

Women Representatives and Their Role in Decision Making Process of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Haryana: An Empirical Study

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Abstract

Panchayati Raj Institutions act as the foundation and instrument in the process of rural development. But due to the patriarchal social system, most decisions are taken by the male members. Despite of reservation and lack of proper participation of women in Gram Panchayat, their contribution is seen not at par in Gram Panchayat. The 73rd amendment in the Constitution of India is a milestone in the history of democratic administration of rural society in India, which opens the path for women to represent the Panchayati Raj Institutions in all three levels i.e. ZilaParishad, Block Samiti, Sarpanch and Panches of the Gram Panchayats and demonstrate their leadership skills and development thoughts in the administration of rural society. Therefore researcher has tried to explore the socio-economic profile of the Women Representatives of Gram Panchayat in Haryana, to study the factors, affecting participation of Women Representatives in the Gram Panchayat, to explore the role of Women Representatives of Gram Panchayat in Decision making Process of Gram Panchayat and find the scope of social work intervention with Women Representatives of Gram Panchayat. Researcher has applied descriptive-cum-exploratory research design to the study. The study will be qualitative as well as quantitative in nature. The sample size of 200 respondents will be selected through stratified sampling. The respondents will be Women Representatives of Gram Panchayat, their family members, community people, members of CBOs and officials from various Government offices/Departments, working with Gram Panchayat. Researcher has found that the women want to give their quality contribution in the process of Rural Development through Gram Panchayat but the patriarchy and gender issues are among the major obstacles in this. Researcher explored that Social Work intervention has an important role in improving the role of women Representatives.

Keywords- *Women Representatives, Panchayati Raj Institutions, Decision Making, Local Self-Government, Patriarchy, Gender*

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Introduction

Local governance plays an important role in maintaining the governance of any country. In Indian democracy, the Panchayati Raj system acts as the basic foundation. Panchayati Raj is not a new concept. It is described in ancient Indian history when villages were small republics and governed by their panchayats. Due to the patriarchal social system, the head of the village was a male member and Women were not allowed to participate or show interest in politics.

After Independence, the Constitution of India and the Panchayati Raj Act made provisions to secure the rights of women. According to the Indian constitution, women have equal right to participate in all sectors of life. According to Article 15, we cannot discriminate against any person on the basis of his colour, caste, gender and religion. The Panchayati Raj system at the local level, it works for good governance, community development, mutual cooperation and saving values. In the Panchayati Raj system, local people play an active role as people's representatives, who are elected by the people. The participation of women in politics is not only an indicator of the power and status of women at present, but it is also necessary for the empowerment and protection of the rights of women. Participation of women in political parties at the national and state level, working as political thinkers is not enough, but political participation at the local level is also necessary.

The 73rd amendment in the Constitution of India provides Women an access to Panchayati Raj Institutions in all three levels. This provision also provides one-third seats for Women in the three tier system of Panchayati Raj System in India. It is a provision of capacity building of the women for sustainability and Holistic development of women in the society and growth of the much neglected half of the population of India. It also works to identify, exhibit and showcase leadership skills of women.

The status of current participation of women representatives in all three levels of Panchayati Raj Institutions as Chairperson and members of ZilaParishad, Block Samiti, Sarpanch and Panches of the Gram Panchayats shows that they have a remarkable number of participation. But there is a need to analyze the real and practical participation of these women leaders of Panchayati Raj Institutions, while they are delivering their duties in planning and executing the developmental actions as per their profile. As per the data, received from Statistical Abstract Haryana 2021-2022, the women participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions, is as follow-

Representation of Women in Panchayati Raj Institutions in Haryana in Panchayat General Elections, 2022

Sr No	Representation of Women in PRIs	Total
1.	Total no. of Gram Panchayat in Haryana	6220
2.	Total no. of elected Panches	58825
3.	Total no. of elected Female Panches	27614
4.	Total no. of elected Sarpanches	6201
5.	Total no. of elected Female Sarpanches	3017
6.	Total elected Members PanchayatSamities	3081
7.	Total elected Members PanchayatSamities	1466
8.	Total elected Members of ZilaParashads	411
9.	Total no. of elected Women Members of Z.P	196

