

Role Of Local Government In Improving Public Service-Delivery In Punjab: A Comparative Study Of District Lahore And Kasur

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Abstract

Local government is a key feature for the good governance and public service delivery at local level in Pakistan. It provides a means for delivering public services, political representation and budget allocation to local citizens at a grassroots level. Ayub Khan introduced local government by Zulfikar Bhutto, Zia and Musharraf. Musharraf devolution plan was more comprehensive. However, all these initiatives for local governments were regulated by federal government. The introduction of 18th Amendment has abolished federal supremacy on local government system and declared local government as sole of provincial government. The Punjab government has introduced 2019 Act designed to further decentralize the power by creating local councils, enhancing public participation and simplifying its structure. In the same way, Act of 2022 is introduced to simplify and strengthen the local political representative's role, budgetary control of the local government. This study is design to compares the 2019 and the 2022 Acts and assesses their impact on District Lahore and Kasur's Local governance and public service delivery.

Keywords: Act, Budget, Devolution, Local Government, Provincial Government, Public Services.

Introduction

Local government is decentralized government at the local level responsible for providing services such as education, public security, waste management and infrastructure development at local level. It often involves direct engagement with the local community to address their local needs (United Nations, 2019) In the Indian subcontinent, the British colonial government introduced the local administration system during the 19th Century. Pakistan adopted this system after independence in 1947 (Cheema, Khwaja, & Qadir, 2006) This system was intended to improve administrative efficiency and foster local autonomy. Ayub Khan, the President of Pakistan, introduced the Basic Democracies System in the 1960s. This system was designed to improve local governance through a system of local councils. Ayub Khan later demolished his own system because of the concerns about its effectiveness and the centralization power (Kennedy, 1991) Zulfikar Bhutto, the Prime Minister of Pakistan in the 1970s, reintroduced a local government system that promoted grassroots democracy. However, his reforms did not last long due to political change (Rizvi, 1974). In the 1980s President Zia-

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ul-Haq reinstated and strengthened the system of local government, seeing it as a way to legitimize and extend his power through a controlled election process (Waseem, 1994). The local government system was unable to function properly during the 1990s because of political instability and frequent government changes, leading to an inconsistent implementation for a decade (Shah, 2006). Early in the 2000s, Pervez Musharraf introduced a comprehensive plan for devolution, which further decentralized authority to local authorities and enhanced their role in administration (Cheema, Khwaja & Qadir, 2006). In 2010, the return of democracy under the Pakistan People's Party government resulted in the passage of the 18th Amendment, which gave provinces more autonomy and the power to legislate local government issues (Malik, 2013).

The 18th Amendment in Punjab led to the Punjab Local Government Act of 2019. This Act aimed to further decentralize power by creating local councils, and to promote public participation in local government (Government of Punjab, 2019). The 2019 Act was criticized for being too complex and for the delays in holding local elections that hindered its implementation (Shah, 2020). The Punjab Local Government Act of 2022, which was introduced in order to simplify governance and increase the effectiveness of local representatives, has been a success (Government of Punjab, 2022). The 2022 Act was also intended to address issues relating to budgetary controls and the functioning local institutions such as Lahore Development Authority. This ensured that local governments have the resources and authority necessary to effectively manage urban development and provide public services at local level (Khan & Zia 2022). Despite the reforms, there are still challenges in realizing the full benefits of the 18th Amendment, and ensuring that the local governments in Punjab operate effectively and independently (Iqbal & Nisar 2023). The Punjab Local Government Act of 2019, which was passed in 2019 to improve local governance and decentralize powers, received criticisms for its complexity (Government of Punjab, 2019). The Punjab Local Government Act of 2022 was a response to these challenges. It aimed to streamline governance and increase the effectiveness of local representatives.

This case study examines the role that local government ordinances play in improving local public administration at local level. It focuses on a comparison of District Lahore and District Kasur, in Punjab, Pakistan. Local governments have the responsibility of improving the service delivery and governance at local level (Iqbal, 2023). This research used both primary and secondary data to produce a comprehensive assessment. Interviews with local officials, administrators and community members were conducted to collect primary data. Secondary data were sourced from government documents and academic literature about local governance in Punjab. Findings reveal that, while Lahore has more effective enforcement of local ordinances, which results in better infrastructure development, public service, and local administrative efficiency. Kasur struggles because of a lack of resources, administrative instabilities, and weakened enforcement of local ordinances (Government of Punjab, Annual Report on Local Governance, 2022). This qualitative study highlights the importance of having an effective local governance system at the grassroots level for sustainable development. Lahore has achieved success in its local public administration due to the enforcement of local laws, which have improved local governance and streamlined service delivery (Punjab Planning & Development Board, 2022). Together, these factors undermine Kasur's performance in local public administration and leave it behind as compared to Lahore (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Despite both Lahore, and Kasur being districts in the Punjab province of Pakistan they have distinct differences between them and when it comes to their effectiveness as a public administration due to a variety of socio-economic and political factors (Ali, 2022).

