

# POLITICAL COMMUNICATION PER SE VOTING BEHAVIOUR

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**Abstract :** Political communication is concerned with spread and communication of information and how it influences politics and policy makers, the news media and citizens. Voting behaviours are concerned with the ways in which people tend to vote in public election and the reasons why they vote, as they do. The media acts as bridge between government and public. In order to string the three into one, the aim of present study was to study Political Communication by Voting behaviour. The study had deliberately focused on the three core actors of political communication, political organizations; media and citizen voters. The sample of the study consisted of N=93 citizen voters, selected randomly from Indian states of MP, UP and Bihar. A self-developed and standardized questionnaire was used to assess the voting behaviours among citizens. Results of study show that most of the respondents are interested in political communication. Findings also indicate that, electronic media (radio and television) is the most preferred media for political communication. Majority of the respondents support the political parties and their ideologies due to parental pressure. Participants vote according to their conscience. Citizens voting attitude is primarily based on qualities of candidates. Majority of respondents do not shift belief in political parties according to their leader's party change/shift. Political perspective of most of the respondents is affected after participating in political activities (political rallies/meetings). There are also evidences that participants of the study do not influence voting behaviour of others.

**Keywords:** Political communication; Voting Behaviour

## Introduction

Political communication(s) is a subfield of communication and political science that is concerned with spread of information and how it influences politics and policy makers, the news media and citizens (Kaid and Bacha, 2008). The media acts as bridge between government and masses. Political communication researches the interrelations among production, dissemination and processing the effects of information. This takes place in two ways, one through mass media and second interpersonally, within the given political context. It incorporates the study of media, political leaders' speeches, rallies, formal and informal conversations etc. it is the link between politics and

citizens (voters) and the modes of interaction, which link up the two. Basically, there are three actors of political communication, namely, political organizations; media and citizens (voters) (Mc Nair, 2017). Their interrelations may be described as-

I. **Political Actors** are those individuals who aspire through organizational and institutional means to influence the decision making process. They are-

Political Organizations

i) Political parties: Likeminded individuals who come together within an agreed organizational and ideological structure to pursue common goal.

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- a) *Political Marketing* target audience voting for political parties is brand voting.

Brand vote + Success = Profit
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- b) *Political Advertising*: Difference between political product (i.e. parties and candidates) and give them meaning for consumers (Voters)
- c) *Public Relations*: Media and information media management tactics design to ensure maximum favorable publicity and minimum of **n e g a t i v e**. *Proactive devices* such as rallies, news conference. *Reactive devices* are the technique responsible for damage, limitation, lobbying of journalist, diverting the potentially damaging stories and suppressing the potentially damaging information. Media or Political consultants, image managers, spin-doctors, gurus are the new professional class.
- ii) **Public Organisations**: are non-party organizations with political objectives like trade unions, consumers groups, and professional associations. They are united not by ideology but by some common features of the members' situations.
- iii) **Pressure Groups**: Less institutionalized than public organizations and they tend to campaign around single issue that is why they also called single issue groups.
- iv) **Terrorist Organisations**: Resistance movements use terror tactics like urban bombing, hijacking e.g.

HAMAS, Al-Qaida etc.

## II. **Audience**

Purpose of Communication is to persuade and the target of persuasion are audience. Political communication may be *broad* with billboard advertisement or may be *narrow* with editorials only. Thirdly it may be broad and narrow also, for example, bombing at tourist place which have message for two audiences, one is for tourists and second is for government.

- III. **Media**: is of three types, namely, print, broadcasting and online. Political actors use media for communicate message to desired audience. Kaid et al (1991), have proposed three political realities. They are-
- a) Objective reality: are political events which actually occur.
  - b) Subjective reality: reality of political events perceived by actors and citizens.
  - c) Constructive reality: events covered by the media.

Extent and direction of media bias vary in modern democracy. Transmitters of message from citizens to political leaders represent *public opinion*. Nowadays internet is increasing the participation of public. The study and practice of political communication focuses on the ways and means of expression of political nature. It is to influence political environment (Denton and Woodward, 1998). The content and purpose of message is crucial factor which makes communication 'political'. This also influence public knowledge, belief and action on political matters (Swanson and Nimmo, 1990).

