

REDISCOVERING THE ROLE OF STUDENT UNIONS IN SINDH PROVINCE

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to explore the role of the student union in resolving student problems through the attentive inculcation of politics in education. This paper has attempted to evaluate the role of the students in the students' politics and helped to understand the value of politics in students' life. The motive to choose this piece of research is student union has performed productively in the past to resolve students' literary and financial issues; however, it has occupied a crucial position in the educational institutes of Pakistan, since 1947. So, the nature of this paper is qualitative and avails a ground to understand political matters more extensively. In the qualitative research methodology, thematic analysis has been chosen, in which the research tool is an interview and semi-structured interviews have been practiced to figure out themes. The objectives of this study are to explore student union problems and to ensure the usage of legal amendments that were passed to liberate students' union in Sindh Province in the past. Although, most of the mainstream top-seed politicians are the product of student unions, and they are providing educated and well-trained political leaders and workers to strengthen political participation in the Sindh province. The results of this study showed that currently, our educational institutions require assistance to address the concerns of students and create a sense of political awareness through the "nurseries of democracy" which means student unions in Sindh province has been acclaimed for producing the country's finest leaders and politicians to promote a democratic culture to enhance debates and learnings on the universities premises. Even though, both sides of the student union debate in the Sindh province have argued

that student unions in universities are related to campus violence and student extremism. However, it is hard to prove that the ban has resulted in an efficient to reduce student-related violence in the last 38 years.

Keywords: Students Union, Student Politics, Political Parties, Democracy, Student Union Restoration Bill 2019

INTRODUCTION

Hussain states that the students were one of the most significant and influential political actors in Pakistan's politics who extended the role and establishment of the political process which demonstrates the active students in several forms, such as an active role in the political setup, agitational role as an active group, and penetration into the policymaking and the political processes (2012).

The term 'Student Unions' means students' political participation in higher education matters through presenting an active commitment to social, educational, and academic financial support. Throughout the world, it has been observed that the best usage of politics should save people's lives and set grounds where justice could occur.

To discover the root causes of political problems personally, socially, and globally, it is crucial to understand the dynamics of the student union and its physical presence on campuses. Student organisations and student unions were active in colleges and universities since 1947.

Historically, before 1947, the Muslim student federation was active and had an important role in the movement of Pakistan. Even, it was associated with Pakistan's Muslim League. Likewise, most of the student organisations had a close link with one political party's ideologies. For instance, the Sindh province is also one of the biggest provinces with multilingual communities. Politically, students from the Sindh province had launched a moment to get Karachi back which was considered the capital city of Pakistan and currently it is the capital city of Sindh province. Then, in 30th January 1948, a resolution was passed that stated students of the province were not in favour to separate Karachi from Sindh province and celebrated "Karachi Day" on 20th February 1948 which caused various indiscrimination at campuses. However, Sindh emerged in the form of One Unit, which led Sindh's people to resist actively, and their leading political party was Sindh Awami Mahaz, in which students

had shown their active participation.

On the other hand, the Muslim League began to disintegrate as Pakistan's first ruling party. It was divided into various self-serving groups, mostly due to intra-party conflicts over the distribution of government ministries. Therefore, MSF split into different groups. After that, a new platform for students was need of time to voice their new-found academic and political concerns. In 1950 student groups at the Dow Medical College in Karachi established the Democratic Students Federation (DSF) (Paracha, 2009).

After two years, DSF began to participate in too many protests and rallies to support progressive causes. DSF grew as a left-leaning student organisation in 1952. A "Charter of Demands" was drafted by DSF in 1953 at Karachi's Dow Medical College and included demands for lower tuition fees, better classrooms, and a legitimate university to be established there. It was a "Demands Day" when DSF members marched out in front of the education minister, Fazlur Rehman. Though, a protest was concealed by Dow Medical College's administration. Even though there were several casualties among the students, many others were injured and taken into custody. After that terrible situation, Mr. Bogra showed a plan for Karachi university to students. The new campus of Karachi University (KU) was identified, and construction was ordered. It was a great victory for DSF, (Paracha,)2009

After a long time of being banned student unions in the country. In 2008 PM Yusuf Raza Gilani announced that student unions would be restored. Currently, most universities and colleges have student societies in departments that cater to extra-curricular activities such as debates and dramas. (PILDAT, 2008) but question is that after passing the bill for the restoration of student unions in the Sindh assembly 2019. But four years have passed, Sindh Government yet not decided elections for student unions in the province.

