

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF COMMITTEE SYSTEM IN SENATE OF PAKISTAN: CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD

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Abstract:

The Committee System in parliamentary settings plays a crucial role in legislative oversight and specialized scrutiny of governmental functions. This paper examines the significance of the Committee System in the Senate of Pakistan, particularly post-constitutional amendments. It discusses how these committees enhance legislative effectiveness, scrutinize government actions, and address national challenges like inter-provincial disputes and administrative inefficiencies. The Committee System has shown improvements, with increased meetings and legislative activity. However, it identifies areas for enhancement, including streamlined procedures, improved oversight, and strengthened capacity building. The paper offers recommendations categorized into short, medium, and long-term strategies. Short-term recommendations focus on empowering committee chairs and conducting performance audits. Mid-term suggestions include revising the Rules of Business and improving digital integration. Long-term strategies propose joint parliamentary committees and leveraging international parliamentary forums for capacity building. These measures aim to optimize committee performance, engage stakeholders, and align parliamentary practices with international standards.

Key words:

Committee System, Senate of Pakistan, legislative oversight, constitutional amendments, capacity building

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Introduction

Woodrow Wilson said, "Congress in session is Congress on public exhibition, whilst Congress in its committee rooms is Congress at work" (Mahmood, 2015). The Committee System in Parliaments is described as a modus operandi of division of legislative business and specialization, as every committee consists of technocrats or expert members. An effective and empowered committee system enhances the overall performance of parliament and reflects the vision and direction of public representatives and political parties on various legislative and policy matters. In modern democracies, the Committee System plays a major role in democratic governance. Parliaments today have a greater need to scrutinize, review, and investigate the workings of their Committee System to ensure it evolves and delivers results that meet public expectations.

Every parliament is accountable to the electorate for how well it ensures government agencies do their job. The committee system is a very efficient means of maintaining oversight and implementing adjustments in the workings of agencies controlled by the executive. Hence, the committees help parliament make sound and evidence-based decisions by examining issues from a stakeholder perspective and improving proposals before the House for onward transmission to the Government.

The Senate of Pakistan also has a well-entrenched Committee System that has asserted its effective role in the current political and federal dispensation and deals with a variety of issues of national importance confronted by the Federation of Pakistan. However, the passage of the 18th and 25th Constitutional Amendments has posed new challenges for the Committee System in the Senate of Pakistan. These challenges compel the Committee System in the Senate of Pakistan to be reviewed and restructured in terms of the constitutional, procedural, and capacity-building paradigm. The capacity of Senators and Secretariat staff needs to be enhanced to make the Committee System more responsive to the expectations of the public and the federation. Inter-provincial disputes on the National Finance Commission Award and the administrative, political, and financial problems faced by the merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, as well as weak administration and financial systems in the provinces, are key challenges before the Committee System in the Senate of Pakistan.

Problem Statement

Pakistan is a federal state with a bicameral legislature as per the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973. The Senate of Pakistan operates through a Committee System, which is an important tool for exercising effective oversight over the functions of the Federal Government. However,

in the wake of the 18th and 25th Constitutional Amendments, and amidst current economic and political uncertainties, the Committee System in the Senate of Pakistan is not vibrant enough to cope with mounting socio-economic challenges, inter-provincial disputes, and other matters of the federating units. The Committee System in the Senate of Pakistan needs to be restructured and empowered to address the current challenges faced by the federation of Pakistan. This paper will respond to the following questions:

- What is the structure, composition, and function of the Committee System in the Senate of Pakistan?
- What is the mandate of the Committees in the Senate of Pakistan?
- What major institutional and legal reforms have been introduced in the Committee System in the Senate of Pakistan over the years?
- What are the key institutional, legal, administrative, political, economic, and structural challenges/gaps in the Committee System in the Senate of Pakistan?
- What are the good practices in the Committee System in the Senate of the United States of America and the Rajya Sabha in India?
- How can the Committee System in the Senate of Pakistan be made more effective, empowered, and efficient in the current changing constitutional scenario?

