ECONOMY, MEDIA AND VOTING BEHAVIOUR: COMMUNICATION CHANNELS' IMPACT ON DIFFERENT INCOME GROUPS IN PUNJAB, PAKISTAN

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Abstract. This study observes the relationship between economic status of voters, media and their voting behaviour. The objectives of this quantitative research are to explore the subject in two directions: a) to observe the association of income and voting behaviour, b) to investigate the impact of communication channels on voters belonging to different income groups. The research method employed was survey (n=1704) using the multi-stage cluster sample technique for data collection from 18 districts with the representation of all 10 divisions of Punjab province. Data was analysed through the factor analysis and logistic regression analysis. The study results revealed that voters with higher income were more inclined to vote with a percentile of 97.7 which declined to 68.1% in the case of low income voters. However, study observed that impact of interpersonal communication was more likely in case of dependent, unemployed and low income voters i.e. Rs 5000-15000 per month. Voters with income bracket of 16-20 thousand per month positively influenced by electronic media while those earning Rs 20-50 thousand per month were not influenced by any communication channel significantly.

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I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Voting behaviour and economic conditions of voters have a strong relationship and media also plays important information mediating role between elections and voters. Right to vote is a basic right and responsibility of voters in every democratic nation. Political studies experts have concluded that vote choices in elections are highly associated with income (Schlozman *et al*., 1999).

High income people are more likely to vote rather than low income people. In general, correlation between rich people and higher voter turnout is well established and poor class is less inclined towards any political engagement. This political imbalance can be understood with the thorough analysis of income wise voting behaviour and vote turnover. This will give a vision that in a democratic setup, how political participation can be increased? Voter turnout are unequally shared among different socio economic sectors with lesser voting among low income class. We get an insight that a cash transfer program has a positive impact on low income people to cast voter in any democratic system. Economic parameters of voter are highly associated with the voting patterns of any country. Democracy is directly dependent on open electoral process and single voter contribution (Akee, 2019).

Monetary factors of the people play important role in every walk of life. However, in voting behaviour financial condition of voters counts a lot. Preferences of 'haves' and 'have nots' make the difference clear to cast vote or not (Azhar, 2011).

Media and democracy is essential for a country. A free and fair elections are not possible without the political debates, knowledge of how to vote, adequate information about parties, regulations and electoral process, which are well provided by the media on the screens of people. Media has substantial effect on the general public's thinking and discourses especially in some specific periods like electoral junctures (Electoral Knowledge Network, 2020).

Media plays an important role in voting behaviour of 'haves' and 'have nots'. Nowadays media is becoming popular in various financial groups of voters. Citizens acquire information regarding political system and the ruling party initially from electronic media and print media. These media houses can manipulate the voting decision of individuals through not only the tilt/angle of a specific report but also by with the selection of specific stories to cover in election days (Gerber, Kerlan & Bergan, 2006).

Normally, financially high class is more likely to engage in political participation than the poor class. However, media's role in civic political participation with reference to economic conditions is the main topic of discussion of this paper/article.

In Pakistan, six national PTV channels, 89 private networks, 26 overseas TV stations, 138 commercial radio channels, 64 Pakistan Radio stations, 34 Pakistan Radio FM channels were operating in 2013 (Sarwar, 2018). Pakistani print media is comprised of over 500 daily newspapers and over 800 periodicals (PEMRA & APNS, 2016).

According to the Asian Development Bank, in 2017, around 210 million people were living in Pakistan out of which 12.4% were below poverty (as cited by Shafique, Ali & Usman, 2019). Pakistan having wealth distribution with the upper 10% of the population earning 27.6% and lower 10% are having 4.1% of the total income (Nations Encyclopaedia, 2017).

Socio-economic status of Pakistan depicts that around 15 million people are elite class, 25 million people are standing on middle class (upper), 65 million people belongs to middle class (lower), 65 million people are on the border line of desperately poor class (Dawn, 2010).

