



## The Role of Khan and Malik in Voting Behavior: A Case Study of Union Council (UC) Chakdara

Mustajab Askar<sup>1</sup>, Mahnoor Naeem<sup>2</sup>, Hajra Ghafoor<sup>3</sup>, \*Sher Hassan<sup>4</sup>

1. BS Political Science, Department of Political Science, University of Malakand  
Email: [khanmustajab543@gmail.com](mailto:khanmustajab543@gmail.com)
2. BS Political Science, Department of Political Science, University of Malakand  
Email: [mn740219@gmail.com](mailto:mn740219@gmail.com)
3. BS Political Science, Department of Political Science, University of Malakand  
Email: [roopjani093@gmail.com](mailto:roopjani093@gmail.com)
4. Lecturer, Department of Political Science, University of Malakand  
Email: [shsherhassan@gmail.com](mailto:shsherhassan@gmail.com)

### Abstract

This study analyze the significant impact of local elites specifically Khan and Malik on the voting patterns of residents in Union Council Chakdara, situated in the Lower Dir District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The objective is to determine whether traditional power dynamics continue to dictate electoral decisions or if new trends are emerging, particularly among the youth. Employing a qualitative approach, the research utilizes purposive sampling to identify four key participants, including voters, young individuals, and those knowledgeable about local electoral processes. Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews and analyzed thematically. The results indicate that social connections, economic reliance, and personal relationships still significantly influence voter behavior, especially among older demographics. Nonetheless, a shift is evident among younger, educated voters who tend to prioritize candidate qualifications, ideological beliefs, and public service records over traditional loyalties. The study also notes a gradual decline in the influence of Khan and Malik, attributed to rising political consciousness and education levels. In light of these findings, the research advocates for enhanced voter education, increased political engagement among youth and women, the promotion of democratic principles through public discourse, and the mitigation of elite influence during elections. Additionally, it recommends the adoption of electoral reforms and technological innovations such as Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) to promote transparency. Ultimately, the study concludes that while local elites still wield considerable influence, a positive shift towards democratic progress is emerging, fueled by awareness, education, and generational change.

**Keywords:** Local Elites, Khan and Malik, Voting Behavior, Electoral Pattern, Traditional Power Dynamics, Youth political Behavior, Voter Education, Electoral Voting Machines (EVMs), Generational Shift, Union Council Chakdara

### Introduction and Background:

United Nations recognized 193 Countries throughout the world. Among the 193 countries 123 are said to be democratic Countries ([www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org)). Most of those Countries have a form of government where people participate directly or indirectly in the process of decision making. It means that people choose their representative in a democratic way (Becker, 2008). Democracy is thought to have originated in ancient Greece, but the term was

designed after the Treaty of Westphalia (1648). After the French Revolution in 1789, democracy obtained popularity and disperse immediately throughout the world (Fozia, et al 2018). Democracy is a form of government that is grounded on the will of the people, where people have the charge to choose their leaders and take them liable. Democracy is seen as the best form of government for representing the will of the people, the development of the people, and the nation (Editorial in Republic Policy, September 16, 2023). Democracy also insurance freedom, equality, justice, diversity, pluralism, and human rights. Democracy is a kind of government where people have the expertise to elect new representatives (Hameed AkRai, 1994).

### **Democracy in Pakistan:**

More than 85 colonies, as well as Pakistan, gained their independence following World War II (Ahmed, 2007). Establishing and sustaining a democratic system has presented Pakistan, a nation initiated on the ideals of democracy and self-determination, with many crisis. Pakistan has seen countless disturbance and criticism in its democratic process since got independence in 1947. The fundamental causes of this include political dishonesty, unstable institutions, military takeovers, and disputes between civilian and military leaders. Pakistan has also had to allege with issues like extreme extremism, poverty, high rates of illiteracy, and regional inequalities that have interfere its democratic development. Pakistan has proved significant strength and development in its democratic process despite these problems. Pakistan's democratic institutions and practices have been enhanced via the implementation of three constitutions (1956, 1962, and 1973), several modifications, and a number of election changes (Republic Policy editorial, September 16, 2023). Voting is the fundamental technique for a shared decision-making process, and it is necessary for citizens to actively engage in their democracy in order to voice their option, select representatives, and structure policies that deliver their interests (Nellis, 2023).

