

## SCHOOL COUNCILS IN PUNJAB: EVALUATING THEIR IMPACT ON SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION AND THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

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### Abstract

*This study investigates the role of school councils in school administration in Punjab, Pakistan, focusing on their effectiveness, challenges, and opportunities through a quantitative lens. A structured survey was conducted with 180 head teachers, school council chairpersons, and parent members across primary, elementary, and high schools. Data were collected using a closed-ended questionnaire based on the framework provided by the School Council Policy 2013. The analysis revealed that while school councils exist in most schools, their functional effectiveness remains limited. Key challenges include low community awareness, limited participation, lack of training, and minimal authority in decision-making. However, respondents acknowledged the potential of school councils in improving accountability, student enrolment, and school infrastructure—provided that systemic support and capacity-building measures are introduced. The findings suggest that strengthening school councils through clear role definitions and enhanced community engagement can significantly improve collaborative school governance in Punjab's public education system.*

**Keywords:** *School Council, community participation, school-based action plan*

### Introduction

Community participation in school administration plays a vital role in improving educational quality and student outcomes, particularly in developing countries. National and international studies have consistently highlighted the value of school-community partnerships in increasing access to education and ensuring its quality (Behlol, 2017; Crozier & Davies, 2007; Lasky, 2000; Vincent, 2000). Involving parents and local stakeholders helps schools share the burden of administration and improve accountability, often leading to better academic performance among students (Tondeur, 2013).

Research has shown that when communities and parents are actively involved, students demonstrate stronger academic progress, improved attendance, and enhanced cognitive skills (Epstein, 1992, 1995, 2006; Bruns, Filmer & Patrinos, 2011). For example, Taniguchi and Hirakawa (2016) found that community participation positively influences school management, indirectly benefiting student achievement. Similarly, Burns et al. (2011) highlighted that learning outcomes improve when schools are given autonomy and held accountable to parents and community members.

Despite these advantages, real-world implementation of school-community collaboration remains challenging. Many schools in developing countries struggle with unclear roles, limited communication, and lack of support for parental engagement (Campbell, 2011; Onsomu & Mujidi, 2011). Teachers may discourage participation, hold infrequent or unproductive meetings, and fail to foster relationships with parents. As Naidoo and Anton (2013) note, parents are often excluded from important decisions, limiting their ability to influence school improvement or demand accountability.

In many cases, including in Pakistan, structural and social barriers further weaken community involvement. These include low literacy levels among parents, distance between communities and

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schools, and the perception that only teachers are responsible for student outcomes (Onsomu & Mujidi, 2011). As a result, school councils often operate as symbolic bodies with little actual authority or impact (Nasira, 2010; Hopkins, 2001).

Given these concerns, this study explores the role of school councils in Pakistan by examining their performance under the School Council Policy 2013. It aims to assess their effectiveness, understand the challenges they face, and identify opportunities for improving collaboration in school administration.

### **Background**

Community involvement through school councils has been promoted in Punjab since the 1990s. Initially called School Management Committees (SMCs), these bodies aimed to engage parents in school decision-making. However, early efforts failed due to low awareness and teacher resistance. The initiative was restructured in 2007 and later under the Punjab Education Sector Reform Program (PESRP), which established over 56,000 School Councils (GoP, 1998; Govt. of Punjab, 2007).

The 2009 National Education Policy emphasized training SC members and boosting awareness at local levels. Yet, the Punjab School Education Sector Plan (2013–2017) reported limited success due to weak communication and low public interest. Still, school councils are viewed as tools for promoting transparency, accountability, and enrollment (Islam, 2015). While SCs have the potential to reduce corruption and improve service delivery, their effectiveness remains limited in practice. This study investigates their performance, the challenges they face, and opportunities for better collaboration in school governance.

