

Making, Keeping and Breaking Campaign Promises in Election

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Abstract

Candidates make couple of promises during the election campaign. The purpose of the study is to find out the reasons for making, keeping and breaking election promises. In this study, data have been collected from primary and secondary sources and qualitative and quantitative research methods have been applied. Candidates make many lucrative promises to influence electoral behavior to gain popularity and win elections. It is examined in the study that voters are able to make their own voting decisions by evaluating the keeping and breaking of election promises. The magnitude of the promise shape's public opinion by influencing the voting beliefs of voters, which increases political participation. The objectives of the study are to review the importance of electoral promises in making the Union Parishad a democratic, participatory, and accountable institution. Conversely, this study provides non-implementation of election promises which is a common matter. Promises, however, have received new attention as a recent campaign technique. Elections are complex issues. So, timely promises are necessary to win in an election.

Key Words: Election, Electoral Promises, Election Campaign, Voting Behavior.

Introduction

Democratic government is premised on the idea that people should be able to make decisions about how they are governed for themselves (Mellon et al., 2023) Election promises are a central feature of electoral campaigns, yet we lack a detailed understanding of several of the mechanisms that are at play when promises are made, evaluated, and acted upon in a representative democracy (Boren et al. 2018). At this time, the voters are drawn attention in various ways. Candidate's thought, their words, and actions are flourished before the general people through campaign promises. Election promises are presented to the voter mainly in yard meeting, rally, advertising, theme songs and door to door campaign time. But, in local elections candidates are given more priority than parties. A festive atmosphere is created in election area during election campaign. Before the election, the candidate gives lucrative promises to attract the voters and after the election, the voters expect that the candidate will implement the promises and the constituency will be developed. Participatory elections are held when election promises are meaningful and the aspirations of the voters come true. Voters are keen to know that which party or candidate has given the promises relevant to their basic needs. To win the election in Bangladesh is highly competitive. Policy linkage is key to channeling societal demands into policy outputs. Parties fulfill this obligation through promissory representation" (Thomson et al., 2017). According to the mandate theory, political parties make specific pledges in their election platforms, and they try to fulfill as many pledges as possible once elected to power (Petry & Collette, 2009). In the promissory form of representation, politicians are expected to reflect citizens' preferences on their electoral platforms because they want to win elections (Morales, 2014). At the electoral stage, parties and voters are strategic in that they take account of the legislative implications of any electoral outcome (Austen and Banks, 1988). Before an election, candidates announce platforms

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and the winner implements a policy after the election (Asako, 2015). The fulfillment of election pledges is at the heart of democratic accountability. If parties are responsive to societal demands, there should be a substantial level of congruence between their policies in government and the promises found in their election programs (Petry & Duval, 2015). The Union Parishad is the most important at the grassroots level to achieve sustainable development goals by expanding local development activities and involving local people in development planning. By analyzing the promises given on union parishad election, people generally justify the candidate on the eve of the election. Candidates usually disclose various promises in their election manifesto to grab the mindset of the voters. The relationship between citizens and their political representatives is not distinctively divided between a forward looking and a backward-looking process of representation. Instead, the periods between elections are related to each other (Naurin, 2011). However, in most cases, the people representatives give hundreds promises just to win in election. Many of those promises remain unfulfilled.

Election and Election Campaign

Election is a formal process to select a qualified candidate for development of constituency through voting. Legitimacy of political powers come to establish political accountability through elections. In an independent and sovereign state, elections are the media of selecting a competent government. Candidates gain legitimacy, ensure accountability and promote democracy through election. In the present context, elections are not only a political mechanism to choose who will hold the office the relate to, but also who will represent the people (Medvic, 2010).

Elections involve different types of activities such as-

- i. Delegacy of political representation;
- ii. Legitimization of those in power;
- iii. Volition of the political elite;
- iv. Assurance of political accountability;
- v. Recreation of the image of public opinion (Wojtasik, 2013).

