

# Role of PESA Act in Development of Villages Dominated by Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) Of Central India

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## Abstract

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 introduced Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) to promote local self-governance across India. However, it excluded Scheduled Areas, home to many tribal communities. To address this, the Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA) was enacted, aligning tribal governance traditions with national frameworks. PESA empowers Gram Sabhas with executive, consultative, and recommendatory powers, enabling tribal communities to control development decisions, protect cultural identity, and manage resources. Despite its progressive intent, PESA's implementation remains inconsistent across states. Many state governments have failed to integrate its provisions effectively, limiting its impact on local governance and tribal empowerment. The Act envisions Gram Sabhas as vehicles for grassroots democracy and cultural preservation, yet this remains largely unrealized. The present study conducted in Gaurella Block, Chhattisgarh, explores PESA's local enactment, its effectiveness in village development, and offers recommendations to strengthen tribal self-governance and uphold constitutional goals in Scheduled Areas. The study reveals a significant lack of awareness among villagers about the roles and powers granted under PESA. A majority (over 70%) of respondents were unaware of key provisions, including the Gram Sabha's authority over local development plans, forest produce, land alienation, and regulation of markets, money lending, and intoxicants. Only 19.3% recognized the need for Gram Sabha approval of development projects. Awareness was higher among males, graduates, Sarpanches, Secretaries, and those aged 40–49, with knowledge correlating positively with education, landholding, and occupation. These findings highlight the urgent need for awareness and capacity-building efforts to realize PESA's village development goals.

**Keywords:** Gram Sabha, PESA Provisions, Village Development, Capacity-Building Programmes

## Background

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 introduced the concept of local self-governance within a national framework by establishing Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) across India. This framework

aimed to decentralize administrative and political authority, providing local bodies with significant powers. However, the uniform application of these provisions did not extend to Scheduled Areas, which are regions recognized by the Constitution for their significant tribal populations and unique governance needs.

To address this discrepancy, the Indian Parliament enacted the Provisions of the Panchayats Extension to the Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act, 1996. This legislation aimed to harmonize traditional tribal governance practices with the national framework, thereby promoting the advancement and development of Scheduled Areas. PESA is regarded as a powerful and effective tool for protecting tribal rights. It grants the Governor extraordinary powers to amend state laws or take measures to ensure that they align with PESA's provisions, thereby safeguarding the interests of tribal communities. (Biswas, 2015, p. 50).

One of PESA's most significant contributions is its emphasis on empowering the Gram Sabha, a body consisting of all registered voters within a village's jurisdiction. According to the Constitution, under Article 243(A), a Gram Sabha at the village level may exercise powers and functions as determined by state legislatures, leading to variations in their authority from state to state. Nonetheless, PESA endows the Gram Sabha with substantial power and authority, enabling it to function as a self-governing institution. State legislatures are mandated to ensure that Gram Sabhas and Panchayats at appropriate levels are endowed with specific powers (G. & Khandimath, 2016, p. 185; Buch, 2004, pp. 93-94).

The powers granted to Gram Sabhas under PESA are categorized into mandatory executive functions, mandatory consultation powers, and mandatory recommendation powers. The mandatory executive functions include the authority to identify beneficiaries for poverty alleviation programs and issue utilization certificates for funds used by the Gram Panchayat. Mandatory consultation powers require that any decision regarding land acquisition or the resettlement and rehabilitation of affected persons must involve consultation with the Gram Sabha or the appropriate Panchayat level. Mandatory recommendation powers stipulate those decisions regarding the granting of prospecting licenses, mining licenses, or concessions for exploiting minor minerals require recommendations from the Gram Sabha or Panchayat. (biswas, 2015, p. 50).

PESA provisions legally recognize the capacities of tribal communities, empowering them to strengthen their self-governance systems or establish new legal institutions that can reverse centuries of external cultural and political interference. These provisions also create opportunities for tribal communities to control their destinies, safeguarding their traditions, customs, cultural identity, community resources, and customary modes of dispute resolution. (<https://www.im4change.org>)

The Gram Sabha has the potential to anchor democracy at the grassroots level, fostering socio-economic inclusion, participation in planning and implementing development programs, and ensuring accountability of the Panchayat to the electorate. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) has undertaken various initiatives to support the effective implementation of PESA, including commissioning studies, making recommendations for legislative amendments, and issuing guidelines and model rules (<https://www.researchgate.net>).

Despite these efforts, the implementation of PESA remains inconsistent across states. In many regions, state governments have made little progress in adopting the provisions of the Act in both letter and spirit. Consequently, even years after its enactment, PESA has not fully realized its potential in promoting

local self-governance, planning, and implementing programs for economic development and social justice in Scheduled Areas.

The Gram Sabha is envisioned as a key institution for safeguarding and preserving tribal traditions, customs, cultural identity, community resources, and customary dispute resolution methods. However, this vision has not been fully realized, and a blanket implementation of these protections has yet to occur.

In light of these ground realities, this study focuses on the knowledge and enactment status of PESA in the Gaurella Block of Bilaspur District, Chhattisgarh. It examines the role of PESA provisions in village development, analyzes constitutional provisions, and highlights the current status, merits, and demerits of the Act. The study also puts forward suggestions and recommendations for improving the implementation of PESA to better serve the intended purpose of empowering the PVTG communities through local self-governance.

### **Insights from Scholars**

**PESA Act and its Empowering Role:** Dr. Broy and Kausik (2005) discuss the revolutionary nature of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA Act), which extends the provisions of Panchayati Raj to Scheduled Areas, giving tribes self-governance powers over their natural resources. PESA grants the Gram Sabha authority over critical village functions, including land alienation, forest resources, internal conflict resolution, and the control of local markets. This aligns with the central research question, as the Act is crucial to the governance and development of Scheduled Tribes (STs), such as those in Gaurella Block.

**Challenges in PESA Implementation:** Biswas (2015) highlights the gap between the legislative intent of the PESA Act and its actual implementation on the ground. Despite two decades passing since the Act's enactment, implementation has been sluggish. His analysis emphasizes that various studies and recommendations have been made to address conflicts and procedural issues with the Act's application. This underlines the core challenge of this research, which will explore the reasons behind the slow or incomplete implementation of PESA provisions in Gaurella Block and the consequences for Village Development.

**People-Centric Governance and Tribal Empowerment:** Tiwari (2016) stresses the importance of the Gram Sabha's role in implementing PESA effectively, particularly in addressing discontent among tribal populations in extremist-affected districts. This resonates with the research topic, as the success of PESA in Gaurella Block depends largely on the active involvement of the Gram Sabha in village governance. Implementing PESA with full force could help alleviate alienation and increase trust among the tribal community.

**Enhancing Tribal Development through Local Decision Making:** Kalaivanan and Ananth (2017) argue that PESA presents a viable solution to the challenges faced by Tribes. At the grassroots level, it provides opportunities for Tribals to engage in decision-making, thereby addressing isolation and deprivation caused by land encroachment and resource inaccessibility. This is highly relevant to the Gaurella Block, where issues like land encroachment and lack of access to resources are common concerns for the PVTGs (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups).

**Structural and Functional Issues in Decentralized Governance:** Bhatnagar (1978) and Harichandran (1983) discuss the structural and functional challenges in the decentralization of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). Their findings suggest that although PRIs are intended to empower local governance, the lack of resources and authority can hinder their functioning. This is particularly true for PESA's implementation, as the lack of adequate financial and functional autonomy at the grassroots level in Chhattisgarh may impede its success.

**Effective Devolution and Caste Domination:** Nanavatty and Meher (1989) argue that effective decentralization of power to the community level, combined with appropriate funding and resource allocation, is essential for Panchayati Raj to function effectively. They also note the issue of caste domination, which can complicate the equitable application of laws such as PESA. This issue may be particularly relevant in Gaurella Block, where traditional hierarchies could influence the implementation of the Act, particularly in tribal communities where caste and social structure might still play a role in local governance.

