

## Head of Family (*Mashar*) Sways Vote Choice in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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### Abstract

*Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has a strong and well-organized social structure. Family is the basic unit of this social structure, which has a hierarchal structure. The head of the family (Mashar) has a significant position in a family in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Therefore, the head of the family (Mashar) influences the socio-economic and political decisions of the family members as well as the politico-socio attitudes. The study presents the impact of the head of the family (Mashar) on the vote choice of an individual. The results show that the head of the family (Mashar) has a strong stimulus to shape electorate vote choice on polling day. The study conducted in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. The targeted population for the study was registered voters (Eighteen years or above male/female) of different National Assembly constituencies. A multi-stage probability sampling technique is used for data collection.*

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### Introduction

The people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have a strong social and religious foundation. Therefore, strong contours of religion and social structure exist in the said community. Likewise, other political, economic determinants social factors also have an effect on the voters' choice. In the general election 2002, religious, political parties got majority votes in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Social determinants, on the other hand, have an equivalent effect on electorate preferences. The importance of family organization in deciding voter behaviour in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is explored in [Shah's \(2013\)](#) research, which focuses on the 2008 elections. *Mashar Aw Kashar* is an integral part of the social fabric in Pakhtun society, beyond all other social norms. *Mashar*, which means elder, and *Kashar*, which means youngster, are both Pashto names. *Kasharan* (plural of *Kashar*, which means young people) in Pakhtun society honour and follow their *Masharan's* orders (elders). We may divide *Masharan* into

two categories: family *Mashar* and influential *Mashar* of the region. The social system is dominated by the family. [Davies \(1965\)](#) distinguishes between two groups of families: nuclear and extended families. The nuclear family consists of parents and their offspring, while the extended family consists of grandparents, uncles, aunts, nieces and nephews, and is larger than the nuclear family. Aside from that, there is an intra-family bond in the Pakhtun social system. Family relatives refer to the relationship between members of the same family. The relatives of a family or a person share a family bond. Relatives are also important in Pakhtun society. Funerals, wedding ceremonies, and other socio-economic activities are attended by family members, who share their joys and sorrows. The two types of families are blood relatives and relatives of relatives. Similarly, one person's relationship with another person expanded another person's familial network. A buddy should not have to be a family member

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to be a good friend. However, in some circumstances, two people's bond turns into blood ties.

Family is considered a major determinant of youngsters' political outlook and behaviour in classical writings on political socialization ([Davies, 1965](#); [Langton, 1969](#); [Dawson & Prewitt, 1969](#)). Family, classmates, colleagues, and the media, according to [Salem, Ibrahim, and Brady \(2003\)](#), broaden an individual's political experience as well as the principles of political socialization. According to research by [Jennings et al. \(2009\)](#) and [Hyman \(1959\)](#), the family has a significant influence on children's political attitudes. Parents transfer political understanding, information, and values to their children, according to [Jaros \(1973\)](#) and [Valentino & Sears \(1998\)](#). Other socializing agents, according to [Plutzer \(2002\)](#) and [Rosenstone & Hansen \(2003\)](#), include education, peer groups, and voluntary organizations. According to [Quintelier et al. \(2007\)](#), intergenerational diffusion of political views can be very direct, such as adopting the same political party affiliation as their parents. In Pakhtun families, children are encouraged to support the political party that their parents support. In reality, in Pakhtun culture, the father is often the family's economic and social leader, and the rest of the family is economically and socially reliant on him. The parents have always spoken about the good qualities of their own political party at home from the beginning. However, if he lacks political literacy, their children may favour various political parties, and even his father may obey his children. During the 2013 general election, it was also noted that a single-family could back several political parties.

On the other hand, certain family elders (*Masharan*) wield political and economic power in the neighborhood. It's possible if such a family elder (*Mashar*) is younger than most voters. However, the family elder (*Mashar*) has sway over the area's voters' political choices. A family elder (*Mashar*) can use economic or social clout to gain political clout in a given region. The role of family and other social networks in the formation of an individual's political attachment was highlighted in studies by [Salem et al. \(2003\)](#)

and [Ramadan et al. \(2018\)](#).

