



Potential of Academic Sociologists & The Way to Tap it in Pakistani Universities

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Abstract

Present research endeavors to initiate a discussion on the challenging role of an academic sociologist in Pakistani academia. The study aims to classify the hurdles faced by the academic sociologists within academic environment in Pakistan. This research seeks to highlight the role and responsibilities of a sociologist in developing sociological thought among sociology students in Pakistani universities. We employed qualitative research methods, and conducted six semi-structured interviews with Pakistani academic sociologists, teaching at both private and public universities of the capital city of Pakistan. Research findings indicate that the sociologists are, usually, entangled in pedagogical and bureaucratic challenges, academic ritualism and are less engaged in indigenous epistemic sociology. The study also points out the dormant status of Pakistan Sociological Association (PSA), which is consequential for aggravating the challenges faced by Pakistani academic sociologists. It suggests Higher Education Commission (HEC)'s intervention, and PSA's revival to play a proactive role by providing indigenous academic platform for making Pakistani sociologists academically more productive and socially more relevant.

Key Words: Pakistan, universities, academic, sociologists, potential, academic ritualism

INTRODUCTION

Few attempts have been made, in the recent past, to understand convolutions related to the growth of sociology discipline in Pakistan. Literature shows that the primary focus of the previous scholars has remained on the inception, institutionalization, and the gradual growth of Sociology as discipline since 1955 at University of the Punjab, Pakistan. Research findings of Yunas and Rizvi (1987) employed by Jamil (2020) to inquire about the role of sociology as discipline in Pakistan advocate that there is a need of an academic sociologist to take lead in strengthening the discipline at both national and international levels. Current research aims to study the role of an academic sociologist in subject development, and sociological knowledge transmission in Pakistani universities, an untapped area of study. At first, it examines challenges faced by an academic sociologist during the growth of the discipline in contemporary Pakistan. Secondly, it highlights a

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significant role of an academic sociologist in developing Sociological thought among Sociology students in Pakistani Universities.

Research review is essential to fathom existing position of social sciences in general, and sociology in particular. To classify the challenges faced by Pakistani sociologist, literature is helpful to understand prevailing structural barriers, state priorities, and systematic academic discrepancies. Waseem (2001) studied the causes behind underdevelopment of social sciences in Pakistan, and he concludes that the education system has undergone many changes such as lacking sociological research orientation policy, inherited colonial educational laws for academia, and imported Western norms and standards that contradict with traditional cultural ethos of Pakistani society. Furthermore, Sabir and Sabir (2010) identified the hampered status of social sciences in Pakistan, which shows stringent structural changes in education system of sub-continent during pre-partition, and that has drastically affected the academic environment in Pakistan after independence. Authors present extensive evidences that British linguistic supremacy and Western epistemological hegemony have generated an intellectual dependency among Pakistani social scientists, in particular sociologists. Similarly, Sabeeha Hafeez (2001), a Pakistani female sociologist, examined that sociology as discipline had been institutionalized in early times, but it has not been professionalized appropriately. She observes that sociologist's contributions are unacknowledged and underutilized during state planning by the political elite, and within academia as well. She further laments that the indigenous sociological empirical studies conducted by Pakistani sociologists are neither being critically evaluated, nor taught in Pakistani class rooms, as it's difficult to believe that Pakistani sociologists are academically productive.

Previous discussion is helpful in identifying a research gap, where the role and scope of a sociologists is yet to be determined in educational institutes of Pakistan. Therefore, present research aims to scrutinize core challenges encountered by an academic sociologist in Pakistan. It investigates the role and responsibilities of a sociologist in developing sociological imagination among sociology students in Pakistani universities. The core objectives of the study are; at first, to clearly define the scope of sociology discipline for academic sociologists, further, to identify the structural barriers prevailing in academic culture of Pakistan, also, to critically examine the academic environment for the development of sociological thought in sociology students in Pakistani universities, and lastly, to highlight the quiescent status of Pakistan Sociological Association (PSA), which is damaging the future development of sociology discipline in Pakistan.

The present research is qualitative in nature and based on primary data collection methods. Study respondents are university based academic sociologists, with more than 10 years of teaching and over 05 years of working experience in development sector of Pakistan. Study area is capital city of Islamabad, Pakistan. Due to time and financial resource constraints, researchers were unable to expand data collection process countrywide. Study shares interesting key findings and some useful suggestions as well. Rigorous analysis outlines extensive role and responsibilities for an academic sociologist, to perform proactively. Research findings suggest a quick rehabilitation of Pakistan Sociological Association (PSA), which is inevitable in supporting an academic sociologist, and to strengthen sociology discipline in Pakistan.

SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION AND THE ROLE OF A SOCIOLOGIST

Focus of Sociology is to study human society in a systematic manner, and to identify prevailing recurring patterns. It attempts to understand hidden forces that operate throughout society to affect, guide, socialize individuals, shape their behavior, and to modify it in response to social events. A prominent mid-20th century American Sociologist C. Wright Mills labeled this technique of understanding as 'Sociological Imagination', which reflects an ability to situate personal or individual troubles within an informed framework of social issues, and identify existing repeating patterns in society (Tishler, 2011). Mills indicates an attainment of creative skills to analyze social problems along with the help of reliable tools, while highlighting the importance of scientific research methods by mentioning it as 'an informed framework'. He proposed that what people need is a quality of mind that will help them in gathering information and developing reasons to achieve a conclusive summary of events occurring around them (ibid). Theoretical explanation is explicit about the challenging role of a sociologist, who is responsible in developing sociological thought in society. The following literature will be helpful in assessing the existing situation analysis on the status of sociology as discipline and, the role of a sociologist in Pakistan.

Sociology as Discipline in Pakistan

Evidently, discipline of sociology has gained its recognition in mid-50s, when the first department of sociology at the University of Punjab, Lahore was established in 1955, in Pakistan. According to Hafeez (2005), although the subject of Sociology has flourished during 1950s and 1970s in Pakistan, but there was a hiatus for next three (03) decades between 1980s and 1990s till 2000. In early 21st century, the demand for Sociology degree slightly increased, when Allama Iqbal Open University had launched its MSc Sociology program in 2001. Furthermore, it motivated the formation of Sociology departments and programmes at various renowned universities including Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan in 2002, University of Arid Agriculture Rawalpindi in 2004, International Islamic University Islamabad in 2008, Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad in 2014, and Fatima Jinnah Women University Rawalpindi in 2016. Presently, these institutions are offering variety of study programmes of Sociology including 4-years BS, MA/MSc, MPhil and PHD as well. A statistical representation of Eduvision Pakistan (2001-2016), an Islamabad based career planning and educational guidance services providing organization established in 2001, estimates that approximately 77 universities and colleges are offering 4-years BS Sociology, 72 institutions deal with MA and MSc programmes, 27 universities are conducting MPhil in Sociology, and around 15 universities are enrolling for PhD in Sociology in Pakistan. Literature reveals a cyclical growth of sociology discipline if not exponential, which instigates the researchers to study the role of an academic Sociologist for subject development. Present study also envisages to understand predicaments faced by an academic sociologist, and highlights their role in organizing and invoking sociological thought process among Sociology students in Pakistan.

Challenges Faced by Academic Sociology

Extensive qualitative study review by Shah et al. (2005) summarizes that the challenges faced by sociology as discipline are multi-dimensional, including imported Western ideology, foreign funding and training of the sociologists to impart borrowed knowledge, and controlled research orientation to support the capitalistic political economy. Inayatullah's (2001) arduous analysis

show that an inadequate academic freedom, singular Western positivist research model, and scholarly reluctances for research innovation have damaged the status of social sciences in Pakistan. The limited budget allocation to Sociology departments and for sociologists at institutional level have remained major issues in promoting the discipline in Pakistan (Hafeez, 2005). Shah et al. (2005) suggested that 'brain drain' has reduced number of sociologists available for sociological research and teaching in Pakistani universities. Similarly, Sabir's (2016) doctoral thesis endorsed that persistent 'brain drain' of qualified sociologists has affected the sociology's progress in Pakistan. Moreover, study documented another challenge, which shows that Pakistan Sociological Association (PSA) was founded and became functional in April 1963. Although, the forum had regularly organized annual conferences successfully, but could not continue its activities in the post-mid-1980s era. The stagnation of association resulted in the lack of interest by higher authorities towards the development of Sociology as discipline in Pakistan (Shah et al., 2005). Thus, literature highlights some challenges, and difficulties faced by the sociologists which are inextricably intertwined.

