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RESEARCH ARTICLE

PEOPLE'S PERCEPTION ON WORKING OF PANCHAYATI RAJ SYSTEM -A CASE STUDY OF KARIMNAGAR DISTRICT IN THE TELANGANA STATE OF INDIA

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Abstract

My study is intended to analyse how People's perception is very important because of the 73rd constitutional amendment act that was introduced to ensure political participation of underprivileged groups like Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and Women through the reservation of provisions in Panchayati Raj System at grassroots level democracy. In this context, the people's perception of working of Panchayati Raj institutions in Karimnagar district plays a very crucial role to reveal the actual ground realities thereof and to what extent they accomplished the above-mentioned objectives. several policy initiatives have been taken for effective implementation of reservation policy in Panchayati Raj in the district. The present research work also focussed on the political backwardness of scheduled castes, scheduled Tribe leadership in Panchayati Raj Institutions at the Panchayati level. It also reveals people's perception to the conscious understanding that people have of public functionaries and official issues in the society and realistically based on their understanding level in the given context on a particular aspect.

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Introduction:-

The evolutionary aspects of reservation policy in the context of the 73rd constitutional amendment Act which came into force in 1993. Subsequently, the emergence of provisions of reservation seats for the weaker sections of the society like Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and Women and challenges and problems thereof in implementation of reservation seats in the Panchayati Raj System across India. It also focussed special emphasis on article 243D which is the foundation for the reservation policy. It can be termed as (Magna Carta of marginalised groups in providing provisions of reservation in panchayats of India), and the significance of the 73rd constitutional amendment Act. This 73rd constitutional amendment Act has increased the participation level of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes and women elected representatives through reservation policy in Panchayati Raj System of Karimnagar district at all three levels. the provisions of reservation policy and political empowerment of SC, ST, BC and women in Panchayati raj institutions of erstwhile Karimnagar district. It also examines the impact of reservation policy on weaker sections of the society in the district. It further looks into the performance level of the representatives of the marginalised community. In this context, the people's perception of the implementation of any policy whether it is positive or negative helps to improve the standard and quality of implementation of any policy formulated and implemented, for the welfare of the weaker sections of the society. The Panchayati Raj Institutions are established and given constitutional status to provide the provisions of

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reservation for the political empowerment and upliftment of the downtrodden people in the Karimnagar district. People's perception on the implementation side of the reservation policy guide policymakers and make them introspect themselves to look into the loophole in the existing system. People's perception would guide policy framers and decision-makers to take steps to strengthen and revitalise the Panchayati Raj Institution in near future. People's opinion on Panchayati Raj Institutions and implementation of reservation of seats would reflect the ground realities in the form of perception. People may comment on any aspect of the functioning of the Panchayati System such as working of panchayats in their locality, conduction of gram sabha meetings, selection of beneficiaries in the presence of people in the Gram Sabha meetings, the performance of panchayat leaders in rural development programmes etc. All these comments help Government a lot to improve the delivery mechanism in the long run to address the existing drawbacks. Finally, these comments not only help academicians, NGOs, other cross-section of people but also the district administration to take suitable measures in the desired direction. It is against this background, the researcher attempted to record the perception of the public on the Panchayati Raj System in the Karimnagar district. For this purpose, a structured questionnaire was administered to 400 respondents (Samples) as identified in the Karimnagar district. The below-mentioned pattern has been followed while recording of respondent's perception in Karimnagar district.

Table 1:- Distribution of Respondents according to their opinion on functioning of Panchayati Raj Total Number of Respondents =400.

S.No.	Perception of Respondents on Functioning of Panchayati Raj System	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Indifferent	37	9.25
2.	Poor	85	21.25
3.	Good	255	63.75
4.	Very Good	17	4.25
5.	Excellent	10	2.5
Total		400	100

Source: Primary Data

The above analysis reveals that 63.75% of the respondents have a good opinion of the functioning of the Panchayati Raj system. On the other hand, 21.25% of the respondents viewed that the functioning of Panchayati Raj is poor and not up to the mark. Similarly, 9.25% of the respondents regarded Panchayati Raj as a group of indifferent people. Only 4.25% of respondents and 2.5% of the respondents felt that the functioning of Panchayati Raj was very good and excellent respectively.

Table 2:- Distribution of Respondents according to their perception on attitude of officials Total Number of Respondents =400.

