



Women's empowerment through reservation in local self-government of India: An analysis

Shanti Riang

Department of Law, Central University of Punjab, Bathinda, Punjab, India

Abstract

Women's empowerment originated from discussions within the women's movement in the 1980s, where feminists, especially from third-world nations, expressed dissatisfaction with the prevailing development narrative focused on politics and economics. During the mid-1980s, the idea of "women's empowerment" started to gain prominence as a political and transformative concept that challenged not only patriarchy but also societal structures based on class, race, ethnicity, and, in India's context, caste and religion. Feminists from Latin American and South Asian nations spearheaded a campaign for women's equality, developing their method and highlighting the importance of consciousness-raising. The 73rd and 74th amendments to the Indian Constitution in 1992 were significant for democratic decentralisation. It has resulted in increased involvement and empowerment of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions in the country through reservation in Local Self-Government. The study is based on secondary data and a review of literature from different online sources. The fifth goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aims to eradicate violence and discrimination against women and girls and to guarantee their opportunities across all areas.

Keywords: Women empowerment, reservation, local self-government, sustainable development goal

Introduction

Empowerment has gained popularity as a prevalent term in the modern world. It strives to ensure the involvement of marginalised groups in the decision-making process. Empowerment is to give a voice to those who are typically unheard of. Empowerment of women involves establishing a supportive atmosphere where women may use their rights freely, both at home and in society, as equal partners with men. Empowerment in the gender context refers to a process that enables individuals to gain control, confidence, awareness, mobility, resource management, and decision-making abilities. Women empowerment entails providing women with equal positions, opportunities, and freedom to develop themselves. Women empowerment aims to make women self-sufficient, financially independent, and confident to handle challenging situations, allowing them to actively engage in decision-making processes. Empowerment provides opportunity, confidence to voice opinions, access to information, exposure to new ideas, and the ability to take control of one's activities (Sohail, 2014) ^[1]. Women's progress relies significantly on their equal participation in political affairs. It is not just a request for fundamental fairness or democracy; it may also be seen as a necessity to take into account women's issues. Achieving equality, progress, and peace requires the active involvement of women and the incorporation of their perspectives in decision-making at all levels. The National Policy for Women Empowerment (2001) recommended the inclusion of a women's quota in higher legislative bodies. The United Progressive Alliance proposed reserving one-third of parliamentary seats for women. Constitutional amendment initiatives in 1996, 1998, and 1999 proposed reservations for women in Parliament and legislative assemblies. When the Lok Sabha was dissolved, all three bills became invalid. The Constitution (108th) Bill 2008 included provisions for reserving seats for women in the Lok Sabha and State legislative assemblies. A study conducted by the Centre for Women's Development Studies

in 1999 and AC Nielson ORG-MARG in 2008 found that reservation played a crucial role in encouraging women to enter politics. Nevertheless, obstacles to women's political empowerment are significant and prevalent. Nandel (2013) discovered that women's political involvement is inadequate, and they lack awareness of the diverse roles of PRIs. Several research indicated that the involvement of elected women in decision-making was deemed insignificant (Singh 2011; Nagpal 2013; Singh, 2013; Biju 2014). Women have attained roles in local government bodies due to established regulations, but they need guidance, awareness, skill development, and support from an organisation (Mehta 2002; Singh 2003; Patnayak 2010; Singh 2007; Meenakshi 2012 Patnaik 2016; Bag and Jagadala 2016) ^[8].

Concept of Women's Empowerment

Empowerment of women involves improving the economic, social, and political status of women who have historically been disadvantaged in society. Creating a sociological and political environment where women can live without oppression, exploitation, fear, discrimination, and the overall feeling of being persecuted due to their gender in a patriarchal society or institution is crucial for women's empowerment. Political empowerment of women involves a political system that supports and promotes women's participation and control in the decision-making process and government. Swami Vivekananda stated that the world's welfare is unlikely unless the status of women is enhanced. A bird cannot fly using only one wing (Murugesan *et al.*, 2019). Empowering women is crucial for freeing them from societal, traditional, and cultural constraints, enabling them to understand their rights, develop self-assurance, have influence over their own lives, and contribute to societal transformation (Sohail, 2014) ^[1]. Robert Adams described empowerment as the ability of people, groups, or communities to seize control of their situations, exert influence, and accomplish their objectives. It also refers to

the process through which they become capable of helping themselves and others to enhance their quality of life. Rappaport (1984) stated that empowerment is viewed as a process through which individuals, organisations, and communities achieve control over their lives. Mahatma Gandhi thought that achieving full and balanced national development and establishing an equitable society is only possible with the active and full participation of women in the nation's political discussion. Empowerment is influenced by a person's social, cultural, economic, geographical, and political circumstances, as well as their engagement with gender roles in society (Sohail, 2014) [1].

