

Original Research Article

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A Study on Socio-Economic Profile of the Gram Panchayat Members of Manipur

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ABSTRACT

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The study was conducted on 200 Gram Panchayat members in 38 Gram Panchayats of Imphal-East and Bishnupur districts of Manipur. Proportionate random sampling method was followed for selection of the respondents. Interview schedule was the main tools used in the present study to collect data from the respondents. For this purpose the Socio-economic Status scale-Rural constructed and standardized by Pareek and Trivedi (1964) was used. The scale consisted of 8 items viz. caste, occupation education, family size, family type, Social participation, Land, house, Material possession. The Socio-economic Status of the Gram Panchayat members was obtained by summation of scores of all the eight items. In addition, the age of the Gram Panchayat members were also found out. The finding reveals that about 90.5 percent of the Gram Panchayat members belonged to middle class and only 8.5 percent belonged to upper class socio-economic status.

Introduction

Panchayati Raj Institutions are the local self-governing bodies consisting of elected representatives from rural areas. The term “panchayat” is a Sanskrit word, which means assembly (Ayat) of five (Panch) wise and respected elders chosen and accepted by the local community and ‘Raj’ literary means ‘governance’ or ‘government’. Conceptually, panchayat can be described as an assembly of the village people or their representatives. It enables participation of people, particularly weaker sections of the society in the decision making process and local self-management. It

is a people institution and generally has a three-tier structure at the district, block and village levels.

The first Panchayat system of Manipur was based on the established United Provinces Panchayati Raj Act 1947. Under this, Gram panchayats and Nyaya panchayats were established, for developmental works and judicial matters. This was followed by two important acts passed by Manipur state legislative assembly, namely Manipur Panchayati Raj Act 1975 and Manipur Panchayati Raj Act, 1994. The Panchayati Raj Act 1975 provided the three tier system of

panchayat while the Manipur Panchayati Raj Act 1994 envisages two tier system of panchayat that was initiated at the time of the enactment of the constitution's 73rd amendment Act. The Manipur Panchayati Raj Act of 1994 extended only to the valley area as the hill areas come under the jurisdiction of the Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act, 1971 and the Manipur (Village Authorities in Hill Areas) Act, 1956. The municipality areas in the valley districts have been also excluded from its operation. Thus this Act is applicable only in the valley districts of Imphal East, Imphal West, Thoubal and Bishnupur. At present Manipur panchayat consist of 166 gram panchayats and 4 Zilla parishad.

Objective of study

To find out the socio-economic status a of the Gram Panchayat members of Manipur

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in two districts of Manipur, namely, Imphal-East and Bishnupur districts. The district of Imphal-East has 3 Blocks namely Imphal East-I, Imphal East II and Jiribam and Bishnupur district has 2 Blocks namely, Moirang and Bishnupur. Out of five Blocks in two districts, only four Blocks, viz. Imphal East-I and Imphal East-II from Imphal-East district and Bishnupur and Moirang Blocks from Bishnupur district were selected purposively. The Jiribam Block under Imphal East district has been excluded since it is far away from the Imphal city.

There are 25 Gram Panchayats each in Imphal East-I and Imphal East-II Blocks and 12 Gram Panchayats each in Bishnupur and Moirang Blocks. For the present study 12 Gram Panchayats each from Imphal East-I and Imphal East-II Blocks and 7 Gram Panchayats each from Bishnupur and Moirang Blocks were selected randomly. Total numbers of

members including Pradhans in Imphal East-I block are 125 and in Imphal East-II block are 117. Similarly, Moirang block has 62 Gram Panchayat members and Bishnupur block has 61 members including Pradhan. By proportionate random sampling method, 68 Gram Panchayat members from Imphal East-I Block and 64 Gram Panchayat members from Imphal East -II Block, as well as, 34 Gram Panchayat members from Moirang Block and 34 Gram Panchayat members from Bishnupur Block have been selected. In this way a total 200 Gram Panchayat members have been selected as respondents.

Socio-economic profile of the members was studied by measuring different components of their socio-economic status. For this purpose the Socio-economic Status scale-Rural constructed and standardized by Pareek and Trivedi (1964) was used. The scale consisted of 8 items viz. caste, occupation, education, family size, family type, Social participation, Land, house, Material possession. The Socio-economic Status of the Gram Panchayat members was obtained by summation of scores of all the eight items. In addition, the age of the Gram Panchayat members were also found out.

Keeping in mind the objective of the study and the parameters to be studied an interview schedule was prepared to collect primary data from the respondents through personal interview. Collected data were analysed by using simple statistical tools viz frequency and percentage.

Results and Discussion

The socio-economic status of the Gram Panchayat members were identified in terms of caste, occupation education, family size, family type, Social participation, Land, house, Material possession, The data are presented in Table 1.

Caste

It was found that majority (70.5 percent) of the Gram Panchayat members belonged to Other Backward Castes (OBC) category followed by 29.5 percent of the members in General category. There was no SC/ST member. The reason is that majority of the population in the study area belonged to OBC category.

Occupation

The Gram Panchayat members were predominantly cultivators as 31 percent of the members belonged to this category followed by 26 percent of members had independent profession; 24 percent was businessman and 19 percent were teachers. The study was conducted in rural and semi-urban areas and members belonged to agricultural families with land-holdings. This was the reason for higher percentage of members having 'cultivation' as their primary occupation.

Education

The Gram Panchayat members were, in general, well educated. It was found that about 31 percent of the members had high school level education, 26.5 percent members were graduate and above. Middle school passed members were 25.5 percent followed by 17 percent of the members completed primary level education. The reason is that with the change in society from traditional to modern, education became more formal, systematically organized and bureaucratized. And, in the modern society, it is compulsory.

