



Voting Behavior of Rural People: The Role of Socio-Economic Factors in Sunamganj District

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Abstract

Voting is an important aspect of political participation in democratic countries. In Bangladesh, a major proportion of voters live in rural areas, and understanding the socio-economic factors that influence voting behavior is critical for assessing democratic participation at the grassroots level. This study investigates how different socio-economic factors influence voting behavior among rural voters in Santiganj Upazilla of Sunamganj district. The study used a quantitative research design, with primary data collected through structured questionnaires from 350 randomly selected voters in Joykalash Union. Descriptive statistics and chi-square tests were used to investigate the association between voting behavior and major socio-economic characteristics, including age, gender, education, income, and religion. The findings indicate that voting is motivated mostly by a sense of civic duty and concern for rural development. The results also show that education and age have a major impact on voting behavior, influencing both how frequently people vote and how they select candidates. More educated voters make issue-based, informed decisions, whereas less educated voters rely on party loyalty and personal connections. In contrast, income, religion, and gender have no significant effect on voting behavior. Overall, the findings of the study indicate that rural voting behavior is primarily influenced by civic awareness and education, rather than by income, religion, or gender. Improving political education and improving local democratic institutions may encourage more informed and meaningful election participation in rural areas.

Keywords: Voting behavior, election, political participation, civic engagement, rural people.

1. Introduction

Voting is the main form of political engagement in democratic nations. It is one of the most essential components of civic participation. It represents people's choices or views on issues, such as in elections or public surveys (MEd, 2023). It is a fundamental democratic right that allows citizens to participate in national governance. Voters' decisions are supreme in a democracy, and voting behavior is the combination of social, psychological, and attitudinal factors leading to a vote in an election (Anil, 2018). According to R.T. Jangam, "Voting behavior is the behavior which indicates the voter's choice preferences, alternatives, arguments, concerns, ideologies, programs, and so on in respect of various questions or issues on which the multiple elections may be contested and fought (Shelton, 2012). It is a combination of social, psychological, and attitudinal elements that lead to voting in an election. Several components influence it, including religion, caste, community, language, money, policy, and ideology (Sheikh, 2014). Bangladesh is a democratic country with a unitary form of government. The primary goal of democracy is citizen engagement in governance, and voting is the primary means of citizen participation in governance. Here, approximately 60% of the total population and a significant portion of voters reside in rural areas, and their voting choices are affected by their socio-economic conditions. National elections offer voters a formal route to express their political choices; however, the determinants influencing these preferences differ significantly among social groups. Addressing these differences is important for evaluating the quality of democratic engagement at the grassroots level. Santiganj Upazilla in Sunamganj is a rural setting where socio-economic differences, migratory patterns, and limited access to public facilities result in diverse political opinions. Examining the significance of socio-economic indicators in this setting reveals important insights into how rural voters make political decisions. The purpose of this study is to look into the socio-economic factors that influence voting behavior in rural areas. By identifying particular socio-economic determinants that influence political preferences, the study offers a broader knowledge of election behavior in rural Bangladesh and has implications for enhancing democratic engagement at the local level.

Objectives

1. To identify the key socio-economic characteristics that contribute to the voter decision.
2. To analyze how these socio-economic factors influence voting behavior in local elections.

2. Literature Review

(Verba, 1978) stated that four modes of political participation, such as voting, campaigning, communal activities, and particularized contact, influence voting behavior. Socio-economic factors such as education, income, age, and occupation influence these modes, affecting a person's political awareness and ability to act. (Hossain et al., 2017) explored the relationship of voting behavior with

socio-political and economic factors by comparing the voting behavior of casting and non-casting voters and the influences of socio-economic and political determinants of the voting behavior of local people. and discovered that age, gender, and social influence all had an impact on voting behavior. (Zahida, n.d.) stated that community leaders can influence voting behavior through their charismatic personalities and by involving religious and communal factors. Factors like caste, religion, money, policy, or ideology influence voting behavior. According to John C. Brigham (1976), personality and attitude characteristics influence voting behavior. Racial attitudes and candidate evaluations are key predictors of voting intentions. In this paper, the author administered measures of racial attitude, conceptual style, commitment to the candidate and electoral process, social-political orientation, candidate evaluation, and voting intentions, but ignored all other social factors. (Max, 1998) investigates several psychological theories and their significance to voting and the hierarchy of wants and values, and their impact on voting behavior. (Rounaq Jahan, 2015) examines Bangladesh's election process, political traditions, and how political parties influence voting behavior in national and local elections. The author explored the social, economic, and hereditary influence and power of political party members and analyzed how political parties influence voter views and behaviors during elections. But the author did not discuss voting perception among rural people. (Najib, 2021) holds the view that class, education, and social networks influence political activity. (M. Salimullah Khan, 2018) provides a keen and insightful examination of voter behavior within the socio-political setting of Bangladesh. Using historical patterns, social structures, and community influence, the book explains why different groups vote more actively.

