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## **Dynamics of Voting Behavior in Tehsil Adenzai, Lower Dir during 2018 and 2024 General Elections: An Appraisal**

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### **ABSTRACT**

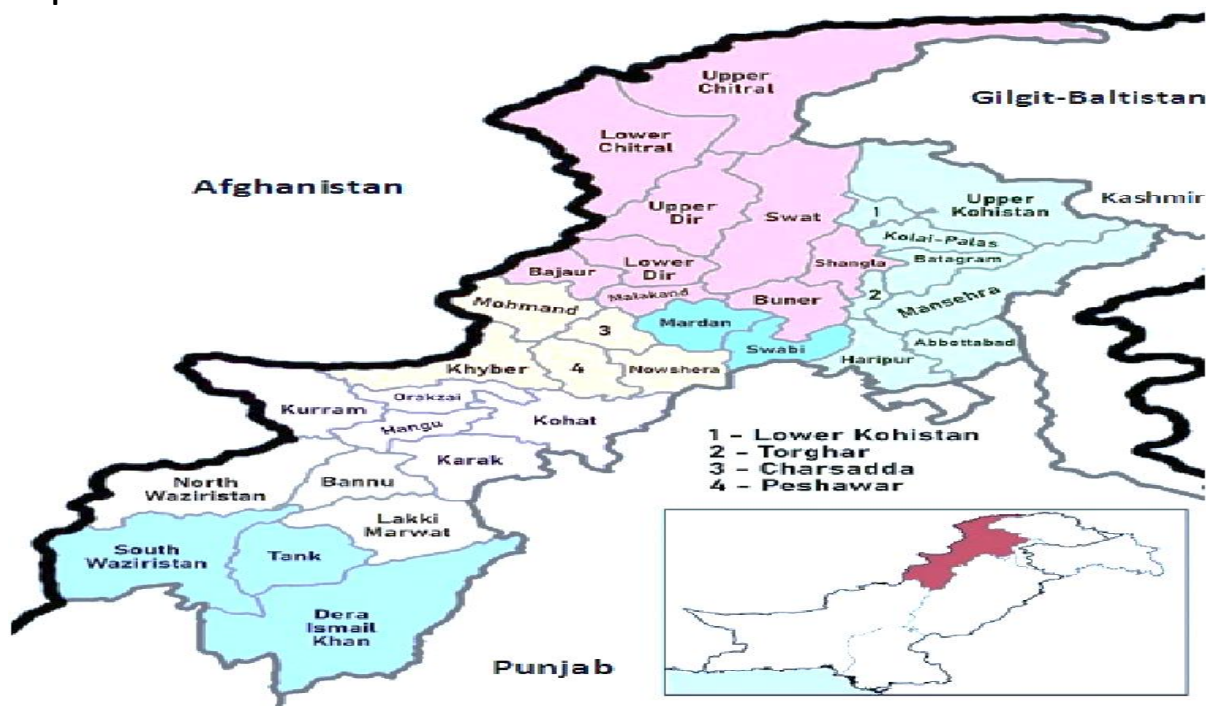
*Political participation of masses through electoral process is sine qua non for flourishing a true democratic culture in a society. Every democratic country guarantees the right to vote to its citizens by incorporating provisions in its constitution. The policy makers in Pakistan also incorporated provisions pertaining to adult franchise in 1973 Constitution; and the Election Commission of Pakistan is held responsible to hold elections at national and local levels. This study mainly revolves around the comparative analysis of 2018 and 2024 General Elections and the voting behaviour of the local people in Tehsil Adenzai, Dir Lower, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. For this study, primary and secondary data have been employed.*

