

# Existentialism of People's Choice Study, 1940 in Rural Punjab

## Abstract

The present study focuses on replicating the People's choice study in context of Punjab elections, 2017. In this research paper, the researcher has analysed the voting behaviour of voters during the assembly elections, 2017 and has also studied the factors influencing the preferences of voters like age, peer, family and also media. The researcher has focused on analysing the influence of Medias on the minds of people.

A survey was done taking all the parameters as they were in People's choice study and data was collected and analysed. With the collected data it was concluded that media definitely impacts the voting behaviour of the voters, but personal contact and word of mouth are still the most influential mode of communication. Along with this, it was also concluded that new media is also playing an important role in elections. Today, youngsters relay on mobile phone for information. Thus, mobile phone acts as an opinion leader for them. The major finding of the study is that two step flow theory is still applicable in rural Punjab as far as media impact is concerned.

**Keywords:** Existentialism, People's Choice Study, Communication.

## Introduction

Existentialism is the replication of a particular concept, idea or a theory to a certain its existence.

Today many types of mass media tools are available in the society and audiences have too many options to choose the source of information and entertainment. Convergence of media content and technologies has also led to change in communication patterns in the society. With this research the researcher has analysed the effect of medias on rural population and also, which type of media is popular and why among various strata's of rural society.

## Review of Literature

Shearon A. Lowery and Melvin L. Defleur in their book '*Milestones in Mass Communication Research*' have discussed in detail, the various studies regarding the media effects on the audience. Lowery and Defleur have discussed studies of Limited effects as well as studies of mass society. The book provides a wide range of opinions regarding the media effects where the studies of limited effects claim that the media content mostly act as a source of information for the audience whereas those prophesying the direct influence of media content claimed that media operators could effects the audience in order to achieve the desired goals. For the contrast between (Lowery and Defleur, 1983) the study concluded by Edgar Dale and Paul Lazarsfeld presents two different viewpoints of direct influence of media and media as source of information only. The authors have outlined fourteen such studies with mixed results and are considered as milestones in media research.

Stanley J. Baran and Danis K Davis in their book '*Mass Communication Theory- Foundations, Ferment and Future*' have discussed in detail the emergence of scientific perspective in mass communication research. The book traces the history of mass communication studies and claims that to study mass communication theory it becomes very important to have a strong historical grounding in the development of media studies. The book gives the overview of mass society theory where media are influencing the audience and undermining the social order. Thus media (Baran & Davis, 2006) lays its direct effect on the defenceless and passive audience. However the authors also claim that the isolated people are more affected by the media content rather than those are more social and well connected. Besides the concept of mass society the book also acknowledge the limited effects of mass media on the influence. The authors have highlighted the concept and role of gatekeepers, opinion

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leaders and opinion followers in opinion formation. The authors have presented a contrast between the claims of mass society as well as the concept of limited effects.

Elizabeth M. Perse in her book '*Media Effects and Society*' talks about the paradigm shift occurred in media effects research. She focuses on theoretical explanations of media effects research. She focuses on theoretical explanations of media effect studies highlighting the various attributes of media which make its character both positive and negative. The outline provided by the author on media functioning can help the media practitioners and users to mitigate the harmful effects of the media. Her work provides a comprehensive treatment to all the efforts made in the past to study the true nature of media. Unlike Frank Esser, while tracing the brief history of mass communication research, Perse (2001) divides these paradigm shifts into three phases and discusses the four broad categories of media effects models including *Direct, Conditional, Cumulative and Cognitive Automatic Effects*. Perse uses notions including consonance, audience selectivity, priming to support her ideas on mass media effects. Perse, apart from the media effect studies, also highlighted the uses of media by the audiences in learning process and stimulating their emotions and the things learned from media become the basis for knowledge, attitudes and later result in actions.

