



BİLİM-TEKNOLOJİ-YENİLİK EKOSİSTEMİ DERGİSİ

JOURNAL OF SCIENCE-TECHNOLOGY-INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM

E-ISSN : 2757-6140

Sayı | Issue : 1

Yıl | Year : 2026



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Challenges and Opportunities of Local Government in Turbat: A Case Study on Union Council of Kalatuk

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ARTICLE INFO

Research Article

Received: 16.01.2026
Accepted: 17.04.2026
Published: 23.04.2026

Keywords:

Challenges
Opportunities
Union council
Local governance
Kalatuk
Kech

 2026 Habib & Baloch

Academic Editor:

Dr. Abdul Hadi

Layout Editor:


Habibe Doğan

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the challenges and opportunities of the local governments in Pakistan, with a specific case study of Union Council Kalatuk, located in District Kech, Balochistan. Quantitative method was used in this study; data were analyzed in SPSS to get accurate results. Effective local governance is essential for democracy and efficient public service delivery. However, in Pakistan, local bodies have historically struggled with a lack of financial and political autonomy. Despite constitutional provisions, such as Article 140A of the 18th Amendment, which mandates decentralization, the implementation in Punjab and Balochistan through acts like the Provincial Local Government Act 2013 has been ineffective. This research identifies a significant gap between the legal framework and the practical empowerment of the local governments. Using a quantitative research design, data was collected from four hundred respondents, including citizens, students, and local council members in Union Council Kalatuk, through questionnaires. The findings revealed that major challenges include inadequate funding, widespread corruption, shortage of skilled staff, and excessive political interference from provincial authorities. Furthermore, key services such as healthcare, education, and emergency response are perceived as highly unsatisfactory. Conversely, the study identified several opportunities for improvement. Respondents strongly believed that increased funding, staff training, the adoption of e-governance, enhanced community participation, and better infrastructure could significantly improve the governance. This study concluded that for local governments to be effective, genuine fiscal and administrative decentralization is required. It recommended the strict anti-corruption measures, inclusive representation, regular public consultations, and targeted youth employment programs to strengthen local governance and service delivery in Union Council Kalatuk and similar regions.

Ethical Statement

Permission to conduct the interviews for the purposes of this research was obtained by all respondents, who were fully informed about the purposes of this research and how their responses would be used. Furthermore, the authors of this research article declare that they have no financial or other substantive conflicts of interest.

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Citation: Habib, I., & Baloch, B. (2026). Challenges and opportunities of local government in Turbat: A case study on Union Council of Kalatuk. *Journal of Science-Technology-Innovation Ecosystem*, (1): 37-47.

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Introduction

A strong democracy depends on local governments (LGs). These governments are meant to provide effective services to the people. Because they are closer to the public, LGs can address people's needs more effectively. This is why many countries now have independent and well-organized systems of decentralized governance (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). The goal of decentralization is to shift power to the local level, allowing services to be delivered more efficiently to citizens (Musgrave, 1959). In a decentralized system, elected leaders have the authority to collect taxes and receive funds from higher levels of the government. They then use this money for local services and development projects. Giving power to local bodies makes institutions more accountable and ensures resources are distributed fairly. This system improves services, especially in healthcare and education (Rhodes, 1994).

For decentralization to work properly, there must be a clear and organized system that divides spending duties among all levels of government. Each level should also have control over its budget to fulfill these responsibilities (McLure & Martinez, 2000). To achieve true decentralization, LGs must have their own sources of income. Without independent and well-established revenue streams, LGs can hardly have financial freedom. In many cases, they remain under the strict financial control of the central government. Musgrave (1959) argued that giving decision-making power to LGs is essential for fair resource distribution, as it better represents the needs and desires of the people in each area. When LGs have the authority to manage taxes and spending, they can design programs that fit the specific demands of their communities. This improves efficiency because local leaders understand their people's needs better and can respond more effectively (Tiebout, 1956).

The LGs of Pakistan have historically underperformed primarily because they lacked financial and political authority while being dominated by federal control. These local institutions form the foundational level of governance, handling administrative tasks across cities, districts, sub-districts, and neighborhoods. For democracy to function properly, there must be an equitable distribution of authority between central and LGs. Essentially, the system needs to involve major political parties meaningfully, creating incentives for them to participate in and strengthen local governance actively (Oates, 1999).

