

Contemporary Issues of Public Administration in Pakistan: A Way Forward

Dawood Nawaz,¹ Shahbaz Ali Khan,² and Ayesha Umar³

Article Information	Abstract
Received: December 04, 2024 Revised: December 22, 2024 Accepted: December 30, 2024	Since birth, Pakistan is struggling to maintain balance of power between its political, economic, and religious dynamics leading towards corruption, ethnic conflicts, military interference in the political matters, religious extremism, and economic issues. The military had played a pivotal role in shaping political horizons of the country through its multiple back and front-stage interventions in the form of martial laws. Therefore, this study comprehensively sheds light into contemporary issues in public administration such as weak governance, bureaucratic hurdles, financial distress, and many other problems faced by public institutions of Pakistan and recommend suitable framework to resolve these issues. This study took motivation from past literature and is descriptive and analytical in nature. The inefficient government failed the country to meet its economic and social development targets. Moreover, the incoherency and ineffectiveness of decentralization has paralyzed the operational capacity of the bureaucracy, while short term, unplanned and politically inspired actions taken by weak governments deteriorated the system and worsened the inefficiency of public institutes. Therefore, there is a need for sound stable policies and that is only possible with political stability in the country. Secondly, there is dire need to focus on evolution and continuity in public policy making, democratic governance, and long-term planning for economic development in the country. In this regard, the government of Pakistan should incorporate technology in its practices by bring the e-government initiatives and make it compulsory for all the public institutions because it will enhance the transparency and accountability of public institutions.
Keywords <i>Bureaucracy</i> <i>E-Government</i> <i>Governance</i> <i>Pakistan</i> <i>Public Institutions</i>	

1. Introduction

Effective government is a challenging task in which most of the developed and developing countries are struggling. Currently, the Pakistan is facing complex internal issues such as financial instability, infrastructure gaps, climate changes, ethnic conflicts, negative demographic trends, social tensions, and

¹Lecturer at Department of Public Administration, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan. Email: dawood.nawaz@iub.edu.pk (Corresponding Author)

²Assistant Professor at Department of Public Administration, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan. Email: shahbaz.ali@iub.edu.pk

³Lecturer at Department of Economics, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan. Email: aysha.umar@iub.edu.pk

state elite capture. Growing criticism of government institutions for their public delivery has resulted in renewed interest in reforming the delivery and structure of public services. Pakistan is facing contemporary issues of public administration in Pakistan since its independence because of the poor governance structure (Nawaz, Batool, Fatima, 2021). Public institutions are failed to provide the better facilities and the sustainable structure of good governance in the country, and it is also the major challenge for the politicians and bureaucracy.

Good governance, commonly known as efficient management of public resources, is the key driving variable for socio-economic development. Hope (2006) associated socio-economic development of developing countries with good governance without which a developing country could not sustain. However, good governance is only possible in the presence of strong and transparent institutions, political stability, and rule of law. Pakistan had experienced with long standing military interventions, unstable and weak democratic government and uncertain situation leads to poor governance and corruption therefore country is struggling with sustaining socio-economic development. Rising inflation, low foreign exchange reserves, negative trade and fiscal balances and high unemployment rate are some of the by-products of flawed economic policies which emerged due to poor governance, weak institutions and fragile democratic governments (Hassan & Zeb, 2021).

The institutional framework and structures have weakened the rules and regulations in the public institutions of Pakistan and these issues could be highlighted as: constitutional crisis, deteriorating law and order condition, escalating inflation, ethnic conflicts, extremism, feudal dispensation, institutional clashes, lack of accountability, lust of power and international conspiracies, massive corruption, military intrusion, mismanagement of resources, no democratic setup, no rule of law, political disturbance, sectarianism, over exploitation of funds (Batool & Kamal, 2020). The governance problem started in Pakistan because of the archaic system of induction of the civil servants (Asghar, 2013). Further, the governance process is very weak and instable in Pakistan and many political instabilities, deficiencies and effectiveness have a need of great attention (Adnan & Fatima, 2018). Thus, the major financial, environmental, political, social, and energy challenges in Pakistan are showing the rigid behavior of the public institutions as well as government towards the public service delivery and public interest which is leading towards the weak governance, and it is evidence of poor policymaking.

