PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL SELF-GOVERNANCE AND EMPOWERMENT OF SCHEDULED CASTE PANCHAYAT PRESIDENTS IN VILUPPURAM DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU

Thesis submitted to the Pondicherry University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the award of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work

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<u>CERTIFICATE</u>

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled **"Participation in Local Self-Governance and Empowerment of Scheduled Caste Panchayat Presidents in Viluppuram District, Tamil Nadu",** is submitted to the Pondicherry University in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work,** is a record of original research work done by me under the supervision and guidance of **Dr. K. ANBU**, Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, School of Social Sciences and International Studies, Pondicherry University, Puducherry and that the thesis has not formed before the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship or any other similar titles.

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N

VILUPPURAM

Source: Rural Development & Panchayat Raj
Department, Government of Tamil Nadu

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Viluppuram District Map Highlighting the Study Area

N

Villupuram District

Melmalayanur

Olakkur

Vallam

Gingee

Mailam

Marakkanam

Vikravandi

Vanur

Mugaiyur

Kanai

Sankarapuram

Tirukkoyilur

Koliyanur

Kandamangalam

Rishivandiam

Thiruvennainallur

Kalrayanhills

Kallakkurichi

Ulundurpet Tirunavalur

Thiagadurgam

Chinnasalem

Source: Rural Development & Panchayat Raj Department, Government of Tamil Nadu

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The various Blocks of Viluppuram District which forms the study areas are:

1. Chinnasalem
2. Gingee
3. Kallakkurichi
4. Kalrayanhills
5. Kanai
6. Kandamangalam
7. Koliyanur
8. Mailam
9. Marakkanam
10. Melmalayanur
11. Mugaiyur

12. Olakkur
13. Rishivandiam
14. Sankarapuram
15. Thiagadurgam
16. Thiruvennainallur
17. Tirukkoyilur
18. Tirunavalur
19. Ulundurpet
20. Vallam
21. Vanur
22. Vikravandi

Acronyms

AD	-	Anno Domini
AIADMK	-	All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
APA	-	American Psychological Association
BC	-	Before Christ
BCE	-	Before the Common Era
CDP	-	Community Development Programme
CMSPGHS	-	Chief Minister Solar Powered Green House Scheme
CPI	-	Communist Party of India
CPM	-	Communist Party of India Marxist
CSR	-	Corporate Social Responsibility
CVC	-	Clean Village Campaign
df	-	Degree of Freedom
DMDK	-	Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam
DMK	-	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
Dr.	-	Doctorate
EB	-	Electricity Board
et al.	-	et alia
etc.	-	et cetera
GoI	-	Government of India
HDI	-	Human Development Index
HDR	-	Human Development Report
i.e.	-	that is
IAY	-	Indira Awaas Yojana
IBM	-	International Business Machines Corporation
INCP	-	Indian National Congress Party

INR	-	Indian Rupee
ITI	-	Industrial Training Institute
MGNREGA	-	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
MLACDS	-	Member of Legislative Assembly Constituency Development Scheme
MoPR	-	Ministry of Panchayat Raj
MPLADS	-	Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme
NABARD	-	National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
NBA	-	Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan
NCRB	-	National Crime Records Bureau
NGOs	-	Non-Government Organisations
No.	-	Number
p	-	Probability
PC	-	Personal Computer
PMGSY	-	Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana
PMK	-	Pattali Makkal Katchi
PRIs	-	Panchayat Raj Institutions
RGRP	-	Rajiv Gandhi Rehabilitation Package
RIS	-	Rural Infrastructure Scheme
r_s	-	Spearman Rank-order Coefficient
RTI	-	Right to Information Act
SC	-	Scheduled Castes
SCP	-	Special Component Plan
SCSP	-	Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan
SGRY	-	Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar
SGSY	-	Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana

Sig.	-	Significance
SPSS	-	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
SSS	-	Self Sufficiency Scheme
ST	-	Scheduled Tribes
THADCO	-	Tamil Nadu Adi Dravidar Development Cooperation
THAI	-	Tamil Nadu Village Habitation Improvement Scheme
TSC	-	Total Sanitation Campaign
VAO	-	Village Administrative Officer
VCK	-	Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi
Viz.	-	Namely
$\chi 2$	-	Chi-Square value

PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL SELF-GOVERNANCE AND EMPOWERMENT OF SCHEDULED CASTE PANCHAYAT PRESIDENTS IN VILUPPURAM DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU

ABSTRACT

The Government of India has introduced Panchayat Raj Institutions through the enactment of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992. It aims to empower people through participation in decision-making process and implement development projects at the grass-root level. The Act institutes a policy of political reservations in local self-government for the historically disadvantaged social group viz. Scheduled Castes (SC). Viluppuram District is one among the Backward Districts in the State of Tamil Nadu (Backward Regions Grant Fund Programme, 2009) having the highest SC population in the State. The District has 1099 Panchayats of which 322 are reserved for the people belonging to SC, which is high in number when compared with other Districts of Tamil Nadu. The SC Panchayat Presidents' participation in local self-governance and functioning with their vested powers are pivotal for their empowerment. Therefore, this study aims to understand whether Panchayat Presidents of SC communities are utilizing their full power in administration as well as in implementing welfare programmes. The objective of the study, in general is to understand the participation and empowerment of Panchayat Presidents of SC community in local self-governance. The specific objectives are (i) to know the socio-demographic profile of the respondents, (ii) to understand the mode of entry into the local self-governance by the respondents, (iii) to assess the level of administrative skills as perceived by the respondents, (iv) to know the awareness about duties and responsibilities and its fulfillment by the respondents and (v) to examine the challenges and barriers faced by the respondents in discharging their duties as Panchayat Presidents. The present study is descriptive in nature. It describes the level of awareness of Panchayat Presidents about their roles and responsibilities in local self-governance and empirical data is generated about the overall development of the panchayat. The research also highlights the various problems faced by the SC Panchayat Presidents in their panchayat settings. The required data is generated using self-administrated structured interview schedule. The researcher has opted census method to cover entire Viluppuram District which is having 322 Panchayat Presidents representing SC. While approaching them for the study, the researcher was able to get the informed consent only from 221 respondents. The

generated data is tabulated and analysis is made to fulfill the objective of the study. The findings of this study will support to formulate necessary policies and development programmes in the identified areas.

Key Words: Empowerment, Local Self-Governance, Panchayat Presidents, Participation, Reservation, Scheduled Caste

INTRODUCTION

"My idea of Village Swaraj is that it is a complete Republic Independent of its Neighbours for its own vital wants..."

- Mahatma Gandhi

1.1. Introduction

Gram (village) panchayats are the backbone of India as the country depends on the villages. India is one of the biggest democracies in the world. The village panchayat provides decentralised governance at the grassroots level and the structure of panchayat enables the development of the village in a democratic way. *Panch* means "five", *ayat* means "assemblies" and panchayat is an assembly of five persons elected by the villagers. From ancient days villages are the central unit of administration. Panchayat is the village administration system and process of governance which signifies the government of a local body restricted within a geographical area. Traditionally, the panchayat in the village settles the disputes arise between the villagers or individuals in a community. India has 4000 years long practice of local self-governance which is very much indigenous and has mention in various literatures and inscriptions (Georgekutty, 2003). Thus, the concept of panchayat or the local self-governance is neither new to India nor borrowed from the Western countries.

Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation has believed that India depends upon the villages for its development. The country can progress productively only when the backwardness of the weaker sections of the society is removed and the economics is reformed. In India the Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST), women and other disadvantaged are considered as the weaker sections. The aim of village panchayat is to protect the weaker sections by a representative belonging to their community, but there was no participation of the weaker sections due to the predominant caste system which existed in the country. To protect and ensure the participation of the weaker sections in the democracy, Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) was framed in 1959. The basic philosophy behind PRIs is to ensure people's

participation in the development programmes which is expected to unleash the arrested process of change and development (Mishra & Singh, 1993). Though the PRIs exist for a long time, it is observed that there are inadequate delegation of powers and lack of financial resources (Harichandran, 1983). In addition, there are insufficient representations of the weaker sections. To provide status and dignity to the weaker sections the bill of the Constitution (Seventy-third Amendment) Act, 1992 was introduced in the Lok Sabha on 16 September 1991, as the Constitution (Seventy-second Amendment) Bill, 1991 (Bill No. 158 of 1991) (Open Access Articles, 2014). The bill has ensured the participation of the weaker sections at the grassroots level democracy (local self-government), which is considered as an instrument of socio-economic transformation. The involvement of people at the grassroots level is the most important means of bringing about socio-economic development. Their participation empowers them and involves them in the decision making process. A country can ensure democracy only if there is participation from all the sections of the society in the governance (Sarma, 2014). Therefore, the panchayat system enables and ensures decentralization of democracy for socio-economic transformation. This chapter discusses the various historical methods of governance system in India with emphasis on the oppression and discrimination faced by SC. Broadly the policy, legislation and programmes that empower the SC people through PRIs are also discussed. Additionally it reveals the Constitutional provisions for participation and empowerment through the local self-governance.

1.2. Panchayat Raj Institutions

In India, Panchayat Raj is the operational form of the concepts of independence, self-governance and participation. This institution gradually has evolved as a natural outcome of people's effort for administering the basic civic services in the village. In the *Vedic* period, panchayat meant a council of five people, which looked after civic administration of concerned villages along with the functions of rural defence and dispute settlement (Roy, 2012).

At the dawn of India's freedom, most of the national leaders felt the need to renew the concept of village panchayat at the village level as a machinery for fighting poverty and empowering people at the grassroot level through democratic

decentralisation. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru felt the rationale for self-government from two different contexts: (a) with a view to extend democracy at the grassroot; (b) in the context of the need for empowerment of the people and ensuring their participation to resolve India's utmost problem of poverty eradication. Today almost all political thinkers believe that PRIs are obvious for people-centric development of any nation.

The Panchayat Raj system is an avowed model for participation of people in development administration at the village level. The system serves as a mechanism to involve people in their own development and train leadership to assume higher responsibilities and serve people efficiently. The prevailing data reveal that in some States PRIs have ahieved tremendous progress and there by have won public confidence. However, in many States, PRIs are faltering. This is due to the difference in their leadership ability, management skill and political outlook (Roy, 2012).

Article 40 of the Constitution of India has enjoined upon the States to organise village panchayats and endow them such necessary power as may enable them to function as units of self-government. Some States have taken initiative, but most of them have failed to deliver expected results due to lack of finance, lack of people's participation, poor representation of weaker sections and absence of any election for long time. To do away with these problems, a radical reform was introduced in the form of the 73rd Amendment. This has emerged as a big step towards filling the gaps in the empowerment of people and village panchayats. It has oultlined the general framework to be followed in every State in organising the Panchayat Raj system.

1.3. Scheduled Caste People in India

The practice of caste system is prevalent in India. There are four *Varnas* viz. *Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya,* and *Sudras.* In addition, there is a fifth category (i.e. *Panchamas*) that entails the people not included in any of the above categories, but who are still Hindus. They are SC and ST. The caste division is especially predominant in the rural areas where the members of the dominant castes control majority of the resources and are responsible for organizing local festivals, religious activities and taking judicial decisions (Bryld, 2010).

The Indian society historically has hierarchical caste system which is a rigid, and occupation-based, in which the relative place of a caste is determined largely by its traditional occupation. In particular, those performing 'unclean' or 'polluting' tasks have been regarded not merely as 'low' castes but as 'untouchables'. The practice of 'untouchability' has resulted in great injustice to the members of the SC because they are discriminated in every respect and denied ownership of productive assets i.e. land, basic rights like education and equality which resulted in perpetuation of their extreme socio-economic deprivation.

The 1931 Census has categorized certain castes as 'Depressed Classes'. Thereafter, the Government of India Act, 1935 has provided for notification of socially disadvantaged castes as 'Scheduled Castes', and a list of such castes are accordingly notified in the Government of India (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1936. The elections to provincial assemblies in British administered areas are held in 1937 under the Government of India Act, 1935 has reserved seats exclusively for SC candidates. The Constitution of India, which came into effect on 26th January 1950, inter-alia, has abolished "untouchability" and has provided several special safeguards for the SC, so as to ensure that they are able to attain equality with the other social groups in the possible time. These safeguards have resulted in the introduction of reservations in the elections to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies and reservation in the government jobs (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, 2012).

Since Independence, the government has taken so many efforts to scale up the social, economic and political position of SC and ST. It has attempted to deal with their problems in three ways. First, there are numerous constitutional and legal provisions aimed at removing discrimination against the SC and to grant them the same rights and privileges as other citizens enjoy. Secondly, there are general development programmes to aid landless agricultural labourers, slum dwellers in towns and schemes for low income groups and special schemes for the SC. Thirdly, the government with the policy of protective discrimination has ensured their representation in Parliament and State Legislatures, their claim to jobs, education, scholarship, grants and loans (Sachchidananda, 2007).

The 2011 Census has recorded nearly 20.14 crore people belonging to SC category in the country. As per the 2001 Census, the number was 16.66 crores. The SC population shows a decadal growth of 20.8 per cent, whereas India's population has grown 17.7 per cent in 2011. There are around 9.79 crores of women among the total SC population. In Nagaland, Lakshwadeep and Andaman and Nicobar islands no SC have been recorded among their population. Though Uttar Pradesh has the largest chunk of the total SC population 20.7% (41,357,608)), Punjab has the largest share of SC in its population (8,860,179) at 31.9 per cent. Himachal Pradesh and West Bengal follow Punjab with 25.2 per cent and 23.5 per cent respectively. In Tamil Nadu, SC account for about 25.5 per cent of the 9,475,475 population (Sivakumar, 2013).

The SC people's control over the resources of the country is marginal, which is less than 5 per cent but the total SC population in India is 16.6 per cent as per Census 2001. Close to half of the SC population lives under the Poverty Line (Navsarjan, 2001) and even more (33.9 per cent) are illiterates (Census of India, 2011). Among the SC, most of them are landless labourers who are engaged in agricultural work (Ravikumar, 2013). As per 2011 Census, the monthly income of 3.31 crore SC households (about 83 per cent of total SC households) is below INR.5000 (Pandathil, 2015). Less than 10 per cent of SC households can afford to safe drinking water, electricity and toilets, which is indicative of their deplorable social condition (Navsarjan, 2001). Moreover, SC are regular victims of the worst crimes and atrocities, far outnumbering other sections of the society. The vast majority of these crimes remain unreported owing to omnipresent fear and crimes that are reported are often ignored by the police personnel or end up languishing in the backlogged court system. According to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), 2011 there were 39,401 cases registered under the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 in India. The numbers increased to 39,512 in 2012 and soared to 46,114 in 2013 (Menon, 2014).

The poverty of SC is a major problem coupled with atrocities against them. The Tendulkar Committee in 2009 has admitted that 37 per cent of the people in India are living below poverty line. The Saxena Committee (2009) has indicated that 50 per cent of the people in India are living below poverty line. Around 80 per cent of SC and ST are living below poverty line in India (Rosario, 2012).

1.4. Local Self-Governance and Mainstreaming of SC community in the Pre-Independence period

The Panchayat Raj system is an old concept of local self-government practiced in India. According to Joshi & Narwani (2011) the historical roots of the local self-government in India can be traced from the ancient past, though its present pattern of urban and rural bodies reflect a distinct impact of the British period. The history of the Panchayat Raj in India can be divided into the following periods from the analytical point of view:

Table 1.1. Period wise development of local self-governance in India

Sl. No.	Periods	Years
1	Vedic Period	1500 BC to 500 BC
2	Epic Period	1000 BC to 600 BC
3	Ancient Period	2700 BC to 1001 AD
4	Medieval Period	1026 AD to 1756 AD
5	British Period	1757 AD to 1947 AD
6	Post-Independence Period	1947 AD to 1993 AD

Source: Joshi & Narwani (2011)

Historically, every village in the country had a Panchayat which was responsible for finding the solutions to the local problems within the village itself. Panchayats or the village councils are as old as India's history and have been a part of tradition. In his book, *Discovery of India (1946),* Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has provided a fairly exhaustive idea about the working of the village panchayats in the past India. Panchayats have vast powers, both executive and judicial and its members are treated with great respect by the King's courtiers and the public. Land was allotted by the panchayats. They have also collected taxes out of agricultural produce and paid the village's share to the Kings. Over and above the Village Panchayats or Village Councils, there was a big panchayat to supervise and intervene, based on need.

Hierarchically the people of SC are at the bottom in Indian social system. They are characterized by two key words 'pollution and poverty'. The stigma of pollution is attached to the groups, presuming their past or present defiling professions with which they eke out their livelihood. The stigma is life-long and cannot be eliminated by any right of expiation. Even though most of them are no longer in the defiling professions, the stigma still continues. Pollution is not just confined to the realm of ritual but it has ramifications in the economic and political fields also. Pollution leads to discrimination. Their interaction with the dominant caste is limited and they are segregated in settlements outside the village, which resulted in their inability to participate in local self-governance (Sachchidananda, 2007).

1.4.1. Vedic Period

The *Rig Veda* and the old *Sanskrit* scriptures mention that during the *Vedic* period the *'Panch-Ayat'* means a group of five persons, which includes some spiritual men selected by the villagers. In India, since the time immemorial, the village has been the unit of administration. The *Vedic* literature has indicated that, each village is self-sufficient and also an autonomous miniature republic. The administration of the village is carried out by a village assembly, headed by a village headman called *Gramani* and advised by a council of elders called *Grama Vridhas* (village veterans). These *Gramani* and council of elders are appointed by the village community and are accountable to village administration. Its duty is to look after village defence, village disputes, collecting taxes for the States and works for public utility (Belli, 2008).

In Indian society, the people of Vedic period have strictly followed the *Varna* system. This system has placed many disadvantages to the lower sections i.e. the present SC community. They are unable to participate in local self-governance as they are placed in the bottom of social hierarchy and they are also isolated from main streams.

1.4.2. Epic Era

The study of *Ramayana* indicates that the administration is divided into two parts – *'Pur'* and *'Janpad'* or city and village. Villages are *'Janpad'* and the village people were called the *'Janpada'*. The mention of *'Gram', 'Maha Gram'* and *'Ghosh'* (village, big village and group of villages) are found in the *Ramayana*.

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In the *Ramcharit-Manas* by Tulsidas, it is found that the welfare of people is the main object of the ruler. The system of governance is divided into the rule of the King *(Raj-Tantra),* the rule of the people *(Praja-Tantra)* and the rule of the wise men *(Vidvat-Tantra)* or educated and knowledgeable persons. In the whole of the State, there was a caste panchayat and one person elected by the caste panchayat was the member of the King's council of Ministers. Thus, King took advice of all the caste representatives who are also ministers.

The word self-government finds ample expression in *'Shanti Parva'* of *Mahabharata* and *Manu Smriti* as well as in Kautilya's *Arthashastra* (350-275 BCE). *'Sabha'* and *'Samiti'* has played a part in controlling the decisions of the King. As per the *Mahabharata,* over and above the village, there are units of 10, 20, 100 and 1,000 village groups. *'Gramik'* was the chief official of the village. *'Dashap'* was the chief of ten villages. *'Vinshya Adhipati', 'Shat Gram Adhyaksha'* and *'Sahasra Gram Pati'* were the chiefs of 20, 100 and 1,000 villages respectively. The lower village head would give information about special events to the higher village head. They used to collect local taxes and were responsible for protection of their villages. There were small and big towns. There was also *'Guptachar'* Criminal Investigation Department (CID) system in towns to search for the offenders. The village heads also protected people against the cruelty of the King. *'Sabha Parva'* of the *Mahabharata* mentions the village panchayats but it is not clear whether the *Panchas* were elected by the people or nominated by the Kings.

1.4.3. Ancient Period

The village administration during the Mauryan and Gupta period was carried out by the Sabha (Assembly), village officials of different grades *(Sthanikas)* and the veterinary doctor *(Anikastha).* The Sabha was expected to debate all matters relating to the village and frame the common rules for the community. The Indian people lived independently in this self-governed village republic (Belli, 2008). During the reign of Chandragupta Maurya, the policy of decentralization of powers was adopted. The village was the smallest unit of governance. A person elected by the people of the village was the *'Gramik'* (head of village).

In South India, the *'Satvahan'* Kingdom existed in the 1st century B.C. There were local bodies for governance in the cities as well as in the villages. The *'Chola'* rulers also developed self-governance in the villages. In ancient period, there was no participation of socially disadvantaged group i.e. present SC people.

1.4.4. Panchayat Raj System in Cholas' Dynasty (Tamil Nadu)

Although the system of local self-government in this country was the creation of the British, the conception of local self-government was not foreign but it was indigenous. During the times of Pandyas and the Pallavas in the eighth and the early ninth century, a system of local self-government existed. The inscriptions of Parantaka I of Chola dynasty from Uttaramerur in the Chinglepet District of Tamil Nadu describes a detailed account of local government that has existed in that region.

The inscriptions of *Vaikuntaperumal* temple in Uttaramerur exhibits *Kudavolai* system which was very notable and unique feature of the village administration of the Cholas. There were 30 wards in each village. A representative for each ward was elected through *Kudavolai* system. The names of the contestants from whom one could be chosen were written on the palm leaves. These palm leaves were put into a pot and shuffled. A small boy was asked to pick up the palm leaves one by one from the pot. The persons whose name written in the tickets picked up by the boy were declared elected. In that manner, the thirty members for thirty wards were elected. This kind of peculiar election system was called *Kudavolai*. Out of the thirty elected members, twelve members were appointed to the annual committee, twelve members were appointed as the members of the garden committee and six members to the tank committee. Members of the standing committee and a gold committee were also elected (Voters Association of India, 2015). The qualifications of the members are given in 1.2.

Qualifications of the Members of Local Self-Governance in Cholas' Dynasty

Table 1.2. Qualification of the members

Qualifications of Members	Disqualifications of Members
1. A person chosen through *Kudavolai* system must be of age above 35 and below 70 years. 2. The person should possess a minimum of one *Veli* land (6.17 acre) and a house built in a taxable land on the person's own site. 3. The person should have knowledge and skill to teach *Vedas* and *Mantras*.	1. If the members does not render proper accounts at the end of a year, he is disqualified from contesting the elections throughout his life. 2. The elected members suffer disqualification, when he accepts bribes. 3. Misappropriated others property. 4. Committed incest or acted against public interest. 5. The person who has killed Brahmins or women or cow or children is disqualified. 6. Thieves, drunkards and people who have undergone punishments are also disqualified from contesting election in *Kudavolai* system. If one has been proved corrupt during their tenure, he and his family members and even his blood relatives cannot contest in the elections for next seven generations. 7. Who has extra marital affairs.

During the rule of Chola, the self-governance system was in proper manner. But those who had the land, knowledge and skill to teach *Vedas* and *Mantras* were only eligible to contest in the elections. In Indian society SC people did not have the land rights and they were not allowed to study the *Vedas* and *Mantras* because they were *Panchamas* (not included in *Varna* system). The people of SC community accepted beef as their food. As they killed cows they are disqualified from contesting the election as per the norms. Thus, during the Chola period the SC community was discriminated and isolated and never permitted to participate in local self-governance system.

1.4.5. Medieval Period

During the Sultanate period, the Sultans of Delhi knew that it would be impracticable to govern a vast country like India from the centre directly. Hence, they divided their Kingdom into provinces called *'Vilayat', 'Amir'* or *'Vali'. Vali* was the head of a province. Management of finance, collection of taxes and selection of judicial officers were under their charge. For governance of a village, there were three important officials – *Mukkadam* for administration, *Patwari* for collection of revenues and *Choundhrie* for decision on disputes with the help of the *Panch.* The villages had sufficient powers as regards self-governance in their territory. Marathas also constituted local self-government institutions in rural and urban areas during the rule of the *Peshwas* in the Maharashtra area. Even in the period of Sultan the socially disadvantaged group (i.e. SC) was not given the rights because of Varna system followed by the Sultans.

1.4.6. British Period

The self-governance was not the objective of the British government. Their main objective was the protection of imperial interests. It was only with such an object that the powers were given at the local level. More attention was paid to urban administration rather than rural areas.

According to Maheshwari (1968), the dawn of local government could be presumed from 1687, when the Madras City Corporation was established. The subsequent history is detailed below:

1. 1687-1881: Local government was established to share the burden of resources of the central and provincial governments.

2. 1882-1919: Local government was seen as local self-government.

3. 1920-1937: Local government was established in the provinces and people's representatives were controlling the provincial administration also.

4. 1938-1947: Local government was in the State of rejuvenation and reconstruction.

1687-1881

In 1687, the Madras City Corporation was made responsible for the public services. Besides collection of taxes, civil and criminal matters were also dealt with. In 1726, Bombay and Calcutta Municipal bodies were established. In 1773, under the Regulating Act, the Justice of Peace was appointed in presidency towns. They supervised health and sanitation in these cities. Sir Charles Metcalfe, the Governor-General of India (1835-36) called the Indian village communities "the little republics". In 1863, the Calcutta City Corporation was formed. The year 1870 was a landmark when Lord Mayo passed a resolution suggesting the decentralization of powers and the necessity of associating Indians in administration. He suggested the strengthening of the municipal bodies and making them more powerful. Representation based on election was implemented only in Madhya Pradesh. The 1880 Famine Commission also indicated the necessity of the local bodies at the village level for famine relief works.

1882-1919

Lord Ripon became the Viceroy of India in 1880. The Local Self-government Resolution, 1882 was the most important act of his tenure. Since the political education of the people starts at the local level, Lord Ripon wanted to develop municipal bodies. Local boards were established in rural areas. Districts and Tehsils were formed. Functions and sources of revenue were allotted to such local bodies. The role of the government was only to guide them rather than controlling them. The Chairperson of the local boards was elected by the members themselves. To stimulate the candidature

courtesy titles of *'Rai Bahadur'* and *'Rai Saheb'* were allowed to Indian members during their term of services in local bodies.

Royal Commission

The Royal Commission (1909) reported on decentralization that paucity of funds and caste and religious disputes were the main obstacles in the effective functioning of local bodies.

Montague-Chelmsford Report

In 1918, the Montague-Chelmsford report suggested that the local boards should be made representative bodies. The State intervention should be minimum. They should learn from their mistakes. The suggestions of the Royal Commission were incorporated in 1918 with the proposed scheme of diarchy. The municipalities were vested with more powers to impose taxes. The Village Panchayat Act was also passed and panchayats became a legal body.

1920-1937

According to Montague-Chelmsford scheme the PRIs did not become truly democratic and vibrant instruments of local self-government at the level of villages, due to the organizational and fiscal constraints. In 1930, the evaluation of the implementation of self-government was done by the Simon Commission. It reported that except Uttar Pradesh, Bengal and Madras, the Commission did not find any progress in the rural areas. The condition of the local bodies deteriorated between 1919 and 1930. Hence, Simon Commission suggested to increase the control of the State over the local bodies. During the period between 1920 and 1937, the local boards were elected bodies, Chairpersons were non-official persons and more administrative and financial powers had been given to local bodies.

1937-1947

The Government of India Act, 1935 gave powers to the provincial governments. Popular elected governments in the provinces got provincial autonomy and they were duty bounded to enact legislation for further democratization of the local self-government institutions, including the village panchayats. Popular governments could

arrange more finances. Separation between provincial taxes and local taxes was ended. In almost all the provinces, local bodies were given more functions. Powers to impose taxes were reduced. Thus, the local bodies were organized properly during the British period, though during the Second World War in 1939, the popular government vacated the office but the position of the local self-government institutions remained unchanged till August 1947 when the country attained Independence.

Thus, the spirit of democratic decentralization at the village level was existent right since the ancient period. It became more and more organized and took proper shape by the time India became Independent in 1947.

During the British colonial, there was no SC representation in the local self-governance system as the British government mainly focused on collecting revenue from India. The upper castes were educated, having the agricultural land and were paying tax. The British government did not concentrate on the socially disadvantaged group (i.e. Scheduled Caste) as they were illiterate and did not have resources and basic rights.

