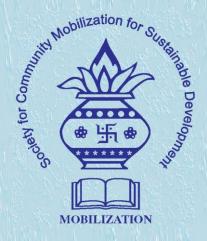# Role Performance of Women Leaders in Panchayati Raj Institutions

Article · December 2022

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Journal of Community Mobilization and Sustainable Development

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3. To facilitate close and reciprocal linkage among the institutions for sustainable rural development.
4. Promoting potential and practicing entrepreneurs.
5. To disseminate the documented knowledge to the global partners through approach abstracting and indexing.

ABOUT THE JOURNAL

Journal of Community Mobilization and Sustainable Development (print ISSN 2230 – 9047; online ISSN 2231 – 6736) is published by Society for Community Mobilization for Sustainable Development twice a year. The Journal of Community Mobilization and Sustainable Development has NAAS rating 5.67 and Journal ID J158. The Journal of Community Mobilization and Sustainable Development, is also available on our website www.mobilization.co.in and it has been registered with www.indianjournal.com for national and global abstracting and indexing. MOBILIZATION envisages reorienting the young professionals and researches for imbibing the values of community participation in research, training and extension efforts.

The aim and scope of the journal are:

1. Sharing the relevant experiences and issues related to agriculture and allied fields at the grass root level and global forum to create the necessary academic and development climate.

2. Sensitizing the different stakeholders about the knowledge and innovation management system in pluralistic agri-rural environment.

3. Developing network among the related partners for convergence of their efforts for sustainable academic development of extension education discipline.

Editorial

Informatization is a recent trend in agriculture that seeks to modernize traditional farming methods by utilizing advanced information and communication technologies (ICTs). Agricultural informatization serves as a long-term stimulus for agrarian development by responding to the farmers' needs in an efficient time-precision framework and eventually leading to significant increases in productivity and sustainability. There have been numerous technological advancements in agricultural information technology, such as rapid communication tools, the Internet of things (IoT), smart networks for agro-advisory, interactive media, remote sensing, drones, big data analytics, and computational facilities, among others. The most recent addition to this is blockchain, a Distributed ledger technology (DLT) comprised of unalterable, digitally recorded data in packages called blocks that are linked (chained) to the next box using a cryptanalytic signature. Though the concept of blockchain was initially developed to address the need for a more decentralized financial system (along with cryptocurrencies), this technology is now finding innovative applications in various fields of agriculture. The most important one is supply-chain management, in which traceability is critical to ensuring food safety and increasing customer retention and satisfaction. The blockchains in the supply chains provide immutable data records of a product from the farm to the consumer's hands, making it easier to identify forged products quickly, reducing the mediators and having a traceability account for the product. It can increase consumer trust in the products they buy while also providing an opportunity to reward producers with a higher price for their products. Though the potentials of blockchains are notable, the technology is not fully proofed of flaws, particularly those related to data storage, scalability, and privacy, which require further research.

I am delighted and privileged to announce to our readers that our current issue of the MOBILIZATION journal (July-September 2022) is ready to enlight you with the most insightful research findings from multidisciplinary fields. It covers topics like e-learning, value chain analysis, analytical study of extension and advisory services, educational psychology and attributes, stress and uncertainty among Indian farmers, communication linkage mechanism, sociological aspects of health conditions, impact assessment, gender studies, farmer's knowledge about green technology, nutrition-led extension studies, differential use pattern of ICT tools, water use and economics, perception towards agriculture ss profession, awareness and usage of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in academic activities, agri-tech start-up and entrepreneurship in agriculture, filed experimental research, fisheries and aquaculture, climate change and vulnerability assessment etc. I am confident that this issue will provide you with a fascinating intellectual experience because it is a collection of strategic and action-oriented research findings from various fields.

The commitment and contribution of the editorial team deserve special mention. I am grateful to them for their perseverance in the drafting process and timely publication of the journal. Finally, I'd like to thank you, the contributors and readers of Mobilization Journal, for your interest in the journal. I encourage you to keep sending us your valuable research findings, ideas, and feedback for the continued improvement of our journal.

