

## **Decentralization and Social Development: A Study of Local Government System of Pakistan**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Decentralization is very important dimension of the modern political system because it applies the core of democracy through local government system (LGS). Every country struggles for social development that includes the standard life of the citizens which is only possible through better delivery system of social services by an efficient local government system. The major concern of the current research is to measure the relationship between “Decentralization” and “Social Development”. The current study is quantitative and descriptive in nature which is based on explanatory research design. The data are gathered through primary and secondary sources. The sample size of primary strand of study consists of 1000 respondents which were selected from the six sampled universities of the Punjab (Pakistan). The questionnaire was employed by the researchers to collect the primary data that are analyzed later by statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). The results of the study found a strong relationship between decentralization and social development. The value of R-Square is .468 that indicates all the included sub-indicators of independent variable have strong and positive relationship with dependent variable.

**Key Words:**            **Decentralization, Social Development, Local Government System, Pakistan**

### **Introduction**

Decentralization has become an integral part of modern political system as it depicts the true roots of democracy. In the contemporary era, democracy is perceived the most appropriate and wide practicing political system across the globe (Manor, 1999). The developed and developing countries are following the democratic principles in order to succeed in this competitive international system. The concept of decentralization shows the transfer of the political powers from the national governments to the grass root level administration (Campbell, 2001). The federal powers are decentralized into the provincial or states’ level management. Furthermore the provincial level management transfers the powers to the district, tehsil/sub-district and local level management. This transfer of powers from federal to the union level management shows the actual transfer of powers that is totally aligned with the democratic values (Mawhood, 1983).

The question of grass root level institutional strategy involves the dual goals i.e. to strengthen the participatory social enhancement at village level and building the LGS that improves the delivery system of services (Rondinelli, 1981). The service delivery system is closely linked with the local progress that is the actual purpose of decentralization and it is only possible through effective system of decentralization (Litvack, et al., 1998). Decentralization has different forms that may be adopted and the local government system is major indicator of them. The establishment of LGS means the transferring the responsibilities of decision making, the management of the resources from federal level to its subordinate administration (Agrawal & Ribot, 1999). Under the LGS, the duties of local administration are given to the local governments so that they may take initiatives according the needs and requirements of that particular area (Sarkar 2003).

The role of the local administration varies from country to country and region to region. The major reason of this variance is the varying nature of the needs and requirements of those areas. For example, in some areas the infrastructure is the major issue while in the other part, the health related facilities are insufficient (Cohen & Peterson, 1996). In such ways, the local administration has to adopt the steps according the needs of that particular area. In such circumstances, the local governments handle the situation in a suitable way because the provincial or federal governments cannot work at the local level (Alan 1997).

## **Types of decentralization**

Decentralization is a broader concept that has further sub divisions in it which differentiate different categories of decentralization. In this regard, decentralization involves three major categories i.e. political, administrative and fiscal decentralization ((Rondinelli, 1981). Every type of decentralization inculcates a number of respective duties according to its nature.

### **I. Political decentralization**

Political decentralization is the foremost type of decentralization which means the transferring of the power to the subordinate or local body of administration. It directly aims to elect the members from the different constituencies that have good repute among the masses. These political responsibilities are assigned to these locally elected members whose major aim is to strive for the social welfare at their constituency level. It truly represents democratic values as the democracy also gives importance to the masses so that they may participate in the local matters of administration. These locally elected members have great role in the policy making and implementation (Jennie & Richard, 1998).

## **II. Administrative decentralization**

Another important type of decentralization is administrative that involves the transferring functional duties of the provincial governments to the local administrations. These responsibilities include the management of health care services, the educational facilities, the building and the maintenance of infrastructure and collection of wastages. The administrative decentralization basically includes the executive responsibilities that are directly associated with the social development (Rondinelli & Nellis, 1986). All of the above mentioned responsibilities i.e. educational, health related and infrastructure facilities represent the level of a particular society. The better service delivery system of these facilities shows the well being of society and the local governments have great concern of these tasks as they are only established to provide more and more facilities to the people at unoin level (Rahman, 1996).