### **Voting behavior:**

The recent history of voting behavior start prior to the 1940 US presidential election, when a group of academics headed by Austrian-American sociologist Paul Lazars of Columbia University began employing survey research to supervise a scientific understanding of voting method (Bertels, 2010). One of the most continually used explanations in modern politics is voting. One of the subfields of political science is voting behavior. Voting is a crucial element of public gathering in a democratic community (Amin, 2020). Voting behaviors are the acts or choices people make when selecting nominee, sometimes influenced by factors like political contexts, social influences, and personal beliefs (Encyclopedia Britannica). Voting behaviors surround people's philosophy, choices, and actions during the election process, impact by their social and psychological atmosphere (Campbell et al., 1960). Voting behaviors is the course of how and why people cast their ballots, with an focus on elements like political ideas, personal status, values, and the contact of political systems and institutions ( Heywood, A, 2019).

### **Voting Trends on the National Level:**

During the first 23 years of its independence, Pakistan did not organize a national election, so its electoral history is very short. Delays in starting the democratic process and changes made to the voting method over time made it more difficult to create a strong democratic association. Continual military actions further confined Pakistan's representative democracy's development and growth (Ahmad, 2004). Instead of being a single, adhesive country, it is more of a collection of villages. The public and the leaders oftentimes get estranged as a result of this multiplicity. This diversity cause Pakistan's voting patterns to differ among communities and geographical areas. Additionally, the nation depends largely on outside resources to meet its defense and economic demands, which gives outside forces the ability to affect domestic events (Ziring, 2005).

**Main Factors of voting behaviors:**

Voter behavior is impressed by two categories of factors: short-term factors, which include immediate concerns like candidate appeal, campaign tactics, regional affiliation, occupation, socio cultural influence, politics, and current events; and long-term factors, which have a longer lasting consequences on voter decision and include ethnic affiliations, religious beliefs, age, gender, education, and political ideologies.(Tabiullah, Ramzan, Shahid et al: Advance Social Science Archives Journal).

**Biraderism:** South Asian countries, including Pakistan, have a social and political frame known as "Biraderism," in which clan and family ties, or "Biraderis," are very important to both society and politics. Widespread family or clan with a common ancestor is referred to as biraderi (Fatima and Akhtar, 2022). Economic affair, familial ties, and group loyalty are all linked to politics. Clan and family structures affect voting behavior in Pakistani politics. Family senior have more control over political choices, particularly in hierarchical settings. (Ahmed, 2020: Nadeem and Bashir, 2020).

**Mass Media:** Communication through a different platforms, including newspapers, radio, television, and the internet, that may quickly reach a large audience is known as mass media (Green et al., 2009). It ease public issue conversations, political debates, and elections (Mc Quail, 2005). The media affect public opinion, propagate official directives, and focus crucial aspects of democracies (Masood and Hassan, 2020). According to Biswas and Roy (2014), electronic media receives more than half of campaign funding in the US and Europe.

**Religions:** Voting behavior is importantly impact by religious certainty, with many people choosing candidates who share their ideas. Religion has a significant influence on political choices in Pakistan and other comparable nations, influencing everything from voter choice to candidate selection and policy (Gul& Khan, 2017).

**Money Politics, Patronage and Clientelism:** In Pakistan, clientelism is the exercise of strong people (patrons) giving resources or protection to weaker persons (clients) in exchange for their assistance. This practice affect Pakistani voters' decision, as does patronage politics, in which political figures offer jobs, favors, or development projects to win loyalty (Farmanullah et al., 2015; Gul& Khan).

**Electoral Campaigns:** When elections take place, political parties or candidates offer to convince voters to support them by using public speaking, advertising, debates, canvassing, and booklet to engage voters and gain support (Shah & Majid, 2022). Door-to-door campaigns give candidates the chance to talk with voters face-to-face, hear their concerns, and engage in conversation (Karim, 2014).

**Party Identification:** According to Ahmed (2017), a person's attachment or piety to a political party is referred to as party identification. Voting behavior in Pakistan is extremely impact by political culture, morals, and familial patterns (Akhtar, 2016).

**Leadership:** The capacity to lead and motivate others is known as leadership. It has a big influence on how people vote. Politicians view strong leaders as successful (Ahmed, 2017). Voters are influenced by characteristics including status, public service, and effective communication (Shawar & Asim, 2011).

**Waderaism:** Waderaism is a system in which landlords endeavor protection and support in return for loyalty (Ahmed, 2002). Wealth plays a key role in Pakistani politics, making it tough for the poor to win elections because of the high charge of campaigns (Anwar, 2016).

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, for example, powerful landlords, known as Zamindars, constantly win votes by mobilizing the community, praying for success, and forming affiliation (Askari, 2002).

