

CRITICAL ISSUES OF GOVERNANCE IN PAKISTAN: STRATEGIES AND SOLUTIONS

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Abstract

The study aims at the critical issues related to governance in Pakistan. The current situation has emerged even into a worse state; therefore, it is essential to address the situation and provide strategies and solutions. The study is qualitative in nature, and based on 170 research articles, reports and published book chapters to extract the underlying principles to tackle the issue. Two steps were followed: 1) extensive review of existing secondary data on governance and 2) interviews of the experts of governance. The second approach was employed to substantiate the first and also to counter-check and confirm. Based on both approaches, the study deliberated upon numerous issues by highlighting their seriousness and criticality. Employing content analysis and analysing the feedback of the experts, the study presents important strategies and solutions in the form of golden principles. Six golden principles are presented with the overarching role of citizen participation.

Keywords: Governance, Golden Principles, Pakistan, Issues, Strategies

Introduction

Pakistan is a developing nation that has encountered significant governance challenges since its inception in 1947. These challenges have been manifested in the form of corruption, political instability, weak institutions, and lack of accountability, which have had a negative impact on the country's progress and have contributed to a range of social, economic, and political issues. This article explores the critical issues of governance in Pakistan and proposes some strategies and solutions to mitigate them. Pakistan is a country with a rich and diverse geography, ethnography, culture, and demography. Its geographical location in the north-western region of the Indian subcontinent has made it a melting pot of cultures and traditions. The country is bordered by India to the east, Afghanistan to the west, Iran to the southwest, and China to the northeast. Its topography is a mix of mountains, plateaus, deserts, and fertile plains, making it a country of immense geographical diversity. Pakistan is home to several mountain ranges, including the Himalayas, the Karakoram, and the Hindu Kush, which not only provide scenic beauty but also serve as a natural barrier between Pakistan and its neighbouring countries. Furthermore, its coastline along the Arabian Sea is dotted with several major ports, including the port of Karachi.

Pakistan is a multi-ethnic country with a population of over 220 million people, making it the world's fifth most populous country. The country's population is composed of several ethnic groups, including Punjabis, Sindhis, Balochis, Pashtuns, and Mohajirs,

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among others. The diverse population has led to the country's diverse linguistic landscape, with Urdu being the national language of Pakistan, but several other languages being spoken in different parts of the country, such as Punjabi, Sindhi, Balochi, Pashto, and Saraiki. Pakistan's culture is a blend of indigenous traditions and influences from neighbouring countries, including India, Iran, and Central Asia. Its vibrant and unique culture is reflected in its cuisine, music, dance, and art. Pakistani cuisine is known for its rich flavour and spicy taste, with dishes like biryani, haleem, and nihari being popular not only in Pakistan but also in other parts of the world. Pakistani music is also diverse, with traditional music styles like qawwali, ghazal, and classical music coexisting with more contemporary forms of music. Pakistani dance forms like bhangra, giddha, and the iconic Punjabi dance are known for their energetic and joyful nature. Pakistani art is also rich and diverse, with miniature painting, calligraphy, and textile art being some of the most prominent forms. Pakistan's government system is a federal parliamentary democratic system, with the President being the head of state and the Prime Minister being the head of government. The National Assembly is the lower house of parliament, while the Senate is the upper house. The country also has a federal system of government, with four provinces and two federally administered territories. Despite its democratic structure, Pakistan's government system has been plagued by several challenges, including political instability, corruption, and weak institutions. The country has experienced several military coups and political assassinations that have undermined the democratic process. The lack of accountability and transparency in government institutions has led to corruption and an erosion of public trust. However, the government has been taking steps to address these issues, including the establishment of independent oversight bodies and anti-corruption agencies. Despite these challenges, Pakistan is making progress towards strengthening its democratic institutions and promoting transparency and accountability in government.

Issues of Governance in Pakistan

Pakistan is a developing country that has been struggling with governance issues since its inception in 1947. Corruption, political instability, weak institutions, and lack of accountability are some of the most significant issues that have impeded the progress of the country.

