



GOVERNMENT PROGRAMMES KNOWN BY THE WOMEN GRAMA PANCHAYAT MEMBERS: A STUDY OF VIJAYAPUR DISTRICT

Dr. Shantadevi.T

Associate Professor and Chairperson

Department of Library and Information Science

Karnataka State Akkamahadevi Women's University, Vijayapura, Karnataka. India

Abstract

While women have made many advances, their inferior status to men continues to be a global phenomenon. At a time of unprecedented economic growth, India is experiencing a dramatic intensification of violence against women and the majority of girls are still not getting equal educational opportunity. In one of the most important steps for the empowerment of women, the Indian government gave constitutional status to village-level councils or Panchayati Raj institutions and reserved 33% of the seats in Panchayats for women. In addition, women were organized into Self-help Groups to mark the beginning of a major process of empowering women, although not much attention was paid to women's formal education. Our aim was to explore the impact of these measures on women's empowerment in the states of West Bengal and Mizoram. In general, we found that affirmative action does ensure that larger numbers of women enter politics but it does not ensure that the women participate in politics and function as elected representatives, because of lack of education. Empowerment needs to be seen as a holistic outcome of processes of critical education that enables women to lead autonomous lives and the freedom to act. Both affirmative action and education are necessary to empower women who have suffered discrimination and lack of power always.

Keywords: Education, Empowerment, Panchayat, Self-Help Groups, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

Introduction

The Gram Panchayat is the basic or lowest level of Panchayat Raj in Karnataka. It has jurisdiction over a group of villages. Gram panchayat represents an assembly of the village elders who are directly elected by the citizens of the village. This panchayat unit is headed by a chairperson who is known as Sarpanch. The representatives of the Gram Panchayats are elected for five years. While the members are directly elected from wards, the Sarpanch is elected by the members. There are seats reserved for women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in Gram Panchayats.

Women constitute half of the population. Issue of political empowerment of women has attracted global attention. The United Nations (UN) adopted Convention on the Political Rights of Women in 1952. UN has organized four World Conferences on Women. Fourth was held in Beijing in 1995 and it declared that women's equal participation in decision making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account. It also affirmed that women should have at least a 30% share of decision making positions. However, participation of women, in general, in politics and public life in India has been abysmally low. There is a huge gap between men and women in political activities beyond voting. Participation of women at the higher level is lower in comparison to their participation at the lower level of governance structure². In the domestic arena leadership and managerial skills of women are silently recognized however, they are not given space in the public arena. While other marginalized communities such as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes got reservations in the Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies, no reservation for women was given in the Constitution of India in the beginning which restricted their political empowerment.

Constitutional Provisions

Article 15 (3) to the Constitution of India empowers State to make special provisions for women. This constitutional mandate is recognition of the fact that women in India need to be empowered socially and economically so as to ensure their full participation in social, economic and political activities of the country. However, to make use of potential of women and also to empower them, 73rd Amendment Act 1992 (73rd CAA) for the first time provided one-third reservations for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and thus ushered a new era of women's participation in the local governance in India. However, journey of political empowerment of women in Panchayats has evolved gradually. Balwant Rai Mehta Committee Report (1959) had suggested only that the 20-member Panchayat Samiti should co-opt or nominate two women interested in work among women and children.

The Ashok Mehta Committee Report (1978) recommended a two-tier panchayat system, in which the two women who polled the highest number of votes in the panchayat elections would, even if they failed to actually get elected, stand co-opted into the panchayat. Where no women contested elections, any two women known to be active community workers, could be co-opted. National Perspective Plan for Women (1988) recommended 30 percent reservation for women in these bodies. Meanwhile, some states had already proceeded to provide reservations for women. In 1985, Karnataka introduced 25 percent reservation for women in the Mandal Praja Parishads, with a further reservation for women belonging to the SCs and STs. Andhra Pradesh, too, had in 1986 provided for

