

Participation and Perception of Youth about Electoral Process and Vote Casting; *A Social Survey at Hyderabad Sindh Pakistan*

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Abstract:

A real representation of citizens for strong legislation for them always comes from free and fair electoral process. The continuity of electoral conduct sustains the democratic development of any country. Democracy can only be strengthened by conduct of elections as per established intervals or no delays in the electoral process, if it is followed than generally it is understood a country on the path of democratic development. There has been a long struggle for democratic development in Pakistan. In the history of Pakistan the first provincial elections were held in 1951 and 1954 but national election were not held till 1970.

Youth is the backbone behind development of any country; Pakistan is one of the countries having more population. The estimated size of Pakistan's population between 15-24 years of age is about 36 million and individuals below 15 years of age forms 58 million, which together makes 60 percent of total population of Pakistan. In Pakistan about 35% of registered voters in the country belong to the age group of 18-30 years, and 58% to 18-40 years. The strong political role of youth has been realized by different political parties in terms of increasing their participation during electoral process.

There are various studies conducted in past regarding electoral history, people's participation, social behaviors, women's participation and in various other terms. The studies have also focused on pre and past election conflicts and youth radicalization. This study aimed at finding out youth participation in vote casting and overall electoral process,

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the knowledge and behaviors of youth about transparency, information dissemination by government and youth's satisfaction and their role during last general elections. The study has been taken as a social survey at Hyderabad region of Sindh province in Pakistan.

Key Words: Vote, Election, Youth, Democratic Process

Introduction:

A long struggle has been taken for sustainable governance and democracy and it will continue for long time in the developing world. Elections play an important role in the struggle for sustainable governance and democracy. Elections have been proving as a great factor for stabilizing and democratizing the emerging democracies of world (KÜHNE, August 2010).

In the history of Pakistan the first provincial elections were held in 1951 and 1954 but national election were not held till 1970. The first elections held in 1962 under military dictatorship and the second elections were came in 1965 where parliaments were elected indirectly by 80000 members of local governments (CPDI, 2014). The Constitution of Pakistan (1956, 1962, and 1973) has faced various crises and did not facilitate much to provide clear image to citizens for democracy. For a long term military regime dominated Pakistani society and imbalanced forms of government were experienced in Pakistan which shaped negative attitude of public towards election. Pakistan faced dissolution of elected governments most of the time by the allegation of rigging. This whole historic scenario limited the citizens' participation in electoral process because citizens realized that their participation has no mean and governments will not be allowed to complete their elected term (CPDI, 2014).

A real representation of citizens for strong legislation for them always comes from free and fair electoral process. The continuity of electoral conduct sustains the democratic development of any country. Democracy can only be strengthened by conduct of elections as per established intervals or no delays in the electoral process, if it is followed than generally it is understood a country on the path of democratic development. According to (Wilder, 1999) "there are few countries in the world where elections have played as critical a role in the establishment and subsequent political history of a country as they have in Pakistan". He further expresses that mainly in the electoral history of Pakistan from it first general election of 1970 to the last general election held in 2013, it has faced challenges in various terms including violence, boycotts or allegations of rigging. In has been seen that struggle for democracy in Pakistan has proved harder than struggle for democracy. The political disorders and instability did not shape positive and democratic image towards the world. The democratic electoral process is only the way to have equal say of every citizen for sustainable democratization and provision of rights to the citizens.

According to (Kazimi , Munir , & Sadaruddin) in a study “study on the Attitude and Knowledge of Youth towards Election through the lens of Election Advocacy in Pakistan”, democracy is not only restricted to civic rights but has also major concerns towards security. Pakistan has suffered various democracy related sanctions in military coups. It has been found to exercise the democratic rights of the people that may result in way to have the right in man in wrong system or wrong man in right system but that can only be achieved after a number of continues elections.