**Gaps in Implementation and Development Impact:** The reviewed literature consistently points to a gap between the legal provisions of PESA and its real-world application. Although the PESA Act was designed to promote tribal autonomy and development, the gap between policy and practice remains a critical issue. The implementation of the Act has fallen short of expectations, especially in regions like Gaurella Block, where PVTGs continue to face challenges in terms of empowerment, access to resources, and overall development.

**Conclusion:** The existing literature on the PESA Act, Panchayati Raj Institutions, and tribal empowerment provides a foundational understanding of the policy's objectives and challenges. This review indicates that while the PESA Act holds significant potential for the development of Scheduled Tribes and PVTGs, including those in Gaurella Block, its full benefits have yet to be realized due to slow implementation, resource constraints, and challenges in decentralization. Therefore, this study will aim to critically assess the role of the PESA Act in the village development of PVTGs in Gaurella Block, with a focus on the effectiveness of its implementation and the barriers to its success.

### **The Rationale of the Study**

Scheduled Tribes (STs) constitute approximately 31.76% of Chhattisgarh's population out of which PVTGs are around 1.99% of the total population comprising of Abujmadi, Baiga, Hill Korwa, Kamar, Muriya and Omar

Despite the state's abundance of natural resources, including land, forests, and water, the STs, who are the original inhabitants, continue to live in dire conditions. Various schemes and provisions have been implemented for their welfare and development; however, socio-economic indicators reflect a dismal status for PVTGs in Chhattisgarh.

PESA is a simple yet comprehensive law that empowers villagers in Scheduled Areas to address their own issues. It enhances political empowerment for planning and managing natural resources and village development, and it also plays a crucial role in conflict resolution according to traditional customs and practices.

PESA is revolutionary for Tribal people especially the PVTGs as it shifts focus from mere development delivery to genuine empowerment, from implementation to planning, and from limited involvement to conscious participation. However, literature indicates that PESA has not been effectively implemented in Chhattisgarh. Despite governmental efforts, the distinction between PESA and non-PESA areas in daily administrative processes is often blurred, and the special provisions for Scheduled Areas are frequently overlooked.

### Scope of the Study

This paper aims to investigate the evidence of the grassroot level about the role of PESA Act, which still remains relatively unknown to both the public and officials. It is expected that the findings of this paper will aid policymakers and Panchayat functionaries at the grassroots level in understanding various dimensions of local self-governance and PESA provisions for socio-economic enhancement and integrated rural development. Additionally, the paper has also provided the authorities with insights to formulate suitable laws addressing the challenges faced by elected representatives from PVTGs in the daily administration of PESA provisions.

### Objectives of the Study

1. The primary objective of this paper is to examine the various components of the PESA provision which enhances functional, financial, and administrative autonomy at the grassroots level. The role of PESA in village development extends the benefits to the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas of Gaurella Block.
2. To know the role and functions of the *Gram Sabha* in implementation of various schemes of rural development and welfare-oriented measures and further socio-cultural impediments in performing their role and the remedial mechanism required for enabling them to play their role effectively.

### Hypothesis

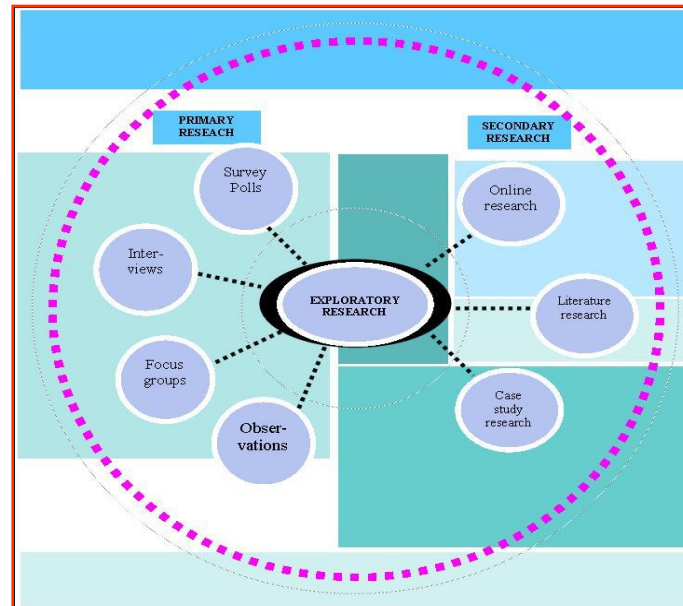
**Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ):** *There is no age-wise, position-wise, educational status-wise, occupation-wise, economic status-wise (landholding), and gender-wise difference in knowledge of roles and functions of the PESA in village development.*

### Research Design

The study explores various aspects of PESA Act implementation at the Panchayat and village levels to understand its effectiveness in development. Therefore, the research design is exploratory, aimed at formulating a problem for more precise investigation or developing working hypotheses from an operational perspective. The emphasis is on discovering ideas and insights that provide flexibility for considering different aspects of the problem under study.

The study relies on both primary and secondary sources, including questionnaires, surveys, interviews, observations, and literature reviews.





## Sampling Design

The study is conducted in the Gaurella-2 Block of the Bilaspur District, Chhattisgarh, where the Tribal population is the highest (63.35%) compared to other blocks in the district. Gaurella-2 is traditionally considered a backward area and is home to many Indigenous Tribal groups. The block comprises 85 villages and 50 Panchayats, with a total of 19,463 households and a population of 71,361.

For the study, 40% of the Panchayats (20 Panchayats) were randomly selected. From each selected Panchayat, 20 respondents were chosen, totaling 400 respondents. The sample includes:

- 20 Sarpanchs of the village Panchayats
- 20 Secretaries of the village Panchayats
- 120 Members of the Standing Committees
- 120 Members of the village Panchayats
- 120 Common villagers of the Panchayats

This study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the PESA Act and its impact on the socio-economic development of STs in Chhattisgarh. By analyzing the knowledge, perceptions, and satisfaction levels of the villagers, the study aims to identify gaps and propose actionable recommendations for more effective governance and development through PESA.

## Methods of Data Analysis

In this study, data were analyzed using both bi-variate and multivariate statistical techniques along with suitable tests of significance, such as the Chi-Square test. This approach allows for a comprehensive examination of the relationships between variables and the identification of significant differences or associations within the data.

## Analysis and Discussion

The *Gram Panchayats* at the grassroots level are expected to develop their plans through a participatory approach and discuss such plans in the *Gram Sabha*. The *Gram Sabha* is expected to act as the watchdog and monitor the programs implemented by the *Gram Panchayat* and other organizations (Verma, 2006).

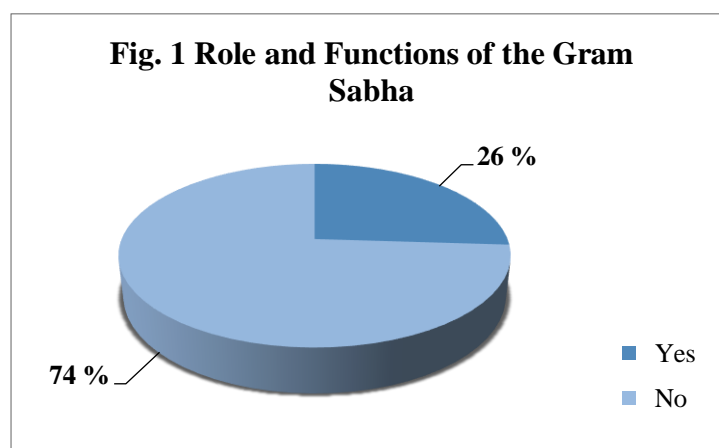
Further, the PESA Act gives scope to facilitate a multifaceted growth of the rural poor by extending the benefits of development to their place and context. The PESA Act provisions aim at the improvement of their living standards by providing them opportunities for the fullest utilization of their potentials through their active participation in the process of development. The PESA provisions give functional, financial, and administrative autonomy at different levels so that at grass root level the rural masses have full freedom to play their role and manage effectively the development programs and projects.

