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## Does Education Shape Support for Democracy in Pakistan: Evidence from the World Values Survey Wave 7 (2017–2022)

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine whether education shapes support for democracy in Pakistan by analyzing nationally representative data from the World Values Survey (WVS) Wave 7 (2017-2022). Based on the modernization theory and the civic culture approach, the study investigates the relationship between individuals' level of education and their support for democracy within the hybrid political framework of Pakistan. This study utilizes quantitative research design and uses binary logistic regression to examine whether education plays a significant role in supporting democracy. Support for democracy is considered the dependent variable which is binary, and the education level is the independent variable, with age, income, and religiosity as the control variables. The findings reveal that, even though a massive majority of Pakistani citizens demonstrate the support of democracy, education fails to impact democratic support significantly. This implies that it is not formal education but could be because of normative aspirations, political experiences, and unease with dictatorial leadership that drives democratic preferences in Pakistan. The paper finds that the contextual and experience variables are more influential in influencing democratic support in Pakistan than the level of education, which refutes the universalism of the modernization theory in developing and hybrid regimes

## INTRODUCTION

Democracy is widely considered as a political system that ensures political participation, civil liberties, and government accountability. Though globally democratic governance has spread, it has not been able to consolidate equally, especially in developing nations like Pakistan. Ever since gaining its independence in 1947, Pakistan has gone through periods of civilian and military intervention, thus yielding to weak democratic institutions. Despite this, the level of support for democracy by people is one of the most vital factors in the survival and establishment of democracy.

According to classical political theory, particularly modernization theory, education is central in formation of democratic attitudes. Based on this school of thought, education improves political awareness, cognitive ability, and ability of citizens to demand responsible leadership, and thus making them more democratic (Lipset, 1959). In this perspective, the more the education is the higher the democratic support is likely to be among the citizens of that society.

Pakistan presents an empirical puzzle, a significant percentage of the Pakistani citizens support democracy as the type of government, despite low levels of formal education. This trend challenges the traditional anticipation of the modernization theory about its expectation about higher education will shape higher support for democracy and poses a question on the causal nexus between education and support of democracy.

Education has traditionally been referred to as a defining factor of democratic disposition, especially in reference to the theory of modernization. In his argument Lipset (1959) asserts that education helps to increase the cognitive abilities of citizens, their political and tolerance levels, and thus facilitates democratic stability. In this view, education can help people learn about democratic standards, participate in the political process, and insist on responsible governance, which will contribute to increased support of democracy.

The theory of civic culture supports this assertion and sees education as an important way of political socialization. According to Almond and Verba (1963), education breeds participatory orientations and political efficacy which required in maintenance of democratic systems. Taking together, these views forecast an affirmative connection between the levels of education and political support of democracy. Nevertheless, the theories have been criticized more as they believe that education is a systematic operation in various political, historical, and institutional environments.

Empirical studies mostly identify positive relationships between education and democratic attitudes, especially in consolidated democracies. The cross-national research based on the data provided by World Values Survey reveals that more educated people tend to support democratic values and oppose the authoritarian ones. However, the association seems much less robust and consistent in situations where there are bad governance and weak democratic institutions.

Glaeser et al. (2007) refute the belief that education is a source of democratic attitudes by stating that education does not result in democratic outcomes unless it is instituted in healthy political institutions and conducive political environments. The results challenge the causal propositions of the modernization theory and indicate that the impact of education on democratic attitudes is relative and not universal.

In the developing and hybrid regimes, democracy may be supported without necessarily being backed by education level. As demonstrated by Bratton and Mattes (2001), citizens in these settings often have an elevated level of normative support of democracy although there is limited democratic experience and educational achievement. This assistance is usually aspirational, an expression of a wish to be held accountable, to be just and to have better governance, and not procedural understanding of democratic institutions. Krishna (2008) continues to complicate the education-democracy relationship by revealing that the political participation and democratic engagement of poorer and less-educated citizens are usually influenced by local institutions, social networks and lived experiences as opposed to the influence of formal schooling alone. Collectively, this literature suggests that under non-consolidated democracies, the support of democracy tends to be influenced by experience of the regime, normative legitimacy and comparative assessments of governance and not education.