**Keywords:** Voting Behavior, Franchise, Tehsil Adenzai, Dir, Democracy.

### **Introduction**

The concept of voting behavior is the integral part of electoral process as it reflects the action or reaction of the general masses towards a political party. Simply voting behaviour serves like a barometer to gauge public sentiments towards public policies of a regime in the form of Vote Turn-out (Kanwal, et al., 2016). that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is one the federating units of Pakistan that is administratively divided into Divisions, districts, and tehsils (Barth, 2011). Malakand Division is one of its most important divisions having vast territory and rich historical orientation. Dir is divided into two districts District Lower Dir and Dir Upper in Malakand division. District Lower Dir has 1,583 square kilometers territory. It has seven Tehsils –Timergara, Adenzai, Munda, Khall, Lal Qila, Samar Bagh, and Balambat (Liu, 20224). Dir was a small princely state of British India whose affairs were to be regulated by rulers known as *Nawabs*. This status lasted from 1890 to 1969. During 1969, Dir gained status of a district in Malakand region; and in 1996 it was divided into two districts – Upper Dir and Lower Dir. During Nawab's rule, people were alien to voting and politics. However, after the termination of this system, Jamaat-I-Islami and Pakistan People's Party became the biggest political players across the region (Inamullah and Israr, 2022). The study shows that Lower Dir has 922,505 registered voters –508,813 male (55.16%) and 413,692 female (44.84%) (Election Commission of Pakistan). The results of 2018 and 2024 general elections show that local people of Lower Dir casted their votes for Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI ) party in both national and provincial assembly seats (Khan, 2026).

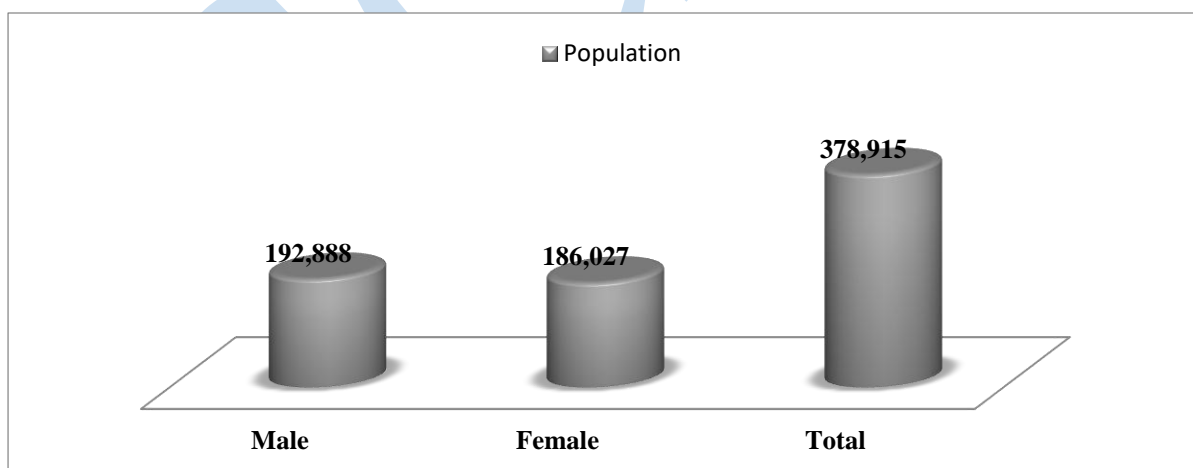
Map-1



Source: Urooj and Shah, 2022: 374

Dir Lower has Tehsil Adenzia has eight Union Councils namely, Asbanr, Badwan, Chakdara, Khadakzai, Khan Pur, Koti Gram, Ouch and Taza Gram. The population of Adenzai is given in Figure-1 (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics).

