

AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF MANAGING FAIRNESS IN ELECTORAL SYSTEM THROUGH REFORMS

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Abstract:

An election is a formal decision-making process by which a population chooses an individual to hold public office. Independent India, as an election-based representative democratic Nation, have successfully existed as a largest democracy in the World for more than six decades now. But after travelling these many miles we find the credibility of our electoral system is still not unquestionable.

Poor stature and statesmanship of a majority of contesting candidates , use of money and muscle power, and ghost of caste, religion & regionalism are taking their toll on the fairness of the electoral process, which is amply clear from poor turnout of voters to cast their vote. This does not present a glorious picture of our electoral system.

It was in the light of the above scenario that a research was undertaken to examine the impact of proposed / mentionable changes and reforms on the fairness of our electoral system. A survey, on a population of electorates was conducted with the help of a structured Questionnaire. The queries were mainly centered around age & educational qualifications for the candidates, misuse of money and muscle power, right to reject, right to recall, reservation for women, and making the voting mandatory and so on.

The data so collected are analysed with the help of Excel. The interpretations of inferences and subsequent recommendations then follow.

Keywords: Suffrage, referendum, reforms, election, Right to reject, Election Commission, Electronic Voting Machine (EVM).

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1. Introduction:

An election is a formal decision-making process by which a population chooses an individual to hold public office. Elections have been the usual mechanism by which modern representative democracy operates since the 17th century. Elections may fill offices in the legislature sometimes in the executive and judiciary, and for regional and local government. The universal use of elections as a tool for selecting representatives in modern democracies is in contrast with the practice in the democratic archetype, ancient Athens. Elections then were considered an oligarchic institution and most political offices were filled using sortition, by which officeholders were chosen by lot.

Electoral reform describes the process of introducing fair electoral systems where they are not in place, or improving the fairness or effectiveness of existing systems.

Psephology is the study of results and other statistics relating to elections (especially with a view to predicting future results).

To elect means "to choose or make a decision" and so sometimes other forms of ballot such as referendums are referred to as elections, especially in the United States.

Ideology

In an elections in either a republic or a democracy, voters alternate between being the rulers of the country and being the subjects of the government. By the act of voting, the people operate in a sovereign (or ruling) capacity, acting as "masters" to select their government.

2. Literature review:

Elections were used as early in history as ancient Greece and ancient Rome, and throughout the Medieval period to select rulers such as the Holy Roman Emperor and the Pope. In ancient India, around 920 AD, in Tamil Nadu, Palm leaves were used for village assembly elections. The palm leaves with candidate names, will be put inside a mud pot, for counting. This was called Kudavolai system. Elections were also used to select rajas by the gana(public) in ancient India. Ancient Arabs also used election to choose their caliph, Uthman and Ali, in the early medieval Rashidun Caliphate; and to select the Pala king Gopala in early medieval Bengal. The modern "election", which consists of public elections of government officials, didn't emerge until

the beginning of the 17th century when the idea of representative government took hold in North America and Europe.

2.1 Functions

Who is elected

The government positions for which elections are held vary depending on the locale. In a representative democracy, such as the United States, some positions are not filled through elections, especially those that require certain skills. For example, judges are usually appointed rather than elected to help protect their impartiality. There are exceptions to this practice, however; some judges in the United States are elected, and in ancient Athens military generals were elected.

Types of elections

In most democratic political systems, there are a range of different types of election, corresponding to different layers of public governance or geographical jurisdiction. Some common types of elections are:

- Presidential election
- General election
- Primary election
- By-election
- Local election

Referendum

A referendum is a democratic tool related to elections in which the electorate votes for or against a specific proposal, law or policy, rather than for a general policy or a particular candidate or party. Referenda may be added to an election ballot or held separately and may be either binding or consultative, usually depending on the constitution. Referenda are usually called by governments via the legislature, however many democracies allow citizens to petition for referenda directly, called initiatives.

Referenda are particularly prevalent and important in direct democracies, such as Switzerland.

2.2 Suffrage

The question of who may vote is a central issue in elections. The electorate does not generally include the entire population; for example, many countries prohibit those judged mentally incompetent from voting, and all jurisdictions require a minimum age for voting.

