

# The Causal Relationship Between Relative Deprivation and Voting Behavior and Political Activism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

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## Abstract

*This study examines how relative hardship affects voting and participating in politics in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has no tangible proof linking these elements. However, previous study evidence suggests a correlation. The research investigation analyzes regional survey responses to fill this gap. The statistical investigation included a face-to-face survey with 384 randomly chosen Pakistanis. Respondents were given questions about their voting and political participation and estimated relative deprivation with a standardized scale. The research investigation found that relative hardship affects Pakistani voting and political engagement. Participation in politics correlated more with relative disadvantage than voting. The research additionally showed that gender, residence, and household income did not significantly influence respondents' views. However, age and level of education strongly influenced participants' factor observations. The research presented here shows that relative deprivation strongly influences Pakistani political behavior in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Thus, tackling this problem may increase political engagement and voter knowledge in the region in question.*



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## Introduction

Van Deth (2014) called political involvement 'the elixir of life of democracy'. Community commitment and participation in politics underpin democracy

functioning and effectiveness. Political researchers have long been worried about it. Hay (2007) claimed that democracy's status depends on the active participation of the general public, and experts are now convinced that this involvement is steadily changing but not worsening. In readings about political participation, prominent scholars have also emphasized political involvement, voting behavior, and the conventional methods of mass engagement with political institutions like political parties and trade unions. Political engagement allows citizens' interests to influence policymaking. Edmund Burke believed elected councils were expected to interpret voters' advantages in debates and discussions as well as parliament's voting policies. Higher unemployment has become the nation's financial disaster. Current research suggests that jobless people feel disappointed and less willing to volunteer in political activities (Feather, 1989; Strauss, 2008). Though some jobless people are wealthier, they prefer being unemployed to poor work chances (Dunn et al., 2014). Even though jobless people tend to be extra 'biographically available' (McAdam, 1986) and less involved in any occupation, they are more active in politics than employed people.

However, it is unclear whether and to what extent unemployed people feel pain from their reduced participation in communal welfare compared to employed people. During financial crises, people may feel more apprehensive and work harder to keep their jobs (Lim & Laurence, 2015). This is primarily true for people in physical and labor-intensive industries. Therefore, the researcher expected to see discrepancies in social action through communal classes or clubs. Researchers have also shown that earnings affect political engagement (Brady et al., 1995; Verba, 1995). The researcher wanted to study class-based differences in mass engagement with politics (Grasso, 2018). The researcher also intended to understand political involvement differences by education level. Pakistani society has historically seen education as a critical source of practical involvement in politics (Grasso, 2013).

### **Relative Deprivation Theory**

The relative deprivation theory interprets social change and movements as masses acting on their behalf to achieve prospects, status, reputation, or prosperity that others have achieved and which they believe they must have (Abrams & Grant, 2012). Many researchers believe this idea clarifies the reason specific individuals take an active role in social events or promote societal change. This interpretation holds that women join feminist movements to acquire some of what men enjoy. Some experts said this hypothesis does not explain why specific individuals, such as animal rights groups, pursue such endeavors that do not seem to benefit them directly.

In addition, the logic of relative deprivation is the belief that one will feel disadvantaged or deprived of something based on comparison with others. The prominent sociologist Samuel Stouffer advanced this hypothesis whereas pursuing social psychology through the Second World War. Relative deprivation may emphasize the unique understanding of dissatisfaction when underprivileged of something they consider authorized, but also the person's unprejudiced quantity complex.

However, Political Science uses relative deprivation to describe an emotional state or relative economic, social, or political deprivation (Bayertz, 1999, p. 144). This word is synonymous with poverty and social marginalization. Relative deprivation costs conduct and tactics, including pressure, political views, and collective action. Researchers in many Political and Social science fields should also consider it (Walker & Smith, 2001).

Political scientists have linked "Relative Deprivation" to social status, community events, and a shift, which can lead to potentially hazardous circumstances, including political ferocity, exhibiting, terrorist exertion, and international conflict, as well as heinous crimes. Some social movement academics say their intensification involves publicizing the grievances of those who feel disadvantaged by entitlement standards (Rose, 1982). Deviants act when their wages fall short (Merton, 1938). Recent alternatives to relative deprivation include relative pleasure.

