

Paradigm Shift in the Political Landscape of Pakistan

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Abstract

Background: In Pakistan, the political landscape is an essential component that has gained attention from youth involvement. Keeping in view the current situation in Pakistan various factors have resulted in the youth's political engagement.

Research Aim: The goal of this study is to explore the dynamic of the paradigm shift in the political landscape of Pakistan.

Methodology: A quantitative-based research, the sample was gathered through a random sampling technique from 200 youngsters in Pakistan. The data was investigated using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Results: The results showed that technological, social, economic, cultural, and global factors influence the engagement and participation of youth in political matters. Social media has been shown as a major platform for providing political awareness and mobilization.

Conclusion: The engagement of youth in politics resulted in creating awareness regarding social and political matters, it was suggested that an increase in participation will increase political efficiency.

Keywords: Political Unrest, Pakistani Politics, Youth's Political Engagement, Political Awareness.

Introduction

Since 1947, Pakistan has observed an unstable democratic system because of the military intervention in the country's politics (Fahad, 2018). In 1970, there have been observed unfair elections for which nobody has taken a stand because of a lack of awareness or not having enough legislation can support the right to free speech (Jalal, 1995). After, the introduction and rise of electronic media all the information, news, and events are available in one click. The spreading role of media has affected almost every society, country, economy, and politics because the media is becoming a major influencer of the world that influences individual beliefs, opinions, perceptions, and thoughts (Wigfield & Eccles, 1992).

The participation of youth has resulted in social and political vanguards in the political landscape and within their own life as well (Sloam et al., 2022). The participation of youth in politics is vital for political stability. In this study, we try to focus on the youth of Pakistan between the ages of 18-30 years to understand their ideas, interest, and major concern regarding the political condition of Pakistan. There have been a lot of factors and indicators for youth participation in democratic activities (Banaji, 2008). In previous literature, it is stated that the more individuals are engaged in political activities the more they can understand the political conditions of the country and may criticize the wrongdoings of the government (Saud, 2020) and bring about positive change by their active participation. According to Llewellyn and Westheimer (2009), youth with a political background and understanding showed prominent action and participation the political campaigns and activities, this will lead to strengthening of the political system.

It can be said that the political landscape of Pakistan has been witnessing significant development and growth in recent years through the active involvement and evolving perspectives of youth. The past political discourses have been observed in shaping the political ideologies and youth engagement in Pakistan. This paradigm shift in the political landscape has been attributed to youth engagement and signifies a prominent transformation in Pakistan's politics.

Research Gap

Despite the engagement of youth in Pakistan's politics, this has remained a significant gap in the research which fails to address the nature, factors, indicators, and implications of this paradigm shift. The existing literature has failed to comprehensively study the factors, motivators,

and burgeoning youth trends within politics.

Research Aim

The purpose of this study is to explore the dynamic of the paradigm shift in the political landscape of Pakistan concerning the active involvement, participation, and engagement of youth.

Research Objectives

- To explore the key drivers that increased youth participation in Pakistan's politics.
- To evaluate the impact of youth on the political condition of the country.

Factors and Indicators of Youth Engagement

Technological Progression

As technology progresses in Pakistan, the increasing access to the internet and media has encouraged youth the access information regarding politics, to connect with several political platforms, and to express political opinion (Loader, 2007). The spread of smartphones and internet connection has expanded the information which enabled the youth to stay informed regarding the political situation of the country. Social media sites, networks, and the internet have played a vital role in mobilizing and organizing campaigns and youth movements in politics (Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia, 2014). Technological development has leveraged such platforms through which youth can organize or participate in political campaigns, this has resulted in overcoming the issues of social justice as well as political reforms. To conclude this digital advancement has promoted mobilization and resulted in amplifying collective voices (Hussain, et al., 2023).

Desire for Change

The youth in Pakistan is against the current political structure, conditions, political, economic, and social status, and corruption (Lall, 2014). These are the drivers that have resulted in growing dissatisfaction among the youth which yearns and demands for an improved government and believes transformative actions are necessary to desire for a change. The participation of youth in the changing movements serves as an indicator of the youth's commitment to change (Checkoway, 2012), the active involvement of youth in civil political

change campaigns, and the participation of youth in public protests and rallies regarding an issue showcase desire for change against the injustice and inadequacy in the political system (Genova, 2018).

Awareness and Education

In the current political condition of Pakistan, the rise of education in the youth has brought about awareness regarding the political rights, social issues, and duties of the government (Muzaffar, 2020). According to Kuehn and Lofgren (2019), Education in youth has fostered critical thinking, empowerment, and encouragement which results in the active participation of youth in political activities and campaigns. It was observed that the educational background of the youth and the high level of education are associated with a deeper understanding of complex political structures (Lauglo, 2011). According to Rana (2014), the role of education is important for an individual since it develops constructive skills. Education can foster critical thinking in the youth which will enhance the analytical skills that would benefit the youth in understanding the political information critically with facts and can give their opinions on political conditions and matters. An awareness of ongoing political events and conditions with understanding of broader political landscape could help in understanding of political process and their ideologies (Seippel et al., 2018).

