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Newspaper Coverage of Elections and Public Opinion in Lucknow: A Case Study of 2019 Lok Sabha Elections

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Abstract

Elections are considered the most crucial activity in the democratic country like India. Democracy lies in the hands of the people who cast their vote during elections and decides the fate of the nation by forming new government. Parliamentary Elections in India popularly known as Lok Sabha Elections are considered country's biggest event with all grandness and extensively it is conducted. Preparing for General Elections in nation like India which is huge as well as diverse from north to south; east to west is a big challenge for Election Commission as well as political parties contesting. Public opinion before elections is something which is studied all around the world just to assess or forecast the actual result post polling. The objective of the study is to assess the public opinion in Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh) in reference to Lok Sabha Elections 2019. Uttar Pradesh is the game changer for general elections as it contributes largest number of seats (80) in Lok Sabha. As a result, all political parties including national and regional gives their best effort to harness seats in Uttar Pradesh. Lucknow being capital to the largest state in terms of population becomes a rationale choice for study. Researcher used survey to collect data from residents of Lucknow across varied religion, caste and community group, gender, financial class, education level, age groups and area. The purpose was to have a proper representation from all class and segment of society to get a comprehensive view of people. Study also attempted to find out the agenda setting pattern of Hindi newspaper in reference of Lok Sabha Elections 2019. Dainik Jagran, a Hindi daily newspaper which has largest circulation in Uttar Pradesh is selected for content analysis. Time frame for content analysis of newspaper was 15 days before votes were casted in Lucknow. Study also focuses on establishing relationship between newspaper coverage and public opinion before votes were casted in Lucknow.

Introduction

India attained independence in the year 1947 and Constitution of India came into effect on 26th January 1950 replacing Government of India Act 1935. 25th October 1950 to 21st February 1951 was the period when India witness its first

ever general elections. It was historic time when India got its first Lok Sabha and member of parliaments. There were total 489 seats on which elections were conducted, Indian National Congress under the leadership of Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru emerged as a majority party winning mammoth 364 seats which was way ahead from the majority mark of 245. Communist Party of India, newly formed Shyama Prasad Mookerjee's Jan Sangha, former colleague of Nehru and one of the architect of Constitution Dr B R Ambedkar's Scheduled Caste Federation (later came to known as Republican Party) were not enough to give any fight to Nehru as an opposition. As a result Pandit Nehru became the first ever Prime Minister of independent India through elected government. Since then India has witnessed 16 Lok Sabha Elections and it has been a roller coaster ride for Indian politics. Majorly Indian National Congress dominated the Parliament but with time few alliances and parties like Janata Party, Janata Dal, Bhartiya Janata Party also left its impressions. 90's can be termed as a period of rise of BJP as a competitive opposition to Indian National Congress. BJP took the perfect advantage by filling the void of active and united opposition and emerged as a rivals of INC at national level. Under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Lal Krishna Advani, BJP flourished extensively across India giving people an alternative to Congress. Later, Atal Bihari Vajpayee became Prime Minister of India. BJP sets new record in the year 2014 Lok Sabha Elections when under the leadership of former Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Damodar Modi won 267 seats and forms the government with the help of some regional parties. Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister of India with full majority government in Parliament.

In the year 2019 India is set to experience its 17th Lok Sabha Elections. National and regional parties are trying their level best to prove their existence. On one side BJP is contesting to back the policies and work done by incumbent Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the other hand Congress is trying to pose challenge by raising issues like corruption, farmers suicide, unemployment, demonetization, GST, Rafael and not fulfilling the promises made in 2014. Regional Parties like Samajwadi Party, Bahujan Samaj Party, Trinamool Congress, TDP are also exploring the space to set their foot on national politics by rising as rivals to Narendra Modi and BJP.

Understanding Lok Sabha

The Lok Sabha is the lower house of Parliament. Individuals from the Lok Sabha are chosen by grown-up general suffrage and a first-past-the-present framework on speak to their particular voting demographics, and they hold their seats for a long time or until the body is disintegrated by the President on the guidance of the board of clergymen. The house meets in the Lok Sabha Chambers of the Parliament in New Delhi.

Lok Sabha is composed of representatives of the people chosen by direct election on the basis of the adult suffrage. The maximum strength of the House envisaged by the Constitution is 552, which is made up by election of up to 530 members to represent the States, up to 20 members to represent the Union Territories and not more than two members of the Anglo-Indian Community to be nominated by the Hon'ble President, if, in his/her opinion, that community is not adequately represented in the House. The total elective membership is distributed among the States in such a way that the ratio between the number of

seats allotted to each State and the population of the State is, so far as practicable, the same for all States.

The greatest quality of the House apportioned by the Constitution of India is 552. Right now the house has 543 seats which is made up by decision of up to 543 chosen individuals and at a most extreme, 2 named individuals from the Anglo-Indian Community by the President of India. An aggregate of 131 seats (24.03%) are saved for delegates of Scheduled Castes (84) and Scheduled Tribes (47). The majority for the House is 10% of the all-out participation. The Lok Sabha, except if sooner broke up, keeps on working for a long time from the date designated for its first gathering. Nevertheless, while an announcement of crisis is in activity, this period might be stretched out by Parliament by law.

16th Lok Sabha which was elected in the year 2014 consist of 267 member of BJP, 44 members of Congress, 36 members of AIADMK, 33 members of TMC and others. BJP with the help of allies like AIADMK, Shiv Sena (18 seats), TDP (15 seats) and few others formed government under the banner of NDA (National Democratic Alliance) and Narendra Modi was elected as a leader of the house. He became 14th Prime Minister of India. Congress was even failed to get even the post of leader of opposition as they failed to secure 10% of the total strength in Lok Sabha.

In 2019 people of India are going to vote on 543 seats for 17th Lok Sabha. It is a largest democratic exercise in the world. Elections are scheduled in seven phases in the month of April-May 2019 starting from 11th April 2019 finishing on 18th May 2019. Results are scheduled to declare on 23rd May 2019.

Lucknow – High Profile Lok Sabha Constituency

Lucknow being the capital city of Uttar Pradesh becomes the rationale choice for the researcher to conduct the study. Lucknow is situated in Awadh region of Uttar Pradesh. City serves as power center for state politics as a result political happening around the state is being discussed and whispered in Lucknow. As far as Lok Sabha constituency is concerned Lucknow is considered as high-profile seat and has distinct history associated to it. During Congress regime this seat is known for relatives of Jawahar Lal Nehru. It has seen people like Vijay Laxmi Pandit (sister), Sheorajvati Nehru (relative) and Sheila Kaul (sister-in-law) as a member of Parliaments. Hemwati Nandan Bahuguna former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh was also elected as MP from Lucknow in the year 1977. Since 1991 Lucknow has been a safe and invincible fort of BJP. Atal Bihari Vajpayee senior leader of BJP and former Prime Minister was five times MP from Lucknow between 1991 to 2009. In 2014 former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh and senior leader of BJP Rajnath Singh won Lucknow seat and later on he became Home Minister of the country. Rajnath Singh got 54.23% votes which was far ahead of Congress candidate Dr Rita Bahuguna Joshi who got only 27.87% votes. BSP-SP has minimal impact on this seat as they got 6.23% and 5.49% votes respectively. Talking about recently conducted State Assembly Elections, BJP holds all five assembly seats of Lucknow. Conclusively speaking Lucknow is a strong hold of BJP. Being capital, it will be an advantage for BJP to use Lucknow as a platform to send a message in their favor across the state.

