**Administrative burden**

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In Pakistan, government officials are grappling with an intense administrative burden caused by a proliferation of overlapping organizations. This burden has far-reaching implications on the efficiency and effectiveness of governance, public officials’ performance, service quality, accountability, transparency, and regulation. This article examines the hierarchical structure of government organizations, the multiplicity of external units, and their impact on public resources and officials’ well-being.
In Pakistan, government organizations predominantly adhere to a hierarchical structure with functional or territorial departmentalization. This structure entails various tiers reporting to line managers, leading to a unity of command-and-control system. Additionally, government organizations are held accountable by external bodies such as the Auditor General of Pakistan for financial and performance audits, and the Anti-corruption and National Accountability Bureau for overseeing government officials’ actions. Internal complaint management systems exist within many departments.
Regrettably, at all levels, there are numerous external complaint and redressal units performing similar functions, leading to duplication, and overlapping. This redundancy results in the wastage of precious public resources and complicates the complaint resolution process.
Over time, an obsessive focus on monitoring and controlling government officials has led to the proliferation of various organizations and bodies. Consequently, a significant administrative burden has been imposed on government officials, leading to several adverse consequences:
Extreme Stress and Burnout: The weight of multiple reporting requirements and scrutiny causes immense stress and burnout among government officials, affecting their overall well-being and performance.
Decline in Performance: The extensive administrative burden negatively impacts the efficiency and performance of government officials, as they struggle to navigate through various processes and requirements.
Time Wastage: Dealing with numerous organizations and redressal units consumes valuable time, diverting officials’ attention from essential duties and responsibilities.
Risk Aversion: Fearing repercussions and complexities associated with dealing with overlapping authorities, officials may become risk-averse, hindering their ability to take proactive initiatives.
Stereotyping in Administrative Functions: The burden of multiple controls fosters a tendency to adopt stereotypical approaches to administrative tasks, stifling creativity and innovative problem-solving.
Political and Administrative Patronage: To avoid career risks, government officials may resort to pleasing political and administrative superiors, potentially compromising their impartiality and decision-making.
Multiplicity of Overlapping Organizations: The extent of overlapping organizations exacerbates the administrative burden. Several entities, such as the Federal Investigation Agency, Provincial Anti-corruption Establishments, National Accountability Bureau, PM & CM Inspection Teams, Departmental Ministers, Federal & Provincial Ombudsman, Right to Information Commission, Auditor General of Pakistan, Public Accounts Committees, Media Organizations, Litigants, online complaint forums, Privilege Motion Committees of the parliament, Federal and Provincial Services Tribunals, and Establishment Division & S&GAD, perform overlapping functions with overlapping authority.
The surge in new organizations, often established for political patronage and the distribution of quasi-public offices, has further complicated the administrative landscape. Illegitimate designations like “Chairman of the Department” led to the misuse of public resources and exertion of undue influence on government officials. Monitoring Teams added an additional layer of control.
The administrative burden on government officials in Pakistan resulting from overlapping organizations has serious consequences for governance, officials’ performance, service quality, accountability, transparency, and regulation. The proliferation of overlapping organizations and complex administrative processes has raised a critical question: has this huge administrative burden improved governance, public officials’ performance, quality of services, accountability, transparency, and regulation? Examining multiple reports and published literature on the subject determines that the increasing administrative burden on government officials has created a complex working environment that poses challenges to efficient governance. This burden has been characterized by overlapping responsibilities, redundant procedures, and limited resources, which hinder public officials from delivering quality services. The overwhelming workload and continuous fear of facing administrative issues have led to decreased motivation and job satisfaction. Consequently, the overall performance of public servants has been hampered, resulting in delays and inefficiencies in service delivery and made accountability harder to establish, as responsibilities often become blurred in the web of overlapping organizations.
Addressing this issue requires a comprehensive review of the existing structure and a coordinated effort to streamline and eliminate redundancies. By easing the burden on officials, Pakistan can foster a more efficient and effective public administration system, benefiting both officials and citizens alike. Simplifying administrative processes, streamlining organizational structures, and providing adequate resources are crucial steps to alleviate the burden on public officials. By striking a balance between expectations and resources, a more effective and transparent governance system can be established, ultimately benefiting both the public and public servants. A critical aspect of addressing the administrative burden lies in managing public expectations effectively. Citizens’ expectations from public servants must align with the available resources. Furthermore, a more collaborative approach involving all stakeholders is essential to develop feasible and realistic governance objectives.