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FKIP UNS

Civic Education in Pakistan: Understanding Demography, Culture, Education, Society, and State

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Outline of the Presentation

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Pakistan

- Pakistan's cultural identity emerges from its strategic location at the nexus of South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East
- Sharing borders with India, China, Afghanistan, Iran
- Area: 881,913 sq km
- Population: 250 million
- Pakistan's geography connects South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East.



The Role of Civic Education in Pakistan

Civic education is the cornerstone of a democratic society, teaching citizens their rights, duties, and values to foster meaningful engagement. In Pakistan, it transcends academics to become a political and ideological tool. This field is uniquely shaped by the nation's complex history, its strong religious identity, and its diverse demographic landscape. Understanding these forces is crucial to appreciating how civic awareness is cultivated and expressed within the country.

Youthful and Diverse Nation

- Population of 242 million, making it the 5th largest globally.
- A significant youth cohort with 64% of the population under 30.
- The national literacy rate is approximately 62.3% for the population.
- Low youth voter turnout, with only 38% participation in 2018.
- Gender gaps in education negatively impact female civic engagement.
- Rural youth often depend on kinship networks instead of formal channels.



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Culture and the Civic Narrative

A Multi-Ethnic Nation

- Pakistan is a blend of many cultures.
- Major ethnic groups include Punjabi, Pashtun, and Sindhi.
- This diversity shapes a unique national identity.

Impact on Civic Education

- Education often emphasizes unity over celebrating diversity.
- Regional and minority histories are frequently underrepresented.
- Language differences can create civic divides among citizens.

Inequal Education System



Public Schools

- Follow a state-designed curriculum.
- Emphasize ideology and rote learning methods.
- Limited focus on critical civic engagement.



Private Schools

- Utilize international syllabi like Cambridge/IB.
- Incorporate stronger civic and global elements.
- Create a divide in civic awareness.



Madrasas

- Prioritize religious instruction over secular subjects.
- Offer minimal civic or constitutional education.
- Contribute to varied levels of civic knowledge.

Society: Class, Gender, and Civic Participation

- Social structure is rooted in class, kinship (biradari), and patriarchy.
- A high poverty rate of 34% creates significant civic barriers.
- Patriarchal norms restrict women's civic agency and public participation.
- Class and biradari politics often control access to local power structures.
- Social trust is low, with few people trusting government institutions.
- Religious intolerance can marginalize minorities from full civic engagement.



1947–1971 — Nation-Building and Islamic Identity

- After independence, civic education aimed to create unity among diverse ethnic and linguistic groups.
- Curriculum emphasized patriotism, Islamic values, and loyalty to the state.
- The Objective Resolution (1949) introduced Islamic principles into the constitutional framework.
- Civic textbooks promoted “*One Nation–One Language–One Religion*” ideology (Urdu, Islam, and Pakistani nationalism).
- Focus was on *nation-building* rather than *critical citizenship*.
- Limited regional and cultural representation in educational content.

1977–1988 — Islamization under General Zia-ul-Haq

- Civic education shifted toward Islamization of society and state.
- Introduction of compulsory Islamiat and Pakistan Studies at all education levels.
- Textbooks rewritten to emphasize obedience, moral duty, and religious identity over democracy or critical inquiry.
- Civic ideals framed through moral conduct and religious discipline, not constitutional rights.
- Marginalization of religious minorities and regional identities in civic content.
- Promotion of an *ideological citizen* — loyal, obedient, and devout — rather than an *active democratic participant*.

2001–2008 — Musharraf's “Enlightened Moderation” Era

- Government policy under General Pervez Musharraf encouraged moderation and global engagement.
- Launch of Education Sector Reforms (ESR) and National Education Policy 2002.
- Attempted to modernize curricula by adding human rights, peace education, and critical thinking.
- Collaboration with UNESCO, British Council, and civil society organizations for civic awareness projects.
- Partial shift toward inclusive civic identity — tolerance, diversity, and participation.
- Implementation remained limited due to political instability and resistance from conservative institutions.

2009–Present

Curriculum Reforms and the Single National Curriculum (SNC)

- National Education Policy (2009) emphasized *citizenship, social cohesion, and critical thinking*.
- Introduction of Single National Curriculum (SNC, 2020–2023) aimed to unify public, private, and madrasa systems.
- SNC integrates Islamic content and national themes across all subjects, including civic education.
- Critics argue it reinforces centralized ideological control rather than pluralism (Nayyar & Salim, 2021).
- Civic education now faces the challenge of balancing national identity with diversity and democracy.
- Ongoing debate: Should civic education promote unity or celebrate diversity?

