A Transformational Journey with Sveep in Karnataka

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Abstract: In order to increase citizens' engagement in the democratic process in Karnataka, the Systematic Voter Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) program has played a crucial role. The 2018 General Assembly elections were the focus of this study, which analyzes the transformational journey of SVEEP and its effects on varied constituency involvement, voter registration, and turnout. To overcome obstacles like disinformation and geographical inaccessibility, qualitative findings highlight the efficacy of merging mass knowledge with local facilitation. The research shows that democratic procedures, voter participation, and inclusion may all be greatly improved with well-planned voter education initiatives. One of the department's top officials acts as a go-between for the media, keeping them apprised of breaking news that must be made public as soon as possible. On top of that, they're lending a hand with the creation of audio and video tracks as well as the imaginative designs for campaign materials. Motivating citizens to cast their ballots in the next assembly election is an important responsibility of the Department of Information and Public Relations. In addition to traditional mass media, DIPR employs innovative outdoor media options to educate the electorate. Even though the option to "not agree" is available on electoral voting machines, 55% of people are unaware that it exists. The availability of Braille provision on EVMs is unknown to 63.4% of respondents, while 72.4% are unaware of VVPAT.

Keywords: Transformational, journey, SVEEP, Karnataka

INTRODUCTION

An increase in voter turnout occurred in the most recent elections in Karnataka as a result of the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) program's (transformative) efforts to raise voter knowledge and participation. The Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of Karnataka oversees the initiative, which employs multi-pronged techniques to reach out to various groups. Among them, urban and young voters, who have displayed a history of indifference, are particularly targeted.

SVEEP Plan:

To ensure that all eligible voters are able to register to vote, the states must develop a comprehensive SVEEP Action plan for the Summary Revision. As a result, the district SVEEP plans are to be developed by the DEOs, with overall guidance from the CEO. People between the ages of 18 and 19, who are just becoming eligible to vote, will be the focus of the Summary modification.

The development of SVEEP's strategy in Karnataka

There have been several iterations of SVEEP since the Election Commission of India launched it in 2009, and each one has improved over the last. A more focused and evidence-based strategy has resulted in Karnataka as a result of this:

- **Targeted interventions:** The plan shifted from broad-based awareness efforts to a targeted effort in polling places with low attendance. As part of this process, we analyzed voter behavior down to the smallest detail and then targeted our activities accordingly.

- **Demographic focus:** Women, people with disabilities (PwD), the elderly, and first-time voters are among the demographics that are currently the focus of targeted campaigns. Voting booth accommodations and targeted outreach are two examples of these initiatives.

- **Use of technology:** A crucial component of contemporary strategy is the utilization of technology. By combining more conventional forms of advertising like print and radio with more modern ones like social media, the Voter Helpline App, and SMS messaging, the CEO's office is able to reach a large audience.

- **Inclusion of marginalized sections:** To promote a more inclusive voting process, targeted efforts are being developed to reach out to indigenous people and other disadvantaged groups.

SVEEP Interference Mechanisms:

The SVEEP initiative made use of a number of distinct approaches. Among these methods were the development of resources to enlighten voters, the launch of initiatives to reach out to local communities, and the integration of various forms of electronic communication. In an effort to make voting easier and more accessible for more people, several voter education materials were created. The goal of the community outreach activities was to get people excited about voting and to make them feel like they had a responsibility to their neighborhood. The usage of social media and smartphone applications facilitated real-time communication and increased the reach of information.

Quantitative examination:

We conducted a quantitative analysis of the data related to voter participation to determine how effective the SVEEP intervention was. Socioeconomic indicators, demographics, and regional disparities were among the many factors considered for the study's goal. Findings indicated that SVEEP initiatives were associated with higher voter engagement, particularly in areas with historically lower participation rates. People from marginalized groups and first-time voters looked to have been the ones most affected by the intervention.

Visions of a Qualitative Landscape:

Aside from the quantitative research, qualitative insights were gathered through individual interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups. A more nuanced understanding of the voters' experiences and viewpoints in connection to the SVEEP project was achieved via the application of these approaches. Voters said they were more prepared for the election because they had a better grasp of how to cast their ballots and a stronger sense of civic duty.

