

## ROLE OF ZILLA AND TALUKA PANCHAYATS OF NAVSARI IN EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN MEMBERS

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### ABSTRACT

Panchayat raj is the basic unit of administration in system of governance. It was introduced first time by the Balwant Rai Mehta in 1959. Panchayat Raj Institutions have three tiers system such as Zilla panchayat, Taluka panchayat and Gram panchayat. Panchayat Raj the local government system in India, being nearest form of governance to the people can be viewed as a suitable platform for encouraging participation of women members. The decentralization governance process in India by bringing women into positions of decision making and power in local grass root level of governance and it's leading towards their empowerment. Considering the importance of empowerment in women members the present investigation entitled, "Role of Zilla and Taluka Panchayat Raj Institutions in empowerment of women members in Navsari district of Gujarat" was undertaken during the year 2019-2020. The Navsari district was selected for present investigation which consisted of one Zilla panchayat, six Taluka panchayat. The complete enumeration method was used and thus, all women members were selected from Zilla Panchayat and Taluka panchayat the three tiers of PRIs in Navsari district. The data was elicited through personal interview method and analyzed using frequency, percentage, correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) and  $t$  test.

**Keywords :** women empowerment, panchayat raj institutions, role, zilla panchayat, taluka panchayat

### INTRODUCTION

Women constitute half part of the society, but they are still in waiting to get equitable contribution in political, social, economic and decision making processes through they can enjoy equal status with men as per the constitutional and legal provisions and thus stills they have a long way to go (Chauhan and Vinaya 2016).

Panchayat, the local government system in India, being the nearest form of governance to the people can be viewed as a suitable platform for encouraging participation of women. Participation of women in PRIs is considered essential for enabling them to participate effectively and independently in development, political processes and to influence the decision making process. The decentralized governance processes in India by bringing women into positions of decision-making and power in local grassroots level governance and it's leading towards their empowerment.

The 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act passed in 1992 by the Narasimha Rao government, came into force on April 24, 1993. It was meant to provide constitutional sanction to establish "democracy at the grassroots level as it is at the state level or national level". This provided 33.00% seats reservation for women, not only in the general category but also the earlier reserved categories of SC and ST in PRIs. The

73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments to the constitution of India have provided for reservation seats in the local body of Panchayats for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision making at the local levels. Empowerment of women literally mean equipping women to be economically independent, self-reliant have positive esteem to enable them to face any difficult situation and they should be able to participate in developmental activities (Biswas, 2016). Women empowerment is a precondition to fulfil the goals of several sustainable development parameters.

In PRIs, there are 71988 women representative in Gujarat state. Among them 68880 women representative are in gram panchayats, 2582 women representative are in taluka panchayats and 526 women representative are in zilla panchayats (<https://www.panchayat.gov.in>). Considering the aforesaid facts and importance of women empowerment in present contest the present research study entitled "ROLE OF ZILLA AND TALUKA PANCHAYATS OF NAVSARI IN EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN MEMBERS" was undertaken with specific objectives.

### OBJECTIVE

To study the role of Zilla and Taluka Panchayats in empowerment of women members

## METHODOLOGY

According to Robinson (1976), an Ex-post-facto research design was considered appropriate and used in present study. The present study was conducted in Navsari district of Gujarat state. Navsari district comprises of one Zilla Panchayat and six Taluka Panchayat and 386 Gram Panchayats among them Zilla and Taluka Panchayat of Navsari District were covered under present study. The complete enumeration method was used in present investigation and thus, 17 women members at the Zilla panchayat and 69 women members at Taluka Panchayats were considered as respondents for present study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In present investigation role was operationalized as the verbal expression of opinion and responses of women members of PRIs to the direct questions regarding their empowerment. Role of PRIs in empowerment of women members were measured by the structured interview schedule containing 50 statements regarding role of PRIs in legal empowerment, decision making pattern, capacity enhancement, social empowerment, political empowerment and gender sensitization. The responses of each statement were recorded in three continuums very important, important and less important with score 3, 2 and 1 for each, respectively. The ranking was done on the basis of mean score to draw the inference.

**Table 1 : Role of Zilla and Taluka panchayats of Navsari in empowerment of women members**

(n=86)

