

Gender perception regarding impact of religion on voting behaviour in 2018 general elections: a case study of district Dir Upper, Pakistan

Muhammad Iqbal* | Farmanullah

Pakistan Studies Center, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Peshawar, Peshawar, Pakistan.

*Corresponding Author Emails: m.iqbal@uop.edu.pk | miqbaldir@gmail.com

Received: 13-Mar-2023 | Revised: 19-Jun-2023 | Accepted: 24-Jun-2023 | Published: 30-Jun-2023

Abstract

Religious teachings have significantly shaped the socio-political lives of the people in Dir Upper, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Nevertheless, no systematic research study has been carried out to explore this aspect. This study is the first academic attempt to fill the gap by investigating the influence of religion on the voting choice of the research population of the study area, specifically focusing on gender preferences in the 2018 general elections. The study adopts a quantitative method of research using a well-structured questionnaire. As per Krejcie and Morgan formula 1970, the data is collected from 381 participants, including male and female respondents. SPSS is used for the analysis of data. The significance of the results has been determined through the P value and Chi-square tests. To achieve reliable results and a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, the study took guidance from two theoretical models, the Sociological Model or School of Columbia and the Psycho-social Model or School of Michigan, also known as Partisan Identification. The research results prove the significant influence of religion on the voting behaviour of the people of Dir Upper, irrespective of their demographic differences such as gender, age, education, marital status, professional status, monthly income, and residential area.

Keywords: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, politics, electoral politics, religion and politics, voters' choice, demographic differences, sociological model, psycho-social model.

How to Cite:

Iqbal, M., & Farmanullah (2023). Gender perception regarding impact of religion on voting behaviour in 2018 general elections: a case study of district Dir Upper, Pakistan. *Journal of Humanities, Social and Management Sciences (JHSMS)*, 4(1), 41-57. <https://doi.org/10.47264/idea.jhsms/4.1.4>

Publisher's Note:

IDEA PUBLISHERS (IDEA Journals Group) stands neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in the published maps and institutional affiliations.

Copyright: © 2023 The Author(s), published by IDEA PUBLISHERS (IDEA Journals Group).

Licensing: This is an Open Access article published under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>).



1. Introduction

The impact of religion on electoral politics is a global phenomenon. Religion has always been crucial in moulding the political and electoral attitudes of the people (Farmanullah, 2014; Bashir & Khalid, 2019). Mofidi (2014) argues that religion can control the political decision and voting choices of the people. The believers of a particular religion would vote for a political party, a person or a candidate with the same religious beliefs (Botterman & Hooghe, 2009; Said, 2021; Bashir & Khalid, 2019). The impact of religion on politics could not be eliminated despite the advancement in science and technology (Botterman & Hooghe, 2009) and the robust process of secularization and modernization (Khan et al., 2022; Zubair, 2015). This is equally true for advanced societies in US and Europe (Botterman & Hooghe, 2009) and for traditional and undeveloped societies in Asia (Munir & Khalid, 2021; Shah, 2017) and those in Africa (Abbink, 2011). In traditional societies, individuals may vote for candidates based on the recommendations of religious leaders. In modern societies, political parties exploit religious differences to attract support from various religious groups. In US presidential elections, different religious groups tend to support one of the two major political parties. The religious rhetoric used by George W Bush in 2000 and 2004 was considered a major factor in his electoral victories (Farmanullah, 2014; Said, 2021).

In recent decades, American voters have shown willingness to vote for presidential candidates from various religious backgrounds. However, many voters exhibit negative attitudes towards Muslim and Atheist candidates, perceiving them as lacking in desirable political traits and competence (Madrid Jr et al., 2022). In traditional societies, religion often plays a central role in electoral decision-making. Religious leaders often advise their followers on which political party or candidate to vote for or against (Bashir & Jan, 2021). During the 2013 election in Pakistan, for example, JUI-F Chief Maulana Fazlur Rahman issued a fatwa declaring it haram (religiously unlawful) to vote for candidates from the PTI party because he believed that Imran Khan, the PTI supremo, was a Jewish agent (Express Tribune, 2013). The influence of religion in the Indian subcontinent is particularly strong. The Muslims ruled India for almost a millennium, and the decline of Muslim rule in the early 1700s deeply disturbed the Muslim intelligentsia. They sought to restore the lost glory of the Islamic state, making religion a central component of Muslim political identities in the subcontinent (Hussain et al., 2022; Ullah, 2014).

Religion played a crucial role in uniting Muslims in the subcontinent, particularly after 1906 when politics among Muslims began to revolve around their religion. This eventually led to the demand for a separate state in 1940 and the creation of Pakistan in 1947. The All-India Muslim League (AIML) initially opposed the electoral process due to fears of Hindu dominance, but this changed with the introduction of the communal electoral system in 1909 through the Minto-Morley reforms (Khan & Ullah, 2023; Mofidi, 2014). While religion was instrumental in the formation of Pakistan, there was no consensus on its political role after independence. Immediately after the independence in 1947, Islam began to influence the political discourse in the country. In 1949, the Objectives Resolution made religion central to the nation-building process, and it has since played a significant role in shaping the socio-political and economic discourse of Pakistan, becoming a critical factor in the state's ideology (Ahmad & Aman, 2021; Aslam et al., 2023; Binder, 1963; Chengappa, 2001; Zubair et al., 2022; An-Na'im, 2011).

