

**POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN THROUGH
PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS: A CASE STUDY OF
SONEPAT DISTRICT OF HARYANA**

Thesis Submitted for the Award of the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Political Science

By

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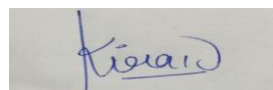
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**LOVELY PROFESSIONAL UNIVERSITY, PUNJAB
2022**

DECLARATION

I, Kiran, hereby declare that the thesis titled “Political Empowerment of Women through Panchayati Raj Institutions: A Case Study of Sonapat District of Haryana” has been prepared by me under the guidance of the Dr.Vinod CV, Former Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, Punjab in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. No part of this thesis has formed previously the basis for the award of any degree, Diploma and fellowship.



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This is certified that Ms. Kiran has prepared her thesis titled “Political Empowerment of Women through Panchayati Raj Institutions: A Case Study of Sonapat District of Haryana” for the award of the PhD degree of Lovely professional University, Punjab under my guidance and supervision. To the best of my knowledge the present work is an original contribution with the existing knowledge. This work has not submitted in part or full for any Degree or Diploma to any university. The thesis is fit for submission and the fulfillment of the conditions for the award of degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science.



Date: 03/09/2022

Dr. Vinod CV

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I'd like to give special thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Vinod C V, for his steadfast efforts to help me at every level of my research progress, providing me with invaluable advice and compassionate direction in order to make the research fruitful and productive. It would have been impossible to have a better supervisor and mentor than him who is remarkably a wonderful human being and academically an intellectual resource person.

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appreciation to the participants for their gentle and sincere cooperation which have benefited me for the completion of my research.

Every effort till this time has been successful because of the kindness that the Almighty has showered on me. I am grateful to God for blessing me with the knowledge, ability, and confidence to furnish my research at its best.

Kiran

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. PRI – PUNCHAYAT RAJ INSTITUTIONS
2. IWHC – INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S HEALTH COALITION
3. CEDAW – CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN
4. NCW – NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR WOMEN
5. MWCD – MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
6. SDGS – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS
7. SC – SCHEDULED CASTES
8. ST – SCHEDULED TRIBES
9. OBC– OTHER BACKWARD CLASSES
10. SHG – SELF HELP GROUPS
11. NFHS – NATIONAL FAMILY HEALTH SURVEY
12. SLI – STANDARD OF LIVING INDEX
13. ANOVA – ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE
14. SD- STANDARD DEVIATION
15. OECD – ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT
16. UNDP – UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
17. UNIFEM – UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT FUND FOR WOMEN
18. DWAN – DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES WITH WOMEN FOR A NEW ERA

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Abstract

Introduction

In contemporary times, empowerment research has become global in scale and scope and it continues to act as a core value in international community development discourses. Today, empowerment as a response to oppression has been used globally by researchers, aid workers, social activists and resistance leaders in their contexts to represent their concerns. The empowerment, therefore, increasingly been considered as an alternate development model that free people from poverty not only through economic development but also by empowering psychologically, socially and politically. India is hierarchically organized by century's longed social system of caste and traditionally a patriarchal society. It is deeply divided on caste, ethnicity and class, where women are historically an oppressed group within Indian society. The political participation of increasingly marginalized social groups in India was inaugurated by 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, which quantitatively intensified poor women's participation in Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs). It inaugurates a new era of democratic participation of women in local self-governing bodies which brought into the limelight that women's concerns like health, nutrition, family income and education now take pivotal stage in PRIs and in village development boards.

Women's participation in local self-governing is largely viewed as an instrument to leverage women's political empowerment at local levels. However the experience suggest otherwise because, due to continued exercise of patriarchy and male dominance in existing political parties and institutions, women's participation continued to remain tokenistic although they are elected to offices of power. There are many instances where elected women in offices are controlled by either their political party leaders or husbands. Some

elected women are known as in their husbands' names. Largely, the role of women in PRIs continued to remain as proxies to their husbands or other pressure groups.

Locating within this context, this study examined the political empowerment of women through Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) with special reference to Sonapat district of Haryana. It studied the socio-economic status of elected women representatives and the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in political empowerment of women. It tracked the PRI influence upon the status of the women. At last, the study examined the elected women representatives' perception of their own success and their level of satisfaction with their own roles in the decision-making process.

Method

Using a cross-sectional descriptive survey design, the researcher quantified and described the women's political empowerment and its associated factors. In this study, the researcher adopted positive philosophy of research where observations about the women's empowerment through local self-governing bodies were philosophised as the objective reality that exist outside human consciousness. Hence, the research investigation is directed through careful conceptualization, operationalization, objective measurement and analysis to describe characteristics of women's empowerment and explain linear causation or '*cause and effect*' relationships between the elected women representatives' socio-demographic characteristics, standard of living and dimensions of empowerment through carefully argued hypotheses in the current investigation.

In this study, the researcher defined the study population as 'a women elected representatives presently assumed political office at Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) in the state of Haryana. Whereas, the study sample was defined as 'a woman who are

elected as people's representatives at village panchayat, municipality, municipal corporations, block panchayat or district panchayat at Sonapat district of Haryana'. Using a multi-stage sampling procedures, the researcher selected 124 elected women representatives at Sonapat district.

Using a structured interview schedule, the researcher conducted face to interview with the study participants. The interview schedule contained (i) a socio-demographic profile, (ii) Women's Involvement in PRIs, (iii) Women's Household Standard of Living, (iv) Women's Political Participation, (v) Women's Political Empowerment, (vi) Women's Status in Politics, (vii) Perceived Success and Satisfaction in Decision-Making. Apart from using descriptive statistics for data analyses, the researcher performed inferential analyses. The researcher studied relationships using ch-square test and Pearson's correlation, while differences and variances were studied using Independent Sample t' test and ANOVA. The researcher further used multiple linear regression analysis to establish factors determining political empowerment of women. Also, logistic regression analysis was used to predict the likelihood of political participation and decision.

Findings:

The participants' average age was 42.7, nearly half of them were educated at high school level and more, 95.2% were married and 68% belonged to joint families. Many were home makers prior to their election and 58% belong to middle wealth quintile. About 62.4% were elected under the open category. The women had the minimal frequency of participation in PRI meetings and Gram Subha.

In general profile, all study participants were elected women with average age of 42.7 whereas majority belong to the age group of 41 years to 50 years. Nearly half of them educated up to high school and higher secondary, 95.2% were married, 68% were belonged to joint families and all were Hindus. Many were home makers prior to their election. Nearly 58% were in middle wealth quintile. Nearly 80% of the women had no prior experience in the group outside of their households before their election. Mostly, women elected to office were from open category (62.4%). The elected women opined that to some extent women's status in family and society got elevated after the election. Evidently, elected women representatives had the minimal frequency of participation in PRI meetings, including participation Gram Subha. They enjoyed relatively low level of political participation in PRIs.

First, the primary and higher secondary grade achievers significantly differed on their political participation. The educational attainment remains to influence elected women's status in politics and their success and satisfaction in decision making. Second, the castes groups continued to influence women's success and satisfaction in decision making. Evidently, there was a significant difference in elected women's success and satisfaction in decision making between upper castes and lower castes, suggesting the lower castes tend to report high success and satisfaction in decision making than upper castes women. Third, the women from joint families tend to report high-level political participation than women from nuclear families. But the women of nuclear families reported a high level of political empowerment than women from joint families. The housewives tend to report high status in politics than working women.

Fourth, the elected women who were married, and of joint families, housewives before the election with a high standard of living were likely to experience a low level of success and satisfaction in decision making and these variables together accounted for 31.4% of the variance. Fifthly, the women of joint families tend to experience lower level of empowerment than in nuclear families, while being a member of joint families explained 11.8% of variance upon women empowerment. The elected women's caste significantly influenced their status in politics, suggesting that being lower caste significantly reduced their political status.

Finally, being a house wife before the election significantly reduced their status in politics. Further, the better standard of living significantly improved women's political status in society. Evidently, being in lower caste groups, and house wife before getting elected significantly reduced women's political status; whereas the women of households with better wealth status substantially improved their political status in society. These variables together accounted for 33.7% of variance.

Hence, this study concludes that the socio-demographic characteristics of elected women continue to determine the women's political status, empowerment and decision making in PRIs.

Keywords: Panchayat Raj Institutions, Empowerment, Women's Political Participations, Women's status in Politics

Acknowledgements

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Chapter-1

INTRODUCTION

The word 'empowerment' has always been political and ambiguous, and its meaning has always been in the eyes of the beholder. Empowerment is basically interdisciplinary in scope, necessitating a rigorous review of literature in social work, business administration, health education and promotion, and community psychology (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). During the 1970s, the term empowerment was widely used in academics, helping professions, and aid workers in the fields of social services, social psychology, public health, adult literacy, and community engagement (Simon, 1994). However, the word has now gained popularity in politics and industry, and a book on 'Self-empowerment for Dogs' was published in 1997 in the United States (Wise, 2005).

By 1990s, slowly the discourses around the term 'empowerment' gradually gained acceptance in international development organizations (Calvès, 2009) and gained footing on gender and development agenda. By the 2000s, it had already become the poverty-reduction philosophy of international development agencies. This phrase is increasingly commonly used in conjunction with "community," "civil society," and "agency," and the concept of "empowerment" is now central to the rhetoric of "poor participation" in development. Although, there were great amount and scale of enthusiasm to welcome the term "empowerment" in international development discourses spearheaded by international development organizations, there are criticism levelled against this term applying to development (Wong, 2003).

By the 1960s, prevailing economic models that saw advancement as purely and simply economic growth had been severely criticised. The failures of development policies and programmes had prompted an increasing number of researchers, activists, academicians, and non-governmental organisations to advocate and campaign for a greater understanding and awareness of the social dimension of development (Calvès, 2009). Anthropologists have advocated development alternatives based on endogenous and self-focused progress (Tommasoli, 2004). As a result, asymmetrical technology transfer for development, top-down planning, information flow, and decision making were rejected. Alternatively, bottom-up approaches have produced discourses that present recipients as active partners in development (Calvès, 2009).

Defining the concept –“Empowerment”

In the absence of a universally accepted definition of empowerment as the term ‘empowerment’ crosscut disciplinary boundaries through the intersections of multiple dimensions adopted from psychology, economics, political science and sociology and practical fields namely social work, counselling psychology and women studies (Page & Czuba, 1999). Empowerment is easier to define in terms of its lack, but it is harder to define in terms of its implementation because it takes diverse forms in different persons and settings. Similarly, Zimmerman (1984) highlighted that claiming a singular definition of empowerment might lead to attempts to attain it being formulaic or prescription-like, which contradicts the very notion of empowerment. Page and Czuba (1999) conducted a review of literature of practical and scholarly discipline but found no clear definition of empowerment across disciplinary line while individual discipline has their narrowed definitions.

In consequence, a critical examination of the core elements of empowerment would benefit our understanding of the term '*empowerment*' more systematically from an inter-disciplinary perspective. In layman's terms, "to empower" is to provide someone the authority and permission to behave in such a way that it empowers another to face life's obstacles and overcome injustices and challenges. Bhmuimali and Poddar (2005) defined the term empowerment as a: "process in which a person assumes an increased involvement in defining and promoting Her own agenda for development in respect of social, economic and political matters." The fundamental characteristics of empowerment, according to Kabeer (1999), are 'agency', which refers to women's ability to identify and act on their goals. The second component was gendered power structures awareness, self-esteem, and self-confidence.

Perkins (2010) recognised four main components of empowerment, including empowerment as a 'process' that takes place in communities and organisations and involves active engagement, reflective thinking, awareness, and understanding, as well as access to and control over resources and major decisions. And consequently, empowerment is not merely a process but an outcome of such process where individuals and communities are benefited. In a similar way, Page and Czuba (1999) defined empowerment as a: "multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives, their communities and societies, by acting on issues that they define as important" (Page & Czuba, 1999).

Empowerment refers to a deliberate continuous effort centred in the local community, involving respect and understanding, critical reflection, caring, and group participation, through which people who do not have an equal share of valuable resources gain greater

access to and control over those resources. It is a process through which people gain control over their lives, democratic participation in the life of the community, and critical understanding of their environment. (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). In a similar vein, Mohanty (1995) claims that the term “empowerment” refers to formal rather than substantive power, and that it involves an external upper-level agency granting authority rather than individuals from below gaining it throughout their struggle. As a result, in the context of economic globalisation, it is linked to the political philosophy of western capitalism.

The prefixing the word ‘women’ to ‘empowerment’ categorizes and specifies a group of people based on gender which portray the discrimination, inequalities and psychosocial disability (Jose, 2014; Varghese, 2011), which signifies the state of disempowerment induced and sustained by gender biases in predominately male dominant societies (Cherayi & Jose, 2016). In practice, “women's empowerment” is defined as “women's ability to make strategic life choices where such ability had previously been denied to them” (Malhotra et al, 2009). As a result, women's empowerment is critical to preserving women's advantages at the individual, home, community, and larger levels (Malhotra et al, 2009). Women's empowerment is understood as a method of reorganising gender roles in the home and in society. Its goals are defined as “women gaining power or capacity to manage their daily lives in social, political, and economic terms—power that allows them to move from the margins to the centre stage” (Bhuyan, 2006). Rani et al (2017) defined: “women empowerment can be defined in very simple words that it is making women powerful so that they can take their own decisions regarding their lives and well-being in the family and society” (p.14301). Kabeer (1999) also noted the multi-dimensionality of women's empowerment, which allows women to fully realise their identities and powers in all aspects of their lives. It also included gaining access to information and

resources, decision-making autonomy, the ability to organise their lives, and more control over the situations that affect their lives and freedom.

Kabeer (1999) emphasised on women's agency or ability to define women's goals, gendered power structures where agency or power help to influence in favour of one's defined goal(s) achieved through self-awareness. Kabeer also accounts for the inner aspects or behavioural aspects of empowerment through the concepts of psychology namely '*self-esteem*' and '*self-confidence*'. Invariably, Bhmuimali and Poddar (2005) emphasised in their definition of empowerment as a goal directed process by which awareness in defining and promoting agenda or desired goals.

Perkins and Zimmerman (1995) conceptualizes it as an deliberate process centered in local community by making awareness in terms of respect, caring, critical reflection and participation in groups for achieving access and control over resources. In their definition, Perkins and Zimmerman (1995) defined the concept in the broader context of local communities and groups where definition focuses on aspects of care, mutual respect and democratic participation.

As theoretical frames, as science and action, empowerment has potential to systematically understand and act upon all sources and forms of oppression in society. It also potentially an emancipatory and liberating tool to free individuals, groups and communities who are oppressed so that they could not realize their full potentials, thanks to their age, gender, ethnicity, employment status, place of residence, sexual identity, religion or national origin

In a gist, the critical review of the definition of empowerment proposed by authors from different disciplines; it is now increasingly evident that as empowerment as a multi-dimensional (i.e., social, economic, political and psychological) process (by which

women generate critical awareness of their position or status in relations to their family, community, institutions, and organization) that help them to set goals and induce a goal directed process of gaining access to and control over valued and scarce resources, services, knowledge, perspectives and worldviews, resulting in challenging inequalities, gender biased disadvantages in social institutions (such as marriage, families), communities and at workplace (organizations).

Historical Evolution of Empowerment:

Post World War II and subsequent social and civil rights movements in the United States and Europe during 1950s and 1960s significantly contributed to the origin and initial notion of empowerment. Emergence of feminist movements, Black Power Movements in the USA, theological movement in Latin America and beyond and wide circulation of the idea of Gandhi on self-reliance (Simon, 1994) cumulatively contributed to the idea of empowerment (Cronwall & Brock, 2005). Although, the term empowerment in its current sense of the term had not been used until 1976 when Barbara Solomon published his book on: ‘Black Empowerment: Social Work in Oppressed Communities’, which originally scoped for liberating potentials of the social work practices for empowering the historically oppressed African Americans in the United States. Since then, the term empowerment has increasingly been used in social and civil rights movements by gays, lesbians, women, African Americans and people with disabilities (PWDs).

Initially, the philosophical concept of empowerment was concentrated on the viewpoints of the oppressed and subjugated in the United States, and it was viewed as a means to allow the oppressed to express themselves, gain power, and challenge the supremacy to which they are subjected (Wise, 2005). In Paulo Freire (1968) seminal work entitled: ‘The Pedagogy of the Oppressed’ substantially influenced the initial idea of empowerment.

According to Freire (1974), a small percentage of persons in any community exert influence over the vast majority, resulting in dominated consciousness. And subsequently, Freire (1974) argued that role of teachers is not mere transmission of knowledge to students but to seek alongside him to transform the world that surrounds them”. According to Paulo Freire (1974): “in every society a small number of people exert domination over the masses, resulting in ‘dominated consciousness’ For people with ‘dominated consciousness in Brazil, Freire wants to attain ‘critical consciousness’. Hence, he advocated for an active teaching method to help individuals to become aware of his/her own situation, of himself as a subject so that he would get an instrument would allow him to make choices and becomes politically conscious” (Freire, 1974). The idea of critical consciousness that help oppressed people to move from understanding to acting was appealing to American researchers, academia, activists and non-governmental organizations (Calvès, 2009).

Barbara Solomon’s (1976) book on ‘Black’s Empowerment: Social Work in Oppressed Communities’ the term received its first appearance in the current sense of the term.

Researchers and intervention to improve life of the people at social margins in the west has increasingly been recognized by the term ‘empowerment’ such as empowerment of gays, empowerment of African Americans, women, gays, lesbians, and people with disabilities. Right wing think tank organization was formed in 1993 named “Empower America” Neo-liberalists also co-opted ‘empowerment’ for overtly political purposes (Perkins, 1995). All these political leaders used the term ideologically rather theoretically.

In fact, the formal appearance of the term ‘empowerment’ was introduced by feminist and radical discourses emerged from the global south. In seminal work on: “Development, Crises and Alternative Visions: Third World Women’s Perspective”, reflects the feminist

researchers, activists and political leaders of the global south (Claves, 2009). An International Coalition of these groups known as: “Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era” (DWAN) founded in Bangalore in 1984, introduces a new approach of women in development (Claves, 2009), which was soon labelled as “Empowerment Approach” (Moser, 1989; cited in Claves, 2009). Critically reflecting on the weakness of top-down approach in development, DAWN began to discourse about the new approaches to women’s empowerment alongside the perspectives and new methods required for enabling women to transform gender subordination and oppressive structures in patriarchal social system. DAWN argued that women from the global south is not integrated with development process and economic self-reliance and meeting basic needs, they argued, do not empower women. Instead, it could only be achieved through radical changes in social, economic and political structures which induce reinforce gender, ethnic and racial and class dominations. Feminist and radical thinkers were critical to the classical approaches in not favouring women while they considered grassroots level women’s organizations are catalysts to women’s aspirations and perspectives (Sen & Grown, 1987; Claves, 2009).

In the 1990s, feminist writings on empowerment, gender, and development exploded in Latin America and Southeast Asia. Batilwala (1993) stated that empowerment is a process of altering power connections between individuals and social groupings in her famous book *Women’s Empowerment in South Asia: Concepts and Practices*. Actions on three fronts can modify power relationships: (a) questioning the ideology that justifies inequality, (b) changing the methods of access and control of economic, natural, and intellectual resources, and (c) changing the structures and institutions that reinforce existing power systems.

Empowerment is now viewed as a multifaceted process for women in global south and conceptualizations and theoretical frameworks are evidently articulating associations

between empowerment and power (Kabeer, 1994; Leon, 1997; Rowlands, 1995). In feminist perspectives, “power to” is considered over “power over” someone else in order to decide and choose or accomplish things. Additionally, collective power owned by grassroots level women’s organizations or “power with” and “power from within” designates women’s ability to develop self-confidence and addressed internalized or personalized oppression (Claves, 2009).

There was a widening gaps between global south and global north on equality alongside increasing poverty rate in developing countries. During the structural adjustment periods, academicians, activists and development practitioners have already began to consider alternate development models (Claves, 2009). This was when the feminist literature in general focus more on empowerment of women. In a seminal work on: “Empowerment: The Politics of Alternative Development” , John Friedman (1992) argued that increasing poverty in developing nations are due to the historical process of exclusion from economic and social powers or otherwise termed as “disempowerment” . Hence, achieving development, in Friedman’s perspective, was to give away with classical models of economic development and accepting alternate models which are people oriented and people and environment focused. He proposes for an empowerment paradigm that addresses not only the social and political aspects of empowerment, but also the psychological empowerment of individuals and households. It also called for balancing unequal power structures in the society by responsible state interventions, increasing civil society influence alongside more responsible corporates. As a result, according to Friedman (1992), empowerment begins with civil society mobilisation around local issues before spreading to regional, national, and international levels.

In contemporary times, empowerment research has become global in scale and scope and it continues to act as a core value in international community development discourses. The United States, Latin America and South East Asia have produced substantial amount of empirical knowledge on empowerment and development (Perkins, 2010). Today, empowerment as a response to oppression has been used globally by researchers, aid workers, social activists and resistance leaders in their contexts to represent their concerns. For an instance, Serrano-Gracia in 1984 observed that empowerment as an illusory in the context of colonization, where community development strategies namely modelling of collaborative roles, verbalization of development values, information transfer and musical intervention to improve community members' ideological preparedness and skills for development. Participants' ideological preparation improved, but she concluded that empowerment in dominant culture was an illusion because its institutions were rigid, conservative, individualistic, capitalistic, and pro-US (Perkins, 2010). The empowerment, therefore, increasingly been considered as an alternate development model that free people from poverty not only through economic development but also by empowering psychologically, socially and politically. Growth interventions should always prioritise economic development while also empowering and mobilising impoverished households and communities to participate in politics on a larger scale (Friedman, 1992).

Transitions to Women Empowerment

Empowerment approach so evolved primarily by women's movements and feminist school of thought received no initial attention neither by national and local governments nor by international bilateral or multilateral development organizations (Parpart, 2002). However, there was an increasing use of the term "women empowerment" by women's organizations worldwide. In 1994, a UN Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo of Egypt which gave the concept "women empowerment" an international visibility. Even

though the conference did not focus on women's empowerment as a key theme, it did emphasise the importance of women's empowerment, gender equality, and sexual rights in the population debate. International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC) and DAWN, two feminist networks, were well-represented at the conference and actively participated in the preparation meeting. The conference's action plan emphasised gender equality and women's lack of authority around the world. Political involvement and representation, education, employment, reproductive and sexual health, violence and rape equity in justice systems, property rights, financial inequality, and job distribution were all highlighted in the action plan (Claves, 2009).

Another key event that cleared the way for the term "women's empowerment" to enter the UN discourse on women and development was the UN Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. (UN, 1995).

India is a signatory to a number of international accords and human rights statutes. India, for example, ratified the 1993 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The Mexico Plan of Action (1975), the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategy (1985), and the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action (1995), which address critical areas of women's concerns, including women and poverty, education and training for women, women and health, violence against women, women in armed conflicts, women and the economy, women in power and decision-making, institutional mechanisms for women's advancement, human rights and women, women and the environment, and girl suffrage.

Women Empowerment in India

India is hierarchically organized by century's longed social system of caste and traditionally a patriarchal society. It is deeply divided on caste, ethnicity and class (Varghese, 2011),

where women are historically an oppressed group within Indian society (Jose, 2014). Indian constitution enshrined gender equality as a core constitutional value and as a fundamental right and found its expression in the Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles while it also empower states to introduce protective discrimination to empower women (NPEW, 2001). Since 5th Five Year Plan marked a change in the national government's approach towards the issues of women from welfare to development. By an Act of Parliament in 1990, National Commission for Women came into being, as a constitutional body that ensure and safeguards the rights of women in India. The seventy third and 73th Amendments in India's constitution have provided women's reservations in local self-governing bodies (NPEW, 2001).

In contemporary time, women in India has achieved significant influence on social, economic and political institutions through emancipatory actions lead by women's empowerment movement nationwide (Handy & Kassam, 2006). Being a signatory in many international bodies, India ratified international conventions and human rights instruments that ensure equal rights and gender equality. Consistent with international development under the UN banner, Government of India in its 9th five year plan (1997-2002) and has spearheaded women empowerment programmes at national level. Government of India officially observed the year 2001 as the year of women empowerment at national level (Handy & Kassam, 2006; Cherayi & Jose, 2016). National Policy for the Empowerment of Women in 2001, inaugurated a new era in independent India towards ensuring gender equality and empowering women. Several state specific policy enactments have also been in place to ensure gender equality and women's empowerment. The National Policy for Empowerment of Women (2001) ensures advancement, development and empowerment of women in all areas of their lives by creating responsive and women sensitive judicial

system, alongside mainstreaming gender sensitivity in development process in the country (Working Group on Women Empowerment, 11th Plan, MW&CD, 2006).

