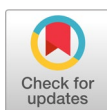


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Unlocking the Sustainable Development Goals with Public Private Partnership and Local Government Role: Insights from Pakistan

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Abstract

This research paper intends to elaborate on the part that the local administrations have in seizing the public-private partnership (PPPs) opportunities through the execution of the SDGs in Pakistan. This study is conducted with systematic literature review approach to analysis the role of PPPs and the local government. For this purpose, the study collected 500 research manuscripts from Elsevier, Taylor and francis, Emerlad, ABDC and Web of Science journal, and selected 206 to analyze the PPPs and the local government's role. It is observed from synthesis analysis that the local government's role is a key factor for the success of PPPs in Pakistan. In addition, political uncertainty, involvement and transparency are key hurdles to achieve SDGs in Pakisan. Out of these analysis, this research recommends to re-draft policy, strategies and the need to retransform digital governance to achieve successful PPPs with the help of local government role. These solutions could play an important role toward SDGs achievement in Pakistan.

Keyword: local government, public-private partnerships, sustainable development goals, systematic literature review

Introduction

The global society's determination to reach the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals has, as a consequence, altered the policy priorities and led many nations to reconsider their growth strategies. In 2015, the SDGs were agreed upon by all United Nations member states, thus providing a universal agenda for humanity to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all (Azhar, [2025](#)). Attaining these ambitious goals by 2030 requires collaborative stakeholders, especially through Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), and local governments should be active participants. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasize that a concerted

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partnership between governments, businesses, and society is necessary. Therefore, local governments could play a facilitative role in realizing PPPs that may accelerate SDG implementation at the grassroots level (Masuda et al., [2022](#)). The SDGs are certainly broad and far-reaching, addressing a range of interrelated issues, like economic inequality, environmental pollution, and social injustice, that need innovative and multidimensional governance approaches. Moreover, the efforts at the grassroots level have also led to the identification of a vital strategy for implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) involving collaboration of public-private partnership with local governance structures through empowered local communities, especially in developing economies like Pakistan (Cheema et al., [2024](#)). One of the numerous means proposed to encourage such collaboration, Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), has turned out to be an important pathway to access resources, expertise, and innovation from both public and private sectors. While agenda-setting of SDGs is definitely the role of national governments, local governments serve as intermediaries in facilitating partnerships that guarantee effective policy implementation on the ground (Masuda et al., [2022](#)).

The role of local governments in allowing these partnerships consists of creating an enabling environment, ensuring compliance, and fostering community engagement (Ningrum et al., [2024](#)). As a developing nation, Pakistan, aligning itself with the SDGs has to face a rather long list of socio-economic and environmental challenges. The implementation of the SDGs has been hindered for a long time by poor infrastructure, depleted finances, ineffective governance practices, political instability, lack of fiscal capacity, and bureaucratic inertia (Maqbool et al., [2025](#); Rehman & Peerjan, [2022](#); UNDP, [2021](#)). Consequently, the Government of Pakistan has been increasingly relying on PPPs as a means of addressing these challenges and this is the case particularly in the areas of health, education, and renewable energy (Rind & Shah, [2022](#)). The extent of their use has reached a point where research has already confirmed their significant roles in achieving the SDGs, namely: infrastructure, service delivery, and enabling innovation (Salvador & Sancho, [2021](#)). However, the comprehensive success that comes from these partnerships is dependent on the governance framework, institutional capability, and regulatory environment that prevails (Bäckstrand et al., [2022](#); Song & Hao, [2023](#)). The local government is the closest administrative level to the community and has a crucial role to play in the mediation of public and private interests with compliance to the law,

creating a conducive environment for sustainable collaborations (Afieroho et al., [2023](#)).

Pakistan is a highly fascinating context to explore and comprehend the interplay between the PPPs, local governance, and SDG implementation. With an array of economic, social, and environmental challenges, Pakistan represents the typical developing country that adopted the SDG agenda but encounters its governance backlogs, the weak fiscal autonomy of local governments, and the unpredictable involvement of the private sector in supporting any sustainable development endeavor (Khan et al., [2015](#)). Evidence shows that PPPs are implemented in infrastructure and energy, but such a contract was hardly used in integration with other SDG projects due to bureaucratic inefficiencies, fragmented policies, and the nonexistence of institutional support at the municipal level (Tipu et al., [2022](#)). Noticing these gaps and instruments would accelerate the progress made toward the SDGs (Khan, [2022](#)).

