

Exploring Changing People's Perceptions on Local Elections

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Abstract

The article explores changing people perceptions of political parties during local elections in Nepal, highlighting the different factors of recent socio-political changes. Following the restructuring of local governance in the 2022 elections, political parties have increased direct involvement with their communities, changing public perceptions. Using a constructivist interpretivist paradigm with multiple realities ontology, the study employs both structured and unstructured questionnaires and interviews to gather narrative experiences from the public. The research utilizes a convergent design, integrating exploratory and descriptive methods, and employs both qualitative and quantitative techniques, including interviews and focus groups, to capture diverse people sentiments across various respondents. The sampling of 120 respondent in convenience sampling reveals that educational changes, political disillusionment, and grassroots engagement are key drivers of these changing perceptions. With all these changes the people are increasingly evaluating political parties based on local issues such as infrastructure, education, health, and social equity, rather than national political manifesto. The findings indicated a growing trend toward electing leaders who are less affiliated with traditional parties, often younger and perceived as neutral. This shift reflects declining trust in established political parties and highlights the need for greater accountability and transparency. The study underscores a pivotal moment in Nepal's democratic institutionalization, urging political entities to adapt strategically to maintain their relevance. By exploring these changing voter perceptions, the article contributes to a deeper understanding of political accountability and voter behavior in developing democracies, offering insights for policymakers and political strategists.

Keywords: Anthropology, election, people, perception, power.

Introduction

The main issue is perception and local election study is to analyses, by taking into consideration the social values and needs, the factors affecting the voters' voting behaviors in the local elections. In the process of evaluating the voters' choices related to the candidate's positive and negative aspects, the impacts of the media messages, the election campaign, the candidate's ethnic origin, and the perceptions developed about the candidate's political party have been analyzed; the influences of age, gender, education level, political identity, and socio-demographic effects have also been questioned (Kulachai et al., 2023).

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Different studies have shown different result about candidate and the sentiments developed about the candidate's political party have been detected to have more dominant effects in the voters' choices. Meanwhile, the level of education has been discovered to be strengthening the voters' rational choices, leading them to make more insightful examinations of the candidate. There has been research conducted on voters' behavior not only in new democracies but also in matured democracies as well since it is a complex phenomenon to understand voters' behavior in a particular condition and environment, which is determined by several tangible and intangible variables. Understanding individual behavior is a complicated process since mapping the cognitive aspect of any individual based on social exchange or rational choice is a complex task as it is correlated with the psychology and socio-economic conditions of public life (Silvester et al., 2020).

Therefore, understanding voters' behavior is a combination of attitudinal, socio-economic and psychological factors that cast influences on voting behavior. The pertinent question is what factors that motivate and determines our choices for the rational decision? Does anywhere the value system guide for the individual decision or personal gain and loss play a significant role in making particular decisions has to be ascertained through the empirical study with regards to electoral behavior of voters. The present study focused on people perception and political parties in local election. The research focuses on different parameters of people while selecting political parties. Therefore, objective of research to explore the changing perception of people about local election. Similarly, what are the factor which affect in perception. The research explores changing perception among people in the study area.

Methodology

Research Methodology

Present study's focus on understanding the changing perceptions, a qualitative research and quantitative research design are adopted. These approaches are ideal for capturing the richness of participants' experiences, thoughts, and feelings and survey of respondents which are central to understanding how perceptions of local elections have evolved in Arjunthara Municipality. The research design involves a combination of descriptive statistics and in-depth interviews, and participant observation, which are all methods conducive to gaining an interpretative understanding of the people's voting behavior (Osunbor & Ofobruku, 2023).

Research Philosophy

The research philosophy guiding this study is interpretivism, which aligns well with anthropological research. Interpretivism emphasizes understanding the subjective meanings and experiences of individuals within their social contexts. This approach is particularly suited for exploring how residents of Arjunthara Municipality perceive and engage with local elections, as it allows for a deep, comprehensive understanding of their perspectives and behaviors. Unlike post positivism, which seeks to uncover universal laws through objective measurement, interpretivism acknowledges the complexity of human experience and the importance of context in shaping social realities (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022).

The primary method involves extended fieldwork and survey method in Arjunthara Municipality, where the researcher immerses themselves in the local community. This approach allows for the observation of electoral practices, community meetings, and other relevant social interactions that influence voter perceptions. Semi-structured interviews have been conducted with a diverse range of participants, including local voters, political leaders, activists, and media personnel. These interviews explore participants' views on local elections, changes in their perceptions over time, and the factors influencing these changes. The semi-structured format provides flexibility, allowing participants to

express their thoughts in their own words while ensuring that key topics are covered (Jamshed, 2014). The researcher participated in local events related to the elections, such as campaign rallies, voter education programs, and Election Day activities. This method helps in understanding the social dynamics at play and how they impact voter perceptions. Local election records, media reports, and historical documents have analyzed to provide a contextual background and support the findings from interviews and observations. This facilitate in understanding the broader socio-political environment that shapes electoral perceptions. A purposive sampling strategy has been employed to select participants who can provide rich, detailed information relevant to the study's objectives. The total selected respondent were 120 people from various socio-economic backgrounds, age groups, genders, and ethnicities to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the community's perspectives on local elections. Key informants, such as local leaders and long-time residents, has been identified through snowball sampling to gain deeper insights into historical changes in electoral perceptions (James & Garnett, 2024).

