

## Evaluation of Ethnicity and Issues of Political Development: Case Study of Punjab

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**Abstract** *The purpose of this research is to evaluate ethnicity and its impact on the political structure of Punjab, Pakistan. This paper examines the role of ethnicity in political behaviour of the masses in Punjab. A social counsel that shows the recognition of a specific group which is descended from the same predecessors is called ethnicity while political development is the continuous decrease of ethnic, social, and religious pressure and components. This topic is vital because of subverting tendencies of the circumstances that in reality endanger the survival of the minority groups in Punjab and therefore hampers significant political development. The governments haven't yielded any efficacious outcomes in spite of elucidation that has been consistently provided. Subsequently, they need to search for a more practical alternative by focusing on the divisions that are present in ethnic societies. Ethnic democracy should be present that is a governmental system which links the ethnic groups to their democratic and political rights. Quantitative research technique is used in this research article to know the public opinion about Ethnicity and political development. The Researchers collected the data by distributing Questionnaire among people.*

**Key Words:** Ethnicity, Political Development, Ethnic Conflict, Punjab, Pakistan

### Introduction

Ethnicity can be described as a social phenomenon from the perspective of identity. In contemporary environment, mostly developing states have strong believes not on region or nation as a social identity rather stalwart of the tribe and kin group that ultimately further strengthen the ethnic bonding. Social scientists generally use the "index of ethno-linguistic fractionalization" (ELF) to measure the difference in the societies with special reference to ethnic differences. In this index, the homogenous societies have zero score whereas the heterogeneous societies can score maximum till 100 that depends if each person of the society has a separate ethnic identity ([Collier, n.d. p.4](#)).

For the initiation of the ethnic conflict, the presence of at least two gatherings with various traits inside a similar political framework is an essential condition. The discord in the ethnic perspective is usually present among different groups or with state authority. Ethnic politics is one of the primary purposes behind internal vulnerability in the progressing world. Majority of the ethnic and regional political characters either have lost

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from their prevailing political adversaries or have gone along with them in the more extensive public alliance in Pakistan.

This research is on the role of ethnic conflicts of Punjab, Pakistan, in the development of politics. The Zamindar group related to farming constitutes the major portion in the Punjab and their reflection can be seen in the major areas of Punjabi society particularly in rural areas of the Punjab. Further segregation of the zamindar group can be given as Jutts, Rajputts, Sheikhs, Gujars, Awaans, Syeds, and Arains. In Punjab, There are multiple benefits of having the ethnic group as a support base for use as bargaining chips during competition with other ethnic groups. Pakistan is not an exception. Even in the states of sub Saharan African area, ethnicity plays major rule and guiding factor in political behaviour ([Batty, 2010, p.4](#)).

The societies which are created on the basis of ethnicity are viewed as flawed, with poor financial interpretation and a high possibility of an aggressive clash. It is not only the high illiteracy percentage but also cultural affiliations and ethnicity that plays vital role in the societies. The pace of economic development is lessened due to the presence of ethnic diversity. As Nawaz Sharif government worked mostly in North Punjab. There is no proper economic growth in South Punjab particularly in the cities of Dera Ghazi Khan, Bahawalpur and adjacent areas. This type of political behaviour does not only weaken the society at large but also creates ethnic differences that cannot be resolved through cooperation. Moreover, such ethnic issues sometimes victimize the minorities ([Collier, n.d, p.1](#))

The demand of South Punjab province is also a reflection of ethnic division in Punjab. The demand of dividing the Punjab is not solely an administrative matter. One of the major factors behind this demand is the feeling of ethnic and linguistically Seraikis, who are the residents of South Punjab, that they are dominated by the Punjabi speakers of North Punjab. These concerns are based on facts particularly regarding the distribution of resources such as in the health budget of the Punjab government for the year 2017-18, the funds allocated for the hospital situated in Northern part of the Punjab was more than twice allocated for South Punjab. Moreover, interestingly only 12 percent of the allocated 30 percent was spent in South Punjab ([Leeza, 2019](#)). This unequal distribution of resources further strengthens the feeling of deprivation on the basis of ethnicity. The similar voices were heard from Bengalis before the dismemberment of Pakistan and the same reservations of Balochis and Pashtuns can be observed in different parts of Pakistan.

