SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN SEIZURES DURING ELECTIONS IN INDIA: A CASE STUDY OF FIVE POLL-GOING STATES

Joseph Lalmalsawma[1], Dr. R. Lalthankhumi[2], Dr. David Rosangliana[3], Vanlalhruaii [4] & Priya Zohmangaihi [5]

[1]Associate Professor, Dept. of Public Administration, Govt. Aizawl West College
Email: josephlmsa.jla@gmail.com
[2]Associate Professor, Dept. of Education, Govt. Aizawl College
Email: khumteiralte@gmail.com
[3]Assistant Professor, Dept. of Mathematics, Govt. Zirtiri Residential Science College
Email: david.gzrsc@gmail.com
[4]Assistant Professor, Govt. Mizoram Law College
Email: vanlalhruaiithangluah@gmail.com
[5]Research Scholar, Dept. of Law, Alliance University, Bangalore
Email: priazohmaii@gmail.com

Abstract:

This research article examines the significant increase in seizures during elections in five poll-going states in India, namely Mizoram, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, and Telangana. The data collected from the Election Commission of India highlights the seizures made since the announcement of the elections, comparing them to previous assembly elections in 2018. The article also discusses the Election Seizure Management System (ESMS), which has facilitated coordination among enforcement agencies and contributed to the rise in seizures. The study emphasizes the Election Commission's commitment to ensuring inducement-free and fair elections by implementing robust measures to monitor and curb electoral malpractices.

Keywords: Election Commission of India, seizures, Election Seizure Management System (ESMS), inducements, electoral malpractices, fairness, technology.

Introduction:

Elections in India are a crucial democratic process that ensures the selection of representatives by the people.[1] However, the increasing influence of money and the distribution of inducements have raised concerns over the fairness and impartiality of elections. To address this issue, the Election Commission of India has implemented various measures, including the Election Seizure Management System (ESMS), to monitor and prevent electoral malpractices. The ESMS facilitates real-time reporting, intelligence sharing, and coordination among enforcement agencies involved in election expenditure monitoring.[2] This research article aims to analyze the impact of such measures in five poll-going states and explore the significant increase in seizures during elections.

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[1] *Electoral Reforms in India, Lok Sabha Secretariat, February 2020*

[2] *Election Commission of India, Compendium of Instructions on Election Expenditure Monitoring (August, 2020), p. 17.*

This research article focuses on the significant increase in seizures during elections in five poll-going states in India: Mizoram, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, and Telangana. By analyzing the data collected from the Election Commission of India, this study aims to highlight the effectiveness of the ESMS and the Election Commission's commitment to ensuring inducement-free and fair elections. Understanding the impact of these measures is crucial for further strengthening the electoral process and safeguarding the democratic principles of India.

Methodology:

This research article utilizes a quantitative approach to analyze the significant increase in seizures during elections in the five poll-going states of Mizoram, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, and Telangana. The methodology involves the collection and analysis of data obtained from the Election Commission of India.

The primary data source for this study is the Election Commission's records, specifically the seizure figures since the announcement of elections in the mentioned states. These seizure figures are categorized into different types, including cash, liquor, drugs, precious metals, and other items. By examining these seizure figures, the study aims to provide insights into the increase in seizures during elections in these states.

Furthermore, comparative data from the previous assembly elections in 2018 is utilized to highlight the increase in seizures. Data from other states is also considered to provide a broader context and comparison.

To understand the impact and effectiveness of the Election Seizure Management System (ESMS), the research also explores this technological tool. The ESMS is an internal app developed by the Election Commission of India to facilitate coordination and intelligence sharing among the enforcement agencies involved in monitoring election expenditures. The study examines the functioning and implementation of the ESMS to understand its contribution to the rise in seizures during elections.
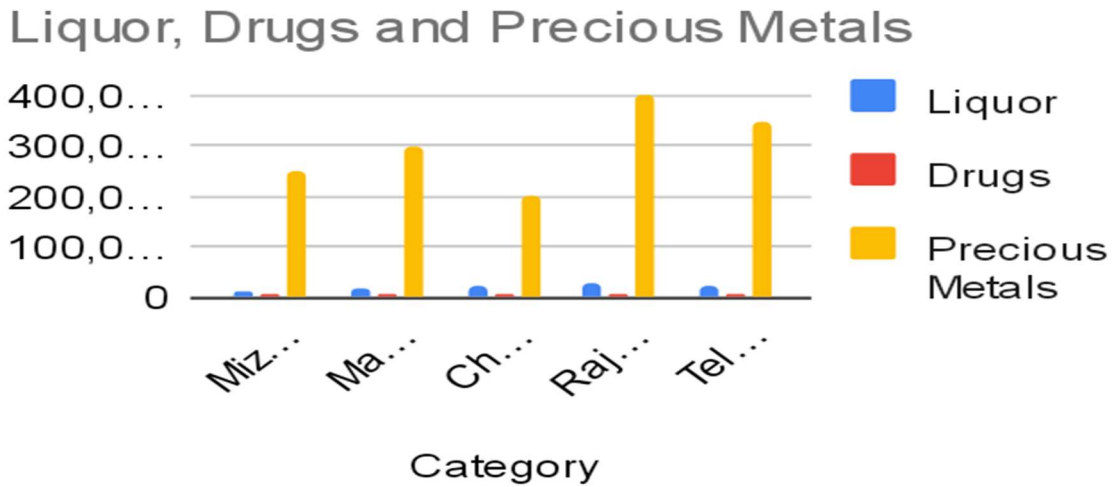
The data collected is then analyzed using statistical methods and presented in the form of tables and figures to provide a clear representation of the increase in seizures during elections in the poll-going states.

