

WHAT SHAPES VOTING PREFERENCES IN UPPER DIR, PAKISTAN; RELIGION OR ISSUES? A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF 2013 AND 2018 GENERAL ELECTIONS

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Abstract

Voting behavior has been a subject of intense academic discourse and is shaped by multiple political, religious, and social factors. In this context, based on Issue Voting model and emphasizing Issue voting as a significant determinant of voting behavior in a multi-party parliamentary political system, like Pakistan, this study aims to explore the changing pattern of Voting Behavior by comparing the general elections of 2013 and 2018 in Pakistan. It argues that the significance of issue-based politics has increased at the cost of religion and other social determinants of voting in the Pakhtun region of Upper Dir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. This is not to say that religion and socio-cultural factors have lost significance at all but is to contend that the politics of voting is changing in the region, long argued to be driven by religion and socio-cultural factors. The study is methodologically quantitative in nature. The quantitative data is collected from 380 respondents from Upper Dir, Pakistan through a dichotomous scale questionnaire under random sampling technique while using univariate and bivariate analyses for the analysis of data.

Keywords: Issue-based voting, Voting Behavior, Religion, Political Factors, Pakistan

Introduction

Political history of Dir¹ reveals that the Islamist Jamaat I Islami (JI) has been victorious in subsequent elections since

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1970's. Nevertheless, the voting behavior of the electorates in Dir astonished the social and political analysts in 2018 general elections, when only 01 (a Provincial Assembly seat) out of the total 11 seats (8 Provincial and 3 National Assembly seats allocated to Upper Dir and Lower Dir) was won by Jamaat I Islami. This shift in voting behaviour was observed across Dir at all polling stations and constituencies. The electorates deviated from their long-standing practise of choosing members of the Islamist Jamaat I Islami by voting for Pakistan Tehreek Insaaf (PTI) (Elections Pakistan, 2018)

In this context, the current study investigates the shifting pattern of voting behaviour among residents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's district Upper Dir. The study aims to assess the change in voting behaviour of the voters in 2018 general elections as compared to 2013 by focusing on the determinants of voting behaviour in these two elections while posing the question, what causes change in voting behaviour of voters in Upper Dir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the general elections of 2018 as compared to 2013? Furthermore, the study's premise is that "the shifting political preferences/determinants based on national and local concerns were the major reason of changing voting behaviour of electorates in 2018 general elections." The article below makes a background for the case study and the question by discussing the electoral history of Dir district. It then comments on the theoretical and methodological premise of this study, followed by data analysis, results and presentation of the findings. In the end is a conclusive argumentation of this research.

¹Dir is a district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province of Pakistan and was a princely state in British India under the Nawab. Its population is and most of the people are ethnic Pakhtun with Pakhtu as a language of the majority. It also shares a border with the neighboring Afghan state placing it in an important and historical region. The total population is 946421 (PBS, 2017).

Background: Electoral and Politics history of Dir from 1970 to 2018

Dir was a British Indian princely dominion ruled by the 'Nawabs' (1890-1969). (Nawaz, 2010; Bangash, 2015) As with other princely kingdoms, the Pakistani government decided to implement reforms in the area in 1969, and it was included into the Malakand division. It was promoted to District in 1970. It was a single District and was split into two Districts, Upper Dir and Lower Dir in 1996 (Nawaz, 2010). Upper Dir is situated in the northwest region of the KP, adjoining 2 ex-princely states, Chitral and Swat. It also shares a border with the neighbouring Afghan state (Shahid, 2005), placing it in an important and historical region.

The inhabitants of the region were uninformed of the franchise, assembly, and even political engagement because no political group was allowed to intervene in state matters or give direct or indirect counsel to the Nawab (Zada, 2014). After the era of 'Nawabism' (Nawab rule), political activity started in Dir in 1969, and the first popular and prominent political party in Dir was Jamaat-I-Islami. Pakistan People's Party has been Dir's second largest political party. Later, in addition to the aforementioned political groups, JUI, ML and ANP received some support (Nawaz, 2010).

