

Voting Behavior of Rural Women: A Study on Laxipur Village

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Abstract

Voting behavior is the subfield of political geography which deals with all the elections process within geographical area. This paper discusses on voting behavior in general of women at Laxipur village in Rajshahi. In any democratic country voting is very important political process and it is the only right of common people to participate in the formation of government. Voting behavior means how an individual makes up his mind to vote and this voting behavior is influenced by some social and psychological factors. The present study is based on field survey, primary data and secondary data as well as evidence, collected from published documents, news papers, journals etc.

Introduction : Bangladesh is a democratic country and it has parliamentary democracy as the governmental system. The governmental system of Bangladesh is a unitary. Democracy is the best desired government and social system of Bangladesh. Bangladesh is a thickly populated country and half of the people are women. Most of the women live in village. They are not conscious about their fundamental and others rights. They can not take any decision freely. They are influenced by husband, father, sons, and others family members. This paper discusses voting behavior pattern of women at Laxipur village in Rajshahi. The study of voting behavior and voting pattern are very important about rural women. Voting behavior is about how people tend to vote, why they do so, their choice and performance and voting pattern. Some social and psychological factors affect voting behavior of an individual.

Study area: Laxipur is a village at Bagha upzilla in Rajshahi district. Almost two thousand people live in this village. Agriculture is the main occupation of the people of this village. Most of the women are housewife and a few women are in other occupations. Most of the women did not complete higher education.

Objectives: 1.To write a follow-up on whether there has been any change in the present scenario than the earlier time regarding the behavior of rural women of Bangladesh about the voting/polling system.

2.To consider the effect of national politics on the behavior of rural women about the voting/ polling system or to ascertain if there is still any effect of husband or other male members of the family on it in the male dominated society.

3.To verify /examine how much rural women now a days know about what vote is or that to vote is their right.

4.To find out that, in the present rural power structure whether there is existence of casting their votes to whoever they want, that means whether women are able to cast votes depending on their own opinion.

5.To collect opinion and how behavior of rural women in Bangladesh can be improved regarding casting vote.

Methodology: The study is based on primary data -field survey and secondary data.

Voting behavior : Voting behavior is a form of [electoral behavior](#). Understanding voters' behavior can explain how and why decisions were made either by public decision-makers, which has been a central concern for [political scientists](#),¹or by the [electorate](#). To interpret voting behavior both [political science](#) and psychology expertise were necessary and therefore the field of [political psychology](#) emerged. Political psychology researchers study ways in which affective influence may help voters make more informed voting choices, with some proposing that affect may explain how the electorate makes informed political choices in spite of low overall levels of political attentiveness and sophistication.

To make inferences and predictions about behavior concerning a voting decision, certain factors such as gender, race, culture or religion must be considered. Moreover, key public influences include the role of emotions, political socialization, tolerance of diversity of political views and the media. The effect of

¹ [Jump up](#) Goldman, Sheldon (June 1966). "[Voting behavior on the United States Courts of Appeals, 1961-1964](#)". [The American Political Science Review](#). [Cambridge Journals](#). **60** (2): 374–383. [doi:10.2307/1953364](#). [JSTOR 1953364](#).

these influences on voting behavior is best understood through theories on the formation of **attitudes**, beliefs, schema, knowledge structures and the practice of information processing. For example, surveys from different countries indicate that people are generally happier in individualistic cultures where they have rights such as the right to vote.² Additionally, social influence and peer effects, as originating from family and friends, also play an important role in elections and voting behavior.³ An important question in this context is how to disentangle the social contagion by peers from external influences.⁴ The degree to which voting decision is affected by internal processes and external influences alters the quality of making truly democratic decisions.

Voting behavior types

The existing literature does not provide an explicit classification of voting behavior types. However, research following the **Cypriot referendum of 2004**, identified four distinct voting behaviors depending on the election type. Citizens use different decision criteria if they are called to exercise their right to vote in i) **presidential**, ii) **legislative**, iii) **local elections** or

in a iv) **referendum**.⁵ In national elections it is usually the norm that people vote based on their political beliefs. Local and regional elections differ, as people tend to elect those who seem more capable to contribute to their area. A referendum follows another logic as people are specifically asked to vote for or against a clearly defined policy.⁶

Interestingly, an older study in postwar Japan identified that urban citizens were more likely to be supportive of socialist parties, while rural citizens were favorable

² **Jump up** Diener, Ed (January 2000). "[Subjective well-being: the science of happiness and a proposal for a national index](#)". *American Psychologist*. *American Psychological Association* via *PsycNET*. **55** (1): 34–43. doi:10.1037/0003-066x.55.1.34. PMID 11392863.