Voting behaviour is a field of study concerned with the ways in which people tend to vote in public election and the reasons why they vote, as they do (Plano, Riggs & Robin, 1982). it has recently been expended in meaning and is taken as one major and broad area of study subsumed

within broader designation of political behaviour. It involves a study of human political behaviour in the context of voting in elections (Hazarika, 2015). Its determinants are charisma, caste, religion, language, monetary beliefs and sub-nationalism in Indian context (Hazarika, 2015). It is actually linked with the in-depth study of individual psychological processes of perception, emotion, motivation and communication process underlying in the election process and its impact on election results (Rajasena and Thanikodi, 2016).

So far in Indian context, not many studies have been entertained in the realm of political communication. Hazarika (2015), Pande (2015) and Rajasena (2016) have tried to research in the field, but the void remains.

We have tried to string the three, the political organizations (message/political communication), the citizen voters and MEDIA. Also, the previous studies have been restricted to political science, and not in the specific arena of political communication. Hence, to fill in the gap, to some extent, the present study has been incorporated to demarcate the individual influence of three vital actors of the same, namely, political messaging from political parties, audience (voters) and media. It is framed as, 'Political Communication *per se* Voting Behaviour'.

### **Objectives of Proposed Study**

1. To study political communication among the respondents.
2. To map out interest of respondents in politics.
3. To study the type of media usage with respect to political communication among the respondents.
4. To study factors influencing voting behaviour of the respondents.

### **Methodology**

#### **Research design**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design.

### **Sample stratification**

Random sampling was applied for choosing the participants of the study. Participants were selected randomly from various semi-urban and urban (Y-class cities) places of MP, UP and Bihar. The sample size was N=120, out of which only 93 questionnaires were found suitable for data analysis. The assessment measure taken for the study was self-developed and standardized tool, namely, 'Political Communication Questionnaire'. Since, the respondents were representative of the all round, their age ranged from 18 years and above.

### **Tool of Study**

The assessment measure taken for the study is 'Political Communication Questionnaire'. It comprises of 19 items divided into various ranking and rating scales. The results were drawn by coding the responses answered through the tool.

### **Statistical Techniques Used**

Data obtained were analyzed by using SPSS. It yielded many tables. But, tables are relevant according to the objectives of the study were considered. Tables were based on frequency analysis. They also yielded percentage of responses categories. Thus the relationship between the variables of study was calculated.

### **Procedure**

The questionnaire was distributed and administered on various respondents. Each respondent was approached personally and was requested to fill up the tool. Respondents were given the liberty to take their time for completing their questionnaires. The confidentiality of their responses was assured.

### **Operational Definitions of Terms Used**

**Political Communication:** a person's belief that he or she has the ability, motivation and, resources to complete a task successfully.

**Results and Analysis**  
**Table 1: Showing Demographic Variables of the Respondents**  
**N=93**

SN	Demographic Variable (s)	Category (s)					
1	Sex	Male			Female		
		47 (50.5%)			46 (49.5%)		
2	Age (in years)	18-25	26-40		41-60	61 and above	
		2 (2.2%)	54 (58.1%)		36 (38.7%)	1 (1.1%)	
3	Educational qualifications	Intermediate		Graduate		Post-graduate & above	
		34 (36.6%)		31 (33.3%)		28 (30.1%)	
4	Occupation	Farmer businessmen	Business	Govt. job	Pvt. job	Retired	Student
		10 (10.8%)	17 (18.3%)	21 (22.6%)	14 (15.1%)	2 (2.2%)	29 (31.2%)

Table 1 is showing demographic variables of the respondents. The number of female respondents (49.5%) was almost equal to number of male respondents (50.5%). Maximum number of respondents fell in age group of young citizens of 26-40 years (58.1%), followed by respondents of 41-60 years (38.7%), and negligibly in other two age groups (2.2% and 1.1%) respectively. The number of respondents, with respect to educational qualifications were almost equal, intermediate (36.6%), graduate (33.3%) and post-graduate and above (30.1%). Occupation of the participants fell into six categories, in which highest number fall into students category (31.2%), followed by government job holders (22.6%), closely followed by businessmen (18.3%), almost same in number by private job holders (15.1%), farmer businessmen (10.8%), and negligible number of retired people (2.2%).