Data using thematic analysis, partly software like Atlas.ti and Nvivo and manual coding were used. This software that allows for the identification, analysis, and reporting of patterns (themes) within the data. Each process helps familiarization with data transcribing interviews, reading field notes, and reviewing documents. Similarly coding generating initial codes that identify interesting aspects of the data. Grouping codes into themes that capture the key aspects of how perceptions of local elections have changed. Refining themes to ensure they accurately represent the data and are coherent. Finalizing themes and defining what each theme represents. Integrating themes into a narrative that addresses the research objectives and supports the study's conclusions (Goyanes et al., 2024).

Ethical issues are central to this study, given its anthropological nature and the involvement of human participants. Informed consent obtained from all participants, ensuring that they understand the purpose of the study and their right to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality will be maintained, with data anonymized to protect participants' identities. Additionally, the research will be conducted with cultural sensitivity, respecting the norms and values of the local community (Kang & Hwang, 2023).

Reflexivity

While this methodology is well-suited for exploring changing perceptions, it does have limitations. The subjective nature of qualitative research means that findings are not easily generalizable to other contexts. Additionally, the researcher's presence in the field may influence participants' responses (observer effect). These limitations will be acknowledged in the analysis and discussion of the findings (Anderson, 2010).

The Area of study

The research area is Arjundhara is a Municipality, which is located in Jhapa district, Province No. 1 of Nepal. Arjundhara has total 11 wards, which are scattered across 110 square kilometers of geographical area. According to 2021 Census conducted by Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), Arjundhara Municipality had total population of 84018. As per 2021 population census, Arjundhara Municipality had total 84018 population with 40,180 males and 43,838 females. Out of total wards, ward number 11 had the largest population 7,520, while ward number 7 had least number of populations with 7,520. With respect to number of households, Arjundhara Municipality had total 13,623 households. The ward number 11 had most households with total 1,715, while ward number 7 had least number of households with total 964 number of households. Baldev Singh Gomden Tamang (CPN-UML) won with 19,169 votes in the Arjundhara Municipality City defeating Ranjita Karki (Nepali Congress) who secured

13,743 votes in Nepal local elections 2022 (Sthaniya Chunab 2079). According to the Election Commission, Nepal, Arjundhara Municipality City has 53,745 eligible voters (Kathmandu post 2021).

Literature Review

People perception and election

The article critiques development actors' thinking on post-conflict countries, focusing on understanding local politics rather than focusing on what they think lacks. It highlights different ways of viewing state and local politics, focusing on theories that seek to understand informal political realities. The article uses case studies to illustrate local level transitional politics in Nepal and suggests that development actors should not resign themselves to accepting the reality of politics but instead integrate detailed studies with long-term goals for reform practices like corruption and patronage (Sharrock, 2013).

Local governments play a crucial role in promoting democratic values, public participation, and economic development in Nepal. However, frustration and dishonesty in politics and bureaucracy pose significant risks to their capacity development. This study aims to address the extent to which local governments can implement constitutional rights to transform communities, resulting from a shift from government to governmentality. Findings suggest that more capacity is needed to institutionalize restructuring, increase citizen engagement, build new partnerships, enhance technical, administrative, and fiscal capacity for effective service delivery, and formulate essential laws, acts, and regulations. Major arguments, such as the effectiveness of local autonomy, political differences, and democratization of bureaucratic assertiveness, remain unanswered (Acharya, 2018).

This article discusses the socio-political formation of Nepal, arguing that political actors operate within wider social contexts and issues. The modern Nepali state is power-centric, and who rules is a vital concern. State restructuring becomes controversial when a country goes federal on the basis of desegregation. Nepali society is diverse and complex, making steps forward possible only from a macro perspective. Post-republican state restructuring in Nepal should focus on positive protests, civil society, political parties, opposition, and factual devotion to create harmony in variety. The effects of public opinion, civic society, ideologies, and social tendencies outside formal political institutions remain decisive (Upadhyay, 2015).

This paper examines the perspectives of the Nepali community on environmental change and the role of development actors in Nepalganj. It highlights the lack of familiarity with climate change and the risks and opportunities associated with the involvement of local government, international development organizations, and local non-government organizations in future adaptation actions. The paper also highlights the criticisms of development, such as poor consultation and short project timelines, and emphasizes the importance of development actors evolving their practices by listening to local communities for the long-term success of adaptation actions (Ireland, 2012).

