



KNOWLEDGE ON PRI PROVISIONS AND RESTRAINTS OF BC WOMEN PRI REPRESENTATIVES: A STUDY IN ANANTAPUR DISTRICT OF ANDHRA PRADESH.

Dr. B.Gopal Naik

*Lecturer in Political Science, K.H.Govt.Degree College, Dharmavaram-515672,
Sri Sathya Sai (District), Andhra Pradesh (State).*

Abstract

Women, in many societies, are often restricted to the roles inside the house, those of wife and mother. While major changes have occurred in the status of women in some parts of the world in recent decades, norms that restrict women to the home are still powerful in defining the activities that are deemed appropriate for women and they exclude political life, which by its very nature takes place in a public forum. Caste has played an instrumental role in raising issues related to the more marginalized among women. In a highly hierarchical society, women belonging to backward castes have lesser access to public life, which is compounded by their gender. Women's empowerment is one of the objectives of the third generation Panchayat in India. Women in India are awfully underrepresented in political institutions. It is only due to less weightage given to the women due to patriarchal and male dominated social system and age-old social taboos against women in the rural area. Hence the present study was an effort to know the extent of participation of backward class women elected representative in Panchayats, an attempt has been made to highlight the respondents awareness on PRI provisions, previous experience, family support. And how they did works beyond schemes? how they communicate people, and are they facing any structural constraints? These questions are being examined in this paper with a robust method.

Introduction

The Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1993 has been considered as a Magna Carta in the history of Panchayati Raj system in India. It paved the way for the new pattern of leadership at the grass roots level. The future of PR system depends upon the quality of its elected representatives. Therefore, the welfare of society requires efficient leadership within the local community and PR institutions can utilize such leadership. The role and performance of the leadership is very to produce and promote significant for mobilizing the rural masses for co-operation and involvement in the implementation of rural development schemes. The status of PR leaders can be utilized to find out their position in the hierarchy of rural society. The understanding of socio-economic and political background of a person is essential for the proper understanding of his behavioral pattern.

After 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1993 and more appropriately after the enactment and implementation of A.P. Panchayati Raj Act, 1994. The main feature of the act is the provision of reservation of one-third seats for women and the reservation for SCs/STs as per their percentage in the total population. As a result, the women representatives occupy about one-third seats for SCs/STs as per their percentage in the total population. As a result, the women representatives occupy about one-third seats in PR institutions and SCs about one-fifth seats, which is the significant representation of these hitherto ignored categories of society.

Methodology

Anantapuramu was chosen for this research study purposively. In this district there are 4482 elected women representatives at three-tiers of Panchayat institutions. Among them 1277 constituting 28.39 percent of total women representatives belong to backward class community. So, there are 1151 BC



women representative members and 126 BC women heading the Panchayats. For in depth study on the functioning style and the empower mental impact of Panchayat Raj institutional participation, 33 per cent (380 members) of elected BC women representative members i.e. Ward members, MPTCs, ZPTCs and 66 per cent (83) BC women heads i.e. Gram Panchayat Presidents and Mandal Parishad Presidents were selected by simple random sampling method. Care was taken to cover all three revenue divisions of the district. So, the universe of the study constitutes 463 Backward Class women representatives.

Respondents Awareness on PRI Provisions

The functional levels of any representative largely depend on their awareness levels in which institution or body they are functioning. As such during field survey the awareness levels of sample respondents is examined on such areas like awareness on three tiers of PRIs, knowledge of minimum age of 18 years to cast vote in elections, knowledge of minimum age of 21 years to contest in elections, awareness on the percentage of reservations in PRIs, XI Schedule of Indian Constitution, major functional areas of PRIs, Two Child Norm etc. Table 1 gives the clear picture of awareness levels of sample BC respondent women in the study area.