The main goal of this research is to focus on the role of local government in facilitating Public-private Partnerships to establish Sustainable Development Goals in Pakistan. Operationally, a PPP provides a collaborative forum for sharing public service delivery risks, responsibilities, and rewards between public and private sectors (Mazher, [2025](#)). Due to funding constraints, bureaucratic inefficiencies are blocking rapid advancement, and this partnership model is useful. The success of such collaborative efforts hinges on solid regulatory frameworks, transparency, and a clear division of roles—none of which are readily available in many developing countries (Bakhtawar et al., [2022](#); Shah, [2019](#)). The local government policies and the rules should be aligned and transposed according to the need of PPPs.

Decentralization is widely promoted as a tool to enhance accountability, responsiveness, and participatory governance (Rahim & Shirazi, [2018](#)). When empowered with adequate autonomy and resources, local authorities mitigate with private actors toward implementing innovative, context-specific solutions. The local governments not only contribute to the overall attainment of the SDGs but also contribute to democratic governance and local empowerment (Cheema et al., [2024](#); UN-Habitat, [2022](#)). These successes, however, are not evenly distributed across provinces, and this has created a discrepancy whereby different regional states have been utilizing PPPs for solving local developmental needs with

varying degrees of success. Intergovernmental coordination, while absolutely imperative, has impeded the sustainability and inclusivity objectives of the national policies. This observation is basically an indication of the necessity to pursue further reflections on how localized models of PPPs can be adjusted in facilitating Pakistan's journey toward accomplishing the SDGs.

Wherever PPPs are integrated with local governments, opportunities arise for sustainable development. Research suggests that local governments are supportive and good in leadership to ensure that PPPs achieve their aims (Lima, [2020](#)). Furthermore, the emerging fields of digital governance and data analytics innovation provide openings for enhancing the transparency and accountability of PPP projects in ensuring equitable delivery of development benefits (Casprini & Palumbo, [2022](#)). Such an opportunity is very germane to Pakistan, where localized initiatives with strong public-private partnerships could narrow the gap between urban-rural development. Therefore, the exploration between PPPs and local governance is not only theoretical but practically necessary for the attainment of ambitiously set targets of the SDG (Ramolobe & Khandanisa, [2024](#)). The underlying rationale for this study arises from the possible contribution of collaborative governance models toward developing innovative solutions for sustainable development. While some studies have explored the separate effects of both PPPs and local government reforms, very few studies focus on their combined effect on SDG achievement in Pakistan, creating a large gap within literature. This research strives to bridge that gap and assess how local governments may be able to capitalize on their strengths with PPPs in delivering better public services and infrastructure toward sustainable development.

The SDG framework has been adopted on a national level, but this is contradicted by the fact that Pakistan ranks 137th out of 167 countries in the 2024 SDG Index, signaling a dire gap between national policies and implementation at the local level (Sachs et al., [2024](#)). Very few studies have synthesized how local governments act as intermediaries across sectors in influencing PPP outcomes for the SDGs. Therefore, the gap is filled in this study by systematically reviewing 209 studies. Although international scholarship has offered PPP as a financing mechanism for infrastructure and services, it has not focused enough attention on the different participations in the cases of local governance in developing countries for the purpose of

achieving the SDGs. Despite having good analytical drawings to inform its arguments, most PPP work in Pakistan remains very descriptive, spiteful about national patterns or merely about individual sectoral cases. Furthermore, it fails to analyze how local governments operate in the context of simultaneously being intermediaries between the state, private sector, and communities. This gap in literature inhibits any understanding of how best to arrange PPPs to correspond with Agenda 2030 at the municipal level. It raises the question of how the local governments in Pakistan facilitate partnerships with the corporate sector to attain SDGs through PPPs. Other research questions include: What sectors (infrastructure, health, education, energy, sanitation) are most commonly addressed through PPP initiatives at the local level? What barriers and enabling factors are most critical to PSP effectiveness in promoting SDG outposts in Pakistan? What policy and governance reforms are needed to enhance the role of local governments in PPP arrangements for sustainable development?

Considering that meeting SDGs is becoming more urgent within a rapidly changing global context defined by technological advancement, political transitions, and environmental uncertainties, this discussion stands to gain from topicality. With a special focus on the context of Pakistan, the intention goes not only to provide insights of local relevance but also insights that could resonate globally, thus contributing lessons toward the framing of policies and practices in similar developing countries facing the same challenges. The emphasis on digital transformation in local governance makes it all the more urgent to leverage novel technologies to enhance service delivery and accountability in PPP projects (Ma et al., [2023](#); Pittaway & Montazemi, [2020](#)). In this regard, this research is valuable to achieve the SDGs with the proper implementation of PPPs, and with the local government's role. This research creates an opportunity with the involvement of PPPs and efficient allocation of resources in local government to achieve the SDGs. Consequently, this research is transformative toward achieving the SDGs and improving the PPPs' role in Pakistan. Lastly, the research highlights the challenges, problems and solution towards the achievement of SDGs.

