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Administrative Autonomy and Recruitment Effectiveness in Medical Teaching Institutions (MTIs) of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: The Mediating Role of Transparency

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Abstract: *The introduction of the Medical Teaching Institutions (MTI) Act in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has granted significant administrative autonomy to public sector hospitals, particularly in human resource decisions such as recruitment and selection. While this autonomy was intended to enhance efficiency and merit-based hiring, concerns regarding transparency and fairness have also emerged. This study examines the impact of administrative autonomy on recruitment effectiveness in MTI hospitals of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with transparency serving as a mediating variable. Using a quantitative research design, data were collected from healthcare professionals and administrative staff working in selected MTI hospitals through a structured questionnaire. Regression and mediation analyses were employed to test the hypothesized relationships. The findings reveal that administrative autonomy has a significant positive effect on recruitment effectiveness; however, this relationship is substantially mediated by perceived transparency in recruitment processes. The results suggest that administrative autonomy alone is insufficient to ensure effective recruitment unless accompanied by transparent policies and procedures. The study contributes to the literature on public sector HRM and healthcare governance by highlighting transparency as a critical mechanism linking administrative autonomy to successful recruitment outcomes. Policy implications for MTI administrators and HR practitioners are discussed.*

Keywords: Administrative Autonomy, Recruitment, Effectiveness, Mediating, Transparency

Introduction

Human resource management has emerged as a critical determinant of organizational effectiveness,

particularly in public sector healthcare institutions where service delivery directly affects human life. Among the various HR functions, recruitment and selection play a foundational role, as the quality of human capital acquired through these processes determines clinical performance, patient safety, and institutional sustainability. In developing countries such as Pakistan, public sector healthcare systems have historically struggled with bureaucratic inefficiencies, political interference, and rigid administrative structures that undermine merit-based recruitment. To address these systemic weaknesses, the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa introduced the Medical Teaching Institutions (MTI) Act, granting administrative and financial autonomy to selected tertiary care hospitals with the objective of improving governance, efficiency, and human resource practices.

Administrative autonomy under the MTI framework represents a paradigm shift from centralized government control to decentralized decision-making. This autonomy empowers MTI hospitals to independently manage their human resources, including recruitment, selection, compensation, and performance management. The underlying assumption of this reform is that reduced bureaucratic constraints will enable hospitals to recruit competent professionals in a timely and merit-based manner, thereby enhancing organizational performance. However, despite the theoretical promise of administrative autonomy, recruitment practices in MTI hospitals have remained a subject of debate and public scrutiny. Allegations of favoritism, lack of procedural clarity, and inconsistent recruitment standards have raised concerns regarding the effectiveness and fairness of recruitment systems within MTIs.

Recruitment effectiveness refers to the extent to which recruitment processes successfully attract, select, and retain qualified individuals who fit organizational needs and contribute positively to institutional goals. In healthcare organizations, recruitment effectiveness is particularly critical due to chronic shortages of skilled professionals, high turnover rates, and increasing service demands. While administrative autonomy is expected to enhance recruitment effectiveness by allowing institutions to respond swiftly to staffing needs, autonomy alone does not guarantee positive outcomes. Without appropriate governance mechanisms, autonomy may inadvertently create space for discretionary practices that weaken trust and legitimacy. This highlights the importance of transparency as a key governance variable in autonomous systems.

Transparency in recruitment refers to the openness, clarity, and fairness of recruitment processes, including publicly advertised vacancies, clearly defined selection criteria, standardized evaluation procedures, and accountability mechanisms. Transparency enhances organizational legitimacy by fostering trust among stakeholders and reducing perceptions of bias or corruption. In the context of MTI hospitals, transparency is particularly important because these institutions operate at the intersection of public accountability and managerial independence. While MTIs enjoy autonomy, they remain publicly funded entities and are therefore expected to uphold principles of fairness, merit, and accountability in HR practices.

