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## Indicators Of Common Voting Behavior In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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### Abstract

Voting is a form of public participation in political system in which people elect a party through evaluative thinking. There are different factors which influence the voting behavior of people. Developing societies have mostly witnessed factors like religion, ethnicity, language and social differences in voting patterns. However, in developed world, issue based voting is prominent. Pakistan, being a developing country has shown similar trends in voting behavior. This research study explores dominant social, political and economic factors in the common voting behavior in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa before 2013. The mixed method research approach is used in this research. Tools for data collection are questionnaire and interview guide. The population of the study consists of all the registered and literate voters of district Malakand. A sample of 400 respondents for questionnaires survey is randomly chosen by using multi-stage cluster sampling technique. Interviews are conducted by using convenient/purposive sampling technique with the relevant stakeholders including political science experts, political workers and journalists. The quantitative data analysis is done through descriptive and inferential statistics by using SPSS version 22 while six-step model of thematic analysis is employed for qualitative data and results from both the methods are integrated. By integrating the results of qualitative data and quantitative data, it is found that the factors like family loyalties/kinship, patron-client relationships, religion and voting on the basis of local issues have been dominant in the common voting behavior in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa



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before 2013.

**Key words:** voting behavior in Khyber Pakhtubkhwa, common indicators, social factors, political factors and economic factors.

### Introduction

Voting behavior is the tendency or inclination of a voter towards a particular candidate or a political party (Goldman, 1996). Electoral politics has a long history and is an important area in Political Science research since 1940 (Schmitt-Beck, 2015). Voting behavior is generally influenced by ethnicity, religion, caste, literacy, age, political affiliation, patron-client relationship candidate's personality, political party's performance or voters' benefits (Negi, 2016).

Studies show that voting behavior in a society depends upon the power structure i.e., in developed world people are politically aware and mostly prefer issue based voting (Bhagoi, Mink, & Cash, 2007; Tsirbas, 2024), while ethnicity, religion, social differences, patron-client relationship, personality of the candidate and partisanship are the core values in developing countries (Seredina, 2022; Hazarika, 2015; Sadie, Patel, & Baldry, 2016). For example, in Nigeria, India, and other developing countries, sectarianism too decides the fate of voting (Alao, 2022), while in European democracies, electoral volatility is observed (Ondruška, 2022).

Pakistan being a developing democracy and heterogeneous in power structure, has observed similar trends in the context of voting behavior. The electoral politics in the country is influenced by several factors including military, bureaucracy, ethnic heterogeneity, religio-political groups, and centuries' old traditions (Hussain, 1976; Paracha, 2024). The military has directly ruled the country for thirty-three years and had formed a nexus with bureaucracy and religious groups using either of the factors to support a political group. As the society is kinship-based therefore the role of the feudal lords cannot be ignored in this regard (Kaplan, 2013).

Besides, at the provincial level, the driving social and political forces vary due to the different structure, language, ethnicity and geographical location (Hussain, 1976). The province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is one of those regions in the subcontinent which has resisted foreign invasions (Islam, 2014). The province also has an adjacent border with Afghanistan, and the spill-over effect of issues across the border is



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directly observed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This scenario has led to the continuous political instability in the region (Shah, 2020) and has thus undermined political development (Khan, Shafiq, & Qayum, 2021). The voting behavior in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has been influenced by imperialist rule, the tribal social structure, the patron-client relationship, land ownership, familial and kinship ties as well as religion (Khan, 2016; Ullah & Jan, 2016; Rashid & Amin, 2020; Badshah & Muhammad, 2019). Though, at the national level, partisanship is considered one of the important determinants of electoral behavior (Rashid & Amin, 2020), but, it is often rejected by the voters of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Ullah & Jan, 2016).

