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Political Empowerment and Local Governance: Evidence from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Local Government Act 2013

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ABSTRACT

In recent era, the process of Local government is significant for smooth democratic transition and political and economic resource allocation at the local level. This study highlights the prevailing mechanism of Political decision making of the Local Representatives under the “Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Local Government Act 2013”. The study also focuses on the empowerment of the local representatives with respect to distribution of funds and the influences they get at the provincial and federal level. Conclusions were drawn based on data collected from local representatives regarding their political decision making and fiscal dependency. The data was further described through themes. Each theme explains the Political empowerment and Economic decision-making indicators. The results show that extra-legal intervention, political and Cultural interventions hinder Political leverage while inadequate due financial share, choice in spending and dependency on supplementary support hinders the fiscal choices of local representatives.

Keywords: Local government, Political Empowerment, Fiscal dependency, institutional transgression, Extra-legal intervention.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, local government is regarded as essential in any democracy since it provides a simple means for residents to access their fundamental needs and rights. Local governance is a two-way process of services delivery from central to local and local to central government. “Through planning, decision-making, rule-enforcing, and accountability processes, local government is the organization, legalization, and

exercise of authority by and on behalf of local citizens.” (Helling, 2005).¹ The Encyclopedia of Social Sciences states that a local government is, in general, "a public organization authorized to settle and deal out a limited reach of public policies within a relatively small district which is a sub-part of a regional or internal government." With the national government at the top and intermediate governments (states, regions, and provinces) occupying the middle range, local government is at the bottom of the pyramid of governmental institutions (Imran, Zaidi, & Rehan, 2024; Mohammad, et al., 2024). Typically, local government has broad authority and is not constrained to providing just one kind of service or activity (International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, 1972).²

According to (Bailey, 1992)³, "the particular people and context involved will determine how precisely we define empowerment within our projects and programs." Any regime, be it central or local tends to better citizen participation and political empowerment (Phulpoto, Oad, & Imran, 2024; Oad, Zaidi, & Phulpoto, 2023). It is both an end and means of local growth. "Political empowerment is the capability, ability, critical awareness, and sense of community affiliation to influence a political system." (Louis Helling, 2005).⁴

In developed nations, the process of local government is turning more and more efficient due to better and efficient policy formulation. Evidence from several countries would appear to show that three necessary conditions are important if the decentralization of resources at the local level is to lead to improved governance (Shah, et al., 2025; Imran, et al., 2023). Starting with political decentralization, significant authority and responsibility for delivering local services should be delegated to local government members in accordance with their qualifications (Imran & Akhtar, 2023; Khoso, et al., 2024). Fiscal decentralization is a procedure that ensures that local governments have access to enough funds through a combination of local taxes and grants from higher-level governments to fulfill their obligations (Malik, et al., 2025; Shah & Saba, 2024). Last but not least, effective accountability channels are needed to promote strong accountability between officials and elected officials as well as between elected officials and their electorates, i.e. institutional decentralization (Manor, 1999).⁵ Local government entails the personal involvement of local politicians in local issues and their resolution (Zhang, et al., 2023). In addition to putting off their skill, initiative, energy, and enterprise if their association with their local life is denied, the local population may also start to lose all sense of responsibility (Ansari, Akhtar & Hafeez, 2024; Akhtar, et al., 2021). Today, sub-national tiers of government are elected in more than 90% of democracies around the world. Both wealthy and poor countries have given these levels of government administrative, fiscal, and political authority. (World

¹ (Helling, 2005)

² International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences

³ (Bailey, 1992)

⁴ (Helling, 2005).

⁵ See (Manor, 1999)

Development Report, 1999).⁶

The phenomenon of modern local government emerged because of traditional and western cultures. Most western nations as well as those that have come under their influence, notably Asian nations, look to the western model of local governance as an inspiration (Azhar, 2024; Azhar, et al., 2022). Local government evolved because of local demands and needs. (ilson, 2011).⁷ Since local communities were allowed to grow in accordance with their own priorities and local self-governance was portrayed as an example of societal freedom, local government had its roots in libertarian trends that emerged in the first half of the 19th century. (Kjellberg, 1995).⁸ The recent phenomenon of local government emerged in response to the pressure produced by industrialization and urbanization. (ilson, 2011).

According to the Azhar, Iqbal and Imran (2025) urbanization occurred as a result of the factory system and the industrial revolution, with the political consequence of expanding municipal powers. (Kearne, 2008).⁹ The number of urban residents had increased from 3% in 1790 and 26% in 1880 to over 56% by 1940, when there were a total of 3,464 incorporated urban locations in the US, 2,024, comprised of a population of over 5000. (Fisher, 1950).¹⁰

The elimination of disparities and divisions between rural and urban areas was the sum purpose of framing the local government scheme in Pakistan. To strengthen the decision-making process, in all the three tiers of local governments, the allocation of 33% representation for women was a singular case in the history of Pakistan (Ahmed, & Imran, 2024; Sultana, Ahmed, & Imran, 2024). Additional Special seats had been reserved for workers, peasants and religious minorities of the local community. For the first time in the chronicles of the body politic, the concept of the District Government was put in. (Abid, 2002). The devolution of power plan was set up through the National Reconstruction bureau (NRB) under federally promulgated Local Government Ordinance (LGO). The civil bureaucracy was set under the elected Nazims while the Deputy Commissioner (DC), being accountable to the non-elected provincial bureaucracy, while at the present system the Nazim has envisaged with the agency to get reports from the District Administration and the District Coordination Officer (DCO). Aside from the intensity of this ordinance, there were gray sides like, considerably weakening the provincial bureaucracy by eliminating the office of the deputy commissioner and assigning a big ratio of social occasions. The police power under this ordinance was curtailed to a significant level, which means that they were saved as a handmaid of the elected Nazims (Niaz,

⁶ The application of functional VATs (Valued added Taxes) have been significantly hampered where those decisions have not been revised in many decades, such as in Pakistan and India where only the subnational government is able to tax products but only the federal government can tax services.

