

Knowledge, Awareness and Practice (KAP) of PRI Members on PESA Act, 1996: A Case study in Mayurbhanj District, Odisha

-¹Ms. Puja Kumari
-²Prof. Nilakantha Panigrahi

¹ Research Scholar, Anthropology and Tribal Development, Guru Ghasidas Vishwavidyalaya, Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh

² Professor and HoD, Anthropology and Tribal Development, Guru Ghasidas Vishwavidyalaya, Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh

Abstract

The Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA) represents a landmark intervention in India's decentralization framework. The Act aims at strengthening tribal self-governance in Fifth Schedule areas by formally recognizing and integrating customary institutions within the structure of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). By vesting greater authority in Gram Sabhas, the Act aspires to promote participatory democracy and safeguard the socio-cultural and resource rights of tribal communities. However, nearly after three decades of enactment, the effectiveness of its implementation remains uneven across states and regions. Against this backdrop, the present study investigates the levels of Knowledge, Awareness, and Practices (KAP) among PRI representatives with regard to the implementation of PESA in the tribal-dominated Mayurbhanj district. Employing a case study design, the research examines the interplay of socio-economic, educational, and institutional determinants that influence local governance processes under the Act. The findings indicate that while PRI representatives demonstrate a moderate degree of awareness about the broad objectives and intent of PESA Act, there exists a noticeable gap in the practical execution of its provisions. The study highlights the need for targeted and context-sensitive capacity-building measures, inclusive training interventions, and strengthened institutional mechanisms to enhance the functional implementation of PESA.

Keywords: PESA Act, Panchayati Raj Institutions, Knowledge–Attitude–Practice (KAP), Decentralization, Tribal Governance.

Introduction

The system of democratic decentralization in India has been significantly strengthened through the establishment of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), which aim to promote grassroots governance and participatory development. The enactment of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act marked a historic step toward empowering rural and/or local bodies by institutionalizing a three-tier system of governance at the village, intermediate, and district levels. PRIs are expected to function as vehicles of local self-governance, ensuring that development initiatives are responsive to the needs and aspirations of rural communities (Government of India, 1992).

In Scheduled Areas, such as those found in Mayurbhanj district of Odisha, the functioning of PRIs is further guided by the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act 1996, which grants additional powers to Gram Sabhas to protect tribal autonomy, manage natural resources, and preserve cultural identity. The effectiveness of

these institutions largely depends on the knowledge, awareness, and practices of elected PRI members, who act as key intermediaries between the state and the local population (Sharma & Pal, 2018).

Knowledge refers to the understanding of roles, responsibilities, and legal provisions related to PRI functioning, including awareness of schemes, rights, and governance procedures. Awareness, on the other hand, encompasses the extent to which PRI members are informed about policies such as PESA, government welfare programs, and participatory decision-making processes. Practice involves the actual implementation of these roles in day-to-day governance, including participation in Gram Sabha meetings, decision-making, and execution of development programs (Singh, 2015).

Despite constitutional provisions and policy frameworks, several studies indicate gaps in the knowledge and awareness levels of PRI members, particularly in tribal and backward regions. These gaps often lead to ineffective implementation of development programs and limited participation of local communities in governance processes (Behera, 2020). In district like Mayurbhanj, which have a significant tribal population and declared as fully scheduled areas various socio-economic challenges, educational limitations, and administrative constraints further influence the functioning of PRIs. Therefore, examining the Knowledge, Awareness, and Practices (KAP) of PRI members in Mayurbhanj district is crucial for understanding the ground realities of decentralized governance. Such a study not only highlights the strengths and weaknesses of PRI functioning, but also provide insights into capacity-building needs and policy interventions required to strengthen local governance in tribal areas.

Theoretical Perceptive:

The study also draws upon the Knowledge, Awareness, and Practices (KAP) framework, which is widely used to assess how knowledge influences attitudes and eventually shapes the practices of the people at the grassroots level. In the context of PRI functioning, this framework helps to understand how awareness of policies such as PESA translates or fails to translate into effective participation and governance practices (Launiala, 2009; WHO, 2022). Limited knowledge and awareness often result in weak implementation, especially in marginalized and tribal regions which ultimately affects the functioning of good governance in the society.

