SOCIO-CULTURAL DYNAMICS AND THEIR RELATION WITH THE PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT IN THE PASHTUN TRIBAL SOCIETY OF PAKISTAN

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Abstract. The study was conducted to identify the importance of socio-cultural traits of tribal people in relation to development. It was aimed at finding the key components of Pushtun culture that may accelerate or restrain development interventions in FATA region of the country. This study was conducted in three zones of the tribal areas of Pakistan, and a total number of 384 respondents were selected randomly. The respondents were subjected to closed ended questionnaires. Questionnaires acquired information related to the link of three basic elements of Pushtunwali (nang, melmastia and badal), in relation to their importance for present day development. Results revealed that a majority of respondents considered nang as the mode of development in their areas. Also, melmastia, by a majority of respondents, was favored to be extended to development consultants, subject to their follow up of local traditions. Moreover, a prominent number of respondents also considered deployment of badal to development interventions as well as related personnel, if development interventions defy or counter local traits and locals' consent. Incorporating local societal culture was thus considered to play a pivotal role in determining success of rural developmental projects in FATA region of Pakistan.

Keywords: Pashtun ethnic society, tribal culture, local knowledge, growth and development, participatory approach, FATA region.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.3176/tr.2018.2.05

1. Introduction

Analysis of the local knowledge and socio-cultural realities are considered vital for founding the development industry. It is to interlink socio-economic growth and local perfection, which indirectly remains as an *end per se* for generating a community's empowerment and self-reliance for sustainability (Keane and Cinnéide 1986). It is also because analyzing, understanding and

grounding development on traditional local culture (sometimes mixed with 'modern' culture) is an attempt to transfer power to local population for their betterment (Ziai 2004). Moreover, since, people centered, rural development stands *sine qua non* for development, it also cannot be isolated without an understanding of the local socio-cultural dynamics (Mohammed 2010). So, the debate of *culture matters*, societal structure and cultural values (communal norms and shared values etc.), embedded in the local social environment, actually shapes the spirit and endeavors of participation; that in turn guarantees sustainable development.

There is hence always a need of immediate attention for building relationship of power and knowledge in the third-world societies (Escobar 1992b). Within the third world, there is a need of even more consideration of closed or tribal cultures. Also, the modern trends of development, besides being flexible and dynamic, also open pathways for knowledge and cultural expression (Escobar 1992a). So, recognizing socio-cultural understanding, and power of the social system to transform development, stays the most important element of development dis-course (Foucault 1977). It legitimizes the perception of locals to consider local cultural realities, before thinking any rural development plan (Simmons 1992). It is a confirmation that *culture matters* – whispering calls for socio-cultural under-standing. So it remains of high importance in the debate to investigate local cultural realities in this modern era of global culture, as determinant of develop-ment (Rapley 1997).

In the debate of *culture matters*, local cultures are not perceived as 'old-fashioned, exotic and strange'. But they melt with the heat of advancement and modernization. They can then deliver goods to the target population (Simmons 1992, Escobar 2011). Local cultures, including ethnic values, are transformative through cultural alteration. This transformation occurs through a process of mutual interaction and dwelling on it the alternate imaginaries as well as counter hegemonic principles. Such an alteration leads to a new orthodoxy in the development dis-cussion, as a pro-local growth and development strategy (Radcliffe and Laurie 2006). So, the local socio-cultural traits may be utilized for a constructive approach on creating new space of opportunities for people and communities (McGregor 2009).

1.1. Social and cultural dynamics of FATA

The Pashtun[1] tribal community is located in the northwest region (Federally Administered Tribal Area-FATA) of Pakistan with neighboring Afghanistan. They are comprised of approx. 3.18 million (1998 census) inhabitants over an area of 27,200 square km. Pashtun tribes of Pakistan enjoy special (centuries long)

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[1]   Pashtun which is a local nomenclature derived to and from Pashtunwali is used here, which is Paktun, Pukhtun or Pathan in the non-Pashtun society.