PESA provides a very strong articulation of the development of the PVTG population and also of the Fifth Scheduled Areas. Therefore, if the PESA is effectively and appropriately implemented the issues related to non-implementation of PESA provision by rural development ministry may not arise and people are awakened to take advantage of the articulated provisions.

### I. Role and Functions of the *Gram Sabha*

There are four types of role and functions assigned to the *Gram Sabha* – (a) review of development programs; (b) control through considering the annual accounts, audit, budget, report of vigilance committees and seeking clarifications; (c) assistance in the implementation of development programs and schemes; and (d) participation in the implementation of development programs and schemes, as may be required to obtain information and data from the *Gram Panchayat*, as well as any other issues that may be prescribed.

Under the poverty alleviation and other programs, it has also the responsibility to select or identify the persons as beneficiaries and obtaining the issuance of utilization certificate of funds from the *Gram Sabha* for such undertaken projects, plans, and programs for social and economic development at the village level in every *Panchayat* but the research findings indicate that majority of the respondents do not know all the role and function of the *Gram Sabha*.



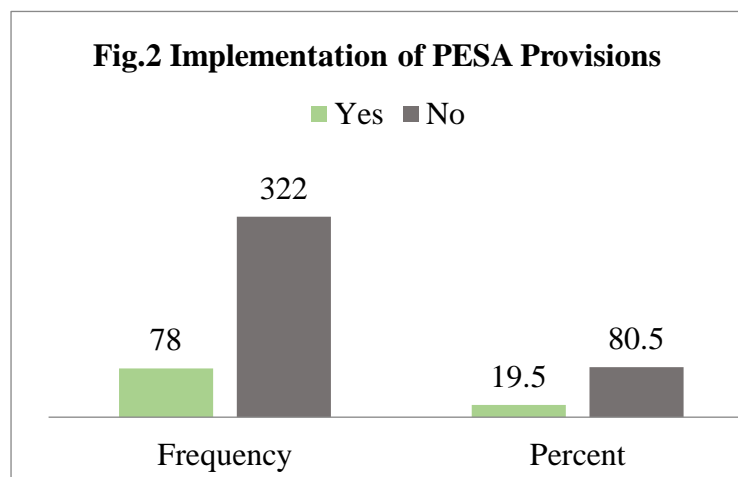
## Fig 1 Percent distribution of the respondents by their knowledge of role and functions of the *Gram Sabha*

**Figure 1** reveals that 26.0 percent of the respondents know all the roles and functions of the *Gram Sabha* and surprisingly 74.0 percent of respondents do not know all the roles and functions of the *Gram Sabha* to improve the social and economic life.

## II. Implementation of PESA Provisions

Effective implementation of PESA will not only bring development but will also deepen democracy in Fifth Scheduled Areas. There are many benefits of PESA that enhance people's participation in decision-making.

It reduces poverty and out-migration and regulates the natural resources for their livelihoods and incomes. It minimizes exploitation of the Tribal population as they will be able to control and manage money lending, consumption and sale of liquor, and also village markets. Effective implementation of PESA checks illegal land alienation and also restores unlawfully alienated Tribal land but the research findings indicate that majority of the respondents are not satisfied with regard to the implementation of the PESA provisions.



**Figure 2** reveals that 19.5 percent of the respondents agree that PESA provisions get implemented at the *Panchayat* level while the majority of the respondent's 80.5 percent do not agree that the PESA Provisions get implemented for socio-economic development in the Fifth Scheduled Areas.

## III. Approval of Development Projects

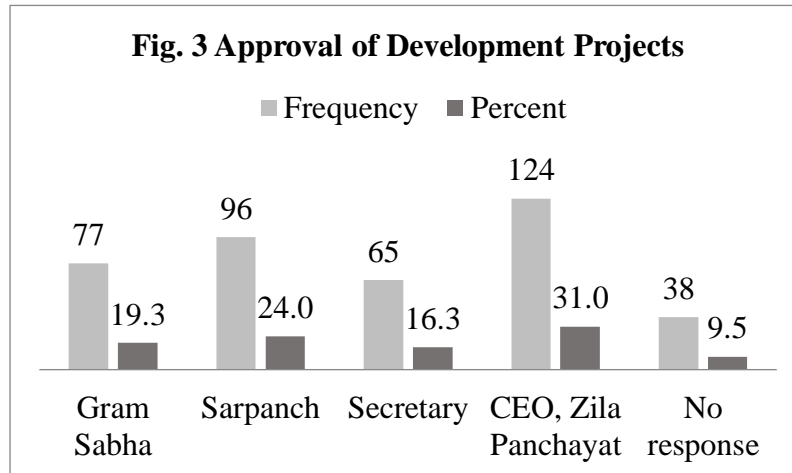
The PESA provision mandates certain exclusive powers to the *Gram Sabha*. The first among them is - "before any plans, programs, or projects for social and economic development are taken up for implementation by the *Panchayat* at the village level, each *Gram Sabha* must approve them" (Ekka & Lakra, 2014, pp. 67-68).

"All the plans, programs and projects for social and economic development falling under the purview of the 29 subjects' items listed in the Eleventh Schedule to the Constitution by the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment, which are to be transferred to and implemented by the *Panchayat*, must be approved by the concerned *Gram Sabha* according to the provision of PESA Act. In actuality, the phrase approval refers to the *Gram Sabha's informed*



permission, and if the *Gram Sabha* does not grant such consent, the plan, program, or project cannot be executed at the *Panchayat* level. *Gram Sabha* also issues utilization certificates for the *Panchayat's* plans, programs, and initiatives for socio-economic development". (Bijoy, 2012, p. 17)

The findings of the research indicate that majority of the respondents agree the approval of the development projects in their village is not taken up with the prior approval of the *Gram Sabha*.

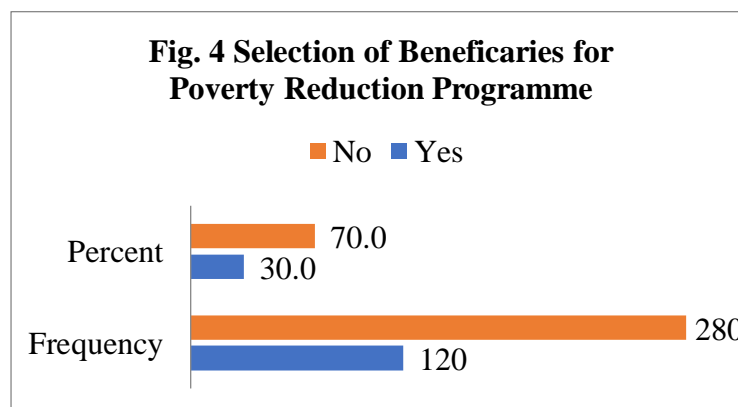


**Figure 3** reveals that 31.0 percent of the respondents are of the opinion that CEO, *Zila Panchayat* approves the development project in *Panchayat* followed by 24.0 percent by *Sarpanch*, and 16.3 percent by Secretary. 9.5 percent of the respondents did not respond to the question on the approval of the development projects in *Panchayats*. Only 19.3 percent of the respondents gave the correct answer with regard to the obtaining prior approval of the *Gram Sabha* by *Panchayat* for all the projects, plans, and programs for social and economic development.

