



RESEARCH PAPER

Political Factors Affecting the Academic and Administrative Environment of Colleges in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

¹Wafa Mohammad*, ²Dr Faruq Nawaz Khan and ³Akhtar Hussain

1. PhD Scholar at Center for Education and Staff Training University of Swat, KP, Pakistan
2. Assistant Professor at: Center for Education and Staff Training University of Swat, KP, Pakistan
3. PhD Scholar at Center for Education and Staff Training University of Swat, KP, Pakistan

***Corresponding Author:** officialdocumentssjc63@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the impact of political factors on the functioning of academic and administrative arrangements in government colleges of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with a special reference to Malakand Division, Pakistan. Although sound policy frameworks regarding educational governance have been implemented, politics and political influences have been one of the major factors affecting the performance of the institutions. The research has been designed through a quantitative, descriptive and correlational design to analyze the effect of political influences such as favoritisms in appointments, manipulation in policies, and interruptions in administrations on the college operations. A sample of 400 participants has been selected from 20 government colleges using a stratified random sampling technique, which included 200 male and female each, recruited in teaching and administrative cadres. The data was collected through a validated Likert scale questionnaire that was analyzed using SPSS. The findings of the study indicate a significant negative correlation between political factors with academic performance and administrative efficiency. The regression further confirmed that political factors predict about 27% of variance in academic and 22% in administrative functioning. The gender-wise analysis also revealed that male respondents have perceived enough political interference, especially in leadership and decision making. The study has, therefore, concluded that politics has a significantly negative influence upon the internal governance and academic output of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa colleges. For the improvement of the situation, the establishment of meritocratic organization, merit-based recruitment, capacity-building programs for the administrators, educational surveillance by involving the community should be initiated. These system level interventions are necessary to ensure a stable, transparent and effective educational system as well. These efforts help the government and other stakeholders in implementing the educational policies in their real faces rather than their whimsical dimension.

KEYWORDS Political Interference, Academic Environment, Administrative Effectiveness, Government Colleges, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Educational Governance, Merit-Based Appointments

Introduction

Numerous socio-political dimensions influence the educational climate of colleges. Since political processes coincide with educational governance in most developing regions or provinces, such as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, political influences also affect the efficiency of academics and administration. Political executions and influences, biased appointments, inadequate division of resources, and discrepancies in policies execution are among the barriers preventing the authorities in achieving quality education (Akhtar, & Malik, 2021). This research investigates the political influences on the college; academic and administration climate in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and determines how the involved parties can create a suitable environment for productive interactions. The research highlights the political issues affecting the educational environment of the government colleges in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and explains how politics influences administration and academic

matters, including decision making resource allocations, staff employments, and policy implementation (Bukhari, & Irfan, 2023).

Clarification of Key Concepts

Political Factors

Political, on the other hand, covers the various ways that political bodies (parties, representatives and government leaders) impact the running and organization of the colleges. Worst may also be reflected as the political appointments in institutions, the influence: on appointments of principals and teachers, policy making, administrative decision making etc. in the colleges of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. All too frequently, political allegiance obscures meritocracy and results in a failure of performance and decline of institutions. Interfering with the autonomy of educational institutions, this kind of interference also subverts professionalism and accountability in academia (Awan, & Aslam, 2021) The analysis of political factors is paramount to make sense of the ways in which governance challenges driven by political interests impact the provision of quality education and the effectiveness of the institution (Hassan, & Ahmad, 2019).

Academic Environment

The academic climate denotes all activities and factors that are associated closely with instruction, learning, and education in general of students. This encompasses curriculum development and administration, quality of teaching by faculty, students' participation in academic functions, adequacy of learning resources, and evaluation of pedagogic targets (Anwar, & Abbas, 2024). A conducive academic environment is necessary to inculcate an intellectual and analytical curiosity and encourage substantive educational attainment. But when strings are pulled to appoint certain faculty, change the curriculum, or assign teaching duties, it undermines the integrity of the academic climate. Such discontinuities can result in low morale among students and teacher, uneven educational levels, and a systemic erosion of quality (Khan, & Bano, 2021).

