

# A Study Of Measurement And Evaluation Of Women Empowerment Through Panchayat Raj Institution In Theni District

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**Abstract:** The empowerment of women is becoming an increasingly popular term in development discourses. Women's empowerment may be a process, and therefore the outcome of the method, by which women gain greater control over material and intellectual resources, and challenge the ideology of patriarchy and gender-based discrimination against women altogether the institutions and structures of society. Further, in view of providing a concrete and actual shape to the initiatives and measures underlined in the constitutional provisions for social and economic upliftment of women the economic development planning introduced in 1951 had also initiated several schemes and programmes for the event and improving the socio-economic status of women's. The outcome of the constitutional and legal measures and the initiatives undertaken under the various plans in the past for bringing improvements in the socio-economic status of women and thus achieving overall equality among men and women's have certainly provided a chance to women to associate themselves and maximize their participation in Panchayats.  
**Keyword:** Empowerment, Panchayat Raj, Socio-economic status, Political status, Women.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This study relates to Panchayat Raj Institutions with particular regard to the 'Empowerment of elected women representatives of Gram Panchayat in rural local self-government. Though in Tamilnadu the Panchayat Raj System is based on three tier system, this study is focused on the basic tier i.e., Gram Panchayat. This is done with a view to explain the basic units of Local Government in Tamilnadu. Here there's scope for people's participation and particularly for women's representation. It is very difficult to review intimately the entire system of Panchayat Raj, because the subject covers vast area. In this study an attempt is made to analyse the empowerment of women representatives in Gram Panchayat – A

casestudyof twenty nine Gram Panchayats in Theni district. There are five component of the women's empowerment framework, namely welfare, access, conscientization, mobilization and control or we can say that empowerment is about power and changing the balance of power.

## 2. IMPORTANCE AND NEED OF THE STUDY

The present study was carried out in Theni district of Tamilnadu. Thirty women respondents were selected randomly from each block of Bodinayakanur and Chinnamanur. Out of that thirty women respondent, ten respondents were selected randomly from each group of officiating member, Panchayatsamiti member and non-member of Panchayat. Hence, totally 60 women respondents were selected for the study. Seven most relevant independent variables i.e. Education, Land holding, Age, Annual income, Level of participation, Duration of Membership and On-going Programme awareness in panchayat were identified for the study. The dependent variables of the study were Knowledge Level and Level of Empowerment (Personal, Social, Economic and Political). All the variables were measured under the set rules and procedures, with scale and schedules developed for the study. An interview schedule was prepared, pilot study were conducted and used in personal interviews with respondents. Appropriate statistical tests were used using SPSS software package.

## 3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of the previous studies on this subject is sort of essential to know what the opposite research scholars have already explored through their research studies, books and articles. Prominent among them are:  
Xaxa(2013) intended to specialise in the empowerment of women in Odisha, through the Panchayatraj System, specifically through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment which has opened

process of what actually our policy makers wanted. The 73rd Amendment of 1993, providing reservation for women at grassroot level, has gone great distance within the empowerment of Indian Women. While Odisha's women explain more about the social transformation and therefore the difference it had made in rural Odisha. It's found that, thanks to illiteracy and poor socio-economic status, the women leaders could not assert their influence on the decision-making process. The ladies leaders from the villages got a special power of police by administration. Pandey (2013) concluded that the inclusion of well qualified women in village Panchayat at the initial state of the interlocation of Panchayat Raj Institution in rural areas would be a crucial instrumental measure in planning for improving social status and empowering women. This group of girls, if provided representation at village Panchayat level can strongly rise within the issues associated with the betterment of women. It creates opportunities for ladies to exercise more control over design and provisions of services and therefore the management of resources it's going to benefit. Good number of girls competing with men in local politics, forwarding gender related agendas is looked as how towards gender equity.

**4. MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION**

In the present study, measurement and evaluation of empowerment has been looked in to supported several important dimensions viz. awareness, participation, decision-making, perception etc.

