

## Political Orientation and Bases of Social Power among Women Leaders in Panchayati Raj Institutions

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### Abstract:

*The major purpose of this empirical investigation was to delineate the essence of political orientation in the effective carrier of women political leaders, especially in the decision-making process of Panchayati Raj institutions. Further, it intends to find out the influence of institutional levels (of P.R. Institutions) on preferred bases of power of women leaders in decision-making process. It also delineates the role of leaders' political efficacy across regions in determining bases of power used & intensity of their political orientation. Finally, the study attempted to test the level of significance in mean differences for preferred bases of power across political orientation, region and level of PR institutions. This study involved 2(Region)X 2(level of institution)X2(Political Orientation) factorial design to conduct a quasi-experimental study. Two hundred Forty women leaders were randomly sampled from two districts (1 scheduled & 1 non-scheduled) of Orissa. The results of the investigation stated some unique facts which are presented in terms of major findings. The findings of the study have both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, this interdisciplinary study adds information to the knowledge in political Science & Psychology. This study will help in understanding the constructs like political orientation. Social power & women empowerment from practical point of view, the findings of this study will set guidelines for developmental planning of rural India enriching the women leaders at grass-root organizations.*

**Key words:** Rural local self- government, Political orientation, Social power.

## **Introduction**

The concept of local self-government is well known in India since ancient days. After independence various developments have taken place in the field of local self-government, particularly in rural local government. Now the local government in India is comprised of two broad categories, rural and urban. Rural Local Government and Urban Local Government are called Panchayat Raj and Municipal Government respectively. Both rural and urban forms of local Government have been constitutionalized through 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> constitutional Amendments in 1992.

The panchayats were established by most of the state government in India after independence, but a major step in this direction was taken on the basis of Balwant Ray Mehta Committee's report in 1957 which recommended the three-tier Panchayati Raj system in India. To operationalize the provision into action, the Balwant Ray Mehta Committee was appointed in 1957 to suggest the introduction of Panchayati Raj. As a result of the recommendation of this committee, three tier Panchayat Raj Systems; the Gram Panchayat at the village level, the Panchayat Samiti at the block or intermediate level and Zilla Parishad at the district level was introduced. The committee remarked about the philosophy of Panchayat Raj that "Panchayat Raj System establishes a linkage between local leadership enjoying confidence of local people and the Government, and translates the policies of the Government into action.

## **Power and Influence**

The power theorists stress the positive sum of power suggesting the raw ability to mobilize resources to accomplish some end without reference to any organized opposition. The concept of power is closely related to the concept of leadership, for power is one of the means by which a leader influences the behaviour of followers (Stogdill, 1974). The organisational behaviour theorist perhaps most closely associated with the study of power, recently define power as a potential force and in more detail “as the potential ability to influence behaviour, to change the course of events, to overcome resistance, and to get people to do things that they would not otherwise do”. Social psychologists John French and Bertram Raven identified five categories of the sources of power. These five classic types of power are reward, coercive, legitimate, referent and expert.

## **Political Orientation**

Political orientation refers to the learning of norms, attitudes and behaviour accepted and practised by the ongoing political system, and social patterns through various agencies of the society. It is the induction of the individual into political culture (Almond & Powell, 1966).and in the development of awareness of political world and appreciation, judgment and understanding of political events (Pye, 1962). It is a process through which individuals acquire formal and informal, deliberate and unplanned politically relevant social attitude and personality traits (Greenstein, 1969). Political orientation is a process by which an individual becomes acquainted with the political system and it determines his perceptions of politics and his reaction to the political phenomena (Rush & Althoff, 1972). It helps him in learning the basic orientation necessary for the maintenance of the democratic system (Mishra, 1980). It

also provides information about citizenship role, impetus for participant role and awareness of political values.

Political involvement fosters stability and order by “reinforcing the legitimacy “of political authority. A society which debar a substantial part of its population from political participation is like to be “highly explosive”. Political involvement in terms of participation has thus been seen as a civic duty and sign of political health (Dowse & Hughes, 1972).

