
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

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POLITICAL AWARENESS AMONG MALE STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY OF UNIVERSITY OF LORALAI

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| ABSTRACT

This study explores the level of political awareness among male students at the University of Loralai, examining the factors that shape their knowledge and participation in civic life. Using a qualitative research design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with sixteen students. The findings reveal significant variation in awareness: some students demonstrated very limited knowledge, while others showed moderate awareness shaped by social media and casual discussions. A smaller group exhibited high awareness, supported by academic exposure and personal interest, leading to active participation in debates, voting, and civic activities.

| KEYWORDS

Political awareness, University of Loralai, Male students, Civic participation, Political socialization theory, Political knowledge, Democratic values, Media influence, Youth political participation

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Abstract:-

This study explores the level of political awareness among male students at the University of Loralai, examining the factors that shape their knowledge and participation in civic life. Using a qualitative research design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with sixteen students. The findings reveal significant variation in awareness: some students demonstrated very limited knowledge, while others showed moderate awareness shaped by social media and casual discussions. A smaller group exhibited high awareness, supported by academic exposure and personal interest, leading to active participation in debates, voting, and civic activities. Education and social media emerged as the strongest influences, while family and community played smaller roles. Lack of interest was identified as the main barrier to awareness and engagement. The study concludes that higher awareness consistently leads to greater participation, and recommends strengthening political education, promoting student engagement, and leveraging social media to foster civic responsibility.

Introduction:-

Political Awareness:

Political Awareness refers to the understanding of Political system, processes, and issues affecting society. It involves being informed about current events, government policies, and the roles of Political institutions and leaders. Political awareness enables individuals to participate actively in civic life, make informed decisions, and engage in discussions about public issues. It includes knowledge of local, national and international politics, as well as an understanding of different ideologies and political movements. Developing political awareness involves staying updated with news, engaging with diverse viewpoints, and critically analyzing political information. Being politically aware helps individuals advocate for their interests, contribution to democratic processes, and address societal challenges effectively (Alkhazalah & Lahiani, 2021).

Political Awareness refers to:-

The ability to read into politicians' agendas by listening to how they are going to make the difference in running government policies. Also, knowing what has been not so good for the country and our constitutional beliefs according to current laws and how they have been handled in the past. Political awareness is a fundamental component of democratic life, shaping how individuals understand, interpret, and engage with political systems, processes, and issues. It encompasses knowledge of local, national, and international politics, awareness of government policies, and recognition of the roles played by political institutions and leaders. As Alkhazalah and Lahiani (2021) note, political awareness enables citizens to participate actively in civic life, make informed decisions, and contribute to addressing societal challenges.

For university students, particularly male students in Loralai, political awareness is not only an academic concern but also a social necessity. It involves the ability to critically evaluate politicians' agendas, understand constitutional principles, and assess how policies have historically impacted society (Rahman & Che Mohd Razali, 2018). Developing such awareness requires exposure to diverse viewpoints, engagement with media, and active participation in discussions on public issues. In the context of Pakistan, where youth represent a significant demographic force, political awareness among students is vital for strengthening democratic values and ensuring responsible citizenship. This study explores the level of awareness among male students at the University of Loralai, the factors influencing its development, and its impact on their civic and political participation. By situating the research within the framework of Political Socialization Theory, the study highlights how family, peers, education, religion, and media collectively shape students' political identities and engagement.

Background of the Study:-

Political awareness is a cornerstone of democratic societies, as it equips individuals with the knowledge and understanding necessary to participate meaningfully in civic and political life. It involves awareness of political systems, government policies, and the roles of institutions and leaders, enabling citizens to make informed decisions and engage in discussions about public issues. Scholars such as Alkhazalah and Lahiani (2021) emphasize that political awareness strengthens democratic processes and helps individuals address societal challenges effectively. In Pakistan, where youth constitute a significant portion of the population, their political awareness is particularly critical. Universities, as centers of learning and socialization, play a vital role in shaping students' political knowledge, values, and participation. Male students at the University of Loralai represent an important segment of this youth population, whose level of political awareness can influence both local and national democratic engagement.

