



ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

The Cultural Dynamics of Power and Corruption in Local Government Department, District Swabi, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

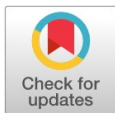
Muhammad Tufail^{1*}, Muhammad Taieb²

^{1,2} Department of Social Anthropology, University of Peshawar, Peshawar, Pakistan

Abstract— The purpose of the study is to explore the cultural dynamics and patterns of misuse of authority in the local government department at the district Swabi, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. The main focus of the study is to identify that who are the real stakeholders holding the power in the local government department, how corruption is done by these powerful stakeholders, what are the patterns of power execution and what are the implications of the misuse of authority for the local communities. The study is based on the social exchange theory of anthropology. The study is qualitative in nature. Purposive and snowball sampling methods are used. The minimum sample size is 270 and the maximum sample size is indefinite and depends on the saturation of the same frequent information. Data is collected via unstructured interviews and case studies. The major finding of the study is that there exists an informal network of liaison among the three actors, holding and sharing the power and authority as partners, in the local government. The three actors working as partners in this liaison were identified as: the local government officials, the local community leaders, and the government contractors. This informal network of liaisons is holding and sharing the power and authority to obtain, maintain and secure social, political, and monetary benefits. This liaison has established an informal system of power and authority that is exercised through its own informal structure. This informal system is working parallel to the formal legal system of the government. The Laws, regulations, rules, and procedures set for the public administration and governance are used to be technically evaded and dodged by these partners to secure their vested interests. The vested interests were identified as: keeping control over the power and authority sources, misuse of authority to collect the wealth, and to buy the means of pleasures and luxuries. This informal power liaison seeks and secure support from the provincial and federal government authorities. This support is obtained via the payments of cash money, luxurious gifts, and services. This informal system of liaison always controls and obtains the awards of the contracts of the development and non-development works and services in the local government. They save illegal money in these contracts through various methods identified with the names as: the acceptances, the advances, the commissions, and the local taxations. The local communities are controlled and kept satisfied via the local touts. The loyalty of these touts is bought via the provision of government jobs, contracts of developmental works and services and payments of cash money. The local cultural patterns of interdependence and social exchanges based on kinship ties, neighborhoods, friendship, and political affiliations provide the ground for corruption.

Index Terms— Law, Power liaison, Informal networks, Cultural patterns, Stakeholders

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*Email: mhmd.tufail.123@gmail.com

Introduction

Local government is a part of the state which has the authority to develop and impose plans and procedures within a defined small territory under its jurisdiction. Local government exists within each country of the world in some form with respect to its size, authority, and area of jurisdiction (Encyclopedia Britannica online). Local government is found across the whole world countries in different forms and is in direct contact with the citizens through the elected or selected representatives from these citizens. These representatives serve as administrators of the public resources. Its duties and services usually include the basic services like construction of roads and streets, graveyards management, childcare, waste disposal system, recreation, public arts, and urban planning. These services should be delivered in the standard and equitable manner (Masters, A. B., & Graycar, A. 2016). Lockard defines it as a government body that has the power to manage and direct the plans and policies inside a definite territory. The territory is part of the central government (Lockard, 1963). Marshal suggested that the local government has three prominent characteristics which are: limited territory of execution within a state, the selection or election, taxation the local level and the autonomy to impose certain steps including the taxation (Marshal, 1965). Likewise, Hill (1974) defined local government as a kind of sovereign body with identified boundary, protected by the law, an organized system with capacity and responsibility, power of legislation, and dependent to some extent for finances and legitimization on the state.

Corruption in local government refers to the misuse of public office, by individuals in positions of power, for personal gains. It involves the abuse of entrusted authority, bribery, embezzlement, fraud, nepotism, and other forms of illicit activities that damage the integrity and effectiveness of local governance. Local governments may be more vulnerable to corruption because interactions between private individuals and public officials happen at greater levels of intimacy and with more frequency at more decentralized levels. Forms of corruption that involve money like bribery, extortion, embezzlement, and graft are found in local government systems. Other forms of political corruption are nepotism and patronage system.

Many local governments have an established political culture with certain expectations and practices that often determine what is seen as acceptable and not acceptable in local politics. In municipalities with an undeveloped or underdeveloped political culture, accountability and legitimacy is usually low and principles of ethics in government are not established. This can encourage corruption to take hold in the local government because citizens do not know what is considered corrupt and what not, and local officials are not afraid to be corrupt because of the low accountability. In some places the local governments have been corrupt for such a long time that the citizens think that this is how it is supposed to work, because that is all they have been exposed to till date.

Local government, a basic pillar of the government, is an important field for corruption research. It is due to the simple fact that the local government is directly in contact with the citizens and has a higher impact on their daily life (Masters, A. B., & Graycar, A. 2016). Corruption is the main focus of research in the wealthy countries today and adding a lot to literature. Research on possible and predictable corruption is underway in countries like Israel and Sweden where corruption is almost controlled. When a lot of corruption scandals observed in the local government within a few decades, the United Kingdom introduced the ethical standards for the local councils under the Local Government Act 2000. These reforms were finished back after a decade, as the national Conservative government came to power, did not want the control of the bureaucracy and the center over the local councils (Masters, A. B., & Graycar, A. 2016).

Corruption in local government is present in almost all countries of the world whether developed, developing or underdeveloped. The world richest and powerful country like the United States is unable to control corruption completely in the local government as evident from the case of the infamous Tammany Hall system in New York which was a case of corruption in the city or local government, and the same as corruption exist till date. Government corruption (Masters, A. B., & Graycar, A. 2016). The study in the richest countries found that the local government officials had sold their services in an unjust manner for just a little packet of cigarettes. Even in wealthy countries, local government employees will 'sell' inequitable services for as little as a packet of cigarettes. Research by Gardiner and Lyman (1978) identified the outcome of local government corruption in the shape of the poor planning for physical infrastructure, which is evident like poor roads, schools, scrappy housing constructions with high risk of fire and safety, bad recreation facilities, high prices for house buying and other facilities and bad governance performance in the local community (Masters, A. B., & Graycar, A. 2016).

In Pakistan, corruption exist in all the state institutions in organized and systematic form (Javaid, 2010). It is a constant threat to the stability and integrity of Pakistan, as the country is under huge amount of the debts taken from the rich countries and the IMF to fill the budget and public finance deficit each year. The country observed in the past decades the mega corruption scandals of the state institutions and the politicians and heads of the governments. The judiciary is not found as independent and observed as protecting corrupt political practices and the powerful elites from prosecution. Bribery, embezzlement, misappropriation, extortion, graft, patronage, and nepotism are found and recorded in courts of law. Money laundering is observed as done by the elite class politicians, businessmen and bureaucracy in mega amounts with impunity. The military is out of the public audit and not accountable to any anti-corruption body. Since 1988, the four elected governments of both Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto have been dismissed in succession, two times each, on charges of corruption (Javaid, 2010). Corruption is present and done equally within the federal, provincial, and local governments as indicated in the research done jointly with the Transparency International Pakistan (Chêne, 2008). Corruption is found widespread, systematic, and deeply penetrated inside all the classes of society and the. All forms of petty and grand corruption are observed including financial and

political corruption. People usually face demands to pay bribes to the public officials to obtain any kind of public services. According to the survey reports of 2002 and 2006 by Transparency International, petty bribery is recorded the with the highest number (Chêne, M. 2008). The survey report of 2006 as per respondents' opinion exposed that the three most corrupt agencies were the police (64%), power sector (11%) and judiciary (9%). The three main reasons for corruption were identified as the lack of accountability, low salaries, and discretionary powers (Chêne, M. 2008).

