

The Leadership Factor in the 2024 Elections: Did Narendra Modi's Impact Peak Much Before the Elections?

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Abstract

This article seeks to examine the role of the leadership factor in the 2024 elections. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) made leadership the centre-piece of its campaign and appeal for votes. While the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) coalition consciously avoided a confrontation with the BJP around the leadership issue, this factor continued to assume salience during the campaign. By locating the debate in the wider context of the 2014 and 2019 elections, this article, assesses whether the impact of the leadership factor, especially in the case of BJP (and the National Democratic Alliance [NDA]) has plateaued and did not add any traction to the campaign of the ruling party. A set of questions asked in the National Election Study (NES) 2024 compared with data from NES 2014 and NES 2019 form the basis of the analysis.

Keywords

Leadership, BJP, Congress, preferred Prime Minister, 2024 Lok Sabha Elections

Approaching the Theme

The 2024 Lok Sabha elections saw a contest between an incumbent ruling party and a resurgent opposition, aiming to secure the public mandate. For the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP), which was completing a decade in power, it was hoping to ensure a third successive term under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Even as the dates of the 2024 elections approached, it became increasingly apparent that the leadership factor would be central to the election campaign. Ever since Modi assumed office as Prime Minister in 2014, the key role of the leadership in centralizing power and shaping the electoral destiny of the party was evident, both in national and state level elections. Especially when viewed from the prism of the BJP strategy, the 2024 campaign saw this effort reaching a crescendo.

In recent years, elections in parliamentary systems have often focused on the leadership factor (Burrett, 2023; Balmas et al., 2014; Berz, 2020; Burrett, 2023; Carter, 2015; Chhibber & Verma, 2019;

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Chhibber & Shah, 2020; Curtis & Lisi, 2014;; Dowding, 2013; Harmel & Svasand 1993; Hennessy, 2000, 2007; Kavanagh, 2000, 1990; King, 2002, 1985; Langer, 2010, 2007; McAllister, 2011; Naseemullah & Chhibber, 2024; Seymour-Ure, 2003; Shastri, 2024a, 2019a, 2009; Shastri & Syal, 2017).² Berz refers to parliamentary elections assuming presidential overtones and a 'presidentialized prime ministerial accountability' with Prime Ministers as agenda-setter of democratically elected governments and frequently combines this important position with formal leadership of their party' (Berz, 2020:1). On the other hand, Dowding has argued that the office of the Prime Minister in Britain has seen a 'personalisation of politics in a parliamentary system, making the Prime Minister powerful within the system' (Dowding, 2013 also Heffernan 2013). A similar trend of 'prime-ministerialisation' of the electoral contest has been witnessed in recent times in India (Shastri, 2019a, 2014; Shastri & Syal, 2017). The 'specific focus on the Prime Minister' in the context of the realities of politics has been highlighted by Carter (2015) and Dowding has argued that the 'personalization and centralization of power' in the office of the Prime Minister have understandably contributed to this trend (Dowding, 2013:617–8). Heffernan has asserted that experience shows that Prime Ministers are not just 'preeminent (but) can become predominant' (2013:644–5). Cary and Shugart have drawn attention to the electoral campaign focusing on 'a personal rather than party reputation' (Carey & Shugart, 1995:417). This has also been seen in the Indian context (Shastri, 2024a). Decisions of parties to change electoral strategies are often linked to emergence of new leaders (Harmel et al., 1995:1; also Kriesi, 2011; Harmel & Svasand, 1993). The 'prominent tone of the media' in projecting candidate attributes in an election and impacting voter evaluation has also been the focus of recent research across democracies (Balmas & Shaefer, 2010:204; Seymour-Ure, 2003). This article attempts to look at the relevance of these studies to the Indian context.

In the Indian context, a detailed analysis of the leadership factor in the 2014 and 2019 elections indicated that its importance was on the ascendance. Additionally, the wider support for the BJP and the weakness of the opposition did contribute to the final electoral outcomes (Chhibber & Verma 2019; Jafferlot, 2015; Palshikar, 2022; Shastri, 2019a; Shastri & Syal, 2017). The three rounds of the India component of the State of Democracy in South Asia study focussed quite prominently on the role of strong leadership in Indian Elections (Sardesai & Shastri, 2023; SDSA 2017, 2008).