### Literature Review

In Punjab, Hamza Alavi claimed that if a voter is financially reliant on a landlord (Chaudhary), the voter should vote for the landlord's favourite political party. As a result, landlords (Chaudhary and Khans) have a vote bank of peasants in various constituencies ([Ahmad, 1977:11](#)). Shandana Khan Mohmand, on the other hand, claims that new technology has altered the social fabric of any culture. Infrastructure and urbanization, she said, were the driving forces behind political mobilization in rural Punjab. Modernization increased voters' control, but the voters' relationship with local landlords remained patron-client. According to her, the social context and caste system are the most important determinants of voting behaviour in Punjabi villages ([Mohmand, 2011](#)).

During elections in Punjab, landed aristocrats, according to Mathew [Nelson \(2011\)](#), use conventional village level informal institutions and kinship. As a result, the PMLN's Chaudharies (Landlords in Punjab) have won every election in the province. The scenario in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, on the other hand, is very different. The Khans of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, like the Chaudharies of Punjab, own a substantial amount of territory. Khans, on the other hand, have little influence over voter autonomy in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Philip Jones study about the first general elections in 1970 called it the 'vertical approach' of political choice ([Jones, 2003](#)). Jones findings presented that in the 1970 election, the dominant determinant of voting behaviour was party identification. In 1977, Zia-ul-Haq's Martial Law regime banned political parties, political activities and started a campaign to depoliticize the Pakistani society. Gen. Zia held non-party local government elections in 1979 and 1983. As a result of non-party local government elections, contesting candidates contacted their social networks, i.e., family relatives, tribe, friends, rather than political party membership strategies. In 1985 general elections were non-party therefore, the familial structure was a more dominant factor to influence voters in

the election rather than political parties. Consequently, the parliament had a greater part of landed elites (Khans, Waderas and Chudheries). Rasul B. Raees argued that “ties to clan, tribe, or *Biradari* and feudal social basis, in particular, largely determined the outcome of elections” (Rais, 1985).

Mughees Ahmed and Andrew Wilder argued that *Biradari* is a ‘primordial’ group identity that including family, caste, and kinship, which is playing a significant role in determining voting behaviour and political preferences of an individual (Wilder, 1999:177; Ahmed, 2009). Ayesha Jalal (1995:105) argues that “a country where parties had never managed to strike roots, the Zia regime’s systematic campaign to discredit politicians and politics gave renewed significance to the old personalized networks of *Biradari* or clan-based ties”. After the end of Zia’s dictatorial regime, again, the democratic practices started in Pakistan. In the second phase of the democratization process from 1990 to 1996, three general elections contested, but during that time, the political government did not complete its five years tenure. In October 1997, the Nawaz Sharif government was dismissed, and Gen. Pervez Musharraf implemented the third Martial Law in Pakistan (Mehmood, 2015). Like previous martial administrators, Gen. Musharraf also adopted a similar strategy to dismantle the democratization process in Pakistan. He introduced a local government system and amended the constitution. When Musharraf’s dictatorial rule in Pakistan came to an end in 2007, the democratization process resumed. As a result of the general elections in 2008, for the first time in the history of Pakistan, the Pakistan Peoples Party, with the support of other coalition parties, completed its five years tenure.

In contrast to other parts of Pakistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa voters chose three different political parties in three succeeding elections. Political, economic, and familial (where the decision of family elder) determinants have played a significant role in defining voting preferences in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. While in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, less scholarly attention has been devoted to

understanding the link between family elder and voting behaviour. This study examines the influence of family elder in shaping individual voting behaviour.

### Influence of *Mashar* (Elder) of the Family on Vote Choice

Family, according to James C. Davies (1965) plays a significant role in influencing an individual's political identity. As a result, a teenager's attitude toward the political system is likely to mirror that of their parents. For his children, a father is a role model. According to James C. Davies, a person gains knowledge from familial and other social situations in which s/he progresses from dependency to freedom (Davies (1965)). Many of the children are politically alienated from their parents’ political views, although others disagree with them. The primary cause of separation is rigid parental supervision, which sometimes results in conforming children and sometimes results in children that are more deviant from their parents.

