

# Democratic practices and youth in political participation: a doctoral study

*by* Mustain Masud

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## Democratic practices and youth in political participation: a doctoral study

Muhammad Saud <sup>a</sup>, Rachmah Ida<sup>b</sup> and Musta'in Mashud<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social and Political Science, Universitas Airlangga, Surabaya, Indonesia;

<sup>b</sup>Department of Communication, Faculty of and Political Science, Universitas Airlangga, Surabaya, Indonesia

### ABSTRACT

Youth in democratic activities has changed the political scenario of Pakistan. The current study was aimed to identify the youngsters towards their participation in democratic practices and political activities. The novelty of present study is to introduce a new theory of 'Youth-Inn' which indicated the continuous youth participation and involvement in community problem solving, peers motivation, influence public to do vote, and other political matters. The phenomena of this study are based on the present political scenario of Pakistan and youth participation in building the political structure. The study was quantitative in nature and data were collected through random sampling techniques, hundreds of respondents participated from two provinces of Pakistan, which are Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The objective of the study is to highlight the performance of youth activities, contribution to the political participation, their role in political parties and interests in political and social matters. The findings of the study suggest that youth in Pakistan are increasingly participating in democratic, social and political activities, which are their basic and core responsibility to take apart and do sufficient steps for the country.

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### KEYWORDS

Youth politics; doctoral study; political interests; election 2018; theory-Youth-Inn

### Introduction

The significant role of Youth in democratic practices have particularly practiced their basic political right in the 2013 to 2018 General Elections in Pakistan. Where, their contribution of youth in democratic practices in the country is obvious and taken attention of public and other social institutions. There are many democratic activities for the youth to participate, depending on the youth concerns, interests, and whether they can feel they are a key player in the political process depends on their involvement. The political stability requires every individual to participate in democratic activities. The study present highlights the status of youth under the age of 18–29 years old in Pakistan. It depicts the role of youth in the country is important and major for the improvement of political structure in the current situation. The youth in Pakistan has participated in the number of political activities (Saud, 2018).

### The concept and the theory of 'Youth Inn'

This piece of paper is a part of doctoral dissertation on 'Democratic Practices and youth Political Participation in Pakistan'. The novelty of this study has addressed the youth in Pakistan with a new terminology and theory 'Youth-Inn'. Which added to the knowledge and curriculum of Sociology of

**CONTACT** Rachmah Ida  [rachmah.ida@fisip.unair.ac.id](mailto:rachmah.ida@fisip.unair.ac.id); Muhammad Saud  [muhhammad.saud@gmail.com](mailto:muhhammad.saud@gmail.com)

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Youth and Sociology of Politics. The concept of 'Youth-Inn' derived from the results that indicate, youth in Pakistan are 'in' and 'take apart' in many democratic and social practices, which found that youth are the source of change and participating to smooth the structure. The proper definition of Youth Inn are:

*"Youth Inn identifies the regular participation of youth in democratic practices, social activities, student campus involvement, representation as a political agent, discussions in public spheres, family involvement in political affairs, and participation in demonstration or protests for political rights."*

According to the United nation development programme (UNDP) youth sociologically defined as, young individuals are described as the transition state between adolescence and adulthood (UNDP, 2000) and on the other side World health organisation (WHO) declares young individuals between the ages of 15 and 34. The official age of youth in Pakistan are 15–29 comprising 27% of the country's population. The gender ratio is equivalent to 50% each while the 63% of young people are literate and 49% are employed and only 51% are unemployed (National Youth Policy, 2008).

Pakistan's youth are the reliable human resource and are accessible in large quantities. Youth in Pakistan hold in an enormous quantity of energy that can be used in the country's cultural, financial, political and ideological growth. A study conducted by Aurangzeb (2008) suggests that youth in other countries are participating in social and political activities. Therefore, it is a good opportunity for the youth to be more productive and creative to be a part of society (Aurangzeb, 2008). As majority of youth in Pakistan are productive to provide them education but on the other side the feudal are reluctant to do so. Thus, Kazilbash (2010) found that feudal or elites are the main stopper for the youth to become educated, because others think that schooling is a danger to them and to their power over the country.

