

A Study of Political Participation of Women in Visakhapatnam District of Andhra Pradesh

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Abstract

This paper attempts to analyse the political participation of women in Visakhapatnam District of Andhra Pradesh. The Political Participation of women has become one of the most important concerns of present century, which shows impact on their family and society. For women it is very difficult to participate in the civic and political life due to lack of support and gender discrimination. In India, still the Political participation of women largely absent from national, state and local-decision making bodies due to their a very less participation in political activities. The role of political parties to encourage more women to join in political activities are also negligible. Strengthening women's rights and removing hurdles to political participation are crucial to achieve women empowerment and gender equality. The research conducted on women sample respondents of the three regions of Visakhapatnam district viz. urban, rural and tribal areas about women political participation.

Key words: *Political participation, Gender discrimination, Women Empowerment and Visakhapatnam District.*

Introduction

Women have the right to participate in political process and it shows positive impact on progress of the nation, state, society, family and individual personality. It is observed that increase in women's political participation and leadership leads to development of the society. It also affects the performance of political process and tends to move towards more inclusiveness, egalitarian, responsible, and democratic in nature. The real political participation of women is need for a liable democracy; it helps in expanding the scope of democratic norms and improves the prospects for enduring development. This is not only a demand of simple justice or democracy, but a necessary condition for women's existence in politics. Participation of women into politics and decision-making structures can change the policies, vision and structure of institutions.

The women facing numerous challenges to participate in the political process due to the gender discrimination, lack of support and inadequate resources. If we see the Political participation of women in our Parliament and state legislatures show a very negligible figure while compare with men. The current Lok Sabha has 66 women MPs out of 543 total MPs and constituting a merely 12.15% of the total strength. The Rajya Sabha has 28 women MPs out of

244 total MPs and women constitute just 11.47%. In Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly only 20 MLAs are women out of 175 MLAs and merely constituting 11.42%. In Legislative council, only 6 MLCs are women out of total 58 MLCs and merely constituting 10.34%. Hence, strengthening women's political rights and removing hindrances towards political participation are necessary to achieve gender equality and women empowerment.

Women in Visakhapatnam district are also largely absent in active political participation at the Centre, State and local politics. It is necessary to study the political participation of Visakhapatnam District women to understand their relevant position in politics. The study is equally significant to strengthen the position of women in society by encouraging equal participation of men and women in political sphere.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the impact of political participation variables on women in Visakhapatnam district in the three regional areas of i.e., Urban, Rural and Tribal areas.
2. To study the perception of women respondents for their active Political Participation.
3. Review the political participation of women in Visakhapatnam District viz., urban, rural and tribal areas.
4. To assess the percentage of women's active participation in the Visakhapatnam districts in urban, rural and tribal areas.

Limitations of the Study

- 1) This study is limited to Visakhapatnam District only and its three geographic regions viz., Urban, Rural and Tribal areas.
- 2) This study is confined only to women sample respondents of Visakhapatnam district.
- 3) For collection of Primary data from the women respondents may from the time constraints, as a certain period has been taken into consideration for the study.

Literature Review

V.B. Athreya and K.S. Rajeshwari (1998) explore the socio-economic and political background of women Panchayat leaders and they conducted work on "Women Participation in Panchayati Raj: A Case Study from Tamil Nadu". And they revealed that political background and family support are important factors for women to enter the public arena.

Poornima and Vasulu (1999), in their study on Panchayat Raj found that Panchayati Raj institutions as grass-root democratic governance institutions are a necessary, but not sufficient condition in the transformation to a better social order and that, transformation facilitating women's participation through reservation is the first and important step.

Palanithurai, G (2002) probes into the problems faced by the elected women representatives when they manage the local body institutions. In his article 'Impediments to Empowerment of Women: Experiences of Elected Women Representatives in Panchayats in Tamil Nadu' has brought to light the ways and means by which the problems can be tackled, what the needs of the leaders and how they can be met by external agencies.

A. Celine Rani (2002) found in his work that the socio-economic status is a significant factor in determining the emergence of rural women leaders. Different categories of leaders have been identified. This reflects the condition in Tamil Nadu.

Duflou E. (2011), in his study found that the inter-relationships of the Empowerment and Development are probably too weak to be self sustaining and that continuous policy commitment to equality for its own sake may be needed to bring equality between men and women.

