

PERFORMANCE OF THE SCHEDULED TRIBE VILLAGE PANCHAYAT PRESIDENTS IN TAMIL NADU - A STUDY

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Abstract: This article has been prepared based on the data collected for a Major Research Project sanctioned by the University Grants Commission, New Delhi. The author greatly acknowledges the UGC for its funding to carry out the project. This study aims to assess the performance of the scheduled tribe elected village panchayat presidents in Tamil Nadu and to bring out the interrelationship between various subject dimensions of the study under consideration. The participants (Male = 95, Female = 53, N = 148) were scheduled tribe elected panchayat presidents in Tamil Nadu. A self prepared pre tested interview schedule was used for data collection. Results show that most of them were school dropouts and their level of education was ranging from primary school to middle school level engaged in agriculture and as agriculture labourers. The level of performance was found higher among the respondents in the young age group. The performance of men is found better than the women counterparts. The respondents with no education (illiterates) reported low level of performance than the literates. The statistical analysis shows that there is a significant difference between the sex, marital status, caste group, and level of education, occupational categories, level of family income and the place of living in the mean score of the performance of the respondents. When the education, income, knowledge about roles and responsibilities and support score increases, then the performance score of the respondents also increases. Likewise, as age and gender discrimination score increases, then the performance score of the respondents decreases. The findings also reveal that the overall performance of the scheduled tribe village panchayat presidents reported as poor.

Keyword: Scheduled Tribe, Panchayat Presidents, Tamil Nadu, Performance.

INTRODUCTION

The term 'performance' means productivity at various levels of human activities. The expression 'performance' carries great significance under democracies in a welfare state. It amounts to the delivering goods to the people. This is the same in the context of the Tamil Nadu Panchayat Raj System. There is a greater gap in the expectations of the Union Government with the ground realities in the context of the Tamil Nadu's rural/tribal areas. There is a list of 29 subjects related to performance, as expected by the Union Government. Even more than half of them are yet to be covered in Tamil Nadu. The effectiveness of its implementation depends on: (a) the panchayats, which are strongly under urban impact, (b) the panchayat heads who are well educated and well informed, (c) the political affiliations or linkages with ruling party and (d) their own caste factor and local influence (Sethuramalingam, 2013). Since our theme is concerned with the scheduled tribe village panchayat presidents, these factors are applicable even to these village panchayat presidents. In our social circumstances, normally, socially disadvantaged are handicapped to discharge their duties and responsibilities in a caste dominated Hindu society. When it comes to scheduled tribe, they have to encounter more difficulties. This is more so when these scheduled tribes are semi-literates or illiterates. Various studies have been conducted on the elected representatives in local bodies. Kitur (1992) analysed that the weaker sections of the society were not able to enter into the panchayat power structure, except in the case of their reserved seats. They were literates even with graduates; land lords and elite people only were able to contest the election to the panchayat. Lieten (1998) reported that the poor peasants, agriculture labourers, the scheduled

castes, and scheduled tribes have very much come to the front. Society for Participatory Research in Asia (2003) reported that a tribal woman in Himachal Pradesh was a widow, able to exercise her power and has substantial say in village matters. She gets work done and the community respects her. The reason being, that her son was a Panchayat Secretary and several members of her extended family were in active politics. Her power was drawn from her reference group who were inevitably male. She was also free of household work, which was taken care of by her daughter-in-law. Chaudhary (2004) pointed out that non cooperation from officials and other representatives and pressure from non tribal populations are outside constraints. Fear and lack of confidence, lack of experience, discouraging the genuine proposal of the tribal leaders, failure in presenting the proposal properly, interference from different corners, illiteracy, economic crisis, feeling of insecurity, lack of interest in work due to unemployment, the tribal sarpanch is failed to do meaningful in panchayat. Pal, M., (2004) pointed out that 'the caste system and patriarchy still exercise a stranglehold on Haryana's panchayat institutions making a mockery of decentralized governance. The women elected representatives need adequate support systems as well as education to make them effective leaders. Sakharwade (2007) cited that a tribal woman sarpanch was selected to receive an award from the President of India under Nirmal Gram Swachhata Abhiyan. But she was denied only because of her gender. She was supposed to receive the award from President of India in a special function held in New Delhi was prevented by the panchayat secretary by deputing an incumbent member of the panchayat (also a former sarpanch) without her knowledge. Planning Commission of India (2007) pointed out that the local bureaucrats,