societal structure or tribal culture (so-called *Pashtunwali*). Pashtun tribes[2] of western frontier region of Pakistan have a unique culture and legal social code of conduct that governs their life, termed as 'the way of the Pashtuns or *Pashtunwali'*. The reality about Pashtunwali is that it remains the cornerstone of Pashtuns' society, backed from 2000–3000 BC (Ahmad 1976). Pashtunwali is practiced as religion (Islam). It impedes the reality that Islamic law is in practice more as a 'cultural norm', however, without precisely agreeing Shari law (Shams-ur-Rehman 2015). Therefore Pashtunwali shapes a locality's behavior from cradle to grave. And it stood responsible for the survival of the Pashtun tribes, however, little admired by the external elements before coming in to contact with the locality (Johnson and Mason 2008). In general term, Pashtunwali has a perfect type of hierarchy in the social groupings (sub-tribe to entire ethnic group), based on the kinship relationships in the shared culture – egalitarianism. The society is a cephalous and a balanced social system. So, in this modern world, Pashtun social system is perceived as culturally idiosyncratic that greatly influences the Pashtun thought, perception and behavior in the daily life (Tainter and MacGregor 2011, Lindholm 1996). There is no sense of acting as substitute or perceiving anyone superior, but in honor. Hence, they do not accept any foreign/state led authority (Holdich 1901, Lindholm 1982, Hauner 1981). Hence, the importance of Pashtunwali is traced from the fact that it overwhelmingly befitted the largest 'quasi-legal' system ever existed in any stateless society (Ginsburg 2011). This quasi-legal system has established itself into a locally accepted constitution (Ahmad 1980). Pashtunwali breathes around three core pillars or tanents, namely; *Nanawatia* or code of honour, *Melamstia* or hospitality (also refuge) and *Badal* or revenge (for justice and social and retaliation, in case first two are not followed). In general terms, these sets of values are the sum total of the tribe's collective expectations from the members of the society and from outsider elements (Liebl 2007).

1.1.1. Nang (code of honor)

Nang, being understood as self-respect and dignity, has the highest value in Pashtun ethnics. Nang is the basic Pashtun nature and character and central pillar of Pashtun culture. Upholding *nang* is the foremost duty of every Pashtun individual (Ginsburg 2011). Hence, nang in '*Nangwali* – the code of honor' become a key thought and standard of reference in accepting, and understanding the normative tribal behavior and socio-political interaction (Ahmad 1976).

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[2] Tribe, according to Encyclopedia Britannica, in anthropological terms, is defined as a common form of social organization from common descent, language, culture and ideology. It was first originated in ancient Rome, with the word *tibus*: division within the state. However, under pure anthropological investigation, 'tribe' refers to 'social segment' having a unique social structure within the society with any common ancestor i.e. a society sharing common ancestry. For some, tribe is a political unit; yet, the social order and structural concept encompass such ideologies.

1.1.2. Melmastia (hospitality)

Melmestia is giving hospitality to host, who are considered equal to host and even 'friends of the host' (*da melma dost*) (Ahmad 1980). Melmestia is a set of conventions and an immediate reward from the society on respecting local cultural values, which is stretched to sanctuary (panah) provision, if threatened by enemies or requested voluntarily. Hospitality evolves around a guest's obligation to give respect to host. Correspondingly, the foreign development workers fit in the category of guests, but they need to bestow their loyalty, i.e. submission to tribal customs. In reply the local Pashtuns are liable to security provision, which remains the best facilitating aspect of Pashtunwali for development workers. Pashtuns obey this social code to maintain their honor (*namoos*) and identity in worst circumstance, and if not observed, it can lead to disadvantage and grave trouble (Spain 1963).

