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## **Empowerment of rural women through Panchayati Raj Institutions**

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**Abstract :** Women empowerment has been recognized as a central issue in determining the status of women. Empowerment covers aspects such as women control over materials and intellectual resources. Empowerment is a process, not an event, which challenges traditional power equations and relations. Abolition of gender based discrimination in all institutes and structures of the society and participation of women in policy and decision making process at domestic and public level are few dimension of women empowerment. The present study was an effort to know the extent of empowerment and associated problem of elected women members in panchayati Raj institutions. Total 75 women representatives randomly selected from Pusa and Kalyanpur block of Samastipur district in Bihar in which 40 villages in the total were drawn randomly from the two selected blocks. The tools used for collecting information were and interview schedule. In order to determine the conditions growing the empowerment of women the data were subjected to correlation, multiple regressions. Empowerment was taken as dependent variables. The finding reveled that about ten percent of these respondents were highly empowered with regard to "Construction, repair and maintenance" of public property. The association between empowerment and their age and participation was negative and significant at 1 percent level of probability. The results of correlation and multiple regression analysis between empowerment and socio-economic & psychological variables of elected village panchayat members was highly significant with caste, family size, family income and interaction style at 1 percent level of probability. The partial regression coefficient was significant only in case of two variables i.e. caste and age.

**Key Words:** Empowerment, Village Panchayat, Panchayati Raj institutions..

### **INTRODUCTION**

Empowerment of women is essentially the process of upliftment of economic, social and political status of women, the traditionally underprivileged ones in the society. It involves the building of a society here in women can breathe without the fear of oppression, exploitation, apprehension, discrimination and the general feeling of

persecution which goes with being a women in a traditionally male dominated structure. Women are the builder and the molder of the nation's destiny. Women empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation to grater decision making power and control to transformative action. It is increasing self-reliance of poor people and especially poor women. It means that the women leave their own life in a way that they think appropriate on the basis of their condition of family circumstances, quality and capabilities of which they themselves are the best judges.

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Women empowerment has been recognized as a central issue in determining the status of women. Empowerment covers aspects such as women's control over material and intellectual resources. Empowerment is a process, not an event, which challenges traditional power equations and relations. Abolition of gender-based discrimination in all institutions and structures of the society and participation of women in policy and decision making process at domestic and public levels are few dimensions of women empowerment.

Panchayati Raj Institution is beginning to transform the process and priorities of local government in India, as well as the women who have been brought into politics. But sustaining this transformation is a significant challenge, given the inertia and resistance of Patriarchal in Bihar is completing gram its 5 years duration. So they, still suffer from depending syndrome? Is the PRI has created an opportunity to take forwards this feminist discourse and action in order to elaborate the qualities and benefits of feminist leadership in Panchayati Raj Institution. How the women representatives of gram Panchayats are taking the activities of the institution?

The 73<sup>rd</sup> constitutional amendment mandated a minimum of one third reservation for women in the membership as well as in the position of chairpersons of Panchayat at all three levels, namely the village, district and intermediate levels. All the states without exception have adopted this reservation policy since then. At the state level the Panchayati Raj Department coordinates the functioning of the PRIs. It is being said that with the advent of women in such a large number in the primary institutions i.e. Gram Panchayats a new phase of the process of empowerment of women has been unveiled. Which are likely to influence their future public role and extent of empowerment. The Present study was undertaken with the following specific objectives:

- i) To study the profile of elected women members in Panchayati Raj Institution.
- ii) To determine the extent of empowerment and associated problems of elected women members in Panchayati Raj System for improvement towards empowerment.
- iii) To find out the guiding factors in participation of women in Panchayati Raj system.