In 2019 Lok Sabha Elections BJP has again fielded Home Minister Rajnath Singh. SP-BSP alliance has declared veteran actor and former BJP MP Shatrughan Sinha's wife Poonam Sinha against Rajnath Singh while Acharya Pramod Krishnam is contesting on Congress ticket.

Research objectives

1. To find out the public opinion in Lucknow in reference to Lok Sabha Elections 2019.
2. To analyse the pattern of newspaper coverage of elections and agenda setting.
3. To gauge the relationship between newspaper coverage of elections and public opinion.

Methodology

The study has followed quantitative method for collecting data by using Survey in urban and rural Lucknow. The sample size was 100 plus respondents. Stratified and random sampling technique is used to assign samples. Researchers did analysis of 120 responses. Out of 120 respondents 20 respondents were not registered hence they were excluded from giving responses for rest of questions. They skipped the questionnaire after first question.

The target audience was from the age group 18 years to 60 and above basically those who are eligible to vote. They were divided into four categories- 18 to 25 years; 26 to 35 years; 36 to 45 years ; 46-55 and above 55 years. Researcher targeted both male and female respondents for the survey. It was also a conscious effort to include respondents from all the forms of occupation, religion, caste, community, financial class, education level and geographical location.

Simple percentile analysis was used for statistical analysis, as it was adequate to simply quantify the measures for the questions asked from respondents. 3D Pie Chart and Cluster Bar is used for representation of data.

This study was conducted through primary data collected from people in the month of February-March 2019 just one month before the Lok Sabha Elections. Questionnaire was used as a tool for data collection. The questionnaire was consisting of 12 questions, which would cover all research objectives of the study. The Survey was divided into three sections on the basis of research objective.

- a) The first section consists of three questions with the purpose to understand the respondents' demographic segmentation – gender, age and occupation etc.
- b) The second part sought to explore the opinion of respondents regarding Lok Sabha Elections 2019.
- c) Third section was targeted to get the performance report of 5 years of BJP government and Prime Minister Narendra Modi from respondents.

To analyse the newspaper coverage of elections and agenda setting pattern of newspapers researcher has used content analysis of Hindi newspapers. Dainik Jagran, a Hindi daily newspaper which has largest circulation in Uttar Pradesh is selected for content analysis. Time frame for content analysis of newspaper was 15 days before votes were casted in Lucknow.

Literature review

To set up this venture report, there were not many books and education material that were alluded to offer framework to the last report that assistance

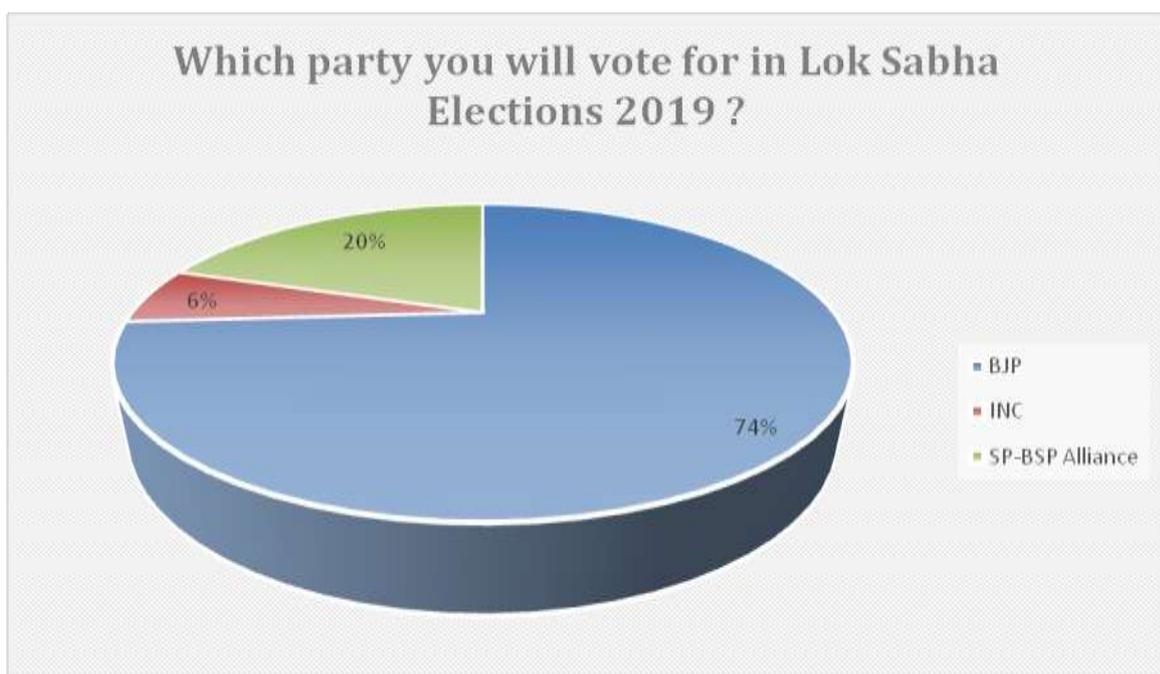
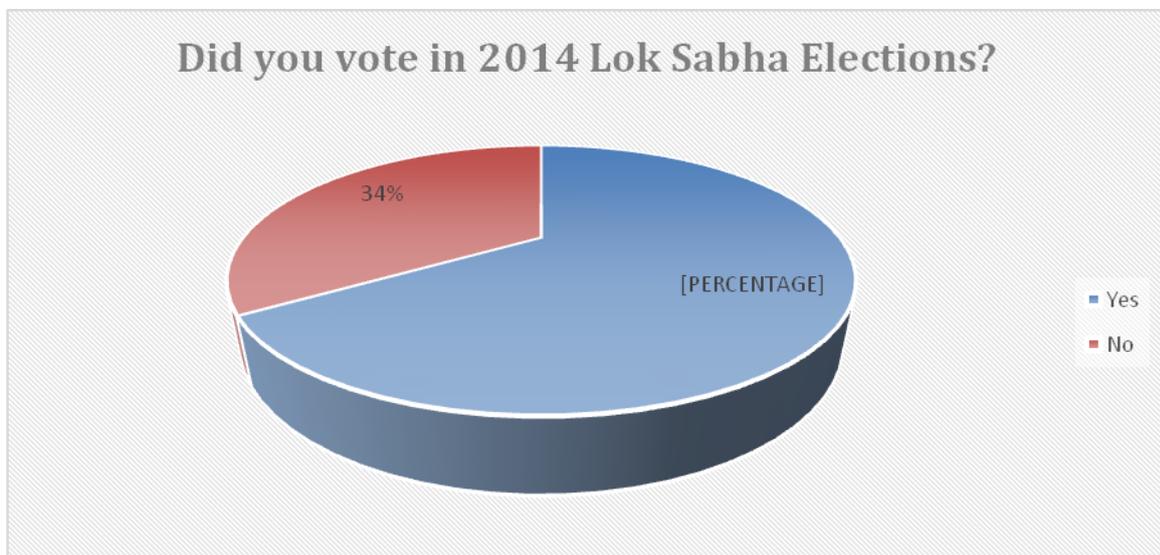
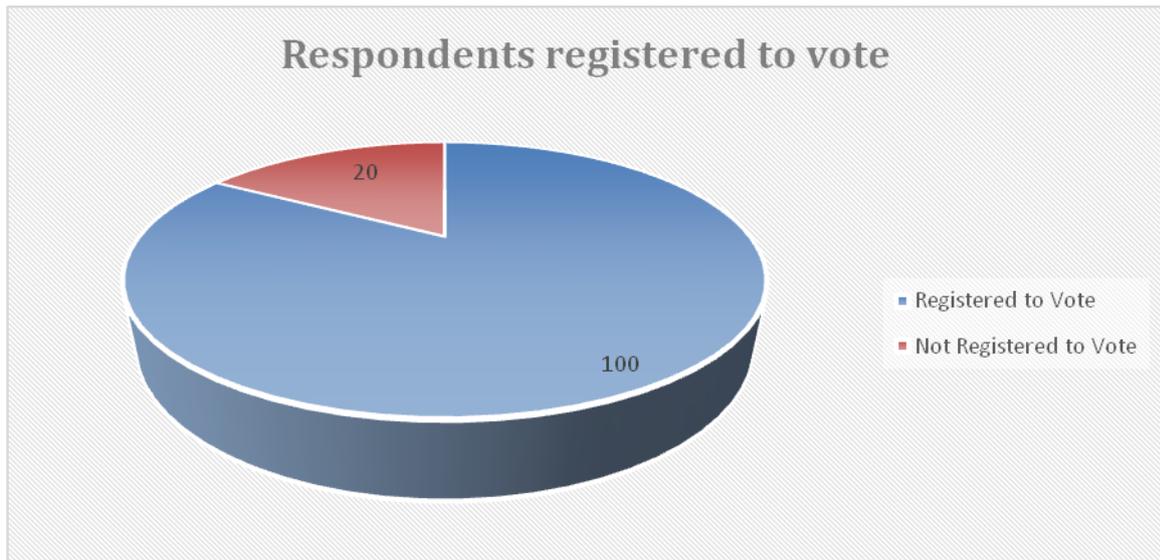
to assemble the learning and recognize the examination, philosophies and comparable works in this field. It encourages me to centre and refined research inquiries by explanation the learning hole. It gives the scholarly challenge to my work and arranges it with in the field. It likewise guaranteed that I won't repeat energizing learning replicating specialized blunders. It helped me to recognize other scientist in this field (a specialist organize is significant asset), to distinguish the unmistakable commitment my examination will make and create a support for the investigation and figure out how explore finding are talked about and introduced in my restrained zone.

