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Research Article

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN AND MEN PARTICIPANTS IN
PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ROHTAK
DISTRICT, HARYANA

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Abstract

The present study was conducted on the sample of 46 women and 75 men respondents from 107 members of five Panchayat Samiti as well as 14 members of Zila Parishad of the upper two tiers of Panchayati Raj institutions (PRI) of Rohtak district, Haryana. For this, stratified sampling technique was adopted for selecting the sample from different Panchayat Samiti as well as Zila Parishad. Interview Schedule was used to collect primary data from all the respondents. Analysis revealed that the socio-economic status of the women were insignificant as compared to the men participants.

Keywords: Panchayati Raj Institutions; Panchayat Samiti; Zila Parishad; Respondents; Socio-economic

Introduction

Panchayats have been the backbone of the Indian villages since the beginning of recorded history, so, Panchayati Raj is not a new phenomenon in the country. Its illustration in history goes back to more than a 1000 years. It has its roots in Ancient Indian Institutions when the villages were little republics governed by their Panchayats. These Panchayats were responsible for overall judicial, legislative, and revenue work for the area. In the midst of conquest and the rise and fall of empires, the village Panchayat continued to survive and gave continuity to the Indian tradition (Singh, 2000). It was with the coming of Moguls that these Panchayats went through a phase of downfall. The British rule following the Moguls rule further centralized the power. It was during their reign that the administrative and legal powers of these institutions were taken away, resulting in unrest among the masses. Probably this and the shock of the mutiny of 1857 led the British to form a Royal Commission on decentralization. The report recommended that the judicial and development functions be again rested in the Panchayats (Mudgal and Mudgal, 2000). The acceptance of Montague–Chelmsford reforms resulted in a stream of legislation relating to village Panchayats practically all over the country (Singh, 2000). Meanwhile, Gandhi mooted the idea of Gram Swaraj (self-sufficient and self-governed villages), with a village at the center of every activity. He had hoped that his philosophy of Panchayati Raj could be the framework of the political order of free India. However, Nehru did not see any special virtue in

villages. Instead, he underlined the advantages of science and technology and appreciated urban culture. Moreover, Dr. Ambedkar roundly condemned the village as a sink of localism and den of ignorance, narrow mindedness, and communalism. As a result, Panchayat could find a place only in the Directive Principles of State Policy in the form of Article 40. After the Independence, at the initiative of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, most states adopted the Panchayati Raj Acts in their respective states (Singh, 2000). The government constituted the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1952), which suggested a three-tier Panchayati Raj system at the village, block, and district level. The first Panchayat to be instituted as per this recommendation was in district Nagaur in Rajasthan on October 2, 1959. However, the Panchayati Raj institutions (PRIs) still did not function properly due to lack of trained personnel and dominance of wealth and high-caste people. The Ashok Mehta Committee (1978) probed dilapidated economic conditions of these Panchayats and concluded that government interference must be removed from these institutions (Mudgal and Mudgal, 2000). The G.V.K. Rao Committee appointed by the Planning Commission in 1986 strongly recommended for the revival of the PRIs all over the country, highlighting the need to transfer the powers of the state to democratic bodies at the local level. The L.M. Singhvi Committee of 1986 recommended that to be effective, the PRI should be constitutionally recognized, protected, and presented by the inclusion of a new chapter in the constitution. It also suggested a constitutional provision to ensure regular, free, and fair elections for the

PRI (Singh, 2000). Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi made repeated efforts in this direction. However, it was the Narsimha Rao's government that succeeded in getting the 73rd Constitutional Amendment passed in April 1993 (Mudgal and Mudgal, 2000).

After Independence, despite having a constitution, which embodies lofty, ideals like equity and equality, social justice could not be achieved so far. Even when India had a woman Prime Minister for quite a number of years, the situation of women at large did not change for the better and women's participation in politics remained quite insignificant in India (Kaul and Sahni, 2009).

However the women constitute more or less than half of the population of any country. But their involvement in politics is insignificant compared to men. Many psychological, social and physical factors hold women back from active political involvement. This is true as far as the state and national level politics is concerned. A democratic country cannot progress if the energies of its half population are concerned in the kitchen only. After attaining independence Indian constitution ensured gender equality through various provisions and regulations. It was presumed that these rights would automatically get translated into political development of the women in the country. The issue of women's participation in politics cannot be viewed in isolation from the general position of women in a society, but despite their vast strength, women occupy a marginalized position in the political system (Nandal, 2013).

The demand for reservation for women in adequate proportion at the local government level was felt strongly due to the fact that rural women are powerless and unequipped because of the traditions and conservatism of rural areas, the patriarchal nature of the family, lack of education, and access to information and media, poor exposure to the outside world, etc. It was also felt that to make it more meaningful, a guarantee is needed for women's emergence as the Sarpanch (head) of the village. The National Perspective Plan for women, 1988, recommended for 30 percent reservation for women in the three-tier system of PRIs. It also recommended that 30 percent of the executive head positions from the village to the district level should be reserved for women (Kaushik, 1993). However, the year 1993 achieved a milestone with the acceptance of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment. The Article 243 (3) of this Act reads as follows: Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat shall be reserved for women and the seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat. And Clause (4) of the Act has the following provision: "... not less than one-third of the

total number of offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level shall be reserved for women" (Mathew, 2000; Nagpal and Ritesh, 2013). This provision enabled more than hundred thousand women participate in PRIs.

Objectives of the study

The present study was planned to evaluate the comparative study of the socio-economic status of women and men participants from upper two tiers (Panchayat Samiti as well as Zila Parishad) of the Panchayati Raj institutions (PRI) of Rohtak district, Haryana.

