Dynamics of Voting Behaviour among the People of Swat

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Abstract

This study delves into the intricacies of voting behaviour in Swat, examining the interplay between individual-level factors, socio-cultural influences, like education, gender, ethnicity nationalism, religion, leadership and political affiliation. Drawing on a comprehensive analysis of questionnaires, our research reveals that, education, and age significantly shape voting decisions, with higher qualified individuals leaning towards nationalistic politics and mainstream political parties instead of tending towards ethnic and religious while some feel that the religion should have a limited role in politics. Furthermore, social identity, ethnicity, and religion, influencing voters' choices and party affiliations to a limited extent. The study also underscores the role of media influence and social networks in shaping voting behaviour, highlighting the need for nuanced understanding of these dynamics. Our findings contribute to the ongoing discourse on voting behaviour, providing valuable insights for policymakers, political strategists, and scholars seeking to comprehend the complexities of electoral decision-making in Swat.

Keywords: Vote, Democracy, Partisanship, Ethnic politics, religious politics, Women participation, Ideology, Nationalism, Ethnicity, Identity, Mobilization, Advocacy,

Introduction

Voting behaviour has always been a complex phenomenon. A number of factors impact people's decision to vote for. Here's a potential introduction for the research paper on "Dynamics of Voting Behaviour among the people of Swat". Voting behaviour is a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon influenced by an array of factors that shape individuals' decisions at the polls(Ford & Kelly 2005). The dynamics of voting behaviour are particularly enticing in Swat. Where unique socioeconomic conditions and a bit higher literacy than the rest of the tribes contributing to the voting behaviour of the people. The intricacies of voting behaviour in this region is crucial for policymakers, political strategists, and scholars seeking to comprehend the electoral preferences and trends that underpin democratic processes. Despite the growing body of research on history, politics, radicalism and Militancy in the area, there remains a significant gap in our understanding of the voting behaviour in Swat. Complex interplay between individual-level factors, socio-cultural influences, and external stimuli that shape electoral decisions. This study aims to bridge this gap by exploring the dynamics of voting behaviour in Swat, with specific focus on how several factors like religion, gender, personal relationship, family political affiliation, ethnicity and Nationalism impact voting behaviour in Swat. By examining the intersections of demographic characteristics, social identity, media influence, and party affiliations, this research seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of the factors that drive voting behaviour in this unique context. This research is based on data collected through a questionnaire, where several queries were put forwarded before the in order to ascertain the factors impacting the voting behaviour in Swat. A questionnaire with eighteen questions was shared with the respondents from variety of people in Swat, where three hundred and thirty people responded to the questions asked from them. The data has been analyzed and presented below.

Table 1.1: Gender of the Respondents

| Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	291	88	88	88
Female	39	12a	12	100
Total	330	100	100	
Missing System	0	0	0	
Total	330			

Figure 1.1 — Gender
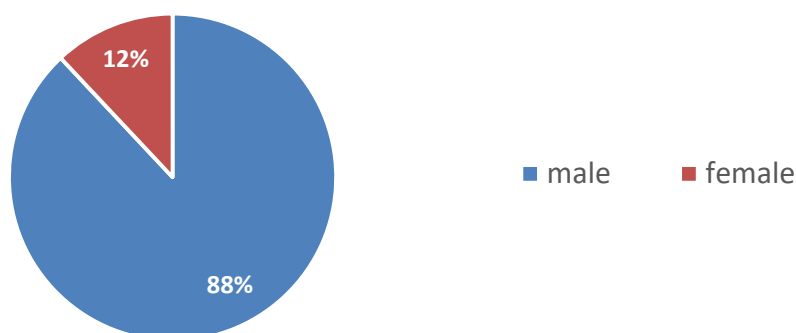
The above table and graph shows us the gender of the respondents, it shows us 88% male respondents and 12% female respondents while the researcher made great efforts to reach out to female respondents, while they rarely participated in the survey which is clear from the survey chart. I have already mentioned in my research limitations that reaching out to female respondents is not in the accordance with the local culture, though the society of Swat is a bit developed from the rest of the northern district of Pakistan in terms of education, while the male respondents were large in number in comparison to female as shown in the table 1.1.

1.1: Generated by the researcher from data collected through questionnaire.

Table 1.2: Age of the respondents

| Age	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
18-32	291	88	88	88
32-42	33	10	10	98
42-52	5	2	2	100
52 0r Above	1	0	0	0
Missing System	0	0	0	0
Total	330	100	100	100

Figure 1.2
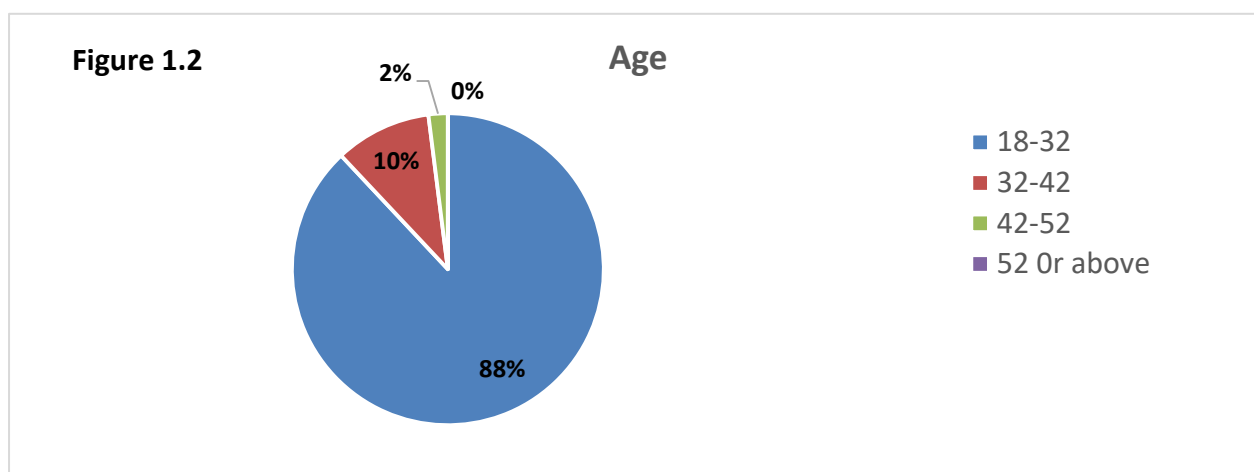
Mainly the respondents were categorized in five major age groups as shown in the table 1.2. It's clear from the table that mostly the respondents were in the age category of 18-32. It's an indication of the fact that most of the respondents are of young age who took interest in the survey, though the researcher tried his best to reach out to people of different age. Secondly it's also an indication that huge chunk of the area under study is young. Secondly the age is a big factor in electoral process because young people get more interest in politics than aged, with age increasing interest decreases in political participation (Rauf & Hassan 2015).

