

GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES UNDER COALITION GOVERNMENT: A CASE OF BALOCHISTAN FROM 2013 TO 2023

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(CGP # 07-002)

6TH RASTA CONFERENCE

Friday 15th, Saturday 16th & Sunday 17th May 2026

ONLINE

This document is unedited author's version submitted to RASTA.



RASTA – PIDE & Planning Commission Competitive Research Grants
Competitive Grants Programme for Policy-oriented Research
PAKISTAN INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS

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ABSTRACT

Since the inception of Balochistan, the province has been governed by coalition governments. This project investigates the impacts of coalition government dynamics on the formulation and implementation of health and education policies in Balochistan during the period 2013-2018 and 2018-2023. Using qualitative triangulation, this study combines relevant policy documents, government's publications, additional secondary data and interviews. Documentary evidence found weak health and education policies implementation, persistent gaps between budget allocations and utilization, and delays and frequent transfer and posting of bureaucrats in senior positions, which brought no impactful reforms in the education and health sectors in Balochistan. Moreover, analyzing additional secondary data, the results demonstrate that low household satisfaction with public services, rising corruption, and continued deterioration in human development were observed.

Interview findings via thematic analysis showed coalition regimes faced structural issues, were compromised, uncertain, unstable, had fragmented authority, and prioritized personal schemes over provincial reforms. Policies in education and health experienced modifications with changes in coalition administrations and ministers. Moreover, the change of policies also disrupted the routine work and policies of donors as well. The involvement of centre and security institutions also caused delays or cancellation of policies in health and education. The findings highlight that institutional independence, strong political parties, policy continuity and local empowerment were limited to their respective periods. The results suggest the coalition governments in Balochistan need structured reforms and framework to be more efficient in-service delivery and policy continuity.

Keywords: Coalition Government, Balochistan, Health, Education and Budget

PREFACE

Balochistan has remained under coalition governments since 1970; in spite of being a resource-rich federal unit, it is plagued by governance issues and poor socio-economic development indicators. This project It projects the impact of governance dynamics on the evolution and implementation of health and education policies in coalition governments in Balochistan. The years covered are 2013 to 2018 and 2018 to 2023, with the intention of tracking the change in political dynamics and the consequent policy impact of the same. Balochistan faces special governance and development challenges that are more serious than in the other federal units. These are governance challenges such as lack of effective governance, political fragmentation and/or instability, and institutional failings, which prevent developmental policies from being fully implemented. Conventionally formed and dissolved coalition governments in this region have an effective bearing on the implementation of policies in the context of important sectors such as health and education. Poor development indicators in health and education sectors as compared with other regions have prevailed from time to time despite considerable attempts.

Our study used a qualitative research approach and entailed learning and understanding a complex governance environment in Balochistan qualitatively. This involved a detailed interview with a varied and broad set of key stakeholders such as policy makers, government officers, people from civil society, and experts in health and education field. These interviews helped elucidate the realities of challenges and perceptions of stakeholders to policy making and policy implementation.

Our research also looks to triangulate the findings by collecting primary data, such as interviews, as well as relevant policy documents, government reports and other secondary data. The dual attention enables a deeper understanding of the complex relation between coalition governance and policy outcomes. The project's focus on coalition politics in Balochistan reveals how political alliances and stability directly influence policy effectiveness.

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to the RASTA Competitive Grants Program (CGP) for Policy-oriented Research for funding and supporting this project. Special thanks to the project mentors, Dr. Hafeez Jamali, Director General, Balochistan Civil Services Academy and Dr. Khalid Chauhan, Director Anti-Terrorism Department for providing invaluable guidance and support throughout the research process. We also extend our gratitude to Dr. Amdadullah Baloch, Associate Professor at Lasbela University of Agriculture, Water and Marine Sciences Uthal, for his scholarly advises and reviews, and Balochistan government officials for sharing data, their cooperation and valuable insights and the Respondents who participated in interviews, providing critical insights and data for this study.

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ABBREVIATIONS

SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
WVS	World Values Survey
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
PSLM	Pakistan Social & Living Standards Measurement
ESS	Effective Sample Size
WDI	World Development Indicators
SD	Standard Deviation

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Balochistan is the largest province of Pakistan in term of land and the smallest in term of population. The province, despite being rich in mineral and natural resources along with longest coastline belt, remained one of most backward and poorest provinces of Pakistan. Balochistan hosts four out of five the poorest districts of Pakistan (Javed et al., 2020). This contrast between backward condition and rich potentialities by nature are the result of governance issues which needs proper investigation and debate.

Balochistan has been facing governance challenges over many periods of time. The existing literature identified limited transparency, weak accountability mechanisms, persistent corruption, slow bureaucracy and weak public delivery mechanism in Balochistan. These challenges have created a gulf and mistrust between public and institutions at large where until and unless public service delivery is improved, people in general claim large development programs nor new funding announcements.

The governance issues are directly linked with political instability in Balochistan. The studies identified a link between unrest of Balochistan with conflict on power politics and resource distribution (Aslam, 2011; Mushtaq & Mirza, 2022). These conflicts and unrest have brought the province to a point where governance challenges and administrative routine have become harder to function properly. Work on fiscal politics in Balochistan also raises concerns about uneven development funding and the effects this has on ordinary people (Ahmed & Jan, 2024). In practical research terms, these claims matter because they shape what should be studied: not only how much money is allocated, but also how it is released, who controls it, and whether spending can be traced to results.

Economic indicators summarize that Balochistan has the highest Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) in Pakistan, estimated at about 69.50%, compared with 33.80% in Punjab (Haq et al., 2024). The MPI reflects overlapping shortfalls in education, health, and living standards, hence, it is useful for diagnosing problems that do not appear in income measures alone. District-level evidence further highlights large gaps in basic services, including education and health access, as well as sanitation and housing conditions (Raza & Khan, 2025). These patterns are frequently connected with political instability, governance issues, poor infrastructures which ultimately discourage investments and shrink human capital. Therefore, any socio-economic packages from federal need persistent evaluation, because projects and announcements cannot provide durable change automatically (Khan et al., 2024).

Health and education sectors explain how governance setbacks show up daily routine life. Study in education indicates continuous challenges cause slow improvement (Coşkun, 2023). Balochistan is continuously described as underserved as compared with other provinces in health, with poor performance on standard indicators (Zahra et al., 2025). Limited facilities, weak oversight and shortage of staff reduce the effects of higher budgeting (Raza & Khan, 2025). Inadequate and weak access to skilled professions is a cause of high infant and maternity mortality rate in Balochistan (Ullah et al., 2025). Less ratio of women participation in politics in Balochistan further restrict

broader policy-making process despite the fact that women are termed to be roughly half of the population in Balochistan (Kakar et al., 2023). Discussed all together, this investigation indicates that service delivery is not only technical. It goes on finding how decisions are formed and implemented? How people are heard and how officials are held accountable in a coalition setup where government itself is so compromising and fragile?

Balochistan has been governed by coalition governments since 1970 because no political party has ever secured majority of seats to form a single party government (Mehdi et al., 2010). No doubt, coalition regime provides larger representation in government but often remains weak and compromised over decision making process, ministries allocation and resource distribution (Falcó-Gimeno, 2014). These issues are often witnessed in Balochistan's coalition setup at larger context due to tribal influence, federal-province power dynamics, role of security agencies and ethnic divisions. All these limits and weaken the powers of coalition to perform in Balochistan (Zareef et al., 2021). The results get fragmented policy and short planning horizons, principally when coalition partners retain veto-like leverage over reforms (Kakar, 2025).

Health and education are key building blocks of developments; therefore, these are useful lens to study political situations of Balochistan. Basically, coalition setup requires constant negotiations over policy making process which ultimately results compromised and weak decisions (Van den Berghe & Vos, 2019). Moreover, in coalition setup, the policy travels into many stages, problem identification, policy setting, enforcement and evaluation, therefore, each stage may be either diverted or disrupted due to constant negotiation and compromise among coalition partners (Zembe et al., 2023).

A crucial study gap remains. Existing literature debates governance challenges in Balochistan and investigates health and education policy in various settings; nonetheless, it hardly isolates how coalition politics influence the mechanism and delivery of policies of health and education in Balochistan. Existing Literature and evidence indicate that control of regime, bargaining among coalition partners and pressure of interest groups give birth to weak and immature results in policies and development, however, these ideas have not been investigated and tested in Balochistan level before (Debus, 2008). This study hence emphasizes on coalition regimes from 2013–2018 and 2018–2024 and investigates how coalition formation process and political bargaining impacted health and education policy selections, resource distribution and implementation quality in Balochistan and translate analysis into practical recommendations which may consolidate accountability process and service delivery in Balochistan.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

Key objectives of this research have been:

- 1) To identify the impacts of coalition government dynamics on the formulation and implementation of health and education policies in Balochistan since 2013
- 2) To investigate the challenges of coalition government in the process of the allocation and distribution of provincial resource funds, particularly in the sectors of health and education.
- 3) To recommend policy options for the coalition government of Balochistan to tackle the governance challenges, particularly in the sectors of education and health.

1.3. Significance of the Study

Study examined how coalition governments in Balochistan impact policies in health, education, and resources. It adds to public policy, education, and health fields by demonstrating how political structures influence social sectors. Study aims to provide policy guidelines for politicians, community leaders, members of civil society, officials and stakeholders to evaluate their programs and policies. Further, it underlines suggestions in the sectors of health and education in coalition governments and resolves regional inequalities, explaining in what ways the adopted policies strengthen development in the province of Balochistan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Complex interaction between coalition régimes and subnational dynamics drastically influences the execution and formulation of policies in respect to education and health at state level. Since coalition regimes involve various political parties' participation and different parties' policies, they remain weak and compromising in nature which ultimately affect policy outcomes (Christiansen & Pedersen, 2014). This complication is greatly witnessed at subnational levels where local political parties have great importance and role in connecting with national policy frameworks (Kailash, 2011).

In education policy, coalition régimes witness issues like parties' priorities and preferences in forming rational policy program (Jungblut, 2016). For example, early movers in school voucher plans, such as Wisconsin and Sweden, established how early policy divergence (means-tested vs universal vouchers) were influenced by political circumstances, shaping successive policy evolution (Lachance, 2020). Policies related to education under coalition setup often faced bargaining situations, where parties with similar priorities inclined to accept more extensive policies. Nevertheless, the necessity to bargain coalition contracts can negotiate the effect of singular partisan partialities, policies that are a mixture of numerous parties rather (Jungblut, 2016). In the UK, the education policy under the coalition governments have been much balanced, based on efficiency and equity, even reflecting the Liberal Democrat and Conservative parties' manifestos (West, 2015). This phase witnessed a change in policy levels, going from a rationalist, guiding state towards more market-oriented lines, characterized by the expansion of Academies and hiding lines between state and market in education (Riddell, 2013). Advocacy coalitions in education department has a key role, shaping policy results via their strategies, actions, profiles and agendas which affect public and decision-maker opinions in respect to policy formation and implementation (Aydarova et al., 2024). The social construction of youth in education policy, as showed by coalition régime's programs in UK, emphasizes how core interpretations of beneficiaries can outline policy approaches in numerous government sectors (Brooks, 2013).

