

## EMPOWERING BALOCHISTAN'S YOUTH: A FLOW IN POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT

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### ABSTRACT

*The present study aims to investigate the dynamics of youth engagement and political participation within Balochistan, one of the most complex and volatile social and political terrains. Comprehensively, the project utilizes a mixed-methods approach; including surveys, and interviews, to identify the levels political awareness, engagement, and factors of constraints relevant to young respondents involved therein. As the findings suggest, a considerable number of youth are “politically astute” or exhibit high interest in political affairs; the number of young girls and boys engaged in formal political activities is very low relatively to other fields. The scarcity of young political agents is explained by numerous challenging socio-economic, educational and security conditions prevailing within the province. Concurrently, the increasing role of digital activism lingers in Malala Yousafzai’s story; the underlying processes driven by digital platforms might create alternative channels for political participation and identification. This research has profound implications for policymakers or practitioners, implying their necessity in establishing new, inclusive policies targeting structural and instrumental factors limiting youth participation in Balochistan. Thus, inclusive tech-supported strategies are needed to empower young actors in Balochistan’s political process. The present work also highlights the prospective of young agents within conflict-ridden provinces and the instrumental role of new generation in emerging democracies.*

**Keyword:** Youth Empowerment, Political Participation, Balochistan, Youth in Politics.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Youth engagement and political participation play a central role in defining the democratic and developmental prospects of any region, especially those riddled with socio-political dilemmas, such as Balochistan. As the largest provincial state of Pakistan by landmass, Balochistan is situated in a peculiar socio-political context defined by the tribe-based organization, natural resource wealth, and systematic generations of political and economic alienation. For Balochistan, the youth, comprising a considerable proportion of its population, are an anchoring agent for the future.

In conclusion, the minor political elite in Balochistan’s case makes it more vital to understand the dynamics of youth engagement in the political sphere. The region’s political space has been highly influenced by the tribal dynamics and the role of local sardars. In effect, such dynamics have led to a form of governance that has not served the interest of the entire population, including the youth (Jelty, 2009). The second factor is the historical background of Baloch nationalism and the quest for autonomy. Therefore, the multiple factors behind the young people’s inclination to political radicalization manifest systemic challenges in the region (Graree, 2009).

The significance of youth involvement in the political arena cannot be underestimated. Active and political youth is vital for fostering democratic virtues, governance, and societal development. The new generation is required to introduce fresh thoughts, zeal, and progress into daylight politics to tackle current obstacles and encourage social change (Eckstien, 2020). Nevertheless, youth participation in Balochistan politics faces several obstacles. These are educational differences, financial constraints, and political exposure and, finally, security that has always been an issue on people’s minds with the active insurgencies and military actions at the time (Khan & Magsi, 2012).

Yet, some signs of political consciousness and activity among Balochistan’s youth expose on the horizon. One of the effective factors has become a social network and digital platforms that provide youth with new tools for political organizing and experience (Khan, 2017). Additionally, educational

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institutions and civil society organizations have become venues for young Balochistanians to express their political views and actions (Iqbal & Khan, 2020).

To address all these issues, a more comprehensive approach is needed to boost the youth's political participation in Balochistan. Boosting education so that they can develop critical thinking and learn about politics, economic empowerment to reduce their disenfranchisement, and peaceful pathways to political activism would be among the primary measures. In addition, creating an environment conducive for this participation through the solution of governance, justice, and resource distribution is among the priority areas, as noted by Bizenjo and Sohail (2015). In general, the potential implications of the youth entering Balochistan's political space are serious. It certainly leads to improved democratic governance as well as social cohesion and democratic stabilization that eventually reduces the risks of radicalization and insurgency. Moreover, providing them with opportunities to legally and peacefully participate in protests while engaging them in the region's development process is likely to provide the state with a more successful developmental path. To sum up, the existing barriers to youth's participation argue in favor of the need for active youth participation in Balochistan's political life. Therefore, the pro-democracy trend of the youth and the potential opportunities for sustainable development and peace can only be achieved once the lack of participation is clarified.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

To address the research problem and fulfill the aims and objectives of this study, I or we will utilize a mixed-method approach to collect and analyze data. Surveys are administered to a large sample of Baloch youth in multiple districts to gauge their level of political involvement and attitudes. Additionally, focus groups, and interviews will be conducted with young participants, leaders of the political community as well as political activists. The analysis will proceed using statistical analysis of the survey responses and thematic understanding of the qualitative analysis to provide in-depth analysis and understanding of youth engagement.