While many of these studies investigate the factors that influence voting behavior, few provide insight into the rural dynamics. This study addresses a gap by examining how socio-economic factors influence voting decisions among rural individuals from various socio-economic backgrounds. Also, this study is unique in this sense that it is based directly on primary data collected from 350 participants and focuses on the socio-economic background of rural voters.

3. Methodology

Research Method

The study used a quantitative research methodology to explore the voting behavior of rural people in Santiganj Upazilla, Sunamganj, and their socio-economic factors. The study used structured survey questionnaires to collect data from a representative sample.

Study Area

The study area has chosen the largest union, Joykalash of Santiganj Upazila.in Sunamganj District. The total area of Joykalasah Union is 9585 acres, and 24 villages. There are 14545 male voters and 14143 female voters in the union. The literacy rate is 33%. The union has a diverse population that

includes people from various backgrounds, religious beliefs, and socioeconomic roots. (BANGLADESH BUREAU OF STATISTICS STATISTICS AND INFORMATICS DIVISION MINISTRY OF PLANNING GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH, 2011)

Population and Sampling

A sample size of 350 was determined based on the expected population of the chosen union, aiming for a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. This study used simple random sampling. This method involves randomly selecting participants from the population

Data Collection Technique

This study used structured questionnaires because this technique was adopted because it was appropriate for the research aims, which centered on investigating the socio-economic factors that lead to voting behavior.

Data Analysis Technique

The data were analyzed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version [IBM SPSS Statistics 25].

Reliability and Validity

In this study, ensuring the reliability and validity of the data was important to the credibility and robustness of the research conclusions. To ensure reliability, the structured questionnaire was carefully designed and administered.

Sample Characteristics

To conduct an in-depth examination of the voting behaviors of rural voters, it is necessary to define the socio-economic status or demographic characteristics of the participants. The following are the descriptive tables that outline the demographic traits of the voters in the sample:

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics: Age Range

Age	Participate no	percentage
(18-31)	114	32.2%
(32-45)	131	37.4%
(46-59)	52	14.9%
(60-73)	53	15.1%
Total	350	100%

[Source: Field survey]

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics: Gender Identity

Gender	Total	Percentage
Male	182	48.0%

Female	168	52.0%
Total	350	100%

[Source: Field survey]

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics: Income Range

Income (monthly)	Total	Percentage
(0-10000)	222	63.4%
(11000-20000)	87	24.9%
(12000-30000)	31	8.9%
(31000-40000 +)	10	2.9%
Total	350	100%

[Source: Field survey]

Table 4: Demographic Characteristics: Religion

Religion	Total	Percentage
Islam	270	77.1%
Hindu	80	22.9%
Christian	0	0
Buddhism	0	0
Total	350	100%

[Source: Field survey]

Table 5: Demographic Characteristics: Education

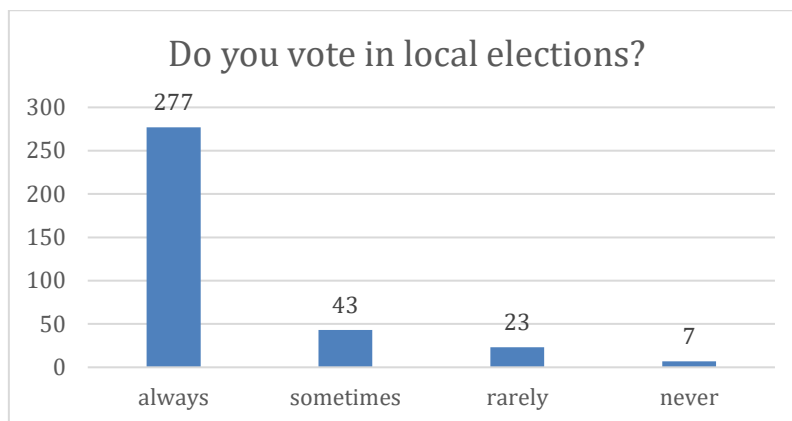
Education	Total	Percentage
Illiterate	29	8.3%
Primary	87	24.9%
Secondary	92	26.3%
Higher Secondary	51	14.6%
Honors/ Degree	68	19.4%
Madrasa	23	6.6%
Total	350	100%