In the historical studies some features related to elections and voters behaviors emerged were socialized and developed as democratic values of the west but voting behaviors of Pakistani voters relatively scares. The mature tradition of voting behavior can only be found in the countries where elections are being conducted regularly and even studied comprehensively (Akhtar, 2012).

Pakistan is a federal state having central, provincial and local level of governments, citizen vote for local bodies, provincial and national assemblies. There are two electoral systems including Local Bodies Elections and General Elections. The voting age for the voters in Pakistan is 18 years which also refers to the age of youth. According to a report by (Ali, April 2017) Pakistan possess a large number of youth population; over 60 percent of the total population that can have greater role for countries economic growth. From these numbers it can be drawn that it can only be achieved by equal participation of youth in democratic electoral process by educating them with democratic procedures and enhancing democratic values among them. “The last recent general election took place in May 2013 that was mostly influenced by feudal, pirs, mirs and waderas (pirs, mirs and waderas are local terms for persons having informal influences through local powers); it was also influenced by violence and terrorism” (Khan, April 21, 2013).

In Pakistan about 35% of registered voters in the country belong to the age group of 18–30 years, and 58% to 18–40 years. Political parties in Pakistan have realized the role of youth in political change and development. A large investment in made in youth oriented electoral advertisement during election campaigns by political parties due to their influence within family or society, participation in poling process, young energy for party benefits in future, active participation in protests, strikes rallies as well as support in party fund raising (Hussain, Sajid, & Jullandhry, March 2018). According to (United Nations, 2015) “Youth can be a creative force, a dynamic source of innovations, and they have undoubtedly, throughout history, participated, contributed, and even catalyzed important changes in political systems, power-sharing dynamics and economic opportunities”.

There are various studies conducted in past regarding electoral history, people’s participation, social behaviors, women’s participation and in various other terms. The studies have also focused on pre and past election conflicts and youth radicalization. This study aimed at finding out youth participation in vote casting and overall electoral process, the knowledge and behaviors of youth about transparency, information dissemination by

government and youth's satisfaction and their role during last general elections. The study has been taken as a social survey at Hyderabad region of Sindh province in Pakistan.

Objectives of the Study:

The main objectives of the study are

- To find out the knowledge and information among youth about vote casing process and importance of vote.
- To elaborate the perceptions of youth about election information dissemination and transparency mechanism in general election 2013 at Hyderabad.
- To know the youth participation in terms of vote casing in election.
- To know the understanding among youth about their role in elections.
- To provide set of recommendations as per findings.

Literature Review:

The estimated size of Pakistan's population between 15-24 years of age is about 36 million and individuals below 15 years of age forms 58 million, which together makes 60 percent of total population of Pakistan. Pakistan is second number after Yemen having large youth population. The current conditions describe that vital role of youth and upcoming generations must be defined by the state (Yusuf, October 2008).

Caste system is very strong and it a matter of status for people in Pakistan. The socio-cultural even political affiliation is associated with families as well as villages. The elder people make it sure that young generation strongly holds attachments with caste (Ahmed , Chauhdhry, & Hussain , Jun 2013). It explains the democratic behaviors of people and influences of elders and caste systems over youth population. There are various other influences over the youth those stops them for real participation in the electoral process.

It was the in the first time in the electoral history of Pakistan where one democratically elected government handed over powers to another government elected democratically by the citizens. According to (Bangash & Hussain, December 2015) "the general elections of 2013 were very Signiant in the history in many ways". There were biggest number of voters about 86 million which made it as biggest election of Pakistan as reported by (Election Commission of Pakistan, June 2016).

