Assessment of impact of “Vision Care Technician Training Programme” on Empowerment of women at Sankara Eye Foundation, India

Tarvinder Kaur

MBA-HM 24

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Introduction

- Sankara Eye Foundation, India in the year 2002, started Vision Care Technician Training Program to empower young girls from socio-economically disadvantaged background and train them in all spheres of eye care.
- The objective of this program was to compensate for the staff in field of eye care and to empower the girls from poor economic background so that they can be independent and also support their families financially.

Research Question

What is the level of women empowerment brought about by the VCT training programme in the lives of women who completed the course and are employed at SEFI?

Research Objectives:

- To assess the level of control over financial decisions in women who have completed VCT training Programme and are employed at SEFI.
- To assess the level of control over personal decisions in women who have completed VCT training Programme and are employed at SEFI.
- To assess the level of autonomy and household decision making in women who have completed VCT training Programme and are employed at SEFI.

Review of Literature

Author (Year)	Study Location	Sample size	Sampling Techniques	Salient Features
Eguonor Oleabhiele, Lisa Ogodo (March 2021)	Nigeria	399 males and females (age:15-49 years)	Cluster sampling followed by purposive sampling	VTP develops the necessary skills and competence for occupation. VTP leads to sustained women empowerment by improving job opportunities and reducing poverty thus improving quality of life. [9]
Mani Bharadwaj (December 2018)	Indore	120 women	Simple random Sampling	Education and skill development is a significant instrument for women empowerment. Vocational training has a significant impact on women empowerment. A key strategy is for gender equality is to combine policies and skill development institutions at local level.[10]
Vipul Kumar, Priyaranjan Maral (June 2015)	Allahabad, UP, India	272 urban married women	Simple random sampling	There is a difference in the financial decision-making behaviour of working and non-working women. Working women are more involved in decisions related to purchase of land, motor, or other assets. [12]
Emmanuel Janagan Johnson (Jan 2015)	Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu	300 women	Simple random technique lottery method.	Income generation programmes help to provide higher education for children. It also helps the family to progress. Additional income is more important for the progress of family in rural areas. (The meaning of family progress is just to have sufficient food and day today requirements.) [13]
Dr Shoaib Feroz Bushralatif Usmani (May 2013)	Bhimber district, Azad Jammu and Kashmir	10 women	Snow-ball sampling technique	Women's economic contribution has raised their status in the society. Women are given importance in household decision-making because they contribute to household income. [14]
Thresi Varghese (Jan 2011)	Sohar region, Oman	150 women were selected using convenience sampling technique.	Convenience sampling technique	Women's interest towards domesticity is responsible for less empowerment. The empowering interventions need to focus on reducing the patriarchal social power responsible for sustained gender inequalities. [15]

Methodology

- **Research design:** Descriptive, Cross-sectional study design
- **Study setting:** Sankara Eye Foundation, India
- **Study population:** Women who have completed VCT/DOA course at SEFI and were employed at SEFI at the time of study.
- **Research approach:** Quantitative Assessment using Google forms
- **Sample size calculation:** Entire Cohort Of VCTs was included
- **Study instruments:** Questionnaire
- **Statistical methods:** SPSS was used for descriptive stats
- **Ethical considerations:**
  - Due approval was taken from ethics committee before conducting the survey.
  - Voluntary participation: women who wished to withdraw were allowed to do so.
  - To maintain the confidentiality of the responses, unique codes were assigned to each respondent and same was used while analysing data.

Methodology

- A structured questionnaire was used with a Likert scale to capture the responses on control on decision-making and other aspects of the study.
- Google forms were used to capture the responses and the data was compiled in Excel using codes assigned to each response. SPSS was used for descriptive statistics.
- Initial Index scores: Average of all scores in that section. For example-

$$\text{Financial empowerment IIS} = \frac{\text{Sum of scores of all elements in Financial Decision-making}}{\text{Number of elements in Financial Decision-making}}$$

- Overall score for women empowerment: Average of all Initial Index scores.
- Overall Score was scaled on a 0-1 scale to assess the level of empowerment among the VCTs.
- Formula- (Actual value – Min. value)/(Max. value – Min. value)

Results and Findings

Table 1: Frequency table for age group of respondents.		
Age Group	Frequency	Percent
18- 20 years	9	4.8
20-24 years	69	37.1
25-29 years	42	22.6
30-34 years	36	19.4
35-39 years	22	11.8
40-44 years	4	2.2
45-49 years	3	1.6
50 years and above	1	.5
Total	186	100.0

Table 2: Type of Locality		
Type of locality	Frequency	Percent
Village	103	55.4
Town	38	20.4
City	45	24.2
Total	186	100.0

Table 3: Highest level of Qualification		
Qualification	Frequency	Percent
Completed High school	16	8.6
Completed VCT/DOA	139	74.7
Completed Bachelor’s Degree	21	11.3
Completed Master’s Degree	7	3.8
Others	3	1.6
Total	186	100.0

