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Constraints of gram panchayats in village developments after the constitution (73rd amendment) act, 1992

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Abstract

Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) have always been considered as means to good governance and 73rd Constitutional Amendment was effected in the hope that it would lead to better governance and provide political space to the disadvantaged section of the society like schedule caste, schedule tribes and women. The present study was an effort to know the the constraints of the Gram Panchayats in village development as perceived by the elected members, Govt. officials and local leaders of the Gram Panchayats after enactment of Constitution 73rd Amendment Act. For this study a sample of total 200 respondents comprising of 140 elected members, 50 local leaders and 10 Govt. officials from 10 Gram Panchayats of Jaipur District of Rajasthan was interviewed through Interview Schedule. The findings of the study revealed that the constraints perceived by respondents can be grouped into general, financial, administrative, socio-political, literary, judicial, agricultural and health related categories and each category has specific constraints perceived with different degree of intensity by different category of respondents. Illiteracy among PRI members, absence of clear role of Gram Sabha, insufficient grants, loss of representation of Sarpanches in Panchayat Samities, difficulty in gathering quorum in Gram Sabha, casteism, interference by husbands of women members, lack of schools/library, favouritism, interference by police, short supply of electricity, low ground level of water, shortage of medicines/female nurses at village level etc. were the important constraints emerged as top ranked constraints from amongst their group categories as perceived by different categories of respondents.

Keywords: local self-government, 73rd constitutional amendment, gram sabha, weaker sections, decentralisation, PRI, constraints of PRIs, village development, gram panchayats

Introduction

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 which created a uniform three-tier structure of Panchayati Raj at the district, block/mandal and village levels, provides transfer of responsibilities and tax powers from the state government to the gram Panchayats. The responsibilities include preparation and implementation of plans for economic development and social justice relating to an indicative list of 29 subjects given in Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution.

Under Article 243-G, the Constitution has given authority to state governments to endow Gram Panchayats with necessary powers to carry out their functions. States are empowered under Article 243-H to authorize Gram Panchayats to levy, collect the appropriate taxes, duties, tolls and fees apart from giving them grants-in-aid from the consolidated fund of the State. Another provision, that of Article 243-I, provides for the constitution of a State Finance Commission (SFC) for every five years to review the financial position of Gram Panchayats and to recommend ways for implementing the provisions of Article 243-H so as to improve the financial position of the later.

The Gram Sabha, the general assembly of villagers, has a key role in effective functioning of Gram Panchayats. In order to translate the mandate of the 73rd Amendment Act, it is essential to look into the number of impediments in the system. Various social, cultural, political, financial and educational constraints might be in the way of village development. Keeping this view in mind present investigation entitled, "Constraints of Gram Panchayats in village development after the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992" was undertaken to identify the constraints of the Gram Panchayats in village development as perceived by the elected members, Govt. officials and local leaders of the Gram Panchayats after enactment of Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act.

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Methodology

The study was conducted in randomly selected two Panchayat Samitis of Jaipur district (Rajasthan). Two hundred respondents comprising of 140 elected members, 50 local leaders and 10 Govt. officials were selected from the 10 Gram Panchayat of Dudu and Sambhar Lake Panchayat Samitis. A scale was developed to measure the constraints of Gram Panchayat in village development. The data were collected with the help of specially developed interview schedule consisting of devices to measure the constraints of the Gram Panchayats in village development as perceived by the elected members, Govt. officials and local leaders of the Gram Panchayats The data so collected were classified, tabulated and statistically analyzed to rank the constraints of different groups as per the perception of the respondents.

Result and Discussion

1. Constraints of gram panchayats in village development as perceived by the respondents

Results revealed that the constraints of Gram Panchayats in village development as perceived by the elected members, Govt. officials and local leaders of the Gram Panchayats were pertaining to the aspects viz., general, financial, administrative, socio-political, in promotion of literary

activities, judicial, in promotion of agriculture and allied fields and in promotion of health related activities and accordingly and top ranked constraints among each group have been found and discussed in results.

A. General constraints

'Illiteracy of Gram Panchayat members leads to various difficulties in administrative works' and 'Role of Gram Sabha is not clear' were the two most important constraints found among the general constraints. Respondents or category wise result have not got many differences. Due to illiteracy among Gram Panchayat members, they were to rely on literate guide. The finding was in line with that of Ravishankar (2018) [11] who in his study concluded that now a day more number of educated respondents and youngsters were contesting Panchayat elections. If educated and youngsters really take responsibility and initiative in grassroots administration, it will benefit rural areas for better administration.

