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A Gender Perspective on Role Performance of Elected Panchayat Leaders in India

By P. Sindhuja¹ and Prof. K.R. Murugan²

Abstract

Gender equality is fundamentally related to sustainable development, and globally accepted as a necessity for the promotion of human rights. Gender empowerment is determined by active participation of women and men in social, economic, and political spaces and activities taken in decision-making. In the context of local government, gender equality is critical as women and men face different challenges in full participation, representation and decent work opportunities. Though the constitution provides women the right to be elected in political and public representative institutions, such as parliament and local government bodies, gender inequality, as a collection of interlinked problems existed in the political arena too. Today the representation of women in politics has been increased considerably but due to their low participation, their issues and problems are generally unseen and unnoticed. Participation of women in the decision-making levels not only enhances their social, political and economic status, but also strengthens democratic institutions and even perhaps change the nature of the democratic process. Thus, the present study analyzed the gender challenges, gender influence in leadership styles, gender role and responsibilities of the elected panchayat leaders in Sivagangai district. The sample size of the study is 50 and the Harvard Analytical Framework has been used as a tool for data collection. Findings of the study assisted in the framing of strategies for the effective role performance of women in rural local governance and for the promotion of Gender Responsive Governance.

Keywords: Gender Equality, Responsive Governance and Political Participation, Tamil, Nadu, India

Introduction

“Women represent half the potential talents and skills of humanity and their under-representation in decision-making is a loss for society as a whole.”
– First European Summit on Women in Decision-making (Athens, 1992)

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Panchayats have been the backbone of Indian villages since the beginning of recorded history, so, Panchayat Raj is not a new phenomenon in the country. Its illustration in history goes back more than 1000 years. Panchayat Raj refers to a local self-government system in India. Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) consist of three tiers: district level, block level and village level. In the structure of Panchayat Raj, the village panchayat is the lowest unit. In India, panchayat exists for each village or group of villages. The panchayat chiefly consists of representatives elected by the people of the village. It has its roots in Ancient Indian Institutions when the villages were little republics governed by their panchayats. These panchayats were responsible for overall judicial, legislative, and revenue work for the area. In the midst of conquest and the rise and fall of empires, the village panchayat continued to survive and gave continuity to the Indian tradition. It was with the coming of Moguls that these panchayats went through a phase of downfall. The British rule following the Moguls rule further centralized the power. It was during their reign that the administrative and legal powers of these institutions were taken away, resulting in unrest among the masses. Probably this and the shock of the mutiny of 1857 led the British to form a Royal Commission on decentralization. The report recommended that the judicial and development functions be again rested in the panchayats. The acceptance of Montague-Chelmsford reforms resulted in a stream of legislation relating to village panchayats practically all over the country. Meanwhile, Gandhi mooted the idea of Gram Swaraj (self-sufficient and self-governed villages), with a village at the center of every activity. He had hoped that his philosophy of Panchayati Raj could be the framework of the political order of free India. However, Nehru did not see any special virtue in villages. Instead, he underlined the advantages of science and technology and appreciated urban culture. Moreover, Dr. Ambedkar roundly condemned the village as a sink of localism and den of ignorance, narrow mindedness, and communalism. As a result, panchayat could find a place only in the Directive Principles of State Policy in the form of Article 40. After the Independence, at the initiative of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, most states adopted the Panchayati Raj Acts.

The government constituted the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1952), which suggested a three-tier Panchayati Raj system at the village, block, and district level. The first panchayat to be instituted as per this recommendation was in district Nagaur in Rajasthan on October 2, 1959. The Ashok Mehta Committee (1978) probed dilapidated economic conditions of these panchayats and concluded that government interference must be removed from these institutions. The G.V.K. Rao Committee appointed by the Planning Commission in 1986 strongly recommended for the revival of the PRIs all over the country, highlighting the need to transfer the powers of the state to democratic bodies at the local level. The L.M. Singhvi Committee of 1986 recommended that to be effective, the PRI should be constitutionally recognized, protected, and presented by the inclusion of a new chapter in the constitution. It also suggested a constitutional provision to ensure regular, free, and fair elections for the PRI. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi made repeated efforts in this direction. However, it was the Narsimha Rao's government that succeeded in getting the 73rd Constitutional Amendment passed in April 1993.

