

Political Ignorance and Voting Participation of Rural Dwellers in Pakistan

Muhammad Asif Naveed

Lecturer

*Department of Information Management,
University of the Punjab, Lahore*

Rahat ul Ain

*School of Governance and Society,
University of Management and Technology, Lahore*

ABSTRACT

This study explored political ignorance and voting participation of rural residents using a qualitative research design. Face-to-face interviews of 71 participants were conducted by visiting their houses using an unstructured interview guide. Data were analyzed and grouped into recurrent themes using content analysis. The results indicated that a large majority of rural inhabitants were politically ignorant and did not seem to be interested in political activities as they were unaware about the existing political system, the way government operates and affect their lives, current affairs, and rural development programs. These participants did not know the value of their votes as they used to cast their votes based on clan preferences, community leader's endorsement, fear of enmity of village elite, and friendship with community leader. These results will be helpful for NGOs, civil society, mainstream mass-media, and community based organizations in shaping public opinion, overcoming socio-political inequalities, altering existing socio-political arrangements, and strengthening socio-political participation.

Keywords: *Political ignorance; Political participation; Voting behavior; Pakistan*

Introduction

Democracy is, generally, supposed to be the government of the people, by the people, and for the people. The primary premise of democracy is that every member of the society, whether literate or illiterate, who is subject to policy should have a voice in its formulation through elected representatives. If the elected officials fail to serve voters' interests, the voters can replace their representatives in the next elections with the ones who can perform better. The key to democratic process is the accountability of elected officials to voters if the democracy supposed to ensure rule of the people. For effective political participation and wise voting behavior, people require credible political knowledge (Bartels, 1996; Delli, Carpini, & Keeter, 1996; Druckman, 2005; Lau & Redlawsk, 2001; Sniderman, Brody, & Tetlock, 1991). If they are politically ignorant, it becomes difficult for them to cast their ballots wisely and, thus, unable to hold political leaders accountable for their actions and performance (Craig, Michael, & James, 1999; Druckman, 2005; Eveland & William, 2004; Niemi, & Weisberg, 2001).

The darkness of political ignorance hangs over democracy since its birth as a political system. It undermines the system of government which is supposed to be the rule of the people. If the people are not aware of what the government does and how it affects their lives, public often cannot exercise their sovereignty responsibly and effectively with limited political knowledge (Somin, 2015). According to

Somin (2016), it is one of the major issues of faced by modern democracies because a large majority of the public is usually not aware of politics and government. Many of the voters believe that their votes are unlikely to change election outcomes and are unable to see anything interesting in having awareness about politics. James Madison (1822) argued that “a popular government without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a Prologue to a Farce or a Tragedy; or perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance. And a people who mean to be their own Governors must arm themselves with the power that knowledge gives”. In a nutshell, accountability is essential and crucial part of the democratic process. However, the effective accountability requires voters to be aware of what government does and how it affect their lives. If the voters remains politically ignorant, the accountability is impossible to achieve because voters are not aware of which officials are responsible for which issues. The widespread and intensive political ignorance, whether it is rational or irrational, makes the monitoring and evaluation of many activities of the government more difficult for public with no or limited knowledge. As a result, the people often do not make informed, responsible, and effective decisions regarding their representatives (Somin, 2016).

Literature review

Research examining political ignorance is not meager. The empirical evidences for the prevalence of political ignorance or little political knowledge appear in several research studies around the globe even in developed democracies. Nearly all the public-opinion scholars believe that political ignorance does matter whereas the others are of the view that the acquisition of political knowledge does not matter because get necessary information through ‘information shortcuts’ and decide about the destinations of their votes. Although the public-opinion researchers have less agreement on the causes and implications of political ignorance, they do have consensus on its deep and widespread existence. For decades, it has been recognized that most of the people have little or no knowledge with regard to politics and government and the average voter make no or litter effort for acquisition of political knowledge (Somin, 2015, 2016). The following paragraphs review some selected research studies highlighting the prevalence of political ignorance among masses which need to be taken quite seriously.