[Source: Field survey]

4. Result Analysis

Number of Voters and Non-Casting Voters

Figure 1: Percentage Distribution of the Voters and Non-casting Voters

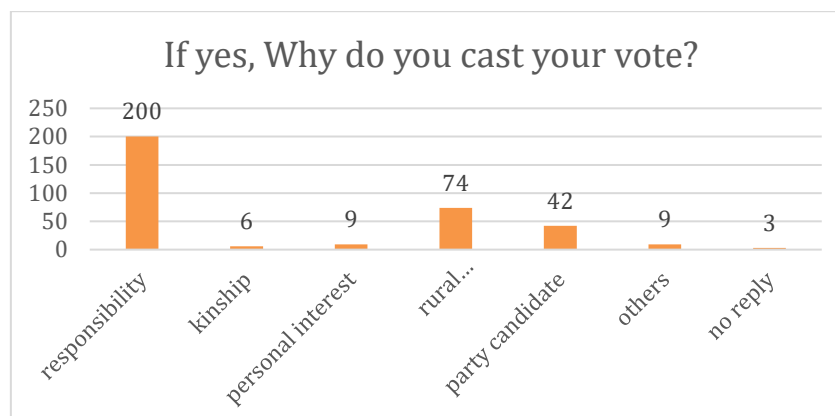


[Source: Field survey, Santiganj, March 2023]

Figure-1 shows that the high level of electoral engagement in rural areas, where 79.1% (277 respondents) always cast their vote in local elections, while 12.3 % (43 respondents) reported that they sometimes give their vote, indicating a high level of civic engagement within the community. This strong pattern of engagement provides a meaningful foundation for examining how variations in socio-economic conditions shape voters' choices and engagement in rural electoral processes.

Reason for Participating in the Local Election

Figure 2: Causes of Voting

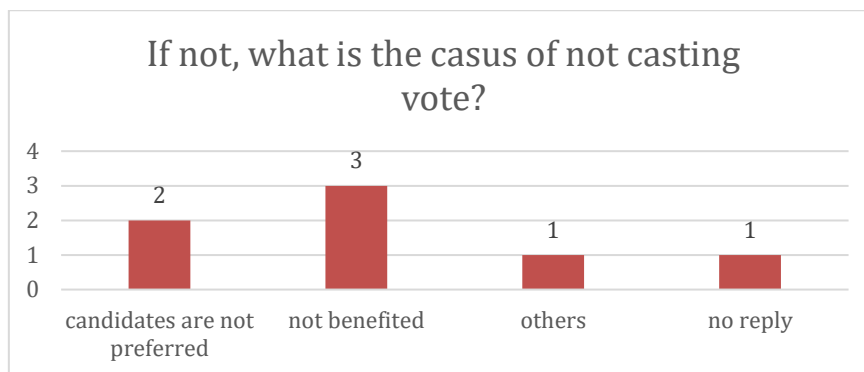


[Source: Field survey, Santiganj, March 2023]

Figure-2 indicates that the civic duty is the main driving force behind voting, and rural development is the second reason behind voting. Few participants mentioned kinship, fear, or social pressure as motivators, and party influence is a secondary issue. Overall, the findings show that rather than being influenced by outside forces, voters mostly participate for civic responsibility.

