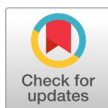
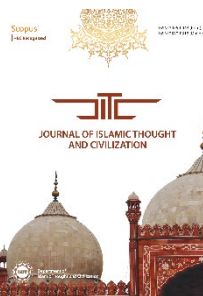



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An Analytical Study of the Electoral Performance of Pakistan's Religious Political Parties in the General Election of 2024

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Abstract

This study presents an analytical review of the electoral performance (EP) of religious political parties (RPPs) in Pakistan's 2024 general elections (GE). Despite a strong ideological background, prominent religious parties such as Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), and Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP) were unable to demonstrate effective national-level EP in this election. Only JUI and Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM) managed to secure five seats. The study was conducted using a mixed methods approach, based on official electoral results, party manifestos, media reports, and scholarly analyses. According to the research, the reasons for the poor EP of religious parties include lack of unity among them, outdated and ineffective narratives, limited financial resources, weak electoral campaigns, and a declining trend of voting on religious grounds among voters. Furthermore, electoral fraud, political instability, administrative weaknesses, and media restrictions also impacted their performance. The findings indicate that unless religious parties implement fundamental reforms in their narratives, electoral strategies, and organizational coordination, they will gradually become ineffective in Pakistan's evolving democratic landscape. In this context, it is essential for them to focus on public issues and align with contemporary political requirements to regain public trust.

Keywords: electoral performance, Pakistan general elections 2024, religious political parties

Introduction

In Pakistan, religious political parties (RPPs) have been engaged in a long and continuous struggle to shape national, political, and social life according to Islamic teachings, resulting in several notable achievements. A key aspect of their strategy has been to first incorporate Islamic principles into the fundamental legal and constitutional framework, so that these principles become part of Pakistan's constitution, and thereafter to continuously work on Islamizing society and the state in light of these principles. This struggle began immediately after the creation of Pakistan, when religious forces exerted pressure on the Constituent Assembly to approve the Objectives Resolution, which laid the foundation for making Pakistan an Islamic Republic. By incorporating this resolution into the constitution, it was established that Pakistan's state and governmental policies would revolve around Islamic teachings, thereby assisting the Muslim population in living their lives according to Islamic principles.¹

Various constitutional and legal institutions were established to enforce the Islamic character of the state, including the Islamic Ideology Council, the Federal Shariat Court, and the Institute of Islamic Research, which have played a key role in implementing Islamic laws and strengthening the

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¹Sumita Kumar, "The Role of Islamic Parties in Pakistani Politics," *Strategic Analysis* 25, no. 2 (May 2001), https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/olj/sa/sa_may01kus01.html

Islamic identity of state policies. Furthermore, numerous Islamic laws—such as the Hudood Ordinance, *Qisas* and *Diyat* laws, the Law of Evidence, Zakat and Ushr regulations, laws regarding the observance of Ramadan, prohibition of interest (*Riba*), and legislation concerning Ahmadiyyat—along with constitutional provisions on the moral eligibility of assembly members, such as Articles 62 and 63, have clearly defined the Islamic face of the state.²

All these achievements and constitutional and legal reforms are the result of the continuous struggle and efforts of RPPs, which have played a significant role in shaping Pakistan's political system within an Islamic democratic framework. In Pakistan, RPPs have always been active as a prominent ideological and political force. Their primary objective has been to come to power through democratic elections and to transform Pakistan into an exemplary Islamic welfare state,³ ensuring the Implementation of Islamic Laws,⁴ and the establishment of the Prophetic system.⁵

The focus of their struggle has been the establishment of an Islamic society and a welfare state where practical adherence to Islamic teachings enables individuals and society to achieve success in both this world and the Hereafter. From the 1970 GE to 2024, RPPs have participated in every election; however, in terms of popular votes, they have not garnered sufficient support to attain power at the federal level. Although they achieved limited successes in some provincial elections, overall, these parties have failed to effectively influence governance at the national political level. This failure has prevented them from making significant progress toward their major Islamic objectives, particularly regarding the Islamic character of society and the state. Prominent RPPs include JI, JUP and JUI, which have participated continuously in every election but have failed to establish the desired political influence.⁶

Therefore, the aim of this research study is to present an analytical review of the EP of Pakistans major RPPs —JUI, JI, JUP, TLP, and MWM in the 2024 GE. The scope of this study is limited to the national level up to the 2024 GE and focuses on the manifestos, strategies, performance and voter trends of major RPPs in Pakistan.

Accordingly, this study will address two main questions:

1. What was the overall EP of Pakistan's RPPs in the 2024 GE?
2. What were the fundamental reasons for the weak performance of RPPs in the 2024 GE?

