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## **Perception of Political Science in Pakistan: A Narrative Review of Challenges and Career Prospects**

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### **ABSTRACT**

As a core branch of social sciences, political science is crucial for understanding public policy, governance, and societal evolution. However, compared to technological and medical professions, political science is often perceived as less prestigious and less market-oriented in Pakistan. This review critically examined how political science is viewed in Pakistan, the obstacles that learners and instructors encounter, and the emerging opportunities that are developing in this discipline. Existing literature from credible academic and news outlets is examined using a qualitative narrative review methodology. Results show that the field's downfall is triggered through societal bias, inadequate funding, outdated teaching techniques, and a lack of political education. The article concluded with suggestions for enhancing the political science curriculum through awareness campaigns, promoting research, and modifying the curriculum.

**Keywords:** Political Science Education, Social Sciences in Pakistan, Higher Education, Perception Studies, Career Opportunities, Policy Reform.

### **Introduction**

Political science is a systematic study of politics, governance, and public policy. It explores how decision-making, authority allocation, and the impact of governmental acts on society. It helps to understand the complexity of contemporary society. Political sociology, international relations, comparative politics, political economy, public policy, and political theory are subfields that make up the vast area of political science (OP Jindal Global University, 2022). Suarez (2024) explains that the discipline's core goal is to comprehend the political aspects of both domestic and international challenges, provide long-term solutions, and implement improved public policies and initiatives. Akingbohunge (2025) emphasizes that the study of political science becomes not just relevant but indispensable in an era defined by rapid technological advancement, shifting power dynamics, and high citizen participation. It is the central part of an informed citizenry, the foundation of



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effective governance, and a key to personal empowerment and societal progress. However, political science is underappreciated in Pakistan despite its increasing significance in the global world. Muzaffar and Javaid (2018) noted that social sciences, particularly political science, are considered less prestigious than fields like technology, engineering, or medicine. This perception is reinforced by inadequate political education at the school level, where the curriculum covers less than 5% of fundamental political information. Bukhari et al. (2024) observe that the material in basic subjects taught from the primary level, such as Social Studies, Civics, and Pakistan Studies, is still limited and mostly historical, emphasizing independence, state building, and notable figures. As a result, students' political literacy and willingness to pursue higher-level political science diminish. Haq (2014) argues that only a few institutions offer social science degrees, leaving students with limited options at the intermediate level. Consequently, many opt for market-oriented areas. This systemic neglect harms the discipline's reputation, deters students, and lowers enrollment. Improving political science education is critically needed for informed policymaking and democratic growth by addressing gaps in civic literacy and governance reforms (Government of Pakistan's Annual Report, 2023–2024).

This review interprets the status of political science in Pakistan using Boncourt's (2021) framework, which shows how political systems, societal perceptions, and state-level academic support shape the discipline's evolution. Several studies have discussed the general decline of social sciences, but few systematically assess how people perceive political science in Pakistan's educational landscape. This article synthesizes existing literature to examine perceptions, challenges, and potential career opportunities related to political science in Pakistan.

### Objectives of the Study

- To explore perception about Political Sciences in Pakistan.
- To review challenges and career options in this field.

### Methodology

A qualitative narrative review approach serves as the foundation for this review. The findings of this review are thematically categorized based on recurring issues in the literature. Relevant literature related to political science education and its perception in Pakistan was reviewed. These sources included journal articles, government reports, policy papers, academic books, and credible newspaper articles. Important ideas, repeating points, and common issues discussed by different authors were identified. After that, the information was organized through thematic categorization in a way that matched the objectives of the review. These themes were perceptions about political science, challenges in political science education, and career opportunities. This helped to summarize the existing knowledge, highlight recurring patterns in the literature, and present a clear understanding of the topic. Since the study relies only on secondary data, no primary data collection, such as surveys or interviews, was involved.



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### **Theoretical and Historical Context**

#### *Theoretical Framework*

This review draws on Boncourt's (2021) framework as a conceptual lens to better comprehend the condition of political science in Pakistan. According to Boncourt, political science develops differently in each nation and is influenced by three key factors: (1) the sort of political system, (2) the degree to which political science concepts are adopted by society, and (3) how much support or pressure colleges and governments exert on the discipline. This model is suitable because all three factors strongly affect political science in Pakistan. It explains why political science in Pakistan struggles with little funding, insufficient public awareness, outmoded teaching techniques, and limited prominence in the education system. According to Boncourt, Pakistan's issues are comparable to those of many other nations, particularly those with inadequate support for social sciences. This framework helps us comprehend the causes for the discipline's current situation and the kinds of modifications that are needed.