Scope of the Study

The Senate of Pakistan operates through its Committees by referring legislative bills, points of public importance, national and international policy matters, and questions for scrutiny and recommendations. Without an effective Committee System in the Senate of Pakistan, the socio-economic and political rights of federating units cannot be safeguarded against the majoritarian rule in the National Assembly of Pakistan. This paper critically analyzes the existing Committee System in the Senate of Pakistan, its mandate, functions, and composition. The paper identifies various institutional, legal, administrative, and procedural gaps in the current Committee System. Furthermore, it provides a comprehensive way forward for making the Committee System more vibrant, effective, and responsive to the increasing demands of the federating units in Pakistan.

Literature Review

The Committee System in the Senate of Pakistan has been analyzed using research papers and journals written by various writers and institutions, including the Parliamentarian Pocket Guide for the National Assembly, the Senate of Pakistan Parliamentary Year Report 2021-22 published by the

Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT), Comparative Analysis of the Functions of the Senate of the U.S.A and Pakistan by Tahir Mehmood, Senate Reforms by Ex-Senator Sanaullah Baloch, and Functions of Parliamentary Committees in Pakistan: An Analysis by Sidra Akram, a research scholar from the Department of Political Science and International Relations, University of Punjab. The research shows that, except for the writing of Ex-Senator Sanaullah Baloch, the rest of the literature only discusses the functions, compositions, and progress of committees during various parliamentary calendar years and their comparative analysis with other parliaments of the world. This is not sufficient to identify the institutional and procedural gaps in the existing Committee System in the Senate of Pakistan. These papers do not provide viable proposals for reforms and further improvements in the workings of the Committees in the Senate of Pakistan. In this paper, the institutional and procedural gaps have been identified in light of various challenges and issues, followed by viable recommendations.

Research methodology

For this study, secondary qualitative data has been collected from the website of the Senate of Pakistan, annual reports of the Senate for 2021, 2022, and 2023, the Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Services (PIPS), the Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT), the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1973, the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Senate 2012, the Rules of Business 1973, and Standing Orders in the Senate of Pakistan. A deductive method of study has been adopted, leading to theory and generalization. The analysis reveals certain gaps in the system, which hinder the Committee System in the Senate of Pakistan from effectively coping with the mounting challenges in the current political dispensation. Furthermore, the study is also based on the writer's observations as a functionary in the Senate of Pakistan.

Organization of the Paper

The research paper has been organized into three sections:

Section-I discusses the Committee System in the Senate of Pakistan, including the types of committees, their mandates, functions, and compositions.

Section-II critically analyzes the Committee System in the Senate of Pakistan through situational analysis and comparative analysis of the Committee System in the Senate of the United States of America and the Rajya Sabha of India. Various functional, constitutional, and procedural gaps will be identified as a result of the comparative analysis. Key issues and challenges faced by the Committee System in the Senate of Pakistan will also be identified in this section.

Section-III encompasses the conclusion followed by short-term, medium-term, and long-term recommendations, with a cause-and-effect diagram.

Committee System in The Senate of Pakistan

In Pakistan, there is a Parliamentary Form of Government. Article 59 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan provides for the Senate of Pakistan. Article 67 of the Constitution provides for making Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Senate. Rules 158-172F of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Senate 2012 provide for Standing Committees as an oversight authority for each Ministry. Besides, there are Functional Committees, the Committee of Rules of Procedures and Privileges, Special Committees, the House Committee, the Finance Committee, the House Business Advisory Committee, and sub-Committees of the Standing Committees. At present, the total number of various Committees in the Senate is 51, having representation from all political parties in the Senate on a proportionate basis. Out of these 51 Committees, 37 are Standing Committees on various Ministries and Divisions.

The Senate Committee System is an important tool in the Senate of Pakistan to maintain an effective check on the functions of the executive. The House refers all matters of public importance, including Government and Private Members Bills, to Committees. The business is referred to the Committees by both the House and the Chairman of the Senate of Pakistan on matters of public importance. The Senate Committees have three main functions: (i) reviewing legislation, (ii) effective oversight of the executive, and (iii) resolving issues of public importance either through suo moto instruments or public petitions. All legislative bills, private members' bills, official bills, points of public importance, and questions are referred by the House to the concerned Standing Committees for examination and reporting with recommendations to the House. Each Committee comprises no fewer than 10 and no more than 14 members, according to the proportionate strength of political parties in the Senate. The Ministers or State Ministers of the concerned Ministries are the ex-officio members of each concerned Standing Committee. The Members elect their Chairman among themselves at the first sitting of the Committee. The Committees are assisted by the Secretariat in its meetings and other secretarial procedures. The Committees are also assisted in research work by a Directorate of Research in the Senate Secretariat.

