

Emerging Trends and Influential Factors in the 2022 Punjab State Elections: A Comparative Analysis of Strategies, Voter Preferences, and Electoral Outcomes

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Abstract

This study explores the emerging trends and factors that influenced the Punjab Legislative Assembly Elections in 2022, shedding light on the evolving dynamics of electoral politics in India. The research employs a comparative analytical approach, utilizing data from various sources such as published literature, online resources, and databases to examine voter preferences, party strategies, and electoral outcomes. The 2022 elections witnessed an unprecedented victory for the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), highlighting the shift in voter priorities towards development, unemployment, health, and sanitation. Key findings include the growing importance of social media and digital campaigns in shaping voter preferences, the increasing significance of women and youth voters in the electoral landscape, and the decline of traditional political forces. These results have crucial implications for the future of Indian politics, emphasizing the need for political parties to address changing voter priorities, engage with digital platforms, and cater to the concerns of women and youth demographics. This study provides valuable insights for political parties seeking to navigate the shifting landscape of the world's largest democracy.

Keywords

punjab legislative assembly elections; electoral politics; voter priorities; social media; women and youth voters; Indian politics

Introduction

India, known as the world's largest democracy, comprises 28 states and 8 Union Territories, with a quasi-federal structure of political institutions ([Heller, 2000](#)). The distribution of power between the Centre and states is crucial for the functioning of the government, making elections an essential aspect of the Indian democratic process. The Election Commission, established by the Constitution of India, is responsible for conducting free and fair elections at both state and national levels ([Katju, 2018](#), [2020](#)).

India's democratic process is marked by elections, which are crucial for the functioning of the government and are organized at both the state and national levels ([Chhibber & Nooruddin, 2004](#)). The recent state legislative assembly elections in Punjab have been characterized by a highly competitive environment, with major parties such as the Indian National Congress, Shiromani Akali Dal, Bahujan Samaj Party, Bharatiya Janata Party, and Aam Aadmi Party vying for power ([A. Kumar, 2014](#); [Palshikar, Kumar, & Lodha, 2017](#)). The 2022 elections resulted in a significant victory for the Aam Aadmi Party, which secured the highest majority in Punjab's history ([Hayat & Majeed, 2022](#)).

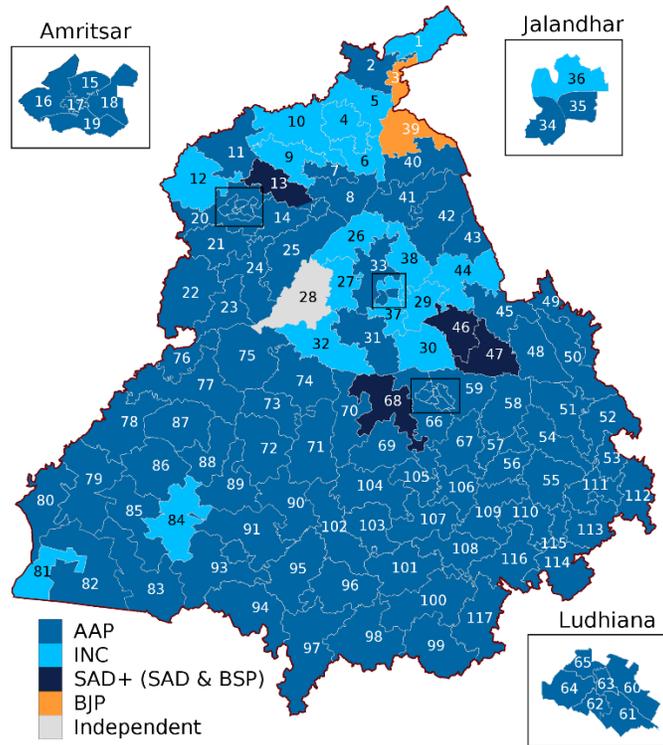
Several factors have influenced state-level politics in Punjab, with emerging trends affecting overall voter turnout and the political landscape ([Palshikar et al., 2017](#)). Voters' political consciousness has shifted, and their voting behavior has changed in response to this shift ([Ahmed, 2008](#)). The 2022 elections saw

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voters prioritizing issues such as development, unemployment, health, and sanitation rather than focusing solely on the parties and their positions in other states ([Sahni & Jagroop, 2021](#)).