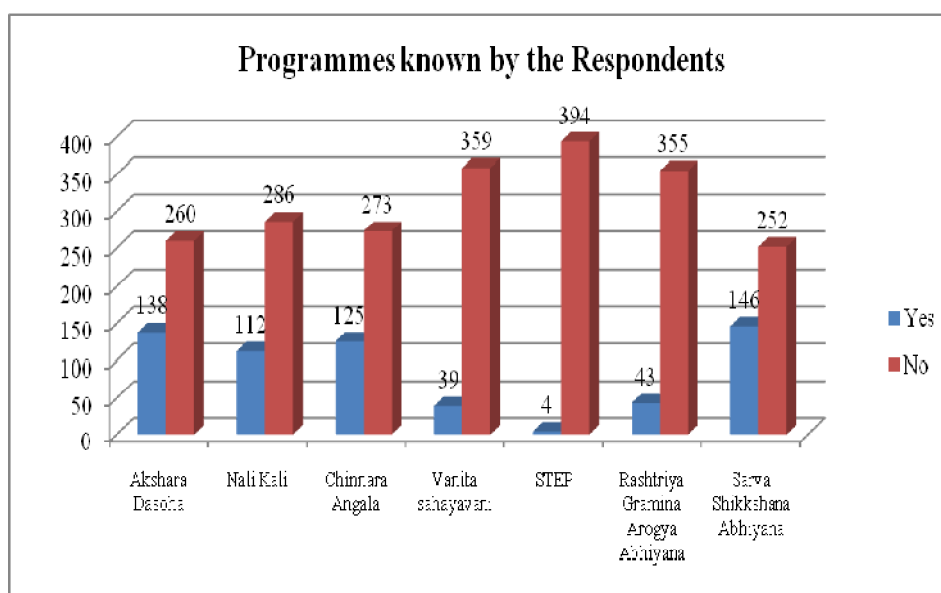


reservation of 22-25 percent for the Gram Panchayat (GP), with two women to be co-opted in the Panchayat Samitis, in addition to the elected women members.

Government programmes, policies, departments and schemes known by the women Grama Panchayat Members

every single women Grama Panchayat member is aware of the government programmes and activities. They have used multiple sources and that they do not depend on any single source. Television was the second most widely used source to keep themselves abreast of Government programmes. But it was Grama Panchayat office through which 84.9% of members kept themselves updated about the programmes. The third most widely used sources are Government offices which were used by more than two-fifth of study population. Public libraries and academic libraries have occupied last position as very few members have used this source to keep themselves updated about Government programmes.

Programmes	Yes	No
Nali Kali	112 (28.1)	286 (71.9)
Chinnara Angala	125 (31.4)	273 (68.6)
Vanita Sahayavani	39 (9.8)	359 (90.2)
Rashtriya Gramina Arogya Abhiyana	43 (10.8)	355 (89.2)
Sarva Shikkshana Abhiyana	146 (36.7)	252 (63.3)
Aarogya Kavacha	299 (75.1)	99 (24.9)
Sampoorna swachata andolana	117 (29.4)	281 (70.6)
Spandana	52 (13.1)	346 (86.9)
Sakshara Bharata	81 (20.4)	317 (79.6)
BPL card	343 (86.2)	55 (13.8)
Namma Aadhara	305 (76.6)	93 (23.4)
Mahiti Sindhu	47 (11.8)	351 (88.2)





Women Grama Panchayat members were asked about the awareness of Government Programmes Table-39 shows that 86.7%(N=343)of the members known to BPL Card programme, while 76.6% (N=305) known to Namma Aadhara, 75.1% (N=299) Arogya Kavacha, 36.7% (N=146) Sarva Shikshana Abhiyana, 31.4% (N=125) Chinnara Angala, 28.1% (N= 122) Nali Kali which are the basic rural development Government Programmes.

