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# Women Participation in Grampanchayat of Kolhapur district: Case study of Chandagad Tahsil

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## Abstract

This study examines the extent and nature of women's participation in Gram Panchayat of Chandagad Tahsil in Kolhapur district, Maharashtra. Secondary data collected from the Collector Office records, the research analyses the composition of Gram Panchayat, gender-wise representation in leadership positions such as Sarpanch, Vice-Sarpanch and members, and the educational status of women representatives. Out of 109 Gram Panchayat in Chandagad tahsil, women constitute the majority in 59.63 percent of the institutions, and they occupy a slightly higher share of Sarpanch posts (54.13 percent) and a very high share of Vice-Sarpanch posts (80.73 percent), indicating both the impact of reservation and rising acceptance of female leadership. The educational profile of women members reveals that most have completed secondary or higher secondary education, while a smaller proportion remains illiterate or limited to primary schooling, and very few have attained degree or postgraduate qualifications. The findings suggest that increased female representation, combined with gradual improvements in education, has the potential to enhance welfare-oriented, socially responsive, and inclusive governance at the village level in rural Kolhapur.

**Keywords:** Women's participation, Gram Panchayat, rural local self-government, women leadership, political empowerment

## Introduction

Panchayati Raj in India refers to the constitutional framework of local self-governance in rural areas. It is a decentralized system that empowers elected representatives to manage and oversee local administration and development activities at three levels — village, block, and district. The term *Panchayat Raj*, meaning “council of five,” has its roots in traditional village assemblies that historically settled local disputes and governed rural affairs.

The modern structure of Panchayati Raj was formally recognized through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992, which came into force on 24 April 1993. This amendment institutionalized a three-tier system comprising the Gram Panchayat at the village level, the Panchayat Samiti at the block or taluka level, and the Zilla Parishad at the district level.

In Kolhapur District, this framework mirrors the national pattern. The district administration consists of one Zilla Parishad, twelve Panchayat Samitis corresponding to the twelve *tahsils*, and around 1,025 Gram Panchayats managing village-level governance. These bodies are instrumental in executing rural development programs, promoting community participation, and ensuring efficient local administration.

Women's involvement in the Panchayati Raj system plays a transformative role in strengthening grassroots democracy. The 73rd Amendment mandates that at least one-third of all seats in Panchayats be reserved for women. This provision has proven vital in enhancing women's representation and participation in local governance. Women leaders often prioritize essential issues such as clean drinking water, education, health care, sanitation, and nutrition, resulting in more inclusive and welfare-oriented decision-making at the community level.

Present study represents the participation of women in gram panchayats of Chandagad tahsil of Kolhapur district and also represents the educational status of women members of Grampanchayat.

## Study Region

Kolhapur district is located in the extreme southern region of Maharashtra. It extends between latitudes 15°43' and 17°11' North and longitudes 73°40' and 74°42' East. Covering an area of 7,746 square kilometres, the district accounts for about 2.5% of Maharashtra's total geographical area (Patil, 2023).

Chandagad tahsil is a southernmost region in the western part of Kolhapur district. Chandagad tahsil is located at 15°56' North latitude and 74°12' East longitude. The area of this tahsil is 922.21 sq.km. This tahsil has special importance due to its historical architecture, natural biodiversity and abundant rainfall. According to record of 2023, Chandagad tahsil consist 157 villages and 109 Grampanchayat.

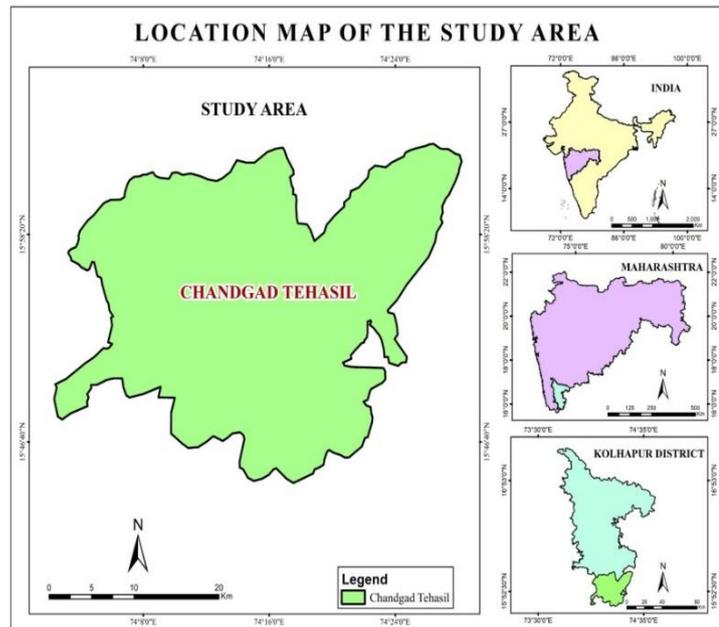


Fig.1

### Objectives

1. To find out the participation of women in governing body of Grampanchayat
2. To assess the educational status of women who participated in Grampanchayat.