1.5. Local Self-Governance and Mainstreaming of SC community in the Post-Independence period

The Community Development Programme (CDP) was introduced on 2nd October, 1952 for the simultaneous social, cultural, economic and political development of rural society through community efforts. It was hoped that the programme would bring about a silent revolution in rural society by awakening the dormant forces of progress but it did not yield expected result. This happened because it was implemented by the District administration with the help of development bureaucracy and technocracy. Consequently, it could not become people's programme (Singh & Singh, 2011).

1.5.1. Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1957)

The failure of Community Development Programme led to the setting up of a Committee headed by Balwant Rai Mehta, the former Chief Minister of the State of Gujarat. It explored the cause of its failure, suggested the remedial measures, examined the usefulness of the existing local self-government institutions and suggested an alternate system of rural governance. The committee felt that the programme did not

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succeed owing to lack of people's participation in it. It also felt that the existing institutions of rural local self-government such as the village panchayats and the District Boards could not ensure the same. It suggested a scheme of democratic decentralization envisioning the creation of democratically elected and organically linked Village Panchayat Committee at the Block level, and the District Council at the District level. It was also of the view that the village panchayat was too small and the District was too large a unit for the devolution of a function of developmental planning. Therefore, this task was assigned to the Panchayat Committee because the Block had an optimum size. It was neither as small as village nor as large as the District. Above all, the very word Block was associated in the psyche of rural masses with rural development and it also had the requisite machinery comprising of the Block Development Officers, the Extension Officers and the Gram Sewaks (Village Level Workers) for rural development. Thus, the Panchayat Committee was given the key role in the development planning and the village panchayat was to help it in implementing its plans. Whereas the District Council was to play the role of supervision, advice and coordination over the Panchayat Committee and Village Panchayats (Chronicle, 2012)

Balwant Rai Mehta Committee has laid down the following five fundamental principles which underline the spirit of democratic decentralization.

- There should be a three tiered structure of local self-government bodies from the village to the District level and these bodies should be linked together.

- There should be a genuine transfer of power and responsibilities to these bodies which enable them to discharge their responsibilities.

- Adequate resources should be transferred to these bodies which enable them to discharge their responsibilities.

- All welfare and development schemes and programmes at all the three levels should be channelled through these bodies only and

- The three tier system should facilitate further devolution and disposal of power and responsibility in future.

1.5.2. Inauguration of Panchayat Raj

As a result of the implementation of the recommendations of Balwant Rai Mehta Committee, the scheme of democratic decentralization, popularly known as the Panchayat Raj was inaugurated at Nagaur in Rajasthan by the then Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on October 2, 1959 (Chronicle, 2012).

It was the discretion of States to accept and act upon the recommendations of the Committee based on the situation. So, only a few States established PRIs. But no uniform structure could be evolved on the basis of these recommendations throughout India. Even panchayats played a marginal role in the implementation of development schemes mainly due to resistance of bureaucracy. Further, many factors such as lack of resources, lack of political support, bureaucratic apathy and the domination of rural elite lead to the degeneration of PRIs (Deshpande & D' Souza, 2009).

Many States in India established Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) in 1959 with the objective of entrusting authority and responsibility to rural people. A decade after these institutions were setup, when the initial enthusiasm started fading away, the Government of India appointed the Ashok Mehta Committee in 1977 for suggesting methods of reviving the Panchayat Raj system. The committee suggested the following important changes (Belli, 2008).

Balwant Rai Mehta committee recommended three tier system of self-governance and this committee found the lack of people's participation in PRIs. This committee was not concerned about the participation of SC people in PRIs.

1.5.3. Ashok Mehta Committee (1977)

There was slow progress of PRIs during 1960s and it declined in the early seventies for various reasons. Consequently, another Committee was appointed under the Chairmanship of Ashok Mehta to suggest measures for revitalising the PRIs (Deshpande & D' Souza, 2009).

- The committee recommended that development schemes should be implemented through PRIs.

- The committee suggested two-tier model at District and Mandal (cluster of villages) level covering a population of 15,000 to 20,000. It recommended the abolition of the Block as an administrative unit altogether. However, the idea of a two-tier system was rejected by the Chief Ministers' Conference in 1979 and the three-tier system continued.

- Seats may be reserved for two women, SC and ST depending on the size of the population.

- It recommended open participation of political parties in panchayat elections.

- The Committee also suggested to draft a Bill for amending the Constitution for establishing panchayats as a necessary extension of democracy.

After the Independence, Ashok Mehta Committee was the first Committee to recommend reservation for SC and ST in local self-governance. Thirty years after the independence, the government had considered the SC people's participation in self-governance.

1.5.4. Rapid Progress in the Late 1980s

The development process of Panchayat Raj system gained momentum in the late 1980s due to various factors. The failure of the 'top-to-down' approach to solve problems of the rural poor was increasingly recognized by many State governments, development agencies and NGOs over the decades since 1970s. This finally forced policy-makers and development practitioners to seek alternative strategies based on the principles of equity, participation and bottom-up planning. It was also a period when Centre-State relation was an important issue with rising regional aspirations and demand for greater federal polity. Equally, there was an attempt on the part of the Centre to bypass the States and route funds directly to panchayats.

It was also observed that only few benefits reach the people through the bureaucratic filters. So, the Panchayat Raj was considered as a mechanism to bypass the power and benefits to the grassroots. The top–to–down model of development was losing sheen in this light and adoption of grassroots and bottom-up approach in planning and development became necessary. Against this background, the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and his government made Panchayat Raj as the main agenda. All

this accelerated the process leading to the emergence of Panchayat Raj system (Deshpande & D' Souza, 2009).

1.5.5. C.H. Hanumanth Rao Team (1982)

The Planning Commission wanted effective participation of the people through the PRIs in rural development so that the plans were more responsive to people's needs and aspirations and there would be a coordinated and accelerated progress. The Planning Commission experts, under the leadership of Dr. C.H. Hanumanth Rao, were deputed to study as how to prepare plans at the District level. He suggested that decentralization of planning should take place. Development plans had remained centralized, hence, participation of local people had been lacking. People should be associated right from the plan formulation stage.

In 1984, the Prime Minister wrote to all the State Chief Ministers to take action without further delay to hold overdue elections to the PRIs.

1.5.6. G.V.K. Rao Committee (1985)

The G.V.K. Rao Committee was constituted in 1985 for reviewing the administrative mechanisms for implementation of developmental programmes. The committee recommended making the Districts as the basic unit of policy making and program implementation. Importantly, it emphasized the necessity of holding regular elections to the panchayats (Deshpande & D' Souza, 2009).

1.5.7. Laxmi Mal Singhvi Committee (1986)

The Laxmi Mal Singhvi Committee was formed in 1986 for reviewing the functioning of PRIs.

- It recommended the reorganization of villages for creating viable village panchayats.

- The committee strongly recommended that greater financial resources be made available to these institutions.

- It opined that the Gram Sabha should be considered as the base of a decentralized democracy and PRIs be viewed as institutions of self-governance

which would actually facilitate participation of people in the process of planning and development.

- Most importantly, it recommended that local self-government should be Constitutionally recognized, protected and preserved by the inclusion of a new chapter in the Constitution. The 73rd Amendment included the Gram Sabha as the basis of the three-tier Panchayat Raj (Deshpande & D' Souza, 2009).

The committee recommended that PRIs are to be constitutionally proclaimed as a three tier government by providing a new chapter in the Constitution to define their powers, functions, free and fair elections through the Election Commission, appointment of Financial Commission by the Union government under the Constitution. All the rural development programmes were entrusted to the PRIs by amending VII Schedule of the Constitution.

1.5.8. Workshops of Collectors (1987-88) and Conferences of Panchayat Raj Leaders

The Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms of the Indian Government organized a number of workshops at Bhopal, Hyderabad, Imphal, Jaipur and Coimbatore where the Collectors of many Districts discussed the subjects to be entrusted to Panchayat Raj at the District level. The importance of the PRIs was recognized for expediting development programmes in rural areas and in the interest of responsive administration. The workshops recommended that the list of functions of the PRIs should be incorporated in the Constitution of India. Functions like agriculture, animal husbandry, minor irrigation, social welfare, health, drinking water and social forestry were suggested to be included in the list of the functions to be delegated to the PRIs and all agreed on revamping the Panchayat Raj system.

Conferences of Panchayat Raj leaders, including women, were also organized to know their views about the reorganization and strengthening of Panchayat Raj. The demands for de-bureaucratization of the control of Panchayat Raj as well as for devolution of more powers and resources were the focal issues in the conferences.

As a result it was decided to amend the Constitution so as to provide protection to Panchayat Raj against negligence or arbitrary action by the State governments.

1.5.9. Sarkharia Commission (1988)

The Commission gave recommendations as (i) it had emphasized on Centre-State relations thus the local bodies should be strengthened in respect of the resources and administrative matters (ii) it also stressed the need for conducting periodical elections to the local bodies being made mandatory (iii) it suggested for the creation of a separate machinery to allocate resources among various Districts (Belli, 2008).

1.5.10. P.K. Thungan Committee (1988)

In 1988, a sub-committee of the Ministry of Rural Development was constituted under the Chairmanship of P.K. Thungon. It suggested Constitutional recognition for Panchayats. Following the suggestion, 64th Constitutional Amendment Bill was introduced in the Parliment in 1989. The draft was not passed owing to the growing doubts among the opposition parties and the State governments (Deshpande and D'Souza, 2009).

This Committee recommended regular elections for panchayats and according Constitutional status to the PRIs and making the District Council (Zila Parishad) as the agency of planning and development.

1.5.11. The 64th Constitutional Amendment Bill, 1989

Rajiv Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, decided to 'revitalize' the PRIs. In fact, he decided to do so after realizing that only 15 paisa out of one rupee for rural development programmes was able to reach the beneficiaries. Moreover, he was keen to create an inclusive system of Panchayat Raj for inclusive development. Hence, he wanted reservations for the women, the SC and ST in PRIs. However, the 64th Amendment Bill that he moved in Lok Sabha in 1989 failed to get the requisite two-third majority in Rajya Sabha. His vision was later on institutionalized by P.V. Narshima Rao, the then Prime Minister of India in 1992 by building consensus in favour of the 72nd Constitutional Amendment Bill which became 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1993.

1.5.12. Harlal Singh Kharra Committee (1990)

In Rajasthan, a committee was constituted under the Chairmanship of the Panchayat Minister to study Panchayat Raj in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, etc., and suggested measures for strengthening Panchayat Raj in the State. The main recommendations of the Committee were:

1. Per capita grant-in-aid to the panchayats be increased from INR.4 to INR.20.

2. The power of the panchayat to impose penalty should be increased from INR.50 to INR.200 and the rate of the fees also should be revised.

3. Services such as education, ayurveda, health, hand pumps, etc., which cater to the needs of rural people, should be brought under the administrative control of the PRIs.

4. The District Rural Development Agency and the District Council should be amalgamated into one agency.

As the result of the recommendations of various such Committees and the tempo generated, the Central Government decided to give a Constitutional status to the PRIs and passed the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act in 1993 to provide uniformity in the Panchayat Raj system throughout India. Reservation to women, SC and ST was also guaranteed by the Indian Constitution.

Though most of the State governments amended their Panchayat Raj Acts in 1993 and 1994, things had mostly remained on paper. Political will is still lacking. Powers, staff and resources to the PRIs have hardly been transferred. The PRIs still remain more an agency of development rather than institutions of self-government.

1.5.13. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1993

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment was the fruition of the efforts and process for institutionalising and providing Constitutional status to the Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs). A vastly debated and delayed Panchayat Raj Bill was reintroduced in the Parliament as the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Bill. It was passed by the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha with near unanimity on the 22nd and 23rd December, 1992 respectively. This Bill was ratified by Seventeen State Assemblies in 1993 and came

into force as '73rd Constitutional Amendment Act' from 24th April, 1993. The Act provides Constitutional status to the Panchayats and gives it uniformity by making the three tier system a permanent feature. Panchayat Raj was included in Article 243 of the Indian Constitution after the 73rd Amendment.

The provisions of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act 1992 aimed at the empowerment of people at the grassroots and ensure that not only rural elites but also weaker sections of the society, particularly women, SC and ST were represented in the panchayat bodies. It aimed at ensuring that the fruits of development percolate down to target beneficiaries at the grassroots. This enactment seemed to be an inauguration of a wholly new chapter of Panchayat Raj in India.

The key features of the Act are as follows:

- Establishment of a uniform three-tier panchayat structure.

- Constitution of a Gram Sabha in each village exercising such powers and performing such functions at the village level as the legislature of a State may be provided by law.

- Direct election of panchayat members. The election of the Chairperson at the Intermediate and District level will be through indirect elections and the mode of election of the Chairperson of the village panchayats has been left to the respective States.

- Not less than one-third of seats to be reserved for women and the posts are on a rotational basis.

- Seats are reserved for women, SC and ST at all levels according to their population at each level.

- Provision of uniform five-year term to the panchayats.

- Mandatory holding of elections within six months of the date of dissolution in case of dissolution or supercession.

- The State legislatures to confer on the panchayats such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-governance.

- Mandatory Constitution of a State Election Commission to ensure free, fair and time bound elections to the panchayats.

- Mandatory Constitution of a State Finance Commission to strengthen PRIs financially.

A revolutionary change in the role of the PRIs was brought by this Constitutional Act which established a full-fledged Panchayat Raj system. The significance of this amendment rests in the fact that it has accorded legal status to the panchayat as a third-tier of government, the other two being the Central and the State governments. Finally, it assumes significance in terms of the range of subjects that have been brought under the purview of panchayat. The 73rd Amendment mentions that the State Legislature may, by law, endow the PRIs with powers and responsibilities at the appropriate level with respect to preparation and implementation of plans for economic development and social justice, as may be entrusted to them, including those in relation to matters listed in the 'Eleventh Schedule' (Article 243G). The Eleventh Schedule thus forms an important reference point for the kind of functions envisaged for panchayats under the Constitution. The Eleventh Schedule of the Act gives a list of 29 subjects on which the Panchayat may act.

1.5.14. Tamil Nadu Panchayat Raj Act, 1994

The history of the local self-governance in Tamil Nadu can be traced back to the Uthiramerur edicts in Kancheepuram District, which bear evidence to the well established local self-governance during Chola Empire. It is a system of democracy in monarchy where the members of the Village Council are elected through a process of secret ballot called *'Kudavolai System'* and these Councils have functioned as self-contained economic and administrative entities. It is also interesting to note that eligibility criteria and norms for disqualification had been prescribed for those who have contested for the Village Council.

The advent of the British rule has shattered the basic structure of the local self-governance. However, the British has presented a modified concept of local self-governance to suit its colonial rule.

Article 40 in Part-IV of the Indian Constitution provides for the organization and endowment of powers to the Panchayats. The Balwant Rai Mehta Committee appointed by Government of India has submitted its report in January 1957 and has recommended the establishment of democratic decentralization which finally come to be known as Panchayat Raj Institutions.

The Government of Madras has enacted Madras Panchayats Act, 1958 and Madras District Development Council Act with the following major features:

a) Creation of Panchayat Unions coterminous with Development Blocks.

b) Abolition of District Boards.

c) Creation of District Development Council to play an advisory role.

d) Entrustment of development and social welfare functions to Village Panchayats and Panchayat Unions. However, the enactments deleted certain powers of Village Panchayats like judicial powers.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act came into effect from April 1993. It added a new dimension to the existence of local self-governance. Accordingly, the Government of Tamil Nadu enacted Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act, 1994 (Tamil Nadu Act 21 of 1994) which came into force on 22nd April, 1994. It brought in a number of changes in the Tamil Nadu Panchayat Raj structure:

1. Three tier systems have come into existence.

2. Members of the three-tiers of Rural Local Bodies and Village Panchayat Presidents are directly elected whereas the Chairpersons of Panchayat Union Councils and District Panchayats are elected from among the elected ward members.

3. All the three tiers of panchayats are independent of each other and the Village Panchayat Presidents are not members in the Panchayat Union Council.

4. Reservation of seats and offices for the SC and ST in proportion to their population has been made and one-third of the total number of seats and offices is reserved for women.

5. The rotation of offices in all three-tiers will be once in 10 years.

6. Election shall be conducted within 6 months from the date of occurrence of any vacancy and the tenure is fixed as 5 years for all the members and Chairpersons.

7. Tamil Nadu State Election Commission was constituted. State Finance Commission is being constituted quinquennially.

Grama Sabha

All the registered voters of a village panchayat constitute Grama Sabha which is provided with specific powers and functions. It shall statutorily be conducted in such a way that the intervening period between two Grama Sabhas shall not exceed a period of 6 months. However, the Government of Tamil Nadu has made it mandatory to convene Grama Sabha a minimum number of four times (i.e. on 26th January, 1st May, 15th August and 2nd October) of every calendar year. Besides, the Grama Sabha can be convened as and when the necessity arises (Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department, 2012).

The Grama Sabha performs the following functions:

- Approves the Village Development Plan.

- Approves the Village Panchayat Budget.

- Approves the Audit Report.

- Reviews the progress of scheme implementation.

- Approves the list of beneficiaries, intended to be benefitted under various schemes.

- Promotes communal and social harmony among various groups of people.

1.5.15. Tamil Nadu Panchayat Raj Elections, 2011

The first Panchayat Raj election was held to all the Rural Local Bodies in October 1996, after the enactment of Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act in April, 1994. The second election to the Local Bodies was conducted during October, 2001. The third and the forth elections were conducted in October, 2006 and October 2011 respectively.

1.5.16. Reservation of Seats and Offices and Rotation

Reservation is an important instrument of social justice (Srinivasvaradan, 1992). It is a measure to uplift the 'excluded sections' of society by giving adequate representation to them in the political institutions at the grassroots. The implementation of this policy has resulted in a large number of SC getting elected to the rural local bodies. Article 243D provides that in every panchayat, seats will be reserved for the SC and ST in accordance with their population in the village or panchayat concerned. Moreover one-third of the seats in each level shall be reserved for women. The office of the Chairperson in the panchayats at the three levels shall be reserved for women, SC and ST in such a manner as the legislatures of each State may, by law, provide. But the number of offices of Chairpersons reserved for the SC and ST shall be in the same proportion to the total number of such offices in the panchayats at each level in proportion the total population of SC and ST in the State. However, not less than one-third of the total number of the offices of Chairperson in the panchayat at each level shall be reserved for women (Mathur, 2009).

Table 1.3. Reservations of Offices and Seats for Women, SC and ST for Local Body Elections, 2011

Category of Reservation	Total No. of office/seats	Reserved for women		Reserved for SC (General & Women)		Reserved for ST (General & Women)	
Village Panchayat Presidents	12,524	4,289	34%	3,136	25%	156	1%

Source: Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department, Government of Tamil Nadu (2012)

1.6. Empowerment of Scheduled Caste People

Empowerment is defined as the giving or delegation of power or authority; authorization; the giving of ability; enablement or permission (Lotich, 2010). Empowerment refers to creating capacities of the individuals or groups to participate actively in their own welfare (Joseph, 2010). Empowered people have freedom of choice and action, which in turn enables them to influence the course of their lives and the decisions which affect them (World Bank, 2011). Empowerment represents hopes and dreams of the SC community for a social environment free of inequalities and disfavouring them in different spheres of life.

Different dimensions of Empowerment

Empowerment is multi-dimensional in the sense that it occurs within social, economic, political and cultural spheres. These dimensions do not necessarily move together at the same route or even in the same direction, because the Indian society is divided into various forms of caste, class and religion. The roots of the caste system go back to the ancient Vedas dividing people on the basis of *Varna.* The caste system has brought many social evils in the country. In India, many villages are separated by caste and people of SC are not permitted to cross the line dividing them from the dominant castes. They are not allowed to use the same wells or to drink in the same tea stalls like dominant castes. They often do not have the basic facilities. They were denied access to better education, housing and medical facilities. They are restricted to certain polluting occupations viz. manual scavenger, leather works etc., (Vikaspedia, 2015).

Figure 1.1. Different dimensions of empowerment

Social Empowerment

The social empowerment focus on building up social capabilities, social status and opportunities to participate in all social events and celebrations for people those who are denied access and experiencing social disability. The origin of marginalization in Indian context is grounded in the social structure of Indian society, where discrimination based on caste, class, religion and gender is widespread. The concept of 'purity' and 'pollution' has dictated the social standings of different castes and sexes. Men and women are deemed to be of unequal moral worth. The *'Varna'* and the social hierarchy is underpinned by a legal order in which privileges and disabilities are siphoned according to caste and gender. Social empowerment is aimed at social change from a hierarchical to a democratic type of society where the equal rights of all individuals are recognized and respected. It is about transforming the existing social structure by providing better education, healthcare system, employment opportunities and social security measures to those people who are deprived of these benefits (Joseph, 2010).

Economic Empowerment

Economic empowerment is the process by which better economic growth and access to economic resources are generated and enhanced. An economically backward society lacks all those dynamic qualities that support and sustain economic growth. This is evident in the marginalized sections of the society who are derived ownership of economic resources. The society and social groups play a vital role in economic development, but the State has a key role as the most effective and suitable agency of sustained economic development. It acts as the biggest agency managing and mobilizing resources including infrastructural and other facilities for promoting and sustaining growth in the economic realm. However, even the State-sponsored, supported and supervised process of development has peripherally reduced the inequality, exploitation and oppression that have played havoc in the lives of marginalized people for centuries. This situation is a clarion call for the empowerment of the SC within the framework of democratic process, as a remedy for them to get their due share in the public economic resources (Joseph, 2010).

Political Empowerment

Political empowerment equips the people with political resources and enables them to actively participate in shaping and sharing of power. It increases the potential of the people to effectively control and influence the decision-making process of the States. The crux of empowerment is the political dimension which highlights the concept of power. Empowerment conceived as a process, endows individuals, groups and communities with power. The people acquire the capacity to make free choices and transform the choices into desired actions or outcomes. With respect to the empowerment of SC people, their political mobilization has been the most effective way to solve their socio-economic, educational and other backwardness. They should become politically organized as to exercise their franchise for the empowerment of the community. The State has to empower them through reservation of seats in Parliament and State Legislatures as well as in the local bodies. The decentralization of power to PRIs by the 73rd Amendment is counted as an attempt to politically empower the people at the grass root level especially the SC and ST people (Joseph, 2010).

Cultural Empowerment

Culture is described as the organic whole of ideas, beliefs, values and goals which condition the thinking and acting of a community. Culture finds conceptual expression in ethics, philosophy and law, symbolic expression in art, literature, myth and cult. It is the normative consciousness of a community inherited from the past and transmitted, with or without modification, to the next generations. Cultural empowerment is a process which strives to protect and reconstruct the cultural identity of the people. Viewed from a subaltern perspective, cultural empowerment of the SC is a herculean task. The dominant culture is governed by economic and political elites, whereas the subaltern culture is a counter-cultural movement and a protest culture. It represents the antagonism of the SC against the dominant class structures and their struggle to assert equality and human dignity. Empowerment of the marginalized groups entails sincere pursuits for perspective cognition and analysis of the composite processes of new identity formation, concretization of these groups to demolish the structure of subordination imposed on them and finally sharing of power with the powerless (Joseph, 2010).

1.7. Empowerment through participation in Local Self-Governance

Empowerment of SC people is essentially the process of upliftment of economic, social and political status in the society. It involves the building up of a society wherein the people of SC can breathe without the fear of oppression, exploitation, apprehension, discrimination and the general feeling of persecution which goes with being an SC in a traditionally dominated structure. One tactic to empower the SC is empowering them through legislation for ensuring participation in political decision making.

Such an approach provides the SC people with a Constitutional platform to stand up against to the dominating communities, to raise their voice on issues concerning SC oppression, subjugation and other related issues and thus in effect, providing them with an identity in an orthodox higher class dominated socio-political set-up, in addition providing a much needed forum to seek redressed of problems directly affecting them.

Participation refers to the active engagement of individuals or group in all the process and activities relating to them such as social system, governance and decision making. Historically the SC people are denied access to resources and power due to lack of participation in all the development process relating to them.

Participation is a voluntary activity of the member of a society by which they take part in decision-making, involving in developmental administration at different levels of government. But in Panchayat Raj, the upper castes cannot accept the idea of being under 'low' caste leaders. Therefore, the so-called dominant community has selected the Panchayat Presidents from SC for name sake. The Vice-President and other members of the dominant caste has taken all the powers and responsibilities from SC Panchayat Presidents. The SC Panchayat Presidents is unable to convene even a meeting due to lack of educational qualifications. In such a situation, the SC Panchayat Presidents are unable to do anything at their panchayat level. The SC Panchayat Presidents cannot raise their voice against the dominant caste. Even the government officials have no concern on them. The government officials often visit the villages or panchayat offices but they do not communicate with local SC Panchayat Presidents. Instead, the official communications are done only with dominant caste Vice-Presidents

and other members of the panchayats (Mangubhai, J., Irudayam, S. A., & Sydenham, E, 2012).

The Panchayat Presidents from SC communities have been denied access to participate in their development process. The participation and protection of the individuals and the communities will make the SC empowered holistically. The current systems and processes allow such provisions, but the caste machinery society dominates them in the governance process. The present study tries to evaluate the participation and empowerment of SC Panchayat Presidents in a scientific and empirical manner.

1.8. Status of Scheduled Caste People in Tamil Nadu

The caste based social hierarchy is prevalent in India and Tamil Nadu and the people at the bottom of this structure are generally identified as Dalits (i.e. SC). Dalits have been called or mentioned as Oppressed, Downtrodden, Panchamas, Harijans and Untouchables in the Hindutva expressions (Murugappan & Jesi, 2014). In Tamil Nadu there are 32 Districts, 80 Revenue Divisions, 269 Taluks, 1,186 Firkas, 16,682 Revenue Villages (Revenue Department, 2015) and 12, 524 Village Panchayats divided for administrative purposes (Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department, 2014). Historically, the landscape in Tamil Nadu is divided into the *Oor* (dominant caste villages) and *Cheri* (SC villages). Inside these villages the SC people are segregated and are made to live in the *Cheri.* Throughout India this division invariably exists and functions without any difference or difficulty.

According to the Census of India in 2011, there are 7,21,38,958 people are living in Tamil Nadu and 1,44,38,445 people belong to SC. In the last ten years the SC population has increased by 26 lakhs. Viluppuram District has the highest SC population in Tamil Nadu and accounts to 10,15,716. The lowest number of the SC people (74249) lives in Kanniyakumari District. In Tamil Nadu, 50 per cent of the SC population lives in villages, 20 per cent in urban areas and 51 per cent are unemployed (Murugappan & Jesi, 2014).

The Dravidian political parties, which came into existence with the objective of achieving social equality, have been in power for more than four decades in Tamil Nadu, yet caste-based discrimination against the SC has remained as a fact of life in the Southern States. Across India, the SC people have adopted an approach of "educate, organize and agitate" and have sought to participate in Parliamentary democracy by occupying positions in democratic decision-making structures wherever opportunities arise. Since 1990, the SC people have increasingly agitating against caste oppression. In this period, Tamil Nadu has witnessed a surge of violence against the SC (Palanithurai, 2013).

The new Panchayat Raj Act of Tamil Nadu, 1994 provides the SC community the opportunity to enter the portals of power acquire critical mass at the grass-root governance and promote social justice. However, the dominant caste groups have found their own ways to capture and preserve power. One strategy is to sponsor the SC to participate in local bodies as candidates of the local communities. This has prevented the entry of more qualified SC in the local governance structures. Yet in many places the SC candidates have entered the local administrative bodies with the purpose to work for the oppressed. Constitutional provisions such as Articles 17, 15(2), 29(2), 35, 244 and 371(A), meant to promote the eradication of caste-based discrimination, have played a minimal role. Unaware of such provisions, these SC have relied on age-old local community bonds to maintain harmony at the grassroots (Palanithurai, 2013).

The entry of the SC into the local governance and the organized struggle had an impact on the functioning of the rural institutions in Tamil Nadu. Irrespective of the skill, capacity, managerial ability and capability of the elected SC representatives, the new SC consciousness has made them look at the opportunities they got through the reservation of seats for them. This new consciousness has provoked them to take up social justice issues in the past 20 years.

