

Strengthening School Governance: Assessing the Impact of School Management Committees on School Administration in Public Schools of Pakistan

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Abstract: This study investigates the impact of School Management Committees (SMCs) on school administration in public schools across Pakistan. Using a quantitative correlational design, data were collected from 1,500 respondents, including school heads, teachers, and SMC members. The analysis explored the relationships between various SMC roles—including awareness, enrolment, teacher management, financial management, basic facilities, and pedagogical practices—and school administrative performance. Correlation results revealed significant positive associations for awareness ($r = .344$), teacher management ($r = .307$), financial management ($r = .085$), basic facilities ($r = .574$), and pedagogical practices ($r = .332$) with school administration, while enrolment showed no statistically significant relationship ($r = .046$, $p = .074$). Multiple regression analysis confirmed that roles in basic facilities ($\beta = .471$), pedagogical practices ($\beta = .124$), financial management ($\beta = .104$), enrolment ($\beta = .122$), awareness ($\beta = .095$), and teacher management ($\beta = .045$) were all significant predictors, explaining 39.1% of the variance in school administration ($R^2 = .391$, $F = 161.468$, $p < .001$). These findings underscore the critical need to enhance the capacity of SMCs in key functional areas for more effective school governance.

Key Words: School Management Committees (SMCs), school administration, educational governance, community participation

Introduction

As part of a nationwide education reform initiative, School Management Committees (SMCs) have been rolled out across Pakistan to promote decentralized governance and community involvement in the administration of public schools. These modifications are rooted in the National Education Policies (1992–2002, 1998–2010) and given systematic transformations through the School. The Management Committee Policy of 2007 aimed to shift school management from centralized control to more localized, participatory structures. SMCs serve as community-based bodies that engage parents, teachers and local stakeholders in decision-making for better school performance, accountability and transparency (Ministry of Education, 2009).

The establishment of School Management Committees (SMCs) is grounded in understanding the importance of active engagement of the local community to improve school infrastructure, accountability and performance of students. SMCs act as a bridge between schools and their surrounding communities and are designed to promote local supervision, utilize community resources, and encourage a constructive and caring academic environment (Dean, 1995; Ogawa, 2009). Studies have shown that when community stakeholders are enabled to regulate school affairs and help

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in planning processes, results such as improvement in student retention, better discipline and greater public awareness among teachers and students tend to follow (Bauch & Goldring, 1998; Hildebran, 1997). However, policy documents stress the importance of SMCs, and empirical studies present mixed findings regarding their effectiveness in school governance. While some investigations report notable improvements in school administration and the efficient use of resources, others reveal challenges such as inadequate accountability, ambiguous responsibilities, low levels of community engagement and mechanisms (Arif, 2024; Adil et al., 2018).

Nasrullah et al. (2020) observed that accountability mechanisms within school governance are frequently ill-defined and that community members often lack the necessary awareness and training to participate meaningfully in oversight activities. As a result, efforts toward decentralization particularly in regions such as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have limited empowerment effects at the grassroots level.

A study conducted by Nasrullah et al. (2021) showed that community-based bodies such as School Management Committees (SMCs) and Parent-Teacher Councils (PTCs) have become merely symbolic rather than functioning as genuine instruments of accountability due to the absence of institutional backing and adequate access to information. This research highlighted the importance of equipping community stakeholders with well-defined targeted capacity-building programs, responsibilities and active involvement in monitoring and evaluation processes.

However, the construction of SMCs reflects a policy commitment to project decentralized school governance but their practical impact on administrative effectiveness remained uneven. It has been observed that many schools in marginalized and low-literacy communities, continue to face challenges such as insufficient capacity, limited public awareness, minimal community participation and unclear committee roles (Adil et al., 2018; Freire, 1999). It was observed that the responsibilities of SMCs in Pakistan included overseeing budgets, developing school improvement plans and monitoring teacher and student attendance (Karim, 2020).

In light of these challenges, the present research aimed to critically assess the practical contribution of SMCs to the administrative performance of public schools in Pakistan. Utilizing a robust data set comprising responses from 1,500 participants which include school principals, educators and committee members, this study explores the extent to which SMCs' operational engagement influences school-level governance. The analysis focuses on six strategic domains: oversight of teaching staff, instructional quality, student enrollment efforts, financial oversight, stakeholder awareness, infrastructure support, and instructional quality. The study seeks to offer evidence-based insights into how participatory governance models can be strengthened to improve educational outcomes and school effectiveness in decentralized settings.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions.

1. To what extent do School Management Committees (SMCs) contribute to the effectiveness of school administration in public primary schools in Pakistan?
2. Which specific roles of SMCs, such as awareness, enrolment, teacher management, financial oversight, provision of basic facilities, and pedagogical support, are significantly associated with improved school administration?
3. What is the predictive value of each SMC functional role in explaining the variance in school administrative performance?
4. Does community awareness of SMC responsibilities influence their engagement in administrative decision-making and oversight?
5. How can the involvement of SMCs in infrastructure, teaching support, and financial governance enhance overall school management practices?