## **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

The study was undertaken in purposively selected Samastipur district of Bihar state for case in data collection. Out of twenty blocks of Samastipur district two blocks namely Pusa and Kalyanpur were selected to represent the whole district. Forty villages in the total were drawn randomly from the two selected blocks (20 villages from each block). Seventy five women representatives were randomly selected from all the gram panchayats of these two blocks. A schedule was used to collect the data by personal interview method. In order to determine the conditions governing the participation of women the data were subjected to multiple correlation, regression and path analysis. Empowerment was taken as dependent variable.

### **Extent of empowerment**

Extent of empowerment of elected women Panchayat members was calculated on the basis of their awareness and extent of participation in their duties and function. A score of 2 was given to the respondents who were "aware" and 1 was given to the respondents who were "not aware" about their duties and functions, Similarly a score of 3, 2 and 1 was assigned to the participation response categories Viz "always" "Sometime" and "never" respectively. According to this scoring pattern "Highly Empowered" were those respondents who were "aware" about their duties and functions and "always" participated/performed their assigned duties "Empowered" respondents were those who were "aware" and "sometimes" performed their duties. "Somewhat Empowered" were those respondents who had the awareness about their duties and factions only. "Not Empowered" were those village Panchayat members who were neither "aware" nor performed their assigned duties under Panchayati Raj system. The empowerment of each respondent was computed on a four point continuum.

Against the 9 activities related to their duties and functions were measured and scores of 4, 3, 2 and 1 were assigned to "Highly Empowered" "Empowered", "Somewhat Empowered" and "Not Empowered" respectively. The scoring pattern is expressed as below:

| Efficiency level    | Scores |
|---------------------|--------|
| Highly Empowered    | 4      |
| Empowered           | 3      |
| Some What Empowered | 2      |
| Not empowered       | 1      |

The efficiency measure contained 9 activities. The extent of empowerment of each respondent was calculated in terms of percentage as per the formula given below

$$\text{Extent of Empowerment} = \frac{\text{Scores obtained}}{\text{Maximum possible Scores}} \times 100$$

Women empowerment has been operationally defined in this study as the impact of women participation in Panchayats, changes in the social status of the women participants, benefits of this participation of the work experience on the efficiency of women members in their day-to-day life. The changes in social status of women members since elected as perceived by them were revealed in terms of frequency distribution and percentage. However, effect of Panchayat experience of the work efficiency of the women members was measured on a four-point continuum. The scores were assigned to the responses recorded on this efficiency measure as under

| Efficiency level        | Scores |
|-------------------------|--------|
| Substantial improvement | 4      |
| Good improvement        | 3      |
| Little improvement      | 2      |
| Negligible improvement  | 1      |

The efficiency measure contained 13 statements. The efficiency score of each respondent were calculated against all these statements. The improved efficiency index expressed in terms of percentage was calculated for all the member respondents individually with the help of the formula given below:-

$$\text{Efficiency Index (EI)} = \frac{\text{Scores obtained by respondents}}{\text{Maximum possible Scores}} \times 100$$

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Socio-economic and Psychological profile of elected women village Panchayat members (EWVPMS) (Third-tier of PRI)

It is evident from table 1 reveals that the majority of the elected women village Panchayat members were within 35 years of age (73.33%) the majority belonged to forward (46.66%) caste and majority of the elected women village Panchayat members had married (98.66%) followed by only 1.34 percent had windowed. Majority the women members personally possessed low (up to 8<sup>th</sup> standard) level of education (48.0%) and also had high family education (29.33%). They by and large enjoyed a nuclear

family (64.0%). But the majority had 3-6 members (42.66%). Further most of these respondents enjoyed in household work (97.33%), these respondents owned land up to 2.5 acre (58.66%) and lived with low material possession (84.00%). Maximum 64.00 percent of respondent had low income group below 20000 annually. The majority of the members were endowed with either mixed (42.66%) or kutch house (37.33%). Majority of respondents had not membership of any social institution.