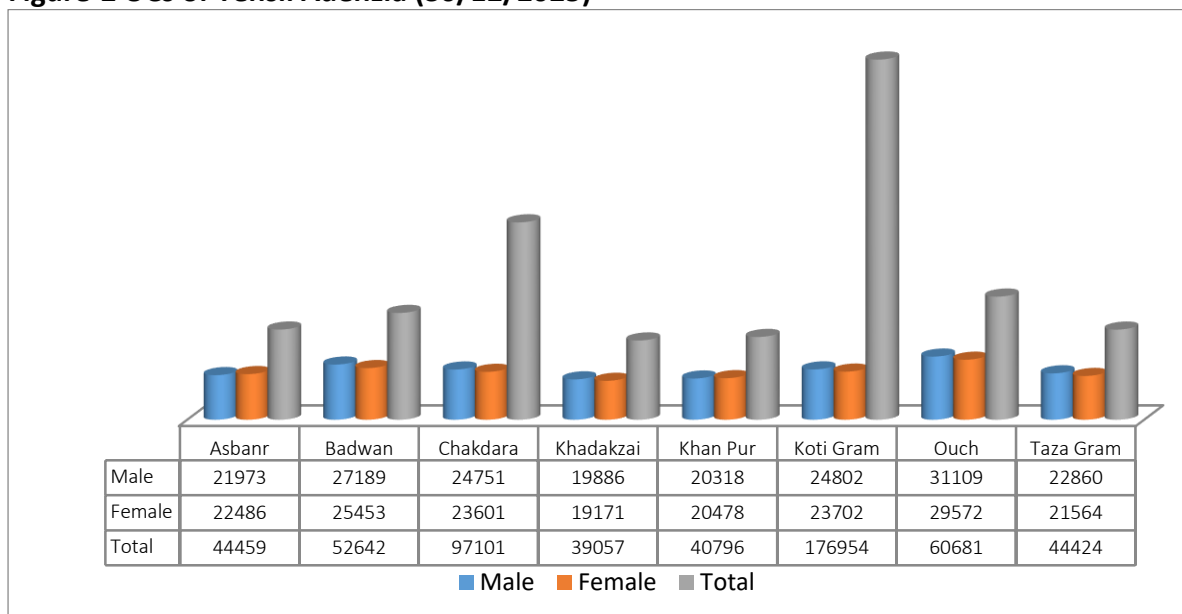
Figure-1 Tehsil Adenzia (30/12/2025)



Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics

The population of Union Councils – Asbanr, Badwan, Chakdara, Khadakzai, Khan Pur, Koti Gram, Ouch and Taza Gram are given in Figure-2

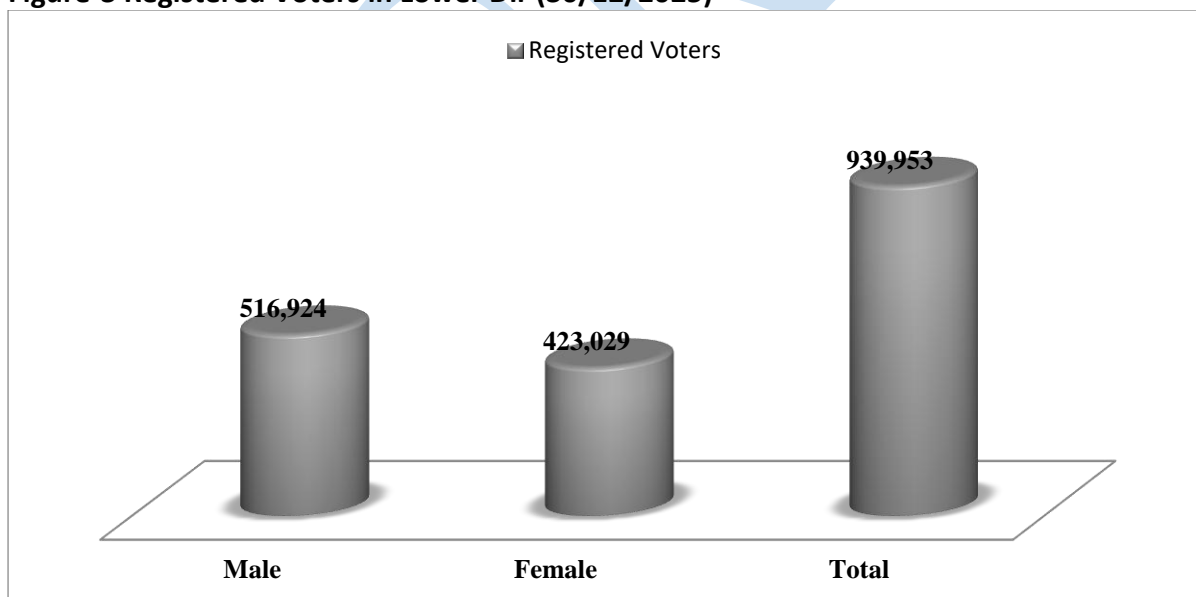
**Figure-2 UCs of Tehsil Adenzia (30/12/2025)**



