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Winning the Vote: Analyzing Electoral Strategies in Na-258 Loralai

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This study examines the strategies employed by victorious candidates in NA-258 (Loralai) through the case study method. The findings reveal that candidates in such constituencies adopted strategies tailored to the social and cultural norms of their areas and the mentality of their voters. In NA-258 Loralai, the candidates relied more on joining pro-establishment parties, forming electoral alliances, utilizing the biradari (kinship) system, managing the Election Day, arranging corner meetings, and door-to-door canvassing. The most effective approach across the constituency was joining a pro-establishment Balochistan Awami Party. The researcher has used rational choice theory to show voters were driven by personal benefits and nepotism, while the case study method compares candidate strategies in 2013 and 2018, identifying the key strategy behind the NA-258 victory. Overall, the research concludes that the election strategies of winning candidates in NA-258 differed significantly, reflecting local socio-political dynamics.

Keywords: Na-258 (Loralai), Election Strategies, Winning Candidates, Electoral Alliances, Biradari System (Kinship Politics), Pro-Establishment Parties, Balochistan Awami Party (BAP), Voter Behavior

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Abstract

This study examines the strategies employed by victorious candidates in NA-258 (Loralai) through the case study method. The findings reveal that candidates in such constituencies adopted strategies tailored to the social and cultural norms of their areas and the mentality of their voters. In NA-258 Loralai, the candidates relied more on joining pro-establishment parties, forming electoral alliances, utilizing the biradari (kinship) system, managing the Election Day, arranging corner meetings, and door-to-door canvassing. The most effective approach across the constituency was joining a pro-establishment Balochistan Awami Party. The researcher has used rational choice theory to show voters were driven by personal benefits and nepotism, while the case study method compares candidate strategies in 2013 and 2018, identifying the key strategy behind the NA-258 victory. Overall, the research concludes that the election strategies of winning candidates in NA-258 differed significantly, reflecting local socio-political dynamics.

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[Na-258 \(Loralai\)](#), [Election Strategies](#), [Winning Candidates](#), [Electoral Alliances](#), [Biradari System \(Kinship Politics\)](#), [Pro-Establishment Parties](#), [Balochistan Awami Party \(BAP\)](#), [Voter Behavior](#)

Introduction

Elections are a cornerstone of democracy, allowing citizens to choose representatives through free and fair voting. In Pakistan, the first direct general elections were delayed until December 17, 1970, with 24 parties contesting. Since its inception, NA-258 (Loralai), covering Loralai, Musakhail, Duki, Ziarat, and Harnai, has seen shifting political trends shaped by tribal structures, socio-economic conditions, and individual political personalities.

Historically, PML-N maintained dominance in the constituency, but in 2018, Sardar Israr Tareen of

the newly formed Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) won with 42,938 votes, defeating PML-N's candidate and marking a notable political shift. The constituency has over 313,000 registered voters and comparatively high literacy rates, partly due to local industries like coal mining, marble extraction, and transport. Proximity to Punjab has also contributed to greater political awareness.

Election history since 2002 reveals fluctuating representation: PML-N in 2002, PML-Q in 2008, JUI-F in 2013, and BAP in 2018. The 2018 elections were influenced by localized strategies rather than



national party agendas. Key winning tactics included joining a popular emerging party (BAP), building electoral alliances across National and Provincial Assembly seats, leveraging tribal and kinship networks, and providing logistical support such as transport and meals on Election Day. Door-to-door campaigns, corner meetings, and personal voter engagement also played a critical role. The

study finds that voters in NA-258 prioritize personal benefits, kinship ties, tribal loyalty, and candidates' ability to deliver development projects over party ideology. Consequently, successful candidates focus on culturally attuned, personalized outreach to align with the social and tribal dynamics of the constituency, making such strategies more decisive than national political trends.

Table 1

S#	Year of Election	NA 263 (Loralai)	Political Party
1	1993	Haji Gul Muhammad Dumar	(JUI)
2	1997	Sardar Yaqoob Nasir	PML-(N)
3	2002	Sardar Yaqoob Nasir	PML-(N)
4	2008	Sardar Muhammad Israr Tareen	PML-(Q)
5	2013	Molana Ameer Zaman	JUI-F
6	2018	Sardar Israr Tareen	BAP

Aims of the Study

The selected study examines winning the vote: analyzing electoral strategies in NA-258 (Loralai), with a focus on identifying the similarities and differences in policies, tactics, and campaign strategies used by political actors to secure electoral success. The research analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of individual candidates, as well as the social, cultural, and political dynamics of the constituency, including voter behavior and community structures. By closely studying the constituency, its people, and past election outcomes, the research identifies the most effective strategies for winning elections in this context. Additionally, the study considers the policy approaches of major political parties that participated in the 2013 and 2018 elections, offering insights into how party platforms and localized tactics interact in shaping electoral outcomes.

