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Abstract: *Bureaucracy, as an administrative backbone, plays a significant role in shaping quality educational governance. The present study examines the intricate relationships among bureaucracy, politics, and educational governance within administrative systems. This study investigates the influence of bureaucracy on educational governance while also scrutinizing the potential mediating role of politics. The research is broadly categorized into three key variables. The data are gathered from retired employees who belong to different government institutes. The sample size used for this study was 189 respondents retired from different organizations across Pakistan, and a convenient sampling method was used. Through rigorous statistical analysis, the results demonstrate a substantial positive correlation between bureaucracy and educational governance. This reveals a noteworthy negative correlation between bureaucracy and politics. A comprehensive mediation analysis further revealed a significant indirect effect of bureaucracy on educational governance, mediated by politics. These findings underscore the paramount significance of efficient administrative mechanisms coupled with well-balanced political involvement for achieving optimal educational governance outcomes. By delving into the complex interplay among bureaucracy, politics, and educational governance, this study offers crucial insights that can inform effective policy-making and administration strategies.*

Introduction

In general, the bureaucracy is attributed to highly negative aspects of organizations, such as actions based on obscured standards, wavering in operations, unnecessary requirements for documentation, and endless complications in full filing the customers' demands (Godoi et al., 2018). When "good" is being practiced to qualify for educational governance, it has developed into a trendy terminology. Although the idea remains persistently difficult to define, these attempts have led to various definitions for many researchers (Hufty, 2009). In Pakistan, the bureaucracy has played a leading role in stimulating

political stability and economic development and has earned laudatory acknowledgments for its role (Braibanti, 1966; Huntington, 2006; Vorys, 2015). Civil organizations and bureaucratic figures were anticipated to offer stability, command, guidance and leadership. Pakistani Bureaucracy again proved its value and met expectations (Shafqat, 1999). In the late 1960s, there were strong movements, popular agitation and protests against the controlling, tyrant and oppressive nature of the government, and some opposition parties and sections of print media tried to depict the bureaucracy as a tool of domination. This representation strongly influenced public perception. Bureaucrats were seen as hostile to their welfare. Bureaucrats were seen as being inimical to their welfares. During the mid-1970s, the World Bank and intellectual community, in accordance with their own understanding and objectives, started to reevaluate and reconsider the function of bureaucracy (LaPorte, 1975; O'donnell, 1978). In the early 1980s, World Bank research started pitching accusations on bureaucracy's aptitude to enhance development and order in Third World Countries. Fraud, enormous corruption, incompetency, lack of accountability, and confrontation with change were depicted as the indications of bureaucracy (World Bank, 1983–1993). Bhutto tried to hold the Bureaucracy, but their control of the government remained robust. In the early period, Bhutto's government bureaucracy was weak, but in the later half, Bhutto's kangaroo bureaucracy became a sturdier and crucial factor in his government. The redesigned bureaucracy was now used to impose a controlling nature, particularly in the form of police suppression. (Yusuf, 1980). A few of Bhutto's trusted bureaucrats held major power control; however, he made the majority of his decisions by himself (Hussain, 2015). When one observes the bureaucracy in developing nations, the outcomes are diverse and mixed. In many countries of South Asia, the power and societal elite position of bureaucracy is still renowned despite the deterioration of control and politicization. Its foremost disappointment is in its failure to endorse prosperity, progress, and impartiality and offer justice to the general public (Baqai, 2008). The interface between politicians and bureaucrats is a significant and ongoing difficulty in the context of educational governance and public administration. This interaction has a significant influence on the integrity and coherence of government operations. The continual rivalry between elected politicians and appointed bureaucrats goes beyond theoretical difficulties and creates noticeable impediments that have a significant impact on the formulation of public policy, the implementation of public services, and the delivery of public services. The connection between these two main groups in Pakistan is both complicated and complex and it has a substantial influence on the results of policy decisions as well as the general structure of government. The resolution of this paradox is necessary for establishing solutions for educational governance that are not only effective but also sustainable. It is common for this kind of interference to make the system less effective, which leads to inefficiency and inconsistent policy execution (Wright, 2011). The main topic of the study is the ongoing conflict between Pakistani officials and bureaucrats, which leads to problems with the government, such as inefficiency, policy paralysis, and a lack of responsibility. These two groups disagree, as they have distinct responsibilities and duties, aims, and priorities. Bureaucrats are more concerned with long-term administrative efficiency, following laws and regulations and keeping the government operating and, to their opposite, politicians coming in power by winning elections; thus, they focus on short-term political gains and addressing public needs, but when these aims conflict with one another, coordination and agreement might fail, making the government far less effective. Many people believe that bureaucracy is an important and essential aspect of modern government. It ensures that public policies are consistently administered, implemented, regulated, and guided. In Pakistan, similar to many other regions around the globe, bureaucracy plays a crucial role in the government's management system. It ensures that the government should keep running and that people can obtain

