

Youth and electoral participation in Botswana

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Abstract

This article focuses on the changing trends and patterns in the youth's participation in the electoral process. It examines trends in electoral participation in general and that of the youth in particular and attempts an explanation. It draws on the results of accumulated surveys and opinion polls that have been conducted over the years by the Democracy Research Project (DRP) of the University of Botswana. The article argues that the reasons for the lower participation rates among the youth are to be found in traditional Tswana society's political culture that does not consider public affairs a domain for women and the youth. This culture is reproduced by the major agencies of socialisation such as the family, school system, political parties and the media.

Introduction

Botswana's constitution embraces a liberal democratic system of government. This system enshrines in it among other principles participation by the general population, at least, in the electoral process. The country has experienced three decades of uninterrupted electoral democracy. It is against this background that this article assesses youth participation in the electoral process. The youth currently represent a significant part of the voting population and according to the 1991 census, they represent 36 percent of Botswana's population. What norms, values and beliefs or political culture they hold are very important, as they serve as a guide to behaviour in general and electoral behaviour in particular.

This article focuses on the changing trends and patterns in the youth's participation in the electoral process. It examines trends in electoral participation in general and that of the youth in particular. This, we admit, is a very narrow view of participation. The youth have other modes of political participation. For example, they do get involved in house to house campaigns on behalf of political parties, they do organise fund raising events for their parties, they organise rallies and their youth wings have been vocal on issues of both national and party interest. In this way they play an important role because they influence the outcomes of elections. Elections provide an important opportunity for the electorate to express their preferences on the policies and programmes of both the government of the day and those of the other contenders for political office. Youth perception about elections and the electoral system is important because it helps them to formulate views about their leaders and motivates them to go to the polls when so required.

The article draws on the results of accumulated surveys and opinion polls that have been conducted over the years by the Democracy Research Project (DRP) of the University of Botswana. The surveys were first conducted in 1974 and subsequently in 1988, 1989, 1994 and more recently in March 1999. The surveys focused on, among other things, awareness, knowledge, popular participation and issues influencing party preference.

Meaning and Significance of the Youth

Botswana is one of those countries with the fastest growing populations in the world. As population statistics from the three post-independence censuses show the de facto population in 1971 was 596 944 growing to 941 027 in 1981 and 1 326 796 in 1991. These figures imply growth rates of 4.7 percent between 1971 and 1981 and 3.5 percent between 1981 and 1991. These growth rates are still relatively high compared to the annual

averages of 2.8 percent for Africa, 2.0 percent for the Less Developed Countries (LDCs) and the world's average of 1.7 percent.

The proportion of the population aged under 15 years has consistently remained high, 44 percent in 1971, 48.8 percent in 1981 and 42 percent in 1991. The 1991 census further shows that 60 percent is aged less than 30 years of age. Botswana's population is thus a youthful one with implications for demands on education, training, health, housing and job creation. It is against these demographic characteristics that there has been renewed interest and focus on the youth.

Societies and cultures have varied in what they call youth. Age has been the most common and primary criteria for defining youth. Botswana's National Youth Policy for instance defines youth as those aged 12 to 29. The Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) defines its youth as the 16-35 year cohort while the Botswana National Front (BNF) and the Botswana Congress Party define it in terms of the 16-39 year cohort. Rogers (1985) notes other common markers of youth across cultures as a period of physical development, a socio-cultural phenomenon or an abstract concept suggesting an idea or an attitude towards life.

In Tswana traditional society, youth was marked by an elaborate series of rites known as bogwera (for men) and Bojale (for women). Schapera (1970: 105) notes that:

a man who had not passed through them was always regarded as a boy, no matter how old he might actually be; or take part in tribal discussions; he was not allowed to marry, and was regarded with contempt by the women.

Cultures have thus universally recognised a period between childhood and adulthood. It is often referred to as youth or adolescence. The word adolescence coming from the Latin verb *adolescere* meaning 'to grow into maturity'. It is a time period that has triggered contrasting images across time and cultures. As early as the 5th century BC Socrates stated:

Our youth now love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority; they show disrespect for their elders and love chatter in place of exercise. They contradict their parents, chatter before company, gobble up their food and tyrannise their teachers.' (Quoted in Osei-Hwedie et. al. 1989:88).

Other images are those of the youth as movers, adventurer, conquerors and martyrs from the 1976 Soweto uprisings, from David' sling that killed Goliath, and from Caesar to Christ.

