

PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT DIAGNOSTIC REPORT KP





Parental Engagement Diagnostic Report-KP



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List of Acronyms

- ASDEO – Assistant Sub-Divisional Education Officers
- B-TAG- Bridging Technical Assistance for the Governments
- EEF – Elementary Education Foundation
- E&SED – Elementary and Secondary Education Department
- ESRU – Education Sector Reform Unit
- FGD – Focus Group Discussion
- GOAL- Girls and Out of School: Action for Learning
- KP – Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
- KII – Key Informant Interviews
- PTA – Parent Teacher Association
- PTC – Parent Teacher Council
- PTM – Parent-Teacher Meetings
- RSPN - Rural Support Programmes Network
- SIP – School Improvement Plan
- SC – School Council



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Effective parental engagement plays a crucial role in shaping children's education and influencing outcomes at home and in school. International research highlights its importance in enhancing academic achievement, motivation, self-esteem, attendance, behaviour, and overall student well-being. However, achieving meaningful parental engagement presents challenges, particularly in government-run schools that grapple with constraints such as limited resources, high teacher turnover, and issues related to parental literacy. A nuanced understanding of these challenges is essential as we explore the positive transformations unfolding in the educational landscape of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The implementation of reforms in the last decade has initiated a positive shift, and although the alarming number of out-of-school children and the issue of “learning poverty” persist, there is a growing awareness and commitment to address these concerns. With a substantial 3.63 million children still out of school in KP, there is a heightened recognition of the need for collective action. This study focuses on assessing parental engagement in education within the province. It acknowledges the critical role that public demand and collective action play in educational reform and emphasises the potential for improvement in the learning environment. The study delves into various aspects of parental engagement, exploring perceptions, levels of engagement, available platforms, and specific challenges unique to KP.

The study reveals a strong inclination among parents to engage in their child's education, particularly in contributing towards their academic achievements and collaboration to ensure the availability of physical facilities at the schools. However, a notable gap exists in prioritising holistic child development, improving the school environment, and participating in co-curricular activities. Insights into parental involvement are gleaned from assessing how effectively schools communicate with parents. The study found that parents receive sporadic updates from schools on their child's academic progress, including attendance and exam results, but less frequently on school events and teacher performance.

Despite existing engagement forums such as Parent Teacher Councils in KP, there is a discernible lack of interest in active participation in these forums by parents. Notwithstanding efforts, parental representation in PTCs remains around 50% or less, feeding into limitations in terms of effective performance of PTCs and at times interference by influential members.



Resource constraints pose a significant barrier to parental engagement, particularly for those dependent on daily wages. Societal restraints contribute to low female participation in SCs. Regularly organised and structured training regime is lacking. The current training primarily focuses on school-centric issues, mainly related to improving facilities. This creates a gap in understanding the broader mandate of these forums and effectively engaging with governmental bodies to influence decision-making.


In conclusion, implementing the designated Parent-Teacher Council (PTC) policy faces hurdles, including PTC members' unfamiliarity due to the absence of mandatory training. The limited interaction between government officials and PTC members hampers collaboration, while economic constraints act as barriers to parental involvement. Insufficient awareness of the importance of parental engagement, compounded by social constraints on women and coordination challenges, further complicate matters. Addressing these issues is crucial to improving policy implementation and fostering meaningful parental engagement within the education system. Ensuring parental engagement and effective participation warrants a multifaceted approach, including policy calibrations, training initiatives, proactive outreach and a shift recognising parents' pivotal role in education. Key policy recommendations for the Elementary & Secondary Education Department (E&SED) include:

More Weightage for Parents in Parent Teacher Councils: To enhance parental participation and safeguards against political influence, increase the minimum parental representation in the Parent Teacher Council to 75%, with additional representation given to mothers.

Effective Collaboration between Educational Authorities and Parent Teacher Councils: Effective collaboration between Parent-Teacher Councils and education officials is crucial for school improvement. To enhance this, E&SED should mandate ASDEOs to attend PTC meetings periodically.

Enhancing Parent Teacher Council Election Transparency and Community Engagement: To increase parental awareness and participation in PTC elections, it is recommended that District Education Officers leverage existing communication channels in rural areas, such as mosques, banners, and parent contacts, before each election cycle.

Parental Oversight to Ensure Financial Transparency: Actively involving parents in decision-making requires openly sharing financial details, including the PTC funds and



expenses. To achieve this, it is recommended that the Parent Teacher Council Policy be modified, obligating schools to prominently display this information using a specified form at the school level.

Efficient PTC Information Management: The Parent Teacher Council details are currently documented manually in school registers; it is recommended that the credentials of PTC members be uploaded into a centralised database in the Student Information System. This will streamline PTC data, enable sample-based communication, and enhance internal controls for meeting regularity, member re-elections, and School Improvement Plans.

Implementing Robust Monitoring and Accountability Measures: E&SED should establish a robust system of comprehensive assessments to systematically monitor the progress of PTCs. This includes identifying areas that require improvement and providing a mechanism for the removal of non-participating and non-performing PTC members.

Encourage Mothers' Participation in the PTCs: Recognising mothers' essential role in their children's education, the E&SED should actively promote their engagement in Parent Teacher Councils. This can be achieved through targeted outreach, flexible meeting options, and informative sessions tailored to foster an inclusive and enriched educational environment.

Building Capacity of Parent Members: Parent-teacher councils need thorough training on their roles and functions, School-based Action Plan development, fund utilisation, and taxation. The E&SED should initiate a comprehensive training program.

Encourage and Incentivise Parental Participation: To boost parental involvement, the E&SED should launch a targeted public awareness campaign emphasising parents' integral role in holistic child development beyond academics. Additionally, the E&SED should encourage and incentivise active parental participation in school events, recognising and rewarding such involvement to promote a supportive community where parents are valued partners in overall student development.


Introduction

Despite the notable progress seen in education indicators in recent years, Pakistan still grapples with challenges related to access, quality, and educational governance. Ensuring the attendance, retention, and learning of all children, especially the most disadvantaged, remains a significant hurdle for the country. While the predicament of having over 26 million out-of-school children in Pakistan is substantial, the deeper problem lies in the insufficient learning outcomes among those who do attend school. Similarly, the Province of KP, like other Provinces of Pakistan, contends with diverse challenges in its primary and secondary education system. This includes addressing the 3.63 million out-of-school children in KP. More importantly, nearly 75% of 10-year-old children face challenges in reading and comprehending age-appropriate content independently, indicating a prevalent issue referred to as 'learning poverty.'¹ Challenges such as deficient infrastructure, shortages of teachers, inadequate educational accomplishments, and socioeconomic inequalities add to the intricacy of the issue, which remains unresolved, notwithstanding the comprehensive reform initiatives undertaken by the provincial governments².

Educational policies and reform initiatives demonstrate the most substantial and enduring outcomes when they originate from public demand and collective action, such as with the engagement of mobilised parents and communities. In contrast, a narrowly technical and supply-driven approach to change does not yield the same positive results. The available evidence emphasises the pivotal role parental engagement can play in addressing some of the educational challenges. Parental engagement at home and school plays a substantive role in their children's education. Research from around the world has shown that parental engagement is a crucial factor in promoting children's academic achievement, motivation, self-esteem, attendance, behaviour, and well-being³. It has a demonstrated impact on the academic achievement of children. The evidence indicates that such involvement positively correlates

¹ <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/214101571223451727-0090022019/original/SASSACPKPAKLBPBRIEF.pdf>

³ Janet Goodall and John Vorhaus. 2011. *Review of Best Practice in Parental Engagement*. Institute of Education. UK



with better academic performance and class participation. A multi-country study has reported a positive correlation between parental engagement in school governance and volunteering and students' academic performance⁴. By fostering collaboration between educators, policymakers, and parents, a collective effort can be made to enhance the overall quality of education and create a more conducive learning environment for the nation's youth.