The main objective of this study is to thoroughly analyze and evaluate the contemporary issues of public administration in Pakistan i.e., governance issues, bureaucratic hurdles, financial distress, and many other problems facing in the public institutions of Pakistan and to devise suitable polices to resolve these issues to strengthen the public sector of Pakistan.

2. Research Methodology

This research is descriptive and analytical in nature and the data is collected and reviewed after the broad assessment of the literature from the past studies i.e., books and journal articles related to the area of study. The themes are derived from the prior studies about the contemporary issues of public administration in reference to the Pakistan to discuss the contemporary issues and total ten (10) themes are derived for this purpose to compile the data regarding these themes (see Table 1).

Table 1: Themes derived for the Contemporary Issues of Public Administration in Reference to Pakistan from the Prior Studies

Sr. No.	Author	Year	Theme	
1.	Siddiqi & Khan	2016	Theme 1	Administrative Culture
2.	Jadoon & Jabeen	2017		
3.	Abbas & Ahmed	2016	Theme 2	Administrative Inefficiency
4.	Ashraf	2017		

5.	Kalia	2015	Theme 3	Bureaucratic Hurdles
6.	Rizwan & Jadoon	2010		
7.	Naveed & Azhar	2022		
8.	Zahra & Jadoon	2016		
9.	Jabeen, Farwa, & Jadoon	2017	Theme 4	Financial Distress
10.	Jabeen, Farwa, & Jadoon	2017	Theme 5	Need of Good Governance
11.	Jafri & Faisal	2014		
12.	Siddique	2016	Theme 6	Implementation of E-Government
13.	Hanif, Jabeen, & Jadoon	2016	Theme 7	Out-dated Structure for Civil Servants
14.	Naveed, Jadoon, & Farooqi	2023		
15.	Khan, Sheeraz, & Bajwa	2022	Theme 8	Political Instability
16.	Khalid, Mushtaq, & Naveed	2016		
17.	Bashir	2017	Theme 9	Proper Public Policy Formulation and Implementation
18.	Sirajul	2015		
19.	Khalid, Mushtaq, & Naveed	2016		
20.	Shaikh, Shah, & Wijekuruppu	2016	Theme 10	Provision of Effective Public Service Delivery

3. Evidence of the Contemporary Issues of Public Administration in Pakistan from the Prior Research

3.1 Administrative Culture

Siddiqi and Khan (2016) indicated the seven gaps of varying intensity in administrative culture of a Pakistan that is relevant to public policy-making such as: accountability gap, administrative gap, capacity gap, funding gap, information gap, objective gap and policy gap which are the major gaps for the efficient and effective administrative system. However, administrative reforms, particularly the drive to improve governance through devolution, creates the need to build capacity at the individual, organizational and institutional levels to better the administrative culture in the public institutions (Jadoon & Jabeen, 2017).

3.2 Administrative Inefficiency

Pakistan's public sector is often heavily criticized for its inefficiency and poor policymaking with deficiencies in the recruitment process and performance management being one of the key reasons. Major issues related to the political influence and nepotism in the recruitment process and promotion has also damaged the effective performance of public sector (Ashraf, 2017). Additionally, a study conducted by Abbas and Ahmed (2016) stated that due to the lack of trust between the state administration and community, there is a great need to establish and improve the formal and informal complain redressal mechanisms. Ashraf (2017) further elaborated that lack of systematic performance evaluation of the civil servants and political interference has reduced the efficiency of administration in the public sector organizations, and because of the political influence, it has been made very difficult to choose the right person for the right job for the goof governance and effectiveness of the public organizations.

3.3 Bureaucratic Hurdles

The bureaucratic structure is very important for the provision of efficient public service delivery and good governance, but its performance has declined due to the political interreference and inconsistency in the decentralization strategies (Kalia, 2015). Most important, the political system of Pakistan which

is considered as elitist part of the country has always discouraged the improvement in the governmental structure, policymaking, and the wellbeing of the public. Furthermore, political leaders have long manipulated the bureaucracy through nepotism that is leading towards the increased corruption. Several reforms were introduced for decentralization of power, but they were seldom implemented in true spirit. Many autonomous agencies were established under the wave of new public management reforms (Rizwan & Jadoon, 2010). So far, an independent legal structure could not correspond to the autonomy of public organizations in Pakistan (Naveed & Azhar, 2022; Zahra & Jadoon, 2016). There are a lot of capacity building challenges which exists in the public sector of Pakistan with the various reasons such as, inequality between the performance and pay, lack of well-structured and service-oriented programs and policies, absence of accountability, and deep-roots of red-tapism in the bureaucratic structure of Pakistan (Zubair, Khan, & Mukaram, 2021).