**Source:** Pakistan Bureau of Statistics

According to Election Commission of Pakistan, the registered voters till December 30, 2025 are given in Figure-3.

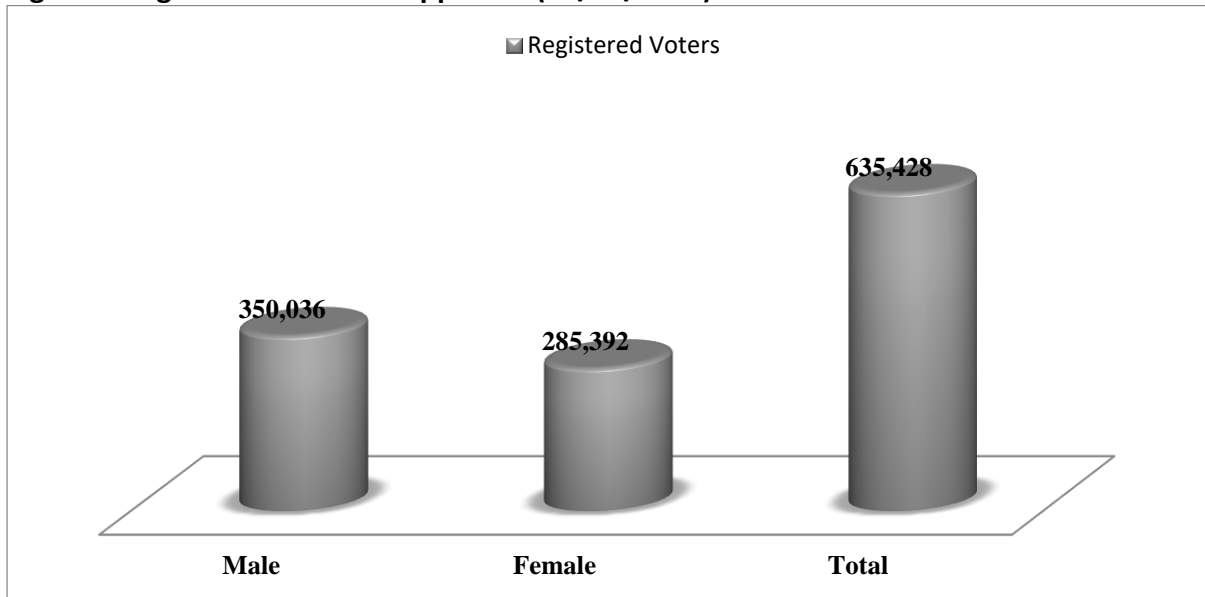
**Figure-3 Registered Voters in Lower Dir (30/12/2025)**



**Source:** Election Commission of Pakistan

According to Election Commission of Pakistan, the registered voters in Upper Dir till December 30, 2025 are given in Figure-4.

