

# Exploring the possibilities of women empowerment and gender inequity in urban local body elections in India

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**Abstract:** *There still exists a gender gap in various fields in this era. Human development is likely affected by the gender inequality and women empowerment. Proper quality education among women enhances the political representation and women empowerment in various sectors. The present study aims in exploring the possibilities of women empowerment and gender inequity in urban local body elections. Additionally the study investigates about women participation in Indian politics, understand the current status of women empowerment in Indian local governance, identify the barriers for women empowerment in Indian urban local elections, examine the existence of gender inequity in urban local body elections and finally suggest possible interventions for enhancing women empowerment and eradicating gender inequity in Indian politics. The outcome for the study is provided by quantitative analysis via survey. The research analyses with quantitative analysis using SPSS version 23.0, through survey assessment, gathering primary data from women in Kochi. A structured questionnaire survey is prepared, segregated, and distributed to the respondent. Purposive sampling approach is used for quantitative analysis and 115 responses are obtained. The research reveals that there is less participation of women in politics and further there are more barriers for women in local body election. The study suggest that quality education can enhance the participation of election among women also to overcome the barriers.*

**Keywords:** *women empowerment, gender inequity, SPSS, election, education.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION :

### 1.1 Background of the study

Gender equality (GE) and Women Empowerment (WE) have catalytic effect in human development's achievement<sup>1</sup>. Till now no countries have completely attained women and girl empowerment and GE<sup>2</sup>. 2030 Agenda depicts that there are some targets to attain WE and GE for sustainable development goals. To work on this, the critical factors are needed to be considered for wellbeing and social development around the world. By inclusion financial services, financial facilities are affordable to all, which has become the normal primacy in India and other countries<sup>3</sup>. The monetary growth of a nation is mainly based on the contribution of women in rural development<sup>4</sup>. Though it is difficult for women in India to empower as they are mostly dominated by males and bulk of citizens<sup>5</sup>. Mostly half of the population in the country are women, yet suffering from various factors such as literacy, earning rates and so on. Now a days, political, economic and social empowerment is required, as it is the only way in enhancing WE in terms of self-esteem, confidence, ability for protection and personal assertions.

<sup>1</sup> N. Bose and S. Das, "Women's inheritance rights, household allocation, and gender bias," *American Economic Review*, vol. 107, pp. 150-153, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> J. A. Odera and J. Mulusa, "SDGs, gender equality and women's empowerment: what prospects for delivery," *Sustainable development goals and human rights: springer*, pp. 95-118, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> S. Bhatia and S. Singh, "Empowering women through financial inclusion: a study of urban slum," *Vikalpa*, vol. 44, pp. 182-197, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> A. Ceesay, "Women and Microfinance in The Gambia: A Path to Empowerment and Financial Inclusion," in *Women's Contributions to Development in West Africa: Ordinary Women, Extraordinary Lives*, ed: Springer, 2023, pp. 99-118.

<sup>5</sup> M. Thelwall, C. Bailey, M. Makita, P. Sud, and D. P. Madalli, "Gender and research publishing in India: Uniformly high inequality?," *Journal of informetrics*, vol. 13, pp. 118-131, 2019.

GE not only concentrates on male and female inequality but also includes the rights of transgender. Political equality is a fundamental democracy tenet. Various literatures have depicted that the representation of females is limited in politics<sup>6</sup>. Further there is gender gap in the political career<sup>7</sup>. Mostly in all the countries women are underrepresented in election office. As they concern that female politicians advocate position that are significant to women alone<sup>8</sup>. Consequently in many countries race, caste, and religion are the vital salient features correspond the variation in political representation<sup>9</sup>. The research of Tamang<sup>10</sup> states that there are hidden conflicts in women organisation regarding policy measures. Conflicts are still continuing based on equality, justice and democracy. From the analysis of Tamang on the women's responses, the literatures concludes that participation of women constrains from binary participation or no participation. Further by examining the engagement and experiences of hidden conflict open space on various conceptualizations of participation in the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

### 1.2 Significance of the study

WE is the significant feature for human and society development. WE develops self-esteem, confidence, ability for protection, and personal assertions. Women participation in politics is limited due to several factors. Gender inequality is the key factor for women in politics. There are various challenges faced by women to participate in politics. To understand the current status of women in Indian politics, the present study analyses on the challenges, factors affecting women participation in local body politics.

