

Issues And Challenges Faced By Elected Members Of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Local Government System In Tehsil Timergara Dir Lower



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Abstract: *Local government system establishes to empower masses at gross root level with political, financial and administrative authority. After the enactment of 18th amendment to the 1973 constitution of Pakistan, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan has established local government system in 2013 to devolve power and authority at local level. This study aims to analyse the current local government system of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in special reference to the issues and challenges face by elected representatives of local government in resolving masses issues and the way forward in Tehsil Timergara Dir Lower. For collection of primary data, semi-structured interviews have been conducted from elected representatives of local government system in qualitative approach while secondary data has been collected through various research papers, articles and other online sources. The collected data are comprehended through philosophy of interpretivism. Thematic analysis has been applied to codify and identify the themes. The study shows that there exists various issues and challenges to elected representatives in resolving masses like lack of fund, political and administrative interference by government, lack of practical implementation and lack of authority. The study suggests that local government, being third important tier of government, should be provided constitutional safeguard with political, financial and administrative authority.*

Keywords: 1973 constitution, 18th amendment, Local Government, khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Timergara

Introduction

Background of the Study

Local Government, in Lockard's (1963) view, is a public institution; empowered to make and implement public policies in the general interest of citizens within a given territory, changing from a private organization. Local Government System, Hasluck (2010) defined, is the domain of government in which local authorities have the legal power to make decisions or enact legislation to adopt governance to suit local circumstances. Local Governance, Stones (1968) perceived, is part of a state administration

that handles regional or territorial population issues within a specific territory (Ndreu, 2016).

After the inception of Pakistan in 1947, it did not give any attention to establish local government institution to empower the citizens at gross root level in the first decade due to political chaos. The Government of India Act 1935 was adopted as an interim constitution and the pre partition local government system was kept to function without any reforms and changes (S. Khan & U. Khan, 2015).

The first comprehensive local government system in Pakistan was introduced and

established by the military government of Ayub Khan by proclaiming Basic Democracies ordinance in 1959. Ayub initiated four tier local government system linked with each other in 1960 through proclamation of Municipal Administration Ordinance. This four-tier system was not introduced to empower public at gross root level rather to strengthen its military power, government and to legitimise its constitution of 1962 (Malik & Rana, 2019).

General Ziaul Haq reformed the local government system after imposing martial law in 1977 and enacted the Local Government Ordinance in 1979. He introduced the most coercive and centralised local government system under the military regime in the absence of national and provincial assemblies. Election to the local government system was held on non-party basis just to legitimise its illegal rule. This system also did not empower the public but only created self-centred politicians who served the military regime and legitimised it whenever needed (Malik & Rana, 2019).

General Pervaiz Musharaf introduced a new system of local government after imposing martial law in 1999. He introduced the devolution plan in 2001 after proclamation of Local Government Ordinance (LGO) and empowered the public at gross root level to greater extent as compared to early two, Ayub and Ziaul Haq. The three tier local government system, union council, tehsil/town council and district council, was directly linked with president office through different institutions like National Reconstruction Bureau (NRB) and the Devolution Trust for Community Empowerment. However, despite some measures of empowerment on local level, election was conducted on non-party basis and Musharaf controlled the local government system through district administration (Malik & Rana, 2019).

The 18th amendment to the 1973 constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, passed in 2010, encouraged federalism and granted the provinces strong legislative and financial autonomy. Provincial autonomy is granted to all provinces to greater extent to manage its affairs independently (Hussain, 2019). The

Government of KP province, under the guidelines of the 18th constitutional amendment, adopted the first local government system under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Local Government Act 2013 which was passed by the KP provincial assembly to establish a local government system through an election and devolved financial, political and administrative authority to locally elected representatives (Saleem, 2018).

After the enactment of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Local Government Act 2013, the election under the Act was held on May 30, 2015 (Ashfaq, 2015). The term of office of the three-tier local government system was four years which expired in August 2019 (Dawn, 2019). The KP government, in 2019, led by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) amended the Local Government Act 2013, and some structural changes were carried out by converting the three-tier local government system to two tiers i.e. tehsil/city and village/neighbourhood councils, local body system. The office of district Nazem and district councils were abolished and the office of the chairman in each Tehsil was created along with the office of the mayor at divisional level all over the province (Dawn, 2019).

