

CONSTRAINTS ENCOUNTERED BY THE PANCHAYAT LEADERS IN PERFORMANCE OF THEIR DESIRED ROLES

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ABSTRACT

The future food production has to come from more difficult areas which are economically and ecologically at a disadvantage. This means our extension workers will have to keep in view the dynamics of rural situation, may be their extension tool and communicating strategy will have to be made more sophisticated and broad based to face new challenges. There are more than two lakh panchayats across the country represented by more than 30 lakh of elected leaders at all three levels. In the great majority of organisational settings, most jobs are structured such that the harder one works, the more effective his performance is likely to be. A study was carried out in Rajnandgaon district of Chhattisgarh in 2010-11 to identify the constraints faced by the panchayat leaders in their role performance. At the district level, 9 members who were chairperson of the standing committees of Jila panchayat and 6 members who were also the chairperson of the standing committees of each of the 9 Janpad panchayats of the district (6X9=54) were interviewed personally along with 200 Gram panchayat leaders (4 standing committee chairpersons each of 50 randomly selected gram panchayats) with the help of interview schedule. It was found that the most important constraint faced by majority of the gram panchayat leaders in the performance of their roles was that there was no provision of salary/honorarium/allowances/exclusive funds for gram panchayat members. A somewhat similar constraint was narrated by the janpad and jila panchayat leaders when they said that there were insufficient allowances to attend meetings and no provision of salary/honorarium as given to MPs and MLAs. As regards the suggestions given by the panchayat leaders that could help them to improve their role performance it could be concluded that provision of honorarium/allowances/salary to panchayat leaders may curtail corruption and enhance the role performance of gram panchayat leaders. Whereas the janpad and jila panchayat leaders suggested that separate fund should be granted, the expenditure of which should rest at the discretion of each elected panchayat leader in line with MPLADF and MLA Fund.

(Key words: Constraints, suggestions and panchayat leaders)

INTRODUCTION

Many new agricultural technologies and improved practices are being developed in agricultural research stations. Effective communication of these agricultural innovations to millions of farmers in rural area is essential to bring about accelerated agricultural development. The future food production has to come from more difficult areas which are economically and ecologically at a disadvantage. Agricultural development programme however well planned and imaginative, cannot make an impact on rural life unless it is backed both by extension and research support. This means our extension workers will have to keep in view the dynamics of rural situation, may be their extension tool and communicating strategy will have to be made more sophisticated and broad based to face new challenges. In fact, both extension and research strategy will have to be

consistent with fast changing socio-economic conditions. A basic function of extension is to assist the transfer of agricultural technology by ensuring that an adequate amount of high quality knowledge about it is present in the farming community for sustained agricultural development.

It is, therefore, not possible to have face to face contact with each and every individual living in the villages. This problem can be solved to some extent through the use of local leaders (Shrivastava, 2011). A local leader who has adopted improved practices extends the same to others. The common man has much faith in the local leaders. A villager would like to hear and imitate his own neighbour as compared to accepting the advice of an outside change-agent. The term "leader" implied a person who was clearly distinguished from other individuals in power, status, visibility and such traits of character as intelligence, integrity, courage, wisdom and judgement. Recent studies have indicated that differences between leaders and other

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members of a group are not as sharply defined as were previously believed, and have produced little evidence of universal character traits that would describe essential and distinguishing leadership qualities. There is all likelihood that many of the elected panchayat leaders can successfully play the role of opinion leadership and serve as a vital link in the extension system for dissemination of latest agricultural innovations to the farming community. There are more than two lakh panchayats across the country represented by more than 30 lakh of elected leaders at all three levels. Out of them, more than six lakh SC/ST's and more than ten lakh women have been holding the office of the members and chairpersons at different tiers of the panchayats. This is unparalleled across the world. In the great majority of organisational settings, most jobs are structured such that the harder one works, the more effective his performance is likely to be. Thus, group influences on the effort expanded by members on their jobs are both very pervasive and very potent determiners of individual work effectiveness.