Table-1, Respondent Women Representatives Awareness on Various Provisions Relating to PRIs

Provisions of PRIs	General BC women Representatives			BC women Heads of PRIs			Grand Total		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Three Tiers of PRIs	162 (42.63)	218 (57.37)	380 (100.00)	42 (50.60)	41 (49.40)	83 (100.00)	204 (44.06)	259 (55.94)	463 (100.00)
Knowledge of Minimum age of 18 years to cast vote in Elections	179 (47.11)	201 (52.89)	380 (100.00)	52 (62.65)	31 (37.35)	83 (100.00)	231 (49.89)	232 (50.11)	463 (100.00)
Knowledge of Minimum age of 21 years to contest in Elections	114 (30.00)	266 (70.00)	380 (100.00)	46 (55.42)	37 (44.58)	83 (100.00)	160 (34.56)	303 (65.44)	463 (100.00)
Awareness on the Percentage of Reservations in PRIs	98 (25.79)	282 (74.21)	380 (100.00)	38 (45.78)	45 (54.22)	83 (100.00)	136 (29.37)	327 (70.63)	463 (100.00)
XI Schedule of Indian Constitution	58 (15.26)	322 (84.74)	380 (100.00)	31 (37.35)	52 (62.65)	83 (100.00)	89 (19.22)	374 (80.78)	463 (100.00)
Major Functional Areas of PRIs	177 (46.58)	203 (53.42)	380 (100.00)	27 (32.53)	56 (67.47)	83 (100.00)	204 (44.06)	259 (55.94)	463 (100.00)
Two Child Norm	146 (38.42)	234 (61.58)	380 (100.00)	44 (53.01)	39 (46.99)	83 (100.00)	190 (41.04)	273 (58.96)	463 (100.00)

Source: Field Data

*Figures in Parentheses are percentages to the total.

It can be inferred from (table -1) that the BC women heads of PRIs are more aware of PRI related provisions than the general BC women representatives comparatively. But the overall picture is not satisfactory with regard to awareness levels. It is regrettable to note that a preponderant majority i.e. 55.94 per cent of sample women representatives are unaware of even three layers of Panchayat Raj Institutions. The Knowledge on minimum age of 18 years to cast vote in elections is confined to 49.89 per cent of total sample. On the other hand, the knowledge of minimum age of 21 years to contest in



elections is limited to only 34.56 per cent of the sample BC women respondents. About 29.37 per cent of the sample is able to give exact or nearly exact figures of reservations given to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes and women in PRIs. The sample BC women are quite unaware of IX Schedule of the Constitution. Important functional are known to 44.06 per cent of sample. Two child norms to contest in PRI elections is known to 41.04 per cent of the sample.

Honor or Recognition

To assess the level of exposure got by the female members the researcher asked the sample representatives whether they are honored enough by the villagers or not. Table 2 depicts their answers.

Table – 2, Number of Sample Women Representatives Honoured by Villagers

Sl. No.	Responses	General BC women Representative	BC women Heads of PRIs	Total
1	Yes honored	231(60.79)	51(61.45)	282(60.91)
2	No, Not honored	149(39.21)	32(38.55)	181(39.09)
Total		380(100.00)	83(100.00)	463(100.00)

Source: Field Data

*Figures in Parentheses are percentages to the total.

Table 2 shows that majority (60.91 per cent) of women members expressed their views that they are honored more after elected as members. There are few members (39.09 per cent) who opine the opposite. There are no major variations among general BC women representatives and BC women heads of PRIs.

Family Support

The reflection of family support towards the sample women representatives is given in table 3.

Table - 3, Reflection of Family Supports towards the Women Representatives Performing their Role.

Sl. No.	Type of Family Support	General BC women Representatives	BC women Heads of PRIs	Total
1	Full Support	176 (46.32)	33 (39.76)	209 (45.14)
2	Husband Dominates	3(0.79)	0(0.00)	3(0.65)
3	Husband Helps Without Interference	124(32.63)	22(26.51)	146(31.53)
4	Husband full Performs	48(12.63)	11(13.25)	59(12.74)
5	No support from Family	29(7.63)	17(20.48)	46(9.94)
Total		380(100.00)	83(100.00)	463(100.00)

Source: Field Data

*Figures in Parentheses are percentages to the total.

From the table 3, it is clear that full support has been rendered by the family towards 45.14 per cent women members and 9.94 per cent women members do not get any support from her family. A



significant portion of the women members (31.53 per cent) are getting help from their husbands without any interference.

Majority members who are getting family supports told that the attitude of their family members is positive in order to discharge their function as PRI members. Their family member takes initiative so that they can play effective role in the PRIs. While they are engaged in domestic works, their husband or family members take responsibility to talk members take responsibility to talk with the visitors and try to meet their requirements.

