



UNVEILING THE HIDDEN LINK: HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND VOTER TURNOUT IN BALOCHISTAN, PAKISTAN

Babar Ali

Riphah International University

Islamabad - Pakistan

[*babaraliecp@gmail.com*](mailto:babaraliecp@gmail.com)

Haider Ali

[*Haider72737@gmail.com*](mailto:Haider72737@gmail.com)

Waqar Ali

Riphah International University

Islamabad - Pakistan

[*khanwaqarps@gmail.com*](mailto:khanwaqarps@gmail.com)

Abstract:

The province of Balochistan in Pakistan provides an intriguing opportunity to analyze the complex correlation between human development and voter engagement. This study aims to determine if there is a direct relationship between the Human Development Index (HDI) and voter turnout in Balochistan. The study utilizes a quantitative research approach, analyzing data from the Human Development Index (HDI) and voter participation records for districts in Balochistan, Pakistan. The HDI data was acquired from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), whilst the voter turnout data was gathered from the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). The study's findings indicate no direct correlation between HDI and voter turnout. Some districts with low Human Development Index (HDI) values have a high voter turnout, whereas, on the other hand, certain districts with high HDI values have a low voter turnout. These findings indicate that other factors beyond HDI substantially influence voter turnout in Balochistan. Further research would be helpful to thoroughly understand the intricate relationship between HDI and voter turnout in Balochistan. These research efforts have the potential to find strategies that can increase voter turnout in the province.

Keywords: *HDI and Balochistan, HDI and Voters Turnout, Human Development Index, Democracy*

1. Introduction



The relationship between socioeconomic development indicators and political participation has long been the subject of academic discussion in democratic governance. An essential component of this relationship is understanding how the Human Development Index (HDI) and voter participation interact, especially in nations with different socioeconomic environments. Pakistan's largest province, Balochistan, offers a unique context for researching these processes.

The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Index is a comprehensive metric combining health, education, and income indices to assess population well-being (UNDP, 2017). HDI serves as a core indicator for measuring the socioeconomic fabric of regions as a crucial predictor of a nation's success. The surprising finding of a complicated relationship between voter participation and HDI throughout Balochistan's districts serves as the impetus for this research. While widespread knowledge predicts that higher HDI values equate to increased civic participation and voter turnout (Franklin, 2004), actual evidence contradicts these assumptions.

As demonstrated by the 2017 UNDP HDI report for Pakistan, our study uses the underlying data to examine the discrepancies in Balochistan's districts. Notably, the juxtaposition of HDI values with voter turnout in places such as Kalat raises concerns about the localized drivers that shape political engagement. Kalat, having the lowest HDI in its group, had the most significant voter participation, which deviates from the expected trend.

Furthermore, areas like Gawadar and Noshki have more incredible voter turnout than their HDI categories would indicate, showing a complicated link between development metrics and political activity. Conversely, despite having the highest HDI in the province, districts like Quetta had lower-than-expected voter participation, adding layers to the rich tapestry of socioeconomic and political variables.

This study aims to untangle the complexity of the relationship between HDI and voter participation in Balochistan, providing insights beyond theoretical assumptions. By doing so, we want to provide valuable views for policymakers, election Management bodies, and academics navigating the changing terrain of democratic governance in many locations.

The primary objective of this research is to examine the influence of development indicators on the level of popular engagement in the political process within a multi-ethnic nation such as Pakistan. The involvement of the public is of utmost importance in ascertaining the legitimate mandate of the populace. This statement underscores the significance of public representatives who truly represent the interests and perspectives of the general population. The objective of this study is to examine the extent to which development indicators influence public involvement in the electoral process in Pakistan, as well as to explore the perspectives of professionals, including election officials and academicians, on this matter.



2. Literature Review

The United Nations espouses the principle of political empowerment. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which the United Nations General Assembly approved at its third session at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris, France, holds significant historical importance as a document that safeguards the right of individuals to participate in the decision-making process (UDHR, 2015). In accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (2015), each person possesses the entitlement to engage in the process of governance either directly or indirectly through the selection of a representative of their own volition. Likewise, individuals possess equitable entitlements to receive public services. Finally, it is imperative that the government's legitimacy be derived from the consent of its citizens, which should be manifested through authentic and confidential elections or comparable mechanisms, ensuring equal and universal voting rights. Pakistan is an active participant in the United Nations and has ratified numerous human rights declarations that are specifically designed to promote political empowerment. The pursuit of political empowerment is widely acknowledged as a universally recognized goal. Therefore, it is imperative to prioritise the covenants and declarations promulgated by the United Nations within this particular framework.

The inaugural Human Development Report was authored by Dr. Mahbub ul Haq in the year 1990 (Snchez, O. A, 2000). He introduced a novel framework for human development that emphasized the enhancement of individuals' possibilities and choices. This approach judged a country's success by the quality of life experienced by its inhabitants, rather than solely relying on the Gross Domestic Product as an indicator of economic development. The report incorporated the utilization of a Human Development Index (HDI) to evaluate individuals' capacities. The Human Development Index (HDI) serves as a metric for assessing advancements across all facets of human development, encompassing improvements in healthcare, educational attainment, and the attainment of a satisfactory standard of living. Subsequently, additional dimensions were incorporated into these reports. The United Nations progress Programme (UNDP) releases these reports on a yearly basis, which are widely recognized as reputable references for assessing global progress (UNDP, Pakistan, 2017).

