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Impact of Dynastic Politics in the Democratic system of Pakistan: (A Case Study of Balochistan Province)

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Abstract

Dynastic politics remains a significant challenge to democratic development in Pakistan, where political power is often concentrated within influential families. This study examines its impact on democracy by identifying major political dynasties, analyzing their relationship with democratic practices, and exploring their influence on governance. A total of 200 participants were selected, including students, Members of the Provincial Assembly (MPAs), political representatives, and think tanks, using both random and convenient sampling techniques. Data were collected through document analysis, surveys, and interviews. Findings indicate that dynastic politics weakens democracy when pursued solely for family dominance, as it limits merit-based leadership and accountability. However, results also suggest that the negative effects can be reduced if voters prioritize personal competence and integrity over family legacy. The study concludes that addressing the dominance of dynastic politics is crucial for strengthening democratic norms and ensuring transparent governance in Pakistan.



Keywords: dynastic, politics, impact, democratic, Pakistan ,Balochistan

Introduction

Politics

Politics includes the activities, actions, and policies used by individuals or groups to gain power, authority, and influence in society. It plays an important role in decision-making, conflict resolution, and the organization of communities. Political systems shape the rights and well-being of individuals, making an understanding of politics essential for democratic participation. Politics is a complex and multifaceted field that involves power dynamics, representation, cooperation, and social conflict.

Types of Political Systems in the World:

Monarchy: A system where power is inherited within the royal family. Traditional respect or fear often supports the rule of kings. Traditional respect or fear often supports the rule of kings.

Totalitarianism: An extreme form of dictatorship where the state controls all aspects of life. Dissent is severely punished, and the system promotes a uniform ideology through propaganda and surveillance.

Authoritarianism: A centralized system with limited political freedom and civil liberties. Power is held by a single ruler or group, who often suppresses the opposition to maintain control.

Oligarchy: A system where power is in the hands of a small, privileged elite, usually based on wealth or social status, with wider political participation restricted.

Federalism: A system that divides power between a central government and regional units (such as states or provinces), aiming to balance unity with regional autonomy.

Confederalism

Confederalism is defined as a political system based on voluntary cooperation between sovereign states, with an emphasis on local autonomy and cooperation. While it allows for the management of diversity, it often struggles with the division of power between central and local authorities.

Democracy

Democracy is defined as government by the people, either directly or through elected representatives. Although direct democracy is ideal in small populations, representative democracy is more practical on a large scale. Core democratic values include the rule of law, individual rights, and regular, fair elections.

Dynastic Politics

Dynasty politics refers to the dominance of political families and is particularly prominent in South Asia. At the local level, it is driven by factors such as mutual cooperation, trust, and the failure of non-family leadership. Family leaders often benefit from name recognition, family trust, and established mentoring networks. Studies focusing on Pakistan (e.g., the 2002–2013 elections) show that family candidates enjoy significant electoral advantages and influence policy and representation.

Factors Motivated the Dynastic Politics

Factors that perpetuate family politics include weak party structures, resource advantages, institutional inertia, voter perceptions, patronage networks, cultural traditions, and weak governance institutions.

Overall, the introduction presents family politics not simply as a traditional or cultural phenomenon, but as deeply rooted in structural and political realities. The aim of this study is to explore whether family politics supports or undermines democracy in the Pakistani context.

Problem Statement

Pakistan show enrich history of dynastic politics. This is very hot issue of today's that different dynasties are think themselves as the true ruler of the Pakistan, if any dynasty take over Pakistan as government, other dynasties try to abolish their government, they can't tolerate any political dynasties as the government of Pakistan. Dynastic politics have long-term effects on political culture, citizen engagement, and the overall health of democracy. Usually the political dynasties occur in poor countries (Mendoza & Venida, 2016). By studying Baluchistan, this study may uncover trends and patterns that have persisted over time and provides the dynastic politics with the valuable insights. How Pakistani nation perceive will be highlighted by the results of this study, and what changes they want in political structure of Pakistan. The results of the study also give the suggestions, that how democracy should maintained in Pakistan.