Using Emile Durkheim's "Concept of Anomie," Robert K. Merton was one of the foremost researchers to employ the term relative deprivation to comprehend social deviation or nonconformity.

To describe relative deprivation, eminent scholar Walter Runciman noted that there are four criteria for comprehending it (Runciman, 1966) and called the object X according to person A:

- The person A does not possess X.
- Individual A identifies others with X.
- Individual A wants X.
- A thinks X is achievable.

He differentiates egoistic and paternalistic relative deprivation. Using aggressive and unfavourable social standing whenever corresponding with other members of a social group who hold a more beneficial or valuable situation, particularly financially, of the social network of which A is a member, and using unfavorable contrast to other social clusters to whom A is not a member, causes selfish RD.

Self-centered relative deprivation is common in employees who believe they should be promoted faster. This may cause them to act to improve their social status but not affect others. When it comes to racial discrimination, fraternalistic tendencies are more likely to lead to social movements like the 1960s American Civil Rights Movement. Urbanska and Guimond (2018) also found a link between paternalistic class deprivation and hardship and far-right voting. More thrilling nationalism drives far-right politics on the left-right band than the usual political right (Baker, 2016; Aubrey, 2004). An organicist world picture continues nativist philosophies and authoritarian and totalitarian tendencies (Hilliard & Keith, 1999, p. 43/Camus & Lebourg, 2017, p. 21).

People without financial resources, justice, social position, or pride are respected and treasured in the broader social order, according to the Deprivation Theory. Then, the masses participate in social movements to resolve their issues. This is a starting point for understanding why some people in society participate in social events and movements. The concept that specific individuals take part in social activities and act on their assessments of what they think they have compared to what other individuals within society have is much more critical. The person's worst situation is absolute deprivation. Contrary to popular belief, the feeling of deprivation symbolizes what individuals believe they ought to have when compared with others and their history or promising future. Human wishes for better conditions may give rise to revolts, rebellions, and revolutions. Deprivation feelings are relative because they stem from non-universal social standards. These also change by moment and region. Relative deprivation differs from absolute poverty, which impacts all poor people. This circumstance indicates a crucial inference and assumption: the degree of deprivation remains the same, but the social structure keeps operating, and specific individuals are better off, especially monetarily.

This helps you grasp an example. In 1905, vehicles were luxury items. Thus, a person without sufficient funds to purchase it would not consider themselves deprived, disadvantaged, or unprivileged. Today, while cars are standard in most social classes if a person cannot afford a car, he is more likely to feel poor, less fortunate, and disadvantaged. Another example is that smartphones are common across society as a whole, and many people feel they deserve one. It may also be time-based, with people who gain privileges or riches followed by a reversal. Kendall (2005) claimed that such events are also unmet growing expectations (530). In politics, those who had voting rights may feel a lack of them and insufficiency compared to those who never had them. Another form of relative deprivation is relative poverty. Below a given level is relative poverty. Political parties with far-right views exploit relative deprivation to explain their support

base. According to the relative deprivation theory, individuals promote far-right political parties due to frustrations from relative deprivation corresponding to one's past and societal position, group, or class (Rydgren, 2007, p. 247).

### **Voting Behaviour**

In constitutional and representative politics, voting behavior determines political products the most. Political Science collected publications have extensively analyzed it. It is also considered a community event because it blends various options into a mutually beneficial democratic result. However, voting behavior analysis emphasizes options about whether to vote, whom to vote for, and how to vote. Voters want to know if voting is worth it based on the supposed expenses, earnings, and their voting methods. Voters usually evaluate contestants based on their preferences before casting their votes. Socioeconomic factors, voters' approaches, contestants' policies, election and polling institutes, and other entities in the political system or community all affect this judgment. The public is also interested in deciding whether or not to vote openly by choosing their most favored candidate or intentionally and deliberately by choosing a candidate more likely to be successful in the election in order to avoid wasting their vote.

However, voting behavior study is a significant topic of Political Science, and scholars use different methodologies to understand how emotions affect voting. Voting behavior is complex and affects representation in politics and administration formation in representational and democratic environments. It specifies political engagement and voter turnout and might indicate the significant depiction based on how well the political parties' purported stance reflects the proper policy positions.