³ **Jump up** Beck, PA, et al. (2002). The social calculus of voting: Interpersonal, media, and organizational influences on presidential choices. *Am Polit Sci Rev* 96 (1): 57-73.

⁴ **Jump up to:** Braha, D., & de Aguiar, M. A. (2016). [Voting Contagion](#). arXiv preprint arXiv:1610.04406

⁵ **Jump up to:** Braha, D., & de Aguiar, M. A. (2017). [Voting contagion: Modeling and analysis of a century of U.S. presidential elections](#). *PLoS ONE* 12(5): e0177970. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0177970>

⁶ **Jump up to:** Andreadis, Ioannis; Chadjipadelis, Th (2006). [Differences in voting behavior](#) (pdf). Fukuoka, Japan: *Proceedings of the 20th IPSA World Congress*. pp. 1–13. July 9–13, 2006.

of conservative parties. Regardless of the political preference, this is an interesting differentiation that can be attributed to affective influence.⁷

Voting behavior : factors influencing voting decision

The voting choice of a voter is the result of various interactions such as psychological, social, economic, and political factors that operate in her mind

Table No 1:

Question Pattern	Answer Pattern	Number of Response	Number of Percentage %
About idea of election	yes	40	80%
	no	10	20%
Awareness of vote	yes	34	68%
	no	6	12%
	No response	10	20%
Involvement of political party	yes	9	18%
	no	28	56%
	No response	13	26%
Local government is more important than national election	yes	31	62%
	no	7	14%
	No response	12	24%
	total	50	100%

The rural women of Bangladesh are not completely conscious about their own rights. While taking decision they are influenced by their husbands , sons, fathers or family members. The table shows that 80% rural women at Laxipur have idea of election but 20% women have no idea of election.68% women have been conscious about vote and 12% women are not conscious about what vote is . 62%

⁷ **Jump up** [Kyogoku, Jun'ichi; Ike, Nobutaka](#) (October 1960). "Urban-rural differences in voting behavior in postwar Japan". *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, part 2: City and Village in Japan. [University of Chicago Press](#). **9** (1): 167–185. [doi:10.1086/449885](#). [JSTOR 1151841](#).

rural women think that local government election is more important than national election. This is the real picture of Laxipur village.

Table no : 2

Family influence on voting behavior

Question Pattern	Answer Pattern	Number of Response	Number of Percentage %
Giving vote by own decision or opinion	yes	26	52%
	no	20	40%
	no response	4	8%
Giving vote influence by	parents	10	20%
	husband	30	60%
	neighbor	2	4%
	relatives	8	16%
Choosing party completely free	yes	25	50%
	no	15	30%
	no response	10	20%
Right democracy practice as a women	yes	35	70%
	no	15	30%
	Total	50	100%

The influence of family in individual voting behavior is an important elements in any democratic election. The family is considered as a learning environment in which child learn values, beliefs and attitudes both directly or indirectly . The data

in table 2 indicate that 20% respondents made their voting decision along with the family decision but 52% rural women can take own decision for giving vote .Now in the case of respondents giving more importance to family as determinant of voting behavior in the constituency is indeed influenced by a number of factors .As indicated the table 2 that 20% rural women influenced by parents, 60% husbands, 4% neighbor, 16% relatives. 50% women can choice party or candidate freely and 70 % rural women have right democratic practice.

Table No :3

Influencing voting behavior by economic status

Question Pattern	Answer Pattern	Number of Response	Number of Percentage %
Influence of black money	Local election	30	60 %
	National election	20	40 %
	Total	50	100 %

The table shows that 60 % rural women said influence by black money on local self –government and 40% national election. So, they can not give vote by their own choice or decision.

Conclusion :

The objective of this study is to find and get the clear idea of voting behavior at Laxipur village. Although it is not possible to depict the whole picture of voting behavior at Laxipur village from only a case study. After all, It has been determined that voting behavior at Laxipur village is not proper exercise and non participatory and their political participation is not good enough. But notable thing is that people of Laxipur has good relation with their local leaders but not with national level leaders. Their political knowledge is very poor and even they are

very callous to participate in political activities. Most of the women take their political decision like supporting candidate and giving vote in the election under the pressure and the guidance of male members of family ,basically husbands. Finally this study does not refer the whole picture of voting behavior of rural areas in Bangladesh but depicts the partial view.

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