the services they need (Hood, 1991; Ferlie et al., 2005). In contrast, the political environment in which bureaucracy works often makes its job difficult. There is a lot of political interference, which shows up in things such as the regular transfers of officials, appointments that are influenced by politics, and the uses of bureaucratic tools for political ends. Pakistan's political belief has a considerable influence on the way the bureaucracy functions, which contributes to the conflicts that exist between politicians and bureaucrats throughout the state. As a result of the widespread practice of political patronage and the politicization of bureaucratic appointment, the bureaucracy is frequently more vulnerable to political leaders than it is to the enhancement of the public interest. The current body of research or study focuses mainly on industrialized countries, with little consideration given to the specific challenges that bureaucracies in developing countries need to address. Research by Besley & Persson, (2009) provides important insights into how bureaucracies function in industrialized settings; however, these studies fail to address the specific challenges that bureaucracies encounter in developing countries. Developing countries or nations such as Pakistan struggle with several challenging situations that affect government performance: political instability, patronage systems, and frequent bureaucratic change. The lack of research or studies on this topic restricts our knowledge of how these elements influence the operations of bureaucratic organizations and the outcomes of educational governance under certain conditions. Few studies have investigated how bureaucracy shapes government in South Asian nations or countries. Although some studies on bureaucratic systems in surrounding countries such as India, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan have been conducted, comprehensive comparative studies examining how bureaucrats serving these governments interact with politics and influence educational governance are lacking. Such a comparative study is absolutely necessary to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the regional dynamics and to identify the most effective techniques that might be utilized to enhance educational governance in Pakistan. To overcome the gaps in the literature, this study aims to empirically analyze how political considerations influence the impact of bureaucracy on educational governance in Pakistan.

Literature Review

Bureaucracy as a Backbone of Educational Governance

Bureaucracy is regarded as a crucial part of the administrative system of today since it offers both a mechanical framework and a purposeful framework for the implementation of government policies. It is typified by formal regulations, hierarchical structure, the division of roles and competency-based hiring, all of which help make management efficient and consistent. Bureaucracy also promotes the steadiness of the educational governance system, as it establishes the stability of administrative practice irrespective of any political transition. Thus, a successful bureaucracy is needed to fulfill the policy objectives and encourage the efficient operation of government entities (Burns & Stalker, 1994; Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). Bureaucracy plays a significant role, especially when its role in educational governance is considered. Educational governance is the form through which power is used and the administration of people is achieved to accomplish collective goals. It highlights values such as accountability, transparency and efficiency in government administration. Bureaucracy is the main force with which educational governance is exercised because policies are bound to be implemented, resources are managed, and services are reduced through it. Thus, bureaucracy is the key to good educational governance (Pollitt, 2014; Asad uz zaman & Virtanen, 2022). Many studies indicate that bureaucracy is directly related to management. Efficient bureaucracies can be useful in enhancing good educational governance results, as they guarantee that policies are implemented on time, ensuring that there is administrative discipline and that stability is achieved within an organization. On the other

hand, ineffective or poor bureaucracy may cause delays in policy implementation, wasted resources and loss of confidence among citizens in government institutions. This highlights the role of the quality of bureaucracy in the effectiveness of educational governance (Kooiman, 2003; World Bank, 1992; UNDP, 1997).

H₁: Bureaucracy is a predictor of educational governance.

