

AN ANALYSIS OF THE DETERMINANTS OF FEMALE VOTING DECISIONS IN AUSTRALIA AND PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Voting patterns are the reflection of democratic traditions that are imbibed within the societal fabric. Pakistan and Australia are far off in case of developmental comparison but there seems to be similar barriers in the societies of both states in relation to women participation and role in politics. This article highlights the patterns which are prevalent in both societies in regards to voting decisions of female diaspora by empirical analysis and identify the similarities and contrasts in voting behaviour of two asymmetrically developed states facing the similar problems of limited role of women in politics. Based on the quantitative data analysis, this article focuses on the comparative analysis of the voting behavior of the two societies and indicates the criteria of rational decision making of the two developmentally different diaspora while advocating the basic notion of women political emancipation in the political sphere of life.
Keywords: Voting behaviour, Pakistan, Australia, Women political Participation, Political Interest.

INTRODUCTION

The political scientists, though, have developed significant work on voting decision, the progress in how people reach their decision has been rarely scuttled. Weaknesses lie in analyses that are not suffice to determine the process by which individuals reach to a specific decision. Redlawsk and Lau (2018) proposed that humans are “cognitively limited information processors”. Therefore, they are reluctant to go through every relevant information while making voting decision, even if doing so is probable. It might require greater work and time to collect such diverse form of information. The literature suggests that mostly people use decision making method that requires a small amount of information to process.

Cognitive style, a concept of psychology, accurately apprehends the idea. It refers to “consistencies in an individual’s manner of cognitive functions, particularly with respect to acquiring and processing information,” and to “fairly stable individual differences in the way people perceive, think, solve problems, learn, and relate to others” (Kozhevnikov 2007, p. 464). Psychology frequently focuses on work on difference between masses in basic understandings spurring dichotomies such as independent or dependent fields (Witkin, 1950). With maturation of the field, the concept was opted by researchers in several applied disciplines and used to comprehend greater intricate concepts such as decision making.

It is acknowledged that there are several ways to deal with the proposition of how voting decision is made such as model of Laver (2005) eminent as Agent – based model or models by Kollman et al. (1992) and Kim et al. (2010) famous as computational models. However, our approach is to use the methods that are handier and simpler to apply on large scale for garnering public views. Thus, we underpinned our research with theoretical model proposed by Lau and Redlawsk (2018) and used two of the four voting decision-making models that are opposite in nature while adapting the items following the work of Zuniga, Diehl & Abreu (2017). The models include Rational Choice model and Heuristic decision-making model.

For the purpose of the study, we developed, using the work of aforementioned studies, independent decision-making model that is closely related with rational choice model and dependent decision-making model that is closely related with heuristic decision-making model.

Rational Choice Model includes collecting maximum amount of information as is possible while making political decision such as casting vote. The model is more perceptually difficult and more time-seeking than the other model as it involves scrupulously identify and process positive and negative information while filtering out immaterial information. However, the model promises the formulation of value – maximizing decision that is independent and self-made. After going through such amount of information, an individual is capable of making one's own voting decision, and have a favorite candidate to vote and consider it right to cast vote assuming one's ability and knowledge to do so. Thus, rational choice model can reliably spin off "independent decision-making model"

Heuristic decision-making considers voters who process limited amount of information (intentionally or unintentionally) that is much easier than the earlier model. Heuristic model entails shortcuts, limited information and practices heuristics that are meant to evade methodology of processing highly cognitive information. The method results in limiting information-seeking to a few sources or relying others for making decisions. With meagre amount of information, the voter may prefer making decision influenced by their family, villagers or cast vote as everyone is doing so. Thus, the heuristic model may off shoot "dependent decision - making".

Determinants of Voting Decision

Since 1950s, three most prominent schools of thought have been pronounced in the literature of voting behavior. The first is socio-economic school that stresses demographic factors as determinants such as age, sex, social class, occupation, religion and social values (Inglehart et al. 1987). Second, Michigan school of thought that emphasizes politics – related determinants to have an impact on voting decisions such as election campaign, candidate preference or party affiliation (Bartels, 2000). Third, rational school of thought emphasizes personal rational assessment serves to cause party affiliation that is closely linked with one's ideology (Brennan and Hamlin, 1998). Apart from the traditional school of thoughts, the institutional theories of voting decisions are of supreme importance that highlight significance of institutional factors such as current political condition, law and order situation and election system of the country (Hellwig and Samuels, 2007).