This study aims to analyze the factors influencing political party perception and voting behavior in Nepal, particularly on social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Data was collected from 333 respondents aged 20 and above just before the historic constitutional assembly election in Nepal. The research uses theories such as Technological Determinism, Social Judgment, Agenda Setting, Uses and Gratification, and Habermas's Concept of Public Sphere and Political Campaign to explore the roles of social media in these processes. The results show that political interest is positively related to political party perception and voting behavior, suggesting that political party perception is influenced by the politician's political interest. Political trust is also positively related to political

perception and voting behavior, indicating that political trust significantly influences political party perception. Religion and social media are also positively related to political party perception and voting behavior. This study contributes to understanding the impact of social media on society and politics. (Paudel et al., 2018)

Election in Nepal

One of the widely articulated and accepted definitions of democracy as propounded by US President Abraham Lincoln states that democracy is a system of the people, for the people and by the people (Haney, 1944). Here, President Lincoln has put people at the center-stage of democracy. One important way the democracy has espoused this centrality is through its expansion and extension up to the local level. Perception in its general term describes the views that people hold about an object, person or place. Feldman (1999) sees perception as the sorting out, interpretation, analysis and integration of stimuli involving one's sense of organs and brain. Perception is conceived and often regarded as communication. Ngene (2016) adds that people often make evaluative judgments of what is desirable and undesirable in a community based on what they feel, experience, see, read, hear or talk about. Severin, (2001) holds that different psychological factors influence perceptions and they include past experience, cultural expectations, motivations, moods, needs and attitudes. Scholars (Tal - Or & Tsfaty, 2007; Sun Pan & Shen 2008) found that perceptions about media contents is significantly determine media effect.

Election Commission of Nepal is a constitutional Election Management Body in Nepal. Constitution of Nepal has made arrangements about the Election Commission in Section 24, article 245 to 247. The constitution has embraced the competitive multiparty democratic system, adult franchise and periodic elections as fundamental guiding principles of democracy. Depending on the constitutional provisions, the Commission has the responsibility to conduct the elections of different tiers – federal, provincial and local bodies – as per the stipulated electoral systems (*Constitution of Nepal, 2015*). Local Government Operation Act 2017, *emphasis on Nepal's federalist system of government* devises an unprecedented scale of autonomy, power, and resources for its local governments. The Constitution of Nepal (2015) provides solid constitutional foundations for autonomous local governments, inclusive and participatory local decision-making mechanisms, and responsive local governance, expecting that such features shall enhance the quality of local democracy in the country (Bhusal & Acharya, 2024).

Election practice in world context

Polling is a new phenomenon in Tanzania, with high public awareness of polls. An individual's opinion on poll accuracy is largely determined by the group they connect with. Independent and undecided voters are more easily swayed by polls than those with strong political views. The results show that a candidate or party reported in the lead gets extra votes because voters are more likely to vote for a candidate, they expect to win than one they expect to lose. This confirms Marsh's bandwagon effect theory and runs against Marsh's underdog theory. The study also supports the Two-Step theory effect, which explains how voters through media can be influenced by opinion leaders, such as local politicians. Journalists should understand the technical details of polls, such as sample size and question nature, to conduct well-researched analysis of opinion polls. The study recommends media training journalists on reporting poll-related stories and regulating the publishing of political opinion polls in Tanzania (Gasuku, 2023).

The application of Geographic Information System (GIS) and election is a study that stresses geospatial aspects which gives support to election boundaries, election information management system along with GIS analysis in election boundaries. This article, as a concept, explains the role and function of

GIS and geopolitics as an introduction to examine the election pattern in Malaysia. This study was aimed at understanding the issue that influenced youth voters in DUN Nusajaya to cast their votes in General Election, thus charting new strategies for future election. In doing so, nine issues are carefully selected and analyzed from a geographical perspective by using GIS method. Socio-demographic data, issues influenced and assessment of state political figure, are used to explore geographic variability in relationships between each variable at a detailed spatial level. Spatial analysis using geographically weighted regression (GWR) was employed, which enables the investigation of local variations in voting patterns (Ismail et al., 2018).

This study explores the reasons why voters prefer local candidates, focusing on two theoretical explanations. Firstly, it identifies that voters prefer candidates who live nearby due to in-group favoritism, while secondly, they expect them to favor their local area once in office. The study uses a conjoint experiment in Denmark to determine the importance of candidates' behavioral localism and symbolic localism in voters' preferences for local candidates. It finds that voters prefer candidates who prioritize local interests and those who signal their commitment to the local in-group. Consequently, voters prefer local candidates due to their behavioral localism, while there is no evidence that voters prefer them due to their symbolic localism. The study suggests that similar content is viewed by others. (Nyholt, 2024)

Thematic review

The study “Exploring Changing People Perception on Local Election: An Anthropological Study of Local Election in Arjunthara Municipality” can be effectively situated within the broader field of political anthropology, which explores how political behavior, local governance, and cultural norms interact in shaping electoral dynamics. Political anthropologists have long examined the relationship between local political structures and individual participation, providing a framework to understand the shifting perceptions of voters in this municipality.

Political anthropologists like James C. Scott have extensively examined how local populations negotiate, resist, or adapt to state authority through both formal and informal political structures. Scott explores how top-down schemes for governance often fail to account for the complexities of local cultures and social structures, leading to resistance or alternative forms of political engagement (Scott, 2020 a).