Administrative decentralization is further divided into three sub-divisions that enhance the effectiveness of delivery system. It is divided into deconcentration, delegation and devolution and each of the categories performs its concerned tasks that ultimately improve the performance of decentralized system (Byrne & Schnyder, 2005). It provides the service delivery system in more specialized way so that the level of social development may be enhanced.

### **a) Deconcentration**

The first form of administrative decentralization is deconcentration. It is considered one of the weaker forms of decentralization because it is mainly developed in the unitary states (Ali, 1995). Its major task is to redistribute the power of decision making and the organization of these responsibilities among the varying tiers of government. It shifts the burden of workload to the subordinate governments that provide easiness to each government. It works in a better way to provide the maximum benefits to local communities (Islam 1997).

In the other words the term deconsentration may be defined as the merely shift of the duties from federal level to the subordinate levels. All of the duties and responsibilities are shared with the subordinate administration under a systematic set up (Islam, 1997). This form of government is used in different parts of the Asia and Africa including Kenya, Tunisia, Tanzania, Morocco, Algeria, Philippines, Pakistan, Thailand and Indonesia since the last decade (Hyden, 1983).

### **b) Delegation**

The second sub-division of “administrative decentralization” is delegation that is more widespread form than deconcentration. It involves the transfer of actual responsibilities from the superior to subordinate governments (Malo, 1995). The transfer of responsibilities makes it semi autonomous governments as still the main

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directions are given by the provincial and federal governments in execution of these responsibilities. The local governments are accountable to the provincial governments that evaluate their performance according to the responsibilities assigned to them (Khan 2009).

#### **c) Devolution**

The last type of administrative decentralization is devolution that means the transfer of important powers which include the legislation powers and the powers of local revenue collection (Sherwood, 1969). The local revenues are collected by these local governments that ease the responsibilities of the upper level governments (Conyers 1986).

According to Cheema and Rondinelli (1983), there are five major characteristics of actual form of devolution. The presence of these characteristics shows the authenticity of the local government system. These characteristics are following.

- The powers that are transferred to local governments should be autonomous that may be governed by the local governments without the pressure of federal governments.
- These units must enjoy the corporate status.
- There must be a specified geographical area of a particular local government over which the government has to exercise its powers.
- The devolution basically implies the establishment of local government as an institution.
- There should be positive mutual cooperation between that local and central governments that is the notion of social development.

### **III) Fiscal decentralization**

Fiscal decentralization is another important kind of decentralization that is mainly associated with the fiscal matters. It deals with the transfer of responsibilities of funds from the central to the local administration in the form of LGS. It also enables the LGS to generate their own resources through the local tax collection. It gives the authority to the local governments to formulate the policies regarding the management of financial resources. In short, it gives authorities to the local governments to manage all the duties regarding their fiscal management by their own and diminishes the dependency over federal governments (Wunsch, 2001).

### **LGS in South Asia**

In South Asian states, the development and the management of the LGS is always considered a critical issue. The majority of the population of this region resides in the rural areas where the local governments have great role to perform. But unfortunately, the dream of well established LGS is a dream to date. The local

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governments are established only in the papers because the local balloting is held in order to demonstrate the transfer of authority but actually it is not transferred. The politicians are only concerned to get the votes of the rural community. The South Asian countries have faced the British imperialism that is why they also have the influence of them in their local government system (Islam & Fujita, 2012). The following table illustrates and compares the existing local government systems of the major South Asian states with British local government system.

**LGS of Selected Countries**

<b>Sr #</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Lowest Tier</b>	<b>Middle Tier</b>	<b>Upper Tier</b>
1	Pakistan	Union Council	Tehsil/Tulka Council	District Council
2	Bangladesh	Union Parishad	Upazial/Thana Parishad	Zila Parishad
3	India	Gram Panchayat	Panchayat Samitti/ Community Development Bolck	District Council
4	Britain	Parish Council	Rural District	County Council

**Source:** *Islam & Fujita (2012)*

The same situation of LGS is in Pakistan where many efforts have been made in order to introduce the well established LGS. But still, there is not an actual transfer of powers due to fear of losing the powers of local management. The well established local government system means to give the major share of local development to the local governments. In the previous rule of PML (N), the local balloting was held across the country especially in Punjab province but the new elected representatives were not given the actual responsibilities. They were not funded sufficiently so that they might work for enhancement of society in local areas.