Situation of the Youth in Botswana

As we have noted earlier, Botswana's population features and characteristics have several planning and policy implications. A young and highly dependent population has implications for the provision of social services such as education, health and employment. Botswana has done exceptionally well in the past two decades to provide services in the form of schools and health facilities. At present some 80 percent of primary school going population are at school and 90 percent of those who finish seven years of primary education are able to proceed to do junior secondary schooling. In the health sector impressive progress have been made. Some 85 percent of the population are within 15 kilometres of the nearest health facility. Life expectancy at birth has risen to 67 years, making it among the highest in the region (CSO, 1991). The Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) has declined over the years from a high of 100 per 1000 live births in 1971, to 71 per 1000 live births in 1981, to a low of 46 per 1000 live births in 1991 (CSO, 1971, 1981 and 1991).

These impressive gains in health are a result of increased national investment in better nutrition, health and income generating programmes established to counter the effects of drought in Botswana between 1982-1988 (CSO, 1989: 71). There was also wider use of

immunisation reaching 80 percent of children injected with all vaccines. There however are potential limitations to these gains. Principal among these being the impact the growing HIV infection rate on the access to care and its quality due to the growing number of patients (Stegling: 2000). For 1998 it was estimated that approximately 17 percent of the general population were infected with HIV. The age group 15-49 years is the most affected with an infection rate of 29 percent (AIDS/STD 1999).

The National Youth Policy has identified other developments that have affected the situation of the youth in the last two decades:

- **Education and training** The Policy notes a growing number of young people of all ages who are not participating in any form of education and training. The 1991 Census indicates that 17 percent of young people age 7 to 13 were not enrolled in school. They are of school going age and in the most impressionable period of their lives. They however are spending this time outside school. This has obvious implications for their chances in the job market now and in the future.
- **Teenage Pregnancy** Pregnancy rates among young women have been found to be high in Botswana and have increasingly become a limiting factor in young women's educational and career prospects.
- **Alcohol and Substance Abuse** Young people have been found to be lead alcohol and substance abusers (Molamu and Manyeneng (1988). These drinking and smoking patterns have obvious implications on the health and well being of young people.
- **Unemployment** Unemployment is identified as one of the greatest problems facing the youth. The 1991/1992 Labour Statistics show that unemployment among young people is considerably high and that young women are far more disadvantaged in this regard than are young men (CSO 1991/1992). In 1994 statistics showed that the unemployment rate among young people aged 20 to 24 years and 25 to 29 was 36 percent and 27 percent respectively. 1998 statistics showed that the situation was not improving as 35.4 percent and 38.9 percent of those aged 15 to 19 and 20 to 24 years were unemployed respectively. The high rates can lead to other problems such as poverty, poor health and involvement in criminal activities.
- **Youth and Crime** Young people also feature very prominently in crime statistics. Juvenile crimes are on the increase. They commit offences such as traffic offences, malicious injury to property, common theft, house breaking, common assault, armed robbery, rape, murder, and use and trafficking of habit forming drugs. Young men tend to feature more than young women do. They are not only the perpetrators but are also the victims of crime. All are linked to unemployment and the lack of education.
- **Youth and abuse** Young people are also victims of abuse by older members of society as they often enjoy a lower social status than their older compatriots do. They are subject to many kinds of abuse and discriminations, which include child labour, physical abuse, sexual abuse and exclusion from decision-making on issues that concern them. Age, gender and their own social skills and knowledge of the law however influence the extent of abuse and discrimination. Many of these social and economic problems have combined to affect the youth as individuals and as a group. Some of the problem behaviour is indeed more common during adolescence than in other periods of life.
- **Youth Adjustment Crisis** The last two decades have experienced phenomenal social, economic and political changes. These have combined to affect the youth in ways that are unprecedented in the country's recent past. These have affected their personal

circumstances and their social environment. They have often had to resort to negative coping strategies like suicide, alcohol and substance abuse and other social ills.

Youth and Elections in Botswana

Elections, narrowly conceived as a process of choosing between individuals to fill an office, have for a long time been a feature of many African political systems. They may have varied in form and meaning but they all tended to represent institutionalised procedures for the choosing of officeholders.

In pre-colonial Botswana, as discussed by Barei in this special issue, politics was characterised by the predominance of chieftaincy. The most significant political office was that of Chief. Chiefdoms had elaborate traditional procedures for filling up the office. This system may have not been open enough, as the final decision was often taken by a small council of elders, but did allow for a lively interest and strong opinions. Women and children or youth were marginalised as only the elders were the actors.

