

Mainstreaming PATA: Exploring People's Perceptions Of The Merger In Hazara Division, Pakistan



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Abstract: *The study focuses on evaluating the public's perception of the PATA merger in the Hazara division, aiming to identify the core challenges and opportunities for reform using a positivist approach. The nature of study was quantitative and questionnaire and interview schedule were used as a tool of data collection to gather primary information from a sample size of 384 respondents in 8 districts of Hazara division through simple random sampling. Questionnaire was distributed among educated respondents while interview schedule was utilized to collect data from illiterate respondents. The collected data was analyzed through the application of Chi-Square Test Statistics to draw the association between dependent and independent variables. It was concluded that despite excellent governance and living conditions in Hazara, the PATA merger faces big obstacles. Roadblocks include tribal and nationalist leaders, political agent resistance and weak federal support. Fortunately, parties that support reforms like better legal justice, less corruption, and more transparency offer hope for a fairer future. The study recommends removing those barriers through tribal elder engagement in a dialogue, gradual adoption, and federal government commitment to resources and reforms. Those changes must last through strong systems of accountability and citizen engagement.*

Keywords: Pakistan, Hazara Division, PATA, Merger, Reforms, 18th Amendment

Background of the Study

The Provincially Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan, including Hazara Division in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, have historically faced complex political and social dynamics as well as governance and development issues. All these areas were once administered according to the PATA system and have been the focus of ongoing government efforts to mainstream them more fully in provincial and national governance frameworks. Such an attempt to mainstream PATA has provoked wide academic and policy discussions regarding historical, legal and socio-political implications.

PATA began in colonial times as the British Indian government attempted to exercise indirect rule in tribal areas. Local tribal leaders, called Maliks, were given autonomy in return for loyalty and cooperation. This system lasted until Pakistan was created in 1947, and these regions remained federal (Mumtaz & Naz, 2017).

Various legal structures in PATA areas have been debated, particularly the application of the colonial-era Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR). First used in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), the FCR was later extended to PATA regions (Ullah et al., 2019). It conferred wide powers on the central government and local administrators, while severely limiting local populations' rights and representation. In 2010, the Pakistani government passed the 18th Amendment to incorporate PATA in provincial governance systems for better service delivery and political representation. These reforms have been resisted by local power structures rooted in tradition.

Streamlining PATA effected significant socio-political changes in local communities. Questions of traditional autonomy and cultural identity erosion, as well as questions of fair distribution of resources and representation of marginalized groups in governance, have been

raised. Despite such worries the integration of PATA into provincial and national systems remains an important task. A critical historical, legal, and socio-political consideration in considering attempts to mainstream PATA is the colonial legacy of indirect rule. In tribal regions like the Hazara Division, local Maliks maintained internal control over their structures while under colonial control. This continued after 1947, with the PATA regions remaining under federal jurisdiction. The FCR also restricted local autonomy, furthering central government control (Rehman, 2017)

Debates and reforms have focused on PATA legal and governance structures. The 18th Amendment to the Pakistani Constitution in 2010 signaled the beginning of PATA integration in provincial governance arrangements. That provision was amended to facilitate service delivery and political representation in areas long excluded from the mainstream political and economic development of the country (Akhtar, 2018). But local power structures and resistance have prevented their implementation. PATA mainstreaming has had sociopolitical impacts in local communities. Here researchers have pointed to local concerns regarding the loss of traditional autonomy and cultural identity (Rana & 2). Nasir, 2021). Integrating PATA into provincial and national systems also has raised questions regarding equitable distribution of resources and participation of marginalized groups in decision making.

Currently available literature gives insight into the complex dynamics shaping the PATA system and ongoing mainstreaming efforts in these areas. Historical contexts, legal, and socio-political implications of such a process are critical to understand in order to deal with the difficulties and prospects of mainstreaming PATA in the Hazara Division. Attempting to mainstream PATA in Pakistan requires understanding local perceptions and concerns. Peoples' views on PATA merging into mainstream governance structures are examined through the Hazara Division. This will guide

policymaking and ensure that mainstreaming is just and reflects local needs and aspirations.

