


**Review Article**

# Working Women Political Awareness, Participation & Apathy in Higher Education Institutions in Pakistan

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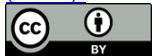
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**ABSTRACT**

Political awareness is vital to increase support for political activism and decrease the political indifference (apathy). Likewise, access to political information and continuous updating of political awareness determines and strengthens the positive and negative behavior of the individual citizens. This study is aimed to study the relationship of Political Awareness, of Working Women in Pakistan, with their Political Participation & Apathy, particularly of those women working in the higher education institutions of Pakistan.

**KEYWORDS**

Political Awareness, Political Participation, Apathy, Working Women, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Citizens' political awareness has many implications particularly with reference to political activism and political apathy. Research tells that people with higher levels of political knowledge creates political sensitivity among the citizens, which in turn increases the chances of political participation and political activism (Prat & David, 2005). Political awareness depends on many factors, particularly the education of the citizens (Ali et al., 2013). The countries with higher levels of voter participation in the political affairs of the country have higher growth rates as compared to the states where public political awareness is low which in turn resulting in low political participation (Khan, 2013; Zubair & Shah, 2015). There are several reasons for the lack of public political awareness however education is the most critical factor (Ibrahim, 2014). Similarly, there is lack of public awareness programs regarding the political education and information of the citizens so that they can play effective role in the political issues of the country (Adeel-Ur-Rehman et al., 2013). As far as the political awareness of women is concerned, it is very pitiful in Pakistan. Even in some areas of the country, local lords do not allow women to vote for their representatives (Sidra, 2015). In urban areas the situation is better than the women in rural areas of the country however, efforts are needed to make our women aware of their political role, rights and duties. Political Participation and Activism refers to the efforts to support or oppose the political system in country for the sake of improving the current conditions and thereby improve the society (Martin, 2007). Research tells about the role of collective actions taken by the members of society to generate practices with a view to challenging the current norms and values running the

political system (Ali et al., 2013). Using life narratives, we analyze in which way specific actions and policies impact upon societies, and in particular the way that individual and collective agents negotiate these impacts (Adeel-Ur-Rehman et al., 2013).

Political participation of every voter is indispensable for having a real civil society with demographic values where every member of the society has equal rights and enjoys life like anybody else in the country (Prat & David, 2005). In Pakistan, the situation regarding the political participation of men and women in the political growth of the country is to the minimal levels (Ibrahim, 2014). Political activism includes the use of active online strategies to create awareness about political issues and thereby propagate political reforms (Sidra, 2015). Political apathy can be defined as the absence of an individual's interest in taking part in the political events and functions (Rosenberg, 1954). This behavior is expressed in multiple ways including the low rate of voter's turnout, low attendance of the political events, public political meetings etc., (ADBPD, 2000). Political apathy leads to decreasing voter turnout and a kind of stalemate in running the government or political system of the country. Political apathy refers to the feeling of disinterest in political leaders, political parties, political issues and ultimately in the affairs of government (Ali et al., 2013). Political apathy keeps the citizens away from gathering information about the political conditions of the area they are living in or country they are citizens of (Editorial, 2014).

RQ1: Are HEIs' working women got political awareness and play their role in political activities?

## **2 | LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 | Political Awareness**

Democracy is based on only one principle "democracy is by the people, for the people and of the people" showing the role of people including individuals, groups, parties, communities as well as the government (Martin, 2007). The political awareness of every citizen, group and whole society is the spadework for making democratic dynamics fully active and useful for every individual citizen of the country (Ali et al., 2013). If voters don't know why and who they are voting for, their role is always negatively manipulated by the politicians who capitalize on the ignorance of the citizens in achieving their own personal objectives through unfair means as they become in power (Khan, 2013; Adeel-Ur-Rehman et al., 2013). To play an effective role in the democratic growth of country's political system, every citizen has to be well aware of the political parties, leaders, political activities like meetings, processions and other similar events occurring in their area or other parts of the country or the Globe (Khan, 2013). The ignorance and illiteracy of voter works as a tool for the dictatorial politicians, which is the most common type of political leaders in Pakistan. Most of the politicians come from feudal class who got properties from the colonial lords in exchange for betraying the native communities and political groups or parties (Sidra, 2015).

