

## Evaluating the Effects of Political Polarization on Family Ties in Punjab

Asyea Naseem<sup>1</sup> Zainab Saif<sup>2</sup> Bushra Tabassum<sup>3</sup> Famia Farooq<sup>4</sup>



**Abstract:** *The present research attempts to evaluate the effects of political polarization on family ties in Punjab. This study examines how political polarization affects family relationships in Punjab, Pakistan. Intense disagreements about ideology and partisanship are features of electoral polarization, which has serious negative effects on society, including damaged family ties. Using an analytical structure based on intergroup conflict theory, this research investigates how ideological differences affect intergenerational family relationships. The study collects primary information from 400 people who took part in three regions of Punjab—Attock, Sheikhpura, and Multan—using a questionnaire. According to the study, political polarization and weaker family ties are positively correlated, with disputes and strained interactions usually resulting from disputes over politics. Important findings show that political opinions vary significantly between and within generations, which causes communication problems and quiet arguments as coping strategies in families. The study concludes that political polarization is becoming a bigger problem in Punjab and that it hurts family relationships and unity. To reduce conflict and improve family relationships, it is advised that families foster common ideals and reasoned political discourse. This study advances the sociological knowledge of how family dynamics are affected by political polarization in a politically complicated and culturally diverse area.*

**Key Words:** Political Polarization, Strained Relationships, Political Disagreements, Family Ties

### Introduction

Smiley (2022) The term Political polarization indicates the growing split of the political ideology of the people into two dramatically opposed extremes, which leave little or no space for moderate viewpoint. Political polarization emerges with ideological divide, partisan loyalty, the decline in bipartisanship, identity politics, and Eco chambers. Chen (2018) states That countries with political polarization have faced severe impacts, including political gridlock, erosion of trust, social fragmentation, and extremism. Political polarization has become a widespread problem in numerous communities, impacting personal and public connections. Similar to other nations, Pakistan is also experiencing upheaval due to the emergence of political polarization. A major worry in Punjab, the largest province by population and has a strong historical and political background, is that it is being impacted by political polarization. Although the province is facing many glitches, including social divisions, inconsistent governance, economic instability, and polarized media, the major hurdle is Political polarization, which significantly harms family ties in Punjab, Pakistan, by causing divisions and conflicts within families that typically uphold strong social and cultural connections. Thus, this article is an attempt to evaluate the effects of political polarization on family ties in Punjab.

<sup>1</sup> Lecturer in Sociology at Higher Education Department, Nankana Sahib, Punjab, Pakistan.

✉ [AsyeaNaseem07@gmail.com](mailto:AsyeaNaseem07@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> Lecturer in Political Science at Higher Education Department, Nankana Sahib, Punjab, Pakistan.

✉ [zainabsaifullahmann@gmail.com](mailto:zainabsaifullahmann@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup> Lecturer, Department of Sociology, University of Home Economics, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

✉ [Bushratabassum.sc@uhe.edu.pk](mailto:Bushratabassum.sc@uhe.edu.pk)

<sup>4</sup> Lecturer in Sociology at Higher Education Department, Kasur, Punjab, Pakistan. ✉ [famiafarooq9@gmail.com](mailto:famiafarooq9@gmail.com)

• **Corresponding Author:** Asyea Naseem (✉ [AsyeaNaseem07@gmail.com](mailto:AsyeaNaseem07@gmail.com))

• **To Cite:** Naseem, A., Saif, Z., Tabassum, B., & Farooq, F. (2025). Evaluating the Effects of Political Polarization on Family Ties in Punjab. *Qlantic Journal of Social Sciences*, 6(1), 106–113. <https://doi.org/10.55737/qjss.vi-i.25290>

## Problem Statement

Political polarization is a growing issue on a global scale that affects both public and familial connections. In Punjab, family connections are beginning to be affected by the growing political polarization. This research article aims to assess how political polarization appears in communication between and among generations as well as how families demonstrate resistance or coping strategies to the detrimental effects of political polarization.

