

Biradari Politics in Punjab: A Case Study of District Jhang

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Abstract

Throughout history, kinship (Baradarism) links have been essential to human social, economic, and political life. From the early phases of political advancement from coping with the typical and straightforward state of affairs to the sophisticated systems of governance used today in this age of globalism, the foundation of community and the state reflect much to this unifying force. Although familial politics are prevalent in tribal societies worldwide, these relationships continue to be crucial to the establishment of civil governments, particularly in developing nations like Pakistan, Indonesia, and the majority of African states. These connections were especially strengthened by non-democratic forces, such as military regimes, in order to reduce the influence of political parties in Pakistani politics. The aim of this study is to examine how Baradarism functions in the politics of district Jhang, Pakistan. The assessment and proof show that the Baradary technique has been one of the primary drivers shaping the democratic process since Pakistan's founding and that biradaries' politics keep playing an important function in Jhang's economic and political affairs. One cannot think of the politics of Jhang if there is no Baradary politics. This research paper aims to bring out the role of brotherhood in the politics of Jhang generally and in district Jhang especially. Therefore, it is to find out in a detail and well-research manner. The research paper follows the qualitative approach along with the secondary data which has been collected from various resources such as research paper, articles in newspaper and other sources. In addition to this, the theory of **Structural-functionalism** is applied where it focuses on the roles and functions of social institutions like biradaries in retaining stability in the society, mobilizing resources, resolving conflicts and social order.

Key words: Baradary Politics, Elections, Punjab, Jhang, Role of Baradaries.

Introduction

Aristotle, a very famous Greek philosopher, said that man is a social animal. This means that a man cannot be alone without his fellowmen. Therefore, an association, attachment, emotional connection, and adoption of shared traits by someone belonging to a certain group derived from the same ancestor is known as biradari. Biradari, which means "brotherhood," comes from the Persian word biradari, which means "brother." Several social strata are divided among South Asian Muslims based on biradari, particularly in Pakistan and India. According to scholar Anatol Lieven, biradari is the most powerful force in Pakistani society, more vital and powerful than any ideological, religious, or ethnic factors. In Pakistan, political parties and coalitions are typically

founded on the Biradari system rather than ideas. Biradari, *qaum*, and *zat* are seen as the most significant and robust ties in Punjabi culture, and they are frequently preferred when forming political coalitions and winning the allegiance of members of the same caste. The caste system has been in place in Indo-Pak for ages, if we look at its history. People often belong to a biradari that is meant to direct people in their day-to-day social life through a set of laws and regulations, or it can be expressed as norms and values pertaining to marital patterns, employment, leisure, enjoyment, and a host of other social issues (Ghafoor, 2014). Iqra (2022) puts her arguments that both the rural and urban area of Jhung communities are heavily impacted by biradarism. Due to its deep roots in rural biradari and their political movements, it has a greater effect in rural areas. This culture is passed down through the generations. This type of clientele exists. When a biradari supports the chosen candidate, he returns the favor by supporting the biradari. They become even more united as a result of this reciprocal friendship. Although they are not secured, biradarism can bind themselves into a tight knot when things become tough. It is always led by an elder, who may not be chosen through an election process but is simply the most senior and well-respected member of his group or biradari, who grants him certain powers and responsibilities. Furthermore, it would not be pointless to say that the Local biradarism and Nazims associated with majority biradarism had taken control of local bodies. These connections played a significant role in national elections and affected the outcomes of municipal elections. Biradarism, or the dominant caste system, is a defining feature of Punjab's social structure. Both locally and nationally, it affects the political system. It was strengthened by Zia's initiatives. The "localization of politics" was one of General Zia's most enduring political legacies and has arguably been the most detrimental to political parties. As a result, national politics lost political traction. Punjabi politics began to revolve around local identities and issues (Ahmad, 2009). Politics of Jhung has been influenced by multiple factors out of which the *Baradarism* is one. This has influenced the whole political system in the district of Jhung. Various *biradarism* are there for different purposes. Actually, the political parties never add this factor in their political manifestoes though they have a strong and paramount presence in the political landscape of the Jhung district. It is clear thing to know that this factor is involved local, provincial and national elections to favor their political party and specific candidate. Even, they form the forward alliances in government. People with personal skills, no political experience, and no family services are responsible for this kind of circumstance. As a result, measures were implemented to heighten tensions between each other. If biradari could be organized and united on the basis of this difference, one would be against the other. As a result, a specific biradari was marketed and the Baradarism motto was reinforced. This is due in part to the fact that some of its members have gained national and provincial authority (Iqra, 2022). Ghafoor (2014) further explains that some studies, which have been already conducted, demonstrate that the idea of a political system based on biradari and the employment of its attire for political ends are akin to a game created and endorsed by political parties in order to further their own political goals. In Punjab, local biradarism contributed as a pressure group and influenced political parties. The importance and roles of caste and biradari are highly significant in Punjab's financial, political, and cultural landscapes, particularly in the lack of national advantages and social security offered by the state. In Punjab's rural districts, biradari continue to play an active part in operational and problem-solving capacities as "parya" and "panchayat" (Ahmed, 2013). Furthermore, it was suggested that biradari is effective at both ends, regardless of whether the location is urban or rural, and that its degree of operation may vary depending on the area. People of various socioeconomic strata are also self-assured and proud to display their caste affiliation because it serves a variety of functions, such as facilitating marriage agreements, resolving disputes within and between castes, creating a network of social ties to encompass the web of social contact, serving as a point of

