

Political Influence of Pir Families during Dictatorship in Pakistan: A Case Study of Pagara Family

Muhammad Umer Quddafi*, Manzoor Khan Afridi†

Abstract

The research investigates how pir families in Pakistan maintain their political control while military regimes govern the country through their dual powers of spiritual leadership and royal family connections. The pir families maintain control over rural and semi-urban areas which they gained through Sufi traditions after their followers designated them as religious leaders. The study examines how these families established powerful relationships with dictatorial regimes to expand their political power and governmental authority. Military leaders used pirs as legitimacy tools which they assigned to political positions and provided benefits in return for their support. The authoritarian governments maintain control over spiritual-political leaders through pir families who used their religious followers to secure their vote as dependable supporters. The research presents case study of notable pir family, such as the Pagara family, demonstrating their capacity to remain significant amid changing political environments. The clientelism framework application demonstrates how these families used their religious status and their patron-client ties to successfully navigate the challenges presented by democratic changes and government power consolidation. The research examines how dynastic politics function in South Asia through its study of religious power and political influence which establishes elite control over non-democratic systems.

Keywords: Pir, Sufi Tradition, Dictatorial Regimes, Elite, Clientelism.

1. Introduction

The historical significance of Pir families in Pakistan extends beyond their religious authority because their spiritual leadership continues to shape political relationships. Pirs function as spiritual leaders because they obtain their power through their family backgrounds and their deep connections to the Sufi tradition. Their political influence remains strongest in rural areas because loyalty to these families develops through patron-client relationships which determine voting choices and political party support. The Pagaras family shows how certain families maintain their power during extended periods. The study of Pir families in Pakistan shows that they function as political mediators who connect politicians with common citizens (Ali, 2010). These families play a vital role in building local political systems which also affect national policy choices (Zaman, 2018).

Sufi lineages or Silsila, designate the complete spiritual heritage and transmission systems used for Sufism. These lineages document the teachings and spiritual legitimacy passed down from a Sufi master to the Prophet Muhammad via a succession of spiritual heirs. The Sufi order system uses these lineages as its foundation because they demonstrate the deep spiritual connection which exists between masters and their disciples (murids). The examination of political families in Pakistan shows how dynastic politics shapes the country's political system. This term describes political frameworks in which power is transmitted through familial lineage, which extends between multiple generations. These systems enable families to pass down leadership positions while maintaining their grip on political authority throughout multiple generations.

1.1 The Pagara Family as Case Study

A distinguished Sufi family known as the Pagara family has played a vital role in developing Pakistan's political system which particularly impacts the Sindh region. The Pir of Pagara leads the organization while he successfully merges his role as a spiritual leader with his political authority.

*PhD Scholar, International Islamic University Islamabad. Corresponding Author. eucolumnist@gmail.com.

†Professor, Department of Politics and International Relations, Dean Faculty of Social Sciences, International Islamic University, Islamabad. manzoor.afridi@iiu.edu.pk

The family's power reached its highest point during military governments because their support matched the needs of Pakistan's ruling powers. The continued power of Sufi families in Pakistan shows how religious leaders use their authority to maintain political control (Waseem, 1994).

The impact of pir families during Pakistan's military dictatorship periods requires examination because it helps to reveal the complex nature of power dynamics which underpin political clientelism. Military governments establish solid power structures which enable religious lineages to function as essential links between their regimes and the citizens, thus maintaining political order. The study of their role demonstrates how non-democratic governments use religious social systems to establish their legitimacy while maintaining power over citizens, which leads to the strengthening of established leaders and the restriction of democratic systems.

The primary objectives of this study are to investigate how pir families maintain their political authority during military rule, to study how military governments interact with religious hierarchies, and to assess how the Pagara family maintained its political power during military rule.

This research aims to tackle significant inquiries about the political power held by pir families in Pakistan. The research will study how pir families maintain their political power during military governments while examining how Sufi lineages sustain their social and political power under authoritarian rule.

2. Methodology

The investigation of political power which pir families maintained during Pakistan's dictatorial period requires qualitative narrative technique to demonstrate their intricate political effects. The approach allows researchers to grasp how social and political forces operate while understanding the secret political roles which these spiritual leaders maintain. The research begins with an extensive literature review which includes academic articles and historical documents and previous studies that investigate the relationship between religion and politics in Pakistan through the study of pir families. The research base provides essential information to develop the research framework while it helps to discover existing research deficiencies.

The Pagara Family serves as the case study which will provide detailed information for this research. The study uses two data collection techniques which include document analysis and narrative analysis. Document analysis requires researchers to examine all types of documents which include official records and unofficial records and diaries and political manifestos and speeches and public statements from members of the pir family. The research examines media coverage and historical documents to understand how their political responsibilities developed throughout different time periods. Narrative analysis uses personal stories and experiences to study how pir families create and present their political identities and objectives.