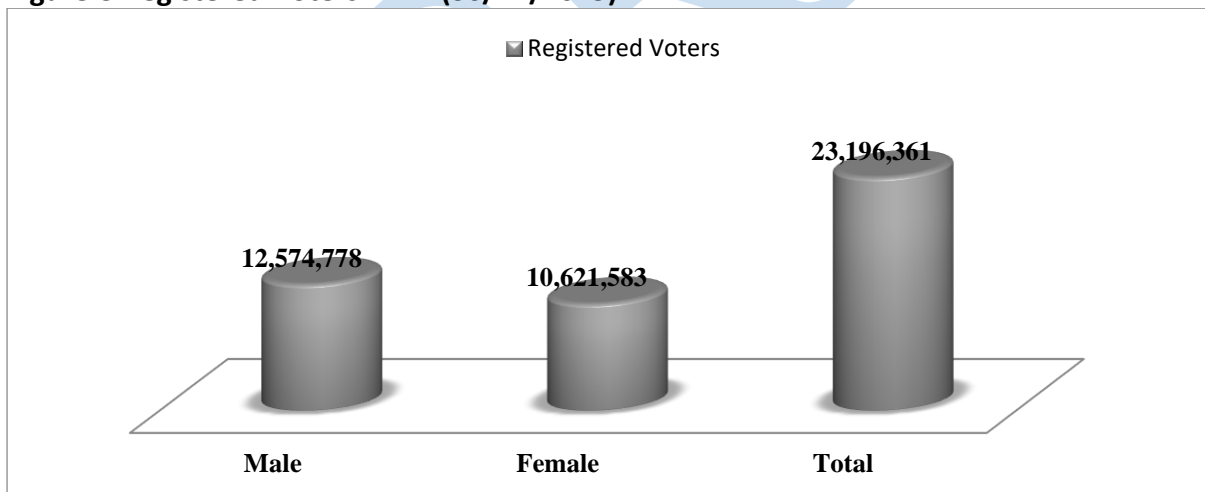
**Figure-4 Registered Voters in Upper Dir (30/12/2025)**



**Source: Election Commission of Pakistan**

According to Election Commission of Pakistan, the registered voters in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa till December 30, 2025 are given in Figure-5.

**Figure-5 Registered Voters in KP (30/12/2025)**



**Source: Election Commission of Pakistan**

**Literature review**

For this study, books, research papers published in national and international journals have been consulted so as to find out possible research gap. Some of the most relevant literature is as under.

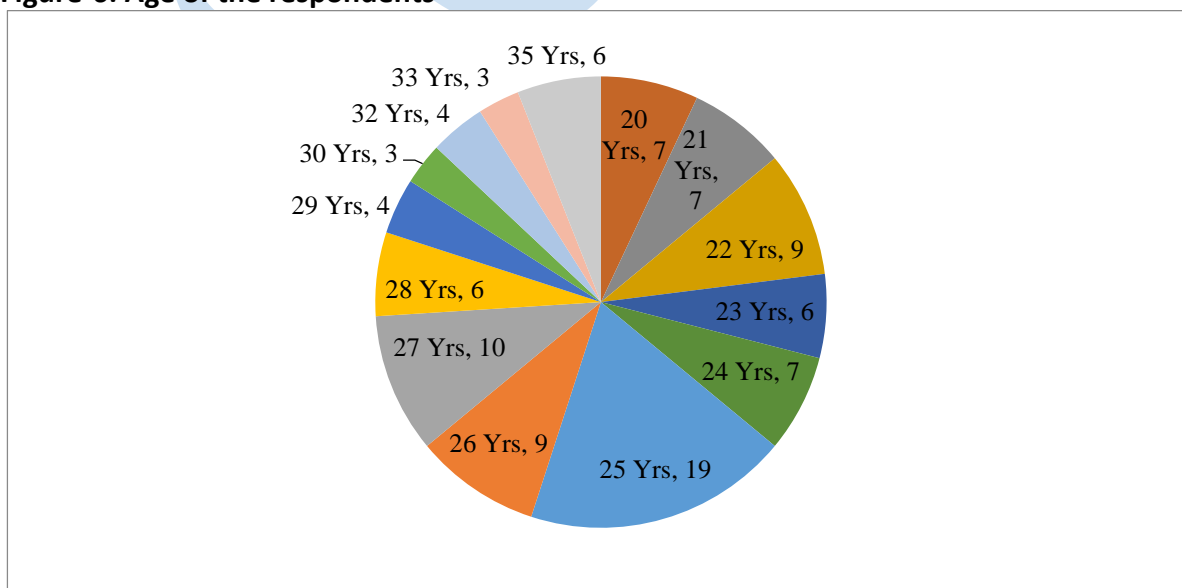
Ahamd (2020) has conducted his research in Punjab and tried to make comparison between rural and urban areas pertaining to behaviour of voters. The author pointed out the socio-cultural norms especially Clan system (Biradari system) and its influence on voting behaviour during local bodies' elections and national level elections. Khan and Ahmad (2023) held his study in Dir Upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and questioned the unfair means like selling and