The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) was established in 2002 as part of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy to fight the menace of corruption. This strategy designed against corruption was thorough and broad in the sense that it covered almost everything needed to check, investigate, and persecute the corruption acts through the NAB (an executing agency). But unfortunately, the collusion of the political elites with the NAB and judiciary; the control of Military Establishment over the NAB and judiciary; and the capricious proceedings of the anti-corruption cases are observed as major hurdles to control the grand corruption (Javaid, 2010; Khan, 2007). Interesting fact is that the military officials do not come under the NAB law and jurisdiction. NAB is seen to be used against the political opponents and civil bureaucrats to control and change their loyalty in politics and governance. A blanket immunity was conferred upon the big political leaders (including Nawaz Sharif and Zardary) and the big bureaucrats to protect them against any persecution, for their mega corruption cases done in the past, by President General Musharraf through the National Reconciliation Ordinance of October 2007 (NRO). The NAB laws are amended to a considerable limit by the sitting Shabaz Sharif government, since came into power in the April 2022, with the fall of the Imran Khan government via a vote of no confidence (allegations that the no confidence was enacted with the help of billions of rupees horse-trading). The new NAB law amendments have given considerable concessions to the corrupt practices in terms of its jurisdiction and its execution with regards to the corrupt acts, persons and the limit of money involved.

The federal republic of Pakistan consists of the three levels of government called as the federal, the provincial and the local government. Local government is protected by the constitution under Article 32 and Article 140-A. Under these given articles, every province has its own local government. In this regard, for the administration and governance of the local government, each provincial government has the power of legislation which is called the Local Government Act. The local government ministry in each province is responsible for its execution which is headed by the given minister (elected member provincial assembly) and the secretary (public official). Local government is the lowermost level that is directly engaged with the common people living in the rural and urban areas in the shape of villages, urban towns, and cities respectively. District councils and metropolitan corporations are respectively the highest rural and urban tiers of local government in the provinces. The city districts are governed by the metropolitan corporations and municipal corporations, while the rural districts are governed by the district council, the tehsil council, and the union councils. The union council is the lowest unit in the local government within the district. The city district head is called the city nazim or mayor. Elected heads of the district, tehsil and union council are called as the district nazim (mayor), tehsil nazim and union council nazim respectively. The province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after the amendments in the Act abolished the post of the district nazim, and the tehsil and union/village council heads are now called as the tehsil mayor and the union/village council chairman respectively.

Administratively and territorially the state of Pakistan is divided into provinces as units of the federation. Each province is divided into divisions, then each division is divided into districts, and each district is divided into tehsils. The tehsil is further divided into union councils or village councils (the lowest unit). District is the major administrative and territorial unit of governance within each of the provinces in Pakistan. The district local government is administered and governed by the elected political heads under the provincial government patronage, as per the Local Government Act of each province. The district is governed by the deputy commissioner (chief bureaucrat in the district) who serves as the state representative from both the federal and provincial governments and having controlling authority over all the federal and provincial departments within the districts. The elected political representatives of the local government at both the district and tehsil levels (the nazim or the mayor) are working in partnership with the office of the deputy commissioner in the district. Local government departments are always in direct contact with the people in their day-to-day life. The provision of the basic services in the local urban and rural communities with regards to the physical and social infrastructure are its basic responsibilities. Some of its duties are listed as: the construction of roads and streets, the drainage and sewerage of water, the clean water supply, disease control, health and safety, clean and green environment, public parks, and playgrounds, building and construction management, bazar management, transport management, weekly cattle and utilities markets, community centers and public library etc. The chances of corruption are high due to the close engagement of the people and the government officials. Corruption in the local government effect the life of the common citizens in a very negative and bad way. Print and electronic media publish cases of corruption on a regular basis. Newline in 1993 (a Pakistani newsmagazine, published some grand and bold cases of corruption in Punjab local government-the largest province in Pakistan (Khan, 2007).

This research is ethnographic, descriptive, and qualitative in nature. The focus of the study is to find out the patterns of corruption and its cultural dynamics in the local government department in the district Swabi, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The question of our research is how corruption is done and what are the social and cultural factors involved in this process.

Literature Review

Corruption is defined as the misuse of government office or authority for personal and private purposes. Transparency International (the international anti-corruption NGO) and the World Bank defined corruption as 'the use of public office for private gain' (www.transparency.org: World Bank, 1997). Transparency International later on redefined it as 'the use of entrusted power for private gain', so as to include the government offices, services and departments that have been privatized. This definition never means that corruption does not or cannot occur in the private sector. We can find corruption in big businesses in the private sector, like for example in the big national level companies and multinational corporations. In these private enterprises corruption is done mostly in the process of procurement and hiring. Likewise, all the private sector functions which are regulated by the government do have corruption. Similarly, the misuse of government office or authority is not just limited to one's personal benefits, but it may serve the interests of one's family, ethnicity, tribe, friends, political party, native land and so on. Corrupt practices have been found in the government offices to finance the activities of the political parties. Corruption is the willful deviation from the arm's-length principle to achieve personal benefits or provide benefits to other individuals involved (Tanzi, 1995). Williams (2012) noted that corruption can be public or private. When corruption is done by the public officials it is called public, and when done by the private individuals it is called private, and in most cases, it is initiated by the private individuals towards the public officials.

Corruption is a diverse phenomenon with respect to its nature, scope, and existence in the world. Corruption in the procurement process is always an inevitable obstacle in the development of a business, organization, or a country (Aidt, 2003; Froystad et al. 2010). Corruption is done by both the bureaucrats and the firms as they are in collusions and can easily dodge and deceive the regulations in a legal manner (Harstad and Svensson, 2011). Pashev (2009), defined it as the misuse of public office having the power to award contracts, for personal and private benefits. Corruption is the opposite to the economic growth and integrity of the state (Lawal, 2007). Corruption stops productivity, brings destruction, and violates the rule of law. It results in the unjust distribution of income and allocation of resources and business uncertainties in a country (Jain, 2001).

Culture is the way of life. Patterns of thoughts and actions of the people represent their culture, and corruption is a practice done in almost all societies by the majority of the people, hence corruption is culture (David, 2012). David further wrote that government officials obtain public money via various forms of embezzlements. Citizens are compelled to pay bribes for their due and legal tasks. At the same time the people also persuade the government officers through bribes to get work done.