**Awareness:**

The first step towards the empowering process is to become aware about the roles, responsibilities and various development programmes. In the context of panchayat raj institutions, the presence of women for over a decade as members has provided opportunities to become aware of the panchayat raj system and its functions. In this study has focused on measuring and evaluating awareness levels of women in Gram Panchayat. The interview schedule prepared a set of questions, aimed at assessing the awareness levels on the general and information relating to panchayat.

**TableNo.4.1: Table showing the sources of inspiration**

Sources of inspiration	Number	Per cent
Family members	44	17.6
Husband	50	20
Political party	83	33.2
Village leaders	17	6.8
Self	56	22.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

**Figure No. 4.1: Sources of Inspiration**

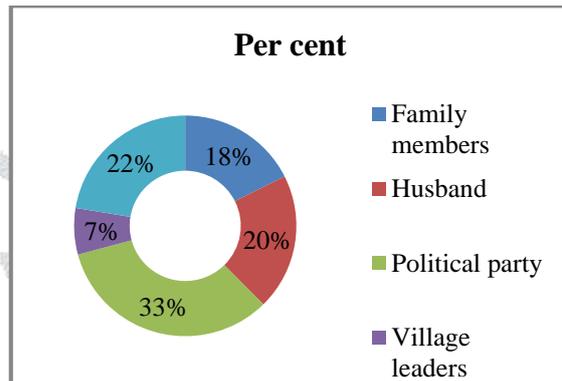


Table and Figure 4.1 indicate the sources of inspiration of respondents into the public life due to the influence of varied factors, such as self-interest, compulsion of family members and party encouragement. 20 Per cent of the members were encouraged by their spouses to enter politics and 17.6 per cent were motivated by their family members. Only 6.8 per cent of the respondents were made to enter politics by village leaders.

**Table No. 4.2: Table showing the present position of the Respondents in Gram Panchayats**

Present position	Number	Per cent
Member	208	83.2
Member of standing committee	23	9.2
Vice president	11	4.4
President	08	3.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

**Figure No. 4.2: Present Position**

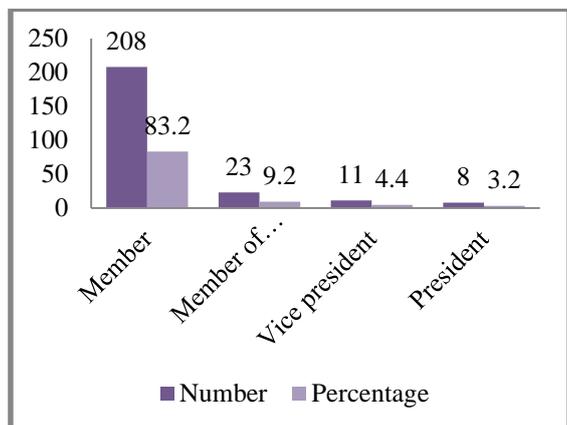
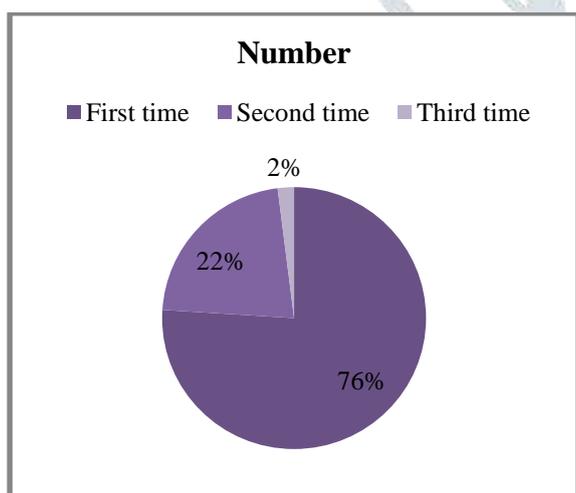


Table and figure 4.2 explains the present position of members in their respective gram panchayats. An over whelming majority of 83.2 per cent are just the members in gram panchayats, whereas major percentage of 3.2 enjoy the position of presidents. Slightly less than 4.4 per cent of the respondents enjoy the position of vice-presidents.

