JDSS Journal of Development and Social Sciences
www.jdss.org.pk

Impact of Political Culture on Voting Behavior in Pakistan: A Case Study of Punjab in General Elections of 2018

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ABSTRACT

Pakistan's political landscape is characterized by a diverse and dynamic political culture, which plays a significant role in determining the voting preferences of its citizens. This research article investigates the role of political culture and its impact on voting behavior in Pakistan, with a specific focus on the province of Punjab during the General Elections of 2018. The purpose of this research is to investigate political culture within the context of electoral politics. The research will analyze the behavior of the people to understand the impact of their socio-demographic determinants such as how digital empowerment and education, religiosity and gender. This study utilizes qualitative research methods to analyze the extent to which the political culture in Punjab influenced the voting patterns in the 2018 General Elections. The results of this study provide insights into the dynamics of election choices in Pakistan and illuminate the complex link between political culture and voting behavior. Integrity, knowledge, tenacity, and vision are among the qualities that must be embraced in order to change Pakistan's political culture from one that is mostly passive and cognitive to one that is more active and evaluative.

| **KEYWORDS** | Political Culture, Punjab, Digital Empowerment, Gender, Religiosity |

Introduction

Political culture of a state encompasses the attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors of its citizens in the context of politics. Political culture is an important instrument for determining whether a political system succeeds or fails. Understanding the influence of political culture on voting behavior is essential for comprehending the electoral dynamics in a democracy. In the current world, democracy is mostly acknowledged as the norm. The public's involvement in political decision-making is the fundamental tenet of democracy, and voting is the most significant political action. As a result, the political culture directly affects the political system and is linked to the authoritative distribution of power and values.

Pakistan is a country marked by its complex political landscape. Each province in Pakistan has a unique historical context that has contributed to its distinct political culture. For instance, Punjab's history is marked by its prominent role in the pre-Partition era, while Sindh has a rich historical heritage that influences its politics. Balochistan, with its history of insurgency and ethnic diversity, presents a different historical backdrop. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has its unique historical factors, shaped by tribal traditions and religious affiliations.

Punjab is not only the most populous but also a political powerhouse. It has a rich and complex history that has influenced its political culture. The region's legacy of agricultural prominence, socio-economic disparities, and ethno-linguistic diversity has contributed to the formation of a distinctive political identity. Feudal, tribal, and ultra-conservative traits are reflected in it. Punjab's political landscape is dominated by business, religious leaders, patriarchy, and feudalism. It is impossible to change the political culture of Punjab unless the

people who are in positions of authority adopt a different perspective. (Ahmar, 1996) However, recently it is observed that the attention toward new ideas about politics in Pakistan, and Punjab specifically has changed the voting behavior from parochial to subject patterns.

Punjab was in a favorable position in the general elections of 2018 due to better infrastructure than other provinces. It mobilized the masses in a relatively autonomous socio-economic system. However, the electoral behaviour was more or less the same in Punjab as in other provinces with slight variations in the level of mobilization and election activities. It resulted, the high turnout in Punjab than in other provinces of Pakistan.

Therefore, analyzing the impact of political culture on voting behavior in Punjab during the 2018 is significant to study. The study evaluates the role of various socio-demographic factors that influence the political orientations of the voters in general election 2018 in Punjab.

Political Culture

The set of values, beliefs, and attitudes in a political system operates is called political culture. This reflects the fact that how people see political system on the whole and have faith in its legitimacy. The political attitudes and orientations of individuals towards political issues and the political system are reflected in their participation or political ability.

Political culture is a set of attitudes, values, and orientations toward political objects in a political system. Political objects in Pakistan can be defined as political parties, different types of elites (e.g. political professionals, religious leaders, financiers, military, bureaucratic), autonomous groups, socio-economic classes, and political institutions. Political culture, according to Gabriel Almond, is "the underlying tendencies – attitudes, attitudes, attitudes, values, abilities and psychological aspects of the system – that shape political preferences. (Almond, 1996). Vidya Bhushan has expressed the words of Dennis Kavanagh to define the political culture as it is made up of the attitude, beliefs, emotions and values of a society. (Bhushan, 2006). Thus political culture is characterized by sharing of beliefs, symbols, values and practices that shape the political behavior within a particular society. It reflects the way people in a given society view and interact with the political system, government, and each other in a political context. Political culture influences the way individuals understand and participate in politics, as well as their expectations of the government and its role in society.

