A psychological scale to measure the attitude of elected women towards grass root self governance (Panchayati Raj) system in Tamil Nadu, India

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This paper dealt with the steps involved in developing a psychological scale for assessing the attitude of elected women towards grass root self governance (Panchayati raj) in Tamil nadu, India. The Panchayati raj is the system of village level (Gram panchayat), block level (panchayat samiti) and district level (Zilla parishad) councils, members elected by the people, carrying out administration activities. Due to the provision of one-third reservations, entry of women in grass root politics was ensured. But the attitude of the women members could influence their participation either positively or negatively. Hence the present attempt was made to construct psychological scale to measure the positive or negative attitude of elected women members towards Panchayati raj system. The scale was constructed following Likert’s method of summated rating technique. Based on the highest ‘t’ values of more than 1.96 and other guidelines, totally 12 statements (6 positive and 6 negative statements) covering the universe of Panchayati raj were selected and administered.

Key words: Panchayati raj (self governance), political empowerment, attitude, summated rating.

INTRODUCTION

In the post independence era (in 1950s), the Indian government accorded highest priority to rural development. To sustain the socio-economic changes that has been taken place in the country, the villages backbone of the country is to be put on a sound footing. At the same time few centres of power cannot realize or fulfill the needs of the vast multitude of people. The father of India Gandhi M. K. put it that “In the true democracy of India, the unit is the village. Twenty men sitting at the center cannot work true democracy. It has to be worked from below by the people of every village”. Thus in a democracy, decentralization of economic, political and administrative financial power is essential. The process of national development would be incomplete and lopsided unless the people are fully involved in it. The system of Panchayati raj (Local self government) was initiated mainly for people’s participation in political and economical process (Rao, 2009).

The gender issues have gained primacy in recent discourses because of its tentacle spread and effect. Although women constitute half of the world’s population, perform two – third of the working hours, earn more than one-fourth of the world’s income, they are still the most deprived and neglected segment of the society. The movement for the empowerment of women has remained a slogan for centuries.Hence the champions of Panchayati raj system desired that rural women should not only become beneficiaries of development, but more importantly the contributions to it. India is perhaps the first country to recognize the social fact and have taken
concrete measures to draw women into leadership position and thereby into politics by giving them one third reservation in grass root politics (Pandya, 2003). Inspite of these constitutional directions for reservation woman is facing several socio economic constraints. Pillai (2001) quoted that political empowerment of women is crucial not only for development of women themselves and without it, the country cannot hope for any sustainable development.

**Genesis of local self governance (Panchayati Raj)**

The Panchayati Raj is the system of village level (Gram panchayat), block level (Panchayat samiti) and district level (Zilla parishad) councils, members elected by the people, and the responsible for the administration of the local public goods. It is a system of self governance electing their own leaders to look after the village administration (Bhandari, 2013). The Panchayats or the local self governments are not a novel phenomenon to India perhaps they have an ancient origin in India. Recognizing the importance of democratic institution at the grass root level, the constitution (72nd amendment) bill 1991 was introduced in the Indian parliament and finally passed by the Lok Sabha on 22nd December 1992. The salient features of the constitution (72nd amendment) act are three tier system of local governance, direct elections, reservation of not less than one-third of seats to women, SCs/STs, five year term for the local bodies, etc.,

The introduction of the reservation for women to the extent of one-third seats in the elections to leadership positions in local self government is the most far reaching step in the direction of making Indian democracy, broad based and highly participative. The process of National development would be incomplete and lopsided unless women are fully involved in it. In spite of constitutional directions, women are facing several socio-economic constraints. The participation in the public activities are largely depends on the attitude of the individual against the system. Attitude plays a significant role in governing the behaviourial components of an individual. The favourable or unfavourable evaluation about an activity decides one’s extent of participation.

**Attitudes and their measurements**

Thurstone and Chave (1929) defined attitude as the degree of +ve or –ve effect associated with some psychological object. Kretch et al. (1962) considered attitude as an enduring system of positive and negative evaluations, emotional feelings and pro con action tendencies, which respect to social objects. Rogers and shoemake (1971) explained attitude as relatively enduring organization of an individual’s belief about an object that pre-disposes his action. Hence attitude is evalutative statements either favourable or unfavourable concerning objects, people or events.

Attitude of any person towards his occupation largely decide his/her type of involvement on a continued basis. As for as the Panchayati Raj is concerned upliftment or betterment of rural mass depends only on the performance of elected representatives, which in turn depends on the attitude of the representatives towards the system. Thus attitude of elected women of Panchayati Raj is definitely an important variable that affects the participation as a whole. Hence an attitude scale has been constructed using the technique of summated raring suggested by Likert (1932). Among the techniques available for attitude scale construction Thurstone’s method of paired comparison technique and equal appearing intervals and Likert’s method of summated rating are widely used.

**Advantage of Likert’s method of summated rating – attitude scale construction – few review of literatures**

1. Hall (1934) and Oppenheim (1966) indicated that Likert type scales with even fewer statements would give higher reliability coefficients.

2. Edward and Kenny (1946) in their comparative study of the method of equal appearing intervals and the method of summated rating estimated that the time required to construct an equal appearing interval scale is approximately twice that required by the method summated rating.