Types of Committees in the Senate of Pakistan

The Senate Committees have been divided into the following categories:

- Standing Committees: Comprise 37 Committees for all Ministries and Divisions of the Federal Government.

- Domestic Committees: Include the Senate Finance Committee, Senate House Committee, Business Advisory Committee, and Library Committee.
- Other Committees: Include the Committee on Rules of Procedures and Conduct of Business in the Senate and the Committee on Delegated Legislation.
- Functional Committees: Include the Functional Committee on Government Assurances and the Functional Committee on Devolution.
- Select Committees: Constituted on certain amendments in a particular Bill referred by the House for consideration, amendment, and reporting to the House.
- Special Committees: Constituted on particular issues of national importance.
- Committee of the Whole: Constituted on urgent and most important national issues wherein the House turns into the Committee of the Whole to give policy guidelines to the Government on issues of national importance.

Mandate of the Committees in the Senate of Pakistan

The mandate of the Senate Committees has been extended, especially after the 18th Constitutional Amendment, to make the system more responsive to the post-devolution mechanism in the federating units as well as at the Federal level. The key mandates of the Committees are as follows:

- Constitutional Mandate: Article 66(5) stipulates that Parliament means either House (Senate of Pakistan or National Assembly), a joint sitting (of both Houses), or a committee thereof. The Senate of Pakistan derives its Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Senate, 2012 from Article 67 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Similarly, sub-clause (3) of Article 66 binds any person to give evidence or produce documents before the Committees of either House, and non-compliance is a punishable act under the law. Article 88 gives the Finance Committee of the Senate of Pakistan the mandate to control its finances within the appropriated budgetary allocations.
- Legal Mandate: Chapter XVII, Section 158-205-A of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Senate 2012 details the functions, composition, elections of the Chairman of Committees, and procedures of all Committees in the Senate. Furthermore, section 187 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Senate 2012, subject to clause (3) of Article 66 of the Constitution, confers powers of a civil court upon the Committees in the Senate. The Committees legislate laws, review bills referred by the House, and provide recommendations, presenting them to the House in the form of reports. The Committees play a role in primary

and subordinate legislation through consideration of legislative bills and intervening in the policies of administrative departments.

- Administrative Mandate: Rule 158 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Senate 2012 provides for a Standing Committee for each Ministry of the Government, which shall deal with the subjects of the concerned Ministry. Through an amendment in rule 166(4) of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Senate 2012, the Senate Committees now keep oversight over the budgetary allocations and utilization by the concerned Ministry, and the Committee shall report the findings and recommendations bi-annually to the House. Through an amendment in rule 166(6) of the same rules, the Committees have been empowered to ratify membership of various administrative boards and councils of the Federal Government. The Functional Committee of the Senate on Devolution was constituted for regular oversight on the devolution process in the wake of the 18th Constitutional Amendment. Rule 47 of the Rules of Business 1973 provides that the Standing or Adhoc Committees of either House is to advise the concerned Divisions on general administrative policy or a special problem.

Powers of the Committees

The Committees in the Senate of Pakistan have the following powers and authority in disposing of their business:

- They can call any persons and papers before them for investigation.
- They can take evidence from any person.
- They can delegate all their authority to sub-committees, except the power to report to the House.
- All matters must be reported to the House before the expiry of the Parliamentary Year.
- They exercise the powers of a civil court under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 (Act V of 1908) for enforcing the attendance of any person and compelling the production of documents, subject to Article 66 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Analysis

Situational Analysis

In the wake of the 18th Constitutional Amendment and the changing scenario and demands of the federating units, the Senate of Pakistan has asserted its effective role through various amendments in its Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business, 2012. A project titled "Restoration of Majesty and Transparency in Parliament (RMTP)" was initiated, which included a series of key initiatives, including committee reforms (Pakistan, Transparency in

Senate, 2015). The prime objective of the project was to further strengthen the committee system in the Senate of Pakistan. Key initiatives undertaken under the program are as follows:

1. **Finance Bill Involvement:** Before 2010, the Senate of Pakistan had no role in the Finance Bill. In 2010, through the Constitutional Amendment Act, it was envisaged that the Senate shall give recommendations on the Money Bill, including the Finance Bill and Annual Budget Statement, and the National Assembly shall consider these recommendations. The Senate Finance Committee considers the Finance Bill and Annual Budget Statement referred by the House and makes recommendations to the House for passage and onward transmission to the National Assembly; however, the National Assembly is not bound to follow the recommendations of the Senate Standing Committee on Finance in the Money Bill or Annual Budget Statement.
2. **Public Accounts Committee Representation:** In 2016, the Senate of Pakistan secured six members' representation in the Public Accounts Committee to have an effective oversight of the Federation's accounts (Pakistan, Role and Power of Senate, 2016).
3. **Committee of the Whole:** Under Rule 172-A, the House transforms into a Committee of the Whole for the consideration of matters of larger public interest. The Committee of the Whole drafted eight bills of national importance, including the Anti-Terrorism Act (Amendment) Bill, 2015, Arbitration and Conciliation Bill, 2015, Land Acquisition (Amendment) Bill, 2015, and Supreme Court (Number of Judges) (Amendment) Bill, 2015 (Pakistan, 2023).
4. **Judicial Appointments:** Under the 18th Constitutional Amendment, equal membership to the Senate and National Assembly in the "Parliamentary Committee for the Appointment of Judges" was enacted, which is an effective mechanism for appointments of judges of the superior judiciary (Pakistan, Article 175-A, 2010).
5. **Chief Election Commissioner Appointments:** One-third representation of the Senate in the committee for the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner was also given in the 18th Constitutional Amendment.
6. **Ministerial Reporting:** After an amendment to Rule 265-A of the Rules of Procedures and Conduct of Business in the Senate, 2012, concerned ministers are bound to appear before the House every three months and report on all matters referred by the House and recommendations made by committees. However, the ministers seldom appear before the House on matters pending with the Division or administrative departments due to a lack of binding provision in the Rules of Business, 1973.

7. **Joint Committee Meetings:** The Senate started an innovative exercise of referring matters of national interest and public importance to joint committees in the Senate for holding joint meetings on such issues. However, such meetings are not regularly held, necessitating the provision of joint ministerial or joint parliamentary committees of both Houses.
8. **Transparency:** For accessibility to the general public and transparency, the minutes of the Business Advisory Committee of the House are regularly uploaded on the Senate's website.
9. **Expert Opinion:** Committees may seek expert opinions from legislative experts and academicians as Special Invitees with the approval of the Chairman Senate. However, due to financial constraints, such experts are seldom invited, and the committee chairs are not free in this sphere.
10. **Public Hearings:** Committees may also conduct stakeholder analyses on relevant subject matters under consideration and, for this purpose, may hold public hearings throughout the country with prior approval of the Chairman Senate. However, due to financial constraints, such public hearings are seldom conducted outside the precinct of Parliament.
11. **Public Petitions Table (PPT):** Committees address and resolve the collective problems faced by the general public through the PPT, and reports containing recommendations are submitted to the House (Pakistan, Rule 277, 2012).
12. **Council of Chairs:** A mechanism for regularly amending the rules pertaining to the functions of the committee was provided in the form of the Council of Chairs in 2015. However, the committee has held only four meetings so far, which is one reason for the stagnation of the system in the Senate of Pakistan.
13. **Standing Orders:** According to Standing Order 2.66 in the Senate, matters referred to the standing committees shall be taken up expeditiously and disposed of within thirty days (Pakistan, Standing Orders, 2015). However, committees often seek extensions for the presentation of reports on matters referred to them, which sometimes results in the lapse of particular business at the end of each parliamentary year.
14. **Secretariat Support:** The Senate Secretariat provides support to committees through the Committee Wing, headed by a Joint Secretary. Each committee has been assigned a Secretary Committee for administrative and procedural support. Committees are supported by professional directorates, including the Research Directorate, an up-to-date library, and the Legislative Drafting Unit. To build the capacity of parliamentarians who are members of various committees and committee staff, the Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Services (PIPS) was established under a Board of Governors consisting of the Speaker of the

National Assembly and the Chairman of the Senate. Legislative Drafting Support Services was established in March 2023 within the same institution to assist the committee in reviewing legislative bills referred to them by the House (Secretariat, 2023).