Empowerment is a process that can also be referred to as the outcome of that process. The result of empowerment should be a redistribution of power among individuals, genders, organisations, classes, castes, races, ethnic groupings, or nations. Empowerment involves altering systems of subordination by making significant changes to laws, property rights, control over women's work and bodies, and the institutions that support and continue male dominance (Batliwala, 1993) [9]. Women's empowerment, according to Naila Kabeer, refers to women's capability to make important life choices, a privilege that was previously withheld from them (Kabeer, 1999) [6]. Empowerment is the process of increasing the abilities of the people or group to make their own choices and turn those decisions into positive actions and results. Kabeer defines empowerment as the act of making choices that challenge current power dynamics that lead to subordination and dependency among individuals. Zimmerman (2000) highlights that empowerment is mostly linked to improving quality of life by enhancing people's control and influence over resources and decision-making

Women's Empowerment in Local-Self Government:

Local government is a structured social organisation characterised by a sense of unity. Local government is an administrative subdivision inside a sovereign state that handles local concerns, is overseen by local authorities and is under the authority of the state government (Jahan, 1997). Politically, it pertains to the administration of a particular geographic region, serving as a political subdivision of a country, state, or other significant political entity. It operates as the state's agent when carrying out its functions. The local government plays a crucial role in the political governance of a country. As a legal entity, it embodies a legal concept. Governance is the process of formulating and executing decisions and policies that engage various actors and stakeholders. Government is an institution, but governance is a methodology. The government encompasses the official establishments and organisations tasked with creating and implementing policies that impact the entire society. Governance encompasses the organisation of society and the processes of decision-making, implementation, and monitoring, often characterised by decentralisation.

Panchayat, as a "Local government," is a state topic and is included in the State list of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India. Article 243D, Clause (3) of the Constitution requires a minimum of one-third reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions for both directly elected seats and positions of Panchayat chairpersons. According to the Ministry, 20 states have included a 50% reservation for women in their state Panchayati Raj Act.

These states are Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura, Uttarakhand, and West Bengal (Ministry of Panchayati Raj, 2023).

Panchayati Raj institutions are the fundamental tiers of self-governance. They function as instruments for decentralisation and participatory democracy on a local scale. The power that rightfully belongs to the people is reclaimed by them. These organisations show significant potential for promoting democratic decentralisation and transferring power to the public. They are the mechanism by which socioeconomic change occurs. Hence, these organisations must be efficient and fulfil a specific function. This requires the active involvement of both women and men in decision-making, programme implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and equitable distribution of development benefits (Radhamani, 2019). Residents possess a deeper comprehension of area matters and are likely to propose more agreeable solutions if given the opportunity. Local self-government has been a longstanding practice in India since the Vedic period.

Women's Empowerment and Constitutional Mandate

Articles 14, 15(3) and 16 of the Indian Constitution empower women by ensuring equality before the law, allowing specific provisions for women and children and promoting equality of opportunity in job concerns. Article 39(a) states that the government should focus on ensuring that all citizens, regardless of gender have access to sufficient resources for living and a respectable quality of life. Article 39(d) ensures that men and women receive the same compensation for the same labour. Article 42 ensures equitable and compassionate working conditions as well as maternity leave. Article 51(e) mandates all Indian citizens to promote peace, and brotherhood, and to avoid actions that degrade the dignity of women. Article 243 D (3) and (4) ensure reservation by stipulating that at least one-third of the total seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat must be reserved for women, including those from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. These reserved seats are to be distributed among different constituencies within a Panchayat through rotation. Additionally, at least one-third of the total Chairperson positions in the Panchayats at each level must also be reserved.