These dynamics are illustrated in Pakistan. Although there have been frequent

military takeovers and incessantly poor democratic institutions, the populace in favor of democracy is quite high. The long-term experiences of authoritarianism have helped to perceive democracy as a valid and more desirable option instead of a regime based on an assessment of the primary performance consequences (Shah, 2014).

Available literature on the findings of the World Values Survey suggests that although education is positively correlated with political awareness in Pakistan, the correlation with support to democracy is weak or negative. This trend is a direct contradiction to the modernization theory that education was a universal factor in democratic support and indicates that a democratic preference in Pakistan was related to experience in history, beliefs about norms and dissatisfaction with authoritarian options rather than formal educational achievement.

Many studies do not analyze this relationship in systematized fashion in Pakistan using current and nationally representative survey data and individual analysis. This study fills this gap by reassessing the correlation between education and democracy support in Pakistan with the World Values Survey Wave 7 (2017/2022). The study does not assume causality by utilizing the individual-level survey data but assesses education as an important correlation of democratic support in any circumstance where the contextual explanations are considered.

This study has three major significances. Firstly, it contributes theoretically by analyzing the modernization theory in a developing country

set up and inquire on whether education is a robust forecaster of democratic support. Secondly, the results can be used in education and civic engagement policies to establish the democratic culture. The results add to the empirical value.

As they are reliable and generalizable because the study relies on nationally representative survey data (WVS Wave 7). Lastly, the research highlights Contextual Importance. Pakistan is a volatile system based on democracy and thus is an essential example in learning the mass perception towards governance.

The dominant approach for this study is modernization theory, which posits that education brings people together in support of democratic ideals by promoting political consciousness, tolerance, and intellect (Lipset, 1959). This approach tentatively posits that the more education, the greater the support for democracy.

However, to explain the Pakistani hybrid political context, it is necessary to refer the civic culture approach. This approach by Almond & Verba (1963) points out that support for democracy still depends on political experience. Democratic support may be driven by dissatisfaction with authoritarian rule and poor governance rather than by education-based democratic values. This research by integrating these two views can investigate the correlation between education and support for democracy in the Pakistani state.

## **METHODS**

In this study, quantitative, correlational research design is used to examine the relationship between education level and the support of democratic governance in Pakistan. The analysis model is based on secondary data provided by Wave 7 of the World Values Survey (WVS) in 2017-2022. WVS is a global study project and is a compilation of data on political values, democratic attitudes, and social norms using standardized questionnaires and national representative sample. The survey covers the adult population of all the major provinces in the Pakistani setting, both urban and rural, representing different socio-economic groups, and thus making the results reliable and applicable.

The main research tool is the WVS questionnaire. The conceptualization of endorsement of democracy is defined as the dependent variable and measured with the help of a WVS item to estimate the respondent's agreement in democracy as a form of government. Raw Likert-scale data is recoded into a binary variable, and specially, agreement or strong agreement as follows, in favor of democracy, and disagreement or strong disagreement as not in favor of democracy. The main independent variable is the educational level of respondents whose highest level of formal education is measured and taken as an ordinal variable. Education is analyzed as a critical explanatory variable whereas causal inference is not made in the analysis.

Age, income, and religiosity are added as covariates to consider other factors that may be causing democratic attitudes. These are

theoretically significant factors in the formation of political preferences, and which are often used in works on democratic support. The analysis of data is conducted using multiple binary logistic regression, which is suitable since the dependent variable is dichotomous. According to this method, the likelihood of supporting democracy is approximated in terms of educational attainment, age, income, and religiosity.

