

**RESEARCH PAPER**

Assessing Democratic Stability in Pakistan: The Role of Institutions, Civil-Military Relations, and Youth Participation

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ABSTRACT

This study considers the institutional and societal processes affecting the stability of democracy in Pakistan and specifically how historical trends of military interference, poor civilian institutions and dominance by elites limit democratic stability in the country. The mixed-methods approach was used with the help of the theoretical prism of institutionalism. Historical and institutional analysis was used at the qualitative level whereas a structured survey was carried out based on the BS and MS students based on their various departments at the GC Women University Sialkot. The formula provided by Cochran was used and the sample size determined was 384, which was obtained and the number of valid responses obtained was 384. Summative and inference statistics were used to evaluate perception about governance, judiciary, civil-military, media and public participation. The results show that, Pakistan has a constitutional democratic system but the application is still not completely democratic because of a partisanized judiciary, imbalance between civil military, inconsistency of elections and fewer civic involvement. But the data also indicate the positive trends in more youth engagement, online activism, and transparency demanded by the population. The research provides political players, civil society, academic, and the media to work in unison and to improve on the institutional integrity, inclusivity in governance, and participatory democratic culture in Pakistan.

Keywords: Democracy, Institutions, Stability, Military, Political Awareness, Society, Social Problems

Introduction

Democratic stability has been one of the society's most complex, contested and isolated zones of inquiry in political science, especially in states with a repeated cycle of authoritarianism, breakdown of institutions and political fragility. There are many such states and among them, Pakistan is particularly poignant and multifaceted. Since its inception in 1947, and even today, Pakistan's political journey has been turbulent; intermittently, civilian rule has been followed by repeated military interventions, and the reality of institutional vulnerabilities has been prevalent. Even with a written constitution ostensibly confirming the basis for representative governance and rule of law, the democratic development of the country has been repeatedly side tracked by structural imbalances, extra constitutional take over and politicization of the state institutions.

Understanding the instability of democracy in Pakistan cannot be tackled without a look at its context. Pakistan's political transitions have never been a smooth or linear walk. What we have instead seen has been more of regime changes, or the dissolution of elected governments, and much time under the leadership of people like General Ayub Khan, General Zia-ul-Haq, General Pervez Musharraf, and others. By engendering various types of military regimes that curtailed democratic freedoms and remaking the political landscape through constitutional vagaries and suppression of dissent, these regimes not only

suppressed democracy, but also strategical co-opted civilian elites. Although, the return to civilian rule in 2008, seen by many as a responsible democratic milestone. It has not fully insulated to democratic institutions from the power of non elected power centers. In Pakistan, as it is today, it is a democracy with all the trappings of a democracy in form, and yet one that can be profoundly authoritarian in function.

The central question to this study is what ensures or undermines democratic stability in democratic climates such as Pakistan. These are the times where the call for understanding the root causes of instability is much needed given the increasing incidence of democratic backsliding in almost all transitional democracies throughout the world. In fact, scholars and observers have long debated how much institutional weakness, elite behavior, civil-military relations and external pressures victimize democratic endurance. Such an inquiry is further nourished by Pakistan's own distinct ways of civil military entanglements, regional tensions, ethnic diversity, and developing civil society.

This research examines the institutional and social dimensions which have restricted and have remained as a constraint in democratic development of Pakistan. An analytical centre on the importance of political institutions as; parliament, executive, judicial, electoral commission and the ubiquitous are result of the military way governance. The study also focuses on the role of politics parties, media institutions and public to be not only passive elements but active players in democratic consolidation or disintegration.

This research will look at institutions in Pakistan as frameworks for democratic governance from the institutionalism theory perspective that connects the formal and formal structures with the political behavior which has revealed the ability of those types of structures in influencing the notions of legitimacy, effectiveness and stability of democratic governing body. By institutionalism, we can get out of episodic explanations and view the deeper organizational and normative foundations of political order. Krugman's point is to analyze how institution design differs from practice (like when informal rules further than formal procedures, or when path dependences stemming from colonial and post colonial governance heritage continue shape this current situation); all this should be done in a comparative manner and by focusing on development of infrastructure.