The research execution depends on its ethical considerations. The research requires participants to provide informed consent while all study details remain confidential and the research team must show respect for Pakistani cultural and religious beliefs that relate to pir families. The research needs to be conducted through maintenance of neutral research values, which requires researchers to avoid any form of partiality. The study contains various obstacles and restricted elements. Researchers face difficulty in finding study participants because they need to access prominent pir families who maintain protective systems and their social standing. The solution begins with building trust through existing networks, which will help to resolve the situation. The researcher's personal interpretations lead to the qualitative research study, which results in interpretative bias as an additional study limitation. Researchers use triangulation because it increases study reliability

through the combination of various data sources and research techniques. The researchers use a qualitative research method to study how pir families use their power to control political activities throughout Pakistan. The study documented how spiritual authority interacts with secular power to maintain ascendancy of some elected officials over certain issues and decisions within the public governance of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

3. Literature Review

Research studies have concentrated on the political effects which pir families have on Pakistan. The following list presents important early studies which investigate this topic. Ansari (1992) provided a comprehensive examination of the complex dynamics between the British colonial government and the hereditary Sufi saints, referred to as pirs, in Sind during the specified timeframe. The text investigates how the British utilized the authority of these local religious figures to establish and sustain their political dominance in the region. Ansari presents the main obstacles which faced British authority when he discusses the revolts which Pir Pagaro and his Hurs followers led during the late 19th century and early 20th century. The pirs who led these uprisings displayed their capacity to create organized movements which fought against British control of the country. The book further analyzes the participation of Sind's pirs in the Khilafat Movement (1919–1924), emphasizing their political engagement and the complexities of their interactions with colonial authorities amid widespread unrest. The pirs who lived during the colonial period established a religious leadership system, which gained political authority by developing its functions within society. The political environment which these figures occupied required them to develop new methods for retaining their power and social standing.

Aziz (2002) conducted a detailed examination of the piri-muridi practice in the Pakistani setting. The study investigates multiple aspects which include historical background and religious beliefs and social structures and political systems and economic conditions. The folk religious element has created economic impacts which led to political corruption and Islamic religious practices distortion according to Aziz assessment of its effects on various parts of Pakistani society. His research examines the connections between pirs and their disciples through his study of their relationship development which created organizational challenges that he explains through his complete research and analytical framework. Through his thorough research and analytical perspective, Aziz explains the complex nature of piri-muridi to show its actual effect across Pakistan. The book examines core questions about how this institution functions which helps develop understanding of religious authority and land ownership and political power dynamics in the region. The resource provides essential information to researchers studying how religion and culture and politics interact within South Asia.

Gilmartin (1988) presented a comprehensive examination of the complex interactions between British colonial governance and Islamic political frameworks in Punjab during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. British authorities created colonial administrative systems that worked together with local Islamic institutions to develop a political system which resulted in the creation of Pakistan. The British colonial government rejected religious beliefs as the basis for central power which resulted in Islamic customs that followed established social ranking systems and local government practices. Gilmartin uses multiple sources, including personal papers and biographies and autobiographies and Urdu materials, to create an authentic narrative that covers all aspects of the story. His extensive engagement with these varied resources facilitates a detailed depiction of both prominent and lesser-known political figures, illuminating the ways in which colonial policies

impacted Muslim political identity and organization in Punjab. This scholarly work is vital for comprehending the intricate relationships between colonialism and Islam in South Asia and provides significant insights into the historical forces that led to the partition of India and the creation of Pakistan.

Malik and Malik (2017) presented an in-depth examination of the sustained political impact of shrine-associated families in Punjab over a period exceeding seventy years. The authors start their research by tracing the electoral political activities of pīr families which began in 1937 before the partition and continued until 2013. Through their research the elites demonstrate their political presence which has lasted since colonial times when religious ties and landownership rights and political power links were established and persisted through the post-independence period. This research demonstrates how institutional frameworks and historical relationships continue to shape political processes in Punjab.

Sherani (1988) studied how Pakistani religious authorities interact with Pakistan's political system since the country became independent in 1947. Sherani points out a notable paradox: the most traditional factions of religious leadership, such as the ulema and pirs, have occasionally favored secularism over a strictly fundamentalist Islamic governance. This unexpected position is frequently overlooked because people tend to treat all religious leaders as one group who belong to the 'ulema' category without understanding their particular differences. Sherani's examination investigates the diverse forms of religious leadership and their varying impacts on the social and political fabric of Pakistan. The chapter shows how ulema and pirs understand their different roles in national political discussions. The research investigates how religious leaders preserve their traditional customs while adjusting to modern times because their responsibilities changed with Pakistan's evolving political environment.

Ethan Epping's book "Politics and Pirs: The Nature of Sufi Political Engagement in 20th and 21st Century Pakistan" examines the evolution of Sufi pirs political activities in Pakistan during the last one hundred years. Epping examined that how these religious leaders transitioned from their traditional religious duties to participate in political affairs which shaped the distribution of power in both local communities and the entire nation. The research highlights major occurrences including the important demonstration which took place on November 27 2010 when protesters walked from Islamabad to Lahore to show their opposition against increasing terrorist attacks and sectarian violence that targeted Sufi shrines and their followers. The research investigates how Sufi orders interact with political authorities to demonstrate how pirs successfully established partnerships with different governments to protect their religious and political power. The research of Epping shows how pirs function as both spiritual leaders and political power brokers who use their status to control policies and election procedures and social movements in Pakistan. This study investigates the political activities of Sufi leaders throughout different eras to reveal how mysticism and politics interact with each other in this area.

