovery and rehabilitation. These articles highlight the potential effectiveness of group-oriented mutual support networks to assist individuals to overcome societal and mental difficulties, which increase resilience among communities. Altogether, the frequency analysis of the keywords shows that the research field can be characterized as the interdisciplinary one, the themes of development studies, gender empowerment, microfinance, social support systems, and public health interventions being combined. The prevalence of the terms concerning women empowerment and microfinance in specific illustrates the increased awareness of the potential of self-help groups as effective grassroots institutions through which inclusive development and an increase in the socio-economic agency of women can be achieved.

4.7 Three-Field Plot Analysis (Authors–Keywords–Sources)

Figure 7 shows a three-field plot (AU-DE-SO) that shows the structural association between the authors (AU), author keywords (DE), and sources/journals (SO) in the research literature concerning self-help groups and empowerment dynamics (Cobo et al., 2011). In further synthesis of the visualization, it is apparent that much of the academic literature is linked to the themes of self-help groups, social support, recovery, addictive behavior, alcoholics anonymous, as well as women empowerment. Such interrelationships point to the fact that the idea of self-help groups has developed within the prism of both the socio-economic development and the public health. Based on the socio-developmental perspective, the thematic connection of the self-help groups, microfinance, social support as well as women empowerment implies that the SHGs are broadly tested as community-based institutional arrangements that bolster the socio-economic status of women, especially in rural and semi-urban areas. In most developing areas, particularly in India, the involvement of women in SHGs is usually influenced by the desire to deal with structural inequalities, economic dependence, and patriarchy in the family unit. Literature thus lays stress on SHGs as community based where women can be financially included, skills built, and decision-making processes which enhances their bargaining power both as a family and the community at large.

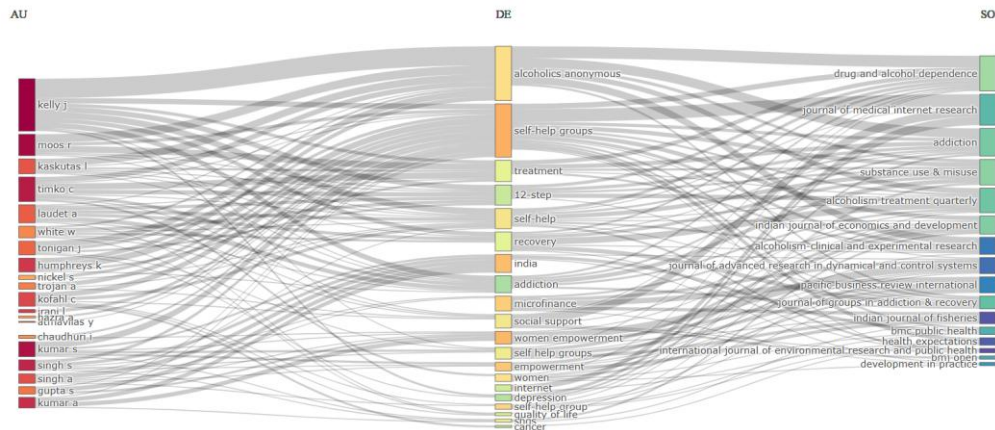


Figure 7: Three Field Paths

Simultaneously, the usage of such keywords as addiction, treatment, alcoholics anonymous, and recovery suggests that another significant aspect of SHG research is connected with social rehabilitation and community support network. These researches point out that the instability in a family due to alcohol addiction and drug abuse in the male members of the household tends to leave women in precarious socio-economic situations. As a result, most women end up in SHGs to access financial assistance as well as to form a common strength, support, and coping networks against domestic issues like alcoholism, economic and social marginalization. The material that was linked to these themes indicates the interdisciplinary character of SHG studies, with articles written in journals devoted to the areas of public health, addiction studies, development economics and social policy. Such interdisciplinary distribution implies that SHGs have progressively been known as sources of support as well as institutions of development that can solve not only community health restoration but also women empowerment and strengthening livelihood issues. All in all, the three-field analysis proposed that the self-help groups are transformative social institutions that help women to jointly defy socio-economic vulnerability and dependency and empowerment consequences. Through financial endowments, peer counseling, and social solidarity, SHGs play an important role in advancing the agency and resilience of the women especially in situations where household violence like alcohol abuse, poverty, and gender inequalities are still dominant.

