Indicators of Leadership Behaviour of Women Sarpanch Under Panchayati Raj System

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the indicators of leadership behaviour of women sarpanch under the Panchayati Raj System in Achalpur, Daryapur, and Nandgaon Khandeshwar block/tahsils of Amravati district of Vidarbha region of Maharashtra. A total of 132 women sarpanch were selected purposively based on a more number of women sarpanch who are working in the gram panchayat of three panchayat samiti. The study focused on exploring leadership behaviour that led to improving the behaviour of women, who are the foundations of local governance and our country's prospects. The study analyses their leadership styles, achievements, challenges, and the socio-political dynamics affecting their performance.

Keywords: *Women sarpanch, Leadership behaviour, Panchayati Raj System, Indicators.*

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is an essential political and social need in contemporary society, just as it was in earlier historical periods, such as ancient and medieval times. It is primarily understood as the dynamic of power between a leader and their followers. From this angle, leaders possess the capacity to influence others. Alternatively, some view leadership as a means to reach objectives by helping group members realize their ambitions and dreams. This perspective includes leadership that inspires followers through establishing a vision, offering personalized support, and serving as a role model. Additionally, some researchers study leadership through a skill-based lens. This approach highlights the traits that contribute to successful leadership. Two key elements define the leadership relationship: the recognition of a shared purpose or goal and the capability to motivate others to work together. Self-confidence, communication ability, decision- making ability, coordinating ability, dispute resolution ability, initiating ability, representative, organizing ability and execution ability improved the leadership behaviour.

Leaders can utilize their skills and persuasive abilities to unite people and empower them to take action for their own development. Indian villages are often affected by entrenched customs, beliefs, superstitions, and ignorance, which have a negative impact on development. This situation requires various efforts to overcome social obstacles. If inclined positively, leaders can play a significant role in guiding development sincerely. Women's leadership in rural regions serves as a vital driving force that inspires and garners the cooperation of the community. A female leader is someone who can ignite inspiration, influence, persuade, and encourage meaningful change. Facilitating change is an essential objective, as most enhancements necessitate moving away from established routines. A woman leader formulates a vision for others and then steers them toward its achievement. Women sarpanch, as the third generation of local leaders, have demonstrated the erosion of traditional gender, caste, and category roles and hierarchies, though this is a lengthy and challenging process. Women must not only advocate for their rights to be more than mere proxy members but also dismantle obstacles related to the

gender division of labor, restricted mobility, seclusion, illiteracy, and insufficient access to information and training, all of which persist without adequate support from higher authorities.

In a relatively short time, they have acquired essential skills, such as self-confidence and motivation to succeed. Their ability to resolve conflicts, set high goals, and exhibit empathy paves the way for improved performance both at home and in their emerging roles in local politics, where they are now anticipated to take on leadership positions. Numerous factors, including previous socio-political involvement, political awareness, the age at which they entered politics, personal interests, family influences, and party affiliation, all play a role in their capacity to fulfill their responsibilities. These elements contribute to the political enlightenment of women sarpanch, which enhances their capacity to engage actively.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in the Amravati district of Maharashtra State. Out of 14 talukas of Amravati district, namely Achalpur, Daryapur and Nandgaon Khandeshwar talukas were purposively selected for the study. A total of 132 women sarpanch were selected purposively based on more number of women sarpanch working in a gram panchayat of three panchayati samiti. The exploratory research design was used for the study. The data were collected in a face-to-face situation by the personal interview method with the help of a structured interview schedule containing questions on the leadership behaviour of women sarpanch. The data were analyzed, and the results were interpreted in Tables 1 and 2.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study had been presented under the following headings.