2. Literature Review

Multiple studies have examined the EP of Pakistan's RPPs from different perspectives. Umer Yaqoob's research article analyzes the EP of Pakistan's RPPs in the 1970 GE. According to the author, the EP of RPPs in the 1970 elections was not impressive. The three major parties — JI, JUI and JUP — collectively won only 18 out of 300 seats in the National Assembly, amounting to merely 6 percent. According to the author, the first reason for this weak EP was sectarian affiliations, second reason was the region-specific support bases of JUI and JUP, third reason was the lack of a strong political stronghold of JI, which significantly affected its performance, fourth reason was the non-

²M. Amin, *A Silent Revolution Is Inevitable* (Lahore: Maktabe Al Burhaan, 2020), 120–36.

³*Constitution of Jamate Islami Pakistan* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, March 2017), 15.

⁴JUI Pakistan, "JUI Manifesto," accessed May 27, 2025, <https://juipak.org.pk/%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B4%D9%88%D8%B1/>.

⁵Muhammad Husnain, Muhammad Khalid, and Samina Awan, "Political Participation and Role of Jamiat Ulama-e-Pakistan (JUP) in Early Constitutional Phase of Pakistan 1948–58," *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan* 59, no. 1 (2022): 210–226.

⁶M. Amin, *Why Pakistans Religious Forces Are Ineffective?* (Lahore: Maktabe Al Burhaan, 2020), 109–29.

participation of Shia political parties (SPP) in the elections and the reluctance of the Shia community to vote for Sunni-majority religious parties and fifth reason was the lack of unity among RPPs, which further contributed to their weak performance in the 1970 elections.⁷

Muhammad Azhar and Ayaz Muhammad's research presents a historical and quantitative analysis of the EP of RPPs in Pakistan from 1947 to 2013. According to the authors, although RPPs in Pakistan are numerous, their electoral support has remained limited. JUI has managed to maintain its identity in certain regions, whereas JI, despite its strong ideological foundation, has failed to expand its political outreach, partly due to its policies and the political compromises it made in the past. The authors identify key reasons for the decline in the EP of these parties, including the lack of popular candidates, sectarian inclinations, and the limited practical and educational capabilities of their leadership.⁸

Muhammad Safdar Hussain and Dr. Asia Saif Alvi presented a comparative study of JI's performance in Pakistan's 2013 and 2018 elections. According to the authors, JI participated in the elections of 1970, 1993, and 2013, while it boycotted the elections of 1997 and 2008. In electoral politics, the party has been part of various alliances, including the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) in 1977 and the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) in 2002 and 2018. Although JI has never succeeded in forming a government at the federal level, it managed, after the 2002 elections, to establish short-lived provincial governments in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan as part of the MMA. In the 2018 elections, religious parties collectively secured approximately 10 percent of the total votes; however, JI refrained from joining the revived MMA that was re-established in 2012. In both the 2013 and 2018 elections, JI's EP remained limited and moderate, and even within alliance platforms, it failed to achieve any notable success.⁹

Muhammad Safdar Hussain and Dr. Asia Saif Alvi, in another research article, presented a comparative analysis of the EP of JI and JUI in the 2013 and 2018 GE. According to this study, RPPs collectively secured approximately 10 percent of the total votes, which represented a relatively better performance compared to the 2013 elections. Since the MMA remained inactive after 2008, RPPs participated separately in the 2013 elections. JI contested the 2013 elections independently and was able to win only three seats in the National Assembly. In the 2018 elections, RPPs participated under the platform of the MMA and secured 2.54 million votes nationwide. However, despite being the largest religious party within the MMA, JI failed to perform better than JUI-F. The study indicates that, although JI is an organized and ideological party, it was unable to secure broad public support, whereas JUI-F achieved limited electoral success based on its religious vote bank in specific areas.¹⁰

Riaz Hasan and Faiza Saleem, in their article, have presented a detailed analysis of the consistently weak EP of religious parties in Pakistan's electoral politics. According to the authors, although Islam is a fundamental component of Pakistani Muslim identity and religious affiliation is strong at the societal level, this affiliation has never translated into significant electoral support for

⁷Umer Yaqoob, "Electoral Performance of Religio-Political Parties in Pakistan: An Analysis of 1970 Elections," *Global Regional Review* 9, no. 2 (2024): 81–87, [https://doi.org/10.31703/grr.2024\(IX-II\).08](https://doi.org/10.31703/grr.2024(IX-II).08).

⁸Muhammad Azhar, and Ayaz Muhammad, "Electoral Performance of Religio-Political Parties in Pakistan: An Assessment," *Pakistan Journal of Islamic Research* 16 (2015): 35–49, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316635755>

⁹Muhammad Safdar Hussain, and Asia Saif Alvi, "Electoral Performance of Jamaat-e-Islami in Pakistan: A Comparative Study of Elections 2013 and 2018," *International Research Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 3, no. 1 (January–June 2024): 349–365.

