

## **VOTING BEHAVIOUR IN ELECTION 2013: A CASE OF DIR LOWER**

### **(NA-34): PREFERENCES AND PRIORITIES**

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#### ***Abstract***

*This study is multi-dimensional in approach, conducted to examine the voting behavior of the people in NA-34 Lower Dir for the general election held on May 11, 2013. For this purpose, opinions were sought from different segments of the electorates based on their diverse background, such as age, gender, education, profession, income and family type. The study revolves around an analysis of the society, cultural, psychological, political, economic and religious factors shaping the voting tendency of the people in the target population. Voting behavior of the people living in the constituency with particular reference to their participation in the general election held in 2013 was examined in the light of their social, religious, political and family background.*

***Keywords:*** *Voting behavior; Election; Opinions; Illiteracy; Opinion; Participation;*

#### **1.1. INTRODUCTION**

As stated by Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865) “democracy is the government of the people, by the people and for the people”. In this context, while adopting democratic form of system, voting behavior of the people in a democratic society is very crucial because it allows people

to participate in the democratic processes. The elected representatives are responsible for their decisions and prevent a minority from dictating the policies of the majority.

Pakistan has a parliamentary democracy and its democratic record is uneven and drastic with respect to its survival. The country has witnessed four Martial Laws since its independence. The very first parliamentary general elections in Pakistan as stated by Ahmad (1976) were held in December 1970 and the last were held in May 2013. The last election was important because for the first time a civilian government completed its five years' term and handed over the charge to the newly elected government. Because of the 2013 election, PML-N formed the government by including nineteen independent candidates under the premiership of Nawaz Sharif (Mahmood, Iqbal, Amin, Lohanna & Mustafa, 2013).

However, moving from general to particular, Lower Dir is one of the 25 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the selected constituency (NA-34) is the only seat of the National Assembly of the district. The rival political parties here are Jamaat-e-Islami, Pakistan People Party, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, Awami National Party and Qaumi Watan Party. Putting a bird eye view on the political history of the area since 1970, most of the time the seat of the National Assembly is won by Jamaat-e-Islami. Thus the scenario of the contextual analysis elucidates that the main contested parties of NA-34 are Jamaat-e-Islami and Pakistan People's Party. However, if we look into the recent 2013 elections' results, Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaf emerged as the second largest party of the constituency by losing the seat at a very narrow margin (ECP, 2008).

Geographically Lower Dir is situated in the northern part of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Total population of the district is 797,852 with a growth rate of 3.42% (1998 census). Female population is slightly higher than male i.e. 51% and 49%. Almost whole of the district lies in

the valley of River Punjkora. Ouch, Timergara, Chakdara, Khal and Munda are the major towns in respect of population.

The district is represented by 4 Provincial Assembly and one National Assembly seat. The current elected MNA in 2013 elections is Sahibzada Muhammad Yaqoob Khan (JI). Most of the population belongs to Yousafzai Pashtuns with several sub-tribes (ECP, 2008). Analyzing the consequential role of the historic and democratic trends in the country in general and in the area under the study in specific, voting behavior is very important in every democratic society. The issue of voting behavior is particularly important in Lower Dir because it is a very far flung, remote, rural, very religious and less educated part of the province. Similarly, the area has been passed through several drastic and uneven changes i.e. in 1994, 2001 and 2009 witnessed of various religious orthodoxy movements including the Tahreek-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi of Maulana Sofi Muhammad, crossing the Pakistani border and entering into Afghanistan by the activists against the US forces to help Taliban Government (Abid, A. L., & Iqbal, K. N., 2010).

Besides these, if we look into the enormous literature created by the scholars on the issue of politics, religion and economy of the area, no such consideration is given to voting trends and voting behavior of the people. In this regard, the study remains an issue of prime concern for the researchers and scholars in the field of social and political societies. Similarly, the geo-political and religious understanding of any community in any democratic structure is obvious form of the voting trends and behavior. Thus, analyzing the social, cultural, religious and political concerns of the people and the shift they have brought in the last few years in their political affiliations, it is explicit that such changes shall be more properly weighing through political activities of the people in selected area. In the present study all possible

efforts are made to study the voting choices of the people. So, being the first attempt, it is very important to know the voting behavior of the people of Lower Dir (NA-34).

