CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 OVERVIEW

The main aim of this study is to empirically examine the patterns of relationship between media, political involvement of women, from the perspective of gender-issue affinity, and the set of other exploratory variables. The research questions that are addressed here is: Is there gender-issue affinity in politics? If yes, what is the extent of affinity to gender-issues amongst women? What factors determine women’s affinity towards gender issues? What is the role played by media in driving women towards gender-issues? Whether the gender-issue affinity plays a role in involving women in politics?

The study seeks to examine individual-level factors such as demographics; the level of importance a woman attaches to media; the level of interest shown by a woman in political news; the extent of news media use, the degree of news satisfaction, the degree of interpersonal trust a woman has in others and other related perceptions. With these exploratory variables, the study tries to examine the degree of gender-issue affinity among women and their involvement in politics and in particular, their attitude and behaviour towards non-conventional political activity.

3.2 SURVEY DESIGN

A quantitative approach (survey design) was adopted for the research. A structured-survey questionnaire was used as a research tool to
gather data from the women respondents who were exposed to various kinds of media. Mostly, the survey was conducted through face-to-face interviews and phone conversations. The survey was done during the period from October 15, 2013 to November 17, 2013.

3.3 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The sampling technique was based on snowball sampling techniques. The researcher personally distributed the questionnaire to the respondents and later asked the respondents to further distribute it to other women (friends and relatives) from all walks of life.

All the questions in the questionnaire were in the English language and so the researcher personally spoke to those women respondents, who could not understand the language, to fill in the responses. The researcher also conducted online survey by sending emails to those respondents, who know the language. The questionnaire had questions on the level of importance women attach to media, about interest/disinterest towards political news, usage of news media, satisfaction/dissatisfaction towards news content, voting behaviour, political party affiliation, level of interpersonal trust and other related questions, in addition to demographic details.

Given the resource and time constraints, the research restricted out the sample size to 1,200 respondents. However, the researcher managed to get only 1,108 valid samples. Because, several women contacted by the researcher hesitated to respond. As the study is to analyze the gender-issue affinity of women, all the 1,108 respondents were only women. The field site for the research is restricted to Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India. Women from all walks of life and from several areas, in Chennai, were considered as respondents.
3.4 RESPONDENTS' PROFILE

The demographic variables were operationalised based on the simplified version of National Sample Survey Instruments. The respondents were asked about their demographics such as age, educational qualification, occupational status, monthly income (in Indian Rupees) and social class. In order to know the age of the respondent, the question 'What was your age as on your last birthday?' was asked.

The age group was categorised into three sets ranging from younger to older. Those in the age group of 1) 18-30 as younger, 2) those between 30-50 years are middle-aged and those 3) above 50 years considered old. Of the total 1,108 respondents, 250 (22.5%) are younger, 537 (48.5%) belong to middle-age group and 321 (29%) are older.

To understand the educational background of the respondents, a question was asked to mention their educational qualification with four options 1) illiterate 2) up-to primary education 3) up-to higher secondary education and 4) graduate. Of the total women respondents, illiterates were 225 (20.3%), those who had only primary education were 238 (21.5%), those who had higher secondary education were 147 (13.3%) and graduates were 498 (44.9%).

Women from all background were chosen as respondents. So, in order to know the occupational status, one question was asked about their occupation with five options such as 1) business/professional, 2) supervisor, 3) house-wife, 4) labourer and 5) student. Of all the respondents, business/professionals were 243 (22%), supervisors were 173 (15.6%), housewives were 468 (42.2%), labourers were 51 (4.6%) and students were 173 (15.6%).
To know the monthly family income (in Indian Rupees) of the women respondents, they were asked to mention the category of income to which they belong. Options given were 1) below Rs.10,000, 2) Rs.10,000-50,000 and 3) above Rs.50,000. Of the total women respondents, the number of women whose monthly family income is below Rs.10,000 was 331 (29.9%), the number of women whose monthly family income is from Rs.10,001-50,000 were 420 (37.9%) and those women whose monthly family income is above Rs.50,000 were 357 (32.2%).

With respect to social class, the respondents were categorised into three classes such as 1) lower class, 2) middle class and 3) upper class based on their monthly family income. Of the total respondents 447 (40.4%) belong to lower class, 389 (35.1%) were middle class and 272 (24.5%) were upper class.