Media reports (The Hindu and The Times of India) have continuously captured the stories of the SC representatives in the local governance and the status of SC in the rural areas. A survey conducted by "Evidence" - a Madurai-based Human Rights Organization (2012) has found that in Tamil Nadu, 85 per cent of 171 Panchayat Presidents from ten Districts face caste discriminations and 80 per cent have

encountered the interference of dominant castes in their administrative works. Panchayat Raj system has provided some political space for SC Panchayat Presidents, but they are restricted by various factors in carrying out their duties and responsibilities. Interference of multifarious kinds and discrimination of various sorts have constricted their performance not only as Panchayat Presidents but also as common citizens.

1.9. Conclusion

When India became a Republic country, its rural society was mostly feudal in nature. Dalits (Constitutionally categorised as 'Scheduled Caste') were, since time immemorial, socially excluded from the mainstream society in every aspects i.e. cultural, social, economic and political. They were the tragic victims of the rigid and immobile Hindu caste system. The SC had no place in the social and political decision-making process. The ideas and orders imposed on them by the dominant castes were the main hindrances in the nation building process after Independence.

The SC constitutes one of the largest social groups and account for about a fifth of India's population. Over the centuries, they have suffered extensively from caste and untouchability based exclusion and discrimination. Traditionally, they are excluded from access to property rights as well as economic, civil, religious and other rights. Disabilities of untouchables become more severe as they were also physically and socially segregated from the rest of the Hindu society through the institution of untouchability (Singh, 2012).

Recent debates regarding inclusion of caste in the 2011 Census have raised questions about whether caste still matters in modern India. Ethnographic studies of the mid-twentieth century has identified a number of areas in which the caste discrimination still exists in education, occupation, social mobilisation, politics and local administration. Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) has also failed to empower SC people (Rosario, 2012).

In India, the self-governance system is not a new phenomenon. It is an old form of government ruled by the local people. From the rule of Kings to British period there was no SC representation in the local self-governance because Indian society is bound to follow closed caste system. After India became independent, 30 years later the

government has concern and has given provision to the SC to participate in PRIs. This chapter concludes with various historical overview and legislative measures for the SC people. This helped the researcher to understand the participation and empowerment process in the local self-governance and the empowerment of the SC Panchayat Presidents in current system of Panchayat Raj Institutions.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Introduction

A review of the available literature related to the subject is a most important and integral part of the research. A review of literature thus helps in identifying the research gaps of a subject and need for the present study. In this chapter, the researcher has given a detailed review of literature on the various studies relating to the present study. This chapter has been divided into following five major sections for the purpose of thematic review.

1. Local Self-Governance in India.

2. Participation of the Scheduled Caste (SC) people in the local self-governance.

3. Empowerment of the SC people through the local self-governance.

4. Caste atrocities against the SC Panchayat Presidents.

5. Gender, caste and governance in India.

2.2. Local self-governance in India

According to Zamora (1990) the Vedic and Post-Vedic sources show the Indian village as a self-sufficient and autonomous miniature republic. This essential feature has given Indian history a sense of continuity. Kingdoms and empires rise and fall but the villages and village panchayats have survived. The village social organization can be clearly understood by centring the discussion on the panchayats, an effective agency of social control for ages. Dadarwal (2000) has mentioned that the Indian villages are governed by the panchayats in the past and has continued to survive. It finds mention in *Manusmriti* and also Arthshastra of *Kautilya* in 400 B.C.

Reddy (1999) has believed that Panchayat Raj is the most important political invention of independent India. He has described that the panchayat is a very ancient institution and the little village republics are governed by their elected panchayat representatives. The description of these village communities is also found in the

Arthashastra of *Kutilya* and the villages in India have been considered as the basic unit of self-administration since the Vedic period.

Srinivas & Shah (1960) have stated that the isolation and self-sufficiency of the Indian village is first propounded by Sir Charles Metcalfe in 1830, "the village communities are little republics, having nearly everything they want within themselves. Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down, revolution succeeds revolution, but the village community remains the same because of panchayats. This union of the village communities, each one forming a separate little State in itself, has contributed more than any other cause to the preservation of the peoples of India and the enjoyment of freedom and Independence".

Padhy (1999) has mentioned that since the time of Lord Ripon, the Local Self-Government served as an important agency to provide training to the educated elites of India in the art of self-government. The Royal Commission on Decentralisation (1908) has made recommendations touching upon almost every aspect of local administration. It has emphasised upon more powers for the village panchayats and less official interference. But in reality, the Tamil Nadu Panchayat Raj Act, 1994 has given more power to the officials.

Gandhi (1942) quotes, "my idea of village *Swaraj* (self-governance) is that it is complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its vital wants, and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity. Thus every village's first concern will be to grow its own food crops and cotton for its cloth. It should have a reserve for its cattle, recreation and playground for adults and children. Then if there is more land available, it will grow useful money crops, thus excluding ganja, tobacco, opium and so on. The village will maintain a village theatre, school and public hall. It will have its own waterworks ensuring clean supply. This can be done through controlled wells and tanks. Education will be compulsory up to the final basic course. As far as possible every activity will be conducted on the co-operative basis. There will be no castes such as we have today with their graded untouchability. Non-violence with its technique of *satyagraha* and non-cooperation will be the sanction of the village community".

Gandhi's (1947) article highlighted the ideals of Panchayat Raj. Panchayat is our old and beautiful word which has got the sweetness of ancient way of life. Its real meaning is that people of the village used to elect five persons for the panchayat and they used to administer the whole village. But the British rule has crushed it. In 1921, an effort was made to revive the old panchayat but that did not succeed and even now if it is not implemented in an organized and beautiful manner and with scientific approach will also utterly rail. The five members of the panchayat will imbibe the virtue of love, fearlessness, knowledge, industry and cleanliness. The concept of gram *Swaraj* can materialise only when every village is self-sufficient and interdependent.

Jain (1999) has stated that, Balwant Rai Mehta Committee was appointed in the year 1957 to study the impact of the Community Development and National Extension Programmes in all aspects and assess the extent to which these have succeeded in utilizing local initiative. The Committee has observed that development cannot be progressed without responsibility and power. Community development can be realized only when the community understands its problems, realizes its responsibilities, exercises the necessary powers through its chosen representatives and maintains constant and intelligent vigilance on the local administration. It is from this standpoint the recommendations of Balwant Rai Mehta Committee was made. The establishment of popular administration in terms of statutory elective local bodies at District, Block and Village levels and devolution of necessary resources, powers and authority to local people. Based on these recommendations PRIs were first launched on 2nd October, 1959 in Rajasthan and was conceptualised as a tool through which people from all sections of rural society, will be able to work collectively to solve their problems. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, while inaugurating the PRIs in Rajasthan has said, "Everybody should be considered equal in our panchayats and there should be no discrimination between men or women and high or low" (Tyagi & Sinha, 2001).

Ghosh (1999) in his article highlights the Gandhian idea that the freedom of the nation has to begin from the grossroot. Every village has to be a republic or panchayat. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has viewed Panchayat Raj as a new 'device' that may help us in making village life prosperous and joyful by our own efforts without looking towards external assistance. On August 15, 1983, while speaking at Red Fort, New Delhi, the

then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi has referred to the ideas of Gandhiji and has asserted "we shall strengthen the Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) to give them responsibility and to ascertain the most possible participation of common man in the pattern of planning".

Ghosh & Pramanik (1999) has revealed that panchayat is an old conception in India and it is an earlier concept of democracy in the history of civilisation. Now-a-days, Panchayat Raj Institutions have been proclaimed as the 'vehicle' of the socio-economic transformation in rural India. The importance of panchayat system has been emphasised by the political thinkers and the administrators of all ages. The authors have pointed out that the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1993 endowing PRIs with Constitutional status, constitute an important landmark in the evolution of grass-root democratic institutions in India. It ensures full freedom to plan according to the local needs and potentials. The comprehensive frame work gives a practical shape to people's participation in the process of economic development with social justice.

2.3. Participation of Scheduled Caste people in the local self-governance

Yadav (1980) illustrate that participation means "involvement of the people in the development process voluntarily and willingly. Such participation cannot be coerced". He has also stated that "people's involvement has to be understood in terms of participation in decision making process, implementing development programmes, monitoring and evaluation of such programmes and in sharing the benefits of development".

Pandey (1998) has stated the factors responsible for success or failure of Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) and have identified the cause for the lack of participation of the weaker sections such as women, SC and ST. The author has felt that the Panchayat Raj system is not only meant for the decentralisation of power and the people's participation but it is also for supporting the rural development and the planning process at the micro level.

According to Mizra (2007), democracy has two basic concepts – rule by the people and self-rule by the individual. As a corollary to this accepted norm of democracy, there is much talk about the concept of democratic decentralisation and it is

one of the most popular concepts in the realm of local self-government. It demands that the share of people should be extended in decision-making. This necessarily involves decentralisation of the decision making process which touch the local areas and regional communities. Decentralisation is very important for achieving goals of poverty eradication, socio-political upliftment and long-term people centred development. To make this whole concept of local self-government a reality, democratic decentralisation is the right step. Local self-governing bodies form an integral part of the projected overall pattern of a democratic society. They are designed to play an effective part in the evolution of people's participation from the lowest ebb. The people are given the opportunity to express themselves on administration, on social and economic problems and to evolve an integral Indian community through a process of emotional integration.

Ravi, Raj & Reddy (2007), have opined that development of any society requires participation of people from all sections and opportunities for utilisation of the existing potentialities by the people for their development.

Narayana (2007) describes the Panchayat Raj as a political system that emphasises people's participation in decision-making, formulation, implementation and evaluation of development efforts. Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) are visualized as the local self-government bodies which enable people to participate in the process of development and governance.

Sangita (2007) states that the PRIs have given access to the disadvantaged groups (i.e. women, SC and ST) to participate in the governance system and improve their livelihood.

2.4. Empowerment of Scheduled Caste people through local self-governance

According to Andersen & Siim (2004) the empowerment is the process of awareness and capacity building which increases the participation and decision-making power of the citizens and potentially leads to transformative action which will change opportunity structures. They have also stated that the 73rd Amendment gives privilege to the SC people to participate in the local administration and utilize the PRIs for their individual and community empowerment. They argue about reservation, which is to compensate for past indignities, as well as to provide support to overcome present

obstacles. Anderson and Siim have a very comprehensive and progressive thought of community empowerment through reservation for political participation. However, Bisha (2009) has referred that Panchayat Raj is an Indian political institution from historical perspective. Thus, it emphasises that Panchayat Raj provides voice to the voiceless and power to the powerless irrespective of caste, creed, sex and religion in rural India. He has also mentioned about the new legislation on PRIs and its scope to create a history for future generation.

Bryld's (2001) view slightly differs from the other authors. He highlights the *Varna* system and its oppression towards disadvantaged groups in India. He has noticed that the oppression is related to their low self-esteem. These circumstances challenge the empowerment through decentralization. The representation of the weaker section in the panchayat has been ensured through reservation. He has also highlighted the cause for non-participation in political system. The lack of capacity due to illiteracy, language barriers, inexperience or low respect among fellow villagers are some of the main causes that beset active participation in the decision-making process of panchayat members elected under reservation.

Padhy (1999) illustrates that "empowerment is the process of building capacities and creating an atmosphere which enables people to fully utilise their creative potential in pursuance of a quality life. It also deepens and popularises the democratic process. Development stands for growth and progress. Its central focus is socio-economic change". The author has described the global views and the local system towards empowerment and further emphasised that the process of development in the Western societies has started from the economic sector. The economic and the social democracy preceded the political democracy in the Western countries, but in the developing countries like India, the political and the administrative development has come first, which try to bring in economic and social development.

Ram (2007) has stated that the decentralisation of power and the role of PRIs are not only empowering the people at the grassroots but also enhancing the democratic functioning. After considering all the possibilities, the Government of India has decided to devolve the powers to the people and make them more powerful to look after their own affairs without looking for the help of the government. Thus, India has moved

from big government approach to small government approach. However, a transformation of panchayats into institutions of self-government is devolution of powers, resources and functions and capacity building among the elected representatives.

According to Savio & Gabriel (2014) a leader is one who can influence others easily for a purpose. The leader, therefore, is a visionary, a seeker and a learned man with skills and abilities to take decisions for the good of the community. Leadership is a dynamic process that facilitates the achievement of goals. Leadership can also be defined as the ability to influence and to be influenced by the members of a group in the implementation of a common goal. The leader should have certain abilities to lead people and mobilize them in such a way that they are lead in pursuit of a common goal or good. If the leader of SC, with vision, learning, leadership skills and abilities, comes to power as panchayat president, there can definitely be meaningful progress towards sustainable human development. Moreover, it will enhance the stability that can be achieved through measures that promote and protect human rights and the effective participation of all the marginalised sections. On the whole the utilisation of the total human resources without any exclusion is expected and it definitely can bring a mass development in the society especially in the Indian society.

2.5. Caste atrocities against the Scheduled Caste Panchayat Presidents

According to Sekhon (2006), panchayats have a long history in India, with the earliest evidence from *Rig Veda* texts dating to 1200 B.C. Over the time, these self-governing sabhas (councils) have evolved into panchayats (councils of five people). These councils, usually controlled by the upper-caste people, are responsible for governing village affairs and managing land and taxes. During that time caste panchayats have also existed to monitor social conduct and ethics of caste members as well as their occupational affairs. The leaders of the Indian Independence Movement have debated the issue of village self-governance, but there is little action. Mahatma Gandhi was in favour of autonomy for villages, while Bharat Ratna Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, a Leader and Chairperson for Drafting the Indian Constitution, has argued that villages in India are oppressive for many groups, and he has believed that

Parliamentary Politics will best meet the needs of people in rural India. Panchayats, therefore, are not afforded important status in the Indian Constitution.

Sivanana & Gayathridevi (2012) have stated that untouchability is still being practised in almost all the villages. People belong to SC are denied access to public places like drinking water taps, barber shops, hotels, temples. Caste-based discriminations are common feature in the Indian villages, even now. Furthermore, the SC men and women are made to sit separately in Gram Sabha.

Vijayakumar (1999) emphasises that panchayat system in India is unable to resolve social issues affecting the development of individuals and the society at large. The increasing level of social conflicts based on religion, caste and politics have further threatened the integrity of the nation as a whole eroding the social fabric of the community. This is the reason for the people from lowest strata (i.e. SC) having fear to participate in PRIs.

The research report of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) 2012, revealed that the discrimination against Dalits (i.e. SC) has been reported more intensely and frequently in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka States. This study has also found that majority of the SC Panchayat Presidents are not trained for the legal provision and power. In addition to that the SC Panchayat Presidents are not allowed to sit on chairs and discriminary practices happening in reserved village panchayats. When the amended form of PRIs were launched two decades ago, both Centre and the States declared that the empowerment of SC people, by providing them reserved seats, would lead to the abolition of untouchability practices in future but the reality exist against.

Gowthami Foundation (2012), working for the SC welfare in the North Coastal Andhra has reported in its study that the government has to strengthen the capabilities of the SC for independent thinking and empower them to achieve the twin objectives of economic development and social justice. The State government must revive the practice of conducting capacity-building classes for the SC Panchayat Presidents for further empowerment of elected panchayat functionaries. It will facilitate the under privileged to fulfill their commitments to the people. The study has also revealed that the SC Panchayat Presidents are facing a lot of discriminations due to the caste system

in village. Providing reservation for the SC people in the panchayat bodies is a method to remove untouchability in the villages (Dalit Jagran, 2012).

In the Parliamentary session on Ministry of Panchayat Raj (2010), the members of Raja Sabha have discussed about the incidents in certain panchayats of some States that the Panchayat Presidents belonging to SC and ST community have not been allowed to function by some dominant caste groups. The Minister has replied to written questions on the steps taken by the government in this regard. Stalin (2015) has filed a RTI to know the States in which the SC and ST community have not been allowed to function by some dominant caste groups and the reply reveals that these kinds of incidents are more in the State of Uttar Pradesh.

Bag (2006) discusses that the power structure in village panchayats is in favour of dominant castes in the society. The creation of such power structure not only defeats the basic implications of democratic decentralisation but also the aim of rural development with social justice. In this context, reservation provides opportunities for the SC community to participate in PRIs. Before the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act there was no effective participation of SC and ST. In earlier State Acts, there was no reservation of seats for SC and ST. In the States of Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Orissa and Punjab reservation was given based on their population. In Uttar Pradesh, there was a provision in the Act to specify the minimum of SC and ST members in the panchayats. The Acts of West Bengal and Goa did not provide for reservation of seats for SC and ST candidates. Most of the States did not provide reservations for the post of Chairpersons at any level. Very few States had provided such reservations to SC people. Tamil Nadu is one among the States to provide reservations for all positions.

The study of Human Rights Advocacy and Research Foundation & Human Rights Forum for Dalit Liberation (2007) revealed that, a SC elected Village Panchayat President in Thirunelveli District in the State of Tamil Nadu was allegedly murdered by the members of a dominant caste of the same panchayat. A woman member of the dominant caste was elected as Vice-President and did not want to work under a SC Panchayat President. She and her husband had on several occasions insulted the SC Panchayat President and he filed two complaints against them in Police Station. Next

day the SC Panchayat President was killed by them. This kind of incidence happened in India, if the SC people elected through democratic process.

The president of Manamai village panchayat in Kanchepuram District has stated that the SC presidents in many village panchayats are facing the caste based discrimination, mainly from their Vice-Presidents, a majority of whom are caste Hindus. The women Panchayat Presidents and the SC women Presidents also face similar problems. Palanithurai in his report to The Hindu states that, barring Vice-Presidents of village panchayats and Vice-Chairpersons of Block and District Panchayats, reservation is in vogue for other posts. Majority of the women and the SC women presidents have been facing challenges from their dominant caste Vice-Presidents, who have emerged as the biggest threat to democracy. The Panchayat Raj expert has further pointed out that while reserving seats for SC in village panchayats, the post of Vice-President also should be reserved along with the President's post. Once the post of President is reserved for SC, Vice-President post also should be reserved for SC (Ilangovan, 2012).

Mathew (2003) has mentioned that the elections to the panchayats have been the first and foremost point of attack. When Melavalavu panchayat in Madurai District of Tamil Nadu was declared as reserved panchayat for SC in the October 1996 election, the people of dominant castes resented this and consequently the polls were not held. The second attempt to conduct election was also foiled by violence and booth capturing. Finally, when the election was held on 30th December 1996, the dominant castes boycotted it. Members of the SC were elected as President and Vice-President despite stiff resistance from the dominant castes. Moreover they are never permitted by the dominant caste to enter the new panchayat office. Finally, on 30th June 1997, the Panchayat President and the Vice-President, along with three others were murdered in broad daylight. Their only crime was that they have been elected through the democratic process. Panchayat related caste violence continues unabated and has become a part of the social reality today. Unfortunately, while dominant caste groups are committing atrocities against the SC, the latter do not have a supportive redressal mechanism.

The Society of Tribal Women for Development (2008) states clearly as follow "traditional caste panchayats still continue to influence the process of the local governance as they have social sanction. It often acts either in tandem with the elected panchayats or in some cases ignoring them totally in order to enforce its traditional codes. Examples of traditional caste panchayats putting up barriers for effective functioning of the local self-government institutions are numerous. For instance, a striking feature in panchayat elections everywhere has been the struggle to usurp the power at the grassroots level by disparate social groupings using caste to polarize people. Traditional power structures, with the support from Panchayat Secretaries and other government officials, often manipulate the constitutional mandate and rule by proxy. The leader of the dominant caste in villages, in order to control panchayat, tend to control remotely the SC elected representatives who are dependent on them due to various compulsions. The elected SC candidates both men and women are forced to work according to the whims and fancies of those who 'sponsor' them. Instances of public humiliation and even physical intimidation of the SC Panchayat Presidents, including women, have often been reported in the media. The social inability of the SC elected representatives to participate confidently in the panchayats stems from their sense of insecurity".

'Evidence', a Madurai-based human rights organisation has conducted a study on caste discrimination faced by SC Panchayat Presidents in selected Districts of Tamil Nadu. This study was conducted in 213 Panchayats across 12 Districts in the State and has come up with its findings on myriad forms of discrimination experienced by the SC Panchayat Presidents under various categories. The survey was carried out in Viluppuram, Cuddalore, Dindigul, Madurai, Virudhunagar, Thanjavur, Nagapattinam, Sivagangai, Salem, Namakkal, Coimbatore and Tirupur. It was found that majority of the SC Panchayat Presidents are facing discriminations due to their caste (Kathir, 2011).

Reddy (1974) mentions that the Indian society where control of lands leads to control over the power, PRIs have been more accessible to the upper strata of the society. His study has also indicated that literacy and educational levels are low among the socially and economically weaker communities (SC) and the power structure in Panchayat Raj is heavily in favour of the dominant castes that have reasonably good education levels.

Sahay (2008) has reported that the SC representatives are not executing the power and the status they deserve. The study carried out by Mathew (2003) has noted that there are plenty of instances where they sit on the ground during the panchayat meetings while the dominant caste members sit on the chairs. Even after acquiring power, the SC elected representatives are restricted in exercising their leadership. This is evident in case of SC women elected representatives who have to face double oppression.

Inbanathan's (2003) study reveals that most of the SC elected members of Karnataka panchayat are economically lower and relatively powerless. The SC people have been able to occupy positions of the Presidents and the Vice-Presidents of certain panchayats by the reservation given by Karnataka government for both the President and Vice-President positions. His study has showed that the SC Panchayat Presidents are not allowed to function independently, the actual function of the panchayat are taken over by the elites and other representatives. The dominance by other individuals are particularly pronounced in the village panchayats, and more so when the post is occupied by a SC women. The entire function of the president is carried out by dominant caste and the SC Panchayat Presidents is expected only to put her thumb impression at the appropriate places.

2.6. Gender, caste and the local self-governance in India

Women constitute almost half of the total population, without whose participation it is impossible to bring about successful participatory democracy. Hence, women's empowerment and participation is being studied separately in this section. Democratic decentralisation is meaningless unless gender equality is ensured. The pace of development in the society will be slow if women are not encouraged to participate. Therefore the panchayat cannot stand the test of success without adequate participation of women. The Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 may be considered as a watershed in the history of the State's initiatives with regard to political empowerment of the rural women. The Amendment Act is a landmark since its objectives are to empower women by creating 33 per cent reservation of seats. For the first time in the history of Indian polity, it has provided a minimum number of seats and political offices in the panchayats for women (Chhetri, 2008).

The 73rd Constitution Amendment Act, 1992 is a step towards this direction as it provides not less than one-third of the elected women members and also Chairpersons at the different tiers i.e. Village Panchayat, Block and District. This is a landmark in the history of women empowerment in decision-making process of the country. The 73rd Amendment can be considered as the greatest event for women's empowerment (Kundu, 2005).

Poonia (2000) has stated that it is a commonly accepted fact that in almost all the societies of the world, men have more power, prestige and privilege as compared to women. In a traditional society women as a class had no place in power and authority structure. They have been treated with, at an inferior position, in most of the socio-cultural set up. India is no exception to this, as its women folk have also suffered a lot and yet suffering due to the oppressive value system of the society. After independence, large scale efforts have been initiated to empower the weaker and deprived section of the society comprising women, SC and ST. Founding fathers of the Constitution have desired to secure justice, social, economic and political for all its citizens. Keeping this in view, the spirit of the Constitution and successive governments enacted several laws for the upliftment, welfare and empowerment of women. The 73rd Amendment Act is the most significant provision which reserves one-third of the seats for women in PRIs.

Bohra (1997) has stated that the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act aims at decentralising the power and also removing the gender imbalances and bias in the local self-governance. It actually aims for equal justice, removal of deprivation and oppression. Collective empowerment through representation and democratic process will give them voice, feelings of solidarity and democratic politics. Affirmative action will build a critical mass of the local leadership of such groups who are active participants in the strategic decision-making.

Hazra (2011) firmly states that "the current framework of international development recognizes that the women empowerment is an immense effective strategy for all round development of the society. Though India is developing economically and technologically by leaps and bounds, its women, especially rural women still continue to be discriminated and their current status in the society still causes concern. Across the nation, women constitute a disproportionate share of the chronically poor

population. Gender discrimination starts from the foetus, in terms of selection of sex, childrearing, feeding, education, employment, control over property and resources, participation and influencing decision-making in public and political spheres etc. The government has attempted to involve and encourage rural women in decision-making process by providing one-third reservation for them in PRIs, to ensure their participation at the grassroots and District levels of governance through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment. The impact of reserving one third of seats for women in the PRIs has been immense, and has empowered women to a great extent both politically and socially. At present, there are approximately 260,000 panchayat representatives in India, out of which around 75,000 are women. This is the largest number of elected women in the World".

Thorat (2005) defines "social exclusion is the process through which the individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from participation in the society in which they live". It is far more difficult to overcome the social exclusion on the basis of caste. The SC communities are restricted to participate in the local self-governance and exercise the political power. Inbanathan (2003), states that through the reservation, it is possible to improve the social condition of disadvantaged groups (i.e. SC), which faces acute deprivations. But there is no suggestion that affirmative action alone will be able to eliminate the discrimination and deprivation that have been part of the SC experience. The PRIs in every State has different experience of inclusion and exclusion of the marginalized communities.

Tiwari (2012) states that in India about one million women entered panchayat after 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. It is a known fact that 40 percent of the elected women have represented the weaker sections (i.e. SC) and about 70 percent women representatives are illiterates and most of them have no previous political experience. Therefore, it is natural that there is a widespread apprehension that women will be manipulated by men. According to Pal (1998) though the 73rd Constitutional Amendment has enlisted the participation of women in decision-making bodies, their roles have been actually performed either by their husbands or any male member of the family.

Grover, Agarwal, & Grover (2000) have described that women's participation in the governance system at various levels has remained low in the post-independence era. However, with the passage of the 73rd Amendment Act in 1993, which constitutionally provided 33 per cent reservation of seats in the PRIs, nearly one million women have been elected in the governance system at the grassroots level. A large majority of these women are first generation leaders who have been elected by choice or family pressure.

Bhardawaj & Sharma (2000) brought to the fore a most alarming fact that women of economically weaker sections and backward classes are least interested in their work. Most of their work is supervised by their spouse and their male relatives. Even more disturbing fact is that influential local leaders, mostly of forward classes, have used the women representatives of weaker sections to suit their own designs. As high as 98 per cent women representatives of weaker sections are not aware of their duties and rights under the PRIs. They do not want to enjoy their power but male domination in PRIs proves to be a big impediment in their way.

The political empowerment of women through reservation has gone a long way in raising the socio-economic and political status of women. More literate women of the next generation are bound to make significant contribution in these local bodies (Chaudhry, 1995). Majority of today's women panchayat leaders are new comers. They may be non active female members of panchayat in the beginning but increased participation and resistance to manipulation will certainly come from women themselves. It is not easy to change the existing structure of thousands of years overnight and expect women to emerge independent, but slowly and gradually women will come out of the age-old barriers imposed on them by social structure to share political power with their male counterparts (Bhargava & Vidya, 1992).

Sethuramalingam (2013), assessed the socio-economic status and political background of the SC and ST women village Panchayat Presidents in Tamil Nadu. The result of the study shows that most of them were school dropouts and their level of education ranges from primary to middle school. The level of caste discriminations is found higher among the ST and the experiences of gender discriminations undergone by both the categories are one and the same. Finally, the performance levels of SC women

Panchayat Presidents are more satisfactory when compared to that of the ST women panchayats presidents.

According to Dinesha (2014), the political reservation, through the 73rd Amendment of the Indian Constitution, has been given to women in general and SC in particular to enable them to participate in the decision-making process at the grassroots level. It is true that recently considerable numbers of women including SC women are elected to the panchayats. But the study found various types of caste based discrimination faced by SC women representatives while performing their public roles. In addition, the study reveals that the upper castes often persuade elections by propping up SC women as proxy candidates and exploit these vulnerable women in many cases.

In Erode District of Tamil Nadu, a SC woman Panchayat President was not allowed to occupy the office. She has lodged complaints with the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and the District Administration, alleging caste-based discrimination by the Vice-President of the panchayat and the Vice-Chairperson of District Panchayat. In another case a SC woman Panchayat President of Pasuvapatti village panchayat in Chennimalai Block has claimed that she was discriminated since her candidature was announced. After she won the election, the dominant caste did not allow her to occupy the panchayat office. In addition the dominant castes in the village refused to co-operate with her in the administration of panchayat. In one more case, a SC woman Panchayat President of Karu Vadatheru panchayat of Tamil Nadu was prevented from hoisting the tricolour on the Republic Day (2012) by a group of dominant caste (Panchayat Raj Update, 2012).