The 1973 constitution of Pakistan says the country must hold elections for the establishment of LGs. The first attempt to create a local government (LG) system occurred during General Ayub Khan's rule.

His "Basic Democracy" system was like a fake third level of government with no real power. In 1979, General Zia-ul-Haq introduced a similar system the "Local Body System" which worked almost the same way. Then, in 2001, when General Musharraf was in power, he started the "Local Government Plan (LGP)." This newest system had three parts: District Government, Tehsil Government, and Union Government. Because people could easily meet with their local councilors. This system helped ordinary citizens at the local level. However, all these systems created by military rulers were intended primarily to make military rule appear legitimate rather than actually empower to LGs (Cheema et al., 2006).

The 18th Amendment was enacted to ensure power moved down to local levels. As clearly stated in Article 140A: "Every province shall establish a LG system. These LGs will have elected by the Election Commission of Pakistan. The provinces will then transfer political, administrative, and financial powers to these LG officials". Article 140A gives constitutional protection to LGs. The setting up of LGs is a constitutional requirement. According to the constitution, each provincial assembly can make its own LG rules. The 18th Amendment doesn't specify of the type of LG system provinces should create; this decision is up to each province. Consequently, Pakistan could have four distinct LG systems, one in each of the four provinces.

Decentralization gives power to local communities. It doesn't just help people; it also creates opportunities for community development. At the same time, it limits the central government's overreach. This means LGs do two important things: they make government more open, and they meet people's daily needs. When power moves to local levels, it encourages skilled people to stay in their areas and use their management, technical, and leadership abilities. This system reduces the gap between cities and villages by bringing services

closer to rural residents. An important part of this is giving local areas control over their finances, which creates a system for better services and encourages regional growth.

When LGs have real financial power, they can create their own income sources. They can then use technology and new ideas to boost their local economy and improve services. In Punjab, LGs operate under the Provincial Local Government Act (PLGA) 2013. This new system treats urban and rural areas differently. Rural areas have union councils (UCs) and district councils (DCs), while urban areas have union committees and municipal committees. Each district will have its unique local council. The election process uses both direct and indirect voting methods.

The main idea of decentralization is letting LGs control their finances. But PLGA 2013 doesn't have a clear fiscal system across government levels to make local bodies truly independent. The law doesn't set up a proper way to send money to LGs for their daily costs. The functions of UCs, municipal committees, and Metropolitan and Municipal Corporations have been elaborated in detail in the Act. Lack of fiscal powers is one of the primary problems facing these bodies. The functions of local bodies include a wide range of tasks, yet two major spending responsibilities of local bodies, i.e., Health and Education, were given to special groups controlled by experts chosen by the government instead.

The functions of the local bodies have been restricted to street lighting, market organization, and the imposition of penalties and fines. All budgets are to be approved by the provincial government, and it retains the power to compel local bodies to review the budget. Development projects of the local bodies are subject to approval by the provincial government under the Act, and LGs have little say in them. All of this makes it clear that the provincial government has the final say on financial matters. The provincial government has total control over these local leaders because it also has the very strong authority to suspend mayors and council leaders at any time. Under PLGA 2013, it is clear that the provincial government and officials have too much control. Local leaders can be removed from their positions if the Local Government Commission (LGC), which is mostly made up of provincial ministers, reviews their work and decides to dismiss them.

Local governments in Pakistan have never had much real power. When we carefully examine the current law, we see it only gives limited authority to LGs, making it hard for them to provide good services. There is an unequal relationship between local and provincial governments. The two biggest reasons for this limited power are that LGs aren't independent and don't control their affairs. Also, the law severely limits what LGs can do, especially in important areas like schools and hospitals, giving these bodies little chance to succeed (Rafique et al., 2020). Another major issue is that LGs don't control their own funds and don't have strong organizations to do their work. While the law does list all the things LGs are obliged to do, these responsibilities don't matter much when LGs don't have the finances or proper organizations to do the work. Since LGs can't raise much money themselves, they depend entirely on funds provided by provincial government. The group determines how to divide funds between LGs (the Provincial Finance Commission) is led by the finance minister of the province. This means LGs lack the revenue-expenditure gap because they lack any potential means to raise their revenues.