Aluko (2009) noted that corruption is universal phenomena and is found across the whole world countries irrespective of race, region, or nation. Similarly, David described it as the common practice observed both in the developing as well as in the developed countries. Developed world like Japan, America, Europe, and former USSR showed corruption. Culture and geography make no difference and each human occupation is infected with corruption (David, I. 2012). It occurs both in the democratic as well as the authoritarian forms of the government (Kolb, 1964).

Corruption has received huge international attention since the decade of the 1990s. An international anti-corruption NGO called the Transparency International (TI), was founded in 1993, use to regularly publish the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for almost all the world countries which rate and compare their corruption perception levels in the given year. The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank place anti-corruption steps as part of in their lending process. Economists have set debates, dialogues, and discussion on corruption at the world forums. Daniel Kaufmann's statistical work for the world bank, through the comparison of various countries of the world, has identified a correlation between corruption and the low growth rates (Kaufmann, Kraay and Zoido, 1999). All kind of the states in the world with any kind of the government system have shown fall of the sitting governments, fall of the state heads like presidents or prime ministers, and fall of the powerful political families and classes, just because of the corruption scandals leaked and exposed (Johnston, 1997).

Social sciences have done lot of research work on the subject of corruption in the last three decades, due to its origin, existence, and diverse and complex impacts in a culture and society across the world. Some of the topics are listed as: the historical forms of corruption in the Western world (Scott, 1972; Heidenheimer, 1989), the impact of corruption over the political parties and groups (Della Porta & Vannucci 1999; Kawata, 2006), the active role of corruption the system of politics (Leff, 1964; Huntington, 1968; Montinola & Jackman, 2002), and the corruption linkages with development, civil society, and democracy (Bardhan, 1997; Rose-Ackerman, 1999; Doig & Theobald, 2000; Johnston, 2005), Torsello & Venard, (2016).

The government role in corruption

The social research carried out in recent past indicated that the role of government has increased extensively in the economy of a given country. Three major causes have been identified which are listed as: (1) huge increase in the level of taxation in many countries (2) huge increase in the level of public expenditure and (3) most probable, a huge increase in regulations and controls on economic activities by the governments. As observed in the majority of countries, a series of authorities or public offices are involved in allowing or approving

a given economic activity to take a start or continue its operations. This line of hierarchy is very difficult to pass in terms of time needed, pre-requisites fulfilled, and energy required. This kind of power confers a chance and induces the concerned authorities to demand a bribe or accept the offered bribe from the clients (Craig (1998); Tanzi (1998); and David, 2012).

Types of corruption

The World Bank differentiates between administrative corruption and 'crony capitalism' or 'state capture'. Research on countries like Russia, Albania, Indonesia, and Malaysia confirm this kind of the differentiation (Rose–Ackerman, 2008). Administrative corruption includes the use of bribery and favoritism to reduce the taxes, escape the regulations and win the procurement contracts. 'State capture' is defined as that the state itself assume the role as to serves the interests of a small group of businessmen and politicians, sometimes comprised of the criminal class (Rose–Ackerman, 2008). This class of politicians and businessmen are classified and identified with the name of the mafia. Adam Graycar noted three types on the basis of traditional analysis which are listed as: petty corruption (flies), grand corruption (tigers) and 'state capture' or policy corruption Graycar, A. (2015). Petty corruption is identified with the lower-level officials who receive a little or big return in the shape of bribery in kinds, while tempering in the official records of taxes or services provisions. Grand corruption as described in the literature (Hellman, Jones, & Kaufmann, 2000; Johnston, 2005; Pope, 1995) is identified when the politicians manipulate the laws and institutions of the state for their personal benefits, distort policy to the extent as to own the state and its institutions and resources. Grand corruption occurs when governments regularly issue contracts for major construction projects, allocate natural resource concessions, and privatize the state-owned firms or companies. A "state capture" situation is identified as, when the legislation process and the legislature is fully controlled and directed and the laws which are developed and passed by the legislature, grants benefits in a corrupt manner to a special group of politicians and business elites. Outside corrupt interests are used to control, make, and re-write the state laws to obtain their private benefits Graycar, (2015).

The role of culture and social capital in corruption

Staats (1972) noted that corruption is a social problem found in various "degrees and forms in all but the most primitive societies". The interrelationship of cultural factors and social capital with corruption in society was studied to find out the key factors involved Santos, (2014). It was found that universalistic trust (linking and bridging social capital) constitutes a positive social capital that is negatively linked to corruption. In contrast, the particularistic levels of trust (bonding) can constitute a negative social capital that is directly related to the level of corruption. Similarly, the cultures which are likely to favor and legitimize the dependency relations and the making of the closed particularistic groups (power-distance and community factors) create a breeding ground for the development of such unethical corrupt structures. The social and cultural factors have been identified as determinants of corruption in our study. Corruption is the outcome of the culture of dependency (denomination of network of cultural factors) as proved by the results of our empirical data. In a broad sociocultural perspective, the culture of dependency serves as a base ground for corruption to breed. Corruption is found to be linked with the particularistic forms of trust or bonding (negative social capital) and a culture that legitimates power relations and social distance. In such conditions the network of reciprocity (amoral familism) provides a favorable ground for corruption where trust is linked more to the individual networks of dependency than to the society as a whole. Countries with this kind of culture of dependency, where particularistic form of trust or bonding between the individuals exists, we found the high level of corruption or conditions conducive for corruption to happen Santos (2014).

Ideas about 'culture' have often been used to explain or excuse the acts of corruption (Larmour, 2012). It is usually told that Gift-giving, is part of our culture, and outsiders should not confuse it with bribery or corruption. Syed Alatas in his classic sociology of corruption (1968), strictly criticized the relativism approach as an excuse for corruption and similarly Transparency International (TI) also opposed this approach. Alatas said that the western researchers cannot understand the inner meaning of the native cultural practices, and usually act as patrons to describe the native cultures. Western scholars used to consider the non-western societies as incapable of separating right from wrong. Atlas proved it from the studies of the studies of the ancient Rome, China, and Muslim cultures that the powerful actually misused the public office for personal gains while used culture as a shield. Leaders who violated the norms knew those local norms existed. Cultural practices are used for the purpose of corruption rather than being the cause of corruption (Alatas, 1968).

Even in the presence of such a strong criticism on cultural relativism and the universal approaches of the international organizations, ideas on cultures gives explanation and understanding that how people identify, accept, and approve a certain act what is otherwise judged to be a corrupt behavior. These explanations of the culture do not deny the ethical basis of judgments about corruption. Rather, they show how ethical meanings develop and change, how people give different meanings to different cultural factors in deciding what is the right thing to do (Larmour, 2012).

