

Role of Youth in the Promotion of Good Governance in Pakistan

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Abstract

This paper aims to examine the role of youth in the promotion of good governance in Pakistan. It highlights the importance of youth for Pakistan's development. Almost 60% of the country's population is young and they have the potential to bring prosperity and good governance. The development of Pakistan is in the hands of the country's energetic and talented youth. However, fewer opportunities, the dearth of proper supervision and lack of capacity to absorb true/untrue information are misguiding them. Very few of our youngsters know the technique to utilize time and positive energies excellently. This paper focuses that psychologically vulnerable youth can be an easy prey of criminals. Today, the problem of our large number of youngsters is, they are with no work and their energies are turning into destruction and crimes. In this backdrop, this study endeavors to find the answer that how we can provide the right avenues to our youngsters to excel. The societal pressures and depression are causes of drug addiction in the teenagers. Thus, systemic involvement of youth is needed to build strong Pakistan; for this youth must be cognizant of national and international changes. In this regard, parenting plays important role. Moreover, for character building, educational institutions and media are effective tools. The formation of career counseling centers to guide our youth is indispensable. Without the training of today's youth, we cannot expect renowned scientists, engineers and future political leaders. Overall, it is focused that training/ counseling and employment opportunities must be prioritized so that intolerance and violence in the society can be curbed.

Keywords: Youth, Pakistan, Development, Good Governance, Society

Introduction

Global geopolitical changing increased economic complexities and attention on terrorism is reshaping ways of government. In order to solve new socio-political intricacies, fresh minds, energetic and smart individuals are required as they have abilities to manage emerging convolutions, thus states' considerations are being directed toward the training of their youth. However, young people today, live differently from young people a generation ago. Many changes have been taking place in this globalized world with almost no or lopsided national youth policy/ planning. In order to prevent the social issues, providing fertile ground to instability, nations tend to learn new strategies.

Certainly, youth is blessing for countries' development, however, improvised youth would be a bane for nations. Potential of youth can be seen in history particularly in revolutions where they were at the forefront working for change with zeal and zest.

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American Revolution, French revolution, other revolutions in the post-Soviet states and few years back revolution in the Middle East put the youth in the picture where it has been realized that youth can lead the old generation on the way to a change. Today's youth is empowered, in many ways, by operating social movements on social media they are contributing in the transformation. Persuasive campaigns are being launched through digital media, young people are gradually establishing solid views and mobilizing societies on local and global issues (The Conversation, 2015).

In this regard, Pakistan appears as a blessed state, holding young people more than 62% of total population and it shows the tendencies of shifting existing political systems. According to National Youth Policy of Pakistan 2009, "youth" can be defined as people between the ages of 15 and 29 (National Youth Policy, 2009). According to this definition, approximately two-thirds of Pakistan's population of 180 million is categorized as youth. Involving young people in advancing states leads to more suitable and operative policy issues (The Conversation, 2015). Presently Pakistan has the largest number of young people ever in its history. Pakistan National Human Development report 2018, says that two-thirds of the total population are under 30 years, with children under 15, which will be tomorrow's youth (Pakistan National Human Development Report, 2018). Pakistan is a country where youth has a potential to alleviate the mounting political, economic and managerial problems. The bleak situation of economy is largely due to the increasing number of population. Recently published report claims "Almost 4 million youth enter the working age population every year. If the current labor force participation rate and unemployment levels remain constant, 0.9 million new jobs are needed every year over the next five years. If we aim to improve labor force participation rates, an additional 1.3 million jobs must be created each year for the next five years. (Ahmad, July 24, 2018)".

In this backdrop, engaging young people in designing developmental schemes and initiatives for Pakistan's economic growth has become indispensable as the globalization demands. However, connecting young people with governance is much more complicated than establishing a youth panel. Pakistan is facing the problem of unemployment and its youth is suffering at large due to the lack of opportunities. In this regard, how can government of Pakistan engage youth in making policies that work for everyone in the country? What are the hindrances to youth participation in good governance?

This paper offers a comprehensive analysis of youth bulge in Pakistan and its capacities to bring state on the developing path. The paper also covers emerging challenges to the youth of Pakistan and offers remedies of the current problems. The qualitative data has been collected, reviewed, and analyzed to ascertain the role of youth in the promotion of democracy, fixing, and improving governance in Pakistan.