Table 4: Age at first Marriage of the respondents	
n/N	85/186
Mean	24.48 years
Median	25.00 years
Std. Deviation	3.235
Minimum	18 years
Maximum	34 years

Table 6: Control on decision related to number of children (respondents having children)

Extent of control	Frequency (N=186)	Valid Percent
No control at all	19	27.1
To small extent	23	32.9
To medium extent	15	21.4
To high extent	13	18.6
Total	70	100.0

Table 5: Control on decisions related to use of contraceptives (among married respondents)

Extent of control	Frequency (N=186)	Percent
To small extent	2	10.0
To medium extent	16	80.0
To high extent	2	10.0
Total	20	100.0

Table 7: Control on decision about time of conception (respondents with children)		
Extent of control	**Frequency (N=186)**	**Percent**
No control at all	19	27.1
To small extent	13	18.6
To medium extent	21	30.0
To high extent	17	24.3
Total	70	100.0

Table 8: Control on decision related to children's education		
Extent of control	**Frequency (N=186)**	**Percent**
No control at all	12	17.1
To small extent	6	8.6
To medium extent	25	35.7
To high extent	27	38.6
Total	70	100.0

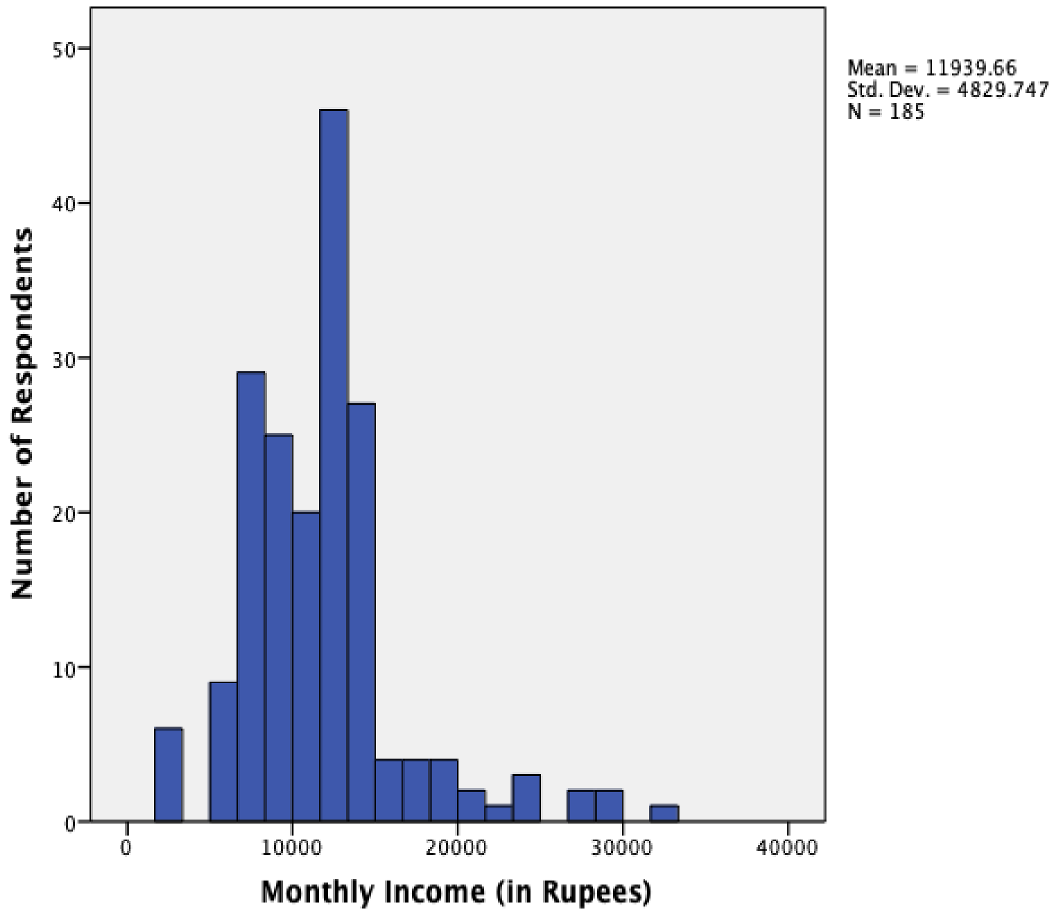

Figure 1: Histogram showing monthly income of respondents.

