

Dynamics of Socio-Economic Background of Rural Leadership: A Study of the Chaupal and Theog Blocks in Himachal Pradesh's District Shimla

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Abstract

The present chapter is an inquiry into the socio-economic background of rural leadership in the post-73rd Amendment Act, of 1992. In this paper, an endeavor has been made to reflect somewhere on the realities behind rapidly developing leadership and its trends in Chaupal and Theog blocks, which I have taken under my study. A comprehensive analysis has been done on the primary socio-economic factors that determine leadership, such as age, caste, occupation, education, income level, social status, gender, and party politics. The study's focus has been narrowed down to two blocks in the Himachal Himalayas District of Shimla. The socio-cultural, historical, topographical, economic, and political opportunities and limits that are inherent to all of the Himalayan people are also shared by their political and economic systems. As a result, the same types of determinants of leadership shaped the grassroots leadership patriarchal society. The research shows that the new leadership is more educated, younger, and comes from the middle and lower classes of society. The 73rd Amendment Act has also given opportunities to women leaders, Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes to ensure their participation in grassroots politics. The study explains that the development of the PRIs leadership and its periphery is still constrained by factors like caste domination, male dominance, class, and the feudalistic character of society.

Key Words: - *Rural Leadership, Grassroots, Determinants of Leadership, Rural Power*

Introduction

Leadership is essential to the functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions and plays a vital role in fostering political development and democratic advancement (Vidya, 1997: 97). In modern civilization, leadership serves as the governing body. A leader is someone who can command respect from others or subdue the negative traits of a group of people to redirect their energies into the direction of his choice. This ability can be attributed to the magnetism of his personality, social standing, or financial prosperity (Rajinder, 1997: 212 - 215). The caliber of grassroots leadership is a major factor in determining how effectively PRIs function (Sirsikar, 1970: 1). India has put forth an effort to build local initiatives within the vast framework of the country's policies so that the villagers can be engaged and integrated

into the mainstream of the nation's endeavors. Only local-level leaders are able to make it happen (Chaudhary, 1981: 1).

A new class of leaders has emerged everywhere courtesy of the Panchayati Raj System and development planning (Sirsikar, 1970: 63). Numerous academics in this field refer to the new rural leadership that is arising as a political result of Panchayat Raj as being "*neo-traditional*." The Panchayati Raj organizations of today are a culmination of the aspirational levels of the community that they symbolize. These new leaders are not merely interested in rural concerns for political gain but do not emphasize caste, wealth, or prestige (Iqbal, 1964: 1018, 1019). Nothing significant can be accomplished in the absence of such leadership. From various perspectives, the very success of PRIs is highly dependent on the caliber of leadership and how it functions within the PRIs. As a result, the effectiveness of PRIs is largely dependent on the caliber of the local leadership (Sirsikar, 1970: 1). On April 24, 1993, the 73rd constitutional amendment went into effect, marking the beginning of a new phase in the development of grassroots institutions. A 1994 amendment to the Panchayati raj act was also enacted by the Himachal Pradesh government, which included all the amendment's provisions.

In the history of women's involvement in politics in India, the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts (1993) are a revolutionary turning point. In the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Municipalities, these amending Acts have granted 33 percent reservation of seats (50%) for women. This has created an effective platform for people's empowerment in grassroots decision-making (Majumdar and Bhanwar 1996: 4). There is no escaping the fact that, in Himachal Pradesh as in a number of other states across the nation, the development of Panchayati Raj Institutions has succeeded in raising attention to the rural masses, stimulating them to participate in decision-making, and thereby identifying their buried resources and abilities.

The current study focuses on a comparison between rural leadership and Panchayat elections. Therefore, the socioeconomic basis of rural leadership in the post-73rd Amendment Act period is the primary topic of this essay. The paper looks at how the political, social, and cultural environment affects how Panchayati Raj Institutions are run and function. The problem is only tackled on a random and deliberate basis; in order to determine the outcomes, both primary and secondary sources of data have been used. At the same time, the factors of rural leadership have been critically examined.

Factors Affecting Rural Leadership

Panchayati Raj politics are now intertwined with village politics, and as a consequence with the rural power structure. If the elected leaders' backgrounds are not taken into account, the study of rural leadership will be inadequate. In the proposed investigation, an endeavor has been made to examine the socio-economic background and demographic traits of rural leadership. *Age, gender, caste, education, family structure, income, occupation, and party affiliation*, among other factors, have all been taken into consideration to assess the socio-economic status

of the leadership in order to determine whether these variables have any significant influence on the patterns of leadership. The following factors that influence rural leadership are listed as follows:

Age:

Age is an important factor to consider while studying rural leadership since in Indian villages, the elderly have traditionally held the position of a community leader. In the past, this elderly individual had complete control over rural life (Chaudhary, 1981: 45). Age is one of the most important factors that determine rural leadership. It was often thought that in a traditional culture like ours, the elderly dominated the PRIs. Experience and wisdom are intertwined with age. It has developed in societal importance throughout time and is considered to be an important factor of Indian traditional leadership (Verm, 1994: 61). Especially in rural societies, older people may be hesitant to adopt new methods of manufacturing and hence are more likely to stick with the old ones. The younger generation, on the other hand, is more likely to rise to new challenges, be open to experimenting with different manufacturing techniques, or accomplish more overall (Joshi, 1999: 33).

