

Democratic Practices and Youth Political Participation in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

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Abstract— The present study focused on youth political participation in the democratic practices in the Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Pakistan. The study deployed the main theory of Jürgen Habermas ‘The Public Sphere’, this theory indicated that people use to discuss their social and political matters among citizens that able to engage the young people [22]. The study applies a quantitative approach, to survey the youth, the questionnaire developed to collect data from the fields. Youth are the respondents of the study and are selected through simple random sampling technique. The universe of the study is limited to KPK provinces from Pakistan and a sample of a total of 200 respondents are selected for the research purpose. To analyses the data, SPSS was used for frequency distribution and percentage to analyses and coding for the results. The conclusions of the study depicted that youth has a substantial role in the political structure at a local and national level, it is also an advantage for political parties to include youth as a leading subject in their party policy in Pakistan.

Keywords— Youth, Political Participation, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Democratic Practices, Pakistan.

I. INTRODUCTION

The model of democracy, with its potential for integrity and fairness, has been a muse for civilizations over the last numerous epochs. The democratic idea, in reality, is stagnant in development, the intricacies fling up by democratic dogmatic processes have gradually increased to buoyancy and sometimes to dejection. An emergent discussion among government, political parties, media, and academics in recent decades has attentive on youth, principally in terms of political participation. The study attempted to explain the factors that influence and encouraged the youth to participate in democratic activities in Pakistan.

In Pakistan, the majority (two-thirds) of the entire population is under the age of 25 years old, and Pakistan’s is one of the utmost densely inhabited country is facing an insightful changing the demographic situation [1]. The gigantic change in voting behaviour has changed the attention toward new idea about politics in Pakistan, according to the Wikipedia reports, In May 2013 general elections, the potential role of youth in elections has more leading than ever before. The regular participation of youth with political parties has opened new avenues toward politics.

The young generation, is the capital of any country, is maintained by health and education, which can drive the dynamism needed to change the living standards within a group. Besides the opportunities, the youth would have

prospect and compensations if the country is not providing the best opportunities for youth, descend into chaos. Political constancy and strengthening the democratic standards are in the paramount interest of the nation and the role of youth participation in this process is crucial. The study focused the Pakistani youth between the age of 15 and 29 years and it is concerned with understanding their ideas, interests, and major concerns towards the current political situation and political future of Pakistan.

People chose to participate in politics for many reasons. It is the best way for a citizen to participate in political participation to make a significant change in their society. The more people are engaged in politics at the national level, they may better understand the political situation of their country, and they may criticize the government wrongdoings. If any citizen has any problem, they may comprehend the political problems, they will be conscious and easy to combat them. However, if people do have political understanding then it became a political action, then the government will have an understanding of why people are not satisfied. The political participation in any country will lead to strengthening the political system if every citizen can participate then it will become much difficult for any government to ignore their problems. Thus, the rise in engagement in political activities should understand the socio-political problems.

People often are motivated to participate in politics as they are targets of mobilization struggles by political parties and interest groups. People use to participate politically through political socialization or have their own life experience that stimulates them to participate. There are two main factors in political activism such as civic participation and sense of political efficacy can encourage and influence the youth to decide to participate. Keeping in view the political situation in Pakistan, youth are participating in many reasons. People may seek personal satisfaction through the political act, as they are willing to work with their neighbours and others in helping their communities. Voter registration is an important to factor and can impede political participation [2]. A general perception that youth in Pakistan is sensible about political decisions and political involvement to change the political scenario of Pakistan and it is a key feature of this research.

Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) are the two main provinces of Pakistan that are famous for high literacy and

youth involvement in political activities. In the general elections 2013, KPK province has drastically changed the ruling political party and the first time in Pakistan, gave chance to a new national political party [3], it is very rare that female of that province may participate in such activities. This study has significant implications in terms of its uniqueness as it will target the social phenomenon among politics which subsists in Pakistan and given very minor attention in the research so far. The timeframe of this study starting from 2013 to the end of 2018 general elections in Pakistan. Further, this research attempted to fill the breach between theoretical and practical knowledge, as very minimum literature are accessible that investigate and give importance to the role of youth in the political structure of Pakistan, it solely gave an emic standpoint of this research.