Somin (2016) analyzed the nature of political ignorance and described its extent, causes, and potential solutions. The empirical evidence indicates that the problem of political ignorance is extensively prevalent posing serious challenges to modern democracy. Most of American citizens believe that it is the rational behavior rather than the consequence of foolishness or selfishness. The American people rationally devote little effort in acquisition of political information due to insignificance of one vote to the outcomes of elections and having little incentive for being engaged in objective evaluation of what they do know. In other studies such as Somin (2006, 2010) argued that the deep and widespread political ignorance have serious implications on deliberative and participative democracy which demand an extensive knowledge and sophistication of the average voter. For competent vote casting, the voter requires basic knowledge regarding identity of the political candidates or party, how political system work, voter’s own policy and preferences, and policy preferences of the political party (Crampton, 2009). He argued, many voters cannot cast their votes competently in the absence the basic

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political knowledge. According to Somin (2015), there is neither easy antidote to this widespread problem nor possibility of considerable increase in the political knowledge of populace any time soon. He argued that the political ignorance might be better addressed by reducing its impact rather than increasing political knowledge of the people. It can be best mitigated by the decentralization and limitation of government.

Yaser, Mahsud, Chaudhry, and Ahmad (2011) investigated the effects of political contents of newspapers on readers' voting behavior in Lahore. The results indicated that the news regarding politics influenced newspaper readers to a great extent whereas the political commercials have influence to some extent on the newspaper readers during election of 2008 in Pakistan. There were differences between the readers' voting behavior based on the location, education, and political information acquisition from the newspapers. In addition, the rural inhabitants and the respondents with low education perceived the role of newspaper less important than their cross families. The study of Bhatti, Ali, and Hassan (2016) investigated the role of electronic media in creating political awareness among young adults of Depalpur, district Okara, Pakistan. The data were collected from 120 respondents, selected through multistage random sampling, from the four villages using interview schedule. The results revealed that a large majority of the respondents perceived that electronic media creates political awareness among them through talk shows.

Gine and Mansuri (2011) examined the influence of voter awareness campaign on female turnout and their choice of political candidate in Sukhar, and Khairpur, Southern Sind, Pakistan. The data were collected from nine villages, which were purposely selected, and 21 polling stations. The information campaigns began a couple of weeks before election 2008 which consists of a team of two women. This team visited door to door and the campaign was delivered to women alone in each household. The content of the information campaign included messages on value of voting, relationship between electoral process and policy, rural development outcomes, and actual balloting process. The results overwhelming indicated that the turnout of those females who received information campaigns increased by about 12 percent on average than those who did not receive campaigns. These females were more likely to exercise independence in political candidate's choice rather than following the wishes of the males of their household. In addition, the data from polling stations revealed that the treatment of ten females increased voting turnout by nine votes which means that the information campaigns do matter overwhelming to females voting turnout and their candidate choice. In another research, Anwar and Jan examined the role of media in political socialization in Peshawar, Pakistan. The results indicated that the existing political communication especially the private channels affects positively on the political sphere of people in Pakistan. However, the corrupt actors in corporate media are the major constraints halting public political awareness which keeps public opinion at the cross-roads and political alienation. The researchers concluded that the widespread public perception about politics as non-consequential endeavor must be changed in Pakistan.

An inquiry by Opdycke, Segura, and Vasquez (2013) analyzed the effects of political cynicism, political information efficacy, and media consumption on the participation of the voters. The analysis suggested that the political information

efficacy and cynicism reported for nineteen percent variance in participants' likelihood to vote. Social media, online newspapers, and news website were the leading source for political information. The results also indicated that the citizen having party affiliation had greater political information efficacy than those who are not affiliated with any political party. There were minimal differences in participants' responses based on the ethnicity and political cynicism. The political cynicism appeared to be different based on affiliation of varied political parties driving voters away from vote casting.

Problem statement

Pakistan is a developing country where 61% of its population lives in rural areas (World Bank, 2015). The rural people are either predominantly illiterate or have low educational levels and are ignorant of new ways of improving their lives. They usually struggle for their basic survival. The factors such as poverty, ignorance, disease, high rate of illiteracy and lack of basic infrastructure keep rural people stagnant (Naveed & Anwar, 2014). Consequently, they are unable to make a meaningful contribution in the socio-economic areas, particularly political participation. Unfortunately, the knowledge of rural people about politics is disturbingly low and the political participation of rural population, in general, is either minimal or negative. The vulnerability of political ignorance is avoidable through provision of need-based and credible political information to the rural citizens. A perusal of published research on political ignorance and voting participation of rural dwellers resulted no such study investigating collaboratively political ignorance and voting behaviour of rural dwellers in Pakistan. Therefore the current study was planned to examine political ignorance, and voting behaviour of citizens residing in a cluster of three villages from the district of Toba Tek Singh, Punjab, Pakistan. This study was designed to address the following research questions:

1. What type of conceptions do the rural dwellers have about politics and government?
2. To what extent are the rural dwellers politically aware about politics and government?
3. What criteria do these people use for casting their votes for a political candidate or a party?

