

# Meaning of voting behaviour politics essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

\n[toc title="Table of Contents"]\n

\n \t

1. [Meaning of Voting Behaviour](#) \n \t
2. [Factors affecting Voting Behaviour](#) \n \t
3. [Sociological factors](#) \n \t
4. [Psychological Factors:](#) \n \t
5. [Voting Behaviour in Manipur](#) \n

\n[/toc]\n \n

‘ Human actions, such as voting in a democratic election, are extremely complex phenomenon’ and depend on a variety of social and psychological factors. Voting in elections is the most obvious and direct way in which a whole population can affect government, sort of mass revolution.[2]Voting is the most distinguishing imperative stuff that a citizen can do to make sure that the government operates in the way it is intended; and guaranteed that their political way of life are heard by the country’s political system.

Therefore, it is the main form of political participation in liberal democratic societies and the study of voting behaviour is a highly specialized sub-field within political science. Voting has become virtually a universal means by which individuals make collective decisions.[3]

## Meaning of Voting Behaviour

The word ‘ voting’ is not a new concept. In antique Greece, voting was not much for elections to offices, which were packed on the jury principles of arbitrary selection. But it was used for decisions on propositions put before democratic assembly, on the fate of individuals.[4]In contemporary

democratic arrangement, voting is a method of expressing the approval or disapproval of the policies, programmes and decisions of the administrative authority. Quoting Oriavwote, (2000), S. K. Balogun and P. O. Olapegba writes:

Voting thus, is a means of aggregating individual preferences into collective decision in an election, the action of formally indicating one's choice of candidate or political party at an election.[5]

Voting is the pedestal of the political pyramid in democracy, and that decisions made at the foundation have the capability to overthrow those at the top. For this reason, voting may perhaps be looked upon as “ the basic decision-making process in a democracy.”[6]It may also describe the process either by which citizens choose candidates for public office or the formal recording of opinion of a group on any subject. In either sense, it is a means of transforming numerous individual opinions into a coherent and collective basis for decision. Voters tend to choose candidates whom they perceived as benefiting them the most and as having a reasonable chance of winning. [7]That is, voting is a good example of ‘ rational choice’,[8]as larger part of the electorate takes their voting preference on the establishment of a judgment of how the present government or the incumbent has exaggerated the welfare of the people, and the odds that the contrasting camp would accomplish better.

The study of voting behaviour started around the 18th century (Jenson, 1969), this early attempts made use of aggregate data analysis that is, using actual election returns by geopolitical units e. g., wards, districts etc.

(Gosnell, 1930).[9]Of late, voting behaviour has used to describe, as Samuel J. Eldersveld writes, certain area of study and types of political phenomena which previously had either not been conceived or were considered irrelevant. It involves an analysis of individual psychological processes (perception, emotion and motivation) and their relation to political actions, as well as institutional patterns, such as the communication process and their impact on elections.[10]As V. O. Key, Jr., and Frank Munger have observed, most voting behaviour of the time is a continuing affirmation of pre-existing political commitments which were forged under the pressure of a major social trauma. Looked at in terms of the party system as a whole, this profound linkage with the past often amounts to a “ standing decision” which is only very infrequently subject to review by any decisively large part of the electorate.[11]

In short, voting behaviour of the populace determines political power in any political system on different scales signifying the intensity of political involvement. Even if people are not aware of a personal involvement in the electoral decision, they may still be induced to vote by social pressures and inner feelings of social obligation.[12]Voting behaviour refers to factors that determine the manner in which a particular group of people vote for a specific political party or candidates that are up for elections. Therefore, voting behaviour as N. G. S. Kini, sums up can be regarded as:[13]

(a) a mode of legitimizing democratic rule; (b) instancing “ participation” in the political process involving integration into the political community; (c) instancing an act of decision-making; (d) a role-action involving definite

political orientation imbedded in a particular type of political culture; or (e) a direct relation of the individual citizens to the formal government.[14]

In fine, the notion of voting behaviour implies the study of voter's preferences, alternative, programmes, ideology, etc., on which elections are fought. Among other things, voting behaviour helps to arrive to a decision which official are chosen to run our governments, the multiplicity of parties that voters have to choose from at the polls, how many citizens will turn out to vote, who will or will not be represented in our legislatures, and whether the majority will rule. It has a thoughtful consequence not only on the process of elections, but also on the degree to which a political system is fair, representative, and democratic. Therefore, it lies at the heart of democratic process and are an expression of popular will.