Religion also affects the electoral attitudes of people in Pakistan. Despite the strong street power of religio-political parties, their electoral performance has been disappointing. This may be due to mainstream political parties such as PML-N, PPP, and PTI successfully attracting religious-oriented voters using religious rhetoric (Ullah, 2014). Religio-political parties have a stronger presence in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa compared to other provinces. The Jamiat Ualam-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) and Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), along with the Jamiat Ualam-e-Islam-Sami (JUI-S) have their central vote bank in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. After Pakistan's creation, JUI started to exert its influence in Pashtun-dominated areas of NWFP (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and Pashtun areas of Balochistan, emerging as a strong stakeholder in the region along with the JI (Zubair, 2015). Despite this, religio-political parties performed poorly in elections until 2002.

During the general election of 2002, six religiopolitical parties contested the elections under the banner of the Muttahidda Majlas-e-Amal (United Council of Action) [MMA]. The MMA performed extremely well this time and stood victorious in two provinces and got 3rd position in the National Assembly (Ahmad, 2013; Ullah, 2014; Farmanullah, 2014). The success of the MMA in 2002 was largely attributed to the US invasion of Afghanistan, which was then ruled by the Taliban (Rana, 2018; Farmanullah, 2014). However, religio-political parties could not maintain their performance in subsequent elections. The anti-US sentiment lost its appeal, and JUI and JI tried to position themselves as anti-status quo and anti-establishment, but this strategy was unsuccessful. In 2013, the religio-political parties secured only five percent of the total polled votes, their second-worst performance after 1997 (Rana, 2018). To counter the rising popularity of Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaf (PTI), the former MMA was revived just before the 2018 general elections, but it failed to get the desired results like the 2002 elections (Mahsud et al., 2021).

This proposed research study provides insight into the impact of religion on voting behaviour, specifically focusing on gender-based differences in District Dir Upper, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. By investigating the perceptions of male and female voters, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between religion, gender, and political participation. The findings of the research can benefit political parties, leaders, and researchers about the specific dynamics within this region and can help them to develop such strategies which can enhance their understanding the political behaviour in a similar context.

The scope of this research study is to explore the gender perception regarding the impact of religion on voting behaviour in the 2018 general elections, focusing on district Dir Upper in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The research questions of this study are: (1) What is the impact of religion on electoral behaviour in District Dir Upper? and (2) How does religion influence gender-based voting choices in District Dir Upper? Moreover, the objective of study are: (1) To investigate the impact of religion on electoral behaviour in District Dir Upper in 2018 general elections and (2) To explore how religion affects gender-based electoral preferences in District Dir Upper.

2. Literature review

There is a lack of in-depth academic research on religion's role as a voting behaviour determinant in Pakistan. There are few articles on the area but with a limited scope confined to specific area. The research gap was identified in the area, particularly in the 2018 general

elections. To fill the gap, an extensive study is needed to investigate religion's impact, specifically focusing on electoral behaviour in district Dir Upper, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan. Fastnow et al. (1999) in their research study, investigated the impact of religion on general voters and political leadership in the US. The findings of their study prove that religion significantly influences the voter's choice. They further found that the followers of different religions in the Congress have differences in inter and intra parties. They further argue that the impact of religion cannot be ignored else it will lead to faulty and biased results and will lead to misunderstanding the behaviour of the Congress's members. According to the authors of the article, religion not only affects the elections but also crucially affects the decision-making process.

Wilder (1999) discussed Pakistan's electoral history, specifically focusing on the voting behaviour determinants in Punjab province in general elections held in 1993 in his book. The author investigated the social determinants such as feudalism, tribal and family association and group or clan factors. His research findings revealed that the patron-client relationship or clientelism is more dominant in rural areas of the province. In contrast, the voters in the urban areas are amenable to party identification.

Botterman and Hooghe (2009) discussed the impact of religion on voting behaviour and preferences for the Christian Democratic Party in Belgium. Despite the general perception that religion has lost its importance in Western democracies, the authors argue that there is still significant evidence regarding the influence of religion on voting behaviour.

Ahmad (2010) conducted a study on electoral politics in NWFP (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) from 1988 to 1999, covering four general elections in a span of eleven years. Contrary to popular belief that voting choices are primarily influenced by traditional factors such as feudalism, family ties, tribalism and factionalism, Ahmad argues that there are two distinct sets of voting practices determinants in rural and urban areas. In urban areas, party identification and loyalty towards political leadership are the main determinants, whereas in rural areas, patron-client relationships hold greater dominance. According to Ahmad, social and political factors play a significant role in shaping voter behaviour. However, religion is not considered as an important determinant of voting behaviour in his study.

Ullah (2014) attempts to shed light on the causes of extremism in Pakistan. He begins by recounting the religiously motivated assassination of Salman Taseer, the Governor of Punjab, as well as the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, a former two-time prime minister of Pakistan. These incidents illustrate the close link between religion, politics and policy in the country. Ullah delves into the origin, ideology, support base and electoral success of major religiopolitical parties in Pakistan. He introduces a new concept, the "Sharia-secular-continuum" model, to explain the phenomenon of religious parties in Pakistan. According to Ullah, each party occupies a different point on the Sharia-secular-continuum spectrum and continuously changes its position per the hour's need. For instance, sometimes Islamic parties may advocate for a liberal agenda, such as support for girls' education, while at other times they may promote uncompromisingly militant religious programs. Ullah has discussed voters' motivation as it relates to party behaviour. He argues that the conventional theories failed to explain voter's behaviour toward Islamic parties in the Pakistani context and advocated his own modal to explain the phenomenon. To justify his modal, he has conducted a field survey with 455 Pakistani voters.

