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A Review Study on Women's Political Awareness in India

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ABSTRACT

Women's political awareness is essential for democratic participation, indicating how well women understand political processes, rights, institutions, and their governance role. In India, despite constitutional guarantees of equality and universal adult franchise, disparities in education, socio-economic status, and cultural norms have historically restricted women's political knowledge and engagement. This review examines existing literature on the levels, determinants, and trends of women's political awareness in various regions and social groups across India. Findings suggest that women's political awareness has gradually increased over time, driven by rising literacy, media exposure, urbanization, government welfare programs, and greater involvement of women in local governance. Seat reservations for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions have significantly contributed to local-level awareness by encouraging women's active participation in community decision-making. Nevertheless, awareness levels differ considerably between urban and rural areas, educated and uneducated women, and among socio-economic groups. Persistent barriers include patriarchal social norms, limited access to information, economic dependency, domestic responsibilities, and mobility constraints. Often, women rely on male family members for political guidance, which hampers independent opinion formation. Additionally, a lack of political education, low confidence, and minimal interaction with political institutions further restrict awareness, especially among marginalized women.

Keywords: *Dependency, Domestic, Mobility, Awareness, Urbanization, Economic.*

INTRODUCTION

In any society, women's political consciousness is a vital sign of social empowerment, gender equality, and democratic health. It speaks to women's awareness of political rights organizations, procedures, and laws as well as their capacity to actively engage in governance and decision-making. Since women make up about half of the population in India, whose democracy is based on the idea of universal adult suffrage, their political knowledge is crucial to maintaining equitable representation and balanced growth. Due to patriarchal societal norms, limited educational opportunities, economic reliance, and family responsibilities, Indian women's involvement in politics has historically been restricted. Despite their important contributions to the freedom fight, women's participation in official political procedures remained relatively low following independence. However, over time, women's political consciousness has gradually increased throughout the nation due to the expansion



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of women's education, socioeconomic development, constitutional guarantees of equality, and the establishment of women's movements.

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, which established reservations for women in local self-government organizations, were a significant turning point in raising women's political consciousness. Many women were able to join Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies thanks to these reforms, particularly from rural and underprivileged populations. Women's exposure to public concerns, leadership roles, and governance has expanded as a result of their participation in these institutions, enhancing their comprehension of grassroots political processes. Disparities in political awareness continue to exist between areas, social groupings, and educational levels notwithstanding these developments. Compared to women in rural or isolated locations, metropolitan women typically have more access to media, education, and political information. The degree of political awareness and engagement is strongly influenced by socioeconomic level, literacy, occupation, and exposure to civil society organizations. Furthermore, women's autonomous political engagement is frequently restricted by elements including family influence over decision-making, mobility limitations, safety concerns, and the weight of household duties.

Mass media, internet communication, self-help organizations, and government welfare programs have all been crucial in spreading political information and encouraging female voters in recent decades. Women are becoming more politically conscious and aggressive as a result of increased visibility of female leaders and action on issues including social justice, employment, health, and education. However, obstacles including false information, a lack of civic education, and enduring gender biases still impede the growth of knowledgeable and independent political participation.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the degree, causes, and consequences of political consciousness among Indian women. Promoting meaningful involvement, bolstering democratic institutions, and attaining gender-inclusive governance all depend on an understanding of the elements that influence women's political consciousness. In addition to empowering people, raising women's political consciousness promotes more responsive policymaking and long-term social development.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Neogi Kuntala (2023) The political representation of women in India has, over the course of its history, been a topic of discussion and investigation. Women's engagement in politics has been impacted by election reforms in West Bengal, a state that has a long and illustrious history of political activities and reforms. With a particular emphasis on legislative and local body elections, this study investigates the influence that electoral changes have had on the political representation of women in the state of West Bengal. This research investigates the influence that changes in legislation, voter behavior, party strategy, and socio-economic factors play in determining the level of female representation in political institutions. In order to determine whether or not electoral reforms have had a good influence on the political empowerment of women in West Bengal, the study combines both qualitative and quantitative studies.



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Datta P. K. (2023) In democratic institutions, gender quotas are now generally accepted as a tried-and-true method of advancing gender justice, notwithstanding certain drawbacks. The impact of reserving seats for women as elected representatives in rural local government in India has been attempted to be captured and analyzed in this article, given secondary source material and my own brief study conducted in West Bengal, one of the Indian states, with particular attention to the difficulties faced by these women. It has been maintained that women elected leaders have demonstrated their ability to manage governmental institutions and to positively impact the development and governance agenda in spite of some innate structural limitations. Additionally, it has been argued that the state should take a far more active role now that it has made room for women by a constitutional change.

Pal Yesh (2023) There are considerable variations in political ideas and political activity between employed women and housewives, as well as differences on psychological variables such as self-esteem, according to cross-sectional comparisons of the two groups. Using a quasi-experimental approach, this research compares the results of the National Election Study panel that was conducted between 1972 and 1976. The purpose of this study was to investigate the competing hypotheses of self-selection and socialization by analysing the data of employed women, housewives, and women who entered the labour force between the years 1972 and 1976.