Similarly, in *Weapons of the Weak* (1985 b), Scott demonstrates how individuals employ subtle forms of resistance within the political system to cope with perceived inequalities and injustices. In the case of Arjunthara Municipality, the increasing preference for independent candidates and dissatisfaction with traditional parties could be seen as a form of local resistance against the established political system. This provides an important lens for examining how local voters may reject national party structures in favor of candidates they perceive as more attuned to their needs.

The role of cultural values and social norms in shaping political behavior is another key area in political anthropology, as explored by Clifford Geertz in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973). Geertz's work emphasizes that political identities are often embedded in the symbols, rituals, and cultural narratives of a society.

Likewise, Benedict Anderson's concept of *Imagined Communities* (1983) shows how national and local political identities are constructed through shared experiences and beliefs. In Arjunthara, voters' perceptions of leadership, party loyalty, and political engagement are likely influenced by long-standing cultural practices, such as family allegiance to specific parties, communal values, or expectations of

reciprocity between leaders and voters. These cultural factors are critical for understanding why some voters remain loyal to political parties, while others seek new forms of representation.

Material incentives and political clientelism

The influence of material incentives on voting behavior influenced by money or gifts, can be situated within the literature on political clientelism. Anthropologists such as Jonathan Spencer have explored how economic hardship can lead to political clientelism, where voters exchange their political support for short-term material benefits. In *Anthropology, Politics, and the State: Democracy and Violence in South Asia* (2007), Spencer examines how political clientelism is often a survival strategy for economically disadvantaged groups. This framework is crucial for understanding the socio-economic dimensions of electoral behavior in Arjun dhara, where immediate financial relief may outweigh long-term political considerations, particularly for those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Emerging independent candidates and political legitimacy

The preference for independent candidates over traditional political parties, can be viewed through the lens of political legitimacy. Jean and John Comaroff (2006) in *Law and Disorder in the Post-colony* argue that legitimacy in postcolonial contexts often shifts away from formal institutions towards more localized, informal structures of authority. This suggests that voters in Arjun dhara may perceive independent candidates as more legitimate because they are seen as being more closely connected to local issues and less tied to the hierarchical, and often corrupt, structures of party politics. Independent candidates may represent a new form of political authority that resonates with the electorate's desire for genuine, grassroots leadership. This shift also mirrors the work of Lisa Wedeen (1999) in *Ambiguities of Domination*, which examines how populations negotiate authority and authenticity in response to political dissatisfaction.

Changing perceptions and political participation

The changing perceptions of voters in Arjun dhara Municipality can also be understood in the context of political culture and participation. David Nugent and Joan Vincent (2004), in *A Companion to the Anthropology of Politics*, explore how political cultures evolve, particularly in response to dissatisfaction with political structures and leadership. In Arjun dhara, the growing political awareness and increasing skepticism of traditional party politics could reflect broader socio-political changes that political anthropologists have documented in other contexts.

Lisa Wedeen's (2008) work in *Peripheral Visions: Publics, Power, and Performance in Yemen* similarly shows how shifts in political culture occur as people become more aware of their political agency and demand more accountability from their leaders. The emerging preference for independent candidates in Arjun dhara can be viewed as part of a broader trend where voters seek alternatives to mainstream politics, driven by a desire for more transparency, integrity, and responsiveness in governance.

Drawing from the works of Scott, Geertz, Spencer, Wedeen, and others, this study situates the changing voter behavior in Arjun dhara within the broader field of political anthropology, offering important insights into how culture, economics, and politics intersect to shape electoral outcomes in local governance. This contextualization not only deepens the understanding of voter behavior but also provides a framework for future research on the role of political anthropology in studying electoral dynamics in other regions.

Research gap

There is a lack of in-depth ethnographic research on local elections in Arjun dhara, Nepal, focusing on how local cultural, social, and economic factors shape political behavior. The research gap lies in understanding how perceptions of leadership, party loyalty, and voting behavior are influenced by the unique socio-political landscape of Arjun dhara. Education influences political engagement, but varying educational levels shape perceptions of local elections. The rise in preference for independent candidates is not well-researched in Arjun dhara, and the impact of political clientelism and material incentives on local electoral outcomes is underexplored. Gender impacts political participation and perceptions in local elections are also underexplored, and the role of local cultural norms in shaping political engagement and electoral behavior is not adequately studied. Longitudinal research is needed to track changes in voter behavior and political perceptions over multiple election cycles.

Results

Participation of Respondent by Gender

The table 1 shows the participation of respondents by gender: 58% male and 42% female. This indicates a moderate gender gap in participation, with males slightly more represented than females. The data could suggest differing levels of engagement or awareness between genders regarding local elections. Anthropologically, this could be examined in terms of cultural, social, or economic factors influencing male and female participation. Perception Shifts: How do perceptions about the importance of local elections differ between men and women? Are women becoming more politically active or aware, and what motivates this change? The pie chart provides a starting point for a deeper exploration of gender dynamics in local elections. By examining the participation rates through an anthropological lens, you can gain insights into the changing perceptions of local governance, the socio-cultural factors at play, and the implications for future political engagement in Arjun dhara Municipality. This analysis can lead to a more understanding of how different segments of the population view and participate in local elections.