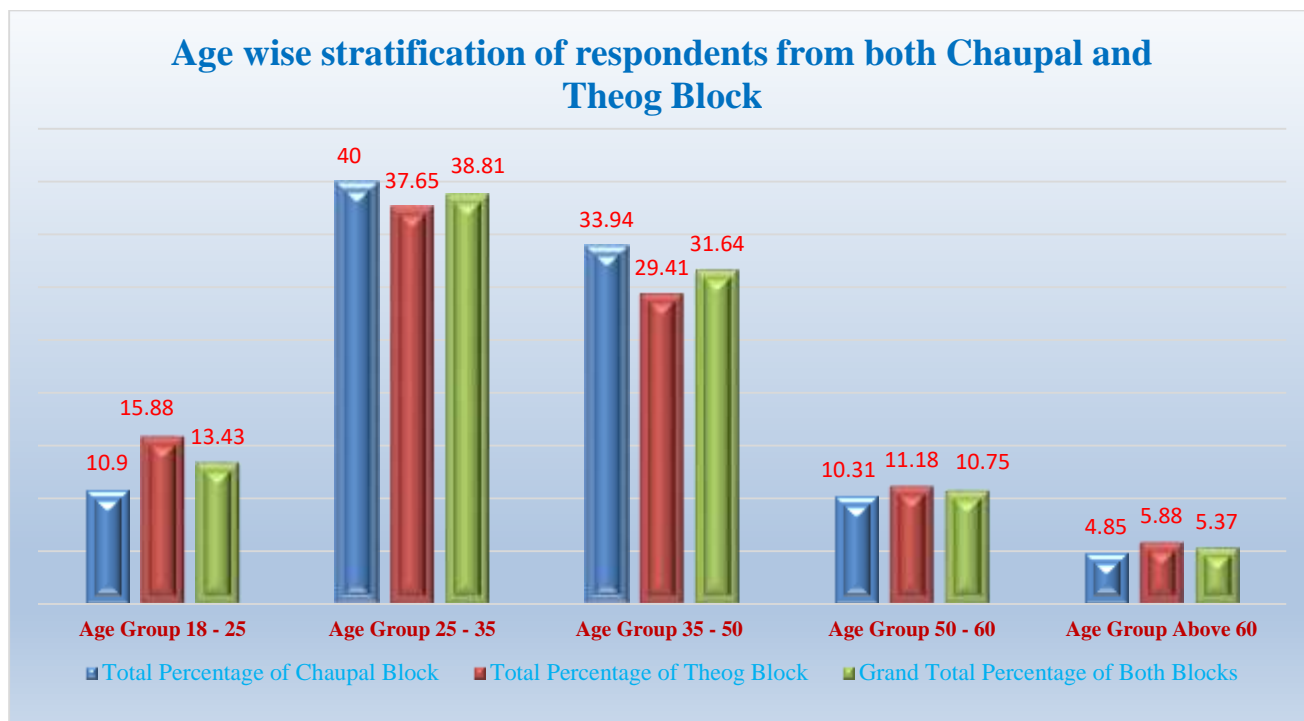


Figure-1: -

The new leadership has adopted a new approach to the PRI's politics and decision-making. The leadership structure has undergone some adjustments as a result of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment's implementation. In the earlier, just a small number of affluent members of society held positions of leadership, but today's younger demographic is also demonstrating a significant interest in politics, especially in the institutions at the bottom of the political food chain. Age plays a significant role in leadership styles. Since the

61st Constitutional Amendment Act reduced the voting age from 21 to 18, the youngest members of society have grown more engaged in politics.

The Figure No. 1, it is evident from the data that respondents in the 25–35 age group represent the highest percentage including both elected and non-elected respondents, followed by those between the 35–50 and 18–25 age groups, respectively. Therefore, it is evident from the clustered columns in Graph No. 3.1 that the youngest social strata are the greatest dominant age group in the present study. The main drivers of the younger generation's involvement in grassroots politics are the increased literacy rate and awareness level. The information above makes it clear that the major social classes actively participate in rural leadership. Due to the 73rd Amendment's new provisions and the seat reservations for women, SCs, and STs, this may be achievable.

Gender:

Women no longer have equal representation in politics despite voting in approximately equivalent numbers to males around the world (Ranjana, 1992: 9). Women have had restricted political engagement historically because of things like caste, religion, feudal values, and family structure. Women have been excluded from political life as a result (Sweta, 1997: 16). Traditional leadership styles in grassroots institutions have undergone a significant transformation. Male members had previously dominated the PRIs. Only the elderly male folks were in charge because the Panchayati Raj ideology itself was based on Panch-parmesan. In the three tiers of PRIs, a 33 percent reservation for women was implemented after the 73rd Constitutional Amendment was enacted. Following the amendment, Himachal Pradesh likewise raised this standard to 50 percent.

The Figure No. 2, it is clear from the data that there are more male respondents than female responders. Out of the total strata used for the study, we can say that men are the predominant group in both blocks, but this satisfies the constitutional requirement for 33 percent reservations of women in the PRIs during the 2005 and 2010 elections when the reservation of 50 percent was not lawfully mandated. It indicates that, as a result of the 73rd Change Act and subsequent revisions, women received their fair share of votes in the Panchayati Raj elections held following the amendment to the Himachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act 1994.