#### IV. Selection of Beneficiaries for Poverty Reduction Programme

For poverty alleviation and other programs, the PESA provision mandates the responsibility of the *Gram Sabha* to identify or select the persons as beneficiaries and this should be done only by the concerned the *Gram Sabha* and not by any others. (Bijoy, 2012, p. 17).

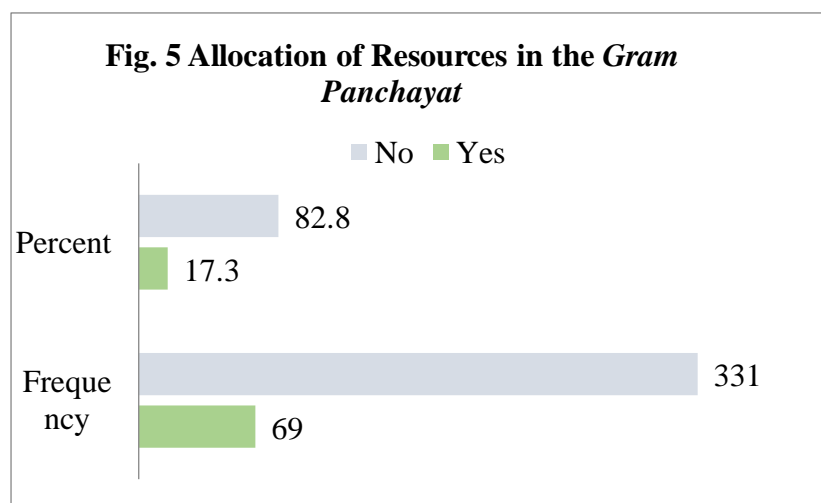
The findings of the research indicate that the percent distribution of the respondent by their idea agree that the selection of beneficiaries for poverty reduction program is not done as per PESA rule.



**Table 4** reveals that only 30.0 percent of the respondents have the idea regarding the selection of BPL beneficiaries, while the majority of the respondent. 70.0 percent of the respondents say that for poverty alleviation and other programs the selections and identifications of persons as beneficiaries are not done as per PESA provision.

## V. Allocation of Resources in Gram Panchayat

The local bodies' grants are released to the *Gram Panchayats* through their respective State Governments as per the recommendations and allocations made by respective Finance Commissions but the majority of the respondents by percent distribution of their knowledge exhibit that they do not know that allocation of resources in the *Gram Panchayat*.

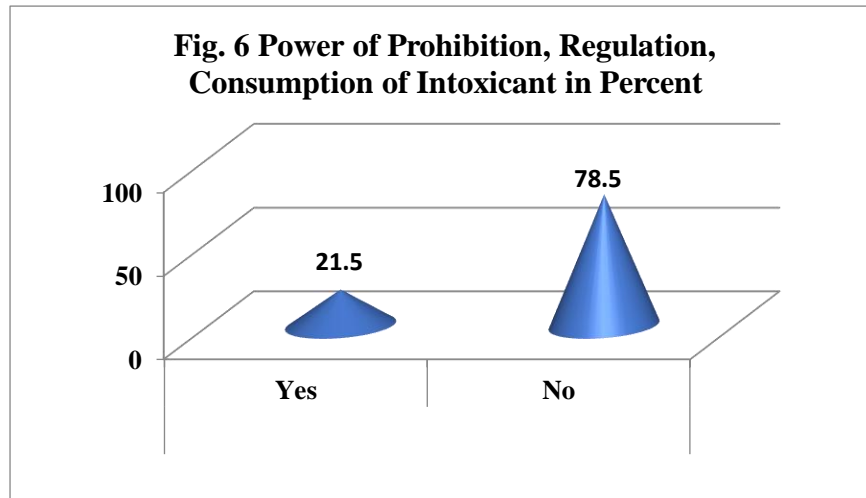


**Fig 5** reveals that 17.3 percent of the respondents know about the allocation of funds received in the *Gram Panchayat* while the majority of the respondents 82.8 percent do not know about the allocation of funds received in the *Gram Panchayat*.

## VI. Power of Prohibition, Regulation, and Consumption of Intoxicants

The PESA provision in the Fifth Schedule Areas mandates the power of the *Gram Sabha* to regulate, restrict or enforce the prohibition on the sale or consumption of any intoxicant (Sharma, 2010). And his vested power is unaffected by any laws or policies enacted by the concerned State; in other words, the State government must respect the *Gram Sabha* and the *Panchayats*' decisions.

But the majority of the respondents do not know that Gram Sabha has the power to prohibit, regulate the consumption of intoxicants in the Scheduled Area.



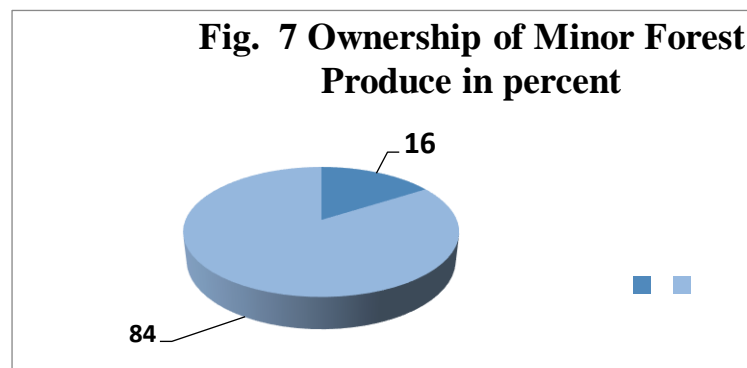
**Fig 6** reveals that 21.5 percent of the respondents know that the *Gram Sabha* has the power of prohibition, regulation, and consumption of intoxicants but the majority of the respondent's 78.5 percent do not know the vested powers of the *Gram Sabha* and act it upon as per the provision.

## VII. Ownership of Minor Forest Produces

The *Gram Sabha's* power, notably ownership over minor forest produce, is mandated by the PESA provision in the Fifth Schedule Areas, so that they can exercise the powers and authority required to function as institutions of self-government (Sharma B, 2010).

The provisions that include their right of ownership, their access to collect, use and dispose which are traditionally done within or outside village boundaries. Furthermore, the Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006 is written in the same spirit as PESA, so both the FRA and PESA as fundamental legislations governing Scheduled Area governance must be read together.

The research findings indicate that majority of the respondents do not know their power over ownership of Minor Forest Produce.



**Table7** reveals that 16.0 percent of the respondents know about the ownership of minor forest produce while 84.0 percent of the respondents do not know that the *Gram Sabha* is bestowed with the power over ownership of minor forest produce.

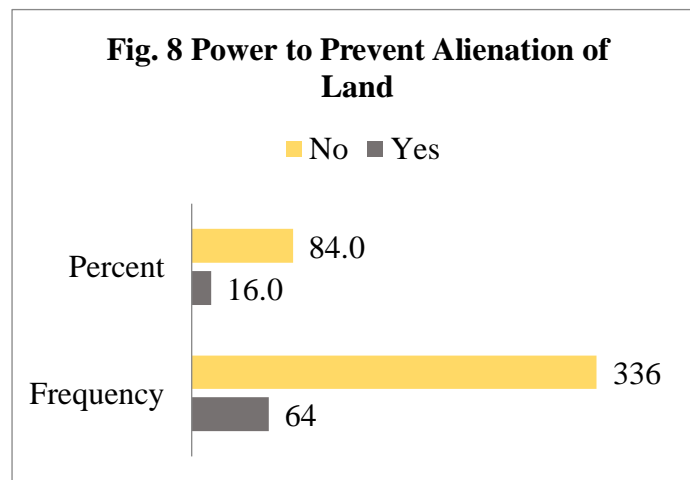
## VIII. Power to Prevent Land Alienation in the Scheduled Areas

The PESA provision in the Fifth Schedule Areas mandates the *Gram Sabha's* power to prevent land alienation, as well as the power and authority to take appropriate action to restore any Scheduled Tribe's land that has been unlawfully alienated, in order to enable them to function as self-governing institutions" (Sharma B, 2010).