It is important to acknowledge that this study is limited to the data provided by the Election Commission of India and the ESMS. Other potential seizures or incidents that were not captured in these sources may not be accounted for. Future research could consider incorporating data from additional sources to enhance the comprehensiveness of the analysis.

Overall, the methodology employed in this research article combines quantitative data analysis, comparison with previous elections, and an examination of the ESMS to shed light on the significant increase in seizures during elections in the poll-going states of Mizoram, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, and Telangana.

Results and Discussion:

The findings reveal a significant increase in seizures in the five poll-going states since the announcement of elections. Compared to the previous assembly elections in 2018, the seizures in

these states have increased by more than sevenfold, totaling over Rs. 1760 crores. This indicates the Election Commission's commitment to ensuring free and fair elections in these states.

Table 1: Seizures in Five Poll-going States (Rs. Crore)

State	Cash (Rs. Cr)	Liquor (Rs. Cr)	Drugs (Rs Cr)	Precious Metals (Rs. Crore)	Freebies and other items (Rs Crore)	Total (Rs. Crore)
Chhattisgarh	20.77	2.16	4.55	22.76	26.68	76.9
Madhya Pradesh	33.72	69.85	15.53	84.1	120.53	323.7
Mizoram	0	4.67	29.82	0	15.16	49.6
Rajasthan	93.17	51.29	91.71	73.36	341.24	650.7
Telangana	225.23	86.82	103.74	191.02	52.41	659.2
Total	372.9	214.8	245.3	371.2	556.02	-1760

Source

*An increase of 636 % as compared to seizure figures during 2018 Assembly Elections in these 5 states

Table 1 presents the seizures made in the five poll-going states, including the amount of cash, liquor, drugs, precious metals, and other items seized since the announcement of elections.

The implementation of the Election Expenditure Monitoring System (ESMS) has played a vital role in coordinating enforcement agencies and streamlining the monitoring process. This internal app has facilitated real-time reporting, intelligence sharing, and enhanced coordination among multiple agencies involved in election expenditure monitoring.

In the recent Assembly Elections, the Election Commission of India has successfully managed to curb electoral malpractices and ensure a level playing field by implementing stringent measures to monitor inducements. This has led to a remarkable increase in seizures in the poll-going states. Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Rajasthan, and Telangana have reported total seizures of over Rs. 1760 crores since the announcement of the elections. These figures represent a seven-fold increase compared to the seizures made during the previous Assembly Elections in 2018.

In Chhattisgarh, a total seizure amount of Rs. 76.9 crores has been reported, with cash, liquor, drugs, precious metals, and freebies and other items being confiscated. Madhya Pradesh follows closely with a seizure amount of Rs. 323.7 crores, primarily consisting of cash, liquor, drugs, precious metals, and freebies and other items. Mizoram has reported a seizure amount of Rs. 49.6 crores, mainly comprising of liquor, drugs, and freebies and other items. Rajasthan has recorded the highest seizure amount among the states, with Rs. 650.7 crores seized, including cash, liquor, drugs, precious metals, and freebies and other items. Telangana has reported a seizure amount of Rs. 659.2 crores, comprising of cash, liquor, drugs, precious metals, and freebies and other items. Overall, the total seizure amount in these poll-going states is an astounding Rs. 1760 crores. This marks a significant increase of 636% compared to the seizure figures during the 2018 Assembly Elections in these states.

Table 2: Seizures Made in Previous 6 State Assembly Elections (Rs. Crore)

State	Total Seizure made during Election in the Year 2017-18 (crores)	Total Seizure made during Election in the Year 2022-23 (crores)	% increase in the Seizure
Himachal Pradesh	9.03	57.24	533.89%
Gujarat	27.21	801.851	2846.90%
Tripura	1.79	45.44	2438.55%
Nagaland	4.3	50.02	1063.26%
Meghalaya	1.16	74.18	6294.80%
Karnataka	83.93	384.46	358.07%
Total	127.416	1413.191	1009.12%