On the basis of the above-mentioned schools, several determinants have been identified in the literature that explains voting decision such as psychological factors (Inglehart et al. 2003), reputation of the candidate, media role (Rupnik and Zielonka, 2012), political interest (Blais et al. 2002), political efficacy (Blais, 2010) and institutional factors as well (Dalton et al. 2003). Moreover, social, political and institutional specific features of a country enable cross – country research (Tavits 2009). On the basis of the extensive literature review, we selected the following variables as determinants of voting decisions that are easily accessed and understood by the respondents and that can be compared across two different societies selected for the study i.e. Pakistan and Australia.

Variables and hypothesis development

1. Political interest (PI)

High political interest is associated with deep political knowledge and is supposed to increase probability of voting and influence voting decision. Several studies have reported political interest as strong determinant of voting turnout (e.g. Blais et al, 2002 and Verba et al. 1995). A logical rationale for link between political interest and voting decision may lie in rationale choice theory that proposes that an individual who carefully gathers and assesses value maximizing information may have more political interest and may have well established ideology to vote for a candidate of the choice. Thus, it can be hypothesized that:

H1: Political interest has positive effect on independent voting decision and negative effect on dependent voting decision.

2. Media Trust (MT)

Media may be offline or online and have been studied and supported in literature as a predictor of voting decision. Offline media such as newspapers and TV is an important source of information (Baumgartner, 2010). Studies on offline media impact on decision making are rare as researchers are more interested in analyzing the impact of online media on decision making. Therefore, updated researches are required in the field (Dimitrova et al. 2014). Aalberg and Jenssen (2007) argued that talk shows and debates on TV have influence on voting behavior of the masses.

Online media provides diverse political information from various sources. It is easier to access and more frequent as compared to offline media. Earlier studies have found that online media provides greater political information and effects voting behavior (Bode, 2015). Determining the impact on intention to vote, Chininga et al. (2019) found significant impact of Facebook on voting decision specifically on students. It can rationally be argued that an individual having more interaction with media sources implicates greater trust on media that translates into greater political awareness and thus independence in voting decision.

Thus, it can be hypothesized that:

H2: Media trust has positive impact on independent decision making and has negative impact on dependent decision making.

3. Political Efficacy (PE)

Political efficacy is one of the strong predictors of political participation (Blais, 2010). The more a person feels greater know how of politics, have “say” in what government does, more one likely to participate in political processes. The extent to which one engage in political discussion, the more probability exists for participating in political activities on account of higher self confidence in political skills (Gastil & Xenos, 2010). It is defined as the sense that political change is probable and people can play active role to bring such changes in politics. (Campbell, 1954). Political efficacy is delineated into internal and external efficacy. Internal efficacy (IF) denotes masses’ feelings about their competence to digest and actively participate in politics (Niemi, Craig and Mattei, 1991). External efficacy (EE) refers to the viewpoint of the people on the sensitivity of the government to the demands of the people (Balch, 1974). High level of political efficacy, both internal and external, is observed to have favorable influence on democracy as people feel having power to determine the actions of the government (Wright, 2014). Therefore, it can reasonably be argued that people having self – confidence or feel of having say in government decisions may independently make voting decision regardless of any other social discriminations. Thus, it can be hypothesized that:

H3: political efficacy has positive relation with independent decision making and negative relation with dependent decision making.

4. Government Efficacy (GE)

It refers to the general quality or effectiveness of the government (Agnafors, 2013). The concept should not be confused with political trust though it is very near to it. Government efficacy denotes perception how government coherent public demands aroused out from the people to render them what they require. Greater level of government efficacy may translate into more independent and rational decisions. Thus, it can be hypothesized that:

H4: government efficacy has positive relation with independent decision making and negative relation with dependent decision making.