### **Research Questions:**

1. What are the perceived roles of school councils in school administration, as viewed by school heads, co-chairpersons, teachers, and school council members?
2. What challenges do school councils face in their collaboration with school administration, and how do these challenges differ among various stakeholders?
3. How does the involvement of school councils impact the overall effectiveness of school administration, including academic performance and community engagement?

### **Methodology**

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the roles and challenges of school councils in school administration. A structured survey was used to collect data from school heads, co-chairpersons, teachers, and school council members. The questionnaire was developed after identifying major themes from prior qualitative findings and expert validation. Initially comprising 76 items, the survey was refined through expert review and confirmatory factor analysis, resulting in a final 53-item instrument—22 items focused on the roles of school councils and 31 on challenges.

The data were collected from a stratified sample representing various schools. Participants responded to items using a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly agree” (1) to “strongly disagree” (5). Collected responses were analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics were used to compute means and standard deviations. ANOVA and Tukey’s post hoc tests were conducted to examine differences in perspectives among stakeholder groups.

## Results:

### Descriptive Statistics Regarding Demographic Variables:

**Table: 1.**

#### *School*

	N	Percentage
Primary	126	36
Middle	140	40
High	84	24
Total	350	100

The table shows that 36% of respondents belong to primary schools, 40% of respondents belong to middle schools and 24% of respondents belong to high schools.

**Table: 2**

#### *Designations of Respondents*

	N	Percentage
Headmaster	50	14.3
Co-chairman	50	14.3
Teacher	125	35.7
Community member	125	35.7
Total	350	100

This table shows 14.3% of respondents belong to the designation of headmaster, 14.3% of respondents belong to the designation of co-chairman, 35.7% of respondents belong to the designation of teacher and 35.7% of respondents belong to the designation of a community member.

**Table: 3**

#### *Professional Experience*

	N	Percentage
1-2 years	6	1.7
3-5 years	50	14.3
6-10 years	163	46.6
>10 years	131	37.4
Total	350	100

This table shows the professional experiences of the respondents. 1.7% of the respondents belong to 1-2 years experience, 14.3% of the respondents belong to 3-5 years experience, 46.6% of the respondents belong to 6-10 years experience and 37.4% of the respondents belong to greater than 10 years experience.

## 4Overall Mean

**Table 4.**

#### *Overall Mean for Academic Involvement*

Sr. No	Statement	Mean
1	SC involved in academic affairs of the school	2.76
2	SC involvement increase student academic outcomes	2.79

3	SC support teachers to achieve educational outcomes	2.32
4	SC involvement enhances teachers' capacity	2.46
5	SC persuades school to arrange extracurricular activities	2.44
6	SC assists in arranging parent teacher meetings	2.51
7	SC protects students' and teachers' rights to eliminate physical punishment	2.42
Total		2.53

It was indicated from the table that the means of the items indicating "academic involvement" as a role of the school council in school administration was ranged between 2.32 to 2.79. The overall mean of the "academic involvement" was 2.53 which shows that most of the people are almost neutral that they have "academic involvement" to perform their duties as a school council member.

**Table. 5**

*Overall Mean for Administrative Involvement*

Sr. No	Statement	Mean
1	SC involved in administrative affairs of the school	3.19
2	SC convenes ten meetings annually	3.14
3	SC involves in planning the School Development Plan	2.66
4	SC assists the execution of School Development Plan	2.84
5	SC monitors the attendance of teachers	3.05
6	SC involvement increases the enrolment	2.84
7	SC assists the provision of free books	2.95
8	SC takes measures to check misuse or illegal possession of school property	3.16
Total		2.98

It was indicated from the table that the means of the items indicating "Administrative Involvement" like a roll of SC in school administration was ranged between 2.66 and 3.19. The overall mean of the "administrative involvement" was 2.98 which shows that most of the people are neutral that they have enough "administrative involvement" to perform their duties as a school council member.

