

IMPACTS OF DEMOGRAPHICS ON POPULAR PARTICIPATION: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF DISTRICT DIK, NWFP, PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

The impact of demographic dimensions on the local government behavior is well identified, analyzed and documented at the global level. Likewise, several studies are available on the developing countries but empirical evidence on the conditions of Pakistan is lacking. This study is an effort to unearth empirical evidence on the popular participation in the local government system exemplifying data from the district DIK, NWFP. Most of the global hypothesis for developing countries stand accepted in this study but the statistics on local data are far more different in terms of value and weight of variables, their relationships and impacts on the research concepts. The most dominant concept in the impact of popular participation on local government system is the 'education for all.' Mass education is leading concept in making or breaking the role of people participation in success or failure of local democracies. Data show that illiteracy is causing many problems including unawareness of masses from their interests and duties at the public level thereby giving free hand to the ruling elite in exploiting public resources for self-interest at the cost of public goods.

INTRODUCTION

It is widely agreed that citizen participation is an essential feature of a democratic political system as Verba and his colleagues insist, "Citizen Participation is at the heart of democracy" (Verba *et al.*, 1995). In the absence of political participation subordinate classes are less able to express their interests in an autonomous way and as D. Rueschmeyer argues that oligarchic interests may dominate politics and oppose democratization or roll back democracy where it exists, no matter how densely organized civil society is (Rueschmeyer, 1998). The degree of equality in popular participation can have important equity and efficiency effects. If one demographic group, for example, is more politically active than another, parties and politicians are likely to cater to this group's interests more, and policies will deliver more benefits to it than to other groups. Biased participation can also create economic distortions if politicians divert resources to specific groups of more active citizens (Benabou, 2000; Rodriguez, 1998).

Main objective of this paper is to test the socio-economic biases in political participation. Although there is a well-developed literature on how institutions and political practices may distort the transmission of citizens' preferences into

policy outcomes (Panizza, 2001), there is little empirical work on how the expressed preferences themselves might be biased. The existing literature concentrates on the politics of interest groups and on the various factors that affect the efficacy of collective action by citizens, (Becker, 1983) but little has been said about the demographics of political participation. The core of this paper focuses on how political participation in Pakistan varies with demographics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the arguments in favour of local government is that it induces broader participation in democratic governance and enables local level services to be tailored according to local preferences. A vast body of Knowledge exists regarding citizens' participation at grass root levels. Some studies showed that local government considerably enhanced citizens' participation in governance. Manor (1995) based upon his work in India and Africa concludes considerable promise for decentralization in promoting citizen participation. Similarly, Crook and Manor (1998) compared the experiences of four countries, two in Asia (Bangladesh and Indian State of Karnataka) and two in Africa (Ghana and Cote d' Ivoire). Their research