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## Gender perspective on decision-making: A study of Sarpanchs of Bhiwani district

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### Abstract

Decision-making is a universal activity that is a part of every person's daily life and it becomes very important when it comes to managerial decision-making or administrative decision-making. In this study, an attempt has been made to understand the gender perspective on decision-making or the gender difference on different dimensions of decision-making which are- Opinions and Support, Bias and Preference, Adapting and Changing, Thinking and analyzing and Motivating and Influencing Factors. Therefore, the study has been conducted on 60 Sarpanchs (30 Male and 30 Female) and it was found that there is no difference in decision-making of men and women, except two dimensions of decision making that is Motivating and Influencing; and Opinions and Support.

**Keywords:** Dimensions of decision-making, decision-making, gender difference, panchayats, Sarpanchs

### Introduction

Managers make decision regarding getting work done through other people, making allocation of resources, and directing the activities of others to attain goals. Managers are called administrators sometimes, especially in non-profit organisations like panchayats. Heads of these panchayats at village level are called Sarpanchs. They do their work in an organisation, which is consciously coordinated social unit composed of one Sarpanch and five Panchs.

Decision-making is the crucial part of daily life. Our current situation is the outcome of decisions we have made in the past; and our future also depends on the decision we will make today. These decisions become more important when it comes to managerial decision-making or administrative decision-making, because success or failure of the organization depends on these decisions. Decision-making can be described as the choice of action made, out of available alternatives, considering uncertainty of the environment. According to Mac Farland "A decision is an act of choice wherein an executive form a conclusion about what must be done in a given situation. A decision represents a course of behaviour chosen from a number of possible alternatives."

The scope of decision-making is very high and it is a fundamental part of our existence and growth. Decisions can be very simple and complex depending on the cruciality of the decision. When it comes to managerial decision-making or administrative decision-making it becomes more important to take decisions wisely. In order to understand the styles of decision-making, we need to acknowledge the major dimensions of decision-making or the factors that help in forming a decision Goel, P.S. (2015) <sup>[8]</sup>:

- 1. Opinions and Support:** Some people are always open to take advices and consultation from the experts and some are independent in nature. As far as panchayats are concerned pradhan or sarpanchs shouldn't take decisions individually. He should take consideration of the gram sabha, which is a meeting of village people. Otherwise people wouldn't feel inclusive. Sarpanchs should take advice from the experienced person and villagers as well.
- 2. Bias and Preference:** Based on our value system and our past experiences, we make some favoring decision intentionally or unintentionally. There is a tendency to take decisions which are more comfortable and based on selective information, to support our biased hypothesis.

There are higher chances of taking biased decision in political environment, as there are many types of influences and pressures. They need to consciously take unbiased decisions so that nobody's rights are violated.

**3. Adapting and Changing:** There are two types of people, one who thinks that grass is greener on the other side and another who thinks grass is green where you water it. First one is always flip flop type who is not sure about the decision made and the other one is the stubborn in nature.

There are some decisions which can't be reversed and some of that you can adjust, adapt or change at a certain cost. In Panchayati Raj Institutions, the representatives should be flexible or adapting in nature so that they can adapt to new technologies and advancements. Rigidity can make you suffer in case of bad decision. In that situation, best thing is to cut the loss and move on.

**4. Thinking and analyzing:** Great decision-makers aren't those who take lots of time to process all the information to take decisions, but those who identify and analyse few critical factors in less time to take decisions.

On the other hand, some authors and scholars believe in thinking and analyzing is the best way of decision-making.

**5. Motivating and Influencing Factors:** There are many internal and external factors which can affect decision-making and motivate to take certain decisions. As far as decision-making in panchayats is concerned, internal factor can be praise, position, power etc. and the external factors can be uncertain environment, political pressure etc. To understand decision-making we must understand that there are motivating and influencing factors which affect decision-making or which are responsible for decision made.

Since, this study is related to the decision-making of Sarpanchs, it is important to understand their perspective that either they thoroughly analyse each and every situation or they quickly make decisions on the basis of few critical factors.

### Review of Related literature

Malaskaa and Holstius (1999) <sup>[12]</sup>, in their study on visionary management said that a modern view of decision-making can be already found in the thoughts and teaching of Aristotle. For a good decision we need to logically combine three kinds of knowledge: knowledge about purpose and objectives, knowledge about understanding the situation, knowledge about the available means of resources. Administrative decisions are not made by an individual in isolation, but are affected by other stakeholders (employees, colleagues and employees) Dean and Sharfman (1996) <sup>[3]</sup>, Cabantos and Gond (2011) <sup>[2]</sup>, and Klingebiel and Meyer (2012) <sup>[11]</sup>. There is difference between the stakeholders and their perspective on influence, from the most influential to least influential: regulatory controller, partner, passive, dependent Wahner-Mainardes *et al.* (2012) <sup>[18]</sup>.