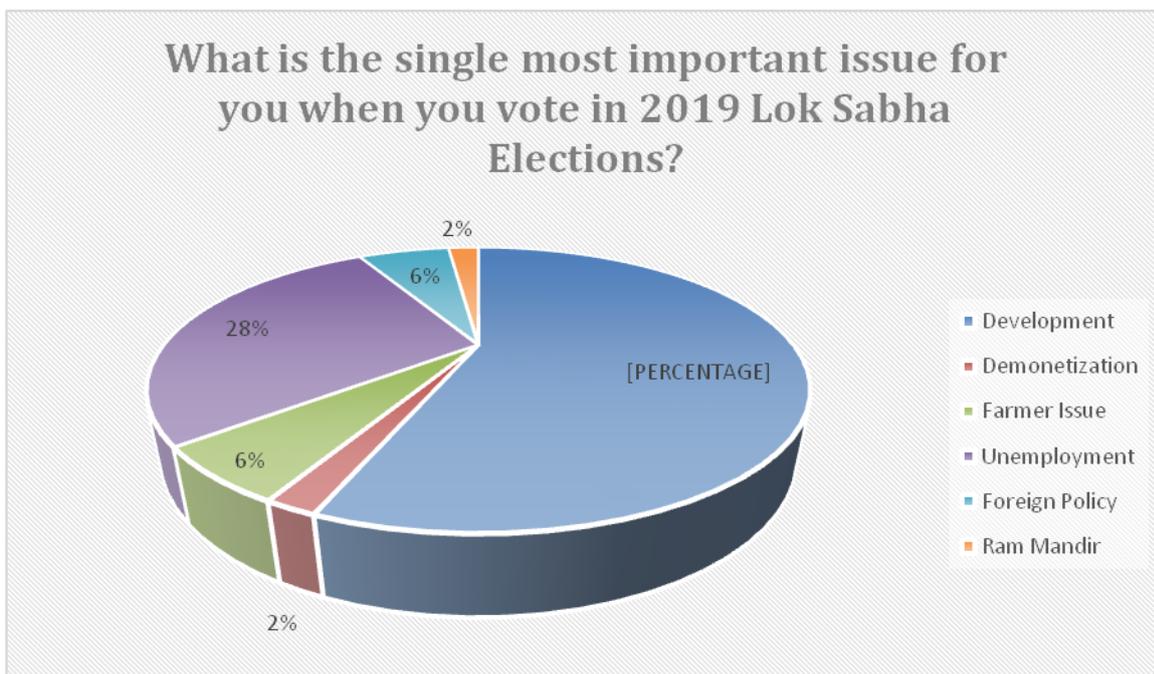
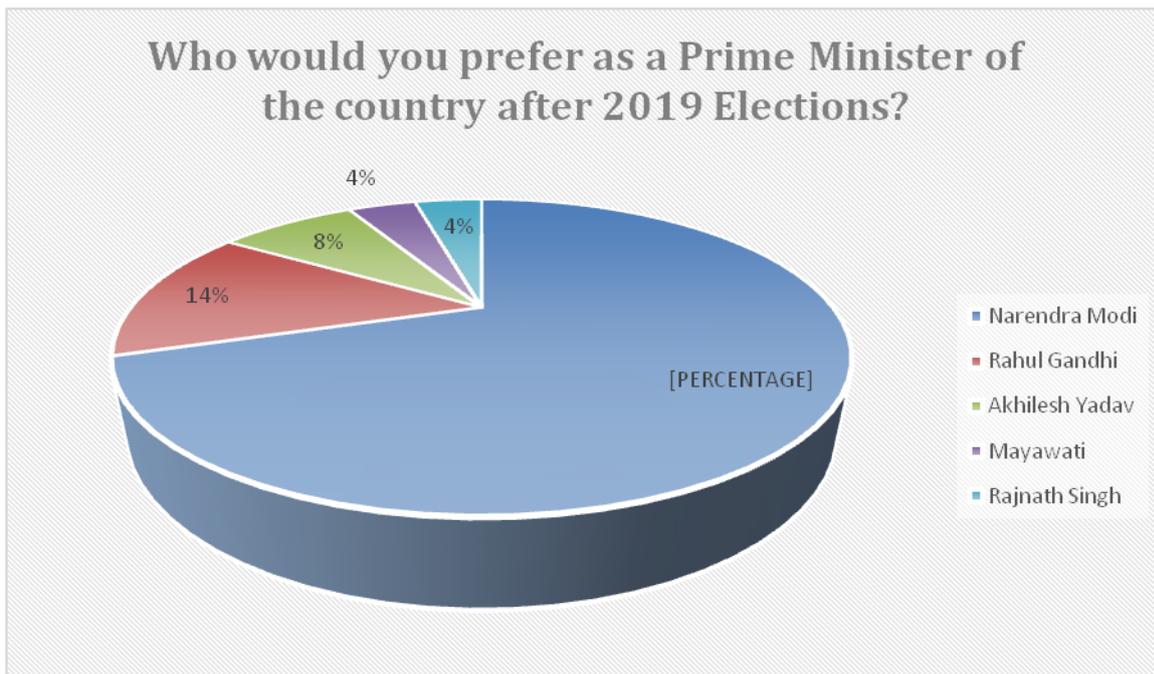
(Chhibber P. a., 2014)In this article we demonstrate that the 2014 Indian general decisionsbrought about a reasonable order for the BJP. The 2014 decisions have made the BJP into a really national gathering with significant nearness in practically all pieces of the nation. The gathering fabricated a remarkable social alliance of upper positions, with numerous OBCs, SCs and STs voting in favor of it too. We contend that this solidification was made conceivable by the way that the gathering effectively gained by an ideological partition present in Indian society, drawing support from both social preservationists and the financial right. Numerous among poor people, who generally bolster the Congress, saw Modi as a superior manager. At last however, it was Modi's prominence, which cut over the social and political scene of India that prompted the Congress' poor constituent appearing in the 2014 races. The degree of the Congress' decrease in sixteenth Lok Sabha may appear to be an abnormality, yet the purposes behind it are profound and auxiliary. Accordingly, the Congress will find it difficult to come once more from this misfortune. It will for all intents and purposes need to reevaluate itself – refine its political stage, assemble another social base, create its organizational hardware, and develop another brand of administration inside the gathering. All things considered, if the BJP wishes to supplant the Congress as Condorcet victor (I e, in pairwise examinations with different gatherings numerous individuals would favor the BJP to administer India broadly), it should present better administration, build up an increasingly hearty association, and undermine the restriction. For the time being, be that as it may, the BJP has plainly supplanted the Congress as the framework defining party. It is the BJP, not the Congress, which is probably going to end up the point of convergence of electoral arrangement and realignment in the coming races.