## Significance of the Study

This study aims to provide deep insight regarding political polarization and its growing effects on family ties in Punjab, Pakistan. It consists of an area where family ties are deeply ingrained and essential to societal arrangements and offers a diverse demographic and extensive cultural legacy. Political polarization has a strong tendency to alter these social interactions, which can hamper the most important societal unit. This study aims to help families understand this phenomenon and navigate the family problems that have emerged due to political polarization. Moreover, the study enables policymakers and social workers to develop policies and strategies to mitigate these conflicts and strengthen family ties. Moreover, this study aims to add to the sociological literature regarding polarization by focusing on this region, which will facilitate the practical application of the study findings. The research encompasses the following questions:

- ▶ How do Pakistani family ties reflect political polarization?
- ▶ What are the intragenerational differences that influence family unity in the context of political beliefs?
- ▶ What are the intergenerational differences that influence family unity in the context of political beliefs?
- ▶ How do various generations manage political disputes within their families?

## Hypothesis

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There are no effects of political polarization on family ties in Punjab.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There are effects of political polarization on family ties in Punjab.

## Review of the Literature

Schroeder (2024) concluded that political polarization has increased over the last several decades. The researcher found extremely negative and strained relationships between college students and their parents on split political beliefs. Days. The heated arguments were recorded in politically active times, like during election campaigns, and electoral Schroeder (2022) commented that political polarization has a significant impact on small and large decisions in families. The people carefully choose the person for dating or marriage, place of work or shopping while considering their political similarities and differences with concerned people.

Guzzi-Heeb (2016) stated that during the eighteenth century, many societies faced a worldwide shift and diversity in political communities. In these environments, family marriages developed into unique bonds that strengthened political or ideological affiliations rather than just considering economic or religious bonds.

Paik (2023) declared that political polarization has significant effects on social relationships as the youngsters who tend to be involved in political arguments with having diversified political affiliations were more inclined to break up with those who had opposing perspectives on politics because of arguments. Del Valle (2022) asserted that the political polarization incorporated with social media influences the communication patterns following the heated debates on Twitter. Burk (2024) contributed that conflict is viewed in the form of restrictions that individuals use to impose their relationships regarding interacting with families with different political affiliations. These tactics caused strain on familial ties rather than making it strong. Moreover, the participants with diversified political opinions mentioned that they had trouble balancing their own identities as well as affiliations with particular groups, as well as current connections with those who had different political opinions.



Moore–Berg (2020) explored that affective polarization tends to threaten social cohesion by causing dehumanization and meta-perception. The respondents of the study confessed that they considered our group as less human due to political diversification causing hostility towards them. Meta-perception involves a negative evaluation of a person about their people who used to believe in different political perspectives than him.

### Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is made up of assertions that can be confirmed by their relationships and observations that clarify abstract ideas. Evaluations associated with a specific subject raise consciousness regarding the data and give it to the investigator so they can better comprehend the issue. However, the theory is founded on a systematic examination of the rules and truths associated with a particular aspect of a problem (Braidotti, 2019).

### Intergroup Conflict Theory

The Origin of intergroup theory can be traced back to social psychology as well as sociology. The founding fathers of intergroup conflict theory were interested in the research of academics who examined bias, competitiveness, and interpersonal relationships (Böhm et al., 2020). Theories regarding human behavior, such as those of Sigmund Freud and William McDougall, whose work examined group behavior in terms of individual psychology, had an impact on initial understandings of interpersonal disputes. Additionally, Tajfel and Turner stated that the conflicts between groups arise from the urge to preserve a good social identity, which frequently results in in-group favoritism and out-group prejudice. Paskewitz (2017) However, measuring its extension to familial connections intergroup conflicts can affect familial connections in addition to big cultural, racial, or political affiliations. If households with individuals from numerous communities and perspectives are caught up in broader societal conflicts, they could face internal disputes. For instance, when external disagreements among groups affect the inside functioning of a family comprising members of different nationalities, it can cause tension, disconnection, or split (Međedović, 2021)

### Materials And Methods

When examining sociological concerns scientifically, methodological approaches are crucial. Establishing an ordered network of knowledge while empirically verifying hypotheses requires appropriate techniques (Bayley, 2013). The goal of this study is to describe the different instruments and research tools that have been used to carry out the investigation. Scientific methodology is a set of clear guidelines and practices that serve as the foundation for investigations and the standards through which assertions of knowledge are assessed.

The researcher has used primary data for evaluation. A questionnaire with a range of close-ended questions was used to unearth the scientific realities related to affective polarization in Punjab. The data was collected from the districts of Punjab named Attock, Sheikhpura, and Multan, which correspondingly belong to North, South, and Central Punjab. The population sample comprised 400 respondents equally distributed among the district's urban and rural localities. The population of the study was educated and comprised of students, professionals, and homemakers.