purchasing of votes during elections that affected the results and transparency and fairness. It also affects the flourishing of a true democratic culture in a society. Ullah and Bibi (2025) investigated voting behaviour in Swat and relied on primary sources of data like questionnaire distributed among 330 respondents. The study shows that accessibility to female respondents due to cultural bars is a major issue because only 12% female respondents were reported. During study, various factors like religion, gender, individual relation, family politics, ethnicity and nationalism affects the election results. Bano and Abbas (2024) observed during their study that people in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa did not believe in too much on political affiliation instead of believing in personality-oriented politics. It is manifested from the 2013 and 2018 general elections wherein the people of this province voted to PTI because of its chief Imran Khan. Jawad and Khan (2021) also investigated and found various factors like social (geography, ethnicity, beliefs, and social position and their relationship to voting patterns), psychosomatic (feeling and emotion and their impact on voter policies), and attitudinal elements (evaluating candidates' government proficiency, qualities, party associations, policy attitudes, and ideologies to make an educated choice) in District Upper Dir that affected the behavior of voters and election results. Khan (2011) highlighted the role of ladies union councillors and their political, financial and administrative empowerment in terms of their participation in the decision-making process at grass roots levels; and found numerous issues hindered them to play a just role in this regard. In the light of above literature, it is inferred that this study is innovative in its nature.

**Methodology**

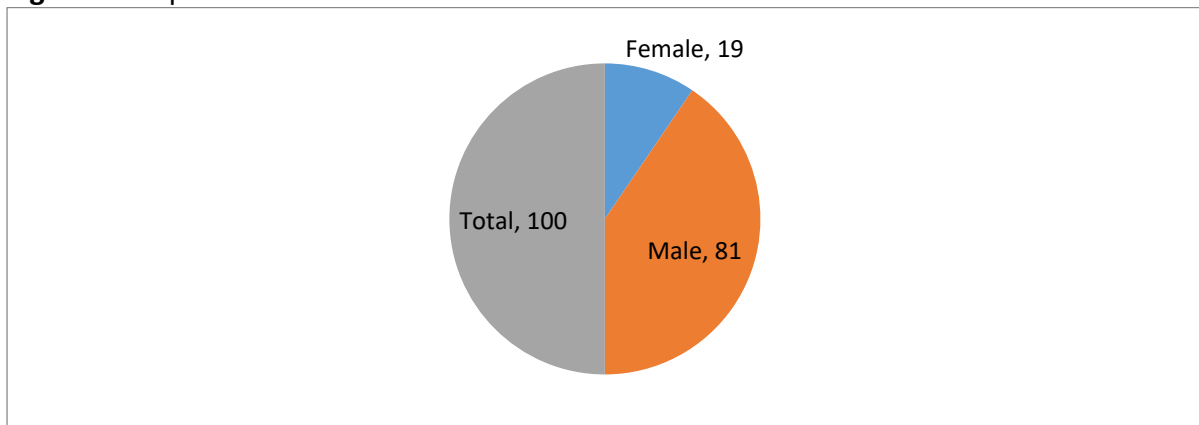
For this study, primary sources (structured interview schedule and structured questionnaire) and secondary sources for collection of data have been employed (Khan, 2026). The age (Figure-6), gender (Figure-7), education (Figure-8) and profession (Figure-9) of the respondents are given as follow.