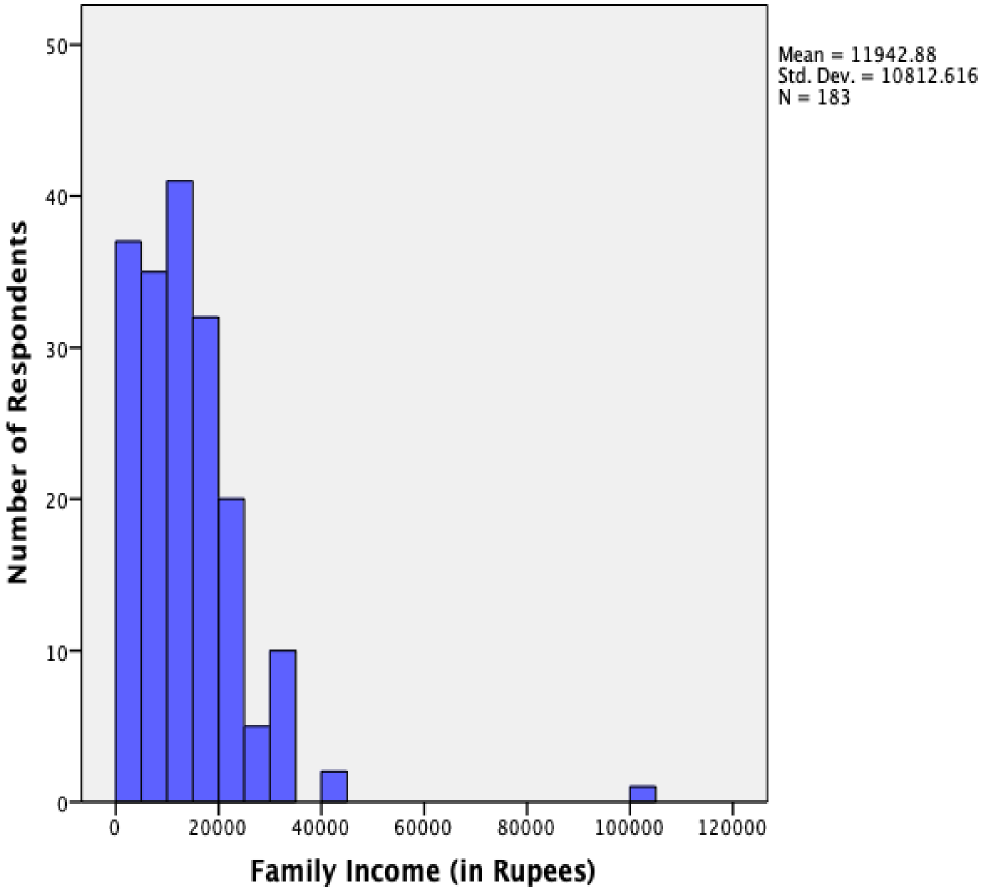

Figure 2: Histogram showing family income of the respondents.

