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A sociological study on the role of self-help groups in political empowerment of rural women in Haryana

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Abstract

The study follows an exploratory-cum-descriptive research design, and information related to research is collected through an interview schedule, observation methods, and secondary sources. Using stratified random sampling, 408 respondents were selected from the universe of the study. The result of the study shows that low participation in Gram Sabha meetings by SHG members, with 431 (89.8%) members not attending and only 49 (10.2%) members participating in it. The data shows that participation was particularly low in Baliali, Bhirhana, and Mohammadpur Ahir villages. Result of study shows that the majority of respondents (25.6%) voted based on their family's decision, while other factors such as caste, education, and mixed also played an important role to cast vote in any election, 72.5% of respondents believe that the Constitution plays an important.

Keywords: SHG, political empowerment, political participation, empowerment of women poverty

Introduction

Political Participation is the process by which citizens engage in political activity, and it can take many forms such as voting, public meetings, joining political parties, and representative bodies. In India, the Constitution grants equal opportunities for women in politics and provides for reservation of one-third of seats in local government bodies for women. This has led to increased political participation and empowerment for women, as they have become more active in leadership roles and have been able to improve their economic and social status. Additionally, women's participation in self-help groups has been found to have a positive impact on their political empowerment.

Panday (1993) ^[11] states that empowerment is a procedure of building capacity, enhancing confidence, and gaining control over productive resources. Batliwala (1994) ^[2] states that empowerment is a course of action that challenges existing power structures and sources. Banerjee (1995) ^[1] says that empowerment is a process of equality enrichment and can be achieved by disempowering some structures, organisms, methods, and institutions. It helps people to access equality and liberty and enables and realizes the weaker section of society for their existence. Sorensen (1997) ^[17] said that an empowered person becomes an agent of development, enhances their capability to involve in the decision-making process, and is able to challenge and change their subordinate position in society in the fields of socio-economic and political arenas. According to IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development, 2009), empowerment is a process by which people take control over their lives. Sharma (2011) ^[14] defines empowerment as "moving from a position of enforced powerlessness to one with more power."

Self Help Groups Definitions and Concept

According to Singh and Jain (1995) ^[15], "Self Help Groups (SHGs) is a voluntary association of people formed to attain both social and economic goals." According to Jha (2000) ^[7], "SHGs are self-governed, peer-controlled groups of individuals with similar socio-economic backgrounds and a desire to achieve a common purpose collectively." Suriyan (2012) ^[18] describes SHGs as "All for all." SHGs are an association of poor women who voluntarily come together to contribute as much as possible to meet their basic needs. Thus, SHGs are groups of 10-20 women who create financial resources for themselves in order to improve their living conditions.

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The process of forming Self Help Groups involves the following activities

- Identifying a target area for the formation of SHGs.
- Identifying the needs of the stakeholders.
- Increasing morale and commitment among women regarding the formation of SHGs.
- Increasing self-confidence and capabilities of women and motivating them to form SHGs.
- Motivating women to involve in collective decision-making processes.
- Encouraging the habit of saving among women.
- Preparing women judiciously for taking social responsibilities (NCERT, 2013) ^[10].

Meaning of Women Empowerment and its Indicators

The concept of empowerment is widely used. It encompasses various elements such as access to resources,

decision-making power, self-confidence, and inner transformation. Empowerment of women is crucial for the overall development and progress of society, as stated by various leaders and thinkers. Bhattacharya (2019) ^[3] argues that women empowerment is necessary to achieve gender equality as women often lack equal opportunities in employment and are segregated due to their gender. The process of empowerment helps them attain equality in society. It can be concluded that empowerment is a multi-dimensional process addressing women's subordination in society and therefore needed in the social, economic, and political spheres. Jesuraj (2015) ^[6] introduced the concept of "redistribution of social power and control of resources in support of women" at the Third International Women's Conference in Nairobi in 1985.