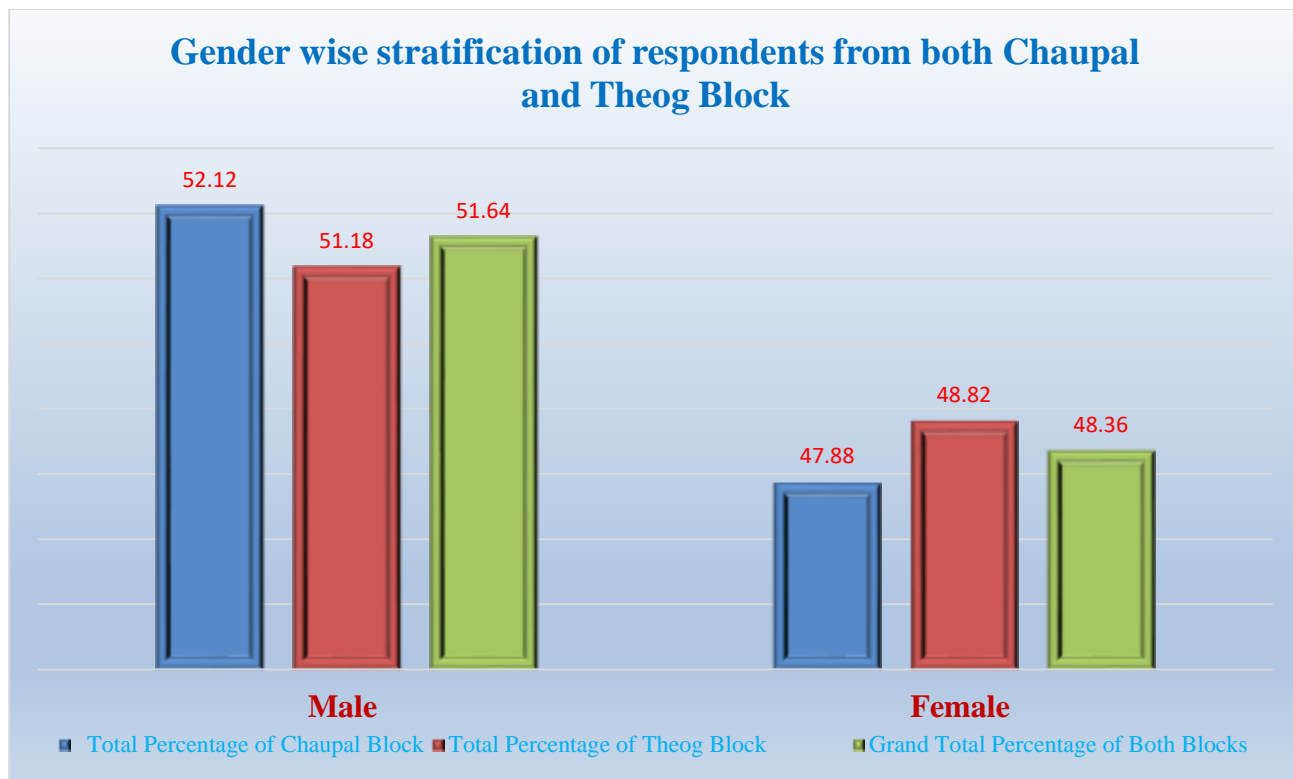


Figure-2: -

Caste:

The emergence of leadership at the village level is significantly shaped by caste. People from the "dominant castes" have frequently been found elected to these institutions at the local level, it has been noticed (Desai, 1969: 38). Caste is a significant factor in determining a person's assigned rank, and Indian society is hierarchically separated based on caste, which is more apparent in rural areas. Caste is thought to have been a significant factor in the elections (Majumder and Bhanwar, 1996: 39). The nature and styles of leadership in the villages are largely determined by caste as well (Zylal, and Zaidi, 1988: 138, 141). Caste-specific ideas influence relations between castes, among other things (Srinivas, 1962: 33) Empirical studies show that due to adult franchise and democratic decentralization, the leadership is shifting to the numerically dominant groups and castes. Traditionally, the rural leadership has been a monopoly of the upper caste Brahmin, Rajput, and large landlords.

Figure No. 3, data clearly shows that the General caste compensates the most percentage of elected and non-elected respondents and that SC is the second largest stratum out of the whole sample survey, while the OBC category makes up the smallest percentage in both blocks. According to the research above, Chaupal block had a higher share of the General category than Theog Block. It is evident that in Himachal Pradesh, the higher castes have a substantially larger share of the rural PRI leadership. This is because candidates from the General

Category compete for the majority of open seats, while candidates from other categories dissociate themselves from it.

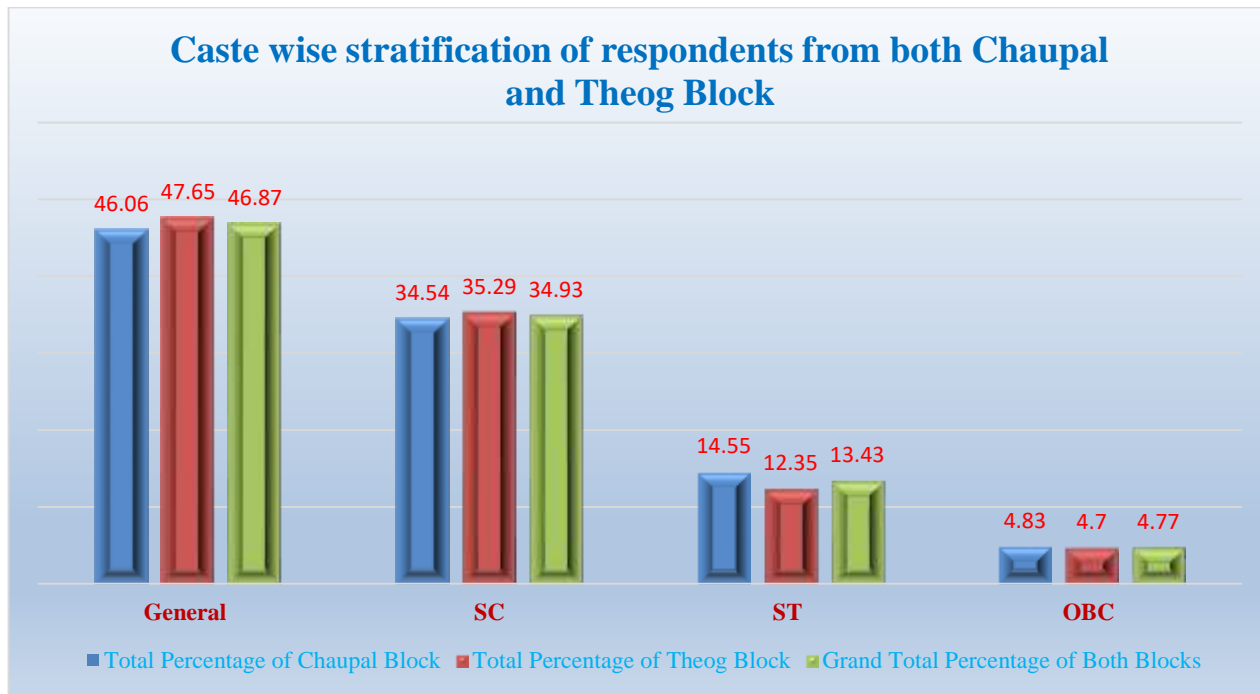


Figure-3: -

Education:

The most innovative factor in the world, education drastically changes all facets of human existence (Rajender, 1997: 76). Modern political involvement originates from the relationship between education and democracy, which also aids in educating the populace about their rights and responsibilities and assisting them in comprehending the complexity of democratic politics. Additionally, it instructs voters on how and when to exercise their right to vote (Bryce, 1962: 80). Education is seen as a crucial factor since it not only helps people develop their minds but also enables them to solve problems rationally and scientifically (Joshi, 1999: 33). Education is a virtue, and those who have received it are blessed (Dickyla, 2004: 18). It influences a person's status in society as well as his effectiveness in terms of both function and utility (Dharam Raj, 1985: 35).

Figure No. 4, the stacked conical representation of the graph from both the Chaupal and Theog blocks reveals that respondents with the educational qualification 10+2 constitute the highest percentage, while the second largest strata out of the total sample survey from both blocks are matriculated. In contrast, postgraduate and other professional qualifications like engineers, doctors, and lawyers are very significantly under-represented.

Even if the state's literacy rate is approximately 84 percent, as the current survey has shown, higher

education is still out of the grasp of many poor rural people. This means that one factor for the low participation in the democratic process is the villagers' or respondents' low or semi-educational backgrounds. Education increases awareness, and awareness inspires people to participate actively in all Panchayat elections and Gram Sabha meetings so they can share their concerns, discuss local issues at the local level, and engage in discussion with the Panchayat's governing body. Therefore, it is evident from the information above that educational background affects how communities participate in democratic processes.

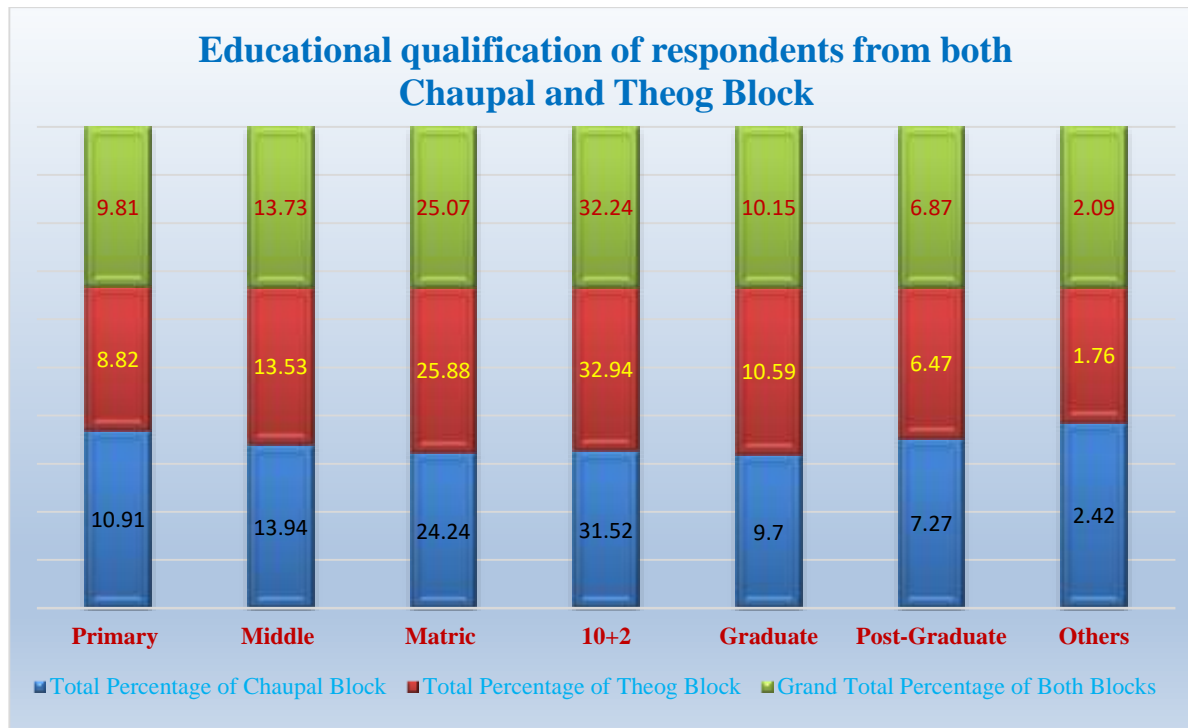


Figure-4: -

Income:

People's economic status is a significant factor in determining leadership in rural areas, and those with excellent economic standing in these locations have historically had a positive influence on their local communities. People were formerly dependent on moneylenders in rural due to a lack of financial institutions. The leadership in rural areas, therefore, came from a wealthy class. With the emergence of cooperative credit institutions, the exploitation by moneylenders has now been minimized to a larger level, and poor people have used these institutions to meet their financial needs (Sud, 1992: 102).

Due to an increase in agricultural and horticultural efficiency over the past twenty years, as well as an increase in their pricing, villagers' standard of living has increased.

Figure No. 5, interprets that the highest percentage of respondents from both blocks had yearly incomes

from all sources between 50,000 and 75,000, which is followed by annual incomes below 25,000, between 25,000 and 50,000, between 75,000 and 1,00,000, and above 1,00,000, respectively. The aforementioned analysis clearly demonstrates that respondents in Chaupal Block had greater income levels than those in Theog Block. The greater the degree of affluence, the greater the chances of entering politics. Better financial standing, however, is by no means the only criterion for participating in grass-roots institutions' politics.