Studies have shown that the electoral history of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is different from the rest of the country (Badshah & Muhammad, 2019). In every election, the voting determinant of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has varied from the past (Ullah, Habibullah, & Khan, 2022). While in other provinces, one or two political parties have dominated the electoral politics. For instance, Punjab is dominated by Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN) (Shah & Majeed, 2022), Sindh has witnessed the dominance of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) for decades (Sajid Khan, 2017), while Baluchistan is dominated by religious and nationalist parties (Chacko, 2020). In contrast, no political party had dominated the electoral politics of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as noted by Shah (2014-2015) that the people of KP are floating voters, while Ullah & Jan (2016) describe that it could be due to the dissatisfaction of the voters with the performance of ruling political parties in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

This study aims to answer the question: What are the social, political and rational indicators of common voting behavior of electors in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa before 2013? The research objective of the study is to explore the social, political and economic indicators of common voting behavior in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa before 2013.

### **Theoretical Framework of the Study**

The three theories related to the voting behavior named Sociological model, Psycho-social model and Rational-choice model are used in this research. The advocates of the Colombian School link voting behavior to social factors, the Michigan School mostly concentrates on psychological and political factors while Downsian model explains voting behavior from the perspective of cost-benefit analysis (Antunes, 2010;



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Aiba, 2002; Negi, 2016). The Sociological model, also called the Colombian School of thought, began with the works of Paul Lazerfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet. The main argument of this theory is that voting behavior is dependent upon the social group to which a voter belongs and thus the related social factors like class, religion, ethnicity, language and personal influence. The second model is Psycho-social theory, also called the Michigan School of thought which originated at the University of Michigan during the 1948 U.S presidential elections. They explained that voting behavior of the people is influenced by political and psychological factors like party identification, perception about candidate, party leadership, political campaign and emotional attachment of the voters with the party (Mahsud & Amin, 2020). The third model is Rational Choice model, also called the Downsian model, and is based on the cost-benefit analysis. According to this model, voters elect a party on the basis of benefits they get as compared to voting the other parties. The rationale behind using these three theories in this research is that all these factors exist in a society in different intensities.

### **Research Methodology**

This study is conducted by using the mixed method research approach. The rationale for using mixed method is that it has helped in better understanding of the common voting behavior of people in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by using both qualitative and quantitative methods in data collection, analysis and interpretation. The population of the study consists of the registered voters (n=461985) of district Malakand (Election Commission of Pakistan, 2023). For quantitative data collection, literate and registered voters were included. Similarly, the population for qualitative data collection included experts from political science and journalism, political workers and journalists in field in district Malakand. According to Raosoft Online Sample Size Calculator and Kreji and Morgan sample size table (Gay, 1996), the Sample Size for quantitative data collection was four hundred (400). The multi-stage cluster sampling technique was used for choosing the sample for data collection through questionnaire. This study has used two data collection tools i.e. interview and questionnaire. For the quantitative data analysis, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 was used while qualitative data analysis was done by



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using six-step Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2008). The results from both the methods were then integrated and findings were drawn through discussion.

### RESULTS

#### **Determinants of Common Voting Behavior in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa**

This research aimed to explore the common social, political, and economic determinants of voting behavior in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa before 2013. Among the social factors, family, kinship, patron-client relationships and religion are discussed and political factors include party popularity, party campaign, and personality of the candidate, emotional voting and foreign policy narrative while economic factors include local issues, developmental works, and institutional reforms. The results from qualitative and quantitative data analysis are almost aligned showing that role of family, kinship, patron-client relationship and religion were the dominant factors. However, in the data collected through questionnaire, other than the above mentioned factors, local issues like employment, peace and security and inflation were also relatively dominant. These local issues have mobilized the people to give vote to certain political parties in KP before 2013. Furthermore, political factors, except the emotional voting behavior and popularity of the party, were not prominent in the common voting behavior.

#### 1. Social Factors in Common Voting Behavior

Among social factors, family, kinship, patron-client relationship and religion are found as dominant in common voting behavior before 2013 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Family being the most important determinant of common voting behavior is followed by religion and patron-client relationship. The result of quantitative data analysis shows that social factors were more dominant in voting behavior in KP specifically before 2013.

#### 1.1 **Elders' Influence on Common Voting Behavior**

The role of elders is seen as dominant in developing countries where family structure is strong and decisions are taken by the family head including Pakistan. Wolfinger *et al.*, (2008) asserted that family structure is hugely important in predicting voter turnout. Kudrnac and Lyons (2017) explained that voters who live with their parents are comparatively more motivated to vote than those who live alone. The youth



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whose parents are not active in political participation, consider voting as a bizarre activity. The following table shows the same trend in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa before 2013.