A campaign is the period right before citizens make a real political choice. This common knowledge typically heightens citizens' attention to politics in direct relation to the proximity of the event (Brady et al., 2006). Election campaign creates a direct connection between the voters and the candidates. Through this connection, the candidate can learn about the voters thinking and the voter can learn about the candidate's identity, thinking and developmental work mentality. Voters are known overall election related information like date, identity of candidates, Mandates of candidate and importance of "Election Day" by campaign.

Election Promises

Election promise is a type of commitment made before an election by party on candidate for the purpose to win in election. By making promises, candidates try to win elections by gaining the trust of voters. Election promises vary according the types of election but the essence of the campaign promise is to influence the voting behavior of voters. Politicians seeking office make promises. This is presumably done in the belief that such promises will alter voters' beliefs about the policies. The politician will implement if elected and establish the capabilities of the politician (Aragonès et al., 2007). Promises may be viewed as essential since they deal with complex

problem areas, even though they may be more challenging to fulfill (Mellon et al., 2023). Voting based on election promises and promises made in the past is referred to as prospective voting. Election promises are a central feature of electoral campaigns, yet we lack a detailed understanding of several of the mechanisms that are at play when promises are made, evaluated, and acted upon in a representative democracy (Andreas et al., 2018).

Methods

Case Selection and Data

Mirzapur Union Parishad has been selected as case study to learn about making, keeping and breaking election promises. 100 voters of the Mirzapur Union Parishad of Panchagarh district were selected as respondents in order to rationalize the research. The union parishad is located in Panchagarh sadar upazilla which is twenty km far away from Panchagarh district. The Union Parishad election 2016 has been taken as a study to evaluate electoral promises which has completed five years of tenure.

Data collection and Data Analysis

In the study, both qualitative and quantitative research method have been used. Purposive sampling method was used for this research. Information has been collected through interview method by asking direct questions. Data have been collected by structural, open- ended and close-ended questions to evaluate the election promises to promote voting participation. The primary data have been collected through interview. On the other hand, the secondary data have been gathered from books, journals, newspaper reports. To make the study effective, collected data from both primary and secondary sources were applied. Arranging the random information from the research area, the data have been analyzed through various program of computer.

Literature Review

Naurin (2011) applies representative democratic theory to describe election promises. She explores the reason why the parties and candidates cannot fulfill their election promises. Moreover, the images of the promise breaking politician are highlighted in this book. Kalogeropoulou (1989) examines how the electorate chooses candidates or political parties during campaigns in light of mandate theory. He also discussed the election manifesto proposes, various issues of social reform and strategies for their implementation. Ergün and Karsten (2019) explain that media is the primary source of information exchange between citizens and candidates by making people aware through media sources. They explained the party mandate model to fulfill promises in elections. Gamslmeier (2023) describes whether electoral promises to provide benefits have an impact on each voter's decision at the polls. Individuals with less social and economic stability are more affected by campaign promises on social welfare expansions, and the alignment gain vanishes quickly after change is implemented. E. Anagones (2007) analyzed various theories about election promises. This study explores a model in which these effects arise as equilibrium phenomena. Here researcher presents and explains a dynamic model in which candidates make campaign promises and voters believe those promises to form trust about the policies. Bonilla (2021) investigates the Importance of Campaign Promises, that it analyses a vital contribution to one of the most important aspects of representative democratic theory and practice. This research analyses the concept about campaign promises and why it is not possible to keep promises and how promises affect voters for decision making.

Table 1: Promises Made before the Election

Periods of Making Promises	Promises given by the Candidates	Objectives of given Promises
Pre-election period Especially during Campaign Time	maintenance of the law and order and providing basic opportunities Development of Communication System Improving Educational System Ensuring Healthcare Activities Protecting Child Security to stop child marriage Formation of Sports Club Prevention of Drugs Making Employment Ensuring Women's Right	Socio-economic development of constituencies or relations build about voting perspectives with voters
	Development of Local Economy and Society Water Supply and Sanitation Promises to deliver various certificates on time	

Promises and Providing basic Opportunities

The candidates promise to maintain law and order in the entire area through curbing crime and disorder, suppressing smuggling, and involving the union parishad in various government projects aimed at sustainable development. One of the objectives of the union Parishad is to maintain law and order for establishing peace and security in society. Chairman and members of union council promise to give full cooperation to the administration to maintain law and order and ensure proper implementation of arbitration and schemes. Candidates promise to provide basic opportunities like the maintenance of local resources, agricultural development, environmental conservation, fisheries, construction of bridge, canals, electricity supply, promotion of family planning, ensuring the rights of poor, older and disable people.