Research Questions

1. What are the strategies adopted by the winning candidates in NA-258 (Loralai) in the election of 2018?
2. What is the difference in the strategies of contesting candidates in 2018 and 2013?
3. Which campaign strategy played the biggest role in the candidate's victory in NA-258?

Limitations

This study focused only on NA-258 Loralai, where interviews were conducted with candidates who

contested the National Assembly elections, while non-contestants were excluded. It explored the strategies of winning candidates, noting both similarities and differences across the two elections. The findings are specific to this constituency and may differ in other areas. Key limitations include the short timeframe of the study and the use of English as the research language.

Literature Review:
Election Strategies in Advanced Countries

This study's literature review is divided into three parts: election strategies in advanced democracies (the USA and the UK), in South Asia, and specifically in Pakistan. In developed countries like the USA, political parties manage campaigns by selecting candidates, organizing events, and running extensive media outreach through electronic, print, and increasingly digital platforms. Technological advances have transformed traditional methods, making online engagement crucial. In the U.S., the president is elected via the Electoral College, with campaigns starting after formal candidacy announcements and lasting about a year, involving intensive planning, fundraising, and voter outreach (Arterton, 1984). In developed democracies, election strategies are shaped by party stance, electoral rules, and voter choices (Budge & Farlie, 2025)

U.S. presidential campaigns have changed a lot over time due to new strategies, media influence, and social changes (Aliwie, 2025). U.S. presidential campaigns are lengthy, with figures like Bill Clinton

and George W. Bush campaigning nationwide for nearly a year. Candidates are officially nominated at party conventions in July or August, after which the general election campaign runs until November. At both national and local levels, candidates rely heavily on their parties for funding, planning, and logistical support, underscoring the central role of political parties in American elections. (Caldeira & Patterson, 1982). Furthermore, the media, which is part and parcel of the election campaign, has a great impact on the results of elections. Advanced nations utilize media wisely to increase party supporters (Zuzana, 2009). Grants, Schultz, and Arterton argued in their research that party-supported candidates have more opportunities of winning elections. Using media as a tool of campaign and manipulation is another strategy of winning elections in America. In the U.S., presidential campaigns are year-long, with candidates touring nationwide before formal nominations at party conventions in July or August. The general election runs from September to November. At all levels, candidates depend heavily on party infrastructure for funding, management, and outreach, underscoring the pivotal role of political parties in elections. (Schultz, 2004).

In the UK, an election campaign consists of three stages. The first stage of the campaign contains posters, irregular meetings with voters, and an appeal for votes to the electorate. At the second stage, the campaign is run at the local level, and the third stage of the campaign includes the use of electronic media like cable and internet, which are, of course, the modern tools of an election campaign. (Farrell & Schmitt-Beck, 2002). Crewe says the party identification model, which assumes that most of the voters are blind followers of parties inherently, did not happen in advanced societies like the British general election of 1997 (Ivor Crewe, 1998). Crewe argues that in the UK, party identification does not matter because its voters are educated and politically aware. They are issue-oriented instead of party fanatics. In the society of the UK, the media plays a pivotal role in the outcome of an election. UK election campaigns use both old and new methods. Labour focuses on reforms, Conservatives on tax cuts and growth, and both use digital media to reach voters. Domestic issues matter most, while media and fact-checkers guide public opinion (Dommett & Power, 2024).

Election Strategies in South Asian Countries

In South Asia, election strategies are influenced by social, political, economic, and cultural factors working together (Abdullah, 2024). India and Pakistan share electoral similarities due to their shared history, but Indian voters are generally more politically active and responsive. India's 2014 general election was the largest in the world, and the 2015 Delhi elections demonstrated voters' willingness to shift support, with AAP defeating the BJP despite its earlier national victory. Indian political campaigns employ a wide range of strategies, including rallies, door-to-door canvassing, and visual promotional tools (Diwakar, 2016).