1.1.3. Badal (revenge)

The societal cultures of a minority population bear the potential to resist (Escobar 2011). Likewise, in Pashtun society, Badal or *por* resists and it is like a debt in the Pashtun culture, which ends mostly with revenge. It is an equivalent response, reciprocation, and exchange in its both positive and negative sense (Khattak et al. 2014). This feature is mainly interconnected and paired with other features of Pashtunwali such as *nang* and *melmestia* (Dupree 1984). Therefore, badal takes a different form, when put in practice and not necessarily the violent form, as mostly cited, but there exist clear limits for deploying revenge and not the free-floating mad rage that can be expressed without any constraints. However, badal implies to redeem justice (Taj 2009). Which is beyond 'time, space and cost', as it is obligatory to fulfill in local culture (Ahmad 1973, Tair 2009). However, 'revenge is the reaction of any action'. It is the answer against any insult – an end to any disobedience (Mahdi 1986). So, in normal routine reality, Pashtun do not start the dispute but remain truthful – Pashtunwali *per se*, but remain loyal to belongings (Barfield 2010).

Conclusively, the above stated realities and mind-set extensively influence Pashtun behavior, i.e. their perception, reasoning of the intervention and sense of judgment, while interacting with outsiders (Tainter and MacGregor 2011). Although caricaturing the modern world's dilemmas, this societal system remains more daring in its well-captured form. Thus, any attempt to ruin this old tribal social system creates xenophobia that could lead to extreme reaction (Ahmad 1980), as it happened in the past and resulted in non-infiltration of both non-/state actors aimed for area development.

1.2. Socio-economic realities

Since independence in 1947, Pashtun tribal belt remains the most backward, unsettled, isolated and underdeveloped area. It remains a poverty-stricken zone where the majority of population has no access to social facilities. It is coupled with high illiteracy rate, widespread diseases due to unhygienic drinking water, sanitation

and health facilities (GoP 2009). This situation is coupled with high dropout in schools, lack of physical infrastructure, lack of information and communication system. Recently, because of lack of employment and economic opportunities, poor population has engaged itself in other money-spinning activities.

1.3. Problem statement

Instead of mitigating (above stated) decades long local vulnerability in a cost-effective manner, FATA has been watched through stereotypical spectrum. The area is both nationally and internationally, intentionally and unintentionally mis-understood and wrongly documented, contradicting the actual reality. So, without proper analysis to examine the local cultural realities, Pashtun tribal social structure was considered a static construction that resists change in its composition, and, the local population was considered uncompromising and rigid (GoP 2007). It has been further documented that Pashtun society of FATA has historically impervious traits to change and was also considered as a stagnant societal structure that hampers any outsider insurgence for area development (Hussain 2000). So, local socio-cultural realities had been totally ignored. In the meantime, wrong perceptions about the local societal structure and neglecting the actual stakeholders also dragged the whole exercise of consultation and projects' execution to misuse of the monetary resources.

1.4. The aim and objectives of study

This study thus targets the under-development of Pashtun tribal region FATA through analyzing the Pashtun cultural system and its misrepresentation as one course. Therefore, at its first attempt, the study tries to analyze features of the above-discussed parameters of Pushtunwali, as the basic parameters to development. These facts of Pashtunwali are broadly analyzed and summarized in this study with the aim to interlink them to give starting point to both policy makers and developmental partners. It is to give proper impression, before going ahead to plan any developmental activity in FATA, yet alone to kick-start any genuine development in the area. Broad objectives of the study are:

i) Study locals' perceptions regarding incorporation of the features of Pushtunwali in development interventions.
ii) Gauging the importance of Pushtunwali in overall recognition, formulation and success of development cooperation.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Data and sampling

This study has deployed both qualitative and quantitative research techniques to answer the study objectives. At the first instance, the existing data was gathered and interpreted systematically as it gave a clear purpose of guiding an inquiry (Saunders 1987). The qualitative method was adopted to gain in-depth information

regarding the cultural realities and societal behavior. Quantitative research technique was deployed for primary data collection under the 'mixed method approach', as it helped in describing, explaining and predicting phenomena while adopting the 'probability sampling technique' within a larger sample size (Cooper et al. 2006). Quantitative technique helped in prediction, generalization and casual explanations, as well as minimizing the researcher's influence on respondents. Closed ended questionnaires were used as the vital research tool for this study.