The SC woman Panchayat President of Thalaiyuthu in Tirunelveli District, Tamil Nadu, was brutally attacked by a gang, has repeatedly filed complaints with the Police Officials and District Administration citing caste-based discrimination but the administration failed to act. She has been facing discrimination right from the day of her announcement to contest elections. She was not allowed to perform her functions as a Panchayat President. In this regard she has filed 12 complaints with the Police and District Administration about the discrimination on her right to function independently but no action was taken. There are reports that the Vice-President and his supporters have disrupted the proceedings of Gram Sabha, she has to seek Police protection to

conduct meetings. The villagers have stated that she has functioned in an unbiased way irrespective of caste affiliation. She has taken many decisions in a bold manner which has invited the wrath of a few sections of the dominant castes. The report concluded that the Panchayat Presidents belonging to the SC communities and women in particular are still being discriminated. (The Hindu, 2011).

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment has definitely empowered women in terms of numbers. From the minuscule figure of 2-4 per cent in majority of the Indian States, the Amendment has for the first time brought 33-40 per cent rural women into decision-making. But being in numbers is not enough. Reservation provides the possibility of voice for women which failed to guarantee it. This is because of the backdrop in which the reservation has been introduced in the country and is marked by numerous factors such as illiteracy, male dominance, casteism, deep-rooted cultural beliefs and values which do not encourage women's assertion but want them to be in their traditional roles such as dependent spouse, mother and housewife. Amidst such social and cultural constraints, it becomes necessary to study the nature and effectiveness with which the women members are able to participate in PRIs and more specifically studying their ability to address the women's issues at the local level (Singla, 2007).

2.7. Critical Analysis of the Review of Literature

The review provides useful information on different aspects of the lines of participation and empowerment of the SC Panchayat Presidents, but lacks in comprehensive approaches in analyzing the issues. From the reviews taken for the study, it is observed that there are volumes of studies available that traces out the historical development of local self-governance, analyses the Gandhian model of self-governance, 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act and reservations and decentralization of political power among different social groups. But only a few studies have attempted to study the SC Panchayat Presidents' effective participation, empowerment and problems in the local self-governance. In this regard, only a few researches have been conducted in Southern States when compare to Northern India. Moreover, it is notable that there is no scientific study on the mode of entry of the SC Panchayat Presidents into local self-governance, knowledge about the duties and responsibilities and its fulfillment, perceived administrative skills and challenges and barriers faced by the SC

Panchayat Presidents in discharging their duties. From the review of available literatures, these research gaps have been identified. Hence, the researcher tries to fill the above mentioned gaps through this empirical research study.

2.8. Formulation of the Research Problem

India, an ancient civilisation, has witnessed the panchayats as an integral part of Indian society and polity since ages. Indian villages have organised and maintained social order through panchayats since ancient times. The informal panchayat is responsible for maintaining and governing the village in accordance with the socio-political norms. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act has come into effect from April 1993. Article 243G in XI Schedule of the Indian Constitution provides for the scope of devolution of powers and functions to the Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) and 29 items are specifically listed out for the development of village panchayats. These have to be implemented only through Panchayat Presidents. Though they are empowered with huge power to transform the village into developed one, in many occasions this is not practical due to various preventing factors. Such case is evident in the village panchayats of Viluppuram District which are abysmally low in human development index rank, high in backwardness and has recorded highest number of cases of violence against the SC.

The critical analysis of the review of literature has revealed that reservation in the local self-governance alone is not sufficient to empower the SC Panchayat Presidents. The reviews concludes that socio-legal provisions for SC Panchayat Presidents has been denied various levels such as caste, gender, political power and influences which was also reflected in various studies conducted by different authors from different parts of the country which draws the attention of the researcher to correlate underdevelopment of the District and empowerment of SC Panchayat Presidents in Viluppuram District.

The empowerment of SC Panchayat Presidents supposed to be backed by education, awareness about duties and responsibilities and its fulfillments, administrative skills and conducive environment to work. However, the researcher identified that there is lack of empirical evidence to test the assumption of underdevelopment in Viluppuram District. This situation has motivated the researcher

to take up a study on these factors among the SC Panchayat Presidents in a Viluppuram District of Tamil Nadu. Therefore, the study tries to know the causes for the continued backwardness of the Viluppuram District and to understand whether Panchayat Presidents of the SC community are utilizing their full power in administration as well as in implementing the welfare programmes for the development of the people in their respective panchayats.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

The word 'Research' itself gives the meaning as searching more relevant facts from the existing facts. The research aims at discovering the truth. The social science research applies scientific methods in discovering the social phenomena. A research may be defined as critical inquiry or examination in seeking facts or process which consists of selected steps, which essentially interdependent. The collection of facts and information following scientific techniques and tools arrive at reasonable conclusion. The research methodology prepares the investigators to adopt techniques and tools to neutralize the description, explanation and justification of various methods. In this chapter, the researcher has explained the methods through which this study is completed.

3.2. Statement of the Problem

Panchayat is popularly known as a traditional local self-governance in villages which functioned under the Banyan tree, headed by five elders sitting along with the village people. The discussions are mostly relating to resolving the village people's disputes, basic needs and execution thereof.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 aims to empower people through participation in decision-making process and implement development programmes at the grass-root level. This Act has instituted a policy of political reservations in local self- governance for the historically disadvantaged social group i.e. Scheduled Caste (SC). This Act gives more opportunity to the people belonging to disadvantaged social group to contest in elections and become Panchayat Presidents to uplift and empower the people of their own panchayat. This brought new reservation strategies for SC in Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs), which was the major step towards democratic decentralization of all the communities. In reality Panchayat Raj system has provided some political space for the SC Panchayat Presidents, but in practice they are restricted by various factors while carrying out their duties.

Interference of multifarious kinds and discrimination of various sorts have constricted their performance not only as Panchayat Presidents but also as common Citizens.

Since the enactment of the Tamil Nadu Panchayat Act 1994, four village panchayat elections have been held in Viluppuram District in the year 1996, 2001, 2006 and 2011, but the panchayats have not witnessed much development. Though the SC community are provisioned 25 per cent reservations in contesting Panchayat Presidents elections in Tamil Nadu, they could not perform better as Panchayat President owing to lack of education, prevention by dominant caste in executing powers and functions and insufficient allocation of funds.

The Human Development Report (2003) has revealed that Viluppuram District has lowest Per Capita Income, Literacy Rate, Health, Combined Gross Enrolment Ratio and has also secured lowest rank in Gender Equality in the State of Tamil Nadu (Planning Commission, 2003). Viluppuram District is confined with very lowest rank (28/29) in Human Development Index (HDI) and last in Per Capita Income (29/29). It is the largest District in Tamil Nadu (with 22 Blocks as compared to the average of 13-14 blocks in the other Districts), but it is one of the least Industrialized areas of the State. The majority of the population depends on agriculture (Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises, 2012). The Ministry of Panchayat Raj (2011) identified six Districts of Tamil Nadu as Backward Districts of the Nation which included Viluppuram District.

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (2008) has identified Atrocities Prone Areas for SC and ST in the Country. It highlights that 28 Districts are Atrocities Prone Areas in Tamil Nadu in which Viluppuram is one among them. Viluppuram District accounts for the highest number of the SC population (9,19,308) in Tamil Nadu (Census 2011) and also records the highest number of cases of violence against SC and ST when compared to other Districts of Tamil Nadu (Evidence, 2011). Based on these backwardness, various special provisions and programs are implemented for the welfare of SC communities. However, these programmes are not implemented properly in the reserved SC Panchayats due to various caste based atrocities against SC (Evidence, 2011). Considering the above factors the researcher has got insight and has taken up this study to know about SC Panchayat Presidents'

participation in the local self-governance, level of their perceived administrative skills, awareness about their duties and responsibilities and its fulfillment, challenges and barriers faced by them in discharging their duties. The research believes that this study will find the way to build the capacities of SC Panchayat Presidents in the study area.

3.3. Aim of the Study

The main aim of the study is to examine the Participation in the Local Self-Governance and Empowerment of Scheduled Caste Panchayat Presidents in Viluppuram District, Tamil Nadu.

3.4. Specific Objectives of the Study

The specific objective of the study is

1. to know the socio-demographic profile of the respondents.
2. to understand the mode of entry into the local self-governance by the respondents.
3. to assess the level of administrative skills as perceived by the respondents.
4. to know the awareness about duties and responsibilities and its fulfillment by the respondents.
5. to examine the challenges and barriers faced by the respondents in discharging their duties as Panchayat Presidents.

3.5. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses have been formulated in order to examine them in the light of the empirical details of the present study.

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between age and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents.

Ho2: There is no significant association between gender and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents.

Ho3: There is no significant relationship between educational qualifications and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents.

Ho4: There is no significant association between the caste based violence occurred in panchayat elections and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents.

Ho5: There is no significant association between the caste based violence occurred in village panchayat and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents.

Ho6: There is no significant association between the respect received from officials and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents.

Ho7: There is no significant association between the support received from other community people and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents.

3.6. Conceptual Framework
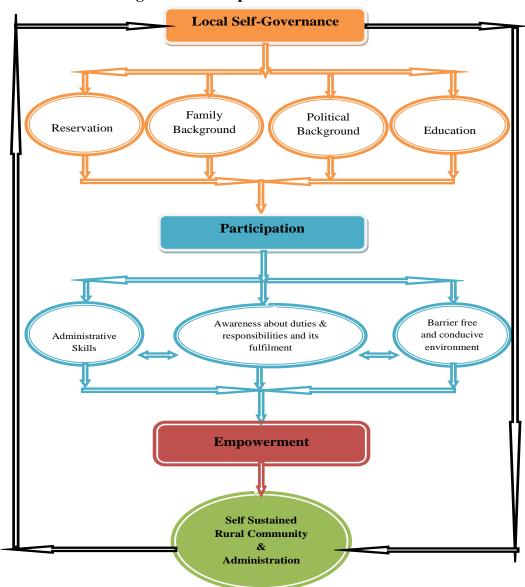
Figure 3.1 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework has been developed based on the theoretical understanding of the concept and on the available legal provisions in the Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs). The 73rd Amendment of Indian Constitution provides decentralized power to the local people through the local self-governance model. This local self-governance model creates holistic opportunity to all the sections of the society to engage in the governance process to develop their local area.

There are four major components playing vital role in determining the SC Panchayat Presidents to participate in the local self-governance. Based on the legal provisions, the researcher assumes that there are four reasons to take part in the local self-governance, (i) reservation in the local self-governance opens up the door for SC people to participate in the local self-governance process in their local area (ii) the family background of the individuals play a vital role to participate in the local self governance (iii) the local leaders are inspired by the national political leaders, political party's ideology and philosophy to take part in the governance system (iv) there are well educated young people and elders interested to serve the community with legal power and support mentioned in 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act.

The reservation, family background, political background and education are the four major pillars for the participation of SC Panchayat Presidents in the local governance system. Effective participation leads to good administration, awareness about duties and responsibilities and its fulfillment thus enabling a barrier free environment. The above said factors on the whole enable and empower the SC Panchayat Presidents.

The SC Panchayat Presidents' participation is closely associated with their empowerment in the community. This empowerment is often determined by their leadership abilities, execution of power and development programmes, community engagement in the governance process, cooperation and co-ordination of other key stakeholders of the panchayat. These dimensions of the empowerment are not clearly understood by the current SC Panchayat Presidents.

The leadership of the SC Panchayat Presidents has close connection with people engagement, cooperation and coordination of the members of the panchayat with respect to execution of the development programmes. The self-sustained village and people centred administration are possible only through empowerment of the SC Panchayat Presidents with their active participation in the local self-governance.

This framework tries to explain the link between the local self-governance, participation and empowerment. Participation highly influences the empowerment of SC Panchayat Presidents. This framework helps the researcher to indentify the gaps in the system and its consistency at all levels. This also helps to structure the research

based on the practical inputs and draw the assumed outcome of the study for better governance system to empower the people with respect and dignity. All these processes constitute the empowerment of SC Panchayat Presidents.

3.7. Operational Definitions

Participation

Participation refers to the mode through which the SC Panchayat Presidents of the study entered into the local self-governance. It includes reservation policy of the government, education, family and political background of the respondents.

Local Self-Governance

A legal system which allows people's democratic participation in the planning and execution of the development programmes in the PRIs.

Empowerment

Empowerment refers to the enhancement of the capacities of the SC Panchayat Presidents to participate actively in PRIs.

Administrative Skills

Administrative skills refers to the skills which the SC Panchayat Presidents perceived such as decision-making, leadership, policy formulation, identifying the opportunities, coping capacity, capacity on implementing plans, delegation of work, solving the problems, organizing the community to work as a team, getting suggestions from others, giving suggestions to others, following the organizational rules, organizing research and planning meetings.

Scheduled Caste

A group of deprived communities living in Viluppuram District of Tamil Nadu which are listed in the National Gazette as Scheduled Caste.

Panchayat Presidents

Democratically elected persons who belong to Scheduled Caste and has a power to rule the panchayat.

3.8. Study Design

Descriptive research design is adopted in this study based on primary and secondary sources of information. In this study, the researcher aims to understand and describe the socio-demographic profile, mode of entry into the local self-governance, level of administrative skills as perceived by the SC Panchayat Presidents, awareness about duties and responsibilities and its fulfilment, challenges and barriers faced by the respondents while discharging their duties as Panchayat Presidents.

3.9. Study Area

In the State of Tamil Nadu, there are 12,524 Village Panchayats spread across 32 Districts and 385 Blocks. Viluppuram (11.9547° N, 79.5277° E) is one of the 32 Districts of Tamil Nadu situated in the Northern part of Tamil Nadu. The District headquarters is located in Viluppuram. Viluppuram is the largest District in the State of Tamil Nadu (with 22 blocks as compared to the average of 13-14 blocks in the other Districts). This District has 1099 village panchayats, among these 322 panchayats are reserved for SC (Tamil Nadu Gazette Regd. No.: TN/CCN/467/2009-11/No.318). This number is highest when compared to other Districts of Tamil Nadu. Hence, the researcher has selected Viluppuram District as the study area.

3.10. Universe of the Study

The 322 Scheduled Caste Panchayat Presidents in Viluppuram District of Tamil Nadu constitute the universe of the study.

3.11. Sampling Method and Size

The researcher has opted Census method to collect data from all the 322 SC Panchayat Presidents in the study. While approaching them for the study, the researcher was able to get the informed consent only from 221 respondents. So, the total number of the respondents of the study is 221.

3.12. Pilot Study

A pilot study has been conducted during June to August, 2013 to check feasibility and viability of the present study. The pilot study has helped the researcher to gain knowledge about the study area and also to decide the sampling method, sample size, tools and method of data collection.

3.13. Pre-Test

Pre-test has been conducted during month of October 2013 among 32 SC Panchayat Presidents i.e., 10 percentage of the universe to check the relevance of the interview schedule. The researcher had discussions with academicians and field practitioners to make necessary modification in the tool. After various clarifications and justifications the tool was finalised.

3.14. Inclusion Criteria

Democratically elected SC Panchayat Presidents from reserved panchayats in the Viluppuram District are included in the study irrespective of their gender.

3.15. Exclusion Criteria

Democratically elected SC Panchayat Presidents from unreserved panchayats in the Viluppuram District are excluded from the study irrespective of their gender.

3.16. Tools of Data Collection

The researcher has prepared a self-administered structured interview schedule to collect the required data for the study. This schedule is divided into five parts viz.

- Part I – Consists of questions relating to socio-demographic profile of the respondents.
- Part II – Consists of questions relating to the mode of entry into the local self-governance by the respondents i.e. reservation, family background, political background and education.
- Part III – Itemized Statements to assess the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents.
- Part IV – Consists of question relating to assessing the awareness about duties and responsibilities and its fulfilment by the respondents for the upliftment of

their panchayats i.e. various committees, mandatory duties, discretionary duties, delegated works and other departmental works.

- Part V – Consist of questions relating to challenges and barriers faced by the respondents in discharging their duties as Panchayat Presidents.

3.17. Methods of Data Collection

Data collection is one of the most important aspects of the study. In this study, the primary data and the secondary data have been collected from various sources.

Primary Data

The primary data was collected using a self-administered structured interview schedule from the SC Panchayat Presidents.

Secondary Data

The secondary data was collected from various sources such a peer reviewed research articles, government and non-government organization reports, published news paper articles, books, government orders and web documents. Based on these sources the conceptual frame work was developed. It was also used to develop tools for the collection of primary data.

3.18. Period of Data Collection

The period of data collection was from 28th December 2013 to 15th July 2014. The researcher has spent about 35 to 45 minutes with each respondent.

3.19. Ethical Considerations

Informed consent

The researcher has got permission from the Assistant Director (Panchayat), Viluppuram District of Tamil Nadu (Letter No. G10/0063/2013 Dated: 07th January 2014) and informed consent from the respondents to collect the data. The purpose, nature and aim of the study were explained to them.

Confidentiality

The anonymity of the participants was ensured and confidentiality of the participants was maintained. The respondents were given the assurance that the data will not be used for any other purposes other than the research. The information related to SC Panchayat Presidents were sensitive and the researcher ensured the participants that the personal data such as the names, panchayat names and the addresses of the participants would never be used anywhere, even in the study.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher did not undertake any social work intervention with the participants. The respondents have experienced the interview as a chance to ventilate their problems. Since the interviews were conducted at their homes they have felt comfortable in expressing their feelings.

3.20. Analysis of Data

Descriptive statistics has been used to describe the socio-demographic details of the respondents. The hypotheses were tested with the use of Spearman's rho correlation coefficient test and Pearson Chi-square test. Organization and preparation of data was done using Microsoft Excel 2007 and all statistical analysis was done by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM-SPSS) PC – version 20.0.

3.21. Chapterization

This thesis is divided into five chapters. The contents of each of these chapters are presented briefly in the following lines.

Chapter I – Introduction – deals with general introduction about the Local Self-Governance/Panchayat Raj Institutions in India and Tamil Nadu.

Chapter II – Review of literature focuses on concepts, theory and review of research studies carried out in India on elected SC Panchayat Presidents in concise manner and presents the research gaps.

Chapter III – Shows the structure and methods adopted for this research study and ethical considerations. This includes conceptual framework, objectives, hypotheses, sample frame and size, a brief discussion of the study area, methods and tools of data collection and analysis of data.

Chapter IV – Deals with data analysis and its interpretation.

Chapter V – The final chapter of this dissertation provides the major findings, discussions, suggestions and conclusion of the present research work with implications for social work practice.

3.22. Limitations of the Study

- The present study has considered only quantitative measurements and did not include any qualitative analyses.

- Availability of published literatures related to the topic is minimal. Since the study focuses on the Indian Panchayat Raj system, there are very limited International studies available which limits the international scale of the research work.

- The possibility of false information from the respondents could not be avoided.

- The study does not include any standardized tools as the researcher could not find such tools relating to the objectives of the study.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1. Introduction

Data analysis is a process used to transform the acquired data in the form of tables and charts and to interpret in a way to reach a conclusion for the research problem. The researcher has analyzed the collected data based on the objectives of the study using different statistical tools. The analyzed data are presented in the form of tables and charts and have been interpreted in this chapter. This chapter is categorized into six sections as follows:

- o Socio-demographic profile of the respondents.
- o Mode of entry into the local self-governance by the respondents.
- o Level of administrative skills as perceived by the respondents.
- o Awareness about duties and responsibilities and its fulfilment by the respondents.
- o Challenges and barriers faced by the respondents.
- o Relationships between independent and dependent variables.

The data is presented in the form of tables and charts using statistical application. Testing of the hypotheses and interpretation of the results are presented here. The hypotheses are tested with the use of Chi-square test and Spearman's rho coefficient of correlation test.

4.2. Socio-Demographic Profile

Age

Age is a very important factor and has greater influence on political participation. Traditionally, it is the privilege of the elders to occupy important positions in the villages and the village leadership remained the monopoly of the village elders. According to Tamil Nadu State Election Commission, the minimum age for contesting in a local body election is 21 years provided the person's name should find place in the electoral roll of the respective local body.

Table 4.1 Distribution of the respondents by their age

Sl. No.	Age Group (in years)	Frequency	Percentage
1	23 – 28	12	5.4
2	29 – 34	30	13.6
3	35 – 40	64	29.0
4	41 – 46	46	20.8
5	47 – 52	29	13.1
6	53 – 58	19	8.6
7	59 – 64	12	5.4
8	65 – 70	6	2.7
9	71 – 76	3	1.4
	Total	**221**	**100.0**

Table 4.1 shows the distribution of respondents based on their age. Less than one third of respondents (29%) belong to the age group of 35-40 years, 20.8 percent belong to the age group of 41-46 years, 13.6 percent belong to 29-34 years, 13.1 percent are between 47-52 years, 8.6 percent belong to the group of 53-58 years, 5.4 percent confine between 23-28 and 59-64 years, 2.7 percent belong to the age group of 65-70 years. The remaining 1.4 percent of the respondents are in the age group of 71-76 years.

Sex

Sex refers to a person's biological status and categorizes the respondents as male or female (American Psychological Association, 2015). In general, women all over the world participate less in politics which is regarded as the public sphere. Though in India both the sexes are given equal right, politics has primarily remained the domain of men.
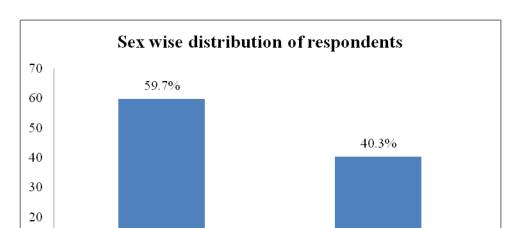
Figure 4.1 Distribution of the respondents by their sex

Diagram 4.1 shows that more than half of the respondents (59.7 percent) are male and 40.3 percent of the respondents are female.

The researcher has observed that the female respondents have contested in local body elections only by the pressure of their husband/family members, because of the reservation for the SC women in the panchayats.

Marital Status

Marital status is the condition of being married or unmarried or a widow under law and jurisprudence and is the collection of rules imposed by the authority. It is also the legal standing of a person with regard to his or her marital status.

Table 4.2 Distribution of the respondents by their marital status

Sl. No.	Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
1	Single	10	4.5
2	Married	208	94.1
3	Widow	3	1.4
	Total	**221**	**100.0**

Table 4.2 shows the marital status of the respondents. It indicates that overwhelming majority of the respondents (94.1 percent) are married, 4.5 percent of the respondents live as single and only 1.4 percent of the respondents are widows.

The researcher has found in the study area that most of the respondents are following the strict rules, norms and customs on marriage system and 95.5 percent of the respondents were married within their kinship.

Educational Qualification

Education is considered to be one of the most important indicators for the quality of leadership. Higher educational level of citizen is an important prerequisite for greater role in administration process. Education makes one to act rationally. But traditionally, literacy and education are not associated. In order to ensure the proper understanding of the objectives of the local self-governance and the role of functioning as a panchayat president in a village, education is considered to be the prime importance.

Table 4.3 Distribution of the respondents by their educational qualifications

Sl. No.	Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
1	Illiterate	14	6.3
2	Primary School	63	28.5
3	Middle School	43	19.5
4	High School	42	19.0
5	ITI	4	1.8
6	Diploma in Engineering	2	0.9
7	Higher Secondary	20	9.0
8	Bachelor Degree	29	13.1
9	Master Degree	4	1.8
	Total	**221**	**100.0**

Table 4.3 provides the data regarding the educational level of the respondents. Out of 221 respondents selected for the research, more than one fifth (28.5%) of the respondents have completed their primary education, 19.5 percent of the respondents had completed their middle school education, 19 percent of the respondents have completed high school education, 13.1 percent hold bachelor degree, 9 percent possess higher secondary education, 6.3 percent of the respondents are illiterate, 1.8 percent have completed master degree and ITI and the remaining 0.9 percent of the respondents have completed diploma in engineering.

Type of family

Every individual is socialized through her/his family. Family has a vital influence on human behaviour and in individual's future development. Family is the right place to make a person a good human being (Bhushan & Sachdeva, 2006). Family is the basic unit of society, which helps the individuals in their socio-economic and political development (Guy, 2013). Family is considered to be one of the most important indicators of grass root level leadership.

Table 4.4 Distribution of the respondents by the family type

Sl. No.	Type of family	Frequency	Percentage
1	Nuclear Family	146	66.1
2	Joint Family	75	33.9
	Total	**221**	**100.0**

Table 4.4 explains that two third of the respondents (66.1%) live in nuclear family and 33.9 percent of the respondents live in joint family.

Types of house

House is one of the important factors for assessing the quality of life of human beings. Different types of houses serve to define the life space of a person.

Table 4.5 Distribution of the respondents by their type of housing

Sl. No.	Type of house	Frequency	Percentage
1	Concrete House	168	76.0
2	Thatched House	38	17.2
3	Tiled House	15	6.8
	Total	**221**	**100.0**

Table 4.5 shows the type of house of the respondents. Majority of the respondents (76.0%) are living in concrete house, 17.2 percent of the respondents are living in thatched house and the remaining 6.8 percent of the respondents are having tiled houses.

Ownership of house

Table 4.6 Distribution of the respondents by their ownership of house

Sl. No.	Ownership of house	Frequency	Percentage
1	Own House	219	99.1
2	Rented House	2	0.9
	Total	**221**	**100.0**

Table 4.6 shows the ownership of the house of the respondents. Majority of the respondents (99.1 percent) are residing in their own houses and only 0.9 percent of respondents are residing in rented houses.

Nativity/Residence

Nativity is a person's birth place or place of origin and residence means the place, especially the house, in which a person lives or resides (Dictionary.com, 2015). Most of the male SC Panchayat Presidents are the natives of the place and female reside with their spouse after their marriage.

Table 4.7 Distribution of the respondents by the years of residence in the village

Sl. No.	Residence	Frequency	Percentage
1	Since Birth	143	64.7
2	3 - 8 Years	10	4.5
3	9 - 14 Years	5	2.3
4	15 - 20 Years	23	10.4
5	21 - 26 Years	12	5.4
6	27 - 32 Years	12	5.4
7	33 - 38 Years	5	2.3
8	39 - 44 Years	4	1.8
9	45 - 50 Years	6	2.7
10	51 Years and above	1	0.5
	Total	**221**	**100.0**

Table 4.7 shows that majority (64.7 percent) of the respondents are natives, 10.4 percent of the respondents are residing in the area from 3-8 years, 5.4 percent of the respondents each are residing 21-26 years and 27-32 years respectively, 4.5 percent of the respondents are residing 3-8 years, 2.7 percent of the respondents are residing 45-50 years, 2.3 percent of the respondents each are residing 9-14 years and 33-38 years respectively, 1.8 percent of the respondents are residing 39-44 years and 0.5 percent of the respondents are residing from 51 and above years in their village.

Access to Potable Water

Everyone has the right to access water and sanitation service that is physically accessible within the household. According to World Health Organization (2003), the water source has to be within 1,000 metres of the home and collection time should not exceed 30 minutes (Ki-moon, 2010). In India the households who have drinking water facilities within the premises is 46.1 per cent in rural areas (The Economic Times, 2013).

Table 4.8 Respondents' household having potable water connection

Sl. No.	Potable water source	Frequency	Percentage
1	Having potable water connection	152	68.8
2	Not having potable water connection	69	31.2
	Total	**221**	**100.0**

Table 4.8 shows that majority of the respondents (68.8 percent) have potable water connection at their household and the rest of (31.2 percent) of the respondents are not having potable water connection at their household. This shows the poor infrastructure facilities in the rural areas.

Toilet facility

According to Nation Sample Survey Organization (2013), 60 per cent rural households in India do not have access to toilet facility even after 66 years of Independence.

