

AWARENESS, PARTICIPATION AND POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN PANCHAYAT RAJ INSTITUTIONS: A STUDY OF KAPURTHALA DISTRICT, PUNJAB

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Abstract

The study investigates women political empowerment, awareness, and involvement among elected women representatives in Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) of Kapurthala, Punjab. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 established PRIs, which required reservations for women and greatly increased their political prominence and involvement in local government. Using a stratified random sample of 638 elected women representatives including Sarpanches, Panches, Panchayat Samiti members, and Zila Parishad members across five development blocks, the study used a descriptive design. A structured multilingual questionnaire was used to gather the data, ANOVA, and descriptive statistics were used for analysis. The results showed that whereas 33.5% of respondents showed low understanding of constitutional provisions, 35.7% of respondents exhibited moderate awareness. There were significant variations at the block and designation levels, with Sultanpur Lodhi exhibiting the greatest levels of empowerment and awareness and Dhilwan the lowest. Higher designations showed greater political participation and awareness than Panches, especially Sarpanches and Zila Parishad members. A significant percentage of women felt poor empowerment, despite those exhibiting strong participation, which reflected issues connected to ability, society, and structure. The study comes to the conclusion that in order to ensure inclusive governance, participatory democracy, and the efficient operation of PRIs in Punjab, it is imperative to develop grassroots women leaders through designation-specific capacity-building, ongoing training, and targeted awareness interventions.

Key words: Panchayat Raj Institutions, Women Empowerment, Political Participation, Local Governance, Gender and Development, Decentralization.

Introduction

The roots of the Panchayat Raj System in India are deeply embedded in the country's historical and cultural heritage. The idea of village-level self-governance is not a post-independence innovation but an ancient tradition that evolved through various historical stages. Within the framework of Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs), economically empowered women are often more confident in taking leadership roles related to budget management, allocation of development funds, and monitoring of public welfare schemes (Agarwal, 2018). Their involvement contributes to transparent governance and ensures that resources are directed toward community needs, particularly those benefiting marginalized groups. A key example of this is women-led oversight in implementing government flagship programs such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), which provide both wage employment and livelihood promotion opportunities (Ministry of Rural Development, 2023). Across India, women sarpanches and panchayat members have successfully initiated and managed community-based projects, including tailoring and stitching centres, dairy farming units, and food processing ventures. These initiatives, often supported through Self-Help Groups (SHGs) under the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM), have not only generated steady income for women but also created local employment opportunities,

fostering a cycle of rural economic growth (Ministry of Rural Development, 2022). The multiplier effect of such empowerment is evident—financially independent women are more likely to invest in their children’s education, improve family health outcomes, and contribute actively to collective community development (Mathew, 1994).

A landmark in their evolution was the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992, which granted constitutional recognition to PRIs, established a three-tier structure (Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti, and Zila Parishad), mandated regular elections, and reserved one-third of all seats for women, including positions of chairpersons (Government of India, 1992). This reservation policy has been acknowledged as a transformative mechanism for women’s political participation (Jha & Mathur, 2020). In several states, including Punjab, the quota has been increased to 50%, thereby expanding women’s opportunities for leadership and representation (Kaur & Sidhu, 2021). The inclusion of women through legislated gender quotas has had far-reaching implications. Studies show that female representatives are more likely to prioritize social welfare, education, sanitation, and water management projects, thereby reflecting a gender-sensitive governance approach (Chattopadhyay & Duflo, 2004). In Punjab, PRIs have evolved to address local socio-political contexts while adhering to constitutional principles. They play a critical role in local planning, implementation of welfare schemes, and facilitating community development. Gram Panchayats, in particular, serve as the first point of contact for rural citizens in accessing government services, thus strengthening participatory governance (Singh, 2018). PRIs in Punjab have also emerged as vehicles for women’s empowerment. Women elected to these bodies have gained visibility, political experience, and influence over local decision-making processes. The networking among women leaders within PRIs fosters collective action and advocacy for gender-sensitive policy implementation (Kaur & Sidhu, 2021). However, challenges persist, including patriarchal norms, limited administrative training, financial dependency on higher-level government bodies, and proxy representation where male relatives exercise authority on behalf of elected women (Kabeer, 2005). Overcoming these barriers requires capacity-building programs, legal enforcement of women’s decision-making authority, and continuous institutional support from state agencies and civil society organizations. Overall, PRIs anchored by constitutional safeguards and adapted to local needs—serve as both a mechanism of democratic decentralization and a platform for advancing gender equality and rural empowerment. Women empowerment involves enabling women to take control of their lives, make independent decisions, and engage meaningfully in various spheres, including the social, economic, and political domains. In the context of rural India, the Panchayat Raj system serves as a vital institutional avenue that promotes this empowerment by facilitating women’s direct involvement in local governance and community-level decision-making. Participation in Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) not only facilitates the political inclusion of women but also acts as a vehicle for social transformation. Women’s involvement in PRIs has expanded beyond symbolic presence to active engagement in governance, development planning, and monitoring of public services. Their role encompasses political, social, and administrative domains—ranging from attending Gram Sabha meetings to formulating policies and overseeing their implementation (Mahalinga, 2013). The enactment of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act in 1992, which became operational in 1993, represented a significant milestone in advancing democratic decentralization in India. This amendment conferred constitutional legitimacy on Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) and introduced a mandatory provision for reserving one-third of the seats for women, including leadership roles at the village, block, and district levels. This legislative reform was a

