

# CIVIL SERVICE OF PAKISTAN: STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

## Outline

### 1. Introduction

Thesis statement: The civil service of Pakistan is the backbone of the country's administrative system, showing both strengths and weaknesses. While their strengths have ensured resilience during crises, their weaknesses have trapped the country in a vicious cycle of poor governance. However, implementation of some remedial measures can effectively overcome them.

### 2- Dissecting civil services of Pakistan under the context of their strengths and weaknesses

### 3- Strengths of civil services of Pakistan

- a) Institutional continuation despite political instability of the country
- b) Merit based recruitment through competitive examination of Federal Public Service Commission
- c) Civil service acts as a strong policy implementation machinery
- d) Plays strong policy advisory role in political transition
- e) Nationwide administrative reach to ensure state presence across the country
- f) Socio-economic mobility for all segments of society by offering commission in elite administrative arms of Pakistan

#### 4 - Weaknesses of civil Services of Pakistan

- a) Political interference in administrative affairs weakens efficiency
- b) Poor service delivery strengthens bad governance
- c) Outdated recruitment process widening the skill gap between officers and contemporary need of governance and administrative.
- d) Lack of internal accountability mechanisms against inefficiency and corruption
- e) Demotivation of officers in civil services due to tenure insecurity
- f) Inadequate use of technology based in civil services to ensure e-governance

#### 5 - Recommendations to overcome weaknesses of civil Services of Pakistan

- a) Implementation of long proposed comprehensive civil services reforms
- b) Depoliticization of civil bureaucracy by tenure security under constitutional guarantees

#### 6 - Conclusion

"Civil Services are the backbone of smooth administration of a social setting. You are the servants of the people. You are not masters. The common public of Pakistan is master". This quote of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah from his speech delivered in Peshawar to civil servants in 1948 aptly underscores the implement of strong public policy through civil servants and their importance in country's day today administration. The civil services of Pakistan is the backbone of the country's administrative system, showing both strengths and weaknesses. While the strengths have ensured resilience during crises but the weaknesses have trapped the country in a vicious cycle of poor governance. However, implementation of some remedial measures can effectively overcome them. There are various strengths have been shown by the civil services that include: The institutional continuation, meritocracy in recruitment, policy advisory role, socio-economic mobility, and nationwide administrative reach. Similarly, it has also shown some weaknesses in the form of: Politicization, poor service delivery, outdated recruitment, lack of internal accountability, tenure insecurity of officers, slow technology incorporation and lack of e-governance. These issues can be overcome by implementing civil services reforms and depoliticization of bureaucracy.

Civil Services of Pakistan is the system through which the public policy is implemented. Pakistan had inherited civil service from British Raj after the inception of the country. People acquire commission in elite civil cadres of civil services of Pakistan through highly difficult competitive exam. Civil Services in Pakistan play a very significant role in policy recommendations and also in its implementation. It shows resilience in the form of policy and institutional continuation, socio-economic mobility and full reach across the country in administrative manner. Along with these, it also shows weaknesses due to structural flaws like politicization, poor service delivery and lack of internal accountability.

There are many strengths that have been shown by the civil services of Pakistan, chief among them is the institutional continuation by it despite political instability in Pakistan. Institutional continuation means the day to day service delivery of institutions despite unfriendly political environment for the better services. Bureaucracy provides continuity of policies during the political deadlocks for day to day administration of Pakistan. According to the Pakistan Observer's article, bureaucracy is the stable backbone of governance of the country in political up and downs. Hence, institutional continuation

is the primary strength that is shown by the civil services during political crises of the country.

Similar to the continuation of administration of the country, merit based recruitment through central superior services exam of civil services is another strength of bureaucracy in Pakistan. Central superior services exam is conducted by FPSC to recruit officers by conducting competitive exam regularly. Many thousand young youth take part in exam to join the elite services of the country but few of them passed in it after multiple examinations. According to the FPSC annual report, 2024, 17,500 candidates took place in exam and only 300 passed it which is less than 3 percent. This shows the merit based competition of joining civil services. Consequently, merit based recruitment is one of the strengths of it.

Along with the transparent recruitment of civil servants, the character of civil services as a strong policy implementation policy machinery is another significant strength of it. Policy implementation machinery means the medium through the policies of political stakeholders are implemented. Civil servants are the medium that connect representatives of people with people. In Pakistan every ministry that operates under cabinet

division have adequate amount of civil servants who implement policies for the betterment of common public. According to the ministry of planning, government of Pakistan official data, there are 12 occupational groups that collectively formulate the civil services in Pakistan. These groups operates under different ministries. This shows that the civil services is a strong policy implementation machinery.

Besides the character of civil service as the medium between policy makers and common public, another strength of civil service is policy advisory role in political transitions. Policy advisory role in change means civil servant can advise policy in the absence of representative governments like interim setups during the conduct of General Elections.

Civil servants play a very important role in implementation of frameworks and also advise many legal and constitutional frameworks in the absence of representative setup. According to a research, conducting by IBA (Institute of Business Administration in 2023, the civil servants also advise policies on the basis of data, research and expertise to elected political leaders. So, the policy advisory role of civil servants is very significant through the last decision is made by political figures.

Parallel to the advisory role of civil servants, civil services provides a socio economic mobility for

all segments of the society to uplift them. Civil services can provide a elevated lifestyle and mobility to do better decisions for the betterment of the society in Pakistan. Every class can enter in civil services by doing hardwork in academics. Not only the elite figure of Pakistani society but also the people of remote areas of Pakistan entering annually in civil service of Pakistan by competing in examination of multiple layers. According to the FPSC, total 6% quota is provided to the youth of Balochistan, but in recent years, it has been seen that the unallocation ratio there is also increasing because more than 6% people are passing the exam and making competition difficult. Thus, Socio economic mobility of civil services is very significant strength.

