



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Voting as a Civic Duty: Examining factors affecting Political Perception and Behavior of People in Dera Ghazi Khan Punjab, Pakistan**

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**ABSTRACT**

The study was designed to assess the political perception and political behavior of voters in Dera Ghazi Khan city through a cross sectional survey. Voting is a civic duty which refers to an action or process of indicating choice, opinion such as choosing a candidate, by some recognized mean, such as a ballot. The data was collected from 150 voters by using interview schedule who were selected through multistage sampling. The study found that people believed voting as a fundamental right and way to address social and economic issues, allowing individuals to raise voice in decision making processes and encouraging development of responsible citizenship. The participants usually engaged in political discussions and participated in civic organizations promoting voter engagement. Education was associated with awareness about electoral procedure and family monthly income was associated with participation in civic organization. The study suggested that education and awareness can increase the political participation of people.

**Keywords:** Citizenship Rights, Political Behavior, Political Perception, Voting

**Introduction**

Individuals may vote for strictly instrumental reasons, seeking to impact the outcome. Voting serves as a mechanism for individuals to express their opinions and ideas. Some voters consider it ethically immoral for a responsible citizen to abstain from voting in an election. We are really captivated by this ultimate inducement. Voting is regarded as a moral obligation of citizenship, in accordance with the civic duty to participate in elections. Citizenship is primarily neither a vehicle for self-expression nor a tool for achieving objectives (Blais & Glais, 2016).

Mandatory voting could cultivate a heightened sense of civic duty to participate in elections within a society. It unequivocally establishes that voting transcends mere luxury; it is a fundamental duty of citizenship by mandating the participation of all eligible individuals in the political process (Muzaffar, et. al., 2019). This mandate may cultivate a more informed and engaged electorate by motivating those who would otherwise remain politically apathetic to educate themselves about the topics and candidates. Ultimately, engagement can enhance understanding of democratic processes, foster a sense of civic responsibility, and underscore the significance of participating in national governance. Concerns regarding coercion and personal liberty are legitimate; yet, the potential for mandatory voting to cultivate a more active and informed citizenry presents a compelling argument in its favour (Feitosa *et al.*, 2019).

Is virtue genuinely its own reward in the context of political engagement? The quandary emerges when one contemplates the intricate interplay between civic responsibility and expressive voting. A sense of civic responsibility motivates individuals to utilise their voting rights, which are essential to our democratic framework.

Nevertheless, with expressive voting, individuals can still convey their identities, values, and perspectives via their vote, regardless of whether the election outcome aligns with their preferences. Voting distinctly accentuates individual belief, whereas civic duty highlights collective responsibility, despite both concepts being regarded as virtuous actions. In addition to fulfilling ethical obligations, engaging in either could foster a more robust democracy, allowing individuals from many backgrounds to partake in significant dialogues and have their perspectives acknowledged (Jones & Hudson, 2000).

Central to democratic societies are the voting behaviours and political engagement of citizens. Citizens exercise their right to shape their nation's trajectory by voting behaviour, which is affected by an individual's social and economic background, values, beliefs, and perceptions of political candidates and issues (Ahmed, et. al., 2015). This behaviour significantly impacts the political environment by shaping policy agendas and electoral results. Participating in demonstrations, engaging in online discussions, and volunteering for campaigns exemplify methods of political engagement beyond mere voting. The vitality and efficacy of representative governance rely on citizens' voting behaviour and political involvement, which reflect their investment in the democratic process. It is essential to furnish residents with access to precise information and to establish venues that encourage diverse and educated civic participation (HE, 2006).

### **Literature Review**

Bowler and Donovan (2013) examined compels individuals to exercise their right to vote. the findings indicate that a basic model of voter turnout significantly enhances its explanatory capacity when participants evaluate the significance of voting in referendums. We will now examine the components that drive the sense of duty. Research indicates that perceptions of politics and politicians influence assessments of accountability. The obligation of citizens to participate in referendums and elections diminishes when they exhibit low political interest, low political efficacy, and a diminished esteem for politicians.