**TableNo. 4.3: Table showing number of times Respondents elected to panchayats**

No. of times elected	Number	Per cent
First time	190	76
Second time	55	22
Third time	05	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

**Figure No. 4.3: Number of times respondents elected to Panchayats**



From the above table and figure, it can be inferred that majority 76 per cent of the respondents are representing their ward for the first time, only a moderate number, 22 per cent are representing their wards for the second time and a small percentage of 2 per cent are representing their ward for the third time. Thus majority of the members are first entrants to Panchayats and hence

are less experienced.

**Table No. 4.4: Table showing the awareness of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act by Respondents**

Awareness of 73 <sup>rd</sup> amendment	Number	Per cent
Very well aware	67	26.8
Just aware	141	56.4
Ignorant of it	42	16.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

**Figure No. 4.4: The aware of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act by Respondents**

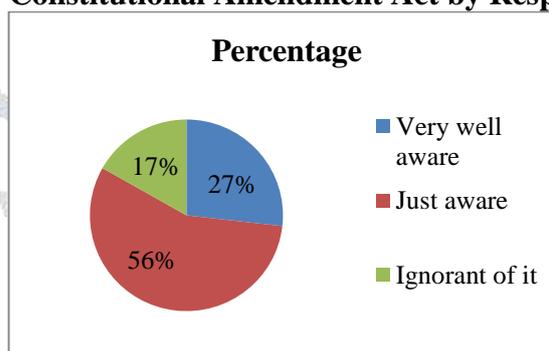


Table and figure no. 4.4 showing the awareness of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act by respondents, in which a provision has been made for 33.33 per cent women’s reservation in gram panchayat of the total 250 respondents 141 are elected from the reservation category. It shows that a majority of 56.4 percent is just aware of the 73<sup>rd</sup> constitutional amendment act, 26.8 per cent are very well aware and 16.8 per cent are ignorant of it. From this, it is concluded that most of the respondents knew that reservation of seats has been made for women as per the Amendment Act. This illustrates that the awareness levels of women in gram panchayat is quite high.

**Table No. 4.5: Training imparted to Newly Elected Women Representatives**

Training imparted	Number	Per cent
Yes	180	72
No	70	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

**Figure No. 4.5: Training imparted to newly elected women Representatives**

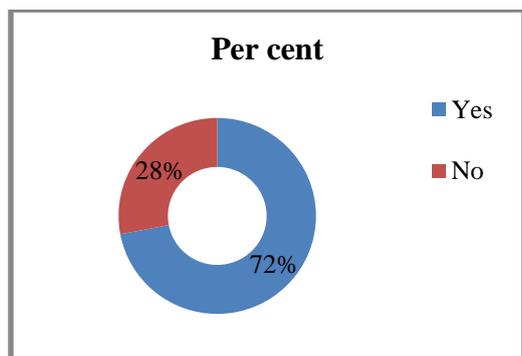


Table and figure 4.5 indicates that 72 per cent respondents had undergone some sort of training, while 28 per cent did not get any training. Training is important for better participation of women in political processes. The study reveals that majority of the members have received training in political participation which has increased their awareness.

