Civil Society Organizations And Participatory Local Governance In Pakistan: An Exploratory Study

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Civil society organizations and participatory local governance in Pakistan: An exploratory study

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Abstract

This paper analyses the extent to which the civil society organizations (CSOs) have influenced the decision-making of the local government toward the needs and priorities of citizens. In development discourse, civil society organizations hold a significant importance as they are deemed to provide holistic and new ways to ensure participatory local governance. Therefore, their role against the backdrop of their involvement in mobilizing citizens' involvement and influencing decision-making in Pakistan calls for further research. This paper aims to fill this gap. Using qualitative research methods, the current paper appraises the role of CSOs in mobilizing public involvement in the decision-making process of local government institutions of Punjab, Pakistan. The paper finds that the effectiveness of CSOs is very low due to various institutional and political constraints. Motivations for CSOs seeking citizen involvement have been instrumental in nature rather than motivated by participatory principles.

KEYWORDS

citizen participation, civil society organizations, local government, Pakistan

1 | INTRODUCTION

In the development studies literature, a discussion on citizen participation in local governance and the role of CSOs is not new. However, there is a paucity of literature that explains the new forms of engagement between citizens and the local state institutions. This involves a fundamental re-thinking about the ways in which citizens' voices are articulated and represented in the political process. A re-conceptualization of the meanings of participation and citizenship in relationship to local governance in Pakistan is explored in this paper.

Along with the State institutions, international donors and the private sector, civil society organizations (hereafter, CSOs) have played an instrumental role in promoting democratic local governance in many countries of the world. As agents of change, CSOs are actively engaged in diverse activities: policy analysis, advocacy, monitor state performance including the actions and behavior of local public officials, and build social capital and enable citizens to identify and articulate their values and civic norms. They also have played an important role as a watchdogs and advocates for democratic change.

Major democratic transitions in Asian region have emanated from pressures of civil society including in South Korea, the Philippines, and Pakistan (Cheema, 2011; Rafique, Khoo, & Idrees, 2016). Similarly, in Pakistan, CSOs have tried to play a vital role in deepening and sustaining democratic local governance and enhancing the citizen participation. Strengthening CSOs, therefore, contributes to a pluralistic, informed, participatory, and tolerant society and in turn, can also strengthen the state by increasing its accountability, responsiveness, and citizen participation.

In recent years, developing countries like Pakistan have bespoken CSOs as the most important instruments of governance for the active involvement of the public. Therefore, the question arises whether and what have been the roles CSOs in promoting citizen participation in the context of Pakistan? In cognizance of the above-mentioned issues, in this paper, we have carried out a four-dimensional analysis that includes all the stakeholders (CSOs, local government administration, political representatives, and Citizens) to answer the following research objective.

○ To evaluate the extent to which the CSOs have influenced the decision-making of the local government toward the needs and priorities of citizens.

Though Pakistan has a very long history of local government and involvement of CSOs in decision-making but since 2001, Pakistan has undergone major local reforms which espouse the expanding and strengthening of Citizen Participation and involvement of CSOs at local level. However, human development indicators of Pakistan show that economic progress did not translate into the people's well-being. In past 20 years, Pakistan's GDP growth rate even increased up to 8% but 60.19% people of Pakistan are still living below the poverty line (Kakakhel, 2014). More than 5.5 million children are out of school (UNICEF, 2013) and health facilities are obsolete. Hitherto, despite the long practice of Citizen Participation and involvement of CSOs in mobilizing citizen involvement and decision-making, the local government has failed to achieve local good governance and pro-citizen development.

To date, although there are studies that examined the effectiveness of CSOs in promoting Citizen Participation in developing countries (Cornwall & Coelho, 2007; Rafique & Khoo, 2018; Turnhout, Van Bommel, & Aarts, 2010; Turnhout & Van der Zouwen, 2010) these studies are not based on concrete evidence. Further in Pakistan's case, the literature is further scarce. Therefore, it is evident that in spite of grave concerns about Citizen Participation in local government system of Pakistan and effectiveness of CSOs, very diminutive in-depth studies have been done to investigate the role of CSOs in mobilizing public involvement and influencing the decision-making of local government. This aforementioned concern instigated the interest to find out the actual happenings on the ground and to identify the effectiveness of CSOs. Hence, this is the intellectual puzzle of the study and thus necessitates answers. To find out the answer of research objective, this study has applied qualitative research methods by selecting Gujranwala district of Punjab Province of Pakistan as its case study. An interview guide based on open-ended questions was developed based on Beierle and Konisky (1999)'s six "Social Goals" that have been employed by previous studies to evaluate the effectiveness of CSOs and Citizen Participation. The interview guide was designed based on the variables and factors derived from social goals that include achieving cost-effectiveness, reducing conflict, increasing trust in institutions, improving the substantive quality of decisions, incorporating public values into decision-making and educating and informing the citizens. Further the interview guide was also reviewed by experts. In-depth interviews, focused group discussions (FGDs) and cross group discussions (CGDs) were conducted while thematic analysis was done using NVivo software.

