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A STUDY ON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS REGARDING DEMOCRATIC CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Democratic Classroom, Students' Perception, Teachers' Role, Freedom, Equality, Justice	The democratic environment plays a significant role in active learning and the development of social values among students. Democracy cannot be brought to the classroom but necessarily be developed there. Positivism was the paradigm and the key objective of this study was to examine the perception of university students about democratic classroom environment. A survey method was used and a questionnaire was filled out by university students (n=120). The questionnaire comprised of basic values (freedom, equality, and justice) of democracy. The data were analyzed using the SPSS and descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that there are no statistically significant differences between male and female students' knowledge. The results provide significant information in reaching conclusion. The findings disclosed that if university teachers democratize their teaching, students learn more effectively. It is vital to nurture and grow democratic values in the students during learning experiences which would lead to a fairer society.
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INTRODUCTION

Democracy is a significant idea for everybody everywhere. Consequently, quite possibly, main objectives of education frameworks are to raise people with democratic perspectives and abilities (Nasirci, 2017). The students who will turn into future residents and society pioneers should comprehend democratic notion. The people need to continue deciding, taking care of issues, and getting a vast range of information for their lives (Hassan, Mahmood, Saeed, Alkhateeb, Arshed & Mahmoud, 2021). In such manner, while deciding, they need to embrace basic perspective to settle on most ideal decisions and track down the best answers for their issues. In this specific situation, the institutions where pupils spend the foundation time of their lives beginning from the young age. The educators who work there must attempt significant jobs (Rayne, 2017).

Democracy is observed as common good that informs, enlightens and inspires citizens. It deals with development of communities (Giroux, 2020). Democratic setting is vibrant to cultivate values of democracy. It cannot be mass distributed to classroom is but is essential to arise in the classroom.

In democratic classroom, students unavoidably feel free to reflect and comfortable conducting deliberations willingly. Classroom where democracy is encouraged provides an active learning atmosphere (Kesici, 2008). Teachers play a vital role to impart democratic values to students. Therefore, teachers need a deep understanding of the democratic knowledge. In addition, they must have an acquaintance of how they themselves are change agents and how they can bring change in a stereotypical classroom. Practicing democracy in the classroom means becoming a angled democratic citizen (Dover, 2017). This is the primary platform where pupils exercise to raise their voices, make adoptions, and take accountability for their knowledge. The democratic classroom is the place to understand and receive fair, unbiased, and respectful conduct. In this setting, the students feel safe to prompt their thoughts, discover leadership, and contribute to building a healthy environment. In the classroom routine, students practice democracy at every prospect and cultivate an obligation for its development (Anderson, 2019). A classroom is the place where ideas related to democracy likewise, equality, freedom, and justice are imparted in pupils.

In this thought-provoking endeavor, tutors have main role to play apart from their subject area. They regulate what will be educated and how it will be communicated in the democratic way (Karakus, 2017). The teacher must trust students to recognize their actions and allow them to identify issues, discuss, articulate an opinion, discussion, and to proposed tactics to deal with conflicts. Such practice of participation is a worthwhile exertion (Subba, 2014). Teachers reflect on their conduct towards students and their teaching decisions' effect on them. The objective of this study was to identify the students' awareness of a democratic classroom environment. For this purpose, the main idea was to bring consciousness in students to recognize the significance of the democratic setting and differentiate the conducts in which teachers can formulate the democratic environment by involving the students. In this study, the researcher endeavors to contribute the ideas which are essential to maintaining a democratic classroom. Many studies on democracy have been proposed when literature is evaluated. In Pakistan, research has been conducted on attitudes toward democracy in schools, among many age groups and across various regions.

Furthermore, despite the fact that many studies on students have been undertaken, no research on democratic perceptions has been conducted at university level. In this regard, the research is noteworthy and an effort to fill this gap. People need to continue deciding, taking care of issues, and getting a vast range of information for their lives. This study will significantly highlight the advantages of the democratic classroom environment at the university level. Most significantly, the current study exemplifies most of the literature on the democratic classroom environment and emphasizes teachers' pedagogy to create such a classroom. Additionally, it will also be beneficial for students to think about the democratic values. This study is also useful to add discourse to promote democracy in the classroom which further leads to the just society. The students who will turn into the future residents and society pioneers should comprehend the democratic notion. This study was conducted to evaluate the perspectives of university students studying in different departments, as well as their opinions on democracy, and study's problem