Role of Academic Sociologists

Ideological orientation of early Pakistani sociologists has created a wide divide within the group of sociologists in Pakistan. Yunas and Rizvi (1987) evaluate that the sheer ideological division among clusters of sociologists in Pakistan has damaged the process of discipline's growth. West vs Islam divide was quite manifest in the form of stringent ideological beliefs. In academia, the group of academic sociologists has remained tied to Western theories, whereas the Islamic sociologists were strictly committed to their religious ideology. On the other hand, the sociologists working in development sector achieved their satisfaction with their role as social workers, social mobilizers or project managers for non-governmental organizations in Pakistan (Yunas and Rizvi, 1987). Authors asserted that if Sociology is to play a more meaningful role in society, this is the group of academic sociologists who should take the lead. Shah et al. (2005), however contend that the discipline's difficulties and insufficient recognition are principally caused by an inefficient role performance of sociologists while undermining indigenous social issues in Pakistan. Feagin (2001), as quoted by Hafeez (2005), also suggests: sociologists should engage in study of alternative social future, and aid in building better societies. Ostensibly, literature emphasizes on an integral role of an academic sociologist for the growth of sociology as discipline in Pakistan.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Issue under investigation is qualitative in nature and pertains subjective experiences of sociologists while performing their professional obligations in academic environments. There are two key justifications to employ qualitative method for this study. First, academic sociologists with significant professional experience in the capital city of Pakistan are not many in number. Having said that, inter-city travel was not feasible due to economic and time constraints to approach academic sociologists from other universities. Second, the nature of information and data required for this study did not allow researchers to employ quantitative methods because it would have been unreasonable to approach our respondents with prefixed close ended responses for their variegated subjective experiences. The following methodology has been utilized to collect primary data for present research.

Research Design

Study employed qualitative research analysis and primary data collection methods. Qualitative inquiry typically focuses on rigorous analysis with an in-depth manner, even with the data collected through small sample size. It is helpful in studying information-rich data, which provides an insight and an in-depth understanding about the topic of qualitative nature that involves variety of subjective experiences as well (Patton, 2007). An interview guide is a commonly used tool to collect data for Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) that deals with the huge amount of qualitative primary data sources (Robinson, 2014). Bero et al. (1998) suggests the usage of primary data sources for a qualitative research analysis, as it provides an opportunity to the social scientists to dig deeply for social phenomenon that requires careful attention, and philosophical treatment. An open-ended semi-structured interview guide was developed encompassing research questions and key thematic areas, including the scope of an academic sociologist, state ideology, sociology and sociologist, early and contemporary sociologists, key challenges including pedagogical patterns, linguistic barriers, indigenous sociological knowledge, lastly, the role of PSA and HEC in the development of sociology discipline, and rectifying the problems faced by the academic sociologists in Pakistan.

Sampling Technique and Universe

A non-probability purposive sampling technique has been utilized along with the homogeneous sample to access study participants. Purposive sampling targets on selecting information-rich respondents whose study will illuminate the undiscovered research questions (Patton, 2007). Literature shows that the purposive sampling is also known as a judgment sampling, because it enables a researcher to choose study participant while considering specific common qualities that participants possess. It is a non-random technique that does not need a set number of participants. Rather it depends on researcher's ability to sense saturation point in information seeking and decide (Robinson, 2014). The logic behind selecting this technique for present study was to gain accessibility to specific academic sociologists who can provide adequate information on research questions. Sample universe was decided to obtain primary data from both private and public universities within federal city of Islamabad, where the Sociology departments have been established for more than 5 years, with effective Sociology taught course (s) for BS, MS, MPhil and/or PhD levels.

Sample Size and Characteristics

Present study sample consists of six academic sociologists pertaining similar characteristics such as MPhil, PhD and post doctorate degrees in Sociology, holding permanent formal position as an academic sociologist at Sociology department e.g. lecturer, assistant professor, associate professor, equipped with both academic and development sector experience (ranging 10 to 15 years), and having international study and teaching profile in Sociology discipline. Study participants maintained research publications in their respective areas for their professional growth. One of the study participants, is currently engaged in writing a text book for the subject of Sociology in Pakistan.

