

Role of Women in Panchayat Raj in Jhansi District: A Descriptive Study

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Abstract - The purpose of this study is to identify the socioeconomic traits of elected women in Panchayat Raj institutions. After selecting 224 participants for the study using a proportional stratified random selection approach, the researcher sought the women's informed permission and conducted interviews with the elected Village Panchayat officials. The interview was conducted in order to gather data using an interviewing approach. Between April and June 2019, information was obtained from them. It is necessary to do a sufficient statistical analysis using SPSS on the data acquired for the study. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed. Our nation has not kept up with the grassroots notion of democracy for women in rural and urban self-governance.

Keywords - Women, Women Role, Panchayat Raj, Jhansi, Descriptive

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INTRODUCTION

Swami Vivekananda emphasised that the position of women must improve for the world to advance since "a bird cannot fly on just one wing." Confirming this, experience throughout the years demonstrates that women have been making many notable and priceless contributions to society while confronting several socioeconomic hurdles. It also applies to Indian ladies. They are no longer limited to doing household chores in secret. Numerous projects have been started in an effort to help women reach their full potential in all areas. But equitable empowerment for all societal segments is the most important condition for a country to advance. Women, who make up around 50% of a country's population, must be given more influence since they are the key to any country's growth. According to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, empowering women has a ripple effect that affects the whole family. Women's empowerment is a necessary step on the road to progress (1). A multifaceted, systematic approach to women's empowerment would undoubtedly advance the nation. However, true empowerment won't take place unless women actively engage in political and governing processes. Only when women completely imagine their potential will we be able to reach our full potential. "The attainment of the aims of empowerment will be ensured by women's equality in power sharing and active involvement in decision-making, including decision-making in political process at all levels."

Women's empowerment has recently had widespread policy support. But by transferring authority to the people and giving women a role in the decision-

making process, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1993 opened a new chapter in the history of democratic decentralisation in India. However, it is also true that unless other steps are taken to address the socioeconomic issues preventing women from fully participating, the legal reservation of seats for them in the Panchayati Raj Structure would not be a sufficient prerequisite for their effective involvement (2).

Political participation of women:

People may express their views on governance and attempt to participate in and influence the choices that have an impact on their life via a variety of political activities (3).

Women's political engagement is a necessary condition for true democracy and gender equality. It makes it easier for women to participate directly in public decision-making and ensures that women are held more accountable. The first step in ensuring political responsibility to women is to increase the proportion of women in leadership roles. Studies have shown that more women in decision-making positions tend to pay more attention to women's concerns in general. However, there is little evidence of women being involved in politics at all levels, from voters to top posts, where they are underrepresented. They continue to encounter a number of barriers to engaging in political life. Women's ability to run for office is still limited by structural impediments created by discriminatory laws and organisations.

Full and cogent involvement of women is a matter of human rights, inclusive growth, social justice and sustainable development. The sincere and effective involvement of women, in equal terms with men, at all levels of decision-making and political involvement is required to the achievement of equality, sustainable development, peace and democracy and the inclusion of women's outlook and expertise into the decision-making processes.

Women's full and meaningful participation is important for social justice, inclusive growth, human rights, and sustainable development. The realisation of equality, sustainable development, peace, and democracy, as well as the inclusion of women's perspectives and expertise into decision-making processes, require the sincere and effective participation of women, on equal terms with men, at all levels of decision-making and political involvement.

Additionally, as stated in the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) (4), women's basic rights to equality and empowerment include equal participation with men in positions of authority and decision-making. Through conventions, protocols, and international agreements for gender mainstreaming, policies and initiatives to augment women's involvement in policies have been promoted. However, they have not yet shown to be successful in attaining gender equality. It is true that a large number of nations, including India, have accepted international treaties and protocols on gender equality and women's political involvement. The lack of women in elected positions and at grassroots political organisations may be seen as a violation of women's basic democratic rights.