3.5 OPERATIONALISATION OF EXPLORATORY VARIABLES

The details of the operationalisation of exploratory variables:

**Media Variables:** Media Importance; News Media Use; Political News Interest; News Satisfaction.

**Psychological Variables:** Interpersonal Trust; Locus of Control; Mean World Syndrome.

**Political Variables:** Voting Behaviour; Political Party Affiliation; Non-Conventional Political Activity and the main variable Gender-issue Affinity are given below:

Media importance measures the level of importance the women attach to media in their everyday life. Though women might be interested in political news they might not consider media to be important. Therefore, a
separate measure becomes necessary and the question ‘how important is media to your everyday life?’ captures this dimension. The options given were 1) not at all important 2) less important 3) important and 4) very important

News Media Use measures the degree of women’s news media use for trying to acquire information on political issues. It is considered the dynamic process of acquiring knowledge from various sources of media, i.e. from newspapers, TV, radio, internet and so on. In short, it is a simple measure of what sources women use to know what is happening in the political arena.

The news media usage of women was identified with the question ‘Which of the following sources of information on politics you use? The options were:

1) Daily Newspaper
2) News Broadcasts of TV/Radio
3) Chatting with Friends/Colleagues
4) Online News Websites
5) Magazines
6) Smartphones / Mobile phones / Tablets / Emails
7) In-depth Reports on Radio/TV

The third indicator ‘chatting with friends/colleagues’ captures the concept of sharing political news, which they gathered, with their friends/colleagues. It has been included because sharing about ‘political news’ is an element that drives one to use media to know more.
Reliability tests showed Cornbach alpha of 0.793. A summated scale score was developed based on the positive responses and were finally categorized into three levels of use ‘Low News Media Use’, ‘Moderate News Media Use’ and ‘High News Media Use’.

Political News Interest is the degree of interest shown by women towards political news issues. Here, ‘political news’ is considered a special and distinctive interest evinced by women apart from interests in teleshopping, animal and plant life, science, history, entertainment. Hence, the question ‘How interested are you in political news’ captures this dimension. The options included were 1) not at all interested 2) less interested, 3) interested and 4) very interested.

News Satisfaction is the degree of satisfaction obtained by the women respondents with regard to the content of the news issues, they gain through various media. Given the variety of news from all sources, it is important whether the women were satisfied with the content of the news. So, the question ‘Taking into account all the information (political news, gender-related issues) you receive from all kinds of media, how satisfied are you?’ was included in the questionnaire. The options were 1) highly dissatisfied with the news, 2) dissatisfied with the news, 3) satisfied with the news and 4) highly satisfied with the news.

The interpersonal trust scale was devised by Julian B. Rotter, a social psychologist, in 1967. The main purpose of the scale is to measure the trust and distrust among people and find out the difference between people who have high trust and low trust. To know the level of interpersonal trust among the women, the question ‘By and large, do you feel that you can trust most of the people or that you must be very careful in moving with people?’ was asked with the options as need to be very careful and most people can be
trusted. This scale was derived based on J. B. Rotter's scale. The scale was mentioned in Robinson, J. P., Shaver, P. R., & Wrightsman, L. S. (1991). Measures of personality and social psychological attitudes. San Diego: Academic Press.

Locus of control scale was developed by Julian B. Rotter in 1966. The purpose of the scale is to assess and measure the internal as well as external locus of control in a person's life. The scale indicates a forced-choice between two different alternatives, of which the respondents must choose only one. In order to know the degree of choice and control (locus of control) in their life, the question 'What is the level of choice and control you feel that you have over the happenings in your life?' was asked. The options included were 1) no choice, 2) less choice and 3) more choice.

Several cultivation analyses concentrating on mean world syndrome has taken into account the General Social Survey's (GSS) data, done by the National Opinion Research Corporation. The GSS is the well-known personal interview survey done since 1972. The concept of television viewing by respondents was included in the GSS in 1976. Based on the GSS questions, a similar question was asked to the women respondents to measure their level of mean world syndrome. 'On the whole, do you feel that most of the people would take advantage of you, provided they get an opportunity, or would they behave fairly?' was asked with the options 1) take advantage 2) behave fairly.

Voting Behaviour is also an indicator of traditional form of political involvement of women. It was operationalised through the question ‘Did you vote in the recent elections’ with the choices 1) ‘Yes’ or 2) ‘No’.

Political Party Affiliation is an indicator of traditional form of political involvement. Since most of the political activities are mainly based
on party politics, it is considered a vital part in this study. The nature and level of affiliation towards political party organisations is used as a tool to measure the patterns of political involvement of women. The question ‘Are you a member of any political party?’ With response category as 1) active member 2) inactive member 3) not a member, captures this dimension.