Women's Empowerment and SDG

Gender equality is essential not just as a goal in itself but also as a critical element for maintaining economic growth, social development and environmental sustainability. Allocating resources in a way that considers both women's and men's interests can lead to sustainable development by ensuring equitable opportunities for both genders, including in decision-making across all activities. Empowerment is a complex social process that allows individuals to take control of their own lives. The method empowers individuals by enabling them to take control of their ability to effect change in their own lives, communities and society (Page and Czuba 1999). Gender equality means that an individual's rights, responsibilities and opportunities are not determined by their gender at birth (OSAGI, 2001). Empowerment of women is essential for improving outcomes, investing in healthy communities and

strengthening economics not just an option but a requirement. The Indian Constitution upholds gender equality and the government is dedicated to advancing gender equality across all government sectors and levels. Supporting gender equality financially is crucial for minimizing gender gaps. Implementing gender-sensitive budgeting is essential for this effort. SDG 5 emphasises the need for measures supporting women and their involvement in political, economic and public spheres. End all types of discrimination against women and girls globally (SDG-5.1); End all violence against women and girls, including human trafficking and various forms of violence against women and girls including human trafficking and various forms of exploitation, in both public and private settings as outlined in SDG-5.2. Abolish all detrimental customs, such as childhood, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation (SDG-5.3) appreciate and acknowledge unpaid care and domestic work by offering public service, infrastructure, and social protection measures. Encourage shared responsibility within households and families at the national level (SDG-5.4). Guarantee women's complete and efficient involvement in decision-making across all political, economic and public spheres (SDG-5.5). Implement measures to ensure women have equal access to economic resources, land ownership, financial services, inheritance and natural resources as mandated by national law. Implement and strengthen impactful policies and laws that advance gender equality and empower women and girls across all sectors.

Three-Tier System of Local Self-Government

The Village Panchayat is the most basic unit in the Panchayati Raj system. If the population of these villages is small, there is a Panchayat for each village or group of villages. The bulk of the Panchayat is composed of representatives selected by the villages. The Gramme Sabha, the village's governing body, convenes at least bi-annually and holds the Panchayat accountable. Before the Gramme Sabha meeting, the Gramme Panchayat must provide its annual administrative report, budget, and financial statements from the preceding year. The Panchayat needs to have the Gramme Sabha's approval before implementing the village development plan, taxation policies, and development activities. Each Panchayat selects a President, also known as Sarpanch, and a Vice-President, also known as Up-sarpanch. In certain states, the Sarpanch is elected indirectly, while in others, the Gramme Sabha directly elects the Sarpanch through a show of hands or a secret ballot.

The Sarpanch plays a vital function in the Gramme Panchayat system. He manages and coordinates the Panchayat's many activities. He is involved in the decision-making process of the Panchayat Samiti, the election of the Pradhan, and the selection of members for several Standing Committees as ex-officio members of the organisation. He acts as the executive leader of the Panchayat, represents it in the Panchayat Samiti, and aligns its activities with other regional groups such as cooperatives.

The Panchayat Samiti is the second tier of the Panchayati Raj system. The Balwant Rai Mehta Committee's report envisions the Samiti as a unified, authoritative, democratic

agency responsible for supervising all rural development activities. The Committee claims that the Samiti offers a space that is sufficiently large to carry out tasks beyond the capacity of the Village Panchayat, yet compact enough to engage the interest and involvement of residents. A Panchayat Samiti generally comprises 20 to 60 townlets, varying based on the position and population size. The population of a Samiti varies from 35,000 to 100,000, with a normal of roughly 80,000. The Panchayat Samiti is composed of around twenty members tagged by and from the Panches of all the Panchayats in the block area, along with two women members, one member each from the slated gentries and slated lines if they warrant acceptable representation, two original individualities with experience in public life and administration, and representatives of the CPC.