The Human Development Index (HDI) focuses on assessing the quality of life experienced by individuals rather than solely considering their income levels (Rokicka, E. 2013). The interconnection between generating income and utilizing it for the betterment of society constitutes two distinct facets. The hindered progress of human development can be attributed to decreased levels of public participation. It is widely acknowledged that individuals within society experience discrimination across various domains, including but not limited to health, education, labor force participation, and political engagement. Discrimination of this nature poses a hindrance to the exercise of freedom rights and serves as an obstacle to the advancement of economic prosperity. Pakistan is an active participant in the United Nations and has ratified numerous human rights declarations that are specifically designed to promote political empowerment. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report on Pakistan in 2017, the National Human



Development Report (NHDR) for the same year indicates that Pakistan's Human Development Index (HDI) is at 0.681. This positions Pakistan at a medium level of human development, as classified by the NHDR.

Balochistan's sociopolitical environment, a prominent area in Pakistan, is distinguished by distinct elements impacting election processes, citizen involvement, and the Human Development Index (HDI). Scholars like as Ahmed and Naseem (2011) emphasize the relevance of social institutions, notably kinship or "Biradari," in constructing political frameworks. As Barbet Porta (2016) emphasizes, characteristics such as race, tribe, and caste impact candidate nomination, highlighting the profound effect of social structures on the electoral scene.

The caste system continues to be essential in Balochistan's political framework, affecting candidate selection and political decision-making. This mechanism influences candidate nomination, particularly in rural regions (Ahmed, 2005), underlining its long-term impact on the region's political dynamics.

Biradari's importance is remarkable in the context of Balochistan's severe rural-urban differences, restricting individual citizen engagement and concentrating authority within these organizations (Usman, 2016). According to Chaudhry et al. (2014), the feudal-like political structure in rural regions enhances political parties' power and control over the local populace.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) emphasizes the need of political empowerment, especially in places such as Balochistan, where inequality in health, education, and political involvement impedes individual rights and economic progress (UNDP Pakistan, 2017). Dr. Mahbub ul Haq's Human growth Index (HDI) is a critical statistic in analyzing the region's growth, concentrating on health, knowledge, and living conditions (UNDP Pakistan, 2017).

Socioeconomic differences, as shown in HDI measurements, are linked to public involvement. Lower public involvement in Balochistan has been connected to prejudice based on criteria such as age, education, money, and race, which influence voting behavior (Leighley & Nagler, 1992). In conclusion, the socio-political dynamics of Balochistan, molded by complicated social structures, necessitate a sophisticated view of political involvement and growth. In this location, the combination of caste systems, kinship, and socioeconomic variables has a tremendous impact on election processes and human development.

3. Research Methodology

To thoroughly examine public engagement in the political process, this study employs quantitative research methodology within a descriptive research design. This technique relies heavily on secondary data from the Election Commission of Pakistan and the UNDP Human Development Index (HDI) report 2017.



The study design used is descriptive, corresponding to the data's secondary and pre-existing character. The research is based on statistics released by ECP, especially for the general elections of 2018 and 2013, as well as the UNDP's HDI report. The descriptive technique allows for data evaluation while remaining detached from the underlying causes impacting public engagement.

4. Findings and Discussion

The study of the link between the HDI and voter participation in Balochistan uncovers a complex interplay of elements that challenges conventional wisdom and sheds insight on the intricate dynamics of political activity in the area.

1. Voter Turnout and HDI Values Alignment

Table 1 consists of seven districts of Balochistan having the same turnout as compared to HDI values.

S#.	District of Balochistan	Human Development Status	HDI	Change in rank 2013-15	Voter Turnout (%)
1	Awaran	Very low	0.173	-2	41.24
2	Jhal Magsi	Very low	0.183	-13	39.27
3	Kalat	Low	0.405	7	48.70
4	Killa Abdullah	Very low	0.238	0	41.19
5	Killa Saifullah	Low	0.422	23	47.19
6	Sibi	Low	0.441	-34	44.98
7	Washuk	Very low	0.188	2	41.24

Table 1: voter turnout in Balochistan districts based on their HDI value category

In the preliminary research, districts like Sibi, Killa Saifullah, and Kalat show a correlation between low HDI levels and low voter turnout. This is consistent with the belief that poorer socioeconomic development leads to lower civic involvement. However, Kalat adds a twist to this story. Even though it has the lowest HDI in the group, it has the most significant voter turnout. This anomaly shows that localized variables, maybe anchored in historical or cultural dynamics, significantly impact civic involvement. It calls into question the conventional premise that lower HDI equals lower political engagement.