Historically, other groups of people have also been excluded from voting. For instance, the democracy of ancient Athens did not allow women, foreigners, or slaves to vote, and the original United States Constitution left the topic of suffrage to the states; usually only white male property owners were able to vote. Males, the dominant cultural group in North America and Europe, often dominated the electorate and continue to do so in many countries. Early elections in countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States were dominated by landed or ruling class males. Much of the history of elections involves the effort to promote suffrage for excluded groups. The women's suffrage movement gave women in many countries the right to vote, and securing the right to vote freely was a major goal of the American civil rights movement.

Extending voting rights to excluded groups (such as convicted felons, members of certain minorities, and the economically disadvantaged) continues to be a goal of voting rights advocates. Suffrage is typically only for citizens of the country, though further limits may be imposed.

2.3 Electoral systems

Electoral systems are the detailed constitutional arrangements and voting systems that convert the vote into political decision. The first step is to tally the votes, for which various different vote counting systems and ballot types are used. Voting systems then determine the result on the basis of the tally. Most systems can be categorized as either proportional or majoritarian. Among the former are party-list proportional representation and additional member system. Among the latter are First Past the Post (FPP) (relative majority) and absolute majority. Many countries have growing electoral reform movements, which advocate systems such as approval voting, single transferable vote and instant runoff voting.

While openness and accountability are usually considered cornerstones of a democratic system, the act of casting a vote and the content of a voter's ballot are usually an important exception. The secret ballot is a relatively modern development, but it is now considered crucial in most free and fair elections, as it limits the effectiveness of intimidation.

2.4 Scheduling

The nature of democracy is that elected officials are accountable to the people, and they must return to the voters at prescribed intervals to seek their mandate to continue in office. For that reason most democratic constitutions provide that elections are held at fixed regular intervals. In the United States, elections are held between every three and six years in most states, with exceptions such as the U.S. House of Representatives, which stands for election every two years. There is a variety of schedules, for example presidents: the President of Ireland is elected every seven years, the President of Finland every six years, the President of France every five years, the President of Russia and President of United States every four years.

2.5 Election campaigns

When elections are called, politicians and their supporters attempt to influence policy by competing directly for the votes of constituents in what are called campaigns. Supporters for a campaign can be either formally organized or loosely affiliated, and frequently utilize campaign advertising. It is common for political scientists to attempt to predict elections via Political Forecasting methods.

2.6 Difficulties with elections

In many countries with weak rule of law, the most common reason why elections do not meet international standards of being "free and fair" is interference from the incumbent government. Dictators may use the powers of the executive (police, martial law, censorship, physical implementation of the election mechanism, etc.) to remain in power despite popular opinion in favor of removal. Members of a particular faction in a legislature may use the power of the majority or supermajority (passing criminal laws, defining the electoral mechanisms including eligibility and district boundaries) to prevent the balance of power in the body from shifting to a rival faction due to an election.

Non-governmental entities can also interfere with elections, through physical force, verbal intimidation, or fraud, which can result in improper casting or counting of votes.

Unfair rules: This can include Gerrymandering, exclusion of opposition candidates from eligibility for office, and manipulating thresholds for electoral success are some of the ways the structure of an election can be changed to favor a specific faction or candidate.

Interference with campaigns: Those in power may arrest or assassinate candidates, suppress or even criminalize campaigning, close campaign headquarters, harass or beat campaign workers, or intimidate voters with violence.

Tampering with the election mechanism: This can include confusing or misleading voters about how to vote, violation of the secret ballot, ballot stuffing, tampering with voting machines, destruction of legitimately cast ballots and, voter suppression

3. Electoral Process in India:

Elections in India are conducted according to the procedure laid down by law. The following process is observed.

3.1 Notification for Election

The process of election officially begins when the recommendation of Election Commission, the President in case of Lok Sabha and the Governor in case of State Assembly issue a notification for the election. Seven days are given to candidates to file nomination. The seventh day is the last date after the issue of notification excluding Sunday. Scrutiny of nomination papers is done on the day normally after the last date of filing nominations. The candidate can withdraw his/her nomination on the second day after the scrutiny of papers.

