

Article

Impact of Voter Gender, Background and Exposure on Voting Behaviour of Pakistani Citizen

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to investigate the impact of voter gender, background and exposure on the voting behavior of Pakistani citizens. A purposive sample consisting of 115 participants with a distribution of 58 men and 57 women were conveniently drawn from Lahore and Jahanian respectively. Voting behavior was measured by Decision to Vote Scale (Muhammad & Hasan, 2016). Factorial ANOVA was applied to determine the effect of voter gender, voter background and voting exposure on voting behavior of Pakistani citizens. Findings indicated that rural and urban voters differ significantly in terms of their voting behavior. Furthermore, analysis on subscales indicated that voters with rural background are more likely to make voting decisions rationally, moreover, consider the personal identity of the candidate and the fulfillment of their own motives as compared to voters with urban background. However, men and women, newly and previously registered voters did not differ in terms of their voting behavior. This research has wide implications for the politicians and voters to gain an insight about the factors which influence the voting decision of the Pakistani citizens.

KEYWORDS: *Pakistani Voters, Voting Behavior, Rural and Urban Voters, Gender, Newly and Previous Voters*

Introduction

Understanding why people cast vote is essential to gain insight about the factors which influence the citizens voting decision. Democracy offers an opportunity to the individuals to become active citizens. Citizens voting behavior uncovers the will of the people (Jost, 2006). Individuals who are above 18 years of age, have their identity cards and registered with Pakistan's election commission are eligible to vote (Ecp.gov.pk, 2011).

Voting is defined as “a fundamental right of almost all citizens over the age of eighteen. It ensures that will of the people is preserved”(HRCP, 2008, p.144). Voting

reflects an individual's choice for a particular candidate or candidates in addition to his choice for one specific political structure (Balis, Elizabeth & Neil, 2004).

Voting is a distinctive activity which shapes the basis of civic rights and political equality in our culture. At the pinnacle of power in democratic societies, would be prime ministers and presidents devote much of their lives in pursuit of office, spending time and money to win the support of the voting public (Evans, 2004). Voting is clearly a choice, but is it a choice like any other? Definitely in terms of the drives which motivate the person's electoral preference are very much similar to other preferences we make in our everyday lives. Edlin, Gelman and Kaplan (2007) postulates that if we separate the rationality from the selfish concerns of the voters then we can assume that voting is a rational process where the voters determine their voting preferences for a particular candidate while keeping in view the common good and the social utility of the candidate.

Voters have set criteria to satisfy their wish of choice. However, while looking at voting choice, the different theories also tried to find criteria which best ensures the larger number of voters as many as possible, or they attempted to find characteristics of voters which indicate that they are likely to share similar desires and have consequently similar voting choices (Evans, 2004). A number of candidates and parties present their products, the political programs for the government and voters pick up amongst these, 'paying' their vote to the party offering the product which best satisfies the voters' criteria. The first thing to notice about voting is that it contributes to a collective outcome, rather than affecting us simply as individuals. In voting, however, we are far from certain about getting what we want. We may vote for a candidate, but if a majority of other voters choose a different candidate, then an attempt to buy my candidate's 'product' fails (Evans, 2004).

Michigan socio-psychological model presented by Campbell, Converse and Stokes (1960) postulates a voting equation which describes voting behavior as an outcome of socialization process which psychologically predisposes a person towards a particular political party. This predisposition towards a specific political party involves the voter's attitude towards the candidates, attitude towards party policies, the manifesto of the party and the impact of the political party in terms of the group benefits such as the effect of the party on the ethnic, social and religious groups. So we can say that the voting behavior is influenced by the personality of the party candidate, party manifesto and the impact of the party.