1.2: Generated by the researcher from data collected through questionnaire.

Table 1.3: Qualification of the Respondents

| Qualification	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Matric	3	1	1	1
F.A/F.Sc	46	14	14	15
BA/B.Sc	29	9	9	24
MA/M.sc	183	55	55	79
MS/MPhil	63	19	19	98
PhD	6	2	2	100
Missing	0	0	0	0
Total	330	100	100	100

Figure 1.3 — Qualification
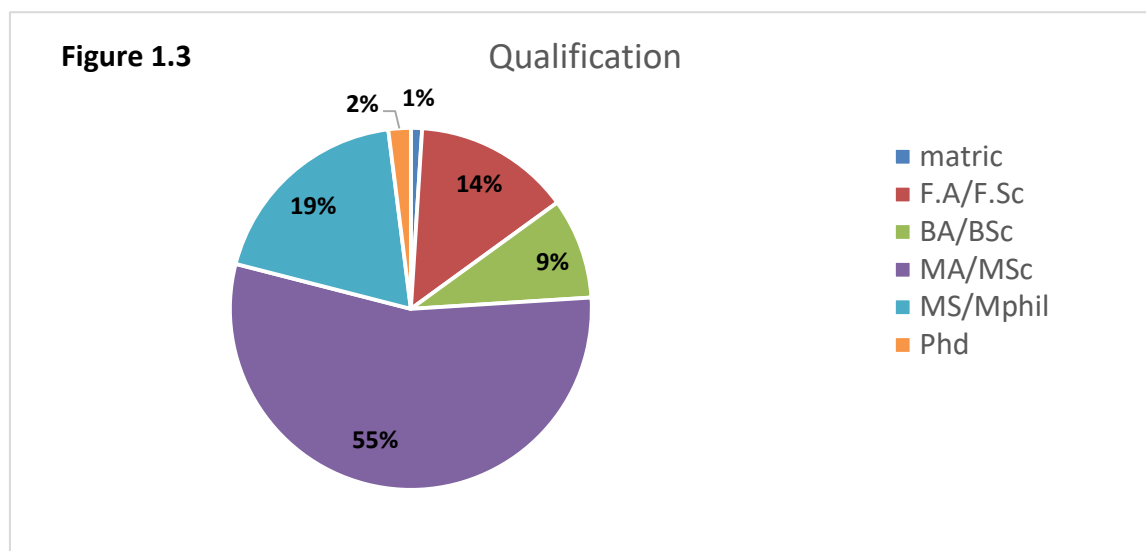
Respondents were also asked in the questionnaire to show their qualification, which was categorized from metric to PhD and above. Education is a factor impacting voting behavior, qualified population thinks vote is their ethical and political duty in addition to considering it is as opportunity to participate in political process (Jan 2000) Several respondents with different qualifications participated in the survey which is clear from Table and graph 6.4. Most of the respondents having sixteen year education, while respondents with eighteen year education stood second in numbers and with qualification of intermediate stood third as is clear from the table above.

1.3: Generated by the researcher from data collected through questionnaire.

Table 1.4: Profession of the respondents

Profession	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Doctors	35	11	11	11
Teachers	78	24	25	36
Professors	15	5	5	41
Business Men	15	5	5	46
Engineers	20	6	6	52
Students	120	36	38	90
Advocates	17	5	5	95
Jobless	15	5	5	100
Total	315	5	5	
Missing	15	5		
Total	330	100	100	100

Figure 1.4: Profession of the respondents


Figure 1.4 — Profession
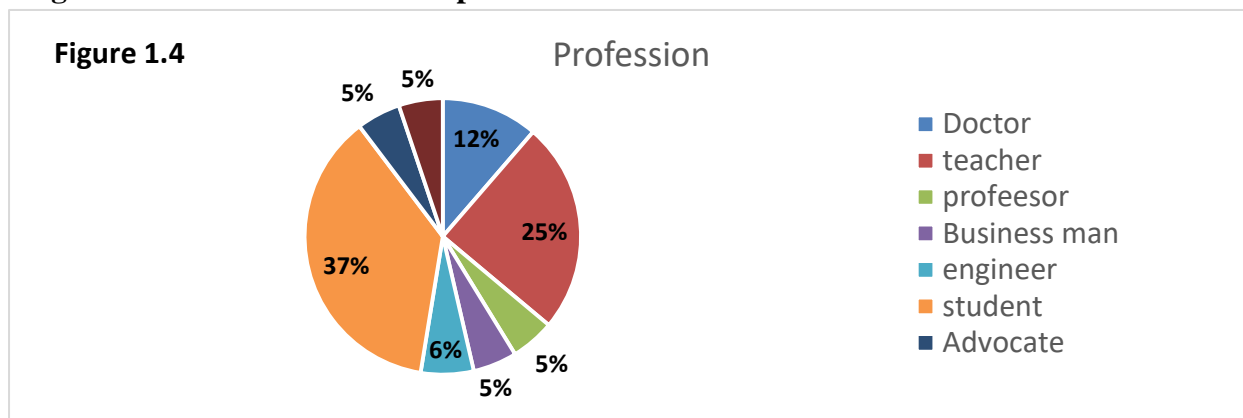
Next question in the questionnaire was about profession. An array of professionals participated in this research as is clear from the table, most of the respondents with 36% were students, as young minds with current political and economic imbroglios, take interest in national issues, while age and trust-deficit in politicians affect political participation (Rauf &Hassan 2015). In addition to this teachers stood second with 24% of the respondents and the doctors stood third with 11% among others as is shown in the table and graph 1.4.