Farmanullah (2014) conducted a study on the 2008 general election in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan compared to the 2002 and 2013 elections. The researcher has applied different theories to explain voting decisions including party identification, issue voting, clientelism and religious and ethnic determinants. Farmanullah gives greater weight to voting issues and clientelism as the primary determinants while considering the other theories as secondary determinants. The study finds that the 2002 election was won by the religious party MMA, the centre-left ethnic Awami National Party won the 2008 election, and the centre-right PTI won the 2013 election. The researcher also touches upon religion as a subtopic in the study, although the scope of the study is limited to the 2008 election compared to the other two elections.

On the other hand, Goldberg (2014) conducted a research study in Switzerland and argues that the influence of religion on voter behaviour is not uniform across the country. He finds that voters living in the Catholic-dominated areas/cantons are more influenced by religion and tend to vote for the Christian Democratic Party (CVP) comparatively more than those living in non-Catholic cantons.

Farmanullah et al. (2017) conducted a field research study in NA-2 District Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, analysing the determinants of voting behaviour in three general elections (2002, 2008 and 2013). They argue that religious factor has influenced voting behaviour to some extent, with more than fifty percent of electorates motivated by religion in 2002, while this ratio decreased in the subsequent two elections. Farmanullah and Shah (2017) focused on clientelism as a voting determinant in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. They found that the patron-client relationship is one of the most important determinants in KP, with indicators like local development, unemployment, and participation in sorrowful and joyful activities.

Shah (2019) in his study on the patrician and floating voters in 2013 general elections in KP argue that the voting choice of the people of KP changes from one election to another. The author finds out that the disproportionate ratio of floating voters in the province is the main reason for such kind of electoral patron. He further finds that party identification is yet another important factor in KP. The personality of the candidate, local and national issues and social network are considered as secondary determinants.

Bashir and Khalid (2019) explore that religion is one of the most important determinants in moulding and shaping the political and electoral outlook in Pakistan specifically in Punjab. They have investigated the 2018 general election and focused upward trajectory of religious votes in the province. The authors observe an increase of 2.17% in religious votes in Pakistan in general and 1.32% in the Punjab province. Among several reasons, the authors see the emergence of Tahreek-e-Labbaik (TLP) as the principal reason for the rise in the religious vote bank. Besides, the author also weighs the emergence of Milli Muslim League, the political wing of Jamat-u-al-Dawa yet another factor which contributed to this trend. Moreover, the authors argue that the increasing influence of Gaddi Nasheen (the successors of the pioneers of Sufi orders) is also among the major reasons which caused an increase in the religious votes. These Pirs and their successors mobilize the voters and support the candidates who follow their religious beliefs.

Rashid and Amin (2020) in their research on electoral behaviour in District Dir (both upper and lower) found that around 99% of the people of the area take an interest in politics.

According to the authors most voters consider polling ballots as their civic duty. They argue that party identification and religious voting are the dominant factors affecting voting pattern. They further argue that religious political parties such as Jama'at-e-Islami, (JI) and MMA, an alliance of religious political parties have performed well in 2002 and 2013 elections. However, JI is the most influential party among the religious parties.

Said et al. (2021) found religion as a significant factor in shaping political decision making in District Buner, KP. The study argues that the people of Buner hold the political involvement of ulama in high regard. The authors observed an anomaly that despite the above-mentioned fact, when the voters go to the polling stations, they do not vote for ulama instead they vote for candidates of secular political parties. The authors concluded that the religion is an important factor in the social lives of the people, but it does not influence their voting choice on the election day.

Shah et al. (2020) have made the interplay of religious socialization and voting behaviour in KP as the subject matter of their research study. They argue that religion plays crucial role in the voting choice of the Pashtun population. The rhetoric religious parties such as the implementation of Sharia, ulama as defenders of Islam, voting for religious political parties as a sacred duty etc., successfully attract a considerable number of voters. They further argue that the religious vote bank has been considerably increased owing to the wave of militancy in the post-9/11 scenario. The illiterate voters and those who are from the lower income group are more inclined towards religious parties.

The review of existing literature reveals a dearth of research on the relationship between religion and electoral politics in District Dir Upper. This study is the first academic endeavour to fill the gap on the specific area. However, it is pertinent to note that further research in this area is needed. This study reveals that there is great potential for future research in this area. The researchers can explore the complex relationship between religion and politics and its implications for the area in particular and for Pakistan in general.

3. Theoretical framework: voting behaviour approaches models

3.1. Sociological model (School of Columbia)

This model for the first time was used in US presidential election held in 1940. Lazarsfeld et al. (1968) suggest that the social group of a person plays a crucial role in determining his voting behaviour. The findings of the study reveal that the religion, socio-economic status and residential area of the person are crucial in determining voting decisions (Visser, 1998; Antunes, 2010).

3.2. Psycho-social model (School of Michigan)/partisan identification

Campbell et al. (1960) give more importance to party identification as a voting behaviour determinant. Different social factors such as ethnicity, race, religion, education, profession, social class and parental partisanship are considered important factors in the "funnel of causality" model. Religion and party identification are dubbed as "exogenous" (external) factors which play a crucial role in the final voting decision. Religion and party identification along other psychological factors, make this model more relevant to this research study.

