

## Does Issue Voting Matter in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa? Empirical Evidence from 2002-2013 Elections

**Farman Ullah**

Assistant Professor, Pakistan Study Centre, University of Peshawar, KP, Pakistan.

**Fakhrul Islam**

Professor and Director, Pakistan Study Centre, University of Peshawar, KP, Pakistan. Email: [ifakhar@uop.edu.pk](mailto:ifakhar@uop.edu.pk)

### Abstract

*Issue voting is the theory of voting behavior which emphasizes that issues play an important role in making electoral decisions by the electorate in general elections. Issues of public importance are incorporated in party manifestoes and electoral campaigns so that to attract the masses and to stand victorious in elections. This article provides empirical evidence during 2002-2013 that how issue voting has played its dominant role in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa? The study assumes that issue voting is a dominant factor in describing electoral patterns in KP. The period 2002-2013 covers three general elections including 2002, 2008 and 2013. In all these elections issue voting has been operated in the form of various issues. It will highlight all those issues which have been used in the form of issue voting during 2002-2013 period. Data have been collected through a questionnaire and have been analyzed with the help of SPSS software version 22 by applying descriptive and inferential statistics.*

### Key Words

Issue Voting, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Electoral behaviour, Electoral Politics, Voting Behaviour.

### Introduction

Personality can be defined as constant; distinctive and planned group of characteristics of a person; decided by environmental as well as genetic traits that control one's cognition, motivation and behaviors in various situations (Ryckman, 2004). According to Kyllonen et al., (2014) Big Five personality traits have been playing The theory of issue voting emerged in opposition to party identification model in psephology. The model of party identification adheres that the electoral decisions are made on the basis of party affiliation/identification. On the other hand, issue voting discards such adherence and claims that only issues shape the electoral decisions. That is why the political parties and activists include the burning issues in their parties' manifestoes and electoral campaigns so that to attract the public and finally secure large electoral support.

V.O. Key Jr. was the earliest political theorist who supported the idea that issues play a dominant role in molding voting patterns than party identification/affiliation. He asserted that issues operate as an electoral choice if there is a distinction on issues among various political parties and candidates. Carmines and Stimson ascribe issues in terms of easy and hard features (Anderson & Stephenson, 2010). He maintains that easy issues refer to those issues which are easily understood by the voters and stay for a long time. Hard issues, on the other hand, are those which are difficult to be understood by a large number of people due to their complex and technical nature. Such issues are mainly Understood by the educated section of society (Carmines & Stimson, 1980). Fiorina divides issues into retrospective and prospective issues (Anderson & Stephenson, 2010). Under this division, the voters assess the past performance of the political parties and their future policies (Fournier et al., 2003). Yoshitaka asserts that issue voting is assessed on the basis of retrospective and prospective performance (Nishizawa, 2009). Budge and his colleagues explain issues in terms of ownership of the political parties and candidates. They posit that voters prefer to vote a political party or candidate which is more competent or special in resolving an issue. Lewis-Beck and his colleague view issue voting with regard to economics. They posit that a political party or candidate is elected if it improves the economic condition in a country (Anderson & Stephenson, 2010). V.O. Key Jr. maintains that the fear of electoral defeat shapes the actions of the governments (Patterson, 1990). Han Dorussen and his colleague assert that it is issue voting that provides a foundation for electoral punishment or reward to political parties in elections. They refer to the example of the Netherland where the political incumbents have been evaluated on the basis of issues during 1970-1999. They added that during this period the main issues were inflation and unemployment (Dorussen & Taylor, 2001).

### **Issue Voting in terms of ‘Spatial Theory’**

The founders of this theory were Anthony Downs and Black. This theory states that the voters vote that political party or candidate whose stance on an issue is closest to the stance of their own in a dimensional space (Maddens & Hajnal, 2001). The dimensional space in each country is different depending on the nature of issues and the varying scale of the necessity for their resolution (Merrill & Grofman, 1999).

Zechmeister also supports this theory by giving the example of Mexico in the 2000 elections. He asserts that modern voters are sophisticated in nature. They have to see the stances of the political parties and candidates and vote the political incumbent who is closest to their own stances on the issues (Zechmeister, 2008).