Literature Review

Wilder examines Pakistan's electoral history with a particular focus on the factors that influence the voting behaviour in the general elections in Punjab province. The author examines social determinants like feudalism, tribe and family affiliation and group or clan factors. His research findings showed that the patron-client relationship (or clientelism) is more prevalent in the rural areas of Punjab. On the other hand, the urban voters are more open to party identification. (Wilder, 1999). Religion is one of the most influential factors in shaping and influencing the political and electoral outlook in Pakistan, particularly in Punjab. After investigation, it was found that religious votes increased in the province during the general election 2018. According to the authors, religious votes in Pakistan increased by 2.17% and in the Punjab province by 1.32%. The increase in religious votes was attributed to a number of factors, including the rise of TLP, Milli Muslim League, and the political wing of Jamat ul-Al-Dawa. The authors further claim that the growing influence of the successors of the Sufi orders, Gaddi nasheen, is one of the main reasons that led to the increase in religious votes. These pirs and their successors mobilized the voters and supported candidates who followed their religious beliefs. (Khalid & Bashir, 2019). According to Huckfeldt & Sprague, people were more likely to prepare for and participate in political events and to express their identity online or offline in political debates. The debates based on the exchange of data as well as the interpretive systems which help to process that data by allowing people to consider factors, counterarguments, debates on the micro level and macro level to get data discussions are a rich source of political information. It remains to be seen what specific exercises of dialogue

through public sphere may lead to political support. (Huckfeldt, Beck, Dalton, & Levine, 1995) Ishtiaq Ahmad and Muhammad Ishaq analyzed the importance of the party manifestos in the campaign strategy of 2013 election. In Lahore, one of the most educated urban areas of Pakistan, 52% respondents in Lahore did not even know what the party manifestos were about. Even though Lahore is among the most educated cities of Punjab. Instead of manifestos, reprimanding rivals is a viable activity in the political contest. (Ahmad & Ishaq, 2018)

In-depth academic research on role of socio-demographic determinants that impact political culture and voting behavior in Pakistan is also widely lacking There are only a few articles on this topic but with limited scope. The research gap was found in this field, especially during the general elections in 2018. To fill the gap, an in-depth study needs to be conducted to understand the impact of education and digital empowerment, gender, and religion on electoral behaviour in Punjab.

Material and Methods

The aim of the research is to determine the effects of socio-demographic characteristics i.e. education and digital empowerment, gender and religiosity on the voting behavior of voters of Punjab in National Elections of 2018. The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of political culture in a democratic political system. The research will analyze the behavior of the people to understand the impact of their socio-demographic norms. It will also analyze how digital empowerment and education, religiosity and gender impacted/ not impacted the patterns of political culture of Punjab in general elections 2018.

Material and Methods

This study is primarily an exploratory and descriptive. The qualitative data analysis allows for a nuanced exploration of the complex interplay of socio-demographic norms influencing voter's choices in general elections 2018. To explore the relationship between political culture and voting behavior in the specific context of Punjab during the 2018 General Elections the study analyzes the secondary sources, such as existing literature i.e. books, articles and statistics. These are examined to study the deeper comprehension of the dynamics of electoral behavior in Pakistan in general elections 2018.

Theoretical Framework

Almond and Verba discussed the various types of political culture and individual's orientations. They argue that the structure of individual positions and orientations is composed of several elements, which are as follows:

Cognitive Orientation; Cognitive orientation describes people's understanding about political knowledge and beliefs. It requires knowledge of the functioning of the political system as well as knowledge of political subjects. Therefore, an individual can have a high level of precise knowledge about how the political system operates, who are the top leaders and what issues the country is facing.

Affective Orientation: It is subjective thoughts of individual's attachment or alienation to the political system. By combining affective orientation with cognitive orientation it describes how people feel about their political system emotionally. It refers to the level of criteria with which people evaluate their political system.

Evaluative Orientation: The shared attitudes, values, and beliefs that influence people's opinions about political system are referred as the evaluative orientations of political culture that shape individuals' judgments about political issues. These orientations can include factors like political efficacy, trust in government, and ideological preferences, influencing how people engage with and assess the political system

These three orientations are found in different combinations in the human psyche and are closely related to each other. (Almond, 1996)

Case Study of Punjab

Punjab is the second largest province of Pakistan in terms of area and the largest in population. The province is analyzed by classifying it in three regions i.e. North Punjab, Central Punjab and South Punjab.It become battleground in general elections 2018. Punjab was one of the most important provinces to ensure that political parties could contest and win the election. With 141 seats among the total 272 seats in the National Assembly, the PMLN and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in particular could not let this opportunity slip away. The PTI secured 67 seats, whereas the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) secured 64 seats. The Pakistan People's Party (PTI) won 16 seats from 33 reserved seats and 15 seats from Punjab.

