

Political psychology; Understanding the emerging fields in psychology

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This paper intends to describe political psychology and its relevance in current scenario. Political psychology is merging of two disciplines which are psychology and politics, here the queries related to political process were analysed or decoded by using psychological perspectives. Political psychology discussing the pattern of political behaviour by exploring different socio-psychological aspects such as leadership, group behaviour etc. When people are came together there will be conflict occurs, the political psychology also predict such political behaviour, as well as prevent and resolve conflicts. This perspectives will nourish our ability to understand politics from psychological perspectives. This paper came as a result of thematic literature review, the historical contexts as well as the recent literature defining the scientific branch. The study of interaction between the politics and psychology became more interesting these days.

Key words: Political psychology, political processes, political behaviour

Introduction

The term political psychology is first coined by Adolph Bastian in his book “man in history”, he was German ethnologist, he also stated the political behaviour based on the “civilization” all human are evolved by similar pattern instead of belief, and believed that all human have same pattern of thinking, which is very crucial statement in political

aspects. After many researchers cross sectioned the statement and corrected it.

Political psychology is an interdisciplinary scientific field of enquiry concerned with study of political processes from psychological perspectives (Hermann,1986).The history of political psychology it also have root in the ancient Greece, many philosophers also contributed such as Aristotle, Plato etc. After the World War II political psychology got a wide acceptance and it was a turning point many studies were occurred as an effect of world war.

McGuire (1993) described the historical development of political psychology as three phases in 1993, He divided the stages on the basis of focusing of the particular topics in different eras, Phase I considered from 1940- to 1950 were the researchers focus on the personality as the main cause of political behaviour, many political process were evaluated on the light of psychoanalysis and psychodynamics, Freud's concepts and ideas got very high acceptance in this era. Phase II considered from 1960 to 1970 were the researchers interests turned into the political attitude and voting behaviour, and also investigated the impact of political campaign in voting. They focused on the "rational man" assumptions which implies how they showing rationality in political decisions. Phase III considered from 1980 to 1990 the era largely focused on individual decision making and cognitive processes, influence of cognitive theories in the evaluation of international politics is also an important effect in this era. Founding of International society of political psychology and journal of political psychology.

According to Sidanus and Jost (2004) phase IV is a considered from 1990 to 2000s, in this era political psychologists were more focused on political issues, power relationship between groups etc. and also focused on collective actions, effect of globalization, and the experiences of migrated people. They also identified the fifth phase as from 2000s onwards, here the political psychology got expanded based on more scientific methodologies and these three areas are biology genetics and neurosciences, clinical political psychology and also behavioural political psychology.

Political psychology is opens a way to understand our own political action, overall it influenced the rational choices how people makes certain decisions and why we feel certain decisions are more important than the other (Huddy,2013).Political psychology gains prominent in west, theories and concepts are quite well developed,(Jost,et al.,2008). Empirical studies most incorporated with the political processes.

Methodology

This paper came as a result of thematic literature review. The historical context as well as the more recent literature defining and conceptualising political psychology elucidate the subject of this work. The linkage between politics and psychology is equally established. It reflects the relevance of human behaviour to various political contexts. It further explicates political psychology as a systematic field of study. Some of the areas of studies within the framework of political psychology are also clarified. The importance of political psychology to the analysis of politics explained by way of analysing some of the relevant literature. A psychological analysis to politics is hoped to give a fresh perspective to political studies. This work highlights some of the important areas of politics.

Political psychology through the lens of literature review

The interconnection between political science and psychology is well documented in both the political and the psychological literature. The definition of political psychology as a sub- scientific branch is still remains debatable. Many researchers were try to decode the political processes through psychological perspectives.

Huddy, Sears, and Levy (2013) define “political psychology as an application of what is known about human psychology to the study of politics”. Bar-Tal (2003) similarly claims that what makes political psychologists unique is their use of psychological knowledge to analyse political issues. In support of this proposition, Huddy and colleagues (2013) provide a long list of psychological approaches that have been applied to the study of political processes. For example, political psychology is the application of psychological theories towards the political processes such as psychological studies of personality are applied to research on mass and elite political behaviour,

behaviourist learning theories to the analysis of mass political attitudes such as mass communication effects; developmental theories to political socialization processes; incentive theories to the study of mass political behaviours such as collective action and violence; social cognition theories to the study of electoral behaviour and mass communications, political reasoning, and political information processing; and inter group relations theories to the study of prejudice, stereotyping, and intergroup conflict.

Through this categorization of the field of political psychology is the question of whether political psychology is merely applied psychology has been the subject of much debate (Schildkraut, 2004). In defense of the field, some political psychologists emphasize that most political-psychological research integrates insights from psychology and political science. In fact, some psychological phenomena, such as stereotyping, prejudice, group conflict, and political leadership, are inherently political and cannot be examined fully outside their political context (Strenger, 2015). Huddy and his colleagues (2013) discusses that the, most political science theories are became essentially psychological in that they rest on implicit and explicit assumptions about the cognitive and emotional mechanisms underlying political behaviour and decision-making. And they also try to state the political psychological research can even shed light on basic psychological concepts, such as motivated reasoning Other political psychologists maintain that even if the characterization is apt, attempts to apply psychological theories to political contexts are no less rigorous than other forms of political science research (Schildkraut, 2004).

