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Socio-Economic characteristics on performance of panchayat leaders of Chhattisgarh

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Abstract

As defined by Roling (1988) extension is purposeful communication intervention deployed by an institution to induce change in voluntary behaviours with a presumed public or collective utility. The common man has much faith in the local leaders. Research in community power structure studies conducted by sociologists in recent years indicate that individuals who hold influence and power do exist in most communities, and operate as a primary friendship clique, and that power is concentrated in the hands of a few persons. The 73rd Amendment provides for an elaborate system of establishing panchayats as units of self-government. For the first time in the constitutional history of India, the constitution of panchayat, the duration of their term, their membership, the constitution of Finance Commission to review their financial position is detailed. A study was conducted in the purposively selected Rajnandgaon district of Chhattisgarh to ascertain the attitude of panchayat leaders towards the Panchayati Raj Institutions. Thus in all (9 + 54 + 200) 263 panchayat leaders were considered as respondents for the study. An interview schedule was used as a tool for collecting primary data from the respondent panchayat leaders and all the 263 respondents were personally interviewed for collecting the raw information. A considerable majority of the gram panchayat leaders (92.50%) were dependent on agriculture and other occupations for their livelihood while a significant majority of the janpad and jila panchayat leaders (96.83%) practised farming as their principal occupation along with other subsidiary occupations. The panchayat leaders can play an active role in preventing peasant migration and offer them gainful employment in their native places by fully utilising the centrally sponsored schemes like MGNREGA and other such developmental and employment generation programmes.

Keywords: Performance, Socio-Economic Characteristics and Panchayat Leaders of Chhattisgarh.

Introduction

A basic function of extension is to assist the transfer of agricultural technology by ensuring that an adequate amount of high quality knowledge about it is present in the farming community for sustained agricultural development. As defined by Roling (1988) extension is purposeful communication intervention deployed by an institution to induce change in voluntary behaviours with a presumed public or collective utility. It is difficult for any country to provide enough number of extension workers to reach each and every family for its social welfare programme. It is rather more difficult for the developing countries where the resources are scarce. This problem can be solved to some extent through the use of local leaders. A local leader who has adopted improved practices extends the same to others. The common man has much faith in the local leaders. Research in community power structure studies conducted by sociologists in recent years indicate that individuals who hold influence and power do exist in most communities, and operate as a primary friendship clique, and that power is concentrated in the hands of a few persons. Studies of the personal characteristics of power holders indicate that they possess high social status and are well known and respected in their communities. The concept of leadership has undergone considerable change as research in this area of study progressed. Leadership was considered at one time to be a set of traits handed down chiefly through heredity from one person to another. Thus, positions of leadership were restricted to individuals belonging to certain strata of society commonly deemed worthy and suitable as leaders – leadership usually being determined by birth in the right family. It was discovered, however, as social and economic barriers disappeared, that leaders began to emerge from hitherto “restricted” strata of society and that leadership was not the monopoly of a few favoured familial groups or social strata. The type of political leadership and individuals in power influences the rate and direction of change. The assessment of those who wield power in respect of the existing social situation, technological and non technological changes and opportunities for such development and change, is of considerably more significance than the assessment of those who do not have power in society. In some societies the political

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leadership controls the economy; significant influence is exercised by them in the direction and rate in which changes take place in society. Between 1959 and 1962, state government in all parts of the country introduced Panchayat Raj legislation. Over the years, however, the functioning of Panchayati Raj was not up to expectations, for various reasons. State governments, whose duty it was, did not often hold local body elections on time, sometimes for many years at a time; if they feared an unfavourable result. Panchayats did not have enough resources to be innovative and independent local bigwigs dominated panchayats and cornered benefits. A number of committees made extensive studies and gave valuable suggestions – the Ashok Mehta Committee, 1978, the G.V.K. Rao Committee, 1985, and the L.M. Singhvi Committee, 1986. The 73rd Amendment provides for an elaborate system of establishing panchayats as units of self-government. For the first time in the constitutional history of India, the constitution of panchayat, the duration of their term, their membership, the constitution of Finance Commission to review their financial position is detailed. It also adds a new schedule to the Constitution the Eleventh Schedule, which lists 29 subjects, which are to be handled by the panchayats. With this Amendment, Panchayati Raj institutions are as much a part of the structure of constitutional government in India as the Lok Sabha. In general panchayats should be able to facilitate member work effectiveness by influencing strategy choices more for complex jobs than for simple, straight forward or routine ones. The reason is that on simple jobs, strategy choices usually cannot make much of a difference in effectiveness; instead, how well one does is determined almost entirely by how hard one works. On jobs characterised by high variety and autonomy, on the other hand, the work strategy used by the individual usually is of considerable importance in determining work effectiveness. In the light of the above facts a study was framed with the following objectives:-