Existing literature suggests that administrative autonomy can improve organizational performance when supported by strong institutional frameworks and ethical governance practices. However, empirical evidence from public sector healthcare institutions in Pakistan remains limited, particularly regarding the mechanisms through which autonomy influences HR outcomes. Most studies on MTIs have focused on financial autonomy, service delivery, or political implications, with relatively little attention paid to human resource governance and recruitment systems. Moreover, the mediating role of transparency in linking administrative autonomy to recruitment effectiveness has not been systematically examined, creating a significant gap in the literature.

From a theoretical perspective, this study draws on the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Institutional Theory to explain the relationships among administrative autonomy, transparency, and recruitment effectiveness. The RBV posits that organizations gain competitive advantage through the acquisition and effective management of valuable, rare, and skilled human resources. Effective recruitment systems

are therefore essential for building sustainable organizational capacity. Institutional Theory, on the other hand, emphasizes the role of norms, rules, and legitimacy in shaping organizational practices. According to this perspective, transparency acts as an institutional mechanism that ensures autonomy is exercised within socially acceptable and accountable boundaries. Together, these theories provide a robust framework for understanding how administrative autonomy can translate into effective recruitment outcomes when mediated by transparency.

In the specific context of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, MTI hospitals operate in a complex socio-political environment characterized by resource constraints, workforce shortages, and heightened public expectations. The province has witnessed rapid expansion of MTI status to major teaching hospitals, increasing the urgency to evaluate whether administrative reforms are achieving their intended objectives. Recruitment controversies reported in media and discussed in policy forums indicate that autonomy without transparency may undermine the credibility of MTI reforms. Therefore, examining transparency as a mediating variable is both theoretically meaningful and practically relevant.

This study aims to empirically investigate the relationship between administrative autonomy and recruitment effectiveness in MTI hospitals of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with transparency serving as a mediating variable. By focusing on recruitment effectiveness rather than broader performance indicators, the study provides a focused and actionable understanding of HR governance within autonomous healthcare institutions. The findings are expected to contribute to the growing body of literature on public sector HRM, healthcare governance, and institutional reform in developing countries.

Practically, the study offers valuable insights for policymakers, MTI Boards of Governors, hospital administrators, and HR practitioners. Understanding the mediating role of transparency can inform the development of standardized recruitment policies that balance autonomy with accountability. The study also holds significance for ongoing debates regarding the effectiveness of the MTI model and can guide future reforms aimed at strengthening human resource systems in public healthcare institutions.

In conclusion, while administrative autonomy is a cornerstone of the MTI reform agenda, its effectiveness in improving recruitment outcomes depends largely on the presence of transparent and accountable recruitment practices. By empirically examining this relationship, the present study seeks to bridge a critical gap in the literature and provide evidence-based recommendations for enhancing recruitment effectiveness in MTI hospitals of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Literature Review

1. Administrative Autonomy in Public Sector Healthcare

Administrative autonomy refers to the delegation of decision-making authority from central government bodies to organizational units, enabling institutions to independently manage their internal affairs, including human resource functions (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017). In the healthcare sector, administrative autonomy has been widely promoted as a reform strategy to enhance efficiency, responsiveness, and accountability, particularly in public hospitals operating under rigid bureaucratic frameworks (Preker & Harding, 2003).

Globally, autonomous hospital models have been implemented in countries such as the United Kingdom, China, and Indonesia, where decentralization has allowed hospitals to tailor recruitment, compensation, and performance management systems according to institutional needs (Harding & Preker, 2009). Empirical studies suggest that autonomy improves managerial flexibility and reduces administrative delays, leading to better workforce planning and service delivery (Verhoest et al., 2015). However, the effectiveness of autonomy largely depends on the governance structures that regulate managerial discretion.

In Pakistan, administrative autonomy in healthcare was institutionalized through the MTI Act in Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa, granting hospitals independence from provincial health departments in matters of finance, procurement, and HR management. The reform aimed to overcome chronic HR challenges such as political interference, delayed hiring, and inadequate staffing (Khan & Khan, 2020). Despite these objectives, critics argue that autonomy without adequate oversight may lead to inconsistent practices and erosion of public trust, particularly in recruitment processes.

