Voices of Future: Perspectives of Young Women on Political Representation and Governance in Dakshina Kannada

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Abstract: The participation of young women in politics is a crucial aspect of ensuring inclusive and equitable governance, particularly in a country like India. Despite significant strides in recent years, young women remain underrepresented in political leadership, facing numerous barriers that hinder their entry and effectiveness in the political arena. Young women in India, encounter several challenges that limit their political participation. The patriarchal culture prevalent in society often discourages women from pursuing careers in politics, and those who do face gender discrimination and harassment. Additionally, the lack of opportunities and preference for non-political fields further exacerbate the issue. In this context the present study explores the views and aspirations of young women aged 18-25 regarding political representation and governance in Dakshina Kannada, a district in Karnataka, India. This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining both primary and secondary data. Primary data is collected through structured questionnaires and interviews with a sample of 50 young women in Dakshina Kannada. Secondary data is sourced from various reports, research articles, and publications from state, national, and international organizations. The analysis focuses on understanding the political interest, knowledge, and challenges faced by these young women in their potential or actual roles as political representatives. The research provides insights into how the next generation of female citizens perceive their role in local politics and envision the future of governance in their region. The findings highlight a generational shift in political awareness and ambition among young women in Dakshina Kannada. Participants demonstrate a exact understanding of local governance issues and express frustration with the current political status quo. They articulate a vision for more inclusive, transparent, and responsive governance structures that address the specific needs of women.

Key Words: Political Representation, Young Women, Governance, Dakshina Kannada, Gender Inclusion

1. INTRODUCTION

In India, women continue to face various forms and degrees of social, economic, and political hardship. Women are less respected than men in the home, community, and public domains. They also have fewer accesses to resources, less economic autonomy, less political authority, and less earning potential. Gender equality's core components include involvement in lawmaking and legislative representation. The topic of women's participation in politics has long been debated in India. Even though the country has advanced greatly in many aspects, women are still underrepresented in politics. India's political climate was considerably influenced by the participation of women in the Indian independence movement. Beyond simply using one's right to vote, political participation encompasses a wide range of other actions, such as joining a political party, running for office, attending rallies, meetings, and holding party positions, as well as holding office, running for office, holding elections, serving in representative bodies, and taking part in decision-making. In any nation, women's active participation in the election process is a sign of democracy's maturity and effectiveness. The group underrepresented in leadership roles is young women. In order to reduce gender disparity in parliamentary politics, women must be represented in the national parliament. Less than 1% of lawmakers are young women, and just 2.2% of lawmakers are under 30 according to Inter-Parliamentary Union data on youth involvement in parliaments. There are 28 women holding the position of Head of State or Head of Government in 27 different nations as of June 1, 2024. At the current rate, it will take an additional 130 years to achieve gender equality in the top positions of authority. There are just 18 nations with female

heads of state and 15 with female heads of governments. When legislation is passed, budgets are negotiated, and governments are held accountable, young women have an unalienable right to representation. Their absence from these procedures violates this right and undercuts the important contributions they make to the well-being of present and future generations as well as all people. Given that young women are strong, influential leaders in a variety of relevant sectors, including civic and democratic involvement on problems like gender equality, racism, and climate change, it is especially crucial that they participate in formal politics. In order to eliminate gender disparities, women's empowerment is essential. India's gender representation in parliament still lags behind other countries, even with the rise in female involvement. India's position in the Inter-Parliamentary Union's Parline database for women's representation in the lower house of Parliament has dropped to 143 out of 185 nations worldwide. There were 77 female legislators in India as of April 2024, accounting for 14.7% of the total number of seats. Dakshina Kannada's young women face a number of obstacles, including social welfare, lack of representation, economic opportunity, and communal conflicts. Concerns regarding social peace and personal safety have been highlighted by an increase in moral policing incidents and communal confrontations. Many young women want to see more women and young people in leadership roles because they believe that their issues and views are not being sufficiently heard in the political system. Young women in the district have identified economic possibilities as one of their top needs, along with access to high-quality education, skill development programs, and job creation activities.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature comprising 20 articles includes 6 articles examining International Level, 8 articles examining National Level, 3 articles examining State Level, and 3 articles examining District Level, thereby offering an understanding of the research topic on objective and theme basis.

