

UNIONIZATION IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION, POLITICAL ACTIVISM: A CASE STUDY OF QUAID-I-AZAM UNIVERSITY, ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Politics plays a vital role in encouraging the student to participate in every academic activity. It helps to manage scholarships and in fee collection procedures. It also helps to fill admission forms as well as to increase the non-academic skills of the students like leadership skills at regional level, communication skills and work for political encouragement and political participation of the students. That indicates working in group under same rules and regulations. It simply indicates a group of human beings whom under certain situations make valid decisions, they work for the same goals and their aims are the same. This study has been done by utilizing qualitative tools and techniques to explore the phenomenon of politics within the premises of educational institutions.

Keywords: Unionization, Education, Political activism, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

Hashmat ullah (2020) states that in Pakistan like other countries, student unions in educational institutions plays significant role in the political participation of the students. Generally, student unions make talented political leaders and help to create a sense of responsibility. Since independence of Pakistan, the student unions have been working and struggling to solve the problems regarding students. The most important prospect of student politics is to provide competent and well-trained leadership. (Hashmat ullah 2020). The aggressive nature of political activities prevents youth from participating in such activities. This decreasing level of youth participation in politics not only endangers the quality of leadership but also jeopardizes the peace of tomorrow. This is a particularly effective perspective when we are observing in the developing countries, specifically countries where conflict is at peak (Bengtson, 2008).

Students' unions were established during the reign of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's period and were banned under Zia Ul haq's dictatorship. Tarique (Ahmed and Abro ,2020). The writer mentions in his article that student politics in Pakistan faces different kind of problems due to which they planned to organized student union to solve and rise voice against inequalities, but Zia Ul Haq banned these unions because students have more power, and they can change the leader.

Rizwan, Waris and Iqbal (2020) states that the participation of youth in the politics of Pakistan has been one of the key and important factors in political change. Hence, the historic study makes us understandable about the fact that the youth has struggled and had been engaged in the political struggle. Mostly the participation of youth addressed and worked in three major movements. The Bengali nationalist movement that had purpose to overthrow of the general Ayub khan. The fact was that the Muslim youth played important role in political struggle for Pakistan; particularly women made different federations. For instance, Muslim women student federation founded in 1941 aims to organize different groups of Muslim women in several cities. During

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first some years of Pakistan, youth and mostly students were actively participating in political activities (Rizwan, Waris and Iqbal 2020).

Hina and Shehnaz (2016) suggested the impact of women participation in Pakistani politics and its socio-economic implications. Generally, there are many sociological factors that shape the female participation in the politics for instance, educational and religious factors which directly encourage women towards such activities and make women able to understand the grassroots issues of politics. If any women are working in educational system she can easily handle the political issues of the society but on the other hand, a woman without education cannot participate in such activities and cannot even change the patriarchal mindset because education provides political awareness which directly encourage women to participate.

Pakistani society is patriarchal society which directly encourages gender discrimination. In the history of Pakistan such as Zia Ul Haq time period, some women organizations emerged for the rights of women and particularly their participation in politics. Moreover, in the patriarchal society, men always consider themselves superior than women and imposed their power and idea on women. But in this modernized society, it is need and demand of the nation to remove the gender discrimination and give equal rights to women. Hence according to modernization this is reality that women should take participation in every sphere of life such as political sphere and educational system. Furthermore, every person have right to participate in politics men and women are equal (Hina and Shehnaz 2016).

In context of Pakistan, there are many researches who indicate female participation in different activities. Laar, She & Ashraf (2019) investigated the female participation during different activities such as physical activities, socio-economic activities and political activities. According to the study, Pakistani female participation tends to be problematic because of religious and cultural barriers. Their participation is limited which also affects their attitude towards physical activities and other activities such as political participation. In the current study, most of the female participants discussed about the challenges they face during their political participation due to their different customs and cultural backgrounds.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Political socialization

M Kent Jennings (2017) states that the role of family plays significant role in the socialization of an individual, because it is the first and most important institution from where an individual is having the purpose of life and is a specific process of development that all human beings go through. During the very first stage children are only capable of imitation. They have a lack of ability to perceive things doing by others. They copy the actions of peoples with whom they interact frequently like mother and father and in the political socialization of an individual to learning process which is transmitted generation to generation (M Kent Jennings 2017).

