

Leadership Styles of Women Leaders in Panchayati Raj Institutions

Manmeet Kaur¹, Neelam Bhardwaj² and L. S. Bareth³

ABSTRACT

Women leadership in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) is crucial not only for the development of women themselves but also for the availability of their creative potential that is socially important and without which, the country cannot hope for any sustainable development. This study was conducted in three districts of Uttarakhand State i.e. Udham Singh Nagar, Dehradun and Tehri Garhwal districts on two hundred women leaders especially Pradhans who were selected through census method. Data were collected with the help of semi-structured interview schedule. The findings of the study depict that there was very slight difference found in each category of leadership style. Authoritarian leadership style was more prominent in the Udham Singh Nagar whereas participative and delegative styles were followed by women leaders who belonged to hill districts of Uttarakhand. Various socio-psychological and communication pattern characteristics were found positively and significantly related with leadership styles of women leaders.

Key words: Leadership styles, Women leaders, Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)

INTRODUCTION

Women across the world have experienced social transformation in recent years. In the present times women have been offered greater opportunities than before both at national and international level. Positive changes can be seen by women holding executive positions and taking up leadership roles not only in political front but as social reformers as well. Historically also women have always been accepted and appreciated as indomitable force in shaping & setting the pace, direction & structure of social and economic advancement in a social system.

The sheer number of women that PRIs has brought due to the reservation policy of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act has also made a difference. Increasing the representation of women has not automatically led to a mere gender analysis of the issues confronting local governance but has necessarily raised the profile of women leaders, their needs and interest in the policy agenda, given that elected women often act

as proxies for men's views at the councils, being advised by their male relatives. PRIs offer opportunity to women to change the face of leadership at the grass-root level. But there is lack of empirical evidence to purview the function of women leaders in holistic perspective. Therefore, it was felt that there is need to analyze the pattern of leadership, leadership style executed by them, constraints faced while performing their leadership role and their self concept as well.

In the policy reforms Uttarakhand has already given 50 per cent reservation to the women in PRIs and as a result more than 50 per cent women have entered in the Panchayat arena. So, realizing the importance of women leadership at the grass- root level under PRIs in Uttarakhand state, the present study was designed and executed with the objective to study the leadership styles possessed by women leaders and find out the relationship between socio-personal, economic, communication pattern and psychological characteristics with leadership style of women leaders.

^{1&3} Assistant Professor & Professor, Department of Extension Education, Swami Keshwanand Rajasthan Agricultural University, Beechwal, Bikaner- 334 006

² Professor, Department of Agril. Communication, G. B. Pant University of Agriculture & Technology, Pantnagar (Uttarakhand)- 263 145

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in the Udham Singh Nagar, Dehradun and Tehri Garhwal districts of Uttarakhand state. Three blocks from each district were selected by using chit method of simple random sampling. Thus, from district Udham Singh Nagar; Rudrapur, Sitarganj and Bazpur blocks, from district Dehradun; Vikasnagar, Doiwala and Sahaspur blocks and from district Tehri Garhwal; Jaunpur, Chamba and Narendranagar blocks were selected for the present investigation. The list of all the elected women representatives especially Pradhans' from the selected blocks of all these districts were procured for the present investigation. Total numbers of women leaders in all the selected three districts were 325. The census method was used to select the respondents from the selected blocks. From each district investigator tried to contact all the women leaders however due to some reasons the total number of women leaders contacted from the selected blocks were 200. A leadership style scale was developed for the present research investigation. Data were collected with the help of pre-tested semi-structured interview schedule. Observation, focused group discussion and case study method were also used to support the quantitative data. Analysis of the data was done with the help of different statistical tools like frequency distribution, percentage, mean, standard deviation, correlation coefficient(r) as well as multiple linear regression.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Leadership Styles possessed by Women Leaders

Leadership style, in the present study refers to the characteristic manner in which a leader exercises influence over others. Data presented in Table 1 shows that not marked difference was found in Mean Score values of all the three types of leadership styles as these values ranged between 16.71 to 16.91. There was very slight difference in each category as participative leadership style was ranked first (16.91 M.S.), followed by authoritarian leadership style which had second rank (16.73 M.S.) and delegative leadership style was ranked third (16.71 M.S.).

