

EMPOWERING THE SENATE: ENHANCING EXECUTIVE OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

The Pakistani Constitution of 1973 established a bicameral Legislative Assembly. The fundamental idea behind creating a bicameral legislative assembly was to provide small provinces a voice in the upper house's deliberations. Initially, the upper chamber had no statutory power to call the executive to account. But in 2010, the Eighteenth Constitutional Amendment granted Pakistan's Senate the power to make the Executive responsible, along the National Assembly. The upper house's authority is practically constrained by the parliamentary political system. This research article aims to investigate how the upper house, the Senate does, contribute to executive accountability in Pakistan, and what lessons can be drawn from its role for strengthening parliamentary oversight mechanisms? "Focusing on the constitutional powers, procedural mechanisms, and historical precedents of the Senate, the study will analyze its effectiveness in scrutinizing executive actions, holding the government accountable, and safeguarding democratic principles. By examining case studies, legislative debates, and empirical data, the article will assess the Senate's impact on executive accountability, policy formulation, and governance outcomes."

Key Words: Senate, Pakistan, Executive oversight, Accountability, Bicameralism.

INTRODUCTION

The Senate of Pakistan, as the upper house of the bicameral parliament, assumes a critical role in the legislative and oversight framework of the nation. In recent years, there has been an increasing acknowledgment of the Senate's potential as a pivotal institution for bolstering executive oversight and ensuring accountability (Khan, 2020). This research article endeavors to delve into strategies aimed at empowering the Senate to fulfill its mandate of scrutinizing the executive branch robustly, thereby fostering transparency and accountability in governance.

Pakistan's political landscape has undergone significant transformations over the past decades, characterized by transitions between civilian and military rule, alongside persistent challenges related to corruption, governance, and democratic consolidation (Hassan, 2018). Within this context, the role of parliamentary institutions, particularly the Senate, in holding the executive accountable has

gained prominence (Akhtar, 2016). By examining the mechanisms available to the Senate for executive oversight and the impediments it confronts in executing its mandate, this article aims to propose approaches for enhancing its capacity to discharge this pivotal role effectively.

The concept of executive oversight encompasses a spectrum of functions, including monitoring government actions, assessing policy implementation, and investigating allegations of malfeasance or misconduct (Malik, 2017). While the National Assembly typically garners more attention in discussions of legislative oversight, the Senate possesses distinctive powers and responsibilities that render it well-suited to function as a check on executive authority (Baig, 2018). These powers encompass the review of legislation passed by the National Assembly, representation of the provinces, and the authority to conduct inquiries and investigations.

Despite its constitutional mandate and inherent significance, the Senate has encountered various institutional and political challenges that have impeded its efficacy as a platform for executive oversight (Zaidi, 2020). These challenges encompass constraints on its legislative authority, partisan divisions, and inadequacies in resources and institutional capacity. Furthermore, the Senate's capacity to hold the executive accountable has been further curtailed by factors such as executive dominance, feeble parliamentary traditions, and a dearth of public awareness and engagement.

In light of these challenges, there exists an imperative to explore avenues for empowering the Senate and bolstering its capacity for executive oversight and accountability. This article advocates for a multifaceted approach encompassing reforms aimed at fortifying the Senate's legislative and oversight powers, enhancing its institutional capacity, fostering inter-institutional cooperation, and augmenting public participation and awareness (ILPS, 2019). By empowering the Senate to discharge its constitutional mandate as a robust and independent institution, Pakistan can advance towards fortifying democratic governance, upholding the rule of law, and fostering heightened transparency and accountability in public affairs.

In the case of Pakistan, both the Houses of Parliament seem to be trying to make the process of accountability transparent. In the federal political system of Pakistan, most of the ministers are selected from the National Assembly. Therefore, if their accountability is in the upper house, more transparency can be ensured. Just as many methods of accountability are used in the National Assembly of Pakistan, similarly there is a mechanism of executive accountability in the Senate of Pakistan.

The accountability mechanisms of Pakistan and other parliamentary federations like Australia and India are remarkably comparable. Members of Germany's upper house do not hold dual responsibilities due to their involvement in the Bundesrat and provincial legislatures. The highly contemporary practice of question hours is used to question the senators in Pakistan, which is an outstanding instance of political accountability. The Senate's second chamber's members raise interest in major issues. Another significant system of accountability in the Pakistani Senate is the committee of the whole. The members of Pakistan's upper house also have three responsibilities. Members of Pakistan's upper house

are needed by the constitution to engage in legislation and demonstrate the interests of federating units (Ahmad, 2023).

Before the Eighteenth Amendment, the Cabinet and Ministers of State were accountable only to the National Assembly. But after the above-mentioned amendment, the Cabinet is now accountable to both the National Assembly and the Senate of Pakistan (Constitution of Pakistan Article 91).