**Table 1**

*Elders' Influence on common voting behavior*

(n=400)

S.No	Elders' influence	N	R	ST	O	A	Mea
		F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	n
1.	On people's voting behavior	25 6.3%	42 10.5%	86 21.5%	166 41.5%	81 20.3%	3.43
2.	On women's voting behavior	19 4.8%	30 7.5%	40 10%	125 31.3%	186 46.5%	4.07
3.	On youth's voting behavior	32 8%	60 15%	110 27.5%	118 29.5%	80 20%	3.39

Source: Field Data

This table shows the elders' influence upon the voters, specifically women and youth was strong in KP before 2013. Out of 400 respondents, 186 (46.5%) responded "Always" to the statement that women had voted on the directives of men/elders of their families. Similarly, 118 respondents (29.5%) responded "often" to the statement that youth were dependent upon their elders' directives in voting before 2013. Overall family's influence on the people in voting behavior can be interpreted as dominant because 166 respondents (41.5%) expressed that before 2013 people would often vote according to the directives of their elders/family men. By comparing the mean of the above three statements, women, were more dependent upon the family elders' directives in case of voting. Shah *et al.*, (2021) said that in KP, due to the patriarchal structure of the Pashtun society, women are mostly dependent on men in every aspect of life. Under this observation, the female voting decision is influenced by the men of their family.

Furthermore, the data collected while interviewing the relevant stakeholders also showed that the role of youth in politics was negligible, specifically before 2013 and thus they were mostly dependent upon their elders' directives in voting. They said that political parties' direct targets were not youth back then. Respondents agreed to the stance that youth before 2013 used to consider their elders' opinions and would follow the party affiliation announced by the family chief. One sample of the



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above explanation by the respondent is given below.

*young people used to consider their elders' opinions and directions mandatory for them to follow and thus had to vote accordingly (Interview, Malakand, 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2025).*

The analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data thus indicates that role of elders in voting behavior in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa before 2013 was prominent specifically on women. In addition, it is found that youth's role in politics was inactive and hence they were dependent on their elders' directives in case of voting.

### 1.2 Role of Kinship in Common Voting Behavior

Kinship is prioritizing the people of one's community, ethnicity, biradari or language over others merely on the basis of acquaintance. The data collected through quantitative method shows that kinship was relatively prominent factor in KP before 2013. As shown in the table below.

**Table 2**

*Role of Kinship in Common Voting Behavior*

(n=400)

S.No	Role of Kinship	N F (%)	R F (%)	ST F (%)	O F (%)	A F (%)	Mean
1.	Tribalism influence on voting behavior	77 19.3%	74 18.5%	126 31.5%	97 24.3%	26 6.5%	2.80
2.	Ethnicity influence on voting behavior	90 22.5%	76 19%	117 29.3%	90 22.5%	27 6.8%	2.72

Source: Field Data

This table explains two sub-factors tribalism and ethnicity, included in questionnaire to know the extent to which kinship has influenced voters in KP. Out of 400 respondents, 126 (31.5%) has chosen the option "sometimes" for the statement "people voted on the basis of tribalism." This shows that voting on the basis of tribal identity was considered as relatively important during voting. In addition, the sub-factor "ethnicity" was also considered as relatively important as 117 respondents (29.3%) opined that people would sometime vote according to their ethnic identity. The mean of these two sub-factors show that these were less dominant as compared to the influence of family on the voting behavior.

In societies where public participation is not facilitated through proper channels, people prefer organizing themselves on a kinship basis. This had happened in colonies maintained by imperial powers. They would give jobs and pieces of land



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based on the biradaries (Naz & Luqman, 2023). The strong kinship based society and tribal structure of KP also makes it very likely for regionalism to be one of an important determinant of voting behavior. When the interviewees were asked to give a detailed overview of the common voting behavior of the people of KP specifically before 2013, few of them referred to regionalism. According to them, supporting one's tribe, friends, ethnicity and language in elections irrespective of any analysis of the capability of the party candidate was very common in the people of KP. Furthermore, one Respondent explained in detail that historically the voters were influenced by tribal Khans and landlords as given below.

