

Attitude of Panchayat Leaders towards Panchayati Raj Institutions as influenced by their Socio Personal Characteristics

Abstract

Allport (1935) defined attitude as “a mental and neural state of readiness, organised through experience, and exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual’s response to all objects and situations with which it is related”. While attitudes are basically learned over the years, some inherited characteristics do affect such attitudes. Our personal experiences with people and situations develop our attitude towards such persons and situations. During the implementation of the panchayati raj system Chhattisgarh has faced several opportunities and difficulties. The experience of the state is extremely rich and provides vital insights into the process of institutionalising panchayati raj. What, then, are the circumstances under which panchayat can improve the work effectiveness of their members through influences on individual choices about the level of effort and about strategy? The interview schedule was used as a tool for collecting the raw information from the panchayat leaders. In all 263 respondents from 9 janpads were interviewed personally to obtain the requisite data. It was found that majority of the janpad and jila panchayat leaders (58.73%) had moderately favourable attitude towards panchayati raj institutions. Majority of the janpad and jila panchayat leaders were middle-aged, belonged to other backward classes, most of them were educated up to higher secondary, they belonged to large size families with more than five members each and most of them had membership in one or more social organizations signifying high social participation. .

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Key Words

Attitude, panchayat leaders, socio-personal characteristics and panchayati raj institutions.

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Introduction

There are various opinions expressed by psychologists about understanding attitude. World of Psychology will be a little review of what's called attitude? As said by psychologists Thomas WJ (in Ahmadi, 1999), which imposes limits as a level attitude trends are positive and negative, associated with the object of psychology. Object psychology here includes symbols, words, slogans, people, institutions, ideas and so on.

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Early on attitudes were defined very broadly. Allport (1935) defined attitude as “a mental and neural state of readiness, organised through experience, and exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual’s response to all objects and situations with which it is related”.

Attitude Formation

The question often arises, ‘how are the attitudes and subsequent behaviors formed?’ While attitudes are basically learned over the years, some inherited characteristics do affect such attitudes.

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Some of the learned characteristics responsible for attitude formation are:

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1. Experiences

2. Perceptual biases
3. Observation of other person attitudes
4. Association
5. Personality

Experiences

Our personal experiences with people and situations develop our attitude towards such persons and situations.

Through job experience, people develop attitudes towards working conditions, salaries, supervision, group dynamics and so on.

Perceptual biases

Perception is the result of a complex interaction of various senses such as feelings, seeing, hearing and so on and plays an important part in our attitude and behavioural formation.

For example, if a manager perceives a subordinate's ability as limited, he will give him limited responsibility. Similarly, we lose many good friends due to our changed perception about them.

Observation of other person attitudes

When we like someone, we try to emulate that person's attitude.

For example, when we are impressed by someone keeping calm under stressful circumstances and we appreciate such calmness, we might try to do the same.

Association

Our association with the group we belong to strongly influences our attitude. Our close association with a group would encourage us to be consistent with the attitude of the group.

Personality

Personality is a set of traits and characteristics, habit patterns and conditioned responses to certain stimuli that formulate the impression that a person makes upon others and this impression is a function of a person's attitude.

Attitude is a learned pre-disposition to react consistently in a given manner (either positively or negatively) to certain persons, objects or concepts. Thurstone (1946) defined attitude as the degree of positive or negative affect (feeling) associated with some psychological object like symbol, phrase, slogan, person, institution, ideal or ideas towards which people can differ in varying degrees.

In the post, 73rd amendment phase Indian states have responded with varying degrees of enthusiasm. Chhattisgarh responded with innovativeness and remarkable commitment to making the system sustainable and successful. During the implementation of the panchayati raj system, Chhattisgarh has faced several opportunities and difficulties. The experience of the state is

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extremely rich and provides vital insights into the process of institutionalising panchayati raj. On the negative side, the major impediments included bureaucratic resistance, functional problems, political and institutional challenges, financial inadequacy and mismatch of capabilities and roles. On the other hand, it involves the grass roots people in a democratic and participative governance system, an involvement that unleashes the stored energy of the people.

What, then, are the circumstances under which panchayat can improve the work effectiveness of their members through influences on individual choices about the level of effort and about strategy? Again the answer depends upon the nature of the job. Unless the job is structured so that the effort level of performance strategy actually can make a real difference in work effectiveness, group influences on effort or strategy will be irrelevant to how individual members perform.

