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Ethnic Identity Politics in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: An Empirical Analysis Of 2008 General Elections*

Abstract

This paper is going to perceive that how much theory of ethnicity in terms of Pakhtun is applicable in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) in relation to 2008 general polls. The study argues that the Pakhtun ethnicity is applicable to some extent in KP. Data have been collected from a sample of 800 in NA-2 which reveals that majority of the respondents (53.76%) build their electoral preferences on ethnic identity. The inferential statistics in the form of chi-square and p-value provides values which provides that there is significant association between dependent and independent variables.

Keywords: Ethnicity, Ethnic Politics, Pakhtun ethnicity, General Elections 2008, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Electoral Politics.

Introduction:

Ethnicity has been derived from a Greek word ‘*ethnos*’ which means ‘tribe’, ‘race’, ‘people’ or ‘nation’.¹ ‘It refers to the people living and acting collectively in a way that we can apply to a people or nation.’² Ethnicity is based on culture, language, ancestry notions, historical stories, location, physical attributes and religion. Ethnicity classifies and organizes individuals into various factions or strata. Each stratum has its own unique features. It has its own perceptions and its members are similar to each other but different from other ethnic groups.³

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* This research article has been taken from the Ph.D dissertation entitled, *Voting Behaviour in Pakistan: A Case Study of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2008 General Elections*, submitted to Pakistan Study Centre, University of Peshawar, Peshawar, Pakistan in 2014. In this thesis various determinants of voting behaviour have been discussed. This paper covers the determinant of Pakhtun ethnicity in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with reference to 2008 General Elections.

There are two views regarding the emergence of ethnicity in society. The first one is the primordial view which claims that ethnicity is inherent in human being because they possess immutable traits. Its exponent supporters are Harold R. Isaacs, Clifford Geertz, Michael Novak and many others. This view of ethnicity has been rejected due to various flaws in it. The second one is the situation view of ethnicity which states that ethnicity is constructed in the society due to socio-economic and political situations. Its supporters are Kathleen Neils Conzen, Werner Sollors, Stephen Steinberg and many others. This theory is most acceptable in comparison to inherent theory of ethnicity. However, still controversies exist among the scholars regarding the application of these theories.⁴

Ethnic voting plays an important role in electoral studies. Ethnic cleavages lead to the formation of various ethnic parties in a multi-ethnic and multi-race society which provide ground for the emergence of ethnic politics.⁵ Ethnic political parties exist both in developed and developing countries such as United Kingdom, Canada, South Africa, India and Sri Lanka etc⁶. According to Robert Dahl, ethnic voting takes place in those ethnic groups where the groups are subjected to homogenous socio-economic status. The ethnic voting will decline when members of an ethnic group attain different socio-economic status.⁷ Raymond Wolfinger also presents his theory on the basis of socio-economic status. The tendency of ethnic voting reaches at the top when the members of ethnic group achieve the middle class status.⁸ According to Robert Harmel and John D. Robertson, greater the ethnic groups in a society, greater will be the number of ethnic political parties in it. Keeping in view the ethnic demands of the people, the ethnic parties launch various ethnic programmes for getting electoral support.⁹ According to Donna Lee Van Cott, ethnic political parties do not emerge automatically. They are formed as a result of the institutional change which refers to the 'changes in constitutional provisions, laws, and rules that structure the political system, particularly the electoral system; and party system change that significantly lowers barriers to new entrants.'¹⁰ Kanchan Chandra rejects the point of view that ethnic divisions lead to the destabilization of democracy. He argues that ethnic parties cannot destroy the democracy if they are institutionally supported and backed. The institutions which are attributed with single ethnic identity structure must be replaced with a structure of multi-ethnic identities.¹¹