According to another study by (Hussain, Sajid, & Jullandhry, March 2018) it reflects that political parties have realized the importance of youth and their role in electoral process during last general by their engagement in most of the electoral campaigns and youth oriented electoral campaigns which improved people's participation and strengthened electoral process. It can also be observed by another report by (Daily Pakistan, May 2013)

as stated it was one of the major outcomes of 2013 elections that improved the active participation of votes and brought out larger turn out. As reported by (Election Commission of Pakistan, June 2016) the turn out in election 2013 was recorded as higher, that is 55.02, which is much higher percentage than all elections held since the 80s as

- 1988 – 43.07%
- 1990 – 45.46%
- 1993 – 40.28%
- 1997 – 35.42%
- 2002 – 41.08%
- 2008 – 44.23%
- 2013 – 55.02%

Youth participation is very crucial in democratic electoral process; by the strong youth involvement a sustainable democracy can be achieved. As it is stated by (United Nations Development Programme, February 2012) that about half of population in many developing countries is consisted on the people below age of 25 years, the less participation of young population than elderly citizens in always found in formal elections in developing countries, it leads to marginalization of youth population. Therefore the debates about youth political participation and their role in electoral process always motivated them to say their part and equal say in the elections. According to (Ali, April 2017) in a report entitled “60 percentage youth population an advantage for Pakistan” have discussed about the more space and opportunities for youth in policy making areas. It also has been expressed that decisions for youth and future generations are taken without any input and concerns from the young people of age of 30, it is leading youth continuously towards unrest so there is need to have amended e and inclusive democratic processes.

Research Methodology:

The study is exploratory and qualitative, there is much study behind the subject and topic but this study is a social survey which finds out vote casting process, participation and perceptions of youth about democratic electoral process in Hyderabad region of Sindh province in Pakistan. Primary data were collected through 100 closed ended questionnaires from the youth between ages of 18-30 years through random sampling. The respondents were mainly students, fresh graduates and newly joined professionals. The universe of the study was Hyderabad district which is located in 140 kilometers east of Karachi; it is the second largest in Sindh province, and the eighth largest city in Pakistan. It is central location of the provinces, where a large number of migrated youth population is residing, so the reflections from youth of Hyderabad can also be taken as reflections from whole province.

Secondary data were collected by reviewing journals, magazines, reports, conference proceedings, and by visiting websites.

Results:

Table 01

Frequency and percentage distribution according to their **age in years**

| # | Age bracket | Total Responses | # of Male Response | % of Male Response | # of Female Response | % of Female Response |
|--------------|-------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1 | 18-20 Years | 18 | 10 | 10% | 08 | 8% |
| 2 | 21-25 Years | 32 | 20 | 20% | 12 | 32% |
| 3 | 26-30 Years | 50 | 23 | 23% | 27 | 27% |
| Total | | 100 | 53 | 53% | 47 | 47% |

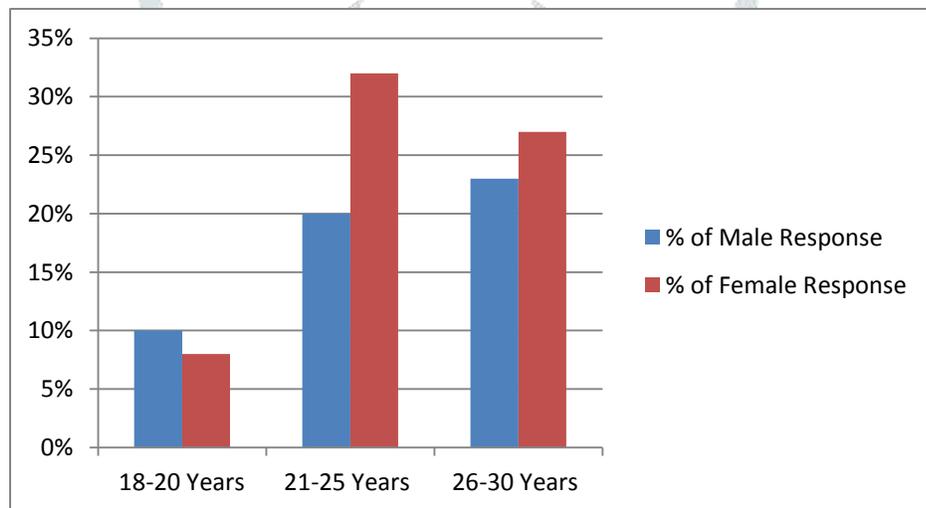
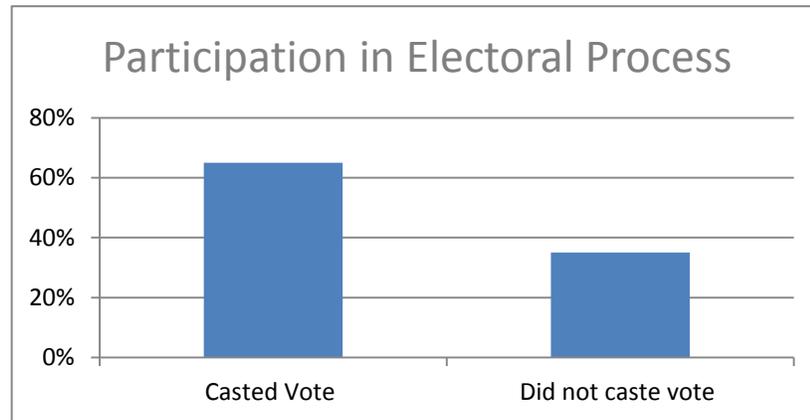


