



Role of Local Government in Infrastructure Development and Service Delivery in District Bannu, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

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Abstract

This study assesses the role of local government in infrastructure development and service delivery in District Bannu, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Primary data were collected from three tehsils—Bannu, Kakki, and Miryan—using a combination of questionnaires for educated respondents and interviews for uneducated respondents. A total of 652 respondents aged 20–60 years were selected through stratified random sampling using Taro Yamani’s formula, including 400 community members, 221 elected local government representatives, and 31 stakeholders from relevant departments. Data analysis was performed using univariate and bivariate methods. Frequency distributions described patterns in responses, while chi-square tests measured associations between variables. Results indicate a highly significant association ($P=0.000$) between infrastructure establishment (roads, drainage systems, and community centers) and local satisfaction. Similarly, feeder road construction was strongly linked to the provision of agricultural services (fertilizers, seeds, and pesticides), and the establishment of health centers was significantly associated with improved access to healthcare services and institutional deliveries. Funding allocation for infrastructure also showed a significant relationship with local participation in decision-making processes. The findings highlight the critical role of local governments in providing essential infrastructure and services. To enhance development outcomes, it is recommended that local governments allocate dedicated funds for infrastructure projects, ensuring better service delivery and improved quality of life for residents.

Keywords: Local Government, Infrastructure Development, Service Delivery, Rural Areas, Bannu

INTRODUCTION

Local governments are responsible for the development and maintenance of infrastructure such as roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, basic health units, public toilets, motor parks, public libraries and public transportation. Countries of the world ensure the provision of infrastructure. Well-developed infrastructure enhances the overall quality of life for community members. Infrastructure plays a key role in both socio-economic and political development and enrichment of living standards (Khoza, 2009).

The shift from focus on construction of infrastructure to the delivery of infrastructure drew the attention of so many countries in South Asia, particularly, Pakistan to focus on the provision and delivery of infrastructure, especially at the local level. This is because 61.18% of Pakistan's total population lived in rural areas as per the 2023 census, where poverty prevails (PBS, 2023). According to different resources only 39% of the population has access to safe drinking water. This means about 61%, or roughly 147 million people, lack access to safely managed drinking water sources (Dawn, 2024). About 27% of the population, nearly 63 million people, lack access to basic sanitation services (IMF, 2021). Over 45% of Pakistanis live in multidimensional poverty, which includes deprivations in healthcare, education, and living standards. Poor healthcare access affects more than 100 million people, particularly in rural areas (UNDP, 2023). Infrastructures are mostly concentrated in urban areas. Access to infrastructure such as; safe water supply, electricity and roads are necessary to reduce vulnerability and poverty in rural areas (Udoh, 2005).

However, the establishment of local government arises from the need to facilitate rural development through infrastructure development and delivery (Sehinde, 2008). Under the Constitution of Pakistan, 1973, Article 140A is the principal provision that empowers provincial governments to establish local governments, delegating them authority over local development functions such as: Construction and maintenance of rural roads, Installation of street lighting, Provision of drainage systems, Access to clean water, and development of public facilities. These responsibilities are typically outlined in provincial Local Government Acts, implemented under the framework of Article 140A (Constitution of Pakistan, 1973, Article 140A).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nwankwo (2002) emphasized that local governments play a crucial role in developing and maintaining essential infrastructure like roads, schools, hospitals, and public services. Such infrastructure improves quality of life, generates employment, fosters economic growth, and attracts investment, making it vital for sustainable development.

Banister (2005) highlighted that infrastructure like roads and bridges are vital for connectivity, trade, and access to services. Gehl (2010) noted that streets also support social interaction and public safety. Jenkins and Curtis (2005) emphasized the importance of public toilets for hygiene and dignity, especially in crowded areas. The World Bank (2020) stressed that effective drainage systems prevent flooding and improve public health. Overall, such infrastructure is essential not only for physical needs but also for social well-being and trust in local governance.

