

INDIAN 'YOUTH' AND POLITICS

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ABSTRACT

This independent project assessed the attention, awareness, and participation of the Indian youth through examining and analysing their behaviour towards political matters on social media platforms, voting patterns of the country and Government-level politics itself. The purpose of this research paper is to dismantle the two-fold effect of puzzlement that the Indian youth possesses being its concept and beliefs.

As part of the same, a google form was created and sent to various students on May 2, 2020. The data collected in this research was primary (through the E-questionnaire) and secondary through internet news sources. The name of the google form was 'Are You An Aware Citizen?' and comprised 17 questions besides the names of the respondents. The name filling was kept optional for the sake of privacy. The form was limited to teenagers in Indian society. The questions did not involve any political party in particular to respect the sensitivity of politics as a whole.

The conclusion made was that the youth was more aware presumably owing to better education access, development and facilities in recent times. While some consider such patterns aping the western cultures, others consider it as a victory for the turning face of India.

Moreover, researched articles from other prominent faces all over the internet were brought together to decipher the puzzling youth of India along the same lines. It incorporated voter behaviour analysis from the Indian General Election of 2019 as well. The methodology for further research was so, that arguments towards the perception of the youth were presented and

elaborated on. The current situation's analysis also followed along with the emergence of the Indian youth in politics. Later, the Indian General Election of 2019 was briefly assessed.

Additionally, current events from 2019 and 2020 were also interpreted to bring out the meaning behind the intentions of the Indian youth. 2 Case studies were created, studied and critically analysed, one of the majority party and the other to the opposition party. This paper takes a politically neutral stand to show both the positives and the negatives of each of the case studies to let the reader create his/ her understanding out of what happened in India.

According to the paradigm, History is regarded as the foundation of politics. Hence, the history of the parties did play an important role to determine the efficacy, effects and outreach of each of them.

With varying definitions and technicalities of 'youth', this research paper progresses from assessing teenagers right till political youth in their older ages just like nature takes its course with one's life. The former group of interest is discussed in the findings of the survey while the latter is discussed in the two case studies. Both groups come under the purview of the so-called 'youth'. The voter behaviour analysis of the 2019 Election acts as the transition phase between the two not in terms of the chronology of events but that of life itself to bring equilibrium to the purpose of this research.

INTRODUCTION

The Indian youth is puzzling. This is a two-fold-concept. One is the confusion that our country creates when defining the youth. This however is faced by each and every country in the world and is inevitable. The second dimension is unique to India, being the opinions and mindsets of the Indian youth. The widely agreed criticism amongst the older generations in today's day and age is the attack on the newer generation and the birth of new lifestyles. Every generation advocates for their own ways. Newer generations are painted in a light which leads many to conclude that the youth is ignorant and reckless. This dates back to Chief Seattle of Washington who calls youth 'impulsive' in his famous speech in 1854. Hence, the paradigm that one's own generation is incomparable is not a new trend but rather inherited in the normal course of

society. Moreover, such a thought is not geographically constrained since the speech pertains to the West.

On the contrary, young minds believe that they are the face of the future owing to newer technology, innovations, discoveries and ideas.

I decided to put the criticism hurled at the newer generation to test. A series of questions were asked. They included personal information like age, city of residence, nationality etc. Later on, they were inquired of basic political questions.

The study helps us understand the invalidity of certain preconceived notions and how they conflict with actual practice. Moreover, the theme is a generational case study at a micro level that incorporates different cities and regions of India at a small scale. It assists the grassroots upward approach towards political analysis of the said population, which is rather a group of interest for strategical development for the days to come.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As already briefly explained in the abstract, a survey was created to assess the knowledge of teenagers in India under part 1 of this research. Later, part 2 was created as the perspectives and arguments where various points of view were assessed. Later, a brief analysis of the 2019 General Election was taken into consideration post which a transition was made to the old groups of 'youth' which includes two use studies that analyse the opposition and majority parties of India in order to understand the youth which is present in the ultimate actual politics of India.