**Table No.4.6: Opinion Expressed by the Respondents on the women’s Political Reservation Bill**

Opinion on Women’s political Reservation Bill	Number	Per cent
Absolutely essential	53	21.2
Essential	151	60.4
Not essential	38	15.2
Not at all essential	08	3.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

**Figure No. 4.6: Opinion on women’s Political Reservation Bill**

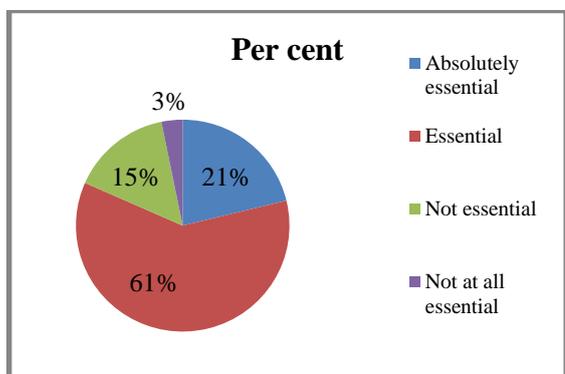


Table and figure 4.6 explains about the awareness of respondents on the women’s political Reservation Bill. Among them 61 per cent of respondents say that it is essential, 21 per cent of respondents are of the opinion that it is absolutely essential, 15 percent of women expressed the opinion that it is not essential and a meager proportion of 3 percent argued that it is not at all

essential.

It are often concluded that an awesome majority of the respondents are in favour of the bill, because, this has enabled an outsized number of women’s to enter into politics. Similarly, the reservation for SC/ST, OBC and women’s has provided opportunities to become members and participate within the development process.

**5.PARTICIPATION**

Women participation in panchayat raj can play a crucial role in becoming effective tool of empowerment of women’s. Women’s participation in outdoor socio-economic and political activities is an efficient means to empower women. The assessment of outside participation potential is vital because purpose isn’t to easily empower a cadre of women’s but to use them as model, as an instrument and as weapon to figure in their various capacities.

The 73rd constitutional amendment has created an area for women’s in political participation and decision-making at the grass-root level. By providing reservation seats reserving for women’s within the political institutions will, provide them a chance to boost their grievances and other related social and economic problem during a formal forum, a political process necessary to make sure the development for all women altogether sphere of. Other states that the most purpose of 73rd constitutional amendment involves the participation of women’s as voters, women as members of party, women as candidates, women elected members of Panchayat Raj Institutions participating in decision-making, planning, implementation and evaluation.

Reservation for women’s in panchayats has provided opportunities to participate within the activities and functioning of the panchayat. Women’s presence within the panchayats has scope and potential to not only cater to the requirements of the society but also bring into focus and address women’s needs. So as to assess the particular levels of participation of womenspanchayat members, the study checked out specific areas within the panchayat and therefore the participation of women’s in these areas. An interview schedule on participation was wont to gauge the amount of participation of the respondents within the thirty two gram panchayats.

**Table No. 5.1: Table showing the Affiliation of Respondents to other Social Organization**

Member of Local Organization	Number	Per cent
Mahila Mandala	32	12.8
Self help group	94	37.6
School betterment committee	41	16.4
Any other	83	33.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

**Figure No. 5.1: Showing the Affiliation of Respondents to other Social Organization**

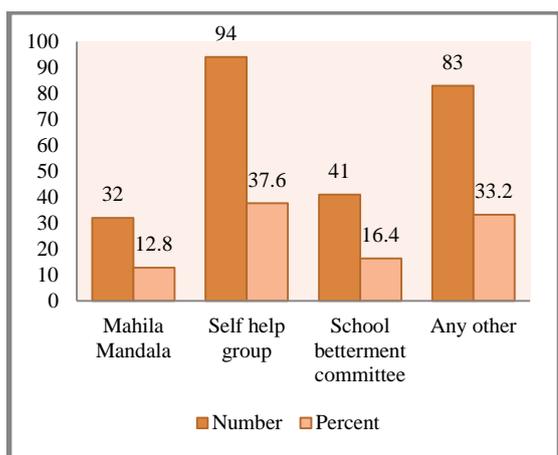


Table and figure No. 5.1 reveals that 37.6 per cent of the respondents are the members of self-help group. While 33.2 per cent were the members of other social organization like BajanaMandali, co-operative society, Rotary club, Lions club etc. 16.4 per cent of respondents are the members of school betterment committee and sizeable number of respondents are the members of mahila mandala.