Bangladesh, having been part of Pakistan until 1971, shares many similarities with Pakistan in terms of its political and electoral systems. Due to these parallels, the campaign strategies used in Bangladesh are relevant to this study. As an emerging democracy, Bangladesh primarily operates under a two-party system, dominated by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the Awami League. Both parties adopt comparable campaign approaches, including political processions, public speeches, and door-to-door canvassing. Party leaders often accompany nominated candidates during constituency visits, reinforcing party presence and voter engagement during the election period (ANFREL, 2009).

Election Strategies in Pakistan

A study in Taxila and Wah Cantt found voting shaped by caste, religion, feudal pressure, and social background, limiting independent choice. In Pakistan, key influences include ethnicity, caste, socio-economic policies, candidate image, and media. Parties leverage different appeals—JUI-F on religion, MQM on ethnicity, and PML-N/PPP on development. Men display stronger party loyalty, while women are more influenced by religious and social factors. Despite calls for change, caste and ethnic loyalties remain dominant (Sheikh, Bokhari, & Naseer, 2015).

A study in 2017 concluded that PML-N's 2013 victory in Lahore found party affiliation outweighed candidate personality or campaign tools. Voter loyalty to PML-N was stronger in Lahore than elsewhere, driven by trust in leaders Nawaz and Shahbaz Sharif. The campaign relied on rallies, door-to-door canvassing, social media, party songs,

and post-election criticism of PPP, but party identity remained the decisive factor (Ahmed, Hina, & Ishaq, 2017). Haider (2013) finds that in Punjab, voting is strongly shaped by the Peeri-Murreddi system, where voters follow religious leaders' political guidance, and by entrenched caste loyalties dating back to Aryan times. His study of the 2013 elections concludes that these factors often outweigh policy considerations or candidate merit in determining electoral outcomes (Haider, 2017).

Usman and Amjad's study in Faisalabad, Punjab, found that a candidate's personal capacity, experience, and effective campaigning, through rallies, corner meetings, door-to-door outreach, media use, and caste-based mobilization, are key to success. Media serves both promotion and negative propaganda, but major party backing and caste support remain the two most decisive factors (Usman & Amjad, 2013). In Loralai, voters are relatively more educated and issue-focused, yet biradari ties and money still shape choices. Shawar and Asim (2012) highlight favoritism, nepotism, and caste as key drivers, with 74% biradari-based voting in Faisalabad. Low literacy (57% in 2010) fuels susceptibility to flashy campaigns, contributing to low turnout (41.8% in 2008). In Pakistan and India, especially in Punjab, family and biradari heads strongly influence voting, while urban voters often follow sectarian or ethnic lines. Dominant biradaris like Jatts and Arains retain significant political power (Ahmed & Naseem, 2014).

Ibrahim (2009) highlights that the biradari (kinship) system strongly influences elections in Pakistan, particularly in Lahore and Punjab, where major castes like Arains, Kashmiris, Kakezais, Kambhoos, and Mughals dominate. Historically exploited by colonial powers, biradaris have grown stronger, shaping political and economic life. Used as a tool to mobilize voters, biradari loyalty overrides individual political choice. According to HRCP (2008), while voting is a right for all citizens above 18, most vote along family lines. Notably, educated women actively support biradarism, promoting family candidates during campaigns (Ibrahim, 2009).

Chaudhry and Ahmad (2018) argue that the caste (Tribal) system plays a central role in shaping political parties and alliances in Pakistan, especially in Punjab, where politics at both local and national levels are caste-driven rather than ideological.

Biradaris act as pressure groups and influence political decisions to protect their interests. Both men and women are emotionally attached to their caste, which deeply affects voting behavior. Though more prominent in rural areas, the caste system is equally active in urban politics. Elections, as a democratic process, offer citizens the right to vote at 18, as per the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, but biradari loyalties often override independent political choices (HRCP, 2016).

In rural Punjab, voting is shaped by kinship, family traditions, interest groups, and psychological factors, with feudal and tribal leaders guiding choices. Candidates often switch loyalties to stay viable. While party campaigns have limited impact, uneducated voters are more swayed by slogans and short-term incentives. Family decisions, party ties, polling station distance, and leadership matter, but psychological influences often outweigh political ones (Muhammad, 2018).