Political awareness refers to the knowledge about political concepts, political institutions and is a key concept in the understanding of the political system.

Political efficacy denotes a citizen’s feelings about the effects of his action on political events. It refers to the person’s belief that “political and social change can be accelerated or retarded, and that his efforts alone or in concert with others can produce desired behaviour on the part of political authorities”. In others words, it refers to the individual’s perception of his effectiveness, not his actual influence.

To sum up, it can be concluded that Political orientation in western literature refers to one’s tendency to favour the activities of a particular political party, in spite of his own place and position. Presently in our Oriental culture, the means to and potency of favour are important concerns of political psychologists (Padhi, & Choudhury, 1989; Sia, Rayguru& Patnaik, 2014). Hence, in addition to above consideration, let us think of potency of the tendency of a person towards political activities in general, and towards a political party in specific to redefine this construct. To measure the construct, the authors suggest to tap the responses of persons toward three important political behaviors like ‘political awareness, political attitude, and political participation’ as three domains of ‘Political Orientation.’

## **Rationale of the study**

Rural India is passing through a period of transition. The new social and economic forces generated by the large scale development plans have shaken up the social structure and are beginning to change the old values and attitudes as well. The traditional leadership is also undergoing the change. New patterns of leadership are emerging. The introduction of community projects, land reforms, decentralized local administrative organisations & decrease in the age of adult franchise which aims at the reconstruction of rural society have brought forth the importance of leadership in grass-root organisations. It is believed that the success or failure of development plans and indeed ideological aspirations as embodied in our constitution may depend upon the participation of leaders from both the sex in relation to grass-root decisions and bases of power availed at grass-root organisations. In other words, it is a fresh look at the concept of women empowerment through the functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions.

## **Objectives of the Study**

The major objectives of the empirical investigation were:

- i) To delineate the essence of political orientation in the effective carrier of women political leaders, especially in the decision- making process of panchayat raj institutions.
- ii) To find out the influence of institutional levels (of P.R. institutions) on preferred bases of power.
- iii) To delineate the role of leaders' political orientation across regions in determining bases of power used.
- iv) To test the level of significance in mean differences for preferred bases of power across political orientation, region and level of PR institutions.

## **Method of study**

### **Design**

This study involved 2(Region) X 2(level of institution) X 2(Political Orientation) factorial design to conduct a quasi-experimental study. This main study was preceded by a pilot study to examine the strength of political Orientation Scale, a measure specially adapted for this study in odia medium (Sia, 2006). This study involved 8cells X 30 Samples. Each of the 8 cells in the design of the main study will comprise of 30 women leaders and thus included 240 subjects in total for investigation.

### **Samples**

Two hundred Forty women leaders were randomly sampled from six districts (3 scheduled & 3 non-scheduled districts) of Orissa. They were also classified equally from two institutions: Gram Panchayat & Panchayat samiti. All of them were from families of middle Socio Economic Status & rural communities.

### **Measures**

This study involves the use of three scales to collect the responses of grass-root women leaders (G.P. and P.S.) through structured interviews by trained investigators. These scales were:

- (i) Political Orientation Scale (POS)
- (ii) Bases of Power Scale (BOPS). The details of these scales are narrated below.

#### **(i) Political Orientation Scale (POS)**

This scale has been developed by Sia (2006) on the basis of thoughts provoked in a study by Padhy& Choudhury (1983). This scale involved three parts to trap subjects' responses about three domains of political orientation such as Political Participation, Political awareness and political efficacy.

The part - I of this scale includes 10 items to be responded in 5-point scale from never to always. These items are meant to know about subjects' participation in political activities. These items are in Oriya medium.

The part-II of the scale comprises twelve statements to be responded in 5-point scales such as never, sometimes, often, frequently, and always these items are meant for collecting information about subjects' political efficacy. These items are also in Oriya medium.

The Part-III of the scale contains 10 questions about simple common information to assess subjects' awareness in relation to politics. The questions are very simple, common and in Oriya medium.