⁷ For Details see also (ilson, 2011)

⁸ A number of nations have established new local government statutes, reorganized their local authorities, and changed the dynamics between the federal and local governments. It was basically a reaction to state growing expansionism.

⁹ For more details see (Kearne, 2008).

¹⁰ (Fisher, 1950).

2010).¹¹

For public decision and actions, the local governments were held responsible so that the members of the local community get access to take part in different development projects in their best and according to their needs and requirements the provincial power was dismissed to the district plan; power in the devolution plan, power and duties of the federal government was not devolved to the provinces or districts of the states or territories. (Anjum Z. H., 2001).¹²

Under the KP LGA 2013, the process of distribution of political power is manifold. The KP LGA Act 2013 is a modification of the 2001 local government Act promulgated under Musharraf's era (Azhar, 2024; Azhar, et al., 2022). In the KP local government Act, every department has been modified with assigning a new task to the local elected representatives. The new statue of the local governments like the repealed 2001 ordinance provides district governments for every district, which is built up of the district council and district government. Town/ Tehsil Municipal and Tehsil/ Tehsil councils where others statue of the local governments following the district governments. The Village and Neighborhood councils make the third tier of local government for urban and rural areas respectively while in the repealed 2001 ordinance; the neighborhood and village were declared by the Tehsil or Town councils in respective Union areas. Under this Act, unlike the repealed ordinance 2001, the Nazims, District, Tehsil, and town council are to be conducted by the respective Nazims and not the Naib Nazims who preside over the meetings of the councils in the absence of the Nazims. While the number of reserved seats for women was previously established at 33%, it is now fixed at 30% in the new legislation. The current statute introduces a novel concept known as "Seats for Youth," and unlike the repealed ordinance, it transfers various Provincial Government offices to the City District Government and District Government. (KP Local Government Act 2013).¹³

Research Questions

The following are the research questions about the study.

- What is the prevailing mechanism of Political decision making of the Local Political Representatives defined in the KP Local Government Act 2013?
- To what extent Local Political representatives hold Political Leverage to carry out Economic decision in their respective constituency?

LITERATURE REVIEW

While reviewing the literature regarding local governance and political empowerment, many studies indicate that the phenomenon of local governance is underway to get to maturity (Kazmi, et al., 2024; Khan, 2021; Raja, 2021). In

¹¹ (Niaz, 2010)

¹² The new system advocates empowerment of local people with the provision of speedy justice, ensuring fiscal autonomy and equitable opportunities of livelihood.

¹³ Article 140A of the Constitution of Pakistan made provision for establishing local government and under the same article on 31 October 2013 The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provincial government passed the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Local Government Act 2013.

developing countries, many studies have been conducted in-order to analyze how local governance should be better implemented to get sustainable results which can in-turn make communities more strengthen and empowered at the grass-root level. The literature also suggests that local governance could be made possible with the proper execution of the policies at the local level and includes the marginalized groups like women, local community and local government and officials. The studies being conducted for analyzing the political empowerment have shown that a holistic strategy and proper policies are needed to get the local governance more reliable and effective. Here are some studies found to be a cornerstone for successful local governance and political empowerment.

Regarding "Political influence on the bureaucracy from the perspective of agency officials who are under pressure," (Furlong, 1998) in his descriptive study analyzes the issue of political pressure on the bureaucracy from the viewpoint of stressed agency officials. The findings imply that many of the conclusions drawn from top-down studies of political influence are consistent with how bureaucracy managers perceive those influences. The bureaucracy seems to have a variety of masters, all of whom have some say in how policies are decided. The study evaluates if these officials can be influenced by other governmental entities and offers a novel view of policy making within the bureaucracy.

In his study (Mookherge, 2006) analyzed the decentralization process in many developing countries who are experimenting to decentralize the public service delivery to the locally elected governments instead of the central government appointed bureaucrats. A theoretical model was given in which the central government is uninformed about the local community needs and to monitor service delivery. The data collection was done by analyzing the available literature and case studies and the effects of decentralization on service volumes, equity and efficiency were analyzed under different financing arrangements). The results, he had concluded are narrating the idea that the under the provision of services for the marginalized segment of society due to the understanding of those bureaucrats who charge bribes for service provision as a monopoly supplier (Shah, et al., 2024; Rasheed & Kiani, 2024).