### **Directional Theory of Issue Voting**

Political theorists like Rabinowitz and others theorizes issue voting in terms of direction and intensity of the stance adopted on issues (Cho & Endersby, 2003). He posits that the voters are desirous that political party or candidate may adopt a stance on an issue in a certain direction and intensity of its resolution (Rabinowitz & Macdonald, 1989). MacDonald exemplifies the directional model of the issue voting in US presidential elections in 1988 and the Norwegian parliamentary elections in 1989 (MacDonald et al., 1995).

### **Issue Voting in terms of ‘Economic Theory’**

This theory was introduced by Anthony Downs which states that the political field is like an economic market where both the consumers (voters) and the companies (electoral candidates) pursue their own interests. Both are desirous to increase their gains. This theory has three postulates. Firstly, both the political parties or candidates and voters should be desirous to increase their benefits. Secondly, there should be consistency in the political system so that predictions could be made by the voters as well as political parties. Thirdly, there should be a number of choices available in the political system so that there is uncertainty with regard to the adaptability of any options (Bergson, 1958). Lewis-Beck and his associates see the application of this theory in the context of the US in the 2008 presidential elections (Lewis-Beck & Nadeau, 2011).

### **Research Question**

How can the theory of issue voting be conceptualized?

- 1) What is the role of the issue voting in KP in the context of 2002, 2008 and 2013 general elections?

### **Methodology**

The methodology is quantitative. Primary data is in the form of questionnaires while the published sources are in the form of journals and books etc. This survey has been conducted in 2011. Data have been collected from the voters from the electoral lists prepared for the 2008 general elections. Only three close-ended questions had been provided in the questionnaire with regard to 2002, 2008 and 2013 elections. The general elections in 2013 have not arrived at that time. However, questions have also been asked from voters so that to know about their future view about the electoral politics in KP.

### **Sampling Methods**

A multi-stage random and systematic sampling technique has been used in sampling. In 2007-08, there were four national level constituencies in Peshawar including NA-1, NA-2, NA-3 and NA-4. NA-2 has been randomly selected. NA-2 Peshawar had 20 union councils in which 04 were rural and 16 urban. Out of a total of 04 rural, 02 union council i.e. Sofayd Deri and Regi were randomly selected. Likewise out of a total of 16 union councils i.e. Tehkal Paian-II and Shahin Town were randomly selected. In each union council, 200 respondents were selected from a voter list via systematic sampling. Thus, a total of 800 respondents were taken in the sample ( $200 \times 4 = 800$ ). Out of these 800 respondents, the researcher could only get 613 respondents.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis has been made via frequency distribution, percentage, a model of regression, coefficient of regression and ANOVA.

### **Variables Of Study**

#### **Dependent Variables**

The dependent variables of the study are as follows.

*Variable 1:*

Voting preference of the voters on the basis of issue(s) in the 2002 elections?

*4-Point Measuring Scale:*

- a) Greatly    b) Moderately    c) Partly    d) Not at all

*Variable 2:*

Voting preference of the voters on the basis of issue(s) in the 2008 elections?

*4-Point Measuring Scale:*

- a) Greatly    b) Moderately    c) Partly    d) Not at all

*Variable 2:*

Voting preference of the voters on the basis of issue(s) in the 2013 elections?

*4-Point Measuring Scale:*

- a) Greatly    b) Moderately    c) Partly    d) Not at all

All these dependent variables/questions have been represented as IV2002, IV2008 and IV2013 respectively.

**Independent Variables**

The following six are the independent variables of the study.

- i. Age
- ii. Monthly income
- iii. Literacy

**Data Analysis**

**Model .1**

**Descriptive Statistics**

**Table 1.** Frequency Distribution

How far did you prefer to make your voting preference on the basis of issue(s) in the 2002 elections?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Greatly</b>	347	56.6	56.6	56.6
<b>Moderately</b>	167	27.2	27.2	83.8
<b>Partly</b>	36	5.9	5.9	89.7
<b>Not at All</b>	63	10.3	10.3	100.0
<b>Total (N)</b>	613	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 shows that issue voting has been greatly supported by the respondents (56.6%) in the 2002 elections. In casual conversation with the voters, they stated that the issue of ‘safeguard Islam’ had been used in issue voting. It was stated that ‘Islam is in danger’. The US attack on Afghanistan after 9/11, the concept of Muslim Umma for unification and the implementation of Shariah in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were some of the key factors that were cashed by the religious political parties in 2002 general elections. Thus, it was the issue of the voting theory that help the religious parties (MMA) to stand victorious in 2002 general polls.