This paper is organized into five main sections. The section after the introduction reviews the literature and attempts to justify the conceptualization of the study. Section 3 briefly outlines the methodology, while Section 4 highlights and discusses key findings from this study. Section 5 concludes this paper by suggesting pragmatic policy implications.

2 | CONCEPTUALIZING CIVIL SOCIETY

At its core, CSOs must articulate the preferences and needs of public to influence the decisions of local administration affecting the effectiveness of local governance system. CSOs increase the voices of citizens (Fagan, Hanson, Hawkins, & Arthur, 2008; Yang & Pandey, 2011), promote equitable opportunities and service delivery (Kim & Lee, 2012). Other researcher focuses on the role of CSOs in terms of control and accountability (Ostrower & Stone, 2010; Zimmermann & Stevens, 2008) but others do not consider it necessary (Alexander, Brudney, Yang, Lu Knutsen, & Brower, 2010; Herz & Ebrahim, 2005). Civil society cannot be considered a space which is autonomous, nor a space for democracy education (Oxhorn, 2016; Sanchez Salgado, 2017). CSOs centered on social capital and stakeholders participation in a thoroughgoing way (Armstrong, Bello, Gilson, & Spini, 2011; Cheema & Popovski, 2010; Kumar et al., 2009; Nikku & Rafique, 2018). Similarly, participation mechanism promoted by CSOs helps to interlink citizens with public representatives (de Lancer Julnes & Johnson, 2011) and make CP more inclusive (Fung, 2015). But on the contrary, scholars such as Kostovicova (2010), and Puljek-Shank and Verkoren (2016) have criticized CSOs for overlooking grassroots institutions and focusing on organizations rendering services rather than fostering society–state relations. Likewise, many scholars (Kreutzer & Jacobs, 2011; Mohan & Stokke, 2000) claim that CSOs have specific agenda and self interests. These specific agendas keep them away from the actual mission which to involve citizens in the decision-making. Moreover, scholars from global south has criticized the concept of Civil society taking as an imported concept from west which is not applicable in Africa and Asia (Glasius, Lewis, & Seckinelgin, 2004; Schuurman, 2000).

Specifically in Pakistan, Abbas and Ahmed (2016), Mohmand and Cheema (2007) and Bhidal (2013) highlighted the challenges faced by CSOs include overlapping layers of accountability, the local government's resistance to service delivery reforms, vested interests in important social sectors, absence of enabling environment for social mobilization owing to security issues implementation flaws in legislation. However, in Pakistan's case, there is no specific study that has evaluated the role of CSOs in promoting participatory local governance and influencing decision-making of local government. Government of Pakistan seems quite blurred about the current roles of CSOs. At times, it appears that CSOs are service providers and their advocacy role is discouraged. While at times, they are labs of new-fangled ideas and novel innovations. Sometimes, CSOs are considered as stakeholders in policy-making process. But How CSOs are affecting the participatory local governance in Pakistan is still unknown.

2.1 | Citizen participation and CSOs

Citizen Participation is the participation of citizen in activities that are related to decision-making and implementations of policies like budgetary priorities, acceptability of development projects for orienting government programs toward the need of community, determining the level of services or service delivery, building support and encouraging the sense of cohesiveness in the society (Waheduzzaman & Alam, 2015). Yang and Pandey (2011) and Gaventa and Barrett (2012) have argued that CP in decision-making improves the efficiency of local governance. CSOs act as the catalyst to improve Citizen Participation in service delivery and influencing the decision-making of government as per the say of citizens. CSOs monitor the actions of donors and other actors in development and play the "watchdog" role on the behalf of citizens.