Election is held not earlier than twentieth day after the withdrawal.

3.2 Filing of Nomination

A person who intends to contest an election is required to file the nomination paper in a prescribed form indicating his name, age, postal address and serial number in the electoral rolls. The candidate is required to be duly proposed and seconded by at least two voters registered in

the concerned constituency. Every candidate has to take an oath or make affirmation. These papers are then submitted to the Returning Officer designated by the Election Commission.

3.3 Security Deposit

Every candidate has to make a security deposit at the time of filing nomination. For Lok Sabha every candidate has to make a security deposit of Rs.10,000/- and for State Assembly Rs. 5,000. But candidates belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are required to deposit Rs. 5,000/- for contesting the Lok Sabha elections and Rs. 2,500/- for contesting Vidhan Sabha elections. The security deposit is forfeited if the candidate fails to get at least 1/6 of the total valid votes polled.

3.4 Scrutiny and Withdrawal

All nomination papers received by the Returning Officer are scrutinised on the day fixed by the Election Commission. This is done to ensure that all papers are filled according to the procedure laid down and accompanied by required security deposit. The Returning Officer is empowered to reject a nomination paper on any one of the following ground:

- (i) If the candidate is less than 25 years of age.
- (ii) If he/she has not made security deposit.
- (iii) If he/she is holding any office of profit.
- (iv) If he/she is not listed as a voter anywhere in the country

The second day after the scrutiny of nomination papers is the last date for the withdrawal of the candidates. In case that day happens to be a holiday or Sunday, the day immediately after that is fixed as the last day for the withdrawal.

3.5 Election Campaign

Campaigning is the process by which a candidate tries to persuade the voters to vote for him rather than others. During this period, the candidates try to travel through their constituency to influence as many voters as possible to vote in their favour. In the recent times, the Election Commission has granted all the recognised National and Regional Parties, free access to the State-owned electronic media, the All India Radio (AIR) and the Doordarshan to do their

campaigning. The total free time is fixed by the Election Commission which is allotted to all the political parties. Campaigning stops 48 hours before the day of polling. A number of campaign techniques are involved in the election process. Some of these are:

- i. Holding of public meetings
- ii. Distribution of handbills, highlighting the main issues of their election manifesto
- iii. Door to door appeal by influential people in the party.
- iv. Broadcasting and telecasting of speeches by various political leaders.

3.6 Model Code of Conduct

During the campaign period the political parties and the contesting candidates are expected to abide by a model code of conduct evolved by the Election Commission of India on the basis of the consensus among political parties. It comes into force the moment schedule of election is announced by the Election Commission. The code of conduct is as follows :

- (i) Political Parties and contesting candidates should not use religious places for election campaign.
- (ii) Such speeches should not be delivered in a way to create hatred among different communities belonging to different religions, castes and languages, etc.
- (iii) Official machinery should not be used for election work.
- (iv) No new grants can be sanctioned, no new schemes or projects can be started once the election dates are announced.
- (v) One cannot misuse mass media for partisan coverage.

3.7 Scrutiny of Expenses

Though the Election Commission provides free access for a limited time to all the recognized National and State parties for their campaign, this does not mean that political parties do not spend anything on their elections campaign. The political parties and the candidates contesting election spend large sum of amount on their election campaign. However, the Election Commission has the power to scrutinise the election expenses to be incurred by the candidates. There is a ceiling on expenses to be incurred in Parliamentary as well as State Assembly

elections. Every candidate is required to file an account of his election expenses within 45 days of declaration of results. In case of default or if the candidate has incurred (expenses) more than the prescribed limit, the Election Commission can take appropriate action and the candidate elected may be disqualified and his election may be countermanded.

3.8 Polling, Counting and Declaration of Result

In order to conduct polling, large numbers of polling booths are set up in each constituency. Each booth is placed under the charge of a Presiding Officer with the Polling Officers to help the process. A voter casts his/her vote secretly in an enclosure, so that no other person comes to know of the choice he/she has made. It is known as secret ballot. After the polling is over, ballot boxes are sealed in the presence of agents of the candidates. Agents ensure that no voter is denied right to vote, provided the voter turns up comes within the prescribed time limit.