Despite the abundance of study on democracy, elections, and the various elements influencing voting behavior, there is still a lack of understanding of the local factors that impact voter preferences in specific occasion. Local aristocrat, particularly Malik and Khan, have a historic impact on election results in areas like Chakdara. Socioeconomic frameworks, regional cultural customs, and behaviors further exacerbate these processes. With an emphasis on the sway of Malik and Khan on Chakdara voters, the researcher purpose to critically find out how these local characteristics impact voting behavior. Additionally, the researcher's premier purpose is to offer answer for defeat the influence of local elites and feudal in elections.

### **Research Questions**

1. How do Khan and Malik use their social status to impact voting behavior in UC Chakdara?
2. What are the Socio-economic factors that influence voting behavior in UC Chakdara?

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To analyze the role of Khan and Malik in influencing voting behavior in UC Chakdara.
2. To explore the impact of Socio-economic Factors on voting behavior in UC Chakdara.

### **Significance of the study**

The research focuses on analyzing how Khan and Malik, as influential feudal leaders, affect the electoral decisions of people in UC Chakdara. The research explores how traditional leader like Khan and Malik shapes political dynamics in their communities and their role in shaping rural voting behavior. This research highlights the lack of existing research on the role of Khans and Malik in shaping the voting behavior of people in Chakdara.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The case study of UC Chakdara's voting behavior highlights the complex interaction of sociopolitical, cultural, and economic elements that shape election decisions. In particular this research explores how tribal ties, patron-client relationships, and identity politics influence voting choices in the region. These situations often determine the candidate popularity and voter turnout more than political platforms.

Although elections in UC Chakdara are occurred in a democratic way, many of the voters chose candidate based on the familial connections, tribal influence, or the promises made by the candidate during elections, rather than ideological alignment and party manifestos. Addressing these complexities is essential for understanding the challenges to democratic consolidation in rural and tribal settings.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Muhammad Kwarah Tal et al. (2024) analyze how ethno-religious feelings, poverty, and poor literacy levels impact voting behavior during the 2019 National Assembly elections in Gombe State, Nigeria. Using a qualitative case study method based on classical liberal theory and qualitative case study design, the researchers discover that politicians used these social factors to diverge voter and affect electoral results in their favor. The study focused the need of governmental and non-governmental institutions promoting literacy, political education, and poverty alleviation through focused interventions including skill obtainment programs. Numerous studies have demonstrated the ways in which social and economic factors influence voting behavior in vast political environments. For example, in their 2023 paper "Social and Economic Determinants of Electoral Behavior in Turkey," OzgeKozal, Mehmet Karacuka, and Justus Haucap examined the different parliamentary elections that took place

between 2007 and 2018 and the complex factors that influence voting behavior in Turkey. The researcher looks at important factors such economic performance, the GDP proportion of agriculture, the rate of female illiteracy, age demographics, internal migration trends, and the effects of terrorism. They also pinpoint how voter choices are influenced by local social divisions, geographical variations, and party affiliation. (Kozal, Karacuka&Haucap, 2023). In their article "Influence of Social Media on Voting Behavior" during the 16th Look Saba elections in India, Biswas, Ingle, and Roy (2014) explain that social media is also one of the main factors that make voting behavior, especially among young generations. The study highlights the shift from traditional to digital media in political campaigning, with political parties using platforms like Face book and Twitter to interact first-time voters (Biswas et al, 2014). Economic, social, psychological, and political factors, as in other provinces of Pakistan, are determinants of voting behavior in KP. However, the results of the works and research (Bashir, 1973) analyzed that economic and social factors influenced voting behavior in the general elections of 1970 in KP. (Ahmad M, 2012). Believes that biradarism, caste, and tribalism have a significant part in voting behavior and influence political relations in Punjab province (Ahmad M.S, Electoral politics in NWFP, 1988-1999, 2010 (Bashir, 1973). Existing research has shed light on elements like feudalism, waderism, and biraderism and how they affect voting process, but little is known about the accurate role Malik and Khan played in creating UC Chakdara's electoral system. More research is required to understand how these elites affect voter preferences and decision-making patterns given the region's distinct social, economic, and political cultural characteristics. This study attempts to close this gap by critically examine Malik and Khan's role in light of UC Chakdara sociopolitical and economic environment.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Research design**

According to Kerlinger a research design constitutes a comprehensive plan, framework, and analyzing strategy devised to yield answers to specific research inquires or challenges. This plan serves as the overall scheme or paragraph for the research, detailing the steps the researcher will undertake, from formulating hypotheses and their operational implications to the ultimate data analysis (Kumar, 2019). The researcher used in this study the qualitative research design to examine the perceptions, experiences, social realities of voters, factors affecting voting behavior, and the influence of Khan and Malik in voting behavior in UC Chakdara. The researcher main focus was on understanding voting behaviors as compare to measuring variables statistically, so for this purpose a qualitative approach or research was most suitable.