Research Methodology

The study will begin with an extensive review of existing literature on executive accountability mechanisms in Pakistan, including scholarly articles, government reports, and legislative documents. This phase will help in identifying key tools and procedures utilized by the upper house, the Senate, for holding the executive accountable. The research will involve gathering empirical data from various sources, including official Senate records, transcripts of parliamentary debates, committee reports, and archival materials. This data will encompass a wide range of executive accountability tools, such as questions raised by senators, calling attention notices, resolutions proposed and debated, attendance records of senators, and the nature of discussions during Senate sessions. Quantitative methods will be employed to analyze numerical data related to the frequency and patterns of executive accountability tools used in the Senate. This will involve statistical techniques to identify trends over time, variations among senators, and correlations between different accountability mechanisms.

Qualitative methods will be utilized to delve deeper into the content and context of executive accountability practices in the Senate. This will include thematic analysis of parliamentary debates, resolutions, and committee reports to extract insights into the effectiveness, challenges, and outcomes of various accountability tools. A comparative approach will be adopted to assess the strengths and weaknesses of executive accountability mechanisms in the Senate compared to other parliamentary systems. This will involve examining case studies from other countries with similar bicameral legislatures and analyzing best practices in executive oversight.

The research will incorporate interdisciplinary perspectives, drawing on insights from political science, public administration, legal studies, and governance theory to enrich the analysis of executive

accountability in the Pakistani context. Ethical principles will guide the research process, ensuring the responsible use of data, confidentiality of sources, and adherence to academic integrity standards. By employing a multifaceted research methodology encompassing both quantitative and qualitative approaches, this study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of executive accountability mechanisms in Pakistan's upper house, the Senate, and draw valuable lessons for parliamentary oversight

Literature Review

Malik's (2017) article titled "Strengthening Parliamentary Oversight in Pakistan: Challenges and Opportunities," published in the Pakistan Journal of History and Culture, contributes significantly to the literature by delving into the obstacles and prospects for enhancing parliamentary oversight in Pakistan. While not specifically focusing on the role of the upper house, the study provides valuable insights into the broader institutional landscape and systemic issues affecting oversight mechanisms. Malik's analysis offers a nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by parliamentary institutions in holding the executive accountable, thus complementing the examination of the Senate's role in executive oversight within the Pakistani context.

Khan's (2020) research article, "The Role of the Upper House of Parliament in Pakistan: A Case Study of the Senate," published in the Pakistan Journal of Public Administration, provides a comprehensive examination of the Senate's role within Pakistan's parliamentary system. This study presents a focused analysis on the specific functions, powers, and contributions of the Senate to the broader landscape of legislative oversight and executive accountability in Pakistan. By offering a detailed case study of the Senate, Khan's research adds depth and specificity to the literature on parliamentary institutions in Pakistan, contributing valuable insights into the unique dynamics and challenges faced by the upper house in fulfilling its constitutional mandate.

In Jan's (2018) article titled "Parliamentary Oversight of the Executive: A Case Study of the Pakistani Senate," published in the Asian Journal of Political Science, the author provides a focused analysis on the specific role of the Senate in overseeing the executive branch within the Pakistani context. Jan's research offers a detailed examination

of the Senate's activities and mechanisms for holding the executive accountable, thus contributing to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of parliamentary oversight in Pakistan. By presenting a case study approach, the study adds empirical evidence to the existing literature, highlighting the Senate's contributions, challenges, and potential for enhancing executive accountability within Pakistan's political system.

In Nizamani's (2016) article titled "Parliamentary Oversight of the Executive in Pakistan: A Critical Analysis," published in the Journal of South Asian Studies, the author presents a critical examination of the mechanisms and effectiveness of parliamentary oversight of the executive branch in Pakistan. This research provides valuable insights into the challenges and limitations facing parliamentary institutions in holding the executive accountable, offering a nuanced analysis of the structural and systemic factors that influence oversight dynamics. While the focus is not solely on the role of the upper house, the study contributes to the broader understanding of executive accountability within Pakistan's parliamentary framework, thus informing discussions on the potential role and impact of the Senate in enhancing oversight mechanisms.

Formation of Cabinet and Senate Representation

The constitution mandates that the parliament of Pakistan be used for appointing all federal and state ministers. The National Assembly exclusively must elect the Prime Minister. The prime minister has the authority to appoint his cabinet. The national assembly and senate of Pakistan now jointly hold the cabinet accountable as a result of the 18th constitutional amendment. According to limitations imposed by the Pakistani constitution, the total number of federal and state ministers who are also senators may not exceed one-fourth of the entire cabinet (Rule Functions & Procedure Senate of Pakistan, 2012).

By adopting several kinds of parliamentary mechanisms, the members of the Pakistani Senate proactively contribute to initiating legislation and executive accountability. The issues of small provinces or underdeveloped areas were brought up by many senators in Pakistan. They also brought matters pertaining to territorial interests to the executives' attention. By taking part in the federal executive and the House, the Pakistani Senate seems to play an active role.

