



Political Attitude towards Democracy among students: The Case of District Bhakkar

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Abstract: The objective of this research paper is to analyze the political attitude of students towards democracy. For this purpose, we compared the perspectives of university and madrasa students in District Bhakkar using secondary data and qualitative content analysis. According to findings, university students generally exhibited a more positive attitude towards democratic values, while madrasa students reflected a more conservative and skeptical stance. Socioeconomic background and educational exposure emerged as significant influencing factors on political orientation. We suggest that educational curricula should be revised to promote democratic understanding and civic engagement, as students are the future pillars of democratic development.

Keywords: Democracy, Political Attitudes, Governance, University Students, Madrasa Students.

1. Introduction

Democracy is widely recognized as the most effective form of governance in the contemporary world, based on the principles of liberty, representation and active citizenship. Therefore, the evaluation of perceived attitudes towards governance mainly regarding democracy and its impact within the population or particular groups is significant in measuring its sustainability and efficiency. Political attitudes which include the opinions, perceptions and even values that people have concerning political affairs, leaders and occurrences are significant predictors of democracy.

Political attitude means the opinions and values that individuals hold about political issues, events, and personalities. They routinely get reflected in our discussions, debates, and critical thinking activities that can facilitate understanding of complicated democratic ideas. University education encourages critical thinking by challenging conventional knowledge, questioning authoritative figures, and vigorously advocating for social change. There are four main types of radicals: liberals, conservatives, reactionaries, and political views. These categories can be differentiated from each other (O'Neil, 2009).

In the context of Pakistan there exists two-tier education system: modern schools, colleges & universities and Islamic madrasas. The influence of these institutions on development of political perceptions among the students is immense. It is therefore a necessity to have a clear understanding of the political perceptions defining student populations drawn from these different streams of education for Pakistan's democracy to function and be sustainable.

Students, in many universities, come from all walks of society. They get introduced to different fields of knowledge. Much of their participation in debates, critical discussions, and analytical exercises usually leads to developing a

Ahmad et al: Political Attitude towards Democracy among students: The Case of District Bhakkar

better appreciation of the tenets of democracy. University education also cultivates critical thinking, whereby students are taught to question the status quo and authorities, leading to advocacy for civil liberties, equal opportunities for all, and liberties of citizens. Furthermore, the freedom embraced in the universities blends the students with different political, religious, and cultural standing, which fosters tolerance and acceptance of diversity in societies governed by democracy.

On the other hand, most of the madrassa students are from the low-income background, attending schools with education based on Islamic principles. The curriculum of madrassas is basically concentrated in Islamic subjects and memorization of scriptures. As a result, madrassa students have a tendency to understand democracy in the light of Islamic teaching and when they feel that certain Islamic values are diametrically opposed to democratic principles, they may have certain level of scepticism or ambiguity towards that system. The influence of the Islamic law that emphasizes justice equity and obedience to Allah also plays a central role in the formation of their Political stance (Arslan, 2015).

The principal aim of this research is to compare and contrast the political attitudes of university and madrassa students regarding democracy in Pakistan and the factors that influence these orientations and thus, the potential impact on political engagement and democracy in Pakistan.

Past research emphasizes the need to measure political attitudes to understand voting behavior, opinion formation, and policy preferences across various sociopolitical systems. This approach provides valuable insights into how individuals make political decisions and are influenced by their environments. (Dalton, 2017). In more general terms, people's attitudes can be viewed as crucial for understanding various questions and challenges, such as the beliefs in the democratic political system, its stability and legitimacy (Diamond, 2015). Moreover, it is important to describe intellectual and political views of a given state employing ideologies including socialism, conservatism, and liberalism (Heywood, 2017).

But it is equally recognized today that the durability of democracy depends on the political orientations of the people which are shaped by political attitudes. According to the view express by Hu (2003) democracy itself has positive attitudes towards democracy as a pre-requisite for the development of democratic systems. In the same way, Tessler Altinowicz (2004) has also underlined the fact that in order for democracy to be sustainable there is need for change in political behavior for democracy.