Further respondents ranked IInd to the constraint 'Role of Gram Sabha is not clear'. Some of the respondents felt the present dysfunctioning of Gram Sabha as an institution of formality. The finding was in line with that of Mishra (1994)

Table 1: General Constraints of Gram Panchayats in village development as perceived by elected members, govt. officials and local leaders

S. No	Constraints encountered by Gram Panchayats in Village development	Elect	ed Mer	nbers	Govt	. Offici	ials	Loca	l Lead	ers	(Overal	1
S. NO	Constraints encountered by Gram Fanchayats in vinage development	T.S.	M.S.	R	T.S.	M.S.	R	T.S.	M.S	R	T.S	M.S	R
1	Role of Gram Sabha is not clear.	229	1.64	II	13	1.3	III	78	1.56	I	320	1.6	II
2	Less number of training programmes are organised to import training to elected gram Panchayat members.	198	1.41	IV	11	1.1	IV	51	1.02	IV	260	1.3	IV
3	Illiteracy of gram Panchayat members leads to various difficulties in administrative works.	240	1.71	I	19	1.9	I	69	1.36	II	328	1.64	I
4	Delay in works due to red tapism.	181	1.29	VII	9	0.9	VI	41	0.82	VII	231	1.16	VII
5	Lack of participation of common man in developmental works.	183	1.31	VI	9	0.9	VI	44	0.88	VI			
6	Difficulties in passing various administrative resolution due to unavailability of required quorum.	192	1.37	V	10	1	V	49	0.98	V	251	1.26	V
7	Lack of awareness of duties among Panchayat members.	209	1.49	III	17	1.7	II	56	1.12	III	282	1.41	III

Abbreviations: T.S= Total Score, M.S= Mean Score, R= Rank

B. Financial Constraints

The study brought out most important constraints among financial category to be-'Insufficient grants from Govt. to meet socio-economic development needs of people' and 'Difficulty in obtaining financial assistance in cases where Panchayat is opposed to ruling party in the State.' In contrast with elected members, Govt. officials and local leaders placed another constraint at 2nd rank i.e.-'Low awareness regarding financial rights and rules among Panchayat members. The finding was supported by Bheemappa (2006) ^[2] who found that 86.60 per cent of the gram Panchayat members faced the problem of delay in sanctioning of funds followed by lack of training facility (75.83 percent), lack of co-operation from the villagers (68.53 percent), non-availability of proper building for the Panchayat (65.00 percent) and lack of time for

adequate guidance (50.00percent) in implementation of activities of gram Panchayat. Similarly, Kumari (2004) [7] in her study on Panchayat raj institutions reported that out of 11 constraints of role performance by women members, 8 viewed as most serious, they were lack of resources for developmental work (88.00 percent), lack of fund for carrying out the work of the projects (88.00 percent), lack of knowledge for the members (80.00 percent), availability of persons well versed with the rural projects (76.00 percent), lack of interest in developmental works (60 percent), carelessness among villagers for developmental works in their villages (64.00 percent), lack of education among Panchayat members (60.00 percent) and bribery and misappropriation of funds (52.00 percent).

Table 2: Financial constraints of gram Panchayats in village development as perceived by elected members, Govt. officials and Local leaders

S. No	Constraints encountered by Gram Panchayats in Village development	Elected Members		Govt. Officials			Local Leaders				verall	
		T.S.	M.S.	R	T.S.	M.S.	R	T.S.	M.S	R	T.S	M.S R
1	Difficulty in approval of financial resolution for want of full quorum.	180	1.29	V	11	1.1	V	52	1.04	V	243	1.22 V
2	Difficulty in obtaining financial assistance in cases where Panchayat is opposed to ruling party in state.	223	1.59	II	14	1.4	III	62	1.24	III	299	1.5 II
3	Insufficient grants from Govt. to meet socio-economic development needs of people.	238	1.7	I	18	1.8	I	80	1.6	Ι	336	1.68 I
4	Low awareness regarding financial rights and rules among Panchayat members.	209	1.49	III	16	1.6	II	68	1.36	II	293	1.47 III
5	Fear of strong oppose and future consequences on compelling local people to pay taxes.	189	1.35	IV	12	1.2	ΙV	49	0.98	VI	250	1.25IV
6	Red tapism in allocation and utilization of budget.	169	1.21	VI	8	0.8	VI	58	1.16	IV	235	1.18 V

C. Constraints of administrative nature

Constraints 'Due to loss of representation of Sarpanches in Panchayat Samitis, they find Panchayat Samitis disinterested in fulfilling their demands' and 'It is very difficult for Panchayat to gather required quorum for the meeting of Gram Sabha' were perceived to be the most important constraints by overall respondents. In supporting finding, on the basis of the analysis of Gram Sabha meetings, Jain (1997) [4] came to the following conclusion: "The level of participation of people

differed a great deal making the proceedings either dull or unproductive. Sometimes a majority of them were indifferent to the discussion and were content to attend it for a while and then leave in the middle. The meetings were also, at times, utilised by rival groups in criticising, ventilating, exposing and for condemning some of the actions of Panches and thereby settle their social and political scores by highlighting facts about miss appropriation of funds and other actual commission and other acts of commission or omission".