3.9 Re-poll

If at the time of polling, a booth is captured by some anti-social elements, the Election Commission may order holding of re-poll in either the entire constituency or particular booths.

3.10 Countermanding of Election

If a duly nominated candidate belonging to a recognized party dies at any time after the last date of nomination and before the commencement of polling, the Election Commission orders countermanding the elections. This is not just postponement of polling. The entire election process, beginning from nominations is initiated afresh in the concerned constituency.

4. Problems and Difficulties of Indian Electoral System:

There has been universal appreciation of the Indian electoral system. People have hailed the manner in which elections have been conducted in India. But there are its weaknesses. It has been seen that in spite of the efforts of Election Commission to ensure free and fair election, there are certain shortcomings of our Electoral system. Some notable weaknesses are discussed below:

4.1 Money Power

The role of unaccounted money in elections has become a serious problem. The political parties collect funds from companies and business houses, and then use this money to influence the voter to vote in their favour. The business contributions are mostly in cash and are not unaccounted. Many other corrupt practices are also adopted during election such as bribing, rigging or voters intimidation, impersonation and providing transport and conveyance of voters to and fro the polling stations. The reports of liquor being distributed in poor areas are frequent during election.

4.2 Muscle Power

Earlier the criminals used to support the candidates by intimidating the voter at a gunpoint to vote according to their direction. Now they themselves have come out openly by contesting the elections leading to criminalization of politics. As a result violence during elections has also increased.

4.3 Caste and Religion

Generally the candidates are given tickets by the political parties on the consideration whether the candidate can muster the support of numerically larger castes and communities and possesses enough resources. Even the electorates vote on the caste and communal lines. Communal loyalties of the voters are used at the time of propaganda campaign.

4.4 Misuse of government machinery

All the political parties do not have equal opportunity in respect of access to resources. The party in power is always in advantageous position than the opposition parties. There is widespread allegation that the party in power accomplishes misuse of government machinery.

All these features lead to violence, booth capturing, rigging bogus voting, forcible removal of ballot papers, ballot boxes burning of vehicles, etc. which result into loss of public faith in elections.

4.5 Lack of candidates with clean image

Educated class, white collard professionals and academicians have very little interest in electioneering. On the other hand people with dubious back ground are very active in the election. And many a times dominance of these people forces the good people further away.

4.6 Absence of upper age limit & minimum educational qualification

In almost all the Govt. & Pvt. Jobs right from peon through Chief Executive there exists guiding rules regarding minimum & Maximum age and educational Qualification for getting in to their respective jobs and the same is strictly followed by them. But there is no upper age limit and minimum educational qualification prescribed for contesting an election for the law makers.

4.7 Excessively high election expenses

One of the biggest hurdles for low and middle income group, white colored and professional citizens of the state not showing interest in electioneering is excessively high expenses of election. Pumping of money by corrupt and non-social element, in the absence of any powerful mechanism to check this menace, the simple and innocent citizen stay away from election process.

5. Objectives:

1. To find out as to whether the existing electoral process in India is really acceptable, whole heartedly by electorate as a tool to choose representatives of their choice, or requires some mentionable change and reforms
2. To ascertain if the proposals for reforms, which are subject of a national debate among people and media in the society, are welcome by the majority of the voters
3. should the candidates in the election fulfill some prescribed eligibility criteria with regard to age and educational qualifications, as is in the cases of the employment in the Government and Private Establishment

6. Methodology:

The very objective of the research to find clues to suggestive reforms in the present electoral system necessitated the use of primary data to be gathered from the voters themselves to ascertain as to what changes and reforms in the present electoral system they want. A sample size of one hundred and ten respondents was chosen from Kanpur(U.P) Parliamentary constituency for conducting personal survey to gather first hand informations with the help of structured questionnaire.

Collection of primary data through Questionnaire

This method of data collection is quite popular. Quite often Questionnaire is considered as the heart of a survey. The primary data were collected through questionnaire since it has some distinguished merits like:

1. It is economical
2. Simple to Administer, &
3. It is free from bias of interviewer

To make the questionnaire more logical and successful it was kept shorter and simple. The questions were mostly close ended with two possible answers of Yes or No. These have advantages of easy handling, and Simple to answer.

