The Impact of Violence on the Voting Behavior:
A Critical View

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Abstract
Voting is the main form of political participation in democratic societies and the study of voting behavior is a highly specialized sub-field in political and social science. The study was concerned with the reasons why people vote the way they do and what is the role of violence on the voting behavior. The main objectives of the present study were to find out the factors like the violence which affect the voting behavior & to explore the factors that constitute political affiliation. A sample of 100 respondents (students) was selected by simple random technique from Gomal University, Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Specifically, this study explored the relationship of voting behavior with violence other factors that had strong effect on voting decisions. The results of the present study showed a diverse response of the student regarding the impact of violence on the voting behavior.

1.   INTRODUCTION

The electoral process is part and parcel of academic institutions regarding their co-curricular activities. In this regard, the youths constitute a major portion of the total population while most of them pursue their studies in the colleges and universities. "Their participation in the extra-curricular activities especially in the election process is presently discussed widely due to many reasons and among them the phenomenon of violence is the most prominent" (Boyd, Westfall, & Stasch, 1977). In general, the academic institutions do not impart education only rather they are the seats of learning where the behaviors, attitudes and the overall profiles of the concerned boys and girls are shaped and groomed. "In the same line, the participation of the students in the extra-curricular activities induces motivation, intelligence, tolerance, boldness and a progressive outlook (Becker & Gary, 1983)". In this context, the electoral process culminating at the voting boosts the self-confidence for exercising one's right for vote. Unfortunately, the picture of such a healthy activity has become bleak because of violence which has become hallmark of the voting behavior prevailing among the students (Leighley & Nagler, 1992).

Elections are the major political events of a political system which shape political behavior in different shapes in long term and short term as well. "Man is a social being. He is born in a society, lives in a society, highly depends upon society for his/her needs and learns every behavior of society, colored with the norms of society" (Wilder, 1999). The study of voting behavior enables to learn about the nature of the political system and provides information about the process of political system and the nature of change. "Voting is the main form of political participation in a democratic societies and its study in political science is highly specialized in the sub-fields" (Cohen, 2003). While doing the analysis of voting patterns, the determinants such as, why people vote and how they make the decisions are invariably focused. Sociologists look at the socio-economic determinants such as support for political parties, occasions, ethnicity and gender, correlation between the classes, age and vote (Lednum, 2006). "While, political scientists focused on the influence of voting behavior of political factors such as political programs, electoral campaign, issues and popularity of leaders of the political parties contesting elections" (Jost, 2006).

In Pakistan, the political preferences and voting behavior of such individuals change over time and change more rapidly, unlike the other democratic states of the world. "In the countries like Pakistan, non-political factors like economics, religion, culture, ethnicity, factionalism are more dominant than the political factors" (Adma & Schoresch, 2007). In such states, there is more need for the politicization of the individuals. "The politicization is the orientation of the people to politically acts and political perspectives and people are politicized in such a way that politics is given sufficient importance" (Pildat, 2008). In Pakistan, the elections are not held on regular basis and military interventions did not allow the democratic institutions to take root. "Despite these hurdles, the Pakistani voters have the opportunity to come into contact with the political parties, candidates and the campaign issues". The voters have now become familiarized to some extent with the election procedures and strategies (Chauvet, Lisa & Paul, (2009).

1.2 Problem Statement

There are certain technical complications in defining and measuring the voting behavior in a specific way. In this regard, the complexity is that the voting behavior depends upon the cross-functioning of several factors/determinants and the personal attributes of the students. The aim of this research is to explore the impact of violence on the voting behavior of the students in Gomel universities, Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. This is a local issue therefore requires native data to develop a real picture of the problem.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. To highlight the different types of violence among students in Gomal University, Dera Ismail khan.
2. To explore the levels of voting behavior among the university students in Gomal University, Dera Ismail Khan, KPK, Pakistan.
3. To have the numeric data about the respective roles of different determinants in defining the voting behavior of the students.
4. To highlight the impact of violence on the elections related activities.