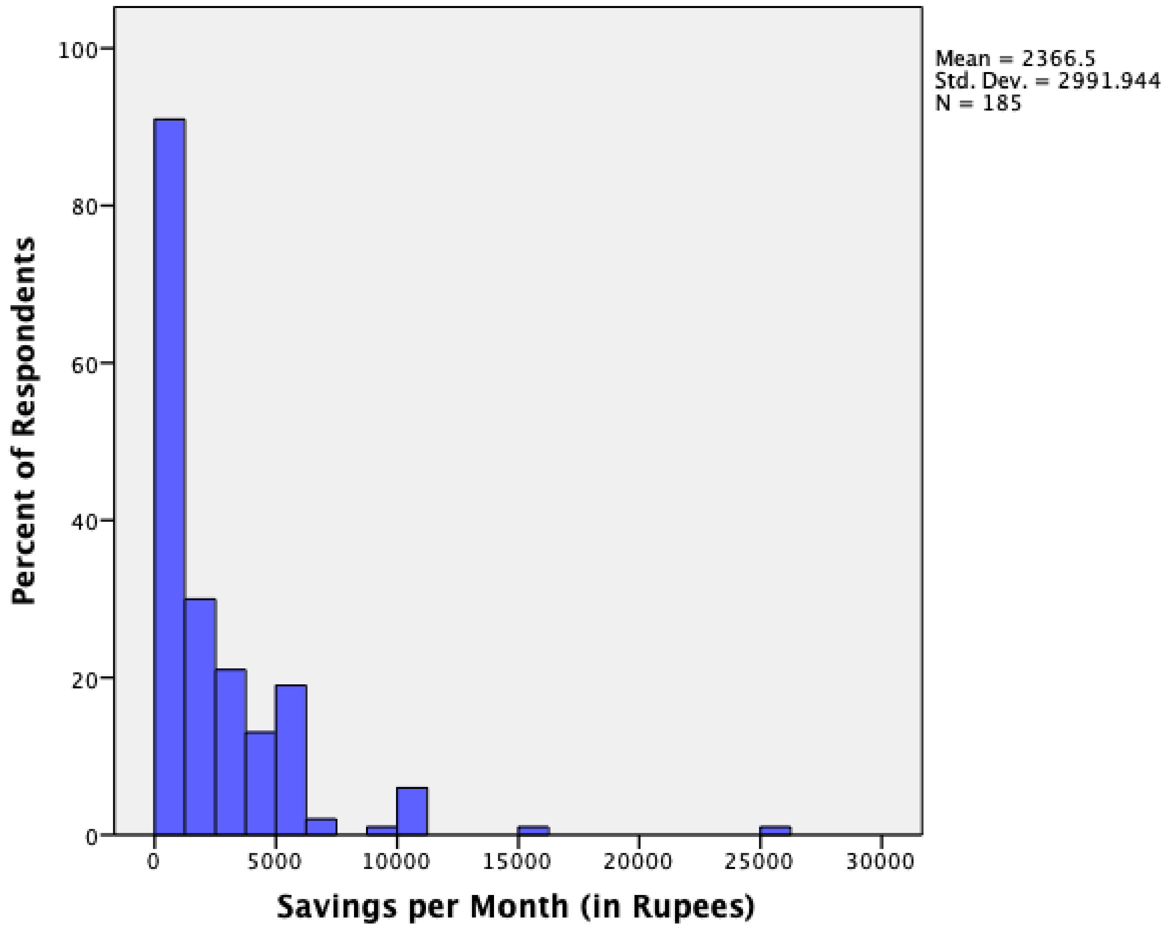

Figure 3: Bar chart showing Monthly savings of the respondents.

Table 9: Frequency table showing Number of Family members Dependent on Respondent's Income.

Number of dependents	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
NIL	27	14.6	14.6
1	25	13.5	28.1
2	38	20.5	48.6
3	39	21.1	69.7
4	22	11.9	81.6
5	19	10.3	91.9
6	9	4.9	96.8
7	2	1.1	97.8
8	2	1.1	98.9
9	2	1.1	100.0
Total	185	100.0	

