

SIGNIFICANCE OF YOUTH VOTE IN INDIAN ELECTORAL POLITICS: THE ‘YUVA’ FACTOR

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ABSTRACT:

This Research paper examines the importance of the youth vote in Indian elections and the factors that contribute to youth voting. Post-2014, MY Factor (Mahila and youth) has had the numbers to decide the outcome of elections, both at the national and state levels. The data from the Election Commission of India proves this, as do the outcomes of different state elections. Young voters, who constitute more than 20 percent of the electorate and include 21.5 crore people aged 18–29 in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, are an essential group that will determine who wins elections. Their rising population, which includes 18.4 million new voters, has turned unenthusiastic tendencies since 2014 into resolute engagement, including the Election Commission’s involvement, such as Turning 18, and severe engagement by parties in employment, education, and national development.

KEYWORDS:

Youth Vote, Indian Election, Voting Behaviour, Election Process, Youth Participation.

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INTRODUCTION

The high number of young people in India is central to India’s future democracy. Although there has been a slow increase in total turnout, there is still controversy about what motivates the youth to vote. Education, place, and media exposure are usually mentioned, but attitudes as a political interest can be a more determining part. The question asked in this paper is: what are the strongest predictors of whether Indian youth cast their vote? Comparing structural measures with attitudinal ones will help the study to understand youth participation better. Of particular urgency is the issue of youth participation, bearing in mind that more than 65% of the population in India is still below the age of 35. This demographic change will make the future of democratic legitimacy depend on the

active participation of youth. The dwindling political confidence. The emergence of digital media and new educational opportunities only complicates the field further. Studying youth behaviour is not merely an academic issue, but a very urgent policy issue, as the disengagement can lead to long-term democratic deficits. Knowledge of young voters' motivations may also be used to empower institutions, close participation gaps across regions, and educate inclusive governance policies.

OBJECTIVES

- To understand the factors which influence youth voters.
- Impact of Youth vote in the State elections and Lok Sabha.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This study is based on primary and secondary sources like – Journals, Newspapers, Publications, Editorials, Books, Post Poll study, Election commission data etc.

FACTORS INFLUENCING VOTING BEHAVIOUR AMONG YOUTHS IN INDIA

1. CHARISMA:

One of the crucial factors of voting behaviour is Charisma. The Personality of the leader attracts the voters to get influence to a particular party and its principles. The slogan of “Garibi Hatao” performed Miracles in the 1971 elections. The image of Jayaprakash Narayan had the same effect in the elections of 1977. The personality of Modi and the BJP won the General Elections of 2014 & 2019.

2. CASTE:

Caste is a determining factor in voting behaviour in India. Its basis for social relations at all levels. The Politicization of caste and casteism in politics has been a well-known reality of the Indian Political system. As Morris Jones believes, caste is more important for politics than before. In Karnataka Caste-based politics can be seen in the run up to General elections.

3. IDEOLOGY:

The Ideological commitment of the voters also impacts the voting behaviour of most voters, who are influenced to ideology, and they keep in view the Ideology of the candidate and the political party at the time of casting their vote, for example:

- BJP- Hindutva, conservatism, nationalism, (Right Wing)
- INC- Big tent, civil nationalism, social liberalism, secularism.
- BSP- Social equality. Social Justice. Secularism.

4. RELIGION:

In Indian politics, religion is also vital. In India, a number of political parties have been founded on religious grounds. Various political parties use religious grounds to solicit votes during election years. The candidates' and voters' religions are taken into account when party tickets are distributed. It is clear that voters, swayed by their religious sentiments, vote for candidates who share their beliefs.

5. INFLUENCE OF MONEY:

India is a poor country with a large number of people living below the poverty line. Money as such plays a crucial role in determining the behaviour of voters in India. A rich candidate has a higher chance of winning the election. According to the Report of the Centre for Media Studies, Approximately RS 100 crore was spent on each constituency, and RS 700 on each vote.

6. PARTY LOYALTY:

In India, many of these people are attached to their different political parties, and they always cast their vote in favour of the party rather than the candidate. We can't change their party loyalty, so it would not be going to win. Such voters are known as committed voters.

7. CREDIBILITY OF CANDIDATE:

In addition to a candidate's party membership or viewpoint on a range of issues and problems, voting behaviour is also influenced by his or her report to the people in a constituency, as well as by his or her known attributes or contributions in any worthwhile activity. The voter as they cast their ballots always considers the degree of his relationship with the candidate.

8. ELECTION CAMPAIGN:

To sway voters in its favour, each party runs extensive election campaigns. use of large crowds. Social media, TV, and street films. Voters' choices can be influenced by a polling campaign. Use of AI has also been used as a medium to reach the last mile, not to miss even a single voter.

9. PERFORMANCE OF THE PARTY IN POWER:

After being elected to power, each political party seeks for office using its election manifesto. It is expected to fulfill the commitments stated therein. The Congress (I), which won a landslide majority in the 1984 elections, is one example of how the performance of the ruling party, whether good or bad, based solely on election promises made and promises actually fulfilled, greatly influences the basic behaviour of the people. In 1989, the very next election, it failed to secure even a simple majority, primarily due to its lack of performance.