Since 1970, eleven General Elections have been held in Pakistan and out of the eleven general elections 5 times (1970, 1977, 1988, 2002 & 2013) JI remained victorious on National Assembly seats while 2 times it has equally shared the seats with PPP in the general elections of 1988 and 1993. PPP won the general elections on National Assembly seats only two times in 1990 and 2008 while PML (N) won the general election on National Assembly only once in 1997. Additionally, the candidates of JI in elections who could not secure a victory, stood close to the winner which shows a popular support for the party

in the region. The same situation had occurred on Provincial Assembly seats (Elections Pakistan, 1977-2013)

On provincial assembly seats too, the JI dominated the elections as is evident from the elections results of 1985, 1988, 1990, 1993, 2002 and 2013, where JI secured the entire assembly seats 6 times out of 11. PPP only dominated in 1977, 1997, and 2008, while in the remaining elections JI and PPP and other parties shared the seats (Elections Pakistan, 1970-2013). Islamist Jamat-I-Islami only lost the elections of 2008 when it boycotted the elections (Elections Pakistan, 2008)

Seats allotted to Dir in general elections (both National and Provincial Assemblies) were generally won by the JI or the PPP. In the elections of 2008, when the ANP formed the government. in KP, the Pakistan People's Party won the majority of seats. When Pakistan Tehreek-I-Insaaf (PTI) almost swept over the province in 2013, JI stayed high in Dir (winning all of the seats assigned to Dir) (Election Pakistani, 2013a). In the general elections of 2018, however, the people of Dir voted for PTI on the National Assembly seat, rejecting the region's previous dominating parties, JI and PPP. Voting preferences, election outcomes, and political conduct have relevance in this setting since elections and their results reflect people's political behaviour, choices, and preferences (Cheeseman, 2017). In this context, the current study seeks to investigate the voting behaviour, preferences, and choices of Upper Dir residents in the aftermath of electoral swings in the 2018 general elections by concentrating on religion, political preferences, and the party narratives of Jamaat-I-Islami and others.

The research also defines voting behaviour as a participant's selection of a candidate or political party in a voting booth (Goldman, 1966). Voting is necessary for elections, democracies, and the operation of the government, claim Thomas and Schotten (1993). Campbell and David (2008) assert that the right to vote ensures that people will be able to pick the right

leaders for their communities. Additionally, it places Pakhtuns in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly in Upper Dir, in the context of the fact that a number of factors affect voting patterns, with religion and the influence of the family head being among the most significant of these factors (Converse, 1974; Rose, 1974; Powell, 1982; Ahmad, 2010). In rural areas where religious and political institutions and interests overlap, political parties with a religious message and a devotion to religious traditions are more prevalent (Gallup, 2008; Lillemets, 2015). The head of the home, often the father, impacts the family's young members' choice of voting in the area due to political socialisation and religion (Mehmood & Rauf, 2018). Because they are socialised in the family, young individuals tend to identify with the party or parties that their elders or family members do (Erikson, Luttbeg, & Tedin, 1980). The literature, theoretical underpinnings, and methodological foundation are all covered more below.

Literature Review

According to the research on voting behaviour and preferences, social networks in general, education, economic position, class, gender, age, occupation, and religion all have an impact on people's propensity to vote. The literature has been divided into six categories in this respect, including religion, economics, the Biradari system, families, national issues, and political affiliation as the foundation for voter preferences and civic activity.

Family is one of the most important sources of political socialisation, since it allows children to develop an affinity for a certain political party (Erikson et al., 1980). The children of the family tend to support the political party that their parents inherit. According to a survey done in Multan city, about 30.8% respondents were compelled to vote for a certain candidate or

party by their families, demonstrating that family plays a significant influence in deciding voting inclinations of their members (Kanwal et al., 2016).

Furthermore, a study of the 2013 elections in District Layyah discovered that 34.4% of respondents voted for party chosen by their parents and members of family. Their own voting decision was thus impacted by their parents' choices (Azeez et al., 2014). The role of family continues to have a significant impact in the province of Pakhtunkhwa, influencing vote preferences and democratic norms in practically every election (Ahmad, 2010). Thus, this part of the literature contends that an individual's voting behaviour is strongly related to the family's party identity. Individuals' party inclinations and voting choices are therefore linked to their familial background. However, a good part of literature also explores religion as a determinant of voting.

Though there are intricacies and complexity between religion and politics, they are inextricably linked (Oshewolo & Maren, 2015). Traditional, religious, and culturally motivated individuals always favour religiously motivated political parties that promise to protect religious traditions (Lillemets, 2015). There is ample literature on this aspect, the analysis of which is not in the scope and limit of this article, however, some relevant examples are briefly comprehended here.

Muttahida Majlis e Amal (MMA) received the greatest support in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's rural districts during the 2002 general elections (KP). Religious parties, such as the MMA, enjoy substantial support in rural regions, among illiterate residents, low-income groups, and women who have an emotional relationship to religion (Said et al., 2021). In other contexts, like in the African state of Nigeria, Agbor stresses the relationship between voting behavior and religion in general

elections (Agbor, 2019). On the other hand, traditional literature also focuses on economic determinants of the voting process.

