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**Local Government System in Pakistan: Causes of bad Governance of Local Government System**

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**Abstract.** The local government is one of the vital organs of the state through which programs of development are formulated and implemented for the community. The democratically elected members at the local government level represented the community and advocate the interests of the community in the social and economic development of the area. The research paper has thoroughly described the existing local government system of Pakistan and also has investigated the critical causes of bad governance in the local government system of Pakistan that hinders the social and economic development of the country. This is a qualitative study; the researcher reviewed and synthesized all the available information gathered from the various sources related to the local government governance in Pakistan. The researcher in this research paper used secondary source of information and observations. Since the introduction of parliamentary form of democratic system in Pakistan, the country has gone through number of modifications and amendments in the local government system but due to the instability in the democratic system, the political governments had failed to deliver good public services at the local government levels. The study has identified major causes i.e Political, Social, Administrative and mismanagement of resources and rampant corruption, which have severely paralyzed the governance system at local government level of Pakistan.

**Keywords.** Governance, Local government, District government, Community empowerment.

**JEL.** D73, H10, H75.

## 1. Introduction

Pakistan is one of the seventh most populous countries of the world. Pakistan as a country is consisting of four provinces along-with federally administered areas by the Federation of Pakistan. It has been observed from the history of Pakistan that local government bodies of North West Frontier Province were dissolved in 1991, Sindh local government bodies were dissolved in 1992 and Punjab local government bodies were dissolved in 1993. Each province has cited their own reasons for dissolution of their local government bodies. The Provincial Governments of Sindh and North West Frontier has cited reason of mismanagement and corruption, while Punjab government has dissolved the bodies of local government to make ensure that national election may not be influenced by the incumbent local government officials in the province. After the dissolution of local government bodies in the provinces, the administrators were appointed to run the affairs of local government bodies. The administrators were the members of

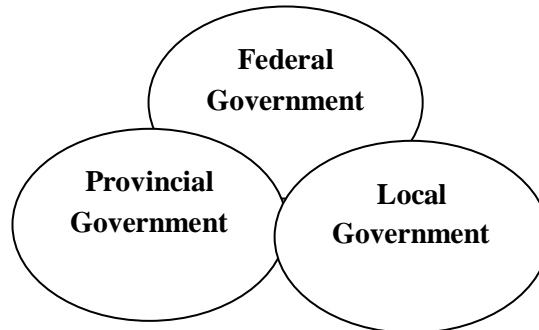
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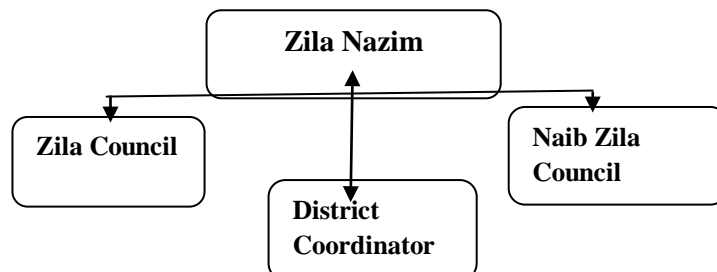
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Federal and Provincial Public Services appointed by the provincial governments of the provinces. The real solution of the public problems lies in the effective local government system at the grass root level (Nazrul & Mohabat, 1997).