### **Political Activism or Participation**

Political activism must be considered in light of varied cultural situations. In fact, political Activism or involvement in Western states refers to ordinary people with plans and actions that might influence government decisions and policies (Bennett & Bennett, 1986). Political participation involves (1) paying attention, (2) voting for candidates, and (3) donating to campaigns for office (Kenski & Stroud, 2006; Brady et al., 1995).

From a demographic perspective, Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) found that income, education, and massge predict political activism and engagement. Brady, Verba, and Schlozman (1995) identified three critical factors for political activism: time, money, and civic skills.

Their analysis calls for institutional policymaking and decision-making to take part in political activities and occurrences. However, home and school experiences can influence institutional involvement goals and movements (Brady et al., 1995). Negative and positive political and election information about campaigns also affects mass political activism and involvement (Hyland, 1995). It shows how mass media affects political Activism and engagement. However, voting for political campaigns affects the masses' political dominance (Finkel, 1985).

Politics and equality in society require citizen participation. It is hard to imagine a continuous and lasting democracy on a national level without the people's right to vote for their political leaders and participate in political matters without constraints. Through political Activism, Activism and engagement can impact who represents them in policymaking, decision-making, and future governance. In a democracy, politically active people share their preferences and needs. It forces representatives to address people's needs and interests.

### **Hypotheses**

To understand Pakistan's socio-political development and social changes, this research needed the public's opinion about the role of relative deprivation in political activism. We tested several hypotheses to understand political and social evolution and the predictors' ability to predict the criterion variable. The researcher also evaluated control variables that helped explain the public's reactions to socio-political development indicators. Cronbach's alpha and PCA assessed the instrument's validity.

The researcher formulated the following hypothesis to analyze predictor-criterion relationships:

*H<sub>1</sub>: A considerable relationship exists between relative deprivation and Pakistan's criteria (political activism and voting behavior).*

The researcher also constructed the null hypothesis to determine if predictors significantly predicted criterion variable change:

*H<sub>2</sub>: Relative Deprivation meaningfully predicts Pakistani political activism and voting behavior.*

To examine how socio-demographic factors affect public opinion on research variables.

*H<sub>3</sub>-H<sub>7</sub>: Sociodemographic attributes significantly influence respondents' views about the role of relative deprivation in Political Activism and Voting Behaviour.*

## Findings and Discussion

This study examined how relative hardship affects Pakistani political activism and voting. It focused on key primary and secondary findings. Secondary qualitative data was utilized to establish basic social phenomenon concepts. Reviewing a large literature area revealed the study's concepts. In the following stage of the study, 384 individuals completed self-administered questionnaires to provide primary data on the subject under consideration. Below are the correlation analysis's key findings:

### Correlation, Pearson-*r*

**Table: 1 Complete Pearson-*r* Correlation Outcomes**

		<b>Voting Behavior</b>	<b>Political Participation</b>
Relative Deprivation (Independent Variable)	<i>r</i>	-0.928	-0.958
	<i>p</i>	0.000**	0.000**

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

1. Voting Behaviour is highly and negatively correlated with relative deprivation ( $r = -0.928$ ;  $p < .001$ ).
2. The Predictor (Relative Deprivation) substantially negative and significantly impacts Voting Behaviour ( $r = -0.958$ ;  $p < .001$ ).
3. This study found that Political Participation ( $r$ -value = 0.954) and Voting Behaviour ( $r$ -value = 0.928) have a significant correlation with Relative Deprivation at the second level, based on a carefully selected sample from Pakistan.

**Multiple Regressions (dependent variable; Socio-Political Development)**

The multiple regression study examined how relative deprivation affects activism in politics and voting patterns in Pakistan.