Paudel *et al.*, (2018) analyzed perspectives of Nepalese citizens about political parties and their voting behaviors in relation to online discourse, emphasizing the impact of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Three hundred thirty-three persons in Nepal, aged 20 and older, engaged in a purposive sample study that produced comprehensive perception data prior to the country's landmark constitutional assembly election. The findings indicated a positive association between politicians' political interests and voters' opinions of and engagement with political parties, implying that politicians' interests influence the public's impression of these parties. The study identified a positive association between political trust and both voting behavior and political perception, indicating that political trust strongly influences individuals' perceptions of political parties. A positive association exists between religious membership, social media use, and individuals' perceptions and voting behaviors regarding political parties. This research addresses deficiencies in our comprehension of the social and political ramifications of social media by utilizing authentic data sources.

Blais and Achen (2019) argued that the choice to participate in an election or abstain is shaped by two separate categories of factors: ethical and non-ethical. Citizens may perceive a duty to vote. If it fails, her firm convictions about the election's result may compel her to vote. Abstention occurs in the absence of a sufficiently strong preference or obligation. The result is a detrimental interaction effect between duty and preference, despite both factors significantly affecting turnout, because preference exerts a considerably lesser influence on persons with a strong sense of obligation. Our assertion that this causal heterogeneity substantially influences the turnout decision is consistently corroborated by the study's comprehensive empirical evidence. A turnout model is deficient in critical detail if it neglects the influence of civic duty.

Borg and Azzopardi (2020) determined by monitoring the political engagement of young individuals, their sentiments on voting, and their intended methods of ballot casting in the forthcoming election. The study accomplished its objectives with the assistance of 143 recent electors and a quantitative methodology. The results indicated that most participants had a moderate interest in politics and a good comprehension and acceptance of their voting responsibilities. Furthermore, an increased number of individuals indicated their intention to participate in the upcoming national and European Parliamentary elections. The study's findings corroborated parliament's decision to extend voting rights to younger citizens, while undermining certain arguments opposing the initiative.

Khan *et al.*, (2020) examined the factors and aspects influencing the voting apathy among people of Islamabad. The study employed questionnaires to collect data from a sample of 200 people. The research utilized a binary logistic regression model because of the dependent variable's binary nature. Displaced individuals do not plan to vote due to time constraints caused by scheduling conflicts. Nevertheless, the study identified a significant correlation between the ages of respondents and their voting intentions; however, no correlation was found between the distances of respondents and their voting intentions. The substantial opportunity cost of voting also deters individuals in the higher-income bracket from participating in elections. Studies indicate that trust in the system significantly influences individuals' decisions to participate in the 2018 election.

Saud *et al.*, (2020) identified motivating youth to engage in political and democratic activities. This study is distinctive as it presents a novel theory termed "Youth-Inn," which elucidates the continuous engagement of young individuals in communal problem-solving, the influence of their peers in motivating them to vote, and their effect on public opinion on various political topics. This study's phenomena are rooted in Pakistan's contemporary political climate and the involvement of youth in shaping the political system. Numerous participants from the Pakistani provinces of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa engaged in the quantitative study, which employed random sampling methods to collect data. The study's findings indicate that young Pakistanis are increasing their participation in democratic, social, and political activities, which are essential for the advancement of their nation.

Weinschenk and Panagopoulos (2020) examined the number of individuals in the United States who regard donating to political campaigns as their civic duty? Approximately 15% of the population asserts that it is a civic obligation for individuals with financial means to contribute to political campaigns, based on data from an original study (N = 1,269). The relationship between the obligation to vote and the obligation to contribute to campaigns is tenuous, presenting an intriguing discovery. The study not only identifies the elements influencing individuals' sense of civic duty to vote but also constructs statistical models to elucidate their views on the necessity to contribute to political campaigns. The study indicates that men, younger adults, and news enthusiasts are more likely to perceive community service as a moral duty.