Voters who are younger and more educated are comparatively more concentrated in Punjab's metropolitan regions. PTI's theme of social and economic advancement resonated with urban youth who were looking for better chances and higher quality of life. As a result, PTI was preferred among Northern Punjab's urban middle class. The PTI's election campaign emphasized stability, economic progress, and clean administration, all of which this socio-demographic category frequently craves. Many people, especially those from middle-class backgrounds, supported PTI because they believed the party was dedicated to eliminating corruption because of the perceived corruption of the current administration. In Northern Punjab, the gender dynamic was changing as more women started taking part in the political process. Female voters found PTI's dedication to women's rights and empowerment appealing. PTI's focus on youth empowerment through programs like the "Kamyab Jawan" (Successful Youth) initiative was well-received by young voters, many of whom were looking for opportunities to start businesses or find employment. Its promise of a new Pakistan attracted a substantial youth vote.

PML-N secured 50 seats out of 82 in Central Punjab. Given the sympathy factor, the party's base in this region remained largely intact. Sharif's conviction in the Panama case worked in his favour. The party did not split and there were no significant defections from it in this area. However, PTI gained 27 seats and its unofficial ally PML-Q won two seats.

South Punjab was the key to the electoral game. The 11 districts in South Punjab accounted for 31 percent of Punjab's native population. After the 2017 Census, South Punjab gained three seats in the National Assembly and 94 seats in the Punjab Assembly. The formation or dissolution of the government hinged on the 46 seats of the National Assembly and the 94 seats of the Punjab Assembly. In the 2018 election, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) won 26 seats in South Punjab, including one held by the Pakistan Muslim League (Q). The Pakistan Muslim League (N) won 11 seats in South Punjab. The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) won 4 seats from this area, but the party's typical feudal electables got each seat. The fact that PPP managed to pick up a few seats in Punjab in 2018 has kept its hopes alive for a revival in this province. (Yusuf, 2018)

Impact of Socio-Demographic Factors in the General Elections of 2018

The contribution of the social demographic traits on voting behavior such as education and digital empowerment, gender and religiosity are central focus of the study.

Education and Digital empowerment

Education is one of the key factors influencing the voting behaviour. Informal political education is gained through engaging in political debates, watching political talk shows on television, using social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, participating in election campaigns and political gatherings, etc.Pakistan has a significant youth population,

and social media was a primary tool for engaging and mobilizing young voters in general eletions 2018. Youth-oriented content, such as videos, memes, and hashtags, became popular on platforms like Twitter, helping to energize and activate the younger demographic. 2018 election saw a surge involvement of youth in politicsThey also used social media platforms to share political views and talk about political issues with friends and neighbors. (Arshad Ali., 2014)

General Elections 2018 are remarkable in this sense also that all political parties made ample use of social media for their campaigns, which resulted in a notable change in the dynamics of politics in Pakistan. Pakistan has a population of 44,61 million people who use the Internet. Of these, 37 million people are considered to be active social media users. Of these, 36 million people are using Facebook, 6,30 million people are using Instagram, 1,26 million people are using Twitter, 2,15 million people are using Snapchat, 5,10 million people are using linkedIn, and 41% of people are between the ages of 18 and 24, and 36% of people between the ages of 25 and 34 are using social media. It show the vast majority of people who use social media and the internet are young people in Pakistan. (Kemp, 2019)

General elections 2018 were referred to as social media electionsFor the 2018 General Elections, three well-known political parties—PTI, PML-N, and PPP—launched distinctive social media election campaigns after discovering the value and applicability of these platforms. By using social media, PTI was able to rely less on conventional media sources. Through these avenues of direct public engagement, the party reduced the power of mainstream media, which would have been less favorable to its cause.

They encouraged political behavior beyond just voting. Social media campaigns prompted supporters to attend rallies, volunteer, and actively campaign for PTI candidates, fostering a more active political culture. Its social media efforts helped build party identification and loyalty. By regularly engaging with supporters, the party fostered a sense of belonging and allegiance among its online community. Their social media strategy led to the creation of online communities of supporters who shared common values and beliefs. PTI frequently live-streamed campaign rallies, press conferences, and speeches on platforms like Facebook and Twitter. These live streams allowed for real-time interaction with supporters and potential voters. They also reached a global audience, including Pakistanis living abroad.