The political system in Pakistan is democratic in nature as it is controlled by the impact of international forces and a minor number of feudal aristocrats, political leaders, bureaucrats and organizations. Democratic elections, for the most part, only commit to rearranging the same old faces. In the 2002 general election, the graduate degree situation unlocked gates of enormous corruption when false degrees were obtained from the country's universities. More fascinatingly, an international university had been scandalized by a representative of the national assembly for obtaining a false degree. A truly trained assembly category, however, can serve a major part in changing a real parliament (Ali, 2011).

### Youth political participation in the world

Youth in the world are participating in several activities to show their interests and enthusiasm to participate in changing the political structure of the country. The study by Munroe (2002) explained that participation in political matters in terms of the degree in which individuals are practicing their right to participate and to engage in democratic activities, such as to speak openly, to participate in protests and to influence others to get more actively involved. These characters capitalize on the legal nature of political praxis, on the other side, they obviously established a frame of reference with the available repertoire of political praxis within the conventional political norms.

The literature on political participation, Dean (2004) portrayed that it is evident that political participation is energetically appreciated, in connection with the youth. In the situation of Pakistan, the notion of citizenship is quite imprecise and political participation is important part of it. Deborah Durham's (2000) explained that youth have vital role in the political arenas in Africa, through which they are involved in freedom or independence struggles, mobilizing and campaigning against the autocratic governments, and championing opposition to virtual forms of democratic governments. The idea of youth as a concept of social changer and it is not limited, such as age and other demographic factors. Durham presented youth as social constructed category, group of social actors and a relational concept. Thus, it offers new avenues to reveal the transient nature of young people, as well as their diverse skills. Judith Bessant (2004) showed that the idea of youth participation in political activities has identified the youth as a popular part of contemporary political talk in Australia

and in other western countries. In the western governments, they have initiated such programmes to advocate youth and their participation as a part of a discourse about modern citizenship, whenever, it become a policy cliché to increased youth participation that will empower and enhance the capacity of young people.

The current data on public sphere discussed by Huckfeldt et al. (2004) show that when people came to discuss their political or social matters either in online or offline virtual public sphere, they were more motivated to ready and took a part in political activities and represented their identity. The discussions that include trade of data as well as interpretive systems that assist to process that data by permitting individuals to think about factors, counter arguments, by discussions on micro and macro level, to obtain data discussions are a rich type of political knowledge. It is left to find that, what are the particular exercises of dialogues through public sphere may cause political support.

Yom (2005) argued that the significance role of youth as a civil activist is more important. Which indicates the role of youth in the democratic societies are important as well as the dire need of the democratic society to strengthen the system. A similar study by Shah et al. (2001) suggested that strong ties between social networks in Public sphere of political participation are mechanism of socialization that motivate civic involvement, building trust, enhance political knowledge among people and construct a community that is more active in politics. In regards to the provision of quick information and communication between public to public, the public sphere uses significant civic potential.

Di Gennaro and Dutton (2006) and Coleman et al.'s (2008) discussed the findings in the survey conducted by 'Oxford Internet Survey' presented that the public sphere indicated an individual's voice who have concerned over the administration responsibility, they imagine that public sphere will be beneficial to support them and have an impact on the political procedure. Alison Park et al. (2002) showed the reason behind youth to participate in political activities rather than other age groups. The main reason to participate or turning out for people who are considered unusual between the parties, differences between local parties, dissatisfaction with local authority procedures may apply to adults. Due to distrust between the ruling states and political parties, young people only participate among adults but their satisfaction level at is declining faster. The Nineteenth British Social Survey (2013) moreover, explored that young people do not feel distrustful from government than other age groups.