In this regard, Bashir (1973) contends that in the 1970 general elections, economic issues influenced the voting behaviour of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa voters. Various studies show that people favour candidates who are economically robust and steady (Khan, 2005). Wilder contends that personal and local reasons impacted individual voting behaviour in Pakistan. Candidates that aided voters with personal issues such as job placement, utility services, and transfers, as well as assisting them in resolving local issues, frequently won elections (Wilder, 1999). In particular, like Pakistan and most of the South Asian and Central Asian states, kinship also plays a significant role. Wilder (1999) defines biradari as a kinship system that exists in Pakistan, including the province of Pakhtunkhwa. In contrast to a family, it is a bigger social unit that influences its members' voting choices. In Pakistan, more than 50% of voters are influenced by baradari, and the candidate's biradari holds more weight with voters than the party (Wilder, 1999). According to Ahmad (2010), in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), social variables such as family, biradari, and feudalism have lost relevance in comparison to political drivers of voting likings such as party affiliation, leadership affiliation, party enactment, and candidate performance. Thus, political factors have diminished the importance of social factors in voting behaviour (Ahmad, 2010). The above-mentioned determinants of voting behavior as explored in the literature are nonetheless important and significant. However, in the recent context of Pakistan, particularly since 2017-2018 issues of national level are playing a significant role, even in so called religious, conservative, and cultural regions. For example, Dir in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa needs to be contextualized in the literature with a focus on issue-based voting against religious and socio-cultural aspects.

Voting on national problems became a prominent component in Pakistani politics in the 1970 general election, finally leading to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's win (Wilder, 1999). Furthermore, in the 1990 general elections, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) received 26% of the vote due to its stance as the party of poor's. Likewise, 50% respondents chose Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI) due to its religious stance (Gallup Pakistan, 1990). In the specific setting of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the MMA was led to an unprecedented victory in the 2002 general elections, owing to its unwavering stance on national concerns of the moment (Khan, 2005). It is in this background that a research study on voting behavior in the historically, strategically, socially, and religiously significant region of Dir, northern Pakistan is demanded. Furthermore, the period from 2013 to the present, particularly the 2018 general elections, should be examined as a moment of transition in the region's electoral politics. Furthermore, the relevance of problems in affecting voting behaviour must be compared with religion and family head as key drivers in conventional literature. This is followed by an explanation of the theoretical underpinning of this investigation.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

There are several models, ideas, and frameworks for understanding voting behaviour and the elements that influence it. One of the most contentious is clientelism, which contends that material favour is the most important factor influencing individuals to vote (Ferejohn, 1997; Robinson & Verdier, 2001; Wantchekon, 2002). Theory of Rational Choice is another significant argument in this regard with the works of Downs (1957) and Arrow (1986). Based on the model of enterprises-consumers framework, the methodology proposes that if rational choice conventions can explain market functioning, they can also

explain political functioning and establish a direct correlation between consumers and voters, as well as amongst corporates and political parties (Downs, 1957; Arrow, 1986). However, political conduct differs greatly from consumer behaviour, and other variables such as historical, cultural, religious, and political influences voting decisions in ways that go beyond the maximum of value of votes. Other theories explore the role of parties and partisanship in voting preferences.

In this context, Party identification theory argues that party identification is a significant factor in voting preferences of individuals. Here it refers to identification, adherence, and loyalty to a party irrespective of the situation (Heath & K. McDonald, 1988). The Partisanship model, on the other hand, contends that partisanship has been a core, traditional, and major element affecting individuals' voting preferences. Partisanship is defined as a psychological attachment to a political party or organisation, or a solid and long-term association with a certain political party. According to (Campbell et al., 1960), the concept is founded on its connections to small-group research, psychological theories and group theory. Though the models are persuasive, significant, and debated, yet in the present case study and in relevance to the data collected, issue voting has been increasingly significant.

Another key driver of voting choices, preferences, and behaviour that was created and promoted in response to the notion of party identification is the issue voting model and theory, which is crucial to this research. The issue model contends that when it comes to voting, concerns such as social, political, economic, or religious are favoured over party allegiance and identity, as well as other socioeconomic and sociocultural variables. Politicians and even political parties are accused of attempting to politicise and bring to the forefront current and pressing topics in their

electoral campaigns. Furthermore, political players, leaders, and parties seek to take positions closer to those of electoral benefits (Cameron & Stephenson, 2010).

The influence of specific issue controversies surrounding elections has been explored in the traditional literature as well as the recent one. A significant work has been done in this regard by Catherine E. de Vries who has explored the issue voting perspective while developing a model consisting of an issue voting triangle. The three factors or sides of the triangle are Voter Salience, Party Conflict and Issue Linkage where voter salience mediates issue voting, while party conflict offers voters with “real” choices and issue linkage related the issue to present political conflict. Likewise, *wedge-issue competition* has been traditionally explored in bi-party system, yet research has explored its relevance to multiparty setups. Additionally, issue voting has been central now in Green politics particularly in Europe. Such studies provide background to the context of Dir, Pakistan, a multi-party parliamentary democracy, the focus of present study, where issue voting is growing since last elections of 2018, though the issues are peculiar to the context of Pakistan.