Works Undertaken for Women

The sample women members were asked “What they have you done specially for the women?” The responded for this question are given in table 4.

Table – 4, Works done by the Sample Women Representatives Especially for the women

Sl. No.	Works done Particulars	General BC women Representatives	BC women Heads of PRIs	Total
1	Nothing	24(6.32)	2(2.41)	26(5.62)
2	JSY	15(3.95)	7(8.43)	22(4.75)
3	NOAPS	14(3.68)	9(10.84)	23(4.97)
4	Immunization	56(14.74)	21(25.30)	77(16.63)
5	MGNREGS	114(30.00)	17(20.48)	131(28.29)
6	Rajiv Aarogya Sree	53(13.95)	9(10.84)	62(13.39)
7	SHG	69(18.16)	11(13.25)	80(17.28)
8	Sanitation	24(6.32)	3(3.61)	27(5.83)
9	IAY	11(2.89)	4(4.82)	15(3.24)
Total		380(100.00)	83(100.00)	463(100.00)

Source: Field Data

*Figures in Parentheses are percentages to the total.

From the frequencies of the table 4, it is clear that most of the sample women representatives have concentrated on encouraging women to take part in MGNREGS works. The second priority of all women representatives is formation of Self-Help Groups. The sample representatives on immunization programme as third important activity undertaken for the development of women. The sample women representatives have taken the initiative joining women patients in private hospitals for treatment of various diseases. Nearly 5.83 per cent of sample women representatives helped fellow women in the construction individual sanitation toilets. Few women representatives helped fellow women to get benefits under National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS) and Janani Suraksha Yohana (JSY) scheme.



Work Done Beyond Schemes

The sample women representatives were further asked “Beyond schemes what have you done for women?” Answer of this question has been reflected in the following table 5.

Table – 5, Work-Done by Sample Women Representatives for the Benefit of Women Beyond Schemes

Sl. No.	Particulars	General BC women Representatives	BC women Heads of PRIs	Total
1	No work done	263(69.21)	66(79.52)	329(71.06)
2	Work done	117(30.79)	17(20.48)	134(28.94)
Total		380(100.00)	83(100.00)	463(100.00)

Source: Field Data

*Figures in Parentheses are percentages to the total.

Table 5, reflects that most of the women representatives i.e. 71.06 per cent have done nothing for the women beyond schemes. Only 28.94 per cent members have done works other than schemes which is welcome move. Various types of works which have done by 28.94 per cent of sample representatives includes, Awareness generation against early marriage, awareness generation against child labour, awareness generation against dowry, awareness generation against alcohol, working against girl-trafficking, conducting health camps, birth control and family planning camp, legal aids etc.

Use of Power

Perceptions of the women representatives about her “Role” are judged putting one probing question that, “How do you want to use your power”? Answers to this question have been presented through the Table 6.

Table – 6, Usage of Power by the Sample Respondent Women Representatives

Sl. No.	Particulars	General BC women Representatives	BC women Heads of PRIs	Total
1	Nothing	18(4.74)	2(2.41)	20(4.32)
2	Development work	74(19.47)	8(9.64)	82(17.71)
3	Social Development	142(37.37)	14(16.87)	156(33.69)
4	Women Development	49(12.89)	41(49.40)	90(19.44)
5	Supply Basic needs	59(15.53)	11(13.25)	70(15.12)
6	Economic Development	38(10.00)	7(8.43)	45(9.72)
Total		380(100.00)	83(100.00)	463(100.00)

Source: Field Data

*Figures in Parentheses are percentages to the total.

Table 6 denotes that 95.68 per cent of women want to use their power in positive direction. Some of them want to do developmental work or social development. They also want to use their power in supplying basic minimum needs for the poor and also in Economic development of the women. Majority (33.69 per cent) of the representatives have exposed their wish to use their power for social



development i.e. working for Education, Health etc. Remaining 4.32 per cent of female members said that they don't want to use their power. They told that "Usage of Power" depends on the actor and the organization in which she belongs to.

Awareness on the Programmes regarding Women & Child development

To judge their sense of responsibility women representatives are also asked "Do you know the programmes regarding Women & Child development"? Answer to this question is presented in table 7.

