

# Explaining the domino effect and bandwagon effect on the voting behavior

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## ABSTRACT

Voting behavior is a consequent of several precursors like voter characteristics, political leadership preferences, socio-economic and legal landscape of the country and the stability of political institutions. In this vein, there are different trends observable in the single-party and multiple-party systems as far as the voting behaviors are concerned. An assessment of the extant literature reveals that voting behavior theories are hinged upon the manner in which voters identify themselves with a particular political party, political leader or a salient issue. However, research veering around the impact of voting behavior at the individual and group levels have remain unexplored-the present study seeks to present the frameworks of domino effect and bandwagon effect on the voting behavior of the masses. The study is significant in terms of contributing to the research propositions on the two theoretical frameworks. The study concludes with practitioner implications and future research directions.

**Keywords:** Domino effect, Bandwagon effect, Single party system, Multi party system, Voting behavior.

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## INTRODUCTION

Voting is an important civic function of a citizen as far as the choice of government is concerned. As a code of conduct, voting is regarded as the symbol of patriotism and jingoism and the national sentiments assume magnified proportions during the times of elections (Falck, Gold & Heblich, 2014). Voting behavior varies across a number of dimensions: the nature of state and polity, the economic, social, legal, environmental landscape; the personality characteristics of the voters; the leadership qualities of the political leaders; the structure, operations and functioning of the political parties; the public policies and initiatives rolled out for the electorate; the issues raised during the elections; anti-incumbency effect, etc. Voting behavior theories hint at diverse reasons for the choices made by the voters during the elections (Amos, Smith & Claire, 2017). Inter-disciplinary research has been conducted to study voting behavior and fields of psychology, sociology, statistics, literature, etc. have been invoked from time to time. The present study seeks to invoke economics for studying the voting behavior. Hitherto, the rational choice theory has been invoked from the domain of economics wherein the rationality of voters depending on the reasoning which the voter uses for making a choice

between the contesting political leaders. Thus, there is a chance wherein the decision to opt for a political leader is based on hit-and-trial, hunch or gut feeling as well and these are irrational. Here comes the issue wherein it is argued whether the decisions made by the voters are aptly ill-conceived because there is a limit to the rationality that is used by an individual while making a decision and this has been empirically validated by Herbert Simon as well in his theory of bounded rationality. In this research paper, two theories from the field of economics have been referred, i.e. domino theory and bandwagon effect wherein the impact of both the theories are being analyzed via research propositions meant to be empirically validated in future research. Findings from the study may be used for furthering our understanding regarding the dynamics of voters in terms of their decisions regarding the choice of political leaders or political parties in the elections. In the context of single-party as well as the multi-party systems, it becomes relevant to appreciate how the two theories shall stand the test of time in developing and developed countries.

### **Background**

Elections are a commonplace phenomenon in countries across the globe-democratic or not. Furthermore, there are political parties in the countries that lead in isolation or in coalition thereby resulting in different perspectives among the electorates. Single-party systems are more prominent in communist and dictatorial countries where the notion of “might is right” is more prevalent. Only one political party is prevalent in a country and it rules the roost much to the negligence and suppression of the other parties and candidates. In multi-party system, there are many political parties and the leaders hail from diverse backgrounds. Political parties emerge and develop over time and space and the historicity of political parties varies in single-party and multi-party systems (Guardado & Wantchekon, 2018). Behind the existence of multi-party system lie the reasons such as the provision of opportunity to all the diverse sections of society to express themselves on the political for assuming power. Furthermore, with the existence of many political parties, it is possible that the voters have a broader choice as far as the selection of the preferred political party is concerned.

Besides, the functioning and operations of the political parties in the developing and developed countries also varies widely. For instance, owing to the differential economic development and socio-legal and environmental backgrounds of the developing and developed countries, the trajectories of political parties’ evolution also assume marked differences and there are several reasons for the divergence than convergence. Given the differential infrastructural growth in both the areas-developed and developing- the evolution of constitutional systems also varies and this has a marked influence on the development and growth of the kind of political fervor and patriotism among the people per se (Levy & Razin, 2015). All of this has a huge bearing on the political parties’ growth and evolution and the same gets reflected in the ideologies and belief systems of the political leaders and political parties that grow over a period of time. Such ideological views also get reflected in the manifestoes that are disseminated across the populace during the elections for showcasing the agenda and vision of the political parties in the near future as far as the country’s fate is concerned- a matter of concern for the voters that goes a long way in impacting the voting decisions.

Academic research on the voting behavior has been emphatic upon the growth and development of the electoral systems and the landscape in which the political parties are situated (Friese et al., 2016). Voting behavior has been perceived as an important component of deciding the fate of the elections.

