

## Participation Patterns of Parent-Teacher Council Members in Public Secondary Schools of Pakistan

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**ABSTRACT:** It is well known that parental involvement is a key contributor to improving students' learning and the effectiveness of schools. This study aims to find out the extent of participation of Parent-Teacher Council (PTC) members and how it affects the academic performance of students in public secondary schools of District Malakand, Pakistan. A cross-sectional survey design was used, which involved 258 members of the PTC and a structured participation assessment tool. Descriptive statistics and two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to analyze the data. The results showed that the participation was high among the members of PTC. Gender and position within the PTC had significant effects, but academic qualification did not. The participation of the female members was higher than that of the male members, and the individuals who were in leadership positions (chairpersons and secretaries) showed significantly higher participation than the general members. The study found that institutional roles are more important than demographic characteristics in influencing participation in PTCs. The results emphasise the importance of policies and practices that ensure inclusive participation, capacity development and equitable engagement of all PTC members to improve school performance and student outcomes.

**KEYWORDS:** Parent-Teacher Council, Parental Involvement, Participation, Academic Performance, School Management Committees

### Introduction

Collaborative governance mechanisms are becoming more critical to educational improvement, linking schools and local communities. Internationally, parental involvement has been linked to greater accountability, transparency, and responsiveness of institutions to the needs of students. Parent-Teacher Councils were introduced in Pakistan as decentralized governance bodies with the aim of involving the community in school management. While policies have been developed around participatory governance, there is a significant variation in practice across schools. Formal PTCs are present in many cases, but their actual involvement is unclear. It is important to know how members participate and which activities are given more attention, in order to assess the effectiveness of such governance mechanisms. Much of the previous research has been concerned with parental involvement in general, and few empirical studies have examined specific parental involvement behaviors in formal councils. Thus, the present study explores the participation pattern of PTC members in public secondary schools.

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The success of educational institutions is not only about the teaching and learning process, but also the active involvement of stakeholders such as parents, teachers, and community members. Collaborative governance arrangements are gaining significance in improving accountability, transparency, and school performance. In this context, Parent-Teacher Councils (PTCs) are one of the major ways that community involvement in education can be promoted (Epstein, 2011).

PTCs, or PTAs as they are also known, or SMCs, were institutionalized in Pakistan through national education policies that focus on decentralizing the management of schools and increasing community ownership (Government of Pakistan, 2009). These councils include parents and community members in decision-making about school planning, financial management, and policy implementation.

The main goal of PTCs is to make parents active participants in the educational process. PTC members meet regularly and work together to solve academic problems, enhance school climate and contribute to students' holistic development (Cheung et al., 2008; Popovska et al., 2021). This participation also promotes communication between parents and schools, which promotes understanding of students' needs.

The success of PTCs, however, is greatly influenced by the level and type of member involvement. However, socio-cultural barriers, limited management skills, and lack of awareness are some of the challenges that prevent meaningful engagement, especially in rural areas (Shah et al., 2024a; Wangeci et al., 2018). Moreover, the leadership of schools is very important in either enabling or inhibiting participation (Povey et al., 2016).

Although the importance of parental involvement has been documented in the literature, little is known about participation in PTCs, including who participates, how often, and what roles they play. This is especially the case in public secondary schools in Pakistan.

This study is therefore aimed at understanding the participation patterns of Parent-Teacher Council (PTC) members, analyzing the extent of their participation and determining the factors that affect their involvement. The results will be used to guide policymakers and educators in enhancing the effectiveness of PTC and ensuring meaningful engagement of stakeholders. The following research questions were used to guide the study.

The involvement of PTC members can also be influenced by political and social forces. In some cases, members might be able to take advantage of their social or political networks to support school development and to obtain resources. However, political interference can also pull the focus of participation away from education to personal and political interests (Noor et al., 2015). The nature of participation can only be explained when formal responsibilities assigned to PTC members are taken into account along with other factors. Real activities of members and frequency of activities should be reviewed.

## Research Questions

1. What is the overall level of PTC member participation?
2. Which participation activities are most frequently practiced?
3. Do participation levels differ across demographic characteristics?