Table 1: A model exploring the dynamics of women empowerment in India from multi-dimensional perspectives

Sr. No	Dimension	Family Level	Society/ Community Level	State/National Level
1.	Familial/ Interpersonal	Involvement in decision-making process, liberty on sexual relations, Freedom from domestic violence	Society should grant freedom to women such as freedom to choose spouses, acceptance of divorce without dowry	Access of reproductive health services
2.	Social & Cultural	Freedom from discrimination, better treatment, encouragement of girl's education	Women's participation in social spheres, the existence of associations for women in society, changes in patriarchal norms	Affirmative media that highlights women's roles and contributions to the nation, emphasis on women's literacy
3.	Economic	Opportunities for self-employment, recognition of women's contributions to income, access to family resources	Access to employment, credit, ownership of land and assets, entrepreneurship	Gender-sensitive budgeting, representation in financial policies
4.	Political	Political Awareness of political activities, democratic systems, and easy access to them	Representation in local government bodies	Political participation of women at all levels, such as at the panchayat, municipal corporation, state legislative assemblies, Rajya Sabha, and Lok Sabha.
5.	Legal	Knowledge of women's fundamental rights	Society's awareness of women's rights, effective local enforcement systems	Laws that ensure women's welfare, strict enforcement of them, and an active judiciary system to address women's rights
6.	Psychological	Respect from every member of the family, increased dignity	Accepted social identity and status, collective awareness of gender-based injustice and discrimination	Inclusion in the process of national development.

Source: Hazra (2011) ^[5]

Review of Literature

The study by Lalitha and Nagarajan (2002) ^[8] entitled "Self-help groups in rural development in Tamil Nadu" aimed to determine the effectiveness of Self Help Groups (SHGs) on women in terms of economic, social, and political empowerment. The study was conducted in three districts in Tamil Nadu, and found that the volume of loans distributed to SHG members increased significantly over time. The study provided evidence that organizing women in the form of SHGs was beneficial for their development and that group activities empowered them to address social issues such as female infanticide, dowry problems, and alcoholism. Additionally, the study highlighted that two members from SHGs promoted by Arogya Agam were elected as village Panchayat presidents. The study by Puhazhendi and Badatya (2002) ^[13], titled "Impact of SBLP," aimed to examine the changes in socio-economic conditions among respondents before and after joining Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and to evaluate the effects of the SHG-Bank Linkage Programme. The research was carried out with 115 participants from 60 WSHGs across three states in central India. The findings revealed that the average yearly savings per household increased by 96%, loan repayment rates rose from 86.5% to

94.9%, and employment days per household increased by 34%. Moreover, the study showed that 15% of SHG member households moved from Below Poverty Line (BPL) to Above Poverty Line (APL) and their social status improved through increased self-confidence, improved communication, and better treatment for their family members. They also gained the ability to make joint decisions confidently.

National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD, 2005) ^[9] conducted a study to review the performance of fisherwomen's Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in Tirunelveli and Thoothukudi districts of Tamil Nadu. The objectives of the study were to understand the performance of microfinance through SHGs on the fisherwomen of Tamil Nadu. The study collected primary data from 725 fisherwomen belonging to 41 SHGs from five coastal villages (Tharuvaikulam, Pazhayakalay, Therespuram, Kootapuli, and Uvari). The results of the study showed that the fisherwomen's SHGs performed well in terms of taking and repaying credit and that microfinance through SHGs improved their livelihood conditions. Additionally, the study found evidence that the women perceived changes in their

identity, now participating in family and community action programs, both at the local level and beyond.

Panwar, Manju (2010) ^[12] conducted a study titled "Role of SHGs in Strengthening Grassroots Democracy: An Experience of Haryana" in the Nilokheri block, District Karnal, Haryana state. The study aimed to highlight the pivotal role played by members of Women Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in strengthening grassroots democracy. The author selected ten gram panchayats in Nilokheri and took three SHGs from each gram panchayat. The study found that the relationship between the gram sabha (village assembly) and SHGs resulted in holding of gram sabha meetings in a proper way, which led to an increase in attendance and ensured the presence of the members of SHGs. It also changed the schedule of gram sabha meetings. Before the involvement of the SHGs in gram sabha meetings, the Sarpanches and Sachivs (village leaders) discussed only infrastructure issues such as the construction of streets, drains, the building of retaining walls, and chaupals. However, SHGs members changed the agenda of Gram Sabha meetings. The initiative of the SHGs brought a difference and the focus shifted to social issues such as opening new schools, improvement in existing schools, the program of adult education, opening of sewing centers for women, ensuring attendance of doctors in Primary Health Centers, and movements against social evils like alcoholism and female feticide.