Any survey of the role of Indian Prime Ministers in steering the electoral destinies of their parties indicate the prominent role that they have played. These include not just the one-decade tenure of Narendra Modi or the 14-year stewardship of Nehru, or the decade and a half leadership of Indira Gandhi and 5-year term of Rajiv Gandhi, but even other Prime Ministers from the Congress party including Lal Bahadur Shastri, Narasimha Rao and Manmohan Singh (Shastri, 2019b). Even prominent non-Congress leaders who went on to become Prime Ministers like Atal Bihar Vajpayee, Morarji Desai, V. P. Singh and Deve Gowda left an indelible impact on the course of politics during their leadership. It is also important to concede in the Indian context that state level leaders have also played a role in shaping the course of national politics (Shastri, 2009), their role is now more visibly apparent in state level elections (Shastri, Kumar, & Sisodia, 2022). This article seeks to use the lens of the 2024 elections to assess the impact of the leadership of Prime Minister Modi in the electoral outcome. This study also attempts at drawing comparisons with the trends in the previous two elections, when Modi was the BJP's Prime Ministerial candidate.

² Elections in Japan and Germany in 2021, Israel in 2022, Greece and Finland in 2023, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Croatia, India, Belgium, Thailand, Mongolia, UK in 2024, are often cited as representative examples in this regard.

The Leadership Factor and the 2024 Campaign

The BJP approached the 2024 elections with a clear strategy. Having been in power for a decade under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, the election campaign clearly revolved around the persona of the Prime Minister. This was visible in multi-track ways – the way the party curated its campaign, the tone and tenor of the Prime Minister’s speeches during the campaign and the exclusive reliance of the candidates fielded by the BJP (and its alliance partners in the National Democratic Alliance [NDA]) in seeking votes to ensure that Prime Minister Modi secured a third term in office (Shastri, 2024a). This focus began well before the formal start of the campaign when the BJP President released a video in January 2024, that asserted ‘Let’s choose Prime Minister Narendra Modi’ (Business Standard 26 January 2024).

In the seven phases of the campaign, that was spread across an unprecedented eight weeks, the Prime Minister addressed 206 public events (The Hindu 30 May 2024). These rallies were carefully planned to cover every phase of elections. After the first few phases of voting, the Prime Minister decided to give over 80 interviews to a wide range (yet select group) of media organisations (Deccan Herald 28 May 2024).

Modi’s guarantee became a key phrase used by all the BJP stakeholders during the campaign. The election manifesto of the BJP was titled ‘Sankalp Patra³ – Modi’s Guarantee 2024’. While releasing the document, Modi underscored the fact that ‘those who have never been cared for, Modi cares for them’ (www.bjp.org/pressreleases/salient-points-speech-honble-prime-minister-shri-narendra-modi-ji-occasion-launching. Accessed on 16 August 2024). In one of his many interviews, the Prime Minister highlighted that in ‘2024 we pledge to deliver *Modi ki Guarantee*⁴ to the people of India’ (Asianet News Channel www.youtube.com/watch?v=zS3JPIwRT4Q. accessed 10 August 2024). His election speeches frequently heard the slogan ‘Modi government once again’ (Deccan Herald 18 April 2024). Elections reports from across the country referred to the BJP’s attempt to stave off any anti-incumbency by appealing to votes on the leader’s name (New Indian Express 13 April 2024; Times of India 23 April 2024). This was clearly the strategy of Prime Minister Modi too, if his campaign speeches and interviews were any indication.

The party’s reliance on a one man show for a third term (Frontline 19 April 2024) appeared a carefully orchestrated electoral campaign plan. As the election campaign panned out, all the 441 BJP candidates sought votes by appealing to the voters to ensure one more seat to facilitate a third term for Prime Minister Modi. This was often the key focus of the other 100 non-BJP, NDA candidates too.

In the case of the principal opposition party—the Congress, its leader Rahul Gandhi drew attention through the two yatras he held in the run-up to the elections.⁵ During the campaign, a question that the BJP frequently raised with the Congress led opposition alliance was, ‘We are led by Modi, who is leading you?’ (Shastri, 2024a). The opposition, on the other hand wished to make the 2024 campaign on issues, strategies and policy alternatives and not on the leadership factor (Shastri, 2024b; Tiezzi, 2024). It is another issue that the opposition was unable to develop a national-level alternate policy strategy during the campaign. The 2024 campaign of the BJP had one clear message – voting for the BJP would mean voting for the Modi guarantee’ (Shastri, 2024a). This was, in unequivocal terms, the BJP’s trump card.