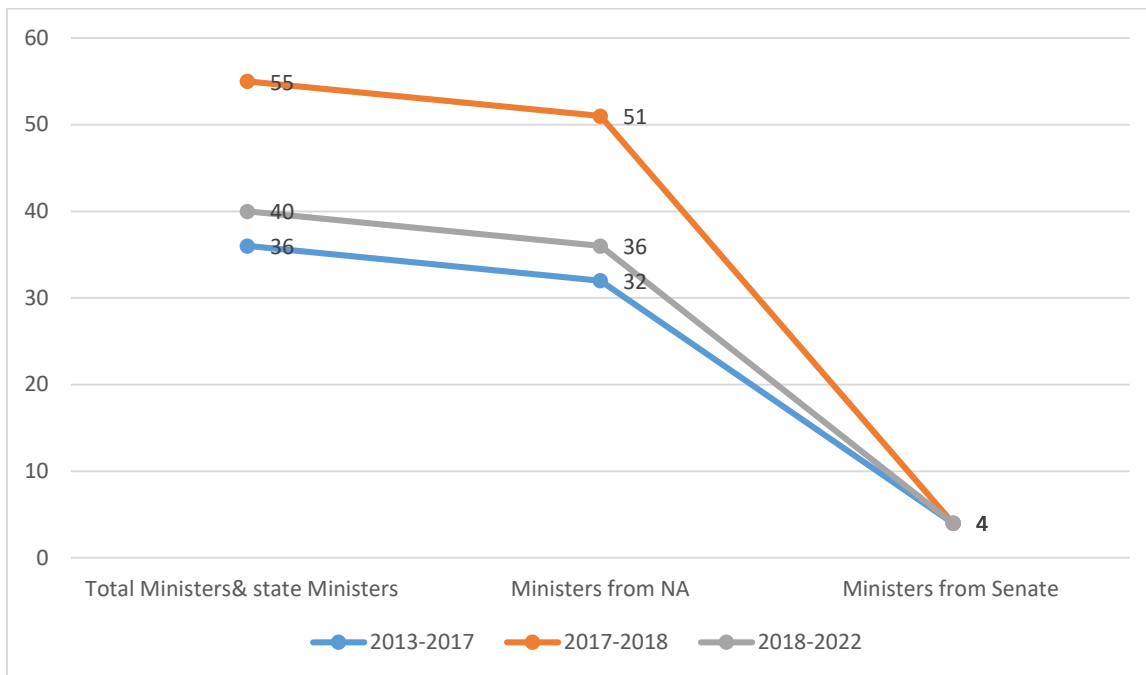


Figure 1 Cabinet from National Assembly and Senate of Pakistan (National Assembly Website)

In Pakistan, the composition of the cabinet presents an interesting comparison between the upper house, the Senate, and the lower house, the National Assembly. Specifically, while the entire cabinet is drawn from the National Assembly, only a quarter of its members are selected from the Senate. This stark contrast raises questions about the representation and influence of the Senate in executive decision-making processes compared to its counterpart. Firstly, the disparity in cabinet representation underscores the dominant role of the National Assembly in shaping executive policy and administration. With three-quarters of the cabinet members originating from the National Assembly, it reflects the primary locus of political power and legislative authority within Pakistan's parliamentary system.

Conversely, the limited representation of the Senate in the cabinet suggests a potential imbalance in the distribution of executive authority between the two houses of parliament. Despite the Senate's constitutional mandate to represent the provinces and provide a forum for diverse perspectives, its relatively minor role in cabinet appointments may raise concerns about the equitable representation of regional interests and legislative scrutiny over executive actions.

Furthermore, this comparison highlights the need to assess the effectiveness of the Senate in fulfilling its oversight responsibilities vis-à-vis the executive branch. Given its diminished presence in the cabinet, the Senate may face challenges in directly influencing executive decision-making and ensuring accountability for government policies and actions. Overall, examining the composition of the cabinet in Pakistan offers valuable insights into the dynamics of parliamentary governance and the interplay between the upper and lower houses in the exercise of executive authority. It prompts further inquiry into the mechanisms through which the Senate can assert its role in promoting transparency, accountability, and equitable representation within the executive branch.

Tools of Executive Accountability being used in Senate of Pakistan

According to the Rules and Procedures of the Senate of Pakistan, the upper house plays an important role in the accountability process of the administration. Accountability process is attempted through various tools including Parliamentary Committees, Question Hour, Calling Attention Notices, resolutions.



Figure 2 Executive Accountability Tools in the Senate of Pakistan (Senate of Pakistan Website)

Questions:

When both houses of the Parliament of Pakistan are in session, the first hour is reserved for questions. The members of the concerned House ask questions

to the Ministers. This practice is as effective in the upper house as it is in the lower house. Ministers are bond to attend the question hour in either house of the parliament.