3.4 Financial Distress

Economic development and efficient public service delivery require alliances and partnership and with corporate sector and civil society based on their specific strengths such as food security projects, promotion of organic food and better farming system, sewage management, and small credit schemes for farmers. Accordingly, the relationship between universities and agriculture needs to be strengthened (Jabeen, Farwa, & Jadoon, 2017). Another factor preventing adequate provision of public facilities is insufficient funding. Municipal authorities depend on allocations from regional governments and have limited discretion to raise their personal funds through taxation.

3.5 Need for Good Governance

Urban governance standards in the country require a renewed focus on accountability, efficiency, participation, social justice, transparency, and security for all individuals at all levels. In Pakistan, good or good governance can only be expected if economic growth, political stability, human development, political stability are combined with the rapid increase in urbanization in the country (Jabeen, Farwa, & Jadoon, 2017). Furthermore, incompetent politicians and bureaucrats, lack of accountability, and unfair recruitment system across the board have undermined efficient service delivery to the public. In this way, Pakistan cannot fulfill its future aspirations. So, Pakistan needs to take some concrete steps to ensure the accountability, efficient public service delivery, transparency, and political stability in the public institutions (Jafri & Faisal, 2014). For this, it should control corruption and abuse of power, injustice in its institutions by ensuring the strict system of accountability and transparency.

3.6 Implementation of E-Government

Without the consent of top-level leadership, e-government cannot be implemented because the e-government projects need large amount of funds, and this type of leadership is missing in our top-level leaders. Moreover, in Pakistan, major policies implementation programs are running on the foreign fundings (Siddique, 2016). All those international agencies who are funding in Pakistan are dictating their own terms and policies which is weakening the leadership in our country and brining the high rate of inflation because of the high amount of interest imposing by these international agencies.

3.7 Out-dated Structure for Civil Servants

A qualitative study conducted by Hanif, Jabeen, and Jadoon (2016) revealed that the performance management system of the Pakistan's Civil Service at both provincial and federal levels has certain strengths including the comprehensiveness, thoroughness and disciplined mechanisms for accountability and promotion. However, the system suffers from external pressure, lack of qualification and standardization, and political interference hinder the effective functioning of the system. In relation to these issues facing by the civil servants because of the outdated structure, the relevant study conducted by Naveed, Jadoon, and Farooqi (2023) suggested that there is a need to implement the

HRM practices in public administration in Pakistan while capturing the major trajectories of civil service reforms in different eras. In this regard, three major developments are necessary for the reform movement such as quality enactment of public servants, strengthening the civil service bureaucracy, and the retrenchment of public workforce.

3.8 Political Instability

Political instability has brought adverse results into the growth and development of the country because Pakistan has experienced changes in the democratic system several time due to martial law or dissolution of assemblies before the completion of tenure. In this regard, new government always rejects the previous government policies and try to execute and implement their own policies that resulting the delays in the process and bring injustice and mismanagement of resources. The transition of the system from democracy to military rule has created a plight that has a serious impact on the development of executive reforms in the state (Khan, Sheeraz, & Bajwa, 2022). However, Pakistan is experiencing a very worst type of the democratic style of government in the country which is never in the favor of public because it is just fulfilling the desires and wills of the political leaders and bureaucratic elites.

3.9 Proper Public Policy Formulation and Implementation

Pakistan's public policy process has gone under a non-linear development pattern, rooted in the political infrastructure development in British India from which modern-day Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan came into being (Bashir, 2017). According to Sirajul (2015), corruption, poor institutional community relationship, lack of proper direction, visionary leadership, consistency, and the commitment towards proper policy formulation and implementation are the main problems for the Pakistan's public policy process. Furthermore, lack of political leadership and commitment, clarity in policy goals, centralized-oriented government structure, governance structure, and the meagre financial resources are the major failures in the Pakistan's policy making-process. Moreover, the ineffectiveness and individual interests of political leaders in Pakistan has resulted in the public policy process being dominated by one man. Almost 90% of parliamentarians in Pakistan are not well educated, so that's why, they are lacking the vision to solving the problems (Khalid, Mushtaq, & Naveed, 2016). It can be said that political leadership remains callous while ministers lack vision.

