

## PROBLEMS FACED BY FEMALE POLLING PERSONNEL'S DEPLOYED DURING THE 17<sup>TH</sup> LOK SABHA ELECTION 2019 WHILE DISCHARGING THEIR POLLING DUTIES

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The present investigation aimed to find out the problems faced by female polling personnel's during different phases of election process during the 17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha Election 2019 held in Churachandpur District of Manipur. A descriptive and analytical method was adopted in the present study. The universe of the study included 615 female polling personnel's who were deployed during the 17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha Election 2019 in District. 240 female polling personnel's which was randomly drawn from among the female polling personnel's deployed in the district. Tool included an online questionnaire consisting of 39 items in spreading around six phases of the election process. MS-Excel program was used for categorization of data and for performing statistical computations such as the Total Scores, Mean, Standard Deviation, and score percentage for each item were computed. Further, the Gross Total Scores, Mean, Standard Deviation, and Score Percentage for each domain of the training programs were also computed. Major findings of the investigation were most of the phases of the election process showed reasonable problems for the female polling personnel's, except during the actual polling day. The primary problem faced by them was connected to the physical arrangement of the polling station which had included decoration of the stations. All the measures for improving the polling process were found to be very imperative and so sufficient efforts must be made to consider and include those measures in a future election process where female staffs are to be deployed.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Election, Lok Sabha, Problems, Female Polling Personnel's, Election Process*

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Background**

S. Y. Quraishi (25 April 2019), India's chief election commissioner from 2010 to 2012, explains how India runs the elections. After 7 decades of India's independent, the commission has conducted 17 elections for the lower house of the Parliament, including the recent election, and over 360 elections for legislative assemblies of different states. The recently concluded Lok Sabha Election was the biggest exercise in managing a single event anywhere in the world! There were million polling stations across India.

About 12 million polling staff members have been deployed. Over 120 trains with more than 3,000 coaches, 200,000 buses and cars are used to transport people and election-related materials across the country. And it is not just buses and trains: you also have to hire airplanes, helicopters, boats, tractors, motorcycles, bullock carts and mules, elephants and camels as well for transportation. The commission does everything to reach every last voter.

Thousands of polling officials often walk for two or three days to reach polling stations, which might be otherwise inaccessible. Every vote counts. The electoral system in India has been a work in progress from the beginning. During independent India's first general elections in 1952, separate ballot boxes were used for every candidate.

In 1962, India had introduced paper ballot for all candidates in a constituency and voters marked their preference. Electronic voting machines were introduced in all state elections since 1998 and since 2004 in the parliamentary elections. In 2013, the commission added the Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail, which is essentially a printer attached to the electronic voting machines that allow each voter to print out a piece of paper that shows which candidate he or she voted for. It can be used to crosscheck the results shown in the machine if there is a dispute.

The term of the 16th Lok Sabha is due to expire on 03rd June 2019, so the Election Commission of India has made comprehensive preparations for the conduct of elections of the 17th Lok Sabha in a free, fair and peaceful manner. The News Minute (12 March 2019) had reported that a total of 600 polling booths out of the 58,186 voting stations were to be set up during the Lok Sabha elections in Karnataka on April 18 and 23 which would be managed by women polling personnel's which included polling staff, police, and security personnel.

Similarly, Hindustantimes (28 March 2019) reported that in Maharashtra, the state's chief electoral officer (CEO) had directed the election machinery to introduce at least 288 female polling booths which would be staffed by only women, from presiding officers to police personnel. In the same lines, **Business Standard (28th March 2019)** reported that female polling stations had been set up in all 40 Lok Sabha seats of Maharashtra. Sensitive polling stations were kept out of such experiment while those booths easily accessible by police were managed by women. Similar was reported by **Poorvi Gupta (28 March, 2019)**.

According to Greater Kashmir News Network (14 April, 2019) eight polling stations, one each in eight assembly constituencies of the district have been designated as all-women polling stations. An article in **Business Insider India (12 March, 2019)**, "This election, India's national capital had 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.

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 17th Parliament constituencies that had concluded on 11th April, 2019 with an aim to encourage women to cast their votes in the Lok Sabha elections.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the problems faced by female polling personnel's during the dispersal for the 17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha Election 2019 in Churachandpur District of Manipur.
- To investigate the problems by the female polling personnel's during physical arrangement of the polling station for 17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha Election 2019 in Churachandpur District of Manipur.
- To find out the problems faced by female polling teams during the actual conduct of the polling process in the 17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha Election 2019 in Churachandpur District of Manipur.

