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REALITY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORMS: CASE OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCIES IN PAKISTAN

Corresponding & Author 1:	DR. ZAHRA ISHTIAQ PAUL, Assistant Professor, Institute of Administrative Sciences, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan, ORCID: 0000-0001-6883-3330, Email: zahra.ias@pu.edu.pk
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Abstract

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New Public Management (NPM) has been the most popular governance model since 1980. NPM devolution is the process of providing service resources at the local level to assist the public and improve service delivery. However, the establishment of local governments in 2001 and their later dissolution in 2010 disrupted the real essence of devolution. This study is a descriptive analysis that aims to assess the devolution process from provincial to local levels in Pakistan, focusing on its effects on the structure, administration, and operation of Environmental Protection Agencies (EPAs) in Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The objective of this study is to examine the trajectories of local government reforms in Pakistan, the extensive devolution program, and the tenure of devolution within the EPAs of these provinces. The study used a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative data obtained from semi-structured interviews with content analysis of important policy documents such as the 18th Amendment, Local Government Ordinances 2001, and Local Government Acts 2010, 2013, and 2016. The results indicate that, although devolution principles were adopted under external influence and pressure from donor organizations, there has been a general absence of effective implementation. The research findings provide significant direction for policymakers, emphasizing the need to harmonize worldwide plans with specific contexts in forthcoming institutional changes. The present study is a valuable contribution to the existing body of knowledge on devolution, particularly in relation to Pakistan as a developing country in Asia.

Keywords: Agency, Decentralization, Devolution, Environment, Pakistan

Introduction

Global implementation of extensive administrative changes has mostly occurred due to changing government and state roles since the mid-20th century. Many governments have implemented administrative changes in recent decades to address concerns such as inefficiency, corruption, inadequate bureaucratic performance, accountability to political institutions, and the ongoing need for decentralization (Grinin et al., 2021). The improvements serve as a reflection of the significance and effectiveness of contemporary development theories of administration. Devolution is not limited in its applicability to Pakistan. It involves granting local governments (LG) empowerment, credibility, and authority. It is an exponentially expanding worldwide concept and practice with advantageous characteristics. Devolution is a system that operates on a hierarchical type of mechanism (HTM). It facilitates the attainment of political stability by transferring political authority to local governments and promotes the achievement of effective and efficient service delivery and accountability (Yusuf, 2018). Devolution has been implemented in numerous developing countries across Latin America, Europe, and East Asia. In Pakistan, the policy-making authority lies with the federal and provincial governments, while the bureaucracy and district authorities are responsible for implementing and executing policy.

Problem Statement

Since 2000, Pakistan has experienced substantial changes in its Local Government framework, especially regarding the decentralization of authority to provincial administrations. One significant domain affected by these changes is environmental governance, particularly the functioning and effectiveness of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the four provinces: Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), and

Baluchistan. It is imperative to evaluate the extent to which the devolution of the EPA has impacted the development and implementation of environmental policies in each province. Understanding the impact of these changes can help identify gaps and inconsistencies in environmental governance.

Significance of the Research

The current research findings will serve as an instructive guide for policymakers. When implementing institutional reforms in the future, it is important to consider the strategy of thinking globally and acting locally. Furthermore, the results will make a significant contribution to the field of academia.

Research Objectives

1. To study the trajectories of local government reforms in Pakistan.
2. To analyze the entire devolution program.
3. To study the tenure of devolution in Environmental protection agencies of various provinces.

The first two research objectives have been examined using content analysis, whereas the third objective has been evaluated both qualitatively and through content analysis.

Literature Review

Historical Context of Administrative Reforms

After achieving independence in 1947, administrative reforms were implemented to ensure the efficient running of the bureaucracy, maintain law and order, and enhance revenue collection. However, After the elapse of 74 years, Pakistan still needs substantial improvements in its administrative framework. The history of administrative reforms in Pakistan may be traced back to the utilization of normative techniques in various reforms carried out in the public sector. (Burfat, Oad, et. al. 2024), The administrative changes in Pakistan can be categorized into four distinct models: development administration, New Public Management, good governance, and network governance, as explained in Table 1. These models have been used by most countries at various

administrative development stages throughout the history of public sector reforms.