Pakistan is also a multi-cultural, multi-lingual, and multi-ethnic state having ethnic diversities in its four provinces. The ethnic landscape in Pakistan is that Punjabis constitute the largest ethnic group (48.2%) in Pakistan, followed by Pakhtuns (13.1%), Sindhis (11.8 %), Siraikis (9.8 %), Urdu-speaking (7.6 %), Baloch-Brahuis (4.2 %), and Hindko-speaking (2.4 %).¹² The ethnic diversities transformed into polarized ethnic identities due to strong stress on policy of centralism, economic disparities, lack of provincial autonomy, lack of tolerance to

promote local language and culture, suppression of an ethnic group at the name of national security and dominant posture of the Punjabis over small ethnic groups.¹³

Pakhtun ethnic politics is practiced in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan during the British rule in India struggled for reformation of Pakhtun society and end of British colonialism under the umbrella of Khudai Khidmatgar (Servants of God) Movement (KKM). It was a Pakhtun ethno-nationalist movement started in 1929. This movement also acted as a Pakhtun's resistive force against the British in the pre-partition era. After the partition of India, KKM boycotted the referendum held in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in July 1947 because it was in favour of independent Pakhtun state or joining with Afghanistan. However, in 1948, after the creation of Pakistan, Ghaffar Khan took oath of allegiance to Pakistan. After the creation of Pakistan, the Pakhtun nationalists of KKM started the demand of provincial autonomy for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa because it feared from the dominance of Punjabis.¹⁴

Khan Abdula Ghaffar Khan, Abdul Hameed Khan Bashani, a Bengali political leader and G. M. Syed, a Sindhi nationalist formed the National Awami Party (NAP) in Dhaka in July 1957. It was a leftist and progressive party which spoke for the protection of the rights of the ethnic minorities and provincial autonomy. In 1967 the party split into two factions. One faction was pro-Soviet led by Muzaffar Ahmed along with Wali Khan and other faction was pro-Chinese headed by Bashani. NAP and JUI formed a coalition government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 1972. When Z.A.Bhutto dissolved the provincial assembly of Balochistan in 1975, NAP started a protest movement against the Bhutto government for suppressing the provincial autonomy Pakhtun nationalists. The Pakhtun nationalists suffered a lot when Abdul Ghaffar Khan passed away in 1988.¹⁵

ANP always tries to politicize ethnic issues. In 1997, ANP broke its alliance with PML-N when Nawaz Sharif refused to rename NWFP. Begum Naseem Wali Khan emotionally argued that Pakhtun should be given identity on the map of Pakistan. She added that Pakhtunkhwa was the 3000 years old name of NWFP. She argued that even this word of Pakhtunkhwa has been used by Ahmad Shah Abdali who once said that he could forget the throne of Delhi but not Pakhtunkhwa.¹⁶ In 2008 elections, ANP got majority in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and established a coalition government with PPP both in the province and centre. The PPP accepted the demand of ANP for renaming NWFP as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa which was constitutionally accepted in 18th Amendment in 2010. The ANP is also giving ethnic touch to the project of Kalabagh Dam.¹⁷

Research Questions:

- 1) What is ethnic voting?
- 2) How far ethnic voting determines the electoral politics in KP?

Criterion For Operational Measurement Of Electoral Variable

Keeping in view the hypothesis and research questions, the study has been confined to the operational measurement of the variable of Pakhtun ethnic voting. Regarding the application of this variable, a number of questions have been asked. Each question has been analysed with the help of chi-square test, p-value and percentage method. In order to comprehend the extent of the application of theory of ethnic voting, the average percentage of all the questions pertaining to the determination of this variable, has been calculated. The following criterion has been followed for measuring the extent of application of variable of Pakhtun ethnic voting.

- The average percentage which is 40% and below has been termed as “Limited Extent.”
- The average percentage which is 60% and below has been termed as “Some Extent.”
- The average percentage which is above 60% has been termed as “Great Extent.”

Methodology

The methodology is quantitative and analytical methods. Data have been collected through questionnaire from a targeted respondents selected through random and systematic sampling. Data have been analysed with the help of SPSS software. The secondary data in the form of books and journals have been taken in literature review.

The Universe Of The Study

The universe of the study is the national level constituency, NA-2 Peshawar. According to 2007-2008, it contains a total of 314904 registered voters divided into 192693 male and 122211 female voters. In addition, there are 20 Union Councils in NA-2 constituency with 04 rural and 16 urban union councils. The technique of random and systematic sampling was used in getting a representative sample

Sample Size And Procedure

In order to get a representative sample size, an over 800 voters were selected on the basis of a multi stages sample techniques given below.