Methods and procedures

This study adopted a qualitative research design using phenomenology as research strategy because it helps the researcher to determine the essence of participants' lived experiences about a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 1994, 2007, 2009, 2013; Ferguson, Ferguson, & Taylor, 1992). The phenomenologist try to understand the reality as it exists from the perspective of those who are the part of that reality especially what people perceive it to be. According to Douglas (1970), internal feeling, motive, and ideas are meaningful stuff for phenomenologist as these are the main forces moving humans as human beings rather than simply human bodies. Psathas (1973) suggested that the phenomenologists set aside their own preconceptions and presuppositions about the social world so that it may be discovered with clarity of vision. In this study, direct interviewing was considered the most suitable for data collection in the rural environment because the rural

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people might be illiterate or less educated to respond to a questionnaire independently. It was considered more effective due to its suitability, adaptability and usability with all kind of participants (Gorman & Clayton, 1999; Kerlinger, 1964). It is also appropriate for in-depth exploration and generating themes about the political ignorance and voting behavior of rural dwellers.

Population and sampling

The population of this study was rural citizen residing in the three villages (i.e., 330 G. B. Kotly, 331 G. B. Saleempur, and 332 G. B. Jakhara) from the district of Toba Tek Singh, Punjab, Pakistan. These villages were purposively selected because they shared similar characteristics with other villages in the area. It was also convenient to collect data from these villages because one of the researchers was the resident of one of these villages. The participants were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling procedures.

Data collection and analysis

The researcher conducted face to face interviews with 71 participants using unstructured interview guide. The rural dwellers were asked questions and their responses regarding each question were recorded. The researcher probed certain situations by asking flow up questions which were not necessarily on the interview guide. The duration for each interview was about half an hour. The researcher tried to find an appropriate place for conducting interviews so that interruptions could be managed carefully and silence could be assured for recording. After interviewing about 40 participants, the researcher strongly felt that additional interviews were not yielding any new and meaningful information from most of the cases. However, the researcher continued data collection due to in search of information rich cases. After 71 interviews, the researcher decided to end the data collection process. Each participant was debriefed at the end of the interview for data substantiation and authentication. The researcher recorded all the interviews using a smart phone for accuracy, reliability, and verification of verbal data which were being generated from participants. Afterwards, these interviews were transcribed carefully for data analysis.

The transcribed data were analyzed using content analysis (CA) because it was considered more appropriate and had widely been used for identifying the emerging and recurrent themes in qualitative data. Content analysis is a technique in which reliable, valid, and objective inferences are made systematically by grouping many words of text, either written or oral, into fewer meaningful content categories (Busha & Harter 1980; Holsti, 1969; Krippendorff, 2004; Stemler, 2001; Weber, 1990). After that, the frequencies and percentages of the responses against these themes were counted because it was possible due to the uniformity in the qualitative data. The verbatim translations of responses were added where felt necessary. It should be noted that there may be a sampling bias because participants' selection was made using purposive sampling. Also, this inquiry covers the experiences of 71 participants only which constitute a small sample of the population. Thus, this study, by no means, claims to be a voice of the whole rural population in Pakistan.

Results

Participants' demographic profile

Of the 71 participants, there were 47 (66.2%) males and 24 (33.8%) females. The age distribution of these participants ranged from 25-55 years with most of them (n=51, 71.8) falling in the age bracket of 30-40 years which means that these participants were in active and middle age of their lives. This was followed by those who are above 40 years of age (n=14, 19.7%) and less than 30 years age (n=6, 8.5%). A large majority of the participants (n=63, 88.7%) had some formal education ranging from primary to masters while six (8.5%) were illiterate and two participants can read and write. Most of the participants who got formal education had their education level from primary to middle (n=46, 64.8%). Seven (9.9%) had passed matriculation whereas five (7.1%) completed their education up to intermediate levels. There were only five total participants who got bachelors and masters degrees. It was quite interesting to mention that none of the females had studied beyond the primary level and only three attended colleges for secondary education.

There were 31(43.7%) farmers which was followed by laborers (n=22, 30.9%) and other occupations. However, the males were mainly farmers, followed by laborers such as home servants and farming assistants. Some of them were electricians, barbers, plumbers, and sanitary workers. Only a few participants were school teachers. The female participants were either housewives or house maids who primarily engaged in a variety of domestic activities.