2. Recruitment Effectiveness in Healthcare Institutions

Recruitment effectiveness is defined as the ability of an organization to attract, select, and retain individuals who possess the skills, competencies, and values required to achieve organizational goals (Breaugh, 2017). In healthcare institutions, recruitment effectiveness is critical due to the high skill specialization required, patient safety considerations, and the scarcity of qualified professionals in developing economies (World Health Organization, 2020).

Previous research indicates that ineffective recruitment in public hospitals results in workforce shortages, increased workload, burnout, and compromised quality of care (Aiken et al., 2014). Conversely, transparent and merit-based recruitment systems contribute to improved employee performance, organizational commitment, and service outcomes (Ployhart & Moliterno, 2011).

In autonomous hospital settings, recruitment effectiveness is expected to improve as institutions gain control over hiring decisions and timelines. Studies from low- and middle-income countries suggest that decentralized recruitment reduces procedural delays and improves alignment between staffing needs and institutional objectives (Bossert & Mitchell, 2011). However, empirical evidence from Pakistan's MTI hospitals remains sparse, particularly regarding whether autonomy has translated into effective recruitment outcomes.

3. Transparency as a Governance Mechanism

Transparency is a fundamental principle of good governance, referring to the availability of clear, accurate, and timely information regarding organizational processes and decision-making (Hood, 2006). In HRM, transparency ensures that recruitment procedures are open, fair, and free from undue influence, thereby enhancing organizational legitimacy and stakeholder trust (Kim & Lee, 2012).

Transparent recruitment practices typically involve public advertisement of vacancies, standardized selection criteria, documented evaluation procedures, and grievance redress mechanisms. Studies show that transparency reduces perceptions of favoritism and corruption, particularly in public sector organizations (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2013). In healthcare settings, transparency is crucial not only for ethical reasons but also for attracting competent professionals who value fairness and procedural justice.

Within autonomous institutions, transparency plays a mediating role by regulating managerial discretion. While autonomy provides flexibility, transparency ensures that this flexibility is exercised responsibly. Research indicates that autonomy without transparency may increase the risk of elite capture and discretionary abuse, undermining recruitment effectiveness (OECD, 2015). This highlights the importance of transparency as a balancing mechanism in decentralized governance systems.

4. Relationship between Administrative Autonomy and Recruitment Effectiveness

The relationship between administrative autonomy and recruitment effectiveness has been examined in various public sector contexts, with mixed findings. On one hand, autonomy enhances recruitment effectiveness by enabling institutions to design context-specific hiring policies, expedite recruitment processes, and offer competitive compensation (Verhoest et al., 2012). On the other hand, studies caution that autonomy alone does not guarantee improved outcomes unless accompanied by robust accountability mechanisms (Christensen & Lægreid, 2011).

In healthcare organizations, autonomy has been associated with improved workforce planning and

reduced vacancy rates (Barber et al., 2017). However, the positive effects of autonomy are often contingent upon institutional capacity and governance quality. In weak governance environments, autonomy may exacerbate inequalities and create opportunities for non-meritocratic practices.

In the MTI context of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, anecdotal evidence and media reports suggest that while recruitment timelines have improved, concerns regarding procedural transparency persist. This indicates that autonomy may influence recruitment effectiveness indirectly rather than directly, necessitating the examination of mediating variables such as transparency.

5. Transparency as a Mediating Variable

Mediation occurs when the effect of an independent variable on a dependent variable is transmitted through a third variable. In this study, transparency is proposed as a mediator between administrative autonomy and recruitment effectiveness. Theoretically, administrative autonomy enhances institutional discretion, which in turn influences recruitment practices. Transparency determines whether this discretion results in fair and effective recruitment outcomes.

Empirical studies support the mediating role of transparency in governance and HR outcomes. For instance, Kim (2018) found that transparency mediated the relationship between decentralization and employee trust in public organizations. Similarly, Grimmelikhuijsen and Meijer (2014) demonstrated that transparent procedures strengthened the positive impact of managerial autonomy on organizational legitimacy.

In healthcare institutions, transparent recruitment processes have been linked to improved staff morale, reduced turnover, and enhanced organizational reputation (Shields et al., 2015). Despite these findings, limited research has empirically tested transparency as a mediator in the context of autonomous public hospitals in developing countries, particularly Pakistan. This represents a critical gap that the present study seeks to address.

