

## **Original Research Article**

### **KNOWLEDGE LEVEL AND CONSTRAINTS FACED BY THE ELECTED WOMEN REPRESENTATIVES OF PANCHAYAT RAJ INSTITUTIONS IN PRAKASAM DISTRICT OF ANDHRA PRADESH**

#### ***ABSTRACT***

The study was conducted in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh to study the women empowerment through Panchayat raj institutions. A total number of 120 respondents were selected purposively from 5 blocks of the district. The data was recorded by personal interview method by using a pre-structured interview schedule. The study revealed that majority of the respondents are having the knowledge about their tenure, age of contesting in elections and how they are getting financial resources to their gram panchayat. Mostly 45.83% of the respondents are having the medium level of knowledge about GramPanchayat, 27.5% of the respondents are having low level of knowledge and 26.67% of the respondents are having high level of knowledge. And majority(80.83%) of the respondents are facing constraints lack of communication skills, 64.17% of the respondents are lack of self confidence, 53.33% of the respondents are lack of sufficient educational knowledge.

**Keywords :** Women empowerment, Panchayat raj institutions, Knowledge, Constraints.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The representation of women in the village administration has brought about a tactical shift in the functioning of grassroots democracy. The changing situation in power structures has created opportunities for the Indian woman to take active part in Panchayati raj. Now, women are not restricted to home and hearth, but are entering into various fields and proving their capabilities. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 that grants 33% reservation for women in the Panchayati raj have encouraged women to participate in their village development and plan for the future of their villages.

## **WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

Out of the total population, 50% of the population should consist of women. However, due to female feticide practices, girl child numbers are decreasing sharply in India. It has also impacted the sex ratio in India. The literacy rate in girls is very low. Most of the girls are not even provided with primary education. Moreover, they are married early and made to raise children and shoulder only household work. They are not allowed to go out and are dominated by their husbands. Women are taken for granted by men as they are considered their property. Even at the workplace, women are discriminated against. They are paid less for the same work as compared to their male counterparts.

Women Empowerment is made up of two words women and empowerment. Empowerment means to give power or authority to someone. So, Women Empowerment means power in the hands of women. It signifies that women should be given equal opportunity in every field, irrespective of any discrimination. In this essay on Women Empowerment, we will discuss the need for women empowerment and the ways through which it can be achieved.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- 1.To Understand the knowledge of elected women representatives and perspectives of the members of Panchayat regarding the role of women representatives in Panchayat Raj institutions
- 2.To find out the constraints faced by the women in panchayat Raj institutions and seek their solutions.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study was conducted in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh to study the women empowerment through panchyat raj institutions. Descriptive research design was adopted for the study as it describes the characteristics or phenomenon that are being studied. A total number of 120 respondents were selected purposively from 5 blocks to study the perspectives of the

members of Panchayat regarding the role of women representatives in Panchayat Raj institutions and constraints faced by the women in panchayat Raj institutions and seek their suggestions. The data was collected by personal interview method by using pre – structured interview schedule and latter appropriate statistical analysis (i.e. Frequency, Percentage, correlation etc.,) was done to logical conclusion

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

**Table :1**

**Knowledge of the respondent regarding gram panchayat : structure, reservation of seats, tenure of membership and sources of funds.**

| S.No | Knowledge on grampanchayat structure, reservation of seats, tenure of membership and sources of funds | A        |       | UD       |       | DA       |       |
|------|---|----------|-------|----------|-------|----------|-------|
|      |   | <i>f</i> | %     | <i>f</i> | %     | <i>f</i> | %     |
| 1.   | For population of 2500 or 4-5 villages there must be one GP   | 75       | 62.5  | 36       | 30    | 9        | 7.5   |
| 2.   | An elected member of GP represents every 400 people   | 65       | 54.17 | 33       | 27.5  | 22       | 18.33 |
| 3.   | Reservation seats for women in GP is 33%  | 37       | 38.83 | 62       | 51.67 | 21       | 17.5  |
| 4.   | Age of contest in election is 21 years  | 93       | 77.5  | 17       | 14.17 | 10       | 8.33  |
| 5.   | GP elections were conducted on non-party basis  | 60       | 50    | 35       | 29.17 | 25       | 20.83 |