There are many factors regarding voter gender, background and voting exposure which influence the voting decision. Generally two viewpoints exist regarding voting decision of women in Pakistan. It has been indicated by the past literature that women cast their vote to PPP than PML for the reason that the PPP had a woman leader. Woman leaders are perceived to be more inclined to take care of the rights of women. Secondly, it is believed that in Pakistan the male family heads play a dominant role in

deciding about whom and to which political party their female family members will cast the vote so women in Pakistan do not exercise their own will in casting the vote. However, these observations have not been supported in 1988 and in 1993 elections where women casted more votes to PML/ANP and less votes to PPP than men. This shows that women take interest in the politics of the country and exercise their own will in casting vote in elections (Wilder, 1999).

Previous literature throws light on the impact of gender of candidate on the voting behavior. The results of the two Punjab constituencies in 1993 elections where women competitive candidate's won seats showed that candidate's gender is less likely to influence the voting decision of male and female voters. On the contrary in Vehari city of Punjab, the combined total of 15,863 voters casted votes on 20 polling stations which were set apart by gender. 65.8 % of women voters voted for PML (N) female candidate compared to 61.6% of men voters on these polling stations. The male candidate of PPP received 30% of women votes and 33.1% of men votes (Wilder, 1999). Few studies indicate that previous voters opinion influence the newly registered voting behavior (Ali, 2011).

It is widely believed that voting decision in rural areas, particularly in Punjab, is determined by more psychological and social than political factors. Faction, biradari (clan), and traditional group loyalties of family, are considered to be manipulating factors in voting decisions to a larger level than other modern factors such as patronage and party loyalty (Wilder, 1999).

Article entitled "Biradiris in Punjab Elections" by Wright in 1993 unveiled that the biradari has a greater influence on voting decision except in cases where the candidates are from the same biradari and family (Jr, 1991). The value of biradari is noticeable when political parties choose candidates for provincial and national assemblies and similarly when political parties have to select candidates to give party tickets. The result of this research also highlighted that the popular observation of the significance of biradari in determining the voting decision is exaggerated. As the case study of the voting decision in Lahore depicted, party loyalty was much more vital factor than the biradari (Wilder, 1999).

Identification with the political party is given more value in urban areas than in rural areas voters. To a larger extent votes are cast to land owners or tribal leaders who contest in elections rather than for political parties, that is why western Punjab is the only region where independent candidates have survived. In rural areas, the choice of candidates is given more importance whereas in urban areas voting decision is influenced by the candidates' identification with a political party (Wilder, 1999).

Political parties critically evaluate the weaknesses and strengths of candidates who want the party tickets. The candidates' strengths are their biradaris, their affluence to spend money on their political campaigns, records of patronage and factional support. It is

difficult to determine what percentage of votes are given to political party, what percentage of candidates' votes are their own or caste based or are casted due to other factors, such as factional support etc. Candidates who participate in elections as independent contestants are nowadays battling tougher than previously to get main political parties tickets as political parties need to choose powerful candidates to be successful in rural areas, and on the other hand the candidates also need to get the ticket of strong political parties (Wilder, 1999).

Party identification was noticeably the major determinant of voting decision in urban constituencies. However, in rural areas of Punjab, there were a lot of other factors such as faction, kinship involved in decisions of voters to cast their votes in the election (Wilder, 1999).

No doubt, these social determinants are vital particularly in western Punjab Pakistan, voting decision is more and more being manipulated by voter's interests than the local problems such as the need for a school, road, assistance in thana-katchehri (police station and courthouse) affairs, establishing health units or providing telephone, natural gas connection in their house, or electricity, transfer or promotions at work place or for a job. A growing number of voters cast vote for candidates who intend to introduce development schemes in their constituencies and had strong records of addressing the local concerns (Wilder, 1999).

The numerous candidates stated on remarkable increase in the amount of money spent on election campaigns. As one PML (N) MNA candidate pointed out

“The additional thing which plays a significant part is money. This is a very critical thing-a magic wand. If you can't distribute anything and there are no development funds, then you give money to those people for pocket votes. One person may have 100 votes, somebody has 200, and I may have 20,000. And they are paid accordingly. In other words the trend picked up of selling votes... this is what practically happens in my constituency” (Malhi, 1994, p 151).