Shanker (2014) highlights the significance of measuring women's political participation at the local level in India, emphasizing its relevance for planners and policymakers in formulating effective strategies and initiatives. Women's involvement in grassroots politics contributes diverse perspectives that are essential for comprehensive societal development. Assessing their political engagement helps determine the need for policy reforms to enhance participation rates. Since gaining independence, India has recognized the importance of collecting gender-specific data on political involvement to monitor progress and address gaps. Such data-driven approaches are instrumental in ensuring inclusive governance and fostering greater representation of women in decision-making processes.

Sultana, W. (2016) in "Social Media and Political Participation: A Study of The People of Dakshina Kannada" examines the impact of social media on political awareness and engagement among residents in Dakshina Kannada, Karnataka. The study finds that social media platforms are vital for facilitating political participation, particularly among younger individuals who utilize these channels to voice opinions and mobilize support for various causes. His findings suggest a need for effective strategies to harness social media's benefits while addressing its limitations to promote a more informed and active citizenry in the political process.

3. METHODOLGY

We attempt to summarize the methodology adopted for conducting the study. Research is crucial to the success of any research project because it ensures that the research findings are accurate, objective, and unbiased.

3.1. Aim and scope of the study

The research aims a vision for more inclusive, transparent, and responsive governance structures that address the specific needs of women. Specifically, the research aims to evaluate how the next generations of female citizens perceive their role in local politics and envision the future of governance in their region. Participants demonstrate a exact understanding of local governance issues and express frustration with the current political status quo.

This research focuses on evaluating the perspectives of young women on political representation and governance in Dakshina Kannada. The research

analysis is on understanding the political interest, knowledge, and challenges faced by these young women in their potential or actual roles as political representatives. The study will be conducted with a specific target population of young women of age group 18-25 years with aim of evaluating young women's political perspective.

3.2. Problem formulation

The research aims to evaluate the young women's perspective of local governance structures and political processes in Dakshina Kannada, to investigate young women's aspirations for future political engagement and their views on how to increase women's representation in local governance. The research will identify a generational shift in political awareness and ambition among young women in Dakshina Kannada.

3.3. Objectives

1. To assess young women's awareness and understanding of local governance structures and political processes in Dakshina Kannada.
2. To explore the barriers and challenges perceived by young women regarding their participation in local politics and governance.
3. To examine young women's perspectives on current female political representation in Dakshina Kannada and its impact on governance.
4. To investigate young women's aspirations for future political engagement and their views on how to increase women's representation in local governance.

3.4. Tools of data collection

The investigators had collected the data using two sources, primary and secondary, as part of the study, the primary source of data being the structured questionnaires. The survey form was questionnaire containing 25 questions with a sample of 50 young women in Dakshina Kannada. Secondary data is sourced from various reports, research articles, and publications from state, national, and international organizations.

3.5. Universe of study

Here the universe includes all young women representatives of age group 18-25 years of 9 different taluks in Dakshina Kannada

3.6. Sampling

The investigators used the simple random sampling method to collect sample of young women from Dakshina Kannada Taluk.

3.7. Research Design

We have used the descriptive research method, a form of quantitative research.

3.8. Criteria

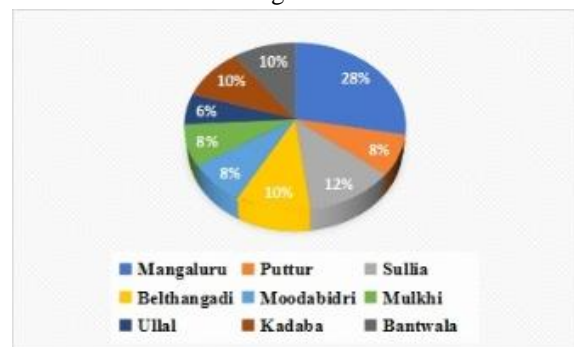Inclusive criteria: Young women aged 18-25 years in Dakshina Kannada.
Exclusive criteria: Young women aged below 18 and above 25 years were not considered.

4. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The data analysis and interpretation are critical components of the research process, transforming raw data into meaningful insights.
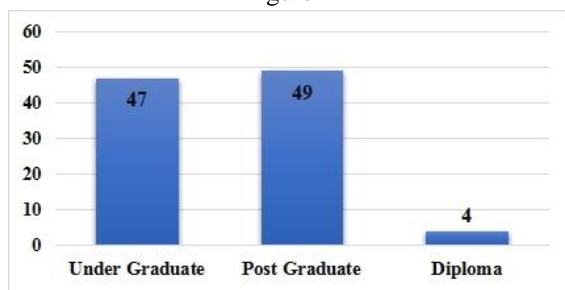
Taluk of the respondents

Figure 1

The above figure shows that Mangaluru leads with a notable 28% of respondents, Following Puttur and Sullia show lower percentages at 8% and 12%, Belthangadi, Kadaba and Bantwala each account for 10%, while Moodabidri, and Mulkhi, have similar responses at 8% and Ullal has the lowest representation with only 6%. The above data reveals that majority i.e. Mangaluru leads with a notable 28% of respondents, indicating a strong engagement or representation in this area.

The data from Dakshina Kannada reveals both opportunities and challenges regarding the political representation of young women. While Mangaluru showcases strong engagement, other regions

demonstrate the need for dedicated efforts to empower young women politically. Addressing cultural barriers, enhancing educational resources, and implementing targeted outreach initiatives will be crucial in fostering a more inclusive political landscape across Dakshina Kannada. By investing in these areas, stakeholders can help ensure that the voices of young women are heard and valued in governance and decision-making processes.
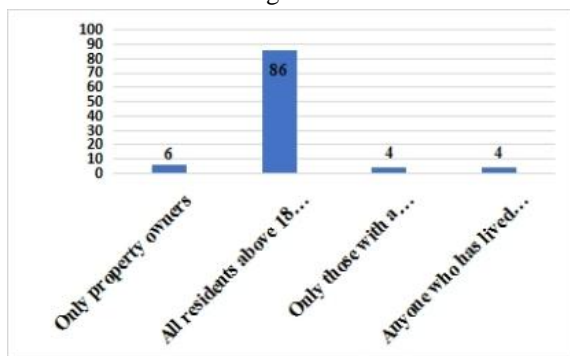
Level of education

Figure 2

The above data reveals that 47% have an undergraduate degree, 49% hold a postgraduate degree and 4% have a diploma. The above data reveals that majority i.e. A slightly higher proportion 47% have an undergraduate degree.

With the majority of respondents having either undergraduate (47%) or graduate degrees (49%), the data indicates a highly educated base. According to their educational background, the respondents are probably well-informed on issues of governance and political representation. The focus on higher education might also be a sign of a willingness to participate in debates on community involvement and policymaking. In the future, utilizing this educational background can strengthen advocacy initiatives meant to address the region's governance issues and increase political representation.

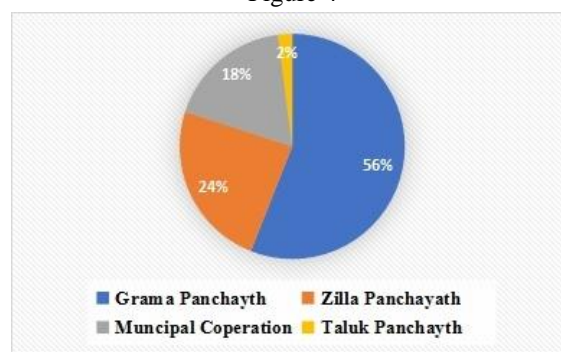Eligibility criteria to Vote

Figure 3

The above figure shows that 86% of respondents believe that all residents above 18 years of age should be eligible to vote, only 6% of respondents think that only property owners should have the right to vote, 4% of respondents advocate for alternative eligibility criteria, such as having lived in the area for at least 10 years, while another 4% specified only those who with only college education. The above data reveals that majority i.e. 86% of respondents believe that all residents above 18 years of age should be eligible to vote emphasizing the importance of universal adult suffrage.

According to the data, there is broad support among respondents for universal voting eligibility, with 86% of them agreeing that all citizens over the age of 18 should be able to vote. This highlights how crucial equality of representation and inclusivity are to democratic processes. There appears to be a shared commitment to expanding access to political involvement, as evidenced by the low support for restrictive criteria like property ownership or certain domicile and educational requirements. This knowledge can help guide future advocacy campaigns that defend and advance voting rights as vital elements of a healthy democracy.