Statement of the Problem

The merger of Provincially Administered Tribal Areas into Pakistan's mainstream governance system poses significant integration challenges. However beneficial the political, legal and economic reforms might be, various structural, political and social barriers prevent them from becoming reality. It remains unclear how these reforms will affect local governance, law enforcement and social justice. However, the effectiveness of implementation, local resistance to change, and the longevity of traditional power structures remain unresolved. Therefore, this study explores peoples' perceptions of the merger in the Hazara Division, identifies challenges and opportunities for smoother transitions and inclusive development in the region.

Methods and Procedure

This quantitative study was conducted in Hazara Division, Pakistan. Primary data was collected through Likert 3-scale questionnaire i.e. Yes, No and Uncertain, and interview schedule. Questionnaire was used as a tool of data collection to gather primary information from educated respondents while interview schedule was used to acquire data from illiterate respondents in total eight districts of Hazara Division. Simple Random Sampling technique was used to collect data from a total of 384 sample size, 48 respondents each from every district, so that the study could cover the entire Hazara Division. The collected data was put into SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) and was analyzed with the help of Chi-Square Test Statistics to draw the association between dependent and independent variable.

Results and Discussion

Table-1Frequency, percentage and measure of central tendency distribution of the socio demographic characteristics of the respondents

Table No. 1 Socio-Demographic Profile of Sampled Respondents

Classification	Frequency	Percent	Measure of central tendency		
			Mean	Median	Mode
Gender of the respondents					
Male	260	67.7%	1.17	1.00	1
Female	124	23.3%			
Total	384	100.0%			
Age of the respondents					
Below 30 years	74	19.2%	2.08	2.00	2
31-40 years	160	41.6%			
41-50 years	110	28.6%			
51 and above	40	10.4%			
Total	384	100.0%			
Marital status					
Married	201	52.3%	1.84	2.00	2
Unmarried	178	45.3%			
Divorced	5	1.30%			
Total	384	100.0%			
Qualification of the Respondent					
Illiterate	30	7.8%	1.71	1.00	1
Primary	60	15.6%			
Middle	57	14.8%			
Matric	70	18.2%			
Intermediate	120	31.2%			
Bachelor/Master	47	12.3%			
Total	384	100%			
Profession of the Respondent					
Sales and related	30	7.8%	2.22	2.00	2
Forces (Police, Army etc).	29	7.5%			
Transport and Related	89	23.1%			
Teacher	50	13.0%			
Unemployed	90	23.4%			
Agriculture	35	9.11%			
Own Business	61	15.8%			
Total	384	100%			
Monthly income of the Respondents					
1000-15000	40	10.4%	2.05	2.00	2
16000-25000	157	40.8%			
26000-40000	70	18.2%			
41000-50000	91	23.6			
51000 and above	26	6.7			
Total	384	100%			

Source: field Survey, 2024

The above table depicts the socio-demographic characteristics of the sampled respondents. The results reveal that the majority, 260 (67.7%) of the total 384 respondents, were male, while 124 (32.3%) were female. Further, the majority, 160 (41.6%), of sampled respondents belong to the age category of below 30 years; 110 (28.6%) belong to the age category of 41-50 years; 74 (19.2%) belong to the age category of 31-40 years; while the remaining 40 (10.4%) of sampled respondents belong to the age category of 51 years and above. Similarly, the majority, 201 (52.3%), of respondents were married, 178 (45.3%) were unmarried, while the remaining 5 (1.3%) were either divorced or separated.