4. Research methodology

The study is quantitative, in which primary data was collected through a questionnaire from the respondents in District Dir Upper, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan. Data were collected through a convenient sampling technique. The data were then analyzed through SPSS software for determining the P-value and Chi-square test value. A convenience sampling technique was employed for drawing samples from the target population. Male and female proportion was determined based on the total polled votes in 2018 election in NA-5 Dir Upper. As per the Election Commission's record of the 2018 elections, male turnout remained 68.5% of the total polled votes while female turnout was 31.4% in NA-5 Dir Upper. According to this calculation, 261 male and 120 female respondents were selected for this study. Proportional allocation method was used for calculating sample size from various strata as given below.

5. Results and discussion

The respondents have been asked different questions the study area. The table-1 shows that one of the investigations is regarding identifying number of respondents who polled their votes and who did not in the 2018 general elections. Out of 344 respondents, 310 confirmed that they had cast their votes during the said election. The question is further analyzed in the light of different variables. The data indicates that a significantly higher percentage of male voters (96.2%) cast their votes as compared to female voters. In contrast, a considerable proportion of female voters (76.4%) did cast their votes, but a significant proportion (23.5%) chose not to vote.

Table-1: Number of respondents who polled their votes in the 2018 general elections

Description	Gender	Yes	No	Total	Chi-square & P-value
Did you poll your vote in 2018 general elections?	Male	229 (96.2%)	9 (3.7%)	238 (69.1%)	$\chi^2=16.96$ p=.001.
	Female	81 (76.4%)	25 (23.5%)	106 (30.8%)	
	Total	310 (90.1%)	34 (9.8%)	344 (100%)	

Source: Field Survey 2022

As mentioned earlier, religion is a significant factor viz electoral decision by the voters. However, it was not properly investigated in the study area to determine to what extent religion shapes the decision of the voters. The table-2 shows that respondents were asked if they polled your vote on the basis of religion in the 2018 general elections: A significant number (75.2%) agree that they cast their vote based on religion. Amongst female voters, the ratio remained quite high. A significantly large number (83.8%) agree that they cast their votes based on religion. A significant number (71.3%) of the male voters showed their agreement with the question.

There is a debate that whether the election process is in conformity with Islam or not. Table-2 shows that this question was asked from the respondents to get their responses. The data shows a large number of the respondents (69.4%) believe that the election process is according to Islam. The data shows that a significant number (70.5%) of the male respondents consider the election process in conformity with Islam. A large number (66.9%) of the females hold the same opinion. Over 18% of the male respondents do not consider election in conformity with

Islam while amongst females this ratio is over 11 percent. There is a difference between the male and female opinions about the question.

Respondents in the study universe keep the Ulama in high esteem. They honour their opinion in matters of socio-political concerns, needless to mention their dominance in religious matters. As shown in the table-2, the respondents were asked what they would do if the Ulama give a fatwa against voting system. An overwhelming majority (75.5%) of the respondents responded they would abstain from casting their vote if they were advised by the ulama to do so. As far as gender is concerned, there is a big difference between the two genders. A significantly large number (86.7%) of women respondents will stop voting if they were advised by the Ulama. A large number (70.5%) of male respondents have the same opinion. However, 26 percent of males and only 11 percent of females are not ready to act upon the fatwa (verdict) of Ulama against the voting system. There is a clear difference between the opinion of male and female respondents.

The leaders of political parties have a great influence on the decision of voters during any election. The leaders of religious political parties have their area of influence and a strong following. People who interact with them and listen to their speeches get influenced. According to the results in table-2, A significant number of voters (52.3%) agree that their decision was influenced by leaders of religious political parties. Yet a large number of the voters (43.3%) were not influenced by the leaders of religious political parties. With respect to the gender divide, a large number of male respondents (53.2%) agree that their voting decision was influenced by the teachings, speeches, talks and their interactions with the leaders of the religious-political parties. 49.9% of the female voters agree that their voting decision was influenced by the leaders of religious political parties. On the other hand, a large number (46.1%) of female respondents responded that their voting choice was not influenced by the leaders of religious political parties. A total of 41.9% of the male voters were not influenced by the leaders of these political parties.

Religious seminaries (*madaris*) play a key role in moulding the opinion of the voters. These schools influence the voters directly and indirectly. The direct target is the people who are the graduates of these *madaris* and the indirect target is the families and other close friends and relatives of the graduates. The study results in table-2 shows that *madaris* has changed the voting decision of a great number (54.5%) of the respondents in the study area. As far as gender is concerned, amongst males, the ratio is extremely high. A significant number (63.4%) of the male respondents accept that *madaris* changed their voting behaviour in the 2018 general elections. Amongst the female respondents, a comparatively less number (34.8%) are influenced by religious schools. The reason for this difference is that on the one hand, very few females directly interact with seminaries and with the graduates (ulama). On the other, very small number of females get education from *madaris*.

Corruption is one of the most challenging problems in Pakistan. Voters want such leaders who the least corrupt are. The data in table-2 indicates that an absolute number (63.3%) of the respondents consider religious candidates, no matter whether they are nominated by religious parties or otherwise, less corrupt. On the other hand, 19.4% of the respondents do not agree with this assumption. 17.1% of the respondents did not take any side. Regarding the gender consideration, a sizable majority of male respondents (73.4%) agree that religious candidates are less corrupt than other candidates. Also, according to 40.4% of the female respondents,

religious candidates are less corrupt than others. On the other hand, a sizable portion (43.3%) of the female respondents express their unawareness about this.