identity, and appealing to the respect and honor that each respective zat or caste enjoys in Punjabi culture.

Problem statement

There are various areas which have been dug out by various researchers. The same goes here. Various aspects of the concern topic have been researched but this topic seems missing in the research perspective. For that reason, it was aimed to find out the role of biradaries in various aspects like electoral campaigns, alliances, voter behavior and the impacts of governance in public policy at district Jhung in Punjab. Therefore, the research aims to find out these aspects in a well-research manner.

Questions

- How do biradaries influence electoral campaigns, alliances, and voter behavior?

Objectives

- To identify the major biradaris and their influence on local and regional governance.

Literature review

Both Punjab's urban and rural regions are heavily impacted by biradarism. It has a greater impact in rural areas because to its intimate linkages to local communities and political movements. This culture is passed down through the generations. A form of clientalism, perhaps. Voting for the nominated candidate, a biradari returns the favor by supporting the biradari. They become even more united as a result of this reciprocal friendship. The establishment of passport office in Marikiwal, Sialkot due to Dr.Firdous Ashaq Awan is example of that system (Humaira, 2020). Kamran (2008) adds that historically, the majority of people in Jhang have been Sunni, but there are also others who practice an intercessional form of Islam, where the Sufis are revered as the go-between for God and humanity. As a result, the saint and shrine are essential to the Jhang people's religious expression. There is a sizable following for Fard Ganj Shakar of Pakpattan, Jaall al-Din Shah Surkh Bukhre of Uch, and Baha al-Eaq of Multan in Jhang. Despite being a minority, the Shia have historically held landed power. Due to their size, influence, and political clout, the Sials are the most powerful of the nearly eighteen birdars that live in rural Jhang. The Syeds are also affluent and influential in politics. The majority of Jhang's population lives in rural areas. Rajoa in Tehsil Chaniot and Shah Jiwna in Tehsil Jhang are two notable Syed families. Nonetheless, there is a noticeable Syed presence in Uch and Shorkot. The majority of them may trace their ancestry back to Sayyid Jall al-Dn Surkh Bukhare and Shber Shah. Humaira (2020) further adds to her esteems that In Pakistan, biradarism has been important at different periods in time, both during the military's reign and during elections for national or local bodies. These biradaries were typically employed by military rulers as a means of influencing the political landscape to their advantage, which is why non-party base elections were their preferred method of obtaining necessary outcomes of the elections. The Gujjars, Jatts, Rajputs, Arains, Baloch, and Sayyads are the most significant and well-known political allies of Punjab. Typically, the district's important biradari is used to select the district administration. Political leadership is dominated by the Jatt and Arain in central Punjab, the Rajput biradari in northern Punjab, and the Bloch biradari in southern Punjab. At first, the district Jhung was a part of Multan and Sargodha division but at the current time, it belongs to the Faisalabad division. Geographically speaking, Jhang is separated into three parts: the Thal in the western portion of the River Jhelum, the fertile plain on the eastern side, and the lands along the sides of Chaj Doab. There is a lot of inhibition in this area. There are a lot of biradaris in the population based on the economic assets of farmers, businessmen, property owners and the working class (Egler, 1960). Furthermore, it adds with genealogical ancestry, language, and sect. Because of their power, all of these biradaris participate in the local politics