METHODS

The study aims at determining voting decision of women and identify several factors that explain their decision. For the purpose of the study, we collected data through structured questionnaire adopted from the studies of Lau and Redlawsk (2018) and Zuniga, Diehl & Abreu (2017), and Rai (2007). Data was collected from only women from two countries i.e. Pakistan and Australia. For finding the results, we applied descriptive statistics such as frequency tables and means. The results of both samples are compared with Levene’s test of variance. The reliability of the instrument is determined with Cronbach’s alpha and validity

was assessed with factor loadings. Moreover, intra-construct correlation is used to highlight the strength of link between an item and the variable. Finally, correlation is run to determine the relation between variables.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Demographics

Table explains and differentiates demographic information of the respondents. Though mean scores for the demographics are meaningless, they serve as a starting point for identifying difference between two samples. To identify difference in demographics between two samples, i.e. Pakistan and Australia, we used Levene's test. The results show that there is no significant difference in age, marital status, occupation and qualification between two samples as we found insignificant f-statistics. However, occupation and family income are found to be significantly different in two samples as they have significant f-stats.

	Country	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	
						F – stat	Sig.
Age	AUS	64	2.53	.776	.097	.443	.506
	Pak	183	2.53	.824	.061		
Marital Status	AUS	65	.75	.434	.054	.117	.733
	Pak	183	.74	.438	.032		
Occupation	AUS	65	2.1077	1.00192	.12427	13.777	.000
	Pak	183	2.5902	1.11499	.08242		
Qualification	AUS	65	3.11	.732	.091	1.777	.184
	Pak	183	3.28	.815	.060		
Family Income	AUS	65	5.68	.503	.062	37.696	.000
	Pak	183	2.99	1.458	.108		

Political Interest (PI)

There is a significant difference in political interest and its items between the two samples. "I have interest in politics" shows 4.18 mean value for Australia that shows they have strong interest in politics. The mean score for Pakistan is found to be 2.77 that shows less interest of women in politics. The mean score is significantly different between the two samples as shown by f-stat 23.69 that is significant at less than 1%. "I pay close attention on what is going on in politics" has mean score 4.33 for Australia and 2.67 for Pakistan that shows women in Australia pay more close attention to what is happening in politics as compared to Pakistan. The difference is significant with f-stat 23.29 at less than 1%. The construct "political interest" is thereby found to have significant difference with f-stat 39.57 at less than 1%. The mean score of Australia is 4.26 that is higher than that of Pakistan i.e. 2.72 that shows women in Australia have more political interest as compared to women in Pakistan.

	country	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	
						f-stat	Sig.
I have interest in politics	AUS	65	4.1846	.60962	.07561	23.699	.000
	Pak	183	2.7705	1.02271	.07560		
I pay close attention on what is going on in politics	AUS	65	4.3385	.59364	.07363	23.286	.000
	Pak	183	2.6667	.97965	.07242		
PI	AUS	65	4.2615	.44289	.05493	39.574	.000
	Pak	183	2.7186	.96007	.07097		

Media Trust

Media trust as well as its items are found to be significantly different between the two samples. “I watch news on TV at least once a day” is found to have mean score 3.95 in case of Australia and 2.80 in case of Pakistan that are significantly different with f-stat 5.21 at less than 5%. It explains as women in Australia more often watch news on TV as compared to women in Pakistan. “I read news via mobile or laptop at least once a day” is found to be significantly different between two samples with f-stat 8.54 that is significant at less than 1%. Women in Australia are more likely to read news on mobile as compared to Pakistani women as they have mean scores 4.2 and 2.86 respectively. “I read news via papers” is also found to be significantly different between the two samples with f-stat 5.027 at less than 5%. Women in Australia are more likely to read newspapers than women in Pakistan as their mean scores are 3.93 and 3.12 respectively. Furthermore, the construct “media trust” is found to be more in Australian women than women in Pakistan as they have mean scores 4.03 and 2.93 respectively.