**Table 2: Expressing interest in Political communication among the respondents**

SN	Political interest	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	43	46.2
2	No	19	20.4
3	Not much	29	31.2
4	Can't say	2	2.2

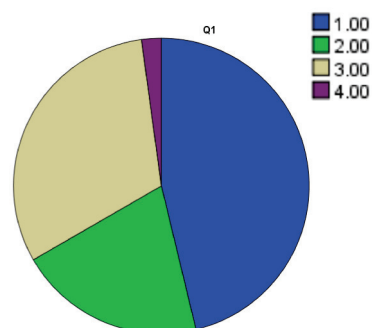


Table 2 shows Political interest of respondents. Maximum respondents said that they were interested in politics (46.2%), followed by not much interest (31.2%), followed by no interest in politics (20.4%), and negligible were undecided (2.2%).

**Table 3: Showing Media type to access Political issues by respondents**

SN	Media type	Frequency	Percentage
1	Newspaper	20	21.5
2	Magazines	6	6.5
3	News-websites/Portal	1	1.1
4	Radio/TV	28	30.1
5	Others	1	1.1
6	N & M	1	1.1
7	N & Portal	1	1.1
8	N R TV	15	16.1
9	N O	1	1.1
10	M R TV	2	2.2
11	Web R TV	1	1.1
12	N M R TV	6	6.5
13	N Web R TV	1	1.1
14	N R TV O	1	1.1
15	N M Web R TV	8	8.6

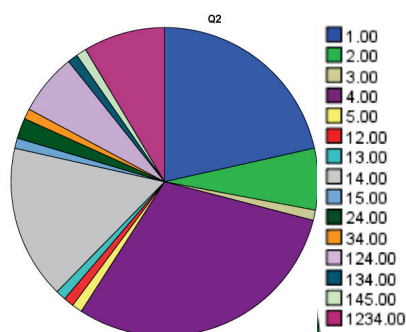


Table 3 is depicting the type of media used, to access political issues by the respondents. Results clearly shows that electronic media is most widely used to access political issues by the respondents (30.1%), followed by newspapers (21.5%), followed by mixed usage of newspapers (print media) and electronic media (radio & television, 16.1%), followed by the combination of all media types (print, electronic and new media 8.6%), closely followed by magazines and composite of print and electronic media (6.5%). The other media choices are the combination of media forms and are negligibly preferred by the respondents.

**Table 4: Showing voting status of respondents**

SN	Voting status	Frequency	Percentage
1	Voted	88	94.6
2	Not voted	5	5.4

Table 4 exhibits the voting status of respondents. It clearly indicates that majority of the participants of the study have been voters before (94.6%) and a microscopic minority (5.4%) were non-voters.

**Table 5: Showing election type in which respondents have voted**

SN	Type of election	Frequency	Percentage
1	Parliament	6	6.5
2	State legislature	5	5.4
3	Municipal/Panchayat	7	7.5
4	Parlia. & State	12	12.9
5	State & Municipal	5	5.4
6	Par. State Muni.	58	62.4

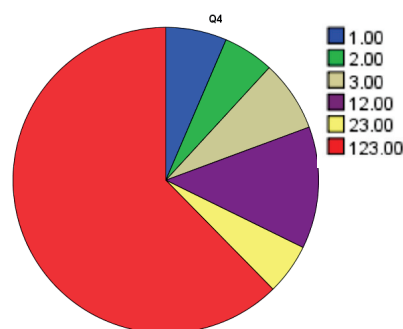


Table 5 shows the type of election in which respondents have voted. More than half of them (62.4%) have voted in parliamentary; state and municipal elections, few of them (12.9%) have voted in both central and state level elections and others have voted in combination of elections.

**Table 6: Showing opinion with respect to Political inclination**

SN	Support Political party without parents liking	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	20	21.5
2	No	73	78.5

Table 6 draws the picture of voting inclination of the respondents. Majority (78.5%) supports the political parties due to parental pressure, whereas fewer respondents (21.5%) do not get inclined towards political parties under pressure of parents.