A research by Siddiq (2010) reveals that the role of judiciary is important to build the trust on the state, majority of the young people finds that the smooth running of state in a strong judiciary in Pakistan. Where the high majority (80%) of the political parties belong to families and inherently involve in corruption. It conclude that politicians are involved in corruption, and therefore, their poor progress shows the lack of trust among the young people (Morris & Klesner, 2010).

The other reason of youth to refrain political activities is having little trust on ruling stakeholders. Aurangzeb (2008) stated the level of satisfaction among youth. Young people are included in the mainstream decision making, however, all the decisions are in a few people's hands. The respondents in this study indicated the low level of satisfaction that contains neither specified budget for youth nor any policy at national level. Youth exert pressure on politicians to vote for a specific and eligible candidates that will help to find the right man for their policies and rights. The role of think-tanks such as 'Center for Civic Education of Pakistan (Centre for Civic Education of Pakistan, 2009)' in Pakistan conducted a report on social change and youth in democracy, which reports that majority have trust in democracy, and they believed that their vote to right candidate can be a chance to change the political scenario. The community interaction and the need for interaction-oriented collective actions in the face of social problems have to bring the sense of ownership of national interests and well-being of the society. Therefore, community interaction results in collective behaviour for preparing people to stand for the aim of common interest (Brennan et al., 2007).

A quantitative research by Muhamamd Saud (2020) & Rachmah Ida, Muhammad saud & Mustain mashud (2020) illustarted that youth have participated through online social media accounts to gain and learn the political learning, political efficacy and have strong association between their peer

groups in Pakistan. It is the need of the day to declare that the political organization or parties in Pakistan and Indonesia should reshape their party manifesto to include youth for the betterment of the society and political structure. The dynamic role of social media also provided the platform for youths to take a part in political activities.

Additionally, Philippa Collin (2008) in her study explained that the role of youth participation in politics empower young people's their skills and citizenship. Young people feel that they have little power to participate but their role in democratic process in quite important. Therefore, lack of political efficacy of youth have influences their behaviour towards democracy, in such they have insufficient trust on political parties and government, thus they are empowered enough to influence decision-making procedures. Keeping in view the above literature of this study, youth has tremendous role and energy to take a part in many activities, which will leads to strengthen the youth in political structure.

## Materials and Methods

The primary study deploys the quantitative research method comprised on 400 respondents selected for the study. The data for this article were compiled from the author dissertation on the topic of 'democratic practices and youth political participation in Pakistan, which is being held at Universitas Airlangga, Indonesia. The regions of the study are the two provinces of Pakistan named 'Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa'. The respondents were selected through the sampling frame and random sampling technique, and given equal chance to the each respondent. The political background, living in the same district or sub district is the main indicator, however, the respondents were selected those who are participated or participating in political activities. The data were analysed through SPSS-25 and Excel to find the results of the study.

## Results and analysis

Table 1 reveals the results about socio-economic background of the respondents such as their area of residence, gender, city, family type and provincial status, and indicates the Province of Punjab in districts Bhakkar, and its four Tehsils (sub districts) from Pakistan were selected for the present study as these regions have high voter turnout.

The data were collected from two provinces of Pakistan covering the total sample size of 400 situated in two provinces with eight sub-units (Tehsils). (1) Punjab, The study was conducted by taking a sampled population of 200 respondents from District Bhakkar<sup>1</sup> and its four sub districts. Among the respondents, 50 (25%) belonged to Bhakkar, 50 (25%) from Darya khan, 50 (25%) from Mankera and 50 (25%) are belonged to Kallurkot.

