

**RESEARCH PAPER****Governance and Transparency: A Case of Pakistan****¹Atiqa Batool*, ²Khadija Asmat and ³Muhammad Muzaffar**

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Corresponding Author atiqabatool15@gmail.com**ABSTRACT**

This study aims to emphasize the significance of Governance and Transparent Political Process in Pakistan. Governance is commonly known for providing tasks and duties, so that the government must complete it on behalf of the governed people. The research is conducted using qualitative approach and focus on the core principle of good governance that is Transparency. In Pakistan, there is typically a lack of transparency on the use of power by the authorities. The absence of a sufficient transparent framework allows the government to abuse citizens' rights. This study reveals the inefficiency of democratic institutions that are not providing transparency and openness in their affairs. In Pakistan, Governance becomes effective only if they are made people aware of governmental policies, meetings and decision making. In order to ensure openness and make information from public records accessible to the general public, the government must carry out activities and establish policies.

Keywords: Corruption, Good Governance, Participation, Secrecy, Political Institutions, Right to Information, Transparency

Introduction

Governance has been widely interpreted to comprise measures and frameworks intended to guarantee openness, responsibility and stability, the rule of law, equity, empowerment, and widespread involvement. The association that addresses matters of national interest between the state and civil society is known as Governance. Governance is the act of governing or ruling. Governance includes all the procedures that a government uses to decide what to do, carry it out, uphold the law, and are held responsible for its actions. On the other hand "Transparency" is essential to good governance because it fosters accountability, openness, and public trust. It guarantees that information is available, decision-making procedures are transparent, and actions are scrutinized, resulting in more accountable and efficient governance.

Unfortunately, not many people understand the importance of Governance. Due to political influence, Pakistan's democratic institutions are unable to carry out their responsibilities and functions on their own (Muzaffar, & Choudhary, 2017). Pakistan is a Republican Democratic state with a parliamentary system; however it has trouble building a long-lasting democracy. Fair elections are not being conducted by the democratic institutions that are essential to democracy's advancement. Fair elections grant freedom to vote for any party they want in power but this is not the case of Pakistan.

In 2002, Pakistan's President passed the Freedom of Information Ordinance. Its goals were to guarantee information freedom and openness in Pakistan so that the general people may access any data pertaining to governmental activities and use it to assess the effectiveness of the administration (Abbasi, 2022). Good Governance and Transparency are essential to every country's growth and stability. Nevertheless, in Pakistan, the government has not succeeded in ensuring accountability, openness, participation, or good governance

at the local level, even with the addition of certain clauses to the Local Government Act of 2009. Local government officials are reluctant to ensure development, which is characterized by a lack of public participation, accountability, transparency, and unequal distribution. Therefore, the government and political leaders in Pakistan should be concerned about the worsening state of law and order as well as the country's economic issues (Panday & Rabbani, 2011).

Transparent governance refers to the open behavior of public servants and their disclosure of the decisions they make. Because the public has access to this data, they can hold the government responsible, which fosters trust and raises expectations for the government's capacity to serve the people. But in Pakistan, this is not possible because public have no access to data. Transparency increases public trust in government by making it simpler to identify and deal with any possible misuse of power or legal infraction. When government meetings are open to the public and press, when laws, rules, and decisions are transparent and open to debate, there is less chance for authorities to misuse the system for their own gain. Council officials are more attempt corrupt activities because they are aware that the public can not scrutinize their work.

Transparency is one of the most important components in ending corruption. For local governance and the people they serve, transparent governance is critical since corruption jeopardizes effective governance, result in resource misallocation, hinders the expansion of the public and private sectors, and biases public policy. Corruption can be controlled only when citizens, the government, and the private sector work together to maintain transparency. Transparency is a strong force that can aid in the fight against corruption, enhance government, and encourage accountability (Chêne, 2008).