The provision is to ensure the protection of the land of Scheduled Tribes in Scheduled Areas which is regarded as the land sources of individuals, communities, and habitations. Alienation of land is considered dispossession of land of a Scheduled Tribe by any means to anyone, whether a Tribe or a non-Tribe. Therefore, the objective of this provision specifies the protection of the land rights of every Tribal as they are put categorically under 'a Scheduled Tribe' term.

Right to land as indicated both individual and collective land which may not be recognized by the formal system but conferred by their traditions and customs comes under this category of right to land. Under the PESA provision special power to prevent land alienation and to take measures to restore illegally alienated land from others, this could be done through the customary mode of dispute resolution or through the formal systems of redressal as the case may be, both could be taken into the consideration (Bijoy, 2012, p. 20).

The research finding indicates that the majority of the respondents by their knowledge do not know the inherent power of the *Gram Sabha* in the Fifth Scheduled Areas to prevent alienation of land.



**Figure 8** reveals 16.0 percent of the respondents know that *Gram Sabha* has the power to prevent alienation of land while 84.0 of the respondents the inherent power of *Gram Sabha* in the Fifth Scheduled Areas to prevent alienation of land.

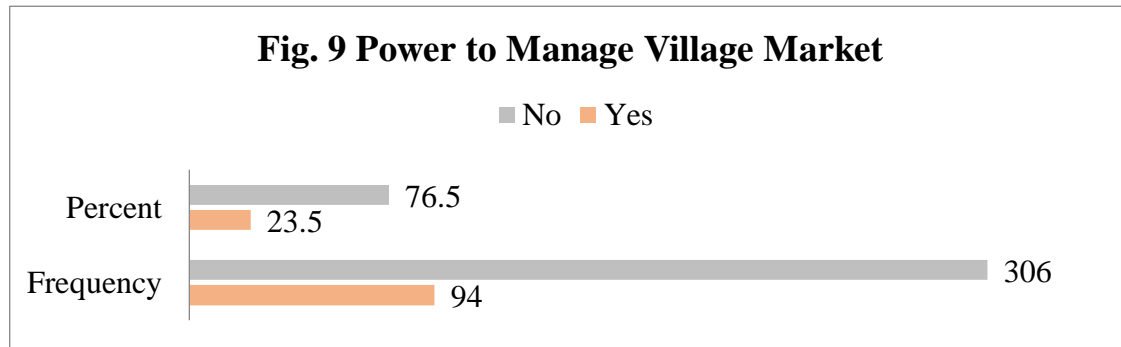
## IX. Power to Manage Village Market

The PESA provision in the Fifth Schedule Areas mandates the power of the *Gram Sabha* to manage village markets by whatever name called and ensures such powers and authority enables them to function necessarily as institutions of self-government (Sharma B. , 2010, p. 175).

Regulating all aspects of village market operations and its power to manage under the PESA provision includes designation of the place, establishment of shops, quality of goods, sales, price, levy of fees, etc.

that may be applicable of any nature, temporary or regular to local village markets in rural areas. Both the *Gram Sabha* as well as the *Panchayats* this power is vested power to control and manage over village market (Bijoy, 2012, p. 20).

The research finding indicates that the majority of the respondents do not know their power to manage the village market.

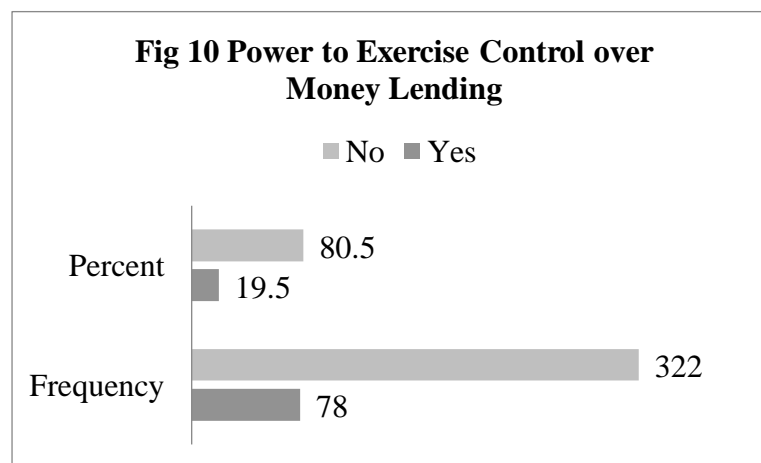


**Figure 9** reveals that 23.5 percent of the respondents know about the power to manage the village market, while 76.5 percent of the respondents do not know at the appropriate level how to control and manage the village market.

## X. Power to Exercise Control over Money Lending to Scheduled Areas

The PESA provision in the Fifth Schedule Areas mandates the *Gram Sabha*'s power to exercise proper control over money lending, as well as all other powers and authorities necessary to ensure and enable them to function as self-governing institutions for Scheduled Tribes (Sharma B. , 2010, p. 175).

Money lending covers all the aspects that include in extending loans to the Scheduled Tribes, whether it is from private persons, Government or banks and also covers the terms under which loan is provided along with its repayment. Under this provision, the Gram Sabha is vested with the regulatory power to determine who can offer the loan and on what terms, and takes action against violations of the terms and conditions set by these regulating bodies concerning control over money lending (Bijoy, 2012, pp. 20-21). The findings of the research indicate that the majority of the respondents do not know that they have the power to exercise control over money lending.



**Figure 10** reveals that 19.5 percent of the respondents know about their power to exercise control over money lending. 80.5 percent of the respondents do not know that in the Schedule Areas they have the powers and authority in the matters of money lending.

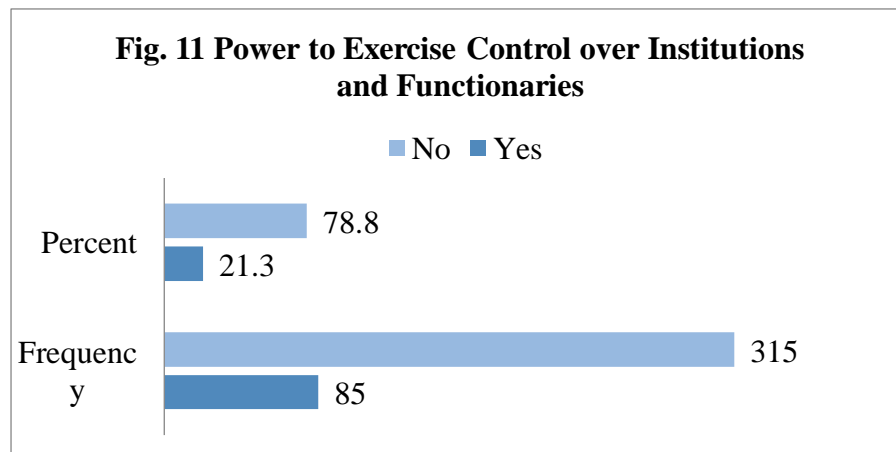
## XI. Power to Exercise Control over Institutions and Functionaries

While endowing the *Panchayats* in Scheduled Areas with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government, the State Legislature must ensure that the *Panchayats* and the *Gram Sabha* are given specific power to exercise control over institutions and functionaries in all social sectors at the appropriate level, according to the PESA provision (Sharma B. , 2010, p. 175).