4.8 Thematic Map Analysis

Figure 8 The conceptual map of the research area shows the classification of the themes into two dimensions, namely, centrality (the role the theme plays in the research field) and density (the development or maturity of the theme). According to these two dimensions, the themes are clustered into four quadrants which are Motor Themes, Basic Themes, Niche Themes, and Emerging or Declining Themes. This categorization assists in the way other aspects of research lead to the intellectual growth of the literature on self-help groups and women empowerment. The cluster of self-help groups, social support, and quality of life falls in the Basic Themes quadrant, which is one of the most centrally located themes with lower development density in the cluster. It means that these issues are the most fundamental and the most widespread notions of the research area. These keywords are eminent meaning that the majority of studies are devoted to the role of self-help groups in the provision of collective support mechanisms that improve the social well-being and the quality of life in general of the participants. Most of the researches in this group are related to the effect of group participation in promoting mental health, coping, peer support, and community resilience. The cluster connected with the words "alcoholics anonymous," self-help and treatment are included in the Motor Themes quadrant which is the well-developed and influential themes.

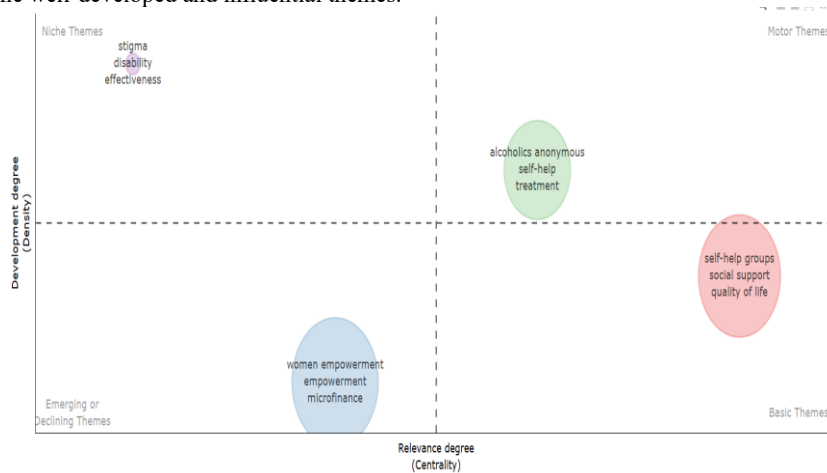


Figure 8: Thematic Map

It means that the study about the recovery of addiction and peer-support during the recovery is conceptually developed and central to the literature. The studies have demonstrated that mutual aid groups and structured peer-support systems play an essential role in substance abuse, addiction recovery, and rehabilitation efforts. This powerful stance of the cluster is associated with the established academic interest in self-help models as effective support systems in healthcare and recovery systems. The cluster of the Emerging or Declining Themes quadrant consists of the cluster of women empowerment, empowerment, and microfinance. These themes are less dense in the thematic map, but they are relevant to the research sphere to a great extent. This indicates that self-help group and women empowerment are the fastest growing field of study especially in the developing nations including India and other regions in South Asia. Research articles in this category mainly focus on the role of SHGs in financial inclusion, access to livelihood, microcredit, and socio-economic empowerment of rural women. Lastly, there is the Niche Themes quadrant that contains such topics as stigma, disability, and effectiveness. These themes are somewhat mature though they have fewer links to the overall research area. They are specialized disciplines that deal with social stigma, health-related issues, as well as the efficacy of support-based interventions in particular settings. On the whole, the thematic map proves that the area under study is interdisciplinary and dynamic with the viewpoints of the field of public health, addiction recovery, social support systems, and development being intertwined. Although conventional studies have placed a lot of emphasis on peer-support and recovery-based self-help framework, the recent studies have shifted to the importance of women empowerment, microfinance, and rural development based on self-help groups. This change implies the recognition of SHGs as revolutionary social institutions which concurrently respond to economic empowerment, social support, and well-being of marginalized groups, especially women in developing economies.