As is evident from the data the representatives appeared to possess certain Characteristics which were comparatively less expressed in beneficiaries (rural women). The EWVPMs were relatively younger in age, possessed at least some education, the family members of many of them being highly educated, had several sources of earning and so they were well to do and naturally therefore, several of them had got constructed Mixed houses with wealth comes the contact and so was the case with many respondents who were found to be having active linkage with certain socio-political organizations. The data presented in table 2 show that maximum 9.33 percent of these EWVPMs were "Highly empowered" with regard to "construction, repair and maintenance" of public property followed by 8.00 percent of the respondents who used their power for "Poverty alleviation, welfare and health" related activities. It was quite discouraging to find that a high percentage of respondents varying from 69.33 percent to 94.66 percent was found to be "Not empowered" indicating that they were neither "Aware" nor "Participated" in the functions assigned to them. From the above findings it can be inferred that through elected women Panchayat members were given one third reservation in the Panchayat with a purpose of their being involved in decision making process and assuring the responsibility for village welfare yet they remained unimportant Male dominance either from their own families or from a colleagues may be attributed to this state the affairs.

An overview of table 3 indicated that these are certainly some positive effect on work efficiency of the women members since their attachment with Gram Panchayat. A little improvement was recorded by 60.0 percent of elected women members more confident in taking independent decisions independently in the society.

That she was a bit more confident in terms at their enhanced freedom to participate signs of improvement in various faculties of the women members. However, changes are still being seen only in a substantial few areas, the majority are yet to grasp the opportunities offered by Gram Panchayats. However, only is in the initiation of change in their self image and the resultant behavior into what should

be done in order to enhance the speed of improvement can be had from the findings enumerated though other tables in this study. Nevertheless, the position of the women in terms of rights over the income of the family or to meet the expenses presents a challenge and possibly required a focused attention.

**Table -1. Socio-economic and psychological profile of elected women Panchayat members.**

| Sl. No. | Variables              | Categories                            | F (n <sub>1</sub> = 75) | %            |
|---------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| 1.      | Age                    | Young (up to 35 years)                | <b>55</b>               | <b>73.33</b> |
|         |                        | Middle (35 – 50 years)                | 20                      | 26.66        |
|         |                        | Old (> 35 years)                      | -                       | -            |
| 2.      | Caste                  | Forward                               | <b>35</b>               | <b>46.66</b> |
|         |                        | Back ward                             | 18                      | 24.00        |
|         |                        | Sc                                    | 22                      | 29.33        |
| 3.      | Marital status         | Unmarried                             | -                       | -            |
|         |                        | Married                               | <b>74</b>               | <b>98.66</b> |
|         |                        | Widowed                               | 1                       | 1.34         |
|         |                        | Divorces                              | -                       | -            |
| 4.      | Personal education     | Illiterate (No formal Education)      | 14                      | 18.66        |
|         |                        | Low (up to 8 <sup>th</sup> Standard ) | <b>36</b>               | <b>48.00</b> |
|         |                        | Medium (Matric and intermediate)      | 22                      | 29.33        |
|         |                        | High (Graduate & above )              | 3                       | 4.00         |
| 5.      | Family Education Index | Illiterate (No formal Education)      | 10                      | 13.33        |
|         |                        | Low (up to 8 <sup>th</sup> Standard ) | <b>25</b>               | <b>33.33</b> |
|         |                        | Medium (Matric and intermediate)      | 18                      | 24.00        |
|         |                        | High (Graduate & above )              | 22                      | 29.33        |
| 6.      | a) Family type         | Nuclear                               | <b>48</b>               | <b>64.00</b> |
|         |                        | Joint                                 | 27                      | 36.00        |
|         | b) Family size         | Up to 3 members                       | 15                      | 20.00        |
|         |                        | 3 – 6 members                         | <b>32</b>               | <b>42.66</b> |
|         |                        | > 5 members                           | 28                      | 37.33        |
| 7.      | Occupation             | Household work                        | <b>73</b>               | <b>97.33</b> |
|         |                        | Caste occupation                      | -                       | -            |
|         |                        | Small scale industries                | -                       | -            |
|         |                        | Business                              | -                       | -            |
|         |                        | Farming                               | 2                       | 2.66         |
|         |                        | Service                               | -                       | -            |
| 8.      | Land holding           | Landlers (No. Land)                   | 4                       | 5.33         |
|         |                        | Marginal (up to 2.5 acre)             | <b>44</b>               | <b>58.66</b> |
|         |                        | Small (5.1 to 10 acre)                | 25                      | 33.33        |
|         |                        | Medium (5.1 to 10 acre)               | 2                       | 2.66         |