The Zilla Parishad is the apex of the triangular structure of the Panchayati Raj system. The Zila Parishad comprises Panchayat Samiti representatives, State Legislature and Parliament members representing the quarter, and quarter-position officers from colorful departments such as drug, public health, public workshop, engineering, husbandry, veterinary drug, education, and other development departments. also, there's a provision for special representation for women, individualities from slated gentries, and individualities from slated lines if they're underrepresented. The Zila Parishad comprises the Collector as a member. The Zila Parishad selects its president among its members. The Zila Parishad has a CEO. He serves as a delegate of the State Government in the Zila Parishad. Each state has subject matter experts or officers at the quarter position for different development conditioning. The Zila Parishad substantially carries out coordinating and executive duties. It supervises the conditioning of the Panchayat Samitis that are under its governance. Zila Parishad approves the budgets of Panchayat Samitis in numerous countries. The Zila Parishad offers the Government pivotal backing in enforcing different development systems. It's responsible for managing hospitals, drugstores, primary and secondary seminaries, as well as modest irrigation systems. It also assists neighbouring creative enterprises. The association's fiscal coffers include subventions from the State Government and the Zila Parishad's share of the land cess, as well as other original cess and levies. Within certain limits, the State Government has at times authorised the Panchayat Samitis to put further levies or raise impositions. The functions of Zila Parishad are as follows 1. It's responsible for furnishing applicable guidance to Gramme Panchayats and Block Samitis and abetting in their operations. 2. It serves as a conciliator between the state government and lower-position organisations. 3. It disregards the prosecution of the Five-time plans. 4. It formulates redevelopment plans for the entire quarter as per the Block Samiti. 5. It also guides the State government on development enterprise and strategies at the quarter position.

Table 1: (A) State/UTs-wise status of 50% reservation of Seats and offices of chairpersons for women in PRIs (as on 08.09.2021)

Sr. No.	States/UTs	50% reservation of 'Seats' for women at all levels of Panchayats has been provided under-	50% reservation of 'Offices of chairperson' for women at all levels of Panchayats has been provided under-	Remarks
1	Andhra Pradesh	The Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act, 1994		-
2	Assam	Sec-9(3), 67(1) of 'The Assam Panchayat Act, 1994' notified on 06.05.1994.	Sec-10(2)(b), 38(1)(b), 70A(3)* of 'The Assam Panchayat Act, 1994' notified on 06.05.1994. *Section 70A has been inserted in the principal Act vide 'The Assam Panchayat (Amendment) Act, 2001' notified on 19.10.2021.	As amended vide 'The Assam Panchayat (Amendment) Act, 2011' notified on 25.04.2011.