Stage 1: In Peshawar there are 04 national level constituencies including NA-1, NA-2, NA-3 and NA-4. It was here that NA-2 was randomly taken.

Stage 2: The constituency of NA-2 has a total of 20 Union Councils with 04 rural and 16 urban union councils. In all 04 rural union councils, 02 were randomly taken i.e. Regi and Sufaid Dheri. In all 16 urban union councils, 02 were randomly taken i.e. Shaheen Town and Tehkal Payan-2.

Stage 3: From each union council, a total of 200 respondents were taken, constituting a total of 800 respondents (200+200+200+200=800). In each union council the 200 respondents were taken through random and systematic sampling. The first item from the voter list was randomly selected through random table while the remaining respondents were selected through systematic sampling after a specific interval (every fourth item).

After distributing the questionnaire, the researcher could get only 613 questionnaires complete in all respects. The lack of interest and sensitivity on the part of the respondents were the main reasons which led to the failure of returning questionnaires.

Variables Of The Study

The conceptual framework consists of two variables i.e. dependant and independent variables.

Dependant Variables

- To what extent you voted on the basis of assurance of protecting Pakhtuns' rights in the 2008 elections?

a)To a Greater Extent b)To Some Extent c)To a Limited Extent d)Not at All

- Changing the name of the province is a right step in the right direction. What is your opinion?

a)To a Greater Extent b)To Some Extent c)To a Limited Extent d)Not at All

- Do you think Pakhtuns are faced with the problem of any discrimination?

a)Yes

b) No

- If yes, then what kind of discrimination?

a) Because Punjabis are more developed b) There are less jobs for Pakhtuns

c) Pakhtuns have no control over their resources (electricity)

d) Other than these reasons

- To what extent the Pakhtun ethnic parties have defended the rights of the Pakhtuns?

a) To a Greater Extent b) To Some Extent c) To a Limited Extent d) Not at All

- To what extent the Pakhtun ethnic parties have succeeded in eradicating unemployment, price hike, load shedding and terrorism?

a) To a Greater Extent b) To Some Extent c) To a Limited Extent d) Not at All

Independent Variables

Urban/rural divisions, gender, age, profession, monthly income and literacy

Explanation of Symbols In Various Tables:

In order to make the table more scientific and elaborative some symbols have been used in the tables. Its explanations are as under.

Symbol	Explanation
U	It refers to Urban area
R	It refers to Rural area
M	It refers to Male respondents.
F	It refers to Female respondents.
A1	Refer to the first category of age which is from 18-40 years.
A2	Refer to the second category of age which is above 40 years.
P1	It refers to the Government Servant.
P2	It refers to the Non-Government Servant.
P3	It refers to Businessmen and Shopkeepers
P4	It refers to the category of Others which includes students, retired persons, unemployed, farmers and skill and unskilled labours.
P5	It refers to House Wife category.
M1	It refers to the category whose Monthly Income is Rs.20000 and Below.
M2	It refers to the category whose Monthly Income is above Rs. 20000.
L1	It refers to Literate respondents.
L2	It refers to Illiterate respondents.

Data Analysis

The Protection of Pakhtuns’ Rights as an Electoral Preference in 2008 Elections

This is the first indicator/dependent variable for measuring Pakhtun ethnicity as a determinant in the electoral politics of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It has been analyzed in the form of various independent variables including, urban/rural divisions, gender, age, profession, monthly income and literacy.