³ Translated to mean Resolution Document.

⁴ Modi’s Guarantee.

⁵ The Bharat Jodo Yatra (Unite India tour) and the Bharat Jodo Nyaya Yatra (Unite India for Justice tour) (first from 7 Sept 2022 to 30 Jan 2023 and second from 14 Jan to 16 March 2024) played some role in galvanizing the party and re-positioning Rahul Gandhi in the leadership sweepstakes.

Implications of Popular Preference for Prime Minister

An important lens from which the role of the leadership factor in an election can be assessed is the preference for Prime Minister among the voters. The National Election Study (NES) post poll surveys have tracked the impact of this factor across recent elections. When asked in the 2024 post poll survey, who would they prefer as the Prime Minister after the elections, a little over four of every ten respondents (41%) indicated Narendra Modi as their choice. This has fallen by five percentage points as compared to the 2019 NES Post Poll study (46% mentioned Modi as their preferred Prime Minister then). However, the 2024 figures represent a six percentage point rise as compared to the Post Poll Study undertaken in 2014 (35%). Clearly, the support for Modi as the Prime Minister peaked during the 2019 elections and has seen a decline in 2024. Was this election verdict a direct corollary to this decline or where there a basket of other factors which contributed to this development? The analysis in this segment addresses this question.

Leadership is frequently also viewed in a comparative frame. The next frequent name (since 2014) mentioned as preferred Prime Minister is that of Rahul Gandhi. In the 2024 Post Poll study, the gap between Modi and Gandhi had reduced to 14 percentage points. The gap was 10 percentage points higher in the 2019 post poll survey and six percentage points higher in the 2014 post poll survey. The lowest gap recorded in the preference for Prime Minister between Modi and Gandhi was recorded one year prior to the end of the first term of Modi as Prime Minister (jn May 2018—Mood of the Nation Poll) when it was 10 percentage points. The gap between Modi and Gandhi among voters in their choice of preferred Prime Minister has visibly declined in 2024 (see Table 1). A slew of factors appears responsible and merit detailed discussion, later in this article

If one were to view preferred Prime Ministerial choice from the perspective of the voting inclination of the respondents, one notices a decline (though remaining high) in support for Modi among BJP voters in 2024 as compared to 2019. The preference for him as Prime Minister in 2024 is similar to what it was in 2014 when he was the Prime Ministerial candidate of the BJP (see Table 2). The support for him to be

Table 1. Preferred Prime Minister Choice: Narendra Modi Versus Rahul Gandhi (2014–2024).

	2024	2019	2014
All India	+14	+24	+20

Source: National Election Study (NES) 2014, 2019, 2024.

Note: All figures in percentages.

Question asked: After this election who would you prefer as the next Prime Minister of India? (Do not offer any name, record exact answer).

Table 2. Preference for Modi as Prime Minister: Response by Voting Choice (2014–2024).

	2024	2019	2014
BJP voters	80	88	80
BJP allies' voters	67	77	60
Congress voters	7	7	4
Congress allies' voters	6	8	12

Source: As Table 1.

Note: All figures in percentages.

Question asked: After this election who would you prefer as the next Prime Minister of India? (Do not offer any name, record exact answer).

Prime Minister has also declined among those who voted for BJP's allies. There is a 10 percentage point decline as compared to 2019. It is, however, higher than what was recorded in the 2014 post poll survey. The support for Modi as preferred Prime Minister among Congress voters has remained the same over the last five years. Among the allies of the Congress, there is a minor drop, in support for Modi as Prime Minister. Over the last decade, the preference for Modi as Prime Minister among Congress voters has doubled while among those who vote for Congress allies, it has reduced by half.

Are there any indications of a major demographic differences in preference for Modi as Prime Minister? The NES 2024 Post Poll data provides some indicators of difference in the intensity of support across different socio-economic groups.