Table 1 also indicates the Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in district Dera Ismail Khan<sup>2</sup> and its four (4) Tehsils (sub districts) from Pakistan for the present study as these regions have high voter turnout in previous elections (Saud, Ida & Mashud, 2020). The study was conducted by taking a sampled population of 200 respondents from these four sub districts. Among the respondents,

**Table 1.** Socio-demographic variables of the respondents in both provinces (n = 400).

Sr. #	Variable	Punjab		Khyber Pakhtunkhwa		Pakistan	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1	<b>Gender</b>	(121) 60.5%	(79) 39.5%	(130) 65%	(70) 35%	(251) 62.8%	(149) 37.3%
2	<b>Residential Area</b>	<i>Urban</i> (120) 60%	<i>Semi Urban</i> (80) 40%	<i>Urban</i> (93) 46.5%	<i>Semi Urban</i> (107) 53.5%	<i>Urban</i> (213) 53.5%	<i>Semi Urban</i> (187) 46.8%
3	<b>Family system</b>	<i>Joint</i> (132) 71%	<i>Nuclear</i> (68) 39%	<i>Joint</i> (77) 38.5%	<i>Nuclear</i> (70) 35%	<i>Joint</i> (247) 61.8%	<i>Nuclear</i> (153) 38.3%
4	<b>Province</b>	(200) 100%		(200) 100%		(400) 100%	

50 (25%) belonged to *Dera Ismail Khan*, 50 (25%) respondents were from *Kulachi*, 50 (25%) from *Paharpur* and 50 (25%) belonged to *Paroa*.

The age is a common factor that is significant with the youth political participation, as this research focused on youth and their participation, thus the age factor is important to discuss. Table 1 shows the gender figure majority of 251 respondents are males and 149 of the respondents are females. The results of the data given in the above table portray the age of the respondents.

The results also reveal type of family system of the respondents are Joint family and Nuclear family system. The greater number 247 of the respondents were living in joint family system whereas 153 are living in nuclear family system, respectively. The joint family system shows that families have strong unity and affiliation towards politics.

The results show the respondents' participation in their political activities. The majority of the respondents (73.3%) mentioned that they participate or have interests in social activities around them and 26.8% of the respondents are less interested in social and political activities in their society. Whenever the researcher asked to what extent you are interested in politics, they raised 'very interested' and high majority are interested (85.3%) in political activities whereas, 14.5% are 'fairly interested' in politics. This present study also discussed their level of interests in local, National and International level of politics. However, 50.8% of the respondents are more interested in local political activities, 22.3% of the respondents are interested in at national level of politics while 27% are interested in International level of politics. It is to found that, these levels of political interests have strong implication on political knowledge and can build the strong opinion on social matters.

Klofstad (2005) discussed that the interaction between peers can be affective intimates and also serves as a critical agent of political socialization. Moreover, is it important for the respondent that his/her friends have the same political opinion, 54.3% of this study showed that it is very important for respondents that their friends should have the same political opinion, It is 'not very important' for the one third of the respondents that they should have same political opinion, additionally, for 15.3% of the respondents, it is 'fairly important' while for 7% of the respondents, it is 'not at all important' that they must have same political opinion as others, such as family, relatives, neighbour and friends.

Table 2 denotes the descriptive results of dependent variables i.e. frequency of having political participation sharing their political views among others. The findings illustrated that 36.3% of respondents were always sharing their political views among others whereas 21.5% respondents were sometime shared their political views. However, 35.5% respondents were very often shared their political views with their social networks and only 3.4% of the respondents are rarely shared their political views with others which indicates their political interests in the community.

**Table 2.** The interests in political activities.

Sr. #	Variable	Percentage (%)	Frequency
<b>Do you participate or have interests in social activities around you</b>			
1	I participate	73.3	293
	I cannot participate	26.8	107
<b>Up to what extent do you have interest in Politics?</b>			
2	Very interested	85.3	341
	Fairly interested	14.5	58
	Not very interested	0.3	01
<b>At which level of politics you are interested</b>			
3	Local	50.8	203
	National	22.3	89
	International	27	108
<b>Is it important for you that your friends have the same political opinion as yours</b>			
4	Fairly important	15.8	63
	Not very important	23	92
	Very important	54.3	217
	Not at all important	7	28

