AWARENESS LEVEL AMONG PANCHAYAT REPRESENTATIVES ABOUT PANCHAYATI RAJ

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Abstract

The representatives of panchayati raj institutions of Deoria district of Uttar Pradesh, both elected (168) and government officials (37) associated with panchayat bodies structured at Village (10), C.D. Block (1) and District (1) were studied to find out their awareness level about panchayati raj on 4 aspects, *viz* general awareness, constitutional awareness, awareness about structure and also about functions, of panchayati raj. The study revealed that, both categories of respondents have average to low level of awareness about general, constitutional status and functional awareness but average to high awareness observed in case of awareness related to structure of panchayats. The overall awareness of these functionaries was also observed as average to low but significant awareness difference found in both type of respondents. The socio-economic characteristics (10) of respondents have significant association with respondent's awareness level. The age, education, caste, occupation and social participation of respondents significantly decides their awareness level about panchayati raj system.

Key words : Awareness level, Elected Representatives (E.Rs.), Government Officials (G.Os), Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), Three tier- Zilla Panchayat, Kshetra Panchayat and Village Panchayat.

Introduction

Awareness deals with the perception and knowledge of a person about any particular object, idea, concept or work etc. It decides his working performance in any institution which leads to his job performance also. The level of awareness of panchayat functionaries is referred as the degree to which these functionaries were familiar with the knowledge about the different subject matter and content of panchayati raj system of the country. It determines the perception and knowledge of Elected Representatives (E.Rs.) and Government Officials (G.Os.) of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) about the system and also affects their working pattern and outcome of panchayat bodies.

Therefore, it was found important and taken for the present study and operationalized as to investigate the conceptual knowledge of respondents about panchayat raj in terms of meaning, general perception, historical perspectives, and various committees on it as well as 73rd constitution Amendment Act of 1992 with its important features, provisions, efforts of government and

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power and responsibilities given to PRIs.

Objectives

1. To study the difference in Level of awareness and personal & socio-economic characteristics of respondents (ERs & GOs).

2. To find out association of awareness level of respondents with their personal & socio-economic characteristics.

3. To predict the awareness level of respondents (ERs, GOs & Overall) on the basis of their personal & socio-economic characteristics.

Research Methodology

The study was conducted in a purposively selected Deoria district of Uttar Pradesh at all the three levels of panchayati raj system as Zila Panchayat (ZP), Kshetra Panchayat (KP), and Village Panchayat (VP) levels. In first stage the zilla panchayat of Deoria district was selected. Thereafter tehsil Salempur was selected purposively and there from one Kshetra panchayat of Bhatni C. D. Block was selected. The kshetra panchayat of Bhatni has 58 village panchayat out of these only 5

village panchayats were selected randomly. There were two category of respondents- Elected Representatives (E.Rs.) and Government Officials (G.Os.) of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)- were selected in the study at all the selected three tiers of panchayat bodies. All the ERs (66 of 5 VP, 62 of KP, & 40 of ZP) and GOs (10 of 5 VP, 11 of KP, & 16 of ZP) were selected for the study. So there were 205 total respondents were selected in the present study.

The data were collected with pre-structured interview schedule and analyzed with help of mean, Standard Deviation, Students Z-test, Correlation Coefficient, and Regression Coefficient.

Results and Discussion

Socio-Economic Status (S.E.S.)

It is evident from table 1 that, in case of elected representative, majority (63.69 per cent) of respondents had medium level of socio-economic status followed by 18.45 per cent and 17.86 per cent respondents who had low and high level of socio-economic status, respectively. As far as government officials were concerned, majority (70.27 per cent) of respondents had medium level of socio-economic status followed by 16.22 per cent and 13.51 per cent of respondents who had high and low level of socio-economic status, respectively. The finding moderately supporting the views of Mandal and Ray (1996).

It may be inferred that the majority of respondents of both the categories had medium level of socio-economic status, but the trend of socio-economic status was medium to low in case of elected representatives and medium to high in case of government officials of PRIs.

However, the low socio-economic status was found more among the respondents of elected representative as compared with respondents of government officials. This proves that the selected respondents were the true representative of universe.

Differences in personal and socio-economic characteristics of respondents

The table 2 indicates that, the calculated values of all the personal and socio-economic characteristics including the socio-economic status of respondents were found to be significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected but our alternative hypothesis is accepted. The findings indicates that there was a significant difference between all the personal and socio-economic characteristics of both categories of respondents. The socio-economic status of both categories of respondents was also

Table 1 : Distribution of respondents according to their socio-economic status (S.E.S.).