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Methodology

The study was conducted in the purposively selected Rajnandgaon district of Chhattisgarh. Out of a total of 21 members of the Jila Panchayat including the president, 9 members who presided over the different standing committees were purposively selected as respondents from the first tier panchayat. Similarly out of the total 182 members of the 9 janpad panchayats, 6 members from each janpad ($9 \times 6 = 54$) presiding over the standing committees were purposively selected as respondents from second tier panchayats.

Comment [u18]: Consider changing the sentence to –The Study area, Rajnandgaon district of Chhattisgarh was purposely selected

In all, there are 696 gram panchayats in 9 blocks/janpads of Rajnandgaon district. Approximately seven per cent gram panchayats were randomly selected from each janpad and four members presiding over the standing committees from each selected gram panchayat ($50 \times 4 = 200$) were purposively chosen as respondents from the third tier panchayats. Thus in all ($9 + 54 + 200$), 263 panchayat leaders were considered as respondents for the study. The interview schedule was used as a tool for collecting the raw information from the panchayat leaders. In all 263 respondents from 9 janpads were interviewed personally to obtain the requisite data.

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The psychological object for the present study has been conceptualised as the panchayati raj institutions. Hence the attitude in the present study refers to the positive and/or negative reaction of the panchayat leaders towards the panchayati raj institutions. The attitude was measured by Likert-type scale suggested by Ray and Mondal (1999). The scale consisted of 10 statements of which 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and 10 were positive statements and 3, 7, 8, and 9 were negative statements.

Responses were obtained from the panchayat leaders on 5 point continuum and the scores were assigned as follows:

Statement	Fully agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Fully Disagree
Positive statement	5	4	3	2	1
Negative statement	1	2	3	4	5

The scores for all the ten statements were summed up to obtain the total score for each panchayat leader which was used for statistical analysis and the panchayat leaders were classified into three categories by using the following formula:

$$A.I. = \bar{X} \pm S.D.$$

Categories

1. Less favourable attitude $\bar{X} - S.D.$
2. Moderately favourable attitude $\bar{X} - S.D.$ $\bar{X} \pm S.D.$
3. Moderately favourable attitude $\bar{X} \pm S.D.$

Results and Discussion

The attitude of panchayat leaders towards panchayati raj institutions

The data pertaining to the attitude of panchayat leaders towards panchayati raj institutions are represented in table 1 It is observed that most of the gram panchayat leaders (40.00%) had a moderately favourable attitude towards panchayati raj institutions, followed by 32.00 per cent of them who had highly favourable attitude whereas 28.00 per cent of the gram panchayat leaders had less favourable attitude towards panchayati raj institutions.

As regards the attitude of janpad and jila panchayat leaders it was found that majority of them (58.73%) had moderately favourable attitude towards panchayati raj institutions, followed by 26.98 per cent of them who had highly favourable attitude whereas 14.29 per cent of the janpad and jila panchayat leaders had less favourable attitude towards panchayati raj institutions.

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Table 1: Distribution of panchayat leaders according to their attitude towards panchayati raj institutions

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S. No.	Attitude	Gram Panchayat Leaders (n ₁ =200)		Janpad & Jila Panchayat Leaders (n ₂ =63)	
		Frequency	Per cent	Frequency	Per cent
1	Less favourable attitude	56	28.00	9	14.29
2	Moderately favourable attitude	80	40.00	37	58.73
3	Highly favourable attitude	64	32.00	17	26.98
	Total	200	100.00	63	100.00

Source: ?????

Mean : 35.35 Mean : 40.33

S.D. : 9.72 S.D. : 87.76

An inference may be drawn that two-fifth of the gram panchayat leaders and just less than three-fifth of the janpad and jila panchayat leaders had moderately favourable attitudes towards panchayati raj institutions.

Similar findings have been reported by Shrivastava (1999), Rathi (2004) and Thakur (2006).