**Figure1. Three Tiers of Government Structure**  
Source: (Nazrul & Mohabat, 1997)

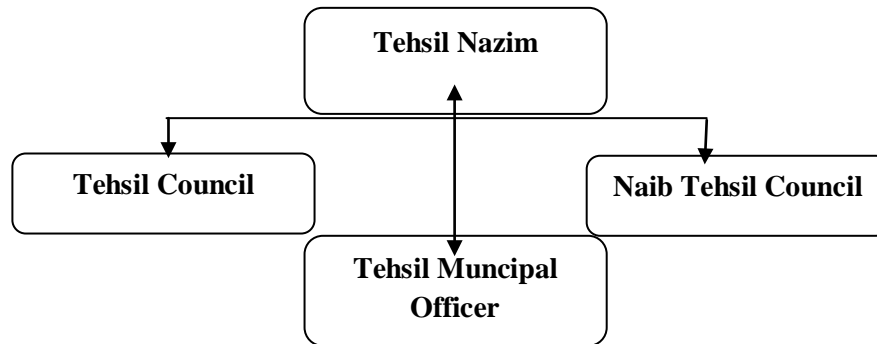
In 2001, Federal government of Pakistan has promulgated new local government ordinance which provides devolution of powers at the district level of government. According to this ordinance, local government is composed of three-tier structure at the provincial levels. This new structure is composed of district, Tehsil and Union levels of local government. This new system was also described as 5Ds local government system. The main objective of this new system was to make local government of respective provinces accountable to the people of the country and enable substantive community participation in the development related activities at the local levels of the government. There are three tiers of the Federal Government of Pakistan, i.e Federal, Provincial and Local Governments. Since the independence, Pakistan has experienced three models local government system. The first model was introduced in 1962, second in 1979 and third in 2001. It has been surprisingly to see that all local government models were introduced during the military governments. After the suspension of local government system, the elections were delayed and District administrators were appointed to run the affairs of local government. The new local government system is composite of three tier local government structure, i.e District Government, Tehsil Government and Union Administration. Amongst these three tiers, the district government is the top tier of local government. It is consisting of District Nazims and district administration that comprises sub-district offices at tehsil level (Anjum, 2001).



**Figure 2. Zila Administration**  
Source: (Anjum, 2001).

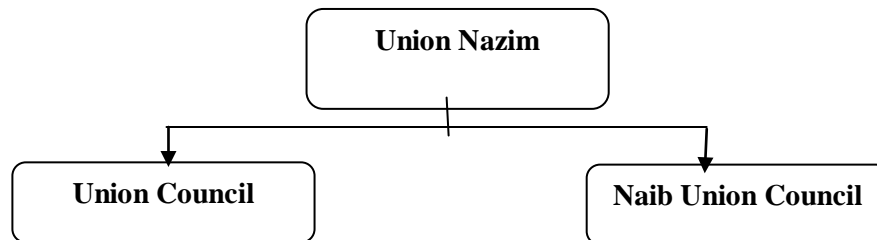
The provincial government has decentralized its powers to the district governments and district governments are responsible to District Nazims. The social, economic and community services are devolved to the district governments

of the provinces. It is claimed that this new local government system has introduced adequate check and balance and effectively addresses the specific needs and problems of the people at the local levels. The second tier of the local government is Tehsil Administration. It is middle tier of local government and headed by Tehsil Nazim and Municipal Administration (Anjum, 2001).



**Figure 3. Tehsil Administration**  
Source: (Anjum, 2001)

The Municipal Administration is responsible for performing municipal functions, spatial planning, public health and housing planning. The third and lower tier of the new local government system is Union Councils and Union Administration which headed by Union Nazims (Anjum, 2001).



**Figure 4. Union Administration**  
Source: (Anjum, 2001).

The union administration is consisting of Union Nazims of all unions and Tehsil council is consisting of Naib union Nazims of union at Tehsil level. As mentioned above, this coordination between District, Tehsil and Union levels has provided vertical linkages between these three tiers of local government. In respect of financial matters, a formula-based fiscal transfer has been introduced to the district through provincial finance award. Further-more, the local government is authorized to levy taxes at the district and tehsil levels. This new Local government was installed in 2001 and elections were held on non-party basis. The main purpose of promulgated this new local government system is to empower the people at local level. The new local government system provides a viable environment where every citizen obtains empowerment, participation and representation in the decision making related to the developmental activities in their respective areas and making local government responsible and accountable to their functions. It makes them accountable for distribution of equitable resources, bring transparency in their actions and provide easy access to information held in public offices. This new system enable proactive participation of people at gross-root level and district, tehsil and union councils monitor the performance of local government. It also

provides amicable settlement of disputes between the community or individuals through mediation, conciliation and arbitration. The new local government system also provides an adequate representation to women, peasants and minorities. It provides the empowerment to traditionally marginalized segment of the society which is one of the essential objectives of this new local government system (Anjum, 2001).