Shah and Thompson (2004) noted that when local governments fund infrastructure like roads and public toilets, they gain control over planning and implementation, improving community services and daily life. Aschauer (1989) emphasized that transportation infrastructure reduces travel time and boosts economic access. Calderón and Servén (2010) highlighted water and sanitation as key to public health, while Sachs (2015) linked infrastructure to social cohesion through shared public spaces. McKinney and

Cherry (2011) added that efficient infrastructure supports economic growth, job creation, and overall quality of life.

Nwankwo (2002) emphasized that aging infrastructure requires regular maintenance to ensure safety, reliability, and long-term value. Local administrations play a key role through assessments, repairs, and renovations. Aluonzi et al. (2016) added that effective contract management resolving disputes, ensuring timely payments, and maintaining clear communication enhances project performance. Government oversight and monitoring are also essential for timely and effective results.

Dennis (2017) highlighted that Nepal's inadequate infrastructure, including roads and public facilities, caused traffic congestion and delays, worsened by road blockages during protests. Sewell and Desai (2016) reported that poor infrastructure limits development and leads to issues like lack of healthcare, education, electricity, and clean water access.

The Post Newspaper (2005) reported that in Zambia, local governments are responsible for controlling land allocation and inspecting buildings like bridges and churches to ensure safety. This role is crucial for protecting people, as access to essential goods and services such as safe housing, which provides shelter and security is a key measure of deprivation in the country.

Nwofi (2018) stated that there are some reasons of failure of local government to provide essential services including corruption; political interventions; personal gains; low level of internal revenue and customized contracts. It restricts the availability of public utility services to masses indicating an acute shortage or inaccessibility of schooling, healthcare, roads and sanitation etc. services.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in District Bannu, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Since the nature of the research is quantitative, a probability sampling procedure was adopted for the selection of three tehsils, namely Bannu Tehsil, Kakki Tehsil, and Miryan Tehsil.

A total of 652 respondents, aged between 20 and 60 years, were selected using Taro Yamane's formula with proportional allocation under stratified random sampling for further distribution across the selected tehsils. The sample was distributed as follows: 400 respondents from the community (citizens), 221 from elected members of local government, and 31 from service providers (stakeholders) representing different departments.

The sample size formula was applied as:

$$n = N / 1 + N (e)^2$$

When explained in words, it means "n" equal to (n=) "N" all over "1+N bracket" "e" squared. Please note the following:

- n = Sample
- N = Total population of the area under study
- 1 = 1 is constant
- e = error limit or margin of error. It's usually accepted at 5% or 0.05.

The study combined both secondary and primary data. Secondary data were obtained from available literature, while primary data were collected through structured questionnaires for educated respondents and interview schedules for uneducated respondents in the selected tehsils of District Bannu, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. After collection, the data were coded and entered into SPSS for analysis. Descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage distributions were applied, followed by bivariate analysis to examine the

association between dependent and independent variables through the Chi-square (χ^2) test. The formula for computing Chi-square is as follows:

$$\chi^2 = \sum_{i=1}^r \sum_{j=1}^c \frac{(O_{ij} - E_{ij})^2}{E_{ij}}$$

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

SECTION A: UNIVARIATE ANALYSIS RELATED TO COMMUNITY MEMBERS INCLUDED LOCAL GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES

Table 1 stated that the majority of the respondents disagreed with the statement that local government plays an important role in the infrastructure development of the area. While, 17.4 percent amongst the respondents replied yes, while 11.0 percent replied with no statement of expression over the statement that, Perhaps these results are closely in line with the findings of Aluonzi et al. (2016) who stated that it is the responsibility of local government to provide enough funds for the development of infrastructure and skilled people. Without the provision of enough fund, skilled persons and related tools are impossible, hence no infrastructure of the area will be developed.

Moreover, majority of the respondents 80.2 percent were in favor of the statement that Infrastructural development plays an important role in the development of the area. The majority believed that infrastructure development enables basic service delivery, greatly improving local quality of life. This aligns with Nwankwo (2002), who stated that good infrastructure boosts quality of life, creates jobs, drives economic growth, attracts investment, and, when well-maintained, ensures safety and extends facility lifespan, supporting overall area development.

