

Impact of NGOs and CBOs Participation on Students Political Knowledge and Awareness in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

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This study examines the effect of engagement with Non- Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) on Political knowledge and awareness of university students of Pakistan. Using a quantitative survey of 191 students, the results show significant positive relationship between NGO/CBO involvement to political awareness ($r = .262, p < 0.01; v = .262, p < 0.001$). Similar levels between genders were found but male students showed higher levels of political knowledge ($p = 0.013$). Grounded in the Civic Voluntarism, Social Capital and Political Efficacy theories, the research concludes that the role of NGOs and CBOs as informal stage for political learning positively adds up to the youth's civic competence in furthering democratic participation in Pakistan.

Introduction

Youth Political Awareness is a critical factor in the process of democratic consolidation and citizen sustainability. In modern democracies, political literacy of young citizens, which

includes understanding of the institutions and processes of politics as well as of rights, has a direct impact on the vibrancy of democracy (Carpini and Keeter, 1996). In Pakistan there is special significance in this relationship. Despite the fact that 64 percent of population



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30 years of age, youth are under-represented in politics and have low level of political awareness (Ahmad, 2018; Ali, 2023; Weiss, 2020; Zaheer, 2016).

Recent surveys suggest a blatant contradiction. Ipsos Pakistan (2024) revealed that although 70% of young Pakistanis plan to vote, almost half of them said that the elections do not make much difference in the lives of people. PILDAT (2023) found that while accounting for the majority of eligible voters, youth are to be found to be lacking adequate understanding of political institutions, party systems as well as policy processes. This pattern is not unlike Norris's (2011) "knowledge deficit" in which civic enthusiasm is not accompanied by vigorous/determined/informed civic engagement.

In the absence of strong civic education and the limited extent of state-led political socialization, non-state actors, especially NGOs and CBOs, have been created as an alternative source of civic learning. These organizations involve young people in community projects, advocacy and governance-related work, and in the process develop young people's political literacy and civic efficacy (Boulding, 2010; Checkoway and Aldana, 2013). Through workshops, participatory programmes and community projects, NGOs and CBOs contribute to developing understanding among students of the governance structures, policy mechanisms and the principles of democracy (Putnam, 2000; Verba et al., 1995), and in doing so change the passive citizens into informed citizens with strong interest in politics.

Theoretical arguments support this relation. The Civic Voluntarism Model draws attention to the role of NGOs in providing the resources and motivation for political learning (Verba et al., 1995). Social Capital Theory emphasises on how civic participation develop networks and trust that are necessary to political knowledge (Putnam, 2000). Political Efficacy Theory posits that such engagement brings most people to believe that they are politically effective (Adu & Badaru, 2020). Empirical research has repeatedly demonstrated the positive effects of NGOs and activities get involved in; students get to be more

politically knowledgeable, interested, and confident in governance (Youniss et al., 2002; Hermosa, 2021; Suresh et al., 2023).

In Pakistan, NGOs and CBOs have made advancements in youth civic education through rights-based workshops, voter's education drives and social justice programmes (Ahmad et al, 2019; Rafique & Khoo, 2018). Organisations such as the Aurat Foundation and Alkhidmat Foundation do a lot to build civic responsibility and democratic values in students (Khan, 2024). These engagements serve as informal "schools of democracy" where theory is put into practice as political understanding. Yet, despite their increasing presence, the level to which the engagement of NGOs and CBOs contributes to the enhancement of student's political awareness is still too little explored in Pakistan (Tunio et al., 2021; Malik, 2021).

This study therefore considers how engagement with NGOs and CBOs affects political knowledge and awareness of university students - basic cognitive elements of democratic participation. By examining these civic experiences, the research adds to the literature in the field of youth civic development, and shows how civil society supplements formal education in the making of informed, responsible and politically conscious citizens in Pakistan.