- To study the problems faced by female polling team during submission of polling materials at the receiving counter during the 17<sup>th</sup>LokSabha Election 2019 in Churachandpur District of Manipur.
- To investigate the miscellaneous problems faced by the female polling personnels during the actual conduct of the polling process in the 17<sup>th</sup>LokSabha Election 2019 in Churachandpur District of Manipur.
- To find out important measures for improving the election process to suit the special needs of female polling personnel's based on the experiences in the 17<sup>th</sup>LokSabha Election 2019.

### **Research Questions**

- What were problems faced by the female polling personnel's during the dispersal for the 17<sup>th</sup>LokSabha Election 2019 in Churachandpur District of Manipur?
- What were the problems faced by the female polling personnel's during physical arrangement of their respective polling station in the 17<sup>th</sup> LokSabha Election 2019 in Churachandpur District of Manipur?
- What were the problems faced by female polling parties during the actual conduct of the polling process during the 17<sup>th</sup>LokSabha Election 2019 in Churachandpur District of Manipur?
- What were the problems faced by female polling team during submission of polling materials at the receiving counter during the 17<sup>th</sup>LokSabha Election 2019 in Churachandpur District of Manipur?
- What were the miscellaneous problems faced by the female polling personnel's during the 17<sup>th</sup>LokSabha Election 2019 in Churachandpur District of Manipur?
- Recommendation of measures for improving the election process to suit the special needs of female polling personnel's based on the experiences in the 17<sup>th</sup>LokSabha Election 2019.

## **DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

### **Method of the Study**

A descriptive and analytical method was adopted in the present study as they were found to be most suitable.

### **Universe of the Study**

The universe of the study included 615 female polling personnel's who were deployed during the 17<sup>th</sup>LokSabha Election 2019 in Churachandpur District of Manipur.

### **Sample of the Study**

The sample of the study consisted of 240 female polling personnel's which was randomly drawn from among the female polling personnel's who were deployed during the 17<sup>th</sup>LokSabha Election 2019 in Churachandpur District of Manipur.

### **Study Tool**

The researcher had developed an online questionnaire consisting of 39 items in six phases of the election process, as shown in table 1. below

**Table 1: Phases of Election Process and Nos. of Items**

Sl. No.	Areas of Election Process	Nos. of Items
1	problems faced by female polling personnel's are during the dispersal	7
2	problems by the female polling personnel's during physical arrangement of a polling station	3
3	problems faced by female polling teams during the actual conduct of polling process	5
4	problems faced by female polling team during submission of polling materials at the receiving counter	5
5	miscellaneous problems faced by the female polling personnel's during the actual conduct of polling process	3
6	Suggestions for improvement (10 items excluding additional suggestion given by the respondents)	16
<b>Total</b>		<b>39</b>

### 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 item were computed. Further, the Gross Total Scores, Mean, Standard Deviation, and Score Percentage for each domain of the training programs were computed. Thereafter, the values were interpreted and the result of the study was finalized.

### RESULTS OF THE STUDY

**The Following are the Results of the Study According to the Sequence of Questions:**

**Results of the First Question:** What were problems faced by the female polling personnel's during the dispersal for the 17<sup>th</sup>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 the female polling personnel's during the dispersal for the 17<sup>th</sup>Lok Sabha Election 2019 in Churachandpur District of Manipur 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 the Problems Faced by the Female Polling Personnel's During the Dispersal**

Item No	Problems faced by the female polling personnel's during the dispersal	Total Score	M	S.D	%	Degree of Problem
1.1.	Election materials such as EVM, Forms, Certificates, Declarations, envelop, etc., were not missing	120	3.25	0.83	50.00	<b>Moderate</b>
1.2	The election materials such as EVM, Forms, Certificates, Declarations, envelope, etc., were not supplied adequately	120	2.63	0.99	50.00	<b>Moderate</b>
1.3	The election materials such as EVM, Forms, Certificates, Declarations, envelope, etc., were not matching for the allotted polling station	0	3.75	0.43	0.00	<b>No Problem</b>
1.4	Handing over of election materials at the dispersal counter was not properly organized and it caused numerous difficulties to the polling teams.	120	2.88	1.17	50.00	<b>Moderate</b>