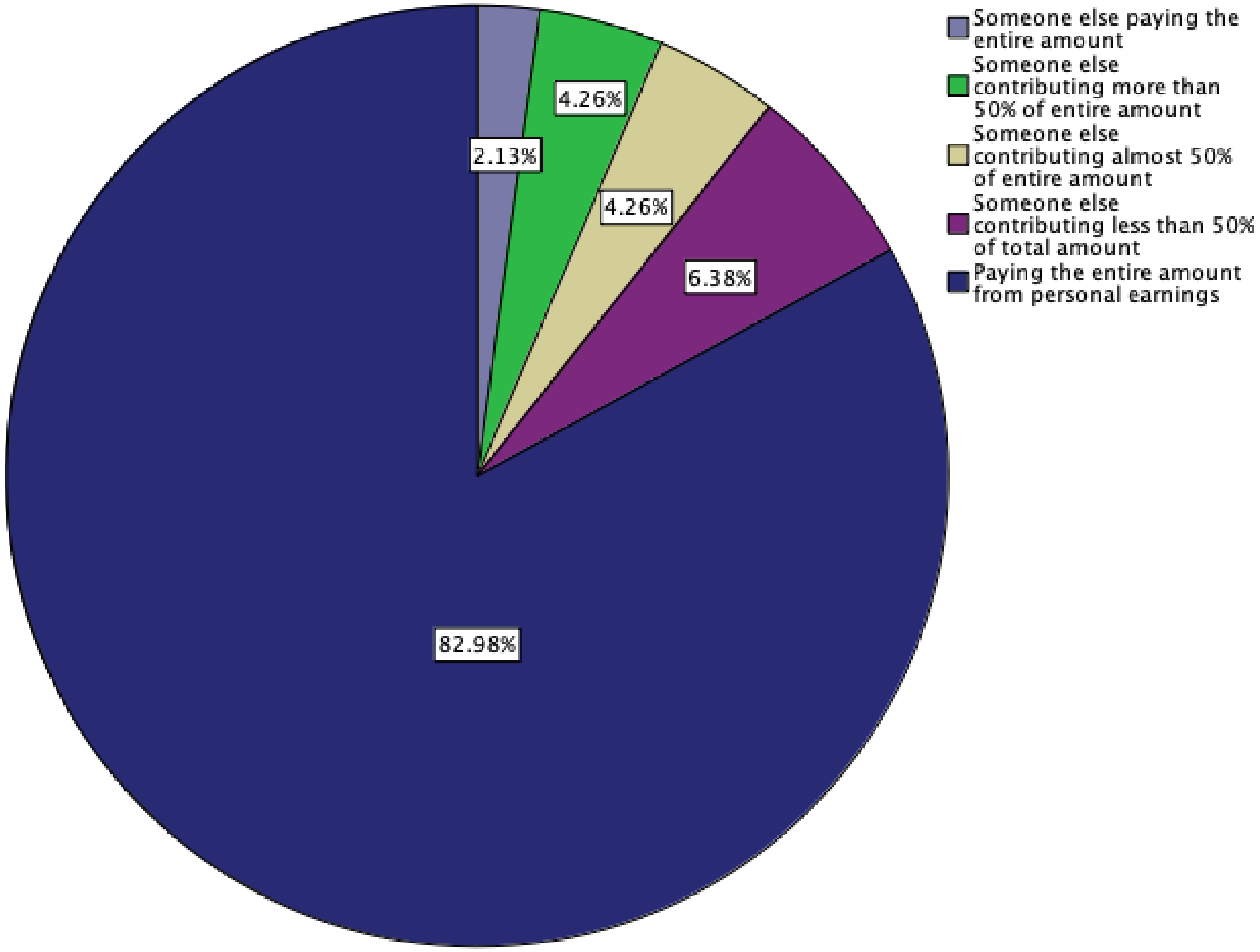

Figure 4: Pie chart showing percent of respondents paying loan

Table 10: Number of respondents who have taken loan from a bank or any other financial institution.

Taken loan	Frequency (N=186)	Percent
No	139	74.7
Yes	47	25.3
Total	186	100.0

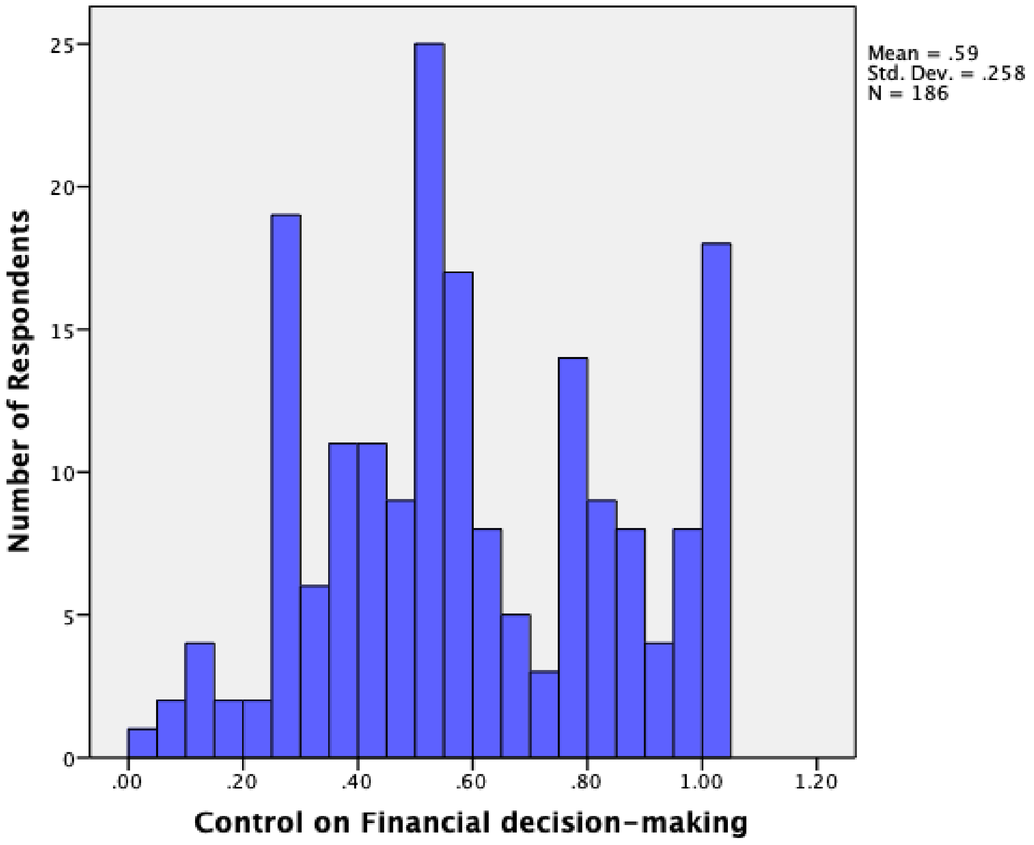

Figure 4.11: Histogram showing Control on financial Decision-making among respondents (on a scale of 0-1)