In his study (Li Y. , 2018) entitled as "Asymmetric Decentralization, Intergovernmental Transfers, and Expenditure Policies of Local Governments", describes the "incentive effects of asymmetric decentralization and fiscal transfers on spending policies of local governments". In his research methodology, he had implied the provincial panel data to carry out an empirical test. His empirical study is based on balanced panel data between 2000 and 2012 from 26 of China's 33 provincial-level administrative units. His conclusion is based on the premise that asymmetric decentralization greatly reduces the degree of incentives for local governments to raise social expenditure, and that because of asymmetric decentralization; fiscal resource transfers do not play a useful function (Hanif, 2024; Islam, et al., 2020).

Shaukat, Qureshi, and ul Haq (2020) due to the rise in relative costs caused by the relatively large income effect, which also significantly lowers local government's

incentives to provide social public goods, the financing mechanism of fiscal transfers weakens the constraining effect of fiscal competition on local governments' expenditure policies. Despite the distribution mechanism of fiscal transfers having a significant positive incentive to local government in regions where the net inflow of fiscal resources is greater than zero, the comprehensive effects of fiscal transfers on the distribution of incentives of local governments to provide social public goods are negative in all regions due to common pooling effects.

Anjum (2001) study describes “the institutional arrangements for citizens’ empowerment and organization at the grass root level”. He bases his assumption on whether the emerging system had enough space for community empowerment. He argues that due to the power, rests in few hands the local people were totally neglected by the local government to be empowered. A little role was assigned to commoners and a trickle-down approach was employed with minimal community participation. To organize the community, the emerging system provides sufficient institutional arrangement. The system provided space to women, youth, minority and peasants through five rounds of local elections which may be regarded as a significant opportunity for the marginalized. However, there is no mechanism to mitigate underlying problems like lack of necessity skill provision, enterprise development, marketing rural based products due to credit crunch, income generation for poor and urban slums dwellers.

Moreover, to analyze the different countries local governance like Latin America, China, and Pakistan, (Ahmad E. , 2010) argues that decentralization methods vary from country to country. Countries like China with a single party/unitary system has been centralized its resources as compared to Pakistan where the decentralization was used with normative perception which bypasses provinces, and the force of political parties tend to possess a provincial focus. As in Latin America, the revival because of shifting from one party regulation had contributed to revival interest in decentralization. To test the contribution of normative approach to decentralization, agencies tended that it would help in reduction of poverty, but the evidence is averse to it. Like in Pakistan, many Latin American nations have seen some movement towards decentralization in the past two decades, often as a reaction to periods of a one-party or military ruler. This has been more distinguished on the spending side than on the grass side. As of the latter it has adverse trends, as nations have established schemes of centralized systems for the VAT, frequently replacing a variety of subnational levies at the provincial and local stratum, sometimes with the help of international authorities and agencies.

To further examine the opening move of the participatory method to experience how much it has bettered the community development at the grass root level (Ahmad, 2013) employed the literature review methodology to further investigate the decentralization phenomenon in Pakistan. More than fifty thousand programs were arranged from twenty one hundred and fourteen mobilization trainings for raising community awareness. He reasons that solutions have improved human development, sustainability and community empowerment and sense of community, for translating shared benefits. The only power being transmitted to the

local level has made the decentralization process elusive because there still exists a little sustenance for the community capacity building as the electoral process is kept in line by the elites. Strong local ownership and empowerment are possible through feasible and local government participatory strategies.

Shaban (2014) work related to women empowerment in local government under Musharraf's era state that upon the advancement of some connected objects like grooming facilities, sitting facilities, placement, timing and coordinated meetings contribute to women empowerment. Lastly, to find significant results a behavioural variation must be swept up to confront the existing sexual biasness. According to the election resolutions for 2000–2001, 36,105 women were elected as representatives at various levels of local government, including 23,222 at the union level through constituency-based direct elections, 3741 at the district and tehsil levels, while remaining sixteen at various levels of local government as Nazims and Naib Nazims. In the Sindh province, two of them were chosen to serve as nazim for the districts of Khairpur and Nawab Shah. On designated seats for minorities, 126 women were present.

Haq and Rehman (2017) he has based his analysis on the reasons, tied with weak institutional structure and political intervention resulting in policy failure to deliver productive results as it is anticipated in the policy goals, to base his arguments the study conducted was descriptive in nature and secondary information and observation were applied and being a qualitative study he had synthesized and reviewed the available information garnered from various sources connected to local government (Shah, et al., 2025; Haq, et al., 2024; Noor, et al., 2024). His results indicate that no follow up was present to see the poor policy outcomes, only there were additionally various factors thought to be major factors deteriorating the local policy making process in the country such as government structure, clarity of the policy goals, the commitment of political leadership, meager financial resources and centralized-oriented government structure.

Khan (2016) descriptive study related to the “inconsistency of local democracy of provinces and case study of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa local government Act 2013”, for which he applied case study method and theoretical and analyses of policy cycle, which suggests some hidden flaws in the said Act which need to be catered immediately and should be countered in order to make the Act more efficient and feasible for the local masses (Rana, et al., 2022; Rana, et al., 2021; Rana, 2015). His study is based on the microscopic analyses of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa local government Act 2013, enquiring hidden structural flaws contributing severe replications on local governance influenced by many stakeholders like bureaucracy, interest groups and elites' class which results in failure of the local governance policy which needs to be performed efficiently and implementation process should be made successful by employing all resources in hand to make the process better and steady. Moreover, the structural flaws in the Act should be catered with employing a holistic approach and strategy (Raja, et al., 2022, Raja, 2022; Raja, et al., 2021).