Reason for not Participating in the Local Election

Figure 3: Causes of Not Casting a Vote

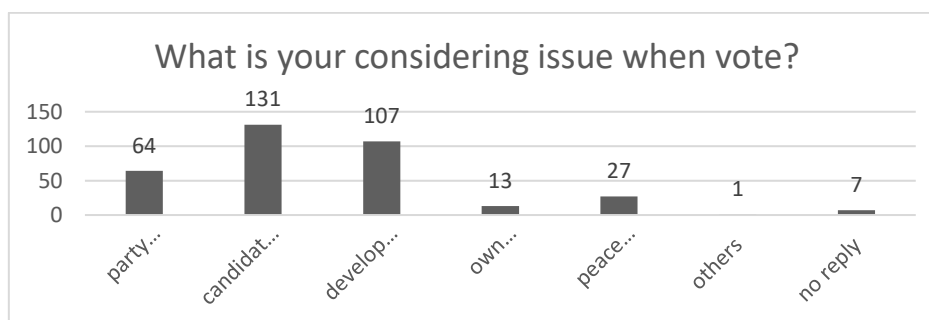


[Source: Field survey, Santiganj, March 2023]

Figure-3 provides an outline of the reasons for not casting a vote among respondents. A few percentage of respondents said they abstained because they didn't think voting would help them personally or because they weren't happy with the candidates. Overall, it indicates that non-voting is rare and it occurs in only a small number of isolated cases.

Considering Issues in the Vote

Figure 4: Considering Issues in Voting



[Source: Field survey, Santiganj, March 2023]

It is apparent from the Figure-4 that voters prioritize local development and candidate ideals when making electoral decisions, indicating a tendency for thoughtful, issue-based decision-making. Party influence is also an important consideration, but less influential than those issues. Overall, the results suggest that before casting a ballot, voters always consider several important factors, such as a candidate's ideology and the development of the area.

Socio-Economic Status and Voting Behavior

Age and Voting Behavior

Table 1: Association between age and voting behavior

S no	Statement		Age				Chi square P=value
			Young (18-31)	Middle (32-45)	Upper middle	Old (60-73)	
						Total	

(46-59)					
1	Do you vote in local elections?				
Always	97(27.7%)	103(29.4%)	33(9.4%)	44(12.6%)	277(79.1%)
Sometimes	10(2.9%)	18(5.1%)	11(3.1%)	4(1.1%)	43(12.3%)
Rarely	7(2%)	7(2%)	6(1.7%)	3(0.9%)	23(6.6%)
Never	0(0%)	3(0.9%)	2(0.6%)	2(0.6%)	7(2%)
Total	114(32.6%)	131(37.4%)	52(14.9%)	53(15.1%)	350(100%)
2.	If yes, why do you vote?				
Responsibility	82(23.9%)	86(25.1%)	20(5.8%)	12(3.5%)	200(58.3%)
Kinship	1(0.3%)	3(0.9%)	1(0.3%)	1(0.3%)	6(1.7%)
Personal interest	1(0.3%)	4(1.2%)	3(0.3%)	3(0.9%)	9(2.6%)
Rural development	16(4.7%)	20(5.8%)	22(6.4%)	16(4.7%)	74(21.6%)
Party candidate	10(2.9%)	9(2.6%)	15(1.5%)	18(5.2%)	42(12.2%)
Others	4(1.2%)	3(0.9%)	1(0.3%)	1(0.3%)	9(2.6%)
No reply	0(0%)	3(0.3%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	3(0.9%)
Total	114(33.2%)	128(37.3%)	51(14.6%)	51(14.9%)	343(100%)
3	What is your consideration when voting?				
Party candidate	12(3.4%)	29(8.3%)	9(2.6%)	14(4.0%)	64(18.3%)
Candidates ideals	52(14.9%)	43(12.3%)	19(5.4%)	17(4.9%)	131(37.4%)
Area development	45(12.9%)	34(9.7%)	16(4.6%)	12(3.4%)	107(30.6%)
Own religion's candidate	2(0.6%)	5(1.4%)	1(0.3%)	5(1.4%)	13(3.7%)
Peace making	3(0.9%)	17(4.9%)	4(1.1%)	3(0.9%)	27(7.7%)
Others	0(0%)	0(0%)	1(0.3%)	0(0%)	1(0.3%)
No reply	0(0%)	3(0.9%)	2(0.6%)	2(0.6%)	7(2.0%)
Total	114(32.6%)	131(37.4%)	52(14.9%)	53(15.1%)	350(100%)

The cross tabulation Table-1 indicates how age influences rural voters' motivations and evaluative criteria. It shows that there is no statistically significant correlation between age and voting rates in local elections ($p=0.074$), and the majority of voters across all ages vote regularly in local elections. On the other hand, there is a significant association between age and voting reasons ($p = 0.000$). Younger and middle-aged voters are largely motivated by responsibility, although upper-middle-aged and elderly voters are more focused on rural development and party affiliation. These differences suggest that civic responsibility is more common among younger generations, and developmental and party candidates become more influential as people age. Again, the crosstabulation indicates a significant connection between age and considering factors when selecting applicants ($p = 0.002$). Across all age groups, candidate ideals and area development are the most influential factors. Young

voters prioritize candidates' values and local development, whereas mid-aged voters balance ideals with peace-making concerns, while elderly respondents place a greater emphasis on affiliation with a party.