### Reliability of the Tool

The reliability and internal consistency of the questionnaire were evaluated by Cronbach alpha as the responses were non-dichotomous. The Cronbach alpha is used to determine the internal consistency and reliability of the tool. The value of Cronbach's alpha for the tool was 0.842, which indicates good reliability (Bujang, 2018).

### Results and Discussions

The research analysis is the main portion of this article concluding the fundamental response of the respondents. Applying statistical analysis will make this research generalize its findings which was the research gap to providing a quantitative numeration about the political polarization affecting the family ties in Punjab.

### Descriptive Statistics

It is essential to utilize statistics to compute and quantify the information to bridge the gap between theory and data. Descriptive statistics, often terms as explorative statistics, enables the researcher to unearth the possible patterns and associations among the variables and population (George, 2018)

**Table 1**

*Distribution of the Respondents According to Their Sex*

Sex	Frequency	Percent
Male	252	61.8
Female	156	38.2
Total	408	100.0

Table 1 summarized the distribution of the respondents according to their sex as 61.8 percent were males and 38.2 percent were females. The differences in the ratio of participation may have occurred due to various socio-cultural reasons.

**Table 2**

*Distribution of the Respondents According to their Education*

Education	Frequency	Percent
Bachelor's Degree	276	67.6
Master Degree	108	26.5
M.Phil. and above	24	5.9
Total	408	100

Table 2 summarized the distribution of the respondents according to their education level as the majority of the respondents were Bachelors 67.6 percent. Also, 26.5 percent belonged to the master's level. The remaining 5.9 percent were from the category of M.Phil. and above.

**Table 3**

*Mean, Standard Deviation, and Perception of Respondents Regarding the Political Polarization and Effects on Family Ties in Punjab*

Effects of Political Polarization on Family Ties in Punjab	Mean	S. D	Perception
How would you describe the political views of your family members?	2.17	1.04	Mostly Similar with some differences
In your opinion, has political polarization in Pakistan affected the way your family members interact with each other?	2.11	1.08	Yes, significantly
How do political differences of opinion affect communication within your family?	3.76	1.28	Often, causes tension.
Do you avoid discussing politics with certain family members due to fear of conflict?	2.78	1.24	Occasionally
Have political differences led to any of the following within your family? (Select one of them)	2.35	2.26	Arguments or Heated Debates
How often do political disagreements occur during family gatherings?	3.27	1.27	Often
Do you and your siblings/cousins have differing political views?	3.26	1.26	Yes, Some of them
How often do these differences lead to arguments or strained relationships?	3.72	1.29	Occasionally



Effects of Political Polarization on Family Ties in Punjab	Mean	S. D	Perception
Are there generational gaps in political ideologies within your family?	3.86	1.28	Significant
How do political disputes between different generations typically manifest?	3.27	1.27	Silent Disagreements
How do you and your family typically handle political differences?	3.84	1.14	Avoid Discussing
Do you think that political polarization is a growing issue in Pakistan?	3.34	1.26	Yes, it's getting worse.
What steps do you think families can take to manage political differences more effectively?	4.21	1.18	Focus on shared values.
Do you believe political polarization has weakened family bonds in Punjab?	3.58	1.17	Strongly agree

Table 3 summarized that most families have similar political perspectives, but there were some considerable variations in their views. When asked your opinion, has political polarization in Pakistan affected the way your family members interact with each other? A significant number of the respondents agreed with the mean of (2.11) and SD of (1.07). The next question was about how political differences of opinion affect communication within your family. A considerable number of the respondents replied that the difference of opinion often causes tension while communicating with each other by indicating the mean value (3.76) and SD of (1.28).

The respondents with mean values (2.78) and SD of (1.24) concluded that they avoid discussing their political views with certain family members due to the fear of conflict. The research population, with a mean value of (2.35) and SD of (2.26), claimed that the political differences led to arguments followed by heated debates in their family. The asked question about the differing political perception into the intragenerational value of the mean (3.26) and SD of (1.26) denoting that there was a difference in perception among cousins and siblings, which leads to arguments and strained relationships by denoting the value of (3.72) and SD of (1.29).