Consistent with Millennium Development Goal-3: “Promote gender equality and empower women” was a core concern of 10th five year plan during the period 2002 to 2007, which proposed a tri-dimensional strategy towards women’s empowerment. They included social and economic empowerment, as well as gender equality. In terms of women's social empowerment, the goal is to establish an enabling environment by implementing various policies and programmes for women's growth, as well as providing them with easy and equitable access to all the necessary services, so that they can reach their full potential. Women’s economic empowerment guarantees that they have access to training, employment, and income-generating activities, as well as forward and backward connections, to help them become economically independent and self-sufficient. The policy document also emphasised gender justice, which aims to eliminate all forms of gender discrimination, allowing women to enjoy de jure as well as de facto rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal footing with men in all areas of life, including politics, economics, social, civil, and cultural affairs (NPEW, 2001).

In 11th Five Year Plan (---) envisioned inclusive and integrated policy strategy for economic, social and political empowerment of women. While the empowerment strategy in 11th plan was confined into three strategic areas namely violence against women, economic empowerment, and women’s health. Nevertheless, there was no attempt to understand empowerment in a holistic manner where social, economic and political areas of empowerment were highly diffused and blurred (Working Group on Women Empowerment, 11th Plan, MW&CD, 2006). For an instance, representation of women in Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) was meant to bring about improvement in the lives of rural

women; but this has not happened. It is primary because elected women were predominantly illiterate and were less aware of their rights. Women of socially, culturally and economically marginalized social groups were more vulnerable than women of forward social groups with relatively better education and economic status Working Group on Women Empowerment, 11th Plan, MWCD, 2006).

Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs):

Being a South Asian political system at grassroots or village levels in South Asian Countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Trinidad, Tobago and Nepal with a historical mention as early as 250 AD as a local governing system at village levels. Term ‘Panchayat’ means assembly and ‘raj’ means rural. The panchayat consists of respected elders chosen and accepted by local communities and these assemblies used to settle issues between individuals and between individuals and village or between villages. Panchayat leader was known as ‘Sarpanch’ or ‘Mukhya’ an elected or generally accepted person (Mallick, 2018). During British India, Sir Charles Metcalf, then governor general of India (1835-1836) observed villages in India as little republic. In Mayo Resolution in 1870 further strengthened the idea of local self-governance. However, Lord Rippon Resolution substantially contributed to the development of village self-governance system in India, which is termed as “Magna Carta of Indian local democracy (Mathew, 2013; Brahmanandam, 2018).

Although the Local Self-Governing Bodies were placed under the state subject in the Directive Principles of State Policy in post-independence India, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act 1993 gave them constitutional legitimacy. Joyti Basu, the Chief Minister of West Bengal in 1977, and Ramakrishna Hedge's Janatha Government in Karnataka, as well as Jayaprakash Narayan, were all proponents of direct democracy. Gram Sabah denotes

village-level democracy, and Jayaprakash Narayan said, “Let us have direct democracy at the village level and representative governance upwards to Delhi”. Following the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1993, several studies were conducted, some of which focused on the PRI system's operation (Brahmanandam, 2018). The Constitution Drafting Committee, according to Singh (2009), has paid lip service to local self-government institutions. Dr. Ambedkar was critical to village republic calling them as the ruination of India.

Notwithstanding, the political participation of increasingly marginalized social groups in India was inaugurated by 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, which quantitatively intensified poor women's participation in Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs). It inaugurates a new era of democratic participation of women in local self-governing bodies which brought into the limelight that women's concerns like health, nutrition, family income and education now take pivotal stage in PRIs and in village development boards. However, Ministry of Women and Child Development, government of India in its “Report on Women Empowerment in 11th Five Year Plan (2006)” observed that despite the desired results, proxy politics, power brokering, and gender discrimination continued while many women elected representatives were subjected to extreme violence for challenging existing power centres. In other instance, the report observed that elected women's roles were tokenistic as their names were in the list but virtually enjoyed no power or authority in PRIs.

In post-independent India, leaders of the freedom movement have differing opinion and perspectives on decentralization of power through Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs). Mahatma Gandhi argued for ‘*Gram Swaraj*’ which implied ‘village self-rule and village self-sufficiency’ (Mathur, 2013). However, B.R. Ambedkar was strongly against this idea

of decentralization of power through PRIs. He argued that villages represents regressive India and act as sources of oppression (Buch, 2012; cited in Brahmanandam, 2018). He feared that empowerment of villages would eventually lead to the upper caste dominance who in turn would continue to oppress the lower castes. As a chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee, thus village self-governance did not get much attention in the Constitution, despite its mentioning it in the Directive Principles of the State Policy.

During 1950s and early parts of 1960s, much of the development sector projects were planned from above or by using “top-down’ approach as centrally administered by Planning Commission of India. However, many such public funded development sector projects have cumulatively failed to achieve the desired goals, Planning Commission has appointed a committee headed by Balwatari Mehta in 1957, which observed that local level agencies can win confidence of the local people and establish link between local leadership and translate the government policies in to action (Singh, 1994). Consequently, this committee recommended three-tire panchayat raj system (PRIs). Nehru entitled it as a most revolutionary step towards a new India when inaugurated three-tire Panchayat Raj System in Rajasthan in October, 2 in 1959 (Mathew, 2013; cited by Brahmanandam, 2018). Brahmanandam (2018) argued that Central government’s step towards this was due to the realization that the democracy at the top would be successful only when it was built from below. By 1960s, PRIs have covered entire country, which was appraised by people as local level system which could address the problems of their everyday life. Unfortunately, in two years’ time, Brahmanandam (2018) observed that PRI system was failed largely due to war with China and food crises. In the absence of constitutional status and lack of clarity on the roles and limitations, most PRIs began to function as government’s agency to implement its programmes at local level (Mathur, 2012). In 1977 when Janatha Government came into power, it showed a marked interest in reviving PRIs and people’s participation in local level

planning for development. Ashok Mehta Committee suggested measures to strengthen PRIs in 1978. The Committee recommended two-tier PRIs.

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, on the other hand, have created a democratic process in these deliberative organisations and launched a debate on democratisation, allowing individuals from socially marginalized communities to properly participate in the decision-making process (Brahmanandam, 2018). However, several studies have shown that gaining access to decision-making bodies and statutory provisions does not ensure empowerment.

Despite these positive and affirmative actions, PRIs continue to remain reproducing caste prejudice, poverty, ethnicity based discrimination, gender discrimination, and social exclusion. Caste continue to act decisively separate those communities with political power and those with no political power in rural areas. In addition, this report also observed that devolution and decentralization of power both by state and central governments are delayed. Three “Fs” continued to remain the same prior to 1993s when 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments were made; because; funds, functions and functionaries remain dysfunctional (MWCD, 2011).

Research Problem Statement:

Nevertheless, the 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) of the Indian Constitution has provided ample space for political participation and empowerment of women alongside members of historically marginalized social groups namely scheduled castes and tribes. Women’s participation in local self-governing is largely viewed as an instrument to leverage women’s political empowerment at local levels. However the experience suggest otherwise because, due to continued exercise of patriarchy and male dominance in existing political parties and institutions, women’s participation continued to remain tokenistic although they are elected

to offices of power. There are many instances where elected women in offices are controlled by either their political party leaders or husbands. Some elected women are known as in their husbands' names. Largely, the role of women in PRIs continued to remain as proxies to their husbands or other pressure groups. Hence, women socialized in patriarchal and male dominant social institutions need additional inputs to empower them to influence decision making process at local level (MWCD, 2011; Brahmanandam, 2018).

Political development through good governance with due participation of women across social groups shall contribute to sustainable development; and where it is nearly difficult to achieve sustainable development goals (SDGs) without politically empowering women (Morita and Zaelke n.d.). However, women across the world are underrepresented in democratic institutions (OECD, 2008). Women in India do not enjoy meaningful and active role in decision in local self-governing bodies due to structural barriers like patriarchy and male social dominance. They have no equal power in leadership at all levels and decision-making at governance at local level, although 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act (1993) removed structural barriers by ensuring 30% reservation for women alongside proportional representation to scheduled castes and tribes (Mallick, 2018). Despite the efforts of the central and state governments to politically empower women and achieve gender equality across all sectors and institutions, the political decision making has not gained adequate and sound ground in local self-governance at village levels. Alternatively, studies suggest that women's active and meaningful roles in decision making contributes to good governance and transparency, reducing corruption and protect the interest of the marginalized in the society (Handy & Kassam, 2006).

Therefore, this study initially examined women's role of personal autonomy, roles and influence in decision-making in Panchayat Raj Institutions in the study district i.e., Sonapet

of Haryana. In advancing this study objective, this study further explored the key barriers that hinder women's meaningful participation in political offices in favour of women's groups. Secondly, the women are not universal category since their socio-demographic characteristics substantially influence the level of political empowerment in local self-governing bodies (Cherayi & Jose, 2016; Jose, 2014) and therefore, the researcher examined the role of socio-demographic characteristics namely age, gender, education, marital states, social group membership, family wealth status influence and shape different aspects of women's political empowerment with respect to their personal autonomy, power and influence in decision-making at PRIs. In order to achieve that, this study raised a key research question: 'What are the significant socio-demographic determinants of personal autonomy and decision making of elected women representatives in PRIs?'. Finally, this study also examined social and economic empowerment of these women representatives in PRIs through matching with women of comparable socio-economic and demographic backgrounds.

Significance of the study

This study examined the both combined and individual effect of effect of key socio-demographic variables namely age, gender, education, marital status, household wealth status (as measured in Standard of Living Index), employment status and social group memberships influence key aspects of women's empowerment viz., social, economic and political empowerment. This study further examined how socio-demographic characteristics predict psychological dimension namely personal autonomy and women's agency determined their role and influence in decision making in PRIs. Furthering the analysis, this study examined the socio-demographic and other factors act as deterrent in their political empowerment through meaningful participation governance in PRIs. The

unique contribution of this study was that has adopted a comprehensive perspective on women's empowerment crossing disciplinary boundaries of sociology, psychology, economics and political science and practice profession like social work in integrating a broader perspective in defining empowerment, although the primary concern of this study was to examine the political empowerment of women representatives in PRIs.

Additionally, using a comparison group shall yield knowledge on unique contribution of 'being elected in *'Panchayat Raj Intuition'* helped those women representatives to improve core elements of empowerment namely personal autonomy, roles in decision making, agency to influence process and outcomes of governing business at PRIs and their ability to articulate women's issues and concerns in local self-governing bodies. Finally, this study yielded empirical knowledge on deterring factors to women's active roles and decision making in PRIs. Since this study examined the role of socio-demographic characteristics on core elements of elected women's empowerment with special reference to political empowerment, the findings informed and contribute to evidence based planning for accelerating women's empowerment in India.

Chapter : 11

Perspective on Women Empowerment

The concept ‘women empowerment’ is multifaceted and has been traditionally been described in terms of rights, resources, and voices. (World Bank, 2001), other scholars defined along the line of resources, agency, and achievements (Kabeer, 1999). It has also been explored in terms of financial strength and large resource access (Parveen, 2008), power inside families (Mason & Smith, 2003), and as a process of obtaining control (Sen, 1997), and political participation (Norris & Inglehart, 2003). Despite the fact that the idea of women's empowerment is multidimensional and has multiple sub-domains, this study focuses on women's political empowerment.

Politics is a branch of social decision-making in which individuals who hold official positions of power make decisions and power are given the authority to make decisions on the distribution of society resources such as scarce resources, tax income, and direct resources to some groups of people at the detriment of others. Hence, the decision of politicians in office affect people’s choices through encouraging certain behaviours while outlawing others. Power class of politics have the ability to impose their judgments, sometimes with force. Clearly, putting women in positions of influence and power will allow them to exercise influence and control over scarce resources in favour of women's growth and empowerment (Sundström et al, 2017). Given this context, women's political empowerment is described as “a process of increasing women's potential, leading to more choice, agency, and participation in society decision making” (Sundström et al, 2017). This definition has three critical elements namely choice, agency and participation.

Women's choices: The capacity to make choices in all aspects of one's life is central to empowerment. Kabeer (2001) argues that the ability to make choice is central to the women's empowerment and according to Gita Sen (1993), empowerment is defined as 'changing the relations of power...which restricts women's alternatives and individuality.' Empowerment allows women to define self-interest and choices while believing they are not only capable but also entitled to make decisions! Malhotra et al., 2002, p.6 Kishor (2000) emphasises the option of being able to make significant judgments about vital regions and essential components of their life, which have previously been denied to them. In that view, women's rights are human rights, which basically include freedom of expression, association, and assembly, freedom to move, practise religion, and participate in the choosing of political leaders, as well as freedom from physical integrity abuses (Cingranelli & Richards, 2010). The customary violations of rights often occur in informal culture rather than formal legal framework. Wherein, the household and interfamilial relations are central to the locus of women's disempowerment.

Secondly, the ability to travel freely is a crucial part of women's empowerment. Govindaswamy & Malhotra (1996). Whereas the confinement of women within households indicates the denial of their rights for movement, and an indicator for women's disempowerment. Consequently, a women's ability to move outside household for own purposes without permission (i.e., visiting a health centre for healthcare service or visiting a local market for purchase) is an empirical measure of women's empowerment.

Thirdly, the third pillar of women's political empowerment is resource control, which includes freedom from forced labour and the right to work for a living, as well as the right to own property (Malhotra et al, 2003). According to feminist thinkers, women's

succession and management over assets and wealth are crucial for exercising economic and social power (Blumberg, 1984; Chafetz, 1990). When women have authority and power over land, properties, assets, and loans, it increases their influence and capacity to make decisions in a variety of areas of daily life (Ashraf et al, 2010). Women's rights are human rights, and women's political progress requires access to justice (Cherayi & Jose, 2016).

Unless women enjoy easy access to justice system for the protection of their rights, the customary laws shall continue to curtail their rights to enjoy freedom in different aspects of human rights, resulting in their disempowerment. As a result, Sundström et al. (2017) argue that women must have fundamental freedom of movement, property rights, be free from forced labour, and be considered as equals in legal systems in order to make meaningful decisions in crucial areas of their everyday life.

Women's agency: Yet another critical component of women's empowerment is agency which Malhotra et al (2002) defines as: "the second element of empowerment that distinguishes from it from other concepts is agency-in other words, women themselves must be significant actors in the process of change that is being described or measured" (p.7). Additionally, Kabeer (1999; p.438) further define women's agency as the "ability to be active agent of change through the ability to define one's goal". Evidently, the gendered power relations deeply hamper the women's ability to voice and express their political opinions, and freedom to form or participate in any political party (Bollen, 1986). It is also concerned about women's power to influence political agenda (Luke, 1974). Thus, women's activism through NGOs, civil society and collective organization therefore provide critical edge to women who would otherwise less participating in the political process (Welzel, 2013). Furthermore, women's ability to successfully influence public spheres, including their access to

media and ability to get problems on media agendas, is an important part of women's political empowerment. In a nutshell, 'to be able to exercise agency and define their aims, women must have freedom of expression, be allowed to engage in civil society organisations, and be represented among journalists' (Sundström et al, 2017; p.7).

Women's participation: Women's participation remains a critical aspect of their empowerment wherein their political empowerment represents their candidacy and election to political seats. The idea of descriptive representatives, due to women's unique socialization, the life experiences, women are different from men (Philip, 1995). Young therefore argued that it is important to have numerical representation in political offices are critical for their empowerment apart from the protection of their civil liberties, and political equality. "Women's equal involvement in decision making is not merely a demand for basic fairness or democracy, but should also be recognised as a vital prerequisite for women's interests to be taken into consideration," declared the Beijing Platform for Action (United Nations, 1995; paragraph 181). Hence, women should have adequate numerical representation and involvement for engaging in explicit conflicts or influence during decision making. Hasheim et al, (1995) postulates that campaigning for political party or protesting as critical indicators of women's political empowerment. Wherein other researchers considered participation of women from village level to national level as indicators of their political empowerment (Malhotra et al, 1995; UNDP, 2015). Hence, "the participation in politics requires a descriptive presence in formal political position and then women have an equal distribution in the distribution of power" (Sundström et al, 2017; p.8).

The Process: This study also stresses on the concept empowerment as a process from a longitudinal perspective. According to Kabeer (2005), empowerment is "a process through which individuals who have been denied the ability to make decisions gain

such an ability” (p.13). As a result, the shift from disempowerment to empowerment must be studied over time utilising longitudinal study approaches (Sen & Mukherjee, 2014).

Theoretical framework of the present study

Under the theoretical framework of the present study, the researcher discusses the theoretical aspects of the concept ‘empowerment’. In Friedman's (1992) analysis of the empowerment of women identifies different levels of power such as psychological, economic, social, and political aspects. The social power explains the access to basic individual products that include knowledge, information, economic resources, skills and participation in social organizations. On the other side, the economic power states that access to the basis of financial aspects such as access to food, income, markets, assets, and decision-making power in financial activities. In psychological domains contains the aspects of personal autonomy, competency, perceptions of self-in relation to others in the households and so on.

Spreitzer (1995) proposed four components of psychological empowerment namely competence, meaning, self-determination and impact. The competence states that the ability or capability of individuals to perform responsibilities, tasks and achieve goals. It is people’s belief in their capability to execute tasks with expertise and skills (Gist, 1987). The meaning refers to the value individuals place on the significance of a given role/job, individuals’ ideals, and own standards. It further involves a fit between the job’s duties, roles, values, beliefs, and behaviors (Brief & Nord, 1990; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Self-determination is concerned with self-autonomy, in which a person makes decisions about his or her employment. Thus, an individual's perception of having the ability to begin and govern activity in order to achieve anticipated

consequences. Therefore, making decisions on work style, pace and efforts are instances of self-determination (Deci, Connell, & Ryan, 1989). The impact component relates to the completion of a specific duty as judged against pre-determined standards of correctness, completeness, and speed. It involves their creativity in solving problems, time, energy, the initiative they take, and the resourcefulness that they utilize their resources (Rothman, & Coetzer, 2003).

Autonomy is referred to individuals' real choice and freedom. It further indicates their decision-making influence, control over sexual life, perception of wife beating, and freedom of movement are the relevant indicators of autonomy. It was found that there was a significant relationship between the autonomy of women and their personal and collective empowerment (Tripathy, 2011). The degree of freedom experienced by women is inextricably linked to the level of personal autonomy enjoyed by the social group to which she belongs. As a result, the degree of autonomy of women is determined by the potential autonomy of their social group and society. It signifies that a social group's autonomy is not only determined by the personal needs of its members (Islam, 2009). This conceptual background shapes the influence of psychological aspects of empowerment and significantly contributes to the political empowerment of women.

Women's literacy and access to a diverse range of educational options, positive media images of women, and their roles and contributions to various aspects of society are all examples of social empowerment (Malhotra, 2003). The socio-cultural components of empowerment have related to two major dimensions such as household and community (Malhotra, 2003). The household aspect refers to commitment toward educating daughters, women's freedom of movement, and controlling discrimination against daughters. Whereas the community aspects include women's visibility to

access the social spheres, involvement in extra-familial social groups and networks, representation of women in ritual and myth programs, and shift in patriarchal norms that includes son preference.

Economic empowerment is crucial for advancing women's rights and allowing women to take control of their lives and influence in society (MFA, 2010). It helps to increase women's access to opportunities and economic resources including financial services, property, jobs, skills, market information and other productive assets. As a political concept, a woman's autonomy depends upon the personal requirements of the members. The importance of economic autonomy in women's overall autonomy was highlighted in the Beijing platform that pointed out the economic opportunities as the main way to reduce deprivation for women to earn income by affording equal access to employment opportunities, trade, resources, and markets (Hur, 2006; Siddiqui, 2011). Economic or financial security benefits not only the individual but the whole family will be benefitted consequently to society.

Participation in the political process is a relevant indicator of women's empowerment. The political process states that women's participation in the election process such as incubating and organizing protests, voting, freedom to involve in political parties, and action on common causes related to women in particular and society in general. Political participation further indicates that women's influence and participation in local, regional, and national political offices position them to constructively influence political offices to attain welfare aspirations and women's development (Handy & Kassam, 2001; Jose et al., 2010). Indian politics witnessed a paradigm change from 'the politics of ideology to the politics of representations' after the two decades of post-independents (Jodhka, 2010).

Consequently, castes have gradually been politicized based on caste consolidations and caste identities that have been widely taken place across the country. Kothari (1970) refuted the widespread notion of increasing the caste influence in Indian politics and its potential threat to the secular and democratic framework. He argued that caste associations significantly formed around the caste identities in due course shift their focuses on non-caste functions that became more flexible, the inclusion of leaders and members from other castes, identifying common causes with voluntary organizations, political parties, and interest groups (P.22-23). Even so, such alliances surrounding identities have increasingly ignored development aspirations and women's rights. The failure of such political and social movements to articulate women's ambitions has cumulatively resulted in strengthening structural inequalities and disabilities faced by women in the gender-biased society (Shortall, 2008).

Cherayi and Jose (2016) investigated how empowerment aids access to both official and informal judicial institutions. They conceived the context as being directly related to socioeconomic position and engagement in home concerns. Empirical evidence suggests that women's empowerment improves their inclusion in various aspects of social life (Batliwala, 1994; Bennett, 1997; Kabeer, 2002). Considering these factors they developed a conceptual model that explains how women's empowerment in terms of personal autonomy, status in domestic consultation, political empowerment, and influence in family decision-making is likely to increase their social inclusion and access to formal and informal justice institutions. This paradigm proposes that many aspects of women's empowerment, such as psychological, social, economic, and political empowerment, significantly increase social inclusion. According to the structural equation modelling results, women's personal autonomy, political empowerment, and family decision-making all had a major role in social inclusion.

The study also found that, despite the women's lack of political empowerment, it fostered and significantly affected social inclusion in their social and political lives (Cherayi & Jose, 2016). The model found that women's political participation and leadership boosted their social inclusion significantly. It established a level playing field for women regardless of their age, colour, gender, class, ethnicity, caste, lifestyle, or job type. Furthermore, women political leaders may be able to transcend identity politics and local elite politics, as evidenced in developing nations where women have gained access to political posts at the local, regional, and national levels (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2002; Alexander, 2007). State and federal governments have implemented a variety of policies and initiatives to encourage women's engagement in inclusive growth and development. It also became the development policy significance for state transformation and good governance. This promotes women's empowerment in various spheres of their life such as social, economic, and political and also it ensures inclusive development (Jackson, 2002; Stromquist and Fischman, 2009).

The study further reported that women's political empowerment significantly contributed to inclusion in justice institutions (Cherayi & Jose, 2016). Women's access to justice institutions should be equal and effective. The constitutional guarantee of equality is a critical aspect in securing equality in accessing justice institutions (Doepke et al., 2012; Goulb, 2010). Ubink and Rooij (2011) reported that barriers to women's access to justice systems are due to various reasons. It is beyond legal aspects that include cultural, psychological, social, political, and economic obstacles that hinder women in accessing justice systems. UNDP (2007) revealed that better women's empowerment in all these dimensions significantly increased their access to justice systems.

According to Cherayi and Jose (2016), political empowerment, together with other factors, dramatically boosted women's access to legal systems. This study implies that this paradigm can be employed in different contexts, particularly among social groups of underprivileged and marginalised women. Clearly, the paradigm implies that women's empowerment in the family, personal, political, and social realms is critical to developing women's agency and capacity to social inclusion. This inclusion was used to refer to healthy social involvement, social integration, healthy access to essential social rights, and the ability to obtain sufficient material resources for quality of life and material well-being. Women's empowerment in these areas also allows them to access and use judicial systems.

Women who have more power in familial decision-making have a higher level of inclusion in personal and social life. Empirical data confirms that women with significant influence in home decision-making in the domains of household buying, health care, and daily necessities had more resources available to them and felt more empowered. It finally pushed for a more inclusive society (Kabeer, 2001; Razavi and Miller, 1995; Tripathi, 2011; Tasli, 2005). According to research, women who have power in family decision-making and complete independence are more likely to be included in social and personal life. The ability of women to make effective decisions and exert control over their lives is critical to their overall well-being. It significantly improved their inclusion in various spheres of social life. Women's active exercise of agency shaped the future of their children (Attanasio and Lechene, 2002; Htun et al., 2002).