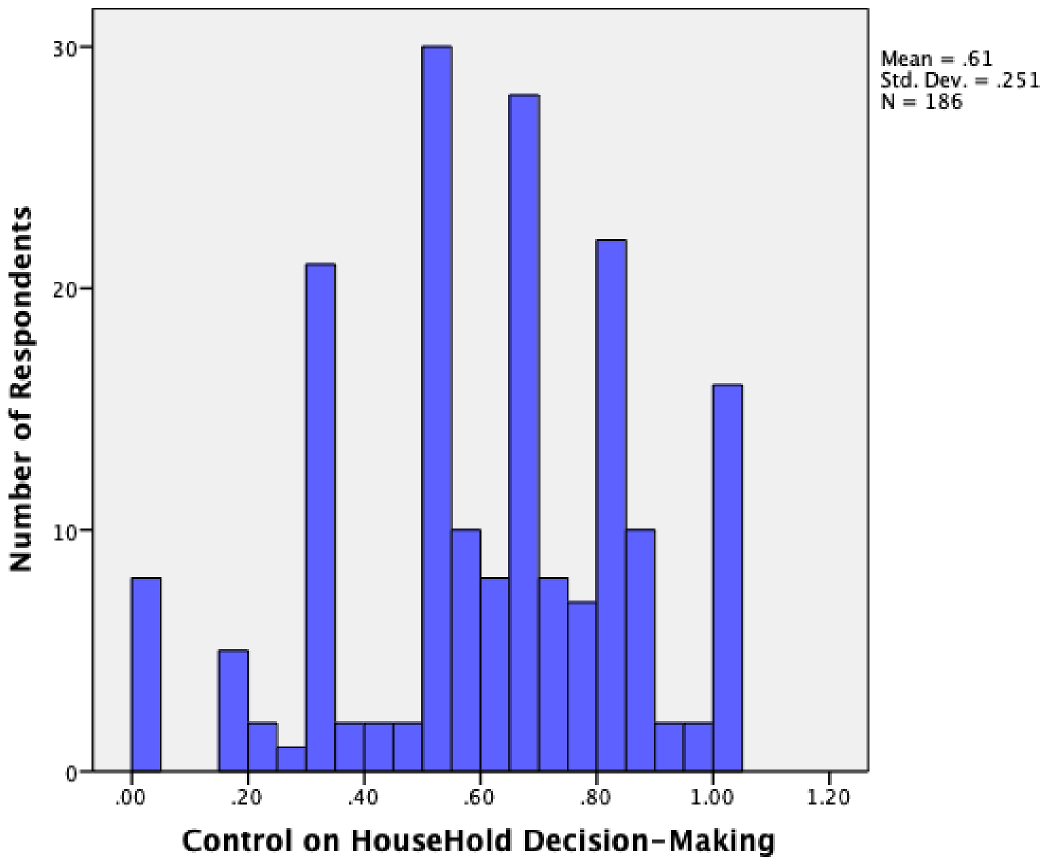

Figure 4.10: Histogram showing Control on Household Decision-making among respondents (on a scale of 0-1)

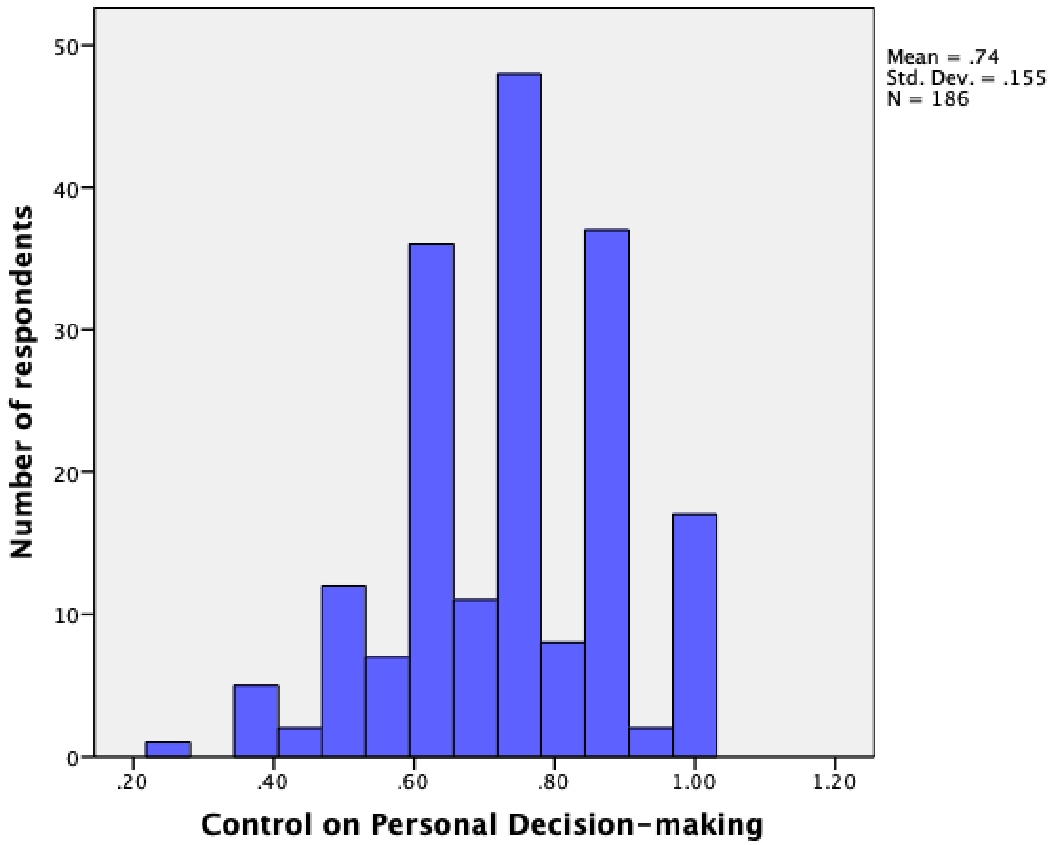

Figure 4.12: Histogram showing Control on personal Decision-making among respondents (on a scale of 0-1)