Table 1
Administrative Reforms

Model	Time Period	Key Figures	Key Concepts	Major Developments
Development Administration	1947–1977	Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto	Bureaucratic reforms	Establishment of occupational groupings, lateral entry of professionals, federalization of organizations
New Public Management (NPM)	1977–1990	Zia ul-Haq, Benazir Bhutto, Nawaz Sharif	Denationalization, Market-type management (MTM)	Privatization of SOEs, autonomy of public companies, IMF SAP, World Bank aid
Good Governance	1999–2013	Pervaiz Musharraf, Asif Ali Zardari	Efficiency, accountability, devolution	District government reorganization, 18th amendment, MTM/HTM management
Network Governance	2012–present	Shebaz Sharif, Imran Khan	Collaboration, co-production	Projects: solid waste management, Lahore Transport Company, Punjab mass transit authority, Orange train, E-sahulat

Note: SOEs = State Owned Enterprises, IMF = International Monetary Fund, SAP = Structural Adjustment Plan

Devolution

A significant reform implemented after 2000 is administrative decentralization. This reform involves restructuring authority based on the principle of subsidiarity. Local governments were granted more authority and responsibility to enhance capacity building, accountability, transparency, fair play, and effective public service delivery. Devolution is a form of administrative decentralization, alongside deconcentration, delegation (Levy, 2002; Popa, 2021), and privatization (Rondinelli et al., 1989).

Environmental Protection Agency devolution

With the migration of people seeking to improve their standard of living, urbanization has grown over the past three decades, placing pressure on environmental regulations. Regulatory, administrative, and technical competent agencies were established by Pakistan's Environmental Policy to advance sustainable development. A Federal Minister managed the 1994-founded Ministry of Environment, Local Government, and Rural Development, while the Secretary handled administrative functions. Local government and rural development were managed by the

Ministry's LG Wing. The local governments were created in 2001 to address environmental concerns. The primary objective of the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) was to implement the Pakistan Environmental Protection Council and associated office regulations (Khayam & Ahmad, 2020). The Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan, and KP environmental protection agencies were implemented at the province level. The provincial-level implementation agencies responsible for environmental protection were the Punjab-Environment Protection Department, Sindh-Environment Protection Agency, Baluchistan-Environment Protection Agency, and KP-Environment Protection Agency. The devolution plan was adopted to enable the provinces to efficiently manage their affairs. This empowerment includes the processes of policy development, direct contributions, and active involvement of the people (Akbar, 2023). The devolution plan was adopted to enable the provinces to efficiently manage their affairs. An evident shift occurred from a strict hierarchical type of mechanism to more adaptable network-type management. Nevertheless, the adoption of NTM/HTM management strategies was demonstrated in all four provinces. Following the Local Government Ordinance (LGO) 2001, provinces adopted a 3-tier devolution approach to optimize public involvement in administrative processes. This approach optimized resource allocation to enhance performance.

Research Methodology

This study is a descriptive and qualitative inquiry conducted to ascertain the veracity of the New Public Management philosophy and its influence on a developing country such as Pakistan. The research aimed to analyze the devolution process from the provincial to local level, specifically focusing on its impact on the structure, administration, and functioning of the Environmental Protection Department in all four provinces of Pakistan: Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, and KP. These provinces were

selected as a case study. The study utilized a mixed-method approach, combining semi-structured interviews with content analysis. The semi-structured interviews serve as the primary method for collecting qualitative data. A total of twenty-eight interviews were conducted. Assessing the efficiency of devolution requires analyzing different aspects. Based on the research conducted by [Azfar et al. \(1999\)](#), [Manor \(1999\)](#), & [Shah \(1998\)](#), devolution was operationalized through several dimensions, including autonomy, responsibility, responsiveness, citizen engagement, openness, and fairness. The content analysis involved the examination of policy documents published by the government of Pakistan, including the 18th Amendment, Local Government Ordinances 2001, and Local Government Acts from 2010, 2013, and 2016.