Governance Theory

Understanding the dynamics of local public administration through the lens of Governance

theory, especially in the contexts of Lahore and Kasur. Governance, refers to the processes, systems, and institutions through which society is managed, involving a wide range of actors and interactions beyond just the government (Rhodes, 1996). This theory emphasizes a shift away from traditional forms of government control towards more participatory and networked forms of governance, where power and decision-making are more distributed (Pierre & Peters, 2000). In cities like Lahore, with established institutions, governance tends to be more effective, while in places like Kasur, weaker governance structures lead to challenges in public administration (Bevir, 2011).

Stakeholders



(Developed by Authors)

Decentralization is also emphasized in the theory as a way to improve local governance (Rhodes, 1996). Understanding the differences between Lahore and Kasur requires a concept called governance networks. In governance networks power and authority is distributed among various rather than concentrated in one institution or actor. This decentralized approach allows for better coordination, resource sharing and collective problem solving (Kooiman, 2003). Governance networks are characterized as flexible and adaptable, allowing them to better respond to complex and dynamic challenges (Rhodes, 1996). Decentralization in Lahore has led to a more efficient distribution of resources and an improved delivery of public services (Bevir, 2011). Kasur faces difficulties due to a weaker decentralization that leads to inefficiency in the public administration. Governance networks are the relationships and interactions between various stakeholders who are involved in policy-making and decision-making (Sorensen & Torfing 2007).

Public Governance Model

The Public Governance Model is a structured way to manage public resources and deliver services to local citizens. This model incorporates transparency, accountability and participation of citizens, as well as the rule of law (Siddiqui, 2023).

Characteristics



(Developed by Authors)

In Lahore the public governance model with transparent processes & accountability mechanisms has been implemented effectively. The result has been improved public service delivery, and increased satisfaction among local citizens. Kasur struggles with issues of transparency and accountability, which results in poor outcomes for public administration. This model stresses the importance for local citizen participation in government (Rhodes, 1996). This theoretical framework integrates governance theory with the public governance model to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence public administration in Lahore, and Kasur. The framework highlights the importance of collaborative governance, transparency, decentralization, and citizen participation in improving public services.

Historical Development of Local Government in Punjab

1. Pre-Partition Era

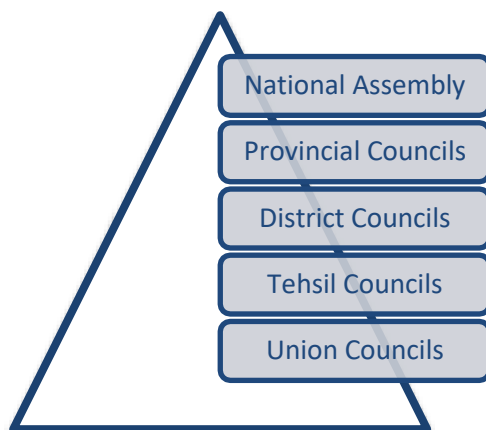
As in other parts of the Indian Subcontinent, the roots of local governance in Punjab can be traced to the British colonial era. As part of their administrative reforms the British introduced local self-government, beginning with the Municipal Act of 1885 which established municipalities throughout the Indian Subcontinent, including Punjab. Local governments were mainly used by the British to maintain law and orders, collect revenues, and manage services such as sanitation and education. These local authorities were often dominated primarily by British officials and the elites, with little local participation (Rehman, 2022). Government of India Act of 35 devolved more powers to the provincial governments including local governance but autonomy was still limited. Local governments in Punjab were not democratic and acted more as extensions of colonial administrations than truly representative institutions during this time. (Rehman, 2022).

2. Post-Partition Era

Pakistan has inherited local government system from the British colonial government and lacked financial as well as infrastructural capacity to transform and implement local government system for smooth public service delivery at grassroots level. However, Ayub Khan had introduced Basic Democracy system for local government system to improve administration and to overcome bad governance.