The local body election in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was held in two phases under the amended Local Government Act 2019 in 2021 and 2022. The first phase election occurred on December 19, 2021, in 17 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Ashfaq, 2021). The second phase election occurred in 18 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on March 31, 2022 (Ashfaq, 2022).

Statement of the Problem

Local Government is a gross root-level system implemented by the government that empowers the masses to resolve their issues at the doorstep effectively. It is a school of democracy that strengthens the democratic process due to public empowerment and participation. A successful democracy needs public empowerment and participation at the gross root level. The elected representatives of the local government system have the facilities of offices, staff, resources, budget, power to make laws and regulations, and a strong voice in the decision-making process. This study focuses to explore the issues and

hurdles faced by an effective local government system of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Tehsil Timergara. This study will also highlight the impacts of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa local government system on the masses and how this system affects the standard of life of the masses. If the issues and hurdles to an effective local government system are overcome then the local government system will be effective and strong, resultantly, democracy will flourish and the state and region will be economically, politically, and socially developed.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study are following:

- To identify the main hurdles and challenges faced by members of the local government system in resolving mass issues.
- To find out the ways through which these hurdles and challenges be addressed by local body members in resolving masses issues.

Research Questions

The research questions are given as under:

- What are the main hurdles and challenges faced by members of the local government system in resolving mass issues?
- How can these hurdles and challenges be addressed by local government members to resolve mass issues?

Literature Review

The local government is considered third important tier of a state government, therefore enables the scholars to thoroughly conduct studies on the concerned subject. Rauf (2016) elaborated that local governance is a bidirectional exchange of services delivery from central government to local and from local government to centre. It is mixture of

community and civic society institutions where assembled people act collectively with legal authority. Local government is the lowest tier of governmental institutions where national government is on peak and provincial government occupy the middle position. The authority is systemised, regularised and utilised through local government system on behalf of local people by managing, decision making, directives enforcement, and accountability plan of actions. It is a public organisation authorised to resolve and deal out limited reach of people policies within a small area of a state.

Ali, Shah & Ahmad (2016) pointed out the role of the local government system in community development and people's prosperity. They are of the view that it integrates social services in Education, health and infrastructure development which creates awareness among the masses and helps in collecting and spending taxes on the local level. It not only helps in community development but also builds trust in government machinery. It also maintains law and order situation in the region. It raises the voices and issues of the masses at the local level and provides solutions to those issues easily at doorsteps.

Taamneh, Almaaitah and Alqdha (2020) illuminated different challenges facing local government are; allocation of financial resources to staff training and development, less interest of local government management in investing in employees skills and ideas, favouritism and tribalism in recruitment process, limited investment projects, lack of financial autonomy, incompetencies of local units in collection of revenue, difficulties in providing service to citizens due to lack of financial resources, bureaucratic interference and hurdles, lack of public participation in decision making process and environmental issues. These challenges have undermined the capability of local government system in term of service delivery to people at gross root level.

Aijaz (2006) elaborated the issues of urban local-level governance and pointed out that during municipal meetings, the decision-making process is mostly carried by the individual with significant social, economic, caste and religious

status. The ineffective participation of women and party politics at local level especially members allied with largest political party decisions are given importance. The ignorance of members from local government act contributes in less participation and they turned to dissatisfaction when their views are not considered. The meetings of council were not convened on time and sometimes the decision is not taken due to factionalism among members. Moreover, there is lack of transparency and accountability of members on various projects which have created dissatisfaction among other members as well as public.

Arif and Cartier (2010) examined the local government system of Pakistan by conducting a survey from citizens. They opined that citizen complained against the services provided by local government system and showed dissatisfaction. Bureaucratic control over local affairs was discouraged by people and complained of their non responsiveness as compared to local elected members. Citizens criticised and blamed the local government members for corruption and bribes in contracting. Citizens stressed on accountability and opined that it can improve service delivery and strengthen local government system. In addition, the overlapping roles and responsibilities between federal, provincial and local government have negatively affected the service delivery because many subjects of public importance became sidelines due to ambiguity.