Regarding the contextually of this theory in the case study, it can be argued that the electoral politics of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in the past two decades, is witness to this. Because the religion was presented as an issue in the elections of 2002, people opted for MMA. Without any doubt there were some others also that contribute to the success of MMA. Voters supported the Awami National Party in the 2008 election because the protection of Pakhtun rights was promoted as an issue. Similarly, in the 2013 elections, voters supported Pakistan Tehreek I Insaaf, or PTI, since the slogan "change" was offered in the guise of issue voting. Similarly, in 2018, the PTI promised that Pakistan would be rid of corruption, that young would be provided employment, that the guilty would be punished, and that merit would be found everywhere and was able to win the

elections in the province and significant in areas like Dir, where parties like the Jamaat-I-Islami and PPP have been in power for almost five decades. The analysis of data collected through the methodology explored below, shows that the significance of issue voting has grown in importance in recent years in Dir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Pakistan.

Research Methodology

The research population for this quantitative study is all of the registered voters in District Upper Dir. District Upper Dir has 447,414 registered voters (268,134 male and 179,280 female), and the total population is 946421. Upper Dir has 120,000 households, and there are 27 Union Councils (UCs) in the area. Furthermore, for a representative sample, a multistage cluster sampling approach is utilised. The district is split into three primary sections: Tehsil Dir, Wari, and Sheringal. Tehsils are split additionally into union councils. These three Tehsils have 27 union councils. Tehsil Dir, Wari, and Sheringal have 12, 9, and 6 Union Councils, respectively. Using a random sampling approach, four Union Councils were chosen from Tehsil Dir, three from Wari, and two from Sheringal based on proportionate allocation. There are 38344 households in the target union councils. For 38344 homes, the sample size is 380. (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Furthermore, the size of the sample is proportionally allotted among the households of each Union Council using Bowely's (1926) proportional distribution formula, is illustrated below.

$$n_h = (N_h / N) \times n$$

Where;

n_h = sample size for stratum h

N_h = population size for stratum h

N = total population size, and

n = total sample size

The data was then composed from the household in union councils selected proportionately.

Table 3.1

Dissemination of target Households

Tehsils	Union Councils	No. of Household	Size of Sample
Dir	Bibiawar,	4020	40
	Ganori,	3862	38
	Sawni,	3639	39
	Qulandi,	4783	47
Wari	Akhgram,	4467	44
	Wari,	5728	56
	Deslor,	4249	42
Sheringal	Sheringal,	3828	37
	Patrak	3768	37
Total	9	38344	380

To collect the data a dichotomous questionnaire is used with two possible answers. Moreover, before actual data collection could be started from the field a pilot survey in Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University was conducted to test the validity of the questionnaire. To locate the respondent's voter lists are used. Respondents engage in a variety of vocations, including government employees, private employees,

housewives, students, and labourers. The majority of the data was gathered by visiting respondents' homes; however, public sites such as mosques and commercial areas were also visited. Female representatives of the local government (female councillors) and a female member of one of the scholar families assisted in arranging data gathering from the targeted voter's women, particularly housewives.

Furthermore, in order to use the chi square test for determining the correlation between dependent and independent variables and to achieve logical deductions the statements of the variables are indexed into cross tabularization. Moreover, for analysis, the data was first coded and then put into SPSS 21 software, which was then examined statistically. For frequency distribution, univariate analysis is used, while bivariate analysis is used for the relationship between dependent and independent variables. The Chi square test is used to determine the level of significance and association between variables.

Ethical consideration which includes that no participant is harmed, due respect is given on priority basis to all the participants during data collection, a prior consent of the respondents, ensure privacy protection, ensure anonymity of the respondents, avoid deception or exaggerated and misleading information and biases in presentation of data has been taken into consideration (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Below is the analysis of collected data.

Data Analysis

Results Based on 2013 General Elections

In this section, the data presented in for 2013 general elections which sets a context for 2018 general elections and a comparison of both and argues that in 2013 general elections issue voting was

significant yet not outweighed by other preferences while in 2018 it outweighs other preferences.

Table 01 below, elucidates the ratio of the respondents inclined by political preferences and issues. Out of the 380 respondents, 179 (47.1%) of the respondents were influenced by various political preferences and issues, while the majority 201 (52.9%) of the respondents were not swayed by any political preferences or issue.