Transparency is the opposite of privacy. An activity is only considered transparent if all of its information is accessible to the public. Transparency and unrestrained access to information emerge as crucial components influencing the dynamics of governance in the Endeavour to establish a stable political structure as the cornerstone of good governance. A dedication to openness develops the basis of a stable political climate while also promoting trust in government. The emphasis on openness and information availability in this examination of good governance tactics clarifies how these Principles support the robustness and efficiency of a democratic system.

Literature Review

Governance is the process by which power is applied to manage a nation's social and economic resources for development. In order to establish and maintain an atmosphere that supports strong and equitable development, good governance is essential. Hold for better Transparency and Information has been closely related to the World Bank's exertion on Accountability. Providing public goods is generally the responsibility of governments. Transparent governance creates the regulations that ensure effective and efficient government operations and address organizational shortcomings (Radin & Beryl, 2007).

Openness and information freedom are desperately needed in Pakistan. Unfortunately, though, there isn't much debate in Pakistan over transparency and information freedom. This study seeks to bring light on Pakistan's political loopholes and emphasize the significance of an open political process. For a nation to maintain good governance and reduce corruption, it is essential to have transparency and openness of information. The authorized parties perform with greater efficiency and honesty when they are aware that they are being watched and monitored by the public (Mumtaz & Tariq, 2021).

Transparency is essential to improved governance and boosts confidence in those holding public office. It examines the history of transparency as a principle of social structure and good governance recognizes its numerous manifestations, and weighs the

advantages and disadvantages of policies aimed at promoting transparency. It is proven that transparency is not an uncommon concept. This might be at odds with other good governance principles. Efforts to increase transparency usually result in more centralized and rigorous information management, rather than a new era of openness in government (Hood & Heald, 2006).

The democratic entity must have an objective, Transparent, independent, and competent media. It serves as a “checking function,” making sure that elected politicians follow the will of the people and honor their campaign pledges and oaths of office. Local people will undoubtedly listen to the public debates broadcast by the media, and they should report the information from the radio to their superiors. The ability of people to hear and make them heard is at the heart of the democratic process, and this creates the groundwork for development projects that are responsive to the felt needs and possibilities of the community (Nyongesa, 2021).

There are unbreakable link between transparency, protection of the right to information and good governance. In order to guarantee the correct implementation of the legislation pertaining to this right, an efficient process can be developed by including all state agencies. Laws that guarantee a liberal regime for information sharing are essential for maintaining the rule of law and promoting peace. There are institutional barriers and limitations to the lavish enforcement of this right and offer solutions by allocating different responsibilities to the legislative, executive, and judicial branches in the execution of this right (Kaiser, Khushbakht, & Kaiser, 2020).

The term Governance is used extensively, though not always accurately. The purpose of this essay is to define the term’s current usage. This paper focuses on the political practice arguments that accompanied the first claims about governance, and political practice that necessitates a new designation serves as proof that something has changed. It defines governance as the application of accounts of government to the practice of governing and the motivations this creates for both observers and participants to embrace the complex notion of Governance (Rhodes, 1996).

There is a strong role of political institutions in establishing the normalness of corruption. Democracies, political consistency, and independence of press are all associated with lower corruption. By allowing the public to expose crimes and hold leaders accountable, transparency is consider to lessen corruption. However, it is in situations where these kinds of systems are inadequate that transparency has been recommended as a cure for corruption (Lederman, Norman, & Rodrigo, 2005).

An attempt to measure governance more effectively is being made, but so far it just amounts to a further expansion of the problem’s complexity. In modern political science, the state is, the operation of the executive branches and their bureaucracies has gotten comparatively little attention. Comparative politics has placed a strong emphasis on democracy, democratic transitions, human rights, and transitional justice ever since the Third Wave of democratizations began more than a generation ago (Fukuyama, 2013).