One of the most critical governance issues in Pakistan is corruption. Corruption has permeated every aspect of Pakistani society and has become a norm. It has not only affected the functioning of governmental institutions but also the private sector, resulting in a lack of trust in public institutions and a decrease in foreign investment. Corruption in Pakistan is systemic and deeply entrenched, with bribery being demanded and paid for services that should be provided by the government. The lack of accountability and oversight has created an environment in which individuals in power can act with impunity, leading to a culture of corruption. To tackle this issue, Pakistan must concentrate on reinforcing accountability and transparency in its governmental institutions. This can be accomplished by creating independent anti-corruption agencies such as the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and enforcing regulations that penalise corrupt individuals.

Another significant governance issue in Pakistan is political instability. Pakistan has experienced multiple military coups, political assassinations, and sectarian violence, resulting in a lack of political stability in the country. The absence of political stability has hindered the development of a stable and effective governance system. One solution to this problem is the development of strong democratic institutions that can provide stability and promote accountability. This requires the establishment of an independent judiciary, a dynamic civil society, and a free press. Additionally, the government needs to work towards enhancing the socio-economic conditions of the people to reduce the grievances that fuel instability and conflict.¹

Weak institutions are another challenge facing Pakistan's governance system. The country's institutions, such as the police, judiciary, and bureaucracy, are often understaffed, underfunded, and lacking in training and resources. This has resulted in a system where those in power can act with impunity, and the rule of law is often ignored. To address this issue, there needs to be a concerted effort to strengthen these institutions. This can be achieved through the allocation of sufficient resources and funding, the provision of training and capacity building, and the establishment of a merit-based recruitment system.²

Lack of accountability is another significant issue facing Pakistan's governance system. Those in power are often not held accountable for their actions, and the lack of oversight and transparency has created a culture of impunity. This has resulted in a system where the powerful can act without fear of consequence, and the rights and freedoms of the people are often disregarded. To address this issue, there needs to be a concerted effort to strengthen accountability mechanisms. This can be accomplished through the establishment of independent oversight bodies, such as ombudsmen or human rights commissions, and the implementation of laws and regulations that hold those in power accountable for their actions.³

Therefore, governance issues in Pakistan are complex and multifaceted, affecting every aspect of the country's development. Corruption, political instability, weak institutions, and lack of accountability are some of the most significant issues that require urgent attention. Pakistan must take necessary measures to address these issues, including reinforcing accountability and transparency in governmental institutions, developing strong democratic institutions, strengthening weak institutions, and establishing independent oversight bodies to promote accountability. The successful implementation of these measures will undoubtedly lead to a more stable and prosperous Pakistan.

Method and Analysis

The study conducted was qualitative in nature and utilised two distinct approaches. Firstly, the researchers employed content analysis to analyse 170 sources of secondary data, including published articles, books, and reports. The primary objective of the content analysis was to gain a comprehensive understanding of the current status of governance in Pakistan, identify the critical issues, and explore potential solutions. This

approach allowed the researchers to uncover recurring themes, patterns, and trends pertaining to governance issues in Pakistan. In addition, to validate and support the findings of the content analysis, the study also conducted interviews with 17 policy and governance experts. The interviews aimed to provide an in-depth understanding of the critical issues of governance in Pakistan from the perspective of individuals with considerable experience and knowledge in the field of policy and governance. The experts' insights helped the researchers to gain a better understanding of the underlying causes of governance issues in Pakistan and potential strategies and solutions. By utilizing both content analysis and expert interviews, the study aimed to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of governance issues in Pakistan.

Why Poor Governance?

Poor governance is a complex phenomenon that has multifaceted causes and consequences. Scholars have attributed the root causes of poor governance to a range of factors such as political instability, corruption, lack of transparency and accountability, weak institutional frameworks, and inadequate public participation.⁴ In Pakistan, the prevalence of these factors has led to a governance deficit and has hampered the country's socio-economic development.⁵ The lack of good governance has resulted in ineffective policy implementation, mismanagement of resources, low levels of public service delivery, and a lack of trust in public institutions.⁶ Moreover, poor governance has also led to a negative impact on democracy and human rights in Pakistan.⁷ The absence of good governance has been linked to human rights violations and a decline in democratic norms and practices. Additionally, the failure to ensure equitable distribution of resources has resulted in socio-economic disparities and unequal opportunities for citizens.⁸ Therefore, the importance of addressing the root causes of poor governance in Pakistan cannot be overstated, as good governance is essential for promoting sustainable development, protecting human rights, and ensuring social justice.