Table-2: Assumptions regarding the religion or religious teachings and voting system

Description	Gender	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	Chi-square & P-value
You polled your vote on the basis of religion in 2018 general elections.	Male	103 (43.2%)	67 (28.1%)	3 (1.2%)	46 (19.3%)	19 (7.9%)	238 (69.1%)	$\chi^2 = 26.4$ p=0.001
	Female	64 (60.3%)	25 (23.5%)	4 (3.7%)	7 (6.6%)	6 (5.6%)	106 (30.8%)	
	Other						00%	
	Total	167 (48.5%)	92 (26.7%)	7 (2.0%)	53 (15.4%)	25 (7.2%)	344 (100%)	
The election process is in conformity with the teachings of Islam	Male	112 (47.0%)	56 (23.5%)	26 (10.9%)	24 (10.0%)	20 (8.4%)	238 (69.1%)	$\chi^2 = 18.56$ p=0.001
	Female	41 (38.6%)	30 (28.3%)	23 (21.6%)	7 (6.6%)	5 (4.7%)	106 (30.8%)	
	Other						00	
	Total	153 (44.4%)	86 (25.0%)	49 (14.2%)	31 (9.0%)	25 (7.2%)	344 (100%)	
If <i>ualam</i> give fatwa against voting system, you would abstain from casting your vote	Male	121 (50.8%)	47 (19.7%)	5 (2.1%)	59 (24.7%)	6 (2.5%)	238 (69.1%)	$\chi^2 = 48.684$ p=0.001
	Female	77 (72.6%)	15 (14.1%)	1 (0.9%)	11 (10.3%)	2 (1.8%)	106 (30.8%)	
	Others						00	
	Total	198 (57.5%)	62 (18.0%)	6 (1.7%)	70 (20.3%)	8 (2.3%)	344 (100%)	
Your voting decision was influenced by leaders of religious parties in 2018 general elections.	Male	98 (41.1%)	29 (12.1%)	11 (4.6%)	53 (22.2%)	47 (19.7%)	238 (69.1%)	$\chi^2 = 22.631$ p=0.0003
	Female	31 (29.2%)	22 (20.7%)	4 (3.7%)	33 (31.1%)	16 (15.0%)	106 (30.8%)	
	Other						00	
	Total	129 (37.5%)	51 (14.8%)	15 (4.3%)	86 (25.0%)	63 (18.3%)	344 (100%)	
The religious <i>madaris</i> influenced your voting choice in 2018 general elections	Male	90 (37.8%)	61 (25.6%)	21 (8.8%)	54 (22.6%)	12 (5.0%)	238 (69.1%)	$\chi^2 = 42.36$ p=0.0001
	Female	19 (17.9%)	18 (16.9%)	38 (35.8%)	19 (17.9%)	12 (11.3%)	106 (30.8%)	
	Other						00%	
	Total	109 (31.6%)	79 (22.9%)	59 (17.1%)	73 (21.2%)	24 (6.9%)	344 (100%)	
Religious parties or candidates are less corrupt than the other.	Male	109 (45.7%)	66 (27.7%)	13 (5.4%)	26 (10.9%)	24 (10%)	238 (69.1%)	$\chi^2 = 24.792$ p=0.001
	Female	20 (21.6%)	20 (18.8%)	46 (43.3%)	10 (9.4%)	7 (6.6%)	106 (30.8%)	
	Other						00%	
	Total	132 (38.3%)	86 (25.0%)	59 (17.1%)	36 (10.4%)	31 (9.0%)	344 (100%)	

Source: Field survey 2022

The workforce at the grassroots level is the backbone of any political party. They are key to the party's activities because they are the workers who plan events, collect funds, canvass and mobilize the voters. Workers serve as the party's public face in the community and foster positive relationships with voters. Additionally, they give party officials insightful feedback on matters that are important to the voters. Without strong and devoted workers any political party would find it difficult to achieve its goals and secure victory in elections. In the research universe, the population was asked if they encouraged others to vote for religious parties. As given in the table-3, majority of respondents (54.6%) answered in the affirmative. It shows that respondents not only vote for religious political parties or candidates but also request the other voters to vote in favour of a religious candidate or religious party candidate. A significant number (73.1%) of the male respondents ask other voters to vote in support of religious candidates or parties. This ratio, however, is quite low among women, at 13.2%. A remarkably high percentage (86.7%) of female voters do not seek votes for religious politicians or parties from other voters. The stark disparity between male and female voters is due to less exposure of the latter to outside communities of the universe. One of the important factors is that women show less interest in and have less knowledge of state politics.

Table-3: Voters of religious parties or candidate ask other voters to vote for same party or candidate

Description	Gender	Yes	No	Total	Chi-square & P-value
Did you ask other voters to vote for religious political parties/candidates in 2018 general elections?	Male	174 (73.1%)	64 (26.8%)	238 (69.1%)	$\chi^2 = 123.05$ p=0.001
	Female	14 (13.2%)	92 (86.7%)	106 (30.8%)	
	Total	188 (54.6%)	156 (45.3%)	344 (100%)	

Source: Field result 2022

According to the results of table-4, in the study area, majority of the voters refrained from voting for secular or nonreligious parties in the 2018 general elections. An assumption was presented to them that the reason for not voting for secular parties is because they do not struggle for the introduction of Sharia in the country. This statement is approved by a decisive majority of respondents (69.9%). It shows that the implementation of Sharia is one of the most significant election issues among the population of the research universe. A disproportionately high number of male respondents (75.1%) agree or strongly agree with the supposition. A large percentage (58.4%) of female respondents agree and strongly agree with the statement. Yet, a considerable number (25.4%) of female respondents say that they are unaware of this factor. The reasons responsible for the unawareness of female respondents include a lack of education, a lack of outdoor activity and social interaction, and a lack of interest on the part of the women in the political affairs of the state.