To conclude, therefore, the present study examined the political empowerment of women through Panchayat Raj institutions. The subsequent chapter provides a detailed overview of the existing literature on women empowerment.

Chapter-1II

Review of literature

Political empowerment: an overview

Political empowerment of women is one of the dimensions of empowerment process. The political participation is largely viewed as a major path to empowerment that has a significant influence in the decision making power provides greater ability to effect matters related to them. In an extensive sense, participation in politics provides increased roles in public life (Vissandjee et al., 2005). Women empowerment is a phenomenon and prevalent during the history across globally for a numerous reasons. The concept has been considered as new due to the increasing presence in the public domain. It has been reshaped and shifted from women welfare to their progressive development and being called as women empowerment and discussed, critically evaluated and reported. It fundamentally means decentralization of power and authority (Chhibber, 2002). It intends to ensure participation of underprivileged sections of individuals in the decision making process. Thus empowerment is viewed as process that enables women for gaining control and access to resources. Empowerment is further considered as the distribution of power that challenges male dominance and patriarchal ideology (Harding, 2003; Hust, 2001).

The critical goal of women's empowerment based on Gandhi's vision of 'Sarvodaya' means the welfare of all through trusteeship and cooperation in the economic aspects, mutual respect in the social aspects and equal participation in the political aspects without considering their caste, class, creed and gender. The consensus of literature on political participation suggests that women are less participative in politics than men.

The reason is that it is generally argued that women are less educated and less informed about political issues, not interested in politics and less attentive to expression of different point of view on politics comparatively with men (George, 2003; Tiwari, 2008). These explanation is observed as an oversimplification of the fact. The lack of participation of women in politics cannot simply be attributed to their nature that is called as a basically conservative. Considering the factors of political interest and resources in order to assess the gender-bias in political involvement indicates the under representation of women in politics (Jain, 1996).

The women empowerment in India is based on three fundamental themes that are incontrovertible and non-negotiable. It ensures that men and women are treated equally and that women have the right to realise their full potential as well as the right to self-representation and self-determination. The first world conference on women, convened in Mexico in 1975 to address the subject of gender equality, had this as its main agenda item. The second world conference on women, held in Copenhagen in 1980, and the third conference, held in Nairobi in 1985, both had the same goal. The Jakarta declaration indicates that the empowerment of women is not only about the equality rather it is necessary for socio-economic and sustainable development (Sharma, 2006). The participation of women in politics and decision-making roles is a vital tool for empowering them and better involvement in political governance according to the standards.

The local self-governance, which is widely known as panchayats are one of the most significant edifice to ensure women's participation in politics and leadership. It also further aim for their empowerment as a whole. It traces an extensive history since Rippon's resolution of 1881 and 1882 while it is a democratic form of recent origin. The history of political empowerment is observed as a roller-coaster in Indian history

since medieval system includes purdah system to 33% seats reserved for women. The consideration for women participation emerged for the first time during national movement (India) in which they participated shoulder with men. Further, in 1917 they made a demand for common adult franchise and in 1929 they got the right to vote on the basis of property, wifehood and education (Sarumathy, 2002). After that, in 1935 the government of India enforced an act that all the women who aged 21 years and above provided the right to vote in which they fulfilled certain conditions with regard to education and property.

Panchayat raj institutions and political empowerment

Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) are seen as the solution to all rural development issues involving the empowerment of socially excluded groups, especially women. Democracy guarantees empowerment whereas Panchayat Raj Institutions ensures involvement of all sections of society. Gender equality is the fundamental element for the effective participation of women for their empowerment and inclusion (Hazarika, 2011). To enhance women's social and economic position, the federal and state governments have launched a number of programmes aimed at offering equal opportunities in employment and education. As a result, considerable changes in women's standing have been noticed over the last two decades. During the independence phase, Mahatma Gandhi was quoted as saying, "If women do not engage in the public realm, the country will perish". Decentralization, thus as a vision could never be realised (Usha, 1999). Following this viewpoint, gender equality is a major concern of the government and numerous intervention programmes implemented for the welfare of women and to ensure their empowerment.

Women's empowerment is an act of achieving a social, economic, and political status in society that allows them to live a respected and dignified life. Panchayat Raj

Institutions are one of the most important initiatives proposed by women's empowerment advocates to improve women's status, especially ensuring their participation in political judgement (Rathod, 2014). The 73rd constitutional amendment is regarded as a watershed moment for two reasons: it aided local and female empowerment. It guarantees women a 33 percent reservation in panchayat seats. This amendment also establishes reserved seats for Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Scheduled Castes (SCs) based on their population.(Narayana &Nayanatara,2016)

In addition, the central government designated 2001 as the year of women's empowerment to commemorate the new millennium. Under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), one of the key goals (goal number 3) is gender equality and women's empowerment. In addition, the government implemented a UN Women project in 2011 with financial support from the UNDP to promote gender governance and political leadership among women in remote villages. The fundamental goal of these programmes is to increase and deepen women's political involvement in PRIs. According to the Global Gender Gap Report (2012), India ranks 105th out of 135 nations in terms of educational achievement, economic engagement, political empowerment, and health issues (Hausmann et al., 2012,Narayana &Nayanatara,2016)

Women gain from reservation in local authorities since it allows them to achieve a respectful position and address their worries and issues, but it is not widely supported by masculine culture. Women's empowerment is still a prominent topic for the bodies. It is noted that the reservation of half of the seats or one-third seats in PRIs is not sufficient for women's empowerment. Mostly, women are home makers and representatives as they are entered in the political for the first time. Patriarchal society, narrow-minded culture, and a lack of education are cited as causes for their lack of

political participation in rural local governments (Dahlerup, 2005; Gochhayat, 2013; Rashimi, 1997, Narayana & Nayanatara, 2016).

Women empowerment and reservation system

The 73rd constitutional amendment ensures reservations for women in general and marginalized groups in particular in PRIs for their participation in decentralization process and aims at holistic community development. This amendment, which was approved in 1993 and is regarded as a crucial pillar in the decentralisation movement, emphasises the need to raise rural women, as well as other economically, socially, and politically weaker sections of society, by including them in administration and development. The central as well as state government has been trying to attain women empowerment through several constitutional safeguards and programmes. Economic empowerment includes financial assistance to self-help groups, women component plan, universities and colleges particularly initiated for women (Nandal, 2013).

Social empowerment is reflected in housing programmes, free public education for girls up to a certain degree, and access to services, among other things. Finally, political empowerment is achieved by awarding grants under the reserved category, reserving seats for contesting elections at various levels, and so forth. Evidently, incredible changes have been reported in rural areas for the empowerment of women at the grass root level over the past two decades (Makwana, 2012). Aiyer (2002) reported that reservations for scheduled tribes and scheduled castes are usually working well. However, there is still a considerable distance to go in transforming women's perceived empowerment into genuine and actual empowerment. There is little doubt that women's reservations have ushered in revolutionary changes in social, economic, and political aspects, empowering more than ten lakh women through fair election.

Hust (2002) investigated women's political representation and empowerment in local government entities in Orissa's Nayagrah and Khudra districts. According to the findings, the majority of women representatives ran for panchayat election through reservation, and just 12.8 percent of women ran for election based on their self-confidence and personal traits. Furthermore, according to Mishra (1997), reservation quotas for women in PRIs allow them to participate in elections and participate in the political arena that deals with the socio-economic problems of village communities.

Pai (2001) remarked that reserving seats for women in PRIs allows underprivileged groups and backward classes (OBC) to identify themselves in local governance, allowing them to better serve their communities and counteracting upper and middle caste domination in politics. Furthermore, Duflo and Topalova (2004) looked at women's representations in 2304 villages across 24 Indian states, covering 36542 households, using data from the Millennial Survey, which included a random selection of reserved women's presidencies. In comparison to unreserved gramme panchayats, elected women from reserved panchayats offered more public amenities such as quality infrastructure, drinking water, and road transportation facilities. Further, in reserved panchayats, elected candidates were less likely to be corrupted.

Despite the fact that certain researches have concentrated on the negative characteristics of PRI reservation systems, according to Palanithurai (1994), members who are terrified of being elected by higher caste and wealthy women may refuse to recognise women elected under reservations. They may object to the rising number of women candidates from marginalised communities running for local government positions in Tamil Nadu. Similarly, Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004b) indicates that women representatives elected through reservation category are incompetent with compare to men

representatives. The reason stated that women representatives were less educated and less experienced.

In a study of village panchayats in Orissa, Panda (1996) found that women have only entered politics as a result of statutory reservation or pressure from immediate family members and the rural society. Nilekani (2010) also looked on the reservation pattern in the Karnataka gramme panchayat system. Women presidents in gramme panchayats were found to be impotent in the study. The actual power was held by male members of their family or vice-presidents of gramme panchayats. Furthermore, according to Narayan (2005), the only reason why women entered politics was because of the reservation of seats for them rather than their participation in public life, and the bulk of them were unfamiliar faces.

Nagraj and Pallavi (2013) conducted a study on reservations in PRIs in Chitradurga district of Karnataka. According to the study, reserving seats for women significantly increased the number of women entering politics and aided tribal women's progressive growth by recognising their voting power, panchayat member duties and obligations, and being supported by their family members. Further, Chandrashekar and Kadam (2012) conducted an assessment of empowerment of women through gram panchayats across 25 GPs in Shimoga district in Karnataka. The study reveals that the young and educated women representatives want to participate in the re-contest of panchayat elections. Furthermore, women's familial and social position improved significantly, as did their contribution to society in terms of developmental projects and public services.

Crook and Alan (2001) indicated that decentralization has significantly contributed to amplified political representation and participation in India and Columbia. The study found that decentralization practice in Karnataka and West Bengal helped women,

scheduled tribes and scheduled castes to participate in the panchayat activities while the men members tended to dominate. Both uneducated and STs and SCs were observed in contacting officials, engaged in meetings, sending petitions, joining associations and etc. Further, Craig (2001) claims that even though decentralization has increased public participation and accountability, this has done little to shrink rural poverty and inequality.

In a study conducted in five districts of Madhya Pradesh, Behar and Kumar (2002) found that while constitutional provisions had aided women in moving forward and establishing their capabilities, any attempt they made to challenge male dominance resulted in usurpation of authority at the ground level. Despite several efforts to integrate excluded groups into the mainstream, discrimination continues to exist in various areas around the country. Discrimination exists in local governance, according to Baviskar and Mathew (2009), with dominant castes forcing panchayat members and presidents to sit on the floor, keeping plates and cups separate for their use that must be washed by them, creating a divide between them, and assisting marginalised SC candidates in election to control them after the contest.

The reason for this supremacy is that formal institutional arrangements may not adequately reflect community democratisation since there is a large gap between establishing democracy and expanding it (Jairath & Sajja 2009). As a result, they noticed that the successful implementation of PRIs in West Bengal and Kerala resulted in land and social reforms, as well as public mobilisation campaigns. Satish (2012) found caste to be a barrier to democratic decentralisation of authority and inclusion of the weaker sectors of society in a study done in two villages in Andhra Pradesh's Nellore district. As a result, social power has been highlighted as a component that tries to undermine the idea of political power decentralisation.

Patil (2009) investigated the power structure and participation of STs, SCs, OBCs, and elected women in rural local self-government in Maharashtra's Kolhapur district. The study discovered that housewives entered politics on the basis of reservations, that their position in administration was modest, and that they had to rely on their husbands to carry out the activities. Women are underrepresented in local self-governance due to a lack of knowledge of panchayat administration, a lack of education, poor economic standing, and the majority caste's control over administration. Palanithurai (2012) also lists roughly 30 sorts of discrimination and untouchability practises against Dalits in four Tamil Nadu villages.

Singh (2009) investigated panchayat officials, members, and peasants in Uttar Pradesh's Agra area. According to the study, due to proxy candidature, illiteracy, poor position of women in family and community, poverty, early marriage, load of household tasks, and other factors, women in the district have traditionally been on the sidelines. He mentioned that a woman president of a village panchayat claimed not knowing the number of homes in her village, as well as her inability and the low status she frequently encounters in her area. Even though, the study concludes that reservation of seats for women significantly improved the bargaining power of SC women and contributed to avail the opportunities for socio-political gains. Moreover, they are approachable to the backward people and village women for their problems.

In most situations, inclusive development is impossible due to a lack of understanding among panchayat officials and members regarding panchayat activities. In a case study of four villages in Andhra Pradesh, Rao (2012) found that the majority of elected leaders from marginalised groups were new to politics and had little knowledge of panchayat programmes, acts, projects, and provisions. As a result, Bhat and Ravi (2012)

advise that STs, SCs, and women in PRIs should network in order to share their experiences and create a workable action plan to meet their requirements.

Patnaik (2005) indicates that elected representatives were not able to articulate their interest for the welfare of their group including implementing their own judgment in panchayat decision making. This research was conducted in four gramma panchayats in the Dhekanal district of Orissa, and it found that effective participation of the marginalised sections in the panchayats in terms of participation, accountability to the panchayats, and responsiveness to the interests of the people in the village has not been ensured. Furthermore, according to Thorat (2002), despite various constitutional provisions, caste-based desecrations of human rights in modified form continue to exploit Dalits, particularly in rural India, because marginalised groups have yet to be fully politically organised against the dominant upper class.

Das (2013) conducted a study on Tribal and Dalit leadership in Gujarat, he reported that only one-third of the Dalit women could won the panchayat elections independently. Dealing experience in social issues, education status, prior performance in panchayats, inspiration to bring development in the village, personal relation with villagers, family support, economic stability and family's local political contacts are the factors responsible for women in accessing panchayat positions, these are the factors directs the pathway to succeed and not easy for those without have such backgrounds.

Women empowerment and its dimensions

Social, economic, psychological, and political empowerment are all aspects of empowerment. Representatives' psychological, socioeconomic, and political position have a role in their ability to participate in panchayat governance. These variables may impact their desire to run for panchayat elections, as well as their active engagement in

them. Vaidya (1997) looked into the role of PRIs in women's development and how they might effectively participate in decision-making. According to the findings, it takes women a long time to establish that they are equally proficient as men. Further, Bhaskar (1997) conducted an assessment among women members of 84 gram panchayats in Kerala revealed that along with land assets, education, other factors such as age, livelihood and income are critical for women to enter into the politics.

Hust (2004) and Dahlerup (2005) suggest that in India, women candidates showed little enthusiasm in active engagement in rural local self-governance. According to the report, the majority of women are behind because they are ignorant and rely on male panchayat candidates. Due to variations in socioeconomic status, family responsibilities, and vocational choice, women candidates face greater challenges to become eligible and aspiring political candidates than men (Alexander, 2007). Further, Narasimhan (1999) examined the psychological empowerment of women candidates and reported that women candidates had gained awareness about their duties and responsibilities, schemes implemented by panchayat, and motivation by their participation in panchayat management.

Nilekani (2010) reveals that wage disparities, domestic violence against women, low female literacy rates, and discrimination in the supplement of nutrition are widely prevalent in India that remains sideline the women into their social, familial and political life. Further, Arora and Prabhakar (1997) focused on a study related to why women are more interested in politics. It indicates that women candidates who belong to dominant and upper castes and highly educated were more interested to join into the politics. They further reported that women representatives who frequently meet and discussed with their friends had substantial political interest.

Women empowerment and political participation

Decentralization enhances people's engagement in local self-governance by holding regular elections and refining access to information by implementing demand-side mechanisms for deliberate decision-making. It also increases local governments' ability to offer services by pooling their financial resources, strengthening panchayat officials' capacity, and rationalising and streamlining administrative activities (Mansuri & Rao, 2013). Any village representative who wants to participate in politics must do so. When democracy begins at the grassroots level, it means equality for all people, and it means equal possibilities for women in politics that are effective and meaningful. In a caste-ridden and patriarchal society, however, women gramme panchayat members' political journey is not easy. The family political history and political membership is substantially helpful the women to enter into the politics (Bhaskar, 1997; Besley, Pande, & Rao, 2007).

In the viewpoint of Kulkarni (2011), women delegates in Gujarat and Maharashtra were uncomfortable while working at the panchayat level due to the large number of male officials and representatives. This stance makes it difficult for women to speak up and participate in public activities. The programmes undertaken by gramme panchayats, which are handled more easily by males than by women, are among the factors that limit women's participation in local self-governance. Furthermore, the criteria for association involvement that allow more male members, women's perceptions of undervaluation of their capacities and skills, and weak family support.

According to Burns et al (2001), men representatives spent more time on political engagement in a day, but women representatives spent more time on domestic chores and had limited time for political participation. It is also observed that most of the women representatives are the political proxy who is vested only the formal power

while the actual power still exist with the male members in their family (Mishra, 1999; Chattopadhyay & Duflo, 2003). Further, Palanithurai (1994) described that women members in village panchayats often face many problems while delivering their duties and responsibilities in Tamil Nadu. Male members of the ward occasionally do not collaborate with female ward members, and it is often difficult for women to balance their duties as elected officials with home responsibilities.

According to Vijayalakshmi and Chandrashekar (2002), the majority of male presidents desired a political career and believed that the presidency was the first step toward that goal. However, the majority of the female presidents had no desire to pursue a political career and were perplexed by their continued participation. There are significant discrepancies in men's and women's expectations of presidents, as well as their attitudes toward political engagement at the panchayat level. While, Rashmi (1997) reported that most of the women representative who entered into the politics first time were housewives and most of them were studied up to primary level or illiterate. Women's political careers in local self-governance have been observed in a few studies. It has been stated that after entering politics, rural women's attitudes and behaviours have changed (Vaidya, 1997).

Gochhayat (2013) examined women representation in politics at five gram panchayats of Hindol block of Dhenkand district, Orissa. The study reveals that the participation of women in electoral process and functioning at panchayat was not up to the satisfactory level. The patriarchal society, parochial culture and low level of education were the reasons for backwardness of women in political participation. Duflo and Topalova (2004) claim that voters are less satisfied with the public goods given by women representatives, which they attribute to the fact that women rarely win elections despite being effective leaders in the gramme panchayat.

According to Kaushal (2010), women in India are politically disenfranchised, yet they are capable of providing good services to the public and demonstrating good leadership qualities when given support, time, money, freedom, and training to work. While Vijayalakshmi and Chandrashekar (2002) looked at women's political participation in Karnataka, they found that despite higher representation and advancement in political status for women in local self-governance, it did not contribute to effective outcomes due to gender and other social differences.

Rai (2013) conducted an assessment of nine concepts of evaluating the impact of reservation of seats for women to ensure their political empowerment. The concepts includes political interest, political knowledge, political participation, political contacts, political trust, and attitude towards the role of gender, political protests, public projects and confidence. The study implies that gender quota had a significant impact on political knowledge of women, majority of the elected women had enough knowledge about the panchayats works and political activities. These factors substantially increased women interest in political works. Further, Chhetri (2012) reveals that women participation in gram sabha reported less in Sikkim, however as per the understanding of the officials there was no proxy representation among women. Further, the awareness level about PRIs was less among women.

Elected women representatives and decision-making

UNDP stated that development has to be inclusive and reduce the poverty level possibly all groups of people contribute to making opportunities, participate in the decision making and share the benefits of development. Inclusive development assures the participation of excluded and marginalized groups in the progressive development process, wherein they will become one of the stake holders. Decentralization similarly focused on inclusive development structure as it itself is a model of development that

enables upliftment and empowerment of the marginalized people and guaranteed by institutional framework (Mishra et al., 1996). The confirmatory actions by the governments enable their participation in various level. The main purpose of decentralization is to develop actions for activities in the local level with the involvement of all sections of the society, for instance, the participation in gram sabha. Since decentralization enables democratic power that is accountable, representative, accessible and transparent to the public which ensures inclusive development. This is initiated universally across various countries as a mechanism to develop governance and service delivery. The National Policy on Education (1986) describes that women will be empowered through combined reflection and decision making. This is parameters that helps in building a significant improvement in self-confidence, self-image, developing the capacity to think critically, ensuring equal participation on bringing social change, developing group cohesion and promotion of decision making and action, promoting group action to bring changes in the society, and encouraging ability for economic independence.

The goal of empowering ST and SC women representatives is to allow them to think freely and act wisely. It allows them to choose their community's interests at a higher level and to deliver greater service to the people without hesitation. Gender perspectives in development goals were introduced by the United Nations Development Programme (1996), which included assurances to enhance women's empowerment in economic and political decision-making at all levels, from rural self-governance to national government. It was proposed that women's empowerment be encouraged by giving them more decision-making power, providing assistance for income-generating activities, and ensuring that they have access to education and skill programmes.

Behar and Kumar (2002) looked at decentralisation in 60 gramma panchayats across five Madhya Pradesh districts. The majority of the time, the choice to run for election for women candidates was made by their spouses, brothers, and father-in-laws, according to the survey. They claimed that when a seat was designated as being reserved for women, the husband of the woman candidate was usually an ex-sarpanch (president) or ex-panch (member) of the panchayat. The women reported that dependency on their husband is essential because majority of them were not capable to handle public affairs primarily because of their lack of confidence, less educated or illiteracy, less experience and awareness and common isolation from public life.

Women in panchayat raj system

India upholds a national democratic constitution guarantees equitable and inclusive access to political participation for all groups of people. Even though, the patriarchy and cultural bias challenges the political representation of vulnerable groups like women to ensure their participation in politics. In order to rectify the gaps between local and national governance, the political participation at local level has been enabled through panchayat raj system 1992. Panchayats are seen as a tool of decentralising national governance, and this is primarily focused on social organising and development in rural India. This indicates a grassroots democracy for bridging local and national needs and interests, the panchayat raj is observed as a means of smoothing the field of democratic political involvement (Vyasulu & Vyasulu, 1999; World Bank, 2003).

In 1993, the panchayat system adopted a 30% reservation for women in the panchayat system to foster decentralisation and facilitate women's entry into politics (Arora, 1999; Kanango, 1996). This increases women's political participation to one-third of positions in governing bodies, allowing them to cross a critical threshold in gender

equity developments and ensuring women's empowerment (UNIFEM, 2003). The underrepresentation of political participation of women is substantive and descriptive. In substantive includes the distinctive perspectives of women shall be heard in political organizations for ensuring their interests, needs and demands are incorporated to political agenda.

The number of women in political groups, on the other hand, is not indicative of the total number of women in society (Tremblay & Pelletier, 2000). When the reservation system was established, political parties were less likely to promote women candidates and the possibility of being elected despite not being a member of their party. Furthermore, the gap between legally created rights and the conditions that enable women to identify and exercise such rights is usually fragmented due to a lack of politically-enforced responses to women's daily needs and interests (Nussbaum, 2003).

The need of women's political participation and leadership

The equal participation of women in decision making is not only a mandate for democracy and justice, however it is a necessary factor for considering the needs and interests of women. The active participation of women and their involvement in decision making at all level found necessary to ensure their equality and development (Ambedkar & Nagendra, 2005). Most of the women representatives entered into the politics due to the persuasion of their husbands, family members, personal interests, and pressure from political party and village people (Panda, 1997). Further, the women representatives have connection with political party members and they will be the mentors to guide them on their works at panchayats (Gowda, 1998).

In India, there has been a shift toward gender equality. The impact of liberal feminism is clearly exerting pressure on the government to provide women with equal rights to

men. Liberal feminism tries to characterise women's place in society in terms of uneven rights for participation in many sectors throughout the world outside of the home. The goal of liberal feminism is to promote equality between men and women in the public sphere (Subha & Bhargava, 2000). Feminist scholars are generally thought to be concerned about the factors that make up politics, in which men continue to be dominant in political sectors, and they maintain traditional politics legitimise women's absence or exclusion from power spheres, as well as devalue women's concerns in politics.

One of their key goals is to proclaim the political nature of private domains and gender relations, which has increased demand for conventional political spheres and compelled authorities to consider matters previously considered to be private. As a result, women's political participation must be debated and understood in this context (Kaushik, 1993). Meanwhile, in the 1980s, programmes and policies on gender in development and the concept of women's involvement in a wider way began to wane. Furthermore, it is debatable if national development will be more effective if women and men participate equally in all activities. The issue is how we can empower women, since the first 50 years of post-independence, the demand of bringing women in the forefront politics through capabilities and opportunities.

In a similar manner, social and economic researchers have argued that women's participation in political decision-making is critical. Toward the close of the twentieth century, planning methods began to discuss women's participation, leadership, and empowerment. In addition, the focus of government programmes and policies shifted from the concept of women's development to their participation in social and political domains in order to empower them. As a result, women's empowerment refers to the process by which women get equal recognition as males in order to participate in the

society's progressive development process through democratic governance and human dignity (Palanithurai, 2001). It is also observed as a process of redistribution of resources in the community in such a way that women acquire equal access and control over the resources (Subha & Bhargava, 2000).