When either effort or strategy or both are in fact important in determining performance effectiveness, the individual has substantial personal control over how well he does in his work. One management practice which in theory should contribute positively in meeting both the above conditions is the use of group participation in making decisions about work practices. Under the above circumstances a brief study was organised with the following objectives :

1. To identify the constraints encountered by the panchayat leaders in performance of their desired roles.
2. To obtain suggestions from the panchayat leaders that could enable them to improve their role performance.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Under the Constitution 73rd Amendment Act, 1992, the state legislatures have been given legislative power, to confer on Panchayats such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government. The success of Panchayati Raj Institutions depends largely upon the quality and competence of leadership available at the local level. A study was carried out in Rajnandgaon district of Chhattisgarh to identify the constraints faced by the panchayat leaders in their role performance. An ex-post facto research design was used for the study. At the district level, 9 members who were chairperson of the standing committees of Jila panchayat and 6 members who were also the chairperson of the standing committees of each of the 9 Janpad panchayats of the district (6X9=54) were interviewed personally along with 200 Gram panchayat leaders (4 standing committee chairpersons each of 50 randomly selected gram panchayats) with the help of interview schedule. The constraints and

suggestions narrated by the respondents were clubbed together under different categories and ranked accordingly following Shrivastava (1999) .

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Constraints faced by the panchayat leaders are never ending. However, they can certainly be minimized if known to the policy makers and planners. During the course of this investigation the panchayat leaders expressed many constraints. Some of the important constraints were grouped into five categories: administrative constraints, communicational constraints, financial/economic constraints, institutional/organisational constraints and socio personal constraints which have been presented below.

The constraints in table 1 have been ranked on the basis of percentage in chronological order as follows: no provision of salary/honorarium/allowances/ exclusive funds for gram panchayat members (82.50%), lack of funds/grants from outside agencies like state/central government, foreign donors, non government organisations and inadequate local generation (70.50%), demand for financial benefits by officers of departments like PWD, irrigation, PHE etc. for conducting technical audit of projects (69.50%), lesser trainings are organised at local level thereby ruling out maximum participation (68.00%), sarpanches carry out the work as one-man show because more powers are vested in the post of sarpanches (62.50%), insufficient cooperation from government officers of various departments and their unnecessary interference (57.50%), inadequate devolution of financial and administrative powers to panchayats (56.00%), lack of cooperation amongst the panchayat members (55.50%), lack of awareness about all developmental programmes (54.50%), undue delay in grant of approval/sanction of plans/programmes/schemes of gram panchayats by janpad and jila panchayats (50.50%), factionalism amongst the villagers (48.50%), lack of supporting staff at the gram panchayats (47.50%), low knowledge of rules, regulations and panchayati raj act (46.00%), favouritism in identification of beneficiaries for various developmental programmes/ schemes (45.50%), panchayat members including sarpanches indulge in groupism (44.50%), lack of need based developmental programmes implemented by state and central governments (42.00%), political interference (39.00%), panchayat meetings are not convened timely and prior information of meetings is not given to all members (38.50%), inadequate communicational support from janpad and jila panchayat members (35.50%), panchayat leaders are by and large ignorant about their responsibilities (33.50%) and villagers show no interest to participate in the gram sabha (31.50%). The above findings were found to be similar to the findings of Deka (2016), Ghosh (2016) and Shrivastava (2003) ,who reported that bureaucratic apathy, non cooperation and interference, lack of funds, grants from outside agencies and inadequate local generation were some of the main constraints.