In addition, this research will center on the mediating factors related to society: public trust, mass publicity, and the public's capacity to influence civil society organizations in relation to state institutions. There is a dynamic yet underexplored arena in Pakistan for how bottom up forces contribute to democratic renewal or decay—the country's demographic composition, which, among other features, includes young people, an evolving urban middle class and civil society increasingly speaking with a loud voice.

The democratic instability in Pakistan is not limited to its borders. Pakistan as a nuclear armed state with deep internal political dynamics is at the cross roads of South and Central Asia and the consequences of internal political dynamics of Pakistan directly impacts upon the regional peace, international counterterrorism strategies and global democratic norms. Weak governance, corruption, institutional decay, among other issues, not only impedes the domestic development but also little helps in facilitating international engagement or aide's effectiveness.

The approach is methodological in this research, it will use a qualitative approach, mixing archival analysis, a review of historical political transitions, and contemporary analytical data based on reports, media analyses and institutional evaluations. In addition, depending on availability, it will rely on survey data and expert interviews to offer a more complete picture of the state of the democratic climate.

In all, this paper attempts to make a meaningful contribution to ongoing academic and policy debates regarding democratic stability in developing countries. Moreover, it aims to provide both a diagnostic towards understanding the institutional and societal barriers that underlie democratic non-consolidation in Pakistan as well as to enable their prescription of concrete strategies to strengthen democratic governance norms, practices, and institutions. By doing, so it will not only help shed light on Pakistan's democratic journey but also be a tool to other discussions to think through how to sustain democracy in the Global South.

Literature Review

Ali (2022) explains the grass root causes of political instability in developing democracies by using a structural approach referring to Pakistan. Political instability is due to ineffective state institutions, deep corruption, and weak civil society by which a stable democracy cannot be accomplished, argues Ali. He emphasizes state building and good governance at grassroots level for ensuring political stability. But unlike Ali's research, for instance, which does not broach the subject of the military perpetuating political instability, which is a leading factor in a democracy in Pakistan. The approach will seek to address this gap through a particular concentration on the role the military plays in subverting democratic processes and democratic institutions is

Amin and Faqir (2021), discuss the Charter of Democracy and the democratic stability of Pakistan and concluded that it was a step in the right direction towards political consensus and institutional reform. While the Charter made it easier for political parties to cooperate with each other, it did not address deeper institutional dysfunction and the military's role in the politics of the country, which the authors stress. According to Amin and Faqir, this promise is still there but will not bear fruit unless the issues are continuously addressed. But their study ignores the external factors, namely international donors and neighbours, who also have a say in the making of Pakistan's democratic course. To this end, this gap will be explored by examining the impact of external political dynamics like foreign and regional security concerns on the consolidation of democracy in Pakistan.

Rotberg and Gisselquist (2009) explain that the good governance is the foundation for achieving democratic stability. According to their research, transparency, accountability and effective use of public resources constitute an area of governance that in turn, encourages democratic resilience. According to them, the democratic processes will remain blunt, and have a tendency of breaking down, in the absence of strong institutional frameworks and an active civil society. The authors offer thorough global evidences however, they do not details into the convoluted institutional mutations that characterize semi authoritarian democracies such as Pakistan. Thus, there is a vacancy for research on the role of institutional weaknesses in countries in which democratic records fluctuate, like Pakistan, in ensuring democratic continuity. Consequently, my study closes this gap by empirically evaluating Pakistan's political institutions and their performance together with other related factors which affect democratic stability.

Campos and Nugent (2000) discussed the relationship between political stability and institutional performance as related to how rule of law and consistent governance encourage foreign investment as well as increase public trust. The essence of their argument is that good political and legalsegment of the environment, such that it is predictable and fair, constitutes the foundation of democratic stability that in turn facilitates economic and social development. Nevertheless, while their work provides a robust analysis of macro-level indicators across different countries, they do not conduct a country- specific deep dive into how it plays out in democratic backsliding, specifically in South Asian contexts. In the absence of such localized, empirical analysis the gap is filled

by this study by analyzing Pakistan's civil-military dynamics, political institutions, and public's trust for the democratic process (Mushtaq, et. al., 2017).