Table No.01

The Protection of Pakhtuns’ Rights	To a Greater Extent		To Some Extent		To a Limited Extent		Not at All		Total							
	336		171		56		50		613							
	(54.8%)		(27.9%)		(9.1%)		(8.2%)		(100.0%)							
Inferential Statistics																
Independent Variables	Area		Gender		Age		Profession					Monthly Income			Literacy	
	U	R	M	F	A1	A2	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	M1	M2	M3	L1	L2
To a Greater Extent (F)	173	163	225	111	228	108	73	39	47	75	102	154	29	153	214	122
To Some Extent (F)	88	83	60	111	92	79	16	18	11	29	97	53	05	113	85	86
To a Limited Extent (F)	33	23	45	11	34	22	06	13	07	21	09	32	04	20	33	23
Not at All (F)	39	11	34	16	31	19	15	15	08	05	07	28	07	15	41	09
Chi-Square (X ²)	13.428		61.606		9.724		85.865					35.746			19.525	
P-Value	0.004*		0.000*		0.021*		0.000*					0.000*			0.000*	

*Indicates Significance level at 0.05.

Discussion:

Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents (54.8%) asserted that they voted on the basis of protection of Pakhtuns’ rights in 2008 general elections. In this connection, strong support came from the respondents belonging to urban area (173), male respondents (225), younger respondents (228), house wives (102), respondents with low monthly income (154) and literate respondents (214).

The Chi-square tests for all independent variables provide significant p-value. The p-value < 0.05 shows that there is association between all the independent variables and the dependent variable of the protection of Pakhtuns’ rights.

Pakhtun Ethnicity and Changing the Name of the Province

This is the second indicator/dependent variable for measuring Pakhtun ethnicity as a determinant in the electoral politics of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It has been

analyzed in the form of various independent variables including, urban/rural divisions, gender, age, profession, monthly income and literacy.

Table No.02

Pakhtun Ethnicity and changing the name of the province	To a Greater Extent		To Some Extent		To a Limited Extent		Not at All			Total						
	99		58		80		376			613						
	(16.2%)		(9.5%)		(13.1%)		(61.3%)			(100.0%)						
Inferential Statistics																
Independent Variables	Area		Gender		Age		Profession					Monthly Income			Literacy	
	U	R	M	F	A1	A2	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	M1	M2	M3	L1	L2
To a Greater Extent (F)	38	61	45	54	68	31	11	13	09	16	50	33	06	60	50	49
To Some Extent (F)	35	23	38	20	35	23	12	13	06	08	19	29	04	25	42	16
To a Limited Extent (F)	39	41	24	56	59	21	08	05	07	12	48	19	05	56	45	35
Not at All (F)	221	155	257	119	223	153	79	54	51	94	98	186	30	160	236	140
Chi-Square (X ²)	14.991		50.040		7.687		52.806					27.218			8.993	
P-Value	0.002*		0.000*		0.053*		0.000*					0.000*			0.029*	

*Indicates Significance level at 0.05.

Discussion:

Table 2 shows that majority of the respondents (61.3%) did not appreciate the step of changing the name of the province from NWFP to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2010. They asserted that it was not enough to claim that Pakhtuns' rights have been defended.

In this connection, strong support came from the respondents belonging to urban area (221), male respondents (257), younger respondents (223), house wives (98), respondents with low monthly income (186) and literate respondents (236). The respondents of these categories asserted that it was not contention to claim that Pakhtuns' rights have been defended.

The Chi-square tests for all independent variables provide significant p-value. The p-value < 0.05 shows that there is association between all the independent variables and this dependent variable of the protection of Pakhtuns' rights by renaming NWFP as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Discrimination against Pakhtuns

This is the third indicator/dependent variable for measuring Pakhtun ethnicity as a determinant in the electoral politics of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It has been analyzed in the form of various independent variables including, urban/rural divisions, gender, age, profession, monthly income and literacy.

Table No.03

Discrimination against Pakhtuns	Yes						No						Total			
	436						177						613			
	(71.1%)						(28.9%)						(100.0%)			
Inferential Statistics																
Independent Variables	Area		Gender		Age		Profession					Monthly Income			Literacy	
	U	R	M	F	A1	A2	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	M1	M2	M3	L1	L2
Yes (F)	248	188	287	149	274	162	89	68	56	96	127	197	39	200	293	143
No (F)	85	92	77	100	111	66	21	17	17	34	88	70	06	101	80	97
Chi-Square (X ²)	3.981		26.009		0.001		25.180					9.421			25.586	
P-Value	0.046*		0.000*		0.976		0.000*					0.009*			0.000*	

*Indicates Significance level at 0.05. ** Indicates Insignificance level.