Table 3: Constraints of administrative nature of gram Panchayats in village development as perceived by elected members, Govt. officials and local leaders

S. No	Constraints encountered by Gram Panchayats in Village development		lected ember			Govt. fficial			Local eader		o	vera	ıll
		T.S.	M.S.	R	T.S.	M.S.	R	T.S.	M.S	R	T.S	M.S	R
1	Non-involvement of women members in Panchayat meeting and disregarding the view point of those who attend.	199	1.42	III	14	1.4	III	68	1.36	II	281	1.41	III
2	Due to loss of representation of Sarpanches in Panchayat Samities disinterested in fulfilling their demands.	237	1.69	I	17	1.7	II	83	1.66	I	337	1.69	Ι
3	It is very difficult for Panchayats to gather required quorum for the meeting of Gram Sabha.	229	1.64	II	18	1.8	Ι	61	1.22	III	308	1.54	II
4	Tight control of administrators on Panchayats.	162	1.16	VII	10	1	IV	48	0.96	VI	220	1.1	VII
5	Autocracy of Panchayat Secretary and his frequent interferences in development works.	187	1.36	IV	0	0	VII	56	1.12	IV	243	1.22	IV
6	Differences in opinion of bureaucrats and Panchayat leaders for the development.	168	1.2	VI	8	0.8	V	45	0.9	VII	221	1.11	VI
7	Lack of strong will among the bureaucrats for proper implementation of the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act. 1992	179	1.28	V	7	0.7	VI	52	1.04	V	238	1.19	V

D. Socio-political constraints

Overall respondent's wise results as well as respondent's category wise results showing a close similarity placed the two constraints 'Deep-rooted casteism in village being obstacle in development works' and 'Interferences by husbands of women members' at the 1st & 2nd ranks respectively. Thus these two constraints were perceived most important by all the categories of the respondents. It was obvious that due to disagreement between various castes on various development issues, the work might have been left

pending. Still women cannot work independently in politics. That's why interference of their husbands were observed. The finding is in line with that of Kamble (1998) ^[5] who observed that rigid casteism was a major problem expressed by 41.44 percent respondents of gram Panchayat members for achieving the progress. Kavya *et al.* (2015) ^[6] in his study also revealed that as for as utilization of power is concerned 40 percent of female respondents are not having full freedom to use their power. They have to take permission by their husband or son.

Table 4: Socio-political constraints of gram panchayats in village development as perceived by elected members, govt. officials and local leaders

S. No	Constraints encountered by Gram Panchayats in Village development		lecte embe		_	ovt. icial	als Leaders S. R T.S. M.S R T.S. 9 V 44 0.88 IX 193 8 VI 46 0.92 VIII 203 8 VI 46 0.92 VIII 213 6 I 79 1.58 I 348 9 V 48 0.96 VIII 199 4 II 72 1.44 II 312			Overs		ı	
		T.S.	M.S.	R	T.S.	M.S.	\mathbf{R}	T.S.	M.S	R	T.S	M.S	R
1	Interference by anti-social elements in development works due to political reasons.	140	1	X	9	0.9	V	44	0.88	IX	193	0.97	X
2	Difficulty in carrying out development works in village in the absence of general consent.	147	1.05	VIII	8	0.8	VI	46	0.92	VIII	201	1.01	VIII
3	Nepotism and favouritism in giving benefits to person by the Panchayats.	159	1.14	VII	8	0.8	VI	46	0.92	VIII	213	1.07	VII
4	Deep-rooted casteism in the villages being obstacle in development works.	253	1.81	I	16	1.6	I	79	1.58	I	348	1.74	I
5	Power toppling games due to various political reasons.	142	1.01	IX	9	0.9	V	48	0.96	VII	199	0.99	IX
6	Interferences by the husbands of the women members.	226	1.61	II	14	1.4	II	72	1.44	II	312	1.56	II
7	Election of undeserving candidates through reservation rules and thus debarring deserving person leads to slow development works.	203	1.45	III	12	1.2	III	63	1.26	III	267	1.34	III
8	Emergence of family problems due to shifting of women from home to politics after providing them reservation by 73rd Amendment act.	190	1.36	IV	10	1	IV	58	1.16	IV	258	1.29	IV
9	Dominance of higher castes in developmental works.	169	1.21	VI	8	0.8	VI	50	1	VI	227	1.14	VI
10	Interference by self-interested groups, businessmen, contractors. Social workers, religious leaders etc.	178	1.27	V	9	0.9	V	53	1.06	V	240	1.2	V