Economic Challenges

The intertwining of economic challenges and youth participation has become a prominent feature in defining the political landscape of Pakistan. The fluctuation in the economic conditions of Pakistan which includes inflation, poor governance, low literacy rate, energy crisis, and unemployment have encouraged the youth to engage themselves in politics (Achakzai et al., 2023). The high level of unemployment among youth creates frustration among the youth and drives them to seek political solutions that could provide them with economic opportunities (Ajaegbu, 2012). The rising cost of living and inflation results in building economic pressure that influences the perception of the youth in raising their voice (Aziz et al., 2014). Another indicator would be low entrepreneurial barriers because the unstable economic conditions cause a rise in the political movement in demand for a more conducive economic environment (A. Ali et al., 2014). According to Saud et al. (2023), the youth in Pakistan seek policies and opportunities that entertain their

desires and aspirations (Ahmad, Thomas, & Hamid, 2020).

Social and Cultural Differences

According to Critelli and Willett (2013), the active participation of youth in the politics of Pakistan showed the rich tapestry of social and cultural differences that showcase the diverse fabric of the country. The varied views and opinions of different social and cultural people act as a main indicator because youth participation in political activities is based upon the cultural values that reflect social and cultural differences (Sloam, 2016), the embedment of culture in the political activism indicates that cultural identity with political expressions expresses the fusion of tradition and youth participation (Coe & Vandegrift, 2015) and the interlink between the gender and cultural norm influences the political participation (Dalton, 2008).

Global Influence and Regional Dynamics

Pakistan's exposure to global political movements and the impact of regional dynamics greatly influences the political views of the youth (Fuller, 2003). The movements which include climate activism, regional change in sociopolitical conditions, and global protest resulted in changing the perspective of the youth in Pakistan (Karamat & Farooq, 2020). The influence of the regional crisis on youth such as conflicts of neighboring countries gives insight into how these geopolitical situations shape the political consciousness of youth (Kadiwal & Durrani, 2018). There is great influence of the role of international media, news, outlets, and platforms in shaping the opinion of the youth to showcase their engagement with global networks (Hafeez, Iqbal, & Imran, 2021).

Social Media Influence

Social media have benefited and allotted space for the youth to express their opinion, thoughts, and beliefs (Kushin & Yamamoto, 2013). According to Ghafoor and Raja (2022), the social media application have gained popularity in these recent years and contributed towards exchange of knowledge and education. It is a platform that can be used in organizing movements and campaigns, through this the youth is participating in online political discussions. According to Jenkins (2016), social media has lowered the barrier to entry into political engagement and thus helped the youth actively and easily participate in the movements. The youth can create their own

blogs, content, and videos which indicates the youth's initiatives in contributing to political discussions (R. Ali & Fatima, 2016). According to R. Ali and Fatima (2016), the power of social media can be determined by the influence of viral trends regarding politics on social media can change the overall perception and opinion of youth.

Aspirations for a Better Future

In Pakistan, the youth constantly aim for a better future they see participation and involvement in politics as a means of shaping the future (Lall, 2014) and by this, the youth ensure that their voices are heard in the decision-making process and policy formation. The active participation of youth in the programs and campaigns that operate with a motive of future change, and the engagement of youth in the educational initiatives which include the programs that promote skills development and knowledge enhancement indicates youth engagement in building a more educated society (Sathar et al., 2016) and pursuing the entrepreneurial ventures by youth showcase the contribution towards economic growth and advancement for a better future (Qureshi et al., 2021).

Methodology

Data Collection

The current study is based on quantitative descriptive research. To investigate the research objectives and aim a survey was conducted to gather the data for this research. The respondent of the study belonged to the 18 to 30 years of age group, the sample of 200 respondents was chosen with random sampling technique for the analysis.

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire contains socio-economic details which include gender, age, residence of urban or rural area, and the educational background of the respondents. The survey comprises questions to gather insight into the indicators and motivators of youth participation in the politics of Pakistan, the items were measured with a 5-point Likert scale which includes measuring items “Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree” to analyze the perceived and expected success from the demographic variable.

Ethical Consideration

Before initiating the research, all potential ethical considerations were made. The participant willingly took part in the survey and gave consent to publish the data except for the revelation of their identity because of confidentiality issues. However, to make the demographic details accessible the consensus was given, as they were part of the questionnaire and research design.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using SPSS-25 Software, where the analysis of univariate and bivariate was done to examine the outcomes of the study.

