

## POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN PANCHAYATHI RAJ GOVERNANCE: A STUDY IN SRIKAKULAM DISTRICT, ANDHRA PRADESH

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### Abstract:

The women constitute an essential part of the human resources in the society, due importance has to be accorded to the role and contribution of women in the various socio-economic, political and cultural activities particularly in Local Governance. Unfortunately, despite the numerical strength, the role of women have been grossly underplayed and the developmental efforts by the government have only limited to further marginalization of women in the developmental process. It is an accepted truth that Indian women in spite of the legal and constitutional safeguards are still in the process of fighting for equality of status and equality of participation in the development process. However, it is shameful to note that, despite their large strength, women occupy a negligible position in the political process. The present study is conducted on Political participation of women representatives in Panchayat Raj Governance of Srikakulam district, Andhra Pradesh with 153 sample Respondents (women representatives). Schedule method was used to collect primary data from the respondents to analyze their participation in Panchayat Raj Institutions and reveal the factors for active political participation of women representatives of Srikakulam district in Panchayat Raj Governance.

**Key Words:** Governance, Panchayat Raj Representatives, Political Participation, Constitution and Srikakulam district

### Introduction

The Indian women are deprived of equal status and opportunities in various walks of life even though they have constituted half of the population. The Preamble of the Indian Constitution, which proclaims political justice as one of its cherished goals but it is still far from achievement. Due to lack of strong political will, the age old patriarchal social structure, male dominance, social, physical, cultural and several psychological factors, hold women back from active political involvement. It is an acceptable truth that Indian women in spite of the constitutional and legal safeguards are still in the process of struggling for equality of treatment as par with men in the development process. It is shameful to note that, despite their vast strength, women considered as a secondary citizens in the political system.

It is essential to have a focus on the constitutional provisions for the emancipation of women before studying the real conditions of women's political participation in Panchayathi Raj governance. The constitutional provisions which facilitates women participation in Panchayat Raj Governance according to 73rd & 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts (1992) are : a) Not less than one third of the total number of seats to be filled by direct elections in every Panchayat to be reserved for women. b) Not less than one-third of the total number of officers of chairpersons in the Panchayath at each level to be reserved for women. The Present study conducted on Political participation of women in Panchayath Raj Governance in Srikakulam district to reveal the actual factors to encourage political participation of women in Panchayathi Raj governance.

### Literature Review

**Manikyamba (1990)** conducted a study on Andhra Pradesh State and concluded that Socio-Economic background in general and political background in particular is crucial determinants of shaping the nature and level of participation of women members in political institutions.

**Dilip K. Ghosh (1997)** in his work entitled "Grass root women Leaders: Who are they? A Study in West Bengal District", had highlighted the importance of 73rd constitutional Amendment, which enabled the rural women to take part in grass root politics.

**R.Arun (1997)** conducted a study on Madhya Pradesh state and found that in most cases women representatives are housewives. It is the first time to them enters into politics. And most of them are illiterate and educated up to primary level.

**S. Pai's(2001)** field notes on Meerut District revealed that the women representatives contest for election due to pressures from the family members. And also the decision of their community leaders and not because of their own interest.

**Seema Bhattacharya (2011)** conducted a study and observed that, Women reservation has led to formality only and not led to real empowerment of women in the Panchayathi Raj Governance. But in reality the family dominance still appears

**Sonowal (2013)** conducted a study on the effect of the SC and ST women in the rural areas of Sonitpur district. He found 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 revealed 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 facilitates women to empower themselves, leaving political agency to the agent herself.

**Objectives of the Study**

- 1 To study and assess the perception of women Representatives in Panchayat Raj Governance for their active Political Participation in Panchayat Raj Governance in Srikakulam district.
- 2 To evaluate the performance of the women representative of Srikakulam district in Panchayat Raj Governance.
- 3 To make certain constructive suggestions for effective participation of women representation in local self governance system.
- 4 To reveal the factors for active political participation of women representatives of Srikakulam district in Panchayat Raj Governance.

**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 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 study covered three Revenue Divisions of Srikakulam district viz. Srikakulam, Palakonda and Tekkali. The total women sample respondents are 153 and they are equally distributed 51 women sample respondents among three Revenue Divisions of Srikakulam viz., Srikakulam (51), Palakonda (51) and Tekkali (51) to collect data about women political participation in Panchayathi Raj Governance. Horizontally, the sample respondents (153) were divided into women ZPTC - 6, MPTC - 55 Sarpanch - 92. The below table clearly explains about sample respondents distributions.