The primary objective of this study is to assess and compare the political attitudes of university and madrassa students towards democracy. By examining these attitudes, this research aims to identify the underlying factors that influence the political orientations of these distinct groups and to explore the potential implications of these perspectives for their participation in democratic processes. In doing so, the study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role that youth play in shaping the future of democracy in contemporary societies.

1.1 Research Questions

Q: 1. What are the prevailing Political attitudes of university and madrasa students with regards to democracy?

Q: 2. What factors play major role in the formation of these political attitudes in each group?

Q:3. What are the potential implications of these attitudes for democratic processes and governance?

The researchers strived to answer these questions by adopting survey approach. Data was collected with help of a questionnaire. Correlations, regression and test of significance was used to test the associations between different variables.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Determinants of Democratic Attitudes and Political Engagement

Democracy is a political system that ensures a government that represents the people, distributes power to the citizens, protects basic rights, encourages active involvement, enforces oversight mechanisms, administers fairly, and maintains equality (IDEA, 2021). Democracy's definition and features are debated, but several values and attitudes are widely accepted as necessary for its establishment and growth. Contemporary democratic theories recognize a specific set of pro-democratic principles that include the diverse range of democratic attitudes held by individuals in various regions of the globe. In his study, Gibson (1996) examined the correlation between specific democratic values and the concept of democracy. These views contain a wide range of factors, such as political determination, promotion

Ahmad et al: Political Attitude towards Democracy among students: The Case of District Bhakkar of transparent elections, and adherence to liberal principles, acceptance of divergent opinions, unrestricted media, and knowledge of political rights.

Political perspectives and the opinions of people are vital elements of democracy, particularly in cultures passing through a transition to democracy. The presence of favourable opinions towards democracy among the majority of the people is considered a necessary condition for the establishment of a democratic system (Hu, 2003).

The preservation of democracy depends on modifications in political conduct or attitude that create a more genuine form of governance. An ideal democratic setup is durable if the majority of public opinion, despite significant economic challenges and deep dissatisfaction, believes that democratic procedures and institutions are the most efficient means to manage the people. (Tessler & Altinoglu, 2004). So it is necessary to understand political attitudes to evaluate the essence of democracy.

O'Neil (2015) classifies political views into four distinct categories: radical, liberal, conservative, and reactionary. Radicals, situated on the far left, argue for major and transformative changes to the current political, social, or economic system. They see the existing system as inherently defective and advocate for its full replacement. Some radicals advocate for the use of violence to achieve these breakthroughs, while others advocate for peaceful means to initiate deep change. Liberals also advocate for substantial changes, but they prefer a gradual and evolutionary method of implementing change within the existing system. They hold the belief that gradual reforms of existing institutions may result in incremental enhancements without necessitating a total overhaul of the system. Conservatives have doubts about the need for substantial changes and maintain the belief that existing institutions provide crucial organisation and steadiness. They see change as potentially disruptive and detrimental, generally believing that efforts to resolve issues would only substitute them with fresh challenges. Reactionaries oppose current changes and seek to restore political, social, and economic institutions to a previous state they consider superior. Similar to radicals, reactionaries may support the use of violence to achieve their aims. They often idealize a past era or an envisioned past ideal they believe was better than the present. These attitudes form a spectrum, with radicals and reactionaries at opposite ends. However, they sometimes use similar methods, like pushing for dramatic changes and even supporting the use of violence.