Table continued....

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Table continued....

|     |                       |  |           |              |
|-----|-----------------------|--|-----------|--------------|
| 9.  | Family Income         | LIG (up to Rs. 20,000)                   | <b>48</b> | <b>64.00</b> |
|     |                       | MIG (Rs. 20000 – Rs. 35000)              | 12        | 16.00        |
|     |                       | HIG ( > Rs. 35000)                       | 15        | 20.00        |
| 10. | Possession Possession | Low (up to MPS)                          | <b>63</b> | <b>84.00</b> |
|     |                       | Medium (MPS 4.6)                         | 2         | 2.66         |
|     |                       | High (MPS > 6 )                          | 10        | 13.33        |
| 11. | Type of house         | Kutcha                                   | 28        | 37.33        |
|     |                       | Mixed                                    | <b>32</b> | <b>42.66</b> |
|     |                       | Pucca                                    | 15        | 20.00        |
| 12. | Social linkage        | No. Membership                           | <b>57</b> | <b>76.00</b> |
|     |                       | Membership of one organization           | 18        | 24.00        |
|     |                       | Membership of more than one organization | -         | -            |

L.I.G. = Low Income Group    H.I.G. = High income Group    M.I.G. = Medium Income Group

**Table 2: Distribution of elected women village Panchayat members with reference to their extent of empowerment on the basis of awareness and extent of participation in duties and functions.**

$n_1=75$

| Duties and function |                                       | Awareness |    | Extent of Participation |   |    | Extent of Empowerment |             |   |       |      |       |      |       |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------|----|-------------------------|---|----|-----------------------|-------------|---|-------|------|-------|------|-------|
|                     |                                       |           |    |                         |   |    | H.E.                  |             | E |       | S.E. |       | N.E. |       |
|                     |                                       |           |    |                         |   |    | F                     | %           | F | %     | F    | %     | F    | %     |
| 1.                  | General village work                  | 4         | 71 | -                       | - | 75 | -                     | -           | - | -     | 4    | 5.34  | 91   | 94.66 |
| 2.                  | Agriculture & allied                  | 11        | 64 | -                       | 4 | 71 | -                     | -           | 5 | 6.66  | 6    | 8.00  | 64   | 85.33 |
| 3.                  | Income generation                     | 12        | 63 | 1                       | 4 | 70 | 1                     | 1.33        | 4 | 5.34  | 8    | 10.66 | 62   | 82.66 |
| 4.                  | Rural housing & Rural electrification | 18        | 57 | 3                       | 3 | 66 | 3                     | 4.00        | 3 | 4.0   | 10   | 13.35 | 59   | 78.66 |
| 5.                  | Education                             | 35        | 40 | 4                       | 5 | 64 | 4                     | 5.34        | 5 | 6.66  | 11   | 14.66 | 55   | 73.33 |
| 6.                  | Poverty alleviation welfare & health  | 28        | 47 | 5                       | 6 | 61 | 6                     | 8.00        | 5 | 6.66  | 6    | 8.00  | 58   | 77.33 |
| 7.                  | Construction, repair and maintenance  | 25        | 50 | 6                       | 8 | 71 | 7                     | <b>9.33</b> | 8 | 10.66 | 8    | 10.66 | 52   | 69.33 |
| 8.                  | Cultural activities                   | 9         | 66 | 2                       | 2 | 69 | 2                     | 2.66        | 2 | 2.66  | 5    | 6.66  | 66   | 88.00 |
| 9.                  | Public Distribution                   | 10        | 65 | 3                       | 3 | -  | -                     | -           | 3 | 4.0   | 3    | 4.00  | 69   | 92.00 |

