Age

Age composition of the members of any institution is an important index to know the kind of people who are responsible for running it. [1] Bangladesh is a transitional society with an interaction of the forces of traditionalism and modernism. So, it is expected that both young who are comparatively modern and old peoples who are mostly traditional would emerge as leaders in these institutions.

Table-6.1

Distribution of leaders by age

Leaders according

to election   Age in years

	18-29 yrs	30-39 yrs	40-50yrs	50 above	Total
Leaders in 1997 election	9 (25%)	23 (63.89)	4(11.11%)	----	36 (100%)
Leaders in 2003 election	16 (44.44%)	18 (50%)	2 (5.56%)	-----	36 (100%)

Table 6.1 shows that there is significant difference in the age distribution of the leaders in two successive elections.

In 1997 election, 25% were elected from the age group of 18-29, which was 44.44% in 2003 election. 63% member was elected from 30-39 age groups in 1997 election. It was 50 % in later election and 11.11% was in age group of 40-49 in 1997 election that was 5.56% in 2003 election. Here no representative was elected from the age group 50 and above in both elections.

This study found that generally the young women were elected as representative in the union parishad. The people chose comparatively younger women as leaders considering their energy, competency and educational qualification.

Education

Education plays an important role in the acquisition of leadership status. So the discussion about the educational background of the leaders is very important to assess their characteristic.[2] The different educational qualifications have been categorized into three groups.

Table-6.2

Distribution of leaders by education

Leaders according

to election   Educational level

	Up to class V	Up to class X	Up to class XII	Graduate/above	Total
Leaders in 1997 election	---	12 (33.33%)	20 (55.56%)	4 (graduate 11.11%)	36 (100%)
Leaders in 2003 election	---	9 (25%)	24 (66.67%)	3 (graduate 8.33%)	36 (100%)

It appears from table 6.2 that the rate of comparatively middle level educated women were high in percentage in the body and this was on increase. 33.33% women were elected from SSC level in 1997 election; it was 66.67% in later election. In the same election, 55.56% women appeared to the system who were intermediate level. 11.11% women were from graduate level. In 2003 election, the level of below SSC was declined and the level of intermediate increased. One woman (2.77% of the total rate) found who was a master degree holder.

This study focused that comparatively educated women are coming to lead the local institutions and their number is increasing. The local people accepted educated women as their leaders.

Experience

Prior experience of the leaders is an important mark to assess their circulation. [3] If they have prior experience in their line, it may be said that there is an inflow of skilled persons into the leadership structure.

Table 6.3

Distribution of leaders by prior experience

Leaders according

to election   Experience level

	Leaders without experience	Leaders with experience	Total
Leaders in 1997 election	36 (100%)	-------	36 (100%)
Leaders in 2003 election	30 (83.33%)	6 (16.67%)	36 (100%)

Table 6.3 shows that none of the women members had any earlier experience in 1997 election. In 2003 election, 16.67% women were found had prior experience.

The provision of direct election for the women in the body was first introduced in 1997. Earlier, women were nominated in the body. The study did not find any of the women to contest any of 1997 or 2003 elections who worked with the system as nominated entity before 1997. The study also found that some women were further elected in 2003 election who was earlier in 1997.

Occupation

Occupation is another important factor in determining of a person's social position. It is a personal qualification, which determinates influence of a man in the society. A leader comes from the society and he has to work for people. So it is very contextual to see the occupation of the leaders.

Table 6.4

Distribution of by occupation

Leaders according

to election   Occupational patterns

	Cultivation	Business	Household affairs	Other profession	Total
Leaders in 1997 election	-----	-----	30 (83.33%)	6 (16.67%)	36 (100%)
Leaders in 2003 election	-----	-----	28 (77.77%)	8 (22.23%)	36 (100%)

The data on occupation of the leaders presented in table 6.4 demonstrate that majority of the women leaders 83.33% were involved with household affairs in 1997 election. The rate however, little declined (5.56%) in 2003 election. Besides, the rate of other professions that included NGO jobs, school teaching, human rights activists and others was also increased in 2003 than in 1997 election. It was 16.67% in 1997 and 22.23% in 2003 election.

The real picture of rural women in Bangladesh is mostly household categories. The professional political figure among the women in rural areas is hard to seen. The study however, found that the people's choices of women as leaders were gradually getting change.

Income

It is widely expected that income has a strong correlation with the leadership. Although leaders are found among all the socio-economic classes, they clearly come from upper levels. The probability of leadership opportunities increases as one move upward in socio-economic scale.