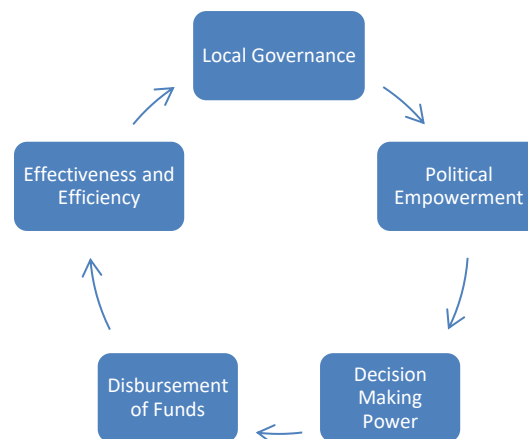
Local governance in Pakistan is still facing acute problems especially in its formulation and implementation phases. The different kind of issues faced by local

governance like corruption, nepotism, national and local elite' self-vested interests are somehow responsible for the in-efficiency of the local government. Furthermore, very few studies have been conducted to dig-out the causes of local governance failure and to recommend a handful solution. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa local government Act is also lacking research work and careful investigations. Due to the complexity of the KP local government Act, the tasks assigned to the concerned authorities and departments are still lacking efficiency and feasibility which need to be concise and specific. The local politicians like Nazims, Peasants, minority, youth, and women are not adequately qualified due to which the Act is considered a hectic task to be fulfilled and easily understood. The result from the literature shows us that majority of the studies are being conducted on the health, educational and fiscal sides of the local government but very few studies have been found to be related with the prevailing mechanism of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Local Government System. The researcher has based his studies for the purpose of including the literature which can pay the way for better understanding the political leverage of local representatives and the remaining gap in the literature.

Theoretical Framework

The local government at a micro level is a body of legislative, financial, deliberative, consultative, political and bureaucratic leadership, and exercising regulative and judicial power. To ensure the way for decentralization and devolution of power, the local government is a bottom to top approach, which feasible functioning promotes participation and welfare of local masses and empower them equally. It also helps in promoting a political culture based on political empowerment, decision making power, disbursement of funds, legislations making. A steadier and efficient local government is a sign of good governance and democracy, and it helps sustain the efficiency of any legislation and political stability in a country. It may be therefore concluded that local government has interconnection with Political empowerment. Local government institutions provide grounds for the prevalence of political, electoral and financial governance in a country. Here, an attempt will be made to discuss and analyze the KP LGA, 2013 within the parameters given in figure.

Theoretical Parameters



Source: (Khan, 2016)

The above theoretical parameters show the method of how local governance leads to its efficiency. Local Governance, being a system of governance focuses on the issues at the local level where different administrative, political and financial tasks are assigned to different authorities and then decisions, legislations, and policies are framed regarding those issues. The upper-mentioned parameters are basically the strategy through which the researcher will try to capture the main theme of the research with the help of visiting the respective area and then interviewing the local representatives. The strategy is focused on the basic and fundamental step which is local governance and local governance is efficient when it's all basic legislative and consultative bodies are independent and work independently. Forecasting and Efficiency are possible by analyzing the whole process of local governance, for which the researcher has tried to explain the political leverage and fiscal dependency in the "Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Local Government Act 2013". Going on to the field and interviewing the local politicians and officials with researcher keen interest can show us the actual results of the Act which efficiency is directly related to good local governance (Janjua, et al., 2025; Faisal, Qureshi & Shah, 2025).

Theoretical Framework and its application to the study

The actual Philosophy of Social Contract, which provided the bases for today's modern Nation State, emerged as a result of uncertain political, social and economic affairs (State of Nature) which led people link a contract among themselves and with a sovereign. The initial purpose was supposed to acquire/ensure security of person's (i) Life, (ii) Property and (iii) Dignity of human being. With only these conditions the State/Sovereign had very limited role in person's life. As the sphere of influence of State expanded, the demands of citizens also got wider in range. The concept of Rights and Duties got more complex, and people expected more and more from State institutions. With the concept of Modern Democratic Welfare State (Hobbes, 1665), the idea of rights and duties got more polished, and State is made responsible for providing many facilities like Education, Health, Clean Environment and pure drinking water etc. (Hanif, Abdin & Mirza, 2019; Hanif, Naveed & Rehman, 2017). This development emerged as a cornerstone to the idea of creating a system of local government which is responsible for providing immediate necessities and facilities.

"People live together in society in accordance with an agreement that establishes moral and political rules of behavior," (Hobbes, 1665). The essence of this theory is that people choose a selected group of individuals among them to govern over them. This contract makes people sacrifice some of their rights for the sake of governance and security. It is a tacit agreement between the governors and the ones to be governed (Kayani, et al., 2023; Khan, et al., 2021; Naseer, et al., 2021; Khan & Khan, 2020). The study put forward an effort to link social contract theory with the idea of local government and political empowerment. Like Social contract theory suggests that government makes some sacrifices to share its power with the people which make them empower.