transformative step toward institutionalizing women's political participation in rural local governance structures (Yadav, 2021). This amendment enabled thousands of women—many of whom had never previously stepped into public life—to assume leadership roles in village-level governance. It offered them a platform for capacity building and leadership development. While initially many women were perceived as 'proxy' representatives for male relatives, their continued involvement gradually led to greater confidence, political awareness, and assertion of independent agency (Jain, 2021; Sharma & Tiwari, 2021).

Research highlights that women's involvement in PRIs has led to significant improvements in service delivery, especially in areas such as health, education, sanitation, and water supply (Tripathi & Yadav, 2018). Further, it has facilitated the articulation of gender-specific concerns and ensured greater accountability in local governance. Despite socio-cultural constraints and initial resistance, many elected women representatives have challenged patriarchal norms, expanded their knowledge of governance, and become effective community leaders (Desai & Thakkar, 2001). However, reservation alone is not sufficient for substantive empowerment. Effective participation requires continuous capacity-building efforts, gender-sensitive governance training, and institutional support to overcome structural barriers such as illiteracy, mobility restrictions, and lack of economic independence (Bhagwan & Bhushan, 2020). The role of state and civil society becomes critical in ensuring that elected women representatives are not merely figureheads but empowered decision-makers. The journey from token representation to active participation reflects a transformative shift in the status of rural women—an evolution this thesis aims to explore in the specific context of the Kapurthala district in Punjab. By examining the lived experiences, challenges, and contributions of elected women representatives in this district, the study seeks to understand the real impact of decentralization on women's empowerment.

Aim of the Study:

The aim of the study is to investigate the awareness level of women regarding constitutional provisions designed for their empowerment in Panchayat Raj Institutions and to assess the extent of their active participation and political empowerment. The study specifically focuses on understanding how women in Kapurthala District, Punjab, engage with and benefit from these institutional frameworks.

Research Design

The present study adopted descriptive research design, which is well-suited for assessing and interpreting current realities, practices, and prevailing trends within a defined population. This approach is especially appropriate for the current study, which explores various dimensions of women's participation in Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) in the Kapurthala district of Punjab. These dimensions include their socio-demographic attributes, level of awareness and the extent of involvement of women in Panchayat Raj system.

Universe of the Study

The universe of the study comprises all elected women representatives serving in PRIs within Kapurthala district. This includes 283 Women Sarpanches (heads of village Panchayats), 1,407 Women Panches (ward members of village Panchayats), 43 Women Panchayat Samiti members (block-level representatives), and 6 Women Zila Parishad members (district-level representatives). These representatives are distributed across the five community development blocks of Kapurthala district: Kapurthala, Nadala, Dhilwan, Sultanpur Lodhi, and Phagwara.

The diversity of roles, responsibilities, and geographic distribution ensures that the study captures a wide range of experiences from grassroots to district-level

governance. Sarpanches and Panches are primarily engaged in village-level planning, execution of development schemes, and community mobilization, while Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad members oversee block- and district-level policy implementation, budget allocation, and coordination among village Panchayats. Considering this layered governance structure, the universe provides a robust framework to explore how women navigate institutional hierarchies, exercise leadership, and contribute to social and political empowerment (Sharma, 2013).