The political situation in Toba Tek Singh received complex examination from Farooq (2024) through his study of pirs and shrines. Sandal Bar serves as the central area of Punjab to which this district has functioned as a religious and political hub throughout its history. Farooq shows how the continuous existence of shrines and their piri custodians shapes community political preferences and voting patterns. The study shows that spiritual leaders function as intermediaries who use their religious authority to sway election outcomes while gaining political benefits. The combination of religious power with political control has created a unique social and political environment which

links religious devotion to political loyalty. Farooq collected scientific data through his qualitative research method by conducting multiple interviews and observing the district through field studies. He discovered that people show respect to pirs and their shrines because this practice provides them with spiritual guidance which also extends to economic and political spheres. Local office candidates need religious leader endorsements because they believe these leaders will help them reach out to non-religious voters. The two groups achieve mutual benefits because pirs maintain their political power while politicians obtain access to committed voters. The research conducted by Farooq shows that religious organizations and their leaders function as vital elements of Toba Tek Singh's political system which determines how the community runs its affairs and creates public policies.

Waseem (2002) conducted a comprehensive investigation about governmental transformations in the nation through his study of social movement interactions with political parties and government entities. The 516-page book provides complete details about government operations and military relationships and how Islam shapes state decisions. Waseem presents his analysis of Pakistan's political situation through his examination of three key elements which include the nation's authoritarian system and its ongoing battle for democracy and the deficiencies of its governmental structures. The National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research published this academic work which contains thorough research and essential historical information that serves as a valuable tool for students and scholars and researchers who want to understand Pakistan's complex political system.

Ahmed (1980) used social anthropology research to examine the complex social and political systems that underlie Pathan (Pashtun) society. The book examines millenarian movements and charismatic authority and tribal organization as its central themes to show their impact on Pathan society. The author presented his historical analysis which combines anthropological research to explain how social structures in the area function together with national political systems. The publication maintains its status as a critical resource for researchers who study South Asian studies and anthropology and political history to investigate the relationships between tribal identity and leadership and resistance movements.

Jaffrelot (2015) presented a detailed and well-researched examination of Pakistan's complex political system. The 2015 publication investigates the country's ongoing problems with political instability and civil-military conflicts and religious extremism and ethnic tensions while showing its extraordinary capacity to recover. Jaffrelot presented a compelling narrative that weaves together historical events, political structures, and ideological shifts to explain Pakistan's paradoxical existence—where democratic aspirations continually clash with authoritarian tendencies. The book analyzes essential political figures and movements to deliver valuable knowledge which helps students and decision-makers and people who want to understand Pakistan's enduring yet tumultuous state.

Iqbal et al. (2020) demonstrated that how the Chishti Dargah of Sial Sharif transformed Punjab politics during the crucial 1945-46 elections which initiated the movement for Pakistan. The shrine guardians of Sial Sharif who held spiritual power and had many followers worked to secure backing for the All-India Muslim League throughout this time. Their endorsement enabled Muslim voters to unite which allowed the League to gain more strength in Punjab. The League won elections through this partnership while the alliance showed how religious groups used their power to shape political activities before partition. After partition, the Dargah maintained its political power by

adjusting to the changing political situation in Pakistan. The spiritual leaders of Sial Sharif remained engaged in political dialogue while using their religious authority to resolve disputes and push for policies that benefited their community. Their ongoing involvement shows how spirituality and politics continue to connect in the region because religious leaders maintain power over both governance and societal growth.

Shah (1990) examined Amin-ul-Hasanat's entire existence and his political accomplishments as the revered leader of Manki Sharif. He began his life in Manki Sharif, Nowshera on February 1, 1922 when he received the spiritual successorship from his father Pir Abdul Rauf. Amin-ul-Hasanat dedicated himself to the All-India Muslim League after he studied the Pakistan Resolution of 1940 which had a strong impact on him. In 1945, he became a member of the League and started his work to gain support from Pashtun people. He organized a major Ulema and Mashaikh assembly that took place in Peshawar on October 1 1945, where the participants declared their permanent allegiance to the Muslim League and its leader Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Jinnah strengthened the alliance when he visited Manki Sharif on November 24 1945, which boosted the confidence levels of Amin-ul-Hasanat and his supporters. The Pir's powerful campaign played a crucial role in the 1947 NWFP referendum, which resulted in most voters choosing to join Pakistan. His dedication to serving the people gave him the title Fateh-e-Referendum which means Victor of the Referendum. After Pakistan gained independence, Amin-ul-Hasanat lost his interest in politics because he disagreed with the political beliefs of provincial leaders such as Khan Abdul Qayyum Khan. He created the Awami Muslim League to function as an opposition party that would operate in the NWFP Provincial Assembly. He participated in politics during his early years but he left political life permanently in 1955 to resume his religious obligations. He died at the age of 37 when a car crash occurred on January 5 1960, near Fateh Jang, Attock District. The Pakistan Post Office issued a commemorative stamp in 1990 to honor him because of his work for Pakistan's creation which made him an important figure in the country's history.