Methodology

The study was conducted by employing questionnaire, interview, and observation methods in the month of June, 2010. For this, the respondents were selected from upper two tiers (Panchayat Samiti as well as Zila Parishad) of the PRIs of Rohtak district, Haryana. The data were collected by the investigator from the field personally. Simple statistical tools were used while tabulation and analyze the data. Secondary data were collected from various government records and other sources.

An interview schedule was framed to collect the primary data from all the 107 members of five Panchayat Samiti as well as 14 members of Zila Parishad of the PRI of Rohtak district. To understand the socio-economic status of respondents we would analysis the age, education, caste, number of family members, monthly income and agricultural land of the respondents.

Results and Discussion

Socio-economic conditions are an important indicator to measure the development level of any community. It is an economic and social environment includes age, education, occupation, income, religion, sex, and residence. Research in the United States and elsewhere shows that most of these variables correlate to some degree with political participation. When analyzing socio-economic conditions, the household income, earner's education, and occupation are examined, as well as combined income, versus with an individual, when their own attributes are assessed. The socio-economic condition measurement is used to predict health, spending habits and other factors related to a person's quality of life, including a person's political participation. Statistics tend to show that higher socio-economic status is positively correlated with more active political participation. In other words, higher a person's education, occupational status, and income levels, the more likely they are involved in political participation. For this, a comparative study of the socio-economic status of women and men participants in the Panchayati Raj institutions of Rohtak district, Haryana, studied and data is shown in Table 1.

Table-1: Age wise classification of Respondents

Age Group	Women (46)		Men (75)	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
21-30	12	26.09	14	18.67
31-40	22	47.83	42	56.00
41-50	07	15.21	13	17.33
51-60	04	08.70	05	06.67
60- Above	01	02.17	01	01.33
Total	46	100.00	75	100.00

(Sources: Computed from primary data)

Table-2: Educational Qualification of the Respondents

Educational Qualification	Women (46)		Men (75)	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
Illiterate	08	17.40	00	00.00
Literate	13	28.20	16	21.33
Educated	21	45.70	41	54.67
Higher educated	04	8.70	18	24.0
Total	46	100.00	75	100.00

(Sources: Computed from primary data)

Table-3: Number of family members of the Respondents

Number of family members	Women (46)		Men (75)	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
1-3	02	04.34	02	02.67
4-6	32	69.58	50	66.67
7-9	09	19.56	11	14.66
10-Above	03	06.52	12	16.00
Total	46	100.00	75	100.00

(Sources: Computed from primary data)

Table-4: Caste wise Classification of Respondents

Caste	Women (46)		Men (75)	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
Scheduled Caste	13	28.26	13	17.33
Backward Caste	05	10.87	12	16.00
General	28	60.87	50	67.66
Total	46	100.00	75	100.00

(Sources: Computed from primary data)

Table 1 showed that more than 70% of respondents, including both women and men are young while less than 10% are aged. The age group with the maximum percentage of both the respondents is 31-40 women with (47.83%) and men (56.00%) while the minimum respondents belong to the age group of 60 and above with 02.17% women and 1.33% men. From the above results there is no significant difference was observed among women and men respondents in the age groups.

Education is not the fruit of contemplation, but also the instrument of socio-economic developments and political maturity of a society. It can be seen that a larger number of

respondents among both women and men are educated with 45.7% women and 54.67% men. However, 17.4% women respondents are illiterate as compared with 00% men respondents. Also, 8.7% women are higher educated as compared to 24.0% men respondents as shown in Table 2. Numbers of family members (family size) are important to understand the type of family. Table 3 shows that maximum respondents, including both women by 69.58% and men 66.67% have 4-6 family members. However, the minimum percentage of family members (6.52%) of 10 and above of the women respondents as compared to men (14.66%) of 7-9 family members.

Table-5: Monthly income of the Respondents

Income (Rs.)	Women (46)		Men (75)	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
001-2000	31	67.40	13	17.33
2001-4000	08	17.39	15	20.00
4001-6000	03	06.52	16	21.33
6001-8000	03	06.52	12	16.00
8001-10000	01	02.17	08	10.67
10001-Above	00	00.00	11	14.67
Total	46	100.00	75	100.00

(Sources: Computed from primary data)

Table 6: Agriculture land of the Respondents

Agriculture land (Acre)	Women (46)		Men (75)	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
Nil	19	41.31	23	30.67
1-3	12	26.08	24	32.00
4-6	08	17.39	19	25.33
7-9	03	06.52	05	06.67
10-Above	04	08.70	04	05.33
Total	46	100.00	75	100.00

(Sources: Computed from primary data)

Table 4 shows that the women respondents with 28.26% and men 17.33% belongs to a Scheduled Caste category. However, 10.87% women respondents belong to backward category as compared to 16% men respondents. General category represented by 60.87% women and 67.87% men respectively. The above data indicate that women belong to a Scheduled Caste category and men belong to General category emerges as dominant respondents than other categories.

Table 5 shows the maximum women respondents with 67.4% have a monthly income up to 2000 while maximum of men 21.33% have 4001-6000. However, women with 00% monthly income at Rs. 10001 and above as compared to men with 14.67%.

Data in the Table 6 shows the respondents, including both women (41.31%) and men (30.67%) are without agricultural land. However, women respondents with 8.7% as compared to men 5.33% have 10 and above acres of agricultural land.

Conclusion

The above study deals with the comparative study of the socio-economic status of the 107 members of the five Panchayat Samiti as well as 14 members of the Zila Parishad of the PRI of Rohtak district includes the 46 women and 75 men. The resulting analysis revealed that the socio-economic status of the women were less significant as compared to the men respondents.

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