A number of candidates revealed that poor voters sell their votes. Voters expect to be served food on election day even if they do not expect money for casting vote. Even if voters don't demand money, they expect food and to be provided transport on Election Day. If transport facility is not provided voters with rural background refuse to visit the polling stations. As one PML (N) MNA candidate described, “it is increasingly becoming the case that the candidate with the most vehicles secures the most votes” (Wilder, 1999).

An indigenous study carried out by Muhammad (2013) investigated the psychosocial factors which influence the voting behavior of men and women. This study uncovered that personal and political profile of a candidate, his affiliation with a particular political party, previous service record to the community affects the voting decision.

Rationale:

Voting behavior is complex interplay of cultural, psychological, political and social factors in Pakistan. There is limited research conducted in the field of political psychology in Pakistan especially to understand the complex phenomenon of voting behavior. Among these, voter **gender**, **voter background**, and **voting exposure** are relevant and determinant variables that notably influence the voting behavior and electoral process in Pakistan. Understanding their impact is vital for promoting democratic practices and improving political participation across diverse segments of Pakistani society.

Objectives:

1. To investigate gender differences in terms of voting behavior.
2. To investigate whether voters with rural and urban background differ in their voting behavior.
3. To investigate the differences in the voting behavior of newly registered and previously registered voters.
4. To explore the relationship among voter's gender, background, exposure and voting decision.

Hypotheses:

Keeping in view the previous literature the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. There would be significant gender differences in voting behavior.
2. Voters with rural and urban areas would differ in their voting behavior.
3. Newly and previously registered voters differ in terms of their voting behavior.
4. Voting decision would be significantly related with voter's gender, background, and exposure.

Method

Sample

A purposive sample consisting of 115 participants with a distribution of 58 men and 57 women was conveniently drawn from Lahore (urban) and Jahanian (rural). The 54 participants were from urban and 61 participants with rural background of Punjab having an age from 18 to 65 years.

Inclusion Criteria: Data was drawn from only those participants who fulfilled the inclusion criteria of the research. Participants who were above 18 years of age, they had their identity cards and they were registered in election commission of Pakistan were included.

Exclusion Criteria: The voters who were not registered in election commission of Pakistan and participants who were below 18 years of age and the voters who had not identity cards are excluded from the study.

Instrument:

Decision to Vote Scale (DVS), developed by Muhammad and Hasan (2016) provides an excellent multidimensional assessment of psychosocial factors involved in the vote decision for the general adult population. This scale has 23 items which consists of five subscales. The responses are taken on four point likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The internal consistency of DVS is .78. The reliabilities of subscales which include Reasons to Vote = .86, Political Identity of Candidate = .63, Personal Identity of Candidate = .61, Voter Motive = .69 and Voter Perception = .50.

Procedure

Before data collection the researcher contacted the participants and obtained their consent for participation. The researcher explained the objective of the study to the participants. Participants who were above 18 years of age, had their identity cards and were registered in election commission of Pakistan were included. Voter's lists were taken from election commission of Pakistan for the data collection for this study. Data was drawn from Lahore and Jahanian. Decision to vote scale was administered to the participants to measure their voting behavior. The confidentiality and anonymity of the information was ensured.

Results

This study was conducted to measure the impact of gender, place and their exposure of voting on voting behavior. To measure the differences in the voting behavior in terms of voter gender, place and exposure Factorial Anova was computed. Furthermore, Pearson Product Moment correlation was carried out to explore the relationship of voting behavior with voter's gender, background and exposure. t-test for independent samples was applied to determine the differences between urban and rural voters' in terms of reason to vote, political, personal identity of a candidate, voter 's motive and perception.

Table 1

Reliability Analysis of Decision to vote scale and sub scales

Sub Scales/Scales	<i>K</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>Range-Potential</i>	<i>Skewness</i>
Reason to Vote (Sub Scale)	6	22.03	2.89	.86	1-4	-.20
Political Identity of Candidate (Sub Scale)	5	13.10	3.05	.63	1-4	.18

Personal Identity of Candidate (Sub Scale)	4	8.32	2.77	.61	1-4	.60
Voter Motive (Sub Scale)	4	7.05	2.52	.69	1-4	.67
Voter Perception (Sub Scale)	4	13.19	1.99	.50	1-4	-.42
Decision to Vote Scale (DVS)	23	63.70	8.29	.78	1-4	.40

Table 1 shows that overall reliability index of DVS and subscales ranging from .86 to .50.