Nazamani (2012) investigated the complete life story and all the different ways Pir Syed Shah Mardan Shah II whose common name is Pir Pagara VII made contributions to society. Pir Pagara VII who became a major leader in Pakistan's political and spiritual systems was born in 1928 at Pir Jo Goth in Sindh. The Hur Jamaat leader used his position to direct his followers through important historical events that affected the country. The account by Nazamani presents readers with complete evidence about Pir Pagara's leadership and his methods of political operations which created permanent effects throughout both the local area and the entire country. This 174-page book which appeared in 2020 requires online customers to buy it from multiple websites which include Noori Sons and Amazon. The book functions as a vital tool which enables users to understand how spiritual power and political power operate together in Pakistan. Through his research work and his ability to tell stories Nazamani brings to light the lasting effects this leader has had on Pakistan's social and political development.

Memon (2003) presented a comprehensive examination of the religious and spiritual roles played by the Pir Pagara family while demonstrating their substantial historical and cultural value. The thesis is available for access online via the Internet Archive. The research will benefit from official and unofficial documents together with diaries and archives from newspapers and personal accounts of devotees which I mentioned before.

3.1 Historical Context of Pir Families

The historical development of Sufism within the Indian subcontinent represents a complex journey which connects to the cultural and religious and political history of the region. Sufism entered India during the 11th and 12th centuries when Persian and Central Asian mystics brought the tradition which combined with local spiritual practices to create new social and religious systems. The Chishti Qadiri and Suhrawardi orders developed as major groups which promoted peace and spirituality and social justice. The Mughal period saw dargahs, which functioned as Sufi shrines, become essential religious centers that held both spiritual and political authority (Schimmel, 1975).

3.2 Pirs and Political Influence in Colonial and Postcolonial Periods

The section describes spiritual authority and political power as essential elements of both colonial and postcolonial times. The study shows how religious leaders through their political activities as Sufi saints and pirs engaged in power struggles with both colonial officials and local power holders (Asad, 1993). During the entire period of colonial rule in South Asia spiritual leaders used their religious authority to obtain political control. The colonial powers established partnerships with religious leaders because they understood the strong connection between spirituality and governmental systems which controlled various aspects of society (Gilmartin, 1988). The section describes how Naqshbandi Sufi leaders managed their relationships with colonial powers and indigenous groups to shape the political situation in their area.

The relationship between spiritual leadership and political authority started to change after independence yet it remained present. Pirs in Pakistan who formed political alliances and participated in elections maintained their power through patronage systems which allowed them to retain political control (Eaton 1978). The historical relationship between spiritual authority and political power is apparent in both colonial and postcolonial eras. During colonial times, governing authorities used spiritual leaders as their main method to establish control over the local population. The colonial period established their political power which allowed them to influence state affairs until the present day.

3.3 Pir Families in Pakistan's Political Structure

The function of pirs (spiritual leaders) as intermediaries between the state and society in Pakistan is deeply rooted in historical and political contexts. The pirs serve as important religious leaders within their communities because they help their followers achieve their spiritual goals while the state pursues its objectives. The leaders gain political legitimacy through their ability to mobilize voters and maintain order in the community. The Gilanis and Pagaras pir families demonstrate their skill in navigating clientelism and patronage systems through their political participation which allows them to maintain power by combining their religious standing with political ties. (Jones, 2010). In South Asia, shrines together with their followers, play an important role in political mobilization activities. These shrines, which are commonly associated with pirs (spiritual leaders), serve as main gathering places where many devotees who share similar religious and cultural and social backgrounds come together. The pirs use their networks of devoted followers to gain political support which makes them powerful intermediaries who politicians seek to win over. The association allows pirs to influence voter behavior while they provide politicians with political authenticity (Ewing, 1983).

3.4 Political Influence of Pir Families in Dictatorships

Military ruler Ayub Khan (1958-1969) took control of the country through a military coup in 1958 to bring modernity to Pakistan. He established the Basic Democracies system which granted

him control over the government while limiting citizens' right to participate in politics. The government under his leadership achieved economic growth yet it created greater social disparities which led to public demonstrations and his resignation from office in 1969 (Burki 1980).

Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988) ascended to power in 1977 following a coup that ousted Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. His presidency brought about complete Islamization of Pakistan which reshaped Pakistani legal systems and educational institutions and economic structures. Zia's military government used oppressive measures against political opponents while advancing religious conservatism through initiatives such as the Hudood Ordinances. He ruled until his death in a plane crash which occurred in 1988 (Talbot, 1998).

Pervez Musharraf (1999-2008) started term in 1999 when he removed Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif from power. The administration he led achieved recognition because it implemented programs that aimed to modernize Pakistan while creating a free-market system and fighting against Islamist extremism through its partnership with the United States after the September 11 attacks in 2001. His presidency encountered several difficulties which included rising military clashes with civilian authorities and growing political protests which endangered democratic institutions until he was forced to resign in 2008 (Rizvi, 2000).

Dictatorship establishes total power control for dictators who rule through their two methods of power: violent repression and military-supported rule. The regime depends on civilian partners who include political organizations and business leaders and religious authorities to achieve both their legitimacy and their sustained power. The partners obtain benefits which include financial rewards and political appointments and protection from their adversaries. The regime receives their loyalty and political support from them which gives them power to control local communities (Geddes, 1999).