The efforts for the revival of student unions have initiated activism. So, this paper analyses those efforts in the context of the student solidarity march and the resistance which was faced by the participatory students and their leadership after the student March.

Basically, the youth comprise 64% of Pakistan's population, unfortunately, but there is no active participation in the mainstream of politics, not even in student-related policies, such as administration, HEC policies for students in the current situation are not sufficient, and low budgets for students' affairs.

In past, student unions were banned in 1984 due to it was a challenging period for the authoritarian regime of Gen Zia al I Haqq. Before its band in the dictator era Ziaul Haq in 1984, progressive alliances swept the union polls in 1983. It has been observed that most of the students lack interest in politics and do not want to involve themselves in politics. Even, students have been impacted to inculcate politics in an educational environment to help other students and contribute. Various studies have been conducted on the students' politics from several historical perspectives, but this study is attempted to discover the status of student unions in politics in Sindh province which is one of the biggest provinces whose population and students are aware of politics.

So, this study is an endeavour to discuss the importance of politics and what is its current status. Furthermore, it has tried to present an in-depth understanding of the student union at Karachi University because politics decide the better future of the youth if it is inculcated vigilantly and actively. In addition, this study has attempted to explore problems related to student unions in higher education. The nature of this study is qualitative to come up with a solution to see the current scenario of the student union in Sindh after the restoration of Student Unions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study explores the fundamental rights of student unions and student politics. This research is qualitative in nature in which the critical discourse analysis method has been used to understand or evaluate the rights of students' unions and politics. Further, a descriptive and analytical approach has been used to justify this study.

Student unions are generally known as general representatives to student bodies and mostly were elected by students. Many universities had a student union fund, that was approved by the elected representatives of the unions for student welfare like fees and book arrangements. In addition, educational institutions had a constitution for the working students' bodies and had an official space within the campuses.

Student Union is one of the most primitive political works in the history of Pakistan that has shown students' conscious attitudes toward social and educational work. For instance, at the time of independence in 1947, Muslim Students Federation played a crucial and left and right political groups

emerged. In a similar vein, IJT was formed in 1947 that was associated with the Jamaat-i-Islami. Further, in 1950, a communist political party was also established by the right-wing to raise their influence; where some students were representino East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) as a Students' League. (Javid, 2019)

Generally, elections were held every year, with the representatives of several student organisations. Therefore, student unions were representative of students of all types of political or ideological affiliations. Moreover, the student unions served as a nursery to develop political leaders. It served as a platform to permit the entry of leaders; later on, it became recognised political leaders of the country such as Mr. Javed Hashmi, a president of the Punjab University student's union in 1972 who became a member of the National Assembly (MNA), Mr. Jahangir Badar, a president of the Hailey college of commerce Lahore who had inculcated students' activism.

Further, in 1971, he was elected as Minister of the National Assembly (MNA) and Senator. Along, he became a federal minister and secretary general of the largest political party, i.e., the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). On the other hand, most of the Baloch leadership in Balochistan including Dr. Abdul Hayee Baloch, a president of the National party was very active in BSO during his student life in Karachi. These are experiences for students and prepared them for a leadership role in real life. (PILDAT, 2008)

With the passage of time, political and constitutional grounds have been affected when the literal community i.e., students started accelerating their movement and raised their voices for fundamental rights 1960s which was a cause to demolish Ayub Khan's government.

The abovementioned discussion is based on the historical perspective of the student union and political movements that have been practiced showing activism in literacy which helped them raise their voices against violence and fundamental rights. The historical perspective suggests that activism is a crucial part raise awareness among students in the democratic state.