7. Survey:

A pilot survey was undertaken to test the suitability of the questions and understanding of the same by the respondents. The pilot survey was conducted at Market places, Institutes and colleges. The responses were encouraging, and based on the pilot survey, a properly thought out and simple worded questionnaire was prepared and was administered in the sample.

Sample Profile

Sample Size:110

Male respondents:80 Male % age : 73 %

Qualification	Age
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GR	62	18-29	26
UG	9	30-41	24
LIT	9	42 & above	21

Female respondents:30 Female % age : 27 %

Qualification		Age	
GR	27	18-29	18
UG	2	30-41	3
LIT	1	42 & above	9

It was in the fitness of the scheme of the exploratory research that the survey method was adopted to conduct the inquiry into the behavior of the population regarding electoral reforms. The tool used for this purpose was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaires (Annex-I) were mailed electronically and distributed personally, with the request to send the same back to the researcher at the earliest.

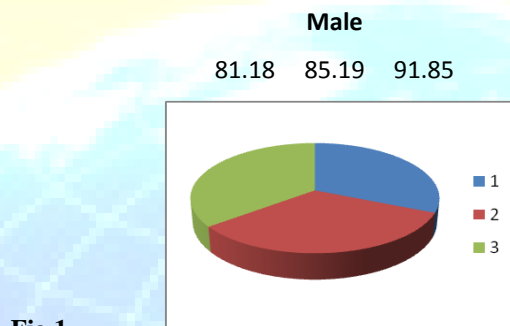
8. Data analysis and findings:

Data that were collected through questionnaire have been analyzed with the help of descriptive and analytical statistical tools like Pie diagrams and tables.

Table No.1

Query	Male(80)						Total	%
	GR(62)	%	UG(9)	%	LIT(9)	%		
1	55	88.71	9	100.00	9	100.00	73	91.25
2	57	91.94	9	100.00	9	100.00	75	93.75
3	48	77.42	8	88.89	8	88.89	64	80
4	46	74.19	4	44.44	8	88.89	58	72.5
5	55	88.71	9	100.00	9	100.00	73	91.25
6	57	91.94	7	77.78	9	100.00	73	91.25
7	43	69.35	5	55.56	7	77.78	55	68.75
8	47	75.81	8	88.89	7	77.78	62	77.5

9	57	91.94	9	100.00	9	100.00	75	93.75
10	41	66.13	7	77.78	9	100.00	57	71.25
11	44	70.97	7	77.78	8	88.89	59	73.75
12	48	77.42	8	88.89	9	100.00	65	81.25
13	53	85.48	8	88.89	8	88.89	69	86.25
14	47	75.81	9	100.00	7	77.78	63	78.75
15	57	91.94	8	88.89	8	88.89	73	91.25
		81.18			85.19			91.85



8.1 Discussion:

From the above table No.1 & fig.1 which shows the responses by the male classified on the basis of their educational back ground (divided *GR, UG & LIT), following inferences are drawn:

On an average 81.18% of male graduates respond positively towards proposed changes, similarly 85.19% of male under graduates respond in favor of proposed changes, and 89.85% of mere literates (not having any formal qualification) also are in favor of proposed changes and reforms.

Table No.2

Query	Female(30)						Total	% Total
	GR(27)	%	UG(2)	%	LIT(1)	%		
1	26	96.30	1	50	1	100	28	93.33
2	26	96.30	2	100	1	100	29	96.67
3	25	92.59	2	100	1	100	28	93.33
4	25	92.59	2	100	0	0	27	90.00
5	26	96.30	1	50	1	100	28	93.33
6	26	96.30	2	100	1	100	29	96.67
7	23	85.19	2	100	1	100	26	86.67

8	23	85.19	2	100	1	100	26	86.67
9	24	88.89	2	100	1	100	27	90.00
10	15	55.56	2	100	1	100	18	60.00
11	23	85.19	1	50	1	100	25	83.33
12	25	92.59	2	100	1	100	28	93.33
13	21	77.78	2	100	1	100	24	80.00
14	19	70.37	1	50	1	100	21	70.00
15	25	92.59	2	100	1	100	28	93.33
		86.91			86.67			93.33