3.10 Provision of Effective Public Service Delivery

The public-sector of Pakistan have various issues in the provision of effective public service delivery because there is still outdated manual working system in many public institutions with the low level of transparency and lack of accountability (Shaikh, Shah, & Wijekuruppu, 2016). However, inefficient bureaucratic style, red-tapism, and political influence are the main hurdles to tackle these problems. Therefore, the efficiency of public administration can be enhanced with the mechanisms of e-government and innovation because it will provide the better public services in response to the demands for accountability and transparency.

4. Key Points of the Major Contemporary Issues of Public Administration in Pakistan

4.1 Corruption

Pakistan public institutes are severely infected by this phenomenon. Corruption and illegal leakages weaken the foundations of the country. According to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, Pakistan stands out at 133rd place for being most corrupt out of 180 countries with score of 2.9. Widespread corruption and nepotism in government institutions and political parties significantly reduces the effectiveness of public institutes (Hassan & Zeb, 2021).

4.2 Political Instability

Frequent takeovers and changes in government and political parties, reduces the political will of the parties in Pakistan. Whenever a new government takeover they usually stop or reformulate the old policies therefore, when there is political instability, the politicians will refrain from making policies that have long term benefits as the opportunity cost of formulating this policy is high. Rather, politicians will focus on short term policies which will improve their political image (Cohen, 2023; Imran, Murtiza, & Akbar, 2023).

4.3 Weak Institutions

After independence, Pakistan inherited its administrative machinery from the British government, who lacks political and administrative wisdom therefore strong apolitical policy is the need of time. Even today, Pakistan is struggling with good governance which undermine the state institutions, such as the judiciary, electoral commission, and accountability agencies and leading towards poverty, social unrest, economic downturns ethnic conflicts (Safdar, 2021).

4.4 Military Intervention

Pakistan's history had witnessed with several military coups having frequent shifts from democracy to dictatorship in every decade. The long episodes of military takeovers initiated from 1958 and lasts till 2008 (Jadoon & Jabeen, 2017). Weak institutions, unstable government, inexperienced and ineffective administrative staff, poor economic outlook invited the military to national politics. Thus historical involvement of the military in politics, leading to periods political manipulation and weak public institutions (Hassan, 2011).

4.5 Economic Mismanagement

Weak institutions and ineffective bureaucratic administration lead to flawed economic policies where nations interest was sacrificed over the political will. Poor economic policies and misallocation of resources heat up the Pakistan economy, compelling Pakistan to go to IMF and trap in vicious circle of debt. Corruption, unaccountable leakages, lack of transparency and short-term economic policies cause the public institutions like PIA, Pakistan railways and Pakistan Steel Mills to reach at the verge of bankruptcy (Jadoon & Jabeen, 2017). The institutes which were considered earning hands of government are now burdens on the economy.

4.6 Provincialism and Regionalism

Pakistan is struggling with division of power between the provinces. This imbalance of power departs the West Pakistan from East with the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. Even though the 18th constitutional amendments in 2010 tried to balance the provincial powers through NFC awards but still a great deal of imbalance exist among the provinces (Jadoon & Jabeen, 2017). Tensions and imbalances between provinces, particularly between Punjab and other provinces lead to ethnic conflicts and rebellion moments in several regions.

4.7 Lack of Transparency and Accountability

Pakistan public institutes are on verge of extension due to limited access to information, and inadequate mechanisms for holding public officials accountable. United Nations has identified integrity, transparency, and accountability as founding principles of good governance and public administration (Cheema, Mahnoor, & Zahid, 2024). Here integrity refers to honesty or trustworthiness in discharge of official duties, transparency as free and reliable access to information on decision and policy making processes and accountability is referred as an obligation to report on usage of public resources by

officials. Any institution that lacks these common traits are suffering from corruption and misconduct posing financial burden on the economy (Armstrong, 2005).

4.8 Patrimonialism & Clientelism

Political leaders often prioritize personal and family interests over public interests thus political loyalty and patronage networks undermine meritocracy and good governance, resulting in policies that waste public money and resources (Ahmed, 2023).