It is the normal consensus of the day that the establishment of LGS is very crucial for the local development. The local administration covers all the areas of country either it is rural or urban because the local councils are established in all of these areas. The local members are elected from these areas and they work for the development of these areas. The local governments increase the harmony among the different stakeholders of social development in which the civil community and the local officials develop strong relations and they collectively work for the social well being at local level (Rahman & Robinson, 2006).

**LGS of Pakistan**

The “Local Government System” of Pakistan has gone through different phases of development. There have been made many efforts to introduce the more suitable

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LGS in Pakistan. First of all, Ayub Khan introduced the a LGS through basic democracies (BD) system in which four tier LGS was established known as “Divisional Council, District Council, Tehsil/Thana Council And Union Council” (Rashiduzzaman, 1968). The second important effort was made during Zia-ul-Haq regime that also provided different urban and rural LGS (Waseem, 1994). Third most important local government system was given by Pervaiz Musharraf that is known as the best example of LGS in Pakistan. He introduced three tier LGS that included “District Council, Tehsil Council and Union Council” (Anjum, 2001). This local government system also provided the opportunities to the marginalized communities of Pakistan including women, minorities and laborers.

The current LGS of Pakistan is also based on following three levels (Malik, 2009).

- District Council
- Tehsil Council
- Union Council

### **Social development**

“Social Development” is a broader idea that involves further sub concepts in it. In the contemporary era, it is an alarming issue for the world because the people are suffering from a large number of issues related to their routine lives. Social development is directly associated with peace, freedom, stability and security at macro and micro level (Kumar, 2017). The social development passes through different stages that are concerned with specific areas. It basically means the reduction in the level of poverty, unemployment and inequality. It strives for the up gradation of the human beings’ lives that requires the enhancement of the entire social system (Myrdal, 1972).

The social development does not merely mean the development and upward social mobility at one time rather it is also associated with the sustainable development that is not for temporary basis. The sustainable development produces the resources that are even useful for the upcoming generations. It empowers the marginalized segments of the society including minorities and women (Bilance, 1997). According to Copenhagen Social Summit (1995) social development is defined according to three basic concepts that include the reduction in poverty, generation of new employment opportunities and social harmony. These three concepts determine the level of social development of a specific society. Social development also requires the orientation values that promote the positive developmental changes in the society like the moral values, closeness and cohesion among the different components of society. These all factors promote social development across the country and globe.

Normally social development is perceived in the terms of GNP but it is misleading the people because only GNP is not the predictor of social development. It only considers the income of people in which the rich are concerned only and the poor are totally neglected. So, it is obvious that while

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measuring the social development the other intervening factors must be included (Ahluwalia, 1974).

In the light of the above studies, it is found that social development is concerned with the enhancement of the life standard. The life standard is upgraded only through the better delivery system of social services. The LGS is established in order to provide more and more services to the community at union level. Hence, there is close association between decentralization (LGS) and social development. The current article is an attempt to measure the association between “Local Government System” and “Social Development”. The current research is consisted on following research question.

“What are the ways of local government system to achieve social development in Pakistan?”

### **Research objective**

- To determine the association between “Local Government System” and “Social Development” in Pakistan

### **Significance of the study**

LGS is an important area especially for the students of the Social Science because it is directly associated with the uplift of social structure as a whole. This research is an attempt of the researchers to explain a brief picture of the Pakistani Local Government System. This study is very fruitful for the students and the policy makers of social policy and development. It will assist them in determining the nature of LGS and how to improve them. It presents an insight of the existing LGS of Pakistan and suggests some recommendations for the improvement that may help in the better service delivery system.

### **Literature review**

Olowu (2002) investigated that there is strong association between the good governance and local administrations. The good governance is mainly achieved through the actual application of the democratic features and the LGS represents the core democratic values because under this local government the civil community participates in the local management. The civil community members are chosen through elections that depicts the democratic values. In this regard, the LGS develops the democratic political system in society.

