

## Impact of Student Unions on Educating the Student of University of Punjab about Political Participation

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role that is being played by the student unions to educate the student of University of Punjab about political participation. This study aims to understand how these student unions effect students' political awareness, participation and articulateness by exploring their actions, programs and dynamism. We apply a quantitative method in this research which includes surveys and case study. The research will gather detailed data on the amount to which student unions expedite political education and encourage active civic engagement among students. This work deals with the history and structure of student unions at the university of the Punjab and to understand how their organizational frameworks support or hinder political education efforts. The main focus of this study is to enhance the political knowledge of the university students. By understanding the perception of students regarding these unions, we can make sure that either the activities of these unions disturbing or effective. This study wants to highlight that how far the student unions can help the student of University of Punjab about politics and political activities. This also aims at how the findings could be applicable to other university of the world.

### Introduction

A student union is a student organization that represents the interests and needs of students in a college, university, or high school. Student unions may provide various services, activities,

and facilities for students, as well as advocate for their rights and welfare. Student unions may also be involved in political and social issues that affect students and the wider community.



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Student unions in Pakistan have a long and turbulent history, dating back to the creation of the country in 1947. Student unions were initially formed to address the academic and social problems of students, especially the migrants from India who faced discrimination and marginalization. Student unions also became involved in political and ideological movements, such as the struggle for democracy, socialism, nationalism, and Islamism. Student unions played a significant role in the anti-Ayub movement of 1968-69, the Bangladesh liberation war of 1971, the anti-Zia movement of 1977-88, and the restoration of democracy in 1988.

There are 13 student unions at the University of the Punjab in Lahore. These are: Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba (IJT), People's Students Federation (PSF), Muslim Students Federation (MSF), National Students Federation (NSF), Insaf Students Federation (ISF), Pashtoon Education Development Movement (PEDM), Baloch Students Organization (BSO), Anjuman-e-Talaba-e-Islam (ATI), Imamia Students Organization (ISO), Muttahida Talaba Mahaz (MTM), Punjab University Students Union (PUSU), Punjab University Teachers Association (PUTA), Punjab University Academic Staff Association (PUASA). These student unions represent different political, ideological, ethnic, and religious groups and interests of the students. They also participate in various academic, cultural, social, and political activities and movements on and off campus.

The student's union of the University of the Punjab Lahore is an organization that represents the interests and welfare of the students of the university. It also aims to educate the students in political participation by organizing various activities and events, such as: Holding seminars, workshops, and debates on current political issues and challenges, such as democracy, human rights, corruption, and extremism. Inviting political leaders, activists, and experts to interact with the students and share their views and experiences. Conducting surveys, polls, and campaigns to raise awareness and mobilize the students on various political causes and demands.

However, student unions also faced many challenges and restrictions, such as the ban imposed by various military regimes, the rise of violence and sectarianism, the infiltration of external forces, and the lack of institutional support and democratic culture. Student unions were banned in 1984 by General Zia-ul-Haq, and the ban was only lifted in 2008 by Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani. However, the revival of student unions has been slow and difficult, as they face legal, administrative, and political hurdles, as well as the apathy and indifference of many students. The student unions of the University of the Punjab Lahore has a positive and significant impact on educating the students about political participation, as it fosters a culture of dialogue, activism, and civic engagement among the students.

## Literature Review

The main aim of the literature is to understand the different definitions of the political participation among the students. Several debates have conducted to define and understand this *concept* (e.g. Schwartz, 1984; Conge, 1988; Day, 1992; Haste & Hogan, 2006; Teorell et al., 2007; Reichert, 2010; Ekman & Amna 2012), but there can be no consensus among the people regarding the definition of the political participation.

The definition of political participation seems to be controversial in terms to identify which actions are political. We use different type of analysis (e.g. legitimization, traditionally and roughness). Social sciences also remain focus on to identify which actions should be considered as political (Conge, 1988; suggested that the students in Spain see the political participation susceptible than the students in Europe (Anduiza, 2001; Garcia & Martin, 2010; Schultz et al., 2010).