1.4 Significance

1. The voting behavior is an ultimate success factor for the electoral process of the political system. There is an acute need of evolving the dimensions and issues of the students in the higher education institutions. This study will make a substantial contribution to fill the gap which persists hitherto.
2. Although the major determinants of the violence and voting behavior are universal yet the contextual and personal diversities may change the whole story. This research will come up with some very appropriate and innovative suggestions about the concerned issue.
3. The findings, in this regard, will make a substantial contribution to the existing databases of knowledge about the issues of violence, particularly the voting behavior of the students in the universities.

1.5 Main Hypothesis

The violence has a profound impact on the voting behavior of the students. The violence can either increase or decrease the level of voting behavior. There are certain technical complications in defining and measuring the violence in a specific way. This study responds to the questions: In Gomal University, what is the level of violence among the students? What are the Dominant Determinants of the degrees of their violence to their voting behavior?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Elections are around the corner in Pakistan. Pakistan has experienced eight general elections as well as 1951-54 direct provincial assemblies and indirect presidential election during the era of president Ayub. "Still Pakistan is in transitional phase and seeking to achieve a smooth and successful democratic system" (Ahmed, 2004). So, it would not be an exaggeration to say that election system remained oscillatory since independence. Major stumbling block to the path of successful democracy is the lack of voters' direction and clear political vision. "On providing clarity to electorates by the political parties through transparent manifesto, only then the elected political party will be able to better serve the national interests rather than perusing vested interests of a few political elite" (Wilkinson, 2004).

The voting behavior of Pakistan is dully traced observing Pakistan's electoral pattern in a historical perspectives. "Since long Pakistan society has been stuck in the whirlpool of feudalism, sardari pattern, tribal Malik and Biradaries' system, religious factions, ethnicity, class structure, pressure and interest groups". In pursuit of their own ideological consideration while supporting their respective political parties, theses disgruntled elements influence the voting behavior in Pakistan. These are not only dominating the voters' mind but also shaping their decisions to cast vote in their favor against the voters' will (Blais, Elizabeth & Neil, 2004). "This politico domineering got more accelerated and strengthens during the era of non-political governments coupled with weak political ideology". The underlying bitter reality shows that most of the influenced voters are nor freely thinking while casting their votes, denying the very fact that the right to vote is a way of expressing ones' own choice or opinion, especially by officially marking a paper or by raising ones' hand. "To sum up, voting behavior is a set of attitude and believes towards elections at the national as well as the local level" (Tedeschi, Richard & Lawrence, 2004).

Voting decisions are the most important decisions that public make. "They decide who will rule the country and how the resources and capital are allocates. Voters do not know all of the issues. They only relay on informational cues" (Michelson, 2005). Demographic factors do effect the voting decisions like gender, race is

more important than socioeconomic factors like education. "In the last few years ethnic and racial influence on voting decisions was studied more than other issues. Race and ethnicity had great influence on voting behavior". Social class plays a significant importance in voting behavior (Birner & Qureshi, 2006). "However, other factors are showing an ever increasing importance today, such as, social class, party policies, and ethnicity and region issues". Voting for a candidate of one's own race might be a product of racism, or it may be the result of reliance on a simple, readily available cue. "In other words, voters may support a candidate of their own race or ethnicity based on the assumption that a candidate who shares their racial or ethnic background also shares their basic political views" (Besley, Timothy, 2006).

Several factors contribute towards the formulation of voting behavior of electorates with varying intensities. "This may range from a number of social identities including class, religion, race, ethnicity, gender, language, occupation as well as political campaigns, affiliations with some association, peer groups, and support for specific ideology, policy or agenda". But these cannot be claimed as the only forces because any experience, history, political culture, values or direct socialization through civic courses can also help shaping a specific voting behavior (Collier, Paul & Rohner, 2008). "Also with the development in technology the influence of many factors such as media boosted with ease of access, wider distribution and sophisticated techniques of communication". Voting is the expression of an individuals' preference for a candidate or a group of candidates as well as the individuals' preference of one political system rather than another (Gallup, 2008).

3. RESEARCHMETHODOLOHY

3.1 Survey Approach

An analysis of the social research methodologies suggests that survey is the handy tool for managers to collect primary data using questionnaire and interviews about the perceptions and attitudes of the respondents. It is noted somewhere that questionnaire approach is the "most frequently used mode of observation in the social sciences because surveys are reportedly the excellent vehicles for measuring attitudes in large populations (Sekaran, 2003:257).