Sampling Technique

To ensure equitable and objective representation of participants, the study employed stratified random sampling, which is recognized for its ability to minimize selection bias and ensure that all subgroups within the population are adequately represented (Singh & Masuku, 2014). Specifically, the lottery method—a probabilistic approach to random selection—was used to select respondents from each category of women representatives. This method is transparent, simple to implement in field conditions, and ensures that every individual in the sampling frame has an equal probability of selection, thereby enhancing the reliability and validity of the findings (Neuman, 2017).

The sampling process involved three key steps:

Preparation of the Sampling Frame: A comprehensive and up-to-date list of all elected women representatives was compiled separately for each category (Sarpanches, Panches, Panchayat Samiti members, and Zila Parishad members), including their respective blocks.

Random Selection via Lottery: For each category and block, the required number of respondents was drawn using the lottery method. This ensured transparency, fairness, and objectivity in the selection process.

Rationale for Random Sampling: The lottery method was chosen due to its methodological rigor and practical suitability for fieldwork. It preserves representativeness within a heterogeneous population while being straightforward and feasible for large-scale data collection (Kumar, 2019).

This stratified random sampling approach also allows for comparative analyses across different levels of governance, geographic locations, and socio-economic contexts, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of women's empowerment in PRIs.

Sample Size and Distribution

The sample size for this study was determined based on the total population of women representatives in each category of the Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) in Kapurthala district. The aim was to achieve representative coverage while maintaining the feasibility of data collection. To this end, a stratified proportional random sampling strategy was adopted, which ensures that all governance levels and geographic regions are proportionally represented (Babbie, 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Different sampling proportions were applied according to the population size of each category. For Sarpanches and Panchayat Samiti members, a 50% sampling proportion was used to ensure adequate representation for meaningful analysis. In the case of Panches, a 33% sampling proportion was applied to balance representativeness with practicality, given their larger population. All 6 Zila Parishad members were included in the study to ensure complete coverage at the district level, enhancing the validity of findings (Kothari, 2019; Kumar, 2019).

Overall, the study included 142 Sarpanches (50% of 283), 468 Panches (33% of 1,407), 22 Panchayat Samiti members (50% of 43), and all 6 Zila Parishad members, resulting in a total sample of 638 women representatives. This proportional allocation ensured that the sample closely reflected the population structure across the five community development blocks: Kapurthala, Nadala, Dhilwan, Sultanpur Lodhi, and

Phagwara.

Tools used for Data Collection

The primary tool for data collection was a self-administered structured questionnaire, prepared in both English and Punjabi to ensure clarity and accessibility for respondents from diverse educational backgrounds. The initial draft comprised 40 close-ended questions developed after an extensive review of literature, previously used tools, and alignment with the research objectives. This draft was reviewed by a panel of five subject experts drawn from Political Science, Gender Studies, and Rural Development. Based on their feedback; 19 questions were accepted without modification, 6 questions were modified for better clarity, contextual suitability, or language simplification, and 5 questions were discarded for being redundant or less relevant.

This expert validation process enhanced both the content validity and contextual suitability of the instrument (DeVellis, 2017; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). After refinement, the final questionnaire contained a total of 25 items. The bilingual format further improved comprehension and minimized misinterpretation for respondents with varied literacy levels (Best & Kahn, 2016). Respondents were encouraged to fill the questionnaire themselves to reduce researcher bias, thereby ensuring that the data authentically reflected their perspectives. During the fieldwork, a structured bilingual questionnaire was the primary instrument for data collection. For respondents who were literate, the questionnaire was self-administered, allowing them to record their responses independently. However, for women Sarpanches, Panches, and Panchayat Samiti members who were illiterate or semi-literate, the researcher orally administered the questionnaire, asking each question and recording the responses systematically. This ensured that all respondents, regardless of literacy level, could participate fully in the study, thereby maintaining inclusivity and minimizing potential bias (Morgan, 2019).

