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KNOWLEDGE, AWARENESS AND PARTICIPATION LEVELS OF VOTERS IN 2014 ELECTIONS IN NANDIGAMA CONSTITUENCY OF KRISHNA DISTRICT

Dr. M Ravi Sekhar¹ and Kota Sangameswar Rambabu²

¹Associate Professor, Department of Political Science and Public administration, Acharya Nagarjuna University, Nagarjuna Nagar, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh.

²Research Scholar, Department of Political Science and Public administration, Acharya Nagarjuna University, Nagarjuna Nagar, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh.

ABSTRACT

Elections are pivotal to the Indian political system because they highlight many of its major aspects and provide insights into Indian politics and society though of course several non-political factors and considerations are also important in politics. The electoral process and the role of elections have been the focus of extensive research from many points of view by means of different methodological techniques and theoretical approaches. In the present transition from a traditional to a modern society, the elections play a vital role by spreading political consciousness, giving rise to competitive patterns of recruitment and mobility. It has also to be noted that still the electoral politics in India is marked by a great deal of 'small group orientations' reflected in local and kin group identification. Vote banks are controlled by local potentates acting as political intermediaries between the parties and the electorate, and a personalized and particularistic structure of political support in which caste identifications gain in potency under the impact of political competition and the need for a firm basis of political support. On the other hand a concern to mobilize political support apart from other considerations leads to a wider canvas than is provided by a single caste or communal group, and to a bargaining and a demand for a share in the distributive benefits provided by the State.

KEYWORDS : Indian political system , electoral process , different methodological techniques and theoretical



approaches.

INTRODUCTION

India has adopted the system of simple majority and single ballot for its major State and national elections. Elections and voting are among the political acts which are conditioned by deep-seated historical and societal factors. Therefore elections in India are to be studied in the historical, social, psychological and ecological setting which bears on the electoral process. Though it is the most common and the most frequently studied act of political participation, voting may not be a very meaningful act of participation at all. It may be hardly more than a rather meaningless ritual, a symbolic gesture performed for reasons of social

conformity or because of social pressures rather than a conscious, informed and studied exercise of political choice. Since the advent of the secret ballot, a fundamental feature of free elections, it is particularly difficult to study and assess, and it has become impossible to observe in its final stages, assuming that the conventional safeguards of secrecy are preserved. As Stein Rokkan has pointed out, in one sense voting is no longer a responsible act, the citizen could no longer be called to account for what he had done, neither by his superiors nor by his peers. The reason for this is, Rokkan says: "The vote is a datum of human behaviour but it is an anonymous datum". While the anonymous and secret nature of the act of voting makes it difficult for students to study the ways in which individual voters exercise their right of franchise, it does not minimize the importance of the act itself nor does it prevent a ready access to voting results. How an individual actually votes may not be known but how the voters collectively have voted becomes known, for the aggregate data on voting results on a polling booth by polling booth or constituency by constituency basis as well as on the basis of the overall national returns are readily available in most political systems. More significantly the voting is only the final stage – the dramatic climax – of the electoral process; and the electoral process which is a complicated and multi-stage process in any political system where elections are held is the central mechanism of the even broader and more complex electoral system.

A diffusion of political values and a positive approach to power also result from this trend giving rise to political factionalism which cuts across communal loyalties and draws its support from a more extended network of influence and power. In such a phase of transition, a party and issue identifications remain at a low level although the conditions for a larger identification are in the process of being created. The level of development must however vary with the exposure to such factors as urbanization, education and the mass media of communications.

RESPONDENTS MEMBERSHIP IN POLITICAL PARTIES

At regular intervals every political party persuades its sympathizers to take membership of Party. Generally, the citizens, who are closely involved with party affairs, take the membership of the political party. The membership of a particular political party influences the voting behaviour of a particular member. The data relating to sample respondent membership in political parties is given in table 1.

Table 1
Number of Respondents' having Membership of Political Parties

S. No.	Response	No. of Respondents	Frequency
1	Yes	101	31.6
2	No	219	68.4
Total		320	100.0

Source: Field Data

With regard to membership in political parties only 31.6 per cent of sample respondents has taken the membership of one party or other. The remaining 68.4 per cent of sample have not taken the membership of any political party.

PARTICULAR PARTY MEMBERSHIP

Table 2 gives the details of sample respondents' membership in a Particular Party.

Table - 2
Membership of Sample Respondents' in Particular Political Parties

S. No.	Response	No. of Respondents	Frequency
1	INC	5	5.0
2	TDP	38	37.6
3	BJP	6	5.9
4	CPI	11	10.9
5	CPM	13	12.9
6	YSRCP	26	25.7
7	Others	2	2.0
Total		101	100.0

Source: Field Data

As per table 2 among the total sample highest percentage (37.6) of sample respondents have taken the members of Telugu Desam Party. In the second place 25.7 per cent has taken Yuvajana Sramika Raithu Congress Party YSRCP membership. The Marxist Communist Party of India (CPIM) membership has been taken by 10.65 per cent of respondents. Nearly 10.9 per cent of respondents have taken the membership of Communist Party of India (CPI). The BJP membership has been taken by 5.9 per cent of respondents. The Indian National Congress (INC) party and other parties (Loksatta, Janasena etc) membership was taken by 5 per cent and 2 per cent of sample respondents respectively. Respondent Family Member/Relatives Engaged in Active Politics

Generally, the political speculations of a particular individual revolve around such party of group in which his/her family members or close relatives are affiliated. Table 3 gives the particulars of association of sample respondent family members/close relative with political parties or politics.