¹⁰Muhammad Safdar Hussain, and Asia Saif Alvi, "Electoral Performance of JI and JUI-F in Pakistan: A Comparative Study of 2013 and 2018 Elections," *Journal of Positive School Psychology* 7, no. 5 (2023): 1344–1358, <https://journalppw.com/index.php/jpsp/article/view/17557/11065>

RPPs. No religious party in Pakistan's political history has succeeded in forming a government at the federal level. However, in the 2002 GE, the religious parties' alliance, MMA, secured 11.3 percent of the votes and formed a government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, largely due to public sentiments arising against the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. Nevertheless, this success did not extend to larger provinces such as Punjab and Sindh. The authors further explain that in the 2008 elections, due to mutual disagreements between JI and JUI, the MMA broke apart, JI boycotted the elections, and the popularity of religious parties sharply declined, resulting in them receiving only 2.1 percent of the votes. In the 2013 elections, both parties contested separately, which further divided their votes, and collectively religious parties secured only 6.74 percent of the votes.¹¹

Rizwan Khadim, in his research, analyzed the growing role of religious populism in Pakistan's electoral politics. According to him, the emergence of TLP was not merely as a political party, but as a protest-based religious movement that later transformed into a formal political party, while maintaining its activist identity. He highlighted that TLP effectively used the issue of blasphemy and its Barelvi sectarian identity for political mobilization. These factors provided TLP.¹²

A review of the existing research literature makes it clear that multiple studies have been conducted on the EP of RPPs in Pakistan. Most studies have analyzed the electoral strategies, vote banks, alliance formation, and ideological narratives of JI, JUP, JUI, and other RPPs in elections from 1970 to 2018. In recent elections, significant changes have occurred in Pakistan's political landscape, including the emergence of new political parties, shifts in voter behavior, narrative-building through social media, and new forms of electoral alliances. Despite these changing factors, there is no research available that integrates the 2024 elections from historical, quantitative, social, political, and ideological perspectives to clearly demonstrate the extent to which religious parties have been effective or ineffective in the current electoral politics. Therefore, this study will attempt to fill this scholarly gap.

3. Research Methodology

This study employed both quantitative and qualitative research methods to provide a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the EP of Pakistan's RPPs in the 2024 GE. The quantitative research involved analyzing official reports from the Election Commission of Pakistan, final election results, seat distribution, and vote counts. This section clearly illustrates the parties' wins, losses, and vote shares. The qualitative research included examining the electoral manifestos, campaign materials, national and international media reports, and analytical articles by experts for major religious parties such as JI, JUI-F, JUP JUP, and TLP. This enabled a detailed study of the parties' narratives, political strategies, public reception, and potential for future reforms. To ensure objectivity and reliability, only credible sources were used, making the research findings trustworthy and analytically sound.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Electoral Performance of RPPs from 1970 to 2018

From the 1970 GE to 2024, RPPs have consistently participated in all elections, including JI, JUI, and JUP, which have been involved in every electoral contest. The performance of RPPs in

¹¹Riaz Hassan, and Faiza Saleem, *The Performance of Religious Parties in Pakistan's Elections*, ISAS Insights no. 514 (Singapore: Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore, 2018), <https://www.isas.nus.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/ISAS-Insights-No.-514-The-Performance-of-Religious-Parties-in-Pakistan-Elections.pdf>

¹²Kashif Ijaz, and Asia Saif Alvi, "Evaluation of Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) in the Context of Elitism," *Journal of Positive School Psychology* 7, no. 4 (2023): 2000–2011, <https://journalppw.com/index.php/jpsp/article/view/17556>.

elections held from 1970 to 2018 is as follows:

Table 1. All Election's Results of RPPs¹³

Title	Votes	Percent	Seats	Percent
1970	4604390	13.95%	18/300	6%
1977 PNA	6,154,921	12% / 36.43%	36 / 200	18% / 12%
1985	Non-Party Based Election			
1988	2,052,308	20.29%	18/237	18.51%
1990	2,062,237	11.86	17/217	11.69%
1993	1,125,377	5.49%	7/217	3.223%
1997 JUI JI & JUP Boycotted	325,910	1.67	2/217	0.92%
2002 MMA	3,335,643	11.41	45/272	16.54%
2008 MMA (JUI, JUP) &JI Boycotted	769,638	2.22	6/272	2.205%
2013	2,493,246	5.49	14/272	5.14%
2018	4,808,255	9.06	12/272	4.41%

4.2. Details of Pakistan's 12th General Elections OF 2024

Pakistan's 12th GE were held on 8 February 2024 to elect members of the National Assembly. Voting was scheduled across a total of 266 National Assembly seats. A total of 5,121 candidates were registered for the National Assembly seats, of which 3,748 were independent candidates, while 1,873 candidates represented political parties.¹⁴ In this election, Pakistan's major parties—Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP)—participated as prominent political forces, while a total of 167 registered political parties contested. Among the RPPs, major parties such as JI, JUI, JUP, TLP, and MWM actively participated. According to the published list by the ECP, a total of 23 other religious parties also took part in the 2024 elections.¹⁵

4.2.1. Introduction of Religious Political Parties

4.2.1.1. Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan

JI was founded by Maulana Syed Abul A'la Maududi (RA) on 26 August 1941 in Lahore. The basic objective of this party is the implementation of an Islamic system of life in the light of the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. Initially, the party emerged as a reformist and intellectual movement; however, after the establishment of Pakistan, it also began to play an active role in the political arena. JI participated in the elections of 1970, 1993, 2013, and 2024, while it boycotted the elections of 1997

¹³Source: "Election Commission of Pakistan, General Elections," accessed May 27, 2025, <https://ecp.gov.pk/general-elections>; Election Studies – Digital Library (1970–2024), accessed May 27, 2025, <https://gallup.com.pk/post/21539>.