Subnational governance, specifically in provincial and state levels, establishes extra layers of complication. In Federal system as witnessed in states like Germany where education is given much importance within coalition setup (Welsh, 2014). Research of German Länder investigated how coalitions setup, being on different pages ideologically, also impacted the spending on education which indicates that coalitions on the basis of ideological composition can affect direction and size of expenditure on education (Schniewind et al., 2009). In India, national political parties in Federal level pay much attention to formation of policies of provincial level whereas the local political parties prioritize their local agenda (Kailash, 2011). Moreover, local differences in universities' education development, as witnessed in China, shows great support to national level policies, for example 'Ministry-Province Co-construction Policy,' where national and local level parties make collective efforts for improvement of education in universities in backward areas (Liang, 2024). South Korea witnesses a unique system where governments along with institutions make collective policies to rescue the shrinking birth rate in higher education institutions that put great effects on academics, administrators, and regional economy and society (Jung, 2024).

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed that politics played a crucial role in health decisions where governments were often witnessed to make certain decisions on basis of political pressure, ignoring the ground realities of health. For example, delaying or softening restrictions related to lockdown, vaccine distribution (Prieto et al., 2024). Fund and resource distribution has been greatly influenced by the coalition politics in developing countries for example, area controlled by major coalition parties, get tangible amount on health (Rizky et al., 2021). India has been spending less amount on healthcare as compare with global average because of political competition among various political parties at state level. In order to gain public vote, governments under coalition setup have been investing more amount on healthcare in India (Datta, 2020). Literature on Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in China, revealed that political willingness, commitment, proper planning and funding on healthcare can develop health services greatly despite many challenges (Yip et al., 2023).

Health policies of coalition regimes in UK are termed as 'game of two halves,'. In early phase, it was market oriented, which was based on privatization and competition, however it has now shifted to new trend, reflecting different political beliefs (Powell, 2016). In this phase no doubt, governments made efforts to integrate health and social care services by introducing new initiative to work collectively in a better way, however, progress still remained debatable (Miller & Glasby, 2016). Coalition regimes in developing countries can address issues like malnutrition effectively when they collaborate with the NGOs and other national and international actors (Sengchaleun et al., 2023). Papers related to how political setup influence health policies and their outcomes, have been widely read and reviewed (Datta, 2020).

Influence of coalition governance is not only limited to federal level; they have also influential role in local and provincial level. The coalition governments in provincial level face federal calculations in India where they are ought to collaborate with federal government in taking provincial level decisions. This indicates that policy formation at provincial involves is not purely handled by the provincial political setup. It involves inputs and decisions of federal governments (Kailash, 2011). Likewise, big cities of South Africa often witness coalition political setup in local government elections where it has been always tough for coalition setup to formulate and implement stable policies (Dlakavu, 2022).

Influential role of coalition politics in provincial level decision, policies and expenditure, specifically for health and education is an important area to be investigated in developing countries (Rizky et al., 2021). This study indicates a direct link between the structure and constitution of coalition governance with resource distribution in important sectors like health and education at subnational level. Coalition partners have strong influential roles in controlling and limiting the policy outcomes in coalition setup. Strong political parties with greater number of seats in coalition setup influence entire legislative process and influence policy decision in their favor. This indicates how coalition partners have strong roles in shaping the policy outcomes. In such situation, the concept of "extra-coalitional policy bargaining" gets so much importance where coalition partners make bargain beyond the official coalition setup that ultimately effects policy outcomes (Krauss et al., 2021).

Formulation of public policy in coalition setup is a challenging task which has to travel from individual political party preferences to a coalition agreement (Jungblut, 2016). The policy which

originated from single political entity, gets often compromised and changed when it is deliberated among the coalition political setup. For example, when the school voucher programs of Wisconsin and Sweden were compared, it was witnessed that contrary education plans gave birth to grievances, the nature of the voucher programs (universal vs. means-tested) originally implemented under another political situations (Lachance, 2020). The policy feedback processes may direct to polarization of interest groups, as observed in education, such groups reacting to policies on private educational institute choice (Finger & Reckhow, 2022).

Furthermore, institutional frameworks have a vital role in deciding which party electoral manifesto and promises to become the ultimate policies of the coalition government (Martin & Vanberg, 2020). Where institutions are creditable and strong which enforce agreements, coalition partners would stay in line of their electoral promises. Such institutions would decide the nature of policy tools in coalition governments. As it is witnessed in the coalition setup of UK, government decides the market related policies in education in order to involve privatization and competition that is more neoliberal in nature (Riddell, 2013). Such changes have a great effect in public service delivery as witnessed in between the state-controlled education and privatization where privatization has made less expenditure on education but more expanded the academia (Junemann & Ball, 2013).

Maintenance of low-income housing delivery in developing countries is not affected by the coalition setup directly, they face governance challenges, including corruption, weak administration and bad governance (Mhlongo et al., 2024). Effective governance, specifically smart governance, is extremely important and effective in urban areas since it helps in better planning, but it also involves challenges like weak arrangement of technology and unequal benefits (Popova & Popovs, 2023). No doubt, smart governance is technological based governance which helps government in reshaping and enhancing public delivery services, but coalition political setup has to decide when and how to use these technologies for better public policy formulation and execution.

In conclusion, health and education policy outcomes are often affected by coalition governments at federal and provincial level because coalition governments are the combination of different political entities with different policy preferences (Jungblut, 2016). Such situation influences the process of public service delivery and resource distribution, as witnessed in expenditure on education and health by local government (Rizky et al., 2021). Situation is further complicated at Federal level where the governments have to consider the interests and preferences of national and regional political parties while formulating and executing policies (Kailash, 2011). Policies of voucher programs and healthcare under coalition governments often get changed due to disagreement of coalition partners (Lachance, 2020).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study adopts a mixed methodology, emphasizing an in-depth understanding of complex governance dynamics, policy processes, and stakeholder perspectives to investigate challenges, faced by coalition governments in Balochistan concerning the formulation and implementation of health and education policies during the periods of 2013-2018 and 2018-2023.

3.1. Research Method

Study employs a qualitative research method, which is particularly suited for exploring intricate social phenomena, contextual nuances, and subjective experiences of actors within a political system (Agee, 2009). Importance of qualitative methods is recognised across various disciplines, including health sciences, psychology, social sciences, and organisational research (Pratt, 2025). Qualitative research aims to understand why and how certain phenomena occur, rather than simply measuring what occurs (Agee, 2009). Given complicated nature of coalition governments and their impact on policy, a qualitative approach enables collection of rich, detailed data and a nuanced understanding of challenges in health and education policy formulation and implementation in Balochistan. This method is chosen because governance challenges in Balochistan are deeply embedded in its political economy, historical context, and dynamic interaction of various stakeholders, which cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measures alone. Qualitative approach provides the flexibility to delve into complex issues such as common pool problem in resource allocation (Chivanga, 2016), political instability due to divergent interests (Bäck et al., 2017), and specific implications for public service delivery, like education and health.

3.2. Research Design

The research design is a descriptive and analytical case study approach, with Balochistan serving as primary case. A case study enables an in-depth, holistic description and analysis of a single unit or a small number of units. This approach is particularly suitable to examine unique politics of Balochistan, where distinct political, economic, and social factors shape governance. The descriptive portion details challenges encountered by coalition governments in policy formulation and implementation, while analytical component seeks to explain underlying reasons and causal mechanisms that contribute to these challenges. The two distinct periods, 2013-2018 and 2018-2023, are treated as sub-cases or comparative temporal units within the broader case study, allowing for an examination of changes or continuities in governance challenges over time. This analysis provides insights into how different political configurations and external factors might have influenced policy outcomes in health and education during these specific government tenures.

3.3. Data Collection

Data collection for this study primarily involved two qualitative methods: policy document review and semi-structured interviews.

Policy Document and Data Review: A review of policy documents and secondary data was conducted, including government reports, legislative documents, policy briefs, strategic plans related to health and education in Balochistan, budget allocations, and official communications from 2013-2018 and 2018-2023. These provided insights into policy objectives, frameworks, strategies, and

resources, helping identify discrepancies between policy intentions and implementation, as well as challenges in coherence, resource distribution, and institutional arrangements. Development fund allocation documents revealed irregular distribution patterns affecting health and education initiatives. Document analysis is a vital method in health policy research, systematically understanding and analysing policy (Cardno, 2019; Dalglish et al., 2021), focusing on policies and instruments to gain governance insights.

3.4. Interviews with Stakeholders

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all key stakeholders involved in coalition governments and health and education policy processes in Balochistan during specified periods. All stakeholders refer to a comprehensive effort to include individuals from various political parties within ruling coalitions, bureaucrats responsible for health and education departments, civil society representatives, academics, and, where feasible, local community leaders who have been affected by these policies. This inclusive approach aims to capture a broad spectrum of perspectives, experiences, and interpretations of governance challenges. Finally, the qualitative data collected from policy documents and interviews were analysed using thematic analysis, facilitated by NVivo software.

Thematic Analysis: Thematic analysis is a flexible and powerful qualitative data analysis method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Nowell et al., 2017). This method involves systematically identifying common ideas, concepts, and patterns of meaning that emerge from textual data (Ahmed et al., 2025). Process typically involves several stages, as outlined in Braun & Clarke (2006) framework. The generation of initial codes and identification of notable features across the entire dataset were carried out systematically. Codes were then grouped into potential themes, considering how different codes aggregate to form overarching concepts. These themes were subsequently reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately reflect the data and maintain distinctiveness. This inductive coding process, leading to theme generation and narrative creation, is particularly effective when combining different sources of information, such as expert interviews and policy documents, to form a comprehensive understanding.

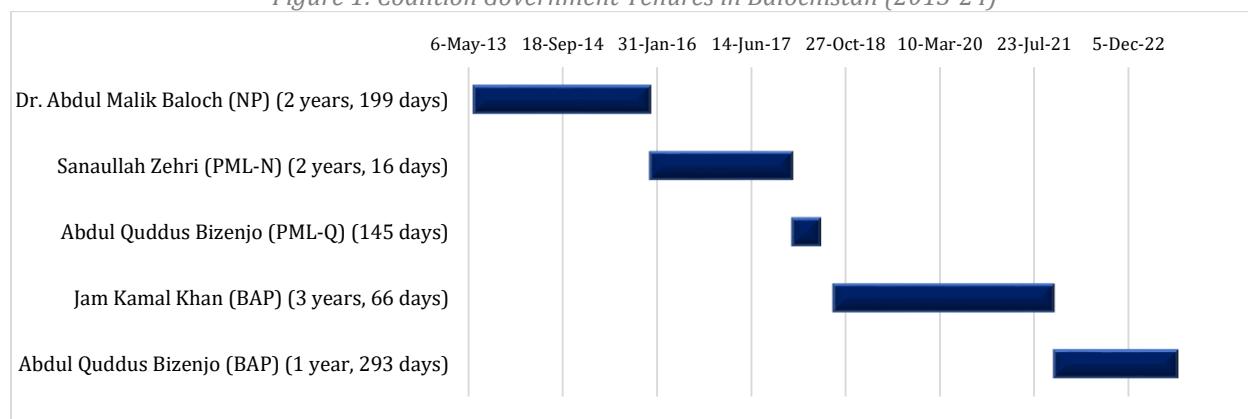
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results and discussion offer a detailed investigation of the performance and issues which the coalition governments in Balochistan have witnessed during 2013-2018 and 2018-2023, especially in education and health sectors.