This mirrors the various phases of life that take place. Teenagers grow up listening to various people in school, college and even their families and relatives at home. After collecting these points of view, they simultaneously assemble create their own political opinions which they reflect in the elections once they are 18 years old post which, they enter into real- level politics in the country.

PART (I) SURVEY

(1.1) Participants

The outcome of the responses was 83 in number. 3 responses were rejected since they were not teenagers. Their ages were- 22, 29, 46. Hence, the paper contains information of only 80 of the 83 responses recorded.

1.1.1 Residence-

The participants/ respondents included 80 teenagers from 6 unofficial regions that I have classified as follows-

REGION	OUT OF 80 RESPONDENTS
Chandigarh tricity*	44
Delhi National Capital Region NCR**	26
Punjab Region***	03
West ****	05
South *****	01
Multiple cities *****	01

*Includes Chandigarh, Mohali and Panchkula

**Includes New Delhi and Gurugram

***Excludes Mohali

****Includes Mumbai and Kota

*****Includes Bengaluru

*****Includes Chandigarh, Mumbai

1.1.2 Age group-

AGE	OUT OF 80 RESPONDENTS
13 years	01

14 years	00
15 years	08
16 years	26
17 years	32
18 years	10
19 years	03

1.1.3 Gender-

Female -50/80

Male-30/80

1.1.4 Nationality-

Indian 76/80

Other 4/80

(1.2) Materials

An online google form was created since in-person interviews were not feasible owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown.

(1.3) Procedure

The google form's link was circulated via direct messages and stories on social media platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp. A disclaimer description was written to put forward the purpose and intent of the project. A special mention was made to the fact that filling out names was optional to respect privacy. The responses so recorded were collected after 2-3 days of the google form out for circulation.

(1.4) Questions

The questions were as follows-

Q1 Name (Optional) -Subjective, no options

Q2 Age -Subjective , no options

Q3 Gender

Options-

- (A) Male
- (B) Female
- (C) Other

Q4 City of residence -Subjective, no options

Q5 Nationality

Options-

- (A) Indian
- (B) Other

Q6 Do you consider yourself

Options-

- (A) Rather liberal
- (B) Rather conservative
- (C) Moderate

Q7 Do you consider yourself well aware of Indian politics

Options-

- (A) Yes
- (B) No

Q8 While in school, did you ever understand the content taught to you in the subject(s) of Civics/ Political Science?

Options-

- (A) Yes
- (B) No

Q9 What is closest to the first thought that comes to your mind when you hear the word 'politics'?

Options-

- (A) Important
- (B) Boring
- (C) Something old people talk about
- (D) Irrelevant

Q10 Are you satisfied with your level of knowledge in politics?

Options-

- (A) Yes
- (B) No
- (C) There is always room for more

Q11 Do you know the name of your state's CM? (If you reside in a UT then the nearest state's CM)

Options-

- (A) Yes
- (B) No

Q12 Do you think women and the youth are underrepresented in Indian politics?

Options-

- (A) Yes
- (B) No

Q13 Do you believe it is a good idea to vote?

Options-

- (A) Absolutely, it is a duty
- (B) Not really

Q14 Do you know about the introduction of 'NOTA'?

Options-

- (A) Yes
- (B) No

Q15 Which of the following according to you is independent of the other two?

Options-

- (A)Legislature (Union Parliament, the 2 houses)
- (B)Executive (President+Council of Ministers)
- (C)Judiciary (Courts, especially the Supreme Court)

Q16 Have you ever heard of the left-right political spectrum?

Options-

- (A)Yes
- (B)No

Q17 Do you consider politics to be a sensitive topic?

Options-

- (A)Yes
- (B)No

Q18 Would you like to see more young people in Indian Politics?

