

Political empowerment of women with respect to the self-help groups (A Case study of Visakhapatnam, District. Andhra Pradesh State)

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Abstract

Socio-economic background of a community considerably influences the attitudes, values and perceptions of the individuals composing it. So for the proper analysis of the role of social factors to political participation, a brief account of socio-economic profile of sample respondents in particular is presented in this section. The institutions do not work in vacuum; the given socio-economic and political circumstances determine the shape of the institutional process. The socio economic variables to a great extent determine the variations in political participation level. Political behaviour like any other aspects of human behaviour takes place in a particular socio-economic and cultural milieu. It is affected by social structure, economic development and historical factors combining together. Background characteristics of an individual play an important role in formulating his/her preference and decisions. The most Significant aspect of women empowerment commence with the involvement of Decision making process in the household activities. Self-help groups have been founded with this motive to create awareness among women in all the areas.

There are a number of studies focusing on the contribution of self-help groups towards economic empowerment of women. Thus, this study is focused on political empowerment of women with respect to self-help groups of North Coastal Districts of Andhra Pradesh State. No attempt, however, has so far been made to study political empowerment in this otherwise an affluent region of the state.

Keywords: political participation, political empowerment, self-help groups, decision making

Introduction

When the modern concept of development emerged with the initiation of the world powers to uplift the socio-economic condition of the people of the Third World the goal was to raise the GNP of the state. During 1960-1970s the world's gross international product was increased by one trillion dollars. At the end of the first development decade, an annual growth rate of 5 percent had been achieved by most developing countries. The rates of unemployment, population growth and the disparity in people's incomes were also increased. By this time it was clear that in spite of rising GNP, the essential needs of people were not being met and evidences depicted that the situation of women in developing countries had, in fact, deteriorated. According to Moser, during these initial years, women of the Third World got special attention through welfare approach particularly emphasizing in the area of education and health. Motherhood has important role in the welfare approach while implementing the family centered programs. Along with the free distribution of goods and services, efforts to combat malnutrition and population control through family planning programs were implemented directly through the aid received from the well to do countries. This gave rise to two parallel approaches, first the financial aid for economic growth and secondly relief aid for the socially weaker section of the society. This had critical implications for Third World women. It meant that the international economic aid which prioritized government support for capital-intensive industrial and

agricultural production to accelerate growth focuses on increasing the productive capacity of male labour force, while welfare provision for the family was targeted at women, who along with disabled and the sick, were identified as "vulnerable groups"

Empowerment of women is an essential basic condition for socio economic development of any society. Although women constitute one half of the population, they continue to be subjugated, confront in socio-economic and political status. Women have been struggling for self-respect and autonomy. Since mid-1980s owing to questioning by women themselves about their oppressed status and plight through varied women's movements, the issue of women empowerment came into focus. According to Bina Agarwal (2000)⁸, empowerment is a process that enhances the ability of disadvantaged (powerless) individuals and groups to challenge and change (in their favour) existing power relationships that place them in subordinate economic, social and political position.

Need for Study

According to Kabeer's understanding there are two essential elements of women empowerment, i.e., process and agency. A process is defined as a series of events that produce gradual change. The process of women empowerment leads to expansion in their ability to have resources and to make strategic life choices. The agency element of women empowerment describes that women themselves are the significant activists in the process of

change. From the above discussion it is clear that the empowerment of women regard with to social, economic and political areas are interrelated. First, Self Help Groups they built confidence among women by encouraging them to cultivate the habit of saving which gives them financial support. If women got economic empowerment then they could stand on their own feet and fight for the other two viz., social and political empowerment.

Objectives

The main objectives of the study are:

1. To examine the particulars of the political hierarchy in the
2. Visakhapatnam District.
3. To observe the political awareness of SHG women in the Study area.
4. To analyse the political empowerment of SHG women in the Study area.

Methodology

This research study is embodied with both primary and

secondary data. As far as secondary data is concerned they were sought from various books, journals, magazines, newspapers, periodicals, unpublished sources, internet etc. The study also embodied a sizeable primary data, which was collected by way of canvassing a schedule among selected sample of respondents.

Selection of Sample

The study is based on the data collected from primary as well as secondary sources. For primary data collection, a multi-stage stratified random sampling design was adopted. The sample has been drawn in such a way that all the households have equal chance of selection. District is a sample unit at the first stage. At the second stage, Revenue Mandal was selected. The Study has selected Revenue Mandal for rural and tribal areas separately; the following rural and tribal areas have been selected from Vijayanagaram which is a selected district for this study.