particularly the grama sevaks find it easier to dominate scheduled caste or tribal women sarpanch and bypassed many of the village affairs. Baisakh (2008) reported that a woman belong to tribal community elected as village panchayat president in a village at Orissa has been quite famous in her area for her pro people positivism. She has effectively mobilized people by discussing the benefits that this legislation would bring to the lives of people along with bringing prosperity to their villages. She has supervising authority over the primary schools. She also has responsibility toward the functioning of other level schools in her areas as a people's representative. Bhattacharya (2008) reported that even as the government intends to implement welfare measures for scheduled tribes and empower them by reserving seats for them in the various civic local bodies, instances are surfacing where non tribal candidates are obtaining scheduled tribe certificates to contest panchayat elections in the reserved seats. Sethuramalingam, et al. (2008) reported that the 73rd constitutional amendment paved the way to enter in to the grass root level politics even by illiterate agriculture labourers, those who are engaged in cattle rearing and those who are staying in huts. Majority of the elected representatives attained this position due to their party membership with well-organised political parties which helped them to enter into grass root level self governing democratic political process. The Indian Express (2011) reported that the members of Gopalpura Gram Panchayat in Narmada district have unanimously nominated a scheduled tribe woman as their sarpanch and a Scheduled Caste woman as a panchayat member, even as there is no such reservation for the same. Kot, (2013) reported that an uneducated tribal woman of Satna district of Madhya Pradesh was elected as village sarpanch first time and her family members run the panchayat by their own rules. A local NGO came into the picture and gave different type of advocacy and training to awake her inner voice and now able to play a role of real leader. Sethuramalingam (2013) concluded that the performance of the scheduled caste women village panchayat presidents is higher in politically active and urban districts than in the rural districts. The correlation coefficients are also positively related to the respondent's level of education, occupational status, personal income and the support received from various sections of the society and concluded that the scheduled caste women village panchayat president's performance is graded at 'medium level' and definitely cannot be labeled as 'mediocre'. The author (2013a) further reported that the advantageous background positions enjoyed by the scheduled caste women panchayat presidents, their performance levels are more satisfactory when compared to that of the scheduled tribe women panchayat presidents. From the review of earlier literatures, following research gap has been identified. It was observed that a number of studies were conducted and analysed the problems of the panchayat presidents. But there is no comprehensive scientific study on the performance of scheduled tribe elected panchayat presidents with multidimensional aspects. This research gap has prompted the researcher to undertake an in-depth study to explore the various issues related to performance of the scheduled tribe elected village panchayat presidents in Tamil

Nadu. A study of this nature will enable to find out priority areas seeking immediate remedial measures. The study will also be helpful to frame suitable policies related to the performance of the scheduled tribe village panchayat presidents at the State as well as National level.

OBJECTIVE

To assess the performance of the scheduled tribe elected village panchayat presidents in Tamil Nadu and to bring out the interrelationship between various subject dimensions of the study under consideration.

METHOD AND PARTICIPANTS

As per the State Election Commission Report, a total number of 156 elected village panchayat presidents belong to scheduled tribe in Tamil Nadu during the period 2007-2012. The researcher selected all these village panchayat presidents belong to scheduled tribes for the present research. While going for data collection, eight panchayat presidents were not willing to give consent for data collection. Hence, the total number of respondents interviewed was 148.