1.4: Generated by the researcher from data collected through questionnaire.

Table 1.5: Do you take interest in politics?

|	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
To A Great Extent	131	40	40	40
To Some Extent	115	35	35	75
To Limited Extent	59	18	18	92
Not at all	25	8	8	100
Missing System	0	0	0	
Total	330	100	100	

Figure 1.5
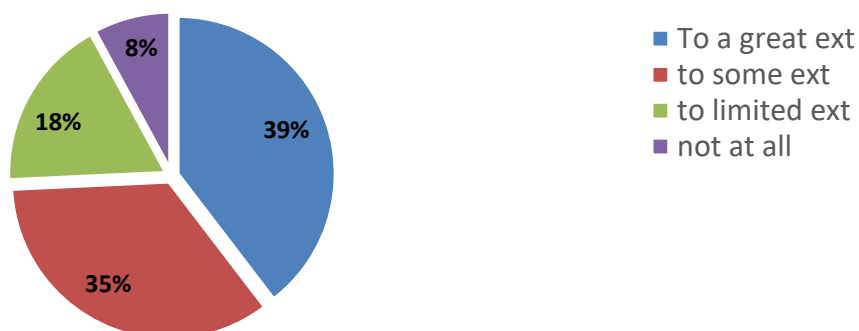
As is shown in the table, this question is of prime importance which ascertains the interest of the respondent in politics which indicates that how many respondents are taking interest in political activities. Four options were given to the respondents in which 39% opted for that they are interested in politics to a great extent, 35% opted for 'to some extent' while 18% opted for 'to a limited extent' and 8% opted for 'not at all as shown in the table 1.5.

1.5: Generated by the researcher from data collected through questionnaire.

Table 1.6 Do you vote on the basis of your family political affiliation?

|	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
To A Great Extent	35	11	11	11
To Some Extent	79	24	24	35
To Limited Extent	101	31	31	65
Not at all	115	35	35	100
Missing System	0	0	0	
Total	330	100	100	100

Figure 1.6
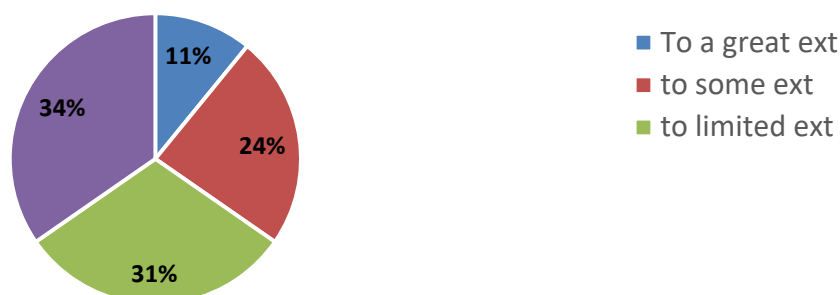
In tribal set-up a whole family, sub-tribe or a tribe is a social unit while in a sovereign State an individual though must belong to a family or clan is mostly considered as independent and is entitled to basic rights and punishment in case of offence. It means that in Tribal state of affairs group stands as social unit while in State individual stands as social unit. This question was put forwarded to ascertain whether the people of the area under study behave like tribal people of Tribes or they have developed from Tribal mentality are deciding independently. Hence it's clear from the table 6.7 that only 11% vote on the basis of family political affiliation while 35% of the respondents don't vote on the basis of family political affiliation is an indicator that tribal mindset is rapidly changing as is clear from the figures above. While researchers have found a connection between family political affiliation and voting behavior (Wantchekon 2003).

1.6: Generated by the researcher from data collected through questionnaire.

Table 1.7: On which basis do you vote?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Religion	48	15	15	15
Ethnicity	31	9	9	24
Family Political affiliation	52	16	16	40
Something Else	199	60	60	100
Missing System	0	0	0	
Total	330	100	100	100

Figure 1.7
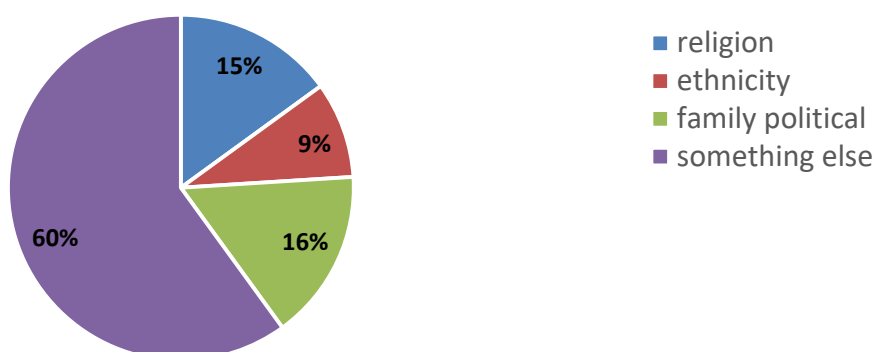
This question was asked from the respondents and the options were given as religion, ethnicity, family political affiliation or something else, in order to ascertain that what factors of identity influence the respondents voting behaviour. Though the majority of the area is populated by pakhtoon and reseachers generally have found that people respond to ethnic slogans specially when they are marginalized (Bhattacharya 2015). In contrast to this only 15% opted for that they vote on the basis of religion and the ethnic based vote is even more lower in rank with 9% while family political affiliation is a bit higher than religion based vote, while 60% of the respondents vote for 'something else' is a clear indication that Tribalism and group religious and ethnic identity is getting weaker as is clear from the figures above.