### **Types of research**

These researchers used the qualitative and exploratory type of research. According to Kumar (2019) he defined the exploratory research is undertaken to explore an area where little is known or to find out the possibilities of undertaking a specific research study. The qualitative research was used to understand the deep social, economic, and political factors influencing voter behavior in UC Chakdara. And the aim of the researcher was to explore the role of local leader such as Khan and Malik in shaping the electoral choices of people.

### **Sources of data collection**

The data was collected for this study through primary sources. According to Ranjit Kumar the primary sources refers to data collected directly by the researcher for the specific purpose of the study (Kumar, 2019). The researcher conducted interviews for data collections from different peoples.

### **Tools of Data Collection**

Several methods used for the data collections by using primary sources. The choices of methods for data collection depend upon the purpose of the study, the resources available and the skills of the researcher (Kumar, 2019). For this research study the data was collected through structured interviews. An interview is a verbal interchange of ideas, often face to face, the telephone was also used, in which an interviewers tries to draw information, opinion, and beliefs from other person (Kumar, 2019).

### **Population and Sampling**

According to Kumar (2019) a population refers to the all group of people, objects, or events that a researcher wants to analyze. He added that clearly defining the study population is necessary to guarantee the applicability and relevance of the research outcome (Kumar, 2019). In this study the researcher targeted the population which included the residents of Union Council Chakdara, located in District Lower Dir, Tehsil Adenzai, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The population consists of eligible voters, including youth, elderly individuals, politically experts and observers, and also the community members of this area. Sampling is define by Kumar (2019) the process of choosing a few from a bigger group to become the basis of for predicting or estimating a fact, condition, or findings regarding the large group.

### **Techniques of Data Analysis**

After the collection of data, the researcher analyzed the responses through thematic analysis. The researcher find out the key themes and patterns from the interviewers responses, such as social pressure, economic influence, political awareness, and the shift in the voting behaviors. These them were then explain in the light of existing literature and the research objectives.

### **Area of study**

This research was conducted in Union Council Chakdara, a rural area located in Tehsil Adenzai, District Lower Dir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The researchers was selected this area due to its prominent local elites structure and its impact on the voters behavior, which making it a relevant case to explore the traditional influence of Khan and Malik on voting behavior.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The researchers conduct the research in a very respectful way for the ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from all four participants before going to interviews and also kept their identities were confidential. The collected data was used solely for the academic purposes, and the participants were given the right to withdraw from the study at any stage.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Due to time and limited access to a larger population, the research study consists on a very small sample size. The findings may not be generalize to all area but provide a meaningful insights into the voting system of UC Chakdara.

### **Data Analysis**

#### **Understanding Voting Awareness in UC Chakdara**

(Anonymous participant 1, Personal communication,23/02/2025) according to this Participant that UC Chakdara contain on eight Union councils. In comparison to other Union Councils of Tehsil Adenzai, UC Chakdara has a higher level of political awareness due to some reasons like historical, social, and educational. He further adds that the area has historically politically aware since the time of the Nawab of Dir. In terms of politics, Fashion Hut Hotel have created opportunities for interaction between politicians and local people, the University of

Malakand establishment in 2001 has also importance in bringing together students from different areas, which has improved political discourse, additionally, He said, the female political participation in the elections of 2013, 2018, and 2024 is viewed as a positive step toward political awareness. The respondent concludes that approximately 80% of the population in UC Chakdara is politically aware.

(Anonymous participant 2, personal communication, 19/02/2025) according to the second participant He offers a differing view, indicating that most of the people are unaware of real meaning of the voting process. He claimed that many voters are influenced by local leaders through road maintenance, water supply, and infrastructure development. Additionally the participant adds that women, are less informed as compared to men. Due to high illiteracy rates of women contribute to a more number of invalid votes.

(Anonymous participant 3, personal communication, 20/02/ 2025) The participant point out that awareness is related to two things one is economic and the other is education. He told further that we are economically very weak and our education level is not such that through we can see the value of vote. He added that these are the factors that are missing in UC Chakdara, due to which people do not focus on the casting of vote which is necessary for democratic improvement. He further discussed many people vote based on religion, biraderi, or ethnicity. He extends his views that some people vote on the basis of party slogans and manifesto.

