



### 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's ID: FAHEEM ABDUL MUNEEB

### Reviewers Report

The manuscript examines the historical development of student unions in Pakistan, the political and institutional factors behind their ban in 1984, and the broader implications of this ban for democratic participation, youth leadership, and campus politics. Using documentary analysis and John Burton's Human Needs Theory as a theoretical framework, the paper argues that the prohibition of student unions weakened democratic culture within universities and limited opportunities for youth political engagement.

The topic is important and highly relevant within the context of Pakistan's political and educational history. Student movements have historically played a major role in democratic mobilization and political change in South Asia, and debates surrounding the revival of student unions continue to remain politically and academically significant. The manuscript appropriately recognizes that the question of student unions is not merely about campus administration but also concerns political participation, representation, and democratic socialization.

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One of the strengths of the paper lies in its clear thematic focus. The manuscript consistently centers its discussion around the relationship between student unions and democratic participation, and the argument remains coherent throughout. The historical overview of student activism in Pakistan is concise but effective, particularly the discussion regarding the role of organizations such as DSF, NSF, and IJT, as well as the political transformations that occurred during the Ayub and Zia periods.

The application of Human Needs Theory is another positive aspect of the paper. The manuscript effectively uses Burton's framework to argue that participation, recognition, and representation are essential political and social needs for students. The argument that the ban created frustration and informal political activity by denying these needs provides a meaningful conceptual lens through which the issue is examined.

The comparative references to India, the UK, and the US also strengthen the manuscript by situating the Pakistani case within broader international practices. The paper correctly highlights that many countries regulate student unions rather than banning them outright, and this comparison supports the article's broader argument regarding democratic participation and leadership development.

The paper is also generally well-organized. The progression from introduction and background to theoretical framework, documentary analysis, findings, and recommendations is logical and easy to follow. The conclusion appropriately summarizes the central argument and maintains consistency with the overall objectives of the study.

At the same time, there are several areas where the manuscript could be strengthened further.

The primary issue concerns analytical depth. While the paper raises important arguments regarding democratic participation and youth representation, much of the discussion remains descriptive and normative. The manuscript repeatedly states that student unions support democracy and leadership development, but these claims could be developed more analytically by engaging more deeply with the political dynamics of student mobilization, state control, and campus violence in Pakistan.

Similarly, the discussion of the ban tends to present the state's actions primarily as authoritarian suppression without sufficiently engaging with the broader historical concerns regarding campus militancy, armed student groups, and political party interference during the late 1970s and 1980s. A more balanced engagement with these complexities would strengthen the scholarly credibility of the paper.

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The use of Human Needs Theory is relevant, but its application occasionally becomes repetitive. In several sections, the paper restates that students were denied “recognition” and “participation” without substantially extending the analysis. Greater integration between the theory and the historical-political realities of student activism in Pakistan would deepen the conceptual contribution of the study.

Methodologically, the use of documentary analysis is appropriate for the topic, and the paper clearly explains the reliance on historical documents, academic sources, and policy discussions. However, the methodology section could benefit from slightly greater detail regarding source selection and analytical procedure. At present, the discussion remains somewhat general regarding how documents were evaluated and interpreted.

The manuscript would also benefit from stronger engagement with contemporary debates on student politics in Pakistan. While the historical discussion is useful, the paper only briefly addresses the present-day implications of the ban. Greater reflection on current university environments, youth political disengagement, or recent student movements would improve the contemporary relevance of the article.

Overall, the manuscript addresses an important issue and contributes to discussions on youth participation, democratic culture, and political history in Pakistan. The paper demonstrates clear thematic direction, relevant theoretical grounding, and coherent organization.

While the manuscript would benefit from deeper analytical engagement, more balanced treatment of historical complexities, and stronger integration between theory and political context, these concerns are manageable through revision and do not undermine the overall value of the study.

**Recommendation: Accepted with minor revisions.**