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Religion Matters Most

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Abstract:

The present article attempts to say that religion card is generally played by various political parties to woo voters for getting their valuable votes. Many electorates also do not give up their religious sentiments and could not caste their votes by rationally but follow their traditional as well as generational pattern of voting by considering that only the concerned political party which talks about their religion can protect their rights and nothing else.

Key words: Religion, Politics, Political Parties, Voters, Confirmatory factor analysis, 2007 and 2012 Punjab assembly elections

1. Introduction

Emmanuel E James said, "There is a need for religion as a system of thought and an avenue for devotion towards a God or Ultimate Reality who gives succour and strength to live this life."ⁱ But in the political arena political parties always try to woo voters on religious lines among other factors.

The hypothesis of the present article is that in the elections many factors like religion, caste, class, education influence the electorates but religion affects most. People are divided on the names of religion and Punjab presents this picture very well during the elections because generally there is fixed concentration of votes as rural jat-Sikhs cast their votes to SAD (Shrimani Akali Dal) whereas Hindus cast their votes to either BJP (Bhartiya Janata Party) which is Hindu nationalist party or Congress.ⁱⁱ The latter also has the electoral support from urban Sikhs. The researcher used the post poll Punjab assembly elections 2007 and 2012 data of CSDS (Centre for the Studies of Developing Societies) to prove the said hypothesis through the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with the help of path diagram. CFA is used to verify the factor structure of a set of observed variables which allows the researcher to test the hypothesis that a relationship between observed variables and their underlying latent constructs exists.ⁱⁱⁱ

2. Results

The following path diagram shows the six observed variables, namely education 2007, caste 2007, religion 2007, education 2012, caste 2012 and religion 2012 and eight unobserved variables like electoral choice 2007, electoral choice 2012, e1, e2, e3, e4, e5 and e6. Here the term (e) denotes error terms which denote that the data has some residual sample. In the present research the researcher is not going to detail in those error terms but focus on the main values of the path diagram which are showing below. The chi-sq value (chi-square value tells about the goodness of fit model that a model fits or not with the data) is 31.586 which indicates that the present model does not fit because other than religion the variables of caste and education have very poor values. The path diagram clearly shows that two of the six observed variables indicate that the religion factor explains a respectable portion of the variance (between 48% and 52%) whereas the other observed factors caste and education has much lower value (between .001% to .06%) in comparison to religion. The religion factor has high estimates in both way either we see it as non-comparatively with 2007 election or comparatively with 2007 election. If we analyse religion separately in 2012 as well as 2007 assembly elections of Punjab, religion factor has highest value compared with caste and education which indicates that religion influenced people to great extent. The path diagram 1 is as follows:^{iv}

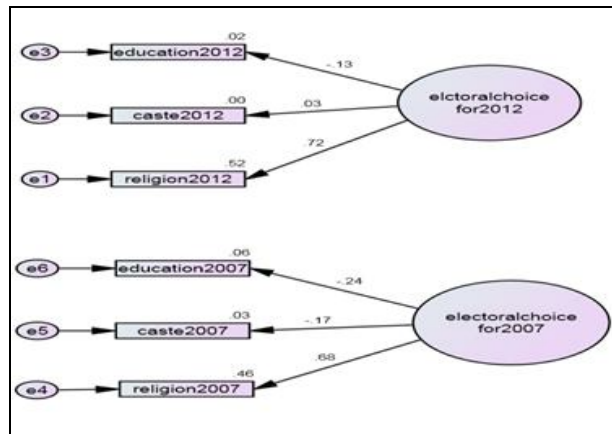


Figure 1: Path Diagram 1

The following Table 1 shows the voting patterns of the Sikhs and Hindus to various parties which indicate that Sikhs votes are divided between SAD-BJP and Congress by their locality because majority of the rural Sikh vote for SAD and urban Sikh for Congress and BJP. On the other side Hindu votes are divided between Congress as well as BJP.

| PARTIES | 2007 | | 2012 | |
|--------------|-------|-------|------|-------|
| | SIKH | HINDU | SIKH | HINDU |
| CONGRESS | 42.77 | 59.85 | 41.8 | 34.8 |
| SAD-BJP | 45.37 | 29.18 | 43.6 | 38.2 |
| BSP | 3.46 | 5.1 | 2.5 | 6.0 |
| PPP | - | - | 6.5 | 3.4 |
| INDEPENDENTS | 1.15 | 0 | 3.4 | 16.5 |
| OTHERS | 7.25 | 5.87 | 2.2 | 1.1 |

Table 1: Political Parties Voted By People (In Percentage)^v

3. Conclusion

It can be said that religion factor is the most influenced factor of Indian elections generally and Punjab elections particularly. Generally the generations follow the same pattern of their ancestors and voting more or less in the same way.

4. References

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