Women's political participation and leadership in PRIs are vital not only for their own growth, but also for their access to creative potential, which is socially necessary, and without their active participation, the country cannot hope for long-term progress. India attempted to meet the needs of communities through a process that required rural people to be passive recipients of development initiatives organised and executed by people who largely dwell in metropolitan areas (Mishra & Dutta, 1999). This suppressed the attempts on local initiatives though in urban communities, the post-independence period was observed the women's entry into various fields such as administration, medicine, law, science and arts. The constitutional amendment changed this when it delivered reservation for women in PRIs.

The 73rd constitutional amendment act has assigned not less than one-third of reservation for women. This is providing not only at the level of members, but not less than one-third of the chairpersons have to be women. The PRIs providing responsibilities of preparing plans for socio-economic development and justice which implementing these schemes and plans as fairly comprehensive groups of subjects that contained 29 subjects coming under schedule XI. It further affords women representatives who are elected for the opportunities of empowerment and personal growth, while generating unique opportunities to bring the changes in the communities. Similarly, all provisions in the 73rd constitutional amendment acts pursues empowering women directly and indirectly for promoting their leaderships in PRIs. However, mere empowerment does not bring an understanding the system of local governance. It shall

be developed to redesign the very constituent of the decentralized process and system (Kaushik, 1993; Mishra, 1997; Kaur, 2000).

Role of government and PRIs in developing women's leadership

The evidences reiterates that the need for policy reservation particularly for women reported that most of the elected women in PRIs not only ensures their involvement and leadership made an impact on grass-root governance, it has also changed major myths like women have the inability to handle responsibilities and power outside their home. Further, there is a significant enhancement in the administration and delivery of services at gram panchayat level in which they focus on the felt needs of the people, higher participation of people specifically women, greater transparency, greater dependence on horizontal linkages of the community (Mathew 1994; Palanithurai, 2002). Likewise the amendment has significantly indicates the creation of political space that has empowered women to achieve confidence, social status and change their status in the patriarchal society.

Buch (1998) reveals that the main feature of this constitutional amendment consist guarantee of representation for the marginalized groups including women. It further describes that elected women representatives shall become the role models for other women in the villages. Even though it is not that women in each PRIs have not succeeded but a majority could do a significant impact in the community that makes it exhilarating. The evidences suggests that elected women representatives have better utilized the funds within the village community in terms of making arrangement of school education, drinking water, sanitation problems, health care and other problems related to the community. The women leadership in some states of India, specifically in panchayats revealed that a large number of women who belong to different communities and castes were elected as chairpersons and members in PRIs.

The participation and specified role of women in local governance is a challenging issue before the policy makers and scholars who wants to be increased the role and involvement of women at grass root level. There are number of factors are observed for ensuring democratic justice that includes maximization of resources focusing special interest of women, their involvement and expanding role of women in decision making process (Narayan, 1946). Evidences suggest that adequate level of participation of women can change their status in the society. It is observed that women is politically a backward category who have the right to participation in spite of all administrative and philosophical objections by changing electoral law that about 40 countries have introduced reservation for women national assembly election Palanithurai, 2009).

The literatures indicates that women involvement through reservation quota is the best way to ensure their participation and leadership in the administrative level. India is now 74 years of independence, even though women have significant level of participation in political institutions, they have to go a long way to get the equal rights, leadership and empowerment. There are many factors responsible for this such as religion, family status, caste, influence of family members and feudal attitude (Kaushal, 1996; Arora & Prabhakar, 1997). The 73rd constitutional amendment act provide opportunities for women in local self-governance to ensure their participation and empowerment. The act specifically sought to rectify the prolonged marginalization of poor, disadvantaged and under-represented people viz., women scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. It further generates a beautiful society for all and after independence numerous initiatives and efforts were made to maximize women's participation for providing particular programmes for them (Yogendra, 2004).

The constitution indicates various provisions for empowering women that includes article 14, 15, 16, 17, 23, 37, 39, 40, 42. These articles and preamble of constitution

provides equal rights and permits government to create policies in favor of women and stop discrimination against them. This is focus on maximizing the role and involvement of women in various social, cultural, economic and political activities. The political process can lead to substantial change in their socio-economic status and empowerment level that bring women into the main stream of development. This is the major concern of government of India that in 2001, the year has declared as the year of women empowerment (Thakur, 2010).

The women's representation in the panchayats do not essentially lead their automatic political empowerment. The social structures and patriarchy still inhibits their empowerment through local self-governance. The traditional families are not much supportive to women working in local self-governance, the underlying perception indicates that women have to stay back home for household work and they are not meant to work outside. Similarly, women are frequently excluded from participating active and legitimate roles in community life due to institutional and social constraints (Joshi & Narwani, 2005).

Most of the women panchayat members were generally treated as mere surrogates and proxies for their husbands and other male members in their family. It is observed that a woman become head of panchayat (sarpanch) through reservation. Evidences suggests that the male members in the panchayat office and husbands or other family members of elected women representatives act on their behalf while delivering duties and responsibilities at office. Further, since many elected women representatives are less educated or illiterate, they lack of knowledge about the office process. This barriers are often exploited by other members (male) working in local self-governance who maintain the accounts and records (Tharmalingam, 2013; Jabbar, 2011).

Singh (2005) describes in his book ‘functioning of panchayat raj system suggests that panchayat raj institutions in India are intended for empowering the people at three suitable levels. However, the main aim still remain a distant dream until the 73rd amendment act came into force on 1993 after a lot of investigation and blending of ideas about the benefits of the decentralization of democratic system. The substantial presence of needy and disadvantaged people especially STs and SCs as candidates through reservation system in the grass root level of political institution found a milestone development of rural politics in India. This major progress has distinct meaning as a decade before in many parts of rural India, these sections were excluded from political participation and public life. These changes significantly made an efficient political power equalities and set the outline for sustainable development.

Nandal (2013) examined a study on ‘a sociological study of Haryana about the participation of women in PRIs’ investigated the level of participation and awareness of ST elected women representatives in PRIs in Anwali district of Haryana. The ST elected women representatives reported low level of knowledge and awareness about constitution and their role in panchayats. The study further reveals that involvement of ST women in gram panchayats were limited to voting in elections. Women does not have their own stand in political involvement, instead of them their husband and other male members in the family make decisions on their behalf. The study concludes that poverty, illiteracy, traditional values, male dominance and social values are the reasons for low level participation of women in panchayats.

Kaur (2005) examined on ‘decentralized governance through PRIs’, pointed out that the assenting action for disadvantaged sections in local management have fringed political awareness and social identities of them. Therefore, forced the marginalized groups to become the part of mainstream social, economic and political life.

Furthermore, preliminary confrontations between lower and higher classes were shown to be associated with indices of social cohesion reported at local levels. The political space provided to disadvantaged groups had to deal with a setback to the unequal socioeconomic structure at the local level, and they were granted a larger area to contribute to decision-making.

Yashoda (2007) conducted a study on ‘women leadership in gram panchayats: a field analysis from Hassan district’ analyzed the political empowerment after 73rd constitutional amendment act’. The result reveals that the rural women for the first time, were given the chance to enter into the PRIs through reservation by the Karnataka state has been made a political space. Through this act women acquired an unpredicted chance for political involvement and part of decision making process at local level. In this background the paper argues that it is pertinent to assess their knowledge of statutory role, duties and functions in panchayats and awareness level of local self-governance for the betterment of women leadership.

Singh (2013) analyzed a study on ‘influence of empowerment of political participation of dalit women’ reported that dalit women’s empowerment in PRIs is a challenging issue. The constitution provides them with equal rights and status, several laws have been enacted even though their role and status in political space is very much restricted due to patriarchal society. On the other side, the participation of women in panchayats has increased up to 50%. This indicates dalit women’s representation have been exemplified and this would make a significant impact in the society. The study further states that, the involvement of dalit women in politics is a complex issue where they are socially, psychologically, politically and economically discriminated or excluded with regard to their caste. In various situations, they have to collaborate with political parties against reservation to avail their seats and they are controlled by affiliated

parties. The study finally concludes that dalit women often face hardships in the reserved panchayats and struggling to meet success in their work.

Mahipal (2004) reported that most of the SC elected women leaders were facing the issues of non-cooperation attitude from panchayat officials and dominant sections (upper caste) while performing the duties in gram panchayats. However, affirmative action for marginalized sections and women in local self-governance has significantly contributed their political awareness and social identities. It can be seen an urge to become a part of mainstream social, economic and political life of dalit women. The study reveals that early clashes between lower and higher castes were substantially reducing and is observed social cohesion at local levels. The elected dalit women have been fighting against the powers of landlords and higher castes. Even though the marginalized women were not involving effectively, they were learning to make plans for the development of the community with specifically marginalized groups.

Mishra (2002) conducted a study on ‘empowerment of women in urban local bodies for good governance’. The study indicates that the significance of 73rd constitutional amendment for empowering the women leaders. The author reported that this amendment rightly assigned the political rights for women to contest in panchayat elections as leaders to decide by the public. Even though, there are distractions to empower the women in their responsibly at office that mostly their husband’s, male members and relatives are controlling them for the decision making and leadership. The study suggests that elected women representatives have to overcome these hurdles for their better participation and decision making in the panchayat.

Ayas and Yaseen (2012) conducted a study on ‘local governance and empowerment of marginalized groups’ describes that empowerment of disadvantaged groups is the major

agenda in participatory democracy and inclusive governance. This aim is mainly for empowering these sections through greater participation and independence. This approach further question some of the critical conventions about the interrelationships between authority and development. It also seeks pinpoint those who are powerless in the degree of domination by others over them and further it assess their capability to increase internal strength and self-reliance. It identifies the right of individuals to regulate their choices in life and effect the course of disparity through their capacity to achieve control over valuable material and non-material resources. The study concludes that empowerment and inclusion of disadvantaged sections considered an essential for the successful dealing o democracy and good governance.

Rai (2007) conducted a study on ‘deliberate democracy and politics of distribution’ reveals that the panchayats is one of the best place to enhance women’s capabilities and they can bring changes in the community as well as their professional political life. They could help in transforming the institutions to bring effective, less corrupted and gender sensitive outcomes. The elected women representatives face various challenges in panchayats. At present, they are enough competent to handle the duties and responsibilities in their respected position. The study reported that women members are efficient performers than male members, as a result it gives them a professional status in their family and society. However, they perform well in the office, the male members have gendered biased assumptions that women are less educated and their awareness level is low about the schemes and programmes. The study concludes that in various situations caste and other privileges significantly influence their performance as a panchayat presidents. Further, women adopt different strategies to deal with proxy male members of the panchayats. Often they take support from other women members, political parties, family and children.

Singh (1985) in his book 'panchayat raj and administration in Haryana' states about the relevance of local leadership. It indicates that the initiation of panchayat raj system has resulted in isolating bureaucratization of administration at village and district level. The obligation of administering the development programmes have been specified to the local leaders who pursue elected representatives and administrative positions to list out the cooperation of the people. This is necessary for the implementation of various government schemes of economic bodies which is very closely secured with these leaders and the achievement of the institutions ultimately hinges upon the quality of leadership.

Parida (2012) examined on 'women and panchayat raj', the study focused on gender equality and empowerment through panchayats. It was found that women in panchayats were not yet provided equal chances due to social constraints. Further reservation seats for women is a good sign of empowerment, however it has lead only an official way not a real empowerment. The study highlighted that women's involvement in panchayats could be achieved with the cooperation of their family members only. The study suggests that women place in the family needs to be replaced with equal partnership between women and men instead of treating women are meant for household work and bearing children. It cannot achieve immediately rather it shall be imparted education to provide social and political awareness. To achieve this, first, there shall be interaction between educated rural women and illiterate elected women representatives have to be encouraged. Second, these elected women could be engaged out to the urban communities and their communication with educated urban elected women leaders shall be organized.

Jabbar (2011) in his article on 'participation of SC and ST women in politics and local barriers' discussed that the participation of women in politics is an emerging issues of

development at present. Evidences suggests that the lower participation of SC and ST women in politics due to the cultural patriarchy, caste dominance and other forms of social exclusion. As a result women ignores in participating in politics. There is a need of validation to ensure the participation of SC and ST women in political space at village level. The system shall be inclusive to encourage the development of SC and ST women by inspiring them culturally, socially and economically become self-reliant. Lack of education, inadequate experience and opportunities make SC and ST women in politics remains official, instead the power controlled by members from dominant castes, proxies, family members and relatives. Further, it was observed that non-cooperative attitude by the panchayat officials and villagers intentionally does not allow them entering into politics. In addition, caste and community play a vital role in the society where they get little access to the public sphere. The study highlighted that patriarchy, lack of education, and social system provides limited scope of acceptance for SC and ST women leadership.

Tiwari (2012) studied on 'women and panchayat raj' revealed that women involvement in panchayats has significantly contributed to women empowerment in recent decades. The study indicates that over one million women entered into panchayats elections after the execution of 73rd amendment act. Among them about 40% of the elected women representatives were from the disadvantaged sections. About 70% of the women were illiterate and does not have prior political experience. These women varies from region to region that panchayats works under different frameworks. It ranges from relegation of women to many instances of political and social insistance in functioning of panchayats. The study further discusses that dalit and women were benefited through reservation, however their involvement in active politics is quiet difficult in the existing social system. The problem of proxy involvement of women is familiar, even though it

is significantly reducing this scenario. Men play a vital role in consulting, nurturing and assisting the women who are entering into politics.

Kaushik (1993) describes about women and panchayat raj, reveals that decentralization is a democratize decision making and functioning are emphasized for reasonably some time now. The same solution for a better functioning and governance for the country, the 73rd and 74th amendments act introduced and it has been hailed the focus of attention of political structures and process in rural India. This is relevant for the marginalized groups of the society which ensures their participation in these structures.

Kumar and Rai (2006) examined on 'dalit leadership in panchayats: a comparative study of four states' in which the study explored the general factors in the selected states on enabling dalit leadership and constraining factors. The situations of dalits are varies across these states, even though there are common factors. The study reveals that education, economic independence, family, experience, personal initiative and community have significantly found enabling factors of dalit leadership. Further, caste practice is the major relevant inhibiting factor across all these states. However, like various other studies, this study was also realized the prospective of dalit leadership in panchayats. The local leaders have potentials to bring constructive changes in the social system that may not be attained through union governments and democratically elected states.

Yadab (2002) in the study of 'empowering women through reservation: a perpetual survey conducted in the urban local bodies' addressed that there is a specification to empower the women in article 74. Based on this reservation, the women are elected to the positions in panchayats. They are in charge of determining their future and complete constituency. Further, the reservation system implies a major shift in the attitudes and

values of society toward women. The study concludes that the social, economic and political development of women can ensure through PRIs.

Joshi and Narwani (2005) studied on 'panchayat raj in India: emerging trends across the states' is observed a well-documented investigation which deals with the different issues of PRIs and its significant role in giving opportunities to the marginalized people for involving in decision-making process at local level. The study discussed that PRIs is a system of government that is observed a proper mechanism and most viable of understanding of democracy at local level. The existing argument is not on its desirability rather it is on strengthening the system by identifying its limitations and filling the gaps which are integral despite the implementation of PRIs through 73rd constitutional amendment act. The wider problem such as argument on the district local government and formation of three-tier system in the country and its effect on the rural power structure on the social inclusion of women, SC's and ST's in PRIs.

Jain (2010) examined on 'subjection of women in India: a theoretical perspective on patriarchy' discussed that the nature of patriarchy in India. The study illustrates that powerlessness and marginalization of women are deep-rooted in patriarchal society like India. An upsurge of interest on the issues of women had been started with the publication report on 'towards equality by government of India' describes the status of women in 1974 followed by the remark of the international decade for women in 1975. Even though, women continue to face gender sensitivity, oppression, which is necessary to eliminate for their sustainable development. The liberal democratic framework of Indian constitution, the progressive laws and working on educational awareness have not substantially contributed to changing the marginalized women. The study concludes that a systematic analysis needed to examine the actual women's condition and their deep-rooted subjectivity.

Choudhuri (1998) in the study of 'empowerment of women through PRIs' found that tribal women were not ready to participate in the election of panchayat raj institutions in West Bengal. They reported less confident to contest the election, moreover they considered themselves as an inactive recipient of the government systems. In this study, mostly the male members responded instead of women for the questions asked by the interviewers which shows either they are not allowed to talk or they do not want to interact with outsiders.

Fadia (2004) in the study of Indian government and politics indicates that the focus of empowering women shall be equipping them to be self-reliant, and economically independent. It gives individuals a positive sense of self-worth, allowing them to handle challenging situations and participate in decision-making. Further, Mehta (2002) examined the participation level of women in panchayat raj system and reported that various pros and cons for women's involvement in local body institutions and developmental programs. Further the involvement rate of women are relatively less than men, however more than half of the elected women representatives are placed in various village panchayats.

Sinha (2007) studied on 'empowerment of women through political participation' illustrates that the status of women in India. The paper described that India became democratic over 50 years old now, however ideals of democracy are far away from the target particularly for women. The paper argues that women are still playing a minimal role in politics. Their involvement in politics are almost invisible, even though the significance of their participation is recognized by the democratic polity across all the villages in the country. The paper argues that women comprised almost half of the population and a democratic governance is possible only through their substantial involvement. The study concludes that for empowering women educationally,

economically, socially and politically, they are required to be part of decision making process.

Paramjit and Gurpreet (2009) examined on 'mapping dalits' that explored the patterns of social mobility of dalits in rural and urban Punjab'. The study emphasized four dimensions such as education, emigration, empowerment and entrepreneurship to map the changing behaviour of dalits. While comparing to other states, Punjab is frequently reflected free from acute caste oriented atrocities and inequalities, even though caste system exists and overcomes in the structure of daily life of the people in the state. The study indicates that urban dalits have experienced a rapid change in their conditions that they transformed to political empowerment at the grass root level. Notwithstanding the changes, there were some aspects of their social life that have not been changed. The study concludes that dalits have been under the influence of Bhujan Samaj party politics that given essential contributions to identify their potential and ensuring their self-sufficiency.

Sinha (2004) examined the panchayat raj and empowerment of women and reveals that panchayat raj system is the support of villages in the country to ensure the participation of all sections of the community. According to the report, Gandhi's ambition of every village having its own panchayat or republic has been realised through the implementation of the three-tier panchayat raj system for enlisting people's participation in rural building and construction. The study concludes that the 73rd amendment act is a revolutionary step for achieving the Gandhi's concept of gram swaraj.

Pujari (2012) examined on 'efficiency of women in politics' discussed the efficiency of women in local self-governance where appropriate representation of tribal and dalits

are guaranteed in West Bengal. Numerous movement led by the left wing government has significantly ensured women participation in politics. Further, women have recognized their exercise of electoral rights could bring socio-economic status and upliftment of the present status. The provision for reservation quota for SC, ST and women in local governance has been aimed to offer an appropriate space for all. The study pointed out that mixed reactions on reservation policy for women. In a state with 28 years of left government rule, the patriarchy system has been challenged, as a result women experienced more comfortable to exercise their political rights.

Guru (1995) explored on 'dalit women talk differently' was an effort to find out the issues of dalit women in the feminism discourse perspective, the study considered dalit women as a group of people need an independent perspective. It was found that dalit women often face the internal and external issues in which the internal issues are the patriarchal domination within the dalit groups, whereas, external issues made by the non-dalit forces regulating their issues. The study concludes that dalit women's independent autonomous organization have potential to stand against dalit patriarchy from within and across the state.

Satyanarayana (2005) in his book 'dalits and upper castes explored a systematic evaluation on the history of caste system and its influence on dalits. Evidently, it discusses about their struggles, water and production needs, relationship to the land and connection between caste and class. He argued the relevance of caste-class enquiries in Indian context. The author further highlighted how dalits are excluded and discriminated by dominant, upper caste people in their everyday social life. The enquiry concludes that a dual way of identifying their consciousness and identity and raised rebellious against caste exploitation.

Patil (2008) examined on 'empowerment of SC women in three villages of Kolhapur district of Maharashtra' found that the percentage of SC and ST women Sarpanches have significantly increased over these years. The study further reveals that women leader have completed substantial work in many aspects in the community. Evidently, they were performed efficient role, however the existing issues are still visible in local governance that includes their illiteracy, male domination, non-cooperation from panchayat officials, pressure from upper caste leadership and harassment. The study concludes that women are marching path towards empowerment as they could enter into the political space and leadership.

Thorat (2009) in his book examined 'dalits in India: search for a common destiny' discussed the status of dalits in India, aim to understand their status with regard to the indicators of human development. The book highlights an in-depth analysis of the socio-economic status of disadvantaged groups and evaluated their access to land and capital, occupational pattern, degree and features of rural dalit labourers, employment and unemployment rate in rural and urban regions and the magnitude of poverty among them. The study further analyzed the social development indicators including literary rate, educational level, health status an access to basic services viz., housing, electricity and water. This book emphasizes atrocities and social discrimination faced by dalits. The investigation concludes that a systematic inclusive strategies shall be initiated to solve the problems of poverty, marginality of dalit and social exclusion.

Chaudhary (2004) examined 'dalit and tribal leadership in panchayats' reveals that introducing PRIs under 73rd constitutional amendment act made significant impact on entering the dalits and tribes into the three levels of PRIs. The study point outs that most of the elected tribal and dalit women representative's education level is low, they are from various socio-demographic background, and they found significant proportion

into the local self-governance. Nevertheless, in spite of likeness, the motive of their entry into politics in the panchayats, functioning style and achievements, and process of empowerment may varies across different cultural context.

Mishra (2002) examined empowerment of women in urban local bodies' that revealed a strong local bodies shall be empowered if women elected in panchayats. The elected women representatives into the local self-governance significantly contribute their empowerment of marginalized sections that further lead to greater accountability and transparency in the system. Further, Jharta (1998) states in the book of 'women and politics in India' explains that the modern democratic constitutions in the world including India recognized the equality of people in political rights. However, in practice their involvement in politics does not appear encouraging their active participation.

Pal (2009) in his study of 'why rethink rotation of reservation in panchayats' reveals that rotation of reservation of panchayats and aggregating the tenure shall not empower the dalit and tribal women. The study suggest that the existing reservation outline shall involve several capacity building measures for ensuring gender equality. The political participation of dalit women can ensure through various state government schemes. The study highlighted that the leader at the local level shall not threat the women for their participation in panchayats. Further existing reservation system of allocation can be followed granting to 10 to 12 years of tenure. The study concludes that women shall participate in confederations, associations for their adequate representation in local level administration.

Chatter (2011) in the article on 'Indian women in local governance' illustrates the role of women in decision making that provides a vital sign of women empowerment in

local governance. The study reported that growing money power and other influence is necessary to contest in panchayat elections. The elected women often face intimidation, violence and slander from male dominated offices that stops women to participate in decision making process. Even though, the 73rd amendment act provides 33% reservation seats for women in rural areas, the elected women panchayat presidents were not allowed to participate on an equal par with men in local self-governance. Further, low awareness level, low level of educational status, proxy, unproductive role and lack of financial independence are observed the reasons for restricting women in local governance.

Tharmalingam (2013) conducted a study on ‘a comparative analysis of SC and ST elected women representatives in Tamil Nadu, reveals that these women experienced gender discrimination and caste based discrimination at panchayats. The study pointed out that SC women presidents were better than ST women presidents while performing their power. Most of the cases, elected women representatives were functioning as a proxy to their husband, family members, upper caste people, wealthy groups, local politicians, other village people and so on. The study concludes that provision of education and training can solve the proxy issue to some extent and they can organize their work accordingly.

Surinder (2006) studied on ‘caste and democracy: assertion and identity among dalits in rural Punjab’ explored the relationship between caste and politics and caste based politics and dalit allegations. This paper examined three case studies in which the result indicates that caste based conflicts and dalits allegations substantially varies across different castes. The study pointed that the experience of being a dalit is very different from that of being a dominant upper caste. The paper concludes that there is an urgent need of changing caste relations to solve the dalit assertions in contemporary India.