Data Collection and Ethical Considerations

The data collection process is a careful and lengthy procedure for qualitative research study. It involves a prior rapport building with research participants. Since researchers themselves are academic sociologists, it enabled them to locate information-rich respondents in the academia. The study participants were contacted in advance for interview time according to their suitable schedule. Research purpose and questions were shared with the respondents in advance to seek their permission and consent for a face to face interview. Each of the respondents were interviewed separately by following the ethical considerations for a recorded interview of about 45 to 50 minutes. Time management was a key element for a successful completion of a scheduled interview with each study respondent. There was no third party involved during the process of interview, and researchers warranted the confidentiality of the recorded data by using the collected information purely for the study purpose. We ensured that the study participants should gain a complete autonomy during interview, which benefited in getting quiescent information related to research questions. Medium of communication during interviews remained English primarily, as the respondents were highly qualified and well-versed in the language.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research findings concentrate to address core questions (1) what are the challenges faced by an academic sociologist in the development of sociology as discipline in Pakistan? (2) What is the role and responsibility of an academic sociologist in developing sociological imagination among sociology students in Pakistani universities? This section divides into two parts. Part-1 identifies challenges faced by an academic sociologist during the subject growth of sociology in Pakistan. Part-2 describes the role and responsibility of an academic sociologist in developing sociological thought among sociology students in Pakistani universities.

Part 1: Challenges of an academic Sociologist

Scope of an Academic Sociologist

Literature is scanty in highlighting the scope of an academic sociologist in Pakistan, and its relationship with the growth of sociology discipline. Study participant-F says initial challenge is that “scope of sociology subject itself is not completely understood in Pakistan, as there is not a single sociological networking platform available to expand a learning horizon for academic sociologist”. Lack of awareness about the consequential role of an academic sociologist is huge problem. Participant-S emphasizes that the subject of sociology cannot grow without the occupational recognition of an academic sociologist as s/he is responsible for sociological thought production and reinforcement: “sociologist proposes solutions for the existing social issues, as the scientific knowledge about society is created by sociologists”. Similarly, C Wright Mills defines scope of sociology subject and the role of a sociologist to conduct sociological researches on prevailing social issues (Tishler, 2011). In recognition of previous sociologist’s work to magnify the scope of sociology, respondent-Z shows an immense disappointment because “the real contribution towards sociological knowledge production is very limited, mostly scholars are just following a copy-pasting method. The contributions of some renowned sociologists like Dr. M. Nizamuddin, and Dr. Hassan Nawaz Gardezi have remained unacknowledged in Pakistan”. Hafeez (2001) supports the study observations while stating that sociologists’ contributions remained neglected and underutilized by

political authorities and academia in Pakistan. Further, respondent-A pointed out the role of a rigid bureaucracy (capitalism), which has affected professional significance and broader scope of a sociologist (see Shah et al., 2005). Participant narrates: “within a bureaucratic formal system, we have to follow instructed guidelines, which restrict ideological growth over the material interests”.

State Ideology, Sociology and a Sociologist

Previously, the ideological base of early sociologists is established by state priorities that resulted in dividing the group of sociologists, which affected the growth of sociology as discipline in Pakistan. Current research analysis deals to find a complex relationship between state persuasions, subject goal, and an association of an academic sociologist in Pakistan. Interestingly, Participant-A reveals that state authorities have remained quite dormant in promoting social sciences after independence, e.g. establishment of first department of sociology in 1956 at Punjab University. Witnessing, the development of sociology and gender studies departments, in majority of KPK universities, is a direct consequence of donor funding and academic assistance. “Does it guarantee the ideological shift? The material incentives are more powerful than the moral basis for the growth of social sciences in Pakistan. State is not successful in creating a serious academic debate over the social issues in society”. Likewise, Participant-Z says: “state is incapacitated to deal with an academic problem and a political debate, as it has been remained hostage of few civil and military interest groups. Hence, an existing political dichotomy has affected the discipline of sociology drastically”. Similarly, Waseem (2001) discussed that state priorities are not align with the sociocultural conditions of Pakistani society. Respondent-S asserts: “the sociological discourse and political narratives are two contrasting perspectives, when the sociological analysis contradicts with state affairs sometimes, it is labeled as a deviant discipline”. Study participant-F opines that bureaucrats are unable to understand implications of sociological studies, and the significant role of an academic sociologist. They prefer natural sciences over social sciences for country’s development. Evidently, it shows a deliberate choice to ignore the growth of sociology, and the role of academic sociologist in Pakistan.

Dissimilarities among Sociologists

No society can create a stipulatory noncontroversial academic environment, where disagreements don’t turn into political divides. However, such differences are taken seriously threatening when institutional development is compromised. Different academic, spatial and temporal backgrounds and trainings of Pakistani sociologists, unfortunately, remained consequential for the healthy growth of the discipline.