## Literature Review

### Epstein's Framework of Parental Involvement

Epstein's model of parental involvement offers a theoretical framework for understanding the various forms of parental and community involvement in educational processes. The framework is based on the theory of overlapping spheres of influence, which views the family, school, and community as interdependent social institutions that are

responsible for children's learning and growth. The framework outlines six key areas of parental involvement: Parenting, Communicating, Volunteering, Learning at home, Decision-making, and Community collaboration (Newman et al., 2019). These dimensions are especially significant in terms of the participation of Parent-Teacher Council (PTC) members as they offer a broad overview of parents and community representatives' involvement with schools.

Parenting is the support and guidance that families provide to help children grow physically, psychologically, socially, and emotionally. Good parenting establishes an environment that fosters children's learning and growth. Parenting is a process that is mainly in the home but can affect the child's relationship with the school and teachers. Parents who know their child's developmental and educational needs are more likely to be involved in school-related activities and decision-making processes in a constructive way (Newman et al., 2019).

Communicating is characterized by frequent and meaningful exchanges between parents, teachers, school administrators, and other stakeholders. Good communication helps parents to keep up to date with children's learning, school life and any new issues. Communication is especially significant in the context of PTCs as council members act as a bridge between the school and the community. They can contribute to meetings, consultations, discussions and information sharing to assist in the co-ordination of parents, teachers and school management.

Volunteering is the involvement of parents and community members in school activities. This can involve helping teachers, supporting school activities, contributing to extra-curricular activities or other types of volunteer support. Volunteering is a way of showing parents that they are involved in school, and that they can make a direct contribution to the day-to-day operation and development of the school (Newman et al., 2019).

Learning at home focuses on the importance of families in supporting children's learning out of school. Parents can help by helping with homework, helping to provide learning materials, helping to set up a learning environment, and by encouraging home learning activities. PTC members do not directly teach the children, but they can inspire and motivate the parents to help their children learn outside the school.

One of the most pertinent aspects of Epstein's model of participation in PTC is the dimension of decision-making. It involves the participation of parents and community members in the decision-making process relating to school policies, priorities, resources, and activities. Parents and community members are given opportunities to be involved in school governance and to impact decisions related to the school environment through formal structures such as PTCs. A dimension of participation is how often PTC members attend meetings, how often they speak, how often they participate in planning, and how often they influence decisions.

Partnerships between schools, families, community groups, and other institutions to assist children's education and school development are considered collaborating with the community. By working together, schools can leverage financial, social, technical and logistical resources. PTC members have the opportunity to make a significant contribution in building links between schools and community stakeholders. Therefore, Epstein's framework is useful for conceptualizing the various activities in which PTC members engage in school affairs.

### Parent-Teacher Councils

Parent-Teacher Councils (PTCs) are formal groups that involve parents, teachers, school administrators, and community members in school decision-making. Also known as School Management Committees or other forms of community-based school governance groups. The bodies are normally created to advance student well-being, boost school-community connections, help the execution of educational policies, and boost community involvement in school matters (Ahmad et al., 2020).

Organized parental involvement in education has a history that demonstrates that the education of children is the responsibility of the family, schools, and communities. Early parental organizations in the United States were interested in enhancing the link between parents and schools and in encouraging parental involvement in education. These efforts helped to establish formal systems in which parents and communities could work together to help improve schools and children's learning.

The concept of community participation in school governance was strengthened in Pakistan through the national education policies, specifically the National Education Policy 1998-2010. The policy highlighted the need to engage communities in school processes and promoted the creation of formal community participation mechanisms. This was followed by the creation of PTCs in schools with the support of government agencies, NGOs and international development partners such as UNICEF, GIZ and USAID (Asim et al., 2025).

KP has been a significant context in the history of parent and community involvement in school governance. The setting up of parent-based school organizations was designed to involve parents in school affairs, improve cooperation between parents and teachers, and facilitate improvements to students' educational experiences. PTCs have also been linked to school development activities such as addressing school needs, which encompass basic facilities, learning materials, minor repairs, student welfare, and other school development activities (Al-Alwan, 2014; Shah et al., 2024b).