Table 4.9 Respondents' household having toilet facility

Sl. No.	Toilet facility	Frequency	Percentage
1	Having toilet facility at home	130	58.8
2	Not having toilet facility at home	91	41.2
	Total	**221**	**100.0**

Table 4.9 shows that majority (58.8 percent) of the respondents have toilet facilities and sizable distributions of the respondents (41.2%) do not have the toilet facility in their house.

It reveals that even the Panchayat Presidents have no toilet facility in their houses. They are used to the practice of open defecation. In India, open defecation is a well-established traditional practice deeply ingrained from early childhood. Sanitation is not a socially acceptable topic and as a result, people do not discuss it. Consequently,

open defecation has persisted as a norm for many Indians. In addition to tradition and the communication taboo, the practice still exists due to poverty (UNICEF, 2015).

Primary occupation

Occupation is an important ingredient of participation. Panchayat President Position is basically a non-profitable volunteer work. However, in the State of Tamil Nadu, paying honorarium to the Panchayat Presidents has made it a subsidiary occupation for members who have their own primary occupation as the source of income for the maintenance of their families. Occupation is another determinant of grassroot level leadership. The primary occupation or the profession of the representatives is another factor which plays an important role in the development of the village.

Table 4.10 Primary occupation of the respondents

Sl. No.	Primary occupation	Frequency	Percentage
1	Farmer	82	37.1
2	Unemployed	66	29.9
3	Coolie	48	21.7
4	Business	17	7.6
5	Lawyer	7	3.2
6	Siddha Medical Practitioner	1	0.5
	Total	**221**	**100.0**

Table 4.10 illustrates that more than one third of the respondents (37.1 percent) are doing farming in their own agricultural land, 29.9 percent of the respondents are unemployed, 21.7 percent are working as agricultural coolies, 7.6 percent are doing business, 3.2 percent are advocates and only one respondent (0.5 per cent) is a Siddha Medical Practitioner.

Monthly Income

It is a widely shared view that economic status is a powerful determinant of rural leadership. Income is a good measure of economic status provided the members give the correct figure of their income. However, because of the evasive nature of human beings to disclose the real income the factual figure is usually not given. The members are unable to assess their income correctly due to the uncertainties and unpredictability involved in both agriculture and as well as in their business pursuits.

Table 4.11 Distribution of the respondents by their monthly income

Sl. No.	Monthly Income	Frequency	Percentage
1	Below INR 3000	115	52.0
2	INR 3001 – 6000	24	10.9
3	INR 6001 – 9000	3	1.4
4	INR 9001 – 12000	7	3.2
5	INR 12001 – 15000	3	1.4
6	INR 15001 – 18000	2	0.9
7	INR 18001 – 21000	1	0.5
8	Unemployed	66	29.9
	Total	**221**	**100.0**

Table 4.11 explains that more than half of the respondents' (52 percent) monthly income is below INR 3000, more than one fifth (29.9 percent) of the respondents are unemployed, 10.9 percent earn a monthly income of INR 3001-6000, the monthly income of 3.2 percent are INR 9001-12000, 1.4 percent each of the respondents' monthly income is INR 6001-9000 and INR 12001-15000, 0.9 percent of the respondents' monthly income is INR 15001-18000 and the remaining 0.5 percent earn a monthly income of INR 18001-21000.

Panchayat Presidents are not receiving any salary from the government. However, they receive honorarium from the panchayat fund which is INR 1000 per month.

Agricultural land

Agricultural land is the primary asset for SC Panchayat Presidents. It is widely believed that if the Panchayat Presidents have agricultural land, their economic status is so powerful to determine the rural leadership.

Table 4.12 Distribution of the respondents by their ownership of agricultural land

Sl. No.	Ownership of agricultural land	Frequency	Percentage
1	Do not own any land	50	22.6
2	Below 1 acre	30	13.6
3	2 - 7 acre	107	48.4
4	8 - 13 acre	29	13.1
5	14 - 19 acre	2	0.9
6	20 - 25 acre	2	0.9
7	Above 26 acre	1	0.5
	Total	**221**	**100.0**

Table 4.12 shows that a large distribution of the respondents (48.4 percent) are having 2-7 acres of agricultural land, 22.6 percent of the respondents are landless, 13.6 percent of the respondents have below 1 acre, 13.1 percent of the respondents have 8-13 acres of agricultural land, 0.9 percent each of the respondents own 14-19 acres and 20-25 acres and the remaining 0.5 percent of the respondents are having more than 26 acres agricultural land.

4.3. Mode of entry into the local self-governance

Table 4.13 Respondents' family members contested in previous panchayat elections

Sl. No.	Family members contested in previous panchayat elections	Frequency	Percentage
1	Contested	78	35.3
2	Not contested	143	64.7
	Total	**221**	**100.0**

Table 4.13 reveals that more than one third (64.7%) of the respondents' family members have not contested in previous panchayat elections and the remaining 35.3 percent respondents' family members have contested and have won in the previous panchayat elections.

Table 4.14 Distribution of the respondents based on contesting in panchayat elections in the past

Sl. No.	Post contested by the respondents in the past	Frequency	Percentage
1	Ward Member	10	4.5
2	Panchayat President	121	54.8
3	Councillor	6	2.7
4	Both Panchayat President & Councillor	7	3.2
5	Not contested in the past	77	34.8
	Total	**221**	**100.0**

Table 4.14 illustrates that more than half (54.8 percent) of the respondents have contested for panchayat President position in the past, 34.8 percent of the respondents have not contested in panchayat elections, 4.5 percent of the respondents have contested for the post of ward members, 3.2 percent of the respondents have contested for both panchayat president and councillor post and 2.7 percent of the respondents have contested for the position of councillor in the earlier panchayat elections.

Table 4.15 Respondents who won previous panchayat elections

Sl. No.	Result of the previous elections	Frequency	Percentage
1	Won in the election	59	26.7
2	Lost in the election	85	38.5
3	Not participated	77	34.8
	Total	**221**	**100.0**

Table 4.15 reveals that more than one third (38.5 percent) of the respondents have lost in the previous panchayat elections, 34.8 percent of the respondents have not contested in previous panchayat elections and the remaining 26.7 percent of the respondents have won in the previous panchayat elections.

Table 4.16 Reasons for contesting in the panchayat elections by the respondents

Sl. No.	Reason for contesting in the elections	Frequency	Percentage
1	Motivation of family members/ Spouse	72	32.6
2	Attracted by PRIs to help people	69	31.2
3	Motivation of community leaders	31	14.0
4	Previous social service experiences	15	6.8
5	Reservation by the government	5	2.3
6	To solve the village problems	5	2.3
7	Promoted by Self Help Groups	4	1.8
8	To help the SC people	4	1.8
9	Attracted by the powers of panchayat President	1	0.5
	Total	**221**	**100.0**

Table 4.16 indicates that nearly one third (32.6%) of the respondents' family members and their spouse influenced and motivated the respondents to contest in panchayat elections, 31.2 percent of the respondents are attracted by PRIs to help the people, 14 percent of the respondents contested in elections because of the motivation of other community leaders, 6.8 percent of the respondents contested in elections because of their involvement in social service activities, 2.3 percent each of the respondents contested in elections because of reservations and to solve the village problems, 1.8 percent each of the respondents are promoted by the self-help groups and to help the SC community through PRIs and the remaining 0.5 percent of the respondents contested in elections because of the powers of Panchayat President.

Figure 4.2 Participation of respondents in panchayat elections prior to the reservation for SC
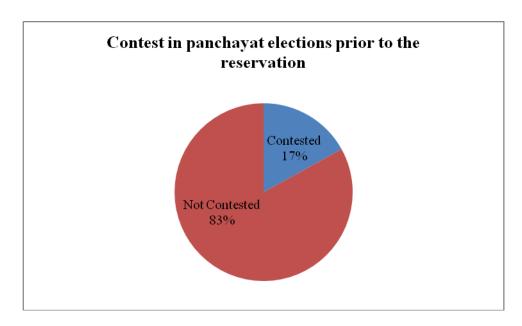
Chart 4.2 shows that majority (82.8 percent) of the respondents have not contested in panchayat elections prior to the reservation of the panchayat for SC and the remaining 17.2 percent of the respondents have contested in the elections prior to the reservation of the panchayat for SC people.

Table 4.17 Reasons for not contesting in elections prior to the reservation of the panchayat for SC

Sl. No.	Reason for not contesting in unreserved panchayat elections	Frequency	Percentage
1	Fear of failure due to less number of SC voters	148	67.0
2	Not interested	29	13.1
3	Threat from dominant community leaders	4	1.8
4	Government Employee	2	0.9
5	Contested in unreserved panchayat elections	38	17.2
	Total	**221**	**100.0**
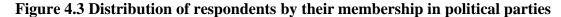
Table 4.17 indicates that more than two thirds (67.0 percent) of the respondents have not contested in elections, when the panchayat was not reserved for SC due to fear of failure due to less number of SC voters, 17.2 percent of the respondents have contested in unreserved panchayat elections, 13.1 percent of the respondents have not contested as they were not interested to contest in unreserved panchayat, 1.8 percent of the respondents have not contested in unreserved panchayat elections because of the threat from dominant community leaders and the remaining 0.9 percent of the respondents were government employee, so they were ineligible to contest in panchayat elections.

Table 4.18 Respondents' opinion about the support received from other community people

Sl. No.	Opinion about the support from other community people	Frequency	Percentage
1	Received support	147	66.5
2	Not received support	74	33.5
	Total	**221**	**100.0**

Table 4.18 clearly shows that majority of respondents (66.5%) were supported by other community and the remaining 33.5 percent of the respondent were not supported by other community.

Still in the rural areas dominant caste people have not changed their attitudes regarding the caste system. However, the common people with radical social justice ideology keep supporting the rights of SC Panchayat Presidents.

Figure 4.3 Distribution of respondents by their membership in political parties
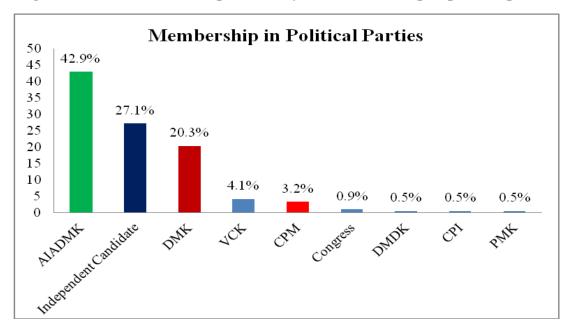
Diagram 4.3 illustrates that more than one third of the respondents (42.9 percent) are members of All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) which is the ruling party of Tamil Nadu (2011-present), 27.1 percent of the respondents are not members of any political party and are considered as independent candidates, 20.3 percent of the respondents are members of Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), 4.1 percent of the respondents are members of Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK), 3.2 percent of the respondents are member of Communist Party of India Marxist (CPM), 0.9 percent of the respondents are members of Indian National Congress Party (INCP) and the remaining 0.5 percent of the respondents are members of Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam (DMDK) and 0.5 percent each of the respondents are members of Communist Party of India (CPI) and Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK).

Table 4.19 Distribution of the respondents by their position in political party

Sl. No.	Position in political party	Frequency	Percentage
1	Having membership only and not holding any positions	87	39.4
2	Holding some positions in the political party	74	33.5
3	Independent Candidate	60	27.1
	Total	**221**	**100.0**

Table 4.19 shows that more than one third of the respondents (39.4%) do not hold any post in their political party, but they have membership, 33.5 percent of the respondents hold post in State level, District level, Block level and Village level in their political party and the remaining 27.1 percent of the respondents are independents, and are not members of any political party.

Table 4.20 Distribution of the respondents based on the support received from political parties after becoming Panchayat Presidents

Sl. No.	Support received	Frequency	Percentage
1	Already member of a political party	161	72.8
2	Independent candidate received support from AIADMK party	59	26.7
3	Independent candidate received support from DMK party	1	0.5
	Total	**221**	**100.0**

Table 4.20 reveals that a large number of respondents (72.8 percent) are already members of political parties, 26.7 percent of the respondents have received support from AIADMK party after they have become Panchayat Presidents and the remaining 0.5 percent of the respondents have received support from DMK party after becoming Panchayat Presidents.

4.4. Level of administrative skills as perceived by the respondents

Table 4.21 represents the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents. This table comprises of 22 factors that assess the perception of the respondents over their administrative skills.

Table 4.21 Level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents

Sl. No.	Self Assessment on perceived administrative skills	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good	Total
1	Decision making	17 (7.7%)	26 (11.8%)	68 (30.8%)	31 (14.0%)	79 (35.7%)	**221 (100.0%)**
2	Leadership qualities	19 (8.6%)	26 (11.8%)	62 (28.1%)	33 (14.9%)	81 (36.7%)	**221 (100.0%)**
3	Active participation	17 (7.7%)	23 (10.4%)	66 (29.9%)	31 (14.0%)	84 (38.0%)	**221 (100.0%)**
4	Formulate policy	19 (8.6%)	30 (13.6%)	67 (30.3%)	30 (13.6%)	75 (33.9%)	**221 (100.0%)**
5	Working hard	17 (7.7%)	25 (11.3%)	62 (28.1%)	34 (15.4%)	83 (37.6%)	**221 (100.0%)**
6	Understanding others mind clearly	20 (9.0%)	27 (12.2%)	64 (29.0%)	32 (14.5%)	78 (35.3%)	**221 (100.0%)**
7	Identifying the opportunities	18 (8.1%)	33 (14.9%)	64 (29.0%)	30 (13.6%)	76 (34.4%)	**221 (100.0%)**
8	Changing attitudes in accordance with the environment	18 (8.1%)	29 (13.1%)	67 (30.3%)	29 (13.1%)	78 (35.3%)	**221 (100.0%)**
9	Coping capacity	19 (8.6%)	25 (11.3%)	65 (29.4%)	31 (14.0%)	81 (36.7%)	**221 (100.0%)**
10	Capacity on Implementing	19 (8.6%)	23 (10.4%)	71 (32.1%)	30 (13.6%)	78 (35.3%)	**221 (100.0%)**

84

	plans					
11	Enticement of speaking	22 (10.0%)	28 (12.7%)	63 (28.5%)	32 (14.5%)	76 (34.4%)	**221 (100.0%)**
12	Open mindedness and transparent activities	17 (7.7%)	24 (10.9%)	66 (29.9%)	34 (15.4%)	80 (36.2%)	**221 (100.0%)**
13	Formulating ambitious dreams on Panchayat development	18 (8.1%)	27 (12.2%)	71 (32.1%)	30 (13.6%)	75 (33.9%)	**221 (100.0%)**
14	In being prudent concentrations	17 (7.7%)	26 (11.8%)	67 (30.3%)	31 (14.0%)	80 (36.2%)	**221 (100.0%)**
15	Delegation of work	17 (7.7%)	23 (10.4%)	61 (27.6%)	34 (15.4%)	86 (38.9%)	**221 (100.0%)**
16	In appreciating the good work	18 (8.1%)	25 (11.3%)	60 (27.1%)	34 (15.4%)	84 (38.0%)	**221 (100.0%)**
17	In solving the problems	23 (10.4%)	33 (14.9%)	55 (24.9%)	30 (13.6%)	80 (36.2%)	**221 (100.0%)**
18	In organizing the community to work as a team	19 (8.6%)	26 (11.8%)	63 (28.5%)	36 (16.3%)	77 (34.8%)	**221 (100.0%)**
19	In getting suggestions from others	17 (7.7%)	24 (10.9%)	56 (25.3%)	29 (13.1%)	95 (43.0%)	**221 (100.0%)**
20	In giving suggestions to others	20 (9.0%)	28 (12.7%)	59 (26.7%)	32 (14.5%)	82 (37.1%)	**221 (100.0%)**

21	In Following the organizational rules/ground rules/characteristics	17 (7.7%)	24 (10.9%)	60 (27.1%)	37 (16.7%)	83 (37.6%)	**221 (100.0%)**
22	In organizing research and planning meetings	18 (8.1%)	29 (13.1%)	65 (29.4%)	33 (14.9%)	76 (34.4%)	**221 (100.0%)**

Table 4.21 shows the distribution of respondents by their level on the various factors of perceived administrative skills. It indicates that more than one third of the respondents (35.7 percent) have perceived that they are 'very good' in decision making on the various processes of the panchayats, 30.8 percent are 'average' in decision making, 14.0 percent are 'good' in decision making, 11.8 percent have perceived that they are 'poor' in decision making and the remaining 7.7 percent of the respondents are 'very poor' in decision making.

With respect to leadership quality, it is found that more than one third (36.7 percent) of the respondents are 'very good' in taking leadership initiatives, 28.1 percent are 'average', 14.9 percent are 'good', 11.8 percent of the respondents are 'poor' in taking leadership and the remaining 8.6 percent of the respondents are 'very poor' in their leadership quality.

Over the assessment on active participation, it was found that more than one third of the respondents (38 percent) are 'very good' in active participation in panchayat activities, 29.9 percent of the respondents are 'average', 14.0 percent of the respondents are 'good', 10.4 percent of the respondents are 'poor' and the remaining 7.7 percent of the respondents are 'very poor' in active participation in panchayat and public affairs.

It is observed that more than one third (33.9 percent) of the respondents are 'very good' in formulating policy at grassroots level, 30.3 percent of the respondents are 'average', 13.6 percent each of the respondents are 'good' and 'poor' in formulating policy and the remaining 8.6 percent are 'very poor' in formulating policy.

The results further indicate that more than one third of the respondents (37.6 percent) are 'very good' in hard working, 28.1 percent of the respondents are 'average', 15.4 percent of the respondents are 'good', 11.3 percent of the respondents are 'poor' in hard working and a very small distribution (7.7%) of the respondents are 'very poor'.

With regard to understanding of others, more than one third of the respondents are (35.3 percent) 'very good' in understanding others clearly, 29 percent of the respondents are 'average', 14.5 percent of the respondents are 'good', 12.2 percent of the respondents are 'poor' in understanding others and the remaining 9 percent of the respondents are 'very poor' in understanding others clearly.

With respect to identifying the opportunities, more than one third of the respondents (34.4 percent) are 'very good', 29 percent of the respondents are 'average', 14.9 percent of the respondents are 'poor', 13.6 percent of the respondents are 'good' and the remaining 8.1 percent of the respondents are 'very poor' in identifying the opportunities.

The results exhibit that more than one third of the respondents (35.3 percent) are 'very good', 30.3 percent of the respondents are 'average', 13.1 percent of the respondents each are 'good' and 'poor' and the remaining 8.1 percent are 'very poor' in changing their attitudes in accordance with the environment.

With regards to coping capacity, more than one third of the respondents (36.7 percent) are 'very good', 29.4 percent of the respondents are 'average', 14.0 percent of the respondents are 'good', 11.3 percent of the respondents are 'poor' in and the remaining 8.6 percent of the respondents are 'very poor' in coping capacity.

The results show that one third (35.3%) of the respondents have perceived that they are 'very good' in implementing plans, 32.1 percent of the respondents are 'average', 13.6 percent of the respondents are 'good', 10.4 percent of the respondents are 'poor' and the remaining 8.6 percent of the respondents are 'very poor' in implementing plans.

The assessment on enticement of speaking clearly shows that more than one third (34.4 percent) of the respondents are 'very good', 28.5 percent of the respondents are 'average', 14.5 percent of the respondents are 'good', 12.7 percent of the respondents are 'poor' and the remaining 10 percent of the respondents are 'very poor' in enticement of speaking.

With regard to open minded and transparent activities, more than one third of the respondents (36.2 percent) are 'very good', 29.9 percent of the respondents are 'average', 15.4 percent of the respondents are 'good', 10.9 percent of the respondents are 'poor' and the remaining 7.7 percent are 'very poor' in open minded and transparent activities in panchayat.

In formulating ambitious dreams on panchayat development, nearly one third (33.9 percent) of the respondents are 'very good', 32.1 percent of the respondents are 'average', 13.6 percent of the respondents are 'good', 12.2 percent of the respondents are 'poor' and the remaining 8.1 percent of the respondents are 'very poor' in formulating ambitious dreams on panchayat development.

In being prudent concentrations, more than one third of the respondents (36.2%) are 'very good', 30.3 percent of the respondents are 'average', 14 percent of the respondents are 'good', 11.8 percent of the respondents are 'poor' and the remaining 7.7 percent of the respondents are 'very poor' in being prudent concentrations.

Over the assessment on delegation of works to others, more than one third (38.9 percent) of the respondents have perceived as 'very good', 27.6 percent of the respondents are 'average', 15.4 percent of the respondents are 'good', 10.4 percent of the respondents are 'poor' and the remaining 7.7 percent of the respondents are 'very poor' in delegation of work.

In appreciating the works done by others, more than one third of the respondents (38.0%) 'very good', 27.1 percent of the respondents are 'average', 15.4 percent of the respondents appreciate 'good', 11.3 percent of the respondents are 'poor' and the remaining 8.1 percent of the respondents are 'very poor' in appreciating the good work of others.

In solving the panchayat problems, more than one third of the respondents are (36.2 percent) 'very good', 24.9 percent of the respondents are 'average', 14.9 percent of the respondents are 'poor' in solving the problems, 13.6 percent of the respondents are 'good' and the remaining 10.4 percent of the respondents are very 'poor' in solving the problems.

With respect to organizing the community to work as a team, more than one third of the respondents (34.8 percent) are very 'good', 28.5 percent of the respondents are 'average', 16.3 percent of the respondents are 'good', 11.8 percent of the respondents are 'poor' and the remaining 8.6 percent of the respondents are 'very poor' in organizing the community to work as a team.

For getting the suggestions from others, a large distributions (43.0 percent) of the respondents are 'very good', 25.3 percent of the respondents are 'average', 13.1 percent of the respondents are 'good', 10.9 percent of the respondents are 'poor' and the remaining 7.7 percent of the respondents are 'very poor' in getting suggestions from others.

In giving suggestions to others, more than one third of the respondents (37.1%) are 'very good', 26.7 percent of the respondents are 'average', 14.5 percent of the respondents are 'good', 12.7 percent of the respondents are 'poor' and the remaining 9.0 percent of the respondents are 'very poor' in giving suggestions to others.

In the formulation of organizational ground rules for panchayat, more than one third (37.6 percent) of the respondents are 'very good', 27.1 percent of the respondents are 'average', 16.7 percent of the respondents are 'good', 10.9 percent of the respondents are 'poor' and the remaining 7.7 percent of the respondents are 'very poor' in following the organizational ground rules.

Over the assessment on organizing research and planning meetings in the panchayat, more than one third of the respondents (34.4%) are 'very good' in organizing research and planning meetings, 29.4 percent of the respondents are 'average', 14.9 percent of the respondents are 'good', 13.1 percent of the respondents are 'poor' and the rest of 8.1 percent of the respondents are 'very poor' in organizing research and planning meetings.

Figure 4.4 Level of overall perceived administrative skills of the respondents
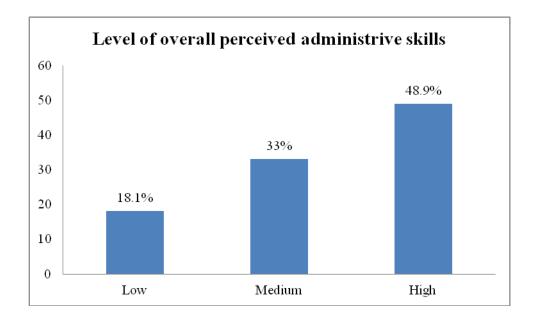
Diagram 4.4 shows that nearly half of the respondents (48.9 percent) are having high level of perceived administrative skills, one third of the respondents (33 percent) are having medium level and the remaining 18.1 percent of the respondents are having low level of perceived administrative skills.

It indicates that more than half of the respondents (50.3 percent) are not satisfied with their administration skills and leadership qualities.

4.5. Awareness about duties and responsibilities and its fulfillment

Table 4.22 Preparation of annual plan and budget of the panchayat by the respondents

Sl. No.	Preparation of annual plan and budget	Able to prepare	Not able to prepare	Unaware	Total
1	Annual Plan	28 (12.7%)	130 (58.8%)	63 (28.5%)	**221 (100.0%)**
2	Budget	77 (34.8%)	87 (39.4%)	57 (25.8%)	**221 (100.0%)**

Table 4.22 explains that more than half of respondents (58.8 percent) are not able to prepare annual plan, 28.5 percent of the respondents are unaware about annual plan and only 12.7 percent of the respondents are actively involved in the preparation of annual plan.

The table also illustrates that more than one third of the respondents (39.4 percent) are not able to prepare annual budget, 34.8 percent of the respondents prepare annual budget and the remaining 25.8 percent of the respondents are unaware about the annual budget.

Various Committees of the Panchayat

All the elected representatives of the village panchayat form the Panchayat Committee. The Panchayat Committee is responsible for taking decisions, such as approving plans and budgets, reviewing progress etc. The village Panchayat President is the Chairperson of the Panchayat Committee and performs the duties as per the decisions of the Panchayat Committee. The village panchayat president is the Executive Head of the Panchayat and presides over and conducts the meetings of the village panchayat. The Panchayat President is also the Administrative Head of the village panchayat.

Table 4.23 Distribution of the respondents by their awareness about various Panchayat Committees

Sl. No.	Awareness about Committees	Aware	Unaware	Total
1	Standing Committee	53 (24.0%)	168 (76.0%)	**221 (100.0%)**
2	Development Committee	75 (33.9%)	146 (66.1%)	**221 (100.0%)**
3	Agriculture and Water Committee	94 (42.5%)	127 (57.5%)	**221 (100.0%)**
4	Working Committee	48 (21.7%)	173 (78.3%)	**221 (100.0%)**
5	Educational Committee	181 (81.9%)	40 (18.1)	**221 (100.0%)**
6	Monitoring Committee	97 (43.9%)	124 (56.1%)	**221 (100.0%)**

Table 4.23.1 shows that majority of the respondents (76 percent) are unaware about the Standing Committee and less than one-fourth (24.0 percent) of the respondents are aware about the Standing Committee.

With regard to the Development Committee, nearly two thirds (66.1 percent) of the respondents are unaware and the remaining 33.9 percent of the respondents only are aware of the Development Committee.

More than half of the respondents (57.5 percent) are unaware of Agriculture and Water Committee and the remaining 42.5 percent of the respondents are aware of the committee.

With regard to the Working Committee, majority (78.3 percent) of the respondents are unaware about Working Committee and the remaining 21.7 percent of the respondents are aware about Working Committee.

Majority (81.9 percent) of the respondents are aware of the Educational Committee and the remaining 18.1 percent of the respondents are unaware about the Educational Committee.

More than half of the respondents (56.1 percent) are unaware about the Monitoring Committee and the remaining 43.9 percent of the respondents are aware of the Monitoring Committee.

Table 4.24 Membership of the respondents in forest group

Sl. No.	Forest group	Frequency	Percentage
1	Aware	5	2.3
2	Unaware	42	19.0
3	Not applicable	174	78.7
	Total	**221**	**100.0**

Table 4.24 reveals that a 78.7 percent of the village panchayats do not have forest in their village panchayats, 19.0 percent of the respondents are unaware about forest group and the remaining 2.3 percent of the respondents are members of the forest group.

Duties and Responsibilities

The Tamil Nadu Panchayat Raj Act, 1994 describes that the Panchayat Presidents have five types of duties and responsibilities viz. Compulsory duties (Section 110), Optional Responsibilities (Section 111), other responsibilities (Section 112, 113, 114), other department works and other responsibilities. So the village Panchayat Presidents have to discharge their duties accordingly.

Table 4.25 Respondents' awareness and utilisation of funds given under compulsory duties and responsibilities of Tamil Nadu Panchayat Raj Act, 1994 (Section 110)

Sl. No.	Compulsory duties and responsibilities	Availed	Not availed	Unaware	Total
1	Panchayat General Fund	220 (99.5%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.5%)	**221 (100.0%)**
2	Block Fund	102 (46.2%)	111 (50.2%)	8 (3.6%)	**221 (100.0%)**
3	District Fund	82 (37.1%)	130 (58.8%)	9 (4.1%)	**221 (100.0%)**
4	Member of Legislative Assembly Constituency Development Scheme (MLACDS)	94 (42.5%)	120 (54.3%)	7 (3.2%)	**221 (100.0%)**
5	Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS)	63 (28.5%)	151 (68.3%)	7 (3.2%)	**221 (100.0%)**
6	Rural Infrastructure Scheme (RIS)	152 (68.8%)	57 (25.8%)	12 (5.4%)	**221 (100.0%)**
7	Self Sufficient Scheme (SSS)	9 (4.1%)	186 (84.2%)	26 (11.8%)	**221 (100.0%)**
8	Revenue Fund	175 (79.2%)	35 (15.8%)	11 (5.0%)	**221 (100.0%)**
9	Scheduled Castes Sub Plan (SCSP)	11 (5.0%)	127 (57.5%)	83 (37.6%)	**221 (100.0%)**

Table 4.25.1 demonstrates that majority of the respondents (99.5 percent) have availed Panchayat General Fund and the remaining 0.5 percent of the respondents is unaware about Panchayat General Fund.

