

Role Of Muslim Women In Gram Panchayats Of Malappuram District In Kerela. A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

The participation of women in governance and decision-making processes is an essential facet of a truly inclusive and democratic society. In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of involving women from marginalized communities, including Muslim women, in local governance bodies like Gram Panchayats. This move towards greater gender representation holds the potential to not only empower Muslim women but also to strengthen the grassroots democratic structure of the country. The study explores the multifaceted roles played by Muslim women within the context of Gram Panchayats in Malappuram District, Kerala. With a focus on an explanatory approach, this study seeks to unravel the complexities of the involvement, challenges, and contributions of Muslim women in local governance structures. The role of Muslim women in Gram Panchayats is a significant but often overlooked aspect of rural governance and community development. The findings of this study are expected to shed light on the strategies Muslim women employ to navigate societal expectations and challenges, and the ways in which their participation shapes policy outcomes at the grassroots level.

Keywords: Muslim women, Gram Panchayats, Gender norms, Local governance, societal impact.

Introduction

Malappuram district in Kerala has a significant Muslim population, and the role of Muslim women in Gram

Panchayats has been noteworthy, reflecting both cultural and political changes in the region. Kerala has a reservation policy for women in local governance bodies, including Gram Panchayats. The engagement of women in local governance has become a significant facet of democratic empowerment across the globe. In the Indian context, the participation of Muslim women in Gram Panchayats has witnessed noteworthy progress, particularly in the district of Malappuram in Kerala. The study examines the multifaceted role that Muslim women play in the Gram Panchayats of Malappuram, shedding light on their contributions, challenges, and the broader implications for gender equality and community development.

Malappuram District in Kerala has a substantial Muslim population, and the historical legacy of the region has witnessed remarkable gender parity within the community. This has led to an environment conducive to the participation of Muslim women in various spheres of public life, including local governance. Muslim women in Malappuram have broken traditional barriers by participating actively in Gram Panchayats. They have contested and won elections, thereby gaining representation at the grassroots level. This representation is not only symbolic but also plays a vital role in articulating the concerns and needs of their community. The presence of Muslim women in Gram Panchayats has led to their empowerment and increased agency within their communities. It has provided them with a platform to voice their opinions, engage in decision-making processes, and influence policies that directly affect their lives. This empowerment transcends the political realm and permeates into their social and economic lives. Muslim women in Gram Panchayats have been at the forefront of advocating for and implementing women-centric development initiatives. They understand the unique challenges faced by women in their communities and thus champion projects aimed at improving healthcare, education, livelihood opportunities, and sanitation specifically for women. While the progress is commendable, it is not devoid of challenges. Traditional norms and patriarchal attitudes can still hinder the participation of Muslim women in Gram Panchayats. Conservative perceptions about women's roles, combined with a lack of awareness, can impede their active involvement in public affairs. Moreover, striking a balance

between their political responsibilities and domestic roles can be demanding.

The presence and achievements of Muslim women in Gram Panchayats are gradually challenging and reshaping traditional perceptions about women's roles in society. As they demonstrate their leadership capabilities and commitment to community welfare, they inspire younger generations to believe in the transformative potential of women in public life. The active participation of Muslim women in Gram Panchayats holds immense implications for gender equality. Their presence normalizes the idea of women in leadership roles, fostering a more inclusive political landscape. Moreover, their policy advocacy addresses gender-specific concerns, contributing to a more equitable and just society. The engagement of Muslim women in Gram Panchayats of Malappuram District, Kerala, is a testament to the evolving dynamics of gender roles in contemporary India. Their active participation, coupled with their dedication to community development, showcases their invaluable contributions to society. As these women continue to break barriers, challenge norms, and drive positive change, they pave the way for a more inclusive and empowered future for all.