2.2. Sample size and sampling techniques

In total, 385 questionnaires were deployed through the researcher's personal contact with the respondents. In this quantitative survey, the sample of $n = 385$ was acceptable as it gives 95% confidence precision with only +5 margin of error. So, $n = 385$ remain adequate and results could be generalized based on the realities that i) Pashtun tribal population shares the same socio-cultural arrangement. ii) It is a commonly accepted and deployed approach of other studies taken in the area, e.g. independent surveys in 2007–10, conducted by 'Community Appraisal & Motivation Program (CAMP) and Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey-MICS–collection of samples and generalization of results on whole study population (Shinwari 2012, GoP 2009). In the first level, cluster sampling technique was adopted and the area is divided into clusters: rural areas (rural FATA), urban areas (rest of FATA), and developed areas (frontier regions, abbreviated as FRs). At the next stage 'random sampling technique' was deployed in selection of individuals for study survey, as it ensures equal and independent chances of selection of any sample unit (Barreiro and Albandoz 2001). After pre-testing the questionnaire, the final revised questionnaires, translated into Urdu language were applied in field. Respondents' answers are rated through 5-points, where 0% or 0 = lowest satisfaction level/very poor to 100% or 5 = high satisfaction level/very good. The field survey was carried out for 6 months in the study area.

2.3. Data analysis

Statistical package for the social-sciences (IBM-SPSS Statistics V.21) was used for quantitative data analysis. Besides information from secondary sources, 'primary qualitative data' (observations and indirect information during field trip) were correlated and quoted competently with the identified commonalities.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Nang as tribal honor

The initial empirical findings of the study confirm that the majority of the local population, i.e. 76% and 71% in Central and Rural FATA, followed by 61% in FRs consider *Nang* as preferred mode of development and conduct. This implies that all phases of project planning and management should be executed by staying within the tribal cultural circumference. This takes into account issue identifica-

tion, needs analysis, project planning, extent and some interventions etc. Whereas (on average) 27% of the population reflect development blueprints as the preferred mode of development. So, it will be not wrong to say that code of honor is indispensable than the development alone, as a proposal. The study findings confirm that the existing perception is comparatively low in FRs. That shows that Pashtun society from metropolitan area is in the transformation process from close to relatively open society with changing trends in their perceptions.
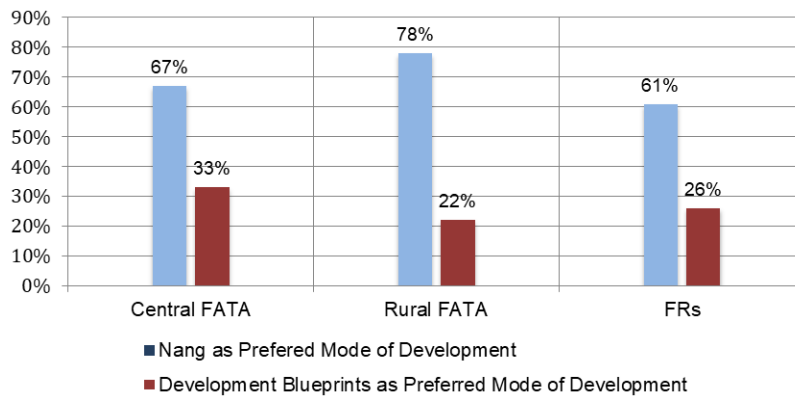
Figure 1. Nang and Tribal Honor in FATA.

3.2. Melmastia as tribal hospitality

The empirical findings of the study further reveal the local perception significance of melmastia. It has been reported that almost two-third (about 76% of entire study population) of the Pashtun community favors the extension of melmastia to developmental consultants, only after following Pashunwali. It is followed by other response of 4%, 7% and 7% (Central, Rural and FRs regions respectively) of individuals who discard such link between melmastia and development consultants. Whereas one-sixth (overall 16%) of the study population still prefer to extend melmastia to all possible developmental consultants without any prerequisite and binding. It is now clear that Pashtuns offer melmastia on conditional basis; submission to pashtun tribal social system.

