



A CRITICAL STUDY ON POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR: FROM VOTER PSYCHOLOGY PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This research endeavours to conduct a comprehensive analysis of political behaviour from the vantage point of voter psychology. Political behaviour, a multifaceted domain encompassing various actions, attitudes, and decision-making processes within the political sphere, forms the core focus of this study. Particularly, the investigation delves into the intricate interplay of psychological mechanisms underlying voters' attitudes, beliefs, motivations, and decision-making processes. The study employs a nuanced exploration of voter psychology, scrutinizing individual traits, cognitive biases, emotional responses, and societal influences that collectively shape political preferences and behaviours. Through an extensive review of literature and empirical data analysis, this research aims to provide insights into the determinants of voter turnout, political participation, party loyalty, and the consequential impact of campaign strategies on electoral outcomes. The significance of understanding voter psychology transcends the realm of elections, extending its implications to policymakers, political strategists, and the broader socio-political landscape. By comprehending the electorate's responses to policy propositions, political messaging, and the evolving socio-political environment, this study endeavours to contribute a robust framework for interpreting and navigating the intricate dynamics of political engagement. In an era marked by rapid advancements in communication channels and information dissemination, the insights gleaned from this study aspire to serve as a crucial tool for comprehending the evolving political landscape. Ultimately, the goal is to offer a critical analysis that illuminates the complexities of political behaviour through the lens of voter psychology, providing valuable insights for academic discourse and practical applications within the realm of politics and governance.

Keywords: Political Behaviour, Voter Psychology, Decision-making Processes, Psychological.

I. INTRODUCTION

Politics is a dynamic sphere that hinges on the actions, decisions, and behaviours of individuals within a society. The study of political behaviour encapsulates the intricate mechanisms through which individuals engage with and influence the political landscape. Understanding these behaviours is pivotal in comprehending the fundamental underpinnings of governance, policy-making, and societal progress. In this context, examining voter psychology emerges as a crucial facet in deciphering the complexities of political behaviour. The realm of political behaviour encompasses a wide spectrum of actions, inclinations, and choices made by



individuals or groups within a political environment. It spans from the most mundane actions, such as voting preferences, to more intricate engagements like political activism and advocacy. Political behaviour underscores the responses of individuals towards political stimuli, be it candidates, parties, policies, or broader socio-political issues. By scrutinizing these behaviours, researchers endeavour to decode the rationale behind citizens' actions and decision-making processes within the political domain.

The significance of voter psychology within the realm of political analysis cannot be overstated. This specialized field of study delves deep into the psychological mechanisms that form the bedrock of voters' attitudes, beliefs, motivations, and decision-making processes within the political arena. Voter psychology scrutinizes the intricate interplay of individual traits, cognitive biases, emotional responses, and societal influences, all of which converge to shape the diverse spectrum of political preferences and behaviours exhibited by voters. By adopting this perspective, valuable insights are gained into the multifaceted factors driving voter turnout, the extent of political participation, the depth of party loyalty, and even the consequential impact of campaign strategies on electoral outcomes. Through the lens of voter psychology, one can unravel the underlying motivations behind electoral choices, providing a nuanced comprehension of how these factors culminate in the shaping of political landscapes.

The comprehension of voter psychology holds pivotal importance, not merely in deciphering the dynamics of elections but also in guiding policymakers and political strategists. It furnishes a sophisticated understanding of the electorate's responses to policy propositions, political narratives, and the broader socio-political milieu. Furthermore, in an era marked by swiftly evolving communication channels and the proliferation of information, the insights gleaned from voter psychology serve as a critical framework for analysing and navigating the ever-changing terrain of political engagement. This field's depth and breadth extend far beyond the individual voter, permeating various levels of political analysis and decision-making, making it an indispensable tool for comprehending and interpreting the intricacies of democratic processes.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Kirmani et al. (2023) conducts an empirical investigation focused on developing a scale to measure political sensitivity, specifically targeting young Indian voters. The research delves into the intricate dimensions of political sensitivity among this demographic, aiming to construct a reliable and valid instrument for assessing their responsiveness to political stimuli. This study adds substantial value by offering a tool that can illuminate the nuanced dynamics of young voter behaviour in the Indian political landscape. Mukherjee, Datta, and Singh (2023) contribute to the scholarly discourse by exploring the voting decision-making processes of low-income consumers. This literature review comprehensively investigates the determinants and underlying factors influencing voting behaviours among individuals from economically marginalized backgrounds. By delineating the intersection of consumer studies and electoral preferences, this work presents a comprehensive research agenda that identifies gaps and proposes directions for