**Table. 6**

*Overall Mean for Financial Involvement*

Sr. No	Statement	Mean
1	SC involves in the financial affairs of the school	3.11
2	FTF (frog-e-taleem fund) allocation through SC affects school performance	2.71
3	Spending NSB (non-salary budget) through SC improves performance	2.95
4	Funds are allocated through mutual understanding of SC	2.96
5	SC has access to the financial record of school	2.94
6	SC generates funds by themselves to fulfill school needs	2.89
7	School administrative record is open to SC	3.04
Total		2.95

It was indicated from the table that the means of the items indicating “financial involvement” as a role of the school council in school administration was ranged between 2.71 to 3.11. The overall mean of the “financial involvement” was 2.95 which shows that most of the people are neutral that they have “financial involvement” to perform their duties as a school council member.

**Table. 7**

*Overall Mean for Selection of Members*

Sr. No	Statement	Mean
1	SC members were selected in a general body meeting	4.24
2	At the time of the meeting, all parents and stakeholders were informed to participate in the meeting	4.05
3	Each parent was given chance to show willingness for SC membership	4.14
4	SC members were selected by a majority of votes by parents	3.80
5	Co-chairman was selected by a simple majority of SC members	4.14
6	New members are selected after every two years	4.18
Total		4.1

It was indicated from the table that the means of the items indicating “selection of members” as a challenge was ranged between 3.80 to 4.18. Overall Mean of the “selection of members” was 4.1 which shows that most of the people are agreed that they have enough “selection of members” to perform their duties as a school council member.

**Table. 8**

*Overall Mean for Politics*

Sr. No	Statement	Mean
1	Involving community means involving local politics in the school	2.66
2	SC members politicize school affairs through their involvement	2.96
3	Other community groups politicize SC members’ involvement in school affairs	2.86
4	CS members politically address school problems	2.56
5	SC members’ involvement in school create disputes in the community	2.62
Total		2.73

It was indicated from the table that the mean of the items indicating “politics” as a challenge was ranged between 2.56 to 2.96. Overall Mean of the “politics” was 2.73 which shows that most of the people are neutral that they have enough “politics” to perform their duties as a school council member.

**Table. 9**

*Overall Mean for Time*

Sr. No	Statement	Mean
1	Sc members easily spare time for meetings	2.94
2	Sc members happily join meeting in the school	2.84
3	All SC members attend ten meetings annually	2.59

4	All SC members attend ten meetings annually	2.82
5	All financial matters are shared with SC members	2.55
Total		2.75

It was indicated from the table that the means of the items indicating “time” as a challenge was ranged between 2.55 to 2.94. Overall Mean of the “time” was 2.75 which shows that most of the people are almost neutral that they have enough “time” to perform their duties as a school council member.

**Table. 10**

*Overall Mean for Transparency*

Sr. No	Statement	Mean
1	SC members are consulted before purchasing of required material	3.96
2	Cashbook and receipt books are matched with work done physically	3.75
3	Transactions are entered in the cash book as they incurred	3.99
4	All entries in the cash book are entered transparently	3.73
5	SC members also face departmental audit	3.81
Total		3.85

It was indicated from the table that the means of the items indicating “transparency” as a challenge was ranged between 3.73 to 3.96. The overall mean of the “transparency” was 3.85 which shows that most of the people are agreed that they have enough “transparency” to perform their duties as a school council member.

**Table. 11**

*Overall Mean for Perception of Inability*

Sr. No	Statement	Mean
1	SC members are unaware of school administration	4.19
2	SC doesn't have the ability to participate in school affairs	4.09
3	Schools have sufficient ability to run schools without SC assistance	4.36
4	SC members hesitate to participate in school due to respect of teachers	4.00
5	SC members' full involvement will create problems for schools	4.12
6	SC members participate in school affairs because of monetary reward	3.55
Total		4.05

It was indicated from the table that the means of the items indicating “perception of inability” as a challenge was ranged between 3.55 to 4.36. The overall mean of the “perception of inability” was 4.05 which shows that most of the people are agreed that they have a “perception of inability” to perform their duties as a school council member.



