

Party or Candidate? Electoral Preference and Political Participation among Youth and Elderly Voters in the Himalayan State of India

Palak Guleria¹, Dr Prashant Kumar Choudhary¹²

¹ Research Fellow, Department of Public Policy, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Manipal, India

² Assistant Professor, Department of Public Policy, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Manipal, India

Abstract

How do voters weigh party labels against constituency candidates in Indian state elections, and how does campaign mobilisation shape this choice across generations? Using a widely used post-election survey from the Lokniti programme at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), this paper analyses the 2022 Himachal Pradesh Assembly election in a Himalayan hill state in north India. The study examines whether respondents reported that their vote choice was influenced more by the party or by the local candidate. Campaign participation is captured through an index of six election period activities, and the analysis estimates separate binary logistic regression models for youth voters (18 to 29) and older voters (60 plus).

The results show a clear generational divergence. Higher campaign participation is associated with greater candidate centred choice among youth, but with stronger party centred choice among older voters. Issue priorities also shape this trade off. Compared to identity and ideology, voters who prioritise livelihoods and welfare, and especially public services and infrastructure, show higher odds of privileging party considerations in both age groups. The findings suggest that campaign mobilisation does not produce a single logic of electoral judgement. Instead, it channels accountability through different cues across cohorts, with implications for how parties and candidates build responsiveness in competitive state elections.

Keywords: Campaign mobilisation; Electoral accountability; Generational voting; Himachal Pradesh; Party candidate trade-off