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## A STUDY OF POLITICAL AWARENESS AMONG WOMEN IN SELECTED URBAN LOCAL BODIES IN HARYANA

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### ABSTRACT:-

**T**he present paper is an attempt to know the level of political awareness among the elected women representatives of the selected municipal bodies in Haryana. The paper is based on a study which was conducted upon all the women councilors representing all the nine municipal corporations in Haryana in 2016. The data was collected with the help of interview schedule. The results of the study indicates that most of the respondents were educated upto matriculation and above. It also indicates that most of the respondents reported to have to know the meaning of some important aspects related to the political arena such as Democracy, Adult franchise, Lok Sabha- Vidhan Sabha, Equality of Rights, Mid-term pol, Quorum of the meeting of your Municipality, No Confidence Motion of their Municipality and the Budgetary Allocation Provisions of their Municipality. But despite having the provisions of one third reservation for women in local bodies, patriarchy was still in dominance, deliberately exercising the real power. Political and bureaucratic interventions were reported as the barriers in decision making process of the respondents.

**KEYWORDS:** Awareness, Empowerment, Councillors, Decision Making, Political Participation.

### INTRODUCTION:

In general, since from the beginning of the modern era, the role of women has been confined to the house hold duties and obligations as they have been excluded from participating in political activities of public spheres. This resulted to have a meager representation at various level i.e. from Parliamentary, Legislative Assemblies to grass root level bodies. Burns et. al.(2001) observed that women's participation in political life is



fairly limited due to various socio-cultural reasons such as socialized differently (especially as far as marriage, motherhood, employment, and property ownership are concerned), or they have fewer resources.

We are aware of the fact that political awakening is closely associated with political competence, efficacy and political participation. Those who are politically more aware, are said to be more politically effective and also participate more in political activities. Such person becomes more aware of what is going on around him/her and in the political system. This awareness in turn induces him/her to participate in the political process. It is, of course, a well-known fact that better informed persons would be more aware and would also secure more participation. The political

parties are a good source of political information, but the people can get information through a variety of media sources like newspapers, radio, television, magazines and inter-personal contacts. Generally speaking, political participation is the degree of involvement of individuals and groups in the political process of a state and society at various levels. Widely, it includes activities like voting, campaigning in elections convincing other persons to vote in a particular way, attending public meetings, distributing party literature, joining an organization or a party, contributing money to a party, contesting elections and holding public or party office. These are called conventional political activities. But recently, the concept of participation has been broadened to include all those political acts through which people directly affect political decision-making process. Besides conventional activities, participation now also includes such activities, like petitioning, participation in mass movements, agitations, strikes, demonstrations, protests, marches, presenting memorandums and violent acts designed to change political system (Milbrath, 1956). These are known as the direct means of political participation or the unconventional political activities. In the present study only the conventional political activities are included. Political competence is the skill, perspectives, and values needed for effective political movement. It is the ability to understand what you can and cannot control when to take action, anticipate who is going to resist your agenda and determine who you need on your side to push your agenda forward.

The available literature on the involvement of women in political arena in India and outside reflects some aspects of their participation. Verma (1979) in a case study of the caste Sabha of the Kurmi in North India observed the role of the Sabha in the process of social transformation through sanskritization. S.S. Sharma (1979) in his study of western UP, re-confirmed the significance of caste in local politics. The study also highlights that landlords and cultivators were dominating the Panchayat and ex-lambardars were found to be losing position. D. S. Choudhry (1981) revealed that that even after democratization, the monopoly in politics of rich and well to do families continues at the grass-root level irrespective of caste, education and age and family. Ranjana Kumari (1994) pointed out that there is a small number of women in the legislatures and a few of them acquired the position of party president or leader of legislative party. As per UNIFEM (2000) Report an average representation of women in the Parliament, Assemblies and Council of Ministers altogether is 10% approximately. According to Sooryarmoorthy and Renjini (2000) the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments brought some significant changes in the political scene of the nation with regard to women's political participation. As a result of this, there are more than 500 district panchayats, around 5,100 block/taluka panchayats, 2,25,000 village panchayats, 90 municipal corporations, 1,500 municipal councils & 1,800 nagar panchayats which elect three million representatives and a considerable number of them would be women. Chhibber (2002) found in his study that the level of political participation by women in India is low. Many women are, however, still not aware of the opportunities created for them by 73rd & 74th constitutional amendment. The socio-economic status of women has direct implication on her interest in politics and political activity. B.B. Mohanty (2003), based on his study concludes that in Maharashtra the members of backward classes and women take part in the decision making process in the Gram Sabha. In Haryana state, Satyakam Joshi (2003) concluded that with regular elections, the position of upper castes has been challenged by the middle and OBCs as they have begun to assert their rights. Lucia Michelutti's (2004) work carried out in Mathura town on Yadavas and found that Yadavas, who were a low to the middle ranked peasant class, have become a significant political force in U.P. & Bihar by demonstrating their political activism which was partly linked to their descent view of caste, folk theories of religious descent, factionalism. The UNDP Report (Sept. 2012) on 'Gender Equality in Elected Office in Asia-Pacific: Six Actions to Expand Women's Empowerment', says that "globally, women hold slightly less than 20 per cent of seats in Parliament. In Asia-Pacific, just over 18 per cent of all members of national Parliaments are women." New Zealand and Nepal are the leading nations where women are one-third of all members of Parliament followed by more than one-quarter of women parliamentarians in Afghanistan, Australia, Laos, Timor-Leste and Vietnam. India, the largest democracy in the world, is far below with 11 per cent women in the Lower House with 105th rank at worldwide. Due to the implementation of 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment, women do better in sub-national than national elections in India.