future studies in understanding voting decisions among economically disadvantaged segments. Biswas (2023) conducts a spatial analysis investigating the electoral patterns and voting behaviour within the context of Bihar's Assembly elections from 2010 to 2020. This study employs a geographic lens to scrutinize the spatial distribution of voting behaviour, shedding light on the geographical determinants and spatial dynamics influencing electoral outcomes in the region. The research contributes to the political geography domain by uncovering the spatial nuances shaping electoral behaviours and patterns in Bihar. Auerbach et al. (2022) present a comprehensive analysis that critically reflects on the study of electoral politics in the developing world, with a specific focus on the Indian case. This work contributes significantly to academic discourse by reassessing conventional approaches to understanding electoral dynamics in developing countries. By focusing on the Indian context, the authors offer insightful reflections that challenge prevailing assumptions and paradigms in the study of electoral politics in emerging democracies. Satriadi, Yusuf, and Ali (2021) delve into understanding voter behaviour as a means to bolster public political participation in Indonesia. This study explores the intricacies of voter behaviour, aiming to decipher the factors that influence and potentially enhance citizens' engagement in the political process. By shedding light on the dynamics of voter behaviour within the Indonesian context, this work offers insights into strategies to augment public participation in the country's political landscape. Ahmad, Bhatti, and Yousaf (2020) delve into the socio-psychological factors influencing voting behaviour in rural Punjab, Pakistan. This study scrutinizes the intricate interplay of social and psychological determinants shaping the voting decisions of individuals residing in rural areas. By focusing on the rural context of Punjab, the research provides a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted factors influencing voter behaviour within a specific regional and socio-cultural milieu.

III. FACTORS INFLUENCING VOTER PSYCHOLOGY

Understanding the dynamics that shape voter psychology is essential in comprehending electoral behaviours. Various factors play pivotal roles in influencing voter attitudes, preferences, and decision-making processes. Among these, social factors wield substantial influence in moulding the psychology of voters. This section explores some of the prominent social factors that significantly impact voter psychology.

A. Social Factors

Social factors encompass a multitude of influences emanating from individuals' interactions within society, which significantly mold their perspectives and behaviours in the political realm. These factors range from interpersonal relationships to the broader societal milieu, shaping the intricacies of voter psychology.

1. Family and Peer Influence: Family and peer groups wield substantial influence over individuals' political beliefs, attitudes, and voting behaviours. The familial environment, including upbringing, socio-economic status, and cultural values passed down through generations, often plays a crucial role in shaping political ideologies. Moreover, peer groups and

social networks contribute significantly to the formation of political opinions, as individuals often align their beliefs with those of their social circles. This influence extends to voting decisions, where familial traditions and peer group endorsements can sway an individual's choice at the ballot box.

2. Social-Media and Information Environment: The advent of social media and the evolving information environment have transformed the landscape of political discourse. Social media platforms serve as influential spaces where political narratives, opinions, and information are disseminated. The content consumed through these platforms can significantly influence voter perceptions and decision-making. The echo chambers created within these digital spaces, where individuals are exposed to like-minded opinions and content, can reinforce existing beliefs or sway opinions. Additionally, the proliferation of misinformation and disinformation on social media can impact voter psychology by shaping perceptions of candidates, policies, and issues.