The scoring of items in part-I and Part-II is similar while that of items in Part-III is different. Each item in Part-III bears one point for each correct answer.

#### **(ii) Base of Power Scales (BOPS)**

This scale was introduced by French Raven (1959) to find out the bases of powers used by leaders (in Social Context) and managers as well as supervisors (in organizations) to create influences on others' behaviour. This scale originally had five domains, which had been expanded adding the sixth domain such as "Contact Power". Hence, the present scale used had six domains, each of them having 2 items to be responded in 5 point scale Hinkin & Schriesheim (1989). Further, the scale has been adapted in Oriya medium for better understanding by grass-root leaders (Sia, 2007). Such a substantial portion of behavior of leaders was marginal in literature of Psychology. The psychometric property of this adapted version has been established by item analysis in previous works, stating the alpha coefficients from .64 to .82.

## **Procedure**

Following the design of the study, 120 women panchayat samiti members and 120 women gram panchayat sarapanches were selected from scheduled area and non-scheduled area (60 from each group across each institution). In other words 60 G.P sarapanches and 60 PS members were randomly selected from Keonjhar, Koraput and Malkangiri districts, which are categorized as scheduled area by the Government of Orissa. Similarly, 60 GP sarapanch and 60 PS members were also randomly selected from Jajpur, Khurda and Cuttack districts which are categorized as Non-scheduled Area. Further, proper care was taken through quartile split to include 30 politically more oriented (PMO) and 30 politically less oriented (PLO) leaders in each group of 60 members on the basis of their extreme scores for Political Orientation Scale. Each member was individually administered POS, and BOPS by structured interview method, after necessary permission from the concerned district collector.

## **Results**

The results of present investigation compares the scores of women leaders for self- efficacy, for their preference of using bases of Political power across political – orientation, region, and level of Panchayatiraj institutions. The Analyses Of Variance followed by Mean and Standard deviation scores are presented systematically. Let us describe the results for each bases of social power in detail.

The results presented in table No. 1 revealed that Area had a significant main effect on leaders' Reward Power,  $F(1,232)= 7.04$   $p \leq .05$ . Analysis of the mean table- 2 stated that GP Sarapanches in non-scheduled area showed significantly higher level of Reward Power ( $M= 5.90$ ) compared to Sarapanches of scheduled area ( $M=5.61$ ). Also PS Members



from non-scheduled areas showed a significantly higher level of Reward Power ( $M=7.78$ ), compared to the PS members of scheduled area, ( $M=7.03$ ).

**Table No. 1. ANOVA Performed on PR Leaders' Score for Reward Power**

SORCES	Df	MS	F	Level of Significance
Orientation	1	1.97	.67	NS
Level of Institution (LOI)	1	1.65	.56	NS
Area	1	20.55	7.04	0.05
Orientation X LOI	1	.08	.03	NS
Orientation X Area	1	.40	.14	NS
LOI X Area	1	.41	.14	NS
Orientation X LOI X Area	1	2.16	.74	NS
Within Cells	232	2.92		

A non - significant main effect was found for Orientation on Reward Power scores of PR Leaders,  $F(1,232)=.67$ , ns. The results (Table -2) showed that the PR Leaders who are politically less oriented ( $M= 8.06$ ) showed greater Reward Power than the PR Leaders who are politically more oriented ( $M= 5.10$ ). Level of Institutions (LOI) had a non - significant main effect on leaders' Reward Power  $F (1,232) = .56$ , ns. A non-significant Level of Institution x Area interaction effect was also observed,  $F (1,232) = .14$ , ns. The results (Table -2) indicated that the Mean scores of PR Leaders at both the levels of PR institutions were hardly differing. The interaction effects of Orientation X LOI was not significant,  $F (1,232) = .03$ , ns. Further, the interaction effects of Orientation X Area was not significant,  $F (1,232) = .14$ , ns. Similarly, the interaction effects of Orientation X LOI X Area was not significant,  $F (1,232) = .74$ , ns.