David K. Perry in his book '*Theory and Research in Mass Communication: Contexts and Consequences*' talks about the process of theory construction in mass communication research. He tries to explain the first phase of mass communication research started with questions like why media violence and sexual content leads to antisocial and criminal behaviour. The author explains the account of mass communication models. Perry (2002) claims that, like other disciplines, the field of mass communication research also relies on past achievements providing the basis for further study. Therefore it becomes necessary to trace the history of mass communication research in order to understand a particular tool of mass communication and future implications. The author also explains that field of mass communication different from other academic disciplines as it uses a broad variety of tools in analysing the effects of media. The author's work on media effects is an attempt to explain the intended and unintended effects of mass communication content. Perry describes the intended effects as which lead to persuasion and attitudinal change. The author highlights the role played by source in persuasion and importance of selecting a right channel to target the audience for desired results. Therefore credibility of source, content of message and the selection of suitable medium are the important elements of mass communication process which are required to be considered before sending a message to the target audience. On the other hand the media content designed for intended results may lead to unintended effects like antisocial behaviour; crime and violence are not desired by the source.

ATM Shahjahan and Kutab Uddin Chisty (2014) in their research paper on 'Social Media Research and its Effects on our Society' have discussed that how social media has become an integral part of people's life. Social media has changed the media choices of people. The audiences have shifted to social media like facebook and twitter, leaving behind the popularity of electronic and print media. Social media has also become an integral part of political campaigning. Social media today has become the biggest source of information and awareness.

In the research paper 'The Impact of Social Networking Sites on the Youth' Khurana (2015) talks about how social media is changing the information gathering techniques of the students. This paper basically deals with how social media is changing the mindsets and habits of gathering information and learning. The youth today spends abundant time on social media. They approximately spend two hours on social media everyday. Therefore, social media is influencing all the dimensions of their lifestyle and personality.

Khurana. N. (2015) 'The Impact of Social Networking Sites on Youth' published in journal of Mass Communication And Journalism., ISSN-2165-7912 Volume S Issue IZ retrieved on April24,2017.

Shahjahan, A.T.M. Chisty, Kutumb. Uddin (2014) 'Social Media Research and its effect on our Society published in Journal of Information and Communication Engineerius. Vol.8. No.6. coset.org/publication/9998891.retrieved on May 17,2017

Joseph Kahna and Benjamin Boyer (2018) in their article on the political significance of social media activity and social networks have revealed that youth today depends a lot on social media for gaining information. The study shows that youth today are influenced both by word of mouth and social media. But their interaction with digital media is influencing their mindsets.

Kahna, Joseph. And Bowyer, Benjamin (2018) 'The Political Significance of Social Media activity and social networks' published in journal of Political Communication.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2018.1426662> retrieved on May4, 2018.

#### **Duration of the Study**

The researcher took 17 months to complete this research work.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

The study is based on People's choice study. With this study the researcher has focused on analysing the impact of media on the voting behaviour of the people of rural Punjab during assembly elections of 2017.

#### **People's Choice Study**

It was funded by Rockefeller Foundation, Life Magazine, Columbia University's office of Radio Research and Elmo Roper, the public opinion analyst.

For the study the researcher decided to carry out a survey on a small country, Erie, in Ohio. It had a population of 25,000. In this particular city; there were only two radio and newspapers sources of information

available thus making it apt for conducting the research.

It was a longitudinal research. With the analysis of the collected data it was found that media messages leave very limited effect on the audiences and their impact is also not universal. This study thus challenged the claims of Bullet theory.

**Significance of Study**

With this research project the researcher interpreted the importance of old mass media theories in the era of New Media technology. Also, the researcher analysed the limited effect of media in society with the penetration of digital technologies.

**Objectives of the Study**

To study the influence of media on the voting behaviour of rural population of Punjab during the election campaign 2017.

**Research Methodology**

This study is a constructive replication of People's choice Research. Constructive replication tests the authenticity of the methods used in the previous analysis by deliberately not repeat the earlier study.

**Research Design**

The study is descriptive in nature. The researcher had conducted a longitudinal study, so that the behavioural changes can be studied. The researcher had employed Panel design to collect the data as the same respondents were asked same questions, but at different point of times.