Indicators of leadership behaviour of women sarpanch

Different indicators played an important role in determining the leadership behaviour for the effective functioning of the women sarpanch. Indicators such as self confidence, planning ability, communication ability, conflict management ability, execution ability, decision making abilities, initiating ability, coordinating ability, organizing ability, representative and guidance and control are closely linked to leadership behaviour. In this study, eleven indicators were judged to determine the leadership behaviour and the data reflecting their level with respect to all eleven indicators was presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Distribution of respondents according to their indicators of leadership behaviour of women sarpanch

Sr. No.	Indicators	Category	Respondents(n=132)	
			Frequency	Percentage
1	Selfconfidence	Verylow(Upto18.00)	09	06.82
		Low(19.00to26.00)	22	16.66
		Medium(27.00to 34.00)	68	51.52
		High(35.00 to 42.00)	23	17.42
		Veryhigh(Above42.00)	10	07.58
2	Planning ability	Verypoor(Upto 18.00)	09	06.82
		Poor(19.00 to 26.00)	18	13.64
		Moderate(27.00to34.00)	66	50.00
		Good(35.00to 42.00)	20	15.15
		Excellent(Above 42.00)	19	14.39

3	Communication ability	Verypoor(Upto 18.00)	07	05.30
		Poor(19.00 to 26.00)	28	21.21
		Moderate(27.00to34.00)	75	56.82
		Good(35.00to 42.00)	14	10.61
		Excellent(Above 42.00)	08	06.06
4	Conflictmanagement ability	Verylow(Upto18.00)	11	08.33
		Low(19.00to26.00)	39	29.55
		Medium(27.00to 34.00)	64	48.48
		High(35.00 to 42.00)	12	09.09
		Veryhigh(Above42.00)	06	04.55
5	Executionability	Verypoor(Upto 18.00)	03	02.27
		Poor(19.00 to 26.00)	30	22.73
		Moderate(27.00to34.00)	64	48.49
		Good(35.00to 42.00)	31	23.48
		Excellent(Above 42.00)	04	03.03
6	Decisionmaking ability	Verypoor(Upto 18.00)	20	15.15
		Poor(19.00 to 26.00)	30	22.73
		Moderate(27.00to34.00)	65	49.24
		Good(35.00to 42.00)	11	08.33
		Excellent(Above 42.00)	06	04.55
7	Initiatingability	Verypoor(Upto 18.00)	06	04.55
		Poor(19.00 to 26.00)	38	28.79
		Moderate(27.00to34.00)	72	54.54
		Good(35.00to 42.00)	09	06.82
		Excellent(Above 42.00)	07	05.30
8	Coordinating ability	Verypoor(Upto 18.00)	10	07.58
		Poor(19.00 to 26.00)	36	27.27
		Moderate(27.00to34.00)	69	52.27
		Good(35.00to 42.00)	13	09.85
		Excellent(Above 42.00)	04	03.03
9	Organizingability	Verypoor(Upto 18.00)	12	09.09
		Poor(19.00 to 26.00)	34	25.76
		Moderate(27.00to34.00)	67	50.76
		Good(35.00to 42.00)	13	09.84
		Excellent(Above 42.00)	06	04.55
10	Representative	Verypoor(Upto 18.00)	08	06.06
		Poor(19.00 to 26.00)	33	25.00
		Moderate(27.00to34.00)	75	56.82
		Good(35.00to 42.00)	14	10.60
		Excellent(Above 42.00)	02	01.52
11	Guidanceandcontrol	Verylow(Upto18.00)	03	02.27
		Low(19.00to26.00)	28	21.21
		Medium(27.00to 34.00)	69	52.28
		High(35.00 to 42.00)	29	21.97
		Veryhigh(Above42.00)	03	02.27
Total			132	100.00

1. Self confidence

As the Table 1, disclosed that slightly more than half (51.52%) of women sarpanch had medium level of self confidence, followed by 17.42 per cent had high, 16.66 per cent had low and 07.58 per cent of them had very high level of self confidence. Only 06.82 per cent of them had very low level of self confidence. The majority of the women sarpanch had medium to high levels of self-confidence, which exemplifies the findings. One of the key factors is women Sarpanch's self-confidence in their own skills, judgment, or resources qualities in carrying out their leadership actions. Its significance promotes being of utmost importance, especially for the leadership, a women sarpanch who establishes her initial identity and impression with local self-government as a sarpanch. At specific root level, having a medium to high degree of self-confidence is essential for carrying out the responsibilities of a liaison between all operational departments. This finding is in line with the findings of Mankar et al. (2012), Patil (2018) and Nikitaben (2021).

2. Planning ability

The result from Table 1, revealed that exactly half (50.00%) of women sarpanch had moderate planning ability, followed by 15.15 per cent, 14.39 per cent and 13.64 per cent had good, excellent and poor planning ability, respectively. Only 06.82 per cent of them had very poor level of planning ability.