Discussion and Analysis

The examination has been carried out employing content analysis and thematic analysis techniques.

Content Analysis

Trajectories of Local Governance Reforms in Pakistan

Pakistan has historically maintained a local governance structure, which represents the lowest level of political organization. The Government of India Act 1919 implemented reforms in the LG system ([Rafique et al, 2023](#)). The LG revisions from 1947-2024 can be categorized into seven distinct eras.

1. First era

From 1947 to 1958, the LG system continued to impede local government empowerment ([Ali, 2014](#)) and provincial autonomy ([Khan & Khan, 2015](#)). The LG system development was hampered by insufficient infrastructure and resources. Due to the lack of an elected process and the indifference of government management, rural and urban areas became unequal ([Sherdil & Rana, 2008](#)). Urban local governments provide essential local services. Despite their low representation, local elites

were patronized in rural council selection ([Ali, 2020](#)).

2. Second era

From 1958 to 1969, General Ayub Khan's military dictatorship instituted basic democracy (BD) with elected and appointed local/provincial members. It prepared the way for future elections. In this era, military leaders ran civil administration, and rural and urban LG institutions existed. The bureaucracy controlled all BD operations. It could negate local government procedures, resolutions, and power. Local bodies were involved in development, regulation, and fiscal imbalance ([Hussain & Salyana, 2022](#)).

3. Third era

The third phase, from 1969 to 1988, began with adult franchise elections in 1970. These elections elected the National and Provincial Assemblies. All local governing organizations were dismantled in 1971, and civilian martial law lasted until 1977. Following the removal of the Bhutto government in July 1977, the Labor Government Orders of 1979 and 1980 justified the Zia regime ([Ahmed & Afridi, 2014](#)). To achieve political centralization, Zia ul Haq aimed to merge urban and rural local governments with Local Government Organizations (LGO). Musharraf exploited fragmentation among legislators to justify his military dictatorship ([Naz et al., 2024](#)). Each of the four provinces elected LGs in 1979 and 1980 ([Wajidi et al., 2003](#)). The LGO was enacted in 1979 in all the provinces, and in 1980 in Baluchistan, to consolidate administrative and economic authority at both provincial and federal levels ([Wajidi et al., 2003](#)).

4. Fourth era

National Zia's demise in 1988, national and provincial governments replaced LGs, resulting in a weak local government system from 1988 to 1999. Conflicts between local and provincial governments halted local groups from 1993 until 1998. Despite its small workforce, LG operated during the October 1999 military takeover. However, the coup hindered a fair

and just system. Regrettably, elected leaders, citizens, and government officials demonstrate undemocratic, unfair, and dubious conduct. The objective of military administration was to establish an equitable society and enact legislation, whereas civilian administration focused on institutional and political matters (Malik & Rana, 2019).

5. Fifth era

General Musharaf assumed the presidency in October 1999 following the Musharaf Coup, therefore commencing the fifth military regime spanning from 1999 to 2010. Disenchanted with incompetent civilian administrations, the public enthusiastically embraced this development. After the LGO 2001, the NRB-developed LG system was adopted on August 14, 2001. Each province formed District, Tehsil (Town), and Union (local) Governments under this structure. Comprehensive law like the LGO 2001 decentralizes administrative, financial, and political power to local levels. LGs were held accountable for decisions under their bureaucratic structure. This efficient devolution helped people strategize and protect the public. It promoted fairness, improved livelihoods, and the public's best interests.

6. Sixth Era

As of 2011, the LG arrangements in various provinces differed. According to Nelson (2016), Baluchistan enacted the Local Government Act in 2010, whilst the other three provinces undertook the same legislation in 2013. The LG Acts granted local councils restricted authority in areas such as service delivery, revenue, taxation, police jurisdiction, and budgetary administration. The division of administrative and financial authority was ambiguous. The federal center was allocated the responsibility of distributing most taxes. The Karachi Water and Sewerage Board, Sindh Building Control Authority, Lahore Development Authority, and Solid Waste Management were among the key institutions under the jurisdiction of provinces. Whereas the education and health sectors

