Assessing the Effectiveness of Social Governance Mechanisms in Reducing Poverty and Fostering Economic Equality in Pakistan

[1] Mukht Yar Ali, School of Marxism, Xi'an Jiaotong University, Xi'an 710048, Shaanxi, China. mukhtyara890@gmail.com

[2] Shakir Ullah, M.phil. Scholar University of Peshawar & Visiting Lecturer and Research Supervisor at GPGC **.**Timergara University of Malakand KP, Pakistan shakirullah0003@gmail.com

[3] Saqib Shah, School of Marxism, Xi'an Jiaotong University, Xi'an 710048, Shaanxi, China. Saqibshah16802@gmail.com

[4] Sajjad Ali, School of Marxism, Xi'an Jiaotong University, Xi'an 710048, Shaanxi, China. sajjad1835051@gmail.com

[5] Saeed Ullah, School of Marxism, Xi'an Jiaotong University, Xi'an 710048, Shaanxi, China. saeedullah2000pk@gmail.com

Corresponding Author: Mukht Yar Ali, email: mukhtyara890@gmail.com

Abstract

In the current study, it is the systematic assessment of the effectiveness of the social governance mechanisms in reducing poverty and enhancing economic equality in Pakistan. Although the programs like BISP and Ehsaas have been significantly reformed, poverty and inequality are entrenched in the structures, institutions and politics. The research design used is a qualitative research design, which utilizes semi-structured interviews, focus group discussion and analysis of policy documents in exploring how governance processes can affect the effectiveness of social protection systems. Findings indicate that new reforms, especially the adoption of digital payments and biometric checks have increased the precision of targeting and minimized leakages. However, there are still major problems within the local level. The forces of political interference, lack of accountability, community participation and poor coordination between federal and provincial institutions have continued to undermine effectiveness of programs and equitable delivery of services. The paper concludes that Pakistan has recorded positive gains, however, there is so much to be done in terms of social governance systems that would make social protection programs viable in reducing poverty and economic inequality in a sustainable manner. Improvisation of coordination, stakeholder involvement and amplification of accountability measures are fundamental in making the welfare system more equitable and steady.

Keywords: *Social Governance; Poverty Reduction; Economic Inequality; Social Protection; Pakistan*

Introduction

Even after decades of reforms, social protection programs, and restructuring of institutions, poverty and inequality are still major problems in Pakistan. Poverty in Pakistan is multifaceted, influenced by limitations in education, healthcare, employment opportunities, and social inclusion. asserts that poverty is primarily a deficiency of capabilities rather than merely insufficient income. This point of view is very important for Pakistan, where economic poverty is made worse by a lack of access to quality services, weak institutions, gender inequality, and regional inequality[1].

The economic inequality remains a large issue, which is directly involved with this issue. The framework of welfare state elucidates how institutional arrangements contribute to inequality by clarifying who is supported, how benefits are allocated and how the support systems advocate universal, inclusive or residual coverage of welfare systems. Pakistan is not a traditional welfare state, although the concept of one can assist us to appreciate how the lack of capacity in institutions and inequalities in access to governmental services can sustain inequalities. Not all people will have equal access to education, wealth will be among the wealthy, there will be large disparities across regions, and the government is not very strong, all of which makes Inequality in Pakistan even worse [2].

Economic inequality is a structural issue that has long-term implications on various provinces, rural and urban regions as well as diverse socio-economic groups in a very diverse manner. Stresses that the lack of access to resources and opportunities by women, rural families, and ethnic minorities is directly connected to the quality of the governance system because the weak institutions enable the rich to seize power, restrict redistribution, and make access to the social goods a challenge to all citizens. The social and economic environment of Pakistan is a clear indication of these dynamics[3].

Social governance, which is the system of processes, structures, and institutional arrangements that make, carry out, and keep an eye on social policies, has a big impact on poverty and inequality. Governance decides if social protection programs help the right people, if resources are shared fairly, and if policymakers are still answerable to the people.[4]. In Pakistan, problems with governance, like political interference, a lack of coordination between government agencies, weak monitoring systems, and low levels of citizen participation, have historically made it harder to reduce poverty [5].