Even, Zia in 1984, imposed Martial law to prevent student activism. The orders were reversed by the first government of Benazir Bhutto in 1988. Three years later, the unions had been challenged in the Supreme Court (SC) of Pakistan on grounds that they had contributed to on-campus violence. Further, on July 1, 1992, SC passed an interim order to approve students'

admission to institutions with the confirmation proforma in which student activism was banned. (Taimur, 2010, Pildat, 2008)

Research Questions

1. What are the current problems of the student union in Sindh Province?
2. What are the results of legal amendments that were passed by the Sindh assembly to liberate the students' union in Sindh Province?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study has used a qualitative research methodology for in-depth knowledge of the issue. In qualitative research, the researcher collects data to learn from participants in the study and develops interview protocols to record data. These protocols give a general view of questions so that the participants can provide answers to the questions. (Creswell, 2008)

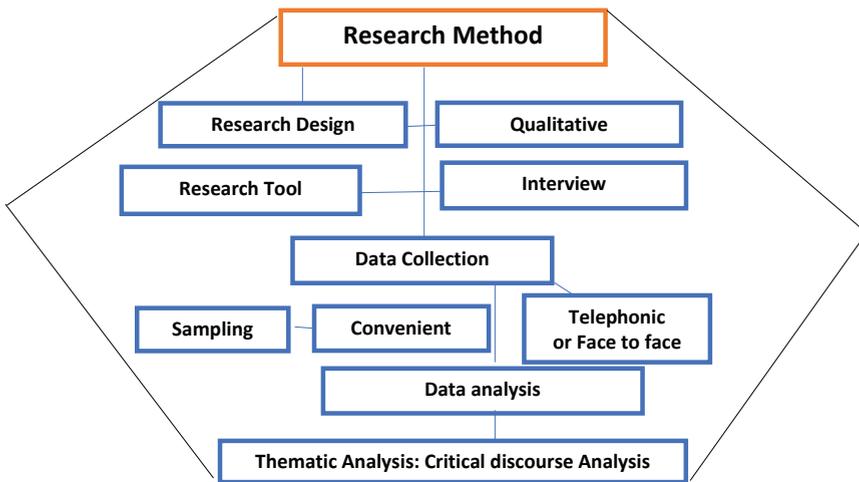


Fig 0.1

Furthermore, as it is mention in the 0.1, qualitative research is an umbrella term for an array of efforts toward and strategies for conducting any inquiry-based study and helps to discover how human beings understand, experience, interpret, and produce the social world. (Alan Bryman, 2012) In addition, this qualitative study has explored the research on students' unions and explores the role of unions in institutions and society where semi-structured interviews have been conducted for this study.

In addition, in research, a population is a group of individuals who have

the same characteristic (Creswell 2012: 142). In this research article, the selected population is activists who have experienced the political student unions' drawbacks, problems, and bans. Furthermore, participants have been selected on their historical participation in their student life.

Similarly, in research "Sampling is the act, process, or technique of selecting a suitable sample, or a representative part of a population for the purpose of determining parameters or characteristics of the whole population." (Fridah, 2002, p 1) Moreover, a sample is a subgroup of the target population that the researcher plans to study for generalizing about the target population. (Creswell, 2012) So, 4 experienced political activists have been selected to understand the dynamics of the student's union, their profiles have been secured as per the British Educational Research Association (BERA) ethical consideration that provides a ground to have respect for the participants, and participants are presented by their gender rather than their personal recognition.

In the research method, it refers to the number of participants and it is represented by "n" in a study. To conduct this study, four senior citizens of the Sindh province have been selected and interviewed to record their experiences.

Tools

The research instrument is the device for answering the research questions that enable the researcher in constructing steps to collect the data. The researcher should consider some variables such as validity, reliability, objectivity, and usability when he wants to design a good research instrument. (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2009:111)

So, the research tool for this study is an open-ended questionnaire that has been used to avail flexibility to use prompts where participants got stuck.

An open-ended question is one of the types of questionnaires that are used in qualitative research. Although some research will quantify the answer during the analysis stage. The questionnaire does not contain a Likert scale, instead, it leaves a blank section for the respondent to write in an answer or speak about it. In this study, the researcher has used open-ended questions to reach the study's objectives and research questions.