2.2 Educational Systems and Their Influence on Political Attitudes

In any society, education plays major role in molding ideas, attitudes, and beliefs. This means that control over educational discourse and access to classrooms is necessary in a conflict (Raheem, 2015). Currently in Pakistan, there are three distinct educational systems in operation. The education system consists of parallel entities, including state-run schools, private schools, and Madrassas (religious institutions) or seminaries. Elite private English medium institutions, sometimes referred to as "A-type" schools. Private schools dominate bureaucratic institutions. Businesses and public offices are privileged over madrasa students, who are most marginalized. Many People have little representation in governmental and private work. These three educational systems are the result of distinct historical evolutionary processes. They possess distinct textbooks, varying Various learning methodologies and the diverse discourses to which individuals are exposed, both internally and externally. Their educational institution, as well as their familial lineage (socioeconomic status), varies significantly from one another. In addition, it has been suggested that it could be the underlying factor contributing to the division and polarization within Pakistani society (Rahman, 2004).

The educational backgrounds of university students and madrasa students influence their political ideas about the democracy. University students, by their exposure to a variety of educational experiences and active participation in intellectual debates, are inclined to develop refined perspectives on democratic principles. On the other hand, students who go to madrasas, which are strongly influenced by religious teachings and community values, may priorities religious interpretations above democratic norms. Diverse educational environments impact students' viewpoints and understanding of governance, emphasizing the need of considering educational backgrounds while analysing political views towards democracy (Ali, 2021).

2.3 Comparative Analysis of University and Madrasa Students' Political Perspectives

Studies show that students' political opinions evolve mostly under the influence of their institutions. All of which are crucial for active involvement in a democratic society, the university offers a broad spectrum of students from many backgrounds, promotes honest communication, and helps critical thinking abilities to grow. According to Smith (2018), actively participating in debates at colleges and being surrounded with diverse viewpoints could help to promote more positive opinions about democracy. Jones (2020) backs up this point of view by underlining how

Ahmad et al: Political Attitude towards Democracy among students: The Case of District Bhakkar

academic freedom and the chance to participate in democratic procedures within colleges help students to develop their respect of democratic values. Conversely, madrasa pupils are exposed to a different learning environment mostly focused on religious education. The political attitudes of pupils are clearly shaped by the Madrasa curriculum, which emphasises religious teachings and exposes students to little secular political discourse. Less favourable opinions of democracy in comparison to universities can result from the lack of focus on democratic values and procedures at madrasas. If taught this way, students could not completely appreciate and understand democracy values (Khan, 2021).

Particularly among young people, the evolution of political ideas is highly influenced by the media. Research conducted in Pakistan indicates that, when seeking political information, most college students believe online news sources more than reputable media sources. The several points of view present in internet news sources help to shape political ideas by also facilitating more interaction with political information. Facebook and Twitter among other social media sites let people express their political beliefs, share news stories, and participate in political debate. Understanding democracy and government requires one to know how media shapes the political views of university and madrasa students. Reading Raja, Khalid (2020), Waqas, Iftikhar, and Bajwa (2021), and Newman, Fletcher, Kalogeropoulos, Levy, and Nielsen (2018) would help one to grasp this.

The formation of political opinions towards democracy in university and madrasa students is much influenced by social and cultural aspects. Social conventions, cultural customs, and religious beliefs all help to define how people in Pakistan view democratic values and government. Through exposure to many cultural ideas and interactions with classmates from many backgrounds, university students can grow more pluralistic in their views about democracy. On the other hand, madrasa students typically come from areas well-known for their robust religious and cultural customs. Individual beliefs and points of view in these societies are significantly influenced by religious education and societal ideals. One has to grasp the social and cultural factors influencing political opinions in order to appreciate the different points of view of university and madrasa students on democracy. This information offers helpful specifics on the larger extent of young people's involvement with democratic processes in Pakistani society (Ahmad, 2023; Ali, 2021; Khan, 2019). Development of democratic attitudes depends on political engagement (Norris P, 2011; Diamond, 1999). Examining student opinions on political engagement could help one better grasp political philosophy and politics (Oross, Róna, & Szabó, 2017).

