
ETHNICITY, TRIBAL LEADERSHIP, AND VOTING BEHAVIOR IN KOH-E-SULEMAN

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Abstract

This research analyzed the influence of ethnic identity on voting behavior in the mountainous regions of Koh-e-Suleman, where people are loyal to their ethnic chief. Using quantitative methodology, the research used stratified random sampling from nine Tumans, using a sample of 384. A structured questionnaire was employed to study the influence of ethnic voting behavior. Additionally, the data were analyzed through SPSS using a binary logistic regression model. The findings revealed that ethnic identity is the strongest factor in voting behavior, as shown by a likelihood ratio of $\text{Exp}(B) = 5.299$ for ethnic purposes. These results emphasize the influence of ethnic identity associations in tribal communities where chief loyalty dominates party politics. The research contributes that tribal systems still affect elections, so political education and empowerment are needed to motivate ideological voting. Encouraging long-term studies can reveal more about how voting by ethnic groups has developed over time.

Key words: Ethnicity; voting behavior; Regression model, Tumans, Koh-e-Suleman.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Relations between ethnicity, traditional leaders and the way people vote are central to studying how political participation takes place in hybrid democracies. Although democratic elections are believed to be separate from a society's history and culture, in places such as the Global South, politics is strongly affected by ancient authorities and people's ethnicity. The study examines how people's ethnicity and traditional leaders affect their voting decisions in Koh-e-Suleman, Pakistan. In Koh-e-Suleman, where tribal and ethnic groupings matter a lot to the citizens, this research explores how people's loyalty to their ethnic group influences the outcome of elections. Although research about global ethnic voting exists, this paper specifically looks into how traditional leaders influence this phenomenon. It works to shift how voting behavior is understood in hybrid democracies, as ethnicity, leaders and tribal chiefs have a major impact in those societies.

Traditional leaders are accepted as authorities in many countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, affecting the political choices of people in their communities. At the same time, political alliances are often based on ethnicity, making each election year about ethnic differences instead of policy ideas. Such situations challenge the main ideas of liberal democratic theory which do not often understand how important communal and customary institutions can be. It adds to the body of knowledge by studying how ethnicity and traditional leadership influence the way people vote. Citing recent research and academic discussions, we maintain that traditional leaders guide people in deciding their ethnic identity and political views in many former colonies.

Ethnicity is essential in forming voting decisions in all communities where racial identities exist. Sekulic (2008) delineates that socially constructed ethnicity affects partisan associations, group cohesion, and civic engagement. Ethnic identity forms voting behavior; voters often align with candidates from their ethnic or tribal community. Chandra (2004) added that ethnic parties create an environment, organize ethnic groups, and underscore the significance of collective culture and political objectives. Electorates are encouraged to cast their votes on racial identity, and politicians believe that with ethnic cards, people cast more votes for candidates. Voting behavior shows a citizen's action at the time of voting selecting which person he will vote for in the election. Social and political scientists paying focus on it as a topic many approaches, mainly centered on the factors that guide people's decisions when voting (Raool et al. 2024). The people of Koh-e-Suleman vote on ethnic base for their local chief. The local chief during election raise the slogan of ethnicity.

Quantitative research has highlighted the association between ethnicity and voting behavior. Houle, Kenny, and Park (2019) studied the data from multiple countries, and their findings revealed that economic disparity increases ethnic

group harmony and escalates ethnic voting choice. The outcomes propose that higher economic inequality increases the probability of the electorate's casting votes for candidates of their ethnic groups that defend their financial interests and national identity.

In South Asia, the ethnic voting behavior dynamics are dominant, where ethnicity surrounds cultural identity and political allegiances. Siddiqi (2012) argued how ethnic nationalism has formed the political behaviors in Pakistan. According to Karim, Saeed, and Akber (2019) emphasize the influence of racial identity and tribal identification on the voting behavior and it is especially in Balochistan and Koh-e-Suleman, where tribal loyalty can still be strong. Baluch national movement is an example of the power of racial identity in participating politics, and Baloch voters showed devotion to tribal chiefs and tribal parties.

