

Economic And Technical Problems of Elected Women Representatives in PRIs Of SPSR Nellore District Andhra Pradesh, India

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Abstract

Many women lack awareness of governance structures, financial planning, and policy implementation. It hinders their decision-making capabilities, making them reliant on male counterparts or bureaucrats for governance-related matters. One of the major problems the women leaders face is the non-acceptability of women as elected representatives. Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in India face major hurdles like inadequate funds (fiscal dependence), incomplete devolution of the 29 subjects, and a lack of skilled staff/ infrastructure (capacity gaps), compounded by political interference, "Sarpanch-Pati" (proxy rule by male relatives for women leaders) and low Gram Sabha participation, all hindering effective grassroots democracy and development. The EWRs do not make decisions independently, with husbands or male relatives exerting control. The present paper appraises the major economic and technical problems of the elected women representatives in Nellore District of Andhra Pradesh, India.

Keywords: Elected Women Representatives, Economic and Technical Problems, Nellore

1. Introduction

The introduction of women's reservation in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, was a landmark step toward gender equality in India's political landscape. The 73rd Amendment and the XI Schedule have placed a greater emphasis on string thinning the Panchyati Raj Institutions in taking the administration to the door step of the people. The study- team appointed by the Planning Commission Committee on planned projects and was presided over by Blawantrai Mehta which submitted an elaborate report in 1957 (**G.Palanithurai, 1996**). It mandated that one-third of all seats in panchayats be reserved for women, enabling them to participate in grassroots governance. Over the years, several states have extended it to 50 per cent, resulting in the presence of over 1.45 million elected women representatives (EWRs) in PRIs. Recently, the panel on the Ministry of Panchayati Raj identified several reasons why male relatives of elected women representatives in the Panchayati Raj System are able to act as proxies on their behalf. In many cases, male family

members, especially husbands (Sarpanch Pati), fathers, or brothers, act as de facto decision-makers, reducing elected women representatives to mere figureheads. It is widely referred to as the 'Sarpanch Pati Syndrome' and is prevalent in states like Rajasthan. The present study tries to understand women's political participation in the contemporary scenario, particularly women representatives at the grass root level of decentralized political system and what best can be done to boost their competencies, skills and knowledge to facilitate their extensive participation in the political institution at their own might (**G.Palanithurai (2001)**).

Most EWRs (up to 96% in some studies) rely heavily on husbands or male family members for finances, restricting their independent action. Honorariums for village heads (Sarpanches) are often very low, disincentivizing serious commitment and participation. Lack of access to micro-credit, digital tools (smart phones, internet), and dedicated assistants restricts their ability to manage official functions and finances effectively. Inadequate training in political processes, financial management, and digital literacy hinders their full engagement with economic responsibilities. Resistance from male bureaucrats and interference from higher-level politicians delay fund allocation and implementation of schemes, impacting local economic development. Financial dependence and societal pressure often force EWRs to let male relatives make decisions, undermining their authority and hindering true economic representation. Rural people through Panchayati Raj bodies get a scope transform their expectations into reality and in the process political power so as to channelize their demands for collective mobilization and community (**V.Desai, 1990**).

Economic and technical problems for Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in India involve financial dependence, low pay, lack of training/awareness, patriarchal resistance, and technical gaps (like digital literacy) hindering effective grassroots governance, leading to proxy leadership and limited decision-making despite reservations for women's empowerment. The key issues include insufficient funds for development, resistance from male counterparts/bureaucrats, limited access to digital tools, and societal pressure (dual burden) limiting their political capacity. Independent thinking and impartial decisions are qualities of a good representative and they are possible only when woman is not dependent upon others for livelihood (**Devaki Jain, 1996**).

ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL PROBLEMS OF EWRs

The elected women representatives are facing number economic and technical, problems in the society. The problems vary from person to person and village to village.

The elective women representative face the economic problems include financial dependence and low remuneration. Mostly the EWRs are economically dependent on male family members and low stipends discourage serious engagement. Moreover there are inadequate funds for development. There is lack of sufficient government funds allocated for development work cripples their ability to implement schemes and limited financial autonomy as there is poor access to micro-credit and financial resources restricts independent decision-making.

Technical problems for Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) stem from deep-rooted patriarchy, leading to proxy governance where husbands decide, coupled with low literacy, limited digital access (smart phones, internet), complex

documentation, lack of financial autonomy, and poor training, all undermining their ability to effectively exercise power and manage village development. EWRs face significant hurdles like male domination in meetings, gender-based violence, dual household burdens, and insufficient government support, hindering their leadership and participation. The technical and capacity problems are low literacy and digital divide. Many EWRs lack formal education, political training, and digital literacy (smart phones, online portals), making engagement with administrative functions difficult. Moreover, they have lack of training and experience as some of them are first-time politicians with little prior political exposure, unlike male counterparts. Complex Documentation is a major problem as they face difficulty in navigating complex official paperwork

1. Economic Problems

The respondents are facing economic problems like lack of funds from government for development work, lack of honorarium and no work is initiated without giving bribe.

Lack of funds from government for development work

Funds are dire essential for the development of the society. The state governments sanction and release funds for the development of village panchayats. The main problem today is to generate funds required for financing such investment on a large scale (small doses will not help and in fact would wash away) and for this the hidden surplus in the rural economy need to be tapped by suitable design of incentive- cum-taxation policies that are politically implementable (**Government of India, 1978**). The information on whether the respondents are facing the lack of funds from government for development work has been elicited and the details are presented in the Table 1.

