

OPINIONS REGARDING GRAM PANCHAYATS' PERFORMANCE: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY IN HARYANA

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Abstract: Opinions of village leaders were sought regarding Gram Panchayats role performances. These leaders were not occupying any positions in PRIs. These were considered as the best judge for the purpose. The opinions were examined in respect of the administrative, educational, construction, maintenance, agriculture, fisheries, forestry, water supply. In all, 113 opinion leaders were interviewed in this context from both agro-climatic zones of the state. The percentage of opinions in favour of GPs performance regarding educational works, construction and maintenance works, drinking works, drinking water supply, works related to agriculture, fisheries and forestry, sanitation works and entertainment jobs is very less. As per the knowledge of informal leaders, the Gram Panchayat did not undertake works related to Khadi, village and cottage industries development, development of bio gas, improved Chullahas etc. Performance of Panchayats was also not appreciated by these respondents in respect of women and child development, social welfare, public distribution system etc.

Keywords: Opinions, Informal Leaders, Gram Panchayats, Haryana.

Introduction: The 73rd Amendment Act (1992), created history in democratic decentralization as it enhances the power at grass root level. The eleventh schedule of the constitution provides with a list of 29 subjects to work upon. The 29 subjects include agriculture, land reform, housing, rural electrification education, health centres provision and maintenance of public goods like local road connectivity, street lightening, sanitation, drainage and water supply and public distribution system. For all round development of a village, it is very necessary to perform all the functions assigned to GPs. But in various studies it is observed that most Gram Panchayats, across the country are not performing obligatory functions. Thus to find out the functioning of Gram Panchayats and opinion of informal leaders towards Gram Panchayats performance this study was conducted.

Research Methodology: The present study was conducted in Haryana State. The Bhiwani district and Karnal district were selected purposively from the dry zone and the wet zone respectively. Three villages Phurlak, Dinger Majra and Raipur Jatan were selected purposively from Ghaunda Block of Karnal District comprising of general, women and scheduled caste categories respectively. On the other hand Bigowa, Saurbgarh and Dhani Phogat Gram Panchyats were selected from Dadri I Block of the Bhiwani District thereby representing general, women and scheduled caste Sarpanches respectively. The proceeding registers of the sampled GPs were thoroughly examined for securing information regarding the working of sampled Gram Panchayats. A structured interview schedule was prepared on the basis of works undertaken by sampled Gram Panchayats. To measure performances of GPs, sampled formal leaders were interviewed by the investigators individually and to supplement the information so collected, the opinion regarding panchayat's functioning, 113 informal leaders were selected, as they were active in villages politics and had a good knowledge regarding Panchyats and its functioning. An informal leader is an individual who is a leader in any social situation in which his ideas and actions influence the thoughts and behavior of others (Dhama and Bhatnagar 2002). The data so collected were coded, tabulated and suitably analyzed by calculating percentages.

Results and Discussion: A perusal of Table 1.1 reveals that almost all the respondents (100%) expressed the view that the Gram Panchayats actively participated in the relief works at the time of natural calamities in the villages. Likewise, seventy percent informal leaders of the sampled villages noted that funds/taxes collection activities were undertaken by the sampled Gram Panchayats of the state. Most Gram Panchayats took active part in removing encroachments on the villager's property as per the views of around sixty percent respondents. But these Gram Panchayats did not submit budget for approval in the Gram Sabha meetings as per the observations of 91 percent informal leaders of the sampled villages. Similarly, 93 percent respondents reported that the Gram Panchayats did not keep essential records in the sampled villages. These views depict a mixed role performance on the part of the Gram Panchayats. Ghosh (2004) also concluded that the Gram Sabha meetings are not presenting an encouraging picture. People's participation is very low. The budget is not submitted before Gram Sabha. Singh (2004) stated that amendments in Acts regarding GS could not improve the functioning of Gram Sabha, in respect of participation transparency and selection of beneficiaries etc. to desired extent. Thus we can conclude that after the amendment in Act though there is change in

situation regarding GS meeting yet more is required to be done. Table 1.1 elaborates data regarding their opinion on administrative decisions/activities undertaken by the Gram Panchayats.