The Mediating Role of Politics in the relationship between Bureaucracy and Educational Governance

The connotation between management and bureaucrats, however, does not exist in isolation and is strongly affected by political grounds. Politics is an important factor in the development of administrative systems and decision-making. Political leaders play a role in policy agenda setting, and bureaucrats play a role in the implementation of this policy. This interdependence results in the need to professionally direct the two actors so that they can achieve successful management (O'Connor et al., 2021; Jalonen, 2025). The politics of bureaucracy may be either positive or negative. Conversely, political leadership is required to streamline the administrative functions to be geared toward national priorities and democratic values. On the other hand, too much political interference can damage the bureaucracy in terms of self-sufficiency and proficiency. Politically related appointments, transfers, and coercion of administrative decisions are some of the practices that may decrease the performance of bureaucracies and hinder effective educational governance (Pierre, 1995; Peters, 2018; Aslam, Zahra, et al., 2023). This declaration highlights the mediating aspect of politics in the correlation between bureaucrats and managers. Politics may dictate the results of bureaucracies and how effective they are in producing results of educational governance. In cases where political leaders approve of administrative independence and professionalism, the bureaucracy is more prone to perform and influence in a positive way in educational governance. On the other hand, too much political influence may lead to a decline in the efficiency of the bureaucracy and a detrimental influence on the educational governance process (Brierley et al., 2023; Tavares et al., 2025).

H₂: Politics mediates the relationship between bureaucracy and educational governance.

Challenges in Pakistan

The Pakistani context is especially critical in terms of the interface of bureaucracy, politics and educational governance. Bureaucracy has been the center stage of regulatory government operations and pushing policies into effect. Nevertheless, its operations are frequently subject to political forces, which impact its ability to perform independently and efficiently. Unstable politics and changes in government also complicate these relations, which results in contradictions in policy enforcement and administrative operations (Handelman, 1981; Egeberg, 2012; Petkova, 2015). The political influence of bureaucracy in Pakistan is commonly debated as the greatest challenge of good governance. The constant movement of civil servants, the absence of appointment through merit, and political pressure may derail organizational procedures and lower institutional efficiency. Such aspects undermine the beneficial role of bureaucracy in governing the state and introduce obstacles to the successful adoption of policies (Aslam, et al., 2023).

Enabling Role of Politics in Collaborative Educational Governance

Although these problems exist, the literature equally indicates that a mutual and accommodating relationship between political leaders and bureaucracies can also enhance educational governance results. Bureaucracies can be better able to fulfill their roles when political players consider the boundaries of the administration and society in general and have a sympathetic stance toward the autonomy of the organization. This means that politics not only plays an obligatory role in the relationship between bureaucracy and management but is also an implementer (Nyadera & Islam, 2022;

Mumtaz & Nakray, 2025; Noer, 2025). On the basis of the above, it is possible to state that the influence of the bureaucracy on management is substantial and that the decisive element of this relationship is played by politics. The power of the bureaucracy is not the only factor that regulates successful educational governance but the quality of political participation. Thus, taking into account the close correlation of bureaucracy and educational governance, as well as the mediating effect of politics, we will be able to better understand the processes of educational governance, predominantly in the Pakistani context.

Methodology

The present research utilized a quantitative cross-sectional research design to examine the impact of bureaucracy on educational governance through the mediating role of politics. A quantitative method was considered appropriate because it helps in the collection of numerical data, objective measurement and relationships among the constructs (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The population of study was retired government employees, a group with expertise and knowledge important for testing hypotheses. The study uses a nonprobability sampling technique for purposive sampling. The sampling strategy was considered appropriate because it suited the conditions in which the characteristics of the total population were unknown. The general norms and criteria that are applied in social science research to carry out surveys and statistical analyses were utilized to calculate the proper size of the sample for this study. This was done to ensure that the sample size was appropriate. Thus, the size of the sample was established. Even though convenience sampling was used, a sample size was chosen to ensure that the examination or research would have enough evidence to establish important and significant interactions among the variables that are the primary focus of the investigation or research. This was done to guarantee that the examination or research would be successful. A total sample of 189 participants was utilized, as displayed in Table 1. The sample consisted of 110 males (58.2%) and 79 females (41.8%).