J.P. Sharma
Chief Editor

Role Performance of Women Leaders in Panchayati Raj Institutions

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to know the extent of participation of women leaders in the grassroots units of self-government, i.e. Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). The sample consisted of 200 women leaders from Udham Singh Nagar, Dehradun and Tehri Garhwal districts of Uttarakhand state. Data were collected using a pre-tested semi-structured interview schedule. The study's findings revealed that 59 per cent of respondents identified helping people in society as one of the reasons for contesting elections. The majority of the women leaders reported that they were taking advice only from the political parties and 65 per cent of them mentioned that the village development committee was working at the *Gram Panchayat* level. More than half of the respondents expressed that they sometimes attended the meetings at the block level, and approximately half of the respondents mentioned that they monthly organized meetings. The majority of the women leaders said that they always raised the issue of electricity in the meetings, followed by education, and more than half of the respondents reported that they discussed issues of examining annual plans during *Gram Sabha* meetings. The majority of the respondents said, they had visited the blocks, nearby banks, or cooperative societies to facilitate the *Panchayat* work. Nearly half of the women leaders had regular interaction with the police. After being elected as *Panchayat* leader, most of the respondents had established the linkages with banks for facilitating the *Panchayat* work, and eighty per cent got the support of male members always during *Panchayat* work. More than seventy per cent of the respondents sought advice from their husbands for facilitating *Panchayat's* work. Nearly sixty per cent of women leaders individually contacted the people to complete the task. Almost all the respondents organized meetings. More than half of the respondents reported that they had constructed the road for easy approachability to the nearby towns during the last year, followed by 46 per cent carried out the sanitation work.

Keywords: Role performance, Women leaders, Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)

INTRODUCTION

The status of women in India has been subjected to lots of magnificent changes over the past few millennia. From equivalent status with men in ancient times through the low points of the medieval period to the promotion of equal rights by many reformers, the history of women in India has been eventful. In modern India, women have adorned high offices, including the president, prime minister, speaker of the *Lok Sabha*, leader of the opposition, *etc.* Nowadays, women leaders in India provide a significant networking opportunity to build their knowledge, develop their capabilities & career potential, and promote their respective organizations. They offer the ideal environment for many other women to set trends, influence, innovate and leverage women's participation in the global world. The strengthening of women

participation in all spheres of life has become a significant issue in economic and social development discourse in the last decades. Virtually every international and bilateral development agency has proclaimed policies to integrate women better into economic and social processes (Pargunan, 2007).

The sheer number of women that PRIs has brought due to the reservation policy of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act has also made a difference. Bringing these women into leadership positions was an act of positive discrimination. The premise is that increasing women's participation in political processes, as both voters and candidates, will change the nature and functioning of public institutions, which will ultimately influence future development decisions and create a more equitable, gender-responsive and humane society. Women, once elected, take up need-oriented development programmes. The village has reported providing water taps, biogas plants, toilets, especially in the *Dalit* areas, playgrounds for the village schools *etc.* (Omvedt, 1990). PRIs in India offer the opportunity to women to change the face of leadership at the grassroots level so that they become empowered to make decisions for their welfare and the welfare of society as a whole. Despite these changes in social structure with a new face of leadership, women as empowered leaders are hard to accept by their male counterparts. Social inhibitions, limited exposure, and low literacy rate are factors that debar them to emerge as successful leaders. In this context, the present study was undertaken with the objective to find out the current level of role performance of women leaders in PRIs.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out in Udham Singh Nagar, Dehradun and Tehri Garhwal districts of Uttarakhand state. Three blocks from each district were selected by using the chit method of simple random sampling. Thus, from the district, Udham Singh Nagar; Rudrapur, Sitarganj and Bazpur blocks, from district Dehradun; Vikasnagar, Doiwala and Sahaspur blocks and from district Tehri Garhwal; Jaunpur, Chamba and Narendranagar blocks were selected for the present investigation. For the present study, the researcher procured the list of all the elected women representatives, especially Pradhans' from the selected blocks of all these districts. The total numbers of

women leaders in all the selected three districts were 325. The census method was used to select the respondents from the designated blocks. The investigator tried to contact all the women leaders from each district; however, due to some reasons, the total numbers of women leaders contacted from the selected blocks were 200. Data were collected with the help of a pre-tested semi-structured interview schedule. Observation and focused group discussion methods were also used to support the quantitative data. Analysis of the data was done with the help of different statistical tools like frequency distribution, percentage *etc.*