**Method**

A simple survey method was explained to collect both quantitative and qualitative data.

**Tool**

The researcher used a scheduled questionnaire to collect data from the sample. In depth interviews were concluded by the researcher to ensure the quality of the data.

**Sample Size**

The researcher had selected a village named Khapus to carry out the research. This village is located in countryside of Punjab and represents the whole state with its characteristics like literacy rate and see ratio.

**Sampling**

The researcher had conducted a longitudinal study. During the research, the sample was divided into a group with 30 items.

**Table1: Characteristics of Sample under Study**

	Sample Size	Age (up to 30)	Age (above 30)
Males	15	8	7
Females	15	8	7
Total	30	16	14

The respondents were studied in the month of November, December and January.

**Data Analysis and Presentation:**

**Table 2: Distribution of Sample Regarding the Knowledge about Upcoming Elections**

	Knowing about elections	Know the date of elections	Will caste vote
November	72	69	88
December	81	75	95

January	98	99	95
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**Table 3: Distribution of Sample Regarding The Choice of Media**

%	Newspaper	TV	Radio	Mobile Phone	Word of Mouth
November	20	33.3	3.3	26.7	10.7
December	20	33.3	0	26.7	20
January	20	33.3	0	26.7	20

**Table 4: Distribution of Sample on the Choice of Supporting Political Parties**

	Congress	BJP	AAP	Others
November	43.3	20	26.7	0
December	50	16.7	30	0
January	53.3	16.7	30	0

**Table 5: Distribution of Sample on Making A Decision Regarding Selecting A Candidate**

	Yes	No	Not decided
November	33.3	13.3	53.3
December	40	10	50
January	50	6.7	43.3

**Table 6: Distribution of Sample Regarding the Preference of Political Party**

	APP	SAD+BJP	INC	Any other
November	23.3	16.7	60	0
December	23.3	13.3	63.3	0
January	20	10	70	0

**Table 7: Distribution of Sample Regarding Seeking Help from Other People like Family or Colleagues in Making Voting Opinion**

	Yes	No	Can't Say
November	53.3	30	16.7
December	60	26.7	13.3
January	56.7	23.3	20

**Table 8: Distribution of Sample on the Basis of Trust and Believability on Media Content**

	Always	Sometimes	At times	Never
November	26.7	33.3	23.3	16.7
December	20	33.3	26.7	20
January	16.7	36.7	23.3	23.3

**Major Findings and Interpretations**

1. The rural people were well aware of their right to vote and majority of people were actively participating in the elections. They were seeking information, discussing political parties and also had decided to cast vote during the Punjab state election 2017. According to them a good Chief Minister is must for their progression.
2. Majority of rural population accessed media for information regarding elections. Radio is now an out dated mode of mass communication. Voters preferred television and newspapers. PTC News – a TV channel and Jagbani- a vernacular newspaper seemed to be their favourite. In rural Punjab vernacular media is preferred. Infact, rural people preferred personal contacts even more than TV and newspapers. Rural people relied on owners of charitable institute, teachers, government employees and even religious gurus for supplementing information they get from

- media. Here, it is astonishing to reveal that two-step flow theory still applicable in rural Punjab.
3. The youth even in rural Punjab favoured New media technology like Mobile phones for accessing information. Social media was popular for accessing information. Social media was popular among the youth and also the literate and economically secured class. But still these people also relied on opinion leaders for making the final decision. During the study it was found that youth preferred AAP. But as elections approached their opinions started changing. Clearly, indicating the influence of New Media. Infact even with the penetration of social media, limited effects theory of media is still applicable.
  4. During the study, it was also concluded that the last 10 days before elections are critical as maximum voting decision is made during this period. People even shift their preferences during this phase. In this phase, media campaigning and word of mouth both play an important role.

#### **Conclusion**

With this study, the researcher reveals that the two step flow theory still exists in rural Punjab. People from rural Punjab are very selective in seeking information. No doubt media like TV, newspaper and mobile phone are popular among people, but still the role of opinion leaders cannot be neglected in shaping the views of people.

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