The advent of colonialism in Africa brought with it a new system of rule. In some parts of the continent, however, it left chiefly rule to a large extent untouched for as long as it was applied to the African population and not the Europeans. Botswana was in this category of countries. Legislatively, there was the European Advisory Council and the Native Advisory Council, both of which were advisory bodies to the Colonial Administration. The Native Advisory Council was made up of chiefs and "councillors" chosen in Kgotla. As Mgadla and Campbell (1989) note, there was in practice no effective participation as chiefs nominated these councillors without adequate popular participation at the Kgotla. The council reflected some element of continuity with the pre-colonial order in two ways. First, it brought chiefs into a new system of rule. Secondly, it continued the exclusion and political marginalisation of women and the youth.

Independence was marked by the advent of a new constitution, which has ushered in a competitive, multiparty electoral system that guarantees open, free and fair elections every five years for citizens meeting the minimum voting age. There have been such elections in 1969, 1974, 1979, 1984, 1989, 1994 and more recently 1999.

Elections as institutionalised procedures for the choosing of office holders have historically carried different meanings to both the rulers and the ruled. For rulers, elections are key instrument of legitimacy and consent. For the ruled the question of what motivates them to participate is the answer to their meaning of elections. The answer may be different from the reason why the rulers may want them to participate. Under the liberal democratic dispensation in the West, voters vote out of the need to express a preference for alternative leadership and programmes. What then is the extent of youth electoral participation and what is the meaning of this participation or the lack of it?

Electoral Participation in the Last Three Decades

Botswana has in general recorded fairly high levels of electoral participation though 1974 and 1969 recorded the lowest and second lowest voter turnouts of 31.2 percent and 54.9 percent, respectively. Turnout of the other years as Table 1 shows, has been over 65 percent. Turnout here is defined by the number of those registered to vote versus those who actually vote. However, when the number of eligible voters is used as the common denominator then the voter turnout percentage drops significantly.

Table 1: Electoral Statistics, 1965 - 1994

Year	1 Potential No. of Voters	2 No. of electorate registered	3 % of electorate registered	4 No. of electorate who voted	5 % of 4/1	6 % poll=4/2
1965	243 365	188 950	78,0	140 789	58,0	74,0
1969	267 647	156 428	58,5	92 965*	34,7	54,9
1974	309 810	236 848	76,4	95 809*	30,9	31,2
1979	362 515	343 483	67,3	147 658	40,7	60,6
1984	416 996	293 571	70,4	227 756	54,6	77,6
1989	507 569	367 069	72,3	250 487	49,4	68,2
1994	609 000	370 356	60,8	281 931	46,3	76,1
1999	800 000	460 500	57,6	336 982	42,1	77,6

*These figures include the registered voters from uncontested constituencies. We have treated the latter as if they all voted, which has inflated the poll percentage for 1969, 1974 and 1979. The actual poll percentages for these elections were 54,9; 31,2 and 58,4 respectively.

The country however does not fare very well when compared to other democracies with competitive elections. A recent survey of 177 countries across the world on electoral participation by the Institute on Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA 1998) shows an increasing trend in overall participation in competitive elections across the globe between 1945 and 1990. Compared to other African countries in the survey, which have held two or more elections between 1945 and 1997, Botswana's turnout was below fourteen of them. These countries were Mauritius' (6) elections with 82,5 percent, Namibia (2) with 80,4 percent, Comoros (2) with 75,7 percent, Cape Verde (2) with 75,6 percent, Madagascar (4) with 72,5 percent, Togo (4) with 69,3 percent, Lesotho (3) with 65,2 percent, Benin (2) with 60,1 percent, Zimbabwe (5) with 58,8 percent, Cameroon (3) 56,3 percent, Gambia (6) with 55,6 percent, Uganda (3) with 50,6 percent, Nigeria (3) with 47,6 percent and Sierra Leone (3) with 46,8 percent. Clearly Botswana might be said to suffer from more entries than all these countries. Taking the latest elections conducted after 1990, however, the 44,5 percent voter turnout still falls below that of 15 African countries.

Youth Electoral Participation

While the overall voter turnout in most of Botswana's recent elections shows participation rates upwards of 65 percent, recent Democracy Research Project surveys do show lower levels of participation among the youth (see Tables 4 and 5). This lower trend is also true among men compared to women (see Table 2). This trend is especially astonishing as the youth are relatively a better educated generation of voters and seem to prefer the current election system over chieftaincy (see Table 3).