The state of corruption in the local government

Meza & Pérez noted in their literature, from various authors, that corruption is a systemic, organized, and collective activity which is considered as a normal social practice in most of the world societies (Meza et al, 2021). They noted some key contents that consolidate the process of corruption in the government sector which are listed as: organizational dynamics, administrative practices, and actors with great power. When we speak of the consolidation of corruption, we refer to a level of stability reached by corruption processes that is self-sustaining and very difficult to reverse. Very little amount of in-depth research work is done on corruption in the public administration, and less detail is found about the government employees' role and behavior in this research (Bozeman et al. (2018); Meyer et al. (2018).

To study the consolidation of corruption two approaches are used: the dyadic interactions approach—or exchanges between individual actors—and networked approaches (a web of exchanges and interactions among multiple actors whether individuals or parties) connecting several layers frequently studied and understood in isolation (Bozeman et al., 2018; Meyer et al., 2018). This approach is suitable to understand that how the various forms of corruption are linked with each other and onward linked with the informal governance structures (Strach et al., 2019). This allows for a contextualized understanding of manifested corruption and is a more adequate frame for identifying and understanding systemic and deep corruption.

We see that major focus of the initial research on corruption were the national governments, as it was perceived that the local governments have low levels of corruption and possess the capacity to control and minimize it at the local levels (Dowley, 2006). This idea supported the normative struggle for the political and fiscal decentralization in the late 90s (Pianezzi & Grossi, 2018) and also supported the quantitative studies on corruption that placed greater emphasis on the country-level reviews and evaluations (Ades & Di Tella, 1996, 1997; Kaufmann & Siegelbaum, 1996; Lambsdorff, 1999; Rose Ackerman, 1999; Lederman, Loayza, & Soares, 2005; Méon & Sekkat, 2005; Plaček et al., 2018; Treisman, 2007).

Research on corruption in the local government systems would help a lot to identify the basic actors and factors which play key roles in the corruption process, and which are most probably missed in the national level studies. This would also contribute to found and develop the theoretical perspectives which are required to understand corruption, and hence would help to find out better ways to deal with it (Graaf, 2007; Doig, 2014; Jiménez et al., 2014; Masters & Graycar, 2016). Studies on corruption are divided in two categories: in the observance of dyadic relations, that is, interactions and behaviors at individual-levels (Della Porta & Vannucci, 1997; Lambsdorff, 1999; Graaf, 2007; Graaf G. & Huberts, 2008; Plaček et al., 2018), and focus on illegal exchanges that involve the public resources or hidden interactions with illegal consequences (Graaf G. & Huberts, 2008; Plaček et al., 2018). Networks have been identified as key characteristics of corruption schemes (Della Porta & Vannucci, 1999; Jancsics & Jávora, 2012; Olver, 2018; Ugalde, 2018; Yu et al., 2018).

Methodology

This is exploratory and ethnographic research. The data collection and description are qualitative in nature. Purposive, saturated and snowball sampling method is used. Primary data has been collected through unstructured interviews, participant observation, key informants, group discussions and case study approach. As participant observer informal group discussions were attended in the local hujras (men's assembly, club, and guest house) in the Pakhtun communities. Locale of the research was district Swabi in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. Swabi (a small city or urban town) is the district head quarter of the district and the local government. This district is comprised of the four tehsils (administrative and geographical units of the districts) named as the tehsil Swabi, tehsil Lahore, tehsil Razzar and tehsil Topi. Respondents of the study, on the basis of research purpose, were identified and nominated in two major categories listed as: first the local government officials in the district government, and second common people of the local communities in the district. These communities live in the form of rural villages and urban towns across the district. The first category of the district local government officials was further divided into five categories identified as: the administrative officers, the engineers, the accountants, and the clerical staff plus peons. The second category of the local people were further divided into four categories identified as: the local elites (holding big land, money, and business), the people from the middle class and the lower-class, the government contractors in the local community, and the local touts (agents or brokers) who always act as a bridge between the district local government officials and the community's people and elites. Hence a total of nine categories from the public and private sectors were selected in the purposive sample. The minimum sample size for each of these categories is 30 and the maximum size is indefinite depending upon the saturation of the information. Hence the minimum sample size is 270 in the purposive snowball sample while the maximum size depends on the saturation of information as per the saturated sampling technique.

Primary data type used in this ethnographic research. This data was collected in the field in qualitative form. Qualitative data was written and presented in the form of sentences and paragraphs as collected via the unstructured interviews, participant observation and group discussions. Mobile phones were used to record interviews and group discussions. Participant observations were recorded in written form via hand-notes. Thematic analysis method was used to analyze the themes contained in the recorded primary data in

qualitative form. The data was collected during the period from 2019-2022.

Discussion

This study is ethnographic and qualitative in nature. This study is conducted in the district Swabi, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan, which is pre-dominantly inhabited by the mandar section of the yousafzai along with the other major ethnic groups like the awans, tanoly, dilazaks and gujjars. This study is conducted to explore the system of power and its cultural dynamics. This system of power includes the sources of power, its structure and function, the major stakeholders of power and misuse of the government authority with the support of this power. The district is the lowest geographical, political, and administrative unit in the state and government system of Pakistan. This district is governed by the deputy commissioner as the representative of the federal and provincial government in the province as per the 1973 constitution of Pakistan. The district is further sub-divided into smaller geographical and administrative units called as the tehsil. This tehsil and is governed by the assistant commissioner (public official) and the tehsil mayor (elected head of tehsil council). The tehsil mayor (previously the called the tehsil nazim) do have some executive and legislative powers at the tehsil level which are exercised through the office of the tehsil mayor and the tehsil council under the local government Act government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The tehsil is further sub-divided into union councils (now called as village council in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province). This union/village council is the smallest and lowest unit of the government system in Pakistan. This is headed by the union council chairman under the district council administration. The district police are a physical force and is an important organ of the government which execute the law of the state and maintain the peace and order in the country at the district and tehsil level. The district police are headed by the District Police Officer (DPO). The district is divided into various police circles and each police circle is controlled by a police station (called police thana in the local terminology). Each police station is headed by the police inspector called the Station Headquarter Officer (SHO). This SHO is known as the thanidaar in the local terminology. The DPO is assisted by the police inspectors who are appointed as the Station Headquarter Officers (SHOs) at the various police stations in the district. The law-and-order situation across the whole district is controlled by these police stations. The SHO or the thanidaar had been the central figure and symbol of the power and authority of the state since the time of the British imperialist rule in the subcontinent. The state has used to exercise its coercive powers through these SHOs (thanidaars) since British period till date. It is observed that the local political leaders, the notable landlords, business giants, the gang lords and the noble elites essentially keep very good relations with the SHO (the thanidar) of the local police station (the thana) to achieve and secure strong support and defense against the law of the state in cases of any violations or offences committed. As such they can defend themselves, their blood relatives, neighborhoods, or friends for any acts of civil or criminal offenses. The social bonds in the form of kinship ties, neighborhoods relations and friendship networks would always pay full loyalty and support of all kinds in return to these local elites as we observed and found during the field study.