Statement	Frequency	Percent
Yes	179	47.1
No	201	52.9
Total	380	100.0

Table 01: Voting Choice influenced by Political Preferences Based on Issues

Furthermore, table 02 illustrates the proportion of respondents affected by religious ideas. A slim majority 192 (50.5%) of the total 380 respondents were inclined by various religious beliefs, whereas a significant proportion 188 (49.5%) were not swayed by any religious beliefs and likings.

Statement	Frequency	Percent
Yes	192	50.5
No	188	49.5
Total	380	100.0

Table 02: Voting Choice influenced by Religious Ideologies

Results Based On 2018 General Elections

This section now explores the data collected for general elections of 2018 and reflects, upon a comparison, that voters have casted vote on the basis of issues both national and local. The ratio of respondents impacted by political preferences is shown in Table 03 below. The majority of the 380 respondents, 250 (65.8%), were impacted by diverse political inclinations, whereas 130 (34.2%) were not swayed by any political leanings. In comparison to 2013 general elections, a clear shift is observed as voters have casted vote on the basis of issues both national and

Statement	Frequency	Percent
Yes	250	65.8
No	130	34.2
Total	380	100.0

local.

Table 03: Voting Choice influenced by Political Preferences Based on Issue

Similarly, table 04 illustrates the proportion of respondents affected by religious ideologies. In 2018, 106 (27.9%) of the total 380 respondents were influenced by various religious ideologies, whereas the vast majority (274 (72.1%)) were not influenced by any religious preferences or convictions. In comparison to 2013 the influence of religion on voting behavior has decreased to a considerable level.

Statement	Frequency	Percent
Yes	106	27.9
No	274	72.1
Total	380	100.0

Table 04: Voting Choice influenced by Religious Ideologies

BI-VARIATE ANALYSIS

In this study, the chi-square test is utilised to determine the relationship between independent and dependent variables and to evaluate hypotheses (Gill, 2001). Four tables (two each for the 2013 and 2018 general elections) with all of the statements are provided in the following pages, Each table detailed the bivariate analysis for each dependent variable and its relationship to the independent variable. The "p" value in each column denotes the relationship between them.

Hypothesis-one

H1. Elections/voting choices in district Upper Dir are determined by religious considerations.

The Influence of Religion on Electorates' Voting Behavior (2013 Elections)

1. The following table, in the 1st row, shows the Chi Square value χ^2 (270.606) with a "p" value of 0.000, demonstrating that there is an imperative correlation in dependent and independent variables, namely religious agenda and voting behaviour of respondents. In the 2013 general elections, the religious agendas of religious political parties, particularly JI, had a major impact on the

voting behaviour of electorates in district Upper Dir, according to the table.

2. The table's second shows the Chi Square value χ^2 (212.180) with a "p" value of 0.000, indicating a significant relationship among the variables. In the 2013 general elections in the people Upper Dir were swayed by the religious beliefs of the candidate and voted in his favour.
3. Likewise, in the third row of the preceding table, the Chi Square value is χ^2 (216.350) with a "p" value of 0.000, indicating a strong link among the two variables. It demonstrates that religion was utilized as a manipulative weapon as usual, appealing to people's emotions and affecting their voting behaviour, and they backed religious political parties such as JI and JUI, in 2013 general elections,
4. Row 4 of the table confirms the Chi Square value χ^2 (2700.606) with "p" value 0.000, which indicates a solid relationship between the two variables. It indicate that majority of people in the general elections of 2013 were swayed by their religious affiliation and feelings to vote for their favourite party
5. In the fifth row, the Chi Square value is χ^2 (219.514), and the "p" value is 0.000. Once again, the "p" value is indicating a firm association between the mentioned variables. It explains that, in the view of the people, the religious parties had superior programs than other parties in the 2013 general elections, hence they voted for religious party candidates.

Table 05 (A): Influence of Religion on Voting Behavior of Electorates (2013 Elections)

S. NO	Statement	Response	Voting Behavior of Electorates		Statistic
			Yes	No	
1	You cast your vote for your preferred party in the general elections of 2013 based on its religious programme.	Yes	160 (42.1%)	0 (0.0%)	$\chi^2 = 27$ 0.606 $p = 0.00$ 0
		No	32 (8.4%)	188 (49.5%)	
2	You gave your vote for a candidate in the general elections of 2013 because he was a religious man.	Yes	138 (36.3%)	0 (0.0%)	$\chi^2 = 21$ 2.180 $p = 0.00$ 0
		No	54 (14.2%)	188 (49.5%)	
3	In the general elections of 2013, the use of religion as a political tactic was prevalent.	Yes	30 (7.9%)	171 (45.0%)	$\chi^2 = 21$ 6.350 $p = 0.00$ 0
		No	162 (42.6%)	17 (4.5%)	
4	You voted for a religious party in the general elections of 2013 because of your religious convictions.	Yes	160 (42.1%)	0 (0.0%)	$\chi^2 = 27$ 0.606 $p = 0.00$ 0
		No	32 (8.4%)	188 (49.5%)	
5	In comparison to other parties, religious parties in the general election of 2013 had superior	Yes	141 (37.1%)	0 (0.0%)	$\chi^2 = 21$ 9.514 $p = 0.00$ 0
		No	51(13.4 %)	188 (49.5%)	