The relationship between economy, media and voting behaviour very important to study for the democratic strengthening of the country. The available literature does not sufficiently focus on the relationship of economy, media and vote patterns. This reflects existing gap in this important research area, especially in a country where democracy is struggling and voting behaviour matters a lot for strengthen this process.

The objectives of this study are:

- To explore the relationship between low income people and high income people on the voting behaviour.

- To measure the difference of media impact on political participation of rich voter and poor voter.

- To investigate whether media influence the voter, with sound and poor economic condition, positively or negatively.

- To gauge the relationship of income and voting behavior of people.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1: What was the impact of media and communication channels on voters belonging to different income groups of Punjab province in General Elections 2013?

RQ2: Do the economic conditions of voters affect the voting participation of people?

RQ3: Whether communication channels influenced the dependent and unemployed voters in GE 2013 differently?

II. METHOD

The quantitative survey research method is applied for this study through a questionnaire of purposive survey, comprised of 42 items to gather data from 18 districts of Punjab, Pakistan. According to the National Census (2017) the population of Punjab is over 110 million (110,012,442) including 55,958,974 males, 54,046,759 females. The total number of the registered voters was 4,99,27,112 (57 per cent of the Pakistan voters) in General Election 2013 which comprised 28,064,284 (56.21%) male and 21,862,830 (43.78%) female voters (ECP, 2013). For this study the multistage cluster sampling technique was applied to collect data from respondents (n= 1704), the registered voters belonging to 18 districts of the province. The sample comprised respondents from diverse income groups i.e. from dependents to the voters having more than Rs 50,000 monthly earnings. The data was collected from 18 districts comprising rural and urban clusters of registered voters besides ensuring almost

participation of male 54 % and female 46 % voters in this study i.e. 54 and 46 percent respectively.

Figure 1

Selected 18 Districts of Punjab Province

The data was compressed through the factor analysis and analysed by using the analysis technique of logistic regression.

III. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Since the registered voters of Punjab province belonging to various income groups were the focus of the study, the data was collected from the following income groups:

In Pakistan's Punjab province most of the students and housewives are usually considered as dependent registered voters. Sometimes there is only one member, the family head, who supports five to 10 other members of the family including his parents and children (Economic Survey of Pakistan, 2010). The sample comprised respondents from diverse income groups i.e. from dependents to the voters having more than Rs 50,000 monthly earnings.

TABLE 1

Respondents Income (Pak Rupee)

	Frequency	Percent
Dependent	577	33.9
Unemployed	145	8.5
Up to 5000	94	5.5
6000-10000	160	9.4
11000-15000	192	11.3
16000-20000	155	9.1
21000-30000	140	8.2
31000-40000	79	4.6
41000-50000	46	2.7
50000 or above	67	3.9
Total	1655	97.1
Missing System	49	2.9
Total	1704	100.0

TABLE 2

Income and Voting – Cross-tabulation count % within income

Income	Voting		Total
	No	Yes	
Dependent	165	353	518
	31.9%	68.1%	100.0%
Unemployed	28	86	114
	24.6%	75.4%	100.0%
UP TO 5000	21	59	80
	26.3%	73.8%	100.0%
6000-10000	21	122	143
	14.7%	85.3%	100.0%
11000-15000	22	152	174
	12.6%	87.4%	100.0%
16000-20000	28	117	145
	19.3%	80.7%	100.0%

Income	Voting		Total
	No	Yes	
21000-30000	14	107	121
	11.6%	88.4%	100.0%
31000-40000	11	62	73
	15.1%	84.9%	100.0%
41000-50000	1	43	44
	2.3%	97.7%	100.0%
More than 50000	6	53	59
	10.2%	89.8%	100.0%
Total	317	1154	1471
	21.5%	78.5%	100.0%

TABLE 3

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	69.898[a]	9	.000
Likelihood Ratio	75.096	9	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	56.598	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	1471		
cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5.			