Literature Review

With public-private partnerships and local governments in the center stage, attaining Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a combined effort

involving different stakeholders. The working mechanisms of such entities in Pakistan are more vital for effective realization of SDGs (Asad, [2019](#)). The degree to which Pakistan has understood the importance of localization of SDGs is clearly portrayed by the approval of the National SDG Framework by the National Economic Council. This framework serves as a guiding document in achieving SDGs through localized approach with emphasis on localization; therefore, there is a necessity of local government's engagement in the process (Asad, [2019](#)). Innovative governance models are much needed in developing countries like Pakistan to realize the SDGs within the ambit of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda. Public-private partnerships govern long-term alliances between public and private partners to provide public services or public works infrastructure, risk-sharing arrangements with shared resources and responsibilities to complement the capability of the public sector (World Bank, [n.d.](#); United Nations Conference on Trade and Development [UNCTAD], [2025](#)).

Globally, PPP models are being adopted and aligned with SDGs through various collaborative governance frameworks. They have been exemplified in Malaysia and Brazil as countries that illustrate how local governments can take on the role of facilitators in sustainable projects entered through PPPs. The examples forwarded in these case studies would no doubt go a long way toward providing important lessons for Pakistan in regard to improving its PPP frameworks. A comparative analysis has outlined key success factors in leveraging the potential of PPPs for the ultimate achievement of SDGs to include effective policy alignment, stakeholder engagement, and regulatory incentives (Adebayo et al., [2023](#); Herath et al., [2024](#); Owojori et al., [2025](#)). PPPs are to be employed for sustainable development with a multi-stakeholder approach. While the previous literature has mainly focused on the theoretical framework and international experiences, there need to be the study that focus on reasons for delaying the local governments projects and why these are not not helpful for the local community. Along with that, research should reveal the challenges to solve the problems of the local community. The evaluation of literature is a significant step towards understanding the role of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in sustainable development through the local governance route, particularly in the context of Pakistan, as it incorporates the views of esteemed scholars in the field. To put it differently, scholars suggest that the government's ability to obtain the funding and the expertise that can solve the issues of resource limitations

and budget gaps is one of the major advantages that PPPs bring to the table (Xiong et al., [2022](#)). To provide inter-partner-public-private relationships with discussing and supportive propositions, the efficiency of the private sector across the world is usually counterbalanced by the public sector accountability. The consulting firm for analysis purposes characterizes PPP as encompassing the whole risk—financial, technical, and operational—that the private sector is taking on in providing public services. The public-private partnerships not only contribute largely to developing countries in their energy infrastructure but also support the sustainability of developing countries' economies in the long run. The countries that used to be poor not so long ago are now more advanced in terms of infrastructure, one of the biggest problems solved through public-private partnership (PPP) arrangements. Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) provide a crucial role in the energy infrastructure of developing countries. Such partnerships are essential for attaining the SDGs through investment availabilities, innovation, and enhanced service delivery (Ren et al., [2024](#); UNCTAD, [2025](#)). However, this concept seems to be limited to just the modernization of service delivery in the healthcare, education, and even urban infrastructure sectors in the case of Pakistan (Akram et al., [2023](#)).

Research Hypothesis 1: Public-Private Partnerships have a positive relationship with the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals insight in Pakistan.

Nonetheless, the co-operation between the public and private sectors is going to be very difficult with a lot of obstacles ahead. As per Batjargal and Zhang ([2021](#)), the lack of persons-in-charge, countries with badly defined accountability mechanisms and poorly monitored sectors are factors that underperform PPPs. In Pakistan, according to Khan et al. ([2015](#)), the successful overcoming of these barriers requires proper stakeholder engagement and sound governance structures. It is not questionable that public-private partnerships have been the mainstay of worldwide attempts to promote social welfare by utilizing the capacity and capital of the private sector for public goods, as well as the construction and maintenance of infrastructure. Thus, PPPs can be viewed as the demanding path to sustainability; however, the real challenge is to create the proper institutional environment in which their advantages can be realized. The research further indicated a negative relationship between degradation of the environment and investment in the power sector through PPPs, meaning

that poor management of PPPs can worsen the situation of the environment if the investments were to be increased. Local governments are the ones who actually play the role of implementors of the SDGs and their localization, being the closest administrative unit to the people. The application of SDGs to local governance structures has been analyzed in the context of Pakistan. The study is based on the experiences of local government councilors from various provinces. The results of the studies indicate that local governments must be empowered and provided with resources if they are to play a real role in achieving the SDGs (Cheema et al., [2024](#)). An investment impact assessment carried out in the energy sector in Pakistan noted that while the energy sector provided investment for growth, it did question the sustainability of the environment. Fiscal decentralization, as Rahim and Shirazi ([2018](#)) argue, may increase both citizen satisfaction and developmental performance, provided that local institutions have enough administrative capacity. According to Tipu et al. ([2022](#)), when local governments are empowered through proper resources and decision-making power, they will be able to match national policies with local requirements, thus, making the sustainable development program more effective. The issues and challenges of decentralization are well known in Pakistan.