Table 2

Correlation Matrix among Voter Gender, Background, Exposure and Voting Decision

Variables	I	II	III	IV
I Voting Decision	-	-.10	.30**	.12
II Voter Gender		-	-.07	-.15
III Voter Background			-	.50**
IV Voting Exposure				-

$p=ns$, ** $p<.01$

Table 2 shows that there is a non significant relationship between voting decision and voter's gender ($r = -.10$, $p=ns$). Results reveal that voting decision has a positive significant relationship with voter's background ($r = .30$, $p<.01$). Results also reveal that voting decision has no significant relationship with voter's exposure ($r = .12$, $p=ns$) and voter's gender whereas voter's gender has a non significant relationship with voter's background ($r = -.07$, $p=ns$) and with voter's exposure ($r = -.15$, $p=ns$). Results demonstrate that voter's background has moderate positive significant relationship with voter's exposure ($r = .50$, $p<.01$)

Table 3

Means and standard deviations of voter gender, background and exposure on voting behavior (N = 115)

Gender	Place	Voter	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>N</i>
Men	Urban	first time	61.26(4.79)	19
		more time	60.67(7.03)	6
		Total	61.12(5.25)	25
	Rural	first time	68.00(11.23)	12
		more time	66.62(9.34)	21
		Total	67.12(9.908)	33
Women	Urban	first time	60.93(9.10)	27
		more time	63.50(.71)	2

Rural	Total	61.10 (9.08)	29
	first time	65.00(6.52)	12
	more time	64.38(5.67)	16
	Total	64.64(5.94)	28

Table 3 indicates the descriptive statistics of sample on voter s gender, background and exposure on voting behavior.

Table 4 Two way *ANOVA* for voter gender, background and exposure in term of voting behavior ($N = 115$)

<i>Sources of variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>n²</i>
Gender	7.309	1	7.30	.111	.739	.001
Place	301.14	1	301.1	4.58*	.035	.041
Voter	.001	1	.001	.000	.997	.001
Exposure						
Gender x	57.10	1	57.9	.882	.350	.008
Place						
Gender x	14.92	1	14.9	.227	.635	.002
Voter						
Exposure						
Place	15.4	1	15.4	.234	.630	.002
xVoter						
Exposure						
Gender x	5.64	1	5.64	.086	.770	.001
Place x						
Voter						
Exposure						
Error	7034.0	107	65.739			

* $p < .05$, $p = ns$.

Results revealed that men and women did not differ significantly on voting behavior, $F(1) = .111$, $p = ns$. Table 4 indicated that urban and rural voters differ significantly on voting behavior, $F(1) = 4.58$, $p < .05$. Data also indicated that newly and previously registered voters did not differ on voting behavior, $F(1) = .000$, $p = ns$. Results also revealed no significant interaction between gender, place and voter in term of voting behavior.

Table 5

Independent Sample t-test on Sub Scales of Decision to Vote Scale in term of Voters Backgrounds (N = 115)

	Urban (<i>n</i> = 54) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Rural (<i>n</i> = 61) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)		CI LL -UL	Cohen 's <i>d</i>	Effect Size
Background			<i>t</i>			
Variables						
Reason to Vote	21.33(3.39)	22.66(2.20)	2.5**	-2.4 -.27	0.47	Medium
Political Identity of Candidate	12.63(2.50)	13.51(3.43)	1.5	-2.0 -.24	0.29	Small
Personal Identity of Candidate	7.74(2.35)	8.84(3.01)	2.1*	-2.1 -.08	0.41	Medium
Voter Motive	6.56(2.05)	7.49(2.82)	2.0*	-1.8 -.02	0.37	Medium
Voter Perception	12.85(2.01)	13.49(1.93)	1.7	-1.4- .09	0.32	Small
Voting Decision	61.11(7.48)	65.98(8.35)	3.2***	-7.8- -1.9	0.61	Large

