

Factors Influencing Level of Knowledge of Women Representatives at functional Democracy in Allahabad District of Uttar Pradesh

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Abstract: The 73rd constitutional amendment act has made the provision of not less than 33% women reservation in the Panchayati Raj Institutions in rural areas. With a view to empowering women through active participation in political decision making process, knowledge is pre-requisite for effective participation, socio-economic activities. Accordingly to study the level of knowledge about Panchayati Raj Institution and the factors influencing the level of knowledge an investigation was carried out purposively selected Allahabad district of U.P. the investigation covering four blocks, 24 villages and 180 women representatives (60 pradhans and 120 women members) were selected purposively. The empirical data were collected through personal interview technique with the help of pre-structured interview scheduled. Thus, the collected data were processed, analysed and interpreted in the light of objectives by applying suitable statistical tools. The study inferred that majority of women pradhans were from medium level of socio-economic background whereas the women members were found to have little bit lesser socio-economic background and had little understanding about functioning of PRIs. The prominent predictors like age, education, income, mass media exposure were found to be influential over level of knowledge in both (Pradhan & Members) the cases. There is need to consider all of these variables while making the training strategy for them to be aware about organization and functioning of PRIs ensuring effective participation with developmental activities.

Keywords: Knowledge, Participation, Political decision making and factors in financing.

I. INTRODUCTION

The 73rd Amendment Act has made an effort to provide special power to women in all the three tiers of Panchayati Raj system. The empowerment is specially a political power, which require involvement and participation of women in the decision making process in the matter of their vital interest. It is in this background that the establishment of new PRIs by 73rd amendments (1993) assumed significance. The new provision incorporated in Article 243 of the constitution gives binding constitutional recognition to PRIs for the first time. The provision of one third reservation for women in PRI has enabled women to participate in grass root government decision making process. It might have enabled them to gain administrative and political training at local level to make them aware conscious and confident. The growing number of women in Panchayats indicates the emergence of new social groups at local level which is more conscious and articulate.

Knowledge is pre-requisite for any successful program as knowledge plays an important role in covert as well as over behavior of an individual. Once knowledge is acquired, it produces changes in the thinking process of an individual which would lead to further changes in the mental aptitude consequently, reflecting in decision making process. It could be said, therefore, that a complete knowledge is very essential in participation and decision making.

Keeping the facts stated above, the present investigation was undertaken in Allahabad district of U.P. with the specific objectives as under:

Objectives:

1. To ascertain the socio-economic profile of sampled women representatives.
2. To assess the level of knowledge of sampled women representatives about organizational dimensions of Panchayati Raj System.
3. To find out the influence of predictors over extent of knowledge.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS:

The investigation was carried out in Allahabad district of U.P. selected purposively. Descriptive research design was followed in carrying out the investigation. The multi-stage sampling technique was followed in selecting the sample. Out of 20 blocks in the district, 2 blocks from Gangapar and 2 blocks from Jamunapar region were selected purposively based on the maximum number of women representatives available therein. A list of village panchayats in each selected block having women pradhans was prepared. Out of these lists, 45 percent women pradhans were selected proportionally. Similarly, the list of village panchayat in each selected block was prepared having not less than 5 women members were available. Thus, a total 24 village panchayats were identified. Women members from each identified village panchayat were selected. Thus, the total sample size was 180 (60 pradhans and 120 women members) constituted the sample size for the study.

The primary data were collected through personal interview technique with the help of pre-tested interview schedule. The collected data were processed, analysed, interpreted and concluded. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used in the analysis of data.

1. Socio-economic profile of the respondents.
2. Level of knowledge of sampled women representatives about PRIs.
3. Factors influencing level of knowledge.

Table – 1 Distribution of respondents according to Socio-Economic profile

Sr. No	Variables	Categories	Women Pradhan N=60	Women Panchayat Members N=120	Total Women Representatives N=180
1	Age	Young(up to 35 years)	14 (23.34)	20 (16.67)	34 (18.88)
		Middle (36-50 years)	39 (65.00)	84 (70.00)	123 (68.34)
		Old (>50 years)	7 (11.66)	16 (13.33)	23 (12.78)
2	Education	Illiterate	3 (5.00)	15 (12.50)	18 (10.00)
		Up to Primary	12 (20.00)	51 (42.50)	63 (35.00)
		Up to High school	25 (41.66)	42 (35.00)	67 (37.23)
		Graduate	20 (33.34)	12 (10.00)	32 (17.77)
3	Caste	General class	11 (18.34)	15 (12.50)	26 (14.44)
		Backward Caste	33 (55.00)	60 (50.00)	93 (51.67)
		Scheduled Caste	16 (26.66)	45 (37.50)	61 (33.89)
4	Marital status	Married	57 (95.00)	105 (87.50)	162 (90.00)
		Widow	3 (5.00)	14 (11.67)	17 (9.45)
		Divorce	0	1 (0.83)	1 (0.55)
5	Family Type	Nuclear	39 (65.00)	48 (40.00)	87 (48.33)
		Joint	21 (35.00)	72 (60.00)	93 (51.67)
6	Family Size	Small (up to 4 members)	29 (48.33)	58 (48.34)	87 (48.33)
		Medium(5-8 members)	16 (26.67)	42 (35.00)	58 (32.22)
		Large (> 8 members)	15 (25.00)	20 (16.66)	35 (19.45)
7	Annual Income	Low(Up to Rs. 27000)	4 (6.66)	21 (17.50)	25 (13.89)
		Medium(27001-150000)	47 (78.34)	49 (40.83)	96 (53.34)
		High(above 150000)	9(15.00)	50(41.67)	59(32.77)
8.	Mass media exposure	Low (1-5)	10 (16.67)	59 (49.17)	69 (38.34)
		Medium (6-10)	34 (56.67)	47 (39.16)	81 (45.00)
		High (Above 10)	16 (26.67)	14 (11.67)	30 (16.67)