#### *Historical Context*

The historical development of political science as an academic discipline provides essential insight into why its status and perception vary across national contexts. Haq (2014) asserts that social science is the foundation of every society assisting humankind to recognize and resolve the issues that have arisen throughout society's development. Maddocks (2025) notes that Political science being a branch of social sciences, is a discipline committed to exploring and clarifying the policy making, distribution of power and decision making.

The discipline has experienced a long and revolutionary evolution before becoming a recognized academic discipline. Classical thinkers such as Plato and Aristotle lay its foundations, as stated by Siddiqui (2025), the field gradually transitioned from philosophical reflections on the state to a more systematic and empirical examination of political behavior, institutions, and public policy. Western universities particularly in Europe and the United States played a vital role in institutionalizing political science, introducing scientific methods, comparative analysis, and behavioral research. According to Muzaffar & Javaid (2018) children were introduced to fundamental political concepts, democratic principles and an awareness of political systems at a very young age in many European nations. In order to ensure that young people acquired the civic skills necessary to engage with society effectively, Germany established specialized institutions for democratic education. Similarly, Roskin (2025) explain that in the United States, political science became a separate discipline in the late 19th century and gradually shifted from studying institutions to studying real political behavior through new methods like psychology, statistics, and surveys. These global examples show how early civic education and modern research approaches strengthened political science as a credible and scientific field.

Hassan (2010) shows that political science in the Arab world emerged within colonial legal traditions and only evolved into an independent discipline in the mid-20th century a pattern strikingly similar to Pakistan's post-colonial development. Reflecting this



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regional trend, Ahmed (2015) describe that in Pakistan, the roots of political science and other social sciences are embedded in the colonial administrative system inherited from British rule. Following independence, very little effort was done and no clear policies were created to adapt the educational system, particularly higher education and social research. Muzaffar et al. (2020) argue that Pakistan's policy priorities were heavily industrial and technical, leaving little room for the growth of social sciences. This slow growth was also shaped by how the state controlled and structured academic knowledge. Moreover, as argued by Rahman (2015), Pakistan Studies serving an official national narrative, leaving little room for critical inquiry or independent social science research. The prioritization of ideological content over academic rigor limited the development of disciplines such as political science and shaped public perception of social sciences. Basharat explains that prior to Partition, Punjab University established the first Political Science department in the regions that make up the present day Pakistan in 1933. Its operations were suspended right after the Partition, but it quickly returned to lecturing. Additionally, the field as an entire began to evolve. By 2001, there were seven departments, an increase from only one in 1947 across public universities.

Following Boncourt's (2021) first dimension the influence of the political system the limited development of political science in Pakistan reflects decades of centralized governance, ideological control, and restricted academic freedom. Trailblazer (2023) notes that today, Political science is no doubt an established having long and illustrious history of teaching and research in numerous colleges and universities around the nation. More than 100 public and private colleges provide political science degree programs at various levels, including bachelor's, master's, MPhil, and PhD. However, despite this numerical growth, the discipline still faces challenges of perception, funding, and professional recognition, which continue to shape its trajectory in the country. Many universities either lack social-science departments entirely or offer very limited disciplines, reflecting long-standing regional inequalities and systemic neglect (The Express Tribune, 2017).

### **Perception of Political Sciences in Pakistan**

The literature shows that political science is generally perceived as a less prestigious and less practical subject in Pakistan. Students, teachers, and the general public all have different opinions about political science in Pakistan. Consistent with Boncourt's (2021) second dimension, the discipline suffers from low societal acceptance, which manifests in parental pressure, misconceptions about employability, and weak political literacy. Furthermore, the discipline's reputation in Pakistan is further damaged by such opinions, which support the notion that it is neither as robust nor as useful as other disciplines directly impact student enrollment.

#### ***Student Perspectives on Political Science***

According to Matthews (2019), student enrollment in political science drops when



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the discipline is seen as highly theoretical, lacking practical applicability, and offering minimal career clarity. These views greatly influence students' discipline choices, prompting many to favor courses that appear to provide more direct employment prospects, such as business, engineering, or computer science. This observation closely correlates with the situation in Pakistan, where students routinely voice similar concerns about the relevance and utility of political science. Henn et al. (2002) report that social sciences are often viewed as a "second choice" for those who could not secure admission in professional programs. Boys especially who pursue higher education with the goal of providing their families with long-term financial security and success view social science as unworthy to be studied and unproductive for the future. Additionally, girls are deterred from earning degrees in social sciences. The study by Akram and Sajjad (2021) demonstrates that feminist viewpoints are virtually absent in Pakistani political science academics, even if it does not specifically look at female students' enrollment decisions. The idea that political science is not a relevant or welcoming area for women may be exacerbated by this underrepresentation, which may deter female students from pursuing it.