2.2 | Linking local governance with citizen participation

The aim of this paper is to explore CSOs' success in mobilizing citizens' involvement in local government institutions and their efficacy to promote Citizen Participation and incorporating the preferences and needs of public in decision-making of local government institutions. Therefore, it is vital to link participation with local governance to know about the success of CSOs.

The local governance system in Pakistan after 2001 is an authoritative apparatus of local development and service delivery (Zaidi, 2005). The local government in Pakistan is divided into three tiers as follows: (a) Union level, (b) Tehsil level (Sub-district level), and (c) district level (the highest tier) which have separated houses and heads. Nevertheless, the local government is the grassroot institution in Pakistan that integrates the common people into the process of development. All the local developmental projects are being handled by the local government institutions. The linkage of CSOs with the local government is presented Figure 1 below.

Pakistan's CSOs are characterized by hybrid forms, multiple inheritances, and the unresolved struggle between the practices and values of pre-capitalist society and new modes of social life, between authoritarian legacies, and democratic aspirations. But how far they are successful is still unknown. By taking the case-study of Gujranwala district in Punjab, Pakistan, we have explored the contribution of CSOs in Pakistan to promote participatory governance. As discussed in introduction section, the framework of "Social goals" (Beierle & Konisky, 1999; Beierle & Cayford, 2001; Beierle & Konisky, 1999) was used to develop interview guide. A short description of variables selected for the study is presented in Table 1 below.

The next section explains Methodology section.
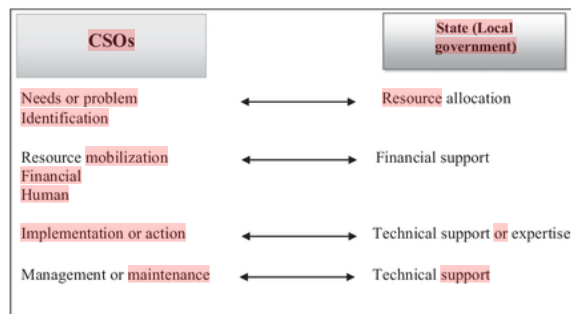
FIGURE 1 Linking CSOs and state (local government)

TABLE 1 Variables and factors selected for study

Type	Description	Variables
Social goals (Beierle, Konisky, Long, Davies, Cayford)	Deals with evaluation of the outcomes of participatory processes Outcome goes beyond normative explanation, substantive decision, conclusion, or recommendation Outcome refers to the extent to which a participatory achieved a set of "social goals"	Educating and informing the public. Incorporating public values into decision-making Improving the substantive quality of decisions Increasing trust in institutions Reducing conflict, and Achieving cost effectiveness

3 | METHODOLOGY

This paper has selected the Gujranwala district of Punjab Province of Pakistan as its case study. Gujranwala is the third most advanced district in Punjab, Pakistan. This study was concerned with the specific area, Gujranwala, a district of Punjab, Pakistan and the involvement of specific stakeholders in local government institutions. This requires in-depth analyses of the issue that is not possible using quantitative research methods. Therefore, case study approach is quite flexible in terms of the use of data collecting methods such as in-depth interviews FGDs, CGDs, and observations (Punch, 2013) which is in accordance with the flexibility of tools used. In addition, there are many justifications to select the local government of Pakistan, 0 to 1 study Citizen Participation and role of CSOs. Most of the citizens of Pakistan are the 0 direct beneficiaries of service delivery by local government. Apart from that, development programs by local governments are funded by international Non-Government Organizations and CSOs through central government. These development agencies seek to ensure Citizen Participation and inclusion of CSOs during the release of aids. In addition, Pakistan is considered as the forerunner among developing countries to implement governance programs that ensure effective Citizen Participation (Ahmed, Devarajan, Khemani, & Shah, 2005). Meanwhile, the Government of Pakistan itself has taken many initiatives to achieve the desired level of participatory governance and involvement of CSOs.

