

Decentralization and Sustainable Transformation of Rural Local Leadership in India

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How to cite this article:

Suresh Vadranam, Jayaprada Sahoo. Decentralization and Sustainable Transformation of Rural Local Leadership in India. Int J Pol Sci 2024;10(1):49–57.

Abstract

The political socialization process is the through every human being learn the essentials of socio-political life science he or she comes in to the world. Behavioral movement has sensitized the scholars in comparative politics to shift their research area from the static aspects of structural, legal, and historical analysis of the rural local governments to the dynamic aspect of the functions of these institutions. This area has received impetus specially from scholars who have been oriented in the methodology of the functionalists. India is acknowledged for its local administration through ages. The present local government structure has its roots in Lord Mayo's strategy of decentralization of 1870, followed by Lord Ripon's enunciation of local government in 1884; which had heralded a new trend of bringing people to the centre-stage in managing their own affairs. Mahatma Gandhi said that "the centre of power is not in Delhi or Calcutta or Bombay or in big cities; it should be distributed among the seven hundred thousand villages of India". The significance of local government in India has considerably increased in the post-independent India. The present research paper examines the political socialization aspects of the rural local body leaders from Cuddalore district, Tamil Nadu, India.

Keywords: Administration; Culture; Decentralization; Local Governments; Political Socialization.



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Received on: 26.03.2024

Accepted on: 22.04.2024

INTRODUCTION

After attaining the Independence in 1947, a committee headed by Balvantrai Mehta studied the problems of local government like absence people's participation and suggested ways and means for improving the execution of 'Community Development Programme' (CDP) and 'National Extension Service' (NES) scheme, launched on 1952 and 1953 respectively, in a phased manner. The partial success of both CDP and NES had lead



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to the formation of a three-tier arrangement, as the process of democratic decentralization. Which later come to be known as 'Panchayati Raj Institutions' (PRIs). This mechanism was recommended by Balvantrai Mehta Committee both the central and state governments have enacted a numeral of legislations to give more momentum to local government, especially Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) over time. However, a constitutional status was accorded to them after a prolonged struggle. Although many States have not shown interest in establishing local self-government institutions, the States were forced to accept the PR as it has the backing of the Constitutional 73rd Amendment Act in 1992. This amendment fulfils the long-felt demand for the rejuvenation of the rural local bodies to have a meaningful mechanism at the grassroots. In other words, it gives a Constitutional mandate to the three-tiered PR system in India.

The aspire of this amendment includes; (1) conducting for usual and appropriate elections to at all level Panchayati Raj institutions through the State Election Commission (SEC) once in five years; (2) empowering down trodden community of the society i.e., Schedule Caste (SC) Schedule Tribe (ST), Backward classes and women leaders Local self-government through reservations in elective offices; (3) intensification the Gram Sabha for direct participation of the people in identifying their felt needs and fulfilling the same through PRIs; (4) providing a mechanism State Finance Commission (SFC) to ensure flow of funds to rural local governments to facilitate them to emancipation their functions and duties; and (5) ensuring devolution of powers as mention in the XIth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. In sum the main objectives of PR system include: (i) promotion of people's participation in local governance activities; (ii) ensuring representation of weaker sections, especially the SC, ST, BC, minorities and women in the Panchayat satalllevels; (iii) achieving rapid rural development and removing interpersonal and regional imbalances, etc. Thus, in fact the Constitution 73rd Amendment has become a milestone in the Constitutional History of India (T.N. Dhar & S.R. Gupta, 1995). To give effect to Constitution 73rd Amendment Act, the government of Tamil Nadu has enacted a new Panchayat Raj Act, known as the Tamil Nadu Panchayati Act, 1994. Tamil Nadu is one of the states in the Country, which had rich experience in establishing the PRI's since 1959. As per the Constitution 73rd Amendment, TN has not only introduced the three-tiered system, but also conducted elections to these bodies.

