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**THE NEW VOTER: A STUDY OF THE VOTING BEHAVIOUR OF YOUTH IN
KAKINADA URBAN ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCY IN EAST GODAVARI DISTRICT,
ANDHRA PRADESH**

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ABSTRACT

In the electoral process of all democracies a voter makes two basic decisions regarding elections. At first, he decides whether he will vote or not. If he decides to vote, then he has to decide, to which party and or candidate he will support. In any democratic system the aspect of voting behaviour is first concerned with how many people vote and in which way, because it is at that point the voters have their most direct and powerful impact on the governing process. Participation of Young People is important. Young people's involvement in politics can take a variety of forms, just like that of any other age group. Voting constitutes only one element of a much more extensive repertoire of political participation, but it is the most basic democratic act that all citizens should perform on a regular basis. In this paper discusses about the voting pattern and understand the dimensions of voting behaviour in relation to the youth. The basic assumption underlying this study is that the young voter's perceptions on the influence of caste in politics, election campaign and role of print media at the time of election.

Keywords: Young Voter, Voting Behaviour, Election Campaign, Media and Caste and Politics

INTRODUCTION

The study of General Elections, Voting Behaviour occupies a prominent place in the realm of politics for a general understanding of wider political system. Election, being a barometer to measure the exciting emotions that are prevailing in the mind-set of the people of the nation, a study at both micro and macro levels is really significant and comprehend the political phenomenon (Acharya, K.R and Ravindra Sastry, V., 1991: 402).

In a democracy the periodic general elections occupy a place of primacy, as democracy is a form of *Vox Populai*. The elections and franchising are regarded as the most obvious means of influence as it enables the general public to select political leaders to rule them and represent their opinion. The citizens get involved themselves in political participatory in various forms and ways, like interacting with the government officials and corresponding through media and there by the general public involve themselves in a variety of formal and informal methods of political discussions and articulate their view-point on the manner and method of functioning of the government. Different aspects influence the behaviour of the people and determine their faculties that they vote in favour of a particular candidate or party whom the people think of

deserving and worthy enough to be elected their representatives. Thus, the voting choice of electorate in regard to parties, and the individual preferences of electorate in selecting political leadership may be viewed as the conversion of the public opinion into specific political decision.

So, the elections are quite important because the electorate make crucial decisions affecting the nation. The electoral outcome in reality determines as to who will manage the affairs of government and make a suitable public policy. The selection of leaders could be regarded as a political process through which the people with ability are recruited to assume political power. It is also true that the political elite may not always act as they promise but the choice of elites provides a form of popular control of policy outcomes (David Easton, 1953: 125)

Voting:

Voting is a means of aggregating individual preferences into collective decisions. It is not the sole means: market mechanisms do perform the same function, as the processes of informal interaction in many social and political groups. This aggregating of individual preferences by voting raises a variety of issues (David, L. Sills, 1968: 387). Voting is a method by which people express their wishful or preferential approval on

candidates for public office or on public issues. The right to vote is called suffrage and franchise.

In a democratic system the people have constitutional right to vote for candidates who rule over them, make the laws and control the government. People do vote on proposed constitutional amendments or changes. In some states and countries, the people may vote directly on public issues through the initiative and referendum and may remove officials through recall.

In a democracy, as many political scientists have called, voting is a duty as well as a right of the people. Informed and interested citizens as they argue, play important role for survival of a democratic form of government. Most modern democracies have universal suffrage, that is, they grant the vote to all adult citizens. The whole body of eligible voters makes up the 'electorate' (New Standard Encyclopaedia, 1984: V144).

Voting is an activity that indicates and estimates the degree of involvement and participation of people in the democratic process which varies from voter to voter. The method of voting activity may appear to be a simple act of putting a cross at some place in the ballot paper. But, when it is considered a vital view as a process of decision making, it

turns out to be a complex phenomenon. The inescapable impact of variable influences, including those of social pressures, economic advantages, psychological suggestions (recommendation) and above all, the impact of election campaign have made the process of this decision-making process, an extensively complicated activity (Aloo, J. Dastoor, 1980: 47 – 48).

According to Richards Rose and Harve Mosiavir, voting serves the following purposes.

