

TOPIC:

THE IMPACT OF DYNASTIC POLITICS ON DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT IN PAKISTAN

Abstract:

Dynastic politics, where political power stays within families across generations, has played a major role in shaping the political system of Pakistan. This research article discusses how this family-based politics system affects Democratic development of country. It focuses on the impact of dynastic leadership on politics fairness, leadership quality, governance, participation of ordinary people, and institutional strength. Using data, surveys, expert views, and case studies, this article shows how dynastic politics limits new politics talents, weakens political accountability, and slows democratic progress. The article also included practical suggestions to reduce the negative effects of dynastic politics and promote a stronger democratic system.

Introduction:

Democracy is a system of government where people choose their leaders through free and fair elections. A strong democracy gives equal chances to everyone to participate, whether they belong to a famous family or not. However, in Pakistan, political leadership often remains in the hands of few influential families. These families pass down political power from one generation to the next, much like a family business. This trend is known as dynastic politics.

In Pakistan, many well-known families such as the Bhutto's, Sharifs, and Chaudhry's have controlled politics for decades. This system limits political competition and prevents new, talented individuals from entering politics. Political parties often choose leaders based on their family name rather than their abilities or ideas. As a result, democracy suffers because voters have fewer real choices, and decision-making becomes centered on protecting family interests rather than serving the nation.

This article explores how dynastic politics affects democratic development in Pakistan. It also highlights how to create a more fair and equal political system where leadership is based on merit rather than lineage.

Literature Review:

Many scholars and institutions have studied the effects of dynastic politics, both globally and in Pakistan. In their research, **Dal Bo, Dal Bo, and Snyder (2009)** show that political

dynasties are common in many countries, especially in developing democracies. They found that once someone from a family enters politics, it becomes easier for their relatives to follow the same path, often without any competition.

Cheema, Javid, and Naseer (2013) focused on Punjab and revealed that dynastic political and **(2013)** focused on Punjab and revealed that dynastic politics is deeply rooted in rural areas where powerful landlord use their influence and resources to win elections repeatedly. These families often have a strong presence in both national and local governments.

According to the **Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and transparency (PILDAT)**, most political parties in Pakistan don't practice internal democracy. Party positions are usually handed over to relatives of current leaders. This weakens transparency and blocks new candidates from rising.

Shafqat (1998) also emphasized that Pakistan's bureaucracy and political leadership are heavily influenced by families. This results in poor governance because positions are not given based on performance or skills.

Gallup Pakistan conducted a survey in **2020** which revealed that **62%** of Pakistanis think dynastic politics harm the country. People believe the system encourages corruption and reduces public trust in political institutions.

These studies prove that dynastic politics is a barrier to democratic development, not only because it reduces government efficiency and public trust.

Results and Discussion:

The effects of dynastic politics on Pakistan democracy are serious and long-lasting. Below are the key problems caused by this system:

1.lack of Political Competition:

Democracy needs fair competition where everyone has the same chance to become a leader. But in dynastic politics, people from famous families have an advantage. They get more media attention, more money, and more support, even if they are not qualified. This discourages talented individuals from participating in politics.

2.Weak Internal Party Democracy:

Most political parties in Pakistan are controlled by families. For example: the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) is led by the Bhutto family, and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) is led by the Sharif family, i

n both parties, leadership is passed from one family member to another. This means party members have little say in decision-making, and merit is often ignored.

3- Power Governance and corruptions:

Many dynastic leaders enter politics because of their family name, not because of their ability to govern. They may not have the right experience or education. This results in poor decision-making and weak public service delivery. Also, when families stay in power too long, Corruptions increases because they use their influence to protect each other.

4- Limited Youth and women Participation:

Young people and women face extra challenges in joining politics, especially if they do not belong to a political family. The system does not support new leaders or provide equal opportunities. This reduces diversity in politics and keeps fresh ideas out of the political system.

5- Public Disappointment and Low voter Turn out

When voters see the same families in power again and again, they feel hopeless. Many people believe their vote does not matter because the outcome is already decided. This leads to lower voter turnout and weakens the democratic process.

6- Institutional Weakness

Institutions like the Elections Commission, Parliament, and local governments often become weak under dynastic rule. Instead of being independent and fair, they are controlled by powerful families to protect their interests. This damages the foundation of democracy.

Facts and Figures: -

In the elections, **56%** of National Assembly members belong to political families (**PILDAT 2019**).

Over **200** candidates in **2018** were directly related to former politicians (**Election Commissions of Pakistan, 2018**)

Gallup Pakistan (**2020**) survey shows **62%** of people think dynastic politics is harmful.

More than **70%** of political parties do not conduct fair internal elections (**PILDAT**)

Case Studies:

The Bhutto Family – Pakistan People’s Party (PPP):

The Bhutto's are one of the most powerful political families in Pakistan. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was the founder of PPP. After his execution, his daughter Benazir Bhutto became a leader. After her assassination, her son Bilawal Bhutto Zardari took over. Despite being young and inexperienced, Bilawal was given control of the party because of his family name.

The Sharif Family-Pakistan Muslim League (N):

Nawaz Sharif served as Prime Minister multiple times. His younger brother Shahbaz Sharif and niece Maryam Nawaz also holds top positions in PML-N. The family controls most party decisions, and leadership stays within the family.

The Chaudhry Family-Gujrat Politics:

The Chaudhry family has remained active in politics for decades. They switch alliances and parties to stay in power. Their influence in Gujrat remains strong, and they often win elections based on family reputation. These examples show that leadership in Pakistan often depend more on family background than on ability or vision.

Conclusions and Final Recommendations:

Dynastic politics is one of the biggest challenges to democratic development in Pakistan. It creates a system where only a few families have power, blocking fresh ideas, discouraging new leaders and weakening institutions. For Pakistan to become a strong democracy, it must take action to reduce the hold of political families.

Recommendations:

- **Promote Internal Democracy in political parties**

Laws should require all political parties to hold regular and fair elections. Party leaders should be chosen based on performance and merit, not family background.

- **Educate Voters**

Voters need to understand the importance of choosing candidates based on their vision and plans, not their family name. Awareness campaigns and civic education should be promoted.

- **Limit Family Influence:**

The Election Commission should monitor and controls how many relatives of politicians can contest elections at the same time. This will stop one family from taking over multiple positions.

- **Support Youth and Women in Politics**

The government and civil society should provide training, financial support, and opportunities for young people and women to join politics. Special seats should be given to those from non-political backgrounds.

- **Media and Civil Society Role:**

The media must highlight the dangers of dynastic politics and promote honest, capable leaders. Civil society organizations should conduct research and campaigns to encourage fair political practices.

- **Judicial Oversight and Transparency:**

Courts and watchdog institutions should keep a check on political appointments and decisions. Any favoritism or corruption should be punished quickly and fairly.

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