Participation is a key that provides a platform to youth to participate in democratic activities in Pakistan [4] and the realm of political participation connects citizens with the democratic process. A scholar [5] discussed the participation, has defined participation as ‘taking a part in policies, processes of formulation’. It is generally accepted that young people are overall apathetic towards democratic practices. The youth is normally categorized as between the 18 to 35 years of old [6].

Family ties and social structure is very strong in Pakistan. The predisposition indicated that social atmosphere, family, caste and its surrounding effects the voting decision and the meaning of predisposition means a propensity focused on the social and inherited factors. Due to strong family system in Pakistan, it is sometimes difficult to change the political choice, the researcher had experienced with his family, and however, Family values may influence the person and his voting behaviour or choice [7].

In Pakistani politics, social media also play a vital role in changing public opinion regarding their voter choices. Such as in these days, social media and electronic media in real shaping people view in general elections. However, regularly participating in political activities aware them toward political issues and government rules and performance [8]. Thus, the media role is to disseminate public information and formal and informal discussion on the various forums. This role of media also portrays the political and economic interests and even discuss unpopular debates [9].

Youth participation in this circumstance refers to the dynamic involvement of characters to participate in democratic practices. Young people are participating rigorously in implementing the international development agenda and strengthening sustainable development goals [10]. In the light of the attention in Pakistani media concerning the youth participation in 2013 Pakistani elections [11], young Pakistanis are increasingly participated in mainstream politics and their views to mobilize young and old people to vote for certain political agents. The study highlighted that to motivate the elders to vote for a specific party is indeed a tough activity, however, youth in Pakistan is struggling to change the political scenario.

The Pakistani youth is a vivacious human resource and it is also available in high quantity. The young talent is deployed in the social, economic, political and ideological development of the country. It is also intended that other countries have such experiences that youth has a positive role in political and social change in the society. Keeping in view the situation of Pakistani youth, the Government of Pakistan should create such opportunities to groom and create capabilities of youth to make them productive and useful member of the society [12].

A. RESEARCH QUESTION

1. Does youth in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) are participating in the political landscape?
2. What are the factors that influence youth to participate in political matters?

B. VOTING IN PAKISTAN

Pakistan is a federal state which is based on local, provincial and central administration, citizens can vote for local, provincial and national assemblies. It has two types of elections, one is local body election and other is a general national election. The voting age of the voters is above 18th years and it refers to the youth age [13]. The term voting is defined to take a part in democratic politics, this will help to elect the leadership to lane the government affairs. The purpose of voting is to give a chance to the citizen to take part in state matters instead of the inactive political process. The most common form of political participation is exercising the right to vote in general elections [14].

Political parties in Pakistan have changed their voter orientation and focused on youth to be a part of active participation in party activities. According to the statistics, the number of registered voters in the country are under the age of 18-30 years are 35% while 58% of the voters under the age of 18-40 years [15]. Voter association has a great impact on Pakistani politics, the major is the caste system. The caste system is influential and it is a matter of status or social stratification in Pakistan. The head of the political parties are associated with caste, their voting campaign usually figures through the caste channels and political association is close to families and villages. It is a culture in Pakistani society, elder people want to ensure that youngsters should hold a strong attachment with their caste. Keeping in view the voting and caste influence on voter has restricted the youth to refrain the participation in political matters, it is also stated that there are other reasons also those stopped them to vote for other candidates [16].

C. Corrupt politicians in Pakistan

In Pakistan, 60 per cent of the country population is under the age of 30, but unfortunately keeping the majority of the young population they are not involved in the government policies, author [12] explained that Pakistani youth does not truth on the Government. It is identified that young people claimed that the government is not interested to take measures for them. However, the politicians are involved in corruption that causes the youth to come out for protests and taking a part in the political structure of Pakistan.