Among different age groups, there was marginally higher support for Modi as preferred Prime Minister among those below 25 years of age. This is consistent with the trend seen in 2019, though the intensity of support has declined. There appears to be a more mellowed support in cities as compared to 2019. From the perspective of access to education, those with college degrees indicated a higher preference for Modi as Prime Minister. This again was consistent with the pattern of 2019. When viewed from the prism of class, the support for Modi as preferred Prime Minister was marginally higher among the upper class and lowest among the lower middle class. The decline among the lower middle class is a major difference as compared to 2019. Media exposure has a much lesser impact in 2024 as compared to 2019. Region wise, the highest support for Modi as preferred Prime Minister was in Eastern India followed by the South, North and West. In 2019, the highest support was recorded in Western India, which now is at the lowest. Modi secured the highest support among upper castes as their preferred Prime Minister. The support was much lower among the Scheduled Castes and lowest among the Muslims. This pattern is consistent with what was found in 2019. Clearly, Modi drew greater support among upper castes, other backward castes (OBCs) and those with a college degree. It was lower among the lower middle classes, Scheduled Castes and Muslims (see Chart 1).

When one compares the support for Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi as preferred Prime Minister, the gap is much wider among the upper castes and OBCs. It narrows down among those living in cities, poor, illiterate and among Muslims. In six states, the support for Rahul Gandhi as preferred Prime Minister as compared to Narendra Modi is higher. These include states like Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Maharashtra, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. In 14 states, the gap between Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi as preferred Prime Minister is higher than the national average of 14 percentage points (see Chart 2). This trend is reflected, in important ways, in the voting patterns in different states and the nature of the electoral contest.

A binary logistic regression analysis was done to see the impact of access to education, age cohorts, economic class, caste or communities of voters and level of media exposure on voters' preference for Modi as Prime Minister (see Table 3).

The logistic regression analysis reveals the key factors influencing the likelihood of voting for the BJP. The model shows that a strong preference for Narendra Modi as Prime Minister significantly increases the odds of voting for the BJP, as indicated by a high positive coefficient ($B = 3.130$, P value $< .001$). Additionally, residing in states where the BJP is either ruling or strong substantially enhances the probability of BJP support, with coefficients of 2.273 (P value $< .001$) for BJP-ruled states and 1.770 (P value $< .001$) for BJP strong states, compared to BJP weak states. Demographic factors like age, education and economic class appear to have negligible effects. Gender, although approaching significance (P value = .062), suggests that men may be slightly more inclined to vote for the BJP than women. Caste plays a critical role, with Hindu upper castes, OBCs and Adivasis showing higher propensities to vote for the BJP compared to other religious minorities, while Muslims are significantly less likely to do so ($B = -1.105$, P value $< .001$). Media exposure also positively correlates with BJP

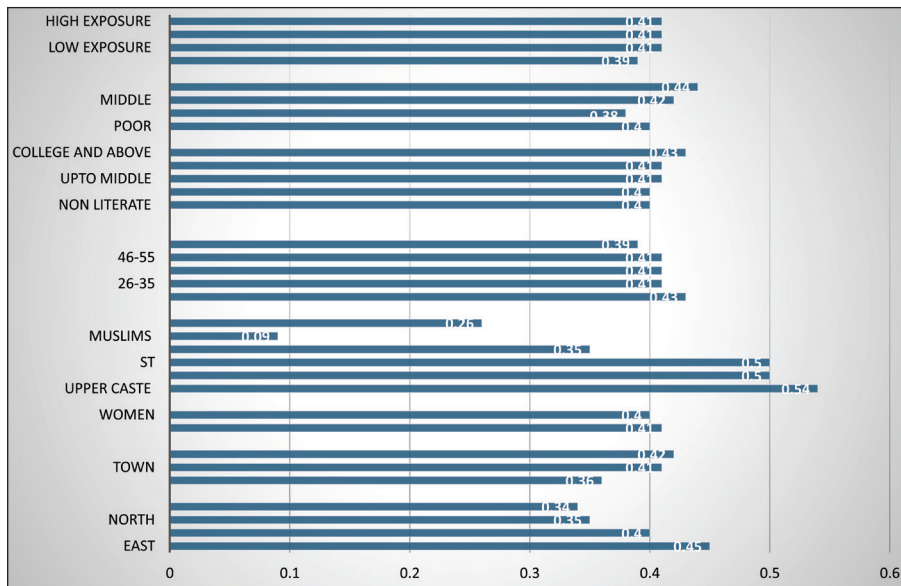


Chart 1. Predicted Probability for Modi as Prime Minister.

