

**RESEARCH ARTICLE :**

Impact of Gram Panchayati programmes on socio-economic conditions of women beneficiaries

■ Suman M. Pujar and Uma S. Hiremath**ARTICLE CHRONICLE :****Received :**

28.11.2018;

Revised :

10.01.2019;

Accepted :

16.01.2019

SUMMARY : The system of democratic decentralization popularly known as Panchayat Raj is considered as an instrument to ensure democracy and socio-economic transformation. Hence, the study was under taken to know the socio-economic status of women beneficiaries relationship between their socio economic change and independent variables and the suggestions for effective implementation of the schemes. The data were collected from 360 women beneficiaries selected from four villages of Uppin-Betageri Gram Panchayat of Dharwad taluk of Dharwad district. Majority of the women beneficiaries belonged to old age group (43.62%), forward caste (55.55%), illiterate (63.88%), married (61.11%), nuclear family (63.33%), small family size (36.66%), farm labours (63.05%), marginal farmers (56.94%), low income level (82.22%), low level mass media participation (67.77%), medium level extension participation (54.64%) and cosmopolitaness (72.45%). The independent variables namely cosmopolitaness, mass media and extension participation showed significant relationship with the socio-economic change of women beneficiaries.

KEY WORDS :

Impact, Gram Panchayat, Social, Economic, Programmes, Women, Beneficiaries

How to cite this article : Pujar, Suman M. and Hiremath, Uma S. (2019). Impact of Gram Panchayati programmes on socio-economic conditions of women beneficiaries. *Agric. Update*, 14(1): 65-70; DOI : 10.15740/HAS/AU/14.1/65-70. Copyright@ 2019: Hind Agri-Horticultural Society.

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Panchayat Raj Institutions, the grass root units of local self government have been considered as instruments of socio-economic transformation in rural India. Involvement of people at the grass root level is the most important means of bringing about socio-economic development. Panchayat Raj is identified as institutional expression of democratic decentralization in India. Decentralization of power to the Panchayats is seen as a means of empowering people and

involving them in decision making process. Local government being closer to the people can be more responsive to local needs and can make better use of resources. The democratic system in a country can be ensured only if there is mass participation in the governance. Therefore, the system of democratic decentralization popularly known as Panchayat Raj is considered as an instrument to ensure democracy and socio-economic transformation (Mishra *et al.*, 2011). The developmental programmes are being implemented in the country through various

Author for correspondence :

Suman M. Pujar

Department of Extension and Communication Management, College of Community Science, University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad (Karnataka) India
Email: pujarsuman8@gmail.com

See end of the article for authors' affiliations

community development blocks. Hence, the study was conducted on women beneficiaries with the following.

objectives:

- To study the socio-economic characteristics
- To know the relationship between their socio-economic change and independent variables
- To get the suggestions for effective implementation of the schemes.

RESOURCES AND METHODS

The present study was conducted during the year 2012-13 in Dharwad taluk of Dharwad district of Karnataka state. Uppin- Betageri Gram Panchayat was purposively selected for the study because it has implemented many programmes and schemes for the development of community and recognized as one of the 'Best Gram Panchayat' among 37 Gram Panchayat working in Dharwad taluk. This Gram Panchayat consists of four villages namely Uppin-Betageri, Hanumankoppa, Saibankoppa and Hanumnal. From each village 90 beneficiaries availing benefit from housing, employment and pension schemes were randomly selected. Thus, the total sample of the study was 360.

Keeping in mind the objectives of study, an interview schedule was structured. Based on the experience gained in pre-testing, the schedule was modified and the data were collected by personal interview method. Data were coded, tabulated, analyzed and interpreted by using following correlation co-efficient formula:

$$r = \frac{n\sum xy - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{(n\sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2)(n\sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2)}}$$

where,

r = Simple correlation co-efficient

n = Sample size

x = Independent variable

y = Dependent variable

$\sum x$ = Sum of x values

$\sum y$ = Sum of y values

$\sum x^2$ = Sum of squares of x values

$\sum y^2$ = Sum of squares of Y values.

OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

As it could be observed from Table 1, most of the women beneficiaries belonged to old age group (43.62%) followed by the middle age (35.27%) and young age group

(21.11%). This may be because of age criteria *i.e.*, more than 58 years fixed for selection of beneficiary in many of the schemes. About 55.55 per cent of the women beneficiaries were from forward caste, followed by scheduled caste (28.90%) and other backward caste (15.55%). This might be due to predominant lingayat caste in the study area which falls under forward caste category. Similar findings were found in the study conducted by Bheemappa (2006).

With regard to education, more per cent (63.88 %) of women beneficiaries were illiterate, followed by primary school (31.11 %), high school (2.79 %) and middle school (2.22%) and none of them were belonged to PUC and above category. The low level of education was possible because of the higher age of women beneficiaries. The reason for this may be sending a girl to school is quite a recent phenomenon especially amongst higher castes and class of population. Other reasons might be low financial position of the beneficiaries and non-realization of importance of education. The findings are in line with the research results of Byatappanavar (2010).