Family type

It was found that 60.5 percent of the Gram Panchayat members belonged to single family and 39.5 percent were in joint family type. The reason is that their families were broken

soon after the marriage of their sons who wanted to live separately because of their lower economic conditions. Further, migration in search of children's education, job, etc. motivates many to have nuclear families.

Family size

Big family size was rather predominant as 70.5 percent of the members had family size above 5 members and 29.5 percent of the members had family size below 5 members. This is due to little awareness among the people (members) regarding the advantages of small family norms.

Social participation

Social participation refers to involvement of the respondent's in formal community /village work or as office bearer in organization. The Gram Panchayat members had low social participation. In addition to being member of the Gram Panchayat, 31 percent of the members were member in another one organization and 27 percent of the members had membership in more than one organization. Nineteen percent members were office-bearer in one organization and 9 percent members were office bearer in more than one organisation.

Land

In Manipur thirty seven percent of Gram Panchayat members had land holding between 5-10 acres and 24 percent of the members possessed 10-15 acres of land. Nineteen percent had land holding between 1-5 acres. The percentage of big land holdings (15-20 acres) members were 12.5 percent while negligible percent (4 percent) had land holding above 20 acres and less than 1 acre. The reason of reduction in land holding was due to increasing trend of nuclear families and inheritance law of land in the State.

Table.1 Distribution of respondents according to socio-economic profile

N=200

Items	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Caste	SC/ST	0	-
	OBC	141	70.5
	General	59	29.5
Occupation	Labour	-	-
	Caste occupation	-	-
	Business	48	24
	Independent Profession	52	26
	Cultivation	62	31
	Service	38	19
Education	Illeterate	-	-
	Can read only	-	-
	Can read and write	-	-
	Primary	34	17
	Middle	51	25.5
	High School	62	31
	Graduate & above	53	26.5
Family	Type - Single	121	60.5
	Joint	79	39.5
	Size -Upto 5 members	59	29.5
	Above 5 members	141	70.5
Social Participation	No membership	84	42
	Membership in one organization	62	31
	Membership in more than one organization	54	27
	Office bearer in one organization	39	19.5
	Office bearer in more than one organization	18	9
	Distinctive feature	-	-
Land	Landless	-	-
	Less than 1 acre	7	3.5
	1-5 acres	38	19
	5-10 acres	74	37
	10-15 acres	48	24
	15-20 acres	25	12.5
	Above 20 acres	8	4
House	Hut	-	-
	Kutch house	21	10.5
	Mixed house	121	60.5
	Pucca house	58	29
	Mansion	-	-
Material possession	Bullock cart	35	17.5
	Cycle	173	86.5
	Radio	191	95.5
	TV	200	100
	Refrigerator	156	78
	Two wheeler	97	48.5
	Mobile phone	186	93
	Improved agricultural implements	78	39

Table.2 Socio-economic status of respondents

Items	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Socio-economic status	Lower Class(less than mean –S.D)	2	1
	Middle Class(In-between Mean \pm S.D)	181	90.5
	Upper Class(Greater than Mean+S.D)	17	8.5

Table.3 Distribution of respondents according to age

Items	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Young age (upto 35 years)	34	17
	Middle age(36-50 years)	129	64.5
	Old age(Above 50 years)	37	18.5

House

About 60.5 percent of the Gram Panchayat members had mixed type of house. Twenty nine percent of the members had pucca house and about 10.5 percent had kutcha house.

Material Possession

All the Gram Panchayat members had television at their home, 95.5 percent of the members had radio, 93 percent had mobile phone, 86.5 percent had cycle, 78 percent had refrigerator, 48.5 percent had two wheeler and 39 percent had improved agricultural implements and 17.5 percent had bullock cart in their house.

Socio-economic Status

The overall socio-economic status indicated that about 90.5 percent of the Gram Panchayat members belonged to middle class and only 8.5 percent belonged to upper class.

Mondal (1991) in his study in West Bengal found that about 60 percent of the Gram Panchayat Pradhans belonged to the middle and lower-middle classes and about 40 percent belonged to upper- middle and upper classes. Jadhav (2004) in his study in Maharashtra found that 65 percent of Gram

Panchayat members were in medium socio-economic status while 20 percent and 15 percent of Gram Panchayat members belonged to low socio-economics status and high socio-economic status category, respectively.

Age

Table-3 further revealed that 64.5 percent of the Gram Panchayat members were middle aged i.e. 36-50 years old. About 18.5 percent of the members were old aged i.e. above 50 years of age and only 17 percent of the members were young in age i.e. upto 35 years.

Dhakne (2002) in his study on “Village leadership patterns and role of leaders in developmental activities” revealed that majority (74 percent) of rural leaders were found to be in middle age category followed by old age category (20 percent) while the smaller number of leaders (6 percent) belonged to the younger age category.

Most of the Gram Panchayat members belonged to OBC category. The Gram Panchayat members were predominantly in cultivation as 31 percent belonged to this category. The Gram Panchayat members were, in general, well educated. It was found

that 60.5 percent of the Gram Panchayat members have single family. The Gram Panchayat members had low social participation. The largest percentage (37 percent) of the members belonged to land holding size of 5-10 acres. Most of the Gram Panchayat members live in mixed type (60.5 percent) of house and almost all the members had radio, TV, cycle, Mobile Phone in their house. The overall socio-economic status indicated that 90.5 percent of the Gram Panchayat members belonged to medium category and only 8.5 percent belonged to high socio-economic status.

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