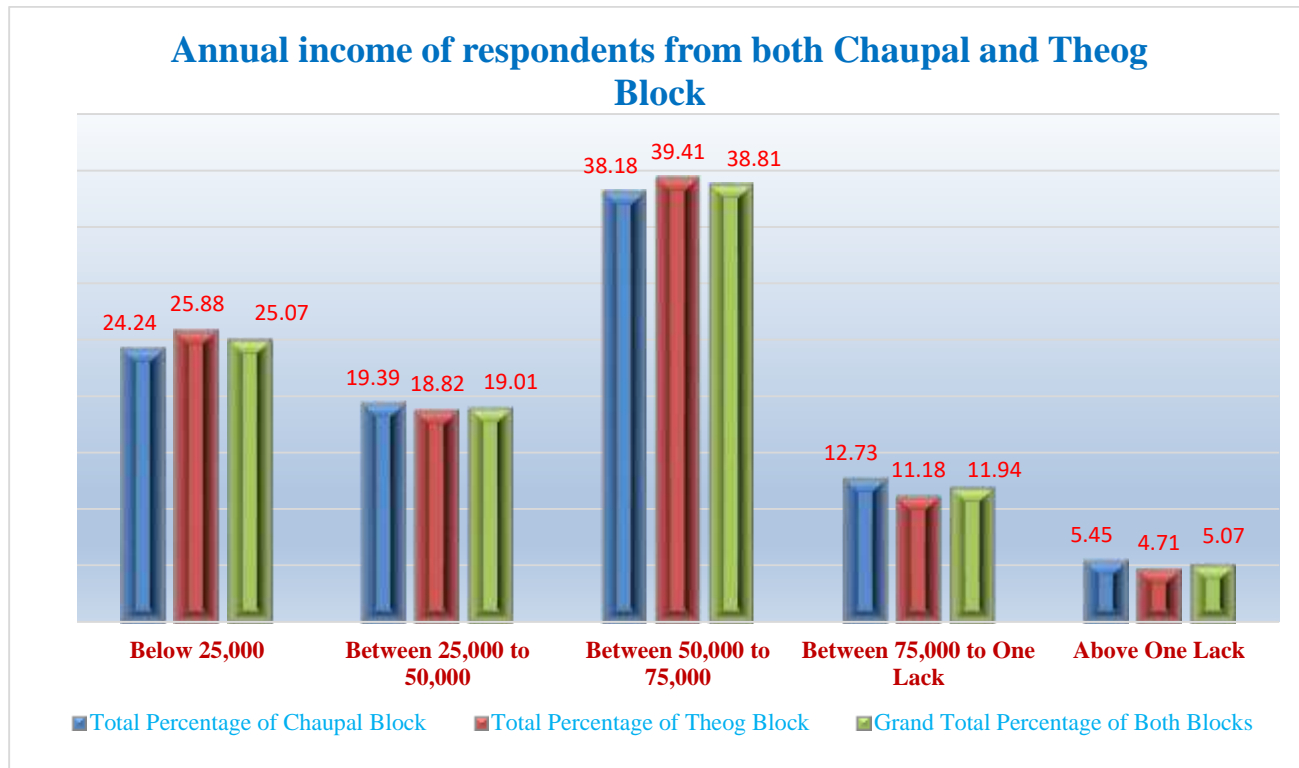


Figure-5: -

Occupation:

One of the essential aspects that determines a family's social position is their occupation. This is a consequence of the fact that various occupations not only have varying reputations but are also associated with different privileges and economic benefits (Savita, 1999: 42). One of the key elements in the emergence of a leader is an occupation in rural society. Only people with those professions can afford to be leaders since they have free time and can remain in the community. Only those who work in agriculture, construction, or other traditional occupations are permitted to live in the community. The agriculturist class among those who hold these occupations enjoys more free time than other classes. Additionally, service employees frequently lack free time and are prohibited from running in elections.

The Figure No. 6, it is clear that the region's population primarily engages in agriculture. Service industries (public, semi-public, and private), businesses, and other professions all carefully adhere to it. According to the

study and the comments of the interviewees, it is discovered that people choose to work for a living even though agriculture is their primary occupation. Most of the respondents work in agriculture, therefore they can participate actively in PRI politics as a whole.