Table 2: Age Distribution of the Sampled Population

Constituency	21 -30	31 -40	41-50	51- 60	61 -70
Nkange	52 (22.2)	64 (27.4)	51 (21.8)	28 (12.0)	19 (8.1)
North-East	38 (16.2)	58 (24.8)	70 (29.9)	29 (12.4)	20 (8.5)
Francistown	56 (26.0)	64 (29.8)	40 (18.6)	27 (12.6)	18 (8.4)
S/Phikwe	58 (29.4)	62 (31.5)	54 (27.4)	13 (6.6)	3 (1.5)
Mochudi	60 (28.0)	39 (18.2)	37 (17.3)	19 (8.9)	20 (9.3)
Lob/Barolong	68 (33.0)	59 (28.6)	43 (20.9)	21 (10.2)	7 (3.4)
Ngwaketse South	50 (21.3)	65 (27.7)	55 (23.4)	24 (10.2)	20 (8.5)
Kanye	52 (21.8)	69 (29.0)	41 (17.2)	29 (12.2)	29 (12.2)
Molepolole	55 (22.0)	80 (32.0)	55 (22.0)	31 (12.4)	15 (6.0)
Maun/Chobe	39 (30.0)	36 (27.9)	31 (24.0)	11 (8.5)	5 (3.9)
Kweneng West	51 (20.6)	71 (28.6)	61 (24.6)	20 (8.1)	16 (6.5)
Gaborone South	105 (45.9)	62 (27.1)	34 (14.8)	17 (7.4)	5 (2.2)
Gaborone North	111 946.3)	56 (23.3)	40 (16.7)	15 (6.3)	7 (2.9)
Total	797 (27.8)	785 (27.3)	612 (21.3)	284 (9.9)	184 (6.4)

Many adult voters are said to be reluctant to vote every time there is an election because in their opinion they determined who should lead them at the very first election in 1965. In their view, the tradition is that you elect or select the leader once until he/she dies. This tradition of selecting the chief is said to be an important factor limiting political participation in Botswana (BDP 1974). As Table 3 illustrates, this explanation cannot hold true for the youth as they have an overwhelming preference for the current electoral system over chieftaincy and most of them were born under the current electoral system.

Table 3: Age and Preferred Form of Government

AGE	ELECTION SYSTEM	CHIEFTAINSHIP
21-29	83,2	16,9
30-39	74	26
40-52	70,1	29
53-64	60,9	39,1
65+	46,4	53,6

During the March Opinion Poll, respondents were asked whether they had registered to vote in the October 1999 election. A significant majority (74.1 percent) of those aged 18–20 years indicated that they had not registered. Those aged between 21–30 only 46.7 percent of the sampled indicated that they have registered. From the poll results a substantial number of the youth (18–30 years) said that they have not registered compared to the elderly population which recorded 70.6 percent.

Table 4: Registered to vote in Elections by Age Groups 1999 Poll

Age	Registered to Vote		
	Yes - n (%)	No - n (%)	Total
18-20	146 (25.9)	417 (74.1)	563
21-30	685 (46.7)	783 (53.3)	1468
31-99	1614 (70.6)	671 (29.4)	2285
Total	2445 (56.6)	1871 (43.4)	4316

Respondents who participated in the March Opinion poll were further asked whether they would vote in the 1999 elections. It seems the recently enfranchised 18–20 age category is yet to take advantage of the 1998 electoral reforms. Young people aged between 18–20 years fared badly as compared to other age categories recording only 42 percent compared to 80 percent among respondents aged thirty-one years and above (see Table 5). Generally the youth were not enthusiastic about going to polls in October 1999 to cast their vote. Voter apathy among the young deserves thorough investigation. Concern about the youth's low electoral participation has for sometime been recognized as a problem area for the country's political system by among others the Independent Electoral Commission, political parties, Botswana Youth Council, newspaper editorials and political commentators. It is also not unique to Botswana. Japan, the United States of America and other mature democracies are faced with this problem. A recent survey in the United States of America called 'America Unplugged' reports that 69 percent of young Americans see government as irrelevant to their lives yet those 65 and older seem to feel otherwise. Massey (1976) also raises the same problems about Japanese youth.