Effective parental engagement in government-run schools remains a challenge faced by various educational systems worldwide. A review of international practices and research consistently highlights the complexity of fostering robust parental involvement in the face of numerous obstacles. According to a comparative study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in multiple countries, there are several persistent obstacles to effective parental engagement. These include resource limitations, high staff turnover rates, socio-cultural diversity, and low levels of parental literacy⁵. In the case of KP, the limitations of the existing framework for parental engagement, i.e. the Parent Teacher Council's Policy, and the limited resources make engaging parents effectively a complex undertaking. Additionally, poverty and the prevalence of parents lacking formal education further compound the challenges faced by government-run schools in fostering effective engagement.


Moreover, the benefits of parental engagement are not distributed equally among all groups. Research indicates that children belonging to marginalised communities, such as the poor, girls, those living in remote geographies, and individuals with disabilities, along with those who have limited access to education and learning resources, are less likely to receive the benefits of parental involvement in their education⁶. The existing disparities in access to educational opportunities amplify the challenges faced by these marginalised groups, hindering their academic success and perpetuating educational inequalities.

Against this contextual backdrop, the present study conducts a diagnostic assessment of the extent of parental engagement in public sector primary and secondary education within the region of KP. To be more precise, the research aims to address the following inquiries:

⁴ Matthew van Poortvliet, Nick Axford, and Jenny Lloyd. 2018. *Working with Parents to Support Children's Learning, Guidance Report*. Education Endowment Foundation

⁵ Francesca Borgonovi and Guillermo Montt. 2012. *Parental Involvement in Selected PISA Countries and Economies*. OECD Education Working Papers No. 73

⁶ Susan Nicolai, et.al. 2023. *Edtech and Parental Engagement*. UNESCO Paper for Global Education Monitoring Report.



What are parents' prevailing perceptions and levels of parental engagement in KP concerning their children's educational pursuits?

What are the existing platforms established by the government or other organisations to foster and promote parental engagement in education?

To what extent do the current forums of parental engagement influence decisions related to various aspects of children's education, encompassing elements such as school access, safety, facilities, student learning and holistic development, classroom environment, as coordination and advocacy at the governmental level?

What discernible gaps and challenges characterise parental engagement in primary and secondary education across different administrative levels, including schools, education departments, tehsils, and districts?

Methodology

The diagnostic study involves an examination of both primary and secondary data sources. The team conducted a comprehensive review of statistics, policies, assessments, studies, and various international and national reports about parental engagement to collect secondary data. This document review facilitated the identification of international best practices in the realm of parental engagement, highlighting successful models implemented by other countries. In order to understand the dynamics of parental engagement in settings exhibiting cultural and financial similarities to Pakistan, the team scrutinised the status of parental involvement in education in countries such as India, Bangladesh, and Nigeria, among others. Furthermore, a global perspective was gained by examining noteworthy examples, including innovative initiatives like Singapore's EdTech Plan and Japan's Kyoiku Mama initiative, shedding light on the design of policies aimed at addressing low parental engagement in education at an international level. *A comprehensive bibliography is provided in Annex 1.*

Primary data collection was conducted through individual interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) involving parents, members of the Parent Teacher Council in KP, Headteachers, and government representatives from the Departments of Elementary and Secondary Education (ES&D) at the Provincial and district levels. Semi-structured interview guides were employed to guide discussions, allowing stakeholders to delve into areas of particular relevance to the study.

The following framework was used for data analysis:

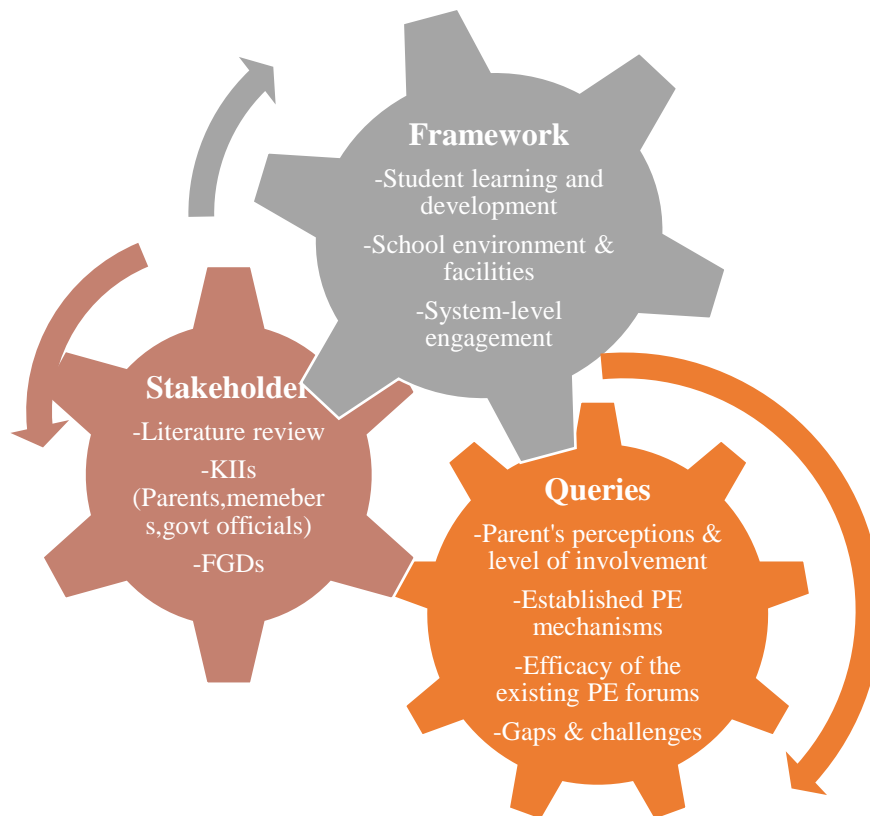



Figure 1: Framework of Analysis.

The process of analysis included identifying themes and recognising frequencies of similar types of responses and patterns of responses, parental awareness and preparedness, practices regarding parental engagement, available parental engagement forums, and their efficacy, challenges, and approaches.

Scope and Limitations

It is imperative to keep in mind specific cautions while interpreting the findings and implications of this study. The current study pertains to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa providing in-depth insights into these educational contexts. While providing in-depth insights into these specific educational contexts, it introduces a limitation regarding the applicability of the study's findings to other provinces in Pakistan. Educational policies, cultural norms, and socioeconomic factors vary across regions, and this regional specificity may impact the study's broader relevance. Moreover, there is limited available data regarding parental engagement outcomes and the influence of initiatives aimed at promoting parental participation. The



analysis also relies on comprehension of the cultural context, stakeholder perspectives, anecdotes, and observations of occasionally nuanced perceptions of the respondents.


Structure of the Report

The report is structured into six sections. The initial section outlines the study's background, objectives, and methodology. Section II delves into a review of literature and international best practices. The report details the policy and institutional framework concerning parental engagement in KP. Section IV examines parental perspectives in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, while Section V focuses on parental involvement in decision-making in KP. In Section VI, the report concludes by offering recommendations to enhance parental engagement and agency and foster effective contributions within the PTC for promoting holistic child development and learning.

PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT IN EDUCATION: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND PRACTICE

Historically, the concept of parental engagement in education has been interpreted in diverse delineations. In essence, it entails cooperative endeavours between parents and school personnel to enhance the learning, development, and overall well-being of children and adolescents. Recognising its complexity across cultural, socioeconomic, and contextual dimensions, parental engagement is not a one-size-fits-all model. It encompasses creating expectations, setting goals, collaborating with teachers, and emphasising shared responsibility in a child's education. This engagement is essential for promoting a child's academic success, social and emotional development, and overall well-being throughout their educational journey. Numerous studies indicate a positive correlation between parental and community engagement in school management and improved student performance. However, a systematic examination of which types of parental involvement most strongly relate to achievement is still needed.