Options-

- (A)Yes
- (B)No

(1.5) Results

Q3 Gender

50 Females (62.5%)

30 Males (37.5%)

Q5 Nationality

76 Indians (95%)

4 Others (5%)

Q6 Do you consider yourself

45 Rather liberal (56.25%)

2 Rather conservative (2.5%)

33 Moderate (41.25%)

Comments- It is evident that majority of the respondents considered themselves rather liberal. This hints to the fact that they believe in social progressivism. This claim is apt in itself because the study was not restricted to any particular region or city.

Q7 Do you consider yourself well aware of Indian affairs?

58 Yes (72.5%)

22 No (27.5%)

Comments- Most respondents were confident and believed that they were well educated in the aspect of national affairs.

Q8 While in school, did you ever understand the content taught to you in the subject(s) of Civics/ Political Science?

72 Yes (90%)

8 No (10%)

Comments- Contrary to the popular belief that the education system of India is flawed, this response lauds the efforts of Indian education and proves that the education system has developed and come a long way.

Q9 What is closest to the first thought that comes to your mind when you hear the word 'politics'?

69 Important (86.25%)

6 Something old people talk about (7.5%)

5 Boring (6.25%)

0 Irrelevant (0%)

Comments- Majority believed that politics is important. This directly proves to break the criticism that the newer generations face in terms of not being 'serious' towards areas of national interest.

Q10 Are you satisfied with your level of knowledge in politics?

55 There is always room for more (68.75%)

19 No (23.75%)

6 Yes (7.5%)

Comments- Majority showed signs that they wished to know more about the political system. This shows curiosity. This also leads one to believe that the youth is neither conceited nor unaware.

Q11 Do you know the name of your state's CM? (If you reside in a UT then the nearest state's CM)

69 Yes (86.3%)

11 No (13.7%)

Comments- If not at the national level, the youth seems to be well aware of state/ regional level politics.

Q12 Do you think women and the youth are underrepresented in Indian politics?

74 Yes (92.5%)

6 No (7.5%)

Comments- This proves that majority of the youth does align with liberal/ progressive ideologies as already proven in Q6. However, an increased number of youth leaned towards progressivism when compared to Q6 which means majority of those who identified as 'moderate' while holding political beliefs did believe in social progressivism at least (if not economic liberal beliefs). Hence, many believe that the gender gap in representation is one that needs to be bridged.

Q13 Do you believe it is a good idea to vote?

77 Absolutely, it is a duty (96.3%)

3 Not really (3.7%)

Comments- It is rather a fact to be proud of that 96.3% of the respondents believed in voting. This leads us to think that voting-which was once seen as a mere right that certain groups of the

population longed for- is now seen as essential i.e. a duty.

Q14 Do you know about the introduction of 'NOTA'?

66 Yes (82.5%)

14 No (17.5%)

Comments- While 96.3% did believe voting was essential, only 82.5% of the respondents were aware of the fact that the 'NOTA' i.e. 'None Of The Above' button exists too when casting votes. This is presumably due to inexperience of voting which is largely due to the age factor.

Q15 Which of the following according to you is independent of the other two?

64 Judiciary (80%)

9 Legislature (11.25)

7 Executive (8.75%)

Comments- Most were aware about the building blocks of the three branches of Government where the Judiciary is independent of the other two.

Q16 Have you ever heard of the left-right political spectrum?

56 Yes (70%)

24 No (30%)

Comments- 30% is a rather alarming number to some. However, it is assumed that those who were unaware believe in voting for the candidate, not the party. This does not show much confidence in the ideologies and beliefs of the youth, something that India has been struggling with for a very long time.

Q17 Do you consider politics to be a sensitive topic?

56 Yes (70%)

24 No (30%)

Comments- Many respected the sentiments of society. This proves wrong the fact that many in our youth debate about politics openly-which is in fact seen as a good thing. Hence, this might act as an area of concern for some but would make others happy.

Q18 Would you like to see more young people in Indian Politics?