Source: Same as Table 1.

Question asked: After this election who would you prefer as the next Prime Minister of India? (Do not offer any name, record exact answer).

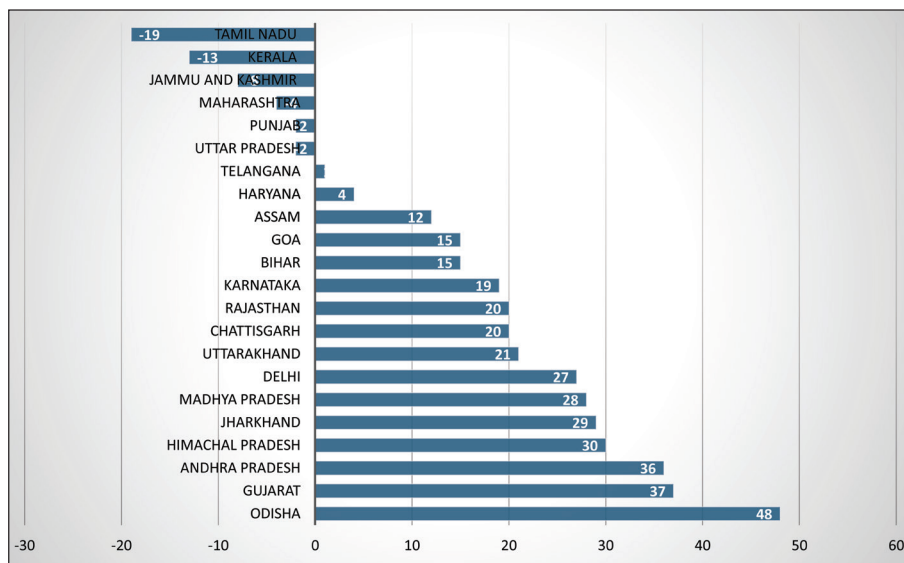


Chart 2. Preferred Prime Minister Choice: Narendra Modi versus Rahul Gandhi—State Wise.

Source: Same as Table 1.

Note: All figures in percentage.

Question asked: After this election who would you prefer as the next Prime Minister of India? (Do not offer any name, record exact answer).

Table 3. Logit Regression: Preference for Modi as the Prime Minister in 2024.

	B	S.E.
Constant	−4.489	0.181
Modi as PM	3.130***	0.048
States group (reference: BJP weak states)		
BJP ruling states	2.273***	0.070
BJP strong states	1.770***	0.074
Age	−0.005	0.020
Education	0.000	0.022
Gender (1: male 2: female)	−0.085	0.046
Locality (1: village 2: town 3: city)	0.161***	0.035
Caste community (reference: other religious minorities)		
Hindu upper caste	0.589	0.093
Hindu OBC	0.265**	0.088
Hindu Dalits	0.060	0.099
Hindu Adivasis	0.455***	0.113
Muslims	−1.105***	0.122
Media exposure index (low to high)	0.131***	0.024
Economic class (poor to upper class)	−0.010	0.026
R square	0.412	

Source: NES 2024.

Note: *** 0.000; ** >0.000 but < 0.01; * >0.01 but < 0.05; S.E., standard error.

voting likelihood, further underlining the importance of these variables in understanding voting behaviour in the 2024 elections.

The above analysis of the preferred Prime Minister choice around the 2024 elections clearly reflects a decline in preference for Modi as Prime Minister. This is consistent with the national verdict one saw in this election and the relative performance of the BJP. Given the BJP's extensive and in many cases, exclusive dependence on the persona of the Prime Minister to win electoral support, the trend one notices in the respondents preferred Prime Ministerial candidate in the NES 2024 post poll survey mirrors the electoral verdict.

Impact of Modi as the Prime Ministerial Candidate of the BJP/NDA

To assess the impact of the leadership of Prime Minister Modi on the vote for the BJP/NDA in the 2024 elections, the NES 2024 post poll survey asked respondents if they would continue to vote for the party they chose even if Narendra Modi were not the Prime Ministerial candidate of the BJP/NDA. Across respondents more than half (52%) said it would make no difference. A quarter (25%) said that it would have changed the way they voted and the balance (23%) felt that they were not sure or did not know. If one analysed the options exercised by those who voted for the BJP and its allies, one noticed a marginal difference. A slightly higher percentage (56%) said it would make no difference even as a quarter said that they would change the way they voted (25%). A little less than two in every ten (19%) of those who voted for the BJP said that they were unsure or did not know. This implies that one in every four votes for the BJP were solely on account of the leadership factor. A marginally higher percentage (27%) of those who voted for the non-BJP parties in the NDA opined that they would have changed the way they

Table 4. Modi Impact Among BJP/NDA Voters.