Table 1: Selected District & Revenue Mandal for the Study

State	Selected District	Area	Total No. of Revenue Mandals	No of Selected Revenue Mandal	Name of Revenue Mandal	No. of SHG Members	Sample Size
Andhra Pradesh	Visakhapatnam	Rural	28	01	Chodavaram	18,016	75
		Tribal	11	01	Hukumpeta	9,419	75
	Total		39	02		27,435	150

From each sampled Revenue Mandal, three villages were selected at random. The selection of villages was finalized on the basis of the indicators published in Hand book of statistics, and after consultations with the concerned Block Mandla Mahila Samskya officials. Thus 06 villages in total were selected which comprised the third stage in our sampling design. From each chosen village, 25 households were selected on the basis of

systematic sampling from the SHGs list from Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP) reports. The SHGs list was collected from the SERP official website that is <http://www.ikp.serp.ap.gov.in/IHCB/IHCBHomePage.aspx>. Thus, from 06 villages, 150 households were selected in Visakhapatnam District in Andhra Pradesh State. Out of 150households 75 for rural area and 75 for tribal area total were selected.

Table 2: List of Selected Villages for the Study

Revenue Mandal	Area	Total Number of Villages	Selected Villages	Name of Villages	Sample Size
Chodavaram	Rural	31	03	Chakipalle	25
				Lakkavaram	25
				Rayapurajupeta	25
Hukumpeta	Tribal	168	03	Burja	25
				Pathakota	25
				Santharai	25
	Total	199	06		150

Finally, from the SHGs list of each village, 25 households were selected on the basis of systematic sampling. In this way, 75 households from rural area

and75from tribal area, i.e. a total of 150 households from selected district were surveyed.



Fig 1: Graphical Presentation of Sample Districts.

Table 3: Particulars Political Hierarchy

S. No	Item	Visakhapatnam District
1	No. of Grama panchayats	994
2	No. of Mandal parishads	39
3	No. of Zilla Parishads	1
4	No. Of Assembly constituency	15
5	No. Of Loksabha constituency	03
6	No. Municipal corporations	01
7	No of Municipalities	03

Source: Handbook of Statistics Visakhapatnam District-2011-12, CPO, Selected Districts.

The above table reveals information on local administrative profile of selected district. Visakhapatnam district has 994 numbers of grama panchayats In the case of number of mandala parishads, 39, and 15 assembly constituencies and the district has three lok sabha constituencies. One municipal corporation and three municipalities.

Table 4: Respondent’s Interest in Politics

District	Area	Yes	No	Total
Visakhapatnam	Rural	48 (64.0)	27 (36.0)	75 (100.0)
	Tribal	34 (45.3)	41 (54.7)	75 (100.0)
	Total	82 (54.7)	68 (45.3)	150 (100.0)

Source: Field Survey.

The figures in brackets indicate percentages.

Interest in Politics

Table 4 reveals information on sample respondents’ distribution based on interest in politics. Out of 150 sample respondents only 54.7 per cent of them are expressed their willingness on interest in politics. The respondents who have interest in politics were noticed more in Visakhapatnam district (54.7%) In rural areas 64% showed interest and in tribal areas also45.3% per cent of respondents showed interest on politics. But in tribal areas nearly 55% of the respondents expressed “NO” statement on interest in politics when we compared to rural areas.

Table 5: Respondent’s Knowledge about the Political Parties

District	Area	Yes	No	Total
Visakhapatnam	Rural	47 (62.7)	28 (37.3)	75 (100.0)
	Tribal	39 (52.0)	36 (48.0)	75 (100.0)
	Total	86 (57.3)	64 (42.7)	150(100.0)

Source: Field Survey.

The figures in brackets indicate percentages.

Knowledge about the Political parties

Information on sample respondents’ distribution based on knowledge about the political parties is presented in table 5. Out of 150 sample respondents 57.3 per cent of them from both rural and tribal areas are said that they have knowledge about the political parties. The respondents who have knowledge about the political parties have observed more in Visakhapatnam district (57.3%). The respondents in rural area of Visakhapatnam district is 62.7%, Even in tribal areas also it occupied 52% in Visakhapatnam district. This shows that there are no significant differences among the sample respondents in total, rural and tribal areas with respect to knowledge about the political parties.