S. No.	Perception of the Respondents on Attitude of the District officials towards Panchayati Raj System	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Negative Attitude towards Panchayati Raj System	210	52.5
2.	Indifferent Attitude towards Panchayati Raj	38	9.5
3.	Positive Attitude towards Panchayati Raj	127	31.75
4.	Not Applicable	25	6.25
Total		400	100

Source: Primary Data

The above table-2 indicates that the status of the respondents on the attitudes of district officials towards the Panchayati Raj System. Out of 400 respondents, a majority 52.5% of the respondents informed that the district officials display a negative attitude towards Panchayati Raj Institutions. On the other hand, 31.75% of the respondents felt that the district authorities have a positive attitude and sensitive behaviour towards the Panchayati Raj system. Approximately, 9.5% of the respondents perceived an indifferent attitude of authorities towards grassroots democracy whereas 6.25 % of respondents felt not applicable.

Hence, it can be inferred that the majority 52.5% of the respondents opined that the district authorities have a negative attitude towards grassroots democracy.

Table 3:- Distribution of the Respondents according to their perception on status of people's participation in PRIs. Total Number of Respondents=400.

S. No.	Perception of the Respondents on the status of Peoples Participation in Panchayati Raj activities	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Poor	289	72.25
2.	Good	103	25.75
3.	Very Good	05	1.5
4.	Excellent	03	0.75
Total		400	100

Source: Primary Data

The above table-3 reveals the status of the respondent's perception of the common public's participation in Panchayati raj activities. Out of 400 respondents, a majority of 72.25% of the respondents informed that the participation level of people in Panchayati raj activities is very low, especially women participation too minimal. It is evident that in some villages such as Regulagudem where most of the people belong to the Nayakapu community (ST-sub caste), their participation and awareness regarding panchayats is very low, similarly, in RamaiahPalle where the majority of people belong to the SC community, their participation level and political awareness is negligible, on the same line in villages like Banjerupalle, KosunurPalle people's participation is also very low, especially SCs, STs, and women were far behind when compared with other communities. On the other hand, 25.75% of respondents felt that the level of people's participation in Panchayati activities is good. Approximately, 1.5% of respondents viewed that the common public's participation in Panchayati raj activities is very good whereas only 0.75% of the respondents felt that the people's participation in developmental activities is excellent. Hence, it can be concluded that the majority 72.25% of the respondents perceived that the common public's participation in Panchayati raj activities is very poor, especially SCs, STs and Women.

Table 4:- Distribution of the Respondents according to their level of awareness on reservation policy. Total Number Respondents=400

S.No.	Perception of the Respondents about awareness and implementation of reservation policy	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Having awareness and knowledge of reservation	370	92.5
2.	Not aware about reservation policy in PRIs	30	7.5
Total		400	100

Source: Primary Data

The above table depicts the status of respondents on awareness and knowledge of reservation policy in the Karimnagar district. Out of 400 respondents, a majority 92.5% of the respondents have awareness as well as knowledge about the reservation policy in Panchayati Raj of Karimnagar district, but most of the respondents do not have sufficient/full-fledged knowledge about the reservation system. On the other hand, approximately, 7.5% of the respondents were not aware of the provisions of reservation of seats in the Panchayati raj system.

Table 5:- Distribution of Respondents according to their perception on objectives of reservation policy Total Number of Respondents=400.

S.No.	Perception of Respondents on the main objectives of reservation policy in PRIs	Frequency	Percentage
1.	To Promote Social Justice	100	25
2.	To Promote / Ensure Political Empowerment	267	66.75
3.	To reduce economical inequalities in the society	22	5.50
4.	To promote social harmony in the society	11	2.75
Total		400	100

Source: Primary Data

The above table clearly indicates the status of the respondents on the main objectives of reservation policy in the Karimnagar district. Out of 400 respondents, a majority (66.75%) of the respondents opined that the main objective behind the provisions of reservations policy is to promote political empowerment among the disadvantaged groups such as STs, SCs, BCs and women thereby ensuring their political participation in Panchayati Raj. Similarly,

approximately, 25% of the respondents felt that the main purpose of the reservation policy is to promote social justice among the weaker sections of society. Another, 5.50% of the respondents opined that the main aim of reservation policy is to reduce economic inequality among the people whereas 2.75% of respondents said that the main motto of reservation policy was to promote social harmony in society. Afterwards, the respondents were asked to reveal their perception on how is the status of reservation policy in the district? Table-5 presents the status of reservation policy as perceived by the respondents.