Table 1
Participation of Respondent Male and Female

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	70	58.33
Female	50	41.66
Total	120	100

Changing people perception on education in local election

To analyze the data provided in figure 1 on the education of respondents, the largest group of respondents falls under the "Up class +2" category (41.66%), indicating a significant proportion of respondents have completed higher secondary education. A substantial number are also classified as "Literate" (25%), indicating basic education without formal higher education. Smaller groups include "Illiterate" (12.5%), "Up class Diploma" (16.66%), and "Diploma and above" (4%). Individuals with higher education levels, such as those with diplomas or above, may have more awareness and understanding of political processes, potentially influencing their perceptions and behaviors in local

elections. Respondents with lower education levels (literate and illiterate) may have different priorities or levels of engagement in local elections. Understanding their perceptions can provide insights into how to improve political engagement and awareness in these groups. The educational composition of the respondents can be analyzed to understand the cultural factors influencing political participation in Arjundhara Municipality. For instance, what role does education play in shaping political perceptions and behaviors? By examining these aspects, the study can provide a comprehensive view of how education influences perceptions and participation in local elections, contributing to a broader understanding of political behavior in the Arjundhara Municipality.

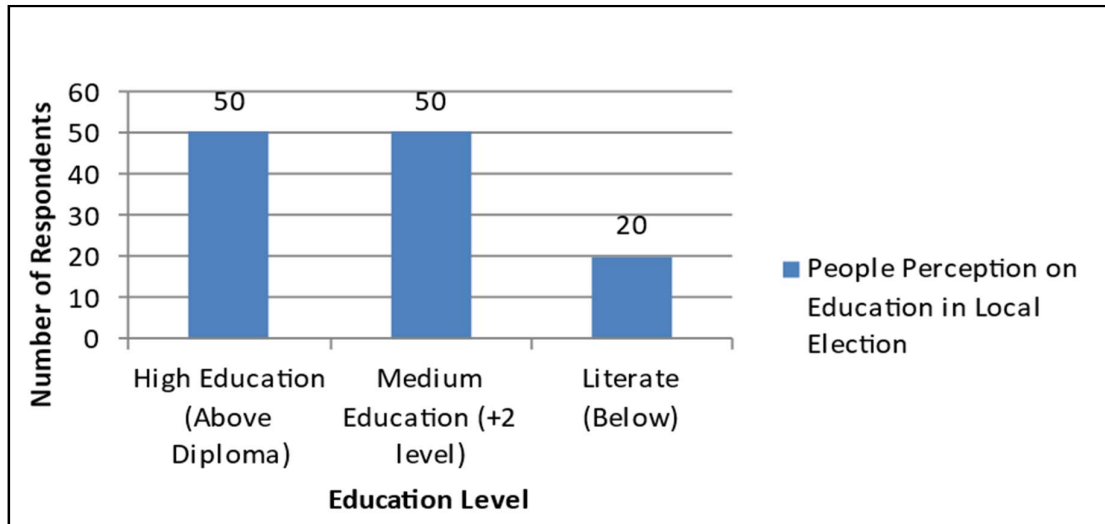


Figure 1
Bar Graph for Changing People Perception on Education in Local Election

One respondent of very young age expressed his frustration "I strongly believe that education is the backbone of any successful democracy. When I vote, I always look for candidates who value education and understand its importance for society. In my view, a well-educated population can make informed decisions and hold leaders accountable. Unfortunately, many in my community, especially those with lower education levels, don't always see things this way. They often prioritize short-term benefits over long-term policies. I feel frustrated when I see educated candidates being overlooked. Education, to me, is key to progress, and it influences every vote I cast."(Participant-1)

Awareness about voting

The figure 2 shows that 60% of respondents are aware of voting, while 40% are not aware. This indicates a majority of the population has some level of awareness about voting processes and the importance of participating in local elections. A 60% awareness level is a positive indicator for local elections. It suggests that a significant portion of the population understands the importance of voting, which could translate to higher voter turnout and engagement in the electoral process. The 40% of respondents who are not aware of voting represent a considerable minority. This group may face barriers such as lack of access to information, low political engagement, or social and cultural factors that discourage

participation in local elections. Given the data from Table 3 on educational levels, it's likely that awareness about voting is higher among those with better education (above diploma and +2 level). Those with only basic literacy or who are less educated may form a significant portion of the 40% who are not aware. Cultural beliefs and social norms within Arjundhara Municipality might influence who is more likely to be aware of voting. For instance, men or more educated groups might have better access to political information and resources compared to women or less educated groups. The pie chart on "Awareness about Voting" provides a snapshot of the current level of civic awareness within Arjundhara Municipality. While a majority of the population is aware of voting, there is a significant portion that remains unaware. Understanding the reasons behind this gap and addressing them through targeted educational and awareness initiatives can help.