1.7 : Generated by the researcher from data collected through questionnaire.

Table 1.8 Do you think women should participate in political process as contesting elections and voting?

|	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
To A Great Extent	171	52	52	52
To Some Extent	88	27	27	78
To Limited Extent	36	11	11	89
Not At All	35	11	11	100
Missing System	0	0	0	
Total	330	100	100	100

Figure 1.8
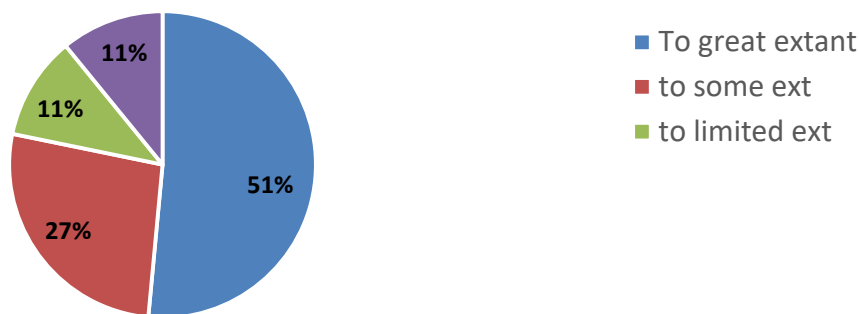
This question was also in a sense to ascertain as in accordance of the local tradition and values women observe Purdah and are rarely seen and participating in public affairs. Though history and identity of pakhtoons affect women participation in politics according to the customs and code of conduct of the *Pashto* (Bilal & Ahmad 2021). This question was put forwarded before respondents to ascertain whether they want the women should participate in political process for 52% advocated their participation and opted for 'to a great extent' though most of the respondents were male. While 27% opted for 'to some extent' while only 11% opted for 'not at all'. It's a clear indication that people approach to women and their social role is changing though within the social norms.

1.8: Generated by the researcher from data collected through questionnaire.

Table 1.9 to what extent do you think women should vote independently?

|	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
To A Great Extent	217	66	66	66
To Some Extent	59	18	18	84
To Limited Extent	37	11	11	95
Not At All	17	5	5	100
Missing System	0	0	0	
Total	330	100	100	100

Figure 1.9
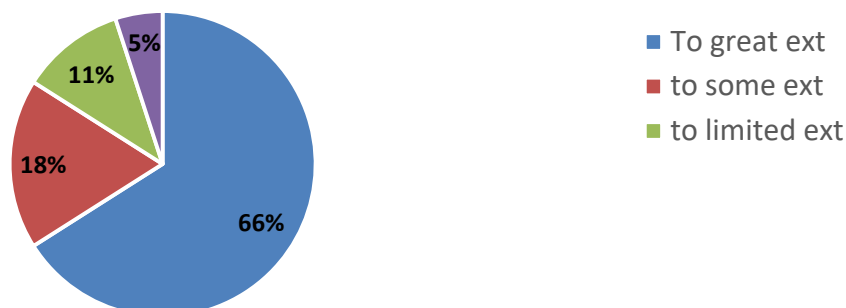
It's also a basic question as to ascertain the independence of women in a patriarchal and traditional society. Surprisingly 66% as is clear from the table opted for 'to a great extent'. While as is mostly observed in traditional societies where women vote is mostly influenced by their male guardians. But here the case is something different. While only 5% opted for 'not at all' is a positive development in the support of women independence of opinion. As voting behavior is generally influenced by a number of factors like, education, history, psychology, tradition and values of a community (Farman & Fakhar 2013)

1.9: Generated by the researcher from data collected through questionnaire.

Table 1.10 should ethnicity and Nationalism be the part in politics?

|	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
To A Great Extent	63	19	19	19
To Some Extent	92	28	28	47
To Limited Extent	59	18	18	65
Not At All	116	35	35	100
Missing System	0	0	0	
Total	330	100	100	100

Figure 1.10
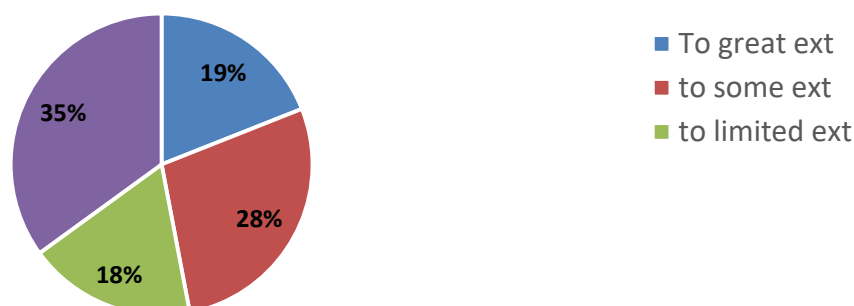
As is clear from the table above, this question was asked to ascertain the level of Pashtun Nationalism mainly to assess that upto what extent voting behaviour is influenced by Pashtunness. It's clear from the table above that only 19% of the respondents opted for 'to a great extent' while 116 which 35% of the total respondents don't believe at all in Ethnicity and Nationalism and probably thinking something greater than that to be the part of politics. Using ethnic slogan is not for a healthy democratic society as most of the time it leads to fragmented society hinder development and good governance (Birnir 2007)

1.10: Generated by the researcher from data collected through questionnaire.