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Socio-personal characteristics

AGE

Table 2: Distribution of panchayat leaders according to their age

S. No.	Age	Gram Panchayat Leaders (n ₁ =200)		Janpad & Jila Panchayat Leaders (n ₂ =63)	
		Frequency	Per cent	Frequency	Per cent
1	Young (up to 35 years)	76	38.00	10	15.90
2	Middle aged (36 to 50 years)	94	47.00	41	65.07

S. No.	Age	Gram Panchayat Leaders (n ₁ =200)		Janpad & Jila Panchayat Leaders (n ₂ =63)	
3	Old (above 50 years)	30	15.00	12	19.03
	Total	200	100.00	63	100.00

Mean : 40.70

Mean : 42.98

S.D. : 9.61

S.D. : 8.32

The data regarding the age of panchayat leaders are presented in table 2. It is observed that most of the gram panchayat leaders (47.00%) were middle-aged (36 to 50 years), followed by 38.00 and 15.00 per cent of them who were young (up to 35 years) and old (above 50 years) respectively. Whereas majority of the janpad and jila panchayat leaders (65.07%) were middle aged (36 to 50 years) followed by old (above 50 years) and young (up to 35 years) with 19.03 and 15.90 per cent respectively.

The average age of the gram panchayat leaders was 40.70 years whereas that of janpad and jila panchayat leaders was 42.98 years respectively. It can be inferred that gram panchayat leaders were comparatively younger than their counterparts from janpad and jila panchayats.

It can be concluded that most of the gram panchayat leaders were middle-aged while around two third of the janpad and jila panchayat leaders were middle-aged. The average age of panchayat leaders of Rajnandgaon district indicates that neither were they too young to take up the challenging roles of rural leadership nor were they too old to have lost all their enthusiasm towards role performance. It can be said to be a perfect combination of young blood and ample experience to efficiently contribute towards rural development activities.

These findings are supported by the findings of Mondal and Ray (1996), Shrivastava (1999), and Rathi (2004).

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GENDER

Table 3: Distribution of panchayat leaders according to their gender

S. No.	Gender	Gram Panchayat Leaders (n ₁ =200)	Janpad & Jila Panchayat Leaders (n ₂ =63)
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S. No.	Gender	Gram Panchayat Leaders (n ₁ =200)		Janpad & Jila Panchayat Leaders (n ₂ =63)	
		Frequency	Per cent	Frequency	Per cent
1	Men	149	74.50	36	57.14
2	Women	51	25.50	27	42.86
	Total	200	100.00	63	100.00

Table 3 gives the distribution of panchayat leaders according to their gender. The data shows that majority of gram panchayat leaders interviewed (74.50 %) were men while 25.50 percent of them were women.

As regards gender of janpad and jila panchayat leaders it was found that majority of them (57.14 %) were men whereas 42.86 per cent of them were women.

It may be concluded that around three fourth of the gram panchayat leaders were men and whereas slightly less than sixty per cent of the janpad and jila panchayat leaders were men.

It is noteworthy that more women were found at janpad and jila panchayat level than at gram panchayat level in the sample panchayat leaders surveyed for the present study. It is assumed that these women leaders at janpad and jila panchayat level were contributing significantly in policy formation, decision making and supervisory roles at the upper level of panchayats. For the present research, the respondents selected belonged to the previous term. Though 33 per cent reservation was provided for women at all the three tiers of panchayats, which has been increased to 50 per cent from the present term, it does not get reflected in the sampled population as the sample for panchayat leaders was drawn randomly.

Similar findings were reported by Misra and Dhaka (2002) and Shrivastava (2003).

CASTE

The data in Table 4 shows the distribution of panchayat leaders according to their caste. It can be seen that most of the gram panchayat leaders (43.50%) belonged to other backward classes followed by 38.00, 14.00 and 4.50 per cent of them who belonged to schedule tribe, schedule caste and general category with respect to their caste.

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As regards janpad and jila panchayat leaders it was found that majority of them (57.14%) belonged to other backward classes followed by schedule tribe (25.40%), general (11.11%) and scheduled caste (6.35%).