Since Governance inception, the government, which is the material manifestation of lawful authority inside an organized society, has not undergone a significant shift. The government’s meaningful and practical reactions to the shifting expectations of the general public and the difficulties they encountered in a constantly shifting environment have resulted in the many evolutionary forms and features of the government. Over time, the state’s exclusive domain gave way to a shared space with the involvement of other actors and stakeholders, and the 1980s witnessed the beginning of a new era of governance (Nag, 2018).

Governance and Transparency in Pakistan

Governance is the systems and procedures that organizations, societies, or other entities use for direction, control, and management. In order to accomplish objectives and satisfy stakeholder requirements, it entails making decisions, putting policies into action, and guaranteeing accountability. Within the realm of politics, governance pertains to the manner in which a political body sets up and operates in order to guarantee the efficient provision of public services, compliance with legal requirements, and attentiveness to the demands of its public.

Governance is the act of governing or ruling. Governance includes all the procedures that a government uses to decide what to do, carry it out, uphold the law, and are held responsible for its actions. As a whole, accountability, openness, the rule of law, and citizen participation are components of good governance in government. To put it briefly, "Governance" refers to the decision-making and implementation processes (Fukuyama, 2013).

"Governance" as a notion is not new. Governance is as old as human civilization. There are many instances in which governance can be applied, including corporate, national, international, and local government. An assessment of governance is necessary, since it is the process of decision making and carrying them out. Focuses on the official and informal players involved in decision making, carrying them out, and putting institutions in place to make and carry out the decisions.

One of the key players in Governance is the "Government". Depending on the level of government subject to discussion, different actors are involved in governance. Actors in rural areas could be influential landowners, peasant farmer associations, cooperatives, non-governmental organizations, research institutes, political parties, religious leaders, finance institutions, and the military, among others. Urban settings have far more complex situations. The players engaged in urban governance are interconnected. At the national level, in addition to the players previously stated, other parties that may have an impact on the decision-making process include the media, lobbyists, foreign funders etc (Sakapurnama, Eko & Safitri, 2012).

Civil society is also an important player in Governance. Civil society refers to all participants outside of the government and military officials. Organized crime network have an impact on decision-making in certain nations in addition to the civil society, especially in metropolitan centers and at the national level. In a similar vein, one way that choices are made and carried out is through formal government organizations. Informal decision-making mechanisms, like "kitchen cabinets" or unauthorized people, might present on a national scale. Certain rural areas may have decision-making influenced or made by influential local families. Such informal decision-making frequently results from corrupt behavior (Saladin, 1998).

In the context of South Asia, and particularly in Pakistan, good governance must go well beyond "Decent" politics or even the establishment of a "Good" society. To promote better human development and higher levels of welfare, it must allow the government, civic society, and the business sector to improve social development as well as economic progress. In Pakistan, the institutions and procedures that guide, manage, and regulate the nation are referred to as its governance. This includes how government agencies operate, how decisions are made, and how policies are carried out (Imran & Nordin, 2018).

In Pakistan, the notion of governance encompasses multiple dimensions, including political, economic, and social governance. Unfortunately, due to a lack of accountability, transparency, poor economic performance, and non-performance of the bureaucracy, Pakistan was unable to provide good governance. The two dominant concepts of the

government and all of its ministries in Pakistan are Secretiveness and non-participation. Despite the fact that the public elected them, they pay no attention to the policies and actions of their government about the nation and its resources. They are limited to seeing and understanding only what the government wants them to do in the country.

Being transparent entails ensuring public access to and transparency of government decision-making, information, and activities. Decisions made and their implementation must be transparently followed by laws and regulations. It indicates that people who will be impacted by these decisions and their enforcement have direct and unrestricted access to information. Transparent governance is when public servants behave honestly and let public know what decisions that are making (Alexandru, 2007).

People's faith in the government is fostered by government transparency. Access to information seeking makes the government answerable to the people. There may be laws governing the transparent and efficient distribution of duties in public administration, but unless institutions are capable of handling such obligations, no changes are likely to occur to guarantee that efficiency is the primary goal of service growth and delivery. Authorities disclose sufficient information to the media in comprehensible formats and expose the truth, but unfortunately this was not a case of Pakistan. In Pakistan, the effective anti-corruption efforts and good government depend on openness and the citizens' right to knowledge (Ahmed, 2013).