Kauzya (2003) found that the local community development is the major concern of the local governments which actually means social development. The LGS is developed to enhance the service delivery system in which the educational, health related and infrastructure facilities are given to the people at local level who are unable to contact the respective departments in the big cities. The author

further elaborated that local government system is being set up in the African countries that will help them for social development.

Dwivedi (2002) explained that a well established local government system is the desire of every country because it works at the micro level. The development of micro level plays an important role in enhancing the life standard of a particular locality. Furthermore the researcher describes that there is close association between local governments and social development. LGS is formed in order to enhance the developmental level at grass root level. The decentralization is introducing a new paradigm of political system especially in less developed countries in the form of local government system.

Ostrom (1990) reported that governance either at local or federal level is associated with a concept known as “Social Development”. There have been made different efforts to form the governments at the micro levels so that the process of development may be initiated at union level. In this regard, LGS is very helpful because these governments are directly linked at the constituencies at local level. The local governments try to establish the sound relations with civil community at local level.

Kooiman (1993) investigated that the main objective of the establishment of LGS is to bring closer the federal governments and the local communities. It is only possible through the establishment of LGS in which the members of civil community are chosen at local level who further participate in the provincial and federal level meetings. In this way there develops a system of harmony between official and non-official stakeholders which is very helpful to solve the local issues.

Olowu & Sako (2002) revealed that there are two broader categories of governance i.e. good and bad governance. Every country either she is developed or developing wants to develop a system of good governance. The good governance is usually achieved through democracy in this modern age. The local governments are the key players of democratic values that strive for social improvement at their constituency level.

In the light of the above literature, it is found that there is close association between “Local Government System” and “Social Development”. The social development may take different forms including health, educational and infrastructure facilities. It is also found during the review of existing literature that decentralization has become the major concern of modern administrative system in which the LGS is set up that shows the devolution of the administrative, political and fiscal powers. Almost all developing and developed countries are inclined to develop a LGS through which the social services are provided at micro level. The central administrations are unable to reach up to local level; hence the LGS is formulated to deal the matters of local development through these governments.

## **Methods and Materials**

The current research consists of quantitative research design. The topic of the research clearly demonstrates the quantitative inclination as there are two distinct variables i.e. “Decentralization” and “Social Development”. The quantitative study is conducted when the researcher wants to gather the data from wide range respondents. The same case is with this research in which the researcher conducted a quantitative study to see the association between both variables while collecting the data from a large pool of respondents of different universities.

### **Universe/ population**

The universe/ population of this research are the students of BS and M.A of the departments of Political Science, International Relations, South Asian Studies, Public Policy and Sociology. The respondents were selected from different six universities of Punjab. These universities include “International Islamic University Islamabad, Quaid-e-Azam University, University of the Punjab, Leads University Lahore, Baha-ud-Din Zakriya University and Islamiya University of Bahawalpur”.

### **Sample size**

The size of sample of the current research consists of 1000 participants. The participants of the study were selected from the above mentioned six universities with equal share.

### **Sampling technique**

The sample of the current study is chosen through multi stage sampling technique that went through three stages. In the first stage, researchers chose the universities in which three regions were identified i.e. Upper Punjab, Central Punjab and South Punjab. The researchers chose two universities from every nominated region. In the second stage, the researchers browsed the list of the departments from whom they could select the respondents with rich knowledge of the topic. Hence, in the second stage, the departments of the universities were selected. In the last third stage, the respondents were selected through simple random sampling technique.

### **Construction of variables**

The study is quantitative in nature so it is necessary to construct at least two variables that can be measured through the quantitative analysis. The current research has two variables known as “Decentralization” (independent variable) and “Social Development” (dependent variable). The variable of decentralization is further divided into five indicators i.e. LGS (as general), LGS in Pakistan,

elections at local level, participation of civil society and accountability to measure the association between both variables in comprehensive way.