These results are hereby proving to have a pivotal role in understanding of local dynamics for development interventions. An understanding about the local traits surely opens an efficient way to cultivate new actions and practices at the lower-bottom (Escobar 1992b). These are often supported by the local mindset through trust, respect, hospitality and cooperation. The empirical evidences of the study show that 97%, 84% and 66% of the population from Central, Rural FATA and FRs are enthusiastic to cooperate with external developmental actors through building trust, cooperation etc. Thus based on central argument, it can be projected that understanding of the local will build mutual trust and cooperation, and will prove to be the tools for successful development applications.
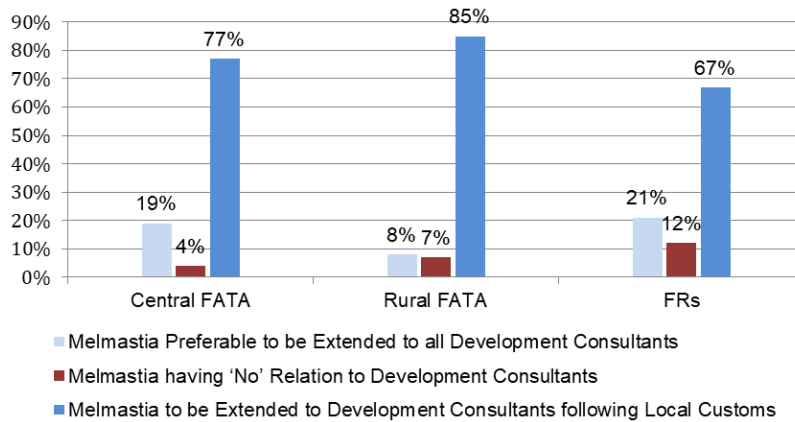
Figure 2. Melmastia as tribal hospitality.

3.3. Badal as tribal reaction

Results obtained regarding badal (as a tribal reaction to externalities) are related to tribal reactions. This is reported to have consequences from mild to severe in nature, if local socio-culture in not followed, or if disrespected. The empirical evidences show that on average 64% of the study population is in favor of deploying badal for justice and social control in the area. However, an equivalent percentage (65.33%) is mindful of deploying badal as counter scheme to external interventions, if Pashtuwali is disrespected or snubbed. This is reported to become possible if the development project is based against the local traditions, and thereof the local consent. This is reported to take place also if any components of the local culture, traditions or the local traits are disrespected through any segment of the development activity. Hence, *badal* remains as a threatening aspect of Pashtunwali against external denial of the local realities.
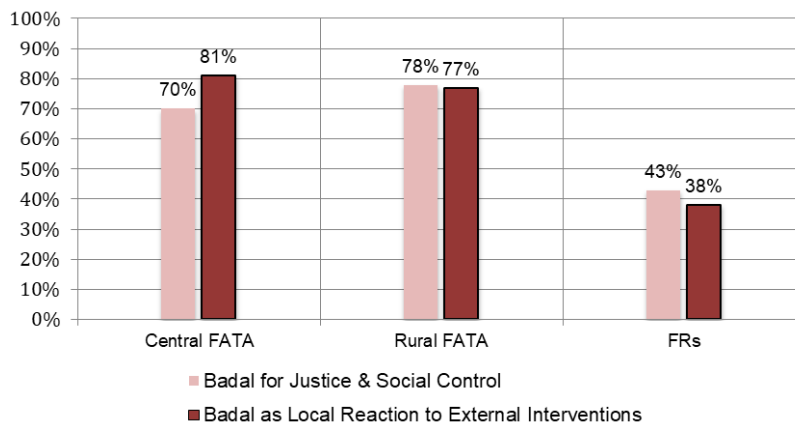

Figure 3. Badal for social control and threatening feature of Pashtunwali.

3.4. Perceived importance of local traits (Pushtunwali)

Information acquired about the general importance of Pushtunwali depicts a clear picture. Pashtun tribal society, in majority, admire their ethnic culture and demand the same from outsider developmental actors. The empirical evidences show that again above average; 86% respondents from Central FATA, 91% from Rural FATA and 66% from FRs demand external actors to gain thoughtful insight and accordingly follow Pashtun tribal cultural realities. Contrarily, only a small proportion (11%, 4% and 18% of the population from Central, Rural FATA and FRs respectively) is against such expectation from outsiders. Surprisingly, the population from FRs is again less rigid in their views. So it is not wrong to say that more social development leads into less rigidity of mindsets, and vice versa.