**Inferential Statistics**

**Table 2.** ANOVA Test<sup>a</sup>

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>1</b>	Regression	45.025	3	15.008	17.112	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	534.143	609	.877		
	Total	579.168	612			

a. IV2002

b. Age, Mincome, Literacy

The ANOVA provides significant value with a marginal error of 5%. It means that the association between all variables is significant.

**Table 3.** Coefficient of Regression

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.428	.159		9.006	.000
Age	.211	.080	.105	2.650	.008
MIncome	-.226	.040	-.223	-5.600	.000
Literacy	.320	.081	.161	3.965	.000

This table shows that all the independent variables provide significant association at the level of 0.05. In this table, the signs of the coefficient belonging to Monthly Income are indirect to IV2002. It means that low monthly income families have more inclination for issue voting. The positive sign of the coefficient with Age shows that age and IV2002 are directly associated. The positive sign of coefficient with Education shows that as the literacy rate goes down, the choice for issue voting will also go down. It means that educated people preferred to vote for issues in the 2002 elections.

## MODEL NO.2

### Descriptive Statistics

**Table 4.** Frequency Distribution

How far did you prefer to make your voting Preference on the basis of issue(s) in the 2008 Elections?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Greatly	328	53.5	53.5	53.5
Moderately	203	33.1	33.1	86.6
Partly	26	4.2	4.2	90.9
Not at All	56	9.1	9.1	100.0
Total (N)	613	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 shows that issue voting has been greatly supported by the respondents (53.5%) in the 2008 elections. In casual conversation with the voters stated that the issue of the 'protection of the Pakhtuns' rights' had been used in issue voting by the ethnic Pakhtun political party. It had been maintained by that ethnic Pakhtun parties that after the 9/11 event, only Pakhtuns are being targeted by the militants. All the military operations are in the Pakhtun area. There is no provincial autonomy. The federal government is not providing genuine rights to the Pakhtuns in terms of jobs, due share in electricity charges etc. All these issues, as maintained by the respondents, were cashed by the ethnic Pakhtun political party and as result stood victorious in 2008 general elections.

### Inferential Statistics

**Table 5.** ANOVA Testa

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
2 Regression	32.504	3	10.835	13.560	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	486.605	609	.799		
Total	519.109	612			

a. IV2008

b. Age, MIncome, Literacy

The ANOVA provides significant value with a marginal error of 5%. It means that the association between all variables is significant.

**Table 6.** Coefficient of Regression

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
2 (Constant)	1.399	.151		9.245	.000
Age	.179	.076	.094	2.358	.019
MIncome	-.181	.038	-.189	-4.699	.000
Literacy	.300	.077	.159	3.892	.000

This table shows that all the independent variables provide significant association at the level of 0.05. The signs of the coefficient belonging to Monthly Income are indirectly related to IV2008. It means that low monthly income families have more inclination for issue voting. The positive sign of the coefficient with Age shows that age and IV2008 are directly associated. The positive sign of coefficient with Education shows that as the literacy rate goes down, the choice for issue voting will also go down. It means that educated people preferred to vote for issues in the 2008 elections.

**MODEL NO.3**

**Descriptive Statistics**

**Table 7.** Frequency Distribution

How far will you prefer to make your voting preference on the basis of issue(s) in the 2013 elections?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Greatly	479	78.1	78.1	78.1
Moderately	91	14.8	14.8	93.0
Partly	14	2.3	2.3	95.3
Not at All	29	4.7	4.7	100.0
<b>Total (N)</b>	613	100.0	100.0	

Table 7 shows that issue voting has been greatly supported by the respondents (78.1%) in the 2008 elections. In casual conversation with the voters stated that they have been inspired by the electoral slogan of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Party i.e. ‘change’. They added that they have tried all the political parties except PTI. The respondents were determined to support the PTI in the 2013 general polls. Thus, the issue of ‘change’ was the main factor that added the electoral strength of PTI in the 2013 elections.

**Inferential Statistics**

**Table 8.** ANOVA Test <sup>a</sup>

	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
3	Regression	13.132	3	4.377	8.186	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	325.641	609	.535		
	Total	338.773	612			

a. IV2013

b. Age, MIncome, Literacy

The ANOVA provides significant value with a marginal error of 5%. It means that the association between all variables is significant.