¹⁴"Pakistan General Elections 2024," *Election Commission of Pakistan*, accessed May 27, 2025, <https://ecp.gov.pk/general-elections-2024>.

¹⁵*Election Commission of Pakistan*, "List of Political Parties," accessed May 27, 2025, <https://ecp.gov.pk/general-elections-2024>.

and 2008. In electoral politics, the party has been part of various alliances, including the PNA in 1977 and the MMA in 2002 and 2018. Although the party has never achieved major electoral success, it has consistently participated in the political process through its ideological stance, public engagement, and organizational structure. The party considers the struggle for the implementation of an Islamic system through elections as part of its peaceful political strategy.¹⁶

4.2.1.2. Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI)

JUI was established in 1945 by a group of scholars associated with Darul Uloom Deoband. Initially, it was purely a religious organization, but it began participating in elections from 1970, a practice that has continued through the 2024 elections. This party is considered one of Pakistan's influential RPPs and has played a prominent role in Islamic legislation, the protection of religious seminaries, the defense of *Khatm-e-Nubuwwat*, and religious freedom. On various occasions, by becoming part of governments in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, it has incorporated its ideological priorities into policymaking and legislation. JUI has particularly deep public roots in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, and southern Punjab. Through participation in coalition governments, the party has also had opportunities to implement welfare projects and reforms, including in the educational, social, and economic sectors. Thus, Jamiat has not limited itself to an ideological narrative alone but has also played an effective role in the practical field.¹⁷

4.2.1.3. Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP)

JUP was founded in 1948 by scholars and spiritual leaders belonging to the Bareilvi school of thought. Its founding leaders included Maulana Muhammad Abdul Sattar Khan Niazi and Maulana Ahmad Saeed Kazmi. The party entered politics in 1970 and adopted the implementation of *Nizam-e-Mustafa* as its central mission. JUP has consistently raised its voice on issues such as the protection of religious symbols, the sanctity of the Prophethood, and the preservation of the shrines of saints. JUP has participated in every general election in Pakistan from 1970 to 2024.¹⁸

4.2.1.4. Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan

TLP is a newly emerging party in national politics, founded by Allama Hafiz Khadim Hussain Rizvi and registered with the Election Commission in 2017. The basic manifesto of TLP is the supremacy of Islam, the development of Pakistan, and the prosperity of the people.¹⁹ In the 2018 elections, the party secured 2.2 million votes for National Assembly seats across the country, emerging as Pakistan's fifth largest political party, and with approximately 1.9 million votes in Punjab's provincial seats, it became the third largest political party in the province. In the GE held on 8 February 2024, Tehreek-e-Labbaik secured 2,896,323 votes.²⁰

4.2.1.5. Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM)

MWM is a religious and political party representing the Shia school of thought in Pakistan. It was founded on 2 August 2009 in Islamabad by Shia scholars and former members of the Imamia Students Organization. Allama Raja Nasir Abbas Jafri is the current Secretary General of this organization. The basic objectives of MWM include a practical struggle for the revival of Islam, safeguarding Pakistan's national integrity and stability, highlighting the issues of the Shia community, promoting goodwill and mutual respect with the Sunni community, awakening political

¹⁶M. Usman, *Political Parties of Pakistan* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1987), 557.

¹⁷Ibid., 703.

¹⁸Usman, *Political Parties of Pakistan*, 657.

¹⁹Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan, "Political Journey. Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan," 2021, <https://tlyra.org/ur/pages/manifesto.php>

²⁰Gallup Pakistan, (2025), "2024 General Election (Press Release 8)."

and religious awareness among Muslims, and striving for the implementation of Qur'anic teachings in society. Its manifesto presents the vision of a welfare-based Islamic society founded on social justice. In 2013, the ECP granted MWM official recognition as a political party and allocated it the electoral symbol "Tent." The party has participated in the elections of 2013, 2018, and 2024.²¹

4.2.2. Electoral Strategy and Nominated Candidates of Religious Political Parties

In the elections held on 10 October 2002, six prominent religious and political parties of Pakistan jointly formed an electoral alliance under the name MMA. This alliance included JI, JUI, JUI-S, JUP, Jamiat Ulema-e-Ahle Hadith, and Islami Tehreek Pakistan.²² In the 2008 elections, this alliance came to an end. In 2013, all parties also participated independently. In 2018, the alliance was reactivated, but in the 2024 elections, these parties once again failed to unite, and all religious parties contested the elections individually without an alliance. Each party adopted its own separate electoral strategy and nominated candidates. In the 2024 GE, JI fielded candidates for all 266 National Assembly seats and 592 Provincial Assembly seats. The nominations were as follows: 144 from Punjab, 45 from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 61 from Sindh, and 16 from Balochistan.²³ TLP nominated candidates for 223 National Assembly seats.²⁴ JUI nominated party candidates for 122 National Assembly seats.²⁵