## **Factors affecting Voting Behaviour**

Voting behaviour is rather a complex and multi-faceted subject. Diverse factors that comprise both political and non-political have an effect on it. Its determinants are vast and wide-ranging, and differ from one person to another to a substantial degree. Voting behaviour is determined by the political attitudes, assumptions, policy preferences, and partisan loyalties of individuals and the political and institutional context within which they cast their votes in an election.[15] Thus, there are a numbers of indicators affecting voters' choice as one of the early pioneers of electoral studies in India, V. M. Sirsikar, observes, " an enquiry into the process of election indicates factors other than rationality." [16]

. The assessment of voting pattern consistently focuses on the determinants of why people vote as they do and how they arrive at the decisions they make. Most attention has been, however, to the behaviour of the mass electorate.[17]A variety of research on the study of voting behaviour has identified two major types of factors, which can be broadly categorized as sociological (demographic, social, and economic attributes) and psychological (politically relevant attitudes, beliefs and values).[18]The comparative political science literature recognizes that certain variables such as education;[19]income and unemployment;[20]importance of party support or attachment;[21]perception of issues;[22]ideology and issues; [23]partisanship;[24]evaluation of leaders or the top candidates;[25]etc., have generally been found to associate with voting behaviour of the electorate. Some of the selected predictors of voting behaviour for this study are analyzed as follows:

## **Sociological factors**

Gender: The analysis of sex is an important indicator of voting behaviour. Women voters tend to be more wavering about their intention to vote as also in the voting act itself than the male voters.[26]However, the commitment is more to candidate than to party both to males and females. Village consensus and advice of village headman work more with female voters than with male voters, while the merit of the candidates attracts more males than females.[27]Sex provides a base for diversity where modernism is a significant issue, since in most societies women's role are more involved in religious institutions and less in modern economic ones. Consequently, where there is a difference between the voting pattern of the two sexes,

women tend to support traditionalist parties more than modernising ones.

[28]Nonetheless, since the focus of the study is on a relatively traditionalistic attitude where gender issues still predominates,[29]it seemed good to retain gender as a determinant of voting behaviour.

**Kinship:** Kinship is a relationship between any entities that share a genealogical origin, through either biological or cultural, or historical descent.[30]In a kinship based society, kinship provides many of the social relations in which a person is likely to be involved in the course of his life. [31]It is a strategy force determining political behaviour of the people and influencing their thought process.[32]

Strong kinship and village loyalties affect many a choice, the family or the wife voting as father or husband suggests, and the village casting its vote according to the advice of the head-man or influential elder.[33]

Despite the traditional claim that each voter is an individual who makes up his own mind, social groups' pressures limit choices sharply, and are highly significant determinants of individual voting patterns.[34]

Kins and clan would, of course, be used to campaign for one or the other candidate; and " votes would be sought by identifying a candidate as a peasant, a worker and the like." [35]

**Age:** Age has often been described as one of the leading indicators of voting behaviour, though it is difficult to treat as an independent variable. As Alan R. Ball has pointed out, age is a ' complex variable'. In common parlance, older citizens tend to vote for conservative parties but this may be simple

reflections of the historical period when the electors' voting habits were being formed. Age may be less important than the strength of the voters' attachment to a political party, and it is this allegiance that hardens with age.[36] However the relationship between age and voting is curvilinear, with a gradual increasing in the mid-age group and declining thereafter. nonetheless, " it is the candidate orientation which dominates in all the age groups." [37]

**Education:** Over the years, education has emerged as one of the major predictors of voting. Educations widen the political visualization and " expands the horizon of one's interest in the political process. It enables the individual to develop the skill for political participation." [38] The electorate having more years of formal education has the greater probability of exercising their franchise in any election.

**Economic Factors:** The economic status of the electorate is an important indicator of voting behaviour. Though it is often considered as non-existent impact on voting, economic factors play an important role in shaping voting behaviour of the electorate as Arivind Virmani points out:

An improvement (or) worsening of economic conditions can increase (or) decrease the probability of voting for the party perceived to be responsible for the change. Further, the independent or floating voter is more likely to be affected by economic conditions than voters committed to a particular party for social, caste, religious and cultural reasons.[39]

` However, as Wolfinger and Rosenstone's findings indicated, the likelihood of voting may not be a linear function of income.[40] The key difference

seems to be the unpleasant variation among those of high-income groups and low-income groups. The most distinguishing factors in election are vote bribing which is open-secret which “ reflect a clash between traditional economic ties and changing cultural pressure.”[41]Poor voters are reported to have received money offered by various candidates.