### **Objectives of the Study:**

This study has been organized to know about the geo-political and religious understanding of people regarding voting trends and behavior in the selected locale. In this context, the social, cultural, religious and political concerns of the people of the area will be analyzed to know about the shift in political trends and behavior. Besides, the political affiliations, factors as well as political activities of the people will be studied to identify the nature and choices of the people for selection of the leaders in Lower Dir (NA-34).

### **1.2. METHODOLOGY**

The researcher has predominantly utilized quantitative research design. This can be obtained from evidences based on measurement as well as mathematical operations (Babbie, 2005). Burns and Grove (2005) are of the view that such approach is formal as well as objective which is believed to be based on numerical data or cause-and-effect relations of the variable.

Thus, the present paper is based on validating research questions (presenting the information through statistics and numbers) which has been obtained from structured interview schedule as this study belonged to obtaining views of the people in the selected area and all the sample population have been asked to explain their views regarding the trends of people towards voting behavior and its impact on the local politics. Besides, in the current paper, both uni-variate and bi-variate analysis have been adopted to represent all the variables in the given data set. The demographic data has been presented in uni-variate tables, while the multiple data is represented in bi-variate tables. Also, for validity and authenticity (of the given

relationship of the variables) Chi-Square test through SPSS has been utilized along-with correlation technique.

### **1.3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Uni-variate Quantitative Analysis**

This section of the data is dealing with uni-variate analysis i.e. this is a numerical record results from measurement using basic mathematical operations (noted by Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). Burns and Grove (2005) pointed that such approach is very formal, objective as well as systematic in nature with the utilization of mathematical data to determine the variables relationship (Burns & Susan, 2011). The following part is dealing with the uni-variate data of the socio-economic nature.

#### **Educational Status of the Respondents**

Education is an ability to read and write at a level of proficiency (Merner, 1958). Depending upon the nature of the study, education has been a key indicator in judging the level of understanding of the respondents towards politics, political affiliations and even their views regarding the changing pattern and voting behavior in NA-34. The educational level of the respondents has been presented in Table-1.

Table No 1: Educational Status of the Respondents

Educational Status	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Median	Mode
Illiterate.	38	13	2.79	3.00	2
SSC/HSSC.	157	52			
Graduation.	48	16			
Master.	53	18			
M.Phil and Above	4	1			
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>			

The table indicates that 157 (52%) of the respondents are educated up to intermediate level and secondary level which is the base for higher education in the prevalent educational system. Further, the percentage of graduation, master, M. Phil and above are shown.

### Bi-Variate Analysis

Trauth, Gebbers, Marwa, & Sillmann (2007) believe that the bi-variate analysis is about the study and relationship of more than one variables.

### Respondents' Knowledge Regarding Political Structure and Politics

Political structure and politics are the core values of any country while in democratic form of government; politics play a pivotal role in human and social progress. Political process in any country is the outcome of social, economic, religious and environmental forces. The intensity and ratio of political movement varies from place to place and region to region due

to different social, economic and political conditions (Ghosh, 1992). Thus, since the political awareness during the last few centuries, the concept of politics and democracy has been in constant utilization (Held, 1999). The knowledge base of the respondents about political system, politics and even the change in the political agenda is an important indicator which could help the researcher to a proposition about the status of the respondents and further could help to generalize what the voting trend of the people would be. In the process of research activity, respondents were asked about their views towards the politics, political system and voting behaviour. The views are presented in the form of frequencies and tables. Further, the respondents were asked to provide their views about how they understand politics and what is their perception towards the political institution of the country. Their views are presented in table-2

**Table No-2: Respondents Knowledge Regarding Political Structure and Politics**

<b>Knowledge Respondents Political Structure and Politics</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Mode</b>
Politics refers to increase parties	79	26	3.20	3.00	2
Politics refers to political leaders	80	27			
Politics refers to political gathering	40	13			
Politics refers to voting and campaign	63	21			
Politics refers to national and provincial assemblies	38	13			
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>			

The given information indicates majority of the respondents 80 (27%) agreed with the statement that political leaders and their role has been termed as politics in the locality. The analysis further indicates that most of the respondents have sufficient knowledge and they know the various dimensions of the political system in the country as well as in the area.

