

**PROBLEMS FACED BY FEMALE POLLING PERSONNEL'S
DURING THEIR ELECTION TRAINING FOR THE 17TH LOK
SABHA ELECTION 2019**

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ABSTRACT

With an attempt to empower women and to increase women turnout, the Election Commission of India (ECI) had set up pink booth in different part of the country during the 17th Lok Sabha Election 2019. Pink polling booths are electoral booths managed entirely by women. Such initiative had caused numerous problem to the female polling staffs. The present investigation aim to find the variety of problems faced by female polling staffs during their training at the Churachandpur District of Manipur for the 2019 lower house election. The investigator adopted descriptive and analytical method of research. The population of the study consisted of 615 female polling personnel's utilised in Churachandpur District. The Sample of the study included 258 female polling personnel's who were randomly drawn. The tool of the study comprised of an online questionnaire consisting of personal profile, and 33 items from various dimension of the election training programme. Main findings of the study were (i) most of the dimensions of training programme for female polling personnel's were efficiently and properly organised. (ii) Hands-on-training with EVM, VVPAT and other election materials required drastic improvement as this had been the biggest problem faced by the female polling personnel's.

Keywords: Election, Lok Sabha, Problems of female polling personnel's, Pink Polling Station, Election Training.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Pink Polling Station or Booth:

Historically, women's turnout has been lower than men's, but it's gone up drastically in the past few elections, and the trend suggests they may be the majority of voters this year. As part of its push to increase women turnout, the Election Commission of India (ECI) is striving to have at

least one pink booth set up in each assembly, the subdivisions of each electoral district. (Annalisa Merelli, 2019)

The “Pink Polling Booths” are electoral booths managed entirely by women staff including police and security personnel, which is meant to be female in order to encourage women to vote. In such booths special arrangements are done at these booths for pregnant women, Persons with Disabilities (PwD), among others.

Pink Polling Booth is also known by different names but similar connotations “*sakhi* election center”—*sakhi* is a Hindi word meaning “female friend,” ‘Sakhi Matdan Kendras’”

These booths don’t just have a female staff, but they also offer a variety of services that can range from a waiting room to drinking water to childcare arrangements. Women also get tokens to mark their place in line, so that they don’t have to wait, often under the sun, for their turn to vote.

An article in Business Today (11 April, 2019) entitled “Lok Sabha Elections 2019: What are pink polling booths?” defined pink polling booths. Pink polling booths are electoral booths managed entirely by women. From women security personnel’s to women polling parties, pink color is commonplace at these booths. Special arrangements are done at these booths for pregnant women, Persons with Disabilities (PwD), among others. Such attempt was meant to encourage women voters’ participation in the upcoming Lok Sabha Elections, Election Commission has set up Pink polling booths across states. Majority of these booths have been set up in the North-eastern states. However, other parts of the country are not lagging behind.

According to Shri R Telang, Chief Electoral Officer of Sikkim, the hill state has set up 30 polling booths, which are exclusively manned by women security personnel and women polling parties, tweeted the Press Information Bureau in Sikkim quoting Telang.

For the first time, Sikkim will have 30 'pink booths' to be manned exclusively by women security personnel and women polling parties- Shri R. Telang, Chief Electoral Officer, Sikkim.

2. BACKGROUND

The Hindu Business Line (11 March, 2018), article entitled “Lok Sabha elections: Five reasons India’s election is unique,” It is election season in India. The South Asian nation is preparing to hold general elections in April and May, in which about 900 million Indians — more than the population of all the countries of Europe combined — will cast their votes to select a new federal government.

Woman power: Women outnumbered men at polling booths in half of the states in 2014 in an election that created history with the highest ever female voter turnout of 65.63 per cent. In last

election women managed some polling stations. This time, the commission plans to set up more pink polling booths managed by women officials to motivate female voters.

An article in Business Insider India (12 March, 2019), “This election, India’s national capital will have polling booths staffed only by women,” described the following;

- India’s national capital will have pink polling booths set up for Lok Sabha elections that will be staffed only by women.
- The move is aimed at promoting women empowerment and their abilities.
- As per the data by Election Commission of India, women account for less than 50% of the total voters in India.