The imposition of Sharia law in the state is one of the main demands of the people in Upper Dir. A movement known as Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi was started in 1989 to impose sharia from Dir (Sultan-i-Room, 2012). In this survey, the respondents were asked whether they still support the implementation of Sharia law in Pakistan in 2018 or not. The statistics in table-4 shows that a significantly large percentage (75.2%) still support the demand for the implementation of Sharia law in Pakistan. Nevertheless, only a small percentage (22.6%) disagrees with this demand. A large number of male respondents (71.3%) call for the

implementation of Sharia law in Pakistan. The desire for the implementation of Sharia law in Pakistan is supported by a staggeringly high percentage of female respondents (83.8%).

Table-4: Why respondents do not want to vote for non-religious parties

Description	Gender	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	Chi-square & P-value
You did not like to vote to non-religious political parties or candidates because they do not work for imposition of Islamic laws in Pakistan	Male	108 (45.3%)	71 (29.8%)	8 (3.3%)	31 (13.0%)	20 (8.4%)	238 (69.1%)	$\chi^2 = 23.463$ p=0.01
	Female	34 (32.0%)	28 (26.4%)	27 (25.4%)	10 (9.4%)	7 (6.6%)	106 (30.8%)	
	Other						00	
	Total	142 (41.2%)	99 (28.7%)	35 (10.1%)	41 (11.9%)	27 (7.8%)	344 (100%)	
Sharia law should be implemented in Pakistan.	Male	103 (43.2%)	67 (28.1%)	3 (1.2%)	46 (19.3%)	19 (7.9%)	238 (69.1%)	$\chi^2 = 13.47$ p=0.0012
	Female	64 (60.3%)	25 (23.5%)	4 (3.7%)	7 (6.6%)	6 (5.6%)	106 (30.8%)	
	Other						00%	
	Total	167 (48.5%)	92 (26.7%)	7 (2.0%)	53 (15.4%)	25 (7.2%)	344 (100%)	

Source: Field result 2022

The imposition of Sharia law on one's own self is one of the important variables to determine how much one really likes the implementation of Sharia law in the country. With this aspect in mind, the question is asked from the respondents to rank the implementation of Sharia law on their own self. The table-5 indicates that a ranking scale consisting of 1 to 5 was provided where 1 stands for minimum while 5 represents the maximum. The respondents were asked to mark any number they feel suited to them. A total of 31.3% respondents marked 3 which represents up to a great extent while 11.6% marked the maximum i.e., 5. 22.9% say they strive to implement sharia on their person up to a limited extent which is represented by number 1 on the scale. 13% of male respondents attempt to follow sharia to the maximum extent, compared to 21.4% of men who just attempt to enforce it to a limited extent. Females nevertheless make up 26.4% of the maximum level, while 8.4% of them do so up to a limited extent. Most of the respondents (31.9 percent of men and 30.1 percent of women) scored 3, which is very high.

Table-5: How strictly the voters of religious political parties observe sharia in their personal lives

Description	Gender	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Chi-square & P-value
Range the imposition of Islamic sharia on your own self	Male	51 (21.4%)	44 (18.4%)	76 (31.9%)	36 (15.1%)	31 (13.0%)	238 (69.1%)	$\chi^2 = 26.23$ p=0.001
	Female	28 (26.4%)	25 (23.5%)	32 (30.1%)	12 (11.3%)	9 (8.4%)	106 (30.8%)	
	Other						00	
	Total	79 (22.9%)	69 (20.0%)	108 (31.3%)	48 (13.9%)	40 (11.6%)	344 (100%)	

Source: Field Survey 2022

One of the most important indicators of one's religiosity is the performance of obligatory worships. The study aimed to know how frequently the respondents perform obligatory worships as well as how frequently they vote based on religion. According to the data in table-6, a relatively small percentage of respondents (2.6%) claim to just sporadically offer the mandatory worships, but a significant portion (50.2%) claim to regularly perform the obligatory worship to a greater (or 4 on the scale) amount. 27.6% of them say that they perform mandatory worship up to the greatest or maximum level. A small number (9.2%) of the male respondents who perform mandatory worships to the fullest extent possible, compared to 2.7% who only do so to a limited or minimum extent. Many of them (65.1%) perform mandatory worship to a greater degree. A very small percentage (1.8%) of female respondents perform obligatory worships up to a limited extent while a large number (68.8%) perform up to the maximum level. It demonstrates that, in comparison to men, women are more assiduous regarding the performance of obligatory worship.

An objective of this study was to determine the degree of religiosity among respondents based on their performance of additional worships, as well as their tendency to vote based on religion. The results in table-6 demonstrate that a relatively high percentage of respondents (28.2%) engage in additional worship, with 23.8% perform up to limited extent (rated 2 on the scale) while a small proportion (14.2%) performing the most frequently (rated 5 on the scale). In contrast, 16.9% reported performing to a great or greater extent (rated 3 or 4 on the scale). Table-6 shows that 29.8% of the male respondents perform additional worships to the minimum level while 11.8% perform it up to maximum level. Among the female respondents, (24.5%) perform obligatory worships up to the minimum level while 19.8% do so up to maximum level.