Further, the research is informed by the concept of institutional pluralism, which highlights the coexistence of traditional tribal institutions and formal governance structures. PESA specifically attempts to bridge this dual system. Studies indicate that lack of convergence between these institutions leads to inefficiencies and governance gaps (Ostrom, 2010; Ministry of Panchayati Raj, 2023). In tribal areas such as Mayurbhanj district of Odisha, traditional leaders continue to hold social authority, while PRI representatives operate within the statutory frameworks, often resulting in overlapping or conflicting roles.

Recent policy-oriented studies further reinforce these theoretical linkages. Reports on PESA implementation in Odisha highlight that despite institutional provisions, gaps in training, awareness, and coordination continue to

affect grassroots governance outcomes (Government of Odisha, 2021 and Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2023). These findings support the argument that strengthening knowledge systems and institutional convergence is essential for effective implementation of PESA Act.

Review of Literature

Ota (2011) examined the status of PESA implementation in Odisha and found that although legislative provisions have been adopted, the knowledge and awareness among PRI members remained limited, especially in tribal districts. The study highlighted that weak understanding of the provisions of PESA Act reduces the effectiveness of Gram Sabhas and limits participatory governance.

Bammidi (2015) conducted a comparative multi-state study and observed that awareness levels among PRI members are low to moderate, with a very few representatives have received formal training. The study emphasized that lack of awareness on the provisions of PESA Act have directly affect governance practices and community participation.

Regional Centre for Development Cooperation (RCDC) (2015)– study provides strong empirical evidence on KAP aspects in Odisha. It found that a majority of PRI representatives lack adequate knowledge of legal provisions, and awareness about governance-related Acts remains superficial. For instance, more than 66% of respondents were unaware of basic legal frameworks related to Scheduled Areas, indicating serious knowledge gaps which have affected the implementation quality of the Act. The study also shows that awareness dissemination depends largely on NGOs rather than formal institutional mechanisms.

Government of Odisha (2021) reports highlight that despite policy provisions, capacity-building of PRI members is still insufficient. The State has recognized the need for extensive training programs and institutional strengthening of Gram Sabhas to improve awareness and implementation practices.

Ministry of Panchayati Raj (2024) - Recent national-level initiatives indicate that efforts are being made to strengthen PRI capacity. In 2024–25, large-scale training programs were conducted covering more than one lakh PRI representatives, along with the introduction of digital planning tools for PESA areas.

Bhoi & Acharya (2024) – Health Status of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups in Odisha, focused on health, and study highlights broader governance issues, showing that low literacy, socio-economic deprivation, and lack of awareness significantly influence decision-making and participation among tribal communities. These factors indirectly affected the functioning of PRI members and their governance practices.

studied on malaria related issues in Odisha found that while awareness levels can be relatively high (around 79.8%), actual practices and implementation often remain inconsistent, with gaps in service delivery and behavioral adoption. This reflects a broader pattern where knowledge does not always translate into effective practice—relevant to PRI functioning under PESA Act.

BMC Public Health (2025) – Health-Seeking Behavior in Tribal Communities of Odisha

Recent research highlights that poor awareness, socio-cultural beliefs, and limited institutional access continue to influence behavior and participation in tribal areas. These findings suggest similar constraints in governance contexts, where PRI members faced barriers in implementing policies effectively are also observed.

Sethy & Mahapatro (2025) studies in Odisha supports the argument that PRI members' performance is shaped by their socio-economic background, which influences their awareness and decision-making capacities

Objective

More specifically the present study has the following specific objectives:

1. To find out the status of the convergence of traditional tribal leaders into the Panchayati Raj Institutional structure (PRI).
2. To analyze the socio-economic and educational background of PRI members.
3. To examine the knowledge level of PRI members on different government schemes implemented at Panchayat level.
4. To assess the extent of participation of PRI members at various levels of implementation of the PESA Act in village development programs.

Research Methodology:

The study adopted purposive random sampling. The present study was conducted in two villages, namely Tiring and Guduta, located in the Mayurbhanj district of Odisha. These villages fall under their respective Gram Panchayats and administrative blocks of the district. All the Ward Members, Sarpanchs, and Naib Sarpanchs of the selected Gram Panchayats considered as the 1st Tier of PRI structure were personally interviewed with the help of a semi-structured interview schedule.