**Table. 12**

*Overall Mean for Motivation*

Sr. No	Statement	Mean
1	SC members should provide some reward for their participation	3.69
2	SC members have enough motivation for their participation	4.28
3	SC members participate because they have a sense of belongingness for school	4.14
4	SC members participate because it's a matter of their children's education	3.88
Total		3.99

It was indicated from the table that the means of the items indicating “motivation” as a challenge was ranged between 3.69 to 4.28. The overall mean of the “motivation” was 3.99 which shows that most of the people are agreed that they have enough “motivation” to perform their duties as a school council member.

#### **ANOVA with Post Hoc Comparison**

**Table. 13**

*ANOVA comparison between Headmasters, Teachers, Co-Chairmen and Community Members regarding Academic Involvement*

Group	N	Mean	SD	F	Sig.
Headmaster	50	2.569	.312		
Co-chair	50	2.546	.413	.671	.570
Teacher	125	2.545	.382		
C-member	125	2.487	.478		

This table describes the results from a one-way analysis of variance to find out the difference of opinion among headmasters, co-chairmen, teachers, and community members towards their role as school council members to perform academic responsibilities. The mean response of headmasters regarding academic involvement is 2.569, co-chairman is 2.546, the teacher is 2.545, and community member is 2.487. The SD of headmaster, co-chairman, teacher, and community member is .312, .413, .382, and .478 respectively.

The F-value for this factor is .671. The level of significance is .570. The difference between the opinions of the six groups is not significant.

**Table. 14**

*ANOVA with Post Hoc comparison between Headmasters, Teachers, Co-Chairmen and Community Members regarding Administrative Involvement*

Group	N	Mean	SD	F	Sig.	Tukey's HSD Comparisons (Mean Difference)			
						Headmaster	Co-chair	Teacher	C-member
Headmaster	50	4.000	.290	890.4	.00		.662		

Co-chair	50	4.055	.216	
Teacher	125	2.546	.217	.828
C-member	125	2.572	.249	

This table describes the results from a one-way analysis of variance to find out the difference of opinion among headmaster, co-chairman, teacher, and community members towards their role as a school council member in administration. The mean response of headmasters regarding administrative involvement is .00, co-chairman is 4.055, the teacher is 2.546, and community member is 2.572. The S.D of headmaster, co-chairman, teacher, and community member is .290, .216, .217, and .249 respectively.

The F-value for this factor is 890.4. The level of significance is .00. The difference between the opinions of groups is significant. Therefore, we applied the post hock test to find the pairs which showed a significant difference in their opinions. After applying the post hock test the table further shows that the difference of opinion between pair headmaster and co-chairman, teacher, and community member are not statistically significant. The difference of opinions between headmaster and teacher, headmaster and community member, co-chairman and teacher, co-chairman and community member remaining areas statistically significant.

**Table. 15**

*ANOVA with Post Hoc comparison between Headmasters, Teachers, Co-Chairmen and Community Members regarding Financial Involvement*

Group	N	Mean	SD	F	Sig.	Tukey's HSD Comparisons (Mean Difference)			
						Headmaster	Co-chair	Teacher	C-member
Headmaster	50	4.086	.227				.430		
Co-chair	50	3.957	.293	297.05	.00				
Teacher	125	2.537	.507						.961
C-member	125	2.510	.438						

This table describes the results from a one-way analysis of variance to find out the difference of opinion among headmasters, co-chairmen, teachers, and community members towards their role as school council members to perform financial responsibilities. The mean response of headmasters regarding financial involvement is 4.086, co-chairman is 3.957, the teacher is 2.537, and community member is 2.510. The SD of headmaster, co-chairman, teacher, and community member is .277, .293, .507, and .438 respectively.