Nearly half of the respondents (50.2 percent) have not been given the Block Fund as they belong to opponent political party, 46.2 percent of the respondents have availed Block Fund through Block Councillors and Block Chairman and the remaining 3.6 percent of the respondents are unaware about Block Fund.

More than half of the respondents (58.8 percent) have not availed District Fund. This fund is disbursed through District Councillors and District Chairman. Only 37.1 percent of the respondents have availed the District fund and the remaining 4.1 percent of the respondents are unaware about the District Fund.

More than half of the respondents (54.3 percent) do not receive MLACDS, 42.5 percent of the respondents receive MLACDS and the remaining 3.2 percent of the respondents are unaware about MLACDS.

Majority of the respondents (68.3 percent) do not receive the MPLADS, 28.5 percent of the respondents receive MPLADS and the remaining 3.2 percent of the respondents are unaware about MPLADS.

Majority of the respondents (68.8 percent) avail Rural Infrastructure Scheme, 25.8 percent of the respondents do not avail RIS and the remaining 5.4 percent of the respondents are unaware about rural infrastructure scheme.

Majority of the respondents (84.2 percent) do not receive funds through Self Sufficient Scheme. Under this scheme the Panchayat Presidents raise fund from the people and an equal amount will be contributed by the government. 11.8 percent are unaware of SSS and only 4.1 percent of the respondents have availed this scheme.

A large number of the respondents (79.2 percent) raised the Revenue Fund, which is collected from people through the housing tax. 15.8 percent of the respondents do not avail revenue fund and the remaining 5.0 percent of the respondents are unaware about it.

More than half of the respondents (57.5 percent) do not avail SCSP Fund directly, 37.6 percent of the respondents are unaware of SCSP Fund and only 5 percent of the respondents avail SCSP Fund directly.

Table 4.26 Respondents' awareness and utilisation of funds given under optional duties and responsibilities of Tamil Nadu Panchayat Raj Act, 1994 (Section 111)

Sl. No.	Optional duties and responsibilities	Availed	Not availed	Unaware	Total
1	Forest department fund	52 (23.5%)	148 (67.0%)	21 (9.5%)	**221 (100.0%)**
2	Donor's fund	25 (11.3%)	171 (77.4%)	25 (11.3%)	**221 (100.0%)**
3	Corporate Social Responsibility fund (CSR)	8 (3.6%)	189 (85.5%)	24 (10.9%)	**221 (100.0%)**

Table 4.26.1 exemplify that more than half of the respondents (67 percent) do not receive forest department fund and saplings, 23.5 percent of the respondents received forest department fund and saplings and the remaining 9.5 percent of the respondents are unaware about forest department fund.

A large numbers of the respondents (77.4 percent) have not utilised fund from donors and the remaining 11.3 percent each of the respondents have utilised the fund from donors and unaware about it.

Majority of the respondents' (85.5 percent) villages do not have any kind of industries and are not getting CSR Fund, 10.9 percent of the respondents are unaware about CSR Fund and the remaining 3.6 percent of village panchayat have industries and are getting the CSR Fund.

Table 4.27 Respondents' awareness and utilisation of funds given under other duties and responsibilities of Tamil Nadu Panchayat Raj Act, 1994 (Section 112, 113 and 114)

Sl. No.	Other duties and responsibilities	Availed	Not availed	Unaware	Total
1	Tamil Nadu Village Habitation Improvement Scheme (THAI)	168 (76.0%)	53 (24.0%)	0 (0%)	**221 (100.0%)**
2	Chief Minister's Solar Powered Green House Scheme (CMSPGHS)	157 (71.0%)	64 (29.0%)	0 (0%)	**221 (100.0%)**
3	Indira Awas Yojana (IAY)	210 (95.0%)	11 (5.0%)	0 (0%)	**221 (100.0%)**
4	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)	221 (100.0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	**221 (100.0%)**
5	Solar Light	67 (30.3%)	151 (68.3%)	3 (1.4%)	**221 (100.0%)**
6	Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC)	149 (67.4%)	65 (29.4)	7 (3.2%)	**221 (100.0%)**
7	Clean Village Campaign (CVC)	166 (75.1%)	48 (21.7%)	7 (3.2%)	**221 (100.0%)**

Table 4.27.1 indicates that majority of the respondents (76.0 percent) have availed THAI scheme, 24.0 percent did not receive fund under THAI scheme. On rotation basis every panchayat is given opportunity to avail this scheme.

A large number of respondents (71.0 percent) receive CMSPGHS and the remaining 29.0 percent of the respondents have not availed this programme.

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Majority of the respondents' (95.0 percent) panchayats have availed Indira Awas Yojana scheme and the remaining 5.0 percent of the respondents have not availed this scheme.

Majority of the respondents (68.3 percent) have received Solar Light for their panchayats, 30.3 percent did not receive Solar Lights for their panchayats and the remaining 1.4 percent of the respondents are unaware about Solar Light Scheme.

Majority of the respondents' (67.4 percent) panchayats have availed Total Sanitation Campaign programme. Through this programme, every eligible household in the panchayat is given financial assistance to construct latrine in their houses. 29.4 percent of the panchayats did not avail TSC programme and the remaining 3.2 percent of respondents are unaware about TSC programme.

Majority of the respondents' (75.1 percent) panchayat implement CVC programme. Under this scheme two sweepers are appointed to clean the villages every day, 21.7 percent of the respondents' panchayat do not have CVC and the remaining 3.2 percent of the respondents are unaware about CVC programme.

Table 4.28 Respondents' awareness and utilisation of funds given under other department works of Tamil Nadu Panchayat Raj Act, 1994

Sl. No.	Other department works	Availed	Not availed	Unaware	Total
1	Patta Scheme (Allotment of land free of cost to construct house)	57 (25.8%)	164 (74.2%)	0 (0%)	**221 (100.0%)**
2	Pension to Old Aged /Widows and Differently Abled	161 (72.9%)	60 (27.1%)	0 (0%)	**221 (100.0%)**
3	Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY)	13 (5.9%)	117 (53.0%)	91 (41.2)	**221 (100.0%)**

Table 4.28.1 shows that majority of the respondents (74.2%) did not provide Patta to people in their panchayat and the remaining 25.8 percent of the respondents have provided Patta to eligible people.

Majority of the respondents (72.9 percent) have recommended the eligible people Old Aged, Widows and Differently Abled persons Pension Scheme and the remaining 27.1 percent of respondents did not recommend anybody for the Scheme.

More than half of the respondents (53.0 percent) did not implement Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana, 41.2 percent of the respondents are unaware about SGRY and the remaining 5.9 percent of the respondents have implemented SGRY.

Table 4.29 Respondents' awareness and utilisation of funds given under other duties and responsibilities of Tamil Nadu Panchayat Raj Act, 1994

Sl. No.	Other Duties	Availed	Not availed	Unaware	Total
1	Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan (NBA)	46 (20.8%)	73 (33.0%)	102 (46.2%)	**221 (100.0%)**
2	National Project on Bio-gas Development	0 (0%)	79 (35.7%)	142 (64.3%)	**221 (100.0%)**
3	Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)	54 (24.4%)	111 (50.2%)	56 (25.3%)	**221 (100.0%)**
4	Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana (SGSY)	1 (0.5%)	76 (34.4%)	144 (65.2%)	**221 (100.0%)**
5	Rajiv Gandhi Rehabilitation Package (RGRP)	17 (7.7%)	136 (61.5%)	68 (30.8%)	**221 (100.0%)**
6	THANE Rehabilitation Programme	119 (53.8%)	77 (34.8%)	25 (11.3%)	**221 (100.0%)**
7	National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)	32 (14.5%)	131 (59.3%)	58 (26.2%)	**221 (100.0%)**

Table 4.29.1 illustrates that more than one third of the respondents (46.2 percent) are unaware about Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan programme, 33.0 percent of the respondents did not implement NBA programme and the remaining 20.8 percent implemented NBA programme in their respective panchayats.

More than half of the respondents (64.3 percent) are unaware about national bio-gas development programme and the remaining 35.7 percent did not implement national bio-gas development programme.

More than half of the respondents (50.2 percent) did not implement Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, 25.3 percent of respondents are unaware about PMGSY and only 24.4 percent of the respondents have implemented PMGSY in their respective panchayats.

More than half of the respondents (65.2 percent) are unaware about Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana, 34.4 percent of the respondents did not implement this programme and the remaining 0.5 percent of the respondents implement SGSY programme in their respective panchayats.

More than half of the respondents (61.5 percent) did not implement Rajiv Gandhi Rehabilitation Package, 30.8 percent of the respondents are unaware of RGRP and the remaining 7.7 percent of the respondents implement RGRP.

Half of the respondents (53.8 percent) have availed Thane Cyclone Rehabilitation Programme in their panchayat, 34.8 percent of the respondents' panchayat are not affected by Thane Cyclone and the remaining 11.3 percent of the respondents are unaware about Thane Cyclone Rehabilitation Programme.

More than half of the respondents (59.3 percent) have not availed the NABARD programme, 26.2 percent of the respondents are unaware about NABARD programme and the remaining 14.5 percent of the respondents have availed the NABARD programme.

Table 4.30 Availability of infrastructural facilities in the panchayats

Sl. No.	Infrastructure Facilities	Available	Not available	Total
1	Primary School	219 (99.1%)	2 (0.9%)	**221 (100.0%)**
2	Sub-Health Centre	71 (32.1%)	150 (67.9%)	**221 (100.0%)**
3	Women and child toilet complex	210 (95.0%)	11 (5.0%)	**221 (100.0%)**
4	Men's toilet complex	67 (30.3%)	154 (69.7%)	**221 (100.0%)**
5	Graveyard & Crematorium	217 (98.2%)	4 (1.8%)	**221 (100.0%)**
6	Community Hall	90 (40.7%)	131 (59.3%)	**221 (100.0%)**
7	Play Ground	125 (56.6%)	96 (43.4%)	**221 (100.0%)**
8	Shopping Complex	10 (4.5%)	211 (95.5%)	**221 (100.0%)**
9	Sub-Library	211 (95.5%)	10 (4.5%)	**221 (100.0%)**
10	Children's Garden	4 (1.8%)	217 (98.2%)	**221 (100.0%)**
11	Drainage	33 (15.0%)	188 (85.0%)	**221 (100.0%)**
12	Solid Waste Management Centre	2 (0.9%)	219 (99.1)	**221 (100.0%)**

Table 4.30.1 indicates that overwhelming majority of the respondents' (99.1 percent) panchayats have Primary Schools and the remaining 0.9 percent panchayats does not have Primary Schools.

Majority of the panchayats (67.9 percent) do not have Sub-Health Centres and the remaining 32.1 percent of the panchayats have Sub-Health Centres.

Majority of the panchayats (95.0 percent) are having Women and Child Toilet Complexes and the remaining 5.0 percent of the panchayats do not have Women and Child Toilet Complex. However, it was found that most of the people are not using the Women and Child Toilet Complexes due to lack of awareness about the issues of open defecation and related health problems.

More than two thirds of the respondents' panchayats (69.7 percent) do not have Men's Toilet Complexes and the remaining 30.3 percent of the panchayats have Men's Toilet Complexes.

Majority of the panchayats (98.2 percent) have Graveyard and Crematorium and only 1.8 percent of the panchayats do not have Graveyard and Crematorium in their locality.

More than half of the respondents' (59.3 percent) panchayats do not have Community Hall and the remaining 40.7 percent of the panchayats have Community Hall in their villages.

More than half (56.6 percent) of panchayats have Play Ground and the remaining 43.4 percent of the panchayats do not have Play Ground facilities.

Overwhelming majority of the panchayats (95.5 percent) do not have Shopping Complexes and the remaining 4.5 percent of panchayats have Shopping Complexes.

A vast majority of the panchayats (95.5 percent) have Sub-Library in their village and 4.5 percent of the panchayats do not have Sub-Library.

Overwhelming majority (98.2 percent) of the respondents' panchayats do not have Children's Garden and only 1.8 percent of panchayats have Children's Garden.

Majority of the panchayats (85 percent) do not have drainage facilities and the remaining 15.0 percent of the panchayats have drainage facilities.

Overwhelming majority (99.1%) of the panchayats do not have solid waste management centres and the remaining 0.9 percent of panchayats are having solid waste management centres.

Figure 4.5 Respondents' opinion about the allocation of funds to their panchayat

Diagram 4.5 shows that the majority (84.2 percent) of the respondents are not satisfied with the allocation of funds and only 15.8 percent of the respondents are satisfied. The Panchayat Presidents have opined that the allotment of funds by the government is very less. The fund is utilised for repairing motors, changing worn out street lights and installing new street lights and to give salary to tank operator and panchayat Secretary. The fund is not sufficient to spend on other infrastructural facilities.

Figure 4.6 Awards received by the respondents

Diagram 4.6 exhibits that majority (93.7 percent) of the respondents did not receive any award from government and Non-government organisations and the remaining 6.3 percent of the respondents have received awards from government and NGOs.

4.6. Challenges and Barriers

Table 4.31 Difficulties faced by the respondents during the election campaign

Sl. No.	Difficulties faced	Frequency	Percentage
1	False propaganda by the opponents	69	31.2
2	Pressure from dominant community leaders to withdraw from the elections	9	4.1
3	Threat for life security by dominant caste leaders	4	1.8
4	All the above	8	3.6
5	Did not face any difficulty	131	59.3
	Total	**221**	**100.0**

Table 4.31 shows that more than half of the respondents (59.3 percent) did not face any difficulty during the election campaign. Nearly one third (31.2 percent) of the respondents have faced difficulties during election campaign due to false propaganda by the opponents, 4.1 percent of the respondents were forced to withdraw their nomination by the dominant community leaders, 3.6 percent of the respondents have faced multiple difficulties viz. false propaganda by the opponents, pressure from dominant community leaders to withdraw from the election and threat for life security and the remaining 1.8 percent of the respondents have faced threat for life security.

Table 4.32 Caste-based abuse faced by the respondents while contesting in panchayat elections

Sl. No.	Form of caste-based Abuse	Frequency	Percentage
1	No abuse	101	45.7
2	Verbal	93	42.1
3	Mental	14	6.3
4	Physical	13	5.9
Total		**221**	**100.0**

Table 4.32 demonstrates that a large number (n=120) of respondents faced caste-based abuse while contesting in the elections. Nearly 42.1 percent of the respondents faced verbal abuse while contesting in elections, 6.3 percent faced mental abuse and the remaining 5.9 percent faced physical abuse while contesting in elections.

Table 4.33 Respondents' opinion about the causes for caste-based violence in their village panchayats

Sl. No.	Reason for caste-based violence	Frequency	Percentage
1	No violence	103	46.6
2	Atrocities of dominant caste	49	22.3
3	Alcoholic nuisance leads to Violence	13	5.9
4	Ridiculing SC women	9	4.0
5	Conflict during temple festival	9	4.0
6	Reservation of the Panchayat to SC	8	3.6
7	Statue of Bharat Ratna Dr. B.R. Ambedkar	8	3.6
8	Hoisting the Flag of different communities	6	2.7
9	Issues relating to revision of wages	6	2.7
10	Inter-caste marriage	5	2.3
11	Denied access to SC people into Caste Hindu areas	5	2.3
	Total	**221**	**100.0**

Table 4.33 shows that a large number of (n=115) respondents' panchayats faced caste-based violence due to various reasons. Nearly half (46.6 percent) of the respondents' panchayats are not facing any kinds of caste-based violence, 22.3 percent panchayats face caste-based violence due to the atrocities of dominant caste, 5.9 percent panchayats face caste-based violence due to the misuse of alcohol, 4 percent each of the panchayats face violence during the time of temple festivals and when the SC women were ridiculed, 3.6 percent each of the panchayats faced caste-based violence due to the reservation of the panchayats for SC and installing the statue of Bharat Ratna Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, 2.7 percent each of the panchayats face caste-based violence due to hoisting community flag and issues related to revision of wages and the remaining 2.3 percent of the panchayats face caste-based violence due to the denial of access to SC people in to caste Hindu areas and due to Inter-caste marriage.

Table 4.34 Respondents' opinion about the verbal abuse of their caste by other community people

Sl. No.	Verbal abuse of caste	Frequency	Percentage
1	No abuse	191	86.4
2	Abused by the people who belong to Vanniyar Community	28	12.7
3	Abused by the people who belong to Nayakkar Community	2	0.9
	Total	**221**	**100.0**

Table 4.34 demonstrates that majority (86.4 percent) of the respondents have not experienced any abuse using their caste name, 12.6 percent of the respondents have been abused by Vanniyar community people using their caste name and the remaining 0.9 percent of the respondents has been abused by Nayakkar community people. However, the respondents did not register complaints under the Protection of Civil Rights Act (1955), because of the fear of attack by dominant caste people.

Table 4.35 The status of office space of the respondents in their panchayats

Sl. No.	Office	Frequency	Percentage
1	Running at Panchayat building	217	98.2
2	Access denied for SC Panchayat Presidents	4	1.8
	Total	**221**	**100.0**

Table 4.35 shows that majority of the respondents (98.2 percent) use their panchayat building as office and the remaining 1.8 percent of the respondents are denied access to the panchayat office by the other dominant community people.

Table 4.36 Respondents' opinion about the respect from officials and ward members

Sl. No.	Respect from officials and ward members	Frequency	Percentage
1	Not treated with respect by ward members	35	15.8
2	Not treated with respect by Vice-President	32	14.5
3	Not treated with respect by Secretary	25	11.3
4	Not treated with respect by all officials and ward members	15	6.8
5	Treated with respect by all the officials and ward members	114	51.6
	Total	**221**	**100.0**

Table 4.36 illustrates that majority of the respondents (51.6 percent) are treated with respect by officials and members, 15.8 percent of the respondents are not treated with respect by ward members, 14.5 percent are not treated with respect by Vice-Presidents, 11.3 percent are not treated with respect by Secretary and the remaining 6.8 percent are not treated with respect by Vice-President, Ward members and Secretary.

Table 4.37 Respondents' opinion about isolation from the panchayat meetings

Sl. No.	Opinion about isolation in panchayat meetings	Frequency	Percentage
1	Not Isolated	212	95.8
2	By Vice-President	5	2.3
3	By Vice-President and Secretary	2	0.9
4	By Ward members	1	0.5
5	By dominant community members	1	0.5
	Total	**221**	**100.0**

Table 4.37 exhibits that a large number of the respondents (95.8 percent) feel that they are not isolated during the panchayat meetings, 2.3 percent of the respondents are isolated by Vice-Presidents, 0.9 percent of the respondents are isolated by Vice-Presidents and Secretary and the remaining 0.5 percent each of the respondents are isolated by Ward members and by dominant community members.

Table 4.38 Respondents' opinion about enjoying the rights and entitlements of Panchayat Presidents

Sl. No.	Rights and entitlements	Frequency	Percentage
1	Enjoying the rights and entitlements	198	89.6
2	Prevented by dominant caste members	14	6.3
3	Lack of cooperation from Ward members and panchayat Vice-President	4	1.8
4	Lack of cooperation from Vice-President	3	1.3
5	Lack of cooperation from Vice-President and panchayat Secretary	1	0.5
6	Lack of cooperation from Ward members	1	0.5
	Total	**221**	**100.0**

Table 4.38 illustrates that majority of the respondents (89.6 percent) are enjoying the rights and entitlements as Panchayat Presidents, 6.3 percent of the respondents are not allowed to enjoy the rights and entitlements by the members of the dominant community, 1.8 percent of the respondents do not get cooperation from Vice-Presidents and the Ward members, 1.3 percent do not enjoy the rights and entitlements because of the non-cooperation of Vice-Presidents and 0.5 percent each do not enjoy the rights and entitlements because of the non-cooperation of Vice-President, Secretary and Ward members.

Table 4.39 Respondents' opinion about restrictions faced as SC Panchayat Presidents

Sl. No.	Restrictions	Frequency	Percentage
1	Did not face any restrictions	158	71.5
2	Constraint of funds	23	10.4
3	Pressure from the dominant caste	20	9.0
4	Negligence by the government officials	9	4.1
5	Constraint of funds, pressure from the dominant caste group and fear of anti-social elements	5	2.3
6	Fear of anti-social elements	4	1.8
7	Limited allocation of schemes and programmes	2	0.9
	Total	**221**	**100.0**

Table 4.39 shows that majority of the respondents (71.5 percent) do not face any kind of restrictions, 10.4 percent of the respondents face restrictions due to lack of funds, 9.0 percent face restrictions due to pressure from the members of dominant caste, 4.1 percent face restrictions due to negligence by the government officials, 2.3 percent face restrictions due to constraint of funds, pressure from the members of dominant caste and fear of anti-social elements, 1.8 percent face restrictions because of fear of anti-social elements and the remaining 0.9 percent of the respondents face restrictions due to limited allocation of schemes and programmes by the officials.

Table 4.40 Respondents' opinion about the support from officials

Sl. No.	Support from officials	Never	Some times	Always	Not approached for support	Total
1	District Collector & Assistant Director (Panchayat)	18 (8.1%)	58 (26.2%)	110 (49.8%)	35 (15.8%)	**221 (100.0%)**
2	Block Development Officials	14 (6.3%)	53 (24.0%)	154 (69.7%)	0 (0%)	**221 (100.0%)**
3	Engineer (Water Supply)	18 (8.1%)	62 (28.1%)	140 (63.3%)	1 (0.5%)	**221 (100.0%)**
4	Engineer (Electricity)	12 (5.4%)	66 (29.9%)	142 (64.3%)	1 (0.5%)	**221 (100.0%)**
5	Engineer (Civil)	18 (8.1%)	58 (26.2%)	144 (65.2%)	1 (0.5%)	**221 (100.0%)**
6	Officials of the Adi Dravidar Welfare Department	19 (8.6%)	35 (15.8%)	41 (18.6%)	126 (57.0%)	**221 (100.0%)**
7	Social Welfare Department officials	14 (6.3%)	45 (20.4%)	47 (21.3%)	115 (52.0%)	**221 (100.0%)**
8	Officials of the Tamil Nadu Adi Dravidar Housing and Development Cooperation (TADCO)	15 (6.8%)	31 (14.0%)	37 (16.7%)	138 (62.4%)	**221 (100.0%)**

9	School Head Masters	9 (4.1%)	31 (14.0%)	181 (81.9%)	0 (0%)	**221 (100.0%)**
10	Village Administrative Officers (VAO)	10 (4.5%)	33 (14.9%)	178 (80.5%)	0 (0%)	**221 (100.0%)**
11	Bank officials	12 (5.4%)	34 (15.4%)	175 (79.2%)	0 (0%)	**221 (100.0%)**
12	Local Police	11 (5.0%)	45 (20.4%)	153 (69.2%)	12 (5.4%)	**221 (100.0%)**
13	Anganwadi Workers	10 (4.5%)	29 (13.1%)	182 (82.4%)	0 (0%)	**221 (100.0%)**

Table 4.40.1 illustrates that nearly half of the respondents (49.8 percent) always receive support from the District Collector and Assistant Director (Panchayat), 26.2 percent receive support only sometimes, 15.8 percent did not approach them for support and the remaining 8.1 percent of the respondents are not supported because of the stigma attached to their caste and being member of opponent political party.

More than two thirds (69.7 percent) of the respondents are always supported by Block Development officials, 24.0 percent get support only sometimes and the remaining 6.3 percent never supported by Block Development officials.

More than half of the respondents (63.3 percent) are always supported by Engineer (Water Supply), 28.1 percent of the respondents get support sometimes, 8.1 percent of the respondents are never supported and the remaining 0.5 percent of the respondents did not approach the Engineer (Water Supply).

More than half of the respondents (64.3 percent) are always supported by Engineer (Electricity), 29.9 percent of the respondents get only support sometimes, 5.4 percent of the respondents are not supported by the Engineer (Electricity) and the remaining 0.5 percent of the respondent did not approach the Engineer (Electricity).

Nearly two thirds of the respondents (65.2 percent) always get support from Engineer (Civil), 26.2 percent of the respondents are supported only sometimes, 8.1 percent of the respondents never get the support and the remaining 0.5 percent of the respondents did not approach the Engineer (Civil).

More than half of the respondents (57 percent) are of the opinion that they did not approach the officials of Adi Dravidar welfare department, 18.6 percent of the respondents always get their support, 15.8 percent of the respondents get their support only sometimes and the remaining 8.6 percent of the respondents never get their support.

More than half of the respondents (52.0 percent) did not approach the officials of the Social welfare department, 21.3 percent of the respondents are always supported by the officials, 20.4 percent of the respondents get support only sometimes and the remaining 6.3 percent of the respondents never get their support.

More than half of the respondents (62.4 percent) did not approach the officials of the Tamil Nadu Housing and Development Corporation Limited, 16.7 percent of the respondents always get support from the officials, 14 percent of the respondents get their support only sometimes and the remaining 6.8 percent of the respondents never get the support from the TADCO officials.

Majority of the respondents (81.9 percent) are always supported by the school head masters, 14.0 percent of the respondents get their support only sometimes and the remaining 4.1 percent of the respondents never get support from school head masters because of the stigma attached to their caste.

Majority of the respondents (80.5 percent) are always supported by Village Administrative Officers, 14.9 percent of the respondents get their support only sometimes and the remaining 4.5 percent of the respondents are never supported by the VAOs.

Majority of the respondents (79.2 percent) are always supported by the bank officials, 15.4 percent of the respondents get their support sometimes and the remaining 5.4 percent of the respondents are never supported by the bank officials.

More than one third of the respondents (69.2 percent) are always supported by the local Police, 20.4 percent of them feel that they are supported only sometimes, 5.4 percent of the respondents did not approach the local Police and the remaining 5.0 percent of the respondents are never supported by the local Police.

A large number of the respondents (82.4 percent) are always supported by Anganwadi workers, 13.1 percent of the respondents get their support sometimes and the remaining 4.5 percent of the respondents are never supported by Anganwadi workers.

Table 4.41 Level of performance as perceived by the respondents

Sl. No.	Performance	Frequency	Percentage
1	Very Good	83	37.6
2	Good	90	40.7
3	Average	44	19.9
4	Poor	2	0.9
5	Very Poor	2	0.9
	Total	**221**	**100.0**

Table 4.41 shows that more than one third of the respondents (40.7 percent) perceive that their performance is good in their panchayat activities, 37.6 percent of the respondents' performance is very good, 19.9 percent of the respondents' performance is average and the remaining 0.9 percent each of the respondents perceive that their performance is poor and very poor in their panchayat activities.

4.7. Testing of Hypotheses

Research Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between age and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents.

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between age and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents.

Table 4.42 Relationship between age and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents

		Age	Level of perceived administrative skills
Age	Spearman's rho Correlation coefficient	1	-.214**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.001
	N	221	221
Level of perceived administrative skills	Spearman's rho Correlation coefficient	-.214**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.
	N	221	221

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Spearman's rho coefficient of correlation is calculated to see the relationship between age and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents. It reveals that there is a moderate negative correlation (r_s = -0.214) between age and perceived administrative skills of the respondents. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Research Hypothesis 2: There is a significant association between gender and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents.

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no significant association between gender and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents.

Table 4.43 Association between gender and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents

Gender	Level of perceived administrative skills			Total	Chi-Square value	P value	df
	Poor	Average	Good				
Male	20	59	53	132			
Female	46	42	01	89	56.968	.001	2
Total	**66**	**101**	**54**	**221**			

Pearson's Chi-Square test of independence is applied to see the association between gender and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents. The calculated value of χ^2 (2) = 56.968, p = 0.001 < 0.5. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. It reveals that there is a significant association between gender and level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents.