Study respondent-S insists that such differences began to emerge as early as the birth of the discipline in Pakistan, and older generations are not willing to acknowledge that the issues of sociological significance have changed over time: “Early group of sociologists in 50’ and 60’s was trained in US and British academic perspectives and environment. They were facing different challenges such as population growth, gender and development, and rural development. In contemporary society, the ideas are changing and new themes emerging such as environmental sociology, migration, rights-based movements, new media and social media trends”. Study respondents believe that sometimes the differences among scholars are substantial to generate new debates that results in proposing alternative solutions. However, academic dissimilarities are

often taken as personal attacks, which are transformed into personal vendettas. As study participant-F describes: “in Pakistan, problem lies within the group of sociologists as the difference is not ideological rather individual and personal. In west, they have conceptual disagreements and engaged themselves in academic debates. I don’t see any discussion or network based on academic philosophy, and for the growth of Sociology in Pakistan, unfortunately”. Respondent-A observes: “although, individual efforts are visible but collective contributions are missing. People are joining hands to get self-interest-based things e.g. to get a taught course, sometime they do collaborate to give tough time to the rival sociologist as well”. Such vice practices are harmful and challenging for the subject growth, and for the role of an academic sociologist in Pakistan. Yunas and Rizvi’s (1987) article confirms to our findings by asserting that the moral division among groups of sociologists has discredited their position, and that of sociology as discipline in Pakistan.

Key Challenges Faced by an Academic Sociologist

Conspicuously, challenges faced by an academic sociologist and the disciplinary growth are intertwined. Obstacles are multidimensional, and need careful attention of both academicians and policy makers for redressal. While sharing different problems of an academic sociologist, Participant-S said that the desirable research lines are not open. “We can conduct research that contradicts state or religious narratives. Therefore, the utility of sociological discourse is limited unless powerful authorities are not receptive”. Furthermore, there are limited funding opportunities available to sociologists. Strenuously, Inayatullah (2001) analyzed the lack of academic freedom, and Hafeez (2005) examined the challenges of fewer financial assistance to sociology departments and for sociologists available in Pakistan. Participant-I drawn attention on the ‘Brain Drain’ of first-generation sociologists during the construction process of sociology in mid-70’s had drastically affected the Pakistani sociologist’s fraternity (see Sabir, 2016 and Shah et al., 2005). Respondent-I shares: “first generation sociologists were dissatisfied with their native academic environment. Resultantly, they left Pakistan for foreign destinations for their own survival”. Senior professor highlighted the growing tendency of ‘Plagiarism’, which is not even acknowledged as a problem for scholars and majority of the universities in Pakistan. Research respondents asserted that the less production of genuine sociological knowledge is a big challenge for the contemporary sociologist, which has affected their role and the status of the discipline as well. Respondent-J found another challenge is that roles and responsibilities of a sociologist are not clearly explained that cause subject stagnation and dilapidation.

Researchers have found rigorous information about the challenges of a sociologist towards disciplinary progress. Also, the in-depth analysis has identified few roles and responsibilities of an academic sociologist, which can be helpful to pull the gear in achieving disciplinary excellence. It is explained in the following section.

Part 2: Role and responsibilities of an academic sociologist

It focuses on highlighting roles and responsibilities of an academic sociologist in developing sociological knowledge among Sociology students in Pakistani universities. Research findings propels an academic sociologist to seek out opportunities within existing challenges, and to achieve excellence for sociology as discipline in Pakistan.

Pedagogical Practices

Teaching patterns adopted by academic sociologists at university level, in Pakistan are often conventional, and ritualistic for lack of creativity and genuineness. It is not that they don't want to experiment with the innovative pedagogical methods. Not only their efforts usually go unacknowledged, rather they are threatened to face the consequences for not following the "standard rules of the game", imposed by the university administrations.