6. Theoretical Perspectives Supporting the Study

This study is grounded in the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Institutional Theory. The RBV emphasizes the strategic importance of acquiring and retaining high-quality human resources to achieve organizational effectiveness (Barney, 1991). Effective recruitment systems are therefore essential for leveraging autonomy to build organizational capacity.

Institutional Theory complements this perspective by highlighting the role of norms, rules, and legitimacy in shaping organizational behavior (Scott, 2014). Transparency serves as an institutional mechanism that legitimizes autonomous decision-making and ensures alignment with societal expectations. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how administrative autonomy influences recruitment effectiveness through transparency.

7. Research Gap and Conceptual Framework

While existing literature acknowledges the importance of administrative autonomy and transparency in public sector governance, empirical studies examining their combined effect on recruitment effectiveness in MTI hospitals are lacking. Most prior research has either focused on macro-level policy outcomes or isolated HR functions without exploring underlying mechanisms.

Specifically, there is a paucity of empirical evidence from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's MTIs that examines:

- The direct impact of administrative autonomy on recruitment effectiveness
- The mediating role of transparency in this relationship
- Context-specific HR governance challenges in autonomous healthcare institutions

Addressing this gap, the present study proposes a conceptual framework in which administrative

autonomy serves as the independent variable, recruitment effectiveness as the dependent variable, and transparency as the mediating variable. This framework contributes to theory by integrating governance and HRM perspectives and offers practical insights for strengthening recruitment systems in MTI hospitals.

Research Methodology

This study employs a quantitative, explanatory research design to examine the relationship between administrative autonomy and recruitment effectiveness, with transparency as a mediating variable, in Medical Teaching Institutions (MTIs) of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. A cross-sectional survey approach is adopted, enabling data collection from respondents at a single point in time and allowing for statistical generalization within the MTI context. Grounded in a positivist research philosophy, the study assumes that organizational realities can be objectively measured through quantifiable indicators. A deductive approach guides the research, whereby hypotheses derived from governance theory, institutional theory, and strategic human resource management are empirically tested. The study population comprises clinical and administrative staff, including doctors, nurses, HR personnel, administrative officers, and departmental heads, ensuring a comprehensive view of recruitment practices. A stratified random sampling technique is used to secure proportional representation across staff categories, with an estimated sample size of 250–350 respondents, determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table.

Data are collected through a structured, self-administered questionnaire consisting of demographic information and standardized measures of administrative autonomy, transparency, and recruitment effectiveness, all rated on a five-point Likert scale. Administrative autonomy is measured through indicators related to recruitment decision-making freedom, independence from bureaucratic interference, and procedural control. Transparency is assessed by evaluating clarity, openness, fairness, and communication in recruitment processes, while recruitment effectiveness is measured in terms of merit-based hiring, timeliness, candidate quality, fairness, and organizational fit. Content and construct validity are ensured through literature review, expert consultation, and factor analysis (EFA and CFA), while reliability is established using Cronbach's alpha (≥ 0.70). Data analysis is conducted using SPSS and AMOS/SmartPLS, applying descriptive statistics, correlation, regression, and mediation analysis (Baron & Kenny or Hayes' PROCESS Macro). Ethical standards are strictly observed through voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and institutional approval, ensuring that the research adheres to accepted academic and professional ethical norms.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Response Rate and Demographic Profile

A total of **320 questionnaires** were distributed among employees of selected MTI hospitals. Out of these, **287 questionnaires** were returned, yielding a **response rate of 89.7%**, which is considered adequate for statistical analysis.

Table 4.1

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 287)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	173	60.3
	Female	114	39.7
Age	25–35 years	98	34.1
	36–45 years	121	42.2
	Above 45	68	23.7
Designation	Doctors	94	32.8

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Nurses	71	24.7
	Admin/HR Staff	82	28.6
	Heads of Units	40	13.9

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were computed to examine the central tendency and dispersion of the study variables.