Table 4: Distribution of panchayat leaders according to their caste

S. No.	Caste	Gram Panchayat Leaders (n ₁ =200)		Janpad & Jila Panchayat Leaders (n ₂ =63)	
		Frequency	Per cent	Frequency	Per cent
1	Schedule Caste	28	14.00	4	6.35
2	Schedule Tribe	76	38.00	16	25.40
3	Other Backward Class	87	43.50	36	57.14
4	General	9	05.50	7	11.11
	Total	200	100.00	63	100.00

On the basis of the above results, it may be observed that most of gram panchayat leaders (43.50%) and the majority of the janpad and jila panchayat leaders (57.14%) were from other backward classes. It may be inferred that other backward classes are the predominant group with respect to caste in Rajnandgaon district. The research results are in line with the caste profile of the population of the district. Three blocks namely Manpur, Mohla and Ambagadh Chowki are categorised as schedule tribe blocks under the constitution and are governed by separate rules framed for this purpose. While the other blocks of the district have a significant population from the other backward classes.

The findings are in line with the findings of Khare (1995), Shrivastava (2003), Rathi (2004) and Prasad and Haranth (2004).

EDUCATION

Table 5: Distribution of panchayat leaders according to their education

S. No.	Education	Gram Panchayat Leaders (n ₁ =200)		Janpad & Jila Panchayat Leaders (n ₂ =63)	
		Frequency	Per cent	Frequency	Per cent

S. No.	Education	Gram Panchayat Leaders (n ₁ =200)		Janpad & Jila Panchayat Leaders (n ₂ =63)	
1	Illiterate	9	4.50	0	0.00
2	Up to primary school	44	22.00	8	12.70
3	Up to middle school	67	33.50	13	20.64
4	Up to higher secondary	60	30.00	26	41.27
5	Graduation and above	20	10.00	16	25.39
	Total	200	100.00	63	100.00

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It is observed from the above table that among the gram panchayat leaders most of them (33.50%) were educated up to middle school followed by 30.00, 22.00 and 10.00 per cent of them who were educated up to higher secondary, up to primary school and graduation and above respectively. Only 4.50 per cent of them were illiterate.

With respect to janpad and jila panchayat leaders, the educational profile showed that most of them (41.27%) were educated up to higher secondary followed by graduation and above (25.39%), up to middle school (20.64%) and up to primary school (12.70%). None of the janpad and jila panchayat members interviewed were found to be illiterate.

Thus a conclusion may be drawn that about two-fifth of the janpad and jila panchayat leaders were educated up to higher secondary and one-third of the gram panchayat leaders were educated up to middle school. In general, we may say that the janpad and jila panchayat leaders were more educated than their gram panchayat counterparts.

Rajnandgaon district has the rare distinction of being declared complete literate district (पूर्ण साक्षर जिला) which is also reflecting in the results obtained from the survey. Education or literacy level plays an important role in the performance of panchayat leaders and it is assumed that as the panchayat leaders of the district are sufficiently educated they would not find it difficult to discharge their duties satisfactorily.

The above results are broadly supported by the findings of Mondal and Ray (1996) and Thakur (2006).

FAMILY SIZE

Table 6: Distribution of panchayat leaders according to their family size

S. No.	Family Size	Gram Panchayat Leaders (n ₁ =200)		Janpad & Jila Panchayat Leaders (n ₂ =63)	
		Frequency	Per cent	Frequency	Per cent
1	Small family (up to 5 members)	70	35.00	16	25.39
2	Large family (more than 5 members)	130	65.00	47	74.61
	Total	200	100.00	63	100.00

Mean : 7.03

Mean : 8.64

S.D. : 3.35

S.D. : 5.44

Table 6 represents the distribution of panchayat leaders according to their family size. It was found that the majority of the gram panchayat leaders (65.00%) belonged to a large-sized family with more than 5 members and 35.00 per cent of them belonged to small family (up to 5 members). While, majority of the janpad and jila panchayat leaders (74.61%) belonged to a large family with more than 5 members each and 25.39 per cent of them belonged to a small-sized family (up to 5 members).

An inference may be drawn that just less than two third of the gram panchayat leaders and about three fourth of the janpad and jila panchayat leaders belonged to a large-sized family with more than five members each.

Rural families are characterised by predominantly large joint families. As panchayat leaders are elected from the rural background it is but natural that the majority of the panchayat leaders surveyed belonged to large-sized family. Large families have both its advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, more number of family members means more helping hands in all the activities including farming etc. and on the other, the elected panchayat leaders from such families may be spared from their daily chores and they may focus more on panchayat activities.

Thus, it is believed that panchayat leaders belonging to large-sized families may perform their roles better as compared to those belonging to small families.