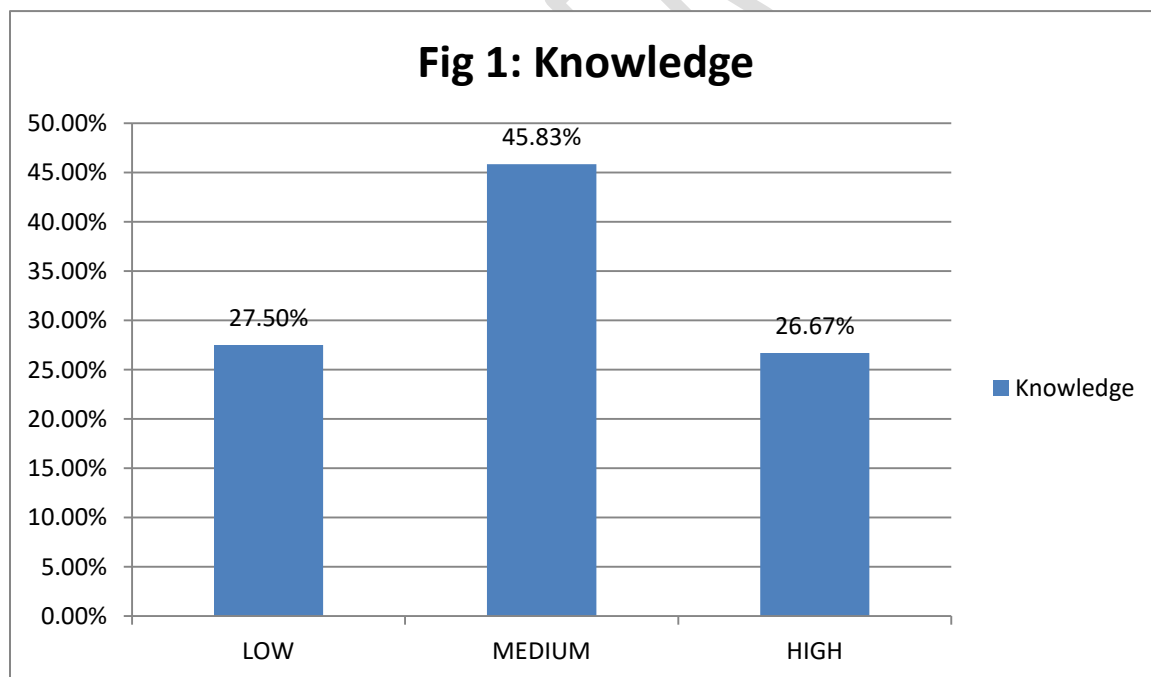
|     |   |     |       |    |       |    |       |
|-----|---|-----|-------|----|-------|----|-------|
| 6.  | The tenure of membership in GP is 5 years                             | 120 | 100   | 0  | 0     | 0  | 0     |
| 7.  | GP needs to conduct regular meetings once in two months               | 68  | 56.67 | 37 | 30.83 | 15 | 12.5  |
| 8.  | Vice president becomes president in absence of president              | 81  | 67.5  | 22 | 18.33 | 17 | 14.17 |
| 9.  | Source of funds for GP being central, state, tax, and schemes         | 72  | 60    | 41 | 34.17 | 7  | 5.83  |
| 10. | GP has got the capacity to raise the resources through tax collection | 92  | 76.67 | 15 | 12.5  | 13 | 10.83 |

From the above table it can be observed that among the respondents, majority of the respondents (100%) have agreed that they know about the tenure of the members is 5 years. 77.5% of the respondents have agreed that they know that the age of contest in election is 21 years. 76.67% of the respondents have agreed that they know about that GP has got the capacity to raise the resources through tax collection. 67.5% of the respondents having knowledge about that vice-president becomes president in absence of president. 62.5% of the respondents are having knowledge that every 2500 population or 4-5 villages must be one gram panchayat. Majority 51.67% of the respondents are partially knowledge about that 33% of seats reserved for women in panchayat raj system. 34.17% of the respondents are having partial knowledge about source funds for GP being central, state, tax and schemes. 30.83% of the respondents are having partial knowledge about that the GP needs to conduct regular meetings once in two months. 30% of the respondents are partially known about that every 2500 population or 4-5 villages must have a gram panchayat. 29.17% of the respondents are partially aware or partially knowledge about that the GP elections are conducted on non-party basis. 20.83% some of the respondents are they don't have knowledge about that the GP elections are conducted on non party basis. 18.33% of the respondents they don't know about that an elected member of GP represents for every 400. 17.5% of the respondents they don't have knowledge about that 33% of seats are reserved for the

women in panchayat raj system. 14.17% of the respondents are not known that vice-president should be acted as president in absence of president.12.5% of the respondents they don't know about GP needs to conduct regular meetings once in two months .