IV. METHODOLOGY

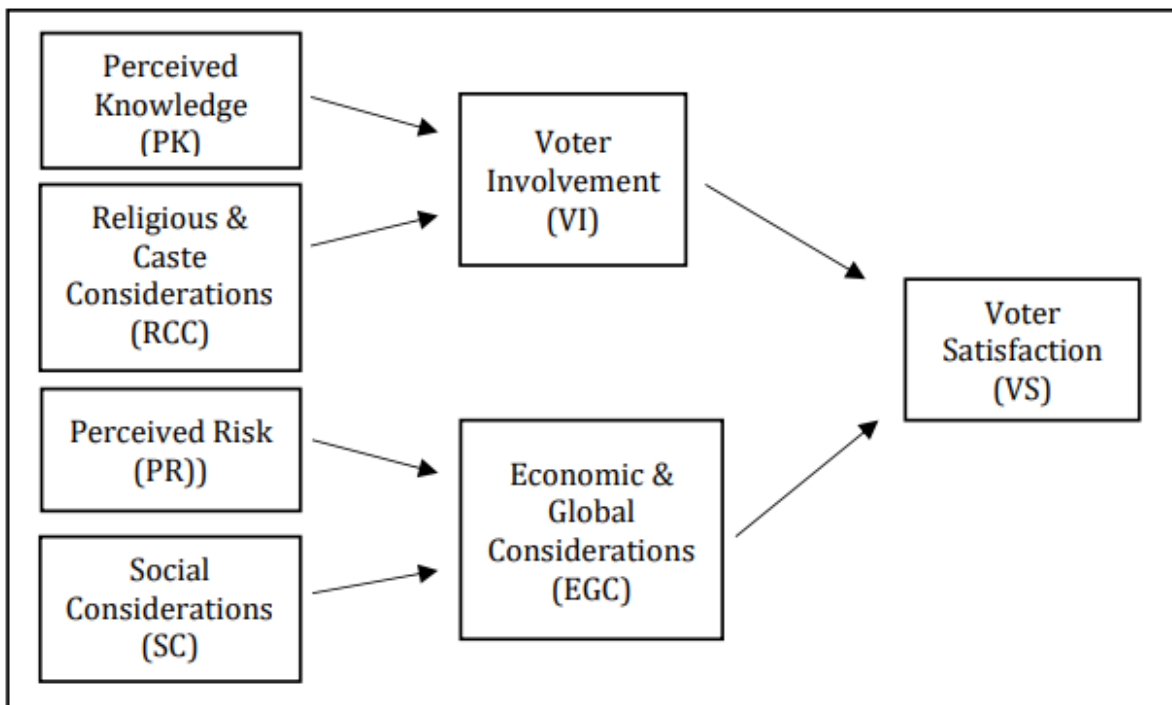


Figure 1.Proposed Research Design

The approach used for incorporating and verifying the scale adopted in this research was a deliberate amalgamation of pre-existing elements and newly devised ones. Essentially, the scale objects were obtained from two separate sources. Initially, a subset of elements (S13-S22; S29-S31) was extracted from the investigation carried out by O’Cass and Pecotich in 2005. The selection of these particular elements was made with the aim of enhancing and adapting the scales suggested by O’Cass and Pecotich to better align with the Indian context. Furthermore, the



researchers included further questions (S1-S12; S23-S28) that were derived from prominent socio-political matters in India. The subjects spanned a broad range, including economic problems, India's worldwide image, farmer welfare, women's issues, minority rights, and unique concerns related to different castes and faiths in the nation. The questionnaire was formatted using a 5-point Likert scale, which provided respondents with a spectrum of options ranging from "strongly disagree" (given a value of 1) to "strongly agree" (assigned a value of 5).

Prior to commencing the final data collecting phase, the questionnaire underwent a meticulous validation procedure that included a carefully chosen panel of subject matter experts. The selection process for these specialists included meticulous scrutiny and they were handpicked from a prestigious institution located in the northern part of India. Their research and work are backed by financing from the federal government. Their contribution was important in evaluating the questionnaire for appropriate phrasing, comprehensibility, and applicability to the Indian setting. The input received from these experts was used to revise and improve some questions in the questionnaire, making ensuring they were better suited to the specific characteristics of the Indian socio-political environment. The purpose of this iterative process of expert validation was to improve the questionnaire's clarity, correctness, and suitability for accurately capturing the thoughts and attitudes of the targeted respondents within the Indian community. The revised version of the questionnaire, which included input from subject experts, was considered appropriate for the final data collection phase. This version will serve as a strong basis for gathering insights into individuals' perceptions and attitudes towards the socio-political situation in India.