4.1. The Architecture of Instability: Coalition Politics and Administrative Discontinuity

Study shows that Balochistan has witnessed multi-party coalition regimes from 2013 to 2023 which have been formed and engineered by external political factors rather than any popular mandate within Balochistan. A compromised coalition regime was formed from 2013 to 2018 by the National Party (NP), Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP), Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) with the formula of 2.5 years as the shared Chief Ministership between NP and PML-N. First phase of 2.5 years of the coalition government was ruled by Dr. Abdul Malik who remained in office until December 2015 while the next phase was governed by Sana Ullah Zehri until January 2018 who was dismissed via a no confidence motion within his own party. The rest of his tenure was completed by Abdul Quddus Bizenjo, PML-Q. However, following 2018 elections, Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) formed a coalition government along with the members of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) where Mr. Jam Kamal Khan served as Chief Minister of Balochistan until October 2021 whose regime was succeeded by Mr. Abdul Quddus Bizenjo who remained in power until August 2023.

Figure 1: Coalition Government Tenures in Balochistan (2013-24)



Source: Authors' compilations.

The Study found that leadership crisis under coalition politics continued throughout the study period.

4.2. Integrated Analysis of Political-Administrative Churn

Continuous political changes created disturbance for the provincial bureaucracy in the consistency and implementation of policies from 2013 to 2023. During this period, regular change of leadership in Balochistan resulted frequent transfer and posting of bureaucrats in senior positions, from example, Health Department witnessed 21 Secretaries, averaging six months each. Similar situations are learnt from Finance and Education Departments which have badly affected well-functioning and handling long-term strategies. As a result, bureaucracy did not function independently, which has

been used as a political tool for political gain. Table 1 indicates the linkages of bureaucracy with Chief Minister.

The tenure of Dr. Abdul Malik also witnessed administrative changes where four Secretaries were transferred in both Planning & Development and Health Departments (see Table 1). The situation was further worsened during Sana Ullah Zehri regime where five more secretaries were reshuffled in Health and Secondary Education Departments which all were political based, used as a tool for political portage. The same example was followed by Abdul Quddus Bizenjo in 2018 where in quick two secretaries were transferred in Health and Finance Departments. However, the regime of Mr. Jam Kamal Khan witnessed serious reshuffle of secretaries frequently where seven Secretaries in Health and six Secretaries in Finance Departments were changed in the period of only three years. Even situation was further deteriorated under second tenure of Bizenjo where seven secretaries were transferred in Colleges and Higher Education Department within period of two years.

Persistent reshuffle in executive positions creates problems in policy implementation and execution. The short tenure of secretaries brings governance challenges in projecting and implementing the plans for longer periods of time.

Table 1: Tenure of Chief Ministers and Key Secretaries in Balochistan (2013-2024)

Chief Minister (Party)	Tenure Dates	Tenure Length	Health Secretaries	Finance Secretaries	Secondary Education Secretaries	Colleges/Higher Ed. Secretaries	Planning & Development Secretaries
Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch (NP)	7 Jun 2013 – 23 Dec 2015	2 years, 199 days	4	2	3	3	4
Sana Ullah Zehri (PML-N)	24 Dec 2015 - 9 Jan 2018	2 years, 16 days	5	3	5	4	4
Abdul Quddus Bizenjo (PML-Q)	13 Jan 2018 - 7 Jun 2018	145 days	2	2	1	1	1
Jam Kamal Khan (BAP)	19 Aug 2018 - 24 Oct 2021	3 years, 66 days	7	6	6	5	4
Abdul Quddus Bizenjo (BAP)	29 Oct 2021 - 18 Aug 2023	1 year, 293 days	6	7	3	7	5

Source: Author's data collection, from Services and General Administration Department, Government of Balochistan.

4.2.1. Bureaucratic Attrition

Date presented in Table 2 shows that the frequent transfer of posting of bureaucrats in Balochistan has brought governance challenges in Health and education Departments. The shortest tenure of Muhammad Akbar Harifal's as Secretary of Health only served for four-day which illustrates the dysfunction, deters reforms and efficient governance. Departments of Education and Finance witnessed serious short tenures of secretaries where some of them have served only eight- and nine-month tenures, this led to postponement or delay of implementation and utilization of budget so frequently. This unstable circumstance created uncertainty among bureaucracy who always think of their own professional security rather than any departmental development. The situation demanded

more loyalty rather than merit and competency, therefore, most departments in Balochistan remained weak and underdeveloped in term of policy implementation and execution.

Table 2: Bureaucratic Instability in Key Balochistan Departments (2013-2024)

Department	Total Secretaries (2013-2024)	Average Tenure	Longest Tenure	Shortest Tenure
Health	21	6.3 Months	1 Year, 5 Months, 15 Days	4 Days
Secondary Education	15*	9.6 Months	2 Years, 0 Months, 11 Days	16 Days
Finance	18	8.0 Months	2 Years, 1 Month, 19 Days	24 Days
Planning & Development	17**	9.2 Months	2 Years, 1 Month, 25 Days	2 Months, 19 Days
Colleges, Higher & Technical Education	18	9.3 Months	2 Years, 3 Months, 29 Days	14 Days

Note: Includes one Secretary tenure is ongoing as of the data cut-off.

**Note: Includes two periods where the post was officially vacant for a total of over 10 months.*

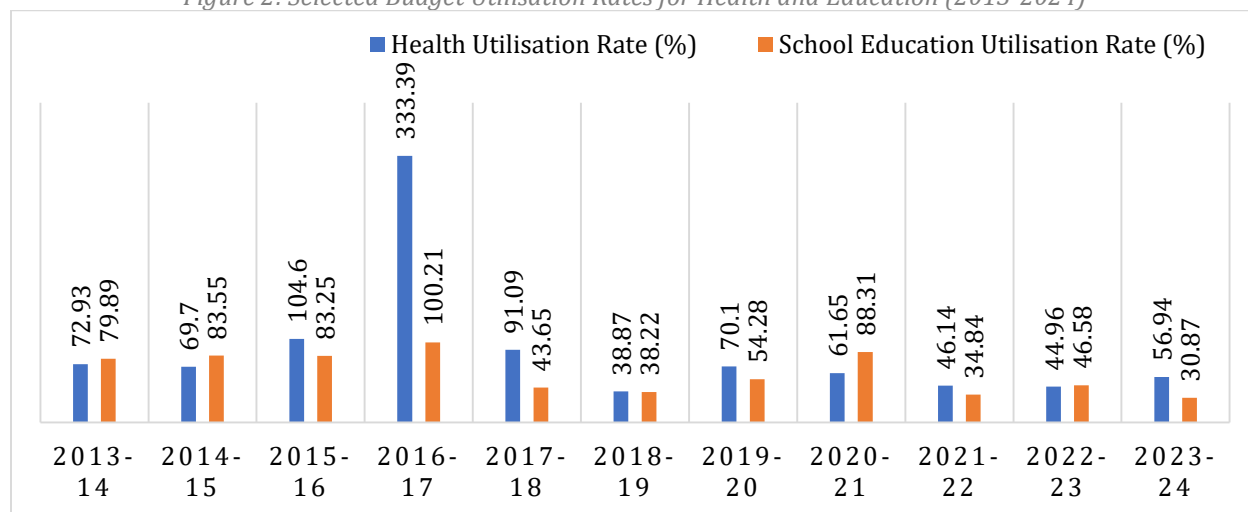
Source: Authors' data collection, from Services and General Administration Department, Government of Balochistan.

4.3. The Fiscal Paradox

Another irony of coalition governments in Balochistan has been noted in the budgetary allocation and versus utilization from 2013 to 2023 where there is a huge gap between allocation and utilization. Data indicates that successive coalition governments in Balochistan failed to utilize the allocated budgets. Budget utilization in health department has remained extremely inconsistent. Figure 2 highlights that utilization rates of budget in health department rose to 333.39% in 2016-17 FY and declined in 38.87% in 2018-19 FY which shows the clear lack of planning and management.

Similarly, the Education Department witnessed similar decline of utilization rate from 80-85% in 2016-17 to 43.65% in 2017-18 and 30.87% in 2023-24. Failure to spend over two-thirds of school development funds explains infrastructural issues, like 79% of schools lacking electricity, 71% without drinking water, 51% without toilets, and 52% without boundary walls (GOP, 2024c). Funds did not reach the front lines.

Figure 2: Selected Budget Utilisation Rates for Health and Education (2013-2024)



Source: Author's compilations based on data accessed from P&D Department Government of Balochistan.

This fiscal failure can be attributed directly to the coalition dynamics. The constant turnover of key officials in the Finance, Planning & Development, and sectoral Departments created an environment of perpetual procedural paralysis. A new Secretary would require months to comprehend ongoing projects, by which time they were often transferred, restarting the cycle. Furthermore, political prioritization of geographically targeted patronage spending—directing resources to the constituencies of powerful coalition partners—over program-based allocations for sector-wide improvement led to inefficient, fragmented expenditure, when it occurred at all.

4.3. The Education Sector: A Trajectory of Systemic Collapse

4.3.1. The Balochistan Education Sector Plan (BESP) 2013-18

After the 18th Amendment, the Department of Education launched BESP, developed with United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Culture Organization (UNESCO) support, based on a 2011-2012 'Situation Analysis'. After getting approval under the leadership of Dr. Abdul Malik, BESP initially aimed to focus on quality education and address the slow progress; however, it remained unable to address the targeted issues due to weak government attention. It also identified so many issues such as quality, governance and access, verified by the annexes and data. The BESP also made wider with the inclusion of Inclusive Education, Disaster Risk Management (DRM) and Early Childhood Education (ECE) along with stakeholder engagement plannings. However, it had certain weak areas like high costs, implementation risk and unachievable strategies. It was also felt to bring major reforms in the plan; however, it faced political interference and resistance from 2013 to 2018.

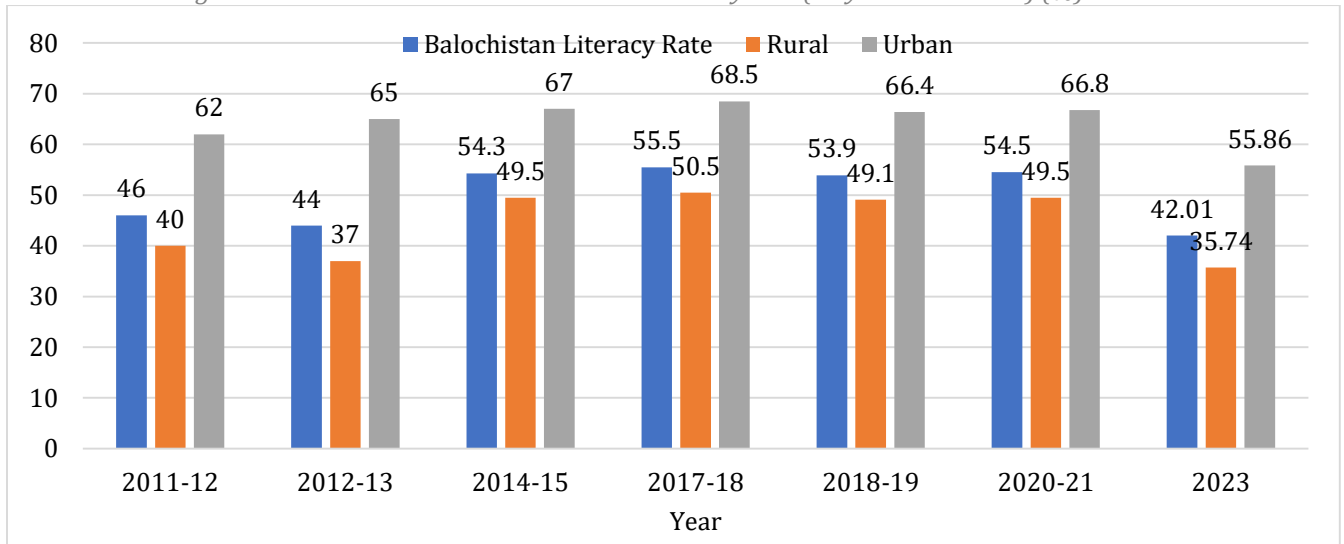
4.3.2. The Balochistan Education Sector Plan (BESP) 2020-25

BESP (2020-25) was initiated by Abdul Quddus Bizenjo, the then Chief Minister, to settle issues like textbooks, curriculum and governance. This aims to focus on learning crisis of students. However, the effectiveness of plan has been a question mark due to its past failure in proper implementation. The political interference and financial constraints have also added into its failure.