**Table 1: The Horizontal distribution of women Respondents in Srikakulam District for data collection**

Positions	Total Sanctioned Representatives	Total Women Representatives	Sample Respondents
ZPTCs	38	19	6
MPTCs	675	349	55
Sarpanches	1106	597	92

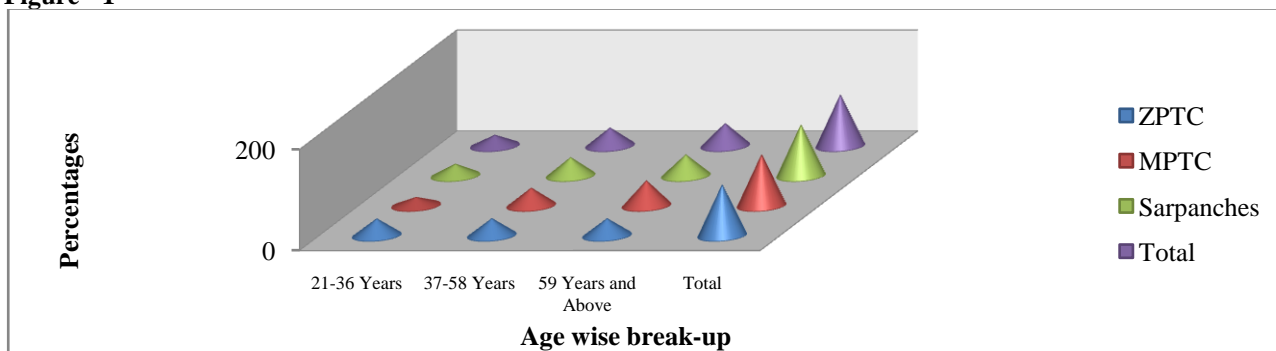
Source: Primary Data

**Table 2: The distribution of women Respondents in Srikakulam District according to their Age.**

Age Groups	ZPTC	MPTC	Sarpanches	Total
21-30 Years	2 (33%)	9 (16%)	21 (23%)	32 (21%)
31-45Years	2 (33%)	19 (35%)	33 (36%)	54 (35%)
46 Years and Above	2 (33%)	27 (49%)	38 (41%)	67 (44%)
Total	6 (100)	55 (100%)	92 (100%)	153 (100%)