3.5 Pir Families' Survival and Influence in Authoritarian Regimes

The Pir families in Pakistan maintained their power during dictatorship times through their ability to use their religious authority and community ties for governmental communication. The organization establishes patronage networks which provide political backing in return for protecting its members and granting them access to government positions and resources. The dictatorships establish their authority through religious appeals which hold deep influence over rural and religious communities. The partnership between them and military forces enables them to expand their political and economic power (Ewing, 1997). The pir families maintained their power under Pakistani authoritarian rule by using three different methods.

1. **Clientelism and Patronage:** Pirs served as intermediaries between the military government and the local populace, exchanging political backing for favors, protection, and resources (Ahmed, 1987).

2. **Legitimization of the Regime:** Pirs used their religious authority to confirm the dictatorships' legitimacy by providing both moral and spiritual support (Siddiqi, 2012).

3. **Electoral Influence:** In the context of manipulated elections, pir families rallied voters to back pro-regime candidates, thereby ensuring political stability for the ruling elites (Shaikh, 2009).

3.6 Clientelism and Patronage Networks

Patronage systems and clientelism systems exist as fundamental components of political systems within many developing nations including Pakistan. Clientelism operates as a system where political supporters exchange their allegiance for goods and services and protective measures. Patrons who are usually local elite members or political leaders provide resources to

their clients who include both individual voters and complete communities in return for their electoral support. The systems establish personal connections between powerful elites and ordinary citizens which determines how political authority gets distributed. The systems maintain existing social divisions because they prevent common people from accessing government benefits according to (Lemarchand & Legg, 1972).

The religious and spiritual leaders in Pakistan have established partnerships with military-backed governments to achieve mutual benefits. Military leaders, including General Zia-ul-Haq, used religious leaders to establish their political authority through Islamic symbols and religious beliefs. The pirs received political power and land ownership and resource access through this arrangement, which elevated their social status. The military governments used their religious authority to restrict popular and democratic movements while maintaining control over rural areas and traditional communities (Nasr, 2001).

3.7 The Pagara Family

The Pagara family from Sindh Pakistan holds significant power through their religious and political influence. The Pir of Pagara title connects to the Hurs who founded their religious and warrior group during the 19th century. The Hurs led the fight against British colonial rule. The Pir of Pagara title has passed down through many generations who each held religious control over large groups of followers in Sindh while using their religious power to gain political authority (Ansari, 1992).

The political legacy of the Pagara family originates from their role as religious leaders. The family tree reaches its highest point with Pir Pagara VII and Syed Shah Mardan Shah II, who combined their roles as political leaders with their duties as spiritual instructors. He led the Pakistan Muslim League-Functional (PML-F) as its president while he shaped the political developments in Sindh by forming alliances with military regimes which included General Zia-ul-Haq's government. His son Pir Pagara VIII Syed Sibghatullah Shah Rashdi III succeeded him after his death in 2012, which allowed him to continue his role as spiritual leader of the Hur Jamaat while he pursued political activities with the PML-F (Waseem, 2002).

3.8 The Pagara Family's Role in the Military-Backed Regimes

During his military government between 1958 and 1969, Ayub Khan used his power to develop political alliances which Pagara VII and Syed Shah Mardan Shah II. Pagara used his spiritual connection with the Hur community to support Ayub's government, which aimed to strengthen its authority through religious and tribal endorsement from important leaders. Pagara's active support for the government helped Ayub's administration establish its credibility in rural Sindh, which supported Ayub's main plan to handle political opposition through religious connections (Waseem, 2002).

The Pagara family has maintained political power in Sindh through their connection to Pakistan Muslim League-Functional (PML-F). The family maintains power because they serve as spiritual leaders of the Hur community, which holds prominent power throughout rural Sindh. The family established key partnerships with military and civilian authorities at the federal level, which included their connections with General Zia-ul-Haq and General Pervez Musharraf. The politicians use their religious power and political connections to maintain control over both provincial and national political systems (Waseem, 2002).

The Pagara family under Pir Pagara VII and Syed Shah Mardan Shah II supported General Zia-ul-Haq's military government during his rule. Zia wanted to achieve complete power through his

alliance with religious leaders and tribal leaders which included Pir Pagara. The Pakistan Muslim League-Functional (PML-F) leadership of Pir Pagara functioned as a major political partner for Zia in Sindh while he established his authority and suppressed opposition. The Pagara family secured their political control through the deal which enabled them to advance their objectives across Sindh and the entire national political system (Waseem, 2002).

During the tenure of General Zia-ul-Haq, Pir Pagara VII, Syed Shah Mardan Shah II, forged significant partnerships with the military administration, providing both religious and political endorsement. Zia depended on religious figures such as Pir Pagara to validate his governance, while Pir Pagara, in turn, enhanced his political stature through the Pakistan Muslim League-Functional (PML-F). Zia used this partnership to increase his credibility in rural Sindh while Pir Pagara gained advantages from federal assistance which helped him control both regional and national political affairs (Waseem, 2002).