### 1.3 Problem statement

There are many obligations for the women in the society to participate in local body election. Though there is random increase in achievement of women in various sector, the participation in politics is still limited. Some of the factors might be education, financial background and so on. The vital reason for less women participation is gender gap<sup>11</sup>. Further there is more gender discrimination<sup>12</sup> in India, as it is a male dominant society. Consequently most of the male participants think that women participation in politics will help to improve only on women empowerment and not on other features. There are economic and political powers for females similar to male yet the show off in politics is still limited<sup>13</sup>.

### 1.4 Research objectives

- To investigate about women participation in Indian politics
- To understand the current status of women empowerment in Indian local governance
- To identify the barriers for women empowerment in Indian urban local elections
- To examine the existence of gender inequity in urban local body elections
- To suggest possible interventions for enhancing women empowerment and eradicating gender inequity in Indian politics

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW :

This section deals with the literatures of political participation of women in Indian politics, Status of WE in local governance of India and Gender inequity in Indian local body elections.

<sup>6</sup> A. Clayton, D. Z. O'Brien, and J. M. Piscopo, "All male panels? Representation and democratic legitimacy," *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 63, pp. 113-129, 2019.

<sup>7</sup> Y. Kerevel, "Empowering women? Gender quotas and women's political careers," *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 81, pp. 1167-1180, 2019.

<sup>8</sup> T. Barnes, *Gendering legislative behavior*: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

<sup>9</sup> L.-E. Cederman, A. Wimmer, and B. Min, "Why do ethnic groups rebel? New data and analysis," *World politics*, vol. 62, pp. 87-119, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> D. Tamang, "Rethinking "participation" in Women, Peace and Security discourses: engaging with "non-participant" women's movements in the Eastern borderlands of India," in *The Women, Peace and Security Agenda*, ed: Routledge, 2021, pp. 36-54.

<sup>11</sup> Y. Kerevel, "Empowering women? Gender quotas and women's political careers," *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 81, pp. 1167-1180, 2019.

<sup>12</sup> D. Suleman, A. H. Mohamed, and M. F. Ahmmed, "Political and Gender issues in Arundhati Roy's 'The Ministry of Utmost Happiness'," *Suleman, D., Mohamed, AH, & Ahmmed, MF (2020). Political and Gender issues in Arundhati Roy's 'The Ministry of Utmost Happiness'. Indonesian Journal of Cultural and Community Development*, vol. 5, pp. 10-21070, 2020.

<sup>13</sup> K. B. Lewellyn and M. I. Muller-Kahle, "The corporate board glass ceiling: The role of empowerment and culture in shaping board gender diversity," *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 165, pp. 329-346, 2020.

## 2.1 Political participation of women in Indian politics

Representation of women in political elections is indeed to come long way which might take decades. January 2019 the women holding the seats in parliament worldwide are 24.3%. The rate of female heads in government has raised from 4.7 percent to 5.2 percent in past two decades<sup>14</sup>.

The participation of women in politics has increased over past few years in all the country. The study of Hessami<sup>15</sup> analyses the effects of women participation in politics. In emerging countries there is increase in rate of female participation due to betterment in provision of goods, specifically on the health and education. Whereas in emerged countries the rate of female participation has no effect on policies. Recent evidence in the study depicts that representation of females has made changes in the policy and parliamentary deliberations. The study concludes that representation of female has improved quality by corruption reduction and extraction of rent by power. The study of Meier<sup>16</sup> analyses the passive representation and active representation of women in public office. The study further analyses the interest of women participation in public administration. From the empirical analysis the result reveals that women leaders increase the probability rate of appointment in head public agency, moreover this agency indirectly affects the representation of administrative positions. Additionally, women officials and public administration are related with adoption of policy related to women friendly.