3	Bihar	Sec-13(2)&(3), 38(2)*(3), 65(2)&(3) of 'The Bihar Panchayati Raj Act, 2006' notified vide the Bihar Act No. 6 of 2006.	Sec-15(5)(ii)&(iii), 40(2)(ii)&(iii), 67(2)&(ii)&(iii) of 'The Bihar Panchayati Raj Act, 2006, notified vide the Bihar Act No. 6 of 2006.	'The Bihar Panchayati Raj Act, 1993' has been replaced by 'The Bihar Panchayati Raj Act, 2006.
4	Chhattisgarh	Sec-13(6), 23(5), 30(5) of 'The Chhattisgarh Panchayati Raj Avam Garam Swaraj Abhiniyam, 1993' notified on 25.01.1994.	Sec-17(3), 25(2)(i), 32(2)(i) of 'The Chhattisgarh Panchayati Raj Avam Garam Swaraj Abhiniyam, 1993' notified on 25.01.1994.	As amended vide 'The Chhattisgarh Panchayat Raj (Sanshodhan) Adhiniyam, 2008' notified on 23.05.2008.
5	Daman & Diu Dadar & Nagar Haveli*	Sec-12(7), 55(5) of "The Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu Panchayat Regulation, 2012" notified on 09.04.2021.	Sec-12(9)(b), 61(5) of "The Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu Panchayat Regulation, 2012" notified on 09.04.2021.	This Regulation has been notified after incorporating provisions of 'the Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman Diu (Adaptation of State Law and Presidential Regulations) Order, 2020' dated 08.10.2020.
6	Gujarat	Sec-9(5)(c), 10(5)(c), 77(2)(b) of 'The Gujarat Panchayat Act, 1993' notified on 26.08.1993.	Sec-51(2), 63(2)(b), 77(2)(b) of 'The Gujarat Panchayat Act, 1993' notified on 26.08.1993.	Amendment made vide 'The Gujarat Panchayat (Amendment) Act, 2014, notified on 20.04.2010. have been incorporated in the Principal Act.
7	Haryana	Sec-9(3), 59(3), 120(3) of 'The Haryana Panchayati Raj Act, 1994' notified on 22.04.1994.	Sec-9(6), 59(6), 120(6) of 'The Haryana Panchayati Raj Act, 1994' notified on 22.04.1994.	As amended vide 'The Haryana Panchayati Raj (Second Amendment) Act, 2020' notified on 02.02.2021.
8	Himachal Pradesh	Sec-8(3A), 78(5A), 89(5A) of 'The Himachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1994' notified on 23.04.1994.	Sec-125(2) of 'The Himachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1994' notified on 23.04.1994.	Amendment made vide 'The Himachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj (Amendment) Act, 2008' notified on 13.04.2008. have been incorporated in the Principal Act.
9	Jharkhand	Sec-17(A)(4), 36(A)(4), 51(A)(4) of 'The Jharkhand Panchayati Raj Act, 2001' notified on 10.05.2001.	Sec-21(A)(1)(iv), 40A91(iv), 55(A)(1)(iv) of 'The Jharkhand Panchayat Raj Act, 2001' notified on 10.05.2001.	As amended vide 'The Jharkhand Panchayati Raj (Amendment) Act, 2010' notified on 04.09.2010.
10	Karnataka	Sec-5(4), 123(3), 162(3) of 'The Karnataka Gram Swaraj and Panchayat Raj Act, 1993, notified on 30.04.1993.	Sec-44(2)(c), 138(2)(c), 177(2)(c) of 'The Karnataka Gram Swaraj and Panchayat Raj Act, 1993, notified on 30.04.1993.	As amended vide 'The Karnataka Panchayath Raj (Amendment) Act, 2010, notified on 23.07.2010.
11	Kerala	Sec-7(6), 8(6), 9(6) of 'The Kerala Panchayat Raj Act, 1994' notified	Sec-153(3)(b) of 'The Kerala Panchayat Act, 1994' notified	As amended vide 'The Kerala Panchayat Raj