The Zia-ul-Haq regime from 1977 to 1988 established Islamic legitimacy through religious practices which the regime used to strengthen its power. Zia used his power to establish religious legitimacy through his alliances with important religious leaders such as Pir Pagara VII. Zia used the Pagara family alliance to obtain their religious authority which he used to gain support from Sindh's Hur community therefore increasing his reputation as an Islamic leader. The Islamization policies enabled him to gain religious leader support while pushing away secular opponents which allowed him to strengthen his control over the situation (Nasr, 2001).

3.9 Patronage Networks and Pir Pagara's Influence on Local and National Elections

Pir Pagara's impact on both local and national elections in Pakistan is significantly anchored in the patronage systems he has cultivated over many years. The Pakistan Muslim League-Functional leader Pir Pagara VII and his successors to the Sindh Hur community leadership position have established extensive networks of loyalty and patronage through their work. The existence of these relationships enables his followers to back him during elections which will help him win local electoral contests. The Pagara family has used their military-backed alliances with different political parties to stay active in national elections throughout their history. In return for their allegiance, Pir Pagara's supporters frequently receive political advantages, such as land grants, government employment, and legal protections (Waseem, 2002).

The patronage system enables Pir Pagara to rule Sindh while he remains vital for national political affairs. The PML-F political party which Pir Pagara led during the 2008 elections formed a coalition government to demonstrate how these patronage networks served their strategic purpose. The Hur Movement played a key role in Pakistan's political development because of Pir Pagara's leadership. The movement started as an anti-colonial resistance against British control in the 1940s but later developed into a major force in Sindh's political landscape. The Pagara family maintained their power through the Hur community which became their political base for organizing and mobilizing support. Pir Pagara used the support network to assist him in winning elections and building alliances with military governments. The organization worked to mobilize people through community efforts while showing strong commitment to their leadership which belonged to the Pir (Waseem, 2002).

The Pagara family leads the Hur Movement which has functioned as a crucial political power in Sindh for extended periods. The movement began as an anti-colonial revolt against British rule but developed into a powerful movement through the leadership of Pir Pagara VI and Pir Pagara VII. The Hur community received their spiritual leadership which created strong loyalty from the

people and enabled them to control major political matters in the area. The movement developed its anti-establishment roots which enabled it to build public support through its partnerships with military and civilian governments (Waseem, 2002). The Pagara family used this system to maintain their authority and reach throughout local communities and national politics.

Pir Pagara has utilized Hur followers to obtain electoral and political support which has become the central element of his family's political power in Sindh. The Hurs possess deep spiritual ties to the Pir Pagara ancestral line which they have used throughout history to support electoral victories of the Pakistan Muslim League-Functional (PML-F). By combining his religious dedication with his political loyalty Pir Pagara successfully gathers large voter blocks during elections which help him win political power in both local and national contexts (Waseem, 2002).

3. 10 Strategies of Political Survival and Adaptation

Political leaders use various strategies to maintain their power during changing political conditions. Pir Pagara used his religious authority and his political connections to remain politically active throughout Pakistan's governmental changes which included military rule. Pir Pagara maintained his political importance by supporting military leaders Ayub Khan and Zia-ul-Haq who provided him with political backing. His ability to adapt allowed him to build his power base throughout the country and in his community (Waseem, 2002).

Pir Pagara used his political expertise, which he developed through his work with major political parties, to create electoral results and control government policies through his Pakistan Muslim League-Functional (PML-F) party. His strategy for survival required him to balance his duties as a spiritual leader with his political work which he used to maintain his existing patronage networks while securing voter support, which showed his ability to function in both democratic and authoritarian political systems.

The Pagara family maintains its political power through multiple strategies which have proven successful despite government leadership changes. Their political power has grown through their ability to maintain their spiritual leadership while building strong connections with powerful patrons. The family established military ties during Ayub Khan and Zia-ul-Haq's military rule, which they used to obtain political support in exchange for protection and political legitimacy. The Pagara family has successfully used their political skills to navigate coalition politics which enables them to remain important in different political systems. Their ability to combine traditional leadership with actual political methods has secured their permanent power in local and national politics (Waseem, 2002).

Pir Pagara VII established military alliances during his rule as a leader who operated in conjunction with Ayub Khan and Zia-ul-Haq. His support of these two authoritarian leaders led him to join pro-dictatorship political groups which included different factions of the Muslim League. Through this association he gained political power together with his supporters while obtaining vital resources and control over political affairs. His participation in these political organizations demonstrated his practical approach because he supported military rule to maintain his power over Sindh while keeping the Pakistan Muslim League-Functional (PML-F) party important (Waseem, 2002).

3.11 Impact of Dictatorship on Sufi Lineages and their Political Role

The Pagara family in Pakistan has experienced substantial political changes because of dictatorship control which affected their political alliances with military leaders. The regimes of Ayub Khan and Zia-ul-Haq used pirs or Sufi leaders to strengthen their political authority because

these leaders controlled spiritual power over their followers. Sufi leaders formed political alliances which enhanced their power in both local communities and national politics. The collaboration established Sufi lineages as vital channels that connected government entities with citizens which maintained their importance throughout changing political conditions (Ewing, 1997). The Sufi associations between these groups created situations which diminished the spiritual authority of Sufi leaders through their political engagement.