On the other hand, there are some successful instances where local bodies have worked alongside nongovernmental partners to deliver essential services and infrastructure improvements, exemplified by the Orangi Pilot Project in Karachi. These cases suggest that, for the SDGs to be fully implemented at the community level, enhancement of local institutional capacities is required. Local governments, closest to the community, shall play a vital role in facilitating PPPs by developing policy frameworks for the inclusive participation of stakeholders and shall ensure accountability of stakeholders (Loorbach et al., [2017](#)). There is evidence to prove that decentralized governance promotes the efficiency of PPP in addressing development needs at the local level by successful case studies from various countries by improving project targeting, transparency, and stakeholder responsiveness in countries like Nigeria, Bangladesh, and Indonesia. In the context of Pakistan, historically, local governments have suffered intermittent challenges, ranging from inconsistent devolution policies to limited financial autonomy. The local governments' incapacity was so great that not everyone could win.

Research Hypothesis 2: Analyze the role of local government towards the achievement of SDGs in Pakistan.

Local government and private sector partnership is one of the solutions to the problem of public transport and solid waste management in urban areas (Bakhtawar et al., [2022](#); Khan et al., [2015](#)). However, there are some institutional and operational challenges which will need to be addressed in order to secure such partnerships. According to the scientists, the resolution of differences, and fair distribution of the benefits of PPPs depend upon three factors: shared goals, fair procurement processes, and active participation of stakeholders (Bakhtawar et al., [2022](#); Shah, [2019](#)). This comes with the guarantee of a continuous need-based applicability and adaptability to the local community. The same argument was made by Stafford and Stapleton ([2022](#)) who recognized that governance hybrids not only save the friction and foster the innovation of solutions but also develop the trust through joint accountability and finally create the conditions for collaboration. In addition, this partnership could prove to be very advantageous in using the local expertise and networks possessed by the municipalities to offset the restrictions imposed by the central government.

Research Hypothesis 3: The merger of PPPs with local government structures fortifies the achievement of SDGs in Pakistan.

Challenges and Opportunities in Pakistan

Although the necessity of public-private partnership and local government participation in SDGs implementation is acknowledged, however, the implementation still faces challenges. The legal formalities and unnecessary procedures are also creating hurdles to establish an effective PPPs in Pakistan. For this research, bureaucracy style and unskilled leadership in local government are not helping to achieve the SDGs in Pakistan. This type of problems are creating high risk to the success of PPPs and that's why PPPs are not being used properly in local workplaces (Akram et al., [2023](#)). In this regard, the PPPs scenario is still uncertain and not friendly for the local government. This doubt exists in the literature review and needs to create the policy framework and valuable governance that could be helpful to resolve these issues.

Nevertheless, a multitude of harmful structural barriers is still severely blocking the path to progress, which has become almost a way of life (Al-Tameemi et al., [2024](#); Nguyen et al., [2024](#)). The literature hints that the

primary chance lies in capacity development which involves the process of attracting the necessary technical and administrative skills of the lower levels of the government in order to be able to monitor and assess PPP projects efficiently and thus, improve their outcomes. Moreover, a situation where the community members are the decision makers and their voices are heard, would not only add more credibility but would also grant the projects more long-lasting presence (Lima, [2020](#)). Digital governance tools serve as an excellent case in point for the public being given access to see if the skill set required is present, if the established regulations are being adhered to and if the residents are being included in the the process. The World Bank ([n.d.](#)) underlines the role of digital platforms in the quality of service delivery and transparency in PPP arrangements.