### *Educators' Attitudes towards Political Science*

Ahmed et al. (2015) find that teachers' views on political science are divided. Many teachers acknowledge that subject fosters social responsibility, civic consciousness, and critical thinking. They consider that it crucial for assisting students in comprehending democratic participation, rights, obligations, and governmental systems. However, other teachers hold a contrasting perception, generally think they are less significant than natural or technical fields. They typically think that these disciplines are theoretical and have few job opportunities. They think that fields like engineering, medicine, or business are more valuable to society. This mixed attitude among faculty members often affects how the subject is taught. In many cases, teachers who view the field as less important are less likely to encourage student engagement or innovation in teaching methods. Such attitudes contribute to the persistence of outdated teaching approaches and limited classroom discussion on political issues.

### *Societal Views and Cultural Bias*

Zaman (2008) suggests that Pakistan's significant preference for STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields has a strong connection with the country's societal prejudice against political science. They are frequently seen as the main routes to both individual achievement and country progress. According to Arshad (2018), scientific students are thought to be cleverer, and everyone wants to belong to this status. As a result, funding for social science departments is reduced, and career counseling for students interested in these subjects is scarce. Many families discourage their children from pursuing political science in an environment where financial security has a significant impact on academic choices. Low political literacy, decreased citizen participation, and rising political indifference are all results of society's failure to acknowledge the discipline's civic importance. The study by Rahman (2015) further demonstrates how state-driven narratives affected the perspective of social sciences. Instead of fostering analytical



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thinking, the curriculum of foundational subjects often conveyed a predetermined ideological position, perpetuating the assumption that social sciences exist to serve political narratives rather than scientific knowledge. This contributed to the ongoing undervaluing of fields like political science.

### **Challenges**

Since gaining independence, Pakistan has remained a developing nation with governments showing the least care for education. People receive very little education, and what they obtain is often inadequate. Findings reveal that despite being one of the oldest and most relevant disciplines in social sciences, political science education in Pakistan continues to face a range of structural, pedagogical, and societal challenges. Drawing on Boncourt's (2021) third dimension state and institutional support the persistent challenges in Pakistan, such as outdated pedagogy, weak research infrastructure, and insufficient funding, illustrate a structural environment that restricts the growth of the discipline.

#### ***Lack of Political and Civic Education at Early Levels***

Khan (2022) emphasizes that the absence of organized political and civic foundation education at the school and college level. This limits the general political consciousness of students. The abilities of instructors to properly teach political topics is further hampered by a lack of curriculum support and inadequate teacher preparation. Bukhari et al. (2024) highlight that students are therefore discouraged from investigating other political viewpoints or examining contemporary global challenges. As a result, students enter higher education with low political awareness and little interest in the discipline. This early gap makes political science appear unfamiliar or difficult, reducing student motivation to pursue it further.

#### ***Outdated Pedagogy and Assessment Methods***

Nasreen et al. (2011) explain that persistent use of outdated methods, which frequently rely only on rote memorization and textbook reading, fail to grab pupils' interest in political subjects. Students' willingness to learn gets worse when they perceive the subject as boring and unrelated to current political issues due to the lack of discussion. Ullah (2025) argues that these methods prohibit pupils from connecting political ideas to current issues. As a result, they find it difficult to acquire the analytical abilities required to successfully comprehend and analyze political circumstances. Without class discussions, debates, simulations, or exposure to current affairs, students find the subject uninteresting or disconnected from real-world politics. Outdated assessment practices that focus on recalling facts rather than evaluating understanding further weaken learning outcomes.

#### ***Unemployment and Limited Career Guidance***

Mustafa (2019) observes another significant challenge is the absence of career counseling and structured employment pathways for political science graduates. Students are rarely aware of the variety of career opportunities available in public administration, policy analysis, research, teaching, journalism, and international relations, which exacerbates the issue due to the absence of organized career counseling at educational institutions. political science degrees are undervalued by companies in many areas since



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they are thought to provide nothing. Murtaza (2025) notes that about 30% of postgraduate youth unemployed because programmes misaligned with market demand. These circumstances deter students from selecting the course, which lowers enrollment overall.

### ***Lack of Interdisciplinary Study***

Maddocks (2025) argues that another major issue in political science education nowadays is the lack of integrative research. Students comprehension of how social, economic, and technological elements impact and are influenced by political decisions is hampered. Without multidisciplinary integration, students are unable to have a comprehensive understanding of contemporary issues like globalization, climate change, or digital governance. Students are unable to apply political theory to real-world situations due to strict curriculum structures and a lack of departmental cooperation. Promoting multidisciplinary research would increase the relevance. Comprehensive reforms, such as updating curricula, enhancing educational approaches, and bolstering institutional finance are necessary to address these problems.