(E.Rs. = 168, G.Os. = 37, N = 205)

S. no.	Category	Frequency of Elected Representatives (E.Rs.)	Frequency of Government Officials (G.Os.)
1.	Low	31 (18.48)	05 (13.51)
2.	Medium	107 (63.69)	26 (70.27)
3.	High	30 (17.86)	06 (16.22)
	Total	168 (100.00)	37 (100.00)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage.

Table 2 : Significance of difference in the personal and socio-economic characteristics of two categories (E.Rs. and G.Os.) of respondents.

S. no.	Personal and Socio-economic Characteristics (Independent variables)	Significance of Difference (Z–values)
1.	Age	5.69*
2.	Education	13.40*
3.	Caste	5.27*
4.	Occupation	9.43*
5.	House	11.84*
6.	Material Possession	10.25*
7.	Family (Size & Type)	2.48*
8.	Land Possession	6.84*
9.	Farm Power	3.02*
10.	Social Participation	15.48*
	Socio-economic status	11.31*

*Significant at 5 per cent level of probability (Z-table value = 1.96).

significantly differing with each other.

It may be concluded that, the government officials of panchayati raj institutions had better socio-economic status compare to elected representatives of these bodies. It might be due to the panchayati raj institution increases the social status of elected representatives but it did not play any important role in their economic status. On the other hand the social and economic status of government officials was better might be due to the fixed pay and designation in PR bodies.

Level of awareness among the respondents about Panchayati Raj System

In order to find out the degree of awareness level of respondents Elected Representatives (E.Rs.) and

Table 3 : Distribution of respondents according to their level of awareness about panchayati raj system.

(E.Rs. = 168, G.Os. = 37, N = 205)

S. no.	Awareness Level Categories	Degree of awareness level							
		Elected Representatives Frequency			Total	Government Officials Frequency			Total
		Low	Medium	High		Low	Medium	High	
1.	General Awareness	22 (13.10)	116 (69.05)	30 (17.85)	168 (100.00)	04 (10.81)	26 (70.27)	07 (18.92)	37 (100.00)
2.	Constitutional status	44 (26.19)	103 (61.31)	21 (12.50)		07 (18.92)	28 (75.68)	02 (5.40)	
3.	Structure	29 (17.26)	85 (50.60)	54 (32.14)		01 (2.70)	32 (86.49)	04 (10.81)	
4.	Function	28 (16.67)	126 (75.00)	14 (8.33)		05 (13.51)	29 (78.38)	03 (8.11)	
	Level of awareness (overall)	34 (20.24)	108 (64.29)	26 (15.47)		06 (16.21)	26 (70.27)	05 (13.52)	

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage.

Table 4 : Significance of difference in the level of awareness between two categories of respondents– Elected Representatives (E.Rs.) and Government Officials (G.Os.)

S. no.	Categories of Awareness Level	Significance of Difference (Z-values)
1.	General Awareness	10.83*
2.	Constitutional Status	14.82*
3.	Structure	14.75*
4.	Functions	12.42*
	Level of Awareness (Overall)	17.16*

* Significant at 5 per cent level of probability (Z-table value = 1.96)

Government Officials (G.Os.) about the panchayati raj system, the items of scale grouped in 4 categories as general awareness, awareness about constitutional status, about structure and about functions of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), beside their overall awareness level. The total obtainable score was also distributed accordingly. The following table no. 3 highlights the distribution of respondents on the basis of their awareness level.

In case of elected representatives (table 3), the majority of respondents had medium level of awareness about functions, general awareness, constitutional status and structure of PRIs..

In case of the government officials identical trends were observed as was found in case of the elected representatives. Similar findings reported by Khare (2001), Rajneesh (2002) and Tyagi and Sinha (2003).

In view of the above findings, it is concluded that level of awareness about every details of panchayati raj system was not found at considerable extent even among the government officials beside elected representatives.

Difference in the level of awareness among two categories of respondents elected representatives and government officials

In order to test the significance in difference between the two categories of respondent with respect to their level of awareness, the hypothesis was tested with the help of "Student's" Z-test.

It is evident from the table 4 that, the level of awareness on four identified areas as well as overall awareness about panchayati raj system among two categories of respondents were found to be significant at 5 per cent probability level of "Student's" Z Test. The findings confirms the alternative hypothesis, there was significant difference in the awareness level of both categories of respondents. That difference was found not only with overall awareness level but also with all 4 areas of awareness level as awareness about general perception of P.R., awareness about constitutional status, about structure and about functions of panchayat raj system. Findings are in the line of Sharma (1996).