The increasing digital infrastructure of Pakistan has the potential to support the implementation of local-level data-driven decisions more effectively. Various methodological approaches employed in the literature, such as quantitative and qualitative studies, reflect the complexities of researching PPPs and local government reforms in terms of sustainable development. Public governance theory and public value theory suggests that government, private and civil societies should be aligned with each other (Marx, [2019](#); Wojewnik-Filipkowska & Węgrzyn, [2019](#)). In this context, the referred research works have brought together ideas from governance, stakeholders, and institutional economics theories to throw light on public-private partnerships (PPPs) especially in their relations with local governments. Stakeholder theory could explain a situation where diverse parties (government agencies, private businesses, and the community) attempt to negotiate their interests in a public-private partnership (Bakhtawar et al., [2022](#)). Researchers gain a full understanding of different aspects of project processes and outcomes of partnerships between the private and public sectors. Thus, policymakers can learn from both success stories and failures. The literature consistently emphasizes the necessity of aligning PPP initiatives with a strong and accountable local regime to achieve SDG. Empirical studies indicate that while Pakistan has made strides in implementing the PPP model, there is still much work to be done in terms of enhancing the institutional framework and encouraging the collaborative regime. Moving forward, integration of digital tools and participation mechanisms will be required to unlock the full capacity of PPP and local governments, and permanent development scenario.

Figure 1

Development of a Framework for Integrating PPPs with Local Government to Achieve SDGs

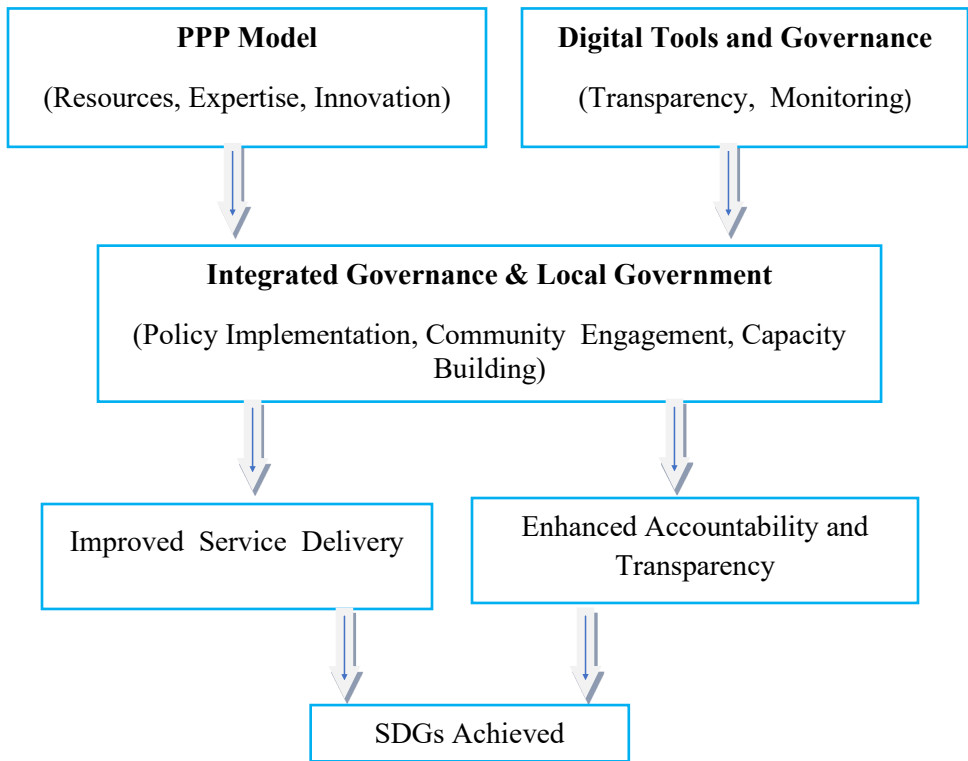


Table 1

The Role of PPPs and Local Government in Advancing SDGs in Pakistan

SDGs Addressed	Sector	Local Government Involvement	Key Findings	Study (Author, Year)
SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, Infrastructure)	Infrastructure	Strategic planning and oversight	Improved efficiency and service delivery in urban areas	Khan et al. (2015)
SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being)	Healthcare	Active monitoring and community engagement	Increased access to quality healthcare services	Rahim and Shirazi (2018)

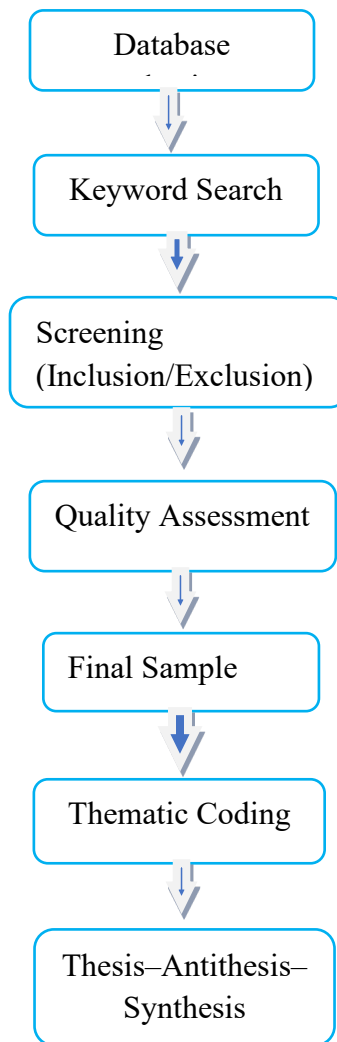
SDGs Addressed	Sector	Local Government Involvement	Key Findings	Study (Author, Year)
SDG 4 (Quality Education)	Education	Policy implementation at the district level	Addressed resource gaps and improved learning outcomes	(UNDP Pakistan, 2021)
SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)	Urban Development	Participatory governance models	Enhanced transparency and stakeholder engagement	Azhar (2025)