Research Hypotheses

1. H_0 = There is no difference in the views of female and male about dynastic politics and democracy.
2. H_0 = There is no difference in the views of the respondents belonging to different higher educational institutions in Balochistan.
3. H_0 = There is no difference in responses of the respondents in terms of designations
4. H_0 = Democracy is not affected by the dynastic politics practices.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the different political dynasties in Pakistan
2. To analyze the relationship between dynastic politics and democracy.
3. To explore the impact of dynastic politics on democracy in Pakistan.

Research Methodology

Research on family politics in Balochistan uses a mixed-methods research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. The qualitative aspect includes descriptive analysis and interviews, while the quantitative aspect includes a survey questionnaire analyzed by

ANOVA and t-test. Content analysis was used for secondary data, and a thematic approach was applied to the interview data. The study population includes students of political science and Pakistan studies, MPAs, political representatives, and think tanks from Balochistan, with a total sample size of 200 participants selected through random and convenient sampling techniques. Data collection tools included document analysis, a Likert-scale questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews. Validity was ensured through a pilot study and expert review, while reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha, which showed high internal consistency (approximately 0.9) across six key parameters. This robust methodology allows the research to explore the impact of family politics on democracy in Pakistan and make meaningful contributions to scholarly discourse and policy debates.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dynastic Politics

Political dynasties can be described as a succession of leaders from the same family, group, or class who inherit political authority. This often involves transferring leadership of a political organization or public office from one family member to another, prioritizing familial ties over merit, qualifications, or abilities. It reflects the preservation of political power within a specific family or group across generations (Qamar A. H. and Dr. Muhammad I. F., 2020).

Dynastic Politics Persists across Different Regions in the World

Dynastic politics, where political power is concentrated within particular families, continues to be a global phenomenon. Here are some notable examples from around the world:

United States

While not a traditional dynasty, the Trump family has had a significant influence on American politics. The 45th President of the United States was the Donald Trump, he served

as President from 2017 to 2021. He was helped by his daughter, Ivanka Trump, and Jared Kushner, son-in-law. They served the Donald Trump prominent advisor in his administration. The political ambitions of other members of the Trump family is also significant, such as Donald Trump Jr. Leiv Marsteintredet and Mariana Llanos examines the attributes of political dynasties across various Latin American nations and widespread existence, published in the 2022 issue of the Journal of Politics in Latin America. The study delves into how these dynasties shape policy outcomes within the region and influence the political representation.

India

In Indian politics the Nehru-Gandhi family has played a central role since the country's independence in 1947. Including Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi (Members of the family) have held top political positions, including Prime Minister. In the Indian National Congress party, Rahul Gandhi has been a prominent figure, serving in various leadership roles. According to Ambar Kumar Ghosh (2023), India have persistently shaped the landscape of democratic political dialogue by the political families, exerting influence that endures to this day. The party system of the India has solidified the significance of these political dynasties within both party structures and representative institutions, since the 1970s. Dynastic rule, including in our own region is a common phenomenon worldwide. The Nehru family held power for several decades until Narendra Modi's election in 2014 in India. Prime Minister for nearly 17 years was the Jawaharlal Nehru followed by his daughter Indira Gandhi, she served for nearly 16 years in total on that Position. Then Manmohan Singh, considered a proxy of the Nehru family, she served for 10 years as the Prime Minister, and Rajiv Gandhi for another five. Consequently, in 2014 the Nehru family dominated Indian politics for 47 out of 67 years after independence until Modi's ascendance. The family remains a significant force in Indian politics, while their influence has waned (Tasneem Noorani, 2022).

Philippines

"The Persistence of Political Dynasties in the Philippines" by Ronald D. Holmes and Miriam Grace A. Go (2021) analyses the enduring influence of political dynasties in the Philippines and highlights the factors contributing the effects on governance and democracy. In the Philippines, the Marcos family with Ferdinand Marcos, remains a formidable political entity, serving as President from 1965 to 1986—with his wife Imelda Marcos, very influential. Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. and Imee Marcos, their children have actively pursued political careers. Bongbong Marcos sought the Vice Presidency in 2016 and was a presidential candidate in the 2022 elections. The results of the 2013 Philippine mid-term elections highlighted the extensive prevalence of political dynasties nationwide. These dynasties were prominently represented across all 80 provinces, comprising a significant 74 percent of House of Representatives, the elected members. According to Tasneem Noorani (2022), In the Philippines, political dynasties are prevalent, with notable examples such as the Aquino and Marcos families. Ferdinand Marcos, who held the presidency for 21 years, was eventually ousted amidst corruption allegations involving both him and his wife. The public has elected his son as president this year, despite this history. While his daughter also holds a prominent position in politics.

