



Religion, Media and Elections: How Communication Channels' Affect Voters Belonging to Different Religions in Punjab, Pakistan?

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Abstract

The present study intends to develop an understanding regarding the differences between sons and daughters which exist at sociocultural level and the relevant Islamic teachings. It contends that most of the social practices are not a true representation of Islamic teachings. Religion, nevertheless, remains an integral part of almost every social system: it determines normative structures and their functioning. Exploring both the dimensions---social and religious---further enabled us to have a comprehensive understanding of gender conception. These are also helpful in dispelling the long existing misconceptions which have been leading to various objectionable and staunch practices. Most of the available literature and researches have been consulted to develop an in-depth knowledge regarding the female child, whether she is considered as a blessing or a curse. It is found that most of the social practices are in contradiction with the Islamic teachings. Flawed interpretations mislead masses and traditional mindsets are usually resistant to change. Islam emphasized on an unbiased stance for male and female conception, only will of God matters in this regard; however social attitudes are not found the same and deviates from Islamic guidelines in many ways.

Keywords: *Social construction, Islamic teachings, Daughters, Blessing, Curse.*

1. Introduction

Religion plays a substantial role in influencing people politically towards their vote decision. There are many factors like family, media and friends but the topmost



impact is listed as religious pressure on the public (Barna: Politics, 2016). One solid and firm indicator towards voting attitude is religion. Religion normally helps people to set a direction in election days for their voting casting decision. Different religious sectors have separate political affiliations because religious influence has a strong correlation with the decision to vote (Gibbs, 2004).

Religion has substantial influence in figuring every belief and political conduct of the people. Citizens have spiritual, emotional and political affiliations backed by religion, which ultimately affects the people at polls (Usman Bashir & Irum Khalid, 2018).

Although religious attendance in the holy institutes has declined in West but the holy beliefs still impact people in the electoral process. Religion is not the only factor which influences people at the poll (Raymond, 2011).

In any human society, political system and religious background are substantial to citizens' voting decision. Religion and politics are two very important aspects of human society anywhere in the world. While religion discourses the person's mind, body and soul equilibrium, political system forms the religious practice and finds who gets what, when and how (Lasswell, 1958) in any specific political scenario. Political system and religious sectors are unavoidable in anybody's journey for political supremacy (Agbor, 2019).

In the developing countries like Pakistan the electoral engagements of the people had a strong impact of religion on their political decision. Pakistan was created after separation from United India in 1947 in the name of religion after showing majority Muslim vote in the separate electorates in the areas, which are now part of this country.

However, in politics, sometimes religion is not of that importance as the scale of this segmentation is shown when people have a declined effect of religion on their voting behavior (Manza & Brooks, 1992).

Religion is not the only determinant towards voting decision of public, rather media is also an unavoidable factor in this regard. In their routine life citizens take information from newspapers, magazines, billboards and electronic media which eventually shape the cognitive, behavioral, physiological and political discourses of the people (Wettstein & Wirth, 2017).

1.1 Objectives

Following research objectives were set for this research paper:

- To explore how far religion is important for the general public to vote

- To investigate the magnitude of religions which are influenced by media in political decision making.
- To observe which media is more likely to have significant impact on voters belonging to specific religion.

1.2 Research Questions

RQ1: What is the relationship between media and voters' belonging to various religion in Punjab, Pakistan?

RQ2: What was the impact of religions on voters in General Elections 2008 and 2013?

RQ5: Which communication channels influenced voters belonging to Muslim and Christian voters in GE 2013 in Punjab, Pakistan? (Sarwar, 2018).

2. Method

The quantitative survey research method was employed for the study in hand with a questionnaire instrument which consisted of 42 items to gather data from the selected 18 districts out of total 36 in Punjab, Pakistan. Over 4000 questionnaires were distributed out of which 1704 were found correct and valid for the study (Sarwar, 2018). For this study, depending on the religions of the people in Punjab, the data was collected from the voters belonging to four religions including Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhs, while the voters belonging to others religions were combined into a category named as 'others'.

The media and communication channels for this study comprised categories of electronic media (EM=TV, Radio), print media (PM=newspapers and magazines), outdoor media (OM=posters, pamphlets, banners, vehicular advertisements), interpersonal communication (IPC= family, friends, neighbours, community, candidates, area, political workers, imam mosques etc). A total 42 items of the questionnaire were distributed into above categories (Sarwar, 2018).

The multistage cluster sampling technique was applied to collect data from respondents (n= 1704), the registered voters belonging to 18 districts of the province. Multistage cluster sampling technique was used to reach out the respondent in villages and cities of the selected 18 districts in Punjab (n= 1704).

The data was compressed using the technique of Factor Analysis following which Logistic Regression was applied due to the nature of the data and the measurement scale.

3. Analysis and Discussion

This part of the paper has been arranged as per the sequence of the research questions. Simple frequencies, comparative voting patterns of General Election 2008 and 2013, voting patterns of 2013 and then finally logistic regression analysis based on the factor analysis were performed in a sequence as per following:

Table 3.1: Frequency of respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Muslim	1608	94.4
Christian	54	3.2
Hindu	10	.6
Sikh	8	.5
Other	4	.2
Total	1684	98.8
Missing System	20	1.2
Total	1704	100.0

The sample comprised 94.4 percent Muslims as Punjab is a Muslim majority province like all other provinces (97 per cent Muslim population), therefore sample represents the research population.