The target of universal primary NER until 2052 seems unachievable because the amount Rs. 72.75 which is set for the purpose of achieving the target of NER even exceeds the current budget. Besides this, the budget is vague and donors which are working in it are extremely uncertain. The past experiences show that due to political instability and lack of government interests would remain the causes of its failure. Adding to this, there are ambiguities in its reforms program. The child-centered mother tongue program between NER and Federal government has not been implemented due to political interference. The training of pre-service teachers with university programs which has been initiated, seems to be risky in term of quality. The success of the program depends on political support, attention and availability of resources which are away at the moment. The BESP 2013-18 and 2020-25 no doubt, has been a great initiative which had to focus on quality, access and strategies of education such as curriculum upgradation, teachers' development (Government of Balochistan, 2013, 2020), but has not been effective due to lack of government attention under coalition governments.

The result of BESP can be judged from literacy rates where there is not any effective improvement. The result shows a minor improvement from 46% to 55.5% between 2011-12 and 2017-18 shown in Figure 3. Before 2018-19, the literacy rates stopped across 54%, despite increasing allocation of amount on education. However, the Census of 2023 shows a quick drop to 42.01% overall, with rural areas at 35.74% and females at 32.8%, revealing a big decline.

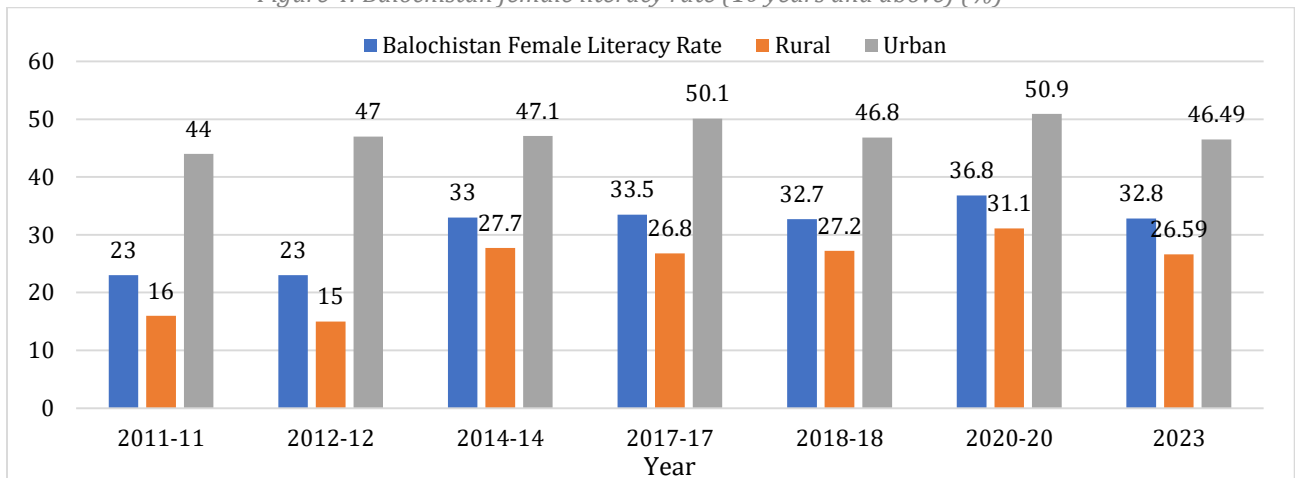
Figure 3: Balochistan total urban and rural literacy rate (10 years and above) (%)



Source: GOP (2014, 2019 and 2024a and 2024b).

Figure 4 Shows Balochistan's declined female literacy rate which is extremely low and disappointing. The gap between male and female has been persistent where female literacy is half to two-thirds of men because of social, cultural and tribal setup of Balochistan for female education. From 2011 to 2015, the literacy rate of female escalated from 23% to 33%, in targeted areas, but overall, progress has remained unsatisfactory. Between 2014-15 and 2018-19, rates stagnated or declined amid political instability. The 2022-23 Economic Survey noted a slight rise to 36.8%, but this was overshadowed by recent setbacks Census.

Figure 4: Balochistan female literacy rate (10 years and above) (%)



Source: GOP (2014, 2019 and 2024a and 2024b).

This failure has caused a sharp decline in education, with Balochistan's Mean Years of Schooling dropping from 3.51 in 2005 to 2.66 in 2020 presented in Table 3, erasing nearly two decades of progress, due to high dropout rates and poor learning environments. Research by Ahmad & Baloch (2022) shows 80% of government primary schools are single-teacher, 72% have one classroom, and 63% have a student-teacher ratio over 50:1, above UNESCO standards. Many teachers are underqualified, with 40% only holding a Matric, 7% a Master's, and 36% unqualified. Frequent unpunctuality, lack of proper monitoring, outdated infrastructure impacted learning outcomes. Therefore, such system would not produce quality education, with odds ratios of 3.95, 3.71, and 3.33.

Table 3: Key Education Indicators in Balochistan (Selected Years)

Indicator	2005	2013	2018	2020	2022
Mean Years of Schooling	3.51	3.17	2.87	2.66	2.66
Out-of-School Children (Total %)	...	51	47
Out-of-School Children (Female %)	...	63	59
Schools with Electricity (%)	21
Schools with Drinking Water (%)	29

Source: Global Data Lab (n.d.).

The objectives of BEP were not properly achieved due to governance structure since it failed to execute its own budget. The BEP represented a documented plan rather result-oriented program which brought no impactful reforms in education sector in Balochistan.

4.4. The Health Sector: The Retreat of Preventive Care

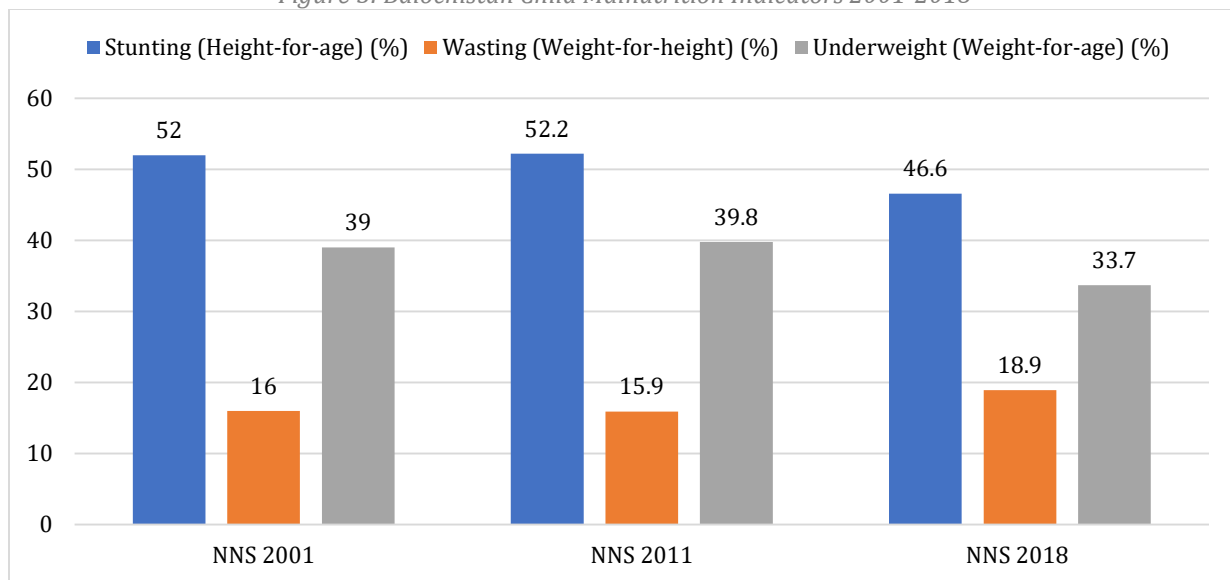
Health Department of Balochistan also presents a similar story in areas like preventive care which is important indicator of Balochistan health system's efficiency. The health sector remained unable to provide proper healthcare to each district (Ullah et al., 2025). Department faces challenges in infrastructure, funding, medicine, human resources and proper treatment facilities in far and flung areas (Noman, 2023). Unavailability of these facilities have reported many deaths specially among children and pregnant women. Poverty, undernutrition, environmental risks, poor water and hygiene access increase morbidity and mortality, mainly among women and children (Midhet et al., 1998; UNICEF, 2023). Under-nutrition is a health concern in Balochistan, contributing to high maternal and child morbidity and mortality, causing lifelong effects like stunted growth and cognitive impairment (Zaidi et al., 2015).

Supported WHO, the government introduced key health strategies over the past decade: the 2013-2018 Balochistan Health Sector Strategy, its 2018–2025 update, and the 2018–2030 Health Policy. The 2013–2018 plan aimed to improve service delivery, quality, workforce, governance, and coverage, focusing on service integration and increasing the health budget from 5% to 10%. It identified five strategic outcomes: governance, private sector engagement, workforce, preventive programs, and resource use, with a monitoring framework. The 2018-2025 strategy, aligned with the 2018-2030 health policy, aims for universal coverage and SDGs, outlining interventions, resources, and monitoring. Developed with WHO, the Balochistan Health Policy 2018-30 aligns with the 2016-25 National Health Vision. From 2013 to 2025, the health sector made gains but faced stagnation due to lack of a long-term plan, politics, poor governance, underfunding, workforce shortages, and political patronage, causing fragmented progress governments. According to the National Nutrition

Survey (NNS) 2018 by (GOP, 2020), Balochistan faces a severe nutrition crisis worse than most Pakistan regions, with inequalities, neglect, weak services, food insecurity, poverty, poor maternal health, WASH issues, and fragile social protection. These threaten intergenerational poverty, human capital, and stability. The crisis surpasses averages and provinces, with high stunting, anemia, overweight childhood, low breastfeeding, poor complementary feeding, micronutrient deficiencies, household food insecurity, unsafe water, and sanitation. Causes include neglect, fragility, conflicts, and weak health systems (GOP, 2020).