Moreover, the difference in political perceptions was intergenerationally examined through the significant mean value of (3.86) and SD of (1.28), which shows a significant difference among different generations regarding political opinions. At the same time, talking about the coping mechanisms with the mean of (3.27) and SD of (1.27), the intragenerational political differences are handled by the families with silent disagreements. The respondents with a mean (3.84) and SD of (1.14) pointed out that they often avoid discussing their different perceptions with family. When I was asked if I thought that political polarization was a growing issue in Pakistan, The respondents with a mean value of (3.34) and SD of (1.26) agreed with the statement by stating that yes, it is getting worse. When it was asked about the steps a family can take to manage political differences more effectively? The respondents with a mean of (4.21) and SD of (1.18) agreed to introduce and focus on shared values among family members.

The last question was about the political polarization's effects on family bonds; a large proportion of the respondents seemed to strongly agree that political polarization has weakened family bonds, with a mean value of (3.58) and SD of (1.17). The above statements, with recorded and computed responses, elaborate that political polarization is manifesting among families in Punjab and affecting the gathering's discourse, communications, and patterns of interactions. Their family members are involved in arguments and heated debates, and their relationships are becoming strained, ultimately compromising their family bonds in Pakistan.

### The Association between Political Polarization and Communication

Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient was utilized to calculate and assess the strength and direction between the variables of political polarization and communication, Interaction, and family bonds (Song, 2020).

**Table 4***Symmetric Measures*

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error	Approx. T <sup>b</sup>	Approx. Sig
Ordinal by Ordinal	Gamma	.651	.031	16.528	.000
	Spearman Correlation	.637	.032	16.644	.000 <sup>c</sup>
N of Valid Cases		408			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error, the null hypothesis is assumed.

c. Based on normal approximation

**Interpretation**

Gamma measures the strength and direction of two ordinal variables. The Gamma value is 0.651, which designates the strong positive association between political polarization and its effects on communication. It is clarified that if the value of political polarization increases, there will be a potential increment in communication values. The P value ( $p=0.000$ ) elaborates that the relationship is highly significant, showing evidence against the null hypothesis of no association.

Spearman's Correlation (ordinal by ordinal) elaborates on the flat relationship between these two variables. The correlation coefficient value of 0.637 deliberately indicates a strong positive relationship between these two variables. The p-value ( $p=0.000$ ) indicates that the correlation is statistically significant. This interpretation is correlating as Esteve Del Valle (2022) asserted that the political polarization incorporated with social media influences the communication patterns following the heated debates on Twitter. The heated arguments were recorded in politically active times, like during election campaigns and near electoral days. The respondents denote that they often.

**The Association between Political Polarization and interaction****Table 5***Symmetric Measures*

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error	Approx. T <sup>b</sup>	Approx. Sig
Ordinal by Ordinal	Gamma	.647	.030	16.320	.000
	Spearman Correlation	.631	.029	16.210	.000
N of Valid Cases		408			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error, the null hypothesis is assumed.

c. Based on normal approximation

**Interpretation**

The Gamma value is 0.647, indicating a strong positive relationship between political polarization and interaction. ( $p=0.000$ ) the P value also elaborates on the statistical significance of the relationship. The Spearman's correlation is also indicating a strong positive correlation between variables with a value of 0.631. This implies that the extent of political polarization increases the value of strained interaction. The respondents with a significant mean value claimed that their interactions in gatherings and family dinners often met with heated debates and arguments. Moreover, they often do not discuss their political perception due to the fear of conflicts.

**The Association between Political Polarization and Family Bonds****Table 6***Symmetric Measures*

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error	Approx. T <sup>b</sup>	Approx. Sig
Ordinal by Ordinal	Gamma	.763	.048	14.469	.000
	Spearman Correlation	.730	.043	14.267	.000 <sup>c</sup>
N of Valid Cases		408			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error, the null hypothesis is assumed.

c. Based on normal approximation



### Interpretation

The Gamma value is 0.763, which deliberately indicates that there is a positive association between political polarization and weakened family bonds. The p-value ( $p=000$ ) indicates that the relationship is statistically significant. The Spearman's rank correlation shows the positive correlation between the ordinal variables as the respondents with 3.58 mean values proclaimed that political polarization is one of the leading sources of weakening family ties in Punjab. While considering the literature review, research work done by Burk (2024) contributed that the conflict is viewed in the form of restrictions that the individuals used to impose on their relationships regarding interacting with families having different political affiliations. These tactics caused strain on familial ties rather than making it strong. Moreover, intergenerational and intergenerational political differences have also been increasing, and several family members have chosen silent disagreements.

