

*V.Sasikala

**Dr.S.Francisca

Abstract

The present study aims at uncovering the political facet of the younger generation. It brings to light whether the students are enriched with political awareness to voice in decision making as future citizens. The objective of the study is to find whether there exists any difference in political awareness with respect to gender. The sample consisted of 1611 college students studying at various Colleges of Arts and Science in Tamilnadu. Descriptive method using survey as technique is used to solve the present problem. Political Awareness Test (PAT) developed and validated by Sasikala and Francisca (2016) has been used for collecting the data. The result showed that gender difference played a dominant role determining political awareness. Male students possessed better political acquaintance than the female students. The paper includes the recommendation in the light of the findings.

Key words: Political Awareness, Gender, College students.

Introduction

“தகுதி எனவொன்று நன்றே பகுதியால் பாற்பட்டு
ஒழுக்கப்பெறின்”.

In English, “If justice, failing not, its quality maintain, Giving to each his due, -'tis man's one highest gain”. Equity is pre-eminent virtue. It is to give each man his due. India is the biggest democratic country in the world, where the real power is vested in the hands of the people. The political system provides its citizens with the right to elect their representatives to govern them. Hence, one needs a vision, intelligence and knowledge of the political process combined with hands on experience to approach to grassroots political and social problems. Today, students tend to accept and develop their political ideologies based on their parents, family and locality's view. Students should be educated to develop the positive feel towards politics and be aware of their own personal political beliefs. Political awareness is the possession of knowledge about the constitutional provisions of the government and its institutions. It will empower them to fight for their right and voice against discrimination. India with its largest youth population is in dire need to upbringing elite citizens who are making strong political decisions.

Significance of the Study

Political awareness is the ability of human beings to acquire and possess political knowledge through perception, reasoning, or intuition (Sasikala & Francisca, 2017). Citizens

* Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University Tirunelveli

** Research Director & Associate Professor, St.Ignatius College of Education, Palayamkottai

of any democratic country must have exposure to political information to emphasize efficient and effective citizenship. Among the citizens of any country the youngsters occupy a vital place as they play a crucial role in strengthening and continuation of democracy. The youth can stretch their wings in the field of politics with confidence only if they possess the needed experience and knowledge. Political awareness enables to open up and promotes the younger generation's participation in the mainstream politics in the future. Political awareness must be independent from sex differences. Ensuring women representation in politics will facilitate lateral thinking to solve various women related problems and gender disparity in any form. It could also offer a whole new perspective while framing legislations to numerous problems that a woman encounters and the nation faces as a whole in the path towards development. Identification of gender gap in awareness towards politics helps to analyse strategies and methods to empower the insufficiently informed as to provide equity treatment to attain equality. The present study will spotlight the initiatives that could be planned on the context by an educationist and policy makers towards gender equality, which is stressed as a goal towards sustainable development.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the level of political awareness among college students with respect to gender; and
2. To find out the significant difference in political awareness among college students with regard to gender.

Hypothesis

1. There is no significant difference in political awareness among college students with regard to gender.

Methodology

The investigators have adopted descriptive method with survey as technique to study the awareness towards politics among the college students. Political Awareness Test (PAT) developed and validated by Sasikala and Francisca (2016) was used for collecting the required data. The study sample was drawn from 1611 students studying in various arts and science colleges in Tamilnadu using simple random sampling technique. The collected data was analyzed using mean, S.D and 't' test.

Percentage Analysis

Objective: 1

The level of political awareness of college students with respect to gender.

Table 1

Level of Political Awareness among College Students with respect to gender

| Variable | Category | Low | | Average | | High | |
|----------|----------|-------|------|---------|------|-------|------|
| | | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % |
| Gender | Male | 79 | 10.8 | 557 | 76.0 | 97 | 13.2 |
| | Female | 154 | 17.5 | 566 | 64.5 | 158 | 18.0 |

Among the college students 10.8% and 13.2% of male students and 17.5% and 18% of female students have low and high level of political awareness respectively.