Table 1.11: Do you vote on the basis of Pashtun Nationalism?

|	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
To A Great Extent	57	17	17	17
To Some Extent	59	18	18	35
To Limited Extent	38	12	12	47
Not At All	176	53	53	100
Missing System	0	0	0	
Total	330	100	100	100

Figure 1.11
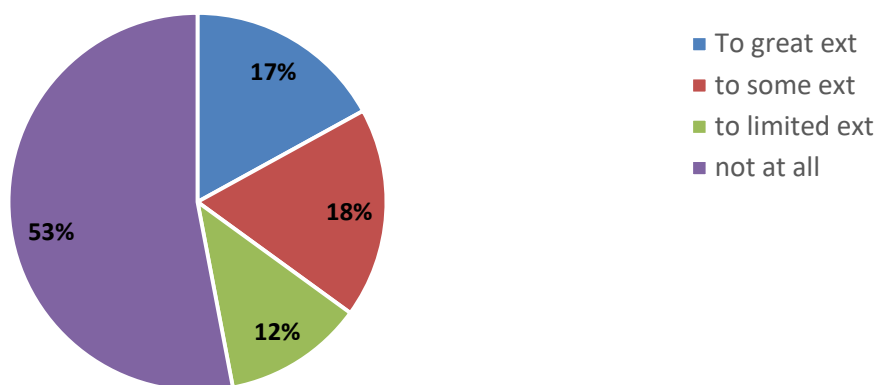
This question was asked straightforward to ascertain whether the people of the area under studyhave still strong Pashtun Nationalism to the extent that it influences their vote. As is clear from the table above that only 57 respondents which is 17% of the total opted for 'to a great extent' indicates that Pashtun Nationalism still exists but not as strong as it was before. While 18% opted for 'to some extent' and 176 respondents out of 330 opted for 'not at all' which indicates that for a simple majority of the respondents Pashtun Nationalism is not slogan on which vote may be casted but it's something else. There was a time when pashtoon nationalism was appealing to people in Swat specifically and KP in general but that's no more relevant to the politics as it was (Ahmad 2010). So it is clear from the figure above that people are more concerned about the political reasons than the social.

1.11: Generated by the researcher from data collected through questionnaire.

Table 1.12: To what extent for you vote on the basis of personal relationship or friendship?

|	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
To A Great Extent	19	6	6	6
To Some Extent	83	25	25	31
To Limited Extent	75	23	23	54
Not At All	153	46	46	100
Missing System	0	0	0	
Total	330	100	100	100

Figure 1.12
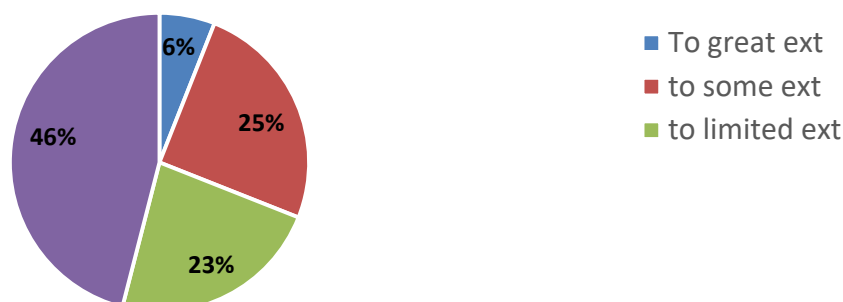
This question is also of prime importance in terms of voting behaviour. As voting is a duty of citizen to be fulfilled in the best interest of the whole society. While some time voters are influenced by a personal relationship or friendship and one may vote just for the sake of relationship as many families have political party affiliation from generation to generation and this my influence the voting behavior of a voter but this may not always be the case and this factor may not impact the voting behavior of a voter (Farman Ullah 2014). As is clear from the table above only 19 respondents which is 6% of the whole respondents have opted for' to some extent ' while 153 respondents which is 46% of the respondents have opted for 'not at all' means that their vote haven't been influenced by friendship or personal relationship, which is a positive development.

1.12: Generated by the researcher from data collected through questionnaire.

Table 1.13: Do you think that religion and politics should be kept apart?

|	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
To A Great Extent	104	32	32	32
To Some Extent	68	21	21	52
To Limited Extent	36	11	11	63
Not At All	122	37	37	100
Missing System	0	0	0	
Total	330	100	100	100

Figure 1.13
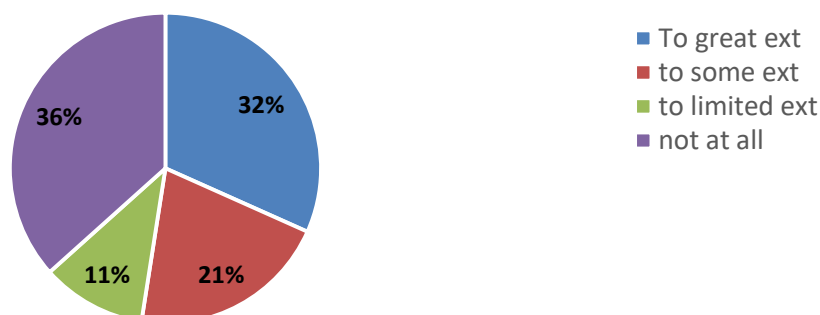
This question is about the role of religion in politics that whether religion should play a role in politics or not. Religion in pashtoon society has a political role throughout history and people have responded to religious slogans. As it was the necessary part of politics even at the time of division of India, though the elections were delayed for decades after the emergence of Pakistan and the Army ruled directly or indirectly. In the 21st century the democracy in Pakistan was strengthening specifically after the Musharraf Regime (Asim 2012) and the role of religion in politics was minimizing though people of KP had voted for religious coalition in in 2002 in KP (Saqib 2021). So, this question was felt necessary to be asked from respondents that whether they still think of political role of religion or their perception have changed about political role of religion. As is clear from the figures in the table 6.14 that 122 respondents which 37% of the total respondents still don't believe in secularism and don't think of separation of religion and politics as religion is also a source of Identity of people, while 104 respondents which are 32% of the respondents strongly believe in the separation of religion from politics which is clear from the figures given above in the table.

