

Exploring the Intersection of Hereditary Politics and Women's Reservation in Rural Gujarat: Tokenism versus Genuine Women's Political Empowerment

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Abstract

Female leaders in local self-government called '*sarpanch*' plays a crucial role in ensuring effective governance and development in rural Gujarat. However, the debate on the impact of heredity politics on the election and performance of Female leaders has been ongoing. It is high time we delve deeper into this issue and explore how hereditary politics can shape the future of rural governance. The analysis of thirty female sarpanches in rural Gujarat provides insights into challenges faced by women leaders. This research paper focuses on how hereditary politics and women's reservation policies intersect and what complexities arise from this intersection. It explores the implications of these factors on gender equality, democratic representation, and social justice. The study's results showed that hereditary politics maintain control over critical aspects of governance in study villages, which may sometimes undermine democracy and limit the diversity of voices. Many female sarpanches enter the political arena due to decisions taken by their male relatives and husbands. The involvement of the 'sarpanch pati' may sometimes hinder her ability to exercise her rights independently. Despite this, it has also been observed that women are often excluded from leadership positions due to hereditary political systems and strong cultural norms. However, Female leaders who adopt servant leadership styles are paving the way for initial steps towards empowerment. Their commitment to serving others and fostering growth has led to a positive impact on the community. This progress is further accelerated by the reservations that have been put in place.

Keywords: Empowerment, Women Reservation, Leadership, Politics, Intersectionality, Gender Equality