Overall, the findings show that age doesn't directly affect how often someone votes, but it does have a big effect on their reasons for choosing and how they judge candidates.

Gender and voting behavior

Table 2: Association between gender and voting behavior

S no	Statement	Gender			Chi square P=value
		Female	Male	Total	
1	Do you vote in local elections?				
	Always	125(35.7%)	152(43.4%)	277(79.1%)	$\chi^2=7.045$ (0.070)
	Sometimes	22(6.3%)	21(6%)	43(12.3%)	
	Rarely	16(4.6%)	7(2%)	23(6.6%)	
	Never	5(1.4%)	2(0.6%)	7(2%)	
	Total	168(48.0%)	182(52%)	350(100%)	
2.	If yes, why do you vote?				
	Responsibility	95(27.7%)	105(30.6%)	200(58.3%)	$\chi^2=11.110$ (0.085)
	Kinship	3(0.9%)	3(0.9%)	6(1.7%)	
	Personal interest	4(1.2%)	5(1.5%)	9(2.6%)	
	Rural development	28(8.2%)	46(13.4%)	74(21.6%)	
	Party candidate	23(6.7%)	19(5.5%)	42(12.2%)	
	Others	8(2.3%)	1(0.3%)	9(2.6%)	
	No reply	2(0.6%)	1(0.3%)	3(0.9%)	
	Total	163(47.5%)	180(52.5%)	343(100%)	
3	What is your consideration when voting?				
	Party candidate	32(9.1%)	32(9.1%)	64(18.3%)	$\chi^2=12.357$ (0.054)
	Candidates ideals	53(15.1%)	78(22.3%)	131(37.4%)	
	Area development	51(14.6%)	56(16.0%)	107(30.6%)	
	Own religion's candidate	8(2.3%)	5(1.4%)	13(3.7%)	
	Peace making	17(4.9%)	10(2.9%)	27(7.7%)	
	Others	1(0.3%)	0(0%)	1(0.3%)	
	No reply	6(1.7%)	1(0.3%)	7(2%)	
	Total	168(48.0%)	182(52.0%)	350(100%)	

It appears from the cross tabulation Table-2 that a deeper understanding of how gender affects various aspects of voting behavior, revealing small differences in reasons and issue concerns, despite general

similarities in participation. The crosstabulation suggests that gender has no significant impact on how often people vote in local elections ($p=0.070$). Both groups show a high commitment to electoral participation, implying that turnout behavior in rural areas is mostly gender-neutral. Again, a similar pattern emerges when examining the reasons for voting. Responsibility and rural development are the primary motivators for both genders, and there is no significant association between age and reasons for voting (0.085). Overall, male and female voters share a substantially similar motivating structure. In terms of issue consideration, both genders consider candidates' principles and local development as important factors of voting behavior, and there is no association between gender and the consideration of these factors (0.054).

Overall, the findings show that, while gender has no substantial impact on turnout or basic reasons, it does have a slight effect on the evaluative criteria of voters to understand candidates and local issues.