Regarding the qualifications of respondents, the results indicate that the majority, 120 (31.2%), of sampled respondents had completed intermediate education, 70 (18.2%) were matriculated, 60 (15.6%) had completed primary

education, 57 (14.8%) had completed middle school, 47 (12.3%) were graduates, while the remaining 30 (7.8%) were illiterate. The results in the table further show that the majority, 90 (23.4%), of sampled respondents were unemployed, 89 (23.1%) were associated with transport-related professions, 61 (15.8%) owned a business, 50 (13.0%) were associated with teaching, 30 (7.8%) were involved in sales and related activities, while the remaining 29 (7.5%) were associated with the forces (Police, Army, etc.).

Moreover, regarding the monthly income of sampled respondents, the results indicate that the majority, 157 (40.8%), had a monthly income of 16,000-25,000 PKR; 91 (23.6%) had a monthly income of 41,000-50,000 PKR; 70 (18.2%) had a monthly income of 26,000-40,000 PKR; 40 (10.4%) had a monthly income of 10,000-15,000 PKR; while the remaining 26 (6.7%) had a monthly income of 51,000 PKR and above.

Table-2 Examining the Association of Major Hurdles to Mainstreaming PATA with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Public Perceptions of the Merger

Major Hurdles	Responses	People's Perceptions of the Merger			Total	Statistics
		Yes	No	Uncertain		
Tribal elders/leaders are the major obstacle in the way of mainstreaming	Yes	181	69	0	250	$x^2 = 80.252$ P= .000
	No	0	0	0	0	
	Uncertain	0	101	33	134	
Federal government is not truly interested in mainstreaming	Yes	124	70	28	222	$x^2 = 104.933$ P= .000
	No	70	16	0	86	
	Uncertain	37	9	30	76	
Mass political parties want the mainstreaming	Yes	151	29	0	150	$x^2 = 305.263$ P= .000
	No	0	49	1	50	
	Uncertain	0	0	4	4	
Local politics and movements are weakening the merger process	Yes	121	50	30	201	$x^2 = 136.260$ P= .000
	No	99	26	0	125	
	Uncertain	42	8	8	58	
Political Agent and his administration is a hurdle	Yes	142	0	76	218	$x^2 = 41.320$ P= .001
	No	79	58	8	137	
	Uncertain	20	0	9	29	

Table No. 2 shows the association of various indicators of the independent variable, i.e., major hurdles in the way of mainstreaming PATA, and the dependent variable, i.e., people's perception of the merger. While asking about the statement regarding whether tribal leaders are the major obstacle in the way of mainstreaming, a highly significant association ($p < .001$) was found between this notion and the dependent variable, people's perception of the merger. This is due to the fact that the authority of tribal leaders is rooted in traditional governance structures of the region. The fear that they will lose their historical power and privileges as members of the old tribal justice (Panchayat) and administration system drives their reluctance to embrace mainstreaming. The merger with the mainstream political framework threatens to undermine their authority by introducing modern laws, democratic institutions, and centralized government oversight. Therefore, they resist mainstreaming out of self-interest because it challenges their authority and way of life.

Similarly, a highly significant association ($p < .001$) surfaced between the statement that the federal government is not genuinely interested in mainstreaming and the dependent variable, people's perception of the merger. Even though the federal government has claimed to support mainstreaming, its actions rarely align with that promise. Legal reforms, inadequate development project funds, and little attention paid to ensuring effective governance in merged areas point to a lack of political will. Mainstreaming requires investment in infrastructure, legal reforms, and human development, but these regions are underfunded and underprioritized. Additionally, political instability and security concerns are commonly used to delay critical reforms. This pattern suggests that the federal government may be outwardly supportive of integration but not necessarily fully committed to the structural changes needed for mainstreaming.

Likewise, when respondents were inquired whether mass political parties want the mainstreaming, a highly significant association

($p < .001$) was identified between the statement and people's perception of the merger. It could be deduced that streamlined political parties see the merger and mainstreaming of tribal areas as ways to gain voters in previously marginalized areas. By pushing for integration, these parties target a large, unrepresented population that could become a political force. Mainstreaming also aligns with the parties' broader ideological goals of national unity, equal representation, and democratic governance. The inclusion of these regions would give political parties access to more potential supporters and enhance their ability to tackle social inequalities, thus increasing their appeal in elections. For these reasons, mass political parties tend to support mainstreaming and are often the most vocal proponents of the merger.