Table 3	Media Trust – Mean and Levene’s Test						
	country	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	
						f-stat	Sig.
I watch news on TV at least once a day.	AUS	65	3.9538	.81836	.10150	5.216	.023
	Pak	183	2.8087	1.02256	.07559		
I read news via mobile or laptop at least once a day	AUS	65	4.2000	.66615	.08263	8.544	.004
	Pak	183	2.8634	.98780	.07302		
I read news via papers.	AUS	65	3.9385	.82683	.10256	5.027	.026
	Pak	183	3.1202	1.11275	.08226		
MT	AUS	65	4.0308	.38062	.04721	38.939	.000
	Pak	183	2.9308	.93243	.06893		

Internal Efficacy

“I am well aware of the” has mean score 4.09 for Australian women and 2.95 for Pakistani women. Though the difference is not significant as f-stat is found to be insignificant. “I am qualified to participate in politics” is found to be significantly different between the two samples as f-stat is 13.23 at less than 1%. The variable “internal efficacy” is also found to have significant difference with f-stat 13.97 at less than 1%. The mean value is 4.06 for Australian women and 3.01 for Pakistani women that shows women in Australia bear more internal efficacy relative to Pakistani women.

Table 4	Internal Efficacy – Mean and Levene’s Test						
	Country	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	
						f-stat	Sig.
I am well aware of the important political ongoing issues in the country	AUS	65	4.0923	.86101	.10680	1.402	.238
	Pak	183	2.9563	1.04211	.07703		
I am qualified to participate in politics	AUS	65	4.0000	.70711	.08771	13.238	.000
	Pak	183	3.0546	1.12282	.08300		
IF	AUS	65	4.0462	.55002	.06822	13.972	.000
	Pak	183	3.0055	1.03109	.07622		

External Efficacy

External efficacy and all of its items are found to be significantly different between the two samples. “People like me have say in what government does” has mean score 4.15 for Australia and 3.12 for Pakistan

that are significantly different as they have f-stat 15.98 at less than 1%. It shows women in Australia have greater trust in government to take their say in what it does as compared to Pakistani women. “Politicians care a lot about the opinions of voters” show mean score 4.18 for Australian women that is significantly higher than mean score of 3.24 for Pakistani women with f-stat 15.15 at less than 1%. “We can trust that political leaders make the decisions for the good of the country” shows mean score 4.16 for Australian women and 3.20 for Pakistani women that are significantly different with f-stat 14.96 at less than 1%. It shows that women in Australia place more trust in politicians as compared to women in Pakistan. Moreover, the variable “external efficacy” is found to have significant difference between the two samples as they have f-stat 13.56 at less than 1%. The mean score for Australia is 4.16 that is higher than mean score of Pakistan i.e. 3.18.

Table 5	External Efficacy – Mean and Levene’s Test						
	Country	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	
People like me have say in what government does.	AUS	65	4.1538	.64301	.07976	15.988	.000
	Pak	183	3.1257	1.06933	.07905		
Politicians care a lot about the opinions of voters	AUS	65	4.1846	.68219	.08462	15.146	.000
	Pak	183	3.2404	1.00390	.07421		
We can trust that political leaders make the decisions for the good of the country	AUS	65	4.1692	.62673	.07774	14.967	.000
	Pak	183	3.2022	.96510	.07134		
EE	AUS	65	4.1692	.55316	.06861	13.558	.000
	Pak	183	3.1894	.81233	.06005		

Government Efficacy

The government efficacy along with its items are found to have significant difference between the two samples. “our government considers public demand while making decisions” is found to have less significant difference between two samples. The f-stat is 3.20 at less than 10% where mean score for Australian women is 4.36 and Pakistani women is 3.14. “Today government is doing well” is also found to have significantly different mean scores as they have f-stat 11.18 at less than 1%. The mean score for Australian women is 4.30 and that of Pakistani women is 2.92. It shows great difference in opinions of women of both countries regarding government performance. Australian women are more likely to be satisfied with the government performance as compared to women in Pakistan. “The decisions of the government are transparent” have mean score 4.2 for Australian women and 2.96 for Pakistani women that are significantly different with f-stat 5.89 at less than 5%. Furthermore, government efficacy is found to have significantly different with 12.23 at less than 1%. The mean score for Australia is 4.30 and for Pakistan 3.01 that shows women in Australia have greater reliance in government efficacy relative to Pakistani women.