The people have continued to submit to the government's will in Pakistan and have paid no regard to the duties that the government has to perform. The government has even enacted laws that benefit them, in order to cover up their operations and lack of transparency. The government's application of legislation is invisible in Pakistan and rather suggests operations that are restricted. Because of their heavy dependency, outside groups in Pakistan increasingly become involved in state issues without authorization. It goes without saying that there won't be any assurance of transparent and good administration with such heavy outsider engagement.

Role of Transparency in Good Governance

Good governance is built on openness in government. At every level of governance, transparency is essential because excessive secrecy leads to abuse of power and diminishes accountability. It is essential for maintaining public wellbeing and advancing the effectiveness of government operations. It closes the gap that exists between the people and their government. When there is no means to hold authorities responsible, corruption and instability can result from a closed administration. Election campaigning is the first opportunity for openness, as the disclosure of campaign finances informs voters about the interests of the candidates.

Politics and political activities ought to be transparent. In politics, transparency entails allowing public and fellow politicians to ask open questions and to be transparent. Politicians do, however, occasionally refrain from being transparent for a variety of reasons, both personal and professional. There has been numerous freedom of information legislation implemented in order to overcome the opposition to instituting transparent politics. In a worldwide, Good Governance increases economic profits and accelerates economic evolution, all made possible by a transparent system. Economists and pertinent policymakers have gradually come to understand the significance of institutions, governance, and transparency for the advancement and growth of the economy (Khan, Ali & Alam, 2020).

Information availability, efficiency, accountability, management, and legitimacy are all components of good governance and play an important role to make governance process Transparent. Legitimacy refers to the general public's acceptance of persons in positions of

authority as well as the upholding of established norms, practices, and procedures. Lawmakers must be able to defend their positions and accountable to the people for their decisions and all that possible through transparent manner (Carolyn, 2009).

Due to Transparency, local government is required to report on, defend, and answer for the choices it has made on behalf of the people it represents. In addition to meeting the needs of the community as a whole, local government works to balance conflicting interests in a prompt, appropriate, and responsive manner. Transparency is the practice of encouraging those who are influenced by administrative decisions, to be aware of facts and figures that result from those decisions.

Lack of Transparency in Pakistan

Pakistan is a democratic nation, where people have the final say in choosing their administration. Political parties in Pakistan do not have the authority and power that is rightfully theirs. The dominant attitude of the government and all of its ministries are secrecy and non-participation. The people are still subject to the will of the government and don't give government obligations any consideration. The government has even enacted laws that benefit them in order to conceal their operations and lack of transparency. People have more confidence in the armed forces than in political parties in the past, which contributes to the weakening of the parliamentary institutions established by popular elections.

Transparency is vital component of governance but it is always misunderstood particularly in Pakistan. The public expects the government to take care of everything. They merely enjoy talking about and watching government actions; they have no interest in getting involved in politics, which gives the government more freedom to act against the interests of the people. It encourages non-transparent and Non-participatory governance (Friedl & Steiner, 2006).

Freedom of information is an unalienable human right and that it is therefore vital for effective governance. Unfortunately, Pakistan's governments have either put restrictions on information disclosure and citizens' right to know, or they have permitted the maintenance of many existing prohibitions. When these restrictions are examined more closely, it becomes evident that the true motivation is to preserve vested interests, cover inefficiencies and incorrect priorities, avoid public scrutiny, and preempt accountability. These restrictions are frequently justified by the government on the basis of national security or public interest (Ali & Ahmed, 2006).