Table 3.2 Voting patterns of respondents in General Elections 2008 and 2013

Vote Decision Impact	Elections 2008 (%)	Elections 2013 (%)	P-Value	Difference
Country Benefit	24.6	22.7	.000 ^a	-1.9
Candidate suitability	14.2	12.9	.000 ^a	-1.3
Media influence	12.2	13	.000 ^a	0.8
Party Affiliation	13.8	14.9	.000 ^a	1.1
Family opinion	9.9	8.9	.000 ^a	-1
Caste	8.5	8.2	.000 ^a	-0.3
Community Benefit	6.6	8.6	.000 ^a	2
Religion	4.6	4.9	.000 ^a	0.3
Area Fellows	2	1	.007 ^a	-1
Personal Benefit	0.6	0.8	1.000 ^a	0.2
Relation with Candidate	0.6	0.8	.688 ^a	0.2

a. Binomial distribution used.

The table 3.2 shows that media impact on vote decision of people in Punjab increased to some extent 0.8 per cent but significantly as per P value. The impact of religion on voting patterns was also significant showing increase from time 1 (GE 2008) to time 2 (GE 2013).

Table 3.4 *Voting* Religion cross tabulation*

		Voting		Total	
		No	Yes		
Religion	Muslim	Count	298	1127	1425
		% within Religion	20.9%	79.1%	100.0%
	Christian	Count	15	37	52
		% within Religion	28.8%	71.2%	100.0%
	Hindu	Count	2	7	9
		% within Religion	22.2%	77.8%	100.0%
	Sikh	Count	0	2	2
		% within Religion	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	Other	Count	0	3	3
		% within Religion	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	315	1176	1491	
	% within Religion	21.1%	78.9%	100.0%	

Table 3.5 *Chi-Square Tests*

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.245 ^a	4	.518
Likelihood Ratio	4.140	4	.387
Linear-by-Linear Association	.093	1	.760
N of Valid Cases	1491		

a. 5 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .42.

Table 3.6 *Symmetric Measures*

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.047	.518
	Cramer's V	.047	.518
	Contingency Coefficient	.047	.518
N of Valid Cases		1491	

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The Table 3.6 revealed that in the country wide elections 2013 there was no significant association between voting behavior and the religion as $\chi^2(4) = 4.140$, $p > 0.05$. Likelihood Ratio is 0.387. Also the association strength, as reflected in the Cramer's value $V = 0.047$ is also not significant.

Table 3.7 Logistic Regression Tests: Communication channels' impact on voting* Religions in Punjab, Pakistan (Variables in the Equation)

Religion		B	S.E.	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)	
Muslim	Step 1 ^a	Electronic Meida_Mean-	-.353	.122	8.382	1	.004	.702
		IPC_Mean-	.673	.080	70.137	1	.000	1.961
		Outdoor Media_Mean-	-.030	.071	.178	1	.673	.971
		Print Media_Mean-	-.270	.087	9.700	1	.002	.763
		Constant	1.179	.431	7.470	1	.006	3.250
		Eelctronic Media_Mean-	3.008	1.174	6.562	1	.010	20.255
Christian	Step 1 ^a	IPC_Mean-	1.152	.818	1.985	1	.159	3.165
		Outdoor Media_Mean-	.066	.548	.015	1	.904	1.068
		Print Media_Mean-	-2.171	1.030	4.447	1	.035	.114
		Constant	-5.218	4.490	1.351	1	.245	.005

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Electronic Media_Mean-, IPC_Mean-, Outdoor Media_Mean-, Print Media_Mean-.

The interpersonal communication (IPC), electronic media and print media significantly influenced Muslim voters in 2013, however, only IPC impact was positive on voting patterns with (B=.673, $p < .0005$) showing an odd ratio of .971 while print media (B=-.27, $p < .005$) and electronic media (B=-3.53, $p < .005$) both influenced voters negatively with odd ratios of .763 and .702 respectively. On the other hand, the voters belonging to Christianity were only positively significant impacted by the EM (B=3.008, $p < .05$) showing an odd ratio of 20.255. However, the print media influenced them negatively (B=-2.171, $p < .05$) reflecting an odd ratio of .114.

4. Conclusion

The article is about media and communication channels' role in decision making of voters belonging to various religious groups during the General Elections of 2008 and 2013. The study results revealed that the voters' media dependence for political decision making has increased from 12.2% in General Elections 2008 to 13% in General Elections 2013. However, voting on the basis of religion was marginally increased from 4.6% to 4.9% in during 2008 to 2013 respectively (Sarwar, 2018).

Study results showed that there was no significant relationship ($\chi^2(4) = 4.140$, $p > .05$) of religions and voting patterns in Punjab, Pakistan. In Pakistan, religion as a force of political participation and vote decision remained on the decline since after PML-N and Mutahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) alliance in General Elections 2002. when the religious political parties jointly fielded candidates after seats adjustment with Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz. Later, in all four general elections held in 2008, 2013 and 2018, the overall seats of religious parties' candidates decreased. Although in 2018 the religion based vote increased due to Khadim Rizvi's Tehreek Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) which secured a total of 21,91,679 votes and became the sixth party securing highest votes, however, the overall seats of religious candidates decreased.

While studying the relationship of media, religions and voting patterns, it was ascertained that interpersonal communication (IPC) role remained positive and significant to impact Muslim voters' ($B=.673$, $p<.0005$) while the print media ($B=-.27$, $p<.005$) and electronic media ($B=-3.53$, $p<.005$) both negatively influence Muslim voters. Meanwhile, the Christian voters were only positively impacted by the electronic media ($B=3.008$, $p<.05$) and they were negatively impacted by the print media ($B=-2.171$, $p<.05$).

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