A. Hussain and S. Hussain (2009) have pointed out many elements which have affected the decentralisation system in Pakistan. According to them, decentralisation in term of local government is always managed by military regime for legitimising its own government rather than to empower people at grass root level. Such non representative governments have controlled local government institutions through bureaucracy. There is always seen power contention between bureaucracy and elected local representatives which directly affected the function of local government system and service delivery. The bureaucracy had the power to appoint key officials and thus would manage allocation of developmental

funds and provisions of other services like education, health etc. Even the elected local representatives would request to bureaucracy to fill vacant posts in different departments. These elected representatives only have responsibilities rather than authority.

B. Khan, Ahmad & A. Khan (2020) explored the causes of weak local government institutions including lack of political will, undemocratic environment, bureaucratic interference in political institutions, poor electoral system, unstable financial conditions, political instability, cabal against the incumbent government, negative role of politicians and political parties and thirst for power of political figures. The elite capture in Pakistan have undermined the institution of local government system to flourish properly. They indicated that elected institutions are to a greater extent unwilling to empower local body members than non-elected institutions. The local government system in Pakistan cannot be strengthen until the democratic regimes give serious attention to it. Due to these problems, they predicted a blurred future for the local governance system in Pakistan.

Zaman and Naz (2015) explained the problems and issues faced by local government members in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including lack of infrastructure, shortage of offices, bureaucratic hurdles due to a mixture of authority in district government, delaying tactics of bureaucrats, financial constraints, funds transferring, and lack of government interest and reluctance to transfer powers to local body members. Moreover, the government and elected Members of Provincial Assembly (MPAs) and Members of National Assembly (MNAs) creates obstacles in transferring of funds to local government. They intervene and interfere in affairs of local government system through political parties in power and other powerful circles.

Rauf (2016) pointed out different loopholes in local governance system which have created many problems for elected representatives of local government system. One problem was the local government Act 2013 implemented in KP which was so complex that even elected representatives hardly understand it. Secondly,

the elected representatives faced extra-legal interventions from higher authorities in the form political, cultural and institutional misdeed. In addition, elected representatives from local government system faced lack of collaboration from government side for guidelines of committees and project making. The release of fund was another main problem faced by elected representatives which hindered many developmental projects initiated for the benefits of people.

Saleem (2018) analysed the political empowerment of local government system in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and observed that the local government system is not formulated to empower and transfer the authority to local elected members as the administrative and political powers have been vested in provincial centre rather than local government. Many subjects which are the business of local government has been transferred to provincial government in local government Act like taxation, planning, information technology, literacy and community development etc. The process of accountability of local body members is vague and seems ineffective. Process of inquiry against corruption, bribery and misuse of public funds is not clear in the Act and political power is not vested in local government but rather in provincial government.

There has been a lack of in-depth research despite of numerous works on the hurdles and challenges faced by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa local body members specifically in Tehsil Timergara in resolving masses issues and the way forward. Existing literature has focused on structure and problems of local government system, citizen participation, empowerment, community development, fiscal decentralisation and accountability process. However, there is need for a detailed understanding of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa current existed local government system, established in 2013 and amended in 2019, to assess the hurdles and challenges faced by the incumbent local body members elected in 2022 election in resolving masses issues and the way forward. This study will conduct an inclusive analysis of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa current 2019 amended local government system

to address this research gap and come up with solution of the research problem.

Methodology

Research Nature

This research study is qualitative. There is no statistical or numerical data involved. The study provided a detailed investigation of the experiences, opinions, and perceptions of members of local body members in tehsil Timergara. Inductive and interpretive approaches are applied to understand and explain the issues faced by local body members in tehsil Timergara and the way forward. Data in this research is collected from interviews of local body members. Thematic analysis is applied to the findings to codify and interpret the collected data.

Research Design

In line with the current study's objectives of issues and challenges face by members of local government system and the way forward, a qualitative research design is applied. A case study research approach of qualitative research design was adopted to this study because it was bounded by a specific geographic location which was Tehsil Timergara. It covered interviews with a specific group of local government members. The study provided an in-depth analysis of issues and challenges faced by local body members of tehsil Timergara and the way forward.

Techniques and Procedures

The research data are collected by using both primary and secondary sources. The primary data are gathered through interviews while secondary data are obtained from books, journals, past research papers, etc.