Students' political opinions in universities are much shaped by their socioeconomic level. Stronger socioeconomic background pupils find higher support for democratic values since they have more access to knowledge and resources. Their exposure to democratic ideas via the media, family discussions, and educational prospects shapes their positive attitudes about democracy (Taylor, 2017). Conversely, Madrasa students typically originate from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, which has a special impact on their political opinions. Because of restricted access to many media and educational materials, students in madrasas could have a more limited awareness of democratic values. These students sometimes put their immediate financial requirements before of democratic values because of their socioeconomic constraints. Addressing socioeconomic inequality will help to encourage inclusive democratic activity (Rahman, 2020).

Similarly, parts of the university curriculum are courses specifically teaching democratic ideas and values. Miller (2016) underlined the crucial part political science and civics courses play in helping university students to see democracy favourably. Students in these courses participate in political events including speeches, voting, and community service in addition to learning about democracy in an intellectual capacity. This exposure helps students to understand the need of actively participating in political processes and absorbing democratic values.

Madrasas' curricula give more weight on religious topics than on democratic ideas. From a secular standpoint, the educational approach applied in madrasas clearly emphasises religious knowledge over political education. Because of their limited exposure to democratic concepts, students attending madrasas can have a different viewpoint and respect of political systems. Since formal democratic education is not offered by madrasas, more comprehensive civic education becomes even more important (Hussain, 2018).

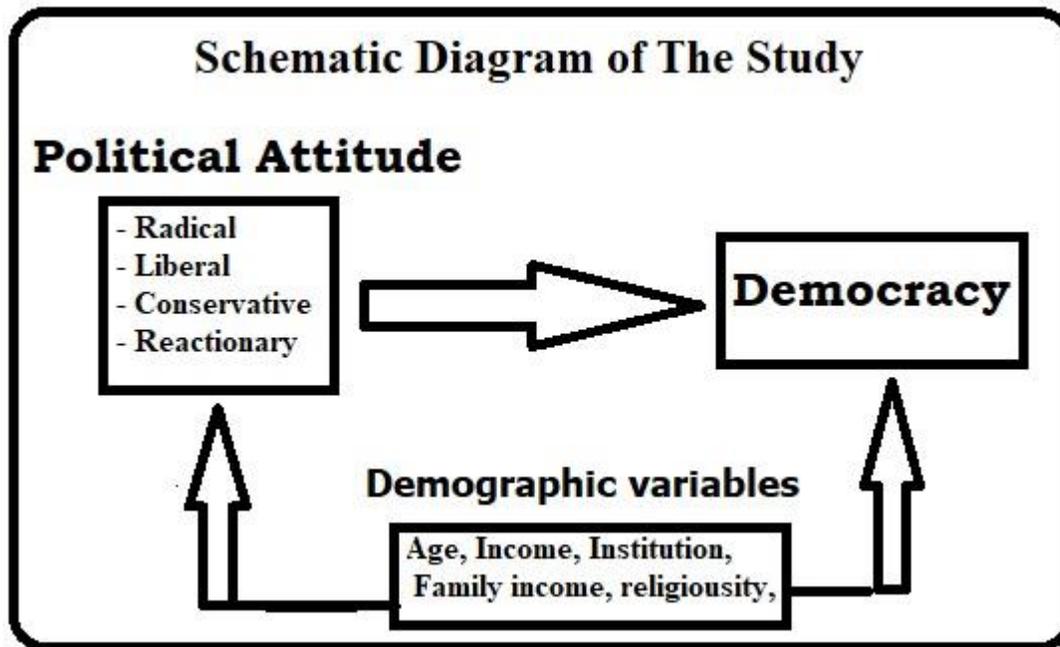
Siddiqui (2015) claims that 67% of Pakistan's young population consists largely of students. This group is necessary to be understood for the more democratic and rich future. As seen by the different perspectives of university and madrasa students, educational surroundings significantly influence students' views on governance and democracy (Khan, 2019). Students from other institutions have also been shown to have varied sociopolitical opinions. Regarding jihad and militancy, even students from madrasas see different things. While madrasa students were less likely to agree, all students agreed that education should encourage enterprise and economic growth (Crozier, 2012).