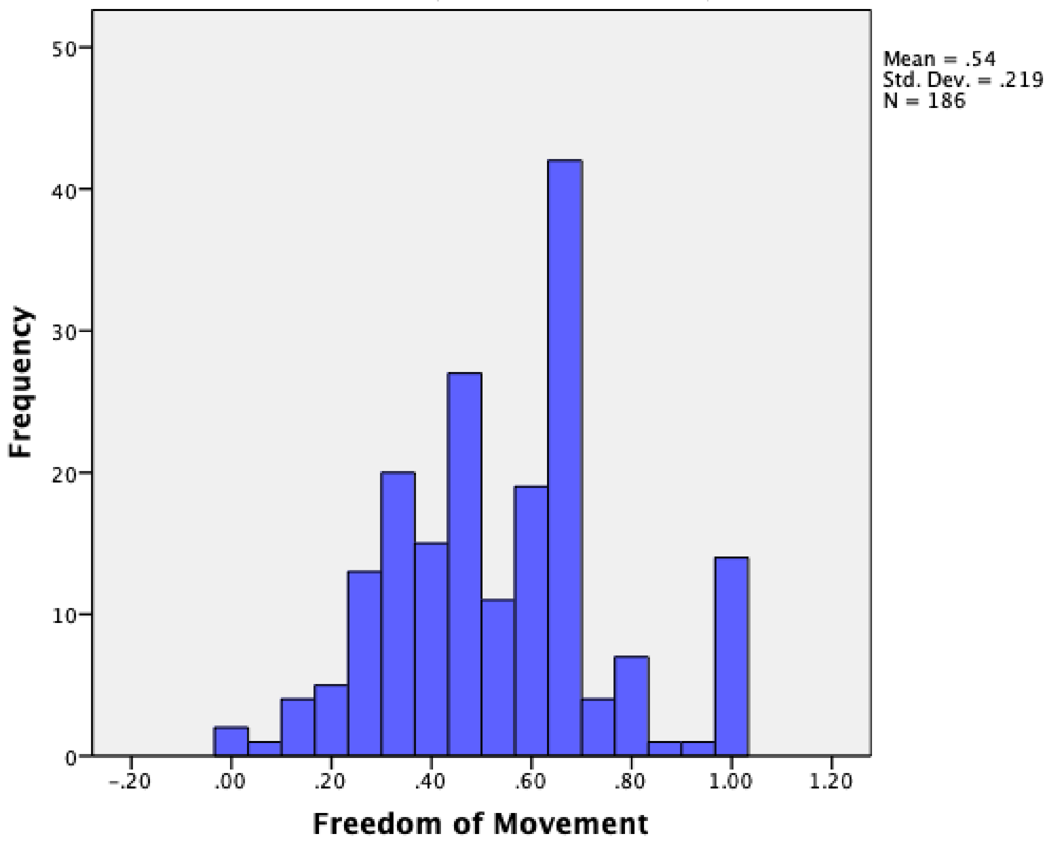

Figure 4.13: Histogram showing Freedom of movement among respondents (on a scale of 0-1)