Chitagubbi, Shivalli, and Devendrappa (2011) ^[4] conducted a study titled "A Study on the Usefulness of Self-Help Group Membership to Women for Empowerment." The objectives of the research were to examine the socio-economic status of SHG members and to assess the effectiveness of SHGs. The study was conducted using 400 participants (100 participants from each district). The findings revealed that approximately 61% of the respondents belonged to nuclear families, were between the ages of 26 and 45, and over 50% had a primary level of education. The groups improved the respondents' situation within the traditional family system by increasing their knowledge of the legal system. Additionally, the members developed their leadership skills through their commitment to work. Sonam, Aggarwal, and Bhushan (2019) ^[16] conducted a study titled "Impact Analysis of the SHG – Bank Linkage Model on Empowerment of Women in Dehradun." The goals of the study were: (1) To examine the impact of SHG membership on the economic and political empowerment of women in the Sahaspur and Chakrata villages (Dehradun district), and (2) to explore the possible channels through which the SHG- bank linkage model

affects the political empowerment of women in India. A survey of 400 respondents from various SHGs in villages of Sahaspur and 100 respondents of Chakrata village of Dehradun was conducted. A structured questionnaire, personal interviews, and group discussions were used to collect the data. In Sahaspur village, 79.5% of respondents said that their income had increased and 77% reported an increase in savings. Around 70% of the respondents increased their spending on consumption goods, and 65.5% could give more pocket money to their kids. 80.25% felt more empowered to work after joining the SHG. 90.25% reported being empowered to take collective action, 59% of women reported being motivated to join politics. On the other hand, in Chakrata village, only 19% of respondents reported an increase in income, and only 10% were able to increase in saving. Around 40% of the respondents could increase their spending on consumption goods, and 13% could give more pocket money to their kids. Only 10% felt more empowered to work after joining the SHG. 20% reported being empowered to take collective action, 15% of women reported being motivated to join politics. The most important reason for Chakrata village not performing well was that this village was situated on hills, largely cut off from the markets and basic infrastructure.

Methodology

In brief, methodology is a detailed blueprint for conducting research. The nature of the present study is descriptive and exploratory, and information related to research is collected through interview-schedule, observation methods, and secondary sources. This study tries to focus on A Sociological Study on the Role of Self-Help Groups in Political Empowerment of Rural Women in Haryana. Stratified random sampling is used in the present study. The study was conducted in Haryana, and the top three districts with the highest number of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) under the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) are Mewat, Bhiwani, and Fatehabad. The districts with the lowest number of SHGs are Palwal, Mahendrgarh, and Rewari. The top three villages with the highest number of SHGs are Baliaali, Bhirhdhana, and Mohammadpur Ahir, and the lowest three SHGs villages are Dhatir, Nasibpur, and Dulhera Khurd. The total number of SHGs in these six villages is 148, and the total number of members in these SHGs is 1,599. A sample of 480 respondents (30% from each SHG) from a total of six villages in six districts were selected for this study. Members of Self-Help Groups were considered as the unit of study and selected randomly from each SHG. The detailed information regarding the sample size as under:

Table 2: Sample Size of Study

Sr. No	District	Block	Village	SHG	Member	Respondent (30%)
1.	Bhiwani	Bawani Khara	Baliaali	57	630	189
2.	Fatehabad	Fatehabad	Bhirhdhana	45	473	142
3.	Mewat	Taoru	Mohammadpur Ahir	43	460	138
4.	Palwal	Palwal	Dhatir	1	15	5
5.	Mahendrgarh	Ateli Nangal	Nasibpur	1	11	3
6.	Rewari	Bawal	Dulhera Khurd	1	10	3
Total				148	1599	480

Participation in the meeting of the Gram Sabha

"Gram Sabha" refers to a village assembly composed of individuals registered in the electoral rolls of that village. According to Mahatma Gandhi, "India lives in villages, so

the Gram Sabha is the foundation of the country's democracy." The Gram Sabha is considered the fourth tier of the constitution, alongside the Central Government, State Government, and Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs). It is

considered a miniature parliament at the village level. In Gram Sabha meetings, the rural poor, women, and

marginalized groups now have an opportunity to participate in decision-making regarding issues that impact their lives.

Table 3: Participation in the meeting of Gram Sabha

Name of the villages	Participation in Gram Sabha		Total
	Yes	No	
Baliالي (Bhiwani)	21(11.1%)	168(88.9%)	189(100%)
Bhirdhana Fatehabad	17(12%)	125(88%)	142(100%)
Mohd. Ahir (Mewat)	11(8%)	127(92%)	138(100%)
Dhatir (Palwal)	0(0)	5(100%)	5(100%)
Nasibpur (Mahendrgarh)	0(0)	3(100%)	3(100%)
Dulhera Khurd (Rewari)	0(0)	3(100%)	3(100%)
Total	49(10.2%)	431(89.8%)	480(100%)

Table No. 3 illustrates low participation in Gram Sabha meetings among members. The majority, 431 (89.8%), reported that they did not attend the meetings. Only 49 (10.2%) members participated. The data also shows that the participation rate was particularly low in Baliالي, Bhirdhana, and Mohammadpur Ahir villages, with only 11.1%, 12%,

and 8% of members participating respectively. Additionally, all members in Dhatir, Nasibpur, and Dulhera Khurd villages did not participate in the gram sabha meeting. This highlights a significant issue at the grassroots level of community participation in decision-making processes.