1. It involves individual choice of governors and public policies.
2. It permits the individual to involve in reciprocal and continuous exchange of influence with political functionaries.
3. It contributes to the development as well as maintenance of individuals' allegiance to the existing constitutional regime.
4. It also contributes to the developmental and maintenance of voters' dissatisfaction with the existing constitutional regime;
5. It has emotional significance certain for individuals; and
6. It has no emotional and political significance for certain individuals. However, the voting has much more significance for the politicians who seek power than for the individual voters (Rose, Richard and Harve Mosiavir, 1966: 314).

Voting Behaviour:

The term 'voting behaviour' is not a new concept. It connotes more than examining voting records, compilation of voting statistics and compilation of electoral reforms (Apple, Paul, H., 1949: 168). In course of time the cited concept has acquired a new dimension as well as a broader comprehensive meaning. It is now treated as sub-field and considered to be a sub-area of political behaviour. Modern political scientists are deeply engrossed to analyse psychological process of individual voting in relation to perceptions, emotions and motivations, and their relation to political action as well as of institutional patterns, such as the communication process and their impact on elections. That is, in other sense the voting behaviour comes under the rubric of political behaviour. The terms 'political behaviour' and 'voting behaviour' as analysed by psephologists do suggest aspects of behaviour study, which are essentially vary in conceptual sense of political science. The difference between the studies on the voting behaviour or political behaviour and other studies is that the former studies reflect not the principles of behaviour or content of behaviour but rather the context, in which the individual behaviour is examined in the elections (Eldersveld Samuel, J., 1972: 267). The studies on voting behaviour differ from the other types of studies

in political science predominantly in three aspects. First, the voting behaviour is an area of political science, where theory can be systematically developed and quantitatively measured and tested. Secondly, the findings from the studies of voting behaviour are more definite and accurate than those of any other type of research in political science. Thirdly, the theory building has reached a stage of sophistication in the research of voting behaviour (Hickman Charles, 1935:1-2).

Importance of Voting Behaviour:

Voting behaviour is regarded as the area or field of study of political science which may be studied scientifically and systematically by employing sophisticated techniques. The traditionalists were mainly concerned with the behaviour and functions of institutions, organisations etc. They began to analyse the political behaviour of individuals with the help of models, techniques, methods borrowed from other social and physical sciences.

Voting behaviour or electoral behaviour is closely associated with not only political behaviour but also with political participation. But while thinking in this line it must be remembered that political behaviour and political participation are broadly used. Electoral behaviour is a part of them. Political

participation includes political discussion, involvement in decision-making etc.

Behaviouralists emphasize that socio-economic political variables influence the voting pattern of electorate. But the contribution of all these factors is not equal or proportionate. The importance of each factor needs to be properly assessed and for that purpose voting behaviour requires to be studied in correct perspective. In a dynamic society the structures and functions must be suitably readjusted in order to make them corresponding to changes. That is why modern behaviouralists make serious attempts to study the behaviour of the voters (Das, P.G., 1996: 435).

Participation of Young People is important. Young people’s involvement in politics can take a variety of forms, just like that of any other age group. Voting constitutes only one element of a much more extensive repertoire of political participation, but it is the most basic democratic act that all citizens should perform on a regular basis.

Objectives of the Present Study

In the present context the study seeks to operationalise concepts of voting behaviour of the young voters. It is mainly concerning the following objectives:

1. To identify the influence of caste on the electoral behaviour of Student voter’s decision.
2. To examine the impact of the election campaign through the media on Student voter’s decision.
3. To identify the influence of Election Propaganda by Cine Actors/Actress

METHODOLOGY

This study is an empirical study based on the primary data obtained through the structured questionnaire, which has been administered among the sample respondents on their voting behaviour and political awareness. Simple random sampling is used to select the sample respondents. Besides this, secondary data required has been collected from various books, journals and newspapers with the help of these two sources of data the electoral behaviour of the young voters of the Kakinada Rural Assembly Constituency in East Godavari District.

Table 1: Distribution of the Sample Respondents by the Age

S. No.	Level of Age	No of the Sample Respondents	Per Cent
1	18- 22	77	77.0
2	23- 25	23	23.0
Total		100	100.0

Source: Primary Data

The data presented in the **Table 1** shows that majority of the respondents are in the age

group of 18- 22 years, constituting 77.0 per cent (77) followed by 23- 25 years age group

respondents, who constitute 23.0 per cent (23).