Background of the Study

School Management Committees (SMCs) serve as the governing bodies of public schools in Pakistan, albeit with limited administrative powers. Their primary objective is to enhance the quality of education by actively involving parents and



community members in the governance of their local schools. The National Education Policies (1992–2002 and 1998–2010) strongly emphasized the establishment and integration of SMCs into local school governance structures to improve educational quality and school environments (Ministry of Education, 2009). Further, the National Education Policy of 2009 highlighted the importance of mobilizing community members and raising awareness about their roles through targeted sensitization campaigns.

In comparison, School Management Councils in the United States play a more dynamic and strategic role. These bodies are instrumental in shaping school goals, formulating strategic plans, and mobilizing human and material resources essential for effective teaching and learning. They serve as vital links between schools and their communities, contributing to the creation of a supportive and productive learning environment (Dean, 1995). Additionally, SMCs help enforce discipline among students and staff, a factor closely linked with improved academic outcomes.

Despite their importance, SMCs in Pakistan often remain underutilized or symbolic. There is an urgent need to make these bodies more functional and results-oriented. In response, the government has initiated the formation and strengthening of school councils to improve pedagogical practices and enhance community-school collaboration. Research supports the positive impact of parental involvement on student achievement. For example, Bauch and Goldring (1998) found that when parents actively engage in their children's educational activities, it significantly boosts their academic performance. The home and family environment are thus crucial factors influencing student success. Parental collaboration with schools, particularly at the primary level, is vital for holistic child development.

Hildebran (1997) emphasized that parents are children's first and most effective teachers, playing a fundamental role in shaping their learning through natural, everyday interactions. Schools, in turn, are deeply embedded in the communities they serve. As social institutions, schools not only transmit culture but also act as tools for social transformation, contributing to both the reproduction and innovation of societal norms and values.

1. Within this community-based framework, Parents-Teacher Associations (PTAs)—established in all provinces under the broader umbrella of SMCs—play a particularly critical role. According to Ogawa (2009), the PTAs are responsible for:
 2. Supporting students at home, in school, and in the broader community;
 3. Raising awareness among parents regarding their educational responsibilities
 4. Engaging the community in discussions about the educational services provided by both the government and local stakeholders.
 5. Motivating parents to enrol and retain their children in school;
 6. Working to reduce student absenteeism and dropout rates;
 7. Strengthening the relationship between parents and teachers; and
 8. Mobilizing community resources to benefit students and educational institutions.
9. These objectives highlight the multifaceted role of SMCs and PTAs in fostering community engagement and improving educational outcomes in Pakistan.

Literature Review

School Management Committees (SMCs) are regarded as a key element of the decentralization of education governance in Pakistan. Their main objective is to increase the accountability of schools, build the connection between schools and communities, and promote participatory decision-making at the grassroots level. A number of studies have underscored the various roles SMCs perform in school monitoring, planning, and financial management.

Khan notices that School Management Committees (SMCs) act proactively to drive infrastructural and human resource progress by interacting with head teachers, parents, and students. With the head teachers and parents as enablers, and SMC members as community advocates, the school operations are fostered with joint ownership as well as participatory decision-making.

Nonetheless, while these contributions have been positive, SMCs in Pakistan also face a variety of systemic barriers. Among the issues are ambiguous definitions of roles, low parental literacy, economic dilemmas, and an overall absence of training in administration—issues that limit their ability to effect real change in educational performance. As Bosetti

(2004) points out, in cases where community engagement is devoid of structure or content, the integrity of school governance is negatively affected.

Furthermore, complementing this perspective, Selznick (2011) and Raadschelders (2013) opine that good school leadership depends on strategic vision and the capacity to mobilize internal as well as external resources. To this end, SMCs—when integrated into the governance system to their full potential—can be important agents in upholding transparency, monitoring personnel performance, and facilitating prudent financial management. In addition, SMCs' structural function, as prescribed in national policy documents, encompasses school development plan preparation, tracking attendance of students, and reporting lengthy staff absences—functions critical to effective school management.

The study also underscored the evolution of SMCs from earlier community organizations such as Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), noting that in Pakistan, the transition was formalized through the 1994 education policy and later codified in the 1998–2010 policy framework. SMCs were expected to assume expanded roles beyond traditional PTA functions, especially in rural and under-resourced schools.

In conclusion, the existing literature from your dissertation supports the argument that SMCs have the potential to significantly enhance school administration, provided that policy and practice gaps, particularly in role clarity, training, and community awareness, are systematically addressed.

Methodology and Results

A quantitative correlational research design was employed. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed among 1,500 participants, including SMC members, head teachers, and school staff. The instrument assessed six key dimensions of SMC engagement. Pearson correlation was used to determine the strength and direction of relationships between variables, while multiple linear regression was employed to identify significant predictors of school administration performance. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS.