sentence is as follows: What is perception of university students on a democratic environment? The age, gender, and departmental factors of the students were used to find an answer to this issue.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Democracy in all fragments of society is conceivable by raising viable residents who take on fair information, abilities, mentalities and qualities (Hassan, 2021). Educational institutions assume a significant part in making a democratic culture of life through the general public (Sah, 2020). Consequently, they have significant obligation about students to gain democratic information, abilities, and qualities. Different definitions and clarifications in regards to idea of democracy is made in different studies. Aristotle characterized democracy as the best political request. As indicated by Levin (1998), democracy is a way of life and culture instead of political framework. Demir (2013) communicates democracy is the best way of life to be reached. Democracy, which incorporates significant ideas like the successful support, opportunity, casting a ballot right, and correspondence, is situation that empowers people to live in manner they merit in public activity in different situations (Turabik, 2016). In this linking, Dewey expresses that there is common connection between democracy and education, furthermore, he believes that democracy cannot exist without the training. He feels that the democratic system can be learned by rehearsing day-by-day life in a school climate that has the democratic culture and in which the fundamental attributes of the democracy are taken on (Dewey, 2004; Demir, 2013; Ahmed, 2015; Karakus, 2017).

To guarantee a democratic society, democratic school culture and environment must be made first. To understand this, insights, perspectives, and qualities that educators themselves have with respect to democratic knowledge are significant in acquiring democracy, and the people they teach. The democratic environment is the most significant part classroom which enhances the students' confidence and learning. The significance of democracy in the classroom has been well recognized all over American and European studies (Dewey, 1974; Barber, 1998; Goodlad, 2002). Beane (2005) argued that the values of democracy are grounded on freedom, equality, and justice. The features of democracy comprise fairness, respect, human rights, expression, accountability, and contribution to decision-making (Abdullah, 2018). Democracy is a way to ensure social justice, to educate students on how to perform in a real-world setting (Anderson, 2019). It is vital to introduce students to how to raise their voices. Democracy is vital concept of just society because with this knowledge citizen learn to value their own rights and others' rights. It makes them able to think critically about solutions to social issues and problems in communities. Maryline (2017) trusts that students can achieve more if classroom setting is designed by using such techniques that built a sense of capability, and feeling of being in right place.

An ideal learning situation can be attained whenever the classroom atmosphere delivers for; 1: inspiration to thoughts; 2: encounter the authority; 3: the logic of competence; 4: the feeling of belonging; 5: responsiveness of one's usefulness; 6: pleasure; 7: inventiveness; 8: awareness of rights; and 9: fairness (Andrew, 2017). John Dewey, renowned philosopher of 20th century was the founder of democratic education. He stressed that educators to give liberty to pupils to learn in their own way, rather than forcing learning on them. He recommended them to offer the students such atmosphere where they can work together with each other and learn through social connections (Servet & Fatih., 2019). Dewey focused on learning by doing. He portrayed

the classroom as a mirror of society and a laboratory for real-life where the pupils develop their skills to solve their problems in real-world situations. Pedagogies based on democratic values enable them to make decisions in the classroom (Andrew, 2017). He was central in progressive education and an activist for democratic pedagogies. His philosophy of education was closely associated with democracy. It is not probable for democracy to be imparted in undemocratic institutes (Mosher, Kenny & Garrod, 1994; Dover, 2017). In classroom to exercise democracy means integrating democratic values by using democratic method that allows pupils to practice democracy.

The classroom environment with democratic values is such a place for students where they can raise voices and actively contribute to learning process (Dover, 2017). Democratic environment can be described as a key component of the contemporary classroom which further leads to a just society. The democratic knowledge raises the ability to endorse the communal good and resolve many issues deprived of resorting to corporal forces (Parker, 2018). He believes that developing pupil's democratic literateness guide them to contributing in the same affairs of the local, national, and international communities, as well as the critical valuations and collective conversion of the unjust social, political, and financial structures. A democratic classroom is a suitable place for the lifelong learning where pupils can exercise decision-making above their variances and then convert to politically tolerant and involve other people who are able of the renewing their cultures and communities (Ali, 2014). Institutions provide a forum to practice democratic values. The teachers are the people with the ability to affect youngsters as specialists in the educational program (Demir, 2013; Hassan, 2021). Classroom is the place where students interface with one another during the learning process. Teachers being a constructive example with democratic practices in classrooms are imperative to foster democratic citizens (Andrew, 2019).