Table 02

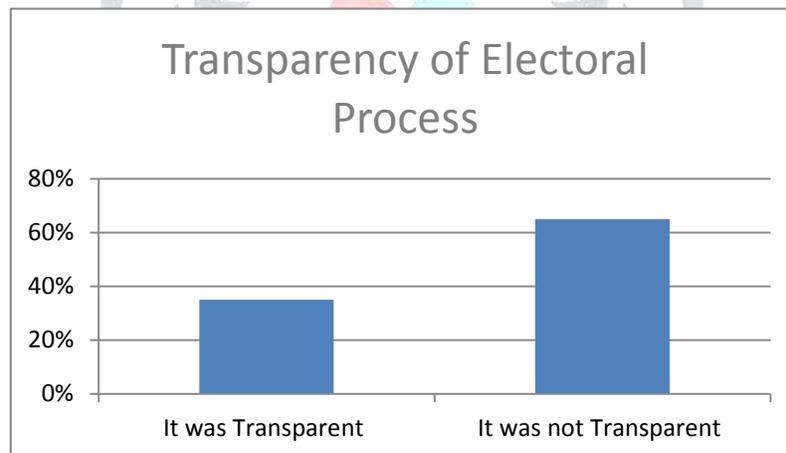
Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents by **participation in electoral process by vote casting**

| # | Description | Frequency of responses | % of the responses |
|--------------|-------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | Yes | 65 | 65% |
| 2 | No | 35 | 35% |
| Total | | 100 | 100% |

**Table 03**

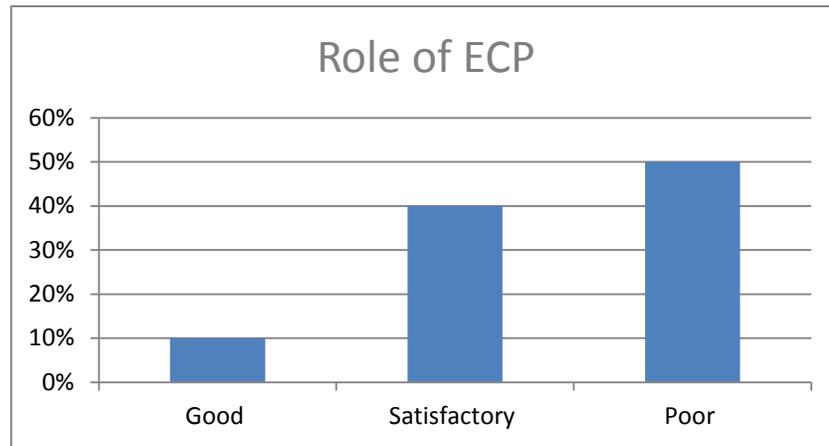
Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents by perception either **electoral process was transparent or not**

| # | Description | Frequency of responses | % of the responses |
|--------------|-------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | Yes | 35 | 35% |
| 2 | No | 65 | 65% |
| Total | | 100 | 100% |

