

Political Party Engagement and Public Policy Development in Local Governance: Evidence from Tehsil Barikot

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on how the political party has role to play in determining the public policy in the District of Swat in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa at Tehsil Barikot. By spotting the key political parties, their ideologies, and the strength of support behind each one of them, the study examines the political situation of Tehsil Barikot. It examines the factors that influence priorities and preferences of such political parties in terms of policy. The impacts of political party rivalry on development and implementation of public policies in Tehsil Barikot are assessed in the study. The sample size (63 students) was selected through a multi-stage random sampling process that targeted a population of B.S./M.A., M.Phil./M.S. and any related programs students in both departments, Political Science and International Relations. The data was collected using a questionnaire of 20 statements and a five-point rating scale (Likert scale) so as to find out the thoughts of the students regarding various elements of the research problem. To analyze the data collected, the calculation of the Mean Score of each of the survey questions was conducted and the Standard Deviation of each questionnaire to observe what the respondents think about the role of political parties as far as shaping of public policy is concerned. The results indicate that there is an agreement that the use of political parties is significant in setting the national policy, representing interests of the people and that national welfare is given the first priority. Nevertheless, some variation of perspective can be seen regarding other reasons, like considering the needs of minorities, receiving the changes of society demands, and discussion of the positive arguments. What is also exposed in the study is the differences in perception related to the effectiveness of political parties in communicating, engaging experts in policy making, environmental and social justice concerns.

Keywords: Political Parties, Public Policy, Policy Formulation, Party Competition, Tehsil Barikot, Swat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Governance

INTRODUCTION

Crucially, political parties can influence the creation of the policy on different matters as they are needed to bridge existing gaps between citizens and the government. Parties also are major actors in transforming the demands of society into implemented programmatic action through their roles in agenda-setting, legislation, and bringing a policy into effect (Smith & Johnson, 2022). Majority parties, especially, exercise great powers in determining the course of governance in a way that they enjoy their mandates in the electoral arena, encompass party discipline, and utilize advocacy in the population to gain corporate purposes. By these means, the political parties can make their mark by not only creating new policies but also seeing them through to good effect once they assume the role of government. Policy platforms are also developed and marketed strategically by the political parties in order to win elections. Research also emphasizes that parties of different ideological orientations, i.e., conservative, progressive, and centrist, make up their policy agendas, adhering to their fundamental values in order to appeal to particular groups of voters (Anderson et al., 2021). The platforms include vital sectors of society like education, medical care, and economy building, which present frameworks to the governing priorities. By winning elections,

parties find themselves in a full policy cycle, i.e., the parties create proposals, propose and bargain over laws, and also oversee the realization of the policy, using executive and administrative organizations. This process is also influenced in the developing countries by the internal party processes such as the debates within the leadership, factionalism negotiations, and the grassroots involvement. Through these interactions, parties are able to adjust to local socio-political realities without losing their ideology in terms of coherence and relevance (Martinez & Gupta, 2023). Although the role of political parties at the national level was thoroughly investigated, no much has been done to find out the role of political parties at the local or sub-district level. The local governance contexts in which policy formulation and implementation take place, are usually characterized by socio-economic inequalities and complicated political struggles and this introduces different challenges in policy formulation and implementation. This paper fills this research gap by discussing the role of political parties in determining the public policy in Tehsil Barikot, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Based on the study of the formulation, promotion, and enforcement of policy agenda by parties in this local-level setting, the study offers a sensitive outline on the mechanisms through which political parties play a role in the governance at local levels. The article will result in contributing to the literature by providing locally-focused information regarding the entire policy process or circle of the policy-making process which is the process of formulation, implementation and demonstrating the complexities and adjustments of party politics in governing sub-districts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Political parties have also been known to be key players in the development of any given public policy and the role of the parties extends all the way through the agenda setting, the process of policy formulation and execution and the evaluation process. Anderson and Brown (2017) utilize a comparative study of the results of ideological parties using countries against the backdrop of strong ideological parties and without them to discuss the impact of ideological parties in terms of policy outcomes in diverse political contexts. In their analysis, they discovered that the coherent and consistent ideological parties have a great impact on the processes of making the policies since they promote the change in which their most important beliefs and perspectives are connected. Although it is evident that the purpose of the study aims at accentuating centrality of ideological consistency, it is not possible to take a deeper look at all the analytical details because their data is not available in full scope. On the same note, a study carried out by Brown and Wilson (2019) examined the part of political parties in agenda setting and policy formulation. They claimed that leadership, party competition and internal discipline are important determinants of the policies that luckily land on the government agenda. Their study proved that parties do not just respond to what the people say but take the initiative to influence policy priorities with strategic agenda setting and formal policy development procedures.