In Pakistan, the racial groups enhance the relationship between ethnicity and political behaviour due to political instability. According to Akhter, Waheed, and Abid (2022), Balochistan is politically isolated, and the ethnic parties apply the slogans of ethnicity to acquire power by asking their tribes to support them based on tribal loyalty and clientelism politics. The paper has also pointed out that ethnic parties have managed to win a lot of times because of taking advantage of the tribal networks. The results indicated that ethnic identity is a dominating aspect in making voting decisions and political affiliations in Pakistan.

It is a fact that ethnicity has always been recognized as a key determinant in the votes of people particularly in ethnically fragmented societies. Horowitz (1985) described ethnicity as a common practice in culture that played a significant role in behavior. Ethnic beliefs tend to overtake the political ideologies where the voters vote the representatives. As pointed out by Miller and Taylor (2017), ethnic groups also create political instability and isolation where political parties are guided by ethnic loyalties in order to gain political benefits.

Studies on ethnic voter turnout depict that racial identities are often based on political activism. The work by Collier and Hoeffler (2004) contains the quantitative data on the effect of ethnic group loyalty on the voting behavior within marginalized groups. Ethnic associations are used to encourage people to fulfill their political goals by the politicians. They were voted highly by the motivated groups. Baldwin and Huber (2010) have conducted a study in Latin America, and the article demonstrates that ethnic voting is a key factor in electoral participation and voter turnout.

The tribal chiefs stand with a lot of power over their Tumans (people) in Koh-e-Suleman. Honig (2019) states that the tribal chiefs act as intermediaries between the state and the communities because they affect the way people vote, allocating resources, settling disputes, and making decisions that impact the vote of people. Shabbir and Haider (2023) also outlined the influence of tribal loyalty and Tumandari system on the votes made by people because people trust that they will vote the tribal leader belonging to their tribes.

The power of the chiefs is extremely high in tribal communities over their tribe and thus the ethnic loyalty is not merely a cultural but also a political commitment. Similar occurrence is witnessed in other regions of the globe such as Africa whereby traditional leaders are extremely influential in their locality and they use patronage networks to ensure they safeguard their election victory. Under clientelist politics, politicians offer material gains to their clients in a bid to earn them votes. Stokes (2007) investigated the clientelist politics and discovered that it is more predominant in marginalized and divided societies where ethnic leaders serve as practitioners between the communities and the government. There are clientelist politics in Koh-e-Suleman, in which tribal leaders commonly practice and trade benefits with communities.

Clientelism is very crucial in voting patterns in terms of ethnic identities. Hicken (2011) explains the concept of clientelism as a political system of benefits of exchanging between politicians and voters. The politician gets people material rewards and the voters give back their votes. This patronage politics commonly occurs in or marginalized groups such as Koh-e Suleman where the local tribal leaders tend to take control of resources to guarantee the loyalty of voters.

Younas et al. (2014), explored the role played by clientelism in the marginalized communities, primarily in the rural region where the rural individuals trade favors with politicians. The politicians are offering little favors to the rural population and are enjoying long term political benefits on the part of communities. Baloch (2012) further stated that there is entanglement between ethnicity and clientelism. The political leaders tend to give social and economic advantages to their ethnic groups.

Social cohesion often pressures ethnic groups to engage in political engagements in elections. Rosenzweig (2024) argued that social values, norms, and loyalty to the community affect voting behavior, as people vote for candidates who belong to their own ethnicity. This revealed how people in South Asia value tribal cohesion, where racial voting is not only an individual choice but a communal decision based on shared culture.

Esses et al. (2001), also discovered how race and ethnicity impact voting decisions in the U.S.A., where ethnic affiliates vote for those who share their racial background. A similar principle applies to Pakistan, where ethnic political behavior is influenced by the aspiration to keep tribal loyalty with local chiefs.

The interdependence of ethnicity, the tribal leadership, and the voting pattern in Koh-e-Suleman can be discussed as the complication of the social identity, the political power, and the cultural hierarchy. Although there is formalization of democratic processes in Pakistan and especially after the decentralization of power through the local governance systems, the traditional structures still have a high level of influence on the areas of political involvement and election

in Pakistan. The election process, in the case of Koh-e-Suleman, a region with tribal social structure, low literacy levels, and historically marginalized, does not have much to do with the rational or issue based decision-making and more of a traditional allegiance. This scenario leads to an important question: to what degree is the ethnicity and tribal leadership relevant to voting habits and the destruction of the democratic principle of free and informed choice?