The Islamization process implemented by Zia during his rule established a state system that permitted Sufi leaders to expand their authority because they supported government-sanctioned religious practices. The Sufi families in Sindh which included the Pir of Pagara established a political alliance with authoritarian governments which helped them maintain their power while validating their authority.

Dictatorship regimes establish power through three main methods which include creating alliances together with their political skills and their ability to control others. The political strength of Pir Pagara VII grew when he became an ally of military leaders who governed Pakistan during Ayub Khan and Zia-ul-Haq's rule. Pagara enhanced his political clout through the Pakistan Muslim League-Functional PML-F which he used to obtain state resources. Through his support for military-backed governments he granted his followers access to key positions and resources which helped him establish control over both local Sindh politics and national affairs (Waseem, 2002).

3.12 How Pagara Family Consolidated Power under Authoritarian Rule

The Pagara family and other Sufi lineages in Pakistan established their control over the country because they used their religious power to build connections with military rulers during times of autocratic rule. Pir Pagara VII supported the governments of Ayub Khan and Zia-ul-Haq because he wanted to obtain government support and political power. The Pagara family used their alliance with the Pakistan Muslim League-Functional (PML-F) to gain control of Sindh and extend their power by combining their religious leadership with their political authority (Waseem, 2002).

The influence of religious authority in legitimizing military dictatorships in Pakistan has been considerable, particularly during the tenure of Zia-ul-Haq (1977–1988). The religious establishment through its prominent figures established religious legitimacy for the governmental systems which governed the country. Dictators used their political alliances with religious authorities to display their rule as morally and religiously justified through their claimed observance of Islamic doctrine. The Islamization policies Zia implemented created stronger connections between him and Islamic leaders because these leaders used their religious authority to assist the government in its fight against secular movements while they improved state power (Nasr, 2001).

Zia used Islamization to define political opposition as un-Islamic which helped him strengthen his power. The religious leaders of this time played a critical role because they supported the government's programs through their fatwas and public statements and religious rulings which showed Zia as an Islamic defender who protected Islam in Pakistan and obtained major backing from religious groups of the population (Haqqani, 2005).

His political activities have brought major changes to Pakistan's political system especially through his work in Sindh province. His leadership of the Pakistan Muslim League-Functional (PML-F) ensured that the Hur community and his followers remained a formidable political bloc. His partnerships with military dictatorships through his support for Ayub Khan and Zia-ul-Haq military regimes received religious validation which he provided to their rulers. Pir Pagara's

combination of his spiritual and political duties enabled him to maintain feudal and dynastic political systems in Sindh according to (Waseem, 2002).

Through these alliances, Pagara was able to build his local power base while expanding his reach to national politics. His involvement with pro-dictatorship alliances enabled him to protect the interests of his family and followers during national political proceedings. These alliances not only reinforced the central authority of military rulers but also cemented the Pagara family's dynastic dominance in local and regional politics, further embedding the clientelism model in Pakistani politics (Talbot, 2012).

3.13 Long-term Effects of Military-Pir Alliances on Democratic Governance

The research investigates how military-political partnerships have shaped Pakistan's democratic processes throughout its history and their current effects on the country's political landscape. The military-political collaborations between Ayub Khan and Zia-ul-Haq and Pir Pagara VII have strengthened authoritarian rule by decreasing democratic political systems. The partnerships between religious leaders and military leaders have enabled religious leaders to strengthen their power through their connections to both their followers and their community networks. The people who hold power in a society will block the development of real democratic systems because they use their authority to create a political sphere where religious standards take precedence over democratic principles (Waseem, 2002).

The political system of Pakistan has maintained dynastic rule throughout its history, as the Bhutto, Sharif, and Pir Pagara families have maintained their political power across multiple generations. The continuous dominance of these political families prevents progress because their grassroots patronage systems create electoral advantages which undermine essential democratic practices of merit-based selection and open public accessibility. The families control political parties and government resources which create challenges for new leaders who want to implement their ideas through democratic processes. The political system in Pakistan functions through dynastic rule which maintains existing power structures and decreases the efficiency of democratic institutions (Waseem, 2002).

3.14 Critique and Limitations of Pir Families' Political Role

Pir families use their historical power to control current political activities in Pakistan because this situation defines the country's political atmosphere. The power structure used by them draws its main criticism because it depends on personal connections instead of actual government procedures. The spiritual power of their religious authority enables them to dominate democratic systems which results in a political system that acts like a quasi-feudal system and restricts the existence of multiple political organizations. The Pir families created a partnership with military governments during the Zia-ul-Haq period which raises doubts about their support for dictatorial leaders who came to power through non-democratic methods (Ahmed, 1980). The Pir families use their alliances to create a power structure that benefits them while excluding all other political groups and community development organizations from decision-making power.

The political power of Pir families faces a major restriction because their members cannot meet modern democratic requirements that exist during this period of increased political awareness and public engagement. The political power that these families pass down to their children limits grassroots political development, because young people today want to advance their political careers in new ways. Their dedication to religious authority prevents them from gaining new followers who will help them control their political power (Waseem, 2002).