Consequences of Poor Governance

Inability of government to effectively manage a country's affairs can lead to political instability, protests, and violence, as shown by the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011. When a government is unable to effectively manage a country's affairs, citizens may become dissatisfied with the government's performance, resulting in political instability, protests, and even violence. This was evident during the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011, where widespread protests and demonstrations led to the overthrow of several governments in the Middle East and North Africa. The Arab Spring was a result of citizens' frustration with the governments' failure to provide basic services, address unemployment, and address political corruption. In many cases, these governments were unable to effectively manage their economies, leading to rising poverty rates and a lack of economic opportunities for their citizens.

First of all, the inability of governments to manage their affairs can also create a sense of hopelessness and a loss of trust in the government among the population. When governments are unable to meet the needs of their citizens, citizens may feel as though

they have no other choice but to take to the streets to demand change. In some cases, these protests can turn violent, resulting in further political instability and a breakdown of law and order. Therefore, it is crucial for governments to effectively manage their affairs to avoid political instability and violence. Second of all, corruption, in forms like bribery and nepotism, undermines public trust in government and weakens institutions, hindering the provision of basic services to citizens, as seen in Nigeri.

Third of all, weak accountability leads to abuses of power and corruption, hampering economic growth and development in countries like Zimbabwe (Fisman & Gatti, 2002; World Bank, 2018; Moyo, 2011).⁹ Corruption is a serious problem that can have a devastating impact on a country's economy, social fabric, and governance. When government officials engage in corrupt practices such as bribery, embezzlement, or nepotism, it undermines public trust in government and weakens institutions. Corruption can also hinder the provision of basic services to citizens, such as access to healthcare, education, and clean water. Just for exemplification, a country where corruption has had a significant impact is Nigeria. Despite being one of Africa's richest countries, corruption has hindered the country's economic growth and development. In Nigeria, corruption is endemic, with politicians and government officials regularly accused of embezzling public funds. This has resulted in a lack of investment in critical infrastructure, including healthcare and education, leading to poor health outcomes and low levels of literacy among the population. Corruption also has a negative impact on the business environment in Nigeria, discouraging foreign investment and hindering economic growth. Companies that operate in Nigeria often face demands for bribes, which add to the cost of doing business and reduce their profitability. This can lead to a lack of investment and job creation, exacerbating poverty and inequality. Ultimately, corruption undermines the social contract between citizens and the government, eroding the legitimacy of the government in the eyes of the people. It is therefore crucial for governments to take measures to address corruption, including strengthening institutions, improving transparency and accountability, and ensuring that corrupt officials are held to account. By doing so, governments can help to rebuild public trust and promote sustainable economic growth and development.

Fourth of all, poor regulatory quality, characterised by excessive regulation or barriers to entry for businesses, impedes economic activity and investment, as seen in Venezuela. Accountability is an essential component of good governance, as it helps to ensure that those in power are held responsible for their actions and decisions. When accountability is weak, it can lead to abuses of power and corruption, which can have a significant impact on a country's economy and social fabric. Poor regulatory quality is a significant problem that can hinder economic activity and investment in a country. When regulations are excessive, or there are significant barriers to entry for businesses, it can create an environment that is challenging for companies to operate in, leading to reduced investment and economic growth. Venezuela is an example of a country where poor regulatory quality has had a severe impact. In Venezuela, excessive regulation and government intervention in the economy have created significant barriers to entry for businesses. This has made it challenging for companies to operate, and it has deterred

foreign investment. As a result, the country's economy has struggled, and there has been a significant decline in living standards for the population. Poor regulatory quality can also create an environment that is conducive to corruption, as officials may use their power to grant exemptions or preferential treatment to businesses in exchange for bribes. This can further hinder economic activity and investment, as companies that are not able to pay bribes may be at a disadvantage.

It is essential for governments to ensure that regulatory quality is high, with regulations that are reasonable and necessary to promote economic activity and investment. By doing so, governments can help to create an environment that is conducive to business growth and economic development, leading to improved living standards for the population.