Several studies highlight the beneficial effects of parental and community engagement in school management on student results, such as decreased dropout rates, higher enrollment, and improved attendance. (Asim and Dee 2016; Behlol, Rafaqat, and Shahid 2017). According to Calwell (2005), parental engagement is crucial as it empowers parents and communities to actively participate in financial decision-making, thereby improving access, quality, and service delivery. Additionally, the study by Gina Madrigal Sapungan and Ronel Mondragon Sapungan (2014) explored the correlation between parental engagement and student learning, performance, and satisfaction. Their findings suggest that students whose parents are actively involved in student affairs are 52% more likely to achieve higher grades and exhibit a greater enthusiasm for studies, particularly in kindergarten through the 5th grade. The 2008 study "Parental Effort, School Resources, and Student Achievement" by Conway and Houtenville highlights the significant impact of parental involvement on academic success. It reveals a consistent correlation between parental effort and heightened student achievement, emphasising that replicating this impact through increased per-pupil spending would necessitate a substantial investment exceeding \$1,000. The study underscores the indispensable



role parents play in shaping their children's education, suggesting that financial investments in school resources alone may not yield comparable benefits. However, Banerjee, Banerji, Duflo, Glennerster, and Khemani (2010) highlight a lack of conclusive evidence regarding the association between parental engagement and student performance.

Parental Engagement: A Review of Best Practices

Parental engagement forums, such as Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), have been established worldwide⁷ to facilitate regular discussions on school policies, curriculum updates, and student activities. Countries like UK, Nigeria, Finland, USA and Singapore have implemented successful models to foster collaboration between parents, teachers, and communities.

Nigeria – The PTA in Nigeria serves as a dynamic governance structure for parental and community involvement in education, promoting collaboration between principals and parents to foster a cooperative approach to education. In response to educational challenges, Nigeria initiated a program to increase PTAs as a prerequisite to addressing various issues (Iremeka et al., 2021).

Singapore

Integrated technology into the education system through an EdTech plan guided by a human-centred learning approach. This plan, further reinforced by the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, actively involves teachers, parents, and community members in the learning process. Anchored in Bronfenbrenner's ecological approach, the initiative places emphasis on empowering schools, fostering continuous teacher professional growth, and gaining a comprehensive understanding of home environments. Despite global challenges, Singapore's well-planned governance and educational initiatives strategically position the country to address learning inequities and remain resilient. This emphasises the need for a strong global mindset and social compact for future success amid uncertainties⁸.

⁷ Established in 1897, the Parent-Teacher Association is the major child well-being association worldwide. The group was formed expecting mothers to lead the cause of child protection and wellbeing. By 1917, the organisation encompassed 37 state congresses, and later, in 1970, the National PTA joined the National Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers to emerge as the principal volunteer child support group mandated to resolve student problems through advocacy, education, and lawmaking.

⁸ (https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-42671-1_10).



Brazil


In 2001, Brazil implemented a successful school development program through community engagement and empowerment in 5,600 schools. The program established Parent Teacher Councils comprising parents, local community members, students, and school officials. These councils have the authority to elect school heads and oversee and advise on pedagogical, financial, and administrative activities. Additionally, the councils prioritise and plan school improvement activities, addressing various aspects of school management, from improving education quality to providing missing infrastructure facilities, with government funding supporting plan execution (I-SAPS, 2020).

USA: The National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is a non-profit organisation in the United States that advocates for the well-being of children and families, particularly in the areas of education, health, and safety. With its membership and representation at local, state, and national levels, the PTA collaborates with policymakers, educators, and community leaders to influence legislation and funding for public education. The organisation plays a crucial role in shaping policies that impact the lives of millions of children and families across the country.

United Kingdom: The National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) is a professional organisation in England that advocates for school leaders and facilitates their growth. The NAHT has established a Parental Engagement Forum that brings together parents, school leaders, and experts to exchange knowledge, research, and resources on parental engagement. Additionally, the forum serves as a platform for providing feedback and advice to the NAHT on its policies and campaigns. (Goodall and Vorhaus, 2011)

Finland: Finland's education system is renowned for its systemic approach to parental engagement. Policies like shorter school days and minimal homework encourage parents to engage in more informal learning activities with their children. This approach fosters a holistic perspective on education beyond traditional classrooms.

Mexico: In 2001, Mexico introduced the Quality Schools Program, a community involvement initiative to enhance educational quality. The program entails providing schools with \$5000 grants to empower school administration and parents to foster improvements. In exchange for the financial support, schools must collaboratively develop a five-year plan with Parents' Associations detailing how the funds will be utilised. The first four years focus on allocating the cash transfer to school materials and basic facilities, while the fifth year emphasises special allocations for teachers' training. Approximately 10% of schools, primarily in disadvantaged



urban areas, have voluntarily joined the program. An independent assessment by Skoufias and Shapiro in 2006 revealed positive outcomes, including a cumulative decrease in dropout, failure, and repetition rates. Participating schools witnessed increased parental involvement in decision-making and supervision of children's homework (Gertler et al., 2006).

Select Models of Parental Engagement

In its quest to conduct a thorough diagnostic study on parental engagement, the current examination attempts to explore various successful models that have proven effective in fostering meaningful connections between parents, children, and schools. Examining these models aims to glean valuable insights that can inform our study. We provide a comprehensive analysis by shedding light on innovative approaches and best practices in enhancing collaboration between educators and parents.

- a. **Goodall and Montgomery's Model:** This model advocates for a shift from parental involvement to active engagement, emphasising the dynamic connection between parents, children, and schools. It challenges the schools having primary agency in parental engagement, promoting negotiated agency between schools and parents. Underscoring the pivotal role of parental engagement, it underscores benefits such as improved self-esteem and enhanced learning outcomes. The continuum model encourages shared decision-making and recognises the crucial role of parental engagement beyond traditional school activities.
- b. **Joyce Epstein's Model:** Epstein's model encompasses six types of engagement, focusing on parenting, effective communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaboration with the community. This comprehensive framework aims to enhance students' learning outcomes by cultivating a supportive learning environment through various dimensions of parental involvement.
 - *The first dimension, **parenting**, focuses on assisting parents in their primary caregiving role by providing resources for creating a home environment that is conducive to learning.*

- *The second dimension emphasises **effective communication** channels, promoting regular and meaningful exchanges between parents and teachers to keep parents informed about their child's progress and school events.*
 - *The opportunity to **volunteer** encourages parents to actively participate in school activities, fostering a sense of community and shared responsibility for student success.*
 - *The fourth dimension, **learning at home**, underscores parents' crucial role in supporting and extending classroom learning.*
 - ***Decision-making**, the fifth dimension, involves including parents in school decision-making processes through various platforms*
 - *Lastly, **collaboration** with the community recognises schools as integral parts of broader communities, encouraging the engagement of community resources to enrich the overall educational experience.*
- c. Australia has formulated a **Family-School Partnerships Framework** to promote cooperation among families, schools, and communities. The framework centres on cultivating positive relationships, facilitating effective communication, and engaging in collaborative decision-making.
- d. In Japan, the "**Kyoiku Mama**" model positions mothers as the foundation of education. Both Japanese and Islamic educational philosophies underscore the crucial role of mothers in shaping children's character and contributing to a robust society. The "Kyoiku mama" model in Japan and Islamic teachings emphasise the responsibility of mothers in imparting values, with both cultures acknowledging the transformative influence of mothers on the nation's civilisation.


The models proposed by Goodall and Montgomery, Joyce Epstein, Australia, and Japan highlight the crucial collaboration between parents and schools to enhance learning outcomes. They underscore the importance of active engagement, shared decision-making, and fostering positive relationships as key elements in creating a supportive educational environment.

PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT IN KP: POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Parents, as education consumers, can form associations to hold service providers accountable for violations, like inadequate school access or poor instruction quality. The 18th Constitutional Amendment recognises this right. This includes instances of school inaccessibility, teacher unavailability, or substandard instruction quality. However, despite this recognition, parents lack the authority and influence to shape education policy and service delivery. This is primarily because Government schools often do not engage them meaningfully due to the non-competitive environment in which they operate and the lack of direct reliance on financial contributions from parents. Furthermore, in low-income contexts, parents face significant power dynamics concerning their role as education consumers, particularly in relation to government schools. Despite their status as consumers, they often have limited power to influence policy and service delivery because it is primarily low-income parents sending their children to government schools who struggle to influence and shape education policy and service delivery.