1. To analyse the socio-economic characteristics of the panchayat leaders.
2. To evaluate the performance of panchayat leaders.

Materials & Methods

Genuine decentralisation through adequate devolution of powers and resources to Panchayati Raj Institutions is an essential pre-requisite, with appropriate capacity building efforts to bring about empowerment of people, particularly the disadvantaged sections such as SC/ST, landless and marginal farmers and women. Under Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution which contains 29 items, the first item - agriculture, including agricultural extension is of specific relevance (apart from the other associated items on the list). A study was conducted in the purposively selected Rajnandgaon district of Chhattisgarh to ascertain the attitude of panchayat leaders towards the Panchayati Raj Institutions. Out of total 21 members of the Jila Panchayat including the president, 9 members who presided over the different standing committees were purposively selected as respondents from the first tier panchayat. Similarly out of the total 182 members of the 9 janpad panchayats, 6 members from each janpad ($9 \times 6 = 54$) presiding over the standing committees were purposively selected as respondents from second tier panchayats. In all there are 696 gram panchayats in 9 blocks/janpads of Rajnandgaon district. Approximately seven per cent gram panchayats were randomly selected from each janpad and four members presiding over the standing committees from each selected gram panchayat ($50 \times 4 = 200$) were purposively chosen as respondents from the third tier panchayats. Thus in all ($9 + 54 + 200$) 263 panchayat leaders were considered as respondents for the study. An interview schedule was used as a tool for collecting primary data from the respondent panchayat leaders and all the 263 respondents were personally interviewed for collecting the raw information.

Results & Discussion

Table 1: Distribution of panchayat leaders according to their occupation

S. No.	Occupation	Gram Panchayat Leaders (n ₁ =200)		Janpad & Jila Panchayat Leaders (n ₂ =63)	
		Frequency	Per cent	Frequency	Per cent
1	Labour only	11	5.50	0	0.00
2	Farming only	122	61.00	38	60.32
3	Service only	1	0.50	0	0.00
4	Own business	3	1.50	2	3.17
5	Labour + farming	29	14.50	4	6.35
6	Service + farming	1	0.50	2	3.17
7	Business + farming	33	16.50	17	26.99
	Total	200	100.00	63	100.00

The data pertaining to occupation of panchayat leaders is presented in Table 1. Majority of the panchayat leaders (61.00%) had farming only as their principal occupation followed by 16.50 and 14.50 per cent of them who had business + farming and labour + farming respectively as their occupations. A small number of gram panchayat leaders (5.50%) were labourers, 1.50 per cent of them had their own business and 0.50 per cent each were in service or professed service + farming as their occupation respectively. Similarly, majority of the janpad and jila panchayat leaders (60.32%) practised farming only as their main occupation whereas 26.99 per cent of them had business + farming as their occupation followed by 6.35, 3.17 and 3.17 per cent of them had labour + farming, service + farming and own

business respectively as their occupations. None of the janpad and jila panchayat leaders were found to have service only and labour only as their main occupations.

A conclusion may be drawn from the above results that about three fifth of the gram panchayat and janpad and jila panchayat leaders each had farming as their main occupation. One of the important characteristics of rural population is that they are predominantly dependent on agriculture as their source of living which is also reflected in the sample drawn for the present study.

The above findings are in line with the findings of Rahudkar (1960), Patil (1963), Salunkhe (1972), Khare (1995), Choudhary (1998), Shrivastava (2003) and Rathi (2004).