**Table No. 5.2: Table showing the Nature of participation by Respondents in Panchayat Proceedings**

Nature of participation	Number	Per cent
Always	35	14
Very often	92	36.8
Often	68	27.2
Less often	38	15.2
Not at all	17	6.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

**Figure No. 5.2: Nature of Participation of Respondents in Panchayat Proceedings**

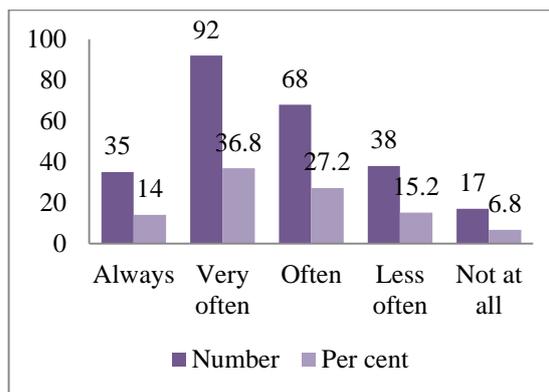


Figure and Table 5.2 explains participation of respondents in the proceedings of Panchayat meeting and speaking about ward related issues. 36.8 per cent of the members take part in the proceedings very often and 14 per cent of them always speak in the meetings. 27.2 per cent of the members participate in the proceedings often and 15.2 percent less often. 6.8 per cent of the members did not take any part in the proceedings. Majority of the respondents thus take part actively in the proceedings of Panchayats.

**Table No. 5.3: Table showing Frequency of visit by the Respondents to their wards**

Visit the ward	Number	Per cent
Always	77	30.8
Very frequently	89	35.6
Frequently	53	21.2
Less frequently	26	10.4
Never	05	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

**Figure No: 5.3: Frequency of visit by the Respondents to their wards**

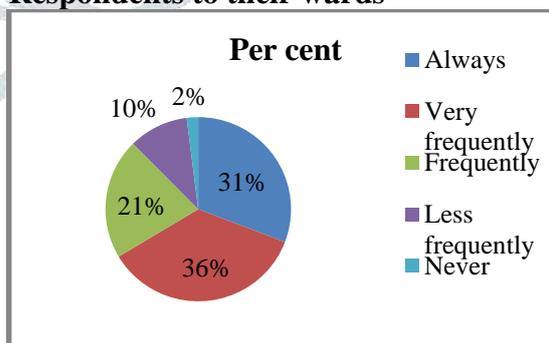


Table and figure 3.3 illustrates the frequency of visit by the respondents to their wards. An overwhelming majority of 66.4 per cent very frequently and always visit their wards, 21.2 per cent members frequently visit their wards, while 10.4 per cent and 2 per cent respondents less frequently and never visit their ward, respectively. It can be concluded that majority of the respondents have the awareness of their roles and responsibilities in panchayats.

**Table No. 5.4: Table showing the Nature of Participation by Respondents in ward sabha and panchayat meetings.**

Nature of participation in meetings	Number	Per cent
Very actively	32	12.8
Actively	115	46
Less actively	80	32
Passively	23	9.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

**Figure No. 5.4: Nature of Participation by Respondents in ward sabha and panchayat meetings.**

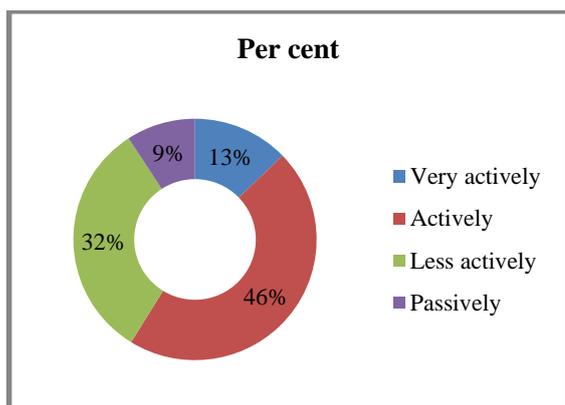


Table and figure 5.4 shows participation of women members in ward Sabha and Panchayat meetings. 46 per cent of the members take part in the meetings actively and 12.8 per cent have reported very active participation. The participation of 32 per cent of the members is found to be less active while 9.2 per cent of the members reported only passive participation.