1.5	Token system for handing over the election materials did not use and so it caused lots of problems.	150	2.63	1.11	62.50	<b>High</b>
1.6	Allotment of vehicle and security personnel's to the polling team was not systematic and time.	120	2.38	1.22	50.00	<b>Moderate</b>
1.7	Vehicles used for transportation were not in good conditions and caused discomfort to polling staffs.	120	3.00	1.00	50.00	<b>Moderate</b>
<b>Gross Total Scores</b>		<b>750</b>	<b>2.93</b>	<b>1.08</b>	<b>44.64</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

Analysis of Table 2 clearly showed a modest degree of problems with regards to the problems faced by the female polling personnel's during the dispersal 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 the problems under investigation were found to have a modest degree of problem. Thus, the female personnel's deployed in the 17<sup>th</sup>LokSabha Election 2019 had faced reasonable problems on the dispersal day. This might be attributed to the inefficient and unsystematic organization of the dispersal system which invokes improvement measures.

**Results of the Second Question:** What were the problems faced by the female polling personnel's during physical arrangement of their respective polling station in the 17th LokSabha 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 problems faced by the female polling personnel's during physical arrangement of their respective polling station in the 17<sup>th</sup>LokSabha Election 2019 in Churachandpur District of Manipur was computed and the result is shown in Table 3.

**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 Physical Arrangement.**

Item No	Problems Faced by the Female Polling Personnel's During Physical Arrangement of Their Respective Polling Station	Total Score	M	S.D	%	Degree of Problem
2.1	The female polling teams did not face any problem while making the physical arrangement of the polling stations.	180	2.00	1.23	75.00	<b>High</b>
2.2	Decoration of the polling stations was not necessary as it caused inconvenience and additional burden.	210	1.50	1.00	87.50	<b>High</b>
2.3	Female polling teams did not need an additional male helper for the physical arrangement of the polling station.	120	3.00	1.33	50.00	<b>Moderate</b>
<b>Gross Total Scores</b>		<b>510</b>	<b>2.38</b>	<b>1.30</b>	<b>70.83</b>	<b>High</b>

Analysis of Table 3 clearly showed a high degree of problems with regards to the problems faced by the female polling personnel's during physical arrangement of their respective polling station which has come at a Gross Total Score of (510) out of 720, Mean of (2.38), Standard Deviation of (1.30) and Percentage of (70.83). The researcher found out that the problems under investigation were found to have a high degree. This may be attributed to the late dispersal of the polling parties and decoration of the polling station by themselves.

**Results of the Third Question:** What were the problems faced by female polling parties during the actual conduct of polling process during the 17<sup>th</sup> 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 parties during the actual conduct of the polling process during the 17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha Election 2019 in Churachandpur District of Manipur was computed and the result is shown in Table 4.

**Table 5: 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 Female Polling Parties During the Actual Conduct of Polling Process**

Item No	Problems Faced by Female Polling Parties During the Actual Conduct of the Polling Process	Total Score	M	S.D	%	Degree of Problem
3.1.	Male polling agents were not sensible and sensitive	0	3.63	0.49	0.00	No Problem
3.2.	Phone numbers of female polling personnel's in the polling stations was displayed.	120	2.63	1.41	50.00	Moderate
3.3.	Poor lighting inside the polling station	0	4.25	0.97	0.00	No Problem
3.4.	Intimidation by miscreants	60	2.63	0.86	25.00	Low
3.5	Female staff lacks the ability to discharge election duties efficiently	0	4.50	0.71	0.00	No Problem
<b>Gross Total Scores</b>		<b>180</b>	<b>3.53</b>	<b>1.23</b>	<b>15.00</b>	<b>Low</b>

Analysis of Table 4 clearly showed a low degree of problems with regards to the problems faced by female polling parties during the actual conduct of polling process which has come at a Gross Total Score of (180) out of 1200, Mean of (3.53), Standard Deviation of (1.23) and Percentage of (22.50). 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 low but reasonable problems during the actual conduct of polling. This may be attributed to the fact that they were assigned in non-sensitive polling stations and perhaps, human nature that men avoid confrontation against females.