Similarly, **News18 also reported through an article “All-Women Polling Booths For Delhi Voters in 2019 Lok Sabha Elections”** that All-Women Polling Booths For Delhi Voters in 2019 Lok Sabha Elections, Published on March 11, 2019,

Business Standard (28th March, 2019) in the article “All-women polling booths in every LS constituency of Maharashtra” reported that pink polling stations had been set up in all 40 Lok Sabha seats of the Maharashtra. "All those deployed at such polling stations - police, election officers and other employees - were women. These booths, an initiative towards gender equality and involving women's participation in the electoral process, will be called as 'Sakhi Matdan Kendras'." Sensitive polling stations will be kept out of this experiment while those near tehsil office or police stations will be considered to be managed by women,

An article in Hindustantimes (28 March, 2019) “Lok Sabha elections 2019: Maharashtra to have 288 all-women polling booths” reported that in elections 2019, Maharashtra would have 288 at least one all-women polling station in each of the 288 Assembly constituencies.

The Daily Star (07 April, 2019) in their article “Lok Sabha election in India: 117 polling stations for women in Mizoram” reported that the state of Mizoram would have 117 polling stations for women in Mizoram. It was also reported that 256 voters awareness forum were formed across the state besides formation of young voters club by social media enthusiasts.

The News Minute (12 March, 2019) in their article “600 all-women polling booths to be set up in Karnataka for Lok Sabha polls” reported that a total of 600 polling booths out of the 58,186 voting stations to be set up for the Lok Sabha elections in Karnataka on April 18 and 23 will be managed by women personnel. These booths will have women as polling staff, police and security personnel.

Greater Kashmir News Network (14 April, 2019) in their article stated that “Training of all-women polling stations staff was held” at DC Office, Srinagar. The training session included videos demonstrating duties of the polling personnel and hands-on training on use

of Electronic Voting Machines or EVMs and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trails or VVPATs. Pertinently, eight polling stations one each in eight assembly constituencies of the district have been designated as all-women polling stations where both the polling officials and the immediate security staff will comprise females exclusively.

Poorvi Gupta (28 March, 2019) reported through an article “Women-only Polling Booths In All 40 Constituencies In Maharashtra” in an online news called “She the People” that there were 40 constituencies in Maharashtra where Women-only Polling Booths was set up. These polling booths will be entirely managed by women workers who will ensure safety and security at the polling booth. The team of women will include police, election officers and other employees and this step is being taken as an initiative to encourage more women to come out and vote.

An article “119 women polling stations set up for Lok Sabha polls” in The Hans India (10 April 2019) reported that the election officials had set up 119 women polling stations with all women polling staff in 17 Parliament constituencies that had concluded on 11th April, 2019 with an aim to encourage women to cast their votes in the Lok Sabha elections, These women polling stations, also called as pink polling stations, were set up in Assembly elections held in Punjab, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka and some North Eastern States. The women or pink polling stations in other States had a touch of pink in everything-all the polling staff wore shades of pink dresses and inside of polling booth-table clothes, walls and balloons all were in pink colour. However, the women polling stations in Telangana were different since pink is synonymous with TRS party in the State. The Congress party raised objections on setting up pink booths, which they felt was bringing undue advantage to TRS. Taking note of Congress argument, the Election Commission had dropped pink word from the women polling stations only in the State and gave directions to Telangana authorities to establish exclusive women polling stations, but without endorsing pink colour.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- 3.1. To study the nature of training programme for female polling personnel’s for the Lok Sabha Election 2019 in Churachandpur District of Manipur.
- 3.2. To find out the problems faced by the female polling personnel’s during their training the Lok Sabha Election 2019 in Churachandpur District of Manipur.
- 3.3. To investigate the skills of Master trainers in training the female polling personnel’s for the Lok Sabha Election 2019 in Churachandpur District of Manipur.
- 3.4. To investigate the problems faced by the female polling personnel’s during their training with regards to the use of LCD Projectors.