The villages selected are predominantly inhabited by major Scheduled Tribe communities of the region, which makes them relevant for studying the implementation and functioning of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996. The village was taken as the primary unit of study and examined in a holistic manner to understand the grassroots governance and the operational dynamics of the PESA Act. Thus, the study covered

around 189 households from the two villages in Mayurbhanj district of Odisha. The interview schedule collected data relating to various development programs implemented by the government and the Knowledge, Attitude, and Practices (KAP) of PRI members on different aspects of the PESA Act. It also focused on the status of decision-making processes within the Gram Sabha and its overall functioning. The study largely employed qualitative tool such as case study guideline and Focus Group Discussions covering cultural and economic aspects of the communities, particularly in relation to the functioning of traditional tribal leaders and PRI members, their decision-making processes, customs and traditions, and changes in resource utilization. The qualitative data related to responses, KAP, and governance practices were analyzed using descriptive methods, case study presentations, and limited quantification wherever necessary to enrich the overall analysis.

Profile of the Respondents

The socio-economic and demographic profile of the respondents in Odisha reveals significant structural factors that may influence the Knowledge, Awareness, and Practice (KAP) of PRI members regarding the PESA Act, 1996. The gender composition of the respondents' shows a higher representation of women (67.21%) compared to men (32.79%), indicating increased female participation in grassroots governance, likely driven by reservation provisions in Panchayati Raj Institutions.

In terms of age distribution, the majority of respondents fall within the age group of 41 to 50 years (30.05%), followed by 51 to 60 years (20.77%) and 31 to 40 years (18.58%). This suggests that a substantial proportion of respondents belong to the economically active and socially engaged age group, which may positively influence governance participation. At the same time, the presence of elderly respondents aged 61 to 70 years (18.58%) and above reflects the continued importance of traditional leaders and their knowledge systems in decision-making processes.

Marital status indicates that a dominant proportion of respondents are married (68.31%), while smaller proportions are unmarried (8.20%), widows (9.29%), widowers (4.37%), and divorced (9.84%). This reflects a socially stable population structure, where family responsibilities may shape engagement with governance and development activities.

Educational attainment among respondents is relatively low. A considerable proportion has education as achievements up to primary level (43.72%), followed by illiterate respondents (24.04%) and those with middle-level education turns to 17.49%. Only a small percentage have secondary education (10.38%), while negligible proportions have higher secondary (1.64%), graduate (1.09%) and technical education (1.64%). This indicates limited formal exposure to legal and administrative frameworks, which may directly affect the knowledge and awareness components of the KAP model regarding the PESA Act.

Occupational patterns reflect economic vulnerability of the respondents. A significant proportion are engaged as agricultural laborers (32.79%), followed by housewives (19.13%) and agriculture-based activities (10.93%). Other occupations includes small-scale businesses vegetable shops (9.29%), grocery shops (4.92%), private service (3.83%), and dependent individuals (8.20%) which indicate limited diversification of income sources. This suggests that livelihood concerns may take precedence over active participation in governance processes.

Housing conditions further highlight modest living standards, with the majority residing in semi-pucca houses (56.28%) and kuccha houses (37.16%), while only a small proportion live in pucca houses (6.56%). All respondents belonging to the Below Poverty Line (BPL) category (100%), indicating widespread economic deprivation. However, universal access to electricity (100%) and ownership of homestead land (100%) provides the possession of a basic level of infrastructural stability of the respondents.

Case Study Analysis:

Case Study-1

Gopi, 50-year-old married woman is the elected Sarpanch of Tiring Panchayat, with specific reference to Tiring village in Odisha. She has done secondary level education upto 10th. Her occupation is agriculture. She is living in semi pucca house, with small landholding. Gopi entered local governance because of the reservation of the seat for women under Panchayati Raj Institutions. Gopi possess basic knowledge of various government scheme implemented at the Panchayat level, including MGNREGA, housing schemes, and welfare programs. Her understanding of these schemes has largely been developed through government training programs, NGO-led awareness camps, and interactions with block-level officials. Although she is actively involved in implementation of various development programs, her knowledge is more practical and experience-based rather than technical or legal. She relies on Panchayat officials, particularly the Panchayat Secretary, to meet the procedure and documentation-related requirements.