	programmes for the general public.				
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According to the above explanation, all five signs are extremely relevant. As a result, the H1 is acknowledged and proven. Thus, religion is a significant factor in deciding vote priorities in Upper Dir in particular and Pakhtunkhwa in general.

Influence of Religion on Voting Behavior of Electorates (2018 Elections)

1. The first row in the following table shows the Chi Square value χ^2 (380.000) with a "p" value of 0.000, indicates a highly level correlation between the independent and dependent variables, namely religious agenda and voting behaviour of the people. The religious agendas of religious political parties, particularly JI, had a major impact on the voting behaviour of electorates in district Upper Dir in the general elections of 2018.
2. The second line of the table gives us the Chi Square value χ^2 (274.505) with a "p" value of 0.000, indicating a significant relationship between the variables. In the 2013 general elections in Upper Dir, the voters were attracted by the religious beliefs of candidate.
3. In the row three, the Chi Square value χ^2 (243.017) is paired with a "p" value of 0.000, indicating a strong association between the two variables. It demonstrates that, like in previous elections, religion was used as a manipulative weapon during the 2018 general elections, appealing to people's emotions and affecting their voting behaviour to back their religious political parties such as JUI and JI.
4. Similarly, row 4 confirms the Chi Square value χ^2 (380.000) with "p" value 0.000, indicates a firm relation

between the two variables. It explains that in the 2018 general election, a vast majority of voters were swayed by their own religious convictions to vote for the religious parties.

5. The Chi Square value is χ^2 (380.000), in the fifth row of the table while the "p" value is 0.000. Again, the "p" value is more significant, indicating a firm association between the variables. It explains that the religious parties had superior programmes than other parties in the 2013 general elections, in the perspective of the electorates, hence they voted for religious party candidates.

Table 05 (B): Influence of Religion on Voting Behavior of Electorates (2018 Elections)

S. NO	Statement	Response	Voting Behavior of Electorates		Statistic
			Yes	No	
1	You cast your vote for your preferred party in the 2018 general elections based on its religious programme.	Yes	106 (27.9%)	0 (0.0%)	$\chi^2 = 380.000$ $p = 0.000$
		No	0 (0.0%)	274 (72.1%)	
2	You gave your vote for a candidate in the 2018 general elections because he was a religious person.	Yes	83 (21.8)	0 (0.0%)	$\chi^2 = 274.505$ $p = 0.000$
		No	23 (6.1%)	274 (72.1%)	
3	Religion was used during the general elections of 2018.	Yes	0 (0.0%)	266 (70.0%)	$\chi^2 = 343.017$
		No	106	8 (2.1%)	

			(27.9%)		$p = 0.000$
4	You voted for a religious party in the 2018 general elections because of your religious convictions.	Yes	106 (27.9%)	0 (0.0%)	$\chi^2 = 380.000$
		No	0 (0.0%)	274 (72.1%)	$p = 0.000$
5	The religious parties in the 2018 general election have more inclusive platforms than the other parties.	Yes	106 (27.9%)	0 (0.0%)	$\chi^2 = 380.000$
		No	0 (0.0%)	274 (72.1%)	$p = 0.000$

According to the above argument, all five signs are extremely relevant. As a result, the H1 is recognised and proven for the 2018 general elections as well. Thus, religion is a significant factor in deciding vote preferences in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in general and district Upper Dir in particular. Religious political parties use strong rhetoric to portray themselves as defenders of Islam. The slogan is the application of Shariah Law/System, which draws a sizable number of voters in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly in traditional, rural, and culturally driven areas of the province such as district Dir. The results of the 2018 general elections corroborate Lillemets' (2015) conclusions that traditional and culturally driven individuals always favour religiously motivated political parties that promise to maintain religious traditions.

It was the slogan of the imposition of Islamic Law which attracted the majority of electorates in traditional society of Dir to cast their vote in favour of J.I. The outcomes of the general elections 2013 verify Lillemets' (2015) assumptions that people

who are driven by tradition and culture favour religious politics to maintain religious traditions.