After Independence, despite having a Constitution, which embodies lofty, ideals like equity and equality, social justice could not be achieved so far. Even when India had a woman as Prime Minister for quite a number of years, the situation of women at large did not change for the better and women's participation in politics remained quite insignificant in India. However, women constitute more or less than half of the population of any country. But their involvement in politics is insignificant as they are considered as subordinate to men. According to Milbrath and Goel

(1977), it is a tradition in almost all societies that politics is mainly an affair of men and that women should fall in line with them politically. The traditional mindset of people supports exclusion of women from political life. According to Lipset (1959), traditionalism and conservative outlook of people is the main hindrance for women to enter into politics. Subordination of women in society too acts as a structural constraint to their participation in political activities (Mishra, 2006). Ideological factors such as patriarchy and gender discrimination which still exist in society shape women's participation globally. Patriarchy as a system of male domination shapes women's relationship in politics. It constructs the hierarchy of gender relations where men are privileged. The gender role ideology is used as an ideological tool by patriarchy to place women within the private arena of home as mothers and wives and men in the public sphere. This male public and female private dichotomy in social perception has been found to be greatest hindrance in the way of women's access to power and political decision-making bodies. Chafe (1974) finds that discrimination against women is deeply rooted in the structure of society which restricts women primarily to the domestic sphere of life. According to Elshtain (1981), public-private divide has been used to legitimate women's exclusion from politics.

Social factors are also important which effect women's participation in public spheres. Women find it difficult to participate in politics due to limited time available to them because of their dual roles in the productive and reproductive sphere. With the primary roles as mothers and competing domestic responsibilities and care work, they are left with little time to participate in politics. According to Khan (1991), due to social condition and the double work, women can seldom make the time to participate in electoral politics. According to Devi and Pati (1981), social traditions engulfed with various taboos continue to look down upon women as a part of the households, not as a part of the public life. After attaining independence the Indian constitution ensured gender equality through various provisions and regulations. It was presumed that these rights would automatically get translated into political development of the women in the country. The issue of women's participation in politics cannot be viewed in isolation from the general position of women in a society, but despite their vast strength, women occupy a marginalized position in the political system.

The demand for reservation for women in adequate proportion at the local government level was felt strongly due to the fact that rural women are powerless and unequipped because of the traditions and conservatism of rural areas, the patriarchal nature of the family, lack of education, and access to information and media, poor exposure to the outside world, etc. It was also felt that to make it more meaningful, a guarantee is needed for women's emergence as the Sarpanch (head) of the village. The National Perspective Plan for women, 1988, recommended for 30 percent reservation for women in the three-tier system of PRIs. It also recommended that 30 percent of the executive head positions from the village to the district level should be reserved for women. However, the year 1993 achieved a milestone with the acceptance of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment. The Article 243 (3) of this Act reads as follows: Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every panchayat shall be reserved for women and the seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a panchayat. And Clause (4) of the Act has the following provision: "... not less than one-third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons in the panchayats at each level shall be reserved for women". This provision enabled more than hundred thousand women to participate in PRIs.

Feminist Perspectives on the Political Participation of Women

Enfranchisement, which is one of the basic criteria to determine political rights, was denied to women in many democracies of the world. In fact, New Zealand was the first country to have enfranchised its women in 1893. Then followed Australia in 1899, Finland in 1906, the Scandinavian countries in 1915 and Switzerland in 1971. Women were granted the right to vote in Soviet Russia in 1917, UK partially in 1918 and fully in 1928, USA in 1920, France 1946, Japan, China in 1947 and in India 1950 (UNDP, 2002). The pressure for inclusion in the political process and full citizenship for women gained full momentum in the 18th and 19th centuries. In 1791, Olympe de Gouges, a French revolutionary published her “Declaration of the Rights of Women and Citizen” in response to the revolution’s Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (1789), which had excluded women from active political citizenship. Her famous statement that “Woman has the right to mount the scaffold; she ought equally to mount the tribune” was taken up as the rallying point for feminists after de Gouges herself had been guillotined (Freedman, 2002). Women’s public and private roles were articulated by Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton at the Women’s Right Convention held in Seneca Falls, New York, 1848.

It is also to be noted that men philosopher Condorcet wrote the first essay on “The Admission of Women into Full Citizenship” (1790), and John Stuart Mill introduced the question of women’s suffrage in the House of Commons in 1867. Mill in his ‘Subjection of Women’, first published in 1869 provided a full-scale analysis of women’s situation and the advantages to society of giving them full legal and political equality with men (Bryson, 1999).