	Would Not Have Voted for NDA Had Modi Not Been PM Candidate (%) 2024	Would Not Have Voted for NDA Had Modi Not Been PM Candidate (%) 2019	Would Not Have Voted for NDA Had Modi Not Been PM Candidate (%) 2014
	2024	2019	2014
BJP voters	25	32	27
BJP allies' voters	27	24	20

Source: Same as Table 1.

voted if Modi were not the NDA Prime Ministerial candidate (see Table 4). Thus, a higher percentage of non-BJP NDA voters stated that they would have changed the way they would have voted if Modi were not the Prime Ministerial candidate as compared to the BJP voters.

It would be important to record that among BJP voters, in 2024, the percentage of those who said that they would not have changed the way they voted if Modi were not the Prime Ministerial candidate has declined by seven percentage points as compared to 2019. There is also a two-percentage point decline among BJP voters who said that they would change the way they voted if Modi were not the Prime Ministerial candidate when the 2024 post poll results are compared with the survey done in 2014. In 2019, one of every three of those who voted for the BJP said that they would have changed their voting preference if Modi were not the Prime Ministerial candidate. This has declined to one of every four taking that stand in 2024. Incidentally, one notices a rise in the percentage of those who said that if Modi were not the Prime Ministerial candidate, among non-BJP NDA voters. It has steadily increased from 2014 to 2024.

An attempt was made to assess if there was any significant difference in response among BJP voters, across states where BJP was the ruling party, where BJP had a strong presence (not ruling but number two party) and where the party had a weak presence.⁶ From the data, one notices that in states where BJP is in power, there is a one percentage point decline among BJP voters saying that they would change the way they voted if Modi were not the Prime Ministerial candidate. It increases by one percentage point in BJP strong and BJP weak states.

If one did a state wise analysis of the post poll survey data among BJP voters, on whether they would change their voting choice if Modi were not the Prime Ministerial candidate, an interesting pattern emerges. There are 12 states where higher than one-fourth (national average) of the BJP voters stated that they would have changed their voting preference if Modi were not the Prime Ministerial candidate. The top three states in that list are Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Karnataka. In Andhra Pradesh, four of every ten of those who said they voted for the BJP would have changed the way they voted if Modi were not the Prime Ministerial candidate. It is clear that in a state where the BJP had a limited presence, Modi was a key factor in securing support for the BJP. The same trend is seen in Bihar, where BJP was in alliance with several other parties, principally the Janta Dal United (JDU). Here too, the Modi factor played a key role in swinging the vote in favour of the party. Karnataka too saw over one-thirds of the BJP voters stating that they would not have voted for BJP if not for its Prime Ministerial candidate. Karnataka saw a similar trend in 2014. On both occasions (2014 and 2024), there was a Congress government installed in the state a year before the Lok Sabha polls. The Modi factor pulling the state

⁶ BJP ruling states – Haryana, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Goa, Assam and Maharashtra; BJP strong states – Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, West Bengal, Odisha and Delhi; BJP weak states – Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. In the last category, it would be necessary to keep in mind that this appeared to the position in the run up to the 2024 election campaign.