15. **Committee Wing Responsibilities:** A Committee Wing in the Secretariat has been established to provide secretariat support to the committees. The wing is divided into two branches, and its responsibilities include all work connected with the standing, special, and select committees of the Senate. It provides secretariat support for committee meetings, including correspondence with members and ministries, and the presentation and circulation of reports. In addition, it provides secretarial support for the nomination and election of members to the committees and the summoning of witnesses if so desired by any committee.
16. **Non-Compliance Mechanism:** Non-compliance by ministries with any direction from the committees with the House's approval is referred to the Committee on Rules of Procedure and Privileges, which is the only mechanism that legally ensures compliance from the administrative divisions/departments of the Federal Government to follow the directions of the committees. There is no monitoring system at the secretariat and ministerial levels to follow up and implement committee directions. Necessary amendments in the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Senate, 2012, and Rules of Business, 1973, are needed to institutionalize the monitoring, implementation, and compliance mechanism at the secretariat and ministerial levels.

Comparative Analysis of Committee Systems: Senate of Pakistan vs. Senate of United States of America

(Mahmood, A Comparative Analysis of the Functioning of the Senate, 2015)

America	Pakistan	Gap
Constitutionally, the Senate has equal power with the House of Representatives	Constitutionally less powerful than the National Assembly in terms of financial power	Constitutional
Committees are powerful, and their decisions are binding on the executive	Recommendatory role	Constitutional and procedural
Working in a presidential system of government	Working in a parliamentary system of government	Constitutional

Government bills automatically stand referred to the concerned committee	Bills are referred to the concerned standing committee after the successful carriage of a motion	Procedural
Bills are thoroughly scrutinized by expert members of the concerned committees	The committee composition is not based on expertise but rather political representation	Procedural
Committees prioritize the consideration of bills as per their mutual consent	The agenda is set solely by the Chairman of the Committee	Procedural
Regular public hearings are held on all controversial legislations	No regular hearings are held on controversial legislations or issues	Procedural
Follow-up on the reports of the committees on any legislation and any matter is binding	Reports of the committee on any legislation and matter are recommendatory	Procedural
Senate meetings are open to the public	Meetings are restricted to only concerned functionaries and individuals	Procedural
Individual committee websites	No specific websites of committees	Structural
Conference committee resolves bilateral differences over an issue between the two houses	Controversial bills are passed through a majority of votes of both houses in a joint sitting	Constitutional and procedural
The Constitution authorizes the Senate to impeach government officials on the basis of established malpractices	No such power is given to the Senate or its committees	Constitutional and procedural

From the above comparison, it is evident that the Senate Committee System in Pakistan lacks the power and authority present in the United States Senate, due to constitutional, procedural, and structural gaps. Addressing these gaps would require constitutional amendments and procedural reforms in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Senate, 2012.

Comparative Analysis of Committee Systems: Rajya Sabha in India vs. Senate of Pakistan

Rajya Sabha India	Senate of Pakistan	Gap
Constitutionally less powerful than the Lok Sabha in terms of Financial Power	Constitutionally less powerful than the National Assembly in terms of Financial power	No
Recommendatory Role	Recommendatory Role	No
Working in Parliamentary system of Government	Working in parliamentary system of Government	No
Bills are referred to the concerned standing committee after successful carriage of a Motion	Bills are referred to the concerned standing committee after successful carriage of a Motion	No
Reports of the Committee on any legislation and matter are recommendatory	Reports of the Committee on any legislation and matter are recommendatory	No
No specific websites of committees	No specific websites of committees	No
Departmental Related Standing Committees (DRSCs) consisting of the members of both the Houses	Standing Committees of the Senate only	Procedural
The duration of Departmental Related Standing Committees (DRSCs) is one year period	The duration of Standing Committees is a 3-year period	Procedural

No duplicity of work in DRSCs	Duplicity of functions in Standing Committees of each House	Procedural
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From the case study analysis of the Indian Rajya Sabha, it is evident that constitutionally and procedurally both systems are working within similar parliamentary parameters with similar power. However, procedurally, the composition of DRSCs differs from the Standing Committees in the Senate of Pakistan. The joint DRSCs consist of members from both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, which helps avoid duplicity of work between the two Houses.