were administered by provincial governments. These LG Acts employ party-based local government elections, in contrast to military administrations. Asif Zardari (2008-2013) and Nawaz Sharif (2013-2017) advocated for provincial assembly members and ministers to have authority over development funding, so they opposed the establishment of robust local administrations. Such funds could be allocated towards patronage to sustain network power. Local administrations also encouraged the practice of political patronage. Prime Minister Imran Khan assumed the post in August 2018. The Prime Ministership was assumed by Imran amidst speculations of military backing. Immediately thereafter, he abolished LG systems in the regions controlled by his party and implemented a new one. Although Punjab has enacted the LG Acts 2019, the other provinces have not. Following the dissolution of the LG institutions by the LG Act of 2019, Punjab held fresh elections in April 2020 (Ali & Mufti, 2022). This proposal aimed to narrow the rural-urban divide by establishing Metropolitan, Local, and Town Corporations for metropolitan areas and Tehsil Councils for rural areas.

7. Seventh Era

Local governments have struggled to execute devolved powers since 2020. Financial constraints, administrative inefficiency, and federal, provincial, and local jurisdiction overlap are major issues (Zaidi et al., 2022). Devolution was meant to improve local governance by bringing decision-making closer to the people, but implementation has lagged behind legislative aspirations. However, the environmental protection authorities in all provinces continue to operate as autonomous bodies under their respective provinces.

Table 2

Summary of Eras

Province-level devolution of Environmental Protection Agencies

Era	Time Period	Key Features and Developments	Objectives	Outcomes
First	1947-1958	Weak LG system was weak, limited infrastructure and resources, rural and urban disparities; patronage in rural councils.	Implement basic local governance structure	Limited influence resulting from centralized control
Second	1958-1969	Military-led government introduced basic democracy; control of LG by bureaucracy; focus on development and regulation	To create a controlled democracy under military rule with a mix of elected and appointed officials	Decentralization but with restricted efficacy owing to political volatility.
Third	1969-1988	Civilian martial law, provincial LG laws passed; integration of urban and rural LG; provincial administration dominated	To reestablish LGs under provincial control and centralize power at the federal level	Mixed outcomes, urban areas improved
Fourth	1988-2019	Weak LG due to conflicts between local and provincial levels; military intervention disrupted the governance system.	To create a fairer society and address governance issues through military oversight	Enhanced local governance, but military dominance dominates
Fifth	1999-2010	Musharraf's devolution Plan 2001, LG framework emphasized accountability, decentralization, and combating elite domination	To decentralize power and improve public services at the local level through a new LG structure	Considerable devolution, but encountered difficulties in execution
Sixth	2011-2019	Varied LG structures; limited autonomy; control by provincial and federal governments; introduction of party-based LG elections	To enhance LG autonomy while maintaining provincial control and introduce party-based elections	Limited autonomy with provincial control
Seventh	2020-Present	Struggles with financial and administrative inefficiencies; overlapping jurisdictions; slow implementation of devolution	To improve governance through devolved decision-making and better local service delivery	Continual reforms, with differing degrees of effectiveness in different regions

The process and efficacy of devolution at the provincial level can be outlined as follows:

1. Punjab

The 2001 Punjab Local Government Ordinance (PLGO) devolved environmental regulation in Punjab, following the 1997 Punjab Environmental Protection Act (PEPA). Community involvement and information exchange between the EPA, ministry, and Punjab assembly are enhanced with decentralization. However, Punjab has always had political interference, decision-making disputes, and nepotism. Punjab had a well-organized district-level framework led by a District Officer (DO) and subordinate DDOs, inspectors, and field assistants. Reporting to Zila Nazim and DCO simultaneously is often delayed in basic cases. Poor administration prevented donors from achieving their goals. No significant provincial changes to PEPA 1997 also contributed to this. Departmental

information was provided through newsletters, blogs, and newspapers, demonstrating transparency. Finally, and most significantly, EPD Punjab ran out of cash. The province gave the DG and Nazim little money and aid. The District Coordination Officer took over Nazim's jurisdiction after local governments were abolished in 2009. Nazim and DCO were administrators while other method steps were unaltered. The province's Chief minister gained a monopoly after the Nazimeens disintegrated in 2010. Punjab environmental tribunal regulations were adopted in 2011 after the 18th amendment to the constitution.