79 Yes (98.8%)

1 No (1.2%)

Comments- 98.8% (All but one) of the respondents did believe that Indian politics caters to the old. This could be seen as an incentive for the whole of Indian society to recognise, appreciate and uplift the younger generation for entering/transitioning their careers into politics.

(1.6) Discussion

The society is majorly divided into two distinct groups when it comes to opinions on the newer and younger generations. Many believe that the rising youth of India is clueless, unaware, laid back and not serious when it comes to important matters like national affairs and politics to name some. The other group believes that the generations so mentioned are a sense of hope and the rising face of the future which is of great importance for the nation and its situation and reputation at a global platform. Through this study, the latter emerges as a rising truth of the belief.

The respondents have showcased a serious demeanour in their attitudes towards not only politics but also general knowledge of the nation's governing systems. It is evident that there is increased awareness and participation from the youth. Their contributions to this study have only benefitted them, in terms of others' perceptions.

This study was only a micro-level way to provide a wake-up call for those of the older generation that constantly misinterpret the youth. Most definitely, it is not them who are at fault to hold such critical notions. As already observed, such a belief is inherited in society. However, it is high time to break that practice and appreciate the positive changes in course that India is taking today.

PART (II) PERSPECTIVES AND ARGUMENTS

Many believe that India is a country that is still stuck in the past owing to its leaders. The youngest Prime Minister to have been elected in India was Shri Rajiv Gandhi at the age of 40 back in 1984. Only one woman -Smt. Indira Gandhi- has been elected as the Prime Minister since India gained independence in 1947. When our current Prime Minister Shri Narendra

Modi was first elected in 2014, he was 63 years old. Dr Manmohan Singh, the Prime Minister before him was 71 years old back in 2004. These are clearly far from progressive tendencies when compared to countries like Finland where Prime Minister Sanna Marin is both 34 years old and a woman. A newspaper article studied this issue and even compared it to politics that takes place in Colleges and Universities in India and questioned if the participation of the youth in politics is “merely a ‘use and throw’ relationship” (Kumar, 2019). Kumar also concluded by implying that it was the need of the hour to showcase youth engagement in politics as something that serves the ‘larger purpose of nation-building’ (Kumar, 2019).

The average age of the current Cabinet in India lies at 60 years old. A news report stated that the average age of Members of Parliament in 1999 was 52 years old and in 2014, it reached 59 years old as found by the Data Intelligence Unit of the newspaper ‘India Today’ (Rampal, 2019). Major and minor newspapers have always been seen to criticise Indian politics for age. A similar situation is experienced in our everyday lives as we talk about such topics with our peers. The real question is, why is the Indian youth silent and where even is the Indian political youth?

While politicians like Chandrani Murmu, a 27-year-old Member of Parliament being the youngest in India and Hemant Soren—who became a Chief Minister at the age of 28 years—exist, many are not aware of what youth in politics actually means. We all know that ‘youth’ is an umbrella term but in politics, its influence exists even further than in other fields of life. The major reason to this being Universal suffrage. One must be 18 to vote. Unlike countries like the United States, where High school students are involved in student wings of political parties, India is rather strict in essence University students are allowed to enter University-level politics under National student wings of political parties, as witnessed vastly in Universities like Jawaharlal Nehru University which is one of the most politically active campuses in India. However, only when one has completed a degree or has had field experience in politics does he or she enter into politics in the first place (most of the time).