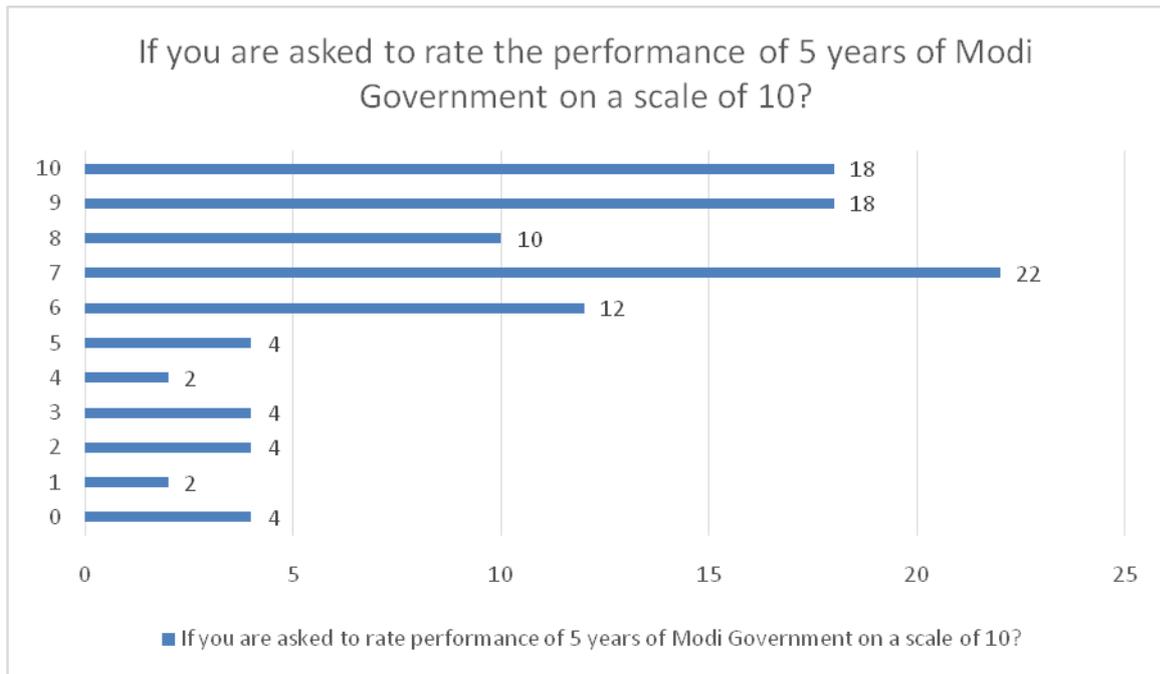
Data Interpretation and Analysis

Survey

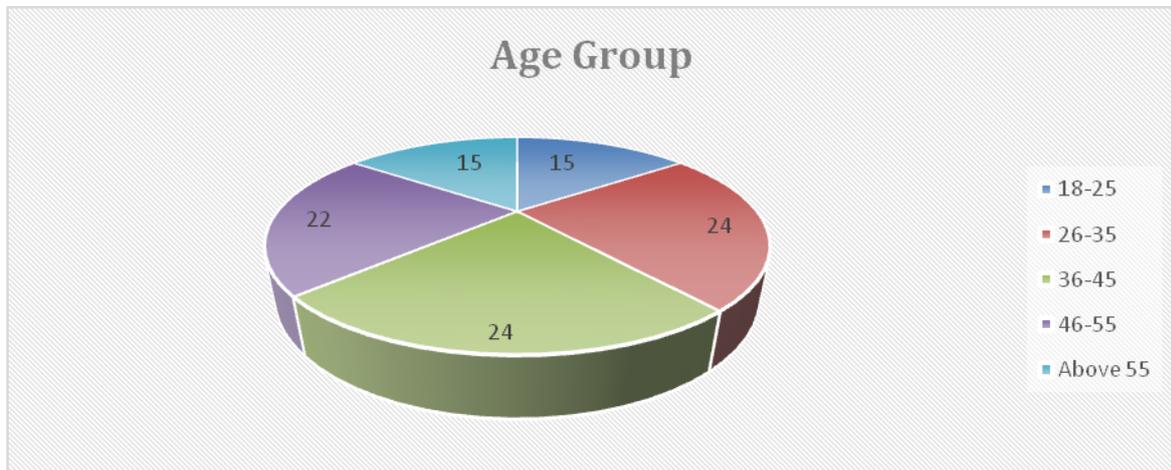
Findings are based on the survey done with 120 male and female respondents from the cross sectional data of 18 years to 60 and above.