Source: Statistical Abstract Haryana 2021-2022

As mentioned above, due to reservation in PRI systems, women are being elected at large level and they are also playing a wonderful role in development of rural life through ZilaParishad, Block Samiti, Sarpanch and Panches of the Gram Panchayats. However, despite of all these, it is the bitter reality that in the maximum part of the PRIs in Haryana, the male family member whether husband, father-in-law, son or any other elder family member are representing themselves in place of the actual member, who is a woman of their family. Many empirical studies have explored that women are controlled by their male elder family members in their roles as a PRI leader/member.

In the light of the above, the present study is an attempt to examine and explore the present situation of the women participation in the PRI system in Haryana and also to study

the factors responsible for participation of women and delivering their duties independently in the developmental process of rural life in Haryana. Apart from this, researchers have also tried to explore the current situation of the implementation of the 73rd amendment in Haryana regarding Panchayati Raj Institutions.

Duhan, K.P. (2018) conducted a study on Women Representatives in Gram Panchayats in Haryana. The major findings of the study is that It is reality that Haryana is one of the most prosperous states in India. But it is also the reality that the condition of women is under-developed and they are neglected at large scale in their social, economic and political life. It is suggested by the author that achieving the real goals of the 73rd amendment of the constitution of India are around the corner. Therefore, now there are only two possible ways, which can be instrumental in bringing women out of this condition, which are to increase education faculties and enhance political participation of women, particularly at PRI level. It is concluded by the author that it is high time to include women in the overall developmental process of the society.

Poonam. (2019), conducted a study to examine the political empowerment of women in local governance in Haryana. The main objectives of the study are to examine the situation of women empowerment and to know the political empowerment of women in Haryana in some selected districts of the state. The main findings of the study are that as the women participation at PRI level has increased and bottom line has been crossed so now it is the high time to accelerate the actual participation of women in the decision making process of the PRIs. It is concluded by the author that we have to provide equal access and equal opportunities for men and women in social, as well as economic life, which will lead to equality and empowerment in their political life also.

Yadav, D.(2021), conducted a study on Role of Women in Local Government in Panchayat Raj Institutions: A Rhetoric or Reality. The major findings of the study are that women leaders in Panchayat Raj Institutions are highly neglected and controlled by the male family partners. They are not allowed to perform their roles and express their leadership skills in the PRI system. Besides, it is also found that the women have multiple responsibilities at family level so she is not able to spare proper time and give proper concentration in her duties as a PRI member or leader. It was suggested by the author that the gender practices and multiple responsibilities of women must be minimized so that she can play a real role in PRI systems.

Objectives

- To Examine the Socio-Economic Profile of the Women Representatives of Gram Panchayat in Haryana

- To Study the Factors, affecting Participation of Women Representatives in the Gram Panchayat
- To Explore the Role of Women Representatives of Gram Panchayat in Decision Making Process of Gram Panchayat
- To give Suggestions to Improve the Role of Women Representatives of Gram Panchayat.
- To find the Scope of Social Work Intervention with Women Representatives of Gram Panchayat.

Research Design

Researcher has applied descriptive-cum-exploratory research design to the study. The study will be qualitative as well as quantitative in nature. The sample size of 120 respondents will be selected through stratified sampling. The respondents will be Women Representatives of Gram Panchayat, their family members, community people, members of CBOs and officials from various Government offices/Departments, working with Gram Panchayat. The data will be collected through interview-schedule, which will be analysed by using single frequency table, cross table, average and percentage methods.

Analysis and Interpretation

Table-1- Sex wise Distribution of the Women Representatives of Gram Panchayat.

Sr. No.	Respondent	Response in Percentage
1	Female	94.00 %
2	Male	06.00 %
3	Third Gender	00.00 %

The above table, about the sex wise distribution of the respondents, it is found that females are 94.00 percent and male are 06.00 percent. No respondent was found from the third gender category.