The creation of a separate province for the people of South Punjab can help in strengthening the federalism in Pakistan. However, the demand of name as "Sarikistan" might create the division among the people of South Punjab due to using the name of a particular ethnic group. This may create fear in the minds of people belonging to other ethnic groups living in South Punjab that their ethnic identity might be compromised or jeopardized in this situation. Although, the numbers of Saraiki speakers are more in South Punjab yet a large number of Punjabi speaking are also residing in this area such as in Bahawlpur and Multan districts, the Punjabis are 28.39 and 21.63 percent respectively. However, there has always been a consensus among the people of South Punjab and among major political parties, at least theoretically, on the creation of a new province. On May 3, 2012, PPPP government passed a resolution in the National Assembly for the creation of new province of South Punjab. Whereas, the Punjab Assembly passed the resolutions of creating a new province of South Punjab and restoration of the Bahawalpur Province ([Roofi & Alqama, 2013, p.159](#)). Janoobi Punjab Suba Mahaz was formed before the 2018 election and they made alliance with Pakistan Tehreek-i- Insaf (PTI) to form an independent South Punjab Province to alleviate the economic and political deprivation in South Punjab.

Punjab is the biggest area in Pakistan regarding populace and appreciates a crucial situation in governmental issues. Elite group in Punjab are also taking part in decision making and they made such decisions which only benefits them. The Punjabi landed first class elite possesses the capacity to solidify and extend their capabilities by utilizing their relations in difficult situation inside the institutional structure in order

to adjust with substituted setting in the political sector as it helps them to keep seeking after their monetary and political interests. ([Javid, 2012](#))

External impacts can likewise produce ethnic clashes. External actors, politically, strategically, financially and monetarily, uphold specific ethnic identities for the promotion of ideology that impacts both state and nation along with accomplishing objectives. The state like Pakistan, where multi ethnic groups are living, needs to formulate a comprehensive policy regarding the equal distribution of resources among different ethnic groups for smooth functioning of the state ([Azhar & Muhammad, 2017](#)).

Today, the greatest danger to the country that can turn the political history of the state is ethnic fault lines. The biggest danger to solidarity in contemporary environment is ethnic nationalism. Ethnic nationality is a disturbing factor not only up to the extent of Punjab but also across Pakistan. It is the focus point of every one particularly during the predominant ethnic gatherings.

## Literature Review

In her Doctoral dissertation, published in 2013, entitled “The Politics of Ethnicity: An Issue to National Integration of Pakistan”, [Rehana Saeed Hashmi \(2013, p.15\)](#) terms “Ethnic politics” as a key challenge in the third world countries. Her research looks at the three ethnic groups Baloch, Mohajir and Saraiki and the state’s role in the integration of these groups in the nation building. She enlists four major factors that hinder this development as ethnic group`s political leadership role, functions connected with the middle class along with its mobility, role of state in diffusing conflict and external support for the ethnic cause.

[Yasmin Roofi and Khawaja Alqama \(2013, p.156\)](#) in their paper “Ethnic Dilemma in Pakistan and Division of Punjab: End or Beginning of the New Era of Conflict” regards the biggest region with respect to population as Punjab (almost 73,621,290) and the one which “relishes a mandatory primacy in politics”. Their research explores the oft-repeated concern of Punjab’s division on ethnic lines to dismantle its political power in Pakistan. They enlist Saraiki as a major ethnic group (with 17.36 percent of population) in Punjab which wants to break-free from the dominant Punjabi group with 75.23 percent of provincial population ([Roofi & Alqama 2013, p.158](#)). Their article further discusses the rifts within Saraiki ethnic groups who differ in their opinions about the formation of a separate province within Punjab concluding that a division on ethnic lines would result in political complexities and should not be done without proper national consensus.