E. Constraints in promotion of literary activities

In close similarity with the respondent's category wise results, the overall respondents perceived 'Lack of schools up to required classes', 'Lack of library facilities in the village' and 'Lack of cheaper agricultural labourers compels rural people to engage their own children in agricultural works instead of

study' as the constraints of immense importance. Similarly Kavya *et al.* (2015) [4] in his study reported that 82 percent of respondents are opined that general awareness of education is increasing through membership of Gram Panchayat. But 18 percent of respondents are opined that they are facing lack of general awareness of education due to the reason of

illiteracy. Gupta and Sandhu (1994) [3] in their study on JRY in Rajouri district observed that lack of people's participation, delay in plan approval, inadequate funds, shortage of staff, non-availability of workers and absence of Panchayat buildings were the major problems faced by the gram

Panchayat in implementation of JRY. Bhatt and Kataria (2002) [1] reported that in some villages in Rajasthan there was not a single and literate woman in SC/ST category. Therefore, literacy as an eligibility condition for the post of Sarpanch had to be taken back.

Table 5: Constraints in promotion of literacy activities of gram panchayats in village development as perceived elected members, govt. officials and local leaders

S. No	Constraints encountered by Gram Panchayats in Village development		lected embers	S	_	Govt. Ticial	s		ocal ader	s	O	verall
		T.S.	M.S.	R	T.S.	M.S	R	T.S.	M.S	R	T.S	M.S F
1	Lack of library facilities in the village.	221	1.58	II	16	1.6	II	78	1.56	II	315	1.58 II
2	Lack of cheaper agricultural labourers compels rural people to engage their own children in agricultural works instead of study.	198	1.41	III	13	1.3	III					
3	Lack of schools up to required classes.	242	1.73	I	18	1.8	I	86	1.72	Ι	346	1.73 I
4	Lack of separate schools for girls.	183	1.31	IV	11	1.1	ΙV	69	1.38	ΙV	263	1.32IV

F. Judicial constraints

The study brought the top judicial constraints as 'Favours by members of Panchayats in dispensing justice in judicial cases dealt with by Panchayats' and 'Interference of police in dispensing justice at Panchayat level' on the perception of overall respondents as well as those from different categories. This may be justified with the reason that the Panchayat members were elected with the supports of their caste community and other self-interested groups who later on

compel them to safeguard their interests. The finding is in conformity with that of Nanda (2006) [9] who noted that 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. Women's participation in politics remained quite insignificant in India even after 59 years of self-rule.

Table 6: Judicial constraints of gram panchayat in the village development as perceived by elected members, govt. officials and local leaders

S. No	Constraints encountered by Gram Panchayats in Village development		lected embers	;		Govt. ficials	5	_	Local eaders	5	0	veral	11
		T.S.	M.S.	R	T.S.	M.S.	R	T.S.	M.S.	R	T.S	M.S.	R
1	Difficulty in dispensing of justice for want of quorum in Panchayat meetings.	180	1.29	V	12	1.2	ΙV	61	1.22	V	253	1.27	V
	Favours by members of Panchayats in dispensing justice in judicial cases dealt with by Panchayats.		1.7	I	16	1.6	I	89	1.78	I	343	1.72	Ι
3	Fear of harm by anti-social elements felt by Panchayat members in dispensing right justice.	193	1.38	III	14	1.4	III	73	1.46	III	280	1.4	III
4	Interference of police in dispensing justice at Panchayat level.	209	1.49	II	15	1.5	II	81	1.62	II	305	1.53	II
5	Favouritism by 'Patwaries' in dispensing justice regarding land matters.	189	1.35	IV	9	0.9	V	69	1.38	ΙV	267	1.34	ΙV

G. Constraints in promotion of agriculture and allied fields

All the categories of the respondents unanimously reported the constraints 'Short supply of electricity for irrigation', 'Ground-water level going down day by day' and 'Feeling of disgust by higher castes in starting poultry and piggery' as the most important constraints in promotion of agricultural and allied fields. Farmers were dependent on irrigation through wells and for this they need regular electric supply which is short. The reason behind the constraint 'Ground water level going down day by day' might be low water conservation practices adopted in Rajasthan. The finding was supported by

Paul *et al.* (2009) [10] who stated that sub-standard quality of the production inputs supplied to the Gram Panchayats from the Government was also an important roadblock in carrying out the development activities with respect to agriculture and dairy farming. The members were disappointed with the fact that the inputs supplied to them were neither timely nor in sufficient quantity supplied to satisfy the needs of the farmers. Many a times, the production inputs were supplied to them in the rainy season. As most of the Gram Panchayats did not have adequate storage facilities, the inputs got either damped or spoiled.