Her understanding of PESA includes importance of Gram Sabha consent in development works, role of Gram Sabha in selection of beneficiaries, community rights over minor forest produces (MFP) and protection of tribal customs, traditions, and resources. She is aware of the implementation of PESA provisions in but lacks detailed understanding of statutory clauses and legal powers. Under her tenure, Gram Sabha meetings are conducted periodically, especially for approval of beneficiary lists, planning of MGNREGA works, and discussion on village development needs. Women's participation has increased, though attendance in the Gram Sabha meetings is still affected by migration, seasonal agricultural work, and lack of awareness among some villagers. Despite her commitment, Gopi faces several challenges concerned with administrative and legal knowledge and her dependence on Panchayat Secretary and officials. In addition she also feels that inadequate financial autonomy of the Panchayat, partial implementation of PESA provisions and socio-cultural barriers in the society affects women

leadership. Her socio-economic background enables empathetic governance, while her growing awareness of PESA strengthens local democracy. She shared that effective implementation of PESA requires continuous capacity building, legal training, and institutional support. This case study highlights that PESA has the potential to empower tribal self-governance, but its success depends largely on the awareness, autonomy, and support provided to elected representatives.

A notable example of her leadership and engagement with PESA provisions is the implementation of an MGNREGA supported pond development project in Tiring village. The need for a community water body was raised during a Gram Sabha meeting, where villagers highlighted water scarcity which affects agriculture and daily use of the villagers. Traditional leaders supported the proposal, emphasizing its importance for both livelihood and community welfare. Following PESA provisions, the Gram Sabha collectively approved the project. The Sarpanch ensured that the planning process remained participatory, incorporating inputs from women, marginal farmers, and traditional leaders. The selection of beneficiaries for wage employment under MGNREGA was done transparently through the Gram Sabha. Priority was given to economically weaker households, widows, and landless laborers. Gopi coordinated with Panchayat officials to ensure timely sanctioning and execution of the project. Despite her limited technical knowledge, she regularly monitored the progress and encouraged community participation. The construction of the pond significantly improved water availability for irrigation and domestic use. It also generated local employment, reducing seasonal migration to some extent. Importantly, the project demonstrated the effective functioning of Gram Sabha as envisioned under PESA, where community consent and participation played a central role.

Case Study-2

Usha is a 45 year old married woman of Guduta Village under Pasma Gram Panchayat, Mayurbhanj District, Odisha. She is educated up to class 5th, doing agriculture as her primary occupation, living in a semi pucca house with small land holding. Despite limited formal education, Usha belongs to a politically conscious household where discussions on governance and rights of the villagers are common. She entered local governance under the reservation for women under Panchayati Raj Institutions. Initially hesitant due to low literacy and lack of administrative exposure, she gradually gained confidence through continuous interaction with Gram Sabha members, NGOs, and awareness programs. Unlike many representatives, her motivation for participation emerged from community encouragement and family support, particularly from her husband and children. Although she has lower formal education, she possesses comparatively strong awareness on PESA provisions, acquired through discussions with her husband and educated children, who helped her to understand PESA-related rights and procedures and learning through experience-based participation in Gram Sabha meetings. Her understanding of PESA includes mandatory role of Gram Sabha in decision-making, rights over minor forest produce (MFPs), need

for Gram Sabha consent in land-related and development activities and protection of tribal customs,

natural resources, and community institutions. Unlike many elected representatives, her knowledge is more rights-oriented and community-focused, even though she may not be familiar with legal terminology or written provisions. Gram Sabha meetings are conducted regularly with better attendance in which the villagers actively discuss forest rights, livelihood issues, and development works. It is commonly observed that women's participation has increased significantly, especially due to her personal outreach and motivation. She often explains PESA provisions in simple local dialect making the Act accessible to illiterate and semi-literate villagers.

Despite her awareness and commitment, Usha faces several challenges due to her low literacy which has affected documentation and official correspondence and resulted, dependence on Panchayat officials for paperworks. Along with the limited financial and administrative autonomy, resistance from traditional power structures, gaps between awareness and actual enforcement of PESA provisions has equally affected her role as Sarpanch.