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents According to Leadership Style

| Leadership Style | Mean Score values | Rank |
|------------------|-------------------|------|
| Authoritarian | 16.73 | II |
| Participative | 16.91 | I |
| Delegative | 16.71 | III |

In participative leadership style, women leaders' offers guidance to group members. They participated in the group and allowed input from other group members. They also encouraged group members to participate, but retain the final say over the decision-making process. Group members felt engaged in the process and were more motivated and creative. Authoritarian leadership style was more prominent in the *Udham Singh Nagar* because in this area leadership role was mainly played by their husbands and in-laws. So, they provided clear expectations regarding what needs to be done, when it should be done, and how it should be done. They made decisions independently with little or no input from the rest of the group. In delegative leadership style, leaders transferred decision making power to one or more members, but remained responsible for their decisions. They offered little or no guidance to group members and delegated decision-making to group members. Hence, it can be concluded that all three type of leadership styles were being exercised by the women leaders. In addition to it, investigator made certain observations and had discussion with women leaders. The significant fact which emerged was participative and delegative styles were followed by women leaders who belonged to hill districts whereas leaders of *Udham Singh Nagar* mostly showed authoritarian leadership style. The reason behind it might be women leaders of *Udham Singh Nagar* belonged to migrated communities with better economic conditions. Villages of this district had heterogeneous population with varied social structure. Villages in hills were found to be more homogenous in terms of language and culture. Another important observation was that women leaders from *Dehradun* district were exposed to various training programmes organized by NGO's for facilitating work of leaders under PRIs. Thus, women leaders of this region were familiar with the team and group approaches therefore mostly followed participative and delegative approaches. This was also observed among some of the women leaders who used mixed type of leadership styles under the present investigation. The findings are in line with the findings of Eagly & Schmidt (2001) and Shah & Monahan (2008) who reported that women's leadership styles were more democratic than men's even in organizational settings. This type of leadership style brings under sharp focus their desire to 'build' rather than 'win'; a greater willingness to explore collaboration as also promote participative style of working, of which, charismatic leadership, individual consideration, intellectual stimulation could be described as the main features. In some situations women leaders used the multi-frame leadership style and those who adopted a multi-frame approach might be able to better address problems and

seek opportunities for the institution. In this context, supporting findings have been reported by Ponnusamy and Lekshmi (2014) that effective leadership practices help the people discover their potential by themselves, which in turn would lead to increased productivity in any organization.

Relationship between Socio-personal, Economic, Communication Pattern and Psychological Characteristics with Leadership Style

Pearson's Product Moment correlation coefficient was worked out to identify the relationship between the leadership style and different selected independent variables. The perusal of the data in Table 2 shows that information seeking behaviour ($r= 0.295^{**}$), information sharing behaviour ($r= 0.208^{**}$), social progressiveness ($r= 0.277^{**}$), power orientation ($r= 0.221^{**}$), decision making ability ($r= 0.250^{**}$) and training exposure ($r= 0.240^{**}$) had highly significant effect on leadership style as these values are found to be significant at one per cent level of significance.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis between Different Variables with Leadership Style of the Respondents

| Variables | Correlation coefficient(r) |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Socio-personal variables | |
| Age | -0.066 |
| Education | 0.062 |
| Political Experience | 0.126 |
| Socio-economic variables | |
| Family size | -0.062 |
| Land holding | 0.021 |
| Annual income | 0.045 |
| Economic status | 0.091 |
| Communication Pattern | |
| Extension agency contact | 0.080 |
| Mass media exposure | 0.173 * |
| Information seeking behaviour | 0.295** |
| Information sharing behaviour | 0.208** |
| Psycho-personal variables | |
| Social participation | 0.029 |
| Innovativeness | 0.023 |
| Social progressiveness | 0.277** |
| Power orientation | 0.221** |
| Decision making ability | 0.250** |
| Achievement Motivation | 0.141 * |
| Training exposure | 0.240** |
| Self esteem | 0.027 |