**Public Employment:** Along with education and economic status, occupation appears to exert a great effect on voting behaviour. Public officials tend to take greater interest in voting and are usually votes for the party which is likely to address their interest. Even farmers, who are conventionally viewed as being uncommonly likely to abstain from voting,[42]have become much less distinctive in this regard.[43]Studies have also revealed that government workers of all types tend to take an unusual interest in political matters and are unlikely to vote in the election.[44]

### **Psychological Factors:**

**Interest in Public Affairs:** Those voters who have interest in public affairs and who follows the news of the present day situation are likely voters in any election. This is because of the fact that such voters are very much concern with the affairs of state’s policies and programme. On the contrary, there are some who take minimal interest in such affairs and are unlikely voters. Many voters made explicit references to specific issue concerns, whereas others spoke in more global terms about parties, leaders or local candidates without elaborating their reasoning in any detail.[45]

**Strength and Direction of Party loyalty:** Voting behaviour is more easily explained by emphasising party loyalty.[46]Some party men are likely to

vote in elections than others as different parties may draw their members from different social base which reflects the weakness and the strength of the party. However, in India, people do not hesitate to shift their votes from one party to another as parties' identities are not very strong. If party loyalty is taken as one of the key indexes of political considerations, it may be assumed that the parties play a marginal role in determining the preference of the voters.[47] Though party loyalty is an important indicator of voting behaviour, it is often “ determined by other factors like social class, economic position or ethnic affiliation.”[48]

Perceived difference between Parties: In any election, if there is a clear-cut difference of ideologies between the contesting parties, the electorates are more likely to exercise their franchise. If the parties and the candidates are same and not easy to distinguish from each other, then there will be a little point in electoral participation. As Habib and Naidu (2006) observes:

Conventional wisdom suggests that workers and poorer classes in society would support parties to the left of the political spectrum, while the middle class and more affluent strata would support parties on the right. The reasons are obvious. While the former have a material interest in fundamentally changing the political and socio-economic arrangements of society, the latter prefer the status quo.[49]

Recent research, however, has emphasized ‘ party de-alignment.’[50] Ideology could be said to be present only in terms of accent on social justice, involving considerable overlap and neutralization among parties which vied in usurping each other's ideological planks.[51] Therefore,

people are most unlikely to vote in the election where there are no ideological differences.

**Charisma of the Candidate:** Role of personality in influencing the electoral behaviour cannot be refuted, Charisma refers to mean ‘ a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural ... or ... exceptional powers or qualities’.[52]Moreover it is this quality of the leader which enables him to attract a large number of people and under the influence of which the people pay reverence to the charismatic leader. Therefore, there is a strong belief that organisation of political party under a charismatic leader is a source of popular support for the party.

**Public Opinion and Mass Media:** Public opinion and mass media has, of late, become an important indicator of voting behaviour. Public opinion refers to the attitudes of a significant number of people about public affairs, or matters of government and politics that concern the people at large. It is “ one not of advocacy of any particular policy, subject or topic, but of the provider of both objective and subjective information, obtained systematically and objectively, analysed dispassionately and delivered evenly.”[53]The latter has the capacity to bring matters to the attention of the public or to conceal them. This is usually referred to as ‘ agenda setting’.[54]While the media may ignore certain topics or exaggerate others, the public also has an enormous capacity for being highly selective in what to take interest in.[55]

In the pages that follow, we shall examine these sociological and psychological factors on the voting behaviour of the electors in the constituency under study.

## **Voting Behaviour in Manipur**

The most interesting questions about an election are not concerned with who won but with such questions as why people voted the way that they did or what the implications of the results are. These questions are not always easily answered. A glance only at the campaign events and incidents will not suffice. The unique aspects of the election must be blended with a more general understanding of electoral behavior to create a full explanation.