Sonowal (2013) conducted a study on the effect of the SC and ST women in the rural areas of Sonitpur district. He revealed that the status of women in the present society, attitude of parents and guardians towards girl education are negative.

Ashid Kolas (2015) in his study concluded that policy making perspective women's empowerment is best understood as a process to end gender-based discrimination and stop the violation of women's rights. These measures enable women to empower themselves, leaving political agency to the agent herself.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS

The Stratified sampling technique (population divided into groups based on some characteristics and then within each group, a simple random sample is used) has been used for distribution of pre-tested questionnaire and Schedules for primary data collection. The collected primary data has been analysed with the statistical tools like percentage analysis. And also Secondary data were collected from the available journals and websites.

The variables of women political participation are Reservation, Empowerment, Governmental Policies, Developmental programmes, Socio-Cultural barriers, awareness of women political rights, Education, self-reliance and independence, Gender discrimination and Violence, Family influence and Independent decision making.

The study covered three regions of Visakhapatnam district viz., urban, rural and tribal areas. The Information was collected from the sample women respondents of the three regions of Visakhapatnam district about women political participation. The total women sample respondents are 405 and they are equally distributed 135 women sample respondents among three regional areas. Horizontally, the sample respondents (405) were divided into women Political leaders (342) and women Non - Political leaders (63). The women Political leaders include MPs, MLAs, Municipal Corporators & Chairpersons, Sarpanches, ZPTCs, MPTCs, etc., and Non- Political leaders includes Political party activists & followers, government employees and house-wife's

Table 1. the distribution of Sample Respondents on the basis of Socio-Economic Profile

S. No.	Variables	Particulars	No. of Respondents	Percentages
1	Age	Below 20 yrs	48	12
		20-35 yrs	77	19
		35-50 yrs	161	40
		50-65 yrs	98	24
		65 years above	21	5

		Total	405	100%
2	Marital Status	Married	296	73
		Unmarried	109	27
		Total	405	100%
3	Monthly Income	Below 50,000	61	15
		Rs. 50,000-1,00,000	136	34
		Rs. 1,00,000 – 2,00,000	170	42
		Above 2,00,000	38	9
		Total	405	100%
4	Positions	Non - Political leaders	63	16
		Political leaders	342	84
		Total	405	100%

Source: Researcher

Inference

From the above table, the highest respondents are 'between 35-50 years age group' (40%) then followed by 'between 50-65 years age group' (24%), 'between 20-35 years age group' (19%), above 65 years age group(5%) and below 20 Years age group (12%). In Marital status Married (73%) group is the highest then followed by Unmarried (27%). In Income levels slightly highest is 'between 100000 – 200000 income group' (42%) then followed by 'between 50000 – 100000 income group' (34%), 'below 50000 income group' (15%) , 'above 200000 income group'(9%). In positions, Political leaders (84%) is the highest and followed by Non-political leaders (16%). In the Scio-economic profile that the highest respondents among their variables are 'age group 'between 35 to 50 years' (40%), followed by married (73%) and annual family income 'between Rs. '100000 – 200000 income group' (42%) and Political leaders (84%).

Table 2. Do you agreeing Reservations of seats (in Parliament, State Assemblies and governmental jobs) for women increases women political participation?

Regional areas	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Total (%)
Urban	115(85%)	15 (11%)	5(4%)	135(100%)
Rural	108(80%)	20(15%)	7(5%)	135(100%)
Tribal	107(79%)	21(16%)	7(5%)	135 (100%)
Total	330(81%)	56(14%)	19(5%)	405(100%)

Source: Researcher

Inference

From the above table, among urban region agree option (85%)is the highest then followed by disagree (11%)and neutral (4%). In rural agree (80%) is the highest then followed by disagree (15%) and neutral (5%). In tribal region agree option (79%) is the highest then

followed by disagree (16%) and neutral (5%). Hence, Visakhapatnam district women highly agreed (81%) that the Reservations of seats (in Parliament, State Assemblies and governmental jobs) to women increases women participation in political process then followed by disagree (14%) and neutral (5%).

Table 3. Is Empowerment of women necessary for active participation of women in politics?