### **2.2 | Political Participation**

In developed or developing societies like Pakistan, the political participation builds multiple civic skills including the political lobbying for improving personal and group welfare and status (Cook, 1998). In Pakistan, political participation of both men and women are very low and ineffective in changing the political conditions of the country. There are several reasons for the lack of participation or nominal political participation in Pakistan (Ali et al., 2013). For example, lack of time due to domestic responsibilities, lack of political socialization, low social status, poor asset base, under-representation of a group in jobs as political careers, marginalization within male-dominated parties, inability to control male bias in current electoral systems are some of the important factors to quote (Adeel-Ur-Rehman et al., 2013; Ibrahim, 2014).

### **2.3 | Women Political Participation**

Women consist of 50% of Pakistan's total population of 220 million. However, the condition of Pakistani women is still a kind of gender subordination, even though there have been efforts by the government to uplift their status. Likewise, several Pakistani women, especially in the rural areas, have suffered atrocities, rape, acid throwing, honor killings, forced marriages, etc. So, an instant solution to the problem is empowering women (ADBPD, 2000). In 1988 Benazir Bhutto, the 1st female Prime Minister of Pakistan, raised voices over a number of women-related issues like inequality in health and education. She had plans to establish police stations, courts and banks for women, however, in her two terms in office (1988-90 & 1993-96), she could not legislate to improve the conditions

of women in the country (Ali et al., 2013).

Formal education is associated with political participation of men and women. The sociologists assert that education is a ‘powerful predictor of political participation’. Education enables people to acquire knowledge and skills to debate publicly and get training in political analysis using current political events (Cook, 1998). Education gives citizens the skills and resources needed to participate in politics (Martin, 2007). Education improves the knowledge and skills which are fundamental to citizens’ life-affairs (Adeel-Ur-Rehman et al., 2013). Well-educated citizens have a clear understanding of the political affairs happening around them as well as at the national and global levels of politics (Ibrahim, 2014).

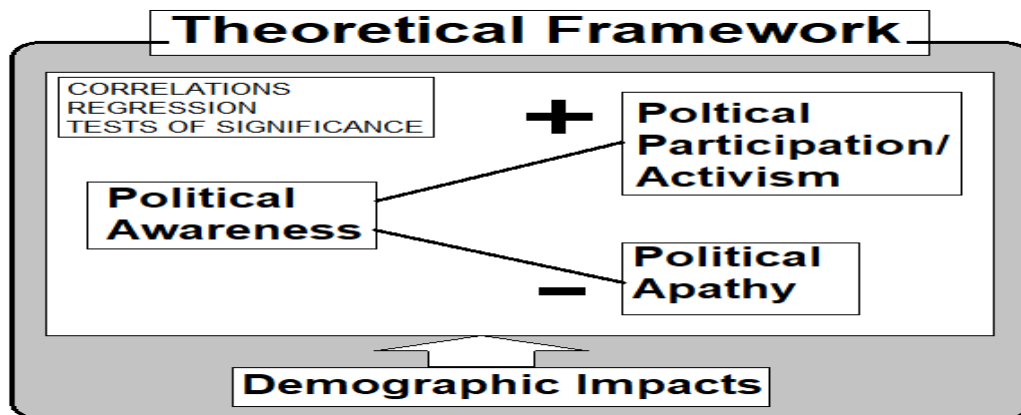
**2.4 | Political Apathy**

Political apathy is caused by the feelings of indifference for political affairs and activities. People stop taking interest in matters like civic responsibilities, engagements, and voting behavior in the electoral processes (Rosenberg, 1954). Political apathy is demonstrated by individuals and groups who feel irrelevant to political matters or take them as unsupportive to the matters of their social life. Political apathy increases low voter turnout, political in-activism and democratic deviations, for example, low voter participation can create misrepresentation, absence of transparency, unaccountability and corruption (Editorial, 2014). Generally, political apathy is common amongst younger voters, minorities and the economically depressed communities (Rosenberg, 1954). Political apathy can be expressed in multiple ways, like it may be the results of lack of adequate political education, which results in poor understanding of politics, politicians and the government in a civilized society (Miller, 1992). It can lead individuals and groups to fail in recognizing the importance of political participation in the broader interest of democracy in the country (Editorial, 2014). If people feel misrepresented politically, they get disinclined to participate in political affairs. It is critical to differentiate between political apathy and political abstention. Being absent from political events and activities is an intentional political move like deciding not to vote. However, apathy refers to staying away from political affairs as if they are concerned with the life of an individual or group (Sidra, 2015).

**2.5 | Demographic Impacts**

In social research, the opinion of the individual respondents is collected through questionnaire or interview. Every individual has differing demographic attributes like designation, qualification, domicile, experience, age and so on. Researchers says that these differences affect the opinion of the subjects in the study. Different statistical tests are available to measure the statistical significance of the ‘group-mean-differences’ based on a variety of demographic attributes relating to the members of the sample selected.