Table 6	Government Efficacy – Mean and Levene’s Test						
	Country	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	
Our government considers public demand while making decisions	AUS	65	4.3692	.71958	.08925	3.202	.075
	Pak	183	3.1475	.96367	.07124		

Today the government of the country is doing well.	AUS	65	4.3077	.65962	.08182	11.188	.001
	Pak	183	2.9290	1.04849	.07751		
The decisions of the government are transparent.	AUS	65	4.2462	.68536	.08501	5.890	.016
	Pak	183	2.9617	.99098	.07326		
GEE	AUS	65	4.3077	.59310	.07356	12.235	.001
	Pak	183	3.0128	.94240	.06966		

Independent Voting Decision

Independent voting decision along with its items are found to be significantly different between the two samples. “I make my own voting decision” showed mean score 4.29 for Australian women and 3.02 for Pakistani women that are significantly different as shown by f-stat 13.77 at less than 1%. It shows women in Australia are more likely to make their own voting decisions. “I cast vote to my favorite candidate” shows mean score 4.15 for Australian women and 3.00 for Pakistani women that are significantly different at less than 1%. The f-stat is found to be 10.65. “I consider it my right to cast vote” is more seem to be pronounced in Australian women that have mean score 4.06 as compared to Pakistani women that have mean score 3.33. The difference between mean scores is significant as the value of f-stat is 53.69 at less than 1%. Moreover, “independent voting decision” is found to be significantly different between the samples. The mean for Australian women is 4.16 and for Pakistani women is 3.12 that are significantly different with f-stat 29.007 at less than 1%. It indicates that women in Australia have greater independence in making voting decision as compared to Pakistani women.

Table 7	Independent Voting Decision – Mean and Levene’s Test						
	Country	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	
I make my own voting decision.	AUS	65	4.2923	.67830	.08413	13.773	.000
	Pak	183	3.0219	1.04806	.07747		
I cast vote to make my favorite candidate win	AUS	65	4.1538	.64301	.07976	10.657	.001
	Pak	183	3.0055	.95214	.07038		
I consider it my right to cast vote.	AUS	65	4.0615	.58301	.07231	53.697	.000
	Pak	183	3.3333	1.08097	.07991		
IVD	AUS	65	4.1692	.46444	.05761	29.007	.000
	Pak	183	3.1202	.90992	.06726		

Dependent Voting Decision

“my decision was influenced” shows significant difference between samples with f-stat 4.473 at less than 5%. The mean score for Australian women is found to be 2.16 lower as compared to 4.05 for Pakistani women. “It is customary to cast vote” is found to have significantly different means as the f -stat is 6.54 at less than 5%. The mean for Australian women is 1.8 that is significantly lower than mean score of Pakistani women i.e. 4.16. “It is customary that all members” is found to have significantly different means for both samples as f-stat is 10.78 at less than 1%. The mean score for Australian women is 2.07 that is significantly lower than mean score of 4.25 for Pakistani women. It shows that women more often vote to the candidate having same caste. “The views of family” is significantly different between two samples as f-stat is 11.78 at less than 1%. Women in Pakistan consider it more important to take advice of the others while casting vote as shown by mean score of 4.25 as compared to Australian women who have mean score 3.06. “I voted because everyone was doing so” shows insignificant difference in mean scores as f-stat is 1.46 that is insignificant. Moreover, “dependent voting decision” found to have significantly different means with f-stat 18.033 at less than 1%. Australian women have lower mean score 2.63 that indicates dependency in voting decision is not the case for Australian women. On the

contrary, Pakistani women has mean score of 4.19 that shows they are strongly dependent for casting their votes.