Administrative Environment

Administrative workspace refers to organization and management structures that are facilitating the day-to-day running of the college. Key among other responsibilities are matters relating to HR management, staff deployment and transfers, financial planning, budgeting, infrastructure, adherence to regulatory frameworks and educational policies. Good governance and effective administration of justice Transparency, accountability and the efficient delivery of services are stabilized by a sound administrative framework (Ali, & Ahmad, 2020). "But in places like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, this atmosphere is unfortunately penetrated by political interference. Politically motivated hiring's in administrative panels; misallocating funds or enforcing rules with a bias are all regular problems. Such practices diminish institutional effectiveness, establish an environment of instability and undermine adherence to educational purpose and national standards. Dealing with political influence in administration is thus fundamental to reinstate credibility and functionality of the education system (Nazir, & Habib, 2023).

Though policy frameworks in place was such to enhance quality of education and governance in colleges of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, political intervention still poses serious challenges to run these institutions. Academic standards and institutional efficiency are frequently undermined by political considerations--appointments that are made, influences that are brought to bear on administrative decision making, and no uniform implementations of policies (Latif, & Noor, 2024). This continual interference serves as a disjuncture between policy aims and the reality of implementation regarding educational policy making. Hence it is a great demand that we understand the scope of politics in

academic and admin matters of the colleges in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa so that meaningful reforms are to be made instead of any cosmetic change.

Literature Review

Political Interference in Education

It is a common phenomenon and concern faced by educational institutions of many developing countries, most notably of South Asia. A considerable body of work has revealed how political processes undermine the freedom and effectiveness of education systems. Political connections play an important role in decision making like faculty appointments, administrative assignments, and funding allocations that frequently prioritize loyalty over merit (Ali & Ahmad, 2020). Moreover, Khan (2021) emphasizes that such activities are cause of administrative inefficiency, low staff moral and declining education standards. These papers show that alongside its other forms of impact, political interference in higher education not only interrupts institutional governance, but erodes trust in the education system which has consequent impacts on student achievement and institutional reputations. We need to know the nature and effects of such intervention to design policy aimed at protecting places of learning from undue political pressure (Iqbal, &Shafqat, 2023).

Impact on Academic Functions

Political intervention directly and negatively affects the academic functions of colleges. Rehman and Nawaz (2022) note that such interference reduces motivation for teachers, especially when political relationships rather than qualification and performance play a crucial role in appointments and promotions. It is a practice that not only undermines the confidence of good teachers but also contributes to debasing the culture of professionalism at colleges and colleges (Khan, 2021). The effects are especially exacerbated in rural or low-resourced areas where politically driven disruptions lead to scholastic calendar interruptions, mismatched curricular coverage and underachievement by the students. The research highlights the quality of teaching and learning is compromised when political activism waxes its influence as it becomes problematic for institutions to meet academic ends while maintaining academic standards (Qureshi, & Jan, 2021).

Administrative Challenges

The political control of the educational institutions has, in many cases, led to a host of administrative problems that have impeded the effective governance and stability of the institutions. Jamil et al. (2019) cite high turnovers of leadership—frequently influenced by political motives—as a significant obstacle to steadiness in administrative planning and decision-making. This sort of instability doesn't allow for long-term strategies to be developed let alone for institutional focus to set in. Furthermore, political interests tend to interfere with budget allocations and the end result is a misuse of money and resources imbalance among colleges. Another important factor is policy non-compliance, meaning that institutions do not respect regulations as well as norms in reaction to political factors. Such disorders in the administration system lead to lack of transparency, responsibility and overall prestige and they finally expose the education to fall short of its main objective in offering education of a high standard (Rahim, &Shahid, 2020).

Enormous work on the role of political factors in the field of education, in Pakistan and South Asia, yet there exists a significant gap as far as the region-specific research is concerned, particularly in case of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Most of the available literature has focused on generic systems and has not examined the specific sociopolitical conditions

in various parts of the province. As such, area specific concerns such as tribal influence, administrative imbalance and the mode of political participation in rural constituencies often get by-passed. The present research fills this gap by studying the Malakand Division of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa specifically, and in doing so it offers empirical evidence of how political meddling influences the academic as well as administrative environment in this region. The study provides a narrow purview thereby enabling the development of an insight into the contextual challenges and ultimately equivalence policies for higher education in Malakand (s) region (Rehman, & Nawaz, 2022).