2. Sindh

Before the 2001 Sindh Local Government Ordinance (SLGO), Sindh had local governments since 1979. In Karachi, Zila councils and District administrations existed, while rural areas had Taluka, TMA, and Union councils ([Sindh LGO, 2001](#)). The 2001 Sindh Local Government Ordinance established several transparency, engagement, and bottom-up processes. The concepts were not truly followed. Citizens Community Boards, which received 25% of the development money, were never fully operational. Government agencies and residents have rarely worked together. Local Governments began after the 2005 Naib Nazim elections. Functional authority converged in Sindh and Punjab. Most environmental efforts were implemented without local government input. LGs did not participate in federal and provincial TMAs ([Memon et al., 2000](#)).

3. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

The NWFP LGO 2001, enacted on August 14th, 2001, gave little emphasis to the environment. However, in August 2005, the environment became the focus of attention with the LGO modification. The province followed the 3-tier devolution model, with district, tehsil, and union Nazims managing the environment through district officers led by the EDO. Lack of funding and environmental

competence in KP hampered true change. In addition, uneven district subdivisions and poor communication caused chaos.

4. Baluchistan

Unlike other provinces, Baluchistan created the Environment, Sports, and Youth Affairs Department in 2004. This agency oversaw Baluchistan-EPA, sports, and youth affairs directorates. The environment became a separate Ministry in 2005 to oversee all environmental issues. Devolution again failed to reflect the fundamental nature of understanding and transmitting powers. The Baluchistan government was granted the power to dissolve local councils and appoint Administrators in 2010. Additionally, local body elections were supposed to be held within one year of local council dissolution. The provincial administration replaced Nazims with Administrators and abolished all local councils. The Baluchistan Local Government Act (BLGA) 2010, which mirrors the 1979 local bodies system, replaced the BLGO 2001.

Post-18th Amendment Provincial Changes

In 2010, the 18th Amendment transferred political power to LG after devolution. Article 140A stated that each province was required to establish a local government system. Elections by the Election Commission of Pakistan elected LG members. Provinces devolved political, administrative, and financial authority to local governments. Localities have constitutional protections under Article 140A (Ali & Safiq, 2016; Khari & Mehboob, 2022). The 18th Amendment transformed federal and inter-provincial governance. The federal and provincial governments restructured their legislative and executive powers afterward. It eliminated 17 federal ministries, including the environment ministry (Anwar et al., 2023). Devolving environmental issues to provinces lacked a national connection. In the past, the federal EPA collected data nationwide and resolved provincial conflicts. In the absence of centralization, provinces have sought internal

resources and aid to overcome problems. It improved service delivery but decreased national cohesion. Section 140-A required provincial governments to delegate more service and decision-making to local bodies and governments, however, this was not realized. All provincial administrations—KP, Punjab, Sindh, and Baluchistan—dissolved local councils and replaced elected Nazims with administrators in 2010. In Punjab, local body elections were postponed, the 2001 LGO was repealed, and the 1979 LGO was reinstated. Restoration of Sindh's 1979 LG Ordinance. The NWFP Land Laws Act of 2009 was amended to divide the province into administrative divisions and districts. Each division has a commissioner and each district has a Collector (HAQ, 2018; Murtaza, 2017; Saleem, 2014). Pakistani local governments have followed the 2001 Local Government Ordinance since 2009. The LGO 1979 and LGO 2001 were introduced in each province from 2009 to 2013. Provinces adopted different LGO mechanisms, but the relevant assembly prioritized the environment. LG legislation from 2013 focused less on decentralizing political, financial, and administrative powers to local councils. Except for Baluchistan, local government elections have not been held in eleven years. The first round of local government elections in Baluchistan was on December 7, 2013, the second on May 29, 2014, and the third on December 31, 2014. On January 28, 2015, 32 Baluchistan districts elected mayors, deputy mayors, chairmen, and deputy chairmen in the fourth and final phase. Despite Baluchistan's successful elections, local council power was not devolved due to peace and order and capacity issues. In 2012, Punjab and Baluchistan passed environmental protection laws, while KP and Sindh followed in 2014. Province-level Environmental Protection Councils were also created. Just the Punjab council has shown a readiness to enforce the Punjab Environmental Protection Act. Local governments did not gain power