(Anonymous participant 4, personal communication, 25/02/2025) the participant stated that voters of UC Chakdara do not understand the real meaning of voting. He further point out that in developed countries, people vote to bring some changes. He adds that those people have certain goals and ideas when they vote to a candidate. But in UC Chakdara people do not see voting on this perspective. He further added that they have no clear ideas about vote that what is vote real for. No clear idea about the purpose of voting.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion all participants share their views towards political awareness. Participant 1 presents an optimistic perspective, indicating a relatively high degree of political engagement and awareness, the other three respondents highlight significant obstacles. UC Chakdara shows active political participation but lacks a profound comprehension of democratic principles. To enhance this situation, it is crucial to implement civic education, awareness initiatives, and community-oriented political training.

## **Voter Prioritization: Ideology, Credibility, or Elite Endorsement in UC Chakdara**

(Anonymous participant 1, personal communication, 23/02/ 2025) This respondent notes that voter choices are affected by many factors when they vote. He stated that family relation and community service (khedmat) are the main factor of voter mind when they vote. He extend that most people vote on this philosophy. The participant discussed 2<sup>nd</sup> factors through which people vote for a candidate is party ideology which mostly affect the youth. He further adds that in local government elections, familial ties and community service is importance to win, whereas in general elections, approximately 50% of voters vote on the basis of party ideology or leader.

(Anonymous participant 2, personal communication, 19/02/ 2025) according to the second participant which shares similar views about voter priority. He discuss that when it comes to voting, people priorities are different. Most people vote on the basis of social ties, family relationship. He also adds that while local elites, such as Khan and Malik, still attempt to influence votes through financial means, their power appears to be waning.

(Anonymous participant 3, personal communication, 20/02/ 2025) according to this one participant a significant portion of voters in UC Chakdara lacks awareness of political party ideologies. He stated that the people do not see the party's slogans, principles, or constitutions when casting their votes. Instead, their voting behavior is dominantly shaped by (Biraderi) or the decisions made by head of the family. Additionally, the respondent points out the issue of vote buying, where candidates distribute money to gain more votes, particularly targeting those which economically in weak situations.

(Anonymous participant 4, personal communication, 25/02/ 2025) The fourth respondent highlights the significance of inherited politics in shaping voting patterns. He stated that voters in UC Chakdara do not prioritize party ideology or the credibility of candidates. Instead, they believe that we should to support the same political parties as their ancestor support, that's why they don't care about party ideology or the credibility of candidates. He further adds that people vote only based tradition passed from their elders.

### **Conclusion**

The analysis of the responses uncovers a complex relationship between traditional loyalties, familial influence, community service, and the emergence of ideological awareness in UC Chakdara. While Respondents 3, 2, and 4 stress a lack of understanding regarding party ideology and a strong dependence on Biraderi, tradition, or financial incentives, Respondent 1 offers a more nuanced perspective. They recognize a growing influence of ideology, particularly among the youth and during national elections.

### **Democratic Progress or Elite Dominance:**

(Anonymous participant 1, personal communication, 23/02/2025) according to the 1<sup>st</sup> participant which show optimistic views that political culture of Chakdara is speedily moving towards democratic structure. He believe that voters are now elect candidates based more on their personal qualification, party ideology, as compare to Khan and Malik endorsement.

(Anonymous participant 2, personal communication, 19/02/2025) this respondent focus that the political landscape in Chakdara is moving towards more democratic structure. The respondent adds that the influence of Khan and Malik is diminishing as the peoples became increasingly politically aware and educated. Different factors are responsible for this trend, Education, Economic Diversification, Youth Resistance, Emergence of new candidate, regional authorities have begun to elect candidates from various communities, such as Gujjars and Yousafzais, there by challenging established power dynamics. He further stated that Khan and Malik continue to exert influence, particularly in party politics and local governance, as well as in conflict resolution between two parties.

(Anonymous participant 3, personal communication, 20/02/ 2025) This respondent offers a more measured evaluation. He discussed the trend is almost changed but not on the level where we can see that it influence whole community or people. Additionally He said, all famous political parties e.g. PTI supporters support only PTI whether it is doing good or bad, same cases in other majors parties too, so democratic trend or not developed still today.

(Anonymous participant 4, personal communication, 25/02/ 2025) the participant highlights that historically, Khan and Malik commanded approximately 80% of power in their hands, he stated that in the past proper law were introduced, decision were made through Jirga system. But he point out that now a day things are slowly and gradually changing. The influence of



Khan and Malik is decreasing and the system is moving towards more democratic. Their power has not completely disappeared but it's getting weaker overtime.