Table-6.5

Distribution of leaders by Income

Leaders according

to election   Annual Income in Taka

	12000-24000	24000-48000	48000-above	Total
Leaders in 1997 election	33 (91.67%)	2 (5.56%)	1 (2.77%)	36 (100%)
Leaders in 2003 election	32 (88.89%)	3 (8.33%)	1 (2.77%)	36 (100%)

Table—6.5 provides that gross of the total leaders elected in both elections were the income group of 12,000-24,000 taka and the picture was same in 2003 election. 5.56% leaders came from the income group of 2400-48000 and 2.77% were above 4800 in 1997 election. The picture was about same in the later election. True picture what has been said earlier as the economical condition of women in Bangladesh (chapter 5) reflected in the study. Most of the women elected from household category actually had no visible income sources. They execute their expenditure for the purpose of election or others depending on their families.

But the trend was changing. The study found that self reliant women leaders were gradually coming to the body and people also choosing them

Landholding

Table-6.6

Size of landholding of the leaders

Leaders according to election   Landholding in acre

	0---1	1--2.00	2.00--5.00	5.00--9.00	Over 9 acres	Total
Leaders in 1997 election	36 (100%)	---	-----	-----	------	36(100%)
Leaders in 2003 election	36 (100%)	---	-----	-----	------	36(100%)

It appears from Table 6.6 that all of the women leaders had the land within 1 acre. The study also found some leaders had only 5 to 10 kathas land (22% in 1997 election and 18% in 2003 election) which they got from their husband or father. The women in rural Bangladesh earns land ownership through either their husband gives them piece/s of land or after the death of their father. As per the Muslim Law, the women get land/properties from their father's house after their death. The study found that the leaders were financially dependent on their spouse.

Media exposure

Now a day's media is the major sources of news about different incidents in the country. So it is very essential to follow different media regularly to know issues of the country. It is very important for the persons who are leaders of the country.

Table-6.7

Distribution of leaders by Radio and television news listening

Leaders according to election			Type of following the news			
			Regular	Sometimes	Never	Total
Leaders in 1997 election			19 (52.78%)	13 (36.11%)	4 (11.11%)	36 (100%)
Leaders in 2003 election			23 (63.88%)	13 (36.11%)	-----	36 (100%)

Table 6.7 depicts that 52.78% leaders in 1997 election spent regular time to hear news broadcast by radio and television. At the same time, 36.11% were irregular and 11.11% never spent time in this regard. The researcher went to very remote areas where he found that radio and television were a major source of news and other recreation for the rural people. Almost all including members owned both radio and television in their house. It was also found that majority of the leaders listen to radio and television news. Especially they listened to the morning

news in radio and Bangla bulletin at 8: pm on television. The percentage of following news was increased in 2003 election where 63.38% leaders regularly listens news. None was found who never followed news.

A large number of women members enjoyed other programmes including drama, film, serial, songs etc.

Table-6.8

Distribution of leaders by Newspaper reading

Leaders according to election	Type of the newspaper reading			
	Regular	Sometimes	Never	Total
Leaders in 1997 election	9 (25%)	24 (66.67%)	3 (8.33%)	36 (100%)
Leaders in 2003 election	10 (27.78%)	26 (72.22%)	-----	36 (100%)

The researcher also inquired the exposition of the leaders regarding their newspaper reading alongside their listening of radio and television.

Only 25% were found who read newspaper regularly from 1997 election, while 66.67% read sometimes and 8.33% never read the newspapers. Although they were educated enough but less interest was the cause behind this down flow on the issue. The situation was found slight improved in latter election where 27.78% were found who read newspapers regularly, while 72.22 read sometimes and none here was found who never read newspapers.

The researcher found that most of the women leaders choose to read other items than news including the items related to beauty, cooking, recreation etc.

Cognition of the leaders on pressing problems in their area concerned

The leaders are the decision-makers of the community. Their attitude and values, through affecting community decision, influence the whole system and its functioning.[4] A local leader like union parishad representative is surrounded by local mass. So he has to always contextual on the social needs of the local people.

"One of the important functions of the leadership is to correctly perceive the needs of the community in a given situation. [5]

In this study, the leaders were asked an open-ended question as to mention three problems, which they were aware and people, of the area faced. All 72 leaders in two successive elections mentioned similar problems. Of the problems, deterioration of law and order was their main observation as a vital problem. Most of the leaders expressed that due to widespread incident of crimes in the area they cannot give attention to other local problems.