As far as marital status was considered, 61.11 per cent were married followed by widows (35.56%) and unmarried (3.33%). This may be due to the system of early marriages followed in rural areas. The result is in conformation with the study conducted by Hiremath (2012).

More number of women beneficiaries were living in nuclear family (63.33%) followed by joint family (36.67%). The probable reasons might be that poor economic condition, less or no co-operative living and sharing responsibilities in the family. Other reasons may be an urge to lead an independent life with personal assets, need for proper accommodation and education for their children would have lead to the formation and changing over to nuclear families. The findings of the present study are similar to those of Hiremath (2012).

With respect to the family size, it was found that 55.83 per cent of them having small family size followed by 36.66 per cent medium family and 7.51 per cent under large family size. This might be due to their awareness regarding advantages of small family norms and the increased cost of living and problems/difficulties in maintenance of big family. Further, as the cost of living is increasing day by day, they might have found it beneficial to have small family to lead comfortable life. The results are in line with the finding of Byatappanavar

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Table 1: Socio-economic status of women beneficiaries			(n=360)	
Sr. No.	Variables	Category	Respondents	
			N	%
1.	Age	Young age (18-35 yrs)	76	21.11
		Middle age (36-50 yrs)	127	35.27
		Old age (51 and above)	157	43.62
2.	Caste	Forward	200	55.55
		Other backward	56	15.55
		Scheduled caste (SC/ST)	104	28.90
3.	Education	Illiterate	230	63.88
		Primary school (1-4)	112	31.11
		Middle school (5-7)	08	2.22
		High school (8-10)	10	2.79
		College (PUC and above)	-	-
4.	Marital status	Married	220	61.11
		Unmarried	12	3.33
		Widow	128	35.56
5.	Type of family	Nuclear	228	63.33
		Joint	132	36.67
6.	Size of family	Small (1-4 members)	201	55.83
		Medium (5-7 members)	132	36.66
		Large (>7 members)	27	7.51
7.	Family occupation	Farm labour	227	63.05
		Farming	133	36.95
		Service	-	-
		Enterprise	-	-
8.	Land holding	Landless	43	11.94
		Marginal farmers (1 to 2.5 acre)	205	56.94
		Small farmers (2.6 to 5.0 acre)	99	27.50
		Medium farmers (5.1 to 10.0 acre)	13	3.62
		Large farmers	-	-
9.	Annual family income	Low income (Rs. ≤17,000)	296	82.22
		Semi-medium income (Rs.17,000-Rs.34,000)	64	17.78
		Medium income (Rs. 34,001-51,000)	-	-
		High income (≥ Rs.51,001)	-	-
10.	Mass media participation	Low	244	67.77
		Medium	20	5.55
		High	96	26.68
11.	Extension participation	Low	77	21.35
		Medium	197	54.64
		High	86	24.01
12.	Cosmopolitaness	Low	58	16.11
		Medium	261	72.45
		High	41	11.44

(2010).

Regarding family occupation, most of the beneficiaries were engaged as farm labours (63.05%) followed by farming (36.95%). None of them belonged to any service or enterprise category. The probable reason might be that majority of beneficiaries had marginal and small land holdings. So, they were mainly depending on wages. Present finding is supported by Arunkumar (2005).

About fifty seven per cent of beneficiaries were marginal farmers (56.94%) followed by small (27.50%), landless (11.94%), medium (3.62%) and none of the beneficiaries belonged to large holdings. Low land holding is one of the criteria for selection of beneficiaries in different schemes. Other reason is, since beneficiaries selected for the study belonged to below poverty line and they were not able to invest money to purchase lands. The finding is consistent with the finding of Chandavari (2011).

From the observation of annual family income of beneficiaries, it was inferred that more than 82.22 per cent of beneficiaries had low income of Rs. 17,000 /- followed by semi medium income (17.78%). None of the families belonged to either medium or high income level. Low income is one of the criteria to get benefit from the Panchayat schemes. Hence, the selected women belonged to below poverty line and are involved in farm labour and farming activities where the income is not certain and available throughout the year.