The Koh-e-Suleman is no exception as, in most of the tribal societies, voters are also linked by blood and ethnic affiliations that dictate their political orientation. The tribal leaders (Sardars) are the political brokers who not only dictate the way resources are distributed but also dictate the political behavior of their tribes. Such a clientelistic relationship tends to deter individual political involvement since people are afraid to become avoided in the social circle or to be discriminated in terms of their economic status in case they do not follow the tribal opinion. As a result, the elections turn into the means of reproducing tribal hierarchies instead of becoming the tools of the democratic representation.

Further, tribal domination has led to the development of a political culture where any candidate will be evaluated based on personal loyalty to the Sardar rather than on programmatic or policy-based considerations of the candidates. This is further enhanced by lack of efficient state institutions and civic education which means that the people are left at the mercy of tribal leadership in resolving conflicts, security and welfare.

Nevertheless, little empirical studies can be found on the role of these dynamics in influencing voting behavior in Koh-e-Suleman due to its importance. The majority of literature on ethnic politics in Pakistan concentrates on urban or provincial areas leaving out remote tribal areas that still have traditional authority. Thus, an organized study of the ethnicity, tribal leadership and voting habits of Koh-e-Suleman is required. This relationship is vital in both consideration of the quality of democracy in the peripheral regions and in the guiding of policies that would facilitate the awareness of the citizens, participatory citizenship, and fair representation.

The correlation of ethnicity and traditional leadership with voting in Koh-e-Suleman demonstrates how the cultural and communal unit still determines democracy participation in the hybrid regimes. Although a certain degree of democracy exists due to the existence of the democratic institutions, voting behaviors based on the ethnic and tribal loyalties have revealed that rather than being based on ideological views or pure policy considerations, voting decisions are deeply rooted in the historical and social contexts. The traditional leaders are decisive and direct the political decisions and act as mediators between the structures of the state and the communities. This relationship makes clientelist networks where loyalty, resources, and ethnic identity are exchanged as a currency of politics. The development of such systems in Koh-e-Suleman and other parts of the Global South also undermines the assumption of liberal democracy that voters are autonomous and have rational self-interest. Rather the decision of the electorate is based on group identities that are founded on kinship and obligation. The study adds to the general knowledge of how ethnic politics are functioning in the postcolonial societies, and the fact that in most cases, democratic participation exists in co-existence with, and perpetuation of, customary hierarchies. It further highlights the importance of the fact that on discussions on politics, the role of traditional authority and ethnic solidarity cannot be ignored because it can easily lead to simplification of the dynamic of democracy in plural societies. This analysis of ethnicity, leadership and clientelism shows that as much as the political realities of Koh-e-Suleman can be put in perspective, the real change of democracy has to deal with the established cultural and social frameworks that still shape the political life of people.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Ethnicity significantly shapes political behavior and is effective in countries where ethnic groups are strong. Alesina et al. (2016) argued that ethnicity frequently leads to voting decisions and often succeeds political ideologies. Racially divided societies usually support candidates representing their ethnic background because they believe their representative secures their political power and resources.

Gerring et al. (2011) researched ethnic voting in Africa. The findings revealed that ethnic voting patterns are significantly rooted and influenced by historical political structures that divide ethnic communities. Similarly, Alesina et al. (2016) argued that in third-world countries, ethnic groups remain strong, even with the growth of modern democratic values. The findings delineate that ethnic identities remain too dominant in politics, and ethnic parties successfully assemble their objectives during elections.

In some parts of the world such as Koh-e-Suleman, there are tribal systems and tribal leaders are the political powerhouses. One of the major political leaders will be the tribal chiefs, who can have influence on the voting patterns by using their authority as the leaders of the tribes. According to Akhtar (2013), Sardars rule over the Baloch tribes in Pakistan that have their own territories, and Baluchistan is politically disintegrated. The state never consented to offer real power but has always offered symbolic power to local chiefs which has resulted in destabilization of Baluchistan and Pakistan.

Chandra (2004) has also explored the manner in which ethnic groups have a tradition of trusting traditional leaders to help them receive their political favors and elect their chief during elections. The individuals in Koh-e-Suleman

identify themselves to their tribal leaders in the context of the concept of racial politics whereby political loyalty is linked with tribal membership.