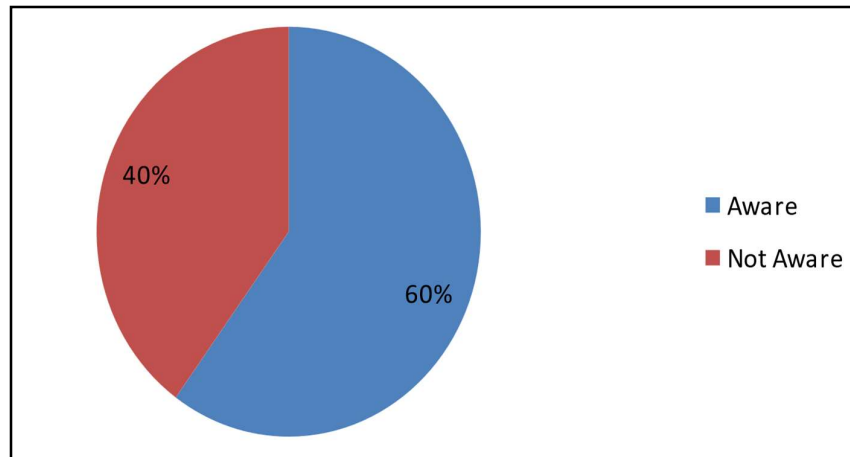


Figure 2
Pie-Chart Showing Awareness About Voting

As a resident of Arjundhara Municipality, I've noticed a big change in how people around me choose which political party to support. In the past, many of us would vote based on family traditions or promises of immediate benefits. Our focus has shifted. Now, more of us are looking at a party's track record, their commitment to development, and their stance on education and healthcare. Education seems to be playing a big role in this shift. Those of us who have gone through higher secondary education or beyond tend to ask tougher questions and expect more from political parties. We want leaders who actually understand our needs and are prepared to deliver real solutions, not just slogans. Even in the groups that were less aware before, there's a growing realization that selecting the right party can shape our future. This increasing awareness is leading people to make more informed, thoughtful decisions when it comes to choosing the parties they support." (Participant-2)

Influence of greed money and materials

The pie chart of figure 3 shows that 40% of respondents acknowledged being influenced by greed, money, or material incentives in their decisions related to local elections, while 60% stated they were not influenced by such factors. The data indicates that a significant minority (40%) of the population is susceptible to influence from greed, money, or material incentives. This suggests that material incentives might play a role in swaying voter behavior or decisions in local elections. A larger proportion

of respondents (60%) claim to be unaffected by materialistic factors, suggesting a resistance to external incentives like money or material goods. This majority indicates a level of integrity or ethical considerations guiding their electoral choices. Individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds may be more vulnerable to material incentives due to economic hardships or the need for immediate relief. The perception that voting can bring direct financial benefits might be more prevalent among this group. The influence of greed, money, or material incentives can undermine the integrity of elections. If a significant portion of voters is swayed by such factors, it could compromise the fairness and representativeness of election outcomes. The pie chart on "Influence of Greed/Money/Material" sheds light on the ethical and socio-economic dimensions of electoral behavior in Arjundhara Municipality. While a majority of respondents resist such influences, a substantial minority remains vulnerable, highlighting the need for targeted efforts to promote ethical voting and reduce the impact of material incentives on the democratic process. Understanding and addressing these factors through education, policy, and community development can help strengthen the integrity and fairness of local elections.

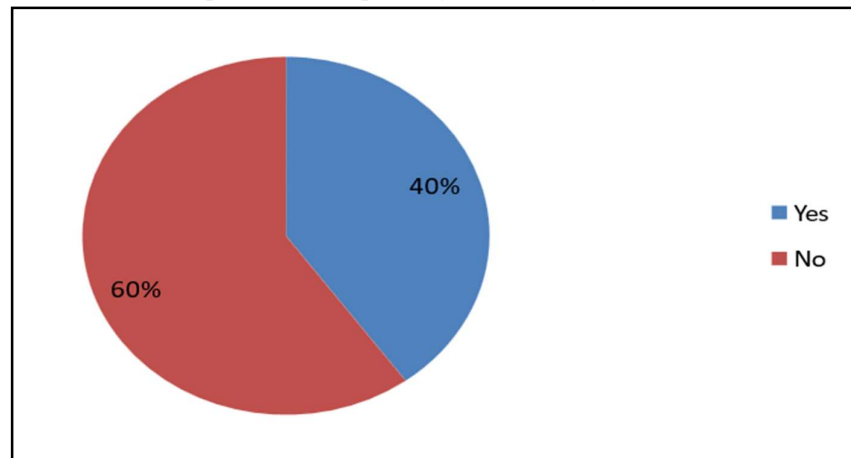


Figure 3
Pie-Chart Depicting the Influence of Greed Money and Materials.

