

Transformation Of Voting Behaviour And Emerging Political Dynamics In Uttarakhand

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ABSTRACT

The current study explores the evolution of voting behavior and political dynamics in the state of Uttarakhand, with emphasis placed on the involvement in elections, the factors affecting voting decisions, change in voting behaviour and political dynamics. A descriptive cross-sectional research approach is used for data collection, and the information about 120 respondents is gathered through a structured questionnaire survey. The data analysis is carried out using the frequency and percentage analysis. The results indicate that 65.0% of the respondents always vote, which means that the level of election involvement is rather high. Image and credibility of candidates is the most important factor affecting voting decisions (24.2%), whereas political parties and their ideology (21.7%) and development and employment issues (20.0%) are of secondary importance to the respondents. With regard to changes in voting behaviour, the increase in the importance of development (28.3%) and candidate performance (22.5%) is indicated. In addition, it is found that the development politics (25.8%) and the need for accountability in governance (22.5%) are the most pronounced political dynamics, followed by the rise of influence of youth voters (19.2%) and regional/local issues (16.7%). Overall, the study indicates that voting behaviour in Uttarakhand is becoming more development-oriented, performance-based and politically aware, with changing patterns of political communication and a comparatively declining influence of traditional political factors.

Keywords: Voting Behaviour; Political Dynamics; Electoral Participation; Uttarakhand; Political Awareness; Voter Preferences.

1. INTRODUCTION

Vote Behaviour is an essential aspect of democratic politics because it depicts how citizens vote according to political, social, economic, and regional factors. In the Indian context, the voting behaviour of citizens has started changing due to political consciousness, change in socio-economic factors, information, and governance and development. Today, citizens are not guided solely by familial or social factors like caste, community, or party affiliations; issues such as employment, development, credibility of the candidate, performance of the government, etc., have started assuming significance in electoral behaviour.

Uttarakhand is a significant case study for studying these developments due to the unique geographical, social, and political nature of the region. Hill versus plain issue, regional issues, migrations, job-related problems, aspirations and demands of the youth, as well as their quest for balanced development, affect the political perspectives and voting behaviour of the population. In addition, the increased usage of social media and electronic tools provides voters with alternative venues for obtaining information about politics and assessing politicians and political parties. These developments have contributed to changes in the nature of political participation and voter expectations across the state.

Given this scenario, the current research work studies the changes in voting behavior and evolving political dynamics in Uttarakhand. This study highlights the aspects of political participation, main determinants of voting behavior, perception of change in voting behavior, and evolving trends like development politics, good governance, participation of youth, regional issues, and political communication through technology. This study aims at providing an overall picture about the impact of evolving voter preferences on the contemporary political environment of Uttarakhand.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Jakimow (2019) studied how the evolving relationship between municipal councillors and the electorate in Dehradun was shaping up, especially in relation to the roles played by women municipal councillors in politics. Using ethnographic methods and case studies of women municipal councillors, it was discovered that the councillors were being cast as *naukrani* or “servants,” individuals who were supposed to cater to the needs of an ever more empowered electorate. The study further identified some emerging political subjectivities, especially those among the middle classes, and proved that evolving voter expectations were altering local politics and representation. The findings were relevant to understanding the changing relationship between voters and political representatives in Uttarakhand.

Monika (2025) analyzed the evolving electoral geography and political performance of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the parliamentary elections of India between 1984 and 2024. This analysis used electoral data, spatial analysis, and other sources to assess regional differences in the voting patterns of BJP as well as broader trends in India’s party system. The results showed that the political performance of BJP in elections varied among different regions, with changes in the party’s performance in northern regions and improvements in the south showing the significance of regional political dynamics and party adaptation strategies. Thus, this analysis proved that the election behaviour and political competition in India could not be explained by national trends alone.

Tillin (2020) investigated the underlying regional politics involved in the process of reorganisation of the Hindi heartland and formation of new states such as Uttarakhand in the year 2000. Through this investigation, he brought out state formation against the political and social transformations that had been evolving for several years and demonstrated that there was a relationship between territorial reorganisation and regional political interests, regional identities, political participation and power relations. The relevance of regional political dynamics in understanding the formation of new states and the subsequent development of political identity in these states was emphasised.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main research objectives are:

- To examine the shifting electoral behaviour patterns in Tehri Garhwal and Nainital district in relation to Uttarakhand's larger political framework.
- To comparatively examine the change in electoral behaviour and political dynamics in the pre-digital era and the post-digital era, with special reference to the Tehri Garhwal and Nainital district.
- To evaluate how voter preferences and decision-making vary in Assembly and Parliamentary elections.
- To assess both the threats and opportunities of digitalization on the democratic processes in the region.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research utilized a systematic approach in analyzing the changes in voting behaviour and politics in Uttarakhand. The approach considered the study design, sample, data collection procedure, variables and analysis of data.