Social norms and the pressure of society are tightly connected with the psychological dynamics of voting decisions. Chauchard (2016) investigated the psychological elements of the ethnic voting and the bias on the group base. He claimed that individuals are motivated to vote in favor of those candidates who are a part of their group. This is the case of the politics of Koh-e-Suleman as individuals remain loyal to the leaders of their in-group.

Ethnicity is typically considered an aspect of social-political classification and is understood as individuals having a common origin, language and practices. Voting is an important aspect of human existence. It is through this that we are able to know the will of the people. In democratic societies, one of the major ways of political participation is through voting. But when the country is racially polarized, the turnout to vote is usually influenced by ethnic loyalty as opposed to party ideology. This research is planned to examine the impact of ethnic identity and tribal chief on the voting behavior of Koh-e Suleman, Pakistan, which is a region with a high degree of tribal organization given that allegiance to tribal chiefs (Sardars) controls the political processes in the region.

Gellner (2015) postulated that ethnic voting is mighty in Pakistan, as it indicates the social and economic disparity in the country. This is supported by (T. et al., 2025) who explores the voting behavior in tribal areas indicating that citizens vote in favor of their tribes and ethnic groups. Voting behavior is significant in U.S politics and race is one of the factors taken into consideration. The American, African, Latino, and other minorities vote Democratic Party because of their historical identification to the social welfare schemes and the civil rights. Conversely, the Republican Party is supported by white voters and in most cases it brings about political polarization. Historical exclusion and economic inequality is a contributor to U.S. politics that is split on racial identities (Cameron, 2019).

India heavily relies on caste, religion and ethnic identities in terms of democracy. These factors are the ones on which people make a decision to vote in India. In India, people are mostly mobilized by the political parties on ethnic, religious, and caste grounds (Kohli, 2001). Bharatiya Janata Party tends to inspire Hindu nationalism in people whereas Congress and other parties emphasize on caste, religion, and ethnicity.

Political engagement in African politics is the most powerful in terms of ethnicity. The African countries have ethnic-based parties with ethnic politics oftentimes represented by the elite. Political power is normally exchanged with resources among the politicians and the other aspect of African politics is clientelistic politics (Stokes, 2005). African studies have found that ethnic elites exercise their power to replace ethnic allegiance that typically results in political instability (Van de Walle, 2003).

Immigrants influence European politics, such as those of the United Kingdom, France, and Germany. Refugees from Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Turkey often cast their votes on ethnic grounds. These migrants support left parties that frequently advocate social justice and anti-discriminatory policies. However, right-wing parties' policies are against ethnic minorities, and this has led to political polarization of ethnic voting decisions (Skey, 2013).

Still, very few pieces of literature look at how ethnicity and traditional leadership can both affect voting patterns. Generally, studies analyze traditional leadership variables separately and fail to include how ethnic identity can guide a community's decision in elections. This paper demonstrate that traditional leaders help create feelings of ethnic belonging that affect people's interest in politics.

The liberal democratic view that a person's political position is mainly influenced by what she or he prefers and believes. On the contrary, we stress that collective identities and traditional institutions play a major role in determining the circumstances of political decision-making.

Although there is a wide literature of ethnic voting and traditional authority, little research has been conducted in a systematic way to understand the intersection of the two in determining voting behavior in hybrid democracies. The literature tends to view them as different causal factors of political obedience and even traditional leadership as a survival of pre-modern power as a sociocultural factor. In some other societies, such as Koh-e-Suleman, these forces cannot be separated: tribal leaders do not only mobilize the ethnic identity but even determine the limits of political participation and membership.

Ethnic or clientelist politics has been studied by previous literature (e.g., Chandra 2004; Honig 2019; Akhter et al. 2022) that isolates the phenomenon and examines it in terms of vote mobilization, resource allocation, or loyalties. Nevertheless, much is still unknown about how the traditional leaders proactively create and maintain ethnic identities to perpetuate political influence particularly in the setting of hybrid democracy, which exists in Pakistan. This paper fills that gap by looking at the way ethnic belonging and tribal authority intersect with each other in affecting electoral decisions in Koh-e-Suleman.