Academic sociologists are well aware about their significant contribution in producing and socializing new generations of sociologists who can play catalytic role in the development of sociology discipline. However, they do recognize the dichotomy of teaching and research environment at university level is incomprehensive for their students. In respondent-S' words: "In Pakistan, we are not differentiating the teaching and research institutions. In colleges, you can teach, but in universities you are supposed to create new knowledge. Globally, academic sociologists are trying to inculcate a habit of independent learning among students. Although, we are trying and imparting knowledge through independent assignments, presentations and critical debate, but sometimes students are not ready to absorb this way of learning as well". Study participant-F laments that the teaching methodology is a challenge for an academic sociologist. "If you are putting hard [effort], students would not care to appreciate your efforts. We are trying innovative methods after reading books and articles to generate a debate. In contrast, a discussion-based system is not acceptable by majority of the students". There are some institutional constraints as well, where the absence of an established system does not allow to generate a discussion. Majority of the universities are following traditional pedagogical style, where lecture-based method is preferable. It also provides an opportunity to take an initiate of discussion based, an independent learning method to impart the sociological knowledge among Sociology students.

Linguistic Barriers

Lack of uniform medium of communication and the language alienation could be the dominant contributing factor in producing incessantly futile, barren and unrewarding academic environment in Pakistan. Academic Sociologists are far more upset about the comprehension issues of their students than any other pedagogical aspect. Still carrying the colonial legacy, English is imposed as the medium of instruction and the language of science in most of the universities in Pakistan. Yet the undergraduate level public education system, whereby most of the students are trained before entering the university, is not competent enough to impart adequate communication and written skills. At university, creoles/pidgins and code switching becomes the norm of communication, when students find it difficult to convey their ideas and thoughts. Resultantly, the fear of being stigmatized, many of them would cease to participate in class discussions and find refuge in illegitimate ways of producing written assignments, i.e. cheating in exams and plagiarism. According to Participant-F: "we cannot see the linguistic challenges in isolation to the education system in Pakistan". Likewise, Respondent-A agrees that problem is deeply rooted in larger scale of educational structure, which begins at primary, secondary to higher levels". Sabir and Sabir (2010) mentioned that British language supremacy, and Western knowledge dominance both created an intellectual dependency in Pakistani society. Participant-F continues: "students come in universities already trained in process of learning with a specific language and style e.g. rote memorization. Study participant-S also shared the similar perspective and added that the real problem for

majority students is comprehensions of ideas in English, and not the subject matter of Sociology itself. Also, it is a challenge for an academic sociologist in transferring knowledge to the students. In contrast, the semester system makes it difficult for university students to grasp novel study patterns". Respondent-A said angrily: "grading system has damaged quality of Sociology, and made it an institutionally compromised discipline". So, as academicians, as asserted by respondent-S: "we have to translate material into local language. Sometimes being bilingual is useful". Despite of existing linguistic challenges, research identifies the usage of bilingual teaching method for an academic sociologist to utilize for sociological knowledge transmission among sociology students in Pakistani universities.

Indigenous Sociological Knowledge

Seemingly, the absence of local knowledge production by an academic sociologist is one of the core reasons behind the neglected status of sociology discipline in Pakistan. Local knowledge creation is an intellectual opportunity for an academic sociologist to bring forth the native sociological perspectives that guarantees the development of the sociology discipline globally. Pakistani sociologists have remained lagged behind in producing their indigenous epistemic sociology in contrast to their regional and global counterparts, which ultimately resultant in the absence of Pakistani sociological narrative in global knowledge economy. As Participant-F regrets that: "senior sociologists did not contribute in indigenous knowledge creation. They have failed in defining the scope of sociology subject, and the role of an academic sociologist. They worked to incorporate international debates and, to implement western models only. Today, we need to focus on emerging trends in Pakistani society. We can produce indigenous sociological knowledge, and link it with global perspective". Furthermore, respondent-S endorsed that: "the knowledge is locally created in around the globe. We can generate local knowledge through books, research articles, conferences and seminars etc. Merely, the English to Urdu translation is not a healthy practice, rather we need to follow the totalitarian approach in knowledge creation". Study participant-Z states: "an academic sociologist must be innovative and creative in developing new knowledge on changing patterns. The role of an academic sociologist is to be critical in digging out the reality and holding a philosophy". Respondent-A says painfully "sincere motivation to produce sociological researches is lacking because of materialistic benefits. People are publishing for the sake of promotion and chairmanship. Even some sociologists are reluctant to share their researches within the class rooms to avoid any criticism. Such publications hardly contribute in expansion of the subject, and public policy usage. "Sociology ka hm nain kia theeka uthaya hua (are we the only responsible for the sociology discipline?)", study respondent narrated another sociologist's viewpoint. Consequently, the hesitancy of the Pakistani sociologist in generating new knowledge on local issues is a challenge in developing sociological imagination among Pakistani students. It also indicates that to gain the lost status of sociology discipline, there is an opportunity for an academic sociologist to work on indigenous issues and progress related to the Pakistani society, to present at both locally and globally.