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Role performance means how the respondent performs a given role by being in a given position as distinct from what she is supposed to serve. It was measured based on the role expected by the PRIs from the women leaders, which is mentioned in the new eleventh schedule added to the Constitution by Article 243-G, which listed 29 sectors or functions. These roles were categorized as agriculture, including agricultural extension, land improvement, land reforms, drinking water, poverty alleviation programmes, health & sanitation including hospitals, primary health centres & dispensaries, the welfare of the weaker sections, women, and child development *etc.* Thus, the role performance of women leaders refers to the extent of overall performance by the leader as perceived by her. Based on this schedule, structured and semi-structured questions were developed on the areas like reasons for contesting elections, affiliation with political parties, type of help from political parties, participation in development activities, participation in political activities, meetings conducted with *Panchayat* members, issues raised in *Gram Sabha* meetings, cooperative role, visits to block or nearby banks or cooperatives to facilitate *Panchayat* work, decision making, group management, developmental schemes running in their respective area, coordinating group activities, interactions of women leaders with the local bureaucrats, the line departments and the police for discussing village related issues, establishing linkages for executing *Panchayat* work *etc.* The responses on these items were obtained and calculated in terms of frequency and percentage.

Women leaders were asked to give various reasons for contesting elections. The cursory look at Table 1 shows that nearly sixty per cent of them identified helping people in society as one of the reasons for contesting the election. Most of the respondents (45.50%) reported that they were in the PRIs because they had pressure from the concerned political party. Thirty-four per cent of the women leaders expressed power as one of their motives to contest the election. Twenty-six per cent of the respondents mentioned that they had pressure from their family, especially from their husbands and fathers-in-law, to enter into politics. Another quarter of the sample *i.e.* 25.50 per cent of the women leaders who said that since others did not volunteer; it tends to be one of the reasons for these women leaders to come forward for taking up the leadership positions. The findings of the present study are in line with the results of Panda (1999); Ambedkar (2006); Kaul and Sahni (2009) and Ram (2012), who reported that most of the women entered Panchayati Raj Institutions due to persuasion by their family members, pressure from the village community, pressure from a political party and their interest to entering into the political arena.

The data in Table 1 also depicts that thirty-four per cent of the respondents belonged to Congress Party, followed by 28.50 per cent had affiliation with Bhartiya

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents according to Reasons for Contesting Elections and Affiliation with Political Party (N = 200)

Categories	Frequuency	Percentage
Reasons for Contesting Elections*		
Hold power	68	34.00
Help people in society	118	59.00
Pressure from family members	52	26.00
Pressure from party	91	45.50
Non-availability of women respondents	51	25.50
Affiliation with Political Party*		
Bhartiya Janata Party	57	28.50
Samajwadi Party	51	25.50
Congress Party	68	34.00
Bahujan Samajwadi Party	16	8.00
Communist Party	13	6.50

*Multiple responses

Janata Party, 25.50 per cent belonged to Samajwadi Party, and eight per cent belonged to Bahujan Samajwadi Party. Only 6.5 per cent of the women leaders belonged to Communist Party. However, the support from any party does not always imply that the person is an active member of that party. Sometimes respondents enjoyed assistance and support of other political parties as well. The study's findings corroborate the results of Kaul and Sahni (2009), who found that women leaders had links with one or the other political party. To some extent, the affiliation of women leaders with political parties made them puppets in the hands of political parties.

