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REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: **IJAR-57381**

Title: A Structural Analysis of Gender Reservation in Panchayati Raj in India

Recommendation:

Accept after minor revision.....

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality		✓		
Techn. Quality		✓		
Clarity	✓			
Significance	✓			

Reviewer Name: Faheem Abdul Muneeb

Reviewer's Comment

The manuscript presents a theoretically informed and empirically grounded examination of gender reservation within India's Panchayati Raj system, with particular emphasis on the phenomenon of proxy leadership. The topic is of substantial academic and policy relevance, especially given the scale of women's political inclusion following the 73rd Constitutional Amendment and the persistent gap between formal representation and substantive authority. The paper is well-motivated and engages with a critical question that goes beyond descriptive accounts of representation—namely, whether institutional inclusion translates into actual governance power.

The manuscript demonstrates a strong command over the subject matter and situates the discussion effectively within constitutional, sociological, and political theory frameworks. The central argument—that proxy leadership is structurally produced rather than culturally incidental—is clearly articulated and consistently developed throughout the paper. The use of empirical references, policy reports, and theoretical literature strengthens the credibility of the argument and positions the study within contemporary scholarly debates.

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Scientific Contribution and Analytical Depth

The paper makes a meaningful contribution by bridging the gap between normative claims about political representation and empirical realities of governance. The distinction between descriptive and substantive representation, discussed in detail in Section 3 (pages 6–7), provides a strong analytical foundation. The manuscript effectively draws on established theoretical frameworks, including those of representation and empowerment, to interpret the Indian case in a nuanced manner.

The empirical illustrations are particularly compelling. For instance, the figure on page 2 clearly highlights the divergence between women's representation and estimated proxy leadership across states, while Table 1 (page 6) further reinforces this gap by linking proxy leadership rates with female literacy and institutional adoption indicators. These visual elements significantly enhance the clarity of the argument and demonstrate the structural nature of the problem.

The multi-level analysis of causation—covering individual, household, community, and institutional dimensions (pages 9–10)—is a notable strength of the manuscript. It reflects a sophisticated understanding of how social structures interact with institutional design. The discussion of the *Sarpanch Pati* phenomenon is particularly well-developed and supported by both empirical and legal references, including the judicial intervention discussed in relation to the Mundona case (page 10).

While the analytical depth is generally strong, certain sections could benefit from further tightening. At times, the argument becomes slightly repetitive, particularly in the discussion of structural causes across multiple sections. Greater conciseness and sharper differentiation between analytical points would enhance the overall impact of the paper.

Methodology and Use of Sources

The manuscript adopts a qualitative, interdisciplinary approach, combining constitutional analysis, secondary data, policy reports, and existing empirical studies. This approach is appropriate for the research question and allows for a comprehensive examination of the issue. The author demonstrates familiarity with a wide range of scholarly sources, including seminal works in political science and development studies.

However, the methodological positioning could be made more explicit in the introductory section. While the sources used are robust, a clearer articulation of how evidence is selected and synthesized would improve transparency. Additionally, while government reports and policy documents are extensively

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used, a slightly stronger engagement with recent peer-reviewed journal literature could further enhance the academic rigor.

Structure, Style, and Presentation

The manuscript is well-structured, with a clear progression from historical context and theoretical framing to empirical analysis and policy recommendations. The use of sub-sections allows for a logical development of the argument. Figures and tables, such as the structural diagram of Panchayati Raj on page 5 and the policy recommendations table on page 13, are effectively integrated and contribute to the clarity of the analysis.

The writing style is generally strong, with a clear academic tone and coherent argumentation. The narrative is engaging without compromising scholarly rigor. That said, some sections are slightly verbose, and minor editorial refinement could improve readability. Occasional repetition and long sentences may benefit from simplification to ensure sharper communication of key ideas.

The title accurately reflects the scope and analytical orientation of the paper and is appropriate for an academic audience.

Final Recommendation

Overall, the manuscript represents a well-developed and insightful contribution to the study of gender, governance, and institutional design in India. It successfully combines theoretical depth with empirical relevance and offers a compelling analysis of the structural constraints on women's political authority in local governance.

While minor revisions are needed to improve conciseness, clarify methodological positioning, and refine language, these do not detract from the overall quality and significance of the work.

Decision: Accepted with minor revisions.