Data Analysis

Following the descriptive analysis, inferential statistical techniques were applied to examine the significance of differences among variables. One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed to assess whether variations in empowerment levels and participation patterns were statistically significant across different groups, such as Sarpanchs versus Panches or women representatives across various blocks. The application of ANOVA allowed for the identification of meaningful differences between groups, distinguishing genuine patterns in empowerment and leadership from variations arising by chance (Field, 2018; Pallant, 2020). This analysis helped identify factors that may positively or negatively influence women's active participation and empowerment within PRIs, providing empirical support for understanding the determinants of effective political representation (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2017).

Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), a widely used software in social science research. SPSS enabled the efficient computation of descriptive measures and ANOVA ensuring the reliability, accuracy, and replicability of results. Its application facilitated systematic data interpretation, allowing the study to draw valid conclusions regarding the dynamics of women's participation and empowerment in local governance (Pallant, 2020). By integrating descriptive and inferential statistics, the study provides a comprehensive and rigorous examination of the patterns, determinants, and impacts of women's representation in PRIs, thereby contributing significantly to the understanding of empowerment through local governance institutions.

Table 1: Level of awareness of women in PRIs about the constitutional measures meant for women in Panchayat Raj Institutions in Kapurthala District

S.NO.	Level of Awareness	Frequency	Percent
1	Low level of Awareness	214	33.5
2	Average level of Awareness	228	35.7
3	High level of Awareness	196	30.7
Total		638	100

A large proportion of the participants (35.7%) had an average degree of knowledge on the areas under study, according to the statistics on participant knowledge levels. This is closely followed by 33.5% of people who are classified as having poor awareness, which suggests that a sizable section of the population has little comprehension or information. A minority that is well-informed is represented by the 30.7% of the participants who exhibit a high level of awareness. This emphasizes the necessity of focused awareness and initiatives to build capacity. Raising awareness levels may enable people to take part in societal growth and making decisions more successfully.

Table 2: One way ANOVA: Variation between sample means in five blocks of Kapurthala district in reference to awareness about the constitutional measures meant for women in Panchayat Raj Institutions.

Variable	Block	N	Mean	SD	Sum of Squares			Degrees of freedom		Mean square		F	p
					Between groups	Within groups	Total	Between groups	Within groups	Between groups	Within groups		
Awareness on constitutional measures meant for women in Panchayat Raj Institutions.	Nadala	107	54.52	14.143	1961.864	104887.647	106849.511	4	633	490.466	165.699	2.96	0.019
	Phagwara	115	54.74	12.819									
	Kapurthala	155	55.34	12.415									
	Dhilwan	107	51.37	14.67									
	Sultanpur Lodhi	154	56.86	10.967									
	Total	638	54.8	12.951									

ANOVA results show that understanding of constitutional provisions intended for women in Panchayat Raj Institutions varies statistically significantly between blocks ($F = 2.96$, $p = 0.019$). In Dhilwan, the average awareness score is 51.37, whereas in Sultanpur Lodhi, it is 56.86. Dhilwan participants showed the least awareness, while Sultanpur Lodhi participants showed the most. It appears that block-wise variations in awareness are not the result of coincidence, as indicated by the significant p-value (<0.05). These results highlight the necessity of block-specific awareness-raising techniques, particularly in blocks with lower mean scores.

Table 3: One way ANOVA: Variation between sample means as per designation in reference to awareness about the constitutional measures meant for women in Panchayat Raj Institutions.

Variable	Designation	N	Mean	SD	Sum of Squares			Degrees of freedom		Mean square		F	p
					Between groups	Within groups	Total	Between groups	Within groups	Between groups	Within groups		
Awareness on constitutional measures meant for women in Panchayat Raj Institutions.	Panch	468	52.93	13.743	6328.059	100521.452	106849.511	3	634	2109.353	158.551	13.304	0.000
	Sarpanch	142	60.06	8.217									
	Panchayat Samiti Member	22	57.86	11.264									
	Zila Parishad	6	64.5	5.128									
	Total	638	54.8	12.951									

Based on participants' designations, the ANOVA analysis shows a statistically significant difference in participants' understanding of constitutional provisions intended for women in Panchayat Raj Institutions ($F = 13.304$, $p = 0.000$). There is an apparent pattern of awareness rising with higher designations, with Zila Parishad members having the highest mean awareness score (64.5), followed by Sarpanches (60.06), Panchayat Samiti Members (57.86), and Panchs (52.93). A substantial portion of the variation is accounted for by the between-group variance (Sum of Squares = 6328.059). The extremely significant variations in awareness among designations are confirmed by the p-value of 0.000. These results underline the necessity of awareness-raising campaigns, especially aimed at Panch members, to guarantee deeper involvement at all Panchayat Raj Institution levels.

