

# The Impact of Socioeconomic Factors on Muslim Voting Behavior: A Case Study of Bihar

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**Abstract:** The study examines the intricate relationships that exist between socioeconomic factors and the voting behaviors of Muslim voters in Bihar. This research aims to offer a thorough knowledge of the intricate dynamics determining Muslim political behavior. The study employs a quantitative approach, including regression analysis and ANOVA to separate occupations, income levels, and educational backgrounds into discrete groups to find trends in voting behavior. To gather information on voting patterns and socioeconomic characteristics (such as education, employment, income, and service accessibility) from 243 Bihar respondents who are at least eighteen years old, a mix of closed-ended and Likert-scale questions utilized. Data analysis has been done using SPSS and Excel. It was shown that there was a positive and statistically significant Pearson connection between political participation and access to basic services ( $r = .136, p < .05$ ). The findings validate previous research and shed insight on the unique dynamics within this specific community, hence emphasizing the intricate process of political decision-making. These findings have implications for political parties and policymakers, as well as highlighting the importance of targeted measures to address the diverse socioeconomic backgrounds of Muslim voters in Bihar. Politicians and policymakers may utilize these results to tailor their approaches and advance inclusive and responsive political systems.

**Index Terms:** - Socioeconomic Factors; Employment; Voting Behavior; Income; Education; Muslims

## I. INTRODUCTION

In today's democratic politics, one of the expressions most commonly used is "voting." This phrase has even gained widespread recognition due to the democratic movement's rising appeal in both theory and practice. In a democracy with a sizable and growing populace, every adult citizen engages in the routine of "voting" to express approval or disapproval of "political candidates" running to represent the interests of the people and the choices, policies, and initiatives of the government (Alam, 2009; Pande, 2003). In the restricted sense, voting refers to the process of choosing representatives using ballots during elections.

"Political analysts" have long been interested in the voting habits of Muslim voters. Muslims vote in substantial numbers, according to a widely held and understandable assumption, and political parties have been using Muslims as "a vote bank" (Imran, Ali., & Yoginder Sikand 2006). Without a doubt, Indian Muslims were inclined to back the Congress party in the early election history since it could take care of the community's urgent requirements despite India's division and the accompanying disturbances (Wright, 1977). Over time, Muslim voters began to buck this tendency; the first indications of this were shown in the 1967 general elections when the Congress party lost throughout the Hindi belt (Amoretti, 1997). The Muslim community remained in cooperation with the Congress party, having quickly realized that the unstable coalition state administrations were unable to control the communal forces. As a result, the first modification was promptly reversed.

Because of the killings that occurred under the emergency led by Sanjay Gandhi, Muslim voters once again abandoned "the Congress party in the 1977 national elections. Muslims in India still recall how Turkman Gate" was kept clean and aesthetically pleasing, forcing them to relocate to other parts of "Delhi" (Saberwal, 2006). Because of this, "the Muslim community saw it as an atrocity" intended to manipulate the populace. In Delhi, there are still Muslim enclaves that anybody may locate. The government has given the Muslims land to live on rather than sterilize them. The region has been referred to as "Nasbandi Colony". The Muslim community began seeking new allies, changing the dynamics of the so-called Muslim vote bank politics (Krishna, 1967).

Following the demolition of the Babri Mosque, "the Congress party" was purportedly an attempt to curb the increasing influence of "the Hindutva movements" by playing the Hindu card. The biggest change in Muslim voters' preferences resulted from this. The destruction of "the Babri Masjid" and the ensuing acts of communal violence completely shocked "Muslim" thought (Mhaskar 2013). The ensuing assembly elections exposed Muslims' discontentment "with the Congress party. The Muslim community turned toward the forces of social justice led by Mayavati, Laloo Yadav, Nitish Kumar, and Mulayam Singh Yadav as they grew stronger." For over ten years, the OBC and Muslim mix was a magnificent one. Congress lost its unique standing at this moment. The Muslim community's activities increased significantly during this time due to the increasing involvement of regional parties.