Table 4: Type of social issue raise in gram sabha

Name of the villages	Type of social issue raise in gram sabha						Total
	Clean village	Light	Edu.	Health	Mixed	N.A.	
Baliالي (Bhiwani)	5(2.6%)	2(1.1%)	3(1.6%)	2(1.1%)	9(4.8%)	168(88.9%)	189(100%)
Bhirdhana (Fatehabad)	1(0.7%)	1(0.7%)	2(1.4%)	1(0.7%)	12(8.5%)	125(88%)	142(100%)
Mohd. Ahir (Mewat)	2(1.4%)	1(0.7%)	4(2.9%)	0(0)	4(2.9%)	127(92%)	138(100%)
Dhatir (Palwal)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	5(100%)	5(100%)
Nasibpur (Mahendrgarh)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	3(100%)	3(100%)
Dulhera Khurd (Rewari)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	3(100%)	3(100%)
Total	8(1.7%)	4(0.8%)	9(1.9%)	3(0.6%)	25(5.2%)	431(89.8%)	480(100%)

Table No. 4 shows that a small number of respondents raised issues related to social issues in the Gram Sabha. Only 8 (1.7%) raised issues about cleanliness, 9 (1.9%) raised issues about education, 4 (0.8%) raised issues about light, 3 (0.6%) raised health-related issues, and 25 (5.2%) raised mixed issues. In Baliالي village, the most common issue raised was cleanliness (2.6%), followed by education (1.6%), light (1.1%), health (1.1%), and mixed issues (4.8%). In Bhirdhana village, the most common issue raised was mixed issues (8.5%), followed by education (1.4%), cleanliness (0.7%), light (0.7%), and health (0.7%). In Mohammadpur Ahir village, the most common issue raised was education (2.9%), followed by cleanliness (1.4%), light (0.7%), and mixed issues (2.9%).

Table 5: Casting votes in gram panchayat election

Name of the Villages	Casting vote		Total
	Yes	No	
Baliالي(Bhiwani)	166(87.8%)	23(12.2%)	189(100%)
Bhirdhana(Fatehabad)	118(83.1%)	24(16.9%)	142(100%)
Mohd. Ahir(Mewat)	124(89.9%)	14(10.1%)	138(100%)
Dhatir(Palwal)	5(100%)	0(0)	5(100%)
Nasibpur(Mahendrgarh)	3(100%)	0(0)	3(100%)
Dulhera Khurd(Rewari)	3(100%)	0(0)	3(100%)
Total	419(87.3%)	61(12.7%)	480(100%)

Table No. 5 shows that the majority of respondents, 419 (87.3%), reported that they cast their vote in the Gram Panchayat election, while 61 (12.7%) respondents did not cast their vote. The results were similar across the different villages, with most respondents casting their vote.

Table 6: Basis of casting vote in election

Name of the villages	Basis of casting vote in election						Total
	Clean Image	Edu.	Caste	Basis of Family	Mixed	Not Apply	
Baliالي (Bhiwani)	16 (8.5%)	7 (3.7%)	12 (6.3%)	57 (30.2%)	74 (39.2%)	23 (12.2%)	189 (100%)
Bhirdhana (Fatehabad)	12 (8.5%)	4 (2.8%)	17 (12%)	34 (23.9%)	51 (35.9%)	24 (16.9%)	142 (100%)
Mohd. Ahir (Mewat)	16 (11.6%)	12 (8.7%)	1 (0.7%)	30 (21.7%)	65 (47.1%)	14 (10.1%)	138 (100%)
Dhatir (Palwal)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (20%)	1 (20%)	3 (60%)	0 (0)	5 (100%)
Nasibpur (Mahendrgarh)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (33.3%)	2 (66.7%)	0 (0)	3 (100%)
Dulhera Khurd (Rewari)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (100%)	0 (0)	3 (100%)
Total	44 (9.2%)	23 (4.8%)	31 (6.5%)	123 (25.6%)	198 (41.2%)	61 (12.7%)	480 (100%)

Table No. 6 shows the basis on which people cast their vote in an election in various villages. The majority of respondents (25.6%) indicated that they voted based on their family's decision, while a smaller percentage (9.2%) voted based on the clean image of the representative. Other factors

such as caste (6.5%), education (4.8%), and mixed (41.2%) also played a role in determining how people voted. Similar trends were observed in specific villages, such as Baliالي, Bhirdhana, and Mohammadpur Ahir, with family decision being the most common basis for voting, followed by clean

image, caste, education and mixed basis. In Dhatir, Nasibpur and Dulhera Khurd villages, the majority of people voted on mixed basis.