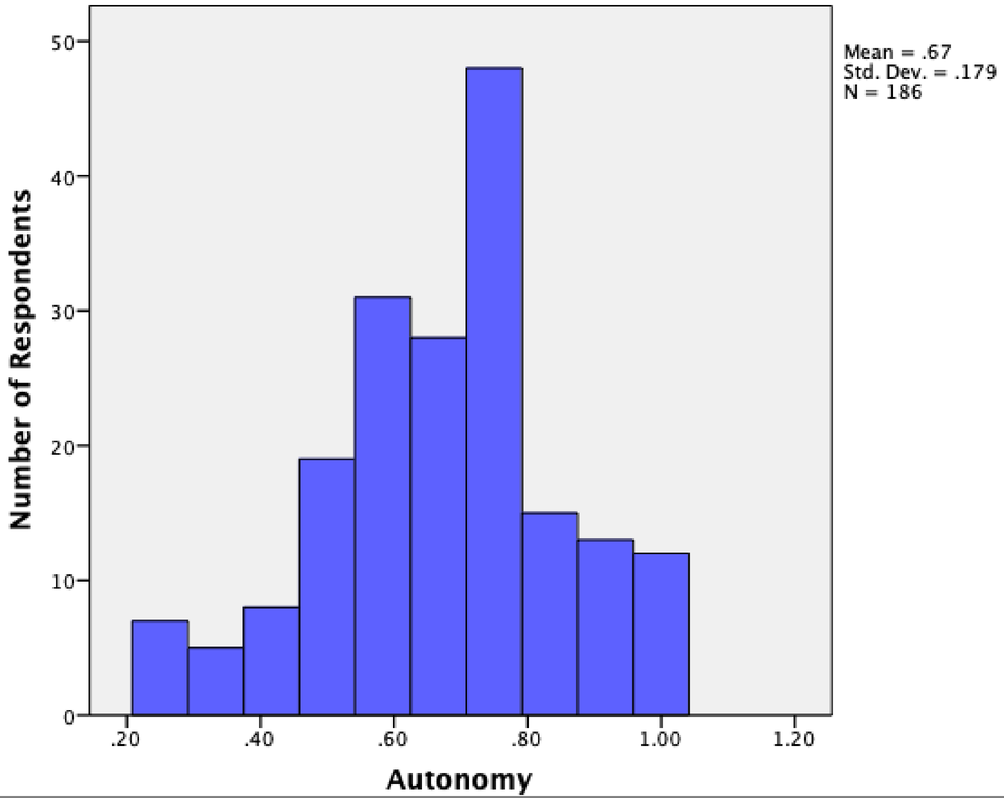

Figure 4.14: Bar chart showing autonomy among respondents

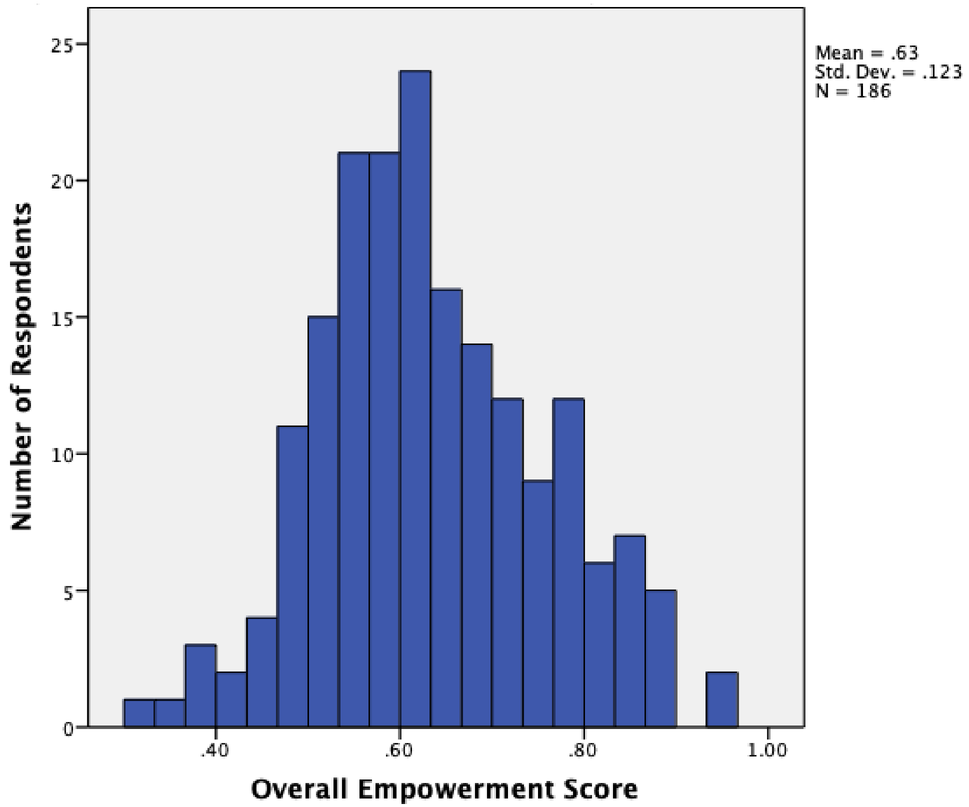

Figure 4.15: Bar chart showing Overall Empowerment Score

Conclusion

- The women who have completed VCT program at Sankara Academy of Vision and are employed at Sankara Eye Foundation, India have a mean empowerment score of 0.63 which can be categorized as medium empowerment.
- Mean empowerment score in Personal decision-making is highest while mean empowerment score for Freedom of movement is lowest among others.
- 80% of the women who have taken loan from any financial institution are able to pay back the amount from their personal earnings. However, the tendency to save a part of their earnings is less. The study also concludes that most of these women support other members of their family financially with their earnings.
- Financial independence and contributing to the family income has a major role in the economic well-being of women as well as the society. Hence vocational training courses such as the Vision Care Technician training program should be encouraged for empowerment of women and the society as a whole.
- In order to avoid the vulnerability of women towards crisis, they should be encouraged to increase monthly savings if possible.
- Also, modifications can be made to the course to include knowledge about the rights of women to increase the awareness among the women.

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