In 1993, the Education Sector Reform Unit (ESRU) initiated the establishment of Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as part of a broader provincial effort to enhance social sectors such as education, health, water supply, and sanitation. The government's commitment strengthened Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) in around twenty thousand (20,000) primary schools. Government support, including funds for minor repairs, solidified their role in school improvement.

In 2010, the Parents Teacher Association (PTA) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was renamed the Parents Teacher Council (PTC), and the government published the PTC Guide outlining the roles and responsibilities of its members. This guide explains the composition and formation of PTC, as well as its powers and authorities. The primary purpose of PTCs is to improve the learning environment and physical condition of schools, with schools, parents, and the council sharing the responsibility for this. The overarching mandate assigned to PTCs encompasses a spectrum of responsibilities, including mobilising local resources for school improvement, monitoring and supervising school performance and accountability, fostering community



involvement, advocating for the rights and needs of students and teachers, and elevating the overall quality and equity of education (Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 2011).

Various research studies have confirmed the significant positive impact of Parent-Teacher Councils (PTCs) on education access and quality, particularly in remote areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. PTCs have been crucial in increasing enrolment and retention rates, particularly among female students, by improving physical infrastructure and school facilities. Additionally, PTCs have contributed to a reduction in absenteeism and dropout rates for both teachers and students, improved learning outcomes and student achievements, strengthened coordination among various stakeholders, and empowered parents and communities to effectively express their concerns and demands (Hafeez, Atta, & Ayaz, 2018) (Nasir, Farooq, & Ali, 2013).

These achievements serve as a testament to the pivotal role that PTCs have played in transforming the educational landscape of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The multifaceted successes that have resulted from their active engagement and collaborative efforts with local communities underscore the importance of their contributions towards enhancing the quality and accessibility of education in the region. However, the effectiveness of councils in promoting parental participation towards enhancing education service delivery at the school level has been widely discussed. Education experts agree that involving parents in school decision-making processes can lead to improved student learning outcomes and amplify parents' voices. However, there are differing opinions on the extent to which the PTCs in KP have been instrumental in ensuring effective parental engagement and amplifying their voice.

Other non-governmental organisations have also launched initiatives for engaging parents in education; significant of these include Civil Society Education Networks⁹ (CSENs) under the REAP Programme and RSPN's Village Education Committee. These are considered promising programmes which have proactively engaged the parents in improving schools in their respective areas of operation.

⁹ Operational in the districts of Lakki Marwat, Mansehra and Buner.

PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT IN KP: EXPLORING PARENT'S PERSPECTIVES


Parental Perspectives: Priorities and Responsibilities

As elucidated in the literature review, the significance of parental engagement in education is widely acknowledged. Nevertheless, due to its varied interpretations globally, assigning a definitive meaning to the concept proves challenging. The broad acknowledgement of the concept is limited by the difficulty in establishing a singular, universally applicable explanation, given its multifaceted and culturally nuanced implementation across different regions. To assess the foundational understanding of parental engagement among parents in KP, we initiated inquiries about parents' perceived responsibilities in their children's education and the practices implemented in their homes. Their diverse responses can be categorised into three prioritised areas:

- a. *Monitoring children's learning progress,*
- b. *Coordinating with school staff to address issues, and*
- c. *Contributing to school infrastructure improvements.*

Two-thirds of the respondents considered staying updated on their child's academic progress as their responsibility, with one-third actively engaging in this aspect. In terms of coordination, one-third of parents preferred collaborating with other parents to address school-related problems, while an additional one-third advocated for active participation in addressing educational challenges faced by the schools. Regarding school facility improvements, approximately one-third of parents recognised this responsibility, with a similar number actively contributing to enhancements.

A noticeable portion of participants recognised their duty to participate in enrolment campaigns and ensure the safety and well-being of students. In contrast, none of the respondents considered it their responsibility to communicate with education department officials to address educational issues, with only a limited number of parents having approached them on such matters.



This data indicates that parents show a strong inclination to engage in their child's education, particularly focusing on student learning achievements and collaboration with schools for physical facilities. However, there is a discernible gap in prioritising the overall development of children, including student care and participation in co-curricular activities. Additionally, there is a lack of recognition among parents regarding their role and capacity to impact decision-making forums at the governmental education level. The assessment observed that there is a notable alignment between parental beliefs and actions, especially in staying informed about academic progress and participating in school improvement efforts.

Conversations with government officials, including ASDOs, the Education Directorate, and head teachers, underscored a recognition of the advantages associated with parental involvement in education. Nevertheless, these discussions also emphasised the difficulties in involving parents at the school level, with the most prevalent obstacle being the "opportunity cost of a daily wage." Economic challenges prevalent in Pakistan impede parental participation, as parents who rely on daily wages or risk salary deductions for work absences find it financially challenging to participate in school events. Despite schools employing local channels to communicate with parents, economic constraints stand as a significant impediment, underscoring the essential connection between financial accessibility and the effective engagement of parents in educational initiatives.

Examining the effectiveness and timeliness of information dissemination from educational institutions to parents yields valuable insights into the overall extent of parental involvement in education. Parents reported receiving information on their child's academic progress, including student attendance, homework, and quarterly exam results. Infrequently, updates on school events and teacher performance were also provided, aligning with parents' preferences expressed during inquiries about desired information that schools should share with them.

When asked whether parents would opt to become members of the PTC if given the chance. In response, 67% of non-member respondents expressed a lack of interest in joining Parent Teacher Councils, with 6% undecided at that time.

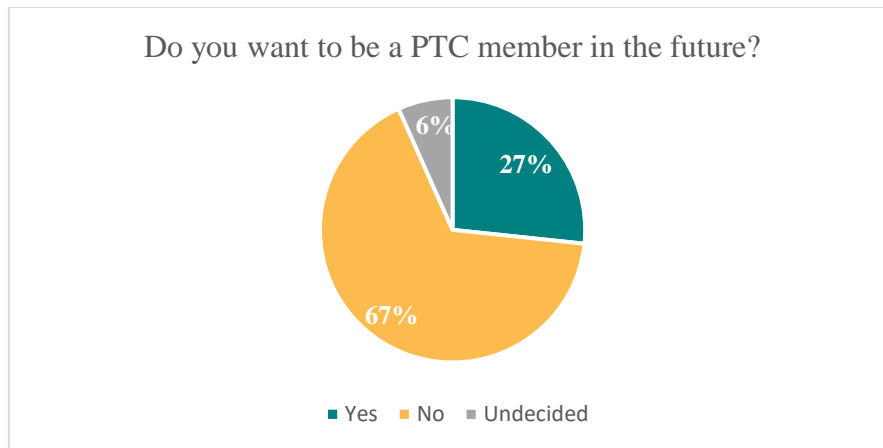


Figure 2: Percentage of non-member parents who would or would not want to become PTC members

The presented statistics reveal a noticeable disinterest in active participation in formal parental engagement forums. Several mothers who expressed a lack of interest attributed it to societal constraints faced by women and inadequate support from their households, aligning with insights from government officials. The prevalent "Pukhtoon Culture" in KP was identified as a barrier to women's involvement in Parent Teacher Councils. As one respondent expressed,

"I can't join the PTC because of my household duties, and I'm not allowed to go to my child's school by myself."

However, the percentage of parents (37 %) expressing interest signals a potential for increased engagement. It emphasises the need to create opportunities for parents to contribute to educational decision-making processes within the school.

Referring to the medium for sharing information with parents, a significant number of respondents expressed the belief that a mobile app would be an effective means of keeping parents informed about their child's education and school-related matters. Nevertheless, it is crucial to highlight that a significant proportion of women from lower income brackets do not possess mobile phones. A mother respondent expressed her views on the financial limitations associated with owning a mobile phone,

"I don't own a phone, and I'm not permitted to have one."