Driver *et al.* (1990) <sup>[4]</sup>, found that the decision-making style depends on the amount of information people use, the number of alternatives they consider, and extent to which they integrate and coordinate multiple sources of information.

According to Malakooti (2010) <sup>[13]</sup> the process of decision-making can be seen as model of four dimensions:

information processing, alternative generation, alternative evaluation and decision closure. Further Guillemette *et al.* (2014) <sup>[10]</sup> identified dimensions of the decision-making process quality as Openness of spirit, Procedural rationality, Effort, Exhaustivity of information.

Erci, B. (2003) <sup>[5]</sup> studied on women's efficiency on decision-making and it was found that women's decision-making rate was lower than that of men, except some domestic-decisions. But reason behind their poor decision-making was their lack of education level and their perception of their status in the family. The two experiments conducted by Missri, E. (2008) <sup>[15]</sup> were done in order to attempt to find discrepancies between the genders in making rational decisions and it was found that both men and women were able to maximize choice in the same way showing no clear advantage for any specific gender. Difference was found in the area of ethical decision-making, that men are more biased than women. Women are more likely to make ethical decisions and years of experience correlated with the higher levels of ethical behavior Sandra H. Glover (2002). Another study conducted by Nikoomaram, H. *et al.* (2013) <sup>[16]</sup>, do not convinced with the idea that gender, Age, Educational level and Work experience is associated with differences in ethical decision-making. The barriers in women participation are also hindering them in decision making. Education, male dominance, family structure has significant impact on decision-making in PRIs Goutam Sadhu (2012) <sup>[19]</sup>. According to Al-Tarawnehv, H.S. (2012), there are many dimensions which affect decision maker, like- risk perceptions, risk attitude, emotions, beliefs, values. It is observed that men and women do not have same perceptions of gender equality in science and that their differing perceptions are relatively consistent across two major European countries Gracia-Gonzalex, J. *et al.* (2019) <sup>[7]</sup>. There is change in the gender role over the time and majority of men and women perceive that education played very important role in changing the gender roles Farooq, A and Kayani, A.F. (2014) <sup>[6]</sup>.

There are several studies on gender difference in decision-making but it is found that it is not gender itself that is the only reason for differences in managerial decision-making. There are other intervening variables, which affects the direct relationship between being a male or female and decision-making among executives; or any gender related differences in decision-making. The researcher analyzed that there are intervening variables like power, politics, conflict management and trust that accounts for observed differences, not only gender Klenke, K. (2003) <sup>[20]</sup>.

### Design and Methodology

In the present study, descriptive survey method is used to conduct a comparison between decision-making of male and female Sarpanchs.

A sample of 60 respondents is taken by applying multistage stratified random sampling technique. The data is collected from Siwani (16), Badhara (24) and Dadri (20) tehsils of Bhiwani district. The sample of 60 respondents has been further divided into male and female equally. The respondents for this study were the Sarpanchs or Heads of the Gram Panchayats. Data has been collected from these respondents by using self-structured Schedule.

**Table 1:** No. of respondents selected from respective tehsils of Bhiwani

Tehsils	Total No. of Sarpanchs	Selected No. of Sarpanchs
Siwani	40	16(8+8)
Badhra	65	24(12+12)
Dadri	48	20(10+10)
Total	153	60(30+30)

Source: <http://prielections.nic.in/>

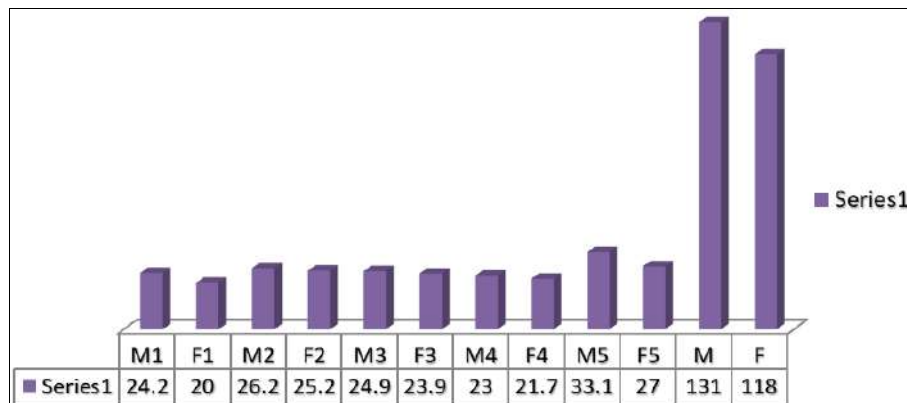
For the present study, mean & SDs are calculated to describe the nature of the data and t-test is applied to compare the decision-making of male and female representatives.

**Objectives**

To compare the dimensions of decision-making (Opinions and Support, Bias and Preference, Adapting and Changing, Thinking and Analyzing, Motivating and Influencing) between male and female Sarpanchs.