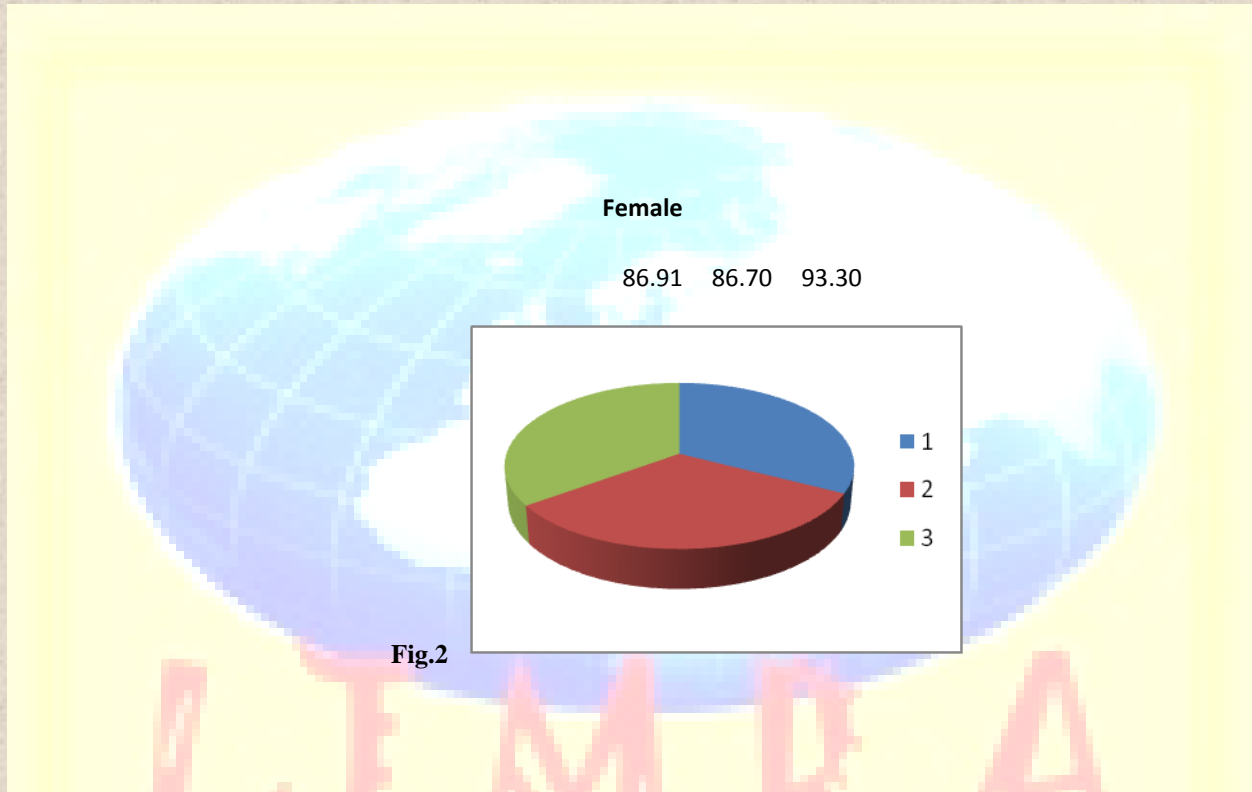


Fig.2

8.2 Discussion:

From the above table No.2 & fig.2 which shows the responses by the female classified on the basis of their educational back ground (divided *GR, UG & LIT), following inferences are drawn:

On an average 86.91% of female graduates respond positively towards proposed changes, similarly 86.67% of female under graduates respond in favor of proposed changes, and 93.33% of female mere literates (not having any formal qualification) also are in favor of proposed changes and reforms.