The State and Governance: A Federal Parliamentary Democracy

The Executive Branch

Led by the Prime Minister, this branch is responsible for implementing laws and running the state.

The Legislative Branch

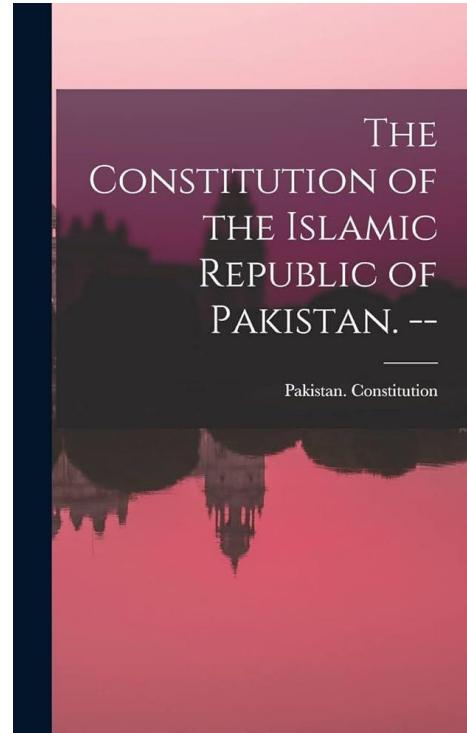
This branch, known as Parliament, is responsible for making laws and representing the will of the people.

The Judicial Branch

Headed by the Supreme Court, this branch interprets the Constitution and ensures justice is administered fairly.

The Constitution of Pakistan (1973): The Supreme Law

The 1973 Constitution serves as the supreme law of the land in Pakistan, establishing the framework for the state. It is a comprehensive document with over 280 articles that define the country as an Islamic Republic and lay out a federal parliamentary system. Key features include the guarantee of fundamental rights for all citizens (Articles 8–28), guiding principles of state policy, and the crucial provision for an independent judiciary to uphold the rule of law.



The Election System of Pakistan

- General elections for national and provincial assemblies are held every five years.
- The system is First-Past-the-Post, where the highest-voted candidate wins.
- All registered citizens aged 18 and above are eligible to vote.
- The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) is an independent body supervising elections.
- 60 seats are reserved for women in the National Assembly for representation.
- 10 seats are reserved for non-Muslim minorities to protect their political rights.

Parliamentary System



The National Assembly

The Lower House, with 336 members serving five-year terms, elects the Prime Minister.



The Senate & President

The Upper House ensures provincial representation, while the President serves as ceremonial Head of State.

Interconnected Fabric of Civic Education

Civic education in Pakistan is a multifaceted field shaped by its youthful population, diverse culture, and fragmented education system. Social hierarchies of class and gender deeply influence citizen engagement and access to power. These elements are intertwined with the formal structures of the state, including its constitution, governance, and electoral processes. Fostering a more inclusive and participatory democracy requires navigating these complex, interconnected challenges to empower all citizens with the knowledge and agency they deserve.

Voter Turnout Trends in Pakistan (2002–2024)

Election Year	Voter Turnout (%)	Context
2002	41.8	Post-military rule (Musharraf era)
2008	44.5	Return to democracy
2013	55.0	High youth mobilization & media influence
2018	51.7	Digital engagement, yet trust decline
2024 (proj.)	~49–50	Decline due to polarization and disillusionment

- Rural–urban and gender gaps persist: Men 55%, Women 45% turnout (2018).
- Youth (18–29 years) form 44% of registered voters, yet remain underrepresented in formal politics.

Civic Literacy and Trust in Institutions

- **Gallup Pakistan (2023)** – Key Civic Indicators:
 - 67% of Pakistanis identify democracy as the best system of government.
 - Only 38% believe their vote can change outcomes.
 - 46% express low or no trust in parliament.
- **PILDAT Youth Survey (2022)** findings:
 - 71% of respondents unaware of local government structure.
 - 64% unable to name their elected representative.
 - Youth who received civic education showed 30–40% higher political knowledge and double the rate of volunteering.
- Indicates a positive but uneven relationship between civic education and citizen behavior.

Final Reflection

Civic education is not just about knowing our rights, it's about living our responsibilities to build a just and democratic structure.

Recommended Readings

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Thank you

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