

IMPACT OF POLITICAL PARTIES AND RELIGION
ON THE ELECTORATES
(2007 PUNJAB ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS)

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ABSTRACT

The present paper describes that People traditionally are the followers of their concerned political parties because people caste their votes as a practice and continue go with parties' fidelities for generations. They generally go with their religions also while voting. Voting is a self-expressive social behaviour in which individual ways of communication are highly motivated in mobilizing citizens to vote. Voters should be very cautious in observing the present governments on the basis of their overall performance during the entire term in office.

Keywords: Elections, Religion, Party, Voting behaviour, Percentage analysis.

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Introduction

The voting behaviour of people is generally affected by three factors: Party, Candidate and Caste-Religious factor.¹ The satisfaction level of people towards the performance of government can be understood with voting process.² There are many political parties in Punjab but mainly two major power contenders which influence the Punjab politics are the SAD (Shiromani Akali Dal) and the Congress. The former is always seen as Sikh dominated party whereas the latter is seen as secular party which secured votes from all sections of society generally.³ In this article the Centre for the Studies of Developing Societies (CSDS) data for 2007 Punjab assembly elections is used. The total 502 respondents were interviewed by CSDS. The following Tables show the impact of religion in Punjab politics:

Results

In the Table 1 the percentage of Sikh, Hindu and other religions' respondents in each Constituency is described. More Sikh respondent were calculated in Sunam Constituency that was 8.38% and lowest from Amritsar West Constituency that was 0.57%. Highest number of Hindu respondents was from Nangal Constituency that was 13.13% and lowest was from more than one Constituency likely Majitha, Jandiala Guru (SC), Sunam, Moga and Panj Graina (SC).

CONSTITUENCIES	SIKH	HINDU	OTHERS
MAJITHA	1.44	0.72	5.26
JANDIALA(SC)	7.51	0.72	10.5
AMRITSA (W)	0.57	3.64	0
RAJA SANSI	3.75	2.18	0
BANGA	2.60	2.18	15.7
JAGROAN	4.33	4.37	0
DAKHA(SC)	5.49	2.18	0

LUDHIANA WEST	2.02	12.40	0
LUDHIANA RURAL	1.73	5.83	0
KUM KALAN(SC)	4.33	5.10	5.26
NANGAL	2.31	13.13	5.26
MORINDA	6.06	3.64	0
PATIALA TOWN	2.89	9.48	0
SIRHIND	7.22	2.91	0
SHERPUR(SC)	6.06	2.18	0
DHANAUA	3.75	2.18	10.52
SUNAM	8.38	0.72	0
MOGA	2.60	0.72	0
PANJ GRAINA(SC)	4.04	0.72	0
LAMBI	4.91	10.94	5.26
BATHINDA	5.20	5.83	15.78
RAMPURA PHUL	6.069	5.83	5.26
BUDHLADA	6.64	2.18	21.05
TOTAL	100	100	100

TABLE-2
POLITICAL PARTIES VOTED BY PEOPLE (in percentage)⁵

PARTIES	INC	BJP	AD	CPI	CPM	BSP	ADM	IND	O	T
SIKH	42.77	2.31	43.06	1.73	0.57	3.46	4.04	1.15	0.86	100
HINDU	59.85	10.94	18.24	2.18	0	5.1	2.18	0	1.45	100

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The Table 2 shows about the Sikh and Hindu voter respondents who voted for different parties. The Congress achieved more votes from both Hindu and Sikh although the percentage of Hindu respondents was pretty higher. On the other side, Akali got votes particularly from Sikh community. The Hindu percentage in favour of Akali was approx 18 percent which was lower than the Sikh percentage in Congress. The main reason of the more popularity of the Congress

than SAD was that it is the secular party and could not have the fixed regional concentration unlike the other parties as Akalis concentrated in Sikh areas and BJP in Hindu areas.

TABLE-3
TO WHOM IMPORTANCE IS GIVEN (IN PERCENTAGE)⁷

CHIOCE	CANDIDATE	PARTY	CASTE	SOMETHING ELES	NO OPINION	TOTAL
SIKH	32.08	56.93	1.15	8.09	1.73	100
HINDU	29.19	61.31	2.18	3.64	3.65	100

It is clear from the Table 3 that 56.9 percent of Sikh respondents and 61.3 percent of Hindu respondents gave their consideration to party. On the other side 32.08 percent Sikh and 29.1 percent of Hindu gave importance to candidate while voting. A modern representative democracy is not possible by depriving political parties because the latter are the central institutions of a modern democracy and also ensure that the citizens are capable of acting politically. Citizens can familiarize themselves politically through the parties by observing the work of the parties. Opposition parties also have the major contribution in modern democracy by criticising the government and control it.⁸

TABLE-4
WHICH GOVERNMENT IS BETTER (IN PERCENTAGE)⁹

PARTIES	CONGRESS	AKALI DAL	BOTH EQUALLY GOOD	BOTH EQUALLY BAD	NO OPINION	TOTAL
SIKH	41.61	41.32	5.2	7.22	4.62	100
HINDU	54.74	24.81	5.1	7.29	8.02	100

It is clear from Table 4 that the percentage of Sikhs who considered that Congress and Akali government is better was more or less same but the percentage of Hindu respondents who supported Congress was very higher than the percentage of Hindu who considered that Akali

government is better. The percentages of the columns both equally good and equally bad were almost same that was approx. 5 percent and 7 percent respectively.

Conclusion

It can be said that people generally voted for parties and also do not go away from their religious sentiments. Generally people vote for a particular party by deciding its overall performance, leadership and development in their areas for example the development and facilities provided by the Akali government to the farmers generally and to the rural poor particularly in Punjab made people loyal towards that party.

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- [¹] Awasthy, S. S. (2009). *Indian Government and Politics*. New Delhi: Har- Anand, pp 420-21.
- [²] Kumar, S. & Praveen R. (2013). *Measuring Voting Behaviour in India*. New Delhi: Sage, pp 6-9.
- [³] Kumar, A. (2005). Electoral Politics in Punjab: 1966-2004. *Journal of Political Studies*, 12:1, pp 119-120.
- [⁴] CSDS data for 2007 Punjab assembly elections.
- [⁵] Same for Table 1
- [⁶] Abbreviation: INC-Indian National Congress, BJP- Bhartiya Janta Party, AD-Akali Dal, CPI-Communist Party of India, CPM-Communist Party of Marxist, BSP-Bahujan Samaj Party, ADM-Akali Dal Mann, IND-Independent, O-Others, T-Total.
- [⁷] Same for Table 1
- [⁸] Hofmeister, W. & Karsten, G. (2011). *Political Parties Functions and Organisation in Democratic Societies*. Singapore: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, pp 8-9 & 17.
- [⁹] Same for Table 1