Figure 1. Assembly Constituencies of Punjab Legislative Assembly



Source: Election Commission of India

This study aims to explore the various emerging trends and issues that have impacted the vote bank of national and regional political parties contesting in the Punjab Legislative Assembly Elections of 2022, with the primary objective of analyzing the election pattern in Punjab and its impact on national politics ([Jodhka, 2022](#); [Judge, 2022](#); [Khemani, 2007](#)). By examining these trends, this study will provide valuable insights into the evolving dynamics of electoral politics in Punjab and shed light on the changing nature of India's political landscape ([A. Kumar, 2017](#); [Pallathadka & Pallathadka, 2022](#); [Rehman & Alqama, 2022](#)).

The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive analysis of the emerging trends and factors that influenced the Punjab Legislative Assembly Elections in 2022, adding a new dimension to the existing body of literature on electoral politics in Punjab and India ([Bashir & Khalid, 2019](#); [S. Kumar, 2022](#)). While previous research has focused on more general aspects of the Indian political landscape, this study delves deeper into the unique aspects of the 2022 elections, such as the unprecedented victory of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the changing political consciousness of voters ([Roy, 2014](#); [Singh, Kaur, & Sarmah, 2020](#)).

Another innovative aspect of this study is its exploration of how voters in the 2022 Punjab elections prioritized issues such as development, unemployment, health, and sanitation over traditional party loyalties ([Banerjee, 2013](#)). This shift in voting behavior not only indicates a potential transformation in the Indian political landscape but also has significant implications for future elections and the functioning of the Indian democratic system.

By examining these trends and factors, this study contributes new insights into the evolving dynamics of electoral politics in Punjab, while also shedding light on the changing nature of India's political landscape ([Sinha, 2022](#)). Furthermore, the analysis of the election pattern in Punjab and its impact on national politics ([Khemani, 2007](#)) allows for a better understanding of the role that state-level politics play in shaping the broader political environment in India, emphasizing the interconnectedness of state and

national politics in the world's largest democracy.

Several factors have influenced state-level politics in Punjab, with emerging trends affecting overall voter turnout and the political landscape ([Palshikar et al., 2017](#)). The 2022 elections saw voters prioritizing issues such as development, unemployment, health, and sanitation rather than focusing solely on the parties and their positions in other states ([Sahni & Jagroop, 2021](#)). The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive analysis of these emerging trends and factors, adding a new dimension to the existing body of literature on electoral politics in Punjab and India. Furthermore, the analysis of the election pattern in Punjab and its impact on national politics allows for a better understanding of the role that state-level politics play in shaping the broader political environment in India, emphasizing the interconnectedness of state and national politics in the world's largest democracy. This research will provide valuable insights into the evolving dynamics of electoral politics in Punjab and shed light on the changing nature of India's political landscape.

Method

This research employs an analytical approach with a comparative analysis for better results, focusing on the key trends and factors that influenced the 2022 Punjab state elections in India. Data has been collected from various sources, including published and unpublished literature, online resources, and relevant databases to provide a comprehensive understanding of the electoral landscape ([Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014](#)). The research methodology consists of three main stages: data collection, data analysis, and comparative analysis.

The data collection process involves a comprehensive search and review of relevant literature, both published and unpublished, as well as an examination of online resources, such as news articles, social media posts, and official government documents. This stage also includes the gathering of statistical data, such as voter turnout rates, demographic information, and election results. The data analysis phase involves the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative analysis includes a detailed examination of the primary sources to identify key themes and trends in the electoral landscape, such as the role of women vote banks, regional development, and employee concerns. Quantitative analysis involves the use of descriptive and inferential statistics to identify patterns and relationships between party strategies, voter preferences, and electoral outcomes.

The comparative analysis component of the study involves comparing the strategies and outcomes of different political parties, constituencies, and demographic groups. This analysis helps to identify the factors that contributed to the success or failure of various electoral strategies and offers insights into the dynamics of the 2022 Punjab state elections.

Results and Discussion

Covid-19 and the Proactive Role of the Election Commission in Punjab

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the world for the past three years, necessitating changes in various aspects of life, including the electoral process. During the 2022 General State Assembly Elections in Punjab, the Election Commission took an active role in ensuring the safety of voters and candidates by implementing strict guidelines for election campaigning. These guidelines included limiting the number of persons for door-to-door campaigning, banning election rallies, and promoting online methods for campaigning. This marked the first time such stringent restrictions were imposed on election rallies and campaigns by the Election Commission.

Additionally, the Election Commission of India made concerted efforts to spread awareness about voting across villages, towns, and localities in Punjab. This awareness campaign contributed to the development of political consciousness among the people of Punjab, resulting in a large number of young voters exercising their right to vote. The successful implementation of the Model Code of Conduct within the Election Commission's strict guidelines ensured a fair and transparent electoral process.