Khawaja and Khalid (2022) give an overview of the democratic challenges that Pakistan has faced, especially in terms of civil-military relations that have always hindered political continuity. The authors claim that repetitive military interventions and the military's significant engagement in the policy making processes cause both erosion of the autonomy of civilian institutions and of the legitimacy of the electoral democracy. The direct link of their work to the main axis of civil – military imbalance as a major underlying cause of democratic instability is quite evident. While they perform a deep qualitative analysis, they do not empirically validate how this form of imbalance influences public trust and participation. The existence of this gap presents a notable opening for my study which uses empirical approaches for investigating the impact of civil military relations along with different institutional factors that affect democratic persistence in Pakistan.

Newton (2001) studied the relationship between social trust, political institutions, and democratic performance. According to him, trust is both a cause and a consequence of good governance and is fostered by responsive institutions, a free media and participatory politics. Newton's research is a matter of developing trust as a feedback loop within democratic systems, where transparency and trust lead to legitimacy and stability. Nevertheless, Newton's work is more theoretical and describes functioning democracies. Hence it lacks applicability to hybrid regime or a democracy in crisis such as Pakistan. I close this theoretical and practical gap by examining how media manipulation, dependent judicial decisions, and lack of public participation in Pakistan lead to weakening the institutions and decline the democratic stability.

Lane (2010) explains the rule of law can only find the way out when connected with the constitutional democracy, where judicial independence and compliance to the legal consistency maintain the democratic resilience. Courts also serve the purpose of arming and disarming the other two branches of government if they overstep their constitutional boundaries. But the study mainly focuses on mature democracies and has no room for contexts where courts go through alternating era of activism and complicity, like Pakistan. This gap in the appropriate context is what has motivated me to conduct my study and try to see how judicial behavior in Pakistan works in the strengthening or regression of democracy in times of political crisis.

Algan and Cahuc (2014) demonstrate that, in societies with low institutional trust, economic and democratic outcomes are more unstable and there is less political participation. In addition to demonstrating that they experience greater feelings of attachment to and satisfaction with the democratic process, perceptions of fairness and justice in governance systems, and so whether governance systems are deemed fair, effective and just are shown to be central to citizens' level of engagement in democratic process. However, unlike the previous study, the main advantage is that instead of analyzing European data, it also explains how historical authoritarianism, media manipulation, or judicial inconsistencies might specifically erode the trust in hybrid regimes such as Pakistan. In turn, my research initiates from their work to extend the analysis of public perception and trust in Pakistan's democratic institutions that relates to civic engagement and political legitimacy.

Mazenda (2022) explores the relationship between governance and development in the African entities highlighting the fact that to democracy growth, transparent, accountable and efficient institutions of governance contribute greatly. Accordingly, development and democratic consolidation are core inhibitors which, in turn, are the result of political interference, corruption and bureaucratic inefficiency. Although this research offers some comparative insights, it offers comparatively more development outcome equilibrium and less on how institutional design and civil military relations affect

the democratic longevity. This conversation is extended by my research, to examine how similar governance failure and institutional constraints influence the path of democratic stability in the political milieu of Pakistan.

Khan (2020) explain the increase in polarization of the Pakistani political landscape is due to ineffective governance in the system coupled with civil military tensions and ethnonational divide. In the study, it is illustrated how these external factors hinder democratic norms agreed upon in a society to collapse, weakening institutional integrity. Although Khan adequately grasps the general political fragmentation at a macro level, the research does not analyze the medium's role in either heightening or dimming the polarization. In this research, the gap to be addressed is the relationship between the media and public perception, and its ability to facilitate democratic resilience despite political divisions.