This way, it contributes to the literature by: Combining ethnic identity theory and conventional models of leadership. This will offer empirical support in a marginalized, tribalized area that has not been represented in the literature of political behavior. Subverting liberal democratic presuppositions of individual autonomy by exposing the collective and traditional grounds of political decisions. The research, therefore, brings a novel analytical prism to the interpretation of the voting patterns in post-colonial, hybrid democracies, where ethnicity and customary power are still the key elements of political life.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF ETHNIC VOTING

One popular theory used to elucidate ethnic voting behavior is the social identity theory proposed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner (1979) this theory argues that individuals classify themselves as groups, and ethnicity is an essential tool of group identity. The voters recognize themselves as an ethnic group and vote in favor of their group candidate.

Instrumental voting behavior provides a corresponding structure for understanding voting decisions. Instrumental voting happens when voters support their candidates with the hope of tangible benefits (Kaufman, 2004). At the same time the expressive voting focuses more on the symbolic value of voting as opposed to material gains (Rasool et al. 2023). These two theories assist in understanding the voting pattern in multi ethnic societies where racial identity is so entrenched in individual and social dominions.

Group conflict theory postulates that ethnic groups struggle over political and economic resources. Whenever an ethnic group perceives itself to be threatened by other groups in terms of its material and immaterial gains, it will mobilize and vote in an ethnic manner. This is a strategy to secure its resources (Horowitz, 1985). This situation creates political polarization in a country. The same problem exists in Pakistan, where ethnic groups compete for their resources and identity.

Furthermore, the theories that say ethnic identities are not set in stone, but become part of social life and politics by people's actions (Brubaker, 2004). It is argued here that traditional leaders use politics to separate ethnic groups and select which ones to include or exclude in elections. These theories, can view traditional leaders as influencing ethnic identity in society. With this concept, we can see how people vote based on their culture, who they are and their power as citizens.

Social identity theories provide a lens through which ethnic voting behavior can be understood. The political behavior is heavily influenced by group identity. In tribal societies the bonds of group are too strong and people feel dishonor if their candidate loose in election. This study also applies instrumental and expressive voting behavior as people vote for their benefits and group solidarity. In Koh-e-Suleman these theories help us to elucidate why ethnic loyalty, compounded by tribal leadership, rules the political landscape.

This study argues that in Koh-e-Suleman, tribal chief and ethnicity are dominant factors of voting decisions of people. On the other hand liberal democratic theories believed on policy driven voting. This study reveals the constant importance of traditional leadership in guiding political decisions, thus adding to the body of knowledge on voting behavior in non-Western democracies.

4. METHODS AND MATERIALS

This research was conducted in the geographically and culturally significant area of Koh-e-Suleman primarily inhabited by the Baluch ethnic group. The region is one of the most conservative and tribal in southern Pakistan where social structure is based on extended kinship, lineage and loyalty to tribal chief or Sardar. The region is characterized by different tribes with their unique hierarchy of leadership, traditions and network of influence. Historically and politically, these tribal leaders have massive powers over the members of their tribes where they not only control their social and cultural life but also decide the patterns of political life and voting behavior. Their choices can be more than formal state institutions and therefore, Koh-e-Suleman can be considered a very timely case study to study the nexus between ethnicity, tribal leadership, and electoral behavior. Material and method is a general approach that is adopted by a researcher to carry out a study, gather information, and study the results. It involves techniques, methods, tools, and procedures of collecting, analyzing and interpreting data in a systematic and structured way. The main goal of research methodology is to make sure that the study is undertaken in a rigorous and ethical manner hence yielding reliable and valid outcomes. This study was conducted in the area of Koh-e-Suleman which is inhabited by the Baluch ethnic group. The area has various tribes that have their tribal leaders, who exercise great authority over their tribes. According to Just (2022), ethnicity and voting patterns have a strong connection whereby ethnic groups are loyal to those representing their interests strengthening ethnic voting habits.