Baviskar (2008) examined on 'panchayat raj after 15 years of challenges ahead' indicates that election considerably addressed a revolution in local self-governance and attained a leadership at grassroots level for the past 15 years. It was found that about 2.4 lakh panchayat presidents have been elected, approximately 27 lakh panchayat members were selected across the country that comprised of 37% women, 19% scheduled caste and 12% from scheduled tribes. However, the failure women representatives are the challenges of the system, but there was a significant progress reported on empowering women at local levels. The study concludes that the elected members from dominant caste control the elected members of SC and ST who were elected through reservation. They often face exclusion and opposition from them while delivering their duties and meeting held in panchayat. They were not allowed to perform their rights that guaranteed under the act.

Anjouri (2010) examined on dalit women in India: anatomy of caste and gender based exclusion' highlighted the weak position of dalits in India. The study explained that dalit women were likely to be more vulnerable than dalit men folk because of their caste and gender based discrimination. It was advocate that they shall assert their unique identity and launch their own self-enhancement movement other than from both dalit rights movement controlled by dalit males and women rights movement dominated by dominant-caste Hindus.

Chaudhary (2004) examined on 'dalit and tribal leadership in panchayats in Madhya Pradesh' reveals that the dalit and tribal elected panchayat members were in the age group of 25 to 44 years and most of them were illiterate and engaged in agriculture related activities. Further, majority of them belong to below poverty line category and it was found that lack of basic amenities were the critical issue among these communities in the selected districts of the state. The study concludes that these leaders

lack social capital to bring out panchayat activities meaningfully. The study suggests that continuous training with systematic interval shall be conducted specifically for tribal and dalit elected representatives in panchayats.

Kumar (2008) analyzed on 'marginlaised sections in rural governance in relation to positive discrimination' indicates that the effective and ineffective dalit and women leadership is the result of a collection of factors that includes age, gender, class, caste and economic independence. The reservation act has been provided places for socio-economic mobility and leadership through political ladders. The study suggests a two-pronged strategy for attaining constructive results, education and economic benefits were essential for empowerment and self-emancipation. Further access to the resources would enable the marginalized sections to organize socially and economically and fight against subjugation and discrimination. As a result, the study highlights that a meaningful involvement of margin alised sections would be possible in local governance.

Bharati (2011) examined on '50% reservation of women in panchayats, a step towards gender equity' reveals that guaranteeing 50% reservation for women in local self-governance has been made a significant step towards equality. Gender equality is guaranteed by the constitution, and the 73rd constitutional amendment act considerably provided an extensive range of women enter into active politics at grassroots level. Evidently, it was observed that women entered into politics were with the influence of their family members and husband is taking decision in official matters in the panchayats. Further, elected tribal women representatives were controlled by the dominant caste are one of the major challenges faced by them. Nevertheless, providing 50% reservation of women in panchayats is an advantage to ensure equality and therefore changing societal injustice. The study concludes that the government shall

provide security measures for strengthening elected women representatives at panchayat level.

Nidhi (2010) examined on 'dalit women and political space which describes their status and issues related to their involvement'. The study pointed that dalit women often face caste based discrimination when they were elected to panchayats. They were performing their roles in the panchayats as proxies done by their husband, relatives, son, daughter-in-law and other known persons in the community. Dalit women were not allowed to take their own decision in the panchayats. Further, upper caste members were discouraging dalit women to attend the panchayat meetings. In various situations they were not allowed to operate funds for the programmes and schemes. They lack leadership as they often face discriminatory behaviour from the panchayat officials while delivering their duties. Similarly, they were not able to complete developmental functions in communities as the panchayat official do not process the funds for the programme. The study finally suggests that dalit women representatives shall make the following efforts to empower themselves that includes, familiar with public activities, to know their rights, control over economic activities and violence against them.

Smitha (2007) explored the development of women leadership in PRIs specifically after the introduction of the 73rd constitutional amendment act in Andhra Pradesh's socio-economic determinants of women leadership at the grass root level. The paper looked into the socioeconomic variables of elected women representatives and how they influence women's leadership. According to the findings, several beliefs are associated with women's admittance into leadership roles, which is hampered by socio-demographic factors such as age, education, occupation, land ownership, and family income.

Devappa (2011) in his work on 'political empowerment of women, issue and challenges' describes the challenges faced by elected women members in local self-governance. The study specifies that reservation quota for women in PRIs has been ensured political empowerment of the weaker sections of the society. It provides promoting equality and social justice to several section of the society. The evidences suggests that the involvement of women in panchayats were addressed on their major challenges and issues. Firstly, the elected women panchayat presidents were inefficient and often depends upon other panchayat officials for delivering their duties. Lack of experience and low level of education/illiteracy make them challenging to discharge their duties. Second, oppression from male dominance and the patriarchal social orders did not allow the elected women panchayat presidents to involve in panchayat activities. Third, lack of participation in PRIs, they do not interact with rural women and attend the gram sabha meetings failed to contribute in good governance.

Kumar and Varghese (2005) in their book entitled ' women's empowerment: issues, challenges and strategies' highlighted that democracy may fails in its purpose if a wide number of people including women lack equal chances for participating in decision making process in government system.

Dhaka, Sunita and Dhaka (2005) examined on 'behind the veil: women in panchayat raj institutions' has explored the process and pattern of social mobility among dalits and its effect on political involvement in the changing situation after the implementation of 73rd amendment act. This book is an outcome of a study executed in Haryana that focused on the involvement and status of dalit women in decision-making process at PRIs. This study highlights the major problems of empowerment of SC's, ST's and women particularly dalit women in the background of 33% reservation in PRIs. Notwithstanding the constitutional guarantees, the study reveals that dalit

women continue to be excluded and discriminated by their gender, caste and patriarchy leading to their marginalization. It further indicates that the 73rd constitutional amendment act is considered as a revolutionary phase in ensuring equal status to SC's, ST's and women particularly dalit women to the political space. This initiation has outstretched various questions. Although reservation seats are provided for dalit women, little has been changed at the local level. The study concludes that reservation is a major enabling factor to include dalit women in PRIs.

Chapter-IV

Research Methodology

In a study entitled: '*Political Empowerment of Women through Panchayati Raj Institutions: A Case Study of Sonapet District of Haryana*', the researcher examined the multifaceted aspects of women's political empowerment through their participation in local self-governing bodies at village level. Using a cross-sectional descriptive survey design, the researcher quantified and described the women's political empowerment and its associated factors. In this thesis, the researcher made a concentrated effort come up with an argument that political participation of women through local self-governing bodies at grass-root level significantly help in improving their political agency and empowerment in other spheres of women's lives. Locating within this premise, the central research question was: 'Is women's participation in the Panchayati Raj System helpful in the political empowerment of other rural women?' Additionally, the researcher examined 'How far is the elected woman representative gender sensitive?' and 'How does political power bring changes to the status of women?' Moreover, the researcher examined, 'How far do the women representatives think themselves successful in performing their duties?'

The specific objectives guided and directed this investigation through breaking down the central research question and the sub-questions into objective and measurable terms; thereby, objectives aided the process to operationalize the key construct under this investigation for adequately measuring them (Creswell, 2009). The researcher therefore developed clearly articulated objectives of this investigation in an objective and

measurable manner as part of conceptualizing the research problem alongside articulating its significance and scope.

Specific study objectives:

- 1) To plot the socio-economic profile of women representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions in general and Dalits in particular.
- 2) To examine the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in women's political empowerment
- 3) To reveal how far political power of women through Panchayat raj institutions could bring changes in the status of the women in Sonapat district of Haryana
- 4) To analyze the elected women representatives' perception of their own success and their satisfaction levels with their own roles in decision-making process

Profile of Sonipat district:

Sonipat is the smallest district out of the twenty-two districts in the state of Haryana in India. Though covers only 5.11% area of the state, it exist as a major connecting link with the important cities of the state of Delhi and Uttar Pradesh. Comprising of four sub-divisions such as Ganaur, Kharkohda, Sonapat, and Gohana, along with eight blocks, the district has a total area of 2,260 sq. km with a population size of more than 10 lakh people. There are 343 villages in the district and 15 out of it are uninhabited. The district is bordered by the states of Delhi and Uttar Pradesh.

Philosophy and research design of Enquiry: The term research design refers to 'the framework of methods, techniques carefully adopted by a researcher to systematically re-search into the problem he or she may be interested in. It direct and guide researcher

to use suitable methods to optimally and systematically investigate while minimizing possibilities of errors during the research process of operationalize, measure, analyse, and draw conclusions from the data (Polit and Hungler, 1995). Fundamentally, there are two methodological paradigms namely objective, quantitative, and subjective and qualitative based on two incomparable philosophical paradigms namely positivism and phenomenology (Polit & Hungler, 1995; Creswell, 2009). In the present study, the researcher adopted positive philosophy of research where observations about the women's empowerment through local self-governing bodies or PRIs were philosophised as the objective reality that exist outside human consciousness. Hence, the research investigation is directed through careful conceptualization, operationalization, objective measurement and analysis to describe characteristics of women's empowerment, and explain linear causation or '*cause and effect*' relationships between the elected women representatives' socio-demographic characteristics, standard of living and dimensions of empowerment through carefully argued hypotheses in the current investigation.

Using secondary research as an empirical and conceptual knowledge base, this study helped to refine the guiding research questions to augment conclusions (Polit & Hungler, 1995). Hence, this investigation was designed Using a cross-sectional descriptive survey design, the researcher quantified and described the women's political empowerment and its associated factors

A research design has three critical elements namely sampling design, an observation design and analytical or statistical design. In the present investigation, the researcher adopted these three critical components carefully for the purpose of enquiry. The following section provides detailed narratives on sampling design, observation design and statistical design.

Sampling design: In sampling design of this study, the researcher has considered to provide a detailed description of study universe, sample, sample size estimation, sample selection and rationale for the sample selection. The sampling design of this research methodology chapter details how study participants are defined, eligibility for inclusion, number of participants or sample size and selection of study participants with due rationale for size and selection procedures. Hence, the principal aim of this subsection was to inform the readers about all logical and methodological decision regarding sample selection procedures.

Defining the study universe: In the present study, the researcher has defined the study universe as ‘all elected women in Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) in the Sonipat district of Haryana state in India’. Wherein the sample was defined as ‘a elected women representative in village panchayat, block panchayat or district panchayat and municipality.

Study population and samples: The researcher has defined the study population or sample as ‘a women elected representatives presently assumed political office at Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) in the state of Haryana. Whereas, the study sample was defined as ‘a woman who are elected as people’s representatives at village panchayat, block panchayat or district panchayat at Sonipat district of Haryana’.

The following table shows the details of the data collected

District Name	Sample collected	Block Panchayat Names	Sample collected	Village Panchayat Names	Sample collected
Sonipat	4	Ganaur	1	1)Datauli 2)Purkhas 3)Garhi Kalan 4)Bari 5)Gumar 6) Majri 7) Bulanpur 8) Chirasmi 9) Dubheta 10) Garhi Gulama	7 4 3 5 2 3 1 2 2 1
		Sonipat	1	1).Mulana 2)Bangru 3). Chitana 4) Sevli 5) Pinana 6). Krewari 7)Sehzadapur 8).Jaji 9) Nangal kalan 10) Kakroi 11) Sersa	5 2 3 4 4 3 3 2 4 3 2

				12) Luhari	2
				13) Sunda Kalan	1
				14) Salarpur Majra	1
		Rai	1	1 Badmalik	6
				2. Aurangabad	5
				3. Bindroli	3
				4. Jhinjoli	3
				5) Shamri buran	2
				6) Patla	1
				7) Nathupur	2
				8) Khatkar	1
		Gohana	1	1) Mahara	4
				2) Khanpur kalan	5
				3) Gamri	3
				4) Lath	2
				5) Mahra	2
				6) Riwara	2
				7) Anwali	3
	4		8		113
					125

Sample selection procedures: Initially, the researcher developed a sampling frame or a list of all elected women representatives at Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) in Sonipt district of Haryana, using the official website links of the Ministry of Panchayat Raj

Affairs, Government of India (Ministry of Panchayat Raj, 2019). From the elected women in the district of Sonipat, the research has interviewed 125 number of elected women representatives from Panchayat, Block Panchayat and District panchayat

At Sonipat district, there are 334 enlisted villages with a district population of 14,50,001 as per Census 2011. The district is divided into eight rural development blocks namely Sonipat, Gohana, Ganaur, Kharkhoda, Kathura, Mundlana, Rai and Murthal. There are four municipal councils or corporations.

Using a multi-stage sampling procedure, the researcher selected 50% of the village panchayats, block and district panchayats using lottery technique out of the total list of Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs). In selected PRIs, the researcher listed out all elected women representatives and contacted them through PRI institutions. All elected women members contacted were informed about the purpose and objectives of the study. Also, all selected women participants were ensured confidentiality of information shared and its careful use only for the researcher's dissertation purpose. All consenting women were contacted for interview until a the estimated sample size 125 was obtained.

Measurement design: This measurement design section provides a detailed description of measurement tools used for systematically observing the phenomenon under the investigation. The subsections of the structured interview were (i) socio-demographic profile, (ii) Women's Involvement in PRIs, (iii) Women's Household Standard of Living, (iv) Women's Political Participation, (v) Women's Political Empowerment, (vi) Women's Status in Politics, (vii) Perceived Success and Satisfaction in Decision-Making. The subsequent sub-sections provided a detailed description of the variables measured.

(i) Socio-demographic characteristics: A12 –item subsection measures socio-demographic characteristics of elected women representatives at Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs). The variables included were age in years, education, religion, caste, place of residence, marital status, number of children, family type, occupation prior to election, spousal occupation, self-reported family income, and membership in self-help group (SHGs).

(ii) Elected Women’s Involvement in PRIs: A 15-item survey questionnaire was designed to collect information on women’s election to PRIs, position held, prior participation in students’ politics, membership and positions held in SHGs, profile of social activism prior to getting elected to PRIs, decision on contesting into PRIs, experience in power sharing and nature of influence in PRI decision.

(iii) Standard of Living (IIPS, 2000): Second subsection contained standard of living index. National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 1998-1999 (IIPS, 2000) was used to calculate standard of living index as a summary household measure. It composed of 27 items that weighted consumer durables, agricultural machinery, housing conditions, and access to basic services (water, light and fuel). This index was calculated by summing up weights, which were based on knowledge about the relative significance of ownership of these items, instead of a formal analysis. SLI was created for all India with possible scores ranging from 0 to 67. This index is based on quintiles for comparison purpose based on the reference population; therefore we categorized the summative scores of the SLI into five quintiles namely ‘poorest quintile (0 to 13.4); poor quintile (13.5 to 26.8); middle quintile (26.9 to 40.2); wealthy quintile (40.3 to 53.6) and wealthiest quintile (53.7 to 67).

There are five quintiles in which '*first quintile*' represents the poorest and the '*fifth quintile*' represents the wealthiest. We used this standard of living index with weights and the scores were summed up and then categorized for comparison whereas the arithmetic mean was calculated for inferential analysis.

(iv) Elected Women's Political Participation: In political participation scale, there are 12 items or questions designed to measure elected women's level of political participation in terms of the extend to influence in groups, leaderships, committees and so on. Hence, the item responses were rated on a four point Likert type rating scale where 01 = To a great extent, 02 = To some extent, 03 = Not at all and 04 = Don't know. For some items, the researcher also adopted a rating five point Likert type rating from 01 = regularly, 02 = often, 03 = sometimes, 04 = never, and 05 = No opinion. The thematic areas of measurements as reflected in items were cooperation, male members cooperation, frequency of PRI meeting participation, frequency of participation in Gram Sabha meeting, frequency of participation in discussion, proposal resolution in meeting, influence in decision-making, influence in implementing rural projects, knowledge of power and functions. Some of the sample items were 'To what extent do you think you have a voice in final decision-making?', 'How often do you participate in discussions?', and 'How often do you attend the meeting of the panchayat?'.

(v) Elected Women's Political Empowerment: A 16-item questionnaire with five point Likert type rating scale where scores range from 05 = strongly agree, 04 = agree, 03 = neither agree nor disagree, 02 = disagree and 01 = strongly disagree. The statements tap women's comprehension about local political situation, participation in public meeting, knowledge about own rights, knowledge of public services delivery

system, tenure in leadership in PRIs, sense of contribution to PRIs, agency to use vote in election, knowledge of women in PRIs, decision making, participation in meeting and empowerment. Some sample items were: 'I am sitting with others in Gram Panchayat meeting', 'I know about reservations for women in Panchayat', and 'I wish to participate in the village Panchayat elections'.

(v) Elected Women's Status in Politics: Using a 28-item instrument, the researcher examined elected women's status in PRIs and in general society. Items were rated on a five point Likert type rating scale where 01 = strongly disagree, 02 = disagree, 03 = neither agree nor disagree, 04 = agree, and 05 = strongly agree. The thematic areas measured under this subsection were women's sense of self on elected position, perceived difficulty in discharging duties as a women, role in working for women, role in generating awareness in health and reproductive health pertaining to women, domestic violence against women, problems of rural women, problem solving for rural women, participation in PIRs, knowledge of women's role in social development, knowledge and sensitivity to gender specific problems. Some of the sample items were 'I entertain/attend the people from my ward coming to my home with their problems', 'The people around me are supportive to my position in Panchayat', 'I have a good relationship with officers and other panchayat members', 'I feel empowered after election and joining the position in PRIs.'

(vii) Success and Satisfaction in Decision-making: A 19-item scale with five point Likert rating scale (01 = strongly disagree; 02 = disagree; 03 = neither disagree nor agree; 04 = agree; and 05 = strongly agree) was used to measure elected women's sense of satisfaction and perceptions of success in elected offices and position. Thematic areas of measurements were influence in decision making at PRI, perceived ability to create

discussion on pertinent theme at PRI, perceived sense of change, initiatives in local welfare, influence in household decision making, spousal influence on official duties, family influence, level of satisfaction, family members' attitude and perceived success in solving problems. Sample items were: 'I am actively involved in the decision making process', 'I take initiative in welfare activities of the panchayat', 'I feel positive changes in my life after becoming panchayat member and Pradhan.'

Interviews with elected women representatives: The researcher has interviewed the study participants at their office or at residence as per prior agreed upon terms of appointment. The structured interview schedule was used to conduct interviews with selected women. Initially, the researcher informed and educated about the purpose and objectives of the study to each prospective participant and elicited informed consent in writing for interview. Further, the researcher informed and maintained confidentiality to each study participants responded to the interview. Interviews lasted for 45 minutes to 1 hour.

Statistical analysis design: Given the context of generating extensive cross-sectional quantitative data for the study, the researcher has developed an advanced data analysis plan. The analysis plan contained two pertinent dimensions namely preliminary analysis and main analysis. In preliminary analysis, the researcher conducted data entry into SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 24) spreadsheet. After data entry, the researcher performed a random check of questionnaire from which data were entered into SPSS spreadsheet in order to detect any entry level human error. Secondly, the researcher cleaned data through plotting and charting wherein entry level mistakes were identified and rectified. Thirdly, the data transformations were performed as

deemed appropriate for likert type data after which the researcher conducted normal distribution of data. It was critical for performing inferential statistical analysis since data normality is an important statistical assumption upon which statistical inferences are based at. Using the QQ Plot, Shapiro Wilk test, and Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, the research found data elected on key analytical variables were relatively normally distributed and thus, data were broadly fit for inferential analysis.

Fourthly, the researcher performed descriptive analysis using frequency, percentage, mean, range and standard deviation statistics to describe socio-demographic characteristics of elected women representatives at PRIs. Fifthly in inferential analysis, the researcher studied relationships (using Ch-square test and Pearson's product movement correlation, while differences and variances were studied using Independent Sample t' test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA-one way). The researcher additionally used multiple linear regression analysis to establish factor determining political empowerment of women. Also, the researcher used logistic regression analysis to predict the likelihood of political participation and decision in critical circumstances and or concerns.

Chapter V

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table-1 shows the socio-demographic profile of elected women representatives in
PRIs.

Socio-demographic profile	F	%	Socio-demographic profile	F	%
Age (in years)			Age (in category)		
Mean	42.7		20 to 30	17	13.6
SD	11.5		31 to 40	42	33.6
Range	24-80		41 to 50	46	36.8
			51 to 60	6	4.8
			61 & above	14	11.2
Education			Marital status		
Primary school	21	16.8	Married	119	95.2
Secondary school	26	20.8	Widow	06	4.8
High school	32	25.6			
Higher secondary school	31	24.8			
UG & Above	15	12.0			
Gender			Religion		
Women	125	100	Hindus	125	100
Social groups			No of children		
General category	82	65.6	One child	13	10.4
OBCs	16	12.8	2 children	63	50.4
SCs	27	21.6	3 & more children	40	32.0
STs	00	00	No children	09	7.2

Place of residence			Family type		
Rural	125	100	Nuclear family	40	32
			Joint family	85	68

Table-1 shows the socio-demographic profile of elected women representatives in PRIs. Using descriptive statistics, the researcher examined the socio-demographic characteristics of elected women representatives in the study district. Initially, in the distribution of age, the mean age was 42.7 years with an SD of 11.5 years while the age range was from 24 years to 80 years. Additionally, the researcher categorically examined the age distribution where the majority i.e., 36.8% of these women belonged to 41 to 50 years of age and 33.6% were aged between 31 years to 40 years 11.2% were aged above 60 years while 13.6% aged between 20 to 30 years. In education, more than a quarter (i.e., 25.6%) were educated up to High School, and approximately the same percent (24.8%) were educated up to higher secondary school, and 20.8% were educated at secondary level while only 12 had a UG and above. In the marital status of elected women representatives in PRIs, 95.2% were married and presently living with their spouses, and 4.8% were widowed. All participants were Hindu women of rural areas; whereas 65.6% were from the general (forward) social group, 12.8% were from OBC (Other backward castes), and 21.6% were scheduled castes. Nearly 68% were from joint families while 32% were from nuclear families while more than half of the women had 2 children while 32% had 3 or more than 3 children, wherein 1 child families were 10.4%.

Table-2 shows the occupational profile and household annual income of elected women representatives in PRIs.

Occupational profile	F	%	Occupational profile	F	%
Job before election			Spousal occupation		
Government job	1	0.8	Government job	8	6.4
Private job	20	16	Private job	36	28.8
Business	1	0.8	Business	2	1.6
Agriculture	48	38.4	Agriculture	47	37.6
Coolie	3	2.4	Coolie	3	2.4
Homemaker/Not working	52	41.6	Others	20	16
			Not applicable	9	7.2
Monthly family income			Monthly family income		
0 to 2000	1	0.8	Mean	13940	
2001- 5000	13	10.4	SD	11407.3	
5001 -10000	52	41.6	Range	2000-75000	
10001 – 20000	38	30.4			
20001 & above	21	16.8			

Table-2 shows the occupational profile and household annual income of elected women representatives in PRIs. In the job before the election, 41.6% were homemakers, 38.4% were engaged in agriculture, and 16% were engaged in private sector jobs. In spousal occupation, 37.6% were from farming background, 28.8% were employed in private sector jobs and only 6.4% reported being employed in public sector jobs. In family monthly income, the mean income was Rs. 13940 with an SD of Rs. 11407.3 with a range from Rs. 2000 to Rs.75000/-. Wherein, 41.6% belong to the income group of Rs. 5001 to Rs. 10000 and 30.4% belong to the income group of Rs. 10001 to Rs. 20000.

Table-3 shows the descriptive scores of standard of living index scores of elected women representatives

SLI Wealth quintiles	F	%	Descriptive scores	N/Mean (SD)
Poorest wealth quintile	01	0.8	Standard of living index	125
Poor wealth quintile	52	41.6	Number	26.9
Middle wealth quintile	---	---	Mean	5.0
Wealthy quintile	---	---	SD	11-40
Wealthiest quintile			Min-Max	

Table-3 shows the descriptive scores of the standard of living index scores of elected women representatives. In the poorest wealth quintile, only one woman belonged while the poor quintile, there were 41.6% (n = 52) women while middle wealth quintile had 57.6% of women. None of the elected women belonged to wealthy or wealthiest

quintiles as per Standard of Living Index (IIPS, 2000) scores. Whereas, the mean score obtained was 26.9% with an SD of 5 while scores ranged from 11 to 40.

Figure-1 shows the elected women's membership in SHGs before getting elected into PRIs.



The researcher examined these women's history of participation in self-help groups (SHGs) prior to their election into PRIs. Hence, figure-1 shows the elected women's membership in SHGs before getting elected into PRIs. Evidently, slightly above 20.8% were the members in SHGs before they got elected into PRIs. Interestingly, nearly 80%

of the women had no prior experience in the group outside of their households before their election.