The terms governance, public administration and legal system never found validity in actual socio-cultural setup in the Pakhtun communities living in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan with regards to their definition, essential principals, characteristics and their practical implementation on the ground . A system imported from the British masters since the colonial period and later on blended with bit of so called national expertise under the regimes of the given time after independence in 1947, never match with and got acceptance in the local socio-cultural system of the Pakhtuns that is identified with egalitarianism, land lord system, patriarchy, kinship ties, neighborhoods' bonds, friendship networks, patterns of honor, patterns of shame and past oriented patterns of thought and action (Goran, Julius, & Ken, 2003; Haque, 1997; Shafqat, 1999). The patriarchic institutions of Jirga (a men's body working as assembly and jury to discuss, mediate, negotiate, and decide the local social issue of all nature) and hujra (a men's house serving as guest house, rest house, club, and Jirga center) always serve as an informal system of governance, public administration, and judiciary to the formal system of the state and government.

Now as observed during the field study; the continuous, non-stop, soft, swift, and technical evasion of the state laws by the governing elites to achieve self-seeking interests have resulted in the bad governance, poor public administration, and poor justice system at the federal, provincial and local government levels. The governance and justice system of the state have assumed the shape of a village' butcher shop (the powerful men and elites always obtain the desired bunch of best meat at the same equal price that a poor and weak man would pay for a poor bunch of the meat in the same quantity from the same shop at the same time in the local Pakhtun communities). The factors identified for the bad governance and poor justice system are stated as: the emergence the of new industrial and business class during the long military regimes, the auspicious patronage of the controlled and directed political touts and puppets by the establishment of the powerful military and civil bureaucracy, the local socio-cultural composition and the incompatibility between the formal governance and justice system of the state and the local informal socio-cultural system of the various ethnic groups (Punjabi, Sindhis, Pakhtuns and Baluchis as major ethnic groups) in Pakistan.

This ethnographic study found that at the district level, the new class of bourgeois has established their partnerships and networks in the local communities with the local political leaders and bureaucrats through the local touts and brokers to secure the mutual benefits in the public and private sectors. These touts may come from the upper, middle, or lower class in the local social context at the district level.

The tout may be a political leader, a businessman, a government contractor, a government clerk, a government officer, or a local political worker. These touts are safeguarding the interests, advocating ambitions, promoting the cause, defending the vicious and black game of power control, and serving as brokers for the local political leaders, bourgeois, and bureaucrats. These touts serve as a bridge between the public and private sectors. These touts charge full price for their services to establish the partnerships and networks between the public and private sectors. The major stakeholders from the public sector are identified as the administrative officers, the engineers, the accounts and finance officers and the clerical staff. The major stakeholders from the private sector are identified as the local political leaders, the local elites, the government contractors, the local businessmen and the common people.

The Pakhtun culture and society, as explored during the field study, is strictly depicting the pattern of power politics. The roots of this pattern of power politics lies in the baseline socialization process of the newborn individuals. Study of the strict and rigid process of socialization of the new born baby in a Pakhtun family reveals that the baby is made exposed to an environment that is composed of the non-material cultural patterns listed as: exhibiting a play of intrigues and alliances, fearless acts, competitive ambition with the cousins called as tarboor (rivals), spirit of pride and honor resides in the patriarchic norms and value system, taking woman as the symbol of honor, ascribed status of being the inborn Pakhtun, dominating the occupational castes, and war with the enemy even at the heavy cost of bloodshed. The pattern of interrelationship in Pakhtun society takes the form of blood based and interest-based intimacy. Relationships with neighbors are very important and regarded and respected carefully due to the interdependency upon each other in many daily lives, works and issues. This also includes sharing together and supporting each other at the occasions of joys and griefs like celebrating the marriages or deaths ceremonies in the local communities. The pattern of kinship ties is practiced according to the famous Pakhtoon proverb "kor jang baher nang" (in home rivalry, out home unity). Social Status is deeply rooted in the genealogical background, size of land holding, movable property, and level of education as determinant factors in the present times. Another important factor that contributed to the social status was identified as is that which one notable individual is having good terms with the sitting government officials at the district and tehsil level administrative departments. The person who has developed good offices with the police and administrative officers is looked upon as a respectable and influential figure. This man is regarded and treated as the local community leader. Leadership in the local socio-cultural set up is identified, conferred, and established upon the above-mentioned characteristics listed as: the size of land holding, the size of the movable property, the genealogical line, the size of the kinship ties, the size of the neighborhood's ties, the size of the friendship ties and the size of the relations network with the government officials. Moreover, it doesn't matter whether this person is qualified or not according to any definition of leadership from the dictionary of social sciences. The leader in the local socio-cultural context must have the ability to deal and coordinate in the best manner with the local district officials and especially the local Police Station Headquarter Officer or the thanidaar (SHO). This practice and characteristic of the local leadership is called as the thana and tehsil in the local terminology. This established practice by the local leaders serves as a bridge between the community people and the district local government officials. The majority of the coordination and dealing is done via this pattern of liaisons. The deal with the district administration and district police is usually conducted in the shape of cash money, rich feasts, gifts in kinds or favors in kinds. The community people do pay loyalty in return to these leaders. They would provide physical, financial, and political support to these local community leaders whenever needed or demanded.

Here the culture of mutual cooperation, support, and nepotism and favoritism was identified and observed among the local community members, the local elites, and the local district government administration officers. This mutual cooperation is characterized by the established informal patterns of networks, partnerships, and liaisons. It was observed that any act of the misuse of authority or power is done with mutual understanding, cooperation, and support by the three parties: the common people, the local elites, and the district local government officials. So, all kinds of acts of law violations or compliances are an integrated phenome that would always involve all the identified stakeholders as major players and partners. No act of law violations or misuse of authority is done an isolation by any single player in this liaison. This liaison is founded, established, and maintained via personal and common benefits and interests. The social exchange theories of anthropology are being observed and experienced in this local socio-cultural setup in practical forms at full play. The pattern of bureaucratic legacy is supported and maintained, since the times of British rule, practiced at tehsil and district level, where these sitting self-imposed kings control the local communities through some of the local touts and brokers. These local touts and brokers always enjoy the favor of these district officials. These touts used to hold the local resources with the grace of informal established partnership with the district bureaucracy. This partnership is conducted via informal verbal liaisons. No deal or liaisons are conducted in written form just for the purpose of avoiding any recorded evidence of illegal corrupt practices. These touts used to keep the control of the local sources of power. These touts have constituted the powerhouse of political economy in the district via obtaining awards of the government contracts of the development and non-development works and services in the district.