In order to assess the performance of the respondents, the researcher compiled a series of 10 that express a wide range of response from extremely positive to extremely negative. Each item called for checking one of three fixed-alternative expressions such as 'High', 'Moderate' and 'Low', and in this three-point continuum, weights of 3, 2, and 1 were assigned. The level of performance was measured by calculating the score of all the items. This too was developed based on the researcher's field experience besides, previous studies, discussions and consultations held with the scheduled tribe elected representatives of local bodies, the voluntary agencies engaged in tribal rights, field experts, academicians and officials of the community development administration. The reliability () value for the tool for measuring the performance of the elected representatives is 0.6963. The Interview schedule was administered in face-to-face with the respondents by the investigator after getting themselves acquainted well with the respondents. To collect the data from the individual respondents, the investigator spent about an average of a day per respondent and the time taken for each respondent was nearly three to four hours a day. The data were also collected from the panchayat clerk to collect the relevant statistics about the respective panchayat. The data were collected during the period of April 2011 – January 2012. The census data like proportion of the scheduled tribe population to the total village population and literacy rate of the respective village panchayats (Census 2001 & 2011) were also used to analyse the data. The socio demographic variables have been discussed widely by using percentage analysis, mean, standard deviation, t-test, one way ANOVA, inter correlation matrix and regression analysis.

FINDINGS

Socioeconomic Background Characteristics:

The results showed that the majority of the respondents were in the middle age group with a mean age of 41.05 years. More than two third (36%) of them were

women. Most of them were married. The respondents from nuclear families (77%) predominated over the joint family system (23%). The concentration of tribal village panchayat presidents was found more in Salem, Tiruvannamalai, Viluppuram, and Namakkal districts than the other districts. It is also found that more than half of the respondents (56%) belong to Malayali tribes. The average level of education of the respondents was seventh standard only. Nearly half (51%) of the respondents were drawn from agriculture background and more than one fourth of the elected tribal village panchayat presidents were landless labourers (28%). Their average monthly family income and expenditure was Rs.7128.38 and Rs. 6361.49 respectively. The analysis shows that the average per capita monthly income of the respondent's family was Rs. 1474.15 (Rs.49.14 per day) with a minimum of Rs. 200 (Rs.6.67 per day) to a maximum Rs. 12500 per month (Rs.416.67 per day). About 29.8 per cent of them were living below poverty line. That is, their per capita monthly family income was less than Rs.672.8 (\$16.61) or Rs.22.42 per day. About 14 per cent of them were living in huts and 41 per cent of the respondents were living in government constructed free houses with space restrictions.

Level of Performance

While going through the overall performance, it is found that 48.6 per cent of the respondent's performance is poor. About 41.9 per cent of the respondent's performance is only medium level and the remaining 9.5 per cent of the respondent's performance is high. The average score of the performance is 16.07 (SD = 4.04) with a minimum score of 10 to a maximum of 24.

Performance and Background Characteristics

Age Group and Performance: Panel - 1 of Table - 1 shows that the mean scores of performance is higher among the respondents in the young age group (mean 16.74) than the means scores of middle (mean 15.80) and old (mean 16.0) age group respondents. However, the ANOVA result [$F(2, 145) = .796, p > .05$] shows that there is no statistically significant variance among the age group of the respondents in the mean score of the performance.

Sex and Performance: Panel - 2 of Table - 1 reveals that the performance of men (mean 17.04) is found to be better than women tribal panchayat presidents (mean 14.34). The independent sample t test analysis [$t(146) = 4.104, p < .001$] also shows that there is a statistically highly significant difference between both sex in the mean score of the performance.

Marital status and Performance: Panel - 3 of Table - 1 show that mean score of performance is higher among the unmarried respondents (mean 20.33) than their married counterparts (mean 15.99). The independent sample t test analysis [$t(146) = 1.859, p < 0.10$] also shows that there is a statistically marginal difference between these two mean scores in the performance of the respondents.