Table 7: Constraints in promotion of agriculture and allied fields by gram panchayats in village development as perceived by elected members, govt. officials and local leaders

S. No	Constraints encountered by Gram Panchayats in Village	Elected	Memb	ers		Fovt. Ficials	S	_	Local eader	s	O	vera	11
	development	T.S.	M.S.	R	T.S.	M.S	R	T.S.	M.S.	R	T.S.	M.S.	R
1	Unavailability of improved seeds and other inputs in the village itself.	169	1.21	VI	10	1	V	53	1.06	VI	232	1.16	VI
2	Lack of cooperation from officials in providing loan to the poor people.	178	1.27	VI	10	1	V	60	1.2	V	248	1.24	VI
3	Feeling of disgust by higher castes in starting poultry and piggery.	208	1.49	III	12	1.2	III	71	1.42	III	291	1.46	III
4	Short supply of electricity for irrigation.	240	1.71	III	16	1.6	III	82	1.64	I	338	1.69	I
5	Ground water level going down day by day.	220	1.57	II	15	1.5	II	76	1.52	II	311	1.56	II
6	Low support prices for cereal crops.	183	1.31	IV	11	1.1	IV	64	1.28	IV	258	1.29	IV
7	Distant markets being a major problem of transportation of agricultural goods.	158	1.13	VII	9	0.9	VI	48	0.96	VII	215	1.08	VII

H. Constraints in promotion of health related activities

Overall respondents' wise results showed that 'Shortage of medicines in the dispensary for free distribution and 'Unavailability of female nurse at health Centre' were the constraints of severe nature. Due to the poor economic conditions the villagers were unable to buy the costly medicines, not available in village dispensary in abundance

for villagers that's why this constraint was perceived. The finding was supported by Sodhi (2016) [12] who stated that Primary Health Centres (PHCs) were hardly concentrating on the preventive and primitive aspects of health. The infrastructure for patients was quite dilapidated. Since these were used largely for delivery cases, women preferred to stay for the minimum time.

Table 8: Constraints in promotion of health related activities by gram panchayats in village development as perceived by elected members, govt. officials and local leaders

S. No	Constraints encountered by Gram Panchayats in Village	Electe	d Mem	bers	Govt	Offic	ials	Local	Lead	lers	O	verall
5. 110	development	T.S.	M.S.	R	T.S.	M.S.	R	T.S.	M.S	R	T.S	M.S R
1	Lack of primary health centre in village.	184	1.31	IV	12	1.2	IV	57	1.14	IV	253	1.27IV
2	Shortage of medicines in the dispensary for free distribution.	238	17	I	16	1.6	II	74	1.48	II	328	1.64 I
3	Lack of proper medical facilities for annuals at the door-step of villagers.	196	1.4	III	14	1.4	III	83	1.66	Ι	293	1.47 III
4	Unavailability of female nurse at health centre.	212	1.51	II	18	1.8	I	68	1.36	III	298	1.49 II

Conclusions

In Rajasthan, with the changed composition of PRIs due to new reservation provisions of the 73rd amendment act, a large number of women (about 32000) and other representatives from SCs & STs (including OBC in Rajasthan) have been given opportunity to participate in grass root level democracy through nearly 10000 PRIs. These newly elected representatives as well as local leaders and govt. officials are facing various types of constraints in village development which have been enlisted in this study with their rank provided with respect to their seriousness as perceived by three different categories of respondents.

Illiteracy among PRI members, absence of clear role of Gram Sabha, insufficient grants, loss of representation of Sarpanches in Panchayat Samities, difficulty in gathering quorum in Gram Sabha, casteism, interference by husbands of women members, lack of schools/library, favouritism, interference by police, short supply of electricity, low ground level of water, shortage of medicines/female nurse at village level etc were the important constraints perceived by the respondents with relatively higher intensity. This study has defined their problems so that govt. can solve them for smooth functioning of democracy at grass root level.

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