Yousaf and Alsamydai highlight Facebook's central role in modern campaigns, enabling parties to connect with voters, share manifestos, promote candidates, mobilize support, and influence ideology, offering a major tactical advantage during elections (Yousif & Alsamydai, 2012). Umbreen and Urwa found that media strongly shaped urban voting, focused on performance and policies, while rural voters relied on personal ties. In 2013, right-wing parties took 62% of votes, PML (N) 35%, PTI 19%, with PML (N) winning on past performance and PTI exploiting PPP's failures via media (Tariq, 2013). Parties used diverse strategies to mobilize voters, with interest groups and door-to-door campaigns proving most effective. Rural apathy, patriarchal decision-making, and patron-client ties shaped outcomes, while political communication strongly influenced public opinion (Ahmed M. F., 2015). In 2013, Pakistani youth emerged as a key democratic force, voting largely on ideology and candidates' problem-solving abilities rather than caste. Media and campaigns boosted their awareness, reflecting rational choice theory (Kanwal, Shahid, & Naeem, Voting Behaviour Of Educated Youth In Pakistan: A Study Of Multan City, 2016).

Gap in the Literature Review

Although many studies have explored voter mobilization, voting behavior, the role of caste, and

campaign strategies in elections, there has been limited focus on the specific election strategies of winning candidates in Pakistan's National Assembly constituency. This study addresses that gap by examining NA-258 (Loralai) using a qualitative case study approach and elite interviews, methods not previously applied to this constituency. The research aims to identify and analyze the key strategies employed by winning candidates in NA-258, offering a novel contribution to the field.

Main Argument

"Candidates who design their election strategies in alignment with the socio-cultural norms of NA-258 (Loralai) and the rational interests of its voters are more likely to achieve electoral success."

Research Methodology

This study uses an exploratory qualitative case study approach to examine the election strategies of winning candidates in NA-258 (Loralai), following Yin's (2014) definition of a case study as an in-depth investigation of a contemporary issue in its real-life context. Data was gathered primarily through 15 semi-structured elite interviews with politicians, party officials, councilors, MPAs, MNAs, and political workers, supplemented by documents, reports, and direct and participant observation. Elites are defined here as individuals directly or indirectly involved in political strategy-making and implementation in NA-258. Respondents were accessed via snowball sampling, starting with initial contacts who referred others. Semi-structured interviews allowed flexibility, beginning with general questions and moving to specific topics, enabling deeper exploration of strategies used in 2018 and earlier elections. Most interviews were conducted in the evening after Maghrib prayer at respondents' homes or offices; remote participants were interviewed by phone. Strategic communication, pre-scheduling, and creating a comfortable environment facilitated participation. This method provided rich contextual data and practical access compared to other qualitative approaches.

Theoretical Framework

Rational Choice Theory views individuals as self-interested actors making calculated decisions to maximize personal utility by weighing costs against

benefits. Rooted in the works of Hobbes, Smith, and Bentham, and later advanced by Kahneman, Tversky, and Gary Becker, RCT has been widely applied in political science to explain voter behavior, party strategies, and electoral competition (Downs, 1957). It assumes individualism, optimality, and self-regard, seeing voters and political elites alike as rational agents. Critics argue RCT overlooks altruism and irrational behavior, but its focus on utility maximization makes it well-suited for analyzing elections in Pakistan, where personal and community benefits often drive political choices.

The study applies RCT to examine strategies in NA-258 (Loralai) during the 2018 elections. Candidates calculated the costs and benefits of actions from ticket acquisition to campaign tactics to secure victory, while voters assessed which candidate could best serve their interests, such as resolving legal issues, improving healthcare, or creating jobs. An interpretive-abductive approach was used to understand these decisions. Alternative theories on coalitions and campaign strategy were rejected as less applicable, making RCT the most relevant framework for explaining observed behaviors.

Interviews of Winning Candidates from NA 258 (Loralai)

NA-258, comprising Loralai, Musakhail, Duki, Ziarat, and Harnai districts in Balochistan, has a population of approximately 735,973 and 313,000 registered voters. In the July 25, 2018, general elections, 22 candidates contested the election, among which 7 were independents and 15 from political parties. Candidate from PKMAP secured 1,064 votes, JUI-F's got 21,031, PPP's candidate 22,101 votes, and PML-N's Sardar Yaqoob Nasir 22,025, while Israr Tareen of the newly formed Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) won with 42,938 votes, defeating PML-N's candidate and marking a notable political shift.

The Strategy of Joining Pro-Establishment Political Parties in Na-258 Loralai

"Candidates who align themselves with political parties perceived to be in coordination with the state establishment generally enjoy greater prospects of electoral success. Such affiliation provides distinct advantages. Firstly, it often ensures access to the support of government employees, whose votes can

significantly influence electoral outcomes. Secondly, candidates associated with establishment-backed parties are typically able to conduct their election campaigns with greater freedom and fewer restrictions, enabling them to mobilize resources and engage with the electorate more effectively” (Tareen, 2018). Furthermore, the majority of the candidates who have joined the newly made Balochistan Awami Party won the election. “PKMAP’s Mehmood Khan criticized establishment control and elite dominance (Uthmankhail, 2018). Overall, success in Loralai required joining a pro-establishment party, electoral alliances, strong biradari backing, door-to-door campaign, and strategic sequencing, factors often absent in losing campaigns.