Participants of the study

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	798	54.6
	Female	664	45.4
	Total	1462	100.0
Age group	1	242	16.6
	2	492	33.7
	3	380	26.0
	4	347	23.8
	Total	1461	100.0
School Location	Rural	677	45.9
	Urban	797	54.1
	Total	1474	100.0
Role in SMC	Chairman	416	28.47
	Community Member	76	5.20
	Parent Member	651	44.56
	Secretary	64	4.38
	Teacher Member	254	17.39
	total	1461	100
Academic Qualification	1	38	2.6
	2	90	6.1
	3	902	61.2
	4	444	30.1
	Total	1474	100.0

		Frequency	Percent
Working Experience	1	218	14.9
	2	426	29.2
	3	177	12.1
	4	640	43.8
	Total	1461	100.0
Work experience related to education (only for parent members)	No	449	69.29
	Yes	199	30.71
	Total	648	100

The table above reveals the demographic characteristics of the participants of the study. The respondents to the survey were members of the school management committees in the Punjab Province of Pakistan. The study sample comprised 1,474 respondents involved in School Management Committees (SMCs), including school heads, teachers, and community members. Among the participants, 54.6% were male ($n = 798$) and 45.4% were female ($n = 664$), indicating a balanced gender distribution.

Participants' age distribution was categorized into four groups, with the largest proportion (33.7%, $n = 492$) falling in the second age group, followed by 26.0% ($n = 380$) in the third, 23.8% ($n = 347$) in the fourth, and 16.6% ($n = 242$) in the first. Regarding school location, 54.1% of respondents ($n = 797$) represented urban schools, while 45.9% ($n = 677$) were from rural areas, ensuring a geographically diverse sample. In terms of roles within SMCs, the majority of respondents were parent members (44.56%), followed by chairpersons (28.47%), teacher members (17.39%), community members (5.20%), and secretaries (4.38%). This distribution reflects a broad representation of the different stakeholders engaged in school governance.

Regarding academic qualifications, a substantial proportion (61.2%) held education at level 3 (interpreted as bachelor's or equivalent), followed by 30.1% at level 4 (likely master's or higher), 6.1% at level 2 (intermediate), and only 2.6% at level 1 (matriculation or below). Participants' working experience in the education sector was diverse, with 43.8% having over 10 years of experience (category 4), followed by 29.2% (category 2), 14.9% (category 1), and 12.1% (category 3).

Among parent members ($n = 648$), 30.71% reported having work experience in education, while the remaining 69.29% had no professional background in the education sector. This mix provides insight into the varied capacities and perspectives that parent representatives bring to their SMC roles.

Results

The following tables convey the results of the data analysis. Pearson correlations and regression analysis were run to generate the following results.

Table 2

Correlations

		SMCs roles in					
School Administration		Awareness	Enrolment	Teachers Management	Financial Management	Basic Facilities	Pedagogical Practices
	r	.344**	0.046	.307**	.085**	.574**	.332**
	r^2	11.83%	0.21%	9.42%	0.72%	32.95%	11.06%
	p	0	0.074	0	0.001	0	0
	N	1500	1500	1500	1500	1500	1500

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson correlation analysis revealed statistically significant positive associations between school administration and the SMC roles, Basic Facilities: $r = .574$, $p < .01$ (32.95% variance), Awareness: $r = .344$, $p < .01$ (11.83%), Teacher Management: $r = .307$, $p < .01$ (9.42%), Pedagogical Practices: $r = .332$, $p < .01$ (11.06%), Financial Management: $r = .085$, $p = .001$ (0.72%), Enrolment showed a weak and statistically non-significant relationship ($r = .046$, $p = .074$),

Multiple regression analysis yielded a statistically significant model ($R^2 = .391$, $F = 161.468$, $p < .001$), indicating that SMC roles collectively explain 39.1% of the variance in school administration. Key predictors included, Basic Facilities ($\beta = .471$, $p < .001$), Pedagogical Practices ($\beta = .124$, $p < .001$), Financial Management ($\beta = .104$, $p < .001$), Enrolment ($\beta = .122$, $p < .001$), Awareness ($\beta = .095$, $p < .001$), Teacher Management ($\beta = .045$, $p = .026$)

Table 3

Variables	DV	B	SE	Beta	p	R ²	F
Constant		.994	.112		.000		
Role in Enrolment		.111	.020	.122	.000		
Role in Teachers' Management		.042	.019	.045	.026		
Awareness	School Administration	.087	.020	.095	.000	39.1%	161.468
Role in Financial Management		.091	.018	.104	.000		
Role in Basic Facilities		.432	.020	.471	.000		
Pedagogical Practices		.114	.020	.124	.000		

Discussion

The findings suggest that SMC involvement in the provision of basic facilities is the most influential factor in strengthening school administration. This highlights the need for resource-driven community participation. Additionally, SMC contributions to pedagogical oversight and financial accountability are also significant, emphasizing a multi-dimensional approach to community involvement in governance. Interestingly, while enrolment did not show a significant correlation, it emerged as a statistically significant predictor in the regression model, possibly indicating indirect effects or mediation through other variables.

Conclusion and Recommendations

SMCs play a vital role in enhancing school administration, particularly through infrastructure development, instructional support, and financial oversight. Policymakers should invest in training programs to enhance the administrative and pedagogical capacity of SMCs, ensure clarity of roles, and promote structured community engagement. A focus on empowering SMCs can contribute meaningfully to the broader goals of educational decentralization and school improvement in Pakistan.

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