### Political Affiliations of the Respondents

Affiliation of the respondents in the current study is a related variable, which could better justify the association of the voters to a particular party. For the researcher, it is compulsory to know the current affiliation of the respondents to a particular party, to decide the likes and dislikes in relation to voting trends in the selected locale. In the research area, there were various political parties, which participated in the national level elections held on May 11, 2013. The major parties included the Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, Awami National Party, Pakistan People Party, Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz, Qaumi Watan Party and also independent candidates contested the election. Detail of party position and participants' affiliations are given in the following table.

**Table-3: The Political Affiliations of the Respondents**

Political Party	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Mean	Median	Mode
Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf	60	20	20			
Jamaat-e-Islami	71	24	44			
Jamait Ulma-e- Islam	55	18	62			
Pakistan People Party	21	07	69			
Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz	07	02	71	2.11	2.00	2
Qaumi Wattan Party	30	10	81			
Awami National Party	51	17	98			
Independent	5	02	100			
Total	300	100.0	100			

The statistical information shows the Political affiliation of respondents has been indicated in frequency and percentages. Majority portion of the respondents i.e. 71 (24%) shows their affiliation in Jamaat-e-Islami and they have hold on the district in the study area.

**Personal Inspiration of the Respondents towards Political Representatives**

The political system in our country is based on traditional social structure. However, a shift has been observed during the last few years regarding the changing pattern of political system in the country in general and in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in particular. In this context, the question for respondent’s regarding inspiration was included in the study to judge the inclination of the respondents. In this regard, there were six options, which compelled the respondents to opt for an elected representative.

**Table-4: Inspiration of Respondents to become an Elected Representative**

Inspiration	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Mean	Median	Mode
Personnel inclination	60	20	20	2.64	2.00	2
To solve the problems of your area	105	35	55			
For future political career	64	22	77			
Family pressure	25	08	85			
Peer group	22	07	92			
Local people	24	08	100.0			
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>			

In the above table, there were six options regarding the inspiration of the respondents to vote for a person and to become representative have been presented. In this context, majority of the respondents i.e. 105 (35%) respect the problems solving nature of the people.

### **Personal Qualities and Characteristics of a Leader**

A survey conducted in District Faisalabad, Punjab Pakistan by Shawar and Asim (2011) revealed that personal qualities and characteristics of a leader play a significant role in modifying voting behavior among public and masses. In this context, personal qualities of a leader such as communication skill, devotion to serve community and economic status are important to mold voting tendency of the public and masses. Educational level of a candidate also plays a significant role in shaping the voting behavior of the public. Literature indicates that candidates with higher educational level specifically gain popularity among public of urban areas (Leighley & Nagler, 1992). Keeping in view the importance of the mentioned literature regarding the personal qualities and characteristic of a leader in shaping voting behavior of the public, the following table include indicators in order to present field information obtained regarding preferences given to personal qualities of leading while voting a particular candidate (table-5).

**Table-5 Personal qualities and Characteristics of Leader**

Qualities and Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Median	Mode
Educational Level of Leader	62	21	3.31	3.00	3
	43	14			
Vision of the leader	70	23			
	46	15			
Communication Skills	23	08			
Honesty and devotion					
Visiting community	56	19			
Economic background i.e. income level					
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100.0</b>			

The above table enumerate the importance of personal qualities and characteristics of a leader/candidate, which influence the voting behavior of the public. In this context, various qualities and characteristics of leaders have been mentioned which are preferred by public while voting them. 70 (23%) respondents were of the opinion that mostly communication skills of a leader attract the voters.