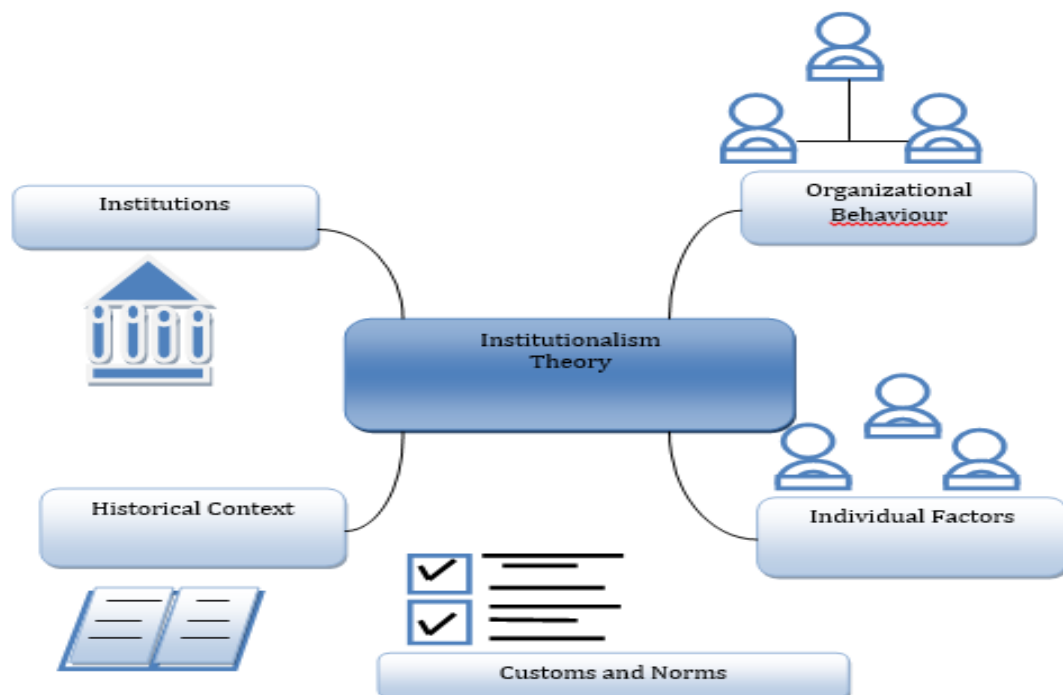


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

Material and Methods

Research Design

The lens of the theory is Institutionalism, and the research design is qualitative-dominant mixed methods. It takes an approach based on the coupling, and interaction of, the formal institutions (such as the judiciary, parliament, and election commission) and informal elements (civil-military dynamics; media behavior; public norms). The design is exploratory and explanatory in the sense that it explains the deeper institutional and societal drivers that cause stability or fragility of democracy in Pakistan.

Data Collection Methods

To evaluate perceptions about institutional trust, governance, media freedom, and civic engagement, a survey questionnaire was designed and distributed among the university students of different regions of Pakistan.

This survey was conducted on a 5 point Linear scale (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) and had 25 structured questions in terms of the six core areas which are: governance, judiciary, media, public participation and democratic culture.

Sampling Method and Participants

The students of political science, sociology and international relations, major universities, Pakistan were the target population.

The sample size is determined using Cochran's formula, ensuring a 95% confidence. Three hundred eighty-four responses were collected and validated for analysis. Respondents were selected using a purposive sampling technique in which they were chosen depending on their level of academic familiarity with democratic and institutional issues.

Data Analysis Techniques

The quantitative data has been analyzed using descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) as well as cross tabulation to indicate relationships on perceptions of institutions and views on stability of democracy. Data derived from secondary sources were analyzed qualitatively and thematically organized into six major themes of the study. Diverse findings were cross-analyzed with triangulation in order to enhance validity and reliability.

Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary and anonymous. Before participation, all respondents were notified about the purpose of the study and their consent was obtained. Personal data was not collected, thereby giving respect to the privacy and confidentiality of the participants.