- 3.5. To investigate the problems faced by the female polling personnel's during their training with regards to Hands-on-training on EVM including VVPAT.
- 3.6. To recommend suggestions for improvement in the training programme meant for female polling personnel's.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 4.1. What were problems faced by the female polling personnel's during their training for the Lok Sabha Election 2019 in Churachandpur District of Manipur with regards to the skills of Master Trainers?
- 4.2. What were the problems faced by the female polling personnel's during their training for 17th Lok Sabha Election 2019 with regards to the use of LCD Projectors?
- 4.3. What were the problems faced by the female polling personnel's during their training for 17th Lok Sabha Election 2019 with regards to Hands-on-training on EVM including VVPAT?
- 4.4. To recommend suggestions for improvement in the training programme meant for female polling personnel's.

5. DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY.

5.1. Method of the Study

The researcher used descriptive and analytical method in the present study as they are the most suitable ones.

5.2. Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of 615 female polling personnel's including the reserved polling party who were deployed during the 17th Lok Sabha Election 2019 in Churachandpur District of Manipur.

5.3. Sample of the Study

The sample of the study was randomly drawn and consisted of 258 female polling personnel's including the reserved polling party who were randomly drawn from the population of the study.

5.4. Study Tool

The researcher had developed a questionnaire consisting of 33 items in five dimensions of the training programme, i.e., Problems faced by female polling personnel's during the training of polling personnel's in the 17th Lok Sabha Election 2019 (8 items); Skills of Master Trainers (4 items); Use of LCD Projectors in the Election Training for Polling

Personnel's (5 items); Hands-on-practice for operating the EVM and other materials during the training (6 items) and Suggestions for improvement (10 items excluding additional suggestion given by the respondents).

5.5. Analysis:

After Data entry in MS-Excel, the entered data given statistically treatment and the total scores, Mean, Standard Deviation, and score percentage for each items were computed. Further, the Gross Total Scores, Mean, Standard Deviation, and Score Percentage for each domain of the training programmes were computed. Thereafter, the values were interpreted and the result of the study was finalized.

6. PROCEDURES OF THE STUDY

This study has been conducted according to the following steps:

- 6.1. Preparation of study tool- Questionnaire- till the final version was compiled.
- 6.2. Determined study population and selection of sample of study was drawn randomly.
- 6.3. Data were collected through online Questionnaire through google form.
- 6.4. Data entry in MS-Excel and statistical computation and analysing of the data was done and it was discussed, and recommended suitable measures.
- 6.5. Compilation of the full paper including references.

7. RESULTS OF THE STUDY:

The following are the results of the study according to the sequence of questions:

- 7.1. **Results of the first question:** *What was the nature of training programme meant for female polling personnel's for the Lok Sabha Election 2019 in Churachandpur District of Manipur?*

To answer this question, Total Scores, Mean, Standard Deviation and Percentages Score of each item and the Gross Total Scores, Mean, Standard Deviation and Percentages Score related to the Problems faced by female polling personnel's during the training in the 17th Lok Sabha Election 2019 in Churachandpur District of Manipur, one dimension of the training programme was computed and the result is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Total Score, Mean, Standard Deviation and Percentages Score of items and the Gross Total Score, Mean, Standard Deviation and Percentages Score regarding the Overall Problems faced by female polling personnel’s during the training of polling personnel’s in the 17th Lok Sabha Election 2019, one dimension of the training programme

Item No	Overall Problems faced by female polling personnel’s during the training of polling personnel’s in the 17th Lok Sabha Election 2019	Total Score	M	S.D	%	Degree of Problem
1.1.	The training of polling personnel’s in the Churachandpur College for Churachandpur District was not well organized.	72	3.26	1.08	27.91	Very low
1.2	The training of polling personnel’s in Churachandpur College had consisted of 3 phases which was not necessary.	36	3.49	0.79	13.95	Very low
1.3	The use of Power point presentation in the theoretical training during the training of polling personnel’s was not useful.	30	3.81	0.87	11.63	Very low
1.4	Proper and adequate refreshment was not served to the tired and exhausted female polling trainees during the training which had caused dissatisfaction among the female teams.	138	2.33	1.16	53.49	Moderate
1.5	Adequate arrangement was not made for sitting for the female polling trainees during the training sessions and they have to squeeze tightly in the benches and this had hampered their learning ability.	54	3.30	1.07	20.93	Low
1.6	Adequate arrangement was not made for drinking water at the training centre which make the female personnel’s go thirst for many hours	96	2.98	1.25	37.21	Low
1.7	“The Master Trainers in training of polling personnel’s were too serious and they over emphasized the importance of carefulness and due diligence on the part of the polling - nervousness	138	2.65	0.91	53.49	Moderate
1.8	“The Master Trainers in training of polling personnel’s were too serious and they over emphasized the importance of carefulness and due diligence on the part of the polling - reduced my ability to concentrate and learn	174	2.40	0.78	67.44	High
Gross Total Scores		738	3.03	1.12	35.76	Low