Table – 7, District wise reflection of knowing or not knowing the Programmes of "Women and Child Development

Sl. No.	Responses	General BC women Representatives	BC women Heads of PRIs	Total
1	Yes	214(56.32)	69(83.13)	283(61.12)
2	No	166(43.68)	14(16.87)	180(38.88)
Total		380(100.00)	83(100.00)	463(100.00)

Source: Field Data

*Figures in Parentheses are percentages to the total.

As per table 7 nearly 61.12 per cent of female members know the programmes regarding women and child development and remaining 38.88 per cent members do not know the programmes. Here, BC women heads of PRIs are more knowledgeable on women and child development programmes than their counter parts.

Communication

The sample women representatives were further asked that "How do you communicate with the people in your locality"? Their answers have been reflected in table 8.

Table –8, Sample Women Representatives Mode of Communications with Public

Sl. No.	Mode of Communication	General BC women Representatives	BC women Heads of PRIs	Total
1	Do not Communicate	14 (3.68)	2 (2.41)	16 (3.46)
2	Talking with Each Household	79 (20.79)	19 (22.89)	98 (21.17)
3	At Weekly Meeting	29 (7.63)	15 (18.07)	44 (9.50)
4	At Gram Sabha	94 (24.74)	27 (32.53)	121 (26.13)
5	Through Party worker	120 (31.58)	14 (16.87)	134 (28.94)
6	Through Husband or Any family members	44 (11.58)	6 (7.23)	50 (10.80)
Total		380 (100.00)	83 (100.00)	463 (100.00)

Source: Field Data

*Figures in Parentheses are percentages to the total.



From the above table we find that 21.17 per cent general women representatives said that they communicate with the people talking with each household. About 28.94 per cent of sample women representatives confessed that they communicate with the village people through party workers. Nearly 26.13 per cent of women representatives informed that they communicate the people through participation in Gram Sabha. Some women representatives (10.80 per cent) confessed that they communicate with the people through husband or any male family member.

Participation in meetings

The women members will become enlightens about the activities of Panchayat Raj institutions, only when they attend the meeting regularly. As such during field survey the women representatives were asked about their regularity of attending the meetings and the same is presented in table 9.

Table – 9, Regularity of Attending PRI Meetings by Sample Women Representatives

Sl. No.	Particulars	General BC women Representatives	BC women Heads of PRIs	Total
1	Not Regular	156(41.05)	18(21.69)	174(37.58)
2	Regular	224(58.95)	65(78.31)	289(62.42)
Total		380(100.00)	83(100.00)	463(100.00)

Source: Field Data

*Figures in Parentheses are percentages to the total.

Most of the members informed the researcher that they always try to attend General meeting and other meeting called by respective PRI bodies but it becomes very difficult for them due to their household activity. Time is another factor. A large number of female members also told that as there are transport cost and other cost of refreshment, they can't attend the meeting regularly. Some of them (who are daily labour) informed that if they come regularly in the meeting then they would be deprived of daily wages. Some of the female members have shown the interference of Party as the cause for not attending meeting.

Supports

What supports have you got after being elected? The answer for this question has been reflected in the following table 10.

Table – 10, District wise Various Support Systems for the Female Members

Sl. No.	Support Systems	General BC women Representatives	BC women Heads of PRIs	Total
1	No Support	7(1.84)	2(2.41)	9(1.94)
2	Training by Government	17(4.47)	3(3.61)	20(4.32)
3	Training by NGO	34(8.95)	5(6.02)	39(8.42)
4	Training by Party	59(15.53)	7(8.43)	66(14.25)
5	Guidance by Ex-Member	15(3.95)	5(6.02)	20(4.32)
6	Reading Materials	88(23.16)	18(21.69)	106(22.89)
7	Field Visit	31(8.16)	9(10.84)	40(8.64)
8	Support by Husband/Family	39(10.26)	12(14.46)	51(11.02)



9	Support by Secretary	16(4.21)	4(4.82)	20(4.32)
10	Support by Party to perform the work	13(3.42)	5(6.02)	18(3.89)
11	Support by Caste leader to perform the work	19(5.00)	2(2.41)	21(4.54)
12	Support from Villagers	6(1.58)	2(2.41)	8(1.73)
13	Support from Officers	36(9.47)	9(10.84)	45(9.72)
Total		380(100.00)	83(100.00)	463(100.00)

Source: Field Data

*Figures in Parentheses are percentages to the total.