Results and Discussion

Table 1
Gender

Gender	Frequency	%
Male	82	21.30%
Female	303	78.70%

Table 1 check all and correct??? shows that 43.8% of respondents were from the 18-20 age group, 48.4% were from the 21-23 age group, and 7.8% were 24+.

Table 2
Age

Age	Frequency	%
18-20	87	22.6%
21-23	186	48.3%
24+	112	29.1%

Table 2 shows that 22.6% of respondents were from the 18-20 age group, 48.3% were from the 21-23 age group, and 29.1% were 24+.

Table 3
Level of education

Level of education	Frequency	%
Bachelor	283	73.5%
Master	102	26.5%

Table 3 shows that the educational level of 73.5% of respondents was BS, and 26.5% had an educational level of MS/MPhil.

Table 4
University

University type	Frequency	%
Public	300	73.5%
Private	85	22.1%

Table 4 shows that 73.5% of respondents were from Public Universities and 22.1% were from Private Universities.

Statement wise analysis

Table 5
Governance and Accountability

Item No	Statement	Level	F	%
01	The government effectively responds to public needs and grievances.	Strongly agree	29	7.5%
		Agree	52	13.5%
		Neutral	107	27.8%
		Disagree	140	36.4%
		Strongly disagree	57	14.8%

Table 5 shows that 7.5% of respondents strongly agreed, 13.5% agreed, 27.8% were neutral, 36.4 disagreed, and 14.8% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 6
NAB and Accountability

Item No	Statement	Level	F	%
02	Anti-corruption institutions like NAB operate independently and impartially	Strongly agree	27	7%
		Agree	81	21%
		Neutral	110	28.6%
		Disagree	103	26.8%
		Strongly disagree	64	16.6%

Table 6 shows that 7% of respondents strongly agreed, 21% agreed, 28.6% were neutral, 26.8% disagreed, and 16.6% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 7
Resource Allocation

Item No	Statement	Level	F	%
03	There is transparency in government spending and resource allocation.	Strongly agree	24	6.2%
		Agree	70	18.2%
		Neutral	102	26.5%
		Disagree	117	30.4%
		Strongly disagree	72	18.7%

Table 7 shows that 6.2% of respondents strongly agreed, 18.2% agreed, 26.5% were neutral, 30.4% disagreed, and 18.7% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 8
Efficiency Of Public Service

Item No	Statement	Level	F	%
04	Public services are delivered efficiently and equitably in Pakistan.	Strongly agree	26	6.8%
		Agree	52	13.5%
		Neutral	102	26.5%
		Disagree	112	29.1%
		Strongly disagree	93	27.2%

Table 8 shows that 6.8% of respondents strongly agreed, 113.58.2% agreed, 26.5% were neutral, 29.1% disagreed, and 27.2% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 9
Accountability of Political Leaders

Item No	Statement	Level	F	%
05	I believe political leaders are held accountable for their actions.	Strongly agree	76	19.7%
		Agree	71	18.4%
		Neutral	64	16.6%
		Disagree	84	21.8%
		Strongly disagree	90	23.4%

Table 9 shows that 19.7% of respondents strongly agreed, 18.4% agreed, 16.6% were neutral, 21.8% disagreed, and 23.4% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 10
Political Institutions and Democracy

Item No	Statement	Level	F	%
06	Parliament plays a meaningful role in making national decisions.	Strongly agree	88	22.9%
		Agree	118	30.6%
		Neutral	103	26.8%
		Disagree	44	11.4%
		Strongly disagree	32	8.3%

Table 10 shows that 22.9% of respondents strongly agreed, 30.6% agreed, 26.8% were neutral, 11.4% disagreed, and 8.3% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 11
Electoral System

Item No	Statement	Level	F	%
07	The electoral system in Pakistan ensures free and fair elections.	Strongly agree	32	8.3%
		Agree	66	17.1%
		Neutral	66	17.1%
		Disagree	83	21.6%
		Strongly disagree	138	35.8%

Table 11 shows that 8.3% of respondents strongly agreed, 17.1% agreed, 17.1% were neutral, 21.6% disagreed, and 35.8% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 12
Political Parties and Democracy

