SUPERIOR UNIVERSITY

CARBS POLICY LAB

From Dialogue to Action: Advancing Evidence-Based Policy, Governance, and Institutional Resilience in Pakistan

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Evidence-Based Policy for a Resilient Pakistan convened policymakers, scholars, researchers, and practitioners to address governance, education, economic, and social challenges through collaborative dialogue.
- The session emphasized evidence-based policymaking, institutional strengthening, accountability, inclusive governance, education reform, digital transformation, and sustainable development.
- Discussions focused on bridging the research–policy gap and promoting practical, data-driven, long-term solutions for Pakistan's socio-economic resilience and sustainable progress.

Introduction

Persistent challenges of governance and policy implementation exist in Pakistan that adversely affect the country's sustainable economic growth through a lack of institutional trust and effectiveness. Multiple policy initiatives are frequently developed in various sectors; however, the implementation of various policies suffers from weak mechanisms, insufficient levels of accountability, inefficient regulatory regimes, and fragmented institutions; therefore, the potential long-term impacts of these policy initiatives are compromised (World Bank, 2023). Policies should not simply be viewed as written documents, but rather that they represent practical and functional frameworks that are capable of influencing business environments, investment climates, and social/economic development. One of the most significant governance challenges in Pakistan is not only the lack of policies but rather the large number of gaps that exist between the intent of a policy and the actual implementation of the same policy.

In addition, there is a need for time to emphasize how important entrepreneurship, digital transformation, and industrial policy will be to the continued development of nations. Referenced South Korea in particular and how the global success is due to having a consistent industrial policy and an institutional framework that supports innovation-based governance, thereby driving long-term economic success. In the same way, the literature on developmental states illustrates that successful economic modernization and competitiveness depend on the presence of strategic industrial policy and institutional coordination (Evans, 1995). Although Pakistan has started local manufacturing initiatives, particularly in mobile device production and the establishment of emerging local brands, substantial barriers remain to developing these initiatives (e.g., policy stability, infrastructure, and technology).

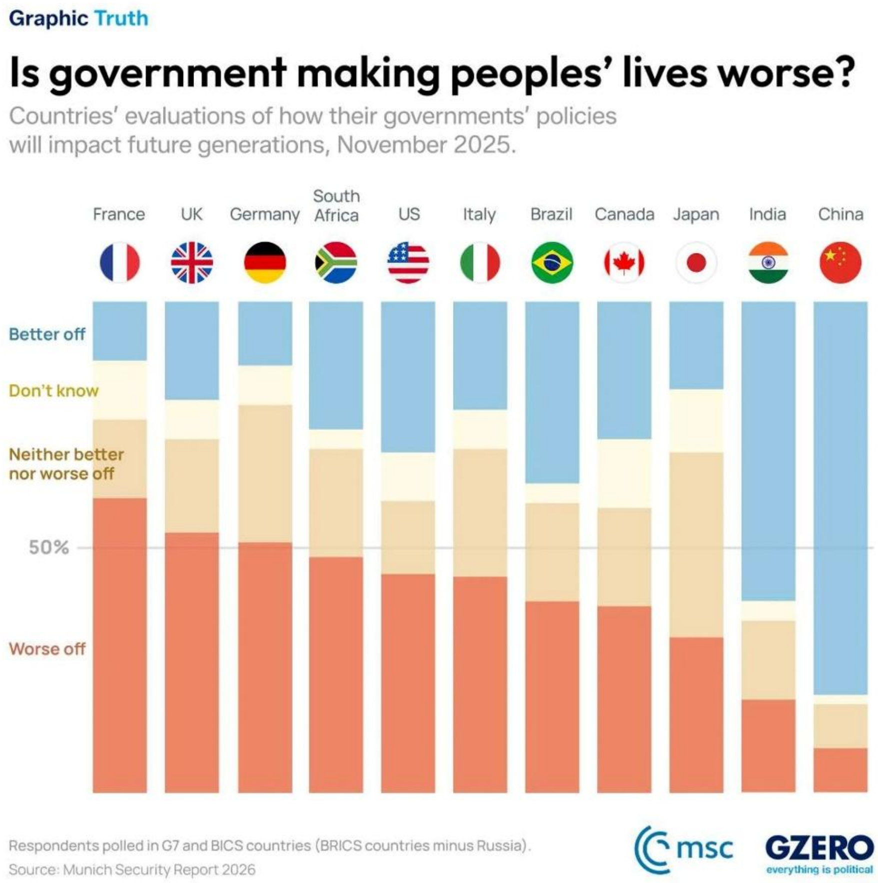
The role of educational institutions, digital skills, and human capital development in building resilience at the national level is also highlighted. For example, Lahore University of Management Sciences was recognised as a modern, digital-focused academic institution contributing to innovation and knowledge development. Nonetheless, concerns were raised about young professionals' work habits, communication abilities, and commitment to their profession. The current youth display a high level of creativity and the capacity to think outside traditional limits. They are confident in their ability to interact with today's digital technologies, allowing them to adjust and adapt rapidly to new and emerging platforms. Their entrepreneurial approach allows them to look for problems they can help resolve, while also creating value with their solutions. Through innovative thinking, youth are helping generate new ideas, products, and solutions across all markets / industries. Taking advantage of these traits, today's youth will continue to play a key role in establishing a more vibrant, connected, and forward-thinking future. The literature surrounding human capital theory suggests that although technical knowledge alone is critical for driving economic productivity, soft skills, innovation capacity, and the ability of institutions to learn also play a critical role in this process (Becker, 1993).