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Governance in Pakistan

Since governance determines the lifestyle of a society, it covers the rule, institutions and practices that set limits and provide incentives (Asghar, 2013). It is the management of social, political and economic affairs of a state. Good Governance has comprehensive codes to follow; it includes accountability, transparency, fiscal responsibility, inclusively, respect for human rights and rule of law, good leadership, democracy and fair competition for public offices. Some degree of transparency is mandatory for accountability; it is an impediment to corruption. Increased accountability is dependent on transparency, it targets corruption and improve governance (Ferranti, 2009).

The issues of governance in Pakistan are hampering market efficiency, innovation, and financial market development. Keeping in view internal and external challenges of Pakistan, renewed attention of government is required to the institutions and overall state machinery to make system transparent and feasible. The lack of coordination between federal, provincial, and local governments is usually observed over information sharing which effects on poor policymaking. Moreover, political instability in the country has created barriers in the way of democracy and impacted on decision making process. In history, political corruption was the main reason to bar country to be developed. Politicians, who were entitled to make and implement laws, took advantage of their positions and endured bad governance. Notwithstanding false assurances of politicians, people believe on the promises of veteran politicians and cast their vote without knowing the bad intentions and power hunger of the politicians. Due to the popularity of democracy, at national and international level, as a good system, it has gained a noticeable attention in Pakistan after military rules. Democracy is now becoming strong in Pakistan and due to the information revolution, young generation is raising their voices and showing their concerns related to good governance. With high voters' turnout in 2013, it can be assumed that Pakistan is making gains because of democratic transition of government; however, inclusive political participation is desirable. The main features of political landscape are kinship, feudalism, patronage, favoritism, and nepotism, which are hampering fresh and educated youngsters to step into politics.

Changing Regional Dynamics

Besides internal challenges to governance, some external dynamics are directly effecting on the functioning of institutions and limiting their performances. In the beginning years of Pakistan as an independent state, it was a well image state; however, sacrifices of national interests were made over the personal interests of leaders. Military had to intervene whenever needed (Mehmood, 2007).

Myriad of issues were transpired in the Cold War era and eventually the great powers game along with mismanagement, the country came into the quagmire of serious

challenges. Pakistan was ahead of Bangladesh and India in terms of social and economic sector. However, after 1990, situation was changed as it has fallen behind its neighboring states with a decline in growth rate (Husain, 2018). Pakistan has been facing several daunting challenges since 9/11. Internally, terrorism has appeared as a formidable threat to Pakistan's security and it has become a burden on economy. Externally, the paradigm shift from bilateralism to multilateralism has given birth to a complex world in which balancing of relations has perplexed policy makers.

Pakistan and the United States (US) had convergence of interests to root out terrorist hideouts and to end the movements of Taliban and al-Qaeda (Mehmood, 2007). Nevertheless, Pakistan's counter terrorism policy is effecting youth of Pakistan particularly young people of the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) have deep psychological impact. Moreover, regional dynamics have sheer effects on Indo-Pak relations. India sees China as its rival and therefore it prefers to join anti-China alliance (Mehmood, 2007). In order to strengthen democracy, regional dynamics must be followed, yet, Urdu and English media have discrete perspectives, and the reporting of these papers resonate grouping in society. This has been noted that Urdu media supports religious movements whereas English media reflects International perspectives over the issues. For instance, Malik Mumtaz Qadri (Murderer of Mr. Salman Taseer, Governor Punjab) was regarded as a martyr mostly in Urdu media whereas English media show him other way (Panel Discussion USIP, July 18, 2018).

Role of Youth in the Promotion of Democracy

Youth, as a concept, differs from culture to culture, area to area and from one society to another. "Many countries define youth the age at which a person is given equal treatment under the law, often referred to as the 'age of majority'. This age is often 18 years in many countries, and once a person passes this age, they are considered to be an adult (Zeb, 2008)." Actually, youth is a special phase of life spanning from childhood to old age ranging from the age 15 to 40 years. As per record, youth between the age 15-24 extent to 1.1 billion and constitute 18% global population and together with the one below age 24 amount to 40 percent of global population. As far as their education is concerned almost 133 million youth remain illiterate in the world due to different reasons of the region they are residing. The unemployment is a worldwide problem and almost 41% of the world unemployed is constituted by youth. Furthermore, a rough estimate is that 238 million youth live on less than 1US dollar and 7000 young people get infected (disease) every day, here women and girls are visible victims. Notwithstanding United Nations (UN) appreciation of youth, national youth policies have not yet fully enjoyed and fundamental youth issues are unaddressed.