Source: Primary Data

**Figure - 1**



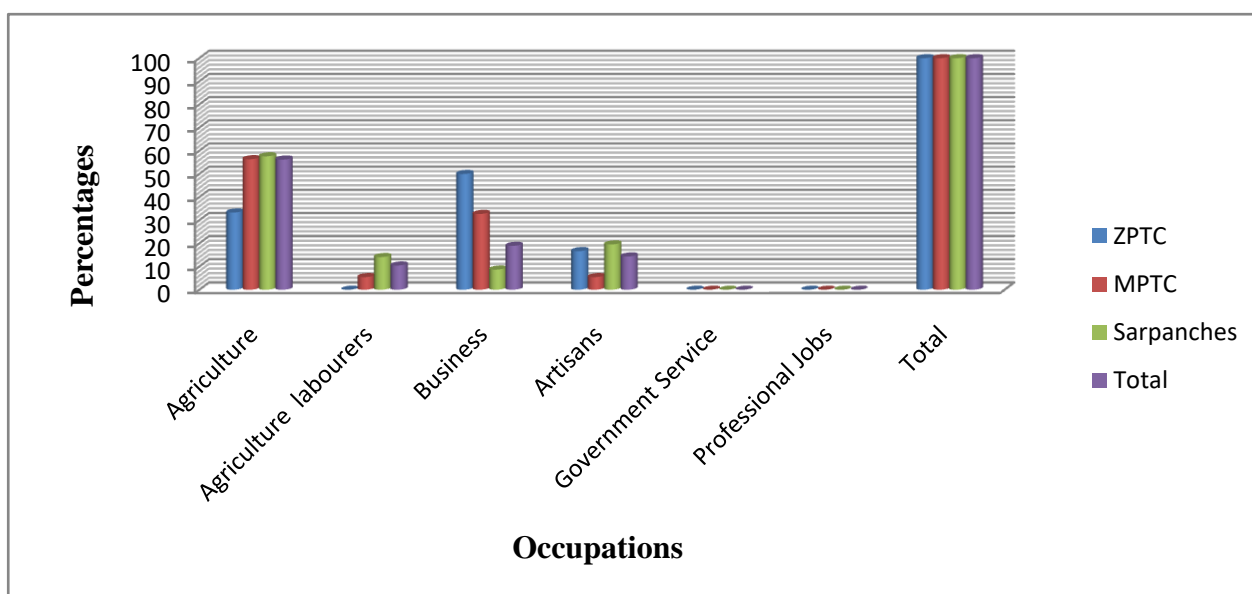
Source: Primary Data

From the above table, the highest respondents are '46 Years and Above age group' (44%) then followed by 'between 31-45Years age group' (35%) and 'between 21-30 Years age group' (21%). Among ZPTCs, all the three age groups are equally distributed (33%). In MPTC '46 Years and Above age group' (49%) then followed by 'between 31-45 years age group' (35%) and 'between 21-30 Years age group' (16 %). In Sarpanches '46 Years and Above age group' (41%) is the highest then followed by 'between 31-45years age group' (36%) and 'between 21-30Years age group' (23%). On the whole, the highest age group respondents for active political participation of Srikakulam district women in panchayat Raj governance are '46 Years and above age group'. And among these sub-groups, in ZPTCs all are equally represented (33%), in MPTCs the highest is '46 Years and above age group'(49%) and in Sarpanches the highest is '46 Years and Above age group' (41%). It is significant to note that, the adult age group women of Srikakulam district are showing more interest than younger and middle age women in local politics and asserting their right to participate in Panchayat governance.

**Table -3: The distribution of women respondents in Srikakulam District according to their Occupation**

Occupation	ZPTC	MPTC	Sarpanches	Total
Agriculture	2 (33%)	31 (56%)	53 (58%)	86 (56%)
Agriculture labourers	0 (0%)	3 (5%)	13 (14%)	16 (10%)
Business	3 (50%)	18 (33%)	8 (9%)	29 (19%)
Artisans	1 (17%)	3 (5%)	18 (20%)	22 (14%)
Government Services	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Professional Jobs	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>55</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>92</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>153</b> <b>(100%)</b>

Source: Primary Data



**Figure - 2**

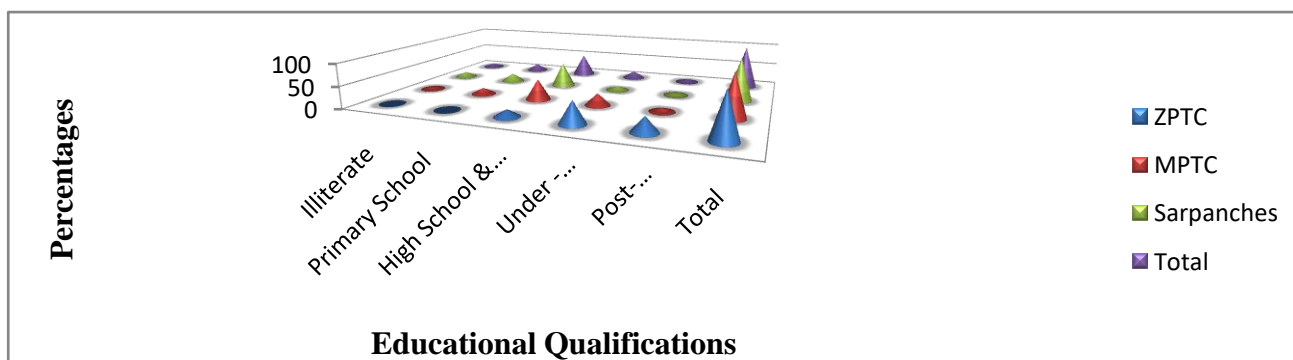
Source: Primary Data

The occupation of women is one of the important factors for active political participation of women in Panchayat Raj Governance. From the above table, the highest respondents in Occupation are Agriculture (56%) then followed by Business (19%), Artisans (14%) and Agricultural labourers (10%). Among ZPTCs, the highest respondents in occupation are business (50%) then followed by Agriculture (33%) and Artisans (17%). In MPTCs, the highest are Agriculture (56%) then followed by Business (33%), Agricultural labourers(5%) and Artisans(5%). In Sarpanches the highest occupation is Agriculture (58%) then followed by Artisans (20%), Agricultural labourers (14%) and Business (9%). And none of them are neither doing professional jobs nor governmental jobs. On Whole, it is clearly showed that the highest Occupation of women representatives in Srikakulam district are Agriculture (56%) and among Sub-categories highest are in ZPTC is business (50%), in MPTC is Agriculture (56%), and in Sarpanches is Agriculture (58%). It is clear that Business occupation Panchayat representatives (who are occupied top level posts viz., ZPTCs & MPTCs) dominating and influencing the Panchayat Raj Institution in Srikakulam district than agriculture occupation panchayat representatives (who are more in lower positions viz., Sarpanches).