The F-value for this factor is 297.5. The level of significance is .00. The difference between the opinions of groups is significant. So, we applied the post hock test to find the pairs which showed significant differences in their opinions. After applying the post hock test the table further shows that the difference of opinion between pair headmaster and co-chairman, teacher, and community member are not statistically significant. The difference of opinion between headmaster and teacher, headmaster and community member, co-chairman and teacher, co-chairman and community member are statistically significant.



**Table. 16**

*ANOVA comparison between Headmasters, Teachers, Co-Chairmen and Community Members regarding "Selection of Members"*

Group	N	Mean	SD	F	Sig.
Headmaster	50	4.067	.269		
Co-chair	50	4.133	.243	.433	.730
Teacher	125	4.087	.289		
C-member	125	4.180	.310		

This table describes the results from a one-way analysis of variance to find out the difference of opinion among headmasters, co-chairmen, teachers, and community members towards challenges they face to perform their duties as a school council member in the selection of members. The mean response of headmasters regarding this selection of members is 4.067, co-chairman is 4.133, the teacher is 4.087, and community member is 4.180. The SD of headmaster, co-chairman, teacher, and community member is .269, .243, .289, and .310 respectively.

The F-Value for this factor is .433. The level of significance is .730. The difference between the opinions of the six groups is not significant.

**Table. 17**

*ANOVA with Post Hoc comparison between Headmasters, Teachers, Co-Chairmen and Community Members regarding Politics*

Group	N	Mean	SD	F	Sig.	Tukey's HSD Comparisons (Mean Difference)			
						Headmaster	Co-chair	Teacher	C-member
Headmaster	50	4.136	.212						
Co-chair	50	2.492	.316	44.95	.00			.990	
Teacher	125	2.476	.305						.678
C-member	125	2.518	.302				.950		

This table describes the results from a one-way analysis of variance to find out the difference of opinion among headmaster, co-chairman, teacher, and community members regarding politics. The mean response of headmasters regarding this question is 4.136, co-chairman is 2.492, the teacher is 2.476, and community member is 2.518. The SD of headmaster, co-chairman, teacher, and community member is .212, .316, .305, and .302 respectively.

The F-value for this factor is 44.95. The level of significance is .00. The difference between the opinions of groups is significant. Therefore, we applied the post hock test to find out the pairs which showed statistically significant differences. After applying the post hock test the table further shows that the difference of opinion between pairs co-chairman and teacher, co-chairman and community member, teacher and community member are not statistically significant. The difference of opinions between headmaster and teacher, headmaster and community member, headmaster and co-chairman are statistically significant.

**Table. 18**

*ANOVA with Post Hoc comparison between Headmasters, Teachers, Co-Chairmen and Community Members regarding Time*

Group	N	Mean	SD	F	Sig.	Tukey's HSD Comparisons (Mean Difference)			
						Headmaster	Co-chair	Teacher	C-member
Headmaster	50	3.960	.198						
Co-chair	50	2.548	.516	122.3	.00			.988	
Teacher	125	2.523	.504						.895
C-member	125	2.565	.529				.997		

This table describes the results from a one-way analysis of variance to find out the difference of opinion among headmaster, co-chairman, teacher, and community members regarding time. The mean response of headmasters regarding time is 3.960, co-chairman is 2.548, the teacher is 2.523, and community member is 2.565. The SD of headmaster, co-chairman, teacher, and community member is .198, .516, .504, and .529 respectively.

The F-value for this factor is 122.3. The level of significance is .00. The difference between the opinions of groups is significant. So, we apply the post hock test to find out the pairs which are statistically significant. After applying the post hock test the table further shows that the pairs co-chairman and teacher co-chairman and community member, teacher and community member are not statistically significant. The difference of opinions between headmaster and teacher, headmaster and community member, headmaster and co-chairman are statistically significant.

