

Factors Affecting Performance Level of Women Panchayat Members of Panchayati Raj System in Sikar District of Rajasthan

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Introduction

The total female population of India is 495.7 million out of which 77% live in rural areas. The concept of empowerment of women as a goal of development projects and programmes has been gaining wider acceptance, especially in the last two decades. Empowerment of women is not only an equity consideration but also a necessary precondition for sustainable economic and social development. The participation of women in the panchayati Raj is essential not only for ensuring political participation in the democratic process but also for rising development goals for women. The Indian parliament passed the 73rd constitutional amendment in 1993 to provide for reservation of 33% of elected seats for women at different levels of local governance. At present more than 1,000,000 women have been holding the offices of members and chairpersons at different tiers of the panchayats.

Rajasthan is the pioneer state in the country where the panchayati raj system was introduced on October 2, 1959. At present there are 3058 women Sarpanch and 27000 women Panch in Rajasthan. So there is a great need to have a deeper understanding of the factors affecting the performance of women in Panchayati Raj Institutes. This study was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To study personal variables of women Panchayat members.
2. To ascertain the association of personal variables with the performance level of women panchayat members.

Methodology

The study was conducted in Sikar district of Rajasthan which is comprised of eight

blocks, out of which Neemkathana and Fatehpur blocks were selected because they had the greatest number of women panchayat members. There are twenty six villages in Neemkathana block and thirteen in Fatehpur block where women sarpanches have been elected. About 50% villages were selected randomly from each identified block. Thus twenty villages, (13 from Neemkathana and 7 from Fatehpur) were identified for the study and for respondents, twenty women Sarpanches one from each selected village and eighty women Panches, 4 from each selected village i.e. 52 women Panches from Neemkathana and 28 from Fatehpur, totalling 100 respondents. Thereafter relevant information was collected from respondents with the help of an interview schedule developed through the face to face contact method. Data were then analysed and tabulated and results were interpreted in the light of the study's objectives.

Results and Discussion

Personal variables selected for the study included:

Age

The results in Table 1 reveal that majority of the Sarpanches were from the middle age category (45%) followed by young age category (35%). Only 20 % were from old age category. The table further reveals that the majority of Panches were from middle age category (55%) followed by young age category (31.25%) and only 13.75% of Panches were from old age category.

Education

The data of Table 1 depict that majority of Sarpanches were educated to primary level (45%), followed by illiterate (25%) middle education (20%) and only 10 % to

high school level. The table further reveals that more than 50 % of Panches were educated to primary level (52.5%) followed by illiterate (23.75%) and middle education (13.75%). Only 10% had been educated to school level and none had had a college or post-graduate education. Similar findings were also reported by Malagi and Pujar (1996).

Caste

Table 1 shows that less than 50% of the sarpanches were from schedule caste/tribe (45%) followed by other backward castes (30%) and 25% general caste. Most panches were from other backward castes (42.5%) followed by schedule caste/tribe (31.25%) and less than 30 per cent from general castes (26.25%).

Table 1. Information regarding profile of the respondent

N = 100

Categories	Variables	Sarpanch (n=20)		Panch (n=80)	
		f	%	f	%
Age	Young	7	35	25	31.25
	Middle	9	45	44	55
	Old	4	20	11	13.75
Education	Illiterate	5	25	19	23.75
	Primary	9	45	42	52.5
	Middle	4	20	11	13.75
	High school	2	10	8	10
	Graduate and above	-	-	-	-
Caste	General	5	25	21	26.25
	SC/ST	9	45	25.25	31.25
	OBC	6	30	34	42.5
Family type	Nuclear	9	45	37	46.25
	Joint	11	55	43	53.75
Annual Income Group	Low	6	30	39	48.75
	Middle	7	35	17	21.25
	High	3	15	10	12.5
Mass media exposure	Low	13	65	54	67.5
	Medium	4	20	21	26.5
	High	3	15	5	6.25
Urban contact	Low	18	90	46	57.5
	Medium	2	10	29	36.25
	High	-	-	5	6.25
Social participation	Nil	3	15	13	13.25
	One	14	70	56	70
	More than one	2	10	7	8.75
	Office bearer	1	5	4	5

Family type

Table 1 reveals that more than 55% sarpanches belonged to a joint family system and 45% to a nuclear family system. Most of the panches belonged to a joint family (43%) or a nuclear family (37%). These findings are in conformity with the findings of the Kachhwa (2003).