The nature of political participation is considering as an important debate within the discussion of the rights and duties. Political participation is generally considered as a debate of rights and duties (Janosk, 1998; Heater, 1999; Annette, 1999; Frazer, 1999; Barnes et al., 2004), which is considerable. The political participation is considered as a legal action to establish the

selection of policy –makers, such as, the action which effects the electoral results (*Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978; Ekman and Amna 2012*). We believe that political participation as an act which is not just taken during the elections, but also between them. This action is considered as which can influence the people who are in the government, which do not include only the representatives of the political parties but also in the groups in society, enterprises, and elite people. The actions taken in this regard can be legal or illegal (*Ekman and Amna 2012; Verba, Nie, and Km 1978*). Political participation means to actively involved in society to assert other's rights and effect decisions about the traditions and the political outcomes it includes speaking out, boycotting the products, charity for the political influence and the other activities which seem not to be political but these have the potential to be. Politics is about both conflict and mutual cooperation. Here we have to discuss the influence of the student unions about the political participation.

Many of the factors which influence student involvement in the politics and the political system of the country. These involve demographic variables, the extent to which young people discuss news and political with their colleague and families. Their participation in these activities highly influence the political structure of the country. Certainly, the role of social media cannot be denied in this regard. This also influence the students, participation in the politics (*Kahne and Westheimer 2006; Wicks et al. 2014; Zukin et al. 2006; see also Statistics Canada 2019 Wicks et al. 2014. Lukuslu and Walther (2021)*) believe that we do not understand that why young people participate in the formal politics because youth studies often follow traditional and ideological ways of thinking. Pitti (2018) says that we have limited knowledge of political participation, this is due to traditional and orthodox definition of political participation. This is a hinder in the modern student participation in the politics. Youth involvement in the politics can be seen as a positive thing and those who do not participate in the politics need some educational program. These educational program can teach the students

how to actively participate in the future politics. Researchers believe that young people seem to be disconnected to the modern politics because they do not believe in the modern politicians, and they know that their voice cannot be heard. Students' participation in politics has changed over time and depend on various factors like social background, demographics, and historical context. A young student participation in the politics depend on the socio- economic factor, location, race, age, education, and citizenship status. Students also have to face different systems that control their actions, like law enforcement, social welfare, education, and digital media. Some researchers show that Canadian students are less involved in traditional political activities like voting and joining activities like voting and joining political parties compared to the older generations.

There has been a great influence of student unions on regarding the participation of the university students. These unions are really helpful to educate the students about their participation in the state politics. These unions belong and associate to the different political parties and they remain their focus on the interest of their own political parties (Ahmed et al., 2021).