**Table No.2 Mean and Standard Deviation of Leader's score for different variables across Area, Institution and Orientation**

Variables		Non-scheduled						Scheduled					
		GP Sarapanch			PS Members			GP Sarapanch			PS Members		
		PMO	PLO	Comb	PMO	PLO	Comb	PMO	PLO	Comb	PMO	PLO	Comb
General Efficacy	M	28.30	23.62	25.96	33.42	27.24	30.33	30.82	26.18	28.50	33.88	27.20	30.54
	SD	4.62	3.68	4.15	6.42	5.48	5.95	5.36	4.28	4.82	5.78	4.84	5.31
Political Efficacy	M	36.24	30.84	33.54	38.42	31.52	34.97	30.46	28.42	29.44	34.84	30.56	32.70
	SD	6.48	7.20	6.84	6.82	6.52	6.67	7.24	6.48	6.86	7.30	6.82	7.06
Reward Power	M	4.02	7.78	5.90	6.24	9.32	7.78	4.34	6.88	5.61	5.78	8.28	7.03
	SD	1.46	2.28	1.87	2.44	2.88	2.66	2.24	2.86	2.55	2.84	3.02	2.93
Coercive Power	M	8.46	6.44	7.45	6.24	5.76	6.00	7.88	6.76	7.32	6.36	5.24	5.80
	SD	2.64	2.18	2.41	1.76	2.28	2.02	1.84	2.40	2.12	2.24	1.30	1.77
Legitimate Power	M	7.62	6.44	7.03	4.36	2.88	3.61	8.48	7.88	8.18	3.84	4.42	4.13
	SD	2.26	2.42	2.34	2.18	1.80	1.99	2.42	2.28	2.35	1.80	1.62	1.75
Expert Power	M	5.28	2.72	4.00	9.18	4.84	7.01	4.46	2.18	3.30	6.20	3.80	5.00
	SD	2.26	1.80	2.03	3.22	1.76	2.49	1.92	1.26	1.59	3.28	1.42	2.35
Reference Power	M	6.32	3.76	5.04	8.82	4.84	6.83	4.34	2.88	3.61	8.24	3.80	6.02
	SD	2.50	2.30	2.40	2.48	1.20	1.84	1.80	1.50	1.65	2.24	1.80	2.04
Contact Power	M	9.28	6.88	8.05	5.48	3.24	4.36	8.26	5.26	7.06	4.74	2.84	3.79
	SD	3.26	2.48	2.87	2.26	2.02	2.14	2.84	2.18	2.51	2.24	1.80	2.02

N.B.- LOI = Level of Institution, PMO= Politically more Oriented, PLO= Politically Less Oriented, GP= Gram Panchayat, PS= Panchayat Samitee, M= Mean and SD= Standard Deviation, and Comb = Combined .

The results showed on the table No. 3 revealed that Area had a significant main effect on leaders' Coercive Power,  $F(1,232)=4.62$   $p \leq .05$ . Analysis of the mean table- 2 stated that GP Sarapanches in non-scheduled area showed significantly higher level of Coercive Power ( $M= 7.45$ ) compared to Sarapanches of scheduled area ( $M=7.32$ ). Also PS Members from non-scheduled areas showed a significantly higher level of Coercive Power ( $M=6.00$ ), compared to the PS members of scheduled area, ( $M=5.80$ ).

**Table No. 3. ANOVA Performed on PR Leaders' Score for Coercive Power**

SORCES	df	MS	F	Level of Significance
Orientation	1	4.36	.94	NS
Level of Institution (LOI)	1	3.39	.73	NS
Area	1	21.58	4.62*	0.05
Orientation X LOI	1	11.81	2.53	NS
Orientation X Area	1	.41	.09	NS
LOI X Area	1	9.95	2.13	NS
Orientation X LOI X Area	1	1.84	.39	NS
<u>Within Cells</u>	<u>232</u>	<u>4.67</u>		

