



ATTITUDE OF SELF-HELP GROUP MEMBERS AND NON-MEMBERS OF THRISSUR DISTRICT TOWARDS PANCHAYATI RAJ-A COMPARATIVE STUDY*

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Abstract

A twenty point psychological scale designed following the Likert's method of summated rating was adopted to compare the attitude of Self-Help Group (SHG) members and non-members towards Panchayati Raj. The scale was administered to a sample, each of 100 SHG members and non-members. The study revealed that just more than half of the SHG members held a favourable attitude towards Panchayati Raj whereas, more than half of the non-members were holding an unfavourable attitude.

Keywords: Attitude, Self-Help Groups, Panchayati Raj

Attitude is the positive or negative feeling associated with a psychological object as suggested by Edwards and Kilpatrick (1948). Katz (1960); Katz and Stotland (1959); Sarnoff and Katz (1954) and Smith *et al* (1956) reported that people hold and express a particular attitude because they derive psychological benefit by doing so. Panchayati Raj system of democratic decentralization is being implemented in Kerala state for the last two decades. Under Panchayati Raj, Self-Help Groups (SHGs) are being formed and function

as pioneers of many development programmes including livestock development. There are now many livestock-based SHGs functioning in the state of Kerala as elsewhere. The present study has attempted to make a comparison of the attitude of SHG members and non-members towards Panchayati Raj. It will throw light on SHG members' and non-members' perception of the functioning of Panchayati Raj. This in turn, may help the policy makers to bring out strategic changes in the Panchayati Raj system.

Materials and Methods

The attitude scale (Table 1) developed by George and Rajkamal (2010) was used to measure the attitude of both SHG members and non-members.

The scale was administered to 100 each of SHG members and non members. These respondents were chosen at random from two block Panchayats of Thrissur district. The respondents were asked to record their feelings on a three- point continuum *viz.*, agree, undecided and disagree with scores of 3, 2 and 1 respectively for positive statements and 1, 2, 3 respectively for negative statements. The attitude towards Panchayati Raj of each

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Table.1. Scale used to measure attitude towards Panchayati Raj

Sl. No.	Statements	Response		
		Agree	Undecided	Disagree
1	I believe that there is not enough of awareness campaign under Panchayati Raj			
2	I feel, true representatives of people will not get elected under Panchayati Raj			
3	Panchayati Raj ensures transparent functioning of the Government mechanisms			
4	Monitoring and evaluation of projects are effectively carried out under Panchayati Raj			
5	Infrastructure development has been satisfactory under Panchayati Raj			
6	I think Panchayati Raj ensures decentralized governance at the grass root level			
7	Now, there is the needed support for testing appropriate technologies in the field			
8	There is not much group action while implementing projects under Panchayati Raj			
9	Panchayati Raj has created a group of more responsible local leaders			
10	People are empowered to plan more realistic projects for themselves			
11	There has been much collective thinking to solve common problems under Panchayati Raj			
12	Panchayati Raj does not ensure development with social justice			
13	Panchayati Raj has improved the marketing avenues of various produces			
14	It enhances the social commitment of the officials of the development departments			
15	Panchayati Raj does not ensure proper management and utilization of common property resources			
16	Beneficiary selection is not fair under Panchayati Raj			
17	Agri-business enterprises get importance under Panchayati Raj			
18	Panchayati Raj has strengthened the rural economy			
19	I feel that there has been considerable uncertainty in funding various projects under Panchayati Raj			
20	Lack of viable projects has resulted in people's lack of faith in Panchayati Raj			

respondent was calculated by summing up the scores of all the statements. Based on the attitude scores obtained, the respondents in both the groups were categorized following Delenius-Hodges cumulative “f method into three groups viz., favourable, amphivalent and unfavourable. The attitude of SHG members and non-members was compared using Z-test.

Results and Discussion

Data in table 2 show that 51 per cent of the SHG members were holding a favourable attitude towards Panchayati Raj, followed by those with amphivalent (47%) and unfavourable (2%) attitude.

Regarding the non-members, 51 per cent held unfavourable, 41 per cent amphivalent and eight per cent favourable attitude towards Panchayati Raj. Z-test indicated (Table 3) a significant difference between the SHG members and non-members regarding the attitude towards Panchayati Raj.

Ambika (2002) observed that majority of TANWA (Tamilnadu Women in Agriculture) SHG members and NGO (Non Government Organisation) SHG members had only medium favourable attitude towards the development programmes. Only less than a quarter of the respondents in both the groups held more favourable attitude. As reported earlier, people express a particular attitude towards any development programme

depending upon the extent of benefits they derive from it. The policy makers and implementing agencies of development programmes therefore need to realize the fact that, the projects that yield benefits to the stakeholders create a sense of wellness towards it. A majority of the non- members of SHGs studied, held an unfavourable attitude towards a much significant decentralised development model the Panchayati Raj. It is further notable that about half of the SHG members and non- members held an amphivalent attitude. In view of the findings of this study, appropriate remedial measures regarding Panchayati Raj have to be taken up immediately.

This particular attitude of the ordinary livestock owners, who do not have membership in any SHGs, might be because of their disappointing experiences as beneficiaries. This could also be due to their ignorance about the benefits of Panchayati Raj. This points out to the need for organizing awareness programmes among these ordinary livestock owners. SHG members however stood out distinctly from non-members as the former had more positive attitude towards Panchayati Raj than the latter. This could be because they were already a part of the Panchayati Raj system.

This trend warrants corrective measures like organising awareness programmes, promotion of SHGs among livestock owners and strategic changes in the

Table 2. Distribution of livestock owners based on attitude towards Panchayati Raj

Sl. No.	Category	Score	SHG members		Non-members	
			f	%	f	%
1	Unfavourable	< 29	2	2	51	51
2	Amphivalent	29 – 41	47	47	41	41
3	Favourable	>41	51	51	8	8
	Total		100	100	100	100

Table 3. Z-test with respect to the variable- Attitude towards Panchayati Raj

Sl. No.	Variable	Mean $\pm$ SE		Z Value
		SHG members	Non-members	
1	Attitude towards Panchayati Raj	41.76 $\pm$ 5.53	31.88 $\pm$ 5.78	12.34**

** ($p < 0.01$)

Panchayati Raj system to ensure involvement of livestock farmers.

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