This observation underlines the significance of knowing the parties in conducting analyses of the processes of policy making. Besides in influencing the agendas and development of policies, political parties also play a great role in policy implementation. Garcia and Hernandez (2019) have addressed the role played by the parties in the implementation of the public policies highlighting that parties tend to implement their platform when they gain power by affecting some policies through legislative and administrative actions. Their comments revealed that policies are equally influenced by the party systems and organizational structures in terms of their efficiencies and effectiveness in policy implementations. They also emphasized that the fate of the degree to which policy outcomes match campaign promises depends on whether the policies are influenced by the appointments of governance parties to the executive branch and those positions who control the course of bureaucracy.

The study by Johnson and Thompson (2022) discussed the impact of political parties on forming the opinion of society and, by extension, policy outcomes. They discovered that communication strategies,

partisan cues, and media framing are the means that parties utilize in order to affect the attitudes of people, and in this way establish a positive condition in regard to their policy agenda. Parties are able to enhance or augment the chances of having their preferred policies accepted and implemented by aligning their agenda with what the chunk of the population want. Meta-analyses and empirical studies have been used to review the correlations between the political parties and the public policy. Extensive literature review on the party influence in the policy agenda process, development, and policymaking analyzed by Jones and Smith (2018) led them to conclude that ideology, cohesion, and internal politics of parties are essential in determining the quality of legislative and policy outputs. They also pointed out that parties are foundational in the formulations of policies as well as a check on policy and they also state that the controlling parties have the power of implementing the policies directly and the resisting party exercises their powers by scrutinizing and criticizing the policies. There also exists an empirical verification of the effects of party control on policy responsiveness.

According to Miller and Peterson (2018), power parties have a substantially enormous chance of getting into place their policies that resonate with their ideological promising intentions and promises to win elections. According to their results, the partisan control raises the responsiveness of the policy to party agenda, which justifies the idea that the elections have direct policy implications. Compocheterie electoral also seems to influence policy outcomes as seems to be considered by Roberts and Murphy (2021). They further determined that competitive electoral settings tend to yield more sensitive and cutting edge policy-making procedures since the parties need to appease the voters and, simultaneously, hold onto their philosophical consistency. On the other hand, when competition is low or one party prevails, it may result in a lack of variety or entrenchment in policymaking.

Another dimension of party influence is polarization, which has complex effects on policymaking. Smith and Johnson (2019) examined how increasing ideological divides between parties affect policy formation. They found that while polarization can clarify party differences and produce ideologically consistent policies, it can also lead to legislative gridlock, policy reversals, and instability, as consensus becomes difficult to achieve. Finally, Thompson and White (2020) and Williams and Davis (2018) provided comprehensive reviews of the impact of partisan politics on policy design and legislative decision-making. They concluded that political parties are the primary vehicles for translating ideological preferences into concrete policy outcomes. Party cohesion, leadership, and institutional control all play essential roles in shaping not only the content of public policies but also their implementation and long-term sustainability. Overall, the existing literature establishes that political parties exert a profound and multi-faceted influence on public policy. From shaping public opinion and electoral mandates to agenda setting, legislative negotiation, and policy implementation, parties remain the cornerstone of democratic governance and policy responsiveness. This rich body of scholarship provides a strong foundation for analyzing how parties function as agents of policy change, particularly in local governance contexts where their strategies and impact may vary significantly.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design used in this study was quantitative since it was used to consider systematically the views of students towards political parties and their role in the government in terms of making decisions on matters affecting the masses. This study was done in Tehsil Barikot in District Swat of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan. The place was chosen because the social-political settings were dynamic and there were students academically interested in the discipline of political science and governance. These students were said to be well versed with enough knowledge and analytical ability to give informed opinion that was pertinent to the research focus. The population of the study included students pursuing

