

Study on the Attitude and Knowledge of Youth towards Election through the Lens of Election Advocacy in Pakistan – An Experimental Approach

Anjum Bano Kazimi^{*}, Amatul Zehra^{**} & Munir Moosa Sadrudin^{}***

Abstract

The current study evaluates the general trend of youth towards election (11 May 2013 election) through the lens of their knowledge and attitude towards election advocacy. The study adopts experimental approach to find, how training impact knowledge and attitude of youth. The treatment group also received 45 minutes of training related to election before post test was conducted with mock election demo to share practical knowledge related to concepts, procedures and application of election. The population for the study consists of all the students studying at secondary to higher secondary level in Sindh, Pakistan. The total sample size for this study $n=200$ is selected through random sampling. The tool was developed and passed for internal consistency. The results disclose that training does play a crucial role in enhancing knowledge and shaping attitude towards democratic process. Before training, there was a lack of positive attitude and lack of knowledge towards election, however, after the training and mock elections, youth gained insight knowledge which helped them to adopt positive attitude. The study suggests inclusion of topics related to need, importance and trust in election procedure of democracy. The study also suggests holding mock elections in all the provinces to give practical training to the youth for shaping their attitude towards election and its process to lead them towards democracy. The study also suggests developing trust in the election process related to transparency through the inclusion of such topics in the curriculum.

Introduction

Our struggle for democracy has been harder than our struggle for freedom. Pakistan has faced political turmoil and instability and has suffered from disillusion because it did not have a global democratic

^{*} Dr Anjum Bano Kazimi, Professor, Sindh Madressatul Islam University, Karachi.

^{**} Amatul Zehra, Faculty of Computer Systems and Software Engineering, University of Malaysia, Phang.

^{***} Munir Moosa Sadrudin, Lecturer, Sindh Madressatul Islam University, Karachi.

image. Election is considered as the primary democratic process to elect a leader to lead the nation. It is a major source of stabilization and democratization. It is a tightrope walk between war and peace, stability and instability in the third world countries.¹

For the very first time, the provincial elections were held in Pakistan in the year 1951 and 1954, but national elections were not held till December 1970. In addition to the constricted nature of democracy, the constitutions of Pakistan (1956, 1962, 1973) underwent crises which did not give clear image to the citizens about democracy. Pakistan experienced imbalanced forms of government which has shaped negative attitude of general public towards election. The civilian regime was overthrown in a coup in 1977, when opponents alleged that the elections had been rigged. In between, there has been military rule; from 1958 to 1971, 1977 to 1988 and 1999 to 2008. Four governments and parliaments were dismissed and dissolved within 11 years. This is a major reason why voters' participation has become lack-luster, because voters realized that their representatives shall never be allowed to complete their term.

For a citizen to be aware of his or her rights and responsibility she or he must know the structure of government and the procedures of democracy. Pakistan is a federation that is a state where there is more than one government. These are at the central, provincial and local levels. Citizens have to vote for local bodies, provincial assemblies and the national assembly. This is a parliamentary form of government in which the speakers, the prime minister and president are elected by our direct representatives. In the present constitutional scheme the voting age has been reduced from 21 to 18 years.

As such it is all the more imperative that the youth, which now includes the students, should be made aware of democratic values and democratic procedure. Whenever an election schedule is announced, the Election Commission appoints and trains for every polling station and polling booth, presiding officers, assistant presiding officers down to polling officer, but not the voters.

Democracy shall function more smoothly if the voters are also trained. It is the youth, the people who shall be voting for the first time, who are required to be trained. The best method is to hold mock elections so that the students become familiar with the voting procedures. For the purpose of this survey structured questionnaire were distributed to the target population before the mock election and training, and a

¹ W. Kuhne, *The Role of Elections in Emerging Democracies and Post-Conflict Countries Key Issues, Lessons Learned and Dilemmas*, 2010.

questionnaire was filled after the mock election and training. This helped the research team to analyze the trend of knowledge and attitude towards election among Pakistani youth.

Research methodology

The project was designed not only to develop awareness about procedures and steps in elections among the students but also to make them aware of their rights and responsibilities; make them understand before they reach voting age that no one can rule over them without their consent, that through elections we transfer some of our basic rights to our representatives for the general good and well being of the population at large. The study adopted experimental research methodology. The population for the study consisted of all the students studying at secondary to higher secondary level in Sindh, Pakistan. The total sample size for this study $n=200$ was selected through random sampling. Pre-test post-test designs were widely used in behavioral research, primarily for the purpose of comparing groups and for measuring change resulting from experimental treatments.² In this study, similar group was experimented before and after the training. The tool was developed and passed for internal consistency. Questionnaire was administered to collect the response while the mock election was also administered with the help of selected institutions to incorporate practical knowledge. For ethical consideration, consent letter was signed by the participants and permission was taken from the institutions selected.