Our constitution explicitly states that gender equality is a fundamental value. According to (5), the constitution not only guarantees women's equality but also gives the state the authority to implement policies that positively discriminate against women. It further said that our laws, development strategies, and programmes have focused at women's empowerment in many domains within a framework of democratic polity. Women's political engagement and emancipation have recently been seen as the most important issues. The 73rd and 74th amendments to the Indian Constitution, passed in 1993, provided for the reservation of seats for women in panchayati raj institutions like panchayats and municipalities, creating a solid foundation for female involvement in local decision-making. The achievement of the aims of empowerment will be ensured by equal treatment of women in terms of the distribution of power and quick involvement in decision-making, including the same in political processes at all levels. Women's active involvement will result in the creation of policies that support them and motivate them to actively participate in society's growth. Women are becoming more prevalent in panchayats thanks to reservations for women in institutions under the Panchayati Raj system. Women have also shown that they are always prepared to embrace difficulties when they arise. They have shown to the rest of the world how Indian women

can participate in Panchayats and influence the members to support policies that would advance their villages and, in turn, the country.

Women's political participation and emerging paradigm Changing dynamics:

It is important to recognise the contribution that women make to the structure of governance, especially local self-government. Women have played a vital role in India's socioeconomic and political changes throughout history and have added energy to the country's shifting rural environment. Indian women's population has been freed from political exclusion thanks to women's education, political activism, and many positive government efforts to end all types of discrimination against women (6).

The second-most populated nation in the world is India. According to the 2011 census, there are 58.65 crore women. Another reality is that there are significantly more women in India than there are in many other nations combined. It seems sense to assume that Indian women will be influential and politically engaged. The truth, however, is different. India's women have virtually little political clout. In panchayats, municipalities, assemblies, or the parliament, they continue to endure the anguish of political prejudice.

The full and equitable participation of men and women in the political decision-making process creates a balance that more closely reflects the social structure of society. As a result, this may increase the legitimacy of political processes by ensuring that they are democratic and open to the opinions and concerns of all societal groups. Women's political engagement and governmental functions are positively correlated (7).

The inclusion of women as voters and legislators, as well as their effective political engagement and representation, have long been important issues for the women's movement. The empowerment approach to political participation came into being later, in the 1990s, when it was promoted as a necessary prerequisite for broader projects of women's empowerment. The election of women to local representative bodies such as panchayats and municipalities has eliminated the possibility of women becoming leaders in their own right and undermining the dominance of men in the political sphere. However, it is not yet clear whether this representation will result in the empowerment of women as a whole.

Women's political engagement should go beyond just increasing their representation in political institutions. It should completely engage women in the political process and provide them the authority they need to realise their full potential.

The goal of the present research project is to provide a comprehensive picture of the dynamics,

perceptions, and political engagement of women as well as the development of new paradigms for political participation. The peripheral and covert engagement of women in political processes has been a source of worry in modern Indian culture. If the other half of the people does not actively participate in the process, the Indian democratic system cannot be regarded as healthy and whole. Additionally, it is believed that women's engagement should go beyond just acting passively (8). To guarantee their full engagement and involvement on a big scale, they must be properly empowered. In spite of the fact that the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments of 1993 boosted their numbers, their involvement in Panchayati Raj institutions is still quite limited and is done so by proxy via their in-laws. But it takes more than just 33 percent, and more women need to be inspired to participate actively in the nation's political and panchayatiray processes. But adding more women to parliament, assemblies, or other Panchayati Raj bodies won't fix the issue or guarantee their effective involvement. In order for them to play their part well and contribute meaningfully to decision-making, it is necessary to increase their potency (9). Governmental initiatives have undoubtedly given women a voice in politics, but this does not establish the conditions for successful involvement or role-playing on their behalf. Additionally, their capacity for effective involvement and role performance continues to be hampered by patriarchy, illiteracy, lack of confidence, etc (10). This calls for a shift in mentality among families and society as a whole. A paradigm change is necessary to move women from a purely passive and proxy position to one of more active and direct engagement in politics. It has to move away from women just participating to include them in meaningful role-playing (11).

