

# Empowering Rural Women Through Communication: With Special Reference Of West Bengal

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*Abstract: This paper tries to analyse the status of Women Empowerment in India and tourist attractions the Issues and Challenges of Women Empowerment. Empowerment of women is essentially the process of upliftment of economic, social and political status of women, the traditionally underprivileged ones, in the society. Their social status especially in rural areas remains very low. Rural women belong to the most deprived section of the society facing adverse conditions in terms of social oppression and economic inequality, a visible majority of them being extremely poor. The study reveals that women of India are relatively disempowered and they enjoy somewhat lower status in society. This could be possible only by adopting definite social and economic policies with a view of total development of women and to make them realize that they have the potential to be strong human beings. Communication means are profoundly affecting social structures. In specific, communication media are creating opportunities for women, enabling them to participate in political, social, and economic processes at unprecedented scale. The role that communication can play in enabling gender equity, however, is constrained by access, low literacy, and limited communication media usage by women. This article throws light to better understand the specific needs of women in our country as they eagerly wait for the increasing availability of communication means. This article would definitely help to open doors for policy debate and continued monitoring of progress made in ensuring that women in our country are equally able to avail of the opportunities that communication offers for improving their lives Considering this scenario, this paper investigates the nature and factors influencing and further outlines a strategic framework for enhancing rural women's empowerment.*

*Keywords: Communication, Women Empowerment, Women education Women Health, Socio-Economic Status, Marginalization, Rural Development, Mass Media.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The women are novel production of the world. Swami Vivekananda expressed that “There is no chance of the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is moved forward. It is unrealistic for a flying creature to fly on one wing” disregarding the reality, women are the most denied and socially segregated in the society. Women play an important role in the improvement of India and assume a proportionate part in its development. It is conceivable just when women will be empowered similarly. India is not just a nation of assorted varieties in the economic and social spheres, yet additionally in gender disparity and imbalance, prompting

poor status and social injustice. Status can be discovered from the degree of control that she has over her own particular life got from access to learning, monetary assets and the level of self-degree of autonomy delighted in during the time spent basic leadership and decision-making at significant focuses in her life cycle. Socio economic suppression of women affects not only the woman but also the country as a whole. The Indian economy suddenly at a high speed without providing adequate opportunity to this innocent and tradition bound teeming millions of rural women of 7 lakh Indian villages. The women in India are facing numerous challenges and yet try to tackle this problems which can assure them to avail the benefit in rural India. A woman should get proper status in society.

Her role is not confined to only to breeder & feeder but should contribute substantially in all field of society. Today it is universally recognized that women are integral to all priorities and development.

## II. WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

The most prominent component of the expression 'Empowerment' is that it contains inside it the word 'power', where women pick up control over material and intellectual resource and challenge the philosophy of patriarchy and gender based decimations. Empowerment is an intricate idea which is translated from various perspectives. Empowerment is widely used but seldom defined. Literally empowerment denotes "to invest with power". Power is defined as the ability to influence the behavior of others with or without restraint. Thus, empowerment means a psychological sense of personal control or influence and a concern with actual social influence, political power and legal rights. It is a multi-level construct referring to individuals, organizations and community. It is an international, ongoing process centered in the local community, involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring and group participation, through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to the control over these resources. As indicated by UNIFEM (2000), Women's empowerment incorporates: procuring knowledge and comprehension of gender relations and courses in which these relations might be changed; building up a feeling of self-esteem, a faith in one's capacity to secure fancied changes and the privilege to control one's life. Empowerment is a procedure of testing existing force connection, upgraded capacity and chance to settle on choices for oneself and equivalent access to assets. As per UNICEF (1993) gives a women empowerment structure, which contends that women empowerment can be seen as far as five fairness, of which empowerment is a basic component at each level. The levels are welfare; get to, conscientisation, investment and control. Women Empowerment is accepted to be a dynamic procedure of individual and aggregate battle against the powers which smother and subordinate women. It emphasizes a strategy of revamping of every single existing asset in the society, be it social, economic, cultural or political. It demonstrates a change from a condition of feebleness to one that perceives and fortifies women to take more noteworthy control over their lives. Women Empowerment is to be accomplished by guaranteeing that women are profitable work, they have equal right to work and property and right to life. The Women Empowerment implies more noteworthy control over fund, learning, data, innovation, aptitudes, preparing, political power, monetary assets, and so on. The World Bank defines empowerment as "the way toward expanding the limit of people or gatherings to settle on decisions and change those decisions into wanted activities and results. Fundamental to this procedure is activity which both form individual and aggregate resources and enhance the proficiency and reasonableness of the association and institutional setting which represent the utilization of these advantages."