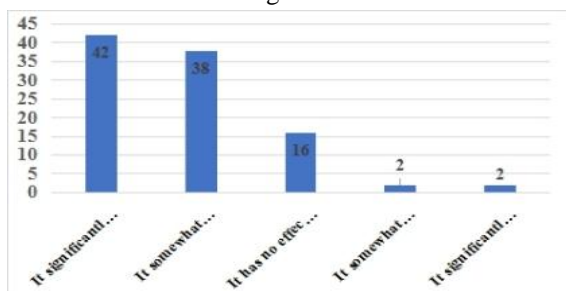Primary local government body in Dakshina Kannada

Figure 4

The above figure shows that 56% identified Gram Panchayat as the primary local government board, Municipal Corporation garnered 18% of responses, Zilla Panchayat (24%) and Taluk Panchayath 2% received lesser but still notable mentions. The above data reveals that majority i.e. 56% identified Gram Panchayat as the primary local government board indicating the significance of grassroots governance.

According to the research, 56% of respondents emphasized the importance of Gram Panchayats in

grassroots governance, indicating a strong preference for them as the main local government body. The importance of local self-governance institutions that closely match community needs is highlighted by this strong identification. Opportunities to increase understanding and engagement with these levels of governance are highlighted by the differing recognition of other local government entities, such as Zilla and Taluk Panchayats. All things considered, strengthening ties between the various levels of local government can improve democratic engagement and efficient administration at all levels.

Influence of Education young womens' participation in Local Governance
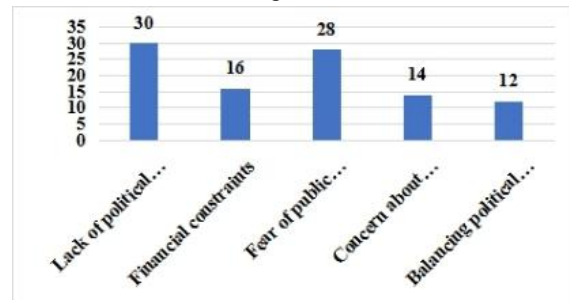
Figure 5

The above figure shows that 42% of respondents reported that education significantly increases participation in local politics, 38% stated that education somewhat increases participation, 16% believed education does not affect participation, 2% reported education decreases participation and 2% stated education significantly decreases participation. The above data reveals that majority i.e. 42% of respondents reported that education significantly increases participation in local politics.

According to the statistics, respondents strongly believe that education has a beneficial effect on involvement in local politics, with 42% of them saying that it much raises engagement. This shows that there is broad agreement on the value of education in promoting civic engagement, especially when paired with the 38% who think it moderately boosts participation. These insights suggest that enhancing educational initiatives focused on political literacy and community engagement can play a crucial role in promoting active citizenship. Additionally, understanding the nuances behind differing perspectives on education's impact can help develop more effective strategies to engage all segments of the population in local governance.

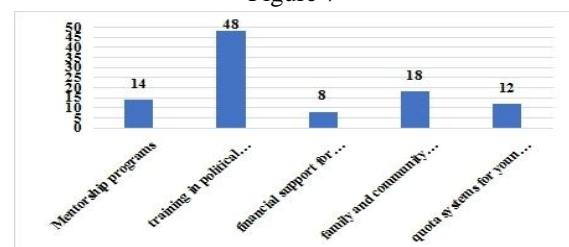Personal challenges for political participation

Figure 6

The above figure shows that 30% of respondents cited a lack of political experience, 28% expressed fear of public speaking, financial constraints were noted by 16% of participants, 14% of respondents raised concerns about personal safety, while a 12% mentioned the challenge of balancing political aspirations with personal life. The above data reveals majority i.e. 30% of respondents cited a lack of political experience as a major obstacle, indicating that many women feel unprepared to enter politics.

Targeted interventions like training programs, financial support efforts, safety measures, and work-life balance legislation are crucial to increasing women's political engagement. Stakeholders can create an atmosphere that motivates and enables more women to participate actively in politics by tackling these barriers in their entirety.