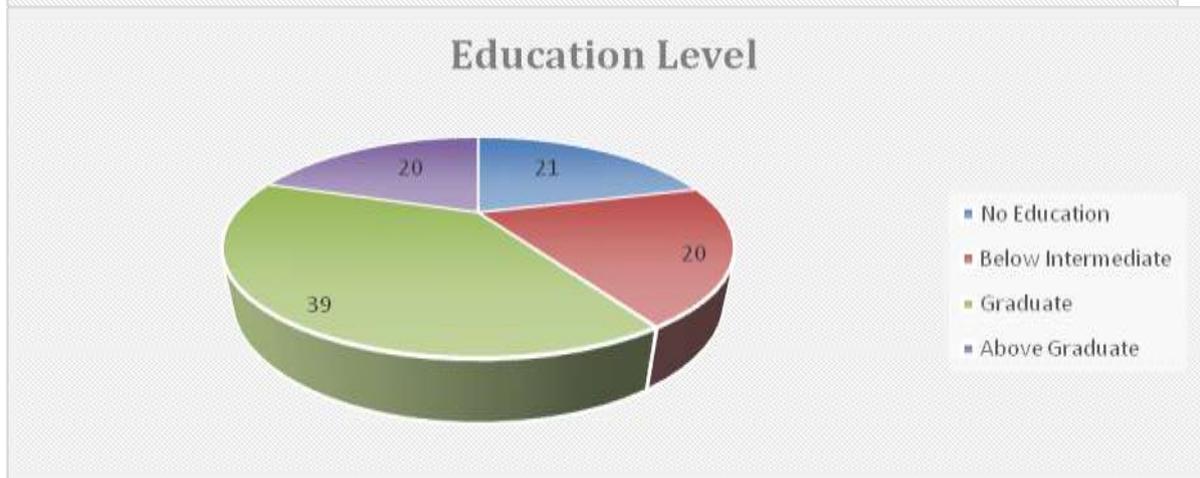
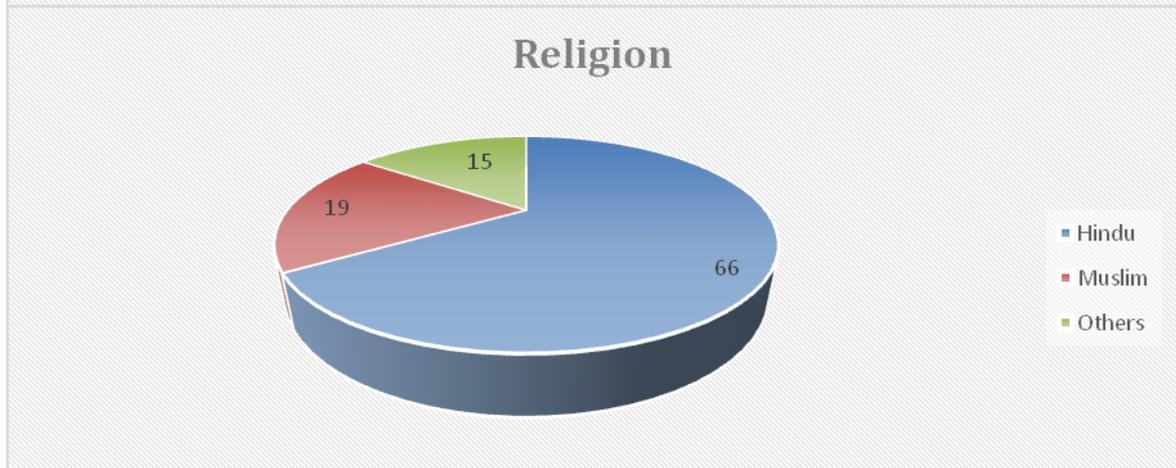
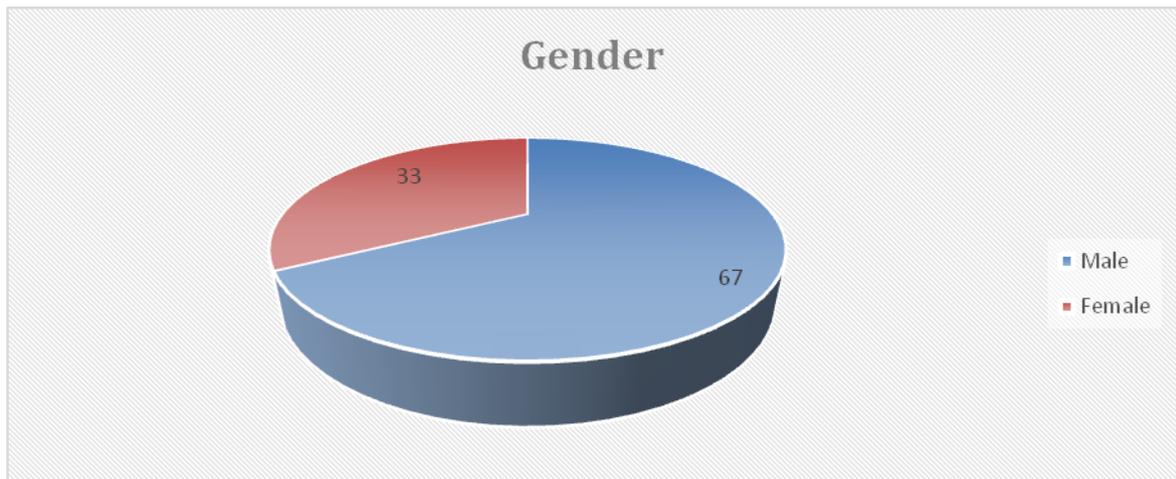