Similarly, the majority of the respondents 71.0 agreed with the statement that the People of the local area are satisfied with the infrastructure constructed by the local government. These findings align with Dennis (2017), who found that Nepal's local government failed to provide enough roads, bridges, and public facilities, causing traffic jams and public frustration. Poor infrastructure limits accessibility, reduces service quality, and lowers living standards, worsening public dissatisfaction. Additionally, narrow roads blocked by protests further disrupted residents, who also faced issues like lack of healthcare, education, electricity, and clean water.

Similarly, 77.6 percent of the respondents were in favor of the statement that local governments are responsible for the maintenance of infrastructure, 3.1percent were not in favor of the statement while 19.3 percent were unaware of such facility. The study findings align with Nwankwo (2002), who emphasized local governments' role in developing and maintaining key infrastructure. As infrastructure ages, regular assessments and repairs are essential to ensure safety and reliability. Well-maintained facilities protect residents and maximize public investment value.

The study further disclosed that, 90 percent of the respondents were of the opinion that, Well-developed infrastructure enhances the overall quality of life for community members, 6.8 negated and 3.2 percent had no knowledge regarding the statement. Well-developed infrastructure is essential for improving quality of life by supporting daily activities and delivering key services. Reliable transport, clean water, waste management, and affordable housing directly affect health, safety, education, and job access for residents.

Likewise, 4.3 percent amongst the respondents replied yes, 81.8 percent replied no while 13.8 percent had no idea about the statement that people are getting basic

facilities/services in the community provided by local government. Regmi et al. (2010b) found that local governments struggle to deliver basic services effectively without community involvement. Their performance is measured by how well they meet local needs in areas like health, education, water, and sanitation. Access to these services is vital for residents' well-being and area development.

TABLE: 1 UNIVARITE TABLE RELATED TO COMMUNITY MEMBER AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES

No	Statement	Yes	No	Do Know	Not	Total
1	local government performing its role for infrastructure development in the area	108(17.4)	445(71.7)	68(11.0)		621(100)
2	Infrastructural development plays an important role in the development of the area	498(80.2)	60(9.7)	63(10.1)		621(100)
3	People of the local area are satisfied from the infrastructure-constructed by local government	33(5.3)	441(71.0)	147(23.7)		621(100)
4	Local governments are responsible for the maintenance of infrastructure	482(77.6)	19(3.1)	120(19.3)		621(100)
5	Well-developed infrastructure enhances the overall quality of life for community members	559(90)	42(6.8)	20(3.2)		621(100)
6	people are getting basic facilities/services related to infrastructure in the community provided by local government	27(4.3)	508(81.8)	86(13.8)		621(100)

SECTION: B BIVARIATE ANALYSIS RELATED TO COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES

Table 2 indicated that a highly significant association ($P=0.000$) was found between Infrastructure Establishment (Road, Drainage and Jirga Halls / Community Center) by Local Government for Community Development and Local People Satisfaction by applying Chi Square Test. Khan & Hussain (2019) found that infrastructure development greatly influences the well-being and satisfaction of local populations, particularly in rural areas. Improved roads enhance mobility and access to essential services like healthcare, education, and markets, leading to better quality of life and public service delivery.

Furthermore, a highly significant association ($P=0.000$) was expressed between Feeder road construction by local government for agriculture purpose and Provision of services i.e. fertilizer provision, seed provision, chemicals/pesticides by local government in the field of agriculture by applying Chi Square Test. Ali et al. (2015) supported these findings, highlighting a strong link between feeder road construction and access to agricultural inputs. Feeder roads improve connectivity to markets and suppliers, especially for smallholder farmers, reducing costs and post-harvest losses. This integrated approach boosts productivity, rural incomes, and food security.

Similarly, a highly significant association ($P=0.000$) was found between Establishment of health centers and health facilities by local government in the target area

and Maintenance of infrastructure i.e. basic health unit by local government by applying Chi Squair Test. Ali & Nishtar (2021) found that establishing new health centers must go hand-in-hand with maintaining existing infrastructure like BHUs for effective healthcare delivery. This balanced approach improves service quality, reduces disparities, and builds public trust. Decentralized local governance enhances responsiveness to community health needs and system resilience.