Carol Gilligan (1936) proposed that Kohlberg's theory might show gender discrimination since its research was conducted on males. Boys tend to have a justice perspective they emphasize on rules and laws while girls tend to care and be responsible. They consider people reason behind attitude is morally wrong. He also argued that girls are socialized for a domestic environment where smooth treatment allows for harmony in nurturing (Gilligan 1982).

Sanchita (2014) states that the society of Pakistan is a patriarchal society where the dominance and patriarchal system is encouraged. On the other hand, history shows us the sacrifices of female in politics, and this is the living example for us that Pakistani women struggled to take part in politics and other sphere of the society. There are many inspirational stories in the history such as Benazir Bhutto, the first executive head of Islamic country. Moreover, Sharry Rehman, Fehmida Mirza and Malala Yusefzai are inspiration for us. These women are not confined to any socio-economic segment or any rural-urban divide. They have suffered in the hands of violent perpetrators mainly due to social and political reasons. Islam is a religion which has provided more status and opportunities to women to establish themselves as important. On the other hand, this is a fact that women were ignored before Islam, they were usually treated as enemies. But Islam brought equal status to men and women in the society and Islam proved that a woman is independent personality which cannot be ignored. The holy Qura'an has disclosed the origin of humankind and has addressed that man and women are complementary components of specie who together are capable of maintaining the survival of human race. Most importantly, Islam not only gives basic equality to women, but equal rights, she can sell, earn and manage her own money and property. Islam says that women has legally independent personality it means she can participate in political activities as well. Unfortunately, with the passage of time this equality has been replaced with gender discrimination and inequity. (Sanchita 2014)

“There is no sanction anywhere for deplorable condition in which our women have to live. You should take your women along with you as comrades in every sphere of life” (Mohammad Ali, 1944)

The Terror management theory by Robertson (2009) who states that politics are affiliated with social cognitions. Social cognition includes environmental factors such as family restrictions and social stigma. The fear of punishment in early childhood enables the individual to build political beliefs such as child grown under strict parenting would have different perspective of politics as compared to a child groomed with good parental affection and love. This may lead the child to avoid or promote social and anti-social activities.

Citizenship and political participation

Citizenship defining the boundaries of the political community that belongs to within the state and out of the state represents the nation (Kivisto, 2007). As the status attached to any citizen by his\her state, develops a lot of responsibilities. He\she has to pay for their state. Respect to other rights must be a priority to any citizen in a peaceful and harmonic manner (Crick, 1998).

Muhammad (2020) suggested in his research the youth participation in political activities which basically examined the role of youth in the political activities in their communities. For instance, the students of Punjab province and their role in political activities needs political awareness and consciousness to conduct his/her role in political activities .The study also says that the participation of youth in politics is increasing day by day because students are developing more interest in politics. Moreover, the new generations are more likely to take part in politics.

Ahmed (2010) investigates the political participation of students of Pakistan historically. This is the fact that youth of Pakistan took participation in many political activities even they took part in the independence of the country but with the time interval students faced many problems and issues in the history. In 1984s Zia Ul Haq imposed a ban on student politics in the educational institutions because he was aware about the power of young youth, since the student unions have not operated still in the educational institutions of Pakistan (Syed, 2010).

METHODOLOGY

Through this research, the research wants to document the experiences of female students in the student councils in Quaid I Azam University Islamabad. Male students are more prominent, and female are almost invisible. The study took place by focusing the participation of female in student councils at campus. Six female respondents were selected for in-depth interviews. The interview with female respondents lasted for almost 20-30 minutes. The focused group discussion was from fifteen female respondents and for almost 30-50 minutes. The purposive technique was used in the research. The purposive sampling is mostly used in the exploratory or in field research. Convenient sampling was used to gather data from the sample. Proper information consent was taken confidentiality of the responses of respondents was assured. The present discussion is on female participants. The female participant belongs to Quaid-I-Azam University, Islamabad. The purposive sampling is useful to collect the data on the presence and engagement of female in the student councils in the campus.