Participants' political ignorance and voting participation

RQ1: Participants' conceptions about politics and government

These rural dwellers were asked to specify the nature of their interest in political activities. While responding, a large majority of rural inhabitants (n=51, 71.8%), especially females, were not interested in politics and government. When asked why were they not interested in politics and government? They replied that they had to sustain their survival for basic physiological needs and struggle for managing their everyday concerns (e.g., income generation activities, food, health and family care). These engagements did not allow them to indulge in politics.

Some participants expressed that they were not interested in political activities because it was a non-consequential endeavor. For instance, one male participant said that "It is a wastage of time and energy to be engaged in political activities" (P7). Another felt that "The discussion on political matters sometimes result in quarrels with friends and relatives. Therefore, it is better to avoid such discussions" (P11). One more male participant expressed, "my vote is not going to change election outcomes because the politicians are not elected by public. I am unable to understand that everyone knows our politician are corrupt. Despite, how these corrupt politicians are elected again and again. That's why I don't see anything interesting about politics" (P67). Whereas, one female summed up the responses of many other participants and raised a very interesting and surprising question, "Why do we need to be engaged with politics if we get nothing out of it?" (P8). Another female participant expressed, "I don't have any concern in being engaged in this useless activity because I don't get anything" (P58). Two more participants shared their opinions as,

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“What can I do with government even if I am well aware of what government does. For example, if a government institution (police department) does anything wrong with me, I cannot do anything because I ‘m not a rich man or an influential personality who can make any difference. That’s why whatever the government does, we have to accept it. May Allah save us from being engaged with any government institutions?” (P71)

“Brother! Being politically informed does not matter. What matter is money that ones’ possess and ones’ influential relationships with MPA/MNA or minister? If one is armed with these two things, everything is in eight direction in government departments. The money is most influential between these two prerequisites.” (P65)

RQ2: Participants’ political ignorance

These participants were asked about the current affairs and government policies on the national level to check their basic level of political consciousness. Most of them were unaware about the existing political system, current affairs, rural development programs, their civil rights and civic responsibilities, manifestos of the political parties, and how the governments were constituted. They were asked about the IMF and international loans and the way these loan would affect their lives. A large majority of these rural participants were not aware of talk of the town ‘PANAMA corruption case’ which was being heard at that time in the Supreme Court of Pakistan. Most of these participants also don’t know about China-Pak Economic Corridor (CPEC) and how it is going to affect the economy of Pakistan.

In addition, most of these rural dwellers were not aware of the basic pillars of government such as the executive, the legislative, and the judicial. These participants even had lack of awareness about the existing parliamentary system, role of senate and mass-media in Pakistan. It was quite disappointing that they were politically ignorant and alienated because they were even unaware about various types of governments (e.g. federal, provincial, and local) and how their decisions affected their lives. It is quite interesting to mention here that many participants especially females did not even know the names of their elected area representatives such as MNA, MPA, and the chairman of their respective union councils and what these representatives did for rural development in last three and half years of their governance.

The rural dwellers were asked to specify the names of mainstream political parties of Pakistan. Most of these participants knew the names of mainstream political parties such as Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N), Pakistan People Party (PPP), Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaaf (PTI), and Jamat-e-Islami (JI) along with their head’s names. About two-third majority of the total participants, especially females, were unable to name other political parties except the PML (N), PPP, and PTI. However, these rural dwellers were unable to express the ideology of any political party especially the manifestos of mainstream political parties. These rural dwellers were also unaware about the names of current health and education ministers from both federal and provincial assemblies.

What these rural dwellers require from the government? In answering this question, most of the participants mentioned that the government should reduce

electricity load shedding and inflation. Only few participant expressed a need for adequate health and educational system from the government. For instance, one male participant expressed that “the performance of the government schools is very poor and we are unable to pay high fee of the private schools. We are worried about the future of our children because they also have to live their lives like us in the absence of proper education” (P55).