Health care, education, rural housing, public distribution, sanitation, drinking water, rural development, food storage and warehousing, welfare schemes, social service, and other social sectors institutions, whether public or private, government or non-government, would be included in social sectors institutions (<https://www.undp.org>)

The *Gram Sabha* and *Panchayats* control and regulate these institutions and functionaries and ensure that all the intended benefit of the community is relevant and appropriate, and further, all the services provided are timely and efficient whose jurisdictions are entirely confined to the village at its appropriate level (Bijoy, 2012, p. 21).

The research finding indicates that the majority of the respondents do not know this vested power to exercise and have control over institutions and functionaries that comes under the jurisdictions of the *Gram Sabha*.



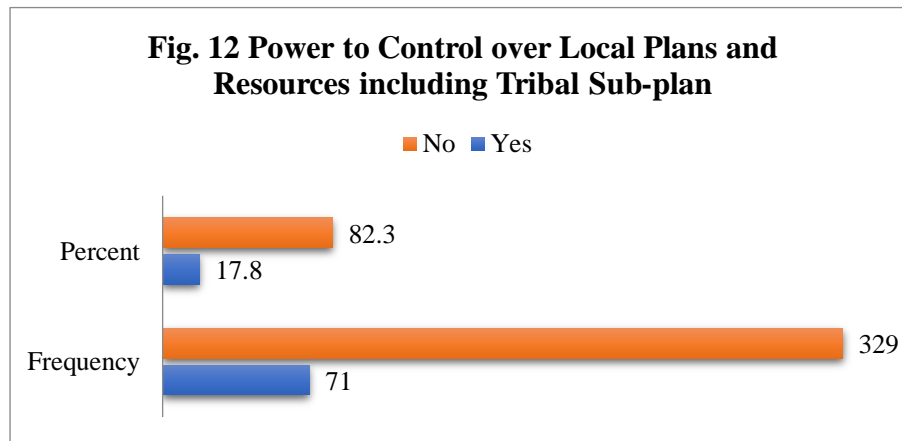
**Figure 11** reveals that 21.3 percent of the respondents know about their power to exercise control over institutions and functionaries, while 78.8 percent of the respondents do not know to exercise their powers and authority to control over institutions and functionaries.

## XII. Power to Control over Local Plans and Resources including Tribal Sub-Plan

While endowing the *Panchayats* in the Scheduled Areas with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government, and the State Legislature is responsibility for ensuring that the *Panchayats* and the *Gram Sabha* are given with specific power to



exercise control at appropriate level pertaining to this matter, according to the PESA provision (Sharma B. , 2010, p. 175).The provision would encompass the *Gram Sabha* and *Panchayats*’ right to establish plans, approve plans prepared by others with or without adjustments, and even reject plans that are inappropriate or irrelevant. It would also imply that all allocated resources and funds are subject to direct supervision and monitoring during their implementations (Bijoy, 2012, p. 21). The research findings indicate that majority of the respondents do not know this provision of having power that is given to them to look into the matters of local plans and resources including TSP.



**Table 12** reveals that 17.8 percent of the respondents know their power to control over local plans and resources including Tribal Sub-plan, while 82.3 percent of the respondents do not know the guaranteed power given to them to exercise in these matters.

### XIII. Socio-economic Determinants of the Role of PESA in village Development

After analyzing the data with frequency distribution an efforts has been made to comprehend the role of PESA in village development by various Socio-economic determinants based on different measures such as age, sex, education status, position, occupation and landholding with a view to understand the role and functions of the *Gram Sabha*, implementation status of the PESA provisions, approval of the development projects, selection of beneficiaries for poverty reduction programme, allocation of resources in the *Gram Panchayat*, power to prohibit, regulate and consumption of intoxicants, regarding minor forest produce and ownership, to exercise the inherent power to exert alienation of land, power to control and manage village market, the inherent power to exert control over money lending, power to exercise their control over institutions and functionaries including local plans, programs, as well as Tribal Sub Plan are evaluated and analyzed to understand the socio-economic determinants of the respondents.

The following detailed cross-analysis gives a comprehensive picture of the Socio-economic determinants of the role of PESA in village development:

#### Age Group

The age structure is significant in terms of experience, maturity, and judgment. The different ages imply variations in life experiences and determine to a large extent of their behavior and attitude. Age is also

an important factor for people evincing interest in political affairs. The age factor gives us an idea of the kind of age groups that have a better extent of knowledge about the PESA Act provisions.

The findings of the study reveal that between 40 -49 years old age group of the respondents know more about every role of PESA in village development.

### **Sex**

The male authority and dominance are quite clearly to be seen in social and cultural life and women, in general, lack political representation in traditional social decision-making structures and are not sufficiently integrate in the decision-making mechanisms at the community level. But in the case of the Tribals, they are traditionally and economically homogenous and strive to work as a collective. However, it is only after the introductions of the *Panchayati Raj* that leadership avenues have been opened in the rural areas and women enjoy the unique position in the community. To assess the role of PESA in village development, the sexes of the respondents are divided into two categories, i.e., Male and Female. The findings of the study reveal that the male respondents know more about the role of PESA in village development.

### **Educational Status**

Education is an important variable for the development of an individual's personality and to understand his/her environment rationally. Education plays a vital role in understanding the objectives of the *Panchayati Raj* and its functioning at the appropriate level. Higher the educations better the understanding of the PESA Act provisions. To assess the role of PESA in village development, the educational status of the respondents is divided into five categories, i.e., illiterates, Primary schools, Middle schools, Higher Secondary and Graduate, and above. The findings of the study reveal that all the respondents whose educational status are Graduate and above know more about the role of PESA in village development.

### **Position**

The position is one of the important determinants that exhibit the level of understanding about the roles and responsibilities of PESA in village development. To assess the role of PESA in village development, the positions of the respondents are divided into five categories, i.e., *Sarpanch*, Secretary, Standing Committee, *Panchayat* members, and Villagers. The findings of the study reveal that both those who are *Sarpanch* and Secretaries know about the various role of PESA in village development.

### **Occupation**

The occupation constitutes the most important element of the socio-economic status. Occupation is an index of a person's social standing. Therefore, the occupation of the respondents has been an important factor in determining their knowledge about the various role of PESA in village development.

To assess the various role of PESA in village development, the occupations of the respondents are divided into six categories, i.e., agriculture, wage/labour, agri-labour, service, business, and other occupations. The findings of the study reveal that all the respondents those who are engaged in other occupation, because of their occupation and trait know more about the all roles of PESA in village development.

**Land Holding**

In order to establish dominance over ownership of land is considered as a crucial factor that not only ensures a stable and secure income but also gives a high social and economic status to the people in general. The pattern of cultivable land ownership is seen generally among in the hands of a big owners (landlords) as against to the large number who either own very little land or do not at all having land. Therefore, land ownership is often considered to be the most important source of power and prestige in rural India.

In order to assess the role of PESA in village development, the landholding pattern according to the size of the land was classified into five categories, i.e., among who have no land, below 2.5 acres of land, 2.6 – 5 acres of land, 5.1 – 10 acres of land and above 10.1 acres of land.

The findings of the study reveal that all the respondents whose landholdings are 5.1 – 10 acres know more about the role of PESA in village development.