through established biradarism (Lieven, 2012). The major castes and biradaris in these districts; the Chiniot and Jhang are Sials Sahibzaadaaz, Jats, Gillotars, Balochs, Nissowanas, Maghianas, Khokhars, Lalis, Nauls, Qazis, Sipra, Syeds, Qureshis, Khojas (Sheikhs) and Rajputs (Madan, 1995). From a village, Lalian became the sub-tehsil of Chiniot, then the tehsil of Jhang, and finally the tehsil of the district of Chiniot. Lalis are straightforward individuals who, following Syeds and these 20–25 Lalis families, hold a significant amount of the land in the area plays a crucial part in Chiniot district politics (Lali, 2016) (Haral, 2016). From 1920, these dominating classes have played a significant influence in the election process. Shah Daultana Syeds have a number of well-known figures who served as sociopolitical elites for three generations. Sardar Hussain, G. M. Shah, Muhammad Ali, Zulfiqar Ali, Sardar Tahir, Ghulam Abbas, Zafer Abbas, and Fazzal Abbas were among these shahs (Haral, 2016). In terms of practical procedures and methods of maintaining domination, particularly through cooperation and consent, it is the most notable example of these castes' triumphs. One electable was replaced, demonstrating how the ruling families and their representatives already had a firm grip on local trends in the same biradari as another (Gramci, 1996). This is best illustrated by the case of Muhammad Ali Shah of Rajoa, who was succeeded by Muhammad Tahir Shah, who was succeeded by Zulfikar Ali, Muhammad Ali Shah's son. To secure their wins, many families even engage in an additional ferocity during election campaigns and on Election Day (Shah, 2017). Shah (2017) further adds that the religious-spiritual culture manipulates the uneducated public's perceptions in order to force the followers to choose representatives from their sect to serve on legislative bodies. They are also able to gain the support of the middle class thanks to personal friendships, biradari bonds, and sociocultural recognition. This circumstance prevents other biradaris from winning, as demonstrated by Sheikh Salamana Syeds, who are very appealing to the middle class. Mian Syed Salahoun Shah defeated Sardar Syed Altaf Hussain Shah under the B.D. system, and this family wisely protected Syed Biradari's support. Even if they are from the same clan, the ruling Biradari will not accept the triumph of any other middle-class family. In honor of Hazart Sakhi Sarwar, the Syed biradaris, particularly those who own darbars or tombs, frequently commemorate festival and Melas at the district and provincial levels as well as the twelve-month progressive festivals. Urs are set up to support the natural ethos that firmly holds people's political, social, religious, and economic beliefs. Pirs/Gaddi Nasheens, who are the religious and spiritual leaders of the Mureedis, use Urs as their finest election campaign tactic to persuade people to vote for the concerned Pirs; if they don't, they will be viewed as murtadd, kafir, or unbelievers. Because Moulvis depends on these feudal lords, even the mosques and other relevant institutions are held accountable for the election campaigns of its leaders (Munawwar, 2017). Ghafoor (2014) adds that during local body elections in Pakistan, the Biradari system was significant at various points in time. In Punjabi politics, the most significant and useful biradaris are Gujjars, Jatts, Rajputs, Bloachs, Araiens, and Syeds. Typically, the key biradari of each district are chosen to serve as the district administration. Balochs are in charge of politics in southern Punjab, Jatts and Araiens are in middle Punjab, and Rajputs are in northern Punjab. The results of Pakistan's political system as a whole are impacted by the division of biradris into several regions of Punjab. The majority of participants—nearly 40.4% of men and 26.8% of women in various districts of Punjab—strongly believed that biradari is crucial to local or grassroots political activity. The majority of respondents concur that the influence of the biradari in a particular neighborhood shapes local politics. Biradari's role and impact are frequently observed in both general elections and post-election political activity within their specific community. Additionally, it is noted that the elected Candidates were observed making every attempt to further their own biradari's interests. If the role of biradaris is not included, Punjabi politics cannot reach its pinnacle. Biradarism is at the heart of the client-patron connection that has developed as a result of the various previously listed factors. Biradaris even