4.2.3. Manifestos and Narratives of Religious Political Parties

RPPs entered the field with the following manifestos:

4.2.3.1. Manifesto of Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan

According to JI Pakistans 2024 manifesto, the party's goal is to transform Pakistan into a truly Islamic, democratic, prosperous, and developed state, where the supremacy of the Qur'an and *Sunnah* is ensured, the constitution, democracy, and the rule of law are upheld, and every citizen is provided with equal opportunities for prosperity and development. The manifesto emphasizes the establishment of prosperous provinces and a prosperous society, promises to provide women with education and all opportunities for development within Islamic limits, and prioritizes the creation of a strong, interest-free economy independent of pressure from international financial institutions.²⁶

4.2.3.2. Manifesto of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam

JUI manifesto was based on the practical implementation of the system of Allah and His Messenger prophet Muhammad. It announced a minimum wage of fifty thousand rupees for workers and promised that its enforcement would be ensured if the party were elected. The manifesto pledged to establish welfare institutions across the country. It guaranteed free medical treatment for the public and specifically promised to set up hospitals and educational institutions in rural areas. The manifesto also included a pledge to establish a judicial system in Pakistan modeled after the era of the Rightly

²¹Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen, accessed January 10, 2026, <https://www.mwmpak.org/departments/2015-04-23-09-40-20/2025-07-28-14-26-13>.

²²Muhammad Naem Zafar, and Azra Asghar Ali, "MMA and Alliance Politics in Pakistan," *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences* 38, no. 2 (2018): 651–663, <https://pjss.bzu.edu.pk/index.php/pjss/article/view/618>.

²³Aaj News, "Elections 2024: How Many Candidates Did JI Field for National Assembly Seats?" May 27, 2025, <https://www.aaj.tv/news/30367158>.

²⁴Jang, "Tehreek Labbaik Pakistans National Assembly Candidates," accessed May 27, 2025, <https://jang.com.pk/news/1313672>.

²⁵Team JUI Swat, "JUI Candidates Nationwide for Election 2024," accessed May 27, 2025, <https://www.teamjuiswat.com/2024/01/JUI-Candidates-Election2024.html>.

²⁶Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan, "JI Pakistan Manifesto," accessed May 27, 2025, <https://elections.jamaat.org/manifesto/aslamy-mnshor-k-aaaly-mkasd>.

Guided Caliphs.²⁷

4.2.3.3. Manifesto of Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP)

The central narrative of TLP's manifesto revolves around Islam, Pakistan, the people, and the supremacy of Islamic principles, linked to the development of Pakistan and the welfare of the public. According to the party, the supremacy of Islamic principles, national development, and the prosperity of the people are the fundamental objectives of their struggle. The manifesto promised that, in light of the practical example of the Prophet and the Constitution of Pakistan, social justice, transparency, protection of minorities and underprivileged groups, devolution of state powers to lower levels, and an independent and dignified foreign policy would be implemented.²⁸

4.2.3.4. Manifesto of Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP)

Under the leadership of Dr. Sahibzada Abul Khair Muhammad Zubair, JUP presented its manifesto for the 2024 GE, with the central theme of "Islam, Pakistan, and the People." According to this manifesto, the party considers the practical implementation of the system of Mustafa ﷺ and the protection of the status of Mustafa as fundamental elements of its struggle.

The manifesto included the establishment of an Islamic welfare government, ensuring the fundamental rights and justice for every citizen, an independent judiciary, ending the current state of affairs, protection of nuclear assets and women's rights, a uniform education system, workers' rights, effective accountability at all levels, and solutions to the energy crisis, all aimed at ensuring social justice and equality.²⁹

4.3. Electoral Results of Religious Political Parties

Ninety-two independent candidates supported by PTI were successful, PML-N won 75 seats, and PPP secured 54 seats. Among RPPs, JUI received 2,163,160 votes but managed to win only 4 seats. MWM a religious and political organization representing Shia Muslims in Pakistan, also won one seat. JI, TLP, and JUP were unable to secure any seats.

Table 2. Election Results of 2024³⁰

Party/alliance	Votes	Percent	Seats
PTI-backed independents	18,457,567	31	92
PML-N	13,999,656	24	75
PPP	8,244,944	14	54
TLP	2,888,619	5	0
JUI-F	2,163,160	4	4
JI	1,336,698	2	0
MWM	61,899	0.10	1
Other	----	----	30
Ind	6,564,486	11.08	9
Total	59,221,077	100.00	265

²⁷JUI Pakistan, "JUI Manifesto," accessed May 27, 2025, <https://juipak.org.pk/%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B4%D9%88%D8%B1/>.