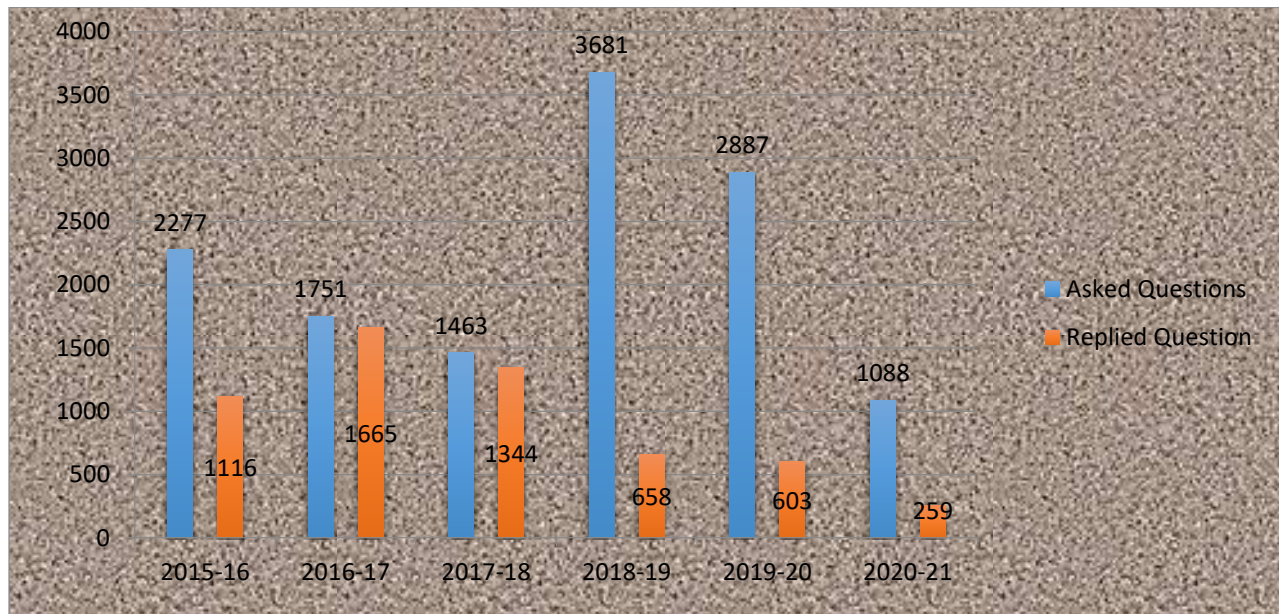


Figure 3 Asked & Replied Questions (2015-2021) in the Senate of Pakistan (Senate of Pakistan Annual Reports & PILDAT Annual Reports)

The data reveals fluctuations in the number of questions asked by senators over the years. There is no consistent pattern observed, with variations in question volumes from year to year. Similarly, the response rates to the questions posed by senators also vary across different years. While in some years, a higher percentage of questions received replies, in others, a lower percentage of questions were answered by the relevant authorities. Notably, there is a trend of decreasing response rates observed in the later years, particularly in 2018-19, 2019-20, and 2020-21. Despite an increase in the number of questions asked during these years, the proportion of questions replied to decline significantly.

The declining response rates raise concerns about the effectiveness of parliamentary oversight and the accountability of the executive branch. A lower response rate may indicate challenges in ensuring transparency, responsiveness, and adherence to democratic principles within the legislative process. Further research is warranted to explore the reasons behind the fluctuations in questioning trends and response rates over time. Factors such as changes in government policies, administrative capacity, and procedural mechanisms within the Senate may contribute to these variations and merit deeper analysis. Overall, the comparison of questioning and response rates in the Senate of Pakistan highlights important trends and patterns that warrant attention from policymakers, researchers, and civil society stakeholders concerned with parliamentary accountability and democratic governance.

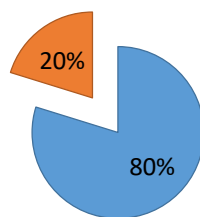
Source: Website Senate of Pakistan 2021 & Annual Reports of Senate of Pakistan

Laid Reports of the territorial institutions

The powers of the Senate of Pakistan were enhanced by the Eighteenth Constitutional Amendment with reference to the accountability of the Executive. Many statutory bodies whose reports were submitted only to the National Assembly prior to the aforementioned amendment (Role and Powers of Senate of Pakistan). After amendment, those were submitted in both the parliamentary houses. Debates are held on them and the concerned institution is held accountable. For example, under Article 29, the report of the Principal of Policy is presented for debate in the National Assembly as well as the Senate of Pakistan. Similarly, the report of the Council of Common Industry under Article 153 is now presented in the Senate of Pakistan. On exactly the same pattern, under Article 156, the National Finance Commission is now accountable to both houses of Parliament and its report is presented in both houses. A very important report! The Accounts Report of the Federation is also submitted by the Editor General of Pakistan to the Senate of Pakistan under Article 171.