It is observed from the above analysis that a major chunk of the respondents are in the younger age group of 18-22 years.

Role of Caste in Politics or Elections:

Though the voters may not express their views frankly regarding the role of caste in politics and election, it could be clearly

understood or felt that caste plays a predominant role in elections, since the Indian society comprises of various different castes and sub-castes. In this regard the researcher tried to bring out the role played by caste in elections in the opinion of the sample respondents.

Table 2: Role of Caste in Politics or Elections

S. No.	Perception of the Respondent	No of the Sample Respondents	Per Cent
1	To great extent	31	31.00
2	To some extent	17	17.00
3	No influence or role	25	25.00
4	Can't say/Don't know	27	27.00
Total		100	100.00

Source: Primary Data

As the data indicate in the **Table 2**, majority of the sample respondents constituting 31.0 per cent (31) said that the impact of caste would be greater extent in elections or politics, while 17.00 per cent (17) of them opined that there would be some extent. No impact of caste and 25.00 per cent (25) of the sample respondents stated that there would be no impact of caste in elections or politics. 27.00 per cent of the sample respondents (27) did not express their views on this issue.

It can be observed from the opinion of the majority of the respondents, (31 +17), that caste plays some role in elections and influence the voters to a great extent.

Opinion of the Respondents on the Belief that People Vote to the Candidate Who Belongs to Their Caste:

The influence and impact of caste in politics and elections is clearly felt. Seats will be allotted to the candidates as per the caste-wise population ratios. It is also clearly evident that where a particular caste with its large population dominates there the candidate of that caste will be given seat to contest in elections.

The main purpose of this question to know the respondent opinion on the belief that people vote to the candidate who belongs to their caste.

Table 3: Opinion of the Respondent on the Belief That People Vote to the Candidate Who Belongs to Their Caste

S. No.	Opinion of the respondent	No of the Sample Respondents	Per Cent
1	Agree	36	36.00
2	Disagree	64	64.00
Total		80	100.00

Source: Primary Data

This is evidently clear from the **Table 3**, as around 36.00 per cent (36) of the sample respondents agreed that people vote to the candidate who belongs to their caste. But 64.00 per cent (64) of the sample respondents disagreed with this opinion.

It can be stated that nearly half of the sample respondents (64) disagreed people do not vote to the candidate who belongs to the caste of their own.

Election Campaign:

Elections are a key activity around which a representative democracy evolves. The success and legitimacy of elections hinge on citizen involvement in voting, and also in the overall election process. Besides voting, citizen engagement in campaign activities can momentarily bridge gap between the elite and the ordinary mass of citizens.

Campaign Functions:

In the matrix of election campaign propaganda are rooted three universal functions which parties everywhere perform viz. the articulative, competitive and educative functions. The articulate function refers to the communication of goals in the mobilization of political support. The competitive function refers to the combat, involving a variety of strategies, which a party-structure carries on vis-à-vis all others in mobilizing support for its own goals, the educative functions refer to the raising of the level of political information of citizens on a mass scale through debates on controversial issues. In this conceptual view point, the respondents were asked to what extent they are interested to participate in election campaign.

Table 4: How Much the Sample Respondents are Interested in the Election Campaign

S. No.	How Much the Sample Respondents are Interested in the Election Campaign	No of the Sample Respondents	Per Cent
1	Great deal	42	42.00
2	Some what	19	19.00
3	Not at all	25	25.00
4	Don't know/Can't say	14	14.00
Total		100	100.00

Source: Primary Data

It was surprisingly revealed by 42.00 per cent (42) of the sample respondents that they are all interested in participating in election campaign with Great Deal. While

25.00 per cent (25) of sample respondents stated that they were not interested at all 19.00 per cent of the sample respondents (19) have shown interest to participating in election

campaign with Some What Interest. 14.00 per cent (14) of the sample respondents stated that they don't know/can't say anything on the campaign issue.

From the above analysis it can be

Table 5: In Favour of Which Party, the Respondent will Participate in Election Activities

S. No.	Name of the Party	No of the Sample Respondents	Per Cent
2	Yuvajana Sramika Rithu Congress Party (YSRCP)	44	44.00
3	Telugu Desum Party (TDP)	30	30.02
4	Jana Sena	12	12.00
7	Didn't participate any political party election activities	14	14.00
Total		80	100.00

Source: Primary Data

As regards to participation of respondents in the election activities of their favourite parties. The Table- V reveals who participate in the election activities of their favourite political parties. Of these, sample respondents 44.00 per cent (44) supported the YSRCP, 30.00 per cent

stated that most of the sample respondents stated that they were interested in participating in election campaign with Great Deal (42.00 per cent).

of the respondents (30) supported TDP and 12.00 per cent of the respondents (12) supported to Jana Sena.