Table 1: Gender distribution of the sample

Gender	F(n)	%
Male	110	58.2%
Female	79	41.8%
Total	189	100%

Data collection for this study was performed using a thorough questionnaire designed to investigate several aspects of bureaucracy, politics, and educational governance (Rahman, 2015), which functions as a disciplined and deliberate tool for gathering insightful comments and answers from the study participants. The appendix includes the entire questionnaire used in this research. These questionnaires were distributed directly and emailed electronically. This decision to use direct distribution methods was prompted by the fact that these approaches are effective in reaching the population of retired government workers that is the target audience. The participants responded to items on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). To measure the internal consistency of the instrument, Cronbach's alpha was used. A value below .70 is considered unreliable, whereas a value above .70 is considered reliable. The data in Table 2 show that the Cronbach's alpha values for all the constructs were well above 0.70.

Table 2: Reliability Analysis

Constructs	No. of items	Alpha value
Bureaucracy	10	.882
Educational governance	10	.861
Politics	10	.880

Results

A Pearson correlation analysis was used to determine the correlation coefficient (r) between Bureaucracy, educational governance and politics. The correlation value of 0.732 between bureaucracy and educational governance suggests a strong positive relationship. This means that as the level of bureaucracy increases, educational governance tends to increase. Similarly, as the level of bureaucracy decreases, educational governance is likely to decrease as well. The positive or optimistic correlation coefficient of 0.732 indicates a relatively resilient and clear and direct relationship among these two variables of study. The correlation value of -0.417 between bureaucracy and politics indicates a very moderate negative relationship. This also implies that as the level of bureaucracy increases, there is a tendency for politics to decrease and vice versa. The negative correlation coefficient of -0.417 suggests that there is an inverse link or relationship between bureaucracy and politics, albeit not as strong and significant as the positive relationship observed between bureaucracy and educational governance. The correlation value, which is -0.568 amid educational governance and politics, indicates a moderate negative relationship as well. This means that as the level of educational governance increases, there is also a tendency for politics to decrease and vice versa. The negative correlation coefficient of -0.568 suggests that educational governance and politics are inversely interconnected, with a moderate strength of association.

Table 3: Correlation Analysis

	Bureaucracy	Educational governance	Politics
Bureaucracy	1		
Educational governance	.732	1	
Politics	-.417	-.568	1

Hypothesis Testing

As shown in Table 4, a structural model was constructed to test the proposed hypotheses regarding the impact of bureaucracy on educational governance through the mediating role of politics.

Table 4: Results of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	β	t value	p value	Decision
Bureaucracy → Educational governance	0.732	14.70	<0.05	Supported
Bureaucracy → Politics → Educational governance	0.133	4.314	<0.05	Supported

The first hypothesis examined the direct relationship between bureaucracy and educational governance. The results revealed a significant and positive effect ($\beta=0.732$, $t=14.701$, $p<0.05$). These results indicated a strong and substantial positive impact of bureaucracy on educational governance. This suggests that a one standard deviation increase in bureaucracy is associated with a 0.732 standard deviation increase in educational governance. The strong magnitude of this effect underscores the centrality of bureaucratic institutions in the educational governance framework.

The second hypothesis tested the mediating role of politics in the relationship between bureaucracy and educational governance. The indirect effect was statistically significant ($\beta=0.133$, $t=4.314$, $p<0.05$). The results indicate that bureaucracy not only directly influences educational governance but also indirectly influences educational governance through politics, suggesting that bureaucratic structures and operations shape the political landscape, which influences educational governance outcomes. Although the indirect effect was smaller in magnitude than the direct effect was, it was nonetheless statistically

significant. Given that both direct effects ($\beta=0.732$) and indirect effects ($\beta=0.133$) are statistically significant, the mediation can be classified as partial mediation.

Discussion

H1: Bureaucracy is a predictor of educational governance.