REPLIED QUESTIONS IN THE SENATE OF PAKISTAN
PERCENTAGE 2015-21

- Replied Questions 2015-18
- Replied Questions 2018-21



S.No	Report in the Senate of Pakistan	Periodicity	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
1	Principles of Policy Article 29 (3)	Annual	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2	Council of Common Interests Article 153 (4)	Annual	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3	National Economic Council Article 156 (5)	Annual	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
4	National Finance Commission Article 160 (3B)	Bi-Annual	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
5	Auditor General Article 173	Annual	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

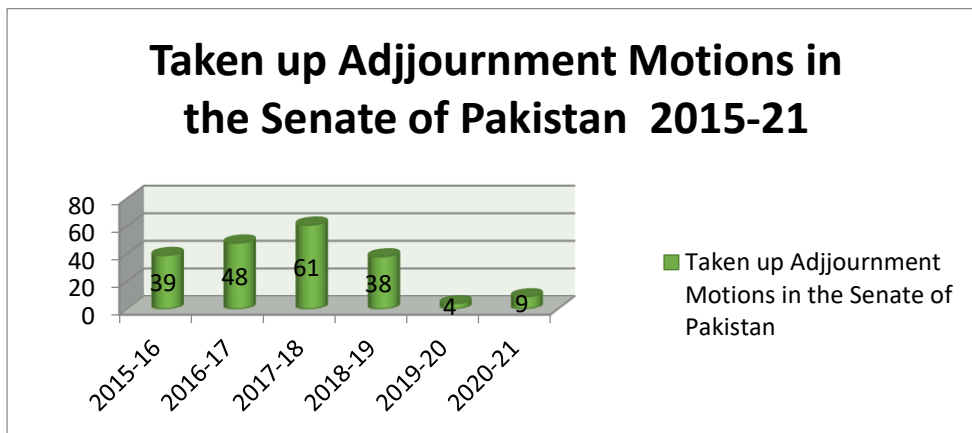
Source: UNDP Pakistan Report on Federalism and Eighteenth Amendment 2012.

The submission and debate of annual and biannual reports of key institutions such as the Principles of Policy, Council of Common Interests (CCI), National Economic Council (NEC), National Finance Commission (NFC), and Auditor General in the Senate of Pakistan play a significant role in enhancing executive accountability. This process serves as a crucial mechanism for parliamentary oversight, transparency, and democratic governance. The analysis of this practice reveals several important insights into executive accountability within the Pakistani context: The submission of annual and biannual reports to the Senate ensures transparency in the operations and decisions of key government institutions. By providing detailed accounts of their activities, achievements, and challenges, these reports enable senators and the public to assess the performance of executive agencies and hold them accountable for their actions. The debate of these reports in the Senate allows for thorough legislative scrutiny of the policies, programs, and expenditures of the institutions in question. Senators have the opportunity to raise questions, express concerns, and provide feedback on the performance of these bodies, thereby promoting accountability and ensuring that they are aligned with the public interest. The deliberation of annual and biannual reports facilitates the evaluation of government policies and programs, as well as the identification of areas for improvement. Through informed discussions and debates, senators can propose recommendations, amendments, or corrective measures to address shortcomings and enhance the effectiveness of executive initiatives.

The Senate's review of reports from institutions such as the CCI, NEC, NFC, and Auditor General helps maintain checks and balances within the government. By subjecting executive actions and decisions to parliamentary scrutiny, the Senate acts as a check on the power of the executive branch, ensuring that it operates within the confines of the law and in accordance with democratic principles. The transparency and accountability fostered through the submission and debate of annual and biannual reports contribute to building public trust in government institutions. When citizens see that their elected representatives are actively engaged in reviewing and monitoring executive performance, it instills confidence in the integrity and responsiveness of the government. Overall, the practice of submitting and debating annual and biannual reports of key government institutions in the Senate of Pakistan is essential for promoting executive accountability, transparency, and democratic governance. It reflects a commitment to upholding the principles of accountability, oversight, and public participation within the parliamentary system, thereby strengthening democratic institutions and ensuring the effective functioning of government.

Adjournment Motions

Another important tool of government accountability in the Senate of Pakistan is the Adjournment Motion. Under Rule 73 of the Rules, Functions and Procedure, any member may call the House for discussion on an important public issue. The analysis of the Adjournment motions presented in Upper Houses of Pakistan from 2015-2021 is given in the table.