act as pressure groups and offer explosive content to generate the fervor and competitive environment needed for political campaigns. However, because voters' thinking becomes biased, localized, and self-serving, this trend is dangerous for both national integrity and true democracy. He is not prepared to endorse the national ideology and give national issues precedence. The dynamic political parties have the power to eradicate this issue, but regrettably, they are compelled to give tickets to candidates from the ruling parties since each party aims to win as many seats as possible (Humaira, 2020). The following table shows the different *biradaries* in different tehsils of Jhang where they have a strong hold in the entire tehsil over the others.

Biradari	land owners	Tehsil
Bhatti	Taimur Bhatti	Jhang
Chila Sial	Akram and Azam Chila	Jhang
Gadi Baloch	Ghulam Ahmed	Jhang
Baloch	Iftkhar Khan and Alina Iftkhar	Jhang

Gramsci (1996) further adds that other notable families also have a presence; they don't own many properties, but they have grown their companies and gained political clout. Among them were Sheikhs and Janjuas with well-known names, such as Waqas Akram, Sheikh Yaqub, Sheikh Akram, and Muhammad Iqbal. Additionally, they have kept their strong hold in these areas through consent and collaboration. They do not tolerate the dominance and even do not like to be subservient to the other middle-class *biradaries*. Fukuyama (2018) says that others typically cast their votes for candidates who are the leaders of clans, prominent figures, or the defenders of a particular emotional, divine, or collective identity as the fundamentally important elements of experience, environment, and essence. Due to their respect for religion and the economy. These electable are typically narrowly focused on the lower classes, but they are more inclusive in elite meetings. Due to the frequent resurgence of biradarism in rhetoric, these circumstances result in voters casting appreciative votes for these classes. For so many reasons, they are opting for their clans and *biradaries*. They even use a special kind of slogan for their leaders such *Jab rab da vote Sayyed da* which means that the soul belongs to God and vote belongs to Sayyed. Shah (2016) adds again that because of their colonial feeling of superiority, these biradaris, who are really elites, never give normal guys any space and don't care about their sentimental and foolish behavior. They even disregard the demands and wants of the lower classes in favor of their own financial interests. Rather than this, they are successful politicians who view their wins as a hereditary legacy. By pursuing contemporary schools and landing jobs in management, they ideologically oppress the lower class in an effort to get more social recognition. The main strategies used to prevent the bourgeoisie from rising are their frantic plans, inadequate progressive framework, joining local contractors and bureaucracy for economic benefits, indirect increases in conflicts, lack of educational efforts, use of British policies, and referencing well-known Biradaris figures. Because of this, the powerful Jhang families are still able to maintain their dominance in both social and ideological spheres. The lack of financial opportunities, illiteracy, and decreased social mobility are the other factors. The cause is the cooperation between the people and the rulers, as well as inside Biradaris. These kinds of coalitions were identified in Jhang politics from 1923 to 2008. The cooperation of the Qazi and Syed families in the 2002 general elections, the Syed-Lali cooperation in the 2005 local body elections, and the Qazis and Sahibzaadaaz cooperation in the Zila-Nazim elections serve as examples of this. More noteworthy is the partnership between Sials and Syeds of ShahJewana. Major Biradaris, including as the Zakir and Manzoor group, the Moulvi and Sheikh group, and Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan in Jhang, perceive the coalitions as an attack on their rivals. The Moulvi and feudal groups, Balochs, Gadi-Balochs, and Bhattis' alliance with Sials