Table-6: How regularly the respondents offer obligatory and additional prayers

Description	Gender	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Chi-square & P-value
Performance of obligatory worships	Male	7 (2.9%)	13 (5.4%)	41 (17.2%)	155 (65.1%)	22 (9.2%)	238 (69.1%)	$\chi^2 = 25.73$ p=0.0001
	Female	2 (1.8%)	4 (3.7%)	9 (8.4%)	18 (16.9%)	73 (68.8%)	106 (30.8%)	
	Other						00	
	Total	9 (2.6%)	17 (4.9%)	50 (14.5%)	173 (50.2%)	95 (27.6%)	344 (100%)	
Performance of additional worships	Male	71 (29.8%)	59 (24.8%)	44 (18.5%)	36 (15.1%)	28 (11.8%)	238 (69.1%)	$\chi^2=19.423$ p=0.00069
	Female	26 (24.5%)	23 (21.7%)	14 (13.2%)	22 (20.8%)	21 (19.8%)	106 (30.8%)	
	Other						00	
	Total	97 (28.2%)	82 (23.8%)	58 (16.9%)	58 (16.9%)	49 (14.2%)	344 (100%)	

Source: Field Survey 2022

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of religion on the voting behaviour of the people of Dir Upper, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. A questionnaire was given to 385

respondents, and after eliminating invalid responses, 344 were used for analysis. The results showed that religion played a critical role in determining the voting choice of the people in the region. The P value and Chi-square tests produced significant results. A large number of both genders casted their ballots in the 2018 general election. On the other hand, a clear majority of both genders polled their votes on a religious basis. They also agree that the voting process is in conformity with the teachings of Islam. According to this study, the female respondents are more susceptible to the influence of ulama while the male respondents are more amenable to the leaders of religious political parties. Likewise, religious *madaris* have a stronger influence on male voters' choices. The candidates of religious political parties are considered less corruptible as compared to the candidates of secular parties. A large number of male voters vote for religious parties. The majority did not vote for non-religious political parties due to their lack of support for the implementation of Sharia law in Pakistan. Both genders supported the demand for Sharia law, with females being more careful in performing religious duties. Overall, both genders were equally influenced by religion in their voting decision, with females demonstrating more attention to their personal religiosity.

Declaration of conflict of interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest(s) with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Acknowledgement

The article is based on the PhD thesis of the principal/corresponding author hence, the authors acknowledge the support of Pakistan Studies Center, University of Peshawar.

ORCID iD

Muhammad Iqbal <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5670-3333>

Farmanullah <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7765-5978>

References

- Abbink, J. (2011). Religion and politics in Africa: the future of “The Secular.” *Africa Spectrum*, 49(3), 83-106. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000203971404900304>
- Ahmad, I. (2013). Islam and politics in South Asia. In J. L. Esposito, & E. E Shahin (Eds.), *The Islam and politics in South Asia* (pp. 324-339). Oxford University. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195395891.013.0021>
- Ahmad, M. S., (2010). *Electoral Politics in NWFP. 1988-1999*. PhD Dissertation, Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan.
- Ahmad, I., & Aman, S. (2021). Women’s rights in Pakistan: A study of religious and alternate discourses regarding women’s participation in politics. *Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal (LASSIJ)*, 5(1), 123–138. <https://doi.org/10.47264/idea.lassij/5.1.9>
- An-Na’im, A. A. (2011). Islam, politics and the state: the case of Pakistan. In *Islam and State: Practice and Perceptions in Pakistan and the Contemporary Muslim World*, 7-19. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/2007islamforum_an-naim.pdf
- Antunes, R. (2010). Theoretical models of voting behaviour. *Exedra*, 4(1), 145-70. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242653736>
- Aslam, T., Rehman, A. U., & Ullah, F. (2023). Determinants of Radicalization and Militancy amongst the Youth in Pakistan. *Pakistan Journal of Criminology*, 15(1), 156-173. <https://www.pjcriminology.com/publications/determinants-of-radicalization-and-militancy-amongst-the-youth-in-pakistan/>
- Bashir, U., & Iram, K. (2019) Religion and electoral politics in Punjab: a case study of 2018 general elections. *South Asian Studies A Research Journal of South Asian Studies*, 34(1), 7–24. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344327928>
- Bashir, H., & Jan, M. A. (2021). Political apprenticeship and women leadership in a patriarchal society: Nasim Wali Khan’s political struggle through acquired skills. *Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal (LASSIJ)*, 5(1), 320–337. <https://doi.org/10.47264/idea.lassij/5.1.21>
- Binder, L. (1963). *Religion and politics in Pakistan*. University of California.
- Botterman, S. & Hooghe, M. (2009). The Christian democratic vote and religious belonging. The relation between religious beliefs and Christian democratic voting and the individual and community level in Belgium. In *5th General Conference of the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) Department of Political Science, Catholic University Leuven (Belgium)*.