Previous studies highlight that political awareness is shaped by multiple agents of socialization, including family, peers, education, religion, and media (Hyman, 1959; Almond & Verba, 1963). However, factors such as limited access to reliable information, political manipulation, and weak civic culture can hinder the development of awareness (Majumdar, 2022). Understanding these influences is crucial for identifying gaps and opportunities to strengthen youth participation in politics. This study situates itself within the broader discourse on political socialization and democratic development, aiming to explore the level of political awareness among male students at the University of Loralai, the factors that shape it, and its impact on their civic and political participation. By doing so, it contributes to the literature on youth political engagement in Pakistan and provides insights for educators, policymakers, and civil society actors seeking to foster responsible citizenship.

Significance of the study:-

This study is important because it shows how political awareness among male students at the University of Loralai affects their role as citizens. By knowing their rights, duties, and the impact of politics on daily life, students can become more active in civic participation and contribute to strengthening democratic values in Pakistan. It also helps educators, policymakers, and society understand the factors influencing awareness, so they can guide students toward responsible citizenship and better political engagement.

Problem Statement:-

Many male students at the University of Loralai have limited political awareness. They often lack proper knowledge of their rights, duties, and how politics affects daily life. Without this awareness, their civic participation remains weak and they may be influenced by unreliable information or political manipulation. This study aims to find out the level of awareness among male students, the factors that shape it, and how it impacts their political participation.

Research Questions:-

1. What is the level of political awareness among male students at the University of Loralai?
2. What factors influence the development of political awareness among these students?
3. How does political awareness affect male students' participation in political and civic activities?

Limitations of the Study:-

This study is limited to male students at the University of Loralai, so results may not represent all students or other regions of Pakistan. It relies mainly on qualitative responses and available data, which may not capture every perspective. Time and resource constraints also restrict the depth of analysis.

Literature Review:-

Political awareness is widely recognized as a key factor in strengthening democratic societies. It refers to the understanding of political systems, processes, and issues that enable individuals to participate actively in civic life (Alkhalaf & Lahiani, 2021). According to Rahman and Razali (2018), students' ability to critically evaluate politicians' agendas and constitutional principles reflects their level of awareness and engagement. Zaller (1992) defines political awareness as "the extent to which an individual pays attention to politics and understands what he or she has encountered," highlighting its role in shaping informed participation. Similarly, Fairbrother (2003) argues that ignoring political awareness undermines state-building, as societies without informed citizens face instability during crises. Awareness is also influenced by cultural and social factors. Abonu, Ogunlade, and Yunusa (2013) note that political culture directly affects the growth of awareness, while Al Slihat (2014) emphasizes that awareness encompasses both self-perception and understanding of community roles. Kavita (2017) further explains that political awareness involves recognizing rights, duties, and interconnected political events rather than viewing them as isolated incidents. Majumdar (2022) identifies knowledge as the foundation of awareness, stressing that political knowledge shapes voting behavior, promotes democratic values, and enhances participation. Media, both traditional and digital, plays a crucial role in spreading information, though it can also be a source of manipulation.

Political awareness, as conceptualized by Zaller (1992), refers to "the extent to which an individual pays attention to politics and understands what he or she has encountered," reflecting intellectual or cognitive engagement with public affairs through factual information about government and politics that individuals internalize. It operates within the exchange of political information between individuals and various sources of messages in the public sphere, serving as a key determinant of participation and active citizenship. While there is some consensus on its meaning, scholars note significant variation in the cognitive resources and preconditions individuals use when analyzing information and making participation decisions (Zaller, 1992). Awareness, or *Waa* in Arabic, originates from *Waa*, meaning the aggregation of things through conceiving, comprehending, and cherishing them, and thus refers to an individual's perception of self, mental and physical functions, and membership in the community (Al Slihat, 2014, p. 350). Conventionally, awareness is defined as the individual's perception of self and surrounding environment (Al Faitouri, 2020, p. 133). In political terms, awareness means citizens' knowledge of their rights and duties, recognition of political events, and the ability to understand them as interconnected elements of a broader reality rather than isolated incidents (Kavita, 2017, pp. 66–67).

Political awareness is rooted in political knowledge, which provides individuals with an understanding of current events and motivates participation in civic life. Since Aristotle, political consciousness has been viewed as essential for intellectual engagement and democratic development. Knowledge about politics strongly influences voting behavior, promotes democratic values, and enhances participation (Majumdar, 2022). Awareness is acquired through perception, reasoning, and intuition, while mass and social media play a mediating role by spreading accurate information and countering manipulation from political parties. Political awareness is often measured through factual knowledge tests, and political discussion further strengthens awareness by helping individuals gather information and deepen their understanding, thereby reinforcing the link between awareness and participation (Majumdar, 2022).