**Table 3.** There are many political activities where the youth participated (n = 400)<sup>a</sup>.

S. No	Categories	A	S	VO	R	N
i	I share my political views with others	36.3% (145)	21.5% (86)	38.5% (154)	3.8% (15)	–
ii	I have worked for a political party.	14.5% (58)	15.3% (61)	61% (244)	9.3% (37)	–
iii	Wear political symbolic dress	24.8% (99)	11% (44)	46.5% (186)	2.8% (11)	15% (60)
iv	Participated in political event	30.3% (121)	17.3% (69)	49.5% (198)	3% (12)	–
v	Donation to party	18.3% (73)	25.8% (103)	4.3% (17)	25.3% (101)	26.5% (106)
vi	Political agent in elections	23.8% (95)	24% (97)	07% (28)	21% (84)	24.3% (97)
vii	Motivation to other fellows	42.5% (170)	14.8% (59)	12.5% (50)	06% (24)	24.3% (97)

<sup>a</sup>GE = general election, A = always, S = sometimes, VO = very often, R = rarely and N = never.

Table 3 discussed having political participation being worked for the political party. The findings demonstrated that 61% respondents were very often worked as a political parties or candidate whereas 14.5% respondents were always volunteered for the political party. Beside other activities, only 15.3% of the respondents are sometimes working while 9.3% of the respondents were rarely supporting or working for their party candidate or political campaigns and dissemination of literature to support their party.

During the political campaigns, events and in general meetings political activists use to wear some political symbolic dresses in the recent general elections. The findings illustrated that 46.5% respondents are very often posting various symbols for their political interests, 24.8% respondents were always wore political campaigns t-shirt or badge, whereas 15% never wore any t-shirt or campaign badge for promotions for their political party or candidate, 11% are sometimes use to wore symbolic shirts or cap while 2.8% of the respondents rarely wore symbolic material for supporting their political parties. It is quite new phenomena among young political activists in Pakistan, where young people use flag t-shirt or play music to dance and solidarity with the political parties.

Political participation being attended a campaign or rally to support a candidate and his/her political party. The findings showed that 30.3% respondents have always participated in political campaign for candidate or party whereas 49.5% respondents were very often participated in such campaigns at local or national level. Only 17.3% of the respondents were sometimes participating while 3% of the respondents were rarely involved in the rallies to support a candidates or party. The findings in the table clearly show that majority of the respondents i.e. 49.5% were very often participated in the political party campaign for the electoral benefits.

The table also defines the frequency of having political participation to donate money to the candidate or party. The findings illustrated that 25.8% respondents were sometimes donated money to the candidates whereas 25.3% respondents were rarely donated for political support. 26.5% of the respondents never donated money for the party political campaigns while only 4.3% respondents were very often to donate some material to the political party or candidate while 18.3% of the respondents are always donated money or material in the 2018 general elections or local elections.

The respondents worked as a party representative for general national and in local elections are: 24% respondents were sometimes worked as a party representative for elections whereas 21% respondents were among those who rarely worked for the party representative. Whereas, 24.3% never performed their duties for party representatives or never get a chance to do such activity while 7% of the respondents were very often participated and worked as a party representative for the national elections however, 23.8% of the respondent always performed as a party representatives in elections.

Table also presenting the political participation and motivation to others to cast their vote for the particular party or any specific candidate are 42.5% of respondents were always motivated others to vote for party whereas 24.3% respondents were among those who never involved in any political promotion. Therefore, very less 12.5% respondents very often motivated their social circle to vote for their party, 14.8% respondents were those who sometimes involved in the promotional campaigns while only 6% of the respondents rarely involved in the motivating others to vote for a particular party or candidates. According to the election commission system, an independent (without party affiliation) can be contested in the election process, however mostly politics submitted their documents for



independent candidates, and their position in society was based on personality and political backgrounds.