Differential Analysis

Null hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in political awareness among college students with regard to gender.

Table 2

Significant difference between male and female college students in their political awareness.

| Variable | Category | Count | Mean | S.D | 't' value | Result |
|----------|----------|-------|-------|-------|-----------|--------|
| Gender | Male | 733 | 10.07 | 3.081 | 3.124 | S** |
| | Female | 878 | 9.57 | 3.406 | | |

It is inferred from the above table that the calculated 't' value is greater than the table value at 1% level of significance for gender. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. There is significant difference between male and female college students in their political awareness. Comparing the mean scores, it is observed that the male students have better awareness in politics than their counterparts.

Interpretation

Male students have better political awareness than the female students. The reason may be that the political arena is claimed as a masculine sphere. Male domination and participation in public affairs is encouraged and accepted as a norm from early past. Watching, reading and listening to the news tend to be more of male activities. Social norms inherited from past exempt the men from household works and enable them with time for news consumption. These may have inclined the young men to keep updated regarding political information. The studies conducted by Singh (1998), Kaur (2000), Harmmeet (2003) & Kaur (2004) are in line with the study and reports that male students were more politically aware than female students. The study of Ahmed, Z., Javaid, M.A., Muzaffar, M., Fatima, N., & Hussain, T. (2015) also reveals that female students of social science group have less awareness compared to their male counterparts. Study of Rivas, A. (2013) also reports that even in

advanced countries where gender equality is emphasized women are found to be less informed about politics than men. The study of Gibbons, D. (1969) reports that men are more knowledgeable about domestic and international politics when contrasted with women. The study of Kuotsu, K. (2016) also reports that majority of women are less adequately informed and interested regarding political issues and events as compared to the male voters. Compared to men, women are less keen to engage in political discussion with others. The study of Ghosh, S.K. (2014) reports that male is higher than that of female both in the educational and political awareness. The study of Bakloo, F.A., & Asma (2015) contradicts the present finding and has reported that girls are more aware than boys. The study of Sharma, B.M., & Choudhary, M. (2014) contradicts the finding of present study and reports gender difference does not exist regarding political awareness. The study of Kaur, N. (2015) also reports that no gender difference prevails regarding the awareness on constitutional provisions.

Implications

Females stay behind men in awareness towards politics. To bridge this gap the government should take initiatives to educate females about their privileges and rights and kindle their interest in politics to widen their knowledge and build confidence over the political structure. Any blanket, may be from family, society or tradition that robs the opportunities of female students' involvement in politics should be banned. Initiatives through awareness programme to generate interest of women towards politics and provoking situations and provide support and encouragement to them to participate in protests, signing petitions, organizing awareness camps, donation camps, for political cause and develop political skills to enhance their political participation and influence the government. Incorporation of update of political information, conduction of political debates and discussions to enhance political knowledge among the student community must be adopted by all faculties within classroom along with their subjects. Female students must be motivated to participate in model youth parliament programmes and taken for a visit to secretariat to equip themselves and get inspired towards political activities.

Conclusion

Gender equality in political, social, cultural and economic spheres is not merely a fundamental human right but also it plays a major groundwork role in creating peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Any learning must have his influence for lifelong. "An education in a liberal arts college is not the learning of many facts, but the training of the mind to think" (Albert Einstein), thus creating political awareness and political empowerment among women would support them to raise their voice against domestic violence, physical and sexual violence, child marriages, and other harm full practices –against women. Enabling

equal access and opportunities to women in politics ensures equality and progress in bringing in laws protecting women and works done to eliminate such practices. "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world" says Nelson Mandela. Hence, the inclusion of political information and current affairs in education curriculum must be given highlighted attention to take needed steps to remove the hindrances and hesitations in exercising the political rights by the younger generations. A changed political spectrum which tends to be inclusive, responsive, egalitarian and democratic would only be visible with intelligent, educated and high level of politically aware women and youth.

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