According to Maccoby et al. (1954), politics is visible as an object of protest in some heavily politicized families. It is attempted to recognize voters who are politically reliant on their family elders (*Masharan*). For this purpose, a question asked from the respondents that, “Vote should be given to that candidate to whom your family (*Mashar*) elder supports”. During the survey, it is asked from the respondents, “Who influence your vote’s decision? Descriptive statistics are used for data analysis.

### Methodology

The study's population is Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's electorate. A statistical formula is used to assess a representative sample. The probability sampling method is used for data collection. Therefore, a multi-stage sampling technique after the sample size is determined. The province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is divided into three geographical regions, i.e., North, Center, and South, in the first level. Two constituencies are chosen at random in each geographical region. Two union councils are chosen at random in each constituency after

the districts are chosen. In the next stage, a hundred respondents (50% male and 50% female) selected through scientific sampling techniques from each union council. The researcher used SPSS for data analysis.

### Gender Consideration

In Table 1, some male and female respondents said that the head of the family influences their vote decision, while a limited number of male and female respondents said that their friends influence their vote decision. However, only a small percentage of male and female respondents said that their families had an effect on their voting decisions. The data shows that the majority of female respondents admitted that the head of the family (*Mashar*) influence their vote choice. Male family members have a firm grip on sociopolitical and economic decision-making in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. And when it comes to voting, female family members are also reliant on their male family members. According to [Eisenstein \(1984\)](#), patriarchy is a male-dominated structure that influences women's political standing throughout society. In a patriarchal society, a male and female hierarchy has been created, with males having more rights than females. According to Adrienne Rich, “a familial-social, ideological, political system in which man by force, direct pressure or through rituals, tradition, law, language, custom etiquette, education, and the division of labor, determine what part women shall or shall not play in which the female is

everywhere subsumed under the male” ([Sarho, 1997](#)). This concept of patriarchy omits two facets of patriarchy: male dominance over females and women's underprivileged status throughout society. Female sociopolitical and economic dependence is caused by male dominance. One common explanation given in such communities is that they (females) are physically frail and incapable of performing arduous tasks. Functional vulnerability, on the other hand, is a social concept. This has been influencing females' psychological well-being since childhood. It can be seen in the toys and presents that children in such cultures get; for example, girls are given dolls, and boys are given toys such as cars and guns. When it comes to a conservative culture like the Pashtoons across the Pakistan-Afghan border, the situation is much worse. A traditional Pashtu proverb, *Khaze La Kor Day Ya Goor*, explains the seriousness of the situation (female are either for home or for grave). This simply demonstrates that females are both forbidden to leave their homes. ‘Masculinity Politics’, on the other hand, is also a global problem. In politics, a man is still trying to maintain his dominant position. This demonstrates the intimate relationship between patriarchy and politics. Patriarchy affects political activity in Pakhtuns, as it does in other Pakistani cultures, especially women's voting behaviour. It has made women socially and socio-politically dependent on their male family members (Naz et al., 2012).

**Table 1.** Who Influences your Vote's Decision?

Gender	Head of the family	Friends	Relatives	Party	Candidate	No one	Don't Know	Total
Male	11.9%	3.0%	2.6%	9.5%	6.0%	18.6%	4.2%	55.8%
Female	14.2%	1.8%	2.9%	5.3%	5.2%	11.0%	3.8%	44.2%
Total	26.0%	4.8%	5.5%	14.9%	11.1%	29.6%	8.0%	100%

### Age Consideration

Table-2 shows that among the total respondents of various age groups, some adults, youth, middle, and senior respondents agreed that the head of the family influenced their decision to vote, while other adults, youths, middle age, and senior respondents admitted that friends influenced their vote

preference. Furthermore, only a small percentage of teenagers, teens, middle-aged people, and the elderly admitted that families affect their voting decisions. Data demonstrates that the majority of youngsters admitted that the head of the family influences their vote choice. Likewise, in other traditional

societies, the social structure of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is also embedded with cultural

values (*Mashar aw Kashar*). Those cultural values are part of Pakhtunwali.