Theoretical framework

The study employs a multidimensional theoretical framework to comprehensively analyze the role of Muslim women in Gram Panchayats within the context of Malappuram District, Kerala. The framework draws from feminist theory, focusing on the intersections of gender, power, and governance. It also incorporates elements of intersectionality theory to understand how factors like religion, culture, and socio-economic background intersect with gender in shaping women's participation experiences. Additionally, social capital theory is utilized to explore the networks and resources that enable or constrain Muslim women's engagement in local governance. The theory of transformative leadership is incorporated to examine how their presence influences policy initiatives and challenges existing gender norms. Lastly, the diffusion of innovation theory is used to assess the broader societal impact of their participation on changing perceptions and promoting gender equality. This interdisciplinary framework allows for a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted dimensions of Muslim women's roles in Gram Panchayats

and its implications for gender norms and local governance dynamics in Malappuram District.

Problem Statement

The study addresses the role of Muslim women in Gram Panchayats within Kerala's Malappuram District. Despite evolving gender norms, there's limited understanding of the challenges Muslim women face and their impact on local governance. The study aims to uncover the multifaceted aspects of their participation, shedding light on socio-cultural influences, structural barriers, and the implications for gender perceptions and equality. Despite the growing discourse on women's participation in local governance, there is a research gap regarding the specific experiences and challenges faced by Muslim women in Gram Panchayats within Malappuram District, Kerala. The dynamics of their involvement, including socio-cultural influences and the broader implications for gender norms and equality, remain relatively unexplored. The study aims to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive understanding of the nuanced role of Muslim women in Gram Panchayats and its impact on societal perceptions.

Need of study

The study is essential to bridge the knowledge gap concerning the role of Muslim women in Gram Panchayats within Malappuram District, Kerala. By investigating their experiences, challenges, and contributions, the research will contribute valuable insights to the broader discourse on gender, governance, and societal transformation. The study's scope encompasses exploring the multifaceted dimensions of Muslim women's participation, shedding light on their empowerment, policy influence, challenges, and their influence on evolving gender norms.

Area of study

Malappuram District is a district in the state of Kerala, India. It was formed on June 16, 1969, by splitting parts of Kozhikode and Palakkad districts. So, June 16, 1969, is indeed a significant date in the history of Malappuram District, marking its formation. The study focuses on the involvement of Muslim women in Gram Panchayats within the Malappuram District of Kerala, examining their roles, challenges, contributions, and impact on gender norms and local governance dynamics.

Objectives

The main objectives of the study are to determine the representation of Muslim women in Gram Panchayats within Malappuram District and analyze its significance in local governance. The study aims to investigate the empowerment, agency, and influence of Muslim women resulting from their participation in Gram Panchayats. It also analyzes the policy initiatives advocated by these women, focusing on their impact on women-centric development and gender equality. The research seeks to identify and analyze the socio-cultural, structural, and attitudinal challenges faced by Muslim women in Gram Panchayats and examine strategies to overcome these barriers. The study aims to explore how the involvement of Muslim women in Gram Panchayats is reshaping societal perceptions of women's roles and leadership abilities, and it intends to assess the broader implications of this transformation for gender norms and equality.

Result and Discussion

Muslim women's representation in Gram Panchayats and its Significance

The inclusion of marginalized and underrepresented groups in local governance plays a pivotal role in ensuring equitable and holistic development. Malappuram District in Kerala, India, is renowned for its diverse population, with a significant Muslim community. Within this context, the representation of Muslim women in Gram Panchayats holds special significance, as it not only enhances gender equality but also fosters participatory democracy and effective governance.

Muslim women's representation in Gram Panchayats within Malappuram District has been a subject of scrutiny and advocacy. Historically, the Muslim community has faced socio-economic disparities, and gender-based norms often limited women's participation in public affairs. However, in recent years, there has been a concerted effort to overcome these barriers through legal and policy measures, promoting inclusivity and representation. Reservation of seats for women in local bodies, including Gram Panchayats, has been a significant step towards ensuring diverse participation. The inclusion of Muslim women in Gram Panchayats empowers them to actively engage in decision-making processes that affect their communities. Their presence encourages a more

comprehensive understanding of local issues and allows for policies that cater to diverse needs. Muslim women's participation adds a unique perspective to local governance. Their experiences, concerns, and insights contribute to a broader understanding of the challenges faced by the community, leading to more effective and nuanced policies. Muslim women's representation promotes social equity by challenging traditional gender norms and patriarchal structures. This has a ripple effect, influencing broader societal perceptions and challenging systemic inequalities.

