

Media and Political Empowerment of Women in Kolar District of Karnataka- A study

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ABSTRACT: *The Role of Mass Media in political empowerment of women is very crucial in a country like India. Mass Media assists women in accessing resources for their development by means of exposure, knowledge and information. The research study was conducted to know the impact of mass media in political empowerment of rural women in Kolar a district of Karnataka State., through the case study of 'Stree shakti' The survey research was chosen as a method to collect appropriate data. The study concludes that Stree Shakthi Programs have brought social change in the village but it has not made the women politically conscious or politically empowered and the mass media have not really played any major role in their lives in making political decisions.]*

KEY WORDS: *Empowerment, rural women, mass media, Stree shakti,*

I. INTRODUCTION

Communication 'is one of the widely recognized factors of democracy. The role of communication in nation building and the development process has been richly and empirically tested across different cultures. The relevance of mass media in the social transformation and social change has been widely recognized across disciplines by eminent social scientists. Communication and political development has been a favourite domain by scrutiny by social scientist. Social scientists and political communicators such as Albig. Pye and Lazarsfeld have extensively studied the significance of communication in aspects of political development. It is widely believed that mass media play a very major role in the political lives, opinion and enlightenment of people. Mass media are important factors in our social life. Mass media have the capacity to reach to far, wide and diversified audience and cutting across all barriers. Popular mass media such as news papers, magazines, radio, television, Cinema and telecommunications represent a symbolic power of social control The modern world is recognized as information era. ICT and the convergence of media technology is not only an instrument of social control but also an economic resource. The power of media is gauged by its reach to the people. Mass Media mobilize the people and mould the public opinion. They effectively solicit public support and participation for the well being to the society. Mass Media cater to the needs of a large number of aheterogeneous groups of people. Mass Media, unlike other communication forms reach out across section of National Population. Mass Media have the capacity of disseminating information to the masses.

The Role of Mass Media in political empowerment of women is very crucial in a country like India. Mass Media can assist women in accessing resources for their development by means of exposure, knowledge and information. News and information can enrich the inner strength of women mass media with their coverage can boost self usage, confidence, collective strength. The public opinion is formed indirectly by the Mass Media and the mass media have the power in forming public opinion. The various development paradigms have highlighted that human development is incomplete unless women empowerment is accomplished in any society. Gender theoreticians like communication - scholars believe in the empowerment of women as part of the National Development process. It is not sufficient to empower women economically but their crucial. Mass Media are expected to play a very crucial role in the empowerment of women in general political empowerment in particular. Theoretical Perspective: It is widely theorized that socialization and learning process have a greater impact on the political decisions. The mass .media by paying attention to some issues and over looking others will mould public opinion people will tend to know about those things dealt with by the mass media and adopt the order of priority set by the media.

II. POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT:

Political Empowerment of Women is an essential component of programs aimed at empowering women, because it provides them the power to make decisions. The issue of women's political status and role of women in politics is very important because politics is central to every thing in a democratic society. Now Zealand was the first country to give right to franchise to women in 1893 followed by Australia and Canada in 1908. Other countries joined the Bandwagon later on. In India women's political participation came fast because of the National Congress and role of Gandhi is engaging women on a mass scale in National movement. Political status of women can be defined as the degree of equality and freedom enjoyed by women in the shaping and sharing of power and in the value given by society to this role of women. Women should be active in public life and take part in political decision making process, as political decisions, create an environment conducive for women to empower themselves.

For long communication scholars are interested in the political development of society and citizens. The gender discrimination has opened up new opportunities to study the methods of maintaining justice to the politically deprived genders. Communication scholars are now interested in the political development of women. Various states of India have realized the need for gender development through their political participation. Number of women development schemes also aim at the political empowerment of women. Stree Shakthi and Political Empowerment of Women: Karnataka State Government under the leadership of S.M. Krishna conceived a novel project in women empowerment.

The main aim was to make the rural women self sufficient and interdependent through organizing 20 lakh women into self help groups. Stree Shakthi program was conceived originally to help women realize their aspirations. The target group was members of the SHG's especially women living below poverty line. Landless agricultural women labourers, women belonging to SC/ST community, women belonging to families with alcoholics, drug addicts, or physically disabled persons. Stree Shakthi is being implemented in all the villages of about 175 Taluks. The scheme is expected to benefit 20 lakhs women who belong to one lakh self help groups. SHG is an organization of target groups whose main task is to inculcate the habit of savings regularly money lending to poor. The Present Study: The present study is an academic examination of the relationship between the role of mass media in the political empowerment of women in the context of Stree Shakthi Program.

Objectives:

1. To study the role of media in the political decision making process of the respondents of Stree Shakthi Program.
2. To assess whether Stree Shakthi Programs have brought /any political consciousness or changes among the beneficiaries.
3. To know whether Stree Shakthi beneficiaries are aware of the local politics.
4. To analyze whether Stree Shakthi Program has brought any social change in the village.

III. METHODOLOGY:

The Study was undertaken in order to collect primary data on the role of mass media and Stree Shakthi Program in the political empowerment of women in Kolar District. The survey research was chosen as a method to collect appropriate data.