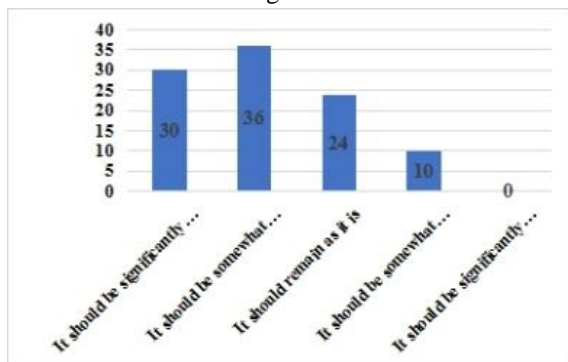Support Strategies to encourage Women Participation

Figure 7

The above figure shows that 48% of respondents highlighted the importance of training in political processes and leadership, 18% emphasized the role of family and community encouragement, other factors included 14% for statements to mentorship programs, 12% for quota systems, and 8% for financial support for campaigning. The above data reveals majority i.e. 48% of respondents highlighted the importance of training in political processes and leadership indicating that skill development is crucial.

The information reveals a number of elements that respondents feel are critical to increasing women's political engagement. The answers show that the training and support systems required for women's political empowerment are clearly prioritized.

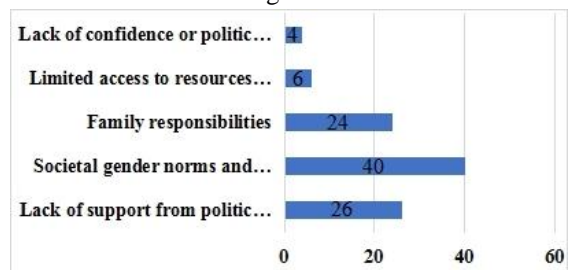Existing reservation system in Dakshina Kannada

Figure 8

The above figure shows that 30% of respondents believe that the quota should be significantly increased, 36% feel that it should be somewhat increased, 24% of participants believe that the quota should remain as it is, 10% advocate for a slight reduction and while no respondents support significantly reducing or eliminating the quota system. The above data reveals majority i.e. 36% feel that it should be somewhat increased suggesting a general consensus on the need for improvement.

According to the findings, most respondents (66%) support an increase in quotas, indicating that quota systems need to be improved. This implies that there is broad support for increasing the number of women in politics, which presents a chance for legislators to think about changing the current quota structures in order to promote greater diversity and inclusivity in government.

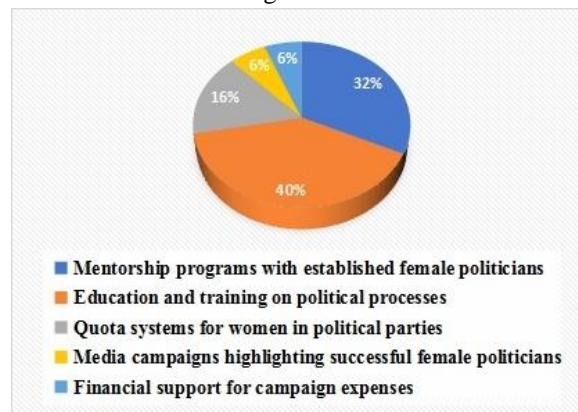Obstacles for participation

Figure 9

The above figure shows that 40% of respondents identified social gender norms and expectations as the primary obstacle, family responsibilities were noted by 24%, 26% expressed a lack of support from political parties, limited access to resources

and funding was cited by 6%, while 4% pointed to a lack of confidence or political experience as a barrier. The above data reveals majority i.e. 40% of respondents identified social gender norms and expectations indicating that societal attitudes heavily influence women's political involvement.

According to the findings, 40% of respondents believe that social gender norms and expectations are the main barrier preventing women from participating in politics. This emphasizes how strongly societal beliefs affect women's political participation. In order to increase women's engagement in politics, it will be crucial to address these cultural hurdles, support family obligations, improve access to resources, increase political party support, and build confidence through training. By tackling these issues holistically, stakeholders can create a more inclusive environment that empowers women to take active roles in governance.

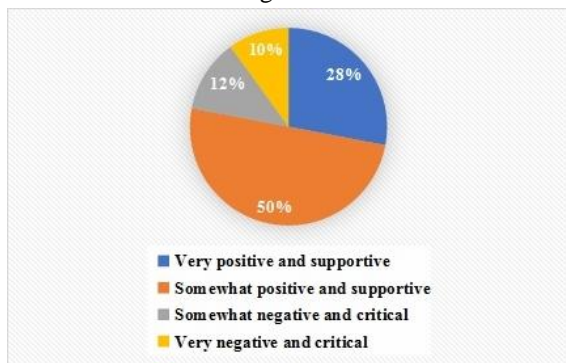Effective strategies to encourage participation in politics

Figure 10

The above figures shows that 40% of respondents responded the need for education and training on the political process, 32% supports mentorship programs aimed at establishing female politicians, 16% except for quota systems for women in political parties, 6% suggested media campaigns highlighting successful female politicians, 6% seek for financial support for campaign expenses. The above data reveals that majority i.e. 40% of respondents emphasized the need for education and training on the political process.