The data collection and analysis in qualitative research are inductive processes. (Spaulding and Voegtler 2010: 180) The data of this study were

collected based on the following steps. The researcher asked to get permission from the selected individuals to participate in any language to follow the ethical considerations. The researcher met with the participant and arranged a time for an interview. The researcher prepared the questionnaires and interview list connected with the statement of problems related to the research. The researcher designed the interview and questionnaires in 3 languages, English, Urdu, and Sindhi to make the participants answer them easily. For this research paper, data has been collected from individuals' interviews and then transcribed. And data analysis is the last step in collecting the data for research. Data analysis refers to the process and interpreting the data which involves several stages such as organizing, familiarizing, coding, reducing, interpreting, and representing. (Ary, et.al. 2010: 481) In order to understand the data, the thematic analysis technique has been used to elaborate the responses well and understand the pragmatical means for the responses.

5.2 Coding/Themes/Sub-themes

S# Codes

1.1	<i>Democracy</i>	1.1 Favourable and Unfavourable Statement
1.2	<i>Ideologies</i>	1.2 Admirable school of thought
1.3	<i>Undeniable Facts</i>	1.3 Aware or unaware
1.4	<i>Existence of Students rather than Unions</i>	1.4 Reasons

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are one the crucial aspect of the research where British Educational Research Association (BERA) rules are highly recommended to use and develop a sense of trustworthiness. For the ethical consideration, the followed points have been honestly followed, such as,

- Objectives have been shared with the participants.
- Differences across cultural backgrounds have been respected.
- Assurances of personal data have been provided to the participants.

Findings

The findings showed the needs and significant role of student unions in institutions of higher education such as colleges and universities etc. Rational politics is an essential part of human life to achieve desired goals for the betterment of society. Even, politics decides the future of people in the democratic society everywhere in the world including Pakistan to struggle for

the due rights of the citizens. Students are also a specific and important class in society, who engage themselves in activities related to the requirements of the education system. The students politics in Pakistan has gone through different phases pre-independence, post-independence to 21st century.

This article includes some of the major facets of student politics in Pakistan and Sindh province. The introductory part generally discusses the definition and concept of the student union. This article also focuses on the history of student politics in Pakistan, and it includes the student's movements of pre-independence, post-independence, and band conditions during the regime of Dictator Zia periods. The paper also elaborates on the needs and significance of student politics with the inclusive nature of higher education, the rights of the marginalized, and the reasons to not ban and crush student politics in the country. Further, the paper enshrines the ideologies of some major students unions such as MSF, NSF, DSF, PSA, USM, PSF, ATI, ISO, PKSF, BSO, and JSSF. Eventually, the main point identified that there are interests behind political parties in student politics is to get educated leadership and utilize it as a Pressure Group in a time of need. (Hussain, 2012)

CONCLUSION

The student union is one of the pivotal and historical moments in the Sindh province which represents an association of the students in the educational institution to promote the general interests of the students for academic, interdisciplinary, extracurricular, and other matters that are concerned with the student's affairs. Historically, student unions have served a variety of functions for their members, such as organising social activities, providing support on a variety of academic and welfare issues, representing students both individually and collectively, and campaigning on local and national issues (Byford, 2014).

Further, in the era of Zia, there were acts of violence on campuses and interventions in administration. As it results, students from 90 cities joined hands together and performed a solidarity march on November 2019 to raise voices to restore student unions and enhance the education system with better facilities by initiating students' unions again. It was also demanded that every educational institution should elect student union nominees on its board, senate, and syndicate because regulations and procedures for the creation of student unions would be developed for the betterment of the generations.

Secondly, in Sindh province, students have fought against the prohibition

of student unions and put their efforts to develop a peaceful environment in educational institutions. The current profile of students' performance shows that students are well aware of their laws, and they are actively using them to get benefits.

So, the limitation of this study is, it is only based on the role of the student union and student politics in Sindh province. It has recognised or mentioned the problems of private students. This is the smallest contribution for the readers to understand the historical drawbacks of student unions and their politics. In the future, educational matters will be explored on the broader to address the students' problems in this technical era.

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