Basic democracies under Ayub Khan (1958-1969)

The system was introduced in the early 1960s to decentralize administrative functions and increase local participation in local government. President Ayub Khan introduced the Basic Democracies System in 1959, as part of a broader reform program aimed at modernizing Pakistan's administrative and political structures (Waseem, 1994). The system had a hierarchical organization consisting of five tiers.

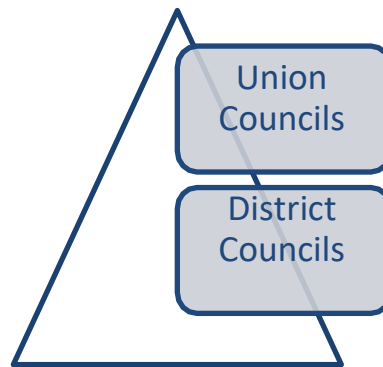


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In the Basic Democracies System, Basic Democrats (local representatives) are elected to represent their constituencies through indirect elections (Waseem, 1994). The system was designed to improve local administration, enhance public service delivery and promote rural development (Kennedy, 1991). The system was criticized for being too centralized by Ayub's regime, despite its decentralization goals. Basic Democrats were seen as lacking in real power and autonomy (Shafqat 1999). Ayub Khan's decision to further centralize power and its lack of effectiveness led to the system being dismantled by the late 1960s (Kennedy 1991). The Basic Democracies System represents an important historic attempt to local governance reform in Pakistan. It reflects both the ambitions of centralized but tiered governance systems and their limitations. After Ayub's resignation General Yahya, then Chief of Army Staff took over and imposed martial laws, leading to military rule. General elections were held in 1970 under Yahya's regime.

Local Government under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1971-1977)

Zulfikar Bhutto was elected President in 1971, and then Prime Minister in 1973.(Burki,1980). Bhutto introduced a new system of local government. This system was designed to decentralize administration functions and engage local representatives in local governance more directly (Pasha,1981). Under Bhutto regime, the local government structure was designed in a two-tiered system.

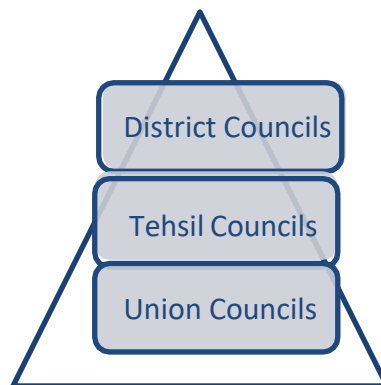


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Bhutto's Reforms were designed to empower local government, improve administrative efficiency and increase public participation in local governance (Burki,1980). Bhutto's administration, despite its intention to decentralize local governments, maintained a significant level of control, which limited their effectiveness and autonomy. Zulfikar Bhutto's regime ended in 1978 following a controversial presidential election and a subsequent military coup led General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq. Zia-ul-Haq imposed martial laws and dismissed Bhutto. Local governments were inactive and little progress was made in strengthening local institutions during his tenure.

Zia-ul-Haq Local Government Reforms (77-1988)

Zia-ul-Haq implemented a new system of local government through the Local Government Ordinance of 1978. This reform was intended to decentralize administration functions and increase participation in local politics (Shafqat,1999).



(Developed by Authors)

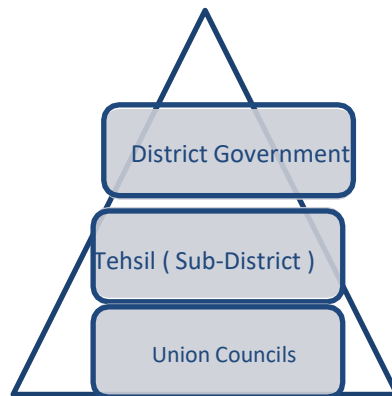
This system allows local elections to be held, where representatives are directly elected by the local people. The goal was to increase grassroots democracy and the public's involvement in local government (Jalal,1995). The reform was designed to transfer administrative and financial power to local governments. This included responsibilities for infrastructure, education and health services (Shafqat,1999). The primary objective was to empower local authorities and decentralize administrative duties in order to reduce the burden of the central government (Pasha,1981). Zia-ul-Haq's regime retained substantial control over the local

governments despite the reforms. The centralization in authority limited the autonomy and effectiveness of local institutions (Shafqat, 1999). Local governments faced many challenges due to financial constraints and inadequate resources, which affected their ability to provide public services efficiently (Pasha,1981). Zia-ul-Haq laid the foundation for future local governments, but they also revealed the difficulties of balancing central control with decentralization (Shafqat,1999). Zia-ul-Haq's local government system was modified by successive governments in response to ongoing debates on the balance between central and local authority (Jalal,1995).