Ahmad et al: Political Attitude towards Democracy among students: The Case of District Bhakkar
Pakistani madrassa teachers influence students' political views. University students often come from urban areas, where exposure to democratic practices and political engagement is higher compared to rural areas, where many madrassa students originate (Rahman, 2008). Students from affluent backgrounds and those who participate in public and political activities are more inclined to support democratic principles. Such relationship points out the necessity for economic development strategies as well as those supporting public engagement in order to popularise democratic values (Mangi, 2021).

Democratic institutions should be open to youth concerns and interests, and their participation depends on whether they feel relevant in politics. Youth engagement in democratic institutions is necessary to accept, understand, and develop them, even when conditions do not favour interests. Youth political participation requires sustained engagement and institution accessibility. This study examined young political engagement. It was found that youth like politics. Most respondents said government governance was crucial. Young people like to vote in general elections and know the worth of their vote. These findings match earlier research. However, youth dislike political parties. To achieve political maturity and stability, it is important to encourage youth to participate in politics, therefore it is necessary that we comprehend their disillusionments and current attitudes (Iqbal, 2012).

2.4 Research Gap

Despite there has been much study conducted on different elements of students' political views and tolerance levels in Pakistan's multiple educational systems, there is still a notable lack of knowledge on how these educational backgrounds influence attitudes towards democracy. Although studies conducted by Raheem (2015) and Adnan (2022) have examined tolerance levels and broad political perspectives, there is a noticeable absence of direct comparison study on the attitudes of university and madrasa students towards democratic ideals and practices. The current body of research has not sufficiently explored the many aspects of democratic attitudes, neglecting to thoroughly investigate how students perceive individual democratic institutions, procedures, and ideals. Moreover, little research has been done on how contextual factors such socioeconomic level, media consumption, and geographical inequalities affect Pakistani students' democratic attitudes. also, lacking is longitudinal study tracking of these attitudes' evolution over students' academic paths. Particularly among students enrolled in madrasas, more study is needed to understand the link between Islamic beliefs with democratic values. Moreover, little research has been done on how students' political opinions could influence educational practices meant to uphold democratic values across different Pakistani educational systems. By filling in these gaps, we might enhance our theoretical understanding and provide valuable insights for legislators and teachers striving to uphold democratic values in different spheres of education.



3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Over the years researches have proved that attitudes can be measured quantitatively, therefore being quantitative in nature, this research was materialized with the help of survey approach. A structured questionnaire has been used for data collection.

3.1 Population and Sampling:

The population for this study consisted of all the university & madrasa students in Bhakkar City. As per the available record it was 6350. A representative sample size was determined by using Yumani formula i.e. 400 students. Using stratified sampling technique, questionnaires were selected among both the groups and researcher could collect data from 248 University students and 154 Madrassa students

3.3 Type of Data:

Primary data was used in this study. Well-structured Questionnaire used as a tool of research for data collection.

3.4 Hypothesis of Study:

We have developed the following hypotheses:

H₀: University students have a more positive attitude towards democracy compared to madrassa students.

H₁: University students do not have a more positive attitude towards democracy compared to madrassa students.

H₀: Demographic status of students has a significant influence on their democratic attitudes.

H₁: Demographic status of students does not have a significant influence on their democratic attitudes.

H₀: Monthly income contributes to the formation of political attitudes towards democracy among students.

H₁: Monthly income does not contribute to the formation of political attitudes towards democracy among students

3.5 Analytical techniques:

SPSS is used to draw the results

4. DATA ANALYSIS:

Data analyses have been done through SPSS software. Data analyses have been showed in the following figure.