Table 2 presents the constraints encountered by janpad and jila panchayat leaders in performance of their desired roles which are sequentially arranged in the descending order of their percentage calculated on the basis of multiple frequencies as follows: insufficient allowances to attend meetings and no provision of salary/honorarium as given to MPs and MLAs (87.30%), lack of administrative powers to supervise over the officials working under the panchayat system (80.95%), members elected for janpad or jila panchayat for the first time take time to learn the procedures and are unaware of their powers/responsibility (79.37%), jila and janpad panchayat members have little executionary roles (77.77%), decentralisation of financial powers has not been satisfactorily carried out (74.60%), non provision of compulsory training for newly elected panchayat leaders regarding working of panchayats (68.25%), discrimination on political/gender basis is common (65.08%), non cooperation from government officers for rural development activities and other day to day work (63.49%), inadequate periodical review of all developmental works undertaken by the panchayats (61.90%), panchayat leaders elected for the first time are unaware of the rules and regulations (57.14%), lack of coordination among the different tiers of panchayats (55.55%), general lack of interest of members in developmental work (53.97%), corrupt practices prevailing among the government officers and also among the elected leaders of the panchayat (52.38%), groupism of member on political/caste basis (50.79%), insufficient information about the developmental programmes implemented by the state and central governments (47.62%), under utilisation of commonly available information sources (46.03%), lack of expertise in financial management and financial audit (44.44%), undue delay in preparation of annual plans and sanction/approval of such plans/programmes/schemes (42.86%), procedural complications to follow rules and regulations create hindrance in day to day work (39.68%), inadequate budgetary allocations to uniformly cover all the three tiers of panchayats of the entire district (34.92%) and vested interest of each member or each group obstructs the smooth functioning of panchayats (33.33%). These findings find support from the findings of Shrivastava (1999), who found in his study that lack of financial support from the government and provision of honorarium to grass root level formal leaders; lack of knowledge regarding rural development programme, lack of training, lack of administrative and financial power etc. were some of the important constraints.

The suggestions given by gram panchayat leaders to improve their role performance are given in Table 3. Some of the important suggestions have been ranked in the chronological order of multiple frequencies and percentage as follows: provision of honorarium/allowances/salary to panchayat leaders may curtail corruption and enhance their role performance (85.50%), curtailment of corruption should be the priority of state government (80.00%), approval/sanction of plans/projects prepared by gram panchayats

should be made time bound to reduce delay (75.50%), administrative powers to panchayats to supervise the developmental works at village level should be provided (73.50%), development works should be properly prioritised as per local needs and should be carried out by mutual discussion/consent of all members (67.50%), training and exchange programmes should be frequent and of short duration to enhance awareness of panchayat leaders (55.50%), awareness programmes/trainings on rules and regulations and day to day working of panchayats should be made compulsory for newly elected panchayat leaders (54.00%), due consideration should be given to elected gram panchayat leaders views (49.00%), elected panchayat leaders should work in close cooperation and perfect harmony for the development of their villages (45.50%), government officials working at village level should ensure their whole hearted support to gram panchayat leaders (42.50%) and panchayat leaders doing exemplary work for the development of their villages should be motivated by honours and rewards (39.50%). These findings are variance with the bindings of Shivhare (2009) and Singh *et al.* (2016).

The suggestions given by janpad and jila panchayat leaders to improve their role performance are given in table 4 and have been sequentially arranged as follows: separate fund should be granted, the expenditure of which should rest at the discretion of each elected panchayat leader in line with MPLADF and MLA fund (87.30%), check and control system should prevent the practice of financial corruption (80.95%), provision of salary/honorarium/ allowances should be comparable to the ground realities (77.77%), common man i.e. villagers/rural people should be made aware to ensure their participation in the developmental process (71.43%), timely trainings should be compulsorily organised specially for newly elected leaders so that they are properly oriented on all aspects of panchayats and rural development (65.08%), periodic monitoring and evaluation of developmental work by elected leaders will improve execution (60.32%), budgetary limits/ extent of grants should be realistic and in consonance to the size and population of the district (58.73%), administrative powers should be further decentralised so that officials working directly under panchayats are brought under their supervisory jurisdiction (53.97%), financial powers should be increased and the leaders should be adequately trained in financial management (52.38%) and working rules and regulations should be simplified and be flexible enough to cater to the requirements of the poor and needy people (41.27%). These findings are in support with the findings of Thakur (2006), who showed that the main suggestions in his study were awareness should be increased among the villagers about rural development activities, financial grant should be increased, official procedures should be easy, quick and timely etc. Shrivastava (2011) also reported that separate fund should be granted, the expenditure of which should rest at the discretion of each elected panchayat leader in line with MPLADF and MLA fund, check and control system should

Table 1. Constraints encountered by gram panchayat leaders in performance of their desired roles