Although women achieved suffrage in many democracies in the later part of the 19th and early part of the 20th century women were appallingly underrepresented in the decision-making bodies both national and local level. Political theorists and philosophers from Plato and Aristotle to Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau argued for a natural difference between men and women. They believed that men were more rational than women and were therefore suited to public and political life. Women, who were thought to be irrational, were relegated to the emotional life at home (Bryson, 1999). Feminist theorists have criticized the theoretical basis on which Western democratic institutions are based, particularly the division between the public and the private (Bryson, 1999). Criticism of the division between public and private in political thought led feminists in the 1960’s and 1970’s to declare that *personal is political* and argue that the private sphere was in fact a primary site of power relations.

The failure of representative institutions to open up to women, made many feminists to move away from the institutions of power. The theoretical underpinnings of such moves were provided by such books as Kate Millet’s *Sexual Politics* (1970). This book provided the first systematic account of the theory of patriarchy and was a vital step in understanding women’s subjugated position in society. The feminist disengagement from the formal political processes and institutions in the 1960’s and 1970’s was not unanimous; there were others who wanted to increase women’s representation in the national and local representative bodies. While recognizing that power exists outside these formal institutions of power there was also the growing realization among feminists that these institutions were important sites of power and if women were to challenge male domination they must enter the arena of formal politics (Bryson, 1999).

Kraditor (1965), Helga Hemes (1982) formulate three different types of reasoning found in women’s political participation (Hedlund, 1988). The first is justice reasoning, which emphasizes women’s right to political participation. It is based on the ideology of natural law and was primarily used during the first wave of women’s movements to justify women’s suffrage. Secondly in the resource reasoning, the claim is made that if women do not participate in politics

society is deprived of particular knowledge and skills that women possess. And thirdly, according to interest reasoning, women's interests are different from men's and often in conflict and women need to act politically to safeguard their own interests. Therefore, it is found that throughout history women's demand for political rights have been motivated by different aspects of these three types of reasoning.

History of Women's Political Participation: An International Scenario

The history of equal participation of women in the political fields, in countries like ancient Greece and Republican Rome as well as in the few democracies emerged in Europe, totally excluded women from the voting rights by the end of the 18th century. Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) is a declaration of the rights of women to equality of education and to civil opportunities (Brody, 2000). Today it is regarded as one of the foundational texts of liberal feminism (Brody, 2000). However, despite of the extension of voting rights as it took place in the United Kingdom in the year of 1832, all the voting rights were denied to be vested in women folk. Only in the 19th century, on the issue of voting rights of women began the struggle and especially in Great Britain and the United States. American women were the first at the world level for fighting for their rights to vote. Similarly, women won voting rights in most of the western liberal democracies after their systematic battle with the system. In United Kingdom, the right to vote was granted by the British Government on the basis of wifehood, property and education. It was only at the early years of the 20th century, women got the success in getting right to vote in the national elections in the countries of New Zealand in 1893, Australia in 1902, Finland in the year of 1906 and Norway in 1913. Women had achieved voting rights in some local elections as far as Sweden and United States were concerned. The enfranchisement of the women particularly in the nations of Europe and elsewhere were speeded up during the period of World War I and its aftermath. On August 26, 1920, the 19th Amendment granted the right to vote to American women, is signed into law by Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby. In almost 28 countries, women won the battle of achieving the equal voting rights with men during the period of 1914-1939. In many of these countries, initially women got the right to vote in municipal or other local elections or most likely in the provincial elections; only in the later phase, they were granted the equality right to vote in the national elections. And immediately after the World War II, some more countries like Italy, China etc. joined this very group. The total number of countries had reached more than 100 in another decade which had provided its women equal rights to vote partly due to the reason that nearly all such countries had achieved independence after World War II and had granted such rights in favor of women in their Constitutions. In Switzerland, women are provided with the full and equal voting rights in federal and most cantonal elections by 1971 and in 1973 same rights were granted to women in Syria also. However, in a number of conservative Arab countries bordering the Persian Gulf, women continue to be denied the equal voting rights. So, in some Muslim countries, participation of the woman in different spheres of civil life was insignificant (Chaudhary, 2002). Complete voting rights on equality basis for women were granted in the Constitution of India by its Government in the Year of 1949; in the country of Pakistan, full voting rights were granted in favor of women in the year of 1956 in national elections.