Table 1: Socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents (n=400)

Name of institution & section/department		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	University	248	62.0	62.0	62.0
	Madrassa	152	38.0	38.0	100.0
	Total	400	100.0	100.0	

Results show that 62 % respondents belong to university 38% respondents belong to madrassa

Table 2: Socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents (n=400)

Residence		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Urban	72	18.0	18.0	18.0
	Rural	328	82.0	82.0	100.0
	Total	400	100.0	100.0	

This study revealed that,18% respondents belong to Urban areas while 82% percent from rural background

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Liberal	400	1.17	5.00	3.37	0.92
Radical	400	1.00	3.33	2.20	0.39
Conservative	400	1.50	4.00	3.06	0.49
Reactionary	400	0.50	2.50	1.55	0.61
Democracy	400	1.33	4.83	3.36	0.96
Valid N (listwise)	400				

The data shows that university and madrassa students lean most towards liberal views (Mean = 3.37), suggesting openness to progressive democratic values. In contrast, reactionary attitudes received the lowest support (Mean = 1.55), indicating less interest in reverting to old or rigid political systems. Overall, the positive average score for democracy (Mean = 3.36) reflects a healthy level of democratic awareness among students from both educational backgrounds.

4.2 Hypothesis Testing

a. Impact of Institution

H₀: University students have a more positive attitude towards democracy compared to madrassa students.

H₁: University students do not have a more positive attitude towards democracy compared to madrassa students.

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Democracy	EVA	1.544	.215	24.140	398	.000	9.62083	.39854	8.83651	10.40514
	ENVA			26.144	390.87	.000	9.62083	.36799	8.89658	10.34508
Liberal	EVA	1.518	.219	24.151	298	.000	9.21845	.38171	8.46727	9.96963
	ENVA			26.211	391.53	.000	9.21845	.35170	8.52627	9.91062
Radical	EVA	2.510	.114	-10.358	398	.000	-2.45982	.23749	-2.92719	-1.99245
	ENVA			-11.147	386.28	.000	-2.45982	.22068	-2.89416	-2.02548
Conservative	EVA	.695	.405	13.268	398	.000	3.67968	.27734	3.13388	4.22548
	ENVA			14.091	377.90	.000	3.67968	.26115	3.16564	4.19372
Reactionary	EVA	42.517	.000	-24.128	398	.000	-6.16186	.25538	-6.66443	-5.65928
	ENVA			-28.751	353.87	.000	-6.16186	.21431	-6.58383	-5.73988

Key: EVA= Equal Variance Assumed

EVNA= Equal Variance Not Assumed

Analysis

1-University Respondents are scoring higher than Madrassa Students

2-P value is also in acceptable range

So, H₀ is accepted

b. Impact of rural and urban areas

H₀: Demographic status of students has a significant influence on their democratic attitudes.

H₁: Demographic status of students does not have a significant influence on their democratic attitudes.

Table

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Democracy	EVA	19.119	.000	2.103	398	.036	1.80668	.85929	.11565	3.49772
	ENVA			2.393	91.568	.019	1.80668	.75485	.30740	3.30597
Liberal	EVA	19.829	.000	2.387	398	.018	1.96116	.82149	.34450	3.57781
	ENVA			2.722	91.765	.008	1.96116	.72057	.53000	3.39232
Radical	EVA	.520	.472	-1.918	398	.056	-.66712	.34777	-1.35152	.01728
	ENVA			-1.861	75.629	.067	-.66712	.35849	-1.38118	.04694
Conservative	EVA	.161	.689	.517	398	.605	.22855	.44174	-.64077	1.09786
	ENVA			.524	79.082	.602	.22855	.43615	-.63957	1.09666
Reactionary	EVA	24.360	.000	-2.438	398	.015	-1.33875	.54906	-2.41927	-.25824
	ENVA			-2.782	91.886	.007	-1.33875	.48117	-2.29441	-.38310

Key: EVA= Equal Variance Assumed

EVNA= Equal Variance Not Assumed

Analysis

Since Democracy (p = 0.036), Liberal (p = 0.018), and Reactionary (p = 0.015) are significant, but others are not So “Demographic status of students has a significant influence on their democratic attitudes” is partially accepted while alternative hypothesis is accepted

c. Role of monthly income in bringing change in opinion

H₀: Monthly income contributes to the formation of political attitudes towards democracy among students.