Religion and voting behavior

Table 3: Association between religion and voting behavior

S no	Statement	Religion			Chi square P=
		Islam	Hindu	Total	
1	Do you vote in local elections?				
	Always	214(61.1%)	63(18.0%)	277(79.1%)	$\chi^2=2.590^a$ (0.459)
	Sometimes	35(10.0%)	8(2.3%)	43(12.3%)	
	Rarely	15(4.3%)	8(2.3%)	23(6.6%)	
	Never	6(1.7%)	1(0.3%)	7(2.0%)	
	Total	270(77.1%)	80(22.9%)	350(100.0%)	
2.	If yes, why do you vote?				
	Responsibility	158(46.1%)	42(12.2%)	200(58.3%)	$\chi^2=8.510$ (0.203)
	Kinship	6(1.7%)	0(0%)	6(1.7%)	
	Personal interest	6(1.7%)	3(0.9%)	9(2.6%)	
	Rural development	55(16.0%)	19(5.5%)	74(21.6%)	
	Party candidate	30(8.7%)	12(3.5%)	42(12.2%)	
	Others	8(2.3%)	1(0.3%)	9(2.6%)	
	No reply	1(0.3%)	2(0.6%)	3(0.9%)	
	Total	264(77.0%)	79(23.0%)	343(100%)	
3	What is your consideration when voting?				
	Party candidate	50(14.3%)	14(4.0%)	64(18.3%)	$\chi^2=4.688$ (0.584)
	Candidates ideals	97(27.7%)	34(9.7%)	131(37.4%)	
	Area development	85(24.3%)	22(6.3%)	107(30.6%)	
	Own religion's candidate	12(3.4%)	1(0.3%)	13(3.7%)	
	Peace making	19(5.4%)	8(2.3%)	27(7.7%)	

Others	1(0.3%)	0(0%)	1(0.3%)
No reply	6(1.7%)	1(0.3%)	7(2.0%)
Total	270(77.1%)	80(22.9%)	350(100%)

The cross tabulation Table-3 shows that how religion influences voting participation, motivations, and decision-making criteria in local elections. It indicates no significant relationship between religion and voting rate in local elections ($p=0.459$). Both Muslim and Hindu respondents report always voting, implying that religious affiliation is not significantly associated with election participation. Similarly, there is no association between religion and the reasons for voting ($p=0.203$). Across groups, responsibility and rural development are the most important concerns. This suggests that civic responsibility and local issues trump religious affiliation when explaining why people vote. Again, religion is not significantly associated with considering the issue when voting. Both communities' priorities are candidates' values and area development, and few chose their own religious candidates, implying that religious identification plays a minor role in the evaluative factors voters employ when making decisions.

Overall, the findings indicate that religion rarely significantly influences rural voters' motivations or evaluative priorities or shapes their voting behavior.

Income and voting behavior

Table 4: Association between Income and Voting Behavior

S no	Statement	Income					Chi square P=value
		(0-10000)	(11000-20000)	(12000-30000)	(31000-40000+)	Total	
1	Do you vote in local elections?						
	Always	171(48.9%)	69(19.7%)	28(8.0%)	9(2.6%)	277(79.1%)	$\chi^2=6.122$ (0.728)
	Sometimes	29(8.3%)	11(3.1%)	2(0.6%)	1(0.3%)	43(12.3%)	
	Rarely	17(4.9%)	5(1.4%)	1(0.3%)	0(0%)	23(6.6%)	
	Never	5(1.4%)	2(0.6%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	7(2.0%)	
	Total	222(63.4%)	87(24.9%)	31(8.9%)	10(2.9%)	350(100.0%)	
2.	If yes, why do you vote?						
	Responsibility	120(35.0%)	50(14.6%)	23(6.7%)	7(2%)	200(58.3%)	$\chi^2=21.025$ (0.278)
	Kinship	4(1.2%)	0(0%)	1(0.3%)	1(0.3%)	6(1.7%)	
	Personal interest	5(1.5%)	4(1.2%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	9(2.6%)	
	Rural development	49(14.3%)	19(5.5%)	4(1.2%)	2(0.6%)	74(21.6%)	
	Party candidate	28(8.2%)	11(3.2%)	3(0.9%)	0(0%)	42(12.2%)	
	Others	89(2.3%)	1(0.3%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	9(2.6%)	
	No reply	3(0.9%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	3(0.9%)	
	Total	217(63.3%)	85(24.8%)	31(9.%)	10(2.9%)	343(100%)	

3	What is your consideration when voting?					
Party candidate	40(11.4%)	16(4.6%)	6(1.7%)	2(0.6%)	64(18.3%)	$\chi^2=18.327$ (0.434)
Candidates ideals	72(20.6%)	41(11.7%)	15(4.3%)	3(0.9%)	131(37.4%)	
Area development	77(22.0%)	17(4.9%)	8(2.3%)	5(1.4%)	107(30.6%)	
Own religion's candidate	8(2.3%)	4(1.1%)	1(0.3%)	0(0%)	13(3.7%)	
Peace making	18(5.1%)	8(2.3%)	1(0.3%)	0(0%)	27(7.7%)	
Others	1(0.3%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	1(0.3%)	
No reply	6(1.7%)	1(0.3%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	7(2%)	
Total	222(63.4%)	87(24.9%)	31(8.9%)	10(2.9%)	350(100%)	