4.9 Thematic Evolution

The analysis of thematic evolution (Figure 9) demonstrates the way in which the focus of the research in the field of self-help groups has been evolving throughout the course of four large time frames: 1993-2011, 2012-2017, 2018-2022, and 2023-2026. The visualization of the Sankey type shows how the major themes have shifted with time and how the study topics of previous times have been transformed into current themes of more recent society involving socio-economic growth and empowerment of women. In the first stage (1993-2011), the research environment was highly dominated by themes like alcoholism, recovery, coping, alcoholics anonymous and randomized controlled trials. These issues show that the initial scholarship research focused mainly on self-help groups in the frameworks of healthcare and addiction recovery programs. The principle of mutual aid groups (Alcoholics Anonymous and other peer-supporting systems) was taken as the basic principle according to which the process of self-help mechanisms was to be comprehended. The second phase (2012-2017) was when the thematic structure started to diversify and change to development-oriented themes. The issues like microfinance, women self-help groups, South Asia, participation, and knowledge were all new issues of this age.

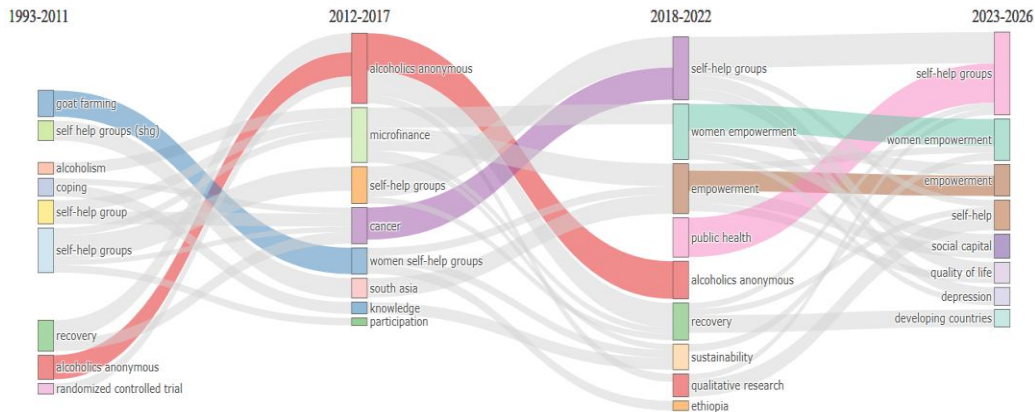


Figure 9: Thematic Evolution

This shift is symptomatic of the increasing scholarly interest in the community-based self-help programs in the underdeveloped countries, especially in the areas like South Asia where SHGs have been popularly introduced as a means of rural development and poverty reduction. The shift to health-based themes to microfinance and women-oriented groups will signify a crucial conceptual scope of the study area. The third period (2018-2022) enhanced this change by focusing on such themes as women empowerment, empowerment, sustainability, and public health. At this point, the literature began to associate self-help groups more with the larger developmental agenda such as gender equality, sustainable livelihoods, and the involvement of the community. There was also research that started incorporating the public health and social development approaches in their study and the contribution of SHGs in contributing to financial inclusion as well as health awareness, social cohesion and resilience of the community. By the last stage (2023-2026), the thematic interest has become reinforced around self-help groups, women empowerment, empowerment, social capital, and quality of life. These arguments underscore the increased understanding of SHGs as complex developmental entities that affect economic empowerment, social participation and general well-being. The recent issues like financial inclusion, entrepreneurship, social capital, and sustainable development goals suggest that the modern studies are more likely to assess the long-term socio-economic effect of SHGs on women and minority groups, especially in developing nations. On the whole, thematic development shows a evident change of the field of research as the time passes. Although initial research was more focused in health related peer-support systems and the recovery of addicts, later studies were extended to cover microfinance, rural development and empowerment programs of women. This has changed in recent years whereby the issue of holistic development outcomes, including social capital, quality of life, and sustainable empowerment has gained a lot of attention, based on a wider acknowledgement of self-help groups as important institutions of inclusive socio-economic development at the grassroots.