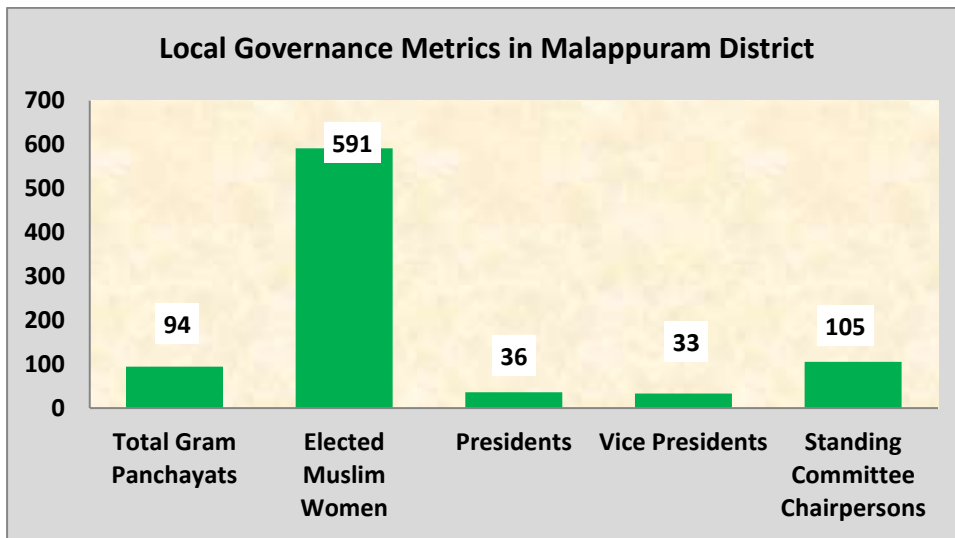
The involvement of Muslim women in Gram Panchayats ensures that community development projects and initiatives address their specific needs. This targeted approach leads to more impactful development outcomes. Increased representation fosters interfaith harmony by creating platforms for dialogue and collaboration between different religious and cultural groups within the district. Muslim women representatives serve as role models for younger generations, encouraging them to actively participate in civic affairs and break down barriers of gender and social stereotypes.

Despite the progress made, challenges remain. Socio-cultural factors, lack of awareness, and resistance from traditional power structures can hinder Muslim women's entry into politics. Encouraging women's education, raising awareness about their rights, and providing capacity-building opportunities are crucial to overcoming these challenges. Additionally, there is a need for continued advocacy to ensure that representation is meaningful and not just symbolic.

The representation of Muslim women in Gram Panchayats within Malappuram District is an essential step towards achieving gender equality and inclusive governance. It reflects the commitment to pluralism and diversity, fostering a more holistic approach to community development. To maximize its impact, sustained efforts are required to address existing challenges and provide an enabling environment for Muslim women to participate actively in local governance. Only through such inclusive representation can Malappuram District truly harness the potential of all its citizens for a prosperous and harmonious future.

Muslim Women in Malappuram's Local Governance

Malappuram District encompasses 94 gram panchayats in the state of Kerala, India. Notably, the district has seen significant Muslim women representation in local governance, with a total of 591 elected Muslim women, 36 presidents, 33 vice presidents, and 105 standing committee chairpersons. Adv. K. P. Mariyumma, a Muslim woman, held the distinction of being the first president of Malappuram District Panchayat, serving from 1995 to 2000. This trend continued with Suhara Mampad during 2010 to 2015, and from 2020 onwards, Mrs. Rafeekha has been continuing this legacy of leadership among Muslim women in the district's Panchayat.