**Table 7: Showing opinion kept in mind while Voting**

SN	Person(s) influencing Voting opinion	Frequency	Percentage
1	Parents	3	3.2
2	Spouse	8	8.6
3	Leaders	8	8.6
4	Conscience	67	72.0
5	Parents, Spouse	1	1.1
6	Parents & Conscience	2	2.2
7	Leaders & Conscience	2	2.2
8	Parents, Spouse, Leaders	1	1.1
9	Parents, Spouse, Conscience	1	1.1

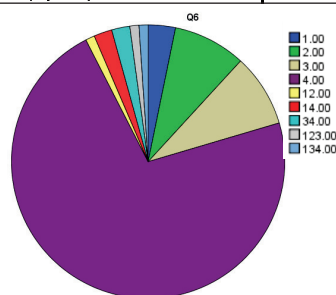




Table 7 further clarifies the voting behavioural pressures. The largest number of participants of the study, voted according to their conscience (72%), followed by spouse and leader's pressure (8.6%), followed by parental pressure (3.2%) and negligibly by other pressures.

**Table 8: Showing factors effecting respondents Voting Attitude**

SN	Factors effecting respondents Voting Attitude	Frequency	Percentage
1	Political Party	17	18.3
2	Candidate's qualities	40	43.0
3	Candidate's religion	2	2.2
4	Candidate's native region	10	10.8
5	PP & CQ	12	12.9
6	CO & CNR	1	1.1
7	PP, CO & CR	1	1.1
8	PP, CO & CNR	3	3.2
9	PP.CO.CR.CNR	7	7.5

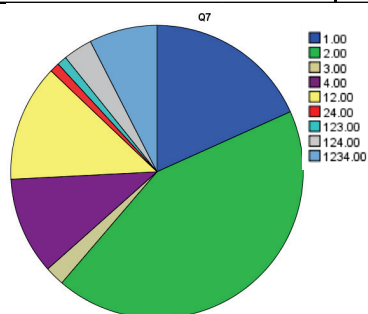


Table 8 is shows an important variable of voting behaviour, the Voting Attitude of the respondents. Citizens mainly vote on the basis of candidate's qualities (43%), followed by name of political party (18.3%), followed by a combined basis of candidate's qualities and political party (12.9%), and followed by regionalism (10.8%). Other contributors in voting attitude formation are a combination of primary effecting variables.

**Table 9: Showing opinion of respondents w.r.t. importance of election type**

SN	Election type	Frequency	Percentage
1	National	31	33.3
2	State	8	8.6
3	Panchayat/Municipal	18	19.4
4	National & State	9	9.7
5	National & P/M	3	3.2
6	State & P/M	1	1.1
7	N,S, P/M	23	24.7

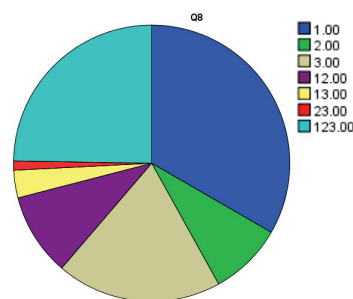


Table 9 exhibits the opinion of respondents with respect to importance type of election. Respondents perceive national elections most important (33.3%), followed by an admixture of all kinds, that is, national; state; panchayat/municipal level elections (24.7%), followed by Panchayat/Municipal elections (19.4%), state & national elections (9.7%), state elections (8.6%) and negligibly by combination of other elections.

**Table 10: Showing opinion of respondents w.r.t. Party change of Leader**

SN	Leader's shift is Candidate's shift	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	32	34.4
2	No	61	65.6

Table 10 shows the opinion of respondents with respect to change of the political party by the leaders. Two-thirds of respondents do not shift belief in political parties (65.6%) as their leader changes the party, whereas one-thirds of them (34.4%) do so.

**Table 11: Showing expression of respondent's views on government's decision making**

SN	Respondents views on government's decision making	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	46	49.5
2	No	14	15.1
3	Sometimes	33	35.5

Table 11 shows respondents views on government's decision making. Half of them express their views on governmental decisions (49.5%), one-thirds sometimes express their views (35.5%) and few never

express their views on governmental decisions (15.1%).