**Table :2 Distrubution of the respondents based on over all knowledge of Panchayat raj system**

| S. NO | Knowledge      | frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------|----------------|-----------|----------------|
| 1.    | Low (13-20)    | 33        | 27.5%          |
| 2.    | Medium (21-28) | 55        | 45.83%         |
| 3.    | High (29-36)   | 32        | 26.67%         |
| 4.    | Total          | 120       | 100            |



**Perception :**

**Table : 3 Perception of the members of Panchayat regarding the role of women representatives in Panchayat Raj institutions.**

| S.NO | Male members reaction to women members participation in discussions  | Frequency | Percentage | f  | p     | f  | P     |
|------|--|-----------|------------|----|-------|----|-------|
| 1.   | Just to show off male members said yes for all demands made by women regarding developmental works without following it up | 83        | 69.17      | 22 | 22.5  | 10 | 8.33  |
| 2.   | Men members kept silent  | 71        | 59.17      | 34 | 28.33 | 15 | 12.5  |
| 3.   | Silencing the women who participating in discussions by saying that they cannot understand anything                        | 68        | 56.67      | 42 | 35    | 10 | 8.33  |
| 4.   | Male members opposed everything  | 58        | 48.33      | 36 | 30    | 26 | 21.37 |

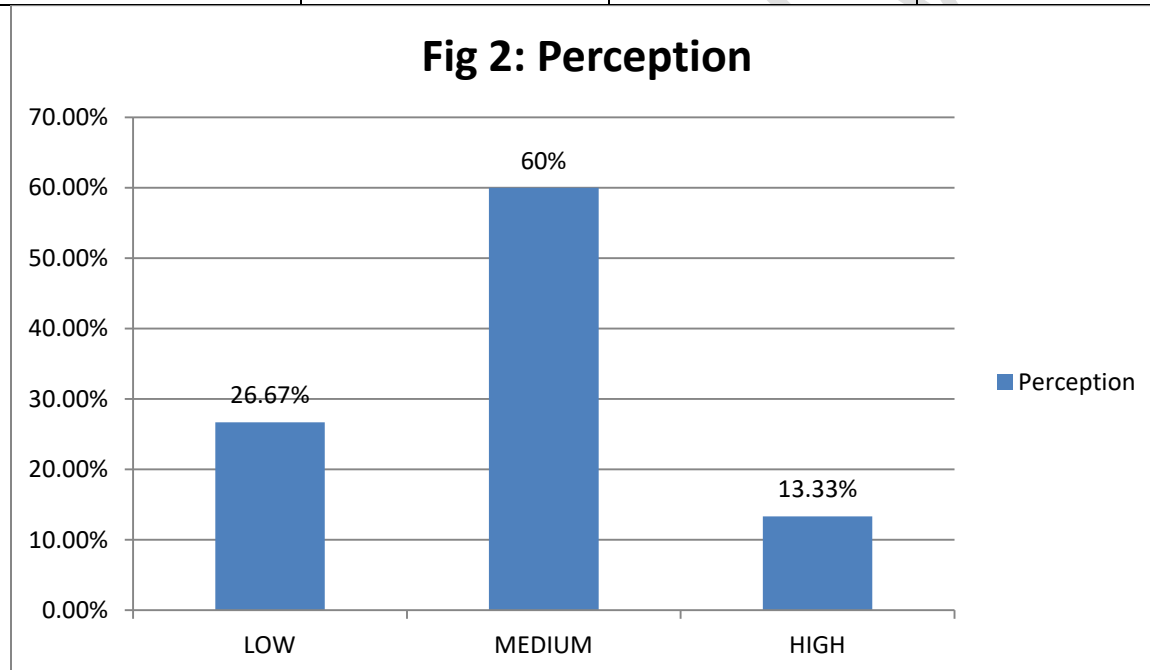
|    |  |    |       |    |       |    |       |
|----|--|----|-------|----|-------|----|-------|
|    | spoken by them                               |    |       |    |       |    |       |
| 5. | Reacted with jealousy                        | 55 | 45.83 | 43 | 35.83 | 22 | 18.33 |
| 6. | Supported women's demands and followed it up | 47 | 39.17 | 37 | 30.83 | 36 | 30    |
| 7. | Sometimes suggestions were accepted          | 43 | 35.83 | 40 | 33.33 | 37 | 30.83 |

From the above table we can observe that among the respondents, majority 69.17% of the respondents have agreed that just to show off male members said yes for all demands made by women regarding developmental works without following it up. 59.17% of the respondents are agreed that members kept silent while discussion is going on. 56.67% of the respondents have agreed that male members silencing the women who participating in discussions by saying that they cannot understand anything. Mostly 48.33% of the respondents have agreed that male members opposed everything spoken by them. And 45.83% of the respondents agreed that male members are reacted with jealousy. Most 35.83% of the respondents partially agreed that male members reacted with jealousy. 35% of the respondents are partially agreed that the male members silencing the women who participating in discussions by saying that they cannot understand anything. 33.33% of the respondents are partially agreed that sometimes suggestions were accepted by male members. 30.83% of the respondents are partially agreed that male members supported women's demands and followed it up. 30% of the respondents partially agreed that male members opposed everything spoken by them. 30.83% of the respondents disagree that sometimes suggestions were accepted by male members. 30% of the respondents are not agreed that male members supported women's demands and followed it up. 21.37% of the respondents are not agreed that male members opposed everything spoken by them. 18.33%

of the respondents disagree that male members reacted with jealousy. 12.5% of the respondents are disagree that men members kept silent