Based on focus group discussions:

During a focus group discussion in Arjundhara Municipality, several participants shared their frustration about the ongoing practice of voters accepting money in exchange for their votes. One respondent shared, *"It's disheartening to see that even today, people around me are still influenced by money during elections. I've seen families in my neighborhood who, despite understanding the importance of good leadership, take cash or gifts from candidates. They justify it by saying they need the money to survive. For them, the immediate benefit outweighs the long-term impact."*

Another participant remarked, *"It feels like all the awareness campaigns don't matter when someone is struggling to feed their family. It's hard to blame them, but it makes me angry that our elections are still tainted by this practice. I wish people would see that voting for someone based on money just continues the cycle of bad leadership."*

A younger participant added, *"I've been educated on how important my vote is, and I refuse to let anyone buy it. But I know others my age who have been offered money and can't resist the temptation. It's frustrating because we talk about change, yet too many of us fall back into this old habit."*

These experiences reveal the bitter reality that, despite increasing awareness and efforts to promote ethical voting, many voters are still influenced by material incentives, especially those facing financial hardships. This practice continues to weaken the integrity of the electoral process, highlighting the need for stronger measures to address this issue.

Disenchanted voter preferences

The pie chart of figure 4 shows that 60% of voters in Arjundhara Municipality prefer independent candidates, indicating a shift away from traditional party structures. This suggests voters may feel alienated from mainstream political parties and see independent candidates as more authentic representatives of their local interests. Only 20% of respondents are willing to change their party preference, indicating that some voters remain within the party system but seek alternatives within different factions. Another 20% of voters have "No Idea" on how to vote, reflecting uncertainty or lack of trust in the political process. This could be due to a lack of clear choices, political literacy, or engagement with local issues. The data suggests a shifting cultural and political landscape, with established norms of party loyalty eroding. Independent candidates represent local, grassroots concerns over top-down party directives, highlighting the potential for increased political fragmentation and the opportunity for reform within local governance.

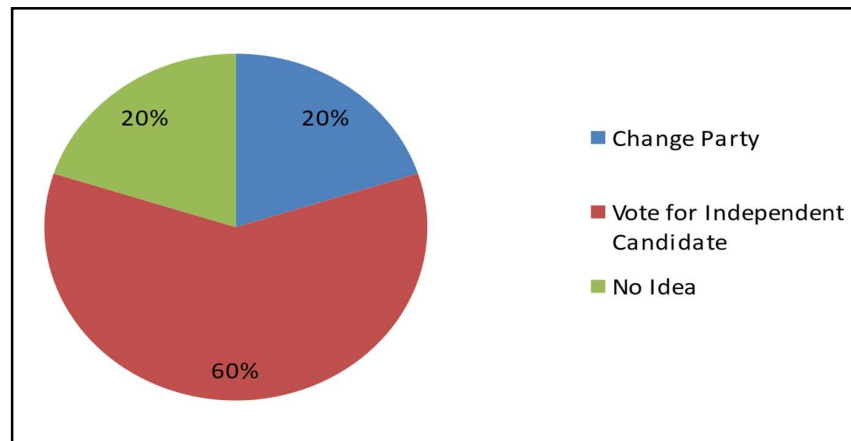


Figure 4
Pie-Chart Showing Disenchanted Voter Preferences

Based on in-depth interview of local leader:

"As a local leader in Arjundhara Municipality, I've been hearing more and more complaints from voters who are frustrated with the political system. They keep telling me, 'We don't trust the big parties anymore.' When I ask why, their answers show deep dissatisfaction. They feel that the same parties come into power again and again, but nothing changes for them. Development is slow, unemployment is high, and promises made during campaigns are never fulfilled. Many people tell me they're tired of being offered small material benefits, like gifts or money, in exchange for their votes. They say these incentives no longer convince them, but they also feel like they don't have better options. When I try to explain that politics is complicated and that change takes time, they dismiss these arguments as excuses. They say they've been hearing the same lines for years and are fed up with empty promises. One of the biggest frustrations I hear is that people feel disconnected from the decision-making process. Even though we, as leaders, try to

explain the challenges we face, the people feel that their concerns are never truly addressed. Many voters are now looking to independent candidates because they believe these candidates might be more genuine, more connected to local issues, and less influenced by party politics. It's clear to me that the traditional party structure is no longer enough. The people are demanding results, and they're no longer satisfied with

Discussion

The information from the several tables and pie charts exposes important new angles on the political scene and people view in Arjundhara Municipality. Although a good number of people are voting, political awareness, education levels, and the effect of material incentives on voter behavior provide clear difficulties. These elements are crucial in determining political involvement and decision-making, which affects political integrity and efficacy of municipal elections generally.

Political sensibility and education

According to the statistics, voter opinions and actions are much shaped by education. Given most respondents (41.66%) having finished higher secondary education and a sizable fraction (25%), being literate, there is evidence that higher educational achievement corresponds with better political awareness. Still, a sizable portion—12.5% of them are illiterate— without access to official schooling or higher learning. The higher voting awareness among respondents (60%), which suggests that education might be a major determinant of this knowledge. Better educated people are probably more aware of the political process, the need of voting, and how their decisions affect government. On the other hand, lower-educated populations could account for a sizable fraction of the 40% of people unaware of voting procedures, therefore hindering political involvement. This requires focused awareness campaigns and educational programs to close the knowledge gap and boost political involvement at every educational level.