The National Nutrition Survey 2018 indicates (presented in Figure 6) slow progress of stunting which has slightly reduced from 52% to 46.6%. However, wasting ratio grew from 16% to 18.9%. the Childhood overweight has also increased due to malnutritional process. The trend of breastfeeding also declined from 2011 onward. Micronutrient deficiencies are another issue where no change has been reported. Even women with micronutrient condition in Balochistan are greater number throughout country. Food and water insecurity is another issue in Balochistan. WASH indicators highlight minor development, but water available to people is not drinkable. Figure 5 indicates stunting's modest decrease of 17 years which is extremely slow to end its prevalence. Wasting improved greatly but regardless of improvements, it indicates constant emergencies. The ratio of overweight children increased which shows the link between diet deterioration and poverty. Underweight prevalence ratio improved to some extent but still it is threatening.

Figure 5: Balochistan Child Malnutrition Indicators 2001-2018

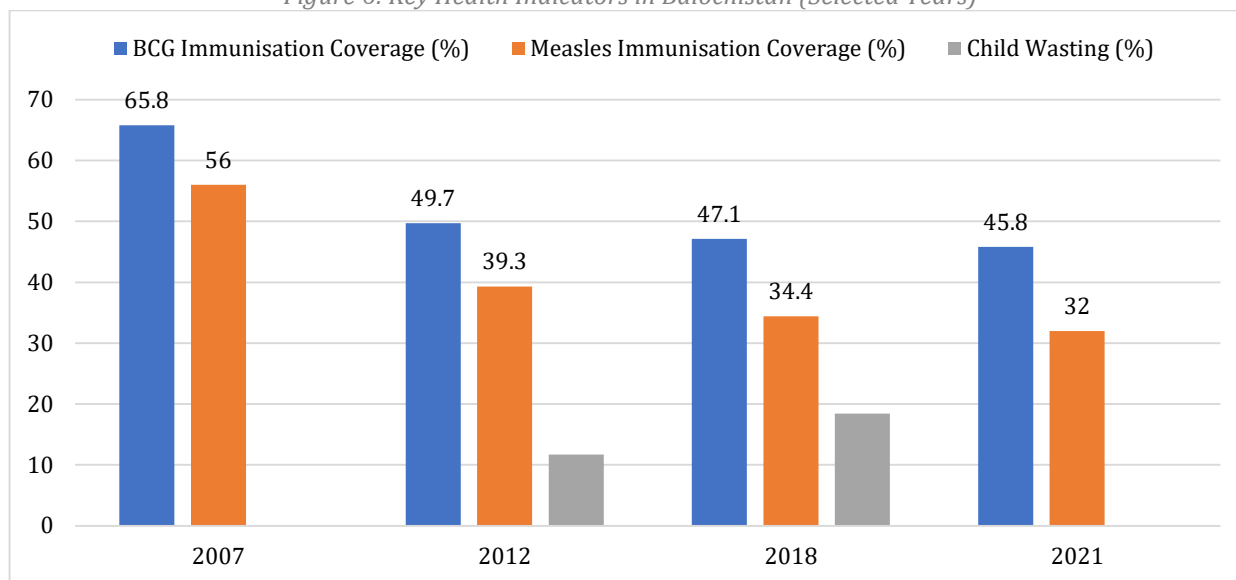


Source: GOP (2020).

Data shows a misery picture of health sector. Immunization coverage presented Figure 6 for BCG is also disappointing where the data indicates a huge decline from 65.8% in 2007 to 45.8% in 2021, where the same story is learnt for measles immunization that also dropped from 56% to 32% in same years. The 32% measles rate among children who are more vulnerable, regardless of more vaccination and government efforts at national level. Data shows that efforts of government have not reached the people at grassroots. Data indicates a serious concern in child wasting which has increased from 11.7% in 2012 to 18.4% in 2018 which is alarming since it has touched WHO's

emergency threshold. The weight-for-height z-score declined from +1 to -1, showing a weak picture of nutrition. The data shows that the mortality among children is increased due to the above factors.

Figure 6: Key Health Indicators in Balochistan (Selected Years)



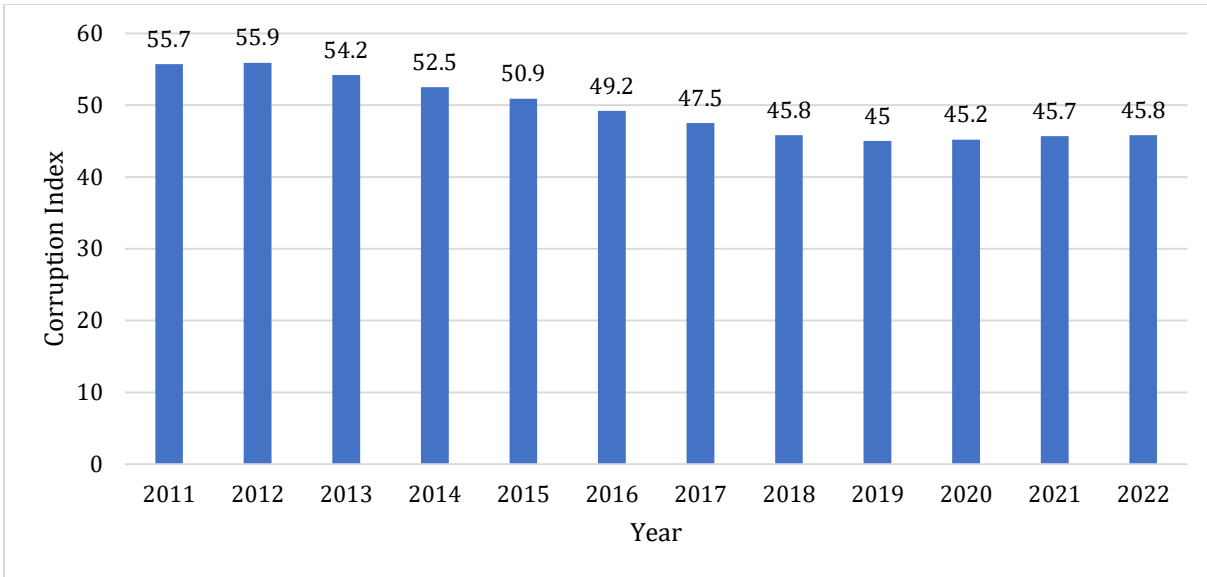
Source: Global Data Lab (n.d.).

Health sector aligned itself with SDGs to bring improvement in health, but data suggests that the very minor improvement has been reported in health sector in study period due to political instability and transfer of posting so often. Period from 2013 to 2023, Balochistan faced governance challenges and political instability; therefore, within the structure of coalition governments, it has failed to implement and carry out the projected plans. The frequent change of secretaries and ministers caused so many challenges such as unused of proposed budget, waste of resources and discontinuity of policies.

4.5. The Governance Ecosystem: Corruption, and Public Trust

Corruption no doubt happens everywhere but is the most dangerous when the most important sectors like education and health departments become their victims (Turkewitz et al., 2025). The practice of corruption at bureaucratic level destroys the entire department. The Corruption Perception Index (CPI) presented in Figure 7, fluctuating from 0 (most corrupt) to 100 (least corrupt), indicates a drop from 55.7 in 2011 to 45.8 in 2022- an 11-point decline showing more corruption in Balochistan. The corruption has continued under the coalition governments since it had political support. The CPI drop out from 2008 illustrates that coalition governments were unpredictable, corrupt, and unstable.

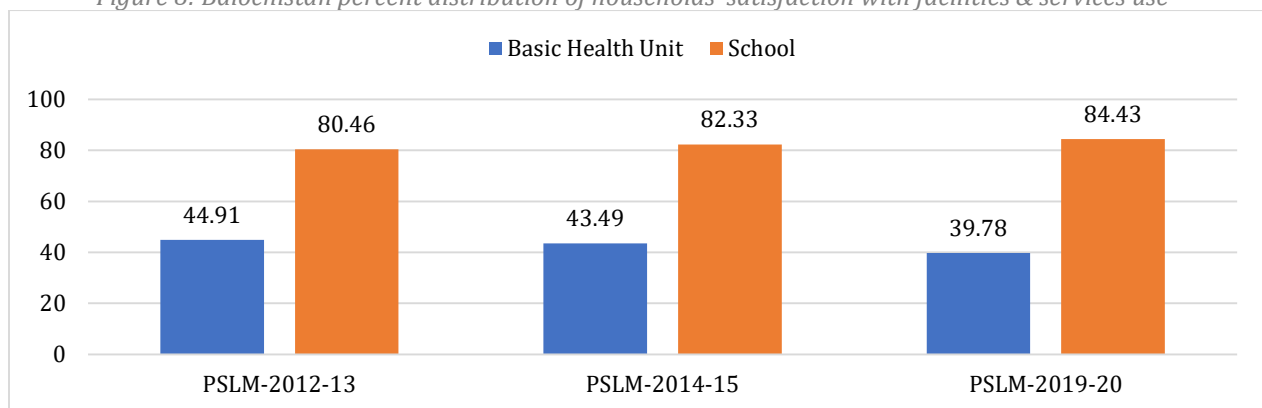
Figure 7: Corruption in Balochistan



Source: Global Data Lab (n.d.).

Household satisfaction suggests perspective of people on government services, along with data on enrollment and literacy. Surveys via PSLM shown in Figure 8, highlighted a dropout in satisfaction with some departments developing and others dropping. Satisfaction with Schools was high (80.46%) and progressed to 84.43%, the most satisfactory. Even with low literacy rate, high satisfaction reduced from moderate expectations—availability of school be adequate for apparent satisfaction. Satisfaction with Basic Health Units dropped from 44.91% in 2012-13 to 39.78% in 2019-20, show the shortage of facilities and human resources. The decline suggests increased BHUs did not improve service quality. The Sehat Sahulat Program offers private healthcare access, addressing inadequate public services.

Figure 8: Balochistan percent distribution of households' satisfaction with facilities & services use



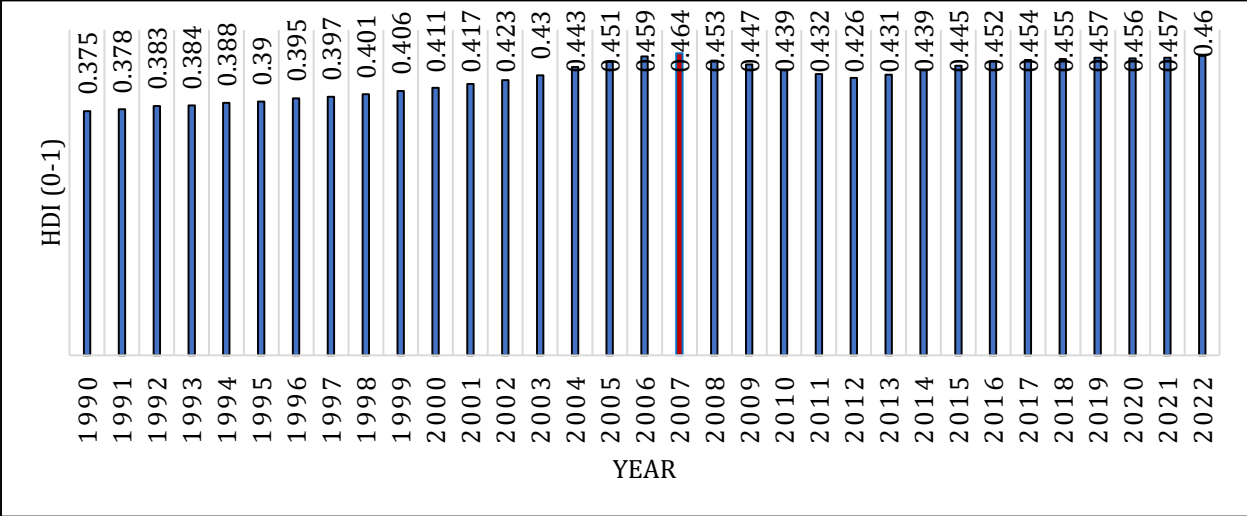
Source: GOP (2013 and 2021).