Sr. No.	Constraints	Frequency*	Per cent	Rank
A. Administrative Constraints				
1.	Favouritism in identification of beneficiaries for various developmental programmes/ schemes	91	45.50	XIV
2.	Lack of supporting staff at the gram panchayats	95	47.50	XII
3.	Inadequate devolution of financial and administrative powers to panchayats	112	56.00	VII
4.	Lack of need based developmental programmes implemented by state and central governments	84	42.00	XVI
5.	Insufficient cooperation from government officers of various departments and their unnecessary interference	115	57.50	VI
6.	Undue delay in grant of approval/sanction of plans/programmes/ schemes of gram panchayats by janpad and jila panchayats	101	50.50	X
B. Communicational Constraints				
1.	Panchayat meetings are not convened timely and prior information of meetings is not given to all members	77	38.50	XVIII
2.	Lack of knowledge regarding rules, regulations and Panchayati Raj Act etc.	92	46.00	XIII
3.	Inadequate communicational support from janpad and jila panchayat members	71	35.50	XIX
C. Financial/Economic Constraints				
1.	Lack of funds/grants from outside agencies like state/central government, foreign donors, NGOs and inadequate local generation	141	70.50	II
2.	No provision of salary/honorarium/ allowances/exclusive funds for gram panchayat members	165	82.50	I
3.	Demand for financial benefits by officers of departments like PWD, Irrigation, PHE etc. for conducting technical audit of projects	139	69.50	III
D. Institutional/organisational Constraints				
1.	Panchayat members including sarpanches indulge in groupism	89	44.50	XV
2.	Lack of cooperation amongst the panchayat members	111	55.50	VIII
3.	Political interference	78	39.00	XVII
4.	Lesser trainings are organised at local level thereby ruling out maximum participation	136	68.00	IV
E. Socio Personal Constraints				
1.	Panchayat leaders are by and large ignorant about their responsibilities	67	33.50	XX
2.	Sarpanches carry out the work as one-man show because more powers are vested in the post of sarpanches	125	62.50	V
3.	Lack of awareness about all developmental programmes	109	54.50	IX
4.	Factionalism amongst the villagers	97	48.50	XI
5.	Villagers show no interest to participate in the gram sabha	63	31.50	XXI

* Frequencies based on multiple responses

Table 2 . Constraints encountered by janpad and jila panchayat leaders in performance of their desired roles

Sr. No.	Constraints	Frequency*	Per cent	Rank
A. Administrative Constraints				
1.	Lack of administrative powers to supervise over the officials working under the panchayat system	51	80.95	II
2.	Groupism of member on political/caste basis	32	50.79	XIV
3.	Non cooperation from government officers for rural development activities and other day to day work	40	63.49	VIII
4.	Undue delay in preparation of annual plans and sanction/approval of such plans/ programmes/schemes	27	42.86	XVIII
5.	Inadequate periodical review of all developmental works undertaken.	39	61.90	IX
6.	Procedural complications to follow rules and regulations create hindrance in day to day work	25	39.68	XIX
B. Communicational Constraints				
1.	Panchayat leaders elected for the first time are unaware of the rules.	36	57.14	X
2.	Insufficient information about the developmental programmes implemented by the state and central governments	30	47.62	XV
3.	No provision of compulsory training for newly elected panchayat leaders regarding working of panchayats	43	68.25	VI
4.	Under utilisation of commonly available information sources	29	46.03	XVI
C. Financial/Economic Constraints				
1.	Inadequate budgetary allocations to uniformly cover all the three tiers of panchayats of the entire district	22	34.92	XX
2.	Corrupt practices prevailing among the government officers and also among the elected leaders of the panchayat	33	52.38	XIII
3.	Decentralisation of financial powers has not been satisfactorily carried out	47	74.60	V
4.	Insufficient allowances to attend meetings and no provision of salary/honorarium as given to MPs and MLAs	55	87.30	I
5.	Lack of expertise in financial management and financial audit	28	44.44	XVII
D. Institutional/organisational Constraints				
1.	Lack of coordination among the different tiers of panchayats	35	55.55	XI
2.	Vested interest of each member or each group obstructs the smooth functioning of panchayats	21	33.33	XXI
E. Socio Personal Constraints				
1.	Members elected for janpad or jila panchayat for the first time take time to learn the procedures and are unaware of their powers/ responsibility	50	79.37	III
2.	Discrimination on political/gender basis is common	41	65.08	VII
3.	Jila and janpad panchayat members have little executionary roles	49	77.77	IV
4.	General lack of interest of members in developmental work	34	53.97	XII