Under this form of governance, transparency is highly valued. argue that the openness of the government influences the way people develop indignation or resignation feelings on seeing the problems with the way the government is operating. People will also hold institutions accountable when there is a substantial amount of transparency. In cases where transparency is low, individuals will give up and become careless. This dynamic is applicable to the situation of social protection in Pakistan under BISP and Ehsaas where digital payment systems and public dashboards have been introduced, which have facilitated the decrease in the chances of corruption and boosted levels of trust but introduces difficult circumstances those with limited access to digital capabilities [6].

Recent research highlights that governance quality strongly predicts the success of welfare programs. [7] demonstrate, when the government adopts good governance and gender equality, its policy will be significantly more effective in alleviating poverty. Similarly, global studies conducted by [8] and [9] reveal that a sense of openness, responsibility, and involvement are required to offer a just and efficient social protection. Such findings have been comparable to what has happened in Pakistan. Governance reforms such as digital payment, biometric verification, and poverty scorecards have been introduced by the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) and Ehsaas that has facilitated the process of identifying the right individuals to assist and reduced frauds.

But there are still big holes. The government of Pakistan continues to grapple over how to coordinate the federal and provincial departments, engaging the citizens, accountability and ensuring that the institutions have the appropriate number of resources. As [10] and [11] It should be kept in mind that the reforms of governance should be considered with the political, social and cultural dynamics of the region. In Pakistan, the social protection system has not been as attained as yet. Moreover, although the two phenomena of poverty and inequality are intertwined, the existing empirical studies in Pakistan rarely examine the relationship in which specific governance mechanisms impact both of them at the same time. [12] The resources distribution and beneficiaries of governmental programs are usually decided by the political nature of poverty governance in developing countries.

Due to these weaknesses, the issue of how effective social governance mechanisms are in the Pakistani institutional context is of great importance. In this research, the researcher will assess how participation, transparency, accountability, and institutional coordination influence the reduction of poverty and economic equity and present a new knowledge to the academic literature and introduce the practical approach to improving the system of governance in Pakistan.

Literature Review

Literature review is a systematic study of available scholarly material related to a particular study topic. The purpose is to determine what has already been known, highlight gaps in the current knowledge and place the current study within broader academic discussions. The literature that would be relevant to this study falls within an assortment of areas that are linked to one another, and these areas include social governance, research on poverty and inequality, the creation and implementation of social policy, institutional capacity, responsibility models, and global and Pakistan particular analyses of social protection efforts such as BISP and Ehsaas. Through these various bodies of literature, the study provides a conceptual and empirical basis to the way governance works in reduction of poverty and economic equality in Pakistan.

Scholars have examined the connection among social governance, poverty reduction, and equality of the economy. People do not consider poverty to be the absence of the money; finally, they also perceive poverty as a deprivation of numerous things due to structural inequalities and institutional obstacles. thinks of poverty as a lack of basic capabilities and emphasizes that economic development cannot guarantee improved health unless there are institutional frameworks to support it. The shift in theory has ensured more scholars take interest in the impact of governance in the outcomes of development[1].

The term governance is general and encompasses the systems, processes and institutions that aid in making decisions, holding the public officials accountable and implementing the policies [4]. Transparency, participation, accountability, and intersectoral coordination are some of the governance mechanisms in social policy where they influence the sharing of social resources and the effectiveness of welfare programs [9]. Research has shown that well financed programs fail miserably when the systems which govern them are inadequate leading to leakages, patronage, corruption and marginalization of the vulnerable groups [5]. The quality of governance is, therefore, gaining momentum as a connection between social outcomes and policy inputs.

It has been shown through empirical research that the better the governance is, the more poverty can be alleviated.[7] discover that good governance and gender equality enhance the effect of a public policy on alleviating poverty. Similarly, according to [8] accountability and transparency performance enhance the effectiveness of social services through reduction in corruption and provision of citizens with more

authority to hold things to task. These findings suggest that a successful governance reform and not just financial growth will help in achieving more holistic poverty reduction.