Research Hypothesis 3: There is a significant relationship between the educational qualifications and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents.

Null Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between the educational qualifications and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents.

Table 4.44 Relationship between educational qualification and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents

		Education qualification	Level of perceived administrative skills
Educational qualification	Spearman's rho Correlation coefficient	1	.672**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.001
	N	221	221
Level of perceived administrative skills	Spearman's rho Correlation coefficient	.672**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.
	N	221	221

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Spearman's rho coefficient of correlation is calculated to see the relationship between the educational qualification and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents. It reveals that there is a moderate positive of correlation (r_s =0.672) between the educational qualification and perceived administrative skills of the respondents. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. It indicates that there is a significant relationship between educational qualification and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents.

Research Hypothesis 4: There is significant association between the caste based violence occurred in panchayat elections and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents.

Null Hypothesis 4: There is no significant association between the caste based violence occurred in panchayat elections and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents.

Table 4.45 Association between caste based violence occurred in panchayat elections and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents

Caste based violence occurred in panchayat elections	Level of perceived administrative skills			Total	Chi-Square value	P value	df
	Poor	Average	Good				
Yes	25	55	40	120			
No	41	46	14	101	15.682	.001	2
Total	66	101	54	221			

Pearson's Chi-Square test of independence is applied to see the association between the caste based violence occurred in panchayat elections and their level of perceived administrative skills. The calculated value is $\chi2\ (2) = 15.682$, $p = 0.001 < .05$. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. It reveals that there is a significant association between the caste based violence occurred in panchayat elections and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents.

Research Hypothesis 5: There is significant association between the caste based violence occurred in village panchayat and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents.

Null Hypothesis 5: There is no significant association between the caste based violence occurred in village panchayat and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents.

Table 4.46 Association between caste based violence occurred in village panchayat and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents

Caste based violence occurred in village panchayat	Level of perceived administrative skills			Total	Chi-Square value	P value	df
	Poor	Average	Good				
Yes	29	55	34	118			
No	37	46	20	103	4.403	.111	2
Total	66	101	54	221			

Pearson's Chi-Square test of independence is applied to see the association between the caste based violence occurred in village panchayat and their level of perceived administrative skills. The calculated value is $\chi2$ (2) = 4.403, p = 0.111 > .05. Hence the null hypothesis is accepted. It reveals that there is no significant association between the caste based violence occurred in village panchayat and level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents.

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Research Hypothesis 6: There is a significant association between the respect received from officials and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents.

Null Hypothesis 6: There is no significant association between the respect received from officials and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents.

Table 4.47 Association between the respect received from officials and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents

Respect from officials	Level of perceived administrative skills			Total	Chi-Square value	P value	df
	Poor	Average	Good				
Yes	36	54	24	114			
No	30	47	30	107	1.477	.478	2
Total	**66**	**101**	**54**	**221**			

Pearson's Chi-Square test of independence is applied to see the association between the respect received from officials and their level of perceived administrative skills. The calculated value is χ2 (2) = 1.477, p = 0.478 >.05. Hence the null hypothesis is accepted. It reveals that there is no significant association between the respect received from officials and level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents.

Research Hypothesis 7: There is a significant association between the support received from other community people and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents.

Null Hypothesis 7: There is no significant association between the support received from other community people and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents.

Table 4.48 Association between the support received from other community people and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents

Support received from other community people	Level of perceived administrative skills			Total	Chi-Square value	P value	df
	Poor	Average	Good				
Yes	60	68	19	147			
No	06	33	35	74	41.462	.001	2
Total	66	101	54	221			

Pearson's Chi-Square test of independence is applied to see the association between the support received from other community people and their level of perceived administrative skills. The calculated value is $\chi 2$ (2) = 41.462, p = 0.001 < .05. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. It reveals that there is a significant association between the support received from other community people and the level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS, DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1. FINDINGS

The major findings of the study have been disseminated in the following manner.

5.1.1. Socio-Demographic Profile

- Nearly half of the respondents (49.8%) belong to the age group of 35-46 years which is very productive in terms of leadership and administration.

- Majority of the respondents (59.7%) are male and 40.3 per cent of the respondents are female.

- Overwhelming majority of the respondents (94.1%) are married.

- All the respondents belong to Hindu religion.

- All the respondents belong Adi Dravidar sub-caste.

- Majority of the respondents (76%) have studied only up to school education.

- Majority of the respondents (66.1%) live in nuclear family and 33.9 per cent of the respondents live in joint family.

- Majority of the respondents (76.0%) are living in concrete houses. However, some of the SC Panchayat Presidents (17.2%) are living in poor housing conditions.

- Overwhelming majority of the respondents (99.1%) reside in their own houses.

- Majority of the respondents (64.7%) are natives of their own panchayats.

- All the respondents are having electricity facility in their house.

- Majority of the respondents (68.8%) have potable water connection at their household.

- Majority of the respondents (58.8%) have toilet facility at their houses and a large distribution of the respondents (41.2%) does not have the toilet facility at their houses.

- Majority of the respondents (58.8%) are involved in agriculture and related activities.

- Majority of the respondents (62.9%) are not engaged in any other full time job and their monthly income is less than INR 6000.

- Nearly half of the respondents (48.4%) are having 2-7 acres of agricultural land which is the major source of income for the respondents.

5.1.2. Mode of entry of the respondents into local self-governance

- More than one third of the respondents' (35.3%) family members have contested and have won the panchayat elections earlier.

- Nearly one third of the respondents' (32.6%) family members have influenced them to contest in panchayat elections.

- Nearly one third of the respondents (31.2%) are attracted by Panchayat Raj Institutions to serve the people.

- A small number of the respondents (14.0%) are motivated by other community leaders/people to contest in panchayat elections.

- A small distribution of the respondents (6.8%) contested in elections as they are already involved in social service activities.

- Only 2.3 per cent each of the respondents have contested in the panchayat elections due to reservations and to solve the village problems.

- Majority of the respondents (82.8%) have not contested in panchayat elections when the panchayat was under the unreserved category and only 17.2 percent of the respondents have contested in the panchayat elections when the panchayat was under unreserved category.

- Majority of the respondents (67.0%) have not contested in the elections prior to the reservation of the panchayat due to fear of failure as the SC voters are less in number.

- Majority of the respondents (54.3%) were not active in politics before becoming Panchayat Presidents.

- Overwhelming majority of the respondents (93.7%) supported by other community people in performing the duties of Panchayat Presidents.

- Nearly half of the respondents (42.9%) are having membership in All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) which is the ruling political party in the State, 27.1 per cent of the respondents are not members of any political party and 20.3 per cent of the respondents are having membership in Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) which is another prominent political party in the State of Tamil Nadu.

- Among the respondents who are members of political parties, 39.4% does not hold any post in their political party and 33.5 per cent hold positions either at the State or at the District levels in their political party.

- Among the respondents who are elected independently, a overwhelming majority (99.5%) have joined All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) after becoming Panchayat Presidents.

5.1.3. Level of perceived administrative skills of the respondents

- Nearly half of the respondents (45.7%) have perceived that their level of administrative skills is average and 29.9 per cent of the respondents have perceived that their level of administrative skill is poor.

- Among the male respondents, an overwhelming majority (98.1%) have good level of perceived administrative skills.

- Majority of the female respondents (69.7%) are poor in their level of perceived administrative skills.

- Among the respondents who hold bachelor degree, 44.4 per cent have good level of perceived administrative skills.

- More than one third of the respondents (35.7%) have felt that their participation is very good in decision-making process.

- A large number of the respondents (36.7%) have expressed that the leadership initiative taken by them in panchayat and public activities is very good.

- More than one third of the respondents (38.0%) have felt that they are very good in participating in the developing programmes actively.

- Nearly one third of the respondents (33.9%) are very good in formulating policy.

- A large number of the respondents (37.6%) are very good in working hard in panchayat related activities.

- More than one third of the respondents (35.3%) feel very good in understanding others.

- More than one third of the respondents (34.4%) have perceived that they are very good in identifying the opportunities.

- Nearly one third of the respondents (35.3%) feel that they are very good in changing attitudes in accordance with the environment.

- The coping capacity of more than one third of the respondents (36.7%) is very good.

- More than one third of the respondents (35.3%) are very good in implementing plans.

- Large distributions of the respondents (34.4%) are very good in enticement of speaking.

- More than one third of the respondents (36.2%) have expressed that they are very good in open minded and transparent activities.

- Nearly one third of the respondents (33.9%) are very good in formulating ambitious dreams of panchayat development.

- More than one third of the respondents (36.2%) are very good in being prudent concentrations.

- Large distributions of the respondents (38.9%) are very good in delegation of work to others.

- More than one third of the respondents (38.0%) are very good in appreciating the good work of others.

- Nearly one third of the respondents (36.2%) have felt that they are very good in solving the problems and 24.9 percent of the respondents have felt they are average.

- A large number of respondents (20.4%) are poor in organizing the community to work as a team.

- More than one third of the respondents (43.0%) are very good in getting suggestions from others.

- Nearly 21.7 percent of the respondents have expressed that they are poor in giving suggestions to others.

- More than one third of the respondents (37.6%) are very good in following the organizational ground rules.

- Only 21.2 percent of the respondents have expressed that they are poor in organizing research and planning meetings.

- Only 18.1 percent of the respondents are having low level of perceived administrative skills.

5.1.4. Awareness about duties and responsibilities and its fulfillment

- All the respondents are conducting Gram Sabha meetings regularly.

- Only 12.7% of the respondents prepare the Annual Plan of their panchayats.

- More than one third of the respondents (34.8%) are preparing Annual Budget and rest of them are unaware and not preparing the annual budget.

- Only 24 percent of the respondents are aware about the Standing Committee.

- Only one third of the respondents (33.9%) are aware about the Development Committee.

- More than one third of the respondents (42.5%) are aware about Agriculture and Water Committee.

- Majority of the respondents (78.3%) are unaware about Working Committee.

- Majority (81.9%) of the respondents are aware of Educational Committee.

- More than half of the respondents (56.1%) are unaware about Monitoring Committee.

- Only small distributions of the respondents (2.3%) are members in Forest Group.

- An overwhelming majority of the respondents (99.5%) have received the Panchayat General Fund.

- Half of the respondents (50.2%) have not availed the Block Development Fund.

- More than half of the respondents (58.8%) did not avail the District Fund.

- More than half of the respondents (54.3%) are aware but not receiving the MLACDS for their panchayats.

- More than half of the respondents (68.3%) are aware but do not receive the MPLADS for their panchayats.

- Majority of the respondents (68.8%) have availed the Rural Infrastructure Scheme.

- Majority of the respondents (84.2%) are aware but do not implement the Self-Sufficient Scheme for their panchayats.

- Majority of the respondents (79.2%) have availed Revenue Fund which is collected from people through house tax.

- Only 5 per cent of the respondents have availed the Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan directly for their panchayats.

- Majority of the respondents (86.9%) are aware and availed the Electricity Board Fund.

- Majority of the respondents (67.0%) are aware but do not receive the Forest Department Fund for their panchayats.

- Majority of the respondents (77.4%) are aware but do not utilise the Fund from Donors.

- Majority of the respondents' (85.5%) village panchayats do not have any kind of industries, so they are not getting CSR Fund.

- Majority of the respondents (76.0%) are aware of THAI Scheme and received the Fund for their panchayats.

- Majority of the respondents (71.0%) are aware of Chief Minister's Green House Scheme and receive the fund for their panchayats.

- A overwhelming majority of the respondents (95.0%) are aware and implement Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) for their panchayats.

- All the respondents are successfully implementing Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (MGNREGP).

- Majority of the respondents (68.3%) are aware and do not implement Solar Light Programme for their panchayats.

- Majority of the respondents (67.4%) are aware of Total Sanitation Campaign and are successfully implementing the programme for their panchayats.

- Majority of the respondents (75.1%) are aware of Clean Village Campaign and successfully implement the programme for their panchayats.

- Majority of the respondents (74.2%) did not provide Patta to the needy people in their panchayats.

- Majority of the respondents (72.9%) have not recommend the Old Age, Widows and Differently Abled Pension Scheme for the people of their panchayats.

- Only 5.9 percent of the respondents implement Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana in their panchayats.

- Majority of the respondents (79.2%) are not aware and do not implement Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan programme and only 20.8 percent of the respondents implement Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan programme in their respective panchayats.

- All the respondents are unaware and do not implement the National Bio-Gas Development Programme.

- More than half of the respondents (50.2%) are not implementing Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana and the remaining 25.3 percent of the respondents are unaware about Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana.

- More than half of the respondents (65.2%) are unaware about Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana and 34.4 percent of the respondents are not implementing this programme.

- More than one fifth of the respondents (30.8%) are unaware about Rajiv Gandhi Rehabilitation Package.

- Only 14.5 percent of the respondents have utilised the NABARD programme.

- Overwhelming majority of the respondents' (99.1%) panchayats are having Primary Schools.

- Majority of the respondents' (67.9%) panchayats do not have Sub-Health Centre.

- Overwhelming majority of the respondents' (95.0%) panchayats are having Women and Child Toilet Complexes.

- Majority of the respondents' panchayats (69.7%) do not have Men's Toilet Complexes.

- Overwhelming majority of the panchayats (98.2%) have Burial and Burning Ground and 1.8 percent of the panchayats do not have Burial and Burning Grounds.

- More than half of the respondents' (59.3%) panchayats do not have Community Halls.

- The large distributions of the respondents' (43.4%) panchayats do not have Play Ground facilities.

- Majority of the respondents' (95.5%) panchayats do not have Shopping Complexes.

- Overwhelming majority of the respondents' (95.5%) panchayats have Sub-Library.

- Overwhelming majority of the respondents' (98.2%) panchayats do not have Children's Garden.

- A large number of the respondents' (85.0%) panchayats do not have drainage facilities.

- Overwhelming majority of the respondents' (99.1%) panchayats do not have Solid Waste Management Centre.

- Majority of the respondents (84.2%) are not satisfied with the overall fund allotment to their panchayats by the government.

- Only a few of the respondents (6.3%) have received awards for their achievements from the District Collector and NGOs.

5.1.5. Challenges and Barriers

- More than one third of the respondents (31.2%) have faced difficulties during election campaign due to false propaganda by the opponents and 4.1 per cent of the respondents have faced the pressure from dominant community leaders to withdraw from the elections.

- More than one third of the respondents (33.5%) are not being supported by other communities in performing the duties.

- More than half of the respondents (54.3%) have faced caste-based violence while contesting in elections.

- More than half of the respondents' (53.4%) village panchayats have faced caste-based violence due to caste Hindus, alcoholic nuisance, temple festivals, reservation of the panchayat for SC, installation of the statue of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, abuse and harassment of SC women, hoisting of flag by dominant caste, increment of wages for SC and denial of access to public resources and Inter-caste marriages.

- According to Atrocities against SC/ST Act, 1989 using derogatory words is punishable. But the study reveals that more than one tenth of the respondents (13.5%) are abused by using their caste names by the people of dominant caste.

- Majority of the respondents (98.2%) are using their own Panchayat office and the remaining 1.8 percent of the respondents are denied access to their Panchayat office by the other community people.

- More than one third of the respondents (48.4%) are not treated with respect by Vice-Presidents, Ward Members and Panchayat Secretaries.

- Nearly half of the respondents (49.8%) are supported by the District Collector and Assistant Director (Panchayat).

- Majority of the respondents (69.7%) are getting support from Block Development officials.

- Majority of the respondents (63.3%) are always supported by Engineers (Water Supply).

- Majority of the respondents (64.3%) are always supported by Engineers (Electricity).

- Majority of the respondents (65.2%) are always supported by Engineers (Civil).

- More than half of the respondents (57%) did not approach the Adi Dravidar Welfare Department Officials and the remaining 18.6 percent of the respondents are always getting support from the officials.

- More than half of the respondents (52%) did not approach the support of Social Welfare Department officials.

- More than half of the respondents (62.4%) did not approach the support of the officials of Tamil Nadu Housing and Development Corporation Limited.

- Majority of the respondents (81.9%) are always supported from by the Head Masters.

- Majority of the respondents (80.5%) are always getting the support of the Village Administrative Officers.

- Majority of the respondents (79.2%) are always getting support from the Bank Officials.

- Majority of the respondents (69.2%) are always getting support from the local Police.

- Majority of the respondents (82.4%) are always getting support from the Anganwadi workers.

- Large distributions of the respondents (40.7%) have perceived that their performance is good in their panchayat activities.

5.1.6. Results of Testing Hypotheses

- 1. There is a significant relationship between the age and the level of perceived administrative skills (r_s = -0.214) of the respondents.

- 2. There is a significant association between the gender and the level of perceived administrative skills (p = 0.001<0.05) of the respondents.

- 3. There is a significant positive relationship between the educational qualifications and the level of perceived administrative skills (r_s = 0.672) of the respondents.

- 4. There is a significant association between the caste based violence occurred during panchayat elections and the level of perceived administrative skills of (p = 0.001<0.05) of the respondents.

- 5. There is no significant association between the caste based violence occurred in village panchayat and the level of perceived administrative skills (p = 0.111 > 0.05) of the respondents.

- 6. There is no significant association between the respect received from officials and the level of perceived administrative skills (p = 0.478 > 0.05) of the respondents.

- 7. There is a significant association between the support received from other community people and the level of perceived administrative skills (p = 0.111 < 0.05) of the respondents.

5.2. DISCUSSIONS

In this part of the study, the researcher has done a thematic discussion based on the objectives and major findings of the study. This discussion has been divided into five major categories as follows.

- o Socio-demographic profile.
- o Mode of entry into the local self-governance.
- o Level of perceived administrative skills.
- o Duties and responsibilities.
- o Challenges and barriers.

5.2.1. Socio-Demographic Profile of the respondents

Age

According to Chhetri (2008), age is an important variable in the study of grassroots leadership. Traditionally, it is the privilege of the elders to occupy important positions in the villages and the village leadership remained as the monopoly of the village elders. The rural community is predominantly traditional and conservative but the need of the hour is an orientation towards progress and change. Such changes can be initiated and promoted only by young leaders who are comparatively free from the domination of customs. The present study reveals that 48 per cent of SC Panchayat Presidents belong to the age group of 23-40 years which is very productive in terms of leadership and administration (Chhetri, 2008). At the same time the remaining 52 per cent of SC Panchayat Presidents belong to the age group of 41-76 years. During the Chola period the eligible age to contest in local panchayat elections was above 35 years and below 70 years. In this age group, people have more knowledge and practical experiences to develop their own community and to solve the village disputes.

Kumari & Kumar (2014) have conducted a study in the Mysore District of Karnataka State. The findings show that the majority of the respondents (75.81 percent) belong to the age group of 25-45 which shows the interst and participation of younger generations to take up the political leadership in the District. Young people under 40 years have to be actively involved in politics and major leadership roles have to be

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taken by them. It will create scope for dynamic leadership and development of the panchayat.

Sex

In the traditional conception of a panchayat, women and lower caste (i.e. SC) are not allowed to participate in the local self-governance. In general, participation of women in politics is very less all over the world which is regarded as the 'public sphere'. Though the Constitution of India has given equal rights to both the sex, prior to the Constitution of 73rd Amendment Act, 1992, very few women have participated in the village politics in Tamil Nadu and the majority of them have come through statutory provision of co-option. After the enactment of the Amendment Act, one-third of the total seats in all the tiers of PRIs are reserved for women along with the posts of Chairperson. As a result, a large number of SC women leaders emerged in Tamil Nadu State. As the State has a three-tier structure, the percentage of the SC women representation in three-tier has attained 34 percent based on their population. In India, some of the States which have already implemented 50 per cent reservation for women in PRIs are Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan and Kerala (Oneindia, 2009). Tamil Nadu State gives 34 percent of reservations for women in all the three tier system. The result of the present study shows that the large distributions of respondents (40.3 percent) are women and they have won in both the panchayats reserved for SC general and women.

Sub-Caste

According to the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Orders (Amendment) Bill, 2012 in India, presently 1208 castes have been specified as Scheduled Castes in related to various States and Union Territories (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, 2012). In Tamil Nadu, 76 castes come under Scheduled Castes (Bill No.60 of 2012). The present study reveals that all the respondents belong to Adi Dravidar sub-community. In Viluppuram District all the respondents belong to Adi Dravidar community, and no respondents are from the other 75 castes which come under SC category in Tamil Nadu.

Educational Qualifications

Education is considered to be one of the most important indicators of the quality of leadership and administration in the local self-governance. Chhetri (2008) has stated that education facilitates the development of progressive ideas and attitudes of human beings. In order to ensure the proper understanding of the objectives of the local self-governance and the role of functioning as Presidents of the village panchayat, education is considered to be of prime importance. The complex problem of PRIs and the rural society demand educated leadership. Bharat Ratna Dr. B.R. Ambedkar (1891-1956) has stated that education will ensure SC's empowerment and better future. Education is the paramount requirement of every human being for their self-preservation. According to Nelson Mandela (1918-2013), former President of South Africa, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world". The finding of this study shows that majority of the respondents (76 percent) have completed only school level education. The reason behind the low level of education is the poor socio-economic background, lack of educational facilities in their vicinities and the lack of motivation.

Agriculture land and ownership of house

During the period of Cholas in Tamil Nadu, only those people who own houses were eligible to contest in panchayat elections. The so-called untouchables i.e. the present SC people were out-casted from Hindu *Varna* system and do not have the proper house. *Manu Smriti* also mentioned the same. During colonial period, British government has given *Panchami* lands for Depressed Classes people (i.e. SC) for their welfare and better future. The British government has studied the socio-economic condition of Depressed Classes in the 1880s, the Chingleput Collector J.H.A. Tremenheere has conducted a survey and found that Depressed Class peoples are living in most inhuman conditions with high levels of oppression and has submitted a memorandum to the British government to allot lands to the people of Depressed Class to improve their socio-economic condition. The British government has approved Tremenheere's demand and has enacted a law in British Parliament to distribute land to them. The Government of Madras has passed the Government Order 1010 and 1010A dated on 30th September 1892 to specify that the lands will be assigned to the depressed

classes. Once the Government Order was published the *Panchami* lands were reserved and some were assigned. It was estimated that a total of 3.20 lakh acres have been gifted to the Depressed Class people by the British Government in all the Districts of Tamil Nadu (Karthikeyan, 2010). Most of the *Panchami* lands were encroached by the dominant caste Hindus either for agriculture or real-estate purposes. The State government has allotted *Panchami* lands to Special Economic Zones or Industrial Parks (Nicholas, 2013).

The result of the present study shows that majority of the respondents (77.4 percent) are having agricultural land and all the SC Panchayat Presidents are living in their own houses. It is very clear that land ownership among the Panchayat Presidents is there but it's not ensured to all the villagers. However, this can be the first step towards the fulfillment of land rights of the SC people.

Primary occupation

The position of Panchayat President is basically a non-profitable volunteer work. However, in the State of Tamil Nadu, paying honorarium to the Panchayat Presidents has made it as a subsidiary occupation for the members who have their own primary occupation as the source of income for the maintenance of their families. Bhaskar's (1997) study has found that the political leadership at grassroots level has been influenced by occupation. Thus, the primary occupation or the profession of the Panchayat Presidents plays an important role in the development of the village. Viluppuram District being an agrarian District of Tamil Nadu, agriculture is the predominant occupation of the rural people. The findings of the present research indicate that agriculture is still the predominant occupation of the majority (58.8 percent) of the SC Panchayat Presidents. However, the revenue from agriculture is not sufficient to run the families and to actively involve in the public affairs.

Income

Athreya & Rajeswari (1998) have found that income is one of the influencing factors to enter into PRIs. According to Chhetri (2008) economic status is a powerful determinant of rural leadership. Income is a good measure of economic status provided the members give factual details of their income. However, the evasive nature of human beings makes them not to disclose the factual income. However, attempts were made to

collect information about the income of the elected SC Panchayat Presidents. The finding of this study show that majority of the respondents (62.9 percent) earn between INR.3000 to 6000/- per month through agriculture and its allied activities. This income is not sufficient for their livelihood. Sachchidananda's (2007) study highlighted that 64.4 percent of the SC Panchayat Presidents come from Below Poverty Line families, out of which 16.6% are extremely poor having annual income of INR 10,000 or less.

5.2.2. Mode of entry into the local self-governance

Mode of entry

The reservation in panchayat elections for SC people, empower them to exercise their duty democratically. Without the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 it would have been difficult for SC people to step in the political arena. The Ashok Mehta Committee (1977) pronounced reservation for SC and ST in panchayat elections.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 provides one-third reservations for women to contest in panchayat elections but the researcher has found that nearly one-third of SC Panchayat Presidents' (32.6 percent) family member influence and force women to contest in panchayat elections. The family members even influence the educated women to contest in panchayat elections without allowing them to take their own decisions. Government provides reservations to women but the male counterpart misguide and misuse the power. The SC women are facing double discrimination from the male counterparts, one as she belongs to SC community and the other as a SC woman. Kaul & Sahni (2009) have observed that the most of the women have entered the PRIs owing to the pressure from the family members especially from their husbands and father-in-law. Athreya & Rajeswari (1998) have found that the political background and the family support are the important factors to enter in the grassroots level politics. Besides, age, education and the income are the influencing factors to enter politics.

Through this research, the researcher has found that majority of the respondents (82.8 percent) have not contested in elections prior to the reservation of the panchayat owing to the fear of failure, threat from dominant caste people and the less number of SC voters. Mangubhai, Irudayam & Sydenham (2012) study reveals that nobody believes that the SC people have the ability to carry out panchayat works. Dominant castes never want the SC leadership to control the panchayat administration because the

SC people are working as coolies in their agricultural lands. Caste based stigma and discriminations are attached with this power. Due to this, the SC people are hesitant to come forward for the nomination. Based on the results, the study reemphasises the importance of reservation in the local governance with special power.

Political Affiliation

Tamil Nadu Panchayat Act, 1994, prohibits a person from contesting panchayat president post with symbols of the political parties. The findings show that only a less number of respondents (27.1 percent) have contested as independent candidates and others were supported by various political parties. Majority of the respondents are members in All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) which is the ruling political party in the Tamil Nadu State during the research period. However, rule of law is not followed in the local administration in terms of political affiliation and support. Political parties are one of the major factors for the under development of the District. The people and Panchayat Presidents have been utilised for the development of political parties.

5.2.3. Level of perceived administrative skills

The findings of the study show that majority of the SC Panchayat Presidents' (45.7 percent) overall perceived administrative skills are average. In addition to that, 35.7 percent of the SC Panchayat Presidents' decision-making power is 'very good' and the level of their overall perceived administration skills is good. More than one third (36.7 percent) of the respondents are 'very good' in taking leadership initiatives and public activities in panchayats. However, they are lacking in resource mobilization from block development office and they are not getting cooperation from dominant caste group to function independently. Nandal's (2013) study reveal that the panchayat representative from various community/caste have very less awareness about the PRIs and they have very less knowledge about the 73rd Amendment Act, power and works of the village panchayats. Further, the present research has found that nearly half of the SC Panchayat Presidents' (45.7 percent) level of perceived administrative skills is average.

Level of perceived administrative skills of female respondents

Ansari (2014) has found that reservation gives an opportunity for the women to contest in panchayat elections but the findings of this study shows that the women are contesting as "dummy" candidates in the election because their spouses are unable contest owing to reservation made for women in their panchayats. The official works of the panchayats are mostly intervened and done by the spouse of the SC women. It also shows that in a traditional society, it is difficult for the men to accept women in the positions of authority and also without educational qualifications, women will find it difficult to work in this system. The findings of the present study also agrees with this finding with regard to the level of perceived administrative skills. It was found that 69.7 percent of the SC women Panchayat Presidents are having poor perceived administration skills, in contrary to Sethuramasubhaiya's (2013) study, which has found that 55 percent of SC women Panchayat Presidents' performance is good.