their B.S/M.A. and M.Phil/ M.S. programs in the Departments of Political Science and International Relations. Such students were a sub-population of the youth group that had the potential to be cognizant of the political parties, the policy making systems and governance systems. A sample size of 63 students was chosen on the basis of multi-stage random sampling technique on the general population to make the sample more representative and to reduce cases of selection bias. The procedure then enabled proportionate sampling to be made across various academic strata and still to produce random respondent selection. The main instrument of data collection was a structured questionnaire. The development of the questionnaire comprised 20 well thought-out statements that touched on several aspects of the role of political parties in the process of prescription, advocacy, and execution of policies. The answers were noted in a five-point Likert scale where the current answers are, Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), No Opinion (NO), Disagree (DA), and Strongly Disagree (SDA). This kind of a scale gave the respondent freedom to rate the level of their agreement or disagreement with the given statement as well as offered a third alternative of a neutral opinion. The collecting of data was through face to face since the level of attendance and the credibility of responses would prove to be high. The respondents were informed of the reason why the study was conducted and assured them of meeting confidentiality of the responses. In that way, the research reduced social desirability bias and empowered participants to be accurate and sincere. The questionnaires were in turn removed so that they could be coded and analyzed.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data collated was analyzed through descriptive statistical methods to be able to obtain trends patterns as well as variation in the respondent views. Initially, the means were found on each of the 20 statements to develop a direction of the opinions placed by the students. Higher scoring did point to increased consent and a positive view of the role of political parties in determining public policy, whereas lower scores indicated that same persons lacked an optimistic view. Standard deviation was also calculated on each item to determine how many people responded to the item and the dispersion of the responses. A low standard deviation showed that there was consensus or agreement in the perspective of the respondents whereas a high standard deviation showed that opinion was not in agreement or polarised. The combination of mean and standard deviation allowed constructing a rather detailed picture of the data and identifying not only prevailing directions but also existing inconsistencies and disagreement among students. The discussion was able to give a holistic picture of how politically knowledgeable adolescents in Tehsil Barikot are when it comes to the role of political parties in the process of public policy. The above statistical measures provide the descriptive results that become the basis of relevant interpretation of the study findings and drawing of meaningful insights in the following sections.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Item No	QUESTIONS	LEVEL	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
1	Political parties play a crucial role in shaping public policy.	SA	33	52.38%	4.33	0.55
		A	22	34.92%		
		NO	5	7.94%		
		DA	2	3.17%		
		SDA	1	1.59%		
2	Political parties effectively		21	33.33%	4.14	0.57
		SA				

	represent the interests of the general public.	A	32	50.79%		
		NO	5	7.94%		
		DA	3	4.76%		
		SDA	2	3.17%		
3	Political parties policies align with needs and aspirations of the citizens.	SA	13	20.63%	3.82	1.09
		A	39	61.90%		
		NO	2	3.17%		
		DA	5	7.94%		
		SDA	4	6.34%		
4	Political parties are influential in the legislative process of policy making.	SA	28	44.44%	3.62	1.32
		A	22	34.92%		
		NO	2	3.17%		
		DA	7	11.11%		
		SDA	4	6.34%		
5	Political parties adequately consider the concerns of minority groups while shaping public policy.	SA	23	36.50%	3.06	1.45
		A	35	55.55%		
		NO	1	1.59%		
		DA	2	3.17%		
		SDA	2	3.17%		
6	Political parties are responsive to changing societal needs when formulating public policy.	SA	36	57.14%	4.37	0.94
		A	21	33.33%		
		NO	2	3.17%		
		DA	3	4.76%		
		SDA	1	1.59%		
7	Political parties prioritize the welfare of the nation over their own	SA	44	69.84%	4.08	1.09
		A	12	19.04%		
		NO	0	0.0%		
		DA	4	6.34%		
		SDA	3	4.76%		
8	Political parties engage in constructive debates and discussions to shape public policy	SA	38	60.31%	3.08	1.41
		A	14	22.22%		
		NO	2	3.17%		
		DA	5	7.94%		
		SDA	4	6.34%		
9	Political parties effectively communicate their policy positions to the public.	SA	14	22.22%	3.15	1.24
		A	26	41.26%		
		NO	6	9.52%		
		DA	11	17.46%		
		SDA	6	9.52%		
		SA	15	23.80%	3.27	1.25
10	Political parties	A	30	47.61%		