Target Population

The target population of this study are ten (10) elected members of the local government system (local body members) belonging to Tehsil Timergara.

Sources of Data

This study included the following two types of data:

1. Primary Data: The primary data are directly obtained from targeted respondents/population through interviews.
2. Secondary Data: The secondary data are collected from different sources like books, research articles, newspapers, journals, reports, government official websites, and other online forums.

Data Collection Tools

This study covered semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions in a qualitative approach to investigate hurdles and challenges faced by local body members in resolving masses issues and the way forward in Tehsil Timergara Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The researcher conducted ten (10) semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions with elected members of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa local government system in Tehsil Timergara.

One semi-structured interview is conducted with the Tehsil Timergara Chairman to determine his opinion about the hurdles and challenges faced by him in resolving mass issues and the possible solutions and ways to resolve these issues. The rest semi-structured interviews conducted with different elected members of local government system included six (06) villages/neighbourhood council Chairmen, two (02) Peasant councillors, and one (01) Youth councillor to come up with the research problem.

Results and Discussion

Inadequate mandate and empowerment

The current local government system prevailed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is nominal despite of election conduction. The provincial government has ceased the power and function of elected members of local government system and deprived them of their mandate (Iqbal, personal communication, September 02, 2024). The current local government system in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is not empowered in true sense to provide services to masses at door step. The power and function of elected members of local government system has taken away by government by amending the local government act in 2022. All these powers have transferred to

district administration and tehsil municipal administration (Ziauddin, personal communication, September 20, 2024).

Similarly, the government do not support the local government system and has abandoned to call the constitutional session of Tehsil Council to approve budget and other developmental schemes. We cannot perform our duties well and are helpless without proper support from government side because it has ceased our powers and functions (Hussain, personal communication, September 30, 2024). The members of local government try their best to provide services to people in personal capacity but due to no power and fund, they cannot act upon. They are not so much empowered to initiate different projects for the welfare of people (Ali, personal communication, October 10, 2024).

Likewise, the government has withdrawn both political and administrative authority from members of local government system. Even the sign and attestation power of various documents and domicile authority have taken away from us. We are the representatives of people without any power and function (Subhan, personal communication, October 16, 2024). The provincial government has ceased authority of local government system and members of local government system are powerless to act upon. The official session of Tehsil council is also not convened by the government to discuss various issues of our locality (Kalim, personal communication, October 28, 2024).

In addition, the elected members of local government system cannot take completely free decisions due to institutional limitations and changes in laws and rules regulations. The current local government system is not empowered due to which various issues arise (Irfan, personal communication, November 05, 2024). The KP government has ceased the power and mandate of local government system by curbing its practical implementation. Even the attestation authority of various NADRA documents and domicile have been taken away from the elected members of local government system (Shahab, personal communication, November 13, 2024).

Moreover, the current KP local government system is not powerful as compared to the system implemented in 2015. The power and function of elected members of local government system and councils has curbed through amendment in LGA. In previous district government system implemented in 2015, the district and tehsil administrations were responsible to elected representatives of local government. Reports could be submitted against any officer to provincial government on account of non-compliance of any decision. The elected members of local government system are, now, nominal and have no administrative, political and financial power to perform (Riaz, personal communication, December 08, 2024). The current KP local government system is nominal due to lack of authority and fund. The elected members of local government system have no power to act upon and solve people problems. The problems and issues of masses are increasing day by day and these cannot be solved without proper political, administrative and financial authority (Sajad, personal communication, January 02, 2025).

Non availability of fund

The most critical issue faced by elected members of local government system is non availability of fund due to which service delivery to masses has hampered. The government do not release fund to local government system to initiate different developmental projects for the welfare of people. The concerns of people are not addressed due to lack of fund which is humiliation of people mandate (Iqbal, personal communication, September 02, 2024). The infrastructure has not developed up to now due no funds from government which have created a lot of problems for the people of our locality. We have no resources of our own to carry out any developmental or services delivery tasks due non-availability of finance (Ziauddin, personal communication, September 20, 2024).