3.1 Research Design

The current research employed a descriptive cross-sectional approach in analyzing the change in voting behaviour and emerging politics in Uttarakhand. The current research considered various elements including voting participation, factors affecting voter behavior, changes in voting behavior, and emerging politics.

3.2 Study Population and Sample Size

The survey was carried out among 120 respondents of Uttarakhand who had the qualifications to become part of the election process. A total of 120 respondents were chosen for the study to understand the voting behavior of the respondents.

3.3 Sampling Technique

In this research study, convenience sampling methodology was adopted. Participants were selected depending on their availability and willingness to respond to the questionnaire related to voting behaviour and politics in Uttarakhand.

3.4 Data Collection

The primary data was obtained from the respondents through a structured questionnaire. The questions in the questionnaire related to the frequency of involvement in the electoral process, factors affecting the voters' decision making, changes in their behavior, and the emerging political dynamics. The responses were collected systematically and subsequently organised for analysis.

3.5 Variables Covered in the Study

The research study considered four key dimensions in respect of voting behavior and politics. These were: (a) voter turnout and voting preferences; (b) determinants of voting behavior; (c) changes in voting behavior; and (d) political dynamics. These four dimensions of the problem have been chosen to understand not only the existing voter turnout but also its changing characteristics.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis employed descriptive statistical methods, mainly frequency and percentage analyses. Findings were summarized in four tables and their respective graphs for easier understanding of the answers. The calculation of percentages was done using the total number of respondents, which was 120, as the denominator.

5. RESULTS

Table 1 represents the voting behavior and political choices of the 120 respondents. Table 1 classifies respondents based on the frequency of their participation in elections, from high-frequency voters to infrequent voters. Figure 1 shows the visual presentation of the respondents' distribution based on the frequency of their voting behavior.

Table 1: Voting Participation and Electoral Preferences among Respondents

Voting Behaviour	Frequency	Percentage
Always vote in elections	78	65.0
Usually vote but occasionally abstain	25	20.8
Vote only when strongly interested	11	9.2
Rarely participate in elections	6	5.0
Total	120	100.0

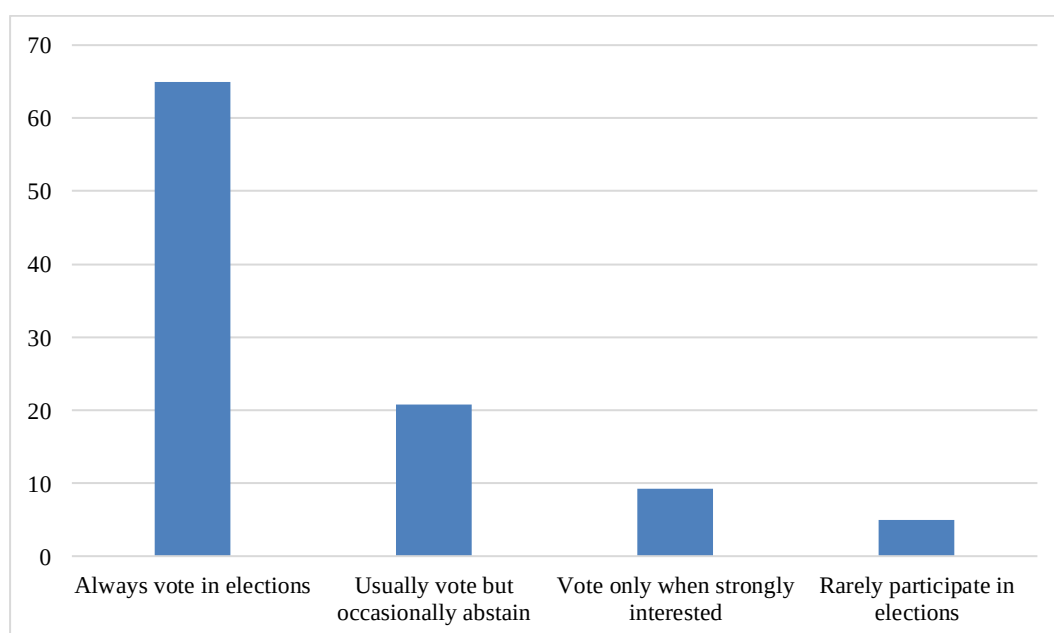


Figure 1: Graphical Representation of Voting Participation and Electoral Preferences among Respondents