## 2.2 Status of women empowerment in local governance of India

Bangladesh local government institutions has more male participation initially as it is the male dominated country. At the starting stage the policy regarding the women participation was neglected from the structure of local government. The study of Paul<sup>17</sup> aims to identify the factors affecting the women participation in Bangladesh. The study is based on quantitative approach where 250 women are considered as respondents. The analysis used to provide the outcome of the objective are reliability, validity, independent sample T test. The study has found that educational, economic, religious and social factors positively impact the participation of women in Bangladesh. The study suggests that the policy maker can enhance in identifying the factors in policy making for participation of women in local governance. WE and equality is a major priority area among the stakeholders. The study of Singh<sup>18</sup> investigates the status of Indian to find preparedness to attain sustainable development. The study further uses secondary sources to analyse various models and dimension of Indian WE. Constitutional safe guards, plans and programs implementation by government are the indicators the WE. Sustainability development goals focus on gender party and several avenues for policy discussion and intervention towards WE.

A society should be neutral and should give equal presence for both women and men. The presence of women can be defined by assessing quality of education. Through education women participation is extended towards politics. After independence, there has been remarkable change. Various policy measure were adopted to empower the condition of women by government. The study of Adhikari<sup>19</sup> aims to analyse the participation of women in political contexts. Reservation for women is an eye opener for entry in politics. The study concludes that their participation enhances on women development and immediate action or attention on WE.

## 2.3 Gender inequality in Indian local body elections

Social exclusion is meant as some groups are excluded partially or totally from participation in the society. Based on this concept the study analyses the women's position in state of Manipur and Assam. In India the north eastern region are relatively better in life choices, mobility and life spaces. Several indices has provided the idea on the betterment in women's position in India. The study of Choudhury<sup>20</sup> has analysed the women's position via interview basis. The study has concluded that women in this region has various disadvantage such as education, life expectancy

<sup>14</sup> women, "<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/03/women-in-politics-map-2023>," 2023.

<sup>15</sup> Z. Hessami and M. L. da Fonseca, "Female political representation and substantive effects on policies: A literature review," *European Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 63, p. 101896, 2020.

<sup>16</sup> K. J. Meier and K. D. Funk, "Women and public administration in a comparative perspective: The case of representation in Brazilian local governments," *Administration & Society*, vol. 49, pp. 121-142, 2017.

<sup>17</sup> R. Paul, B. Mohajan, M. M. Uddin, and M. A. H. Reyad, "Factors affecting women participation in local government institution: A case study of Bangladesh perspective," *Journal of Global Research in Education and Social Science*, vol. 13, pp. 94-105, 2019.

<sup>18</sup> S. Singh and A. Singh, "Women empowerment in India: a critical analysis," *Tathapi*, vol. 19, pp. 227-253, 2020.

<sup>19</sup> A. Adhikari and B. Saha, "Women participations in education and politics: a twenty first century scenario," *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, vol. 11, pp. 68-74, 2021.

<sup>20</sup> S. Choudhury and S. Kumar, "Gender discrimination and marginalization of women in North-East India," *Journal of Public Affairs*, vol. 22, p. e2625, 2022.