These findings conform to the findings of Choukidar (1964), Salvi and Patil (1965), Krishnaswamy and Guruswamy (1970), Choudhary (1998), Shrivastava (2003), Rathi (2004) and Thakur (2006).

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

Table 7: Distribution of panchayat leaders according to their social participation

S. No.	Social Participation	Gram Panchayat Leaders (n ₁ =200)		Janpad & Jila Panchayat Leaders (n ₂ =63)	
		Frequency	Per cent	Frequency	Per cent
1	No membership in any organisation	101	50.50	12	19.05
2	Membership in one organisation	34	17.00	14	22.22
3	Membership in more than one organisation	35	17.50	29	46.03
4	Executive/office bearer in an organisation	30	15.00	8	12.70
	Total	200	100.00	63	100.00

The distribution of panchayat leaders according to their social participation is given in Table 7. The table depicts that majority of the gram panchayat leaders (50.50%) had no membership in any organisation followed by 17.50 per cent of them who had membership in more than one organisation. 17.00 per cent of them had membership in one organisation and 15.00 per cent were executive/office bearers in an organisation.

Whereas, most of the janpad and jila panchayat leaders (46.03%) had membership in more than one organisation followed by 22.22 per cent of them who had membership in one organisation, 19.05 per cent had no membership in any organisation and 12.70 per cent were either executive or office bearer in an organisation.

It may be concluded that about half of the gram panchayat leaders had no membership in any organisation and most of the janpad and jila panchayat leaders (46.03%) had membership in more than one organisation. From the above results, it may also be inferred that janpad and jila panchayat leaders had higher social participation as compared to gram panchayat leaders who had low social participation. Social participation is one of the important factors that governs the role performance. It can be presumed that by keeping the other factors constant the janpad and jila panchayat leaders would perform their roles better in comparison to the gram panchayat leaders owing to their higher social participation as compared to the latter.

The findings pertaining to the gram panchayat leaders are supported by the findings of Somu (1975), Sethu (1981), Sundarambal (1990), Karim and Dey (1995), Garje (1997), Shrivastava (1999) and Rathi (2004).

Table 8: Correlation analysis of independent variables with an attitude of gram panchayat leaders towards panchayati raj institutions

S. No.	Independent Variables	Correlation Coefficient “r”
1	Age	- 0.3295 **
2	Gender	- 0.0720
3	Caste	0.1667 *
4	Education	0.7353 **
5	Family size	0.1852 **
6	Social participation	- 0.0223

* Significant at 0.05 level of probability

** Significant at 0.01 level of probability

The data pertaining to correlation analysis of independent variables with an attitude of gram panchayat leaders towards panchayati raj institutions are given in table 8. It is observed that the variables gender and social participation had non-significant relationship with the attitude of gram panchayat leaders towards panchayati raj institutions. This means that changes in the above stated variables will not bring about any significant change in the attitude of gram panchayat leaders towards panchayati raj institutions. However, the variable caste was positively and

significantly related with an attitude of gram panchayat leaders towards panchayati raj institutions at a 0.05 level of probability.

While the variables education and family size had a positive and significant relationship with the attitude of gram panchayat leaders towards panchayati raj institutions at 0.01 level of probability. The positive and significant relationship of the stated independent variables with an attitude of gram panchayat leaders towards panchayati raj institutions reveals that if the value of these independent variables increase then the value of attitude of gram panchayat leaders towards panchayati raj institutions will also increase and vice versa.

Only one variable i.e. age had a negatively significant relationship with an attitude of gram panchayat leaders towards panchayati raj institutions at 0.01 level of probability indicating that any increase in the value of the age of gram panchayat leaders will correspondingly decrease the value of attitude of gram panchayat leaders towards panchayati raj institutions. Thus the older gram panchayat leaders will have less favourable attitude towards panchayati raj institutions and vice versa.