A few key study questions are as follows: (a) What are the primary socioeconomic determinants of Muslim voting behavior in Bihar? (b) How much does the educational attainment of "Muslim voters in Bihar" impact their political inclinations and participation in the election procedure? (c) How do disparities in income affect the ways that Muslim communities in different regions of Bihar vote? (d) How do the employment and professional opportunities for Muslim voters impact their political inclinations and party memberships? (e) What impact does the provision of basic services, like "healthcare, education, and infrastructure," have on Muslims' political involvement in Bihar? will be covered by this investigation. The answers to the aforementioned questions contribute significantly to the body of knowledge and help the research achieve its goals, which include giving readers a thorough grasp of the intricate mechanisms determining Muslims' political conduct.

Additionally, pertinent material that is presently included in the body of knowledge already known about the subject will be reviewed as part of the research. The strategy will be developed in the next part. The research will then set out the objectives and hypotheses to make the analysis and assessment of the findings easier. After that, the study design that was previously described in the methodology section will be used to formulate the results. It will be made sure that the outcome and conclusion of the discussion are appropriately provided.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review part is structured into two primary segments: an examination of the socioeconomic context of Muslim voters, encompassing variables such as income, education, and employment; and an investigation into the following ramifications of socioeconomic factors on the voting patterns of Muslim individuals. This section aims to offer readers a thorough comprehension of the complex correlation between the voting inclinations of Muslim voters and the socioeconomic environment.

### 2.1 Socio-economic Status of Muslim Voters

The subject has been a matter of long discussion, the socio-political and economic status of Indian Muslims has improved with the neoliberal reforms of the 1990s and India's rapid economic growth. However, the Muslim minority now faces greater expectations. Muslims in India are among the most marginalized ethnic and religious groups of the twenty-first century, despite being the world's biggest Muslim minority and the country's third-largest total population.

Living in all 50 states as well as "the District of Columbia," they make up the biggest minority group. However, bias, societal stagnation, and educational exclusion have added to the economic disadvantage of Muslims in many parts of the nation (Ali, & Sikand, 2006). The majority of India's religious minorities have been relegated to the lowest socioeconomic strata of all, following independence. Pogroms have become more common in the community, resulting in the murder of several Muslims, the burning of their shops, the abuse and rape of their women, and the theft and destruction of their belongings.

The aforementioned are the results of the communal riot, and they are a two-way process. Furthermore, the minority population was often disadvantaged in the upheavals of the community. Majority and minority populations in India were involved in the majority of sectarian riots. Muslims had frequently faced abhorrent prejudice. According to Ahmad (2007), there is compelling evidence that minorities face marginalization in almost every country, and there is no reason to assume that "Muslims in India" are somehow immune to this tendency. Beg (1989) asserts that Muslims have relatively little influence over the process of economic progress.

There was no improvement in the socioeconomic status of Muslims before or during independence. According to W. W. Hunter, it was formerly unthinkable for a well-born Musselman to become penniless in pre-independent India; today, it is almost impossible for him to stay prosperous (Hunter, 1969). There is a popular assumption that Muslims in independent India have seen a gradual deterioration in their general economic situation and have largely remained unaffected by social and economic development (Ahmad, 1975). A wide range of policies and programs have been implemented by successive governments in India to assist "the social, educational, and economic" development of the country's minority groups. Undoubtedly, Muslims have made some significant strides, but the gap in education and income between the Community and the other SRCs is still thought to have been widening.

### 2.2 Impact of Socioeconomic Factors on Muslim Voters' Behavior

The way people vote has always piqued the curiosity of political scientists. One of the most important factors in politics, among other effects, is religion (Liddle and Mujani 2007; Kohut et al 2000; Kotler-Berkowitz 2001; Olson and Warber 2008; Botterman and Hooghe 2009; Layman 2001; Campbell, 2006). There is even more intricacy in the relationship between religion and political orientation given that political orientation can vary from conservative to liberal based on one's level of religiosity (Layman 2001).