df=113, *p*=ns, **p*<.05, ***p*<.01, ****p*<.001

Results revealed that urban voters and rural background voters differ significantly on reason to vote, $t(113) = -2.5, p < .01$. Table 5 showed that urban voters and rural voters did not differ significantly on political identity of candidate, $t(113) = -1.5, p = \text{ns}$. Results also depicted that urban voters and rural voters differ significantly on personal identity of candidate, $t(113) = -2.1, p < .05$ as well as on voter motive, $t(113) = -2.0, p < .05$. Table 5 demonstrated that urban voters and rural voters did not differ significantly on voter perception, $t(113) = -1.7, p = \text{ns}$.

Discussion

This study was designed to compare voting behavior behavior in terms of gender, place and voter's experience. The results of the study indicated that no gender differences in terms of voting behavior. One of the reasons for this finding may be that men and women are equally interested in their vote decisions. The effect of gender on voting decision has changed dramatically over the years. Now in Pakistan, women have high sense of efficacy and political interest than in the past decades (Wilder, 1999).

Voters in urban and rural areas differ significantly in terms of voting behavior. The reasons for this finding may be that different factors are involved in voting behavior of urban and rural voters in Pakistan. It is widely believed that voting decision in rural areas, particularly in Punjab Pakistan, is determined by more psychological and social than political factors. The findings also support that faction, biradari (clan), and traditional group loyalties of family, are considered to be manipulating factors in voting behavior and voting decisions to a larger level than other modern factors such as patronage and party loyalty (Wilder, 1999). In rural areas the choice of the candidate is more valued whereas in urban areas the identification with the political party exerts a greater influence on the voting decision. Political Parties while selecting candidates to give party tickets critically evaluate their strengths and weaknesses. Their strengths include their race, material affluence, previous services and factional support.

(Wilder,1999). Party identification exerts a great influence on voting decision in urban constituencies. However, in rural areas of Punjab, there were many other factors involved in decisions of voters to cast their votes in the election.

The study also came up with the interesting findings which indicated that voters with rural background give more importance to the personal profile of the candidate and to their own expectation with a particular candidate to fulfill their desires. On the basis of the findings we can infer that voters with rural background do cost benefit analysis while making vote decision. They rationally make a decision and take into consideration the personal profile which includes the race, gender, religion and the socioeconomic status of the candidate. Moreover they take into consideration the previous services rendered by the candidate to meet the demands and needs of the voters. The findings also partially support the Michigan socio-psychological model (1960) in case of voting decision of the voters with rural background as they take into consideration their attitude towards candidate and to what extent he can fulfill their demands. Furthermore, findings also showed that voting decision is positively related with the voter's background which means voters' rural and urban background affects the voting decision.

Findings of the study indicated that newly and previous registered voters did not differ in their voting behavior. The reason of this result may be that in Pakistan; most of the young voters are guided and instructed by the older voters and elders (Ali, 2011).

Conclusion

The study enables us to conclude that nowadays both men and women value voting behavior. Voters with rural and urban backgrounds differ in voting behavior as voters from rural areas value the personal profile and services rendered by the political candidate in the previous years while deciding whom to vote. The study reveals that newly registered and previous voters do not differ significantly in terms of vote decision. This finding shows that youngest voters are influenced by older ones voting behavior.

Limitations

The sample of the study is restricted to two cities of the Punjab. Furthermore, the phenomenon of voting behavior was studied quantitatively. Future studies can be carried out to explore the phenomenon of vote decision with larger sample from Pakistani culture.

Implications of Study:

It will be beneficial for political psychologists. It will be beneficial for politicians and political parties. It can be helpful in developing the awareness of the

importance of the vote in the society. It will be beneficial for voters to understand the underlying factors which influence their own decision making to vote.

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