Musharraf's Devolution Plan 2000-2008

General Pervez Musharraf came to power through a military coup in October 1999, overthrowing the democratically elected government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (Siddiq, 2007). Musharraf implemented the most comprehensive reforms of local government in Pakistan's history in 2000 with the Power Devolution Plan. Musharraf's regime aimed to decentralize power, promote grassroots democracy, and reduce the influence of traditional political elites. This plan, was designed to devolve authority to local governments through a three-tiered system of District Governments, Tehsil Government (sub-districts) and Union Councils (International Crisis Group, 2004).

Musharraf's devolution plan



(Developed by Authors)

According to Musharraf's plan Elected Representatives have been given administrative and financial power, and the local government is responsible for providing basic services such as education, healthcare and infrastructure development. Local elections were held without the participation of political parties to limit their influence and promote independent candidates. (Cheema Khwaja & Qadir 2006). To ensure that women, minorities and marginalized groups are represented in local government, the plan reserves seats for them (Siddiqui 2023). They were created to encourage citizens' participation in local development. This led to an improvement in service delivery across many areas (Cheema Khwaja & Qadir 2006). The Devolution Plan disrupted traditional power structures, dominated by feudal families and elites, but also led to resistance among these groups (Siddiqi 2007). After Musharraf left power in 2008, the government that followed, led by the Pakistan Peoples Party and Pakistan Muslim League-N rolled back many reforms (Siddiqi, 2007).

Difference Between Basic Democracy and Devolution Plan

Aspect	Basic Democracy (Ayub Khan's Era)	Musharraf Devolution Plan
Time Period	1959-1969	2000-2008
Primary Objective	To provide a local governance system and control through indirect elections.	To decentralize power from the federal to local governments, promoting grassroots democracy.
Election System	Indirect elections: Basic democrats (elected by the people) elected the President and members of the assemblies	Direct elections: Citizens elected representatives at the Union, Tehsil, and District levels.
Control	Centralized control with significant power held by the President.	Devolution of power to local governments, but with oversight by provincial and federal governments.
Structure	Four levels: Union Council, Tehsil Council, District Council, and Divisional Council .	Three-tier system: Union Council, Tehsil Council, and District Council.
Role of Local Bodies	Limited to basic administrative and development functions.	Empowered local bodies with administrative, financial, and political responsibilities.

Outcome	Led to the concentration of power in the hands of Ayub Khan; eventually collapsed.	Initial success in empowering local governments, but largely dismantled after Musharraf's departure.
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Source: Developed by Authors from Punjab Government Documents

Elected Governments (2008-2022)

After Musharraf's resignation, the elected governments of Pakistan, notably those under Pakistan People's Party and Pakistan (PPP) Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN) showed different levels of commitment towards local government. The 18th Amendment of the Constitution was the most significant reform under the PPP government. This amendment transferred considerable powers to the provinces from the federal level, increasing their autonomy (Waseem,2012). Local governments did not have full power despite the transfer of powers from the federal government to the provincial government. The provincial governments often resisted transferring power to local authorities, resulting in weak local governance (Cheema and Khan, 2020). Local government elections were repeatedly delayed during the PPP's reign. Under pressure from the Supreme Court, the PML-N conducted local government election in 2015-2016. The elections were held across all provinces but the effectiveness and process of local government varied greatly between regions (Cheema, Khan, 2020). Punjab Local Government Act of 2013, a 2013 law, aimed at empowering local authorities by giving them administrative and financial authority (Waseem 2017). Local representatives are often subjected to interference by provincial and federal government, which undermines their ability function independently (Cheema, 2020). The PTI government promoted the idea to empower local bodies in order to improve public service delivery, and public participation (Siddiqui, 2023). This act replaced the local government system of Punjab and aimed to introduce a decentralized, participatory governance (Cheema and Khan,2020). The PTI government in Punjab was criticized for dissolving the local bodies that were elected under the old system and for delaying new elections. This led to a vacuum of local governance that affected public service delivery. The PTI's tenure in office was marked by political unrest and clashes between the government and opposition parties. This affected both the effectiveness and continuity of local governance reforms (Siddiqui, 2023). The pandemic of Covid- 19 not only highlighted the need for effective local government, but also revealed weaknesses in existing systems (Rizvi, 2021).