Methods

This research is qualitative which is based on case method. In this regard, the researchers collected 500 papers from reputable sources like; Scopus and Web of Science, JSTOR, MDPI, Google Scholar, UNDP, World Bank, and Government of Pakistan reports to gain insights into policy frameworks and implementation challenges. For this purpose, the study emphasises on thesis-antithesis-synthesis analysis that is also called systematic literature review approach to analyze the role of public private partnership and local government to achieve the sustainable development goals in Pakistan. Hence, a search strategy of purposely selected keywords (i.e., "Public-Private Partnership," "Sustainable Development Goals," "local government," and "Pakistan") ensured a sufficiently broad coverage of relevant literature. Consequently, studies and reports were selected that would meet the following inclusion criteria: Published in English between 2015 and 2025, empirical research, case studies, or policy analyses that clearly addressed the roles of PPPs and/or local governance in achieving SDGs. Furthermore, the selected studies must focus on Pakistan or draw comparative insights from similar developing contexts. Those studies without empirical evidence or those that focused only on developed countries with no implications for Pakistan were excluded. This mode of sampling helped to retain the relevance and manageability of the sample whilst still ensuring the representation of an array of views. This allows for an in-depth examination of the mechanisms, challenges, and success factors in Public-Private Partnerships-driven Sustainable Development Goals projects. The systematic literature review process is crafted in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Process of Systematic Literature Review



Results

The research outcomes point out that PPPs are an exceptional chance to lead the SDGs in Pakistan. The total cases examined demonstrate 68% that yielded good results, with infrastructure, health, and education being the most successful sectors with 39%, 19% and 9% shares respectively. These sectors provide a strong support to Hypothesis 1 (H1), stating that well-

structured PPPs have a considerable impact on service delivery, efficiency, and sustainability which are the SDG targets. It is noteworthy that as a trend, projects that were given priority through the proper regulatory frameworks and open contracting would always show more positive effects than projects carried out under uncertain rules. On the other hand, 32% of the cases revealed that the main obstacles were political interference, bureaucracy, and weak regulation in the PPP sector which means that in Pakistan, "one size fits all" does not apply but such a structure will make the success of the PPP critically dependent on the particular governance environment in which it is executed. This creates a scenario where the public-private partnerships that are not supported by good institutions become a wasteland for inefficiency instead of being the accelerators for development.

The aforementioned also implies that local authorities are the ones who mainly determine the fate of PPPs. Addressing evidence from projects in which municipal authorities are involved in land allocations, community engagement, and monitoring, it was indicated that these projects generally proved easier to implement and had stronger accountability mechanisms. For this purpose, currently local government is trying to apply digital transformation in Punjab and Sindh cities, and the resulted transparency is much better now. Further, transportation system has been shifted toward electric buses by Punjab Government. The Government of Pakistan has already constructed multiple motorways, and M-12 is also currently in process with the PPPs. In this way, travel will smooth and going green and it also helpful to work together to fund and its management. In addition, Sindh Government is also trying to establish purification of water and health system to improve the quality of life. This pattern substantiates Hypothesis 2 (H2), indicating that empowered local governments act as intermediaries promoting national development strategies through their effective linkage with community-level implementation.

In this case, we foresee very strong results if such PPPs are integrated with local government systems. Through a joint examination of case studies, it was discovered that the financial and technical resources of PPPs, along with the legitimacy of local government and the proximity of the community, have paved a new way leading to results that are beyond the reach of anyone. The above has confirmed Hypotheses 3 (H3), which posits that the merger of PPPs with local governments speeds up the SDG agenda in Pakistan. The table provided illustrates the scenario in terms of both

opportunities and challenges. One among many factors that resulted in success is the very convincing institutional capacity and digital integration; it indicates that local governments with skilled staff and e-governance tools are most likely to support impact-driven PPPs.