**Table-4: Distribution of Respondents in Srikakulam District according to their Educational qualification**

Educational Qualifications	ZPTC	MPTC	Sarpanches	Total
Illiterate	0 (0%)	2 (4%)	12 (13%)	14 (9%)
Primary School	0 (0%)	8 (15%)	18 (20%)	26 (17%)
High School & Intermediate	1 (7%)	26 (47%)	52 (57%)	79 (52%)
Under - Graduation	3	15	8	26

	(50%)	(27%)	(9%)	(17%)
<b>Post-Graduation</b>	2 (33%)	4 (7%)	2 (2%)	8 (5%)
<b>Total</b>	6 (100%)	55 (100%)	92 (100%)	153 (100%)



Source: Primary Data

Figure - 3

Source: Primary Data

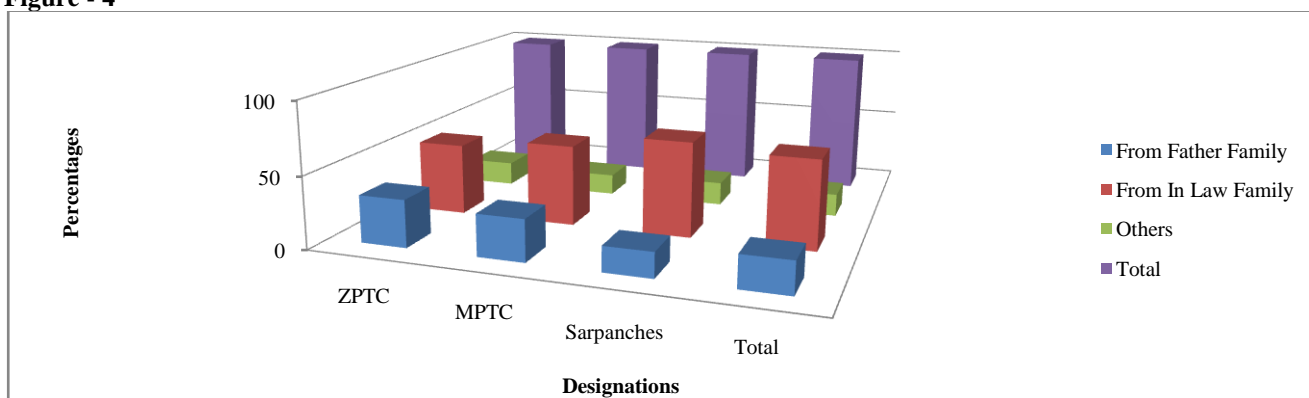
It is an acceptable fact that education qualification is an one of the key factors for active Political participation of women in Panchayat governance. From the above table, the highest respondents in Educational Qualification are ‘High School & Intermediate’ (52%) then followed by Primary School (17%), Under Graduation (17%), illiterate (9%) and Post Graduation (5%). Among ZPTCs the highest respondents in Educational Qualification are Under Graduation (50%) then followed by Post Graduation (33%), ‘High School & Intermediate’ (7%) and none of them neither illiterate nor primary school. In MPTC, ‘High School & Intermediate’ (47%) are the highest then followed by Under Graduation (27%), Primary School (15%), Post Graduation business (7%) and illiterate (4%). In Sarpanches, the ‘High School & Intermediate’ (57%) are the highest then followed by Primary School (20%), illiterate (13%) Under Graduation (9%), and Post Graduation (2%). Overall, it shows that the highest Educational Qualifications of women Panchyathi representatives in Srikakulam district is ‘High School & Intermediate’ (52%) and among these sub groups the highest are in ZPTCs are Under Graduation(50%), in MPTCs are ‘High School & Intermediate’ (47%) and in Sarpanches are ‘High School & Intermediate’ (57%). It is significant to note that still illiteracy prevalent in the panchayat women representatives of Srikakulam district and particularly in women Sarpanches. And also the higher education qualification is very less and meager among women Panchayat representatives.

Table- 5: The distribution of respondents in Srikakulam District according to their political background.

POLITICAL BACKGROUND	ZPTC	MPTC	Sarpanches	Total
<b>From Father Family</b>	2 (33%)	16 (29%)	16 (17%)	34 (22%)
<b>From In Law Family</b>	3 (50%)	31 (56%)	61 (66%)	95 (62%)
<b>Others</b>	1 (17%)	8 (15%)	15 (16%)	24 (16%)
<b>Total</b>	6 (100%)	55 (100%)	92 (100%)	153 (100%)