*People of KP had preferred voting in the past particularly before 2013 based on tribe, ethnicity and biradari (Interview, Malakand, 11 Dec, 2024).*

The analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data indicate that kinship was a prominent factor in the common voting behavior yet the results of quantitative data shows that kinship was less dominant than the role of family/elders in KP before 2013. The data collected through interviews however, referred to kinship as equality important as family in voting behavior.

### 1.3 Role of Religion in Common Voting Behavior

Religion is an important part of society in Pakistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and hence influences voting behavior also. The table below shows that people of KP, before 2013, were very much inclined to voting on the basis of religion.

**Table 3**

*Role of Religion in Common Voting Behavior*

(n=400)

S.No	Role of Religion	N F (%)	R F (%)	ST F (%)	O F (%)	A F (%)	Mean
1.	Establishment of Islamic System and voting	24 6%	61 15.3%	134 33.5%	110 27.5%	71 17.8%	3.36
2.	Voting for prioritizing Muslim Ummah	39 9.8%	69 17.3%	124 31%	109 27.3%	59 14.8	3.20

Source: Field Data

Religion as a determinant of voting behavior in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa before 2013 is found to be dominant as shown in the above table. Among the five options given, 134 respondents (33.5%) opted for "sometimes" in response to the statement "people had voted for the establishment of Islamic System". However, 110 (27.5%)



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respondents have chosen “often” for the same statement. This shows that people were more inclined towards voting on the basis of religion. Similarly another statement “people voted to party which included narrative of Muslim Ummah in their speeches” 124 respondents (31%) chose “sometime” while 109 respondents (27.3%) opted for “often”.

According to Said, Rahman, and Yousafi (2021), religion and politics are the two main parts of human society. Religion is a prominent component of politics in Pakistan as well. While collecting data through interviews it was observed that most of the respondents agreed to the fact that religion had remained a dominant voting behavior in KP generally before 2013. Looking at how the respondents explained people's voting behavior shows that KP has remained a stronghold of the religious parties compared with other provinces. However, those religious parties have not been able to form governments in KP in the past shows that there were other determinants of voting behavior too.

*Respondent 7 claimed that in the past, political parties with religious tendencies had attracted the masses in KP to vote (Interview, Malakand, 16<sup>th</sup> Dec, 2024).*

The quantitative and qualitative data analysis aligns with each other indicating that religion was a dominant factor in the common voting behavior before 2013.

### 1.4 Role of Patron-Client Relationship in Common Voting Behavior

Clientelism is a situation where public service delivery is conditioned by the support of the masses toward politicians. In such a society, public institutions are weak and the rule of law is absent (Bardhan, 2021). Clientelism is common in developing countries like Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America (Ullah, Ali, & Rehman, 2015; Ullah & Shah, 2017). The trend in voting behavior in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa before 2013 depicts that patron-client relationship is a prominent factor like other developing countries as shown in the table below.

**Table 4**

*Role of Patron-Client Relationship in Common Voting Behavior*

(n=400)

S. No	Role of patron-client relationship	N F (%)	R F (%)	ST F (%)	O F (%)	A F (%)	Mean
1.	People voted for getting personal favors	25	67	100	126	82	3.43



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		6.3%	16.8%	25%	31.5%	20.5	
2.	People voted in return of receiving money	69	142	118	42	29	2.55
		17.3%	35.5%	29.5%	10.5%	7.3	

Source: Field Data

This table explains that out of 400, 126 respondents (31.5%) stated that before 2013, people “often” used to vote for getting their personal favors like postings and transfer done. Its mean value is “3.43”. Similarly, 118 respondents opted for the option “sometimes” when asked if people had voted in return of receiving cash money from the political candidates. The mean of voting in return of cash money is “2.55”. This description shows that patron-client relationship was quite evident in voting behavior in KP. Khan *et al.*, (2023) noted that voter influence is quite common in democratic politics in Pakistan. Trends of vote purchasing and selling are also found in general elections.

