

MINOR RESEARCH PROJECT

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ON

***“THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN VILLAGE
PANCHAYATS : WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
BIJAPUR DISTRICT : A STUDY”.***

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY :

The study is based on the 53 (fifty three) Gram Panahcyats in Bijapur district. Bijapur city is the district headquarter of Bijapur district of Karnataka State. The district is divided into five taluks viz, Basavana Bagewadi, Bijapur, Indi, Muddebihal and Sindagi and 18 hoblies. The district has 1 city municipal council, 5 town municipal council and 199 Gram Panchayats.

The study region has been selected keeping in view the socio-economic and demographical considerations. Drought hits the district frequently. With low degree of literacy, particularly female literacy and low level of per-capita household income, the study area is one of the backward regions of the state.

To assess the nature and extent of participations of respondents a sample of 318 women members from 53 Gram Panchayats was drawn randomly. The individual profile is derived by taking into consideration the factors such as age, caste, religion, marital status, type of the family, education, occupation and annual income of the respondents. The socio-economic, political and educational background of women members in the sample form is studied with the help of the responses to an elaborate questionnaire.

On the basis of the data collected for the study and analyzed systematically, the following findings emerge.

It has been found that the women representatives are from the young and lower middle age groups. This shows that relatively young women have begun to replace the elderly ones.

The education profile shows that, a considerable number of women are still illiterate because the level of female literacy remains rather low in rural area. However some of the illiterate members / office bearers have learnt sign to the papers after getting elected to the panchayats. It could be observed that low level of education of women representatives become a stumbling block in the way of their taking up the responsibilities in panchayats.

The occupational status of the respondents shows that, a majority of them were housewives engaged in the household related activities. Some of them were agricultural labourers, a few of them were self employed. Though women play a major role in agriculture and allied sectors, their contribution is hardly recognized. It has also been evident that almost all women representatives in the Panchayats are totally dependent on their husbands and they lack confidence. This is proving to be great barrier in the way of their empowerment.

As far as the income level of the respondents in concerned, majority of them are in the income brackets of less than Rs. 11000/- per annum. So, the economic conditions of women leaders is a cause of concern as it is linked with the role perception. When they are economically poor, they may not think of the development of the Panchayat. Our policy makers, who have in mind putting reservation, is that to develop both women and panchayats through various measures. Mere representation is not a real solution to it. What is found from the analysis is that in every aspect, educationally, socially and economically they are weak.

The study reveals that only five to six percent of the respondents read news paper and listen the news in T.V. Information blockade is the most powerful weapon. Generally women do not have access to newspapers. This is one of the barriers to the process of women's empowerment. Moreover all the government information is transmitted from one department to another only among officials, and they circulate information booklets and details only among men. Even though they circulate, women members are not able to understand the information.

Most of the women members had no idea as to what constituted a meeting, what was an agenda, how meetings were to be conducted and what was expected of them as elected representatives. Most of them were not aware of the ward meeting.

A majority of the women members were not aware of the rural development schemes and the maximum amount drawn. It is observed that the male members have been dominating in the decision making process. It has been found that the participation of women in meetings is

not satisfactory. Participation of women in preparing budget and plan was also not encouraging.

One interesting point to be noted is that, even if the women members depend on their husbands, the power relation between husband and wife has changed because of reservation, particularly because the husband gets a chance to come to the public sphere because of the wife.

It is found that a large number of respondents had attended the training. But they felt that, the training was not so helpful for them. This shows that there was something wrong with the way the training programmes were implemented or there was utter indifference on the part of women representatives towards these.

A majority of respondents admitted that, there was no positive change after becoming the members of panchayats. Some of them were of the opinion that there was a change in their personality to some extent. A few members admitted that there was a change in their personality after becoming the members of panchayats. They have the courage to speak up at Gram Sabha and Panchayat meetings, of getting some of their basic needs fulfilled.