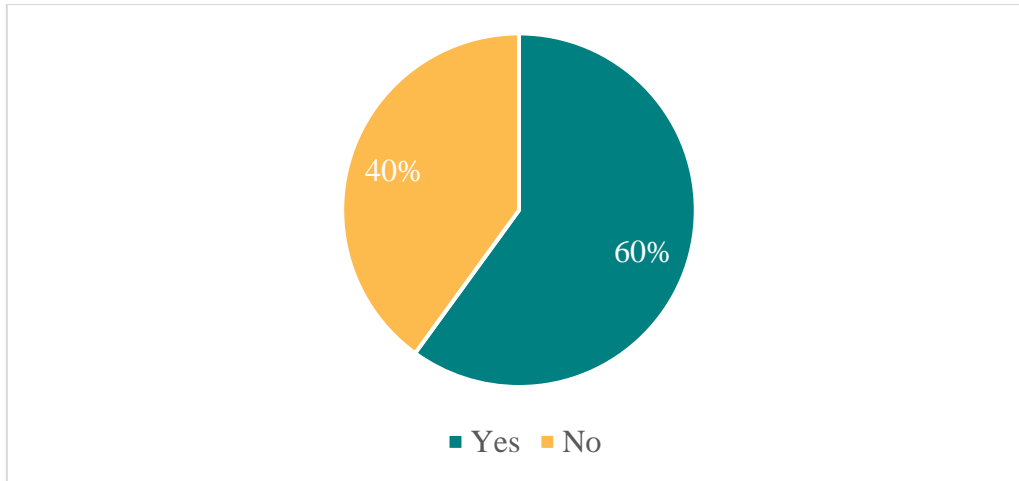


Figure 3: Percentage of parents who would benefit from an app as a data-sharing medium

In conclusion, parental responsibilities in education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are primarily focused on monitoring academic progress, coordinating with school staff, and contributing to school infrastructure improvements. However, there is a noticeable gap in addressing the comprehensive development of children, including care and participation in co-curricular activities. Moreover, there is limited recognition among parents of their potential impact on decision-making forums at the governmental education level, highlighting the need for increased awareness and understanding of their role.

Economic challenges, particularly the opportunity cost of daily wages, significantly hinder parental participation, underscoring the essential connection between financial accessibility and effective engagement. Cultural constraints, notably the prevalent “*Pashtun Culture*”, act as barriers to women's involvement in Parent-Teacher Councils (PTCs), emphasising the importance of cultural sensitivity in engagement initiatives.

Additionally, a substantial percentage of parents expressed a lack of interest in joining PTCs, citing societal constraints for women and inadequate household support. Addressing these issues is vital for fostering holistic parental engagement and promoting the overall well-being of children within the education system.



SECTION V

PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT IN KP: PARENT'S PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATIONAL DECISION-MAKING

Exploring Concerns: Motivational Challenges and Criteria for Selection

In KP, Parent Teacher Councils serve as representative platforms for community engagement in school improvement and development efforts. To ensure alignment with community aspirations, the council policy mandates elections every three years¹⁰, conducted by Assistant Subdivisional Education Officers (ASDEOs). These elections include the general body meeting for membership under general and parent categories. Additionally, the community elects a chairperson responsible for managing financial resources allocated by the Elementary and Secondary Education Departments¹¹. Challenges to the effectiveness of Parent Teacher Councils arise from existing practices and policy requirements related to their formation.

Dynamics of the Local Influentials' Role in PTCs


When examining the current forums, Parent Teacher Councils as an institution encounter distinct challenges. Concerns regarding motivation and selection criteria in the formation of these councils are evident, highlighting potential issues in the selection process. The concept of "Elite Capture"¹², as termed by the study respondents, becomes a notable concern, where Head Teachers might establish Parent Teacher Councils through personal connections, thereby introducing the risk of personal motivations influencing the composition of the council. This issue is exacerbated by low awareness of the significance of PTCs, particularly in low-income areas where parents may have limited educational backgrounds. Low attendance at council meetings is a consequential challenge, leading to "elite capture" during member selection. In response, head teachers sometimes include individuals without a genuine interest in the school, like janitors or security guards, resulting in ineffective councils¹³. This dynamic perpetuates a

¹⁰ Section 7.3 of Parent Teacher Council Policy 2010.

¹¹ Section 7.2 of Parent Teacher Council Policy 2010.

¹² FGD Peshawar

¹³ FGD respondents in Peshawar



disconnect between the school administration and genuine parental concerns, hindering meaningful engagement.

Limited ASDEO Involvement Hampers True Parental Representation in Parent Teacher Councils

Currently, the ASDEOs are not fulfilling their role in organising elections and notifying the membership of PTCs as stipulated by the policy. Instead, head teachers establish the council with community representation and provide the ASDEOs with information about the council members.

Irregular Elections Diminish Parent Members' Motivation

The prescribed elections after three years are not conducted at regular intervals as outlined in the policy, leading to PTC councils persisting for prolonged periods without re-elections. The council, once established, operates indefinitely, leading to members serving for extended periods. Changes due to migration or death occur intermittently, with the headteacher replacing outgoing members. Despite the existing rules, there is a limited mechanism at the district and sub-district levels to guarantee that schools conduct fresh elections every three years for their respective councils.

Low Parental Representation in PTCs

Furthermore, the policy mandates that parents' representation in the council formation must surpass 50% of the total membership. Although schools typically comply with this requirement, the study reveals that parents' representation often exists around 50% or less which has the drawback of potential for unwarranted political interference, wherein local public representatives nominate individuals for inclusion in the council, particularly influencing head-teacher's decisions.

Rafaqat Islam's study, 2017, while focusing on Parent Teacher Councils in KP, holds relevance for Parent Teacher Councils in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and other specialised parental engagement forums. Islam emphasises the necessity for expanded criteria beyond personal connections in selecting Parent Teacher Council members. One suggested criterion is establishing a direct link to a student within the school. This not only diversifies the council's composition but also ensures a more inclusive representation of stakeholders with a direct interest in the educational well-being of students. The goal is to mitigate the risk of elite capture and promote a transparent and representative Parent Teacher Council formation process.



Low Participation of Mothers in Parent Teacher Councils Due to Societal Norms

Similarly, mothers encounter considerable obstacles in engaging with schools despite their pivotal role in the early years of education. In Pakistan, a notable issue arises due to societal norms limiting women's presence in public spheres. Our interviews and discussions with government officials revealed a unanimous concern about low female participation in Parent-Teacher Councils, exacerbated by the absence of government initiatives facilitating women's involvement in their children's education.

Closely linked to the selection criteria is how members acquire information about the PTC and their elections. According to our interviews with parents who were council members, they acquired information about joining the Parent-Teacher Council primarily from the school itself. The second most common source of information was through their children. Notably, all parents received crucial information about the Parent-Teacher Council directly from the school administration.

State of Training for Members of Parent-Teacher Councils

In areas where a substantial number of parents lack formal education and awareness, it becomes essential to offer the necessary training to newly appointed members of Parent-Teacher Councils about their roles and functions. This training is a cornerstone, ensuring that these members are adequately prepared to make informed and beneficial decisions. For instance, the observed underutilisation of funds by Parent Teacher Councils could be addressed through effective training initiatives. This not only diversifies perspectives but also improves decision-making efficacy.

Only 53% of members indicated receiving training on their roles and responsibilities when asked about training provided to the PTC members. Regarding the training content, members primarily highlighted topics centred on child-centric concerns, focusing on initiatives to boost student enrolment, monitor teacher and student attendance, and organise extracurricular activities. Once again, there was a noticeable lack of emphasis on fostering awareness regarding liaison with government officials. This reveals a potential gap in understanding and engaging with governmental bodies and relevant officials within the training priorities. Furthermore, 67 per cent of the participants expressed the opinion that they require further training.