There are 44.61 million internet users in Pakistan. In addition, unlike PTI, the PML-N and the Pakistan People's Party used social media platforms. In the 2018 General Elections, PTI was able to retain its electoral mandate in Punjab and emerged as the largest party in the province.

Gender

Punjab is a patriarchal society. Women do not play a prominent role in politics. They are not allowed to vote in Punjab. The candidates and the political parties in rural areas sign an agreement that women will not be allowed to vote in the election. This means that a large part of the society will be kept away from the polling stations during the election. This lack of women in politics had a huge impact on the turnout ratio of the election in Punjab in 2018. In the 2018 general elections the gap between male and female voter stood at 9.1 percent with 11 million fewer women exercising their right to vote than men in 2018 general election. The reason for the gender gap in electoral participation is usually attributed to communal taboos in rural areas, while urban elites and politicians are rarely seen suppressing women's participation..

Looking at turnout data from 2018, there is a much higher gap in the largest metropolitan cities compared to each province's remaining constituencies. The difference between the largest metropolitn city and the rest of the province is highest in Punjab, with the gender gap in turnout in Lahore being double (12.5%) than in the rest of the province (6.3%).

Unfortunately, of Pakistan's 46 million registered voters, only about 40 percent took part in the 2018 election. Women face many challenges in terms of political participation, not only in terms of social norms (i.e., traditional beliefs about women's role in society) but also in terms of bureaucracy (i.e. inability to obtain national identity cards (CNIC) that provide women with an official record in the system). Women's low interest in politics is inextricably tied to their low political literacy, and this in turn is significantly tied with the low amount of interaction between political parties and female voters. The gendered structure of political party mobilization—which usually depends on males to rally the women in their households—is the reason for the low level of interaction between women and political parties. One major aspect of women's disengagement from politics in urban areas is political parties' inability to expand their base of female leaders and workers. (Cheema, Khan, Shandana, Kuraishi, & Liaqat, 2019)

Religiosity

Islam has always played a crucial role in the history of Pakistan, which prides itself on being one of the rare states that were born in the name of Islam. The social and political life of Pakistanis has been shaped by the religious teachings. The role of religion in politics has been significant since the country's inception in 1947. The nation was founded as a homeland for Muslims, and its Islamic principles have shaped the political landscape. The Constitution of Pakistan declares Islam as the state religion, influencing legislative and policy decisions. Various political parties leverage religious sentiments to mobilize support, and issues related to blasphemy laws, Islamic jurisprudence, and religious minorities often become focal points in political discourse. The intertwine of religion and politics in Pakistan has both positive and challenging aspects, with ongoing debates about the extent to which religious ideologies should influence governance and legislation. This dynamic relationship continues to evolve, impacting the country's political, social, and cultural fabric.

During the 2018 general elections in Pakistan, political parties were observed manipulating religion to achieve their political objectives in various ways. Some parties strategically aligned themselves with religious groups or leaders to garner support, emphasizing their commitment to Islamic values. This often involved making promises related to the protection of religious norms and institutions. Additionally, parties raised issues such as blasphemy laws and the defense of Islamic principles to appeal to conservative voters. The use of religious rhetoric and symbols, especially during election campaigns, became a common strategy to connect with voters on a deeply ingrained cultural and religious level. However, critics argue that such manipulations can polarize society and divert attention from critical socioeconomic issues. The interplay between politics and religion in the 2018 elections underscored the complex dynamics within Pakistan's political landscape.

All societal groups are becoming more religious, but this trend is most noticeable in Punjab's 2018 general elections. Compared to 2013, when religious parties garnered under 5% of the total votes cast, there has been a notable rise. On the basis of the total votes cast across the country, TLP was declared as the 5th largest political party. The party was born out of the protests that followed the death of Mumtaz Ali Qadri in 2011, a year after he shot and killed a provincial governor in Pakistan's Punjab province. By extolling Qadri's virtues, the TLP gained a large following and eventually overtook the JUI-F and Jamaat-e-Islami to become Pakistan's largest religious political party. (Khalid & Bashir, 2019)

TLP proved to cause a major loss in PML-N vote bank due to its sudden popularity, as it targeted PML-N(the previous ruling party) the most. According to a Gallup survey, 46 percent of TLP voters in 2018 said they had voted for the PMLN in the previous year. The survey also showed that between 2013 and the 2018 general election, the PMLN lost 9 percent of its national vote bank from this category, with 3 to 4 percent going to TLP and not PTI. (Gallup Pakistan Exit Poll , 31 July 2018.) In Punjab, TLP overtook the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in terms of votes. TLP became the 3rd largest party in Punjab, with 4 out of every 5 votes polled for TLP coming from Punjab. On the other hand, 14 National