On the other hand, class disparities could have a comparable effect on voter attitude. For instance, middle-class voters like right-wing parties to maintain the status quo, whereas working-class voters favor leftist parties (Lijphart 1979; DeCanio 2007). However, increasing anomalies in "voting behavior," where some voters reject social class assumptions, are rendering this theory obsolete (Achterberg and Houtman 2006). According to the author, this relatively recent phenomenon may be explained by cultural capital, working class, authoritarianism, and middle-class post-materialism.

Due to their poor cultural capital and precarious economic situation, people from the working class who lack it tend to follow conservative cultural norms and support more Republicans. In contrast, the middle class acts differently (Achterberg and Houtman 2006). Furthermore, voting behavior may be influenced by "the big five personality traits" of neuroticism, "extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness," and agreeableness, according to some research (Caprara and Vecchione 2013; Schoen and Schumann 2007). For instance, "openness and agreeableness" and "conscientiousness" are associated with the Left and the Right, respectively.

A Study of West Bengal's Socio-Economic Conditions and Political Representation of Indian Muslims (Mainuddin, 2011). In West Bengal and India, the vast majority of Muslims are impoverished. The socioeconomic status and political representation of Indian Muslims are far lower than that of members of other social and religious groups, such as the SC and ST. However, without political empowerment, the socioeconomic advancement of Muslims remains an idealistic objective, and vice versa. Khalidi (2006). Although there may have been a slight amelioration in the economic circumstances of many Muslims, the prevailing majority still endure abject destitution, as stated by Khalidi O. (2006).

Many Muslims have also seen a deterioration in their living situations. According to Reddy C. R. (2003), Muslims have fewer favorable circumstances compared to Hindus. He cited the 1999–2000 "National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) Report," which shows that Muslims in India, especially those living in cities, face more financial difficulty than Hindus. Hasan M. (2003) claims that Muslims' low educational attainment is due to poverty and carelessness.

Because of their socioeconomic status and perceived discrimination, few Muslims can afford or desire to pursue higher education. He emphasizes affirmative action (Laskar 2000). Child Labor in the Aligarh Lock Industry: The lock-making industry in Aligarh employs a large number of underage Muslims who are forced to work in hazardous and low-paying jobs. This negatively affects the children's chances of obtaining a good education and staying healthy. Children suffer more in risky circumstances, which invariably necessitates strong, drastic political measures.

By looking at how socioeconomic factors impact "Muslim voting behavior in Bihar," the proposed study closes a large research gap in the body of knowledge. Numerous studies have been conducted on Indian voting patterns, but few of them have looked at the intricate dynamics that occur among the Muslim minority in Bihar. To create programs and policies that are specifically designed to fulfill the needs and preferences of this particular set of individuals, it is imperative to understand how "socioeconomic factors," such as employment, education, and income, impact "voting behavior."

Furthermore, examining how the availability of jobs and basic amenities impacts the "political choices made by Muslims in Bihar" may contribute significantly to the broader discourse on comprehensive and representative democracy. This study is significant because it may inform political analysts, decision-makers, and community leaders about the many aspects that affect Muslim political engagement in Bihar. In the end, this will result in a more complex comprehension of the electoral environment and the advancement of inclusive, efficient administration. The following goals and hypotheses are further attempted to be fulfilled by the study.

### III. OBJECTIVES

- i To identify and analyze the key socioeconomic indicators that influence the voting behavior of Muslims in Bihar.
- ii To investigate how the employment opportunities and occupational choices of Muslim voters impact their political choices and party affiliations.
- iii To evaluate the influence of access to basic services such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure on the political participation of Muslims in Bihar.

### IV. HYPOTHESIS

**H1:** Socioeconomic indicators such as income level, education level, and occupation significantly influence the voting behavior of Muslims in Bihar.

**H2:** Employment opportunities significantly influence the political choices and party affiliations of Muslim voters in Bihar.

**H3:** Access to basic services like healthcare, education, and infrastructure positively correlates with higher political participation among Muslims in Bihar.