Table-6.9

Response of the leaders on the community problems

Most important Problems	Response of the Leaders	
	Leaders in 1997 election	Leaders in 2003 election
Terrorism	36 (100%)	36 (100%)
Unemployment	20 (55.56%)	16 (44.44%)
Agriculture	25 (69.45%)	11 (30.55%)
Communication	25 (69.45%)	11 (30.55%)
Food	18 (50%)	18 (50%)
Medical facilities	19 (52.78%)	17 (47.22%)
Clothing	23 (63.88%)	13 (46.22%)
Education	15 (41.67%)	21 (58.33%)

The data presented in table 6.9 of course show common problems the rural leaders perceived. The highest responses were found on terrorism (100%) in both elections. Basically, the Kushtia district is infested by outlaw's politics. At least 12 such outlawed parties are active in the district, which has at least 10,000 of arms cadres unleashing a region of terror. [6] The leaders expressed the view when this researcher talked to them.

Information was found that a number of male leaders live in the district or upazila headquarter due to rampant criminal activities at their areas concerned.

The criminals especially belonging to various outlawed parties often demand toll to the leaders. This trend takes worst form when the local leaders go to implement any government project including infrastructural development work or rehabilitation, vulnerable group feeding (VGF) programme etc. The leaders seeking anonymity said that the gangs of criminals even resist the work if they are not paid toll.

Leaders observed that the unemployment is a much-growing problem in their areas. This is also another common problem in our society.

This problem is categorized in two types in rural area, the leaders observed. (A) Educated young unemployment and (B) joblessness of rural people in a certain season. The rural leaders observed that educated young (it is from SSC to master's level) remains in every house at rural villages. But a large of them is unemployed. Besides, people including labourer and marginal class farmers suffer from seasonal joblessness. The leaders here mentioned that though VGF/ VGD, FFW (food for work) and other projects are launched time to time but those can not meet the needs of the local people.

Rural Bangladesh is mainly dependent on agriculture. To meet food deficiency or increase its production, it is needed to use scientific cultivation system and improve agricultural inputs like fertilizers, pesticides, high-yielding seeds, irrigation facilities etc. The leaders observed that rural farmers suffered to get benefit from those inputs in time. Several areas of Kushtia district are very remote and there marketing system. A large number of rural people are deprived of medical facilities, the leaders observe. According to their opinion government should take initiative to extend medical facilities at rural level with educated practitioner.

Ability of the leaders to suggest solution to the problem

A leader is accepted by the masses on the basis of his performance. The performance may be measured in two ways: her/his perception of the community problems and his capacity to prescribe suggestion to solve those problems.[7]

The leaders were asked a question: Do you suggest any solution to the problems when people draw your attention or you identify?

Table-6.10 (*)

Ability of the leaders to suggest solution to the problems

Leaders according to election	Response on capacity or incapacity				
	One problems	Two problems	Three or more	Incapable	Total
Leaders in 1997 election	30 (83.33%)	3 (8.33%)	----	-----	36 (100%)
Leaders in 2003 election	32 (88.88%)	4 (11.11%)		-----	36 (100%)

The study found that majority of the leaders could suggest or made solution the problem that was under their ability. In 1997 election, 83.3% leaders were able to suggest or solve one problem, 8.33% for two problems. The picture was 88.88% and 11.11% in later election. No woman member was found capable to suggest three or more problems.

The study found that a number of women leaders had good perceptibility about the various social problems the people faced. But reality is that when any crisis took place, the male people are intended to show their key role there. Patriarchal society is cause to it. But however, the women leaders had enough attention about various local problems and they suggested what ability they had to solve the problems.

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*. The theme of the table was taken from Abdul Wahab op, cit, p-82

Awareness of the leaders about responsibilities

Awareness of the leaders on responsibilities is a very important. Awareness can help a leader to be successful and also turn him into a future higher level leader. In this connection, the leaders were asked how much they knew about their duties. They were also asked about various functions and typical projects and programmes the union parishad managed like 'Food for Work Programme (FWP), Rural Maintenance Programme (RMP), Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF), Post Flood Rehabilitation (PFR), Test Relief Programme (TR) and Old-age Allowance Programme (OAP) etc.