A= Always; S= Some times; N=Never, H.E. – Highly Empowered; E= Empowered; S.E. = Some What Empowered; NE= Not Empowered

**Table 3. Effect of Panchayat Experience on work efficiency of elected Village women members.**  
 $n_1=75$

| Sl. No. | Statement   | Negligible improvement |       | Little improvement |       | Good Improvement |       | Substrata improvement |       |
|---------|---|------------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|
|         |   | F                      | %     | F                  | %     | F                | %     | F                     | %     |
| 1.      | Started taking decisions in household affairs                           | 5                      | 33.33 | 40                 | 53.33 | 5                | 6.66  | 5                     | 6.66  |
| 2.      | Finding money for house hold expenses                                   | 70                     | 93.33 | 3                  | 4.0   | 1                | 1.33  | 1                     | 1.33  |
| 3.      | Participating independently in social works.                            | 1                      | 1.33  | 35                 | 46.66 | 26               | 34.66 | 13                    | 17.33 |
| 4.      | Taking decisions independently  | 6                      | 8.0   | 45                 | 60.00 | 20               | 26.66 | 4                     | 5.33  |
| 5.      | Have establish independent identity                                     | 6                      | 8.0   | 40                 | 53.33 | 9                | 12.0  | 20                    | 26.66 |
| 6.      | Can plan for future   | 15                     | 20.0  | 35                 | 46.66 | 15               | 20.00 | 10                    | 13.33 |
| 7.      | Inference of husband and others has decreased on their personal affairs | 20                     | 26.66 | 35                 | 46.66 | 18               | 24.00 | 2                     | 2.66  |
| 8.      | Can spend self earned money as per their own desire.                    | 20                     | 26.66 | 45                 | 60.00 | 5                | 6.66  | 5                     | 6.66  |
| 9.      | Decreased in male/Female discrimination.                                | 25                     | 33.33 | 30                 | 40.00 | 10               | 13.33 | 10                    | 13.33 |
| 10.     | Decrease in perusals system   | 10                     | 13.33 | 40                 | 53.33 | 15               | 20.00 | 10                    | 13.33 |
| 11.     | Can go any were any time freely   | 5                      | 6.66  | 30                 | 40.00 | 30               | 40.00 | 10                    | 13.33 |
| 12.     | Improvement in health and standard of living Diet.                      | 30                     | 40.00 | 32                 | 42.66 | 10               | 13.33 | 3                     | 4.00  |
| 13.     | Increase in consciousness against exploitation                          | 10                     | 13.33 | 25                 | 33.33 | 35               | 46.66 | 5                     | 6.66  |

**Table 4. Changes in social status of elected women members since elected in gram Panchayat**

| Sl. No. | Statements                                      | F( $n_1=75$ ) | (%)    |
|---------|---|---------------|--------|
| 1.      | Provides satisfaction                           | 75            | 100.00 |
| 2.      | Contact with all types of people have increased | 71            | 94.67  |
| 3.      | Respect in society                              | 70            | 93.33  |
| 4.      | Respect in family increased                     | 68            | 90.66  |
| 5.      | Finds less time for family                      | 40            | 53.33  |
| 6.      | Respect in family decreased                     | 14            | 18.66  |
| 7.      | Respect in society decreased                    | 2             | 2.66   |