The local district government has assumed the role of a body that is gratifying the common interests and ambitions of the district bureaucracy and the local touts and brokers instead of executing the well-defined law in theme and content during the practice of governance and public administration within the district. The public works and services are never delivered as per the standard laws and procedures set by the government. The public services are delivered when a handsome bribe is paid by the citizens to the public servant. The contracts of the public works are always awarded to the touts. The illegal and informal shares are set in advance between the

government officials and the touts before awarding the contract to a special tout. These illegal shares are named as: the advance, the commission, the ring, the chai pani and sugar. The major ambitions and dreams of the district local government officials as exposed during the field study are stated as: to make a huge bank balance, to educate children in elite educational institutions, to own residential plots and homes in big cities, to purchase agricultural lands, to own expensive vehicles, to obtain European or American immigration visas, and to avail foreign trips. The desires and wants of the top government officials were identified as the rich food, rich dance and music parties, prostitute women, prostitute transgender and alcoholic drinks. All these lusts and luxuries are being achieved via misuse of the authority by these high- and low-grade officials. In the majority of cases all these kinds of lusts and luxuries are being provided by the touts to these government officials. The touts as mentioned earlier may be a local political leader, a government contractor, a local businessman, a notable person in the community or a common man. A government official himself can serve as a tout as we identified in many cases in the field. These officials in turn reward these touts with the provision of government contracts, government jobs and all kinds of support and services from the government departments. The merit and legal formalities and procedures are just filled in the government official documents while evaded and dodged on the ground through a set of well-established skills and techniques. These skills and techniques of dodging and deceiving the legal formalities and procedures on the ground are inherited by the new government officials from the old officials in each government department. The documentary record is developed and maintained in accordance with the set law, criteria, formalities, and procedures but the ground reality is totally different. Hence, as a result, we can see the poor and miserable state of the works and services by the local government department in the district Swabi.

It was found that collective or common interests and benefits are not the first choice or priority of the government officers. In the same way, it is not a priority for the majority of the local people who may belong to any social class. Individual needs, interests and ambitions were found to be the prime and foremost priority in both the public and private sectors. The fact that was identified that it is never the priority of a given government official to pay his duty as per the given law assigned with his position. The given official is always addicted to earning personal benefits in monetary or other valuable forms via the misuse of his authority. It was observed as a matter of routine practice in the government offices that a government official used to make predefined, intentional, illegal, and unjust delay during the course of delivery of the services assigned to his position. The officials would always use to obstruct and not allow any kind of service delivery in a smooth legal manner, until and unless paid with a pre-defined amount of bribe. This bribe is always collected in cash through the clerical staff or the peon (naib qasid) working in the said office. The bribes are always collected in cash by hand. This bribe is never paid or received via bank transactions. No text messages via phones, no phone calls or social media is used during the bribe's deals. The illegal and informal rates, terms, and conditions in case of the award of the contracts for the development and non-development works or services are found to be different. The parties in such deals of the contracts are identified as the local government officials, the government contractors, the elected political members or ministers and the brokers. The illegal share received by the concerned officials from these contracts have a well-set informal procedure. This informal procedure consists of informal heads. The illegal shares of money saved from the government contracts are distributed between the government officials and the contractors via these informal heads. The names of these informal and illegal heads are listed as: the acceptance, the advance, the commission, the fuel and food charges and the stationery. The shares are divided in percentage ratios as per set criteria and formula among the administrative officers, the engineers, and the accountants in the given local government office. All these deals and transactions are made via words of mouth in face-to-face discussions and the money is received in cash by hand with no bank transaction involved. Similarly, no text recording or voice calls via phones or social media channels are used. This is done to avoid any kind of legal complications and evidence in case any complaint or enquiry was made and initiated against any official or contractor involved in such works.

A famous proverb was reported by the predominant majority of local population from both the public and private sector that, 'awal zaan dey bia ehaan dey' (a pakhto language proverb which means the self comes first, then the others). Hence, according to this famous folk saying, it was observed that almost all the people in the local communities follow, prefer, and seek their personal or family interests. The collective interests come with a second or no priority. Another very surprising fact that was found was that the speech and acts of the people rarely match. In the course of the day-to-day conversation everyone would talk and prefer the collective benefits of the community and is a champion of communal interests. But when it comes to practice the same people are found to ask and seek their personal interests if there was a clash with the community interests.

Some of the prominent and interesting cultural traits and patterns that were frequently observed and reported by the local population, and which are always followed and practiced by the local people in letter and spirit are described here. Every person in the locality is bound to follow the local norms, values, customs, and traditions from the local Pakhtun culture which are identified as: keeping the competitive jealousy with the blood relatives and neighbors, intrigues and alliance in the community, strong and fearless attitude, pride and ego, sympathy, hospitality, refuge and always ready to fight the hostile persons. Similarly, the concepts and patterns of honor and shame associated with land, woman, and bravery. These local people would proudly say in Pakhto language that, "Pakhtun pa deraan arat bailee" (a Pakhtun shall lose his whole agricultural land just to secure a little plot of solid waste collection). Here the personal ego is given a very high value in the local culture that to never to surrender your will before your kin and neighbors in the local community. On the contrary, they are found to be least concerned with the corruption and exploitation of national resources around them by the government officials

and political authorities. They only talk about such corruption issues but would never submit a complaint or take any practical step to stop such corruption. They proudly say, feel victorious, and claim the achievement in public, if they had obtained any kind of government service or facilities through illegal means.

At the community level, in the local terminology, the name and the concept of "Afsar" (government officer) since the British colonial time, has done great loss in terms of making officer a powerful king with no responsibility and accountability to the public or to the government and state. An "afsar" (officer) is considered to be a god possessing the unquestionable powers of molding the situation to self-aspiration, and even violating and misusing the given law in accordance with his own justified version. No one dared to contact him, speak to him, or ask him directly except through the established patterns of brokers or touts (dalaal in local language). These afsaran (officers), by virtue of their authority, enjoy an elite status with unquestionable obedience and respect from the subordinates and the public while sitting at their seats in the respective departments in the district government. Even the peon on duty at their office door is thought to be a king without a crown. In the local Pakhto language it is a famous saying that 'che da cha pa laas ke kaar dey nu hagma sarkaar dey', which in English language means: 'a person with power and authority in the government office is a king'. This peon (naib qasid in the local terminology) also plays the role of a broker and tout to set a deal between his boss and the local elites, political leaders, or local community people. This deal is arranged with a handsome bribe in the form of money in cash, or gifts in kinds. The amount of the bribe money or the value of the gifts depends upon the level or value of the benefits of the clients involved, and the level of authority that would be misused by the concerned officer in the given case. In such cases the concerned laws (Act, statutes, rules, and regulations) have been observed as to be technically dodged and escaped with high skills and expertise. Apparently, all the legal formalities required are found to be fulfilled in the official record in a given case. But on the contrary, fake, and false but suitable and due reasons and pretenses are submitted on official record for any violations or deficiencies in the legal procedure and formalities that were required in the given case. It is a famous saying in use the district local government offices as well as in the local communities in the local pakhto language that, "che her qisam jaaiz ao ka najaaiz kaar obaasy nu bas kaaghaz barabar saata, bia hees parwa ma kawa" which in English language means that, "in order to achieve any kind of a legal or illegal task a person is supposed to just keep the formalities complete on the paper". Hence, the corruption in Pakistan has assumed high ranking rate on the global corruption indexes just due to the presence of this abstract institution that provides conducive environment for corruption in the local culture and society.