1.13: Generated by the researcher from data collected through questionnaire.

Table 1.14: Should there be only religious political parties in Pakistan?

|	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
To A Great Extent	47	14	14	14
To Some Extent	61	18	18	33
To Limited Extent	45	14	14	46
Not At All	177	54	54	100
Missing System	0	0	0	
Total	330	100	100	100

Figure 1.14
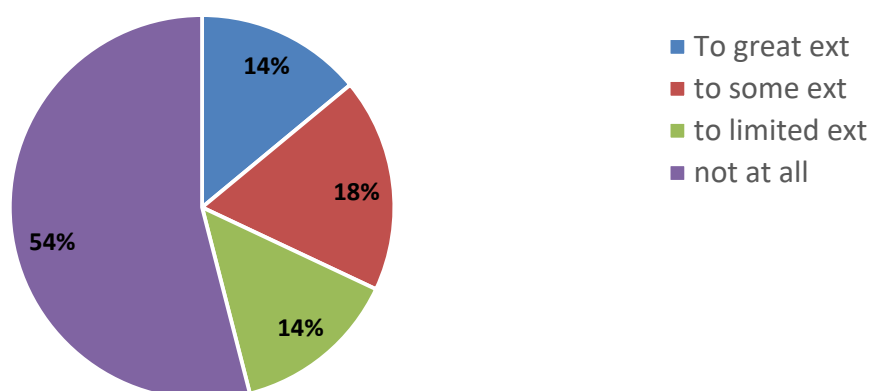
This question was also asked as to ascertain the opinion of the respondents about the role of religious political parties, that whether the respondents still think the religious political parties can play a developmental role in politics based on past experiences with religious political parties. As is clear from the table above, only 47 respondents which is 14% of the whole respondents opted for 'to a great extent' while the major, while majority of the respondents opted for 'not at all' and they don't think religious political parties can solve issues.

1.14: Generated by the researcher from data collected through questionnaire.

Table 1.15: Do you think ethnic Nationalist Parties can make developments?

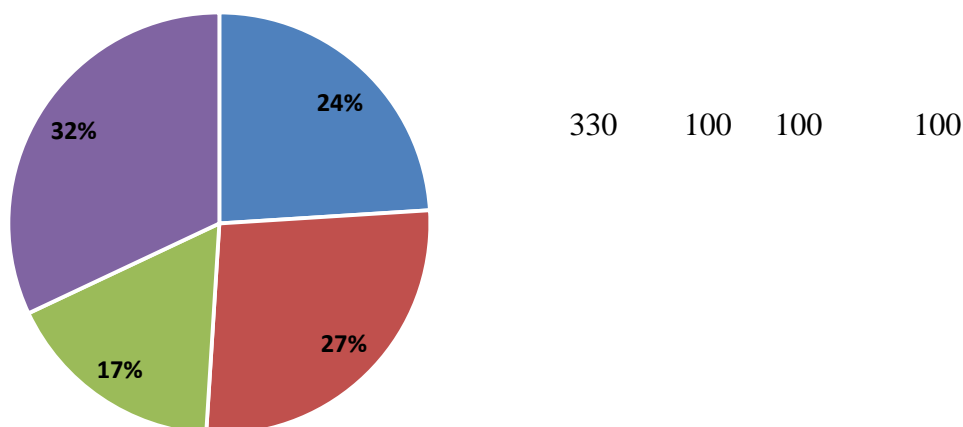|	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
To A Great Extent	49	15	15	15
To Some Extent	100	30	30	45
To Limited Extent	86	26	26	71
Not At All	95	29	29	100
Missing System	0	0	0	
Total	330	100	100	100

Figure 1.15
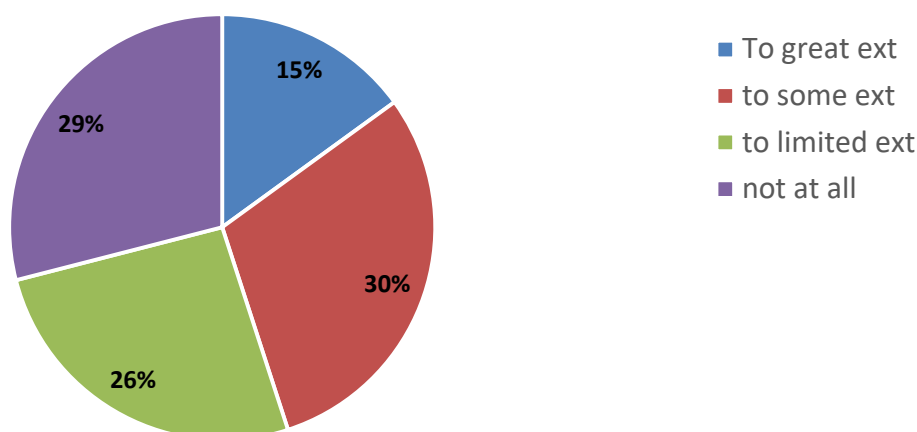
This question was asked to ascertain the role of ethnic Nationalist Parties as once they had come into power in KP, ethnicity influences voting behavior and ethnic slogans to marginalized groups are appealing, and voters respond to it (Chandra 2005). These types of political parties play politics on the basis of Nationalism mainly Pashtunnes or Pakhtunwali. Pashtunness or Pakhtunwali is also Identity of People (Shah 2023). so it was asked whether people intend to opt for second time for these slogans. Some 95 respondents opted for 'not at all' which 29% of the total respondents, while 100 respondents, which is 30% of the respondents, still believe that Ethnic Nationalist political parties can make developments as given in the table above.