### V. METHODOLOGY

The study employed a stratified random sampling method to choose a representative sample of 243 Bihar residents, all of whom are at least eighteen years old. A structured questionnaire has been used as the major method of data collection to gather information on the socioeconomic characteristics and voting patterns of the target group. The study gathers demographic and socioeconomic data (gender, age, income, education, employment, access to services), as well as voting habits and behavior information from Bihar citizens aged 18 and over through a variety of statements. A score of 1 indicates a significant disagreement, whilst a score of 5 indicates a strong agreement.

The Likert scale is closed-ended. Three hundred Muslim voters (age eighteen and older) have received the statement-form questionnaire designed to collect responses for the study. However, only 264 survey questionnaires were returned. 21 of the 264 forms were incomplete or did not provide enough information. Just 243 forms have enough data about them. As a result, the study's sample size is 243 respondents. "Excel and SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences)" has been utilized for data analysis. The study used regression analysis methods to investigate the correlations between various socioeconomic variables and voting behavior, to accurately assess the influence of these elements on "Muslim voting behavior in Bihar."

### VI. RESULT

#### 6.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Table 1: Demographics

S No.	Demographic Characteristics	Category	N	%
1	"Gender"	Female	80	32.9
		Male	163	67.1
2	"Age group"	18-28 years	98	40.3
		29-38 years	80	32.9
		39-48 years	45	18.5
		Above 48 years	20	8.2
3	"Education"	Primary Education	36	14.8
		Secondary Education	53	21.8
		Bachelor's Degree	97	39.9
		Masters' Degree	43	17.7
		Others	14	5.8
4	"Occupation"	Student	57	23.5
		Employed (Full/Part-time)	76	31.3

		Self-Employed	74	30.5
		Retired	21	8.6
		Others	15	6.2
5	"Monthly Income"	Nil	31	12.8
		Less than 25,000	50	20.6
		25,000-44,999	66	27.2
		45,000-64,999	63	25.9
		65,000-85,000	19	7.8
6	"Do the employment opportunities provided by the political parties influence your political choices?"	No	65	26.7
		Yes	178	73.3
7	"Please rate the extent to which access to basic services like healthcare, education, and infrastructure enhancement influences your political participation."	Strongly Disagree	6	2.5
		Disagree	10	4.1
		Neutral	34	14.0
		Agree	40	16.5
		Strongly Agree	153	63.0

The respondents' gender, age group, education, occupation, monthly income, and many other demographic details are displayed in Table 1. Bihar accounts for 67.1% of the 243 respondents, or males, and 32.9% of the females (Table 1). The age group of 18–28 years old accounts for 40.3% of the total number of respondents (98). 39.9% of the total responders, or 97 people, hold a bachelor's degree. The following table indicates that the largest number of respondents—76—are either full- or part-time employees, i.e., 31.3% of the sample. When asked if political parties' job opportunities influenced their political choices, 73.3% of respondents said "yes," and 63.0% said "strongly agree" when asked how much their access to necessities "like healthcare, education, and improved infrastructure affected their political participation."

## VII. HYPOTHESIS TESTING

"H1: Socioeconomic indicators such as income level, education level, and occupation significantly influence the voting behavior of Muslims in Bihar."

### a) Income level

Table 2: ANOVA

Hypothesis	Variables	Factor			Anova		Hypotheses Supported
		Income Level	Mean	SD	F	Sig value	
H1	Voting Behavior	Nil	19.1935	2.84511	2.545	.029	Supported
		Less than 25,000	19.3000	3.83459			
		25,000-44,999	17.3939	4.03019			
		45,000-64,999	17.6825	3.06818			
		65,000-85,000	17.7895	2.99219			
		More than 85,000	18.4286	3.00549			

According to varying income levels, Table 2 Anova examines the hypothesis about Muslim voters' behavior. The distribution of people's income level was done into six groups: Group 1 was Nil; Group 2 was Less than 25,000; Group 3 was 25,000-44,999; Group 4 was 45,000-64,999; Group 5 was 65,000-85,000; and Group 6 was More than 85,000. Muslims' voting behaviors appear to differ considerably depending on their economic level, according to the findings of the ANOVA ( $F = 2.545, p < .05$ ).