All the developmental and non-developmental activities at the tehsil and district level are decided, directed, and controlled by the earlier mentioned abstract institution of mutual common interests between the stakeholders of the local community and the government officials with no regard for moral and legal values. This observed pattern is evident from the poor and miserable physical and social infrastructure at the community level exhibited by the poor condition of buildings, roads, and inhuman attitude of the government employs at the tehsil and district departments. The communities are living in the shape of small and medium size villages as well as small and medium size urban centers in the shape of towns or small cities. The socio-economic and socio-political patterns in the Pakhtun community in these districts are greatly affected by the influential roles of "thanidar" and "patwari (police inspector and the land revenue clerk)". With no knowledge of police order, criminal procedure code and civic rights, the common man always suffers the heavy burden of the thanaidar (Station Head Quarter Officer also called SHO). The thanaidar (SHO) is found to be a tactical, wild, savage, and dictatorial character. The local brokers use the friendly and strategic relationship with the thunderous and overwhelming personality character of the thanidar as a tool to impress and dominate the local people in the community. The thanidar, mostly low educated, can cross the home boundary without showing warrant, inflict severe corporal punishment and practice unlawful detention of the poor ignorant citizens with minor or no law violations. Any relief in such cases is only possible while resorting to support from the local brokers or touts. Patwari (the land revenue clerk), on the parallel collects a lot of favors from the locally emerged players of land trade called as the property dealers in the shape of money, rich lunches and dines, gifts in kinds. Major disputes and enmities are caused by the illegal pen-play of patwari. Developing and establishing good relations with a patwari may confer a high status in the community. The amount of bribes and illegal fee in rupees is found and reported as ranging from Rs.100 to 5000 and from 50,000 to lacs. Such amounts of bribes are paid to the patwari for obtaining any legal service from the land and revenue department. This is a simple copy of the official land record, that is a due right of any citizen to obtain without any fee, is issued for an illegal fee with no official receipt and record, ranging from Rs.100 to Rs.50000. This form of illegal and non-recorded bribes or fee money collected by the land and revenue department officials are physically evident with their financial holdings in the shape of agriculture and commercial lands, residential plots, posh houses, gold, and huge bank balances in their bank accounts. Bank accounts are always opened in the names of wives, sons, and daughters. The corrupt government officials rarely kept the illegal wealth in their own names just as to secure safety and defense in case of any criminal enquiry initiated against them by their own department, anti-corruption department or by the NAB (National Accountability Bureau). The thanidaar and the patwari both collect the bribe money for the misuse of the authority, in the shape of cash and by hand. No bank account transactions or voice and written communication is involved in such deals of bribes and illegal collections. It was reported that mostly such cash money is kept private in safe houses instead of banks to avoid any legal complexities or records that might be presented as evidence or proof in the court of law.

The local people reported that the recently introduced local government system under the devolution plan by the federal government

and the local government elections by the provincial government has conferred the local political leaders, contractors, and touts with new opportunities. The offices at the district, tehsil and union council are now occupied by the touts and brokers with new names and identities. After the last local government elections, these touts and political elected members have installed the metal or the marble stone plates inscribed with their names and achievement at every street, square and corner in the local communities. They are hiding from the public the financial corruption they have done in these developmental projects in partnerships with the government officials and the touts. One can see the failure of the district government administration evident in the form of totally inhuman conditions prevailing all around in the shape of poor and miserable conditions of physical infrastructure in the government departments as well as in the local communities. One can see the extremely poor and miserable conditions of the physical infrastructure of the public places listed as: District Headquarters Hospital (DHQ), Rural Health Centers (RHC), Basic Health Units (BHU), government schools, public parks, government offices, roads, streets, drainage system, sewerage system, clean water supply pipelines, street lights, butchers houses, bazars, footpaths, weekly cattle markets, the fruits and vegetable markets, weekly cheap prices markets, road-side and streets-side encroachments and the solid wastes heaps points. The DHQ hospital is the best example of the corruption, negligence, and failure of the hospital as well as the district government administration, though billions and millions of rupees are being spent each year to upgrade the physical infrastructure of this hospital. The emergency section seems like a dirty slum. Most of the medical equipment and devices are absent from the concerned sections, taken either to private clinics or to the doctor's houses.

The administrative head called is the Medical Superintendent (MS) who is the senior doctor in the hospital. The MS disclosed the fact that whenever he has taken any disciplinary action against the hospital staff for any negligence from the duty, any violations or embezzlements, the local political leadership and elites would always come to his rescue. This list includes the local elected members of the National or Provincial Assembly (MNA or MPA), the local district or tehsil nazim or the local community's elites. The said accused and under enquiry staff also used to access the close relatives and friends of the medical superintendent to favor him and defend him from any possible conviction and punishment in the said case. The medical superintendent reported that this practice of defense and protection of the accused violators staff of the hospital by the local leaders is a matter of routine practice. In some cases of such violations and disciplinary enquiries, the accused employees approached the high-level bureaucracy and make phone calls from these bureaucrats to save them from possible punishment.

Most of the medical equipment, devices, machines, and installations in the local hospitals in the district have been identified as of very low quality as compared to the accounts and finance record specifications in terms of the quality, conditions, model, and the price allocated and paid. The key informers identified the hospital solid waste disposal and crushing plant (a big machine), that was purchased with millions of rupees, but was in fact old, used, repaired and of very low quality as compared with the specification recorded in the account's books in accordance with the procurement of goods and services standard government procedure. The price paid for this retired and abolished machine is found almost higher, 700% higher rate than the actual market price of a standard and high-quality machine of its kind. The worst is that the machine is lying at fault and not operational just after a few months of its installation. This machine is planted just at the left side of the back gate of the DHQ hospital Swabi, a living standing example of the misuse of authority, where all the concerned administrative, technical, and financial officers are involved who had signed the official files to purchase this defective machine. Another case is the newly under construction building of this hospital called the new block. The engineer (a whistleblower) was transferred from the local duty station to a far-away station, who had put objections to the physical work done on the ground as not per specifications allocated in the construction project documentary plan called as the PC-1, PC-2 and PC-3 (this document has a standard format which contains all the details of the construction project listed as: the material types, standard and quality, number and amount, prices in rupees, the type of technical and non-technical staff, the labor and the time plan). The said engineer was first called by his district and provincial heads and was asked to do and follow the informal routine practice in the department. He was strictly directed not to bring on written official record any kind of violations, technical objections, or reservations in the said construction project. He was told that he has been making serious problems for the whole official hierarchy in this civil project. He was promised that he would surely get hid due share in the commission (unrecorded, unofficial, and illegal share in the construction works distributed at a set rate among the administrative and technical staff whose signature involved in the process) plus chai pani (tea and water- a local term used for bribes). The engineer refused to comply with his higher bosses and got immediate transfer from his position of authority. The estimated cost of the project is in billion rupees, wherein as per the estimates of embezzlement set rates and values in the local government and C&W department (communication and works), only about 7th to 9th part of this allocated budget has been actually spent on this project. All the rest huge amount @ 700% to 900% of the actual cost as (per the existing market prices) has been distributed among the concerned authorities. The quality, number and type of the items were never used and applied as this whistleblower engineer disclosed and reported. It was reported during the interviews by some persons that the late and ex- district nazim (mayor) was lying seriously injured in the emergency section of this district head quarter hospital without the presence of any qualified medical attendants or standard required equipment, when brought in emergency conditions, a few days before his sad demise. Hence, what a common man should expect from this hospital.