Table- 01 schemes of Government known to Women Grama Panchayat Members

Schemes	Yes	No
Yashaswini	303 (76.1)	95 (23.9)
Aarogya Bandhu	200 (50.3)	198 (49.7)
Madilu	222 (55.8)	176 (44.2)
Bhagyalaxmi	298 (74.9)	100 (25.1)
Pancha tantransh	77 (19.3)	321 (80.7)
MGNAREGA	330 (82.9)	68 (17.1)
Udyogini	54 (13.6)	344 (86.4)
Indira Awas	274 (68.8)	124 (31.2)
Akshara Dasoha	138 (34.7)	260 (65.3)
STEP	4 (1)	394 (99)
Ashraya	354 (88.9)	44 (11.1)
Suvarna Gramodaya	141 (35.4)	257 (64.6)
RWSP Gramina neeru sarabaraju yojane	175 (44)	223 (56)
SJRSY	171 (43)	227 (57)

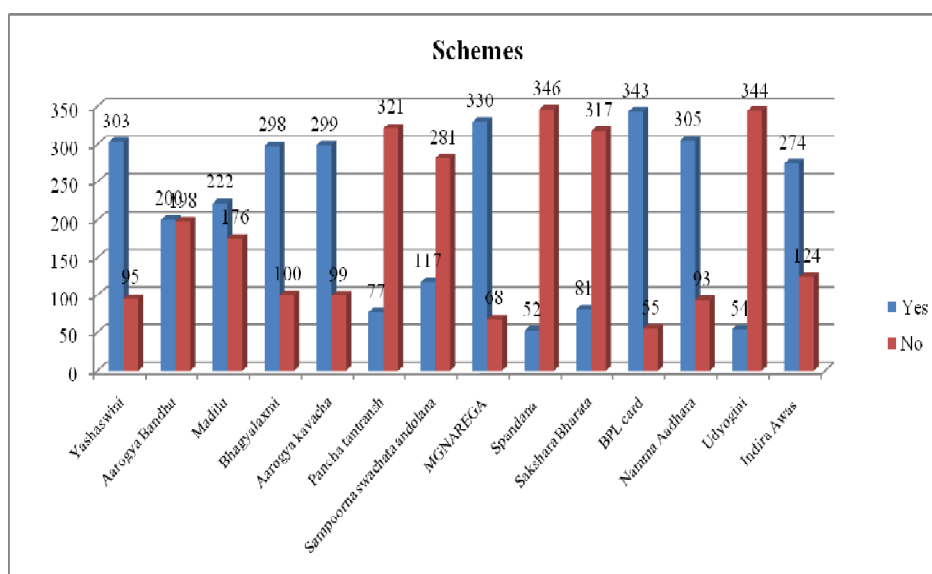




Table- 02 Awareness of Departments of Government of Karnataka among Women Grama Panchayat Members

Departments	Yes	No
Mahila Ayoga	29 (7.3)	369 (92.7)
Social welfare department	27 (6.8)	371 (93.2)
Women and Child Development	55 (13.8)	343 (86.2)
Devedasi Punrvasati Kendra	162 (40.7)	236 (59.3)
Department of Rural development	38 (9.5)	360 (90.5)
Karntaka Mahila Abhivruddhi Nigama	45 (11.3)	353 (88.7)