Table No.3

Query	MALE(80)						Total (80)	% Total
	18-29	%	30-41	%	42 & Above	%		
1	20	76.92	23	95.83	30	100.00	73	91.25
2	21	80.77	24	100.00	30	100.00	75	93.75
3	21	80.77	20	83.33	23	76.67	64	80
4	15	57.69	20	83.33	23	76.67	58	72.5
5	21	80.77	23	95.83	29	96.67	73	91.25
6	24	92.31	24	100.00	25	83.33	73	91.25
7	19	73.08	19	79.17	17	56.67	55	68.75
8	21	80.77	17	70.83	24	80.00	62	77.5
9	22	84.62	23	95.83	30	100.00	75	93.75
10	13	50.00	17	70.83	27	90.00	57	71.25
11	15	57.69	22	91.67	22	73.33	59	73.75
12	17	65.38	20	83.33	28	93.33	65	81.25
13	20	76.92	22	91.67	27	90.00	69	86.25
14	18	69.23	19	79.17	26	86.67	63	78.75
15	22	84.62	22	91.67	28	93.33	72	90
		74.10		87.50		86.44		

Female

85.19 84.44 91.85

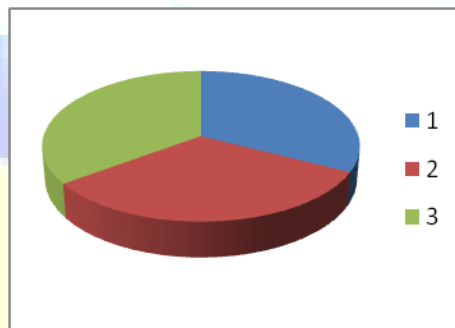


Fig.3

8.3 Discussion:

From the above table No.3 & fig.3 which shows the responses by the male classified on the basis of their age groups (divided *18-29, 30-41 & 42 and above), following inferences are drawn:

On an average 74.10% of male aged between 18 & 29 years respond positively towards proposed changes, similarly 87.50% of male aged between 30 & 41 years respond in favor of proposed changes, and 86.44% of male aged 42 years and above also are in favor of proposed changes and reforms.

Table No.4

Query	FEMALE (30)						Total	% Total
	18-29	%	30-41	%	42 & Above	%		
1	16	88.89	3	100.00	9	100.00	28	93.33
2	18	100.00	3	100.00	8	88.89	29	96.67
3	17	94.44	3	100.00	8	88.89	28	93.33
4	17	94.44	3	100.00	7	77.78	27	90.00
5	16	88.89	3	100.00	9	100.00	28	93.33
6	18	100.00	2	66.67	9	100.00	29	96.67
7	15	83.33	3	100.00	8	88.89	26	86.67
8	16	88.89	2	66.67	8	88.89	26	86.67
9	16	88.89	3	100.00	8	88.89	27	90.00
10	8	44.44	2	66.67	8	88.89	18	60.00
11	14	77.78	2	66.67	9	100.00	25	83.33
12	16	88.89	3	100.00	9	100.00	28	93.33
13	14	77.78	2	66.67	8	88.89	24	80.00
14	12	66.67	1	33.33	8	88.89	21	70.00
15	17	94.44	3	100.00	8	88.89	28	93.33
		85.19		84.44		91.85		

Female
85.19 84.44 91.85

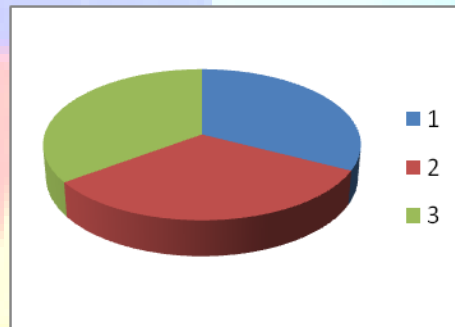


Fig.4

8.4 Discussion:

From the above table No.4 & fig.4 which shows the responses by the female classified on the basis of their age groups (divided *18-29, 30-41 & 42 and above), following inferences are drawn:

On an average 85.19% of female aged between 18 & 29 years respond positively towards proposed changes, similarly 84.44% of female aged between 30 & 41 years respond in favor of

proposed changes, and 91.85% of female aged 42 years and above also are in favor of proposed changes and reforms.