3.2 Population & Sample

The universe or population is the entire group of items in which the researcher is interested and wishes to plan to generalize (Boyd et al., 1977:302-303). The population of interest in this research project consisted of all the 'Students' in the Gomal University, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan while from this population, a sample of 100 students was selected by simple random technique.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

- *Secondary Sources*: All research inevitably involves the use of the book, pamphlet, periodical, and documentary materials in libraries. "Literature review is the documentation of a comprehensive review of the published and unpublished work from secondary sources of data in the areas of specific interest to the researcher" (Goode & Hatt, 1952:103).
- *Primary Sources*: A structured questionnaire was prepared by first extracting variables and their related attributes from the extensive literature survey. The questionnaire included the research and demographic variables. There were two (2) demographic variables while the research variables are the violence and the voting behavior.

3.4 Tools for Data Analysis

There are two types of questions about analysis which may be raised. One of them relates to the techniques of representing the data and the other to the methods of logically ordering them so that questions can be raised and answered (Goode & Hatt, 1952:343). Similarly, the descriptive tools were applied by showing the frequencies, means and other data about the research variables.

4. FINDING ANALYSIS

In order to inquire about the sources of information on which electorates' relied questions were asked and 54% of students expressed their source as media, 16% replied with peer groups, for 8% the source of information was family and 3% used other sources. While 6% students replied with both media and peer groups, 11% with media and family both only 1% replied with peer groups and family and 1% replied with all the sources of information. In an analysis across the location majority of male students i.e. 41% said their source was media while majority of female students answered their primary source as peer groups.

Table 4.1 Frequency of students are members of the militant groups

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	15	15.0	15.0	15.0
	Disagree	17	17.0	17.0	32.0
	Neutral	43	43.0	43.0	75.0
	Agree	15	15.0	10.0	100.0
	Strongly Agree	10	10	15	35.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	100.0

How often students belong to the militant groups shows when asked for the purpose of understanding their connectivity, 15% replied with strongly disagree, 17% with disagree, 43% replied with agree and 25% strongly agree as the members of the militant groups.

Table 4.2 Frequency of students are on the pay role of different political parties

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	29	29.0	29.0	29.0
	Disagree	14	14.0	14.0	43.0
	Neutral	21	21.0	21.0	64.0
	Agree	5	5.0	5.0	69.0
	Strongly Agree	31	31.0	31.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

In the answer of how often the students are on the pay role of different political parties, 29% of the respondents replied with strongly disagree, 14% with disagree, 21% agree, 5% strongly agree and 31% were neutral.

Table 4.3 Frequency of casting vote is forcibly engineered by the violent political groups

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	7	7.0	7.0	7.0
	Disagree	40	40.0	40.0	47.0
	Neutral	24	24.0	24.0	71.0
	Agree	19	15.0	14.0	100.0
	Strongly Agree	10	14.0	15.0	39.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

When asked how casting vote is forcibly engineered by the violent political groups, 7% replied with strongly disagree, 40% with disagree, 24% neutral, 19% agree and 10% were strongly agree but this include those students who intentionally abstain from voting due to lack of trust over political candidates and media.

Table 4.4 Frequency of the phenomenon of Loyalty has been diminished due to violence

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	34	34.0	34.0	34.0
	Disagree	26	26.0	26.0	60.0
	Neutral	25	20.0	20.0	95.0
	Agree	5	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Strongly Agree	10	15	15	40.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

In the answer of the phenomenon of loyalty has been diminished due to violence, 34% students replied with hard loyalist, 26% with soft loyalist, 20% consider themselves as floating voters and 5% are non-voters who deliberately didn't vote while 15% were strongly disagree. On the other hand when students were asked if they ever changed their party then 60% replied, yes whereas 40% said they never changed their party.