**Table No. 5.5:Opinion Expressed by the Respondents on Continuance in Politics**

Continue in politics	Number	Per cent
Yes	94	37.6
Can not say	60	24
No	96	38.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

**Figure No. 5.5: Continuance in Politics**

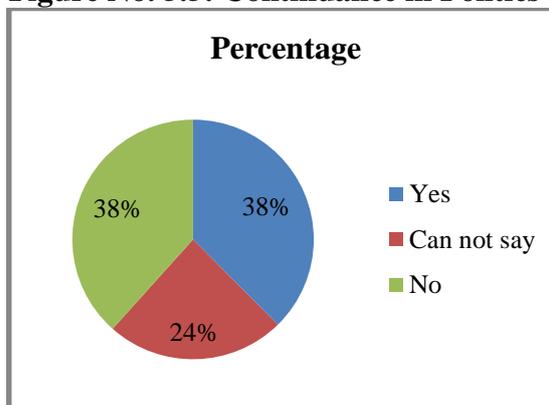


Table 5.5 explains about the respondents on continuance in politics. 37.6 per cent of respondents expressed their desire to continue in politics and an equal proportion of respondents were unwilling to continue their political career. 24 per cent of the respondents could not give any opinion. From this, it can be analysed that a majority of the female members have interest in politics and minority of female members are not interest in politics.

**Table No. 5.6: Opinion Expressed by the Respondents about the Enhancement of Status in society after the membership**

Opinion	Number	Per cent
Enhanced a lot	77	30.8
Moderately increased	82	32.8
Somewhat increased	50	20
Neither increased nor decreased	41	16.4
Decreased	Nil	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

**Figure No. 5.6: Opinion Expressed by the Respondents about the Enhancement of Status in society after the membership**

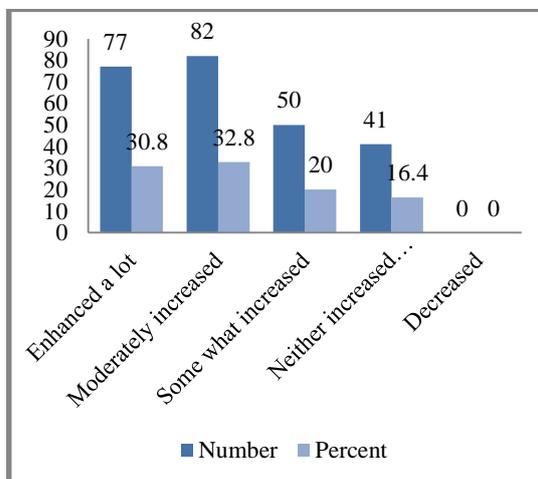


Table and figure 5.6: illustrates that opinion expressed by the respondents about the enhancement of status in society after the membership. 30.8 per cent of the respondents were

of the opinion that membership of Panchayats had enhanced a lot, their status in society. For 32.8 per cent of the respondents it was moderate enhancement and for 20 per cent it was small increase, 16.4 per cent expressed the opinion that there was neither increase nor decrease in their status in society due to Panchayat membership. No respondent indicated decrease in social status. It can be concluded that Panchayat membership has given better status to women in public spheres.

**6. DECISION MAKING**

The ability to think and take independent decisions is a crucial dimension within the empowerment process. Decision-making either at the individual or at a way larger societal or institutional level may be a process that involves tons of things like rational thinking, access to knowledge and knowledge choices available and active participation in activities etc. It also depends to a large extent on the social and cultural background of the individual as well as the values of the society.