Hypotheses

Following main hypotheses were developed and were tested:

1. There will be no significant difference in the knowledge of students towards election (pre and post test)
2. There will be no significant difference in the attitude of students towards election (pre and post test)

Data analysis

Biographical information

Table 1: Showing Number of Respondents on the Basis of Gender

Gender	No. of Respondents
Male	89
Female	111

² D. Dimitrov & D. Rumrill, *Pretest-posttest designs and measurement of Change*, 2003.

Table 2: Showing Number of Respondents on the Basis of Economic Status

Economic Status	No. of Respondents
Rich	12
Poor	00
Middle Class	188

Table 3: Showing Number of Respondents on the Basis of Family Structure

Family Structure	No. of Respondents
Single Family	194
Joint Family	06

Table 4: Showing Number of Respondents on the Basis of Source of Information about Election

Source of information about election	No. of Respondents
TV	192
Friends	4
School	2
Others	2

Table 5: Showing Number of Respondents on the Basis of Training

Have you ever attended training on election	No. of Respondents
Yes	20
No	180

*(a) Attitude***Table 6: Showing Number of Respondents on the basis of best form of government leader**

The best form of government leader is	No. of Respondents Pre-Test	No. of Respondents Post-Test
Dictator	53	40
Democratic	147	160

Table 7: Showing Number of Respondents on the basis of attitude towards becoming member of political/social organization

It is good to be the member of political organization	No. of Respondents Pre-Test	No. of Respondents Post-Test
Yes	32	131
No	15	40
Don't Know	153	29

Table 8: Showing Number of Respondents on the basis of attitude towards casting vote in the future election

I want to caste my vote in the future election	No. of Respondents Pre-Test	No. of Respondents Post-Test
Yes	172	196
No	14	04
Not at All	14	00

Table 9: Showing Number of Respondents on the basis of attitude towards the role of election in solving issues of terrorism

Election can solve issues of terrorism	No. of Respondents Pre-Test	No. of Respondents Post-Test
Agree	33	132
Disagree	167	68
Total	200	200

Table 10: Showing Number of Respondents on the basis of attitude towards role of vote in changing the fortune of Pakistan

My vote cannot change the fortune of Pakistan	No. of Respondents Pre-Test	No. of Respondents Post-Test
Agree	100	15
Disagree	100	185
Total	200	200

Table 11: Showing Number of Respondents on the basis of attitude towards transparent election

Elections are never transparent in Pakistan	No. of Respondents Pre-Test	No. of Respondents Post-Test
Agree	163	160
Disagree	37	40
Total	200	200

Table 12: Showing Number of Respondents on the basis of attitude towards women participation in election

Women should take part in election	No. of Respondents Pre-Test	No. of Respondents Post-Test
Agree	64	170
Disagree	136	30
Total	200	200

*(b) Knowledge***Table 13: Showing Number of Respondents on the knowledge of age to cast vote**

The age to cast vote is	No. of Respondents Pre-Test	No. of Respondents Post-Test
Below 18	163	00
18 and above	36	200
21 and above	1	00
Total	200	200

Table 14: Showing Number of Respondents about knowledge about form of government

Which form of government we have in Pakistan	No. of Respondents Pre-Test	No. of Respondents Post-Test
Federal	02	02
Provincial	08	00
Parliamentary	190	198
Total	200	200

Table 15: Showing Number of Respondents on the basis of knowledge about the last election held

The last elections were held in the year	No. of Respondents Pre-Test	No. of Respondents Post-Test
2005	44	09
2008	150	184
2010	06	07
Total	200	200

Table 16: Showing Number of Respondents on the basis of knowledge about power in Pakistan

In Pakistan, all power lies with	No. of Respondents Pre-Test	No. of Respondents Post-Test
President	38	26
Prime Minister	132	172
Chief Minister	40	02
Total	200	200

Name the current body, which is responsible for holding election	No. of Respondents Pre-Test	No. of Respondents Post-Test
Election Commission	06	197
Others	184	03
Total	200	200

Analysis

Majority of the selected participants (56%) were females while the proportion of male participants was 44%. The age of the respondents varied from 14-17. In Pakistan, the age to cast vote is 18; therefore, the selection of the respondents is justified for this study. Whereas 94% of the respondents belonged to middle class families, all the respondents had their B-Forms, majority of them were from single family system (194 respondents). They had no training on elections (180 respondents); majority of them (192) gained information about election from TV. Only one respondent was associated with a social organization. Majority of the respondents knew the names of political parties working in Pakistan.

Attitude

Before the pre-test, majority of the respondents did consider democratic leadership to be the best form of leadership. However, after the training and mock election, there was a slight improvement in the trend of accepting a democratic leader. If we compare it with the economic status of the respondents, majority were from the middle class and, as democracy is considered as the best possible way to gain access to basic needs, therefore, the results justify this innate trend. According to Burki,³ youth have some preferences. They seek accountable head who is free from corruption and who work for the economic upliftment of the country. According to the Centre for Civic Education of Pakistan majority of the youth believe in democracy.