Nasreen Akhtar in her paper “Ethnic Politics in Pakistan” labels Pakistan as a “fragmented, polarized and multi-ethnic state” (2013, 3). She defines ethnic group as a group with common language, culture and having distinct social traits. Therefore, she puts Baloch, Bengalis, Mohajirs, Punjabis, Pakhtuns, and Sindhis as the major ethnic groups. Her article which concerns Baloch uprising, a phenomenon she calls “Baloch Ethno-nationalism”, cites the dominance of Punjabi ethnic group as a major source of ethnic conflicts within Pakistan.

In his book “*The politics of ethnicity in Pakistan: The Baloch, Sindhi and Mohajir ethnic Movements*”, Farhan Hanif Siddiqi draws out a parallel between local ethnic conflicts and global conflicts. Siddiqi refers to the dominance of Punjabi ethnic group as “Punjabisation of the Pakistani state”. The book is rife with discussions on ethnic activism, ethnic loyalty and what he calls social engineering of the state to change ethnic demographics in Pakistan. ([Siddiqi, 2012,25](#))

[Mughal \(2020\)](#) in his article describes the demand of new province by the Saraiki people due to marginalization and ethnic issue. It is a result of a very long struggle that people of South Punjab are mobilized to get a new province in the wake of marginalization they were facing since long. He also points out that the policy makers and the government should address the grievances of other ethnic groups in Pakistan to avoid any repercussions.

[Adeel Khan \(2005\)](#) in *Politics of Identity: Ethnic Nationalism and the State in Pakistan* also labels Punjabis as the “most satisfied ethnic group” in Pakistan due to their over-representation in bureaucracy and military.

Khan calls it a “pervasive ethnic conflict” where Mohajirs and Pakhtuns are the most marginalized groups. A predominant area which Khan explores is of the ethnic violence which, according to him, is done either for the state or by the state ([Khan, 2005, 29](#)). Another significant point Khan raise is that the politicization of ethnic movement is a relatively modern phenomenon which in the case of Pakhtuns started to happen with the state’s effort to centralize tribal areas. The discontent of local groups, therefore, resulted in a surge of ethnic conflict.

In their article “Ethnic Diversity and Political Development in Pakistan”, Ethnic factor is referred by Dr. Arshad Syed Karim, Dr. Samina Saeed, and Dr. Nabila Akber as an indicator of “political trend”. The main facet in the study of social and regional behaviors is diversity in ethnicity. Their research analyses the amalgamation, refusal furthermore the multicultural laws and recommends a federal system designed for sustenance of multi-ethnic societies in Pakistan ([Karim, Saeed, & Akber, 2019](#))

[Gulshan Majeed \(2004\)](#) in her article “Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict in Pakistan” attributes ethnic diversity in Pakistan as its unique identifying feature. Tracing how this diversity results into violent religious, political, territorial and linguistic conflicts, Majeed refers to the ethnic bias prevalent in General Ayub’s era which resulted into dismemberment of Pakistan (2004, 58). She further mentions the ethnic deprivation among existing ethnic groups such as Seriaki, Mohajirs, Balochs and Pakhtuns all of which have destabilized political system and undermined “foundations of the state”.

[Akhtar \(2007\)](#) claims that in the first decade of 21<sup>st</sup> century, Baloch Nationalists stood against the state after a long interval of almost 20 years due to deprivation and social exclusion. They showed their concerns over continuous denial to include ethnic Balochis in developmental plan of the Balochistan province and refusal to give more economic power to their province. He also pointed out towards the grievances of nationalist movements in East Pakistan over power sharing arrangements. He pointed out that in spite of the fact that Bangla was the native language of more than half of the population was not given the status of national language.

[Feroz Ahmed \(1998\)](#) in his book *Ethnicity and Politics in Pakistan*, presents a politico-historical analysis of ethnicism in Pakistan. The book’s various chapters are entitled “The Pushtoon Question, The Rise of Mohajir Identity, and The Sindhi Grievances” referring to the prevalent ethnic issues in Pakistan. Ahmed argues that due to Pakistani state’s nationalistic practices for “cultural homogeneity”, it has snubbed ethnic movements and its socio-cultural diversity.