Research Background

In this 28th anniversary year of constitutionally buttressed Panchayati Raj and Nagar Palika Institutions, is a re-stocking of the experience of all states which will enable us to review and appraise the time-bound implementation of decentralized planning process at the grassroots. Besides providing for good governance at the grassroots through local institutions in India will be examined through the Constitution 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts make the Panchayati Raj and Nagar Palikas any better than their pre-Constitutional phase? Will the district plan consist of only those devolve to the local bodies? What are the factors contributing to the disempowerment of Panchayati Raj and Nagar Palikas in contemporary India? Are the local governments having full potential to prepare their plans; and thereby measuring up to the expectations and aspirations of people? And what sorts of reforms are necessary to promote the decentralized planning more effectively for delivering goods and services at the grass roots? Hence the study particularly the role, of political socialization of grassroots governance and decision-making components of local government institutions as a public delivery system at the grassroots besides exhibiting higher significance and relevance in the context of the completion of 25 years of journey of the 73rd and 74th constitutional Amendment Acts. It is necessary appreciate the functioning of the system by scrutinizing whether the constitutionalizing of PR is a progressive foot-step at the door of rural transformation.

Socio-Economic Background of the Grassroots Leaders

The extent to which citizens themselves participate in politics and the ways in which they do so are largely the responses to the stimuli provided by the social circumstances. These circumstances include how individuals live, the kind of social culture they are embedded in, how much and what they have, the kind of work they are engaged in, how much they earn, and the opportunities they have for improving their lives. Social circumstances affect the level of resources available for role perceptions and serve to foster or inhibit development of attitudes and beliefs that underlie various types of role perceptions. Indicators of social circumstances include such characteristics as age, race, sex, region, education, employment, marital status, social standing etc. (Verba Nie and Kim, 1978).

Differing social circumstances lead to differing life experiences of individuals. They, in turn, affect the patterns of citizens' role perceptions. Life experiences, with their resultant evaluations of the past and expectations of the future, induce individuals to varying levels of role perceptions, political judgment and political activities. Social circumstances affect the social roles and the political roles that people play. Influencing both the expectations others apply to individuals and the expectations, which those individuals apply to themselves and to others are also the essential factors on the part of the respondents. Again, social circumstances affect the flow of political communication with individuals in some social locations, receiving and expressing more role perceptions than others. And certainly, circumstances affect both the citizens' stakes in political outcomes and their perspectives of those stakes. Thus, individuals and individual differences are important, because they are not simply artifacts of larger social forces. Citizens pay heed to some aspects of social experiences and they reinterpret others. They are attracted to some environments while they seek to avoid others. In these and other ways, individually motivated choice becomes an important element of the structural basis underlying democratic politics.

Political Socialization of Grassroots Leaders

The present research work is an academic endeavor intended to enquire in to and discern the pattern of political leadership of a sample of grassroots political leaders of Cuddalore District of Tamil Nadu. As political leadership at District level occupy a significant place of importance in the context of the working of the Indian political system. Political leadership at local level, provide leadership to the local political system, they operate it, and thus become instrumental in taking democracy to the grass-root level. Leadership refers to the act of leading others in social situation. As a central figure of the society he not only decides societal goals but also create congenial atmosphere for goal attainment. Since political leaders are at the helm of affairs, at in people of the Cuddalore District tend to look toward them for guidance and directions. The stability and viability or instability or changes are determined by the act of leadership. Leaders may develop his authority through legitimacy. The stability and development of the political system crucially determined by the nature and culture of the political leaders which he learns through the process of political socialization

unless the leader develop a congruence political culture with the structural framework of the political system, the political system's stability and viability will be threatened and obstruct the development and socio-political modernization in India. Out of the three broad levels of political system of India i.e. National levels, the state levels and the local levels; political leadership at the local level especially at the District levels seems to have special significance as it is entrusted with the task of taking democracy at the grassroots levels. Political leadership at the District levels enjoys the positions and status of trend-setters and they significantly influence the ideas, feelings and behavior of the people and successfully implement the plans and programmers of socio-economic and political development. If the leadership is change-prone, dynamic, articulates congruent with democratic culture, the constitutional goals as enshrined in the preamble of India may be translated in to action. Therefore, emerging pattern of political leadership deserves careful study and analysis for appreciating the process of socio-political change and modernization in India. Because of the immense importance of the political leaders in the political process of Indian polity at the local level especially at the district level, a micro-study has been humbly undertaken to find out and discern the emerging pattern of political leadership in the Cuddalore District of Tamil Nadu.