An interview guide based on open-ended questions was developed by the research team, reviewed by a panel of eight experts with experience in governance and society and then piloted with two volunteers. Nineteen face-to-face interviews with all the stakeholder, CSOs members, local government officials, and public representatives were carried out. In addition, eight FGDs from citizens of Gujranwala and three CGDs that included all the stakeholders were conducted. Five FGDs contained six participants each, three focused groups discussion contained seven participants each while the three CGDs were comprised of eight participants each. Total number of participants were 94. The interviews, FGDs and CGDs, took place between October 2016 and March 2017. The qualitative software QSR-NVivo 11 was used to manage, code, and analyze the data. Using guidelines developed by Braun and Clarke (2006), a thematic analysis was conducted to identify, analyze, and report on patterns (i.e., themes) within the interview data. As part of the analysis process, NVivo "word frequency queries" were run to identify words and word groups (e.g., stem words, synonyms) that occurred most often, as well as the relative and absolute frequency of word/word groups within the data set. Figure 2 gives an overview of the most used words.

To ensure the comprehensiveness of data in terms of data coverage, "text search queries" were used to look for (a) specific themes and subthemes; (b) words with a shared stem; and (c) words with related meanings. Via a "matrix coding query," subthemes were identified as positive, negative, and unintended.

4 | ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The thematic analysis resulted into an 871 individual most relevant coded-statements from which two primary outcome themes and four subthemes were identified. Findings are presented under two main themes that include mobilizing public involvement and influencing decision-

FIGURE 2 Word frequency queries

making. Sub themes and nodes are presented under these main themes and based on the results, discussion is generated, and conclusions are made.

4.1 | Theme A: mobilizing public involvement

The first main theme extracted from data was regarding the role of CSOs in mobilizing the citizens in the decision-making of local government. Two sub-themes, increasing public knowledge and increasing trust on local government institutions were also extracted from data. The responses were categorized into three types of expression, positive expression, negative expression, and undecided. It was found that most of the respondents are of the view that CSOs were failed in mobilizing the public involvement. Out of total sample (n = 94), 77.1% participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the CSOs effort in mobilizing public involvement, while 18.6% participants showed their satisfaction and 4.3% did not have any point of view. Quantification of qualitative data is presented in Table 2 below.

4.1.1 | Subthemes 1: increasing public knowledge

To assess the efforts of CSOs in increasing the public knowledge of local citizens regarding Citizen Participation and local good governance, different questions from stakeholders were asked on the bases of the following indicators that were also emerged into important nodes.

- Provision of information to CSOs
- Public outreach
- Public feeling of having sufficient knowledge

Wahid et al. (2017) argue that involving citizens in discussions organized by CSOs or government institutions is vital for effective governance and the accountability of the institutions providing public services. But this was found that most of the stakeholders claimed that CSOs in Gujranwala, Pakistan have failed to provide sufficient knowledge to citizens and other stakeholders. Talking about the provision of information, one of the senior local politician aged 62 from Kamonki district of Gujranwala during an in-depth interviewed said:

> I have participated in many discussion forums but the information is not adequate for us. Citizens and local government officials would agree with me that CSOs information is inadequate and have not increased their understandings regarding public participation and local good governance.
> [Interview with local Public representative, Kamonki, PR4]

Although CSOs are also instrumental in energizing the community and mobilization of stakeholders (Buccus, Hemson, Hicks, & Piper, 2008) but in Pakistan's case, the research literature shows that CSOs are being used as a tool to trap "power elite" (Kurosaki, 2005, 2006; Rathore, 2013). Other researchers such as Chaudhry (2009) finds CCBs and CACs as tools to empower "power groups and the associates." From this, it is evident that CSOs have failed to educate wider public. At their maximum, they could only inform the citizens. All the stakeholders were dissatisfied with the CSOs' success in achieving its goals. Many of the respondents were not aware of the CSOs' existence and its role. While those who knew about CSOs showed their dissatisfaction. On top of that, CSOs members also believed that they could reach only limited public and could not even provide them sufficient information to both citizens and local government institutions.

4.1.2 | Subthemes 2: increasing trust on local government institutions

The second sub theme derived was related to the role of CSOs in increasing trust on local government institutions. The main role of CSOs in a local government setting is to foster positive relations with citizens and mobilize them to get involved in local government decision-making. In this wake, if CSOs are successful for increasing the trust of public in municipality, questions from stakeholders resulted into following undermentioned nodes.