This study looks into the complex relationships between bureaucracy, politics, and educational governance, which have attracted the attention of many researchers in the field of political science and public administration for quite some time. The research or study hypotheses were designed with great care to explore these relationships and possible mediating effects, helping to gain a better understanding of how these elements work together in administrative systems. The analysis of the findings highlights the connections between these concepts and provides important insights for policy-making and administration, but recognizing the study's limitations is important. This study reveals a strong connection between bureaucracy and educational governance, highlighting how they depend on each other in administrative systems. This relationship connects to Weber's theory of bureaucracy, which suggests that having a rational-legal authority in bureaucratic systems is essential for achieving efficient and effective educational governance (Weber, 2009). Statistical analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between bureaucracy and educational governance ($r = .732$, $p < .01$), which supports the findings of earlier studies concerning the important role of a well-functioning bureaucracy in achieving good educational governance outcomes (Kaufmann et al., 2011; Fukuyama, 2013). The total significant effect of bureaucracy on educational governance is (Effect = .7187, $p < .001$). Highlight how crucial a strong bureaucratic structure is for promoting positive educational governance outcomes. These results align with what Cheema et al., (2006) reported, suggesting that how well educational governance works relies on how efficient bureaucratic systems are. This study shows that improving bureaucracy leads to better educational governance outcomes, indicating that being efficient in administration is important for good educational governance. This is important for policy-making, especially in places such as Pakistan, where bureaucratic inefficiencies are often achieved through good educational governance (Niaz, 2010).

H2: Politics mediates the relationship between bureaucracy and educational governance.

This paper also explores the complex functions of politics as a possible mediator between educational governance and bureaucracy. The negative correlation between bureaucracy and politics ($r = -.417$, $p = .01$) emphasize the dynamic interaction whereby higher bureaucracy might decrease political impact and vice versa. These results are consistent with those of previous studies that proposed that political intervention sometimes prevents bureaucratic processes from performing as they should, subsequently compromising government structures (Zafarullah & Kaiser, 2025). A mediation study revealed a noteworthy indirect influence of bureaucracy on educational governance via politics (Effect = .1302, $p = .001$). This revelation is important because it emphasizes the complicated junction of politics and bureaucracy in determining paths of influence for government. Although bureaucracy directly affects government, the mediating function of politics adds a complex layer that may either improve or reduce the results of educational governance depending on how political power is used. This finding corresponds with the results of Shafiqat, (1999), who reported how political influence reduces bureaucratic efficiency in Pakistan and therefore progresses less than ideal government does. This research has important ramifications for administrative procedures and policymaking. The favorable link between bureaucracy and educational governance highlights the need for simplified administrative structures to support good educational governance. Moreover, the mediating influence of politics emphasizes the need to understand and control the interaction between political dynamics and

administrative effectiveness. These results imply that the best educational governance results depend on a harmonious balance between administrative systems and political participation. This realization fits the theoretical paradigm of good educational governance, which supports open, responsible, efficient institutions free from too much political intervention (World Bank, 1992). In Pakistan, political unrest and bureaucratic centralization sometimes aggravate educational governance challenges, and one study indicated that reforms meant increasing bureaucratic independence while guaranteeing responsibility that could greatly enhance educational governance outcomes (Altaf & Shabir, 2023). Considering political nuances, policymakers can use these findings to improve administrative systems. Achieving durable educational governance changes that require this double concentration to enhance the bureaucracy and reduce negative political effects.

Future Directions

Interesting future studies on comparable relationships between the bureaucracy and politics and educational governance in many emerging nations or countries might be conducted. Comparative studies between Pakistan and neighboring countries, such as Iran and Bangladesh, and India or other locations with comparable political systems would provide a more in-depth view. With respect to different political regimes, longitudinal research might investigate how the relationships among bureaucracy, politics, and educational governance can change over time. This would offer a better understanding of how long-term educational governance has been impacted by political reforms and changes in government or bureaucratic restructuring. Scholars could investigate whether other factors, such as institutional capability, public pressure, or corporate culture, mediate or moderate the link between bureaucracy and educational governance. Considering these elements could enable one to see the bureaucratic and governmental dynamics from an expanded perspective. Although this study emphasized retired government officials, future studies could focus on current bureaucrats who are directly involved in modern political and bureaucratic dynamics. This would provide real-time information on how present political circumstances influence administrative decision-making and the results of government.

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