Source: <https://dop.lsgkerala.gov.in/en/node/1030>

Period	Muslim Women in District Panchayat
1995 to 2000	Adv. K. P. Mariyumma
2010 to 2015	Suhara Mampad
2020 onwards	Mrs. Rafeekha

Source: <https://dop.lsgkerala.gov.in/en/node/1030>

The data illustrates the Muslim women in the District Panchayats representation. During the period of 1995 to 2000, Adv. K. P. Mariyumma took on this role, followed by Suhara Mampad from 2010 to 2015. Since 2020, Mrs. Rafeekha has been assuming the position, and her representation continues into the present. These notable individuals presumably held positions of leadership within the District Panchayat, actively contributing to local governance and decision-making endeavors.

Contribution of Muslim women in Gram Panchayats

The participation of Muslim women in local governance, specifically in Gram Panchayats, has the potential to transform not only their own lives but also the dynamics of their communities. In the context of Malappuram District in Kerala, India, where the Muslim community is prominent, examining the extent to which Muslim women's participation in Gram Panchayats has contributed to their empowerment, agency, and influence is crucial.

The reservation of seats for women, including Muslim women, in Gram Panchayats has offered them a direct avenue to participate in decision-making processes. This participation enables them to voice their concerns, propose policies, and advocate for issues that affect their communities. Active engagement in Gram Panchayats exposes Muslim women to training programs, workshops, and networking opportunities. These experiences equip them with skills, knowledge, and confidence, enhancing their ability to engage effectively both within and beyond the political sphere. Participation in Gram Panchayats instills a sense of self-confidence in Muslim women. This newfound confidence often transcends political boundaries and influences their personal and social lives, as they become more vocal and assertive in various spheres.

Muslim women's presence in Gram Panchayats allows them to participate in critical decisions related to community development, resource allocation, and local projects. Their agency extends to influencing policies that directly impact their neighborhoods. As women assume leadership roles within Gram Panchayats, their social standing within the community improves. This upward mobility challenges traditional gender roles and norms, empowering them to navigate societal boundaries more effectively. Muslim women's agency in Gram Panchayats often translates into policies that prioritize marginalized groups and address their unique needs. This leads to more equitable and inclusive development initiatives.

Muslim women participating in Gram Panchayats become role models for other women and girls in their communities. Their presence inspires aspirations beyond conventional gender roles and fosters a belief in the potential for positive change. The active involvement of Muslim women brings attention to issues that may have been overlooked previously, such as healthcare, education, and sanitation. Their advocacy raises community awareness and encourages collective action. The increased visibility of

Muslim women in leadership positions challenges prevailing stereotypes and patriarchal norms. This gradual shift contributes to reshaping attitudes towards women's participation in public life. The participation of Muslim women in Gram Panchayats within Malappuram District has led to significant empowerment, agency, and influence. By engaging in decision-making, advocating for marginalized groups, and challenging societal norms, these women contribute not only to their own growth but also to the broader development of their communities. The transformational impact of their participation underscores the vital role of gender-inclusive governance in building equitable and vibrant societies. Sustained efforts to address challenges and strengthen their influence will ensure that the positive trajectory of Muslim women's empowerment continues within Malappuram District and beyond.

Muslim Women's Policies for Gender Equality in Gram Panchayats

In Malappuram District, Kerala, Muslim women's active participation in Gram Panchayats has led to the formulation and advocacy of specific policy initiatives aimed at promoting women-centric development and advancing gender equality. These initiatives reflect a concerted effort to address the unique needs and challenges faced by women in the district, while also fostering a more inclusive and equitable local governance structure. Muslim women representatives in Gram Panchayats have consistently advocated for policies focused on women's health and hygiene. This includes campaigns to improve access to healthcare facilities, especially those catering to women's specific health needs. Initiatives promoting regular health check-ups, maternal and child health services, and awareness programs about reproductive health have been instrumental in ensuring that women receive appropriate medical attention. Such policies not only enhance women's well-being but also contribute to reducing gender-based health disparities.