The other important governance mechanism that has been explored in the discourse of development is participation. Other experts like [13] and [14] emphasize the fact that the inclusion of citizens, in particular, of those who are already on the outside, makes social policies more responsive and programs more legitimate. Participation is, however, not always a simple thing: In many situations especially within South Asia, participatory spaces can be monopolized by elites in the region making it difficult to represent minority populations in a genuine way [15]. These types of issues demonstrate the value of institutions having measures that ensure that all individuals are able to participate in the governance procedures.

Transparency also plays a vital role in shaping social outcomes. According to[6], transparent governance reduces opportunities for corruption and strengthens societal accountability by enabling citizens to track public expenditures.[7] show that being open about things makes it easier for everyone to get public services, especially programs that help the poor. These insights are pertinent to Pakistan, where digital governance reforms, especially under the Ehsaas Programme, have demonstrated potential for enhancing targeting precision and mitigating leakages.

Due to the strong connection between good governance and economic inequality, the latter is an expression of systemic inequality in access to income, assets, and opportunities.[3] says that good governance can make things fairer by making sure that resources are shared fairly and making institutions more fair. Cross-national evidence from welfare states demonstrates that inclusive governance systems correlate with reduced inequality and enhanced social protection.[16]. These findings are relevant to Pakistan, where governance deficits like elite capture, institutional fragmentation, and poor monitoring make inequality worse.

Although there is growing amount of writing, gaps still exist. Many of the studies define governance broadly and do not focus on specific mechanisms such as the targeting systems, the channels of feedback or inter institutions coordination that influence performance of the programs[10]. Moreover, research on Pakistan often focuses on poverty reduction or inequality separately, overlooking their interconnectedness [17]. Scholars such as [18] It should be noted that governance in the context of Pakistan has to be understood since the reforms of governance should include social and political realities of the region. Although the successes and unsuccessful experiences of such initiatives as the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) and Ehsaas have been documented in the literature, there is a lack of qualitative research on the concomitant effects of governance mechanisms on the poverty and inequality outcomes [12].

Overall, the literature indicates that social governance mechanisms are highly significant in reducing poverty in the long run and decrease of economic inequality. However, the available studies on the practical operation of these mechanisms are limited to Pakistan-specific studies. This analysis contributes to literature by examining the role of social governance in the activities of Pakistan in alleviating poverty and establishing how improved governance can enhance the welfare of the society and balance the economic disparities.

Theoretical Model

The theoretical model used in this study assumes that social protection interventions and outcomes of reducing poverty and achieving economic equality are mediated by social governance. It is based on the capability approach put forward by [1] that takes the idea of poverty as not only a lack of monetary

resources but of an opportunity and liberty as well. Good governance typified through transparency, participation, accountability and institutional coordination improve these capabilities through equitable, efficient, and inclusive implementation of social programs[4, 9].

Among the governance failures are elite capture, a weak monitoring system, bureaucratic incompetence, and political interference that hinder equitable resource distribution and limits the ability of the social protection programs to reduce poverty [5, 10]. On the other hand, strong governance arrangements promote targeted programs, limit leakages, create trust in the masses and ensure equitable service access thereby helping in reducing poverty and creating an egalitarian economy [3, 7, 8].

The model recognises the four main governance mechanisms which affect the efficacy of the programs: participation, transparency, accountability, and coordination. The effectiveness of these mechanisms is modulated by the socio-political situation in Pakistan, such as institutional power, fragmentation of the administrative structure, and social stratifications [11, 18]. It is more probable that with proper reinforcements, programs like BISP and Ehsaas obtain desired outputs and deliver fair results; in contrast, when they are ineffective, inequality will remain, and poverty-reduction operations will not continue to reach the maximum [12].

Therefore, the theoretical approach provides a systematic foundation to examine the governance mechanisms in Pakistan, as well as explain how their improvement will result in more effective and equitable social protection results.