from the 2013 LG Acts (Rid & Murtaza, 2019). The LG Act of 2013 gave local governments too little power, concentrating administrative functions at the provincial level. This strengthening of provincial authority again curtailed resident freedom and options (Abdullahi & Chikaji, 2017). The 2017 Public-Private Partnership Authority Act addressed key infrastructure projects such as roads, the orange train, bridges, and metros. It omitted citizen engagement (Emenhiser, 2016; McCourt, 2021). Following these advancements, the federal and provincial administrations once again neglected the condition of the environment. Research conducted by Anjum et al. (2021) indicated a decline in the country's environmental condition throughout the last ten years, resulting in negative impacts on the health and well-being of the population. In 2014, the state of KP enacted an environmental protection legislation that created the Environment Protection Tribunal. The purpose of its establishment was to supplant and surpass the federal tribunal. Notwithstanding several provincial endeavors, devolution has not been fully executed. The increasing interest in party-based municipal elections stems from its ability to enhance local governance arrangements. Environment and other domains have autonomy, and provinces legitimize independently of the federal level. This often makes the environment a secondary concern when it should be a priority.

Thematic Analysis

Following the completion of the interviews, a thematic analysis was performed to examine the responses. Themes and codes were developed through the analysis process. Table 3 presents the themes that were examined in the study. A total of six themes were found from which nodes were built. The themes serve to emphasize the core perspective and viewpoint of the study participants. The themes are identified according to the measures of devolution effectiveness.

Table 3
Themes, nodes & supporting narration

Themes	New Nodes	Supporting Narration
T1: Autonomy	Insufficient legal authority Lack of funds and aids Increased labor burden with PLGO enforcement authority	"Insufficient legal authority hinders my performance. Without legal underpinning, my decisions are generally unenforceable, causing delays and issues. Legal limits often prevent us from completely implementing the proper action, which is frustrating" (R-5) "My task is hardest without funds and aid. Insufficient finance delays cancel many important projects. This scarcity also affects service delivery" (R-20) "Giving local governments more legal authority, finances, and PLGO enforcement capabilities would improve our situation. We could move decisively, accomplish projects swiftly, and manage workload without overburdening staff with these actions. More efficient methods and clear instructions would lessen stress and confusion" (R-3)
T2: Accountability	Lack of standard template No formal legal framework Overlapping hierarchy Tight organizational structure Time constraints	"No template makes everything harder. Each department formats reports and papers differently, causing discrepancies and confusion. Every time is like starting over. A common template would simplify and improve communication" (R-1) "We have overlapping hierarchies, getting orders from various heads. It causes confusion and inefficiency" (R-9) "Our tight organizational structure keeps us underfunded. We don't have any legal" (R-18)
T3: Responsiveness	Status of service delivery progressed High public expectations Monthly reports presented to the higher authorities Aggrieved people relieved Separate offices for each town/suburb	"I find managing high public expectations tough yet gratifying. By providing high-quality services and open communication, we aim to exceed these expectations. Regular feedback and community interaction assist us understand their needs" (R-25) "Separate offices for each town or tehsil improve our ability to customize services. Each location has staff familiar with local needs and traits. We can respond better and develop deeper ties with residents with this localized approach. Our services are also more accessible and convenient for the community" (R-2)
T4: Citizen Participation	Invited people through newspapers Citizen-led activism and involvement Public hearing for NOC People respond to related projects Nepotism Cronyism	"We foster activism by giving citizens a voice and involving them in decision-making. Because of their knowledge of community needs and experiences, their involvement typically improves policy" (R-17) "Public NOC hearings promote openness and community involvement. Residents can comment on planned projects during these sessions. We discuss project information and receive feedback during these sessions" (R-6) "Old field workers who were promoted said that cronyism was common in the department" (R-9)
T5: Transparency	Capacity building Increasing legitimacy of governmental actions Foster the public participation process	"We prioritize publicizing our decisions and rationales. Building trust and establishing legitimacy through awareness programs, seminars, brochures and accessible information helps us gain community trust" (R-13) "Public participation has improved our judgments by presenting varied perspectives. We create more thorough and effective policies with community input. Community feedback on a recent project helped us detect possible concerns early on and make revisions that improved the outcome" (R-12)
T6: Fairness	Equal employment opportunity Accountability guaranteed for all documentation Benchmarks for determining fairness Allocative efficiency Cost efficiency	"No benchmarking mechanism, no complaints, equal complaints from all sides, or no fairness criteria were fulfilled" (R-7) "Everyone talks about equal employment opportunities, but I've seen it work. Nothing except talk. They hire diversity candidates but don't promote them. Like window dressing" (R-27) "I see only procedural fairness was mostly incorporated in the departmental tasks" (R-1)