## **3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Most literature on youth engagement and political participation in Balochistan tends to encompass broader themes around governance, insurgency, and socio-economic development in the region. Indeed, there is a prevalent works on the politics of Balochistan as an insurgency-hit region given its strategic significance, rich natural resources, and the longstanding grievances by its population – especially the youth .

### **3.1. Historical and Political Context**

Knowledge of Balochistan's political history is crucial for interpreting the current state of affairs in youth engagement. For instance, (Grare, 2006) traces the history of grievances and autonomy movements, which have been instrumental in increasing political identities within the population. (Jetly, 2009) also discusses regional conflicts and governance challenges, which led to political and social fragmentation.

### **3.2. Youth Engagement and Political Participation**

Several studies concentrating on the youth of Balochistan describe the increased disenchantment and disillusionment from the formal political forums. (Iqbal and Khan, 2009) used the case of political instability and economic marginalization, which created the feeling of alienation among young people. However, (Khan, 2017) also refers to the aspects of digital activism providing a modern platform for political expression and activism, indicating the meaningful impact of social media on young Balochistan.

### **3.3. Socio-Economic Factors and Education**

The discussed studies indicate that socio-economic status and education are crucial factors determining youth political engagement. In their study, (Khan and Magsi, 2012) address socio-political causes of unrest in the region and argue that socio-economic deprivation and limited educational prospects result in disinterestedness in political activities. (Bizenjo and Sohail, 2015) highlight that more inclusive education policies that develop political knowledge among the youth are required.

### **3.4. Barriers to Participation**

The current literature recognizes various barriers to efficient youth involvement in Balochistan's politics. The primary impediments include safety concerns, political oppression, and the dominance of

traditional authority configurations. Mahmood and Jetly repeatedly reference these factors as major obstacles to youth's capacity to express their political opinions or participate in elections.

### **3.5. Youth Activism and Change**

However, there is increasing evidence of enhanced youth political activity in the region. (Mahmood, 2014) and others point out multiple studies showcasing the expanding role of Balochistan's youth in various forms of activism, spurred by the aspiration for political transformation and an equitable society. The contribution of youth organizations and student activist groups in promulgating a novel political ideology is also a frequent topic in the literature.

### **3.2 Comparative Perspectives**

Comparing Balochistan to other territories, Eckstein offers an argument that sheds light on commonalities and differentials in terms of youth political engagement in at different socio-political levels. Such a comparison allows for critical insight into the unique and shared factors that influence youth participation in political processes globally.

### **3.3 Future directions.**

Much of the reviewed literature calls for more empirical research that could provide a comprehensive understanding of youth engagement in Balochistan. For example, given the argument made by (Bizenjo and Sohail, 2015) that youth empowerment in regional political processes could play a role in shaping a sustainable and democratic governance in the region, future research could attempt to answer this research question empirically. In general, the presence literature has demonstrated the problematic and opportunity side of youth engagement in politics in Balochistan. While decades of grievances and socio-economic marginalization have limited their active participation, modern communication, and civil society mobilization have stimulated political consciousness among Baloch youth. Future research should explore the implications further, highlighting the peacebuilding roles that young Balochs could play in democratic processes.

## **4. DISCUSSION**

The following findings of this study offer crucial insights into the workings of youth engagement and political participation in Balochistan and underline the challenges and opportunities presented to young people in the area. Therefore, the implementation of the mixed-methods approach enabled the portrayal of the political behavior and attitudes among Balochistan's youth in a more comprehensive and comprehensive manner. Thus, the survey participants displayed a steady level of political awareness and a select level of engagement in the political process.

### **4.1. Political Commitment and Responsiveness**

The survey-based on the findings indicated specific variations among participants from different regions. Although the majority of participants understood the key issues of politics, their proposal in official political activities such as voting or participation in one of the political parties was scarce. Therefore, this represents (Jetly's,2009) assertion of the disillusionment with formal political institutions in Balochistan.