Methodology

The paper will use a qualitative research approach to critically investigate how social governance procedures can reduce poverty and ensure social-economic fairness in Pakistan. The most suitable approach is considered to be the qualitative one, because all the aspects of governance such as participation, transparency, accountability and institutional coordination are deeply rooted in the political culture, the practices among institutions, and the experiences of the community, and they cannot be measured using only quantitative indicators. By focusing on the subjective experiences, power relations and institutional practices, the methodology allows the subtle examination of how the social protection programs operate in the real-life situations and how local realities affect their success. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with policymakers, social protection officials and civil society representatives as well as community leaders and the focus group discussions with beneficiaries in direct contact with welfare programs were used as major methods of data collection. The analysis is also enriched by a thorough overview of the most important policy documents, governmental reports and evaluation works that allow making a critical comparison between the formal governance frameworks and their practice. Purposive sampling was used in that it was necessary to have people who had first hand experience of the governance processes and hence the insights are not only institutional, but are also the experiences of the marginalised groups. The qualitative research design also allows mapping subtle issues in governance like elite capture, administrative bottlenecks, and unequal provincial abilities that often govern quantitative assessment cases. Every aspect of the study was performed in regard to the consideration of ethical issues such as privacy and voluntary involvement.

Social Governance and the Landscape of Poverty and Inequality in Pakistan

Poverty and inequality in Pakistan can be attributed to the structural, institutional and socio-economic gap to the extent that it compromises the effectiveness of social governance systems. As a result, multidimensional poverty remains rife in the country, with people having a low access to education, healthcare services, sanitation, and job opportunities. Inequality in space still exists where the rural

regions have a significantly greater poverty rate, especially in Balochistan, South Punjab and interior Sindh. These trends reflect the imbalance in the allocation of government resources and the inability of the weak governance systems to ensure the equitable access to basic services [5].

These spatial inequalities are reflected in economic inequality, as they are marked by a strong inequity in income, wealth, and social mobility opportunities among population groups. Wealth concentration in the hands of political and economic elites is a source of perpetuated inequality as it drives policy making and the distribution of resources. This connection highlights how inequality cannot be decoupled with governance shortcomings, in which poor institutions are unable to share resources equally or limit the inertial power of dominant forces. In Pakistan, these failures are reflected in unequal systems of education, reduced opportunities of employment by the poor, and gender-based inequalities in economic processes [3].

The forms of governance are critical in determining such outcomes. The poor administrative capacity, the widespread political interference, the lack of transparency, and the insufficiency of the coordination between the federal and provincial governments impede the successful service delivery and limit the scope of the social protection programs. Governance must not be perceived as just an administrative procedure but as one of the determinants of the success of social programs. The errors of misallocation, leakage, and exclusion have occurred in the welfare schemes due to historical government failures in governance such as the Zakat system and in the early phases of the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP)[9].

The recent changes to the BISP and Ehsaas programs, such as the use of digital payments, biometric verification, and poverty scorecards, show how better governance can improve the performance of programs. These interventions clarify processes, reduce gender and socio-economic disparities, and enhance policy efficiency.[7] But there are still big problems. Even with these changes, the governing institutions are still plagued by poverty and inequality because citizens don't get involved, local governments aren't doing their jobs well, and institutions aren't working together. These governance failures will keep going, which will keep inequalities going, limit access to services, and make elite capture a problem[12].

Therefore, the poverty and inequality situation in Pakistan cannot be discussed outside the context of the level of social governance. Enhancing governance, specifically through improved transparency, accountability and coordination across governments, is needed when social programs should be effectively delivered to vulnerable populations and help make the economy more equitable

Role of Social Governance in Poverty Reduction in Pakistan

The social governance is a key factor to the effectiveness of the poverty-reduction interventions in Pakistan. As the poverty in the country is mostly caused by structural and institutional shortcomings, the administration of the social protection programs regulates the fairness of these programs, their effectiveness, and diversity. Therefore, social governance has a direct impact on the sustainable reduction of poverty by determining the target of program placement, program resource allocation and accountability systems.

The country needs better governance as compared to most other countries since the livelihood of millions of low-income families is based on social protection programs like the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) and the Ehsaas Program. Empirical data that has emerged recently shows that the effectiveness of these schemes is significantly increased by the process of governance, especially transparency and digital monitoring. As an example,[19] explain that institutional reforms contribute to an increase in the accuracy of targeting by demonstrating that digitization of BISP payments decreases

leakages and reduces the necessity to go through intermediaries. Correspondingly,[20] discover that biometric verification systems boost transparency of the program and establish a sense of trust among beneficiaries, which enhances the success of the poverty reduction efforts.