**Table 12: Showing Media of respondent's expression on government's decision making**

SN	Media of respondent's expression	Frequency	Percentage
1	Social media	13	14.0
2	Debates	7	7.5
3	Family & Friends	58	62.4
4	Social media & debates	1	1.1
5	Social media & FF	3	3.2
6	Debates & FF	6	6.5
7	SM Debates FF	5	5.4

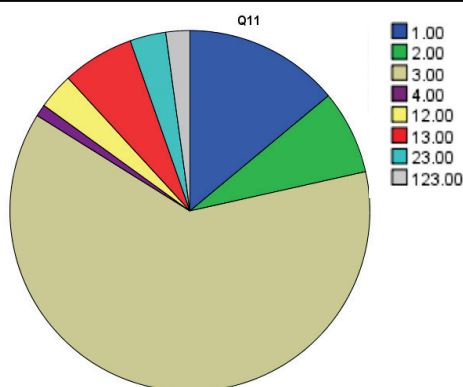


Table 12 shows the media through which respondents' express their views on government's decision making. Most of them (62.4%) discuss it among family and friends, some take the help of social media (14%), few go for debates (7.5%) and others use a combination of media.

**Table 13: Showing respondent's awareness of basic social needs and problems**

SN	Respondent's Problem Awareness	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	88	94.6
2	No	5	5.4

Table 13 shows respondents' awareness of basic social needs and problems. Most of them are aware (94.6%), and hardly a few (5.4%) were unaware of basic social needs and problems.

**Table 14: Showing respondent's Platform to raise problems of social needs and problems**

SN	Respondent's Platform to raise problems	Frequency	Percentage
1	Family head	35	37.6
2	Gram Panchayat	20	21.5
3	MLA	5	5.4
4	Letter to Media/Political Party	13	14
5	FH, GP	8	8.6
6	FH, Letter	2	2.2
7	GP, MLA	2	2.2
8	FH, GP, MLA	5	5.4
9	FH, MLA, Letter	2	2.2
10	FH, GP, MLA, Letter	1	1.1

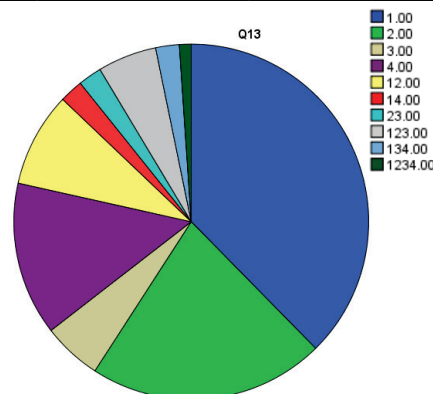


Table 14 is an important one, which depicts respondent's Platform to raise problems of social needs and problems. Analysis reflects that, family head caters it the most (37.6%), followed by gram panchayats (21.5%), followed by letters written to media and political parties (14%). The other platforms are negligibly and jointly used by the respondents respectively.

**Table 15: Showing respondent's visit to political rallies/meetings**

SN	Visit of respondent's to Political rally/meeting	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	28	30.1
2	No	44	47.3
3	Sometimes	18	19.4
4	Can't remember	3	3.2

Table 15 shows analysis of respondent's Visit to Political rally/meeting. Maximum of them do not participate in such political activities

(47.3%), one-thirds (30.1%) participate in such political activities and one-fifths (19.4%) of them sometimes visit to political rallies/meetings.

**Table 16: Showing effect on respondent's political perspective after visit to political rallies/meetings**

SN	Effect on respondents on visit to political rallies/meetings	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	39	41.9
2	No	35	37.6
3	Sometimes	19	20.4

Table 16 summarizes the effect on respondent's political perspective after visit to political rallies/meetings. Most of them are effected (41.9%), one-fifths sometimes effected (20.4%), and one-thirds (37.6%) are not affected at all.

**Table 17: Showing respondent's influence on voting behaviour of others**

SN	Respondent's influence on Voting behaviour of others	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	27	29.0
2	No	54	58.1
3	Sometimes	12	12.9

Table 17 shows how the participants of the study influence voting behaviour of others. Majority respondents (58.1%) do not influence voting behaviour of others, approximately, one-thirds (29%) of them do influence voting behaviour of others and rarely (12.9%) they influence others' voting behaviour, sometimes.