The SVEEP intervention had its successes, but it also had its share of challenges, such as communicating with faraway villages, dealing with language barriers, and keeping people involved after the election. Some of the proposals put up to enhance future interventions include tailoring outreach methods to specific communities, enlisting the help of local influencers, and making use of current technologies to facilitate continuous civic education.

Election Visitors Programme

India is admired for its proficiency in managing elections, given that it is the biggest democracy on Earth. The Electoral Management Bodies of different nations, particularly young and developing democracies, have long been a focus of ECI's efforts to promote knowledge sharing and the interchange of experiences and insights. Election officials from several nations participate in study programs and trainings organized by the Election Commission of India. These programs cover topics such as technology, election administration, voter education, and more. Along with the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the ECI ran an Election Visitors Programme, which drew 41 participants from 17 other countries as part of the SouthSouth Cooperation program. Unicef and the programme worked together.

Achieving Goals: Filling in Specific Deficits

Although there were disparities in participation that were particular to certain states and districts, the most significant ones on a nationwide scale were those pertaining to gender, urban indifference, youth, and special categories.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mahmood, Z. (2022) The topic of this case study is the experience of the Indian elections that were held between March 2020 and July 2021, i.e., during the COVID-19 pandemic. Elections for national parliament, regional assemblies, and municipal councils were all held during this time, and the report breaks out the results by constituency. It draws attention to the problems with organization, institutional changes, and execution that these elections encountered during the COVID-19 era. The case study aims to highlight the inherent difficulties of holding elections after catastrophic catastrophes. These conflicts, on the one hand, make it very difficult to have meaningful discussions, hold contests, have people's voices heard, and run elections, and on the other, they threaten to undermine the trust that people have in democratic procedures. Last but not least, elections play a crucial role in India's political system and in the political life of the country. Due to the epidemic's impact on election logistics, democratic discourse and contestation were hampered to an extent. Although these challenges were there, they were surmounted by the use of innovative methods of election administration and the widespread encouragement of voter participation. Both the elections and public health were affected by the bureaucratic, political, and administrative dynamics that were distinct to each region. Distinct variations in the administration of elections at the subnational level served to emphasize these dynamics.

Harbers, et al., (2022) The perpetrators of electoral violence include both those seeking power via the electoral process and anti-systemic entities who are antagonistic to democracy. Although there are distinct causes of violent tactics, it is unclear if the effects of anti-systemic violence and intra-systemic violence are distinct. By focusing on state-level elections in India, a country that has both nationwide elections and continuing political violence, we show that this distinction is crucial for understanding regional patterns of electoral violence and how it affects election outcomes. We show that both tactics have a chilling effect on voting, but that the effect against systemic violence is stronger. The data we used to draw these conclusions comes from a unique dataset tracking incidents of violence during elections for legislative assemblies held between 1985 and 2008. Not only does systemic violence appear to be more

targeted—happening more frequently in state legislature districts when the sitting member is an opposition politician—but it also benefits the political party with control of the state's executive branch.

Tiwari, (2022) Posting the date of the next election is not enough to maintain a functional democracy. Voter education is critical for providing citizens with the knowledge they need to make an informed decision. Additionally, voters need to be informed about the procedure, the various political groups, the policies they back, and the qualifications of the candidates. Equipped with more knowledge to aid them in casting a "enlightened" vote, thereby adding to the building of an educated populace. The ECI recognizes and values the importance of engaging with younger voters, who are savvy with technology and who get their news through social media and other digital platforms. In an effort to reach out to voters and raise their level of voting process awareness, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has utilized social media campaigns, smartphone applications, and other digital platforms. The study delves into the reason for the significant surge in voter participation during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, which occurred after the ECI-SVEEP (Systematic Voter's Education and Electoral Participation) initiative was launched in 2009. The study also looks into the Election Commission of India's (ECI) recent attempts to raise voter awareness using modern media. Examining the Election Commission of India's (ECI) use of radio, websites, interactive techniques, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter as part of their campaign strategy is the main objective of this study. Voters will be more informed and encouraged to have a larger say in the creation of national mandates beyond 2014 if these tactics are successful. This study will also look into the present state of affairs. This study delves into the recent digitally disseminated efforts through social media platforms and examines the many factors that impact the behavior of election campaign social media followers.