Regional areas	Yes	No	Neutral	Total
Urban	112(83%)	21 (16%)	2(1%)	135(100%)
Rural	97(72%)	19(14%)	19(14%)	135(100%)
Tribal	92(68%)	30(22%)	13(10%)	135 (100%)
Total	301 (74%)	70(17%)	23(9%)	405(100%)

Source: Researcher

Inference

From the above table, among urban region 'Yes' option (83%) is the highest then followed by No (16%) and neutral (1%). In rural areas Yes (72%) is the highest then followed by No (14%) and neutral (14%). In tribal region 'Yes' option (68%) is the highest then followed by No (22%) and neutral (10%). Hence, Visakhapatnam district women highly say 'Yes' (74%) that the Empowerment of women is necessary for active participation of women in politics then followed by No (17%) and neutral (9%).

Table 4. Do you agree the Governmental Policies towards women lead to participation of women in political process?

Regional areas	Agree	No	Neutral	Total
Urban	97(72%)	30 (22%)	6(3%)	135(100%)
Rural	106(79%)	21(16%)	5(6%)	135(100%)
Tribal	111(82%)	12(9%)	12(9%)	135 (100%)
Total	314 (78%)	63(16%)	23(6%)	405(100%)

Source: Researcher

Inference

From the above table, among urban region agree option (72%) is the highest then followed by disagree (22%) and neutral (3%). In rural areas agree (79%) is the highest then followed by disagree (16%) and neutral (6%). In tribal region agree option (82%) is the highest then followed by disagree (9%) and neutral (9%). So, Visakhapatnam district women highly agreed (78%) that Governmental Policies towards women lead to participation of women in political process then followed by disagree (16%) and neutral (6%).

Table 5. Do you agree the Developmental programmes of women necessary for active participation of women in Politics?

Regional areas	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Total (%)
Urban	103(76%)	19 (14%)	13(7%)	135(100%)
Rural	91(67%)	29(22%)	15(11%)	135(100%)
Tribal	88(65%)	31(23%)	16(12%)	135 (100%)

Total	282(70%)	79(19%)	44(11%)	405 (100%)
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Source: Researcher

Inference

From the above table, among urban region agree option (76%) is the highest then followed by disagree (14%) and neutral (7%). In rural areas agree (67%) is the highest then followed by disagree (22%) and neutral (11%). In tribal region agree option (65%) is the highest then followed by disagree (23%) and neutral (12%). Hence, Visakhapatnam district women highly agreed (70%) that the Developmental programmes of women necessary for active participation of women in Politics then followed by disagree (19%) and neutral (11%).

Table 6. Do you agree the awareness of women political rights required for political participation of women?

Regional areas	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Total (%)
Urban	112(83%)	10(7%)	13(10%)	135 (100%)
Rural	91(67%)	31(23%)	13(10%)	135(100%)
Tribal	89(66%)	29(21%)	17(13%)	135(100%)
Total	292 (72%)	70(17%)	43(11%)	405(100%)

Source: Researcher

Inference

From the above table, among urban region agree option (83%) is the highest then followed by disagree (7%) and neutral (10%). In rural agree (67%) is the highest then followed by disagree (23%) and neutral (10%). In tribal region agree option (66%) is the highest then followed by disagree (21%) and neutral (13%). Hence, Visakhapatnam district women highly agreed (72%) that the awareness of women political rights required for political participation of women then followed by disagree (17%) and neutral (11%).

Table 7. Is Education to Women necessary for their active political participation?

Regional areas	Yes	No	Neutral	Total
Urban	110 (81%)	21 (16%)	4(3%)	135(100%)
Rural	98(73%)	29(21%)	8(6%)	135(100%)
Tribal	89(66%)	35(25%)	11(9%)	135 (100%)
Total	292(72%)	79(20%)	34(8%)	405(100%)

Source: Researcher

Inference

In the above table, among urban region ‘Yes’ option (81%) is the highest then followed by No (16%) and neutral (3%). In rural areas Yes (73%) is the highest then followed by No (21%) and neutral (6%). In tribal region Yes option (66%) is the top then followed by No (25%) and neutral (9%). Hence, Visakhapatnam district women highly Yes (72%) that the education of women is necessary for political participation then followed by No (20%) and neutral (8%).

Table 8. Do you agree self-reliance and independence to women provides active participation in their political activities?