Development of Communication System

Union council is formed with few villages. Village roads are mostly unpaved to extensive reconstruction. For that, the development of the area and people's demand the candidate promised to repair and maintenance the road. During the rainy season, the residents of the union council have to suffer a lot due to bad road. There are many projects for communication and community infrastructure development at the local level and the candidates promise to implement these projects before the elections. The chairman of the union council promises to make all the projects groups according to the rules. Candidates promise to improve the transport system so that people can move easily and produced crop can be easily exchanged in the market.

Ensuring Healthcare Activities

The union Parishad organizes various health camps to get health facilities at different times and poor people get services from these health center which plays a role in ensuring their health security. That's why, the candidates of union council election make various promises to ensure health security to the needs of the union residents before the election.

Promise to Protect Child Security

In the constitution of Bangladesh, it is intended to make children as good citizens. Representatives of Union Parishad make promises for the safe shelter and intellectual development of the children.

The candidates promise to take various steps to stop sexual abuse, ban child labor, and ensure the right to education for children and as a signatory country to the Child Rights Charter, representatives have also promised to take various steps at the local level to protect child.

Promises to Stop Child Marriage

Child marriage is an obstacle to the sustainable development of society. For that, the government of Bangladesh is determined to eliminate child marriage in 2041. In this context, the candidates at the local level have made various promises to eliminate child marriage and create a promising future for the girl child. If girls get married before the age of 18, they face many physical problems. For that, various promises are made to remedy child marriage before the election.

Prevention of Drugs

Violence against women, family conflict, and social degradation are rising due to the widespread use of drugs. Even the easy availability and portability of drugs are affecting the young society at the local level. Due to the presence of Indian borders in Bangladesh, drugs have become easily accessible. So, local representatives promise to harness the power and potential of the youth and build a drug-free society.

Ensuring Women Rights

The study shows that rural women are backward in political, social and economic aspects while development of the nation is not possible if women are backdated. So, candidates make promises for the empowerment of women to ensure women rights. Also, candidate make promises to awareness and stop violence against women.

Development of Local Economy and Society

Most of the people in the study area are poor, day labor and their main occupation is agriculture. Development of union council is possible strengthening the local economy. So, the candidates give promises to provide different incentives to the farmers and make entrepreneurship.

Water Supply and Sanitation

Awareness among the rural people is very low. As a result, various types of diseases seen in the rural population. So, the candidates promise to provide clean water supply, irrigation and sanitation facilities before the elections.

Promises to Deliver Various Certificates on Time

Various certificates are issued by the Union Parishad such as a birth certificate, citizenship certificate, landless and inheritance certificate, trade license, etc. So, representatives promise that no citizen should be harassed to get these certificates on time.

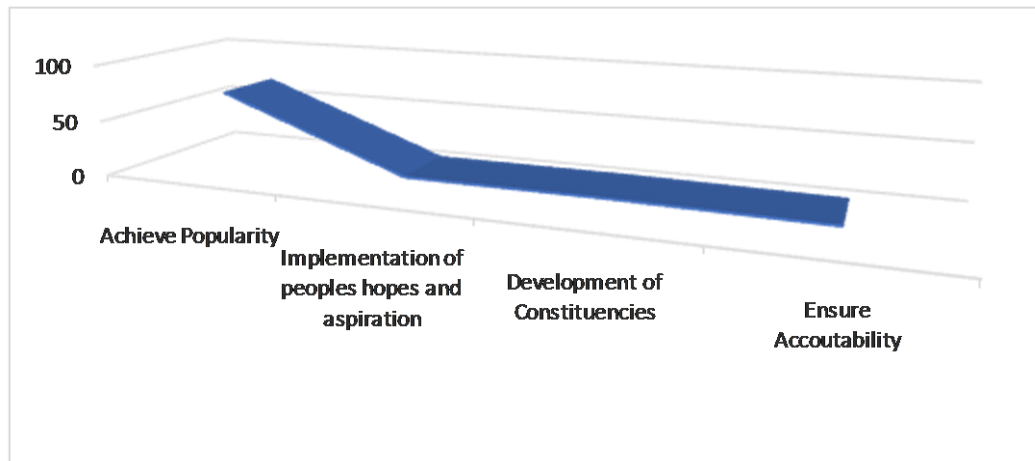
Table 2: Do Campaign Promises Affect Voter's Behavior?