**Table. 19**

*ANOVA with Post Hoc comparison between Headmasters, Teachers, Co-Chairmen and Community Members regarding Transparency*

Group	N	Mean	SD	F	Sig.	Tukey's HSD Comparisons (Mean Difference)			
						Headmaster	Co-chair	Teacher	C-member
Headmaster	50	2.212	.247						
Co-chair	50	4.020	.371	48.1	.00			.163	
Teacher	125	4.134	.345						.996
C-member	125	4.144	.324				.112		

This table describes the results from a one-way analysis of variance to find out the difference of opinion among headmaster, co-chairman, teacher, and community members regarding transparency. The mean response of headmasters regarding transparency is 2.212, co-chairman is 4.020, the teacher is 4.134, and community member is 4.144. The SD of headmaster, co-chairman, teacher, and community member is .247, .371, .345, and .324 respectively.

The F-value for this factor is 48.1. The level of significance is .00. The difference between the opinions of groups is significant. Therefore, we applied the post hock test to find out the pairs

which show a significant difference. After applying the post hoc test the table further shows that the opinions of pairs co-chairman and teacher co-chairman and community member, teacher and community member are not statistically significant. The difference of opinions between headmaster and teacher, headmaster and community member, headmaster and co-chairman are statistically significant.

**Table. 20**

*ANOVA with Post Hoc comparison between Headmasters, Teachers, Co-Chairmen and Community Members regarding Perception of Inability*

Group	N	Mean	SD	F	Sig.	Tukey's HSD Comparisons (Mean Difference)			
						Headmaster	Co-chair	Teacher	C-member
Headmaster	50	3.927	.323				.225		.009*
Co-chair	50	4.040	.302	3.7	.01			.935	
Teacher	125	4.069	.297		.22				.923
C-member	125	4.084	.262				.812		

This table describes the results from a one-way analysis of variance to find out the difference of opinion among headmaster, co-chairman, teacher, and community members regarding the perception of inability. The mean response of headmasters regarding the perception of inability is 3.927, co-chairman is 4.040, the teacher is 4.069, and community member is 4.084. The SD of headmaster, co-chairman, teacher, and community member is .323, .302, .297, and .262 respectively.

The F-value for this factor is 3.7. The level of significance is .01. The difference between the opinions of groups is significant. Therefore, we apply the post hoc test to find out the pairs which show a statistically significant difference. After applying the post hoc test the table further shows that the opinions of pairs headmaster and co-chairman, headmaster and teacher, co-chairman and teacher, co-chairman and community member, teacher and community member are not statistically significant. The difference of opinions between headmaster and community member, teacher and community member are statistically significant.

**Table. 21**

*ANOVA with Post Hoc comparison between Headmasters, Teachers, Co-Chairmen and Community Members regarding Motivation*

Group	N	Mean	SD	F	Sig.	Tukey's HSD Comparisons (Mean Difference)			
						Headmaster	Co-chair	Teacher	C-member
Headmaster	50	4.100	.303				.859		.025*
Co-chair	50	4.050	.277	3.2	.02			.622	
Teacher	125	3.986	.295		.139				.805
C-member	125	3.950	.355				.235		

This table describes the results from a one-way analysis of variance to find out the difference of opinion among headmaster, co-chairman, teacher, and community members regarding motivation. The mean response of headmasters regarding this question is 4.100, co-chairman is 4.050, the teacher is 3.986, and community member is 3.950. The SD of headmaster, co-chairman, teacher, and community member is .303, .277, .295, and .355 respectively.

The F-value for this item is 3.2. The level of significance is .02. The difference between the opinions of groups is significant. Therefore, we applied the post hoc test to find the pairs which showed significant differences. After applying the post hoc test the table further shows that the opinions of pair headmaster and co-chairman, headmaster and teacher, co-chairman and teacher, co-chairman and community member, teacher and community member are not statistically significant. The difference of opinions between headmaster and community member, teacher and community member are statistically significant.