In addition, a highly significant association ($p < .001$) was found between the notion that local politics and movements are weakening the merger process and the dependent variable, people's perception of the merger. This is because movements that are local in nature, often rooted in ethnic or regional identity, have agendas that oppose national calls for mainstreaming. Such movements might interpret the merger as an external imposition on local affairs, which violates their cultural autonomy and political power. For example, movements promoting tribal traditions or regional independence may oppose centralized laws and institutions. As these movements gain traction, they could mobilize public opinion against the merger and weaken momentum for mainstreaming. Furthermore, local political leaders might exploit fears of cultural erosion or loss of self-government to mobilize opposition to the process and delay integration policies.

Moreover, when respondents were asked whether the political agent and his administration are hurdles, a highly significant association ($p < .01$) emerged between this notion and people's perception of the merger. As the central figure in administering tribal areas, the Political Agent represents the colonial-era governance structure that mainstreaming seeks

to dismantle. These agents wield great power - often acting as judges, juries, and administrators without checks and balances. And with mainstreaming comes the end of the Political Agent, and power is transferred to democratically elected representatives and modern legal institutions. So, the Political Agent and his administration are often resistant to mainstreaming, which weakens their authority and the discretionary powers they currently enjoy. And the bureaucratic apparatus behind the Political Agent is deeply entrenched, so its dismantling will be a major obstacle to mainstream integrationists.

In line with this, Shah et al. (2019) identified the role of tribal leaders as barriers to mainstreaming the Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA). The traditional power structures maintained by Maliks often conflict with modern governance systems and prevent PATA from being incorporated into the mainstream administrative framework. Khan (2020) agrees that Maliks' interest in the status quo has always hindered reform efforts. Ahmad (2018) examined that the Federal government is not interested in mainstreaming PATA. The study found that the government has been

inconsistent and unsteady in its approach, raising questions about its true intentions regarding PATA's integration. Mass political parties support mainstreaming of PATA despite the resistance from traditional power structures. A study by Hussain and Ali (2021) showed that major political parties see PATA integration as an opportunity to increase their voter base and influence in the region. Factors that weaken the PATA merger process include local politics and movements. Zaman (2022) claimed that localized political dynamics, often driven by competing interests and ideologies, have prevented a smooth integration. This was elaborated by Afridi (2020), who found that certain movements within the region have actively opposed mainstreaming efforts. The issue of how the political agent and their administration can hinder the mainstreaming of PATA is complex. The position was meant to link tribal and modern governance systems. Yousafzai (2018) argued that an administrative structure built around the political agent has maintained opposition to mainstream governance mechanisms. Malik (2021) elaborated that the entrenched power of the political agent's office has created institutional inertia against reforms.

Table 3: Association of Mainstreaming Goals and People's Perceptions of the Merger

Goals of Mainstreaming	Responses	People's Perceptions of the Merger			Total	Statistics
		Yes	No	Uncertain		
Reforms is a better opportunity for a better society	Yes	210	25	20	255	$\chi^2 = 267.548$ P= .000
	No	41	79	0	120	
	Uncertain	0	1	13	14	
Legal justice system will improve with the reforms	Yes	211	29	11	251	$\chi^2 = 272.994$ P= .000
	No	30	71	0	101	
	Uncertain	0	8	24	32	
Poor locals will get more benefits through legal justice system	Yes	170	29	11	210	$\chi^2 = 219.929$ P= .001
	No	51	84	0	135	
	Uncertain	5	4	31	39	
Reforms will help in minimizing corruption	Yes	176	30	22	228	$\chi^2 = 13.705$ P= .001
	No	28	88	8	124	
	Uncertain	0	9	23	32	
Good governance system will be ensured with the reforms	Yes	145	24	121	290	$\chi^2 = 319.561$ P= .000
	No	20	64	1	85	
	Uncertain	0	0	9	9	