Ethical voting and material incentives

The effect of pecuniary incentives on voter behavior is one of the most alarming features the statistics expose. According to the pie chart on "Influence of Greed/Money/Material," forty percent of respondents said they considered such elements while deciding on their vote. This significant minority represents the socioeconomic weaknesses that let people be easily swayed by instant financial gain. Particularly lower socioeconomic groups could see voting as a means of instant relief from problems, therefore diminishing the long-term relevance of ethical voting. This tendency affects the integrity of elections since it results in short-term, opportunistic decision-making instead of choosing leaders depending on competence, credentials, and dedication to growth. Dealing with this problem will call for structural changes to lower economic inequalities driving people toward such decisions and educational initiatives.

Changing voter choices

The "Disenchanted Voter Preferences" pie chart shows how dynamically voter behavior is changing. A significant 60% of respondents said they preferred independent candidates, clearly dissatisfied with current political parties. This change implies that many voters see established political parties as ineffectual or corrupt, hence they feel cut off from them. Many of these voters think that independent candidates may better reflect local issues, be more approachable, and stay free from party bureaucracies sometimes perceived as ineffectual to meet community demands. This trend points Arjundhara

Municipality's developing representation dilemma. Voters are looking for substitutes they think would provide more real and responsible leadership as political parties neglect to meet public needs. For political anthropologists, this is a crucial realization since it shows how dissatisfaction with conventional political systems may inspire independent groups and maybe even political realignment inside a society.

Political disconnect and frustration

Many voters still find the political system unsatisfactory even with rising knowledge and changes in political tastes. Focus group conversations expose strong discontent with the way that current political parties perform. Voters accuse the present system of causing mistrust by unmet promises of development and improvement. Although presents or money might not seem enough to inspire voter loyalty, economic difficulty nonetheless drives some to accept such incentives. When trying to explain political complexity, leaders encounter public opposition since the community views these justifications as means of justification for inaction or delayed development.

Voters' political estrangement from leaders mirrors more general problems with responsibility, openness, and representation. Political parties and leaders really need to solve the underlying reasons of voter discontent and encourage a more informed and involved citizen. Moreover, growing dissatisfaction with conventional politics creates the path for independent candidates and other political movements to acquire momentum by attending to these unresolved issues.

The part socio-economic and cultural factors play

The statistics imply that voter behavior is shaped in part by cultural and socioeconomic elements as well. Because of their immediate financial demands, those from lower socioeconomic origins are more prone to be persuaded by material rewards; individuals from more educated or stable backgrounds may be more immune to such temptations. Furthermore, influencing who is more likely to be aware of voting procedures and to take part in elections are cultural ideas and social conventions. Men or those from particular educated groups, for example, might have easier access to political information and resources than women or less educated people.

Effects on electoral integrity and next elections

The results draw attention to major issues compromising the fairness and integrity of municipal elections. Although most respondents oppose material incentives, the fact that forty percent of them are nonetheless vulnerable to such pressures raises questions about the integrity of the voting results. Furthermore, the growing inclination for independent candidates over well-known political parties indicates that parties should review their platforms and participation policies. More ethical leadership, openness, and responsibility are obviously demanded. All things considered, the information offers Arjunthara Municipality a whole picture of the elements impacting voter behavior. Political involvement is shaped in part by education, material incentives, dissatisfaction with conventional political parties, and socioeconomic considerations. Targeted interventions including educational campaigns, legislation changes, and community development projects—such as those aimed at encouraging ethical voting, so lessening the power of pecuniary incentives, and so rebuilding confidence in the democratic system. This will be absolutely vital to guarantee that municipal elections are fair, representative, and efficient in bringing about the development and transformation the voters are looking for.

Conclusion

The data presented from the pie charts and tables offer valuable insights into the political behavior and attitudes of voters in Arjundhara Municipality. A clear link emerges between educational attainment and political awareness, with better-educated individuals displaying greater engagement and understanding of the voting process. However, a significant portion of the population remains uninformed or disengaged, particularly those with lower educational levels, which points to a need for targeted political education and awareness initiatives.

The findings also reveal a troubling reliance on material incentives, with 40% of respondents admitting to being swayed by money or gifts during elections. This not only compromises the integrity of the electoral process but also highlights the economic vulnerabilities that many voters face. Efforts to combat this trend must focus on reducing socio-economic disparities and promoting ethical voting practices through education and policy reform.

The shift in voter preferences towards independent candidates indicates growing frustration with traditional political parties. This disillusionment suggests that parties are failing to meet the needs and expectations of the electorate, leading voters to seek alternative forms of representation that they believe will be more responsive to their local concerns. Political parties must adapt to these changing dynamics if they are to regain the trust of the electorate and remain relevant.

In conclusion, the political landscape in Arjundhara Municipality is undergoing significant changes, driven by a combination of rising political awareness, frustration with traditional parties, and the persistent influence of socio-economic challenges. Addressing these issues will require a multi-faceted approach, including educational initiatives, socio-economic reforms, and efforts to restore the integrity of the electoral process. By doing so, Arjundhara Municipality can foster a more informed, engaged, and ethical electorate, ultimately leading to more representative and effective governance.

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