Categories of Respondent's Answer	Answer of the Respondents (%)	Reasons of Influence or does not Influence Voting Behavior
Promises Influence Voting Behavior	65%	• Agenda Setting • Evaluation of Candidates
Promises does not Influence Voting Behavior	45%	• Political Socialization • Reinforcement Believe

Notes: The table is based on my research interpretations. More detailed description is found in the text.

Table 2 displays 65% respondents think that campaign promise affects voter behavior and the purpose of election campaign promises is to influence voting behavior and gain power by winning election. Voters get an idea about the candidates' values, identity, family status, behaviors and morality by evaluating the election campaign promises which plays role in proper agenda setting of voters. Respondents said that candidates who are friendly, honest, development oriented and experienced are given more importance. Because before any election, all the candidates make electoral promises but it is important for the voters to understand which candidate will keep the promises after winning election. Voting behavior can be changed by assessing the need for promises made before elections such as improving roads, sanitation system, providing clean water and give old and widow allowance card. 45% respondents say that promise does not affect voter's behavior. Because reinforcement believe developed through political socialization influences respondents voting behavior. Also, the use of money in elections is now more important than the giving promises. Vote buying is common campaign technique to winning in union Parishad election.

Figure 1: Importance of campaign promises in election



Source: The author analyzed the answer of respondents

Figure 2 exhibits that campaign promises are a criterion for gaining popularity of a candidate. Because popularity of candidate prerequisite for winning the election (67% respondents). Candidates make various promises to fulfill the aspiration of the people (10% respondents) and develop the constituency (15% respondents). During election campaigns, voters try to gain support by promising to implement voters demand through campaign techniques like door-to-door campaign, yard meeting, rally and miking. In a democratic system, accountability of candidates expected by the voters. That is accountability of candidates can be ensured by the monitoring and implementing promises. But accountability of candidates depends on how they campaigned and what types of promises they made. Respondents feel that election integrity and ethical behavior are essential for establishing accountability. Competitive elections create a relationship of formal accountability between policy makers and citizens - electoral rewards and punishment can be needed handed out on election day. Ideally this formal accountability leads to better governance (Ashworth, 2012). 8% respondent think that the accountability of the representatives is enhanced by making campaign Promises. When the fundamental rights of the citizen are fulfilled, the confidence and loyalty to the state are increased.