3. Hall (1934) used the method of summated rating in his survey of attitude of employed and unemloyed men because of its relative simplicity. Summatated rating method gets a four or five point judgement on each item and thus providing more information during item analysis and selection. The assumption of the summated rating method is that each statement in the scale covers the entire attitude.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This research work is intended for construction of attitude scale for measuring the attitude of elected women towards the local self governance (Panchayati Raj). Ex post facto research design was used in the present study. The study was conducted in Dindigul district of Tamil Nadu state, South India (Figures 1 and 2). The method used for collecting the data for the study was personal interview method using interview schedule. The schedule was pretested carefully before going for the final interview process. The respondents were 70 elected women who had won Panchayati Raj elections.

**Procedures of attitude scale construction**

**Collection of statements**

A large number of statements covering the entire range of Panchayati Raj were collected. Such an item pool was generated
Figure 1. Tamil Nadu state map.

Figure 2. Blocks of Dindigul district.
after thorough discussion with scientists, subject matter specialists, block development officials and Panchayati Raj functionaries. In all seventy four statements were prepared.

Editing of statements

The overlapping statements were deleted and others were edited according to some selective specifications (Edward, 1957). After editing items relevant and unique to the selected areas for developing the scale were chosen. There were sixty- two statements.

Subject rating

All the sixty two statements were then randomly ordered. These together on a 5 point equal appearing interval continuum from strongly agree to strongly disagree with the midpoint being neutral at three. The list was sent to 125 judges in a non sample area. The respondents were asked to respond to each statement in terms of their agreement and disagreement with the statements on strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree with a scoring pattern of 5,4,3,2 and 1 respectively for positive statements and 1,2,3,4 and 5 respectively for negative statements. Of the 125 judges, 110 judges returned the statements after duly recorded their scoring of this eight were eliminated on the criteria of Thurstone and Chave (1929) for carelessness in judging or otherwise failed to respond to the instructions sent for five judgement and two judges were placed more number of statements on one of the five points. Thus finally the responses of 100 subjects were considered for final selection of statements. The scores were then summed up to find out the total score for each respondent for all the items.

Item analysis for selection of items

Item analysis will provide information about how well each individual item relates to the other items in the analysis. After obtaining the summed score for total statements (62) the subjects were arranged in descending order based on their total scores. The 27% of the subjects with the higher total scores and the 27% of the subjects with the lowest scores would provide criterion groups in terms of which to evaluate the individual statements. The ‘t’ value item (discriminating index) , a measure of the extent to which a given statement differentiates between the high and low groups of subjects for each statements was calculated using the formula given by Edward (1957).

\[ t = \frac{X_H \bar{X}_L - X_L \bar{X}_L}{\sqrt{\frac{\sum (X_H - \bar{X}_H)^2 + (X_L - \bar{X}_L)^2}{n(n-1)}}} \]

Where, \( X_H \) the mean score on a given statement for the high group; \( \bar{X}_H \) The mean score on a given statement for the low group; \( \sum X_{hi} \) Sum squares of individual scores of a given statement for high group; \( \sum X_{li} \) Sum squares of individual scores of a given statement for low group; \( \sum X_{hi} \) The summations of the scores on a given statement for a high group; \( \sum X_{li} \) The summations of the scores on a given statement for a low group; \( n \) Number of respondents; \( \sum \) Summation of the 6 positive and 6 negative statements covering the universe of Panchayati Raj with highest ‘t’ values to more than 1.96 were selected as they differentiate between high and low groups. The Statements for final attitude scale along with their value (marked with * mark) is given in the Table 2.

Reliability of the scale

The reliability of the attitude scale constructed was tested by internal consistency reliability method. For measuring internal consistency, co-efficient alpha (Croanbach, 1951) was used. Co-efficient alpha is a direct function of both the numbers of items and their magnitude of inter correlation. Co-efficient alpha involves comparison of the variance of a total scale score (sum of all items) with the variance of the individual items. The formula for Co-efficient alpha is:

\[ S^2_x \frac{K \sum S^2 T - \sum S^2_i}{K-1} \]

Total variance of the sum of the items

\[ S^2_i \] Total variance of the sum of the items, \( S^2 \) variance of the individual items; \( K \), number of items.

The value of the co-efficient alpha is usually positive taking on values from zero to just less than one, where large values indicates higher levels of internal consistency. Nunnally (1983) provides a widely accepted rule of thumb that alpha should be at least 0.70 for a scale to demonstrate internal consistency. The co-efficient alpha was 0.88 for the study indicating higher reliability of the scale. The reliability is also measured by split half method. The 12 statements of the scale were divided into two equal halves with all even number statements in one half and the odd numbers in the other half. The co-efficient correlation between two sets of scores of the scale was computed and found to be significant (\( r = 0.715 \)) at 1% level of probability. Hence the scale can be termed as reliable.