Recognizing the pivotal role of education in women's empowerment, Muslim women in Gram Panchayats have championed policies aimed at promoting girls' education and skill development. They have advocated for increased resources and facilities in schools, as well as awareness campaigns to encourage families to prioritize girls' education. Additionally, initiatives focused on skill training and vocational education empowers

women with economic independence, allowing them to contribute to household incomes and reducing their vulnerability to gender-based economic disparities. Promoting women's safety and security has been a priority for Muslim women representatives. They have advocated for the implementation of policies that address issues such as domestic violence, harassment, and gender-based discrimination. These policies encompass the establishment of women's help desks, crisis intervention centers, and awareness campaigns to sensitize communities about the importance of creating safe spaces for women.

Economic empowerment policies have been a significant focus of Muslim women representatives. They have pushed for initiatives that provide women with access to financial resources, credit facilities, and opportunities for income generation. Microfinance schemes, self-help groups, and training in various income-generating activities have empowered women to become financially self-reliant, thereby enhancing their agency and decision-making power within their households. Muslim women in Gram Panchayats have been instrumental in advocating for gender-inclusive infrastructure projects. They emphasize the importance of gender-sensitive planning in the development of public spaces, ensuring those women's needs and safety considerations are integrated into urban and rural planning. This approach results in improved accessibility, lighting, sanitation facilities, and transportation options, all of which contribute to women's increased participation in public life.

Policies promoting maternity and child care support have been a cornerstone of Muslim women's initiatives. Advocacy for crèches, maternity leave provisions, and child care centers has been instrumental in enabling women to balance their roles as caregivers and contributors to the workforce. These policies not only support women's economic engagement but also challenge traditional gender roles and foster more equitable sharing of caregiving responsibilities.

Impact on Women-Centric Development and Gender Equality

The policy initiatives advocated by Muslim women in Gram Panchayats of Malappuram District have yielded tangible impacts on women-centric development and gender equality. These initiatives have resulted in increased access

to healthcare, education, and economic opportunities for women. Additionally, they have played a pivotal role in changing societal attitudes towards women's roles and capabilities, contributing to the dismantling of gender stereotypes.

These policies have contributed to enhancing women's agency and decision-making power within their households and communities. By addressing specific challenges faced by women, such as health disparities and economic vulnerability, these policies have fostered an environment where women are better equipped to engage in public affairs, contribute to local development, and participate in decision-making processes.

The policy initiatives advocated by Muslim women in Gram Panchayats of Malappuram District have made significant strides in promoting women-centric development and advancing gender equality. Through their advocacy, these women have not only addressed the unique needs of women in their communities but have also played a transformative role in reshaping local governance and challenging traditional gender norms. As their impact continues to grow, these initiatives stand as a testament to the importance of women's participation in shaping policies that reflect the diverse needs and aspirations of their communities.

Analysis and Strategies for Challenges for Muslim Women in Gram Panchayats

Muslim women's participation in Gram Panchayats within Malappuram District, Kerala, has been transformative, yet it is not without its share of challenges. These challenges can be categorized into socio-cultural, structural, and attitudinal aspects, which collectively hinder the full and meaningful engagement of Muslim women in local governance.

1. Socio-Cultural Challenges:

- The socio-cultural norms that have historically confined women to domestic roles and limited their participation in public affairs continue to persist in Malappuram District. Muslim women often face resistance from family members and societal pressure to prioritize their traditional roles over engaging in political activities.
- Patriarchal structures within families and communities can undermine Muslim women's agency. Decisions often require the approval of male family members,

and women's voices can be marginalized in decision-making processes.

Strategies:

- Implement targeted awareness campaigns that emphasize the importance of women's participation in Gram Panchayats and challenge gender stereotypes.
- Conduct workshops for families, community leaders, and religious figures to promote understanding of the benefits of women's engagement in local governance.
- Showcase successful Muslim women leaders who have made positive contributions to their communities, inspiring others to follow suit.

2. Structural Challenges

- Limited access to education and economic resources can impede Muslim women's ability to participate effectively in Gram Panchayats. The absence of proper infrastructure, such as transportation, can also deter their involvement.
- Reservation of seats for women is a step forward, it does not always guarantee meaningful participation. Women might find themselves in token roles without access to decision-making platforms.