Association of personal and socio-economic characteristics of Elected Representatives (E.Rs.), Government Officials (G.Os.) and overall respondents with their level of awareness

An effort has been made to find out the effect of personal and socio-economic characteristics (independent

Table 5 : Association of personal and socio-economic characteristics of elected representatives with their level of awareness.

(E.Rs. = 168)

Dependent variable Independent variables	Level of Awareness				Awareness Level (Overall)
	General Awareness	Constitutional Status	Structure	Functions	
Age	0.1203*	0.1247*	0.0996	0.0063	0.0941
Education	0.7335*	0.7114*	0.6606*	0.6447*	0.7419*
Caste	0.4918*	0.4635*	0.4701*	0.4536*	0.5116*
Occupation	0.5246*	0.4845*	0.4756*	0.4757*	0.5259*
Family	0.2086*	0.2787*	0.2437*	0.2098*	0.2507*
Land Possession	0.4791*	0.4183*	0.4429*	0.4277*	0.4696*
Social Participation	0.2702*	0.2256*	0.2497*	0.3276*	0.2901*
SES	0.6883*	0.6531*	0.6509*	0.6361*	0.7101*

* Significant at 5 per cent level of probability.

Table 6 : Association of level of awareness with personal and socio- economic characteristics of government officials.

(G.Os. = 37)

Dependent variable Independent variables	Level of Awareness				Awareness Level (Overall)
	General Awareness	Constitutional Status	Structure	Functions	
Age	0.2071	0.0661	0.2109	0.1361	0.0906
Education	0.0981	0.2722*	0.4006*	0.4672*	0.3654*
Caste	0.6009*	0.4997*	0.0936	0.0636	0.4924*
Occupation	0.2586*	0.1509	0.3638*	0.3729*	0.0175
Family	0.0423	0.1427	0.2859*	0.3434*	0.1809
Land Possession	0.2608*	0.0249	0.4677*	0.2773*	0.0571
Social Participation	0.1251	0.0425	0.3854*	0.4085*	0.0983
SES	0.4815*	0.3103*	0.1456	0.1566	0.2773*

*Significant at 5 per cent level of probability

Table 7 : Association of level of awareness with personal and socio-economic characteristics of respondents (Overall).

(N = 205)

Dependent variable Independent variables	Level of Awareness				Awareness Level (Overall)
	General Awareness	Constitutional Status	Structure	Functions	
Age	0.0748	0.1311*	0.1108*	0.1688*	0.1342*
Education	0.7703*	0.7699*	0.7361*	0.7224*	0.7987*
Caste	0.5797*	0.5556*	0.5189*	0.5019*	0.5795*
Occupation	0.6275*	0.6359*	0.5655*	0.5511*	0.6395*
Family	0.0736	0.0738	0.0905	0.0519	0.0707
Land Possession	0.3286*	0.2167*	0.2645*	0.2524*	0.2711*
Social Participation	0.4841*	0.5099*	0.4733*	0.5216*	0.5359*
SES	0.7541*	0.7339*	0.7108*	0.6911*	0.7717*

*Significant at 5 per cent level of probability.

Table 8 : Multiple regression analysis of personal and socio-economic characteristics with level of awareness among the respondents E.Rs., G.Os. and Overall.

(E.Rs. = 168, G.Os. = 37, N = 205)

S. no.	Independent Variables	Regression Analysis					
		Elected Representatives (E.Rs.)		Government Officials (G.Os.)		Overall Respondents	
		'Beta' weights	't' values	'Beta' weights	't' values	'Beta' weights	't' values
1.	Age	0.360 (0.125)	2.882*	0.147 (0.180)	0.814	0.293 (0.106)	2.769*
2.	Education	2.843 (1.458)	1.950	2.509 (2.120)	1.184	3.182 (1.262)	2.520*
3.	Caste	1.118 (1.512)	0.739	2.830 (1.804)	1.568	0.202 (1.241)	0.163
4.	Occupation	0.319 (1.618)	0.197	1.563 (2.204)	0.709	0.741 (1.291)	0.574
5	House	1.893 (2.052)	0.922	2.424 (2.931)	0.827	1.066 (1.642)	0.649
6.	Material Possession	1.271 (1.729)	0.735	7.901 (2.169)	3.643*	2.031 (1.399)	1.451
7.	Family	1.425 (2.108)	0.676	1.151 (2.908)	0.396	1.087 (1.800)	0.604
8.	Land Possession	2.591 (1.836)	1.412	2.927 (2.654)	1.103	1.867 (1.541)	1.212
9.	Farm Power	0.731 (1.584)	0.461	1.504 (1.870)	0.804	0.338 (1.309)	0.258
10.	Social Participation	1.817 (2.186)	0.831	5.638 (4.159)	1.356	2.443 (1.884)	1.296
	Socio-economic status	1.268 (1.385)	0.916	1.648 (1.870)	0.882	0.700 (1.177)	0.595
		Multiple 'R' = 0.7935 'R' square = 0.6297 Standard Error = 9.8915 'F' value = 24.1184* at 11, 156 and 167 d.f.		Multiple 'R' = 0.8243 'R' square = 0.6794 Standard Error = 4.6194 'F' value = 4.6256* at 25 and 36 d.f.		Multiple 'R' = 0.8587 'R' square = 0.7373 Standard Error = 9.2891 'F' value = 49.2551* at 11, 193 and 204 d.f.	