Validity of the scale

In the present study the validity of the scale was examined with the help of content validity. Garrette (1966) stated that ‘the validation of content through competent judgement is most satisfactory when the sampling items are wide and judicious and when adequate standardization group is utilized. Thus content validity is the representativeness or sampling adequacy of the content, the substance, the matter, and the topics of a measuring instrument (Kerlinger, 1983). Hence utmost care was taken to select the contents from various literature, expert opinions and discussion with statutory bodies especially involving in the subject (Rajiv Gandhi chair for Panchayati Raj studies, GRI, Tamil Nadu, India and Institute of social sciences, Bengaluru, India), Department officials, Panchayati Raj functionaries and social scientists. The suggestions and remarks were given due consideration and incorporated in the scale. Care was taken to include all the statements, which represented the entire range of attitude of elected women towards Panchayati Raj and thus content validity was verified.

Administration of the scale

All the 12 statements of the scale were mixed thoroughly and final attitude scale was administered to elected women to study their attitude towards Panchayati Raj. For simplifying the operationalisation of attitude scale, the five point continuum of statements were reduced into three point continuum. Respondents numbering 70 elected women Panchayati Raj office bearers were requested to rate each statement on a three point continuum viz.,
Table 1. Distribution of elected women according to the attitude towards Panchayati Raj n= 70.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Less favourable</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Favourable</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>65.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>More favourable</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean = 33.371; SD = 1.927.

Categorization of respondents

After getting the total attitude scores, the respondents were classified into three groups as follows:

Less favourable: < (mean - SD)
Favourable: < (mean + SD)
More favourable: > (mean + SD)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Regarding the social development programmes, empowerment of women is the key aspect for sustainability of results. The political empowerment of women is the key to achieve the objective of gender equality also to eliciting full participation in nation building. It is evident from the Table 1 that 65.72% of elected women had favourable attitude, followed by 18.57% with less favourable and 15.71% with more favorable attitude towards Panchayati Raj. This finding is supported by the findings of Channegowda and Shivaramu (1994). The favorable attitude of the elected women of Panchayati Raj institutions towards the system will sure contribute in their participation and performance (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Distribution of elected women according to the attitude towards Panchayati Raj n= 70.

Agree, Undecided, Disagree with scores 3, 2 and 1 respectively for positive statements and 1, 2 and 3 for negative statements. The sum of scores on all the statements formed the attitude score of the respondents. The minimum and maximum scores were 12 and 36 respectively.

Conclusion

Attitude is the enduring system of cognitive component. Attitude plays vital role in influencing behavioural components. In the present study, despite the constitutional guarantees, the representation of women in politics is still very dismal (Global gender gap report, 2012). The extent of participation of women in local self governance depends on their attitude towards the Panchayati Raj system. More favourable attitude towards Panchayati Raj system would normally create greater involvement of the individuals in the panchayat proceedings. Greater involvement would increase the extent of participation in the panchayat activities. This is how positive and significant relationship between attitude towards Panchayati Raj system and extent of participation could be thus explained.

Hence this scale can be used by the planners, developmental workers and social scientists involved in the grass root political sphere for measuring the attitude of the elected members of the Panchayati Raj institutions by administering to them. The findings of the present study also warrant the need for further investigation in several directions. There is scope to initiate studies on attitude of villagers towards the Panchayati Raj system. A comparative study between the elected women and men of the Panchayati Raj institution may be conducted.
Table 2. Statements for final attitude scale along with their value (marked with * mark).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Attitude statements</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>DA</th>
<th>SDA</th>
<th>‘t’ value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Panchayati raj is the backbone of democracy</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Self governance promotes village development</td>
<td>3.63*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Women are not raising their voices for problem in monthly meeting</td>
<td>2.31*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Panchayati raj organization is the process of democratic decentralization</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Women functionaries can develop better rapport with other women in the village</td>
<td>4.51*</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Women’s participation in grass root administration has positive effect on a democratic structure</td>
<td>3.92</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Panchayati Raj Institutions are real representative body of the rural people</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Women from lower economic strata can also participate in Panchayati raj</td>
<td>4.69*</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Panchayati Raj breaks the harmony of the village</td>
<td>0.77</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Women are dummy functionaries of the panchayats</td>
<td>4.01*</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>There is political involvement in local civic elections</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>No reservation for women in Panchayati Raj is needed</td>
<td>3.45*</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Women face non co-operation of male subordinates in Panchayati raj administration</td>
<td>0.59</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Women leaders can take better decisions in Panchayati raj</td>
<td>4.87*</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Women are not aware about their responsibilities</td>
<td>4.94*</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Women are capable of holding important positions in PR</td>
<td>3.24</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Women leadership qualities increase after being elected as Panchayati Raj functionaries</td>
<td>5.41*</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Women are mute spectators of Panchayati raj institutions proceedings</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>In Panchayati raj institutions relatives of women leaders are said to be ‘shadow leaders’</td>
<td>0.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Elected women are hesitating to take decisions during time of crisis</td>
<td>4.89*</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>One cannot expect the performance of women members on par with their men counterparts</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Women are fit for political administration</td>
<td>4.85*</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Participation of women in Panchayati raj is low</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Women are not capable of holding important positions Panchayati raj</td>
<td>4.63*</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>The Gram Sabha meetings are just a formality</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td></td>
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