Table 5: Intention to Vote by Age Groups 1989 Poll

Age	Intending to vote		
	Yes - n (%)	No - n (%)	Total
18-20	239 (42.4)	252 (44.7)	564
21-30	913 (62.1)	402 (27.3)	1470
31-99	1836 (80.4)	274 (12.0)	2284
Total	2988 (69.2)	928 (21.5)	4318

Party Support among Youth

The 1989 DRP opinion survey showed the BNF controlling some 36 percent of the people aged 21-30 years compared to the BDP's 22.9 percent. The BPP rallied behind with 19.0 percent.

Table 7 below shows party support based on the 1999 DRP opinion results. BNF popularity seems to have diminished. From the poll results, young people aged between 21-30 showed their preference to BDP than the BNF. The BDP led other parties by 40.4% support. The BNF, which fared better in the 1989 polls among the youth, came behind the BDP with 21.5 percent in the 1999 poll. Botswana Congress Party (BCP) and Botswana Peoples Party obtained 7.2 percent and 1.2 percent, respectively. A similar pattern is repeated for the 18-20 year olds. The lowering of voting age from 21 to 18 it seems would not benefit the BNF, which over the years has been attracting young people to its rallies. The BNF strongly advocated for electoral reforms, which included, among other issues, the lowering of the voting age.

Table 6: Party Support by Age 1989

Age	None - n (%)	BDP - n (%)	BNF - n (%)	BPP - n (%)
21 - 30	51 (37.2)	334 (22.9)	270 (36.8)	39 (19.0)
31 - 40	36 (26.3)	399 (27.4)	214 (29.2)	47 (22.9)
41 - 50	23 (16.8)	354 (24.3)	127 (17.3)	51 (24.9)
51 - 60	11 (8.0)	160 (11.0)	54 (7.4)	32 (15.6)
61 - 70	5 (3.6)	109 (7.5)	32 (4.4)	21 (10.2)
71+	4 (2.9)	65 (4.5)	20 (2.7)	10 (4.9)
Total	137 (100)	1457 (100)	733 (100)	205 (100)

Despite these shifts in party support among the youth most political parties have ignored the youth and youth issues in their manifestos (Raditlhokwa 1999). The BDP and the BNF for instance did mention the plight of women, children and other vulnerable groups, making no direct reference to the youth. The BNF went further and pledged to reserve 30 percent of all eligible positions for women but said nothing about the youth. In 1999 however, the BDP did attempt to appeal for the youth vote through some innovative youth targeted advertising. These were in the form big billboards featuring young people radio advertising that had the young voter in mind and political rallies conducted by its youth wing.

Table 7: Party Support by Age 1999

Age	BCP	BDP	BLP	BNF	BPP	BPU	BWF	IFP	MELS	UAP	UDF	PUSO	No Answer
18-20	43 (7.7)	252 (44.9)		98 (17.5)	14 (2.5)			4 (.7)					150 (26.7)
21-30	106 (7.2)	592 (40.4)	3 (.2)	315 (21.5)	17 (1.2)	1 (.1)	1 (.1)	6 (.4)	2 (.1)	2 (.1)	1 (.1)	1 (.1)	418 (28.5)
31-99	120 (5.3)	1152 (50.7)		451 (19.8)	51 (2.2)	5 (.2)		7 (.3)	1 (.0)			1 (.0)	486 (21.4)
Total	269 (6.3)	1996 (46.4)	3 (.1)	864 (20.1)	82 (1.9)	6 (.1)	1 (.0)	17 (.4)	3 (.1)	2 (.0)	1 (.0)	2 (.0)	1054 (24.5)

Discussion

The answer to youth voter apathy may be found in African societies' traditional political culture that does not, as Ngcongco (1989) notes, consider public affairs a domain for women and youth. Traditionally, political power is based on age and was centered on a person's social standing. Groups such as minorities, women and young people were not expected to be leaders or to contest for leadership positions. The youth as, Somolekae (1989) notes, are traditionally believed not to be mature enough and were and are still are excluded from the political process. This culture is still strong and influences who gets elected into political and civic office. This lack of a democratic ethic tends to permeate all major social institutions of society and is a survivor from pre-colonial through colonial

into post-colonial society. Youth as have been women, are considered as minors whether in the family, polity, economy, religion and education. They have historically been controlled and managed by adults.

Elderly males often made key decisions on their behalf. The pre-independence and post-independence periods of transition did not provide sufficient socialization to break this lack of a democratic ethic amongst these marginalized groups in society.

A political culture in general and a democratic culture in particular, as is true of all norms, values, beliefs and attitudes held by a society, are a product of a complex process of socialization. The human infant is born without any political skills and values and acquires the necessary political values, beliefs and attitudes through political socialization. Key in the process are social institutions such as the family, school system, media and political parties.