Engagement is an essential aspect of proper governance. In Pakistan social programs are in most cases irrelevant and unresponsive due to the fact that the marginalized groups are not part of the decision-making process. The community level intervention structures of the Ehsaas Program such as social registries, beneficiary committees and complaints channels helped in the identification of vulnerable households more equity. Participatory structures make sure that the interventions are based on local demands and overcome political favors that are usually on the grassroots level in determining the allocation of resources [21].

Mechanisms of accountability are also critical to the improvement of the performance of social protection programs. The overall examination of the South Asian welfare systems assumes that a strong accountability supported by audits, social reporting, and electronic grieving platforms minimises corruption and enhances policy execution. The example of the One Window Ehsaas Centers is the attempt to make the process of accountability as simple as possible and remove bureaucratic delegation points that can slow down the process of delivering the benefits to the target persons[22].

An important issue of governance is institutional coordination. The federal and provincial structures of Pakistan tend to have disjointed mandates resulting in uncoordinated and redundant delivery of programs. Ineffectiveness and limitations on long-term impact by provincial social protection agencies are caused by poor coordination between the agency and federal initiatives. Improved coordination may enable the exchange of data, avoid overlapping benefits, and create delivery models that will be able to tackle multidimensional poverty[23].

Also one of the paramount things is gender-responsive governance. Women in Pakistan have become the main beneficiaries of social protection policies. However, there are still weaknesses in governance, including limited mobility, no identity documents and access to financial services. Gender-sensitive governance systems, such as streamlined enrolment procedures, mobile banking services, and women-specific redress grievance systems, are effective in reducing the impact of poverty because they guarantee inclusion of women[24].

To sum up, poverty-reduction programs cannot be effective in Pakistan without social governance. Sturdy governance frameworks, which include transparency, participation, accountability, coordination and gender responsiveness, improve the quality of performance, equity and inclusivity of social protection programs. On the contrary, poor leadership makes even well-invested programs useless. Thus, to attain sustainable (and significant) poverty alleviation in Pakistan, social governance should be enhanced.

Need for Improving Social Governance Mechanisms

Pakistan should strengthen its systems of social governance to realize long-term reduction of poverty and also the income inequality gap between the wealthy and the poor population. Although some gains have been made through initiatives like the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) and Ehsaas, the current governing environment is still being characterized by poor accountability, ineffective institutional spaces, weak citizen participation, and uneven bureaucratic capacity. These limitations hinder equal allocation of resources and decrease the efficiency of social protection programs to the most vulnerable groups.

One of the major driving forces behind governance reform is the high level of elite capture and political interference. As researchers argue, the interest of the elite influences the institutions in most

developing nations hence compromising on the inclusion results. The eligibility and distribution of resources in Pakistan is often affected by political networks thus vitiating the credibility and fairness of social protection programs. This means that there is a need to ensure that systems of governance are reinforced- especially by the establishment of independent monitoring systems and open decision making[25].

The need to reform is also reinforced by poor inter-institutional coordination. The federal and provincial social protection systems of Pakistan are working in a crackdown administrative structure in which regulatory overlap and incompatible data systems are the norm. According to [26], to optimize the role of social protection, the institutions are supposed to co-exist so that they can provide uniform service and eliminate duplication. Joint planning efforts, interoperable databases and harmonized registries can help ease program operation and targeting with greater accuracy.

We also need better ways to hold people accountable. Social welfare institutions are still full of corruption, leaks, and bureaucratic inefficiencies. says that problems with governance make it hard for services to be delivered in many areas of Pakistan. Making accountability systems stronger, like independent audits, ways to file complaints, community monitoring, and digital reporting tools, can cut down on corruption and make policies work better. These steps are especially helpful in rural areas, where there is often not much oversight[27].

Similarly, citizen participation remains limited. [28] The meaningful engagement raises the program legitimacy and promotes trust in governance by the people. However, lack of literacy, gender stereotypes, and socio-political inequalities do not allow the marginalized populations to engage in the governance procedures. Social protection policies can be more oriented towards the needs of the community through the robust participatory mechanisms that allow the local governments, community committees and inclusive consultation.