One significant outcome of the Election Commission's proactive approach was the seizure of a large

amount of illegal liquor and drugs, which were intended for distribution in villages to secure vote banks. This action led to a considerable loss for the political parties that had relied on these illegal methods to gain votes in previous years. Moreover, the deployment of well-equipped security forces, observers, and micro-observers at nearly every polling booth further reinforced the Election Commission's commitment to conducting free and fair elections.

These innovative measures and trends introduced by the Election Commission during the 2022 Punjab General State Assembly Elections not only ensured a safe voting environment amidst the Covid-19 pandemic but also fostered a greater sense of political consciousness among the electorate. The proactive role of the Election Commission in Punjab serves as a model for conducting elections in challenging circumstances while maintaining the integrity of the democratic process.

The Importance of the Dalit Vote Bank in Punjab's Political Landscape

In Punjab's political landscape, the Dalit vote bank plays a significant role, making it a top priority for all political parties during election campaigns. Constituencies with a larger margin of Dalit votes were contested by Dalit candidates, emphasizing the importance of this demographic in the electoral process. Each political party sought to convince Dalit voters to cast their votes in their favor, leading to various strategic moves.

A notable example was the Indian National Congress (INC), which appointed Charanjit Singh Channi, a member of the Dalit community, as Chief Minister of Punjab just two months before the elections. This move replaced Capt. Amrinder Singh and aimed to please the Dalit population in Punjab. With Dalits accounting for 35% of the total votes in Punjab, it is evident why political parties prioritized appealing to this demographic.

Similarly, the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) announced that the Deputy Chief Minister would be selected from the Dalit community. To reinforce this commitment, SAD formed an alliance with the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), a party with a significant impact on Dalits in the Doaba region, particularly in Jalandhar, Nawan Shehar, and Hoshiarpur.

The focus on the Dalit vote bank by various political parties highlights its importance in shaping Punjab's political landscape. As a result, it is crucial for parties to understand and address the needs and concerns of this significant demographic to secure their support in elections. By acknowledging the Dalit community's role in the electoral process, political parties can work towards fostering inclusive politics and empowering this historically marginalized group.

The Growing Trend of Celebrities in Politics

The strategy of leveraging celebrities to gain votes was initially observed in national politics, but after witnessing its effectiveness, regional political parties began adopting this approach in regional politics as well. In the Punjab State Assembly Elections of 2022, this trend was particularly prominent. Political parties aimed to attract young voters by involving celebrities in their campaigns and even offering them the opportunity to contest elections as their candidates. It has been observed that candidates with the largest fan following were often selected for this purpose.

Notable examples include Bhagwant Mann, a comedian who joined the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in 2011, and Navjot Singh Sidhu, a former cricketer and host who entered politics. In the 2022 elections, Anmol Gagan Maan, a singer, joined AAP and contested from the Kharar Constituency. Shubhdeep Singh Sidhu, also known as Sidhu Moosewala, joined Congress and contested from the Mansa Constituency. Balkar Sidhu, a professional singer, ran for office from the Rampura Phool Constituency.

Capitalizing on the fame of celebrity Sonu Sood, his sister Malvika Sood contested elections for the Indian National Congress (INC) from the Moga Constituency. The inclusion of celebrities in political campaigns demonstrates the evolving landscape of electoral politics, where star power is increasingly harnessed to attract young voters and sway public opinion. This trend signifies the importance of understanding the changing dynamics of politics and the role that popular culture can play in shaping election outcomes.

Populist Slogans and Social Media as Campaigning Tools in Indian Politics

Slogans have long been a major component of Indian politics, gaining popularity since the 1950s. For instance, Indira Gandhi used the slogan "Garibi Hatao" (Remove Poverty) to gain popularity and win elections. In the 2014 national election, Narendra Modi from BJP employed the slogan "Acche Din Ayenge" (Good Days Will Come Soon) and secured a clear majority in Parliament. Similarly, the Punjab State Assembly Elections witnessed the use of populist slogans by various political parties.

The Indian National Congress used "Channi Karda Masle Hall" (Channi Solves Every Matter), Shiromani Akali Dal adopted "Je Chaonde Ho Vikas, Sukhbir Te Karo Vishvas" (If You Seek Development, Trust Sukhbir), and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) relied on their famous slogan "Ek Moka Kejriwal Nu" (One Chance for Kejriwal). These slogans resonated with the public and became an integral part of the electoral landscape in Punjab.

In recent years, the use of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram for campaigning has emerged as an influential tool. Political leaders post their views, activities, visions, and opinions on these platforms to connect with voters, especially younger audiences. The integration of social media into political campaigns has revolutionized electoral politics by providing a more accessible and interactive platform for politicians and voters alike. As a result, both populist slogans and social media have become increasingly important factors in shaping the outcomes of elections in India, reflecting the evolving landscape of political communication and campaigning strategies.