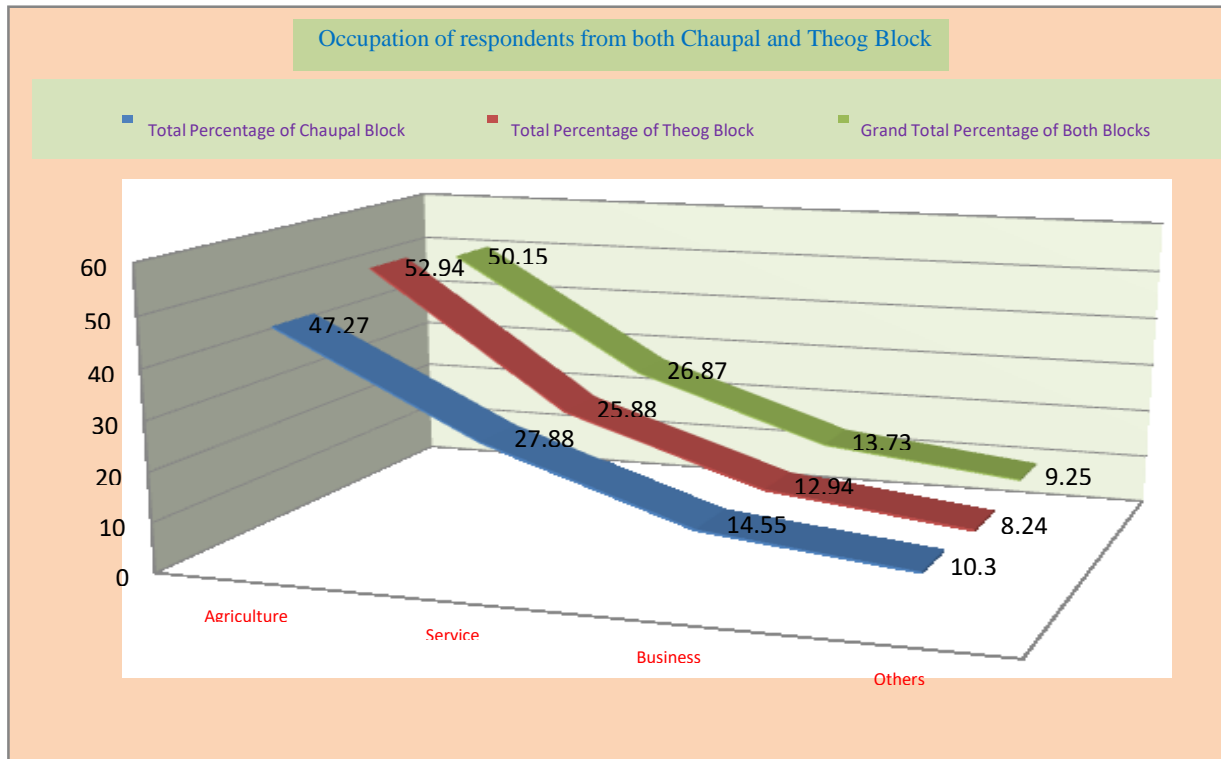


Figure-6: -

Family Structure:

In terms of family structure, the joint and nucleus families are typically distinguished. The joint family is related to a traditional, agricultural civilization where family prestige and conservation tend to take precedence over individual interests. The core family, which is more of an industrialized society development, allows for more flexibility and self-expression among its members despite a certain amount of isolation in some ways. India has a joint family culture that has existed historically, and the joint family structure is still in place in the rural districts of Himachal Pradesh. But as a result of industrialization and societal change, this system is gradually disintegrating (Himani, 2016: 124-135).

Figure No. 7, demonstrates that nuclear families represent the highest percentage in both blocks. It must have been discovered in the current study that people are still living in joint families. However, the proportion of nuclear families is significantly higher than the proportion of combined families. As a result, the transition from a shared family structure to a nuclear family is evident.

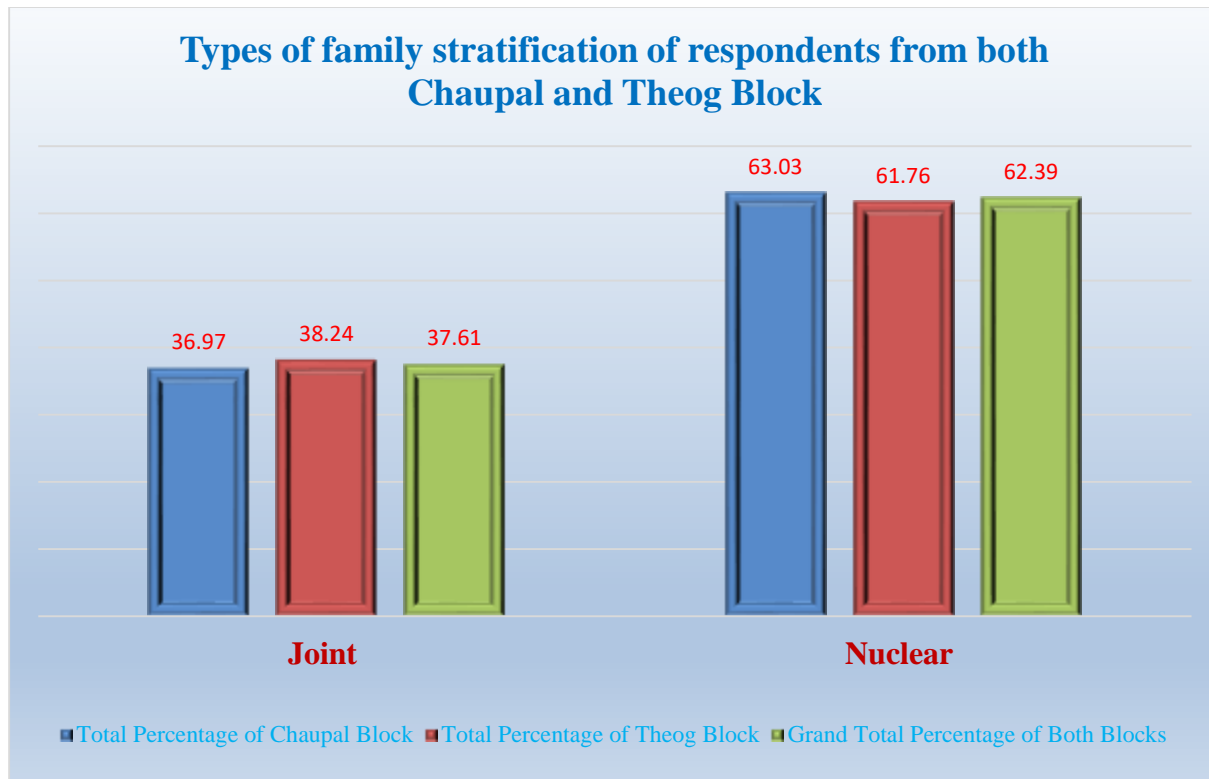


Figure-7: -

Size of Lang Holding:

Land ownership has a major contribution to establishing hegemony in the village. In contrast to a huge number of people who either owned very little land or no land at all, the majority of the land in rural India was concentrated in the ownership of a relatively small number of large proprietors. According to V.M. Sirsikar, the leader's income in general and economic position, in particular, is determined by a number of connected variables in addition to property holdings (Brief facts 2001) The majority of people in Himachal Pradesh work in agriculture and horticulture-related fields. Because of the challenging terrain and peoples' primary employment in agriculture and horticulture, this is the case. Apples are the principal fruit crop of the Shimla District, and wheat, maize, and paddy are the main crops farmed in the State. Here are apples of high quality grown. The State has an extremely low holding level. The various land reforms have removed those who weren't cultivators from their land. Such people's land is now being tilled. The determinants of leadership include land ownership as a variable to numerous other factors that contribute to social and cultural status (Mehta,1972: 82). In Himachal Pradesh, 8.63 lakh farmers manage an area that is 55.67 lakh hectares in size. The typical holding size is 1.1 hectares. Agriculture and related industries in the State account for about 21% of the entire Gross State Domestic Product (Brief Facts, 2006-07).

Figure No. 8, shows that the biggest number of respondents for both the Chaupal and Theog blocks have land holdings smaller than 10 Bighas. According to the image, just 5 to 6 percent of the total stratum used for the study from both blocks were respondents with size holdings of 50 Bighas or more. According to the sample data and

graph's column representation, one-third of the respondents have land holdings between 10 and 30 Bighas in size. The bulk of responses in both Blocks was from the category of land holdings with fewer than 10 bighas.

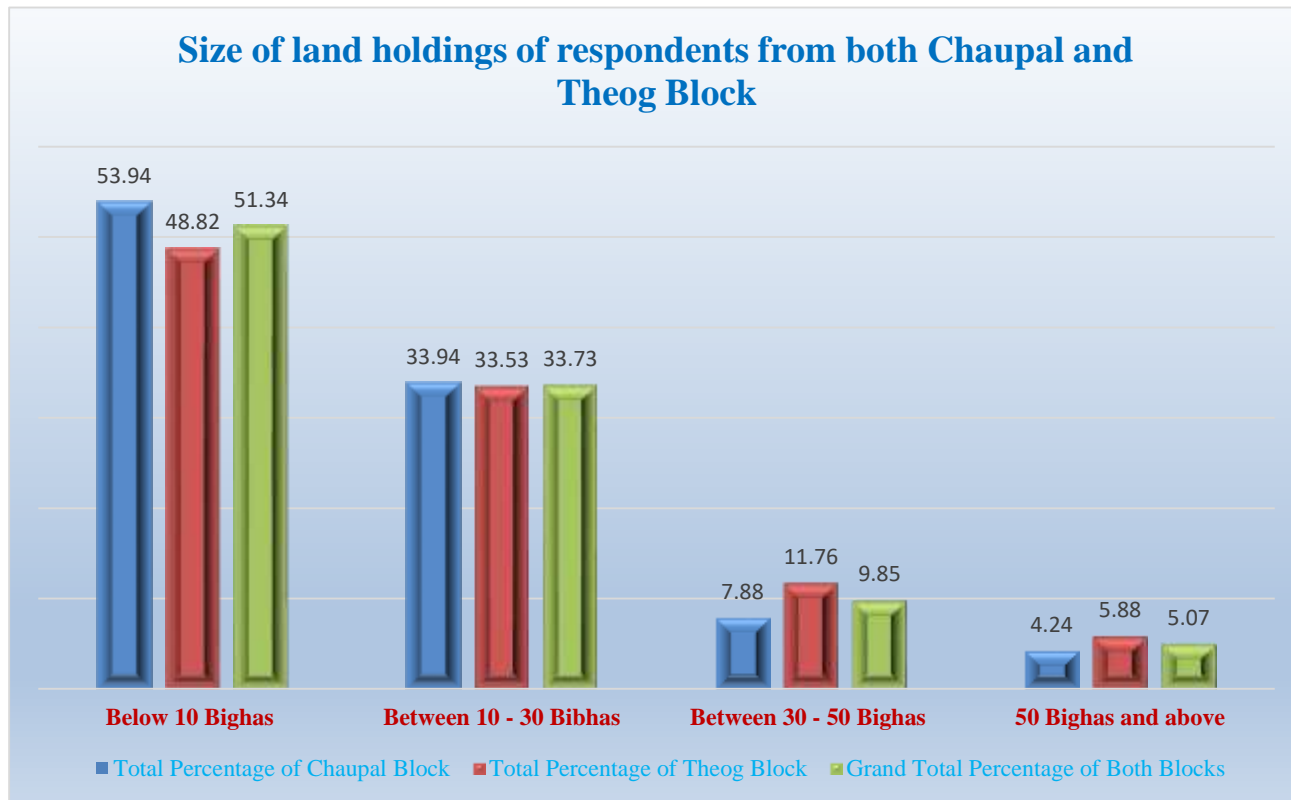


Figure-8: -

Affiliation with Political Party:

Political parties are essential to the development and maintenance of the nation's democratic system. They aid in the process of educating people about politics and forming and preserving public opinion. Through the political party's leaders and employees, the people can participate at all levels. In a democracy, the existence of political consciousness and public engagement are fundamental political events (Rajalaxmi, 2000: 44). Bringing focus to the political legacy of Panchayat leaders is the section's primary objective. It becomes significant that the leaders are associated with several political parties. An indicator of a leader's ideological commitment and preference is whether they are a member of our sympathies with a political party. On the one hand, this shows that they believe political parties should exist and have a function to play in regard to PRIs (Majumdar and Bhanwar, 1996: 133). People's political identification at the village level is a result of political parties' direct or indirect participation in the operations of Panchayat-run institutions that are governed by them. Congress, BJP, CPI (M), and independent parties, among others, are among the political affiliations of the populace. Regarding their affiliation with any political party, respondents to the current study were inquired about it.