Absence of Culturally Situated Textbooks in Pakistan

Previously, it discussed significant role of an academic sociologist for indigenous knowledge production and ways of disseminating epistemic sociology among sociology students in Pakistan. The presence of culturally contextualized Sociology text book enables the sociology students to

establish their sociological narrative eloquently. The role of Pakistani academic sociologist has become inevitable in writing a sociology text book in context of Pakistani society. Study presents the situation analysis of knowledge creation by the contemporary academic sociologists in Pakistan. Participant-Z proposed that: “the establishment of an ‘academic currency’ is a dire need of contemporary time. Also, a critical appraisal on a sociologist’s published work is crucial for discipline’s nourishment, but we are apprentice in this academic area. Likewise, Sabeeha Hafeez (2001) acknowledged study findings to evaluate Pakistani sociologist’s indigenous work to bring improvement and change in society. Respondent-Z suggest that there is a need to restrict plagiarism and reduce writing reluctances among academic sociologists to produce academic coinage of sociology in shape of a text book. Study participants observes that: “the habit of writing is very rare and slow among academic sociologists. I have edited few problems based books on migration and gender based issues. When it comes to prepare a book for university students, it is quite challenging as it takes time and financial resources. There is a need to write a sociology text book for university students which is easy to grasp, and to develop an independent sociological imagination”. Study participant-A has shared some good news, as a text book ‘sociology of Pakistan’ is in pipeline, which is a collective production process among few Pakistani sociologists. As they believe that “it’s important to generate the knowledge in context of Pakistan, and to highlight its cultural beauty including local sports, food, art, music, family and community values, which is getting vanished and unknown to our young generation”.

Development of Sociological Knowledge in Pakistani Universities

This section assesses the contribution of contemporary academic sociologist in developing sociological thought among sociology students in Pakistani universities. Academic sociologists are professionally capacitated and equipped with interdisciplinary methods to work within a diverse social environment. The responsibility of an academic sociologist is to engage sociology students in multi-dimensional scholarly debates and activities, to develop their sociological monacle. Respondent-F talks enthusiastically: “It is role of an academic sociologist to cultivate an ability among Sociology students in discussing diverse ideas based on culture, class, caste, religion, gender etc., rather to impose personal ideology”. Likewise, Participant-A is concerned that “Young kids are vulnerable, towards an unknown ideology and get easily trapped in illusions about society. The role of an academic sociologist is vital in developing balanced sociological concepts in their mindsets”. Respondents are of the view that few of the academic sociologists are struggling in creating a space for sociological debate. But there are much more efforts needed on part of the academic sociologists in Pakistan. Additionally, Participant-F asserted that: “We should have common platform to initiate healthy debates on sensitive issue. More networking events provide an engaging environment, that enable students to respect and learn from senior sociologist’s technique of idea construction”. Study analysis highlighted the dormant status of Pakistan Sociological Association (PSA), which was established in 1963, and brought few eventful opportunities for academic sociologist to present their work at a big platform (see Shah et al., 2005). It remained nonfunctional and non-existent since 1980 that put the development of Sociology discipline and the professional growth of a sociologist at stake.

HEC and an Academic Sociologist in Pakistan

Study seeks to get information regarding institutional support for the development of sociology discipline, and for the academic sociologists in Pakistan. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) is solely responsible for the management of higher education and academic research in the country. Participant-S clearly states that: "HEC is not a supportive organization for the growth of sociology, truly, social science neglected through entire process of higher education in Pakistan. There is a need for special financial assistance for the development of an academic sociologist, and to conduct extensive sociological researches in Pakistan. It might be helpful in strengthening subject, and to produce new knowledge that leads to impart fresh epistemic dimensions of the subject among Sociology students". Respondents appreciated that it's a good initiative to teach sociology as a core course at university level, but the usability of sociology knowledge is very broad, we can use it to solve certain national problems. Similarly, participant-A says: "HEC equates social sciences with natural sciences that caused bad practices and performance of sociologists' e.g. fake publications, paid publication, poor quality. They are producing more than 100 publications but are reluctant to share their work with students". Participant-F focuses that the missing element of an association is a core reason behind such ignorant behavior of HEC towards academic growth of sociology discipline, and sociologists in Pakistan. Likewise, Participant-Z opines: "HEC itself is incapacitated as the internal commitment for the subject growth is missing". Research analysis reveals that the role of HEC is very limited in the development of sociology discipline and towards the capacity building of an academic sociologist.