Table 3

Hypothesis Testing Based on Findings

Hypothesis	Result	Evidence
H1: PPPs is helpful to achieve the SDGs in Pakistan	Supported	Evidence is found and its consistent.
H2: Local Governments is playing an important role tot establish the PPPs and enhance the SDGs.	Supported	Local Government is a key driver to achieve the SDGs
H3: Establish the interation between PPPs and local Governmentt.	Supported	Interation is an key to achive the SDGs

To illustrate, local governments that implemented a digital monitoring tool to invite participation in decision-making were more efficiently delivered than those where local governance capabilities were still weak. The analysis revealed some obvious success stories, but at the same time, it also uncovered the presence of challenges everywhere. Roughly, the literature suggests inadequately developed regulatory frameworks, political interference, and bureaucratic inefficiencies that remain a traditionally distracting phenomena that deny PPP projects their full benefits. Where local government capacities cannot align with national development goals, the project drags on delays and cost overruns with undesirable risk-sharing arrangements. The advent of digital technologies has emerged as a critical enablement. E-governance and digital monitoring tools have played a vital role in increasing transparency, expediting procurement processes, and facilitating real-time execution monitoring of projects under the PPP mode. These functions have been credited with the positive effects of increased stakeholder engagement, decreased corruption risks, and enhanced feasibility of integrated development models.

Table 4
Success Factors and Challenges

Category	Description	Frequency/ Importance	References
Success Factors			
Institutional capacity	Strong Local Government capabilities establish project monitoring	High	Farquharson et al. (2011) Osei-Kyei and Chan (2015)
Regulatory framework	Clear and efficient policies & risk-sharing foster trust	Moderate– High	Verhoest et al. (2015)
Digital integration	E-governance improves transparency, efficient	High	Ma et al. (2023)
Stakeholder engagement	Community, companies involvement enures alignment	Moderate	Busco et al. (2024)
Challenges			
Political interference	Instability disrupts continuity	High	World Bank (n.d.)
Budget constraints	Limited funding restricts scope	Moderate	Ibrahim and Jantan (2024)
Bureaucratic inefficiencies	Slow administration delays delivery	Moderate	Ibrahim and Jantan (2024)
Legal ambiguities	Weak legal frameworks create uncertainty	High	Liu et al. (2025)

Discussion

This research analyzed the cooperation of Public-Private Partnerships with local governments for the promotion of Sustainable Development Goals in Pakistan. The results indicate that the infrastructure, health, and education sectors can be addressed through PPPs, but their impact and effectiveness vary greatly depending on the assurance of regulation, political stability, and the ability of the local government (Tipu et al., 2022). As per

governance theory, the government can play a middle role between private and local partnerships to build trust and remove unnecessary processes to accomplish the task. At this juncture, it should be recognized that PPPs in the global south are not merely legal contracts but rather entail a greater commitment to a robust local institution. The practical implications of such a process lead to the emergence of a new literature stream that suggests an application of the multi-level governance model where the national policy is recognized along with the local government's ability to embrace and make use of these policies. The investigation reveals the functioning of the PPPs along with local governance thus broadening the application area of stakeholder theory. There is a growing body of evidence that sustainability is a key factor in collaborative governance models that require the active involvement of local government, the private sector, and the community, rather than the use of a hierarchical or purely market-driven approach. This paper is a contribution to the process of bridging the gap in literature regarding the role of local governance as a mediator in the management of PPPs in the Global South (Casprini & Palumbo, [2022](#)), especially in the case of the institutions of Pakistan. The research reveals, mainly, political interference, the lack of strong regulatory frameworks, and the existence of bureaucratic inefficiencies as the main barriers to the success of PPPs. The implementation part of the projects and the investors' trust would suffer awfully if legal certainty and transparent governance frameworks were not established first. Nonetheless, the finding implies that local government is an essential part of the PPP success. The local government's planning, monitoring, and community participation affect implementation delays and accountability directly: higher local government capability leads to longer delays but still provides accountability. This gives rise to three immediate shifts in policy for Pakistan:

Assistance for Improvement of Urban Capacity: Training, resource allocations, and technical support are necessary to empower local governments to appraise and control PPP projects efficiently.