**Figure-6: Age of the respondents**



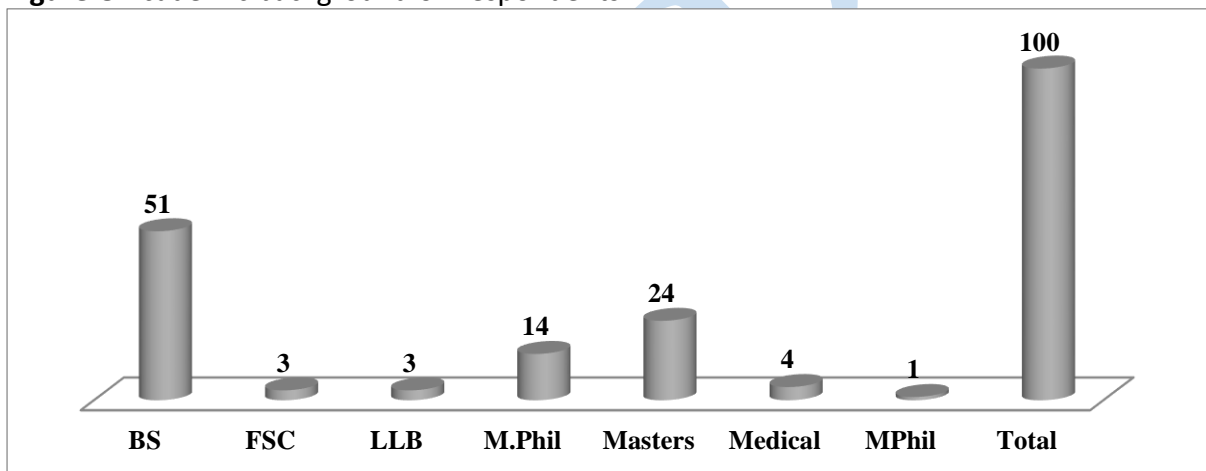
Source: (Khan, 2026)