In the elections and the aftermath of elections, the pre- and post- voting behavior is measured using different statistical tools and techniques. Voting behavior has been analyzed in terms of the reactions of the electorate during the times of their casting votes. Voting behavior has been analyzed in terms of the socio-demographic background of the electorate. For instance, variables such as age, sex, caste, economic status, literacy levels, professional background, etc. have been found to have significant impact on the voting decisions. Likewise, voting behavior has also been conceived as a factor of the political parties, political contestants' characteristics, backgrounds of the political contestants, nature and public image of the political contestants, etc. Furthermore, the issue salience, i.e. the important and significant topic that is of relevance and criticality at the point of elections also has a bearing on the voting behavior. Voting behavior is a function of the satisfaction of the electorate with the public policies and development that has been spearheaded by a political party or leader. Even the influence of family, friends, peers and colleagues also impacts the voting decisions. Finally, the nature and scope of voting behavior is a function of the extent to which the electorate wishes to get rid of the previous or the incumbent political party or leader. All of the aforesaid factors are known to have differential impact on the elections in countries where there are single or multiple political parties. Even these factors are determinants of the election outcomes in the national, regional and local elections. Last, but not the least, these factors have a significant bearing on the election outcomes in developed and developing countries.

### **Research context**

Invoking a multidisciplinary research has always been a forte of social scientists, and, this includes the research themes picked by the political scientists. Thus, the present study seeks to invoke two theories from economics: domino effect and bandwagon effect. Domino effect implies that a particular event or happening leads to ripple effect thereby causing further events in succession. This is evident in the field of economics because during the times of recession, it is seen that there is a snowballing effect in the sense that the recession in one economic sector leads to recession in other sectors. This happens because the economic sectors are interconnected and with the existence of complementary and supplementary produce, the impact of recession happens across all the economic sectors.

Likewise, as far as the voting behavior is concerned, the invocation of domino effect may be understood in terms of the fact that one individual's voting decision has a huge bearing on the voting decision of the other individual. This is because the individuals are interconnected and there are friends, family members, colleagues and peers who get influenced by a particular individual's voting decision. Being interconnected also means that the feelings of camaraderie and familial ties have a huge impact on the voting decisions and thus the dent or appreciation of votes cast and won by the political leaders or political parties is impacted to a large extent. Going further, the trickle-down effect of voting decision or the bottom-up effect of a voting decision is also witnessed as the familial ties cut across the national, regional and local levels of administration. Implicitly, the voting decisions at the three levels of administration have a huge bearing on the others and thus, the election results are influenced to a great extent. Tentative research propositions that emerge from the aforesaid are:

- 1) Voting behavior is a function of the voting decisions made at the national, regional and local levels and vice-versa.
- 2) Voting behavior is a function of the strength of familial ties with other voters.

- 3) Voting behavior is impacted by the extent to which the communities are self-governed or governed from above.

The second economic theory that is being referred to pertains to that of bandwagon effect that implies that the influence of one individual who is rich or influential enough has an impact on the choices and decisions of those who are nearby or connected with the rich person directly or indirectly. People are carried away looking at the costly cars or costly items purchased by the richer or influential people and the same behavioral characteristics are being copied by the others who are influenced by the influential or rich people. For instance, if somebody in the locality buys a Buick or an Audi, then the neighbors are also influenced by the rich person's purchasing decision and the former seek to buy the pricey items on credit or by selling off their assets just to be join the league or look similar to the richer person.

Likewise, in the voting behavior, it is seen that an influential or richer person's voting decision has a direct or indirect influence on the voting decision of those who come in touch with the former directly or indirectly. This is especially true in the case of social media proliferation wherein the voting decisions of the leading figures are widely campaigned and become popular and the same voting decisions are replicated by those who are following or holding a liking for the popular figures. For instance, if a particular sportsman in tennis is a favorite and she supports Democratic party, then the same decision shall be made at the polls by a person who likes and adores that tennis personality. Tentative research propositions that follow are:

- 1) Voting behavior is influenced by the extent to which an individual likes another influential person.
- 2) Voting behavior is a factor of the extent to which the influential person in the neighborhood campaigns or popularizes her voting decision.

### **Conclusion**

Voting behavior is a complex theme and much water has flown under the bridge regarding the extent to which voting behavior is determined by a host of factors-external or internal (Darr, Hitt & Dunaway, 2018). Voting behavior in developed and developing countries differs as much as that between single-party and multiple party dominated countries. Concomitantly, a lot of academic research has veered around the influence of different academic disciplines on voting behavior studies. In this vein, the present study sought to appreciate the impact of two economic theories on voting behavior and tentative research propositions were advanced. The study holds relevance for practitioners in the sense that they would be better able to appreciate the voter psyche while drafting their manifestoes or campaigning in polls. Furthermore, given the limited scope of the present study, it is proposed that future studies be conducted to ascertain the extent to which the tentative research propositions may be empirically validated across time and space.

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