The statistical evidences show that in order to restore the local community at the mirror of development and improvement, it is important to examine the cultural realities first. So, understanding societal realities such as social capital, norms, values, beliefs, knowledge and communal capacities remained most important. It is vital for cooperative endeavors with local community for the area's development (Babajanian 2008).

The results interestingly reveal that understanding Pashtunwali is demanded in FRs. It is not therefore wrong to say that one part of the Pashtun society, i.e. FRs is comparatively less rigid to their cultural values, thus indicating Pashtunwali as a 'non-static creation'. So, it is evident that the local community can even alter cultural values to meet their socio-economic needs (Escobar 2011). It further shows that 'change is indispensable'. Hence, Pashtun society is in the transformation process from close to relatively open society. Yet, in majority cases, locals are more attached with Pashtunwali, i.e. Central and Rural FATA. It is also due to wrapping Pashtunwali in the religious package (Islam). It impedes the reality that Islamic law is being practiced as Pashtunwali (Shams-ur-Rehman 2015).
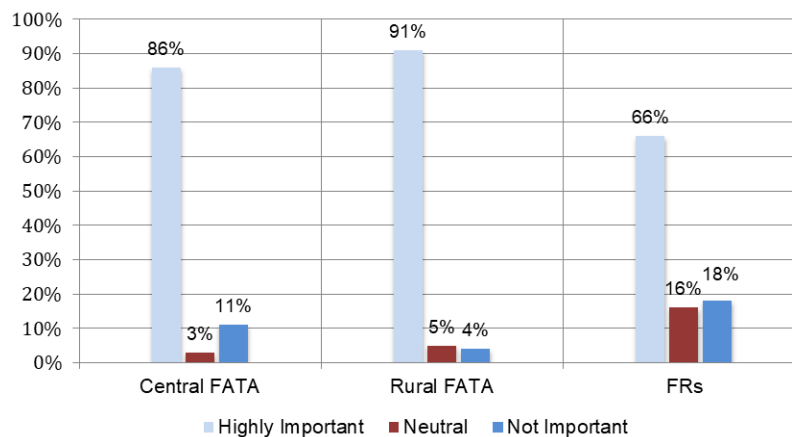

Figure 4. Locals' expectations from outsiders to understand Pashtunwali.

4. Conclusion

Human-centered notion and participatory form of development, fulcrum on which the growth and development of individuals in a society depends, is proved to be dependent on local socio-cultural values. The empirical results of the study reveal that each individual aspect of local culture constitutes 'intrinsic value' for the Pashtun tribal society in FATA. Three-fourth of the study population in FATA considers *Nanag* as the preferred mode of development and conduct. It stresses the local demand of placing the development industry within the tribal code of honor. Hence, Nang remains indispensable in FATA. Likewise, 76% of the population favors extension of melmastia to developmental consultants, however, on social submission to Pashtuwali. So, understanding *Nang* and *Melmastia* bears the potential to open new possibilities rather than hindering any participatory attempt. It is further revealed that 64% of the study population reflect tribal retribution, i.e. deployment of *badal* as a responsive scheme to non-compliance of developmental consultants with Pashtun socio-cultural environment. It is to remark that societal features are vital to understand how to avoid any difficult situation in the area. The study further confirms that 89% and 91% of the population from Central and Rural FATA demand from developmental consultants to understand and follow Pashtunwali prior to initial contact with the locality. It is followed by 66% from FRs. Overall less rigidity of the population from FRs shows that socio-economic projects can surely lead to change in perception of the locality about the outside world and developmental consultants. It is through interaction between minority culture and open culture, in which local culture loses its intensity. Nevertheless, this study concluded that only 'culturally centered' sensitive tactic of development can ensure grounding development. It remains necessary to take local cultural realities into consideration for area development.

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