The table below shows the significant multiple regression results for the cause-and-effect hypothesis:

**Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis Results**

Models		
<b>Model 1 (Dependent Variable: Voting Behavior)</b>	R2 = 0.862; 86.2 % or 86 % Change	0.000**
<b>Model 2 (Dependent Variable: Political Participation)</b>	R2 = 0.917; 91.7 % or 92 % Change	0.000**

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

1. The Relative Deprivation model predicted 86% of Voting Behaviour change.
2. The predictor variable, Relative Deprivation, significantly impacted Voting Behaviour and expected change, according to carefully selected research participants from Pakistan.
3. An estimated 92% of the variance in involvement in politics is due to relative deprivation.
4. Relative Deprivation has a significant impact on participation in politics and expects change, according to study results from carefully selected Pakistani respondents.

**Results of the Mean Differences**

**Table 3: Difference in means of the sociodemographic attributes of respondents.**

	Gender	Age	Residence	Education		Ethnicity



					<b>Family Income</b>	
Relative Deprivation	0.573	<b>0.002**</b>	0.950	<b>0.004**</b>	0.426	<b>0.000**</b>
Voting Behaviour	0.629	<b>0.001**</b>	0.850	<b>0.004**</b>	0.797	<b>0.001**</b>
Political Participation	0.880	<b>0.002**</b>	0.878	<b>0.010**</b>	0.521	<b>0.001**</b>

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

1. There was no significant impact of gender on participants' opinions towards relative deprivation, voting behavior, and political participation.
2. Residence did not significantly affect individuals' sentiments towards Relative Deprivation, Voting Behaviour, or Political Participation.
3. The study found no significant impact of family income on participants' attitudes regarding role of RD in active political participation and voting behavior.
4. Age had a significant impact on participants' opinions regarding the role of RD in active political participation and voting behavior.
5. Education had a significant impact on participants' attitudes regarding the role of RD in active political participation and voting behavior.
6. Ethnicity significantly influenced participants' opinions about relative deprivation, voting behavior, and political participation.
7. Demographic characteristics had varied effects on respondents' beliefs on the importance of Relative Deprivation in Voting Behaviour and Political Participation.

## **Discussion**

Relative Deprivation (RD) is a socio-psychological term that compares an individual's situation to that of their comparison grouping. It influences political conduct and engagement. This concept is popular in political science, especially in the fields of voting behavior and engagement with political research. In this essay, we will examine how relative deprivation affects Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) residents' voting and political engagement. Relative deprivation is the sensation of injustice or discontent people have when comparing their condition to that of those they view as more fortunate (Merton, 1938). Political engagement and voting behavior are affected by relative disadvantage. This study discusses relative impoverishment and political conduct in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

***Define relative deprivation:*** People sense injustice if they contrast their situation with people they view to be more appropriately situated (Mackie, 2016). A person's perceived view of their economic and social standing in contrast to others. People or organizations may feel disadvantaged concerning their comparison group of people, such as relatives, close companions, or society.

***Relations between relative poverty and voting:*** Voter turnout is strongly linked to the degree of deprivation. Individuals who consider themselves economically as well as socially underprivileged may engage in political processes to seek redress and improve their situation (Hix & Høyland, 2017). In KP, a province plagued by destitution, instability in government, and ethnic strife, sense that extreme poverty can motivate people to vote and become involved in politics. RD positively correlates with voting turnout in empirical studies. Gurr (1975) concluded that deprivation increased political participation, including voting. Echterhoff, Gartzia, and Mendez (2017) found that Spanish people with relative disadvantage were more inclined to participate in rallies for political causes and file petitions. In KP, where a large segment of the people has been economically and socially marginalized, relative deprivation can strongly influence the way people vote. The government of the province has struggled to address unemployment, destitution, and fundamental amenities, leaving residents feeling deprived. Deprivation might motivate people to vote for someone that they think could enhance their situation.

***Political Participation and Relative Deprivation:*** Organizing gatherings, forming political parties, and voting are all forms of political participation. RD encourages people to participate in politics to get their issues addressed. Sawaie (2015) found that Pakistanis who felt more deprivation seemed more inclined to participate in collective political movements. Deprivation can encourage people to get involved in politics and pursue change, according to one study. Perceptions

of relative deprivation may encourage engagement with politics in KP, where ethnic and socioeconomic differences are prevalent.

***Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Relative Deprivation and Participation in Politics:*** Among Pakistan's four provinces, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is noted for its various racial and cultural groups, and violent political past (Farooq, 2016). Citizens of this region live in relative poverty due to years of political unpredictability, financial inequalities, and violence (Khan, 2014). Due to continued war-torn region this region has been suffering from less development in socioeconomic fields. Studies reveal that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa residents feel relative impoverishment, which affects their political attitudes (Jaffer, 2008). Comparative deprivation influences political engagement in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa through protest voting. Khan (2014) revealed that impoverished people were more likely to protest, vote, and support fringe political groups and candidates. The conviction that the current political system has failed to solve their problems and improve their living conditions drives this conduct. Thus, they vote for alternatives to show their unhappiness (Khan, 2014).

Relative poverty also affects Khyber Pakhtunkhwa voter turnout. Khwaja and Mian (2019) discovered that people who felt more deprived seemed less inclined to vote. Due to the notion of believing their decision to vote will have no impact on their condition, they are unmotivated to participate in politics. Besides voting, relative disadvantage affects Khyber Pakhtunkhwa youth involvement in politics and activity. Jaffer (2008) found that young people who sensed relative deprivation seemed far more inclined to join social and political activities. Their ambition to question the current norm and improve society drives this.

Pakistan's relative deficiency in voting and political engagement was this article's primary focus. Reviewing the gathered works demonstrated that the people's political awareness was expanding, influencing their voting behavior. For numerous reasons, the people's understanding of politics, a form of activism and engagement, is expanding. The researcher found that relative disadvantage affects voting and political involvement and participation. The meticulously chosen sample of Pakistani voters received a closed-ended and tailored survey questionnaire.

The first hypothesis examined the relationship between Relative Deprivation on Voting Behaviour and participation in politics in Pakistan. Variables were firmly, negatively correlated. A study found that Pakistanis believe relative disadvantage strongly and significantly affects their voting habits and involvement in politics. It also showed a negative relationship. When relative deprivation rises, mass voting behavior declines because the disadvantaged are unable to feel favorably

regarding their elected representatives and candidates. The findings confirmed the researchers' earlier conclusions.

Based on the conservatively nominated sample from Pakistan, regression analysis showed that relative impoverishment predicted 86% of voting behavior variance. Regression research showed that relative deprivation might predict over 92% of political involvement in Pakistan based on the attitudes of the conservatively selected sample. It indicated that Relative Deprivation varied Political Participation more than Voting Behaviour, although both were important. The findings confirmed the researchers' earlier conclusions.

This study also stated that demographic variables, including gender, place of residence, and household earnings, do not affect the participants' opinions on all variables. However, educational level and age affect participants' attitudes on all variables. After examining the previous research alongside this study's analysis, all factors showed a meaningful relationship. The existing collected papers provided ample evidence that relative disadvantage may shape Pakistani voters' behavior when voting and involvement in politics. Distinguished researchers and essayists have also noted this issue as an essential variable in Voting Behaviour and Political Participation.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, relative disadvantage affects voting and political engagement. Being poor and socially underprivileged can inspire political participation and advancement in society and the economy. The province ought to tackle destitution, joblessness, and the absence of essential facilities to lessen relative deprivation. More could have been done to the public about political involvement and promote an even more inclusive system of government in KP. In the end, relative hardship has a significant impact on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa politics. The region's long tradition of instability in politics, financial inequalities, and bloodshed has caused widespread relative hardship, which affects voting and political activity. The governing body has to tackle the fundamental root causes of extreme poverty and improve Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's economic and social environment to deal with the problem at hand.

## **Conclusion**

The major conclusion after discussing essential facts and then crucial findings:

Pakistani citizens' voting and political Participation have been linked to relative deprivation. Political Participation (-0.958) correlates better than Voting Behaviour (-0.928). Relative Deprivation significantly influences voting and political Participation. Participation in politics (92 per cent change) is more affected by relative deprivation than how people vote (86 per cent chance).

Demographics, including gender, place of residence, and household earnings, did not affect participants' perceptions on various issues. However, education, as well as age, could strongly influence participants' observations regarding the factors.

### **Data Availability Statement**

Contact the corresponding author for data supporting this study's conclusions. Data are not published since it could threaten research participants' privacy/consent.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors report no conflicts of interest.

### **Ethics Standards**

Human participants are safe in this study.

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