The exposure of Pakistan to economic shocks, climatic disasters, and inflation also highlights the need to have dynamic governance structures. According to the recent scholarship, flexible and shock-responsive systems of governance are critical to protect the populations at a disadvantage in times of crisis. The examples of the 2022 Pakistan floods demonstrate inadequacy of the emergency assistance system in the country, which is why the presence of strong and well-organized social protection systems are significant [29].

To sum up, the government of Pakistan needs to improve its social governance systems to shift away out of a disjointed welfare system to an effective, equitable, and inclusive one. Through enhancement of transparency, participation, accountability, coordination as well as institutional resiliency, social programs will be able to reach the marginalized populations and significantly reduce poverty, thus enhancing more economic equity.

Analysis

The combined analysis shows that the strength of the social governance systems is the main element that supports the effectiveness of the social protection programs in Pakistan. Respondents steadfastly claimed that recent governance reforms that have been instituted and particularly transferred biometric verification, poverty scorecards and digital payment systems (under the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) and the Ehsaas Program) have increased transparency and reduced leaks. These advancements are consistent with available evidence that show institutional reforms enhance targeting precision and reduce corruption in the process of welfare delivery[7, 8]. However, the findings also show that technological advancement does not completely solve structural disparities. A significant number of beneficiaries (even now) still experience barriers to digital literacy, limited mobile banking access, and issues accessing

identification documents, which all limit these populations (particularly women and rural communities) disproportionately. These obstacles support the view in the scholarship that governance technologies, as such on their own, cannot guarantee equitable inclusion without challenging more general trends of social exclusion [13, 24].

One of the central issues that can be identified based on the analysis is that political interference and elite influence are still very strong especially at the local level. The national-level reforms have made the program delivery more visible, but local patronage networks are still influencing the process of enrollment, access to information and filing complaints. Such tendencies are a reflection of previous claims that political capture interrupts the distribution of resources evenly in developing environments [5], and[30] which demonstrate that political capture disrupts equitable resource allocation in developing nations. Because these problems are so specific to certain areas, governance reforms need to go beyond just making things run more smoothly and deal with bigger political problems and institutional weaknesses.

Another relevant gap in governance is participation. Despite the fact that participatory governance theories relate such participation to high levels of inclusion and responsiveness, this research finds that participation in the social protection initiatives in Pakistan is largely symbolic. The recipients are not often considered in the process of decision-making, monitoring, and or feedback, and as such, this generates a gap between the policy development and community demands. This finding confirms the previous arguments stating that participatory mechanisms must be backed by strong institutions in order to avert elite capture and make sure that the marginalized groups are indeed represented [14, 15].

The institutional fragmentation also weakens the impact of the anti-poverty programs. Services were duplicated, unequal dissemination of information, and poor communication between the federal and provincial agencies were reported by the respondents. Other comparable studies highlight the importance of poor coordination in corrosion of program coherence and responses to multidimensional poverty. Disrupted governments systems prevent the delivery of services, integration of programs, and the sustainability of social protection intervention in the long term [10] and [26].

There is a lack of accountability systems. However, despite the formal mechanisms of dealing with complaints, it is not known by many people who may want to use these mechanisms, the mechanisms have a long holding period, or they lack trust in its effectiveness. These findings support assertions that accountability models can still be performative in the absence of institutional sanctions and empowerment of citizens, thus supporting mistakes, unfair performance, and political meddling that reduce the credibility of programs and their equity [8].

The discussion also reveals a direct relationship between the problems in governance and the perennial economic inequalities. Beneficiaries also identified that, although cash transfers reduce the short-term distress, structural inequalities, including the unequal access to educational, job-finding, and healthcare services remain unaddressed. This observation underpins the argument that institutional quality, but not the simple economic growth is a critical factor of inequality. In turn, social protection initiatives are unable to lead to long-term inequality decrease unless there are governance structures that will ensure equal access to government services and opportunities [3].

This combined analysis demonstrates that governance reforms in Pakistan have made national governance more transparent and efficient. Nevertheless, low attendance, responsibility, institutional alignment, and implementations at local levels remain among the major factors weighing down the potential effectiveness of the social protection programs. The most important factor that has determined whether welfare programs can alleviate poverty in a long run and help bring economic equality has been

governance. Transparency, coordination, community involvement, and downward accountability should be improved in order to improve the effectiveness of the program and ensure social justice in the long term.