Backg round of the respo ndents	Role of PESA in Village Development (%)											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Know ledge about t func tions of GS	Whether PES A prov ision s impl emented	Wh o app rove s Dev. Proj ects	Crite ria of select ion of benef iciari es	Knowl edge of source & amoun t of funds	Cons umpti on of Intoxi cants	Owne rship of Mino r Fores t Produ ce	Land alien ation	Villa ge mark et	Mon ey lend ing	Con trol in the soci al sect or	Tri bal Sub - pla ns
Correc t answer	Yes	Yes	(GS)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Age Group</b>												
Below 29	4 (16.0)	4 (16.0)	3 (12.0)	2 (8.0)	1 (4.0) 29	5 (20.0)	3 (12.0)	2 (8.0)	5 (20.0)	3 (12.0)	5 (20.0)	1 (4.0)
30-39	44 (24.2)	34 (18.7)	30 (16.5)	55 (30.2)	34 (24 .3)	34 (18.7)	26 (14.3)	26 (14.3)	41 (22.5)	31 (17.0)	35 (19.2)	32 (17.6)
40-49	45 (32.1)	35 (25.0)	34 (24.3)	53 (37.9)	5 (12.8)	39 (27.9)	31 (22.1)	32 (22.9)	32 (30.7)	32 (25.0)	36 (25.7)	33 (23.6)
50-59	10 (25.6)	5 (12.8)	9 (23.1)	9 (23.1)	0 (0.0)	7 (17.9)	4 (10.3)	4 (10.3)	43 (30.7)	35 (25.0)	36 (25.7)	33 (23.6)
60+	1 (7.1)	0 (0.0)	1 (7.1)	1 (7.1)	0 (0.0)	1 (7.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4 (10.3)	8 (20.5)	8 (20.5)	5 (12.8)
<b>Sex</b>												
Male	71 (27.0)	53 (20.2)	48 (18.3)	85 (32.3)	49 (18.6)	57 (21.7)	44 (16.7)	47 (17.9)	62 (23.6)	51 (19.4)	58 (22.1)	49 (18.6)
Femal e	33 (24.1)	25 (18.2)	29 (21.2)	35 (25.5)	20 (14.6)	29 (21.2)	20 (14.6)	17 (12.4)	32 (23.4)	27 (19.7)	27 (19.7)	22 (16.1)

<b>Educational Status</b>	16 (18.6) ) 19 (14.4) ) MS (22.8) ) 37 (53.6) ) 9 (75.0) )	9 (10.5) 20 (15.2) 14 (13.9) 9 (39.1) 8 (66.7) 7)	12 (14.0) 22 (16.7) 20 (19.8) 19 (27.5) 4 (33.3) 3)	15 (17.4) 31 (23.5) ) 26 (25.7) ) 38 (55.1) ) 10 (83.3) )	6 (7.0) 11 (8.3) 14 (13.9) 29 (42.0) 9 (75.0)	12 (14.0) 18 (13.6) 18 (17.8) 29 (42.0) 9 (75.0)	8 (9.3) 9 (6.8) 13 (12.9) 27 (39.1) 7 (58.3)	10 (11.6) ) 9 (6.8) 13 (12.9) 23 (33.3) 9 (75.0) )	11 (12.8) ) 20 (15.2) ) 19 (18.8) ) 36 (52.2) ) 8 (66.7) )	11 (12.8) ) 17 (12.9) ) 17 (16.8) ) 24 (34.8) ) 9 (75.0) )	13 (15.1) 18 (13.6) 16 (15.8) 28 (40.6) 10 (83.3) 3)	9 (10.5) 14 (10.6) 15 (14.9) 26 (37.7) 7 (58.3) 3)
<b>Position</b>	16 (80.0) ) 19 (95.0) ) 25 (20.7) ) 25 (20.8) ) 19 (16.0) )	17 (85.0) 0) 15 (75.0) 0) 22 (18.2) 2) 14 (11.7) 7) 10 (8.4)	11 (55.0) 8 (40.0) 26 (21.5) 19 (15.8) 13 (10.9) 9)	18 (90.0) ) 19 (95.0) ) 36 (29.8) ) 28 (23.3) ) 19 (16.0) )	18 (90.0) 18 (90.0) 14 (11.6) 14 (11.7) 5 (4.2)	17 (85.0) 18 (90.0) 17 (14.0) 20 (16.7) 14 (11.8)	16 (80.0) 15 (75.0) 9 (7.4) 15 (12.5) 9 (7.6)	16 (80.0) ) 19 (95.0) ) 6 (5.0) ) 11 (9.2) ) 12 (10.1) )	18 (90.0) ) 18 (90.0) ) 22 (18.2) ) 23 (19.2) ) 13 (10.9) )	17 (85.0) 0) 17 (85.0) 0) 13 (10.7) ) 17 (14.2) ) 14 (11.8) )	18 (90.0) 0) 17 (85.0) 0) 14 (11.6) ) 21 (17.5) ) 15 (12.6) )	17 (85.0) 0) 16 (80.0) 0) 15 (12.4) ) 10 (8.3) ) 13 (10.9) )

<b>Occupation</b>	66 (22.3)	61 (20.6)	55 (18.6)	82 (27.7)	50 (16.9)	59 (19.9)	43 (14.5)	48 (16.2)	60 (20.3)	61 (20.6)	60 (20.3)	55 (18.6)
Agriculture	10 (23.8)	4 (9.5)	3 (7.1)	8 (25.8)	5 (11.9)	8 (19.0)	6 (14.3)	1 (2.4)	9 (21.4)	3 (7.1)	6 (14.3)	3 (7.1)
Wage labour	11 (35.5)	3 (9.7)	7 (22.1)	8 (25.8)	5 (11.9)	5 (16.1)	4 (12.9)	2 (6.5)	8 (25.8)	2 (6.5)	5 (16.1)	1 (3.2)
Agri-labour	2 (50.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (50.0)	2 (50.0)	2 (50.0)	1 (25.0)	1 (50.0)	2 (50.0)	1 (25.0)	1 (25.0)	1 (25.0)
Service	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (16.7)	1 (16.7)	11 (52.4)	1 (16.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (33.3)	0 (0.0)
Business	15 (71.4)	9 (42.9)	8 (38.1)	15 (71.4)		11 (52.4)	10 (47.6)	11 (52.4)	15 (71.4)	11 (52.4)	11 (52.4)	11 (52.4)
Others occupations												
<b>Landholding</b>	24 (32.0)	8 (10.7)	17 (22.3)	22 (29.3)	8 (10.7)	12 (16.0)	9 (12.0)	4 (5.3)	20 (26.7)	8 (10.7)	12 (16.0)	7 (9.3)
No land	38 (17.4)	37 (17.0)	35 (16.1)	52 (23.9)	20 (25.0)	38 (17.4)	28 (12.8)	27 (12.4)	40 (18.3)	38 (17.4)	38 (17.4)	34 (15.6)
Below 2.5 acres	26 (32.5)	22 (27.5)	15 (18.8)	31 (38.8)	10 (47.6)	12 (57.1)	10 (47.6)	19 (23.8)	23 (28.8)	20 (25.0)	22 (27.5)	18 (22.5)
2.6-5 acres	13 (61.9)	9 (42.9)	8 (38.1)	13 (61.9)	1 (16.7)	1 (16.7)	2 (33.3)	11 (25.4)	10 (47.6)	9 (42.9)	10 (47.6)	10 (47.6)
5.1-10 acres	3 (50.0)	2 (33.3)	2 (33.3)	3 (33.3)				3 (50.0)	1 (16.7)	3 (50.0)	3 (50.0)	2 (33.3)
Above 10.1 acres												



### Hypothesis Testing

In order to assess the knowledge about roles and functions of the *Gram Sabha*, the Chi-Square Test through SPSS has been done.