In view of these considerations, the objectives in this study are guided by the following:

1. To study the impact of engagement of NGO/CBO's on political knowledge and awareness.
2. To study the relationship between participation with NGOs/CBOs and political knowledge and awareness.
3. To examine the existence of gender-based difference in engagement with NGOs/CBOs and political knowledge and awareness.

Literature Review

Youth Engagement

Youth engagement has become a key issue in academic research and policy debate, as young people play a key role in maintaining democratic processes. Their involvement in civic and political

life strengthens government, fosters social responsibility and shores up democratic values. Interaction with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) provides an important nexus through which citizens become connected with political systems and enable participation, political learning, and the development of the community.

Engagement with Non-Governmental Organizations and Civil Society Organizations

On a global scale, work with NGOs and CBOs has become an important mode for developing civic learning, political consciousness and participatory citizenship among young people. These things are running as informal learning environments that accompany, in a way, an educational form that stimulates leadership, critical thinking, the citizenship of countries, the creation of social identities (OECD, 2024; Verba et al., 1995). Such institutions have been identified as "agents of political socialization" by Almond and Verba, (1963) - ones that nurture democratic orientations and political efficacy. Through services of volunteerism, advocating and participatory governance, NGOs and CBOs expose young people to the governance- and decision-making processes that are often not included in formal curricula (Putnam, 2000).

There is empirical evidence that supports their contribution to democratic competence. The Gagliardi et al., (2024) says that youth volunteering boosts confidence, motivation for civic act and engagement into democratic institutions. Likewise, Szulc -Walecka 2024 noted that young people's civic identification and efficacy were enhanced through their participation in community governance in Finland and Poland. Globally, NGO-based initiatives are associated with greater levels of civic confidence, political awareness and continuous democratic participation (Dar, 2015, Liu, 2024, Paffenholz, 2009).

Nonetheless the potency of both NGOs and CBOs are subject to the context. In consolidated democracies, they complement the formal civic education while, in transitional democracies, they often replace weak civic institutions (Meyer et al.,

2020). The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) highlights their use to oppose democratic decline and disengagement especially where state-led civic education is low (Timreck & Emmons, 2025).

In Pakistan, NGOs and CBOs act as mediators between the citizens and the governance structures by engaging youth to engage in provision of community service or to engage in voter education and policies (Ahmad et al., 2019; Rafique and Khoo, 2018). Participation in NGO programs helps the students to boost their trust level in the institutions, civic responsibility, and democratic values (Bukhari et al., 2024). However, access is not uniform as urban and private universities have better NGO linkages, but the rural and public universities face restricted interaction opportunities (Tunio et al., 2021). Despite this disparity, the role of NGOs and CBOs has continued to be indispensable in linking the educated youth towards effective participatory governance and policy advocacy (Rafique & Khoo, 2018).

Political Consciousness and Knowledge

Political awareness and knowledge are the cognitive dimensions of citizenship that include knowledge of political institutions, the mechanisms of governance, electoral systems, and rights of citizenship that are needed for informed participation (Carpini & Keeter, 1996). Recent research conducted across the world shows that both this type of formal civic education and community-based experiences enhance these competences. A report called the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) has reported that the more civic students are knowledgeable, the more likely they are to uphold democratic values, trust institutions and become politically involved (Schulz, 2024). Similarly, the United Nations development program (UNDP, 2022) identifies civic literacy as a key issue in democratic accountability and youth empowerment.

In the context of developing democracies, civic programmed spearheaded by NGOs have been shown to be effective in stimulating political learning. In Malaysia, digital civic efforts were able

to enhance youth information-seeking behaviors as well as their understanding of governance concepts (Abdullah et al., 2021). Research from India and South Africa also shows that the involvement of NGOs increases the political efficacy and awareness of democratic rights among youths (Acharya et al, 2010, Bornman et al., 2023). These findings support the view that political knowledge is built on the foundation of formal teaching as well as experience in community settings.