Therefore, it can be concluded from above data that over half of the women sarpanches possessed a moderate degree of planning skills. The likely explanation is that the local villagers elected the women sarpanch and they may have believed that they were ultimately responsible for carrying out the program, but a field survey also revealed that some programs had been put into place for political reasons without taking the needs of the local population into account. This finding is in line with the findings of Diwan (2007) and Nikitaben (2021).

3. Communication ability

The result revealed that more than half (56.82%) of women sarpanch had moderate communication ability, followed by 21.21 per cent, 10.61 per cent and 06.06 per cent had poor, good and excellent communication ability, respectively. Only 05.30 per cent of them had very poor level of communication ability.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the majority of sarpanch women had moderate to poor communication skills. The women sarpanch's medium level of sources of information may have contributed to their moderately influenced communicational behavior. This finding is in line with the findings of Patil (2018) and Nikitaben (2021).

4. Conflict management ability

As the Table 1, disclosed that less than half (48.48%) of women sarpanch had medium level of conflict management ability, followed by 29.55 per cent had low, 09.09 per cent had high and 08.33 per cent had very low and rest 04.55 per cent of them had very high level of conflict management ability.

The majority of the women sarpanch were classified as having a medium to low level of conflict management ability, which perfectly captures the outcome. At the most basic level, the village's conditions are not quite supportive, and there were many conflicts among villagers over caste, class, resource distribution, etc. The medium to low level of conflict management ability may be explained by the limitations faced by women Sarpanchs in a male-dominated society. This finding is in line with the findings of Kumari (2012) and Nikitaben (2021).

5. Execution ability

The result from Table 1, revealed that slightly less than half (48.49%) of women sarpanch had moderate execution ability, followed by 23.48 per cent, 22.73 per cent and 03.03 per cent had good, poor and excellent execution ability, respectively. Only 00.27 per cent of them had very poor level of execution ability. According to the findings, the majority of women sarpanches possessed moderate to good execution ability. The villagers' strong support for all developmental programs that were implemented after their concerns were raised in the

gram sabha may be the likely cause. This finding is similar with the findings of Belli (2008) and Nikitaben (2021).

6. Decision making ability

The result from Table 1, revealed that less than half (49.24%) of women sarpanch had moderate decision making ability, followed by 22.73 per cent, 15.15 per cent and 08.33 per cent had poor, very poor and good decision making ability, respectively. Only 04.55 per cent of them had excellent level of decision making ability.

The majority of women sarpanch had moderate to poor decision-making skills, according to the findings. Restrictions may be the cause of this moderate capacity for decision- making and the majority of women sarpanch are family members' instructions caused them to be excluded from important decision-making processes, and their opinions were frequently disregarded and unheard. When making important decisions at panchayat raj institutions, the majority of women sarpanch stated that collective decision-making is required. This finding is similar with the findings of Patil (2018) and Nikitaben (2021).

7. Initiating ability

The result from Table 1, revealed that more than half (54.54%) of women sarpanch had moderate initiating ability, followed by 28.79 per cent, 06.82 per cent and 05.30 per cent had poor, good and excellent initiating ability, respectively. Only 04.55 per cent of them had very poor of initiating ability.

Thus, it can be inferred that more than half of women sarpanch had moderate level of initiating ability. Being women as a leader had moderate initiating ability due to existing custom and culture prevailed in community and shy nature coupled with hesitation in initiating the things. This finding is in line with the findings of Diwan (2007), Bhabhor (2012) and Nikitaben (2021).

8. Coordinating ability

The result from Table 1, revealed that more than half (52.27%) of women sarpanch had moderate coordinating ability, followed by 27.27 per cent, 09.85 per cent and 07.58 per cent had poor, good and very poor coordinating ability, respectively. Only 03.03 per cent of them had excellent of coordinating ability.

Therefore, it can be concluded that more than half of women sarpanchs possessed a moderate degree of coordination. One of the likely explanations for the above mentioned findings is that women sarpanch when making decisions about developmental work in village, they should coordinate more effectively, as development involves the work of numerous departments, agencies, and institutions for marketing, credit, and inputs. For the overall village development activity to be properly coordinated, the women sarpanch under the democratic style must have applied their wisdom at a moderate level. This finding is in line with the findings of Belli (2008) and Nikitaben (2021).