Policy Recommendations

The empirical observation of this research suggests that the social protection system in Pakistan is significantly improved due to digital changes and a greater level of transparency. However, the governance still faces certain challenges that limit its general effectiveness. The analysis then suggests a set of policy interventions that can be implemented to reinforce the socio Government structures, and make poverty-reduction programs more durable.

To begin with, the local-level governance must be strengthened. Reform within the country has increased the level of openness, but the local application is subject to the influence of politics and the capture of elites. It would be beneficial to develop strong municipal institutions that are marked by well-defined mandates, sufficient financial capacity, and independent institutions of checks and balances to minimize patronage and ensure that benefits are spread equally[25]. Downward accountability can also be further entrenched through community-based monitoring of performance through citizen committees, through social audits and grievance-redress forums, to reduce potential exclusionary errors.

Second, there is need to have better coordination between federal governments and provincial governments. The incoherence of the social protection system in Pakistan is due to the incoherent databases, nonhomogeneous eligibility criterion, and different program architecture. By combining to build integrated social registries and interoperable data platforms, more accurate targeting and reduction of duplication would be possible [26]. The introduction of a national coordination council on social protection would be able to institutionalize the frequent dialogue and shared strategic planning.

Third, more comprehensive and user-friendly forms of accountability mechanisms have to be institutionalized. Despite the presence of digital grievance platforms, beneficiaries, especially women and rural people, do not know or do not trust such opportunities. By increasing the presence of One-Window Service Centers and responding quickly to complaints, as well as strengthening the independent audit, the transparency and the levels of trust among the population would increase [8].

Fourth, the inclusive participation should become an inherent attribute of the system. Not only should the beneficiaries be involved in the enrolment, but also in program design, monitoring and evaluation. Participatory arenas may be structured such as community meetings, women forums and local advisory committees to ensure that marginalized voices make an impact on decision-making and thus legitimize and make programs more responsive[13, 14].

Fifth, the reforms in governance are to be outright aimed at structural inequalities. The design of the programs should be gender-responsive and disability-sensitive such as efficient enrolment processes, mobile registration stations, and better accessibility to electronic financial services.[24] emphasize that gender-inclusive governance is essential for reducing long-term poverty and inequality.

Finally, Pakistan has to enhance its ability to react quickly to the shock. The vulnerable households are disproportionately impacted by climate-related disasters and inflationary shocks, which features the need of adaptive systems. The state will be in a better position to reduce the effect of crises by setting up early-warning systems, emergency cash-transfers schemes, and disaster registers [29].

On the whole, these policy suggestions underline the fact that governance reform does not belong to the administrative exercise alone; on the contrary, it is key towards making sure that social protection

programs are effective at alleviating poverty, bridging inequality divides, and promoting the long-term welfare of the most vulnerable groups in Pakistan.

This paper has explored how social governance can reduce poverty and provide economic equity in Pakistan and have highlighted that the role of governance as the coordinating channel between social protection outputs and development outputs. Even though a program like the BISP and the Ehsaas Program has come a long way especially with regards to transparency and concentration on targets, the issue of governance continues to hinder the ability to bring about a significant change. The findings demonstrate that political meddling, absence of a high community engagement, ineffective accountability framework, and lack of proper coordination between federal and provincial organizations all discourage the effectiveness and equity of delivering social protection.

It is also available in the analysis that despite the fact that the administrative operations have been streamlined as a result of the digital reforms, the reforms have not completely addressed the underlying structural problems like gender inequality, inequality of regions, and barriers faced by marginalized communities. Economic inequality has been maintained because the effects of the failure of institutions, exclusionary practices and lack of access to services of the state have been insurmountable by the social protection programs.

Enhancing the performance of programs and promoting the long-term social and economic justice therefore requires strengthening of governance. The paper finds that lasting poverty reduction and economic balance in Pakistan requires long term governance reforms particularly on the local level, accompanied by the willingness to make inclusive decisions and equitable distribution of resources. The absence of these reforms will mean that the pace of progress will be slow, and the most disadvantaged groups within the society will still be finding it hard to climb the social and economic ladder.

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