

EFFECT OF EDUCATION IN CREATING AWARENESS ABOUT WOMEN RESERVATION IN LOCAL SELF GOVERNANCE-A STUDY OF RURAL WOMEN

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Abstract

In one of the most important steps for the empowerment of women the 73rd amendment to the Indian constitution, passed in 1992, mandated that no less than a third of the total number of seats in village governments (panchayats), and no less than a third of the office of Chairperson of the panchayat should be reserved for women. Including women, in local governments, is an essential step towards creating gender-equal opportunities and gender-sensitive policies. Education/literacy holds the key for active participation by the women representatives in gram panchayats. To study the effect of education in creating awareness among rural women about women reservation in local self governance, sample of 100 rural women from Bhongra, Budian, Khaparan, Baroda, Dhan Kheri villages of Jind district of Haryana was selected. Data was collected with the help of a self developed questionnaire and face to face interview. Major findings suggested that lack of education create hindrances in the way of active participation of elected women representatives. Also the traditional thinking of society, male dominance and gender discrimination are the major problems in creating awareness about women reservation in local self governance.

Keywords: Local Self-Governance, Education, Rural Women.



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The past three decades have witnessed a steadily increasing awareness of the need to empower women through measures to increase social, economic and political equity, and broader access to fundamental human rights, improvements in nutrition, basic health and education. In one of the most important steps for the empowerment of women, the Indian government gave constitutional status to village-level councils or Panchayati Raj institutions. The 73rd amendment to the Indian constitution, passed in 1992, mandated that no less than a third of the total number of seats in village governments (panchayats), and no less than a third of the office of Chairperson of the panchayat should be reserved for women. This amendment was introduced as a strategy to empower women by giving them the opportunity to participate in the decision making process at the grassroots level. Political empowerment of women and their active participation in local self-governance bodies should not be based on “luck” factor. This massive participation of women in local governance allowed them not only to enter in to politics but gave them a greater presence within the public life. Political

participation in local governance is one of the major ways to ensure women's empowerment, to increase decision-making power and greater ability and to influence matters that affect their lives in the community and the larger society. In the broader sense, participation in politics goes far beyond electoral politics, such as voting and election to public office. Women's empowerment begins with their consciousness - perceptions about herself and her rights, her capabilities and her potentials, awareness of her gender and socio-cultural, economic and political forces that affect her (Reema Mukherjee, 2008).

Education is regarded at the national level as an important catalyst for development of the country. Education is equally important for women empowerment. One of the primary ways in which access to women empowerment can be guaranteed is through education. In a broadly liberal framework it was understood that education would lead to various forms of empowerment, such as within the family, in the field of employment, in securing rights and also in increasing women's representation and allowing women's voices to be heard in politics. The Balwant Rai Mehta Committee on Panchayati Raj System emphasised that rural women should not become mere beneficiaries of development but should be made equal partners in its affairs as contributors. To make women's contribution effective their awareness about women reservation in local self-governance is important. Keeping in the above facts in view the present study was planned by the investigator.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Arun, R. (1996) in her study noted that though women constitute more than half of the population in India, their participation in the decision-making process, has always been negligible, in most cases, women are housewives and first time entrants in politics, most of whom are illiterate or educated up to primary level. In some cases, the women have come forward but not very effective. Often illiteracy and lack of adequate education are impediments; the outcome is that most of the women sound vague about their role. However, the situation is not entirely grim. In many cases women have started coming forward with the desire to do something for other women. Almost all of them recognized the need for education. S. Govinda Gowda et. al. (1996) in a study of elected women panchayat leaders of Karnataka found that the education and annual house hold income had a significant and positive relationship with the developmental role performance. The Indian Institute of Social Science in a study of Panchayati Raj in Haryana (2000) found that majority of the women panchs including younger women were illiterate when elected to office. Two years after

office they demanded literary skills. Surender, P. (2014) in his study concluded that participating in decision making is higher among those women who were adequately educated.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Including women, in local governments, is an essential step towards creating gender-equal opportunities and gender-sensitive policies. Education/literacy holds the key for active participation by the women representatives in gram panchayats. Majority of the respondents who were voted to the positions through reservations came from lower echelons of the society and are generally inadequately educated and hence their participation at the gram panchayat level may not be up to the satisfaction. They may have played a dummy role in comparison to their male counterparts. It is critical to know that are they aware about their rights and roles as women representatives and if their opinion about reservation is favourable or not. The study is also helpful to analyse the problems women generally face during their participation in governance. On the basis of the results of this study measures can be suggested to create awareness about reservation in local self government i.e. panchayats among rural women.