Note R= Respondent

From Table 3, it is evident that despite constitutional devolution, Pakistan's local governance system faces many obstacles. Over-centralization, poor budgetary resources, weak institutional capacities, and

low public participation hamper this government. Existing Local Government Acts lack devolution and exercise too much provincial power, despite their differences.

Conclusion

The present study examined the trajectory of developments in local government reforms in Pakistan. Complemented by an examination of the complete devolution program and to investigate the tenure of devolution in Environmental protection agencies across different provinces. Decentralization in Pakistan occurred due to external influences such as structural adjustment programs and donor pressure, and internal factors such as the military's desire to establish its authority being a key cause for the repeated efforts to restructure local government. Pakistan's government structure is essentially divided into two tiers: the Federal and Provincial. The local governments, which constitute the third tier of governance, have been unable to make a substantial influence due to their limited autonomy in implementation. Instead, they function more like a hierarchical system. Since 2001, there has been a reorganization of power distribution across the Federal, Provincial, and Local levels. The devolution in 2001 resulted in the provision of local autonomy and the establishment of locally elected officials as the principal figures in district administration, management, and development. Through the provision of local resources, this initiative empowered individuals and enhanced service delivery. The establishment of local governments in 2001 and their subsequent elimination in 2010 distorted the process of devolution in Pakistan. In a nutshell, implementing institutional reform is a complex task. Improving public service delivery is a challenging endeavor that necessitates the consistent implementation of political reform. However, LG formation in 2001 was deficient in all these aspects, especially when it came to EPA devolution.

Recommendations

This study added to the body of research on decentralization by giving a comprehensive view of how environment protection agencies in Pakistan have been devolved. Governments should study the prior system to avoid repeating the same mistakes.

1. Local governments should be allocated appropriate authority and autonomy to enhance citizen participation and communication, which is necessary for the successful implementation of government projects across sectors.
2. Giving LGs political, administrative, and financial authority can enable devolution in a true sense.
3. Merit-based hiring promotes competitiveness, responsibility, and fairness. When possible, local authorities should provide immediate relief to the injured person due to their administrative independence.
4. There should be consequences for nepotism because it is a criminal offense.
5. The government should undertake measures for the effective organization of elections, allocation of resources, and backing from institutions are essential for mobilizing communities and engaging the public.
6. Local government officials should be trained to fulfill their duties and reduce their dependence on the province.

Future Implications

The future implications of devolution for environmental protection agencies can be significant and multifaceted. Here are some key considerations:

1. Devolution might result in difficulties in coordinating amongst several tiers of government. Efficient methods for coordinating and collaborating amongst different levels of government will be essential to tackle environmental concerns that cross national borders and guarantee unified national environmental agendas.
2. Devolution can tackle environmental justice concerns by granting local communities the

authority to safeguard their natural resources and solve site-specific environmental threats.

3. Implementing comprehensive monitoring and evaluation frameworks will be essential to evaluate the efficacy of decentralized environmental policies and programs. This can facilitate the identification of deficiencies, the dissemination of optimal methods, and the ongoing enhancement of environmental governance.

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