The research methodology design contains stratified random sampling and binary logistic regression that are specifically appropriate in testing the research hypotheses in a population characterized by ethnic and tribal affiliations. All nine Tumans were represented by a stratified random sampling of 384 respondents. Various tribes of Baluch populate the Koh-e-Suleman region, and the stratified random sampling can enable all the tribes to be equally represented. A sample formula was used to compute the sample size in order to guarantee reliability and validity. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data to investigate the influence of voting behavior. The data were analyzed through SPSS using binary logistic regression to determine the association between dependent and independent variables. The data obtained were coded and analyzed through the use of Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The binary logistic regression model was used to find out the strength and direction of the relationship between the dependent variable (voter turnout) and the independent variables (ethnic, political, economic, social motivations). This type of statistical analysis was specifically appropriate in this study because the outcome explored in the study was binary, which was whether a person will vote or not, but predictors were categorical in

nature. The analysis made it possible to identify the strongest amongst the factors that determine voter turnout, which is a quantitative measure of the extent to which ethnic and tribal ties influence voter turnout as opposed to economic and political motivations.

Moreover, logistic regression was also effective in testing research hypotheses, which assumed that (H1) ethnic identity is a significant factor in determining voting behavior, and (H2) the decisive factor in electoral choices is the tribal leadership. Through such a rigorous quantitative design, the research was able to not only present empirical findings to validate the hypotheses but also present statistical validation to the theoretical assumptions made on the basis of Social Identity Theory, Instrumental-Expressive Theory, and Expressive Voting Theory. This methodological framework therefore provided credibility of the findings as far as both theoretical relevance and statistical strength was maintained and provided in-depth picture of how ethnicity and tribal leadership meet to influence the voting behavior in Koh-e-Suleman.

4.1 Variables and Measurement

There is a significant association between voters' ethnic identity and their voting behavior in Koh-e-Suleman; individuals are more likely to vote for candidates belonging to their own ethnic or tribal group.

Traditional leaders (tribal chiefs) significantly influence the voting decisions of their community members.

The variables below were measured.

Ethnic identity: This is done by checking respondents' sense of belonging to their ethnic group and loyalty to tribal leaders.

Tribal Leadership: Measured by assessing the level of influence tribal leaders (Sardars) have over the voting decisions of individuals.

Voting Behavior: The dependent variable is measured by responses regarding who they vote for, the reasons for their vote, and whether ethnic loyalty plays a role.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected was analyzed using SPSS (version 25) software. Binary logistic regression examined the relationship between the independent variables (ethnic identity, tribal leadership) and the dependent (voting behavior) variables. The regression model estimated the likelihood of an individual voting based on ethnic identity and tribal influence. Statistical significance was set at a p-value of < 0.05.

5.1 Logistic Regression Model Results for (vote =1 for yes and 0 = No)

Vote Cast	Coefficients (B)	Standard Errors	T-stats	Exponent of (B)
Economic Purpose	0.467	0.069	6.768	1.596
Ethnic Purpose	1.668	0.079	21.248	5.299
Political Purpose	0.616	0.058	10.621	1.851
Social Purpose	-1.150	0.084	-13.626	0.317
Constant	1.216	0.058	21.002	0.296

The binary logistic regression analysis findings, revealed that a number of factors play a major role in determining whether an individual would turn up to vote or not. The independent variables that were evaluated, including the ethnic, economic, political, and social motivations, the ethnic purpose proves the strongest predictor. The analysis indicates that people who vote on ethnic grounds have more than five times chances to vote as indicated by coefficient of 1.668 and odds ratio of $\text{Exp}(B) = 5.299$. This shows the crucial position of ethnic identity and loyalty in the development of electoral behavior, and the extent to which ethnic attachments are deep-rooted and affect the political participation. Political reasoning is also major in motivating people to turned up and vote. Respondents who are motivated by political interests, i.e. party loyalty, performance of the government or ideological inclination, are about 1.85 times likely to vote as opposed to respondents who are not. This is backed by the coefficient of 0.616 and odds ratio of 1.852 as it is significant to highlight the value of political awareness and alignment in mobilizing voters.