and Syeds were also encountered by the Qaisar Ahmed Sheikh and Meher Muhammad Hayaat groupings. The Sials, the Moulvi group, and the Syeds and Sheikhs of Jhang and Chiniot are all on the same page (Shah H. , 2016). The political environment in Jhang demonstrated that prominent biradaris worked together for their political goals not only with other biradaris but also with members of the lower classes. Another factor that contributes to the creation of powerful biradaris and political representation is matrimonial alliance. Examples of this include marriages between Syed and Qazi, Bhatti and Syed, Nissowana and Lali, Qazis and Lalis, Sials and Chaudaris, and Syeds and Sials. Biradari politics, as opposed to ideological politics, were strengthened by the ongoing selection of the same electable. This essay concentrated on the many strategies employed by biradaris to hang onto power in the political and economic spheres. Nevertheless, these biradaris mobilized Sunnis and Shias using religious cards (Kamran, 2009). With very few exceptions to the broad pattern driven by the furniture industry, other businesses, education, clan internal problems, the constant course of egalitarian electioneering, and the introduction of new generations, the political behavior in rural areas remains unchanged, while the partial sections of citizens in urban areas of Jhang, Shorkot, and Chiniot remain unchanged. On the other hand, emerging top class competitors once more prioritized collateral politics. The underprivileged receive education and propagation materials, but the elites always stay at the top. The political climate after 2008 showed that Jhang and Chiniot were once more ruled by elites, who had established their political, cultural, and economic identities. Resultantly, the *biradari* politics is successful through the domination of the factionalism and *biradarism* (Gramci, 1996). The Syeds (Sayyid) and the Sials (Siyal) are the two most prominent biradar groups in Jhang. All of the Syeds are Shia. With the exception of the Bharwnas of Tehsil Jhang, the Sials are also like this. The tehsils of Ahmedpur Sial and Shorkot Sial are home to the majority of Shia-affiliated Sials. Birdars were incorporated into the Raj's structure of government after 1857. Through acts of investiture, the birdar heads—whom the British referred to as "natural leaders"—were given favor in exchange for their services to the Raj. The Sials and Syeds were rival groups in Jhang's case. In Pakistan after independence, political rivalry persisted unabated. Interestingly, there have been cases of intra-kinship rivalry during the 1980s and 1990s, where one faction within the same kinship fueled sectarian tensions to the detriment of the other. Thus, disputes inside and between families had a significant role in igniting sectarian tensions in Jhang (Kamran T. , 2008).

Discussion

The above mentioned data shows that the various clans in the district Jhung of Punjab have to do with the politics. There are some notable biradaris who are playing the dominant role in the politics of Jhang district. These are the Syed, Sial, Rajpots, Awans and Balooch. These have dominated the politics in various ways and made the whole politics a web trap which has engulfed each and every aspect of the concerned area. The above discussion shows that the *biradari* system has made the democratic setup of the area a fragile and a honey trap among their own clans. The democratic norms and values have been shattered by the dominant strata of the Jhang district society where a common man cannot get enough vote. Either he has to support the powerful biradari or get the support of the biradari. Otherwise, the situation would be something else. There seems the embezzlement democratic process through these biradari system. There are some negative impacts created by these dominant classes in the society which are as follow;

Monopoly in politics: The common man is put aside by these people. They are the only classes who consider politics only their due rights. They decide the future of the area rather than by the public. The incapacitated leaders come forward by favoritism and nepotism. Their roles are just nominal and they are more authoritative rather than a supportive one towards the common man.

Biradarries control the political landscape in Jhang. Wider involvement is restricted by the concentration of power among a small number of powerful clans, such as the Sials, Syeds, and others. In addition to suppressing rivalries, this concentration of political power impedes the democratic process. Because qualified members of lesser clans are sometimes excluded, loyalty rather than merit drives the political system.