In the same way, the government does not release fund to local government system and that's why no developmental schemes have initiated up to now for the welfare of people (Hussain, personal communication, September

30, 2024). The elected representatives of local government members have no funds and resources to initiate any developmental projects for the benefits and welfare of the people. In 3 years of tenure, the government has not released a single penny to initiate any developmental projects on local level and provide services to people at door step (Ali, personal communication, October 10, 2024).

In similar fashion, the most important issue face by members of local government is lack of fund. The government do not heed to local government system by not releasing fund to them to carry out different welfare activities on local level (Subhan, personal communication, October 16, 2024). The elected members of local government system face salaries issue and their salaries are also not released. They are unable to resolve masses issues due non-availability of fund and also not focusing on people's issues due to no salary for them. The government did not release single penny to village councils after conducting election in 2022 (Kalim, personal communication, October 28, 2024).

Identically, the current local government system only exist in theory and government does not release fund to it to carry out different developmental schemes. There are a lot of decisions which cannot be implemented due to financial constraints because these need huge capital (Irfan, personal communication, November 05, 2024). The most significance challenge face by members of local government system is lack of and non-releasing of funds by provincial government to local government. The government did not release fund after conduction of election (Shahab, personal communication, November 13, 2024).

Besides, the local government institution is totally dependent on provincial government for finance. Local government institution get fund through provincial finance commission (PFC). The government has decided to transfer 30% of revenue fund to local government but unfortunately, no single penny has been released up to now. There are no direct sources of income in village councils and these rely only on governmental grant. Tehsil Government can utilise TMA's fund in municipal services but

with the approval of tehsil council which is not convening constitutionally (Riaz, personal communication, December 08, 2024). The most significant and important challenge faces by elected members of local government system is lack of fund due to which no developmental task for public welfare is initiated. The provincial govt do not release fund to local government which have increased people's problems. Many developmental schemes have not completed up to now due to lack of resources and fund (Sajad, personal communication, January 02, 2025).

Political Interference

The existed local government system is not free from political interferences. The members of provincial assembly (MPAs) and members of national assembly (MNAs) manipulate the decision-making process. They initiate and approve developmental projects of their interests from local government institutions. Civil society people also sometimes interfere in different activities carry out by local government members (Iqbal, personal communication, September 02, 2024). The empowerment of local government without eliminating interference of MPAs and MNAs is useless and waste of time. It is true that on one hand government has given us some sort of powers but on the other hand MPAs and MNAs interference has taken away these powers from local government members. Sometimes, political opponents make hindrances in decision making process (Ziauddin, personal communication, September 20, 2024).

Correspondingly, those voices of representatives of local government are considered which have affiliation with the same political party in power. The suggestions and demands of members belong to other political parties are ignored and deprived their locality from many important decisions. The government provide fund to only those Tehsil councils which have affiliation with provincial government and other tehsil councils are deprived of it (Hussain, personal communication, September 30, 2024). The government or political party especially the one in power interfere in local government system. Funds are only transfer to those members which have affiliation with governmental political

party and other members are deprived (Ali, personal communication, October 10, 2024).

Alike, the government has established Rules of Business (ROBs) due to which many decisions which are in favour of public cannot be taken. The ROBs established by provincial government has certain faults which ceased the tehsil council to act freely. The constitutional session of Tehsil Council is also not convened by the government to take important decisions. The provincial government favour those tehsil councils where elected chairman belongs to same political party in government (Irfan, personal communication, November 05, 2024). The political parties especially MPAs and MNAs interfere in the system by such a way that they are reluctant to empower the local government system due to reducing its influence in constituency. The ROBs empower the Tehsil Government to overrule a decision made by a village council if it seems against the interest of government (Shahab, personal communication, November 13, 2024).

Bureaucratic Hindrances

The bureaucracy in Pakistan has strong roots in the system and they are reluctant to mitigate its power and influence from the system. The government has curbed the powers of local government members by amending the local government act and empower the district and tehsil administration to act upon (Iqbal, personal communication, September 02, 2024). The district administration pressurises the local government department to release fund of other village councils to initiate any project in other region. It is violation of rights of the concern village councils and injustice with the people (Ziauddin, personal communication, September 20, 2024).