Sample characteristics

The selected female participants with age group of 22 to 30 were included in the study. All respondents were current students and participants of student councils of QAU and all female respondents are members and coordinators of student councils in campus.

Positionality, reflexivity and research ethics

The researcher experienced many things during my research. The first and foremost thing is that as a researcher learnt how to convince and how to deal with respondents. I think that whatever field we study and do inquiry , it shapes our personal life and encounters accordingly. After venturing gender studies, I started questioning myself and every relation in my surrounding through a gender lens. My learning and socialization made me understand the idea of female has been historically displaced from every field of study. I have personally observed that political understanding within the campus has a great impact on the female students at campus.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of qualitative research aims to uncover and understand the issues and problems in larger context by using the data to describe phenomenon. Political participation and campus politics have become more important in current time for various reasons like in order to open doors for female, to power making structures and to enhance status of women in the society. Since this female participation has been discussed below.

Politics plays significant role to make women politically empower and give them courage to participate

in political sphere. Saira (2017), says in her article that with the passage of time, it is being observed that it is encouraging women enhances political participation in the policy making institutions, in decision making processes and legislature, In general, can contribute to emergence of gender- based society for addressing issues regarding women's status in different societies (Saira 2017).

Moreover, for female politics on the campus plays important role. It encourages females to be strong in the decision making. It helps to provoke different females with different ideas and issues that male is unaware of, so the participation of female is important at campus. There are considerable variations in female political participation in different student councils in the campus. Thus, the female role in the political sphere is as important as the role of male in the campus.

This research analysis female political participation from the perspective of five major themes including:

1. Female political participation
2. Gender discrimination.
- 3 Cultural values
4. Patriarchal structures.
5. Male attitudes toward female in the student councils

Female political participation

In this section I want to discuss all the problems and issues faced by female in the student council of the campus. Research data showed that mostly female got participation in the student council by their own choice, and some are not interested and have no idea about student politics. There are many reasons behind this attitude; firstly, they are afraid of male dominance and gender discrimination in the campus. Secondly, they think that due to political participation, their studies will be suffered, they will not pay full attention on studies. So, they are not participating in student politics. Historically student politics were banned in Pakistan by general Zia because he feared that students could be threat to his regime and could begin a wave of protest against him. After his authority student's union and students' politics were not allowed in the country. Student's politics plays important role in Pakistan.

In Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad, student politics exist in form of different groups and different councils. For instance, there are five to six student councils as Gilgit Baltistan student council, Punjab student council, Siraki student council, Baloch student council, Pushtoon student council and Sindh student council. The major theme of the student councils is to demand rights and basic facilities at the Campus. Secondly student politics is giving the political training and trained students to differentiate between positive and negative politics.

Moreover, in campus female and male are participating in student politics but they have separate roles in each student council. It has been observed that in every student council has different specified roles according to their gender. As one of the female respondent shares: "I am working as student coordinator since one year. I want to get another position but unfortunately due to the less participation of females in the council we have to bear male dominance in council, but this is my promise to myself that I will represent female in the council till the end of my degree." Many female students are working in the student councils for the representation of female, and they failed to get other positions in the councils because of lack of participation of female members. There are different roles for female in the student council and mostly female are working as member or coordinator, there are many other positions that female lacks but according to some female students they can achieve that place and role of president through equal work and regular participation.

Most of the respondents have shared that they participate in the student council because they feel that they need to represent the females and highlight their issues and problems in the student council. The study discusses that the participation of female in the campus. The current research shows that some of the female student want to participate in the student council that they want to help other female students who are basically facing different issues regarding hostel and other scholarship process in the campus as well as they encourage other females to participate in co-curricular activities as sports and other art making competitions in the university.