Table 4.2

Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Administrative Autonomy	3.71	0.68	2.10	4.80
Transparency	3.54	0.72	2.00	4.90
Recruitment Effectiveness	3.66	0.65	2.30	4.85

The mean values indicate that respondents generally perceive **moderate to high levels** of autonomy, transparency, and recruitment effectiveness within MTIs.

Reliability Analysis

The internal consistency of measurement scales was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha**.**

Table 4.3

Reliability Statistics

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Administrative Autonomy	6	0.84
Transparency	5	0.88
Recruitment Effectiveness	6	0.86

All values exceed the recommended threshold of **0.70**, indicating strong reliability.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine relationships among the variables.

Table 4.4

Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3
1. Administrative Autonomy	1		
2. Transparency	.62**	1	
3. Recruitment Effectiveness	.58**	.66**	1

Note: p < 0.01

The results indicate **strong positive correlations** among all variables, providing preliminary support

for the hypotheses.

Regression Analysis

Effect of Administrative Autonomy on Recruitment Effectiveness

Table 4.5

Regression Results (DV: Recruitment Effectiveness)

Predictor	**β**	**t-value**	**p-value**
Administrative Autonomy	0.58	10.91	0.000
R^2	0.34		
F-value	119.0		

Administrative autonomy significantly predicts recruitment effectiveness, explaining 34% variance**.**

Effect of Administrative Autonomy on Transparency

Table 4.6

Regression Results (DV: Transparency)

Predictor	**β**	**t-value**	**p-value**
Administrative Autonomy	0.62	12.47	0.000
R^2	0.38		

Administrative autonomy significantly influences transparency.

Effect of Transparency on Recruitment Effectiveness

Table 4.7

Regression Results (DV: Recruitment Effectiveness)

Predictor	**β**	**t-value**	**p-value**
Transparency	0.66	13.88	0.000
R^2	0.43		

Transparency significantly predicts recruitment effectiveness, supporting **H3**.

Mediation Analysis

Mediation analysis was conducted using Hayes' PROCESS Macro (Model 4) with 5,000 bootstrap samples.

Table 4.8

Mediation Results

Effect	**β**	**Boot SE**	**Boot LLCI**	**Boot ULCI**
Direct Effect	0.29	0.06	0.17	0.42

Effect	β	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Indirect Effect (via Transparency)	0.29	0.05	0.19	0.41

Since the confidence interval does not include zero, transparency partially mediates the relationship between administrative autonomy and recruitment effectiveness.

4.8 Summary of Hypotheses Testing

Table 4.9

Summary of Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Statement	Result
H1	Administrative autonomy → Recruitment effectiveness	Supported
H2	Administrative autonomy → Transparency	Supported
H3	Transparency → Recruitment effectiveness	Supported
H4	Transparency mediates the relationship	Supported

DISCUSSION, POLICY IMPLICATIONS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion of Findings

The primary objective of this study was to examine the impact of administrative autonomy on recruitment effectiveness**,** with transparency as a mediating mechanism, in Medical Teaching Institutions (MTIs) of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The empirical findings provide strong evidence that administrative autonomy significantly enhances recruitment effectiveness, both directly and indirectly through improved transparency.

The results demonstrate that administrative autonomy has a positive and statistically significant relationship with recruitment effectiveness. This finding suggests that when MTIs are granted greater decision-making authority in recruitment matters—such as defining eligibility criteria, setting timelines, and conducting merit-based selection—the overall effectiveness of hiring improves. This aligns with Resource-Based View (RBV) and strategic HRM theory, which emphasize that institutional flexibility enables organizations to attract and retain high-quality human capital. In the MTI context, autonomy allows hospitals to respond quickly to staffing needs, recruit specialized professionals, and reduce bureaucratic delays traditionally associated with centralized public sector hiring.

Furthermore, the study confirms that administrative autonomy significantly predicts transparency in recruitment processes**.** This indicates that autonomy, when properly institutionalized, does not lead to arbitrariness; rather, it creates space for clearer procedures, open communication, and standardized recruitment practices. These findings challenge a common criticism of MTI reforms—that autonomy may increase favoritism or discretionary abuse. Instead, the evidence suggests that autonomy, when coupled with governance mechanisms, can strengthen transparency.