## **2. Causes of bad governance in the local government**

### *2.1. Political Causes*

The political instability has been one of the biggest dilemma for the Pakistan since the introduction of democratic setup in the country. The incompetent political leadership had badly tarnish the essence of democracy and due to this reason the country is always experiencing weak democratic institutions. The frequent change of political governments and their apathetic attitude towards the rising public issues have been the main reasons to formulate policy as per the requirement of the public and implement to resolve the public issues in real manner. Due to the political rivalries between the political parties, every incumbent government holder usually abandons the public policies formulated by the previous government. The incoming political governments were more focused on serving their own interests instead of resolving the burning issue of the people. Up till now none of the government has been able to adopt the proper process of making public policy functioning well in Pakistan (Mahmmud, 2000).

### *2.2. Administrative Causes*

The bureaucracy is one of important pillar of the government and it plays very important role in public policy making process. In case of Pakistan, the bureaucracy is mostly influenced by the political leadership to serve their own petty interests. In the government structure of Pakistan, there are two types of bureaucracies which are holding control over the state as well as government affairs of the country. Amongst these two types, military bureaucracy is the most powerful one in the Pakistan and secondly civil bureaucracy also does not lag behind in footing their influence in the government affairs in the country. The government bureaucracy is very notorious in practicing nepotism, corruption and red-tapism. The political inference in the appointment and posting of officers has badly affected the performance of the Public organizations in the country. It has been observed that political leadership has always used bureaucracy to serve own interests rather than to formulate public policies for sustainable solution of the public issues and problems (Nazral & Mohabat, 1997).

### *2.3. Social Causes*

The Pakistan, as a developing country is facing multiple problems. The social problems are increasing day by day at alarming ratio in the country. Such as 40 % people are living their lives below the poverty line (Mahmood, 2000). Due to the bad governance, the political governments have failed to control the inflation, devaluation of currency and the petrol cost which affects the prices of daily used items by the public. Consequently, the society is going through a situation where one family is living very high luxurious life, while another family looking for one time meal. It has been universally recognized that education is the one of the important tool for the development and prosperity of the country. In this regard, the developing countries in recent years have focused upon the development and renewal of primary education and to eliminate illiteracy. But, unfortunately, Pakistan like the other developing countries has made very poor progress in enhancing the literacy ratio in the country. Since independence, it continues to remain in the group of countries with the lowest literacy rate. The 22 percent of the

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world's population lives in South Asia. Sri Lanka and Maldives have almost attained full literacy in their respective countries. The adult literacy rate for India is 61 as compared to 53 percent in Pakistan (Siddiqui, 1992). Due to these reasons, it has been very difficult to bring social responsibility among the people for participating in the activities related to the social and economic development of the country.

### *3.4. Mismanagement of Resources*

Pakistan has abundant natural resource in the country but unfortunately it is one of poor country in the Asian continent. The country is quite rich in vital resources like energy, agriculture, mineral, human resource and agriculture but due to the bad governance at all levels of government and lack of future planning, it has not been able to utilize these resources properly for the economic development of the country. Having had abundant resources, the built-in absurdities in the government ruling had badly affected the economic as well as social development of the country. The continuous dismal performance of Pakistan needs well-coordinated efforts to restore the economy and calls for evolving approach to the management of available resource to cope up with contemporary challenges facing the country (Mahmood, 2000).

### *3.5. Rampant Corruption*

The menace of corruption in the country has deeply rooted in the society that it has become a way of life and includes the ideological, moral and ethical values of the society. The misappropriation of public funds, favoritism and misuse of power has been the norms of the day at the all levels of government. The weak and indecisive policies of the successive political governments has provided enough room to the corrupting practices from the federal to local government level bureaucracies. The accountability and transparency seem non-existent in the government. Consequently, the agencies who are responsible for checking the corruption have failed to stop it and on the contrary, they have become the part of the menace. Now, this menace has so deeply rooted in our system that it has become the part of the culture of the society (Jalal, 1995).

## **4. Conclusion**

It has been concluded from the study that there is a need of drastic measures from the political government to yield the fruitful outcome of new local government system. The main big issue is the distribution of powers at local government level between the bureaucracy and elected representatives. Despite the various amendments in local governance ordinance, local government system is still considered ineffective in terms of distribution of powers between Nazims and District Management officers and to serve the people in a productive manner at gross root level. It has been observed from the three rounds of local government election held under the devolution plan that it has increased the grip of power more to the influential and political people rather than to serve the poor people at local level. The study has highlighted, political parties' priorities, social causes, mismanagement of resources and rampant corruption are being the main causes of bad governance at local government level.

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