Sr. No.	Role statements	Zilla panchayat (n=17)					Taluka panchayat (n=69)				
		VI (3)	I (2)	LI (1)	MS	R	VI (3)	I (2)	LI (1)	MS	R
<b>A</b>	<b>Legal empowerment</b>										
1	The membership of Panchayat is helpful in making awareness regarding property rights of women.	13	02	02	2.647	III	44	16	09	2.507	VI
2	Plays an important role in development of a legal persona to the women members.	12	03	02	2.588	IV	44	18	07	2.536	V
3	Plays an important role in fight for rights.	09	06	02	2.412	VII	41	19	09	2.464	VIII
4	Helps in getting the knowledge the protective acts/laws as women in the society.	12	02	03	2.529	V	42	25	02	2.579	III
5	Understanding of legislation related to the protection of women-hood.	11	03	03	2.471	VI	44	20	05	2.565	IV
6	Helps in understanding of different aspects of right to life provided by Indian Constitution.	50	10	02	2.176	X	44	24	01	2.623	II
7	Plays an important role in establishment equality before law.	14	03	0	2.824	I	41	16	12	2.420	IX
8	Helps in solving the problem of gender discrimination in the society.	13	03	01	2.706	II	41	21	07	2.493	VII
9	Gives the provision of an effective legal structure which is supportive of women empowerment.	09	05	03	2.353	VIII	54	13	02	2.754	I
10	Helps in addressing the gaps between what the law prescribes and what actually occurs	09	04	04	2.294	IX	36	24	09	2.391	X
<b>B</b>	<b>Decision Making Pattern</b>										
1	Helps in decision making regarding education of children.	11	03	03	2.417	IV	50	16	03	2.681	II
2	Helps in understanding and implementation of different aspects of Family planning.	13	02	02	2.647	I	47	20	02	2.652	III

Sr. No.	Role statements	Zilla panchayat (n=17)					Taluka panchayat (n=69)				
		VI (3)	I (2)	LI (1)	MS	R	VI (3)	I (2)	LI (1)	MS	R
3	Plays important role in taking decisions regarding own professional life.	11	05	01	2.588	II	44	21	04	2.580	VIII
4	Helps in taking decisions regarding livelihood options for women members.	08	06	03	2.294	VII	46	20	03	2.623	IV
5	Helps in decision making for beneficial cropping patterns for the family.	06	08	03	2.176	IX	47	17	05	2.609	V
6	Helps in taking decisions regarding use of own income as per own choices.	05	09	03	2.118	X	39	23	07	2.464	X
7	Helps in taking decisions for good health and hygiene practices for family members.	08	07	02	2.353	VI	43	24	02	2.594	VI
8	Helps in decision making for priorities in family expenditure.	08	05	04	2.235	VIII	46	15	08	2.551	IX
9	Helps in good family savings for future.	10	05	02	2.471	IV	45	20	04	2.594	VI
10	Helps in taking the decisions regarding nutritional aspects of women.	11	04	02	2.529	III	51	15	03	2.696	I
<b>C Capacity Enhancement</b>											
1	Helps in getting legitimate wages.	07	05	05	2.118	V	40	19	10	2.435	IV
2	Helps in making women aware of their rights and developing condense to claim them.	09	02	06	2.176	IV	40	22	07	2.478	III
3	Entail a better quality of material life through sustainable livelihoods owned and managed by women.	09	04	04	2.294	II	36	20	13	2.333	V
4	Helps in obliteration of professional inequality.	11	04	02	2.529	I	44	22	03	2.594	I
5	Helps in providing equal educational opportunities for women in the society.	08	05	04	2.235	III	41	26	02	2.565	II
<b>D Social Empowerment</b>											
1	Helps in solving the inequality issues in family and society.	13	02	02	2.647	I	53	12	04	2.710	IV
2	Helps in eradication of exploitative social practices.	11	05	01	2.588	II	54	12	03	2.739	II
3	Implies a society in which women and men enjoy the same opportunities, outcomes, rights and obligations in all spheres of life.	08	06	03	2.294	VI	44	23	02	2.609	VII
4	Helps in eradication of household inequality.	09	06	02	2.412	IV	48	20	01	2.681	V
5	Helps in transformation of healthy and prosperous social life.	11	03	03	2.471	III	54	13	02	2.754	I
6	Helps in establishment women empowerment is as mechanism for social transformation.	08	07	02	2.253	V	44	24	01	2.623	VI
7	Helps in providing a desirable social status to women in the society.	08	05	04	2.235	VII	52	15	02	2.725	III
8	Helps in getting self-esteem and self-respect in the Society.	08	05	04	2.235	VII	39	22	08	2.449	VIII
<b>E Political Empowerment</b>											
1	Helps women to be a political force, both nationally and internationally.	12	04	01	2.647	I	52	13	04	2.609	IV

Sr. No.	Role statements	Zilla panchayat (n=17)					Taluka panchayat (n=69)				
		VI (3)	I (2)	LI (1)	MS	R	VI (3)	I (2)	LI (1)	MS	R
2	Increases active involvement in democratic decision-making processes.	10	06	01	2.529	III	47	21	01	2.667	I
3	Helps in establishing gender inequality in politics.	8	05	04	2.235	VI	45	19	05	2.579	V
4	Helps in Women's right to the full development of their potentials.	9	06	02	2.412	V	46	21	02	2.638	III
5	Helps in protecting women's right to self-representation and self-determination.	9	07	01	2.471	IV	46	22	01	2.652	II
6	Secures the existence of a political system favoring the participation in and control by the women of the political decision-making process and in governance.	11	05	01	2.588	II	41	25	03	2.551	VI
<b>F</b>	<b>Gender sensitization</b>										
1	Helps in removing the subordinate status of women in the society.	10	05	02	2.471	V	43	18	08	2.507	VI
2	Helps in removing the proficient inequality.	8	08	01	2.412	VI	41	26	02	2.565	III
3	It helps in liberty of thoughts, expression, beliefs, faith and worship.	12	05	0	2.706	I	46	23	0	2.667	II
4	It helps in maintaining equality of status and creating opportunities for members.	10	06	01	2.529	IV	38	29	02	2.522	V
5	It helps in developing environment full of justice and equality of women in society.	11	06	0	2.647	II	47	22	0	2.681	I
6	Take initiative efforts for handling of gender violence.	10	07	0	2.588	III	38	30	01	2.536	IV