Table 6: Distribution of SHG Members Elected as Sarpanch in the selected district In A.P Gram Panchayat Election – 2013

S. No	Category	Contested	Elected
1	S.C	22	15 (68.18)
2	S.T	7	4 (57.14)
3	B.C	124	88 (70.97)
4	General	102	61 (59.80)
5	Total	255	168 (65.88)

Source: Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP)

Note: figures in the parenthesis percentage of elected members to contested members

Table 6 gives information on social community-wise distribution of SHG members elected as Sarpanch in A.P Gram Panchayat Election held in 2013. Out of total 255 persons contested 65.88 per cent were elected in

Table 9: Impact on Respondent’s Participation in Election

District	Area	Very Good	Good	Little	No impact	Total
Visakhapatnam	Rural	14 (18.7)	24 (32.0)	23 (30.7)	14 (18.7)	75 (100.0)
	Tribal	9 (12.0)	24 (32.0)	21 (28.0)	21 (28.0)	75 (100.0)
	Total	23 (15.3)	48 (32.0)	44 (29.3)	35 (23.3)	150 (100.0)

Source: Field Survey.

The figures in brackets indicate percentages.

Impact on participation in Election

Table-9 shows information on opinion of sample respondent’s on improvement with respect to impact on participation in election through SHGs. out of 150 sample respondents, 29.3% expressed that they have little impact regarding impact on participation in election through SHGs. In Visakhapatnam district more respondents 32.0% have said that they have good impact regarding impact on participation in election through SHGs. In rural areas 30.7% of respondents have expressed that they have little impact with regard to impact on participation in election.

Visakhapatnam district.

Table 7: Distribution of SHG Members Elected as Ward Members in A.P Gram Panchayat Election - 2013

S. No	Category	Contested	Elected
1	S.C	273	201 (73.63)
2	S.T	269	196 (72.86)
3	B.C	1263	958 (75.85)
4	General	719	532 (73.99)
5	Total	2524	1887 (74.76)

Source: Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP)

Note: figures in the parenthesis percentage of elected members to contested members.

Table-7 gives information on social community-wise distribution of SHG Members elected as Ward Members in A.P Gram Panchayat Election held in 2013. Out of total 2524 contested persons in Visakhapatnam district 1887 (74.76%) were elected Persons.

Table 8: Participation of SHG Members in Politics

District	Area	Yes	No	Total
Visakhapatnam	Rural	52 (69.3)	23 (30.7)	75 (100.0)
	Tribal	31 (41.3)	44 (58.7)	75 (100.0)
	Total	83 (55.3)	67 (44.7)	150 (100.0)

Source: Field Survey.

The figures in brackets indicate percentages.

Participation of SHG Members in Politics

Table 8 represents sample respondents’ distribution based on participation of SHG members in politics. Out of 150 sample respondents 55.3% percent of SHG members are shown interest to participate in politics in Visakhapatnam district. In rural area also Visakhapatnam (69.3%), in tribal areas 41.3per cent of respondents have shown interest to participate in politics. This shows that there is a significant difference among the sample respondents in total, rural and tribal areas with respect to participate in politics.

Conclusion

In Visakhapatnam district respondents have said that they have good impact regarding impact on participation in election. In tribal areas more respondents (28.0%) show that they have little impact with regard to impact on participation in election through SHGs. Sample respondents have little improvement through SHGs in social, economic and political aspects such as reduction in alcoholism, in adoption of small family norm, reduction in domestic violence, with regard to access to markets, with respect to awareness of property rights, marketing skills, productive skills, access to M.P. and

M.L.A, participation in election and able to meet non-government officials.

Suggestions

Basing on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are offer:

1. Non-governmental organizations/government which is running SHGs may motivate enthusiastic women members to get into the local administration as these members would be better representatives taking their experience from the SHG platform. The NGOs working in the area could also organize training /awareness programmes on empowerment of women and importance of becoming a member may be made clear.
2. Programmes could be drafted keeping in view the limitations of the women and the inputs to be given. Special training programmes may be organized periodically for the elected women representatives.
3. The rural population and all the others concerned should understand the cause of women empowerment and should work to achieve the same. In other words, there must be a multi-thronged approach to alleviate the problems of women and bring them to the mainstream.

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