Sr. No.	States/UTs	50% reservation of 'Seats' for women at all levels of Panchayats has been provided under-	50% reservation of 'Offices of chairperson' for women at all levels of Panchayats has been provided under-	Remarks
		in 1994.	in 1994.	(Amendment) Act, 2009' notified on 07.10.2009.
12	Madhya Pradesh	Sec-13(6), 25(5), 30(5) of 'The Madhya Pradesh Panchayat Raj Avam Gram Swaraj Adhiniyam, 1993' notified on 25.01.1994.	Sec-17(3), 25(2)(i), 32(2)(i) of 'The Madhya Pradesh Panchayat Raj Avam Gram Swaraj Adhiniyam, 1993' notified on 25.01.1994.	Amendment made vide 'The Madhya Pradesh Panchayat Raj Avam Gram Swaraj (Sanshodhan) Adhiniyam, 2007' notified on 25.05.2007, have been incorporated in the Principal Act.
13	Maharashtra	Sec-10(2)(d) of 'The Maharashtra Village Panchayats Act, 1959' notified on 30.01.1959. Sec-58(1B)(d), 12(2)(d) of 'The Maharashtra Zilla Parishads and Panchayat Samitis Act, 1961' notified on 13.03.1962.	Sec-30(4)(c) of 'The Maharashtra Village Panchayats Act, 1959' notified on 30.01.1959. Sec-67(5)(c), 42(4)(c) of 'The Maharashtra Zilla Parishads and Panchayat Samitis Act, 1961' notified on 13.03.1962.	As amended vide 'The Bombay Village Panchayats and the Maharashtra Zilla Parishads and Panchayat Samitis Amendment Act, 2011' notified on 21.04.2011.
14	Odisha	Sec-10(3)(c) of 'The Orissa Grama Panchayats Act, 1964' notified on 21.01.1965. Sec-16(2)(c) of 'The Orissa Panchayat Samiti Act, 1959' notified on 19.02.1960. Sec-6(3)(c) of 'The Orissa Zilla Parishad Act, 1991' notified on 02.07.1991.	Sec-10(5)(e) of 'The Orissa Grama Panchayats Act, 1964' notified on 21.01.1965. Sec-16(3-a)(ii-c) of 'The Orissa Panchayat Samiti Act, 1959' notified on 19.02.1960. Sec-6(3-A)(d)(iii) of 'The Orissa Zilla Parishad Act, 1991' notified on 02.07.1991.	As amended vide 'The Odisha Panchayat Laws (Amendment) Act, 2011' notified on 17.05.2011.
15	Punjab	Sec-11(3), 102(3), 165(3) of 'The Punjab Panchayati Raj Act, 1994' notified on 21.04.1994.	Sec-12(2), 106(b), 169(b) of 'The Punjab Panchayati Raj Act, 1994' notified on 21.04.1994.	As amended vide 'The Punjab Panchayati Raj (Amendment) Act, 2017' notified on 25.07.2017.
16	Rajasthan	Sec-15(6) of 'The Rajasthan Panchayati Raj Act, 1994' notified on 23.4.1994.	Sec-16(5) of 'The Rajasthan Panchayati Raj Act, 1994' notified on 23.4.1994.	Amendment made vide 'The Rajasthan Panchayati Raj (Second Amendment) Act, 2008' notified on 11.04.2008, have been incorporated in the Principal Act.
17	Sikkim*	Sec-13(7), 500(5) of 'The Sikkim Panchayat Act, 1993' notified on 18.10.1993.	Sec-17(2)(b), 54(2)(b) of 'The Sikkim Panchayat Act, 1993' notified on 18.10.1993.	As amended vide 'The Sikkim Panchayat (Amendment) Act, 2011' notified on 17.12.2011.
18	Tamil Nadu	Sec-11(3), 20(3), 32(3) of 'The Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act, 1994' notified on 22.07.1994.	Sec-57(1-D) of 'The Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act, 1994' notified on 22.07.1994.	As amended vide 'The Tamil Nadu Panchayats (Amendment) Act, 2016' notified on 27.02.2016.
19	Telangana	Sec-9(6), 146(5), 175(4) of 'The Telangana Panchayat Raj Act, 2018' notified on 30.03.2018.	Sec-17(5), 147(6), 176(5) of 'The Telangana Panchayat Raj Act, 2018' notified on 30.03.2018.	-
20	Tripura	Sec-14(3), 72(3), 124(3) of 'The Tripura Panchayat Act, 1993' notified on 10.11.1993.	Sec-20(4), 79(2), 131(2) of 'The Tripura Panchayat Act, 1993' notified on 10.11.1993.	As amended vide 'The Tripura Panchayat (Fifth Amendment) Act, 2010' notified on 20.04.2010.
21	Uttarakhand	Sec-11(2), 56(b), 93(b) of 'The Uttarakhand Panchayati Raj Act, 2016, notified on 07.04.2016.	Sec-10A(3), 55A(3), 92A(3) of 'The Uttarakhand Panchayati Raj Act, 2016, notified on 07.04.2016.	As amended vide 'The Uttarakhand Panchayati Raj (Amendment) Act, 2019' notified on 25.07.2019.