Through democratic actions in classrooms, teachers can facilitate students for the participation and ensure them how such participation impacts the world. Suba (2014) claimed that teaching democracy focus on methods that empower pupil voices to be acknowledged. This act allows each student to defend their human rights and their freedom. The values of democracy assist the methods and goals that must be endorsed in practicing democracy. Education is not only important for democracy, but its values, for example, freedom and justice are vital to learning. She also explained that practice of these values in classroom makes a rich learning atmosphere feasible. Akrar, (2017) states that a democratic classroom comprised such themes as being fair, being humanist, considering making students feel valued and meeting their needs, being open to communicating, being constant, treating each student as equivalent, like providing students with a new info; and showing esteem for variances. Students focus closer on the activities of their teachers and they are more open to rehearses in the classroom. The impact of classroom practices and encounters at rudimentary level endures longer (Murtaza & Akbar., 2019). Many studies around educators' democratic practices in classrooms about various factors. Educators procure democratic teaching methods for repeating democratic abilities to raise wanted conduct in youthful students under the shade of a democratic classroom climate (Demir, 2013; Ahmed, 2015).

A country where democracy is promoted is not imaginable without justice, equality, and right of expressing thoughts (Karakus, 2017). The freedom of expression allows people to simply put forward their needs. In the modest term, democracy may be well-defined as a set of views and standards towards freedom, however, it comprises a range of tactics which have been outlined

over the history of manhood. In short, democracy is schematized form of freedom. Democratic knowledge raises the ability to endorse the communal good and resolve many issues deprived of resorting to corporal forces. The liberty of expression fosters students to clearly put forward their demands (Kasimi, 2020). In this connection, democracy is a mode that must be learned, and drilled in classrooms (Maryline, 2020). She stated that to be prepared to come together to discourse on the complex problems of today's world need to learn the democratic ways in the classroom for a welfare society. It is central to note that the democratic value of equality does not mean that teachers must treat all pupils the same way but it means they would give equal chances to all students accordingly (Janak, 2013). In this linking, educators give freedoms to pupils during democratic rehearses in classroom to meet democratic qualities like opportunity for the articulation and interest, regard for variety, uniformity, and resistance. Consequently, teachers help students in realizing and practicing democracy for social turn of events (Nasirci, 2017).

The democratic classroom is about justice and equity among students. It works on universal principle that guides people to know about right and wrong. This act maintains a balance amid individuals, groups, and society (Ahmed, 2014; Durrani, 2018). Equality also signifies the basic idea of democratic dispositions. Impartiality is the belief that everyone including students is equal (Dover, 2017). He states that to be equal, means that pupil voices are equivalent to that of their teachers. When student voices are placed on an equal footing, the natures of intelligent judgment and action become conceivable. Within Deweyan concept of democracy, the practices are not only imparted and facilitated in the classroom but also strengthened through pupils experience such processes in their life. The democratic atmosphere of the classroom supports students to identify freedom, it seeks to raise students' mature views (Khan, 2009). Literature discloses that concept of democratic classroom is still not impressive in terms of application in Pakistan, but different studies' results are so hopeful (Siddiqui, 2019). Gap classifies through literature that more studies regarding democratic classroom environments must be conducted. This study identified many significant issues related to the teachers about democratizing their pedagogies. Consequently, it is dire need to explore the school student's perception regarding democracy.

Research Hypothesis

- Ho1: There is no statistically significant difference in students' awareness (both male and female) regarding a democratic classroom environment.
- Ho2: There is no statistically significant difference in students' ideas (both male & female) about democratic values.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this research quantitative research was used and the paradigm of this study was positivism. A survey method was used and a questionnaire regarding a democratic classroom environment was filled out by university students. The sample of current study was 120 university students. Which were selected randomly. In this research, an adopted questionnaire was used as the tool which consisted of a total of 34 close-ended questions. A Likert scale of 1 to 5 was used, strongly Agree (5), agree (4), neutral (3), disagree (4), and strongly disagree (1) for measuring responses of the respondents. In the questionnaire, there were three main sections, consisting of values of democracy which are freedom, equality, and justice. The first section was related to the views and perceptions of students about freedom in the classroom. In the second section, there were

questions associated with equality. In third and last section, students were asked about justice in classroom.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data were analyzed with statistical package for social sciences. Descriptive statistics (frequency, Percentage, mean, standard deviation, and independent sample t-tests) were used to analyze data.