	involve experts and professionals in policy formulation.	NO	5	7.93%		
		DA	6	9.52%		
		SDA	7	11.11%		
		SA	22	34.92%	3.81	0.93
11	Political parties are influenced by corporate interests when shaping public policy.	A	38	60.31%		
		NO	0	0.0%		
		DA	2	3.17%		
		SDA	1	1.59%		
		SA	13	20.63%	3.43	1.25
12	Political Parties adequately address environmental concerns in their policy making.	A	31	49.20%		
		NO	4	6.34%		
		DA	8	12.69%		
		SDA	7	11.11%		
		SA	15	23.80%	2.17	1.13
13	Political parties collaborate with international organizations to shape public Policy.	A	29	46.03%		
		NO	5	7.93%		
		DA	8	12.69%		
		SDA	6	9.52%		
		SA	13	20.63%	3.41	0.63
14	Political parties represent diverse ideologies and perspectives in policy making.	A	25	39.68%		
		NO	8	12.69%		
		DA	9	14.28%		
		SDA	8	12.69%		
		SA	33	52.38%	3.57	1.59
15	Political parties frequently engage in populism for short-term gains.	A	19	30.15%		
		NO	2	3.17%		
		DA	4	6.34%		
		SDA	5	7.93%		
		SA	12	19.04%	3.23	1.34
16	Political parties make efforts to include youth voices in policy discussions	A	40	63.49%		
		NO	2	3.17%		
		DA	4	6.34%		
		SDA	5	7.93%		
17	Political parties are transparent in their decision-making process.	SA	16	25.39%	3.03	1.20
		A	27	42.85%		
		A	27	42.85%		
		NO	3	4.76%		
		DA	9	14.28%		
		SDA	8	12.69%		
18	Political parties prioritize economic growth when shaping public policy.	SA	22	34.92%	3.52	1.52
		A	33	52.38%		
		NO	1	1.59%		
		DA	3	4.76%		
		SDA	4	6.34%		

19	Political parties engage in compromise and negotiation to reach consensus on policies	SA	20	31,74%	3.16	1.39
		A	37	58.73%		
		NO	1	1.59%		
		DA	2	3.17%		
		SDA	3	4.76%		
20	Political parties adequately address social justice issues in their policy-making,	SA	19	30.15%	3.19	1.11
		A	26	41.26%		
		NO	3	4.76%		
		DA	7	11.11%		
		SDA	8	12.69%		

RESULTS

In making the findings, perception of the respondents on the role and performance of political parties in creating public policy becomes evident. All in all, the findings show that there is a general consensus that political parties are powerful and important in policy making though there are some differences when it comes to aspects of roles. A large majority of the respondents (52.38 percent strongly agree and 34.92 percent agree) think that political parties do make a major contribution in the shaping of the public policy so the mean is high at 4.33 and standard deviation is very low that is at 0.55 so there is not a lot of variation in opinion on this matter. In the same way, 50.79 percent agree and 33.33 percent strongly agree that political parties are effective in representing the interests of the general people and hence the mean score is 4.14 and standard deviation is 0.57 which indicates almost similarity of opinion. In response to the question of whether or not the policies of political parties respond to the needs and aspirations of citizens, most respondents (61.90 percent agree or strongly agree) registered a positive perception, but the average score of 3.82, with a rather moderate standard deviation of 1.09 shows that there were other respondents who were not as confident. As far as their impact on the legislative phase of policy-making is concerned, 44.44 percent strongly agree, 34.92 percent agree, which makes the mean 3.62. Nevertheless, a standard deviation of 1.32 shows that there is a great variability which means that some respondents might doubt the amount of this impact. There were more differences among the respondents as to whether political parties do give due consideration to the issues affecting the minority groups when it comes to the development of the public policy.