4.6. The Synchronised Failure of Human Development

Impact of these sectoral and governance collapses is plainly obvious in Balochistan's Human Development Index (HDI) presented in Figure 9. After a period of steady progress from 1990, the HDI peaked at 0.464 in 2007, coinciding with the onset of the conflict and the era of managed coalitions.

For the subsequent fifteen years, the HDI stagnated, fluctuating between 0.43 and 0.46. This aggregate stagnation masks the violent decline in its constituent parts: health and education. HDI trend is the ultimate testament to a system that has not merely stalled but has actively reversed human progress.

Figure 9: Balochistan Human Development Index (1990-2022)



Source: Global Data Lab (n.d.).

This decline results from coalition governance failures, such as damaged school infrastructure—missing boundary walls and toilets in 60 and 59 per cent of schools. These issues discouraged female enrolment and retention due to safety concerns. High teacher absenteeism and single-teacher schools in rural areas further limited girls' educational opportunities. The failure to stabilise education bureaucracy and effectively use budgets hindered policy implementation from Balochistan Education Sector Plans, leading to a lost generation of women deprived of basic education rights.

After reviewing the policy documents along with data, the evidence shows a clear, compelling narrative of a synchronised collapse caused by unstable, politically driven coalition governments which has also caused weak and depended on bureaucracy in Balochistan. Due to political interference, the bureaucracy has failed to implement long-term policies and reforms. Consequently, Balochistan has faced more governance problems in key sectors like health and education. The Data from 2013-2024 indicates that among others the political model of Balochistan is the key reasons of its failure in health and education sectors.

4.7. Qualitative analyses

The investigation was carried out by interviewing key twenty respondents (Appendix Table A) such as secretaries (retired and in service), key political figures, district officers, civil servants, media persons, members of civil society, development partners and governance experts to investigate how policies formation and implementation, resources allocation and distribution functioned under coalition government in Balochistan from 2013 to 2023. Thematic analysis highlighted eleven key themes.

4.7.1. Theme 1 – Fragmented Political Authority

This theme identifies that political system of Balochistan is fragmented and structural. Balochistan has never had a single-party majority government. Between 2013–2018 and 2018–2023, highly unstable, multi-party coalitions with veto powers were common. Respondents emphasized this fragmented political setup of Balochistan is enduring. Another political figure analyst remarked the political landscape of Balochistan has been set in a way that it does not run with the formation of coalition government. As he explained in his interview.

“No political party in Balochistan has ever secured a majority, and coalition system that emerges is inherently unstable. Every coalition partner holds veto power, and this means that state institutions cannot act with autonomy or consistency. Due to structural factors, aside from the nationalists and the Jamiat, which retain a party system structure, the remaining parties primarily consist of personal voters or are artificially constructed by the state. Members typically join a party for a period of five years before transferring to another. These parties are generally nominal. The consequence for coalition politics is that, Chief Minister (CM) is compelled to manage only six or seven coalitions.” (Respondent 19)

He further elaborated that fragility of coalitions gives individual ministers “a disproportionate degree of authority” over bureaucratic machinery, creating fragmented lines of governance. *“That creates a culture in which coalition management is the Chief Minister’s primary job. In Balochistan, a Chief Minister cannot maintain his position without securing the support of at least fifteen to twenty influential Members of Provincial Assembly (MPA).”* (Respondent 19)

A senior journalist explained,

“The coalition politics in Balochistan since 2013 are significant because, in the past seventy-seven years—or rather since it gained provincial status—coalition governments have been formed, and governance has often relied on coalition politics. Similarly, from 2013 to 2018, the same pattern persisted. During this period, however, coalition government was divided according to an agreement: two parties would govern for two and a half years each, with the other coalition political partners. This was a unique form of governance in coalition politics.” (Respondent 17)

A Respondent stated bluntly:

“Coalition politics here is never about a shared ideology or vision. It is arithmetic. Whoever can form 51 percent governs—and everyone in that 51 percent must be constantly appeased.” (Respondent 1)

This insight was echoed by the opposition party senior leader:

“Loose alliances of convenience where partners behave like separate governments under one roof.” (Respondent 4)

A Respondent clarified how this fragmentation transforms into administrative experience:

“While serving in P&D, I felt that I have been serving under four or five different cabinets due to continuous change of ministers.” (Respondent 7)

Respondents complained regularly over the frequent reshuffle, risk of removal, and frequent compromising, referring to a political system where it has been very difficult to make the right policies. As a senior media person said:

“There is no decision, taken on the basis of merit but rather on the personal interest.” (Respondent 17)

Key officials viewed that they have been affected by decisions directly:

“Problem was that every new minister adopted new policy of his own version.” (Respondent 13)

This fragmentation surely resulted in more challenges for good governance where ministers left provincial version of policies and created their own version of policies which most were failed.

4.7.2. Theme 2 – Policy Discontinuity and Bureaucratic Instability

Respondents consistently viewed policy discontinuity in Balochistan. They described that coalition governments often experienced uncertain tenures of key bureaucrats, sudden change of ministry and uncertain political situation. They further viewed that no Chief Minister after 2008, has been able to complete his 5-year tenure.

The senior journalist emphasized that

“Since 2013, Balochistan governments witnessed so many changes of Chief Ministers and reshuffle of the Cabinet Ministers. During this period, there has been political engineering and uncertainty. Interesting fact is that since 2013, Balochistan regime did not have any strong opposition leader. However, most of the times, Chief Ministers were removed by his own party members.” (Respondent 17)

After the change of cabinet, new ministers and new secretaries were appointed in important Departments where new initiatives were introduced and old ones were abandoned.

A senior Education Secretary, described:

“Every newcomer asked us for new beginning, a fresh start despite the fact that we were doing so well with the previous ministers.”

A former Health Secretary reminded:

“As a team, we made plans of many years to bring revolutionary reforms in hospitals, however, sudden change of minister turned back our entire plans and efforts where we were forced to start from the very beginning.” (Respondent 6)

Several respondents emphasized how policies were discarded after spending millions. Respondent from UNICEF described it as:

“Pushing on reset button after every cabinet change in remained a norm of the day in Balochistan.” (Respondent 9)

Same policy discontinued has been noted in district level. A District Education Officer observed:

“Change of policy affected us, it has been difficult to convince the teachers to abandon the old policy and follow the new one after every short while.” (Respondent 8)

A public-sector doctor viewed that:

"We initiated and implemented the health projects with enthusiasm, but disappointed to change them after the reshuffle of cabinet." (Respondent 11)

Consequences were labelled so much serious in respect to BESP 2013–18, which respondents viewed as technically vigorous but politically it was not backed after the many regime changes. Development partner consultant said:

"BESP 2020–25 continued because of door support." (Respondent 12)

As a result, weak coalition governments failed to implement and carry out long-term policies.

4.7.3. Theme 3 – Federal and Military Influence

During interviews, most of respondents pointed out federal and military influence in administrative setup. They described that Balochistan is one of the key provinces where a hybrid form of regimes have been installed to influence more easily. The ex-chief minister expressed honestly:

"Rawalpindi and Islamabad also have a strong say in the formation process of Balochistan government." (Respondent 1)

The opposition party's senior leader highlighted this:

"The federation has been involved in formation and manipulation of Balochistan's governments, and center always rightly anticipated about the distribution of ministry." (Respondent 4)

Respondent from P&D explained *"informal signals have been issued"*:

"Sometimes we got direction to give more preference to which district." (Respondent 7)

Respondents from UN agencies said same words. Respondent, from the World Bank, noted:

"Authorities from center take the responsibility and ownership of Balochistan to order for new project initiation to which district." (Respondent 7)

The journalist illustrated this situation interestingly:

"Every project has two-signature one is clear and other one unknown." (Respondent 17)

According to a political analyst:

"coalition governments of Balochistan have been so weak where direction of policy implementation and formation come from informal quarters. The problem is that seasonal political figures occupied important positions in Balochistan cabinet who do not represent people rather establishment. As a result, there is limited autonomy in Balochistan. During periods of nationalist rule, the provincial government maintained some level of autonomy; however, beyond that, the decisions are primarily federal in nature, however, the main power resides with the security personnels in Balochistan due to security issues. The military permits some space for provincial authorities on key issues but restricts influence on matters directly affecting security issues" (Respondent 19)

The influence of federal and security agencies compounded the effects of coalition fragmentation, making policy formulation and implementation even more complex.

4.7.4. Theme 4 – Politicization of Public Sector Development Program (PSDP)

Respondents consistently identified PSDP as the nerve center of coalition politics rather than serving as a development tool, it became an instrument for managing political loyalties.

A respondent stated:

“PSDP was how we held the coalition together. Every partner wanted their schemes included.”
(Respondent 2)

Another added:

“You simply cannot pass a budget unless every partner sees their share in PSDP.” (Respondent 3)

P&D official distinguished between a technical budget prepared by officials, a political budget negotiated by coalition leaders

“Political budget always wins.” (Respondent 7)

This produced a pattern in which: new schools were opened in vote-rich areas rather than underserved areas, hospitals were upgraded where political allies lived, funds were fragmented into many small schemes to satisfy multiple partners.

One respondent stated:

“They built a school in a village with 20 households while our overcrowded school was ignored.”
(Respondent 13)

A respondent provided a health example:

“One health centre has surplus staff and almost no patients.” (Respondent 14)

Another explained:

“PSDP is treated as party property, not provincial wealth.” (Respondent 18)

“After 2008, opposition benches in Balochistan effectively ceased to exist because opposition members often entered coalitions, despite officially being in opposition. The primary reason for this is related to MPA funds; following the Seven NFC Awards, Balochistan's fiscal space expanded considerably, and this practice gained momentum from 2008 onwards. Previously, MPAs received only nominal funds, but from 2008 onward, nearly all PSDP funds were allocated to MPAs.” (Respondent 19)

This political distortion of PSDP systematically weakened the strategic implementation of sector plans.

4.7.5. Theme 5 – Bureaucratic Patronage and Political Interference

Respondents from different perspectives viewed bureaucrats have strong sources and minister backup to get themselves posted into their desired stations. Promotion, posting, transfer and even administrative decisions take place politically rather than merit. This bureaucratic patronage has also affected health and education policies.

A senior former education secretary viewed:

“Merits on posting and transfer of bureaucrats in education has been very rare.” (Respondent 5)

Respondent, who remained Secretary of Health in Balochistan, noted political interfere in posting and transfer of bureaucrats:

“Secretaries, DCs, DHOs were appointed by the will of political figures, ignoring merit.” (Respondent 6)

Ignoring merit in transfer and posting is so disappointing. Respondent, a District Health Officer, clarified:

“I cannot issue warning to a doctor if he is absent due to his political affiliation with ministers.” (Respondent 14)

A respondent from school observed:

“Teachers avoid serving in rule areas. If I transferred any teachers in remote areas, they got the order reversed shortly.” (Respondent 8)

Respondent explained transfers are mostly political based:

“Transfer should have been based on rewards and punishment.” (Respondent 15)

Respondent viewed that bureaucratic posting and transfer delayed office routine work.