Effective service delivery depends on appropriate fiscal devolution. When local bodies have only partial independence, it creates significant for their evolution and development. To solve local problems effectively, we need to: (1) make sure LGs have enough funds, (2) help them build skills to deliver services, and (3) give real power to these local-level governments. The purpose of this study is to identify the challenges faced in these areas and how they affect the quality of services provided to local communities.

Problem Statement

In today's world, LGs are responsible for providing basic services to their people and communities in a fast, efficient, and easy way. According to PLGA 2013, LGs must improve how they deliver services, but many communities still struggle to access these basic services. The progress made in public services has not yet reached a level that satisfies the people. Communities do not receive sufficient essential services, such as healthcare, public utilities, social welfare, rural planning, and infrastructure development. To identify the main

reasons for these problems, this research uses UC Kalatuk as a case study to explore the challenges LGs face in delivering better services. It will also examine the opinions of LG representatives on how to address these challenges and improve public service delivery.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study is to investigate the problems that affect the effectiveness of service delivery by LGs in the selected UCs of Kalatuk. With this aim, this study will explore:

1. To investigate the challenges of LG in Union Council Kalatuk.
2. To find out the opportunities of LG in Union Council Kalatuk.
3. To identify the Public Satisfaction Level (PSL) in Union Council Kalatuk.
4. To highlight the possible autonomy linked with the LG of Union Council Kalatuk.
5. To recommend better suggestions regarding the LG of Union Council Kalatuk.

Significance of the Study

Many studies have already examined the performance of LGs. This study will contribute new findings to existing research on the challenges and opportunities linked to service delivery. The findings from this research will assist government leaders and decision-makers. It will also help researchers and scholars by giving them insights into the LG system in Balochistan. This study will also be helpful for local communities by suggesting ways to improve their participation in decision-making and service delivery.

Overall, this research will help to strengthen local governance by emphasizing practical solutions for current problems and identifying opportunities for improvement. It will be a useful resource for future studies on the LG system in Pakistan.

Theoretical Framework

Decentralization theory: This theory was presented by Rondinelli (1981), who explained how decentralization helps in improving governance and local decision-making in developing countries.

Decentralization theory explains how shifting power and responsibilities from central to LG improves governance and public service delivery. This theory suggests that when LGs are given authority, they can make better decisions based on the needs of the local community. These efforts also strengthen democracy by encouraging more people to take part in decision-making and by ensuring that leaders are held responsible for their actions.

Within our findings, this theory is relevant because it highlights how LG can function more effectively if given proper resources and autonomy. However, challenges such as limited funds, political interference, and weak administrative capacity can limit its effectiveness. At the same time, decentralization creates opportunities for better governance, local development, and community engagement.

Methodology

Research methodology is a structured and scientific approach used to examine and understand social issues. It involves carefully chosen methods for gathering data and drawing accurate conclusions. Essentially, it serves as a step-by-step guide for conducting research. By following systematic techniques, researchers can observe, explain, describe, and analyze information to produce reliable knowledge (Neuman, 2009). Scientific research methods are essential for interpreting observations and generating reliable findings. Methodology provides clear rules, processes, and procedures to ensure the study is well-organized and credible (McNabb, 2015; Bryman, 2016; Sanli, 2023).

Research Design

Research design refers to the structured framework or plan that guides the entire research process, ensuring the study is conducted systematically and logically. It outlines the strategies for data collection, measurement, and analysis to address the research problem effectively (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The study used a quantitative method. Primary data were collected from the residents of UC Kalatuk,

and the officials who are responsible for delivering local services to the people. These officials included the UC Chairman and the UC members.

Target Population

A population is a key part of research. It refers to a group of people who share similar qualities within a specific area or setting (Martínez-Mesa et al., 2016). This idea helps to shape the research questions and guides studies. On the other hand, a target population is a smaller group within the larger population that meets specific criteria important to the research (Alvi, 2016). Researchers choose this group based on factors that align with their study's goals (Asiamah et al., 2017; Casteel & Bridier, 2021; Willie, 2024). By defining the target population, researchers can adjust their methods and focus on the most relevant people for their study (Alvi, 2016). In our study, the target population of the research study was the local body members, male and female students, and the residents of UC Kalatuk, District Kech Turbat, Balochistan.