4.10 Institutional Collaboration Network

The institutional network of collaboration (Figure 10) shows the trends of partnership between the university, research and institute and other organizations offering a contribution to the literature available on self-help groups, addiction recovery, and women empowerment. The institutions are represented by the nodes of the network and the links between network nodes suggest collaborative relationships by co-authored publications. The relative importance of the institutions is represented by the size of the nodes, and the pattern of the clustering shows the emergence of collaborative groups of research in various regions. The analysis shows that the Stanford University is at the center of the network of collaboration, with a high betweenness centrality (100.046) and PageRank value, as well as, the identification of its major bridging role between the various institutional groups. The institutions closely related to this cluster are the US Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and VA Palo Alto Health Care System which emphasizes the role of collaborative research in the business of addiction recovery, public health, and peer-support systems. The other major cluster is the one that focuses on Harvard University, Harvard Medical School, Harvard University Medical Affiliates, and the Massachusetts General Hospital.

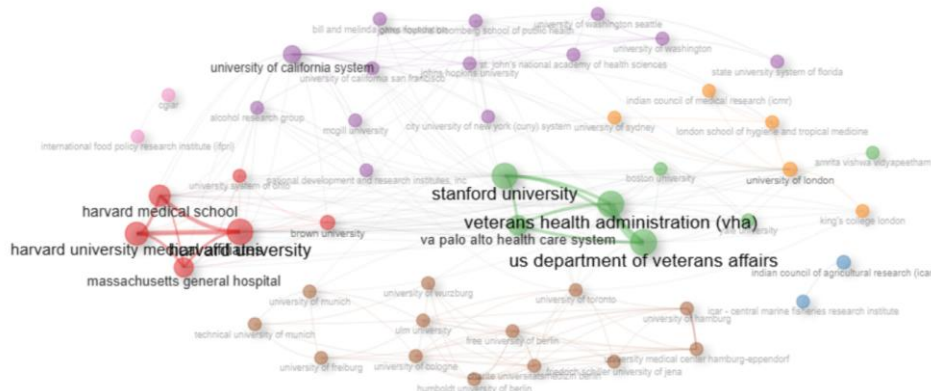


Figure 10: Institutional Collaboration

In these institutions, the level of collaboration activity is very high, and the collaboration activity is greatly involved in the formation of the research connected with mental health, addiction studies, and community-based recovery models. The fact that this network has both Brown University and the University System of Ohio is another indicator of good academic collaborations in the United States. The network also puts special emphasis on the role of the major international universities and research organizations. The institutions like Johns Hopkins University, the University of California system and the University of Washington exhibit high interrelation with other research centres, which indicates that they make contributions to the world knowledge base in the self-help mechanisms involved in health and health intervention programs. Equally, another cluster of European institutions that are involved in the study of public health, social policy and community support systems through research includes the University of London, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the King College London.