Punjab Local Government Laws

Punjab has witnessed significant changes in the laws regarding local government over the past years to reflect the province's changing administrative, political and social local needs.

List of Local Government Act in Punjab

Law	Year	roducedBy	Focus	Structure	Challenges

Punjab Local Government Act	2013	Post-18th Amendment (PPP Govt)	Aligning with 18th Amendment, autonomy to local govts	Three-tiered system with more autonomy at local levels	Political interference, financial constraints, limited capacity
Punjab Local Government Act	2019	Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)	Further decentralization, strengthening local	Restored District Councils, Union Councils	Short-lived due to political transitions
Punjab Local Government Act	2022	Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Govt	Addressing 2013 and 2019 Acts' shortcomings, enhanced public service delivery	Focused on decentralization, enhanced accountability, and transparency	Implementation challenges, need for political stability

Why the Punjab Local Government Act 2022 Was needed

The need for a new legal framework was prompted by frequent changes in local governments and lack of consistency in policies. Punjab Local Government Act (2019) was introduced to address these problems, but it failed to last long due to political changes (Khan, 2010). The Punjab Local Government Act 2022 was introduced in order to address the shortcomings of earlier laws and provide for a more stable, effective and efficient framework for local government. The 2022 Act is designed to decentralize power to local governments and allow them to better manage local affairs. The act aims to improve the public service delivery, especially in areas such as education, health and infrastructure development, by giving local governments more financial and administrative autonomy (Malik 2022). The act includes mechanisms to improve accountability and transparency of local representatives, both of which were weak points in previous laws (Khan, 2022). The 2022 Act places a strong emphasis on community involvement in local government, which ensures that citizens have more say in the decision-making process at the local level.

District Lahore

As the capital of Punjab, Lahore gets a greater share of resources in terms of both financial allocations as well as human capital. Lahore has always been a priority for the Punjab Resource Allocation Local Ordinances and their Enforcement Political Stability Citizen Participation government in its budgets. Lahore, received PKR 75 billion in the budget for 2022-23 for infrastructure development and public delivery services at local level. Government of Punjab (2023) Punjab Budget 2023-24 This is a much higher allocation than other districts. Kasur is a district that receives less resources than Lahore, due to its lower urbanization. Kasur received only PKR 8 billion in the same budget for 2022-23 to fund development projects. Kasur has been unable to implement major public administration reforms due to this disparity. Government of Punjab (2023) Punjab Budget 2023-24 Lahore has a more effective enforcement system due to well-established institutions such as the Lahore Development Authority and City Traffic Police. The LDA took actions against more than 2,500 illegal buildings in 2022 (Lahore Development Authority, 2023) And the City Traffic Police issued over 1.2 million fines for traffic violations, demonstrating strong enforcement commitment for maintaining the order on roads (City Traffic Police Lahore, 2023). On the other hand, Due to

its weak governance, Kasur has a difficult time in enforcing local ordinances. Kasur's traffic police only issued 35,000 fines for traffic violations in 2022 fines for 150 illegal constructions (District Government Kasur, 2023). The lack of enforcement leads to problems such as unauthorized urban expansion, traffic mismanagement and poor public administration. Lahore has a relatively higher level of administrative stability. This has led to a consistent implementation of policies and governance at local level. Lahore's development projects are less likely be interrupted by the presence of influential politicians and stable administrative institutions. Lahore has 14 seats out of the 371 in the Punjab Assembly. This gives a significant influence on provincial decisions Malik, R. (2021). The 18th Amendment of the Constitution of Pakistan passed in 2010 significantly changed the governance landscape. It devolved powers from the federal to the provincial governments, including local government matters (Malik, 2013). This amendment gave provinces more autonomy and allowed them to legislate independently on local government issues, thus enhancing the role that local governments play in public administration (Cheema, Khan & Myerson, 2010). Devolution was intended to improve local governance, strengthen local democracy and enhance public service delivery at local level (Waseem, 2010).