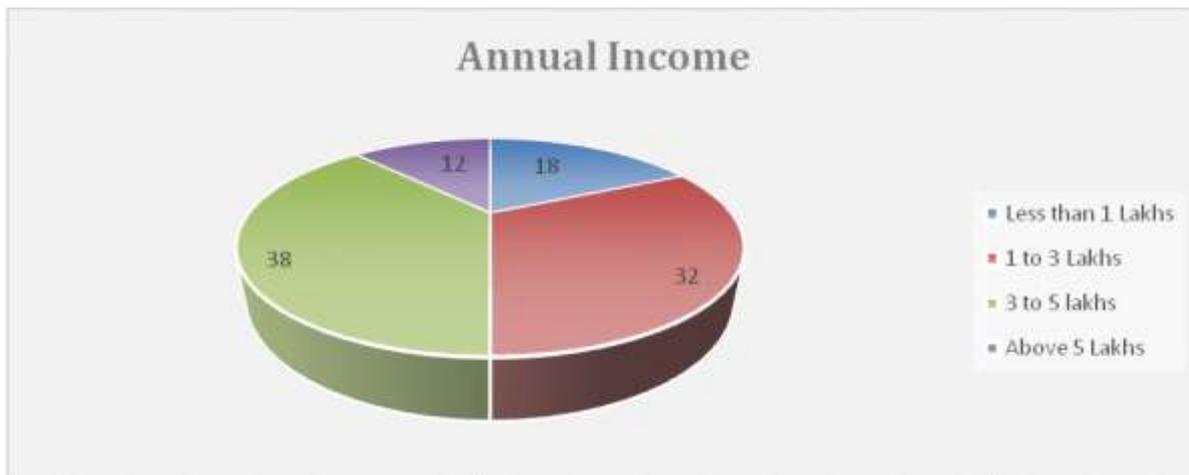




Demographic Details



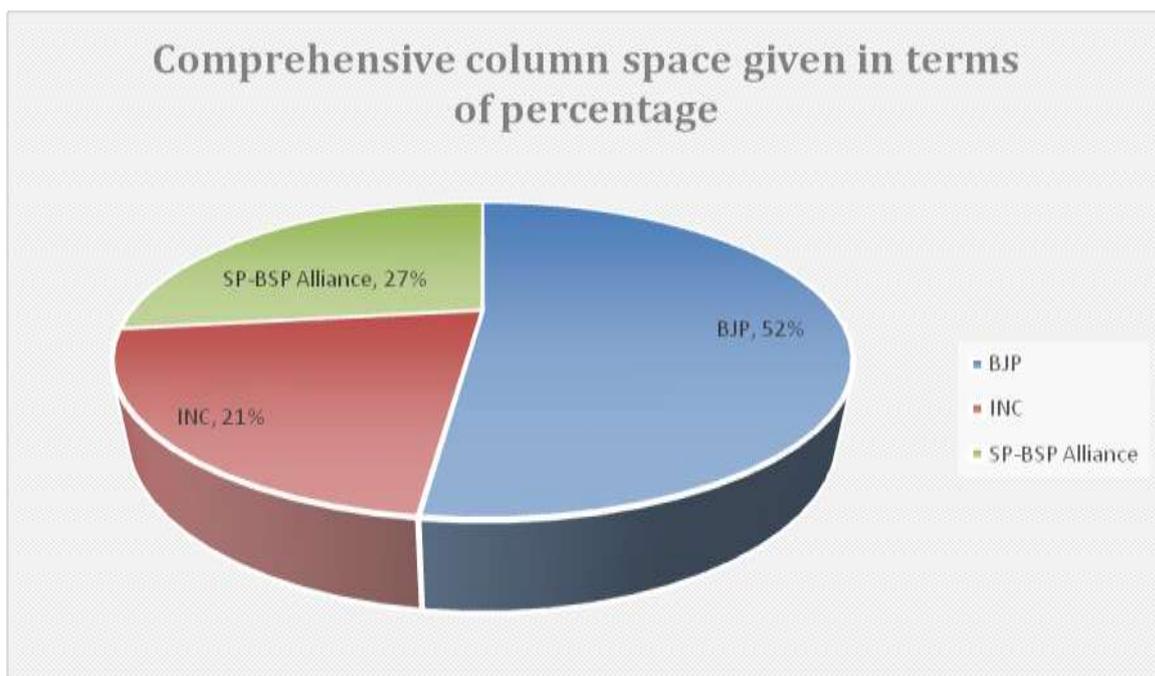




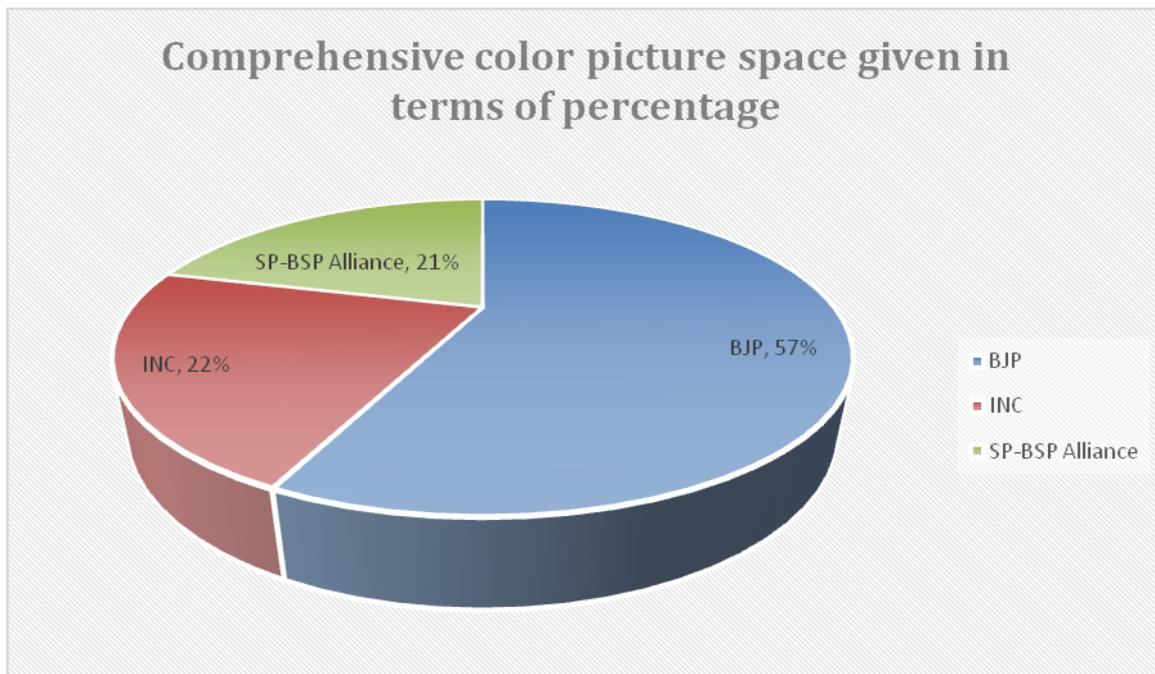
Content Analysis

Content Analysis of Hindi Newspaper Dainik Jagran is done on the basis of three parameters which are followed as: -

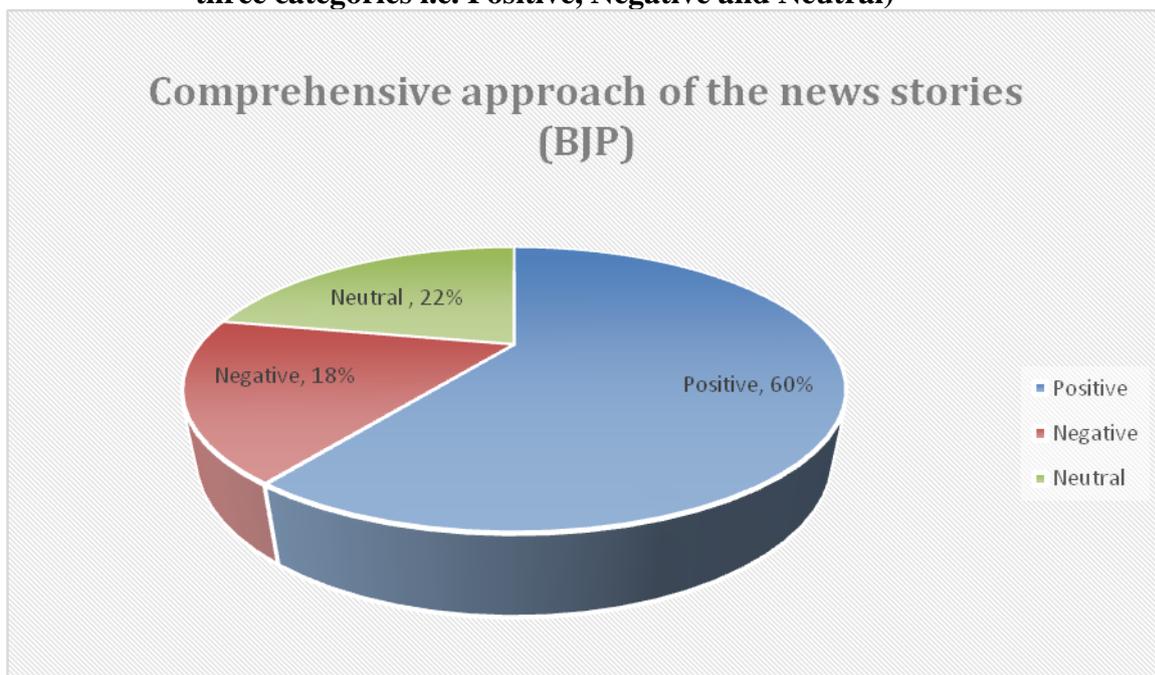
- 1. Comprehensive column space given to each party for the duration of 15 days before voting took place in Lucknow.**