Data collected through qualitative method also shows that role of patron-client relationship in voting behavior has remained dominant in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The province has been through a hard history with respect to state building and human development. As the service delivery from the state was not adequate enough, people started relying on making patron-client relationship with the powerful elite. Instead of demanding it as a right, they became used to consider service delivery as a favor from the powerful elites. Samples of the above situation in the respondents’ words are given below.

*Given its proximity to Afghanistan, KP faced significant challenge from terrorism and instability. These factors often influenced voter preferences with parties promising better security and development gaining traction (Interview, Malakand, 17<sup>th</sup> Jan, 2025).*

*Another respondent opined that the Voting behavior in KP before 2013 was seriously influenced by political individual benefits. Voters in KP were under control of Khans, peasants, landlords and rich traders who used the vote power in their hands for vested interests (Interview, Malakand, 15<sup>th</sup> Jan, 2025).*

Literature on the patron-client relationship in developing societies aligns with the patterns in KP which further shows that when there is lack of governance, gap



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between policy makers and masses increases. As a result, people rely on the private benefit providers like patron-client relationships instead of the state. Respondents referred to the influence of favor providers over the people of KP specifically in the past. People used to rely on political approach in the matter of transfer and posting of a job. The measure of votes a politician would get was dependent upon whether he had built a road, installed electric poles or not. People would consider it as a personal favor to them and hence would vote for that political candidate.

### 2. Political Factors in the Common Voting Behavior

Political factors discussed in the common voting behavior in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa before 2013 are party popularity, party manifesto, personality of the candidate, emotion based voting and foreign policy narrative. Among these, most prominent was voting on the basis of emotions. In addition, popularity of the party is also found as a factor above average in importance for voters. This explains that people of KP had voted in elections before 2013 on the basis of any event that triggered their emotions or they have voted a political party for its popularity in Pakistan. To look at the overall trend, it is evident that except the factors of emotions and popularity of the party, all other political factors found in the common voting behavior were below average in importance which explains that political factors were not much prominent in the voting behavior in KP before 2013 as compared to the social factors.

#### 2.1 Role of Charismatic Personality in Common Voting Behavior

The warm personality of a political leader influences people's voting behavior. However, this influence may vary from country to country. In addition, candidates with high comprehension ability and aggressive personalities are more likely to attract voters (Ivanchenko *et al.*, 2019). However, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa before 2013, as evident from the results of quantitative data, personality had not been very prominent factor of voting behavior as shown in the table below also.

**Table 5**

*Role of Charismatic Personality in Common Voting Behavior*

(n=400)

S. No	Statement	N	R	ST	O	A	Mean
		F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	
1.	charismatic personality of candidate and voting	69 17.3%	83 20.8%	117 29.3%	87 21.8%	44 11%	2.89



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Source: Field Data

The above table shows the low value of mean (2.89) which further explain that personality of candidate was not a much dominant factor in determining voting behavior in KP. The respondents were divided while responding to the statement “people voted according to the charismatic personality of the candidate” However, 117 responses (29.3%) were received on the option “sometimes”. It can be interpreted in way that the history of KP before 2013 had not many popular leaders in the province which could attract the voters just because of the personality of that leader.

### 2.2 Role of Party Manifesto Common Voting Behavior

Party manifesto is a list of to-do things/reforms which party pledges to fulfill when it will come to power. Manifesto is the ideology of party which differentiates it from other parties. However, in Pakistan and KP specifically, people do not often choose a party in election on the basis of manifesto and this trend was much prominent in elections before 2013 in KP.

**Table 6**

Role of Party Manifesto in Common Voting Behavior

(n=400)

Item No	Statement	N F (%)	R F (%)	ST F (%)	O F (%)	A F (%)	Mean
1.	Party manifesto and voting behavior	54 13.5%	118 29.5%	103 25.8%	78 19.5%	47 11.8%	2.87

Source: Field Data

This table shows the role of party manifesto in voting behavior in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa before 2013. In response to the statement “people voted to a party on the basis of its manifesto” 118 respondents (29.5%) chose the option “rarely” while 103 respondents (25.8%) chose “sometimes”. The tendency of the responses is titled against the statement and its mean (2.87) also shows party manifesto was not a factor in KP before 2013. Furthermore, this also reveals that analyzing the choice of voting for the people of KP was not based on studying the manifesto of each party.