Table – 3
Respondent's Family Members / Close Relatives engaged in Active Politics

S. No.	Response	No. of Respondents	Frequency
1	Yes	42	13.1
	No	269	84.1
2	No Reply	9	2.8
Total		320	100.0

Source: Field Data

As per table 3 the political association of respondent's family members/relatives is insignificant. To be precise only 13.1 per cent respondents family members/ close relatives are involved in active politics. During the formal discussions with respondents at the time of field survey it become clear that most of the respondent's, family members / relatives holding positions like Sarpanch (Village President), Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituency Member (MPTC), Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituency Member (ZPTC), Municipal Councilor, Corporator etc. In case of 84.1 per cent of sample Respondent's no family member/relative engaged in active politics. Nearly 2.8 per cent of respondents has not given any reply.

DISCUSSION OF POLITICS WITH FAMILY MEMBERS

The data with regard to frequency of sample respondents discussion of politics with family members is given in table 4.

Table –4
Sample Respondents Frequency of Discussion of Politics with Family Members

S. No.	Response	No. of Respondents	Frequency
1	Daily	21	6.6
2	Frequently	37	11.6
3	Occasionally	147	45.9
4	Rarely	41	12.8
5	Never	74	23.1
Total		320	100.0

Source: Field Data

It is clear from table 4 that the highest number of sample respondents i.e. 45.9 per cent discusses the politics with family members occasionally. They are followed by 23.1 per cent of no discussions and 12.8 per cent with rare discussions. About 11.6 per cent frequently discusses politics with family members and only 6.6 per cent held daily discussions.

PURPOSE OF VOTING

Generally in representative democracies citizens cast their vote in elections to elect representative of their choice, who in turn frame policies for the welfare and development of citizens. But the sample respondents stated that the voting serves several purposes, besides serving above two mentioned purposes. Table 5 gives the clear picture of the views expressed by sample voters.

Table – 5
Respondent's views on the purpose served by Voting

S. No.	Response	No. of Respondents	Frequency
1	To elect representatives	49	15.3
2	To strengthen one's party	68	21.3
3	To support one's caste candidate	91	28.4
4	To Frame Policies/programmes	38	11.9
5	It serves no Purpose	45	14.1
6	Others	23	7.2
7	No Response	6	1.9
Total		320	100.0

Source: Field Data

It can be inferred from table 5 that among total sample, 28.4 per cent of respondents declared that the voting will help to support one's own caste candidate. Nearly 21.3 per cent of total sample opined that the voting helps to strengthen one's party. According to 15.3 per cent of respondents voting will serve to elect representatives to Central and State legislatures. To frame policies or programmes for the development of people is the main purpose of voting as stated by 11.9 per cent of

the sample. Voting will serve other purposes as per 7.2 per cent of respondents. It is important to note that nearly 14.1 per cent of sample respondents said that the elections serve no purpose. About 1.9 per cent has not stated any purpose of voting.

MOTIVATING FACTORS TO VOTE

Table 6 gives the details of the factors swayed the sample voters in 2014 general elections held to Nandigama Assembly constituency. There are wider variations among sample respondents with regard to the motivating factors.

Table 6
Motivated factors of Respondent's to vote

S. No.	Response	No. of Respondents	Frequency
1	Had a EPIC / Voter slip	11	3.4
2	Name in Voter's List	19	5.9
3	National/State Leader's Charisma	106	33.1
4	Self Motivated	119	37.2
5	The Contesting Candidate	34	10.6
6	Family and Friends	28	8.8
7	No Response	3	0.9
Total		320	100.0

Source: Field Data

It is clear from table 6 that a preponderant majority i.e. 37.2 per cent of sample respondents are self-motivated. The second important motivating agent is national and state leader's charisma as reported by 33.1 per cent of sample respondents. The contesting candidates from Nandigama Assembly constituency motivated 10.6 per cent of sample respondents. The next important motivating agent is family members and friends as reported by 8.8 per cent of sample. Having name in ECI issued voters list motivate 5.9 per cent of sample respondents. The voter list in hand or photo identity card of ECI motivated 3.4 per cent of respondents. Less than 1 per cent of respondents are not given any agents of motivation.

PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

Apart from voting, the people participates in such political activities like attending public meetings, canvass on behalf of a particular candidate, distributes slips to voters, take part in party meetings etc. table 7 furnishes such details given by sample respondents.

Table – 7
Respondents Participation in Political Activities during 2009 General Elections

S. No.	Response	No. of Respondents	Frequency
1	Attended Public Meetings	71	22.2
2	Canvassed on behalf of a particular Candidate	69	21.6
3	Distributed slips to Voters	102	31.9
4	Participated in Party Meetings	62	19.4
5	No Participation	16	5.0
Total		320	100.0

Source: Field Data

As per table 7 nearly 31.25 per cent of respondents declared that during 2014 Assembly elections they distributed slips to voters. Around 22.2 per cent of sample respondents attended public meetings conducted by political parties. Canvassing on behalf of contested candidates is done by 21.6 per cent of total sample. Nearly 19.4 per cent of sample respondents took part in the deliberations held during party meetings. About 5 per cent of sample confined to voting as they are not participated in any political activities in 2014 elections.

CONCLUSION

The study examined the knowledge awareness and participation in electoral process the study examined the membership of respondents in political parties, family members or close relatives emerged in active politics, discussion of politics with family members, membership in political parties, membership in particular party etc., were ascertained. The study also analyse the type of participation of respondents in 2014 election in Nandigama Constituency.

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