Some participants were in a state of political distrust. For instance, one participant ironically expressed, “the government ignores public interests while formulating policies” (P19). Another, reflecting the responses of many others, noted that “the current politicians do not have any concern with public welfare and described that these political leaders serve their own interests after elected as public representatives” (P17). A female inhabitant (P32) raised a quite interesting question as “what can public do with these political leaders if they are not accountable anywhere?” A school teacher mentioned that, “Nobody can take risks of raising the question mark on the performance of current local political leaders because everyone is afraid from the enmity of these politicians” (P41). The educated participants perceived current Pakistani political leadership as,

Politicians can usually influence government institutions particularly police department because they had personal relationship with government authorities. That’s why the rural people had fear of enmity and did not raise their voice against these corrupt politicians. (P49)

Political leaders, either from ruling party or from opposition parties, are corrupt and they don’t have any interest with welfare of the public. Whatever they do, they strive for serving their own interests at each time. (P38)

Politicians mainly engage in politics so that they may be able to develop and strengthen their own business while making use of government machinery and funds because they believe that politics determines their economy. (P47)

RQ3: Rural inhabitants’ vote casting behavior

What criterion did they use while casting their vote for a particular candidate or a political party? The details of participants’ responses are presented in Table 1. These figures indicate that most of these farmers were not politically aware and did not know the value of their votes as a large majority of these respondents (n=61, 86%), especially males, cast their votes using their preferences for their caste/clan, endorsement by the community leader, fear of enmity of village elite, and friendship with community leader. For instance, one participant expressed, “We (me and my family) usually cast our votes to the candidate who is decided by our whole caste” (P9). Another emphasized that “I can’t deviate from the decisions of my caste leader because I have to bear the severe socio-economic consequences” (P2).

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Table 1

Participants' vote casting behavior (N=71, multiple responses)

Decision based on	Male	Female	Total	
Clan/caste preference	40	21	61(86%)	
Endorsement by the community leader		21	11	31(43%)
Fear of enmity of village elite		17	05	22(31%)
Friendship with community leader	12	04	16(22%)	
Social worker	09	02	11(15%)	
Request on friends/neighbours		04	03	07(9%)

This phenomenon was summed up by another respondent when he said that “My family have good relationship with the community leader and used to cast our votes for the candidate endorsed by the community leader” (P31). This view was quite precisely expressed by another respondent: “we, the poor people, have to follow the community leader’s endorsements if we have to stay in the village” (P51). The reason to follow the village elite especially by the poorer voters raises an interesting question:

We are economically dependent on the village elite because we work on their farms. The food for our kids and animals comes from their farms. How can one deviate from their endorsements if one has to survive in the village? (P37)

It was interesting to mention that the female participants mainly cast their votes considering the wishes of their household heads which was in contrast with the male voting behavior. For example, one female mentioned that “I align myself with my husband while making selection of the political candidate for voting” (P11). Another female said that “we the females usually cast our votes considering the decisions of our households” (P50). One more female stated, “I used to cast my vote to a political candidate that I had been told on the evening before Election Day. On that day, our households also trained us for vote casting” (P59). In addition, one more female confided:

We, the rural females, usually don’t know the political candidates due to cultural sensitivity. How can we decide a candidate for vote casting independently if we don’t have information about political candidates? Therefore, we cast our votes based on family decisions. (P45)

There were only a small number of educated and economically independent participants choose a social worker for vote casting. Whereas seven participants casted their votes following the requests of their interpersonal relationships with friends or neighbors.

Discussion

The analysis indicated that a large majority of the rural residents, both male and female, were not interested in politics and government. It also appeared from the results that these participants were not politically conscious as they were unaware about the existing political system, the way government operates, manifestos of the mainstream political parties, current affairs, and rural development programs. In addition, most of these rural dweller even unaware about their elected area representatives and the ministers for health, and education in both federal and provincial assemblies. In a nutshell, these rural inhabitants were mainly politically ignorant and don't know about their civil rights and responsibilities. These results are in line with the results of Somin (2016) who also reported the problem of political ignorance is extensively prevalent even in American citizens where democracy has developed at a reasonable level, literacy rate is good, and they actively participate in politics as compared to Pakistan.

The results also indicated that there was a widespread perception about politics as non-consequential endeavor among these rural dwellers. The deep and widespread political cynicism affects political participation and voters' turnout. Political cynicism refers to the negative perceptions of the public about politics, people's distrust, and their lack of confidence on politicians as well as in government (Agger, Goldstein, & Pearl, 1961; Fu, Mou, Miller, & Jalette, 2011; Strama, 1998; Valentino, Beckman, & Buhr, 2001). The political ignorance and cynicism has serious implications on deliberative and participative democracy requiring an extensive knowledge and sophistication of the average voter (Somin 2006, 2010). Perhaps, these were the main reasons for not getting involved in politics and political activities. However, politics, whether one is concerned with it or not, affects everyone's life because the policies the government formulates affect the lives of masses, either positively or negatively.