Political awareness is deeply tied to everyday life, as political activity shapes legislation, education, and social structures, with citizens' present and future conditions of society (Al-Khaza'leh & Lahiani, 2021). It is considered a pillar of the political and social system, and neglecting it weakens state-building, leaving societies vulnerable during crises (Fairbrother, 2003). Awareness itself reflects an individual's understanding, knowledge, and assessment of self and surroundings, growing with personal development and cultural exposure. Thus, the stronger the individual's political culture, the higher their political awareness, which in turn strengthens participation and democratic engagement (Abonu, Ogunlade, & Yunusa, 2013). Finally, the Political Socialization Theory provides a framework for understanding how students develop awareness through agents such as family, peers, education, religion, and media (Hyman, 1959; Almond & Verba, 1963). This theory is particularly relevant for analyzing the factors that influence male students at the University of Loralai.

Literature gap:-

Most studies on political awareness focus on general student populations or international contexts, leaving a gap in understanding how male students in smaller regional universities of Pakistan, such as the University of Loralai, develop and practice political awareness. While theories like political socialization explain the role of family, peers, education, religion, and

media in shaping awareness (Hyman, 1959; Almond & Verba, 1963), little research connects these agents directly to the local socio-political environment of Balochistan.

This lack of localized evidence highlights the need for a study that examines the level of awareness among male students in Loralai, the factors influencing it, and its impact on their civic participation, thereby contributing to both academic literature and practical efforts to strengthen democratic engagement in Pakistan.

Main Argument:-

Political awareness among male students at the University of Loralai is shaped by social, educational, and cultural factors, and directly influences their level of civic participation and democratic engagement.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework and Research Methodology:-

Political Socialization Theory:-

Political socialization means the learning process by which people develop an understanding of their political identities, behavior and opinions. Through different agents of socialization, such as peers, parents, and schools, the lifetime experiences of political socialization play a key role in developing the traits of loyalty and responsible citizenship (Longley, 2024). The theory of Political Socialization was primarily presented by Herbert Hyman, who coined the term and published the foundational text *Political Socialization* in 1959. The theory explains how individuals learn political values, behaviors, and norms from early life through various agents of socialization, such as the family, school, peers, and media. The concept has since been further developed and expanded by numerous scholars, including Pye, Greenstein, Hess, Easton, and Almond Verba's work in 1963. This study is based on Political Socialization Theory, first introduced by Herbert Hyman in 1959 and later expanded by Almond and Verba (1963). The theory explains how individuals learn political values, behaviors, and norms throughout their lives. It highlights the role of agents of socialization such as family, peers, education, religion, media, and community in shaping political awareness.

According to this theory, political learning begins in childhood and continues through adolescence and adulthood, influencing how people understand politics and participate in civic life. For students, especially at the University of Loralai, these agents play a direct role in developing awareness of rights, responsibilities, and democratic values. This framework is relevant to the study because it directly connects the factors influencing awareness, like family background, media exposure, and educational environment, to the level of political awareness among male students, and helps explain how awareness impacts their **civic** participation. Political Socialization Theory explains how individuals develop political knowledge, values, and ideology through lifelong processes beginning in childhood and continuing into adulthood. Politically socialized individuals are more likely to participate actively in civic and political life, and in contexts such as the United States, this often reinforces democratic ideals. The main agents of socialization include family, siblings, peers, education, religion, the state, community, region, and various forms of mass media, print, broadcast, digital, and social media. These agents influence awareness differently across life stages: childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. While the theory highlights the importance of these influences, it has been criticized for sometimes oversimplifying complex social dynamics and underestimating structural inequalities that also shape political engagement.

Research Methodology:-

This study uses a qualitative research design supported by descriptive analysis. The population consists of male students enrolled at the University of Loralai. A purposive sampling method is applied to select participants who can provide relevant insights into political awareness. Data is collected through semi-structured questionnaires and interviews focusing on students' knowledge of politics, influencing factors, and participation in civic activities. In total, 16 male students were interviewed to gather diverse perspectives. Responses are analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes related to awareness levels and influencing agents such as family, peers, education, religion, and media. The study is guided by Political Socialization Theory, which provides a framework for interpreting how social and cultural factors shape students' political knowledge and participation.