Hence, youth in politics might not exactly be something one thinks of initially. This research paper started with a survey of the youth only to later talk about what youth in politics actually means. This not only erases any misconceptions one might have about the youth but also

studies the youth in totality, being one as per definition and the other as per a non-stated yet universal politics definition, socially and political respectively; something of rhetoric in itself. To complement the claims, one can look at how youth is represented as the age group of 15-34 years (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, 2017) when the United Nations defines youth as ages 15-24 in their fact sheets one example being ‘Realizing the Potential of Youth’ (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2014). This shows that the Government assists such as the notion and it is not merely politicians who have created their own idea of youth. It is present vastly outside the walls of politics as well in one of its inter-related dimension being our society and social affairs when our aforementioned Ministry’s report is referred to. According to the modification made by the National Youth Policy 2014, the concept was changed to 15-29 years of age. This brings the Government, the people of India and also politics all into equilibrium. While the Ministry does not seem to have used this concept, their adoption of 15-34 years of age is not necessarily bound to be criticised for there is no particular definition or hard and fast concept of youth as such and that is the reality of the matter. This claim is supported by Pablo Picasso who once said “Youth has no age”. While there is no direct connection between an artist and politics as such, politics is a part of this world just like Picasso himself was. Even the Oxford dictionary does not state a particular age group when defining youth.

Since the puzzling concept of youth is now out of the picture, it is now important to understand how the Indian ‘youth’ voted in 2019.

According to the newspaper India Today, their India Today-Axis My India post poll shows (Bansal, 2019) that the age-wise vote share was-

Age group 18-25 years –

- 44% Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)
- 26% Indian National Congress (INC)
- 30% Other Parties

Age group 26-35 years-

- 46% Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

26% Indian National Congress (INC)

28% Other Parties

*Note- All data presented above is taken from the news article published on May 31, 2019, titled 'How India voted in 2019 election? Here is what India Today-Axis My India post-poll study tells us.' From the newspaper 'India Today'.

PART (III) CASE STUDIES

(3.1) CASE STUDY 1- OPPOSITION PARTY: INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS (INC)

It is common knowledge that the Indian National Congress has ruled India for 54 years since independence in 1947, which is the most that any political party ever has in the country. In recent times, INC lost the Indian General Elections of 2014 and 2019. Following their second loss, the party President Shri Rahul Gandhi resigned in July 2019. It is important to note the timeline of the INC post-2019 in order to understand the political youth in Congress. Smt. Sonia Gandhi, who had been the President of INC for 19 years, took over as the Interim President of INC and still holds that position as of today. Referred to as the 'Grand old party' of India, many people speculate its apparent love for senior member politicians. Many have criticised INC for the same, some situations have even led their 'youthful' or 'young' politicians to resign like Jyotiraditya Scindia. On social media, a lot of the youth questioned as to how Scindia switched his ideology from a Centre left-leaning party to a Centre right-leaning party without warning. Many politicians like these in India are questioned by the young and a question of power versus party always arises.

Almost all young INC supporters slammed Scindia and supported their party calling him 'overambitious' and a 'traitor'.

Others have rebelled, like Sachin Pilot and his loyalist MLAs. He claimed the support of 30 MLAs being the Deputy Chief Minister of Rajasthan and called CM Ashok Gehlot's Government in 'minority' (Staff, 2020). Referring to the timeline, this followed rumours that Pilot was in talks to join BJP however unlike in Scindia's case, this claim did not prove to be

true and Congress' learned lessons from Madhya Pradesh's Government failure in March 2020 prompted a timely dealing of the political crisis and within a month, Congress proved majority in the Rajasthan floor test in August 2020 (Staff, 2020). While there have been many internal conflicts between the young and the old for INC, its timely and appropriate reactions have saved the party from extremely troubled times and political crises. In August 2020, when Smt. Sonia Gandhi's Interim President position was questioned and questions of ECI freezing their symbol were considered by party leaders who were concerned about where the party was headed, a situation of the internal conflict of senior leaders, Rahul Gandhi loyalists and the so-called 'dissenters' including 23 party leaders who wrote a letter asking for 'sweeping changes' took place at the Congress Working Committee (CWC) meeting. Following such heated times; two new young Congress appointments were made (not an isolated case of young appointments). Gaurav Gogoi aged 38 years was appointed as the Deputy Leader of the party in the Lok Sabha and Ravneet Bittu aged 44 as the party's whip in the Lok Sabha proving that the party does not necessarily favour senior and old aged leaders or 'sidelines' its young and youthful members. Other popular young politicians in Congress include Jaiveer Shergill aged 37 years, Milind Deora aged 43 years, Deepender Hooda aged 42 years and Jitin Prasada aged 46 years. While Congress has lost power at the Centre, it does not let go off what it is known for, working for the better of its states where it does have power.