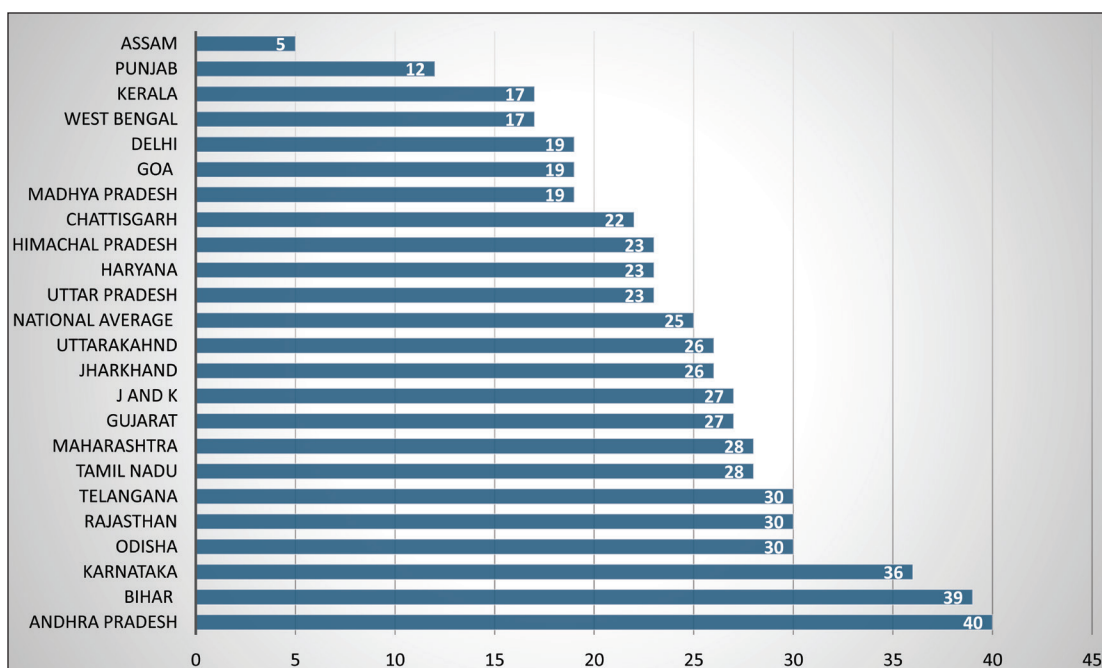


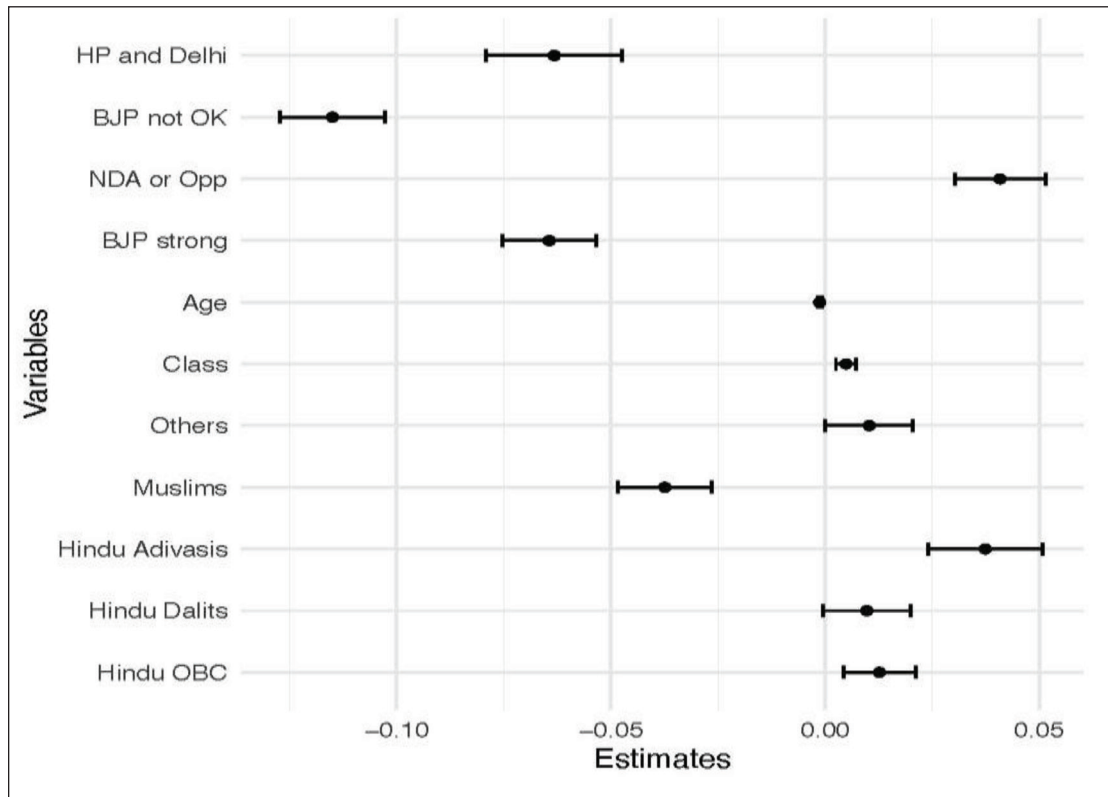
Chart 3. Modi Impact Among BJP Voters: State-Wise Analysis.