## Research Methodology

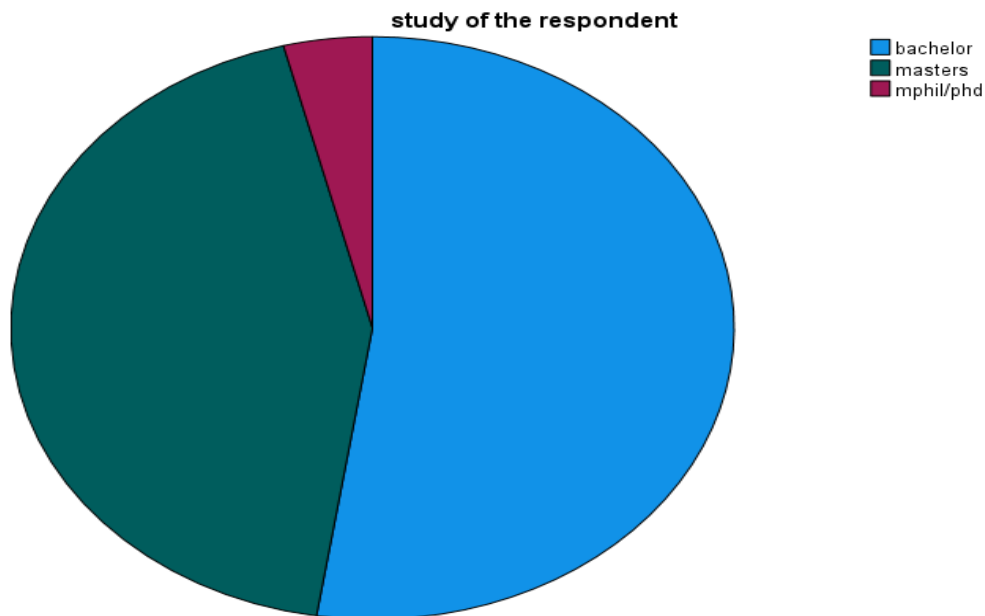
### Data Interpretation

The research was conducted to know about the impact of student unions in University of Punjab about the political participation of the students. Quantitative data is collected to analyze the impact of student unions. The data is collected from 101 students including both the male and female students. The male student is 70 and the rest of the students are female. The part 1 of the questionnaire was used to collect the data regarding the socio-demographic attributes of the respondents. It contained six questions, i.e., gender, age, religion, education, marital status and residence of the respondents. Gender was coded (1= male and 2= female), age was coded as (1=18-24, 2= 25-34, 3= 35-44 and 4= more than 45), religion was coded as (1= Muslim and 2= non-Muslim) education was coded as (1= bachelor, 2= masters and 3= MPhil / PhD), marital status was

coded as (1= married and 2= unmarried) and residence was coded as (1= rural and 2=urban).

background took part in the research.

The students belong to different study



We calculated the mean and std. deviation of the demography part of the questionnaire. The mean and std. deviation of the age of respondents are 1.2376 and .58564 respectively, the mean and std. deviation of the education of the respondent are 1.5149 and .57643 respectively, the mean and std.

deviation of the marital status of the respondent are 1.1584 and .36695 respectively, the mean and std. deviation of the religion of the respondent are 1.1386 and .34727 respectively and the mean and std. deviation of the residence of the respondents are 1.4356 and .49831 respectively.

**TABLE 1.1**

|          |                       | <i>age of the<br/>respondent</i> | <i>study of the<br/>respondent</i> | <i>marital status of the<br/>respondent</i> | <i>religion of the<br/>respondent</i> | <i>residence of the<br/>respondent</i> |
|----------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>N</b> | <b>Valid</b>          | 101                              | 101                                | 101   | 101                                   | 101                                    |
|          | <b>Missing</b>        | 0                                | 0                                  | 0   | 0                                     | 0                                      |
|          | <b>Mean</b>           | 1.2376                           | 1.5149                             | 1.1584                                      | 1.1386                                | 1.4356                                 |
|          | <b>Std. Deviation</b> | .58564                           | .57643                             | .36695                                      | .34727                                | .49831                                 |

The questionnaire is divided into four parts.

- The first is about the demographic information of the students,
- The second part is about the student unions.
- The third part has concern about the political participation of the students.
- The rest of the part is about the engagement in the unions.

The students agree with the mean value that the student unions at the university of the Punjab help them to understand hoe democracy works. The respondents also agree that they learnt about political ideas by participating in the activities of the student unions. They also feel that the meetings of student unions are informative and interesting. They also agree with the mean value that student unions gave them voice in decision making at the university. The students seem to be neutral to participate in the protest of the student unions. The respondent feels comfortable to

express their opinions in the student union setting. The students agree with an opinion that the student unions only care about their own political parties despite the interests of the all political parties of the countries. The student unions also agree with the opinion that some activities of the student unions are disruptive and loud.

The students agree with the mean value that the university does not provide enough support to the student unions. The respondents also agree that the student unions at the university of the Punjab provide equal opportunities to all students regardless of their political affiliation. But they disagree that the presence of multiple student unions with different ideologies help balance power dynamics and prevent the domination of any single group at the campus. The strongly agree that by engaging in student union activities help them to critically analyze political information. The students feel a sense of belonging and community with their own student union which is shown in the table below:

**Table 1.2**

|          |                       | <i>The university does not provide enough support to student unions.</i> | <i>Student unions at the university of Punjab provide equal opportunities for all students to participate ,regardless of their political affiliation</i> | <i>The presence of multiple student unions with different ideologies helps balance power dynamics and prevent any single group from dominating university politics</i> | <i>My experience with student unions at the university of Punjab has made me more interested in participating in future democratic processes ,both on campus and beyond.</i> | <i>engaging in student union activities helps me to critically analyze political information.</i> | <i>debates and discussion within student unions encourage me to question my own political beliefs.</i> |
|----------|-----------------------|--|--|--|--|---|--|
| <b>N</b> | <b>Valid</b>          | 101  | 101  | 101  | 101  | 101   | 101  |
|          | <b>Missing</b>        | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0   | 0  |
|          | <b>Mean</b>           | 3.4851   | 3.5644   | 3.8911   | 3.2475   | 3.5842  | 3.7822   |
|          | <b>Std. Deviation</b> | 1.15424  | 1.10829  | 1.01883  | .91001   | 1.06082   | .93385   |