The concept of Sacrifice for the sake of Rights is fundamentally the

agreement for provision of security of Person's Life, Property and Dignity. In return of this, the people were supposed to obey the command of Sovereign (King/State) (John Locke, *Two Treatises on Civil Government*, 1689) (J.J. Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Emile*, 1762). This concept led to the idea of Law (Law is the combination of Rights and Duties: like you have right to free education, security, health, environment, water, etc.). This concept of Rights/Duties got polished with the passage of time, and people's demands increased. As a result, the concept of welfare state emerged where the ideal state and its responsibilities are demanded by people. Since today's institution of state is highly complex and a central or provincial government deals with multiple high politic issues, the day to day needs which are of local nature are devolved to local setups for more efficacy. The devolution of power over to local representatives is the continuity of Social Contract at local level. The rationale for local government and local political empowerment is taken form the idea of Social Contract between Sovereign and Masses/citizens which means instituting local bodies is fundamentally strengthening the actual social contract between State and Citizens at grassroots level. (*Leviathan*, 1665).

METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

Methodology is a systematic way of solving a specific issue or problem. It is the way how research is carried out. Methodology is the procedure to describing, explaining and predicting a phenomenon and how the researcher will employ the same tools. "The study of methods by which knowledge is gained" is another definition. Its goal is to "give the research work plan" (Rajasekar, 2006). For this study, the researcher has collected data from local representatives who are the practical implementer of the Act. The collected data clearly indicates the political empowerment and fiscal dependency of local representatives through sequential themes. These themes describe the overall satisfaction level of the local representatives in their political decision making and fiscal dependency provided in the KP LGA 2013. Purposive Sampling was used as a tool for data collection. This is a sampling technique in which the researcher chooses purposely who according to their opinion will be relevant to the project. The judgment of investigator guides the choices of respondents. "It is therefore, also known as judgmental sampling". (Sarantakos, 2005).

Locale of the Study

The locale of the study was District Buner. The rationale behind selecting district Buner is that it is composed of both rural and urban population and data can be collected regarding the issue. The total population of district Buner, according to the 1998 census is 897,319, with a total of six tehsil and 27 union councils. The sample size was selected from two tehsil: Tehsil Gadezi and Tehsil Daggar. These two Tehsil were selected for data collection because of the local government was located at Daggar and the representatives could be easily accessed for the selection of data. The sampling technique was purposive, that is why the data was collected from the 26 respondents (all of them were male) which were enough to meet the criteria for the available themes.

DISCUSSION

Being a qualitative study, the research has used in-depth interview to collect data from the respondents. In addition, according to (L BERG, 2001), “the three parallel processes of action (data reduction, data display, conclusions, and verification) that make up qualitative data analysis.” Due to the informed nature and specialty of respondents, data comprised of sequential order on various themes. Interview was mostly collected in Pashto and interview questions were further elaborated by the researcher for better understanding and results from the respondents. After the generation of themes, the perceptions and views of the respondents were articulated into a meaningful whole. As the research topic suggests that the basic idea was to know about the empowerment of local representatives that’s why the researcher has interviewed the local representatives because they know the rule of business. The first five questions in the interview guide suggests and explain the political empowerment and delegation of power of the local representatives under the Act while the last five questions suggest the empowerment of local representatives with respect to release of funds. Here the researcher has explained the collected data through different themes which will justify the objectives of the research.

Guarantee of Rights

According to the “Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Local government Act 2013”, the local government shall work under the framework of provincial government. The local government shall not impede from the prescribed rule of business in exerting the executive authority. So, it is clearly mentioned in the Act, that the Act suggests certain limitations as well as provide a guarantee to the rights and responsibility of the local representatives. Since the local governments guarantee the rights of local representatives the primary data suggests that majority of the representatives agree with the fact, but some had different views when it comes to be applied on the ground. They had different views because of their diverse culture and political affiliations. One of them replied.

*“As in the case with previous local ordinances, the job was still efficient then it is now, because to compare the situation with accordance to the rule of business the reality on the other hand is somehow different. Monitoring and implementation of the legislated principles are far beyond realities.”*The respondent is a Nazim.

Apart from their pessimistic views, they suggested remedies like monitoring the activities of each representative.

“There should be an independent monitoring team who should be assigned the job to monitor and evaluate the activities of the local representatives. This could help in efficient working with respect to the task assigned. The ordinance is a kind of power-centric in nature; only those with strong approach and affiliation to the ruling party enjoy the rights to guarantee.”

This should not be the case with all the representative’s opinions because it was observed that those with strong affiliation to the ruling party were optimistic in their views while the remaining representatives whose affiliations was directed to

the opposition party had pessimistic views regarding guarantee to rights.

Extra-legal interventions

Extra-legal interventions mean when any third party interfere in decision making of local representatives which according to the Act is subject to punishment in the form imprisonment or fining in monetary value. Such intervention if found shall have a proper channel to instigate for further investigation and accusation of the third party in the matters concerned with the local representatives.

When the respondents were asked about the extra-legal interventions, majority of the respondents had positive responses while some had negative responses. Any extra-legal intervention while embarking on your duty by a third party? Like MNA, MPA, AC, DC? If yes. What do you think are the causes of such interventions? Do you have any remedies in your mind as per your experience?