Annual income

The majority of Sarpanches belonged to the medium income group (35%) followed by low income group (30%). Only 15% belonged to the high Income group. The majority of panches belonged to the low-income group (48.75%) followed by medium income group (21.25%) and high category of income (12.3%).

Mass Media Exposure

Table 1 shows that most sarpanches had a low level of mass media exposure (65%) followed by medium level of mass media exposure (20%). Only 15% had a high level of mass media exposure. Most panches had a low level of mass media exposure (67.5%), followed by medium level of mass media exposure (26.28%). Less than 10% panches had a high level of mass media exposure (6.25%). This finding is in conformity with the findings of Senthamarai *et al.* (1997).

Urban contact

Table 1 indicates that most sarpanches had a low level of urban contact (90%) followed by medium level (10%). None were found in the high level of urban contact. Most panches had a low level of urban contact (57.5%) followed by medium level (36.25%) and only 6.25% with a high level of urban contact.

Social participation

The majority of sarpanches were members of one organization (70%) followed by no participation category (15%) and more than one organization category (10%). Only 5% were found in the category office bearer. Most panches were members of one organization (70%) followed by no participation category (13.25%) and more than one organization category (8.75%). Only 5% panches were office bearers. The finding is in accordance with the findings of Senthamarai *et al.* (1997).

Association of the personal variables with the performance level of women panchayat members

In order to measure the association of performance level of women panchayat members and related independent variables, the chi-square test was computed and results have been presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Association of the selected independent variables with the performance level of women panchayat members

N=100

S. No.	Independent variables	Chi-square (χ^2)
1.	Age	4.37*
2.	Education	7.39**
3.	Caste	1.25 NS
4.	Family Type	9.5**
5.	Income	0.13 NS
6.	Mass Media Exposure	9.13**
7.	Social participation	9.52**
8.	Urban contact	7.45*

NS = Non significant
* = Significant at 5% level
** = Highly significant at 1% level

Age

The data shows that the calculated chi square value (4.37) is higher than the tabulated value leading to a null hypothesis. "There is no association between performance level of women panchayat members and age of respondents." , is rejected . It means there is significant association between performance level of women panchayat members and age.

Education

The calculated chi square value (7.39) is higher than the tabulated value at 1% level of significance thus again, a null hypothesis "There is no association between performance level of women panchayat members and education" is rejected. It means there is a highly significant association between performance levels of women panchayat members and education..

Caste

The data shows that the calculated chi square value (1.25) is lower than the tabulated value thus another null hypothesis. "There is no association between performance levels of women panchayat members and caste" is accepted. It means there is no significant association between performance levels of women panchayat members and caste.

Family type

The calculated chi square value (9.5) is higher than the tabulated value thus a null hypothesis. "There is no association between performance levels of women panchayat members and family type" is rejected. It means there is a highly significant association between performance levels of women panchayat members and family type.

Income

The calculated chi square value (0.13) is lower than the tabulated value giving a

null hypothesis. "There is no significant association between performance levels of women panchayat members and income" is accepted. It means there is no association between performance levels of women panchayat members and annual income. This may be because elected women panchayat members derive equal authority by virtue of their posts.

Mass media exposure

The calculated chi square value (9.13) is higher than the tabulated value at 1% level of significance thus another null hypothesis. "There is no association between performance levels of women panchayat members and mass media exposure" is rejected. It means there is a highly significant association between performance levels of women panchayat members and mass media exposure.

Social participation

The calculated chi square value (9.52) is higher than the tabulated value at 1% level of significance thus a null hypothesis. 'There is no association between performance levels of women panchayat members and social participation" is rejected. It means there is a highly significant association between performance levels of women panchayat members and social participation.

Urban contact

The calculated chi square value (7.45) is higher than the tabulated value giving a null hypothesis. "There is no association between performance levels of women panchayat members and urban contact" is rejected. It means there is a significant association between performance levels of women panchayat members and urban contact.

Conclusion

Age, education, family type, mass media exposure, social participation and urban

contact all have significant associations with the performance of women panchayat members. However, caste and income have no significant association with performance levels of women panchayat members.

References

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