(3.2) CASE STUDY 2- MAJORITY PARTY: BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY (BJP)

BJP only came into existence 40 years ago and has ruled India for 12 years (as of 2020) as opposed to 54 years of INC. As already discussed, the average age of the current Cabinet in India lies at 60 years old. It is also found that 90% of the Cabinet includes crorepatris (Web Team DNA, 2019). The youngest member is Smriti Irani who is 44 years old. The oldest being Ram Vilas Paswan who is 74 years old. It has also been found that 90% of the Rajya Sabha included crorepatris as of March 2018 (The Economic Times, 2018). Some famous young politicians of BJP include Tejasvi Surya aged 29 years, Pritam Munde aged 37 years and Dushyant Singh aged 46 years.

In November 2019, BJP lost power in Maharashtra, its only Hindutva ally. When BJP was to form a Government in Maharashtra, it was unable to do so following which Shiv Sena was called upon for the same. When asked for a 3 day time period, the Governor rejected the plea and called Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) instead. When the Governor's decision was challenged in the Supreme Court, President's rule was imposed in Maharashtra. However, when President's rule was revoked and Devendra Fadnavis was brought back as CM post the claim of majority, Ajit Pawar who was chosen as the Deputy CM of Maharashtra at the time called quits due to internal party conflicts and isolation from support. This led Fadnavis to resign as well due to falling of support and inability to prove majority due to the lost support of MLAs from NCP prior to the floor test. Later, the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA), an alliance of Indian National Congress, Shiv Sena and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) came to power in Maharashtra. These events played a key role in BJP's loss in Maharashtra considering Shiv Sena officially cut ties with the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) due to dissatisfaction with promises made which they claim were not upheld. This caused BJP to lose one of its strongholds in India, which the BJP found to be strategical for its Hindutva ideologies. Fadnavis at the time was 49 years old. The Indian rightist youth was angered by what happened to BJP and a lot of backlashes was faced when the young leftists who supported INC, criticised the MVA Alliance. Maharashtra is the second most populous state of India and a loss for BJP means a loss for the impact on the youth of its only Hindutva ally.

Nevertheless, BJP continues to work for the youth of the nation. The Skill India Mission, Make In India, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Digital India Mission, Startup India and the Fit India Movement are various programs that BJP has implemented successfully to bring about positive changes in the Indian youth

PART (IV) CONCLUSION

While India is a diverse country in terms of its people and cultures, we can see that the Indian youth that comprises these dimensions of the nation is also a huge group that cannot be generalised. Whether it be the teenagers who have shown impeccable knowledge of the Indian political system and Government or the voters who have voted to bring India where it is today ever since 1947. Even the politicians of India vary in terms of age, opinions, economic

backgrounds, practices, actions and any other socio-political or economic factor that is taken into consideration. The only thing that unites us all as a nation is a constant development seen in the country. It is up to every person to decide what they personally think is a positive or a negative change but change is a part of India. Development can be social, economic, political, positive, negative, mental, personal etc depending upon which lines you are classifying development. The youth has always showcased itself to be enthusiastic, willing, inquisitive and most importantly, in action. It is this 'action' of the youth that complements and completes the circle of youth. This subsequently verifies the ways in which youth is identified rather than defined, in the field of politics in India. Hence, Indian politics whether the youth is directly engaged in it or indirectly, is an equally important and accurate aspect to look at while identifying youth's characteristics and behaviour to contribute to its definition in the field of youth research.

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