Lack of transparency and information access in public affairs is largely to blame for Pakistan's poor state of governance and widespread corruption in government activity. This limits the capacity of citizens, and public representatives to efficiently check the functioning of public institutions. This lack of openness causes public entities to make arbitrary, non-participatory decisions, execute projects inefficiently, and engage in widespread financial corruption. Inadequate openness and information availability also support overbearing bureaucratic regulations and the breakdown of democratic institutions. Due to its inability to produce public benefits, this non-transparency, exclusive, and non-participatory form of government has come under growing criticism throughout time (Qaiser, Khushbakht & Qaiser, 2020).

During its first forty years of existence, Pakistan was one of the world's most successful developing nations in terms of its economy. However, a lack of accountability and openness made the problem of governance worse in the 1990s. Pakistan's economic performance has fallen noticeably low of that of its close neighbors. One of the main problems with governance in Pakistan is that governmental institutions are not held

accountable; in particular, Pakistan's political system's instability has made accountability diminished that is because of lack of Transparency.

Lack of Transparency in Institutions and its Implications

Transparent governance refers to the open behavior of public servants and their decision-making process being transparent to the public. Transparent governance includes a clear sense of organizational responsibility, the availability of information on government policies and acts, and the guarantee that governments are successfully run and free from systematic corruption. The notion that links corruption with transparency seems straightforward: when the public is aware of the actions of public officials, corruption may be identified more readily and officials "behave better" (Maurice & David, 1957).

After years of being ruled by a civil-military bureaucracy, political parties and parliamentary institutions still lack strength. This is caused by and results from an exclusive, non-participatory, opaque political system where widespread corruption and a culture of secrecy are the norm. Numerous restrictive laws, regulations, and directives from the government are the root causes. The matter is made worse by a weak institutional and legal environment for information freedom. Even with the enactment of numerous new laws, many of them are faulty, challenging, and inefficient. As of yet, there is no comprehensive policy in place to guarantee transparency.

Transparent information is a right that citizens enjoy, but the government routinely violates this right. Moreover, people in Pakistan have no access to information regarding general public finance management. Many governments and authorities attempted to restrain the pervasive corruption between 1995 and 2005 by passing anti-corruption laws, but as a result, their ranking in the Corruption Perception Index declined. Meanwhile, in Pakistan, the lack of transparency has led to a sharp rise in corruption. There is no rule of law in Pakistan, no checks and balances. The corruption perception index as reported by Transparency International Pakistan is shown in this table.

Table 1
Corruption Perception Index

Years	Corruption perception index
1995	2.25
1998	2.7
2004	2.1
2005	2.1

Source: Transparency International Pakistan

For any institution, be it legislative, judicial, or bureaucratic, transparency is crucial. Over the past few years, it has been noted that bureaucracy in Pakistan has become political in various institutions, which hinders their transparent performance, affects how bureaucracy functions overall, and causes disruptions to the system. The capability of bureaucrats to rapidly adapt to the demands of politicians allows them to provide their service with an endless supply of support. The relationship between politics and bureaucracy has fostered corruption and served as a catalyst for progress, casting doubt on the efficacy of reforms (Gavazza, Alessandro & Lizzeri, 2007).

Lack of transparency in institutions pertains to unavailability and unease of access to data about public resources, decision-making procedures, and government acts. This can foster an unhealthy political structure in Pakistan. Institution in Pakistan requires a commitment to openness since it gives citizens a clear picture of the government's aims and activities. Citizens are more likely to feel involved, informed, and invested in the political

process when the mechanisms of governance are transparent, which helps to maintain the political system's overall stability.

Pakistan's political and bureaucratic forces have been intertwined since the country's inception. This mutually beneficial relationship has occasionally led to advancement, but it has also encouraged a corrupt, nepotistic, and patronage culture. Political elites frequently provide senior bureaucrats with unexpected benefits, typically exceeding the monthly income of 80% or more of the general public. This stands in sharp contrast to the rest of Pakistan's population's economic circumstances. (Alom & Morshed, 2018)

Pakistan's public institutions as a whole currently confront numerous challenges. Systems and procedures are out-of-date; mechanisms to ensure coordination exist but are not implemented; and there is a lack of transparency for formulating and coordinated policies. The secretaries' committee meetings in Pakistan have been absent for many years. An environment that is favorable to good governance is one in which the public has access to the information that is necessary to hold political leaders accountable. However, there isn't enough political will in Pakistan to improve the decision-making process's openness and transparency.