**Results of the Fourth Question:** What were the problems faced by female polling team during submission of polling materials at the receiving counter during the 17<sup>th</sup> 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 team during submission of polling materials at the receiving counter during the 17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha Election 2019 in Churachandpur District of Manipur was computed and the result is shown in Table 5.

**Table 6: 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 Female Polling Team During Submission of Polling Materials at the Receiving Counter**

Item No	Problems Faced By Female Polling Team During Submission of Polling Materials At The Receiving Counter	Total Score	M	S.D	%	Degree of Problem
4.1.	Arranging separate counters for receiving election materials from the female polling teams were not made and caused inconvenience to them.	120	2.63	1.41	50.00	<b>Moderate</b>
4.2.	Proper and adequate care for serving dinner was not made during the submission of election materials	120	2.63	1.41	50.00	<b>Moderate</b>
4.3.	Proper arrangement was not made for dropping the female polling teams who had completed submission of election materials	180	1.75	1.30	75.00	<b>High</b>
4.4.	Adequate arrangement was not made for siting in the receiving counter.	90	3.00	1.33	37.50	<b>Low</b>
4.5	Adequate arrangement was not made for drinking water at the delivery counters	180	2.00	1.23	75.00	<b>High</b>
<b>Gross Total Scores</b>		<b>690</b>	<b>2.40</b>	<b>1.41</b>	<b>57.50</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

Analysis of Table 5 clearly showed a moderate degree of problems with regards to the problems faced by female polling team during submission of polling materials at the receiving counter which has come at a Gross Total Score of (690) out of 1200, Mean of (2.40), Standard Deviation of (1.41) and Percentage of (57.50). The investigator found out that the problems under investigation were found to have a modest degree. Thus, the female personnel's deployed in the Lok Sabha Election 2019 had reasonably modest problems during submission of polling materials at the receiving counter during the 17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha Election 2019. This may be attributed to no arrangement for transportation of female staff for dropping them to their home, no proper arrangement for dinner and lack of receiving counter.

**Results of the Fifth Question:** What were the miscellaneous problems faced by the female polling personnels during the 17<sup>th</sup> 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 miscellaneous problems faced by the female polling personnel's was computed and the result is shown in Table 6.

**Table 7: Total Score, Mean, Standard Deviation and Percentages Score of Items and the Gross Total Score, Mean, Standard Deviation and Percentages Score Regarding Miscellaneous Problems Faced by the Female Polling Personnel's.**

Item No	Miscellaneous Problems Faced by the Female Polling Personnel's – Remuneration and Security	Total Score	M	S.D	%	Degree of Problem
5.1.	The remuneration provided to the female polling teams was not relatively sufficient for all the hardship they had gone through.	210	1.75	0.97	87.50	High
5.2.	“The same remuneration was provided to all female polling teams who had holdup one night in the polling station and who had not hold up,” I do not appreciate such illogical treatment.	180	2.00	1.23	75.00	High
5.3.	Adequate security (Deployment of CPF) arrangement was not made for female polling teams which were unjustified and thoughtful of the election authority	180	2.13	1.17	75.00	High
<b>Gross Total Scores</b>		<b>570</b>	<b>1.96</b>	<b>1.14</b>	<b>79.17</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

Analysis of Table 6 clearly showed a moderate degree of problems with regards to the regarding miscellaneous problems (Remuneration and Security) faced by the female polling personnel's which has come at a Gross Total Score of (570) out of 720, Mean of (1.96), Standard Deviation of (1.14) and Percentage of (79.17). The investigator found out that the problems (Remuneration and Security) under investigation were found to have a modest degree. Thus, the female personnel's deployed in the 17<sup>th</sup>LokSabha Election 2019 had faced problems with regards to remuneration and Security. This may be attributed to the shortage of funds.

**Results of the Sixth Question/Statement:** Recommendation of measures for improving the election process to suit the special needs of female polling personnel's based on the experiences in the 17<sup>th</sup>LokSabha Election 2019.

To analyses this statement 16 items which were in the form of measures for improving election process to suit the special needs of female polling personnel's asked 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 measures for improving election process to suit the special needs of female polling personnel's based from the experiences in the 17<sup>th</sup>LokSabha Election 2019 was computed and the result is shown in Table 7.