N.B.- LOI = Level of Institution, PMO= Politically more Oriented, PLO= Politically Less Oriented, GP= Gram Panchayat, PS= Panchayat Samitee, M= Mean and SD= Standard Deviation

A non- significant main effect was found for Orientation on Coercive Power scores of PR Leaders,  $F(1,232)=.94$ , ns. The results (Table -2) showed that the PR Leaders who are politically more oriented ( $M= 7.24$ ) showed greater Coercive Power than the PR Leaders who are politically less oriented ( $M= 6.05$ ). Level of Institutions (LOI) had a non- significant main effect on leaders' Coercive Power  $F(1,232) = .73$ , ns. A non -significant Level of Institution x Area interaction effect was also observed,  $F(1,232) = 2.13$ , ns. The results (Table -2) indicated that the Mean scores of PR Leaders at both the levels of PR institutions were almost same. The interaction effects of Orientation X LOI was not significant,  $F(1,232) = 2.53$ , ns. Further, the interaction effects of Orientation X Area was not significant,  $F(1,232) = .09$ , = .39, ns.

**Table No. 4. ANOVA Performed on PR Leaders' Score for Legitimate Power**

SORCES	df	MS	F	Level of Significance
Orientation	1	1.20	.22	NS
Level of Institution (LOI)	1	1.81	.32	NS
Area	1	.00	.00	NS
Orientation X LOI	1	3.83	.69	NS
Orientation X Area	1	2.25	.40	NS
LOI X Area	1	1.07	.19	NS
Orientation X LOI X Area	1	.94	.17	NS
Within Cells	232	5.58		

Table No. 4. showed non- significant main effects found for Orientation, Level of Institution (LOI) and Area on Legitimate Power of PR Leaders. The results of this table also revealed a non-significant main effect for Orientation on Legitimate Power scores of PR Leaders,  $F(1,232)=.22$ . The results (Table -2) showed that the PR Leaders who are politically more oriented

(M= 6.07) showed greater Legitimate Power than the PR Leaders who are politically less oriented (M= 5.40).

Level of Institutions (LOI) had a non-significant main effect on leaders' Legitimate Power,  $F(1,232) = .32$ , ns and Area had also a non-significant main effect on leaders' Legitimate Power,  $F(1,232) = .00$  ns. From the mean table-2, it was revealed that GP Sarapanches in scheduled area showed higher level of Legitimate Power (M= 8.18) compared to Sarapanches of non-scheduled area (M= 7.03). Also PS Members from scheduled areas showed a higher level of Legitimate Power (M=4.13), compared to the PS members of non- scheduled area, (M=3.31). Hence, a non-significant Level of Institution x Area interaction effect was also observed,  $F(1,232) = .19$ , ns. The results (Table - 2) indicated that the Mean scores of PR Leaders at both the levels of PR institutions were mostly same. The interaction effects of Orientation X LOI was not significant,  $F(1,232) = .69$ , ns. Further, the interaction effects of Orientation X Area was not significant,  $F(1,232) = .40$ , ns. Similarly, The interaction effects of Orientation X LOI X Area was not significant,  $F(1,232) = .17$ , ns.

The results showed on the table No. 5 revealed that Area had a significant main effect on leaders' Expert Power,  $F(1,232) = 5.50$   $p \leq .05$ . Analysis of the mean table- 2 stated that GP Sarapanches in non-scheduled area showed significantly higher level of Expert Power (M= 4.00) compared to Sarapanches of scheduled area (M=3.32). Also PS Members from non-scheduled areas showed a significantly higher level of Expert Power (M=7.01), compared to the PS members of scheduled area, (M=5.00).