The Constitution of India is the supreme law of India, laying out the framework for government institutions, political

structure, powers and duties, fundamental rights and citizens' duties. Adopted in 1949 and implemented in 1950, it declares India a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic and promotes justice, equality, liberty and fraternity among citizens.

Table 7: Do you think Constitution Plays important roles in women empowerment?

Name of the villages	Constitution role in women empowerment			Total
	Yes	No	Can't Say	
Baliali (Bhiwani)	140(74.1%)	14(7.4%)	35(18.5%)	189(100%)
Bhirdhana (Fatehabad)	97(68.3%)	11(7.7%)	34(23.9%)	142(100%)
Mohd. Ahir (Mewat)	109(79%)	7(5.1%)	22(15.9%)	138(100%)
Dhatir (Palwal)	0(0)	3(60%)	2(40%)	5(100%)
Nasibpur(Mahendrgarh)	2(66.7%)	0(0)	1(33.3%)	3(100%)
Dulhera Khurd(Rewari)	0(0)	3(100)	0(0)	3(100%)
Total	348(72.5%)	38(7.9%)	94(19.6%)	480(100%)

The Table No. 7 shows the views of respondents on the importance of the Constitution in women empowerment. 72.5% of respondents believe that the Constitution plays an important role in empowering women, 7.9% believe it is not

important, and 19.6% had a neutral response. The results vary among different villages, but overall a majority of respondents in all villages believe that the Constitution plays an important role in women empowerment.

Table 8: Do you think that knowledge about government programs should be provided in SHGs Members?

Name of the Villages	Knowledge about other government programme			Total
	Yes	No	Can't Say	
Baliali (Bhiwani)	119(63.0%)	6(3.2%)	64(33.9%)	189(100%)
Bhirdhana (Fatehabad)	82(57.7%)	12(8.5%)	48(33.8%)	142(100%)
Mohd. Ahir (Mewat)	115(83.3%)	5(3.6%)	18(13.0%)	138(100%)
Dhatir (Palwal)	5(100.0%)	0	0	5(100%)
Nasibpur (Mahendrgarh)	3(100%)	0	0	3(100%)
Dulhera Khurd (Rewari)	3(100%)	0	0	3(100%)
Total	327(68.1%)	23(4.8%)	130(27.1%)	480(100%)

The table shows that a majority of members (68.1%) believe that knowledge about government programs should be provided in self-help groups members in order to take advantage of them. A small percentage (4.8%) stated that there is no need for awareness about other government

programs and a neutral response was given by (27.1%) of the respondents. This trend is seen across all the villages surveyed including Baliali, Bhirdhana, Mohammadpur Ahir, Dhatir, Nasibpur and Dulhera Khurd. A small percentage in each village gave a negative response.

Table 9: Do you think women's rights should be increased?

Name of the Villages	Opinion about women's rights should be increased			Total
	Yes	No	Can't Say	
Baliali (Bhiwani)	110(58.2%)	5(2.6%)	74(39.2%)	189(100%)
Bhirdhana (Fatehabad)	81(57.0%)	13(9.2%)	48(33.8%)	142(100%)
Mohd. Ahir (Mewat)	112(81.2%)	10(7.2%)	16(11.6%)	138(100%)
Dhatir (Palwal)	5(100%)	0	0	5(100%)
Nasibpur (Mahendrgarh)	3(100%)	0	0	3(100%)
Dulhera Khurd (Rewari)	3(100.0%)	0	0	3(100%)
Total	314(65.4%)	28(5.8%)	138(28.8%)	480(100%)

The table shows that 314 members (65.4%) believe that awareness about women's rights should be increased so that they can take advantage of them. 28 (5.8%) respondents gave a negative response, and 138 (28.8%) had a neutral response. In Baliali village, 110 (58.2%) members said that awareness about women's rights should be increased, 5 (2.6%) gave a negative response, and 74 (39.2%) had a neutral response. In Bhirdhana village, 81 (57%) members said that awareness about women's rights should be increased, 13 (9.2%) gave a negative response, and 48 (33.8%) had a neutral response. In Mohammadpur Ahir village, 112 (81.2%) members said that awareness about women's rights should be increased, 10 (7.2%) gave a negative response, and 16 (11.6%) had a neutral response. In

Dhatir, Nasibpur and Dulhera Khurd village, all members said that awareness about women's rights should be increased.