In Pakistan, there are no significant developments have been done to advance Transparency, openness and information availability. There is no formal information on how governmental departments operate that has served as the foundation for the policy initiatives. In reality, they were abruptly designed and carried out, with little time for thought or consultations, apparently to gain political support rather than to genuinely advance openness and empower citizens by guaranteeing their access to data and documents maintained by public bodies. The lack of Transparency is the reason of the people's right being violated.

Information's availability was restricted, as a result of national commissions and campaigns lacking "transparency". Although the Pakistan's government fiercely supports media independence and freedom, but its hidden goal is to limit that freedom. The public's lack of involvement is another factor contributing to the invisibility of government processes. The only body with the power to make transparent system and approve decisions is the government. But unfortunately, no citizens participate in it, because no one is allowed to participate.

The corrupt governments take advantage of the lack of political knowledge and lack of Transparency among people regarding their rights to participate in the decision-making process. Over the last few years, it has been noted that bureaucracy has become political in some institutions, impeding their ability to operate in full transparency, affecting the bureaucracy's overall functionality, and causing disruption to the system.

Because there are insufficient public rules to safeguard that privilege of openness, the government in Pakistan has the freedom to act against the interests of the people. The public's lack of involvement led to invisibility of government processes. Government officials are aware that if they make any judgments that could be unfavorable to the interests of the country, the public will not act in response. Sometimes opposition plays a negative role in this regard by providing wrong or misinformation to citizens especially youth. Although the government recognizes the public's need and right to participate in the decision-making, no practical attempt has been implemented.

Conclusion

Pakistan's governance process is unstable and has many ups and downs. Furthermore, Pakistan performs worse on an assortment of institutional and governance

indicators. One of the core principles of good governance is that the public should have access to the information related to government. People of Pakistan are merely known about transparency. Due to lack of Transparency, they are unfamiliar with the government's procedures for accountability. People are forced to expect everything from the government because of their heavy dependence on those institutions, who are already corrupt. The invisibility of government is due to non-transparent environment and availability of wrong information. The absence of a suitable accountability framework allows the government to abuse citizens' rights. People's faith in the government is fostered by government transparency. In Pakistan it is possible only if decision making and their implementation is transparently followed by laws and regulations. While achieving good governance in its entirety is challenging, efforts must be made to improve it in order to ensure it.

Recommendations

- Decisions making and their implementation must be transparently followed by laws and regulations. It indicates that people who will be impacted by these decisions and their enforcement have direct, Transparent and unrestricted access to information. Authorities should disclose sufficient information to the media in comprehensible formats and expose the truth.
- Additionally a delicate, broadly communicated policy is desperately needed, one that can explain this right of Transparency to people of Pakistan, make it easy to understand, and facilitate its implementation. Pakistan's economy will improve under good governance, creating job opportunities and enhancing the standard of living for the average person.
- The government ought to enact laws and policies that support openness and transparent information freedom. Its only goals have to be to enhance public sectors and guarantee good governance. Furthermore, it would strengthen ties between the people and the government, which is essential for Pakistan to thrive.
- An environment that is favorable to good governance is one in which the public has access to the information and accountability necessary to hold political leaders accountable and remove corruption from country and all that possible through a proper transparent setup. Good governance should have the full support of the government. The public should be informed of their rights to information freedom and openness, as well as how to hold the government responsible. In order to guarantee maximum transparency and accountability in the process of forwarding a file among ministries and other matters, government departments must embrace digitalization and digital literacy.

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