Veena Kukreja’s article “Ethnic Diversity, Political Aspirations and State Response: A Case Study of Pakistan” employs the term “ethnic militarism” to discuss ethnic conflicts in Pakistan (2020, 28). Kukreja argues that the Pakistani governments (no matter whether democratic or military) have sought to fought against the ethnic demands instead of a peaceful integration into mainstream (2020, 30) which has aggravated ethnic militarism ([Kukreja, 2020](#))

In “Ethnic Fragmentation and Cultural Dynamics in Pakistan”, Muhammad Azhar and Ayaz Muhammad enlist “sovereignty, economic disparity, resource allocation, demographic factors, political factors and linguistic and cultural factors as the main factors behind the ethnic conflicts in Pakistan. Within political factors, they refer mainly to the role elite’s play by motivating their ethnic followers for personal gains. A second contributing factor they have pointed out is the feeling of marginalization small ethnic groups has because of lack of political power ([Azhar & Muhammad 2017, 70](#)). Like Kukreja and Ahmed, these two also refer to the coercive treatment Pakistani state has done to subside ethnic conflicts ([Azhar & Muhammad, 2017](#)).

## Hypothesis

H I: Government Regulations can control Ethnic Conflicts

## Research Methodology

To recognize, select, measure, and analyze data about a topic, the particular methodology or strategies

used is known as research methodology. The methodology segment permits the reader to basically assess a study's general legitimacy and dependability in a research paper. Analyses, overviews surveys, interviews, case studies, and so forth are included in the research methods. The researchers used questionnaire technique in this research to collect quantitative data. The researchers have collected the data by distributing questionnaire among people.

### Data Collection Technique

The questionnaire was collected and examined by the researchers. A code was allotted to each response that was received while interpreting the quantitative data. (Rabbani & M.R, 2012)  
In our questionnaire a statement was given and five options were given:

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

### Research Analysis

First of all, researchers have formulated a questionnaire in which the major issues and solutions of ethnicity conflicts were highlighted. The questionnaire was distributed to the people and collected the data from 300 respondents from Punjab. After the collection of data, researchers found that there was a clash in opinion of people in Punjab about ethnicity and its relation with political development. Researchers found that conflict is present in different ethnic groups in Pakistan and also gave solutions for proper way to control conflict and issues of political development in Punjab.

Table 1. Age

Age	Percentage
18 – 25	62.7
26 – 35	10
36 – 49	8.6
50 & above	18.7

Table 2. Gender

Gender	Percentage
Male	53.3
Female	46.7

Table 3. Education

Education	Percentage
Bachelors	61.3
Masters	28
MPhil	2.7
PhD	4
Other	4.1

**Table 4**

Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Ethnic conflicts are dependent on the political system which serves to either reduce or intensify feelings of ethnicity.	28.8	44.5	19.2	4.1	3.4
2. Ethnic settlement is possible if a government functions on principles of democracy.	24.2	53	14.1	4.7	4
3. Ethnicity is the deciding factor behind people's political affiliations in Pakistan.	18.8	41.6	20.1	13.4	6
4. Political decisions based on ethnicity are reasons for lack of development in Pakistan.	22.8	47	12.8	10.7	6.7
5. Strong ethnic groups enjoy privileges in the power structure of the state.	31.1	43.9	13.5	8.1	3.4
6. The entanglement of ethnicity in our political life is fatal to government.	11.4	51.7	25.5	8.1	3.4
7. Participation of every ethnic group in the government is must for strong political structure.	32.9	45.6	11.4	6.7	3.4
8. Conflict creators don't want peace in ethnic society.	32.2	49	8.7	6	4
9. Difference between ideologies of ethnic groups is the main issue in political instability.	11.4	53.7	16.1	14.1	4.7
10. Major ethnic groups show participation in politics but still prefer to remain isolated from other ethnic groups.	14.8	55	20.1	6	4