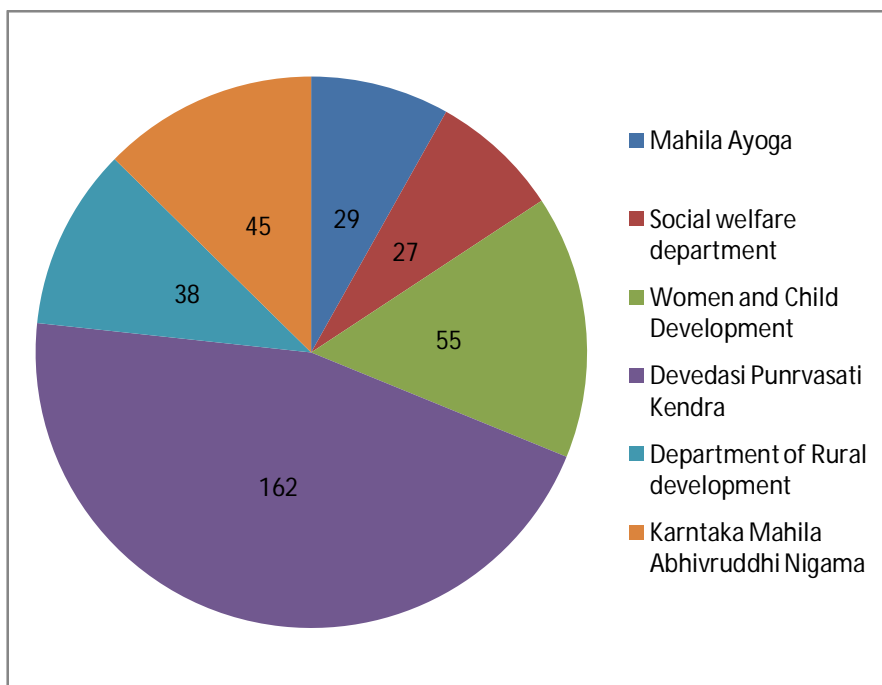
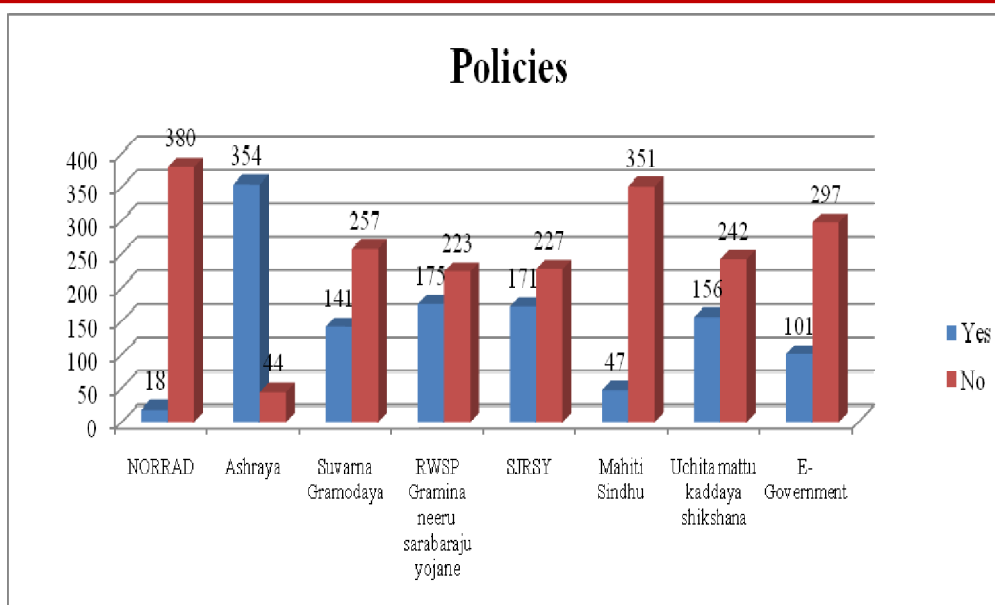
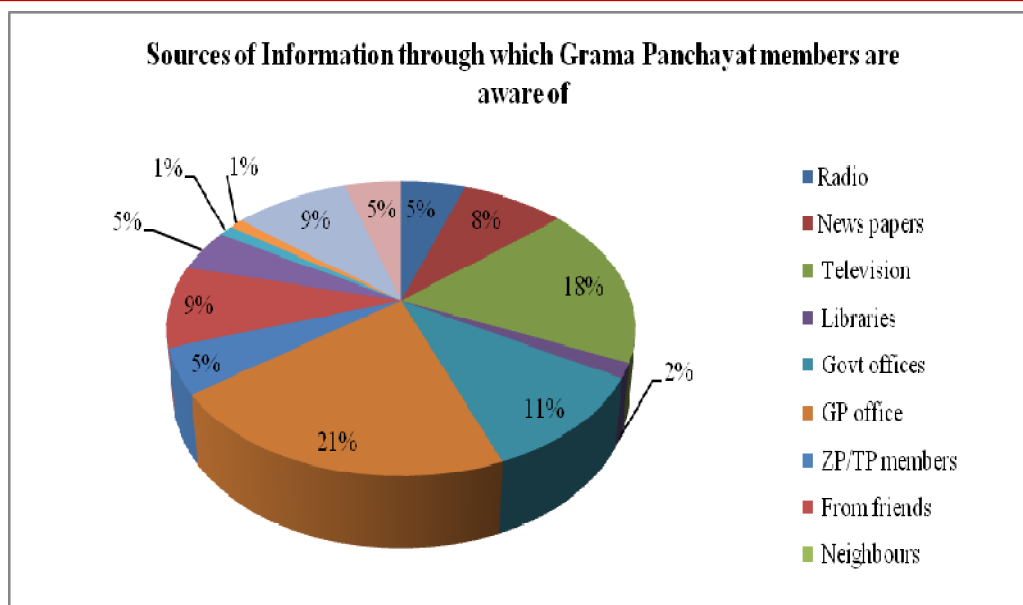