According to the findings, the majority of respondents (40%) highlight the need of political education and training as a crucial step in increasing women's political participation. This research emphasizes how crucial knowledge and skill gain

are to women's political empowerment. Support for quota systems (16%), media campaigns (6%), financial aid (6%), and mentorship programs (32%), further demonstrates the necessity for a diversified strategy to eliminate obstacles to women's political participation. Stakeholders may foster an atmosphere that empowers and encourages women to participate actively in governance and decision-making processes by fully putting these supportive measures into practice.

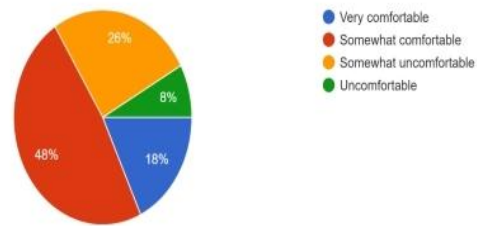Media representation on Women Participation

Figure 11

The above figure shows that with 28% describing coverage as very positive and supportive and 50% as somewhat positive and supportive, with 12% labelling coverage somewhat negative and critical and 10% as very negative and critical. The above data reveals that majority i.e. 50% as somewhat positive and supportive, critical views exist.

The data indicates that a majority (50%) of respondents perceive media coverage as somewhat positive and supportive, with an additional 28% describing it as very positive. However, critical views exist among 22% of respondents, highlighting areas where the coverage may fall short. This mixed sentiment underscores the importance of continuous engagement between media outlets and their audiences to refine reporting practices and address concerns raised by critics. By doing so, media organizations can strengthen their credibility and enhance the effectiveness of their coverage in promoting informed public discourse.

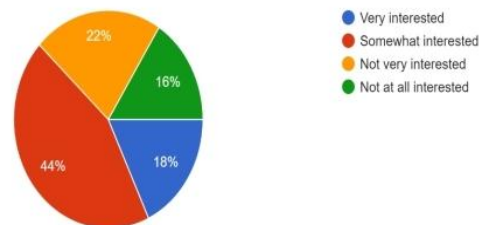Expression on political views on public forum

Figure 12

The above figure shows that a small percentage 18% feel very comfortable, a significant proportion 48% are somewhat comfortable, a notable percentage 26% are somewhat uncomfortable, and a small but significant minority 8% feel uncomfortable. The above data reveals that majority i.e. 48 % are somewhat comfortable indicating a sense of cautious openness.

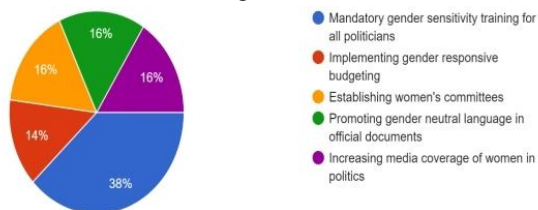Interest in pursuing a career in politics or local governance

Figure 13

The above figure shows that 44% expressed somewhat interest, while 22% were not very interested, notable percentage 16% were not all interested and 18% were very interested. The above data reveals that majority i.e. 44% expressed somewhat interest.

According to the data, the majority of respondents (50%) believe that media coverage is supportive and somewhat favorable, and another 28% say that it is very positive. Nonetheless, 22% of respondents expressed critical opinions, pointing out potential gaps in the coverage. This conflicting opinion emphasizes how crucial it is for media organizations and their audiences to stay in constant communication in order to improve reporting techniques and allay critics' worries. By doing this, media outlets can improve the efficacy of their coverage in fostering knowledgeable public debate and bolster their credibility.