“Files got stopped and delayed due to non-availability of officers in offices.” (Respondent 7)

Respondents from civil society said that political capture of bureaucracy has stopped office work going smoothly.

“The involvement of political figures in official work brought hinderance in office’s work badly. Officers did not want to offend the minister at all.” (Respondent 18)

Academics and analysts connected this patronage pattern to the broader political economy:

“Bureaucracy and institutional independence have been compromised for the sake of stability of coalition.” (Respondent 19)

Bureaucratic patronage always created hindrance for proper and timely implementation of policies.

4.7.6. Theme 6 – Unequal and Politicized Resource Distribution

Respondents continuously highlighted that resource distribution in Balochistan is extremely unbalanced where some districts get great share while the others are neglected despite the fact that they deserved more attention and funding.

One politician stated,

“In coalition government, all minister managed to get their share otherwise, government collapses.” (Respondent 4)

According to respondent from P&D:

“Some districts have been given much priority because the senior ministers belonged to that particular district.” (Respondent 7)

Respondent who examined expenditure data for international companies, pointed out structural prejudice:

“Allocation of funds in urban area seemed political and bias, Quetta, Makran division and the district where Chief Minister belonged were given priority.” (Respondent 10)

At district level respondent witnessed:

“BHUs and hospitals in cities have been given much priorities and developmental funds whereas the BHUs and hospitals with no political support, falling in remote areas, have been neglected.” (Respondent 14)

Respondents from education sector experienced the same story:

“Schools from B-areas have been neglected specially the female school whereas the schools in cities have been over facilitated.” (Respondent 13)

Gender disparities complexed these inequities. Respondent, a lady health worker, described:

“Women from remote areas have been denied the basis health facilities, denying their accessing to healthcare.” (Respondent 16)

An activist from civil society explained community perceptions:

“When new hospital is established when the old one is deprived of its facilities. Our own village hospital has been without doctor.” (Respondent 20)

A politician also accepted these biases. Respondent noted:

“Sure, politicians with strong base, get greater share in the fund resource distribution. This is what coalition politics goes.” (Respondent 1)

Analysts Respondent connected this to the larger political view:

“Resource distribution has been based on biasness. The distribution cycle worked in accordance with the importance of political figure in cabinet.” (Respondent 19)

These proofs explain how resource distribution has been used for political purposes, which is nothing to do with need-based development in Balochistan.

4.7.7. Theme 7 – Donor Dependence and Weak Domestic Ownership of Policies

Respondents accepted that most of plans and project, have been carried by donor agencies because governments did not pay much attention to their plan and implementation (T7).

Respondent acknowledged:

“We approved BESP since GPE needed an approved sector plan.” (Respondent 7)

Respondent (Education Secretary) documented:

“The UNICEF and GPE were required to fund this plan.” (Respondent 5)

Respondent from UNICEF described:

"We carried it out for gender components and ECE and in its initial phase we did not witness any government interest." (Respondent 9)

Respondent (UNESCO) viewed:

"Making it aligned with international indicators has been our target while politicians had their own concerns." (Respondent 11)

Respondents believed that involvement of donor agencies made the plan alive.

"BESP 2020–25 continued to progress because of the efforts of donors." (Respondent 12)

Respondent from health sector said:

"Health Policy 2018–30 was not in interest of government. Donors kept it alive." (Respondent 6)

Frontline respondents voiced a perception of gap from donor-driven plans. Respondent stated:

"We listen about sector plans, but we do not see any development until we see the resource reaching at schools." (Respondent 13)

Respondent (doctor) viewed that after the end of project from donor, no ground improvement would be noted in hospital.

"Donors gave fruitful trainings to doctors once the project has been continued. After the end of project, nothing seems to be improved and everything ends from here." (Respondent 15)

Civil society and academic respondents enlarged these statements:

"Plans of donors do not get political support, therefore, their impacts are short-lived." (Respondent 19)

However, it is believed that efforts of donors have great impacts. Respondent 10 viewed:

"Donors initiate and carry out program for the betterment of hospitals, but they do not get political will." (Respondent 10)

As a result, the donors' efforts have died due to lack of governmental interest and support.

4.7.8. Theme 8 – Governance Constraints, Security, and Territorial Fragmentation

A key theme found from interviews connects to the structural constraints which affects Balochistan's governance: massive landscape, complex topography, diversified population, established tribal setup and uncertain political environment. These factors harshly impact the policies related to education and health in Balochistan.

Respondent, a senior clinician, termed geography a governance obstacle:

"Balochistan is so much shattered, once emergency imposed in remote areas due to viral disease, it takes us two days to reach there." (Respondent 15)

Likewise, the District Health Officer, echoed while visiting the affected area:

"We have BHUs in remote areas where no cycle can go even. Despite the fact that they are distanced around 40 to 50km but reaching there takes us one complete day." (Respondent 14)

A lady health worker, gave firsthand information:

"We walked hours on foot to visit home to home in remote area, which is unsafe and risky, but we need to." (Respondent 16)

Numerous respondents stressed that Balochistan is so vast. In some remote places authority of state ends and authority of Sardars starts, in operating such areas is unsafe and risky. Therefore, such areas remained neglected. One respondent described:

"In certain remote areas the service delivery is influenced by tribal setup." (Respondent 19)

Some areas are dangerous due to security threat, serving there is very difficult.

"Sometimes security clearance does not allow us to ensure our polio campaign in the much need area." (Respondent 14)

Former Health Minister, accepted:

"No doubt, some areas, we needed security involvement to ensure the function of our BHUs, but their presence also created security risk for doctors and their staff. Therefore, doctors tried to transfer their post in another place." (Respondent 3)

Presence of security remained the heat of discussion among the respondents; some deemed it necessary while others viewed it governance bias. A respondent stated:

"Civilians have to operate without security presence." (Respondent 18)

Respondent, a civil society leader, outlined it as a structural restraint:

"Policy implementation is a large issue, we cannot do it alone, we need security and officials to be involved in it." (Respondent 20)

Therefore, structural restraints like territory and its remoteness, security presence, conflict zone, and tribal setup make a vital layer of policy projection and implementation.

4.7.9. Theme 9 – Institutionalizing Policy Continuity

Respondents continuously stressed the requirement of institutionalized policy continuity in respect to education and health sectors.

Respondent viewed:

"Governments should make long-term policies for health and education and must not be victim of coalition governments." (Respondent 1)

Former Education Minister, said:

"BESP should continue as plan for the betterment of education and every new government should respect the plan." (Respondent 2)

Bureaucrat projected:

"The tenure of secretaries be fixed around three years so that plans and policies get matured." (Respondent 5)

Respondent backed the idea of protected implementation units:

“Policies and plans should continue after the reshuffle of regime.” (Respondent 6)

Development partners supported these concerns and proposed:

“There should be legal process to protect plans and policies of education and health.” (Respondent 9)

Respondent argued:

“Long-term financing procedure would support to protect the plans. If we stop any projects, the amounts which have been spent, would go in waste.” (Respondent 10)

Frontline workers supported long-term plans. Respondent described

“If project changes after every short period, teachers do not take serious.” (Respondent 13)

Civil society recommended:

“Political figures had to sign agreements to carry out projects of previous governments irrespective of their difference of opinion and political background.” (Respondent 18)

An analyst presented more detailed structural insight.

“Changing the framework and structure of plan, is waste of resource.” (Respondent 19)

Thus, institutionalizing continuity is rising as an essential policy recommendation, particularly in such a cabinet which often changes.

4.7.10. Theme 10 – Local Governance, District Authority & Transparency

Respondents support district should get more autonomy for funds and make policy. However, some respondents disagree with the idea, saying that district level is so fragile and weak which cannot control all.

The District Education Officer from Gwadar, specified:

“Everything is centralized despite the fact that we know our capacity better than others but neither we can transfer nor hire.” (Respondent 8)

The District Health Officer echoed this:

“Sometimes we identified an urgent basis issue and need quick response but cannot do it unless Quetta allows us.” (Respondent 14)

Another respondent said:

“We know the status of schools, about teacher presence and facilities, but cannot do anything except reporting.” (Respondent 13)

Respondents claimed that transparency mechanisms and community monitoring have to be changed. Respondent proposed:

“Schools in remote areas be handed over to local authority for addressing issues at the earliest.” (Respondent 16)

Civil society leader respondent recommended:

“Public display of PSDP schemes—online and outside district offices—would reduce political manipulation.” (Respondent 20)

Journalist Respondent backed open data reforms:

“If people know about the allocation and release of amount for the project, so chances of corruption would die up.” (Respondent 17)

A governmental level, Respondent point out:

“Bringing project through digital system would not only ends the chances of corruption, it also ends the chances of delay.” (Respondent 7)

Nevertheless, analysts warned that decentralization should have accountability. Respondent said:

“Decentralization creates more accountability problem at local level.” (Respondent 19)

Thus, improving district administration and transparency appeared as a central policy preference to improve governance with coalition regimes.

4.7.11. Theme 11 –Sustainable Political Settlement

4.7.11.1. Governance Beyond Patronage

Respondents showed concerns in broader political settlement, coalition politics is shaped by unique power arrangement and uncertain political environment. All respondents recognized that reforms are possible through administrative setup but administrative setup of Balochistan has been influenced by the political setup.

The political expert expressed:

“Until Balochistan has a strong political party, representing all parts of Balochistan, a compromised coalition politics in Balochistan is unavoidable.” (Respondent 19)

This view was echoed by several politicians and former ministers. A respondent argued:

“Coalitions should be built on program agendas, not on distributing spoils. That is the only way to stabilize governance.” (Respondent 1)

Respondent from the opposition, reinforced:

“We need a real opposition that debates policy, not just one that competes for funds.” (Respondent 4)

Respondents noted that structural issues—elite fragmentation, tribal hierarchies, and federal-military intervention—limit development of a strong political culture but also saw ways the settlement could slowly evolve.

4.7.11.2. Stability Through Shared Commitments

Some respondents argued that coalition instability could be mitigated if education and health were treated as non-negotiable, cross-party commitments rather than bargaining chips.

One respondent proposed:

“Before forming a coalition, parties should publicly agree on a shared health and education agenda that no partner can veto.” (Respondent 2)

Another respondent observed:

“If all parties sign on to a five-year sector plan, implementation won’t collapse when ministers change.” (Respondent 7)

Civil society activists emphasized:

“Citizens should demand pre-election commitments on education and health, so coalitions cannot ignore them.” (Respondent 18)

4.7.11.3. Reducing Political Engineering and Strengthening Mandates

Respondents emphasized that political engineering in Balochistan ought to be ended.

“Until and unless political engineering is witnessed in Balochistan, service delivery would remain a question mark.” (Respondent 4)

Respondent said that politically engineering based politicians have no accountability:

“Leaders selected not elected, would not do great deal for people in general.” (Respondent 17)

Respondent gave political economy summary:

“You cannot develop long-term policies for health and education until there is political legitimacy.” (Respondent 19)

4.7.11.4. Strengthening Political Parties

All respondents labelled weakness of political parties which is the biggest hindrance of durable policies.