Conclusion

The result of the study shows that low participation in Gram Sabha meetings among members, with 431 (89.8%) of the members reporting that they did not attend the meetings and only 49 (10.2%) members participating. The data shows that participation was particularly low in Baliali, Bhirdhana, and Mohammadpur Ahir villages, A small number of respondents raised issues related to social issues in the Gram Sabha. Only 8 (1.7%) raised issues about cleanliness, 9 (1.9%) raised issues about education, 4 (0.8%) raised issues

about light, 3 (0.6%) raised health-related issues, and 25 (5.2%) raised mixed issues. In Baliali village, the most common issue raised was cleanliness (2.6%), followed by education (1.6%), light (1.1%), health (1.1%), and mixed issues (4.8%). In Bhirhdhana village, the most common issue raised was mixed issues (8.5%), followed by education (1.4%), cleanliness (0.7%), light (0.7%), and health (0.7%). In Mohammadpur Ahir village, the most common issue raised was education (2.9%), followed by cleanliness (1.4%), light (0.7%), and mixed issues (2.9%).

Majority of respondents, 419 (87.3%), reported that they cast their vote in the Gram Panchayat election, while 61 (12.7%) respondents did not cast their vote. The majority of respondents (25.6%) indicated that they voted based on their family's decision, while a smaller percentage (9.2%) voted based on the clean image of the representative. Other factors such as caste (6.5%), education (4.8%), and mixed (41.2%) also played a role in determining how people voted. Similar trends were observed in specific villages, such as Baliali, Bhirhdhana, and Mohammadpur Ahir, with family decision being the most common basis for voting, followed by clean image, caste, education and mixed basis. In Dhatir, Nasibpur and Dulhera Khurd villages, the majority of people voted on mixed basis. 72.5% of respondents believe that the Constitution plays an important role in empowering women, 7.9% believe it is not important, and 19.6% had a neutral response. The results vary among different villages, but overall a majority of respondents in all villages believe that the Constitution plays an important role in women empowerment.

Majority of members (68.1%) believe that knowledge about other government programs should be provided in self-help groups members in order to take advantage of them. A small percentage (4.8%) stated that there is no need for awareness about other government programs and a neutral response was given by (27.1%) of the respondents. This trend is seen across all the villages surveyed including Baliali, Bhirhdhana, Mohammadpur Ahir, Dhatir, Nasibpur and Dulhera Khurd. A small percentage in each village gave a negative response. The result of the study shows that 314 members (65.4%) believe that awareness about women's rights should be increased so that they can take advantage of them. 28 (5.8%) respondents gave a negative response, and 138 (28.8%) had a neutral response. In Baliali village, 110 (58.2%) members said that awareness about women's rights should be increased, 5 (2.6%) gave a negative response, and 74 (39.2%) had a neutral response. In Bhirhdhana village, 81 (57%) members said that awareness about women's rights should be increased, 13 (9.2%) gave a negative response, and 48 (33.8%) had a neutral response. In Mohammadpur Ahir village, 112 (81.2%) members said that awareness about women's rights should be increased, 10 (7.2%) gave a negative response, and 16 (11.6%) had a neutral response. In Dhatir, Nasibpur and Dulhera Khurd village, all members said that awareness about women's rights should be increased.

Thus, the text describes the results of a study on participation in Gram Sabha meetings, issues raised by members, voting patterns in Gram Panchayat elections, beliefs about the role of the Constitution in empowering women, the importance of knowledge about government programs and awareness of women's rights. The text states that participation in Gram Sabha meetings was low, with most members not attending. Participation was particularly low in certain villages. A small number of members raised

issues related to social issues in the Gram Sabha, and most respondents reported casting their vote in the Gram Panchayat election. The majority of respondents believed that the Constitution plays an important role in empowering women, and that knowledge about other government programs should be provided to self-help group members. The majority of members believed that awareness about women's rights should be increased so that they can take advantage of them. The results varied among different villages, but overall, majority of respondents in all villages agreed on the same.

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