**Table No. 7. ANOVA Performed on PR Leaders' Score for Expert Power**

SORCES	df	MS	F	Level of Significance
Orientation	1	.79	.25	NS
Level of Institution (LOI)	1	.43	.14	NS

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Area	1	17.14	5.50	0.05
Orientation X LOI	1	1.26	.40	NS
Orientation X Area	1	.34	.11	NS
LOI X Area	1	1.13	.36	NS
Orientation X LOI X Area	1	.13	.04	NS
Within Cells	232	3.12		

A non-significant main effect was found for Orientation on Expert Power scores of PR Leaders,  $F(1,232) = .25$ , ns. The results (Table - 2) showed that the PR Leaders who are politically more oriented ( $M= 6.28$ ) showed greater Expert Power than the PR Leaders who are politically less oriented ( $M= 3.88$ ). Level of Institutions (LOI) had a non-significant main effect on leaders' Expert Power  $F(1,232) = .14$ , ns. A non-significant Level of Institution x Area interaction effect was also observed,  $F(1,232) = .36$ , ns. The interaction effects of Orientation X LOI was not significant,  $F(1,232) = .40$ , ns. Further, the interaction effects of Orientation X Area was not significant,  $F(1,232) = .34$ , ns. Similarly, the interaction effects of Orientation X LOI X Area was not significant,  $F(1,232) = .13$ , ns.

The results placed in table No. 6 revealed that a significant main effect was found for Orientation on Reference Power scores of PR Leaders,  $F(1,232)=4.05$ ,  $p \leq .05$ . The results (Table -2) revealed that the PR Leaders who are politically more oriented ( $M= 6.93$ ) showed significantly greater Reference Power than the PR Leaders who are politically less oriented ( $M= 3.82$ ).

**Table No. 6. ANOVA Performed on PR Leaders' Score for Reference Power**

SORCES	df	MS	F	Level of Significance
Orientation	1	13.73	4.05*	0.05
Level of Institution (LOI)	1	.05	.02	NS
Area	1	65.89	19.42**	0.01
Orientation X LOI	1	5.16	1.52	NS

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Orientation X Area	1	5.91	1.74	NS
LOI X Area	1	.00	.00	NS
Orientation X LOI X Area	1	1.00	.29	NS
Within Cells	232	3.39		

Level of Institutions (LOI) had a non-significant main effect on leaders' Reference Power,  $F(1,232) = .02$ , ns. Area had also a significant main effect on leaders' Reference Power,  $F(1,232) = 14.42$ ,  $p \leq .01$ . The mean scores in table- 2 revealed that GP Sarapanches in non-scheduled area showed higher level of Feeling Style ( $M = 5.04$ ) compared to Sarapanches of scheduled area ( $M = 3.68$ ). Also PS Members from non-scheduled areas showed a higher level of Reference Power ( $M = 6.83$ ), compared to the PS members of scheduled area, ( $M = 6.02$ ). A non-significant Level of Institution x Area interaction effect was also observed,  $F(1,232) = .00$ . The interaction effects of Orientation X LOI was not significant,  $F(1,232) = 1.52$ , ns. Further, the interaction effects of Orientation X Area was also not significant,  $F(1,232) = 1.74$ , ns. Similarly, The interaction effects of Orientation X LOI X Area was not significant,  $F(1,232) = .29$ , ns.

**Table No. 7. ANOVA Performed on PR Leaders' Score for Contact Power**

SORCES	df	MS	F	Level of Significance
Orientation	1	5.02	1.71	NS
Level of Institution (LOI)	1	11.50	3.92	0.05
Area	1	1.52	.52	NS
Orientation X LOI	1	7.13	2.43	NS
Orientation X Area	1	1.19	.41	NS
LOI X Area	1	5.57	1.90	NS
Orientation X LOI X Area	1	1.56	.53	NS
Within Cells	232	2.93		

The results placed in table No. 7 revealed that a non-significant main effect was found for Orientation on Contact Power scores

of PR Leaders,  $F(1,232)= 1.71$ , ns. The results Mean scores indicated that the PR Leaders who are politically more oriented ( $M= 7.08$ ) showed greater Contact Power than the PR Leaders who are politically less oriented ( $M= 4.54$ ).