H₁: Monthly income does not contribute to the formation of political attitudes towards democracy among students

Table

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Democracy	Between Groups	508.20	2	254.10	5.954	.003
	Within Groups	12675.36	397	31.93		
	Total	13183.56	399			
Liberal	Between Groups	393.04	2	196.52	4.984	.007
	Within Groups	11707.34	397	29.49		
	Total	12100.38	399			
Radical	Between Groups	53.70	2	26.85	3.798	.024
	Within Groups	2098.44	397	5.29		
	Total	2152.14	399			
Conservative	Between Groups	70.92	2	35.46	3.129	.045
	Within Groups	3365.28	397	8.48		
	Total	3436.20	399			
Reactionary	Between Groups	289.99	2	145.00	8.412	.000
	Within Groups	5119.70	397	12.90		
	Total	5409.69	399			

Analysis

Hypothesis is accepted

5 Findings of the Study & Conclusion:

A comparison of the political view of democracy among University and madrassa students in Pakistan presented in this paper have shown that their perception is highly influenced by their educational systems. University students are relatively more optimistic in their attitude towards democratic norms such as civil liberties, political pluralism and the rule of law. For this reason, the positive outlook is said to be as a result of exposure to different opinions, critical matters and most important academic freedom which all enhances the students' understanding and embracement of democratic values. Madrassa students have a negative attitude towards democracy in comparison to students from other schools; more often they express doubts about the ability of Democracy to work in Islamic context and stay closer to religious rules.

Thus, the findings emphasize the role of educational contexts in the formation of the political positions. Groupon and other exposures in university education promote freedom of speech and exposure to different opinions in tackling some of the challenges of democracy. All these exposures help in improving their knowledge as well as support the tenets of democracy. On the other hand, madrassa education deliberately tries to impart religious knowledge and provides little importance to the terms and conditions of political democracy hence results in being more conservative and less supportive of democratic systems.

Socioeconomic background also emerged as an influential factor for development of political orientation. University students come from affluent class which provide them with more resources, media and information that support democracy. On the other hand, students in the madrassas usually come from poor background hence are unlikely to have access to any of the two, hence unlikely to have developed any democratic principles.

These different perceptions of societal groups are of great significance for political participation in Pakistan since they are indicative of a more general tendency in the society regarding the attitudes towards democracy. It is for this reason, university educated people are more likely to vote or politically activate themselves as they are products of a democratic system. While students at a madrassa can be expected to be less likely to vote or to engage in politically related activity of their religious and conservative leaning. This problem weakens the notion of democracy in Pakistan and might difficulty the distribution of voices afterward taken by different stakeholders of the society.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS:

the following recommendations on the basis of our findings and conclusion:

a. Youth should actively engage in democratic processes

It is recommended that young students must engage in political activities especially madrassa students like such as voting, civic debates, and political discussions. Students are a valuable asset of any nation, and their participation can introduce progressive changes in political culture.

b. Educational institutions should promote democratic thinking

Educational institutions on both sides should encourage critical dialogue and awareness about political systems. Curriculum reforms must ensure that both university and madrassa students are equally exposed to civic education and democratic values.

c. Efforts should be made to reduce the gap between educational systems

It is imperative to address the institutional disparities between universities and madrassas to ensure Madrassa students should be not excluded from understanding contemporary governance structures and democratic principles. Promoting equal opportunities and access to political literacy across educational systems can help in bridging ideological divides.

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