Discussion:

Table 3 shows that majority of the respondents (71.1%) asserts that there is discrimination against the Pakhtuns. It has been strongly supported by the respondents belonging to urban area (248), male respondents (287), younger respondents (274), house wives (127), respondents with low monthly income (197) and literate respondents (293). They all asserted that there is the problem of discrimination against the Pakhtuns.

The Chi-square tests for most of the independent variables provide significant p-value. The p-value < 0.05 shows that there is association between most of the independent variables and the dependant variable of discrimination against Pakhtuns.

The Form of Discrimination against Pakhtuns

In the table 3, 436 (71.1%) of the respondents admitted that there is problem of discrimination against the Pakhtuns. The third indicator i.e. discrimination against the Pakhtuns has been tried to understand in terms of its sub-indicators. The sub-indicators are “Because Punjabis are more developed”, “There are Less Jobs for Pakhtuns”, “Pakhtuns have no control over their resources (electricity)”, and “Other than these reasons”.

Table No.04

Form of Discrimination against Pakhtuns	Because Punjabis are more developed		There are less jobs for Pakhtuns		Pakhtuns have no control over their resources (electricity)					Other than these reasons			Total			
	62		110		244					20			436			
	(14.2%)		(25.2%)		(56.0%)					(4.6%)			(100.0%)			
Inferential Statistics																
Independent Variables	Area		Gender		Age		Profession					Monthly Income			Literacy	
	U	R	M	F	A1	A2	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	M1	M2	M3	L1	L2

Because Punjabis are more developed. (F)	32	30	36	26	35	27	13	13	03	12	21	29	03	30	35	27
There are less jobs for Pakhtuns. (F)	46	64	57	53	62	48	23	11	14	19	43	45	03	62	68	42
Pakhtuns have not control over their resources (electricity). (F)	158	86	179	65	167	77	48	41	37	60	58	113	30	101	177	67
Other than these reasons. (F)	12	08	15	05	10	10	05	03	02	05	05	10	03	07	13	07
Chi-Square (X²)	17.123		18.161		7.752		17.013					14.762			7.897	
P-Value	0.001*		0.000*		0.051*		0.149**					0.022*			0.048*	

*Indicates Significance level at 0.05. ** Indicates Insignificance level.

Discussion:

In this Table 4 the sub-indicators of “Because Punjabis are more developed”, “There are Less Jobs for Pakhtuns”, “Pakhtuns have no control over their resources (electricity)”, and “Other than these reasons”, have been analyzed. Majority of the respondents analyzed that (56.0%) that Pakhtuns have no control over their resources followed by the second category of having less jobs opportunities for Pakhtuns (25.2%).

The assertion that Pakhtuns have no control over their resources has been supported by majority of the respondents belonging to urban area (158), male respondents (179), younger respondents (167), category of others (60), respondents with low monthly income (113) and literate respondents (177).

The Chi-square tests for most of the independent variables provide significant p-value. The p-value < 0.05 shows that there is association between most of the independent variables and the dependant variable of this indicator.

The Safeguard of the Pakhtuns’ Rights by the Pakhtun Ethnic Parties

This is the fourth indicator/dependent variable for measuring Pakhtun ethnicity as a determinant in the electoral politics of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It has been analyzed in the form of various independent variables including, urban/rural divisions, gender, age, profession, monthly income and literacy.