The Governance Perspective and Ideal of Governance as an Institution have great relevance, highlighting the need for transparency, accountability, and institutionally effective policies that will bring about a better outcome for sustainable and sound policy decisions (Pierre & Peters, 2020). The observations suggested that when implementing policies, not only is the development of policy required, but also the coordination of institutions, the capacity of leadership, and the development of long-term strategic plans.

Problem Statement

Tax non-compliance, weak regulatory enforcement, and the existence of informal economic practices, including the significant volume of mobile phone imports that are transacted through channels that are not monitored by the government, are a few examples of the latter. Such practices reflect the broader structural deficiencies that exist within a given country's governance system and within its institutional monitoring system. Moreover, existing research supports the view that countries with weak institutional enforcement typically have great difficulty in achieving policy effectiveness, economic stability, and investor confidence (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). Also, it is a fact that while Pakistan's digital economy is growing and its e-commerce ecosystem is becoming increasingly developed, the governance and regulatory systems have not evolved to match the pace of these developments.

There is an urgent need to deal with such challenges since the consequences are going to affect Pakistan's economy, its ability to attract investors, the development of an entrepreneurial climate, and the capacity of its governance to handle all types of development. The policies themselves have not been weakly implemented, as there are many regulatory loopholes in place; there have also been declining levels of trust in institutions, and since the country's industry has been unable to develop competitiveness on a global scale, it continues to suffer from little growth and very little innovation. Without undertaking evidence-based reform of the institutions, as well as strengthening them and improving the methods used for governance, it appears that Pakistan's economic uncertainty and low levels of global competitiveness are going to become increasingly apparent. Thus, there is a need for more effective, historically-based, evidence-driven, practical policy-making, accountability within institutions, and innovative types of governance to contribute to and enable the development of more resilient and sustainable economies over the long term.



About the Discussion

It is a need of time to focus on bridging the government, policy implementation, Scholars, and institutional development within Pakistan's growing socio-economic progress. The debate provided participants with practical insights into how policies influence entrepreneurs, corporates, and business environments, including institutional performance and long-term sustainability. By combining personal experiences with policy reflections, the seminar sought to bridge the gap between theoretical understanding and real-world governance challenges.

The aim is to encourage participants to view policy as a functional tool that can influence economic growth, industry development, and social behaviours, and not just as a formal document. Renowned Companies in international markets provide evidence, how countries such as South Korea have been able to achieve industrial and technological growth due to having stable policies, support from institutions, and strong governance. The examples served as evidence of how a stable long-term direction within policy, having an appropriate industrial plan in place, and developing economically through innovation (as an economic model) can lead to sustained national growth.

Another part focuses on issues of governance within Pakistan, including tax evasion, underdeveloped regulatory systems, the existence of informal economies, and challenges faced when implementing government policies or programs. Policies are difficult to carry out because of issues regarding the effectiveness of institutions, lack of cooperation amongst government agencies, and the workloads facing government employees. It was highlighted that for effective governance to occur, there must be a sufficient capacity to implement policies, a system in place for monitoring implementation, and accountability for those responsible. The literature around Good Governance also supports the notion that the success of a policy is directly tied to the capabilities of relevant institutions, active stakeholder engagement, and reliance upon evidence-based processes in administrations (Pierre & Peters, 2020).