## Discussion

The research focuses on knowing the youth's approach towards politics that involves their participation in politics, knowledge of political problems, and membership with political parties, and electoral conduct. Some of the results with regards to prior research are discussed here: While discussing the amount of youth involvement in politics, this research shows a favourable youth reaction. Approximately, 85.3% of participants were highly satisfied and very interested to participate in political activities, and a large percentage of participants indicated that they are interested to talk about local political matters and they would like to speak and listen to politics. Thus, majority of our youngsters are involved in political problems, and these results are backed by Henn et al. (2002) and Muhammad Saud (2020) researches reports that teens are involved in politics. It is incorrect to perceive youthful individuals as being apolitical. This research discovers a strong amount of youth consciousness while studying the extent of youth consciousness.

Similarly, the results of another variables showing that youth in Pakistan are interested to participate in political activities. A substantial number of participants felt that it is every citizen's responsibility to take a part in political activities. These results are backed by Collin's research (Collin, 2008) and Habiba et al. (2018), which states that young generations think it is their responsibility and basic right to engage in the mechanism of democracy.

While questioned about youth participation as political agent in the general elections, only 23.8% of participants recorded, while 24.3% never participated in political agent role, there are many reasons of non-participation as a role of political agent. It demonstrates that teenagers do not believe and do not like to join the traditional political parties. Siddiq's (2010) research supports these results, which states that the bulk of youngsters are not a part of any political party, nor would they want to become a party member.

The gender of the respondents also emphasized the study's reflections. Their interests in political behaviour show a distinction between male and woman. It is also supported by the study of Lopez et al. (2003) stated that young women likely to work as volunteer and participated in different political activities.

## Conclusion

This quantitative research highlighted the status of youth participation in democratic activities in Pakistan. The findings of the study found that youth have interests in political activities, such as to participate in political discussions in public spheres. A greater vau<sup>20</sup>e of the respondents are living in a joint family system that is an essential part of political socialization among families. In terms of participating in General elections, youth likely to participate in electoral activities, they like to wear T-shirts, donating money to the political parties, motivating others and also representing as youth political agenda in the polling stations. The novelty of this research is a new concept in the field of Sociology of Politics & Sociology of youth is 'youth Inn'. Where the youth used to discuss local political matters with their fellows. It is to conclude from this paper make evident that research on time trends political participation among youth in Pakistan that utilize scales are highly driven by discussions in public and private spheres, indicating further issues with this sort of analysis.

## Notes

1. <sup>19</sup> [s://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhakkar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhakkar)
2. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dera\\_Ismail\\_Khan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dera_Ismail_Khan)

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## Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## Notes on contributors

**Muhammad Saud** is a young political researcher based in South and East Asia. He is the author of studies on Youth and political participation. He lectures in Sociology, worked in the development sectors (NGOs) and has contributed to a series of youth development projects and particularly on youth policy, youth manifesto for the Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI), youth advocacy, at the grassroots level. He is working with think tanks to promote youth as the main indicator of social change in the democratic society. He started his career from the spirit of volunteerism and got the Best Volunteer Award from Rozan Pakistan. He is currently engaged in funded projects with Indonesian and Malaysian Universities on the Democratic Practice and Youth political participation. He is also associated with national and international forums.

**Rachmah Ida** Professor Rachmah Ida got her bachelor's degree from the Department of Communications, Universitas Airlangga, Surabaya and her Master's degree and in Media Studies, from Edith Cowan University, Perth. While for the Doctoral degree, Rachmah Ida got it from Curtin University of Technology, Perth. Became Professor in Media, Culture, and Society and lecturing at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo, she has already published numerous articles, book chapters, and also books. The latest one, published in 2019 entitled *Sunar Perempuan dan Konstruksi Seksualitas Perempuan Madura* (Female circumcision and Madura Women's Sexuality Construction). Her main research areas are media, culture, and society.

**Musta'in Mashud** Professor Mustain is currently working as Vice Dean (Academic Affairs) in the faculty of Social and Political Science (FISIP); he received his doctoral education from Universitas Airlangga Indonesia. His major in Sociology, Community development and political participation. He participated in many International and national forums for the policy making of youths in Indonesia. His main research areas are community development, political participation & sociology of crime.

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## ORCID

Muhammad Saud  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5739-7238>

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