Sampling Procedure

A simple procedure refers to an easy, straightforward method for conducting research without complex steps (Wang, 2024). It is often used in surveys, observations, and basic experiments. In contrast, A sample procedure is the method for selecting a smaller group (sample) from a larger population (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Creswell, 2017). For example; common types of sampling procedure are: Random sampling, Stratified sampling, and Convenience sampling. A simple random sample will be used for the research, and systematic sampling will be used for the respondents.

Sample Size

In research methodology, sample size refers to the number of participants or observations included in a study. It's like deciding how many people to survey to get reliable results (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Sanli, 2023). The sample size of our research was consisted of four hundred individuals including common residents, male and female students, and the members of the UC Kalatuk. A total number of 51 male students and 49 female students were randomly selected for the data collection research used systematic sampling in our research study.

Research Instrument

A research instrument is a tool or method used to collect, measure, and analyze data in a study (Creswell, 2009; McNabb, 2015). It ensures that researchers gather accurate and relevant information to answer their research questions. Common instruments include: Questionnaires/Surveys, Observations, Tests/Scales, and Document Analysis. For this current research, the impact of the discussion method on UC Kalatuk, Kech Turbat, Kech was assessed using a questionnaire, which was distributed to four hundred respondents, all citizens of UC Kalatuk. The total number of statements in the questionnaires were 25 (= challenges: 5 + opportunities: 20), for which answers were required as strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. The statements were written in English that were easy, clear, and precise way, which were filled in a better way by each respondent.

Data Collection

Data collection is the systematic process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest in a research study (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Creswell, 2017). It enables researchers to obtain accurate, relevant data to answer research questions or test hypotheses (Liu & Wang, 2014). The method of data collection depends on the research design, which can be either quantitative (utilizing numerical data) or qualitative (utilizing descriptive/non-numerical data), suggested by Saunders et al. (2023). The data collection process was done in UC Kalatuk by distributing four hundred questionnaires.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of organizing, examining, and making sense of the information you collect in a study (Creswell, 2009). It helps researchers find patterns, answer questions, and draw conclusions from their data. In point of fact, there are several methods of data analysis in educational research, but in our study, the data were analyzed through the Scientific Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 19.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations are the moral guidelines researchers follow to ensure their work is honest, fair, and safe for participants, society, and the scientific community (Resnik, 2020). These rules apply to all research stages from planning to publication. This research adhered to the ethical guidelines and regulations, and no informal data collection was conducted with respondents' consent and there was no coercion in any procedure.

Results

This section presents the results of the quantitative analysis based on data collected from four hundred respondents in Union Council Kalatuk, including citizens, students, and local council members. The findings are organized into key thematic categories, including main challenges, institutional capacity, service delivery, accountability, participation, reform priorities, and governance challenges. Each category is presented through descriptive statistics and is followed by a detailed interpretation of respondents' perceptions.

The findings indicate a clear consensus that local governance is constrained by entrenched structural and institutional challenges. Overall, 61.2% of respondents expressed agreement with the identified issues, compared to 22.8% who disagreed, suggesting that governance deficits are widely recognized rather than contested. Among these, political interference (85%), corruption (83%), and shortage of skilled staff (83%) emerge as the most dominant concerns, reflecting a convergence around core dimensions of governance failure. The particularly high perception of political interference underscores the extent to which administrative processes are viewed as compromised by external political pressures, pointing toward patterns of patronage and weakened institutional autonomy. Similarly, the near-unanimous recognition of corruption signals a profound legitimacy deficit, while the shortage of skilled personnel highlights systemic capacity limitations that further undermine effective service delivery. In contrast, perceptions regarding financial adequacy are more divided. While 34% of respondents agree that funding is adequate, a larger proportion (50%) disagree, indicating that fiscal constraints remain a significant concern. Nevertheless, the predominance of dissatisfaction suggests that fiscal insufficiency continues to limit the operational capacity of local government institutions (Table 1).

