



Study On Awareness And Opinion Towards The Functioning Of Gram Sabha And Gram Panchayat With Reference To Coimbatore

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ABSTRACT

Social audit is a process of reviewing official records and determining whether state reported expenditures reflect the actual monies spent on the ground. The present study thus focused on the awareness and opinion of the public the functioning of gram sabha and gram panchayat. Social Audits are now widely accepted as an important mechanism to address corruption and strengthen accountability in government service delivery. The study concludes that majority of the public were aware of gram sabha and gram panchayat and more than half of them were satisfied with its functions. The study also concludes nearly 50% only participate in meetings and demographic factors had significant impact on awareness and participation in gram sabha and gram panchayat activities.

KEYWORDS :

Introduction

With the emergence of modern governance and advent of globalization, the world economic growth is at lightning speed. This has really enabled the ordinary man to access and consume services and basic needs all within the affordable price. Almost all the countries in the 21st century are run by democratic institutions. At the same time, equality of people before law – in terms of access to basic infrastructure and services such as education, food, transportation, housing, employment, etc., - as enshrined by the constitution of India the democracies - is safeguarded by the welfare state elected democratically. While distributing the public resources, services and wealth among the general public irrespective of their place/state, religion, caste, creed, it is an enormous challenge for the governments to maintain transparency and non-partisan approach.

From the available literature and government policy documents one can define the term Social Audit "as a measurement tool to infuse accountability and transparency in the use and management of public resources. It relies on engagement from citizens and/or Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to directly and/or indirectly demand accountability and transparency in the public policy and budget cycles. Social audit is participatory, and can be an anti-corruption and efficiency enhancing mechanism. It is based on the premise that citizens want and have the right to know what the government does; how it does it; how it impacts on them; and that the government has an obligation to account and be transparent to citizens. The present study thus focussed on the awareness and opinion towards the functioning of gram sabha and gram panchayat among the general public with reference to Coimbatore.

Review of Literature

Davenport (1998) discussed the benefits of social audit as it enhances reputation, alerts policymakers to stakeholder trends, affects positive organizational change, increases accountability, assists in re-orienting and re-focusing priorities and provides increased confidence in social areas. All these authors highlighted the importance and benefits of social auditing. The study in three National Rural Employment guarantee scheme(NREGS) Districts in Andrapradesh showed that the awareness of NREGA increased by 62% post-Social Audit . By February 2007, 50 field assistants and 6 computer assistants had been sacked, 3 MDOs had been suspended and 6 inquiries initiated (in Andhra Pradesh). Over Rs.5 lakh have been recovered from 12 Mandals in the last one year. In May 2007, Sarpanches returned Rs.96, 000 that had been collected through petty corruption. The post-office officials returned the embezzled money. In Pakur district of Jharkhand, the Gram Panchayat (GP) is maintaining a work-wise file under NREGS. This file contains, technical and administrative sanctions, copies of vouchers/ bills of every expenditure, copies of muster rolls, financial details (receipts, expenditure and wage payment) etc. When such a

document is readily available for each work three-fourths of social audit process is completed.

Objectives

1. To study the socio economic profile of the respondents.
2. To study the awareness of the respondents about gram sabha and gram panchayat.
3. To study the opinion of the respondents about gram sabha and gram panchayat.
4. To find out the socio economic factors influencing the level of awareness and opinion towards gram sabha and gram panchayat.

Methodology

The study is descriptive in nature. The universe of the study is the general public residing in rural areas of Coimbatore district. Multi stage sampling was used to select the sample. Of the total 12 blocks in Coimbatore district 2 blocks namely Sultur and Annur were randomly selected. Out of the 17 village panchayats in Sultur block 1 village panchayat was randomly selected similarly out of the 21 village panchayats in Annur block 1 village panchayat was selected randomly. From the selected village panchayats one village was randomly selected from each village panchayats. A total sample size of 250 was selected from the 2 villages using simple random sampling. A structured Interview Schedule was prepared for the purpose of data collection. SPSS was used for processing the data, such as data base creation, data editing, descriptive statistics and data analysis. Relevant statistical in the SPSS package were used to analyze the data.

Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Socio-Economic Profile

Variable	Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Age	18-22	12	4.8
	23-27	44	17.6
	28-32	47	18.8
	33-37	54	21.6
	38-42	24	9.6
	43-47	29	11.6
	48-52	19	7.6
	53-57	21	8.4
Gender	Male	116	46.4
	Female	134	53.6

Education	illiterate	36	14.4
	Primary	12	4.8
	Middle	48	19.2
	High school	21	8.4
	Higher secondary	48	19.2
	Under graduate	32	12.8
	Post graduate	19	7.6
	Diploma	30	12.0
	Professionals	4	1.6
Social group	SC	55	22.0
	OBC	91	36.4
	Minorities	6	2.4
	General	98	39.2
Occupation of the family head	Daily wages	80	32.0
	Govt. Sector	18	7.2
	Private sector	74	29.6
	Business	41	16.4
	Small trade	7	2.8
	Unemployed	18	7.2
	Any other	12	4.8
Average monthly house hold income	Rs.501-Rs.1000	12	4.8
	Rs.1001-Rs.1500	10	4.0
	Rs.1501- Rs.2500	12	4.8
	Rs.2501-Rs.3500	29	11.6
	Rs.3501-Rs.5000	71	28.4
	Above Rs.5000	116	46.4

Table 1 shows that 21.6 percent of the respondents belong to the age group between 33-37, 53.6 percent of the respondents were male, 19.2 percent of the respondents have completed their higher secondary level of education, 36.4 percent of them belong to other backward class (OBC), 32 percent of the respondents occupation was daily wages and 28.4 percent of the respondents monthly household income was between Rs. 3501-5000.

Table 2: Awareness on Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat

Variable	Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Aware about gram sabha	Yes	225	90.0
	No	25	10.0
Participated in Gram Sabha meetings	Yes	114	45.6
	No	136	54.4
Frequency of meetings conducted	Once every month	9	3.6
	once every two months	26	10.4
	once every 3 months	94	37.6
	once in six months	38	15.2
	once in a year	16	6.4
	Less Frequently	21	8.4
	Any other	46	18.4
Matter discussed in meetings	Information / news about new Programmes / Schemes	13	5.2
	Updation about previous programmes / schemes	7	2.8
	Income & Expenditure on programmes / schemes	3	1.2
	Allotment / allocation to beneficiaries	9	3.6
	All of the above	147	58.8
	None of the above	7	2.8
	Any other	64	25.6
Clarify doubts with the Gram Sabha members	Yes	180	72.0
	No	70	28.0

Know about Panch and Sarpanch of village and Gram Panchayat	Yes	211	84.4
	No	39	15.6
Activities & responsibilities of Gram Panchayat	Road construction	36	14.4
	Proper water supply	19	7.6
	Street light	18	7.2
	Infrastructure development	27	10.8
	Pollution control	20	8.0
	Village development works	130	52.0
Level of Satisfaction of the Gram Panchayat	Not Satisfactory	47	18.8
	Satisfactory	151	60.4
	Very Satisfactory	52	20.8

Table 2 shows that majority (90 percent) of the respondents were aware of gram sabha, more than half of the respondents (54.4 percent) do not participate in gram sabha meetings, 37.6 percent of the respondents have stated that gram sabha meetings are conducted once in every 3 months, 58.8 percent of the respondents stated that the gram sabha meetings discusses about new programmes and schemes, updation of previous programmes and schemes, regarding income and expenditure, allotment and allocation to beneficiaries, majority (72 percent) of the respondents have stated that they use to clarify the doubts if any with the gram sabha members, 84.4 percent of the respondents know about panch and sarpanch of village and gram panchayat, 52 percent of the respondents have stated that the development work of the village are the major activities and responsibilities of gram panchayat and 60.4 percent of the respondents were satisfied on their gram panchayat.

Table 3: Opinion towards Gram Panchayat

Variable	Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Opinion on performance of Gram Panchayat in terms of Implementation of Programmes	Poor	5	2.0
	Bad	36	14.4
	Average	85	34.0
	Good	112	44.8
	Excellent	12	4.8
Opinion on performance of Gram Panchayat in terms of dissemination of Information	Poor	4	1.6
	Bad	39	15.6
	Average	81	32.4
	Good	114	45.6
	Excellent	12	4.8
Gram Panchayat conceals information	Yes	112	44.8
	No	138	55.2
Type of information concealed	Funds received	32	12.8
	Expenditure incurred	28	11.2
	Allotment of beneficiaries	26	10.4
	Details & progress about programme / scheme	37	14.8
	Any other	127	50.8

Table 3 depicts that less than half (44.8 percent) of the respondents had a good opinion on the performance of gram panchayat in terms of implementation of programmes, 45.6 percent of the respondents had a good opinion on the performance of gram panchayat in terms of dissemination of information, 55.2 percent of them had stated that gram panchayat does not conceals information and 12.8 percent of the respondents have stated that gram panchayat conceals the information on funds received for the programmes and schemes from them.