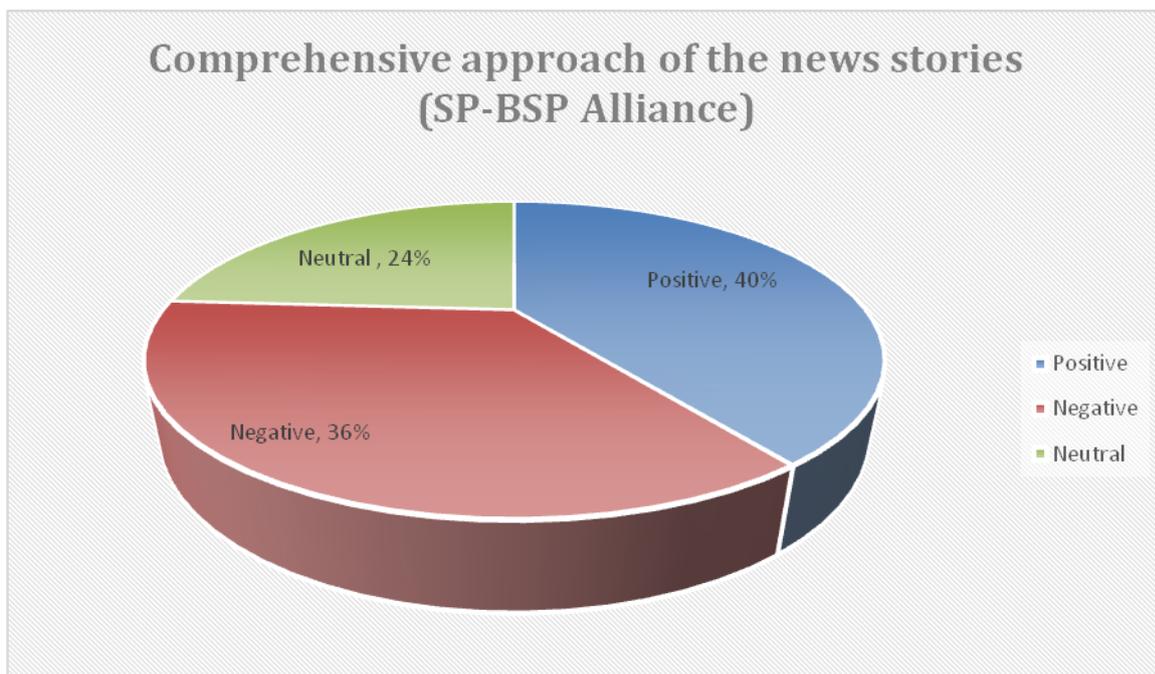
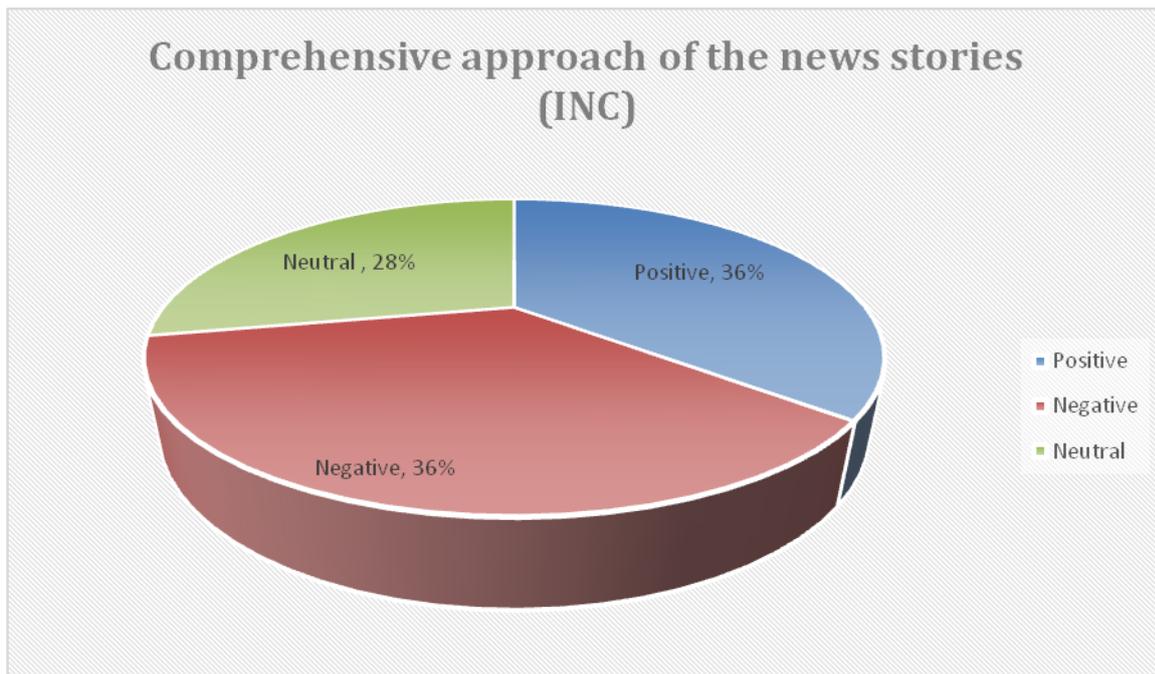


- 2. Comprehensive color picture space given to each party for the duration of 15 days before voting took place in Lucknow.**



3. Comprehensive report on the approach of the news stories on the basis of analysis of headlines for the duration of 15 days before voting took place in Lucknow. (Approach of the news stories has been classified into three categories i.e. Positive, Negative and Neutral)





Results&Discussion

a) Survey

1. The survey showed that out of 120 responses, 20 respondents were not registered to vote. These respondents were excluded from the sample. 100 respondents were considered for analysis.

2. Demographic discussions are as followed: -

a. 24 respondents are from the age group 36 to 45; 24 respondents belong to the age group 26 to 35 while 22 falls between 36 to 45. In total 70

respondents can be considered as mature and active voters. There are 15 young and new voters.

b. Out of total 100 respondents; there 33 female and 67 male voters.

c. Religion, caste and community plays a very decisive role in Indian politics. Thus, it becomes very important to include representation from all religion and communities. There are 66 and 19 respondents from Hindu and Muslim community respectively. 15 belongs to other religious groups like Sikhs, Christians, Jains etc.

d. Educational qualification of the respondents was also sought to get the awareness and knowledge level. 39 respondents were graduate, and 20 respondents were above post-graduation level. As, we know Uttar Pradesh ranks in low literacy level it becomes very crucial to include their representation also; 21 respondents belong to no education level while 20 respondents fall below intermediate level. Thus, having opinion from all level of educational qualification.

e. Uttar Pradesh is a distinct state if we talk about gap between rich and poor. There people who can afford high standard of life like businessman, government employees etc. on the other hand there are people who cannot afford even minimum survival like laborer, farmers and daily wage workers. Researcher tried best to have opinion from diverse level of income groups. 38 respondents earning between 3 to 5 lakhs per annum while 32 respondents earning 1 to 3 lakhs per annum which sums up middle and upper middle class. 12 respondents belong to earning group more than 5 lakhs per annum. There are 18 respondents who earn less than 1 lakh per annum.

3. Survey also indicated that out of 100 respondents who are registered to vote there are 34 respondents who have not voted in 2014 Lok Sabha Elections. It includes 15 first time voters also. Hence, these 34% can play a very crucial role in 2019 Lok Sabha Elections. New voters are more aware and open to politics which is far from religion, community and caste.

4. Talking about the party they will vote for in Lok Sabha Elections 2019; 74% respondents voted for BJP (Bhartiya Janata Party) while 20% and 6% will vote for SP (Samajwadi Party) and Congress respectively. This shows a clear opinion among people in Lucknow that they want to give another term to BJP to form a government. Lucknow being a BJP bastion shows the trend that Lucknow will raise the BJP flag high. 6% votes to Congress clearly shows that it is losing its ground and not able to pose any challenge. SP-BSP alliance tends to benefit but that won't create much impact on BJP's victory lap in Lucknow.