²⁸Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), *Election Manifesto of TLP for the 2024 Elections* (2024), <https://tlyra.org/ur/pages/manifesto.php>.

²⁹Sabah News, "JUP Manifesto," accessed May 27, 2025, <https://sabahnews.net/archives/164434..>

³⁰Election Commission of Pakistan, "General Elections 2024 Results," Accessed May 27, 2025. <https://ecp.gov.pk/general-elections-2024>.

In the 2024 GE, the performance of RPPs was extremely limited. These parties not only faced a significant reduction in the number of seats but also appeared weaker in terms of their vote bank compared to previous elections. Analysis of the election results indicates that religious parties failed to play an effective or decisive role in national politics, and their parliamentary representation became even more restricted.

4.3.1. Comparative Performance of 2018 and 2024

In the 2018 GE, JUI and JI jointly participated under the platform of MMA. This alliance secured 12 general seats in the National Assembly and received 2,582,905 votes. MMA's total vote share was 5% and its share of seats was 4%.³¹ In the 2024 elections, JUI received 2,163,160 votes but managed to win only 4 seats. JI individually secured 1,336,698 votes (2.2%) nationwide but failed to win any National Assembly seat. Thus, the combined total votes for both parties in 2024 were 3,499,858, whereas in 2018 this total was 2,582,905.³²

This means that the number of votes increased by 916,953; however, despite this, these parties faced a significant reduction in parliamentary seats. The main reason for this decline was that in the 2024 elections, both parties not only contested without an alliance.

TLP received 2,888,619 votes in the 2024 GE. Nationally, in terms of votes, TLP emerged as the fifth-largest political party; however, it failed to win any National Assembly seat.³³ In the 2018 GE, TLP received approximately 2,234,316 votes (around 4%) but failed to win any seats in the National Assembly.³⁴ In 2024, the number of votes for TLP increased by approximately 650,000, and its national vote share also grew; however, it again failed to achieve parliamentary success.

4.4 Reasons for the Weak Performance of Religious Political Parties

The results of the 2024 GE clearly indicate that RPPs have failed to play an effective parliamentary role at the national level. This situation raises a question: what are the fundamental reasons that prevent these parties from establishing an effective position in the electoral arena? Below is an overview of the key reasons why RPPs fail to achieve significant success in Pakistani elections.

4.4.1. Internal Differences Among Religious Political Parties

One of the main reasons for the failure of RPPs in the 2024 and previous elections is their internal differences. The unified platform of religious parties, MMA, was not reactivated for the elections, and the religious parties participated individually without an alliance. Due to their internal differences, the vote bank of religious parties becomes divided, resulting in the fragmentation and weakening of their overall political strength. Success is not possible without an alliance, as each religious political party represents a specific sect. JUI represents the Deobandi school of thought. JUP and TLP are associated with the Bareilvi school of thought. *Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith* represents the Ahl-e-Hadith school of thought. MWM is the most prominent political organization of the Shia school of thought. Furthermore, in some constituencies, JI is also seen as a separate ideological sect based on the specific views and teachings of Maulana Maududi.³⁵

³¹Gallup Pakistan, "Gallup Pakistan on Election 2018," accessed May 27, 2025, <https://gallup.com.pk/post/33069>.

³²Gallup Pakistan, "Gallup Pakistan on General Elections 2024," accessed May 27, 2025, <https://gallup.com.pk/post/36435>.

³³Gallup Pakistan, "Election 2018."

³⁴Gallup Pakistan, "General Elections 2024."

³⁵Zahid Rashidi, "National Politics and Religious Parties," *Al-Sharia* 13, no. 10 (October 2002): 40–42, <http://alsharia.org/2002/oct/mulki-siasat-aur-mazhabi-jamatain-maulana-zahidurrashidi#top-anchor>.

According to Dr. Muhammad Amin, no religious political party in Pakistan can succeed individually because it is evident that if a religious political party is based on a specific sect, people from other sects will not vote for it. Therefore, it can never become a national political party. Such a party can never win enough seats to secure a majority in the National Assembly and bring its Prime Minister to the center. In Pakistan's 70-year history, no sectarian religious political party has ever gained power at the center or formed a single-party government with a majority in any province. Occasionally, these parties have joined power through secular or other religious political alliances (such as during Mufti Mahmood's era or JI's partnership with PTI, but these governments were neither effective, stable, nor religiously impactful—especially when the central government did not provide them support.³⁶

According to the published list of parties registered with the ECP, 23 RPPs participated in the 2024 elections, indicating that RPPs are divided not only inter-sect but also intra-sect. The presence of multiple parties within the same school of thought has split the vote bank and prevented religious forces from playing an effective role in national politics. This division is the fundamental reason for their electoral failures, reduced public acceptance, and political ineffectiveness.³⁷