Figures in parentheses indicate Standard Error of 'Beta' weights,   * Significant at 5 per cent level of probability.

variables) of respondents on their level of awareness (dependent variable) about panchayat raj system. The selected independent variables were age, education, caste, occupation, family, land and social participation and the dependent variable was level of awareness about panchayat raj system. In order to study the relationship the correlation coefficient was calculated. The obtained values of correlation coefficients were tested for their significance of effect.

It is evident from the table 5 that, the level of awareness about general awareness and constitutional status as well as overall awareness about panchayati raj system was affected by their age, education, caste, occupation, family, land possession and social participation as well as their socio-economic status.

In case of government officials, the table 6 indicates that the education, caste and socio-economic status of the respondents were found to be affecting their awareness level about panchayati raj system. The other characteristics of personal and socio-economic status like

age, occupation, family, land possession and social participation were played moderate role in this context.

Table 7 revealed that, all the selected independent variables personal and socio-economic characteristics except family of respondents were found positive and significantly associated with their level of awareness (overall). The findings indicated that family had not been playing any role in determining the awareness level of respondents.

Prediction of dependent variable – Level of Awareness – of Respondents– E.Rs., G.Os. and Overall – based on their independent variables – personal and socio-economic characteristics

The multiple regression analysis was calculated to know the important independent variables with their prediction ability in explaining the dependent variables of respondents E.Rs., G.Os. and Overall.

Multiple regression equation–I

Multiple regression equation with 10 independent variables and socio-economic status for predicting the level of awareness of respondents – E.Rs., G.Os. and Overall. As per the table 6.2.6, the values of multiple correlation (R), when all the 10 independent variables and SES were used to predict the awareness level score of respondents were 0.7935 for E.Rs., 0.8243 for G.Os. and 0.8587 for overall respondents and the coefficient of determination (R^2) values were 0.6297, 0.6794 and 0.7373, respectively, for the E.Rs., G.Os. and Overall respondent. Thus, the variation of 62.97 per cent, 67.94 per cent and 73.73 per cent in the level of awareness score was explained by all the 10 independent variables and SES together.

The calculated 'F' values (24.12, 4.626 and 49.26) were found to be significant which suggests the desirability of analyzing the beta weights resulting from multiple regression analysis. The calculated 't' values of beta () weights were given in the same table. According to 't' test criterion, the variables age of E.Rs., Material Possession of G.Os. and Age and Education of Overall respondents were found to be positive and significant at 5 per cent level of probability. Thus, the variables namely Age of E.Rs., Material Possession of G.Os. and Age and Education of Overall respondents had contributed to most in the prediction of level of awareness scores of respondents.

It indicates that, the Age of E.Rs. was significantly affected their level of awareness. The adult E.Rs. were more aware about panchayati raj compare to young E.Rs. The regression analysis of awareness level score of G.Os. indicates that their awareness was significantly associated with only their material possession whereas the overall respondents regression analysis furnished that, their age and education were deciding variables of their awareness level about panchayati raj system. It seems that, with increasing age and qualifications, they have a tendency to get more knowledge about their organization.

Conclusion

The present study indicates that a significant difference found among elected representatives and government officials awareness level not only about overall perspectives of panchayati raj but also about its general awareness, constitutional status, structural, and functional awareness. The government officials were more aware about these parameters of awareness compare to elected representatives. The study also reveals significant association of respondent's awareness level with their personal and socio-economic characteristics. The study further suggests that a comprehensive training programme should be organized for elected representatives and government officials to make them aware and comprehend on every details of the panchayat raj system. The training programme should not be arranged for once but should be arranged time to time as per the developmental activities of the area to be undertaken. This training programme will not be a unique suggestion similar type of training and orientation programme should be organized regularly.

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