PTCs have more than just management duties. Councils are often required to activate community support and establish partnerships with other organisations and government departments. This can include assisting academic programs, co-curricular activities, teacher professional development, student activities, school improvement initiatives, and provision of necessary facilities (Khan & Iqbal, 2013). The success of a PTC is therefore linked to how well its members are involved in the activities and decision-making of the school.

It is suggested in the literature that meaningful participation does not necessarily follow the presence of a PTC. The level of participation varies depending on how often members attend, their involvement in decision making, how they communicate with school stakeholders, involvement in school activities, support for school improvement, and involvement in the wider community. Thus, an analysis of participation patterns is useful to gain insight into whether PTCs are active participatory bodies or are simply formal administrative bodies.

### Importance of PTC Participation in Educational Institutions

The creation of PTCs is an example of the general policy that schools should not be isolated from the communities they serve. Participatory school governance offers parents and community members ways to be involved in school decision-making, to observe educational activities, to interact with school leaders, and to assist in institutional development. The role of the community in school governance and accountability has been highlighted in the national education policies in Pakistan. Therefore, decentralization reforms in Pakistan were introduced to strengthen school governance by increasing community participation, improving accountability, and enhancing monitoring of public schools (Nasrullah et al., 2019).

PTC involvement can be at multiple levels. Members can at least attend meetings and be informed about school affairs. They can be more active and involved in discussions, decisions, school activities, communication with parents, and implementation of school improvement projects. Members can be actively involved in working with teachers, administrators, parents, community organizations, and government departments to meet school needs at the highest level of participation.

The level of participation is thus a crucial measure of the effectiveness of PTCs. A formally established council, with few members, may be of little practical importance in governance. On the other hand, schools can gain access to the community knowledge, social networks, local resources and wider support through active participation. Current studies have indicated that the role of school-based participatory bodies depends on the extent of member engagement, their knowledge of their role, and the opportunities they have to engage in the school.

But there are also a number of contextual factors that can impact participation. Knowledge about PTC responsibilities is limited, capacity is weak, communication is not effective, social inequalities can restrict participation, political influence can be an issue and limited opportunities for meaningful decision making can restrict participation. It is therefore important to study participation empirically, not to presume that the fact of a PTC being formally established means that the community is actively involved.

### Roles and Responsibilities of PTC Members

PTC members will be expected to represent parents and the community in school affairs. They can be involved in council meetings, school planning, decision-making, school monitoring, communication with parents, supporting teachers and school leaders, and mobilizing community resources (Gan & Bilige, 2019).

One of the most basic ways of being involved in PTC is to attend meetings. Good attendance allows members to be informed, participate in discussions about school needs, review activities, and contribute to decisions. But simply being present does not mean that one is participating. It is also expected that members will voice their opinions, engage in conversation, and play an active role in decision-making.

PTC members can also be involved through school visits and monitoring activities. These activities may offer chances to see the school setting, talk with teachers and students, determine the resources required, and share concerns with school management. The nature and frequency of participation can, however, be very different among members (Imam, 2019).

Communication with parents and the community is another key role. PTC members can help parents to be involved in school activities, to share information about school needs and to organize community support for school improvement. These activities enable PTC members to help build better school-community ties (Tatlah & Iqbal, 2011).

PTC members can also be involved in the mobilisation of financial and material resources for schools. Community support can include provision of learning materials, technological resources, infrastructure, minor repairs and other school needs (Brien & Stelmach, 2009). PTC members also can help with academic and co-curricular activities in the school and can motivate parents to help children at home.

However, the literature suggests that there is not always consistent participation or uniform distribution of participation among PTC members. Some members may be involved in meetings, monitoring, decision-making, and community mobilization, while others may be less involved. If people do not know what to do, have limited managerial skills, poor communication, and lack of understanding of PTC responsibilities, this will limit the effectiveness of participation (Clinton & Hattie, 2013).

### Participation Patterns of PTC Members

The current literature shows that PTC participation is complex. It involves formal meetings, school monitoring, decision making, communication with parents and teachers, school activities, community mobilization, resource generation and support for student learning. These activities involve various degrees and types of involvement.