## b) Education Level

Table 3: ANOVA

Hypothesis	Variables	Factor			Anova		Hypotheses Supported
		Education level	Mean	SD	F	Sig value	
<b>H1</b>	Voting Behavior	Primary Education	17.8889	4.32123	2.760	.028	<b>Supported</b>
		Secondary Education	19.1132	3.07384			
		Bachelor's Degree	18.3814	3.71776			
		Masters' Degree	17.5116	2.83995			
		Others	16.0714	2.64471			

The hypothesis about Muslims' voting behavior based on varying degrees of education is tested using Table 3 Anova. The participants were divided into five groups based on their educational background: "Group 1 was Primary Education; Group 2 was Secondary Education; Group 3 was bachelor's degree; Group 4 was Masters' Degree; and Group 5 was Others." According to the ANOVA results, there is a significant difference in Muslims' voting behavior based on their educational attainment ( $F = 2.760, p < .05$ ).

## c) Occupation

Table 4: ANOVA

Hypothesis	Variables	Factor			Anova		Hypotheses Supported
		Occupation	Mean	SD	F	Sig value	
<b>H1</b>	Voting Behavior	Student	18.7018	3.50492	2.631	.035	<b>Supported</b>
		Employed (Full/Part-time)	17.2368	3.41709			
		Self-Employed	18.9189	3.74808			
		Retired	17.9524	3.08992			
		Others	17.6667	3.01583			

The hypothesis on Muslim voting behavior based on various occupations is tested using Table 4 Anova. Group 1 consisted of students; Group 2 included full- and part-time employees; Group 3 included self-employment; Group 4 consisted of retirees; and Group 5 consisted of others. Based on their occupation, Muslims' voting behavior appears to differ considerably, according to the ANOVA results ( $F = 2.631, p < .05$ ).

"H2: Employment opportunities significantly influence the political choices and party affiliations of Muslim voters in Bihar."

Table 5: Regression

Hypothesis	Regression Weights	Beta Coefficient	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	t-value	p-value	Hypotheses Supported
<b>H2</b>	Employment Opportunities -> Political Choices and Party Affiliations	.150	.150	.022	5.538	26.993	0.019	<b>Supported</b>

Table 5 presents the results of the regression analysis. The hypothesis looks at whether political party employment possibilities affect people's political decisions and party affiliations. Regressing the dependent variables of Political decisions and Party affiliations on the predictive variable Employment opportunities was done to test hypothesis H2.  $F = 5.538, p < 0.05$  shows that employment prospects are important in improving Muslims' political preferences and party affiliations in Bihar ( $b = .150, p < .05$ ). Additionally, the  $R^2 = .022$  shows that 3.2% of the variation in political decisions and party affiliations is explained by the model.

"H3: Access to basic services like healthcare, education, and infrastructure positively correlates with higher political participation among Muslims in Bihar."

Table 6: Correlation

Hypothesis	Factor	Correlation		Hypotheses Supported
		Pearson Correlation (r)	Sig value	
<b>H3</b>	Access to basic services	4.3333	1.02449	<b>Supported</b>
	Political Participation	15.1358	3.14952	

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6 presents the results of the correlation study. It was shown that there was a positive and statistically significant Pearson connection between political participation and access to basic services ( $r = .136, p < .05$ ). Thus, H3 was endorsed. This suggests that greater access to essential services will lead to increased Muslim political involvement in Bihar.

## VIII. DISCUSSION

The study's result reported earlier provides a valuable understanding of the complex correlation between socioeconomic characteristics and the voting preferences of Muslim voters in Bihar. When examining political preferences within the Muslim community, it is crucial to take into account the notable disparities in voting behavior based on wealth, education, and employment. Consistent with the body of research on the impact of socioeconomic status on political choices, Muslims with varying vocations, educational backgrounds, and income levels demonstrate unique voting behaviors (Kinder & Sears, 1985; Nie, et al. 1974).