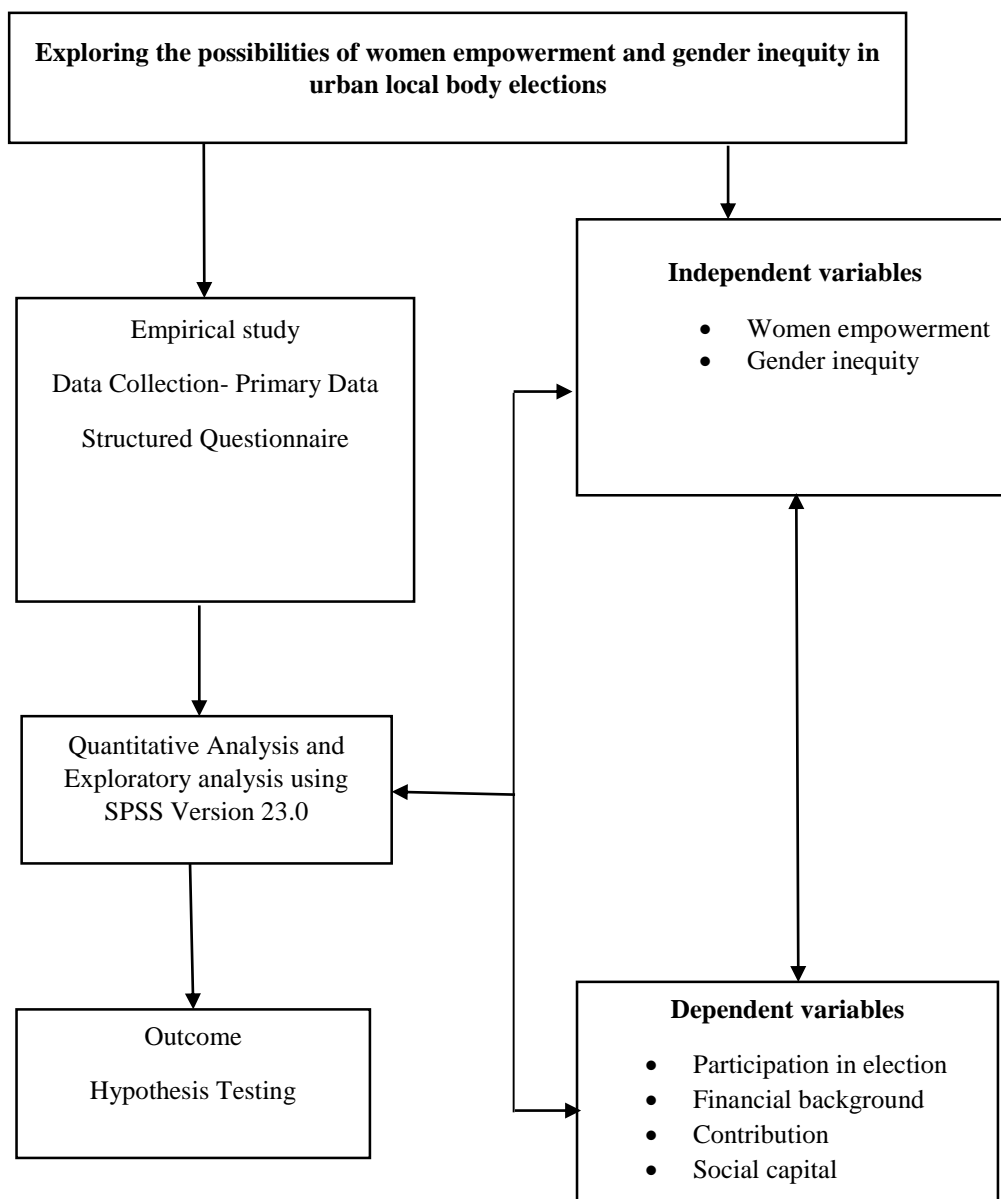
and resource access. There is no mundane structure for social subsistence of women in north eastern region. Moreover it is clear that demarcation on the roles makes the women value lesser.

### 3. Methodology :

#### 3.1 Research Design

The present research is subjected on empirical and descriptive studies. The research embraces quantitative analysis technique and primary data is used. The primary data collection has been accomplished by survey with aid of questionnaires and then the gathered data is analyzed using the SPSS tool. The data is gathered from women in Kochi. The Primary data collection accompanied nearly 115 respondents from women in Kochi. To establish the relation between the variables WE and gender equality in urban local body election.

The primary stage of research design identifies the variables that contributed to the impacts or variations in the WE. The factors influencing WE and gender inequality in urban local body election is determined. The relationship between WE and gender inequality was explained. The research by design is quantitative and exploratory, seeking to uncover the underlying causes WE in local body election. The positive and negative effects also impacts the WE.



**Figure 1 Research Design**

The data is collected from the women participants in Kochi. Establishing the link and relationship between the variables selected in this research is performed by implementing ANOVA evaluation, correlation, and mean and chi square evaluation. The process involved in the research is illustrated in Figure.3.1. The independent variables are considered WE and gender inequality. The dependent variable is participation in election, financial background and contribution.

### 3.2 Research Objectives

- To investigate about women participation in Indian politics
- To understand the current status of women empowerment in Indian local governance
- To identify the barriers for women empowerment in Indian urban local elections
- To examine the existence of gender inequity in urban local body elections
- To suggest possible interventions for enhancing women empowerment and eradicating gender inequity in Indian politics

### 3.3 Research Question

- What is the level of women participation in Indian politics?
- What is the current status of women empowerment in Indian local governance?
- What are the barriers for women in Indian urban local elections?
- How gender inequality exists in local body election?
- What are the possible measure to enhance women empowerment and gender equality in Indian politics?