This study looks at the decision-making levels of the respondents within the panchayat level. In order to assess the levels of decision-making, certain questions were posed to the respondents. This study also sought the opinion of the respondents on enabling factors that they think are most essential for effective decision making.

**Table No.: 6.1: The nature of involvement in the process of decision-making by the Respondents**

Involvement in Decision making	Number	Per cent
Actively involved	67	26.8
Involved to a moderate level	92	36.8
Less involvement	60	24
No involvement	31	12.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

**Figure No. 6.2: Nature of involvement in the process of decision-making by the Respondents**

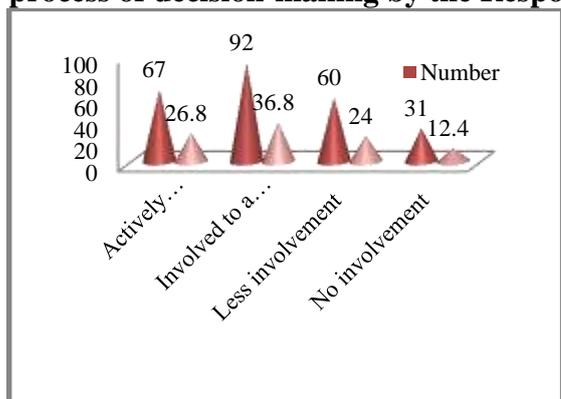
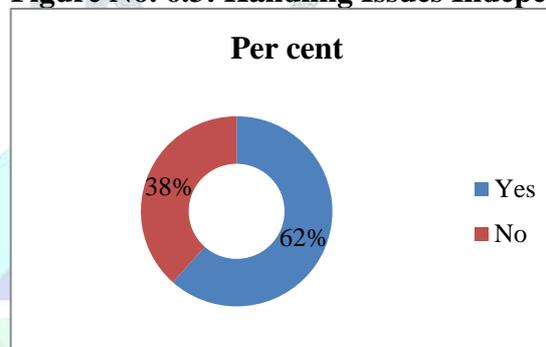


Table and figure 6.2 explains the nature of involvement of respondents in the process of decision-making. It was reported by a majority of respondents 36.8 percent that they involve moderately in decision-making. 26.8 percent were actively involved in decision-making process of Panchayats. 24 per cent women members just involved in the process of decision-making, while a very small number of respondents 12.4 per cent were not involved in the process of decision-making. From this it follows that a majority of the respondents are moderately and actively involved in the decision-making process of panchayats.

**Table No. 6.3: Table showing Respondents handling issues independently**

Handling Issues independently	Number	Per cent
Yes	154	61.6
No	96	38.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

**Figure No. 6.3: Handling Issues Independently**



and figure 6.3 explains the respondents handling issues independently. An overwhelming majority of 61.6 per cent are handling issues independently in wards and panchayats, while 38.4 per cent of respondents are not having the capacity to handle issues independently in their constituencies. From this analysis, it is understood that majority of the respondents are very strong in the consciousness of their role in panchayat. They are capable of handling issues independently.

**Table No. 6.5: Table showing Respondents handling issues in using Digital Gram Panchayath Services**

Issues in using Digital Gram Panchayath Services	Number	Per cent
Easy to access	35	14
Without awareness about e-panjayath	83	33.2
Low level of English literacy	94	37.6
Low levels of computer knowledge	25	10

Low levels of broadband penetration	13	5.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

Neither good nor bad	38	15.2
Bad	20	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