The cross-tabulation Table-4 indicates that the relationship between household income and several aspects of voting behavior, and provides information about how economic status influences rural voters' participation in elections. The table shows that there is no significant association between voters' income and voting behavior ($p=0.728$). The majority of people in all income groups report voting in local elections on a regular basis, indicating that participation is generally regular regardless of financial situation. Again, when examining the reasons behind voting, it appears from the table that there is no significant association between them ($p=0.278$). Respondents from both higher and lower income groups highlight rural development and responsibility as their primary driving forces, indicating a common sense of community expectations that crosses financial boundaries. Crosstabulation also indicates that there is no association between financial condition and voting behavior ($p=0.434$).

Overall, these patterns indicate that income does not influence how, why, or on what basis rural people vote in local elections. This indicates that civic responsibility and communal identification may have a greater influence than individual economic status in determining election choices, and voters prefer community wellbeing over personal financial concerns when participating in political processes.

Education and Voting Behavior

Table 5: Association between Education and Voting Behavior

S no	Statement	Education						Chi square P=
		Illiterate	Primary	Secondary	H.Secondary	Honors	Madrasa	Total
1	Do you vote in local elections?							
	Always	18(5.1%)	61(17.4%)	72(20.6%)	43(12.3%)	66(18.9%)	17(4.9%)	277(79.1%)
	Sometimes	3(0.9%)	16(4.6%)	16(4.6%)	5(1.4%)	0(0.0%)	3(0.9%)	43(12.3%)

Rarely	7(2.0%)	6(1.7%)	2(0.6%)	3(0.9%)	2(0.6%)	3(0.9%)	23(6.6%)	$\chi^2=48.702$ (0.000)
Never	1(0.3%)	4(1.1%)	2(0.6%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	7(2.0%)	
Total	29(8.3%)	87(24.9%)	92(26.3%)	51(14.6%)	68(19.4%)	23(6.6%)	350(100%)	
2. If yes, why do you vote?								
Responsibility	6(1.7%)	35(10.2%)	54(15.7%)	33(9.6%)	57(16.6%)	15(4.4%)	200(58.3%)	$\chi^2=87.791$ (0.000)
Kinship	1(0.3%)	0(0%)	3(0.9%)	2(0.6%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	6(1.7%)	
Personal interest	2(0.6%)	3(0.9%)	0(0%)	3(0.9%)	0(0%)	1(0.3%)	9(2.6%)	
Rural development	5(1.5%)	27(7.9%)	23(6.7%)	7(2.0%)	9(2.6%)	3(0.9%)	74(21.6%)	
Party candidate	12(3.5%)	14(4.1%)	7(2%)	6(1.7%)	1(0.3%)	2(0.6%)	42(12.2%)	
Others	2(0.6%)	2(0.6%)	2(0.6%)	0(0%)	1(0.3%)	2(0.6%)	9(2.6%)	
No reply	0(0%)	2(0.6%)	1(0.3%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	3(0.9%)	
Total	28(8.2%)	83(24.2%)	90(26.2%)	51(14.9%)	68(19.8%)	23(6.7%)	343(100%)	
3 What is your consideration when voting?								
Party candidate	13(3.7%)	14(4%)	21(6.0%)	10(2.9%)	3(0.9%)	3(0.9%)	64(18.3%)	$\chi^2=77.963$ (0.000)
Candidates ideals	2(0.6%)	39(11.1%)	29(8.3%)	21(6.0%)	36(10.3%)	4(1.1%)	131(37.4%)	
Area development	5(1.4%)	19(5.4%)	29(8.3%)	14(4.0%)	27(7.7%)	13(3.7%)	107(30.6%)	
Own religion's candidate	4(1.1%)	5(1.4%)	2(0.6%)	2(0.6%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	13(3.7%)	
Peace making	3(0.9%)	7(2.0%)	9(2.6%)	4(1.1%)	2(0.6%)	2(0.6%)	27(7.7%)	
Others	1(0.3%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	1(0.3%)	
No reply	1(0.3%)	3(0.9%)	2(0.6%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	1(0.3%)	7(2%)	
Total	29(8.3%)	87(24.9%)	92(26.3%)	51(14.6%)	68(19.4%)	23(6.6%)	350(100%)	