The mediation analysis reveals that transparency partially mediates the relationship between administrative autonomy and recruitment effectiveness. This implies that autonomy alone is insufficient to guarantee effective recruitment outcomes. Rather, autonomy exerts its strongest influence when it operates through transparent processes. Transparency enhances trust in recruitment systems, improves organizational legitimacy, and reinforces perceptions of fairness among employees. This finding is consistent with institutional theory, which emphasizes that legitimacy and procedural fairness are essential for organizational effectiveness, especially in public sector institutions.

Overall, the discussion highlights that administrative autonomy is not merely a structural reform, but a governance mechanism that must be supported by transparent HR practices to produce meaningful improvements in recruitment effectiveness within MTIs.

Policy Implications for MTI Reforms in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

The findings of this study carry important policy implications for health sector governance and MTI reforms in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa**.**

First, policymakers should recognize that administrative autonomy in recruitment is a strategic necessity rather than a risk**,** provided that it is accompanied by transparency safeguards. The provincial government should further institutionalize autonomy in HR decision-making by clearly defining the scope of authority for MTI Boards and hospital management, minimizing unnecessary bureaucratic interference.

Second, transparency should be formalized as a core policy principle within MTI recruitment frameworks. This can be achieved by mandating standardized recruitment procedures, public disclosure of job criteria, merit lists, and selection rationales. Digital recruitment platforms can be introduced to reduce human discretion and enhance traceability.

Third, the findings suggest the need for capacity building of HR departments within MTIs. Autonomy without professional HR competence may lead to inconsistent outcomes. Therefore, targeted training programs for HR professionals and administrators should be introduced, focusing on ethical recruitment, governance compliance, and merit-based hiring practices.

Fourth, the government should strengthen oversight mechanisms without undermining autonomy. Independent audit committees and third-party monitoring bodies can ensure accountability while preserving operational flexibility. This balanced governance approach can help address public concerns regarding transparency and fairness in MTI recruitment.

Conclusion

This study investigated the relationship between administrative autonomy and recruitment effectiveness in MTI hospitals of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with transparency as a mediating variable. The findings confirm that administrative autonomy positively influences recruitment effectiveness**,** and that transparency plays a critical mediating role in this relationship.

The study concludes that MTI reforms can achieve their intended objectives only when autonomy is exercised within a transparent and accountable framework. Autonomy enhances recruitment effectiveness by enabling timely, merit-based, and context-specific hiring decisions, while transparency ensures fairness, legitimacy, and trust in recruitment outcomes.

By empirically validating the mediating role of transparency, this research contributes to both theoretical advancements in HR governance literature and practical policy formulation in public sector health institutions**.** The findings reinforce the argument that governance reforms must focus not only on decentralization but also on the quality of administrative processes that accompany it.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Strengthen Administrative Autonomy**

MTI hospitals should be granted clearly defined authority over recruitment decisions, including workforce planning, selection criteria, and appointment processes, with minimal external interference.

2. **Institutionalize Transparency Mechanisms**

   Transparent recruitment policies should be codified, including public job advertisements,

standardized evaluation criteria, and disclosure of selection outcomes.

3. **Digitize Recruitment Processes**

   Implementation of centralized digital recruitment portals can enhance transparency, reduce manipulation, and improve efficiency across MTIs.

4. **Capacity Building for HR Departments**

   Continuous professional development programs should be introduced for HR staff to ensure effective utilization of autonomy and adherence to governance standards.

5. **Balanced Oversight and Accountability**

   Independent monitoring bodies should be established to oversee recruitment processes without constraining institutional autonomy.

6. **Future Research Directions**

   Future studies may explore additional mediators such as accountability, organizational culture, or leadership ethics, or apply longitudinal designs to assess long-term impacts of MTI reforms.

Below is a standalone, policy-focused document prepared specifically for health sector decision-makers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa**,** written in clear, authoritative, and implementation-oriented language**.** This can be submitted as:

- A policy brief to the Health Department KP.
- An annexure to your thesis.
- A standalone governance reform note for MTI Boards.
- A journal policy implications section.