It is observed majority of the sample respondents i.e., 44.00 per cent (44) stated that their favourite political party is YSRCP.

Table 6: Election Propaganda How far the Sample Respondent is influenced by Cine Actors/Actress

S. No.	Perception of the Respondent	No of the Sample Respondents	Per Cent
1	Fully influenced	15	15.00
2	Somewhat influenced	23	23.00
3	Not influenced	36	36.00
4	Can't say	26	26.00
Total		80	100.00

Source: Primary Data

Election Propaganda by the Cine Actors/Actress:

The idea of using the star power of celebrity endorsements to reach young voters is not a new idea. It has been previously proven quite successful in motivating and mobilising large groups of young voters. What is being discussed in this instance, however, is how celebrities can encourage young people to utilize their privilege to vote. This concept

does not necessarily indicate if celebrities are able to encourage these same young people to vote for a certain candidate.

In Indian election scenario, propaganda by leaders with charisma and by the Cine-actors and actresses who have fan following is an obvious phenomenon. But the data in the **Table 6**, shows that majority of the sample respondents constituting 36.00 per cent (36) felt that there would be no influence of cine

actor’s propaganda in elections. While only 23.00 per cent (23) of the sample respondents stated that it would be some extent, 15.00 per cent (15) of the sample respondents only felt that there would be fully influenced of cine actors to full extent.

It can be said that there would be no influence of cine actors / actresses, propaganda in elections as stated by majority of the sample respondents (36).

Table 7: How far the Political Propaganda through the Media (Print Media/Electronic Media) Election Campaigns, influence the Decision of Voter

S. No.	Perception of the Respondent	No of the Sample Respondents	Per Cent
1	Fully influence	16	16.00
2	Somewhat influence	33	33.00
3	Don't influence	28	28.00
4	Don't know	23	23.00
Total		100	100.00

Source: Primary Data

As the data presented in the **Table 7**, shows major chunk of sample respondents, constituting 33.00 per cent (25) felt that there would be somewhat influence of media on the decision of voters, while 23.00 per cent (23) of the sample respondents stated that they didn’t know about the influence of media’s election campaign on decision of voters’ in casting their vote with surprisingly. However, there was 16.00 per cent (16) who felt there would be great influence of media on the decision of voters. Surprisingly 28.00 per cent (28) of the sample respondents stated that media would not be do not influence in casting their vote.

It is observed that the most of respondents i.e., 33.00 per cent (33) felt that

How far the Political Propaganda through the Media (Print Media/Electronic Media) Election Campaigns, influence the Decision of Voter:

The researcher had also tried to find out how far political propaganda through electronic as well as print media would influence the decision of the voters in casting their vote.

the election campaign through the media would be somewhat influence the decision of respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Young people should vote to develop a habit of voting from the start, and thus ensure high turnout in the future. Getting them to vote is part of their political socialization. It encompasses two aspects: behavioural and attitudinal. Behavioural means acting politically on the basis of attitudes, preferences and opinions, such as by discussing politics with others, participating in political events, and through voting.

The following observations are reached through the discussion:

- It is observed that a major chunk of the respondents are in the younger age group of 18-22 years.
- It can be observed from the opinion of the majority of the respondents (31+17) regarding caste play in politics/ election, that caste plays somewhat role in elections and influence the voters to a great extent.
- It can be stated that nearly half of the sample respondents (64) disagreed people do not vote to the candidate who belongs to the caste of their own.
- It can be observed that the most of the sample respondents stated that they were interested in participating in election campaign with Great Deal (42.00 per cent).
- It is observed majority of the sample respondents i.e., 44.00 per cent (44) stated that their favourite political party is YSRCP.
- It can be said that there would be no influence of cine actors / actresses, propaganda in elections as stated by majority of the sample respondents (36).
- It is observed that the most of respondents i.e., 33.00 per cent (33) felt that the election campaign through the media would be somewhat influence the decision of respondents.

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