Table 1

Demographic Description of Participants' Data on the Basis of Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female	65	39.9	54.2	54.2
Male	55	33.7	45.8	100.0
Total	120	73.6	100.0	

Table 2

Demographic Description of Participants' Data on the Basis of the Program.

Program	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
BS	19	11.7	15.8	15.8
MA	28	17.2	23.3	39.2
MS	73	44.8	60.8	100.0
Total	120	73.6	100.0	

Table 3

Perception of Students Regarding Democratic Values (Freedom).

SN	Statements related to Freedom	Mean	SD
Q1	We can express ourselves freely in the classroom.	1.94	.919
Q2	Teacher involves students in classroom decision-making.	1.97	.978
Q3	Teacher provides open forums for resolving classroom problems.	2.00	.907
Q4	Teacher really cares about the students.	1.98	.996
Q5	Teacher create a supportive learning environment.	1.87	.798
Q6	We can express our opinion regarding the teacher's presentation.	2.28	.961
Q7	Promote expression of diverse viewpoints.	2.16	.926
Q8	You feel easy to interact with teacher in your classroom.	2.26	1.008

It specifies in above table that means of the statements about democratic values freedom 1.87–2.28 that includes “Mean” of scale. The result that is conducted from this table is that majority of students were satisfied with statements.

Table 4

Perception of Students Regarding Democratic Values (Equality).

SN	Statements related to equality	Mean	SD
Q9	Teacher encourages us to ask questions.	1.77	.837
Q10	Teachers develop activities that encourage critical thinking.	1.95	1.099
Q11	Teacher encourages students to question.	1.82	.840

Q12	Teacher respect each student's voice and acknowledge it.	1.89	.986
Q13	Teacher provide opportunities to infuse democracy in classroom.	1.83	.938
Q14	Teacher treat with respect, even have another cultural background.	1.77	.867
Q15	Teacher promote a classroom culture where conflicts are resolved.	1.93	.822
Q16	Teacher generate opportunities for students to practice teamwork.	1.92	.949
Q17	If teacher from different related struggled to get along in your class.	2.12	.945
Q18	Teacher easily make strategies to address the different situations.	1.98	.804
Q19	Teacher give chances to learn about people from different cultures.	2.13	.903
Q20	Respect for student is basic for equitable classroom environment.	1.56	.619

It specifies in the above table that means of statements about democratic values equality are 1.56–2.13 which includes “Mean” of scale. The result that is conducted from this table is that majority of students were satisfied with the statements.

Table 5
Perception of Students Regarding Democratic Values (Justice).

SN	Statements related to Justice	Mean	SD
Q21	Teacher uses body language, and terms to convey a message.	1.61	.759
Q22	Teacher uses random response strategies.	2.00	.889
Q23	Teacher uses probing techniques to assist students to answer.	2.03	.793
Q24	Teacher acknowledges all students' responses & contributions.	2.03	.987
Q25	Teacher uses multiple approaches to always monitor students.	2.10	1.024
Q25	Teacher uses student real experiences to link classroom learning.	1.90	.814
Q26	Teacher asks for feedback on the effectiveness of instruction.	2.03	.884
Q27	Teacher provides standards for successful task accomplishment.	1.98	.716
Q28	Teacher provides individual help to all students.	2.19	1.031
Q29	Teacher is concerned with the wellbeing of every single student.	2.08	.918
Q30	Teacher expresses a personal interest in students' learning.	2.14	.946
Q31	Teacher is concerned with the success of every single student.	2.15	.967
Q32	Teacher teach inclusion and respect for difference.	2.21	.839
Q33	Rotate classroom responsibilities (in charge student like cr, gr).	2.11	.896

It specifies in the above table that means of statements about democratic values justice 1.61–2.21 which includes the “Mean” of the scale. The result that is conducted from this table is that majority of students were satisfied with the statements.

Table 6
Independent Sample Test Table to Test Students' Awareness.

Democratic Classroom Environment & Values	Independent Sample Test								
	Levene's Test for Equality of Variance						T -Test of EM		
	F	SIG.	t	SIG.	DF	MD	SED	95% CI	
								Lower	Upper
EVA	2.440	.121	.811	.419	117	2.76382	3.40998	-3.98946	9.51709
EVNA			.827	.410	116.858	2.76382	3.34119	-3.85331	9.38094

Independent sample t-tests were accompanied by views of students to check for signification to differences amongst university students (both male & female) regarding democratic classroom environment & democratic values. The Sig. (2-tailed) value is .419. This value is greater than .05. So, null hypothesis is accepted. Afterward, there are no statistically significant differences in student awareness (both male & female) about democratic classroom environment & democratic values.