Analysis of Table 1 clearly showed a very low degree of overall problems with regards to the Problems faced by female polling personnel’s during the training of polling personnel’s in the 17th Lok Sabha Election 2019, one dimension of the training programme which has come at a

Gross Total Score of (738) out of 2064, Mean of (3.03), Standard Deviation of (1.12) and Percentage of (35.76). The researcher found out that all the problem/issues under investigation were found to have a low degree of problem. Thus, the female personnel's utilised in the Lok Sabha Election 2019 did not face significant problems during their training. This might be attributed to the efficient of the Election Officials in Churachandpur District of Manipur and particularly the Nodal Officer for training polling personnel' in Churachandpur District.

7.2. Results of the second question: *What were problems faced by the female polling personnel's during their training for the Lok Sabha Election 2019 in Churachandpur District of Manipur with regards to the skills of Master Trainers?*

To answer this question, total scores, Mean, Standard Deviation and Percentages Score of each item and the gross total scores, Mean, Standard Deviation and Percentages Score related to problems faced by the female polling personnel's during their training for the Lok Sabha Election 2019 in Churachandpur District of Manipur with regards to the skills of Master Trainers, one dimension of the training programme was computed and the result is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Total Score, Mean, Standard Deviation and Percentages Score of items and the Gross Total Score, Mean, Standard Deviation and Percentages Score regarding problems faced by the female polling personnel's during their training for the Lok Sabha Election 2019 in Churachandpur District of Manipur with regards to the skills of Master Trainers, one dimension of the training programme.

Item No	Problems faced by the female polling personnel's during their training for the Lok Sabha Election 2019 in Churachandpur District of Manipur with regards to the skills of Master Trainers	Total Score	M	S.D	%	Degree of Problem
2.1	They did not provided sufficient information	30	3.77	0.83	11.63	Very low
2.2	They did not taught the same thing for the same issues	72	3.37	0.97	27.91	Low
2.3	They did not gave correct information	6	3.91	0.60	2.33	Very low
2.4	They were not well trained and thus lack the skills of transmitting and communication	12	3.98	0.73	4.65	Very low
	Gross Total Scores	120	3.76	0.83	11.63	Very Low

Analysis of Table 2 clearly showed a very low degree of problems with regards to the problems faced by the female polling personnel's during their training for the Lok Sabha Election 2019 in Churachandpur District of Manipur with regards to the skills of Master Trainers, one dimension of the training programme, which has come at a Gross Total Score of (120) out of 1032, Mean of

(3.76), Standard Deviation of (0.83) and Percentage of (4.65). The researcher found out that the problems under investigation, i.e., skills of the master trainers, were found to have a very low degree. Thus, the female personnel's who undergo training in Churachandpur District for the 17th Lok Sabha Election 2019 had faced negligible problems which may be attributed to the proficiency and efficiency of the Master Trainers utilised.

7.3. Results of the third question: *What were the problems faced by the female polling personnel's during their training for the 17th Lok Sabha Election 2019 with regards to the use of LCD Projectors?*

To answer this question, Total scores, Mean, Standard Deviation and Percentages Score of each item and the Gross Total scores, Mean, Standard Deviation and Percentages Score related to the problems faced by the female polling personnel's during their training with regards to the use of LCD Projectors, one dimension of the training programme was computed and the result is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Total Score, Mean, Standard Deviation and Percentages Score of items and the Gross Total Score, Mean, Standard Deviation and Percentages Score regarding problems faced by the female polling personnel's during their training for the 17th Lok Sabha Election 2019 in Churachandpur District of Manipur with regards to the use of LCD Projectors, one dimension of the training programme.