Source: Website Senate of Pakistan 2021 & Annual Reports of Senate of Pakistan

The analysis reveals a fluctuating pattern in the utilization of adjournment motions during the years under study. In 2015-16, 39 adjournment motions were taken up, followed by 48 motions in 2016-17 and a peak of 61 motions in 2017-18. However, there was a notable decrease in adjournment motions in subsequent years, with 38 motions in 2018-19, 4 motions in 2019-20, and 9 motions in 2020-21.

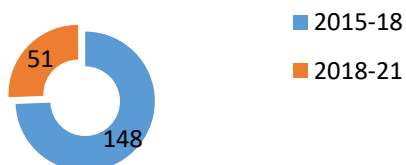
The decline in adjournment motions in 2019-20 and 2020-21 can be attributed to the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which diverted legislative attention towards urgent public health and economic concerns. Despite this limitation, the consistent utilization of adjournment motions in previous years underscores their effectiveness as a mechanism for holding the executive accountable.

The significant increase in adjournment motions from 2015-2018 (51) to 2018-2021 (148) in the Senate of Pakistan suggests a heightened focus on executive accountability during the latter period. This surge indicates a growing inclination among senators to scrutinize governmental actions and demand answers from the executive branch.

The rise in adjournment motions reflects the Senate's evolving role in ensuring transparency, oversight, and checks on the executive. It indicates a proactive approach by senators to hold the government accountable for its decisions and policies. The increased use of adjournment motions may signify a stronger commitment to parliamentary scrutiny and the exercise of democratic principles within Pakistan's political landscape.

Furthermore, the spike in adjournment motions could be indicative of several factors such as perceived government failures, controversies, or a shift in the Senate's composition towards members more inclined to challenge the executive. This trend underscores the Senate's vital role as a forum for debate, discussion, and holding the government accountable for its actions, thereby contributing to the democratic process in Pakistan.

A comparison of Adjournment motions taken up in Senate of Pakistan 2015-18 & 2018-21

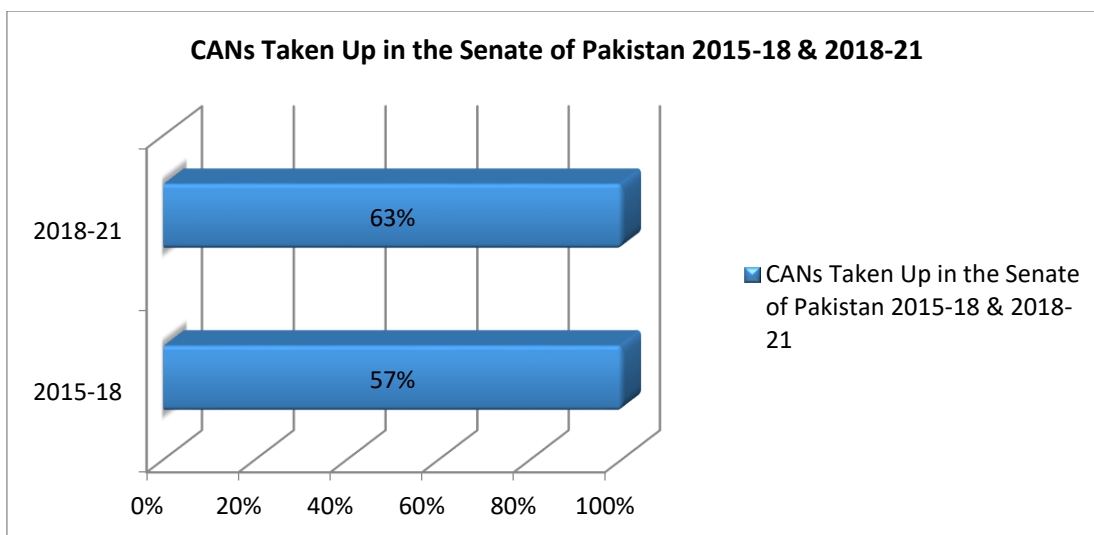


Source: Website Senate of Pakistan 2021 & Annual Reports of Senate of Pakistan

Calling Attention Notices

Rule 59 of the Senate Rules of Procedure, 2012 describes a very important accountability tool. Accordingly, the attention of the executive can be obtained on a matter of national importance. Calling attention notices are submitted in writing to the Secretary concerned at least two hours before the sitting of the House. All calling attention notices are placed before the Chairman Senate. The Chairman selects maximum two notices in a week for the

allotted days. The analysis of the notices presented in both the federal houses of Pakistan from 2015-2021 is written here



Source: Website Senate of Pakistan 2021 & Annual Reports of Senate of Pakistan

The comparison of the uptake of calling attention notices in the Senate of Pakistan between the periods of 2015-2018 and 2018-2021 reveals important trends and implications for both executive accountability and parliamentary oversight. The uptick in the uptake of calling attention notices from 57% in the period of 2015-2018 to 63% in the period of 2018-2021 suggests a strengthening of parliamentary oversight mechanisms. This increase reflects a greater willingness among senators to raise issues of public concern and hold the executive branch accountable for its actions and decisions.