Table 4.5 The time span of change in voters' behavior shortened due to the political awareness

What is the time span of change in your behavior?		Gender		Total
		Males	Females	
	N/A	8	15	23
	Before the introduction of free media	5	3	8
	After the introduction of free media	17	17	34
	Indifferent	19	15	34
Total		49	50	99

The time span into the change of their decision was also measured as for 34% after the introduction of free media, 8% before the introduction of free media and 34% were indifferent towards this change. As this question was targeted to those only who had experienced a change so out of the filtered subjects on both sides 17% as the highest value believed that this change occurred after the introduction of free media and held it responsible.

In the answer of the question which type of talk shows inspires them the most, 11% students replied with different party leaders facing each other, 29% replied with leaders facing public, 13% preferred political leaders interview, 14% preferred public discussion forum, 9% replied with programs hosted by analysts. For the same question 4% replied with all the types and the remaining 6% replied with several combinations. Also majority of the rural i.e. 18% replied with the leaders facing public and majority of urban people 11% also preferred the same.

Table 4.6 The phenomenon of violence has shaken the belief in preference to performance

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	61	61.0	72.6	72.6
	Disagree	17	17.0	20.2	92.9
	Neutral	1	1.0	1.2	94.0
	Agree	5	5.0	6.0	100.0
	Strongly Agree	26	20	14.0	60.0
Total		100	100.0		

When students were asked of violence has shaken the belief in preference to performance, then 72% replied with strongly disagree, 20% as disagree, 1% were neutral and 6% agree and 14% strongly agree. The majority voting in favor of this option belonged to males and this revealed their rational voting behavior.

Table 4.7 Preference to family affiliations affect the voting behavior

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	16	16.0	21.1	21.1
	Disagree	21	21.0	27.6	48.7
	Neutral	7	7.0	9.2	57.9
	Agree	21	21.0	27.6	85.5
	Strongly Agree	11	11.0	14.5	100.0
	Total	76	76.0	100.0	
Total		100	100.0		

When asked to rate that family affiliations affect the voting behavior, then 21% were strongly disagree, 27% were disagree, 9% were neutral, 27% were agree and 14% were strongly agree. It showed that almost third of the population was somehow affected by the parents voting decision.

Table 4.8 vested interests of the political parties' impact upon the voting behavior

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	5	5.0	6.8	6.8
	Disagree	23	23.0	31.5	38.4
	Neutral	7	7.0	9.6	47.9
	Agree	21	21.0	28.8	76.7
	Strongly Agree	17	17.0	23.3	100.0
	Total	73	73.0	100.0	
Total		100	100.0		

When asked to rate the vested interests of the political parties' impact upon the voting behavior, 73% students replied with 5% as strongly disagree, 23% disagree, 7% with neutral, 21% agree and 17% strongly agree. This suggested the minority of students looking for benefits while majority do not seek their personal benefits. But the situation was different when students were asked to rate the personal relations as eligibility of the candidate/party, then 73% students responded in which 11% rated strongly disagree, 25% disagree, 4% rated neutral, 15% students agree and 18% were strongly agree. As result showed majority here voted for the personal relations either highly or somewhat agreement.

Table 4.9 Influence of print and electronic media role in shaping the voting behavior

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	28	28.0	28.0	28.0
	Disagree	27	27.0	27.0	55.0
	Neutral	3	3.0	3.0	58.0
	Agree	18	18.0	18.0	76.0
	Strongly Agree	24	24.0	24.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

In this part when students were asked influence of print and electronic media role in shaping the voting behavior, 28% replied with strongly disagree, 27 % with disagree, 3% people were neutral, 18% responded agree and 24% were strongly agree. 32% of male students voted in favor of influence of media while 23% of female students said it had influenced but few associated high positive values to it and most of them replied somewhat.

Table 4.10 Violence has influenced the student's right to vote for his/her favorite candidate

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	38	38.0	38.0	38.0
	Disagree	38	38.0	38.0	76.0
	Neutral	7	7.0	7.0	83.0
	Agree	9	9.0	9.0	92.0
	Strongly Agree	8	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

In the answer of violence has influenced the student's right to vote for his/her favorite candidate, 38% responded with strongly disagree, 38% said disagree, 7% said they were neutral about it, 9% rated as agree and 8% rated as strongly agree.