Item No	Statement	Level	F	%
08	Political parties promote democratic values within their structures.	Strongly agree	34	8.8%
		Agree	74	19.2%
		Neutral	118	30.6%
		Disagree	98	25.5%
		Strongly disagree	61	15.8%

Table 12 shows that 8.8% of respondents strongly agreed, 19.2% agreed, 30.6% were neutral, 25.5% disagreed, and 15.8% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 13
Institutions Without Military Interference

Item No	Statement	Level	F	%
09	Political institutions in Pakistan operate without military interference.	Strongly agree	24	6.2%
		Agree	42	10.9%
		Neutral	16	15.6%
		Disagree	108	28.1%
		Strongly disagree	151	39.2%

Table 13 shows that 6.2% of respondents strongly agreed, 10.9% agreed, 15.6% were neutral, 28.1% disagreed, and 39.2% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 14
Constitution And Democracy

Item No	Statement	Level	F	%
	Constitutional	Strongly agree	53	13.8%

10	amendments have strengthened democratic institutions.	Agree	111	28.8%
		Neutral	111	28.8%
		Disagree	61	15.8%
		Strongly disagree	49	12.7%

Table 14 shows that 13.8% of respondents strongly agreed, 28.8% agreed, 28.8% were neutral, 15.8% disagreed, and 12.7% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 15
Judiciary and rule of law

Item No	Statement	Level	F	%
11	The judiciary in Pakistan functions independently of political influence.	Strongly agree	31	8.1%
		Agree	81	21%
		Neutral	82	21.3%
		Disagree	104	27%
		Strongly disagree	87	22.6%

Table 15 shows that 8.1% of respondents strongly agreed, 21% agreed, 21.3% were neutral, 27% disagreed, and 22.6% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 16
Judicial Activism And Democracy

Item No	Statement	Level	F	%
12	Judicial activism contributes positively to democracy.	Strongly agree	34	8.8%
		Agree	126	32.7%
		Neutral	117	30.4%
		Disagree	66	17.1%
		Strongly disagree	42	10.9%

Table 16 shows that 8.8% of respondents strongly agreed, 32.7% agreed, 30.4% were neutral, 17.1% disagreed, and 10.9% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 17
Accessibility Of Courts

Item No	Statement	Level	F	%
13	Courts are accessible and fair to all citizens..	Strongly agree	34	7.8%
		Agree	74	19.2%
		Neutral	76	19.7%
		Disagree	92	23.9%
		Strongly disagree	113	29.4%

Table 17 shows that 7.8% of respondents strongly agreed, 19.2% agreed, 19.7% were neutral, 23.9% disagreed, and 29.4% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 18
The Rule of Law And Power

Item No	Statement	Level	F	%
14	The rule of law is applied equally, regardless of power or position.	Strongly agree	28	7.3%
		Agree	56	14.5%
		Neutral	64	16.6%
		Disagree	88	22.9%
		Strongly disagree	149	38.7%

Table 18 shows that 7.3% of respondents strongly agreed, 14.5% agreed, 16.6% were neutral, 22.9% disagreed, and 38.7% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 19
Judiciary And Democracy

Item No	Statement	Level	F	%
15	Judiciary plays a constructive role in democratic transitions.	Strongly agree	53	13.8%
		Agree	124	32.2%
		Neutral	101	26.2%
		Disagree	53	13.8%
		Strongly disagree	54	14%

Table 19 shows that 13.8% of respondents strongly agreed, 32.2% agreed, 26.2% were neutral, 13.8% disagreed, and 14% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 20
Media and public participation

Item No	Statement	Level	F	%
16	Media in Pakistan freely reports on political and institutional issues.	Strongly agree	26	6.8%
		Agree	83	21.6%
		Neutral	86	22.3%
		Disagree	111	28.8%
		Strongly disagree	9	20.5%

Table 20 shows that 6.8% of respondents strongly agreed, 21.6% agreed, 22.3% were neutral, 28.8% disagreed, and 20.5% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 21
Media Influence On Public Perception