Women have been battling for sense of pride and independence. Since mid-1980 attributable to addressing by women themselves about their mistreated status and situation through varied women's movements, the issue of 'Women Empowerment' came into center. Empowerment is visualized as a guide to enable women to accomplish uniformity with men or possibly lessen the sexual orientation based separations. As indicated by A.P. J. Abdul Kalam, expressed that empowerment of women is essential for making a good nation. At the point when women are empower, society with capacity is guaranteed. Empowerment of women is fundamental as their musings and their esteem frameworks lead the improvement of a decent family, good society and at last a decent nation.

## III. COMMUNICATION FOR EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL WOMEN IN INDIA

Communication media is becoming a platform for the empowerment of the society on a whole. There is a need to bridge the gap between administrator, policy maker, planner and beneficiary as rural women and lab to land from time-to-time. This calls for a two way communication process. Extension workers, such as demonstrators and officials, who can function as channels of communication between planner and beneficiary, lab and land to be given orientation by organizing orientation classes on latest developments. This is to carry on various tasks in accordance with the goals of rural women empowerment. The exposure to communication can help in gaining knowledge and change attitudes which will indirectly help women gain freedom at all fronts. Media communication aims at improving the quality of life of those who are under developed and ized, thus contributing to empowerment. The Communication media has a larger role to play in the empowerment of women.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- ✓ To understand the socio-economic background of the respondents.
- ✓ To access the awareness of women Empowerment in West Bengal
- ✓ To understand the current Media seeking habits of the respondent
- ✓ To evaluate the impact of various communication in rural society.

## IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The researcher has reviewed the literature to become aware with existing published work. The literature for the study was collected from books, journals, periodicals and from web interrelated sources.

Payel Das (2012) Social Background, Mass Media Exposure and Awareness of Gender Issues among the Post Graduate Students in Silchar, Assam University, Silchar, Conducted a study in Silchar district, on Mass Media exposure and gender Issues in 2012 for this research work researcher

said that It is not always through different mass media such as television, radio or newspaper but also through books, pamphlets, hoardings and banners which plays an important role in the awareness of the respondents. From the study it is revealed that, programs on crucial social issues penetrated in our society, special economic schemes for women and government schemes for economic development of gender, special awards for women participation, and awareness of central social welfare board schemes for gender development.

Anne Webb (2016) Information and Communication Technology and Contesting Gender Hierarchies. Journal of Information Policy, Penn State University Press in Egypt, Dr. Saneya El-Neshawy, explored women farmers' use of communication tools to access information, in combination with a focus on their identification of what was needed to overcome the hegemonic customs of society that sustained and ized women's loss of regulator over their own agricultural land. Their productive cultivation of their land is their means of securing their livelihood as well as their Self-willpower and actualization of their capacities and intervention.

S.B. Patil (2012) conducted research study entitled "Role of Communication in Empowering Women through SHG: A study" Which investigates, the results of the study indicate that mobile phones were the only means of modern communication means. Women need to be involved in decision making regarding development of new technology in order to participate fully in its growth and impact. Even though women have undergone training, majority of the respondents lacking regular, proper and need based training concentrating on utilizing local resources and local market. Social participation of respondents was very low due to lack of social mobility therefore the development agencies should educate the family members using different media like TV, radio, newspapers, computer and mobile.