Item No	Problems faced by female polling personnel's during the training for the 17th Lok Sabha Election 2019 with regards to the use of LCD Projectors	Total Score	M	S.D	%	Degree of Problem
3.1.	The use of LCD Projectors during the training was effective method for mastery learning	66	3.33	0.98	25.58	Low
3.2.	Adequate number of LCD Projectors were not used during the training	114	2.77	1.03	44.19	Moderate
3.3.	Majority of the Master Trainers were not efficient in Power Point Presentation	54	3.35	0.94	20.93	Low
3.4.	There was no arrangement for generator so power point presentation were not done when there was power shut down	78	2.88	0.87	30.23	Low
3.5	Master Trainers were not able to make used of power point presentation and hence reduced their ability to transmit information effectively	24	3.58	0.79	9.30	Very Low

	and efficiently.					
	Gross Total Scores	336	3.18	0.97	26.05	Low

Analysis of Table 3 clearly showed a low degree of problems with regards to the Problems faced by female polling personnel’s during the training in the 17th Lok Sabha Election 2019 in Churachandpur District of Manipur with regards to the use of LCD Projectors, one dimension of the training programme, which has come at a Gross Total Score of (336) out of 1290, Mean of (3.18), Standard Deviation of (0.97) and Percentage of (26.05). The researcher found out that the problems under investigation were found to have a low degree. Thus, the female personnel’s deployed in the Lok Sabha Election 2019 had faced negligible problems during their training with regards to the use of LCD projectors. Further, mention may be made in this regard that inadequate number of LCD projector were supplied as such the responded felt that as a distinct problem. Hence, the use of LCD projectors during the training had proved to be useful for the female polling personnel’s.

7.4. Results of the fourth question: *What were the problems faced by the female polling personnel’s during their training for 17th Lok Sabha Election 2019 with regards to Hands-on-training on EVM including VVPAT?*

To answer this question, total scores, Mean, Standard Deviation and Percentages Score of each item and the gross total scores, Mean, Standard Deviation and Percentages Score related to the problems faced by the female polling personnel’s during their training with regards to the use of LCD Projectors, one dimension of the training programme was computed and the result is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Total Score, Mean, Standard Deviation and Percentages Score of items and the Gross Total Score, Mean, Standard Deviation and Percentages Score regarding problems faced by the female polling personnel’s during their training for the 17th Lok Sabha Election 2019 in Churachandpur District of Manipur with regards to the with regards to Hands-on-training on EVM including VVPAT.

Item No	Problems faced by the female polling personnel’s during their training for 17 th Lok Sabha Election 2019 with regards to Hands-on-training on EVM including VVPAT	Total Score	M	S.D	%	Degree of Problem
4.1.	I did not get enough chances for hands-on-practice	126	2.77	1.14	48.84	Moderate
4.2.	I did not attained mastery over the skill of operating the EVM as enough chances was not	66	3.23	0.96	25.58	Low

	given to me					
4.3.	I did not attained mastery over the skill of operating the EVM as adequate number of EVM was not provide during the training	114	2.86	1.13	44.19	Moderate
4.4.	Hands-on-practice was not useful as the sealing materials were not adequately provided during the training	126	2.88	1.13	48.84	Moderate
4.5	Hands-on-practice was not useful as many EVM provided during the training were not working	90	3.00	1.16	34.88	Low
4.6	Actual practice for filling up the Forms, Certificates, Declarations, Envelops, etc. were not conducted adequately	114	2.79	1.11	44.19	Moderate
	Gross Total Scores	636	2.92	1.12	41.09	Moderate

Analysis of Table 4 clearly showed a moderate degree of problems with regards to the Problems faced by the female polling personnel’s during their training for 17th Lok Sabha Election 2019 with regards to Hands-on-training on EVM including VVPAT, one dimension of the training programme, which has come at a Gross Total Score of (636) out of 1548, Mean of (2.92), Standard Deviation of (1.12) and Percentage of (41.09). The investigator found out that the problems under investigation were found to have a moderate degree. Thus, the female personnel’s utilised in the Lok Sabha Election 2019 had slightly faced problems during their training with regards to the Hands-on-training on EVM including VVPAT. This may be attributed to lack of EVM, VVPAT, and other election materials and malfunction EVM and VVPAT were not repaired immediately which had compounded to the shortage of functional EVM and VVPAT for hands-on-training. Hence, EVM and VVPAT must be sufficiently supplied during the training so that all the polling personnel’s acquires essential skills for efficient performance of the election duties.