Based on the results, 65.0% of the participants claimed to vote all the time during elections, which is the highest percentage within the sample. 20.8% of the people said that while they voted regularly, there were times when they did not take part. Moreover, 9.2% of the people said that they voted only if they had a strong interest in the election. Only 5.0% of the people participated occasionally. Overall, the findings suggest a high level of electoral participation among the respondents, with most demonstrating regular involvement in the electoral process.

Table 2 displays the main factors cited by the 120 respondents that affect their voting behavior. The factors are those relating to the candidates, politics, ideology, development/employment, local/regional factors, welfare/government performance, and the influence of the family/community. Figure 2 shows the graphical representation of the distribution of respondents on these factors.

Table 2: Major Factors Influencing Voting Behaviour among Respondents

Factor influencing voting decision	Frequency	Percentage
Candidate's image and personal credibility	29	24.2
Political party and ideology	26	21.7
Development and employment issues	24	20.0
Local/regional issues	19	15.8
Welfare schemes and government performance	13	10.8
Family/community influence	9	7.5
Total	120	100.0

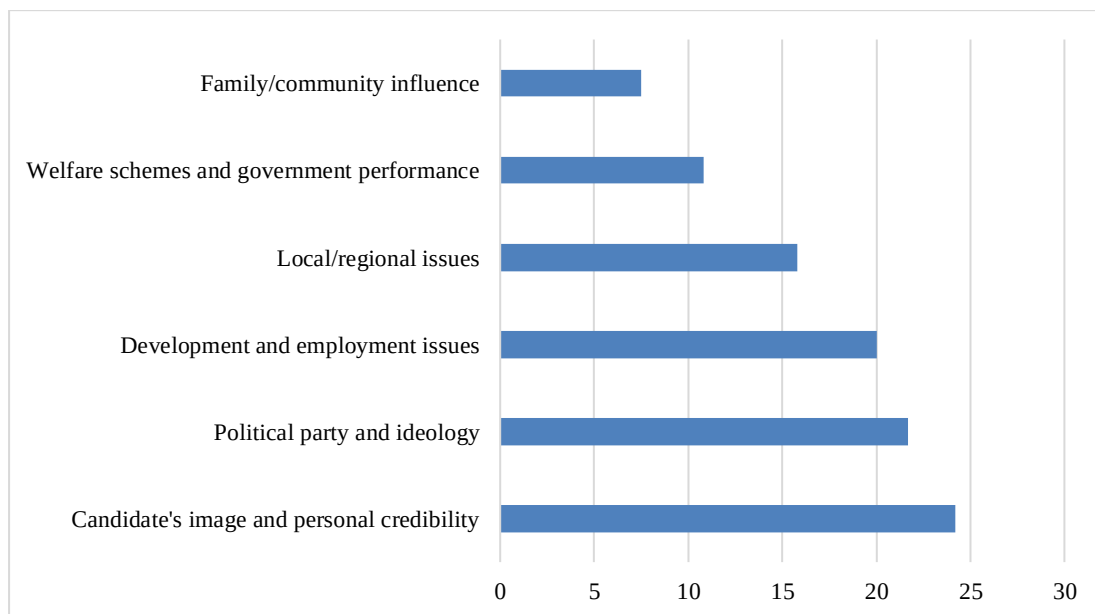


Figure 2: Graphical Representation of Major Factors Influencing Voting Behaviour among Respondents

The results indicate that the image/personal credibility of the candidate was the most influencing one (24.2%), followed by the political party/ideology (21.7%). Development/employment concerns affected 20.0% of the people, and local/regional issues were a reason to vote for 15.8%. The welfare schemes/government performance affected 10.8%, while family/community influence was the least influencing one, accounting for 7.5%. It means that the voting process was affected mainly by the personal credibility of the candidates, political ideologies, and development problems rather than traditional factors like family and community influence.