The most critical threat to democratic governance exists in societies where religious authorities maintain significant control over political matters. In Pakistan religious leaders utilize their spiritual power to obtain political control which violates democratic principles that establish equal rights and merit-based systems. People develop loyalty to their spiritual leaders through religious legitimacy which establishes patronage networks that create a feudal-like clientelist system which prevents citizens from participating in democratic processes (Waseem, 2002). Democratic political competition experiences disruption because followers of religious leaders prioritize their spiritual leaders over democratic principles.

The clash between democracy and religious authority becomes more pronounced when religious leaders support authoritarian governments, which Zia-ul-Haq accomplished by using religious legitimacy to justify his anti-democratic rule through military governance. The religious elite gain increased power through such partnerships, which prevents democratic development, while political control remains with religious families who restrict public political participation (Jaffrelot, 2015).

People criticize Pir families because their participation in undemocratic governments creates legitimacy for authoritarian rule. The military regimes that included Zia-ul-Haq used these families to destroy democratic institutions because they collaborated with dictatorial leaders who offered them political and material benefits. Their partnership supported patronage networks which increased their religious and political power while blocking democratic progress. The opponents of this participation argue that it has worsened the existing feudal political system which limits political competition and reduces public representation (Ahmed, 1980; Waseem, 2002).

The potential tension between spiritual authority and political accountability concerning Pir families in Pakistan represents a critical concern. Spiritual leaders frequently possess considerable influence because of their religious status, which enables them to engage in political activities without facing accountability. Their followers might choose to support their spiritual leader instead of democratic principles, which allows political leaders to operate without official monitoring. This situation creates governance difficulties because decision makers will choose spiritual matters over public needs, which will lead to a loss of democratic oversight (Waseem, 2002; Ahmed, 1980).

The combination of spiritual and political functions creates ethical problems which need to be solved. The Pir leaders struggle to fulfill their responsibilities toward the people because their religious obligations conflict with their political duties. The existing system of patron-client relationships creates social inequality which prevents the development of a political culture that includes all people (Hussain, 2008).

The democratic processes of Pakistan face their most severe challenges because of how Pir families use their religious authority which maintains control over political power to undermine democratic systems. The political patronage extended by these families can establish clientelistic networks which enable voters to trade their electoral backing for political loyalty and governmental advantages thus creating a risk to the electoral process (Waseem, 2002).

The historical connection between their organization and military governments has repressed political diversity which led to the loss of fundamental rights and the exclusion of political opponents. The existing political environment maintains a system that prioritizes loyalty above responsibility which obstructs the establishment of genuine democratic governance (Khan, 2005).

Dynastic politics operates through its centralization of power to specific families who hold political authority while this system restricts political competition and diverse political pathways.

The political system of Pakistan is dominated by Pir families who use hereditary succession to maintain political control which creates a system that lacks accountability to voters. The established system of political power produces an environment which disregards new political leaders and movements while it perpetuates a system of clientelism that weakens democratic institutions (Waseem, 2002). The social structures create barriers that restrict people from moving up the social ladder which prevents them from taking part in their communities and this situation leads to lower standards of governance.

The Military-Pir partnerships in Pakistan create a dangerous situation for political diversity because they establish an environment where military power and spiritual leadership combine to exclude nonviolent political viewpoints. The military alliance with Pir families allows them to establish their power, because they receive official backing from the state while their political rivals face elimination. The relationship enables decision-making at high levels, which creates obstacles for new political parties to establish themselves (Zahid, 2008).

The democratic processes of Pakistan face their most severe challenges because of how Pir families use their religious authority which maintains control over political power to undermine democratic systems. The political patronage extended by these families can establish clientelistic networks which enable voters to trade their electoral backing for political loyalty and governmental advantages thus creating a risk to the electoral process (Waseem, 2002).

5. Conclusion

The Pagara family has historically controlled the political landscape of Pakistan through their power during military rule times. The Pagaras used their role as spiritual leaders to gain political power during the Ayub Khan and Zia-ul-Haq administrations. The military officials established strategic partnerships with the organization, which permitted them to sustain and expand their authority over Sindh's governmental and administrative functions. The military leaders used their alliance system to establish their rule because they wanted to create a centralized power structure. The military governments needed the Pagaras' social and political power, which created a mutual relationship with the family that used their influence to dominate their constituents.

The Pagara family's spiritual authority functioned as the main force behind their political decision-making. The Hur Jamaat leaders succeeded in gaining the loyalty of thousands of followers who believed their leadership provided both spiritual direction and political support. The Pagaras used their combination of religious devotion and political support to serve as political power brokers who helped their allies gain electoral success. The military regimes considered their advanced spiritual status as an essential asset to help them legitimize their authority through religious leaders while they fought against democratic challenges. The Pagaras used this partnership to acquire essential resources and state positions, which would help them maintain their political relevance in the changing political landscape.

The Pagara family and military officials established a clientelism system which became a fundamental part of Pakistani political systems. The family-built patronage networks which enabled them to distribute state assets to their loyal supporters who helped them maintain their power. The clientelistic system gave them increased control over Sindh while it also impacted the distribution of political power throughout the region.

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