Table-2- Age wise Distribution of the Women Representatives of Gram Panchayat.

Sr. No.	Age Group of respondents	Response in Percentage
1	18-30	17.00 %
2	30- 45	48.00 %
3	45-60	23.00 %
4	Above 60	12.00 %

The above table, about the age wise distribution of the respondents, it is found that 17.00 percent respondents belongs to the age group of 18-30, 48.00 percent respondents belongs to the age group of 30-45, 23.00 percent respondents belongs to the age group of 45-60 and 12.00 percent respondents belongs to the age group of above 60.

Table-3- Category wise Distribution of the Women Representatives of Gram Panchayat.

Sr. No.	Category of Respondents	Response in Percentage
1	SC	21.00 %
2	BC	28.00 %
3	Unreserved Category	51.00 %

The above table, about the category wise distribution of the respondents, it is found that 21.00 percent respondents belongs to Scheduled Castes, 28.00 percent respondents belongs to Backward classes and 51.00 percent respondents to Unreserved Category.

Table-4- Education wise Distribution of the Women Representatives of Gram Panchayat.

Sr. No.	Education Level	Response in Percentage
1	Middle Pass	21.00 %.
2	Metric Pass	42.00 %
3	Senior Secondary Pass	24.00 %
4	Graduation and above	13.00 %

The above table, about the education wise distribution of the respondents, it is found that 21.00 percent respondents are middle pass, 42.00 percent respondents are metric pass, 24.00 percent respondents are senior secondary pass and 13.00 percent respondents are with Graduate and above qualification.

Table-5- Family Occupation wise Distribution of the Women Representatives of Gram Panchayat.

Sr. No.	Occupation	Response in Percentage
1	Agriculture	45.00 %
2	Self-Employment and other related activities	19.00 %
3	Daily Wagers/ Labour work etc	26.00 %
4	Service	10.00 %

The above table, about the occupation wise distribution of the respondents, it is found that 45.00 percent respondents have agriculture as occupation, 19.00 percent respondents belongs to self-employment and other related activities, 26.00 percent respondents are involved in daily wages/labour work etc, 10.00 percent are involved in the service sector.

Table-6- Reasons for Participating in Gram Panchayat Election

Sr. No.	Reason	Response in Percentage
1	Political Power Seeking	65.00 %
2	Pressure from male family members	81.00 %
3	Vision for Development of Village/Community	26.00 %
4	Because the seat was Reserved for women	98.00 %

The above table exhibits the Reasons for Participating in Gram Panchayat Election. It is found that 65.00 percent respondents joined PRI because of Political Power Seeking attention, 81.00 percent respondents joined PRIs because of Pressure from male family members, 26.00 percent respondents joined with the Vision for Development of Village/Community and 98.00 percent respondents replied that they joined the PRI because of Because the seat was Reserved for women.

Table-7- Status regarding Meetings attended by elected Women Representatives in Panchayat

Sr. No.	Status regarding Meetings	Response in Percentage
1	Regularly	13 .00 %
2	Majority of times	21 .00 %
3	Sometimes	57 .00 %
4	Rarely	09 .00 %
5	Never	NIL

The above table explores the information about the Status regarding Meetings attended by elected Women Representatives in Panchayat. It is found that 13.00 percent respondents told they attend the meeting regularly, 21.00 percent respondents told they attend the meeting Majority of times, 57.00 percent respondents told they attend the meeting Sometimes, 09.00 percent respondents told they attend the meeting Rarely and there was not any reply from 'never' attended any meeting.

Table-8- Problems and Challenges faced, faced by Participation of the Women Representatives of Gram Panchayat.