In Guduta village, many households depend on wage labor under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). However, villagers reported irregularities such as delayed wage payments, lack of transparency in job allocation, exclusion of some eligible households. These issues led to dissatisfaction and reduced participation in the programs. Usha raised these concerns during a Gram Sabha meeting. Using her awareness on PESA, she emphasized that the Gram Sabha has the authority to monitor development programs, beneficiary selection and work allocation which must be transparent and participatory. She encouraged villagers, especially women, to voice their concerns openly in Gram Sabha meetings the appropriate platforms to bring change in the society.

Under her leadership a special Gram Sabha meeting was convened to review MGNREGA and to bring changes in the implementation resulting the preparation of a transparent list of job card holders and beneficiaries which was publicly displayed, priority was given to vulnerable households, including widows and landless families and a monitoring group comprising of PRI members, traditional leaders, and villagers was formed , complaints regarding delayed payments were forwarded to block officials. Usha played a crucial role in simplifying procedures and motivating the villagers to actively engaged in the process.

She confidently shared that the outcome and impact are observed in developing improved transparency in job allocation and wage distribution, increased participation of villagers, especially women, in MGNREGA works, reduction in complaints related to exclusion and irregularities, strengthened role of Gram Sabha as a monitoring authority, and enhanced trust between villagers and Panchayat leadership. This intervention demonstrated how awareness of PESA provisions can improve accountability and effectiveness of development programs. The case of Usha highlights that formal education is not the sole determinant of effective leadership in Scheduled Areas. Her experience demonstrates that awareness campaigns, family support, and community engagement can significantly enhance the understanding and implementation of PESA. This case study illustrates that PESA

awareness at the household and community level can empower elected women representatives, even in the absence of higher education. It reinforces the idea that capacity building, sustains awareness efforts, and social support systems are crucial for realizing the true spirit of tribal self-governance.

Case Study-3 Ward member

Reena is a 34-year-old tribal woman belonging to the Ho community, is an elected Ward Member of Tiring village. She has completed education up to Class 10 and lives in a nuclear family. Her family earns their livelihood from agriculture and wage labor. Her household owns a small parcel of land where paddy is cultivated during the monsoon, while her husband works intermittently as a construction laborer in nearby towns.

Reena represents a category of tribal women leaders who are moderately educated, but socially grounded within the community. She is able to read Panchayat notification, understand meeting agendas, and maintain basic written records, although she is not fully confident in drafting formal applications. Compared to many women representatives in Jharkhand, her educational achievement allows her to engage more independently with Panchayat procedures. She attends Gram Sabha meetings regularly and listens attentively to all discussions related to village development, welfare schemes, and infrastructure planning. While initially hesitant to speak to the researcher, she began raising issues related to drinking water supply, irregular pension payments, and road maintenance. She often consults elderly villagers and women's self-help groups before meetings, ensuring that her interventions reflect collective concerns in Gram Sabha to taken consensus decisions. Reena has basic working knowledge of the PESA Act. She understands that the Gram Sabha has authority to approve village-level development plans, tribal consent is required in land and natural resource matters, welfare beneficiary selection must be discussed openly in the Gram Sabha. Although she cannot quote legal provisions, she frequently emphasizes that "Gram Sabha approval is mandatory" for works in Scheduled Areas. This awareness with PRI members reflects the comparatively stronger institutional outreach Odisha's tribal regions. Her challenges include balancing household work with public responsibilities and limited confidence while interacting with block-level officials. Nevertheless, her case illustrates how basic literacy combined with exposure to participatory institutions enhances the substantive participation of tribal women in local governance.

Tiring village faced recurring problems related to irregular drinking water supply, especially during summer months. Existing hand pumps are either dysfunctional or insufficient to meet the water needs of the villagers. Women, in particular, had to walk long distances to fetch water, affecting their daily household activities and livelihoods. Reena identified the issue through regular interaction with women's self-help groups and elderly villagers and she raised the issue in a Gram Sabha meeting. She emphasized that drinking water is a basic necessity and must be prioritized in village planning, Gram Sabha approval is essential for initiating any development work. Her approach ensured that the issue was not presented as an individual concern but as a collective community demand. With the support of the Gram Sabha the issue was formally recorded and

prioritized in the village development plan based on which, a proposal was forwarded to the Panchayat for repair of existing hand pumps and installation of new ones, while the beneficiary hamlets were identified based on need and accessibility, community members, including traditional leaders, supported site selection

As A result, non-functional hand pumps improved immediate access to water, installation of additional water sources reduced the burden on women, increased participation of women in Gram Sabha discussions and strengthened accountability of Panchayat towards basic service delivery. This case illustrates how a Ward Member, even with limited authority, can influence development outcomes through active participation and community mobilization.