TABLE 4

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.218	.000
	Cramer's V	.218	.000
	Contingency Coefficient	.213	.000
N of Valid Cases		1471	

The Table 3 depicts the relationship voting and income is significant with $\chi2$ (9) = 69.898, p < .0005. Same is case with, the association

strength, V=218 reflecting that the association is significant. The findings revealed that the voters who earn Rs 41 to 50 thousands per month were the most likely voters showing 97.7% turn out in the election. However, the voters with over Rs 50 thousand monthly income showed 89.8% voting turn over. This also reflects that voting trend among middle class is more as compared to the elite class. Mostly there was an increase in voting among various income groups having more income i.e. dependents 68.1%, Rs upto 5000 income 73%, Rs 6000-10000 income 85% and Rs 11-15 thousands income 87%.

TABLE 5

Media and IPC Impact on voting of different income group voters

Income			B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Dependent	Step 1ᵃ	EM_Mean_	-1.031	.214	23.278	1	.000	.357
		IPC_Mean_	.549	.129	17.970	1	.000	1.731
		OM_Mean_	.000	.121	.000	1	.997	1.000
		PM_Mean_	-.404	.140	8.304	1	.004	.667
		Constant	3.431	.772	19.733	1	.000	30.903
Unemployed	Step 1ᵃ	EM_Mean_	.240	.384	.391	1	.532	1.271
		IPC_Mean_	.535	.264	4.113	1	.043	1.707
		OM_Mean_	.241	.248	.946	1	.331	1.273
		PM_Mean_	.290	.258	1.256	1	.262	1.336
		Constant	-2.580	1.384	3.476	1	.062	.076
Rs 5 Thousand	Step 1ᵃ	EM_Mean_	.157	.460	.117	1	.733	1.170
		IPC_Mean_	.150	.324	.214	1	.644	1.161
		OM_Mean_	.039	.313	.015	1	.902	1.040
		PM_Mean_	-.020	.388	.003	1	.958	.980
		Constant	-.523	1.847	.080	1	.777	.593
6-10 Thousand	Step 1ᵃ	EM_Mean_	1.026	.526	3.804	1	.051	2.791
		IPC_Mean_	1.519	.404	14.116	1	.000	4.569
		OM_Mean_	-.493	.290	2.878	1	.090	.611
		PM_Mean_	-.052	.484	.012	1	.914	.949
		Constant	-3.594	2.284	2.476	1	.116	.027
11-15 Thousand	Step 1ᵃ	EM_Mean_	.865	.486	3.169	1	.075	2.374
		IPC_Mean_	.456	.290	2.481	1	.115	1.578
		OM_Mean_	-.130	.263	.246	1	.620	.878
		PM_Mean_	-.956	.331	8.325	1	.004	.385
		Constant	.933	1.738	.288	1	.591	2.543

Income			B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
16-20 Thousand	Step 1a	EM_Mean_	1.661	.555	8.961	1	.003	5.263
		IPC_Mean_	2.363	.411	33.109	1	.000	10.625
		OM_Mean_	-.137	.251	.299	1	.584	.872
		PM_Mean_	-1.061	.353	9.026	1	.003	.346
		Constant	-6.805	1.859	13.399	1	.000	.001
21-30 Thousand	Step 1a	EM_Mean_	-1.239	.481	6.643	1	.010	.290
		IPC_Mean_	.336	.362	.858	1	.354	1.399
		OM_Mean_	.204	.261	.615	1	.433	1.227
		PM_Mean_	.480	.360	1.777	1	.182	1.616
		Constant	2.630	1.702	2.388	1	.122	13.871
31-40 Thousand	Step 1a	EM_Mean_	-2.445	1.106	4.884	1	.027	.087
		IPC_Mean_	.106	.592	.032	1	.858	1.111
		OM_Mean_	.136	.437	.098	1	.755	1.146
		PM_Mean_	.009	.638	.000	1	.988	1.010
		Constant	7.819	3.504	4.981	1	.026	2488.437
41-50 Thousand	Step 1a	EM_Mean_	-.545	.832	.430	1	.512	.580
		IPC_Mean_	.179	.595	.091	1	.763	1.197
		OM_Mean_	.014	.561	.001	1	.980	1.014
		PM_Mean_	-1.150	.750	2.352	1	.125	.317
		Constant	5.885	3.264	3.250	1	.071	359.477
More than 50 Thousand	Step 1a	EM_Mean_	-.174	.711	.060	1	.807	.840
		IPC_Mean_	.673	.996	.456	1	.500	1.959
		OM_Mean_	-.155	.652	.056	1	.813	.857
		PM_Mean_	-.031	.532	.003	1	.953	.969
		Constant	1.319	2.726	.234	1	.628	3.740
a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: EM (electronic media)_Mean_, IPC (interpersonal communication)_Mean_, OM (outdoor media)_Mean_, PM (print media)_Mean_.								