### ***Systemic Neglect and Structural Problems***

Husain (2008) maintains that weak institutional capacity, antiquated academic procedures, and a research culture incapable of meeting national demands are the results of the state's historical absence of a cohesive public policy toward the social sciences. Due to insufficient training, a lack of academic leadership, and the predominance of rote learning, universities have developed into bureaucratic institutions with weak analytical capabilities, and significant empirical research is still hard to come by. This systemic neglect perpetuates the idea that social sciences notably political science is less significant, restricting its contribution to government, civic education, and evidence-based policymaking. These issues are the result of a long-term systemic dislike for social sciences at the national level, which continues to influence student preferences, the caliber of instruction, and the general standing of political science in Pakistan.

### **Career Opportunities in Political Sciences**

Political science is both a professional and an academic field, although students often assume that the discipline leads only to teaching or politics. The review finds that political science offers career opportunities in civil services, academia, research, media, and NGOs; however, students often lack awareness of these options. As Boncourt's (2021) model explains, societal perceptions and weak institutional linkages limit the visibility of career pathways in political science. Maddocks (2025) emphasized that strong research and analytical abilities are developed through studying political science, which also provides access to a wide range of professions outside of politics and government. Capacity to handle emergencies, resolve issues, Research, writing abilities, Presentation and public speaking abilities are the key abilities to succeed in political science. Trailblazer (2023) noted that graduates in political science can work in a variety of industries and fields that demand political expertise. Public Services, Academia, Non-governmental organizations and Media are some of the options from which graduates in political science can choose



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their career. Although the private sector in Pakistan isn't yet saturated with political science roles, the public sector provides a decent number of job opportunities explain below (Superior Group of Colleges, 2025).

### ***Public Sector and Civil Services***

Political science provides a strong base for careers in the civil services, including CSS, PMS, and other government recruitment examinations. Its focus on governance, public administration, political institutions, and current affairs directly aligns with the syllabus of major competitive exams. Graduates work in administration, foreign service, law enforcement, planning and development, local governance, and public policy units.

### ***Research and Development Sector***

Pakistan has a growing network of think tanks and policy research institutions including PILDAT, SDPI, IPRI, ISSI, CPDI, IPS, and various university-based research centers that require graduates who can analyze political trends, governance issues, and public policy challenges. These organizations conduct policy evaluations, governance assessments, legislative reviews, and socio-political research, offering roles such as research associate, policy analyst, governance specialist, and project coordinator. International development organizations such as UNDP, UNICEF, UN Women, USAID, Asian Development Bank, Friedrich Ebert, and British Council also hire political science graduates for democracy assistance, youth development, governance reforms, and civic education programs.

### ***Media and Journalism***

Political science graduates are increasingly employed in media houses, news agencies, and digital journalism platforms where they contribute to political reporting, editorial analysis, digital content creation, and current affairs programming. Many serve as political analysts, researchers, media planners, and communication strategists. With the rise of online journalism and policy-based content creation, political communication has become a significant career avenue.

### ***Academia and Educational Services***

Teaching remains a strong career pathway, particularly due to the expansion of political science departments in public and private universities. Graduates can pursue academic careers as lecturers, researchers, and curriculum developers after completing advanced degrees (MPhil/PhD). There is growing demand for faculty in political science, international relations, public policy, and peace and conflict studies.

### ***International Relations and Diplomatic Sector***

Political science is closely linked to foreign policy, diplomacy, and international



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affairs. Graduates may find opportunities in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, international organizations, diplomatic missions, cultural exchange programs, and global NGOs. Skills in negotiation, geopolitical analysis, and cross-cultural communication are particularly valuable in these roles.

### *NGOs, and Human Rights Organizations*

A large number of organizations working on human rights, gender equality, youth engagement, social justice, and civic education recruit political science graduates. Positions include advocacy officer, program manager, monitoring and evaluation officer, and social researcher. The discipline's focus on public issues, rights, and governance makes graduates suitable for social advocacy and community development roles.

