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REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-57603

Title: **Student Unions in Pakistan: Historical Ban, Benefits, Challenges, and Their Role in Democratic Participation**

Recommendation:

Accept after minor revision

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality		✓,		
Techn. Quality		✓,		
Clarity	✓,			
Significance	✓,			

Reviewer Name: Abdul Haseeb Mir

Detailed Reviewer's Report

The manuscript titled "**Student Unions in Pakistan: Historical Ban, Benefits, Challenges, and Their Role in Democratic Participation**" explores the evolution, prohibition, and potential revival of student unionization within Pakistan's higher education sector. Utilizing a qualitative approach centered on document analysis, the study frames the historical 1984 ban under General Zia-ul-Haq's military regime not merely as a localized administrative strategy to curb campus violence, but as a systematic denial of basic human needs. This conceptual anchoring is achieved by applying John Burton's Human Needs Theory, arguing that the structural suppression of core needs—specifically identity, recognition, and political participation—alienated the youth demographic, fractured university democratic culture, and inadvertently fostered a more volatile landscape dominated by unregulated, informal campus groups.

The paper's core strength lies in its attempt to bridge theoretical conflict resolution frameworks with contemporary institutional policy analysis in South Asia. By examining the trajectory from constructive mid-century student activism to post-ban institutional decay, the author underscores a critical paradox: the state-mandated prohibition aimed at restoring order ultimately escalated campus instability while stunting the development of future national leadership. Furthermore, the study introduces a comparative dimension by referencing regulated student union frameworks in India, the United Kingdom, and the United States to argue for a safe, transparent, and structured revival within Pakistan.

However, while the thematic framework is compelling, the manuscript requires comprehensive structural, methodological, and analytical development to meet the rigorous standards of a high-impact peer-reviewed journal. The theoretical application remains somewhat repetitive, the comparative analysis

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lacks deep contextual integration, and the methodological justification must be tightened to address inherent biases in secondary data sources.

Suggestions for Improvement

- **Refine the Opening Syntax in the Introduction:** The introduction contains jarring grammatical errors that immediately disrupt the academic narrative. For instance, on page 2, line 36, the fragmented text reading "tudent ghen" must be corrected to seamlessly introduce the discussion on democratic values and political cultivation.
- **Deepen the Application of Human Needs Theory:** While John Burton's Human Needs Theory is highly appropriate for this study, the manuscript currently repeats the exact same explanatory points on page 5 and page 6 (lines 122–131 and lines 136–145). Instead of reiterating that needs are non-negotiable, the author should expand the analysis to illustrate *how* specific historical student movements expressed these psychological and social needs prior to 1984.
- **Resolve the Conceptual Mismatch in the Literature Review:** On page 11, the citation for Sulthana (2025) refers strictly to the "Recognition of trade unions in India: A comparative analysis with the UK and US." Trade unions operate under entirely different legal, labor, and economic frameworks than academic student unions. The author must explicitly clarify this analytical leap or replace this literature with comparative studies explicitly focused on *student* governance structures in those nations.
- **Address Methodological Limitations and Source Bias:** The research relies exclusively on qualitative document analysis. The methodology section must be expanded to explain the exact criteria used to select the analyzed government reports, university records, and historical newspapers. Acknowledging that military regime mandates or state-controlled media portrayals from the 1980s carry heavy institutional bias, the author needs to explain how these documents were critically cross-examined to ensure objective findings.
- **Expand the Comparative Framework:** The paper frequently asserts that Pakistan can learn from the regulated union models of India, the UK, and the US. However, these models are only mentioned in passing generalizations. The author should dedicate a specific subsection within the findings to dissect the regulatory mechanisms used abroad—such as independent judicial oversight, university-mediated financial auditing, or code-of-conduct enforcement—and assess their feasibility within Pakistan's current socio-political environment.
- **Differentiate Between Ideological Factions and Unaffiliated Violence:** The manuscript notes that organizations like the Democratic Students Federation (DSF) and Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba

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(IJT) introduced division and conflict. The analysis would be significantly stronger if it historicized these shifts, exploring how external political parties commercialized or weaponized campus factions during the late 1970s, shifting the campus dynamic from intellectual debate to armed rivalries.

- **Provide Concrete, Actionable Policy Recommendations:** The current recommendations on page 8 are highly abstract, urging the government and the Higher Education Commission (HEC) to provide "policy support and monitoring mechanisms." The author should transform these into precise institutional steps, such as proposing a draft framework for non-partisan campus elections, setting explicit legal boundaries against external political party interference, and designing student-led dispute resolution bodies.
- **Correct Pervasive Typographical and Formatting Flaws:** The manuscript contains several formatting oversights that detract from its academic presentation. Examples include running text errors like "&Baig, 2023" lacking a space, the split word "acqtivists" on page 3, and broken sentence structures in the "Significance of the study" section on page 3. The entire document requires a thorough line-by-line copyedit.

Final Recommendation

Recommendation: Revisions Required (Major Revision)

The manuscript addresses a highly significant, historically rich, and contemporary issue in Pakistan's socio-political and educational landscape. The integration of conflict resolution theory with institutional policy history provides a solid foundational perspective. However, because the comparative analysis requires a more accurate grounding, the theoretical framework needs to be streamlined to remove redundancy, and the policy recommendations must be made actionable, publication cannot be advised in its current form. Addressing the major methodological and conceptual points outlined above will significantly elevate the manuscript's academic rigor and make it a valuable contribution to the field of South Asian social and political studies.