## METHODOLOGY, SAMPLING AND DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

The present study employed descriptive and exploratory research design. The study has been carried out among the Female councilors in all the nine Municipal Corporations in Haryana namely Panchkula, Ambala, Karnal, Yamuna Nagar, Panipat, Hisar, Gurgaon, Faridabad and Rohtak. At present, as on 2014, there are 214 councilors including Mayors, out of which all the 80 female councilors (including five Mayors) have been selected in the present study. Thus, it represented the census method of sampling. All women councilors were interviewed with the help of interview-schedule to get relevant information. In the secondary sources –govt. records, census report and other concerned literature have been used.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Following tables attempt to analyse the collected data from the universe of the study:-

**Table-1**

<b>The level of knowledge about the working patterns and procedures of the municipal body</b>		
Response	Freq.	%
Yes	77	96.2
No	3	3.8
Total	80	100.0

In the above table majority of the respondents i.e. 96.2% know the working patterns and procedures of their municipal body. It is also find out in the study that all the councillors reported to have consulted while taking decision at their local body.

**Table-2**

<b>Person attending the meeting of the municipality in Respondent's absence</b>		
Response	Freq.	%
Your husband	45	56.2
Your son	6	7.5
Your relatives	1	1.2
None	28	35.0
Total	80	100.0

The above table shows that majority of the women i.e.56.2% admit that their husband attend the meeting of the municipality in their absence followed by 7.5% their son, 1.2% their relatives to attend such meeting and in 35% cases nobody attend the meetings in their absence.

**Table-3**  
**Knowledge of the respondents of the following**

Type of Knowledge	Yes		No	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Do you know the meaning of Democracy	69	86.3%	11	13.8%
Do you know the meaning of Adult franchise	73	91.3%	7	8.8%
Do you know the meaning of Lok Sabha- Vidhan Sabha	77	96.3%	3	3.8%
Do you know the meaning of Equality of Rights	62	77.5%	18	22.5%
Do you know the meaning of Mid-term pol	62	77.5%	18	22.5%
Do you know the meaning of Quorum of the meeting of your Municipality	70	87.5%	10	12.5%
Do you know the meaning of No Confidence Motion of your Municipality	67	83.8%	13	16.3%
Do you know the meaning of Budgetary Allocation Provisions of your Municipality	72	90.0%	8	10.0%

The Table No 3 represents the knowledge of respondents about various political activities. In this connection 86.3% reported to have knowledge of the meaning of Democracy followed by 91.3% who know the meaning of Adult franchise, 96.3% who know the meaning of Lok Sabha- Vidhan Sabha, 77.5% know the meaning of Equality of Rights & of Mid-term pol, 87.5% respondents know the meaning of Quorum of the meeting of their Municipality, 88.3% know the meaning of No Confidence Motion of their Municipality and 90% respondents reported to be known to the meaning of Budgetary Allocation Provisions of their Municipality.

**Table-4**

Who prepares the memo of official deliberations and agenda connected with their Municipality		
Response	Freq.	%
Yourself	8	10.0
With the help of husband	30	37.5
With the help of son	16	20.0
Within the help of daughter	26	32.5
Total	80	100.0

In the above table, 10% respondents reported that they themselves do prepare the memo of official deliberations and agenda connected with their municipality followed by 37.5% respondents who prepares with the help of their husband, 20% with the help of their son and 32.5% with the help of their daughter.

**Table-5**

What barriers arise when a women councillor takes decisions?		
Response	Freq.	%
Caste	2	2.5
Region	1	1.2
Political party	36	45.0
Bureaucracy/ Administration	41	51.2
Total	80	100.0

In the above table, 2.5% respondent submitted that caste became a barrier for a women councillor to take decisions. The study highlights that political parties (45%) & bureaucracy (51.2%) major barrier in decision making process.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the light of the analysis of the above data and facts, it may be concluded that majority of the respondents have been found to be known about the working patterns and procedures of their municipal body and they reported to have consulted while taking decision at their local body. They also reported to have to know the meaning of some important aspects related to the political arena such as Democracy, Adult franchise, Lok Sabha- Vidhan Sabha, Equality of Rights, Mid-term pol, Quorum of the meeting of your Municipality, No Confidence Motion of their Municipality and the Budgetary Allocation Provisions of their Municipality. But all that has been revealed was not so bright as more than half of the respondents admitted that their husband or any other male from the house used to attend the meeting of the municipality in their absence. Only a few used to prepare the memo or official deliberations and agenda connected with their municipality. During the study some significant suggestions were laid down by some learned respondents like more power should be given to Mayors, the bureaucratic interference should be reduced, unnecessary political interferences should be removed and funds/grants for developmental works to be made available well in time

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