Significance of the research study

There is paucity of research work in political socialization aspects of the rural local body leaders at national and international level. This research work would add to multi disciplinary research literature relevant to Politics and Public Administration, Social Work, Sociology, Rural Development, Economics, etc.

Review of Literature

Suresh and Krishnamurthy (2011) analyzed the functions of the new panchayat raj system established through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment. He emphasized on achieving economic development and social justice by performing and planning the exercise at the grassroots level with the active participation of the stakeholders.

Suresh and Krishnamurthy (2012) have examined rural transformation after the introduction of 73rd Constitutional Amendment. This law has increased awareness among common man about

socio, economic and political aspects relevant to rural community. It also has led to strengthening relationship between state government and stakeholders in rural areas.

Suresh Mishra and Rajvir. Dhaka. (2004) in their research study evaluated the role of Panchayat Raj Institutions in democratizing the decision making process at the local level and in mobilizing the people for social and economic development. The study also provides the overview of the genesis of Panchayat Raj system in the country and in the state of Haryana, the electoral process, emerging pattern of leadership, capacity and capability of Panchayati Raj institutions in implementing poverty alleviation programmes besides suggesting measures to enable Panchayat stoemergeastrue institutions of democratic decentralization.

Malik (2005) evaluated the status of 73rd Amendment Act and status of state finance commission in India. The author critically examines the implications of provisions of this new legislation. He also notes that the empowerment of weaker sections and women will enable the people at the grass roots to enter politics and participate in the process of self-government.

Research gap and Objectives of the study

Analysis of literature reveals that there is scarcity of research work in political socialization aspects of the rural local body leaders at international and national level. Research has taken this research work based on identified research gap.

7.1. Objectives of the study

This research study aims to understand about political socialization aspects of rural local government respondents. The researcher has formulated the objective based on identified research gap.

Research Methodology

Research design used in this research study is quantitative as well as cross sectional Research design. Quantitative research design is used as results of the research work are documented numerically. Cross sectional research design is used as data is collected at single point of time. This research study uses both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data refers to data collected for the first time and are original (Kothari,

2004). Primary data is collected through interview with rural local government leaders in Cuddalore district, Tamil Nadu, India. Secondary data is used for literature review purpose. Secondary sources that researcher had used to undertake this research are books, journals, Government reports and records. Units of analysis for research work are its respondents. Respondents are village panchayat presidents in Cuddalore district, Tamil Nadu, India. The total number of village presidents in Cuddalore district is 682 that constitutes unit of analysis. Stratifiedr and omsampling method was used to select respondents of the study.

8.1 Sample collection procedure

20 percent of the universe was selected as samples by using stratified and omsampling. 160 respondents constitute the sample for the research study. Interview method is used to collect data from the respondents. Self prepared questionnaire was used by the researcher in tapping their perception on themes related to political socialization and grassroots democracy.

8.2. Formulation of Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no association between gender of the respondents and political activities during school days.

H₀₂: No association is found between gender of the respondents and their view on political activities during college days.

8.3 Statistical tests used in the research study

Researched had used Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) 25th version to numerically analyze the data collected. Frequency and Chi square test is used in this research work.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Frequency Distribution regarding the Influence of Family on the Respondents to Join Politics.

Influence of Family	Frequency	Percent
Agree	144	90.0
Disagree	16	10.0
Total	160	100.0

Source: Compiled by author based on primary data

Table 1 depicts that majority (90 percent) of the respondents agree on the impact of family to join politics. 10 percent of the respondents donot agree about the same.

Table 2: Frequency Distribution regarding the Respondent's Family Affiliation to a Political Party

Family Association to Political Party	Frequency	Percent
Agree	142	88.8
Disagree	18	11.2
Total	160	100.0

Source: Compiled by author based on primary data

It is evident from above table 2 that majority (88.8 percent) of the respondents agree about the family inclination to a political party. 11.2 percent of the respondents do not agree to it.

Table 3: Frequency Distribution regarding the Respondents Mother's Inclination towards a political party

Mother's Inclination towards a Political Party	Frequency	Percent
Agree	122	76.25
Disagree	38	23.75
Total	160	100.0

Source: Compiled by author based on primary data

Table 3 shows that more than three fourth (76.25 percent) of the respondents agree about their mother's association towards a particular political party. 23.75 percent of the respondents do not agree to it.