Conventional thinking would not be enough to steer desirable reforms in a country but there is a need to understand the relationship between citizens and public. In order to bring positive change, Pakistan's youth is a critical force. The young people can play a crucial collaborative role in helping governments to deliver on sustainable

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development objectives (Davis, 2018). The concept of democracy and good governance is centre-stage for the improvement of system and youth is the core player of good governance. To access information and participation in decision making processes are guaranteed across the international human rights treaties (Davis, 2018).

The young people involvement of in decision making process is at the heart of political and social discourse. Youth in decision-making, often expounded as “youth governance”, it spotlights the activities young people are involved in decision making efforts at various levels of organization (Seminar Series WKKF, 2005). In Pakistan, youth constitute mainstream electoral voters; however, the parliaments have less youth participation as legislature because mostly old politicians get seats in National Assembly of Pakistan. Youngsters continue to be restrained and demoted to youth wings of various political parties and have been used as agents to accumulate political power merely. Their role in decision making process has been marginalized and largely ignored because of the status quo politicians.

Fundamental Right of Participation

The concept of good governance is placed within the wide-ranging principles, in which emphasis is more on stakeholders' participation in decision making process. Participation of citizens in the political activities will make Pakistan successful. Since Pakistan holds large youth population, their participation in the democratic process becomes crucial because they are more vibrant and responsive. Recognized representative bodies of young people is direly needed at the moment as it is observed that old politicians are still holding positions and there is no space available for youngsters in it. Youth is entitled to equal right of political participation. A national mandate allows youth aged 18 years and above to vote during elections (Fayyaz, 2015) Meaningful youth participation is vital to certify the policies, programs, and services adequately speak the requirements of young people. A report, published by British Council (2013) showed that significant number of Pakistan's youth think that they will have a role in changing the country for the better (British Council Pakistan, 2013).

Youth movement for democracy and refurbishing of system has been started in Pakistan since 2014. This trend of transformation was observed during the Pakistan Tehreek-e- Insaaf (PTI)'s protest against PMLN in Islamabad which was a show of noticeable participation of youth. The impatient youngsters were poised for revamping of system and have shown their affection with the use of colors, lights, dancing and music. The youth is becoming impatient because of the loads of information making them more observant. They are also determined to deliver positively for the betterment of system and good governance.

Youth of Pakistan could not draw inspiration from seasoned politicians because they remained failed in addressing their issues and solving them. Therefore, governmental

policies must reveal the problems of young people and can only do so through full participation of youth at all levels. Young people must be fully engaged in the planning, implementation, designing, observing and assessments of new policies, programs, and services related to youth issues. Engaging young people in meaningful, practical, decision-making roles in policy development will be resulted in effective way. Several provisions in the Convention on the Rights of the Child reflect children's right to participation. Participation is one of the guiding principles of the Convention, as well as one of its basic challenges (Convention on the Rights of the Child).

Since 2017, political upheavals, due to Panama leaks, are visible in Pakistan. Consequently, youth has become politically very active and can be seen in almost all major political parties of Pakistan. The politically active youth includes students, young democrats and versatile professionals (those who were active politically during their studentship, excluded from policy development and disillusioned with political leadership and institutions later on (Bhidal, 2015).

In order to harness the power of youth, meaningful engagement, education, and employment is needed and failing to do so could lead to youth anger dissent which would be disastrous for Pakistan (USIP, 2018). There are grievances fueled movements in Pakistan, potentially cause disturbance like Arab spring, as there was significant youth bulge factoring revolution. Youth can be prepared to participate in politics at educational institutes. AN article appeared in 2015 in Foreign Policy Magazine maintained “The provision of a platform for students to become involved in an apolitical and mock democratic process will not only improve their educational experiences but will also give them an opportunity to learn first-hand about the importance of pluralistic and democratic organizational systems (Javaid, 2015).

Meaningful engagement is needed because youth is worried that whether the decisions (being taken on government level) affect their lives. Young and new voters are more in the election as number of voters are more. , some available podiums are playing important role in disseminating information, for example Transparency International is creating socio-political awareness amongst people and particularly youth. The accountability, transparency, and good leadership are the basics to ensure the good governance and it would not possible to have good governance without knowing democracy.

