

ACADEMIC PROFILE OF POLITICAL ELITE: A STUDY OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

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Abstract

Representative political institutions almost everywhere owe their success and salience largely to those who compose them and who participate in political decision-making process. Education plays a significant role in shaping the socio-economic and political profiles of political elites. The present study is an empirical study carried out in the state of Himachal Pradesh. In this paper, an attempt has been made to analyze the socio-economic and political profile of the political elites in terms of their educational background. The unit of investigation in the present study is the M.L.As, M.Ps and office bearers of different national political parties in the State. The study has been carried out with the help of an exploratory-cum-descriptive research design because the main focus of the study is to explore the emerging pattern of the political elites in Himachal Pradesh in terms of their educational background. This will help us to understand the educational background and emerging pattern of political elite in India in general and in the state of Himachal Pradesh in particular.

Keywords: Himachal, Political, Elites, Educational, Background.

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the most important indicators to examine the quality of leaders any nation have. Education is significant in shaping the opinions, attitudes and behavior patterns of the individuals. It plays a vital role in country's progress. It is widely held that a shared social and educational background substantially promotes the cohesiveness of any elite group.¹ Highly educated political elites are more likely to understand the complex national and international issues and can play an important role in decision making process. According to Leighley, "education is the critical determinant of conceptualization as it increases the extent to which an individual seeks political information as well as the amount of information retained."² Thus, when exposed to some amount of information, the more educated individual can manipulate it more successfully than a less educated individual. An illiterate leader cannot be expected to successfully grasp all the rules and regulations of political institutions. Although, there is no educational criteria to contest election in India but the role education plays in making good leaders cannot be denied.

The present study is conducted on political elites of Himachal Pradesh. The political elites are a group of political leaders, who hold political power; are decision-makers or influence the decision-making process significantly; and are considerably more active in politics and public affairs. In the present study, researcher has tried to cover the political elites of all the twelve districts of Himachal Pradesh since its attaining statehood in the year 1971. For investigation, members of parliament (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha) from all the four parliamentary constituencies of the state (former and present), members of all the 68 State Legislative Assembly constituencies (former and present), and office bearers of different national political parties especially at the state and district level have been included. We have included both the former and present political leaders because they either have held or are holding political power in the state or have affected/affecting the political decision making process significantly. They have remained or are at the helm of political affairs in the state. Further, by including both former and present political leaders in our study, we have been able to ascertain the emerging pattern of the political elites in Himachal Pradesh. Thus, all the M.Ps and M.L.As of Himachal Pradesh (former and present), office bearers of different national political parties (former and present) constitute the universe of our study. However, owing to the practical problems and limitations imposed by time, resources,

rugged topography and moreover availability of the political elites, it was not possible for the researcher to contact all the elites holding/held power in the power-structure of Himachal Pradesh. Hence, we resorted to sampling technique in order to select the sample for the present study. A purposive sampling method was followed based upon quota system. We have selected a sample of 250 respondents of the total universe, of which 50% (125) are ML.As & M.Ps, out of which 107 are M.L.As, 6 are M.Ps and 12 are both M.L.As and M.Ps and rest 50% (125) are office bearers of different national political parties in the State.

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Table 1: Educational Status of the Respondents

S N	Educational Status	No. of Respondents		
		M.Ps/M.L.As	Office Bearers of Political Parties	Total
1.	Illiterate	-	-	-
2.	Primary	-	-	-
3.	Middle	02 (01.6)	02 (01.6)	04 (01.6)
4.	Matric	06 (04.8)	09 (07.2)	15 (06.0)
5.	Hr. Secondary	12 (09.6)	13 (10.4)	25 (10.0)
7.	Graduates	36 (28.8)	34 (27.2)	70 (28.0)
8.	Post Graduates	26 (20.8)	21 (16.8)	47 (18.8)
9.	M. Phil /PhD	10 (08.0)	04 (03.2)	14 (05.6)
10.	*Technical/Professional	33 (26.4)	42 (33.6)	75 (30.0)
	Total	125 (100.0)	125 (100.0)	250(100.0)

Note: Figures within parentheses indicate percentages.