## **Conclusion**

In the conclusion according to three respondents (1, 2, and 4) concur that democratic principles are gradually taking root. These all participants note a reduction in the traditional dominance of Khan and Malik, attributed to increased education, youth engagement, and wider access to political information. Conversely, one respondent (3) holds a more critical stance, asserting that authentic democratic practices have yet to materialize. He further stated that the essential democratic culture where candidates present their platforms and voters evaluate them critically is largely absent.

## **The role of Khan and Malik in influencing voting behavior in rural areas**

(Anonymous participant 1, personal communication, 23/02/ 2025) The first participant highlights that the historical impact of Khan and Malik on voting behavior has notably diminished. Following the merger of Dir State with Pakistan in 1969 their authority began to wane. He further demonstrated that currently, their influence is mostly confined to their family members or dependents. Individuals who lack economic or social independence such as property or land may still depend on Khan and Malik but for the overall community, their affect is minimal.

(Anonymous participant 2, personal communication, 19/02/ 2025) according to this respondent which emphasizes that most of Khan and Malik use wealth and assistance to sway voters. He further told that political pressure in Chakdara is less as compared to the regions like Baluchistan. Economic support and personal favors are important in gaining votes from the people.

(Anonymous participant 3, personal communication, 20/02/2025) this examines the social dynamics and interdependence within Chakdara society. Social ties exist in UC Chakdara through which Khan and Malik influenced people. He further stated, factors such as family loyalty, economic reliance, religious connections, friendships, and Hujra culture through which Khan and Malik gain vote from people. He stated that if they do not vote for Khan and Malik they will definitely cut off relations with people.

(Anonymous participant 4, personal communication, 25/02/ 2025) According to this participant which highlights that Khans and Maliks continue to hold social authority, particularly in Thana Tehsil, where they actively engage in resolving familial and societal issues of different people. He further describes that this social involvement of Khan and Malik helps to maintain their influence over voters, who trust and follow them due to their assistance in everyday matters.

## **Conclusion**

The findings of participants indicate a nuanced and changing influence of Khan and Malik on voter behavior in Chakdara. Two respondents (1 and 2) concur that their authority is diminishing, with their power largely restricted to personal networks or exercised through economic incentives rather than through traditional means of influence. Conversely, two other respondents (3 and 4) contend that social standing and community reputation still empower Khan and Malik to sway voting choices, particularly among individuals who rely on them socially or economically.

## **Factors used by Khan and Malik**

(Anonymous participant 1, personal communication, 23/02/2025) this participant recognizes that Khans and Maliks most of the time use social factors to gain vote from the voters. He

also claimed that they also use their authority through economic factors, such as helping needy people and solving the legal matters. He added that Khan and Malik also making easier for them to access resource like jobs are legal assistance. Furthermore, they highlight a psychological aspect also, where individuals feel compelled to support these Khan and Malik due to tradition, respect, and social bonds, even in the absence of direct coercion.

(Anonymous participant 2, personal communication, 19/02/ 2025) This participant this time emphasizes the critical role of social connections in the process of voter mobilization. He further explained that Khan and Malik used most of the time social factors such as funerals and weddings engage actively in personal and community gatherings individuals often value more than financial support as compared to economic factors.

(Anonymous participant 3, personal communication, 20/02/ 2025) according to this participant which offers a comparative perspective, indicating that the mobilization strategies employed by Khan and Malik are influenced by their political party affiliations. He further stated that the factors are change in every political parties such as Jamaat-e-Islami or JUI, Khan and Malik take influence from their party. He further discussed that the party's ideological stance shapes how these elites interact with voters. In UC Chakdara most of the Khan use social factors to gain votes from the people.

(Anonymous participant 4, personal communication, 25/02/ 2025) according to this interviewer economic dependence is low, only a small number of people get influenced by money. The participant minimizes the impact of direct financial incentives, asserting that only 2–5% of voters are influenced by monetary factors. He stated that, In contrast, 95% of voters are motivated by social ties, personal recommendations, and community standing. He further describe financial factors may have a minor role; social influence and community trust are the prevailing forces in voter mobilization.

## **Conclusion**

In the conclusion all four participants concur that Khan and Malik primarily engage voters through social connections, emotional ties, and community participation. Three participant (1, 2, and 4) stress that social and relational structure are significantly more impactful than economic or political pressures. Respondent 3 notes that their strategies are tailored to specific parties and shaped by self-interest, illustrating the adaptability of elite behavior in response to the political landscape.

## **Examining the Financial Contributions of the Khan and Malik Families in Elections**

(Anonymous participant 1, personal communication, 23/02/ 2025) The initial participant makes a clear differentiation of Khan and Malik financial support between local government elections and general elections. According to his opinion Khan and Malik families are more financially involve in local elections, where their direct influence and control are more pronounced. He further added, conversely, in general elections, their involvement leads to be more symbolic and socially impactful rather than financially.