District Kasur

Kasur is characterized by administrative instability and frequent leadership changes. This instability has caused delays in the implementation of local projects and weakened local governance. Kasur has a limited political representation at the Punjab Assembly, with just 5 seats out of 371. This reduces its influence on provincial affairs. Hussain, F. (2020) Lahore has a higher level of participation by local citizens, through voting and community forums. This contributes to a better public administration of local government. Lahore had a 57% voter turnout in the local government elections of 2022, indicating a high level of civic engagement. Local authorities also regularly organize public forums and hearings, which encourage active local citizen participation in governance. By contrast, Kasur had a lower level of local voter participation in 2022, with 43% of voters voting. This limited engagement can be seen in the low number of local community forums and public meetings held in the district. The lower level of local participation hinders local governance as feedback from citizens and their involvement is essential to responsive administration (Bhatti, & Shah, 2022).

Comparison of Local Government Act 2019 and 2022

Aspect	Punjab Local Government Act, 2019	Punjab Local Government Act, 2022	Kasur	Lahore
Introduction Year	2019	2022	2019 Act: Initial implementation issues; 2022 Act: Aimsto address these issues	2019 Act: Similar issuesfaced; 2022 Act: Improved implementation
Governance Structure	Restored three-tieredsystem: District Councils, Union Councils,	Refined three-tiered system withadditional provisions for	Struggles with effective implementation of	Generally better implementation of 2022Act with improved

	Municipal			
	Committees	autonomy	both Acts	governance structures
Financial Autonomy	Enhanced financial powers for local bodies	Further increased financial autonomy and budgeting powers	Limited financial resources and autonomy under both Acts	Better financial management and resources under 2022 Act
Administrative Autonomy	Improved operational independence for local bodies	Greater emphasis on operational independence and accountability	Weaker administrative capacity and autonomy	Stronger administrative capacity and autonomy
Public Participation	Encouraged through local elections and community involvement	Increased mechanisms for public participation and transparency	Limited public participation and engagement	Higher levels of public engagement and transparency
Challenges	Implementation challenges due to political transitions	Aimed to address past challenges with more robust mechanisms	Persistent issues with political interference and resource constraints	More effective response to challenges with better governance mechanisms
Impact on Service Delivery	Aimed to improve service delivery but faced hurdles	Improved service delivery focus with enhanced local government powers	Service delivery issues persisted; improvements sought	Better service delivery outcomes with the 2022 Act

Source: Developed by Authors from Punjab Government Documents

Conclusion

This study compares the local governance systems in Lahore with those in Kasur. It highlights the differences in effectiveness of public service delivery between the two districts. Lahore benefits from a better allocation of resources, a stronger administrative stability and a developed administrative structure as it is the capital city. Lahore is able to maintain a high standard of urban planning, development, and service delivery because these factors allow it to

enforce local ordinances, provide robust public services, and ensure robust enforcement. In Lahore, the success in the public service delivery can be attributed largely to the stronger governance frameworks that include an effective elected representative, a functioning administrative system, as well as substantial budgetary support by provincial government. Kasur, faces many challenges that impede its progress. The district is plagued by limited resources, weak governance structures and political instability. Insufficient budget allocations, a lack in effective urban planning and inadequate service delivery have compounded these challenges. Kasur's weak enforcement of local ordinances exacerbates its governance problems, making it harder for the local government of the district to meet the needs of the population.

Lahore's and Kasur's differing resource allocation is a key factor in the contrasting administrative results. Lahore's bigger budget and concentrated investment in infrastructure and health and education has resulted in better governance and more efficient public services. This shows how a proper distribution of resources can improve public administration. Kasur suffers, on the other hand, from inadequate resources. This leads to insufficient service delivery, and a growing gap in development when compared to Lahore. Lahore's administrative stability, as well as its stronger governance frameworks, have allowed for the enforcement of local ordinances. Lahore's governance models are more robust and allow for an effective public administration. Kasur, on the other hand, has a weaker governance system and more political challenges that have resulted in inconsistent policy implementation and a lack sustained development. Lahore's active citizen participation has played an important role in improving the public administration. Engagement of local communities has improved transparency and accountability in governance, contributing to better services. Kasur has had a difficult time gaining the same level public trust and cooperation due to its limited engagement of citizens.

Kasur, on the other hand, has been lagging behind due to inconsistent administration over the years. Lahore has a more effective enforcement of local ordinances, thanks to its better administrative capacity and political commitment. Kasur struggles to enforce these ordinances because of its weak governance structures and limited resource. This disparity in enforcement is a major factor in the differences in governance outcomes between both districts. The research concludes that successful local public administration is dependent on a combination between resource availability, governance, political stability and active citizen involvement. These factors are important in shaping the administrative abilities of local governments in Punjab

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