Sr. No	Activities / Decisions	Opinion		
		Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
1	Relief works undertaken	113 (100)	0 (0)	113 (100)
2	Funds collected	79 (70)	34 (30)	113 (100)
3	Encroachments removed	67 (60)	46 (40)	113 (100)
4	Budget submitted to Gram Sabha	10 (9)	103 (91)	113 (100)
5	Essential statistics of the villages	8 (7)	105 (93)	113 (100)

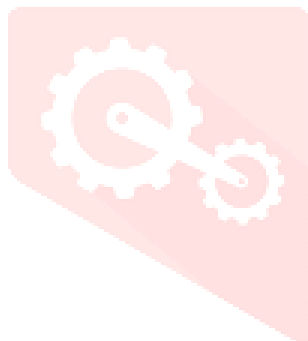
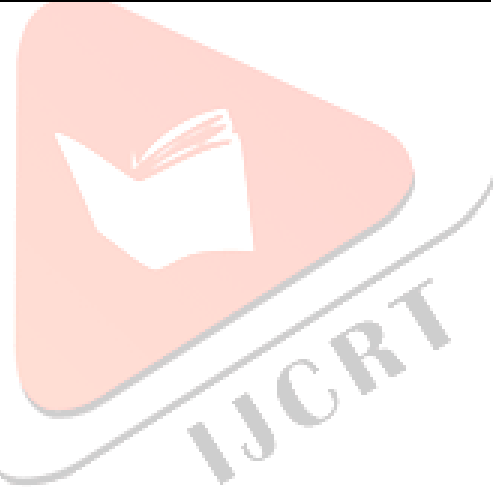
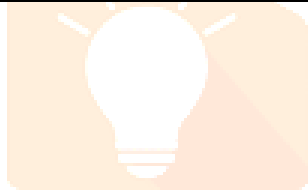


Table 1.2 Details opinions of informal leaders about educational works undertaken by the GPs.

Table 1.2 Opinions regarding educational works

Sr. No	Activities / Decisions	Opinion		
		Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
1	Newspapers acquired	48 (42)	65 (58)	113 (100)
2	Classroom accessories required	4 (4)	109 (96)	113 (100)
3	Sports materials acquired	4 (4)	109 (96)	113 (100)
4	Staff employed	3 (3)	110 (97)	113 (100)
5	Public awareness	0 (0)	113 (100)	113 (100)
6	Enrollment promoted	0 (0)	113 (100)	113 (100)
7	Ensuring attendance	0 (0)	113 (100)	113 (100)
8	Adult literacy	0 (0)	113 (100)	113 (100)
9	Development of library	0 (0)	113 (100)	113 (100)

The table 1.2 reported that 42 percent respondents opined that Panchayats acquired daily news papers. Majority (96%) informal leaders denied the fact that sampled Gram Panchayats provide classroom accessories and sports materials. All the opinion leaders reveal that no work regarding promotion of education like public awareness, enrollment promotion, attendance insurance, adult literacy and development of library were undertaken by sampled Gram Panchayats. This shows that performance of Gram Panchayats regarding educational works is very poor. Naidu and Reddy (1997) concluded that though the panchayats are taking interests regarding educational work yet performance is not satisfactory. Thus, we can conclude that there is need to give attention towards educational development as it is a very important factor in village development.

Table 1.3 depicts opinion of informal leaders regarding construction and maintenance works undertaken by Gram Panchayats.

Table 1.3 : Opinion regarding construction and maintenance works.