“Huge intervention in decision making of the local representatives in case when any decision is intended by them. While they are bound to the secretary in some of the decision making, but no proper heed is given to the local representatives, instead when there is MPA or MNA involved in any of the local problem or issue, MNA and MPA are considered while the documents of the Local representatives are considered a garbage. Posting and transfer is under provincial authorities while local representatives do not have any say in it, which they think should be their job.”

Such kind of response was observed from those representatives who had background other than PTI, because those who were affiliate of PTI never answered in negative.

*“If local representatives maintain good relations with other third party, then the job is well performed, and extra-legal intervention is minimal. It is a top priority of the ruling party to avoid any intervention, but a kind of reference is also needed in some matters.”*The representative is a Town Nazim.

Though AC and DC are bound to MPA, the optimal level of responsibilities could be achieved if virtuous relations are maintained among the local representatives and third party. It should be the duty of the provincial government to maintain the relation because majority of the representatives had reservations from the provincial government regarding the indispensable and uneven behavior.

Political interventions

Defines Political intervention as “Individual or group activity aimed at changing public opinion, a nation's political system, and ultimately how resources and rights are allocated within a society”. Being a local government, working under the provincial government, the KP local government is still under political interference according to some of the local representatives. While interviewing them, they had views like.

“Inside district, the process of transferring, posting and proposal approval is done by district government according to the rule of business but on the ground, there is no such procedure found yet according to the local representatives. These matters are never disclosed to the representatives and managed in a highly politicized way.”

This means that there is political intervention in local representative's decision making. To ensure an independent local government, such intervention should be avoided.

One of them replied that.

“As for example, before the 2015 local body's election, different authorities were promised for the local representatives but after the election was held, no such power or authority was provided to them.” The representative is a Nazim.

Although, local government is intended to nourish the democratic process at the local level, the political intervention is weakening it, which needs to condense in order to promote democratic values in a better sense on the local level.

Cultural Interventions

Describes cultural interventions as a method “assisted by individuals who have been approved to lead or facilitate a particular cultural activity due to their sanctioned cultural expertise and knowledge because of living that culture.

It is evident from the interviews that there is a strong hold of cultural intervention in implementing and assessing the outcomes of Act for research purpose. Majority of the respondents had replied in positive and had claimed the culture barrier in the way of progress.

“There is culture factor involved in the process, and it will take time to overcome this barrier. Being an area with still Baradari vote concept and traditional politics, the process will take too long to come on to the track.” The respondent was a District Nazim with academic background in Sociology.”

The higher authorities need to take initiatives to curb the cultural factors to maintain the governance pattern and provide the resources to the local people at their doorstep efficiently.

Institutional transgressions

Institutional transgression is an act, process or instance of transgressing: such as infringement of law command or duty. Institutional transgressions are also a factor influencing the empowerment of local representatives. According to them:

“The underlying problems and issues of the area are known to local representatives while the transgression of other institution makes the process more complex and layman issues are not fulfilled on time.”

This means that the local representatives still lack their independency and unease in making independent decision. Due to its unjust and negative consequences, institutional transgression needs to be curbed out for the smooth functioning of governance at local level.

Sufficiency of Act/legislations

As the for the rule of business of the district government, being carried out with accordance to the prevailing laws, the intention of asking such question was to know whether the Act is enough to address the total issue faced by the community. The question was further elaborated for extracting underlying results. Being the executive authority of the district government, the business of the district government is carried out in accordance with this Act and other laws for the time being in force? If yes, is the legislation/Act enough to address the problems faced by

a layman? Do you want/desire extension of your legal jurisdiction? What could be those extensions in case?

“We have options through councils, any issue in rule of business or layman problem is directed through the council. After the council’s agreement and committee, the issue is highlighted, and a framework is framed. The sufficiency of the legislation is exact and according to the need of representatives and implementation, but more incentives and authorities is required”.

“The extension is needed because the problems are too much while the tenure and legal jurisdictions are minute. The provincial government need to review the Act and must extend the legal jurisdiction for the complete performances of the local representatives.”

A performance-based incentives and awards distribution at the end of every year is needed, so that the representatives should worked efficiently, and it will enhance the empowerment of the local representatives in local decision making.

Disciplinary actions against functionaries

This question from the interviewee were asked with an intention to know whether the District Nazim who is authorized by the Act, hold the power of disciplinary action against the functionaries in their respective constituency. It was elaborated as; do you possess the authority to enquire about an action or sanction a specific order against functionaries in district government under efficiency and disciplinary rules?

“As according to the Act, the Nazim has the authority to take disciplinary action against any functionary in district government under efficiency and disciplinary rules because he knows problems of his constituency and the Act authorize them to do so but, on the ground, no such authority is practiced due to pressure from the high authorities. They named it C&W, DHO etc.”. “Any disciplinary action against functionaries is sometimes considered a rivalry against others because of the tussle of different political parties.”

“The real problem is the elite model, where those with authority and acquaintanceship can enjoy the privileges while those without strong social ties to the high authorities or so-called elite have no say in any of the procedures or decision-making against functionaries. Furthermore, the process of disciplining functionaries is abhorrent and complicated.”

Even though the majority of respondents has an innate desire for a fair and independent system where the decisions they make should be autonomous and have a strong place, the system continues to struggle with a self-serving mentality and an interest-based culture.