-
- Campbell, A., Converse, P. E., Miller, V. E., Stokes, D. E. (1960). *The American Voter*. University of Chicago.
- Chengappa, B. M., (2001) Pakistan: the role of religion in political evolution. *Strategic Analysis*. <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rsan20>
- Express Tribune. (2013, May 5). Political ‘fatwa’: voting for PTI is haram, says Maulana Fazl. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/544667/political-fatwa-voting-for-pti-is-haram-says-maulana-fazl>
- Farmanullah, Khan, S., & Ali, S. (2017). Religion as a voting determinant in the electoral politics of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: a comparative study of 2002, 2008 and 2013 general elections. *PUTAJ Humanities and Social Sciences*, 24(2), 1-20.
- Farmanullah, & Shah, S. J. A. (2017). Patron-client politics in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: an analysis of 2008 general elections via Ordinal Logistic Regression Model. *Pakistan-Annual Research Journal*, 53, 192-209. https://www.pscpesh.org/PDFs/PJ/Volume_53/12_Farmanullah.pdf
- Farmanullah. (2014). *Voting behaviour in Pakistan (a case study of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2008 general elections)*. PhD dissertation, University of Peshawar.
- Fastnow, C., Grant, J. T., & Rudolph, T. J. (1999). Holy roll calls: religious tradition and voting behaviour in the U.S. House, *Social Science Quarterly*, 80(4), 687-701. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42864400>
- Goldberg, A. C. (2014). The impact of religion on voting behaviour – A multilevel approach for Switzerland. *Swiss Political Science Review*, 20(2), 305–329. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/spsr.12068>
- Hussain, I., Rahman, Z. U., Shah, M. N. U. H., & Xingong, W. (2022). State-tribal relations in the British India: a study of the Yousafzai’s armed resistance in the Northwest Frontier region. *Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal (LASSIJ)*, 6(2), 103–121. <https://doi.org/10.47264/idea.lassij/6.2.6>
- Khan, G. D., & Ullah, H. (2023). Role of Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qaiyum Khan in constitutional reforms in the North-West Frontier Province of the British India. *Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal (LASSIJ)*, 7(1), 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.47264/idea.lassij/7.1.1>
- Khan, H. U., Yiling, C., & Kerui, W. (2022). The role of local governments in the political and socio-economic development of Pakistan. *Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal (LASSIJ)*, 6(1), 307–320. <https://doi.org/10.47264/idea.lassij/6.1.19>
- Lazarsfeld, P. F., Berelson, B., & Gaudet, H. (1968). *The people’s choice: how the voter makes up his mind in a presidential campaign*. Columbia University.
-

- Madrid-Jr, R., Merolla, J. L., Yanez Ruiz, A., & Schroedel, J. R. (2022). The relevance of religion for political office: voter bias toward candidates from different religious backgrounds. *Political Behaviour*, 44(2), 981-1001. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-022-09782-6>
- Mahsud, N. H. K., Wasai, & Hussain, M. (2021). An analysis of students' attitude toward electoral politics in 2018 general elections: A case Study of Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad. *Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal (LASSIJ)*, 5(1), 279–300. <https://doi.org/10.47264/idea.lassij/5.1.19>
- Mofidi, S. (2014). The electoral function of religion in contemporary India. *International Journal of Contemporary Issues (IJCI)*, 2(1), 18-33. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275274923>
- Munir, K., & Khalid, I. (2021). Analysing the voting cluster of political parties: A case study of district Lahore Pakistan (1970-2013). *Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal (LASSIJ)*, 5(1), 413–431. <https://doi.org/10.47264/idea.lassij/5.1.27>
- Rana, M. A. (2018, May 20). The role of religion in polls. *Daily Dawn*. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1408803/the-role-of-religion-in-polls>
- Rashid, M., & Amin, H. (2020). Voting pattern in district of Dir: a case study of three general elections (from 2002 to 2013). *Sir Syed Journal of Education and Social Research*, 3(3), 154-161. <https://doi.org/10.36902/sjesr-vol3-iss3-2020>
- Said, M. G. (2021). The impact of religion on voting behaviour. *Humanities and Social Sciences Reviews*, 9(2), 14-24. <https://doi.org/10.18510/hssr.2021.922.15>
- Shah, D. A. H. (2017). *Constitutions, religion and politics in Asia Indonesia, Malaysia and Sri Lanka*. Cambridge University.
- Shah, H. (2019). *Voting behaviour in Pakistan: an analysis of partisan and floating voters in general elections 2013 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa*. PhD Dissertation, Department of Political Science, University of Peshawar.
- Shah, H., Mehmood, W., Ali, S., & Khan, I. (2020). Religious socialization and voting behaviour in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. *Global Media and Social Science Research Journal*, 5(1), 57-71. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/347985461>
- Ullah, H. K. (2014). *Vying for Allah's vote: understanding Islamic parties, political violence, and extremism in Pakistan*. Georgetown University.
- Visser, M. (1998). Five theories of voting action strategy and structure of psychological explanation. PhD thesis, University of Twente. <https://research.utwente.nl/en/publications/five-theories-of-voting-action-strategy-and-structure-of-psycholo>
-

Wilder, A. R., (1999). *The Pakistani voter: electoral politics and voting behaviour in the Punjab*. Oxford University.

Zubair, M. (2015) *The interplay of religion and politics: a case study of Pakhtuns in Pakistan*. PhD Dissertation, University of Peshawar.

Zubair, M., Raza, A., & Islam, S. (2022). The coexistence of religion and politics in Pakistan: an analysis of historical, social, and political factors. *Journal of Humanities, Social and Management Sciences (JHSMS)*, 3(1), 435-446. <https://doi.org/10.47264/idea.jhsms/3.1.30>