Similarly, a highly significant association ($P=0.000$) was found between establishment of health centers and health facilities by local government in the target area and easy access of health facilities (government dispensaries) in your Community by applying Chi Square Test. Ali & Nishtar (2021) supported the findings by showing a strong link between local government involvement in health infrastructure and improved access to services. Local planning reduces barriers to care, especially in underserved areas, encouraging timely treatment and better health outcomes. Decentralized approaches ensure more inclusive, equitable, and responsive healthcare delivery.

Similarly, a highly significant association ($P=0.000$) was found between establishment of health centers and health facilities by local government in the target area and occurrence of deliveries in health centers by applying Chi Square Test. Bhutta et al. (2010) emphasized that decentralized health planning enables local governments to overcome geographical and socio-cultural barriers, boosting institutional deliveries. Expanding maternal health facilities improves access, trust, and use of skilled care during childbirth. This approach enhances maternal and neonatal health outcomes, especially in rural and underserved communities.

TABLE 2: BIVARIATE TABLES RELATED TO COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES

S. No	Statement	Chi-Square (P-Value)
1	Association between Infrastructure Establishment (Road, Drainage and Jirga Halls / Community Center) and Local People Satisfaction	$\chi^2=809.317$ (.000)
2	Association between Feeder road construction by local government for agriculture purpose and Provision of services i.e. fertilizer provision, seed provision, chemicals/pesticides by local government in the field of agriculture	$\chi^2=819.486$ (.000)
3	Association between Establishment of health centers and health facilities by local government in the target area and Maintenance of infrastructure i.e. basic health unit by local government	$\chi^2=83.278$ (.000)
4	Association between Establishment of health centers and health facilities by local government in the target area and Easy access of health facilities (government dispensaries) in the Community	$\chi^2=235.607$ (.000)
5	Association between Immediate effect of municipality services on the quality of the lives of the people of the community and Disposal of garbage on right place by local government	$\chi^2=10.062$ (.039)
6	Association between Establishment of health centers and health facilities by local government in the target area and Occurrence of deliveries in health centers	$\chi^2=135.912$ (.000)

SECTION-C UNIVARIATE ANALYSIS RELATED TO STAKEHOLDERS



Table 3 indicates that all of the respondents 100 percent think that it is the responsibility of local government to provide enough funds for the development of infrastructure and skilled people. These findings contradict Bird & Vaillancourt (2006), who argued that relying solely on local governments for infrastructure and skill development overlooks their financial and operational limitations. They emphasized that local governments often lack fiscal autonomy and depend on higher authorities for funding. Thus, national support and external funding are essential to fulfill development goals.

Similarly, 54.5 percent of the respondents answered yes to the statement that specific types of infrastructure like road, bridge, street, public toilet etc. are critical (important, essential) for community, 18.2 percent answered with negation while 27.3 percent did not respond. The results align with Banister (2005), Gehl (2010), and Jenkins & Curtis (2005), who emphasized that infrastructure like roads, bridges, and public toilets, is vital for connectivity, hygiene, and social well-being. Streets support not just mobility but also urban planning and safety. Such infrastructure is essential for local development and quality of life.

Furthermore, table 3 indicated that, table indicated that all (100 percent) of the respondents argued that local government involve the community in the decision-making process regarding infrastructure development. Similar findings were reported by Haque (2022), who noted that the structure of local governance affects community development. Limited citizen participation in centralized systems can hinder effective infrastructure planning. Involving communities through advisory committees helps ensure projects reflect local needs and priorities.

Furthermore, 72.7 percent amongst the respondents reported that infrastructure investments can support economic development, 18.2 percent negated and 9.1 had no knowledge regarding the statement. These findings align with Munnell (1990), who emphasized that infrastructure investments are vital for economic growth, boosting productivity and trade. They also enhance human capital by improving access to education, healthcare, and technology. Such investments promote regional integration, reduce inequalities, and support sustainable development.