Fifth of all, the government's inability to maintain law and order results in increased crime and violence, leading to social unrest and reduced economic activity, as seen in Honduras.¹⁰ So, maintaining law and order is a fundamental responsibility of any government, and failure to do so can have severe consequences for the country and its people. In Pakistan, the inability to maintain law and order has resulted in increased crime and violence, leading to social unrest and reduced economic activity. This situation is like what has been observed in Honduras. In Pakistan, the lack of law and order has created an environment in which criminal activities such as robbery, kidnapping, and terrorism are rampant. This has made it difficult for businesses to operate, leading to reduced economic activity and investment. Furthermore, the constant threat of violence has created a sense of fear among the population, hindering their ability to live their lives freely. The situation in Honduras is similar, where high levels of crime and violence have had a severe impact on the country's economy and social fabric. Businesses are hesitant to invest in a country where crime is widespread, leading to reduced economic activity and job creation. Additionally, the high levels of violence have led to social unrest, with citizens protesting the government's inability to maintain law and order. To address this issue, it is essential for governments to take concrete steps to improve law and order, including strengthening law enforcement and investing in social programs to address the root causes of crime and violence. By doing so, governments can help to create a safer environment that is conducive to economic growth and development, leading to improved living standards for the population.

Sixth of all, poor governance results in a lack of investment, reduced economic growth, and failure to provide basic services, leading to poverty, inequality, and social unrest, as seen in Somalia.¹¹ Poor governance is a significant problem that can have severe consequences for a country and its people. When governance is poor, it can result in a lack of investment, reduced economic growth, and failure to provide basic services, leading to poverty, inequality, and social unrest. Somalia is an example of a country where poor governance has had a severe impact. In Somalia, poor governance has led to a lack of investment, with businesses hesitant to invest in an environment that is characterised by instability and insecurity. The lack of investment has hindered economic growth and development, leading to high levels of poverty and inequality. Additionally, the

government's failure to provide basic services such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure has further exacerbated the situation, leading to a sense of frustration and anger among the population.

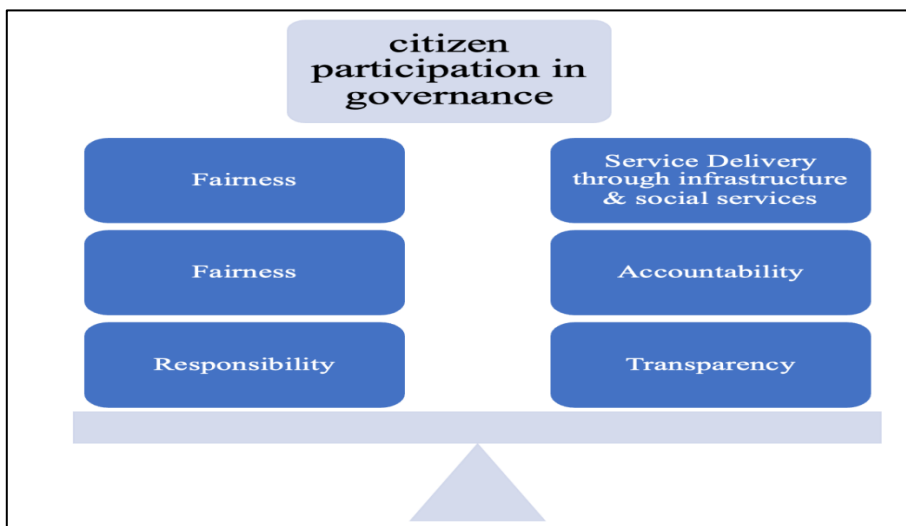
This situation has resulted in social unrest and conflict, with various factions vying for power and control. The lack of governance has created an environment in which violence and instability are prevalent, leading to significant humanitarian crises and displacement of people.

Seventh of all, poor governance hinders development and progress, leading to reduced economic growth and development, as seen in multiple countries (World Bank, 2018). Poor governance is a significant hindrance to development and progress, and its consequences are evident in many countries. When governance is poor, it can result in reduced economic growth and development, leading to significant challenges for a country and its people. In countries where governance is poor, there are often significant barriers to economic growth and development. For example, corruption and lack of accountability can create an environment in which businesses are hesitant to invest, leading to slow development and low lifestyle.

Strategies and Solution

Pakistan has been plagued with issues of poor governance for decades. The country has faced numerous challenges in terms of political instability, corruption, and lack of accountability. Poor governance has resulted in a lack of trust between the government and the people, making it difficult to implement policies and programs effectively. The consequences of poor governance have been dire for Pakistan, with social, economic, and political implications.