Table 6.11

Leaders according to election	Stage of awareness			
	Fully aware	Partly aware	Not aware	Total
Leaders in 1997 election	11 (30.56%)	22 (61.11)	3 (8.33)	36 (100%)
Leaders in 2003 election	22 (61.11%)	14 (38.88%)	-------	36 (100%)

Table-6.11 shows that majorities of the leaders are partly aware about functions of union parishad. The situation however, was on improved. In 1997 election, 30.56% leaders were fully aware, 61.11% were partly and 8.33% were found not aware about activities of the institution. In 2003 election, 61.11% was found fully aware and 38.88% was partly. There was found nobody to be not aware of the activities.

The researcher found that most of the women members were elected from housewife status and their awareness stage of any issue were categorically poor.

Perceptibility of national issues

The leaders were asked about their perception of various national, political, economic, administrative and other situational including past, present or immediate past issues. This perception is an ability and quality of a leader. This quality is a must for a leader to develop over all leadership quality.

Table 6.12

Leaders according to election		Stage of perceptibility			
		Fully perceive	Partly perceive	Not perceive	Total
Leaders in 1997 election		12 (33.33)	15 (41.67))	9 (25%)	36 (100%)
Leaders in 2003 election		16 (44.44%)	16 (44.44%)	4 (11.12%)	36 (100%)

The data shows that 33.33% leaders were fully able to perceive the national issues in the country in 1997 election and 41.67% was partly aware and 25% leaders were not aware in this regard. In 2003 election, it was found same figure of awareness 44.44% who claimed of aware about different issues happening in the country. 11.12% leaders told that they were not aware about different issues.

The study found that the causes behind this less awareness among the women members were mainly the traditional. They all suffer from information gap as most of them did not read newspapers regularly.

The study further observed that a good number of leaders knew something about country's various courses of events. They were also enough interested in politics rather than other issues including economic and administrative.

The affiliation with various socio-cultural organisations

The linkage with various social organisations like schools, colleges, mosques, madrashas, rural clubs, Eidgah, cultural organisations, sports organisations, and temples is very important for a leader. These organisations have been often used as spring board' for getting into the union parishads or still higher level leadership. [8]

(*) This study found that the local leaders controlled a part of rural politics through these organisations. In this connection the leaders were asked about their linkage with such rural formal and informal institutions.

Table 6.13

Leaders according to election	Affiliation of the leaders				
	Directly involved	Partly involved	patroniser	Not involved	Total
Leaders in 1997 election	8 (22.22%)	20 (55.56%)	2 (5.55%	6 (16.67%)	36 (100%)
Leaders in 1997 election	14 (38.89%)	15 (41.67%)	4 (11.11%)	3 (8.33%)	36 (100%)

In our finding, majorities of women leaders were partly involved with these organisations-----55.56% in 1997 and 41.67% were in 2003 election. Of the calculation, 22.22% were involved directly, 5.55% were patroniser and 16.67% were not involved at all in 1997 election, while 38.89% were partly, 11.11% were patroniser and 8.33% were not involved in 2003 election.

The study found that most of the leaders in general (male/female) were involved in different social activities like salish (village arbitration), school committees, madrasha committees. In our study we have found that a person gains the first leadership quality in his house where he gain experience through dealing various household affairs. By successfully dealing this stage one can gradually enter into next higher level position. In this stage one can introduce him with various social affairs. Through dealings this stage one can take opportunity to enter into the formal leadership.
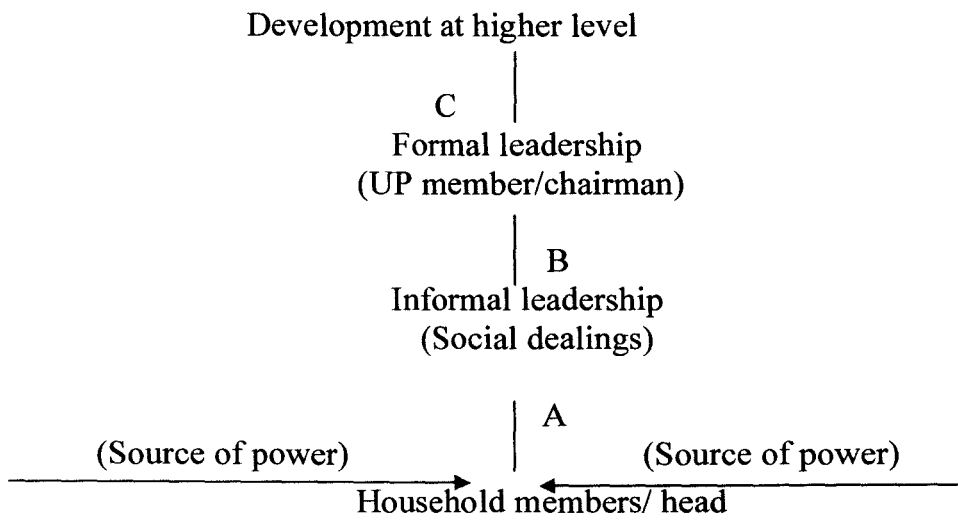
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* Another study by Atiur Rahman has found such trend on the same ground, see- op, cit,

In case of women leaders particularly, the study found that women members had not much relationship with these social organisations. It was due to their traditional house oriented mentality or the bindings of the society. But the study however, found a number of the women leaders who were patroniser of these organisations.