In Pakistan, however, the level of political knowledge among the university students is very uneven. Studies show people's limited knowledge about the structure of governance, electoral systems as well as party dynamics (Asma & Rauf 2024; Maqsood et al., 2024). While NGO and social media campaigns have made awareness on certain civic concerns, most often the awareness is superficial and issue specific (Maqsood et al., 2024). On the contrary, students with community projects, advocacy workshops and Non-Government Organization (NGO) collaborations demonstrate a better understanding of political processes and rights (Muhammad et al., 2024). These findings are a pointer to the value of experiential civic learning and also suggest that NGO and CBO engagement can build up political literacy, institutional trust and democratic consciousness among Pakistani youth.

Although, in global literature the positive connection between NGO engagement and political learning, there is a dearth of empirical research in Pakistan especially related to university students. Existing studies cover the issue of youth activism, political participation, or NGO performance at a macro level, while there are few studies that delve deeper into how direct participation in NGOs and CBOs affects the political knowledge and awareness of students. Moreover, much of the available research focuses on urban academic settings (or elite) and does not include the experiences of representatives of students from rural areas or from public-sector universities. Few research studies examine the cognitive consequences of civic engagement - for example, enhanced political understanding,

institutional trust, and critical political reasoning - among university students.

This study aims to address these gaps by trying to empirically analyze the link between participation in NGOs/CBOs and political knowledge and awareness of students in Pakistan. By taking university students as a new form of civic grouping, the research seeks new knowledge on how non- formal structures of citizenship may foster political literacy, democratic participation and active citizenship in a new democracy such as Pakistan.

Theoretical Framework

The current study is based on Civic Voluntarism Model (Verba et al., 1995), Social Capital Theory (Putnam, 2000) and Political Efficacy Theory (Adu and Badaru, 2020). These frameworks explain, in aggregate, how engagement with NGOs and CBOs provide students with resources, social networks, and political efficacy, which in turn contributes to the improvement of student political knowledge, awareness and ability to participate in informed civic activity.

Hypotheses

- H1:** There is significant positive impact of engagement of students with NGOs and CBOs on political knowledge and awareness of students.
- H2:** There is a significant relationship between participating with NGOs and CBOs and political knowledge and awareness of the students.
- H3:** There is significant difference in the level of engagement with NGOs and CBOs among males and females' students.
- H4:** There is a significant difference between male and female students to their level of political knowledge and awareness.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The current investigation applied the quantitative survey research design to scrutinize the relationship between the student engagement in NGOs and CBOs and their political knowledge and

awareness in Pakistan (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The quantitative paradigm supported objective measurement and statistical examination of the suggested relationships (Bekkers, 2005; Checkoway, 2012; Kahne & Westheimer, 2006; Verba et al., 1995; Zukin et al., 2006).

Study Participants

Participants were made up from students who were enrolled in universities from both public and private universities in Pakistan. These individuals represented a heterogeneous population in terms of gender, level of education, field of study and socio-economic background. University students were selected because they are a socially aware and politically active group in society (Sloam, 2014).

Sampling Technique

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to represent individual institutional types and demographic groups equally (Etikan & Bala, 2017). The size of this sample was determined by the voluntary participation and completeness rate of responses. This methodological choice reduces bias in sampling as well as increasing the generalizability of findings (Etikan et al., 2016; Schreier, 2018).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance of the relevant institutional authorities was received. Participants were

informed about the nature of the study and their consent, confidentiality and anonymity were carefully protected during the data collection process (Bryman, 2016).

Instrument

Data were collected through structured questionnaire with three sections, i.e. demographic, engagement with NGOs/CBOs and political knowledge and awareness. Items derived from existing civic engagement scales (Sperber & McClendon, 2022; Moely et al., 2002; Carpin and Keeter, 1996), and were rated on a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire was pre-tested for clarity and understanding.

Data Collection Procedure

Data was gathered online and through the printed questionnaires distributed at selected universities. This mixed-methods approach ensured that we had participation from a variety of academic and geographical academic contexts. Responses were checked for completeness before being analyzed.