Hypothesis-II

H2. The basic reason behind shifting of the electorates' voting behavior in 2018 general elections was the changing determinants established on political issues.

Determinants of Voting Behavior of the Electorates in 2013 Elections

1. The table below shows a Chi-Square value of χ^2 (268.124) with a highly significant "p" value of 0.000, indicating a strong correlation between the variables in question. The chart shows that in the general elections of 2013, the voters overwhelmingly backed political parties for their election manifestos and promises for public welfare. The public vote options were therefore molded by the party manifesto and public programmes.
2. The Chi-Square value χ^2 (0.404) with a non-significant "p" value 0.525 in the second row of the above table indicates that no correlation exists between the variables. The "p" figure shows that in the general election 2013 the slogan of vote for change attracted relatively few people than 2018.
3. The next row of the table with the Chi-Square value χ^2 (0.009) and non-significant "p" value (0.924) shows that no association is found between the variables in question.
4. Similarly, the row four displays the Chi-Square value χ^2 (240.597) with the highly significant "p" value 0.000, indicating that the two variables have a strong association. The "p" number demonstrates that in the 2013 general election, a huge majority of the voters voted for the

political party that took a strong stance on a crucial issue that were affecting the people in any way.

5. The last row shows a Chi-Square value of χ^2 (0.409) with a non-significant "p" value of 0.523, indicating that the variables have no correlation between themselves. The "p" number demonstrates that in the 2013 general election, candidate personal character was not a matter for the voters, and they just focused on the party platform and party philosophy on critical topics.

Table 06 (A): Political Preferences/determinants and Voting Behavior of the Electorates (2013 Elections)

S. NO	Statement	Response	Voting Behavior of Electorates		Statistic
			Yes	No	
1	You cast your vote in the general elections of 2013 based on the party platform/program.	Yes	250 (65.8%)	28 (7.4%)	$\chi^2 = 268.124$ $p = 0.000$
		No	0 (0.0%)	102 (26.8%)	
2	Voters in the 2013 general election cast ballots with the phrase "vote for change."	Yes	85 (22.4%)	40 (10.5%)	$\chi^2 = 0.404$ $p = 0.525$
		No	165 (43.4%)	90 (23.7%)	
3	You gave your vote for the candidate in the 2013 general elections because he or she belonged to a favoured party.	Yes	180 (47.4%)	93 (24.5%)	$\chi^2 = 0.009$ $p = 0.924$
		No	70 (18.4%)	37 (9.7%)	
4	Voters in the 2013 general elections cast ballots based on party positions on important subjects.	Yes	246 (64.7%)	31 (8.2%)	$\chi^2 = 240.597$ $p = 0.000$
		No	4 (1.1%)	99 (26.1%)	
5	You cast your vote for the party or candidate in the 2013 general elections who accomplished a lot for your constituency.	Yes	147 (38.7%)	72 (18.9%)	$\chi^2 = 0.409$ $p = 0.523$
		No	103 (27.1%)	58 (15.3%)	

According to the description overhead, two of the five signs are extremely relevant, while the other three are not. H2 for the 2013 general elections is so rejected on this grounds. Until 2013, electorates mostly adhered to conventional voting preferences. The findings from the 2013 general elections contradict Ahmad's (2010) contention that social factors such as household, biradari, feudal system, and so on had no influence in comparison to politics of voting behaviour such as party affiliation, leadership affiliation, party performance, and candidate character and many more. It also refutes the conclusions of Wilder's (1999) study on the 1993 polls, which proved that political issues influence voting patterns in Pakistan and not social variables. In the preceding discussion, it may be argued that political awareness was quite low among the populace in Upper Dir during the 2013 general election. The Dir area was had been in the grip of social elements such as religion, family, biradari, Malakism, Khanism, Nawabism,, and the change from traditional preferences had yet to occur.

The Voting Behavior of the Electorates in 2018 Elections.

1. The first row of the table below shows the Chi-Square value χ^2 (274.932) with a highly significant "p" value of 0.000, indicating a strong relationship between the variables. The chart shows that in the general elections of 2018, voters enthusiastically backed political parties based on their election manifestos and promises for public welfare. Thus, party manifestos and public programmes influenced people voting behaviour.
2. The second row of the above table shows the Chi-Square value χ^2 (2.877) with a non-significant "p" value of 0.090. The "p" value shows that the variables in question has no relationship. The "p" number shows that relatively few electorates voted for the slogan "vote for change" during the 2018 general election.