Table No.05

Safeguard of the Pakhtuns’ rights by Pakhtun Ethnic Parties.	To a Greater Extent		To Some Extent		To a Limited Extent		Not at All			Total						
	62 (10.1%)		41 (6.7%)		95 (15.5%)		415 (67.7%)			613 (100.0%)						
Inferential Statistics																
Independent Variables	Area		Gender		Age		Profession					Monthly Income			Literacy	
	U	R	M	F	A1	A2	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	M1	M2	M3	L1	L2

To a Greater Extent (F)	15	47	27	35	46	16	06	07	04	11	34	16	02	44	27	35
To Some Extent (F)	20	21	30	11	27	14	15	07	03	08	08	18	06	17	34	07
To a Limited Extent (F)	41	54	54	41	72	23	11	14	12	25	33	42	05	48	54	41
Not at All (F)	257	158	253	162	240	175	78	57	54	86	140	192	32	191	258	157
Chi-Square (X²)	37.635		10.361		14.857		27.587					17.356			17.122	
P-Value	0.000*		0.016*		0.002*		0.006*					0.008*			0.001*	

*Indicates Significance level at 0.05.

Discussion:

Table 5 shows that majority of the respondents (67.7%) rejected the assertion that Pakhtuns’ rights have been safeguarded by Pakhtun ethnic parties. It has been strongly rejected by the respondents belonging to urban area (257), male respondents (253), younger respondents (240), house wives (140), respondents with low monthly income (192) and literate respondents (258).

The Chi-square tests for all of the independent variables provide significant p-value. The p-value < 0.05 shows that there is association between all of the independent variables and the dependant variable of safeguarding the Pakhtuns’ rights by Pakhtun Ethnic Parties.

The Eradication of National Issues by the Pakhtun Ethnic Parties

This is the fifth indicator/dependent variable for measuring Pakhtun ethnicity as a determinant in the electoral politics of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It has been analyzed in the form of various independent variables including, urban/rural divisions, gender, age, profession, monthly income and literacy.

Table No.06

Eradication of National Issues by Pakhtun Ethnic Parties	To a Greater Extent				To Some Extent		To a Limited Extent					Not at All			Total	
	65 (10.6%)				45 (7.3%)		104 (17.0%)					399 (65.1%)			613 (100.0%)	
Inferential Statistics																
Independent Variables	Area		Gender		Age		Profession					Monthly Income			Literacy	
	U	R	M	F	A1	A2	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	M1	M2	M3	L1	L2
To a Greater Extent (F)	30	35	27	38	40	25	06	03	05	13	38	19	02	44	18	47
To Some Extent (F)	19	26	23	22	23	22	09	07	02	07	20	14	02	29	21	24
To a Limited Extent (F)	41	63	71	33	76	28	20	16	15	30	23	50	10	44	77	27
Not at All (F)	243	156	243	156	246	153	75	59	51	80	134	185	31	183	257	142
Chi-Square (X²)	20.669		13.644		7.603		31.850					17.142			43.514	
P-Value	0.000*		0.003*		0.055*		0.001*					0.009*			0.000*	

*Indicates Significance level at 0.05.

Discussion:

Table 6 shows that majority of the respondents (67.7%) rejected the assertion that national issues and problems have been eradicated/minimized by Pakhtun ethnic parties. It has been strongly rejected by the respondents belonging to urban area (243), male respondents (243), younger respondents (246), house wives (134), respondents with low monthly income (185) and literate respondents (257). The Chi-square tests for all of the independent variables provide significant p-value. The p-value < 0.05 shows that there is association between all of the independent variables and the dependant variable of eradicating/minimizing national issues by Pakhtun Ethnic Parties.

Conclusion

There are many determinants of voting behaviour such as party affiliation, issue voting, religious voting, clientelism, kinship etc. However, this study considers only the determinant of ethnic voting. The empirical evidences support the argument of the study that ethnic determinant is secondary in importance as compared to other determinants of voting behaviour in KP electoral politics. Data show that (53.76%)¹⁸ of the respondents based their electoral preferences on ethnic voting in 2008 general elections. As per the criterion set in article that if an average percentage which will be 60% and below will be termed as “Some Extent”. Therefore, it is concluded that the application of the determinant of ethnic voting is applicable up to some extent in KP electoral politics in 2008 general polls.

Notes & References

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¹⁷ Ghufuran, p.1100-1101

¹⁸ This is the average percentage which has been calculated by taking the average percentage of the percentages of all those questions which have been asked from the respondents in determining operationalisation of theory of Pakhtun ethnicity in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2008 general elections.