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Key Factors influencing the Voting Behaviour of the Civilians in Semi-Urban Areas.

(With relevance to Naiwala North and Pahala Udugampola Grama Niladari Divisions of Minuwangoda Electorate)

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The Sri Lankan society is categorized into three main divisions: Urban, Semi-Urban and Rural. Inherent characteristics and factors in each division have a huge impact on the voting behaviour of its residents. This study is mainly based on the voting behaviour in semi-urban areas. The principle objective of the study is to identify the factors which influence the behaviour of the voters in semi urban areas and also to examine the manner in which those factors affect the voting behaviour. Sub-objectives of this study include identifying whether those key factors have an equal impact on all the voters in the selected areas and the reasons behind such an impact. The study has several assumptions, i.e., It is assumed that the factors determining the voting behavior of semi-urban areas are different from that of urban and rural areas in Sri Lanka and that the factors determining the voting behavior of semi-urban areas depend upon the demographic aspects of voters. This study is based both on primary data gathered through questionnaires and interviews and secondary data collected from survey reports, related books and the internet. The sample was selected through the multi stage and random sampling methods. Data analysis was conducted through the descriptive statistical methods. The sample of the research is 100 registered voters from semi-urban Naiwala North and Pahala Udugampola Grama Niladari Divisions of Minuwangoda Electorate and their voting behavior during the western provincial election of 2014 provide the basis for the study. As per the results of the survey, it is concluded that the principles of political parties, image of candidates (19%), ideologies of voters through generations, psychological factors (11%), the impact of media (42%) and personal factors (35%) influence the semi-urban voting behavior. The degree of the impact of above-mentioned factors are determined by the demographic factors such as the gender, age, religion, race, the level of education of voters. However, it is significant that all the above mentioned factors do not influence the voting behavior of voters in semi-urban areas in an equal manner. It is also suggested that responsible media propaganda should be in place during the elections.

Key words: *Voting behaviour, semi-urban areas, Voters, Election Candidates*

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