INFLUENCE OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC VARIABLES ON AWARENESS AND OPINION TOWARDS GRAM SABHA AND GRAM PANCHAYAT

Table 4: Influence of Socio-Economic Variables on Awareness on Gram Sabha

Variables	Statistical tool	Value	Result
Age and awareness on gram sabha	Chi-square	Chi = 26.824 (p<0.01)	Significant
Gender and awareness on gram sabha	Chi-square	Chi = 3.781 (p<0.05)	Significant
Education and awareness on gram sabha	Chi-square	Chi = 15.079 (p<0.05)	Significant
Social Group and awareness on gram sabha	Chi-square	Chi = 32.240 (p<0.05)	Significant
Occupation and awareness on gram sabha	Chi-square	Chi = 4.980 (p>0.05)	Non Significant
Income and awareness on gram sabha	Chi-square	Chi = 4.436 (p>0.05)	Non Significant

Table 4 reveals the influence of socio economic variables on awareness on gram sabha. It shows that age, gender, education and social group significantly influences the level of awareness on the gram sabha. The variables namely occupation and income does not influence the level of awareness on the gram sabha.

Table 5: Influence of Socio-Economic Variables on Participation in Gram Sabha Meetings

Variables	Statistical tool	Value	Result
Age and participation in gram sabha meetings	Chi-square	Chi = 26.824 (p<0.01)	Significant
Gender and participation in gram sabha meetings	Chi-square	Chi = 7.994 (p<0.05)	Significant
Education and participation in gram sabha meetings	Chi-square	Chi = 18.528 (p<0.05)	Significant
Social Group and participation in gram sabha meetings	Chi-square	Chi = 3.560 (p>0.05)	Non Significant
Occupation and participation in gram sabha meetings	Chi-square	Chi = 8.648 (p>0.05)	Non Significant
Income and participation in gram sabha meetings	Chi-square	Chi = 13.368 (p>0.05)	Non Significant

Table 5 depicts the influence of socio economic variables on participation in gram sabha meetings. It shows that age, gender and education significantly influences the participation in gram sabha meetings. The variables namely social group, occupation and income do not influence the participation in gram sabha meetings.

Table 6: Influence of Socio-Economic Variables on Level of Satisfaction on Activities of Gram Panchayat in terms of Expectations and Performance

Variables	Statistical tool	Value	Result
Age and Level of Satisfaction on Activities of Gram Panchayat	Chi-square	Chi = 29.490 (p<0.01)	Significant
Gender and Level of Satisfaction on Activities of Gram Panchayat	Chi-square	Chi = 3.845 (p>0.05)	Non Significant
Education and Level of Satisfaction on Activities of Gram Panchayat	Chi-square	Chi = 22.712 (p>0.05)	Non Significant
Social Group and Level of Satisfaction on Activities of Gram Panchayat	Chi-square	Chi = 21.069 (p<0.01)	Significant
Occupation and Level of Satisfaction on Activities of Gram Panchayat	Chi-square	Chi = 26.885 (p<0.01)	Significant
Income and Level of Satisfaction on Activities of Gram Panchayat	Chi-square	Chi = 16.998 (p>0.05)	Non Significant

Table 6 depicts the influence of socio economic variables on level of satisfaction on activities of gram panchayat in terms of expectations and performance. It shows that age, social group and occupation significantly influences the level of satisfaction on activities of gram panchayat in terms of expectations and performance at 0.01 level of significance. The variables namely gender, education and income do not influence the level of satisfaction on activities of gram panchayat in terms of expectations and performance.

Table 7: Influence of Socio-Economic Variables on opinion towards performance of Gram Panchayat in terms of Implementation of Programme

Variables	Statistical tool	Value	Result
Age and opinion towards performance of Gram Panchayat	Chi-square	Chi = 46.717 (p<0.01)	Significant
Gender and opinion towards performance of Gram Panchayat	Chi-square	Chi = 15.244 (p<0.01)	Significant
Education and opinion towards performance of Gram Panchayat	Chi-square	Chi = 60.599 (p<0.01)	Significant
Social Group and opinion towards performance of Gram Panchayat	Chi-square	Chi = 28.324 (p<0.01)	Significant
Occupation and opinion towards performance of Gram Panchayat	Chi-square	Chi = 49.198 (p<0.01)	Significant
Income and opinion towards performance of Gram Panchayat	Chi-square	Chi = 55.872 (p<0.01)	Significant

Table 7 reveals the influence of socio economic variables on the opinion towards performance of Gram Panchayat in terms of Implementation of Programme. It shows that age, gender, education, social group, occupation and income significantly influences the level of satisfaction on activities of gram panchayat in terms of Implementation of Programme at 0.01 level of significance.