Sr. No	Activities / Decisions	Opinion		
		Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
1	Streets construction	104 (92)	9 (8)	113 (100)
2	Chaupals construction	76 (67)	37 (33)	113 (100)
3	Repair of streets	48 (42)	65 (58)	113 (100)
4	Hospitals construction	20 (18)	93 (82)	113 (100)
5	Repair of Choupals	19 (17)	94 (83)	113 (100)
6	School's construction	14 (12)	99 (88)	113 (100)
7	Repair of Schools	7 (6)	106 (94)	113 (100)
8	Repair of Hospitals	6 (5)	107 (95)	113 (100)

A perusal of data presented in Table 1.3 reveals that majority (92% and 67%) respondents were of the opinion that construction of streets and chaupals respectively were undertaken by Gram Panchayats while 42 per cent informal leaders stated that sampled Gram Panchayats undertook repair of streets. Majority about 82 percent opinion leaders pointed out that Panchayats did not take care of hospital constructions and repair of chaupals while 88 percent respondents denied the fact that they undertook school's construction. Repair of schools and hospitals were not undertaken by sampled Gram Panchayats as majority about 95 per cent respondents are pointing out towards this fact. Hence, we may say that construction works were undertaken by Gram Panchayats moderately and performance regarding maintenance was poor. Mehta (1996) also stated that construction works like schools, chaupals, road etc. were given performance by Gram Panchayats. Linten (1996) concluded that village roads and streets are the priorities high on the agenda of most of the members. Thus we can conclude that Gram Panchayats not only give performance to construction maintenance of these works.

Table 1.4 details opinions of informal leaders regarding drinking water supply by the Gram Panchayats of the sampled villages.

Sr. No	Activities / Decisions	Opinion		
		Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
1	Maintenance of water tank	28 (25)	85 (75)	113 (100)
2	Installation of handpumps	24 (21)	89 (79)	113 (100)
3	Laying of pipelines	7 (6)	106 (94)	113 (100)
4	Maintenance of water supply	4 (4)	109 (96)	113 (100)
5	Motor and motor operators	0 (0)	113 (100)	113 (100)
6	Prevention and control of water pollution	0 (0)	113 (100)	113 (100)

The data presented in Table 1.4 reveals that only 25 per cent informal leaders opined that sampled Gram Panchayats maintained water tank while only 21 percent respondents supported the fact that Gram Panchayats installed hand pumps. Majority (94% and 96%) informal leaders denied the laying of pipelines and maintenance of water supply by GPs. No efforts were made by GPs for placement of motor and motor operator and prevention and control of water pollution as all the opinion leaders responded no regarding these statements. The less participation of Panchayat members in water supply activities also affected by the fact that these activities are performed by the Water Supply Department set up by the state government. Naidu and Reddy (1997) also pointed out that water supply is poor in villages. Thus we can conclude that less mention is paid by GPs regarding drinking water supply and they must observe use works.

The data presented in Table 1.5 show that majority (62%) opinion leaders agreed with the development of fishes in villages, followed by 19 per cent and 11 per cent opinion leaders who favoured land leveling and plantation Acne by sampled GPs. Majority (92%) informal leaders opined that no payments have been made regarding electricity bills followed by 96 and 97 percent respondents who said that no activity regarding development of waste land it installation of hand pumps were performed by sampled Gram Panchayats. Majority (98%) members said that sampled Gram

Panchayats did not maintain the tube wells. Sampled Gram Panchayats did not make any activity / decision regarding development and maintenance of grazing lands, preservation of trees and promotion of farm forestry as all the opinion leaders opined no regarding these statements.

Table 1.5 presents opinions of informal leaders regarding development of agriculture, fisheries and forestry.

Table 1.5 Opinions regarding works related to agriculture, fisheries and forestry.