Source: Primary Data

Figure - 4



Source: Primary Data

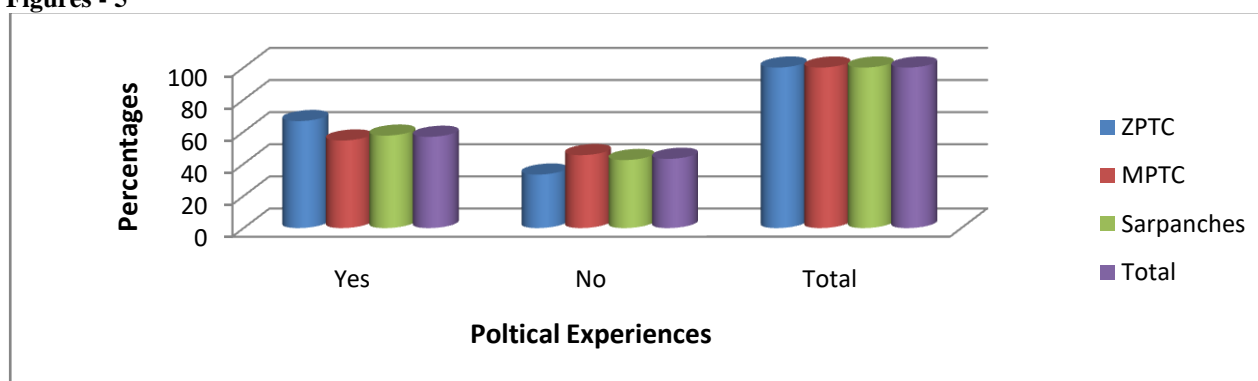
Political background of Women is one of the determining factors in choosing the political career in local-self governance. From the above table, the highest participation of women in Panchayat Raj Governance is 'In-Law family' political background (62%) then followed by from 'father's family' political background (22%) and 'others' political background (16%). Among ZPTCs 'In-Law family' political background (50%) then followed by 'father's family' political background (33%) and 'others' political background (17%). In MPTCs, 'In-Law family' political background (56%) then followed by from 'father's family' political background (29%) and Others political background (15%). In Sarpanches, 'In-Law family' political background (66%) then followed by 'father's family' political background (17%) and 'Others' political background (16%). Overall, 'In-Law family' political background (62%) is the highest among Panchayat women representatives of Srikakulam district and among these sub-groups the highest are in ZPTCs are from 'In-Law family' political background (50%), in MPTCs are from 'In-Law family' political background (56%) and Sarpanches are 'In-Law family' political background (66%). This indicates that women from their 'in-Law family' political background got much support and encouragement to choose politics as their career rather than 'father's family' political background and 'Others political background'. From this study, it may infer that women with political background are actively participating in Panchayat governance while comparing with 'No political background' women.

**Table-6: Distribution of Respondents in Srikakulam District according to their Political Experience**

Political Experience	ZPTC	MPTC	Sarpanches	Total
Yes	4 (67%)	30 (55%)	53 (58%)	87 (57%)
No	2 (33%)	25 (45%)	39 (42%)	66 (43%)
Total	6(100%)	55(100%)	92(100%)	153(100%)

Source: Primary Data

**Figures - 5**



Source: Primary Data

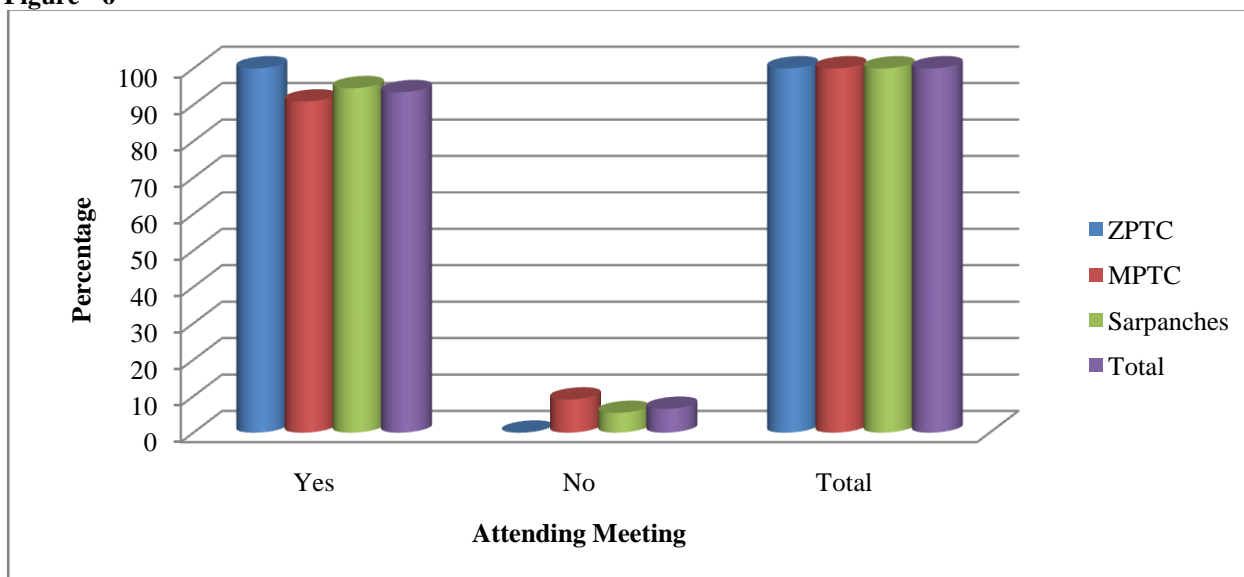
It is needless to state that political experience plays an important role in performance of an individual in the panchayat governance. The highest respondents say yes (57%) in political experience then followed by No (43%). Among ZPTCs 'yes' (67%) is the highest then followed by No option (33%). In MPTCs Yes (55%) is highest then followed by No option (45%). In Sarpanches Yes (58%) then followed by No (42%). The highest Panchayat representatives say yes (57%) in their Political Experience and among these sub-groups, the highest in ZPTCs are yes (67%), in MPTCs are yes (55%) and Sarpanches are yes (58%). Here, the experienced women representatives are participating more in panchayat governance than new women representatives of Srikakulam district.