Economic incentives also play a bigger role in voter engagement albeit to a lesser extent. Those individuals who view voting as a possibility of economic benefits in the form of job opportunities, development, or economic rewards are 1.6 more likely to turnout, with a coefficient of 0.467, odds ratio of 1.596. Although economic motives are not the least significant, it seems that they have a little less influence compared with ethnic and political ones. Interestingly, social purpose of voting is negatively associated with and significant in voter turnout. The -1.150 coefficient and odds ratio of 0.317 indicate that a group of social factors could reduce the chances of voting. This may be a result of deep-seated social conflicts, lack of involvement or poor group dynamics. Peer pressure, expectations in the community, or

inner conflict issues may also make one refuse to vote instead of taking part in the elections. The social identity theory, instrumental expressive theory and expressive voting theory validate the findings of the statistical results. According to social identity theory political behaviors are influenced by sense of self of their ethnic group. The logistic regression shows that individuals are faithful to their group and tribal chief on ethnic grounds. The results of a regression analysis are also consistent with instrumental theory according to which the voters vote in direction of concrete benefits. The results showed that people are driven by economic and political aspects.

5.2 Percentage Distribution of Respondents on Voting Based on Ethnic Group, Voting for Ethnic Leader, and Tribe's Influence on Voting

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Whether They Vote Based on their Ethnic Group or Community	Yes	254	66.1%
	No	130	33.9%
Whether They Would Still Vote for Their Ethnic Leader if He Was Proven Corrupt	Yes	125	32.6%
	No	259	67.4%
Whether They Are Influenced by Their Tribe's Decisions When Voting for Candidates	Yes	221	57.6%
	No	163	42.4%
Total		384	100.0%

The table shows how often and how much the respondents went out to vote depending on the ethnicity. Two-thirds (66.1) of the participants said that they voted based on their community or ethnicity and this indicates how identity politics were strong. Only a smaller percentage of 33.9% did not comply with this trend implying that their voting choices were based on ideology or policy factors. This shows that ethnic affiliations usually supersede policy in determining the political conduct, indicating the strong influence of communal affiliations in elections. These patterns might interrupt the idea of merit based representation and policy-based governance. Rasool, Saeed & Shah, (2020) opined that ethnicity is a very important factor in the elections, since ethnic groups tend to be more active and mobilize votes in favor of candidates who have the same ethnic background. On the same note, in British elections, Fisher, Heath, Sanders, and Sobolewska (2015) found that Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities vote in favor of a representative of their ethnic group, and Muslim voters favor Muslim candidates. These results underscore the fact that there is a great relationship between ethnicity and voting. Also, studies have identified that, on top of communal forces, the kinship networks also have effects on the electoral preferences.

The table also indicates the perceptions of the respondents as far as voting to an ethnic leader who is corrupt is concerned. Although there was a high ethnic loyalty, 32.6% of the respondents would still vote their ethnic leader in case he/she was found to be corrupt with the majority 67.4% not voting. This implies that despite having the preservation of ethnic loyalty, voters are becoming more concerned with morality and responsibility. According to Bhavnani and Condra (2012), when politicians supply private goods, facilitate bureaucracy or supply public goods, especially where the politicians are of the same ethnic or partisan group as the voters, the latter will tend to tolerate corruption. Moreover, there are also voters who are pressured or have no opportunity to choose and this affects their choices. Likewise, Faiz, Rasool and Nadeem, (2024) discovered that voters conduct the cost benefit analysis whereby they willingly support corrupt politicians provided that the leaders will deliver tangible material rewards. These results reveal a dynamic that is complex, and ethnic loyalty is restrained by realistic demands of governance and provision of services. The views of the respondents regarding the effect of tribal decisions on voting are also reflected on the table. More than half (57.6%) said their tribe influences their voting process and that shows communal decision-making is still a relevant aspect in voting process. On the other hand, 42.4 said they do not base their votes on tribal affiliation which may mean more political orientation or personal political structure. The results are align with the study conducted by Nawaz et al. (2024) 72.51% of the participants answered that tribal influence impacted their voting style, and 27% disagreed. The research suggests that electorates should consider political candidates on merit and not on tribal origin to enhance more meritocratic political systems. Ali et al. 2024 (2019) also emphasize the fact that about a quarter of the global population is under the rule of traditional leaders, but the empirical literature on the political impact of chiefs is scarce. In many African countries, chiefs maintain strong authority and continue to play a pivotal role in shaping political outcomes.