Vipin K Sharma (2011) Conference Paper "Women empowerment and Communication", At Swami Sahajanand College of Commerce & Management Bhavnagar (Gujarat) stated that it is specifically in the context of women's autonomy and choice in poorer and developing countries like India and in less affluent communities that it is now pertinent to focus on the impact of communication on women's routine life and their employment opportunities. In doing so, it is important to bear in mind the distinctive features of the current revolution in the mode of production, which is primarily Knowledge-intensive. Communication opens up a direct window for women to the outside world. Communication makes the role of time and distance less significant in all fields.

Shaik Haseena (2011) Communication for development of rural Women: a study of self-help groups in Andhra Pradesh, Sri Padmavathi Mahila Visvavidyalayam, Tirupati, Conducted a study in Andhra Pradesh, on Communication for development of rural women in 2011 for this research work researcher stated that the media must be involved in developmental activities for the betterment of the community village related problems must be focused in TV channels. Mass media can play a positive role in women awareness programs. Audio visual media should be utilized more frequently for insertion, motivation and effective propagation about schemes. Entrepreneurial development programs should

be conducted for the socially and economically advantaged groups. Internet and other sources of information should be used together for information on market demand and trends. The members must be motivated to evolve legislation in developmental activities for the betterment of their community.

Studies Signifying to Women's Empowerment through Socio-cultural Communication) in Kamrup District, Mrs. Dipalee Neog (2011, Assam Gauhati University, Guwahati, Conducted a study in Kamrup district, on Women Empowerment through Socio-Cultural Communication in 2011 for this research work researcher said that Completion of primary education can be ensured when is encouraged at home for pursuing education and not stressed with heavy household work. A girl child must enjoy some basic facility as their childhood rights for enhancement of educational level like time for reading at home, time for playing at home and reward for good work. In order to enhance women empowerment in terms of gain of political focusing, self-confidence and social respect through the involvement in the gram panchayats.

Rajeswari Ramachandran, K Jaggarajamma, M Muniyandi and Rani Balasubramanian (2006), Identifying effective communication channels in a rural Community: a field report from south India, Indian Journal of Tuberculosis. The study block included 39,255 populations in 5 villages. Key informants from each village were selected. One key informant from each village who was able to give the information about available communication channels selected by the villagers formed the study population. The main communication channels in this area are described. In all villages, the main source of any information was through television. The main source of information and this channel of communication may meet the challenge of reaching the "interior pockets" of rural India.

## V. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Communication researchers and scholars have proposed many theories since the foundation of the discipline. It has travelled through times, new ideas, concepts paradigms have been developed. Behind each and every new idea there has been some theoretical background which works as the backbone of new practices proposed. Here it is an attempt to provide the theoretical back bone to a comparatively new practice of communication.

*Democratic Participant Theory:* The study was informed by the Democratic Participant Media Theory which is one of the normative theories of the media which emphasizes and supports the media multiplicity, local nature of the media, horizontal media involvement and interaction. The theory is mainly concerned with the right of every person to information, the right to reply, the right to use the means of communication for interaction in small scale settings of interest groups, sub-culture and community. According to Kwaramba 2000 the Democratic Participant Media Theory is very effective in that it guarantees some channels for feedback and an opportunity for often neglected local communities to express their opinions and views on issues of interest to them.

*Development Communication Theory:* The Development Communication Theory, specifically, discuss about the habit of scientific application of strategies and doctrines of communication to establish a positive notion of social change. It also stresses that there can be no Empowerment without communication. Communication has undertaken exactly the same responsibility of various empowerment programmes, accepting limitations and directives from the State. In the 'Development Communication Theory', media has taken the role of bringing forth positive and developmental programmes for the state and accepting restrictions and receiving instructions from state. It is an undisputed fact that there can be no foundation of Empowerment without communication and this concept provides the basis for the Development Communication Theory.

## VI. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The work is basically descriptive and Analytical in nature.

*Design of the Study:* The researcher has adopted descriptive research design to describe the research problem 'empowering marginalized rural women through communication: with special reference to monteswar block of burdwan district'.