Youth in Pakistan believe that the persistence of Pakistan in an independent and strong judiciary. In a study conducted [17], explained that 80 per cent of the political parties is inherently corrupted in Pakistan. Furthermore, the poor repute of candidates, parties, leaders and most important corruption is a problem near to youth and that this the main factor that influenced youth to change the political system of Pakistan.

D. WHAT DOES POLITICAL PARTICIPATION MEAN?

Participation in any political structure reflects the frequency of democracy. It is an important sector in the political structure. The term ‘political participation’ defined [18] ‘any activity that has to intend or effect the influence on Government acts by directly establishing the public policy and indirectly pressurize the policymakers and candidates for specific cause’.

In the world record, [19] mentioned that the best democracies that include citizens to participate who possess a high level of political knowledge and political efficacy. A renowned author [20] declared that political participation signifies to normal citizens who are serious to have actual behaviour can sensitize governments policies and decisions. Thus, [19], [21] thoroughly explained political participation refers to engaging in political activities, such as, voting, boycott, campaigns, or donating to political parties.

Public sphere theorist [22] depicted that the public sphere is a system of transmitting data purpose and perspective. The discussion among public bodies examines in an unimpeded way that is to ensure the authenticity to express their feelings and that show the freedom about the general matters. In this perspective, the author [23] found that public sphere offered several opportunities for political seepage and it addresses new approaches to affect the parliamentary issues and maintained politically active.

II. HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

(H1) There is an association between social media and political efficacy.

(Ho) There is no any association between political efficacy and political participation.

Testing of the hypothesis

H1: Youth with higher efficacy will be more likely to participate in political activities.

The hypothesis shown that, the estimated effects of political efficacy is that the greater the individual feels that government is responsive to one’s political goals and desires, the more likely one is to engage in political activities designed to make a direct influence on government activities, such as voting, attending rallies, and working directly for members of government. The study found that, the attitudinal determinants of political behaviour with respect to efficacy. The perceptions the electorate hold on their ability to participate effectively in politics are a large influence on their decision to participate [34]. These efficacious attitudes are one of the important factors individuals employ in turnout decision-making processes. Judgments of effectual influence are broken down into two types: internal and external

efficacy. A scholar [30] demonstrated that efficacy breaks down into these two pairs, each exhibiting different patterns of association with values and beliefs such as political trust. Both forms of efficacy indicate the degree to which an individual feels he/she can influence the political system [30].

III. MATERIAL AND METHOD

The present study opted quantitative research methodology and the purpose of quantitative research methodology is to gain opinion from all respondents. The respondents having the political background are part of the study. The theoretical framework of the public sphere and youth political participation developed to gain the actual findings. The universe of the study is limited to the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan. In the KPK, district Dera Ismail Khan and its 4 sub tehsils were selected. The total of 200 samples collected from public, universities and colleges. Proper permission taken from district authorizes to collect the data from the fields.

IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The current study opted on the famous theory of Jürgen Habermas ‘The Public Sphere’. This theory discussed that people in common places use to discuss their matters in public spheres [22]. This is how the youth in Pakistan are participating in the dialogues with the public at public spheres.

V. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

This part of the paper describe the result and analysis of the study.

Table 1: Result discussion on Gender, Age, Living area, and Education of the respondents.

Sr. #	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Area of Residence of the Respondent from KPK			
i.	Urban	93	46.5
ii.	Semi Urban	107	53.5
	Total	200	100.0
Age of the respondents (in years)			
i.	18-22	164	82.0
ii.	23-26	32	16.0
iii.	27-29	4	2.0
	Total	200	100.0
Gender of the respondents			
i.	Male	130	65.0
ii.	Female	70	35.0
	Total	200	100.0
City of the respondents			
i.	Dera Ismail Khan	50	25.0
ii.	Kulachi	50	25.0
iii.	Paharpur	50	25.0
iv.	Paroa	50	25.0
	Total	200	100.0
Educational qualification			
i.	Matriculation	9	4.5
ii.	Intermediate	80	40.0
iii.	Master & above	111	55.5
	Total	200	100.0