* Technical and Professional Degrees include law, engineering, M.B.A, B.A.M.S, MBBS, B.Ed, B.Tech, ITI etc

It is evident from the table 1 that none of the respondent in the whole sample is illiterate and majority of them (30 percent) are technical and professional degree holders followed by graduates (28 percent) and post graduates (18.8 percent), higher secondary (10.0 percent), matriculate (6.0percent) and M.hil / PhD degree holders (5.6 percent). There are only 1.6 percent respondents who are under matriculates. Thus, the majority of the respondents in the sample (76.8) are professional and technical degree holders, graduates and post graduates. On the whole, the educational level of the respondents in the sample is quite high which indicates that politics of the state is run by educated elite and while selecting candidates for election and forming their organizations, political parties give due consideration to the educational qualifications of the candidates.

TYPE AND PLACE OF SCHOOLING

Type and Place of schooling is also an important factor among others in elite formation. It is generally believed that those who get education in urban areas especially in convent, public and private schools have more exposure as compared to those who get education in the schools of remote areas. Those who get education in developed areas of the State or outside the State are more likely to achieve elite status. A privileged minority gets education from elite schools and can easily make their place in politics. Table 1.2 shows the place of schooling/ education of the respondents.

Table 2: Type of Schooling of the Respondents

Sr. No.	Type of School	Number of the Respondents		
		M.Ps./M.L.As,	Office Bearers of Political Parties	Total
1.	Govt. School	90 (72.0)	103 (82.4)	193 (77.2)
2.	Convent	32 (25.6)	15 (12.0)	47 (18.8)
3.	Public	03 (02.4)	06 (04.8)	09 (03.6)
4.	Any other	—	01 (0.8)	01 (0.4)
	Total	125 (100.00)	125 (100.00)	250(100.00)

Note: Figures within parentheses indicate percentages.

Table 2 shows that majority of the respondents in the whole sample (77.2 percent) have taken their education from Government Schools. There are only 18.8 percent respondents who are educated from convent schools and 3.6 percent are educated from public schools. It is also found that majority of the M.Ps and M.L.As (72.0 percent) as well as office bearers of political parties (82.4percent) have also taken their education from government schools. However, a good number of M.Ps and M.L.As (25.6 percent) as compared to office bearers of political parties (12.0 percent) are convent educated.

Regarding the place of higher education of the elite, it is also found that majority of the respondents (58.8 percent) have taken their higher education within the State and 28.8 percent from outside the State. Similarly, the percentage of the M.Ps and M.L.As who have studied outside state is 39.2 whereas the percentage of the office bearers who have studied outside the State is only 18.4percent. The analysis, thus reveals that majority of the political elites are educated from government schools and have taken their higher education within the State. However, a sizeable number of M.Ps and M.L.As as compared to office bearers of political parties are also educated from convent schools and have got their higher education from outside the State.

FATHER'S EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION

Educational qualification of the parents and other family members also plays a significant role in shaping one's personality. Elites belonging to a well educated family background are generally found to be more updated about the political phenomenon and developments as compared to elites belonging to uneducated family background. Family is a first institution which helps to determine the orientations, attitudes and behaviour of a person. Father's educational level is a very important dimension in this regard. If the father of a leader is well qualified and had a sound knowledge, the level of the general awareness of the children would also be high.³Table 3 shows the educational qualifications of the fathers of the respondents.

Table 3: Educational Qualification of the Fathers of the Respondents

Sr. No.	Educational Qualification	Number of the Respondents		
		M.Ps/ M.L.As	Office Bearers of Political Parties	Total
1.	Illiterate	32 (25.6)	30 (24.0)	62 (24.8)
2.	Primary	12 (09.6)	09 (07.2)	21 (08.4)
3.	Middle	07 (05.6)	09 (07.2)	16 (06.4)
4.	Matric	35 (28.0)	32 (25.6)	67 (26.8)
5.	Plus Two	07 (05.6)	11 (08.8)	18 (07.2)
6.	Graduate	21 (16.8)	22 (17.2)	43 (17.2)
7.	Post Graduate	01 (0.8)	05 (04.0)	06 (02.4)
8.	M.Phil /P.hD	01 (0.8)	-	01 (0.4)
9.	Professional	09 (07.2)	07 (05.6)	16 (06.4)
	Total	125 (100.0)	125(100.0)	250(100.0)

Note: Figures within parentheses indicate percentages.