Issues and Challenges

In view of the institutional, procedural, and legal analysis and case studies, the following challenges and issues have been identified in the current Committee System in the Senate of Pakistan:

a. Political:

- The Committee System in the Senate of Pakistan faces challenges of in-house political bipartisanship. Since the House works through committees in legislation, oversight of the executive, and redressal of public grievances from all federal units, an objective and uniform approach from members towards resolving issues is essential.
- Ministers and State Ministers seldom attend committee meetings, demonstrating a lack of seriousness toward the importance of these meetings.
- The devolution of administrative, political, and financial powers to the provinces is a daunting challenge, especially the merger of ex-FATA following the 25th Constitutional Amendment and the provinces' shares in the National Finance Commission. This has created a new political tussle among political parties and between federal and provincial governments.
- Without a well-structured, flexible, informed, and proactive Committee System in the Senate of Pakistan, addressing political challenges and resolving issues faced by federating units is a distant dream.
- Important legislation under consideration in various committees is often blocked due to the political tendencies of members.

b. Economic:

- The country faces economic turmoil due to current account, fiscal, and trade deficits, rising inflation, population growth, deteriorating law and order, and overlapping administrative authorities in the post-18th Constitutional Amendment era.

- A state-of-the-art Committee System in the Senate of Pakistan and enhanced capacity building of members on financial and economic issues is necessary.
- According to a UNDP project paper, Senate committees should have access to high-quality and objective information on policy matters to make effective political decisions on important socio-economic and political issues in Pakistan (UNDP, 2017).
- Generally, members' primary sources of information are newspapers or social media, which they then bring to the floor of the House.
- Ministries lack a mechanism to constantly brief committee members on national importance and key economic and financial initiatives. There is no proactive and preemptive mechanism within the Senate Secretariat, Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Services (PIPS), or at the ministerial level to brief Senators on economic and financial issues.

c. Procedural and Institutional:

- The committees in the Senate of Pakistan function under the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Senate, 2012.
- There are several standing committees, leading to a duplicity of functions within the Senate and with the National Assembly. For example, the Committee on Government Assurances and the Committee on Rules of Procedures and Privileges both deal with executive accountability.
- The Functional Committee on Problems of Less Developed Areas could be assigned to the Standing Committee on Finance and Revenues or the Standing Committee on Planning Development and Special Initiatives.
- There are 38 Standing Committees in the National Assembly performing similar functions to those in the Senate, sometimes causing confusion due to overlapping recommendations.
- To ensure a uniform policy approach, the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Senate should be revised to establish joint parliamentary committees or Joint Ministerial Committees with proper and equal representation of both houses, similar to DRSCs in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha in India.
- On financial matters, the Senate Committee's role is advisory, and the National Assembly has the discretion to accept or reject its recommendations. For example, the National Assembly rejected five recommendations of the Senate Standing Committee on Finance, Revenue, and Economic Affairs on the Finance (Supplementary) Bill 2022.
- There is no limit on the number of extensions for report submission, causing delays in reporting to the House. At the end of the parliamentary year, unaddressed matters lapse without committee accountability.

- The Committee System lacks an in-house monitoring system for the quantum of output on referred matters. The Parliamentary Year Report 2021-2022 showed that 42 bills pending before various standing committees lapsed (Pakistan, Parliamentary Year Report, 2022).

d. Technological:

- There is a communication gap between Senate committees and government functionaries, with members seldom receiving timely working papers from ministries.
- Digitalization of communication between the Senate Secretariat's Committee Wing and ministries is required.
- Senate committees should take all stakeholders on board before considering matters of public importance, but mobilizing committees to public places is time-consuming and costly. A digital system for e-conferencing with the public would enhance outreach.
- The Senate of Pakistan is moving towards digitalization, with agendas and communications sent to members through digital gadgets. However, there is a lukewarm response from the government, hampering smooth communication between ministries and the Secretariat and committees.

Conclusion

Based on the discussions in the preceding sections, it is clear that no parliament can effectively function without a structured and efficient Committee System. Particularly in the post-18th Constitutional Amendment era, the Committee System in the Senate of Pakistan has played a crucial role, especially in legislation. According to a report by PILDAT, the Committee System has increased its effectiveness by holding 300 meetings in 2022 (PILDAT, 2022).