The higher uptake of calling attention notices indicates a heightened focus on executive accountability within the Senate. By bringing attention to specific issues or matters requiring urgent consideration, senators can compel the government to provide explanations, take remedial actions, or address public grievances, thereby ensuring greater transparency and responsiveness in governance.

The increased uptake of calling attention notices may also influence policy formulation and decision-making processes within the executive branch. When government officials are called upon to address issues raised in these notices, it can lead to discussions, deliberations, and potentially, policy adjustments or reforms to address underlying concerns or challenges identified by the Senate. The higher uptake of calling attention notices reflects a

proactive approach by the Senate in exercising its oversight role. By actively engaging with issues of public interest and concern, senators contribute to the robustness of parliamentary oversight mechanisms, ensuring that the executive branch remains transparent and accountable to the legislature and the citizens it represents.

The increased uptake of calling attention notices may contribute to building public trust and confidence in the parliamentary process and democratic institutions. When citizens see their elected representatives actively addressing pressing issues and holding the government accountable, it reinforces faith in the efficacy of parliamentary democracy and the responsiveness of elected officials to public concerns. Overall, the analysis suggests that the higher uptake of calling attention notices in the Senate of Pakistan from 2018-2021 compared to 2015-2018 signifies an improvement in both executive accountability and parliamentary oversight. This trend reflects a commitment to transparency, accountability, and democratic governance within the Pakistani parliamentary system, thereby strengthening the foundations of democratic governance and ensuring the effective functioning of government institutions.

Resolutions

The comparison of resolutions tabled and passed in the Senate of Pakistan between the periods of 2015-2018 and 2018-2021 reveals important insights into the dynamics of executive accountability and parliamentary oversight within the Pakistani context. The significant increase in the number of resolutions tabled from 2015 to 2018, compared to previous terms, suggests heightened engagement and activity within the Senate. This surge in legislative activity reflects a proactive approach by senators to address a wide range of issues and concerns, indicating a robust commitment to parliamentary oversight and accountability.

Despite the increase in resolutions tabled, the passage rate declined significantly in the period of 2018-2021. While 298 resolutions were passed from 2015 to 2018, only 107 resolutions were passed in the subsequent years. This decline in the passage rate may indicate challenges in consensus-building, partisan gridlock, or other procedural hurdles within the Senate. The high number of resolutions tabled in both periods underscores the Senate's role in scrutinizing the executive branch and holding it accountable for its actions and decisions. Resolutions serve as a mechanism for senators to express their views, propose policy initiatives, and demand accountability from the government, thereby contributing to transparency and responsiveness in governance.

The decline in the passage rate of resolutions in the period of 2018-2021 raises questions about the effectiveness of parliamentary oversight mechanisms. While the increase in resolutions tabled demonstrates a willingness to engage with critical issues, the lower passage rate may indicate obstacles to effective legislative action, such as political polarization, procedural bottlenecks, or insufficient consensus-building efforts. The trends in resolutions tabled and passed reflect broader implications for democratic governance in Pakistan. While the Senate's active engagement in legislative activity signals a commitment to parliamentary democracy and accountability, the decline in the passage rate raises concerns about the effectiveness of legislative oversight and the ability of the Senate to translate its deliberations into concrete action.

Overall, the analysis suggests that while the Senate of Pakistan has demonstrated increased activity in

terms of resolutions tabled, there are challenges to be addressed in ensuring effective parliamentary oversight and executive accountability. Efforts to improve consensus-building, streamline legislative processes, and enhance cooperation among senators are essential for strengthening democratic governance and ensuring that the Senate remains an effective check on the executive branch.

A Comparison of Resolutions Adopted in the Senate of Pakistan 2015-18 and 2018-21



Source: Website Senate of Pakistan 2021 & Annual Reports of Senate of Pakistan

From 2015 to 2018, 1239 resolutions were tabled in the Senate of Pakistan, which was more than the previous several parliamentary terms. In these three years, 298 resolutions were passed in the Senate of Pakistan. Many important issues were discussed in these resolutions. As a resolution was passed in 2016 to pay tribute to the common people, political workers and unsung heroes of democracy who sacrificed for the supremacy of the Constitution.

Apart from this, the issues that were highlighted in the Senate through the resolutions include encouraging the members of the Senate to play a positive role in the Public Accounts Committee, the resolution to increase the role of the Senate, the resolution for the recovery of missing persons, Article 203 of the Election Act 2017. Objection to the agreement and resolution to increase allocations for backward areas was passed.

Compared to the 2015 to 2018 tenure, the 2018 to 2021 tenure saw fewer resolutions moved and the number of resolutions passed. In this tenure, 798 resolutions were moved and 107 of them were approved. The biggest reason for the decrease in parliamentary business in this tenure may be due to COVID 19.