**Table-7: Distribution of Respondents in Srikakulam District according to their Attending to Meetings**

Attending to Meetings	ZPTC	MPTC	Sarpanches	Total
Yes	6 (100%)	50 (91%)	87 (95%)	143 (93%)
No	0 (0%)	5 (9%)	5 (5%)	10 (7%)
Total	6 (100%)	55 (100%)	92 (100%)	153 (100%)

Source: Primary Data

Figure - 6



Source: Primary Data

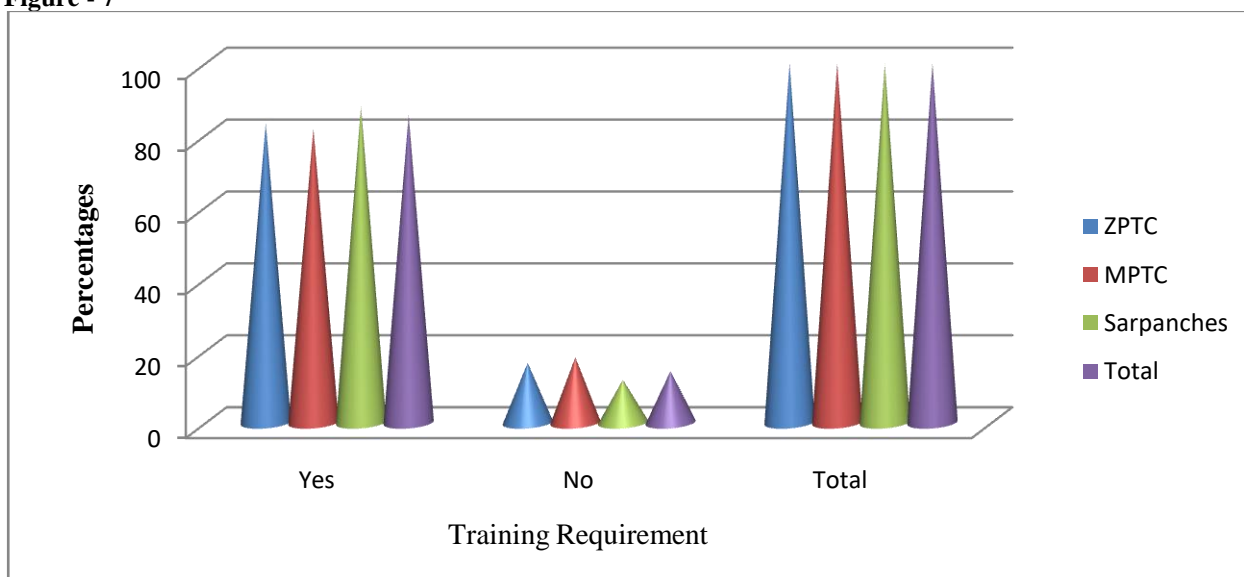
Commitment to the politics and dedication to the work are the pre-requisites for the success of local-self governance. The highest women representatives of panchayat Raj accepted yes (93%) that they are attending to the meetings regularly then followed by No (7%). All the ZPTCs are attending the meetings regularly. Among MPTCs, Yes (91%) option is the highest then followed by No option (9%). In Sarpanches ‘Yes option’(95%) is the highest then followed by ‘No option’(5%). Overall, the highest percentage of Panchayat women representatives of Srikakulam district accepted yes (93%) to attending the meetings regularly and among sub-groups highest are in ZPTCs are ‘Yes option’ (100%), in MPTCs are ‘Yes option’ (91%) and Sarpanches are ‘Yes option’ (87%). Here, very low percent of women panchayat representatives of Srikakulam district stated that they are unable to attend the meetings due to their pressing domestic work. This shows that the Srikakulam district panchayat women still finding it hard to balance their domestic life with that of their career choices.