Results

Table 1 shows the socioeconomic factors of the respondents where the majority of the respondents are male (f=120, 60%) and female (f= 80, 40%). The table showed that most of the respondents were of the age group 18-21 years (f= 70, 35%) and 22 to 26 years (f=90, 45%), this resulted that the youth between the age of 18-25 years are more active and engaged in the politics this suggests a positive indicator for the political participation of youth in Pakistan. The table further showed that the majority of respondents are living in the urban areas about (f=140, 70%), whereas, about (f=60, 30%) respondents are living in the rural areas this showed that respondents who are living in urban areas are more politically aware regarding the political structure of the country. Moreover, the majority of respondents have a Bachelor's degree (f=120, 60%) and Master's degree (f=39, 19.5%), while few numbers of respondents have done matriculation (f=11, 5.5%) and intermediate (f=30, 15%), this concluded that the youth who are more educated tends to be more actively participate in political campaigns.

Table 1. Sociodemographic Details of the Respondents

No	Socioeconomics Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Total Sample Size		200	100%
Gender Classification			
01	Male	120	60%
02	Female	80	40%
Age Group			
01	18 to 21 years	70	35%
02	22 to 26 years	90	45%

03	27 to 30 years	40	20%
Rural or Urban Resident			
01	Urban	140	70%
02	Rural	60	30%
Educational Background			
01	Matriculation	11	5.5%
02	Intermediate	30	15%
03	Bachelors	120	60%
04	Masters	39	19.5%

Table 2 shows the factors that encouraged the participation of youth in political activities. The respondents were provided with a questionnaire that consisted of a questionnaire of the given variables. The responses showed that when the respondents were asked regarding the ‘*Technological Progression*’ majority of the respondents 62.5% strongly agreed and 17.5% agreed and claimed that the fusion of technology has made access to information easy and has motivated the youth in political participation, the second variable ‘*Desire for Change*’ showed greater interest about 65% from the respondents who demands a complete transformation in the political conventional norm and belief that their active participation is essential for addressing the challenges. The respondents were asked to share their opinion regarding ‘*Awareness and Education*’ a high number of youths 60% said that as education expands the youth are more actively engaged in the democratic process. The following description regarding ‘*Economic Challenges*’ showed that about 45% considered the economic factors of Pakistan as the motivator for the youth in the active involvement in the political process (Imran, et al., 2022).

For the ‘*Social and Cultural Difference*’, about 50% of the participants were uncertain regarding the influence of youth political participation following their social and cultural differences. The majority of the respondents about 45% were agreed with ‘*Global Influence and Regional Dynamics*’ and considered that the youth majorly influenced by international events and global dynamics. For the factor of ‘*Social Media Influence*’ the majority of the respondents about 75% strongly agree and declare that social media has revolutionized the political landscape of Pakistan, the introduction of social sites resulted in the youth acquiring knowledge about political conditions and issues. Lastly, the respondent was asked to give their opinion regarding ‘*Aspiration for a Better Future*’ the majority of participants about 62.5% agreed and said that the desire for a positive change underpins the commitment of youth to political activism and participation.

Table 2. Responses Regarding Factors of Youth Engagement (in %)

Factors of Youth Engagement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1 Technological Progression	62.5	17.5	12.5	5	2.5
2 Desire for Change	65	20	10	2.5	2.5
3 Awareness and Education	60	25	10	3.5	1.5
4 Economic Challenges	45	30	15	5	5
5 Social and Cultural Influence	15	15	50	10	10
6 Global Influence and Regional Dynamics	35	45	10	7.5	2.5
7 Social Media Influence	75	15	5	2.5	2.5
8 Aspiration for a Better Future	62.5	20	12.5	4	1
Total	53.75	21.43	15.5	5	3.43