7.5. Results of the fifth question/statement: Recommendation for improvement of the training programme meant for female polling personnel’s.

To analyses this statement 10 items which was in the form of suggestion for improving the training programme for female polling personnel’s were ask to the respondents and the responses were computed to obtain Total scores, Mean, Standard Deviation and Percentages Score of each item and the Gross Total scores, Mean, Standard Deviation and Percentages Score related to the suggestions for improving the training programme for female polling personnel’s was computed and the result is shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Total scores, Mean, Standard Deviation and Percentages Score of each item and the gross total scores, Mean, Standard Deviation and Percentages Score related to the suggestions for improving the training programme for female polling personnel's.

Item No	Suggestions for improving the training programme for female polling personnel's.	Total Score	M	S.D	%	Degree of Importance
5.1.	Assignment of Polling personnel's Nos. must be done well ahead.	252	0.98	0.15	97.67	Very High
5.2.	Polling personnel's Nos. must be informed one week before the commencement of the Training	246	0.95	0.21	95.35	Very High
5.3.	Training Room Mapping and Daily Schedule for the entire Election Training must prepared and be informed to all concerned at least three days ahead in order to avoid unnecessary confusions among the trainees.	252	0.98	0.15	97.67	Very High
5.4.	Adequate number of LCD Projectors should be provided during the training at the ratio of 1:5 (1 EVM & 5 Polling Personnel's)	246	0.95	0.21	95.35	Very High
5.5	Generator must be kept standby in case if there is power shut down	252	0.98	0.15	97.67	Very High
5.6	Any EVM malfunctioning during the training must be replaced with good ones immediately	252	0.98	0.15	97.67	Very High
5.7	Sufficient number EVM Engineers and LCD Projectors Engineers must be engaged during the training	258	1.00	0.00	100.00	Very High
5.8	Evaluation of skill of trainees on EVM operations and filling up Forms, Certificates, Declarations, Envelops, etc. must be sufficiently carried out	258	1.00	0.00	100.00	Very High
5.9	All means must be adopted to ensure that all the polling personnel's attained mastery over all the election materials	258	1.00	0.00	100.00	Very High
5.10	Honorarium must also be provided for attending the training and scoring high score in the skill evaluation	258	1.00	0.00	100.00	Very High
	Gross Total Scores	2532	0.98	0.14	98.14	Very High

Analysis of Table 5 clearly showed a very high degree of importance with regards to the Suggestions for improving the training programme for female polling personnel's which has come at a Gross Total Score of (2532) out of 2580, Mean of (0.98), Standard Deviation of (0.14) and Percentage of (98.14). The investigator found out that all the suggestions asked in the

questionnaire were found to have a very high degree of importance for improving training programme.

Further, an open statement was provided for collecting respondent's valuable suggestions for improvement of training programme for female polling personnel's which is shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Suggestions given by the respondents

Sl. No	Suggestion given by the respondents
1	Honorarium for training could have been disbursed on the final day of training.
2	Training for evening session should wind up as earlier as possible because those who came from Imphal faced a big problem regarding transportation
3	Mothers having infants must not be utilized for any election duties.

Hence, it is recommended that the suggestions in table 5 and table 6 must be taken into consideration for improvement of the training programme for female polling personnel's.

8. DISCUSSION

The study had revealed that most of the dimensions of training programme for female polling personnel's were efficiently and properly organised though there were some negligible problems. Remarkable, the investigator had found out that one of the dimension of training programme, i.e., Hands-on-training with EVM, VVPAT and other election materials, required drastic improvement as this had been the biggest problem faced by the female polling personnel's. In this regards, adequate EVM, VVPAT and other election materials must be made available during the training.

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