TABLE: 3 UNIVARIATE TABLE RELATED TO STAKEHOLDERS

No	Statement	Yes	No	Do Know	Not	Total
1	it is the responsibility of local government to provide enough funds for the development of infrastructure and skilled people	33(100)				33(100)
2	Do you believe that specific types of infrastructure like road, bridge, street, public toilet etc. are critical (important, essential) for your locality	18(54.5)	6(18.2)	9(27.3)		33(100)
3	local government involves the community in the decision-making process regarding infrastructure development	33(100)				33(100)
4	infrastructure investments can support economic development	24(72.7)	6(18.2)	3(9.1)		33(100)



SECTION-D BIVARIATE ANALYSIS RELATED TO STAKEHOLDERS

Table 4 reported that a highly significant association ($P=0.000$) was found between Provision of funds by local government for infrastructure and Local government participation in the decision making process related to infrastructure i.e. road, bridge, public toilet etc. Shah & Thompson (2004) found that local governments’ funding of infrastructure projects reflects and strengthens their role in decision-making. By allocating resources for roads, bridges, and public toilets, they gain control over planning and implementation. This financial involvement drives effective infrastructure development. When local governments control both funding and decisions, citizens can better monitor performance and demand transparency, boosting trust and governance. Greater financial autonomy leads to stronger local involvement in infrastructure planning and management. A significant association between Provision of facilities or programs i.e. Location (grounds), cash for management and arrangement and equipment related to traditional games, sports, and recreational activities by local government and Arrangement of recreational activities by local government ($P=0.416$). Robertson (2000) found that local governments play a key role in community development by funding recreational facilities and programs. Their financial support ensures these programs are sustainable and well-managed, promoting public health, social interaction, and community pride. This makes organizing local recreational activities easier and more effective.

Furthermore, a highly significant association ($P=0.000$) was found between People believe that specific types of infrastructure like road, bridge, street, public toilet etc. are critical (important, essential) for your locality and infrastructure investments can support economic development. In other words, people’s beliefs about the importance of specific infrastructure are strongly connected to their views on infrastructure’s role in boosting the economy. Straub (2011) arguing against the statement that while the belief in infrastructure’s importance is statistically linked to perceptions of economic growth in this study, actual outcomes might vary in practice, its impact depends heavily on governance, efficiency, and economic context.

Similarly, no statistically significant association ($P=0.464$) was found between perceived cause of poor infrastructure and public consultation by local government. This result is supported by Hasan (2006), who found that in many urban development contexts in Pakistan, public consultation efforts often lack the institutional backing and structured implementation necessary to meaningfully influence infrastructure outcomes. Without formal mechanisms for incorporating citizen input into decision-making, consultation remains symbolic and disconnected from perceptions of government support.

TABLE: 4 BIVARIATE TABLES RELATED TO STAKEHOLDERS

S. No	Statements	Chi-Square (P-Value)
1	Provision of funds by local government for infrastructure and Local government participation in the decision making process related to infrastructure i.e. road, bridge, public toilet etc.	$\chi^2 = 19.556$ (.000)
2	Provision of facilities or programs i.e. Location (grounds), cash for management and arrangement and equipment related to traditional games, sports, and recreational activities by local government and Arrangement of recreational activities by local government	$\chi^2 = 3.929$ (.416)
3	People believe that specific types of infrastructure like road, bridge, street, public toilet etc. are critical (important, essential) for your	$\chi^2 = 41.250^a$ (.000)

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- locality and infrastructure investments can support economic development
- 4 Do you believe poor infrastructure is due to lack of local government support and Does your local government consult the public before beginning infrastructure projects $\chi^2 = 3.590^a$ (.464)
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CONCLUSION

Local governments are central to rural development through the provision of infrastructure and essential services. In Pakistan, however, despite constitutional backing and decentralization reforms, rural areas continue to experience severe deficits in clean water, roads, electricity, and sanitation. Weak institutional capacity, corruption, and misallocation of resources further constrain effective service delivery. As a result, community trust in local governance remains fragile. Bridging these gaps is crucial for raising living standards and ensuring more equitable and sustainable development.

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