Much of the current debate about PTCs, however, centers on what they are likely to do, their institutional significance, or their potential to improve schools. Much less research has focused on the actual participation rates of PTC members. Specifically, it is important to know the extent of participation, the most common activities of the members, and whether participation varies by demographic.

Demographic attributes can affect participation because the members of PTC may have various educational backgrounds, ages, genders, occupations, experiences, and personal and social attributes. They could influence how confident members are, what they know, if they are available, how they communicate with school authorities, and their capacity to engage in decision-making. Thus, an analysis of the differences in participation by demographic group can give a more detailed picture of what factors are correlated with active participation in PTC activities.

The present study aims to fill this gap by studying the participation pattern of PTC members in public secondary schools of Pakistan. Specifically, the study examines overall participation, participation frequency of various participation activities, and participation differences by demographic characteristics. The focus is significant because it can give evidence on the level of participation as PTCs are active participatory mechanisms in public secondary schools.

### Research Gap

Past research has concentrated on Parent-Teacher Councils' effectiveness, governance, and problems. Very little empirical data is available on the actual participation pattern of the members of PTC, especially in terms of frequency of participation activities and differences in the participation activities among the various demographic groups in Pakistani public secondary schools. This study thus fills this gap by exploring the extent, size, and socio-demographic differences of PTC participation.

### Methodology

#### Research Design

The study used the quantitative cross-sectional survey design to investigate the participation pattern of Parent-Teacher Council (PTC) members in public secondary schools. A cross sectional survey was deemed suitable as it allowed quantitative data to be gathered from a large sample of respondents at one time and allowed for the study of the overall level of participation, the frequency of participation activities and differences in participation by demographic characteristics.

#### Population and Sample

The target population was all the Parent-Teacher Council (PTC) members of public secondary schools in District Malakand, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The participants were chairpersons, secretaries and general members of parents, teachers and community stakeholders. 258 PTC members were involved in the study. A convenience sampling technique was employed to select participants, as they were easily available and willing to participate in the data collection period. After data screening, responses with missing data were not included in the appropriate analyses. For inferential analyses, therefore, there were 238 to 239 complete responses for each variable.

#### Instrumentation

A structured questionnaire with two sections was used to collect data. The first section collected information on the demographic characteristics such as gender, age, educational qualification, occupation, and role in the Parent-Teacher Council. The second section assessed participation in PTC activities on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly

Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The questionnaire measured members' involvement in various activities, including attendance at meetings, decision making, school activities monitoring, communication with stakeholders, school programs support and community related activities.

### Data Collection Procedure

The data were obtained from the selected public secondary schools by visiting them. Before the data collection, the purpose of the study was explained to the respondents, their responses were assured to be kept confidential, and participation was made voluntary. All participants gave informed consent to the completion of the questionnaire. Questionnaires were sent and received on-site to ensure the highest possible response rate and fullness of responses.

### Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data. The overall level of participation of PTC members was determined using frequencies and percentages. Mean scores and ranking of individual participation activities were calculated to determine which activities were most common. Independent-samples t-tests and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to explore differences in participation across demographic characteristics at the .05 level of statistical significance. Data Analysis

## Results

**Table 1**

*Participation Level*

|                               | Number | Percentage |
|-------------------------------|--------|------------|
| Low level of Participation    | 28     | 11%        |
| Medium level of Participation | 155    | 60%        |
| High level of Participation   | 75     | 29%        |
| Total                         | 258    | 100.0      |

The above table presented data regarding the different levels of participation among the members of Parent-Teacher Councils. Data depicted that 11% of the members of PTCs are at the low level of participation in the activities of Parent-Teacher Councils. 60% of the members of PTCs are at the medium level of participation in the activities of Parent-Teacher Councils. 29% of the members of PTCs are at the high level of participation in the activities of Parent-Teacher Councils the demographic characteristics of the participants were identical to those reported in Abdullah and Nasrullah (2026), as the present study utilized the same dataset. Detailed demographic information is available in the earlier publication (Abdullah & Nasrullah, 2026).