Strategies:

- Implement programs that provide educational opportunities for women to enhance their skills and knowledge, enabling them to contribute more effectively.
- Offer training workshops to equip women with the necessary skills in leadership, communication, and policy formulation.
- Advocate for resources dedicated to improving women's access to education, healthcare, and transportation, addressing structural inequalities.

3. Attitudinal Challenges:

- Deep-rooted stereotypes about women's capabilities and roles can undermine their credibility as leaders in Gram Panchayats. Preconceived notions about the suitability of women for political roles persist.
- Women might lack the support networks necessary to navigate the complex world of politics. The absence of mentors and allies can hinder their progression.

Strategies:

- Promote positive portrayals of Muslim women in leadership positions through media channels, challenging stereotypes and showcasing their contributions.

- Establish networks that facilitate mutual support and sharing of experiences among women participating in Gram Panchayats.
- Initiate mentorship programs that pair experienced women leaders with newcomers, guiding them through the challenges and opportunities of political participation.

Muslim women's participation in Gram Panchayats in Malappuram District marks a significant step towards gender equality and inclusive governance; challenges persist on socio-cultural, structural, and attitudinal fronts. Overcoming these challenges requires a multi-pronged approach that includes awareness-raising, capacity-building, and policy reforms. By dismantling gender stereotypes, providing necessary resources, and fostering a supportive environment, these strategies can empower Muslim women to fully engage in local governance, ensuring their voices are heard, and their contributions are recognized for the betterment of their communities and society at large.

Societal perceptions of women's roles and leadership abilities

The involvement of Muslim women in Gram Panchayats in the Malappuram District of Kerala has been instrumental in reshaping societal perceptions of women's roles and leadership abilities. This phenomenon has not only impacted local communities but also has broader implications for challenging traditional gender norms and promoting gender equality.

Historically, the Malappuram District in Kerala has been characterized by conservative norms and practices, which limited the participation of women, especially Muslim women, in public and political spheres. However, over the past few decades, there has been a gradual shift in societal attitudes, driven in part by factors such as increasing education, economic development, and awareness about women's rights. This transformation has paved the way for Muslim women to actively participate in local governance through their involvement in Gram Panchayats.

The participation of Muslim women in Gram Panchayats has challenged and redefined traditional perceptions of women's roles. These women have demonstrated their leadership abilities, decision-making skills, and commitment to community welfare. Their

involvement has shown that women, regardless of their religious background, can effectively contribute to local governance and decision-making processes. This shift has played a crucial role in breaking down stereotypes that confined women, particularly Muslim women, to domestic roles and passive engagement.

The implications of this change are far-reaching. Firstly, the involvement of Muslim women in leadership positions within Gram Panchayats has served as a powerful example for younger generations. It has shown that women can play pivotal roles in shaping public policy, advocating for their communities, and working towards sustainable development. This, in turn, encourages more women to aspire to leadership positions and challenges the deeply ingrained notion that politics and leadership are exclusively male domains.

The presence of Muslim women in Gram Panchayats has led to policy shifts that prioritize gender-sensitive issues. Their lived experiences and perspectives bring attention to issues such as women's health, education, sanitation, and livelihoods, which might have been overlooked in the absence of their representation. This demonstrates the transformative potential of diverse representation in decision-making bodies and contributes to more inclusive policies that cater to the needs of all members of society.

The involvement of Muslim women in leadership positions has fostered inter-community dialogue and understanding. By participating in public life, these women have had the opportunity to interact with people from various backgrounds, helping to break down stereotypes and prejudices. This promotes a more inclusive and harmonious society where individuals from different religious and cultural backgrounds can work together towards common goals.

However, it's important to note that challenges persist. While the involvement of Muslim women in Gram Panchayats has undoubtedly contributed to changing perceptions and promoting gender equality, barriers such as patriarchal norms, socio-economic disparities, and resistance to change still exist. These women often face backlash, discrimination, and resistance from traditional power structures that seek to maintain the status quo.

