

Journal of Developing Country Studies (JDCS)

FEUDALISM AND GOOD GOVERNANCE: FROM PERSPECTIVE OF PAKISTANI YOUTH

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to find whether feudalism has been a hindering force in the face of human development. The common perception is that the feudal mindset has always resisted the improvisation of the living standards of the marginalized poor and overall human development in the country. Low HDI is one of the main measures to judge the government is good or bad.

Methodology: The research is based on simple random sampling among the students of University of Karachi to collect the primary information through a questionnaire constituting 15 queries and study literature to have an insight of the topic and to make the logical connections.

Findings: Our study explores the relation between feudalism and good governance in Pakistan, by connecting the impact of feudalism on human development which is an actual essence of good governance.

Unique contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: In the research, we have studied the modern concept of good governance and how it is affected by the prevalent feudal system in the country.

Keywords: *Feudalism and Good Governance, Human Development*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Feudalism is the system where some powerful landowners exercise their powers and rule over the people of that particular area and the people living under them have to obey the commands and orders of the landowner. The feudal system is mainly found in remote areas or some under-privileged areas. In this system one dominated person (usually male) take care of his family and also look after the land he owned which is inherited to him by his forefathers. It has been noticed that many of the politicians are feudal lords by their backgrounds. While they continue to rule since decades, it has been observed that the rural areas have only lagged behind in every aspect as compared to the urban centers or the rest of the world; the people in the areas don't even have the basic amenities like health and education. Some areas are still living in the medieval age as they don't have electricity; and hence live in isolation from the rest of the world.

In case of Pakistan, Feudal lords started taking part in the political affairs since the very beginning of this state and policy making of the country bends before their will. They are also known for influencing the decisions of the government as they have become the part of every government. Landlords may exercise their powers through controlling the local people by debt bondage or by the distribution of water, fertilizers, tractor permits which in turn gives them influence over the revenue, police departments and judicial administration of local government. Recently, harsh feudalism existed in the "rural Sindh", "Baluchistan", and "some parts of Southern Punjab".

Our research study explores the relationship of feudalists along with the good governance in Pakistan. We judge the public perception of the people regarding feudalism in relation to different aspects of human development such as health, education, food and women empowerment etc. The main purpose of our study is to examine that how the feudalism can affect the human development of the country.

In the words of Shaukat Qadir, *Pakistani author*;

"Landlords are beneficiaries of a broken system that exploits the poor and empowers the rich. Consequently, their desire to do away with this (system) is very limited and their primitive beliefs of dominance, such as suppression of women, continue to exist"

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Human Development is a relatively modern concept, first the progress of a nation was measured via financial indicators such as GDP or per capita income, however, now the world has moved on to a broader concept and measures the economic progress through the extent of human development that has taken place in a country. The human development index ranks countries according to the provision of facilities which ensure human development. The criteria for human development include freedom, which is also the most basic constitutional right of a person. 'Human development is defined as the process of enlarging people's freedoms and opportunities and improving their well-being. Human development is about the real freedom ordinary people have to decide who to be, what to do, and how to live. In September 2018, Pakistan ranked at 150 in the human development index out of 189 countries according to the United Nation's Human Development Report. Pakistan lags behind India, Bangladesh and Nepal in terms of educations, health, life-expectancy and gender equality.

Now it should be considered that more than half of the population of Pakistan lives in the rural areas, 'Rural population (% of total population) in Pakistan was reported at 60.78 % in 2016, according to the World Bank collection of development indicators, compiled from officially recognized sources. Since most of the rural areas are under the influence of feudal lords, it may be assumed that they might have at least some role in hampering the process of human development. Since most of the rural families depend upon farming for their livelihood, they come under the direct or indirect influence of the wealthy landlords who lend the local farmers their lands to till and harvest, it is reported that only 5% of agricultural families own more than 66% of the lands in Pakistan.

The feudal culture pertains to arrogance and a superior attitude, experts and analysts have coined the phrase 'culture of feudal impunity' to explain their power and influence over the rule of law. The local police and judicial system are ineffective against the feudal powers, even in the case of extreme crimes such as murder or mayhem; the authorities are reluctant to take action against members of feudal families. The feudal lords are known to misuse power and for maintaining personal prisons outside of law to punish people for personal vengeance. Their culture includes encouraging practices such as KaroKaari, bonded-labor and robbing the women of personal freedom by marrying them to the Holy Quran.

However, some people such as Michael Kugelman claim that feudalism has become a scapegoat, used by failing governments as a reason to justify their own incompetence. According to these people, the aspects of feudalism are seldom made topics of research, yet this culture is vehemently denounced by the educated elites in the urban areas who may or may not have knowledge of the real picture.

On the other hand, the political influence of the feudal families cannot be overlooked, while some term these people as mere tools in the hands of the Pakistan Intelligentsia, others see them as a separate entity which at least to some extent has a say in the governing procedures. 'Most of the laws were made by feudal lords so they cannot make any law against them, said I.A Rahman, the Director of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan in a conference organized by the CCEP.

Whether the powers of feudalism are a myth or a reality, the feudal community of today faces certain challenges that might have lessened their power, for instance growing industrialization and the opposition from the media has rendered them weaker than before, meanwhile the human development index shows that the situation of Pakistan is still quite below the acceptable standards. This might be an indicator to the fact that feudalism might not be the main or the only obstacle in the way of human development.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted via an open ended questionnaire. We have designed it in this concise manner so that we can easily analyze the collected data easily and interpret our results in terms of our hypothesis. The sample for the questionnaire were the 250 students of University of Karachi who represented Youth as well as most of the country, they were randomly selected.