According to a respondent:

“Politicians announce personal based schemes to individual rather than local priorities.” (Respondent 20)

Respondent claimed:

“Stronger parties also negotiate for bargaining to get more funds in PSDP for workers.” (Respondent 1)

4.8. Discussion

Balochistan has witnessed coalition cabinet since 1970s. However, coalition governments need strong political parties with strong manifesto, strong institutions with independent policies which are rare in Balochistan (Kakar, 2025). Coalition politics has been witnessed to seek more powers to suffice needs of their workers in Balochistan (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2006). Therefore, main sectors like education and health have been ignored in true sense (Bäck et al., 2024). Change of cabinet also affected the bureaucracy which has been instable and uncertain, data proved that twenty-one Health

Secretaries have been transferred and posted from 2013 and 2024. Therefore, policies have been either abandoned or discontinued. This trend brought loyalty rather than (Brender & Drazen, 2005). In coalition governments, ministerial fiefdoms fragment portfolios (Laver & Shepsle, 2011). Frequent reshuffle in cabinet affected the continued policies of government, for instance, implementation of BEP (2013–18; 2020–25) and Balochistan Health Policy (2018–30) remained at risk (Government of Balochistan, 2013; 2020). Existing literature anticipates such failures in contexts where high turnover, politicized human resources, and weak institutional routines compromised institutional memory and capacity (Andrews et al., 2013; Pritchett et al., 2013).

Respondent testimonies and policy process indicate a hybrid governance order: provincial executives operate alongside federal and security veto players who shape coalition formation, portfolio allocations and project siting (Jaffrelot et al., 2024). Scholarship on Pakistan's security-led federalism explains the 'two signatures—one visible, one invisible' dynamic and resulting dual accountability that blurs responsibility for results (Staniland, 2017). Political settlement theory captures this as a limited access order, in which elite bargains—not impersonal rules—govern institutional behavior (Leftwich, 2010). Patron-client rules dominate postings, transfers and discipline in education and health—teachers and clinicians resist rural postings or evade sanctions with political cover—creating capability traps in which systems adopt plans but cannot act on them (Andrews et al., 2013). This administrative capture explains chronic delays in procurement, non-execution of approved schemes and recurrent resets when ministers change. Despite BEP and increased allocations, budget utilisation plummeted and outcomes declined. These trends reflect global findings that governance quality influences impact of public spending and that isomorphic mimicry (plans lacking capabilities) is common in weak states (Pritchett et al., 2013). Data supports the pattern of stagnation and decline referenced in policy documents.

Primary care indicators also regressed reaching emergency thresholds. Utilization responds to perceived quality; under-resourced facilities, absentee staff, and stockouts reasonably discourage households (Filmer et al., 2000). The Health Policy 2018–30 and Health Sector Strategy 2018–25 set SDG-aligned goals, but without protection from political turnover and patronage, implementation lagged (Government of Balochistan, 2018a and 2018b). Evidence from interviews and documents depicts PSDP as coalition currency: a technical P&D budget is re-written into a political budget to satisfy partners through small, constituency-tied schemes (Keefer & Khemani, 2005). This reallocation explains spatial and gendered inequities—urban/strategic districts repeatedly upgraded while remote areas and girls' services lag (Wahab et al., 2025). Fund releases themselves may be discretionary and relational, a hallmark of the political marketplace (de Waal, 2015). Incomplete decentralisation leaves districts responsible for delivery without control over staff, budgets or priorities (Cheema et al., 2017).

Even with better politics, Balochistan's scale, sparsity, terrain and security frictions raise cost of state presence; service delivery is often a negotiated enterprise with tribal authorities and security actors (Migdal, 2018). Effective strategies, therefore, require realistic logistics, flexible modalities and durable field presence embedded in local authority structures. Fixed multi-year tenures for secretaries, key directors, sector plans (Education/Health Acts), councils, and results-based, multi-year financing buffers from cabinet churn (Andrews et al., 2013). Empower districts over budgets,

HR and implementation with robust public disclosure (online PSDP dashboards, GIS tracking), empowered boards, and vertical integration of accountability linking citizen voice to official response (Fox, 2015). Without transparency, decentralization can simply reproduce patronage locally (Cheema et al., 2017). Progress ultimately depends on political parties, reduced external engineering in coalition formation, cross-party agreements, and linking political legitimacy to service delivery (Leftwich, 2010). Balochistan's 2013–2023 experience illustrates how office-seeking coalitions, embedded in a hybrid order, generate administrative instability, patronage, and PSDP politicization, leading to simultaneous declines in education and health despite ambitious plans and larger budgets (Kakar, 2025). Essential reforms are required to ensure transparency among coalition partners. Political incentives have to be reframed so that coalition partners compete for human development programs (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2006).

Findings highlight that coalition governments in Balochistan resulted in unstable and discontinued policy implementation, lack of ownership, undesired reshuffle and many quarters for decision making. Controlled bureaucracy, political patronage and uncertain political environment have resulted in governance challenges in health and education sectors. Findings also suggest that due to hybrid politics and structural constraints in Balochistan, service delivery remained a question mark. Decentralization and continuity of policies are always termed as development factors; however, weak and compromised coalition politics in Balochistan did not allow policies to flourish for a longer period. Therefore, study suggests that challenges, arising in health and education sectors in Balochistan, are purely political based which can be settled via political will and efforts.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Conclusion

Study was carried out to find out governance challenges which impacted health and education under coalition regimes from 2013 to 2018 and 2018 to 2023. Findings revealed that coalition regimes in Balochistan in the said period had been compromised, uncertain, unstable with fragmented authority. Findings demonstrate investigation of eleven themes, taken for study, show that coalition partners have hindered development, resulted fluctuated allocations and caused discontinued policies in health and education throughout the periods. Study shows that coalition regimes have been more focused to personal schemes of their coalition partners rather than provincial reforms and developments. Policies distorted due to change of minister. Moreover, change of policies also disrupted the routine work and policies of donors. Involvement of center and security institutions also caused delays or cancellation of policies in health and education. Both coalition regimes from 2013–18 and 2018–23 met with structural problem. Coalition government's periods revealed that institutional independence, strong political parties, policy continuity and local empowerment were limited to their respective periods. Therefore, coalition governments struggled to settle governance challenges in health and education during the study period.

5.2. Recommendations

Results suggest the coalition governments in Balochistan need structured reforms and framework to be more efficient in-service delivery and policy continuity. Balochistan, with its geo-strategical, geo-political and geo-economic importance, needs a permanent governance model which is transparent, inclusive and public oriented. Adopting institutional mechanisms to regulate coalition behaviors can transfer Balochistan from a crisis-prone government to public service focused regime. Following recommendations are grounded in respondent insights, thematic analysis:

- Establish formal coalition governance frameworks to regulate decision-making and ensure policy continuity.
- Develop a formal framework ensuring that major policy instruments are protected from abrupt political and administrative change.
- Introduce fixed tenures for key bureaucratic positions to safeguard administrative stability and meritocracy.
- Depoliticize PSDP by linking resource allocation to transparent, needs-based development criteria.
- Strengthen provincial autonomy by clarifying federal and military roles in devolved sectors.
- Decentralize authority to districts and communities with strong accountability and transparency mechanisms.
- Promote cross-party oversight and consensus on education and health as non-negotiable development priorities.
- Shift political incentives from patronage to performance by linking legitimacy to service delivery outcomes.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Semi-structured Interview Respondents

Respondent Code	Respondent	Expertise / Relevance to Study
Respondent 1	Former Chief Minister of Balochistan	Senior Politician, Nationalist Party President, and Coalition formation, PSDP allocation, cabinet-level policy decisions
Respondent 2	Former Minister for Education	BESP formulation, education policymaking, political dynamics
Respondent 3	Former Minister for Health	Health policy processes, coalition negotiation, service delivery bottlenecks
Respondent 4	Opposition Party Senior Leader in Balochistan Assembly	Oversight, legislative scrutiny, critique of coalition governance
Respondent 5	Former Secretary Education	Sector planning, HR governance, implementation challenges
Respondent 6	Former Secretary Health	Health sector governance, strategy implementation, interdepartmental coordination
Respondent 7	Senior Officer, Planning & Development Department (P&D)	PSDP allocations, provincial planning cycle, political-bureaucratic interface
Respondent 8	District Education Officer (Male), Gwadar	District-level implementation, teacher deployment, field realities
Respondent 9	UNICEF Education Specialist	BESP support, donor coordination, ECE and gender reforms
Respondent 10	World Bank Governance & Public Finance Expert	Public financial management, expenditure reviews, governance constraints
Respondent 11	UNESCO Education Policy Advisor	Technical support to sector planning, curriculum, literacy reforms
Respondent 12	GPE / Development Partner Consultant	Sector planning, financing frameworks, results-based financing mechanisms
Respondent 13	Secondary School Head Teacher	School realities, teacher absenteeism, community interface
Respondent 14	District Health Officer (DHO), Lasbela	Primary healthcare delivery, HR issues, security constraints
Respondent 15	Senior Medical Officer Kech	Clinical services, staff shortages, equipment gaps
Respondent 16	Lady Health Worker (LHW)	Outreach, maternal/child health, rural service access
Respondent 17	Senior Journalist, ARY News	Political analysis, governance failures, public accountability
Respondent 18	Director, Local Governance & Rights NGO	Social accountability, citizen rights, public service monitoring
Respondent 19	Senior Political Economy Expert on Balochistan	Political settlement analysis, party systems, coalition dynamics
Respondent 20	Senior Social Activist / Community Leader	Community engagement, gender issues, service delivery inequities

Appendix II: Themes Generated from Thematic Analysis

Code (T1-T11)	Theme Title	Description of Analytical Focus	Linked Objective(s)
Theme 1	Fragmented Political Authority	Shows how multiparty coalitions create unstable, competing centers of power, each with veto authority	Obj. 1
Theme 2	Policy Discontinuity & Bureaucratic Instability	Examines frequent reshuffling of ministers/secretaries and its impact on reform continuity	Obj. 1
Theme 3	Federal & Military Influence	How federal agencies & security institutions shape coalition formation and policy priorities	Obj. 1
Theme 4	Political of PSDP	How development funds are used as bargaining chips for coalition survival	Obj. 2
Theme 5	Bureaucratic Patronage & Political influence	Political interference in posts/transfers, HR manipulation, weak discipline	Obj. 1 & 2
Theme 6	Unequal & Politicized Resource Distribution	Spatial, gender, and constituency-based disparities in funding	Obj. 2
Theme 7	Donor Dependence & Weak Domestic Ownership of policies	Donor-driven policymaking creating strong plans but weak local commitment	Obj. 1
Theme 8	Governance Constraints, Security, Territorial Fragmentation	How terrain, conflict, and tribal influence limit implementation	Obj. 1
Theme 9	Institutionalizing Policy Continuity	Options for protecting long-term reforms from coalition turnover	Obj. 3
Theme 10	Local Governance, Decentralization & Transparency	Recommendations for empowering districts, communities & enhancing accountability	Obj. 3
Theme 11	Sustainable Political Settlement	Long-term political reforms required to stabilize governance & strengthen service delivery	Obj. 3