**Table : 4 Distrubution of the respondents based on over all perception of male members regarding EWRs in Panchayat raj system**

| S. NO | Perception     | frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------|----------------|-----------|----------------|
| 1.    | Low (10-15)    | 32        | 26.67%         |
| 2.    | Medium (16-21) | 72        | 60%            |
| 3.    | High (22-27)   | 16        | 13.33%         |
| 4.    | Total          | 120       | 100            |





**Constraints :**

**Table 5: Family and other constraints faced by the EWRs of GP in their work**

| <b>S.NO</b> | <b>Family and other constraints faced by the EWRs of GP in their work</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> | <b>Rank</b> |
|-------------|---|------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| 1.          | Lack of communication skills  | 97               | 80.83             | I.          |
| 2.          | Gender discrimination   | 85               | 70.83             | II.         |
| 3.          | Lack of self confidence   | 77               | 64.17             | III.        |
| 4.          | Lack of leadership qualities  | 72               | 60                | IV.         |
| 5.          | Lack of educational knowledge   | 64               | 53.33             | V.          |
| 6.          | Misuse of funds by secretary and vice-president                           | 23               | 19.17             | VI.         |
| 7.          | Non- cooperation from male members  | 19               | 15.83             | VII.        |
| 8.          | Non- cooperation from vice-president                                      | 10               | 8.33              | VIII.       |
| 9.          | Lack of information flow from the secretary                               | 8                | 6.67              | IX.         |
| 10.         | Lack of family support  | 3                | 2.5               | X.          |

It could be seen from the above table constraints faced by the respondents that the majority 80.83% of the respondents are given their feedback that they are not having good communication skills (**rank I**). 70.83% of the of the respondents are facing gender discrimination from the other members or from the people of panchayat (**rank II**). 64.17% of the respondents are facing lack of self- confidence (**rank III**). 60% of the respondents are having lack of leadership qualities (**rank IV**). 53.33% of the respondents are facing problem from lack of sufficient educational knowledge (**rank V**).19.17% of the respondents are facing problem from misuse of funds by secretary and vice president (**rank VI**).15.83% of the respondents are facing non-cooperation from male members (**rank VII**). 8.33% of the respondents are facing non- cooperation from vice-president (**rank VIII**).6.67% of the respondents are having lack of information flow from the secretary (**rank IX**). 2.5% of the respondents are facing lack of family support (**rank X**).

**Table 6: Suggestions**

| S.NO | Suggestions  | Frequency | Percentage | Rank |
|------|--|-----------|------------|------|
| 1.   | Conduct more interactive sessions with officials and ex- EWRs  | 93        | 77.5       | I.   |
| 2.   | Gender sensitization program for males   | 86        | 71.67      | II.  |
| 3.   | Self motivation training programs  | 73        | 60.83      | III. |
| 4.   | Training and capacity building programs  | 70        | 58.33      | IV.  |
| 5.   | Make them aware about importance of education  | 62        | 51.67      | V.   |
| 6.   | Training in legal and financial aspects related to their work so that the sarpanch can take proper and independent decisions | 20        | 16.67      | VI.  |
| 7.   | Give counseling to male members  | 16        | 13.33      | VII. |

|     |  |   |      |       |
|-----|--|---|------|-------|
| 8.  | Give counseling and departmental actions against secretaries | 9 | 7.5  | VIII. |
| 9.  | Maintain regular contact with secretary                      | 6 | 5    | IX.   |
| 10. | Need motivation to family members                            | 2 | 1.67 | X.    |

From the above table we could understand that the respondents given their suggestions to the constraints faced by the elected women representatives. That they are majority 77.5% of the respondents are said that conduct more interactive sessions with the officials and with Ex-EWR's, gender sensitization programs for males, self motivation training programs. Training and capacity building programs, make them aware about importance of education, training in legal and financial aspects related to their work so that the sarpanch can take proper and independent decisions. And give counselling to the male members of the GP and secretary, maintain regular contacts with secretary and need motivation to the family members.

## CONCLUSION

The study highlighted the perception of the male members of the panchayat towards women active participation in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh. From this study, it is very clearly showed that the women should be encouraged and empowered to play an active role in active political participation. The women should build confidence about their abilities and powers towards their duties. The men should change their attitude towards the active participation of women in politics. The study observed that the majority of the respondents are not having good communication skills, educational knowledge and self-confidence. It is suggested by the respondents that they need capacity building training programs and conduct interactive sessions with officials and ex-elected women representatives (EWR)'s to improve their communication skills. The men and women both should change their attitude towards the active participation of women in active politics.

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