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Why should public opinion matter in a country?

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ABSTRACT

This research paper is going to focus on public opinion and why it should be matter in a country when we speak about public opinion the first thing which comes to our mind is thoughts and point of views of public as a whole on a particular topic when there is no public in a country it cannot be called a country and for the decisions that a country take the opinion of public is way too much necessary. This research paper will examine that how the public opinion varies differently from country to country and how its criteria change from place to place people to people. The research paper is totally a work of doctrinal method which drawn up various major points about public opinion this paper is going to cover the major points of characterization like meaning of the public opinion, process of public opinion that how the people tend to speak, why it matters in a country, fundamental concepts like types of public opinion its characteristics its examples and the evolution and history the paper also going to cover the importance of public opinion and mainly article 19 freedom of speech and expression s highlight which is related to this.

Keywords— Public opinion, Culture, Social activism

1. RESEARCH METHOD

The research method of paper is completely doctrinal in which there is a full examination of public opinion. The paper is not so much lengthy and broad each and everything is explained in a prescribed manner. The research paper is completely original and does not in any way intend to plagiarise.

How has the research done?

The research was done by analyzing various blogs, books, articles, and websites related to public opinion and the main aim of this research is to highlight the facts that why public opinion is important.

What materials are used?

Data has been collected from online websites, books, blogs, and articles.

2. INTRODUCTION

Public opinion means the thoughts and views of the public on a particular issue. Each and every citizen has right to express their views about any issue which is related to them by their aspect the public opinion is not only restricted to political issues but also on social kind of issues. Without the views of the public, a frequent social decision cannot be taken. It consists of desires, wants and thinking of the majority of people it is the collective opinion of the people of a society or state on an issue or problem. [1]

Contrasting understandings of public opinion have taken shape over the centuries, especially as new methods of measuring public opinion have been applied to politics, commerce, religion, and social activism. [2]

Public opinion is important in a democracy because without the opinion of public the government cannot decide how to act on public issues most of the issues in a country are related to public and makes sense to take public opinion when we talk about public opinion the first thing which comes to our mind is public people and how they speak the speaking of public is very much important.

Public opinion is often made concrete through questions asked in polls. Politicians routinely cite public opinion polls to justify their support of or opposition to public policies. Candidates use public opinion strategically to establish themselves as front-runners or underdogs in campaigns. Interest groups and political parties use public opinion polls to promote their causes. The mass media incorporate reports of public opinion into a news story about government and politics. [3]

3. PROCESS OF PUBLIC OPINION

Public opinion is the result of a social and psychological process that leads to a situation in which the behavior of each member of a public in regard to an issue is conditioned by his expectation that other members of the public hold similar attitudes on the same issue. The public opinion process involves the formation of individual attitudes and opinions and group process [4].

3.1 The formation of public opinion:

There are three stages of public opinion: The rise of an issue-discussion and proposed solutions and arrival at a consensus. As soon as a public issue emerges there is usually a preliminary phase of discussion. The issue is defined and a hope is expressed for its solution.

Later as a discussion continues those concerned express their own views on the issue and propose various and often divergent solutions through letters, petitions, memoranda etc. In the course of time, we pass on the third stage when opinion begins to crystallize and people began to take sides.

The formation of public opinion depends upon a number of factors. Symbols play a most important role in the process of forming opinions. Symbols are a combination of words, personalities, music, drama and other such devices that make an impression upon the masses. They may be slogans or they may be factors linked to popular sentiments which arouse the imagination and cause individuals to respond readily as democracy, liberty, red, fair deal, pearl harbour.

The public opinion process is so much lengthy and takes a lot of time to let people tend to speak on any particular issue.

3.2 Why public opinion matters in a country?

Ever since humans banded together the public has held opinions, but it has only been recently that we have begun to collect the views of the people with the aim of getting a better understanding about their priorities. This has been especially important in democracies where the popular will determines who leads each nation.

So, public opinion as measured by polls is extremely important during the election process, not just to try to predict which candidate will win, but more importantly, which of their positions or policies are more attuned to the needs and desires of their constituents.

Beyond elections, public opinion is incredibly important for governing. For example, the shift in public attitude regarding gay marriage in the United States allowed the Obama administration to support its legalization nationwide. In the same way, the perceptions of immigration in Europe have allowed the rise of nationalistic movements.

Public opinion shouldn't be the only consideration in policymaking. Sometimes there are changes in viewpoints that are sudden and short-lived, and other times, there are established preferences that are simply not realistic; none of these should serve as the basis for governance. For example, if one polls public opinion on taxes, it is a virtual certainty that most people will see their charge as excessive, no matter if they are high or low when measured by objective standards. And yet, a nation can't function without funds, so most responsible governments will defy public opinion in this matter and will continue to force their citizens to contribute to the public finances. [5]

Besides political and government point of view, public opinion also matters in social issues which are related for the profit of the public.

4. FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS

Features of public opinion:

- (i) Public opinion is concerned with a matter of public importance. It is not concerned with the interests of a particular group of people.
- (ii) Public opinion is for social welfare. The welfare of society is an essential characteristic of public opinion.
- (iii) Public opinion is arrived at after careful thought. It is the tentative deliberative adjustment of the public to a situation. It is a logical view of things. While Lasswell holds that all opinions involve a choice between different views which may be rationally held, Kimball Young, on the other hand, is of the view that an opinion may be rational, or based upon some conviction, or it may proceed from feeling and emotion.
- (iv) It is a cooperative product. It is the product of the interaction of human minds.
- (v) Public opinion is related to a particular age or times. It is to be evaluated in the context of a particular situation.
- (vi) Public opinion has a cultural base. The culture of a society influences public opinion.
- (vii) Lastly, numbers are not necessary to constitute public opinion. The opinion of even a single person may be called public opinion though not held by the majority. The opinion of Mahatma Gandhi, though held by him alone, could be rightly called public opinion. However, the opinion held by a minority must be shared by the majority not by force but by conviction. [6]

Importance of public opinion

Public opinion is a very much important concept in India as well as in other countries taking the opinion of the public is very difficult and in a democracy without this no decision id possible.

The importance of public and its necessity is

- (i) **Public opinion is a major source of law:** the laws passed by the government are based on public opinion and their demands.
- (ii) **Public opinion is a guardian of rights and freedom:** rights and freedom of public always need protection so people act as a guardian Alert public opinion is the greatest safeguard against any violation of rights and freedoms of the people.
- (iii) **Public opinion is the basis of state policies:** The government of the state formulates its policies on the basis of the public opinion. All public policies are based on public opinion. The government is supposed to do everything which the public opinion demands.

- (iv) **Public opinion determines election results:** In every election, only that political party wins which enjoys the support of public opinion. The political party which gets the popular mandate to rule has to exercise power only in tune with public opinion. It has to go out of power when public opinion turns against it.
- (v) **Public Opinion serves as the Foundations of Democracy:** Sovereignty of the people, which is the very basis of democracy, really means the supremacy of the public opinion. In every democracy, the government and its policies are continuously based on public opinion. The government remains in power so long as it is backed by public opinion.
- (vi) **Public opinion is the agent of social change:** No law aimed at social change, no policy aimed at social reforms and no action aimed at development can be really successful unless it is backed by strong public opinion. Desired objectives of social change can be secured only by securing a public opinion distinctly favorable to proposed reforms and changes. As such in every society, public opinion is at the back of every activity of the government.

Realizing fully the importance of public opinion, J.S. Mill very strongly advocated the need for an absolutely free flow of public opinion in the society. He was certain that each opinion should be allowed to freely flow in the society as it is necessary for the emergence of a true public opinion. Laski was of the view that even during a period of war, freedom of public opinion should not be suppressed.

In case an opinion is backed by the people at large and it opposes the war, the state has no right to continue the war, and in case the opinion is the opinion of only a minority, it cannot in any way adversely affect the outcome of the war.

5. RELATION OF ARTICLE 19: FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Freedom of speech considered the basic freedom by most philosophical thinkers consists of several facets, including the right to express one's opinion unhindered, unfettered by the fear of retribution. It is one of the most basic elements for a healthy, open-minded democracy. It allows people to freely participate in the social and political happenings of their country. [7]

Freedom of speech and expression is quite relatable to public opinion because this article gives freedom to speak to each and every citizen. The essence of free speech is the ability to think and speak freely and to obtain information from others through publications and public discourse without fear of retribution, restriction, or repression by the government. It is through free speech, people could come together to achieve political influence, to strengthen their morality, and to help others to become moral and enlightened citizens.

Article 19(1) (a) of the Constitution of India guarantees to all its citizens the right to freedom of speech and expression. The law states that "all citizens shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression". Under Article 19(2) "reasonable restrictions can be imposed on the exercise of this right for certain purposes. Any limitation on the exercise of the right under Article 19(1) (a) not falling within the four corners of Article 19(2) cannot be valid.

This right is available only to a citizen of India and not to foreign nationals. This right is, however, not absolute and it allows Government to frame laws to impose reasonable restrictions in the interest of sovereignty and integrity of India, security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency and morality and contempt of court, defamation and incitement to an offense.

6. CONCLUSION

By the above research on the topic public opinion I have concluded that yes public opinion matters in each and every country because without taking the opinion of public no government can achieve success because the democratic government is for the people's welfare when we talk about public opinion the first word which comes to our mind is public or people our country can be called a country only by the people.

Public opinion relates to the article 19 in very much aspect because its related to freedom of speech and expression.

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