Figure-2

The process of formal leadership from informal stage:

Development at higher level

C

Formal leadership
(UP member/chairman)

B

Informal leadership
(Social dealings)

A

(Source of power)   (Source of power)

Household members/ head

Types of development works the local leaders support on priority basis

It is very important to know the priority the local leader gives to select development projects. This will justify their competence to lead the rural development.

Table-6.14

Leaders according to election	View of the leaders				
	Infrastructure	Educational	Tree plantation	Others	Total
Leaders in 1997 election	18 (50%)	12 (33.33%)	2 (5.55%)	4 (11.11%)	36 (100%)
Leaders in 1997 election	25 (69.44%)	8 (22.22%)	1 (2.77%)	2 (5.55%)	36 (100%)

In table 6.14 depicts that majority of the women leaders in both elections emphasised on infrastructural development -----50% in 1997 and 69.44% in 2003 election. Infrastructure development included the development of roads, culverts, irrigation, embankment, health, educational institutions and religious institutions. 33.33% leaders in 1997 election opined for educational development, 5.55% for tree plantation, while 11.11% for others. In 2003 election 22.22% opined for education, 2.77% for tree plantation and 5.55% for others that included the development of hat-bazars, children parks, recreation center etc. A number of leaders also opined for increasing of VGF (vulnerable group feeding) and VGD (vulnerable group development), cards, old age allowance and widow allowance. The study found that majority of the leaders emphasised for rural infrastructural development work. The main cause behind such particular choice was that the leaders were committed to develop their areas

Time spent for public works

Another way of examining the sense of obligation of the leaders is to know how much time they spend for public works on an average. [10] In our study, we found that the leaders came from different professions (table- 6.4). But after being elected they are to spend time for public work.

Table-6.15

Leaders according to election	Time the leaders spent in hour					
	1-2	2-4	4-6	6-8	Whole time	Total
Leaders in 1997	----	-----	25 (44.44%)	7 (27.77%)	4 (27.77%)	36 (100%)
Leaders in 2003	----	-----	28 (63.88%)	3 (22.22%)	5 (13.88%)	36 (100%)

The data shows that most of the leaders spend a good amount of time for public work in both elections. Several of them found to spend full time. In 1997 election, 44.44% leaders spent time for 4-6 hours; it was increased in later

election---63.88%. The number of the leaders of spending fulltime was also increased in 2003 election than 1997.

The study found that women leaders elect were spending good time for rural development. They were also found willing to hear the local people. The leaders answered that it was a challenging job. There was no opportunity of reluctance. The people only choose those who spend more time for them. The leaders who spent full time were professionally social worker or affiliated with politics.

Linkage with government officials

Upazila is the immediate higher unit of administration above union parishad. Different activities for union parishad are channeled through various government offices of upazila. Besides, Upazila Nirbahi officer (UNO) is the immediate controlling authority of the UPs. So, no doubt relation will develop between UP leaders and upazila level government offices. The study found that the local level leaders more or less maintain a good relation with the upazila level government officials.

Table 6.16

Linkage with government officials

Leaders according to election	Maintain link with the officials		
	Yes	No	Total
Leaders in 1997 election	36 (100%)	----	36(100%)
Leaders in 1997 election	36 (100%)	----	36(100%)

Table-6.16 shows that the leaders in both elections maintained good relation with upazila and district level government officials. Though they often were worried about behaviour of the government officials but they opined that they had kept relation because they had to go to them for various occasions relating to people's interests. Some opined that they often go to district level government officials to look after various interests of people or to manage them regarding this.

Link with political parties

Nowadays government system is basically a political system. Political parties are the main players of the political system. Though there is a big gap between national and local politics, the local leaders are deeply involved in different political parties. According to the findings of the present research, the majority of the women leaders were affiliated with political parties.