### Interpretations/findings

1. 73.3 % of the respondents agreed with the statement. 19.2 % had impartial views (neutral) while 7.5 % of the respondents disagreed. The results view that most respondents agree with the statement. This is because ethnic conflict is caused fundamentally by social and political frameworks that leads to inequality and does not offer alternatives for the peaceful expression of differences which triggers the ethnic feelings.
2. 77.2 % of the respondents agreed with the statement. 14.1 % were neutral and 8.7 % disagreed with the statement. The results show that most respondents agree with the statement because ethnic democracy is a governmental system which links the ethnic groups to their democratic and political rights. All the ethnic groups have the freedom to engage in the political process however few respondents think that the dominant ethnic groups have strong political hold.
3. 60.4 % of the respondents agreed with the statement. 20.1 % were neutral and 19.4 % of the respondents disapproved the statement. Majority approved of our statement because ethnic groups support political leaders having the same ethnicity as them which helps them to build trust among leaders and citizens. However, some respondents think that not all people consider ethnicity while choosing their political affiliations.

4. 69.8 % accept it. 12.8 % had neutral views furthermore the statement was disapproved by 17.5 %. Most of the respondents agreed with the statement because political decisions that are based on ethnicity are usually biased and are made for personal benefits rather than state benefits.
5. 75 % of the respondents agreed with the statement. 13.5 % were neutral and 11.5 % disagreed with the statement. Most respondents agreed with the statement because it is evident in our state that dominant ethnic groups enjoy the most privileges as they are in power and are influential.
6. 63.1 % of the respondents agreed with the statement. 25.5 % were neutral and the statement was disagreed by 11.5 % of the respondents. Majority agreed to this because involvement of ethnicity in our political life creates a biased political system. The government should make policies keeping in view the Constitution irrespective of ethnic divisions.
7. 78.5 % of the respondents agreed with the statement. 11.4 % were neutral and the statement was disagreed by 10.1 %. Most of the respondents believed this statement is true because the stability of the political structure depends on the participation of every citizen from every ethnic group present in the state.
8. 81.2 % of the respondents agreed with the statement. 8.7 % were neutral and the statement was disagreed by 10 %. Most believe in the fact that ethnic societies will live peacefully when conflicts between them are minimized and it is possible when discrimination is diminished.
9. 65.1 % of the respondents agreed with the statement. 20.1 % were neutral and 18.8 % disagreed with the statement. Many respondents agreed because clashes in the ideologies of the ethnic groups create issues in the political structure. But some respondents say that it is not the difference in ideologies that creates political instability instead it is the ignorance of different ideologies which weakens the system.
10. 69.8 % of the respondents agreed with the statement. 20.1 % were neutral and 10 % disagreed with the statement. Most respondents agree to this as we see that the distinction between different ethnic groups and their degree of involvement in politics. Dominant ethnic groups show more participation due to more power in the political structure. But in the view of some respondents, not many ethnic groups are politically active or engage in ethnic conflicts.

## **Conclusion**

Different inter-ethnic groups' conflicts destabilize the political system and undermine the foundation of a state. The tribal conflict in areas like Punjab intensifies conflicts between Punjabi, Saraiki and other ethnic groups which hampers the development in Punjab. The successive governments have not taken this issue seriously and did not address the real grievances of different ethnic groups. Rarely, the situation is handled by the policy makers by controlling violent activities and minimizing conflict. Therefore our hypothesis regarding the control of ethnic conflict is right in which government should take part to control ethnic conflict in society by promoting the concept of equality, social justice and harmony. In short, ethnic democracy should be present in a governmental system which links the ethnic groups to their democratic and political rights. All the ethnic groups have the freedom to engage in the political process.

## **Recommendation**

1. Government should take strict actions against those elements that are creating ethnic conflicts among general population to get their vested interests.
2. Government should stabilize law and order situation in Punjab.
3. Political parties should not be involved in activities which can create religious or ethnic conflict factors in state.
4. There should be proper policies to address the grievances of deprived group to diffuse ethnic problems in state.
5. Political parties should not promote the culture of favoritism for a specific ethnic group.

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