10. POPULAR SLOGANS:

Sometimes, different political parties raise the populist slogan according to the needs of the time and affect the thinking of the voters. For example, 'Garibi Hatao' in 1971. "Khela Hobe." "Jai Jawan Jai kisan" "Achhe din aane waale hain" "Jab Tak sooraj chand Rahega Indira Tera naam Rahega"

11. LANGUAGE:

India is a multilingual nation. Voting behavior is also influenced by language. The linguistic reorganization of states is a clear indication of how important language is to Indian politics. People are easily swayed by any language-related issue because they have an emotional attachment to their native tongues. Voting behavior is always influenced by linguistic interests.

IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH VOTE IN ELECTORAL POLITICS IN INDIA.

"Youth" vote plays a very important role in electoral politics in India. The political parties understand the key role they play in elections, whether it may be assembly, general, or local. Youth constitute a significant number in every constituency. They become a factor in making or breaking election results. So, each and every political party tries to woo young voters.

- The Youth vote made a difference for the victory of the BJP in the 2014 General elections. There was a sharp divide among the voters. The age group of (18-22) voted for the BJP. Also, in the same manner, they voted for Congress in a minimal number.
- In the 2020 Bihar Assembly elections. The youth played a very critical role in reducing the number of seats of NDA (National

Democratic Alliance). But the MGB (Mahagathbandhan) led by RJD, which got over 47% of the vote share among the age group of (18–25), the NDA got 34%. There is a difference of 13% Vote share.

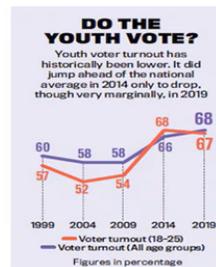
- In the 2022 Punjab Assembly elections. The AAP (Aam Aadmi Party) got a voter share of 48% among the age group of 18–25. But the Congress got just 19%, the difference in vote share is 29%, which is a considerable number.
- In the 2019 General elections, according to the Data published by Lokniti, a post-poll study. The BJP emerged as the most preferred party among first-time voters. In the Age group [18–22], 41% voters voted for the BJP, whereas a minimum of 20% voted for the Congress. The difference in vote share is 21%.
- In the 2020 Delhi Assembly Election, AAP’s vote share is the highest in the youth category, while for the BJP, it is the reverse. AAP got about 52.3% voter share among (18–30), whereas BJP got 32% voter share.

All these instances in electoral politics in India show how the youth vote is more crucial than any other age group, caste, religion, baggage or not; on them, it’s purely their intellectual mind they vote, so the political parties try to grab the attention of young voters in the name of providing employment opportunities or influence in the name of Nationalism. “We have the power to make a difference. But we need to vote.”

Table 1: Voting across age groups in 2019 and 2024 (BJP and Congress)

	Vote share for Congress		Vote share of the BJP	
	2019	2024	2019	2024
Up to 25 year	20	21	40	39
26-35 years	19	21	39	37
36-45 years	20	22	37	36
46-55 years	20	21	35	37
56 years and above	20	22	35	35

The Hindu Newspaper



Lokniti CSDS

SUGGESTIONS:

- Political parties have to bring out separate declaration focusing on youth while bringing out election manifesto.
- ECI has to focus its initiatives in rural areas in par with urban areas.

CONCLUSION

India has successfully sustained the onslaught of the problems related to democratic rule. Democracy has been a successful experiment and elections are like a mirror which reflects the true image of Democracy. The Modern developed Democracies have always laid great emphasis on the study of elections and electoral behavior. Voting behavior is a common subject being discussed by the Political scientists and laymen alike. The vote is such a simple yet complex right known to every citizen in India. But many citizens, especially the youth who constitute a significant number, are not aware of the inherent value they hold in electoral politics. The voting Right is available to almost everyone equally at the age of 18 years irrespective of their religion, gender, education or literacy level. Voting is a fundamental right of every citizen who is of sound mind in India. It helps them to choose the leaders of tomorrow to contribute towards the country's development. It helps for a better India.

Former President of USA 'ABRAHAM LINCOLN' termed "The ballot is stronger than the Bullet", signifies the Importance of it. But the Indian Voter is very negligent to it and is influenced by various traditional criteria like caste, religion, political party, charisma etc., though India is witnessing rapid social, economic and political changes yet the political behavior is not free from extraneous factors. There have been many instances in Indian electoral politics, where the winner or loser is decided by one vote. This shows us each and every vote matters in elections. Participation in the political processes provides an opportunity to people to make the political system reflect their aspirations and ambitions and at the same time lends legitimacy to the system which is the hallmark of democracy. In fact, no democracy politics survive or fulfills its ideals without the participation of the people. Academician Chandrachur Singh believes that "the Era of Political assertions and domination via caste-based politics is waning. The sheer number of younger voters and their craving for education and employment opportunities in the backdrop of massive and ever rising unemployment rates is draining the change. Young voters' preferences are for "Employment Opportunities, Education, Development Work". To conclude, there has been a marked increase in youth voters' turnout in urban local bodies elections and their basis of voting is very contrasting to other voters in the election system. The committed voters cast to a particular party without any aspirations; the

silent voters are those who make up their mind during voting day. The young voters are those who vote neither on traditional factors, but on employment, education, job opportunities, and development works.

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The Authors have no conflict of interest to declare that they are relevant to the content of this article.

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