### Chi Square Test

Tests	Personal qualities and characteristics of leader and voting behaviour
Chi-Square	24 <sup>a</sup>
Df	3
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 75.0.

Chi square test with the value of 24; degree of freedom 3 with p value of 0.000 shows, that personal qualities and characteristics of leaders influence voters' behavior significantly.

### Traditional Preferences for Voting Trends

Many research studies show that voting behavior is influenced by family background specifically caste, *biradri* and social class of the leader. There is also considerable evidence that religious background of a candidate is considered by the public while voting in the election. Such preferences commonly prevail in rural areas and with higher number of religious ethnicities (Roskin, 1998). In addition, major political parties or alliances award tickets to *biradaris* in majority. Political parties carefully weigh the relative strengths and weaknesses of candidates seeking tickets, including the strength of their *biradaris* (Ahmad, 2004). Keeping in view the mentioned literature, the following tabular information is the presentation of field information obtained while preference of public regarding voting candidate (see table-6);

**Table-6 Traditional preferences**

Indicators	Frequency	Parentage	Mean	Median	Mode
Religious affiliation and knowledge	06	1	2.09	2.00	1
Family background i.e. ethnicity, <i>Biradri, Khanadan</i>	01	1			
Participation in social gatherings	9	5			
Interaction with people	4	3			
<b>Total</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>3</b>			

The above table illustrates the traditional preferences affecting voting behaviour in NA-34, District Lower Dir. The table contain various indicators to judge the perception of voters regarding their preferences while voting a specific party, candidate or a leader. The information reveals that religious affiliation and knowledge of the leader or a candidate plays a significant role in influencing voting behavior.

**Chi Square Test**

Tests	Traditional preferences and voting behaviour
Chi-Square	19 <sup>a</sup>
Df	3
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 75.0.

Chi square test with the value of 19 degree of freedom, 3 with p value of 0.000 shows that traditional preferences significantly influence voting behavior.

***Khanism (Landlordism) and its Influence on Voting Behavior***

Research shows that in rural areas families with prestigious backgrounds influence the political structure as well. Wealthy families often influence the local law enforcement agencies including police-stations and the courts. Such families do not provide space for other families of lower socio-economic stratum to participate in political activities. Further, such families use different strategies to terrorize the community (Pakistan Economic Survey,

2005; Gallup, 2010). The following table contain information regarding the role of *Khanism* in influencing voting behavior in NA-34, Lower Dir (Table No. 7).

**Table-7: *Khanism* and its Influence on voting behavior**

Indicators	Frequency	Parentage	Mean	Median	Mode
Dependency of masses on Khans	76	25			
Influence of wealth	25	08			
Influence and hold over Thana and other law enforcement agencies	49	16			
Lack of space for other to contestants	80	27	3	2	4
Dominancy or hold over local social institutions	23	08			
Usually large family size of Khan families	17	06			
Masses fear of Khans	30	10			
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>			

The above table explores the role of *Khanism* in influencing the voting behavior. Dependency of masses on *Khans* is one of the important factors in influencing the voting behavior, the argument was supported by 76 (25%) of the respondents while, majority that is 80 (27%) respondents argued that there is lack of space for other candidates due to influence of *Khans'* to thrive politically which definitely molds the voting behavior in favor of them.

**Chi Square Test**

Tests	<i>Khanism</i> and its influence on voting behavior
Chi-Square	16 <sup>a</sup>
Df	3
Asymp. Sig.	.000

Chi square test with the value of 16; degree of freedom 3 with p value of 0.000 shows, that *Khanism* significantly influences voting behavior.