With the voting rights granted to women in most countries of the world, women's struggle for more political space in decision making arena started getting recognition. With the advent of feminism in USA in 1960s the concept of participation of women in political process (not only in

voting but also in other political activities) took a new direction. In later decades, importance of the concept of participation of women in political process has significantly increased among political thinkers and researchers. In recent times, a large number of institutions and research centres have been established to broaden the scope of analysis of women's participation in political process.

Initiatives of International Organizations

Globally, various organizations have taken initiatives to promote women's status in society. For example, in 1946, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) was set up as a permanent body of the Economic and Social Council. In 1952, the General Assembly of United Nations adopted the Convention on the Political Right of Women which stated that "Women shall be entitled to hold public office established by national law on equal terms with men without any discrimination". In 1979, the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the General Assembly of United Nations. Consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, it defines what constitute discrimination against women and sets up an agenda to end such discrimination. The CEDAW also highlighted the participation of women in politics.

The first World Conference on Women was held in 1975 in Mexico City. The Conference, along with the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985) launched a new era in global efforts to promote the advancement of women by opening a worldwide dialogue on gender equality. The Conference called upon governments to formulate national strategies and identify targets and priorities in their effort to promote the equal participation of women in political space. By the end of the United Nations Decade for Women (i.e. in 1985), 127 Member States had responded by establishing some form of national machinery, institutions dealing with the promotion of policy, research and programmes aimed at women's advancement and participation in development. The fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 also took plan of actions empowering women to take part in politics and decision-making process. Besides, many other organizations such as United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), International Labour Organization (ILO), Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), took initiative to provide institutional framework for research, training and operational activities in the area of women and development.

Empirical Studies

Various studies conducted in different parts of world have shown that as compared to men, women have very negligible impacts in political process all over the world. A study conducted in 43 countries on women's political engagement, reveals the fact that, women everywhere have a secondary political status (Nelson and Choudhury, 1997). According to Sinha (1989), it is an international experience that despite loud proclamations of constitutional equality between men and women, the few women who enter politics seldom enjoy political power or are involved in decision making bodies. A statistical study conducted by Tingsten (1963) on electoral behaviour and party attitude of women shows that women nowhere make use of their vote to the same extent as the men do. Lasing (1975) points out that woman as compared to man are less politically efficacious, less politically interested, have less political information and are less likely to

participate in politics. Campbell (1967) finds that average American women are lower in political efficacy, lower in political involvement and less in political concept formation than the average male.

Regarding Indian women Goel finds (1974) that, as compared to men, women are less involved in politics. They are less likely to take interest in politics, to attend public meetings and to influence decisions. According to Bhoite (1988), Indian women cast their votes in large numbers, take part in agitational activities, but on the other hand they lag behind in enjoying power positions and occupying prestigious political offices. Jahan (1987) indicates that since 1960 a large number of women have been leading either governments or opposition in four South Asian countries (India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka). But all of them get into politics through their family connections. All of them have either husbands or fathers or other relatives' already in politics which provide them with readymade network of communication and support. But despite the prominence of several women leaders in the region, opportunities for female leadership have been rare (Jahan, 1987). Jalal (1975) points out that though the women of Bangladesh have political and legal rights like any other developed countries, but in reality, women of Bangladesh don't have meaningful participation in political process.

In a society, participation of women in political process is essential to attain the goals of development and to share the fruits of development equally among people. Especially in a democratic society, participation of women in political process has a great significance to preserve democratic values. In a present day modern society, it is realized by all that without equal participation of both men and women in all spheres of lives and levels of decision making process, democracy; in the true sense of the term cannot be established. Women's participation in political process is essential to solve various social problems related to women. A woman better understands women's problems. Therefore, arguably unless women participate in political process, their problems cannot be solved.

Table 1: Proportion of seats held by Women in National Parliament

Country or Area	Year	Value
SAARC Countries		
Afghanistan	2013	27.7
Bangladesh	2014	20.0
Bhutan	2013	8.5
India	2014	12.0
Maldives	2014	5.9
Nepal	2013	29.5
Pakistan	2013	20.7
Sri Lanka	2013	5.8
Other than SAARC Countries		
Argentina	2013	36.2
Australia	2013	26.7
Brazil	2014	9.0
Canada	2013	24.7
China	2013	23.6
France	2013	26.9
Germany	2013	36.5

Japan	2014	9.5
Mexico	2013	36.8
Russian Federation	2013	13.6
South Africa	2014	41.5
United Kingdom	2013	22.5
United States	2014	19.4

Source: Women and Men in India-2016, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India.