Table 1
Lack of funds from government

Sl. No.	Lack of funds from government	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	324	90
2	No	36	10
Total		360	100

The table presents that 90 per cent of the respondents faced the problem of lack of funds from government to the developmental programmes while mere 10 per cent felt that there is dearth of funds from the government for the developmental activities. Above all, it is concluded that majority of the respondents opined that they have dearth of funds from the government for undertaking developmental activities in their village that has some hamlets. Thus, government should release funds for the developmental activities in the villages.

Lack of honorarium

The state government pays salary for the sarpanches of gram panchyat in for the form of honorarium to women sarpanches working at village level. The information on whether the respondents are receiving the honorarium has been elicited and dovetailed in the Table 2.

Table 2
Lack of honorarium to women sarpanches

Sl. No.	Lack of honorarium	No. of Respondents	Percentages
1	Yes	144	40
2	No	216	60
Total		360	100

The table explicitly shows that 216 respondents (60 %) opined that there no honorarium for women sarpanches working at village level while 144 respondents (40 %) opined that there is honorarium for women sarpanches working at village level. By and large, it is concluded that majority of the respondents (60 %) opined that there no honorarium for women sarpanches working at village level

No work is initiated without giving bribe

Now-a-days bribe has rapidly widespread and no work is initiated without giving bribe. The information on whether the work is initiated without giving bribe has been elicited and the details are presented in the Table 3.

Table 3
No work is initiated without giving bribe

Sl. No.	No work without giving bribe	No. of Respondents	Percentages
1	Yes	114	32
2	No	246	68
Total		360	100

The table shows that 114 respondents (32%) opined that no work is initiated without giving bribe while 246 respondents (68%) opined that work is initiated without giving bribe. By and large it is concluded that majority of the respondents (68%) opined that work is initiated without giving bribe. Thus corruption must be made taboo and the culprits must be brought to book such as pension, cutting increments, transfer to remote villages etc.

2. Technical Problems

The elected women sarpanches are encountering many technical problems like lack of training, lack of knowledge regarding PRS and development programmes and Lack of information regarding different rural development programmes,

Lack of training to women sarpanches

The information on whether the respondents have training after having elected as sarpanches has been elicited and the details are dovetailed in the Table 4.

Table 4
Lack of training to women sarpanches

Sl. No.	Lack of training to women sarpanches	No. of Respondents	Percentages
1	Yes	291	81
2	No	69	19
Total		360	100

The table presents that 291 respondents (81 %) have no training while 69 respondents (19 %) have training. It is concluded that majority of the respondents (81 %) have no training. If they are trained they function well and development takes place and people feel happy.

Lack of knowledge regarding PRS and development programmes

The information on whether the respondents have knowledge regarding PRS and development programmes has been elicited and the details are furnished in the Table 5.

Table 5
Lack of knowledge regarding PRS and development programmes

Sl. No.	Lack of knowledge regarding PRS and development programmes	No. of Respondents	Percentages
1	Yes	204	57
2	No	156	43
Total		360	100

The table presents that 204 respondents (57%) have no knowledge regarding PRS and development programmes while 156 respondents (43%) have knowledge regarding PRS and development programmes. Above all it is concluded that majority of the respondents (57%) have no knowledge regarding PRS and development programmes. Thus the respondents need proper knowledge on PRS and its developmental programmes to take wise decisions and implementing them properly.

Lack of information regarding different rural development programmes

Sarpanches need information regarding different development programmes for the development of villages. The information on whether the respondents have information regarding different rural development programmes has been elicited and the details are furnished in the Table 6.

Table 6
Lack of information regarding different rural development programmes

Sl. No.	Lack of information regarding different rural development programmes	No. of Respondents	Percentages
1	Yes	224	62
2	No	136	38
Total		360	100

It is noticed from the table that 224 respondents (62%) have lack of information regarding different development programmes for the development of villages whereas 136 respondents (38%) have information regarding different development programmes for the development of villages. Above all, it is concluded that majority of the respondents (62 %) have lack of information regarding different development programmes for the development of villages. The respondents are allowed to actively participated and given upmost priority in decision making.

Conclusion

Economic problems for Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) center on financial dependence on male relatives, hindering independent decision-making, coupled with low incentives (poor honorariums), lack of capacity (digital, financial literacy), and societal barriers like patriarchy, leading to proxy leadership and limited economic empowerment, undermining genuine grassroots governance. Regarding economic problems about 90 per cent of the respondents faced the problem of lack of funds from government to the developmental programmes, (60 %) opined that there no honorarium for women sarpanches working at village level, (68%) opined that work is initiated without giving bribe. In case of technical problems, (81 %) have no training, (57%) have no knowledge regarding PRS and development programmes and 62 %) have lack of information regarding different development programmes for the development of villages. Training programs focusing on leadership, digital skills, and political processes are crucial for Capacity Building. Endowing Panchayats with greater powers, finances, and functionaries (staff) enhances EWR effectiveness for Effective Devolution. Stronger mechanisms to prevent proxy governance and address threats are needed for monitoring and support. Moreover, digital tool platforms like e-Gram Swaraj aim to improve transparency but need better EWR adoption.

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