### 2.3 Role of Emotions in Common Voting Behavior

According to Satriadi et al., (2021), the factors that compel a voter to vote on party



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identification are emotional closeness to the party, party beliefs, sense of belonging, and party ideology. The results from quantitative data analysis have shown that emotional based voting has always been an important determinant of voting behavior in KP.

**Table 7**

*Role of Emotions in Common Voting Behavior*

(n=400)

Item No	Role of emotions based voting	N F (%)	R F (%)	ST F (%)	O F (%)	A F (%)	Mean
7.	Influence of emotions on voting behavior	67 16.8%	76 19%	102 25.5%	90 22.5%	65 16.3%	3.03
16.	sanctions imposed on the party and voting behavior	135 33.8%	116 29%	105 26.3%	33 8.3%	9 2.3%	2.16

Source: Field Data

This table explains voting on the basis of emotions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa before 2013. Upon asking 400 respondents the statement “people voted on the basis of sanctions imposed on the party” 135 respondents (33.8%) said “Never” and 116 respondents (29%) opted “rarely”. Furthermore, 105 respondents (26%) chose “sometimes”. The low mean value (2.16) and overall tendency of the respondents to this statement shows that people had not voted to political parties which had received backlash from the system. Another statement given in the questionnaire to explain the emotional based voting of the people of KP before 2013 was “people voted on the basis of their emotions.” This shows a relatively stronger response in the favor of this statement as 102 responses (25.5%) concentrated their view on “sometimes” and a relatively higher value of mean (3.03) also shows that people had voted to political parties before 2013 on the basis of their emotional attachment.

While collecting data through interviews, one respondent opined that the people of KP are reactionary. It further implies that the people of KP were swayed by an emotional event and thus voted on the basis of that event in every new election due to which an inconsistent and volatile voting behavior could be seen in the electoral history of KP.



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Thus the analysis from both the methods (quantitative and qualitative) show that people in KP before 2013 had voted on the basis of emotions thus emotional voting behavior was a relatively prominent factor.

### 3. Economic Factors in Common Voting Behavior

Regarding the economic/rational voting behavior in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa before 2013, issues like construction of roads, installation of water pumps, electric poles, transformers and gas meters, employment opportunities, inflation and voting for the peace and security in the province are ranked above average. They would prefer the solution to local issues as compared to the reforms in institutions at the provincial level. The means of the factors like reforms in education, health, industrial sector, tourism, local government are ranked below average. However, regarding the performance of the party, respondents believe that it was of average importance for the people of KP before 2013. In comparison with social and political factors, economic/rational factors were the second prominent elements in common voting behavior in KP before 2013.

#### 3.1 Role of Local Issues in Common Voting Behavior

This table gives a detailed view of the role of local issues in determining the voting behavior of the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa before 2013.

**Table 8**

*Role of Local Issues as in Common Voting Behavior*

(n=400)

S. No	Role of local issues	N	R	ST	O	A	Mean
		F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	
1.	Employment opportunities and voting behavior	34 8.5%	83 20.8%	78 19.5%	110 27.5%	95 23.8%	3.37
2.	Cheap electricity/gas and voting behavior	50 12.5%	69 17.3%	87 21.8%	97 24.3%	97 24.3%	3.31
3.	Peace and security and voting behavior	34 8.5%	71 17.8%	89 22.3%	109 27.3%	96 24%	3.41
4.	Inflation and voting behavior	36 9%	66 16.5%	96 24%	94 23.5%	108 27%	3.43
5.	Construction at local level and voting behavior	42 10.5%	46 11.5%	90 22.5%	118 29.5%	104 26%	3.49



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6.	Installation of electric poles, transformers and gas meters and voting behavior	25 6.3%	53 13.3%	89 22.3%	141 35.3%	92 23%	3.56
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Source: Field Data

Statements related to five local issues named installation of electric poles and gas meters, constructions at local level, inflation, peace and security, employment and cheap electricity were asked in the questionnaire to find their role in determining voting of the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The frequency of respondents on the option “often” was 141 (35.3%) for the statement “people voted on the basis of installation of electric poles, gas meters and transformers” with the mean (3.56). Before 2013, this table reveals, people were inclined to political parties which used to fulfill their local issues like installation of transformers and electric poles in the days near to general elections. In this way, they would get people’s support and would win the elections.