Reliability and Validity of the Instrument

Reliability and clarity were evaluated in a pilot study. The instrument showed high internal consistency and values of Cronbach alphabet index were over 0.70 (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Content validity was determined through expert review, and construct validity was determined through factor analysis to ensure that all items were in line with theoretical constructs.

Table 1: Reliability of the Instrument

Variable Name	Total Items	Construct-wise Cronbach's Alpha Value
Engagement with NGOs & CBOs	10	.936
Political Awareness & Knowledge	10	.934

Data Analysis and Results

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

A total of 191 students from both public and private universities of Pakistan were recruited to participate in the study. According to the demographic data, there is a fairly even split in the gender distribution between the male and female respondents (51.3% men versus 48.7% women). The majority of the study participants belong to

the age range of 18 to 27 years, and this is consistent with the age group of university students in Pakistan. In addition, 65.4 per cent were undergraduates and 34.6 per cent were postgraduates. Students affiliated with social sciences made up about 48.2% of the sample and this indicates increased exposure in civic and political discourse, this was followed by 27.2% from management and 24.6% from natural sciences. Representation from public (58.6%) and

private (41.4%) institutions ensured heterogeneity from the institutional context. The majority of respondent (53.9%) were categorized under middle income having moderate socioeconomic heterogeneity. Overall, the demographic profile suggests that the sample was

diverse and reasonably representative of the Pakistani University Student population and thus provides a reliable basis for subsequent statistical analyses of NGO/CBO engagement and political awareness.

Table 2: Students' Demographic Data (N=191)

Demographic Information	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	70	36.6
Female	121	63.4
Age		
18-22	129	67.5
23-27	52	27.2
28-32	3	1.6
Above 33	7	3.7
Education Level		
BS	165	86.4
M. Phil	23	12
PHD	3	1.6
Type of University		
Private	30	15.7
Public	161	84.3
Family Socioeconomic Status		
Lower-income (Less than 50k)	28	14.7
Middle-income (50k to 1 lac)	92	48.2
Upper-income (Above 1 lac)	71	37.2
Family Political Background		
No involvement in politics	136	71.2
Some family members are involved in politics	49	25.7
Highly politically active family	6	3.1
Province of Origin		
Punjab	160	83.8
Sindh	2	1
KPK	18	9.4
Balochistan	3	1.6
GB	7	3.7
AJ&K	1	.5
Involvement in any NGO or CBO?		
Yes	38	19.9
No	153	80.1

Engagement with NGOs and CBOs

The findings show an average level of engagement among university students. Mean scores show relatively low levels of direct participation - active involvement ($m=2.46$), attending events ($m=2.30$) and volunteering ($m=2.63$). On the contrary the

higher the means for "NGOs/CBOs provide valuable resources" ($m=3.46$) and "provide a platform for youth to learn and develop skills" ($m=3.59$) indicates that students recognize the importance and benefits of these organizations. Overall, engagement seems to be more solid

information rather than participatory; numerous undergraduates follow NGOs/CBOs online ($m = 2.98$) yet less in on ground activities. These findings suggest that the youth have a mostly positive

perception of NGOs/CBOs, but not very much active involvement, thus highlighting the need to develop more inclusive and accessible civic opportunities in universities.

Table 3: Students' Engagement with NGOs and CBOs (N = 191)

Statements	M	SD
Actively engaged with an NGO or CBO.	2.46	1.22
Attended events, workshops, or training sessions conducted by NGOs/CBOs.	2.30	1.35
Volunteered for an NGOs/CBOs.	2.63	1.31
Follow NGOs/CBOs on social media to stay informed about their initiatives.	2.98	1.25
NGOs/CBOs provide resources or support that are valuable to youth.	3.46	1.12
Participated in community service or outreach activities.	2.77	1.26
Engagement with NGOs/CBOs increased understanding of social issues.	2.99	1.25
NGOs/CBOs provide a platform for youth to learn and develop skills.	3.59	1.17
Opportunities to network with other youth through NGOs/CBOs.	2.99	1.17
involvement with NGOs/CBOs has helped to develop personal leadership skills.	3.03	1.19