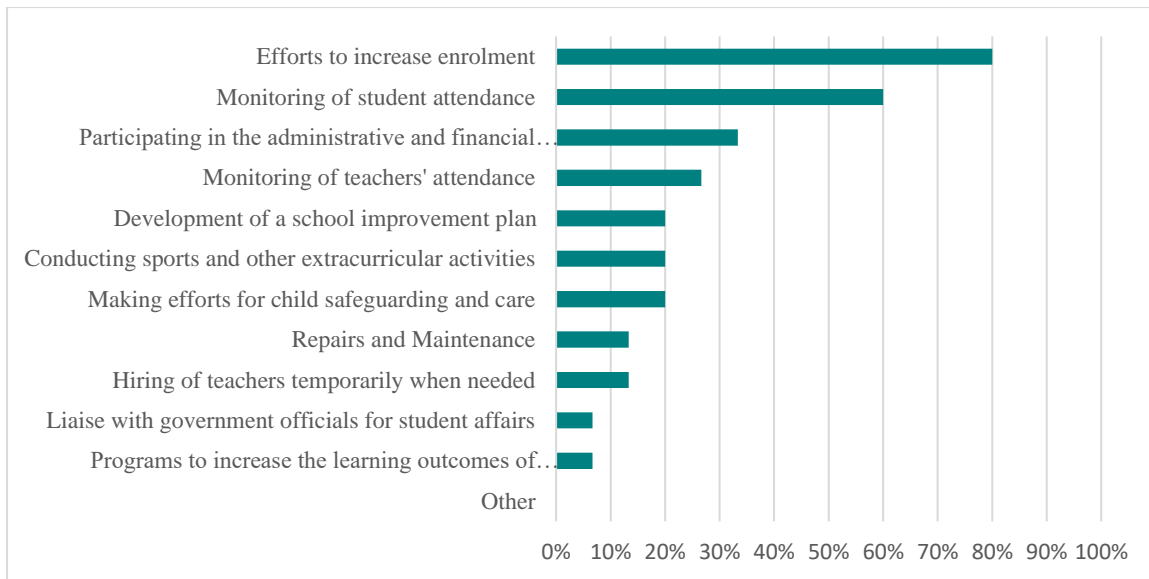


Figure 4: Topics covered in the PTC member’s training

Navigating the Balance between Infrastructure and Student-Focused Initiatives

Currently, Parent-Teacher Councils tend to adopt a predominantly "school-centric" approach, primarily focusing on addressing infrastructural challenges faced by the school. These include tasks such as repairing boundary walls, ensuring water provision and attending to minor repairs. While these issues are undoubtedly crucial for the school's overall functioning, it is noteworthy that the mandates of these councils also encompass addressing "child-centric" concerns. This involves initiatives aimed at enhancing student attendance and retention efforts directed at higher student enrolment, highlighting the broader scope of their responsibilities.

However, additional factors come into play when actively involving Parent Teacher Councils in matters related to teaching and learning. To enhance their involvement in teaching and learning, it's crucial to grasp educational dynamics and commit to actively participating in initiatives that directly affect students' academic progress and well-being. As these councils navigate the balance between school infrastructure and student-focused initiatives, there is a call for ongoing education and motivation to equip members with the skills and knowledge needed to contribute meaningfully to both aspects of school governance.

Parent Members’ Role and Participation in Decision-making

In the realm of educational affairs, the participation of parent members in decision-making holds paramount significance. To substantiate this participation, it is vital to understand the

influence parents wield in making decisions related to school management. The responsibilities of the PTC encompass activities related to the physical school, such as infrastructure and facilities, as well as those about students' learning, including attendance and extra-curricular activities.

We asked the interview participants what roles the council's parent members perform in student affairs, school, and system levels.

- Most respondents prioritised a. resource mobilisation, b. School Improvement Plan (SIP) development, and c. enhancing school facilities at the **school level**.

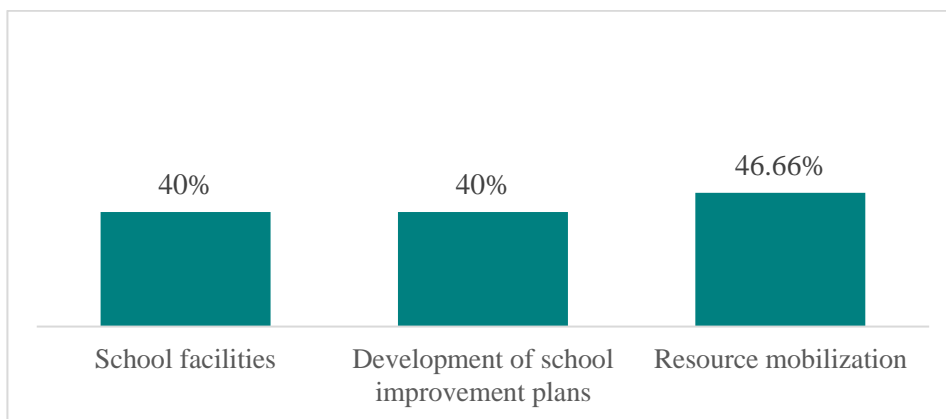


Figure 5: Frequency of parental involvement at the School Level

- **At the student level**, the Parent Teacher Council emphasises co-curricular activities, followed by enrolment campaigns, safeguarding initiatives, and overall learning outcomes.

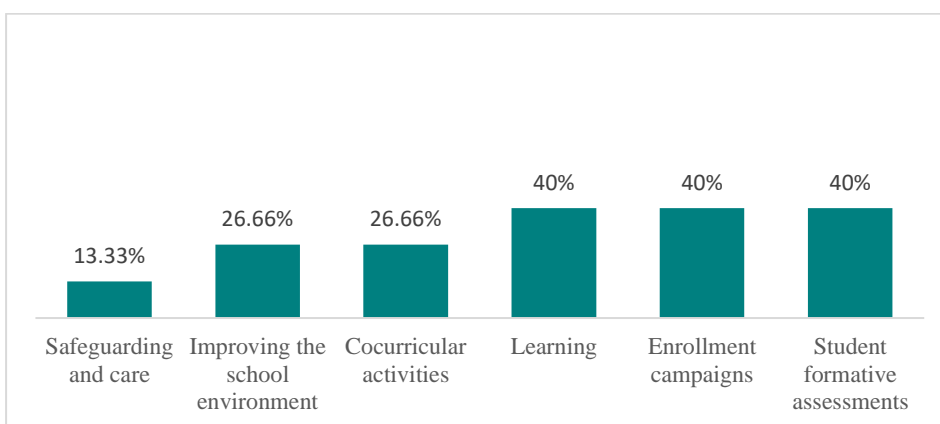


Figure 6: Frequency of parental involvement at the Student Level

At the systemic level, coordinating with government officials at the Tehsil and District levels emerged as a top priority. Surprisingly, 80% of PTC parent member respondents had met with officials like ASDEO or DEO, while 40% claimed to receive adequate support from the school administration in decision-making. However, this finding diverges from the responses provided by government officials, who indicated that parents seldom initiate communication with them regarding school matters.

Despite advocating for parental voice, involvement in decision-making at the government level was the least prioritised option selected by the respondents.