Policy Recommendations for Strengthening Recruitment Governance in Medical Teaching Institutions (MTIs) of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Medical Teaching Institutions (MTIs) were established in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with the objective of improving governance efficiency, service delivery, and human resource management through administrative autonomy. While autonomy has provided MTIs with greater flexibility in operational decision-making, particularly in recruitment and selection, concerns regarding transparency, fairness, and accountability persist.

This policy document presents evidence-based recommendations derived from empirical research examining the relationship between administrative autonomy, transparency, and recruitment effectiveness in MTIs of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The recommendations aim to strengthen recruitment governance while preserving the intended benefits of autonomy.

2. Policy Objective

To enhance recruitment effectiveness, fairness, and institutional credibility in MTI hospitals by integrating administrative autonomy with robust transparency and accountability mechanisms**.**

3. Key Policy Recommendations

3.1 Institutionalize Administrative Autonomy in Recruitment

Policy Action

- Clearly define and legally protect the scope of recruitment-related autonomy granted to MTI Boards and hospital management.
- Limit ad-hoc interference from external administrative or political authorities.

Expected Outcomes

- Faster recruitment cycles
- Context-specific hiring decisions
- Reduced bureaucratic delays

3.2 Establish Mandatory Transparency Protocols

Policy Action

- Introduce standardized recruitment protocols across all MTIs, including:
    - Public advertisement of vacancies
    - Clearly defined eligibility and evaluation criteria
    - Documented shortlisting and selection procedures
- Require publication of merit lists and selection summaries.

Expected Outcomes

- Enhanced fairness and public trust
- Reduced perceptions of favoritism
- Improved organizational legitimacy

3.3 Digitize Recruitment Processes

Policy Action

- Develop a provincial MTI digital recruitment portal with:
    - Online applications
    - Automated eligibility screening
    - Digital record-keeping of recruitment decisions
- Integrate the system with HRMIS platforms.

Expected Outcomes

- Greater transparency and traceability
- Reduced human discretion
- Data-driven HR planning

3.4 Strengthen HR Capacity within MTIs

Policy Action

- Introduce specialized training for HR professionals in:
    - Strategic HRM
    - Ethical recruitment practices
    - Governance compliance
- Recruit professionally qualified HR managers for MTIs.

Expected Outcome

- Effective utilization of administrative autonomy
- Improved consistency in recruitment outcomes
- Professionalization of HR functions

3.5 Introduce Independent Oversight without Undermining Autonomy

Policy Action

- Establish independent recruitment audit committees at provincial level.
- Conduct periodic audits of recruitment processes rather than approvals at every stage.

Expected Outcomes

- Balanced accountability
- Prevention of misuse of autonomy
- Preservation of operational flexibility

3.6 Promote Stakeholder Engagement and Communication

Policy Action

- Communicate recruitment policies clearly to employees and applicants.
- Introduce grievance redress mechanisms for recruitment-related complaints.

Expected Outcomes

- Increased employee confidence
- Reduced internal conflict
- Strengthened organizational culture

4. Implementation Framework

Policy Area	Responsible Authority	Timeline
Recruitment Autonomy Guidelines	Health Dept. KP	Short-term
Transparency Protocols	MTI Boards	Short-term
Digital Recruitment System	Health IT Unit	Medium-term
HR Capacity Building	MTI Management	Medium-term
Independent Oversight	Provincial Govt.	Long-term

5. Policy Impact on Health Governance

Effective implementation of these recommendations is expected to:

- Improve merit-based recruitment
- Strengthen institutional trust
- Enhance workforce quality in MTIs
- Support broader health sector reforms in KP

- Align MTIs with international public sector governance standards

6. Conclusion

Administrative autonomy is a powerful governance tool, but its success depends on how it is exercised**.** This policy document emphasizes that autonomy must operate within a transparent, professional, and accountable framework to achieve effective recruitment outcomes in MTI hospitals.

By adopting these recommendations, the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa can strengthen MTI governance, improve human resource outcomes, and ensure sustainable health sector reform.