(Anonymous participant 2,3, personal communication, 19,20/02/ 2025) Both the second and third participant highlights that financial assistance is indeed provided, but not in cash form. Instead, the Khan and Malik families provide tangible goods such as construction materials or essential household items. He describes these material contributions serve as indirect economic support, aimed at winning favor without direct monetary exchanges in voters.

(Anonymous participant 4, personal communication, 25/02/ 2025) according to this respondent emphasizes a more extensive form of financial backing, which includes not only

the Khan and Malik but also Members of the National Assembly (MNAs) and Members of the Provincial Assembly (MPAs). He further argued this support contain on public development initiatives, such as road construction and water pipe scheme. Such contributions foster goodwill among voters and enhance their influence.

### **Conclusion:**

All four respondents examine that the Khan and Malik families do extend financial support during elections, although the nature and extent of that support differ. In local elections, their economic involvement is more direct and impactful, while in general elections, it leans more towards social engagement and symbolic representation.

### **Impact of Khan and Malik on Regional Democracy**

(Anonymous participant 1, personal communication, 23/02/ 2025) this participant argues that democracy always suffers whenever voters lack political autonomy. He further add that Khan and Malik influence democracy through psychological means rather than direct force, which causing individuals to make choices driven by social pressures instead of political beliefs or informed understanding. He told that this situation compromises the transparency and freedom essential for a strong democratic framework. He added that it is a sign of weak democracy when the voters are affected more by societal influence than by their own political affiliations.

(Anonymous participant 2, personal communication, 19/02/ 2025) highlights that the Khan and Malik want the traditional old power structure to maintain. He further extend that they want keep control in their hands. Reduce the public participation in the decisions making process. So he stated that all these structure of the Khan and Malik is sign of totally weak democratic norms and values in the region.

(Anonymous participant 3, personal communication, 20/02/ 2025) according to this participants which presents a more comprehensive viewpoint, contending that the decline of democracy cannot be attributed solely to the influence of Khan and Malik, there are multiple factors of declining democratic structure. He explained these figures khan and malik constitute only a small portion of the population, it is not such a large part that weaken democracy but their impact is primarily felt during elections. He force that true democracy encompasses more than just the act of voting it also involves a significant deficiency in development and political inclusion, which represents a more substantial concern. In his opinion, the entire system lacks genuine democratic essence, independent of khan and malik participation.

(Anonymous participant 4, personal communication, 25/02/2025) according to this participant opinions that the true goals of democracy have not been achieved. He further stated, although their political power has grown, the fundamental characteristics of democracy are notably absent in the region, he further suggesting that elite control need as a replacement for true democratic norms and values.

### **Conclusion:**

The majority of participants show that the influence of Khan and Malik in UC Chakdara undermines democratic processes by centralizing power among a select few elites, thereby restricting voter independence and diminishing authentic political engagement. Although one of the participant argues that their influence is more limited and context-dependent, the prevailing consensus suggests that traditional power dynamics obstruct the establishment of a fully democratic framework in the region.

### **Youth Voting Trends in UC Chakdara**

(Anonymous participant 1, personal communication, 23/02/2025) this participant analysis a notable generational change in voting process of UC Chakdara. They point out that younger individuals are more inclined to focus on party ideologies, the reliability of candidates, and policy initiatives, rather than being swayed by traditional factors such as family connections or historical allegiances. He further adds that the pattern of youth voting is totally changed from their elder way of voting at 180 degree.

(Anonymous participant 2, personal communication, 19/02/ 2025) according to this participant which provided a concise observation, connecting the evolving voting patterns of young people to the influence of social media. He further explained his views that due to mass media the voting choice of youth was completely changed from their ancestral way of voting.

(Anonymous participant 3, personal communication, 20/02/2025) the point views of this participant is that now a day opposite change come youth do not care about their elders, however the youth whose belong to the family of khan and malik families care during casting vote of their elders. He further added that the youth of poor class, middle class people they don't care and vote by their own choice of candidate without any external pressure.

(Anonymous participant 4, personal communication, 25/02/ 2025) highlighted that the younger demographic in UC Chakdara largely dismisses the conventional norms and values adhered to by their elders. The respondent furthermore discuss that this shift is reflected in the independent political identities of younger voters, which motivate them to make electoral choice more and more independent. Most of the youth have their own ideas and beliefs, which they prefer to follow, especially in UC Chakdara.