Level of Institutions (LOI) had a significant main effect on leaders' Contact Power,  $F(1,232)= 3.92$ ,  $p \leq .05$  and Area had a non-significant main effect on leaders' Contact Power,  $F(1,232)= .52$ . The analysis of mean scores in table-2 revealed that GP Sarapanches in non-scheduled area showed significantly higher level of Contact Power ( $M= 8.05$ ) compared to Sarapanches of scheduled area ( $M= 7.06$ ). Also PS Members from non-scheduled areas showed a higher level of Contact Power ( $M= 4.36$ ), compared to the PS members of scheduled area, ( $M= 3.79$ ). As a result, a non-significant Level of Institution x Area interaction effect was also observed,  $F(1,232)= 1.90$ , ns. The results (Table -2) indicated that the Mean scores of PR Leaders at both the levels of PR institutions were mostly same. The interaction effects of Orientation X LOI was not significant,  $F(1,232)= 2.43$ , ns. Further, the interaction effects of Orientation X Area was not significant,  $F(1,232) = .41$ , ns. Similarly, the interaction effects of Orientation X LOI X Area was not significant,  $F(1,232) = .53$ , ns.

## Major Findings

To sum up, the results of this investigation stated some unique facts which can be presented in terms of major findings as following:

- It was found in 4 bases out of 6 bases of power that there is significant mean difference across region. In other words, the region of political leaders has significant effect on their preference for different bases of social power in the decision making process of rural Local Self-Governance (PR bodies).

- More specifically, the mean scores of women political leaders from non-scheduled area are higher than their counter parts from scheduled area in choosing reward power, expert power and referent power as their preferred bases to influence their followers and co-workers.
- It has also been found interestingly that political orientation has also significant effect on political leader's choice for referent power to influence others. In other words, politically more oriented women leaders did prefer referent power more significantly than their politically less oriented women leaders.
- It is reflected in the present study that women Gram Panchayat Sarapanches did prefer contact power more significantly than women Panchayat Samiti members.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

### **Political Orientation**

In previous study (Sia & Rayguru, 2014), it has been found that women are less politically oriented, less participative in political activities. It implies that women leaders in rural and backward regions are less participative to assert their efficiency in political activities. Consequently it can be concluded that women leaders in rural Local Self Government are politically less efficacious. This association between political orientation and political efficacy of rural women leaders may be due to the difference in their education, awareness and exposure. It can be concluded that political orientation in western countries refers to one's tendency to favor the activities of a particular political party, irrespective of his own place and position. Presently in our oriental culture, the means to and potency of favor are important concerns of political psychologists. (Padhi & Choudhry (1989): Sia et al, 2014). Hence in addition to above consideration, oriental researchers think of the potency of the



tendency of a person toward political activities in general and toward a political party in specific to redefine the construct of 'Political Orientation'. To measure the construct it was suggested to tap the responses of persons toward 3 important political behaviors such as "Political Awareness, Political Attitude and Political Participation" as 3 domains of political orientation.

### **Bases of Social Power**

As defined power involves the potential to influence others-both the things they do and the ways they feel about something. In this section we will focus on the individual bases of power-that is resources that give people the capacity to influence others successfully. It is an inevitable fact of social life that some individuals can boost a greater capacity to influence people successfully than others.

The concept of power is closely related to the concept of leadership for power is one of the means by which a leader influences the behavior of followers (Stogdill, 1974). Given this integral relationship between leadership and power, Hersey, Blanchard and Nafemeyer stated that leaders must not only access their leadership behavior in order to understand how they actually influence other people but they must also examine their possession and use of power.

In this context French and Raven (1959) suggested 5 different bases of social power as potential resources at the hand of leaders (even of corporate sectors) to influence their followers and pursue their senior/bosses. These bases include Reward power, Coercive power, Legitimate power, Reference power and Expert power which, have been very frequently used in western psychology literature. Further, the scale was adapted in odia medium by Prof. F. M Sahoo (2000) with the 6<sup>th</sup> base in the name of Contact power. It refers to one's ability of creating network with different contacts (important persons) so that it can enable him to influence others through the contact of

concerned important persons. It is very frequently used by individuals in Indian society. Accordingly, the bases of power scale (Sahoo, 2000) used in this investigation included six bases of social power to measure the preference of using power bases by political leaders at grass root level.