Table 3 indicates the association of various indicators of the independent variable, i.e., goals

of mainstreaming, and the dependent variable, i.e., people's perception of the merger. The results in the table identified a highly significant association ($p < .001$) between the statement that reforms represent a better opportunity for a better society and the dependent variable, people's perception of the merger. It is because this merger with its accompanying reforms is a unique chance to create an equitable and progressive society in the Hazara Division. Integration of the region into the national mainstream could promote inclusion, social justice and economic development. Changing traditional governance models for a more modern political framework could open up new opportunities for improved education, healthcare and infrastructure for all citizens. Additionally, local communities being included in national democratic processes encourage civic participation, allowing PATA people to shape their future. In effect, the reforms create a society where growth and prosperity are possible for all - a just and forward-looking society.

Likewise, a highly significant ($P=.000$) association was found between the notion that legal justice system will improve with the reforms and people's perception of the merger. It could be deduced that the potential benefits of the merger include a more robust and transparent legal justice system. Those reforms could replace tribal justice practices with standardized laws that promote fairness and accountability by extending the formal legal system to the Hazara Division. Courts, modern legal procedures and trained judicial personnel can facilitate faster and more impartial resolution of disputes. That move also means more citizens have legal resources and protections under the law, building trust in the system. And the reforms could also eliminate parallel legal systems - like Jirgas - which have been accused of fostering local power imbalances and discriminatory practices against vulnerable groups.

In addition, regarding the statement whether poor locals will get more benefits through legal justice system, a highly a highly significant ($P=.001$) came to surface between the notion and people's perception of the merger. The reforms

open up a window of opportunity for those disadvantaged and poorest in society to receive justice denied or withheld. Formal law guarantees that every citizen, regardless of social standing, has a fair trial, legal representation and protection under the law. This helps poorer locals who historically have been pushed out of traditional power structures, such as the Jirgas, where richer and more powerful people often rule. The reforms might enable these disadvantaged groups to have recourse to a neutral legal system where their rights are respected and grievances are heard without fear of retribution or bias. Hence, PATA integration into the mainstream legal system may offer poor communities a space for justice and social equity.

Similarly, a highly significant association ($p < .001$) was found between the statement that reforms will help in minimizing corruption and people's perception of the merger. Corruption has long been endemic in many tribal and semi-autonomous areas where informal governance structures are often opaque and unreliable. Transparent laws and protocols for governance may curb corruption through reforms and modern governance mechanisms. Formalizing government operations, such as financial oversight, judiciary transparency, and independent anti-corruption bodies, may reduce the incentives for officials to engage in corrupt practices. Better monitoring systems could reduce bribery, nepotism, and misuse of public resources. Furthermore, increased participation from civil society and media, empowered by the reforms, could act as checks on government officials and ensure that corrupt practices are exposed and corrected.

Moreover, when respondents were asked about whether a good governance system will be ensured with the reforms, a highly significant association ($p < .001$) was identified between the notion and people's perception of the merger. It can be deduced that these reforms are a means of establishing good governance practices in the Hazara Division, namely accountability, transparency, and public service delivery. By integrating the region into national governance structures, the reforms promote democratic

institutions, including elected local governments responsive to people's needs. This ensures inclusive decision-making and accountability for elected representatives. Included are mechanisms for regular audits, checks and balances, as well as citizen engagement for better governance. Participation by local communities in politics also creates ownership of governance issues and fosters a participatory environment in which the government can be held accountable to the people.