9. Conclusion & Recommendations:

Based on the analysis and inferences it is amply clear that the majority of the respondents favour and support the proposed reforms and show concern toward the deterioration of fairness in existing electoral system.

Keeping in line with spirit of fairness in election process and promoting confidence in the public the process of reforms must continue. This paper is an attempt to this end. Some logically considered reforms are hereby recommended, which are as follows;

Right to reject

With suitable amendment in the rules and law governing conduct of election, a proviso for negative voting be created. The ballot papers should, in the column relating to names of candidates, after the entry of last candidate's name, provide a column of "None of the above" to enable a voter to reject all the candidates in the fray.

Number of proposers

The number of proposers of the Name of a candidate seeking to contest election for Parliament or State Assembly, be fixed as five (5).

Financial Status

An Affidavit clearly stating total income, sources of the income and total assets held by the candidate be declared in advance. And the same should be submitted at the time of nomination.

Social Status

An Affidavit clearly detailing the cases pending in the court of law is submitted with nomination papers. A candidate against whom such case(s) are pending in which charge sheet has been filed, and if decided against him imprisonment of one year or more can be awarded, he should be debarred from contesting election.

The above two proposals i.e. disclosure of financial and civic status by aspiring candidates, shall eliminate/substantially reduce the in-genuine, non-deserving, and dummy candidates from contesting election which will ease the burden of govt. machinery conducting the election as will also reduce the cost, of conducting election, to the exchequer.

Minimum Qualification

A minimum educational qualification be made mandatory for a candidate seeking an election for any public office/legislative body to remove anomalies among office holders of state.

Upper Age Limit

Like minimum age, an upper age limit for contesting election be fixed to remove anomalies among office holders of state.

Suitability Certificate

A candidate should get a statement of suitability, signed from a fixed no. of tax payers i.e. 25 for Assembly and 50 for Parliament, and submit the same with nomination papers. This will not only enhance the credibility of the candidates, but also elevate the confidence level of voters in the contestants. Further this will reduce the number of in-genuine, dummy, non-deserving and cheap popularity seeking candidates in the fray, which will bring the cost of conducting election down, as also the management of election by the govt. authorities will be made easy and lesser painful.

Security deposit non- refundable

The amount of security deposit for contesting election of assembly and parliament be raised to Rs.20000 and Rs.40000 respectively. The security for S.C.,S.T. and Graduates & Higher educated candidates be fixed at Rs.10000 and Rs.20000 for assembly and parliament respectively. The security once deposited should not be refunded notwithstanding the result of the election.

Woman Reservation

Giving due weight & in the recognition to the right of equality for fairer sex 50% of the seats in the legislature be reserved for woman candidates. Their active participation, in electioneering,

will go a long way creating an environment conducive for all members of the family to actively participate in electoral process.

Election expense limit

To provide a level playing field to all the candidates and to eradicate the use of money power in the election, an expense limit should not only be fixed but a regulatory mechanism, strong enough, to ensure strict implementation of the same in its letter and spirit must be put in place and the violator may be barred from the on going election.

Voting be made mandatory

While right to vote is a fundamental right of all the major citizens (18 years of age and above) of the state, the voting needs to be made mandatory so that voters cast their vote en-mass and a real people's representative is actually elected. This can be achieved by proper training and education about the value of their vote and proper use of E-mail and SMS in deserving cases.

Voting by E-mail & SMS

To encourage & motivate the electorate to necessarily come out in large numbers to vote, one very effective tool which is very popular, convenient and economical, is the use of e-mail & sms for casting the vote.

Use of E-mail & SMS to cast the vote will go a long way helping to make voting compulsory for it being handy & convenient. This will also help to a greater extent in:

1. Reducing fear of use of muscle power during polling
2. Reducing fear of use of money power to attract voters
3. Motivating NRIs (who have now been allowed to be registered as voters in the voter-list of their relevant constituency) to vote sitting in their houses / business establishments abroad
4. Increasing polling percentage in the election helping thereby the choosing real people's representative
5. Making it convenient for those employed who are posted at distant places and out of their states to cast their vote conveniently

6. Reducing reluctance among those who have an indifferent attitude towards electioneering, particularly towards casting their votes

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