There are number of factors effecting female political participation in the campus according to this research all of the respondents said that" we have to face number of challenges that affect us emotionally and psychologically.

Gender discrimination

Gender discrimination describes the situation in which people are treated differently on the basis of male or female, rather than based on their individual skills or capabilities. The word Gender refers to both men and

women. They are born equal, but social construction differentiates them based on their stereotypical roles. Gender inequality is the unequal distribution of finance, power, and privilege between men and women. It is common sense that majority of women are under the domination of men. In the west and Europe, laws have been constituted from time to time to give sufficient protection, freedom and equality to women. Women rights have been linked with human rights. Gender inequality and women discrimination in developing countries still exist. Pakistani women also face gender inequality in different environments and places.

In the campus there are many females who are facing discrimination on the basis of gender. Females are considered as unable to perform those roles which a male can perform that's why female have not yet any position as male. For instance, she is unable to work as chairperson because male thinks that she should be working under male.

Female participation is important but when a female gets member of cabinet she has to work under male and has to face male dominance which generally leads toward patriarchy. Many agreements and decisions are made without female presence. The major problem is gender discrimination and male dominance in the student councils. Due to the less participation of female, male considered superior and female inferior because of societal pressure and other threats, she is unable to participate in student councils. In the campus male has freedom in every walk of life but unfortunately females have no rights even to select the member of the council according to their own choice, for instance one of the respondents said, 'I want to elect my junior as finance secretary, but the chairman of the student council thought that for female it is not suitable, so he forced me to change my opinion'.

According to the current study most of the female students face harassment while participating in the student councils. They are being underestimated and considered male as dominant. There is not any separate platform for female where she can easily implement her opinion.

Cultural values

Culture determines what is acceptable or unacceptable, important or unimportant, right or wrong workable. Moreover, it comprises of specific norms, values, attitudes, experiences, hierarchies, religion, beliefs and gender role.

The cultural biasness against women's political participation is not only limited to the family level but it also reflected at government level. Majority of the respondent stated that "social life of female are affected by the traditions and cultures". Because there are many cultures in Pakistan where people still think that politics is not for women, she only has to take care of home, kids and domestic work. They don't allows their young daughters to participate in even their family matters, according to their culture, women are not allow to go outside for work without any male. As a result women become discourage and when hardly she got permission to study at university level she hase to maintain the same cultural values while participating in the student councils. As one of the respondent shared her experience that "I belong to pushtoon family and I have responsibility to maintain my cultural values while participating and I know my limits but in many cases I experienced many threats from male members of the council saying who gave you right to speak about females and why you are participating in such politics, you don't know this is against of our culture that you will work with strangers. Moreover they threat to inform misinformation to the parents.' Moreover, many females in the student councils proved that the whole system is social constructed they have work hard for the representation of female in the student councils and they encourage other female students to participate.

Patriarchal structures

Patriarchy is referred to a system; in which males have power, authority, and supremacy over women. Simply, it means male dominancy in the society and unequal power between men and women. The life of both men and women are affected due to patriarchal system but this is reality that life of women is badly impacted because patriarchy provides a foundation of violence against women. Patriarchy has also deep roots in particular areas of Pakistan as majority of respondents says that "our culture gives more preference to male to participate in politics as compared to female. In this dominant society, one of the ways through which women will empower is through politics.

The current study explores that women in some student councils are influenced by social systems, misinterpretation of religious knowledge and class. In some student councils' women have to compromise with male but sometimes male cross their limits and tries to show their toxic hegemony, they consider themselves to have more power and authority over women everywhere. As one of the respondents says that "our cultural priority is to be male". Women have to work under male they think that the political empowerment of female will question male dominance in the student council at the campus. Male always think that if we make women

politically empowered than most probably all of them will be able to do anything without console and will raise voice for their freedom. As a result male use their power over women and at university male dominance is high because there are different students from different areas with different cultural backgrounds, they have to use their socialization accordingly.