Uniformly, the Tehsil and District administrations do not consider any suggestions of elected representatives of local government system. They only consider those suggestions which are put by government affiliated party members (Hussain, personal communication, September 30, 2024). The bureaucrats apply delaying tactics whenever a problem is presented to them for early solution. They care

very less about elected representatives of local government suggestions and plans (Ali, personal communication, October 10, 2024).

In like manner, the bureaucrats are reluctant to transfer power and authority to local level and work under the local government. They formulate and implement such types of policies and laws which create hindrances for members of local government system. They are reluctant to carry out their duties under the supervision of elected members of local government system and give no value to their opinions (Kalim, personal communication, October 28, 2024). The bureaucracy in Pakistan serves the government rather than people. The government control local government system through bureaucracy which create hindrances for elected members of local government (Irfan, personal communication, November 05, 2024).

Lack of Practical Implementation

The local government system just exists on paper and in reality, it is completely paralysed. The current local government system does not meet people expectations and is completely failed due to lack of its practical implementation. The government does not have clear policy in hand about local government system (Iqbal, personal communication, September 02, 2024). The system is not completely failed but have a lot of deficiencies. The government has tried to establish system of local government just like prevailed in United Kingdom (UK) but in reality, the system only exists in theory and there is lack of practical implementation. The system has disbanded due to frequent changes. According to the spirit of local government act, the system has collapsed and failed (Ziauddin, personal communication, September 20, 2024).

Equivalently, the current local government system does not fulfil people needs and concerns and is failed up to now. The elected representatives of local government have no authorization power to act upon. Even the attestation power of local government members is not acceptable to NADRA and other government institutions. Only village council secretary accepts our attestation power due to its responsibility. Otherwise, the system does not

deliver properly up to now (Hussain, personal communication, September 30, 2024). The current local government system is insufficient to deliver properly due to various shortcomings. The people have not met any benefits from it up to now. The system is designed without any proper principles and practical implementation. The system only exists in theory and is of no value until practically implemented (Ali, personal communication, October 10, 2024).

Comparably, the current local government system does not meet people as well as members of local government expectations. The government do not release fund to local government to initiate different developmental projects for people welfare. The government have not released single penny in two and half year (Subhan, personal communication, October 16, 2024). People elect their representatives locally on the hope that they will solve our problems. But the government do not heed to the system and not release fund to village councils due to which people's problems are not solved. Due to this people expectations from the system get worse. The current local government system has failed due to not releasing funds to solve people problems locally (Kalim, personal communication, October 28, 2024).

Likewise, the current KP local government system is best system which have maximum numbers of people representatives in each village council. But unfortunately, the current local government system is paralysed due to its unpractical shape and governmental negligence. If it is truly implemented with true spirit, then people's maximum problems may be solved (Irfan, personal communication, November 05, 2024). The current KP Local government system is completely collapsed due to lack of practical implementation. The system is dysfunctional due to non-releasing of funds to local government. The powers have also been taken away from elected representatives of local government which have completely created despair among members of local government and people (Shahab, personal communication, November 13, 2024).

In the same way, the current local government system of KP is insufficient to fulfil people's

needs and demands. It has failed to achieve its objectives of devolution of powers on local level up to now. The current system of local government is nominal and no practical implementation has witnessed up to now. The previous district government system was best due to its functionality and practical implementation (Riaz, personal communication, December 08, 2024). The current KP local government system is unsatisfactory and have failed due to its theoretical nature. The election of local government has been conducted but the elected representatives of local government are deprived of power and authority through amendment in the LGA Act (Sajad, personal communication, January 02, 2025).

Lack of Decentralised Management System

The local government system should be decentralised in true sense to take decisions on local level. The local government system lack empowerment to impose and collect taxes on local level. The local government can generate revenue through imposition of taxes on different sectors like private schools, colleges and hospitals, parks, vegetables and fruits mandais, shopping malls and hotels. The local government can utilize this generated revenue for the well-being of people (Iqbal, personal communication, September 02, 2024). There are many natural resources exist in our village council which can boost the economic well-being of concerned village council. But unfortunately, the village council is not given any single penny in extraction of these resources. The government must adopt a concise plan to give the village council its rights from extraction of minerals and natural resources. These natural resources can not be properly managed without empowered decentralised system on local level (Ziauddin, personal communication, September 20, 2024).