A particularly noteworthy finding concerns the representation of women and minorities, which received the lowest level of agreement (21%) and relatively high levels of disagreement (45%), alongside a substantial neutral response (34%). The high proportion of neutral responses may instead indicate a lack of awareness, normalization of exclusion, or socio-cultural constraints that render inequalities less visible or less contestable

Table 1. Challenges for the local governance in Union Council Kalatuk (%)

| Main Challenges | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
| Funding is adequate for the local government to maintain basic services | 9 | 25 | 16 | 27 | 23 |
| Corruption is a major problem in the Union Council Kalatuk | 54 | 29 | 10 | 4 | 3 |
| Shortage of skilled staff in local government offices | 41 | 42 | 10 | 5 | 2 |
| Political interference disrupts government works | 51 | 34 | 10 | 4 | 1 |
| Lack of representation of women and minorities | 7 | 14 | 34 | 28 | 17 |
| Average Means | 32.40 | 28.80 | 16.00 | 13.60 | 9.20 |

The findings indicate a generally positive perception of the enabling conditions of local governance, particularly in relation to administrative and technological capacity. A strong majority of respondents agree that training (93%) and digital systems (78%) can significantly enhance governance effectiveness, reflecting awareness of modern governance tools and capacity-building mechanisms. Similarly, funding and infrastructure are widely recognized as critical facilitators of effective governance. However, this optimism is tempered by notable skepticism regarding actual decision-making power, where responses are divided (40%

positive vs. 34% negative). This suggests that while respondents acknowledge the importance of institutional inputs, they perceive local governments as structurally constrained. Thus, capacity is seen more as potential rather than realized authority, indicating incomplete or superficial decentralization (Table 2).

Table 2. Institutional capacity and governance structure in Union Council Kalatuk (%)

| Institutional Capacity and Governance Structure | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
| Sufficient funding enables local governments to perform effectively | 16 | 54 | 09 | 16 | 05 |
| Training government staff can enhance the delivery of services | 37 | 56 | 05 | 01 | 01 |
| Digital systems (e-governance) can help reduce corruption and administrative issues | 46 | 32 | 16 | 05 | 01 |
| Better infrastructure can boost governance (road, water, electricity) | 28 | 62 | 05 | 04 | 01 |
| Local government has enough power to make decisions | 15 | 25 | 26 | 25 | 09 |
| Average Means | 28.40 | 45.80 | 12.20 | 10.20 | 3.40 |

This category reveals the weakest performance dimension of local governance. While a moderate majority acknowledge improvements in general service provision (61%), dissatisfaction dominates in critical sectors. Healthcare (58% negative), agricultural support (60% negative), and especially emergency response (80% negative) reflect severe governance deficits. Education and sanitation also show mixed but concerning trends. These findings suggest that local governance is failing in its most visible and impactful function-delivering tangible public goods. The sharp contrast between expectations and outcomes indicates systemic inefficiencies, resource misallocation, or administrative weaknesses, reinforcing the argument that decentralization has not translated into improved service delivery shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Service delivery and performance outcomes in Union Council Kalatuk (%)

| Service Delivery and Performance Outcomes | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
| Provision of faster services to the masses | 12 | 49 | 29 | 09 | 01 |
| Satisfactory ratio of healthcare services | 05 | 15 | 22 | 22 | 36 |
| School and education facilities meet the local needs | 20 | 28 | 08 | 15 | 29 |
| Effective garbage collection and sanitation services | 09 | 41 | 16 | 20 | 14 |
| Local government supports to farmers and agricultural development | 09 | 18 | 13 | 37 | 23 |
| Quick response from local government during emergencies | 01 | 10 | 09 | 26 | 54 |
| Average Means | 9.33 | 26.83 | 16.16 | 21.50 | 26.16 |

The results, in Table 4, present a nuanced picture of accountability. While a majority of respondents believe that local leaders understand community needs (79%), perceptions of accountability are comparatively weaker (60% positive, 27% negative). In other words, local actors are perceived as socially embedded and aware, yet not sufficiently answerable.