1.15: Generated by the researcher from data collected through questionnaire.

Table 1.16: Do you vote on the Basis of promulgation of Sharia law?

|	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
To A Great Extent	80	24	24	24
To Some Extent	88	27	27	51
To Limited Extent	55	17	17	68
Not At All	107	32	32	100
Missing System	0	0	0	
Total	330	100	100	100

Figure 1.16

This was once the slogan of many religious political movements as is clear from the political history of Swat. Like the movement of TNSM then MMA government in 2002 later on Militancy and extremism (Azeem2021). All of them promised the people to promulgate the sharia law in Swat specifically but to no avail. Instead of resolving the issues of people of Swat, such slogans and movements added to the plight of people of Pashtun Belt generally and the people of Swat specifically. Hence it was felt necessary to include this question whether people vote on the basis promulgation of sharia law or not. As is clear from the table above, only 80 respondents, which is 24% of the total respondents still opted for 'to a great extent' while 107 respondents, which 32% of the total respondents opted for 'not at all.

1.16: Generated by the researcher from data collected through questionnaire.

Table 1.17: To what extent do you vote for social developmental works, i-e establishing schools, colleges, universities, hospitals etc?

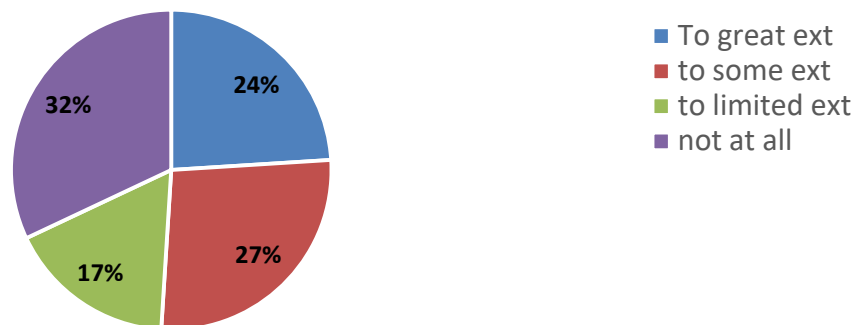|	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
To A Great Extent	176	53	53	53
To Some Extent	84	25	25	79
To Limited Extent	31	9	9	88
Not At All	39	12	12	100
Missing System	0	0	0	
Total	330	100	100	100

Figure 1.17
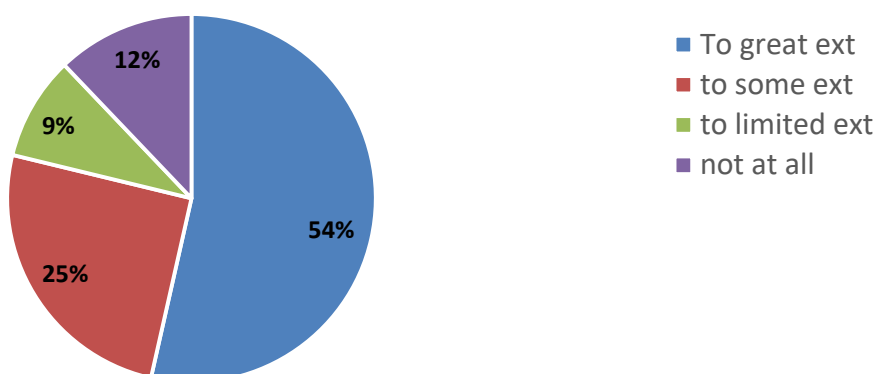
To ascertain whether people vote on the basis of developmental works or not, while politics is mainly performed to the development of people. Hence 176 respondents which is 53% of the total respondents opted for ' to a great extent' while only 39 which is 12% of the total respondents opted for 'not at all' as is clear from the figures above in the table. While 84 respondents which is 25% of the total respondents opted, that their vote has been influenced by such slogans upto some extent while 31 respondents hold for a limited extent, which is 9% of the total respondents.

1.17: Generated by the researcher from data collected through questionnaire.

Table 1.18: Do you think religious political parties will succeed in promulgation of Sharia law?

|	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
To A Great Extent	80	24	24	24
To Some Extent	88	27	27	51
To Limited Extent	55	17	17	68
Not At All	107	32	32	100
Missing System	0	0	0	
Total	330	1 00	100	100

Figure 1.18

This question is also of prime importance as this slogan has much been used in the political arena in Swat. Hence 107 respondents think the religious political parties will not succeeded in promulgation of Sharia law which is 32% and the highest among other options while 80 respondents which is 24% of the total respondents still think they will succeeded in promulgation of sharia law as is clear from the statistics above.

1.18: Generated by the researcher from data collected through questionnaire.

Table 1.19: Do you vote on the basis of Party leadership?

|	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
To A Great Extent	99	30	30	30
To Some Extent	96	29	29	59
To Limited Extent	38	12	12	71
Not At All	97	29	29	100
Missing System	0	0	0	
Total	330	100	100	100

Figure 1.19
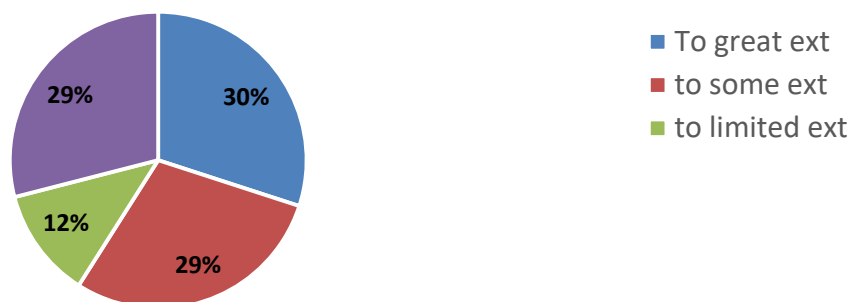
This is also a new phenomenon in the arena of politics that most of the people vote for the party leadership irrespective of candidate appointed by a specific party in a specific constituency. Before the General election of 2018 Imran in a public gathering in Swat had appealed masses to vote for his leadership irrespective of the candidate the party had appointed for contesting elections and people had responded to that and PTI made a clean sweep. In the statistics above in the table it's clear that 99 respondents which is 30% of the total respondents have opted for 'to a great extent' while 96 respondents which is 29% of the total respondents opted for' to some extent 'while the percent of respondents have opted for 'not at all'.