Collaborations of Provincial government with local bodies

Legally Collaboration of Provincial Government is restricted to only disciplinary actions against the district level representative while district council where local representatives are held accountable for their severe misconduct or blunders. Majority of the respondents had negative answer to this question because of the grievances they had faced in budget allocation, delegation of power, and independent decision making.

“The provincial government is dictating every decision they want, and there is no consistent follow-up if we forward them any of the problem, we face in our constituency which has a link with the provincial government.”

“Collaboration is there but the local representatives have serious concerns from the higher authorities regarding the budget allocation because their constituencies need funds for the completion of the proposed projects while the provincial government sometimes doesn’t show any serious attitude on the plea of budget deficit.”

The collaboration of provincial government with local bodies is mostly verbal and nominal in nature. The Nazims (District, Tehsil and Village level) are merely interested in their respective hold of authority and proper mechanism of liaison is lacking. Technically collaboration is optional and circumstantial part of the whole process.

Guideline for Long and Short-term Projects and Committees

“The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Local Government Act 2013” has provided a long list of responsibilities to the local representatives, additionally, the district council, the tehsil and the village council must make committees and projects under their respective constituencies. First, they must visit the place where the project is to be installed with an engineering body, which is responsible to evaluate the pre-panning and then an ADP is proposed. These all committees and projects are based on the demands of local people. The rule of business and Act has recommended that any project or committee shall have a procedure accordingly. When the local representatives were asked about the guideline about the projects, majority of them answered in negative.

“In the current government, no such guideline is provided except a single budget training was initiated only for once until now in their whole tenure.”

“They considered us machines and not human being. The burdensome responsibilities and uncountable issues faced by layman and budgetary cut, makes it hard to work efficiently. As we are not that much literate to read each clause of the Act, we need proper guidelines and arrangement of seminars to further know about the Act.”

Though, the “Khyber Pakhtunkhwa local government Act” is considered one of the best local government Acts by some officials, the result shows somehow different results on the ground in case of proper guidelines. Single budget training is insufficient to inform the local representatives about their tasks and work for the community.

Dependency on supplementary support

The provincial government when get failed to provide the proposed amount or funds to the local government, the local government has no other way to complete the proposed projects. The KP Local Act 2013 does not allow any of the representative body to get supplementary support from any other financial body or firm. However, some of the local NGO’s can fund the deficit of the local representatives but that is not possible every time.

“The local government should be financially viable itself to trigger income generation of their own and to make themselves independent so that in the future they would not get shortage of funds at the local level”

Sanctioning of funds

This is a very important factor which shows the status of local representative’s empowerment. The question was asked basically to know how the local representatives have a say in releasing of funds independently for their constituency and projects completion because if the desired funds are sanctioned based on any reason, it makes it hard to satisfy the local needs on the mean time.

“Financial authorities hold power in hands to sanction the authenticated fund which reduces the chances of late arrival of the funds to the constituency but according to the rule of business, the authenticated fund will be sanctioned by the financial authorities if there is any mishap in budgetary receipt.”

“Sometime when the funds are sanctioned, the whole of the process gets freezes. The ADP which we make turns incomplete, and the remaining projects become a burden for the next year which fulfillment is difficult.”

“Sanctions are not imposed because someone has made a fraudulent claim, but because they have failed to meet one or more conditions that have been imposed upon them.”

Inside the district, tehsil and village councils, a separate account is made which releases the amount to the respective councils. These councilors are responsible for the desired projects but when the funds are sanctioned, the local representatives are left in an undesirable condition because they cannot work on any project without enough money, they needed for these projects.

Political sanctions

An act which is intended to gain or achieve some political means and goals or to bare someone from achieving their desired goal by a political party or politicians is known as political sanctions.

“The Act is still facing huge political interventions in case of fund releasing and sanctioning. Sometime the matters are performed through percentage sharing among the different actors.”

The situation of sanctioning the funds and then percentage sharing is on one hand affecting the credibility of representatives and on the other hand it is also affecting the service delivery for the common masses, which indirectly is a matter of great concern for the independent and empowerment of local representatives.

Choice in spending

As per the local government act the fund distribution must be as follow:

S. No	Area of Distribution	Distribution Criterion
1.	Sanitation	20%
2.	Water Supply	25%
3.	Discretionary Spending	50%
4.	Beautification	05%

Legally the above distribution plan is to be followed while allocating money to community-based projects. The opinion of elected representatives in this regard is as follow:

“Before this Act, only a single Nazim was responsible to make ADP but now a separate Nazim is responsible for District, tehsil and village council. Co-ordination is a problem between these different government representatives, like sometime the ADP is not shared with each other.”

The reply of interviewed Nazims reflects that Choice in Spending is a thug of war between different representatives and the desired goals are inevitably affected as a result.

Inadequate Due Financial Shares

The due financial share mechanism in the “KP Local Government Act 2013” is influenced to the extent that those districts with Political ministries assigned to them have a very influencing role. The funds to be disbursed in the due year is inadequate to meet the finances, therefore, the local representatives in those districts where there is no ministry assigned.

“According to Nazims, the district government makes ADP and according to the size of that ADP, that must be disbursed but the financial authorities do not comply with accordance to the amount required to fulfill the ADP, on the plea of budget shortage or financial crisis. Similarly, the due quarterly distribution promise is not honored, and we get only half (i.e. Two Quarters) shares from the proposed budget. At times duplication of scheme also occurs. They have been given the task of making plan for new micro and macro projects but the fund they get is never adequate to meet the expenses of the proposed projects.”