The involvement of Muslim women in Gram Panchayats in the Malappuram District of Kerala has significantly transformed societal perceptions of women's

roles and leadership abilities. By breaking barriers and redefining norms, these women have become catalysts for broader changes in attitudes towards gender equality. Their presence has not only challenged traditional notions but has also contributed to more inclusive policies, inter-community dialogue, and the empowerment of future generations. However, addressing the remaining challenges is essential to ensure that these positive changes continue and deepen, fostering a more equal and just society for all.

Major findings

The major findings regarding the role of Muslim women in Gram Panchayats of Malappuram District in Kerala highlight their increasing participation in local governance and decision-making processes. Over the years, there has been a notable shift in societal norms, allowing Muslim women to actively engage in public affairs. This increased involvement has led to diverse benefits, including enhanced representation of women's perspectives in policies and projects. Despite facing initial challenges related to cultural and gender biases, Muslim women have proven their capabilities by taking on leadership roles within Gram Panchayats. These roles have enabled them to address issues that are crucial to their communities, such as education, healthcare, and social welfare, from a firsthand perspective. It is evident that the participation of Muslim women in Gram Panchayats of Malappuram District has not only empowered them individually but has also contributed to the overall development and inclusivity of local governance practices.

Implications of the study

The implications of the study revolve around illuminating the significant role that Muslim women play in the Gram Panchayats of Malappuram District, Kerala. By delving into their participation and contributions, the study not only enriches discussions on gender empowerment and local governance but also provides nuanced insights into representation dynamics and societal transformation. The findings carry the potential to stimulate policy considerations aimed at further empowering and facilitating the engagement of Muslim women in decision-making processes at the grassroots level. Moreover, the study's revelations can foster a more inclusive and just democratic framework within the district, while also

offering a replicable model for analogous regions grappling with comparable challenges and possibilities.

Conclusion

The role of Muslim women in the Gram Panchayats of Malappuram District, Kerala, has emerged as a significant and transformative aspect of local governance and social dynamics. Over the years, these women have broken barriers and shattered stereotypes to actively engage in grassroots governance, thereby contributing to the overall development and empowerment of their communities. The participation of Muslim women in Gram Panchayats has brought about a paradigm shift in traditional gender norms prevalent in conservative societies. Their presence in decision-making processes has not only challenged existing patriarchal structures but has also paved the way for a more inclusive and equitable representation of voices. By assuming leadership roles and engaging in policy formulation, these women have demonstrated their capability to address issues ranging from public health and education to sanitation and infrastructure, which are crucial for the betterment of their communities.

The involvement of Muslim women in Gram Panchayats has created ripple effects beyond the realm of local governance. Their actions have inspired other women to step forward and become active participants in public life, fostering a sense of agency and empowerment among them. This newfound visibility and influence have the potential to break down societal barriers and stereotypes, fostering a more tolerant and progressive society.

However, it is important to acknowledge that Muslim women's participation in Gram Panchayats also faces challenges. Deep-rooted cultural norms, limited access to education and resources, and inadequate support systems can hinder their progress. Therefore, it is imperative for stakeholders, including government bodies, non-governmental organizations, and local communities, to provide the necessary infrastructure, training, and support to ensure that these women can fully realize their potential and contribute effectively to the development of their regions. The role of Muslim women in Gram Panchayats of Malappuram District, Kerala, showcases a remarkable journey of empowerment, breaking down barriers, and advocating for positive change. Their presence not only challenges conventional norms but also contributes significantly to the growth and betterment of their

communities. As their influence continues to grow, it is hoped that their stories will inspire more women across all segments of society to step into leadership roles and actively shape the future of their communities and the nation at large. The path they have paved is a testament to the transformative power of inclusion and gender equality in local governance.

Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest to declare regarding the content presented in this paper. The authors have no financial or personal relationships that could potentially bias the interpretation of the findings or influence the presentation of the information provided. This paper has been prepared with objectivity and integrity to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the information shared.

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