TABLE 2 Mobilizing public involvement (n = 94)

Mobilizing public involvement	Positive expression	Negative expression	Undecided
Increasing Public Knowledge	16	76	2
Increasing Trust on local government institutions	19	69	6
Average (%)	17.5 (18.6)	72.5 (77.1)	4 (4.3)

- Public confidence in the CSO's ability to influence decisions
- Public feeling in CSO's capability in serving its interest
- Degree of freedom of CSO to define issues, question experts and shape the agenda
- Allocation of sufficient resources to CSO

The findings show a distrust among all the stakeholders. Makuwira (2011) considers this relationship of CSOs–government full of "suspicion and tension." In Gujranwala, Pakistan, CSOs were not successful in serving the interests of public in local government decision-making. Apart from that, the trust of public on local government is shaken. The reason of this trust deficit can be the failure of CSOs in serving the interests of public in service delivery. Although some researchers found out that CSOs helped the citizens to be involved in government decision-making and it has also made powerful government institutions accountable (for example see, (Read, 2008; Salamon, 2004), but in Gujranwala, opposite opinions were shared by the stakeholders during in-depth interviews and FGDs. For instance, one of the citizens, also an educationist, during a cross group discussion argued,

> I don't think its [CSOs efforts] would influence local development. I know CCBs and CACs along with public representation can be very helpful to the society. That surely can bring great positive change in the development of people. But currently, I see a big gap among them.   [CGD Gujranwala region, H2]

Insofar, the perception of CSOs in increasing trust in the local government was mixed. Majority of the public showed less interest in the decision-making of local government as they have lost trust on the local government. While assessing the efforts of CSOs in restoring their trust, majority of the stakeholders pointed out that CSOs did not represent their point of view in the local government as they have their own political agenda and manipulations. On the contrary, CSOs pointed out that they have very limited freedom in shaping their own agenda, defining issues and questioning experts and local government officials. While local government officials consider CSOs as "Elite Trap" with specified political motives.

4.2 | Theme B: influencing decision-making

The second main theme derived using nVivo was the role of CSOs in influencing the decision-making of local government. The subthemes identified were the incorporation of public preferences and needs, and thereby improving the decision quality. It was found that most of the respondents are of the view that CSOs are not able to influence the decision-making of local government in district Gujranwala. Out of total sample (*n* = 94), 65% participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the CSOs effort in influencing decision-making of local government. On the contrary, 28.2% participants showed their satisfaction while 6.5% did not have any point of view. Quantification of qualitative data is presented in Table 3 below.

4.2.1 | Subthemes A: incorporating public values into decision

This sub-theme is related to informing the local government institutions about the preferences, assumptions and opinions of citizens by CSOs. CSOs members claimed that they have tried to get public opinion and convinced the local government authorities regarding the public preferences. But as per the citizens, this practice is very limited. According to local government officials, this was probably due to ill-defined procedures and mechanism to exchange information with the public. CSOs member claimed that effectiveness of CSOs is undermined by local government officials. They pointed out that their recommendations and opinions are not taken willingly by local administration. Most of the times, their opinion is heard but not considered during the implementation of the projects. This may be due to the reasons that CSOs have failed to discharge their duties. One of the managers of an NGO said,

TABLE 3 Influencing decision-making (*n* = 94)

Mobilizing public involvement	Positive expression	Negative expression	Undecided
Incorporating public values into decision	21	70	3
Improving decision quality	32	52	10
Average (%)	26.5 (28.2)	61 (64.9)	6.5 (7)

Local government administration expects the information regarding the public point of view on decision making and service delivery. But on the contrary, they discourage CSOs if we want to accommodate different preferences and interests of citizens in local government decision making.   [Interview with CSOs members, CSM7]

But on the other hand, local government officials think otherwise. They consider CSOs as the elite trap or pressure group. One of the most senior local government officer heading the local government, aged 57, argued,

Many members of CSOs try to create pressure group which supports some specific grouping and political party. Actually their main intention is to undermine the success of local government administration. Usually, they try their best to create the disturbance by leaking the information.   [Interview with Local Bureaucracy, LG department, LGO1]

Based on the discussed findings and discussions, this can be concluded that CSOs are not successful to incorporate public demands in local government decisions. They are just successful in informing local government about the demands of public but failed to empower the citizens or hold government officials accountable. It has been found that CSOs again had so many limitations. It could not define a proper procedure and process for the exchange of information, significantly with the citizens. "Word of Mouth" and "Meetings" were found non-effective. CSOs members claimed that their suggestions are heard by the local government officials but not given importance. On the contrary, local government officials claimed that CSOs misinformed the local government to fulfil their own political agenda. Secondly, there was no mechanism of making CSOs accountable to public. There is no system to provide citizens with reliable and sufficient information. The next section is comprised of the findings and discussions regarding second subtheme which is improving decision quality.