Analysis of the Data: Table 1.1: Membership of political party

Parameter	Yes		No		Total	
	No's	% Age	No's	% Age	No's	% Age
Membership in political party	66	13.2	434	86.8	500	100

The study was attempted to know the political empowerment of women who participated / in Stree Shakthi Program. Respondents were asked to detail their political leanings whether they were members of any political party. More than 86% of the respondents were not members of any political party. Only about 13.2% of the respondents indicated that they are members of political organization. It appears that a majority of the women are not interested in the political activities.

Table 1.2: Topics of discussion among Stree Shakthi members through inter personal communication media:

Topics of Discussion	No's	Percentage
Women Empowerment	292	58.4
About gainful employment	176	35.2
About family issues	251	50.2
Working of SS group	381	76.2
Organizational development	257	51.4
Children's Educations	265	53.0
About local politics	70	14.0
Other prog's of Government	100	20.0
Social Functions of household issue	118	23.6
About atrocities on women	182	36.4
General discussion	207	41.4
Total	500	100

The table attempts to understand the nature of interpersonal communication behavior of the respondents. For this about 12 important parameters were developed as themes of discussion.

Table 1.2 reveals that most of the time the respondents discuss about the activities and working of Stree Shakthi Groups with their colleagues (76.2%) and about 58.4% discuss women empowerment issues, 53.0% discuss on children and also family issues 50.2% general discussion occupies major slot (41.4%) about 36.4% also discuss atrocities on women and only about 14% of the SS respondents discuss about the local politics

Quality Parameters	Great Extent		Some Extent		No Response		Total	
Made politically conscious	83	16.6	115	23.0	302	60.4	500	100
Economics Independence	245	49.0	172	34.4	83	16.6	500	100
Brought Social change in village	89	17.89	183	36.6	228	45.6	500	100

One of the major objectives of SS program is to bring a change in the living conditions of women. To bring social economic and political change in the lives of women. About 36.60% of the R's have highlighted that SS prog's have brought social change in the village, economic independence 34.4%, only 23.0% of the respondents say that it has made them politically conscious.

Table 1.4: Role of mass media in political Decision making process:

Media	To great extent		To some extent		Little extent		No Response		Total	
	Nos	%age	Nos	%age	Nos	%age	Nos	%age	Nos	%age
News paper	15	3.0	56	11.2	40	8.0	389	77.8	500	100
Magazine	6	1.2	21	4.2	11	2.2	462	92.4	500	100
Radio	68	13.6	51	10.2	40	8.0	341	68.2	500	100
Television	88	17.6	69	13.2	71	14.2	272	54.4	500	100
Internet	19	3.8	11	2.2	15	3.0	455	91.0	500	100
Anganawadi	217	43.4	81	16.2	31	6.2	171	34.2	500	100
Govt. organization	58	11.6	49	9.8	18	3.6	375	75.0	500	100
NGO's	38	7.6	47	9.4	36	7.2	379	75.8	500	100
SHG's	47	9.4	43	8.6	34	6.8	376	75.2	500	100

Political decision and participation in political activities is an important aspect of democratic administration. The study has attempted to measure the political participation and decision making process and role of media in political decision making process. Respondents view on the political decision was measured on a four point scale. To great extent, to some extent, to little extent, and no response. Large number of respondents from 92.4% to 44.2% have indicated that the mass media have not played any major role in making political decision. Even interpersonal channels of communication also have not played any profound impact on the political decision making process. Interestingly 43/4% of the respondents have indicated that the Anganawadi workers have influenced them: in their political decisions followed by Govt. organizations 11.6% and SHG's (9.40/0) to a great extent. The informed political decisions are influenced by various communication channels in respect of SS stake holders. Women empowerment is a proves that enables women to develop self control, confidence, self reliance and has a positive self esteem to enable them to face any difficult situation and making women participate in development activities. Empowering women is necessary sustainable development of a community. Sustainability implies a state of balance and equilibrium in factors related to human life, which can be social, political, financial, environmental and even spiritual. It is a state to which all those factors that influence the process of the growth of human being and her holistic environment has to advance in but independently, yet supporting each other. In the case of women equality, social justice and freedom have dynamic roles to achieve such sustainability. But the notion of sustainability often becomes the victim of unsustainable traditions and political opportunism. Defined in its complexity and interaction among all dimensions of human life political, economic, social, and cultural. Development has been conceived as an integral process of economic growth and social progress.

IV. POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT:

Empowerment is viewed as a process of Women's Development, to make women aware of developmental needs, politically assertive, economically self sufficient and ideal to enable women to make informal decisions'. Empowerment has been defined as an active multi - dimensional process which should enable them to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life. It would consists of greater access to knowledge and resources, greater autonomy in decision making, greater ability to plan the circumstances that influence their lives and free them from all shackles. (Balbir Sony 2001).

MAJOR FINDINGS:

1. Majority of the Stree Shakthi respondents are not interested in the political activities and political development.
2. Majority of the Respondents do not discuss about local politics through inter personal communication media in the study area.
3. Stree Shakthi Programs have brought social change in the village but it has not made the women politically conscious or politically empowered.
4. Large number of respondents have opined that the mass media have not really played any major role in their lives in making political decisions.

CONCLUSION:

Mass Communication has played a major role in the development of our country through out the history; communication has been a motivating factor in maintaining social order and integration of society. Throughout the 20th century communication media have been assigned a greater role in achieving social progress and economic prosperity. Empowerment is also a methodology of ensuring social economic independence, self - reliance and restore dignity of women. Though mass media have not played any major role in the political life of women, yet it is expected that the information provided by media will sensitize the political consciousness of women.

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