The data in Table 2 reveals that the majority of the respondents, i.e. 76 per cent, reported that they were taking only advice from the political parties. Thirty-two per cent of the respondents mentioned that

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents according to Type of Help from Political Parties and Committees Working at *Gram Panchayat* Level (N = 200)

Categories	Frequuency	Percentage
Type of Help from Political Parties*		
Funds	47	23.50
Advice	152	76.00
Direction	56	28.00
Facilitating you to be elected as leader	64	32.00
Committees Working at *Gram Panchayat* Level*		
Education committee	84	42.00
Social justice & welfare committee	33	16.50
Agriculture & irrigation committee	60	30.00
Executive committee	15	07.50
Fisheries committee	08	04.00
Public health & rural water supply committee	48	24.00
Relief & public work committee	15	07.50
Establishment committee	15	07.50
Audit & budget committee	10	05.00
Child & women development committee	75	37.50
Industry & allied activities including infrastructure committee	19	09.50
Village development committee	130	65.00
Not aware of the committee	10	05.00
No such committee exists	15	07.50

*Multiple responses

political parties were facilitating their work as *Panchayat* leaders. Twenty-eight per cent of the respondents said that political parties provided the direction, followed by 23.50 per cent claimed that they were receiving financial assistance. Only a few of the women leaders opined that it was because of other reasons for which they had support. The study's findings are as per the findings of Gowda (1998)**,** who observed that women leaders were supported and assisted by their political mentors who were already in politics.

It is apparent from the data presented in Table 2 that majority of women leaders,' *i.e.,* 65 per cent mentioned that village development committee was working at the *Gram Panchayat* level, followed by 42 per cent education committee and 37.50 per cent child & women development committee, respectively. These committees were dominant at the grassroots level, while other committees were working in some other areas. Only 7.5 per cent of the women leaders mentioned that no such committees were working at *the Panchayat* level, and five per cent of the respondents expressed that they lacked awareness about such committees.

The data presented in Table 3 shows that more than half of the respondents, *i.e.,* 56 per cent, expressed that they sometimes attended the meetings at the block level, followed by 42.5 per cent who regularly attended the *Panchayat* meetings at the block level. Only 1.5 per cent of the women leaders reported that they never visited the block office for meetings to date. When asked about the reasons for their low participation,

Table 3: Categorization of Women Leaders according to Participation in Meetings and Meetings Conducted with *Panchayat* Members (N = 200)

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Participation in Meetings		
Regularly	85	42.5
Sometimes	112	56.0
Never	03	1.5
Meetings Conducted with *Panchayat* Members		
Weekly	07	3.5
Fortnightly	43	21.5
Monthly	101	50.5
Quarterly	26	13.0
As Per Convenience	23	11.5

women in PRI mentioned that they were not informed about meetings because the male members always considered that women were always interested in projecting the issues relating to women only. During FGD, it emerged that the low participation of women leaders in meetings was due to nervousness, shyness and hesitation of speaking in front of male members. The women were subjected to embarrassment by statements like "how could she speak at meetings when elderly people were present." This is a result of a male-dominated society, which hinders women's participation. Despite their election to the key positions, they were unable to express their feelings and decisions boldly. It gives a grave picture of our women leaders who are leading the *Panchayats.* Although women had joined mainstream politics at the grassroots level, they struggled hard to put up their viewpoint. The findings are supported by the results of Palanthurai (1997); Ambedkar (2000); Nambiar and Bandyopadhyay (2004), who reported that women enter in PRIs because of reservation of seats for them. They were not informed or invited to the meetings in male-headed *Panchayats.* Sometimes they were hesitant to attend such discussions because of frustration of not being heard and were only to communicate to the beneficiaries the plan of action of *Gram Panchayat.*

The data in Table 3 depicts that approximately half of the respondents, *i.e.,* 50.5 per cent reported that they organized monthly meetings, followed by 21.5 per cent who conducted these meetings fortnightly and thirteen per cent quarterly. The women leaders conveyed that meeting with *Panchayat* members was organized to discuss *Panchayat's* plan and other updates. Only 11.5 per cent of the women leaders said that they called the meetings according to their convenience. This indicates that the meetings were called only when the need arose; there was no regular schedule to organize meetings. The informal investigator's discussion with ward members revealed that they viewed *Panchayat* work as the responsibility of *Pradhan* only, and some of the ward members reported that they were never being called for meetings and discussed any agenda item.