Moreover, there exist a number of German and Canadian institutions, among others, like the University of Toronto, the Humboldt University of Berlin, Free University of Berlin, the University of Munich, and the University of Hamburg, which comprise a collaborative group of health sciences, social medicine, and rehabilitation research. All these institutions collaborate to form interdisciplinary research relating mental health, addiction treatment, and peer-support models. Research organizations in the developing world like the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) are also part of the network which gives an indication of the emergent involvement of the institutions in the country where self-help groups are especially important in rural development and women empowerment programs. Further, there are global bodies like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and CGIAR that show that they are also involved in research connected with development policy, community-level resiliency and social empowerment programmes. In general, the analysis of the institutional cooperation suggests that the study undertaken on self-help groups and the connected empowerment models is backed by a network of universities, medical institutions, and policy research organizations distributed worldwide. The high level of interest of institutions in the United States and Europe, as well as emerging contributions of Asia and international development agencies, indicate the multidisciplinary and global nature of SHG research, which cuts across disciplines of the study of public health, development studies, social policy, and gender empowerment.

5. Implications of the Study

5.1 Theoretical Implications

This research study also adds to the existing body of literature on self-help groups (SHGs) and women empowerment as it offers an overall view of the intellectual framework and thematic evolution of the literature area. The bibliometric analysis demonstrates that SHG-related scholarship has developed since the initial studies on the nature of peer-support mechanisms and health recovery models to discussions of wider scope of financial inclusion, microfinance, and socio-economic empowerment of women. The implication of earlier research was the significance of peer-support systems in enhancing behavioural outcomes and the recovery process (Davidson et al., 2006; Kelly et al., 2012). Conversely, more recent studies have come to emphasize more that SHGs are being used to increase the agency of women and their economic involvement, especially in the developing nations (Swain & Wallentin, 2009). Through mapping of these developing themes, the study will add theoretical insight on understanding of SHGs as institutions that integrate social support, empowerment and community-based development processes.

5.2 Policy Implications

The findings in this study have significant policy implications to policy makers and development agencies involved in formulating women empowerment programmes. The growing popularity of other themes like microfinance, financial inclusion, and rural development signifies the great importance of SHGs that can be used to deal with socio-economic inequalities. Past research has revealed that SHG participation is capable of enhancing the power of women in making decisions, financial independence and social status in the household as well as in communities (Swain and Wallentin, 2009). The policymakers can thus enhance the empowerment programmes of women through community-based SHG models that promote a sense of collective participation, development of entrepreneurship, and financial literacy.

5.3 Practical Implications

In practical terms, the research has a practical implication to non-governmental organizations (NGOs), development practitioners, and grassroots institutions that are involved in community development. It has always been proven to be true that the social resilience and quality of life among participants could be improved when supported by collective support systems and peer networks (Laudet, 2007; Gil-Gonzalez et al., 2020). SHG empowerment by use of training programmes, financial literacy, and digital financial services would further increase their efficiency in ensuring women socio-economic empowerment and sustainable livelihoods.

6. Future Research Direction

Table 7: Future Research Direction

Key Area of Focus	Objective	Research Questions
Self-Help Groups and Women Socio-Economic Empowerment	To investigate the role of self-help group participation in enhancing the economic independence of women, social participation and empowerment in decision making in households and communities.	1. What is the impact of self-help group participation on the ability of women to control financial resources and make household decisions? 2. How do SHG activities impact on socio-economic empowerment of rural women in the long-term and sustainability of livelihood?
Microfinance SHGs and Financial Inclusion	To examine how SHGs are used to magnify the financial inclusion, access to credit, and entrepreneurial opportunities of marginalized women.	1. What role do SHGs play in creating social capital and resiliency in a community in terms of collective efforts? 2. How do the effectiveness of SHGs in supporting inclusive financial systems in the emerging economies depend?
SHGs, Social Capital, and Community Development	To understand the role of SHGs in enhancing social networks, collective action and community participation in the rural and semi-urban areas.	1. How do SHGs contribute to the participation and community-based development programs in local governance? 2. What role do SHGs play in creating social capital and resiliency in a community in terms of collective efforts?
SHGs and Household well being	To examine the overall effects of SHG involvement on family welfare in terms of education, health and social well-being.	1. What is the effect of SHG participation on the health outcomes of households, access to education and the general quality of life? 2. Are SHGs effective platforms to deal with social issues like poverty, gender inequality, and domestic vulnerability?
Digital Transformation and SHG Sustainability	To find out how digital financial technologies and digital literacy programs can make SHGs more efficient in their operations and operational sustainability.	1. What is the way to enhance SHG financial management and transparency with the help of digital banking, mobile finance, and online platform? 2. Digital inclusion is one of the questions that should be answered to enhance SHG networks and sustainable rural entrepreneurship.

