

ROLE PERCEPTION OF ELECTED WOMEN SARPANCHES UNDER PANCHAYATI RAJ SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted in purposively selected two non-tribal talukas viz; Himmatnagar and Idar and one tribal taluka viz; Bhiloda having highest number of women sarpanches in Sabarkantha district. The sample of study was 80 women sarpanches. The findings indicated that majority of women sarpanches had medium overall role perception of leadership roles, while most of the women sarpanches had medium to high level of role wise perception of different leadership roles.

INTRODUCTION

The women are active participants in day to day family life and economic activities of family. If they are left out in the development efforts, the chariot of the social and economic process gets hampered. With this in view, the first major attempt was the inclusion of the right to equality in various articles of the constitution of India. But, this was poorly enacted. However, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, which came into force in April 1993, made a new era in the federal democratic set up of the country by providing constitutional status to the Panchayati Raj Institutions. This Amendment to the constitution has distinctly broken new grounds and laid the foundation for establishing a strong and vibrant Panchayati Raj Institution. An important aspect of the Act is the political empowerment of women by providing them one-third reservation of seats at all levels.

METHODOLOGY

Out of 26 district of Gujarat state, Sabarkantha district was selected purposively. The district is composed of 13 talukas having 709 Gram Panchayats, out of which, 244 Gram Panchayats

are headed by women sarpanches. Two non-tribal talukas viz, Himmatnagar and Idar and one tribal taluka viz; Bhiloda having highest number of women sarpanches were selected purposively. There were 86 Gram Panchayats headed by elected women sarpanches in these selected talukas, however 6 women sarpanches were dropped from the study as they were reluctant to reply or had resigned as sarpanches. Hence, 80 women sarpanches formed the sample of study. Selected women sarpanches were interviewed personally with the help of pre-tested interview schedule. Data were subjected to statistical analysis.

FINDINGS

1 Women sarpanches' overall role perception

The roles of women sarpanches selected for this study were: planner, executor, communicator, decision maker, motivator, group organizer, leader and initiator.

Number and percentage of women sarpanches having low, medium and high level of overall role perception have been given in Table 1.

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Table 1: Distribution of women sarpanches according to their role perception

n = 80

Sr. No.	Level of perception	Frequency	Per cent
1	Low	13	16.25
2	Medium	51	63.75
3	High	16	20.00

X = 172.163

S. D. = 16.107

The results in Table 1 reveal that overall 63.75 per cent of the women sarpanches had medium level of role perception followed by 20.00 per cent of them with high level of role perception. The percentage of women sarpanches who had low level of overall role perception was 16.25.

It was found that majority (63.75 per cent) of the women sarpanches had medium level of perception regarding their role perception in panchayat. The probable reasons behind such type of result might be that majority of the women

sarpanches were elected first time and possessed primary to secondary education.

2 Perception of different leadership roles by women sarpanches

The leadership roles of women sarpanches selected for this study were: planner, executor, communicator, decision maker, motivator, group organizer, leader and initiator.

The data in relation to perception of different roles by women sarpanches are depicted in Table:2

Table 2 : Distribution of women sarpanches according to their perception of different leadership roles

n=80

Sr. No.	Name of role	Level of role perceived						X	S. D.
		Low		Medium		High			
		F	P	F	P	F	P		
1	Planner	08	10.00	52	65.00	20	25.00	28.787	3.075
2	Executor	10	12.50	54	67.50	16	20.00	24.200	2.573
3	Communicator	05	06.25	62	77.50	13	16.25	28.025	3.134
4	Decision maker	15	18.75	48	60.00	17	21.25	20.550	2.169
5	Motivator	26	32.50	40	50.00	14	17.50	20.337	2.255
6	Group organizer	05	06.25	50	62.50	25	31.25	12.475	1.500
7	Leader	14	17.50	48	60.00	18	22.50	24.962	2.700
8	Initiator	16	20.00	55	68.75	09	11.25	12.912	1.940

F: Frequency

P: Per cent

1 Planner

It can be seen from Table 2 that 65.00 per cent of the women sarpanches had medium perception while, 25.00 per cent of them belonged to high perception, only 10.00 per cent of women sarpanches had low level of perception of their role as a planner. As an elected local leader, the responsibility to plan different activities rests with them. Thus, they might have perceived planning as an important role in the village development programmes.

2 Executor

Referring to the leadership role of executor,

the data show that 67.50 per cent of women sarpanches had medium perception, while 20.00 per cent women sarpanches had high perception followed by 12.50 per cent with low perception of the role as an executor. The different development activities, plans, programmes and projects are being implemented through the gram panchayat institution. The women sarpanch and panchayat members generally involve themselves from planning to execution stage. Majority of women sarpanches had medium level of role perception as executor. This might be due to their more contacts with Government officers during various meeting,

more mass media exposure and cosmopolitanism.

3 Communicator

It can be seen from the Table 2 that 77.50 per cent of women sarpanches had medium perception while 16.25 per cent of them belonged to high perception. Only 6.25 per cent of women sarpanches had low level of perception of their role as a communicator. It can be concluded that majority of the women sarpanches had medium level of perception and trend was found from medium to high. The probable reasons might be that the extension workers might have used them as a communicator for diffusing the new technologies and developmental programmes.

4 Decision maker

As regards to the role perception as a decision maker, 60.00 per cent had medium role perception, while 21.25 per cent had high role perception and remaining 18.75 per cent of them had low perception. The inception of new programme / activities in village may not be accepted initially by the villagers in the village. At that time women sarpanches have to play their role as decision-maker.

5 Motivator

Referring to the role of motivator, half (50.00 per cent) of the women sarpanches had medium role perception, 32.50 per cent had low perception and 17.50 per cent had high perception. Women sarpanches might not have perceived the need for motivation of the panchayat members for different development programmes. Therefore, this role might not have been considered more important by the women sarpanches at gram panchayat.

6 Group organizer

More than three-fifth (62.50 per cent) of women sarpanches had medium level of perception of leadership role as a group organizer followed by 31.25 per cent with high level and only 6.25 per cent women sarpanches with low level of role perception. The probable reason might be that

the developmental activities require group efforts. They might be willing to get elected for next term. Hence, this role might have been considered more important by women sarpanches.

7 Leader

Referring to the leadership role, the data show that 60.00 per cent of the women sarpanches had medium perception, while 22.50 per cent had high perception and 17.50 per cent had low perception of the role as a leader. Since, women sarpanches are elected by people they might perceive their role as a leader of the village.

8 Initiator

More than two-third (68.75 per cent) of the women sarpanches had medium level perception of leadership role as initiator, while 20.00 and 11.25 per cent of them had low and high level perception, respectively. The women sarpanch might have felt that by taking initiatives in different activities, their prestige would be increased in community and it would also help in maintaining their social status. Being the first citizen person in a village, any government officers, agencies or functionaries contacted sarpanches first and sarpanches might be initiator to adopt new ideas and recommendation.

CONCLUSION

The findings indicated that majority of women sarpanches had medium overall role perception of leadership roles. In role wise perception, it has been found that the most of women sarpanches had medium to high level of perception regarding different leadership roles. The different roles perceived medium and high by women sarpanches in aggregate were found in following sequence : Communicator (93.75 per cent), group organizer (93.75 per cent), planner (90.00 per cent), executor (87.50 per cent), leader (82.50 per cent), decision maker (81.25 per cent), initiator (80.00 per cent) and motivator (67.50 per cent).