Before the pre-test, majority of the respondents were undecided about affiliation with social or political organization; there was a huge change in the trend after training and mock election, where the respondents realized that it is good to be member of a political or social organization on the basis of the fact that these affiliations are not for the self, rather for the collective development of a country. In general few young people are involved in the institutions of typical politics, but majority avoid it due to threats.⁴

Majority of the respondents were keen to be a part of democratic process by casting their vote in the future. Collin⁵ also shares this view that youth participation is not only crucial for democratic process but it also enhances skills for effective participation in the democratic process.

There was a slight slope shift towards positive trend after the training. Terrorism has highly impacted young minds. This reflection can be seen before the pre-test and mock election as majority of the respondents disagreed that there is no link between election and solving the issue of terrorism. However, the researchers provided training which highly changed the attitude of the respondents who later realized that election though it could not solve the problem of terrorism but does contribute towards countering the issue of terrorism. Equal proportion of the respondents believed that vote can change or cannot change the fortune of Pakistan. This provides a glimpse of hope among the youth.

³ S.J. Burki, 'The Youth surge and Pakistani politics', Lahore, *Tribune*, 11 May 2013.

⁴ K. Edwards, 'Youth democracy and social change', in *Proceedings Social Change in the 21st Century Conference 2006*, Queensland University of Technology, 2006.

⁵ P. Collin, 'Young People Imagining a New Democracy', *The Foundation for Young Australians*, Whitlam Institute, University of West Sydney, 2008.

After the mock election and training, there was a great shift in this trend where majority realized that vote can change the fortune of a country. Before and after the training and mock election, there was not much shift in the attitude of the respondents towards the transparency of election. Majority believe that elections are never transparent. Siddiqua⁶ also reflect the same opinion that majority of the youth believe that political parties are corrupt and non transparent. This view was further supported by Aurangzeb.⁷ A study was carried out by Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency reveals that a large number of Pakistani voters intended to cast their vote, but mostly have doubts about transparency of election process. Hinds⁸ found that youth in general, is generally uninformed about politics and the electoral process which create doubt among the youth towards the process of election.

Though the training provided information about the current election process, but economic status plays a very crucial role in this regard where the influence of family plays an important role in shaping this attitude.

On the basis of male dominant society, there is a general trend in Pakistan where women are mostly isolated and are not associated with elections. Even in the ranks of mainstream political parties which champion equal rights and participation of women, the number of women candidates contesting in the up coming general election has declined.⁹

This trend was visible before the training and mock election, where majority of the respondents said that women should not take part in election. However, there was a sweep shift in the attitude where the respondents believed that women should participate in election.

Knowledge

Majority of the respondents knew that the age to cast vote is 18 and above. However the training did increase the knowledge level as all the respondents learnt about the actual age after the training and mock

⁶ A. Siddiqua, *Red Hot Chili Peppers Islam-Is the Youth in Elite Universities in Pakistan Radical?* Retrieved from <http://www.boell-Pakistan-org>.

⁷ B. Aurangzeb, *Youth in Governance: Exploring Dynamics of Youth Participation in Pakistan*, Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, the Netherlands, 2008.

⁸ M.D. Hinds, *Youth vote 2000: They'd rather volunteer*. Carnegie Reporter,1(2). Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2001. <http://www.carnegie.org/reporter/02/vote2000/>.

⁹ A. Waseem, 'Number of Women Candidates not Rising', Retrieved from <http://dawn.com/2013/04/21/number-of-women-candidates-not-rising/>

election. Majority of the respondents had knowledge about the form of government we have in Pakistan, before and after the training. Majority of the respondents knew that the last elections were held in 2008. The training, however, impacted slightly in raising awareness among those who did not know. Majority of the respondents knew that all power in Pakistan lies with the Prime Minister. Training and mock election had a slight impact in raising knowledge. Majority of the respondents had no idea about the body, responsible for holding elections and had no idea about the number of seats in National Assembly, however, after the training, majority gained knowledge that Election Commission play an important role in this regard. It was shared to the respondents that National Assembly has 272 while Sindh has 130, Punjab has 297, Khyber Pukhtunkhwa has 99 an Balochistan has 51 seats.

Conclusion

There was no significant difference among the youth about the knowledge towards election, however, there was a significant difference in their attitude towards election. Active civic participation is important for the future of a nation and a healthy democracy.¹⁰ There is a profound need to promote a culture of democracy in Pakistan. A democratic culture means not only expressing one's own opinion, but also to accept the opinions of others, even if it may differ from one's own. It is to this end that democracy works, and it is this process which creates a tolerant society. Therefore, the research suggests to build positive attitude by providing training to the youth through the inclusion of such topics in the curriculum. Furthermore, mock elections should be held in all the institutions to raises political awareness.

¹⁰ C. Gibson, *From Inspiration to Participation: A review on perspectives of youth civic engagement*, The Grantmaker Forum on Community and National Service and Carnegie Corporation, 2001. Retrieved from <http://www.pacefunders.org/publications/pubs/Moving%20Youth%20report%20REV3.pdf>