The women leaders working in PRIs were not found to be timid; they usually raised their point of view in the meetings. In the empirical study, all the respondents reported complete freedom to raise

various issues in the discussions. The data in Table 4 illustrates that most of the respondents, *i.e.,* 74.5 per cent said that they always raised the issue of electricity, followed by education 57.5 per cent, road 54.5 per cent, improvement of schools 43 per cent, access to drinking water 38 per cent and drainage 35 per cent, respectively. Only 1.5 per cent of the respondents were found in other categories, who raised other issues in the meetings like widow pension, old age pension, job cards, ration cards *etc.* The data depicted that women leaders want change in their respective *Panchayats*, and that's why they always raised their voice. The results are supported by the findings of Mandal (2003) and Nambiar & Bandopadhyay (2004), who reported that women members refuted their points in the meetings without any form of protest or any pressure to take note of their views. They have even used their elected authority to address several critical issues such as children's education, drinking water facilities, family planning facilities, hygiene & health, quality of health care & village development such as *pucca* road and electricity in their areas.

Gram Sabha's provision for each *Panchayat* Circle consisting of the persons registered in the electoral rolls relating to the village or the group of villages comprised within the area of the *Panchayat*. There shall be at least two meetings of the *Gram Sabha* every year to be held, one in the first and the other in the last quarter of the financial year and is to be conveyed by *Pradhan*. As an observer*,* the officer nominated by the Block Development Office shall attend the meeting and discuss the plan with *Gram Sabha* members. The data in Table 4 also reveals that more than half of the respondents, *i.e.,* 52 per cent reported that the issue of examining annual plan was discussed during the *Gram Sabha* meeting, followed by half of the respondents expressed that review of *Panchayat* activities was done in *Gram Sabha* meeting, 47 per cent said that approval for village plans was another issue. Other key issues which were raised included planning for rural development work 38 per cent, followed by a nearly equal number of respondents who mentioned that review of existing schemes and to maintain a register of developmental activities which emerged during *Gram Sabha* meetings. About 32 per cent revealed that consideration of budget proposal was done, and 24 per cent reported that the administration's report was

Table 4: Categorization of Women Leaders according to Issues Raised in Meetings and Type of Issues Discussed during *Gram Sabha* Meetings (N = 200)

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Issues Raised in Meetings*		
Access to drinking water	76	38.0
Drainage	70	35.0
Road	109	54.5
Electricity	149	74.5
Education	115	57.5
Improvement of schools	86	43.0
Any other	03	1.5
Type of Issues Discussed during *Gram Sabha* Meetings*		
Examine annual plans	104	52.0
Consider budget proposal	64	32.0
Discuss report of the administration	48	24.0
Review existing schemes/work	67	33.5
Review Panchayat activities	100	50.0
Approve village plan	94	47.0
Maintain a register of developmental activity	67	33.5
Promote social harmony	35	17.5
Mobilize people's participation	44	22.0
Planning for rural development works	76	38.0
Do not know	1	0.5

*Multiple responses

discussed. Mobilizing people's participation and promoting social harmony were other areas that were raised during the *Gram Sabha* meetings. Thus, it can be concluded that most of the issues raised were related to routine activities carried out by the *Panchayat* members.

It is apparent from Table 5 that a vast majority of the respondents, *i.e.,* 90 per cent, reported that they had visited the blocks, nearby banks, or cooperatives to facilitate *Panchayat* work. This showed the level of independence and initiatives taken by women leaders. The women leaders were confident enough as they visited the banks, cooperatives or blocks regularly. Only ten per cent of the respondents to date did not visit the blocks or banks. The reason for not visiting the banks and cooperatives was that they still needed some help from their male counterpart. Thus, there is a need to motivate women leaders to raise their level of

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents according to Visits to Block or Nearby Banks or Cooperative to Facilitate *Panchayat* Work, Developmental Support Taken by Women Leaders from Other Organization and Interaction of Women Leaders with Supporting Departments (N = 200)