Case Study-4

Jaishree, aged 41, is a Santhal tribal woman and Ward Member of Tiring village. She has completed education upto 12th standard which distinguishes her from many women representatives in neighboring villages. She lives in a joint family engaged in agriculture, and her access to basic amenities such as electricity, drinking water, and mobile connectivity.

Jaishree is confident in reading official documents, maintaining registers, and communicating with Panchayat officials. She actively participates in Gram Sabha discussions and often assists villagers in understanding scheme guidelines related to PMAY, Old Age pensions, MGNREGA, and drinking water projects. Her knowledge of the PESA framework is relatively strong. Through training programs conducted by block officials and civil society organizations, she has learned that Gram Sabha approval is essential for utilization of village land and forest resources, tribal customary practices must be respected in development planning, the Gram Sabha has a monitoring role over Panchayat works. Jaishree frequently reminds villagers that development schemes should not be finalized without Gram Sabha discussion. She has raised concerns regarding delays in MGNREGA payments and improper beneficiary selection and demonstrating lack of procedural awareness and accountability with the villagers. Despite her education, she still faces gender bias from some male members, especially during financial discussions. However, her literacy, clarity, and persistence allowed her to assert herself effectively. Her case reflects Odisha's gradual transition from symbolic to functional participation of tribal women under Panchayati Raj facilitated through PESA Acts.

In Tiring village, open defecation remained a persistent issue despite ongoing efforts under the Swachh Bharat Mission Gramin programs being implemented in the village. Several households had either not constructed toilets or were not using them regularly due to shortage of water availability, lack of awareness and behavioral resistance. Jaishree recognized the issue during her interaction with women and elderly villagers, who faced difficulties related to safety and health. She raised the concern in a Gram Sabha meeting and emphasized that sanitation is a key component of village development and public health. Drawing upon her understanding of the Panchayats

Extension to Scheduled Areas Act, she insisted that the planning and implementation of sanitation initiatives must involve active participation and approval of the Gram Sabha. She encouraged open discussion, where villagers shared concerns regarding cost, water availability, and usage habits. With her initiative, a list of households without toilets was prepared and verified in the Gram Sabha, awareness was created through door-to-door interaction, especially among women, eligible households were linked to sanitation benefits under the scheme, community members were motivated to adopt hygienic practices. As a result, toilet construction increased, and behavioral change gradually improved usage. Women's participation in discussions on sanitation also increased, reflecting greater awareness and ownership. The case highlights how an educated and proactive Ward Member can facilitate behavioral changes and effective implementation of public health programs, strengthening grassroots governance through community participation.

Case Study-5

Sabita, a 36-year-old tribal woman belonging to the Munda community, is an elected Ward Member of Guduta village. She has studied up to Class 10 and lives in a modest household. As a source of livelihood she is dependent on rain-fed agriculture and forest-based livelihoods. Compared to more remote tribal regions, Guduta village shows moderate development in terms of road connectivity access to, school functioning of Panchayat Raj Institutions. Sabita regularly attends Gram Sabha meetings and plays an important role in mobilizing women to participate. She is able to read meeting resolutions and understands the importance of written records. The development programs made at Panchayat level focuses on health services, drinking water, school infrastructure, and nutrition programs of school for children and at CDS centers for both mother and children. She has practical knowledge of the PESA Act, particularly regarding community consent on land-related decisions, protection of tribal interests in forest common property resources and Gram Sabha's authority in beneficiary identification. Sabita may not understand legal texts independently, but she clearly understands that development cannot be imposed without village approval. She often uses simple language to explain these rights to other tribal women, contributing to collective awareness. Her limitations include lack of training in budgeting and digital reporting systems. However, her consistent participation and community trust indicate strong potential for leadership. Her case highlights how functional literacy enhances participatory governance even in economically modest tribal households. In Guduta village, irregular supply of supplementary nutrition and poor attendance at the local Anganwadi centre was a concern, particularly depriving pregnant women and young children. She identified the issue through her interaction with women during Gram Sabha meetings and informal discussions in the village. She raised the matter in the Gram Sabha and emphasized that services under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) must function effectively for the well-being of mothers and children in the village. Drawing on her understanding of the Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas Act, she highlighted that the Gram Sabha has a role in monitoring welfare services and ensuring accountability.