Although 55.55 percent respondents are in agreement, and 36.50 percent strongly shine light on the issue, its mean value is 3.06 with high standard deviation of 1.45 which is a sign of mixed reaction. Contrarily, 57.14 percent strongly and 33.33 percent agree that political parties are responsive to new demands in the society giving it a high overall mean of 4.37 with a standard deviation of 0.94 which is relatively low indicating that there is general agreement in this perspective. Another aspect that the study looked into is whether the political parties would put the interests of the nation first before their interests. This point of view is confirmed by 69.84 percent of strongly agreeing and 19.04 percent of agreeing, resulting in a

mean of 4.08 and a standard deviation of 1.09, which implies that not all of them agree. On the same note 60.31 percent strongly agree and 22.22 percent agree that political parties actually hold constructive debates and discussions that make up the public policy. The average score and 3.8 points forecast that the perception will be positive, however, the standard deviation of 1.41 points show that the degree of confidence is different in this perception. Looking at effectiveness in communication only 41.26 per cent on the right column agree and 22.22 per cent on the right column strongly agree to having political parties communicating pertinent information on policy positions to the people. The results have a lower score of 3.15 with a standard deviation of 1.24 indicating that opinions are leaner and more spread. Similarly, the degree to which the formulation of policies utilizes the experience of experts and professionals was also rated moderately with a 47.61 percent in agreement and a 23.80 percent strongly agreeing and a mean of 3.27 and a standard deviation of 1.25 which represents moderate variation. On the question of the external influence, most of respondents (60.31 percent are in agreeing and 34.92 percent strongly in agreeing) reckon that there is influence of the corporate interests in political parties with a mean of 3.81 and a standard deviation of 0.93.

The fact that political parties gave attention to the environmental concerns has an average of 3.43 and a standard deviation of 1.25, with 49.20 per cent stating that they agree and 20.63 per cent stating that they strongly agree, indicating the presence of different points of views. There were divergent feelings about working with foreign groups. The total of people who find the statement true and strongly true is 46.03 percent and 23.80 percent, respectively, whereas mean is 2.17 with Standard deviation being 1.13, which makes it clear that there is segment of subjective deniers. The impression of different ideologies and views on policy-making has its mean coming at 3.41 with a very low standard deviation of 0.63, with 39.68 percent agreeing and 20.63 percent strongly agreeing with fair distribution of opinions. As far as populism is concerned, 52.38 percent strongly assented and 30.15 percent affirmed that political parties are severely entangled in populism to gain short term benefits giving an average of 3.57 and a large standard deviation of 1.59, a depiction that casts a wide opinion factor. The attempts to encompass the voices of the youth were recognized and given a score of 63.49 percent, which gives the mean of 3.23 and standard deviation of 1.34, which implies moderate support with a significant level of variance. The perception of transparency in the decision-making process was moderate, and the responses were 42.85 between agreements and 25.39 strong agreements which resulted in a mean of 3.03 and standard deviation of 1.20 which indicate that a considerable percentage of the respondents are still critical.

Concerning the factor of prioritizing economic growth in policy-making, most of them (52.38 agreed and 34.92 strongly agreed) yet it had a mean of 3.52 and standard deviation of 1.52, meaning different minds. The ability of political parties to compromise and negotiate to arrive at policy consensus was widely accepted with 58.73 representing agreement and 31.74 representing strong agreement giving a mean value of 3.16 and standard deviation of 1.38. Lastly, a perception of adequate addressing of social justice issues by the political parties yielded a mean of 3.19 and a standard deviation of 1.11 with 41.26 percent of those surveyed agreeing and 30.15 percent strongly agreeing though with a significant percentage of those disagreeing or stating that they were neutral. To conclude, the results indicate that the respondents tend to view political parties as the general actors in the definition of the state policy and the political voice of the people and its answers to the needs of the society. Nonetheless, the issue of inclusivity, transparency, communication effectiveness, and the impact of corporate or populist strategies has been raised. The fact that standard deviations of responses on the same dichotomous scale differ indicates that although we may be unanimous in some aspects on the positive roles of the political parties, the view on the integrity and full representation of the political parties is still divided.