Table 2: Distribution of panchayat leaders according to their annual income

S. No.	Annual Income	Gram Panchayat Leaders (n ₁ =200)		Janpad & Jila Panchayat Leaders (n ₂ =63)	
		Frequency	Per cent	Frequency	Per cent
1	Low income group (up to Rs. 25000)	102	51.00	5	7.94
2	Middle income group (Rs. 25001 to Rs. 100000)	74	37.00	34	53.97
3	High income group (above Rs. 100000)	24	12.00	24	38.09
	Total	200	100.00	63	100.00
		Mean	56.80	Mean	123.57
		S.D	95.91	S.D	92.26

Annual income of the respondents shown in table 2 it is observed that majority of the gram panchayat leaders (51.00%) belonged to low income group with annual income of up to Rs. 25000/- followed by 37.00 per cent of the gram panchayat leaders who were from middle income group with annual income ranging from Rs. 25001/- to Rs. 100000/- and the remaining 12.00 per cent gram panchayat leaders belonged to high income group with their annual income being above Rs. 100000/-.

On the other hand majority of the janpad and jila panchayat leaders (53.97%) were from middle income group (Rs. 25000/- to Rs. 100000/-) followed by 38.09 and 7.94 per cent of them who belonged to high income group (above Rs. 100000/-) and low income group (up to Rs. 25000/-) respectively.

It is thus conclusively indicated that majority of the gram panchayat leaders belonged to low income group whereas majority of the janpad and jila panchayat leaders belonged to middle income group.

With respect to annual income it can be said that janpad and jila panchayat leaders were in better position in comparison to the village panchayat leaders which is also indicated from their average annual income. In the case of gram panchayat leaders the average annual income was Rs. 56800/- much below that of Rs. 123570/- the average annual income earned

by janpad and jila panchayat leaders.

The higher values of standard deviation of annual income in both the case of gram panchayat and jila and janpad panchayat leaders indicates that their annual incomes were widely dispersed from mean i.e. the difference between maximum annual income and minimum annual income from average annual income is very large.

The probable reason for annual incomes of panchayat leaders being on the upper side may be that, the leaders are generally elected from upper socio-economic strata of the society and also that contesting election even at panchayat levels entails considerable expenses which may be beyond the capacity of an ordinary rural person.

The findings of Patil (1970) and Choudhary (1998) support the above findings.

Table 3. gives the distribution of panchayat leaders according to their land holding. It is observed that maximum number (26.50%) of gram panchayat leaders were big farmers with land holdings of above four hectare each, closely followed by 24 per cent each of medium and marginal farmers with 2.01 to 4.0 ha. and up to 1.0 ha. land holdings respectively. 20.00 per cent of the gram panchayat leaders were small farmers with 1.01 to 2.0 ha. land holding whereas only 5.50 per cent of them were landless.

Table 3: Distribution of panchayat leaders according to their size of land holding

S. No.	Size of land holding	Gram Panchayat Leaders (n ₁ =200)		Janpad & Jila Panchayat Leaders (n ₂ =63)	
		Frequency	Per cent	Frequency	Per cent
1	Landless	11	5.50	1	1.59
2	Marginal (up to 1.0 ha.)	48	24.00	3	4.76
3	Small (up to 1.01 to 2.0 ha.)	40	20.00	6	9.52
4	Medium (2.01 to 4.0 ha.)	48	24.00	12	19.05
5	Big (above 4.0 ha.)	53	26.50	41	65.08
	Total	200	100.00	63	100.00
		Mean	8.10	Mean	17.42
		S.D	13.14	S.D	17.41

On the other hand a majority of janpad and jila panchayat leaders (65.08%) were big farmers with above 4.0 hectares of land, followed by 19.05 per cent of them who had medium sized land holding (2.01 to 4.0 ha.), 9.52 per cent had small sized land holding (1.01 to 2.0 ha.) while 4.76 per cent of them were marginal farmers with up to 1.0 ha. land holding and only 1.59 per cent of them were landless.

It can thus be conclusively stated that majority of the janpad and jila panchayat leaders had big sized land holding while a slightly above one fourth gram panchayat leaders had big size land holding.