The following Table 3 gives an overview of the changes in the voting behavior of the respondents. The data in Table 3 is about the changes that occurred due to development agenda, candidate performance, influence of tradition/community, information from the Internet/social media, and political awareness. Figure 3 is a graphical representation of these changes.

Table 3: Perceived Changes in Voting Behaviour in Uttarakhand

Perceived change in voting behaviour	Frequency	Percentage
Increased importance of development issues	34	28.3
Greater focus on candidate performance	27	22.5
Reduced influence of traditional/community factors	22	18.3

Increased influence of social media and digital information	20	16.7
Greater political awareness among voters	17	14.2
Total	120	100.0

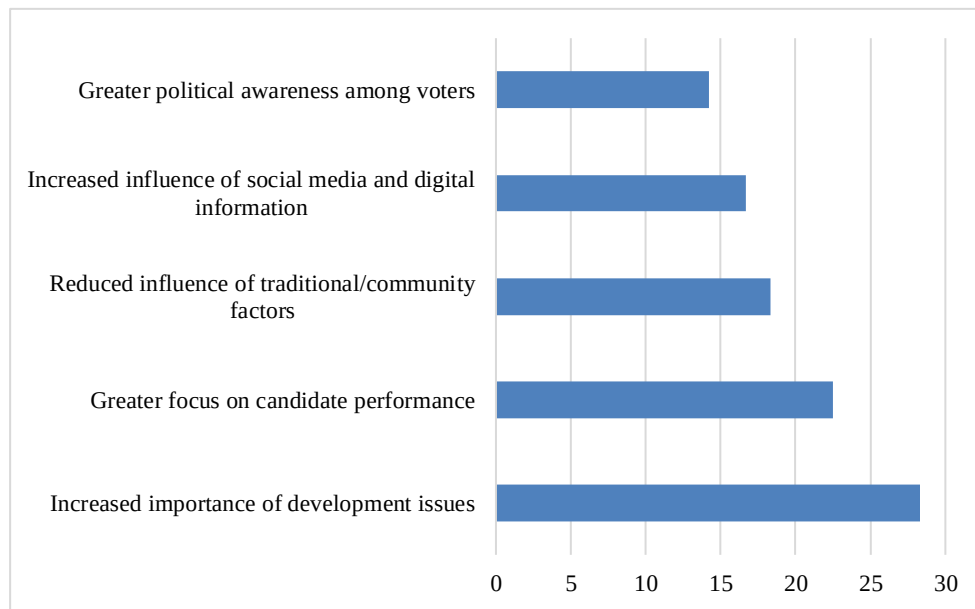


Figure 3: Graphical Representation of Perceived Changes in Voting Behaviour in Uttarakhand

According to the results, 28.3% of those surveyed felt that there was an increase in importance of development in their vote choices, which is the highest percentage recorded. The next highest were those who thought that there was increased emphasis on candidate performance (22.5%). There were 18.3% who felt that there was decreased influence of traditional or community factors, and 16.7% who mentioned the increased influence of social media. In addition, there were 14.2% who felt that there was increased political awareness among voters. Overall, the findings suggest a shift towards development-oriented, performance-based and digitally influenced voting behaviour, accompanied by a gradual reduction in the influence of traditional factors.

Table 4 shows the political dynamics that were seen to emerge from the views of the 120 respondents from Uttarakhand. Table 4 is about development politics, responsible government, involvement of the youth, regional politics, use of technology and social media for politics, and the persistent nature of traditional politics. Figure 4 is a visual presentation of the same.

Table 4: Emerging Political Dynamics Perceived by Respondents in Uttarakhand

Emerging political dynamic	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Increasing importance of development politics	31	25.8
Stronger demand for accountable governance	27	22.5
Growing influence of youth voters	23	19.2
Greater prominence of regional/local issues	20	16.7
Increasing role of digital and social media politics	12	10.0
Continued influence of traditional political networks	7	5.8
Total	120	100.0