Table-6.17

Party linkage of the leaders

Leaders according to election	Link with political parties						
	AL	BNP	JP	JSD	Jamaat	Non-political	Total
Leaders in 1997 election	25 (69.44%)	9 (25%)				2 (5.55%)	36 (100%)
Leaders in 2003 election	15 (41.67%)	19 (52.78%)				2 (5.55%)	36 (100%)

Note: AL (Awami League) BNP (Bangladesh Nationalist Party), JP (Jatyia Party-Ershad), Jamaat (Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh) and JSD (Jatyia Samajtantrik Dal).

According to their opinion, 69.44% women were AL supporter in 1997 election, which was 41.67% in 2003 election, 25% were BNP supporter in 1997 election, it was 52.78% in later election, 5.55% women member had no political affiliation in 1997 election, which was same in 2003 election

The study found that political affiliations of the local level leaders were very clear. Though union parishad election in the country is not held on the basis of political but most of the leaders were affiliated with politics and even they did not bother or hesitate to disclose their political links. The study observed that linkage with political parties was also important variables to win in the election.

Link with national political leaders

Linkage with the national political leaders including upazila, district and national level is very important for a local level leader. Because skill, knowledge and experience of those leaders are lesson for a rural leader to develop their

leadership quality. Local leaders gain knowledge about various issues from the national leaders.

The study found that most of the leaders maintained a good link with higher level leaders.

Table-6.18

Distribution of leaders having linking of higher political leaders

Link with political leaders

Leaders according
to election

	Yes	No	Total
Leaders in 1997 election	26 (72.22 %)	10 (27.78 %)	36 (100 %)
Leaders in 1997 election	32 (88.89 %)	4 (11.11 %)	36 (100 %)

Table 6.18 shows that, majorities of the women leaders had relations with national level political leaders. 72.22% in 1997 election and 88.89% in 2003 were maintaining rapport with higher level political leaders including top level leaders and national lawmakers.

In the present time, activities of the political parties have increased at the grassroots level and political consciousness has also enhanced among the people. The study found that a large number of local leaders were politically conscious. They had good relations with political parties. They regularly took part in various political activities. This participation established a good relation between local and national leaders. The local leaders also spent a good time with the higher level leaders regularly. The study found that the local leaders when meeting with higher level leaders raise various problems of their concerned areas and demand sanctions of various development projects.

Perception of the local leaders about their future development

The local leaders should have a strong aspiration if they want to move forward to the next higher level leadership. In this connection, the leaders were asked two

related questions (a) 'would you like to contest in the next higher level (like upazila) election? (b) 'Would you like to contest in parliamentary election ? .

A good number of leaders replied in the positive. This was a good mark of the development of leadership of local level.

Table-6.19

Hope of the leaders

Leaders according to election

	Yes	No	Total
Leaders in 1997 election	25 (69.44%)	11 (30.56%)	36 (100 %)
Leaders in 1997 election	30 (83.33%)	6 (16.67%)	36 (100 %)

Table 6.19 shows that a good number of women leaders responded in the positive about their hopes of ascending to the next higher level leadership.

In 1997 election 69.44% leaders replied in positive regarding the issue and in 2003 it was 83.33%. The women leaders opined that sometimes they suffer with no confidence by the male colleagues but in gross respect they did not think that they are unable to ahead on next higher level leadership and to handle the position. They suggested that confidence across the society and men is very necessary. The society has to take confidence on women and their ability first. The study also found that the women members who were comparatively rich hoped to contest in the next higher level election like the post of union chairman or upazila chairman. Other categories of the leaders also replied positively who were educated.

The study found a good sign in development of leadership at local areas in Kushtia. A good number of women were found elected twice in their posts. It means that they were doing better. In the study area, three women were found who were elected members in 1997 election and in next contested for the post of chairmen in latter 2003 election.

In the study area, four women members of union parishad contested in the post of vice-chairman in upazila election held in 2009. Of them, two were elected and they were working for the local development with confidence.

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Notes and Reference

1. **M. Abdul Wahab**, op, cit, p-61-62.
2. **M. Wahab, Abdul**, op, cit, p-61-63.
3. **Ibid** p--73.
4. **Ibid,** p--79.
5. V.M **Sirisker,** *The Rural Elite in a Developing Society,* (New Delhi: Orient Longmont Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1970), p-61.
6. **The Daily Star,** May 15, 2005.
7. **Wahab Abdul** op, cit, p-82
8. **Atiur Rahman**, op, cit, p-42.
9. **Wahab Abdul**, op, cit, p- 95