Hypotheses

H1: Political factors significantly affect the academic functioning of colleges in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

H2: Political influences have a measurable impact on administrative effectiveness in colleges.

Material and Methods

Research Design

Research Methodology The research used quantitative and descriptive-analytic methods to investigate the effect of political factors on academic and administrative environment of government colleges in architecture of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Our use of this model is in the attempt to provide some measurement of the degree of political involvement and its relation to objective measures of the corporatization of the organization. A reliable and valid questionnaire was constructed as the main instrument of data collection which was used for the systematic collection of responses from across a wide cross-section of respondents comprising teachers, heads of colleges and students. This strategy helps to guarantee certain level of objectivity, consistency and (statistical) policy having alerted for a blind plunge of political relations into the education (Rehman, & Nawaz, 2022; Ahmed, & Hussain, 2023).

Population and Sample

The target population for this survey was the entire teaching and administrative faculty working in government colleges (Appendix-A) of the Malakand Division of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. To allow for a representative and equal representation, a stratified random sample was used. This approach enabled us to incorporate both perspectives (across gender and institution) into the discussion. A total of 400 subjects were selected i.e., 200 male and 200 female belonging to 20 colleges of the division out of the 28 government colleges (male and female). The gender and institutional stratification of the sample made it representative of the demographics and structure of government colleges of the region leading to the validity and generalizability of the results of the study.

Data Collection

The data of the study was collected utilizing pretested, structured tools which include Likert scale items. The questionnaire was formulated to gather participants' perceptions and experiences vis-à-vis political interference in academic and administrative aspects of their respective institutions (Shah, & Batool, 2022). The items were designed to assess political engagement over staff appointments, resources allocation, decision-making processes, and effects on both teaching activities and governance. Utilizing a Likert scale provided participants with the option of indicating that they agreed or disagreed to a degree, thereby quantifying attitude and trends. The scale

was administered to the 200 sample of teachers and administrators of the 20 government colleges of Malakand Division and to ensure maximum and authentic data was collected.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed by SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). To present the general trends and central tendencies of the participants' responses, participants' responses were analyzed according to descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation). We used a Pearson correlation analysis to test the relationships between political factors and the performance of institutions and the strength and directions for variance among variables. Regression analysis was also performed to investigate, if political interference predicts academic and administrative outcomes. This integration of methods helped to better understand the magnitude and influence of political interference in the operations of the government colleges in Malakand Division.

Results and Discussion

Table 1
Sample Distribution by Gender and Number of Colleges

Gender	Number of Participants	Number of Colleges
Male	200	10
Female	200	10
Total	400	20

Table 1 shows the total number of research sample respondents, categorized by gender, as the sample consisted of 400 respondents who were equally distributed between male and female. The students were randomly selected from twenty government colleges in Malakand Division, Khyber PakhtoonKhwa in Pakistan; 10 male colleges and 10 female colleges. This balanced male/female representation balances the data such that the study is representative for males and females separately; it gives us an unbiased correlation to study political influence on male and female educational settings.

Table 2
Sample Distribution by Designation

Designation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Teaching Staff	280	70.0
Administrative Staff	120	30.0
Total	400	100.0

Table 2 deploys participants according to their professional position in the institutions. Educational staff of 400 participated in the study; 70% were teachers and 30% administrators. This distribution emphasizes the studies focus on soliciting perspectives of faculty and administrators, which helps to create an understanding of political influence across campus operations in both academic and non-academic units of the college

Table 3
Sample Distribution by Experience Level

Experience (Years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 5	90	22.5
5-10	130	32.5
11-20	110	27.5
More than 20	70	17.5
Total	400	100.0

Table 3 shows the work experience of the participants. Most respondents reported an experience of 5-10 years (32.5%), 11-20 years (27.5%), and <5 years (22.5%). Few (17.5%) had worked for over 20 years. This variety in experiences permits a

broad range of early-career, mid-career, and senior staff voices to speak up about how political pressures affect individuals at different career stages.