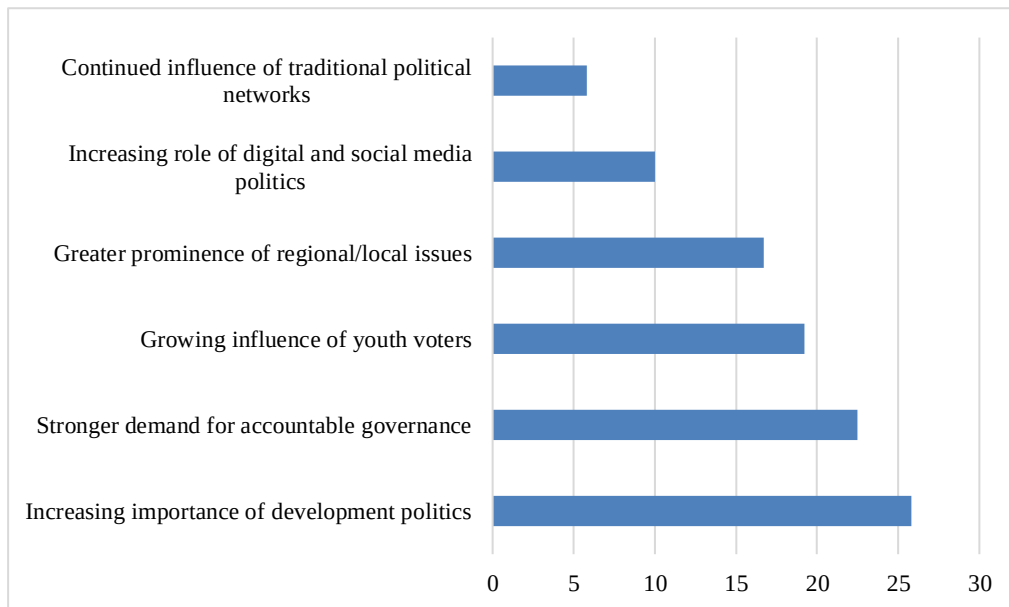


Figure 4: Graphical Representation of Emerging Political Dynamics Perceived by Respondents in Uttarakhand

Based on the results of the study, the increasing significance of development politics is found to be the most frequently cited emerging trend, mentioned by 25.8% of those surveyed, with the rising need for accountable governance cited second with 22.5%. Increasing power of young voters is cited by 19.2% of those interviewed, while 16.7% mention increasing significance of regional/local issues. Growing importance of digital and social media politics is cited by 10.0% of the survey participants, compared to just 5.8% that cite the persisting power of traditional political networks. Overall, the findings indicate a shift towards development, accountability, youth participation, and regional concerns, while the relative influence of traditional political networks appears to be declining.

6. DISCUSSION

From the results obtained from this research, one can conclude that the voting behavior of people in Uttarakhand is gradually changing. Most of the survey participants mentioned that they are consistent participants in the voting process, thus indicating their active interest in this democratic process. The image of the candidate and the credibility of his candidacy were the most important criteria that influenced the voting behavior of people, followed by the political party and ideology as well as development and employment issues. This additional significance of development issues and the performance of candidates implies that people are interested in the performance, credibility, and efficiency of political representatives. At the same time, the comparatively lower influence of family and community factors indicates a gradual movement away from traditional patterns of electoral decision-making towards more individual and issue-based choices.

The results also demonstrate several changes occurring in the evolving political dynamics of Uttarakhand. Development politics and the need for good governance have been cited as two of the most significant trends, along with the rising importance of the youth vote and region-specific issues. The rise in the importance of social media and digital data also reflects several changes in the manner in which voters' access and share political information. The diminishing influence of traditional and community-related influences, along with the rising focus on development,

accountability, and the performance of the candidates, implies that the political scenario in Uttarakhand is transforming into an issue-focused, performance-oriented and politically aware one. Overall, the findings reflect a changing electorate in which contemporary development concerns and new forms of political participation are increasingly shaping voting behaviour.

7. CONCLUSION

The study has revealed that the political behaviour in terms of voting in the state of Uttarakhand is going through a slow but certain transformation into an issue-oriented and developmental one. The study indicates a relatively high rate of election turnout, where 65.0% of respondents always take part in elections, with candidate credibility, political parties and ideologies, as well as issues related to development and employment playing important roles in decision making process. Respondents have also shown a higher level of significance attributed to development issues, candidate performance, political awareness and electronic information, together with a decrease in the role of traditional and community-based factors. In addition, development politics, accountable governance, youth involvement and regional issues have been found to be significant elements of the changing political environment. Overall, the study indicates that voter preferences in Uttarakhand are increasingly shaped by development, accountability, candidate performance and changing forms of political communication, reflecting the evolving nature of contemporary electoral politics in the state.

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