In view to the above, it was logical to ask rural dwellers to specify the criterion for making selection of the political candidate while casting votes. A large majority of these participants, especially males, cast their votes while considering preferences of their clan/caste, endorsements of the community leader, fear of enmity of village elite, and friendship with the community leader. While on the other sides, the females cast their votes mainly considering the wishes of their household heads which means that the rural citizens cast their votes incompetently. Perhaps, political ignorance is the main reason for voters' incompetent behavior. According to Crampton (2009), the voters cannot cast their votes competently in the absence the basic political knowledge. He further argued that the voter requires basic political knowledge (e.g., identity of the political candidates or party, how political system work, voter's own policy and preferences, and policy preferences of the political party) for competent voting participation. This was a puzzling phenomenon indicating that the politicians of third world countries, when elected, work for their self-interest rather than the socio-economic development of their constituencies. If this situation is the true for other villages in South Asia especially in sub-continent, it has a very serious implications for existing democracies where majority of the rural dwellers are politically ignorant and do not actively participate in socio-political development. Lack of political awareness and cynicism might be one of the main reasons for corrupt political cultures in the under-developed world.

Conclusions

It appeared that a large majority of the rural dwellers were politically ignorant and alienated and did not know the risks of compromising their votes. There was a widespread perception about politics as non-consequential endeavor among these citizens which needed to be changed. This widespread political ignorance keeps this segment of the population bogged down in dealing with basic survival and politically backward. Therefore, they cannot actively participate in the process of socio-economic and political development. If the people are not aware of what the government does and how it affect their lives, how can they exercise their sovereignty responsibly and effectively with limited political knowledge?

The voting behavior of rural dwellers discovered by this study is quite mechanical not deliberative which has serious implications to existing democracy in Pakistan as majority of rural inhabitants cast their votes under the influence of someone and compromise the value of their votes. Although such voters participate apparently in elections, these voters are actually disenfranchised, either knowingly or unknowingly, as they are unable to make independent, informed, and deliberative decisions for their voting participation. Considering these results, it is quite legitimate to raise questions: (1) whether democracy can work effectively in spite of voters' political ignorance? (2) Should such political system be called as democracy where public has no voice in voting participation? If we say such a political system as democracy, this system will continue to serve the interests of the elite and common man will not get anything from it. This is an area where there is a room for NGOs, civil society, and mass media to work if the nation has to get out of the corrupt political culture. The role of mass-media is critical not only for making public opinion through delivering credible political information and political socialization of the rural communities not only in Pakistan but also in other countries around the globe. The government also needs to work on political information efficacy of the rural population if the goal of real, participative, and deliberative democracy is to be achieved.

The results of this study will be useful in a number of ways. First, such knowledge will be helpful for NGOs, civil society, mainstream mass-media, community action groups, and training organizations in making public opinion, overcoming socio-political inequalities, altering existing socio-political arrangements, and strengthening socio-political participation. Once, fundamental socio-political changes occurred, then, it would be easy through education to alleviate political ignorance, empower political socialization, and promote participation of the broader masses of rural people in society. This would ultimately reduce rural people's current state of political alienation, increase their participation in political development, and play a decisive role in strengthening democracy. Lastly, this research may provide new directions for more detailed and in-depth inquiries in the proposed area as no other study appears to have been conducted so far on the rural citizens' political ignorance and voting behavior.

The government and mass-media, idealistically, need to take responsibility for a need-based, efficient, and objective political information support system. Also, the masses should have the capability for objective evaluation of what the government does and does not. If the government is a power vehicle and the group of people who ride it for their own interests rather than public interest, how can these people

work against themselves by creating political awareness, political socialization, and political activism among masses? In addition, if the mass-media also has a business concerns, how can the mass-media work for those (public) who are not going to be beneficial in making money (profit)? Consequently, the mass-media would also like to ride in power vehicle (the government) for business concerns rather than being the mirror to government and showing its real face. Practically, the government and the mass-media are the two sides of the same coin and they will not work for public interests. However, the government and the mass media collaboratively make masses fool and transform their opinion by discussing non-issues and broadcasting doctored and diluted information or even misinformation. The absence or lack of alternative and independent media is also strengthening the collaboration between mass-media and the government. The realistic solution is that the masses have to help themselves. The emergence of alternative and independent media creating political awareness among masses through provision credible political information which can ultimately be a game changer leading towards political socialization and activism in Pakistan.

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