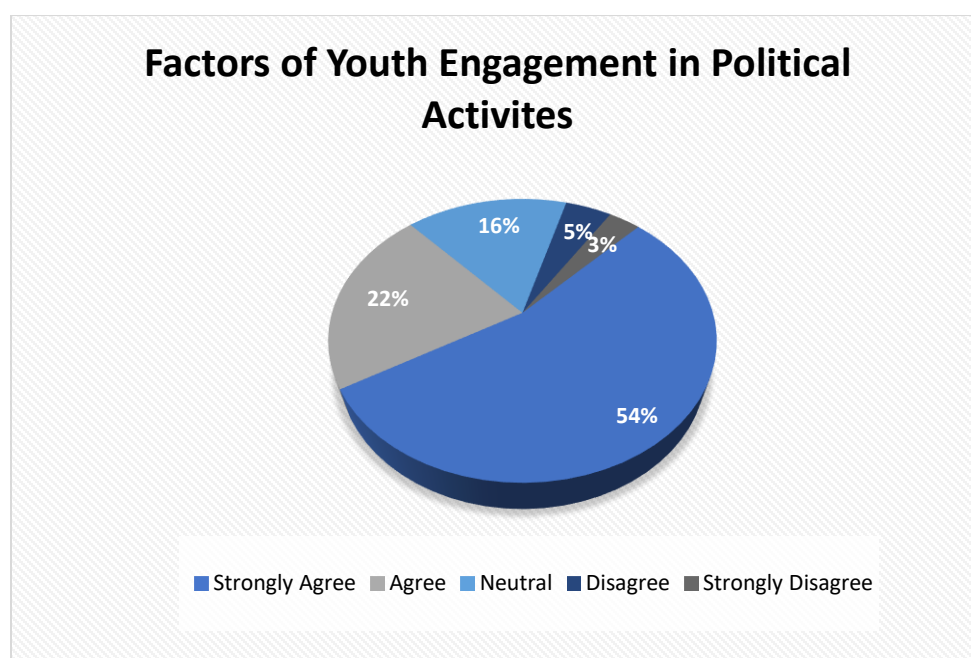


Figure 1. Graphical Representation of % for the Youth Engagement in Political Activities

The results concluded that the majority of the respondents agreed with the above-stated factors, the most prominent factor was social media influence with a 75% of strongly agree rate. Moreover, around 50% of the respondents were uncertain about the factor of social and cultural differences whereas, the least strongly disagreed rate about 1% was acquired for aspiration for a better future.

Discussion

This present study was conducted on the current paradigm shift in the political landscape of Pakistan. The current survey in this study was to examine the factors and their indicators that promote political participation and efficacy among the youth. The variables that were used in the study including sociodemographic characteristics showed that the youth is engaged in the democratic process and political activities of Pakistan.

The findings of the study suggest that technological progression has empowered the youth by providing them access to information, and the ability to connect with the individuals and platforms where the youth can express their political views and expressions. The finding of this study was similar to the study conducted by Ejaz (2013), which states that information technology has facilitated the youth and emerged as an encompassing tool within politics. The desire for change has emerged as a driver within the youth that actively seeks platforms and reforms where they can express their dissatisfaction with the political and economic condition of the country with the aim of positive transformation. This finding was in line with the study of Jenkins (2016), which claims that youth seek platforms for effective political change. According to Rana and Tuba (2015), technology has also greatly impacted education positively. Whereas, the results showed that awareness and education play a pivotal role in creating political awareness, critically analyzing political events, and participating in political discussion. Similar findings were suggested by Saud (2020), who claims that education helps in creating awareness and promoting political knowledge among the youth of Pakistan.

Further findings of the study suggest that the economic challenges include unemployment and income inequality among youth which demand policies that address these economic differences and provide them with more economic opportunities. The finding was consistent with the study conducted by Kemal (2006), which declared that unemployment and income inequality have raised awareness among the educated youth of Pakistan, which resulted in the active participation of youth in the demand for effective policies. The findings of social and cultural differences indicated the diversity in social and cultural aspects did not have any impact on youth engagement in political activities. The result was similar to the study conducted by Henn and Foard (2014), which claims that socio-cultural differences have little impact on the political views, opinions, and thinking of the youth. Moreover, global influence and regional dynamics showed that there is a great impact of international events on the local political landscape of Pakistan. A similar result was shown in the study by Khan et al. (2023), which states that the dynamics of

Pakistan have a great influence on the global and regional flux. On the other hand, the findings of social media have showcased that the participants were uncertain and did not consider the social and cultural differences in the engagement and participation of youth in political activities. It has emerged as a powerful force that could influence opinion and serve as a catalyst for future change. Similar results were stated by Gil de Zúñiga et al. (2012), social media is a center of information that enables the user to be connected with the updated with the recent and updated information and events. According to another study by Kolachi and Memon (2022), through evolution of social media finding out people's preferences and information has become easy. Lastly, the results showed that aspiration for a better future encourages youth to actively participate in campaigns and programs that support the motive of a more equitable and progressive society. The finding was inconsistent with the study by Brown (2011), which declares that the youth who are encouraged for a better future show great participation in the political programs that support slogans like better world or better future.

The findings reveal that the engagement of youth in politics resulted in awareness regarding social and political matters, it was suggested that an increase in the participation of youth in politics will increase the political efficiency that would impact the political conduct of youth in Pakistan.

Conclusion

To conclude, the paradigm shift in the political landscape in Pakistan is due to the engagement and participation of youth which is a multifaced phenomenon that resulted in response to technological, social, economic, cultural, and global factors. The active participation of youth in politics reflects the desire for positive change which is driven by awareness of education, global and longing for a better future. Social media has served as a major platform in providing political awareness and for digital activism. The policymakers should realize the interconnectedness of these factors so that they can promote an environment that could encourage education, inclusivity, and participation of youth in meaningful democratic processes in Pakistan.

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