In relation to choosing power bases in a society by political leaders at grass root level, it was found in 4 bases out of 6 bases of power that there is significant mean difference across region. In other words the region of political leaders has significant effect on different bases of social power in rural Local Self- Governance (PR bodies).

More specifically, the mean scores of women political leaders from non-scheduled area are higher than their counterparts from scheduled area in choosing reward power, expert power and referent power as their preferred bases to influence their followers and co-workers. It may be explained in terms of better education and exposure of political leaders in non-scheduled area in comparison to their counterparts from scheduled (backward) area. It is obvious that reward power is based on the ability to control valued organisational rewards, resources and privileges in influencing the co-workers and followers. In developed region political leaders of Panchayat Raj bodies (Sarapanches and Samiti Members) being educated and exposed to more political activities might be able to manipulate the reward and the resources at their levels.

On the other hand the coercive power is based on one's ability to control over various punishments to influence others. In this present study it was observed that women political leaders even at grass root level in scheduled (backward) area did choose coercive power more significantly to manage their decisions by influencing their co-workers and followers. It might be showed due to their illusory perception and ignorance about the effectiveness of coercive elements. Because, coercive elements or ways are easily and quickly usable to influence others. Hence women political leaders from backward areas

since are less educated and exposed are ignorant of less effectiveness of the coercive power.

Further, the expert power of a person is based on the accepted belief that the individual has a valued skill or ability, which attracts others towards him. Accordingly a political leader who is perceived as an expert by his co-workers and followers is able to influence them at times. In this investigation it was observed that women political leaders from non-scheduled (developed) area did prefer expert power significantly more than their counterparts than scheduled (backward) areas. It may obviously be explained in terms of their better opportunities and exposure in developed areas.

Similarly the referent power is based on existing social network of the person in the society. It is implied by referring to the network when a person is in need of influencing (pursuing) another person or group of persons. In this study it is observed that women political leaders in non-scheduled (developed) area did prefer more significantly the referent power than their counterparts in scheduled (backward) area. It is generally perceived that persons in developed environment are able to be in higher social network and they know better how to utilise the network to pursue others in comparison to person in back ward areas.

It has also been found interestingly that political orientation has also significant effect on political leader's choice for referent power to influence others. In other words, politically more oriented women leaders did prefer referent power more significantly than their politically less oriented women leaders. It may be implied that leaders' exposure to more and more political activities and political literatures can enable them to use social networks to influence their co-workers and followers. In socio-cultural parameters of Odisha as women are less exposed to political activities in the society are less able to develop and use references with respect to contact power as a base of social power. It has been stated that

persons in pluralistic society like India, use their important contacts and involvement in important organisation for influencing others.

Contact power refers to the use of important contact and being used as an important contact to influence one's co-workers and followers. In case of political leaders, more specifically for women leaders in India the use of contact power has become an essential instrument to influence co-workers and followers. It is reflected in the present study that women Gram Panchayat Sarapanches did prefer contact power more significantly than women Panchayat Samiti members. This difference between Sarapanches and Samiti Members may be due to restricted political spectrum for Samiti members in Odisha. It is constitutionally accepted that a Sarapanch is the head of a Panchayat and a Samiti member is a co-worker to him or her. Further, both administrative and financial privileges in a Gram Panchayat are under the control of a Sarapanch who is accepted as the elected head of the Gram Panchayat. These privileges might be so helpful for Sarapanchaees to use contact power more significantly than Samiti members in India.

### **Implications of the work**

The findings of the study have both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, this interdisciplinary study adds information to the knowledge in political Science& Psychology. This study will help in understanding the constructs like political orientation, social power & women empowerment. From practical point of view, the findings of this study will set guidelines for developmental planning of rural India enriching the women leaders at grass-root organizations.

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