Moreover, a male student thinks that female is unable to work and understand complex situations, issues and can't take better decision so females have to work under male because they consider themselves as they can easily solve and their decision-making power is better than female students. This is fact that every decision is taken by male according to their will in the student councils at campus.

Male attitude towards female in student councils

It is reality that attitude of males towards female is negative in some student councils at the campus. Majority of the students share negative attitude about females in council, but some females are highly encouraging by other members. Most of the male members thinks that female have to stay away from politics because only male have to work and participate. Simply, males want to be dominant everywhere.

Moreover, many female students faced many problems and challenges just because of negative behavior of the male students in the councils, even when intended to join the council, male would show harsh behaviors, threats and started to criticize, due to this reason women feels discouragement while participating in the student councils. No one wants to support female especially in term of politics in the campus. After a long struggle, some of female enable themselves to speak in front of male in councils and are able to participate at that level. Those who got permission to participate also faced criticism and stereotypical assumptions.

CONCLUSION

Pakistan is a male dominated society where women face discrimination in every walk of life, for instance, political sphere, educational system. Political participation plays vital role to empower women. This is fact that female political participation is becoming more important in the current time because of various reasons like in order to open doors for female to show power in making structures and to enhance the status of women in the society. Student politics also plays significant role to make women strong in decisions making and challenge the male domination in the society but unfortunately the political system of Pakistan is highly encouraging to dominate the male. Furthermore, Student councils at QAU are mostly headed by male students and majority of the members are also male. According to the observations and research, the political culture of the student council is very much male dominating, or we can say constituted by male and very few females are working as members and coordinator since few years. Male dominance is first challenge for female students at student council at QAU regarding politics. Patriarchy has seriously negative consequences on the political participation of female in the campus. Firstly, in most of the student councils due to limited awareness of politics, female tend to faced gender discrimination at campus level. Secondly, a large number of female populations at campus are not interested to participate in politics due to which the interested females have to face many challenges

After discussing and analyzing all issues, problems and challenges faced by female in the student council of Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad, I am able to explore that the political system of the student councils is patriarchal and male dominant which directly encourage gender discrimination. The major problematic factor in way of female politics in the campus is patriarchal structure, because of this patriarchal structure female is negatively encouraged and their political participation is also seriously affected. Traditionally, females are inferior and are not allowed to participate in politics because politics is considered to be good for male because male is strong and he can easily solve and handle the situation than female.

Although the discrimination is reinforcing the dominance of male in society, but when time comes to participation of female in politics, although they reserve seats but females are not encouraged to perform accordingly. Most of the respondents shared their experiences and they all agreed at the statement that councils are male dominant where female is given less chance to perform and stand for the rights of other females. They consider female not to be part of politics, they think, it's enough for a female to get education. I find very interesting responses of female participants about student politics. Students' politics is the basic step from where female learn how to work in diversity, particularly in male dominant area, some of the females are working to eliminate gender disparities.

The study will lay foundation for further research on student politics, to make better understanding the problems and challenges faced by the female students in the student councils at campus. Moreover, the research has revealed the importance of female student in student politics and their vital role to encourage other female

students at campus. The findings has increased awareness among the students that how female students participate in the student politics.

In addition it has provided the information for further literature. There are many researches done on students' politics but very little evidence is found on female participation. To bridge this gap, the research will provide great information to add student knowledge.

The study will not only be useful for researchers but also for teachers as well. It will guide teachers to know the participation of female students in the politics. Similarly, the students will also take benefits from these findings; they would know the importance of female participation in student politics in the campus and how it influences on the academic performance of the students. This research explored the participation of female in the student councils in the campus. Also it can help to spot the steps that are needed to work on participation of female in the student councils at campus

The limitation of present study includes sample size. The sample size is comparatively small, which might not represent the general population. Furthermore, due the current situation of covid 19, the researcher was unable to access female students. Secondly, often female students tend to reveal positive experiences but many of them hide bad experiences such as harassment, violence.

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