Pakistan

The family of the Bhutto has been a dominant force in Pakistani politics. In the 1970s, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto served as Prime Minister, and the first female Prime Minister of Pakistan in the late 1980s was his daughter, Benazir Bhutto. She faced a lot of challenges, even these challenges included the assassination of Benazir Bhutto in 2007, but in spite of all that the Bhutto family continues to hold sway in Pakistani politics. Asif Zardari, the husband of Benazir Bhutto continued it till the Bilawal Bhutto reached the age of 25. Both Asif Zardari and Bilawal Bhutto are working as their Dynasty. Nawaz Shari Family also played an important role as dynastic family.

The Effects of Political Dynasties on Economic Development

A research study examines the relationship between the economic development in Indonesia and presence of political dynasties, this study assessed that how dynastic politics influence resource allocation and policy decisions. The prevalence, persistence, and consequences of dynastic politics in different parts of the world was studied by these articles offer valuable insights into, contributing to our understanding of its dynamics and implications for democracy, governance, and economic development. (Patunru, A. A., 2023).

History of Dynastic Politics in Pakistan

Over 50% of public representatives with some form of political dynasty are associated in Pakistan. For nomination the candidates of the families which are from influential background are often preferred due to their perceived ability to secure electoral victories. Voters are strongly inclined and frequently influenced to support dynastic candidates during elections. They view the influential families as familiar and credible choices. (Qamar Abid Hussain and Dr. Muhammad Ishaque Fani 2020). Dynastic politics is an integral feature of Pakistan's politics as in other parts of South Asia, Both the PML-N (Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz) and PPP (Pakistan People's Party) and are essentially family-run political parties. The PML-N has been dominated by the Sharif family, while the PPP has been dominated by the Bhutto family. Tasneem Noorani (2022) analyses that the 2 families ruling the Pakistan since 50 years. Out of which the Bhutto are in politics since 1971 (51years) and the Sharif family is in politics since 1981(41 years). General Zia-ul Haq groomed and brought up the Sharif's family leader. He did this for encountering the Bhutto. Now third generation of the both exhibiting the dynastic rule.

Finding

The quantitative results of the study reveal a complex and often critical view of family politics among respondents. Political Science students (58%) and Pakistan Studies (42%) demonstrated a good understanding of family versus non-family politics, with a generally balanced gender split and a majority of advanced semesters, indicating political maturity. Many respondents acknowledged that family politicians benefit from family identity and establish voter loyalty, which is often seen as a political "brand." While some supported family politicians because of

their enthusiasm and experience in public service, others criticized them for elitism, economic inequality, and prioritizing family or party interests over the national well-being. Statistical analysis revealed a moderate negative correlation ($r = -0.425$) between family politics and democracy, suggesting that family dominance undermines democratic values. Significant differences were found based on gender, educational institution, and participant type, reinforcing the idea that background influences perceptions. Overall, the findings highlight that while family politics still hold sway due to historical ties and financial power, especially among the younger and more politically aware, there is growing skepticism about their role in a truly representative democracy.

Conclusion

The study highlights that dynastic politics has deeply influenced the democratic process in Pakistan by concentrating political power within a few families, often at the expense of merit, transparency, and accountability. While dynastic politicians may provide continuity in leadership, their dominance restricts broader political participation and weakens the foundations of democracy. Findings suggest that dynastic politics becomes particularly harmful when practiced solely for the preservation of family power rather than public service. To strengthen democracy in Pakistan, it is essential that citizens assess leaders on the basis of personal competence, integrity, and performance rather than family background. Encouraging merit-based leadership, promoting political awareness, and ensuring fair electoral practices can help reduce the negative effects of dynastic politics. Ultimately, the sustainability of democracy in Pakistan depends on active citizen participation and the gradual shift from family-centered politics to people-centered governance.

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