**Figure-7** Respondents on Gender-basis

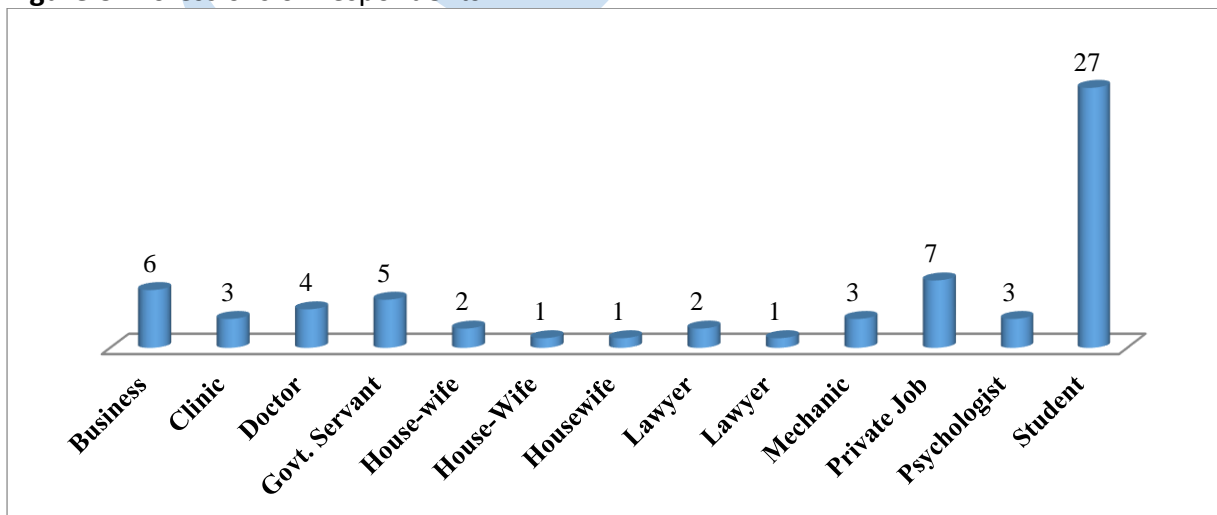


Source: (Khan, 2026)

**Figure-8** Academic background of Respondents



**Figure-9** Professions of Respondents



Source: (Khan, 2026)

### **KEY INFLUENCING FACTORS**

The survey shows the below some major multiple factors influencing the behaviour of voters (Khan, 2026).

First, religion is one of the tools to induce the voters morally to cast their votes in favour of a particular political party. Second, *biradari* (clan) system also played in role in influencing voting behaviour in Tehsil Adenzai. Third, *Hujra* as a social institution of gathering to discuss local issues also played its role in this regard. Fourth, social media especially whatsapp played a pivotal role to mobilise general masses especially youth in 2024 General Elections. Fifth, a paradigmatic shift from development-oriented politics to narrative-based politics also influenced voting behaviour in 2024 general elections. Contrary to, in 2018 general elections developmental projects occupied a major role. However, the role of this factor cannot be sidelined in influencing voters' behaviour because the common man needs some development works in his area. Sixth, the traditional Veil (*Purdah*) system also influences voting behaviour in Dir including Adenzai. This cultural norm promotes restricted-franchise in local areas by debarring the women from exercising their right to vote and restrict them to their houses. Seventh, the personality traits of the candidate also influenced voting behaviour in Tehsil Adenzai. The voters opted candidates with manifesto consisted of principles of fairness and anti-corruption stance are some important to note.

### **IMPLICATIONS**

The study shows the comparative study of 2018 and 2024 General Elections in the light of collected data that several innovations were introduced in 2014 elections in contrast to 2018 elections. First, the bulk of youth were engaged voluntarily in the electoral process and mobilization of various segments of the society. Second, traditional elder system was thrown to cold storage wherein the family or tribal elder could influence the voting behaviour by deciding the suitable candidate. Third, narrative-based politics was emerged. Fourth, women though small in number yet played their role in the electoral process which was also a healthy political and electoral development in such closed-society. Fifth, political education took place among the local people.

### **CHALLENGES**

Despite positive political and electoral development in District Dir and Tehsil Adenzai, several existing challenges cannot be ignored. First, the socio-cultural values still hinder a free voting choice in these areas. Second, *biradari* system has still effective therein. Third, women disfranchisement to larger extent is still invoke. Fourth, security concerns are also there which affect free voting system in these areas. Lastly, an inclusive franchise system is still a far cry.

### **MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

In the light of aforementioned findings, some major initiatives need to be taken by the government. First, political and electoral education through print, electronic and social media needs to be effectively launched. Services of local civil administration need to be utilized for this purpose. Second, the services of religious scholars need also be used to educate people about their constitutional responsibility. Third, the services of local elders need to be hired because of the traditional influence in their localities. Fourth, people need to realize the significance of voting system in national development. Lastly, women should

be given due place in the existing political culture of the society by allowing them to exercise their constitutional role in the form of right to vote and right to stand for election as a candidate.

### CONCLUSION

To cut the story short, it may be inferred that political cultural values have taken place in 2024 elections which were different from those of 2018 elections. The influence of local elders, tribal chiefs, feudal class and religious clerics were found as gatekeepers to the vote and ultimately their influence on local voting behaviour. Contrary to it, the influence of youth and social media was observed during 2024 elections that changed the political and electoral dynamics of local politics.

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