**Table 2.** Who influences your vote’s decision?

Age	Head of the family	Friends	Relatives	Party	Candidate	No one	Don't Know	Total
18-23	5.5%	1.0%	1.1%	2.7%	1.9%	4.8%	1.7%	18.6%
23-27	4.5%	.9%	1.2%	2.5%	2.3%	4.9%	1.5%	17.9%
27-32	4.5%	.6%	.6%	2.1%	1.6%	6.9%	1.2%	17.6%
32-37	2.8%	.8%	.5%	2.6%	1.7%	3.8%	.5%	12.7%
37-42	3.9%	.3%	.6%	1.8%	1.3%	4.1%	1.0%	13.0%
42-50	2.9%	.8%	.7%	1.0%	1.2%	2.9%	1.0%	10.3%
Above 50	2.0%	0.4%	0.7%	2.2%	1.2%	2.2%	1.1%	9.8%
Total	26.0%	4.8%	5.5%	14.9%	11.1%	29.6%	8.0%	100.0%

### Professional Consideration

In Table 3, a limited number of businesspeople, regular wagers, government employees, non-government servants, fishermen, unemployed, and some housewives reported that the head of the family influences their vote preference. Nonetheless, a small percentage of traders, daily wagers, government and non-government employees, fishermen, the

unemployed, and housewives said that friends affect their voting decisions. A limited number of traders, daily wagers, government employees, non-government servants, on the other hand, agreed that the vote was swayed by family’s head. Moreover, the majority of unemployed respondents (5.9% out of 15%) and housewives (9%) vote choice is influenced by the head of the family (*Mashar*).

**Table 3.** Who Influences your Vote’s Decision?

Profession	Head of the family ( <i>Mashar</i> )	Friends	Relatives	Party	Candidate	No one	Don't Know	Total
Business	2.1%	1.0%	0.4%	2.2%	1.0%	2.3%	0.7%	9.8%
daily wager	3.3%	0.3%	0.6%	1.0%	1.2%	1.3%	.8%	8.5%
Government Servant	3.7%	1.2%	0.4%	3.0%	2.0%	7.5%	1.2%	19.0%
Non-government servant	1.6%	0.6%	0.7%	2.4%	1.4%	6.0%	0.7%	13.5%
Farming	2.8%	0.2%	0.4%	0.9%	0.9%	1.4%	0.4%	7.0%
Unemployed	5.9%	0.4%	1.1%	1.8%	1.9%	3.6%	1.2%	15.8%
housewives	9.0%	1.2%	1.8%	3.6%	2.9%	5.2%	2.9%	26.6%
Total	26.0%	4.8%	5.5%	14.9%	11.1%	29.6%	8.0%	100%

### Income Consideration

A significant number of respondents from the lower class and those who did not list their monthly income said that the head of the family influenced their vote choice among the total respondents of various income classes shown in Table-4. Although a small percentage of the lower middle class, middle class, and upper class agreed that the family's head

influenced their vote preference, the majority of the lower middle class, middle class, and upper class did not.

Although a small percentage of respondents from the lower, middle, and upper classes agreed that their peers had an effect on their voting decisions, however, a sizable proportion of those who did not

disclose their profits acknowledged the impact of friends on their voting decision. Nonetheless, a small percentage of the poor, middle and upper classes believe that their vote is affected by family.

The majority of respondents (7.1%) with an income of fewer than 10,000 Rupees stated

that the head of the household influences their vote preference. It follows that economic dependence is a significant influence on voting behaviour. Respondents of higher income levels, on the other hand, indicate independent vote preference.

**Table 4.** Who Influences your Vote's Decision?

Monthly Income	Head of the family ( <i>Mashar</i> )	Friends	Relatives	Party	Candidate	No one	Don't Know	Total
Below 10,000	7.1%	0.6%	1.5%	2.9%	2.4%	5.6%	1.7%	21.8%
10000-20000	3.1%	0.7%	0.8%	2.7%	2.0%	4.1%	1.3%	14.7%
20000-30000	2.3%	1.0%	0.5%	2.3%	1.2%	5.3%	0.6%	13.3%
30000-40000	1.0%	0.5%	0.2%	1.1%	1.0%	2.4%	0.4%	6.5%
40000-50000	0.5%	0.2%	0.3%	1.2%	0.4%	1.7%	0.4%	4.5%
Above 50000	0.7%	0.1%	0.1%	0.9%	0.3%	2.4%	0.2%	4.6%
Don't know	11.2%	1.7%	2.1%	3.9%	4.0%	8.0%	3.5%	34.5%
Total	26.0%	4.8%	5.5%	14.9%	11.1%	29.6%	8.0%	100.0%

### Marital Status and Vote Choice

In terms of marital status, a large number of married respondents said that the head of the family influences their vote preference, while some unmarried respondents and a small group of widows said that the head of the family influences their vote decision (See in Table No. 5).