### 3.4 Research Hypothesis

**H<sub>11</sub>:** There is high level of women participation in Indian politics.

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no participation of women in Indian politics.

**H<sub>12</sub>:** There is existence of barriers for women in Indian urban local election

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no barriers for women in Indian urban local election

**H<sub>13</sub>:** There exists gender inequality in local body election.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no gender inequality in local body election.

### 3.5 Study Population

The valuable respondents for the survey were filtered using purposive sampling methods. The sample size for the research is 115. After collecting the data, it is fed as different variables and assessed through the tool called SPSS to accomplish the research aim.

### 3.6 Sampling Method

Purposive sampling method is adopted in this research for selecting the repliers. The current study utilizes the purposive sampling approach in the primary data sources. It is a non-probability sampling method where researcher decide who must be combined or obtained as the sample<sup>21</sup>. The respondents selecting process is expected to provide beneficial information for the research. The main reason for proceeding with purposive sampling strategy in the study is because the statement is constructed with respect to the objectives of the research that particular people may provide significant views required for the research questions and thus required to be combined into the sample<sup>22</sup>. The samples under this purposive sampling approach are obtained from women.

### 3.7 Data Collection

The most important stage of research is data collection process. This is based on the emphasis on the objectives of the research to increase a logical knowledge on research questions. The main responsibility of a researcher is to

<sup>21</sup> F. B. Thomas, "The Role of Purposive Sampling Technique as a Tool for Informal Choices in a Social Sciences in Research Methods," 2022.

<sup>22</sup> S. Denieffe, "Commentary: Purposive sampling: complex or simple? Research case examples," *Journal of Research in Nursing: JRN*, vol. 25, p. 662, 2020.



choose the appropriate data collection method. The data has been collected from women to explore the possibilities of WE and gender inequity in urban local body elections

### 3.8 Research Instrument

The research tools are utilized in education, health sciences and social sciences to inspect students and clients. The projected research uses a structured questionnaire from various respondents. The research instrument utilized in the study is the structured questionnaire, depicted as the survey questions. A set of questionnaires was designed and distributed to women. Every sample possesses the same probability as other research samples to be chosen, serving as a representation of the whole population.

### 3.8 Data Analysis

A systematic phenomenon for collecting and executing mathematical, statistical, and computational data is by Quantitative research analysis<sup>23</sup>. This method fetches data from management employees utilizing sampling techniques. Numerical results are obtained in the analysis.

With the support of framed questionnaire, the data are collected from the particular sample respondents, and quantitative methodology is utilized for the data analysis. The data will be recorded using an Excel sheet to reveal the variables. The software tool SPSS is used for the subsequent estimation stage to analyze the variables entered in Microsoft Excel. The outcomes are estimated using five evaluation approaches. The methods used by the researchers are correlation, chi square, mean, and ANOVA analysis. Correlation is applied to describe the association between the two variables. Regression is implemented to represent the influence of a single variable upon other variables. ANOVA is a statistical tool used to find the difference between the means of two independent collections by analysts. Descriptive statistics denotes the representation, collection, and formation of data. It is employed for briefing the characteristics of data sets.

The use of SPSS software in this research makes the results effective and consistent in counting the values. The collected data was enumerated with the usage of Excel and SPSS software. Correlation, and ANOVA are accomplished to evaluate the organized hypothesis. The data estimation comprises 3 levels, namely, Microsoft Excel is used to incline the demographic variables, and the design of frequency distribution is done. To list the data analyzed by statistics to predict the median range and the mean and standard deviation of several variables in this research is a significant step. Hence SPSS software is employed in this research. Mean, chi square, ANOVA, and Correlation evaluation are employed to evaluate the research hypothesis.