**Figure No. 6.5: figure showing Respondents handling issues in using Digital Gram Panchayath Services**

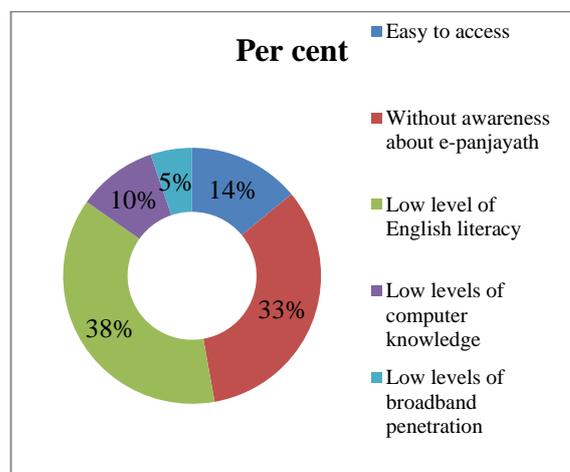


Table and figure 6.5 explains the respondents handling issues in using Digital Gram Panchayath Services. An overwhelming majority of 38 per cent are handling issues in low level English while 33 per cent of respondents are without awareness about e-panjayath and 14 percent of respondents are strong in the concept this services.

**7. PERCEPTION**

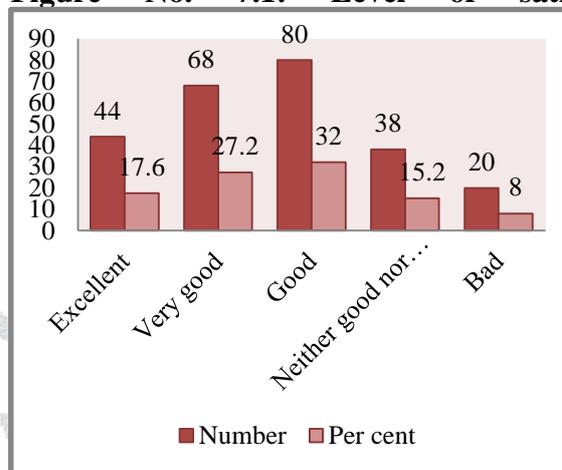
The way one perceives oneself has a direct bearing on the confidence levels and assertiveness of an individual. A person, who perceives him or her in a positive light is self-confident, has the capabilities to take action and be responsible for them. While positive self-perception leads to many positive traits and actions, the perceptions of others also influence to a significant extent the individual's self-perception.

Perception is a more subjective attribute and is difficult to measure. An attempt has been made in this study to explore and analyses the perceptions of the respondents regarding their position in the panchayat, status in society, the way they perceive their roles as members and decision-makers, their limitations and potentials etc.

**Table No. 7.1: Table showing the perceived level of satisfaction of power and position of respondents in Gram Panchayats**

Level of satisfaction	Number	Per cent
Excellent	44	17.6
Very good	68	27.2
Good	80	32

**Figure No. 7.1: Level of satisfaction**



It is quite evident from table and figure 7.1, that nearly 59.2 percent expressed their opinion on power and position as very good and good respectively. Only a minority of the respondents expressed their opinion on power and position as bad and disappointing. As a result of their outdoor participation in the delivery of welfare services, these respondents have acquired a new identity full of self-satisfaction and self-respect.

This study states that majority of women's entered into politics thanks to the mandatory provision of reservation. Most of the women's are from non-political background and entered into politics thanks to pressure from the party or from the self-interests. The important aspect of the study is that the women's who reluctantly entered into politics showed great maturity in outlook enthusiasm, increasing political consciousness and increasing perception of their role and responsibility.

**8.CONCLUSION**

The concept of women empowerment isn't a replacement one. Its literal meaning refers to giving women maximum participation choose process and power sharing within the representative bodies, employment, access to property, productive assets, commons and financial assets etc. The reform in Bihar is that the primary of its kind in India and according to the knowledge made available by the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) there's no other countries where the local governance has adopted a reservation of fifty per cent.

In the light of the above study following specific suggestions are often made for the

empowerment of women through their effective participation in political processes. Men's hostility, indifferent attitude and domestic responsibilities are the main constraints in empowerment of women. Therefore, political awareness programmes should make women understand their rights and therefore the benefits. There's the necessity for normal orientation and training programmes which will help to extend the political and management skills of women in panchayats. Being politically skillful, they're going to be ready to understand and assimilate diverse political opinion, participate intelligently in political debates and analyses issues to form useful decisions.

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