Table 8: Influence of Socio-Economic Variables on opinion towards performance of Gram Panchayat in terms of Dissemination of Information

Variables	Statistical tool	Value	Result
Age and opinion towards performance of Gram Panchayat	Chi-square	Chi = 53.490 (p<0.01)	Significant
Gender and opinion towards performance of Gram Panchayat	Chi-square	Chi = 12.112 (p<0.01)	Significant
Education and opinion towards performance of Gram Panchayat	Chi-square	Chi = 70.619 (p<0.01)	Significant
Social Group and opinion towards performance of Gram Panchayat	Chi-square	Chi = 26.037 (p<0.01)	Significant
Occupation and opinion towards performance of Gram Panchayat	Chi-square	Chi = 46.243 (p<0.01)	Significant
Income and opinion towards performance of Gram Panchayat	Chi-square	Chi = 59.967 (p<0.01)	Significant

Table 8 shows the influence of socio economic variables on the opinion towards performance of Gram Panchayat in terms of dissemination of information. It shows that age, gender, education, social group, occupation and income significantly influences the level of satisfaction on activities of gram panchayat in terms of dissemination of information at 0.01 level of significance.

Table 9: Influence of Socio-Economic Variables on opinion on information concealed by Gram Panchayat

Variables	Statistical tool	Value	Result
Age and opinion towards performance of Gram Panchayat	Chi-square	Chi = 13.622 (p<0.01)	Significant
Gender and opinion towards performance of Gram Panchayat	Chi-square	Chi = 1.057 (p>0.05)	Non Significant
Education and opinion towards performance of Gram Panchayat	Chi-square	Chi = 22.857 (p<0.01)	Significant
Social Group and opinion towards performance of Gram Panchayat	Chi-square	Chi = 6.973 (p>0.05)	Non Significant
Occupation and opinion towards performance of Gram Panchayat	Chi-square	Chi = 9.463 (p>0.05)	Non Significant
Income and opinion towards performance of Gram Panchayat	Chi-square	Chi = 11.454 (p<0.05)	Significant

Table 9 states the influence of socio economic variables on the opinion on information concealed by Gram Panchayat. It shows that age, education and income significantly influences the opinion on information concealed by gram panchayat at 0.01 level of significance. The variables namely gender, social group and occupation do not influence the opinion on information concealed by gram panchayat at 0.01 level of significance.

Salient Findings

- More than one fifth (21.6 percent) of the respondents belong to the age group between 33-37.
- More than half (53.6 percent) of the respondents were male
- Nearly one fifth (19.2 percent) of the respondents have completed their higher secondary level of education
- More than one third (36.4 percent) of them belong to other backward class (OBC)
- Less than one third (32 percent) of the respondents occupation was daily wages
- More than one fourth (28.4 percent) of the respondents monthly household income was between Rs. 3501-5000.
- Majority (90 percent) of the respondents were aware of gram sabha
- More than half of the respondents (54.4 percent) do not participate in gram sabha meetings
- 37.6 percent of the respondents have stated that gram sabha meetings are conducted once in every 3 months
- Majority (72 percent) of the respondents have stated that they use to clarify the doubts if any with the gram sabha members
- Majority (84.4 percent) of the respondents know about panch and sarpanch of village and gram panchayat
- Less than half (60.4 percent) of the respondents were satisfied on their gram panchayat.
- Less than half (44.8 percent) of the respondents had a good opinion on the performance of gram panchayat in terms of implementation of programmes
- Less than half (45.6 percent) of the respondents had a good opinion on the performance of gram panchayat in terms of dissemination of information
- More than half (55.2 percent) of them had stated that gram panchayat does not conceals information
- More than one tenth (12.8 percent) of the respondents have stated that gram panchayat conceals the information on funds received for the programmes and schemes from them.
- The demographic factors namely age, gender, education social group, occupation and income have a significant impact on the awareness, participation and opinion on the gram sabha and gram panchayat.

Conclusion

A social audit is a way of measuring, understanding, reporting and ultimately improving an organization's social and ethical performance. A social audit helps to narrow gaps between vision/goal and reality,

between efficiency and effectiveness. Social Audits are now widely accepted as an important mechanism to address corruption and strengthen accountability in government service delivery. The present study is an attempt to understand the participation and involvement of the general public in social audit by means of understanding their awareness and participation in the local governing bodies. The study concludes that majority of the public were aware of gram sabha and gram panchayat and more than half of them were satisfied with its functions. The study also conclude nearly 50% only participate in meetings and demographic factors had significant impact on awareness and participation in gram sabha and gram panchayat activities.

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