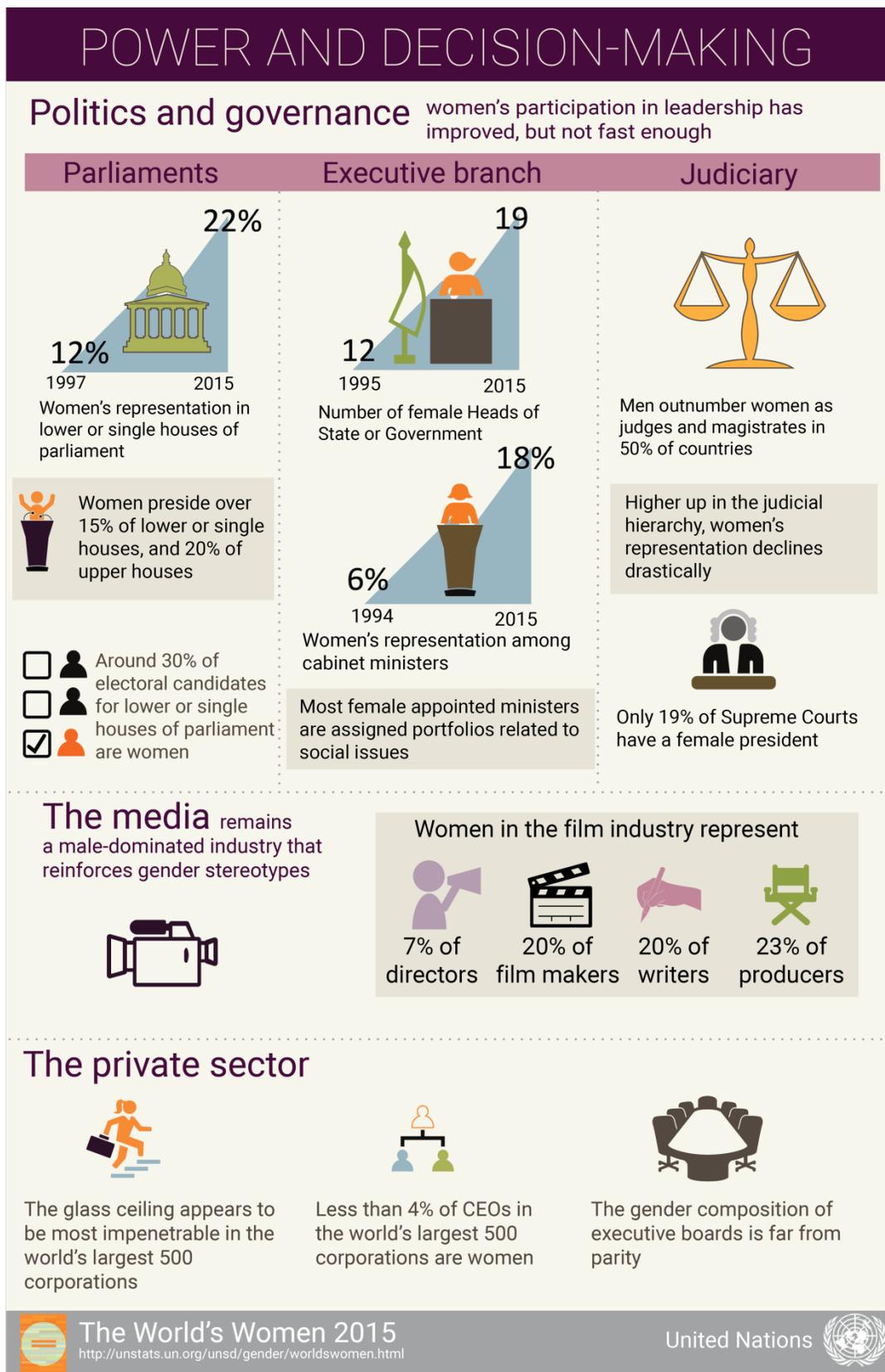


Figure 1: Women's Participation in Leadership

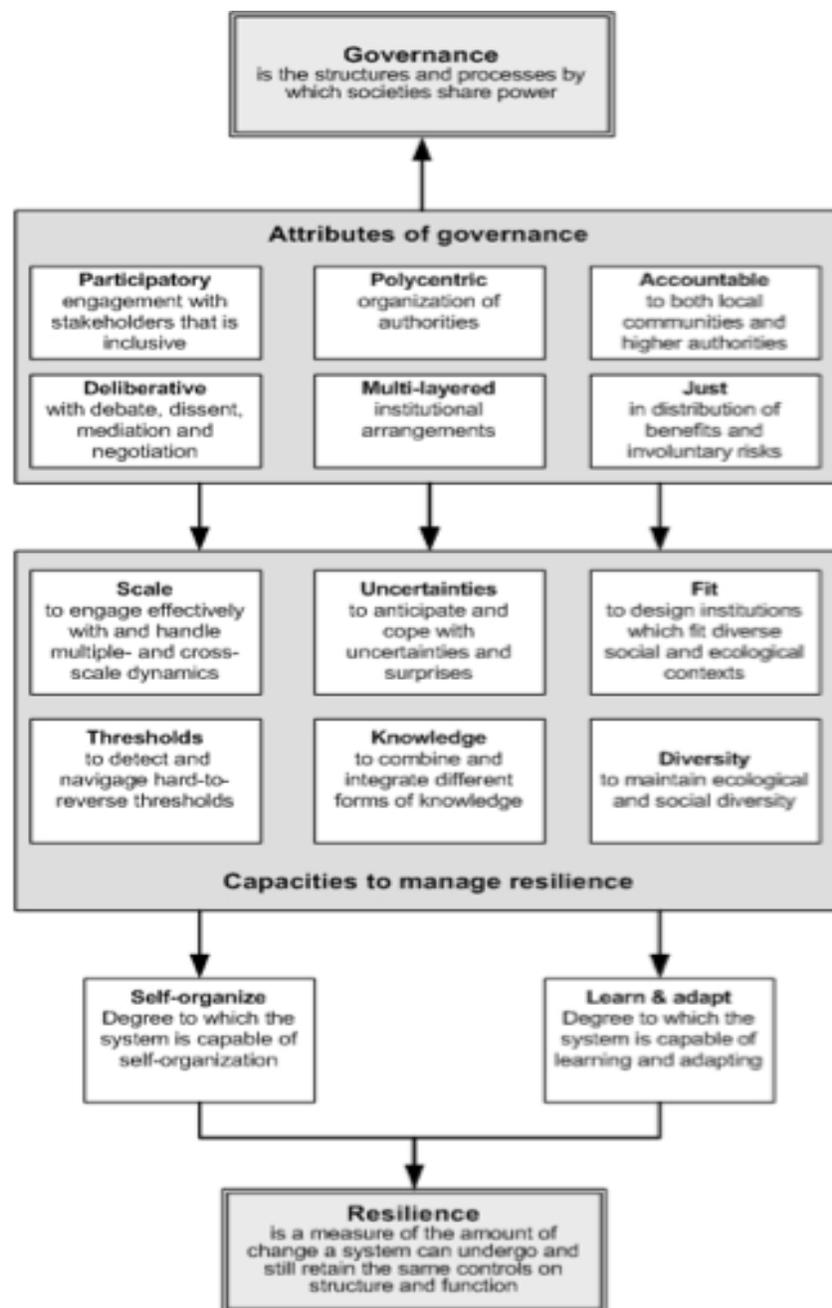


Figure 2: Governance attributes and resilience

Source: Lebel et al. (2006)

Research Methodology

Rationale of the Study

Panchayat Raj Institutions play a vital role in the welfare and development of citizens. Effective governance and gender justice can be attained only if there is equal participation and leadership of men and women in decision making. India has emerged as a model to international community with more elected women representatives than rest of world put together. Indian

experience reveals that many women are hesitant and find it difficult to perform their expected role as elected representatives. While on the other side, there are a number of women representatives who have provided good leadership. Political participation of women is critical for inclusive development. Poverty cannot be overcome without addressing the underlying power imbalances that exist in the world, in particular gender inequality. Besides the socially constructed roles, the gender difference in ownership, authority and decision making too isolate women and prevents them to actively participation in local governance. Hence the research study aims to focus on both women and men elected village panchayat leaders and tries to analyse the gender differences in various aspects. By strengthening resilience and reducing gender inequality a better future for all can be not only imagined but can be achieved.

Objectives of the Study

- To study the socio-economic and political profiles of the respondents
- To explore the gender roles and responsibilities of the respondents
- To find out gender challenges faced by the respondents in the study area.
- To provide suggestive measures for effective participation of women in rural local governance.

Research Design

A descriptive research design has been adopted in this study.