Regional areas	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Total (%)
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Urban	89(66%)	22 (16%)	24 (18%)	135(100%)
Rural	111(82%)	12(9%)	12(9%)	135 (100%)
Tribal	106(78%)	21(16%)	8(6%)	135(100%)
Total	306 (76%)	55(13%)	44 (11%)	405(100%)

Source: Researcher

Inference

From the above table, among urban region agree option (66%) is the highest then followed by disagree (16%) and neutral (18%). In rural areas agree (82%) is the highest then followed by disagree (9%) and neutral (9%). In tribal region agree option (78%) is the highest then followed by disagree (16%) and neutral (6%). So, Visakhapatnam district women highly agreed (76%) that self-reliance and independence to women provides active participation in their political activities then followed by disagree (13%) and neutral (11%).

Table 9. Do you agree Family influence on Political participation of women?

Regional areas	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Total
Urban	88(65%)	23(17%)	24(18%)	135 (100%)
Rural	112(83%)	21 (16%)	2(1%)	135(100%)
Tribal	97(72%)	19(14%)	19(14%)	135(100%)
Total	297 (73%)	63(16%)	45(11%)	405(100%)

Source: Researcher

Inference

From the above table, among urban region agree option (65%) is the highest then followed by disagree (17%) and neutral (18%). In rural areas agree (83%) is the highest then followed by disagree (16%) and neutral (1%). In tribal region agree option (72%) is the highest then followed by disagree (14%) and neutral (14%). Hence, Visakhapatnam district women highly agreed (73%) that the Family influence on Political participation of women then followed by disagree (16%) and neutral (11%).

Table 10. Do you agree Socio-Cultural barriers become obstacles to the political participation of Women

Regional areas	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Total (%)
Urban	61(45%)	53 (39%)	21(16%)	135(100%)
Rural	85(63%)	39(29%)	11(8%)	135(100%)
Tribal	88(65%)	31(23%)	16(12%)	135 (100%)
Total	234 (58%)	123(30%)	48(12%)	405 (100%)

Source: Researcher

Inference

From the above table, among urban region agree option (45%) is the highest then followed by disagree (39%) and neutral (16%). In rural areas agree (63%) is the highest then followed by disagree (29%) and neutral (8%). In tribal region agree option (65%) is the highest then followed by disagree (23%) and neutral (12%). Hence, Visakhapatnam district women highly agreed (58%) that the Socio-culture showed obstacles on Political participation of women then followed by disagree (30%) and neutral (12%).

Table 11. Are Gender discrimination and violence against women showed obstacles to political participation of women?

Regional areas	Yes	No	Neutral	Total (%)
Urban	88(65%)	23(17%)	24(18%)	135 (100%)
Rural	112(83%)	21 (16%)	2(1%)	135(100%)
Tribal	97(72%)	19(14%)	19(14%)	135(100%)
Total	297 (73%)	63(16%)	45(11%)	405(100%)

Source: Researcher

Inference

From the above table, among urban region agree option (65%) is the highest then followed by No (17%) and neutral (18%). In rural agree (83%) is the highest then followed by No (16%) and neutral (1%). In tribal region Yes option (72%) is the highest then followed by No (14%) and neutral (14%). Hence, Visakhapatnam district women highly Yes (73%) that 'Gender discrimination and violence' again showed obstacles to political participation of women then followed by No (16%) and neutral (11%).

Table 12. Do you agree Independent decision making of women leads more increase in political participation of women?

Regional areas	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Total (%)
Urban	115(85%)	15 (11%)	5(4%)	135(100%)
Rural	108(80%)	20(15%)	7(5%)	135(100%)
Tribal	107(79%)	21(16%)	7(5%)	135 (100%)
Total	330(81%)	56(14%)	19(5%)	405(100%)

Source: Researcher

Inference

From the above table, among urban region agree option (85%) is the highest then followed by disagree (11%) and neutral (4%). In rural agree (80%) is the highest then followed by disagree (15%) and neutral (5%). In tribal region agree option (79%) is the highest then followed by disagree (16%) and neutral (5%). Hence, Visakhapatnam district women highly agreed (81%) that the Independent decision making of women increases more in political participation of women then followed by disagree (14%) and neutral (5%).