According to Bowler and Donovan (2002), there is more evidence to support the growing recognition of the impact of economic factors on voter behavior, such as the influence of employment opportunities on political preferences and party membership. An excellent correlation has been seen between employment opportunities and political engagement. According to Griffin and Newman (2005), this suggests that the methods used by political parties to offer job opportunities may have a significant influence on "the political choices made by Muslim voters in Bihar."

Additionally, "the positive correlation between political involvement and access to essential services" is supported by additional research (Campbell et al., 1954; Verba et al., 1995) emphasizing the role of infrastructure and services in fostering political engagement. Better access to basic services and more political participation are positively correlated, which is consistent with the idea that increasing social welfare might result in more active civic engagement.

In addition to highlighting the variety within the Muslim community, the complex relationship between socioeconomic conditions and Muslim voting behavior in Bihar has important ramifications for political strategy and policies. To properly engage this population, political parties must acknowledge the multifaceted nature of these impacts. Policymakers must implement focused strategies that tackle the diverse requirements stemming from discrete socioeconomic origins. These demands encompass everything from job and education prospects to healthcare and infrastructure. Furthermore, promoting inclusive political discourse that speaks to the diverse issues that Muslim voters face can help make the democratic process more responsive and representative. In maneuvering through this maze of complexities, political players need to be aware of the diversity within the Muslim voter base and utilize sophisticated policies that close socioeconomic divides and promote fair growth for all.

## IX. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has investigated the intricate relationships between socioeconomic factors and their noteworthy influence on Muslim voting behavior in Bihar. The wide ranges of occupations, earnings, and educational attainment highlight this population's nuanced political preferences. The findings provide specific insights into the unique elements that motivate the voting behavior of Muslims in Bihar. Additionally, they validate the existing body of research on the impact of socioeconomic status on political choices.

The discovered influence of job opportunities on party memberships and political choices demonstrates the importance of economic considerations in influencing political decisions. This aligns with larger-scale research that acknowledges the intricate relationship between economic conditions and voting patterns. Moreover, the strong correlation between political participation and the availability of essential services underscores the significance of social services and infrastructure in fostering civic engagement. These findings have implications for political parties and policymakers, as well as highlighting the importance of targeted measures to address the diverse socioeconomic backgrounds of "Muslim voters in Bihar."

This study offers valuable and novel perspectives on the political conduct of Muslims in Bihar. Furthermore, it establishes a framework for future study that can assist in comprehending the numerous processes at play, while also directing electoral and policy actions to better align with the diverse interests and preferences of this substantial population. With India's political and social landscape changing constantly, a deep understanding of the factors influencing voting behavior would be necessary to build a robust and inclusive democracy. The findings validate previous research and shed insight into the unique dynamics within this specific community, hence emphasizing the intricate process of political decision-making. Politicians and policymakers may utilize these results to tailor their approaches and advance inclusive and responsive political systems.

However, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this study. Given the wide range of cultural, social, and economic facets of the country, the regional focus on Bihar may restrict the conclusions' application to the greater Indian context. The cross-sectional structure of the data makes it more challenging to identify the causal relationships between socioeconomic traits and voting behavior. Future studies should employ longitudinal methods and a larger geographic focus to increase the external validity of the findings.

## X. Implications of the Study

This study holds significant importance and provides valuable information for political strategists, politicians, and community leaders. Understanding the intricate impact of socioeconomic factors on Muslim voting behavior in Bihar is essential for devising political strategies and policy suggestions that may effectively engage diverse target demographics. These findings might assist policymakers in developing inclusive programs that address the specific needs of different socioeconomic and educational groups and encourage a more equitable distribution of resources. Political parties may modify their policies to better accommodate Muslim voters' aspirations for work, and community leaders could use the results to increase civic engagement through improved access to basic services. Overall, the study's implications expand beyond Bihar and provide a framework for fostering inclusive government and political participation in diverse populations.

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