OBJECTIVES

1. To ascertain the level of awareness among the rural women regarding the women reservation in local self governance.
2. To find out the effect of education on the awareness among rural women regarding women reservation in local self governance.
3. To study the problems faced by rural women during participation in local self governance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Method

Survey method of research was used for the present study.

Sample of the study

Sample of the present study included 100 rural women from Bhongra, Budian, Khaparan, Baroda, Dhan Kheri villages of Jind district of Haryana.

Tool used

A self developed questionnaire was used by the investigator to collect the data. The first part of the questionnaire deals with personal information like name, age and qualification, family

size of the respondents. The second part includes 23 questions related with the objectives of the study having answers in YES or NO. Investigator filled the questionnaire by asking the responses of the respondents. Face to face interview technique was also used to know the opinions of the respondents.

Statistical Technique used

Statistical technique of percentage was used to analyse the data.

MAIN FINDINGS

1. The mean age of the respondents was 39 years. Nearly 70% of the respondents were illiterate or less educated.
2. Only 6% respondents were fully aware about the provisions of Panchayati Raj Act, 34% were partially aware while rest are totally unaware of the act.
3. 76% of sample was aware about reservation of women in panchayati raj institutions.
4. 94% women opined that women reservation in panchayats is necessary for women empowerment.
5. Nearly 90% of sample expressed that women reservation is helpful for building self confidence in rural women. Educated women were clearer about their thoughts in this regard as compared to less educated.
6. More than three-fourth opined that Haryana Government is implementing this reservation effectively.
7. Almost all of the respondents expressed the view that women education is helpful for active participation in local self governance.
8. 90% women were of the opinion that elected women representatives are not using their rights according to their will. There is a lot of interference from the male members of the family.
9. 92% of the respondents expressed the view that illiteracy pose is a major obstacle in active participation of women in local governance.
10. 64% women opined that less educated /illiterate women representatives hesitate to go out and meet people for any work.
11. Almost all women of the sample were of the view that male dominance in society prove as hindrance for women to participate actively in local governance. Gender discrimination is the main challenge in active participation.

12. 30% percent of the women opined that women representatives are not able to participate properly owing to the heavy workload and lack of support from family.
13. Parda-system prevalent in rural areas is also responsible for less active participation of women in local governance. 67% women supported the view.
14. 78% women opined that lack of right information due to inability to read and write is a major problem for illiterate women representatives.
15. Illiterate/less educated women representatives depend mostly on male family members or male colleagues for any decision in panchayat meetings. 95% women agreed with this statement.
16. 92% respondents agreed that educated women representative fulfil their responsibilities enthusiastically.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The result of the above study shows that the reservation for women can be an important impetus to women's empowerment in India at village level but it is not a guarantee for participation of the elected women. To expedite and speed up this process it is essential to implement some supplementary policies which encourage the self-confidence of women, build their negotiation skills and remove operational obstacles in their participation and decision making. Broadcast media like radio can be used for awareness creation about working of panchayats and roles, rights and responsibilities of elected representatives of local self government. Studies on women in politics have emphasized that contact with outside world makes women more alert and also active in the political process. There could be two ways of doing it. Firstly, interaction between enlightened rural women and illiterate elected one's should be encouraged. Secondly, these women could be taken out to the urban areas also and their interaction with educated urban elected women representatives be arranged. Various awareness generating programmes like mock panchayats, songs, exhibitions, informal group discussions and counselling sessions should be introduced in rural area by the Govt. and NGOs to create awareness among rural women.

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