Krosnick and McGraw (2002) studies shows the political science aims to deepen our understanding of political phenomena, any research that contributes to this is try to achievement of the value, even if it is based applying psychological theories to political settings. Such researcher's contribute to the linkage of psychology-based concepts, variables and theories into rational choice models. Indeed, psychological research has offered experimental evidence for deviations from rational decision-making. Nevertheless, by identifying numerous psychological factors that cause people to behave inconsistently from rational choice models, political psychology not

only complements, but also augments some rational choice predictions (Mintz, Geva, Redd & Carnes, 1997; Schildkraut, 2004).

Research in political psychology is not only theoretically rigorous but also has practical relevance. Aside from deepening our understanding of political phenomenon and posing and testing theoretical concepts, political psychology also aims to offer specific recommendations to the resolution of particular political problems, such as conflicts, protests, and terrorism (Strenger, 2015).

Crenshaw (2002) argues that the most important contribution of political psychology lies in its applicability to real-life political problems and policy issues, such as ethno-nationalist conflict, terrorism, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Drawing on empirical findings and theoretical developments, political psychologists can point political leaders and policy-makers to decision-making models, offer paths to conflict resolution that might bring bitter enemies to the bargaining table, and suggest campaign managers and strategic consultants useful models of political marketing and voting behaviour.

In the course of its development, the discipline has seen the rise and demise of many theories and approaches analysing political behaviour and decision-making. Thus, any attempt to account for the full range of research areas in the field will only reflect one's subjective perspective and location among the wide range of research agendas. Some researchers focus on elite behaviour (power motivations, charismatic leadership, psycho-biography, decision-making, bargaining, etc.), whereas others study behaviour at the mass level (obedience, participation, political violence, socialization, beliefs systems, mass communication, etc.). Some emphasize personality and motivational psychology, and others focus on the cognitive mechanisms underlying political behaviour.

Political psychology is also responding to the most current developments and events politically relevant taking place in the world. It is not a rigid discipline where only a specific issue falls under the purview of the discipline. It is dynamic in nature. Political psychology has much been stimulated by the urgent political problems of the day, especially those with actually or potentially devastating human consequences (Sears, 1987). Political psychology as a field must

attempt to deal with the consequences of an increasingly borderless world in which identities are fluid, transformed, hybrid, or in search of secure identities. Such an orientation is, for us, highly suited to the tasks of developing truly global traditions and centres of research in political psychology throughout the world, notably the postcolonial world and the global south, while retaining an openness to whatever the discipline might become (Nesbitt-Larking and Kinnvall, 2012)

Significance of political psychology

- ◆ Political psychology opens a way to understand our own political action, overall it influenced the rational choices how people make certain decisions and why we feel certain decisions are more important than the other (Huddy, 2013).
- ◆ The dominance of political scientists might explain why political psychology, unlike other fields in psychology, seems to be predominantly not concerned with identifying the contextual principles of how the human mental processes and behaviours work. (Azmi, Othman., 2020)
- ◆ In politics, normally people speak about numbers – the winning or the losing numbers, leaders and followers, voted in or voted out, and people and power. Psychology on the other hand speaks about mental processes and behaviour.
- ◆ The combination of politics and psychology will explain among others why leaders act in a certain manner, what is the leadership personality that is liked by the people, the reasons why people vote for a particular individual or party, the dynamics and changes in voting behaviour according to time, locality and circumstances, and finding means of winning the hearts and minds of the voters. (Azmi, Othman., 2020)

Levels of analysis; Individual and collective

In political psychology researchers use mainly two types of analysis, the individual and the collective level of analysis. Individual level is concerned with personality of citizen and political leaders, with political beliefs and values, with role of socialization and individual development in the formation of political beliefs with the examination of cognitive processes in decision making. Collective level is concerned

with group level processes in political thought and behaviour, including international relations and conflicts, role of racism in politics, group identities, cultural diversities social changes etc (Staerkle,2015).

Conclusion

The ever growing interest in the field of political psychology is marked by the increasing number of books published and also attracts scholars from different disciplines such as neuroscience, biology, economics, philosophy sociology etc. Broadening of scope of research in political psychology includes biological, behavioural and clinical approaches. Political psychology also makes huge contributions not only understand political processes but also basic psychological science (Crenshaw, 2002) Political psychology as a field must attempt to deal with the consequences of an increasingly borderless world in which identities are fluid, transformed, hybrid, or in search of secure identities. Such an orientation is, for us, highly suited to the tasks of developing truly global traditions and centres of research in political psychology throughout the world, notably the postcolonial world and the global south, while retaining openness to whatever the discipline might become (Nesbitt-Larking and Kinnvall, 2012).

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