District wise performance: Panel - 6 of Table - 1 illustrates that the mean score of performance is found higher at Kanyakumari (mean 24) district followed by Krishnagiri and Coimbatore (mean 21) districts. Whereas, the performance is found very low at Erode district (mean

12.50). The ANOVA analysis [$F(14, 133) = 1.659, p < 0.10$] also shows that there is a statistically marginal variance among the different districts (place of living) in the mean scores of performance of the respondents.

Size and type of family: Panel - 4 & 5 of Table - 1 depicts that the mean score of performance is little higher among the respondents who belong to small families (mean 16.81) than the medium (mean 16.43) and big (mean 15.11) families. It shows that when the size of family increases then the mean score of performance decreases. However, there is no statistically significant difference between these three mean scores, [$F(2, 145) = 2.004, p > .05$]. It is also found that the mean score of performance is little higher among the respondents belonging to joint family than the nuclear family and there is no statistically significant difference in the mean scores of performance of the respondents ($t(146) = 0.602, p > 0.05$).

Caste and Performance: Panel - 7 of Table - 1 shows that the mean score of performance is little higher among the respondents belong to Kurumba tribe than the respondents belong to 'other category' (which includes Kattunaicken, Kanikaran, Kondakappu, Kurichan, Paliyas, Solagar), Irulas and Malayali tribes. The low mean score is found among the Malaikurava tribe (mean 11.33). The ANOVA results [$F(2, 145) = 2.132, p < 0.10$] also shows that there is a statistically marginal variance among the various tribal groups in the mean scores of performance of the respondents.

Table – 1: Mean scores of Performance across Respondents' Background Characteristics

Variables	N	Mean	S. D.	df	F/t	Sig.	
1. Age Group	Young (35 or <)	42	16.74	4.29	2 145	0.796	0.453
	Middle (36-59)	99	15.80	3.97			
	Old (60+)	7	16.00	3.56			
	Total	148	16.07	4.04			
2. Sex	Male	95	17.04	4.02	146	4.104	0.000 p < .001
	Female	53	14.34	3.49			
3. Marital Status	Married	145	15.99	3.98	146	1.859	0.065 p < .10
	Unmarried	3	20.33	5.51			
4. Place of Living	Knacheepuram	9	16.11	4.54	14 133	1.659	0.072 p < .10
	Dharmapuri	8	17.38	4.37			
	Salem	26	17.65	3.95			
	Krishnagiri	2	21.00	2.83			
	Coimbatore	2	21.00	4.24			
	Erode	2	12.50	3.54			
	Kanyakumari	1	24.00	.			
	Viluppuram	23	15.35	3.80			
	Namakkal	20	14.65	2.64			
	Vellore	10	16.90	5.53			
	Thiruvallur	12	15.33	4.38			
	Tiruvannamalai	25	15.24	3.79			
	Tiruchirappalli	5	16.00	3.08			
	Arialur	2	14.00	.00			
Theni	1	15.00	.				
Total	148	16.07	4.04				
5. Caste	Irulas	48	16.42	4.61	4 143	2.132	0.080 p < .10
	Malayali	83	15.72	3.48			
	Kurumbas	6	18.00	4.10			
	Malaikuravas	3	11.33	.58			
	Others	8	18.00	5.18			
Total	148	16.07	4.04				
6. Size of family	Samll (3 or <)	21	16.81	3.87	2 145	2.004	0.139
	Medium (4-5)	81	16.43	4.20			
	Big (6 & >)	46	15.11	3.74			
	Total	148	16.07	4.04			
7. Type of family	Nuclear Family	114	15.96	3.85	146	0.602	0.548
	Joint Family	34	16.44	4.67			
8. Education	Illiterate	24	12.83	1.63	4 143	63.440	0.000 p < .001
	Primary	58	14.43	2.93			
	Middle	21	14.48	1.66			
	High school & HSc	36	19.83	2.73			
	Collegiate	9	24.00	.00			
Total	148	16.07	4.04				
9. Occupation	Agriculture/Business	79	17.33	3.98	2 145	9.309	0.000 p < .001
	Agriculture Labour	32	14.97	3.79			
	House Wife	37	14.35	3.54			
	Total	148	16.07	4.04			
10. F. Income	4000 or less	65	15.28	3.74	2 145	8.125	0.000 p < .001
	4001 -8000	57	15.74	3.95			
	8001 & >	26	18.81	3.95			
	Total	148	16.07	4.04			