Sr. No	Activities / Decisions	Opinion		
		Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
1	Development of fisheries	70 (62)	43 (38)	113 (100)
2	Land leveling	21 (19)	92 (81)	113 (100)
3	Plantation	12 (11)	101 (89)	113 (100)
4	Payment of electricity bills	9 (8)	104 (92)	113 (100)
5	Development of waste land	5 (4)	108 (96)	113 (100)
6	Installation of tube wells	3 (3)	110 (97)	113 (100)
7	Maintenance of tube wells	2 (2)	111 (98)	113 (100)
8	Development and maintenance of grazing lands	0 (0)	113 (100)	113 (100)
9	Preservation of trees on public land	0 (0)	113 (100)	113 (100)
10	Promotion of farm forestry	0 (0)	113 (100)	113 (100)

Kaur and Singh (1993) also stated that majority of leaders participated in irrigation activities and low participation was observed in activities like credit improved seeds, training and farm forestry etc. Singh (1993) concluded that panchayats made efforts regarding agricultural activities. Thus we can conclude that though sampled panchyats made efforts regarding irrigation facilities yet more is required to be done regarding agricultural extension, farm forestry etc.

Table 1.6 presents the information regarding opinion of informal leaders about sanitation works undertaken by the GPs.

Sr. No	Activities / Decisions	Opinion		
		Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
1	Maintenance of Cremation sites	113 (100)	0 (0)	113 (100)
2	Construction of public latrines	16 (14)	97 (86)	113 (100)
3	Cleaning of Ponds, wells and tanks	16 (14)	97 (86)	113 (100)
4	Cleaning of Streets	5 (4)	108 (96)	113 (100)
5	Cleaning of drainage	5 (4)	108 (96)	113 (100)
6	Disposal corpses and carcasses	0 (0)	113 (100)	113 (100)

The analysis of data presented in table 1.6 reveals that all the informal leaders were satisfied with the maintenance of cremation sites, while only 14 percent each agreed with construction of public latrines and cleaning of ponds, wells, tanks. Majority (96%) opinion leaders opined that sampled panchayats made no efforts regarding cleaning of streets and damage. All the informal leaders of the view that disposal of corpses and carcasses were not undertaken by sampled Gram Panchayats. Naidu and Reddy (1997) also stated that sanitary conditions were highly unsatisfactory in villages. Thus we can conclude that Gram Panchayats must turn their efforts towards improvement of sanitary conditions.

Table 1.7 provide information regarding opinion of informal leaders about entertainment activities undertaken by the Gram Panchayats.

Table 1.7 Opinions regarding entertainment jobs undertaken.

Sr. No	Activities / Decisions	Opinion		
		Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
1	Providing sports materials	10 (9)	103 (91)	113 (100)
2	Organizing games	9 (8)	104 (92)	113 (100)

3	Organizing fairs	7 (6)	106 (94)	113 (100)
4	Development of public parks and play grounds	6 (5)	107 (95)	113 (100)
5	Sports fund	6 (5)	107 (95)	113 (100)

Table 1.7 shows that majority above 90% of respondents gave negative response regarding arrangement of entertainment activities as mentioned in Act, such as Sports fund, providing sports materials, organizing games and fairs and development of public parks and play grounds. Singh (1998) also concluded that Gram Panchyats paid less attention to entertainment activities for villages. So it is concluded that entertainment works are the most neglected by the Gram Panchayats.

As per the knowledge of the informal leaders, the Gram Panchayats did not undertake works related to khadi, village and cottage industries development, development of non-conventional energy sources such as biogas, improved chullhas etc. Performance of Panchayats was also not appreciated by these respondents in respect of women and child development, social welfare, public distribution system etc. Sharma (1993) revealed that two studied panchayats have failed to discharge even the elementary functions of panchayats. Shivramu et al. (1995) examined that agriculture, animal husbandry, youth development, cottage and village industries development were performed poorly.

To conclude the Act provide for 29 funds, functions and functionaries to be taken care of the by new PRIs at the village level. But, the findings of the present study shows an altogether different picture. So, much more is required to be undertaken by the Gram Panchayats for making them an effective instrument of local self governance.

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