* Significant at 0.05 level of probability

** Significant at 0.01 level of probability

As evident from the data under communication pattern i.e. information seeking behaviour and information sharing behaviour and psycho-personal

variables like social progressiveness, power orientation, decision making ability and training exposure had significant affect on leadership style. As being leaders, women are required to have more exposure and needs to be actively engaged for seeking and sharing of information. Socio-personal and socio-economic variables like age, and family size and had negative and non-significant relationship with the leadership styles of the women leaders. Similarly the characteristics like education, political experience, land holding, annual income, socio economic status, extension agency contact, social participation, innovativeness and self esteem had non-significant relationship with the leadership styles of the women leaders which reflected that these variables had no affect on the leadership style of women leaders under PRIs. The findings that social participation had no influence on the leadership style are supported by the findings of Kaur and Mahajan (2002) and Saiyad *et al.* (2004).

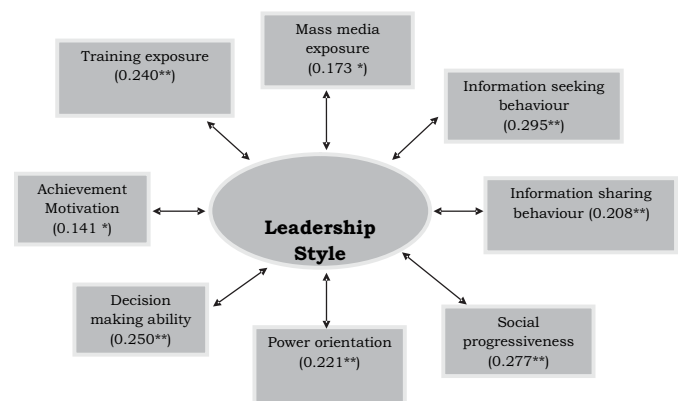


Fig.1 : Relational Diagram of Leadership Style of Women Leaders with Independent Variables

Besides that there was positive and significant relationship found between leadership style of the women leaders and some independent variables like mass media exposure ($r= 0.173 *$) and achievement motivation ($r= 0.141*$) at five per cent level of significance. The findings are in accordance with the findings of Shirke *et al.* (2001), Sarkar *et al.* (2002) and Mohanty. (2005) who reported that mass media exposure was found to be positively and significantly correlated with the leadership and the leaders who had better mass media exposure were found to show better role performance.

Awareness of developmental information showed positive and significant relation-ship with the leadership style of the women leaders.

Regression Analysis between Socio-personal, Economic, Communication Pattern and Psychological Characteristics with Leadership Style

By using the multiple linear regression analysis, the prediction of dependent variable (leadership style) from independent variables (Selected characteristics) has been studied. There was increase in the dependent variable for a unit increase in the independent one. As per the multiple regression analysis, the data presented in Table 3 reveals the regression relationship of dependent variable *i.e.* leadership style on 25 antecedent variables pertaining to the respondents.

The value of coefficient of determination (R²) in case of Y1 has been found as 0.278 and the corresponding 'f' value was obtained as 2.567* *i.e.* significant at five per cent probability level, which indicated that this particular regression model was significant. The value of (R²) shows that 27.8 per cent variation in the dependent variable was due to twenty five antecedent

variables taken for the present investigation, remaining 72.2 per cent variation in the leadership style (Y1) was due to other factors outside the purview of this investigation. Hence, the dependency relationship of Y1 on each selected characteristics can now be studied with the help of 't' value. Table 3 thus depicted that in case of leadership style (Y1), it had positive significant relationship with social progressiveness ($t= 2.738^{**}$) at one per cent level of significance and self esteem ($t=2.132^*$) at five per cent level of significance. Thus, the regression analysis in Table 3 shows that social progressiveness and self esteem emerged as the most important predictors of leadership style (Y1) of women leaders. It was prominent to note that some socio psycho-personal variables and communication characteristics such as power orientation, decision making ability, achievement motivation, training exposure, mass media exposure, information seeking behaviour and information sharing behaviour which had significant correlation coefficient with the leadership style of the women leaders but have not shown any significant contribution to the multiple regression analysis.