Furthermore, the people representatives of local government system have the ability and strategies to counter different issues of their locality. But the government very rarely support and heed the system to resolve masses issues locally (Hussain, personal communication, September 30, 2024). The local elected representatives have not only the ability to

resolve masses issues but are well aware of their issues instead of MPAs and MNAs. The issues of masses cannot be resolved without proper empowered decentralised system on local level. If the government make the system more effective, empower it and release fund to it, then problems of people will be resolved locally without any discrimination (Ali, personal communication, October 10, 2024).

Moreover, the government should empower the village council cabinet to approve different developmental schemes for the welfare of people. These village councils should be empowered to spend fund from TMA, MPA and MNA fund and Tehsil Chairman fund (Subhan, personal communication, October 16, 2024). The elected members of local government system cannot take measures due to lack of empowerment and mandate. There are different sectors in our locality which can be brought in tax net with the support and help of people if empowered decentralised management system is installed on local level (Kalim, personal communication, October 28, 2024).

In addition, the locally elected representatives are well aware of problems and issues of their locality which can bring these problems to Tehsil Council for better solution. All the members of Tehsil council can make a concise strategy to resolve the issues with mutual collaboration. But a strong and empowered decentralised system is needed on local level for resolving people issues and to empower masses at gross root level (Irfan, personal communication, November 05, 2024). The issues of masses cannot be solved properly without empowerment of the local government system. The current prevailed local government system in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is strongly centralised in practice and government is also reluctant to make it a true decentralised management system to resolve masses issues at door step (Riaz, personal communication, December 08, 2024).

Conclusion

This study focused on the issues and challenges faced by elected representatives of local government system and the way forward in

Tehsil Timergara District Dir Lower. Based on findings, it can be concluded that the government of KP does not pay attention to establish and strengthen the local government system. It is reluctant to transfer power and authority to the elected representatives of local government system to empower the masses on gross root level. It curbs the powers of members of local government system by frequently changing and amending the local government act. the government does not transfer fund to local government system to carry out different welfare tasks. The fund transfer to local government is nominal and not free from political motives and favouritism. The constitutional sessions of councils are also not convened to approve different decisions for the welfare of people and to generate revenue. Moreover, the system is completely paralysed and lacked practical implementation which have created many problems for the locally elected members of local government. The system is not free from political and bureaucratic interference which have created many issues for members of local government system. The government favour those locally elected members which have political affiliation with the same political party. The MPAs and MNAs also create hindrances to manipulate the decision-making process. The bureaucrats are reluctant to transfer their power to locally elected members and to be accountable to them. They use delaying tactics in implementing decision taken by councils for the welfare of people.

Recommendations

The following are recommended based on research findings:

- ❖ The government should immediately withdraw the amendments made to LGA and remodel the original provisions to authorise and empower the elected representatives of local government system. The power and functions entitled to local government members in 2019 should be reinstated to make the system more functional and trustable.
- ❖ The KP government should release fund to local government institution to carry out developmental projects in their locality. It should release maximum fund to village councils instead of urban councils which have TMA's fund to carry out different developmental and municipal activities. Otherwise, the village councils should be authorised to spend TMA's fund for various municipal activities in village councils.
- ❖ The MPAs and MNAs interferences should be completely ceased to strengthen the local government system. The funds given to MPAs should be directly transferred to local government institution of concerned constituency. The locally elected representatives of people are well aware of their problems and can solve these issues better as compared to MPA. The MPAs and MNAs interferences should be completely curbed by law to protect the local government system.
- ❖ The bureaucrats should be made accountable to the locally elected representatives of people by law. They should act upon the decisions taken by councils and should be punished in violation of decisions. The bureaucrats should be restricted to their managerial work rather than make them lords of people. The annual confidential report and performance report of bureaucrats should be prepared by elected representatives to make them servants of the people.
- ❖ A concise and concrete system of local government in KP should be adopted by the consensus of all major stakeholders. Frequent amendments to the system should be discourage to prevent the system from decay. A constitutional safeguard should be guaranteed by

the law to practically implement it.

- ❖ The government should call constitutional sessions of councils with constant interval of times to approve different decisions and developmental projects. The councils should be authorised to impose taxes and fines on local level to generate revenue. The TMAs should be made subordinate to tehsil council.

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