*Universe of the Study:* The study was conducted in four Blocks, namely Monteswar and Burdwan-1 from Burdwan and Arambag and Chinsurah-Mogra from Hooghly district. This block is dominated by the General SC. ST and Muslim caste followed by Aurari, Brambhan, Bagdhi Nomosudra, siya and sunni. The area of the research is Burdwan and Hooghly District of West Bengal.

*Sampling Method:* The study was conducted in four Block were selected through Purposive Sampling Method for the study. Amongst these four Blocks 8 Villages was selected, 80 respondents were selected from each Village through Lottery method of Random sampling.

*Tool for Data Collection:* For the collection of required information which was needed for research questions, interview-schedule was prepared. The questions of socio-economic, familial background, working hours, working conditions area of expenditure of wages, empowerment of women and the problems of their empowerment.

*Data Collection* In the present study, both types of data have been used. Primary data were collected from the respondents with structured interview-schedule. Primary data were collected from the respondents in the months of July to December 2016. Secondary data were collected from the different books, journals, newspapers and other documents.

*Source of Data:* The rural women in these villages constituted the population of the study. Stratified random sampling with arbitrary allocation was followed to select 640 rural women (80 from each village).

## VII. ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, an in depth analysis of the collected data has been attempted as per the objectives stated earlier. The interpretations, the findings are also given. The study helped

to find the effectiveness of communication of media among the rural women community by taking a small village in West Bengal state of India. The collected survey data from the women respondents were analyzed and tabulated to derive the results. Analysis of the data is given below.

### PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENT

In social science research individual characteristics of respondents have an important role to play in and conveying and giving responses regarding the problem. Observance this in mind, The various personnel characteristics taken into account are in this study namely age, marital status, caste, religion, family status, family size, income, education, occupation etc. in the study. All these are taken as variables that affect women empowerment in rural society.

*Age pattern:* In this study 175 women were in the age group 18-30 years (27.34%) whereas the largest group was constituted by 275 (42.96%) women in age group of 31-45 years. 152 (23.75%) in age group of 46-60 years and 38 (5.93per cent) respondents were in age group above 61 years. The majority of women were in the mid-age group.

*Caste structure:* It indicates that the villages in this district keeping the Government norms, the respondents are classified into three categories, namely General, Other Backward Classes, Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe. In respect of District, it could be seen that majority of the respondents in all district belonged to SC category (43.28%) and (19.21%) belonged to ST category, where only 21.40% goes to general category.

*Mother Tongue:* Mother tongue is the root of any Society. In respect of District, it could be seen from the table 6.5 that majority of the respondent mother tongue is Bengali (84.375%) in the rural areas of Burdwan district followed by (78.75%) in Birbhum district, (70.62%) in Bankura district and (79.37%) in Hooghly district.

*Type of family:* To know the type of family of the respondents, they are classified into two categories as the study area is mostly dominated by these two categories family, i) Joint ii) Nuclear. Data reveal that minority 172 (26.87%) respondents were either residing in joint or extended families which clearly reflect the strong cohesiveness in the family. However 468 (73.12%) respondents resided in nuclear family.

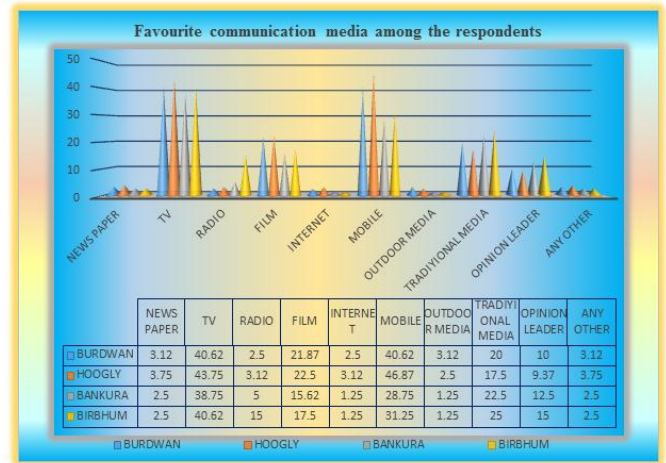
*Family annual income:* Income of a person plays a vital role in influencing the economic conditions of an individual which in turn is likely to have bearing on the on the responses about a problem posed to respondent. Family annual income of most of the women or family studied is in under the range of Rs 5,000 is (20.15%) and Rs. 5,001-10,000 398 (62.18%) of the respondents family, 84 (13.12%) of respondents, family annual income was 10, 0001- 15,000 and only 29 (4.53%) respondents of family income was in the range of Rs. 15,001-20,000 per annum.