Scale: Strongly Disagree (1); Disagree = (2); Neutral = (3); Agree (4); Strongly Agree (5)

Political Awareness and Knowledge

Findings show that students were generally politically attentive. The greatest level of agreement was found in terms of knowledge of the right of voting and the duties ($m = 3.97$), when it comes to knowledge that being politically informed is important for being an active citizen ($m = 3.96$) and knowing that political awareness is necessary for participating in the political sphere ($m = 3.83$). Students also showed high awareness of the political parties in Pakistan ($m = 3.80$) and

current movements in Pakistan ($m = 3.74$). Moderate level of understanding was found towards functions of the governance ($m = 3.71$) and contemporary political issues ($m = 3.63$). Slightly lower means were obtained for following political news regularly ($m = 3.45$) and confidence in knowing how the electoral process works ($m = 3.51$). Overall, the political knowledge and awareness of students was good, although there is still a moderate degree of greater engagement and consistent information-seeking.

Table 4: Political Awareness and Knowledge (N = 191)

Statements -I,	M	SD
Keep myself informed about current political issues.	3.63	1.06
Discuss political matters with friends, family, or classmates.	3.60	1.06
Understand how government institutions function.	3.71	0.88
Aware of my voting rights and responsibilities.	3.97	0.93
Knowledgeable about the political parties in Pakistan.	3.80	0.95
Regularly follow political news through various media (TV, websites, social media).	3.45	1.11
Feel confident in my understanding of the electoral process in Pakistan.	3.51	0.98
Believe that being politically informed is important for active citizenship.	3.96	0.96
Am aware of current political movements or causes in Pakistan.	3.74	0.97
Feel that political awareness is crucial for participating in democratic processes.	3.83	1.02

Scale: Strongly Disagree (1); Disagree= (2); Neutral = (3); Agree (4); Strongly Agree (5)

Relationship between the main study variables

Pearson correlation analysis showed that there was a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between the engagement with NGOs & CBOs and political awareness & knowledge ($r = .262$, $p < .01$). This implies that the students that are more involved with the NGO and CBO activities tend to demonstrate high levels of political understanding and awareness. The

finding suggests that involvement in civic organizations increases exposure to social and political issues for the students, thereby leading to a better understanding of governance, rights and the process of democracy. As a result, interacting with NGOs and CBOs is an important non-formal education avenue to develop political literacy and consciousness among university students in Pakistan.

Relationship between the key constructs

Key Construct	1	2
Engagement with NGOs & CBOs	1	
Political Awareness & Knowledge	262**	1

Impact of NGO/CBOs on Political Awareness and Knowledge

Simple linear regression analysis results show that the engagement of students with NGOs and CBOs has a significant contribution to the variations in the political awareness and knowledge of pupils. Specifically, NGO/CBO involvement is a significant predictor of political

consciousness ($b=0.262$, $t=3.73$, $p<0.001$), suggesting that students who are more actively involved in these organizations are more likely to be well informed about political issues. The unstandardized coefficient ($B=0.209$) indicates that for each one-unit increase in participation with NGOs/CBOs, political awareness and knowledge increases by 0.209.

Table:7 Impact of NGOs/CBOs on Political Awareness & Knowledge (N = 191)

Study Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		T	p
	Beta	Std. Error	Beta			
Political Awareness and Knowledge	.209	.056	.262	3.73	.000	
Gender Differences in Engagement with NGOs & CBOs and Political Awareness & Knowledge			(189) = -0.389, p = 0.698. However, significant gender difference in political awareness and knowledge was determined and males (M = 3.92, SD = 0.92) were found to perform better than females (M = 3.60, SD = 0.67), t (189) = 2.52, p = 0.013. This is to suggest that male students showed more political awareness and threats than female students.			
Independent samples t-test results (Table 5) indicate that there is no significant difference between males and females on the level of engagement with NGOs and CBOs as males (M=2.93, SD=1.01) and females (M=2.99, SD=0.97) reported similar levels of participation, t						