Another significant component is how digital transformation, entrepreneurship, and new technologies play a crucial role in shaping today's economies. How have e-commerce business platforms, the internet, and digital business activity rapidly changed Pakistan's economy? Examples of emerging local brands and local manufacturers demonstrated the new opportunities for entrepreneurship in Pakistan. LUMS (Lahore University of Management Sciences) is one of the higher education institutions that has created an environment of innovation, digital learning, and skill development. Research on innovation ecosystems has found that collaboration between academia, industry, and government increases a nation’s economic competitiveness through the development of a knowledge-based economy (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000).

The interactive and experiential approach with discussion-based engagement, practical examples, and participant interaction. Some of the areas of discussion included representations within governance, continuity of policy, opportunities for youth, and institutions' need for reform. Discussions regarding the role of international governmental agencies, especially the International Finance Corporation (IFC), reinforced the importance of facilitating investment, strategic planning, and forming institutional partnerships to support economic growth. Finally, communication, discipline, health, and adaptability are critical factors for effective leadership and institutional success.

In summary, a tri-dimensional view of the relationship between governance, policy implementation, entrepreneurship, and institutional resilience is provided. It encouraged participants to critically examine Pakistan’s governance structures while promoting practical, evidence-informed, and innovation-oriented approaches for sustainable development and economic growth.

Conclusion

An experiential and practical analysis of the challenges facing Pakistan in terms of governance, policy implementation, and economic development is provided; there needs to be more than just a policy formulated to achieve effective public policy; public policy is dependent upon institutional capacity, implementation mechanisms, accountability, and long-term strategic vision. The importance of the various components of entrepreneurship, digital transformation, industry development, and human capital in the effort to enhance the economic resilience of Pakistan was emphasized during the seminar. The connection of global examples to local governance issues reaffirmed that there is a need for evidence-based policies, institutional reform, and collaborative approaches to increase the competitiveness, effectiveness of governance, and sustainability of national development in Pakistan

Recommendations

1. Establish Implementation Units

Each government department must create an independent implementation and monitoring unit to ensure policies are properly implemented and continuously assessed.

2. Increase Regulatory Oversight

Establishing stronger regulatory enforcement mechanisms is essential to dealing with individuals who do not pay taxes, those who illegally import goods from other countries, as well as regulating other practices that destabilize the country's economy.

3. Foster Collaboration Between Universities and Industry

The universities and the industries that hire their graduates should work together to create programs that foster innovation, entrepreneurship, and skills development in order to enhance the country's knowledge-based economy.

4. Fund Digital Entrepreneurial Ecosystems

To support digital businesses, e-commerce platforms, and local manufacturing businesses, the government must create fiscal policies that will encourage investment in these types of businesses, as well as create the infrastructure needed to support this growth.

5. Develop Professional Communication Skills

Educational institutions should place an emphasis on developing students' communication and leadership abilities along with their academic development to prepare them for successful careers.

6. Ensure Consistency/Long-Term Policy Continuity

The long-term economic and industrial policies of the country must be protected from socio-political changes so that the country has a consistent framework for economic and industrial activity over time, which will provide investors with confidence.

7. Build Institutional Capacity

Developing the capacity of public officials through capacity-building programs can significantly improve the government's effectiveness, efficiency, and ability to make evidence-based decisions.

8. Use Data to Make Evidence-Based Economic Planning Decisions

Policymaking decisions should be based on research, analysis of the market, and international best practices to ensure that the economic policy design process produces effective and sustainable economic policies.

Opinion Piece

In Pakistan, a lack of policies is not the problem. The main problems are the lack of implementation and continuity in policies and governance that is based on evidence. The discussions clearly show that nations that are resilient have institutions, universities, and policymakers working together as opposed to working separately. Sustainable development requires moving from short-term decisions to long-term, research-based policies or reforms in education, innovation, accountability, and citizen welfare. For Pakistan to compete globally and keep its talent, it needs to make developing policy based on evidence part of its governance culture and not just something done occasionally.

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The Collaborating Institutions Include

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2. University of Lahore (UOL)
3. University of Central Punjab (UCP)
4. Bahria University Lahore Campus (BU)

5. University of Management and Technology (UMT)
6. Forman Christian College (FCCU)
7. Virtual University of Pakistan (VU)
8. University of Science and Technology
9. Lahore College for Women University (LCWU)
10. Gulab Devi Educational Complex (GDEC)
11. University of Education (UOE)

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Disclaimer

The views expressed are a consolidation of discussions and do not constitute the official stance of any participant or organization.

Any mention of tax non-compliance, informal trade, regulatory gaps, or unmonitored imports refers to general industry-level policy and governance challenges, not to any specific company, institution, or stakeholder.

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