**Table 04**

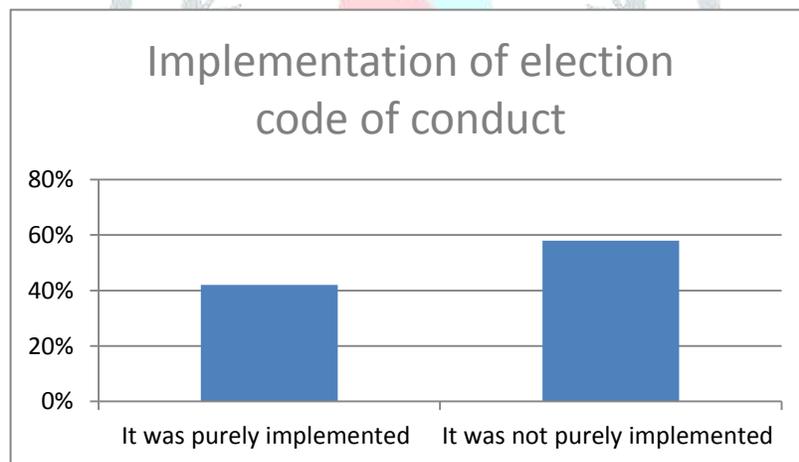
Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents by perception how they see **role of Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP)**

| # | Description | # of responses | % of the responses |
|--------------|--------------|----------------|--------------------|
| 1 | Good | 10 | 10% |
| 2 | Satisfactory | 40 | 40% |
| 3 | Poor | 50 | 50% |
| Total | | 100 | 100% |

**Table 05**

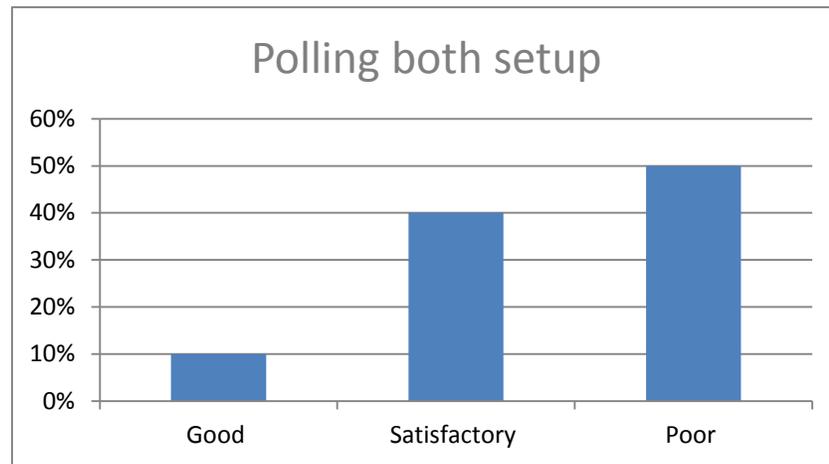
Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents by perception on proper implementation of election code of conduct

| # | Description | # of responses | % of the responses |
|--------------|-------------|----------------|--------------------|
| 1 | Yes | 42 | 42% |
| 2 | No | 58 | 58% |
| Total | | 100 | 100% |