From the above table it is clear that 1.94 per cent of women representatives have not got any support and remaining 98.06 per cent of women representatives considered that they have got the supports. According to them they have got supports like training by govt., training by NGO, training by party, Guidance by Ex-member, Reading materials, field visit, support by husband/family, support by secretary, support by party to perform the work, support by caste leader to perform the work, support from villagers, support from officers etc.

Among 463 women representatives 125 (26.99 per cent) women representatives have got the training either government or party or NGO. And remaining 73.01 per cent have not got training. This denotes that a significant number of women representatives are uncovered by the knowledge and skill support. But surprisingly 22.89 per cent of women representatives have got the reading materials.

Structural Constraints

The structural constraints faced by sample women representatives are given in table 11.

Table-11, Structural Constraints Faced by Sample Women Representatives

Sl. No.	Structural Constraints	General BC Women Representatives		BC Women Heads of PRIS		Total		Grand Total
		Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Mentioned	Not Mentioned	
1	Age	128 (33.68)	252 (66.32)	14 (16.87)	69 (83.13)	142 (30.67)	321 (69.33)	463 (100.00)
2	Sex	61 (16.05)	319 (83.95)	11 (13.25)	72 (86.75)	72 (15.55)	391 (84.45)	463 (100.00)
3	Caste	101 (26.58)	279 (73.42)	13 (15.66)	70 (84.34)	114 (24.62)	349 (75.38)	463 (100.00)
4	Land Holdings	63 (16.58)	317 (83.42)	8 (9.64)	75 (90.36)	71 (15.33)	392 (84.67)	463 (100.00)
5	Occupation	56 (14.74)	324 (85.26)	19 (22.89)	64 (77.11)	75 (16.20)	388 (83.80)	463 (100.00)

Source: Field Data

*Figures in Parentheses are percentages to the total.



It is clear from table 11, that the structural constraints faced by sample women representatives are minimal. Among the various structural constraints age is considered as an important constraint by 30.67 per cent of total sample. Here, general BC women representatives are ahead with 33.68 per cent and it sharply reduced to 16.87 per cent in case of BC women heads of PRIs. The second important structural constraint is caste, which is reported by 24.62 per cent of the sample. Gender as a structural constraint is recognised by 15.55 per cent of the sample. Occupation is identified as one of structural constraint by 16.20 per cent of the sample. Only 15.33 per cent of the sample recognised landholdings possessed by a family as one of structural constraint.

Other Constraints

The question, “What are the other constraints faced by you in performing your work?” was put to the sample women representatives to know their feelings towards important hindrances. Table 12 depicts their responses.

Table – 12, Other Constraints faced by the Sample Women Representatives

Sl. No.	Constraints	General BC women Representatives	BC women Heads of PRIs	Total
1	Distant Location and Lack of Communication	18(4.74)	4(4.82)	22(4.75)
2	Low level of Education & Knowledge	27(7.11)	12(14.46)	39(8.42)
3	Male Intervention	48(12.63)	22(26.51)	70(15.12)
4	Party Intervention	47(12.37)	21(25.30)	68(14.69)
5	No Monitoring & Supervision	69(18.16)	11(13.25)	80(17.28)
6	Inadequate Financial Allocations	136(35.79)	9(10.84)	145(31.32)
7	Party Conflict	35(9.21)	4(4.82)	39(8.42)
Total		380(100.00)	83(100.00)	463 (100.00)

Source: Field Data

*Figures in Parentheses are percentages to the total.

It is clear from the table that inadequate financial allocations are the main problem as told by maximum respondents (31.32 per cent). Lack of monitoring and supervision is reported by 17.28 per cent of the sample women representatives. Male intervention is reported by 15.12 per cent of sample women representatives. On the other hand, nearly 14.69 per cent women representatives reported party intervention is the major constraint in discharging their duties properly. Equal per cent i.e. 8.42 of sample women representatives reported party conflict and low level of education and knowledge as major constraints. Distant location and lack of communication is reported by 4.75 per cent of women.