The focus of hypothesis testing is on the answer to whether there was a statistically significant association between educational

attainment and democratic support in Pakistan. The p-values that are based on the regression model are used to measure statistical significance. The results are provided in the form of descriptive statistics and regression tables, indicating frequencies, percentages, coefficients, standard errors, and the level of significance to make them clear and transparent.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Descriptive Findings

Table 1. Distribution of Support for Democracy among Respondents in Pakistan (N = 1,287)

| Support for Democracy | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------------|---------------|----------------|
| No (0)                | 166           | 12.90          |
| Yes (1)               | 1121          | 87.10          |
| Total                 | 1287          | 100.00         |

Note: Percentages are Rounded to Two Decimal Places

Table 1 indicates that Pakistan has a very high level of support in democracy with 87.1 percent of respondents indicating that they support democratic form of government. This

means that the Pakistani people have widespread support of democratic ideals, although the country has been politically unstable and subject to military rule periodically.

Table 2. Educational Profile of Respondents in Pakistan (N = 1,287)

| Education Level           | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| 1 = No formal education   | 18.80          |
| 2 = Incomplete primary    | 16.08          |
| 3 = Complete primary      | 32.56          |
| 4 = Incomplete secondary  | 17.02          |
| 5 = Complete secondary    | 1.55           |
| 6 = Incomplete university | 10.10          |
| 7 = Complete university   | 3.73           |
| 8 = Postgraduate          | 0.16           |

Note: Percentages are Rounded to Two Decimal Places

As documented in Table 2, a large percentage of the respondents are low and middle levels of formal education. Although there is this educational distribution, the support to

democracy is still prevalent implying that the democratic views in Pakistan are not limited to the highly educated communities.

### Logistic Regression Results

Table 3: Logistic Regression Results for Support for Democracy in Pakistan

| Variable    | Coefficient | Std. Error | p-value |
|-------------|-------------|------------|---------|
| Education   | -0.018      | 0.052      | 0.731   |
| Age         | 0.006       | 0.008      | 0.448   |
| Income      | -0.018      | 0.039      | 0.650   |
| Religiosity | 0.323       | 0.219      | 0.140   |
| Constant    | 1.489       | 0.423      | 0.000   |

Note: N = 1,287. Binary logistic regression. Two-tailed tests

### Discussion of Findings

The findings show that education is not significantly related with the support of democracy in Pakistan. This result helps confirm the hypothesis of the study and refutes the assumptions of the modernization theory, which posits that the higher the education level, the more the presence of democratic attitudes. Rather, the results match the claims that in developing and hybrid regimes, the support to democracy is frequently influenced by political experience, the beliefs about normativity, and the displeasure with authoritarian rule instead of the formal schooling.

### Implications

The support of democracy in Pakistan is not strongly influenced by education, age, income, and religiosity. This is an indication that more general societal influences, like cultural traditions, political experience, or institutional confidence, might have a bigger impact on the development of democratic culture. Policymakers should target these broader forces to enhance democratic participation.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows whether education significantly correlates with support for democracy in Pakistan using World Values Survey Wave 7 data. The results show that, in as much an overwhelming majority of Pakistanis declare their support on democratic governance, education is not statistically significant with support. This means that formal schooling is not the major determinant of democratic preferences in Pakistan.

Rather, democracy is reinforced by the wider contextual influences like the experience with the authoritarianism regime, normative understanding of political legitimacy, and the desire to govern responsibly. These findings contradict the general propositions of modernization theory and underscore the existence of political context in the development of democratic attitudes in developing and hybrid regimes.

Policy wise, promoting democratic culture in Pakistan cannot just be strengthened by increasing the number of people who have had an education. They should work towards better institutional performance, civic engagement and promoting the level of trust of people in the democratic processes. The upcoming study can take a longitudinal/qualitative design and incorporate other factors like political trust, media exposure, and experience in local governance to further determine how democracy is supported.

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