This table reveals IPC put a positive significant impact on economically dependent voters as B= .549, p<.0005 reflecting an odd ratio of 1.731. Also, IPC significantly positively impacted the voters who were jobless as B= .535, p<.05 with an odd ratio 1.79. Voters with Rs 6000-10000 also had positive significant impact of interpersonal communication on their vote decision as B=1.52, p<.0005 with an odd ratio of 4.57.

On the other hand, the electronic media (EM) and the print media (PM) had significant but negative impact as B= -1.03, p<.0005 with an odd ratio .357 and (B=-.404, p< .005) and odd ratio .667 respectively.

However, the print media had negative significant impact on the voters whose monthly earnings range was between Rs 11-15 thousand as B=.96, p<.005 showing an odd ratio of 0.385.

Further, the EM (electronic media) positively influenced the voters of income range of Rs 16-20 thousand as B=1.661, p<.005 with an odd ratio of 5.26 and while IPC also positively influenced this income group. However, print media had significant but negative influence on this income group (Rs 16-20 thousands) as B= -1.06, p<.005 with an odd ratio of 0.346.

The electronic media negatively significantly impacted the voters belonging to the income group of Rs 21-30 thousand as B= -1.24, p<.05 with an odd ratio of .290. Likewise, the EM significantly negatively impacted the voters belonging to the income range of Rs 31-4000 in in GE 2013 as B= -2.445, p<.05 and showing an odd ratio of .087.

Interestingly, no media or communication channel could significantly influence voters of the three income groups including Rs 5,000 and Rs 41000-50,000 and more than Rs 50,000 in GE 2013.

IV. CONCLUSION

The relationship between voter turnout and income of people was seen significantly positive. People from income group Rs 41,000 to 50,000 were the most likely voters (97.7%) while the registered voters with over 50,000 income showed 89.8% participation in General Election 2013 in Punjab. However, dependent and unemployed people voted less (68.1%).

The second part of the article focused on the impact of communication channels on voters belonging to different economic status or income groups. The study revealed that dependent and unemployed voters were positively influenced by IPC.

Voters of the income bracket ranging 6000-10000 rupees were positively influenced by the interpersonal communication channels. The

electronic media positively impacted the voters of income group Rs 16000-20000 while print media's overall impact was negative on the voters of this economic status. The voters who earn Rs 21000-30000 and Rs 31000-40000 per month has significant but negative impact of electronic media.

Interestingly, no media or communication channel could significantly influence voters of the three income groups including Rs 5,000 and Rs 41000-50,000 and more than Rs 50,000 in GE 2013.

Funding and Ethical Considerations

Authors Credit Statement

Muhammad Shabbir Sarwar conceptualized the idea and conducted this study as part of his PhD dissertation. He operationalized the key terms and devised methodology. Mr. Khurram Shahzad helped in data collection, while and Ms Javairia Shafiq worked on literature review of this paper.

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