4.4.2. Electoral Fraud in the 2024 Elections

The second major reason for the failure of RPPs is the alleged fraud in the 2024 elections, which also affected their performance. Therefore, leaders of all religious parties have raised allegations of rigging in the elections. Maulana Fazlur Rehman, the head of (JUI, announced a movement against the alleged fraud in the 2024 elections. He stated that, just like in 2018, the right of the people to vote was undermined in the 2024 elections.³⁸

Ameer of JI, Hafiz Naeemur Rehman, announced observing a black day against the alleged fraud in the February 8, 2024 elections. He stated that the real results were altered through Form 47, and specific candidates were declared winners. He demanded the establishment of a judicial commission and the announcement of results according to Form 45, while warning that if transparent investigations were conducted, the majority of parliamentary seats would be rendered vacant.³⁹ TLP completely rejected the results of the 2024 elections and called for protests across the country. In a press conference in Lahore, TLP leader Hafiz Saad Rizvi stated that TLP had a clear lead in several constituencies, but their vote bank was stolen. In many constituencies, Form 45 was never issued, yet the results of these constituencies were announced.⁴⁰

Following allegations of fraud in Form 45 and Form 47 results in Pakistan's GE, the independent election monitoring organization Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) demanded an independent audit of the election results.⁴¹ According to the Global Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) report "Democracy Index 2024," the state of democracy in Pakistan has further deteriorated and it has been classified as an "authoritarian regime." Pakistan's overall score in 2024 was 2.84,

³⁶ Amin, *Why Pakistans Religious Forces*, 109–29.

³⁷Election Commission of Pakistan, "Enlisted Political Parties with ECP 1-2-2024," accessed May 27, 2025, <https://ecp.gov.pk/list-of-political-parties>.

³⁸Independent Urdu, "Electoral Rigging: Maulana Fazlur Rehman Announces Protest Movement from April 25," accessed May 27, 2025, <https://www.independenturdu.com/node/164171>.

³⁹Geo News, "JI Announces Black Day on February 8 Against Alleged Electoral Rigging," accessed May 27, 2025, <https://urdu.geo.tv/latest/395160>.

⁴⁰Express News, "TLP Completely Rejects Election Results, Announces Protests Nationwide," accessed May 27, 2025, <https://www.express.pk/story/2602899/1>

⁴¹Iftikhar A. Khan, "Election Watchdog Seeks 'Independent' Audit of Results," *Dawn*, February 19, 2024, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1815366/election-watchdog-seeks-independent-audit-of-results>.

compared to 3.25 in 2023. Due to this decline, Pakistan's global ranking fell six places to 124th and it was listed among the 10 worst-performing countries in the world.⁴² These figures highlight serious issues in Pakistan's electoral process, political participation, and civil liberties. During the 2024 GE, Pakistan faced multiple problems related to the electoral process, including pre-poll rigging, media restrictions, and actions against political opponents. These factors played a significant role in the decline of democracy.

According to Freedom House's report "Freedom in the World 2024," Pakistan was classified as a partly free country, receiving an overall score of 32/100. Its score for political rights was 12/40, and for civil liberties 20/60. This score reflects a three-point decline compared to 2023, indicating a deterioration in democratic values and civil liberties.⁴³ All these factors, especially electoral fraud and political interference, negatively affected the EP of Pakistan's RPPs.

4.4.3. Adverse Political Environment in Pakistan During the 2024 Elections

During the 2024 GE, Pakistan experienced an overall adverse and uncertain political environment, which affected not only RPP but also other parties. Unequal media coverage, pressure on certain political parties, delays in the election schedule, lack of neutrality of state institutions, and law and order issues in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan further complicated the electoral process. The suspension of mobile phone and internet services on polling day raised questions about electoral transparency and affected voter turnout. Delays in results, discrepancies between Form 45 and Form 47, delays in the allocation of reserved seats, and the slow response of the Election Commission also impacted the impartiality of the elections.⁴⁴

As a result of these factors, the vote bank and parliamentary representation of religious parties further declined. Overall, administrative weaknesses and lack of transparency in the 2024 elections raised serious concerns about Pakistan's democratic future, highlighting the need for a transparent and impartial electoral process in the future.

4.4.4. Lack of New and Attractive Narratives in Religious Political Parties

The one major reason for the failure of Pakistan's RPPs is the absence of a new and attractive narrative. To succeed in electoral politics, political parties must not only clearly present their manifesto and objectives to the public but also offer a coherent and compelling narrative that provides effective solutions to national and social issues. The public generally prefers parties that present real and contemporary solutions to their basic needs, social problems, and state challenges.

In the 2002 GE, the alliance of religious parties, MMA, achieved remarkable success, which was deeply influenced by the international political environment—particularly the U.S. aggression in Afghanistan—which mobilized the religious sentiments of the Pakistani public. MMA placed this context at the center of its electoral narrative, resulting in unprecedented public support and parliamentary success. The alliance linked religious and national sentiments in its message, creating

⁴²Economist Intelligence Unit, "Democracy Index 2024: What's Wrong with Representative Democracy?" February 27, 2025, <https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2024/>.