Nashmena *et al.*, (2022) assess public perceptions towards voting and civic responsibility, along with the factors believed to influence this sentiment. A mixed-methods study was performed. To collect data for a quantitative study, 300 individuals were surveyed; 150 were from rural regions and 150 from urban areas. Individuals possessing elevated educational qualifications and substantial monthly earnings in metropolitan settings are more inclined to participate in elections, as they perceive voting as a civic duty and a means to elect a genuine representative. Conversely, those with diminished educational attainment and reduced monthly incomes in rural regions are more inclined to express motivation to vote without ultimately submitting a ballot. Moreover, individuals' voting behaviour is affected by the candidate's party affiliation, and age constitutes a crucial demographic factor in influencing voting patterns. These findings can provide a significant resource for legislators as they develop new initiatives and

policies to enable citizens to use their voting rights and fulfil their responsibilities within their communities.

Otache *et al.*, (2023) determined the educational level moderates the relationship between civic education and voting intention. The sample size comprised 1,450 people from all six geographical zones of Nigeria. The findings indicated a positive link between civic education and voting intention. Further research indicated that the correlation between civic education and voting intentions is significantly influenced by perceptions of voting behavior. Moreover, the relationship between civic education and voting intention is positively influenced by elevated levels of education. The outcomes have implications for democracy and governmental institutions. The research provided empirical evidence that educational attainment moderates the relationship between civic education and voting intentions, with attitudes towards voting serving as a mediating factor.

## Material and Methods

The was cross-sectional survey conducted in Dera Ghazi Khan City. The population comprised voters of Dera Ghazi Khan and a sample of 150 voters was selected through multistage sampling technique. At first stage, 3 Union Councils were selected randomly, at second stage, 2 colonies/mohallahs were selected from each selected union council randomly; and at third stage, 25 respondents (people) were chosen from each selected colony/ mohallah conveniently. The data was collected through structured interview schedule which was pretested on 20 respondents. The independent variables were socio-demographic factors and dependent variable were political perception and political behavior of people. Data was analyzed through percentages and chi square test.

## Results and Discussion

This study explored political perception and behavior of voters in Dera Ghazi Khan. The political perception was measured through assessing voters' awareness about voting as a civic duty and its importance in social life.the political behavior of voter's was assessed through their participation in political discussions, organizations and community engagement.

**Table 1**  
**Perception about voting as a civic duty**

<b>Perception about Voting as a civic duty</b>	<b>S.A %</b>	<b>A %</b>	<b>N %</b>	<b>D %</b>	<b>S.D%</b>	<b>Total</b>
Voting is a fundamental right in many democratic societies	53.3	43.3	2.0	0.7	0.7	<b>100</b>
Voting allows individuals to contribute for collective well-being of society	30.7	54.2	14.2	0.5	0.4	<b>100</b>
Voting is a way to address social and economic issues	32.6	50.1	16.0	0.7	0.6	<b>100</b>
Voting allows individuals to raise voice in decision-making processes that affect their lives	34.7	50.7	13.3	1.0	0.3	<b>100</b>
Voting encourages the development of responsible citizenship	38.0	49.3	10.0	1.4	1.3	<b>100</b>

The data in table 1 presents perception of research participants about voting as a civic duty. The results showed that majority (53.3) percent of respondents strongly agreed and (43.3) percent agreed that voting is fundamental right in many democratic societies. Majority (54.2) percent of the respondents agreed and (30.7) percent strongly agreed that voting allows individuals to contribute for collective well-being of society. Further, majority (50.1) percent of participated voters agreed and (32.6) percent strongly agreed that voting is a way to address social and economic issues. Majority of research participants (50.7) percent agreed and (34.7) percent strongly agreed that voting allows individuals to raise voice in decision making processes that affect their lives. Most of respondents (49.3) percent agreed and (38.0) percent strongly agreed that voting

encourages the development of responsible citizenship. These results are relevant with previous studies and literature that showed a society deeply involved in politics and civic participation possesses a government that is more responsive and accountable, while also fostering social cohesion and reinforcing the connections among its diverse populace (Ekman & Amna, 2012).