Table 4: Extent of Participation and Political Empowerment of Women in Panchayat Raj Institutions.

S.NO.	Level of Participation and Political Empowerment	Frequency	Percent
1	Low	222	34.8
2	Average	231	36.2
3	High	185	29
Total		638	100

The majority of the participants (36.2%) demonstrate an average degree of involvement with political processes and decision-making, according to statistics . Following this, 34.8% of people are classified as having low empowerment and engagement, which denotes little impact and engagement within Panchayat Raj institutions. A minority that is engaged and empowered is reflected in the lower percentage (29%) that exhibits strong involvement and empowerment. These results imply that there exists a sizable portion of the participants with low engagement, even while a significant number are somewhat involved. To ensure greater accessibility to government initiatives, this necessitates specific strategies, growth in leadership, and awareness-raising initiatives to increase women's political involvement and empowerment, particularly at the local level.

Table 5: One way ANOVA: Variation between sample means of Participation and Political Empowerment of Women working in PRIs in reference to different blocks in Kapurthala District.

Variable	Blocks	N	Mean	SD	Sum of Squares			Degrees of freedom		Mean square		F	p
					Between groups	Within groups	Total	Between groups	Within groups	Between groups	Within groups		
Participation and Political Empowerment	Nadala	107	27.53	7.837	696.853	32324.382	33021.235	4	633	174.213	51.065	3.412	0.009
	Phagwara	115	26.93	6.964									
	Kapurthala	155	27.17	7.026									
	Dhilwan	107	24.96	8.618									
	Sultanpur Lodhi	154	28.19	5.607									
	Total	638	27.07	7.2									

Degrees of political empowerment and involvement among different blocks varied statistically significantly, according to the ANOVA results ($F = 3.412$, $p = 0.009$). Dhilwan has the lowest mean score (24.96), whereas Sultanpur Lodhi has the highest (28.19), suggesting higher political involvement. The sum of squares (Sum of Squares = 33021.235) is split between within-group variation (32324.382) and group differences (696.853). These discrepancies are not the result of chance, as confirmed by the substantial p-value (<0.05). The results indicate that women's involvement and autonomy in Panchayat Raj Institutions are influenced by their geographic location, underscoring the necessity of local development initiatives, particularly in blocks with relatively lesser degrees of involvement like Dhilwan.

Table 6: One way ANOVA: Variation between sample means of Participation and Political Empowerment of women working in PRIs in reference to Designation of Women working in PRIs in Kapurthala District.

Variable	Designation	N	Mean	SD	Sum of Squares			Degrees of freedom		Mean square		F	p
					Between groups	Within groups	Total	Between groups	Within groups	Between groups	Within groups		
Participation and Political Empowerment	Panch	468	26.06	7.529	1828.932	31192.303	33021.235	3	634	609.644	49.199	12.391	.000
	Sarpanch	142	30.10	5.072									
	Panchayat Samiti Member	22	28.32	6.910									
	Zila Parishad	6	28.83	4.309									
	Total	638	27.07	7.200									

There is a significant difference in political empowerment and engagement across designations, according to the ANOVA results ($F = 12.391$, $p = 0.000$). The highest mean score is 30.10 for sarpanches, compared to 28.83 for Zila Parishad members, 28.32 for Panchayat Samiti members, and 26.06 for panchs. Although between-group differences (1,828.932) are equally significant, within-group variation (31,192.303) accounts for the majority of the overall variance (Sum of Squares = 33,021.235). The extremely significant p-value confirms to the fact that designation affects the degree of autonomy and involvement. According to the findings, those in more senior positions within the Panchayat Raj system appear to have more political influence and participation. This suggests that Panch members need to have their ability built in order to improve participation at the local level.