## 4. Results :

### 4.1 Demographic analysis

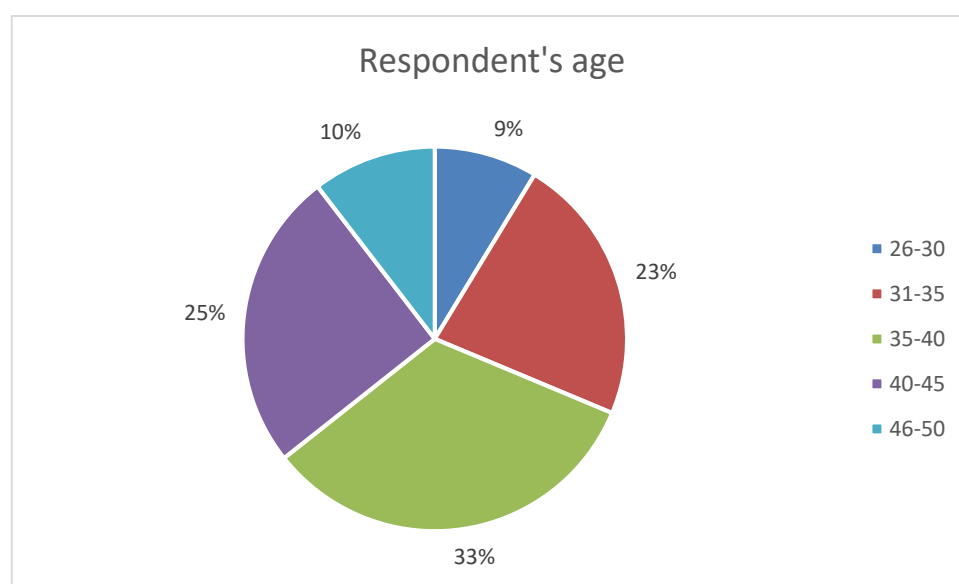


Figure 2. Respondent's age

<sup>23</sup> Y. M. Jung, "Data analysis in quantitative research," 2019.

The respondent's age is depicted in figure 2. Age of participation of women in politics should be above 25. So the demography analysis is performed for the respondent's age above 25. From the figure, 33% of the respondents were from age 35-40, 25% of participants were from 40-45. The least respondents with 9% were from age 26-30. The figures clearly states the involvement of women in local election body is less in the age 20-25.

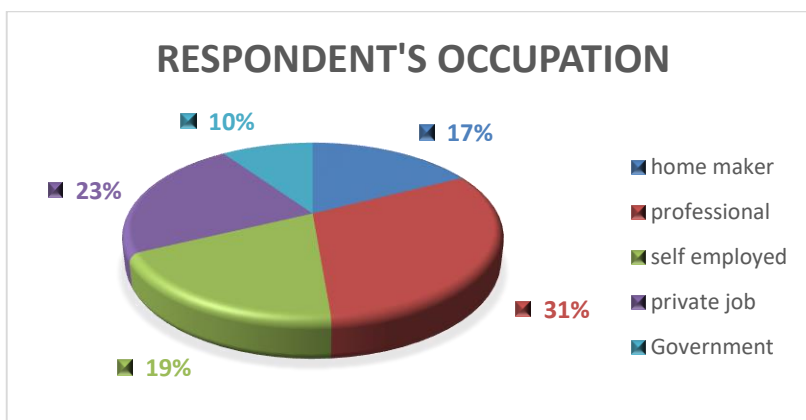


Figure 3. Respondent's occupation

Respondent's occupational status is depicted in figure 3. Most of the respondents were professionals with 31% and private job participants were 23%. The least occupation among the participants is home maker. The figure states that there is less involvement in local body election among home makers.

## 4.2 Statistical analysis

### 4.2.1 Frequency Test

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	85	59.2	59.2	59.2
	Neutral	10	30.7	30.7	89.9
	Disagree	15	10.1	10.1	100.0
	Total	115	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 illustrates the frequency test for participation in election is dominated by men. From the table the highest percentage of the responses was 59.2 which responded for "agree". From the analysis we can depict that the level of participation is less due to the domination by men. From this analysis the hypothesis "there is high level of women participation in Indian politics" is rejected. The outcome of the table concludes that there is low level of participation of women in politics.

