

# Role Perception and Performance of Women Members in Panchayat Raj

D.D. Suradkar<sup>1</sup>, S.D. Wangikar<sup>2</sup> and P.K. Wakale<sup>3</sup>

## Introduction

Panchayat Raj movement in India got initiated with Mahatma Gandhi's concept of Gram Swaraj, considering every village as a republic enjoying powers to decide at the bottom. Further the states were made responsible to organize village Panchayats and endow them with powers and authority to enable them to perform as self government.

Finally, the Panchayat Raj movement in India was started in pursuance of Balwantrai Mehta committee report (1957). The purpose of establishing the Panchayats, when they were first proposed at the time of drafting of the constitution, was precisely to give an opportunity to millions of men and women to increasingly acquire greater awareness of their rights and responsibilities and about their surroundings and all that happens in the sphere of politics and economics that affects them and the country (Jain, 1994). Panchayat Raj Institutions after 50 years of service to the country are still in the process of evolution after undergoing a series of morphological changes. One among those changes is the participation of women in Panchayat Raj Institutions which is necessary for realizing the developmental goals for women, especially in the field of agriculture and allied areas.

It is inquisitive to explore whether the rural women are aware about their role as members of Panchayat Raj and whether they perform the said role as per expectations and to what extent? These questions need answers. It was observed that there were few researches in this area and hence the present study was undertaken with following specific objectives:

1. To identify the role perception of the elected women members.
2. To examine the role performance of the elected women members.

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<sup>1</sup>Sub-Editor, Directorate of Extension Education, PDKV, Akola

<sup>2</sup>Professor, Department of Extension Education, MAU, Parbhani

<sup>3</sup>Associate Professor, Directorate of Extension Education, PDKV, Akola

## Methodology

The study was conducted in Parbhani district of Maharashtra state. The elected female representatives at three levels viz., Zilla Parishad, Panchayat Samiti and gram panchayats formed the population for the study. All the 20 elected female members of Zilla Parishad and 40 members of the Panchayat Samiti were included in the study. Since the district had 704 Gram Panchayats, 300 of them were selected by lottery method, and 100 female respondents were selected by nth number method of random sampling. The final sample comprised of 160 respondents for the study.

Pre-tested interview schedule was used to collect the data. Simple statistical techniques like frequency, percentage, mean, S.D. and ANOVA 'F' test were used for analysis of data.

## Results and Discussion

### 1. Role Perception level

A cursory look at Table 1 shows the role perception indices of Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad members.

**Table 1: Role Perception of the respondents**

Variable	Gram Panchayat (n = 100)		Panchayat Samiti (n = 40)		Zilla Parishad (n = 20)		'F' value
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	
<b>Role perception</b>							
1. Low	24	24.00	08	20.00	03	15.00	4.2117*
2. Medium	55	55.00	22	55.00	13	65.00	
3. High	21	21.00	10	25.00	04	20.00	
Total	100	100.00	40	100.00	20	100.00	
Mean	78.47		84.20		86.15		
S.D.	13.77		14.72		10.62		

\* Significant at 5 per cent level

The data revealed that, more than half of the Gram Panchayat members (55 per cent) were having 'medium' level of role perception. This was followed by 'low' level of role perception among 24 per cent and 'high' level of role perception among 21 per cent of the members. The average level of role perception of Gram Panchayat members was 78.47.

Further it was also noticed from Table 1 (i) that, a significant percentage of the Panchayat Samiti members (55.00 per cent) were having 'medium' level of role perception, while 25 per cent and 20 per cent members were found to have a 'high' and 'low' level of role perception, respectively. The average level of role perception of Panchayat Samiti members was 84.20.

It is clear from Table 1 that, near about two-thirds (65 per cent) of the Zilla Parishad members were having 'medium' level of role perception followed by 20 per cent and 15 per cent of the members having 'high' and 'low' level of role perception respectively.

The calculated 'F' value was significant at 5 per cent level, which indicated that, there was significant difference between role perception of Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad members.

Higher percentage of role perception of Zilla Parishad members compared to Gram Panchayat and Panchayat Samiti members could be due to their education, more use of sources of information and more training they have undergone.

## 2. Role Performance level

Perusal of Table 2 indicates that, two-thirds (66 per cent) of the Gram Panchayat members were having 'medium' level of role performance followed by 20 per cent having 'high' and 14 per cent members having 'low' level of role performance, respectively. The average level of role performance of Gram Panchayat members was 30.40.

**Table 2: Role Performance of the respondents**

Variable	Gram Panchayat (n = 100)		Panchayat Samiti (n = 40)		Zilla Parishad (n = 20)		'F' value
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	
<b>Role performance</b>							
1. Low	14	14.00	08	20.00	04	20.00	7.1500**
2. Medium	66	66.00	23	57.50	12	60.00	
3. High	20	20.00	09	22.50	04	20.00	
Total	100	100.00	40	100.00	20	100.00	
Mean	30.40		36.07		40.45		
S.D.	11.56		12.52		15.18		

\*\* Significant at 1 per cent level

Further, it is also indicated from Table 2 that, substantial percentage of the Panchayat Samiti members (57.50 per cent) were having 'medium' level of role performance, while the remaining 22.50 per cent and 20 per cent members were having 'high' and 'low' level

of role performance, respectively. The average level of role performance of Panchayat Samiti members was 36.07.

It is clear from Table 2 that, six out of every ten of the Zilla Parishad members (60 per cent) were having 'medium' level of role performance and equal percentage that is 20 per cent each, were having 'high' and 'low' level of role performance. The average level of role performance of Zilla Parishad members was 40.45.

The calculated 'F' value was significant at 1.00 per cent level of probability, indicating a remarkable difference in the role performance level of the Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad members.

The possible reasons for high role performance among Gram Panchayat and Zilla Parishad members compared to Panchayat Samiti members could be due to the feeling of doing better for the society, which may not be of this order in Panchayat Samiti members.

### **Conclusion**

From the study it is concluded that, the role perception and role performance level of Zilla Parishad members was higher than the Panchayat Samiti members, and role perception and performance level of Panchayat Samiti members were higher than Zilla Parishad members. However, the overall role perception and role performance level of the Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad members was fairly moderate. This suggests the scope for increasing their role perception and role performance level in Panchayat activities. There is need for large scale capacity building intervention to be taken up for the members to effectively understand and operate the roles.

### **References**

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