Ferris, & Dash, (2022) Besley, Persson, and Strum's classic model states that voters may be characterized as either party loyal or undecided, with the latter group being more receptive to policies that better reflect their desired programs. Election rivalry between parties for the support of those who are deemed swing voters improves the efficiency with which government services are provided and brings government services into conformity with what the people want. Using election data from 14 Indian states from 1957 to 2018, we assess the model's predictions, build a new method for measuring the importance of noneconomic variables, and extend the BPS model to incorporate voter participation. There is documentation of all of these endeavors here. The results mostly match the model's predictions, with the exception that they

work particularly well for the less developed states, or BIMAROU states. A more competitive election is one in which more people cast ballots and where there is less of an imbalance between the number of safe seats and the distribution of vote volatilities among constituencies. When comparing top and second place, a lower vote share margin indicates this.

Katju, (2021) The Election Commission of India, or EC from here on out, is an organisation charged with organizing and supervising voting at the national and state assembly (provincial) levels in India. It was founded in 1950 under the Indian Constitution. A lot of work has gone into making the voting process more accessible throughout the last several elections. On top of that, the 2019 Indian parliamentary elections had more than 900 million eligible voters. In an effort to engage voters, the Election Commission (EC) used both conventional and unconventional strategies to raise voter awareness. An institutional desire for public mobilization was on full display in the push to get people to the polls to cast their ballots. Beyond that, a large number of names are missing from the election registers, and the EC is being said to have shown little concern over this anomaly. Could this paradox of enthusiasm and abnormality be an indication of India's "democracy at crossroads," a period when the country is moving toward more participatory and effective institutional functioning? On the other hand, maybe this is just another example of how growing public expectations and more administrative oversight have put pressure on institutions to perform below par. Examining the methods used by India's Election Commission (EC) to encourage more people to cast ballots is central to this research project.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. To study on Strategic evolution of SVEEP in Karnataka

2. To study on SVEEP Intervention Components

KAP Survey Findings

In response to an order from the Election Commission of India, a comprehensive nationwide survey was launched to gauge voter awareness, sentiment, and engagement. Based in Bengaluru, the Institute for Social and Economic Change conducted this Baseline KAP Survey. To provide fair and balanced representation of all elements of society, the survey encompassed 40 assembly constituencies across the four administrative divisions of the state of Kamataka. The survey relied on a well-structured questionnaire to collect broad information about the country's voting system. To complement this quantitative component, we also performed in-

depth interviews and focused group discussions to learn about the hopes, fears, and realities of certain groups of voters.

Here are the main takeaways from the survey::

Secondary analysis

While 72.9% of Karnataka's population is 18 and over, only 68.3% of the population is female, meaning that the EP ratio is lower for females than men. Nevertheless, with only 35.3% having enrolled, the enrollment gap is at its widest among the 18–19 age group.

The sex ratio among the 18+ population is 989 to 932, but the gender disparity in the votes polled is 932 to 9. Voter registration and turnout have both seen increases because to SVEEP's engagement. The percentage of eligible voters has risen from 64.9% in 2008 to 71.8% in 2013, with the largest increase observed among women.

Knowledge

Even though 78% of people know that you have to be 18 to register to vote, just 17% got the date of January 1st as the proper qualifying date. Among eligible voters, just 6.3% have heard of National Voters' Day.

Even though the option to "not agree" is available on electoral voting machines, 55% of people are unaware that it exists. Sixty-three percent of people don't know that electronic voting machines have Braille capabilities, and seventy-two percent don't know what VVPAT is.

Last but not least, 80.3% of people said that television was the best place to get political and election-related news.