It is evident from the statements of the Nazims that financing the local bodies gets less attention from the higher ranks. On one hand the planned annual program gets suffered on the grounds of budgetary restrictions while on the other hand the already restrained promised budget is not allocated and is cut half. As a result, the performance of local bodies, while dispensing their responsibilities, is suffered inevitably.

Philosophical Findings

As describe earlier, the theory of Social Contract envisage that people live together in society in accordance with an agreement that establishes moral and political rules of behavior. The essence of this theory is that people choose a selected group of individuals among them to govern over them. This contract makes people sacrifice some of their rights for the sake of governance and security. It is a tacit agreement between the governors and the ones to be governed.

This contract gives immense power to the government. Powers, that could corrupt the minds of the rulers, and they may misuse it. This misuse of power causes the breach of social contract.

This research put forward an effort whether the social contract, which gives power to the local representatives under local government has been empowered the local representatives and in turn whether it is significant for the common masses at the grass-root level. The researcher has based his arguments that the idea of local

government has emerged from the theory of social contract, which is basically an agreement of resource and power politics. The empowerment of the local representatives is possible if the local government works under its prescribed rules.

“The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa local government Act”, after its analyses and research is no doubt an exemplary legislation which has significantly empowered the local representatives in decision making at grass-root level. It has also provided the local representatives with a prescribed set of regulations and some discretionary power in funds distributions which makes them independent in resource distribution. The major flaws identified, sometimes hinder the smooth functioning and inversely affect the empowerment which needs to be considered to make the Act more efficient.

CONCLUSION

The basic aim of this research was to find out the political and economic empowerment of local representatives in service delivery and independency in releasing of funds. The literature suggests that a strong local government works efficiently with having an independent local representatives and local bodies. The local representatives are selected by the local masses, and they have the right and duties to distribute the resources among the local masses. If the local representatives are independent in their decision making and are well empowered, the distributions of resources among the masses on the local level are well managed and the needs are fulfilled in an efficient way. Moreover, the trust of the local masses on the local representatives at the grass-root level bears a fruitful relationship and the democratic values are well established.

This research tested these arguments on the local representatives of Buner to find out the results of whether the local representatives have really got empowerment in political decision making and fund distributions under the “Khyber Pakhtunkhwa local government Act 2013”. The research concludes that the local representatives feel satisfactory in directing their decision making at the local level, but some major extra-legal interventions are still faced by the local representatives. Those representatives who are in a relationship with the ruling party are mostly satisfied with their decision making while those who belongs to non-ruling party possess serious grievances with their decision making. Moreover, extra-legal, political, institutional transgression and legal interventions hinder the smooth functioning of decision making of local representatives at the local level. The process of funds distribution is accordingly to the rule of business, according to the local representatives but some major sanctions like insufficient funds allocated in ADP Scheme, dependency on supplementary support and inadequate due financial shares make it hard for the local representatives to act independently and fulfill the needs of local people.

Policy Implications

After the analyses of the primary data, collected through in-depth interviews, it was found that

As the idea of local government is an integral part of human political life

where he can achieve his basic and fundamental political rights. Since the local government guarantees the rights of the local representatives, it also in return, demands from them in term of basic service deliveries to the local people. Therefore, the local government is a two-way process of service delivery if the local representatives are independent in political decision making as well, they deliver the necessities to the local people.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa local government Act, according to the results and conclusion, is one of the best and exemplary Acts, but some major modifications and recommendations should be considered by the policy makers and implementers of the Act. Some of them are as under.

- A proper monitoring team should be arranged to monitor the working of the local representatives. This will help in evaluating the service delivery to the local masses and performances of local representatives and incentives and rewards should be provided to the local representatives for their encouragement to work efficiently.
- The local government should be considered a unified system. There are many deficiencies in this system. The local government is based on trickle down approach. The local representatives are elected to local council through electoral process. The representatives are assigned with the task of exercising political and administrative authorities, but the puzzling nature of the Act is a huge barrier in the way of local representatives to exercise their rightful responsibilities in a better way.
- The number of councilors in the village, tehsil and District level should be reduced because it was observed that the number of local representatives is almost high which has created a complex whole.
- The delimitation of constituency of the districts under KP LGA 2013 is still based on the previous Pakistan land revenue Act of 1967 and 1998 census of Pakistan. This has created a problem in inaccurately determination of population of a locality. The delimitation for local government should be based on the recent census and land revenue Act to ensure accurate representatives and service delivery.

If the suggested recommendations are truly applied by the policy makers, the policy implications would bear fruitful results on the ground. The arrangement of the monitoring team for the surveillance of the local representatives would present the regular outcome of the responsibilities assigned to them and it would make the Act more effective.

Another recommendation related to the complexity of the Act, if considered by the policy makers would in turn help the local representatives know the Act and would easily access the clauses. Another recommendation suggests that due to the large number of local representatives at the local bodies, the local government system has created a complex whole and if these recommendations are truly considered by the policy makers would provide an ease for the local representatives. The last recommendations which are related to the combination of the Act based on old census which if considered would make the Act effective and can help in

assigning the resources to the people at grass-root level.

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