The family is widely regarded as the most fundamental of all the agencies of socialization and is often referred to as the “nursery of our humanness”. If we owe so much of our humanness to the family surely it must play an important role in the process of political socialization. Does it preach and practice democracy and electoral politics that might be broadly referred to as a democratic ethic? Does it provide opportunities for learning and living values and attitudes that are democratic? In traditional Tswana society, the family is not one of the most democratic institutions in society. Youth and women, as is true in other institutions in society, are regarded as not capable enough to make major decisions. They could thus never learn and live democratically nor could they develop the right sets of values and attitudes that can be referred to as a democratic ethic. The marginalisation seems to have been carried on into the new post-independence political culture. The modern Tswana family is also hampered in two other ways in breaking up with this past. First, it competes with other agencies of socialization such as the school which, as Priwitt (1971:14) notes “monopolizes the time and instruction of youth during the impressionable years of late childhood and early adolescence”. The youth tend to spend most of their early years in formal institutions such as schools and have increasingly become products of such agencies than of the family. Second, parents, as key agents of socialization in the family, are also new to the post-colonial political culture. They are therefore educated in the past and have to teach the youth in the present.

The education system is another important agency of political socialization. This is more so in contemporary modern society as it is widely accessible and where the young spend their most impressionable years. This is where the young can learn and live democratically.

In practice, however, students are commonly regarded as too young and immature and therefore incapable of exercising their discretion properly. They are supposed to learn about democratic institutions and how they work on the one hand and gain a knowledge and understanding of Setswana culture and traditions. These may contradict one another. The predominant view is one that seems to be in line with Tswana culture and tradition and summed up by Ramatsui (1989:90) when he says:

Pupils because of their relative immaturity can be given only a limited voice in any important decisions affecting the school community.

Phorano (1989), amongst others, decries the present education system in Botswana seeing it as authoritarian and lacking in the development of a democratic culture. This authoritarianism is enforced through a rigid command system that puts the headmaster and teacher at the top of the hierarchy who enforce discipline, and puts the student on the receiving end of the system. This is not only limited to school governance. The classroom culture is also one of teacher dominance and he/she is seen more as a custodian of the truth and fountain of unquestionable knowledge. Critical thinking is discouraged and seen as disrespectful. It is an attitude that pervades all levels of the educational system. It is only at the level of tertiary education that there is an element of representative governance in

student affairs though the head of the institution still reigns supreme on all matters pertaining to the school. Students in these tertiary institutions are still viewed by authorities with suspicion when they challenge decisions.

Political parties are central institutions of electoral politics and are expected to organize the voter into registered party members and encourage them to participate in political events including elections. They tend to attract very few registered members. The main strategies for attracting supporters has been through the "freedom square", study groups, leaflets and house to house campaigns. There are obvious limitations in each of the strategies. Freedom squares have proved of limited appeal to the youth. The timing and use of improper language may be the big turn off to the young voter and may appeal more to those already affiliated and not to the non-affiliated. Study groups as a mobilization strategy is of very limited appeal as it is sparingly used and is often targeted at party membership. House to house campaigns are a recent phenomenon to most parties and their use has been limited to periods immediately before the general elections. While it may be too early to judge their utility, it is evident that it is not the most appealing to the young voter as authority patterns in the home centers around mum and dad or the oldest person at home.

The media is yet another important institution in political socialization. The media is potentially very influential in spreading values and beliefs. The youth are relatively more educated than their parents' generation and better placed materially to access newspapers, radio, television and magazines. How much political content and with what audience in mind is the critical question.

Conclusion

The results of many of these institutions are a youth that though relatively better educated than the old is lacking in a democratic culture. This is a very worrisome trend especially in a society where some 60% of the population is under the age of 30 and are not only the voters or potential but also the future voter. One of the important ways of ensuring the survival of any electoral system is not only in applying the law to the letter but also in enlisting the development of a democratic culture. What the average citizen and the youth in particular think about elections and the electoral system is of importance in how citizens view their leaders and what may motivate them to go to the polls when so required. Should a significant part of the population lose confidence in the electoral system then the rulers lose their legitimacy. It is a crisis of confidence that does not come overnight. The family, school system, media and political parties do play an important part in the promotion or the lack of certain attitudes towards the system. They are important agents of political socialisation. Voter education as a long-term investment in developing a democratic culture must take these institutions into account.

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