Table 2 compares the seizures made in the previous six state assembly elections, demonstrating a remarkable increase in seizures during the recent elections.
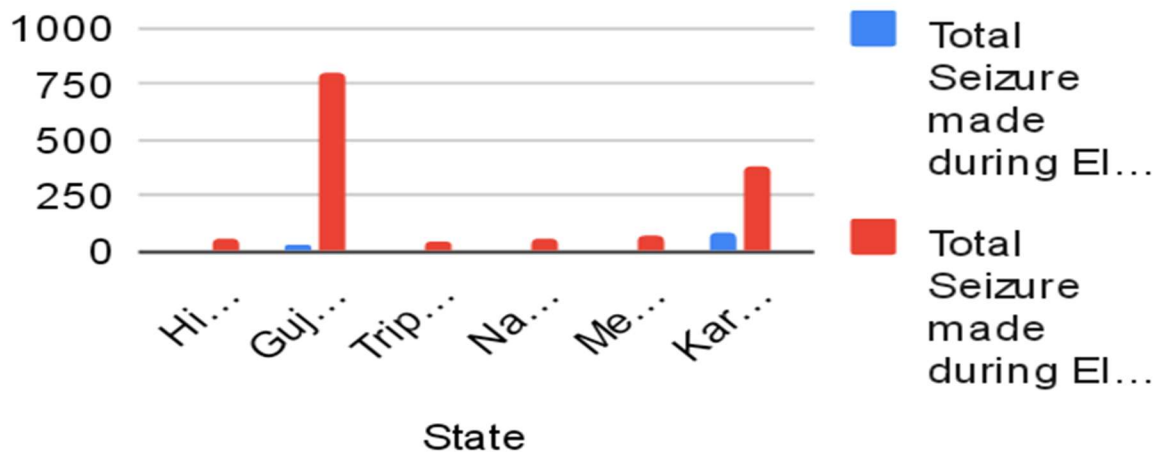
The Election Commission of India has been consistently working towards enhancing the integrity of elections by implementing robust measures to monitor election expenditures and curb inducements. As a result, the seizures made in the past state assembly elections demonstrate the Commission's commitment to ensuring free and fair elections.

In the election year 2017-18, the total seizure amount was Rs. 127.416 crores, while in the year 2022-23, the seizures increased remarkably to Rs. 1413.191 crores. This represents a staggering 1009.12% increase in seizures during these six state assembly elections.

Individual states have also witnessed a significant rise in seizures. Himachal Pradesh recorded a 533.89% increase, Gujarat saw a massive 2846.90% increase, Tripura reported a substantial 2438.55% increase, Nagaland witnessed a notable 1063.26% increase, Meghalaya experienced an astonishing 6294.80% increase, and Karnataka observed a substantial 358.07% increase in seizures compared to the previous assembly elections.

The Election Expenditure Monitoring System (ESMS) has played a crucial role in facilitating coordination and intelligence sharing among enforcement agencies. This technology-driven platform has enabled quick sharing of information, real-time reporting, and better coordination among multiple enforcement agencies involved in monitoring election expenditures.

The Election Commission of India has left no stone unturned in ensuring a fair electoral process. Through visits, reviews, and close monitoring, the Commission has sensitized field forces about the importance of expenditure monitoring and emphasized a zero-tolerance approach towards inducements. Deploying experienced officers as Expenditure Observers and marking specific constituencies as Expenditure Sensitive Constituencies further contributes to the concerted efforts to tackle the menace of money-power.

The ongoing elections in the poll-going states continue to witness vigilant enforcement agencies, and the seizure figures are expected to rise further, reflecting the Election Commission's commitment to maintaining the integrity of the democratic process.

Implications and Recommendations:

The findings of this study have significant implications for electoral integrity and the democratic process. The substantial increase in seizures during the poll-going states demonstrates the effectiveness of the Election Commission's measures in curbing electoral malpractices. The Election Seizure Management System (ESMS) has proved to be a valuable tool in facilitating coordination among enforcement agencies, ensuring real-time reporting, and better monitoring of election expenditure.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

➢ The Election Commission of India should continue strengthening the implementation of the Election Seizure Management System (ESMS) and explore further technological advancements to enhance coordination and intelligence sharing among enforcement agencies.

➢ Regular training and sensitization programs should be conducted for field forces and enforcement agencies to emphasize the importance of expenditure monitoring and the consequences of electoral malpractices.

➢ The Election Commission should consider expanding the scope of the monitoring process beyond seizures to include other forms of electoral misconduct, such as vote-buying, intimidation, and misuse of state resources.

➢ Collaboration and information sharing between the Election Commission and other relevant government departments, such as the income tax department, excise department, and police, should be strengthened to ensure comprehensive monitoring and deterrence of inducements during elections.

Conclusion:

This paper emphasises the significant rise in seizures seen during elections in the five states where polling takes place, so highlighting the Election Commission's steadfast dedication to guaranteeing elections that are devoid of any kind of enticement and characterised by fairness and freedom. The efficacy of the Election Expenditure Monitoring System (ESMS) has been shown in its ability to enhance collaboration among enforcement authorities and facilitate the timely submission of information. The results of this research underscore the need of ongoing surveillance and rigorous measures to combat the circulation of illegal incentives in electoral processes.

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