**Table 18: Showing views of respondents on Election Method of Government formation**

SN	Respondents views on Election Method	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	81	87.1
2	No	8	8.6
3	Sometimes	4	4.3

Table 18 shows views of respondents on election method and government formation. Most of them like election method and government formation (87.1%) and very less respondents sometimes (4.3%) or do not (8.6%) like election method and government formation.

**Table 19: Showing views of respondents on smooth Functioning of political system**

SN	Respondents views on smooth Functioning of political system	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	41	44.1
2	No	29	31.2
3	Sometimes	23	24.7

Table 19 summarizes the views of respondents on smooth functioning of political system. Most of the respondents find the functioning of the political system smooth (44.1%), one-fourths find it smooth sometimes (24.7%) and almost one-thirds (31.2%) do not view the functioning of the political system smooth.

### Results and Findings

1. Most of the respondents are interested in political communication.
2. Electronic media (radio and television) is the most preferred media for political communication.
3. Majority of the respondents support the political parties and their ideologies due to parental pressure.
4. Almost two-thirds of the participants vote according to their conscience.
5. Respondent citizens voting attitude is primarily based on qualities of candidates.
6. Majority of respondents do not shift belief in political parties according to their leader's party change/shift.
7. The media through which respondents' express their views on government's decision is, by discussing it among family and friends.
8. Most of the respondents' are aware of basic social needs and problems prevailing in the country.
9. Platform to raise social needs problems is through the family head.
10. Maximum respondents do not participate directly in political activities (political rallies/meetings).
11. Political perspective of most of the respondents is affected after participating political activities (political rallies/meetings).
12. Majority participants of the study do



- not influence voting behaviour of others.
13. Most of the participants of the study like present election method and government formation.
  14. Most of the respondents find the functioning of the political system smooth in the country.

### **Interpretation Discussion and Conclusion**

The important demographic effects, that needs to be highlighted regarding the results, is that, age played significant role in determining the political communication among citizen respondents, since maximum respondents were young (26-40 years). However, qualification did not play a role, as three categories of the education had almost similar number of respondents. Occupation did have a significant effect, as the maximum number of respondents was students. Interpreting this, it may be concluded that youngsters and students primarily opined in our study, which constitute our major population. As platforms multiply, the media environment becomes more complicated, and classic understandings of media ecology give way to a growing recognition of the hybrid media system. In studying political communication across platforms, we may try to understand better, what types of experiences and effects are uniform, and which are specific to a particular platform. In present study, electronic media (radio and television) have been the most preferred media for political communication. This is in accordance with the media interventions. In India, the reach of radio (reaching 110 million) and TV (reaching 475 million), is maximum, that is, 50% of the population. It is far ahead of print media (reaching 282 million). Television still has the deepest penetration throughout India (Dasgupta, 2016).

Confident individuals typically take control over their own learning experiences, are more likely to participate

in class, and preferred hands-on learning experiences (Wilma, 1998). But, the present study defies the same. Having majority of youngsters and students in the study, who are considered as power houses of energy and efficacy (?) our results are inclined towards Partisan Reinforcement Theory. Majority of the respondents support the political parties and their ideologies due to parental pressure. Conversely, they vote according to their conscience (?). It may be interpreted that, they extend support extrinsically, and vote according to internalised conscience, which is best suited for social and moral communication. Indeed, it is in accordance with partisan reinforcement phenomena of political communication (Norris 2017).

Civic engagement is enabling masses to keep up with what is happening in the world and mobilizing them to vote (Norris et al., 1999). It influences reasoned voting choices. Similarly the participants of the study do not shift belief in political parties according to their leader's party change/shift, express their views on government's decision is, by discussing it among family and friends, and discuss social needs problems through the family head. The chief effect of political communication is reinforcement, not change, as partisans are strengthened in their voting choices (Lazarusfeld, Berelson and Gaudet, Erie Country Studies, 1940-44). Same is reflected in results of present study as, political perspective of most of the respondents is affected after participating political activities (political rallies/meetings), and they do not influence voting behaviour of others. The masses who do most of reading and listening, go for their own partisan propaganda and resistant to conversion due to strong pre-dispositions (Lazarus et al, 1948, pp 95-100).

In conclusion, it may be said that, motivated and stress free political-culture must be encouraged in order to make

mature and realistic political communication enthusiastic, responsible and innovative to groom future independent citizens for all round politico-national development.

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