### Data Source and Methodology

The present study relies entirely on secondary data. Information regarding the number of Gram Panchayats and the distribution of male and female members was obtained from the records of the Collector's Office. The collected data were analysed using statistical tools such as percentage analysis, and the results are presented through various graphical representations.

### Grampanchayats in Kolhapur district

Kolhapur District in Maharashtra has an extensive network of Gram Panchayats that function as the foundational units of rural self-governance. Each Gram Panchayat is responsible for managing local administration, implementing development projects, and promoting welfare activities within its jurisdiction, which may include one or more villages. Among all the tahsils in Kolhapur District, Chandagad has the highest number of villages, with a total of 157 villages and 109 Gram Panchayats. In some cases, a single Gram Panchayat governs two or more villages collectively.

### 5.1. Majority of members

Table No.1

#### Majority of Members (2023)

Majority	Percentage
Grampanchayat with majority of Women members	59.63
Grampanchayat with majority of men members	40.37
Total Grampanchayat	100

Source: Compiled by researcher

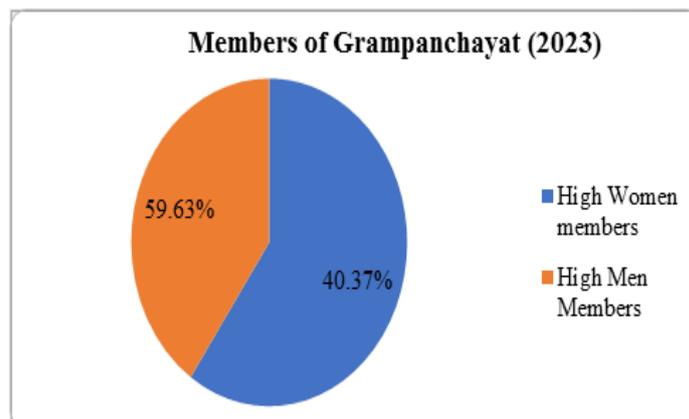


Fig.No.2

Out of the 109 Gram Panchayats in Chandagad *tahsil*, 65 have a majority of women members, accounting for approximately 59.63% of the total. In contrast, 44 Gram Panchayats have a majority of male members, representing about 40.37%. This distribution highlights that women occupy a dominant role in most Gram Panchayats, reflecting their strong participation and influence in local governance.

**Women holding the position in Grampanchayat**

The representation of men and women in leadership positions such as Sarpanch, Vice-Sarpanch, and Members illustrates both the practical functioning of democratic decentralization and the influence of constitutional provisions like women’s reservation in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). The following table presents the gender-wise distribution across these key leadership roles at the village level. Examining this data provides valuable insights into the advancement of women’s political participation, the prevailing gender disparities, and their implications for promoting inclusive and participatory local governance.

**Table No.3**  
**Holding position in Grampanchayat by women (2023)**

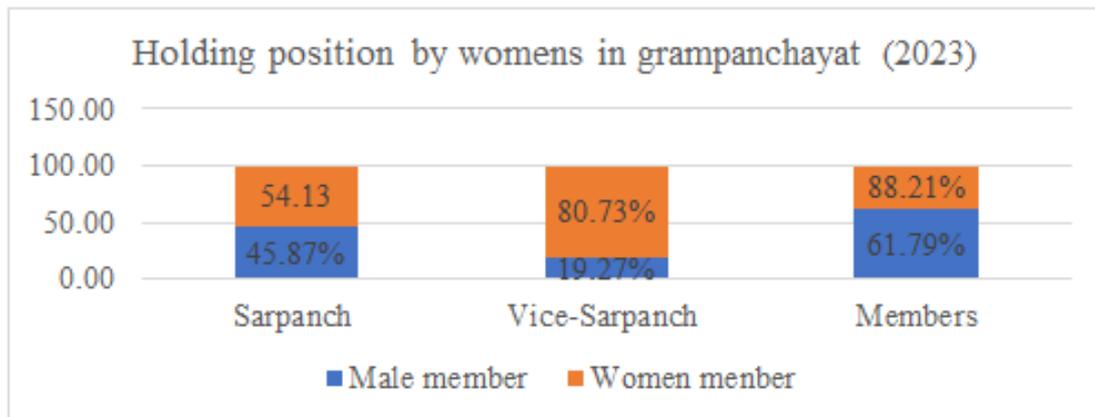
Sr. No	Designation	Male	Female
1	Sarpanch	45.87	54.13
2	Vice-Sarpanch	19.27	80.73
3	Members	61.79	38.21

**Source:** Compiled by researcher

Women comprise 54.13% of Sarpanch positions (outnumbering men at 45.87%), reflecting reservation policies' direct impact alongside rising community acceptance of female authority, as evidenced by similar trends in Maharashtra's Panchayati Raj Institutions post-1993.