***Null Hypothesis ( $H_0 - 2$ ): There is no age-wise, position-wise, educational statu-wise, occupation-wise, economic status-wise (landholding), and gender-wise difference of knowledge about roles and functions of the Gram Sabha.***

The analysis depicts that 74.0 percent of the respondents have no knowledge about the roles and functions of the *Gram Sabha*. ***This result calls for an urgent need of conducting an awareness generation program and education about the role and functions of the Gram Sabha to help them to exercise their powers in all the matters pertaining to the approval of the local plans, programs, and projects for their socio-and economic development.***

Regarding knowledge about the roles and functions of the *Gram Sabha*, the *Sarpanch* and Secretary have significantly better knowledge than the standing committee members, *Gram Sabha* members, and common villagers at a 1% level of significance. Therefore, ***the result reveals that despite their membership in the Standing Committee and as Gram Sabha members; they are ignorant about the role, functions, and responsibilities of the Gram Sabha and not able to exercise their power to demand their entitlement. This calls for an urgent need of having constant interface meetings with the community level Institutions (CBOs, PRI Institutions, Government officials, Block and District level Administration). These interface meetings will serve as a platform where they are sensitized to know their role, functions, and responsibilities as well other constitutional rights and be ready to use it if there is any violation of the stipulated provisions under the PESA Act.***

Regarding age-wise knowledge about roles and functions of the *Gram Sabha*, the younger and older age group has lesser knowledge than the age group between 40-49 years, but the result is not significant.

Regarding knowledge about roles and functions of the *Gram Sabha* among different educational categories, it is significantly less among the illiterate, primary literate, and secondary literate with respect to the higher secondary and above at 1% level of significance. Therefore, ***the knowledge on legal literacy will help to establish a legal cell at the Panchayat level and to play the role of watchdog for effective implementation of the development projects.***

Regarding knowledge about roles and functions of the *Gram Sabha* among different occupational categories, The “other” category (including housewives, unemployed, etc.) has significantly better knowledge than the categories including cultivators, agri-labour, wage labour, respondents involved in business and service, at a 1% level of significance. Therefore, ***the result reveals that media being the most powerful instrument of publishing information, gathering information, creating public awareness, and acting as a pressure on the Government to follow transparency and objectivity in its policies and programs will sensitize on the issue of PESA and help to read the importance of PESA and its effective implementation.***

Regarding knowledge about roles and functions of the *Gram Sabha* among different categories of landholding, the big farmers (i.e., having land more than 5 acres ) has significantly better knowledge than landless and small farmers (having less than 2.5acres) and marginal farmers (having less than 2.5-

5acres) at a 1% level of significance. Therefore, *more efforts have to be made to increase the active participation and involvement of the landless, marginal and small farmers in Gram Sabha to cater to the needs of the tribal interests.*

Regarding Gender-wise knowledge about roles and functions of the *Gram Sabha*, both the female and males have very little knowledge about roles and functions and there is no significant difference among them. Therefore, *both males and females should be encouraged and motivated for active participation in the Gram Sabha as per the PESA provisions, as it is also a prime variable for assessing the level of executions and management of their roles and functions of the Gram Sabha in the study area.*

Both males and females should be motivated to attend in the preparatory campaign to enhance the knowledge about the role, functions, and responsibilities of the *Gram Sabha* because it is also a prime variable for assessing the level of knowledge about the role, functions, and responsibilities of the *Gram Sabha* in the study area.

**Chi-square test to ascertain significant difference in the knowledge of all functions of the *Gram Sabha* by the background characteristics**

Knowledge of all functions of <i>Gram Sabha</i>	Background Characteristics of Respondents					Total	Pearson Chi-Square	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
	Position of the respondents							
	<i>Sarpanch</i>	Secretary	Standing committee member	Member	Villager			
No knowledge	4	1	96	95	100	296	<b>89.487<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>.000</b>
	20.0%	5.0%	<b>79.3%</b>	<b>79.2%</b>	<b>84.0%</b>	74.0%		
Total	20	20	121	120	119	400		
	The age group of the Respondents					Total		
	Below 29yrs	30-39yrs	40-49yrs	50 and above				
No knowledge	21	138	95	42		296	5.118 <sup>a</sup>	.163
	<b>84.0%</b>	<b>75.8%</b>	67.9%	<b>79.2%</b>		74.0%		
Total	25	182	140	53		400		
	Educational Status of the Respondents					Total		
	Illiterate	PS	MS	H. Sc. & above				
No knowledge	70	113	78	35		296	<b>52.145<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>.000</b>
	<b>81.4%</b>	<b>85.6%</b>	77.2%	43.2%		74.0%		
Total	86	132	101	81		400		
	Types of Occupation					Total		
	Agriculture	Wage/labour	Agri labour	Service & Business	Others			
No knowledge	230	32	20	8	6	296	<b>26.376<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>.000</b>
	<b>77.7%</b>	<b>76.2%</b>	64.5%	<b>80.0%</b>	28.6%	74.0%		
Total	296	42	31	10	21	400		
	Land Holding					Total		
	No land	Below 2.5 acres	2.6 - 5 acres	5.1 and above				
No knowledge	51	180	54	11		296	<b>27.003<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>.000</b>
	<b>68.0%</b>	<b>82.6%</b>	67.5%	40.7%		74.0%		
Total	75	218	80	27		400		
	Gender of the Respondents					Total		
	Male		Female					
No knowledge	192		104			296	.396 <sup>a</sup>	.529
	73.0%		75.9%			74.0%		
Total	263		137			400		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have an expected count of less than 5  
Note: PS – Primary School; MS- Middle, H. Sc. – High School

## Conclusion

### Role of PESA in Village Development

- 74 percent of the respondents do not know all the roles and functions of the *Gram Sabha* to improve the social and economic life.
- 80.5 percent of the respondents do not agree that the PESA Provisions get implemented for socio-economic development in the Fifth Scheduled Areas.
- 19.3 percent of the respondents know that for social and economic development in the Fifth Scheduled Areas, *Gram Panchayat* has to obtain the prior approval of the *Gram Sabha* all local level development plans, programs and projects.
- 70.0 percent of the respondents are of the view that as per PESA provision identification or selection of persons are undertaken as beneficiaries for their development in the rural areas.
- 82.8 percent of the respondents do not know that the local bodies' grants are released to the *Gram Panchayats* through their respective State Governments as per the recommendation and allocations made by respective Finance Commissions.
- 78.5 percent of the respondents do not know their vested power to regulate and exercise any intoxicant with regard to sale and consumption and to have control over them.
- 84.0 percent of the respondents do not know that the *Gram Sabha* is endowed specifically with the ownership of minor forest produce.
- 84.0 percent of the respondents do not know the in the Schedule Areas the *Gram Sabha* has been given the power to prevent all the matters related to land alienation.
  - 76.5 percent of the respondents do not know that the inherent powers of the *Gram Sabha* as well as the *Panchayat* to manage the village markets at their appropriate level.
  - 80.5 percent of the respondents do not know their power under the provision to exercise and regulate all the matters pertaining to control over money lending in the Scheduled Areas.
  - 78.8 percent of the respondents do not know that under the PESA Act provision the *Gram Sabha* has been given the power to look into all the matters pertaining to the institutions and functionaries in the Scheduled Areas.
  - 82.3 percent of the respondents do not know that the local plans including the TSP come under the direct supervision and control of the *Gram Sabha* in the Scheduled Areas.

### Socio-economic Determinants of the Role of PESA in village development

- **Age group:** The findings of the study reveal that between 40-49 years old age group of the respondents know more about the all role of PESA in village development.

- **Sex:** The findings of the study reveal that the male respondents know more about the role of PESA in village development.
- **Educational Status:** The findings of the study reveal that all the respondents whose educational status is Graduate and above know more about the role of PESA in village development.
- **Position:** The findings of the study reveal that both those who are *Sarpanch* and Secretaries know about the various role of PESA in village development.
- **Occupation:** The finding of the study reveals that all the respondents those who are engaged in other occupation, because of their occupation and trait know more about the all roles of PESA in village development.
- **Land Holding:** The finding of the study reveals that all the respondents whose land holdings are 5.1-10 acres know more about the role of PESA in village development.

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