Sr. No.	States/UTs	50% reservation of 'Seats' for women at all levels of Panchayats has been provided under-	50% reservation of 'Offices of chairperson' for women at all levels of Panchayats has been provided under-	Remarks
22	West Bengal	Sec-4(2), 94(20)(ii), 140(2)(ii) of 'The West Bengal Panchayat Act 1973' notified on 17.01.1974.	Sec-9(1), 98(1), 143(1) of 'The West Bengal Panchayat Act 1973' notified on 17.01.1974.	As amended vide 'The West Bengal Panchayat (Amendment) Act 2012' notified on 17.05.2012.

Conclusion

The position of women representatives in different villages of Panchayat in different states in India is impressive, with a total 1453973 numbers of elected women representatives out of 3187320 PRI Representatives. It is not the same case for qualitative women participation. The elected women representative's participation in local government bodies remains generally insignificant, as they are not given any

specific duties. The absence of operational guidelines and terms of reference for female elected representatives the limited capacity of female elected representatives to operate in public institutions of this nature, the lack of awareness over their roles and responsibilities, and the systematic discrimination and biases by male elected colleagues all these are seen as a factor impeding women's meaningful participation in local government.

The Panchayati Raj Institution's operation exemplifies democracy, commonly defined as a government that is of, by, and for the people. Reserving seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions aims to empower them to oversee various duties of the gram panchayat, improve living standards, and secure a respected position in society. The women's reservation system in PRIs not only empowers EWRs but also benefits society as a whole. Sustainable Development Goal 5 aims to attain gender equality and empower women and girls. SDG-5 includes five targets, with Target 5.5 focusing on promoting women's full participation and equal opportunities in leadership roles across political, economic, and public spheres. Target 5.5 has two indicators, with Indicator 5.5.1 focusing on the percentage of seats occupied by women in national parliaments and municipal administrations. The e-handbook on Sustainable Development Goals emphasises that the indicator mentioned pertains to the presence of individuals in local government rather than the effectiveness of their involvement. The Government's initiative to boost female representation in Panchayats through the reservation of seats under the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 is a positive step towards empowering women. The Government's approaches are founded on quantitative analysis. Women's representation in various village panchayats across different states in India is notable, however the quality of women's political participation is lacking. The government and NGOs in different states have conducted numerous studies and publications to assess the status of elected women legislators in districts or states, as well as to make comparisons between other states. The studies showed that reserving seats for women in PRIs increased their participation, but women elected representatives encountered various challenges such as socio-cultural constraints, financial dependence, lack of support from family members and PRI officials, ignorance and bias against EWRs by officials, male presence in PRI operations, and inadequate capacity building for EWRs, particularly in financial matters. The study examines the effectiveness of elected women representatives in local self-governance in empowering both themselves and society.

References

1. Sohail M. Women empowerment and economic development-an exploratory study in Pakistan. *Journal of Business Studies Quarterly*,2014;5(4):210.
2. Porter E. Women, political decision-making, and peace-building. *Global Change, Peace & Security*,2003;15(3):245-262.
3. Bakshi S. Impact of gender on consumer purchase behaviour. *Journal of Research in Commerce and Management*,2012;1(9):1-8.
4. Sharma C, Singh P. "Gender and Comparative Politics: Political Representation in Asia." *Journal of Polity and Society*,2021;13(2):23-38.
5. Zimmerman MA. Psychological empowerment: Issues and illustrations. *American journal of community psychology*,1995;23:581-599.
6. Kabeer N. Resources, agency, achievements: Reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment, *Development and change*,1999;30(3):435-464.
7. Govinda Gowda S, Dhadave MS, Srinivasa Gowda MV. Developmental Role of Women Members of

- Panchayati Raj Institutions: A Study In Karnataka, *Journal of Rural Development-Hyderabad*,1996:15:249-260.
8. Bag M, Jagadala M. Women Empowerment: Issues and Challenges through the Lens of Reservation in Panchayati Raj System. *International Journal of Research in Management, Social Sciences & Technology*,2016;13(13):1-11.
9. Batliwala S. Empowerment of women in South Asia: concepts and practices, Asian-South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education, Freedom from Hunger Campaign - Action for Development, 1993, 54.
10. Raheena PA, Neena ST. Participation of Women for the Development of Civil Society: A Study among Women Representatives in Local Governance. *Artha Journal of Social Sciences*,2017;16(2):23-38.
11. Singh JP. Indian democracy and empowerment of women. *Indian Journal of Public Administration*,2000;46(4):617-630.
12. Spary C. Women candidates, women voters, and the gender politics of India's 2019 parliamentary election, *Contemporary South Asia*,2020;28(2):223-241.
13. Panda S. Political empowerment of women: Case of Orissa PRIs. *Indian Journal of Public Administration*,1999;45(1):86-94.
14. Khan MR. Women Participation and Empowerment in Local Government: Bangladesh Union Parishad Perspective, *Asian affairs*,2006;26:73-80.
15. Rappaport J. Terms of empowerment exemplars of prevention: Toward a theory for community psychology, *American Journal of Community Psychology*,1987;15(2):121-148.
16. Alsop R, Heinsohn N. Measuring empowerment in practice: Structuring analysis and framing indicators, 2005. Available at SSRN 665062.
17. Nikkhah HA, Redzuan M. Participation as a medium of empowerment in community development. *European Journal of Social Sciences*,2009;11(1):170-176.