Discussion

The current study provides a thorough examination of the roles, duties, awareness, and engagement of women elected members in Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) across various designations and geographic areas. Women's participation in local administration is multifaceted, and the results show how factors like age, position, and geography affect their efficacy, independence, and ability to make decisions in public service. Various blocks have significantly diverse degrees of awareness of the constitutional safeguards for women. According to the data, Dhilwan has the lowest average awareness level, whereas Sultanpur Lodhi has the greatest. According to the ANOVA results ($F = 2.96$, $p = 0.019$), women's awareness and understanding of their entitlements and obligations in PRIs are significantly shaped by regional and maybe sociocultural disparities. This unequal knowledge distribution is a reflection of geographical differences in accessibility to training courses, training public relations, and knowledge sharing. According to Agarwal (2010), women's public involvement is frequently influenced by regional sociopolitical factors, meaning that even within a single location, micro-level differences may have significant effects on empowering women.

One significant factor influencing awareness is the political representative's designation. In contrast with Panchs, women who worked as Zila Parishad and Sarpanch representatives revealed considerably greater levels of awareness. Panchs had significantly lower awareness levels, ($F = 13.304$, $p = 0.000$). This is in line with Narayana (2003), who noted that official position and information availability rise with designation, providing higher-level representatives with greater exposure and learning and engagement possibilities. Given that Panchs make up the largest percentage of elected women in the study, this variation highlights the necessity of specific training programs. Blocks and designations also differed significantly in terms of their political independence and involvement. Dhilwan had the lowest participation mean, whereas Sultanpur Lodhi had the highest. These disparities, which were confirmed by ANOVA ($F = 3.412$, $p = 0.009$), imply that female political involvement may be strongly influenced by supportive institutions, social support, and regional sociopolitical acceptance. Blocks that offer better social and institutional support create an atmosphere that is more conducive to women's involvement. According to Chaudhuri (2004), female political activism is frequently reliant on both institutional and informal cultural standards, which makes regional factors crucial. There was a distinct hierarchical structure in the designations. Compared to Panchs, Sarpanches, Zila Parishad, and Panchayat Samiti members reported considerably higher levels of empowerment and involvement. This pattern, which was statistically significant ($F = 12.391$, $p = 0.000$), emphasizes how woman's trust and capacity to engage in leadership are impacted by power, position clarity, and social approval. The results are in line with research by Jha and Mathur (1999), who pointed out that women in positions of more authority are better equipped to get over societal barriers and exercise their own autonomy when making decisions.

The study also explores the difficulties and issues that women in PRIs confront, exposing a wide range of disparities in experiences among various designations. Panchs frequently cited more difficulties, such as as prejudice from their male peers, a lack of knowledge and understanding, budgetary limitations, inadequate training, administrative obstacles, and safety issues. The findings of the ANOVA ($F = 5.759$, $p = 0.001$) further confirm that the women's designation has significant effects on these issues. Similar results have been shown in earlier studies by Bhagat and

Mohanty (2009), who highlighted that women at the grassroots level encounter long-standing administrative and societal impediments that impair their capacity to perform efficiently.

Conclusion

The study concludes that women awareness and political empowerment within Panchayat Raj Institutions remain uneven, with a considerable proportion showing only average or poor levels of knowledge and engagement. Significant differences emerged across both blocks and designations, with Sultanpur Lodhi consistently reflecting higher awareness and involvement compared to Dhilwan. Similarly, Zila Parishad members and Sarpanches demonstrated greater understanding and empowerment than Panchayat Samiti members and Panchs, who remain relatively less informed and engaged. These disparities highlight that structural position and geographic location strongly influence awareness and participation. The findings underscore the urgent need for targeted, block-specific interventions and designation-focused capacity-building programmes, particularly for Panchs, to bridge existing gaps. Strengthening women's awareness, leadership, and political involvement is vital for ensuring inclusive governance and effective functioning of Panchayat Raj Institutions.

Implications of the study

With differences between blocks and designations, the study identifies notable differences in women's political empowerment and understanding within Panchayat Raj institutions. According to the findings, block-specific awareness campaigns are crucial, particularly in places with low levels of involvement and understanding like Dhilwan. The differences in designations imply that Panch members need specific capacity-building to improve their comprehension and participation in decision-making. All levels of government will experience balanced engagement provided grassroots representatives are strengthened. In order to address differences, the study also emphasizes the necessity of ongoing training, leadership development, and community-based awareness campaigns. Improving women empowerment will deepen democratic involvement at the local level, promote inclusive development, and enhance governance.

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