Sr. No.	Problems and Challenges	Response in Percentage
1.	Male dominated system of the Society	35.00 %
2.	Lack of support from male PRI members	55.00 %

3.	Lack of support from male family members	24.00 %
4.	Lack of support from Higher Authority	12.00 %
5.	Lack of Proper Information and Knowledge about Gram Panchayat programmes	31.00 %
6.	Lack of training and Capacity Building about Gram Panchayat programme and Roles	08.00 %
7.	Hesitation and Social Restrictions in speaking in front of male elders.	21.00 %
8.	Multiple Responsibilities and Burden of household chores	44.00 %
9.	Any Other	11.00 %

The above table explains the Problems and Challenges faced by Participation of the Women Representatives of Gram Panchayat. It is found that 35.00 percent respondents told Male dominated system of the Society, 55.00 percent respondents told Lack of support from male PRI members, 24.00 percent respondents told Lack of support from male family members, 12.00 percent respondents told Lack of support from Higher Authority 31.00 percent respondents told Lack of Proper Information and Knowledge about Gram Panchayat programmes, 08.00 percent respondents told Lack of training and Capacity Building about Gram Panchayat programme and Roles, 21.00 percent respondents told Hesitation and Social Restrictions in speaking in front of male elders., 44.00 percent respondents told Multiple Responsibilities and Burden of household chores, 11.00 percent respondents told 'Any Other' which involves personal health issues, lack of budget, community conflicts and gender issues.

Table-9- Suggestions to improve Participation of the Women Representatives of Gram Panchayat.

Sr. No.	Suggestions	Response in Percentage
1	Improve gender equality	72.00 %
2	Overcome restriction form Family and Society	55.00 %

3	Cooperation and support from government	86.00 %
4	Overcome the household burden by family members	73.00 %
5	Attended meetings regularly	44.00 %
6	Build self confidence	34.00 %
7	Motivate Panchayat members to participate	27.00 %
8	Update themselves about work	17.00 %
9	Build rapport within community	33.00 %
10	Proper Training	16.00 %
11	Roll of Mass media	19.00 %
12	Any Other	07.00 %

The above table explores the Suggestions to improve Participation of the Women Representatives of Gram Panchayat. It is found that 72.00 percent respondents told Improve gender equality, 55.00 percent respondents told Overcome restriction form Family and Society, 86.00 percent respondents told Cooperation and support from government, 73.00 percent respondents told Overcome the household burden by family members, 44.00 percent respondents told Attended meetings regularly, 34.00 percent respondents told Build self confidence, 27.00 percent respondents told Motivate Panchayat members to participate, 17.00 percent respondents told Update themselves about work, 33.00 percent respondents told Build rapport within community, 16.00 percent respondents told Proper Training, 19.00 percent respondents told Roll of Mass media, 07.00 percent respondents told Any Other, which involves proper education, personal interest for development of our rural society etc.

Major findings

- It is found that females are 94.00 percent and male are 06.00 percent. No respondent was found from the third gender category.
- 17.00 percent respondents belongs to the age group of 18-30, 48.00 percent respondents belongs to the age group of 30-45, 23.00 percent respondents belongs to the age group of 45-60 and 12.00 percent respondents belongs to the age group of above 60.
- 21.00 percent respondents belongs to Scheduled Castes, 28.00 percent respondents belongs to backward classes and 51.00 percent responders to Unreserved Category. It is significant to explore that the number of respondents from Scheduled Castes, Backward Classes and Unreserved Category are almost in same ratio, which is as per the reservation roster of Haryana Government.

➤ 21.00 percent respondents are middle pass, 42.00 percent respondents are metric pass, 24.00 percent respondents are senior secondary pass and 13.00 percent respondents are with Graduate and above qualification. It is explored that the impact of latest amendment in the qualification for electing the election of PRI in Haryana is seen significantly, as all women representatives are having a certain education qualification, whereas, **when we see the education qualification of MLAs and MPs, many of them are still found illiterate or below middle class qualification.**

➤ About the occupation wise distribution of the respondents, it is found that 45.00 percent respondents have agriculture as occupation, 19.00 percent respondents belongs to self-employment and other related activities, 26.00 percent respondents are involved in daily wages/labour work etc, 10.00 percent respondents are involved in the service sector.