The data presented in the table-1 reveals that in Zilla Panchayat, as far as the legal empowerment is concern the role statement, "Plays an important role in establishment equality before law" ranked at first rank (2.824 MS). Whereas, role statement; "Helps in solving the problem of gender discrimination (2.706MS)" ranked at second rank and "The membership of Panchayat is helpful in making awareness regarding property rights of women (2.647MS)" ranked at third rank. In the decision making pattern the role statement; "Helps in understanding and implementation of different aspect of family planning (2.647MS)" ranked at first rank followed by "Plays important role in taking decision regarding own professional life (2.588MS)" and "Helps in taking the decision regarding nutritional aspects of women (2.529MS)" ranked at second and third rank, respectively. The role statement regarding capacity enhancement; "Helps in obligation of professional inequality (2.529MS)" ranked at first rank followed by "Entail a better quality of material life through sustainable livelihoods owned and managed by women (2.294MS)" ranked at second rank and "Helps in providing equal educational opportunities for women in the society (2.235MS)" ranked at third rank. Role

statement regarding social empowerment; "Helps in solving the inequality issues in family and society (2.647MS)", ranked at first rank. "Helps in eradication of exploitative social practices (2.588MS)", ranked at second rank and "Helps in transformation of healthy and prosperous social life (2.471MS)" ranked at third rank. Apart from that, role statement regarding political empowerment; "Helps women to be a political force, both nationally and internationally (2.647MS)" ranked at first rank, "Secures the existence of a political system favouring the participation in and control by the women of the political decision-making process and in governance (2.588MS)" ranked at second rank and "Increases active involvement in democratic decision-making processes (2.529MS)" ranked at third rank. Role statement regarding gender sensitization, "It helps in liberty of thoughts, expression, beliefs, faith and worship (2.706MS)" ranked at first rank followed by "It helps in developing environment full of justice and equality of women in society (2.647MS)" and "Take initiative efforts for handling of gender violence (2.588MS)" which were ranked at second and third rank, respectively.

Furthermore, in Taluka Panchayat, role statement regarding legal empowerment; “Gives the provision of an effective legal structure which is supportive of women empowerment (2.754MS)” ranked at first rank followed by “Helps in understanding of different aspects of right to life provided by Indian Constitution (2.623MS)” ranked at second rank and “Helps in getting the knowledge the protective acts/laws as women in the society (2.579MS)” ranked at third rank. While, role statement regarding decision making pattern; “Helps in taking the decisions regarding nutritional aspects of women (2.696MS)” ranked at first rank followed by “Helps in decision making regarding education of children (2.681MS)” ranked at second rank and “Helps in understanding and implementation of different aspects of Family planning (2.652MS)” ranked at third rank. Whereas, role statement regarding capacity enhancement; “Helps in obliteration of professional inequality (2.594MS)” ranked at first rank followed by “Helps in providing equal educational opportunities for women in the society (2.565MS)” ranked at second rank and “Helps in making women aware of their rights and developing condense to claim them (2.478MS)” ranked at third rank. Apart from that, role statement regarding social empowerment, “Helps in transformation of healthy and prosperous social life (2.754MS)” ranked at first rank followed by “Helps in eradication of exploitative social practices (2.739MS)” ranked at second rank and “Helps in providing a desirable social status to women in the society (2.725MS)” ranked at third rank. In addition, role statement regarding political empowerment; “Increases active involvement in democratic decision-making processes (2.667MS)” ranked at first rank followed by “Helps in protecting women’s right to self-representation and self-determination (2.652MS)” ranked at second rank and “Helps in Women’s right to the full development of their potentials (2.638MS)” ranked at third rank. Furthermore, role statement regarding gender sensitization; “It helps in developing environment full of justice and equality of women in society (2.681MS)” ranked at first rank followed by “It helps in liberty of thoughts, expression, beliefs, faith and worship (2.667MS)” ranked at second rank and “Helps in removing the proficient inequality (2.565MS)” ranked at third rank. The results are in line with Bariyaet al. (2021) and Bansalet al. (2021).

## CONCLUSION

The result of this study indicates that Zilla and Taluka panchayat raj institutions play a major role in women empowerment. In case the parameters of role statements such as legal empowerment, decision making pattern, capacity

enhancement, social empowerment, political empowerment and gender sensitization would help in women empowerment.

## IMPLICATIONS

The study facilitates for knowing role of PRIs in empowerment of women members which would provide platform for women members to improve their social, political and economic status in the society and can take own decision without fear of entire strata.

Those factors which influence the role of PRIs in empowerment of women members should be counted while planning and implementation of the developmental programmes for more and more active involvement of women members in political spheres.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict between author.

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