Table-4 shows the profiling of women engagement in PRIs

Profiling women in Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs.)					
Variable labels	F	%	Variable labels	F	%
Elected from			Post held in PRIs		
Open category	78	62.4	Sarpanch/Punch	113	90.4
Reserved category	47	37.6	Block Panchayat	8	6.4
			District Panchayat	4	3.2
Participation in			If yes what was the		
student/youth			position?	4	3.2
organization prior to			Secretary	23	18.4
election	22	17.6	Active member	98	78.4
Yes	102	81.6	Passive member		
No					
Did you participate in any			How did you decide to		
social activity before			context the PRI election?		
election?			Own decision	87	69.6
Yes	22	17.6	Family persuasion	22	17.6
No	103	82.4	Political party persuasion	01	0.8
			Others	15	12
Have you contested			Do you feel that your		
against male candidates			status in family and		
in election?			society gets elevated after		
Yes	54	43.2	being elected?	38	30.4
No	71	56.8	To a great extend	52	41.6

			To some extend	09	7.2
			Not at all	26	20.8
			Don't know		
Do you think PRIs have helped in the decentralisation of powers at the grass root level?	43	34.4	Do you find that women are performing their role in Panchayat affairs like the male counterparts?		
To a great extend	37	29.6	To a great extend	78	62.4
To some extend	17	13.6	To some extend	33	26.4
Not at all	26	20.8	Not at all	3	2.4
Don't know	2	1.6	Don't know	11	8.8
No response					
Do you think women are represented by proxy by their male family members in Panchayats?			Is there any difference that you have experienced by virtue of being a women in Panchayats?		
Yes	43	34.4	To a great tended	27	21.6
No	56	44.8	To some extend	21	16.8
To some extend	8	6.4	Not at all	56	44.8
Don't know	18	14.4	Don't know	21	16.8
Has some of your family member contested any election before you were elected to the local body?					
Yes	22	17.6			
No	103	82.4			

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Table-4 shows the women elected representatives' engagement in PRIs. The researcher examined their category of elected status, position held in PRIs, and their overall participation in PRIs. The descriptive analysis reveals that most of the women contested the election through open category (n=78; 62.4%); and about 37.6% (n=47) elected through reserved category. The position held in PRIs were examined in terms of Sarpanch, Panch, Panch Samities, and Zila Parishad. The result indicates that most of the elected women representatives held in the position in PRIs were Sarpanch/Punch (n=113; 90.4%). About 6.4% (n=8) were in the Block Pnachayat and only 3.2% (n=4) were in the District Panchayat. Further, the majority of the elected women representatives were not participating in any student or youth organization (n=102; 81.6%) and 22% (17.6) of them were participating in these organizations. The participating members' position in student or youth organizations were assessed and the descriptive result shows that most of them were passive members (n=98; 78.4%); only 4 (3.2%) members were held in the position of Secretary and 18.4% (n=23) were active members in the organizations.

The elected women representatives' participation in social activity before the election was examined. The result reveals that only 17.6% (n=22) of women were participated in social activities before electing to PRIs. While 82.4% (n=103) women didn't participate in any social activity before their election. Further, the women's decisions in contesting elections in PRIs were examined and the descriptive statistics show that most of the women had their own decision in the participating election (n=87; 69.6%). Whereas 17.6% (n=22) of women responded that their family inspired them to participate in the election. On the other side, only 1 woman responded that political

party persuasion in the participating election (0.8%), and 15 (12%) responded that they decided to contest in the election through other influences.

The researcher assessed whether the women candidates contested against male candidates in the election. The descriptive analysis indicates that 56.8% (71) women contested elections, not against male candidates. Nonetheless, 43.2% (n=54) of women contested elections against male candidates. Further, the women representatives were asked their status in family and society gets elevated after being elected. The result reveals that to some extent women's status in family and society got elevated after the election (n=52; 41.6%). However, 30.4% (n=38) women responded that to a great extent their status in family and society got elevated after being elected. On the other hand, 7.2% (n=9) of women reported that not at all their status was elevated after being elected. Finally, 20.8% (n=26) revealed that they don't know whether their status elevated after the election.

The women were asked about their opinion on whether PRIs have helped in the decentralization of powers at the grass-root level. The descriptive analysis shows that 34.4% (n=43) of women responded that to a great extent PRIs have helped in the decentralization of powers at the grass-root level. Similarly, 29.6% (n=37) indicates that to some extent PRIs have helped in the decentralization of powers at the grass-root level. About 13.6% (n=17) and 20.8% (n=26) reported that not at all and they don't know PRIs have helped in the decentralization of powers at the grass-root level simultaneously.

Furthermore, to a great extent (n=78; 62.4%) of elected women reported that they were performing their role in panchayat affairs like male counterparts. Similarly, to some extent (n=33; 26.4%) of women responded that they were performing their role in

panchayat affairs like male counterparts. On contrary, 2.4% (n=3) and 8.8% (n=11) indicated that they were not at all performing and they don't know whether performing their role in panchayat affairs like male counterparts. The elected women were asked their opinion on whether women were represented by proxy on their male family members in panchayats. The analysis reveals that most of the elected women reported no (44.8%; 56) and about 34.4% (n=43) indicates that yes. Further, to some extent (n=8; 6.4%) of elected women reported that they were represented by proxy on their male family members in panchayats. And 14.4% (n=18) responded that they don't know whether elected women are being represented by proxy on their male family members in panchayats.

The elected women were asked whether some of their family members contested any election before they were elected to the local body. The descriptive analysis reveals that most of the women reported that none of their family members (n=103; 82.4%) contested any election before they were elected to the local body. However, 17.6% (n=22) reported that some of their family members contested elections before they were elected to the local body. Finally, the elected women were asked was there any difference that they have experienced by virtue of being a woman in panchayats. The descriptive analysis shows a mixed response that 21.6% (n=27) of women reported that to a great extent there were differences that they have experienced by virtue of being a woman in panchayats. Constantly, 16.8% (n=21) of women reported that to some extent there were differences that they have experienced by virtue of being a woman in panchayats. About 44.8% (n=56) of women found there were not at all any differences that they have experienced by virtue of being a woman in panchayats. And finally, 16.8% (n=21) of women responded that they don't know whether there were any differences that they have experienced by virtue of being a woman in panchayats.

Table-5 shows descriptive scores of elected women's political participation

Variable labels	F	Min-Max	Mean	SD
Sense of cooperation	125	6-23	10.1	4.6
Frequency of participation	125	5-21	8.8	3.5
Political participation (total)	125	11-44	18.8	7.7

In the present study, the researcher defined elected women's political participation as perceived support and cooperation of elected women from Panchayat officials, other elected men, and women members'. In addition, this subsection of political participation also considered the frequency of participation in Gram Subha meeting, Panchayat meeting, and participation in discussion. Table-5 shows descriptive scores of elected women's political participation. In sense of cooperation from others (which include PRI officials, other, male and female members), the scores obtained ranged from 6 to 23 with a mean of 10.1 and an SD of 4.6. The result implies that elected women perceived relatively little amount of cooperation from other members, including women members as well as PRI officials.

In women's frequency of participation in PRI meetings, Gram Sabha, and in other committees, the scores obtained ranged from 5 to 21 with a mean of 8.8 and an SD of 3.5. It implies that elected women representatives had the minimal frequency of participation in PRI meetings, including participation Gram Subha. Additionally, in elected women's overall political participation, the scores obtained ranged from 11 to 44 with a mean of 18.8 and an SD of 7.7. Evidently, the measures of central tendency suggest that elected women enjoyed a relatively low level of political participation in PRIs.

Table-6 shows the descriptive scores of study variables

Key study variables	N	Min-Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Political participation	125	11-44	18.8	7.7
Political empowerment	125	51-111	72.2	8.3
Women's status in politics	125	90-140	119.3	13.3
Success & satisfaction in decision making	125	48-112	75.9	9.1

Table-7 shows the descriptive scores of study variables namely political participation, political empowerment, and women's status in politics, success, and, satisfaction in decision making. Initially, the researcher examined the level of political participation of elected women. It includes how extent the panchayat raj officials are cooperative working in the panchayats, male and female members co-operation in related to work

in the office, frequency of attending the meetings in panchayats, and grama sabha meetings. Their participation in the discussions, initiation of any proposed resolutions in panchayat meetings, considerations of their voice in final decision-making, and implementation in rural programs. The satisfaction level on their performance in the village panchayat, suggestion on strengthening the effective participation of Dalit women in Panchayat Raj Institutions, and awareness of their powers and functions in the panchayats. The analysis shows that political participation ranged from 11 to 44 with a mean of 18.8 and an SD of 7.7. The result evidently indicates that the elected women representatives' political participation is poor.

Secondly, in elected women's political empowerment, the aspects contained were their ability to assess and evaluate the local political situations, participate and contribute in party meetings, public meetings, knowledge of the public service delivery system, generic and women-specific rights, skills in decision making and accessing information. In the scores obtained on political empowerment, the scores ranged from 51 to 111 with a mean of 72.2 with an SD of 8.3; which implies that a high level of political empowerment.

Thirdly, the researcher examined the elected women's status in politics. The status was examined in the areas of their 'sense of pride in PRI membership, status in the household, problems in discharging duties, role in generating women's rights, stand on domestic violence, intervening in women's problems, and expressing views without fear. The scores ranged from 90 to 140 with a mean of 119.3 and an SD of 9.1. The result reveals that the elected women reported a high level of status in politics.

Finally, elected women's perceptions of their own success and satisfaction in decision-making were examined. It contained their involvement in the decision-making process

in terms of independent decisions, senior members decisions and only the role in execution, improvement in individual capacity after being elected, initiation of welfare activities, positive changes in life, effective participation in decision making, family members influence in decision making, improvement in the status of Dalit women, satisfaction level of the existing system for women empowerment, positive changes in the attitude of family members after being elected, the perception of own work, participation in the problem solving, initiation of women related issues, perception on PRIs role in empowering the rural women and initiation of programs through panchayat for the upliftment of women. The scores on the perception of own success and satisfaction in decision making were ranged from 48 to 112 with a mean of 75.9 and an SD of 9.1. The result implies that elected women had a high level of success and satisfaction in their decision-making process in village panchayats.

Table-8 shows the correlations between socio-demographic profiles and key study variables

S. No	Variable labels	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Age (in years)						
2	Monthly income	-.044					
3	Standard of living	.078	.259**				
4	Political participation	-.148	-.145	-.176*			
5	Political empowerment	.050	.069	.056	-.583**		
6	Women's status in politics	.158	.183*	.236**	-.418**	.582**	
7	Success and satisfaction in decision making	.200*	.127	.222*	-.395**	.432**	.719**
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).							

Table-8 shows the correlations between socio-demographic profiles i.e., age and monthly income, and the major variables used in the study that includes standard of living, political participation, political empowerment, women's status in politics, their perception of success, and satisfaction in decision making. First, age was significantly correlated with elected women's success and satisfaction in decision making ($r=.200$;

$p < .05$). The result indicates that as elected women's age increases their success and satisfaction in decision making also increases. However, age is not correlated with monthly income, the standard of living, political participation, political empowerment, and women's status in politics. Further, monthly income and standard of living are significantly correlated ($r = .259$; $p < .01$). The result indicates that higher the family monthly income higher would be in their standard of living. Constantly, monthly income was significantly correlated with elected women's status in politics ($r = .183$; $p < .05$). Evidently, higher the monthly income is considerably improve the elected women status in politics. Nevertheless, monthly income was not correlated with women's political participation, political empowerment and their success and satisfaction in decision making.

Standard of living was inversely correlated with political participation of elected women representatives ($r = -.176$; $p < .05$). In this study, the political participation of women reported less, therefore, plausibly standard of living does not affect their involvement in politics, it may be determined by some extraneous factors. Further, the standard of living and elected women's status in politics are significantly correlated ($r = .236$; $p < .01$). The result implies that the higher the standard of living of the elected women higher would be their status in politics. Similarly, standard living was significantly related to elected women's success and satisfaction in decision making at different levels ($r = .222$; $p < .05$). The result indicates that when the standard of living of the women increases, their success and satisfaction in decision-making also increases. However, the standard of living was not correlated with the political empowerment of elected women.

Political participation of elected women was inversely correlated with their political empowerment ($r = -.583$; $p < .01$). Since the political involvement of elected women

reported less, plausibly the reason could be lesser the political empowerment. Similarly, political participation was inversely correlated with elected women's status in politics ($r=-.418$; $p<.01$) and success and satisfaction in decision making ($r=-.395$; $p<.01$). Furthermore, elected women's political empowerment and their status in politics are significantly correlated ($r=.582$; $p<.01$). The result reveals that the higher the political empowerment of elected women higher would be their status in politics. Constantly, political empowerment and women's success and satisfaction decision-making are significantly correlated ($r=.432$; $p<.01$). The result implies that when elected women's political empowerment increases their success and satisfaction in decision making also increases. Finally, elected women's status in politics was significantly correlated with their success and satisfaction in decision making ($r=.719$; $p<.01$). The result indicates the hat higher the women's status in politics higher would be their success and satisfaction in decision making.

Table-9 shows educational grade-wise variance of key study variables.

Educational grade achieved	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	df	Sig.
Standard of living	255.533	63.883	2.740	4	.032
Political participation	1373.749	343.437	6.870	4	.001
Political empowerment	1202.926	300.732	4.895	4	.001
Women's status in politics	6986.999	1746.750	14.052	4	.001
Success & satisfaction in decision making	3479.701	869.925	15.591	4	.001

Women's standard of living significantly varied on educational grades achieved ($F(4) = 2.740$; $p < .05$) where post hoc test using Tukey HSD reveals that primary and secondary grade achievers significantly differed on their standard of living ($p < .05$). Similarly, primary and higher secondary groups also significantly differed ($p < .05$). Hence, the results suggest that educational attainment continues to influence elected women's standard of living significantly. Further, elected women's political participation significantly varied on educational grades achieved ($F(4) = 6.870$); $p < .01$)

in which post hoc test using Tukey HSD indicates that primary and higher secondary grade achievers significantly differed on their political participation ($p < .05$). Constantly, primary grade achievers and under-graduates and above women's substantially differed on their political participation ($p < .05$). The result evidently indicates that educational attainment continues to influence elected women's political participation.

Furthermore, elected women's political empowerment significantly varied on their educational grade achieved ($F(4) = 4.895$; $p < .05$) where post hoc test using Tukey HSD specifies that high school and higher secondary groups significantly differed on their level of political empowerment ($p < .05$). Continually, high school grade achievers and under-graduates and above women's political empowerment were considerably differed ($p < .05$). Therefore, the result directs that educational attainment continues to influence elected women's political empowerment. Women's status in politics substantially varied on their educational grades ($F(4) = 14.052$; $p < .01$) where post hoc test using Tukey HSD reveals that primary and high school grade achievers significantly differed on their status in politics ($p < .05$). Likewise, primary grade achievers and under-graduates and above women's status in politics was significantly differed ($p < .01$). Hence, the result discloses that educational attainment remains to influence elected women's status in politics. Finally, women's success and satisfaction in decision making significantly varied on educational grades achieved ($F(4) = 15.591$; $p < .01$) where post hoc test using Tukey HSD implies that all groups such as primary, high school, higher secondary school and under-graduates and above significantly differed on women's success and satisfaction in decision making at various levels ($p < .05$). Therefore, the result indicates that educational attainment continues to influence elected women's success and satisfaction in decision making.

Table-10 shows caste-wise variance of key study variables.

Caste wise variance	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	df	Sig.
Standard of living	113.485	56.742	2.355	2	.099
Political participation	200.326	100.163	1.704	2	.186
Political empowerment	14.151	7.075	.101	2	.904
Women's status in politics	462.218	231.109	1.315	2	.272
Success & satisfaction in decision making	783.482	391.741	5.089	2	.008

Table-10 shows the analysis of variance of key study variables across caste-wise groups. The result reveals that elected women's success and satisfaction in decision-making significantly varied on caste-wise groups ($F(2) = 5.089$; $p < .05$). The mean value is 391.741. Hence, the result suggests that castes groups continue to influence women's success and satisfaction in decision making. However, women's standard of living, political participation, political empowerment and their status in politics does not show variance on caste groups.

Table-11 shows wealth quintiles wise variance of key study variables.

Wealth quintiles wise variance	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	df	Sig.
Political participation	288.699	144.349	2.486	2	.087
Political empowerment	57.263	28.631	.410	2	.664
Women's status in politics	1797.196	898.598	5.452	2	.005
Success and satisfaction in decision making	127.536	63.768	.774	2	.463

The table-11 shows the wealth quintiles wise variance of key study variables. The result indicates that elected women's status in politics significantly varied on wealth quintiles ($F(2) = 5.452$; $p < .05$). The mean value is 898.598. Therefore, the result recommends that wealth quintiles continue to influence women's status in politics. Nevertheless, women's political participation, political empowerment, and their success and satisfaction in decision-making reveal no variance on wealth quintiles.

Table-12 shows the education grade wise differences of the key study variables

Variables	Education	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
Political participation	lower to upper primary	47	16.45	6.409	-2.898	123	.005
	High school & above	78	20.24	8.107			
Political empowerment	lower to upper primary	47	73.06	8.138	.918	123	.361
	High school & above	78	71.65	8.428			
Women's status in politics	lower to upper primary	47	124.98	11.307	3.883	123	.001
	High school & above	78	115.95	13.305			
Success and satisfaction in decision making	lower to upper primary	47	80.87	8.574	5.203	123	.001
	High school & above	78	72.96	8.025			

Table-12 shows the education grade-wise differences of the key variables studied. The independent sample t' test reveals that there was a significant difference in political

participation between lower to upper primary grade achievers and those who studied high school and above ($t(123) = -2.898$; $p < .05$). The mean difference shows high school and above grade, achievers tend to report high political participation ($M=20.24$) than lower to upper primary grade achievers ($M=16.45$). Further, there was a significant difference in elected women's status in politics between lower to upper primary grade achievers and those who studied high school and above ($t(123) = 3.883$; $p < .01$). The mean difference reveals that lower to upper primary grade achievers have high status in politics ($M=124.98$) than high school and above grade achievers ($M=115.95$).

Similarly, there was a significant difference in the success and satisfaction in the decision-making of elected women between lower to upper primary grade achievers and those who studied high school and above ($t(123) = 5.203$; $p < .01$). The mean difference indicates that lower to upper primary grade achievers tend to report a high level of success and satisfaction in decision making at different levels ($M=80.87$) than high school and above grade achievers ($M=72.96$). However, there is no difference reported in political empowerment between lower to upper primary grade achievers and those who have completed high school and above.

Table-13 shows the caste wise differences of the key study variables

Variables	caste	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
Political participation	upper castes	98	19.28	8.221	1.623	123	.109
	lower castes	27	17.15	5.267			
Political empowerment	upper castes	98	72.15	8.230	-.079	123	.937
	lower castes	27	72.30	8.779			
Women's status in politics	upper castes	98	118.41	13.481	-1.507	123	.134
	lower castes	27	122.74	12.212			
Success and satisfaction in decision making	upper castes	98	74.62	8.522	-3.202	123	.002
	lower castes	27	80.70	9.502			

Table-13 shows the caste-wise differences of the key variables such as political participation, political empowerment, women's status in politics, and success and satisfaction in decision making studied. The independent sample t' test shows that there was a significant difference in elected women's success and satisfaction in decision making between upper castes and lower castes ($t(123) = -3.202$; $p < .05$). The mean difference reveals that lower castes tend to report high success and satisfaction in

decision making (M=80.70) than upper castes women (M=74.62). However, there was no difference reported on political participation, political empowerment, and women's status in politics across caste groups.

Table-14 shows the family type-wise differences of the key study variables

Variables	Family type	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
Political participation	Nuclear family	40	17.00	6.389	-1.989	123	.050
	Joint family	85	19.67	8.155			
Political empowerment	Nuclear family	40	75.70	8.896	3.376	123	.001
	Joint family	85	70.53	7.529			
Women's status in politics	Nuclear family	40	125.05	10.924	3.433	123	.001
	Joint family	85	116.66	13.512			
Success and satisfaction in decision making	Nuclear family	40	79.63	7.486	3.241	123	.002
	Joint family	85	74.20	9.252			

Table-14 shows the family type-wise differences of the key variables studied. The independent sample t' test indicates that there was a significant difference reported in political participation between the women coming from nuclear families and joint

families ($t(123) = -1.989$; $p < .05$). The mean difference reveals that the women from joint families tend to report high-level political participation ($M=19.67$) than women from nuclear families ($M=17$). Further, there was a significant difference in political empowerment between the women from nuclear families and joint families ($t(123) = 3.376$; $p < .01$). The mean difference indicates that women from nuclear families have reported a high level of political empowerment ($M=75.70$) than women from joint families ($M=70.53$).

Constantly, there was a significant difference in status in politics between women from nuclear families and joint families ($t(123) = 3.433$; $p < .01$). The mean difference implies that women from nuclear families tend to report high status in politics ($M=125.05$) than women from joint families ($M=116.66$). Furthermore, there was a significant difference in women's success and satisfaction in decision making between women from nuclear families and joint families ($t(123) = 3.241$; $p < .05$). The mean difference indicates that women from nuclear families reported high level of success and satisfaction in decision making ($M=79.63$) than women from joint families ($M=74.20$).

Table-15 shows the occupation wise differences of the key study variables

Variables	occupation before election	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
Political participation	Working	73	19.62	7.711	1.380	123	.170
	Housewife	52	17.69	7.643			
Political empowerment	Working	73	71.77	8.703	-.663	123	.509
	Housewife	52	72.77	7.785			
Women's status in politics	Working	73	115.70	14.594	-4.124	123	.000
	Housewife	52	124.46	9.115			
Success and satisfaction in decision making	Working	73	74.78	9.713	-1.702	123	.091
	Housewife	52	77.56	7.858			

Table-15 shows the occupation-wise difference of the study variables such as political participation, political empowerment, women's status in politics, and success and satisfaction in decision making. The independent sample t' test shows that there was a significant difference in elected women's status in politics between the working women and housewives ($t(123) = -4.124$; $p < .01$). The mean difference indicates that housewives tend to report high status in politics ($M=124.46$) than working women ($M=115.70$). However, there was no difference reported in political participation,

political empowerment, and success and satisfaction in decision-making between working women and housewives.

Table-16 shows the SLI scores wise differences of the key study variables

Variables	SLI	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
Political participation	low wealth quintiles	53	20.40	7.012	1.989	123	.049
	upper wealth quintiles	72	17.65	8.037			
Political empowerment	low wealth quintiles	53	71.40	10.313	-.850	123	.398
	upper wealth quintiles	72	72.76	6.486			
Women's status in politics	low wealth quintiles	53	114.92	12.485	-3.316	123	.001
	upper wealth quintiles	72	122.60	13.001			
Success and satisfaction in decision making	low wealth quintiles	53	74.77	8.489	-1.233	123	.220
	upper wealth quintiles	72	76.79	9.423			

Table-16 shows the women's standard of living scores-wise difference in political participation, political empowerment, women's status in politics, and success and

satisfaction in decision making studied. The independent sample t' test shows that there was a significant difference in elected women's political participation between the low wealth quintiles and upper wealth quintiles ($t(123) = 1.989$; $p < .05$). The mean difference reveals that women with low wealth quintiles tend to report high political participation ($M=20.40$) than women with upper wealth quintiles ($M=17.65$). Constantly, there was a significant difference in women's status in politics between the low wealth quintiles and upper wealth quintiles ($t(123) = -3.316$; $p < .01$). The mean difference suggests that women with upper wealth quintiles have high status in politics ($M=13.001$) than women with lower wealth quintiles ($M=12.485$). Nonetheless, there was no difference reported in political empowerment and success and satisfaction in decision making between women lower and upper wealth quintiles.