The table discussed the socio-demographic status of the respondents, i.e. area residence, gender, educational attainment and city. The table results demonstrate the result of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and its four (4) tehsils (sub-districts) selected for higher voter turnout. The present study

conducted in these four sub-districts with a sampled population of 200 respondents. Among the respondents, 50 (25%) belonged to Dera Ismail Khan, 50 (25%) respondents were from Kulachi, 50 (25%) from Paharpur and 50 (25%) belonged to Paroa. More than half (53.5%) of the respondents are living in the semi-urban area while less than half (46.5%) are living in urban areas. The table also discussed the age of the respondents, as age indicated the level respondents, age also indicates the significant character of this research, thus majority (82%) of the respondents belonged to the age group of 18-22 years while the age group 23-25 are 16% respectively. In social researches, age affects the attitude of a person.

The table further explained the gender segregation, more than high (65%) of the respondents are belongs to a female. It

additionally exemplifies that female in KPK are more active to participate in political activities. It is also found that women in KPK are more likely to participate in politics [33]. The table also portrays the educational attainment of the respondents, which is thus categorized that, matriculation, intermediate, Master and above level of education. The data reported that more than half (55.5%) of the respondents did Master and above while nearly one third (40.0%) got inter-level of education, 4.5% had passed matriculation level and few are students and working in some fields. It is observed that people having a higher educational background may more be engaged in political participation and it is also predicted that voting and political participation are more cited with educational attainments [24].

Table 2 How often respondents participation in political activities?

Sr. #	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Do you participate or have interests in social activities around you			
i.	I participate	125	62.5
ii.	I cannot participate	75	37.5
	Total	200	100.0
Up to what extent do you have interest in Politics?			
i.	Very interested	169	84.5
ii.	Fairly interested	31	15.5
	Total	200	100.0
At which level of politics you are interested			
i.	Local	101	50.5
ii.	National	42	21.0
iii.	International	57	28.5
	Total	200	100.0
Do you have anyone in your family who is interested in politics?			
i.	Yes	139	69.5
ii.	No	61	30.5
	Total	200	100.0
Whom have you got political interests and inspiration?			
i.	Family	30	15.0
ii.	Relatives	77	38.5
iii.	Friends	31	15.5
iv.	Neighbor	62	31.0
	Total	200	100.0
Is it important for you that your friends have the same political opinion as yours			
i.	Fairly important	32	16.0
ii.	Not very important	46	23.0
iii.	Very important	109	54.5
iv.	Not at all important	13	6.5
	Total	200	100.0

Table 2 shows the respondents' participation in their political activities. Majority of the respondents (62.5%) mentioned that they are participating or have interests in social activities around them while around little more than 37.5% of the respondents are less interested in social and political activities in their society. Whenever the researcher asked to what extent you are interested in politics, they raised 'very interested' and a high majority are interested (84.5%) in political activities whereas, 15.5% are 'fairly interested' in politics.

The researcher discussed their level of interests in local, National and International level of politics. It is [32] clarified that casual or informal social interaction, particularly two-

way communication (peers/friends) where politics is discussed, influences the predominance of political behaviour, whether at local, government or regional level. However, more than half (50.5%) of the respondents are more interested in local political activities, 21% of the respondents are interested in at a national level of politics while 28.5% of the respondents are interested in the International level of politics. The table also shows the respondents' families' interests in politics, the majority (69.5%) having political interests from their families while Less than half 30.5% of the respondent's families are not interested in politics.

Table 3. How often do you follow politics-oriented news (political event) on following channels?