4.2.2 | Subthemes B: improving decision quality

The first indicator to assess the improvement in decision quality was the provision of important information by CSOs to local institutions to improve decision quality. As per CSOs members, they collect this kind of information from citizens and then try to influence the decision-making of local government as per the suggestions of citizens which they gather through public meetings, corner meeting, and conferences. But many CSOs members opined that local administration uses the information not to change decision-making but for manipulation. Then, it can be assumed that CSOs do not have the ability to influence the decision-making process of local government. Which is why, in an in-depth interview, both the CSOs members and local government officials showed a low level of satisfaction with each other. For instance, CSOs members pointed out that,

It is quite difficult to say that if we were able to improve the decisions as local administration never provide the conducive environment for us to influence.   [FGD Kamonke region, D3]

On the contrary, officials questioned the sincerity of CSOs members. Most of the local government officials had the perception that these CSOs are just doing routine work to fill the files. This finding is consistent with previous scholars (Kostovicova, 2010) who criticized CSOs for overlooking grassroots institutions, religious organizations, trade unions, community organizations, traditional leadership institutions, and informal networks. All the stakeholders, CSOs members, and local government officials accept this failure. This indicates that CSOs was successful to a very low and limited level to foster Citizen Participation in the decision-making of local government in Pakistan.

Thus, it can be said that among the four stages of Citizen Participation as explained earlier sections, informing, consulting, involving, and empowering, CSOs have failed to involve people in the decision-making of local government or empowering the people to take their own decisions. Thus, we can conclude that Citizen Participation and influence at decision-making is only at the informing stage and the authoritarian model of governance is still being practiced in local government of Pakistan.

5 | DISCUSSION

Citizens and local governments are increasingly coming together in new ways to participate, deliberate, and develop solutions to pressing social, economic, and community development issues. There is no doubt that the increase of CSOs in number may have a positive and noteworthy impact on participatory development, despite of criticism about corruption and in effectiveness of these CSOs. Taking the case of Gujranwala Pakistan, we argue that CSOs have failed in making meaningful impacts. The findings from this paper suggests that if CSO's are not clear about their roles and vision, do not possess right skills, funding driven and co-opted with the bureaucracy and local politics and if their work in not deep rooted in Citizens' daily realities and struggle, the role of CSOs in local governance is meager and limited to token participation.

This paper shows the evidence that CSOs are working without any clear vision and framework. It was also noted that citizens of Gujranwala, Pakistan are not ignorant either to understand the role and help could be extended by these CSOs. Citizens are always well aware of their surroundings and socio-political realities (Cleaver & Toner, 2006; Toner & Franks, 2006). From this study, it was found that CSOs in Gujranwala, Pakistan have created illusion among the citizens that they can make government accountable for their work. But in practice, they are bogged down by their own bureaucracy and institutional constraints. It was also evident that Gujranwala Pakistan's case ascertains that bureaucracy and provincial governments are not ready to empower local government institutions either to enhance the people participation in local government institutions.

There is a lack of trust among all the stakeholders evident (democratic deficit or trust deficit). In many incidents, the CSOs and local government officials blame each other and public preferences are ignored. Apart from that, it is evident from results that CSOs and elected local government (political representatives) are mostly handicapped by elite groups; further, there is political interference. The results are in line with the findings of many scholars; for instance, Fagan et al. (2008) theoretically evaluated the hypothesis that local government has better information, but less accountability and is thus more prone to elite capture.

Apart from the elite capture of resources, this study found out that failure of CSOs in Gujranwala, Pakistan is due to its ambiguous and abstruse nature. Alike other buzzwords in development discourse (Schuurman, 2000), Civil Society has become a malleable concept that can easily be coopted to fulfil specific political interests.

The concept of CSOs in Gujranwala local government setting is contested and local citizens have not espoused CCBs and NGOs. There have been several debates over whether the concept of civil society are applicable outside Europe, though neither Europe nor Asia are homogenous entities (Bruun & Jacobsen, 2000). Civil society is usually considered as lynchpin to institutional development that ensures prosperity and development (Putnam, 2002), but no more so in the context of the Gujranwala, Pakistan. The evidence came out in this objective clearly shows that Pakistan has not endured the transition of CSOs toward autonomous body.