Table- 03 Policies

Policy	Yes	No
NORRAD	18 (4.5)	380 (95.5)
Uchitamattu kaddaya shikshana	156 (39.2)	242 (60.8)
E- Government	101 (25.4)	297 (74.6)

**Table- 04 Sources of Information through which Grama Panchayat members are aware of**

Sources	Yes	Rank
Radio	86 (21.6)	7
News papers	138 (34.7)	6
Television	288 (72.40)	2
Libraries	26 (6.5)	11
Govt offices	175 (44)	3
GP office	338 (84.9)	1
ZP/TP members	80 (20.1)	8
From friends	145 (36.4)	5
Neighbours	76 (19.1)	9
Public libraries	19 (4.8)	12
Academic libraries	18 (4.5)	13
Organization/institutes	153 (38.4)	4
From social activists	76 (19.1)	9



The women Grama Panchayat members were asked to identify the sources through which they kept themselves abreast of Government programmes. From table-43 it can be found that they used multiple sources and that they do not depend on any single source.

Television was the most widely used as more than 72 percent kept themselves abreast of government programmes. But it was Grama Panchayat office through which 84.9% of members kept themselves updated about the programmes. The third most widely used sources are government offices which were used by more than two-fifth of study population, while organizations/institutions stand at number 4, in keeping Grama Panchayat members aware of Government programmes. Friends and Newspapers occupy fifth and sixth position as more than one third also depend on these sources. Radio is the seventh widely used source as more than one-fifth of women Grama Panchayat members depend on this source. Public libraries and academic libraries have occupied last position as very few members have used this source to keep themselves updated about Government programmes.

Conclusion

Women empowerment is an important tool for socio economic development and this can be achieved when society recognizes women as one among the social partners, provide them equal opportunities, rights, facilitate equal education and allow them to participate equally and effectively in the decision-making system with political participation. For this they required information support from various information sources. Rural libraries and community leaning centers are major sources to provide informative information to women leaders in local government system. The study has information needs and gathering habits of women grama panchayat members in Bijapur district. The study conducted in five talukas of Bijapur district from each taluka 12 villages and 80 respondents were selected for the study. Study assessed that the information needs of the grama panchayat members and their behavior of how they seek information from different sources available in systems. Study also assess that role of library and media in providing information support to grama panchayat women members to fulfill their information needs.

References

1. Rajput P (2001), Women's Political Participation in India: An Agenda for Empowerment, in Promilla Kapur "Empowering the Indian Women" Publications Division, Government of India, New Delhi, pp. 226-227
2. High Level Committee on Status of Women (2015), Report on the Status of Women in India, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Govt. of India, New Delhi. P.34
3. Ministry of Panchayati Raj (2010), Study on EWRs in Panchayati Raj Institutions, Govt. of India, New Delhi. P.4
4. Pattanaik S.K. (2010), Rural Women Panchayati Raj and Development, Arise Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi, pp. 130-131
5. Ministry of Panchayati Raj (2014), National Capability Building Framework, Govt. of India, New Delhi.
6. Ministry of Panchayati Raj (2016), Advisory on Panchayat Self-Help Groups Convergence at Gram Panchayat Level, Govt. of India
7. Ministry of Rural Development (2018), Advisory on Panchayat Self-Help Groups Convergence at Gram Panchayat Level, Govt. of India, accessed on <http://>
8. Panchayats' working women - Down To Earth www.downtoearth.org.in > ...
9. Role of Grama Panchayat www.tumkurzillapanchayat.gov.in
10. The karnataka panchayat raj act, 1993 www.dpal.kar.nic.in > ...