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It is clear from table 4 that all the respondents gained in their social status after becoming representatives of the people of certain area or ward of the gram Panchayat. Maximum 94.67% of EWVPMs reported about an increase in their contacts with a large number of people possible as a sequel to this contact all but 93.33% of women members revealed that their respect in society had increased. However only 2.66 percent members mentioned of decrease in their respect in society since elected to gram Panchayat. Although there is only a very small number to

perceive themselves in such a disgruntled state, this aspect needed a careful watch and in case such a negative impact in the perception of elected women members is observed on rise, then the issue would assume Significance. However as many as 90.66 percent respondents confirmed about increase in their respect back bone. To push up the concern, the rest 18.66 percent of the representatives reported a decrease in their family respect. There were 53.3 percent members who grudged for time for their family due to engagements in gram Panchayats.

**Table 5. Overall impact of participation of elected women in Gram Panchayats**

| Sl. No. | Statements                               | F ( n <sub>1</sub> =75) | (%)    |
|---------|--|-------------------------|--------|
| 1.      | Social prestige of women has improved    | 75                      | 100.00 |
| 2.      | Opportunity to express the views         | 73                      | 97.33  |
| 3.      | Enhancement in information accessibility | 73                      | 97.33  |
| 4.      | Increase in self image and self respect. | 71                      | 94.66  |
| 5.      | Growth in capability of decision making  | 70                      | 93.33  |
| 6.      | Development in the status of Women       | 68                      | 90.66  |
| 7.      | Openness in the style of functioning     | 68                      | 90.66  |
| 8.      | Growth in political consciousness        | 62                      | 82.66  |
| 9.      | Expansion in developmental aspects.      | 58                      | 77.33  |

It can be observed from table 5 that the members unanimously perceived an improvement in their social prestige and that of other elected women also due to their enhanced right to participation in the democratic process at the grass root level. As many as 97.33 percent of the respondents felt that there was a unique opportunity to express views in gram Panchayats. Their accessibility to different kinds of information regarding people and societies had enhanced and their self- image and self respect were boasted up. There were 94.66 percent EWVPMs who felt an improvement in their decision making ability since their association with gram Panchayats. Again 90.66

percent of the elected women members expressed that there was an increase in openness of their working style which they considered a welcome change in their personality. There have been improvements in the overall status of the women as indicated by (90.66%) of the respondents. There are also 82.66 percent of them who informed about increase in the political consciousness since their linkage with gram Panchayat. That the women had also become the focus of development and hence there was expansion in the developmental aspects in the society was felt by 77.33 percent of the respondents.

**Table 6. The co-efficient of correlation between empowerment and socio-economic and Psychological variables of elected women members of Gram Panchayats**

| Sl. No. | Independent Variables   | Value of Coefficient of Correlation |
|---------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1.      | Age                     | -0.478 <sup>**</sup>                |
| 2.      | Caste                   | 0.258 <sup>*</sup>                  |
| 3.      | Marital status          | -0.205 <sup>Ns</sup>                |
| 4.      | Personal Education      | 0.092 <sup>Ns</sup>                 |
| 5.      | Family Education        | 0.080 <sup>Ns</sup>                 |
| 6.      | Family type             | 0.037 <sup>Ns</sup>                 |
| 7.      | Family Size             | 0.098 <sup>Ns</sup>                 |
| 8.      | Occupation              | 0.099 <sup>Ns</sup>                 |
| 9.      | Size of land holding    | -0.104 <sup>Ns</sup>                |
| 10.     | Family income           | 0.245 <sup>*</sup>                  |
| 11.     | Material possession     | 0.048 <sup>Ns</sup>                 |
| 12.     | House type              | 0.218 <sup>Ns</sup>                 |
| 13.     | Social linkage          | 0.095 <sup>Ns</sup>                 |
| 14.     | Knowledge               | 0.034 <sup>Ns</sup>                 |
| 15.     | Development constraints | 0.059 <sup>Ns</sup>                 |
| 16.     | Interaction Style       | 0.293 <sup>*</sup>                  |
| 17.     | Participation           | -0.402 <sup>**</sup>                |