**Table 06**

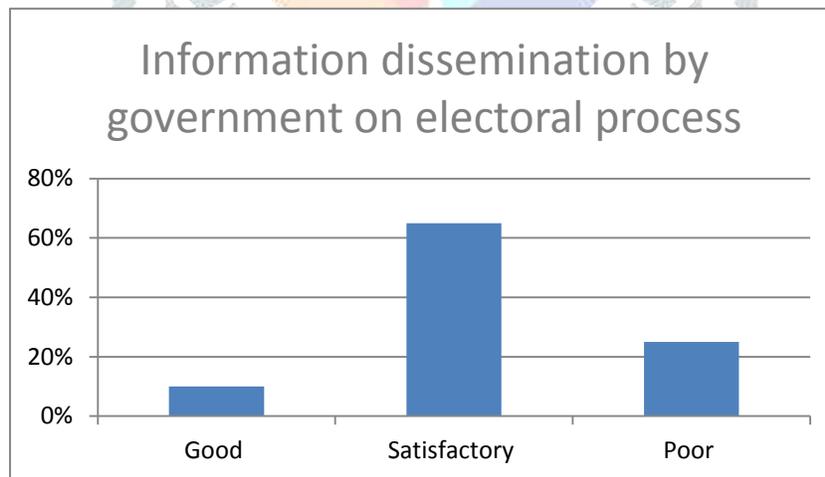
Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents by perception on polling both setup

| # | Description | # of responses | % of the responses |
|--------------|--------------|----------------|--------------------|
| 1 | Good | 10 | 10% |
| 2 | Satisfactory | 40 | 40% |
| 3 | Poor | 50 | 50% |
| Total | | 100 | 100% |

**Table 07**

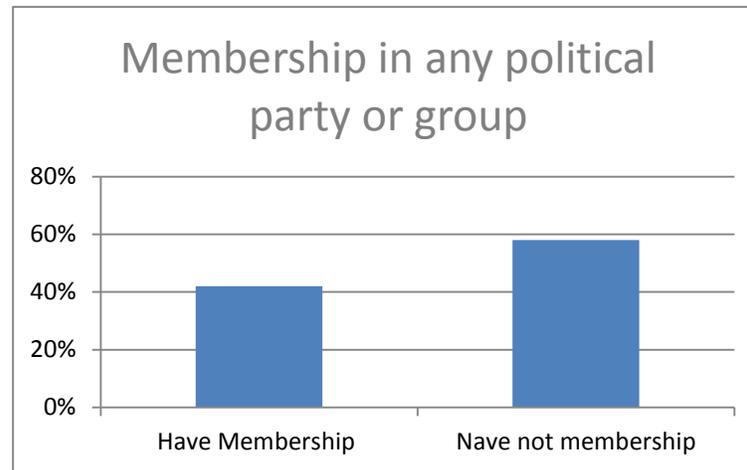
Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents by perception on **information dissemination by government on electoral process**

| # | Description | # of responses | % of the responses |
|--------------|--------------|----------------|--------------------|
| 1 | Good | 10 | 10% |
| 2 | Satisfactory | 65 | 65% |
| 3 | Poor | 25 | 25% |
| Total | | 100 | 100% |

**Table 08**

Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents by **membership in any political party or group**

| # | Description | Frequency of responses | % of the responses |
|--------------|-------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | Yes | 42 | 42% |
| 2 | No | 58 | 58% |
| Total | | 100 | 100% |



Findings:

Below are the findings of study

1. The age distribution of respondents in the present study shows the percentage of age group 18-20 years 18% (10% Male and 8% Female), 21-25 years 32% (20% Male and 12% Female) and 26-30 years 50% (23% Male and 27% Female).
2. The distribution of the respondents according to their participation in electoral process through vote casting 65% casted vote and 35% did not caste.
3. The distribution of respondents according to their perceptions about transparency of electoral process is 35% it was transparent and 65% it was not transparent.
4. The distribution of respondents according to perception on role of Election Commission of Pakistan is 10% good, 40% satisfactory and 50% poor.
5. The distribution of respondents according to perception on proper implementation of election code of conduct is 42% implemented properly and 58% not implemented properly.
6. The distribution of respondents according to perception on setup of polling both is 10% good, 40% satisfactory and 50% poor.
7. The distribution of respondents according to their perception on information dissemination about electoral process and policies by government is 10% good, 65% satisfactory and 25% poor.
8. The distribution of respondents according to their formal membership in any political party or group is 42% have membership and 58% have not any membership.

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