⁴³Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2024* (2024), <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2024/>.

⁴⁴Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT), "Pakistan's 12th General Election (2024): Score Card on Experts' Perceptions of Electoral Integrity," accessed May 27, 2025, <https://pildat.org/electoral-reforms1/pakistans-12th-general-election-2024-score-card-on-experts-perceptions-of-electoral-integrity>.

a profound impact on voters' hearts.⁴⁵

However, in recent elections, RPPs have not made their narratives as effective or appealing, nor connected them to public issues, everyday challenges, or contemporary demands. The mere implementation of a religious system or traditional religious narratives has not been sufficient to attract public attention and gain voter support in the current political environment—especially when the public is more focused on practical issues such as the economy, employment, education, and justice.

4.4.5. Trend of Not Voting on Religious Grounds in Pakistan

From 1970 to 2024, the trend of voting on religious grounds in Pakistan has always been weak. The annual review of the proportion of votes received by RPPs in Pakistan is as follows: 22% in 1970, approximately 0% in 1977, 2% in 1988, 4% in 1990, 6% in 1993, 8% in 1997, 12% in 2002, 2% in 2008, 6% in 2013, 10% in 2018⁴⁶ and approximately 11% in 2024.⁴⁷

According to a survey by the renowned statistician Dr. Ijaz Shafi Gilani, based on combined results of all electoral surveys in Pakistan from 1993 to 2018, the reasons for public voting are as follows: 21% vote based on personal patronage, 19% based on development work, 16% based on party loyalty, 13% based on competence, 13% based on honesty and religious inclinations, 8% based on community, 2% influenced by the desire to defeat someone, and 4% based on other reasons.⁴⁸ According to Dr. Ijaz Shafi Gilani's survey, only 13% of voters in Pakistan vote based on religious inclinations, which is a relatively small portion of the overall electoral process. This low percentage indicates that although religion holds importance in political identity, its influence on electoral decisions is limited.

Furthermore, in some constituencies, public dissatisfaction with the performance and political strategies of religious parties also limits voting based on religious inclinations. Therefore, it can be said that religious identity is only one component of voter behavior, while other social, economic, and political factors carry greater weight. The reasons for the failure of Pakistan's RPPs in the 2024 elections include internal differences, electoral fraud, an unfavorable political environment, lack of an attractive narrative, and the declining trend of voting based on religion among the public. Collectively, these factors have negatively affected the EP of religious parties and were the fundamental reasons for their failure in the 2024 GE.⁴⁹

5. Conclusion

This detailed analytical study of the EP of Pakistan's RPPs in the 2024 GE clearly shows that RPP failed to play an effective and decisive role in national politics. The study reveals that the primary reasons for the failure of religious parties are the lack of unity and the division of their vote bank. Furthermore, the lack of an effective strategy in their traditional religious slogans and narratives, and the absence of appealing messaging that addressed public issues such as the economy,

⁴⁵Muhammad Nawaz Khan, and Khurshid Iqbal, "The Politics of Electoral Alliances in Pakistan: A Case Study of Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal, Pakistan (MMAP)," *Journal of Regional Studies Review* 3, no. 1 (2024): 8–20, <https://doi.org/10.62843/jrsr/2024.31020>.

⁴⁶Gallup Pakistan. "Pakistan's 11th General Election 2018," accessed May 27, 2025, <https://gallup.com.pk/post/26164>.

⁴⁷Gallup Pakistan, *Pakistan's 12th General Election Scorecard 2024* (Islamabad: Gallup Pakistan, 2024), 4.

⁴⁸Ijaz Shafi Gilani, *The Ritual of Elections of Pakistan (1970–2018)* (Lahore: Lightstone Publishers, 2024), 122.

⁴⁹Zia ur-Rehman, "The Decline of Islamist Politics?" *Dawn*, March 17, 2024, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1822018Conclusion>

employment, health, and education, alienated general voters. Additionally, sectarian divisions and external factors such as electoral fraud severely impacted their performance. In contrast, other parties adopted narratives that linked religious values with development, reform, and modern solutions to public issues, which resonated with youth, urban populations, and a significant number of voters with religious inclinations. This situation clearly indicates that RPP need fundamental reforms to restore their electoral role and gain an effective position in national politics in the future. They must contest elections on a united platform by resolving internal differences and sectarian biases. These parties need to reorganize their narratives according to contemporary demands and present practical and clear solutions to real public problems.

The future success of RPP will depend on their ability to recognize social changes and modern political demands and implement fundamental and comprehensive reforms in their traditional narratives and strategies. The findings of this study not only provide valuable guidance for Pakistan's religious parties but are also significant for broader democratic and political reforms and transparency. An effective political presence of religious parties can contribute to strengthening and balancing Pakistan's democratic process, provided they succeed in adopting this path of reform.

Author Contribution

Muhammad Umeir Aslam: writing -review & editing. **Mohamad Zaidi bin Abdul Rahman:**supervision. **Raja Hisyamudin bin Raja Sulong:** supervision.

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