Table-17 shows the multiple linear regression model of socio-demographic predictors
of women's status in politics

Model -1: Determinants of women's status in politics	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	100.793	8.861		11.375	.000
Age	.058	.095	.050	.604	.547
Education grade (UP or Less = 0; High school = 1)	-3.712	2.426	-.136	-1.530	.129
Marital status (married = 1; unmarried = 0)	-4.808	5.069	-.078	-.949	.345
Caste group (lower caste = 1; upper caste = 0)	-.913	.216	-.341	4.218	.000
Family type (Nuclear =0; joint = 1)	1.059	2.700	.033	.392	.696
Occupation before election (working = 0; house wife=1)	-8.016	2.390	-.282	-3.354	.001
Standard of living	8.737	2.076	.325	4.208	.000
F statistic: F(6, 118) = 9.769; p<.001					
R ² =.337; Adjusted R ² = .297					
NB: *** significant at .001 level					

Table-17 shows the results of multiple linear regression analysis performed to understand how socio-demographic variables predict elected women's status in politics. The socio-demographic variables considered were age (in years), educational grade (upper primary or less = 0; High school and above =1), marital status (married = 1; unmarried/separated/divorced =0), caste (lower caste =1 upper-caste = 0), family type (nuclear = 0; joint =1), occupation (working =0 housewife =1), and standard of living measured by Standard of Living Index (IIPS, 2000). The dependent variable was 'women's status in politics' measured on a five-point Likert type rating scale which range from 'strongly agree =5 to neither agree nor disagree =3 to strongly disagree =1'. After transforming the data needed for multiple regression analysis (for an instance, nominal variables were dichotomized and labeled as 0 and 1) and computing the overall scores and means of 'women's status in politics', the researcher ruled out the plausible role of multicollinearity of predictor variables using the measure of tolerance and VIF. Multicollinearity exists when tolerance is below 0.1 and VIF is greater than 10. In this model, tolerance level was within the acceptable limits (i.e., less than 0.1) and VIF less than 10. The researcher tested the overall significance of the model using F statistic, which evidenced the predictor model of women's status in politics was statistically significant at 0.001 level $F(6, 118) = 9.769; p < .001$).

The elected women's age did not significantly influence their status in politics ($\beta = .050; p > .05$). In a similar way, education grade also did not help in improving their status in politics ($\beta = -.136; p > .05$) and followed by their marital status ($\beta = -.078; p > .05$). Evidently, caste affiliation of elected women significantly influenced their status in politics ($\beta = .341; p < .001$) which suggest that being lower caste significantly reduced their political status. As seen earlier, elected women's family type did not significantly influence their status in politics ($\beta = .033; p > .05$). Additionally, women's occupation

before their election into PRIs significantly influenced their political status ($\beta = -.282$; $p < .001$) which implies that being a house wife before the election significantly reduced their status in politics. On the other side, better standard of living significantly influenced their status in politics ($\beta = .325$; $p < .001$) which suggest that having more household wealth status significantly improved women's political status in society. To sum up, the overall beta coefficients suggest that being in lower caste groups, and house wife before getting elected significantly reduced women's political status; whereas, women of households with better wealth status substantially improved their political status in society. Overall model explains 33.7% of variance ($R = .337$) as showed by square statistic.

Table-18 shows the multiple linear regression model of socio-demographic predictors
of women's Success and satisfaction in decision making

Model -1: Determinants of women's success and satisfaction in decision making	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardize d Coefficient s	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)					
Age	63.590	6.141		10.355	.000
Education grade (UP or Less = 0; High school = 1)	.063	.066	.080	.959	.339
Marital status (married = 1; unmarried = 0)	-4.435	1.682	-.238	-2.637	.009
Caste group (lower caste = 1; upper caste = 0)	-1.384	3.513	-.033	-.394	.694
Family type (Nuclear =0; joint = 1)	.544	.150	.298	3.627	.000
Occupation before election (working = 0; house wife=1)	4.314	1.872	.197	2.305	.023
Standard of living	-3.940	1.656	-.204	-2.379	.019
F statistic: $F(7, 117) = 7.667$; $p < .001$	1.986	1.439	.109	1.380	.170
$R^2 = .314$; Adjusted $R^2 = .273$					
NB: *** significant at .001 level					

Table-18 shows the results of multiple linear regression analysis performed to understand how socio-demographic variables predict elected women's success and satisfaction in decision making. The socio-demographic variables considered were age (in years), educational grade (upper primary or less = 0; High school and above =1), marital status (married = 1; unmarried/separated/divorced =0), caste (lower caste =1; upper caste = 0), family type (nuclear = 0; joint =1), occupation (working =0; house wife =1), and standard of living measured by Standard of Living Index (IIPS, 2000). The dependent variable was 'women's success and satisfaction in decision making in PRIs which was measured by a five point Likert type rating scale which range from 'strongly agree =5 to neither agree nor disagree =3 to strongly disagree =1'.

After transforming the data needed for multiple regression analysis (for an instance, nominal variables were dichotomized and labelled as 0 and 1) and computing the overall scores and means of 'women's success and satisfaction in decision making. The researcher further ruled out the plausible role of multicollinearity of predictor variables using the measure of tolerance and VIF. Multicollinearity exists when tolerance is below 0.1 and VIF is greater than 10. In this model, tolerance level was within the acceptable limits (i.e., less than 0.1) and VIF less than 10. The researcher tested the overall significance of the model using the F statistic, which evidenced the predictor model of women's success and satisfaction in decision making was statistically significant at 0.001 level ($F(7, 117) = 7.667; p < .001$).

Elected women's marital status of being married significantly and inversely influenced their success and satisfaction in decision making at PRIs ($\beta = -.238; p = .009$) which suggest that in comparison to married women representatives, unmarried or separated

women enjoyed a high level of success and satisfaction in the decision at PRIs. Plausibly, this may be due to the excessive influence of spouses on PRIs reducing the decision-making powers of elected women in the day-to-day affairs of the PRIs. Further, elected women of joint families significantly benefited from success and satisfaction in decision making in PRIs ($\beta = .298$; $p < .001$), which suggests that elected women of joint families get more success and satisfaction in decision making at PRI levels. Similarly, elected women's occupation before the election (of being a housewife) significantly influenced their success and satisfaction in decision making ($\beta = .197$; $p < .01$); whereas, elected women's household standard of living inversely influenced their success and satisfaction in decision making ($\beta = -.204$; $p < .001$). Overall results suggest that elected women who were married, and of joint families, housewives before the election with a good standard of living tend to experience a low level of success and satisfaction in decision making. All these variables together accounted for 31.4% of the variance in the model ($R^2 = .314$).

Table-19 shows the multiple linear regression model of socio-demographic predictors
of women's political empowerment

Model -1: Determinants of women's status in politics	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	65.547	6.393		10.253	.000
Age	.031	.069	.043	.456	.649
Education grade (UP or Less = 0; High school = 1)	.281	1.751	.016	.161	.873
Marital status (married = 1; unmarried = 0)	3.970	3.657	.102	1.086	.280
Standard of living	.208	.156	.124	1.332	.185
Caste group (lower caste = 1; upper caste = 0)	-1.670	1.948	-.083	-.857	.393
Family type (Nuclear =0; joint = 1)	-6.338	1.724	-.357***	-3.676	.000
Occupation before election (working = 0; house wife=1)	1.000	1.498	.060	.668	.506
F statistic: F(7, 117) = 2.245; p = .035					
R ² =.118					
NB: *** significant at .001 level					

Table-19 shows the results of multiple linear regression analyses performed to understand how socio-demographic variables predict elected women's empowerment. The socio-demographic variables considered were age (in years), educational grade (upper primary or less = 0; High school and above =1), marital status (married = 1; unmarried/separated/divorced =0), caste (lower caste =1; upper-caste = 0), family type (nuclear = 0; joint =1), occupation (working =0; housewife =1), and standard of living measured by Standard of Living Index (IIPS, 2000). The dependent variable was 'empowerment' which was measured by a five-point Likert type rating scale which range from 'strongly agree =5 to neither agree nor disagree =3 to strongly disagree =1'.

After transforming the data needed for multiple regression analysis (for an instance, nominal variables were dichotomized and labeled as 0 and 1) and computing the overall scores and means of 'women's success and satisfaction in decision making. The researcher further ruled out the plausible role of multicollinearity of predictor variables using the measure of tolerance and VIF. Multicollinearity exists when tolerance is below 0.1 and VIF is greater than 10. In this model, tolerance level was within the acceptable limits (i.e., less than 0.1) and VIF less than 10. The researcher tested the overall significance of the model using the F statistic, which evidenced the predictor model of women's success and satisfaction in decision making was statistically significant at 0.01 level ($F(7, 117) = 2.245; p = .01$).

Out of age, education, marital status, the standard of living, caste, family type, and occupation, only family type showed a significant effect on women's political empowerment ($\beta = -.357; p < .001$), which suggest that being in joint family

substantially reduced their political empowerment. The overall model explains about 11.8% of the variance on political empowerment ($R^2=.118$).

Chapter V1

DISCUSSION

In the present study, the researcher examined the political empowerment of women through Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) with special reference to the Sonapat district of Haryana. The study specifically studied the socio-economic status of elected women representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions in general and Dalits in particular. Further, the study assessed the role of the Panchayati Raj Institutions in the process of women's political empowerment. The study further attempted to scrutinize how far the political power of women through Panchayat raj institutions could bring changes in the status of the women in the district. Finally, the researcher analyzed elected women representatives' perception of their own success and their satisfaction levels with their own roles in the decision-making process.

The study found that more than a quarter of elected women representatives were educated up to High School, while only 12 had a UG and above. About 95.2% of women in PRIs were married and presently living with their spouses. All participants were Hindu women of rural areas; whereas 65.6% were from the general (forward) social group and 21.6% were scheduled castes. Nearly 68% were from joint families and 41.6% were homemakers before the election. About 37.6% of women's husbands were engaged in farming and the family monthly income represents, 41.6% belong to the income group of Rs. 5001 to Rs. 10000. The standard of the living index showed a mixed response in which 57.6% of elected women belong to the middle wealth quintile.

Remarkably, nearly 80% of the women had no prior experience in the group outside of their households before their election.

Further, most of the women contested the election through the open category (62.4%) and held in the position in PRIs were Sarpanch/Pumch(90.4%). The majority of the elected women representatives were not participating in any student or youth organization (81.6%). Interestingly only 17.6% of women were participated in social activities before electing to PRIs. Most of the women had their own decision in the participating election (n=87; 69.6%) and 56.8% of women contested elections, not against male candidates. The elected women reported that to some extend women's status in family and society got elevated after the election (41.6%) and 34.4% of women responded that to a great extent PRIs have helped in the decentralization of powers at the grass-root level. Most of the women reported that none of their family members (82.4%) contested the election before they were elected to the local body.

Furthermore, elected women perceived relatively little amount of cooperation from other members, including women members as well as PRI officials. Evidently, the measures the study suggest that elected women enjoyed a relatively low level of political participation in PRIs. On the other hand, the women reported a high level of political empowerment; status in politics and success, and satisfaction in their decision-making process in village panchayats. The correlation analysis indicates that as elected women's age increases their success and satisfaction in decision making also increases. Higher the family monthly income of women higher would be their standard of living and status in politics. Constantly when the standard of living of the women increases, their success and satisfaction in decision-making also increases.

The result further reveals that the higher the political empowerment of elected women higher would be their status in politics and success and satisfaction in decision making also increases. Similarly, the higher the women's status in politics higher would be the success and satisfaction in decision making.

The analysis of variance suggests that educational attainment continues to influence elected women's standard of living, political participation, political empowerment, women's status in politics, and success and satisfaction in decision making. Further, castes groups continue to influence women's success and satisfaction in decision making and wealth quintiles continue to influence women's status in politics. There was a significant difference reported in political participation, status in politics, success, and satisfaction in the decision-making between lower to upper primary grade achievers and those who studied high school and above. Likewise, there was a significant difference in elected women's success and satisfaction in decision-making between upper castes and lower castes. Furthermore, there was a significant difference reported in political participation, political empowerment, status in politics, and success and satisfaction in decision making between the women from nuclear families and joint families.

Correspondingly, there was a significant difference in elected women's status in politics between the working women and housewives. There was a significant difference found in elected women's political participation and their status in politics between the low wealth quintiles and upper wealth quintiles. Evidently, the caste affiliation of elected women significantly influenced their status in politics which suggests that being lower caste significantly reduced their political status. Elected women's occupation before their election into PRIs significantly influenced their political status which implies that being a housewife before the election significantly reduced their status in politics. On

the other side, a better standard of living significantly influenced their status in politics which suggests that having more household wealth status significantly improved women's political status in society. The result suggests that being in lower caste groups, and housewives before getting elected significantly reduced women's political status; whereas, women of households with better wealth status substantially improved their political status in society.

Elected women's marital status of being married significantly and inversely influenced their success and satisfaction in decision making at PRIs which suggests that in comparison to married women representatives, unmarried or separated women enjoyed a high level of success and satisfaction in the decision at PRIs. Plausibly, this may be due to the excessive influence of spouses on PRIs reducing the decision-making powers of elected women in the day-to-day affairs of the PRIs. Further, elected women of joint families significantly benefited from success and satisfaction in decision making in PRIs which suggests that elected women of joint families get more success and satisfaction in decision making at PRI levels.

Similarly, elected women's occupation before the election (of being a housewife) significantly influenced their success and satisfaction in decision making. Whereas, elected women's household standard of living inversely influenced their success and satisfaction in decision making. Overall results suggest that elected women who were married, and of joint families, housewives before the election with a good standard of living tend to experience a low level of success and satisfaction in decision making. Out of age, education, marital status, the standard of living, caste, family type, and occupation, only family type showed a significant effect on women's political empowerment, which suggests that being in a joint family substantially reduced their political empowerment.

Women's empowerment starts with their realization about themselves particularly, their potentials, capabilities, awareness, cultural background, socio-economic status, and political forces that affect them (Mukherjee, 2008). In the present study, the mean age of the elected women was 42.7 years. The education status of women was slightly differed from primary level to higher secondary education completed. Most of them were married and living with their spouses. All the elected women were Hindu women of rural areas. Similar to the study findings Manikyamba (1996) reveals that the degree of participation of the young and middle-aged women is more than that of the aged. About 70% of them completed 10th class and, most of them belong to the Hindu religion. Moreover, 83 percent of the women live in nuclear homes, with nine out of ten claiming that their spouses are the most supportive of their political activity. Above 60% of them had no prior political experience while entering into politics. The present study also reveals that nearly 80% of the women had no prior experience before their election.

Women's empowerment is defined as allowing women to participate in the decision-making process and share authority in areas such as employment, representative bodies, productive assets, and property ownership, among other things (Hatim, 2001). The findings indicate that most of the women contested the election through the open category (n=78; 62.4%). nonetheless, Dhaneswar (2015) reported that 95% of the elected women representatives were elected through reserved seats and only 5% of them were elected open category against male contestants. This finding reveals that without reservation for women it is likely to only a few women would have been participating in the PRIs. This further indicates that political parties are not interested to nominate women candidates to contest in the open category and contest against male candidates.

The study reveals that most of the women had their own decision in the participating election. However, empirical evidence shows a mixed response on elected women representatives of PRIs on their motivation in contesting elections. It was found that the motivations elements include the influence of their husbands and other family members. While in some cases self-interest and political party play a vital role in contesting the election of women representatives in local governance (George, 1995; Arun, 1996; Pande, 1997; Bhaskar, 1997; Snehlata & Salgoankar, 2000).

Dhaneswar (2015) indicates that nearly 35% of women in PRIs reported due to the pressure of relatives and neighbors they enter into politics. About 28% of elected women indicate due to the strong pressure from the political party they contested in the election since the seats were reserved for women. On the other side, around 13% of elected women reported that their self-interest was the reason for joining in PRIs and 7% of the elected women mentioned that they have contested the election due to the influence of their husbands. Dhaneswar (2015) concludes that most of the women contested the election not for their self-interest rather they joined due to the pressure from husbands, family members, political party and neighbors. It was found that political parties have significantly played a critical role in grassroots politics for motivating and mobilizing the rural women to contest in the election in the local self-governance. Even though, it was found that women empowerment and rural development do not attract women aspirants to join in the local governance (Kumari & Verma, 2010).

Usually, women are not fully interested to contest in the elections against men contestants due to some socio-economic constrictions. Politics and the system have not been considered the main encouragement to join in politics. An attempt has been made

to study how extent and nature of the election of women including whether they were elected for reserved seats or open categories. After the statutory reservation in the 73rd amendment act, found a new significant revolutionary era for women in representing in the PRIs and ensures their mass participation across the country especially in the rural areas.

It is a great opportunity for the women who were largely confined in the household chores, lacked information on public affairs, many were disabled even to decide their own personal interests are now been asked to shoulder public responsibilities, an opportunity to play a substantial role in public life and to take up an active part in the decision making process in the local self-governance. Consequently, women come to the forefront of public life and politics, the political parties started figuring out their names into the list of their party affiliation. This is definitely a big movement in the Indian traditional male-dominated and one-sided democracy. Further, it is specifically crucial, landmark, and significant in the history of women's political representation in the grass-root level of democracy of the country (Das, 2009).

The present study reveals that 56.8% (71) women contested elections, not against male candidates. Similar to the study findings, it can be seen that women are not still interested to contest against male candidates and they would like to contest only in the seats reserved for them (Vimla, 2015; Lahon & Kumar, 2013). Reddy (2004) indicates that the women elected under the reservations quota in village panchayats have become nominal candidates without exercising actual functional power. Similarly, Dalits did not have the freedom to cast their vote, experienced threat created an unreceptive situation for under-privileged sections. Reddy further reported that women Sarpanches who belong to the Dalit category were being harassed and obstructed while discharging their duties and responsibilities by the former Sarpanches belonging to backward

classes and upper castes. The result reveals that to some extent women's status in family and society got elevated after the election. On the other side, 20.8% revealed that they don't know whether their status elevated after the election. Some of the women responded that to a great extent PRIs have helped in the decentralization of powers at the grass-root level.

The study findings reported that to a great extent (n=78; 62.4%) of elected women indicate that they were performing their role in panchayat affairs like male counterparts. Similarly, Dhaneswar (2015) implies that most of the women (89%) have performed their duties and responsibilities in local self-governance after performing their household activities. However, the study reported that some of the elected women representatives left out the panchayat meetings after just putting their signatures in the attendance register as they have household work that they could not ignore. G.S. Mehta (2002) reveals that illiterates, married and young women from Muslims and backward castes dominated the village panchayats. Women found actively participated in various development projects along with male counterparts. Approximately half of the elected women representatives had in village panchayats had experienced some amount of changes in their social status after joining local governance.

Singh (2009) indicates that in Indian villages, the girls are considered dependent upon their father, brother, and other family members from time to time in different stages of their life and it shall continue in their married life too. This dependent attitude shall also have a deep impact on women's minds and affect their performance at the panchayat activities. The familial aspects, community, and the state have together created a situation wherein women representatives are facing various operational constrictions while performing their roles and functions in PRIs (Singh, 2009).

Moreover, according to Rout and Sahu (2012), women's active participation in local governance has remained limited to a small number of women. The nature and degree of their participation is limited to a few sectors of local administration, and not to the extent that was envisaged. Various factors have an impact on their performance including a lack of understanding of their role, responsibilities, and family bonding submissiveness.

According to Neena and Raheena (2017), 78 percent of elected women participated actively in meeting the fundamental needs of the villagers. However, 43% of women said they had fewer opportunities to share their opinions and views in main panchayat decision-making processes. Similarly, 70% of them argued that there was a partial acceptance of their demands and statements in the development programs and activities of the panchayats. Most of them reported that the tag a 'woman' controlled as a barrier for their opinion and the work they involve in the panchayat level activities. About 40% of them expressed that they lack awareness of the functioning system and coordination of activities was the major hurdle while executing the developmental programs.

Kaushik (1993) linked the term political participation with the concept of power and argues that politics is a study of the implementation of power and thus political participation implies the exercise of power. It further argues that an investigation of the political involvement of women needs to be combined with various aspects. First, the nature, level, and extent of women's involvement in the political process in both formal and informal institutions. Second, the significance and impact of such participation for women's living conditions and rights. And finally, the types of feminist issues which are raised in the progress of such involvement. However, the majority of women were found controlled by their family members particularly husbands (Mandal, 2003). The present study reveals that most of the women reported that they were represented by

proxy on their male family members in local governance. Evidently, some studies reported that husbands made the decisions for the panchayats and their wives (elected women representatives) put signatures on official documents. Nevertheless, some studies found that elected women in the local governance were not meek and mute participants rather they raise their voices (Ghosh, 2008; Mandal, 2003).

Consistently, Malik (2004) reveals that women representatives at the village level do not attend the meeting regularly, they were being elected proxies by their family members. The women's thumb impressions were collected later on. He further pointed out that elected women were illiterate and ignorant about political activities. That is one of the main reasons their families did not allow them to attend the meetings in the villages. This result evidently shows that women are not enough competent leaders and they just represent their families in the elections in PRIs.

The study reveals that a significant amount of women found there were not at all found any differences that they have experienced by virtue of being a woman in panchayats. Contrary Dhaneswar (2015) indicates that about 43% of elected male representatives of PRIs have compellingly tried to influence their suggestions and opinions to make decisions according to their interests. Most of the women gram panchayat presidents reported that their opinions were stifled by the male representatives. They adopt various measures to exercise to execute their decisions and sometimes threatened the women representatives not to go against their views. This study further reveals that male representatives of the PRIs are not satisfied with the participation of a huge number of women representatives and still they are trying to endure their dominance in the decision-making process. This study concludes that this information is reflective of just a functional representation of women in the PRIs and not be effective that may turn the reservation system into a mockery (Mangla, 2007).

Consistent with this, the study further reported that elected women perceived relatively little amount of cooperation from other members, including women members as well as PRI officials. Kaul and Sahni (2009) reported that elected women were not always treated with due respect in rural local governance. Most of them have complained that their ideas and suggestions were not considered seriously and not included in the decision-making process. Some of the women were experienced that their views and ideas were ignored only because they are women. Many women reported that at times they were forced by their spouses to approve their decisions in the local self-governance.

The study discloses that elected women representatives had the minimal frequency of participation in PRI meetings, including participation Gram Subha. Consistently, Vikas (2013) reveals that constitutional knowledge of women was not up to the level and their participation in Gram panchayats was only limited, they remain as a voter in the meetings. Some of the women responded that they do not know the functioning of gram panchayats. Moreover, in gram panchayats election their spouse and family members decide to whom they should give vote and the women do not have their own choice.

Sinha (2000) indicates that politics is a firmly male dominate area because self-discipline, rationality, aggressiveness, competitiveness, universality, and orderliness are viewed as the prices qualities of men. On the other hand, impulsiveness and submissiveness are the qualities allied with women. The reasons for the low-level participation of women in politics are observed as poor socioeconomic status, illiteracy, tradition, and dependence of male members in the family. Sinha revealed that about 33% of women were elected in Haryana at the panchayat elections 1n 1994, however, the women representatives did not actively participate in the decision-making process.

Usually in the meeting, they were at odds to sit with the male members in the tradition-oriented orthodox society.

In a patriarchal society like India, the dominance of men over women in social, economic, and political aspects is common. Usually, in a family or village man is considered as the decision-maker where women have no significant role or sometimes she plays an either subordinate or secondary role. This point was pertinent particularly to PRIs before the 73rd amendment act. Before it, very few women were contested and elected in PRIs. Globally, the status of women is measured by their involvement in politics and empowerment. Evidently, women remained underrepresented in the decision-making process. Women constitute half of the population, however, they often face discrimination irrespective of their identity, status, and region (Mishra, 2002).

The participation of women in decision-making is imperative for their interests to be incorporated into governance. Nandal (2012) suggests that it has been commonly experienced that governance structures do not provide adequate involvement of women, frequently suffer from state-level interventions which are neither democratic nor inclusive. Deshmukh (2005) pointed out that women were lagging behind men in four key factors that include literacy, mean age of marriage, sex ratio, and involvement in decision-making activities.

Empowerment of women through involvement in PRIs majorly depends upon the nature and extent of their involvement in the decision-making process in PRIs. Simultaneously, the actual participation and performance in planning and implementation of development programs and other welfare programs at the village level. The elected representatives are considered the leader of the rural society. They have a great role to meet the welfare expectations of the rural village people. Similarly,

they are playing a significant role in transforming the socio-economic conditions and empowering the rural villages (Patni, 1994). Consistently, the women leaders in local governance have to play unique roles to empower the rural women which are usually ignored by the mainstream of society. The elected women have greater responsibilities to organize the rural women to stand against the social evils such as domestic violence, dowry system, molestation, rape and alcoholism, and so on. The elected women further have been responsible for organizing the rural women to increase their participation in social, political, and economic activities (Rajendra & Doddamani, 2010).

The study result implies that elected women had a high level of success and satisfaction in their decision-making process in village panchayats. Similarly, as elected women's age increases their success and satisfaction in decision making also increases. Active participation and regular attendance of elected women in the decision-making process in panchayat activities is an important determinant of empowerment and democratic governance. Participation does not mean just attending the meeting mute or meek. The nature and extent of success in achieving improvements in the socio-economic and political status of women are majorly determined by their real participation in the decision-making process (Mehta, 2002).