A. SAMPLE

The meaning of 'youth' differs both worldwide and within the Indian context, resulting in a range of age categories that are regarded for this group. According to the United Nations, 'youth' refers to those who are between the ages of 15 and 24. Nevertheless, in India, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports officially established the age range for 'youth' as those between the ages of 13 and 35 in 2003. Later on, in 2014, the definition was modified to include those aged 15 to 29 under the category of youthful population. A purposive selection strategy was used to pick the sample for this investigation, based on numerous criteria. Initially, due to the lack of a dependable and all-encompassing sample frame, it was necessary to rely on the researchers' discretion to create a representative sample for the study. Furthermore, the purposive sampling approach provides benefits such as efficiently gathering data from a substantial sample size in a little period and at a reduced expense in comparison to other methods.

Recent study indicates that young people throughout the world primarily use the internet, with significant levels of online presence and engagement (Abeler et al., 2014; Ahmad & Khan, 2017; Guth et al., 2007; Jones, 2002; Yoo&Donthu, 2001). According to Statista.com in 2016, 74% of internet users in India are aged 35 years or younger. Politicians have acknowledged the importance of online platforms in connecting with young people. They have recognised these



platforms as successful tools for election campaigns, with a specific focus on the global and Indian youth (Chadha & Guha, 2016). Therefore, in order to get valuable input from the younger demographic in India, the survey specifically targeted individuals between the ages of 15 and 29 who use the internet, in accordance with the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports' definition of 'youth'. The research sample included 56% male and 46% female participants. In addition, almost 59% of participants were below the age of 25, while the remaining 41% were 25 years old or beyond. The sample exhibited a heterogeneous combination of religious and caste affinities. Hinduism was the preferred religion for the majority (69%) of the participants, while Islam was chosen by 19% of the respondents. Christianity was the religion of choice for 4% of the participants, while the other 8% associated with other faiths. In terms of caste affiliations, 65% of the respondents identified themselves as belonging to the general category, 23% as Other Backward Classes (OBC), and 12% as Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST). The respondents were from different areas of India, with 33% from the northern region, 29% from the central region, 19% from the western region, 15% from the southern region, and 4% from the eastern portion of the nation.

B. DATA COLLECTION

The data gathering technique for this research was modified from the strategy described in a study conducted by Bashir and Madhavaiah in 2015. The researchers devised a questionnaire using Google-Docs and disseminated it over several internet platforms, forums, sites, and student circles nationwide. The poll remained online for a period of one month, ending when the response rate shown a significant decrease. A total of 263 persons participated in the survey, providing their replies. However, after careful examination, 69 surveys were found to be incomplete or inappropriate for analysis and were therefore removed from the dataset. Therefore, only 194 questionnaires were judged suitable and selected for further study. Hence, the ultimate sample size for this research included 194 respondents.

The selected sample size of 194 individuals is deemed enough for investigations using statistical techniques such as exploratory factor analysis and structural equation modelling (Comrey & Lee, 1992; Gorsuch, 1983; MacCallum et al., 1999). The sample size in this study adheres to the suggested subject-to-variable ratio guideline of 5:1, which has been widely endorsed and used by several researchers in prior studies (Ahmad & Khan, 2017; Hatcher, 1994). This research achieved a substantial sample size by modifying the approach used in a previous study and using an online questionnaire disseminated across several platforms. This enabled the researchers to conduct rigorous statistical analyses and follow known criteria in the area of research technique.

V. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The results obtained from the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) carried out using SPSS 20.0 provided significant insights into the structure and reliability of the scale. By using methods such as principal component analysis to extract factors and varimax rotation to rotate factors, the

study resulted in the improvement of the original scale. Items with factor loadings below 0.4 were removed, following the standards set by experts in the area (Kline 1994; Hinkin, 1995; Buyukozturk et al., 2004; Malhotra & Dash, 2011; Metin et al., 2012). As a result, a more sophisticated scale was developed, consisting of seven variables and 29 questions. These variables are categorised as follows: Economic and Global Considerations (EGC), Religious and Caste Considerations (RCC), Social Considerations (SC), Voter Involvement (VI), Voter Satisfaction (VS), and Perceived Knowledge (PK). These variables represent different aspects of political sensitivity among voters and their contentment with the current political environment. The sample's appropriateness was confirmed by the statistical significance ($p < 0.05$) of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (BTS) and a satisfactory value (0.767; > 0.6) of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO), indicating that the sample size was enough (Khan & Adil, 2013; Malhotra & Dash, 2011). The EFA model explained 70.1% of the total variance, indicating that the scale is comprehensive in assessing political views among voters.

All seven variables demonstrated good reliability based on the examination of internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha coefficients. The alpha values varied from 0.771 and 0.916. The Economic and Global Considerations (EGC) variable, consisting of three items, had an alpha value of 0.771. The variables of Religious and Caste Considerations (RCC) and Social Considerations (SC), which consist of scales with six and three items respectively, demonstrated alpha values of 0.916 and 0.836. In addition, the construct of Voter Involvement (VI), which consists of three questions, had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.877. Finally, the Voter Satisfaction (VS) variable, consisting of four questions, had an alpha value of 0.831. Similarly, the Perceived Knowledge (PK) variable, consisting of seven items, had an alpha value of 0.902. The results of this study reveal that the scale used in the research is reliable. All seven variables showed Cronbach's alpha values that were higher than the acceptable threshold of 0.6, as shown by previous studies (Hair et al., 1998; Kerlinger & Lee, 2000; Khan & Adil, 2013). The scale's durability and uniformity in assessing different aspects of voter conduct and attitudes demonstrate its dependability, confirming its potential usefulness in studying political mood and voter involvement within the Indian context.

Table 1. Items and EFA Results

Item	EFA Loading Factor	EFA Factor Name
1	0.705	Economic and Global Considerations (EGC)
2	0.787	Economic and Global Considerations (EGC)
3	0.563	Economic and Global Considerations (EGC)
4	0.778	Religious and Caste Considerations (RCC)
5	0.769	Religious and Caste Considerations (RCC)
6	0.823	Religious and Caste Considerations (RCC)
7	0.879	Religious and Caste Considerations (RCC)

8	0.839	Religious and Caste Considerations (RCC)
9	0.83	Religious and Caste Considerations (RCC)
10	0.83	Social Considerations (SC)
11	0.879	Social Considerations (SC)
12	0.719	Social Considerations (SC)
13	0.806	Voter Involvement (VI)
14	0.791	Voter Involvement (VI)
15	0.700	Voter Involvement (VI)

A. Measurement Model

The study used Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) after Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). Prior scholars have advocated for this particular order, emphasising that while EFA is effective in identifying factors, it may not completely clarify the cross-loadings of items and inter-variable correlations. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed using AMOS 20.0 to examine the seven components shown in Figure 2. The majority of items had loadings over 0.5 on their respective variables, suggesting a robust correlation. Nevertheless, items S6, S9, S22, S26, and S27 exhibited unsatisfactory loadings and were therefore excluded from further analysis. The model fit indices are shown in Table 2. These indices are used as evaluation measures to determine the quality of the measurement model's fit. The model fit indices obtained were considered to be within the acceptable range according to accepted standards in the field. By deleting items with weak connections and ensuring that the remained components showed strong relationships with their respective items, the researchers were able to improve the reliability and validity of the future study by refining the measurement model.

Table 2. Fit Indices of the Measurement Model (CFA) with recommended values and observed values

Fit Index	Recommended Values	Observed Values
CMIN/df	<0.30	2.070
GFI	>0.90	0.884
AGFI	>0.80	0.846
NFI	>0.90	0.875
CFI	>0.90	0.930
RMSEA	<0.70	0.061

“Sourced from Hu and Bentler (1998); Hooper et al. (2008); Hair et al, (2010); Malhotra and Dash (2011)”