Table -8: Distribution of Respondents in Srikakulam district according to their Training requirement

Training Required	ZPTC	MPTC	Sarpanches	Total
Yes	5 (83%)	45 (82%)	81 (88%)	131 (86%)
No	1 (17%)	10 (18%)	11 (12%)	22 (14%)
Total	6 (100%)	55 (100%)	92 (100%)	153 (100%)

Source: Primary Data

Figure - 7



Source: Primary Data

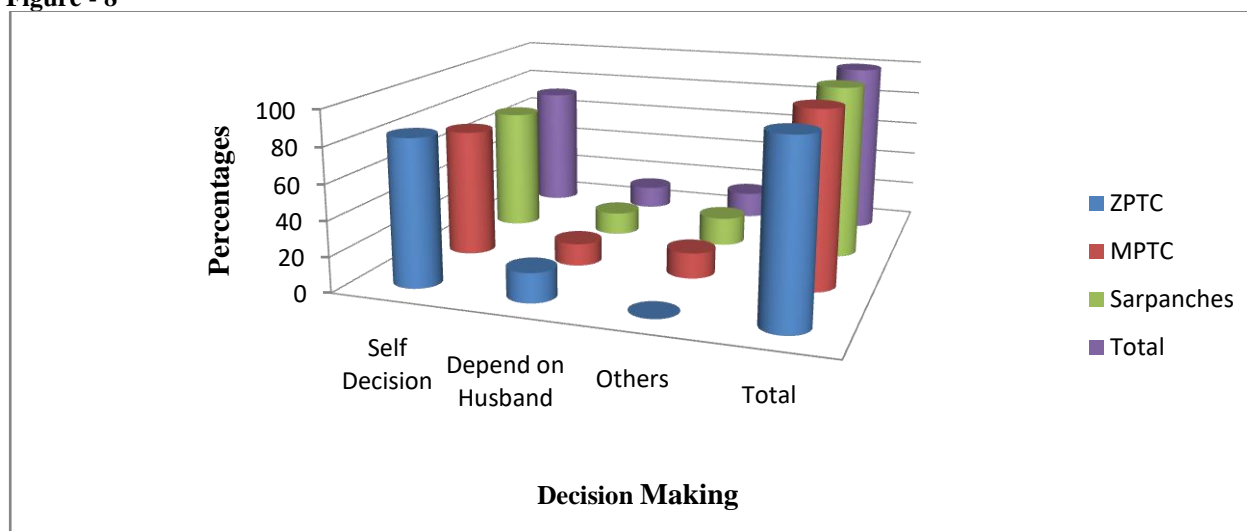
Training is one of the main components in any field of career. It is not only improving ones performance at work place but also to keep them updated in terms of knowledge and emerging challenges. This is equally important in the case of a political career development in the Panchayat Raj Governance. The highest women representatives accepted 'Yes'(86%) for training requirement then followed by No(14%). Among ZPTCs 'yes' (83%) is the highest then followed by No option (17%). In MPTCs Yes (82%) is highest then followed by No options (18%). In Sarpanches Yes (81%) then followed by No (11%). The highest Panchyat representatives say yes (86%) in the training requirement and the highest among sub-groups are in ZPTCs are yes(83%), in MPTCs are yes(82%) and Sarpanches are yes(81%). The majority of the Panchayat women representatives said training required for political participation of women in panchayathi Governance.

**Table – 9: distribution of sample respondents according to their decision making dependency**

Decision Making	ZPTC	MPTC	Sarpanches	Total
Self Decision	5 (83%)	40 (73%)	65 (71%)	110 (72%)
Depend on Husband	1 (17%)	7 (13%)	12(13%)	20 (13%)
Others	0 (0%)	8(15%)	15 (16%)	23 (15%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>6(100%)</b>	<b>55(100%)</b>	<b>92(100%)</b>	<b>153(100%)</b>

Source: Primary Data

**Figure - 8**



Source: Primary Data

Decision making is one of the vital factors in active political participation of women in Panchyathi Raj governance. The highest majority of women respondents accepted 'self decision' (72%) impact on their political decision making then followed by others (15%) and depend on Husband(13%). Among ZPTCs the self decision (83%) is highest then followed by 'depend on Husband' (17%). In MPTC 'self decision' (73%) is the highest then followed by others (15%) 'depend on husband' (13%). In Sarpanches, the highest is 'self decision' (71%) then followed by others (16%) and 'depend on husband' (13%). On whole, the highest dependency factor on decision making is 'Self Decision' and among sub groups highest are in ZPTCs is 'Self Decision' (83%), in MPTCs is 'Self Decision' (73%) and in Sarpanches 'Self Decision' (71%). It is significant to note from the above table that, large majority of the respondent women representatives in all categories (ZPTC, MPTC and Sarpanches) that is 72% percent have stated that they made or take decisions on their own and do not depend upon any of them. This shows that, the women still are unable to ascertain their autonomy in independence in decision making even in their career life but still they dependent on the aid and advice of their husbands.