According to Catherine Hakim, the fourth resource for empowering women should be sex. This is in addition to being an economic, social, and woman resource. Women should strategically develop this resource and their personalities to attract men's attention and fulfill their roles in panchayat administration with renewed zeal and passion (12).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study's primary goal is to determine the degree of female engagement among the elected women representatives in Panchayat Raj Institutions. Additionally, it aims to identify the sociotropy, leadership, and degree of decision-making authority held by women inside the Panchayat Raj Institution as well as to calculate the obstacles to their participation. Additionally, this research tries to comprehend the difficulties women have while participating in Panchayat Raj Institutions. After obtaining informed permission from the women who replied, the researcher used a proportional stratified random selection approach to choose the 224 respondents for the study. This enabled the researcher to interview elected Village Panchayat officials. The researcher visited Babina, Badagaon, Chirgaon, and Moth during

the pilot study to see if it would be feasible to perform the research study there. The pilot research provided the path for the women representatives to have a better grasp of the system of functioning and the demands for growth. The pilot research made it possible to fully comprehend the current Socio-Demographic situation and helped to separate out the desired information for further investigation.

Twelve elected women representatives from each of the chosen blocks participated in pre-testing after the geographic region, Village Panchayats, and sample were decided upon for the real research. The study's scheduled interview schedule was followed, and the necessary information was gathered.

The interview schedule was set after significant questions were kept and extraneous ones on the respondents' sociodemographic traits were removed.

The interview was conducted in order to gather data using an interviewing approach. Between April and June 2019, information was obtained from them.

In addition to using the structured interview schedule, the researcher also had informal conversations with the women members in order to obtain responses from the remaining 10% of the respondents. By doing so, the researcher was able to learn in-depth information about the role of women in Panchayat Raj Institutions. Some of the women members were apprehensive during the interview because they believed they were uneducated and lacked sufficient understanding about the Panchayat Raj Institution. However, the researcher persuaded them and was able to get the necessary information.

SPSS was used to do the necessary statistical analysis on the study's data. It used both descriptive and inferential statistics.

DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

• Distribution of the respondents

The majority of responders (35.3%) are from the Moth block, followed by 23.7 percent from Babina block, 22.3 percent from Badagaon block, and 18.8 percent from Chirgaon block. The majority of respondents (46%) were elected from the general women's category, while 30% of respondents were chosen from the SC/ST women's quota, 13% were chosen from the general category, and 10.7% were chosen from the SC/ST category.

• Political career of elected women representatives of Panchayat Raj

Number of times women got elected

The following table indicates that the great majority of respondents (80.8 percent) were elected for the

first time, 18.8 percent were elected a second time, and 0.4 percent were elected a third time.

Table 1: Number of times women got elected

| Number of Times Elected | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------------|-----------|------------|
| First Time | 181 | 80.8 |
| Second Time | 42 | 18.8 |
| Third Time | 1 | 0.4 |
| Total | 224 | 100.0 |

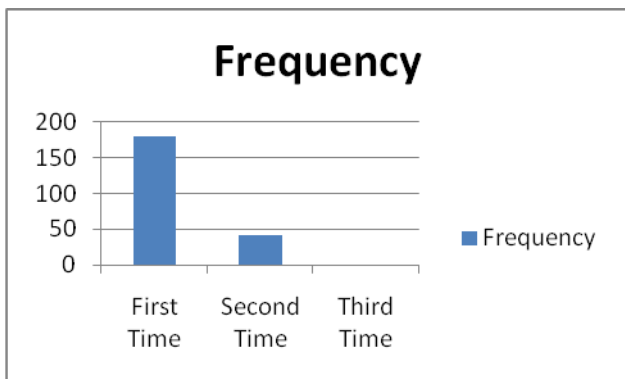


Figure 1: Number of times women got elected

Reason for participation in PRI

According to the table below, the majority of respondents (41.5%) engaged in PRI out of self-interest, followed by 27.2% of respondents who were coerced by other women, 26.8% of respondents who were coerced by the community, and 4.5% of respondents who were coerced by their family. This is in contrast to the findings of P. Jeyabal and K. Dravidamani (1997), who revealed that the majority of the presidents were persuaded and guided to run for office by their husband and their relatives and that they had a low awareness of the Panchayat Raj System in their work entitled "Women Panchayat Presidents.