Forming Electoral Alliances in NA-258 Loralai

In NA-263 Loralai, winning candidates often rely on forming targeted alliances with influential tribal leaders. Opponents, including Sardar Yaqoob Nasir and Shams Hamzazai (PKMAP), acknowledged the alliance’s decisive role, though some alleged vote shifting and pre-planned rigging (Nasir, 2018). In Balochistan’s political culture, alliances are shaped by tribal loyalties, particularly among the dominant Kakar, Tareen, Nasir, Luni, Khetran, and Musakhail, 2018 tribes, where only powerful groups collaborate” (Hamzazai, 2018). By 2018, this combination of strong party affiliation and tribal alliance-building had become the most reliable formula for electoral success in the constituency” (Hamzazai, 2018).” In NA-258 Loralai, candidates joined hands with political parties and supported each other by sharing NA and PP votes. As a result, both their candidates won the election” (Aryan , 2018).

Role of Cast (Tribal) Support

In NA-258 Loralai, tribal affiliation is a key determinant of electoral success. Sardar Jaffar Khan (PKMAP) noted that every candidate got the maximum vote in their cast and tribe (Uthmankhail, 2018). PTI’s Haji Jehangir Musakhail emphasized the dominance of the caste system in Balochistan, alleging rigging in 2018 (Musakhail, 2018). “A former Jamat-e-Islami leader added that parties lack strong vote banks, with voters prioritizing personal and tribal ties. The main tribes, Kakar, Tareen, Nasir, Luni, and Musakhail, are essential to winning”

(Akhwand Zada, 2018). The interviews confirmed that in NA-258, tribal loyalty outweighs party loyalty, with cultural and biradari considerations guiding voter choices.

Managing the Polling Day

“Muhammad D. (2018) notes that voters in NA-258 Loralai focus on quick benefits and personal gain. The winning candidates provided food, pocket money, and transport on Election Day. They also used trained polling agents and stayed until the results were complete, which helped them win”(Bukhari, 2018).

Door-to-Door Campaign

The winning candidates actively engaged with the electorate through personalized campaign strategies. One of the most effective approaches was home visits, where candidates directly interacted with voters and their families, thereby fostering a sense of personal connection and trust. In addition, “the organization of *corner meetings* in local neighborhoods served as a vital mechanism for addressing community concerns and presenting party agendas in an accessible manner” (Sherani, 2018). “Door-to-door campaigning further reinforced these efforts, as it enabled candidates to mobilize support at the grassroots level and demonstrate attentiveness to the everyday issues of constituents. Collectively, these strategies not only enhanced the visibility of candidates but also strengthened their legitimacy in the eyes of the electorate, ultimately contributing to their electoral success” (Anwar, 2018).

Difference in the Strategies of Contesting Candidates in 2018 and 2013

PML (N)’s leaders claimed 2013 was relatively fair and credited their win to anti-Zardari and sympathy votes, while accusing PTI of large-scale rigging in 2018. Across parties, views on election fairness aligned with outcomes; winners called polls fair; losers claimed rigging. Rational choice logic suggests that in 2018, strategies differed due to changing political environments, security threats, and the rise of new campaign tools. In 2018, PTI, BAP, and MQM targeted corruption of Sardars, Nawabs, Nawaz Sharif, and the Zardari government. PTI leaders credited their clean sweep to Punjab dominance and gains in other provinces, while PML

(N) and PPP claimed 2018 was rigged against them, contrasting it with a “good” 2013. Compared to 2013’s election, 2018’s election saw heightened competition, new candidates, and strategies such as Pro-establishment parties, alliances, biradarism, managing the polling day, door-to-door campaign, and family networks shaping electoral outcomes.

The Strategy Played the Biggest Role in the Candidate’s Victory in NA-258

After interviewing the candidates, it is often seen that almost all the candidates have applied almost the same strategies; however, the candidate who joined pro-establishment political parties such as the newly made Balochistan Awami Party has won the election in NA-258 Loralai.