**Table 2**  
**Political behavior of people**

Political behavior of people	S.A %	A %	N %	D %	S.D%	Total
You usually engage in respectful political discussions	43.3	30.0	6.7	12.7	7.3	100
You respect the rights and choices of others, even if you disagree	56.0	38.0	4.0	1.3	0.7	100
You participate in civic organizations that promote voter engagement	38.0	30.7	6.7	22.6	2.0	100
You report any irregularities or concerns about the voting process	42.7	42.0	11.3	2.7	1.3	100
You encourage others to vote based on their own values and priorities	36.0	48.7	8.6	6.0	0.7	100

The data of table 2 presented the political behavior of research participants and most (43.3) percent of respondents strongly agreed and (30.0) percent agreed that they usually engaged in respectful political discussions. Majority (56.0) percent of the voters who participated in this study strongly agreed and (38.0) percent agreed that they respect the rights and choices of others even if they disagreed from them. Most of voters (38.0) percent of respondents strongly agreed and (30.7) agreed that they participate in civic organizations that promote voter engagement. Further, (42.7) percent of respondents strongly agreed and (42.0) percent agreed that they reported any irregularities or concerned about the voting process. Moreover, (48.7) percent of participants agreed and (36.0) percent strongly agreed that they encourage others to vote on basis of their own values and priorities. These results are relevant with previous studies and literature that showed, the cornerstone of democratic societies is the relationship between voting behavior and political participation (HE, 2006).

**Table 3**  
**Association between Education and Awareness about electoral procedure**

Family Monthly Income	Participation in Civic Organization					Total
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Illiterate	4	0	1	1	0	6
Literate to Primary	9	2	1	1	1	14
Primary to Middle	12	3	0	1	1	17
Middle to Matric	3	1	0	1	1	6
Matric to Inter	5	2	1	0	1	9
Inter to Graduation	39	15	1	2	1	58
Above Graduation	24	11	3	1	1	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>150</b>

Chi-Square Value = 19.694(p - value = .003), Degree of freedom = 18, Level of significance = 0.05 Significant, Gamma Value = 0.39

Table 3 describes association between education and people's awareness about electoral procedure. The independent variable was educational status and dependent variable was awareness about electoral procedure. The chi-square value shows the association is highly significant (P = .003). The Gamma value is positive which depicts the relationship between variables is direct. This means greater the level of education, greater will be awareness about electoral procedure. The results are relevant with previous studies and literature that showed by societies that emphasize civic education in all its forms empower their citizens to make informed decisions, so fostering active political

engagement and underscoring the importance of lifelong learning and democratic participation (Galston, 2001).

**Table 4**  
**Association between Family monthly income and participation in civic organizations**

Family Monthly Income	Participation in Civic Organizations					Total
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Below 20,000 PKRs	11	5	1	3	1	21
20,001-40,000 PKRs	10	4	2	12	0	28
40,001-60,000 PKRs	6	20	2	22	0	50
60,001-80,000 PKRs	5	11	1	7	0	24
Above 80,000 PKRs	10	6	4	5	2	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>150</b>

Chi-Square Value = 34.605 (p - value = .004), Degree of freedom = 16, Level of significance = 0.05 Significant, Gamma Value = 0.56

Table 4 describes association between income and people's participation in civic organizations. The independent variable was income and dependent variable was participation in civic organizations. The chi-square value shows the association is highly significant ( $P = .004$ ). The Gamma value is positive which depicts the relationship between variables is direct. This means greater the income, greater will be participation in civic organizations. These results are consistent with previous studies and literature that showed voter behavior, shaped by values, beliefs, socioeconomic status, and perceptions of political candidates and issues, determines how individuals exercise their right to influence their nation's trajectory (HE, 2006).

## Conclusion

Majority respondents viewed voting as a fundamental right in many democratic societies. The respondents were agreed that voting allows individuals to contribute for collective well-being of society. The majority voters said that voting is a way to address to social and economic issues. Majority respondents said that voting allows individuals to raise voice in decision making processes that affect their lives. Voting encourages the development of responsible citizenship. The participants said that they usually engaged in respectful political discussions and respect the rights and choices of others even if they disagreed from them. Majority respondents participated in civic organizations that promote voter engagement and reported any irregularities or concerned about the voting process. They encourage others to vote based on their own values and priorities. Education was associated with awareness about electoral procedure. Family monthly income was associated with participation in civic organization.

## Recommendations

This study recommends that education and awareness can affect the political perception and behavior of people and contribute to increase the political participation.

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