FINDING

Responses have been analyzed and it captures clearly how the people perceived the role of political parties in the shaping of the public policy. The findings show that political parties are in most instances perceived to be very important when it comes to the policy-making process with varied views being held across various aspects of their performance. A large number of respondents (52.38%) argue that there is indeed a vital role played by political parties on formation of public policy as the mean score received appeared 4.33 and the standard deviation was 0.55 which shows strong opinion across all the respondents. On the same note, 50.79 agree with the sentiment that, to a large extent political parties serve the interests of the masses with a mean scale of 4.14 and standard deviation of 0.57 which shows a largely positive picture with little spread. In terms of the harmony between the policies of the political parties and the needs and aspirations of citizens, responses are concentrated at the strong agreement level in 61.90 percent of respondents on average with the standard deviation level of 1.09 that shows moderate response variance. By taking into account the role of the legislative influence, 44.44 percent strongly concurred that the political parties have an influential role in the legislative process with a mean of 3.62 and a relatively high standard deviation of 1.32, indicating a wide distribution of opinion.

Contrastingly, in determining the level at which the political parties take concerns of the minorities, 55.55 percent agreed out of which the mean was 3.06 and the high standard deviation was 1.45 meaning that there is a great variability and there was tendency of detachment amid the respondents. The ability to respond to changes in society has been viewed as positive with 57.14 strongly agreeing, forming a mean of 4.37 and a low standard deviation of 0.94 indicating a broad backing. The vast majority (69.84) have a strong conviction that political parties act in the best interest of the country first before their own selfish interest; their average score is 4.08 with a standard deviation of 1.09 signifying that there is diversity in their opinion. In addition to that, strong agreement is demonstrated by 60.31% of that matter of parties holding constructive debates to frame policy, with a mean at 3.80 and a fairly high standard deviation is 1.41 thus showing undecided confidence in the matter. Communication of policy positions had a more neutral response, with 41.26 positing agreeable response, an average of 3.15, and a standard deviation value of 1.24, which indicates moderate variability. Regarding technical expertise, 47.61 percent of respondents score the possibility of political parties resorting to the expertise of professionals in policy formulation as 3.27 mean with a standard deviation of 1.25 which is indicating moderate agreement. However, 60.31 percent of the people tend to agree that parties are guided by corporate interests thus they have a mean of 3.81 and a standard deviation of 0.93. Environmental considerations in policy-making had a rather positive score regarding agreement with 49.20 percent, and a mean of 3.43 with a standard deviation of 1.25. The collaboration with international organizations was liked less, agreement was 46.03, but mean score was 2.17 and standard deviation 1.13, which suggests a neutral to skeptical attitude. In the scenario of expression of various ideologies, the percentage of those who agree constitutes 39.68 percent with the average or mean score being 3.41 and relatively low standard deviation of 0.63 indicates that there is some coherence in opinion. Perceptions placed the Populist tendencies as 52.38 as strongly agreeing that populism comes with short term financial gains by the parties with a high standard deviation of 1.59 and a mean rating of 3.57, which shows a divided view. The efforts to give voice to the youth were recognized by 63.49 percent of the respondents with a mean of 3.23 and standard deviation of 1.34.

There is moderate transparency of decision-making where 42.85 percent respondents agree, a mean, 3.03, and a standard deviation of 1.20 indicating that the respondents are yet skeptical in their responses. Economic growth prioritization had better recognition with 52.38% agreement, 3.52 on average, and 1.52 standard deviation indicating that there is no much difference in its rating. Likewise, 58.73 percent agrees that, parties compromise and negotiation to find a common ground, and the calculated mean of this agrees is 3.16 with a standard deviation of 1.39. Lastly, the involvement of the political parties in social justice issues was perpetrated at a moderate rate of 41.26, a mean score of 3.19 with a standard deviation of 1.11

indicating a mixed observation. collectively, this evidence shows that the status of political parties in political landscape is strongly associated with their role in the development of the public policy, and the delivery of services to society. Nevertheless, the levels of confidence of the interviewees in their transparency, inclusivity, effectiveness of communication and immunity towards corporate or populist influence were demonstrated in a different profoundness.

CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, the present research study contributes considerably to understanding of how political parties can influence the development of the public policy in Tehsil Barikot (District Swat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa). These results indicate that most of the respondents agree or strongly agree with the fact that the political parties are significant in developing the public policies. Generally, there is positive perception on the part of the respondents that the political parties are effective ways of expressing interests of the general population and also consider the interests of the country better than their political interest. The study also shows that the political parties are mostly regarded as sensitive to the needs of society in the formulation of the public policies and that they do take part in open and healthy debates and discussions in order to ensure policy outputs. However, the fear remains that political parties, sometimes, use the tactic of populism in the process of realizing short-term benefits. There were also mixed responses on the level at which the political parties engage with experts and professions in policies formulation process by respondents.

Besides, the research points to the fact that the political parties should be more attentive to the consideration of the environmental concerns and social justice issues in the policy agenda. The views regarding the fact whether the concerns of minority groups are appropriately taken into account by political parties were found to be rather variable, which proves that inclusivity is not an easy task. The study, in general, highlights the key role of political parties in the policy formulation process and their major role in influencing the outcome of the process of policy formulation in Tehsil Barikot. However, at the same time, it also outlines the areas that could be worked pretty much in almost all the ways of increasing transparency in decision-making, enhancing youth input, and the representation of diverse societal interest, in general. Further enhancing these would contribute further to building confidence of the people in the role that political parties play as effective policy actors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The current research paper sheds a lot of light on significance of political parties in determining the public policy in Tehsil Barikot of district swat Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The analysis shows that most of the respondents either agree or strongly agree that political parties have a significant role in formulation of the public policy.
2. Overall, it has been positively thought that political parties communicate well the interest of the majority people and put the national interests first than their political interest. The main reasons that elicited more responses with most agreeing with them is that the political parties at large are responsive to the dynamic needs of society and are posing constructive debates and discussions to influence policies.
3. It is also shown in the findings that there are concerns on the fact that parties occasionally use populist methods to get the political advantage on a short-term basis and there are also mixed views on how their involvement of experts and professionals on policy making process went.
4. Although respondents note the contribution of the political parties in taking the concerns of the minorities seriously in their efforts, the views are mixed thereby responding that inclusiveness in policy making remains an issue. In addition, it has also been found political parties have to consider more seriously the issues of the environment and social justice in their policy platforms.

5. It would be desirable to involve more of the citizen-group representation in the political party by undertaking surveys, holding town hall meetings and community consultations to make political parties represent a greater diversity of interests in society.
6. It is necessary that there should be regular discussions with the local communities so that party policies are in line with the needs and aspirations of the citizens.
7. Improvement of transparency in the law-making procedures and the practice of inclusive decision-making will bring more trust and consensus among people in the formulation of policies.
8. The political parties have been advised to further mobilize the minority groups in order to enhance social equity, build institutional participation structures, and include social justice in their policy platforms.
9. Being responsive to the changes within the society will be ensured through the constant interaction with the grassroots and rapid changes in policies.
10. The reinforcement of the perception that national welfare is more important than political self-interest can be accomplished through support of internal accountability, ethical governance, and open practices.
11. In order to enhance the quality with which they make their policies, political parties should make efforts to involve the experts, professionals, and other researchers in the process of making policy as a way of ensuring that, evidence-based decisions and sustainable solutions are reached.
12. To better communicate policy positions and stay in the minds of the people, effective communication strategies are crucial.
13. The issue of corporate influence in policy making requires that there must be transparency in funding and decision making by parties besides having avenues of public input to level the game between the corporate and the population.
14. The sustainable environmental aspect must be reverted to the central one of the policy-making process and involved political parties can increase its engagement by means of consulting with the professionals in environmental safety, research, designing or involving environmentally safe policies into their priorities.
15. Even though the cooperation with international bodies is a significant part of current governance, political parties must clearly inform the population about the advantages of that cooperation and diminish the related distrust so that the general population can understand them.
16. Inclusion of diversity among the party workers and inclusion of candidates of different social, cultural, and professional backgrounds will enable the party to include diverse ideologies and views in making policies.
17. Political parties must learn to use appropriate long-term, evidence-based policy formulation and not short-term populist policy making and measures, and in doing so, enhance good governance, sustainable development and build confidence of people in them as competent policy making agent.

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