The cross-tabulation Table-5 shows that the association between voters' education level has a significant impact on shaping people's voting participation, motivations, and considerations when selecting candidates in local elections. Voter participation and education level are significantly correlated ($p=0.000$). Higher educated people report the highest frequency of regular voting. On the other hand, illiterate respondents exhibit significantly lower participation, emphasizing the crucial role that education plays in voting engagement. Similarly, there is a strong association between education and the reasons behind voting ($p=0.000$). More educated voters place more emphasis on civic duty; on the other hand, less educated respondents show greater preference for party candidates or kinship-based factors, indicating that education increases voters' attention to civic and developmental issues. Education also significantly influences citizens' consideration when voting. While less educated voters place more emphasis on party affiliation and personal links, more educated

respondents place more weight on candidates' values and local development. These results show that education influences voters' decision-making process as well as their propensity to participate.

Overall, educational qualification has shown as an important indicator of voting behavior, with higher education encouraging greater involvement and a more issue-oriented, informed political decision-making process.

5. Major Findings of the Study

The study's main purpose is to identify the key socio-economic characteristics that contribute to the voter decision in rural settings and to analyze how these socio-economic factors influence voting behavior in the local election. Based on the field data from 350 participants and statistical analysis from SPSS, the findings explain how socio-economic factors, including age, gender, education, income, and religion, affect voting behavior in local elections.

Among the total respondents, 79.1% always vote, and 12.3% sometimes vote in local elections. A total of 91.4% respondents actively participated in the local election. It indicates a high level of civic responsibility. When asked why they vote, the most popular reasons were a sense of civic duty (48.3%) and rural development (21.1%). Only 2.62% expressed personal interest, with a tiny number citing kinship, fear, or other reasons. These findings show that most electors are motivated by a feeling of duty and developmental concerns. When it comes to considering issues, when vote 37.4% prioritized candidate ideas, 30.57% focused on area development, and 18.29% on party candidates. These data also show that candidates' talents and development plans are more important than party support. The data analysis demonstrates that socio-economic characteristics such as age, gender, occupation, income, religion, and education have a significant effect on defining voting behavior among rural voters. Age has a big impact on voting behavior, with the 32-45 age group having the highest participation, followed by those 18-31. Participation decreases in older age groups, 46-73. While civic responsibility is the most common reason for voting among all ages, elderly voters prioritize rural development and party candidates. Gender played an important role in voting engagement. While both male and female respondents regularly participated in elections, males had a slightly greater engagement rate than females. Both genders stated responsibility and development as primary motivators, while males were slightly more influenced by party identification. Income did not have a major impact on voting frequency. Voter turnout was high across all socio-economic categories. This suggests that economic position does not have a substantial influence on voting participation in the investigated rural context. Religious identity was not identified as an influencing element. Muslim and Hindu voters followed similar voting patterns and motivations. In both categories, responsibility and rural development were the most important motivations for voting, with religious identity having little influence on vote choice. Education is more obviously related to voter attitudes. Higher education holders are more likely to vote based on

candidate principles and civic values, while less educated voters are more affected by party identity and development goals. Even illiterate respondents show high involvement, indicating wide civic awareness.

Overall, while all socio-economic characteristics affected voting behavior, education and age showed the largest relationships. Civic responsibility and development appeared as the most constant motivators across all demographic categories, with little influence from religion or income.

6. Conclusion

Elections have long been a feature of the democratic process. Elections protect democratic freedom, transfer power, and provide leadership opportunities. Local elections have created a connection between the electorate and candidates. Local elections hold equal importance to national elections. The study found that several factors influence residents' voting behavior. They were encouraged to vote and sometimes prevented from voting for significant reasons. The findings also indicate that voting behavior in rural areas is influenced by a complex interaction of social norms, community influence, and political awareness, rather than a single factor. Despite organizational limits, rural voters show a strong sense of civic responsibility, which sustains the political process. These outcomes indicate that increasing local governance and community-level political education can improve the quality of rural electoral participation.

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