**Findings**

- 1) The highest age group respondents for active political participation of Srikakulam district women in panchayat Raj governance are '46 Years and Above age group' and among these sub-groups, in ZPTCs all are equally represented (33%), in MPTCs the highest is '46 Years and above age group'(49%) and in Sarpanches the highest is '46 Years and Above age group' (41%). It is significant to note that, the 'adult age group' women of Srikakulam district are showing more interest than younger and middle age women in local politics and asserting their right to participate in Panchayati Raj governance.
- 2) The highest Occupation of women representatives in Srikakulam district are Agriculture (56%) and among Sub-categories highest are in ZPTCs are business (50%), in MPTCs are Agriculture (56%), and in Sarpanches are Agriculture (58%). It is clear that Business occupation Panchyati representatives (who are occupied top level posts

- viz., ZPTCs & MPTCs) dominating and influencing the Panchayat Raj Institution in Srikakulam district than agriculture occupation panchayat representatives (who are more in lower positions viz., Sarpanches).
- 3) The highest Educational Qualifications of women Panchayathi representatives in Srikakulam district is 'High School & Intermediate' (52%) and among these sub groups the highest are; in ZPTCs are Under Graduation(50%), in MPTCs are 'High School & Intermediate' (47%) and in Sarpanches are 'High School & Intermediate' (57%). It is significant to note that still illiteracy prevalent in the panchayati Raj-women representatives of Srikakulam district and particularly in women Sarpanches. And also the higher education qualification is very less and meagre among women Panchayat representatives.
  - 4) 'In-Law family' political background (62%) is the highest among Panchayat women representatives of Srikakulam district and among these sub-groups the highest are in ZPTCs are from 'In-Law family' political background (50%), in MPTCs are from 'In-Law family' political background (56%) and Sarpanches are 'In-Law family' political background (66%). This indicates that women from their 'in-Law family' political background got much support and encouragement to choose politics as their career rather than 'father's family' political background and 'others' political background. From this study, it may infer that women with political background are actively participating in Panchayati governance while comparing with 'No political background' women.
  - 5) The highest women Panchayati Raj representatives has political experience (57%) and among these sub-groups, the highest political experience in ZPTCs (67%), in MPTCs (55%) and Sarpanches(58%). Here, the experienced women representatives are participating more in panchayat governance than new women representatives of Srikakulam district.
  - 6) The highest percentage of Panchayat women representatives of Srikakulam district accepted 'yes' (93%) to attending the meetings regularly and among sub-groups highest accepted 'yes' are in ZPTCs (100%), in MPTCs (91%) and Sarpanches (87%). Here, very low percent of women panchayat representatives of Srikakulam district stated that they are unable to attend the meetings due to their pressing domestic work. This shows that the Srikakulam district panchayati women representatives still finding it hard to balance their domestic life with that of their career choices.
  - 7) The highest Panchayat representatives accepted 'yes option' (86%) for training requirement and the highest among sub-groups are in ZPTCs are yes(83%), in MPTCs are yes(82%) and Sarpanches are yes(81%). The majority of the Panchayat women representatives of Srikakulam said that training is required for political participation of women in panchayathi Governance.
  - 8) The highest dependency factor on decision making is 'Self Decision'(72%) and among sub groups highest are in ZPTCs are 'Self Decision' (83%), in MPTCs are 'Self Decision' (73%) and in Sarpanches are 'Self Decision' (71%). It is significant to note from the above table that, large majority of women representatives in all categories (ZPTC, MPTC and Sarpanches) that is 72 percent have stated that they made or take decisions on their own and do not depend upon any of them. This shows that, the women still are unable to ascertain their autonomy in independence in decision making even in their career life but still they dependent on the aid and advice of their husbands.

### Recommendations

1. The Family members have to co-operate with women Representatives in Panchayati Raj to overcome family burden and responsibilities.
2. To encourage 'non-political background' and 'poor' women representatives in local governance then the government has to provide reservations of seats based on poor economic conditions of rural women.
3. The Society and Government have to put more efforts to remove the Patriarchical system which indirectly controls and directs women representatives in local Governance.
4. The Governments has to check unnecessary political intervention created by male elected representatives in their normal functioning of Panchayati governance.
5. The Government has to conduct the awareness and training programmes among the rural women to increase their more participation in local governance in rural areas.
6. The Government has to provide fees incentives and fee concession to the women representatives to increase standard of education among them in rural areas. Then it results in effective participation of women representatives in local governance.
7. The government has to motivate and encourage the young rural women towards the political participation in local governance.

### Conclusion

The study highlighted the perception of Panchayat Raj women representatives towards their political participation in Srikakulam District. From this study, it is very clear that rural 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 in local governance. If the State governments make more efforts (following the above recommendations) to remove hindrances of rural women representatives in political participation then within a short span of time our State will become number one in Panchayat Raj Governance . And the slogan of Mahathama Gandhiji slogan of democracy at the grass root level will become reality.

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