5.2.4. Awareness about duties and responsibilities and its fulfilment

Gram Sabha

Gram Sabha is the general assembly or village parliament of the village panchayat. The Gram Sabha should be consulted on all major issues and regularly informed of the activities of the village panchayat. The Panchayat President convenes the Gram Sabha and also chairs the meeting. Tamil Nadu Panchayat Raj Act, 1994 gives special provision to conduct Gram Sabha meeting in the SC people's locality. Gram Sabha has a huge power to transform the villages with people's participation. It was found from the study that the SC Panchayat Presidents conduct Gram Sabha meetings but participation of SC people is still poor.

Panchayat Committees

All the elected representatives of the village panchayat form the Panchayat Committee. The Panchayat Committee is responsible for taking decisions, such as approving plans and budgets, reviewing the progress. It is also responsible for ensuring democratic decision-making through the involvement of the people.

The village Panchayat President is the Chairperson of the Panchayat Committee, and performs the duties as per the decisions of the panchayat committee. The village Panchayat President is the Administrative and Executive Head of the Panchayat and presides over the meetings of the village panchayat. The percentage of mean score with regard to the unaware nature over the six committees i.e. standing committee, development committee, working committee, monitoring committee, agriculture and water committee is found to be 58.6% which is high. Lower educational status of the presidents makes them unaware about the committees and its functionaries. Majority of the SC Panchayat Presidents (81.9 percent) are aware about educational committee because the school head teacher regularly conducts the meeting. In some reserved panchayats, Vice-Presidents take charge of the meetings in the President's absence. Sachchidananda's (2007) study reveals that all the SC elected members in Bihar panchayats are divided regarding the formation of above mentioned committees. There are village panchayats in Bihar where these committees have not contributed for effective implementation of developmental programmes.

Programmes

Majority of the SC Panchayat Presidents have expressed that the District Collector, Assistant Director (Panchayat) and Block Development Officer are arranging programmes based on the availability of funds which do not meet the real needs expressed in the proposal approved by the gram sabha. Only a few programmes are allotted for their panchayats and it is not sufficient. Kejriwal (2012) opined that the District Collectors has to disburse the fund according to the programme prepared by the Gram Sabha. However, the District Collectors are allocating the fund according to their whims and fancies, instead of asking for proposals from the Gram Sabha.

Funds

Tamil Nadu State Government has allocated INR 11,274 crore under the Scheduled Castes Sub-Plan for the year 2015-16 out of the State's total annual plan outlay of INR 55,100 crore. It is 20.46 percent of annual plan outlay which is more than the percentage of SC population of the State. This large outlay was given to provide more welfare programmes for SC people (Adi Dravidar and Tibal Welfare Department, 2015).

It was found from the study that 84.2 percent of the SC Panchayat Presidents are not satisfied with the overall fund allotment to their panchayat by the government. The Government is providing more funds for the Backward Districts (Kejriwal, 2012). In Tamil Nadu, Viluppuram District is one of the Backward Districts. In reserved panchayat, the SC Panchayat Presidents cannot get more funds owing to caste stigma. If they get more funds, the Vice-Presidents will not cooperate. Inbanathan & Sivanna (2010) reveal that the SC Panchayat Presidents cannot act independently. Even if they are getting cooperation from dominant caste Vice-Presidents, without her/his knowledge the files will not move out of the office. The Panchayat Secretary also acts on the Vice-Presidents' wish. The Vice-President of the dominant community controls the village panchayats. In some reserved panchayats the Panchayat Secretary is not cooperating owing to caste differences. In some of the panchayats, the Presidents are members in the ruling political party and hence they can easily avail the funds. While allotting the funds to the reserved panchayat the officials discriminate the SC representatives, because the officials follow the *Varna* based caste system. As the SC Panchayat Presidents are unaware of the available funds, they are not availing funds like Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan (SCSP). In addition to that majority (64.3 percent) of the SC Panchayat Presidents are unaware of Bio-gas programme, through this programme people of the community can benefit from 15 to 85 Cubic Meter capacity biogas plants for cooking purposes. Social institutions like village panchayats may have to take full responsibility for installing the plant, its daily operation and maintenance (Maharashtra Energy Development Agency, 2003). In addition to cow dung, feeding materials like sugar cane press mud, poultry waste etc., can be used in this type of biogas plants. Hence, the majority of the SC Panchayat Presidents have to be made aware of this programme.

It was found that 41.2 percent of the SC Panchayat Presidents are unaware about Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (Universal Rural Employment Programme). The scheme has special provisions for women, SC, ST and parents of children withdrawn from hazardous occupations. While preference is given to families below the poverty line, people who live above the poverty line too are eligible under this scheme. Similar results are achieved by the study conducted by Inbanathan & Sivanna (2010).

Award

Only a few SC Panchayat Presidents (6.3 percent) have received awards for their achievements from the District Collectors and NGOs. The award was given for maintaining hygiene in their respective villages by operating women sanitary complexes, preventing open area defecation and for maintaining hygiene in school premises (India Sanitation Portal, 2013).

5.2.5. Challenges and Barriers

It was found that 33.5 percent of the SC Panchayat Presidents are not supported by other communities. The people of dominant community never want the SC to control the panchayat administration as the caste system has been deeply rooted from the top to bottom of the State (Murugappan & Jesi, 2014). The results indicate that 54.3 percent of the SC Panchayat Presidents have faced caste-based violence while contesting in panchayat elections. In addition to that 53.4 percent of village panchayats have faced different forms of caste-based violence instigated by dominant caste. During temple festivals the people of dominant caste will not allow the SC to worship the God. These are the causes of caste-based violence in Viluppuram District of Tamil Nadu.

Sampath (2010) has quoted Bharat Ratna Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's view that untouchability is abolished legally but he has seen in his own eyes that SC people are ill-treated, humiliated, assaulted and houses are burnt. SC women are targeted and sexually harassed. These are the happenings of the day in our country and laws alone cannot establish their rights and livelihood. People should unite and struggle for their rights along with democratic minded sections. Raja (2005) has assumed that in several villages of Tamil Nadu, the dominant castes have continuously mocked the Constitution by refusing to allow the SC to become Panchayat Presidents and have got away with administrative activities. It seems that for ruling politicians, the decentralisation and the local governance are only means of electoral propaganda. In Pappapatti, a village in Madurai District where the post of Panchayat President is reserved for SC, vested interest groups have repeatedly subverted the election process. Out of the 19 attempts made between 1996 and 2004 to elect a Panchayat President, only thrice the process was allowed to be completed. Even on these three occasions, a candidate supported by the local dominant caste won, only to resign a few minutes later. The SC of Keeripatti

and Nattarmangalam in Madurai District and of Kottakachi Yendal village in Virudhunagar Districts of Tamil Nadu State have been facing similar problems.

Bharat Ratna Dr. B.R. Ambedkar has said that, in India many villages still considered as "sinks of localism, dens of ignorance, narrow-mindedness and communalism", so the dominant caste never allow the SC to rule/administrate the village panchayats (Pal, 2004). He has given this statement nearly 68 years before, but still this discriminatory and untouchability practices are happening in village panchayats, particularly those who are elected under reserved SC categories in Viluppuram District of Tamil Nadu. It may be the reason for Dr. B.R. Ambedkar not accepting Mahatma Gandhi's request on village based political/governance system (Waghmore, 2015).

According to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 using derogatory words and comments [Section 3(s) (u) (v)] is punishable but this study reveal that more than one tenth of the SC Panchayat Presidents (13.5 percent) are called by their caste names by the dominant community. In a socialized society, the people of dominant caste are still 'narrow-minded' and are not properly socialised in the context of caste myth. The stigmatising based on caste, humiliating the SC people degrades the panchayat.

As per the Tamil Nadu Panchayat Raj Act, 1994 once in every 10 years a panchayat rolls from general to reserved panchayat and vice-versa. When the panchayat is reserved for the SC the dominant caste could not take it positively and try to dominate them with local caste power. While collecting the data, the researcher has understood that in Viluppuram District some panchayats having only ten or twenty SC family are also reserved for the SC people. The researcher proposes that if the panchayat is reserved for the SC category, the minimum population of SC should be 70 per cent. This will lead to more effective participation of SC, otherwise there shall be no empowerment of the SC community.

Support from Officials

The research study reveals that 57 percent of the SC Panchayat Presidents have not approached Adi Dravidar Welfare Department (ADWD) officials due to various reasons and constraints in terms of proximity, education and the process involved in claiming funds through this body. This department has direct link in the SC people, but majority of the SC Panchayat Presidents (57%) have not visited the office. Tamil Nadu State Government has allocated INR 11, 274 crore under the Scheduled Castes Sub-Plan for the year 2015-16 out of the State's Total Annual Plan Outlay of INR 55, 100 crore. This allocation amounts to 20.46 percent of annual plan outlay and is more than the percentage of SC population of the State allocate mainly for the welfare of SC people through ADWD (Adi Dravidar and Tibal Welfare Department, 2015). In the locality of SC all the infrastructure development programmes and social welfare programmes are made through this Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan (SCSP)/Special Component Plan (SCP). The SC Panchayat Presidents are not getting the SCSP fund directly and are getting it through Block Development Office. At times it is more difficult to get this fund.

In addition to that, 62.4 percent of the SC Panchayat Presidents have not approached Tamil Nadu Adi Dravidar Development Corporation (THADCO) for any support and assistance. Through this Corporation various development programmes and activities are carried out for the welfare of the SC people but majority of the SC Panchayat Presidents are not using its services.

There are plenty of opportunities available for the development of the SC community. However, the caste system and caste based atrocities have became the obstacles of their development. The Panchayat Presidents are the key change agents of the panchayat. Nonetheless, their skills and capacities are undermined and access to knowledge and resources are deliberately denied. In these circumstance, people centred development can be achieved through strengthening their capacity at local panchayat level.

5.2.6. Local Self-Governance and Social Work Practice

All human beings are part of the society and everyone in the society has different social roles and duties. While performing the roles and duties, the individual faces many problems in one or other form, which hinder the performance as a social being (Mehta, 2010).

Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledges, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing (International Federation of Social Workers & International Association of Schools of Social Work, 2014).

The social work profession meant to bring social change in the communities which are at risk and oppressed. The Panchayat Presidents are key social change agents. However, these change agents are not sensitized in a holistic community development model. The principles of social work empathise the "respect for diversity". Nonetheless, the present governance system does not allow the diversity in the work culture on the basis of caste. The present caste system and its practice in the local governance is totally against the social work principles. The respect and dignity of the individuals and certain communities are not ensured in the present caste based governance system. The social work profession and knowledge are supposed to fill the development gap in the system. However, this profession is not much recognized and not actively involved in the development activities of the panchayats.

The present unequal and unethical development initiatives and practices are rooted in the population. There is huge scope for the use of social work methods, techniques and tools to address the present constraints and challenges of the SC community. The people's participation is one of the key elements in the development activity which emphasize the community engagement in the panchayat development. The social work profession has to play a vital role in bringing positive change in the people and system.

The current gap has been widely covered in the present study. It creates more opportunity for social work research to be carried out in this research domain to validate the data on a large scale.

5.3. SUGGESTIONS

- Majority of the SC Panchayat Presidents are earning less than INR 6000/- in a month in addition to the honorarium of INR 1000/- per month given from their Panchayat Funds which will not be sufficient for their survival. It is suggested that the honorarium has to be increased and can be given as monthly salary instead of honorarium.

- Majority of the SC Panchayat Presidents have studied only up to high school level. Due to this they are not able to plan and execute the programmes effectively. The study suggests that there should be a minimum qualifying education to contest in the panchayat elections. In addition to that they will have to be motivated and helped to pursue Diploma or Certificate Programme on Panchayat Raj Administration and Management.

- Most of the SC Panchayat Presidents do not have proper house with basic amenities such as individual toilet and water connection. It is suggested that the SC Panchayat Presidents can be provided residential quarters. This provision may improve the living conditions of the SC Panchayat Presidents that lead them to affirmative action to implement the development programme of their panchayats. In addition to that it will improve the participation, leadership and administrative skills of the SC Panchayat Presidents.

- Majority of the SC women Panchayat Presidents are forced to contest in panchayat election by their husband and other family members. The reservation for woman has been manipulated and misutilised by the male family members. In order to change the situation and improve effective participation in the local self-governance, the SC women candidates can be nominated / recommended by the locally registered women groups.

- The SC Panchayat Presidents have affiliation to various political parties. The study reveals that those presidents supporting the ruling party are gaining more in terms of sharing of funds and other resources. So, irrespective of the political affiliation of the SC Panchayat Presidents, the State, District and Block resources have to be distributed equally to SC Panchayats.

- Panchayat Presidents' duties and responsibilities are divided into four categories such as Mandatory Duties (Section 110), Discretionary Duties (Section 112, 113, 114), Delegated Works and other Departmental Works. The study suggests that, in order to sensitise the Presidents on their duties, mandatory refresher programmes can be organised and subsequently resources allocation can be done.

- Leadership and management skills training programme can be organised once in a year and it should be mandatory for fund allocation to the panchayats.

- Annual appraisal of the panchayat development for SC Panchayat Presidents has be done through social audit. The audit report can be disseminated to the general public.

- Since the SC Panchayat Presidents are facing caste based abuse, violence, discrimination and exploitations at various levels, they could not take innovative actions for the panchayats' development. In order to eradicate the caste based issues in panchayats the following powers can be delegated.

    1. Scheduled Caste (SC) Panchayat Presidents shall be empowered to take decisions and pass approvals independently when she/he become a victim under the Scheduled Castes and The Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.

    2. The SC Panchayat Presidents shall be empowered to appraise the performance of Vice-Presidents, ward members and clerks of the panchayats and the appraisal report can be shared in the Gram Sabha meetings. The report may also be sent to the Assistant Director (Panchayat) and District Collector and necessary actions can be taken against those officials whose performance is not satisfactory.

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3. The post of Vice-President of panchayats shall also be brought under reservation. This will not only prevent conflicts between the SC Panchayat Presidents and Vice-Presidents but also empower the presidents to function most effectively for the development of the panchayat.

4. Communal events shall be organised at panchayat level to bring peace and harmony among the people and also to increase the cooperation of other key stakeholders.

- Grama Sabha meetings have to be video documented by the administration, to ensure that the activities of the panchayat are governed well and to ensure the participation of all the members. This helps in recording the opinions, impressions and suggestions of the functionaries, local citizens on their grievances, handicaps and difficulties. The indifferent attitude of the Ward Members/Vice-President/ Panchayat Secretary can be curbed.

- A high-level "Steering Committee on Complaint" must be formed with the representatives of the SC Panchayat Presidents, government policymakers (like Secretaries of Rural Development & Panchayat Raj, Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare and Home Departments), Commissioner of SC and ST, the Chairman of State Human Rights Commission, a retired Judge of High Court, Professional Social Worker and representatives from Voluntary Organisation to meet at regular intervals and to discuss the problems/grievances of the SC Panchayat Presidents in PRIs and to provide just, adequate and quick solutions.

- From this study, it is inferred that reservation provides the opportunities to SC people to participate in PRIs. Therefore, the government shall continue the reservation policy in the State of Tamil Nadu and to put the last first.

5.4. Implications for Social Work Practice

Social work is a professional activity of helping individuals, groups and communities to enhance or restore their capacities and creating societal conditions favourable to this world. This profession is committed to enhance the wellbeing of all human being and to promote community well being. It is particularly committed to alleviate poverty, oppression and other forms of social injustice. Social justice is an ideal condition in which all members of the society have the same basic rights, protection, opportunities and social benefits. Social workers have an obligation to help the disadvantaged groups increase their personal, interpersonal, socio-economic and political strength and influence through improving their circumstances. Empowerment focused social workers seeks a more equitable distribution of power and resources among the various communities in the society.

Working with the communities is one of the primary methods of social work. It involves a process through which communities are organised to work towards their development. In this process of development the social worker as a professional change agent enables a community action system (comprising of individuals, groups and organizations) to engage in planned, collective action in order to deal with community felt needs. This process is initiated within a democratic framework, which lays emphasis on collaborative efforts, consensus building and building one's potential and capacities through participation.

The results of the present study reveal that the SC Panchayat Presidents in the Viluppuram District of Tamil Nadu are facing with numerous constraints and problems relating to education, awareness about the programmes, administration of the panchayat, gaining support from officials, abuse, discrimination and caste based atrocities, gender discriminations and so on. It indicates the enormous scope of professional social work intervention in local self-governance with specific focus on SC Panchayat Presidents. The most common methods of social work intervention which can be utilized to address the identified purposes of intervention are community organization, social action, group work, case work, social welfare administration and social work research. It signifies the need for appointing professionally trained social

workers in local self-governance. The possible social work interventions recognised through the present research study are:

- Facilitating the participation and inclusion of SC Panchayat Presidents in the local self-governance.

- Creating awareness and educating SC Panchayat Presidents about the available services, programmes and resources and its effective utilization.

- Enhancing the administrative and leadership skills and problem solving capacities of SC Panchayat Presidents.

- Addressing the inequalities, injustices, atrocities and challenges faced by the SC people in general and SC Panchayat Presidents in particular.

- Engaging in advocacy with regard to significant Panchayat, Block, District, State and National level concerns relating to participation and empowerment of SC Panchayat Presidents in local self-governance.

- Encouraging harmonies, democratic inclusive and mutually supporting communities in the villages.

5.5. CONCLUSION

Before the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act came into operation there was no effective participation of Scheduled Caste in PRIs. In the earlier State legislation, there was no reservation of seats for the SC. The Amendment Act, 1993 has a clear provision for providing reservation for the SC community. The local depressed groups (SC) have a better chance of organising themselves and resist the elite in Panchayat Raj elections because of increasing reservations.

Through reservation, the Indian Constitution has ensured the provision for the empowerment of the SC. However, the findings of this study show that the Panchayat Presidents elected under reserved SC category lack the capacities to perform effectively due to low level of education, lack of cooperation and coordination from fellow members; from dominant caste group and officials of panchayat. The SC Panchayat Presidents' active participation in decision-making is not ensured in the study area.

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Especially female SC Panchayat Presidents are hesitant to work with this system. Decentralisation of power has not resulted in empowerment of the SC. Although the government claims that the reservation has made a huge effort to empower the SC people in society, the present research shows that reservation creates access to participation in the local self-governance but lacks sensitivity about government programme, schemes and administrative process. The atrocities against the SC people de-motivate them in the empowerment process. The reservation is not ensured in a genuine manner.

The study concludes that there is less education, problems in utilizing the resource allocation, violence and atrocities occurred against the SC Panchayat Presidents. In addition, there is prevalence of non-cooperation in the development activities of the reserved SC panchayats. These situations directly affect their participation in various committees, which leads to poor performance in the decision making process and leadership abilities. Ultimately, the development activities are not executed properly. Consequently, this situation does not help the District and its SC population to come out of its backwardness. Therefore, the local self-governance cannot be achieved without ensuring safe and participative space and opportunity for the SC Panchayat Presidents to implement the developmental activities independently which will empower them and in turn empower the entire SC population in the Viluppuram District of Tamil Nadu.

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Appendix

PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL SELF-GOVERNANCE AND EMPOWERMENT OF SCHEDULED CASTE PANCHAYAT PRESIDENTS IN VILUPPURAM DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

I am Stalin. A, a Ph.D. Research Scholar in the Department of Social Work, Pondicherry University, Puducherry. I am doing research on the above topic. In this regard I would like to appreciate your active participation by answering these questions. The session will usually take only 20-30 minutes to complete. The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential and used for research purpose only. In this interview schedule, your participation is voluntary; you can neither answer nor reject any question. I appreciate your sincere participation for the successful completion of the research study.

Respondent No._____

Name of the Panchayat: _____   **Block:**_____

I	Socio-Economic Status	Remarks
1.1	Name:	
1.2	Age:	
1.3	Gender: 1) Male 2) Female	
1.4	Marital Status: 1) Unmarried 2) Married 3) Widow / Widower 4) Separated 5) Divorced	
1.5	Religion: 1) Hindu 2) Buddhist 3) Others, Specify ………	
1.6	Name of the Sub-Caste: …………………………….	
1.7	Educational qualification: 1) Illiterate 2) Primary 3) Middle School 4) High School 5) Higher Secondary 6) Graduate 7) Post Graduate 8) Others, Specify ………………	
1.8	Type of Family: 1) Nuclear 2) Joint	

1.9	Type of House: 1) Thatched 2) Tiled 3) Concrete	
1.10	Ownership of House: 1) Owned 2) Rented	
1.11	How long are you living in this area? ……………………	
1.12	What is the main source of lighting for your household? 1) Electricity 2) Kerosene 3) Solar lamp	
1.13	Does your house have water pipe connection? 1) Yes 2) No	
1.14	Does your house has toilet facility? 1) Yes 2) No	
1.15	Primary Occupation:	
1.16	Monthly Income: INR.	
1.17	Family Income: INR. per month	
1.18	Do you own any agricultural land? ………………….. 1) Landless 2) less than 1 acre 3) 1-5 acres 4) above 5 acres	
II	**Contributing factors to participate in PRIs**	**Remarks**
2.1	Is there any member of your family elected as a Panchayat representative earlier? 1) Yes 2) No	
2.2	Did you contest in the previous panchayat elections? 1) Yes 2) No If Yes, Specify the positions …………………….	
2.3	Is there any important factors that motivate you to contest in Panchayat elections? 1) Yes 2) No	
	If Yes, Specify ……………	
	If No, why did you contest in panchayat elections? …………	
2.4	Did the reservation in the elections inspire you to participate in elections? 1) Yes 2) No	
2.5	Have you ever been contested in elections when your Panchayat was not reserved for SC categories? 1) Yes 2) No	

	If No, Specify the reason ………..	
2.6	Were you active in politics before becoming panchayat president? 1) Yes 2) No	
2.7	Did you receive support from other community people during elections? 1)Yes 2) No	
	If Yes, Specify the support received ………………………………………………………	
	If No, specify the reasons ………………	
Political Factors		**Remarks**
2.8	Are you member of any political party? 1) Yes 2) No	
	If Yes, specify the name of the party ……………	
	If No, specify the reason ………….	
2.9	Do you hold any post currently in the political party? 1)Yes 2) No	
	If Yes, specify the post …………	
2.10	Did you receive any support from political parties after becoming President? 1) Yes 2) No	
	If Yes, Specify the name of the party …………	

III	Level of administrative skills as perceived by the respondents					
	Self Assessment on perceived administrative skills	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good
3.1	Decision making					
3.2	Leadership qualities					
3.3	Active participation					
3.4	Formulate policy					
3.5	Working hard					
3.6	Understanding others mind clearly					
3.7	Identifying the opportunities					
3.8	Changing attitudes in accordance with the environment					
3.9	Coping capacity					
3.10	Capacity on Implementing plans					
3.11	Enticement of speaking					
3.12	Open mindedness and transparent activities					
3.13	Formulating ambitious dreams on Panchayat development					
3.14	Being prudent Concentrations					
3.15	Delegation of work					
3.16	Appreciating the good work					
3.17	Solving the problems					

3.18	Organizing the community to work as a team					
3.19	Getting suggestions from others					
3.20	Giving suggestions to others					
3.21	Following the organizational rules/ground rules/characteristics					
3.22	Organizing Research and planning meetings					

IV	**Awareness about duties and responsibilities and its fulfilment**				

Prepare annual plan and budget		**Able to prepare**	**Not able to prepare**	**Unaware**	**Remarks**
4.1	Preparing Annual Plan				
4.2	Preparing Budget				

Panchayat Committees		**Aware**	**Unaware**	**Remarks**
4.3	Standing Committee			
4.4	Development Committee			
4.5	Agriculture and Water Resource Committee			
4.6	Working Committee			
4.7	Educational Committee			
4.8	Other Groups			
	Forest Group			
	Village Monitoring Committee			

Duties and Responsibilities of Panchayat Presidents					
Government Programmes/Schemes		**Availed**	**Not availed**	**Unaware**	**Remarks**
Compulsory duties and responsibilities (Section 110)					
4.9	Panchayat General Fund				
4.10	Block Fund				
4.11	District Fund				
4.12	Member of Legislative Assembly Constituency Development Scheme (MLACDS				
4.13	Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS)				
4.14	Rural Infrastructure Scheme (RIS)				
4.15	Self Sufficiency Scheme (SSS)				
4.16	Submitted Revenue Subsidy/Grant				
4.17	Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan (SCSP)				
4.18	Tamilnadu Electricity Board				
Optional duties and responsibilities (Section 111)					
4.19	Forest Department Fund				
4.20	Contribution from donors				
4.21	Corporate Social Responsibility fund (CSR)				
Other duties and responsibilities (Section 112, 113, 114)					
4.22	Tamil Nadu Village Habitation Improvement Scheme (THAI)				
4.23	Chief Minister Solar Powered Green House Scheme (CMSPGHS)				

4.24	Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY)				
4.25	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)				
4.26	Energisation of Street Lights with Solar Energy				
4.27	Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC)				
4.28	Clean Village Campaign (CVC)				
Other Department Works					
4.29	Revenue Department – Patta				
4.30	Social Welfare Department – Pension				
4.31	Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY)				
Other Duties					
4.32	Nirmal Bharat Abiyan				
4.33	National Project on Bio-gas Development				
4.34	Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)				
4.35	Swarnjayanthi Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY)				
4.36	Rajiv Gandhi Rehabilitation Package (RGRP)				
4.37	THANE (Relief & Rehabilitation Programme)				
4.38	Rural Roads under NABARD - Fund				
4.39	Others, specify …….				

Infrastructure Facilities		Available	Not available	Remarks
4.40	Primary School			
4.41	Sub-Health Centre			
4.42	Public Toilet complex for Women and Children			
4.43	Public Toilet complex for Men			
4.44	Burial and Burning Ground			
4.45	Community Hall			
4.46	Sports ground			
4.47	Market complex			
4.48	Sub-Library			
4.49	Children's Park			
4.50	Drainage facilities			
4.51	Solid Waste Management Centre			
4.52	Others ……..			
4.53	Are you satisfied with the financial resources allocated to your Panchayat? 1) Yes 2) No			
4.54	Have you received any award for your Panchayat during your tenure? 1) Yes 2) No			
	If Yes, name of the award…………………. ..Amount (if any)…………………..From whom?............................			
V	**Challenges and Barriers**			**Remarks**
5.1	Did you face any difficulties during the election campaign? 1) Yes 2) No			
	If Yes, Specify ………………………………………………………………….			

5.2	Did you face caste based violence while contesting in elections? 1) Yes 2) No		
	If Yes, Specify		
5.3	Whether any caste based violence occurred in your Panchayat? 1) Yes 2) No		
	If Yes, specify the reasons ……………………………………………………………………		
5.4	Did anybody called you by your caste name? 1) Yes 2) No		
	If Yes, Who? ………………… Why? ……………………		
5.5	Do you have separate office? 1) Yes 2) No		
	If No, why? ………………		
5.5	Are you respected by your officials and members? 1) Yes 2) No		
	If No, why? ……………………		
5.6	Do you feel isolated during the panchayat meetings? 1) Yes 2) No		
	If Yes, Whom? ……….. Why? ………….		
5.7	Are you able to enjoy the rights and entitlements of a Panchayat President? 1) Yes 2) No		
	If No, specify the reasons ……………………………………………..		
5.8	Are you facing any restrictions as Panchayat President? 1) Yes 2) No		
	If Yes, Specify ………………………………………………………………..		

	Support from the officials	Never	Some times	Always	Not approached for support
5.9	District Collector & Assistant Director (Panchayat)				
5.10	Block Development officials				
5.11	Engineer (Water Supply)				
5.12	Engineer (Electricity)				
5.13	Engineer (Civil)				
5.14	Adi Dravidar Welfare Department officials				
5.15	AD Welfare Dept. Officials				
5.16	Social Welfare Department officials				
5.17	Tamil Nadu Adi Dravidar Housing and Development Cooperation officials (TADCO)				
5.18	Head Masters				
5.19	Village Administrative Officer (VAO)				
5.20	Bank officials				
5.21	Local Police				
5.22	Anganwadi Workers				
5.23	How do you rate your performance as a panchayat President? 1) Very good 2) Good 3) Average 4) Bad 5) Very bad				
VI	**Suggestions**				
6.1	How would you like to see your Panchayat after five years?				