➤ Above the Reasons for Participating in Gram Panchayat Election. It is found that 65.00 percent respondents joined PRI because of Political Power Seeking attention, 81.00 percent respondents joined PRIs because of Pressure from male family members, 26.00 percent respondents joined with the Vision for Development of Village/Community and 98.00 percent respondents replied that they joined the PRI because of because the seat was reserved for women. It is an alarming fact, which is explored in the present study that in majority of the cases, the women representatives contest the election only for power seeking intention and Pressure from male family members.

➤ Above the information about the Status regarding Meetings attended by elected Women Representatives in Panchayat. It is found that 13.00 percent respondents told they attend the meeting regularly, 21.00 percent respondents told they attend the meeting Majority of times, 57.00 percent respondents told they attend the meeting Sometimes, 09.00 percent respondents told they attend the meeting Rarely and there was not any reply from 'never' attended any meeting. It is an important fact that more than fifty percent of respondents attend the meeting sometimes, which is directly related to the actual working, involvement in decision making process of PRIs and delivery of her services as a PRI member.

➤ Above the Problems and Challenges faced, faced by Participation of the Women Representatives of Gram Panchayat. It is found that 35.00 percent respondents told Male dominated system of the Society, 55.00 percent respondents told Lack of support from male PRI members, 24.00 percent respondents told Lack of support

from male family members, 12.00 percent respondents told Lack of support from Higher Authority. It is an important finding that Male dominated system of the Society and Lack of support from male PRI members are the main challenges in the way of delivering their services in an effective and neutral way.

➤ 31.00 percent respondents told Lack of Proper Information and Knowledge about Gram Panchayat programmes, 08.00 percent respondents told Lack of training and Capacity Building about Gram Panchayat programme and Roles, 21.00 percent respondents told Hesitation and Social Restrictions in speaking in front of male elders., 44.00 percent respondents told Multiple Responsibilities and Burden of household chores, 11.00 percent respondents told 'Any Other' which involves personal health issues, lack of budget, community conflicts and gender issues. It is important to explore here that more than fifty percent of respondents told that Multiple Responsibilities and Burden of household and Social Restrictions are the major issues faced by the women representatives.

➤ The main Suggestions to improve Participation of the Women Representatives of Gram Panchayat. It is found that 72.00 percent respondents told Improve gender equality, 55.00 percent respondents told Overcome restriction form Family and Society, 86.00 percent respondents told Cooperation and support from government, 73.00 percent respondents told Overcome the household burden by family members, 44.00 percent respondents told Attended meetings regularly, 34.00 percent respondents told Build self confidence, 27.00 percent respondents told Motivate Panchayat members to participate, 17.00 percent respondents told Update themselves about work, 33.00 percent respondents told Build rapport within community, 16.00 percent respondents told Proper Training, 19.00 percent respondents told Roll of Mass media, 07.00 percent respondents told Any Other, which involves proper education, personal interest for development of our rural society etc.

Suggestions

Author suggested that there is a need to improve gender equality, overcome restrictions from Family and Society, improve Cooperation and support from government, and overcome the household burden by family members so that women can play a substantial role in the decision making process of the Gram Panchayats. Apart from this, regular training programmes should be organized for Women PRIs members. Government should ensure regular and mandatory participation of Women PRIs members in the meetings at village to state level. There is a need for a special support system for Women

PRI members by government and other welfare organisations and Government should start any award or prize programme for Women PRI members for their extraordinary contribution in community/society development.

Conclusion

It is concluded that the majority of the women joined PRI because of Political Power Seeking attention and because of Pressure from male family members. It was also the main reason that they joined the PRI because the seat was Reserved for women. More than fifty percent of respondents told they attend the meeting sometimes. Male dominated system of the Society, lack of support from male PRI members, lack of proper information about their rights and duty are some of the major challenges before the women PRI members. Therefore, as suggested above, there should be Proper Information and Knowledge about Gram Panchayat programmes, training and Capacity Building about Gram Panchayat programmes and Roles, improve education and free from Multiple Responsibilities and Burden of household chores. Lastly it is suggested that there is a need to improve gender equality, overcome restriction from Family and Society, improve Cooperation and support from government, and overcome the household burden by family members so that women can play a substantial role in decision making process of the Gram Panchayats.

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