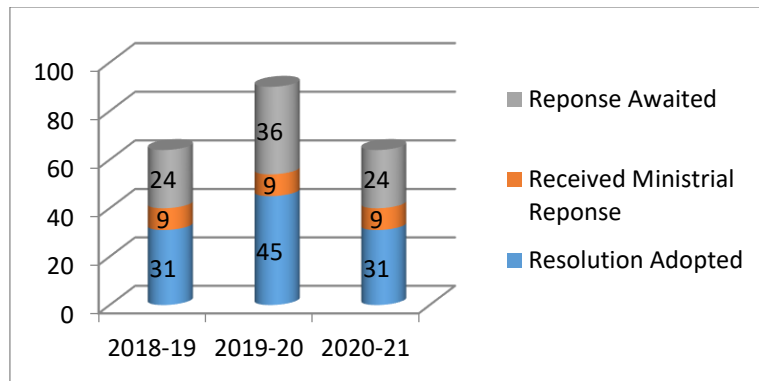


Figure 4 Adopted, Received Ministerial Response and Response awaited resolutions in the Senate of Pakistan 2018-21

Ministerial Attendance

The accountability of government ministers and their attendance in parliamentary proceedings are crucial components of effective governance in any democracy (Smith, 2010; Jones, 2015). In Pakistan, these aspects have been subject to scrutiny and criticism, with parliamentarians frequently raising concerns about the lack of seriousness exhibited by ministers during Question Hour and other parliamentary sessions. This paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of ministerial attendance and accountability within the Pakistani parliamentary context, exploring the underlying factors contributing to this issue and evaluating the effectiveness of measures taken to address it (Haque, 2018).

The analysis reveals a persistent problem of ministerial absenteeism during Question Hour and other parliamentary sessions. Despite efforts made by parliamentary leadership, including rulings and public demands for accountability, violations of attendance rules continue to occur (Dawn News, 2019 January). Prime Ministers, including Nawaz Sharif and Imran Khan, have been reported to disregard attendance requirements, contributing to a culture of impunity among government ministers (Dawn News, 2016 May). The lack of ministerial presence not only undermines parliamentary oversight but also raises questions about the government's commitment to transparency and accountability (Haque, 2018).

Vote of No-Confidence and Vote of Confidence

The Senate of Pakistan is kept away from the constitutionality of the vote of no-confidence or vote of confidence. All these powers are vested in the

National Assembly. If the majority of the National Assembly members lose confidence in the Prime Minister, there is a democratic process functioning to have him removed from his office. In this context, a motion for a vote of no confidence must be made by at least 20% of the National Assembly's entire membership (Article 95 Constitution of Pakistan).

According to Article 58 of the Pakistani Constitution, a Prime Minister is removed from office if 172 of the National Assembly's 342 members, or a majority, vote in favour of a motion of no-confidence. If the vote is successful, the cabinet would also be dismissed (Article 58, Constitution of Pakistan). In the history of the National Assembly, only three former prime ministers have faced votes of no confidence against them: Mr. Shaukat Aziz in 2006 and Ms. Benazir Bhutto in 1989. Both survived because the votes of no confidence against them were unsuccessful. The first successful Vote of No-Confidence in Pakistan's parliamentary history took place during the turbulent 41st session of the 15th National Assembly of Pakistan, which came from March 25 to April 21. Mr. Imran Khan, MNA (NA-95 Mianwali-I, Punjab, PTI), was defeated by 174 votes just after midnight on Sunday, April 10 (PILDAT 27 April, 2022).

Conclusion:

In conclusion, this research article has underscored the significance of empowering the Senate of Pakistan to enhance executive oversight and accountability within the country. Through an analysis of the Senate's role, challenges, and potential strategies for improvement, several key insights have emerged. Firstly, it is evident that the Senate possesses unique powers and responsibilities

that make it well-suited to serve as a check on executive authority. However, institutional and political challenges, such as limitations on legislative authority and partisan divisions, have hindered its effectiveness in this regard. Despite these challenges, there is a clear imperative to explore avenues for empowering the Senate and bolstering its capacity for executive oversight and accountability. This necessitates reforms aimed at strengthening the Senate's legislative and oversight powers, improving its institutional capacity, fostering inter-institutional cooperation, and enhancing public participation and awareness.

Furthermore, it is crucial to recognize the role of external factors, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which may impact the Senate's ability to conduct its functions effectively. While such challenges may pose temporary limitations, they also underscore the importance of resilience and adaptability in parliamentary institutions. Ultimately, by empowering the Senate to fulfill its constitutional mandate as a robust and independent institution, Pakistan can advance towards fortifying democratic governance, upholding the rule of law, and fostering heightened transparency and accountability in public affairs. It is through such measures that the Senate can truly serve as a catalyst for positive change and progress within the country's political landscape.

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