Table 6:- Distribution of Respondents according to their perception on the status of reservation policy Total Number of Respondents=400.

S.No.	Perception of Respondents on the status reservation Policy in Panchayati Raj	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Effective	28	7
2.	Ineffective	127	31.75
3.	Poor	22	5.5
4.	Satis factory	210	52.5
5.	Not Aware	13	3.25
Total		400	100

Source: Primary Data

According to the analysis of the above table, out of 400 respondents, 52.5% of the respondents expressed satisfaction over the status of the reservation policy. On the other hand, 31.75 of the respondents felt that the status of the reservation policy was ineffective. Only 7% of the respondents viewed that the status of reservation was effective. However, approximately 5.5% of respondents graded that the implementation of reservation policy was poor whereas 3.25% of the respondents informed that they were not aware of the implementation of reservation policy.

Table 7:- Distribution of the Respondents according to their perception on implementing agencies Total Number of Respondents=400.

S. No.	Status of Respondents on implementing agencies of reservation policy in Panchayati Raj	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Central Government	10	2.5
2.	State Government	288	72
3.	Office of the District Collector	35	8.75
4.	Office of the District Panchayati Officer	90	22.5
5.	Not Aware	02	0.5
Total		400	100

Source: Primary Data

The analysis of the above table reveals the respondents level of understanding over the implementation of the reservation policy. Out of 400 respondents, 72% of the respondents informed that the State Government is the main organisation that implements the reservation policy in Panchayati raj whereas 22.5% of the respondents felt that the responsibility of implementation of reservation policy in Panchayati raj lies with the office of the district panchayat officer. Similarly, 8.75% of the respondents have the opinion that the office of the district collector is the main implementing agency of reservation policy in Panchayati raj. Another 2.5% of the respondents and 0.5% of the respondents perceived that the central government and not aware of implementing agency respectively.

Table 8:- Distribution of the Respondents according to their perception on understanding angle of reservation policy Total Number of Respondents=400.

S.No.	Status of understanding level of Respondents on Reservation Policy in Panchayati Raj System	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Positive discrimination	355	88.75
2.	Negative discrimination	30	7.5
3.	Not aware	15	3.75
Total		400	100

Source: Primary Data.

The analysis of the above table depicts the understanding level of respondents regarding the provisions of reservation policy in the Panchayati raj system. Out of 400 respondents, 355 (88.75%) of the respondents believed that the provisions of reservation for weaker sections of the society such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes and women in the Panchayati Raj System are positive discrimination. Further, they perceived that the reservation policy provides a space for disadvantaged groups and thereby ensures their political participation and political empowerment in Panchayati Raj Institutions at grassroots democracy. They also viewed that it is the most welcome policy initiative and positive discrimination towards vulnerable groups in society. On the other hand, 7.5% of the respondents viewed the reservation policy as negative discrimination on the part of other sections in the society. Interestingly, some of the incumbent women reserved category sarpanches also viewed the reservation policy as negative discrimination. For instance, Smt. Neeraja the sarpanch of Gamberpur of Kathalapur Mandal had expressed her dissatisfaction over provisions of reservations mainly because women are not in a position to utilise these opportunities, likewise, some respondents left their comments against reservation policy. Only 3.75% of the respondents informed that they are not aware of the provision reservations. Therefore, it can be concluded that the majority i.e., 88.75% of respondents considered reservation policy positive discrimination towards weaker sections of society in the Panchayati Raj System of Karimnagar district.

Conclusion:-

It is observed that there should be proper sanitation facilities and other essential facilities must be provided such as drinking water, proper drainage system and some of the villages still have Kacha roads etc. The gram sabha meetings must be convened regularly and the identification of beneficiaries of social security schemes must be done in the presence of people and political interference must be avoided. It is also viewed that the development funds should be utilised appropriately and misuse of these funds must be prevented. However, the Sarpanches and other elected representatives must be available to the common people for the redressal of their grievances and the officials must have a positive attitude towards the common public and should work with commitment. It is perceived that the elected representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions should take the common public's views and wishes into consideration while implementing the development programmes and identification of sites for development work and people's participation. As a result, the intended purpose of initiated development programmes was not reaching the targeted groups. Finally, the elected representatives should work towards the common people's voice and their grievances at the grassroots level democratic institutions of the Karimnagar district.

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