7. Limitations of the Study

Although this study offers a good bibliometric review of the literature on self-help groups (SHGs) and women empowerment, the study has a number of limitations that need to be noted. To begin with, the analysis will be conducted only with the publications that have been indexed in

Scopus and Web of Science databases. Despite the wide coverage by these databases of high quality scholarly publications, pertinent studies that are indexed on other databases or in local journals could have been missed.

Therefore, the dataset may not have considered some contributions to the SHG literature. Second, only English-language publications were used in the study and it might have created bias of language based on the fact that the results are not representative of other researches done in other languages. This is especially applicable to the case of SHG research because most studies touching on rural development and women empowerment are carried out within the local or regional contexts.

Third, bibliometric analysis is mainly aimed at presenting quantitative data (citations, keywords, publishing trends, etc.), and this method might not fully reflect the qualitative complexity of the individual studies. Although the method is the best way to trace the intellectual organization and research patterns of the domain, it avoids evaluating the quality of methodology and contextual subtleties of the specific articles that are part of the dataset. Lastly, the study findings are determined by the search keywords and filtering criteria chosen to affect the vastness of the literature obtained.

The possible research that may be conducted in the future is to increase the dataset with other keywords, databases, and methodological strategies, including systematic reviews or meta-analyses of the research so that the picture of SHG-related scholarship may be more complex. All in all, the study has informative information on the growth, thematic transformation, and collaborative forms of research on self-help groups and women empowerment, even to these limits.

8. Conclusion

This paper is a bibliometric research overview of the existing body of knowledge related to the self-help groups (SHGs) and women empowerment focusing on the intellectual framework, theme development, and global trend of research in this area. Through the examination of the publications listed in Scopus and Web of Science between 1993-2026, the research will show a gradual increase in the number of scholarly sources that focus on SHGs, which indicates that these entities have been growing in their importance in dealing with problems of financial inclusion, building communities, and empowering women socio-economically.

The results show that the initial studies of self-help groups were highly focused on the peer-support methods and addiction recovery and mental health support systems, focusing on the community-based support and its role in enhancing the behavioural and psychosocial outcomes. The emerging research is over time slowly shifting to development oriented themes including microfinance, financial inclusion, rural development and women empowerment especially within the developing nations.

This shift shows how SHGs are progressively becoming significant grassroots institutions that do not only act as sources of social support systems, but also socio-economic development processes at large. The bibliometric analysis also determines the important journals, authors, and the countries which play the role in the development of the SHG related literature. It is also noted that the increasing relevance of SHG studies within the context of global societies continues to be reflected by the presence of powerful institutional collaboration networks and interdisciplinary research themes (Cobo et al., 2011). Also, thematic mapping and thematic evolution studies demonstrate new spheres of study that revolve around social capital, and quality of life, sustainable development, and digital financial inclusion.

In totality, the paper highlights the importance of the self-help groups as multiplex community organizations that support empowerment, collective action and socio-economic change in marginalized groups of individuals. Through a rigorous mapping of the intellectual evolution of SHG research, the study would help to understand the dynamic research environment better and give a basis on future research and policy interventions to enhance the empowerment of women and comprehensive development programs.

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Author Contributions

Both authors played significant roles in the study conceptualization, analysis of data, and outcomes interpretation as well as writing of the manuscript. The final version of the manuscript is already read and accepted by all the authors.

Conflict of Interest

The authors assert the lack of conflict of interest in publishing this research.

Data Availability

The bibliographic information in this paper was accessed in the online databases like Scopus and Web of Science (WoS). The authors can provide the dataset upon the reasonable request.

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