Assembly seats in Punjab saw a decrease in the votes of PML-N and an increase in the votes of TLP compared to the difference between where PML-N lost and where TLP got more votes than where the difference between the votes of the returned candidates and the votes of the runners up resulted in a margin of less than the votes obtained by TLP in these seats. (Chaudhary, 2018)

In a region where voters prefer candidates over parties and focus on personal gains, it was difficult for a new religious party to garner support, especially when the party was lagging behind in terms of electoral strength, electables, organisational structure, and electoral experience in Punjab. Khadim Rizvi filled these voids with religious populism. He promised to implement the Prophet's system and mesmerized the nation with the poetry of Faizan-e-Mohammad Ali and Ahmadi-e-Raza Barelvi. Rizvi knew exactly who his target voters were, and his party Tehreek e Labbaik (TLP) guaranteed them the protection of prophethood and the blasphemy laws in Pakistan. No other party that contested the election in Punjab campaigned on a subsectarian basis (to this extent) on such a large scale. Some religio-political parties (JUI-F, JI) voters belonged to a specific sect, but their leadership did not emphasise the sectarian angle.

This gave rise to the TLP's popularity among the religious community, particularly in Punjab. Other religious parties did not take a position on the blasphemy issue. In the 2018 election, Pakistan's weak institutions and party system played a role in the survival of the TLP and its electoral campaign. TLP emerged as the third largest party in the Punjab and challenged the policies of mainstream political parties.

Results and Discussion

Following the general elections in 2018, the political culture has undergone a transformation, resulting in better-informed publics. The results of the general elections and the post-election voting patterns reveal certain trends to be studied. n the end, Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf emerged as the single-largest party, but it did not secure a majority in the lower house of the National Assembly. PML-N was the second-largest party, while the Pakistan People's Party emerged as the third-largest party, likely holding the power in the lower house. By enlisting the support of several independent candidates and minor parties such as PML-Q, Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) and Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), PTI managed to cross the halfway point and form the government without seeking the support of the PPP.

PTI's effective use of social media and on-the-ground campaigns mobilized a significant number of young and first-time voters. These voters were motivated to play a more active role in shaping the effective political behavior in Punjab. Its focus on accountability and anti-corruption resonated with voters. Citizens started to demand transparency and accountability from their political representatives. There was also a higher voter turnout compared to previous elections. This was indicative of a shift from passive cognitive orientations to a more active and engaged orientations.

In addition to becoming more effective in their political engagement, citizens and political actors in Pakistan also adopted evaluative orientations after the 2018 elections. This orientation involves critically assessing the performance of elected representatives, political parties, and government institutions. PTI government, which came to power after the 2018 elections, faced increased scrutiny from citizens, media, and opposition parties. People became more evaluative in assessing government policies and their impact on various sectors, such as the economy and social welfare. Citizens were more vocal in demanding accountability from elected officials. This included calls for transparency in government spending, investigations into corruption allegations, and holding those in power responsible for their actions. The political discourse in Pakistan became more evaluative and issue-focused. Citizens were no longer content with empty promises; they

demanded evidence of progress and development. Citizens and political activists, on the other hand, are now actively participating in the political process by using social media platforms to voice their political opinions. As a result of this culture of sharing, they also have access to online social media platforms to engage with the political process in the same way.

Conclusion

General elections 2018 in Pakistan brought about a shift in the country's political culture, moving from passive cognitive orientations to more active and evaluative orientations. Pakistan's political landscape was transformed beyond recognition. This transformation was driven by the rise of PTI, its focus on accountability and change, and the mobilization of previously disengaged segments of the population. By doing so, the PTI ended the 30-year-long power struggle between the Muslim League factions and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), which almost doubled its electoral strength between 2013 and 2018. The electorate's growing effectiveness and evaluative approach to politics reflect an evolving and more engaged political culture in Pakistan. This shift has the potential to foster greater accountability and transparency in the country's political system.

Last but not least, the need of the hour is to transform Pakistan's political culture. Education should be free and mandatory from primary level to high school level to reform the whole society and create better decision makers. It will instill values, skills, and knowledge which will change the mindsets of people and teach them about their political right. The future of Pakistan lies in the hands of the people in 2024 general elections. To change Pakistan's political culture, we need to adopt qualities such as honesty, wisdom, endurance and vision in order to move from passive thinking to active and evaluating thinking.

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