A pronounced 80.73% of Vice-Sarpanch roles are held by women (vs. 19.27% men), likely driven by quota enforcement in secondary positions, which studies on rural India attribute to strategic proxy placements or rotational reservations enhancing women's visibility without full authority.

Men dominate general membership at 61.79% (women at 38.21%), underscoring that while reservations elevate women in key posts, baseline participation gaps persist due to factors like lower female literacy (secondary/higher secondary levels predominant among women representatives) and cultural barriers, aligning with Census 2011 and district-level PRI analyses.



**Fig.No.3**

**Educational status of Women members of Grampanchayat**

The 73rd Amendment in 1992 made sure women get seats in village councils (Panchayati Raj), helping them join local decisions. But their success depends a lot on education, which affects leadership skills, understanding rules, and bringing village growth. Looking at education levels of these women gives clear views on their strengths; the data shows counts and shares across groups like illiterate, primary, secondary, and higher.

**Educational status of Women members of Grampanchayat (2023)**

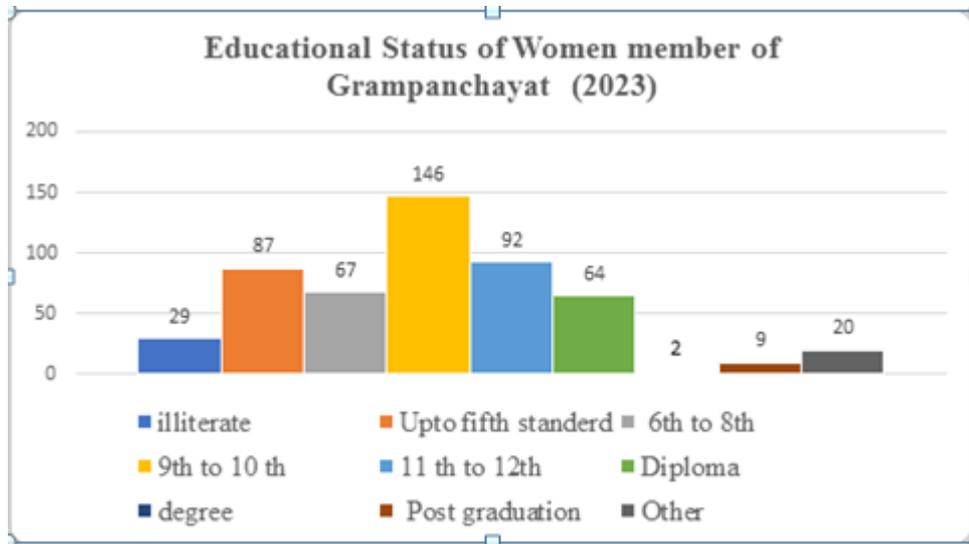
Sr.No.	Education	Female
1	illiterate	29
2	Upto fifth standard	87
3	6 <sup>th</sup> to 8 <sup>th</sup>	67
4	9 <sup>th</sup> to 10 <sup>th</sup>	146
5	11 <sup>th</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup>	92
6	Diploma	64
7	degree	2
8	Post graduation	9
9	Other	20

**Source:** Compiled by researcher

Illiterate (5.62%) A small proportion of women remain illiterate, Primary Education (16.86%) A significant share studied only up to the 5th standard. This reflects early dropout trends, often linked to poverty, household responsibilities, or lack of nearby schools.

The largest group is women educated up to 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> standard. Higher Secondary (17.83%) A considerable proportion reached 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> standard, showing improved retention. This level often equips women with better communication and analytical skills for governance.

Diploma Holders (12.40%) A notable share pursued vocational or skill-based education, reflecting interest in employability and practical knowledge that can enhance their effectiveness in local governance. Degree (0.39%) & post-graduation (1.74%) Very few women attained higher education, highlighting persistent barriers such as financial constraints, limited access to colleges in rural areas, and gender norms discouraging advanced studies. Other (3.88%) This category may include informal or alternative education, showing diversification in learning paths.



**Fig.3**

**Conclusion**

The present study clearly highlights that women’s participation in the Gram Panchayats of Chandagad tahsil has significantly strengthened the process of democratic decentralization at the grassroots level.

1. Out of 109 Gram Panchayats, women hold majority representation in 59.63 percent of the institutions, indicating a positive shift towards gender-inclusive governance.
2. More women serve as Sarpanch (54.13%) and especially as Vice-Sarpanch (80.73%). This shows the strong effect of the 73rd Amendment rules and growing acceptance of women leaders in rural areas.
3. Many women leaders have completed high school or higher secondary education. Some still have only primary schooling or no education at all. Lack of college access limits their full power and work efficiency in leadership.
4. Women’s involvement in Panchayati Raj helps achieve gender equality and boosts social-economic growth in rural Kolhapur.

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### **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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