### **Policy and Academic Reform Recommendations**

Ahmad (2020) argues that universities worldwide are improving the discipline by adopting twenty-first-century teaching approaches such as active learning, simulations, role-play, policy-writing workshops, and research-based learning. These modern instructional methods allow students to develop key transferable skills including analytical thinking, communication, collaboration, and digital literacy. However, incorporating global best practices into Pakistani universities can significantly increase the employability of graduates and make the discipline more relevant to contemporary job markets. Adopting these methods would also help bridge the skills gap and modernize political science programs in line with international standards. According to Saeed, Fatima, and Ahmed's (2022), it is evident that social science education in Pakistan has to be strengthened by enhancing curriculum design, expanding the pool of qualified staff, and guaranteeing greater support from HEC and government organizations. Their analysis reveals significant deficiencies in research infrastructure, finance, and training, which bolsters the suggestion that political science and social sciences be given greater funding, contemporary teaching strategies, and policy-level consideration. These improvements will help lessen the current imbalance between STEM and social science education and improve the general quality and perception of political science in the country. Rafi and Naveed (2025) provide following recommendations aim to improve the relevance, quality, and societal acceptance of the discipline.

### *Reforming Curriculum and Teaching Practices*

Ullah (2025) stresses that institutions have to first modify their curricula by including contemporary subjects like environmental sustainability, digital humanities, and global governance in order to build up relevancy. Pakistani universities need to prioritize education based on research, revise their curricula, and use active learning strategies. It should be mandatory for educational institutions to implement student-centered learning methodologies. Academic accountability is a crucial component that requires constant focus. Social sciences are intended to equip students with the knowledge and skills



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necessary to understand and shape society. But when schools become cemetery of ideas, the nation's intellectual and democratic progress is threatened.

### ***Enhancing Interdisciplinary Integration***

Fostering composite courses that blend business, social sciences, political studies, and technology can attract more students. Saeed, Fatima, and Ahmed (2022) believe that Pakistan's social sciences lack modern, interdisciplinary course formats, which inhibits student motivation and undermines academic advancement. Boncourt (2021) also stresses that the future of political science depends on its ability to connect with rising areas such as technology, management, and global studies. Therefore, merging political science with business, media, data analysis, and technology through composite courses can make the study more interesting, relevant, and appealing to students.

### ***Promoting Research and Academic Inquiry***

Educational institutions should offer internships and research projects that demonstrate how social sciences are implemented in the actual world. Matthews (2019) claims that students are more inclined to select political science when they can clearly grasp how the topic ties to practical skills and employability competencies. To increase student involvement, practical exercises like fieldwork, policy simulations, and applied research must to be incorporated into the curriculum.

### ***Strengthening Career Counseling and Industry Linkages***

Graduates in the humanities must offer internships through agreements with governmental agencies and non-governmental groups. Usman et al. (2022) stress that mentoring and job adaptation play a vital part in developing individuals' career success and professional confidence. This finding can guide adjustments in Pakistan's social science education system, where students often lack mentorship and clear information about employment options. Establishing institutional mentoring programs, alumni networks, and advisory services within political science departments would assist students develop the skills and support structures they require. This can significantly influence their impression of the discipline by giving students real career possibilities and practical applications of their education. According to Matthews (2019), a lot of student's steer clear of political science since they are uncertain about their job prospects. Students can better grasp career pathways in public administration, development, government, diplomacy, and civil society by strengthening university-industry ties.

### ***Increasing Public Awareness of the Discipline's Importance***

Public awareness programs ought to highlight the role of social sciences in building morally strong leaders and socially sensitive citizens. Findings from Usman et al. (2022) reveal that mentoring and career adaptability strongly impact individuals' feeling of professional direction and accomplishment. This shows that public awareness campaigns for political science should go beyond describing its societal value and also highlight the practical support mechanisms such as mentoring programs, alumni networks, and career counseling that can help students thrive. Displaying real instances of successful political science graduates, assisted by such tools, might help shift public opinions and develop



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better trust in the profession.

### Conclusion

The state of the social sciences is a very severe issue that has to be addressed immediately. The patterns identified in this review align with Boncourt's (2021) framework, demonstrating how Pakistan's political system, societal attitudes, and institutional support collectively shape the status of political science. Long-standing neglect, limited policy focus, and weak academic investment have contributed to the marginalization of the discipline. The government must incentivize academics to conduct social science research. Institutions should have to encourage students so that they opt subject related to social sciences. In order to prevent students from being only influenced by engineering and pure science, the government must also make room in the market for such individuals that study social sciences. These fields can reclaim their proper position in academia with swift action and a change in public perception. Beyond academic survival, this is about the moral and intellectual fabric of the country. Without the political science, we run the risk of producing a generation that is technically skilled but lacks the empathy and historical understanding necessary to manage a world that is getting more complicated by the day. Social scientists could solve Pakistan's many issues in fields like economy, social values, citizens' rights and responsibilities, education, equality, law and order, politics etc.

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