Item No	Statement	Level	F	%
17	Media influences how I perceive political events and institutions.	Strongly agree	63	16.4%
		Agree	141	36.6%
		Neutral	101	28.6%
		Disagree	44	11.4%
		Strongly disagree	27	7%

Table 21 shows that 7.8% of respondents strongly agreed, 19.2% agreed, 19.7% were neutral, 23.9% disagreed, and 29.4% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 22
Censorship And Media

Item No	Statement	Level	F	%
18	Censorship and state pressure undermine journalistic freedom.	Strongly agree	81	21%
		Agree	190	36.4%
		Neutral	101	26.2%
		Disagree	40	10.4%
		Strongly disagree	23	6%

Table 22 shows that 21% of respondents strongly agreed, 36.4% agreed, 26.2% were neutral, 10.4% disagreed, and 6% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 23
Social Media And Civic Engagements

Item No	Statement	Level	F	%
19	Social media promotes civic engagement among youth.	Strongly agree	81	21%
		Agree	164	42.6%
		Neutral	83	21.6%
		Disagree	37	9.6%
		Strongly disagree	20	5.2%

Table 23 shows that 21% of respondents strongly agreed, 42.6% agreed, 21.6% were neutral, 9.6% disagreed, and 5.2% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 24
Decision Making And Public Opinion

Item No	Statement	Level	F	%
20	Public opinion is an important factor in political decision-making.	Strongly agree	103	33.8%
		Agree	124	32.2%
		Neutral	60	15.6%
		Disagree	38	9.9%
		Strongly disagree	33	8.6%

Table 24 shows that 33.8% of respondents strongly agreed, 32.2% agreed, 15.6% were neutral, 9.9% disagreed, and 8.6% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 25
Democratic culture and trust

Item No	Statement	Level	F	%
21	I trust Pakistan's democratic institutions to uphold my rights.	Strongly agree	35	9.1%
		Agree	69	17.9%
		Neutral	115	29.9%
		Disagree	79	20.5%
		Strongly disagree	87	22.6%

Table 25 shows that 9.1% of respondents strongly agreed, 17.9% agreed, 29.9% were neutral, 20.5% disagreed, and 22.6% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 26
Public Participation

Item No	Statement	Level	F	%
22	Citizens have enough opportunities to participate in political processes.	Strongly agree	31	8.1%
		Agree	82	21.3%
		Neutral	82	21.3%
		Disagree	114	29.6%
		Strongly disagree	76	19.7%

Table 26 shows that 8.1% of respondents strongly agreed, 21.3% agreed, 21.3% were neutral, 29.6% disagreed, and 19.7% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 27
Voter Turnout And Public Trust

Item No	Statement	Level	F	%
23	Low voter turnout is a sign of declining public trust in democracy.	Strongly agree	117	30.4%
		Agree	137	35.6%
		Neutral	72	18.7%
		Disagree	34	8.8%
		Strongly disagree	25	6.5%

Table 27 shows that 30.4% of respondents strongly agreed, 35.6% agreed, 18.7% were neutral, 8.8% disagreed, and 6.5% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 28
Need Of Institutional Foundations

Item No	Statement	Level	F	%
24	Democratic culture in Pakistan needs stronger institutional foundations.	Strongly agree	163	42.3%
		Agree	119	30.9%
		Neutral	56	14.5%
		Disagree	31	8.1%
		Strongly disagree	16	4.2%

Table 28 shows that 42.3% of respondents strongly agreed, 30.9% agreed, 14.5% were neutral, 8.1% disagreed, and 4.2% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 29
Strong Institutions And Democratic Stability

Item No	Statement	Level	F	%
25	Strengthening institutions will lead to long-term democratic stability.	Strongly agree	158	41%
		Agree	101	28.3%
		Neutral	78	20.3%
		Disagree	18	4.7%
		Strongly disagree	22	5.7%

Table 29 shows that 41% of respondents strongly agreed, 28.3% agreed, 20.3% were neutral, 4.7% disagreed, and 5.7% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 30
Mean Score Assesment