Education and Performance: Panel - 8 of Table - 1 depicts that the mean score of performance is higher among the respondents who have collegiate education (mean 24.00) and it is very low among the illiterates (mean 12.83). The table also reveals that when the level of education increases, then the performance of the respondents also increases. The ANOVA results [F (2, 145) = 63.440, p < .001] also illustrates that there is a statistically highly significant variance among the level of education in the means scores of performance of the respondents.

Occupation and Performance: Panel - 9 of Table - 1 points out that the mean score of the performance of respondents engaged in agriculture / small business are (mean 17.33) higher than the respondents engaged as agriculture labour (mean 14.97) and house wives (mean 14.35). The findings also reveal that as the occupational status of the respondent increases then the mean score of the performance also increases. The ANOVA results (F (2, 145) = 9.309, p < .001) also reveal that there is a statistically significant variance among the various categories of occupation in the means score of performance of the respondents.

Income: Panel - 10 & 11 of Table - 1 depicts that the mean score of performance is higher among the respondents whose family income is Rs. 8001 and above per month (mean 18.81) than the family income category of Rs. 4001 - 8000 (mean 15.74) and Rs. 4000 or less (mean 15.28). It shows that as income increases, then the mean score of performance of the respondent increases. The ANOVA results [F (2, 145) = 8.125, p < .001] also reveal that there is a statistically significant variance among the income categories of the respondents in the mean score of performance.

Membership in Socio Political Organizations and Support System

From the Panel - 1 of Table 2, it is found that the mean score of performance is found higher among the respondents who are having membership with social organisations than the non members. The independent sample t test (t (146) = 2.896, p < 0.01) also statistically supports these findings at highly significant level.

Table – 2: Independent sample t test between the members and non members in socio political organisations and support system

SN	Variables	N	Mean	S D	t	df	Sig.
1	Membership in Social organisations	Member	20	18.45	5.00	2.896	146
	Non Member	128	15.70	3.76			
2	Membership in Caste organisations	Member	21	19.90	4.41	5.065	146
	Non Member	127	15.44	3.62			
3	Membership in Political parties	Member	65	17.74	3.89	4.745	146
	Non Member	83	14.77	3.69			

From Panel - 2 of Table - 2, it is found that the mean score of performance is found higher among the respondents who are having membership in caste based organisations than the non members. The independent sample t test [t (146) = 5.065, p < 0.001] also statistically supports these findings at highly significant level. Panel 3 of Table 2 depicts that the mean score of performance is found low among the respondents who are having membership in political organisations than the non members. The independent

sample t test [t (146) = 4.795, p < 0.001] also statistically support these findings at highly significant level.

Relationship between the Socio Economic Background Characteristics of the respondents and their Performance

Table - 3 shows that the performance of the respondents is negatively related to their age, and gender discrimination whereas, it is positively related to the respondent's education, income, knowledge about roles and responsibilities and support score. That is, as education, income, knowledge about roles and responsibilities and support score increases, then the performance score of the respondents also increases. Likewise, as age and gender discrimination score increases, then the performance score of the respondents decreases and there is no relationship between the performance of the respondents and the proportion of the scheduled tribe population to the total population of the village panchayats, literacy rate of the respective village panchayat and caste discrimination score.