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Visits to Block or Nearby Banks or Co-operative to Facilitate *Panchayat* Work		
Yes	180	90
No	20	10
Developmental Support Taken by Women Leaders from Other Organization		
Yes	46	23
No	154	77
Interaction of Women Leaders with Supporting Departments*		
Police	102	51.0
Bureaucrat	55	27.5
Met line departments	32	16.0
Take assistance from Govt. Department for implementation of schemes	35	17.5

*Multiple responses

Table 6: Distribution of Respondents according to Linkages Established for Facilitating the *Panchayat* Work and Extent of Cooperation with Male Members (N = 200)

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Linkages Established for Facilitating the *Panchayat* Work*		
Banks	143	71.5
Co-operative	86	43.0
Mahila mandals	76	38.0
NGO's	92	46.0
Government organizations	46	23.0
The Extent of Cooperation with Male Members		
Always	160	80.0
Sometimes	38	19.0
Never	2	1.0

*Multiple responses

confidence. The data in Table 5 also shows that most of the respondents, *i.e.,* 77 per cent, had not taken any support from any organization for facilitating the *Panchayat's* work. At the same time, 23 per cent had taken the development support from other organizations like NGOs for promoting the *Panchayat's* work in terms of advice, training, direction and in some conditions, funds for providing various facilities to the *Gram Sabha* members.

Women leaders required regular support from other supporting departments like police, hospitals, bureaucrats *etc.,* for the smooth running of *Panchayats*. The data in Table 5 reveals that nearly half of the respondents, *i.e.,* 51 per cent had regular interaction with police, 27.5 per cent interacted with bureaucrats, and 17.5 per cent took assistance from government departments to discuss schemes. The results in Table 5 also depicts that most of the women leaders had regular interaction with police. It might be because conflicts in their respective areas pressurized women leaders to seek police help to resolve disputes.

The data in Table 6 indicates that the majority of the respondents, *i.e.,* 71.5 per cent after being elected

as *Panchayat* leader, had established linkages with banks, followed by 46 per cent with NGOs, 43 per cent had said that they had contact with cooperatives, 38 per cent with *Mahila Mandals* and 23 per cent with government organizations, respectively. Thus, it can be concluded that women leaders need funds for carrying out many developmental works. It was the reason why a high percentage of women leaders having linkages with banks. A sizable portion expressed links with NGOs as these NGOs helped them for carrying out the development work. During interaction with the women leaders, some said that NGOs helped them develop leadership skills and create awareness about new initiatives.

The results in Table 6 reveal that the majority of the respondents, *i.e.,* 80 per cent got the support of male members always during *Panchayat* work. In comparison, 19 per cent got it sometimes. Only two women leaders mentioned that they did not find any support from their male colleagues. During FGD, the women leaders expressed that non-cooperation of male members was due to patriarchal society, ego clashes of male members, insecurity among the male members that if the women get empowered, then they would address and emphasize only on women issues and the most important reason was the rigid mindset of the male members that women are meant only for household chores. In addition to it, women leaders also believed that male members wanted women to

be always dependent on them for taking decisions. The findings are in line with the results of Kaul and Sahni (2009). They reported that the significant reason of women leaders for not attending the training was patriarchal setup and thereby non-cooperation of male members. As a reaction, the respondents got frustrated and chose to abstain from further meetings. Kaur *et al.* (2012) also concluded that most women had a medium level of empowerment, which indicates that women have less involvement in decision-making, right on family affairs, agricultural matters, occupational matters, and women have restricted the freedom for accessible avenues of expression.

A perusal of the Table 7 shows that 70.5 per cent of the respondents sought advice from their husbands to complete the task, followed by 46.5 per cent who took self-decision, 34.5 per cent consulted *Panchayat* members, 28 per cent sought community opinion, and only 13.5 per cent of the respondents sought advice from the developmental officers. Hence, it can be concluded that the system of *Pati Pradhan's* still prevails in society.

The results in Table 7 also shows that a nearly equal percentage of women leaders, *i.e.,* 58 per cent individually contacting the people for completing the task and 57 per cent persuaded the community for the

initiation and completion of the task. Twenty-eight per cent of the women leaders were playing the role of facilitator during the time of completion of the study, and only 14.5 per cent of the women leaders were found in the category of inviting specialists or dignitaries to motivate the community and *Panchayat's* members for *Panchayat* work.