1.19: Generated by the researcher from data collected through questionnaire.

Table 1.20: Do you vote only for candidate, irrespective of party leadership or Manifesto?

|	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
To A Great Extent	38	12	12	12
To Some Extent	108	33	33	44
To Limited Extent	61	18	18	63
Not At All	123	37	37	100
Missing System	0	0	0	
Total	330	100	100	100

Figure 1.20
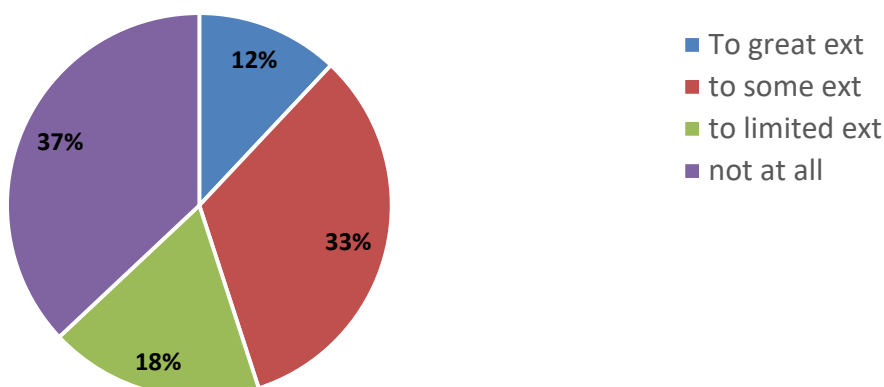
Usually in most of the democratic countries in the world, developmental projects are performed by established institutions in the country, but the case is different in Pakistan, where the legislators are provided funds and they utilize them in their respective constituency. In the same vein most of the candidates for general elections make promises and they sometime make their positions strong by completing developmental projects in their respective constituencies. Hence this question was felt necessary to be asked from respondents.

1.20: Generated by the researcher from data collected through questionnaire.

Table: 1.21 Do you think the current political parties will succeeded in resolving the economic and political issues of Pakistan?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
To A Great Extent	17	5	5	5
To Some Extent	63	19	19	24
To Limited Extent	75	23	23	47
Not At All	175	53	53	100
Missing System	0	0	0	
Total	330	100	100	100

Figure 1.21
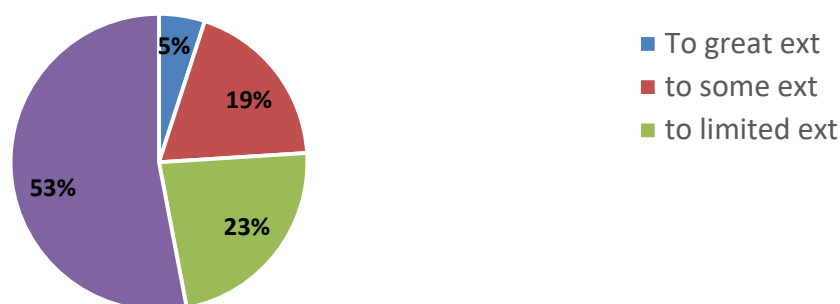
This is just a general question as the whole political process is done for the sake of political and economic development. Currently the country is facing huge political and economic challenges. On the basis of the past experiences of the people it was asked whether political parties will address the challenges faced by the country or not. The response of the respondents was surprising and 175 respondents, which is 53% of the whole respondents, think the political parties cannot address the issues faced by Pakistan. While only 75 respondents which 23% of the total respondents think opted for 'to a limited extent' while only 17 respondents which is 5% of the total respondents opted for 'to a great extent' as shown in the statistics above in the table 6.22

1.21: Generated by the researcher from data collected through questionnaire.

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Conclusion

This study has provided a comprehensive examination of the dynamics of voting behaviour in Swat, shedding light on the complex interplay between individual-level factors, socio-cultural influences, and external stimuli that shape electoral decisions. The findings of this research underscore the significance of education, history of politics and age in influencing voting preferences, though the ethnicity religion and nationalism has a limited role in politics as reflect in the data collected and analysed. Most of the respondents believe in the independent and free participation of women in politics and voting, in contrast to the traditional point of view which believes in the limited social and political role of women other than domestic responsibilities, and the reason may be the overwhelming participation of the 18-32 age group respondents in the research. While The study's results have important implications for policymakers, political strategists, and scholars seeking to understand the electoral landscape in Swat . By recognizing the complex dynamics that drive voting behaviour, stakeholders can develop more effective strategies to engage voters, build coalitions, and foster inclusive democratic processes.While most of the people responded to the last question, do feel that the current economic and political crisis couldn't be expected from political parties to be resolved. Furthermore future research should continue to explore the nuances of voting behaviour in diverse contexts, incorporating innovative methodologies and interdisciplinary perspectives to deepen our understanding of this complex phenomenon. Ultimately, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse on voting behaviour, providing valuable insights for those seeking to promote democratic participation, representation, and accountability in Swat and beyond.

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