Data Analysis/Results:-

Level of Political Awareness:-

The interviews reveal that the level of political awareness among male students at the University of Loralai varies widely. For example, Salar Ahmed admitted his awareness is very limited, mostly based on casual gossip, and he has little knowledge of political institutions. Similarly, Muhammad Ullah, Amin Ullah, and Azar Mehmood showed low awareness, avoiding politics due to lack of interest. In contrast, Muhammad Umar (Political Science student) rated his awareness at 70–80%, explaining that his academic background and practical involvement keep him informed. Likewise, Afzal Khan, Kaleem Ullah, and Shahroz Khan demonstrated high awareness, showing strong interest, critical thinking, and active participation in debates and civic activities. A third respondent (unnamed) emphasized awareness as a basic need for society and spoke against corruption, but admitted weak knowledge of institutions. Most others, including Sadiq Khan, Ajmal Khan, Sohail Amin, Saleem Ullah, Asmat

Khan, Rahat Khan, and Habib Khan, displayed moderate awareness, following politics casually, knowing basic rights, but not deeply engaged.

Factors Influencing Awareness:-

The factors influencing awareness also differ. Education plays a strong role for students like Muhammad Umar, Afzal Khan, Kaleem Ullah, and Shahroz Khan, who actively study politics and gain knowledge through teachers and peers. Social media is the main source for Salar Ahmed, the unnamed respondent, Sadiq Khan, Sohail Amin, Saleem Ullah, and Rahat Khan, who rely on platforms like YouTube or digital networks for information. Family influence is minimal overall, though Salar Ahmed was once forced by his parents to vote. Community and peers shape casual awareness for Ajmal Khan, Asmat Khan, and Habib Khan, while personal interest drives higher awareness among Afzal Khan, Kaleem Ullah, and Shahroz Khan, who actively seek political knowledge.

Effect of Awareness on Participation:-

When it comes to participation, awareness directly affects involvement. Students with low awareness (Salar Ahmed, Muhammad Ullah, Amin Ullah, and Azar Mehmood) rarely participate, often disengaging due to lack of interest or information. Those with moderate awareness (Sadiq Khan, Ajmal Khan, Sohail Amin, Saleem Ullah, Asmat Khan, Rahat Khan, and Habib Khan) show limited participation, usually restricted to voting or casual involvement. Students with high awareness (Muhammad Umar, Afzal Khan, Kaleem Ullah, Shahroz Khan) are actively engaged in civic and political activities, debates, and voting, seeing politics as a responsibility. The third respondent represents selective participation, he raises his voice socially against corruption but avoids formal politics due to distrust in institutions. In a net shell, the findings show that higher awareness leads to active participation, moderate awareness results in occasional involvement, and low awareness produces disengagement. Selective awareness, shaped by social concerns but weak institutional trust, leads to activism without formal political engagement. This highlights the importance of education, social media, and personal interest in shaping political awareness and participation among male students at the University of Loralai.

Conclusion and Recommendations:-

The study reveals that political awareness among male students at the University of Loralai is uneven, ranging from very low to high levels. Some students show minimal interest and weak knowledge of political institutions, while others demonstrate moderate awareness shaped by casual exposure to social media and community discussions. A smaller group exhibits high awareness, with strong academic grounding, critical thinking, and active involvement in civic and political activities. Overall, education, social media, and personal interest emerge as the strongest influences on awareness, while family and community play smaller roles. Importantly, higher awareness consistently leads to greater participation in political and civic life, whereas lack of interest remains the most significant barrier.

Recommendations:-

- ❖ Universities should integrate practical and localized political content into courses to enhance awareness beyond theory.
- ❖ Safe platforms for debates, discussions, and student forums to encourage active participation.
- ❖ Use digital platforms to spread accurate information and counter misinformation, since most students rely on them.
- ❖ Awareness campaigns should highlight the importance of voting, rights, and duties to motivate disengaged students.
- ❖ Initiatives should target lack of interest by linking politics to everyday student concerns such as education, employment, and community development.

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