Cast-based discrimination: Each caste cast their vote for their own biradari rather than supporting the other. This has caused more harm to the politics of popularity and democracy. They are mostly resisting to change in the system along with that, the society and biradari. They want to be in a status-quo for perpetuating their political authority. This division frequently takes the form of caste-based prejudice in Jhang, which marginalizes some groups, especially those with less political or financial power. Biradarries from lower castes or minorities usually have less access to work, education, and upward mobility chances. A vicious cycle of poverty and exclusion is brought about by this institutional prejudice. Intergenerational inequality is sustained when people from less powerful backgrounds encounter major obstacles in their pursuit of socioeconomic advancement.

Resistance to development: Another major issue is how the biradari system affects development programs and resource distribution. In Jhang, development initiatives are frequently focused on areas controlled by influential clans, neglecting other areas. Overall progress is slowed and regional inequities are made worse by this unequal resource distribution. Biradarries can present the problem of resistance to change. Modernization initiatives frequently clash with the traditional norms maintained by powerful clans. Infrastructure projects, women's empowerment programs, and educational changes may encounter resistance if they pose a challenge to the current biradari system. The biradari setup focuses only for their own interests. They avoid the common developmental programs. They do not come in the radar of public after getting to their desired positions. This thing has make it hard for the area to be developed.

Chaos and adversaries: In Jhang, inter-biradari disputes are frequent occurrences that frequently result in disputes that turn violent. Long-lasting feuds can be sparked by disagreements over territory, resources, or political power, upsetting social harmony and stability. In addition to taking lives, such disputes take resources and focus away from growth and governance. Resultantly, the chaos perpetuates and the administration halts due to their incapacitated attitude. Deeply ingrained in South Asian tradition, the biradari system plays a crucial role in the sociopolitical structure of Jhang, a district in Punjab, Pakistan. Although it promotes a feeling of community and identity, its influence can also have negative consequences. The detrimental effects of biradarries on the district's growth, the legal system, and general social cohesion are examined in detail below.

Conclusion

Man's creation of civilization is a singular occurrence, and its slow progression from the hunting and gathering stage to industrial and scientific development has been marked by numerous setbacks, lapses, and breakthroughs. Voting behavior is still heavily influenced by filial links, including family, kinship, clan, and tribe. Biradari politics and familial ties are quite strong in the Punjab province. The total situation in several districts demonstrates how important this phenomena is. Biradarism is pervasive in the Jhang district. Jhang is home to a number of different ethnic groups, including the Jatt, Gujjar, Awan, Kashmiri, Arain, Raput, Sayyad, and others. The prosperous political parties take advantage of this feature. It is concluded that local bodies' politics in actual fact is biradari politics and with the process of local bodies system it is playing vital role. The voting has caused grave rifts within civil society by stirring up the tribal feuds and biradarism. People are already thinking of how to push forward their families and clans in the next election.

For a person to win, he better belong to a dominant ‘biradari’. Every political party had nominated candidates belonging to larger clans, is very near to the result of this study. It is human nature to exercise ethnic preference for their own group in the form of aggression against others. Some advantages are also found in the study. Biradarism assumes the status of the central character in the local bodies’ elections. It fills the gap of political parties. It is a type of contest which is essential feature of democracy. In Pakistan the biradari system provides security and power for millions of its members. It gives them an identity because biradari is not just a matter of being a Jatt or a Rajput, it is also a kinship system. In short Ayub’s basic democracy, Zia’s rootless democracy promoted biradarism and by holding party-less local body elections, politics based on ethnicity and Biradarism has been given chance. The local body policies of the Ayub’s regime which was basic democracies, like wise Zia’s ‘rootless democracy’ and Musharraf’s ‘devolution plan’ has not been practiced with factual sagacity except the promotion of biradarism. Political awareness should be necessitated by the ruling regimes in the social fabric of the society.

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