Political participation is the contribution of the members of the society in the decision-making process in the local self-governance (Almond & Powell 1975). Therefore, political participation indicates all the political-related activities including involvement in the election process as candidates and voters, in political parties the involvement in the decision-making process as executives and representatives. Political participation helps the people to be linked with the decision-making process and political system. Participation can be observed from two aspects such as intensity and width. Intensity refers to how deeply an individual is involved in a problem and to what extent he or she

would go towards the attainment of this purpose. While, width determines due to the multifaceted nature of the political activity that entails involvement in various issues ranging from casting votes to involving in a technical expert committee (Sheshadri, 1976).

The study result indicates that when the standard of living of the women increases, their success and satisfaction in decision-making also increases. Likewise, when elected women's political empowerment increases their success, and satisfaction in decision making also increases. It was observed that overloaded household activities, lack of knowledge on the subject discussions in the meeting, shyness, and anxiety are some of the causes been reported of elected women's irregularity of involvement in the decision making at the statutory meetings (Hust, 2004; Mehta, 2002).

Generally, the elected women representatives consult with their husbands or other family members for any decisions and attend the meetings at panchayats. The study findings reflected on elected women's education, income, caste affiliation, and wealth were significantly influenced their standard of living. It has also resulted in their status in society. Education is one of the major determinants of women's participation in politics. The educated women have an enhanced competence and sense for evaluation and critically observing the issues. Ignorance deprives them of the knowledge of their duties and rights. When we look at the rural scenario than in the urban area, we may find less educated or illiterate women in politics far outnumbered those who are well educated (Ramanujan, 2015).

The result further indicates the hat higher the women's status in politics higher would be the success and satisfaction in decision making. Educational attainment continues to influence elected women's success and satisfaction in decision-making. Further, the

result suggests that castes groups continue to influence women's success and satisfaction in decision making. Between lower to higher primary grade scorers and those who studied high school and above, there was a considerable difference in success and satisfaction in elected women's decision-making. The elected members in the PRIs must participate regularly and actively in the decision-making process in local government, such as attending meetings and voicing their thoughts on various issues. By involving in the decision-making process, the elected representatives can express their views, and opinions on various issues, particularly on development schemes.

It strengthens their participation, contribution, and recognition in the local self-governance which further boosts their confidence and self-esteem. The elected representatives of PRIs including men and women share an equal role in the decision-making process. Nonetheless, it was found in some studies that elected women representatives were not active members in the governance activities compared with men (Mohanty, 1999, Mehta, 2002, Singla, 2007). It was observed that the socio-economic background of the elected women along with other aspects is responsible for the passive involvement of women in the panchayat activities. Most of the elected women find time to take part in the panchayat activities after completing their regular household chores. It further revealed that due to the huge responsibility of the household domain, the women get less time to take part in panchayat activities.

The present study result suggests that being in lower caste groups, and housewives before getting elected significantly reduced women's political status; whereas, women of households with better wealth status substantially improved their political status in society. Consistently, Mohanty (2000) found that the elected women are from a poor socio-economic background in the village panchayat level. The working nature of the panchayat has significantly changed through the involvement of women

representatives. Further, most of the women were contesting in the election for the first time and were illiterate, they have to depend upon their husbands or family members executing activities of panchayats. Even though the elected women depend upon their families, the relationship between husband and wife has substantially changed due to their status in local governance. This study concludes that the reservation of seats in PRIs has considerably improved women's status in politics and other aspects of their life.

The study further suggests that elected women who were married, and of joint families, housewives before the election with a good standard of living tend to experience a low level of success and satisfaction in decision making. Sharma (2002) reveals that most of the elected women were from joint families and the remaining of them were backward castes and scheduled castes. The study reported that even though the elected women were not aware of their role and responsibilities in the panchayats even they were familiar with the social atrocities and problems faced by women in the society.

Similarly, family type showed a significant effect on women's political empowerment, which suggests that being in a joint family substantially reduced their political empowerment. The majority of the elected women were forced to contest elections in panchayats by their family members, the women participated with their self-interest found low level. Numerous elected women were supported by their male members when they visit the office of panchayats. The study pointed out that even though they were representatives in panchayats, there was no change in performing their routine work. The result concluded that one-half of the elected women experienced some change in their status after coming into the local governance (Mehta, 2002).

Chapter-V1I

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The socio-demographic characteristics

Age:

- ✓ The mean age was 42.7 years with an SD of 11.5 years while the age range was from 24 years to 80 years.
- ✓ The majority i.e., 36.8% of these women belonged to 41 to 50 years of age,
- ✓ 33.6% were aged between 31 years to 40 years
- ✓ 11.2% were aged above 60 years while 13.6% aged between 20 to 30 years.

Education:

- ✓ In education, more than a quarter (i.e., 25.6%) were educated up to High School,
- ✓ Approximately the same percent (24.8%) were educated up to higher secondary school,
- ✓ 20.8% were educated at secondary level while only 12 had a UG and above.

Marital status:

- ✓ In the marital status of elected women representatives in PRIs, 95.2% were married and presently living with their spouses,
- ✓ 4.8% were widowed.

Religions:

- ✓ All participants were Hindu women of rural areas; whereas 65.6% were from the general (forward) social group,
- ✓ 12.8% were from OBC (Other backward castes), and 21.6% were scheduled castes.

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- ✓ Nearly 68% were from joint families while 32% were from nuclear families
- ✓ More than half of the women had 2 children while 32% had 3 or more than 3 children, wherein 1 child families were 10.4%.

Occupational profile:

- ✓ In the job before the election, 41.6% were homemakers,
- ✓ 38.4% were engaged in agriculture, and 16% were engaged in private sector jobs.
- ✓ In spousal occupation, 37.6% were from farming background,
- ✓ 28.8% were employed in private sector jobs and only 6.4% reported being employed in public sector jobs.

Monthly income:

- ✓ In family monthly income, the mean income was Rs. 13940 with an SD of Rs. 11407.3 with a range from Rs. 2000 to Rs.75000/-.
- ✓ Wherein, 41.6% belong to the income group of Rs. 5001 to Rs. 10000 and 30.4% belong to the income group of Rs. 10001 to Rs. 20000.

The standard of living:

- ✓ In the poorest wealth quintile, only one woman belonged while the poorest quintile,
- ✓ There were 41.6% (n = 52) women in poor wealth quintile
- ✓ There were 57.6% of women in middle wealth quintile had.
- ✓ None of the elected women belonged to wealthy or wealthiest quintiles as per Standard of Living Index (IIPS, 2000) scores.

- ✓ The mean score obtained was 26.9% with an SD of 5 while scores ranged from 11 to 40.

SHG participation prior to election:

- ✓ The researcher examined these women's history of participation in self-help groups (SHGs) prior to their election into PRIs.
- ✓ Slightly more than 20.8% were the members in SHGs before they got elected into PRIs. Nearly 80% of the women had no prior experience in the group outside of their households before their election.

Engagement in PRIs:

- ✓ The most women contested the election through open category (n=78; 62.4%);
- ✓ About 37.6% (n=47) elected through reserved category.
- ✓ Most of the elected women representatives held in the position in PRIs were Sarpanch/Pumch (n=113; 94.4%).
- ✓ 6.4.6% (n=17) were held in Block and 3.2 % (4) were in District
- ✓ The majority of the elected women representatives were not participating in any student or youth organization (n=102; 81.6%)
- ✓ And 22% (17.6) of them were participating in these organizations.
- ✓ Most of them were passive members (n=98; 78.4%); only 4 (3.2%) members were held in the position of Secretary and 18.4% (n=23) were active members in the organizations.

Participation in social activities:

- ✓ The elected women representatives' participation in social activity before the election was examined.
- ✓ The result reveals that only 17.6% (n=22) of women were participated in social activities before electing to PRIs.
- ✓ 82.4% (n=103) women didn't participate in any social activity before their election.
- ✓ Most of the women had their own decision in the participating election (n=87; 69.6%).
- ✓ Whereas 17.6% (n=22) of women responded that their family inspired them to participate in the election.
- ✓ Only 1 woman responded that political party persuasion in the participating election (0.8%), and 15 (12%) responded that they decided to contest in the election through other influences.

Women's status after election:

- ✓ 56.8% (71) women contested elections, not against male candidates.
- ✓ Nonetheless, 43.2% (n=54) of women contested elections against male candidates.
- ✓ The women representatives were asked their status in family and society gets elevated after being elected.
- ✓ The result reveals that to some extend women's status in family and society got elevated after the election (n=52; 41.6%).

- ✓ 30.4% (n=38) women responded that to a great extent their status in family and society got elevated after being elected.
- ✓ 7.2% (n=9) of women reported that not at all their status was elevated after being elected.
- ✓ 20.8% (n=26) revealed that they don't know whether their status elevated after the election.

Opinion on decentralisation:

- ✓ 34.4% (n=43) of women responded that to a great extent PRIs have helped in the decentralization of powers at the grass-root level.
- ✓ 29.6% (n=37) indicates that to some extent PRIs have helped in the decentralization of powers at the grass-root level.
- ✓ 13.6% (n=17) and 20.8% (n=26) reported that not at all and they don't know PRIs have helped in the decentralization of powers at the grass-root level simultaneously.
- ✓ To a great extent (n=78; 62.4%) of elected women reported that they were performing their role in panchayat affairs like male counterparts.
- ✓ To some extent (n=33; 26.4%) of women responded that they were performing their role in panchayat affairs like male counterparts.
- ✓ 2.4% (n=3) and 8.8% (n=11) indicated that they were not at all performing and they don't know whether performing their role in panchayat affairs like male counterparts.
- ✓ The elected women were asked their opinion on whether women were represented by proxy on their male family members in panchayats.

- ✓ The analysis reveals that most of the elected women reported no (44.8%; 56) and about 34.4% (n=43) indicates that yes.
- ✓ To some extent (n=8; 6.4%) of elected women reported that they were represented by proxy on their male family members in panchayats.
- ✓ 14.4% (n=18) responded that they don't know whether elected women are being represented by proxy on their male family members in panchayats.
- ✓ Most of the women reported that none of their family members (n=103; 82.4%) contested any election before they were elected to the local body.
- ✓ 17.6% (n=22) reported that some of their family members contested elections before they were elected to the local body.
- ✓ Elected women were asked was there any difference that they have experienced by virtue of being a woman in panchayats.
- ✓ A mixed response that 21.6% (n=27) of women reported that to a great extent there were differences that they have experienced by virtue of being a woman in panchayats.
- ✓ 16.8% (n=21) of women reported that to some extent there were differences that they have experienced by virtue of being a woman in panchayats.
- ✓ 44.8% (n=56) of women found there were not at all any differences that they have experienced by virtue of being a woman in panchayats.
- ✓ 16.8% (n=21) of women responded that they don't know whether there were any differences that they have experienced by virtue of being a woman in panchayats.

- ✓ The result implies that elected women perceived relatively little amount of cooperation from other members, including women members as well as PRI officials.

Frequency of participation:

- ✓ In women's frequency of participation in PRI meetings, it was evident that elected women representatives had the minimal frequency of participation in PRI meetings,
- ✓ Including participation Gram Subha.
- ✓ In elected women's overall political participation, elected women enjoyed a relatively low level of political participation in PRIs.

Political participation:

- ✓ In level of political participation of elected women contained what extent the panchayat raj officials are cooperative towards working in the panchayats.
- ✓ It includes male and female members co-operation in work in the office, frequency of attending the meetings in panchayats, and grama sabha meetings.
- ✓ Their participation in the discussions, initiation of any proposed resolutions in panchayat meetings, considerations of their voice in final decision-making, and implementation in rural programs.
- ✓ The political participation ranged from 11 to 44 with a mean of 18.8 and an SD of 7.7, which indicates that elected women representatives' political participation was poor.

Political empowerment:

- ✓ In elected women's political empowerment, the aspects contained were their ability to assess and evaluate the local political situations.
- ✓ It also include participate and contribute in party meetings, public meetings.
- ✓ It again contains knowledge of the public service delivery system, generic and women-specific rights, skills in decision making and accessing information.
- ✓ The results implies that a high level of political empowerment.

Women's status in politics:

- ✓ Women's status was examined in the areas of their 'sense of pride in PRI membership, status in the household,
- ✓ And problems in discharging duties, role in generating women's rights, stand on domestic violence, intervening in women's problems,
- ✓ And expressing views without fear.
- ✓ The results reveals that the elected women reported a high status in politics.

Level of Success and Satisfaction:

- ✓ Elected women's perceptions of their own success and satisfaction in decision-making were examined.
- ✓ The scores on the perception of own success and satisfaction in decision making were ranged from 48 to 112 with a mean of 75.9 and an SD of 9.1.
- ✓ The result implies that elected women had a high level of success and satisfaction in their decision-making process in village panchayats.

Socio-demographic correlates:

- ✓ Age was significantly correlated with elected women's success and satisfaction in decision making, indicating that as elected women's age increases their success and satisfaction in decision making also increases.
- ✓ Age was not correlated to monthly income, the standard of living, political participation, political empowerment, and women's status in politics.
- ✓ The monthly income and standard of living are significantly correlated which implies that higher the family monthly income higher would be in their standard of living.
- ✓ The monthly income was significantly correlated with elected women's status in politics.
- ✓ Higher the monthly income is considerably improve the elected women status in politics.
- ✓ Nevertheless, monthly income was not correlated with women's political participation, political empowerment and their success and satisfaction in decision making.
- ✓ Standard of living was inversely correlated with political participation of elected women representatives
- ✓ In this study, the political participation of women reported less, therefore, plausibly standard of living does not affect their involvement in politics, it may be determined by some extraneous factors.

- ✓ The standard of living and elected women's status in politics are significantly correlated which suggest that higher the standard of living higher would be their status in politics.
- ✓ The standard living was significantly related to elected women's success and satisfaction in decision making at different levels.
- ✓ The result indicates that when the standard of living of the women increases, their success and satisfaction in decision-making also increases.
- ✓ However, the standard of living was not correlated with the political empowerment of elected women.
- ✓ Political participation of elected women was inversely correlated with their political empowerment.
- ✓ Since the political involvement of elected women reported less, plausibly the reason could be lesser the political empowerment.
- ✓ Political participation was inversely correlated with elected women's status in politics and success and satisfaction in decision making.
- ✓ Elected women's political empowerment and their status in politics are significantly correlated which suggest that higher the political empowerment of elected women higher would be their status in politics.
- ✓ Political empowerment and women's success and satisfaction decision-making are significantly correlated.
- ✓ The result implies that when elected women's political empowerment increases their success and satisfaction in decision making also increases.

- ✓ Elected women's status in politics was significantly correlated with their success and satisfaction in decision making suggesting higher the women's status in politics higher would be their success and satisfaction in decision making.

Women's Standard of living and empowerment

- ✓ ANOVA shows that the women's standard of living significantly varied on educational grades achieved.
- ✓ The educational attainment continues to influence elected women's standard of living significantly.
- ✓ The elected women's status in politics significantly varied on wealth quintiles. The result recommends that wealth quintiles continue to influence women's status in politics.
- ✓ Nevertheless, women's political participation, political empowerment, and their success and satisfaction in decision-making reveal no variance on wealth quintiles.
- ✓ There was a significant difference in elected women's political participation between the low wealth quintiles and upper wealth quintiles.
- ✓ The mean difference reveals that women with low wealth quintiles tend to report high political participation than women with upper wealth quintiles.
- ✓ There was a significant difference in women's status in politics between the low wealth quintiles and upper wealth quintiles.
- ✓ The mean difference suggests that women with upper wealth quintiles have high status in politics than women with lower wealth quintiles.

- ✓ There was no difference reported in political empowerment and success and satisfaction in decision making between women lower and upper wealth quintiles.

Women's education and empowerment:

- ✓ The elected women's political participation significantly varied on educational grades achieved. The primary and higher secondary grade achievers significantly differed on their political participation.
- ✓ Also the primary grade achievers and under-graduates and above women's substantially differed on their political participation.
- ✓ The result evidently indicates that educational attainment continues to influence elected women's political participation.
- ✓ The elected women's political empowerment significantly varied on their educational grade achieved where the high school and higher secondary groups significantly differed on their level of political empowerment.
- ✓ The high school grade achievers and under-graduates and above women's political empowerment were considerably differed. The result directs that educational attainment continues to influence elected women's political empowerment.
- ✓ Women's status in politics substantially varied on their educational grades where the primary and high school grade achievers significantly differed on their status in politics.

- ✓ Likewise, primary grade achievers and under-graduate women's status in politics was significantly differed. The result discloses the educational attainment remains to influence elected women's status in politics.
- ✓ The women's success and satisfaction in decision making significantly varied on educational grades achieved; where all groups such as primary, high school, higher secondary school and under-graduates significantly differed on women's success and satisfaction in decision making at various levels.
- ✓ Thus, the result indicates that educational attainment continues to influence elected women's success and satisfaction in decision making.
- ✓ There was a significant difference in political participation between lower to upper primary grade achievers and those who studied high school and above.
- ✓ Evidently, the high school achievers tend to report high political participation than lower to upper primary grade achievers.
- ✓ There was a significant difference in elected women's status in politics between lower to upper primary grade achievers and those who studied high school and above.
- ✓ The mean difference reveals that lower to upper primary grade achievers have high status in politics than high school and above grade achievers.
- ✓ There was a significant difference in the success and satisfaction in the decision-making of elected women between lower to upper primary grade achievers and those who studied high school and above.

- ✓ It indicates that lower to upper primary grade achievers tend to report a high level of success and satisfaction in decision making at different levels than high school grade achievers.
- ✓ However, there is no difference reported in political empowerment between lower to upper primary grade achievers and those who have completed high school and above.

Caste and empowerment:

- ✓ Elected women's success and satisfaction in decision-making significantly varied on caste-wise groups. The result suggests that castes groups continue to influence women's success and satisfaction in decision making.
- ✓ However, women's standard of living, political participation, political empowerment and their status in politics does not show variance on caste groups.
- ✓ There was a significant difference in elected women's success and satisfaction in decision making between upper castes and lower castes.
- ✓ The mean difference reveals that lower castes tend to report high success and satisfaction in decision making than upper castes women.
- ✓ However, there was no difference reported on political participation, political empowerment, and women's status in politics across caste groups.

Women's family type and empowerment:

- ✓ There was a significant difference reported in political participation between the women coming from nuclear families and joint families.

- ✓ The mean difference reveals that the women from joint families tend to report high-level political participation than women from nuclear families.
- ✓ There was a significant difference in political empowerment between the women from nuclear families and joint families.
- ✓ The mean difference indicates that women from nuclear families have reported a high level of political empowerment than women from joint families.
- ✓ There was a significant difference in status in politics between women from nuclear families and joint families.
- ✓ The mean difference implies that women from nuclear families tend to report high status in politics than women from joint families.
- ✓ There was a significant difference in women's success and satisfaction in decision making between women from nuclear families and joint families.
- ✓ The mean difference indicates that women from nuclear families reported high level of success and satisfaction in decision making than women from joint families.

Women's occupation and empowerment:

- ✓ There was a significant difference in elected women's status in politics between the working women and housewives.
- ✓ The mean difference indicates that housewives tend to report high status in politics than working women.

Socio-demographic determinants of women's status in politics:

- ✓ Using the multiple linear regression analysis, the researcher examined the socio-demographic factors significantly influencing elected women's status in politics.

- ✓ The socio-demographic variables considered for the analysis were age, educational grade, marital status, caste, family type, occupation before election and household wealth status otherwise standard of living.
- ✓ Elected women's age, education, marital status and family type did not significantly influence their status in politics.
- ✓ Interestingly, the caste affiliation of elected women significantly influenced their status in politics, suggesting that being lower caste significantly reduced their political status.
- ✓ The women's occupation before their election into PRIs significantly influenced their political status which implies that being a house wife before the election significantly reduced their status in politics.
- ✓ The better standard of living significantly influenced their status in politics which suggest that having more household wealth significantly improved women's political status in society.
- ✓ To sum up, the overall beta coefficients suggest that being in lower caste groups, and house wife before getting elected significantly reduced women's political status;
- ✓ Whereas, women of households with better wealth status substantially improved their political status in society. Overall model explains 33.7% of variance as showed by square statistic.

Socio-demographic determinants of women's success and satisfaction in decision making:

- ✓ Using the multiple linear regression analysis, the researcher analysed how socio-demographic variables influence elected women's success and satisfaction in decision making.

- ✓ The socio-demographic variables considered were age, education, marital status, caste, family type, occupation and standard of living.
- ✓ The dependent variable was 'women's success and satisfaction in decision making in PRIs.
- ✓ Elected women's marital status of being married significantly and inversely influenced their success and satisfaction in decision making at PRIs, which suggest that in comparison to married women representatives, unmarried or separated women enjoyed a high level of success and satisfaction in the decision at PRIs.
- ✓ Plausibly, this may be due to the excessive influence of spouses on PRIs reducing the decision-making powers of elected women in the day-to-day affairs of the PRIs.
- ✓ The elected women of joint families significantly benefited from success and satisfaction in decision making in PRIs, which suggests that elected women of joint families get more success and satisfaction in decision making at PRI levels.
- ✓ The elected women's occupation before the election (of being a housewife) significantly influenced their success and satisfaction in decision making; whereas, the elected women's household standard of living inversely influenced their success and satisfaction in decision making.
- ✓ The overall results suggest that elected women who were married, and of joint families, housewives before the election with a good standard of living tend to experience a low level of success and satisfaction in decision making.
- ✓ All these variables together accounted for 31.4% of the variance in the model ($R^2=0.314$).

Socio-demographic determinants of women empowerment:

- ✓ Using the multiple linear regression analysis, the researcher analysed how socio-demographic variables influence elected women empowerment do.
- ✓ The socio-demographic variables considered were age, education, marital status, caste, family type, occupation and standard of living.
- ✓ Out of age, education, marital status, the standard of living, caste, family type, and occupation, only family type showed a significant effect on women's political empowerment.
- ✓ The result suggests that being in joint family substantially reduced their political empowerment.
- ✓ The overall model explains about 11.8% of the variance on political empowerment ($R^2=.118$).

Conclusion

In general profile, all study participants were elected women with average age of 42.7 whereas majority belong to the age group of 41 years to 50 years. Nearly half of them educated up to high school and higher secondary, 95.2% were married, 68% were belonged to joint families and all were Hindus. Many were home makers prior to their election. Nearly 58% were in middle wealth quintile. Nearly 80% of the women had no prior experience in the group outside of their households before their election. Mostly, women elected to office were from open category (62.4%). The elected women opined that to some extent women's status in family and society got elevated after the election. Evidently, elected women representatives had the minimal frequency of participation in PRI meetings, including participation Gram Subha. They enjoyed relatively low level of political participation in PRIs.

Initially, the primary and higher secondary grade achievers significantly differed on their political participation. Therefore, the educational attainment continues to influence elected women's political participation and political empowerment. The educational attainment remains to influence elected women's status in politics and their success and satisfaction in decision making. Secondly, the castes groups continued to influence women's success and satisfaction in decision making. Evidently, there was a significant difference in elected women's success and satisfaction in decision making between upper castes and lower castes, suggesting the lower castes tend to report high success and satisfaction in decision making than upper castes women. Thirdly, the women from joint families tend to report high-level political participation than women from nuclear families. But the women of nuclear families reported a high level of political empowerment than women from joint families. Additionally, the housewives tend to report high status in politics than working women.

Fourthly, the elected women who were married, and of joint families, housewives before the election with a high standard of living were likely to experience a low level of success and satisfaction in decision making and these variables together accounted for 31.4% of the variance. Fifthly, the women of joint families tend to experience lower level of empowerment than in nuclear families, while being a member of joint families explained 11.8% of variance upon women empowerment. The elected women's caste significantly influenced their status in politics, suggesting that being lower caste significantly reduced their political status.

Finally, being a house wife before the election significantly reduced their status in politics. Further, the better standard of living significantly improved women's political status in society. Evidently, being in lower caste groups, and house wife before getting

elected significantly reduced women's political status; whereas the women of households with better wealth status substantially improved their political status in society. These variables together accounted for 33.7% of variance.

It is therefore evident that women's socio-demographic characteristics varyingly influenced their political empowerment and participation, where the variables namely education significantly improved political participation and empowerment while lower caste affiliation continued to remain as a source of poor political participation and empowerment. Further, women of joint families also faced low scores on empowerment measures while marital status (of being married) substantially reduced women's political participation and empowerment scores.