The stacked cylindrical bar demonstration of Figure No. 9, depicts that the majority of elected and non-

elected respondents from both blocks were affiliated with the Congress party, which is then followed by respondents' political affiliations with the BJP, CPI (M), and Independent, respectively. According to the survey, Chaupal Block had a higher proportion of respondents who identified as members of the Congress party than Theog Block. CPI (M) influence is also observed during the study in the Theog block. In the study of rural leadership, the connection of leaders with various political parties becomes significant.

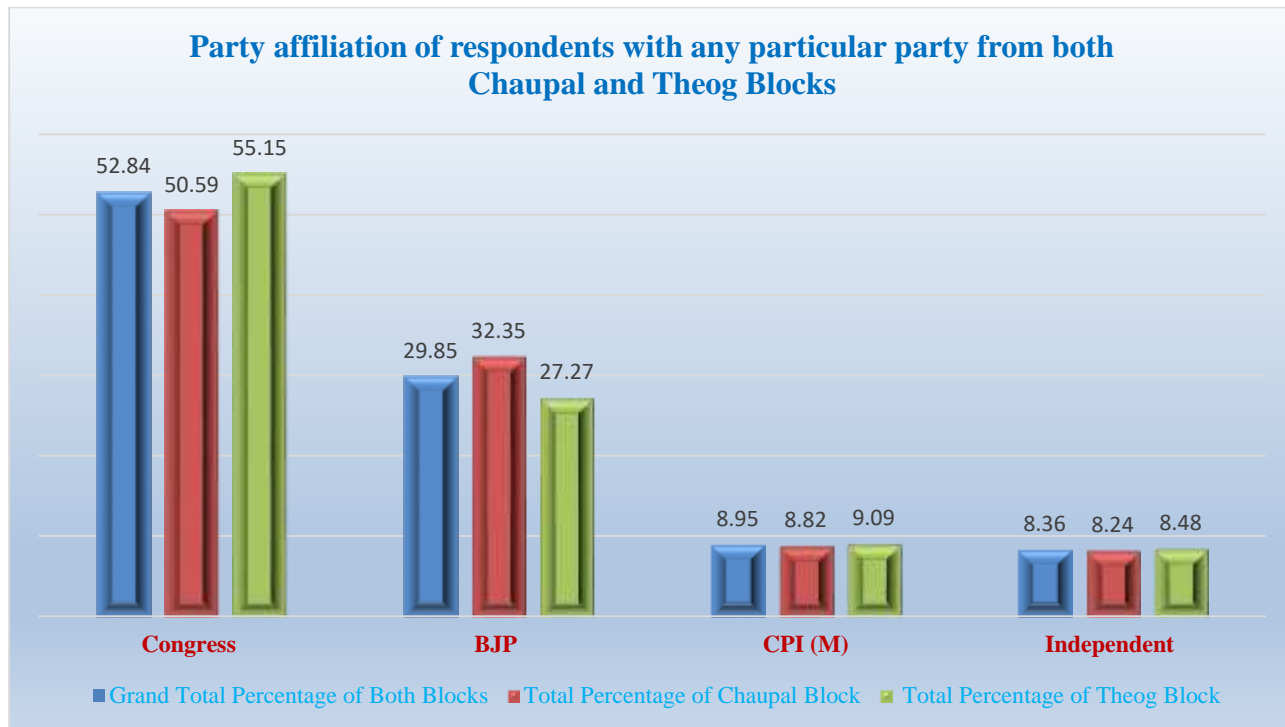


Figure-9: -

The study has emphasized that there is evidence of influence in both the functioning and politics of grassroots institutions.

Conclusion

Thus, we conclude by saying that on 24 April 1993, the 73rd amendment came into effect, marking a new phase in the development of grassroots institutions. Himachal Pradesh also enacted the PRI act through the 1994 amendment act. It is important to see the elected leaders' backgrounds it makes the study of rural leadership more adequate; age, gender, caste, education, family structure, income, occupation, and party affiliation are these factors. Taken into consideration to access the socio-economic status of the leadership in order to determine whether these variables have any significant influence on the patterns of leadership. Age plays a significant role in leadership. The youngest social strata are the greatest dominant age group in this study. Himachal Pradesh raised the reservation for

women from 33% to 50%. Previously men are the predominant group in both the blocks (Chaupal and Theog) when the reservation of 50% was not lawfully mandated. As a result of the 73rd change Act and subsequent revisions, women received their fair share of votes in the PRI elections. The emergence of leadership at the village level is significantly shaped by caste. General caste compensates the most percentage of elected and non-elected respondents. Scheduled caste is the 2nd largest stratum out of the whole sample survey and the OBC category makes the smallest percentage in both blocks. The Chaupal block had a high share of the general category than the Theog block. Both blocks reveal that respondents with the educational qualification 10+2 constitute a high percentage, while the 2nd largest strata out of the total sample survey from both blocks are matriculated. In contrast, the PG and other professional qualifications like; engineers, doctors, and lawyers are very significantly under-represented. People's economic status is a significant factor in determining leadership in rural areas. The respondents in the Chaupal block had greater income levels than those in the Theog block. The greater degree of affluence, the greater the chance of entering politics. Various occupations not only have varying reputations but are also associated with different privileges and economic benefits. One of the key elements in the emergence of the leaders in occupation in rural society. In both blocks, it is discovered that people choose to work for a living even though agriculture is their primary occupation. Family structure in both blocks represents the highest percentage of the nuclear family. The proportion of nuclear families is significantly higher than the proportion of joint families. Both blocks have land holding smaller than 10 bighas. 1/3 of the respondents have land holding between 10 and 30 bighas in size. The bulk of responses in both blocks was from the category of land holdings with fewer than 10 bighas. Both blocks were affiliated with the Congress party followed by respondents with the BJP, CPI(M), and independent. Chaupal block had a higher proportion of respondents who identified as members of the congress party than the Theog block.

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