Table 2: Reason for participation in PRI

| Reason for Participating in PRI | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Self Interest | 93 | 41.5 |
| Family's Compulsion | 10 | 4.5 |

| | | |
|------------------------|-----|-------|
| Community's Compulsion | 60 | 26.8 |
| Women's Compulsion | 61 | 27.2 |
| Total | 224 | 100.0 |

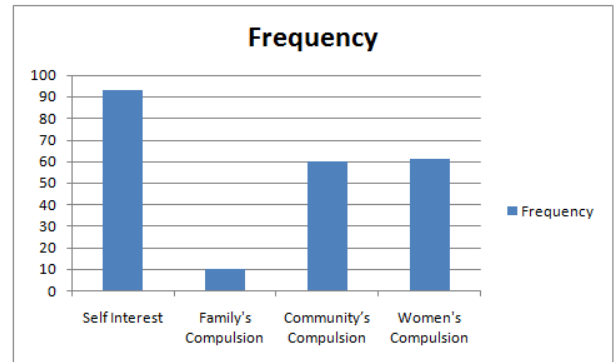


Figure 2: Reason for participation in PRI

Affiliation to political party

The following table makes clear that the majority of respondents (62.5%) do not have any political party connections, whereas 37.5% of respondents have. This is consistent with Snehalata Panda's results from her 1996 research, "Emerging Pattern of Leadership among Rural Women in Orissa," which found that leadership among rural women was changing in a good way despite the absence of political affiliation.

Table 3: Affiliation to political party

| Affiliation to Political Party | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Yes | 84 | 37.5 |
| No | 140 | 62.5 |
| Total | 224 | 100.0 |

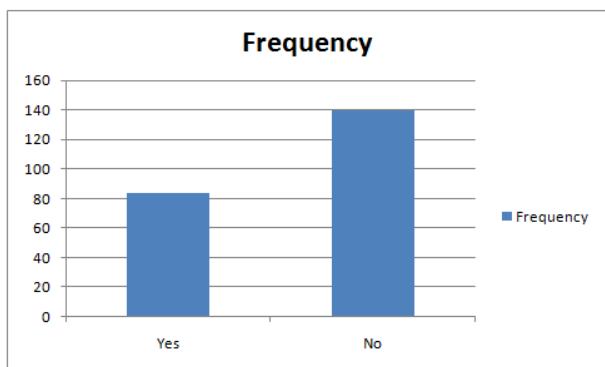


Figure 3: Affiliation to political party

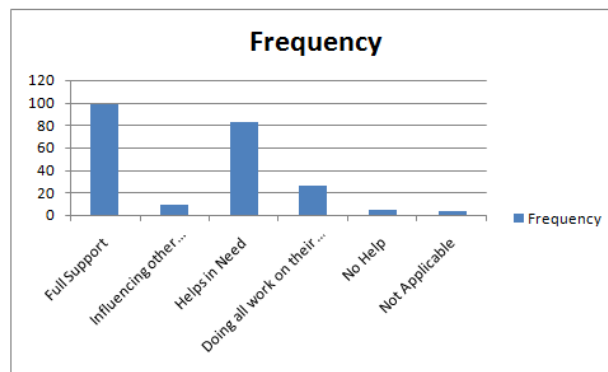


Figure 4: Family support in discharging their duty

Family support in discharging their duty

The following table shows that the majority of respondents (44.2 percent) have full support from their family members, while 37.1% of respondents believe that their family members assist them when they are in need, 11.6% believe that their family members carry out all of their tasks on their behalf, 1.8% believe that they receive no assistance from their family members, and 1.3 percent believe that the question is irrelevant.

Table 4: Family support in discharging their duty

| Family Support in Discharging Duty | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Full Support | 99 | 44.2 |
| Influencing other family members | 09 | 04.0 |
| Helps in Need | 83 | 37.1 |
| Doing all work on their behalf | 26 | 11.6 |
| No Help | 04 | 01.8 |
| Not Applicable | 03 | 01.3 |
| Total | 224 | 100.0 |

CONCLUSION

Even if their spouses, particularly their husbands, took advantage of the fact that women were given reserved seats, there is no denying that they significantly increased the power of the female population. In certain cases, individuals are becoming more and more aware of their obligations and rights. The government machinery would pave the way for women's participation in and political empowerment of the Panchayat Raj institutions if suggestions to increase women's participation by elected representatives were taken into consideration and effectively implemented, particularly with regard to representative prevention. Additionally, this would ensure participation rates, enhance perceptions of women's leadership and decision-making in all spheres of their lives, and facilitate the fulfilment of women's reservation objectives in local self-governance, particularly in villages.

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