\* Significant at 5% level of Probability, \*\*Significant at 1% level of Probability, Ns - Non Significant

It can be observed in table 6 that the association between women empowerment and their age and participation were negative and significant at 1 percent level of probability ( $r = 0.478, 0.402$ ),  $P > 0.01$ ) whereas the variables i.e. Caste, Family Income and Interaction Style were positive and significant at 5 percent level of probability. The association between the dependent variable and personal Education, Family Education, Occupation, size of land holding and Social linkage were also positive but non-significant. All other variables maintained negative association with the empowerment of EWVPMs. Among these, age exhibited highly significant association ( $r = -0.478$ ,  $P > 0.01$ ), followed by participation ( $r = -0.402$ ,  $P > 0.01$ ). Empowerment was found to be in strong association with age but negatively. This implied that the younger members were in possession of greater empowerment compared to those higher in age. Again the EWVPMs having higher family income than the others were found to be more empowered.

Multiple regression analysis was carried out to know the predictive values of the independent variables in contributing the variation with empowerment. Standardized regression coefficient are unit free and therefore can be compared with each other in respect of their contribution towards variability in Empowerment with the help of these values Empowerment is influenced not only by any one of the independent variables but all of them as a part of a system. The selected seventeen variables studied were fitted into the regression models. The findings of the analysis are presented in table 7.

This table indicated that out of seventeen selected independent variables fitted in multiple regression analysis, three contributed significantly whereas Personal Education, Family Income and House Type contributed positively and significantly with empowerment of elected women. The contribution of remaining fourteen variables i.e. Age, Caste, Marial Status, Family Education, Family Type, Family Size,



**Table 7. Multiple regressions between Empowerment and socio-economic and psychological variables of elected women members of gram Panchayats**

| Sl. No. | Characters              | Standard regression | Standard error | T-Value | SDR regression Co-efficient |
|---------|-------------------------|---------------------|----------------|---------|-----------------------------|
| 1.      | Age                     | -0.673              | 0.446          | -1.509  | -0.200                      |
| 2.      | Caste                   | -2.490              | 4.653          | -0.535  | -0.75                       |
| 3.      | Marital-status          | 2.500               | 9.035          | 0.277   | 0.044                       |
| 4.      | Personal Education      | 6.040               | 2.704          | 2.234*  | 0.259                       |
| 5.      | Family Education        | 1.490               | 2.476          | 0.602   | 0.065                       |
| 6.      | Family type             | 3.962               | 6.486          | 0.611   | 0.080                       |
| 7.      | Family Size             | -5.421              | 4.303          | -1.260  | -0.181                      |
| 8.      | Occupation              | 2.123               | 1.765          | 1.203   | 0.134                       |
| 9.      | Size of land holding    | 4.546               | 3.871          | 1.174   | 0.118                       |
| 10.     | Family income           | 8.013               | 3.486          | 2.356*  | 0.269                       |
| 11.     | Material possession     | -4.010              | 3.732          | -1.674  | -0.116                      |
| 12.     | House type              | -7.229              | 3.536          | -2.004* | -0.224                      |
| 13.     | Social linkage          | 6.704               | 6.066          | 1.105   | 0.120                       |
| 14.     | Knowledge               | 7.949               | 0.181          | 0.439   | 0.047                       |
| 15.     | Development constraints | -9.302              | 0.153          | -0.609  | -0.064                      |
| 16.     | Interaction Style       | -6.042              | 3.539          | 1.707   | 0.198                       |
| 17.     | Participation           | -0.609              | 0.392          | -1.552  | -0.328                      |

$R^2 = 0.500$ ;  $F = 3.347$ ; \* Significant at 5% level of Probability

Occupation, Size of Land Holding, Material Possession, Social Linkage, Knowledge, Development Constraints, Interaction Style and Participation were non-significant.