**Table 8: 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 Measures for Improving Election Process to Suit the Special Needs of Female Polling Personnel's**

<b>Item No</b>	<b>Measures for Improving the Election Process to Suit the Special Needs of Female Polling Personnel's</b>	<b>Total Score</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>S.D</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Degree of Importance</b>
6.1.	The token system must be used in distributing election materials to the polling teams.	240	1.00	0.00	100.00	<b>Very High</b>
6.2.	A proper and adequate sitting arrangement under the tent must be made near the distribution counter.	240	1.00	0.00	100.00	<b>Very High</b>
6.3.	Proper and adequate drinking water must be provided on the dispersal day.	240	1.00	0.00	100.00	<b>Very High</b>
6.4.	Ensure provision of lunch on the dispersal day and use the token system to avoid unnecessary rushes.	240	1.00	0.00	100.00	<b>Very High</b>
6.5	Ensure all the election materials are supplied to the polling team.	240	1.00	0.00	100.00	<b>Very High</b>
6.6	Ensure that no polling team is given wrong election materials particularly the electoral roll.	240	1.00	0.00	100.00	<b>Very High</b>
6.7	Ensure that polling teams are provided vehicle and security personnel's through the token system.	240	1.00	0.00	100.00	<b>Very High</b>
6.8	Ensure vehicles are properly marked and queue up in systematic order.	240	1.00	0.00	100.00	<b>Very High</b>
6.9	Ensure that there are vehicle and security personnel's counters to avoiding unnecessary confusion.	240	1.00	0.00	100.00	<b>Very High</b>
6.10	Ensure that vehicle counter has the details stations and movement of all the vehicles	240	1.00	0.00	100.00	<b>Very High</b>
6.11	Ensure that security personnel's counter has the details of all the security personnel's station and movements.	240	1.00	0.00	100.00	<b>Very High</b>
6.12	Good and comfortable vehicle must be allotted to female polling teams.	240	1.00	0.00	100.00	<b>Very High</b>
6.13	Ensure that the polling teams are divided into two sections - Section -A to be led by PrO which shall engage in the collection of election materials. Section-B, To be led by PO I for the physical arrangement of Polling Stations immediately after lunch.	240	1.00	0.00	100.00	<b>Very High</b>
6.14	Ensure that the polling stations assigned to female polling teams have Safe, clean, and comfortable rooms for holding up the night and proper arrangement for dinner must be provided or made.	240	1.00	0.00	100.00	<b>Very High</b>
6.15	Female polling to must be not assigned any sensitive polling stations.	240	1.00	0.00	100.00	<b>Very High</b>
6.16	Ensure proper home dropping vehicle for female polling personnels after complete submission of election materials.	240	1.00	0.00	100.00	<b>Very High</b>
<b>Gross Total Scores</b>		<b>3840</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>Very High</b>

Analysis of Table 7 clearly showed a very high degree of importance with regards to the measures for improving election process to suit the special needs of female polling personnel's which has come at a Gross Total Score of (3840) out

of 3840, Mean of (1.00), Standard Deviation of (0.00) and Percentage of (100.00). The investigator found out that all the measures asked in the questionnaire were found to have a very high degree of importance for improving the election process.

Further, an open statement was provided for collecting respondent's valuable suggestions for improvement of the polling process for female polling personnel's which is shown in Table 8.

**Table 9: Suggestions were Given by the Respondents for Improving the Election Process**

Sl. No	Suggestion is Given by the Respondents
7.1	Mothers having infants must not be utilized for any election duties.
7.2	Efficient receiving staff must be utilized in order to avoid long hours of waiting
7.5	Either free accommodation should be given for those who come from Imphal or any other far off places to stay the night the day before the election or all the polling personnel should stay together at the polling station.
7.6	Proper arrangement should be done for an overnight stayer.

Hence, it is recommended that the suggestions in table 7 and table 8 must be taken into consideration for the improvement of the election process to suit the special needs of the female polling personnel's.

## DISCUSSIONS

The study had revealed that most of the phases of the election process showed reasonable problems for the female polling personnel's, except during the actual polling day. The primary problem faced by them was connected to the physical arrangement of the polling station which had included decoration of the polling stations. All the measures for improving the polling process were found to be very imperative and so sufficient efforts must be made to consider and include those measures in a future election process where female staffs are to be deployed.

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