Nazma Sultana et al. (2023) found that goal of the current study was to learn how rural Dinhat Subdivision women saw women's empowerment through political engagement. The study was carried out in the Indian district of Coochbehar's Dinhat Sub-Division. The qualitative research has a phenomenological focus. Purposive sampling was used, and semi-structured interviews with rural women in the study region were used to gather qualitative data. Following deductive coding according to preset themes, the data were subjected to thematic analysis. According to the survey, there is significant variation among rural women's perceptions of women's empowerment through political participation. While the majority of rural women (47%) believe that women should actively participate in politics to empower themselves, 29% see this negatively, and 24% have no notion of how women might empower themselves through politics. Nonetheless, 67% of women in rural areas are eager to get involved in politics. They also believe that if the family's male members actively engage in politics, they won't face any opposition. Additionally, they see certain obstacles if they become actively involved in politics, such as taking care of the family and doing housework, which are traditionally and culturally reserved for women in rural India.

Kumari, Suman and Vasu Siotra (2023) They explored that the women's empowerment and gender equality have been at the top of the global agenda. The United Nations has included achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls as one of its Sustainable Development Goals (SDG-5). To address gender inequality, numerous global, regional, and local initiatives and attempts have been made. Because of the patriarchal mentality, women in India have faced discrimination and stereotypes since ancient times. Women have experienced societal ills like sati, the purdah system, female infanticide, female foeticide, dowry, and domestic abuse. A number of legislative and



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constitutional measures have been drafted to do away with these ills. Women nowadays are far more aware of their rights and have made significant progress towards female empowerment. The federal and state administrations have introduced a number of programmes aimed at emancipating women. Nonetheless, gender bias and the patriarchal attitude persist, and women continue to face discrimination in both public and private settings. The goal of the article is to examine the degree of women's empowerment in the various Indian states. The secondary data gathered from multiple government sources served as the foundation for the study. Additionally, an examination of the causes of the patterns has been conducted. The study has shown that female literacy positively impacts women's health and ability to make decisions. Additionally, government assistance in the form of programmes and infrastructure serves as a catalyst for women's empowerment. Self-help and women-focused organisations have encouraged women's economic empowerment and decision-making.

Mukulika Banerjee (2023) stated that this study looks at how self-help groups, or SHGs, have contributed to "civic growth" and the evolution of electoral politics in India. The impact of these groups' transformative influence on women is situated within a larger political framework, drawing on ethnographic engagement conducted in a West Bengali village both before and after their formation. In spite of the vertical divisions in village society, the SHG's activities allowed horizontal solidarities to arise and successfully challenge the status quo. It expands on an expanding body of research on women's empowerment and their ability to take collective action through Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to demonstrate that the concept of "empowerment" may be expanded to encompass the capacity for civic engagement and political acumen—what Arendt refers to as "natality."

Parray Rayees Ahmad and Hussain Md. Iftekhhar (2023) India finally achieved its independence in 1947, after decades of suffering and conflicts. In the beginning, the idea of India was based on the principles of equality, democracy, and harmony. The founding fathers of the Constitution placed a strong emphasis on the republican, democratic, socialist, and secular traditions with the intention of making this nation a model for unity in diversity. Justice, freedom, and equality for all people, regardless of their caste, gender, religious affiliation, or place of birth. system. To encourage and integrate all of its citizens in the social, economic, and political activities of the country, India, which is the largest democratic nation in the world, makes it a priority to do so. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 was enacted by the government in order to ensure that women take part in the political activities of the nation and to ensure that they are visible in the decision-making process. Attempting to make a review of the available literature on the issues and potential outcomes of the reservation system for women is the purpose of the present paper. One school of thought contends that despite the fact that the reservation system has brought about improvements in the political landscape of India, women's representation is still constrained, and their ability to make decisions is also limited. When it comes to removing impediments and restrictions that prevent women from participating in political processes, the study offers some proposals and recommendations to the government as well as other stakeholders.



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Chakrabarti Kaberi (2023) One of the fundamental aspects of federal politics of development and transformational politics in modern-day West Bengal, gender politics is the subject of this chapter, which delves into its breadth and subtleties. By incorporating a discussion on the role that women have played in the public sphere ever since the colonial era, it places the subject of women's participation in sociopolitical processes within a context. Despite the widespread worry that exists around gender roles and the limited extent of participatory politics, it emphasizes on the ever-expanding breadth of women's agency in state politics. Beginning in the 1940s, the participation of women in social movements made a significant contribution to the mobilization of their political leadership. During the post-independence period, the dominant space of women's movement in the state was shaped simultaneously by the influence of communist ideology and the influence of Gandhi. This chapter examines the nature of this skewed representation with a particular emphasis on electoral politics, party organizations, and legislative bodies. It highlights the fact that, despite a rich legacy of women's political activism in the state, their representation in crucial spaces within decision-making processes and legislative affairs demonstrates a wide gender gap. As well as this, the chapter focuses on the important problem of how the pervasive violence that exists in private spaces and state politics, particularly electoral violence, makes it extremely difficult for women to play an equal role in the political arena. During the process of mobilizing women's participation in public places in the state, this chapter offers light on the occasional disjunction that occurs when independent women's organizations network with party-sympathetic women's groups.

