The Role of Public Universities in Youth Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility: A Study of Social Sciences Faculty, University of Peshawar, Pakistan

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Abstract: *The present study aims to explore the role of public sector universities in the social responsibilities and civic engagement of youth in the faculty of social sciences, University of Peshawar, Pakistan. Using a quantitative survey involving systematic sampling methods, the study interviewed 180 social sciences at KP public universities. For the collection of data from the respondents, a self-administered questionnaire was used. The findings indicated that most of the participants of the study had never participated in any volunteer community service, or even signed up for a social issue. In the view of the participants, the role of you in society should be to advocate for positive change and peace. Participants advocated for peace and interfaith education, fostering linkages and capacity-building opportunities with the business and development sectors, as well as folklore, music and theatre at the country's public universities. The study recommendation includes; stimulating social responsibility and the opportunities for civic engagement for students at the country's public universities so that youth may involve effectively to the benefit of the wider community.*

Introduction

Youth's social responsibility includes understanding and participating in social processes that help people in their communities eliminate social injustice, which reflects the youth's direction and coordination of civic engagement (Hope, 2016). Thus, the youth's belief in social responsibility indicates their participation in civic action to bring about encouraging changes in the existing system of social welfare (Hope, 2016; Flanagan et al., 2012).

Exploration of the identity of the world around you is a hallmark of adolescence. This age group is characterized by broadening and refining political and social perspectives by promoting civic development and critical thinking (Finlay et al., 2010). This identity exploration helps serve as a medium for the discovery of social, cultural and political systems, thereby enhancing understanding of important social institutions. One such development of citizenship is a social responsibility that instils in individuals the value of considering not only their own but also the needs and aspirations of others (Schmid, 2012; Wray-Lake & Syvertsen, 2011; Gallay, 2006). People who are highly socially responsible feel that they have a responsibility to have a constructive impact on the social order and place the needs of other people in society above their own needs. Experts i.e. Pancer et al., (2007)have noted that the social responsibility of adolescents is associated with valuing society and youth social change. As a result, youth social

responsibility includes helping people overcome social injustice by participating in and comprehending political and social processes. This suggests that youth social responsibility is actually a focus on civic engagement, in which they work to improve the social and political systems in place for the greater community.

Civic engagement can be characterized as the exercises of people or gatherings that affect a local area to resolve the issues of individuals locally (Adler 2005). As a result, citizen involvement is one factor contributing to social development and stability. Young people are held accountable for civic and political statements that have an impact on social figures and community life as society develops (Flanagan et al., 2012).

Youth make up 60% of Pakistan's populace of 180 million. The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2008) reported that there are 58 million people under the age of 15 and 36 million people between the ages of 20 and 24. 55% of the 50 million young people between the ages of 18 and 29 live in urban areas; the Pakistani urban communities of Lahore and Karachi alone record 30 million youth (Pakistan Statistics, 2008).

The government of KP, led by a political party named "Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf", launched a youth policy in 2016 for the first time to provide equivalent opportunities for youth to work in a safe and secure environment and an enabling environment (Izharullah, 2016). The policy also includes loans for unemployed youth and other financial benefits so that they can find self-employment opportunities. The policy also recommends the provision of stipendable internships to organisations, businesses and companies (The Express Tribune, 2012). The policy requires universities to provide on-campus employment for at least 5 percent of their enrolled students. The province should also address adolescents' right to health by providing comprehensive sanitation facilities. The policy also calls for equality between men and women in curricula, public information and advertising.

Methodology

The nature of the current study is quantitative which involves a systematic sampling method. The sampling frame for the current study was constructed by collecting attendance sheets from all social sciences departments (i.e. 09 departments) of the University of Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. A total of 180 students were nominated for this study choosing 20 students from each department of the University, which includes 10 girls and 10 boys from each department. Furthermore, for the collection of data, a self-designed interview schedule was used. Furthermore, informed consent was obtained from each student before conducting interviews.