Just a limited percentage of married and unmarried respondents admitted that friends had swayed their opinion. Furthermore, a small percentage of married, single, and widowed respondents said that relatives had an impact on their vote decision.

**Table 5.** Who Influences your Vote's Decision?

Marital Status	Head of the family ( <i>Mashar</i> )	Friends	Relatives	Party	Candidate	No one	Don't know	Total
Married	17.3%	2.9%	3.0%	9.7%	6.4%	18.5%	5.3%	63.2%
Unmarried	8.2%	2.0%	2.3%	4.9%	4.5%	10.5%	2.4%	34.8%
Widow	0.5%	0.0%	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%	0.5%	0.3%	2.0%
Total	26.0%	4.8%	5.5%	14.9%	11.1%	29.6%	8.0%	100.0%

### Educational Consideration and Voting Behaviour

Among the total respondents of different educational levels (See in Table-6), a minimum number of the secondary and higher secondary school level respondents affirmed that the head of the family influences their vote's decision. Whereas some of the graduate and post-graduate level respondents argued

that the head of the family influences their vote's decision. While a large number of illiterate respondents (7% out of 16%) said that the head of the family influences our vote's decision.

A meagre number of secondary level, higher secondary and graduates, post-

graduate level and illiterate respondents accepted that friends influence their vote's decision. On the other hand, an insignificant number of secondary school level, higher secondary school level, graduate and post-

graduate level accepted the influence of relatives on their vote's decision. Illiterate respondents, according to the data, the family head has a greater influence on their decision to vote for a candidate on Election Day.

**Table 6.** Who Influences your Vote's Decision?

Educational qualification	Head of the family	Friends	Relatives	Party	Candidate	No one	Don't know	Total
Primary	1.9%	0.4%	0.5%	0.5%	1.0%	1.5%	1.2%	7%
Middle	2.9%	0.6%	0.7%	1.4%	1.1%	1.0%	0.3%	7.9%
Matric	4.8%	1.1%	1.2%	2.7%	2.1%	4.9%	0.7%	17.5%
Intermediate	2%	0.6%	0.3%	1.3%	0.9%	3.6%	0.4%	9.2%
BA/BSc	3.4%	0.9%	0.7%	2.9%	1.5%	4.9%	1.8%	16.1%
MA/MSc	3.7%	0.4%	1.1%	4.4%	2.1%	10.8%	1.4%	23.9%
M.Phil.	0.4%	0.2%	0.0%	0.2%	0.4%	0.8%	0.1%	2%
Illiterate	7%	0.6%	1.1%	1.4%	2%	2.1%	2%	16.3%
Total	26%	4.8%	5.5%	114.9%	11.1%	29.6%	8%	100%

### Conclusion

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, voting behaviour is influenced by a variety of socio-economic and political factors. Political identity, religion, problems, and personality are the most important determinants of voting behaviour in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Similarly, the head of the family (*Mashar*) also plays a significant role in determining the political behaviour of the electorate in the election in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, family structure has a strong bond. As a result, the family leader has a strong connection to an individual's political socialization.

According to the findings, a significant number of respondents accepted that their

vote was affected by their family's head of household (*Mashar*). The majority of female respondents agreed that their vote is swayed by the family's head. On the other hand, a sizable proportion of illiterate respondents suggest that *Mashar* has an effect on their voting preferences. Furthermore, a sizable proportion of economically dependent respondents had their political decisions influenced by their family's head of household. It is proved from the study that a strong family structure (head of the family), as well as social values, plays a significant role in voting preferences in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

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