4.9 Energy and Resource Management

Unplanned and politicized energy investment pushes the country into the energy crisis. Power crisis of 2007 and 2016 caused the government to make short term solution which further exacerbated the energy situation in the country. Introduction of IPPS in the Pakistan energy sector traps the country into circular debt. These independent power plants are mostly owned by bureaucrats and politicians and operating below their capacity whereas the government is liable to pay 100% capacity charges thus raising electricity cost making this sector highly inefficient (Ullah, & Lin, 2024). Furthermore, inadequate management of natural resources leads to energy crises and environmental degradation.

4.10 Social Inequality

Pakistan social policy and programs are ineffective and as they usually introduced to save political image of the politicians so social safety nets and program introduced by politicians had never been fruitful instead it leads to social disparity and dependency (Imran, Murtiza, & Akbar, 2023).

4.11 Human Rights Violations

Bureaucrats and weak political regimes raised concerns about human rights, especially regarding freedom of speech, assembly, and minority rights. Recent social media breakdown and restriction in Pakistan curbed the freedom of speech and right to information leading to distrust among different communities.

4.12 Judicial Overreach

Judicial system had played a critical role in shaping Pakistani politics. Normally, high rank positions are political relation based rather than on merit therefore, frequent interventions by the judiciary in political matters, sometimes seen as overstepping its constitutional mandate causes conflicts among the institutions (Jadoon & Jabeen, 2017).

4.13 Militancy and Extremism

The presence of militant groups and extremist ideologies posing a threat to the identity of state. Pakistan's history had filled with allegations of terrorism supporting country despite of being unconditional ally on war against terrorism. This creates a negative image and uncertain environment which hurts the foreign relation thus decelerating to economic growth.

4.14 Bureaucratic Red-Tape

Inefficient and corrupt bureaucracy, hindering effective governance and service delivery leading to poor management of public institutions (Imran, Murtiza, & Akbar, 2023).

5. Conclusion

Since more than five decades Pakistan is struggling with poor economic governance; security and regional geo-politics issues; poorly designed and implemented devolution and fiscal decentralization, weaker policy-formulation process; various factors of political economy with civil-military relationship; dominance of the state in the private-market; and entrenchment of vested interest and elite capturing (Rana, 2022). These issues are intertwined with Pakistan's economy creating state of recession having high inflation, insecurity, rising unemployment rate, negative balance of payments, lack of public inspection, and the accelerated growth of poverty. Political instability further fueled the economic downturn as investors are losing trust due to uncertain economic conditions. Moreover, the influence of military and technocrats on usage of public financial management remains to a greater extent. They entered the realm of policymaking to serve their self-interest and pave their foundation in the political system of a country. Though the provision of health, education and basic community services had become a provincial subject after the 18th amendment to the Constitution of Pakistan, property tax should be decentralized to local authorities to generate better incentives and resources at the local level which can overcome the lack of funds and further improve the provision of facilities in the urban zone. The government of Pakistan also has great need to focus on the e-government and restructuring of their policies which are contributing towards good governance in the government procedures for the systematic delivery of the public services. This study can facilitate the government and public policymakers to enhance accountability in terms of policymaking & implementation, public service delivery, and obeying the law and order by highlighting the contemporary issues in public administration and recommending suitable policies for it like incorporation of technology through e-Government; in all the public departments to bring transparency in the system and it will be a remarkable initiative by the government to enhance the accountability, equity, equality, inclusiveness, consensus-oriented, and law & order in front of the public.

6. A Way Forward

- Ensuring the public access towards regular, reliable, and relevant information, e-governance is major paradigm for the public officials to devote their official time for the hearings and solutions to treat the public complaints and requests for access to the public data.
- All the services provided by the state should be benchmarked for an effective monitoring and evaluation, and for the comparison with ideal service delivery standards.
- Strengthening of key democratic institutions such as the Election Commission, Judiciary, and Parliament, making them more accountable, transparent, and responsive.
- Judiciary should be independent and work without any political interference and pressure to gain the trust of the public.
- Framing and executing the strict policies and laws for the eradication of corruption and ensuring that everyone must be held accountable and answerable from top to bottom level in the public institutions.
- Bring the e-government reforms in all public sector institutions to ensure the accountability, transparency, equity, responsiveness, equality, law & order, and justice for the smooth functioning of public sector, and among the different stakeholders of the society.

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