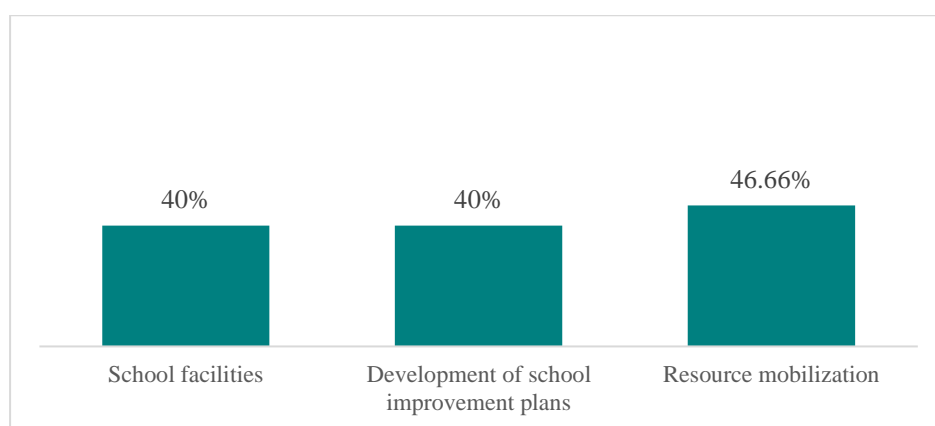


Figure 7: Frequency of parental involvement at the System Level

At the PTC level, women members face challenges in fulfilling their responsibilities due to societal restrictions on women's participation. They express the need for incentives to advance parental engagement beyond improving their child's education. Both PTC members and Peshawar government officials agree on the necessity of introducing incentives for members, such as an honorarium, to ensure sustained commitment to duties. There is a consensus amongst the participants that very few females participate in the council meetings. As elucidated by anecdotes from the interview participants,

"Women encounter more challenges in our area, as they either cannot venture outside the house independently or if they wish to, they are not permitted to do so. This restriction makes it challenging for them to actively participate in the Parent-Teacher Council (PTC)." ¹⁴

¹⁴ KII with ASDEO, Mardan

"At the boys' schools' level, the government has not implemented any specific measures for females, as it is uncommon for Pakhtun families to allow their women to participate in school councils,"¹⁵

"While we have directives stating that every Parent-Teacher Council (PTC) should include at least one female member, achieving female participation at the village level in boys' schools is challenging," explained ASDEO Mardan.

Financial inadequacies present challenges in the effective functioning of PTC, necessitating an increase in funds and a revision of the non-salary budget distribution policy. Optimising the system for resource distribution is crucial to address recurring financial challenges.

In terms of decision-making processes, PTCs rely on voting, with some respondents indicating that decisions are made by a majority vote and few respondents believing in unanimous voting. While most PTC members believe they are equally involved in the voting process, concerns arise about potential influence from the Head Teacher or school administration, indicating a need for transparency. This is further corroborated by the fact that 60% of overall respondents felt that their decisions are influenced in some way by the Head Teacher or the school administration.

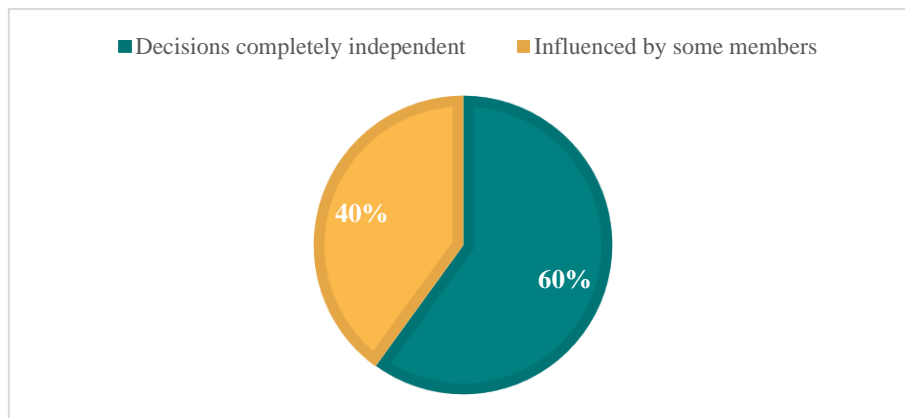


Figure 8: Percentage of members who are and who are not able to vote independently

When asked about challenges or limitations in the PTC's structure, composition, and functions, the respondents' feedback is condensed and visually represented in the graph below.

¹⁵ FGD Mardan

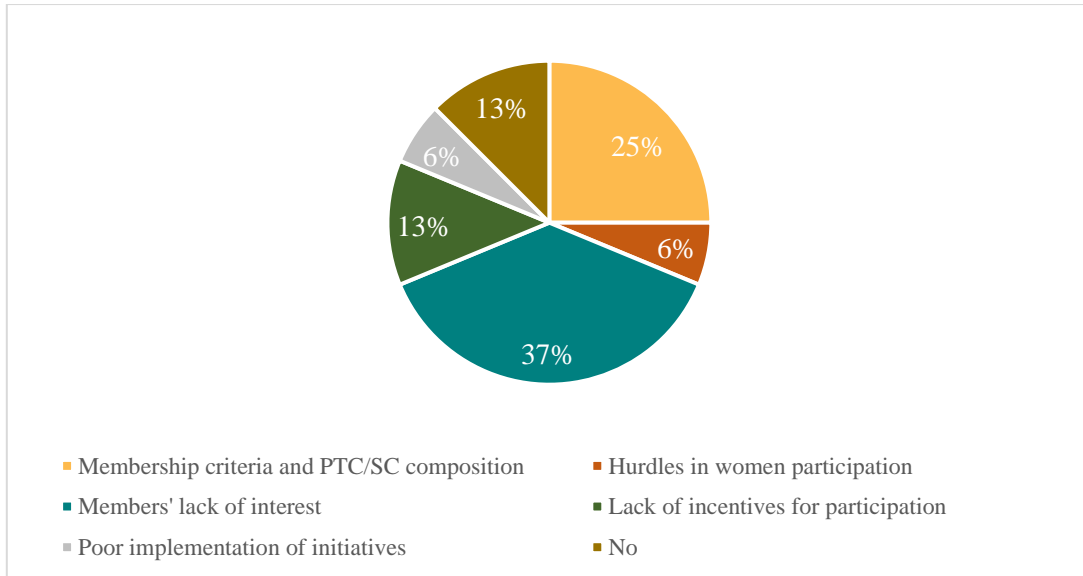


Figure 11: Breakdown of challenges faced by the PTC

Challenges in Vertical Impact: The Limited Influence of Parental Engagement through Parent Teacher Councils

The participation of parents in education, particularly through councils in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, fails to generate substantial influence at higher levels of education policy and service delivery. Despite sincere engagement, these councils have limited vertical impact, exerting minimal sway over Education Officers at the Tehsil and District levels. Higher-ranking officials often display passive involvement or disregard the recommendations presented by Parent Teacher Councils. Challenges and identified issues at the school level that require action from higher tiers frequently go unaddressed. Consequently, there is a notable absence of a systematic mechanism for consolidating parental interests into public demands for decision-makers. The lack of a representative forum beyond the school level poses a substantial institutional barrier to demand-side answerability within Pakistan's education system.

Coordination and Feedback Mechanism between PTC/SC and Government

A robust feedback mechanism between the government and Parent Teacher Councils is essential for their effectiveness. A feedback mechanism is required to facilitate transparent communication, allowing councils to convey on-the-ground challenges while the government can offer adequate support. This exchange is necessary for responsive policymaking, aligning educational initiatives with actual school needs.

In engaging with government officials in Peshawar, the absence of a feedback mechanism emerged as a notable concern. ASDEOs, who serve as the first tier of government

representation beyond the Parent Teacher Councils, are, in many cases, burdened with overseeing over 100 schools. This extensive workload poses practical challenges, hindering their consistent attendance at PTCs. The graph below illustrates a lack of coordination between PTC member parents and government officials.

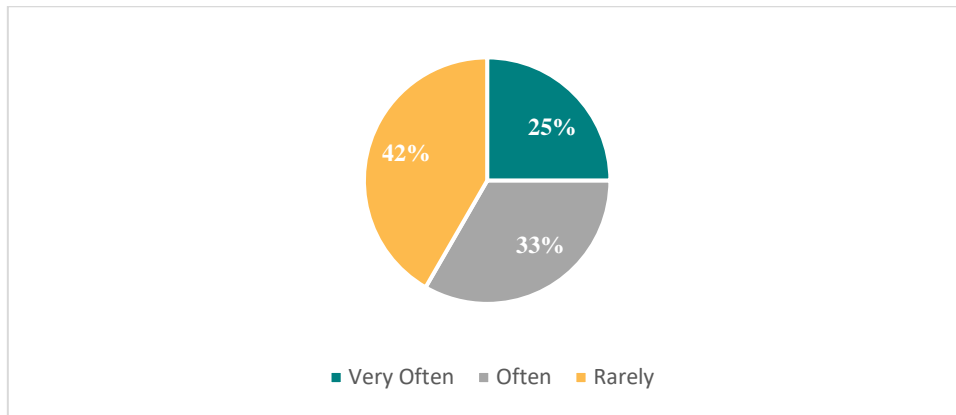


Figure 9: Percentage of the frequency with which government members are directly approached

However, the discussions also shed light on instances where ASDEOs are sought out by parents and Head Teachers to address pressing issues like inadequate facilities and teacher attendance, further emphasising the critical need for a feedback system. Such a mechanism would facilitate efficient communication and contribute to timely issue resolution, ensuring a more responsive and effective educational governance structure. It was unanimously agreed that establishing a collaborative approach will ultimately enhance the overall efficacy of PTCs in fostering positive educational outcomes. Regarding the PTC policy, a significant number of education department representatives expressed their contentment with the provisions of the PTC policy for engaging parents effectively.