Table – 3: Inter correlations matrix between the socio economic variables and various subject dimensions of the study

Variables	Age	Educati on	R. Income	Family income	Prop. of ST Populat ion	Literac y rate	Role score	Support Score	Gender Discrimi.	Caste Discrimi.	Perfor mance Score
Age	1.000										
Education	***.318	1.000									
R. Income	.054	**238	1.000								
Family income	.034	*203	***944	1.000							
ST Population	-.037	-.100	-.072	-.018	1.000						
Literate	.068	.126	.109	.073	***.653	1.000					
Role Total	-.037	***518	***282	**214	.026	-.023	1.000				
Support Score	*.165	***647	*169	.112	-.039	-.049	***420	1.000			
Gender Discrimi.	.284	***.836	.047	*.290	.182	-.159	***.569	***.640	1.000		
Caste Discrimi.	.059	.113	.084	.049	***.912	***.633	.004	.048	-.180	1.000	
Performance	*.198	***764	***268	***274	-.053	.029	***566	***486	***.682	.056	1.000

*** p < 0.001 ** p < 0.01 * p < 0.05 + p < 0.10

Step wise Multiple Regression Analysis on overall Performance

According to table - 4, the R2 value, which is a measure of how much of the variability in the outcome, is accounted for by the predictors (Field, 2009). Model 1 refers to the first stage in the hierarchy when only education is used as predictor. For the first model, its value is 0.584, which means that the support score accounts for 58.4% of variation in performance of scheduled tribe elected women village panchayat presidents. In the second model, this value increases to 0.624 or 62.4 % of the variance in the performance score. Therefore, whatever variables enter the model in step 2 account for extra 3.9 % of the variance in the performance score. The b value tells us about the relationship between performance score and each predictor. If the value is positive, we can tell that there is a positive relationship between the predictor and the outcome whereas, a negative coefficient represents a negative relationship (Field, 2008). For these data, the predictor (Independent Variable) is education. Respondent's education has positive b values indicating positive relationships. So, as level of education increases, then the performance score increases, as knowledge about the roles and responsibilities of the respondent increases, then the performance score increases. The b value also tells us that to what degree each predictor affects the outcome if the effects of all other predictors are

held constant. The t value for level of education ($t = 14.327$, $p < 0.001$) and the respondent's knowledge about the roles and responsibilities ($t = 3.897$, $p < 0.001$), are significant predictors of performance of the respondents. From the magnitude of the t-statistics, we can see that the education has more impact than the other predictors. The standardized beta (β) values provide a better insight into the importance of the predictor in this model. The standardized beta value for education is 0.764, and the respondent's knowledge about the roles and responsibilities is 0.232. This tells us that the education has slightly more impact in the model.

Table – 4: Results based on step wise multiple regression analysis on overall performance

Model	Predictor variables	R	R ² x 100	Change in R ² x 100	b	SE b	β	t value	p value
1.	(Constant)	.764	58.4	58.4	11.834	.366		32.352	
	Education				0.697	0.049	0.764	14.327	0.000
2.	(Constant)	.790	62.4	3.9	9.603	.671		14.320	
	Education				.588	.054	.644	10.813	0.000
	Roles & Responsibilities				-.06710	-.017	-.232	3.897	0.000

CONCLUSION

The finding shows that the respondent's level of education and their knowledge about the roles and responsibilities has more impact on the performance of the scheduled tribe village panchayat presidents. Low level or poor performance at the initial stages due to inexperience and fear factors is commonly noticeable. The performance levels depend on the levels of support and respect enjoyed by various classified categories of the tribal panchayat. As expected, the performance of the young and youthful members in general, the male's performance is higher when compared to the women's performance and the unmarried chief's performance is higher when compared to the married householder's performance. And among the castes, the Kurumba's performance when compared to the other tribal castes, the performance of the educated as well as the affluent members when compared to the illiterate and poor persons performance seems more satisfactory. Another interesting and educative factor noticed in this study is that of the better and efficient performance of those who had been active members in the welfare forums, self-help groups, caste organisations, and as political party organizers and public speakers. In order to improve the performance of the scheduled tribe elected village panchayat presidents, the remedial measures can be taken through the local efforts by increasing literacy percentage, organising more and more short and medium term programmes on local governance at the door step of elected tribal representatives through the voluntary agencies and the educational institutions working in the field of panchayat raj.

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