### 4.2.2 ANOVA test

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean <sup>2</sup>	F	Significance
Gender discrimination exists in Indian politics	Between Groups	7.375	2	3.688	83.281	.000
	Within Groups	5.491	113	.044		
	Total	12.866	115			
The major barrier in participation of women is political illiteracy	Between Groups	.234	2	.117	.334	.021
	Within Groups	43.435	113	.350		
	Total	43.669	115			

Table 2 states the outcome of ANOVA analysis. This analysis is generally executed to define the statistical variance among independent groups. The significant values attained for the measured concept is less than 0.05, hence there exists a significant relationship among independent groups. The considered variable for the analysis are "Gender discrimination exists in Indian politics" and "The major barrier in participation of women in politics is illiteracy". From the outcome of the result, it is clearly stated that there are barriers for women in Indian urban local election. Hence the hypothesis "there are no barriers for women in Indian urban local election" is rejected.

### 4.2.3 Correlation test

Table 3 Bi variant Correlations			
		Gender discrimination exists in Indian politics	Implication of Policy reduces inequality in politics
Gender discrimination exists in Indian politics	Pearson Correlation	1	.513*
	Significance 2 tailed		.016
	N	115	115
Implications of Policy reduces inequality in politics	Pearson Correlation	.513*	1
	Significance 2 tailed	.016	
	N	115	115

Table 3 provides outcome of correlation analysis. Examining correlation in data exploration is a statistical method used to evaluate the power of the correlation or association among the measured factors and calculate their relationship via the significant Pearson coefficient value. The variables considered for the analysis are “implication of policy reduces inequality in politics” and “Gender discrimination exists in Indian politics”. The result shows that there is relation among the variables, as the significance value is less than 0.05. Further the Pearson correlation value is 1 which depicts that there is a strong correlation among the variables. From the outcome it is proven that there is gender inequality in Indian politics. Hence the hypothesis “there is no gender in equality in Indian politics” can be rejected.

### 5. Discussion :

Various literatures have analysed on the Gender impact in women participation in politics<sup>24</sup>. Further the literatures have analysed the participation of women in politics<sup>25 26</sup>. Also the status of women empowerment in India is analysed<sup>27 28 29</sup>[1-3]. The literatures conclude that level of participation is limited in politics and there is gender inequality in politics. Further existing study suggests that proper policy is required to enhance the women empowerment in India. Though various research has analysed on Gender inequality and women participation in politics, literatures have not provided the barriers of women participation in politics.

The present study outcomes have depicted participation of women in politics via frequency test. The test concludes that there is limited women participation in politics. From the ANOVA test, the outcome illustrates that there are several barriers for women in Indian politics. The correlation outcome states that there is gender inequality in Indian politics.

### 6. Conclusion :

WE is a base for human and society development. Both emerged and emerging countries focus on WE in various sectors, WE in political sector is still a question. Most of the literatures have analysed on the gender inequality, political participation of women in Indian politics and status of women empowerment in local governance of India. Literatures states that their women participation is limited. The present study has analysed on the factors which limit women participation in local body election and concluded that Gender discrimination and women in politics is illiteracy. The study concludes that Gender discrimination should be vanished to provide equal rights for women in all fields including politics. The study further suggests that quality education can enhance the participation of election among women also to overcome the barriers.

<sup>24</sup> S. Choudhury and S. Kumar, "Gender discrimination and marginalization of women in North-East India," *Journal of Public Affairs*, vol. 22, p. e2625, 2022.

<sup>25</sup> women, "https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/03/women-in-politics-map-2023," 2023.

<sup>26</sup> K. J. Meier and K. D. Funk, "Women and public administration in a comparative perspective: The case of representation in Brazilian local governments," *Administration & Society*, vol. 49, pp. 121-142, 2017.

<sup>27</sup> R. Paul, B. Mohajan, M. M. Uddin, and M. A. H. Reyad, "Factors affecting women participation in local government institution: A case study of Bangladesh perspective," *Journal of Global Research in Education and Social Science*, vol. 13, pp. 94-105, 2019.

<sup>28</sup> S. Singh and A. Singh, "Women empowerment in India: a critical analysis," *Tathapi*, vol. 19, pp. 227-253, 2020.

<sup>29</sup> A. Adhikari and B. Saha, "Women participations in education and politics: a twenty first century scenario," *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, vol. 11, pp. 68-74, 2021.