5. On assessing Narendra Modi's popularity as prime minister, it was one sided affair as he topped the chart with 70% respondents want to see him again as Prime Minister of India. Mere 14% are going with Rahul Gandhi while Akhilesh Yadav is also a choice for 8% respondents. 4% respondents each also batted for Mayawati and Rajnath Singh. These figures are showing clear picture that India is still facing vacuum of good leader who can challenge Mr. Modi as Prime Minister. Rahul Gandhi and other opposition leader fails to convince people on their challenge.

6. Last five years there are number of issues which is used by opposition parties to attack BJP as well as Narendra Modi. Narendra Modi also introduced lot of policies and reforms to strengthen his case. Development, Demonetization, Farmers Issue, Unemployment, Foreign Policy, Ayodhya

Ram Mandir etc. are few popular among all issues. As per survey 56% respondents feels development is the most important issue on which 2019 Lok Sabha Elections will be contested. They feel Modi government has contributed towards the development of the country while on the other hand 28% respondents feels Modi government failed to tackle the issue of unemployment. Promises done regarding providing employment are total failure and this will be key issue in 2019 General Elections. 6% respondents each feels foreign policy and farmers condition will be an important issue while 2% each says demonetization and Ram Mandir will play a role in elections.

7. On asking to rate the performance of 5 years of Modi Government; 68% respondents gave more than 7 marks; 46% gave more than 8 marks and 36% gave more than 9 marks on the scale of 10. These ratings will be considered as good performance by Narendra Modi in last 5 years. Only 20% of respondents rated him 5 and below on the scale of 10. Generally, people in Lucknow are highly satisfied with the development work, policies, reforms and decision taken by Narendra Modi in last 5 years and the want him to continue with the work he is doing for the country.

b) Content Analysis - Hindi Newspaper (Dainik Jagran)

1. As far as column space given to different parties by Hindi daily Dainik Jagran for the duration of 15 days before voting took place in Lucknow. Comprehensive report in terms of percentage states that 52% column space was given to BJP while INC and SP-BSP Alliance got 21% and 27% column space respectively. In terms of importance given to newspaper coverage; news stories related and associated to BJP received more coverage in comparison to other rivals in the constituency like INC, SP and BSP.

2. Pictures plays a crucial role in newspaper. News stories having strong, impactful and big picture (in terms of size) tends to have an impact on readers as on hand it attracts readers towards the story and also provide visual aid to the people who can't read. As far color picture space given to different parties by Hindi daily Dainik Jagran for the duration of 15 days before voting took place in Lucknow pictures of news stories related to BJP has received 57%; INC 22% and SP-BSP Alliance 21% of total space. In line with the column space, picture space also goes in favor of BJP hence BJP has got more opportunity to reach and impact the readers/voters.

3. Approach and perspective of the stories covered by newspaper also influence readers. To assess the approach of the stories, researcher classified all stories into three categories i.e. Positive, Negative and Neutral on the basis of analysis of headlines given to the respective stories. Comprehensive report of all three parties gives a very clear picture on the agenda setting by Hindi daily Dainik Jagran.

a. 60% of the news stories related to BJP were having positive approach while 22% falls under Neutral approach. 18% stories were negative for BJP.

b. 36% of the news stories related to INC were having positive approach while 28% falls under Neutral approach. 36% stories were negative for INC.

c. 40% of the news stories related to BJP were having positive approach while 24% falls under Neutral approach. 36% stories were negative for BJP.

Conclusion

Lok Sabha Elections 2019 is all set to become a historic election in the history of Indian politics. As in 2014 we have seen a comeback of Bhartiya Janata

Party with a thumping victory after Atal Bihari Vajpayee regime. Absence of credible and able national leader in other parties, corruption charges on a decade rule of United Progressive Alliance (UPA), burning issues of inflation, unemployment and poverty, issue of Ram Mandir, black money and Narendra Modi's Gujarat Model of development were few factors helped BJP and NDA to return to power after 10 years. BJP solely won record 267 Lok Sabha Seats which was later termed as 'Modi Wave'. We have seen the rise of Narendra Modi as a national leader and a great influencer. He gave new hope to the people of India by talking about development, zero-corruption, national safety, more jobs and returning of black money and people trusted him. In his tenure of 5 years he must be remembered for large number of initiatives, policies and reforms.

Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Digital India, Skill India, Jan Dhan Yojna, Ujjwala Yojna, Make in India, restructuring of Planning Commission as NITI Ayog, construction of toilets in villages etc. are registered in his five-year work record. Surprise announcement of demonetization, implementation of GST (Goods and Services Tax), condition of farmer, money laundering cases, rising intolerance in the country and Rafael deal are few issues on which opposition always tried to attack him. Above all these issues first tenure of Narendra Modi as a PM will be recalled for taking brave and courageous step in reference of national security. Surgical Strike and Balakot Air Strike post Pulwama attacks are decision for which and he and his government boast.

In 2019 picture is bit different as compared to 2014; 2014 he came with lot of promises but 2019 will be time of evaluating and assessing the completion of the promises made in 2014. In 2019 he will be seeking another term as to complete lot of incomplete work. He has to convince people about his works and efforts. Study executed in Lucknow clearly states the people are ready to give him another term that too convincingly. Lack of resilience shown by opposition, disunity among various other regional parties and absence of credible leaders helping people to go for Modi one more time. People are not able to see anyone as capable leader as Narendra Modi. As per study 70% of the respondents wants him to be next PM; that too one month before they will go and cast vote; this is clear-cut answer on the opinion of people in Lucknow and Uttar Pradesh. There is no fight and competition to him in near future as people are completely trusting him as a leader of the country.

Study has come out on the opinion of people in Lucknow in reference of Lok Sabha Elections 2019. Lucknow will vote for Modi with an expectation and hope of speedy development in the country. Home Minister Rajnath Singh will win from Lucknow parliamentary constituency as BSP-SP's Poonam Sinha and Congress's Acharya Pramod Krishnam got rare chance to pose any threat to him. Study clear states Lucknow-UP will not disappoint Narendra Modi instead as per its image will help Modi to become 15th Prime Minister of the country.

To summarize the findings of Newspaper coverage of Elections by Hindi daily Dainik Jagran it is very much clear from the study that BJP was given more importance as compared to INC, SP and BSP in terms of both column space and picture space given to the stories. In terms of agenda setting study clarifies that Hindi daily had given BJP more positive approach while covering news stories while INC, SP and BSP were discriminated while coverage of stories related to them.

While drawing relationship between newspaper coverage of election and public opinion this study presents a narrative that proves a direct relationship between newspaper coverage of elections and public opinion in the case of Lok Sabha Elections 2019 in Lucknow. This case study of Lucknow states that importance and positive approach in terms of coverage given to or agenda setting by newspapers in favor of one party can influence readers/voters and tends to create public opinion in favor of that party among them. Study narrates that prominent Hindi daily in Lucknow gave more importance and positive approach to BJP on the other hand survey conducted among voters in Lucknow gives a predominant edge to BJP as far public opinion is concerned. It establishes a direct relationship between newspaper coverage of elections and public opinion. Considering the findings of the case study of Lucknow it is yet to find out whether the study will bring out same findings in other constituencies or elections. Researchers can extend the study to reach to the concrete conclusion regarding establishing a relationship between newspaper coverage of elections and public opinion. There is possibility of other factors apart from newspaper coverage of elections affecting public opinion will be considered as limitations of the study.

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