### **4.2. Influence of Socio-economic Factors**

The impacts of economic hardship and limited access to education were also highlighted as substantial barriers to political engagements. Majority of the youth expressed a sense of marginalization and underrepresentation in politics, which is consistent with (Khan and Magsi 's 2012) analysis of the socio-political determinants in the region . This suggests that socio-economic disparities may be detrimental to active and equalitarian youth participation in politics.

### **4.3. Digital Activism and New Media**

The rise of digital platforms and new media, for example, have enabled the youth to be more politically vocal. From the collected data, the use of social media in discussing politics, rallying around social causes, and engaging in online campaigns is prevalent, consistent with (Khan 's 2017) findings.

### **4.4. Challenges of Political Participation**

Some of the most important findings were the security threat, political instability, and the roles of traditional power structures. These results reaffirm the existing literature, particularly the study by (Mahmood 2014), which stresses the necessity of sustaining a stable and safe environment to increase youth political participation.

#### **4.5. Youth activism and Revolution.**

On the brighter side, there was evidence of activism spirit among the youth who revealed their interest in participating in social and political reforms. Overall, given the increasing worldwide participation in activism by the youth, it is possible that they can help shape Balochistan's political future if provided the necessary support and chances.

#### **4.6. Comparative Analysis.**

Compared to studies in other parts of the world, the Balochistan youth issue appears unique, albeit similar. This comparative argument can be used to justify the complexity of politics and the various, interrelated factors that influence youth politics. Policy and Practice The present research has likewise significant implications for policy and practice. Policies should be enacted to create conducive political participation for the youth, particularly those addressing socio-economic issues, providing educational opportunities, and maintaining a safe, free environment. Utilizing technology and social media have shown promising potential ways through which the youth can be encouraged to partake in active politics.

#### **4.7. Limitations and future research**

This research also has many limitations, including the geographical and demographical confinement of the survey and reporting biases from self-assessments. Future research should consider a larger sample across the region to obtain more reliable information on the youth politics landscape.

### **5. CONCLUSION**

These findings outline how the issue of youth engagement and political participation in Balochistan is multifaceted and complex. Although the findings present many hurdles to overcome, they also shed the light on opportunities the province can pursue to enhance the role of the youth in the country's politics. By creating an environment that encourages and supports youth involvement, Balochistan can capitalize on its young population and use them as a driving force behind the political and societal change. Thus, the exploration of youth engagement and political participation in Balochistan reveals a issue area with many structural barriers but also opportunities for advancement. Within the framework of the socioeconomic and the political realities of the province, the work has explored the various factors affecting the involvement of young people in the political system. The resulting findings suggested that the issue was not in the young people themselves, as most displayed high levels of interest and awareness about the problems in the country. However, relatively few new publics participated in the official political activities, indicating to the development of a barrier. Such barriers included the socioeconomic obstacles, education hurdles, and security concerns. Furthermore, the political realities of the region, which have been characterized by significant upheaval and violence over the past few decades, have alienated the younger generation of the natives even further from the existing political institutions. Nevertheless, the study results also presented a number of potential opportunities for the province. One of the most significant examples is the proliferation of social media use among the residents of Balochistan. While the young people appeared to be disillusioned with the traditional political activism, they still turned to the social media to express their views on the matter.

The implications of these findings are of significant importance to the policymakers, educators, and civil society organizations seeking to promote youth political participation in Balochistan. It is clear that there is a need for interventions that target the underlying issues causing youth to disengage from the political process, such as lack of access to affordable and quality education, economic opportunities, and the overall insecurity of political involvement. Moreover, the positive role of digital spaces in promoting youth political participation should also be recognized. Finally, further studies could question possible factors websites of determining the extent and type of youth political participation in Balochistan. This could include comparisons across regions to determine the distinguishing and common factors that affect youth and political participation. In fact, longitudinal data would be useful in determining how young adults' assessments involve over time in Balochistan, thus giving more coherent responses to the possible effect of changing conditions socio-politically. In conclusion, the Balochistan youth political participation level is precariously placed, and it is set to transform the region's future. Therefore, defying all barriers and utilize the potential and energy of the youth is a prerequisite for a more democratic, inclusive, and sturdy political landscape. Youth's ability to play an active role in politics would not only address the existing predicaments in Balochistan; it would also

construct a clear way forward for a progressively prosperous region. Thus, it is the responsibility of the government of Pakistan, civil society, and international bodies to support youth political involvement and ensure that the voice of the youth is heard.

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