### **Tool for data collection**

The tool of the data collection has much importance because the current research is based on this tool. This research is quantitative so survey is opted as a technique and structured questionnaire as a tool of quantitative data collection. The researchers distributed the questionnaires among the willing respondents for data collection.

### **Tool for data analysis**

The analysis of data is an important step while doing a primary research because it presents the crux of the whole research. In the current research, the analysis of quantitative data was done through statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). First of all, a data sheet was prepared in which data was entered in the form of numbers. The data were systematically entered according to the variables of the study. After entering the data, the multiple regression model test was applied to see the association between both above mentioned variables.

### **Results and discussion**

The current study employed “Multiple Linear Regression” to find out the association between independent variable i.e. Decentralization and dependent variable i.e. social development. The use of the multiple linear regression was subject to the certain conditions and assumptions that were addressed before applying the final test. All the basic assumptions such as normality, heteroscedasticity, autocorrelation and Multicollinearity were addressed.

The following two tables show the relationship between both the variables. The first table explains the summary of whole model of the regression and second table represents the coefficients value of each category of the decentralization and its relationship with social development i.e. the dependent variable of the study.

**Table No: 01**

<b>Model Summary</b>					
Mode	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.686 <sup>a</sup>	.471	.468	.35176	1.205

a. Predictors: (Constant), account, lg1, lbe, lg2, civil

b. Dependent Variable: Total Social Development

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The above table explains the model regression analysis summary. In this model all the five categories of the decentralization have been included to find out its relationship with social development. In the first place the value of R indicates the correlation coefficient between both the variables. The above value of R is .686 which is quite high which shows positive and strong correlation between “Decentralization” and “Social Development”. In the second place the value of R-Square shows the predictive relationship between both variables of the study. So, in line with the above assumption the value of adjusted R-Square .468 narrates that all the variables of the research i.e. the independent variable shows the 46% of the deviation in the dependent variable on account of the independent variable. The above association is relatively high keeping in view the survey nature of the data as survey research yield less association hence the 46% deviation in the dependent variable is quite high.

**Table No: 02**

<b>Coefficients 2</b>					
<b>Model</b>	<b>Unstandardized Coefficients</b>		<b>Standardized Coefficients</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.097	.110		10.015	.000
Local Government System					
Local Government System in Pakistan	.164	.025	.179	6.531	.000
Local Bodies' Election					
Civil Community's Participation	.163		.189	6.414	.000
Accountability	.001	.025	.002	.074	.941
	.241	.019	.417	13.261	.000
	.215	.018	.298	10.385	.000
		.021			

The above table shows the coefficient value of each sub category of the decentralization and how each sub category contributes to the social development. In the first place the P-values of all the categories show that all the sub-categories

of the independent variable are considerably associated with dependent variable except local bodies' election. This implies that local government system, community participation and accountability i.e. the sub categories of "Decentralization" are significantly associated with "Social Development" as increase in the aforementioned categories increase the level of social development. In the second place civil community participation is at the higher level with .417 coefficient value which implies that 1 point increase in the civil community participation index will increase the social development by 417 times.

On the same token accountability comes at the second level where 1 unit increase in accountability index will increase the social development by .298 times. Similarly, 1 unit increase in the LGS will increase the social development index by .189 times and again 1 unit increase in the LGS in Pakistan will increase the social development by .179 times. Hence, in the view of above statistics, it is not difficult to conclude that all the sub categories of the decentralization are positively and significantly associated with social development except local bodies' election. The civil community participation and accountability are two major contributors of the social development with regard to the sub categories of the decentralization.

## **Conclusion**

In the light of the above secondary and primary data, it is concluded that decentralization has significant relationships with social development. All of the included indicators of decentralization fetched a strong association with constant dependent variable of social development except the local bodies' election that has slightly different results than the other indicators of independent variable. The research also found that local government system is the heart of democracy at local level as it involves the members of civil community at the grass root level. The well established local government system is the notion of social development because local governments include every area of country either it is rural or urban because the union councils exist in all these areas. These are basically union councils that strive at the local level for the educational, infrastructure and health related facilities. It is the need of the day that solid efforts should be made to improve the local government system in Pakistan so that every area of Pakistan may make progress.

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