Table 4. Accountability and responsiveness in Union Council Kalatuk (%)

| Accountability and Responsiveness | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
| Local government officials are accountable to the people they serve | 25 | 35 | 13 | 22 | 05 |
| Local leaders understand community needs better than central officials | 38 | 41 | 12 | 05 | 04 |
| Average Means | 31.50 | 38.00 | 12.50 | 13.50 | 4.50 |

This dimension emerges as one of the strongest aspects of local governance within the study sample. A large majority of respondents express strong agreement with community participation (91%), the need for regular public meetings (92%), and the inclusion of women in decision-making (86%). These findings indicate a clear preference among respondents for participatory and inclusive governance practices (Table 5). Given the quantitative nature of the study and its localized scope, these results reflect a strong normative inclination toward participatory governance.

Table 5. Participation and inclusion governance practices in Union Council Kalatuk (%)

| Participation and Inclusion | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------|
| Local government should hold regular public meetings | 50 | 42 | 02 | 05 | 01 |
| Community participation can help solve local problems | 59 | 32 | 06 | 01 | 02 |
| More women should be included in decision-making | 44 | 42 | 05 | 06 | 03 |
| Average Means | 51.00 | 38.66 | 4.33 | 4.00 | 2.00 |

This category shows the highest consensus across all dimensions, with near-universal agreement on anti-corruption measures (94%), local use of taxes (93%), and youth employment (94%), shown in Table 6. These responses highlight a clear public demand for transparent, redistributive, and development-oriented governance. The intensity of agreement suggests that governance deficits are not due to lack of public awareness but rather due to implementation failures and political constraints. This reinforces the interpretation that citizens are not disengaged; instead, they possess a strong and coherent vision of what effective governance should look like.

Table 6. Reform priorities and normative expectations in Union Council Kalatuk (%)

| Reform Priorities and Normative Expectations | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------|
| Corruption cases should be punished strictly | 69 | 25 | 01 | 02 | 03 |
| Locally collected taxes should be used for community projects and developments | 50 | 43 | 04 | 02 | 01 |
| Youth employment programs should be a priority | 53 | 41 | 04 | 02 | 00 |
| Average Means | 57.33 | 36.33 | 3.00 | 2.00 | 1.33 |

Discussion

The main focus of our research study was to explore the challenges and opportunities of LG in UC Kalatuk, District Kech Turbat. The discussion is based on the results collected from questionnaire, tables, and charts aims to explain the results based on the objectives of our research study. The study began with demographic information, which showed that 51% of respondents were male and 49% were female. Most of the respondents (74%) were between the age of 18-25, showing that youth actively participated in this research. A smaller percentage was between 25-35 (15%), 35-45 (6%), and above 45 (5%), indicating that younger citizens are more engaged in LG issues. In terms of occupation, 60% were undergraduate students, 15% were graduate students, 18% were employees, 5% were unemployed, and 2% were local council members. This demographic result highlights that the majority of the respondents were educated youth who are aware of local governance problems and opportunities.

The first challenge identified in the study was related to financial capacity. The results showed that 27% of respondents disagreed that funding was adequate for maintaining basic services, while 25% agreed, 9% strongly agreed, and 23% strongly disagreed. This finding reveals that most people believe the LG lacks proper funding, which affects service delivery. Limited financial resources make it difficult for local authorities to maintain infrastructure and meet community needs effectively. Besides, the second major challenge was

corruption. A large number of respondents (54%) strongly agreed that corruption is a major issue in UC Kalatuk, while 29% agreed and only a small portion disagreed or remained neutral. This shows that corruption remains one of the biggest obstacles in local governance, preventing fair resource distribution and damaging public trust.

Another issue raised was the shortage of skilled staff. About 42% agreed and 41% strongly agreed that there is a shortage of qualified personnel in LG offices. This suggests that many departments lack trained workers, which lowers the quality of services and slows down local development. Similarly, political interference was found to be another challenge, with 51% strongly agreeing and 34% agreeing that political influence often disrupts government work. This indicates that politics plays a major role in local decision-making, which sometimes lead to unfair practices and delays in administrative work. Further, regarding representation of women and minorities, the study found that 34% of respondents remained neutral, while 28% disagreed and 17% strongly disagreed that women and minorities are well-represented in LG. This shows that the inclusion of these groups remains weak, and that more policies are needed to ensure equality and participation.