Table 9: Correlation analysis of independent variables with attitude of janpad and jila panchayat leaders towards panchayati raj institutions

S. No.	Independent Variables	Correlation Coefficient “r”
1	Age	- 0.0598
2	Gender	- 0.0701
3	Caste	0.2042
4	Education	0.7729 **
5	Family size	0.0411
6	Social participation	0.3452 **

* Significant at 0.05 level of probability

** Significant at 0.01 level of probability

The correlation coefficients showing the relationship of independent variables with an attitude of janpad and jila panchayat leaders towards panchayati raj institutions are given in table 9. The

data indicate the variables education and social participation, had a positive and significant relationship with the attitude of janpad and jila panchayat leaders towards panchayati raj institutions at 0.01 level of probability. The positive and significant relationship of the above variables connotes that if the values of the above stated independent variables are higher than the janpad and jila panchayat leaders will have a highly favourable attitude towards panchayati raj institutions. On the other hand, if the values of the above independent variables are lower than the janpad and jila panchayat leaders will have less favourable attitudes towards panchayati raj institutions.

The remaining four variables viz. age, gender, caste and family size have non-significant relationship with an attitude of janpad and jila panchayat leaders towards panchayati raj institutions i.e. the increase/decrease in these nine independent variables will have no significant increase/decrease in the attitude of janpad and jila panchayat leaders towards panchayati raj institutions.

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Table 10: Multiple regression analysis of independent variables with an attitude of gram panchayat leaders towards panchayati raj institutions

S. No.	Independent Variables	Regression Coefficient “b”	“t” values
1	Age	- 0.743 *	2.120
2	Gender	- 0.479	0.604
3	Caste	0.091	0.193
4	Education	1.476 *	2.630
5	Family size	0.167	0.883
6	Social participation	0.395 **	2.804

* Significant at 0.05 level of probability

** Significant at 0.01 level of probability

The Regression coefficient and “t” values obtained from multiple regression analysis of independent variables with an attitude of gram panchayat leaders towards panchayati raj institutions are presented in table 10. It is revealed that out of 6 variables twelve independent variables viz. gender, caste and family size were found to be non-significantly contributing to the

attitude of gram panchayat leaders towards panchayati raj institutions. Only one independent variable i.e. age of the gram panchayat leaders had a negatively significant contribution in the attitude of gram panchayat leaders towards panchayati raj institutions at 0.05 level of probability. The negatively significant contribution means that there is a reciprocal relationship between age and attitude of gram panchayat leaders towards panchayati raj institutions i.e. if there is 1 unit increase in age of gram panchayat leaders then there would be the corresponding decrease of 0.743 units in the attitude of gram panchayat leaders towards panchayati raj institutions.

However, the independent variable education showed a positive and significant contribution towards the attitude of gram panchayat leaders at 0.05 level of probability. The remaining one independent variable viz. social participation, was observed to have positive and significant contribution in attitude of gram panchayat leaders towards panchayati raj institutions at a 0.01 level of probability. Thus if there is 1 unit increase in the variables of education and social participation the attitude of gram panchayat leaders towards panchayati raj institutions will become more favourable by 1.476 and 0.395 units respectively.

Table 11: Multiple regression analysis of independent variables with an attitude of janpad and jila panchayat leaders towards panchayati raj institutions

S. No.	Independent Variables	Regression Coefficient “b”	“t” values
1	Age	- 0.048	0.665
2	Gender	- 0.477	0.441
3	Caste	- 0.468	0.558
4	Education	1.985 *	2.262
5	Family size	- 0.333	1.154
6	Social participation	0.068	0.249

* Significant at 0.05 level of probability

** Significant at 0.01 level of probability

The results of multiple regression analysis of independent variables with an attitude of janpad and jila panchayat leaders towards panchayati raj institutions are given in table 11. From the “t”

values of the independent variables, it can be inferred that the variables age, gender, caste, family size and social participation had non-significant contributions towards attitude of janpad and jila panchayat leaders.

However, the variable education showed positive and significant contribution in the attitude of janpad and jila panchayat leaders towards panchayati raj institutions at 0.05 level of probability.

Thus if there is a 1 unit increase in the variable education, there would be 1.985 units corresponding increase in the value of attitude of janpad and jila panchayat leaders towards panchayati raj institutions.

Conclusions

It may be concluded from the above study that education is a contributing factor in the attitude formation of Panchayat leaders. The more educated the Panchayat leaders the more favourable attitude they are bound to have towards Panchayati Raj Institutions. However, age is negatively correlated with the attitude of Panchayat leaders which means that the more aged the panchayat leaders the less favourable attitude they are likely to have towards Panchayati Raj Institutions.

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