Factors behind Electoral Defeat in NA-258 Loralai (2018)

Interviews with losing candidates from NA-258 reveal multiple causes of defeat. PTI candidates

Dawood and Jehangir blamed PML-N for rigging, late ticket allocation, lack of financial support, and entrenched caste politics. Akhundzada (2018 cited limited resources, inability to reach remote voters, and opponents’ heavy spending, while PKMAP’s Akhter 2018 pointed to vote shifting to Duki and unfavorable electoral alliances. Former MNA Sardar Yaqoob Nasir acknowledged running a strong campaign but noted the biradari system, shifting alliances, and the impractical expectation for ministers to attend all local events. Haji Muhammad Khan (PML-N) claimed active door-to-door campaigning but alleged establishment bias toward nationalist parties.

PPP candidates, including Sardar Sarbuland Jogazai, in 2018 attributed losses to security threats preventing leadership visits, weak provincial leadership, poor past governance, and opponents’ effective use of alliances and religious appeals.

Table 2

Based on the interviews of winning candidates, a sequential chart of strategies has been drawn in the following table.

S#	Strategies Number-wise	Strategies of winning candidates in NA-258 (Loralai)
1	Joining a Pro-establishment political Party	The candidate who joined the newly made Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) has won the election.
2	Electoral alliances	In NA-258 Loralai, candidates formed alliances with political parties and adjusted seats by exchanging NA and PP votes. This helped both NA and PP candidates win the election. Since Balochistan is a tribal society, such alliances are very important for the people.
3	Caste system	The successful candidates relied on their tribal and caste networks to secure victory, gaining the trust and support of key leaders from major tribes.
4	Managing the polling day	Voters in NA-258 Loralai look for quick benefits and personal gain. The winning candidates gained support by giving food, pocket money, and transport on Election Day. They also appointed trained polling agents and stayed until the results were announced. This good management helped them win the election.
5	Door-to-Door Campaign	The winning candidates visited voters at their homes. They also held corner meetings and went door to door, which helped them win the election.

In Balochistan, voter behavior is shaped by tribal and socio-cultural norms, where alliances outweigh democratic processes. Strong tribes align with powerful castes to protect interests, and biradari loyalty dominates elections, as seen in NA-258 Loralai in 2018. Voters prioritized culture, caste, and nationalism, supporting PKMAP for promises of Pashtoonistan amid perceived discrimination and resource exploitation. Candidates relied on alliances, the tribal system, personal popularity, and tribal ties.

Discussion

In NA-258 Loralai, 2013's winning candidates relied heavily on tribal alliances and the biradari system. Support was concentrated among dominant tribes (Kakar, Nasir, Luni, Tareen, Musakhail), with alliances formed to secure mutual interests and counter rival tribes. Candidates from major tribes or allied with them had a clear advantage, as voters believed only their own biradari could protect local interests. Losing candidates failed mainly because they neglected alliances, lacked effective campaigns, or ignored large biradaris. It is often seen that voters valued personal benefit and tribal loyalty over party affiliation, with men more likely than women to support candidates who personally visited them. Interviews with elites emphasized that success in NA-258 depends on strategic alliances, biradari loyalty, and personal connections, rather than party platforms alone.

Conclusion

This research has examined the strategies of winning candidates in NA-258 Loralai during the 2018

general elections. The findings confirm that candidates who design their campaigns in line with the socio-cultural norms of their constituencies and address the rational interests of voters are more likely to secure victory. Analysis of interviews revealed that while all successful candidates applied multiple strategies, their sequencing, focus, and execution varied by constituency. In NA-258 Loralai, the candidates relied on joining pro-establishment parties, electoral alliances, appeals to tribal loyalty, nationalist rhetoric, personal reputation, and political expertise. These strategies resonated in a society where kinship and tribal systems play a decisive role.

Rational Choice Theory effectively frames these findings. Voters in the constituency weighed costs and benefits before casting their ballots. Lahore's party-oriented voters supported PTI candidates for promises of change, while Loralai's candidate-oriented voters prioritized biradari loyalty and personal gain. Political parties also engaged in cost-benefit analysis when awarding tickets, choosing candidates with the highest winning potential. Methodologically, this study used a case study method approach: 15 elite interviews with politicians and party workers. Ultimately, the central argument, that candidates who embed their campaigns within local socio-cultural contexts and align with voters' rational interests are most likely to win, has been validated. This research not only explains past electoral outcomes but also offers a predictive framework: by analyzing socio-cultural norms and surveying registered voters, one can map the profiles of potential winning candidates in future elections.

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