Factors influences voting decisions rather than election promises

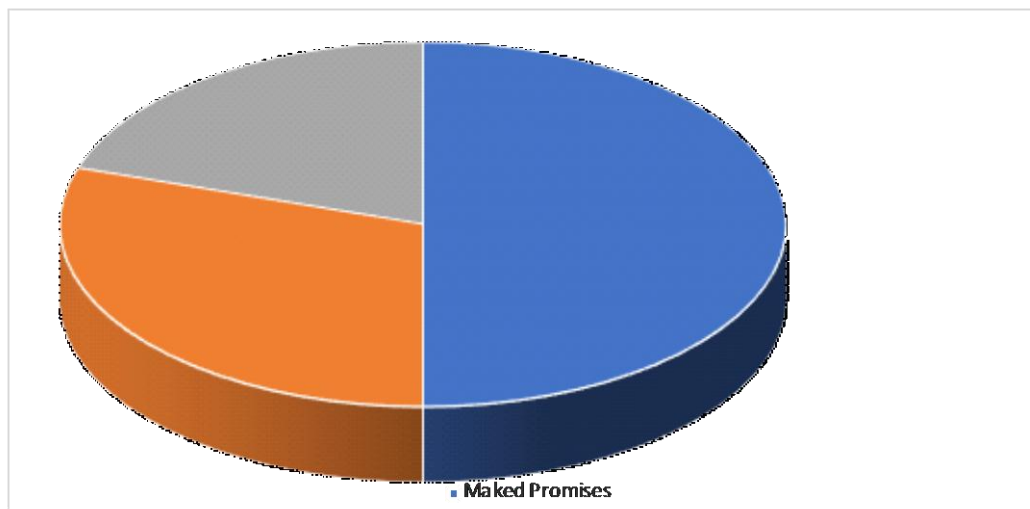
Local Relation

Sometimes a good relationship with a candidate influences voting behavior more than electoral promises. A respondent said that candidates give promises in meeting, Yard meeting, door to door campaign time to a development of the area and attract voters but local relations can be influence voting. It is seen that in research area candidate gets the highest votes in his own village because everyone thinks that he will always available in our village and we will get a lot of benefits. The reasons for the importance of good relations candidates are gain privileges, easy reach and maintain influence.

Kinship

Kinship influences voting behavior as it increases nepotism and favoritism that disrupt democratic system. In grassroots politics it is easier to elect representatives through family and kinship than electoral promises. 'Political relations are expressed in terms of Kinship' and the 'manipulations' of kinship are of the means employed in political strategy. (Balandier,1970). Kinship as a whole possesses political meanings and functions but rather that the internal mechanisms of kinship, such as the formation of groups based on unilineal descent, and the external relations, such as the formation of networks of alliances based on matrimonial exchanges, set up and involve political relations.

Figure 2: Voters perception and reality about campaign promises



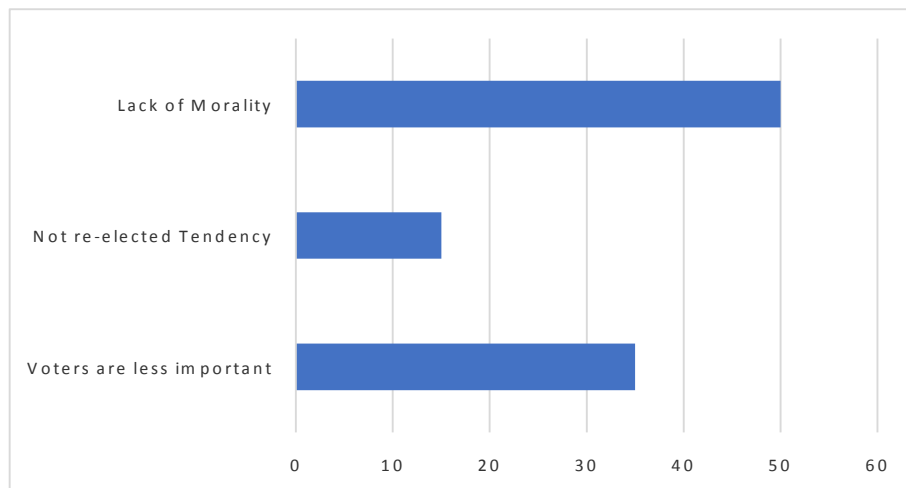
Source: The author analyzed the answer of respondents

The study found that before the election, the promise level of the candidates was 100%, 60% of them kept or 40% broke promises after winning election. Of the 60% kept promises, 32% were partially fulfilled and 24% were fully fulfilled 40%. Respondents said candidates are very close to the general people before the election but this behavior changes in the aftermath of the election. That is, the people do not get the elected representatives when they have a problem. Respondents think that not implementing election promises has become a culture. When candidates get power, they don't give much importance to connect to the people. Promises are called cheap talk because most promises are not fulfilled. Three km of roads have been paved in the study area and many unpaved roads has been renovate. Government projects are developed and project groups are made based on demand of local people. Various awareness programs have been conducted

regarding maternal, infant mortality and birth control. Also, some health services have been established to provide dental services and vaccines. women are given higher priority in arbitrations related to violence against women. candidates have been provided tube-wells for clean water supply and sanitation facilities to poor communities. The elected representatives said that the reasons for not being able to keep the promises are that the budget from the government for the work of the union parishad is less, elderly allowance, widow allowance, disabled allowance card, VGD card are allocated very less than the requirements. So, it is not possible to give them opportunity to everyone.