The findings outline that Pakistani CSOs have not contributed in building the positive relationship among the stakeholders in local government settings. Therefore, this objective may contribute to the debate of universal applicability of western civil society model (also mentioned by (Glasius et al., 2004). CSO's contribution to activate the Citizen participation and their empowerment is quite minimal. Thus, civil society in Gujranwala, Pakistan cannot be considered either an autonomous body or a school of democratic education (also see, (Chandhoke, 2007; Edele, 2005; Oxhorn, 2016; Sanchez Salgado, 2017).

The purpose of this paper is not to undermine the concept of CSOs in Pakistan and agrees with Obiro (2006) who opines that CSOs cannot change the world all alone and their contributions are noteworthy. The available research literature on civil society is quite voluminous and cover all the major arguments based on stakeholders participation and social capital in a thoroughgoing way (See, for example, (Armstrong et al., 2011; Cheema & Popovski, 2010; Kohler-Koch, 2010; Kumar et al., 2009; Pearce, 2002). Among all the researchers, the most valued Putnam's (2002, 2000, 1993) work has discussed that how civil society can impact positively on social capital and may lead toward greater connectedness and trust in specific societies. Moreover, it also helps developing networks and universal norms. But the findings of this study show that civil society specifically CACs, CCBs, and CBOs only represent the interest of high-income group of the society and powerful classes. So, apart from the conceptual problems, another question arises about the operational challenges for CSOs in Pakistan.

In development discourse, civil society is considered as the substitute to unresponsive and inefficient government institutions or also as the main resistance site against market forces and the government (Mohan & Stokke, 2000). But in Gujranwala, Pakistan case, it has failed both in educating the citizen and influencing the local government and development.

6 | CONCLUSION

The in effective role of CSOs in Gujranwala local government settings ascertained that Pakistan is still at a nascent juncture, and needs a certain level of political maturity to provide a autonomous working space for CSOs. At the same time, there is no denying the fact that CSOs specifically CACs, CSOs, and CCBs have close contact with people, as they work at community level. Kreutzer and Jacobs (2011) points out that effective governance structures are crucial to the viability of CSOs. Perhaps the lack of effective governing structures in Pakistan could also be contributing factor for the ineffective CSOs role in local governance. Others scholars have emphasized that the ways in which CSOs' governance themselves also matters as a model for more effectiveness (Ostrower, 2008). Other researchers have focused on the role of CSOs in terms of control and accountability (Ostrower & Stone, 2010; Zimmermann & Stevens, 2008). Some authors deny that more instrumental accountability is necessarily better (Herz & Ebrahim, 2005). They focus on the values shared by the volunteers in a community and point out the importance of expressive accountability (Alexander et al., 2010). Few other scholars emphasized political issues (Christensen & Lægreid, 2007), public interest (Stone & Ostrower, 2007), and democratic governance (Bevir, 2017) as salient features of local governance.

This study of the view that the politics and struggle of common working class people of Pakistan will actually be decisive against the imperialism, authoritative democracy, and current form of government rather than this CSOs politics (also see, (Ocakli, 2016). Because, amid the clamor and debates about CSOs in "global south" including Pakistan, there is a deathly silence in literature about whether a functional civil

[1] society in fact even exists. In this light, debates about the pros and cons of (an existing) civil society in contemporary Pakistan (and other post-colonial societies) may be displaced or of less significance than initially thought.

Taking the current scenario of CSOs in Gujranwala, Pakistan, it can be argued that developing a vibrant local civil society in Pakistan would be complex and fraught with challenges. This is partly because CSOs, whether local or national, is at best an imperfect arena racked with contradictions. As by-products of the society, the same tensions and disagreements prevalent in the wider society also afflicts local civil society. As illustrated in this study, therefore, it can be concluded that even a strong and vibrant local civil society is not the panacea to the Pakistan's current development challenges.

In absence or ineffective CSOs, Social Workers and other policy activists have to refocus their strategies on strengthening robust CSOs in one hand and building both a more active and engaged citizenry and a vibrant, responsive and effective state that can deliver needed public services with the involvement of citizens in decision-making. A concerted people-centered effort involving an enlightened donor sector, willing government, and a selfless and pragmatic civil society are what it will take to bring about meaningful and sustainable change in Pakistan's intractable local governance environment.

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