The study also explored opportunities for improvement in local governance. A majority (54%) agreed that sufficient funding can improve government performance. Moreover, 56% of respondents agreed that training staff can enhance service delivery, with 37% strongly agreeing, showing that capacity building is considered a key solution. The findings also show that digital systems (e-governance) can reduce corruption, with 46% strongly agreeing and 32% agreeing. This suggests that technology can bring transparency and efficiency to local systems. Another strong opportunity highlighted was community participation, with 59% strongly agreeing and 32% agreeing that people's involvement can help solve local problems. This means citizens' voices can play an active role in promoting better governance. In addition, better infrastructure was seen as a major opportunity, with 62% agreeing and 28% strongly agreeing that improvements in roads, water, and electricity can boost governance and public satisfaction. Under decentralization and local autonomy, results were mixed. Around 26% were neutral, and 25% agreed that LGs have enough power to make decisions. However, 33% disagreed that decentralization has improved public services. On the other hand, 41% agreed and 38% strongly agreed that local leaders understand community needs better than central officials, which shows the importance of empowering local representatives. Similarly, 49% agreed that decentralization has made government services faster, and 35% agreed that local officials are accountable to the people they serve, indicating a moderate level of trust in local leadership.

The study also examined public services in UC Kalatuk. A majority of respondents (36%) strongly disagreed that healthcare services are satisfactory, while 29% strongly disagreed that schools and education facilities meet local needs. However, 41% agreed that garbage collection and sanitation services are effective, showing mixed performance across sectors. For agricultural development, 37% disagreed that the LG supports farmers, indicating a lack of attention toward this important sector. Moreover, 54% strongly disagreed that the government responds quickly to emergencies, highlighting poor disaster management and slow administrative response. Regarding future improvements, respondents showed a positive attitude toward reforms. Around 50% strongly agreed and 42% agreed that the government should hold regular public meetings to improve transparency. Likewise, 69% strongly agreed that corruption cases should be punished strictly, showing strong demand for accountability. The study also found that 44% strongly agreed and 42% agreed that more women should be included in decision-making. Moreover, 50% strongly agreed that local taxes should be used for community projects, and 53% strongly agreed that youth employment programs should be made a top priority to promote development and reduce unemployment.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of our study, it can be concluded that the LG in Union Council Kalatuk faces significant challenges in its operation, mainly due to limited financial capacity, corruption, lack of skilled staff,

and political interference. These issues weaken administrative efficiency, reduce transparency, and hinder development projects. Moreover, the inadequate representation of women and minorities limits inclusive decision-making in local affairs. Despite these challenges, our study also identified promising opportunities for strengthening governance. The findings showed that citizens are optimistic about improvements through better funding, staff training, and the adoption of e-governance systems. Furthermore, community participation and infrastructure development are seen as key drivers of improved service delivery. The results also suggest that decentralization, if implemented effectively, can enhance responsiveness, accountability, and trust between local authorities and citizens.

The study concludes that empowering LGs through financial autonomy, capacity building, and citizen engagement is crucial for sustainable development in UC Kalatuk. Addressing corruption, political interference, and weak representation will also improve transparency and public confidence in local institutions.

Recommendations and Suggestions

- The government should give more funds and resources to local councils so they can improve health, education, and infrastructure services.
- Corruption should be reduced through strong monitoring and the use of e-governance systems for transparency.
- Training programs should be arranged for LG workers to improve their knowledge and performance.
- Women and minority participation should be increased in LG decision-making to ensure fair representation.
- Citizens should be encouraged to take part in planning and decision-making through community meetings and awareness programs.
- The self-government system should be strengthened to allow local leaders to make decisions according to local needs.
- E-governance should be promoted to make communication fast, reduce paperwork, and improve accountability.
- Development projects should focus on improving roads, clean water, and electricity for better local development.
- Youth and farmers should be supported through employment, training, and agricultural programs.
- The LG should build a strong partnership between citizens and authorities to make governance more effective and transparent.

Additional Information and Declarations

Acknowledgements: This research article is derived from the BS thesis of Irfan Habib, University of Turbat.

Authors' Contributions: Authors declare that they have contributed equally to the manuscript.

Conflict of Interests: The authors of the manuscript declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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