### **Conclusion:**

The comprehensive analysis of the responses indicates a notable transformation in the voting behavior of younger generations in UC Chakdara. The youth are progressively departing from established voting patterns that were significantly shaped by familial influence, khan and malik, and historical connections.

### **Independent Electoral Choices in Chakdara**

(Anonymous participant 1, personal communication, 23/02/ 2025) according to this participant he told that in my experience the following steps are necessary to guarantee independent voting process in UC Chakdara.

#### **Voter education and awareness;**

He told that it is important to educate people about the value of vote particularly the elder and elder and senior. He added if the head of the family (sarbarah) is educate and aware the rest of the family will follow.

#### **Voting Rights based on Education;**

Making more independent voting process may be facilitated by adopting a system that links voting rights to education. He further discuss that there are no such requirements for casting vote, but even for lower government job like sweeper and Naib Qasid, a minimal qualification such as 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Additionally he told that one option is to use weighted voting system, for example in which, voters who are illiterate receive one vote, those with a bachelor degree receive two votes. Who hold a degree of MS or M Phil degree receive three votes. And those who have a degree of PhD hold five votes. By using this method voting power will be changed from conventional factors such as going to weddings and funerals and fulfilling social duties to well informed decision making.

### **Implementation of Electronic Voting Machine;**

The participant suggested another step which is the implementation of EVM. EVM can provide a more independent voting process and lesser outside interference. However he prefers that voting should not be done through mobile apps as this could make more manipulation. EVMs ought to be implemented at polling stations instead in order to guarantee a safe and open voting process.

(Anonymous participant 2, personal communication, 19/02/ 2025) according to this participant he also suggested the following steps.

- Movement of raising voting awareness of public.
- Enhanced political education.
- Being aware of power of vote.
- Ensuring everyone to the rights to vote.

He told that these steps can make voter more independent.

(Anonymous participant 3, personal communication, 20/02/2025) This participant provides a very distinguished views claim that in Pakistan I don't like democracy work because the true essence of democracy does not achieve. He told that I suggest that during voting poor, rich and middle class people should consider the mission of the candidate. He further explain if the candidates are secular or either religious it does not matters his ideology matters, if his ideology focuses on the development of country people should to vote to them. He suggested that 1<sup>st</sup> we should stop experimenting people and choose a candidate on the basis of their actions and work for the development of democracy. He further extend that two things are necessary for the development of independent vote concept which is economic development and educational awareness, focus on these two things to develop the democracy.

(Anonymous participant 4, personal communication, 25/02/2025) This participant suggested that through education and political awareness people know more about the real essence of politics. He further added when political parties promoting public discourse, debates, and community gatherings, voters can become more informed about party platforms and candidates' proposals and everyone plays their part. This helps to reduce the influence of khan and malik and start a new independent system of voting. People begin to think freely and take part election with their own choices.

### **Conclusion:**

This study elaborated the impact of local leaders like Khan and Malik on the voting behavior of the people of Union Council (UC) Chakdara. Through a combination of interviews, existing literature, and field observations, it was find out that traditional or local leader particularly Khan and Malik maintain a considerable impact on voter decision through social pressure, economic assistance, social ties, and established a strong familial relations with voters. Despite there are the presence of a democratic system in the region, many voters decision making process are affected by these external factors.

However, the research also highlights a slowly and gradual transformation of the political culture of UC Chakdara, especially among the younger population. Who are increasingly challenging the old or traditional voting concept and demonstrating a preference for voting based on candidate qualifications, developmental policies, party ideology, party manifestos, and ideological beliefs. Elements such as education, political consciousness, and social media play a vital role in this new trend of shift.

Furthermore, the study also highlights that the individual interests also dictate the voter priorities rather than a collective progress, and many of the voters possess a very little

understanding of their voting rights and obligations. In addition this study also told that social and economic factors also affect the electoral process in the region, while the broader community is still in the process of assimilating democratic principles.

In conclusion, although the influenced of Khan and Malik continues to shaped the choices of voter behavior in UC Chakdara. But there are changes occur slowly and gradually in the existing political culture which provides optimism for a more democratic and well informed political culture in the future. Ongoing initiatives in voter educations, political reforms, and socio economic advancement are crucial for empowering the electorate and diminishing the local elite control over the democratic process.

This research study further opened the door for further research on the electoral behavior in rural places of Pakistan, particularly in places like where traditional leader powers still exist or dominate in the regions. Future study could focus to examine the role of political parties and mass media in shaping voter awareness among people. Additionally, more detailed, long term studies could help to bring some changes in youth voting behavior over time. In the grassroots level strengthening the democratic values is a continuous process that require the academic attention, communal engagement, and institutional support.

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