### Conclusion

The result of the current study shows that political polarization is a growing issue in Punjab. People with different political opinions and perceptions tend to involve heated arguments and strain familial relationships. Political polarization has significantly affected communication and interaction among families, causing weakened family bonds. Moreover, intergenerational and intergenerational political differences have also been increasing, and several family members have chosen silent disagreements. These families use no political discussion, walkout, and silent disagreement as a coping mechanism to avoid familial and political disputes.

### Recommendation

The recommendations are based on the empirical evidence extracted from the respondents' coping mechanisms and the reviewed literature regarding political polarization and its effects on family bonds. There is an urgent need to promote shared values among family members. Every family should establish some ground rules and regulations while talking about politics. Political perceptions should be catered to rationally rather than be involved with egos and emotions, as they will encourage empathy and compassion. It should be avoided to watch polarized media channels and talk shows, which tend to create echo chambers.

## References

- Bayley, R. (2013). The Quantitative Paradigm. In *The Handbook of Language Variation and Change* (pp. 83–107). John Wiley & Sons, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118335598.ch4>
- Böhm, R., Rusch, H., & Baron, J. (2020). The psychology of intergroup conflict: A review of theories and measures. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 178, 947–962. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2018.01.020>
- Braidotti, R. (2019). A theoretical framework for the critical posthumanities. *Theory, culture & society*, 36(6), 31–61. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276418771486>
- Bujang, M. A., Omar, E. D., & Baharum, N. A. (2018). A review on sample size determination for Cronbach's alpha test: A simple guide for researchers. *The Malaysian Journal of Medical Sciences: MJMS*, 25(6), 85–99. <https://doi.org/10.21315/mjms2018.25.6.9>
- Burk, A. N. (2024). *Friends Unlike Me: Affective Political Polarization, Hidden Heterophily, and the Work of Negotiating Boundary Conflict* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Notre Dame].
- Chen, M. K., & Rohla, R. (2018). The effect of partisanship and political advertising on close family ties. *Science*, 360(6392), 1020–1024. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aag1433>
- Del Valle, E., Broersma, M., & Ponsioen, M. (2022). Political interaction beyond party lines: Communication ties and party polarization in parliamentary Twitter networks. *Social Science Computer Review*, 40(3), 736–755. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894439320987569>
- George, D., & Mallery, P. (2018). Descriptive statistics. In *IBM SPSS Statistics 25 Step by Step* (pp. 126–134). Routledge.
- Guzzi-Heeb, S. (2016). Kinship transition and political polarization: The spread of radicalism in the Swiss Alps. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 47(1), 27–51. [https://doi.org/10.1162/IINH\\_a\\_00940](https://doi.org/10.1162/IINH_a_00940)
- Hallila, P., Hans, & Aversa, P. (2024). Revving Up or Backing Down? Cross-Level Effects of Firm-Level Tournaments on Employees' Competitive Actions. *Academy of Management Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2022.0946>
- Mededović, J. M., & Petrović, B. (2021). Intergroup conflict runs in the family: Parental social attitudes and political ideology predict the ethos of conflict in their offspring. *Psihologija*, 54(4), 347–362. <https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=984143>
- Moore-Berg, S. L., Hameiri, B., & Bruneau, E. (2020). The prime psychological suspects of toxic political polarization. *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences*, 34, 199–204. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cobeha.2020.05.001>
- Paik, A., Pachucki, M. C., & Tu, H. F. (2023). “Defriending” in a polarized age: Political and racial homophily and tie dissolution. *Social Networks*, 74, 31–41. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socnet.2023.01.006>
- Paskewitz, E. A., & Beck, S. J. (2017). When work and family merge: Understanding intragroup conflict experiences in family farm businesses. *Journal of Family Communication*, 17(4), 386–400. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15267431.2017.1363757>
- Schroeder, M. (2022). *Media's Impact on Political Polarization in the Family* [Master's thesis, University of Missouri-Columbia].
- Schroeder, M., & Figueroa-Caballero, A. (2024). The (political) show must go on: The effects of political media and family relationships on affective polarization. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10776990241232084>
- Smiley, A. H. (2022). *Politics that Divide and Ties that Bind: Family, Friends, and Neighbors in a Polarized Era*. University of Washington.
- Song, H. Y., & Park, S. (2020). An analysis of the correlation between personality and visiting place using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. (2020). *KSII Transactions on Internet and Information Systems*, 14(5). <https://doi.org/10.3837/tiis.2020.05.005>