*Educational status:* The educational status of the respondents. Out of the total, about 136 (21.25%) of women in the study are illiterate and 276 (43.12%) are educated up to lower primary level. Out of the total respondent investigated under this study 133 (20.78%) are studied to V- X, 57 (8.90%) are studied up to XI- XII and only 38 (5.96%) are graduates.

**Occupation:** The most of the respondents 118 (18.43%) counted for this study are daily wager probably because of low skill, low education and lower socio-economic background, 309(48.28%) are seasonal worker. Only 91(14.21%) women are part time-worker. About 122(19.06%) women are not working in any field. There are no salaried employees found.

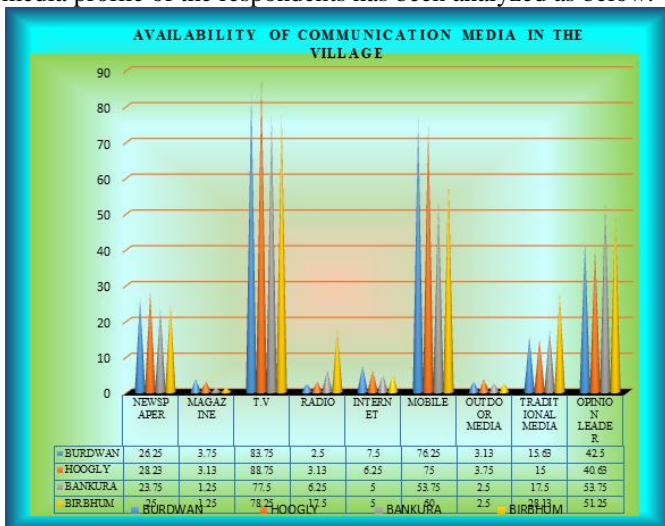
**VIII. TO UNDERSTAND THE CURRENT MEDIA SEEKING HABITS OF THE RESPONDENT**

Under this heading, it is tried to analyses the media seeking habits and exposure of the respondents to use mass media. For this purpose five Mass Media namely, print media as newspapers and magazine, broadcast media as radio, Audio-visual media as television, Film and multimedia as computer based media such as internet are occupied into consideration. They are access to media, frequency of using various media, average time spent on various media etc. The media profile of the respondents has been analyzed as below.



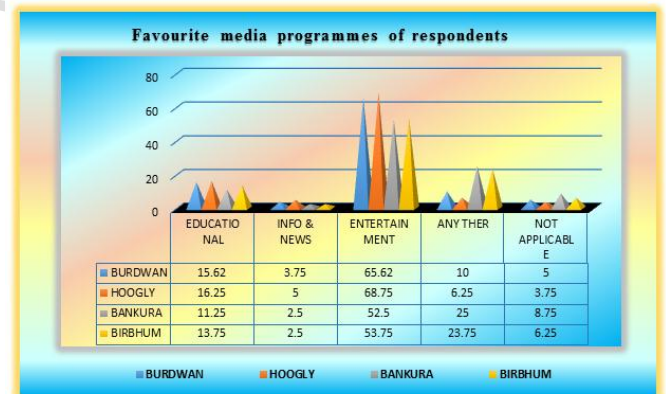
Source: Data collected through Field Survey  
Figure &Table 2: Favorite Communication Media Among The Respondents

The 'Table - 2' indicates about the favorite communication media among respondents. Television is the most favorite communication medium preferred by the maximum percentage of respondents that is 40.93% where Hooghly tops the list with 43.75%. 36.87% respondents like mobile phones as communication medium here also Hooghly tops the list with 46.87% mobile users. 2.96% likes newspapers, 6.40% likes radio where Birbhum tops the list with 15% radio listeners and 11.71% depends on opinion leaders as communication medium in these four districts where shockingly Hooghly district counts the least with only 9.37%.