Table 5: Gender Differences in Key Study Variables (Independent Samples t-Test, N = 191)

Study Variables	Male		Female		T	p
	N=70	N=121	M	SD		
Engagement with NGOs & CBOs	2.93	1.01	2.99	.97	-.389	.698
Political Awareness & Knowledge	3.92	.92	3.60	.67	2.52	.013
Political Participation and Activism	3.11	.79	2.71	.76	3.31	.001

Note. Value is significant, p<.05

Findings and Discussion

This study focused on political knowledge and awareness in relation to the engagement of university students in the work of NGOs and CBOs, and aimed to focus on the difference between the two genders. The analysis is then discussed below in relation to the research objectives and hypotheses.

Objective 1: Impact of NGO/CBO Engagement on Political Awareness and Knowledge

The regression analysis shows that the student's engagement with NGOs and CBOs has a significant effect on political knowledge and awareness of the students ($b = 0.262$, $t = 3.73$, $p < .001$). Each one-unit increase of NGO/CBO participation is associated with a 0.209 increase in political knowledge, proving Hypothesis 1 that civic engagement leads to improved political knowledge. These findings are consistent with previous research findings showing that civic and

community engagement develops political literacy and efficacy (Boulding, 2010; Checkoway and Aldana, 2013; Ahmad et al., 2019). According to the Civic Voluntarism Model (Verba et al., 1995), organizational involvement provides the skills, motivation and networks that strengthen civic competence. Studies across contexts - including the Philippines (Hermosa, 2021), South Africa (Adu & Badaru, 2020) and South Asia (Rafique & Khoo, 2018; Bukhari et al., 2024) all similarly report that the participation of NGOs serves to foster political awareness and democratic learning among youth. By evidencing this relationship in Pakistan, the study extends the extant literature as this challenges Weiss (2020), according to whom youth interest was not accompanied by engagement. Instead, NGO/CBO involvement seems to turn interest from passive to informed in order to close the political knowledge gap in a context of weak civic education and low institutional trust (Zaheer, 2016; Tunio et al.,

2021). For all, NGOs and CBOs are informal schools of democracy that provide youth with participatory experience and policy insight, supporting democratic citizens (Putnam, 2000; Sperber & McClendon, 2022).

Objective 2: Link between Participation with NGOs/CBOs and Political Knowledge and Awareness

The result of the correlation analysis showed that there is a moderate, positive and significant correlation between students' engagement with NGOs and CBOs and their political knowledge and awareness ($r = 0.262$, $p < \text{jointly } .01$) supported Hypothesis 2. Greater engagements in civic organizations are thus found to be associated with higher levels of political understanding among university students. Grounded on the theory of Social Capital (Putnam, 2000), these findings show that civic networks promote trust, cooperation and joint learning that improves democratic competence. NGO/CBO engagement introduces youth to political dialogue and governance issues, including community mobilization which enhances the political literacy of youth. Consistent with the research of the world community, activity in civic associations has been shown to strengthen political efficacy and awareness (Youniss et al., 2002; Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Radzik-Maruszak et al., 2025). Likewise, Checkoway and Aldana (2013) emphasize that experiential learning opportunities are available through NGO-led programs that often are lacking in a formal education. Evidence from South Asia provides further people with evidence that NGO-based civic education does promote political awareness and critical thinking (Ahmad et al., 2019; Rafique & Khoo, 2018; Bukhari et al., 2024). Consistent with the Civic Voluntarism Model (Verba et al., 1995), NGO/CBO participation provides the resources, including skills, networks, and motivation, that enhance political competence. In Pakistan, such organizations contribute to the betterment of awareness through training sessions, voter campaigns and leadership programs, etc., thus promoting civic responsibility.