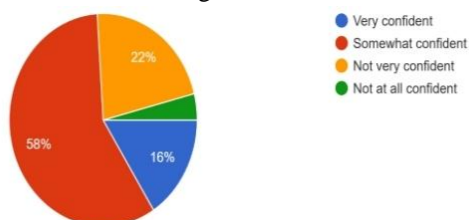Most effective way to address gender bias in political process

Figure 14

The above data reveals that 38% convey mandatory gender sensitivity training for all politicians, implementing gender responsive budgeting14% respondents, establishing women's committees, increasing media coverage of women in politics, respondents and promoting gender neutral language in official documents with 16% respondents. The above data reveals that majority i.e. that 38% convey mandatory gender sensitivity training for all politicians.

According to the statistics, a sizable majority (38%) support making gender sensitivity training mandatory for all politicians as a critical first step in promoting inclusivity and tackling gender-related issues in politics. A complete strategy to improve gender sensitivity in political processes is also highlighted by other suggestions including creating women's committees, boosting media coverage, encouraging gender-neutral terminology, and putting gender-responsive budgeting into practice. By prioritizing these initiatives, stakeholders can work towards creating a more equitable political environment that values and incorporates diverse perspectives.

Perception on their Ability to be the an Elected Representative

Figure 15

58% felt somewhat confident, a notable proportion 22 were not very confident, 16% were very confident and 4% were not at all confident. The above data reveals that majority i.e. 58% felt somewhat confident indicating a potential willingness to take on leadership roles.

According to the statistics, the majority of respondents (58%) express some degree of confidence in their ability to assume leadership roles, suggesting that they may be open to chances in this area. A considerable percentage of respondents are not very confident (22%) or not at all confident (4%), despite the fact that there is a strong foundation of confidence among them, especially with 16% feeling very confident. Creating an atmosphere that offers assistance, education, and guidance can boost self-esteem and inspire more people to assume leadership roles and make valuable contributions to their communities or organizations.

5. MAJOR FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

Mangalore leads with a notable 28% of respondents indicating strong engagement or representation in this area. A slightly higher proportion, 47%, hold an undergraduate degree. Furthermore, 86% of respondents believe that all residents above 18 years of age should be eligible to vote, emphasizing the importance of universal adult suffrage.

Additionally, 56% identified the Gram Panchayat as the primary local government board, indicating the significance of grassroots governance.42% of respondents reported that education significantly increases participation in local politics. However, 30% cited a lack of political experience as a major obstacle, suggesting that many women feel unprepared to enter politics.

Moreover, 48% of respondents highlighted the importance of training in political processes and leadership, indicating that skill development is crucial. A consensus exists, as36% feel that training opportunities should be somewhat increased. Additionally, 40% emphasized the need for education and training on the political process. While 50% expressed somewhat positive and supportive views, critical perspectives also exist.

Regarding comfort levels, 48% are somewhat comfortable, indicating a sense of cautious openness to political involvement. 44% expressed some interest in participating in politics. Furthermore, 38% conveyed the necessity for mandatory gender sensitivity training for all politicians. Lastly, 58% felt somewhat confident, indicating a potential willingness to take on leadership roles.

- Establish mentorship programs connecting experienced women politicians with those aspiring to enter politics. This can provide guidance, support, and encouragement.

- Create peer networks where women can share experiences, challenges, and strategies for overcoming barriers in political participation.

- Launch campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of women's representation in politics. This can involve community meetings, social media outreach, and partnerships with local organizations.

- Promote success stories of women leaders in the community to inspire others and demonstrate the impact of female participation in governance.

- Encourage local governments to publish gender report cards that track women's participation in politics and governance, fostering accountability.

- Promote greater involvement in local governance structures like Gram Panchayats by providing information on how to run for office and participate effectively.

CONCLUSION

The study emphasizes the importance of education and training for women to enhance their political skills and knowledge. Many respondents expressed a desire for workshops and seminars that focus on governance, leadership, and political processes to build confidence and competence. Establishing mentorship programs and support networks for aspiring women politicians can provide crucial guidance and encouragement. These initiatives can help women navigate the political landscape and build a sense of community among female leaders. The research advocates for systemic changes within political parties to ensure greater support for female candidates. This includes adopting practices that prioritize women's candidacy and actively working to dismantle patriarchal structures within party hierarchies. While there are significant strides toward empowering women in local governance through reservation policies, substantial work remains to be done to ensure that these advancements translate into meaningful representation at higher levels of government. Addressing educational gaps, providing robust support systems, and fostering an inclusive political culture are essential steps toward achieving gender parity in Dakshina Kannada's political landscape.

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