The research performed a thorough assessment of the measurement model's reliability and validity using well-established approaches. The evaluation included important measures such as Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR), using the approaches and comparable research papers. The results showed that all seven variables had Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values higher than the suggested threshold of 0.5, demonstrating acceptable convergent validity. This indicates that more than 50% of the variation

in the indicators can be consistently attributed to their corresponding constructs. Furthermore, the analysis comparing the square root of AVE (diagonal values in Table 3) with the inter-construct correlations showed satisfactory discriminant validity, indicating clear differences across the constructs. Furthermore, the Composite dependability (CR) values were determined to be comfortably above the permissible threshold (>0.7), confirming the satisfactory internal consistency dependability of the measurement model. The results as a whole provide strong evidence for the reliability of the measurement model, instilling confidence in the study's capacity to effectively measure and differentiate between the constructs being examined.

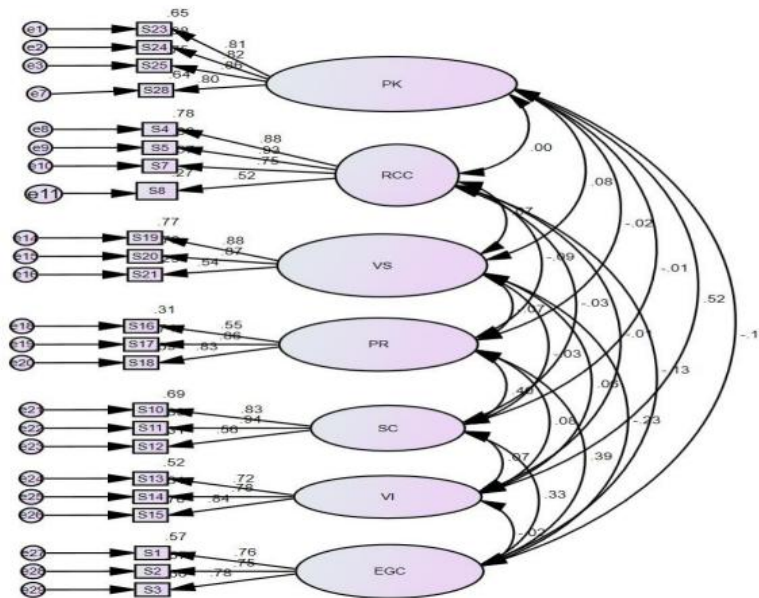


Figure 2. Measuring Model

Table 3. Reliability and Validity

	CR	AVE	PK	RCC	VS	PR	SC	VI	EGC
PK	0.894	0.678							
RCC	0.86	0.617	0.823						
VS	0.818	0.61	0.085	0.067					
PR	0.801	0.582	-0.024	-0.093	-0.072				
SC	0.831	0.631	-0.009	-0.027	-0.03	0.398			
VI	0.825	0.612	0.522	-0.009	0.058	0.081	0.074		
EGC	0.806	0.581	-0.13	-0.129	-0.227	0.388	0.335	0.017	

“PK= Perceived Knowledge; RCC= Religious and Caste Considerations; VS= Voter Satisfaction; PR= Perceived Risk; SC= Social Considerations; VI= Voter Involvement; EGC= Economic and Global Considerations”



VI. CONCLUSION

Understanding voter psychology emerges as a pivotal facet in deciphering the intricate tapestry of electoral behaviours and political decision-making. Throughout this exploration, we have delved into multifaceted influences ranging from social dynamics to intricate psychological mechanisms that shape individuals' attitudes and actions within the political sphere. The amalgamation of family and peer influences, the transformative impact of social media dynamics, the sway of emotions and personality traits, and the nuances of cognitive biases collectively contribute to the complex mosaic of voter psychology. These insights underscore the importance of appreciating the multifarious factors that underpin voter behaviours and attitudes, emphasizing the necessity for policymakers, political actors, and researchers to grasp these dynamics comprehensively. Indeed, a nuanced understanding of voter psychology is indispensable for devising effective strategies, fostering inclusive democratic processes, and shaping policies that resonate with the diverse perspectives and needs of the electorate. As we navigate the evolving landscape of politics and democracy, this understanding remains an integral compass, guiding efforts towards ensuring informed, inclusive, and robust democratic systems that cater to the intricacies of voter preferences and behaviours.

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