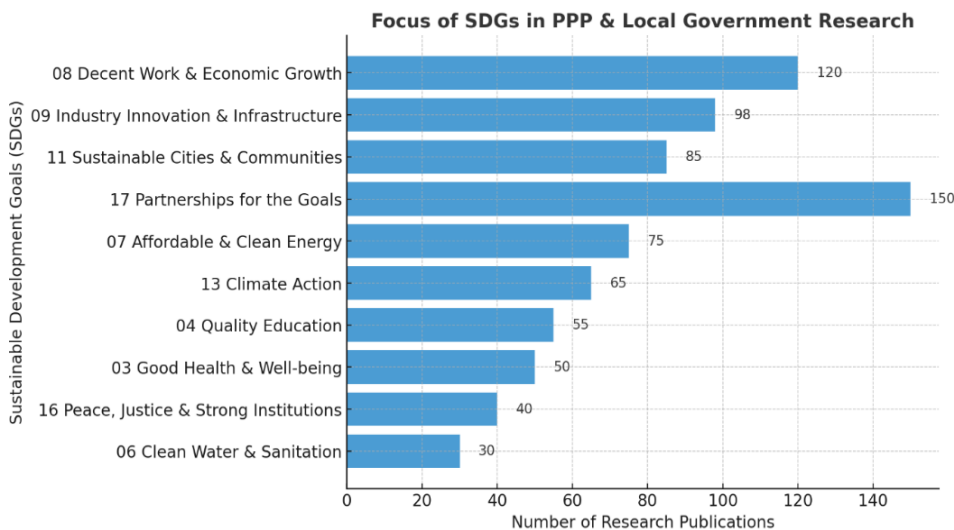
Uniformity of Procurement and Regulatory Frameworks: Having transparent and clear-cut rules will ensure that risks are shared appropriately and delays minimized.

Increased Digital Governance: E-governance platforms for monitoring, reporting, and stakeholder interaction can significantly reduce corruption risks and speed up project delivery.

The combination of PPPs with strong local government points to the highest potential for advancing SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), SDG 3 (Health), and SDG 4 (Education). The successes in these areas are a testament to the fact that empowered municipalities not only enhance accountability but also improve service delivery. Poor governance mechanisms primarily consisting of regulatory confusion, limited fiscal autonomy, and political interference directly hinder the achievement of SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). Thus, the author emphasizes that besides the provision of funds through PPPs, governing mechanisms reforms at the local level are a prerequisite for the successful attainment of the SDGs in Pakistan. The study is limited in confirming the findings because it uses secondary sources, which are different and may suffer from publication bias or the researchers' interpretations. There is a plan for future research: to carry out surveys at the municipal level and longitudinal case studies to validate the findings. Test the utility of particular governance reforms (i.e., digital platforms, capacity-building programs). Assess social equity outcomes by querying who benefits most from services delivered through PPPs, therefore tying the governance of PPPs to inclusion and justice.

Figure 3

Focus of SDGs in Public-Private Partnership and Local Government Research in Pakistan



Conclusion

For the advancement of Pakistan's sustainable development goals, interlinking the local governments with the public-private partnerships is discovered to be an important measure. Successful case studies are presented in the areas of urban infrastructure, healthcare, and education, where empowered local authorities play a very important role promoting accountability while engendering innovation in service delivery through partnership modes of delivery. More than 500 peer-reviewed papers substantiate the above claim by providing evidence that PPPs can provide tremendous benefits in these sectors, but these benefits will be reaped only when there is good governance and accountability maintained at the local level.

From a theoretical standpoint, it adds to the debate on collaborative governance by stating that local actors are not just passive implementers, but rather, they play an important role as intermediaries in deciding the outcomes of PPP. Looking at the whole scenario from the policymakers' perspective, the priority is on how to boost the municipalities' capabilities and make procurement regulations more straightforward and enhance the application of digital governance tools as the crucial backing for the promise of PPPs to be realized. Political interferences and inadequate regulatory structures are the main obstacles that still hinder the governments' efforts to enhance PPPs for SDGs. The political and bureaucratic pressures may whittle down the financial benefit that is driven from the short-term or no institutional support. Thus, the resolution of this issue calls for a comprehensive reform agenda that not only provides a transparent regulatory framework but also trains and builds capacity for local governments and focuses on the priority of digital governance systems.

It is concluded that better local government role is the key to the success of establishing PPPs in order to achieve the SDGs in Pakistan. The government needs to construct PPPs from municipal level to federal level along-with improving the local government's role. This type of action could improve the PPPs which would increase the SDGs in Pakistan. So, this study is going to contribute by suggesting governance improvement in order to achieve the SDGs in Pakistan.

Author Contribution

Sidra Tabbasum: conceptualization, data curation, writing -original draft. **Anwar Hussain:** formal analysis, investigation, visualization, writing-review and editing. **Syed Husnain Shah:** methodology, project administration.

Hafiz Shahid Irfan Aslam: Resource Validation

Conflict of Interest

The authors of the manuscript have no financial or non-financial conflict of interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

Data Availability Statement

Data supporting the findings of this study will be made available by the corresponding author upon request.

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