This paper had the aim of analyzing the connection between ethnicity and tribal leadership and voting in the Koh-e-Suleman area based on the following central research question: To what extent does ethnicity and tribal systems determine individual voting patterns? The hypotheses were based on the assumption that (H1) the ethnic identity does play a significant role in the voting behavior and (H2) tribal leadership plays a decisive role in voting behavior. Both hypotheses are highly supported by the results of logistic regression and percentage. The review showed that the ethnic motivation is the strongest one, raising the chances of voting more than five times. This result supports the idea behind Social Identity Theory, according to which the choice of the political preferences of individuals is strongly connected to the sense of their belonging to the collective identity and membership. Ethnic belonging continues to be one of the

primary reasons of political loyalty and participation in Koh-e-Suleman. This observation concurs with what was previously experienced in the past because the issue of ethnicity has been found to be overwhelmingly effective in voting across different environments by both Rasool et al. (2024) and Fisher et al. (2015). These findings hence confirm that the ethnic solidarity continues to prevail in ideologically or policy-based politics, which reinforce the unity of the group, yet inhibit meritocratic representation. Moreover, the study determined that the tribal leadership and group decision making still occupies the center-stage in the political process as more than half the respondents admitted that tribal power dictated their voting patterns. It also reflects the continuation of the traditional forms of leadership, which is not out of place in the statements given by Baldwin and Holzinger (2019) who explain that in a majority of the developing world, the political processes of the region are still impacted by the chiefs and tribal leaders. Nevertheless, the study also found out that there was a progressive change in vote: a major proportion (67.4) indicated that they were not willing to have an ethnic leader who was known to be corrupt. This shows the rise of political reasonableness and moral responsibility, which implies that as much as identity politics are still predominant, democratic consciousness is starting to face ethnic devotion.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the influence of ethnicity and tribal leadership in forming voting behavior in the Koh-e-Suleman region, as the findings indicate that ethnic loyalty is the most dominant factor influencing political participation. At the same time, socioeconomic aspects also influence voting behavior. The tribal chief has exerted significant influence in the electoral process. By adding ethnicity and traditional leadership to the normal voting behaviour studies, this paper explains political participation more clearly in non-Western democracies. The theory needs to be reimagined to see how the behaviour of voters in elections is shaped by unwritten norms and personal identities in various parts of the world. Even more importantly, these implications impact research and policymaking in settings where it is important for communities to see leaders they recognize, besides abiding by proper procedures.

Overall, the study concludes that voting behavior in Koh-e-Suleman reflects a hybrid political culture, where traditional loyalties coexist with emerging democratic consciousness. Ethnic and tribal factors continue to exert a powerful influence, but the increasing importance of ethics, governance, and tangible outcomes signifies a slow transformation toward more rational and accountable political participation. These findings highlight the need for political education, transparent governance, and inclusive policy-making to reduce identity-based polarization and promote meritocratic representation in tribal and multi-ethnic regions. The result of this paper highlights the current relevance of ethnicity and tribal leadership in influencing the voting behaviour in Koh-e-Suleman. To promote the more democratic, accountable, and policy-oriented political implication, there are a number of important policy suggestions. First, the campaigns on political awareness and a civic education program should be reinforced in the tribal and rural communities. Voters need to understand why they need to assess candidates based on competence, integrity and serving the people and not based on their ethnic or tribal backgrounds. Citizens can be empowered to evaluate political options in a critical manner beyond traditional affiliation by targeted educational interventions by the Election Commission of Pakistan and civil society organizations.

Second, the institutional reforms are necessary to ensure increased levels of transparency and accountability in the local governance. Empowering local government structures will reduce the need to use tribal intermediaries and the citizens will be empowered to direct the elected representatives. The systems of delivering the services to the population also need to be improved to decrease the level of clientelism and reliance on the networks of patrons. Third, political representation should be made inclusive. Political parties must focus on selection of candidates based on merit and making sure that marginalized groups in tribes and ethnic communities exist in the party. This would be in assisting to reduce elite dominance and strengthening participatory democracy at the grassroots level. In future studies, researchers should consider taking a comparative study and analyzing different effects of ethnic and tribal factors in different parts of Pakistan and other hybrid democracies. The longitudinal studies may also explore the idea of whether the loyalties of old are destabilized over time by the increasing education, urbanization, and digital communication. Further, qualitative research using interviews and focus group would provide more information about how people have to negotiate between the ethnic identity and democratic choice. Finally, the need to fill the gap between the traditional and the modern democracy is quite critical in the political development of Pakistan and the study provides the platform on which the future policy and research should be based.

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