Findings

Table 1

Age and Gender of the respondents

Gender	Age (years)					Total
	18 − 20	20 − 22	22–24	24 − 26	26 − 28	
Female	19	45	20	06	0	90 (50%)
Male	06	36	44	03	01	90 (50%)
Total	25 (14%)	81 (45%)	64 (35.5%)	09 (5%)	01 (0.5%)	180 (100%)

Table 01 shows that 45% of respondents are aged 20-22, 35.5% are aged 22-24, 14% are aged 18-20, and 5% are aged between 24-26 years old, 0.5% of the respondents were between 26-28 years old.

Table 2
Respondent's views regarding the role of youth in society

Role of Youth in Society	Frequency	Percentage
Create Positive Change	45	25%
Work for Development	18	10%
Bringing Peace	31	17%
Get Education	49	27%
Reduce and Solve Problems	25	14%
Loyal to country	12	7%
Total	180	100%

Table number 02 demonstrates the respondents' views about youth's role in society, 27% of the respondents said that the role of youth in society is to receive education, whereas 25% recorded that the role of youth is to create positive change in the society, 17% of them stated that youth should play a role to bring peace in society, 14% of the participants stated that youth should diminish and solve social issues in society, 10% proposed that youth needs to work hard for the social development in society, and 07% of them stated that youth should be patriotic.

Table 3
Respondent's views about universities should provide foreign scholarships to high achievers, capacity–building opportunities for youth in universities and availability of jobs to youth in KP.

Foreign Scholarship	Frequency and Percentage	Capacity Building Opportunities	Frequency and Percentage	Jobs for Youth in KP	Frequency and Percentage
Yes	167 (93%)	Yes	170 (94%)	Yes	174 (97%)
No	13 (7%)	No	10 (6%)	No	06 (3%)
Total	180 (100%)	Total	180 (100%)	Total	180

Table number 03 demonstrates that the majority (i.e. 93%) of the participants of the study stated that academic institutions (i.e. universities and colleges) should provide overseas scholarships for talented students, 94% of them stated that academic institutions (i.e. universities and colleges) should also provide opportunities to youth such as; capacity building and 97% of the participants of the study reported that government should provide job opportunities for youth.

Table 4
Respondent's views about the promotion of peace and interfaith harmony education, linkage with corporate and development sector for internships opportunities, and promotion of local language, folk music and theatre in educational institutions?

Promotion of Peace & Interfaith Education	Frequency and Percentage	Linkages with corporate and development sector	Frequency and Percentage	Promotion of Local Language Folk music and theatre	Frequency and Percentage
Yes	162 (90%)	Agree	174 (97%)	Yes	135 (75%)
No	18 (10%)	No	06 (3%)	No	45 (25%)
Total	180 (100%)	Total	180 (100%)	Total	180 (100%)

Table number 04 reveals that the majority (i.e. 90%) of the participants of the study stated that universities should promote interfaith education and peace, likewise, most of the respondents (i.e. 97%) stated that universities should have contact with the development and business sectors, and 75% recorded that universities should promote folk music, theatre and local languages.

Table 5
Have the respondents ever participated in any voluntary community service, signature campaign or signing a petition for any cause and what was the type of that cause?

Voluntary community services	Frequency and Percentage	Signature Campaign or Signing a Petition	Frequency and Percentage	If participating in signature campaign or signing a petition then for what cause?		
				Social issues	Educational issues	Political issues
Yes	21 (12%)	Yes	27 (15%)	10 (37%)	12 (44%)	05 (19%)
No	159 (88%)	No	153 (85%)			
Total	180 (100%)	Total	180 (100%)			

Table number 05 demonstrates that most of the respondents (i.e. 88%) stated that they have never taken part in voluntary community services, whereas 12% of them indicated that they have participated in such services. The table further reveals that 85% of the participants of the study have never attended any signature drive or signed a petition. Of those who had participated in a signature drive or petition, 44 percent had been involved in an educational issue, 37 percent had been involved in a social issue, and 19 percent had been involved in a political issue.

Table 6
Respondent's views regarding fixing quota for girls in employment, legislation on early and forced marriages in KP, and legislation on domestic violence in KP

Fixing Quota for Girls in employment	Frequency and Percentage	Law on early and forced marriages	Frequency and Percentage	Law on domestic violence	Frequency and Percentage
Yes	120 (66%)	Yes	168 (93%)	Yes	174 (97%)
No	60 (33%)	No	12 (7%)	No	06 (3%)
Total	180 (100%)	Total	180 (100%)	Total	180 (100%)

According to Table 6, 66% of respondents suggested setting employment quotas for girls. From a total of 180 respondents, 93% believed that early and forced marriage should be legal in their province, and 97% believed that domestic violence should be legal in their province.