In terms of standard regression co-efficient age, family education and participation were the variables which occupied first three ranks respectively. The corresponding partial regression coefficient in respect of these variables indicated that in case of Age, Family Education and Participation, a unit gain is capable of causing a change in the empowerment to the tune (0.67), (1.49) and (0.60) units respectively provided other variables kept constant.

It is revealed from table 8 that the direct effect of the independent variables was substantial in case of Age (-0.5246), Family Education (0.4432), Marital Status (-0.4412), Personal Education (0.4321), Family Type (0.4320), Participation (0.32731), Caste (0.3213), Interaction Style (-0.3212), Family Size (-0.2431), Knowledge (0.2422), House Type (-0.2312), Occupation (-0.2132) and Material Possession (-0.2118). Infact except social linkage (-0.0912) all the independent variables had large direct effect on empowerment of the elected women members. Interestingly, social linkage also exerted

substantial indirect effect (-0.2132), Occupation, Family Education, Size of Land Holding caused maximum indirect effect through Family Education, Education and Age, respectively

## CONCLUSIONS

In Indian constitution, there are provisions for equal rights for all citizens irrespective of their social and economic status. Socio-economic and Psychological background of the elected women members, what degree of preparedness did these representative have to turn this basic institution into a key player in accelerating the socio-economic development in the country side while there may be numerous indicators to this effect, a knowledge of the sources of motivation for the women to fight a for the rules and regulations of Gram Panchayats and awareness to the developmental programmes under the Panchayati Raj was considered important towards effective role playing by the elected women members.

The above finding concluded that there was an overall positive impact of increased participation of elected Women members in gram Panchayats as the representations of the society. That is why more than 90.0 percent

respondents spoke positively with respect to different life situation which was the consequence of their association with Gram Panchayats. There is enough evidence that the Gram Panchayats are capable of providing a right platform from where a substantial change might take place in the

status of women. However, a concrete impact on the life of either elected women members of Gram Panchayats or ordinary women in the society will take some time to take place.

**Table 8. Direct–indirect effect of independent variables with empowerment of elected women members of gram Panchayats.**

| Sl. No. | Characters              | Direct effect | Total indirect effect | Maximum indirect effect | Through             |
|---------|-------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 1.      | Age                     | -0.5246       | 0.1821                | 0.0928                  | Hoding size         |
| 2.      | Caste                   | 0.3213        | 0.2232                | -0.1770                 | Age                 |
| 3.      | Marital status          | -0.4412       | 0.2127                | -0.2211                 | Age                 |
| 4.      | Personal Education      | 0.4321        | 0.5142                | 0.2152                  | Family education    |
| 5.      | Family Education        | 0.4432        | 0.0427                | 0.1530                  | Education           |
| 6.      | Family type             | 0.4320        | 0.0243                | -0.2477                 | Family Education    |
| 7.      | Family Size             | -0.2431       | 0.2214                | -0.1821                 | Family education    |
| 8.      | Occupation              | -0.2132       | -0.0421               | -0.2431                 | Family Education    |
| 9.      | Size of land holding    | 0.1627        | -0.2821               | 0.3121                  | Age                 |
| 10.     | Family income           | 0.1633        | 0.0321                | 0.0321                  | Age                 |
| 11.     | Material possession     | -0.2118       | 0.0732                | 0.0123                  | Family Education    |
| 12.     | House type              | -0.2312       | -0.0787               | 0.2477                  | Material possession |
| 13.     | Social linkage          | -0.0912       | -0.2132               | 0.1321                  | Family education    |
| 14.     | Knowledge               | 0.2422        | -0.2213               | 0.1010                  | Age                 |
| 15.     | Development constraints | 0.1721        | -0.0317               | -0.0720                 | Family education    |
| 16.     | Interaction Style       | -0.3212       | -0.0211               | 0.1321                  | Education           |
| 17.     | Participation           | 0.3273        | 1.1473                | 0.0324                  | Age                 |

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