In addition to that, construction of roads, bridges, streets and pavements were also regarded as an important factor in determining the voting behavior of people. On this statement, 109 respondents (27.3%) were concentrated on the option “often”. The statement “People voted in hope of establishment of peace and security in the province” 109 responses (27.3%) were concentrated on the option “often”. This shows that due to the political instability in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa people had prioritized those political parties which promised to restore peace and security in the province. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa being less developed province as compared to other provinces and hence employment was also relatively important factor in determining voting behavior as 110 (27.5%) of the respondents said “often” to the statement “people voted to get employment opportunities”. People were in need of employment opportunities and thus voted to political parties which promised to give these opportunities. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is a province which contributes a huge amount in electricity generation yet many people are deprived of this facility in the province. However, voting on the basis to get cheaper electricity and gas was not seen as a priority of the people of KP.

While collecting data through interviews, respondents added their detailed view



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about the common voting behavior in KP specifically before 2013 that people of KP always wanted peace, security and development in the province. This demand makes ground for the question that why the people of KP voted for a different political party in every new election before 2013.

Thus the analysis from both the methods (quantitative and qualitative) indicates that people in KP before 2013 always wanted peace, security and development. Quantitative data, however, provides a more detail about the local issues which mobilized the voters. These issues include construction at local level, installation of electric poles and gas meters, inflation, employment opportunities and peace in the province.

### 3.2 Role of Developmental Works in Common Voting Behavior

This table shows the role of developmental works of political parties in determining the voting behavior of the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa before 2013. Overall trend in the table shows that developmental work was not a dominant factor in the voting behavior of the people.

**Table 9**

*Role of Developmental Works in Common voting behavior*

(n=400)

Item No	Role of developmental works	N F (%)	R F (%)	ST F (%)	O F (%)	A F (%)	Mean
1.	Flourishing tourism and voting behavior	215 53.8%	84 21%	51 12.8%	39 9.8%	11 2.8%	1.87
2.	Influence of developing industrial sector on voting behavior	110 27.5%	122 30.5%	88 22%	52 13%	28 7%	2.42
3.	Influence of building dams and power houses on voting behavior	106 26.5%	107 26.8%	80 20%	62 15.5%	45 11.3%	2.58

Source: Field Data

The low mean values for the three items of developmental works tourism, industries and Dams are (1.87), (2.42) and (2.58) depict that it was not a dominant factor.. Furthermore, on the statement “people voted for the development of dams and power houses”, 106 respondents (26.5%) responded “Never” while 107 (26.8%) chose



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“rarely”. Similarly, on the statement “people voted for developing industrial sector” 122 respondents (30.5%) said “Rarely” while 110 (27.5%) of them opted for the option “Never”. Likewise, for the statement “people voted for flourishing tourism”, 215 respondents (53.8%) chose “Never”. The trends are clear in this table depicting that developmental works in economic factors were not dominant in the voting behavior. However, while comparing the means of the above three items, it is evident that voting for developing dams and power houses was relatively important for the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as compared to developing industrial sector and tourism.

### Findings

1. Before 2013, social factors were more prominent in the voting behavior of the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
2. In ranking the common voting behavior before 2013, the dominant factors which influenced the voting of the people of KP were kinship, patron-client relationship, regionalism, religion, ignored role of youth and the local issues like construction of roads, installment of electric poles, gas meters and hand pumps etc. Similarly, factors of employment and establishment of peace and security were dominant.
3. In ranking social factors in the common voting behavior in KP before 2013, kinship, voting on the basis of direction of elders, ignored role of youth, patron-client-relationship, and religion remained most dominant while voting on the basis of dynastic politics, ethnic identity and voting in return of cash money were seen as less popular.
4. In ranking political factors in the common voting behavior, it is evident that except voting on the basis of emotions, all other factors were found in the range below average. This explains that political factors were not much prominent in the voting behavior in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa before 2013 as compared to the social factors.
5. In comparison with social and political factors, it is evident that economic/rational factors were the second prominent in common voting behavior in KP after the social factors. The local issues like construction of roads, installation of water pumps, electric poles, transformers and gas meters, employment opportunities, overcome inflation and voting for the establishment of peace and security in the province are



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prominent.

