

Factors influencing the voting decision of young people - evidences from Romania

CONTU Eleonora Gabriela, ZAHARIA Razvan

¹*University of Bucharest, Romania*

²*Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania*

eleonora.contu@faa.unibuc.ro, rzaharia@ase.ro

Paper Structure:

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Literature review**
- 3. Methodology**
- 4. Research Findings and Discussion**
- 5. Conclusion**

1. Introduction

-
- **The purpose of this paper is to highlight the influence of various factors on voting decision of young people.**
 - In this sense, a quantitative exploratory research has been carried out.
 - The influence factors on voting decision of young people during the political elections are:
 - the level of education and the occupation,
 - the personality traits,
 - the living conditions,
 - the recent political, economic and social events,
 - the reference groups, and
 - the affiliation groups.

2. Literature review

❖ **There are six major theories of voter choice** (Bannon [1, p.139]) :

- the party identification theory,
- the social determinism theory,
- issue voting,
- expressive theory,
- instrument theory, and
- interactionist theory.

❖ **There are six characteristics of young people's electoral behaviour** (Dermody, Hanmer-Lloyd, and Scullion [3, p.423]):

- (1) turnout at elections is lower for 18-24 years old than for older voters,
- (2) young people are less interested in national political issues,
- (3) young people perceive politicians and governments as dishonest and ineffectual,
- (4) a large proportion of young people feel alienated from the society,
- (5) globalisation is undermining the credibility and authority of national governments,
- (6) electoral civic-mindedness is less strong in young people.

-
- ❖ Blais and Achen [8] argue that an even more important motivation is civic sense:
 - ✓ over 70% of US voters, 80% of those in the UK, and even 90% of those in Canada consider that the vote is a citizen's duty to be fulfilled.
 - ❖ Nickerson [9, p. 48] finds a vicious circle: The parties are not interested in attracting young people because they think they do not vote anyway, and the youth feel marginalized and this impels them no longer to vote a candidate/party.
 - ❖ Dermody and Hanmer-Lloyd's finding [10, p.128]: “The importance of rebuilding young people’s trust in parliamentary politics is critical to the survival of democratic governance.”

3. Methodology

- ✓ A quantitative research based on a survey.
- ✓ A sample of convenience, consisting in 133 students from the two of the most important universities in Bucharest was used.
- ✓ All respondents were between 18 and 23 years old.
- ✓ The questionnaire was completed by self-administration between April and May 2018.
- ✓ Different ways of responding were also requested: multiple choice from a list, respectively a differential semantic scale.

4. Research Findings and Discussion

The main objective of the paper was to identify the factors that influence the vote of young people.

- Respondents were asked to hierarchize the main factors of influence, to say about each factor whether or not they influence it, and to explain his/her answer.

Table no 1: The importance of factors influencing the vote

1.	Recent political, economic and social events	3.29
2.	Level of education	3.36
3.	Living conditions	3.46
4.	The personality traits	3.48
5.	Occupation	3.87
6.	Reference groups	5.12
7.	Affiliation groups	5.56

-
- To test the hypothesis that young people tend to prefer political candidates with the same personality traits to them, two questions have been asked.
 - One of these was introduced at the beginning of the questionnaire and asked the respondents to tick off from a list the personality traits that they believe that characterize them.
 - The second question was placed in the final part of the questionnaire and referred to the personality traits that young people want in the case of an ideal candidate.
 - The list of features was the same as the first question, and the respondents were asked to assign a value from 1 to 10 for each feature, depending on its importance.
 - The results are shown in Tables 2 and 3.

Table no. 2: Respondents' personality traits (percent of the sample that feels it has the trait)

1.	Correctness	86.5%
2.	Seriousness	75.2%
3.	Sociability	70.7%
4.	Dignity	70.7%
5.	Perseverance	57.1%
6.	Creativity	57.1%
7.	Optimism	55.6%
8.	Modesty	45.1%
9.	Empathy	42.9%
10.	Flexibility	41.4%

Table no. 3: Political candidates' personality traits (percent of the sample that considers the trait to be very important)

1.	Correctness	52.6%
2.	Seriousness	45.1%
3.	Sociability	31.6%
4.	Dignity	30.1%
5.	Perseverance	23.3%
6.	Creativity	25.6%
7.	Optimism	24.8%
8.	Modesty	21.0%
9.	Empathy	21.0%
10.	Flexibility	11.3%

-
- What is absolutely remarkable is the full consistency between the hierarchy of personality traits assumed by respondents and the hierarchy of personality traits of the ideal political candidates.
 - In both cases, the most important features were **Correctness, Seriousness, and Sociability**, and the least appreciated were **Flexibility, Empathy, and Modesty**.
 - This empirical finding confirms the theory that the voter tends to vote for a candidate who resemble to him/her.

5. Conclusion

- The main conclusions of the study concern the importance of the factors influencing the intention to vote of young people, their motivation to vote or not to vote, and the correlation between the voter's personality traits and those of the candidate.
- In terms of motivation to vote, the desire for change and the civic duty are the most often cited reasons.
- The main reasons mentioned by respondents who do not intend to vote are the lack of confidence in the current political class and the feeling that the vote is useless.
- An interesting conclusion, consistent with previous studies, is that there is a direct link between the personality traits of the voter and those of the candidate he/she prefers.
- Because of the exploratory character of this work, the conclusions are not definitive, but must be confirmed by further research.

Thank you for your attention!