Table 3 reveals that fathers of majority of the respondents (75.2 percent) are educated upto different levels. There are 24.8 respondents whose fathers are illiterate. Father's of 26.8 percent respondents are matriculate followed by the father's of 19.6 percent respondents who are graduates and post graduates. Father's of 6.4 percent respondents are professional degree holders. Our findings thus reveal that majority of the political elites in the state politics are from educated family background though the number of elites belonging to highly educated families is small.

MOTHER'S EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION

Educated mothers play an important role in molding the character of their children and deciding their future. Educated mothers help in making their Children complete citizens with full of awareness and knowledge. They have a more direct role to play in their children's education than fathers. But in India literacy rate of females is low as compared to male. No doubt, today Himachal Pradesh has made a remarkable progress in women's education, but three to four decades back it was quite low. Table 1.4 shows the educational qualifications of the mothers of the respondents.

Table 4: Educational Qualification of the Mothers of the Respondents

Sr. No.	Educational Qualification	Number of the Respondents		
		M.Ps/ M.L.As	Office Bearers of Political Parties	Total
1.	Illiterate	66 (52.8)	64 (51.2)	130(52.0)
2.	Primary	15 (12.0)	14 (11.2)	29 (11.6)
3.	Middle	08 (06.4)	13 (10.4)	21 (08.4)
4.	Matric	19 (15.2)	16 (12.8)	35 (14.0)
5.	Plus Two	10 (08.0)	04 (03.2)	14 (05.6)
6.	Graduate	05 (04.0)	10 (08.0)	15 (06.0)
7.	Post Graduate	01 (0.8)	02 (01.6)	03 (01.2)
8.	M.Phil /P.hD	-	-	-
9.	Professional	01(0.8)	02 (01.6)	03 (01.2)
	Total	125 (100.0)	125 (100.0)	250 (100.0)

Note: Figures within parentheses indicate percentages.

As far as educational qualification of mothers is concerned table 4 discerns that mother's of the majority of the respondents (52.0 percent) are/were illiterate whereas mothers of 14.0 percent respondents are/were matriculates, mothers of 20.0 percent respondents are under matriculates and those of 6.0 percent respondents are Graduates. Mothers of only 1.2 percent respondents each are post graduates and professional degree holders. It indicates that the educational level of the mothers of the political elites is quite low than their fathers. This may be due to low rate of female literacy in the State especially in the past decades.

VIEWS REGARDING EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION TO CONTEST ELECTION

As we know that Indian Constitution does not prescribe a minimum educational qualification to contest election, so every adult citizen whatever his educational qualification is eligible to contest election without any discrimination in India. However, we cannot deny the role of education in framing laws and regulations and running the government. An educated leader can be a best diplomat and a wise decision -maker of the country. Table 1.5 shows the views of the respondents regarding educational qualification to contest the election.

Table 5: Views Regarding Educational Qualification to Contest Election

Sr. No.	View Point of the Respondents	Number of the Respondents		
		M.Ps/ M.L.As	Office Bearers of Political Parties	Total
1.	Yes	109 (87.2)	105 (84.0)	214 (85.6)
2.	No	16 (12.8)	20 (16.0)	36 (14.4)
	Total	125 (100.0)	125 (100.0)	250 (100.0)

Note: Figures within parentheses indicate percentages.

Table 5 discerns that majority of the respondents in the whole sample (85.6 percent) as well as in M.Ps/ M.L.As (87.2 percent) and office bearers of political parties (84.0 percent) categories are of the opinion that there should be a minimum educational qualification to contest the election. Supporters of this viewpoint argue that educated leaders can bring positive changes in the society. There are only 14.4 percent respondents in the whole sample, 12.8 percent respondents in M.Ps/M.L.As and 16.0 percent in office bearers of political parties' categories who are of the opinion that there should be no criteria of educational qualification to contest the election. Respondents supporting this viewpoint say that a leader should be able to understand the problems of the people whom he is representing. He should be emotionally attached to the people of his area and should be able to voice out their views and demands in the house.

So the Study Reveals that politics of the State is run by educated elite as majority of the elite are highly educated and have taken their education from government schools. It is also found that while selecting candidates for election and forming their organizations, political parties give due consideration to the educational qualifications of the candidates.

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