Sr.#	Category	DA	OW	STW	RA	Total
i.	Follow politics-oriented news (political event) on Television	66.5% (133)	-	33.5% (67)	-	100% (200)
ii.	Follow politics-oriented news (political event) on Radio	70.5% (141)	1% (2)	28.5% (57)	-	100% (200)
iii.	Follow politics-oriented news (political event) on Newspaper	-	61% (122)	39% (78)	-	100% (200)
iv.	Follow politics-oriented news (political event) on Social Media	61 % (122)	-	39% (78)	-	100% (200)

The impact of social media may not be so different from the impact of other major shifts in technologies of information. Previous work has suggested that technology like the radio [25], television [26] and even newspapers had profound implications for the dynamics of political life, although empirical results about the effects of these technologies are mixed. Table 4 depicted the respondents how often they are following the political orient news on social media, Television, Radio and Print newspaper (English/Urdu), More than half (66.5%) of the respondents are regularly following politics-oriented news (political event) on Television while 33.5% of the respondents are following several times in a week.

Furthermore, Majority (70.5%) of the respondents are daily following politics-oriented news (political event) on Radio by using mobile phone and radio, 1% of the respondents are following once a week while 28.5% of the respondents are following ‘several times in a week’ political news on radio news bulletin or channels, however, it is very common that local radio channels usually tune political awareness messages and talk during the elections seasons.

Newspapers publications are information about current events, such politics news. More than half (61%) of the respondents are ‘once in a week’ reading politics-oriented news on Newspaper while little more than half (39%) are reading and following ‘several times in a week’ political-

oriented news on local and national newspapers either in English and Urdu. Besides, news sites people visited online provide more diverse perspectives than their offline social networks that are associated with volunteer groups, work, or geographical communities [27]. Furthermore, youth participation in online political and/or non-political communities is positively correlated with an interest in future offline civic activities [28]. The participation in social media, higher the percentage (61%) of the respondents are ‘regularly’ following politics-oriented news on Social Media, while 39% of the respondents are using ‘several times in a week’ to post, read and write comments on political literatures.

Use of social media and politics

Although there are several emergent forms of media, all of which are sometimes referred to as social media, while social media refers to sites like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter which represent new forms of socially embedded, networked, real-time information exchange that did not exist in the early days of the internet. Early social media websites such as MySpace, Friendster and eventually Facebook, started as a way to create spaces for the exchange of information within social networks, and for expanding those networks online. Indeed, Facebook, now the most popular social media site in the world [29], thus, in Pakistan youngsters are using these networks to show and share their political affiliations and tactics to support and argue state, during the election campaign it is quite normal.

Table 4: Indicated the reason of political active?

DA=Disagree, N=Neutral, AG=Agree, SA=strongly agree

S. #	Category	DA	N	AG	SA	Total
1	Does your role is important in the society	20.5% (41)	14% (28)	21.5% (43)	44% (88)	100% (200)
2	You meet influential people during your affiliation in politics.	8.5% (17)	17% (34)	29.5% (59)	45% (90)	100% (200)

The term political active goes to the tight engagement in politics, thus an individual may understand the political issues, criticize and can analyse the government decisions, and would have its own opinion to fix the problems. Being more political active, thus, less than half (44%) of the respondents are strongly agreed that is youth are interested to make a role to make a better society, and less than half (45%) of the respondents state that it is fascinating to become politically active that also provides opportunity to meet with powerful politicians and influential people. However, social change is the part of society and democracy can change their nature, according to the respondents that are a key role to change democracy. The chance to participate in politics [31] argue that involvement in politics introduces youth to “participatory politics.”

VI. CONCLUSION

The presented study has the number of findings which indicated that youth have a significant role in the political structure of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. Youth are participating in politics from different platforms, such as social media, watching news channels and participating in local discussions with their peers and families. Majority of the respondents strongly agreed that for them it is important to play a part to change society. The level of interests in local, national and international are quite high. This is also found that majority of the respondents are aspiring political knowledge from their relatives, thus it is certified that family values may influence the person and his voting behaviour or choice [7]. Young people are also conscious, the level of higher education depicted the higher tendency of politics, and hence educational attainment is often cited as the best predictor of voting and political participation [24]. Furthermore, away from the benefit to the social and political contexts activists engage in, there is growing evidence that participation in and activism can result in a range of youth benefits that includes identity development, reductions in problem behaviours, and the promotion of positive development in the community.

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