Socio-economic profile of women representative:

The data in table 1 shows that out of total women pradhans and members the highest percentage (65%, 70%) belonged to middle age group followed by young and old group respectively in both the categories. The results indicate that middle aged women were more active in local politics in both the cases. The table 1 revealed that overall the majority of respondents (68.34%) were from middle aged followed by young and old aged groups. This might be due to better understanding of the political process. It is evident that 41.66 per cent of women pradhans were educated up to high school. Whereas in case of members (42.50%) having education up to primary school level. Overall it was found 37.23 per cent respondents were educated up to High Education also plays a great role in participation of members in functioning of Panchayati Raj system. The table related to castes showed that majority of the respondents (51.67%) hailed from backward caste and 33.89 per cent were from scheduled castes. only 14.44 per cent respondents were from general class. However, in both the groups maximum percentage (55%and 50%) was observed in Backward caste. It was further found that population too played vital role in the prevailing political scenario in the Panchayati Raj system as majority(51.67%) belonged to backward class. As it is evident from the table 1 that majority percentage (95%and 87.50%)of pradhans and members were married respectively. Overwhelming majority of the sampled women representatives (90.00%)were married. The majority of the married proportion (90.0%) took active role in the Panchayati Raj

which is attributed due to better understanding of the women of Panchayati Raj institutions. It was apparent from the table that the majority (65%) of the women pradhans belonged to the nuclear family whereas women members (60%) were from joint family. Results showed that majority of the women representatives (51.67%) hailed from joint family while 48.33% of them were from nuclear family. It means still joint family is surviving. The figures given in the table showed that around 50 per cent of the respondents (48.33%) had small family size. On the other hand, 32.22% had medium family size and 19.45% had large family size. The results indicated that more women from small size families took active participation in Panchayat activities. Likewise the effect of medium family in some group played vital role in the performance of PRIs. The clear role is inducing effect. Figures in the Table revealed that majority of women pradhans (56.67%) were found to have had medium level of mass-media exposure, whereas around fifty percentage of women members were found in low level of mass media exposure. Only 16.67 per cent respondents were having high mass media exposure. It also reflects the level of awareness of the respondents which has direct bearing in decision making participation.

Distribution of respondents according to overall level of knowledge about PRI.

Table – 2 Overall Level of Knowledge of Respondents about Structural and Functional Aspects of Panchayati Raj Institution

Overall Level of Knowledge	Women Pradhans		Women Panchayat Member		X ²
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
Low (1-6)	20	33.34	50	41.67	10.90
Medium (7-12)	21	35.00	37	30.83	
High (13 and above)	19	31.66	33	27.50	
Total	60	100.00	120	100.00	

*Denotes 1% significance level at 2d.f.

It is evident from the above table that 35 per cent women pradhans had medium level of knowledge followed by 33.34 per cent low and 31.66 per cent had high level of knowledge respectively whereas in case of women panchayat members 41.67 per cent were found to have had low level of knowledge followed by 30.83 per cent medium and 27.50 per cent had high level of knowledge about panchyati raj institutions. Thus it was concluded that 31.67 per cent of women pradhan posses high level of knowledge as compare to women members (27.50%). The reason may be that the knowledge have not been well understood by the women members as compare to pradhans, it may be due to ignorance about some aspects of PRIs. The calculated value of X² test was found to be 10.90 which was greater than the Table value of X² (9.21) at 1% level of significance for 2d.f. Hence, the null hypothesis (Ho) was rejected and alternate hypothesis was accepted. It can therefore be, concluded that Pradhans were found to have had better knowledge than that of women members, as it was to be expected. It may be attributed to their position and awakening.

Socio-Economic Factors and Knowledge

It is well known fact that an individual's behaviour depend upon his/her socio-economic background. Past researches have shown that those who know new things have well defined socio-economic characteristics so it was thought appropriate to include some socio-economic variables in the present study.

Table – 3 Correlations between Selected Independent Variables and Knowledge of Sampled Women Representatives

S. No.	Independent Variable	Correlation Coefficient 'r' value (Women Pradhan)	Correlation Coefficient 'r' value (Women Panchayat Member)
1.	Age	0.321**	0.463**
2	Education	0.560**	0.408**
3	Caste	-0.301**	-0.92**
4	Marital status	-0.490**	-0.285**
5	Family Type	0.203**	0.653**
6	Family Size	-0.670**	-0.187**
7	Annual Income	0.710**	0.710**
8	Mass Media Exposure	0.220**	0.698**

** Denotes one percent significance level.

*Denotes five percent significance level.

The influence of some selected predictors on the extent of knowledge about PRIs of the respondents was worked out. The eight factors studied, out of these, five factors viz. age, education, family type, annual income, and mass media exposure were found to be influential over level of knowledge in the case of women pradhan whereas age, education, family type, annual income, occupation, land holding and mass media exposure were also found to be influential over level of knowledge of women panchayat members. However, caste, marital status, family type did not influence the knowledge in both the cases. It is important to note that steps

which attempt to improve the knowledge about PRIs these variables should be considered by policy makers, trainers and administrators. Interpersonal trust, leadership are also needed to encourage them.

III. CONCLUSION

It is concluded that the sampled women pradhans were well of about various structural and functional aspects of PRIs as compared to women members. Consequentially, overall women pradhans have had better knowledge than that of women panchayat members. Predictors like age, education, annual income, land holding and mass media exposure were found to have direct bearing on the level of knowledge. However institutional changes are needed in civil society, the media, political parties, legislature and judicial system with a view to support women's issues and to translate from policy issue to practice.

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