3. Similarly, the Chi-Square value χ^2 (233.683) and highly significant "p" value 0.000 in row three of the above table indicate that the two variables have a strong association. The table shows that during the 2018 general elections, electorates voted for candidates from their preferred party, even if they did not like the candidate, but did so because of the party manifesto and party attachment.
4. The fourth row displays the Chi-Square value χ^2 (220.966) with a highly significant "p" value of 0.000, indicating that the two variables have strong link with one another. The "p" number indicates that in the 2018 general election, a huge number of the voters voted for the political party that took a strong stance on a crucial issue that influenced the people directly or indirectly at the time.
5. The last row shows a Chi-Square value of χ^2 (1.537) with a non-significant "p" value of 0.215, indicating that the variables are not interlinked. The "p" number demonstrates that in the 2018 general election, the performance of the candidate was not a concern for the voters, they just focused on the party platform and party policy on critical topics.

Table 06 (B): Political Preferences/determinants and Voting Behavior of the Electorates (2018 Elections)

S. NO	Statement	Response	Voting Behavior of Electorates		Statistic
			Yes	No	
1	You cast your vote in the 2018 general elections based on the party	Yes	251 (66.1%)	26 (6.8%)	$\chi^2 = 274.932$ $p = 0.000$
		No	0 (0.0%)	103	

	platform/program.			(27.1%)	
2	Voters in the 2018 general election cast ballots with the phrase "vote for change."	Yes	53 (13.9%)	18 (4.7%)	$\chi^2 = 2.877$
		No	198 (52.1%)	111 (29.2%)	$p = 0.090$
3	You gave your vote for the candidate in the 2018 general elections because they belonged to your preferred party.	Yes	248 (65.3%)	34 (8.9%)	$\chi^2 = 233.683$
		No	3 (0.8%)	95 (25%)	$p = 0.000$
4	Voters in the 2018 general elections cast ballots based on party positions on important subjects.	Yes	235 (61.8%)	24 (6.3%)	$\chi^2 = 220.966$
		No	16 (4.2%)	105 (27.6%)	$p = 0.000$
5	You cast your vote for the party or candidate in the 2018 general elections who accomplished a lot for your constituency.	Yes	151 (39.7%)	86 (22.6%)	$\chi^2 = 1.537$
		No	100 (26.3%)	43 (11.3%)	$p = 0.215$

The above debate leads us to the conclusion that three of the five indications are extremely significant, while the other two are not. As a result, the H3 is approved for the 2018 general election. Furthermore, it can be stated that party affiliation, development, and issue focus have increased greatly in Upper Dir district over time. Electorates now select the candidates/parties who perform the best. People voted for JI in the 2013 general

elections due of their prior performance as a member of MMA from 2002 to 2008. However, when the JI boycotted the elections in 2008, the PPP-P seized the opportunity. When JI failed to perform throughout 2013-18, they were ousted again, and a new set up was implemented, with PTI obtaining a seat in the national legislature.

The findings of Ahmad (2010), who argues that in KP, social factors like family, biradari, feudalism, etc. have lost importance to political determinants of voting preferences like party association, leadership affiliation, party performance, and candidate performance, etc., are thus consistent with the results of the 2018 general elections. It also confirms the findings of Wilder (1999), a research on the 1993 general elections that revealed that in Pakistan, voting patterns are mostly influenced by political reasons as opposed to social variables. In this region of KP, the movement from conventional voting preferences happened, and control of social variables like as family, biradari, and religion dropped significantly in contrast to prior elections.

Conclusion

This article argues that issues orientation and usage in voting is growing in significance in district Upper Dir over the lapse of time, as political preferences and issues were not important to the people during 2013 general elections and before that. This is reflected in the comparison of 2013 general elections and 2018 general elections. Religious impact in general elections has fallen significantly from 2013 (from 50.5% to 27.9%), but still being moderately significant in 2018. The same is obvious from the results of the 2018 general elections, which saw religious groups like Jamat-i-Islami win just one member in the province parliament in the district of Upper Dir.

In this regard, the study's statistics show that, in 2013, 179 (47.1%) of the respondents were impacted by different political preferences and issues, but in 2018, the majority of 250 (65.8%) respondents were influenced by different political preferences based on issues. This demonstrates the value and reinforcement of issue-based voting during elections. Similar to 2013, when 192 (50.5%) respondents reported being affected by various religious ideologies, just 106 (27.9%) respondents reported being influenced by such ideas in 2018, demonstrating a decline in religiously motivated voting.

The study thus argues that issue-based voting is gaining significance in the region, primarily at the cost of religion and socio-cultural factors. We argue that issue-based rhetoric is still a significant factor to influence voting choices and shape election results in so called traditional, religious and conservative societies, like Dir and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Through this article we thus attempt to contribute to the literature on voting behavior and issue based politics.

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