Table 8	Dependent Voting Decision – Mean and Levene’s Test						
	Country	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	
My decision was influenced by my head of family. (husband, father)	AUS	65	2.1692	.57471	.07128	4.473	.035
	Pak	183	4.0546	.80334	.05938		
It is customary to cast vote to the candidate having same caste. (R)	AUS	65	1.8000	.56458	.07003	6.546	.011
	Pak	183	4.1639	.71515	.05287		
It is customary that all members of family cast vote to one candidate. (R)	AUS	65	2.0769	.64488	.07999	10.784	.001
	Pak	183	4.2568	.72221	.05339		
The views of the villagers/ family/relatives are important for casting vote. (R)	AUS	65	3.0615	.60922	.07556	11.780	.001
	Pak	183	4.2514	.68113	.05035		
I voted because everyone was doing so. (R)	AUS	65	4.0615	.55557	.06891	1.463	.228
	Pak	183	4.2623	.66881	.04944		
DVD	AUS	65	2.6300	.42067	.05218	18.033	.000
	Pak	183	4.1978	.47207	.03490		

Model Correlation

The result depicts significant positive relation of political interest with independent voting decision making as found by Zuniga, Diehl and Abreu (2017) and Smets and van Ham (2013) and negative relation with dependent voting decision. It can be reasonably justified that women with greater political interest are more inclined towards independent voting as they bear their choice after extensive information gathering as suggested by rational choice model.

Media trust is also found to have significantly positive relation with independent voting decision at less than 1%. The results are consistent with that of Intyaswati et al. (2021). It can be reasonably be justified that women who have media interaction, build their opinions trusting the contents they provide and consider them capable to make rational voting decision. However, the relation with dependent decision making is insignificant.

Internal efficacy is found to have significantly positive relation with independent voting decision. The results are compatible with that of Moeller et al. (2014) and Zuniga, Diehl and Abreu (2017). The reason may evolve that women who deem them knowledgeable of political information consider them qualified to participate in rational process of making voting decision. Therefore, they are more likely to make independent voting decisions. However, the relation with dependent voting decision is insignificant.

External efficacy is also found to have positive and significant relation with independent voting decision. It may be due to the fact that women who believe in that they would be heard by the government when they demand, they are more likely to make independent decision regardless of other disruptive elements such as family pressure. External efficacy also has positive relation with dependent voting decision. It may be argued that when women believe people will be heard of while making decisions, they

rely on the choices of others such as family members or follow the trend as just to cast vote as everyone is doing so.

Moreover, government efficacy also found to have significant relation with independent and dependent voting decision. A reasonable justification for this two-edged result may be that when women perceive government doing efficient work, it may realize in favorable word of mouth of the masses and decision of the voter and others in vicinity are identical to match the government efficiency.

Table 9		Model Correlations						
		PI	MT	IF	EE	GEE	IVD	DVD
IVD	Pearson Correlation	.339**	.407**	.481**	.722**	.795**	1	-.197**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.002
	N	248	248	248	248	248	248	248
DVD	Pearson Correlation	-.155*	-.052	-.107	.164**	.219**	-.197**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.014	.416	.092	.010	.001	.002	
	N	248	248	248	248	248	248	248
** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).								
* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).								

CONCLUSION

This article shows empirical analysis of determinants of voting decision by women in Pakistan and Australia. The determinants selected for the study include political interest, media trust, internal efficacy, external efficacy and government efficacy. Voting decision is divided into independent and dependent voting decision. All the selected determinants showed significant difference between the two samples. Australians are more interested in politics; they put greater trust on media; they are more confident that they can reliably participate in politics; they put more trust on government and politicians that they consider peoples' opinion and their votes are valued; they put greater trust on present government. Accordingly, two samples are significantly different in respect of their voting decision. Australian showed greater independence for making voting decision and Pakistani women showed greater dependency for making voting decision. Finally, correlation is run to find the relation between determinants and voting decision. It is found that significant and positive relation of personal interest, media trust, internal efficacy, external efficacy and government efficacy with independent decision making. It may be explained as women with strong political interest, greater interaction with media, political self – confidence, greater trust on politicians and government, are more likely to make their own voting decision. On the other side, political interest, external efficacy and government efficacy have negative relation with dependent voting decision.

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