Source: Data collected through Field Survey  
Figure &Table 1: Availability of Communication Media in the Villages

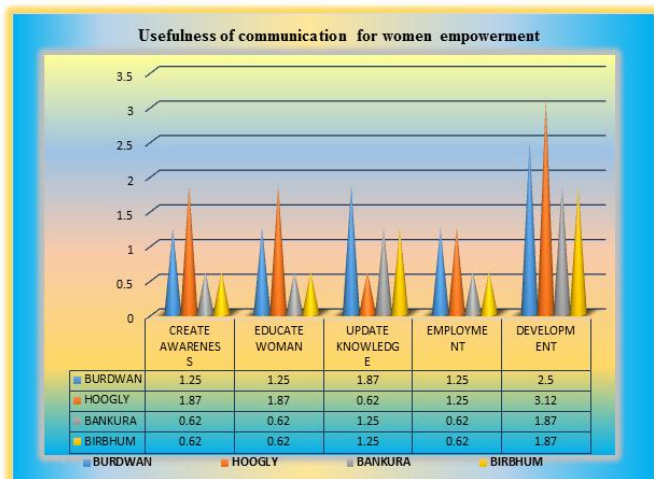
Table - 1 shows that television plays a major role in communication among the rural women, in an average 82.18% of the respondents said that television has become one of the important part in their daily life. Despite radio being the cheapest medium for the rural communities, only 7.18% of the respondents from these districts access the radio. 3.50% of the respondents have access to the outdoor media. 50.93% of the respondents who access to the opinion for opinion leader in the rural areas of these districts. Despite traditional media being the cheapest medium for the rural communities, only 20.18% of the respondents from these districts use the traditional media. 25.78% of the respondents have access to the newspapers and only 0.5% houses buy English newspapers and the rest prefer the regional dailies. 5.93% of the respondents who were college students have access to the Internet only in their educational institutions. Only 2.34% of respondents buy magazines. 66.25% of respondents have mobile for their personal use in the rural areas of these districts.



Source: Data collected through Field Survey  
Figure &Table 3: Favorite Media Programmes of Respondents

The 'Table - 3' indicates favorite media programs of respondents. 15.62% uses media for educational purpose followed by 3.75% for info and news, and the majority 65.62% for entertainment and 10% for other purposes in the rural areas of Burdwan district. 16.25% uses media for educational purpose followed by 5% for info and news, and the majority 68.75% for entertainment and 6.25% for other purposes in the rural areas of Hooghly district. 11.25% uses media for educational purpose followed by 2.5% for info and news, and the majority 52.50% for entertainment and 25% for other purposes in the rural areas of Bankura district. In Birbhum 13.75% uses media for educational purpose followed

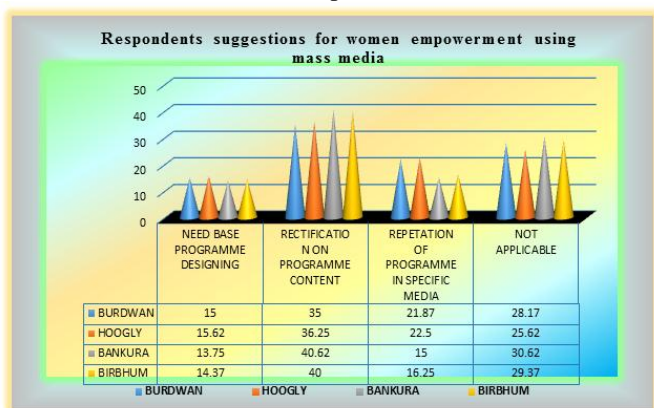
by 2.50% for info and news, 53.75% for entertainment and 23.75% for other purposes.