Findings

- 1) The highest respondents belong to 'between 35 to 50 years' (40%) in age group, married women (73%) in marital status, 'between Rs. '100000 – 200000 income group' (42%) in income group and Non - political leaders (84%) in position.
- 2) Majority of Women respondents (72%) in Visakhapatnam district accepted that the women education is necessary for more participation of women in political activities. While in Regional areas, the urban women respondents (81%) are highest then followed by Rural (73%) and Tribal (66%) respondents.
- 3) The sample respondents agreed (81%) that the Reservations of seats (in Parliament, State Assemblies and governmental jobs) to women encourage more women in political

participation. While in district regional areas, the urban women respondents (85%) more accepted than Rural (80%) and Tribal (79%) respondents.

- 4) Women respondents of Visakhapatnam district (78%) agreed that the governmental policies towards women lead to participation of women in political process. Among regional areas, the Tribal area women (82%) are highest then followed by Rural (79%) Urban (72%) respondents.
- 5) The majority of respondents (74%) accepted for active participation of women in political activities, the women empowerment is compulsory. While in the regional areas, urban women respondents (83) % are highest then followed by Rural (72%) and Tribal (68%) respondents.
- 6) The women respondents are majorly agreed (76%) that self-reliance and independence to women provides active participation in their political activities. In Regional areas , the Rural women respondents (82%) are highest then followed Tribal (78%) Urban (66%) respondents
- 7) Visakhapatnam district respondents (73%) agreed that family influenced on the political participation of women. Among district regional areas, rural areas (83%) are the highest then followed by Tribal (72%) and Urban (65%)
- 8) The sample respondents of district mostly agreed (70%) that the Developmental programmes of women necessary for active participation of women in Politics. In Regional areas, the urban women respondents (76%) then followed by Rural (67%) and Tribal (65%) respondents.
- 9) In Visakhapatnam district, the women respondents agreed (58%) that the Socio-culture showed obstacles on Political participation of women. Here, Tribal (65%) is the highest then followed by Rural (63%) and Urban (45%) respondents.
- 10) The respondents highly agreed (73%) that the 'Gender discrimination and Violence' against showed obstacles on political participation of women in politics. While in regional areas, the rural women respondents (83%) is highest then followed by Tribal (72%) and urban respondents (65).
- 11) The women Respondents of Visakhapatnam district accepted (72%) the awareness of women political rights required for political participation of women. In regional areas, urban women respondents (83%) are highest then followed by Rural (67%) and Tribal (66%) respondents.
- 12) The sample respondents agreed (81%) that the Independent decision making of women leads to more political participation of women. While in district regional areas, the urban women respondents (85%) more accepted than Rural (80%) and Tribal (79%) respondents.

Recommendations

- 1) The Central and all State governments should provide women reservation of seats in legislative bodies and also governmental jobs (already Andhra Pradesh state government is providing $33\frac{1}{3}\%$ reservation to women in governmental jobs) to increase more women's representation and Political participation in India political structure.
- 2) To Support women's participation and development in political process, the government has to provide skill building and leadership training for women members of political parties.

- 3) The Centre and State governments' first priority should be given to women education, which is the grassroots problem in India and also higher literacy among women may lead to their maximum political participation. They should make concrete women education programs particularly in rural and tribal areas.
- 4) It is the responsibility of governments to make special women empowerment programs to encourage more women in the political participation particularly in rural and tribal areas.
- 5) The Government and Political parties should create healthy atmosphere at work place. And also they should organise 'Awareness programmes' for creating awareness among women especially belonging to backward sections about their rights.
- 6) The Government should strictly implement the Laws and Acts to curb the Atrocities, Crimes, Honour killings and mal-practices against women and particularly to backward areas women.
- 7) The Governments and Political Parties have to work more to remove stereotype that women are weak participants in political systems and make them more empowered and political participative.
- 8) The family and political party members should not be any kind of interference in the work and decision taken by women in politics. A respectful, considerate and appreciative attitude of family and political party members will strengthen women's political participation and particularly to women in rural and tribal areas.

CONCLUSIONS

The study highlighted the perception of women towards their political participation in Visakhapatnam District (regions i.e., urban, rural and tribal areas). From this study, it is very clear that women should be encouraged and empowered to play an active role in political process, to make the government to be more open, responsive and transparent. The Political participation of women to be encouraged to increase the women to take independent decisions, to reduce violence, women's ability to claim legal rights, participation in civic society, economic independence and many more. If the Centre and State governments make more efforts to remove hindrances in women empowerment and political participation then within a short span of time our country will become Gender equality nation.

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