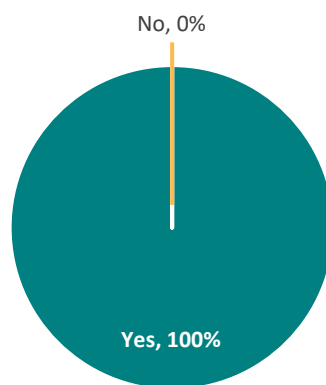


Figure 10: Views on PTC Policy




CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Parental engagement stands as a crucial element in shaping the trajectory of school governance and influencing the learning outcomes of children. Recognising the pivotal role parents play in fostering a conducive educational environment, it becomes imperative to focus on the Parent-Teacher Council (PTC) policy. Despite its potential significance, the current implementation of the PTC policy reveals substantial limitations. A significant issue is the lack of familiarity among PTC members, primarily due to the absence of mandatory training and standardised modules, leading to a knowledge gap that hampers decision-making and engagement strategies. Additionally, limited interaction between government officials and PTC members at the tehsil and district levels impedes collaborative efforts, restricting the alignment of grassroots concerns with higher-level policy decisions. Coordination challenges, including deficient data sharing between PTC and government officials, further worsen communication issues. The absence of a feedback mechanism hinders effective communication on council performance. Addressing these challenges is crucial for enhancing the implementation of educational policies and promoting meaningful parental engagement in the education system.

Furthermore, economic constraints pose a substantial barrier, as resource-constrained parents often prioritise daily wages over participation in educational matters. The prevailing lack of awareness regarding the importance of holistic parental engagement contributes to the perception of schools merely as daycares. This perception results in minimal parental interest in actively participating in educational matters, emphasising the need for broader community education and the value of schooling. Social constraints, particularly affecting women, present challenges such as restricted mobility and a lack of decision-making authority, hindering active participation in educational initiatives. Therefore, addressing gender disparities and empowering women in educational decision-making is crucial for fostering comprehensive parental engagement.


Recommendations


Acknowledging the pivotal role of the Parent Teacher Council in fostering parental engagement, the department's commitment is evident through the establishment of a



comprehensive policy guideline on the mandate of PTCs and education reforms. The diagnostic study yields recommendations strategically aligned to augment and harmonise with the Elementary and Secondary Education Department's endeavours. These recommendations aim to reinforce a well-structured and participatory approach to parental engagement and to bolster effective governance within the education system.

- i. ***More Weightage for Parents in Parent Teacher Councils:*** To strengthen the capacity of the Parent Teacher Council to facilitate increased parental participation in decision-making and oversight at the school level, it is proposed to raise the minimum threshold for parental representation in the council from 50% to 75%. This adjustment aims to protect Parent Teacher Councils from political influence in of selecting members favoured by locally influential individuals. Moreover, it will elevate the community's involvement in school management by providing parents, who are direct stakeholders, with increased participation in decision-making at the school level.
- ii. ***Effective Collaboration between Educational Authorities and Parent Teacher Councils:*** The effective liaison between parent-teacher councils and education officials is crucial for providing essential support mechanisms to enhance school improvement. Notably, the ASDEO in KP has a significant role in offering technical support at the school level. To enhance this collaboration, it is recommended that the E&SED mandates ASDEOs to attend a minimum of two PTC meetings each month personally. This will establish vital communication channels between council members and district-level education administrators.
- iii. ***Fostering Transparency and Broadening Community Involvement by publicising Parent Teacher Council Elections:*** Currently, there is a lack of a formal mechanism for promoting and advertising Parent Teacher Council elections within communities. This results in a lack of awareness among parents about upcoming school elections, depriving them of the chance to participate in council elections and contribute to school management decisions. To address this issue, it is recommended that the Elementary & Secondary Education Department issue notifications to District Education Authorities before each election cycle, urging them to advertise and publicise Parent Teacher Council elections. Utilising existing communication channels in rural settings, such as mosques, banners, and parent contacts, can enhance the dissemination of election information.

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- iv. ***Enhanced Parental Participation and Oversight to Ensure Financial Transparency and Effective Decision Making:*** To actively engage the parents in decision-making processes, it is crucial to openly share financial details, including the allocated and disbursed NSB funds, along with monthly/quarterly expenses, with all council members. To achieve this, a modification in the Parent Teacher Council Policy is recommended, making it obligatory for schools to display this information prominently using a specified form at the school level. This modification in the Parent Teacher Council Policy will enhance transparency and community participation in decision-making.
 - v. ***Updating Parent Teacher Council Information for Efficient Management:*** Currently, Parent Teacher Council details, including member names, contact information, and membership categories, are stored in registers at the school level. It is recommended that the Elementary & Secondary Education Department updates the Student Information System at the school level to upload Parent Teacher Council members' credentials onto a centralised database. This automation will facilitate the streamlined consolidation of council member data, enabling sample-based communication to assess their engagement with the school. This system will also contribute to internal control measures concerning council meeting regularity, member re-elections, and the formulation and execution of school-based action plans.
 - vi. ***Implementing Robust Monitoring and Accountability Measures:*** E&SED should establish a robust system of comprehensive assessments to systematically monitor the progress of Parent Teacher Councils. This includes identifying areas that require improvement and providing a mechanism for the removal of individuals who are unable to fulfill their responsibilities within the Parent Teacher Council. This proactive approach will contribute to the overall effectiveness and functionality of the Parent Teacher Councils, ensuring a more dynamic and responsive school governance structure.
 - vii. ***Encourage Mothers' participation in the PTCs:*** Recognizing the vital role mothers play in their children's education, the E&SED should actively promote their engagement in Parent Teacher Councils. This can be achieved through targeted outreach, flexible meeting options, and informative sessions tailored to facilitate their participation. Embracing the diverse perspectives of mothers will foster a more





inclusive and enriched educational environment, ultimately benefiting both students and the entire school community.

- viii. ***Building Capacities of Parent Teacher Council (PTC) Members:*** Parent Teacher Councils need thorough training on their roles, functions, School-based Action Plan development, fund utilisation, and taxation. The Elementary & Secondary Education Department should initiate a comprehensive training program through ASDEOs or independent non-government organisations. Additionally, the PMIU should create and circulate communication products like infographics and short videos for effective training.
- ix. ***Encourage and Incentivize Parental Participation:*** To enhance parental participation in education, the Elementary & Secondary Education Department is recommended to design and implement a targeted public awareness campaign. This campaign should underscore the integral role parents play in fostering a child's holistic development, surpassing academic achievements. Simultaneously, the E&SED should encourage and incentivise active parental participation in school events, creating initiatives that recognise and reward such involvement. By promoting a deeper understanding of the collaborative relationship between home and school and reinforcing this bond through incentives, educational institutions can cultivate a supportive and cohesive community where parents are recognised as valued partners in the overall development of students.
- x. ***Engaging Local Stakeholders for Educational Outreach:*** To enhance educational outreach efforts, the Elementary & Secondary Education Department should harness local social and political capital, including public representatives, religious leaders, community elders, etc. To implement this recommendation, the E&SED may consider organising joint workshops, community events, and information sessions involving these influential figures. This collaborative approach will effectively disseminate information and raise awareness about education and parental engagement within the community.

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