When the scope is extended to districts with extremely low HDI values, such as Killa Abdullah, Washuk, Jhal Magsi, and Awaran, a persistent trend of low voter turnout is seen. Despite having the lowest HDI values in this collection, Washuk and Awaran had the greatest voter participation. This disparity underlines the impact of specific local characteristics, indicating the need for a more comprehensive knowledge of the factors influencing political behavior in Balochistan.



2. Voter turnout exceeded expectations

The voter turnout values of this set of districts surpass the categories of their HDI scores. This group comprises a total of fifteen districts.

S#	District of Balochistan	Voter Turnout (%)	Human Development Status	Human Development Index (HDI)	Change in rank 2013-15
1	Barkhan	44.98	Very low	0.237	-2
2	Chaghi	57.44	Very low	0.21	-1
3	Dera Bugti	44.98	Very low	0.271	7
4	Gawadar	56.26	Low	0.443	1
5	Harnai	52.93	Very low	0.184	-10
6	Kharan	57.44	Very low	0.29	-3
7	Khuzdar	54.60	Low	0.412	3
8	Kohlu	44.98	Very low	0.267	10
9	Lasbela	56.26	Low	0.416	-1
10	Loralai	52.93	Low	0.381	1
11	Musakhail	52.93	Low	0.368	18
12	Noshki	57.44	Low	0.441	7
13	Sherani	47.19	Very low	0.295	-7
14	Zhob	47.19	Very low	0.295	-12
15	Ziarat	52.93	Low	0.301	-19

Table 2 Districts with higher voter turnout than their HDI value group in Balochistan.

Contrary to predictions, voter turnout in a cluster of districts with low HDI values, such as Gawadar, Noshki, Lasbela, Khuzdar, Loralai, Musakhail, and Ziarat, is higher than predicted. Similarly, districts with extremely low HDI values, such as Sherani, Zhob, Kharan, Dera Bugti, Kohlu, Barkhan, Chaghi, and Harnai, confound expectations by showing high voter turnout. This surprising conclusion calls into question the long-held idea that lower socioeconomic development leads to lesser political involvement. The prevalence of districts with both low HDI and increasing voter turnout implies the effect of region-specific dynamics and necessitates more investigation into the causes influencing this phenomenon.



4.3 Voter turnout falls short of expectations

The voter participation in the aforementioned districts exhibits a lower rate compared to the turnout observed in the remaining groups categorized by HDI-values. The collection of eight districts includes Bolan/Kachhi, Jaffarabad, Kech/Turbat, Mastung, Nasirabad, Panjgur, Pishin and Quetta.

S#	District of Balochistan	Voter Turnout (%)	Human Development Index (HDI)	Change in rank 2013-15	Human Development Status
1	Bolan/Kachhi	39.27	0.345	1	Low
2	Jaffarabad	38.99	0.345	-3	Low
3	Kech/Turbat	40.00	N/A	N/A	N/A
4	Mastung	48.70	0.459	-1	Low Medium
5	Nasirabad	39.27	0.311	3	Low
6	Panjgur	41.24	N/A	N/A	N/A
7	Pishin	48.18	0.482	10	Low Medium
8	Quetta	36.90	0.664	-17	Medium

Table 3: Districts with lower voter turnout than their HDI value in Balochistan province.

Surprisingly, areas with the highest HDI scores, notably Quetta, had lower voter turnout than projected. This contradicts the premise that increasing civic involvement is directly proportionate to higher levels of socioeconomic growth. The particular instance of Quetta underlines the need of taking into account localised circumstances that may outweigh the effect of general development metrics. This surprising conclusion encourages policymakers to consider factors other than HDI values when developing measures to improve democratic participation.

5 Analysis

These discoveries have far-reaching ramifications for both social scientists and politicians. The surprising patterns highlight the difficulties of using HDI alone to forecast voter turnout. Future studies should look at the particular contextual elements that influence political behavior in each district, taking into account historical, cultural, and localized dynamics. Understanding the complex interaction of these elements can help guide focused actions to increase civic involvement.

Policymakers must recognize Balochistan's diversity and implement region-specific initiatives. A one-size-fits-all strategy exclusively focused on broad socioeconomic development metrics may be insufficient. Localized efforts that are guided by a greater awareness of the particular dynamics in each district might promote more meaningful civic involvement.



Finally, the study's findings call into question basic assumptions regarding the link between HDI and voter turnout in Balochistan. The complicated dynamics at work underline the need of gaining a full grasp of the elements that influence political activity. Recognizing and resolving these region-specific peculiarities will be critical for sustaining a vibrant and participatory democracy as Balochistan evolves.

6 Conclusion

An examination of the correlation between the Human Development Index (HDI) and voter turnout in Balochistan reveals a multifaceted interaction of factors that defies common assumptions and provides valuable understanding of the complicated dynamics of political engagement in the region. The study's results emphasize the necessity of going beyond oversimplified concepts of correlations between HDI and voter participation and recognizing the impact of localized variables, historical dynamics, and cultural influences on molding political engagement. The research emphasizes the need for additional investigation into the complex relationship between socioeconomic development, civic engagement, and political participation, specifically in the context of Balochistan.



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