Meaningful employment is needed. Jobs may not difficult to get because of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), but quality job is the dire need of time. Quality job does not mean employment merely but dignity and security must be assured so that youth become willing to stay in Pakistan and he/she can contribute in the development of country. Elevation of youth in Pakistan can be done when our government will focus on capacity building and workforce. World Bank statistics of 2014 show 8.2% youth is unemployed (Bilal, 2017). The youth is more prone to psychological illnesses including depression, anxiety because of the tarnished fabric of society (Bilal, 2017).

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Hence, engagement of youth has become crucial for the personal and national growth. Engagement means meaningful engagement i.e. they must have say which impact on their lives. Fresh and novel ideas can come from young minds subject to equal treatment and opportunities in educational institutes and workplaces. If senior officials start sending their children to government school, there would be betterment in education system and common person will get confidence on public schools.

Problems of Youth in Pakistan

Youth is not a problem to be solved but there is need to harness their potential. Since this social force is unleashed in Pakistan, it needs proper guidance and healthy engagement. There are several glitches attached to the progress of Pakistan and one is ignorance and lack of guidance. The youth of Pakistan direly needs direction, however, poor lobbying and lack of advocacy skills is not meeting the desired targets. Although three major political parties, PTI, Pakistan People's Party (PPP), and PMLN, of Pakistan have shown concerns for youth in their manifestos, however, youngsters are unable to get along with new industries and agricultural sector is also another mismatch of their capacity. The only mobility is either to go out of country or join government jobs. Moreover, jobs are related to security.

Lack of political space for the youth of Pakistan is a serious issue because they are not practically participating in decision making process. In old days, politicians had been assuring youth to solve their issues however, this is no more suitable way out and they should not be taken as sideshow. Young politicians have faced almost same issues of local education, equitable distribution of sources. The political fragmentation steered bad effects on the minds of youngsters and coordination is missing between the youngsters of opposite political parties.

There is merely one political party in the history of Pakistan so far succeeded in completing its tenure. Sadly, the political parties are led by industrial and religious elites, and feudal lords as political campaigns are so expensive unaffordable by commoners. To empower common people is against the interests of feudal as their promotion would bring real democracy which is detrimental to status quo parties. Therefore, power holders, inhibit development by forbearing education and awareness campaigns and people are intentionally kept in vicious circle of poverty. Similarly, in educational institutes, youth is being exploited by political leaders in order to get their interests. "Backed by funds, arms and weapons, the student unions of young people have indulged themselves in violent acts. With no sense of direction, unemployment and illiteracy, the young people of Pakistan are still struggling when it comes to any type of participation" (Zeb, 2008).

Furthermore, the shortage of human resources and financial support is misguiding the youth which is adding fuel to fire. Poor leadership within political parties are not providing vision of future and this has just made them follower of organizational

structures without innovations. There are no platforms available for exercising unique practices and the organizations working for youth are actually working on other's agendas which are squeezing the space for youth.

Pakistan's youth is more concerned about quality life, however, major political parties do not have this capacity to manage the issues of youngsters. Although problems of youth living in different provinces of Pakistan are different but their common concern is to listen them as they are living in technology world which has unleashed information. About 130,000,000 youth is now being mobilized as they possess electronic gadgets and number of internet users is also increasing. They want to be heard by political elites but political leaders only hear them during their election campaigns. This causes distress in youth and gives rise to new political structures such as Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM). Certainly, youth is present in every political party of Pakistan such as Pakistan PTI, Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and PML-N are significantly showing young faces in parliament. Sadly, the empowered youth does not reflect the 130 million Pakistan's youngsters because the elite families are different from general youth problems. State's elites have been associating with different ethnic groups for personal political gains. This is finishing the sense of justice and legitimacy of state (Akhtar, 2009). Nevertheless, political structures needs to be changed as the sensitivity of youngsters towards their issues is heightened. The inner stirrings of the youth also depend on the surroundings for instance the workers and followers of PTM are predominantly young. The strong point of PTM is its workers and participants (Khan, November 2, 2018). New voices want election commission approachable to them as feudal societies are still dominating the election process and there is no room left for talented, versatile and energetic youth.

The elder generation of current youth is also factoring distress because the societal norms before internet age were different where dishonesty, exploitation and treachery was not disclosed but today's youth is more informed and blunt. Therefore, old deep rooted issues are coming to surface with different force somewhere moderate and becoming intense on other places.