The data in Table 8 reveals that almost all the respondents, *i.e.,* 98 per cent, organized meetings, followed by 23.5 per cent who organized small training, 15.5 per cent conducted demonstrations, and 13.5 per cent organized group discussions, respectively. Most of the women leaders expressed that teamwork or group as a whole could handle the developmental

Table 7: Categorization of Women Leaders according to Type of Support in Decision Making about *Panchayat* Work and Initiative Taken for Completing the Village Tasks (N = 200)

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Type of Support in Decision Making about *Panchayat* Work*		
Self-decision	93	46.5
Seek husband's opinion/advice	141	70.5
Seek community opinion	56	28.0
Consult *Panchayat* members	69	34.5
Seek advice from developmental officers	27	13.5
Initiative taken for Completing the Village Tasks*		
Individually contacting people	116	58.0
Persuading the community	114	57.0
Inviting specialists or dignitaries	29	14.5
Taking facilitating role	56	28.0

*Multiple responses

Table 8: Categorization of Respondents According to Type of Group Activities Organized and Developmental Activities Organized during Last One Year (N = 200)

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Type of Group Activities Organized*		
Demonstration	31	15.5
Small training	47	23.5
Group discussion	63	13.5
Meetings	196	98.0
Developmental Activities Organized during Last One Year*		
Construction of boundary walls/ walls/security walls	31	15.5
Sanitation works	92	46.0
Health facilities	56	28.0
Bridges/check dams	20	10.0
School construction	9	4.5
Panchayat Bhawan	15	7.5
Construction of *guls*	3	1.5
Construction of *kharanja*	9	4.5
Construction of water tanks	4	2.0
Digging of wells	2	1.0
Construction of drainage system/ toilet	5	2.5
Fitting of hand pumps/tube wells	56	28.0
Fitting of streetlights	13	6.5
Electricity	4	2.0
Road construction	110	55.0
Drinking water facility	2	1.0

*Multiple responses

activities. The findings are in confirmation with the findings of Kaur *et al.* (2020), who found that women leaders of the study area were aware about the team work and group approaches, but lacked knowledge of constitutional laws, Panchayati Raj Act, rules, procedures & functions of PRIs and such a position makes the functioning of the PRIs inefficient.

It is evident from Table 8 that more than half of the respondents, *i.e.,* 55 per cent reported that during the last one year they had constructed the road for easy accessibility of the local villagers, followed by 46 per cent carried out the sanitation work and equal number of respondents, *i.e.*, 28 per cent mentioned that they provided health facilities and fittings of hand pumps & tube wells were also done. This shows the initiation level of the women leaders for the development of their respective areas, and almost all the women leaders reported that development work depends on the funds available for the site. The activities carried out by the *Panchayat* leaders are based on the directives given under the eleventh schedule.

CONCLUSION

Based on the study's findings, it is concluded that a significant number of women contested elections to help people in society. The participation of women leaders in meetings was low in some cases; it tends to be because of the patriarchal setup and thereby the non-cooperation of male members. However, most of the respondents organized the meeting monthly with *Panchayat* members to discuss the *Panchayat* agenda. A minimal number of the women leaders revealed that they received support from the government officials and administration. In contrast, most of them had help from their husband or in-laws to facilitate the *Panchayat* work. A majority of the respondents reported that they discussed the various issues during the *Gram Sabha* meeting to improve the functioning of *Panchayats* and had established the linkages with banks, cooperatives and other organizations for facilitating the *Panchayat* work. A maximum number of respondents had regular interaction with police to resolve the conflicts in their respective areas. After the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, women leaders have taken up the central role as *Panchayat Pradhans*, which empowered them with leadership responsibilities at the grassroots level. It has been noticed that certain women leaders were very enlightened. They had been successfully doing the

developmental work very effectively and have ensured the overall development of their constituencies. Therefore, the present study has proven many wrong myths that women could not successfully take leadership roles. It was observed that many of the women leaders were strong enough to take their viewpoint in front of policymakers and could air their voices about women's rights.

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