In this regard, Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) argued that reforms are acknowledged as necessary conditions for societal progress. Inclusive institutions, often the result of large-scale reforms, are drivers of prosperity and societal well-being. Their research demonstrates that reforms can produce more just and effective societal structures for an ever-expanding population. Fukuyama (2014) noted that well-implemented reforms will benefit the legal justice system. Reforms that promote the rule of law and judicial independence are therefore essential for a just and effective legal system. Kleinfeld (2012) agrees that justice sector reforms can increase public trust and ensure fair access to justice. A reformed legal justice system

often benefits poor and marginalized communities the most. Golub (2003) suggested that among justice reforms, legal empowerment initiatives may provide disadvantaged groups with the means to assert their rights and obtain justice. This is supported by Anderson (2003), who showed that reforms focusing on improving access to justice may improve the socio-economic conditions of the poor. Reforms may also reduce corruption, as evidenced by the literature. Mungiu-Pippidi (2015) argues that comprehensive governance reforms, focusing on transparency and accountability, can reduce corruption. In this vein, Rose-Ackerman and Palifka (2016) noted that strategic anti-corruption reforms can reorient incentives and reduce opportunities for corrupt practices. Sometimes, good governance follows well-designed and implemented reforms. Grindle (2004) found that reforms focusing on key governance issues, such as public sector management and institutional accountability, may produce more responsive governance systems. Rothstein (2011) argued that quality government improvements through reforms can enhance societal well-being and institutional performance.

Table 4: Association of Expected Outcomes of the Mainstreaming and People's Perceptions of the Merger

Expected Outcomes of the Mainstreaming	Responses	People's Perceptions of the Merger			Total	Statistics
		Yes	No	Uncertain		
Rule of law will get increase with the reforms	Yes	172	0	73	245	$x^2 = 299.941$ P= .000
	No	49	88	0	131	
	Uncertain	0	0	8	8	
Transparency will get increase with the reforms	Yes	210	88	4	302	$x^2 = 366.104$ P= .000
	No	11	67	0	78	
	Uncertain	0	1	5	6	
Accountability will get increase with the reforms	Yes	221	56	0	277	$x^2 = 270.944$ P= .000
	No	0	82	0	82	
	Uncertain	0	4	21	25	
Common people will get share in the decision making	Yes	211	69	0	280	$x^2 = 272.814$ P= .000
	No	0	87	3	90	
	Uncertain	0	5	9	14	
Living conditions of the local will get improve	Yes	221	70	11	282	$x^2 = 376.133$ P= .000
	No	0	88	2	90	
	Uncertain	0	6	6	12	

Table 4 indicates the association of various indicators of the independent variable, i.e.,

expected outcomes of the mainstreaming, and the dependent variable, i.e., people's perception

of the merger. The results show a highly significant association ($p = .000$) between the statement that the rule of law will increase with the reforms and the dependent variable, people's perception of the merger. It can be deduced that merging PATA into the mainstream legal and political framework will strengthen the rule of law in the Hazara Division. Older, inconsistent tribal laws will be replaced by uniform legal reforms, enabling fair and consistent enforcement of laws, reducing arbitrary judgments, and building trust in state institutions. For example, formal courts, trained lawyers, and law enforcement agencies will improve legal oversight and protect citizens' rights. The reforms can end impunity, favoritism, and informal justice practices, making legal processes more open, fair, and accessible for all.

Similarly, when respondents were asked whether transparency will increase with the reforms, a highly significant association ($p = .000$) was identified between this notion and people's perception of the merger. The reforms are premised on transparency because formal governance structures require transparency in decision-making and accountability of public officials. By integrating PATA into a national framework, the reforms will mandate clear reporting mechanisms, public access to government information, and independent oversight bodies to monitor activities. This will reduce backdoor deals and secretive governance associated with informal or traditional systems. Transparency will also make decisions and allocations of resources clearer to the public, increasing trust in government.