Source: NES 2024.

the BJP way clearly apparent. Further, in BJP-ruled states of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Uttarakhand, the Modi factor appeared decisive. This could be linked to the fact of limited impact of the state leadership and the strong dependence on the Prime Minister. Maharashtra too appears to indicate that the pull factor for the BJP was linked to Modi as the Prime Ministerial candidate (see Chart 3). In three opposition-ruled states, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Odisha, the Modi factor appears to have played a key role in boosting the BJP vote.

In 11 states where the less than one-fourth (national average) of the BJP voters said that they would have changed their voting preference if Modi were not the Prime Ministerial candidate, seven had BJP governments. It could be argued (as discussed later in this article) that the strong party presence in these states was key to BJP supporters voting for the party and Modi as the Prime Ministerial candidate was a secondary factor. In the remaining four states (Punjab, Kerala, West Bengal and Delhi), the Prime Ministerial candidate of the party was a less important factor as compared to the support for the party itself.

A linked issue was the relative importance of the party, candidate and the Prime Ministerial candidate in deciding whom to vote for. Nationally, half of the respondents said the party was the most important factor. Another one-thirds (36%) said it was the candidate and one of every ten said it was the Prime Ministerial candidate. In the case of the BJP voters, the trend was a little different. Close to half (46%) said that it was the party and one-thirds (34%) said it was the candidate and one-sixth (17%) said it was the Prime Ministerial candidate. It is clear that in those states where the BJP had a strong party presence, the Prime Ministerial candidate had a second order of priority. Where the party had a weak leadership at the state level, the Prime Ministerial candidate seems to assume greater significance.

Table 5. Regression Model – Impact of Modi as Prime Ministerial Candidate.

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Data Set.

The model presented here (Table 5) captures the key elements of the argument made above. The reference category in the regression for caste and religion is the Hindu upper caste and the results are interpreted as ‘compared to the Hindu upper castes’. The reference category for the different type of state level competitions is BJP-ruled states.

When it comes to the state categories, in BJP weak states (referred to as BJP not OK states), BJP voters would not have changed their vote if Modi was not the Prime minister candidate. The result is significant. In the states of Himachal Pradesh and Delhi, BJP voters would not have changed their vote even if Modi was not the Prime Ministerial candidate. The result is significant. In opposition-ruled states and where the BJP is the junior partner in the coalition (NDA or Opp states), the BJP voters would have changed their vote if Modi were not the Prime Ministerial candidate. The result is significant. Finally, in BJP strong states, the BJP voters would not have changed their voting preference even if Modi were not the Prime Ministerial candidate. The result is significant.

When it comes to Muslims, compared to Hindu upper castes, they would not have changed their vote preference even if Modi were not the Prime Ministerial candidate. The result is significant. Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and OBCs as compared to Hindu upper castes would have changed their vote if Modi were not the Prime Ministerial candidate. The result is significant.

Summing Up

When the impact of the leadership factor in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls is assessed, one notices that as compared to both 2014 and 2019, it was a factor with a lower degree of salience. Preference for Narendra Modi as the preferred Prime Minister peaked in 2019 and has seen a decline in 2024. The preference remains high among the upper castes and those with access to higher education. Once again, a lower percentage of BJP voters took the stand (in 2024) that they may have changed their voting preference in Modi were not the Prime Ministerial candidate of the BJP (as compared to 2019). Those numbers have fallen from one in every three BJP voters to one in every four.

In states, where the BJP is in power or has a strong presence, the support for the party seems to be the key factor. Where the party is not in power and its organisational base is still developing, the Modi factor appears to have greater salience. Given the high levels of expectations in the BJP to achieve 370+ seats for the BJP and 400+ seats for the NDA, riding on the charisma of its leadership, the results clearly indicate that the leadership factor, in terms of impact, has seen a plateau in 2019. In 2024, the leadership factor did not help in achieving the stellar performance that was expected of the BJP and the NDA, by its supporters.

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