Table 4.11 The violence has superseded the democratic outlook of the entire electoral process

Do you believe the appearance of candidate counts		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
	Strongly Disagree	23	15	38
	Disagree	20	18	38
	Neutral	2	5	7
	Agree	3	6	9
	Strongly Agree	2	6	8
Total		50	50	100

This showed that majority of male students associated high positive values with the appearance than the female and on both sides few were totally against it.

Table 4.12 Yellow journalism is also invoking violence among students

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	19	19.0	19.0	19.0
	Disagree	31	31.0	31.0	50.0
	Neutral	7	7.0	7.0	57.0
	Agree	16	16.0	16.0	73.0
	Strongly Agree	27	27.0	27.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

When the students were asked to identify if they trust the different sources of information for deciding, 19% replied with strongly disagree, 31% with disagree, 7% with neutral, 16% responded with agree and 27% said strongly agree.

Table 4.13 The students have lost their trust on various physical and electronic resources

Do you trust the different sources of information for deciding		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
	Strongly Disagree	7	12	19
	Disagree	11	20	31
	Neutral	2	5	7
	Agree	11	5	16
	Strongly Agree	19	8	27
Total		50	50	100

Here again the results showed that majority of male students expressed lack of trust towards media while deciding on vote or other issues. On the other side the high positive values were seen in female student responses.

Table 4.14 political events have become major resources for marketing of electronic media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	32	32.0	32.0	32.0
	Disagree	28	28.0	28.0	60.0
	Neutral	5	5.0	5.0	65.0
	Agree	15	15.0	15.0	80.0
	Strongly Agree	20	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

In the answer of if they think political marketing through media counts, than 32% students replied with strongly disagree, 28% with disagree, 5% replied with neutral, 15% responded with agree and 20% with strongly agree.

Table 4.15 Frequency of marking political marketing through media

Do you think political marketing through media counts?		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
	Strongly Disagree	16	16	32
	Disagree	9	19	28
	Neutral	3	2	5
	Agree	7	8	15
	Strongly Agree	15	5	20
Total		50	50	100

Again dividing the subjects across gender based it was witnessed that on both sides students believed that it had influence but again majority of the male students said that marketing through media really counted and almost half of the female also believed that it did impact over the voter.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The people of Pakistan do not have a lot of experience in elections. The first 23 years of Pakistan were without election while from 1970 to 2010 nation has experienced 4 regime of dictatorship. The election system has been changing since independence. Hence the political system of Pakistan is still in its experimental stage. Political behavior is a central part of politics of any political system. Politics is an activity related to political system. It is not only a part of political life but social life too. Caste system seems to be stronger than political loyalty now-a-days as far as motivations for voting behavior are concerned. Party affiliation determines the voting behavior. The better level of education and political knowledge will reduce the power of discouraging elements and it as a racial or group prejudice should be discouraged. Because of that our public does not have awareness about politics we are still living in a non-politicalized society.

Media has penetrated deep into our society through several channels but the only constraints that restrict its full potential is inaccessibility and lack of trust. The majority of the people in urban areas uses media as the primary source of information and has high levels of consumption patterns or at least average for those even without having a keen interest in politics. On the other side the scenario is completely opposite and majority of rural population rely on peer groups and family as a source of information and the role of print media is also restricted due to illiteracy and lack of interest. With different ingestion of media on both sides the impacts, attitude and voting patterns of people are also dissimilar. As revealed through this study the majority of public in rural area vote on the basis of biradari and personal affiliations, and in case they experience a change that is not mainly due to media but on the basis of personal differences and relations.

5.2 Recommendations

1. Media should promote programs such as civic education and voter's awareness because of its capability to reach audience and the potential to affect the violence.
2. The most importance should be placed at the core issues of voting behavior than the ones being set by a specific party or group which in turn reduce the violence.
3. Media should avoid breaking news without previous confirmation which also matter a lot in creating violence and ultimately affects the voting behavior.
4. All the facts regarding political affairs should be placed in front of public in order to adequately enlighten them for a wise decision making.
5. Instead of leg pulling all the streams should promote a strong culture that encourages justice, positive deeds and public participation.
6. A well-defined code of conduct should be followed by the electorally and in any case the national interest at large should be kept supreme.

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