There are two variables at play in this hypothesis; one variable is feudalism while the other variable is human development. As we try to find out how feudalism exercises power to impede human development, feudalism is the independent variable. While, we see how human

development is affected by the feudal community, hence human development is the dependent variable.

Hypothesis

In our research, we studied how the good governance of Pakistan can be affected by the powerful landowners? How the feudal system can impact on the governing structure of the country? We further summarized it and put our focus on Human Development in Pakistan. The concentration and purpose of the research move to find whether feudalism is the hindering force in the human development. It is the general observation that feudal lords always seem as the obstacles in the human development of any country. Feudal minds never allow people to live freely with their own choices. So this research will figure it out,

H_0 = Feudalism is the hindering force in the human development of Pakistan.

H_A = Feudalism is not the hindering force in the human development of Pakistan.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

All the respondents agree that education is the foundation for human development and 50% of the respondents think that the education system has been deliberately damaged to sustain feudalism. 32.1% are agreed that honor-based laws are dominant over rule of law.

When asked about the role of government 44.4% agreed that usually the government bows down before feudal powers and compromise on governance under their pressure. While 71% of the respondents said that the government is not willing to counter the feudal mindset, 59.3% also said that the government blames feudalism to mask its own shortcomings.

When it came down to the question whether feudalism can prevail if democracy continues for a longer period of time, 44% people agreed that since most parties comprise of members who are feudal lords as well, one has to accept feudal dominance because there is no other option, yet 40% disagreed with this view, thus in this matter we cannot conclude decisively.

66.7% of the respondents agreed that it is in the interest of the feudal families to keep human development at bay in their areas, as equal opportunities for the local population will mean their own downfall. 63% of the respondents expressed the view that effective implementation of land reforms can weaken feudalism. 81.3% respondents said that the financial inferiority of the local population compels them to live under the influence of feudal lords.

50% of the respondents agreed that women empowerment can be a major threat to the feudal power in the rural areas, thus it is against their interest to promote education and freedom of women. Majority of the respondents were of the opinion that the lack of education and religious beliefs of the rural population makes it easier for the feudal lords to control them.

The responses seem to indicate that whatever the reality, in public opinion, feudalism indeed might be the biggest impediment to human development.

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The data collected shows that feudalism has a notorious position in common perception, though experts own that the feudal system has been relatively less studied, hence it can't be established as a fact that all the evils attributed to it are correctly applied. However, the responses obtained from the sample frame show that the feudal culture might indeed be hindering human development.

Hence it supports the null hypothesis which says that feudalism is the hindering force in the way of human development. The existing literature also seems to support the mentioned idea, yet the lack of research in this matter prevents us from reaching a decisive answer. Through the existing literature, we can only make out a correlation between feudalism and human development in Pakistan.

It has been observed that Pakistan is close to the bottom of the Human Development Index. The United Nations development program report explains different factors because of which Pakistan seems to be one of the slowest developing nations in terms of human development. The life-expectancy in Pakistan is lesser than that in India, Bangladesh and Nepal. The health conditions in this country have deteriorated while in terms of education Pakistan lags behind the three above mentioned countries. As far as gender equality is concerned, Pakistan is only ahead of Afghanistan out of all South Asian countries.

While we cannot claim that feudalism is the only obstacle for human development, we cannot also deny that it is one of the key factors which hinder development in rural areas as Pakistan is the only country who has strong and dominant feudal system among them. In a recent report, the World Bank cited land inequality as a primary cause of rural poverty in Pakistan, with 44 percent of the country's farmland controlled by just 2 percent of rural households. With a natural constituent base among tribal followers and tenants, the feudal landlords moved easily into politics after independence, dominating provincial and national assemblies while building alliances with the all-powerful military. Although their grip on political life has loosened in recent years, they remain a potent force in Pakistan's newly reconstituted parliament. The existing studies as well as the collected data show that even if feudalism is not the only culprit, it still might be one of the main reasons behind Pakistan's performance in terms of human development.

Conclusion

In this research paper we have made an effort to find if feudalism is the main hindering force in the human development in Pakistan or not? It is generally observed that majority of legislative branch is comprised of feudal lords; they started taking part in the political affairs and policy making of the country ever since Pakistan came into existence. Feudalists also influence the decisions of government. The findings of this research paper shows that feudalism might be one of the main obstacles in the development of humans of the society. Through these findings we can conclude that in Pakistan, feudalism has a strong influence on the rural society, they try to mold the structure of decision making process so that all the policies made by legislation would be go in their favor.

In a nutshell, we can safely say that feudalism is a force to be reckoned with, feudal lords are part of the legislature and hence they are directly responsible for bringing about human development in their own constituencies. We cannot assume that feudalism is the root of all evils but we can say that it is one of the obstacles for human development in the country.

Recommendations

Feudalism is the dominant form of pressure group which is eating up our economy. These feudal lords hold positions on politics, government and own acres of land. They do not treat people equally and make decisions on their personal interest. In order to eliminate this system government has to take following measures;

One of the best ways is to increase education and awareness among people. Because if the literacy rate is raised in a country then it's quite natural that people will aware about their rights as same time get seats in the parliament. So, this system will die its own death.

Another way was to introduce progressive tax system for land owners. It means that, the more land you have the more tax you have to pay. So, most of the land lord's wouldn't say that their land is expensive. As a result, the government have right to buy the lands without paying more money. By this way, the more part of the land will be owned by the government, not owned by the feudal lords.

The government also needs to put pressure on those landlords who use 1000 hectares of land if there is nothing productive going on, and use these lands for other productive purposes.

Another way to weaken the feudal elites is to ban them from politics. By using these methods the feudal system can be eliminated thus leading to an economically sounder Pakistan.

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