However, in terms of oversight and accountability of the government, there is a need to further streamline the Committee System in the Senate of Pakistan. Issues such as lack of internal accountability regarding members' conflicts of interest, timely disposal of business by committees before the parliamentary year expires, and ensuring timely compliance from the executive remain grey areas. Addressing these issues requires revisiting the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Senate, 2012, and the Rule of Business 1973.

A well-informed and accountable Committee System, along with a responsive executive, can effectively address the socio-economic and political demands of federating units. This will contribute to enhancing governance and ensuring better outcomes for Pakistan's legislative processes.

Recommendations

Based on the situational analysis, case studies, and gap analysis, the following recommendations have been segmented into short-term, mid-term, and long-term categories:

Short Term (based on internal procedures)

1. Empowering Committee Chairs: Committee Chairs may be empowered to call upon experts, intelligence officials, and academicians for specialized input on policy matters. Committees should be able to conduct hearings outside the precincts of Parliament for stakeholder analysis.
2. Performance Audit: At the end of each Parliamentary Year, a performance audit of the progress of Committees and Ministerial compliance should be conducted by the House or its designated Committee.
3. Council of Chairs Meetings: Regular meetings of the Council of Chairs should be held to streamline the working of the Committees and propose amendments to the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business 2012.
4. Regular Updates: The Senate of Pakistan should devise an internal mechanism to regularly update Committees on issues faced by the federation, utilizing the Research Directorate within the Secretariat or the Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Services.
5. Dedicated Secretary Committees: The Secretary Committees should be relieved of additional charges and assigned exclusively to their roles with proper Secretariat support to ensure professionalism.

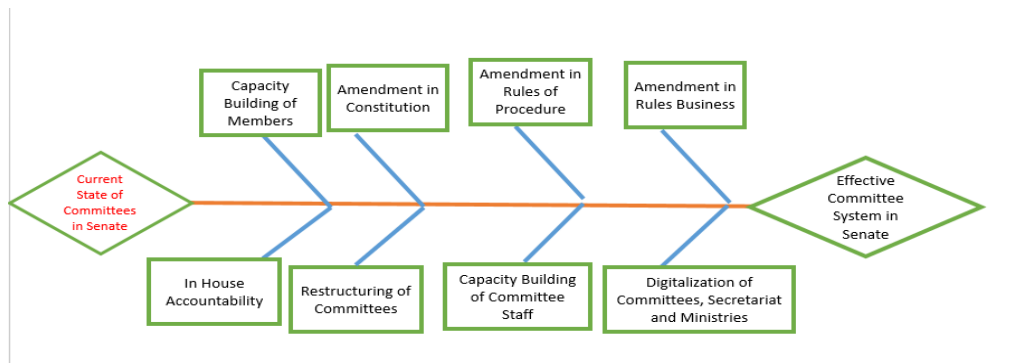
Mid Term

1. Amending Rules of Business 1973: The Federal Government should amend the Rules of Business 1973 to mandate administrative Ministries/Departments to comply with Committee directions within specified timelines and provide prior briefings to concerned Committees on key policy matters and challenges.
2. Digitalization and ICT Utilization: To create an informed Committee System, it should be aligned with the public, provincial legislatures, and federal ministries through digitalization and extensive use of Information Communication Technologies.
3. Periodic Review of Rules: The Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Senate 2012 should be revisited and reviewed every two years by the House Business Advisory Committee to streamline Committee procedures and prevent rule stagnation.

Long Term

4. Joint Parliamentary Committees: To avoid duplicity of functions and ensure a uniform approach on national and international issues, joint parliamentary committees between the Senate and National Assembly should be constituted with equal representation of political parties from both Houses. This will promote sustainability, continuity, and uniformity in political and administrative approaches, and reduce public expenditure by avoiding simultaneous meetings on the same agenda items.
5. International Parliamentary Fora: The Senate of Pakistan, as a member of the International Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), should leverage the technical assistance provided by these organizations for restructuring the Committee System and enhancing the capacity of Committee Members and staff.

Cause and Effect Model of Strengthening the Committee System in the Senate of Pakistan



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