The proposition that leaders in general belong to the upper socio economic strata of the society also holds true when the size of land holding of panchayat leaders is analysed. Land holding is an important criteria which has contributed as a critical parameter in governing rural leadership. The opinion

leaders in villages traditionally had large size of land holdings and were early adopters of agricultural innovations. It is these leaders who played a key role in dissemination of farm information.

This finding is in concurrence with the findings of Salunkhe (1972), Kamble (1975) and Khare (1995).

The material possession of panchayat leaders is depicted in table 4. It can be seen that majority of the gram panchayat leaders (85.00%) had medium material possession followed by 9.00 per cent and 6.00 per cent of them who had high and low material possession respectively. Whereas majority of the janpad and jila panchayat leaders (77.78%) had medium material possession followed by 14.29 per cent of them who had high material possession and 7.93 per cent of them had low material possession.

Table 4: Distribution of panchayat leaders according to their material possession

S. No.	Material possession	Gram Panchayat Leaders (n ₁ =200)		Janpad & Jila Panchayat Leaders (n ₂ =63)	
		Frequency	Per cent	Frequency	Per cent
1	Low material possession	12	6.00	5	7.93
2	Medium material possession	170	85.00	49	77.78
3	High material possession	18	9.00	9	14.29
	Total	200	100.00	63	100.00
		Mean	44.18	Mean	85.33
		S.D	49.75	S.D	70.68

It can be concluded that majority of the gram panchayat as well as janpad and jila panchayat leaders have medium material possession.

Material possession is an important component of the socio-economic status scale. It is assessed by taking into account the physical assets, herd size, animal driven agricultural implements, mechanical implements and type of house possessed by an individual and working out a combined score. It can be inferred from the above data that material possession

of the janpad and jila panchayat leaders is comparatively higher than that of gram panchayat leaders.

Table 5 shows the distribution of panchayat leaders according to their socio economic status. It is observed that a significant majority of gram panchayat leaders (91.00%) had medium socio economic status followed by 9.00 per cent of them who had high socio-economic status, while none of the gram panchayat leaders were found to belong to low socio economic status group.

Table 5: Distribution of panchayat leaders according to their socio economic status

S. No.	Socio economic status	Gram Panchayat Leaders (n ₁ =200)		Janpad & Jila Panchayat Leaders (n ₂ =63)	
		Frequency	Per cent	Frequency	Per cent
1	Low socio economic status	0	0.00	3	4.76
2	Medium socio economic status	182	91.00	51	80.95
3	High socio economic status	18	9.00	9	14.29
	Total	200	100.00	63	100.00
		Mean	68.00	Mean	121.33
		S.D	62.00	S.D	86.71

On the other hand, majority of the janpad and jila panchayat leaders (80.95%) were from medium socio economic status followed by 14.29 and 4.76 per cent of them who had high and low socio-economic status respectively.

A conclusion may therefore be drawn that majority of the gram panchayat as well as janpad and jila panchayat leaders belonged to medium socio economic status. The mean scores of socio economic status of gram panchayat leaders was 68 and that of janpad and jila panchayat leaders was 121.33. It can be inferred that janpad and jila panchayat leaders had higher socio economic status as compared to gram panchayat leaders.

Janpad and jila panchayat leaders represents a larger constituency as compared to gram panchayat leaders. Comparatively more election expenditure is incurred by janpad and jila panchayat leaders owing to the wider area they represent and this could have been possible only if they belonged to upper socio economic status category. In rural society people from higher socio economic status are easily

recognised, command respect and have their influence on the people. This gives them better chance of getting elected in comparison to people of low socio economic status.

The findings discussed the above are by and large supported by the findings of Thombre (1976), Walunj (1977), Sinha *et al* (1989), Sundarambal (1990), Mondal and Ray (1996), Garje (1997), Shrivastava (1999), Rathi (2004) and Thakur (2006).

Table 6 shows the distribution of panchayat leaders according to their role performance. The ^{data} reveals that the majority of the gram panchayat leaders had medium role performance, followed by 23.00 and 21.50 per cent of them who had high and low role performance respectively.

Whereas, a significant majority of the janpad and jila panchayat leaders (58.73%) had medium role performance, 30.16 per cent of them had high role performance while 11.11 per cent of the janpad and jila panchayat leaders belonged to low role performance category.