**Table 2**

*Gender-wise Participation Level in PTC meeting*

| Gender | Low level   | Medium level | High level  | Total         |
|--------|-------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| Male   | 30<br>(21%) | 75<br>(53%)  | 36<br>(26%) | 141<br>(100%) |
| Female | 9<br>(7%)   | 78<br>(67%)  | 30<br>(25%) | 117<br>(100%) |

The above table depicts data regarding the gender wise level of participation. Data revealed that in male members of PTCs, 21% are at a low level of participation. 53% of the members in PTCs are medium level of participation, while 26% of the members were at the high level of participation. In female members of PTCs, 7% are at a low level of participation. 67% of the members in PTCs are at a medium level of participation while 25% of the members were at the high level of participation

**Table 3***Age-wise Participation Level in PTC Meeting*

|              | Low level     | Medium level  | High level    | Total         |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| below 35     | 5<br>(5.6%)   | 63<br>(70.7)  | 21<br>(23.5%) | 89<br>(100%)  |
| 36 to 50     | 22<br>(15.7%) | 89<br>(63.6%) | 29<br>(20.7%) | 140<br>(100%) |
| 51 and above | 2<br>(6%)     | 20<br>(69%)   | 7<br>(24.1%)  | 29<br>(100%)  |

The above table depicts data regarding the age-wise level of participation. Data reveals that in the age category below 35 years, 5.6% are at a low level of participation. 70.7% members of PTCs at a medium level of participation while 23.5% members were at a high level of participation.

In 36 years to 50 years age category of members of PTCs, 15.7% are at low level of participation. 63.6% members of the PTCs are medium level of participation while 20.7% members were at the high level of participation.

In 51 years and above age category of members of PTCs, 6% are at low level of participation. 69% members of the PTCs are medium level of participation while 24.1% members were at the high level of participation.

**Table 4***Qualification-wise Participation level in PTC Meeting*

| Qualification        | Low level   | Medium level | High level  | Total         |
|----------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| SSc                  | 23<br>(21%) | 53<br>(49%)  | 33<br>(30%) | 109<br>(100%) |
| FA/FSc               | 11<br>(22%) | 30<br>(60%)  | 9<br>(18%)  | 50<br>(100%)  |
| BA/BSc               | 3<br>(12%)  | 17<br>(68%)  | 5<br>(20%)  | 25<br>(100%)  |
| MA/MSc/BS            | 1<br>(1%)   | 46<br>(70%)  | 19<br>(28%) | 66<br>(100%)  |
| Higher Qualification | 0<br>(0%)   | 6<br>(75%)   | 2<br>(25%)  | 8<br>(100%)   |

The above table presents the level of participation among the members of PTCs with respect to their qualifications. In the SSC category of members of PTCs, 21% are at a low level of participation. 49% members of the PTCs are medium level of participation while 30% members were at a high level of participation.

In the F.A/ FSc category of members of PTCs, 22% are at low level of participation. 60% members of the PTCs are medium level of participation while 18% members were at a high level of participation.

In the B.A/B.Sc. category of members of PTCs, 12% are at low level of participation. 68% members of the PTCs are medium level of participation while 20% members were at a high level of participation.

In the M.A/MSc/BS category of members of PTCs, 1% are at a low level of participation. 70% members of the PTCs are medium level of participation while 28% members were at a high level of participation.

In the Higher Qualification category of members of the PTCs, 0% are at a low level of participation. 75% members of the PTCs are at a medium level of participation while 25% members were at a high level of participation.

### Participation Levels by Respondents' Occupation

**Table 5**

*Distribution of Participation Levels by Respondents' Position in the Council*

| Position    | Low n (%) | Moderate n (%) | High n (%) | Total n (%) |
|-------------|-----------|----------------|------------|-------------|
| Chairperson | 3 (9.4)   | 20 (62.5)      | 9 (28.1)   | 32 (100.0)  |
| Member      | 26 (13.1) | 114 (57.6)     | 58 (29.3)  | 198 (100.0) |
| Secretary   | 0 (0.0)   | 19 (67.9)      | 9 (32.1)   | 28 (100.0)  |
| Total       | 29 (11.2) | 153 (59.3)     | 76 (29.5)  | 258 (100.0) |