Since the introduction of participatory democracy in Manipur under the Manipur State Constitution Act, 1948, attempts have been made to study the nature of voting behaviour in Manipur. There has been some imprecise handling of the topic in the study of electoral politics,[56]political participation,[57]social and political change,[58]socio-political study;[59]and that research on the study of voting behaviour had also been undertaken both at the state[60]and constituency level.[61]They found that party ideology, ethnicity, role of money, caste, religion, personalities of the candidates, etc., were the main factors affecting voting behaviour in Manipur. As S. K. Chaube notes that in Manipur voters not only attach importance to party levels but also to status and personalities of the candidates.[62]However, some scholars' emphasis on caste as a factor of voting behaviour in Manipur,[63]though there is "absence of caste system in Manipur." [64]

In the hills, ethnic loyalties play an important role as factor in voting decision.[65]The tribalism and ethnicity have become more intense as a result of the introduction of adult franchise.[66]Electoral politics has significantly given rise to inter-group conflicts in north-east and this is also affecting the democratic values and tradition of the tribals.[67]In addition to ethnicity, ' money, promise for government jobs, candidates' personalities, etc., have also been a major source of influence to the voters in the hills.'[68]

In the first and the only election held in ' Independent Manipur'[69]under the Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947, the voting behaviour of the electorate was influenced by ideology of the Manipur State Congress party as the party got the highest number of seats. And also the influenced of personality cult was also evident as twelve independents candidates in fray was also elected to the erstwhile Manipur Assembly.[70]

After the merger of Manipur into the Indian Union in 1948, the first democratic election was held in 1952 under the Constitution of India. In the election, the socio-political movement of the time demanding for a responsible government influenced the electoral behaviour of the voters. [71]In the second and third assembly election held in 1957 and 1962 also, the same factors that influenced the election of 1952 were evident. However in 1962 election as R. P. Singh points out:

...in the hills areas, as there were no reserved seats for the schedule tribes, the election were fought on tribal lines. Political parties had sent up only

tribals as their candidates except in Jiribam, where half of the voters were non-tribals...[72]

In 1967 assembly election of the state, the demand for a full-fledged statehood in the state influenced the voting behaviour of the people.[73]The electioneering was a quite brisk except in the cease-fire bound northern hills areas where it was restricted to a whisper campaign for fear of underground Nagas who boycott the elections.[74]After the attainment of statehood in 1972 and in the assembly election that followed, voting behaviour of the electorate was 'oriented toward parochial regional outlook,'[75]as the performance of the regional political party, MPP in this election indicates. However, as a result of political instability in the state, mid-term election was held in 1974, and in that election the main determinant of voting behaviour was: inclusion of Manipur language in the Eighth Schedule, local problems and money factors.[76]In the assembly election of 1980, 'money, a strong Indira wave, and the impact of personality of the candidates'[77]in fray played an important role in shaping the vote-choice of the electorate. Also, in the election of 1984, the vote-choice was mainly determined by 'a strong sympathy wave for the Congress (I) due to the assassination of Indira Gandhi and the charming personality of Rajiv Gandhi.'[78]

However, in the assembly election of 1990, voting behaviour was mainly 'influenced by the elders or the head of the family to vote for a particular party or candidate;'[79]and also the influence of money was found to be associated with the vote-choice of the electorate. In the assembly election of 1995 and 2000, 'money as a determinant of voting behaviour was considered to be more significant than all other factors.'[80]In the assembly

election of 2002, influence of money, personality of the candidates, party loyalty, and local issues facing the state and the respective constituencies was noticed.[81]The assembly election of 2007 perhaps culminated in the victory of the Indian National Congress (I) and the electoral behaviour of the people was mainly influenced by the stability of the Secular Progressive Front (SPF) government and the various developmental works initiated during the period. The boycott-call given by armed insurgent outfit to the INC during election did not hamper the electoral prospect of the party. The strong personality of the incumbent Chief Minister, Shri Okram Ibobi Singh had profound impact on the voting behaviour of the people.

From the above analysis, the voting behaviour of the electorate in Manipur changes from time to time and from one election to another. Various socio-political factors had influenced the voting behaviour of the people of the state. The electors of Manipur have exercised their political franchise according to the needs and circumstance of the time for better governance.

As Dr. Benjamin Gangmei, sums up:

the main determinant of voting behaviour in Manipur includes: personality of the candidate, party loyalty, money power, local issues, family influence, election campaign, groupism, election feasting and insurgency.[82]

In the light of th