Discussions

The results of the present study show that the more youthful age comprehends and thinks often about friendly issues in their province and country. The majority of students held the belief that young people should strive to bring about positive change and peace in society, while others held the belief that young people should work to solve social issues and, as a result, contribute to the country's development. This youth awareness is a positive indication that they are aware of and care about social issues and intend to contribute to their resolution. This indicates that young people are willing to participate in such activities in order to be guided toward positive social

change. The university's students also advocate for exam-passing students to receive scholarships for higher education abroad. However, there are insufficient funds at the nation's universities to enable students to continue their education beyond the annual high achievers.

According to Zia (2017), the KP government spent Rs 136 billion on education in the province between 2017 and 2018, a 15 per cent increase from the previous year's budget. In contrast, between 2017 and 2018, the Punjab government allocated Rs 34,500 crore, or 17.51 per cent, to education. In contrast, Punjab's total education budget has grown by 10.29% (Rs. 32.2 billion) contrasted with 2016-17 (Shiekh, 2017). However, if we compare the two provinces, we find that the KP government devotes 28% of its budget to education while the Punjab government devotes only 18% of its budget to education. Punjab is a densely populated province with a higher literacy rate and higher quality of education than KP. This may account for the budget disparity. The people of the KP province are conservative and tribal, so the government needs to spend more on education because education is not a priority for them. However, Punjab leads the provinces in terms of literacy rates, with 63% of its population over the age of 10 (The Economic Survey of Pakistan, 2015–16), followed by Sindh (60%), KP (53%), and Balochistan (44%).

Additionally, students believed that universities ought to provide them with employment and capacity-building opportunities. Young people also want universities to work with the business and development sectors of the country and to promote interfaith education and peace. The majority of students also believed that local and folk culture should be promoted at public universities; nonetheless, not many went against this thought.

Universities in the country do not promote social and civic responsibility among youth. This can be seen from the findings of the current study that the majority of students have never participated in any volunteer community service. Few of them said they had only attended signature drives or signed online petitions on educational, social and political issues.

Most young people think that the proportion of female employees should be fixed because most women do not continue to work after finishing their studies. The country's social system requires men to be in charge of running and raising their families, while women are in charge of household chores. This keeps men from getting jobs as women are excelling in studies and are doing well in different forums. They argue that because women have family responsibilities, they don't take their official responsibilities seriously and take most of their time off after marriage. In this way, a vacuum is created in the organization where men can take responsibility and women can take care of the family. However, this thinking runs counter to the idea of women's rights and women's empowerment, yet most of society believes that men and women should share family and work responsibilities. In stark contrast to these ideas, due to the large size of the household, fewer people in the household work, so both men and women should work and share the burden of supporting the family. Most young people also advocate for women-friendly legislation in the province, such as laws on early marriage and domestic violence.

Conclusion

The main purpose of the current study was to explore the role of public sector universities in the social responsibilities and civic engagement of youth in the faculty of social sciences, University of Peshawar, Pakistan. After a careful investigation, the study reached the conclusion that the role of youth in society is to receive education, create positive change, bring peace to society, reduce and solve social problems, work hard for social development, and should be loyal to the country. Furthermore, respondents

support that universities should provide foreign scholarships for outstanding talents, provide capacity-building opportunities, and job opportunities for young people, universities should promote interfaith education and peace, universities should have links with the business and development sectors, promote local languages and folk music and theatre and employment quotas should be provided for females.

Implication for Practice and Policy

Younger generations should be involved in social and civic activities alongside their studies as this can enhance their sense of responsibility and bring about positive changes in society.

There is also a need to allocate resources to higher education, linking with universities in developed countries and the business and development sectors, as they can improve the quality of education and skills of students. Given the current situation of militancy and fundamentalism, there is an urgent need for universities to provide education and training for peace and harmony on campus. This task could be undertaken by the social science departments of the universities, or by setting up separate institutes at each university.

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