Komal Kriti et al. (2023) The purpose of this paper was to analyze the difficulties that indigenous women encounter in governance while also looking at their socioeconomic and personal condition. Primary data formed the basis of the research. Maniadih village in Bihar state's Samastipur district was the site of a field visit that yielded the data set. Using the use of a timetable for interviews. The study's sample size consists of fifty indigenous women beneficiaries. There was a dearth of native women in positions of power. This study demonstrates that indigenous women may communicate with people all over the globe. More and more, people are realizing how important it is to involve tribal women in decision-making processes that directly impact their lives. Despite this, there are still a number of obstacles that make it hard for them to be involved in government. The researcher was developing an interview schedule to cover all the bases after speaking with the indigenous women and learning the ins and outs of the research site.

Dauletova, V. et al. (2022) explored that the underrepresentation of women in politics persists despite the Arabian Gulf countries' pledges to advance gender equality and nondiscrimination against women. This research aims to analyse, via the prism of public opinion, the causes underlying the continued political disempowerment of women in the Middle East and North Africa, using the Sultanate of Oman as a case study. The results are based on 288 surveys that were completed by two participant groups: Omani civilians without any political education and undergraduate and graduate students specializing in political science. These results validate the influence of both official (government-driven) and informal (socio-cultural) variables contributing to Omani women's low



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political empowerment. By examining public opinion created regarding women's political empowerment in the nation, political science majors were found to have less gender bias than people without any political science education. Sociodemographic factors, including both groups' ages and educational attainment, did not significantly affect the degree of gender bias, nor did they increase it. On the other hand, a favorable association between the opinions of the public and gender was noted. Male respondents belonging to the general public group showed heightened levels of prejudice against the necessity of women's political empowerment, whereas politically educated respondents, irrespective of gender, upheld a positive attitude towards women and their involvement in politics. The study demonstrates that when political awareness is used as a mediator, gender bias is neutralized. The results also imply that raising people's political consciousness could be viewed as a constructive intervention that is required to shift public opinion in favour of women's political empowerment.

Hardeep Kaur and Manvendra Singh (2022) Social media is a powerful tool for influencing public opinion and political communication. Political parties' conventional campaign tactics have changed as a result of social media. It gives politicians and candidates a forum to quickly and efficiently communicate their political programmes and proposals to a large number of voters. One crucial requirement for a democratic society to succeed is the political participation of women. Social media makes it easier for women to participate in politics. This study investigates how women's use of social media affects their political participation in Punjab's Nawanshahr block of the S.B.S. Nagar district. It is primarily based on primary data that was gathered via a Google form from 65 respondents, including females from both urban and rural areas. According to this study, 95.4% of the female respondents utilize social media; however, the majority of them don't share or like political content or visit the websites of political parties. Most female students in the 15–29 age range use social media and participate in online political activity. Of the female respondents, 35.5% said they had no interest in politics. Social media has been shown to be a useful instrument for evaluating political parties' performance.

CONCLUSION

Political awareness among women in India has significantly increased over the years, reflecting broader social changes such as higher literacy rates, greater economic participation, increased media exposure, and the expansion of democratic institutions. Women today are more aware of their political rights, voting power, and role in governance than in the past. Initiatives like reservations for women in local self-government bodies, government welfare programs, and the rising number of women leaders have played a major role in boosting political consciousness at the grassroots level.

Despite these positive developments, the level of political awareness among women remains uneven across regions and socio-economic groups. Women in urban areas and those with higher education tend to have greater political knowledge and confidence compared to their rural and less-educated counterparts. Persistent barriers such as patriarchal norms, limited access to information, economic



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dependency, mobility restrictions, and heavy domestic responsibilities continue to limit many women's ability to engage actively and independently in political processes.

The study also shows that awareness does not always lead to effective participation or decision-making power. In many cases, women's political choices are shaped by family members, especially male relatives, which limits their ability to make independent political decisions. Additionally, issues like low representation in higher political institutions, lack of leadership training, and little support from political parties further restrict women's meaningful involvement in governance.

Nevertheless, the growing influence of education, digital media, self-help groups, and civil society organizations is slowly changing the political landscape for women. These platforms offer opportunities for sharing information, developing leadership, and taking collective action, thereby boosting women's confidence and agency in public life. As more women become aware of socio-political issues, they are better prepared to advocate for policies related to health, education, employment, safety, and social welfare.

In conclusion, improving political awareness among women in India is crucial for achieving genuine democratic participation and gender equality. Although significant progress has been made, ongoing efforts are necessary to tackle structural inequalities, promote civic education, and foster supportive environments that enable women to exercise their political rights freely and effectively. Empowering women with knowledge, resources, and opportunities will not only strengthen their role in governance but also contribute to more inclusive, responsive, and sustainable national development.

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