Actually, the chairman and members of the union council have been many limitations in doing developmental work they are lower position in hierarchy. Implementation and non-implementation of present election promises are greatly affecting the next election. It has been seen in the research area people's representatives have not fulfilled their promises according to the demand of local people. Candidates have partially fulfilled their promises like improvement of communication system, address child marriage, and ensure health security. The respondents said that child marriage is taking place secretly and sometimes representatives of union council know about it but do not inform administration. Even delegates could not fully provide security to women. For that, women are politically unaware and their level of political participation is limited. Respondents said that old age allowance, widow allowance and VGD card is given to others rather than needy people. Also, before the election the representatives said that they would stand by the interests of the people but after the election it was seen that they stayed away from the people.

Figure 3: Reasons for breaking election promises



Source: The author analyzed the answer of respondents

Voters are essential in the election system of Bangladesh because candidates are elected by direct vote of the people. After the elections the scenario changed and it was seen that the voters became less important to the candidates. The study shows the attitude of the candidatures after election is that 'I have got power.' Candidates are breaking election promises due to lack of morality (50%) and giving less importance to the voters (35%). Although, people are the source of all powers in democracy. If candidates do not intend to be re-elected, they are not interested to fulfill commitment. On the other hand, if the candidate is likely to be re-elected he tries to fulfill the promises his to maintain his reputation. Figure 3 shows that Peoples are less interested in election

promises because most election promises are not kept after winning an election. Respondents said that if an elected representative has no desire to be re-elected (15%), there is a tendency to break electoral promises.

Conclusion

Studies have shown that candidates make promises in pre-election period to gain popularity in order to win the election. However, it is important to keep other promises such as fulfilling the aspiration of the voters, development of constituency and ensuring candidate accountability. Participation and accountability are one of the conditions for establishing democracy. Political participation increases on the merits of election campaign promises. As a result, all men and women participate in voting. For this, it is possible to select qualified and efficient leadership. Also, accountability plays a key role in keeping promises. Although the participation in voting of the research area is high but the elected representatives are not interested in fulfilling all the election promises. Elected representatives try to keep their promises in the first year after being elect but later they don't have time to think about those promises. It is seen that couple of promises are made before the elections but actually all the promises are not equally important. That is, more reasonable promises attract voters and influence voting behavior more. It is clear that most of the promises made by the candidates before the Mirzapur union parishad elections have not been fully fulfilled. As a developing country, promises could not be fulfilled due to the lack of funds allocated for the development of the union council and the lack of coordination and morality of the candidates. Sometimes, other factors such as candidate's influence, familiarity and wealth become more important in winning elections than electoral promises in union council election. The culture of not keeping election promises should be changed and the trust and needs of the voters should be given more importance. Promissory representation will not be established if the promise is kept at a low rate. Before making electoral promises, the candidate must consider the limitations of keeping the promises. Positive exercise of power by keeping electoral promises will establish democracy in the society. The chairman and members should be active and responsible in implementing the developmental work and the promise must be fulfilled with good intention. A promise tracker should be used to visualize promise fulfillment. A voter becomes critical thinker by evaluating the promises of different candidates and parties. As a result, voters are not exposed to misinformation threat. Interaction and discussion about highlight issues are possible through election promises. Studies have shown that candidates break 40% of their promises after winning the election, which has a negative impact on voter confidence and trust. On the other hand, 60% of the promises have been kept by the people's representatives, so it can be said to promote voting participation through which the voter's demands have been fulfilled. Actually, a promise is what has to be must fulfilled. It is then possible to establish promissory democracy in society.

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