Women's Vote Bank and Its Impact on Punjab Politics

The women's vote bank in Punjab politics plays an equally important role and is a top priority for every political party contesting elections in Punjab. Political parties specifically mention beneficial schemes for women in their election manifestos. During the 2022 elections, women were seen as a major source of votes. The Congress party offered free bus travel for women in Punjab to attract women voters. Shiromoni Akali Dal (SAD) president Sukhbir Singh Badal announced a monthly allowance of 1000 rupees, while AAP leader Kejriwal also announced 1000 rupees per month for women to support their empowerment. According to reports, in the 2022 elections, 10,200,996 women voters exercised their right to vote.

The main reason behind the high turnout of women voters was the increasing political consciousness among the women population of the state. This awareness encouraged them to actively participate in the electoral process and to choose candidates who addressed their concerns and needs. Political parties recognized the power of the women's vote bank and made efforts to cater to their interests through various schemes and promises.

The 2022 Punjab elections highlight the growing significance of women's vote bank in shaping the political landscape of the state. As political consciousness continues to rise among women, their influence on election outcomes is expected to increase further. The findings of this study underscore the need for political parties to recognize and address the concerns of women voters in order to secure their support and ensure more inclusive and representative governance.

Regional Development Issues on Punjab Politics

A significant emerging trend observed in the 2022 Punjab elections was the increased awareness and concern of voters about regional issues, such as development, unemployment, lack of basic facilities, drug mafia, and illegal mining. This shift in voter priorities led to a change in the political landscape of Punjab. Instead of voting solely based on party affiliations, voters cast their ballots for the development and betterment of Punjab.

After analyzing the performance and policies of various political parties, voters opted for change in the 2022 elections. The clean sweep victory of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) serves as evidence of the heightened consciousness among Punjab's population. Issues like drugs and unemployment have become major concerns in the state, and people desire job opportunities and a healthy environment to build their careers. This growing discontent has led many to consider migration to foreign countries as a viable option.

The results of the 2022 Punjab elections demonstrate the increasing importance of addressing regional

development issues in shaping the state's political dynamics. The success of AAP underscores the need for political parties to focus on the concerns of the electorate and prioritize regional development to meet the expectations of the people. This study highlights the evolving priorities of Punjab's voters and the significance of addressing regional development issues in order to secure electoral support and promote sustainable growth in the state.

A noteworthy observation from the 2022 Punjab elections was the direct influence of employee concerns on the state's political landscape. In the months leading up to the elections, various employee unions expressed their opposition to the incumbent state government (Congress) due to perceived negligence of their interests. Key issues raised included the implementation of the 6th Pay Commission, regularization of contract workers, and the delinking of UGC pay scales for teachers employed in colleges and universities.

Employee unions such as Punjab Federation of University College Teachers' Organisation (PFUCTO), Punjab and Chandigarh College Teachers' Union (PCCTU), Punjab Roadways Employees Union, and Pensioners Union staged agitations against the government, warning of potential electoral losses in the upcoming elections. These concerns were clearly reflected in the election results, indicating the emergence of a new trend that significantly impacted Punjab's electoral politics in 2022.

This study highlights the growing importance of addressing employee concerns in shaping political outcomes. The influence of employee unions on the 2022 Punjab elections underscores the need for political parties to take these issues seriously and prioritize the interests of the working population. By doing so, parties can better secure electoral support and promote a more inclusive and equitable society that takes into account the needs and aspirations of all citizens.

Conclusion

The 2022 Punjab elections showcased several key trends that significantly influenced the state's electoral politics. Among these trends were the prioritization of the women vote bank, a heightened focus on regional issues of development, and the emerging role of employee concerns as a game changer. Political parties recognized the importance of the women vote bank and tailored their election manifestos to include beneficial schemes specifically targeted at women voters. The heavy turnout of women voters demonstrated the effectiveness of this strategy and emphasized the importance of addressing women's issues in the political landscape.

The awareness and concern of voters regarding regional issues such as development, unemployment, and lack of basic facilities played a crucial role in shaping the election outcomes. The victory of the Aam Aadmi Party signaled a desire for change and a focus on addressing these pressing issues to improve the lives of Punjab's citizens. Lastly, the influence of employee unions on the election results highlighted the need for political parties to address the concerns of the working population. Addressing employee-related issues can secure electoral support and contribute to the creation of a more inclusive and equitable society. Overall, these findings underscore the importance of understanding and addressing the evolving concerns of various demographic groups, regional issues, and employee interests in order to achieve electoral success and promote inclusive and sustainable development in Punjab.

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