Table 7
Group Statistic to Test Students' Awareness (Both Male & Female)

Gender	Group Statistics			
	N	Mean	SD	SEM
Female	65	68.5231	20.23696	2.51009
Male	54	65.7593	16.20498	2.20522

Table 7 presented descriptive statistics for each group (male and female). Male n=54, sample mean \bar{x} =65.75 and sample standard deviations s = 16.20498, female n=65, mean \bar{x} =68.52, and sample standard deviations s = 20.23696.

DISCUSSION

The aims of this study were to recognize the students' awareness of the democratic classroom environment. For this purpose, main idea was to bring consciousness in students to recognize the status of democratic situation and to distinguish conducts in which teachers can establish a democratic classroom environment. A classroom is a place where democratic ideas like equality, freedom, and justice are imparted to the pupils. In this thought-provoking endeavor, educators have key role to play that regulates what will be imparted and how it will taught in democratic environment (Akar, 2016). Educators give freedoms to pupils during democratic rehearses in the classroom to meet democratic qualities like the opportunity for articulation and interest, regard for variety, uniformity and resistance. Teachers help students in realizing and practicing democracy for their social turn of events (Nasirci, 2017). Democratic values, freedom, equality, and justice are vital to maintaining democratic environment in classroom. When the literature on the perception of democracy in the classroom is studied, it is seen that the same results are approached. In the study of Yildirim (2017), pupils established the concept of freedom on the way to democracy. In studies of Dover (2013, 2017), the students connected democracy with the ideas of justice in the classroom. In the study of Marilyn (2020), the school students distinguish democracy as equality and freedom. They seem to stress democracy as shield of social rights. The concept of a democratic classroom environment in the study of Giroux (2020), is related to the perceptions of freedom of the voice in the classroom, where the students express their ideas freely.

In the study of Andrew et al. (2017), they linked the ideas of students about democracy with the words of rights and justice. In study of Kasimi, (2020), teachers endorse freedom and equality. Additionally, students relate the democratic environment to participate and get involved in classroom decision-making. Therefore, it is perceived that the findings of studies in literature support the results obtained from this research. The result indicated that majority of students were satisfied with questionnaire statements. This study exhibited that there are no statistically significant differences in the students' awareness both females and males regarding democratic classroom environment and democratic values. It is also observed that students focus closer on

the activities of their teachers and they are more open to rehearses in classroom. The impact of classroom practices and encounters at basic level endures longer (Mutaza & Akbar, 2019). The study revealed that students in Pakistani universities have awareness regarding democratic classroom environment and democratic values. Democratic atmosphere of classroom supports students to identify freedom, it seeks to raise students' mature viewpoints (Parker, 2018). The study highlighted that teachers play vital role to impart democratic values in students. Thus, teachers need deep indulgent of democratic knowledge. Also, they must have an acquaintance of how they themselves are change agents and how they can bring change in the stereotyped classrooms.

CONCLUSION

Through this study, views of university students were examined regarding the concept of the democratic classroom environment and democratic values. The results showed that students understand the values of democracy. On other hand, democracy is an occurrence in all extents of real life. It might be suggested that teachers must be set up the democratic environment and practice democratic values. In addition, attitudes and actions of teachers enhance students' views and ideas regarding democracy values (freedom, equality & justice). Although students' views of democratic classroom atmosphere that is medium or above appear to be satisfactory, this does not imply that they are sufficient. Making provisions that protect student democratic rights and allowing these arrangements to be utilized can contribute toward a more democratic classroom climate. Collaboration is required, however, because the classroom is more than an individual experience. It is the collective phenomenon that is broader than any single person's experience.

A healthy, classroom atmosphere promotes development and learning of young people, which is essential for a productive, contributing, and satisfying existence in a democratic society. The norms, values, and expectations that promote are all part of this atmosphere. If educators want to maintain the pleasant classroom environment, especially as seen by students, they must acknowledge that students prefer a mix of positive and punishing strategies for managing their behaviors and developing their social and emotional competencies. The democratic classroom is about justice and equity among students. It works on universal principle that guides people to know about right and wrong. This act maintains a balance between individuals, groups, and society. The study recommends that educators need to practice democracy during the teaching-learning process in classroom to make students participatory to meet expectations of democratic culture.

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