Furthermore, nationwide administrative reach of civil servant to ensure the presence of state and law is trait that strengthen civil servant's role.

Administrative reach means the presence of state in the remote areas of the country. That presence can be for administrative or law enforcement purpose. Many remote areas of Pakistan which do not have the basic amenities of life, have the administrative reach of civil servants to ensure the presence of state. Jiwani is the most far area of Pakistan at the coast of Arabian sea with the border of Iran. It has a tehsil

who works under the district administration of Quetta district of Balochistan. This aptly explains the role of civil servants and their administrative reach across the country.

However, along with these strengths, the civil service of Pakistan is also posing some structural weaknesses, chief among them is the politicization of bureaucracy that affects the efficient governance. Politicization of bureaucracy means politically influencing the administration, decision-making and appointments of officers. This negatively affects the bureaucratic efficiency and governance. Restructuring of 1972 civil services, left the constitutional safeguards of the officers and ultimately badly affected them. This put substance in the argument that political interference in civil service is the weakness of this domain of governance.

Besides the political involvement in the bureaucracy, poor service delivery of civil service impacts the public interests. Poor service delivery means facing hurdles in public offices to acquire services due to bureaucratic red tape. Common people face issues in domicile, tax, legal heirs issues due to bad service delivery by public offices which are run by civil servants. In Pakistan,

ease of doing business is very bad condition due to challenges in bureaucratic efficiency. According to the World Bank's ease of doing Business ranking 2024, Pakistan is at 108<sup>th</sup> out of 190 countries, not in top 50. So, this is a serious weakness of civil service of Pakistan.

To further elaborate the weaknesses of civil service of Pakistan, another limitation is outdated recruitment mechanism of bureaucracy. Outdated recruitment mechanism means that is efficient but does not fulfill the requirements of 21<sup>st</sup> century. Pakistan has restructured civil service last time in 1972 when the present system of recruitment was adopted. Pakistan need to restructure the civil service to make it efficient. In 2005, ministry of planning proposed restructure and introducing the cluster system to make bureaucracy upto the mark. So, it can be said that outdated recruitment is one the weaknesses of civil services of Pakistan.

Also, the lack of internal accountability is the challenging weakness for the civil service against corruption and inefficiency. Lack of internal accountability means the absence of tribunal of bureaucracy that internally proceed office inquiries to adjudicate cases. In

case of civil service of Pakistan, tribunals are present but backlog has impacted their efficiency. There is a need of efficient and working services tribunals to ensure the internal accountability of civil services. According to Pakistan bureau of statistics data, 11 percent decrease in adjudication of services tribunal has seen since year 2000. This aptly describes the lack of internal accountability as the weakness of civil service in Pakistan.

Parallel to the internal backlog, demoralization of the officers due to tenure insecurity is one of the important weakness of civil service that need to be fixed. Tenure insecurity refers to a frequent posting and transfers of the officers without completing term of minimum five years in public office. This is badly affecting the work of civil servant and demoralizing them. They do not have legal securities to challenge their wrong postings and transfers. Constitutional guarantees of tenure completion was lifted in 1972 reforms and restructure. This issue has affected the public policy implementation and good governance. Thus, tenure security is needed for the officers to perform effectively in public offices for betterment

of the common people of Pakistan.

To explain the weaknesses of civil services of Pakistan further, the hesitation of civil servants in the use of technology based e-governance in civil services. E-governance means the incorporation of technology in public affairs of the policy formation and public office affairs. E-governance has effectively transformed the meaning of civil services in many countries. In main reason of private sector efficiency in Pakistan is incorporation of technology in affairs. The Pakistan Post is the public office in Pakistan with many limitation of effective post affairs while TCS is also post service in private sector with the best services. So, the technology based governance is needed in Pakistan to make public offices efficient.

To discuss the remedial measures that can mitigate the weaknesses of civil service in Pakistan, the most important recommendation is the implementation of comprehensively proposed civil services reforms. In long standing civil service reforms in Pakistan, all the above discussed challenges are aptly fixed and many new things are recommended. These recommendations include: The Shift from general to

Specific recruitments, new service of national executive service, protection of tenure, performance based promotion, improved training, incorporation of technology and modern human resource management, and objective Fx check of officers. This comprehensive proposed civil service reform can mitigate the challenges of civil service of Pakistan in meaningful manner.

Likewise, another proposed recommendation for efficient civil service is the depoliticization of officers. Depoliticization of civil servants can enable public offices to effectively implement public friendly policies. Civil service can be depoliticize through the fixed tenures with legal framework, enforcement of merit based appointments rather than appointing officers for vested interests, performance based promotion to avoid the recommendations, separation of policy making and policy implementing, and the reinforcement of neutrality, and professionalism through ethical codes and trainings. The implementation of these measures can mitigate the political interference in civil services matters of the country.

Conclusively, one may say that the civil service is the most crucial part of Pakistan's administrative structure, having both strengths

and weaknesses. The strengths are making it efficient and resilient to face ups and downs in political framework of the country while the weaknesses are making it the most basic reason of misgovernance. The proposed recommendations can effectively overcome the limitation of civil services of Pakistan. The strengths of civil is ensuring the continuation of institutional works, acts as machinery of public policy implementation and plays the role of policy advisory mechanism. The weaknesses include the political interference, lack of internal accountability and hesitation of technology based governance of public offices. A vibrant nation takes steps to overcome the challenges of any domain timely and does not wait for the point of no return where the things (issues) become chronic. Pakistan also needs to strengthen the strength of civil services and work hard collectively to reduce the weaknesses of this domain.