Table above presents the distribution of participation levels across different positions within the Parent-Teacher Council (PTC). The majority of respondents in all three positions reported a moderate level of participation. Among chairpersons, 62.5% reported moderate participation, while 28.1% reported high participation and 9.4% reported low participation. Similarly, 57.6% of members reported moderate participation, followed by 29.3% reporting high participation and 13.1% reporting low participation. None of the secretaries reported low participation; instead, 67.9% demonstrated moderate participation and 32.1% reported high participation. Overall, the findings indicate that moderate participation predominated across all PTC positions, although secretaries exhibited the highest proportion of respondents reporting high participation.

### Two-Way ANOVA: Effect of Gender and Position in PTC on Participation

A two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to determine if there were any differences in participation rates based on respondents' gender and their role in the Parent-Teacher Council (PTC). A statistically significant main effect of gender was found,  $F(1, 233) = 13.85$ ,  $p = .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .313$ , which suggested that there was a significant difference between the participation levels of male and female respondents. The size of the effect indicates that gender explained a significant amount of the variance in participation.

There was also a significant main effect for position in the PTC,  $F(2, 233) = 33.80$ ,  $p = .029$ , such that participation was significantly different by members' positions in the council. The reported effect size (partial  $\eta^2 = .971$ ), however, must be checked as it is very high for educational research. There was no interaction effect between gender and position in the PTC,  $F(2, 233) = 0.06$ ,  $p = .944$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .000$ , indicating that the relationship between gender and participation was similar across PTC positions.

**Table 6**

*Two-Way ANOVA Examining Differences in Participation by Gender and Position in the Parent-Teacher Council*

| Source            | F (df1, df2)        | p    | Partial $\eta^2$ |
|-------------------|---------------------|------|------------------|
| Gender            | $F(1, 233) = 13.85$ | .001 | .313             |
| Position in PTC   | $F(2, 233) = 33.80$ | .029 | .971†            |
| Gender × Position | $F(2, 233) = 0.06$  | .944 | .000             |

- ▶ **Gender Matters:** Female members are more actively engaged in PTC activities than males.
- ▶ **Position Matters Even More:** Individuals holding leadership roles (chairman, secretary) demonstrate substantially higher participation compared to regular members.

The extremely large effect size for position ( $\eta^2 = .971$ ) suggests that institutional role and responsibility are the strongest predictors of participation, far outweighing demographic variables like qualification.

The non-significant interaction indicates that these patterns are stable across genders, meaning both male and female leaders show higher engagement than general members.

From a policy and practical standpoint, this implies that:

- ▶ Enhancing role clarity and responsibility distribution may improve participation.
- ▶ Training and empowering general members could help bridge the participation gap.
- ▶ Schools should focus on activating passive members, not just relying on leadership roles.

A two-way ANOVA indicated a significant main effect of gender,  $F(1, 30.45) = 13.85, p = .001$ , and position in PTC,  $F(2, 2) = 33.80, p = .029$ , on participation. However, the interaction effect was not significant,  $F(2, 233) = 0.06, p = .944$ .

## Discussion

The results of this study have implications for the dynamics of Parent-Teacher Council involvement in public secondary schools. First, the differences in academic qualifications are not significant, indicating that participation is not determined by academic qualifications. This means that participation in PTC is more broad-based and not restricted to highly educated individuals. Gender differences, however, show that women members are more active in PTC activities. This could be explained by their greater engagement in children's education and socialization in the cultural context.

The most important result is the significant effect of the position in the PTC. Chairpersons and secretaries showed much greater participation than did general members. This indicates that there is a structural imbalance of participation, as formal roles and responsibilities are linked to engagement. The results are congruent with stakeholder theory and Epstein's model of parental engagement, both of which support the notion that there needs to be structured interaction between school and community.

## Conclusions

The study concludes that:

- ▶ Participation in PTCs is generally high
- ▶ Gender and position significantly influence participation
- ▶ Academic qualification has no significant effect
- ▶ Leadership roles are key drivers of engagement
- ▶ Thus, participation is more role-driven than demographic-driven.

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