9. Organizing ability

The result from Table 1, revealed that slightly more than half (50.76%) of women sarpanch had moderate organizing ability, followed by 25.76 per cent, 09.84 per cent and 09.09 per cent had poor, good and very poor organizing ability, respectively. Only 04.55 per cent of them had excellent of organizing ability.

The probable reasons may be the women sarpanch has to organize various activities in a phased manner and during that they have to see the capabilities of panchayat members and allot achievable targets to each of the members accordingly by following consultative approach and on other hand few women sarpanch have followed non-democratic type of approach and doubling the capabilities of members. This finding is in line with the findings of Belli (2008) and Nikitaben (2021).

10. Representative

The result from Table 1, revealed that less than three-fifth (56.82%) of women sarpanch had moderate representative ability, followed by 25.00 per cent, and 10.60 per cent and 06.06 per cent had poor, good and very poor representative ability, respectively. Only 01.52 per cent of them had excellent of representative ability

Thus the analysis showed that majority of women sarpanch had moderate to poor representative ability. During survey it was found that as women they have lots of economical and social responsibilities besides the duties of women sarpanch and due to time constraints they are not in position to attain all the meeting to represent the village might be the possible explanation of this type of results. This finding is in line with the findings of Diwan (2007), Bhabhor (2012) and Nikitaben (2021).

11. Guidance and control

As the Table 1, disclosed that more than half (52.28%) of women sarpanch had medium level of guidance and control, followed by 21.97 per cent had high, 21.21 per cent had low level of guidance and control. Only 02.27 per cent each of them had very low and very high level of guidance and control.

From the above results, it could be inferred that the women sarpanch occupied crucial management positions at gram panchayat level having the responsibility of guiding the work undertaken by various development departments coming under their jurisdiction. While, doing so the sarpanch followed checks assigned and guided the members, while implementing development work. This finding is in line with the findings of Saiyad (2000) and Nikitaben (2021).

Indicators of leadership behaviour with their mean per cent score and rank

The Table 2, revealed that mean per cent score of planning ability (59.40) was highest followed by execution ability (57.14), self confidence (57.02), guidance and control (55.96), communication ability (55.72), initiating ability (54.70), conflict management ability (53.56), coordinating ability (53.54), representative (53.34), organizing ability (53.02), decision making ability (52.60), respectively.

Table 2.
Distributionofrespondentsaccordingtotheirindicatorsofleadership behaviour with their mean per cent score and rank

Sr. No.	Indicatorsofleadershipbehaviour	Respondents(n=132)	
		Meanpercentscore	Rank
1	Selfconfidence	57.02	III
2	Planningability	59.40	I
3	Communicationability	55.72	V
4	Conflictmanagementability	53.56	VII
5	Executionability	57.14	II
6	Decisionmakingability	52.60	XI
7	Initiatingability	54.70	VI
8	Coordinatingability	53.54	VIII
9	Organizingability	53.02	X
10	Representative	53.34	IX
11	Guidanceandcontrol	55.96	IV
12	Overallleadershipbehaviour	55.09	

From the Table 2, clearly indicated that the leadership behaviour of women sarpanch was varied across different indicators. The overall leadership behaviour was 55.09%, indicated a moderate level of leadership behaviour. While women sarpanch demonstrate strengths in planning, execution, and self confidence, they faced challenges in co-ordination, representative, organizing and decision making interests. These areas need focused training, capacity building to enhance their leadership effectiveness.

Conclusion

The study concludes that women sarpanch

in the selected talukas of Amravati district exhibit an overall moderate level of leadership behaviour (55.09%). Their strongest qualities lie in planning ability, execution ability, and self-confidence, which enable them to implement developmental activities effectively at the village level. However, decision-making, organizing ability, and representative skills emerged as comparatively weaker areas, often due to socio- cultural constraints, limited exposure, and time-bound responsibilities.

While these women leaders have demonstrated commendable progress in breaking traditional gender roles and participating actively in local governance, enhancing their performance will require targeted capacity-building programmes, especially in decision- making, coordination, and conflict management. Strengthening these competencies, alongside providing institutional and community support, can significantly enhance their ability to lead effectively, address village needs comprehensively, and contribute more dynamically to rural development under the Panchayati Raj System.

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