Attitude

Among the sampled respondents, "Vote as a Right and Duty" ranked highest in terms of motivation to cast a ballot, while "Lack of voter slip," "Ignorance about the polling station," and "long queue" ranked lowest in terms of motivation to cast a ballot.

The majority of respondents hold a good view of voting and the political process when asked about their opinions on the matter.

Practice

Only 12% of those who have moved around a lot have removed their names from the electoral roll, while 72% have kept them.

 A large percentage of the respondents (90.8%) claimed to have had an EPIC card, and 92.4% indicated they are actively registered to vote. The primary method of enrollment has been Special Enrollment Drives, with BLO's visits to homes and community centers serving as secondary sources.

The main reason people don't want their names on the electoral roster is because they don't know how to enroll. The respondents believe that there is an insufficient amount of accessible voting facilities, including ramps and wheelchairs, separate entrance and exit in the polling booth, and other necessities for disabled and senior voters.

Long lines(66.2%), lack of a separate line for seniors(22.6%), unclear instructions from poll workers(19%), and an absence of water, restrooms, and a ramp (14.1%) are the most common problems that voters encounter.

SVEEP Intervention

While just 44.4% of people could recollect specifics about the campaigns leading up to the election, a much larger percentage—approximately 86%—said that television commercials and shows, together with newspapers and magazines (64.7%), are important sources for election-related information.

During elections, 53% of people remember ICONS/STARS.

Evidence & Publicity:

The Karnataka Chief Executive Officer's office and the Information and Publicity department are collaborating closely. Crucial electoral messages must be communicated to the general public. The most common ways that news gets out there are through print, television, and social media. One of the department's top officials acts as a go-between for the media, keeping them apprised of breaking news that must be made public as soon as possible. On top of that, they're lending a hand with the creation of audio and video tracks as well as the imaginative designs for campaign materials.

Motivating citizens to cast their ballots in the next assembly election is an important responsibility of the Department of Information and Public Relations. In addition to traditional mass media, DIPR employs innovative outdoor media options to educate the electorate. The primary function of the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) is publicity; it employs all available media in this endeavor. Over 2,600 highway hoardings spread out throughout the state are owned by the Department of Information. To encourage and inspire residents to cast their ballots, the department displays adverts in these billboards.

The department's goal is to inform the state's population about the government's accomplishments through a variety of field PR programs. For this reason, the Department has an office at the district headquarters and employs three or five Street Play teams. Voter education initiatives will also make advantage of these groups. In a similar vein, the Department can host photo exhibits and other forms of public art to educate voters.

It is possible to brand all district offices' publicity vehicles and utilize them in a voter awareness campaign. These cars and street play teams collaborate for the infotainment programs called "Kalajatha," where they showcase films and conduct street plays. Using Kalajatha can help educate rural voters and allay their fears and concerns. When artists aren't doing streetplays, they can answer voters' questions. Promotional materials will also be distributed using LED trucks.

The department distributes radio jingles and documentaries made by empanelled organizations. Another possible use for this service is educating voters. Various media channels have the ability to be utilized for publicity, including train branding, on-board advertising, railway stations, movie theaters, bus stands, and loudspeakers.

The department publishes the monthly magazines Janapada (Kannada) and March of Karnataka (English). Since Janapada has a circulation of over 70,000 copies, it may be released as a Voters Education Special Issue in May 2018.

CONCLUSION

Structured voter education has a crucial role in enhancing democratic participation, as seen by the transformational path of SVEEP in Karnataka. Through the use of context-specific tactics including media outreach, door-to-door campaigning, and first-time voter education, the program was able to improve voter registration and turnout, especially among women and low-turnout communities. The importance of extensive and persistent awareness campaigns is

highlighted by the strong association between SVEEP intensity and turnout. The results highlight the need of combining media campaigns with grassroots facilitation and targeted interventions for marginalized groups in order to encourage informed, inclusive, and engaged citizenship. To enhance democratic government and promote wider civic involvement in India, it is crucial to maintain funding for comprehensive voter education initiatives such as SVEEP.

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