Pakistani Academic Sociologist in Changing World

In a changing world, the role of an academic sociologist has become crucial to understand, and to cope up with sociological transitions in a functional society. Social change is a dynamic process that needs careful attention and rigorous analysis. Role of sociologist as described by C. Wright Mills is to render the correlation between the cause and effects of recurring social events in a scientific manner. Participant-S observes, "The social transformation is a global phenomenon, we need to learn dynamics of existing social system that causing this rapid change in society. For example, these contemporary technological advancements have brought both positive and negative effects. In Pakistan, it's difficult to convince others. It needs preparation to guide present day youth, as public dealing is a huge responsibility for an academic sociologist". Respondent-A believes: "an academic sociologist is a driver of the discipline, they need to be committed and passionate with their vision and ideology. It is their duty to generate healthy realistic debates rather than engaging students with idealistic approach. They should go in the class with small but related ideas and actions, students will absorb it easily." Feagin (2001, quoted in Hafeez, 2005) encourages the sociologists to bring innovative solutions to build better societies. Participants A and F observes that "young faulty members are entering in the academic field with passion and commitment, which is a positive aspect. They can pull the discipline up while leaving the old aristocracy attire. Participant J suggests: "we need to avoid politics, and adopt interdisciplinary approach to collaborate with other social sciences subjects such as social work, anthropology, psychology and gender studies as well". Participant-F advocates for the revival of Pakistan Sociological Association (PSA), which is inevitable for the growth of an academic sociologist, likewise, for the sociology discipline in Pakistan.

CONCLUSION

Role of a teacher is pivotal in producing succeeding generations. Academic Sociologists are expected to fulfil certain key responsibilities, research and teaching. The former is crucial for producing new knowledge, while the latter is indispensable for its transmission. Current study coveted to explore challenging role of an academic sociologist in constructing sociological thought in Pakistani academia. We were principally interested in two key questions regarding how Pakistani sociologists operate in academic environment: 1. What is the role of academic sociologist in his/her discipline's development in Pakistan; and, 2. What pedagogical challenges they face while imparting sociological imagination. We conclude that the challenges faced by the academic sociologist in pursuance of the development of sociology as discipline are interconnected and indissolubly linked together.

Study recapitulates that Pakistani sociologists' dilemma is two-fold when it comes to being innovative in teaching. First, they face resistance from students as well as the administration (sometimes treated with ad hominem attacks for being adamant). Second, absence of indigenous knowledge base, including books and research journals that provide little margin of culturally adaptive knowledge transmission, especially when linguistic barriers are overarching. In this scenario, academic ritualism, plagiarism, and linguistic imperialism become enormous challenges for Pakistani academic sociologists. To cope with these, they are required to establish an 'academic currency' in shape of sociology text book, to safeguard the academic sociology by holding more rational and pragmatic approach to lead Sociology students in Pakistan (being bilingual while lecturing, for example).

State institutions are often blamed for deliberately ignoring the discipline's potential in contributing to frame the national public policy. Our academic colleagues have not been at the forefronts of public policy interventions as compared to their counterparts from other disciplines like economics, political science and public health. Study participants lamented that the institutional control over research agendas is one of the biggest challenges behind the dilapidated orientation of sociological research in Pakistan. Such controls are usually not so conspicuous to be dealt with the scholarly debunking. Pakistani sociologists acknowledged the role of Higher Education Commission (HEC) as positive in providing relatively flexible research opportunities.

We advocate for a common sociological platform to be fully functional in organizing regular meetings and discussions on sociological issues, which is essential for the nourishment of sociological imagination of both academic sociologists, and sociology students at Pakistani universities. Study concludes that institutional support of HEC is inevitable to take affirmative steps in correcting the deplorable situation of institutionalized sociology in Pakistan. It should focus more on improving the quality of the discipline, instead of quantitatively increasing number of sociology departments and backing the mushroom cloning of Sociology graduates, who ultimately end up competing with each other for far lower proportion of available employment opportunities as compared to the number of productive sociologists produced annually.

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