Statement No.	Mean Score
1	2.63
2	2.75

3	2.63
4	2.50
5	2.89
6	3.48
7	2.41
8	2.80
9	2.06
10	3.15
11	2.65
12	3.11
13	2.55
14	2.29
15	3.18
16	2.65
17	3.45
18	3.61
19	3.65
20	3.63
21	2.70
22	2.68
23	3.75
24	3.99
25	3.94

Conclusion

The quest for democratic stability in Pakistan has been a long, winding road and one that has been constantly interrupted. This research aimed at investigating why democratic consolidation is not achieving in Pakistan whereby the country has a constitutional set up and transition of power is a regular affair. Taking a look through an institutional lens, the research examined the interactions of formal structures like the parliament, judiciary, electoral bodies and institutions against graft as they collide—turbulently at times—with informal powerholders, like the military establishment, patronage-based political networks, and a media environment that oscillates between activism and manipulation.

Combining a historical-institutional analysis through a qualitative approach with a quantitative survey of the university students, the study aimed at listing major weaknesses of Pakistan's democratic infrastructure. The mean face value of 3.56 among several indicators on the measures of trust in institutions, perceptions of governance, the credibility of the media, civic engagement suggests an adequate yet careful public trust in the democratic system. Respondents were keen for reform but equally skeptical about the seriousness and capacity of political institutions to deliver change.

The findings demonstrate that democracy in Pakistan is much more than conducting elections and passing the baton. It is more about the inculcation of culture of accountability, strengthening institution of checks and balances, enhancing judicial independence and giving room for public participation outside electoral electioneering. Among the most horrifying trends documented is the ongoing prevalence of the power of unelected institutions, especially the military, over elected ones; this tendency to undermine democratic rule continues to weaken its legitimacy. Equally, politicisation of the judiciary and the use of accountability mechanisms to serve partisan interests has eroded the confidence in the people on Rule of law.

The current research not only adds to the academic knowledge about democratic development in transitional states but actually has implications for policy discussions regarding institutional reform in Pakistan. It asserts that without fixing the cardinal imbalances within institutions; especially the civil-military divide and the politicization of the accountability structures, democracy in Pakistan will always remain vulnerable and operate in its perpetual fragility. Finally, democratic stability in Pakistan goes beyond the

constitutional measures; it demands change of political behavior, cultural change in institutions, and change in expectations of the public. The future of democracy is not only making institutions democratic, but also making the citizens demand transparency, justice and inclusivity. As Pakistan grows forward, sustainability of democracy shall rest upon the people and leaders' capacity to safeguard democratic norm and resist authoritarian postures and restore trust in the democratization process.

Recommendations

Citing what is available through literature review, data analysis of questionnaire and the achievement test the following suggestions are recommended to improve the role of media to create the political awareness;

- Strengthen the autonomy, capacity and performance of the parliament, the election commission and bodies of accountability in order to guarantee live checks and balances in governance.
- Instantialize mechanisms which constrain military intrusion into civilian activities through strengthening the democratic control of national security and policymaking procedures.
- Shield judiciary from political intrusion by establishment of open procurement, tenure security and accountability mechanisms to earn public confidence in the rule of law.
- Enhance the level of transparency in elections, empower the role of Election Commission and embrace the use of technology to conduct free, fair, credible elections.
- Establish severe anti-corruption regulations and destroy patronage-based political mandates that are detrimental to institutional integrity, and representation.
- Promote civic education with a particular emphasis on youth, and increase opportunities of the citizen for discussion of policy issues and local government.
- Fund independent media and guarantee ethical standards of journalism, and avoid both state censorship and misinformation.
- Invest in digital literacy programs that will allow citizens to reason through political content, and contribute constructively to democratic processes.
- Enhance capacity of oversight institutions, including the public accounts committee and Ombudsman offices to confirm information about the transparency of governmental service delivery.
- Support intraparty democracy, political dialogue, and regimes respect for the constitutional norms to entrench valued democratic aspects in political action.

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