Study Universe

According to the 2011 census, Sivagangai district has a sex ratio of 1,003 females for every 1,000 males, much above the national average of 929. The average literacy of the district was 71.67%, compared to the national average of 72.99%. The district has 7 taluks in 2 revenue division. It has 3 Municipalities (Sivagangai, Devakottai and Karaikudi). It has 12 Panchayat Unions and 445 Village Panchayats.

Sampling Technique

Census sampling has been adopted to collect the data.

Sample Size

Illayangudi panchayat has been taken for study. It has 21 & 34 Elected Women and Male village panchayat leaders respectively.

Research Tools

Interview schedule and focus group discussion have been adopted for the collection of data. The Harvard Analytical Frame Work has been used to study the gender role differences among the elected women and men panchayat leaders.

Sources of data collection

Primary data has been collected through interview schedule and case studies directly from the respondents. Secondary data include documents, records available in Inter Parliamentary Union, books, journals and related websites.

Pre-Testing

A pre-testing was done to verify the suitability and adaptability of the tool in order to satisfy the research objectives. This exercise helped the researcher to standardize the structured interview schedule with necessary modifications (both additions and deletions) so as to obtain qualitative information from the respondents.

Major Findings of the Study**Table 2: Socio-economic and political profile of the respondents**

Variables	Elected Women Representatives (%)	Elected Men Representatives (%)
Age	43 (31yrs-40yrs)	56 (41yrs-50yrs)
Type of Family	53.3 (Joint Family)	47 (Nuclear Family)
Education	30 (Hr. Sec)	34 (Secondary)
Occupation	50 (Agriculture)	65 (Business)
Family Income (p/m)	67 (4001- 6000)	69 (8001-10,000)
Age of entry into politics	57 (26-35)	56 (36-45)
No. of. times elected	70 (First Time)	60 (Third Time)
Motivational factors	70 (To Develop Community)	68 (To Develop Community)
Family members in politics	73	61
Interest to contest in election again	57 (Interested)	82 (Interested)

Age is an indicator of experience and maturity in the Indian context. It is also an indicator of authority, as in the Indian cultural ethos, age is treated with a lot of respect. This is particularly relevant to women, because the years in which they can be, most fruitfully, politically active, are also their reproductive and child bearing years. Before the elections there was a belief that older women, who were free or more free from household duties and responsibilities would be more active in local politics, but the data collected shows that approximately 43% of the women respondents belongs to the ages between 31-40 years and the men respondents belongs to the ages between 41-50 years. It is evident that changing attitude of the society has helped the women of younger age to come out and take part in village panchayat election.

Family as a unique social institution plays a very important role in the development of personality of an individual and also in the process of socialization. The above table reveals that 53% of the women respondents were from joint family and remaining 47% of the respondents were from nuclear family. So, it is clear that respondents from joint family get psychological security and moral support to lead the both private and public sector successfully.

Education is not the fruit of contemplation, but also the instrument of socio-economic and political maturity of a society. The data collected shows that the 30% of the women respondents have completed their higher secondary education and only 34 % of the male respondents have completed their secondary education. It confines that still there are obstacles for women and men to continue their higher education.

Family is an important economic unit and fulfills all economic needs of the family members. The data collected reveals that 67% of the women respondents' family income falls between Rs. 4001-6000. But 69% of male respondents' family income falls between Rs.8001-10,000.

Age is considered as an important factor in determining the emotional and psychological aspects. As the age increases the mental and psychological aspects also get matured, able to cope with all activities and also provide their full participation. But the data collected shows that 57% of the women respondents were from the age group of 26-35 years and 56% of the male respondents were from the age group of 36-45 years. From the data, it may also consider that woman in the middle age group also have the same abilities and capabilities as men from older age group.

On the question of political careers and their frequency being elected as panchayat leaders table- 1 depicts that 70% of women respondents were elected as first time and 60% of male respondents were elected as third time. The differences may be due to the rotation of seats allotted to women.

The political parties as they play a key role in democratic politics, they should have strong desire and involvement in serving the people irrespective of gender. Table -1 clearly indicates that majority of women and male respondents entered into politics to help the people in society. Thus, it can be inferred that the choice of entry into politics of women and male respondents are mainly to serve the people.

Several research studies have found the families that have political background are more willing to introduce their women into politics, than families that are not interested in politics at all. It has to be acknowledged that for a woman, a political family background can be an important political resource. Almost 73% and 61% of women and male respondents came from families which were politically active; it means that they had close relatives in active politics. It appears that the prevalence of political families is a general sociological feature in Indian politics, which is not necessarily connected to gender.