Gender-Issue Affinity is a measure of affective and behavioral commitment to gender-related issues in political sphere. Affective dimension could be emotional or symbolic. Gender-Issue Affinity differs from previous measures in that the scale does not focus on gender perceptions but instead emphasise behavioral aspects of political orientation, more closely resembling scales on political participation (Robinson, Shaver, and Wrightsman. 1998). The scale seeks to measure women's active participation in gender-related political actions - explicit value commitment articulated through social and political actions. It is not an attitudinal measure but rather seeks to measure levels of political participation related to gender issues.

Operationally, it measures the actions of women who are intended towards influencing women political outcomes. It was operationalised using six-item scale with ‘yes/no’ response. The questions were framed as, Have you done any of the following in the last five years?” was asked to the respondents.

The items included were:

1) Did you try to persuade/try to show someone why they should vote for a particular woman candidate?

2) Did you give/spend personal money for a particular Women’s Association/Women Self-Help-Groups?
3) Did you watch or read news on Radio/TV/Newspapers to pay attention to women’s issues?

4) Did you try to persuade your family members to support a particular women’s cause?

5) Did you do any voluntary or paid work for a particular woman candidate?

6) Did you attend any political meeting in support of a particular party/woman candidate?

Reliability tests showed Cornbach alpha of 0.864. A summated scale score was developed based on the positive responses and were finally categorized into three levels of involvement ‘Low Gender-Issue Affinity’, ‘Moderate Gender-Issue Affinity’ and ‘High Gender-Issue Affinity’.

Non-Conventional Political Activity measures the women’s drive to involve in various forms of non-conventional political activities. The political participation scale was developed by Herbert F. Weisberg for the 1980 & 1982 American National Election Studies. The study has a new series of questions about partisanship of an individual. It is possible to create a 5-point scale of party support/closeness from these questions. The scale was mentioned in Robinson, (1993), Measures of Political Attitudes (Measures of Social Psychological Attitudes) , John P. Robinson (Author), John Paul Robinson (Editor), Lawrence S. Wrightsman (Editor) Academic Press; 1st edition (January 15, 1999). Based on the scale, the women respondents were asked a similar question. In order to know the kinds of non-conventional political activity done by the women respondents, the question, 'Have you participated or will you participate in any of the following activities?' were asked to them. The options included were:
1) Involved in debates/discussions on women issues
2) Attended a political meeting by or in support of a woman candidate
3) Participated in peaceful demonstrations for women issues
4) Joining boycotts
5) Occupying buildings
6) Appeal to politicians in support of women issues
7) Signing a petition for women cause

Reliability tests showed Cornbach alpha of 0.781. A summated scale score was developed based on the positive responses and were finally categorized into three levels of activity ‘Low Non-Conventional Political Activity’, ‘Moderate Non-Conventional Political Activity’ and ‘High Non-Conventional Political Activity’.

There has been several measures to study gender-related issues - gender equity, gender sensitivity scales and their variants are popular tools to assess the extent of gender individual perception of gender issues typically framed within an organisational (e.g. company) or application context. Within the context of political communication, there are relatively few measures that use indicators of political involvement.

3.6 PILOT STUDY

An effective structured-survey questionnaire is not possible to have been devised without careful review by the experts from various fields. It was reviewed by seven experts who are senior media persons and academicians — (T.R. Sudha, Chief Sub-Editor, The Hindu; S. Senthil Velavan, Marketing
The valuable suggestions and advice given by the experts were incorporated in to the final questionnaire with utmost care and caution. Several women were asked to fill the questionnaire immediately and the researcher clarified their doubts too. The pilot study included 30 respondents and based on it the final questionnaire was altered, taking into account the practical difficulties of respondents in filling it. However, the contents were retained as per the suggestions given by the experts.

3.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There are a few critical limitations to the study. To begin with, keeping in view the demographic growth of the women population in the country, the sample size could have been large. But, the time and resource constraints restricted the sample size to just 1,108. However, an honest initiative was done by the researcher to make sure that the minimum samples, required to derive statistically valid inferences, were obtained. Next, the number of the focus groups could have been still more, say at least 15-20 focus groups of 10 each. However, due to several constraints more focus groups were not possible.

Also, the researcher feels that the operationalisation of several variables such as interpersonal trust, locus of control, mean world syndrome, gender-issues affinity and non-conventional political activity could have been more in-depth including several variables as per the scales suggested by the scholars. But, to keep the questionnaire crisp and short, a simple questionnaire was adopted. For instance, the variable locus of control is a 13-item
questionnaire, which Rotter used. Similarly, the interpersonal trust scale mentions at least 20 -25 items as means of measurement. The GSS includes several questions to measure the level of mean world syndrome among women. With regard to gender-issue affinity and non-conventional political activity, only six and seven items were included in the survey, taking into account the major issues.