Table 4: Frequency Distribution regarding the Respondents Membership to a Particular Political Party

Membership to a Particular Political Party	Frequency	Percent
Agree	147	91.88
Disagree	13	8.12
Total	160	100.0

Source: Compiled by author based on primary data

Table 4 shows that majority (91.88 percent) of the respondents agree about their membership to a particular political party. 8.12 percent of the respondents do not agree to it.

Table 5: Frequency Distribution regarding the Respondent's Political Activities during School Days

Political Activities During School days	Frequency	Percent
Agree	133	83.1
Disagree	27	16.9
Total	160	100.0

Source: Compiled by author based on primary data

Table 5 shows that more than four fifth (83.1 percent) of the respondents agree about their

political activities during school days. 16.9 percent of the respondents do not agree to it.

Table 6: Chi-square test for association between gender of the respondents and political activities during school days

Gender	Political Activities during School days		Total	Chi-square value
	Agree	Disagree		
Male	48	9	57	0.74 (p value = 0.785)
Female	85	18	103	
Total	133	27	160	

Source: Compiled by author based on primary data

Table 6 shows that chi-square value is 0.74 and it is not significant at 5% level (i.e. p value = 0.785 < 0.050). It shows that relationship is not found between gender of the respondents and political activities during school days. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H01) "There is no association between gender of the respondents and political activities during school days" is accepted. It is concluded that there exists no relationship between gender of the respondents and political activities during school days. It is seen from the above table 6 that 48 male respondents agree about political activities during school days. 9 male respondents do not agree to it. The above table 6 shows that 85 female respondents agree about political activities during school days. 18 female respondents don't agree to it. 133 respondents agree about political activities during school days. 27 respondents do not agree to it.

Table 7: Chi-square test for association between gender of the respondents and political activities during college days

Gender	Political activities during college days		Total	Chi-square value
	Agree	Disagree		
Male	69	34	103	2.51 (p value=0.110)
Female	45	12	57	
Total	114	46	160	

Source: Compiled by author based on primary data

Table 7 shows that chi-square value is 2.51 and it is not significant at 5% level (i.e. p value = 0.110 < 0.050). It shows that relationship is not found between gender of the respondents and political activities during college days. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H02) "No association is found between gender of the respondents and their view on political activities during college days" is accepted. It is concluded that there exists no relationship between gender of the respondents and political activities during college days.

It is seen from the above table 7 that 69 male respondents agree about political activities during college days. 34 male respondents do not agree to it. The above table 7 shows that 45 female respondents agree about political activities during college days. 12 female respondents don't agree to it. 114 respondents agree about political activities during college days. 46 respondents do not agree to it.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- Majority (90 percent) of the respondents agree on the impact of family to join politics. 10 percent of the respondents do not agree about the same.
- Majority (88.8 percent) of the respondents agree about the family inclination to a political party. 11.2 percent of the respondents do not agree to it.
- More than three fourth (76.25 percent) of the respondents agree about their mother's association towards a particular political party. 23.75 percent of the respondents do not agree to it.
- Majority (91.88 percent) of the respondents agree about their membership to a particular political party. 8.12 percent of the respondents do not agree to it.
- More than four fifth (83.1 percent) of the respondents agree about their political activities during school days. 16.9 percent of the respondents do not agree to it.
- There exists no association between gender of the respondents and political activities during school days.
- There is no association between gender of the respondents and political activities during college days.

Managerial Implications

- a. Government and civil society organizations should create awareness about welfare schemes in rural community.
- b. Females in rural areas should participate actively in political activities of rural areas.
- c. Rural families should encourage youth to actively participate in local governance.
- d. Civil society organization should create sensitization among socially disadvantaged people to actively participate in local government activities.

- e. Academicians and researchers should undertake research studies in the area of capacity building and training of rural local body elected leaders. He or she can also undertake research study in other contemporary areas of local governance.

CONCLUSION

Political socialization of rural local body leaders is a contemporary topic of research in political system that has been scarcely researched. Researcher aimed to understand about political socialization aspects of rural local government respondents. It is evident from results of the research study that no association between gender of the respondents and political activities during school days. No association is seen between gender of the respondents and political activities during college days. Suggestions were given by the researcher for increasing people's participation in local governance. Academicians and researchers were suggested to undertake further research pertaining to areas of local governance.

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