Source: Data collected through Field Surve

Figure & Table 4: Usefulness of Communication for Women Empowerment

The 'Table - 4' indicates usefulness of communication for women empowerment. 1.25% uses communication to create awareness followed by 1.25% to educate women, 1.87% to update knowledge among women, 1.25% uses communication as a tool for employment and 2.50% uses communication for development in the rural areas of Burdwan district. 1.87% uses communication to create awareness followed by 1.87% to educate women, 0.62% to update knowledge among women, 1.25% uses communication as a tool for employment 3.13% uses communication for development in the rural areas of Hooghly district. 0.62% uses communication to create awareness followed by 0.62% to educate women, 1.25% to update knowledge among women, 0.62% uses communication as a tool for employment, 1.87% uses communication for development in the rural areas of Bankura district. In the rural areas of Birbhum district, 0.62% uses communication to create awareness followed by 0.62% to educate women, 1.25% to update knowledge among women 0.62% uses communication as a tool for employment, 1.87% uses communication for development.



Source: Data collected through Field Survey

Figure & Table 5: Respondent's Suggestions for Women Empowerment Using Mass Media

The 'Table - 5' describes that 37.96% of respondents think that content of the programs for women empowerment should be shared in local dialect and culture, rural population is more in the districts of Bankura and Birbhum so the demand more local dialect content i.e., 40.62% and 40% respectively. 18.96% of the respondents from these districts think there should be repeated presentation of the program for women empowerment and 14.68% thinks that there should be more analysis on community and according the programs should be designed. Almost 28.43% of the respondents are of no opinion regarding the question.

### IX. CONCLUSION

It is observed from the study that the rural women are either illiterate or only just literate. It shows a worried picture of women education in rural India. Most of the women workers are either S.Cs. or O.B.Cs lived in nuclear family. The annual income of rural women is Rs. 5000-8000; they are using their income on fulfilling the daily needs of family, children's, education and investment. More than half of the respondents' family monthly income is R.s 8000; they are landless and are living in mixed house without toilets. Only 3.75 percentage of them have toilets in their house. It is the most worried picture of rural India regarding women's health, honor and security. Most of the rural women are working because of there is no other earner in their family or having only one earner in the family excluding them. Most of the women workers work nine hours a day and their working conditions are very poor and facilities available at workplace are a few. Most of women workers have monthly and fortnightly payment and have less information about this scheme. They are totally denied in the decision making process of work, audit etc. but they have role in family decision making in the education of children, purchasing of goods and animals etc. Some of the respondents said that their family economic condition and social status has worse. Social and economic condition of the family decreased but their overall empowerment has grown up. For the successful implementation of this scheme, women workers did suggest that the women should be included in decision making process. The facilities such as drinking water, medical facility and sheds and look after of the children should be available at the work place.

It is seen that situation facing the majority of Indian women is far from positive. However efforts are under way to short out the adverse effect through governmental & non-governmental level. Both the government and NGO's seem too aware of the focus on rural development, education, health, childcare & proper gainful employment for the rural women. Special focus should be laid on public distribution system for food security, health schemes, child care credit and insurance scheme. The role of NGO's & women organization are of paramount importance in this direction to meet the challenges on rural women.

It is essential as their believed and their value systems principal the development of a moral family, respectable society and ultimately a noble nation. Women empowerment will be real and effective only when they are capable income

and property so that they may stand on their feet and build up their identity in the society. The Empowerment of Women has become one of the most important apprehensions of 21st century not only at national level but also at the international level. Government inventiveness alone would not be sufficient to accomplish this goal. Society must take initiative to create an environment in which there is no gender discrimination and women have full openings of self-decision making and participating in social, political and economic life of the country with a sense of equality.

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