Another serious issue is education in schools and colleges is not meeting international standards. As per the research conducted at Agha Khan University in 2013, "there are wide differences in access and quality across provinces, rural and urban areas" (Ashraf, January 2013). The absence of quality education is serious issue which effects on their critical thinking and civic sense. Even after completing their education, most of them could not get appropriate jobs as education and industry is not synergized. Since they are not prepared for industries, they could not be engaged properly. This drives mental stress and drugs addiction in society. Hence, unprepared, unaware and jobless youth can be easily enticed by any political party, extremist group or criminal gangs. Education is the best solution of many problems in Pakistan because empowerment, engagement, development and youth education are interrelated and interdependent (Ashraf, January 2013).

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Although the government is responsible to provide education, however, growth of private schools is a visible phenomenon as it is a parallel education system. Private educational institutes attract more parents generally because schools offer English as a medium of instruction which is making such schools popular (Ashraf, 2012). The laptop scheme was introduced by Pakistan Muslim league–Nawaz (PMLN) government to attract university students and this scheme impacted on their political decision. This was believed that the scheme would go a long way in enticing the large number of youth who have put their weight in the favour of PTI (Rizwan, March 8, 2012). The extremists' parties are also using young minds to spread their words in society such as there are great number of followers in Tahreek-e-Labaik which protested in Islamabad and Lahore.

Nowadays, youngsters are also using social media as a mode of communication to get national and international attention. However, electronic means are also being used for cyber bullying which causes provocation and consequently it reduces confidence of youngsters. The victims are going to encounter melancholy, depression and nervousness (Bokhari, February 17, 2019). Therefore, curbing cyberbullying in this age is necessity not a precaution. Some youngsters are using social medi for positive purposes and spreading words of wisdom and expressing their feelings which are surely for positive change in society, such as Jibran Nasir (viral on social media) raised serious issues which no one ever dared to highlight. The original work of youth is being stolen by the political veterans and lack acknowledgement of the work of young people is making them more frustrated.

Recommendations

- The role of the youth in Good Governance is inevitable; therefore, an understanding of the concept of Good Governance has become essential.
- Corruption is the biggest hindrance in the progress of Pakistan; hence, there is a need to root out corruption from each and every institution of Pakistan.
- To fight against corruption, it is direly needed to highlight the active mafia in the system. Therefore, knowing the causes of corruption is the fundamental right of everyone.
- Matriculation level for young girls must be compulsory in Pakistan. Moreover, vocational training centres must be spread out even in remote areas of Pakistan as it would be helpful in development and peacebuilding.
- In order to foster tolerance and acceptance of others' belief, considerable amendments are required in our curriculums through which fresh thoughts can be instilled.

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- The role of media and parliamentarians has become vital to create space for the youngsters of Pakistan.
- To utilize the energies of Pakistan's youth, efforts must be made at all levels. Collective and individual action plans on Governance is the dire need of hour.
- Promotion of the safe spaces to raise the plurality of voices, peace-building discussions and community mobilization is needed at national level.
- Youth must be exposed to the different learning approaches and processes. In order to exhibit their talent, biannual exhibitions of reach work and young ideas must be held at provincial level and yearly at national level.
- Youth Governance requires culture of Youth Voice, participation, the principles, practices, which could take many years.
- It's important to think about different ways to engage young people in governance. It is also important to know that becoming part of formal governance structures is not always suits to everyone, thus other less formal ways of contributing towards good governance can be introduced.

Conclusion

Young people have firm emotional, spiritual, and cultural foundations, which, with the support of society and state, enable them to take new challenges confidently. Creation of equal opportunities of employment, with self-respect, and promotion of solidarity would mitigate fears of youth about their future in Pakistan. In the age of globalization, youth must show readiness to get new challenges and government should provide room to fresh minds with their new ideas and critical thinking. A futile national youth policy was tried to implement the lack of active support by all provinces. Equitable social and economic progress with equal educational opportunities for Pakistani youth would be a boon for its overall progress.

Practical role of youth in good Governance would bring positive outcomes for youth and Pakistan. In order to acquire the skills of active citizenship such as understanding how decisions are made, organized, communicated and planned, there must be compulsory school level teachings/ activities for youngsters. Our civil society would only be improved when youth is knowledgeable and with thoughtful citizens country will ultimately progress.

The biggest threat to all institutions of Pakistan is that youth has no space there as corruption has interceded there. Therefore corruption has become a menace to progress and it hampers the way of progress of young people. Thus, youth must fight and rise together against the corrupt system. In order to eradicate this menace, some platforms are being established to help them out. Last but not the least, youth retain power to change themselves and they have ability to turn against the tide of social evils as they are living in an information age and can choose the best for themselves.

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