CONCLUSION

It could be concluded that there was very slight difference found in each category of leadership style as participative leadership style was ranked first followed by authoritarian leadership style and delegative leadership style. Authoritarian leadership style was more prominent in the Udham Singh Nagar because in this area they worked according to their respective husband and in-laws. Participative and delegative styles were followed by women leaders who belonged to hill districts *i.e.* Dehradun and Tehri Garhwal. A positive and significant relationship was found to exist between the leadership style and some selected characteristics like information seeking behaviour, information sharing behaviour, social progressiveness, power orientation, decision making ability, training exposure, mass media exposure and achievement motivation.

The characteristics like education, political experience, land holding, annual income, socio economic status, extension agency contact, social participation, innovativeness and self-esteem had non-significant relationship with the leadership style of the women leaders. In the light of the findings it was suggested that PRIs should be empowered with women leaders. There is a need to train women leaders at regular intervals and interaction between enlightened women leaders and the other elected women leaders should be encouraged for the proper functioning of the PRIs.

Table 3: Regression Analysis between Socio-personal, Economic, Communication Pattern and Psychological Characteristics ('X's) with Leadership Style (Y1) of Women Leaders

| Variables | Partial Regression Coefficient (b) | 't' value |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | Leadership Style (Y _i) | Leadership Style (t _{v1}) |
| Socio-personal variables | | |
| Age | -0.105 | 1.184 |
| Education | -0.809 | 0.046 |
| Political Experience | 2.709 | 0.277 |
| Socio-economic variables | | |
| Family size | 0.059 | 0.034 |
| Land holding | 0.526 | 0.030 |
| Annual income | -0.172 | 0.046 |
| Economic Status | 0.538 | 0.031 |
| Communication Pattern | | |
| Extension agency contact | 0.226 | 1.475 |
| Mass media exposure | -0.135 | 0.621 |
| Information seeking behaviour | 0.276 | 0.712 |
| Information sharing behaviour | 0.794 | 1.745 |
| Psycho-personal variables | | |
| Social participation | 1.800 | 0.001 |
| Innovativeness | 0.214 | 0.620 |
| Social progressiveness | 0.484 | 2.738** |
| Power orientation | 0.135 | 1.093 |
| Decision making ability | 0.253 | 1.125 |
| Achievement Motivation | 0.581 | 1.497 |
| Training exposure | 3.020 | 0.685 |
| Self esteem | 0.526 | 2.132* |

* Significant at 0.05 level of probability

** Significant at 0.01 level of probability

Paper received on : February 02, 2017

Accepted on : February 15, 2017

REFERENCES

- Eagly, A.H. and Johansenn-Schimdt, M.C. 2001. The leadership styles of women and men, *Journal of Social Issues*, 57(4), 781-797.
- Kaur, R. and Mahajan, N. 2002. Role perception of Farm Women in Agriculture, *Indian Journal of Extension Education*, 38(1&2), 109-113.
- Mohanty, A.K. 2005. The Pattern of Rural Leadership Among Farming Community: A Study on leadership Dynamics in Uttaranchal, Ph.D. Thesis (Unpublished), Department of Agricultural Communication, G.B.P.U.A.&T., Pantnagar- 263145, Uttarakhand.
- Ponnusamy, K. and Lekshmi P. S. Swathi. 2014. A study on Leadership Qualities of Supervisory Officers (Divisional/Institution Heads) in ICAR Institutes, *Indian Journal of Extension Education*, 50 (3&4), 58-61.
- Saiyad, A.S., Patel, B.S. and Mayani, V. V. 2004. Correlates of Role Perception and Role Performance of Women Sarpanch in Panchayati Raj Institution, *Rural India* (Feb.-March), : 46-60.
- Sarkar, J.D., Srivastava, K.K. and Sangode, P.K. 2002. Role of Tribal Leaders in Dissemination of Technology, *Agricultural Extension Review*, 02, 11-13.
- Shah, J.A. and Monahan, L.M. 2008. The Leadership Styles in Academia: Four Faces of University Presidents, AIMS, *International Journal of Management*, 2(2), 81-91.
- Shirke, V.S., Yelpanekar, P.H. and Khot, B.B. 2001. Role Performance of Rural Local Leaders In Agriculture Development. *Journal of Maharastra Agriculture University*, 26 (1), 88-89.