**Table 9.** Coefficient of Regression

	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
3	(Constant)	1.033	.124		8.346	.000
	Age	.163	.062	.106	2.626	.009
	MIncome	-.089	.031	-.116	-2.841	.005
	Literacy	.189	.063	.124	2.998	.003

This table shows that all the independent variables provide significant values at the level of 0.05. The signs of the coefficient belonging to Monthly Income are indirectly related to IV2013. It means that low monthly income families have more inclination for issue voting. The positive sign of the coefficient with Age shows that age and IV2013 are directly associated. The positive sign of coefficient with Education shows that as the literacy rate goes down, the choice for issue voting will also go down. It means that educated people will prefer to vote for issues in the 2013 elections.

## **Conclusion**

Empirical data shows that issue voting has played its crucial role during 2002-2013 period comprising 2002, 2008 and 2013 general elections. The statistical figure (56.6%) and the informal discussion with the respondents in terms of 2002 general elections infer the idea that issue voting has operated greatly. The US attack on Afghanistan after 9/11, the concept of Muslim Umma and the implementation of Shariah in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were the key factors that provided a base to the operationalization of issue voting in KP electoral politics. The MMA was the main beneficiary of the issue voting in 2002 general polls.

Similarly, the statistical figure (53.5%) and the informal discussion with the respondents in terms of 2008 general elections infer the idea that issue voting has operated greatly. Militant attacks in KP, operations in KP, the provincial autonomy and the exploitation of the Pakhtuns' resources (electricity) by the central government were the key factors that provided a base to the operationalization of issue voting in KP electoral politics. The ANP was the main beneficiary of the issue voting in 2008 general polls.

Likewise, the statistical figure (78.1%) and the informal discussion with the respondents in terms of 2013 general elections infer the idea that issue voting was intended to be preferred to a great extent. The slogan of 'change' has made the voters' mind to mold their electoral choice on issue voting. After the 2013 general elections, we have seen that the electorate supported PTI due to the slogan of 'change' coined in terms of issue voting.

The empirical data also shows that low-income families, voters with high literacy rate and the elder respondents greatly supported issue voting during the 2002-2013 period.

## References

- Anderson, C. D. & Stephenson, L. B. (2010). *Voting Behaviour in Canada*. Canada: UBC Press.
- Bergson, A. (1958). Review of *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, by Anthony Downs, *The American Economic Review*, Vol. 48, No. 3.
- Carmines, E. G. & Stimson, J. A. (1980). The Two Faces of Issue Voting. *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 74, No. 1.
- Cho, S., & Endersby, J. W. (2003). Issues, the Spatial Theory of Voting, and British General Elections: A Comparison of Proximity and Directional Models. *Public Choice*, Vol. 114, No. 3/4.
- Dorussen, H. & Taylor, M. (2001). The Political Context of Issue-Priority Voting: Coalitions and Economic Voting in the Netherlands, 1970–1999. *Electoral Studies*, No. 20.
- Fournier, P., Blais, A., Nadeau, R., Gidengil, E., & Nevitte, N. (2003). Issue Importance and Performance Voting. *Political Behaviour*, Vol. 25, No. 1.
- Lewis-Beck, M. S., & Nadeau, R. (2011). Economic Voting Theory: Testing New Dimensions,” *Electoral Studies*, No.30.
- MacDonald, S. E., Rabinowitz, G., & Listhaug, O. (1995). Political Sophistication and Models of Issue Voting. *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 25, No. 4.
- Maddens, B., & Hajnal, I. (2001). Alternative Models of Issue Voting: The Case of the 1991 and 1995 Elections in Belgium. *European Journal of Political Research* Vol. 39, No.3.
- Merrill III, S., & Grofman, B. (1999) *A Unified Theory of Voting: Directional and Proximity Spatial Models* USA: Cambridge University Press.
- Nishizawa, Y. (2009). Economic Voting: Do Institutions Affect the Way Voters Evaluate Incumbents?.in *The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems*, eds. Hans-Dieter Klingemann and Ian McAllister, USA: Oxford University Press.
- Patterson, T. E. (1990). *The American Democracy*. USA: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company.
- Rabinowitz, G., & Macdonald, S. E. (1989). A Directional Theory of Issue Voting. *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 83, No. 1.
- Zechmeister, E. J. (2008). Policy-Based Voting, Perceptions of Issue Space, and the 2000 Mexican Elections. *Electoral Studies*, No. 27.