The data indicated that women beneficiaries had low level of participation (67.77%) followed by high (26.68%) and medium level (5.55%) of mass media participation. This might be because of their poor or occasional listening and viewing behaviour. Though mass media play vital role in creation of awareness regarding any educational and rural development programme, the beneficiaries failed to make complete use of the advantages of mass media channels. These

Sr. No.	Social change parameters	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Member of Gram Panchayat	5	1.39
2.	Member of SHG group	182	50.56
3.	Member of co-operative society	7	1.94
4.	Member of NGO's	110	30.56
5.	Member of Anganwadi	8	2.22
6.	Member of school	10	2.78
7.	Member of co-operative bank	14	3.89
8.	Member of co-operative milk society	5	1.38

Sr. No.	Economic change parameters	F	%	
1.	Housing schemes (n=80)	House repair	7	8.75
		House expansion	8	10.00
		House construction	65	81.25
2.	Employment schemes (n=80)	Purchase of agriculture related materials	13	16.25
		Starting of subsidiary activities	10	12.50
		Purchase of materials for subsidiary activities	8	10.00
		Purchase of kitchen related materials	15	18.75
		Purchase of family related materials	14	17.50
		Purchase of personal related materials	20	25.00
3.	Pension schemes (n=200)	Purchase of family related materials	77	38.50
		Purchase of kitchen related materials	31	15.50
		Purchase of personal related materials	92	46.00

findings are in accordance with of Satyanarayana *et al.* (2002).

After availing benefit from the programme, the beneficiaries improved socially where in, more than fifty per cent of women beneficiaries became the member of the SHG group (50.56%) followed by member of NGO's (30.56%) (Table 2) like Shri Dharmastal Manjunath Trust, Neralu mane and other local organizations.

The probable reasons might be their interest to participate in social activities and an urge to be recognized by the community people, identity in the society, feeling of proud and prestige by becoming a member. Becoming a member is also a compulsory

norm in SHGs formation.

In housing scheme majority of the beneficiaries constructed a new house (81.25%) followed by house expansion (10.00%) and repair of old house (8.75%) (Table 3). The possible reason might be providing house to the BPL families free of cost is the norm of the housing scheme by which government want to raise the rural poor economically. The housing sector has positive impact on overall standard of living of the rural people. The government should support various schemes of rural housing and ensure quality improvement in rural housing from time to time. The findings are in line with the Mohapatra (2012).

Table 4 : Relationship between independent variables and socio-economic change of beneficiaries about women related schemes (n=360)

Sr. No.	Variables	Social change	Economic change
		r value	r value
1.	Age	-0.111*	-0.372**
2.	Education	-0.017	-0.005 NS
3.	Family size	0.018	-0.077 NS
4.	Land holding	-0.018	-0.005 NS
5.	Annual family income	0.090	-0.017 NS
6.	Mass media participation	0.092	0.306**
7.	Extension participation	0.145**	0.299**
8.	Cosmopolitaness	0.106*	0.379**

* and ** indicate significance of values at P=0.01 and 0.05, respectively NS= Non-significant

Table 5 : Suggestions given by the women beneficiaries for improvement of the schemes (n=360)

Sr. No.	Categories	Statements	F	%
1.	Housing schemes (n=80)	Use of quality materials for house construction	32	40.00
		Increase in financial assistance	39	48.75
		Restricting the payment of money to 2-3 instalment	41	51.25
		Provision of additional loan	35	43.75
		Direct distribution of money	54	67.50
2.	Employment schemes (n=80)	Increase in working days	46	57.50
		Proper disbursement of cash and food grains	32	40.00
		Support to SHGs	37	46.25
		Provision of additional loan	35	43.75
		Adequate training facility to start the selected SHG activities	28	35.00
		Proper space / building facility for conducting meeting	39	48.75
3.	Pension schemes (n=200)	Increase in pension amount	112	56.00
		Regular payment	95	47.50
		Advance intimation to beneficiary and officers	77	38.50
		More staff to handle the scheme	46	23.00

Note: Multiple answers possible

In employment scheme, beneficiaries were able to purchase personal related materials (25.00%) followed by kitchen utensils, materials required for the entire family members and agriculture implements. As per their need and requirement they might have purchased the materials out of the savings and showed improvement in their economic condition. One of the components in this scheme is distribution of grains to the beneficiaries. This has helped the beneficiaries not to spend the money for purchase of food grains from the market.

The programme was effective in creating favorable impact on the women beneficiaries in terms of employment generation of 248.01 and 220.34 days in the form of high and low employment, respectively (Smitha Chetan, 2004).

Mass media participation, extension participation and cosmopolitanism showed significant relationship with socio-economic change of women beneficiaries (Table 4). The plausible reason might be that these three variables contributed the beneficiaries to know about various aspects of programmes through Gram Sabha meetings, radio listening, TV watching, group discussion, visits to nearby city etc., which have provided an opportunity to improve socially and economically.

Gram Panchayat should be recognized with wider powers and financial resources not merely as institutions of political participation but institution of social and economic development.

For proper implementation of Panchayat schemes and programmes beneficiaries gave some suggestions like direct distribution of money and material, proper distribution of food grains, providing additional loan and support to SHG group by providing sufficient financial assistance and training facility to SHG members to start income generating activities (Table 5). Mandal (2005) also stressed that monitoring and intermediary role should be played continuously, at least until the SHG group takes up economic activity.

Authors' affiliations :

Uma S. Hiremath, Department of Extension and Communication Management, College of Community Science, University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad (Karnataka) India

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