The students agree with the mean value that the student unions promote understanding and respect for diverse view points within the university. The students understand that the skills and knowledge they gained from student unions will help them in their future engagement with

national politics. The students strongly agree that the student unions at university of the Punjab prepare student unions to achieve and responsible citizens in a democratic society which is shown in the below table:

**Table 1.3**

|          |                       | <i>Participation in student union leadership roles develops my skills in argumentation and negotiation</i> | <i>I feel a sense of belonging and community within my student union</i> | <i>Student unions promote understanding and respect for diverse viewpoints within the university.</i> | <i>My involvement in student unions has connected me with other students who share my political interests.</i> | <i>The skills and knowledge I gain from student unions will be helpful in my future engagement with national politics</i> | <i>Student unions at the university of Punjab prepare students to be achieved and responsible citizens in a democratic society</i> |
|----------|-----------------------|--|--|---|--|---|--|
| <b>N</b> | <b>Valid</b>          | 101  | 101  | 101   | 101  | 101   | 101  |
|          | <b>Missig</b>         | 0  | 0  | 0   | 0  | 0   | 0  |
|          | <b>Mean</b>           | 3.6238   | 3.4752   | 3.6238  | 3.5248   | 3.7327  | 3.5446   |
|          | <b>Std. Deviation</b> | .98845   | 1.10085  | 1.14762   | 1.06390  | 1.08527   | 1.10022  |



## Design and Participant

The study was conducted to know the influence of student unions on the students of University of Punjab, Pakistan about political participation. In this study, the population consist of students from University of Punjab Lahore, Pakistan. Researchers selected a sample (N=101) respondents, including (N=70) male students and including (N=31) female students who belonged to different degree programs. We used the quantitative survey method to collect data in order to obtain results. This research used a simple random technique.

## Measures

The questionnaire for the study is constructed with analytical and closed ended questions, it includes a 5 point likert scale with having options: 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= strongly agree, 5= agree. In this research, researcher incorporated independent and depended variable from previously conducted studies. The independent variable in this study was political participation, while the dependent variable is student unions. The instrument base on twenty items obtained a reliability of  $\alpha = 0.82$ , which is acceptable. Socio demographics also include in the questionnaire such as gender, degree, program of study, religion, age and residence of the respondents.

## Procedure

We gathered from a specific sample of participants for our research through online survey/ questionnaire. The online survey questionnaire was prepared on goggle forms and distributed among the students of University of the Punjab via link. To distribute the survey link researcher used his personal contacts, Emails and WhatsApp. Total 101 responses were received. First of all, raw data was entered into a software SPSS to analyze the results pf the responses. Researcher used IBM Statistical Package for social sciences SPSS software to analyze data and regression analysis and descriptive statistics to test the proposed hypothesis.

## Discussion

The analysis presented above shows that, there has been an impact of student unions in educating the students of university of Punjab, Lahore about political participation. We also found that there is a difference of opinion regarding the political participation of the students. In this part of paper, we discuss, we discuss the implications of our findings for our understanding of political participation of the Punjab university students and how far the influence of student unions matters in this regard (Farid & Ashraf, 2025).

### Students, Politics and the role of student's union

The previous studies in this perspective show that the student unions in universities show more interest on representing students' everyday concerns rather than pushing for bigger political or social change. The status and role of student unions are different in different countries. The political participation also varies from country to country. One of the studies shows that the political participation of the Canadian students is far less than the other European countries. The main focus of our study is to analyze the impact of student unions regarding the political participation of the Punjab University students. We find from the previous studies that the role o student unions are very important in order to educate the university students. Some studies show that in the UK, student unions focus on representing students, but not in a way that promotes democratic education or community efforts. There is a big difference in power between university leaders and student union officers, with only one university showing that students had real power (Sarwar & Farid, 2024).

We study the impact of student unions on educating the student of university of Punjab about political participation. But we cannot analyze the student unions educate the university student either to participate in specific political party or they allow the students to join the political parties according to their own interest.



## Conclusion

In this article, we have drawn upon survey on targeted population of 101 students of university of Punjab who belong to different degree programs. In this way, we analyze the role of student unions regarding the political participation of the students. Some students

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believe that their political activities are highly influenced by the student unions and some are neutral at this stance. After the study of different studies related to the student unions, we have to understand the role of student unions in educating the university students about the political participation.

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