**2.6 / Theoretical Framework**



**Figure 1:** Schematic Diagram of the Theoretical Framework

The above model represents the ‘theoretical framework’ extracted from the existing research on the topic. The literature supports the idea that public political awareness is a critical factor in shaping both political participation as

well as political apathy of the citizens. The field study will be based on the same model as a research guide. The questionnaire will be about the three research and six demographic variables included in the model. Likewise, hypotheses have been formulated as per direction of the relationships given in the model including positive and negative relations of predictor with dependent variables of political participation and political apathy which will be tested in the field surveys to be conducted by the researchers in near future. Three different statistical tools will be used to test the hypotheses generated from the model. Correlation, regression and tests of significance will be the statistical procedures to examine the nature of hypotheses as per primary field data.

### 3 | RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This a review article and based on published material which had been taken from well reputed databases such as Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), Ulrich, J-Gate, EBSCO, and HEIs repositories. Published material includes newspapers, new bulletins, websites, government reports, published theses, articles, books, journals' websites, which includes renowned and well reputed publishers such as sage, emerald, Wiley.

### 4 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Literature provides a lot of evidence regarding the role of public political awareness in making or breaking the political system of the country. All the developed countries have given opportunities to their citizens to stay aware of what is happening in the political system and extend their suggestions for the operations and improvement of political affairs. In the developing countries like Pakistan, there is still lack of political awareness on the part of citizens including both literate and illiterate communities living across the country. Lack of political knowledge and skills has resulted in the political apathy of masses with just 30% turnout (Sidra, 2015) in most of the elections taking place in the country (Zubair & Shah, 2015). Research tells that one who takes part in the political matters of the community, gets the big share for his/her family as well as for himself/herself and stays the winner of the political struggle (ADBPD, 2000). Likewise, women's political participation is not only critical for the whole community rather it is essential for the uplift of women in the society in countries like Pakistan (Martin, 2007). In Pakistan, the women involvement in political affairs is not too much; however, if it is brought to the level of casting votes in the favor of or against some candidate will be a great achievement (Adeel-Ur-Rehman et al., 2013). In this regard, there is a need for launching awareness programs for the citizens of Pakistan to become aware of the political affairs in the country so that they can play required political roles as individual citizens as well as pressure groups to change the current political system for the good of society (Khan, 2013; Zubair & Shah, 2015). Both men and women need to learn the importance of political participation and negative impacts of political apathy on the political system of the country (Martin, 2007). Being part of a society, the citizens must have command over the political matters happening around them and affecting their lifestyle in all matters (Ibrahim, 2014). To get benefits from the existing political systems, both individuals and groups need to be aware of what is happening politically and then participate in shaping the political structure and operations in their domain (Sidra, 2015).

### 5 | CONCLUSION

It has been found in the literature survey that in most of the cases political apathy has the following causes which increase political indifference among the citizens:

- Many citizens believe that their vote will not be counted. Rigging of the election process is not a new phenomenon in Pakistan. There are several examples of rigged elections which turn into a cause for generating apathy among the citizens.
- Some people don't vote because they don't like politicians. It complained that most of the politicians don't look back after elections. Similarly, politicians with bad news of scandals also create apathy among the voters. Others believe that politicians will make big promises to get elected but once they succeed, they stop representing the community rather they work for themselves only (Miller, 1992).
- There is also a lack of appropriate leadership or candidates in the country. The same faces come with different parties and slogans but with the same agenda. So, lack of proper candidates also works as a precursor to political apathy.
- A big chunk of the population has no more trust in the political parties and their governments. The same party has ruled many times but did not do anything to the very basic problems of the community. Thus,

political apathy increases due to the failure of multiple governments in addressing the issues of the community.

- Media also plays a role in creating apathy and indifference to the political affairs of the country. News channels do not provide information about the positive role of politicians, rather these channels spread negative view of political parties, political leaders and the system (Editorial, 2014).

Political apathy may result into a damage to the successfully running of the democratic government or allow some other forces to take on the reigns of the government. Likewise, absence of participation from the citizens can also germinate "political ills" including corruption, fraud, dishonesty and self-interest when they find themselves not accountable to the public. Countries where elections are taking place consistently, it has been found that the issues of political apathy are gradually disappearing from their political landscape. Most of the advanced countries have successfully controlled the problems of political apathy in their homeland by increasing the political awareness and participation of their masses.

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