Table 1 reveals that 57% and 82% of women and male respondents respectively were interested to contest again in the election as they feel their contributions are needed for the welfare of the society.

Table 3: Gender Roles and Challenges of the Respondents

Variables	Elected Women Representatives (%)	Elected Men Representatives (%)
Challenges faced during election campaign	66 (Travel & Meeting People)	55 (Lack of Finance)
Challenges faced after being elected	43 (Managing House Hold, Child Care Responsibility along with Official Duties)	33 (Solving Peoples' Problem)
Roles and Responsibilities	64 (Implementation of Govt, Schemes)	55 (Basic Facilities)
Division of Domestic Work	74 (Need Support)	27 (Supports their Spouse)
Reasons for Low Participation of Women in Politics	77 (Gender stereotypes)	72 (Dual Role and Lack of Confidence)
Perceived Leadership Qualities	61 (Commitments & Hard Work)	75 (Confidence & Positive Attitude)

Changes needed for Better Leader	88 (Self Confidence & Self Initiative)	86 (Communications Skills)
Decision Making Skills of Women and Men	87 (Women)	66 (Women)
Reasons for Why Women Should Participate in Local Governance	80 (To Promote Gender Equality)	75 (To promote Gender Equality)

Village panchayat leaders in local governance will meet the biggest challenge which is service delivery, especially as they are seen in the image of respect for life, peace and security, sensitivity, gentleness, patience, empathy and gentle persuades. Sixty-six percent of women respondents cited that travel and meeting people during election time as a significant challenge faced by them but 55% of men respondents cited that lack of finance as a major problem they faced during election period.

The challenge of handling family responsibilities was highlighted as a particularly acute challenge faced by the women respondents (43%). They also expressed their concerns about their inability to attend to family matters as a result of their leadership responsibilities but 33% of men revealed solving people's issues were the problem faced by them.

Gender was found to be a significant factor in determining leadership roles. 64% of women respondents cited that implementation of government schemes as their role. It reveals still women respondents are not aware about their roles and not fully empowered to handle their leadership role.

This study has revealed that women and men perform very distinct domestic roles. While women perform tasks such as cooking, weeding, harvesting and looking after children, men mostly do traditional gender specific roles. Hence, 74% of women respondents highlighted that they need family members support to perform their role and also need gender sensitization programmes for both women and men to break down the gender specific domestic roles.

88% of women respondents cited that they have to develop their self-confidence and must take self-initiative to overcome the barriers during their tenure. The areas where women lacked confidence include public speaking, fear of losing election and ability to perform duties effectively upon election. About 86% of men respondents revealed that they need to improve their communication skill. They explained that a local leader has to interact with different levels of people, speak to the public clearly and politely, express opinions and look after the welfare of the people.

Recommendations

- The local government should ensure that women are treated fairly and equally and to make sure that discrimination against women is not acceptable
- Local government has a responsibility to develop awareness of gender issues through programmes for men and women.
- Local government needs to be more women friendly. Consensus style politics and meetings at times that fit into the other responsibilities that women have, will enhance the political environment

- Opportunities need to be made available for women as soon as they are elected to learn about local government and their governance role and to provide them with support
- Local government needs to take a gender-balanced approach and ensure that women are in decision-making positions in governance and management roles, and women's issues are promoted in policy and service provision.
- Workshops on gender awareness and development for both women and men to educate people on women's rights and the importance of women's equality would pave a way for gender mainstreaming in the local governance which results in gender responsive governance.
- The media needs to improve the status of women by advocating that women's issues involve both men and women to hasten change in customs, beliefs and values.

Conclusion

The study concludes the persistence of gender role inequalities in private and public sector. The novelty of this paper is that researcher analyze the whole distribution of house hold work and works related to their job. The findings of the study suggest that even when there is near-equality in the house hold work and employment attainments, the outcomes are far from equality in private public sector. This inequality is due to discrimination in responsibilities and access to control over resources that is rooted in the socio culturally ascribed notion of masculinity as superior to femininity. Gender equality is a goal which cannot be achieved only by higher representation of women in the Legislatures and other public bodies but it has to be buttressed by other supportive measures. The restructuring of gender relations both within the family and in the society, is an important step not only towards promoting freedom, equality and justice in favour of women but also for ensuring their increased political participation at all levels.

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