Objective 3: Gender Based differences

The independent samples t-test show no

significant gender effect on students' engagement in NGOs and CBOs with the mean of engagement among the males $M=2.93$, $SD=1.01$ and the mean of engagement among the females is $M=2.99$, $SD=0.97$ with $t (189) = -0.389$, $p=0.698$ showing that both genders engage in civic organizations at similar levels. This supports Hypothesis 3 to some extent in terms of the gender inclusivity in civic spaces. Similar findings have been made by Suresh et al., (2023) and Rafique & Khoo (2018), which suggest that NGOs and CBOs tend to be gender-neutral platforms conducive for youth participation despite their gender. However, there was a significant gender difference in political knowledge and awareness, in that males ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 0.92$) had higher political knowledge and awareness scores than females ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.67$; $t (189) = 2.52$, $p = .013$), in support of Hypothesis 4. This implies that the sociocultural limitations and patriarchal norms still restrict women's political exposure. The result is consistent with Zaheer (2016) and Malik (2021) that suggest the dominance of gender hierarchies in Pakistan limit women's access to participating in political dialogue and leadership positions. Similarly, Hermosa (2021) stated that male students tend to be more active in political discourses and media, which makes it politically conscious compared to females. These disparities are an outcome of socialization patterns on the basis of gender for as Putnam's (2000) Social Capital Theory shows that constrained participation prevents women from accumulating "political capital." The Civic Voluntarism Model, developed by Verba, et al., in 1995, similarly stresses the uneven distribution of civic resources and recruitment networks while Political Efficacy Theory, due to gender differences in perceived political influence and political confidence, as outlined in (Sperber and McClendon, 2022). Nevertheless, the similar participation rates in NGOs and CBOs are a positive trend towards gender equity in civic participation. Consistent with Flanagan & Levine (2010) and Boulding (2010), the gender gap on political awareness can be compressed with inclusive civic platforms. Strengthening the gender sensitivity and inclusivity of NGO/CBO programmed in this

manner could thus lead to an increase in the political literacy and empowerment of women in Pakistan's civic space.

Implications of the Study

The findings conducted by the Study brings into light the important role that NGOs and CBOs play in cultivating political awareness and participation among Pakistani youth. To reinforce the effect of this, universities, policymakers, and civil society organizations should work together to increase the availability of civic exposure and engagement opportunities to students. A key goal of service learning, particularly when applied in community-based projects, is to integrate service and community-based projects into academics, so as to bridge the gap between theory (in the political) and participation (in the community). At the policy level, the government should offer institutional and financial support to NGOs and CBOs that work in youth, allowing them to continue supporting youth - focused civic education and leadership initiatives. Addressing the gender disparity in political knowledge in the also requires addressing with targeted interventions for creating safe, inclusive and gender safe spaces for young women's participation and leadership development. By institutionalizing civic engagement to encourage co-operation between NGOs and universities Pakistan can foster a more socially-politically literate and participatory generation that can

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contribute to democratic strengthening and civic renewal.

Conclusion

This study investigated the link of student's engagement with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Community Based Organization (CBOs) and political awareness of students in Pakistan. Drawing on the Civic Voluntarism Model, Political Efficacy Theory and Social Capital Theory, the results show that civic engagement in NGOs and CBOs will make a significant contribution to enhancing students' knowledge of political processes, issues and civic responsibilities. The results confirm that NKG and cognitive participation (CBO engagement) is seen as an effective form of informal political education, which equips youth with the knowledge, confidence and networks they need for informed citizenship. These organizations offer spaces of experiential learning that complement the formal education of people, to encourage dialogue, critical thinking and awareness of democratic values. Overall, the study shows the key role NGOs and CBOs play as catalyst for political literacy and civic consciousness amongst universities students. Strengthening collaboration between education institutions and civic organizations can contribute additionally to political awareness and development of educated, participatory youth citizenry of Pakistan.

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