### **Discussion**

In developing world, social factors like religion, ethnicity, social differences, patron-client relationship (Seredina, 2022) are prevalent in the voting behavior. For instance, in Nigeria religion and Patron-Client relationship (Alao, 2022), and in South Africa racial factors greatly influence voting behavior (Sadie, Patel & Baldry, 2016). These factors also exist in the voting behavior of the people of KP. However, the study conducted has shown that these factors were more prominent in KP before 2013. In the general elections of 2013, 2018 and 2024, the role of social factors was replaced by political factors which influence the voting behavior of the people.

The patron-client relationship has been an important determinant of voting behavior in the history of KP. This fact is backed by the findings of this research according to which in the voting behavior before 2013, patron-client relationship was the second most dominant determinant in the social factors. The existing literature shows that patron-client relationship was a dominant factor in the rural population in 2002 general elections (Islam & Ullah, 2014). Similarly, the factor of kinship also called Biradari was evident in the province of Punjab before 2013. The literature also shows that societies which lack the proper political platforms often organize themselves in clans, tribes and families to reach powerful positions (Ahmad, 2008), the same is true for KP which is why the first question of the research has found that voting on the basis of kinship has been the most prominent factor in the history of KP before 2013. Furthermore, the role of family, according to the Columbian School of thought, is very important in deciding the choice of the party in voting (Kudrnac & Lyons, 2017). The voting behavior of the people of KP before 2013 is aligned with this assumption. The participation of youth in politics was negligible before 2013 and thus their role in decision making was neglected in the field of politics. They would follow the traditions set by their elders. However, after 2013 the youth have become the trend setters in politics. They have educated their families about the parties' manifesto due to which the voter turnout has increased in the recent elections.

In developed world, people are politically aware and they elect their leaders on issue based voting. In the US people vote to political parties which ensure service delivery



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(Bhagoi, Mink & Cash, 2007). Similarly, in Greece people prefer economic voting (Trisbas, 2024). Among the prominent issues in KP, employment and establishment of peace and security have always been relevant. The province has suffered the effects of terrorism as well as war on terror. People had voted to political parties like the MMA and ANP in the hope of establishing peace in the society, but were disappointed (Quraish & Islam, 2018).

But the issue based voting becomes a less priority when other factors dominate voting behavior. For instance, before 2013, the most prevalent factor which influenced people of KP in elections was kinship and voting according to the directives of elders.

### **Conclusions**

It was concluded that Social factors were comparatively dominant in the common voting behavior while political factors are found less dominant in common voting behavior in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Economic factors remained considerable prominent in the common voting behavior. Among social factors in common voting behavior, voting on the basis of elders' opinion, kinship and patron-client relationship are much dominant. However, the role of religion is also worth mentioning as an important factor in both the common voting behavior.

### **Recommendations**

1. The basic needs like education, health, justice, and law and order situation still need effective reforms. The government should ensure public service delivery to decrease the prominent role of kinship and patron-client relationship.
2. As the factor of emotions is much dominant in the voting behavior of the people of KP thus the masses should be educated about the responsibility of the state and their duties in that regard so that they elect their leaders on the basis of service delivery instead of having an emotional attitude in voting behavior.

### **Suggestions for further Research**

- 1 The findings of this research are limited to the area of district Malakand. In order to study the change in the voting behavior of the people of KP, research should be carried out in all over Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- 2 Secondly, the population of this research consist the literate voters of district



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Malakand. It is suggested for further research that survey should be conducted from the illiterate masses of KP. The literacy rate in KP is 55.1% which makes it necessary to study the voting behavior of the half of the population of KP.

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