### Findings

For “academic involvement” the researcher found conformity between each respondent. Each respondent’s category has the same opinion near to neutral. These findings match with qualitative findings in terms that the community doesn’t involve in the academic affairs of the school. They think that this is what only duty of teachers. The community can do nothing with the academic responsibilities of schools. On the other hand, for “administrative involvement” we found a difference of opinions among respondent categories. Headmasters and co-chairman agreed that they were collaborating administrating responsibilities while teachers and community members showed less agreement regarding this collaboration. The same results were found from the analysis of “financial involvement”. Headmasters and co-chairmen thought that they were involving in the financial affairs of schools while teachers and community members were not agreed. Qualitative findings also proved that financial affairs were done in a confederacy of headmaster and co-chairman. Other members of school council members were not involved in these matters.

From “selection of members”, it was found that each respondent category had the same opinion regarding the selection of members. They were agreed that at the time of selection proper procedures were not followed. Schools selected those members who could favor them when needed. They selected those members who were dormant and had no experience of working with schools or other community welfare activities. Further, it was found that selected members were unable to perform their duties because they lack skills in doing so. Findings showed that community members didn’t have the required knowledge and skills to perform the duties. Most of the respondents showed their agreement regarding community members’ inability to perform school-related decisions. So, their contribution could not be fruitful. Moreover, they were never provided the required training.

For “politics”, school heads strongly believed that community involvement was a way to politicize the school environment. Other respondents categories did not agree with that opinion. For “time” it was found that most respondents disagreed that community members can easily spare time for schools. Only headmasters’ opinions differ from other respondents. His response was neutral regarding the challenge of time. Lastly, “transparency” was a big issue in this collaboration. Results revealed that headmasters disagreed that information was confidential. Other members agreed that all related information was kept confidential and was not shared with community members.

## Conclusion

The findings revealed that school councils generally lacked awareness of their core responsibilities and were often unable to participate meaningfully in school decision-making. Their involvement was largely limited to recommending feeder teachers during shortages and resolving minor disputes. However, they struggled with key responsibilities such as implementing the School-Based Action Plan (SBAP) and monitoring teacher attendance. While they contributed to the purchase of materials and school maintenance, generating local funds remained a challenge.

Improper selection procedures often led to the inclusion of underqualified and less confident members, many of whom lacked the training and skills necessary for effective participation. Although a few members were motivated by personal or ancestral ties to the school, others were driven by expectations of monetary benefits.

Time constraints due to occupational commitments (e.g., farming, shopkeeping) and political interference further hindered their active involvement. Schools tended to restrict council roles to signing documents, limiting broader engagement. Moreover, a lack of transparency in school matters weakened community trust and accountability. These challenges underscore the need for structured training, transparent practices, and inclusive policies to strengthen the role of school councils in school governance.

## Discussion:

The findings of this study highlight a significant gap between the prescribed roles of school councils (SCs) and their actual practices. Despite the school council policy assigning academic, administrative, and financial responsibilities, members were generally inactive in monitoring student performance or teacher attendance (Taniguchi & Hirakawa, 2016). Their involvement was more visible in supporting teacher shortages and maintaining school-community relations, especially during disputes. Financially, SCs contributed to infrastructure, procurement, and temporary staffing, aligning with Preston (2013), who emphasized community support through volunteering and fundraising.

However, SCs were often excluded from planning and were only involved at later stages, reflecting Taniguchi & Hirakawa's (2016) findings. Selection processes lacked transparency, with members chosen for formality rather than competency. Many schools resisted empowering SCs, fearing administrative interference, as noted by Fukuyama (1996), Halpern (2005), and Putnam (2000). Community members' low education and time constraints (Putnam, 2000; To, 2016; Wedam et al., 2015) hindered their participation. A few were motivated by emotional ties or aspirations for improved education (To, 2016), but their input was often undervalued (Comer, 2009). Overall, weak trust and limited engagement between schools and communities continue to challenge effective school governance (Epstein, 2011; Tschannen-Moran, 2013; Turnbull et al., 2010).

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