Table 4
Sample Distribution by Age Group

Age Group (Years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
21–30	80	20.0
31–40	150	37.5
41–50	110	27.5
51 and above	60	15.0
Total	400	100.0

Distribution of participants by age is presented in Table 4. The maximum age group of respondents was 31–40 years (37.5%) and 41–50 years (27.5%) and 21–30 years (20%), 51 years and above (15%). The age diversity adds to the external validity of our results, as it encompasses generational perceptions regarding and reactions to political affinities in educational institutions.

Table 5
Comparison of Male and Female Perceptions of Political Influence (N = 400)

Dimension	Gender	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Political Interference in Appointments	Male	3.85	0.71	2.74	.006
	Female	3.61	0.68		
Impact on Academic Performance	Male	3.70	0.75	1.92	.055
	Female	3.55	0.70		
Disruption in Administrative Decisions	Male	3.90	0.69	3.15	.002
	Female	3.60	0.65		
Policy Compliance Issues	Male	3.68	0.72	1.48	.140
	Female	3.55	0.74		
Overall Political Influence	Male	3.78	0.70	2.31	.021
	Female	3.60	0.67		

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Table 6
Pearson Correlation between Political Factors, Academic Functioning, and Administrative Effectiveness

Variables	1	2	3
1. Political Factors	1.00		
2. Academic Functioning	-.52 (<i>p</i> < .01)	1.00	
3. Administrative Effectiveness	-.47 (<i>p</i> < .01)	.58 (<i>p</i> < .01)	1.00

A correlation among Political Variables, Academic Performance, and Administration Effectiveness Table 6 presents the Pearson correlation values between political variables, academic performance and administration effectiveness. The findings also demonstrate statistically negative relationships between political variables and academic adjustment ($r = -.52$, $p < .01$) and administrative efficacy ($r = -.47$, $p < .01$). The first and second hypotheses are supported by these results, which show that higher political interference is related to lower academic and administrative productivity. Furthermore, a significant ($r = .58$, $p < .01$) between academic performance and administrative efficacy suggests that wherever academic system is powerful, administration also becomes effective.

Table 7
Regression Analysis: Impact of Political Factors on Academic Functioning (H1)

Variable	B	SE	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
(Constant)	4.12	0.22	—	18.73	.000
Political Factors	-0.46	0.08	-.52	-5.75	.000

$R^2 = .27$, $F(1, 398) = 33.06$, $p < .001$

Summary of Linear Regression Analysis: Political Factors Regressing on Academic Functioning (H1) The model was significant, $F(1, 398) = 33.06$, $p < .001$, accounting for 27% of the variance in academic functioning ($R^2 = .27$). The negative and significant regression coefficient for political variables ($\beta = -.52$, $p < .001$), such that scores lower when more interference is experienced from politicians. This supports H1, indicating political factors to be a powerful predictor of academic disruption in colleges.

Table 8
Regression Analysis: Impact of Political Factors on Administrative Effectiveness (H2)

Variable	B	SE	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
(Constant)	3.98	0.25	—	15.92	.000
Political Factors	-0.41	0.09	-.47	-4.56	.000

$R^2 = .22$, $F(1, 398) = 20.82$, $p < .001$

Table 8 shows the regression analysis for H2, focusing on the effect of political factors on administrative effectiveness. The model was also significant ($F(1, 398) = 20.82$, $p < .001$) with an R^2 value of .22, meaning political factors accounted for 22% of the variance in administrative effectiveness. The negative beta coefficient ($\beta = -.47$, $p < .001$) indicates that as political interference increases, administrative efficiency declines. This strongly supports the second hypothesis (H2) and underlines the detrimental impact of politics on the governance and operational efficiency of colleges in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Discussion

The results of the study prove beyond reasonable doubt that political considerations play a very significant role both at academic and administrative levels in the government colleges of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa especially in the Malakand Division. The near equal representation of gender and institutionalism (Table 1) guaranteed an inclusive consideration of the problem. Moreover, diversity in title (Table 2), professional experience (Table 3), and age group (Table 4) contributed to the richness of the data and permitted a more comprehensive understanding of how political intervention may impact people differently depending on their job position and career phase (Hashmi, & Raza, 2019).