* Frequencies based on multiple responses

Table 3 . Suggestions given by the gram panchayat leaders that could enable them to improve their role performance

Sr. No.	Constraints	Frequency*	Per cent	Rank
1.	Development works should be properly prioritised as per local needs and should be carried out by mutual discussion/ consent of all members	135	67.50	V
2.	Training and exchange programmes should be frequent and of short duration to enhance awareness of panchayat leaders	111	55.50	VI
3.	Due consideration should be given to elected gram panchayat leaders views	98	49.00	VIII
4.	Administrative powers to panchayats to supervise the developmental works at village level should be provided	147	73.50	IV
5.	Provision of honorarium/allowances/salary to panchayat leaders may curtail corruption and enhance their role performance	171	85.50	I
6.	Approval/sanction of plans/projects prepared by gram panchayats should be made time bound to reduce delay	151	75.50	III
7.	Awareness programmes/trainings on rules and regulations and day to day working of panchayats should be made compulsory for newly elected panchayat leaders.	108	54.00	VII
8.	Elected panchayat leaders should work in close cooperation and perfect harmony for the development of their villages	91	45.50	IX
9.	Government officials working at village level should ensure their whole hearted support to gram panchayat leaders	85	42.50	X
10.	Panchayat leaders doing exemplary work for the development of their villages should be motivated by honours and rewards	79	39.50	XI
11.	Curtailement of corruption should be the priority of state government	160	80.00	II

* Frequencies based on multiple responses

Table 4 . Suggestions given by the janpad and jila panchayat leaders that could enable them to improve their role performance

Sr. No.	Constraints	Frequency*	Per cent	Rank
1.	Budgetary limits/extent of grants should be realistic and in consonance to the size and population of the district	37	58.73	VII
2.	Provision of salary/honorarium/allowances should be comparable to the ground realities	49	77.77	III
3.	Separate fund should be granted, the expenditure of which should rest at the discretion of each elected panchayat leader in line with MPLADF and MLA Fund	55	87.30	I
4.	Administrative powers should be further decentralised so that officials working directly under panchayats are brought under their supervisory jurisdiction	34	53.97	VIII
5.	Timely trainings should be compulsorily organised specially for newly elected leaders so that they are properly oriented on all aspects of panchayats and rural development	41	65.08	V
6.	Periodic monitoring and evaluation of developmental work by elected leaders will improve execution	38	60.32	VI
7.	Working rules and regulations should be simplified and be flexible enough to cater to the requirements of the poor and needy people	26	41.27	X
8.	Check and control system should prevent the practice of financial corruption	51	80.95	II
9.	Common man i.e. villagers/rural people should be made aware to ensure their participation in the developmental process	45	71.43	IV
10.	Financial powers should be increased and the leaders should be adequately trained in financial management	33	52.38	IX

* Frequencies based on multiple responses

prevent the practice of financial corruption etc were some of the main suggestions.

A conclusion can safely be drawn from the study that the most important constraint faced by majority of the gram panchayat leaders in the performance of their roles was that there was no provision of salary/honorarium/allowances/exclusive funds for gram panchayat members. A somewhat similar constraint was narrated by the janpad and jila panchayat leaders when they said that there were insufficient allowances to attend meetings and no provision of salary/honorarium as given to MPs and MLAs. As regards the suggestions given by the panchayat leaders that could help them to improve their role performance it could be concluded that provision of honorarium/allowances/salary to panchayat leaders may curtail corruption and enhance the role performance of gram panchayat leaders. Whereas the janpad and jila panchayat leaders suggested that separate fund should be granted, the expenditure of which should rest at the discretion of each elected panchayat leader in line with MPLADF and MLA Fund.

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