With her initiative the functioning of the Anganwadi centre was reviewed in the Gram Sabha, beneficiaries, including pregnant women and mothers, were encouraged to share their concerns, monitoring mechanism involving women's groups was formally established and the issue of irregular supply was communicated to Panchayat-level officials. As a result, the regularity of food distribution improved, and attendance at the Anganwadi centre increased in the village. Women became more aware of their entitlements, and community involvement in monitoring the implementation of basic services. As a result of which access of the beneficiaries to such welfare services was strengthened.

Case Study-6

Anita Soren, a 29-year-old Santali tribal woman, is one of the youngest Ward Members in Guduta village. She has completed her education upto Class 12th standard. She belongs to a lower-middle tribal household engaged in agriculture and small livestock rearing. Her family is benefited from basic welfare schemes and has moderate digital access through smart phones. Anita represents a new generation of tribal women leaders who combine education with social engagement. She maintains written notes of Gram Sabha meetings, follows up on pending works, and communicates with Panchayat officials using social media like phone calls and messaging platforms.

She has gained awareness of the PESA Act, 1996 through Panchayat orientations and NGO interactions with NGOs. She understands that the Gram Sabha is the primary decision-making body in Scheduled Areas where community approval is essential for development interventions and tribal participation is central to democratic governance. Anita has raised issues related to sanitation, village drainage, school safety, and women's health services. Although she sometimes feels inexperienced in financial matters, she actively seeks clarification rather than remaining silent.

In Guduta village, parents and teachers raised concerns regarding inadequate safety measures in the local primary school, including damaged boundary fencing and lack of proper sanitation facilities for children. These issues particularly affected girls' attendance and overall learning conditions. Anita identified the problem during her interaction with mothers and school-going children and brought it to the Gram Sabha. She emphasized that ensuring a safe educational environment is essential for the development of the children and must be prioritized in village planning. Referring to the principles of the Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas Act, she highlighted that such community concerns require collective discussion and approval. With her initiative the issue was formally discussed and recorded in the Gram Sabha, priority needs such as boundary repair and sanitation facilities were identified, a proposal was forwarded to the Panchayat for necessary action, continuous follow-up was maintained through communication with officials. As a result, basic repairs were undertaken, improving school safety and hygiene conditions. The intervention also encouraged greater parental involvement and increased awareness about the importance of safe schooling. Her case demonstrates how education, even without strong

economic background, significantly strengthens women's engagement with democratic institutions.

With further capacity-building, she has the potential to become a key factor in promoting transparent and inclusive governance.

Conclusion

The relevance of the ethno-methodological approach is very important to understand the socio-cultural intricacies particularly in the tribal societies. The socio-cultural factors affecting the implementations of welfare programs which are concerned to the development in tribal communities from emic perspectives are rarely addressed by the researchers to understand the dynamics of development as the tools of success and for failure of progressive Acts of the State. Keeping this in mind the present study attempted to document the various successful and failure processes affecting the implementation of the PESA Act, 1996 which primarily aims to strengthen the concept of Good Governance in fifth scheduled areas as provisioned in the Constitutions of India. The in-depth study of functioning of six members belonging to 1st tier of the PRI, the basic structure of the PESA Act, 1996. The result of implementation of PESA Act for three decades is experienced in tribal dominated fully scheduled areas, Mayurbhanj district shows many successful achievements of the decentralized governance established through constitutional mandate. The study identified various factors among which the education, skill development, ethical perspectives and motivated processes plays very important roles for the PRI members at grassroot level for successful implementation of the Gram Sabha which in the pivotal part of whole functioning of PESA Act to establish Good Governance in Scheduled areas as desired also under PESA Act, 1996.

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