**Hypothesis**

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There exists no significant difference between dimensions of decision-making (Opinions and Support, Bias and Preference, Adapting and Changing, Thinking and Analyzing, Motivating and Influencing) of male and female Sarpanchs



**Fig 1:** Data Analysis and Interpretation

**A Comparison of mean scores of Decision-making of Male and Female Representatives**

The above chart represents the comparisons of the mean score of male and female Sarpanchs with respect to their dimensions. In this figure, M1, M2, M3, M4, and M5 represent mean score of male representatives with respect to 5 dimensions of decision-making; and M represents total mean score of males. On the other hand, F1, F2, F3, F4, and F5 represent mean score of female representatives with respect to 5 dimensions of decision-making; and F represents total mean score of females. By comparing the

mean score of both the genders we can conclude that men are more open to take advices and opinions from seniors or experts whenever it is required. They are also more motivated towards their political position. This may be because men are more into leadership or political affairs and women are more likely to follow the directions given by the male members in their family (spouse/father).

The table below represent the results of the study which consists of mean of the score, standard deviation of the score and t-value of the data.

**Table 2:** Mean, S.D. and t-ratio of male and female representatives

S. No.	Dimensions of Decision-making	Male		Female		t-values
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
1.	Opinions and Support	24.2	2.578425074	19.96667	3.934668	5.764
2.	Bias and Preference	26.23333	2.812329	25.16667	3.464931	1.258
3.	Adapting and Changing	24.93333	2.690127	23.9	3.772404	1.164
4.	Thinking and Analyzing	23	3.205599	21.66667	5.188404	1.192
5.	Motivating and Influencing	33.06667	5.172429	26.96667	7.681071	3.426
	Decision-making as a whole	131.4333	11.44005	117.6667	11.44005	3.378

In this study, t-values are calculated for the comparison of the male and female scores of decision-making. Data collected from 60 respondents (Sarpanchs) in which 30 were male and 30 were female. So there were two sets of data with 30 respondents each which were compared using paired t-test.

Since, sample size was 30, degree of freedom will be sample size minus 1 which is: 29 (30-1)

Level of significance for the study is taken 5% (0.05).

So, with degree of freedom 29 and 5% significance level table value of the T is 2.045.

When calculated value of t of all five dimensions and over

all decision-making is compared it is found that calculated value of first and fifth dimension which is opinion and support, and motivating and influencing is more than the table value (5.764 > 2.045 and 3.426 > 2.045). Which means that null hypothesis is rejected in case of 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> dimension that there exists no significant difference between 1<sup>st</sup> dimension of decision-making (Motivating and Influencing) of male and female Sarpanchs; and there exists no significant difference between 5<sup>th</sup> dimension of decision-making (Opinions and Support) of male and female Sarpanchs.

In case of remaining three dimensions (2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>) of

decision-making, Null Hypothesis is accepted that- There exists no significant difference between 2<sup>nd</sup> dimension of decision-making (Bias and Preference) of male and female Sarpanchs; there exists no significant difference between 3<sup>rd</sup> dimension of decision-making (Adapting and Changing) of male and female Sarpanchs; there exists no significant difference between 4<sup>th</sup> dimension of decision-making (Thinking and Analyzing) of male and female Sarpanchs. Because the calculated t-values were less than the table value (1.257<2.045, 1.164<2.045 and 1.192<2.045)

Overall decision-making between male and female was also compared using t-test and it is found that calculated t-value 3.378 > 2.045 (table value). Hence, the Null Hypothesis is rejected in case of overall decision-making of male and female Sarpanchs that- there exists no significant difference between decision making of male and female Sarpanchs as a whole.

Overall we can say that women require more support and also they were more influenced by several factors in comparison to men. Other than these two factors (1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>) there is no significant difference between decision-making of men and women Sarpanchs.

Reason of this difference could be lack of their awareness, low level of education and several social and cultural influences. Because these factors affect women more in comparison to men, we need to focus more on awareness of these representatives. We also need to focus on educating people equally regardless of their gender so that better decision-making and the implementation can be achieved.

### Conclusion

Village Panchayats are closest unit of the political system to provide maximum welfare to maximum people. So, it is very important to understand the difference between Decision-making of the managers of these Panchayats and also how different factors affect their decision-making differently. By comparing the mean score of both the genders we can conclude that men are more open to take advices and suggestions from the seniors or the experts whenever it is required. They are also more motivated towards their political position. This may be because men are more into leadership or political affairs and women are more likely to follow the directions given by the male in their family (spouse/father). Women are more like passive decision-maker because men take decisions on behalf of them. Although the situation is changing now but still there is scope of a lot improvement. Fair and independent decision can be made only if both the male and female have equal opportunity to take decisions because both represent the PRIs on each level; and only then true representation can be justified. It can be concluded that there are minor differences in the decision-making of the male and female representatives of village. The reason behind this could be lack of awareness, lack of education, and difference in social pressure on men and women.

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