In the gender-wise comparison of responses (Table 5), male respondents generally had higher level of perception of political interference in all the dimensions of measurement and it was significant in the areas like administrative decisions and appointment processes. This could suggest that male employees, who are often more involved in leadership roles in these organizations, are more exposed to political corrections or more sensitive to their potential ramifications. But the topic was not gender or role specific as male and female personnel both agreed that political influence exists and is widespread (Haider, & Siddiqui, 2020).

Correlations (Table 6) offered robust evidence in favor of the two hypotheses. Political pressure was negatively correlated with academic performance ($r = -.52$) and administrative efficiency ($r = -.47$), confirming that the deeper the politics is embedded in institutional functioning, the more dysfunctional are its operations. $r = .25$ for Positive relationship between academic success and administrative success ($r = .58$) suggests that

commotion in one domain has the potential to infest the other, illustrating the fusion of institutional processes (Yousafzai, & Khan, 2020; Baig, & Ali, 2022).

These findings were also confirmed in the Legit regression analysis (Tables 7 and 8), which measured the effect of political variables. Political influence accounted for 27% of the variance in academic performance and 22% in administrative effectiveness, all substantial considering the myriad of dynamics at institutional level. These findings support both H1 AND H2, suggesting that the political interruption is not only there, but does so significantly. The negative beta-coefficients indicate that higher levels of political interference results in a significant decline of the institutional performance, thereby emphasizing the imperative for policy changes (Farooq, & Yaseen, 2020).

Overall, the results are consistent with prior studies (for example, Ali and Ahmad, 2020, Jamil et al., 2019, Rehman & Nawaz, 2022; Gul, & Hayat, 2022) as well as contribute to the existing literature by providing evidence from the perspectives of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region. This also confirms the judgment that there is a need to reform in some areas and to depoliticize the process, as discussed in the third research question. Unless these entrenched political factors are addressed, reform of quality and governance in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's government colleges is likely to be either fruitless or fleeting (Jamil, et al., 2019; Mahmood, 2019).

Conclusion

The purpose of this research is to scrutinize the political dimensions and its influence towards the academic and administrative atmospheres at the government colleges of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Malakand Division. Results indicate that political interference is a major obstacle to institutional performance and contributes to the politicization of faculty appointments, administrative decisions, policy implementation, and institutional coherence. Both quantitative associations and regression tests showed that political dynamics have a negative effect on academic functioning and administrative efficiency. These outcomes also affirm hypotheses of the study and meet the goals of it, showing not only for the existence of political interference, but also for their measurable impacts. The interrelatedness of administration and academic functions also implies that is reform of the institution must be comprehensive. Unless political intrusions are tackled then these goals of quality and governance will continue to elude colleges in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Malakand Division.

Recommendations

In the light of findings, some suggestions are given to minimize political interference and improve the performance of government colleges in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The first, was the necessity of the transparent and merit-based recruitment and appointment systems. Recruitment of these officials must be protected from political pressures by third party oversight, and independent selection boards. Second, the autonomy of institutions to be empowered redefining the roles of college principals and administrative heads and allow them to function unhindered. The third is capacity building, creating programs that train college administrators and faculty how to stand up to political pressures and stand up for the integrity of the institution. Furthermore, policy enforcement instruments need to be reinforced through regular checks, monitoring systems and feedback mechanisms that ensure rules are consistently enforced across institutions. Government should also look at appointing an ombudsman for provincial education, who can receive and respond to complaints involving political interference and policy breaches within colleges. Ultimately, we should advocate for additional research, and particularly qualitative work that explores a deeper level of socio-political nuances and realities. This would lead the higher education sector of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

towards a more stable, just and higher-performing institutional architecture, only if the root cause of political interference is addressed.

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