Table 6: Distribution of panchayat leaders according to their role performance

S. No.	Role performance	Gram Panchayat Leaders (n ₁ =200)		Janpad & Jila Panchayat Leaders (n ₂ =63)	
		Frequency	Per cent	Frequency	Per cent
1	Low role performance	43	21.50	7	11.11
2	Medium role performance	111	55.50	37	58.73
3	High role performance	46	23.00	19	30.16
	Total	200	100.00	63	100.00
		Mean	154.38	Mean	182.35
		S.D	36.04	S.D	26.91

It can be conclusively said that majority of both the gram panchayat leaders and janpad and jila panchayat leaders had medium role performance as regards rural development and other panchayat activities.

This finding finds support from the findings of Thombre (1990), Singh (1999), Shrivastava (1999), Kalakannawar and Badigar (2000), Shrivastava (2003), Rathi (2004), Thakur (2006) and Pachouri (2007).

Table 7: Distribution of panchayat leaders according to the mean and coefficient of variance of their role performance

S. No.	Panchayat leaders	No. of respondents	Mean	CV	'Z' value
1	Gram panchayat leaders	200	154.38	23.35	6.86
2	Janpad and jila panchayat leaders	63	182.35	14.76	
	Overall Mean		168.37		

The data in table 7 indicated that the overall mean score of role performance of panchayat leaders was 168.37. The mean scores of role performance of gram panchayat and janpad and jila panchayat leaders were 154.38 and 182.35 respectively.

“Z” test was applied to know that if there is any significant difference in the mean role performance scores of gram panchayat and janpad and jila panchayat leaders. The calculated Z value was found to be 6.86 which was greater than the table value 2.58 at 0.01 level of probability. Therefore the calculated Z value was highly significant and it can be concluded that there is highly significant difference in the role performance of gram panchayat and janpad and jila panchayat leaders. In other words it can be conclusively stated that janpad and jila panchayat leaders had significantly better role performance than the gram panchayat leaders in reference to rural development and other panchayat activities.

Conclusion

A considerable majority of the gram panchayat leaders (92.50%) were dependent on agriculture and other occupations for their livelihood while a significant majority of the janpad and jila panchayat leaders (96.83%) practised farming as their principal occupation along with other subsidiary occupations.

Just above half of the gram panchayat leaders (51.00%) belonged to low income group with annual income of up to Rs. 25000 and a significant majority of the janpad and jila panchayat leaders (92.06%) had annual income of above Rs. 25000. The average annual income of gram panchayat leaders was Rs. 56800 while that of janpad and jila panchayat leaders was Rs. 123570.

Around one fourth of the gram panchayat leaders (26.50%) were big farmers with above 4.0 ha. of land whereas around two third of the janpad and jila panchayat leaders (65.08%) were big farmers with above 4.0 ha. of land. The average size of land holding of gram panchayat leaders was 3.28 ha. while that of janpad and jila panchayat leaders was 7.05 ha.

A considerable majority of both the gram panchayat leaders (85.00%) as well as the janpad and jila panchayat leaders (77.78%) had medium material possession.

Slightly above ninety per cent (91.00%) of the gram panchayat leaders and about four fifth of the janpad and jila panchayat leaders (80.95%) had medium socio economic status.

More than half of the gram panchayat leaders (55.50%) and slightly below three fifth of the janpad and jila panchayat leaders (58.73%) had medium overall role performance. The mean performance score of janpad and jila panchayat leaders (182.35) was significantly higher than that of gram panchayat leaders (154.38) which was proved by applying Z-test.

Though farming still remains the principal occupation of the rural people which is also reflected in the results of the study, small land holdings prevents them from optimum utilisation of scarce resources thereby giving lower returns. This has resulted in continuous migration of rural people specially from Chhattisgarh to far off towns and cities in search of greener pastures and further getting themselves entrapped in the vicious cycle of poverty. These migratory labourers are underpaid and exploited by their employers or middlemen and

forced to work as bonded labourers. The panchayat leaders can play an active role in preventing peasant migration and offer them gainful employment in their native places by fully utilising the centrally sponsored schemes like MGNREGA and other such developmental and employment generation programmes.

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