In addition, a highly significant association ($p = .000$) emerged between the statement that accountability will increase with the reforms and people's perception of the merger. Accountability is essential for good governance. These reforms will create systems that hold public officials accountable for their actions. Mechanisms such as regular audits, performance evaluations, and legal recourse for misconduct will be introduced through formal political and administrative institutions under the reforms. Such measures will restrain abuses of power by

holding officials accountable to their constituents, with legal consequences for graft or neglect. The existence of independent courts and oversight bodies will also permit a transparent review of the actions of public authorities, ensuring that decisions are made in the public interest and not for private gain.

Likewise, a highly significant association ($p = .000$) was found between the notion that common people will share in decision-making and people's perception of the merger. It can be deduced that reforms would bring Hazara citizens into the national political system, allowing them a say in issues affecting them. Ordinary people will be able to shape policies that reflect their needs and concerns through electoral representation, local councils, and community engagement platforms. This inclusion will ensure that decision-making is not monopolized by a few elites or tribal leaders but is more representative of the population. Hence, the reforms may result in more responsive governance, where local communities are considered in political discussions and policy-making at regional and national levels.

Moreover, while asking whether the living conditions of the locals will improve, a highly significant association ($p = .000$) surfaced between this notion and people's perception of the merger. The changes will enhance the living conditions of locals in the Hazara Division through increased investments in infrastructure, healthcare, education, and public services. Integrating the region into mainstream development frameworks opens up funds for roads, schools, hospitals, and other basic facilities that have been lacking in tribal areas. The introduction of social welfare programs and employment opportunities in the legal economy will also elevate the economic status of the population, reduce poverty, and increase social welfare. As part of a larger development push, improvements in clean water, electricity, and sanitation services are likely to enhance living standards across the region.

In line with this, Tamanaha (2004) noted that reforms have often been correlated with a better rule of law. Well-designed reforms can improve legal frameworks and promote consistency and

fairness in their application. Carothers (2006) supported this view by demonstrating how rule of law reforms can produce more stable and just societies, enabling economic development and social cohesion. Many reforms also improve transparency in governance structures. Bauhr and Grimes (2014) pointed out that transparency-focused reforms may reduce information asymmetries between the government and citizens. Hood et al. (2006) elaborated that transparency reforms can increase public trust and improve policy outcomes. Literature documents the relationship between reforms and increased accountability. Bovens et al. (2009, 2014) show how reforms focusing on accountability mechanisms can foster more responsive and responsible governance. Schedler et al. (1999) noted that accountability-enhancing reforms are needed for democratic consolidation and good governance. Such reforms tend to increase citizen involvement in decisions. Fung (2015) showed how common people can have a direct say in policy that affects them. As Smith (2009) pointed out, participatory reforms can result in more representative decision-making when implemented well. Potential reforms to improve local life are a common theme in development literature. Sen (1999) suggested that reforms that increase individual freedoms and capabilities could improve quality of life. In support of this view, Easterly (2006) argued that context-specific reforms are necessary for context-specific improvements in living standards.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study concludes that, despite the potential for the merger of PATA to improve governance, legal justice, and living conditions in the Hazara Division, several major obstacles hinder its implementation. The entrenched power and resistance to change from tribal elders (Maliks) and the Political Agent and his administration are significant barriers to mainstreaming PATA. Additionally, inconsistent federal commitment and the disruptive nature of local political movements further weaken the merger. It is noteworthy that mass political parties support the reforms, such as increased legal justice, reduced corruption, enhanced transparency,

accountability, and citizen participation, which promise a way forward toward a just and prosperous society.

The study recommends focused strategies to address the identified barriers that must be implemented to mainstream PATA. Tribal elders should engage in dialogue to recognize their roles and then gradually integrate them into the new governance framework. The federal government must first demonstrate genuine commitment by allocating adequate resources for development and legal reforms, along with robust policy implementation. Lastly, establishing strong mechanisms for accountability and transparency within the governance structure will enable citizens to participate in decision-making. Such steps will legitimize the reforms and help ensure long-term development in the region.

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