The perceptions and practices of the politics and elections at the community level are in total contradiction to the given local government Act, the constitution of Pakistan and the principles and definitions of political science. The terms 'service' and 'responsibility' are

granted to self-service and self-interests. Pakhtun society depicts the practice of power politics with intrigues and alliances composed with the social patterns of blood-based relationship, neighborhoods, friendships, competitive jealousy, and status complex. Politics, as the researcher observed and found in the local communities, is never considered as a career, profession, or duty as a service to the people. Politicians were rarely found to come from the social classes possessing higher education, good moral character, and a noble and honest family background. On the contrary, in practice, as found and identified in almost all the cases, those persons would contest elections, who by hook or by crook have collected lots of money, can pay gifts and hospitality to the district government officials and local elites, can do spending on the events and rallies of the political parties, can provide the district police with rich gifts, lunches and dines, can provide the local police station with pity cash money, office-paper and automobile-fuel. In the local communities such figures are considered as the most righteous and suitable candidates for the elections at the local, provincial, and federal government level. A good, noble, and honest social history, virtues and ethics were very rarely found in the leading political class. The local public were found to expect, demand, and need a politician as a person with power that can dominate and control the local district government offices and officers. No matter whether this power comes from legal or illegal means. But the local political leader must possess such power. These powerful political figures, contesting the elections, are supported by the government contractors/suppliers called as the *tekedaraan* in local Pakhto language. Here a network is established between the three social actors identified as: the local political figures with power and support of the people, the district government officers with official authority and the government contractors with money. A fourth actor is identified as the social class of brokers who always set the stage for the easy and smooth contacts and coordination between these three actors. This class of brokers either comes from the local communities or from the local district government officials. An informal network of relationships is established among these four actors at the district level that is based upon common interests, common benefits, and interdependence. These common interests, benefits and interdependence were identified as the: earning of lots of wealth, property, lust, and luxuries. This informal network of roles, statuses and relationships has developed an informal mechanism of trust, safety, and defense against any kind of social, political, and legal opposition and proceedings ever initiated by the people or by the government.

It was found that political campaign for the local government elections is always run on the basis of certain local cultural principles that are determined by the kinship relations, neighborhoods relations, friendship relations, business relations and political interests. Voting support and strength is based upon the cultural patterns identified as the: paternal and maternal blood relatives (*Khel, tal, tabbar, tarboor, aziz* and *mamagaan* in local language), residential location and neighborhoods (*cham, gawand, kaly kor* in local language), friendship relations (*yar dost* in local language), common interests in business, and alliance with the enemy of the enemy. The voters (majority of whom are illiterate and ignorant of the essentials of democracy and the impact of their votes upon their future) always found to support the candidate who can best serve their individual interests and, provide them support while dealing in *thana* and *tehsil* (police station and courts) during the matters of crimes and litigations.

Conclusion

There was a substantial gap found between the theory and practice in the local government system at district Swabi, in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan in terms of laws, rules, regulations, procedures and their practical implementation on the ground. There exist an invisible, abstract but highly effective and practical institution of power at the district level composed of the liaison and collusion among the three working partners: *afsaran* (district bureaucrats), *masharan* (local political leaders including landlords and big business holders), and *tekadaran* (local government contractors). The role of the *tout* in this informal network or partnership is very important and inevitable. The *tout* may be a local political leader, a local businessman, a common man from the private sector. Similarly, a *tout* may be a government officer, a government clerk, or a peon in the government department. The three stated partners share common vested interests to increase and safeguard their movable and immovable wealth through the misuse of authority and fraudulent practices in the local government development projects. These partners provide marginal relief to the local community in the form of very poor and substandard social and physical infrastructure. The common people, on the contrary, ironically involve in their feuds of land, enmity over cultural concept of ego and honor, matters of rivalry with blood relatives and prejudice with neighborhoods. *Afsar, thanidar* and *patwari* (the public officer, the police station head quarter officer, and the land revenue clerk) were the main governmental tools of controlling the local political arena, composed of the local political leaders and the local people. The local politics is based upon the ties of blood relationships, residential neighborhoods, friendship relations, mutual benefits and intrigues and alliances to achieve the power and hence set, maintain, and raise the social status. The poor, substandard, and technically backward social and physical infrastructure in the communities in the district presented solid evidence of the difference between theory and practice. This bad governance is the outcome of the presence of an abstract but effective and practical institution of informal and illegal power. The local communities are non-responding due to the cultural factors of interdependency and exchanges based upon kinship ties, social bonds, political and economic needs. This network of socio-cultural patterns is found to support and encourage the illegal exchanges between the stakeholders of the public and private sectors. Self and individual interests always come first over the common interests of the community.

Recommendations

The major public policy guidelines on the local government can be translated as to create and develop the modern participatory form of governance and public administration that is based upon the efficient and effective mechanisms and procedures for the development and upgradation of the life standard of the people living in the form of villages and urban towns in the districts across the country. Some of the elements of this mechanism and procedures are listed as: local legislation, local autonomy, local self-reliance, local taxation, local income generation, the local government accountability, self-assessment of strengths and weaknesses of the local resources, collective initiative taking by the government and the people and best utilization of the local resources. The public policy on the local government is provided and laid down in the articles in the constitution of 1973 (under Article 32 and Article 140-A on the local government). This policy on the local government, under these articles of the constitution of 1973, is explained and directed by the federal government in the devolution plan of 2001 by President Musharraf, and further defined and interpreted by the local government Acts of all the four provinces of the Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. How much this objective is achieved in the presence of this informal institution of networks and liaisons among the politicians, bureaucracy, government contractors and brokers at the district level is a question to be considered and investigated through further research. Social mobilization across the districts shall be made compulsories for all the public sector employees to minimize the impact of the network of socio-cultural exchanges in the public sector. The state must takeover certain responsibilities to deliver free health, education, and social welfare support to minimize the socio-cultural interdependency. The local government must provide burial and marriage services to the local communities in order to minimize social interdependency. The duration of the delivery of justice in the civil and criminal cases shall be determined to avoid the social insecurity and the dominance of the powerful corrupt elites both from the public and private sectors. These steps might find ground to reduce and minimize the level and rate of corruption at the district levels in the country.

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