The golden principles of good governance consist of service delivery through investments in infrastructure and social services, accountability, transparency, fairness, and responsibility. These principles are important in promoting democracy and ensuring that the government is acting in the best interests of the people. However, it is equally important to recognize the significance of citizen participation in the decision-making process. When citizens are actively involved, their needs and concerns can be heard and taken into account by the government. Without this involvement, decisions made by the government may not accurately reflect the desires of the people, leading to a loss of trust in the democratic process. Therefore, in order to promote good governance and democracy, it is necessary to uphold the golden principles while also actively engaging citizens in the decision-making process. This will ensure that the government is accountable, transparent, fair, responsible, and responsive to the needs and aspirations of its citizens.



Strategy 1: One of the strategies to deal with the issue of poor governance in Pakistan is to strengthen institutions and promote transparency. Institutions such as the judiciary, parliament, and civil service must be strengthened and given more autonomy to ensure accountability and transparency. This can be done through reforms in the appointment and training of civil servants, as well as by providing them with the necessary resources to carry out their functions effectively. In addition, transparency can be promoted by enforcing laws that require public officials to disclose their assets and income.

Strategy 2: Another strategy is to improve citizen participation in governance. Pakistan has a large and diverse population, and their participation in governance can lead to more inclusive and responsive policies. This can be achieved by increasing public awareness about governance issues and encouraging citizens to participate in decision-making processes. For example, town hall meetings and public consultations can be held to engage citizens in the policy-making process. In addition, the government can promote good governance by working with civil society organisations, the media, and the private sector. These actors can play an important role in monitoring government actions and holding public officials accountable. The government can work with these actors to create a culture of transparency and accountability that is essential for good governance.

Strategy 3: Finally, the government can improve its service delivery by investing in infrastructure and social services. This will not only improve the lives of citizens but also enhance the government's legitimacy. For example, investing in healthcare, education, and infrastructure can help to reduce poverty and increase economic growth. This, in turn, will help to build trust between the government and the people, improving governance in Pakistan.

Poor governance is a major challenge for Pakistan, however, there are strategies and solutions that can be implemented to address this issue. Strengthening institutions,

promoting transparency, improving citizen participation, working with civil society organisations, the media, and the private sector, and investing in infrastructure and social services are all important steps that can be taken to improve governance in Pakistan. These strategies must be implemented in a comprehensive and sustained manner to ensure lasting change.

The Conceptual Framework presented here is a structured approach used to understand complex issues. In the context of governance, a Conceptual Framework based on the Four Golden Strategies of accountability, transparency, fairness, and responsibility can provide a comprehensive understanding of good governance principles. Accountability is the first golden strategy of governance. It refers to the obligation of those in power to answer for their actions, decisions, and policies. This involves establishing clear rules and procedures to define responsibilities and ensure decisions are made with the best interests of society in mind. The second golden strategy of governance is transparency, which refers to the openness and accessibility of information related to government activities, policies, and decision-making processes. This involves making information readily available to citizens and allowing them to hold government officials accountable for their actions. Fairness is the third golden strategy of governance. It requires equal treatment for all citizens, regardless of their social, economic, or political status. This includes the establishment of rules and regulations to protect citizens from discrimination and ensure equitable access to public services. Responsibility is the fourth golden strategy of governance. It refers to the willingness and ability of those in power to make decisions that benefit society. This requires a commitment to public service and sustainable decision-making.

Applying the Four Golden Strategies to governance can help identify strengths and weaknesses in governance systems and guide policy development. For example, they could be used to create indicators to measure policy effectiveness. Using a Conceptual Framework based on the Four Golden Strategies can also inform governance research. By focusing on accountability, transparency, fairness, and responsibility, researchers can better understand factors that contribute to good governance and identify best practices for improvement.¹² Overall, the Four Golden Strategies provide a useful guide for improving governance systems and ensuring they are responsive to society's needs.

Conclusion

Obviously, many complex issues exist but can be managed, the Four Golden Strategies of governance provide a framework for understanding the principles that underlie good governance. Accountability, transparency, fairness, and responsibility are essential components of effective governance, ensuring that those in power act in the best interests of society. A Conceptual Framework based on these strategies can guide policy and program development, as well as research on governance systems, and can help identify areas for improvement. By applying these strategies, governments and citizens can work together to create governance systems that are transparent, equitable, and responsive to the needs of society.

Endnotes

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