**Religion as a Source of Influencing Voting Behavior**

A considerable amount of research shows that religion is one the eminent factors in shaping voting behavior of the public. Religious preferences are kept in view by the masses in rural areas and in those areas where religion is dominant in socioeconomic activities. Besides, in rural and religiously dominant areas, leader also tends to represent religion as a source of attraction. In developing world, it is common that religious leaders are linked with politics, and such an involvement is specifically for the purpose to merge religious and political structure (Gallup, 2008). In this regard, the following table contains field information while considering the importance of religion in molding the voting behavior of public (see table-8below);

**Table-8: Religion as a source of influencing voting behavior**

Indicators	Frequency	Parentage	Mean	Median	Mode
Using religion as a source of attraction	130	43.33 %			
Religious people are often involved in politics as well	103	34.34 %	2	1	1
Efforts to guide political structure with reference to Islam	67	22.33 %			

The above table illustrates the role of religion in influencing voting behavior in NA-34, District Lower Dir. In this connection, indicators have mentioned in the table whereby using religion as a source of attraction have been opted by majority i.e. 130 (43.33 %) of the respondents.

**Chi Square Test**

Tests	Religion as a source of influencing voting behaviour
Chi-Square	16 <sup>a</sup>
Df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 75.0.

Chi square test with the value of 16; degree of freedom 2 with p value of 0.000 shows, that religion is an important source of influencing voting behavior.

**1.4. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION**

The most interesting questions about an election are not concerned with who won but with such questions as why people voted or what are the implications of the results? These questions are not always easily answered. Looking only at the campaign events and incidents will not suffice. The unique aspects of the election must be blended with a more general

understanding of voting behaviour to create a full explanation. The major concern characterized by the study was voting behaviour carried out in NA-34 Lower Dir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. While the locale was delimited to three selected union councils of Lower Dir. A sample of 300 respondents was selected using probability sampling i.e. specifically stratified random sampling and sample of 100 voters from different age categories was selected for analysis. Interview schedule was utilized, and the information was processed through SPSS and presented in tables including frequencies and percentages. In addition, chi-square test was applied in order to judge the validity of the results.

The analysis of the data was conducted in two categories including uni-variate and bi-variate analysis. The socio-demographic information included certain variables such as age, gender, educational and income level of the respondents, directed the attitude and behavior. In the demographic variables, education and level of education was analyzed and sample data showed that majority of the respondents were either SSC or HSCC level education.

In the context of bi-variate analysis, the quantitative analysis involves the field information showing various dimensions of objectives and their analysis in tabular form. The empirical information and its analysis show that most of the voters have a convergence towards the leaders and their role for acceptance as politics in the locality. Similarly, affiliation of the respondents has also been asked and major portion of respondents agreed that they belonged to the Jamaat-e-Islami party in the area.

Data further indicates, that people in the locality prefers the solving nature of issues. Another important indicator for judging the voting behavior was the communications skills of a leader, public in the locality considers the communication skills of a leader while voting. Traditional preferences are significant factors associated with voting behavior where the

people prefer the family background of a candidate for casting their vote. Besides, *Khanism* (Landlordism) influences voting behavior, as the information shows that Khans do not provide space to other candidates. Data also reveals that religion is an important source influencing voting behavior, and religion is being utilized as a source of attraction. Findings of the study enumerates that the policy of a party affects the voting behavior. Further, voters while voting a leader or a party also prefer the performance in provision of basic facilities including food, shelter and water. Furthermore, the awareness and educational level of the representatives as a source of inspiration for voting behavior, the findings show that illiterate people are more vulnerable to be deceived by politicians, and therefore in many cases, politicians are able to influence the behavior of illiterate voters.

### 1.5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the current study, the following recommendations are extended.

- The government, civil society/NGO etc. should take necessary steps to create awareness regarding voting trends among people and community
- People should encourage and promote new faces in politics who are free of corruption.
- Media should play its role in bringing awareness for voting trends and issues in political system
- Females of the constituency are not allowed to participate in the electoral process. Thus, it is a challenge for the Election Commission of Pakistan and other concerned authorities to take action and make sure their participation.

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