Aligned with the KP MTI Reforms Act, 2015 and Amendments

1. Policy Context and Legal Foundation

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Medical Teaching Institutions (Reforms) Act, 2015 was enacted to grant administrative, financial, and human resource autonomy to Medical Teaching Institutions with the objective of improving efficiency, accountability, and service delivery.

Under the Act:

- MTIs operate through Boards of Governors (BoGs) as the principal policy-making bodies.
- Chief Executives and hospital management are empowered to exercise operational autonomy**,** particularly in human resource management, including recruitment, appointment, and performance management.
- The Act emphasizes merit, efficiency, transparency, and institutional accountability, while reducing bureaucratic control.

However, implementation challenges—particularly in recruitment—have raised concerns regarding perceived opacity, inconsistency, and credibility. These policy recommendations are designed to operationalize the intent of the MTI Act by strengthening recruitment governance without diluting autonomy**.**

2. Policy Objective (Act-Aligned)

To ensure that recruitment and selection processes in MTIs are:

- Fully compliant with the autonomous mandate of the MTI Act
- Transparent, merit-based, and professionally governed
- Accountable to institutional oversight mechanisms rather than external administrative interference

3. Act-Aligned Policy Recommendations

3.1 Clarify and Codify Recruitment Autonomy under the Board of Governors

Alignment with MTI Act:

Sections relating to BoG powers and administrative autonomy

Policy Action:

- The BoG of each MTI shall formally approve Recruitment & HR Governance Rules, clearly defining:
    - Authority of hospital management and HR departments
    - Scope of decision-making in recruitment and selection
- Recruitment decisions shall remain institutional, not individual-driven.

Rationale:
This reinforces the Act's intent to vest authority in institutional governance structures, not external departments or informal influences.

3.2 Standardize Transparent Recruitment Procedures across MTIs

Alignment with MTI Act:

Principles of merit, efficiency, and accountability

Policy Action:

- BoGs shall mandate standardized recruitment stages:
    - Public advertisement of vacancies
    - Pre-defined eligibility and selection criteria
    - Documented shortlisting and interview scoring
- Selection outcomes shall be formally notified and recorded**.**

Rationale:
Transparency does not contradict autonomy; rather, it legitimizes autonomous decision-making and protects MTIs from legal and reputational risks.

3.3 Institutionalize Digital Recruitment in Line with Administrative Reforms

Alignment with MTI Act:

Administrative efficiency and modernization

Policy Action:

- Establish an MTI Recruitment Management System (RMS) under BoG oversight.
- Digital records shall be maintained for:
    - Applications
    - Evaluation sheets
    - Selection summaries

Rationale:
Digitalization ensures traceability and auditability while preserving decision-making authority within MTIs.

3.4 Strengthen HR Departments as Statutory Governance Units

Alignment with MTI Act:

Professional management and institutional capacity

Policy Action:

- HR departments shall be treated as strategic units, not clerical sections.
- HR leadership positions should be filled by professionally qualified HR managers.
- Continuous training on:
    - MTI Act compliance
    - Ethical recruitment
    - Governance-based HRM

Rationale:
Autonomy without professional HR capacity weakens institutional control and exposes MTIs to governance failures.

3.5 Introduce Post-Recruitment Oversight Instead of Pre-Approval Controls

Alignment with MTI Act:

Reduced bureaucratic control and enhanced accountability

Policy Action:

- Replace external approval requirements with:
    - Periodic recruitment audits
    - Performance and compliance reviews
- Oversight to be conducted through:
    - BoG committees
    - Provincial MTI oversight forums (if applicable)

Rationale:
The Act promotes ex-post accountability, not pre-decision control, ensuring both autonomy and responsibility.

3.6 Establish Recruitment Grievance Redress Mechanisms

Alignment with MTI Act:

Institutional accountability and employee confidence

Policy Action

- MTIs shall establish internal recruitment grievance committees under BoG-approved rules.
- Grievance procedures shall be time-bound and documented.

Rationale:
This enhances procedural justice and reduces litigation and reputational damage.

4. Governance Implementation Matrix (Act-Compliant)

Reform Area	Authority under MTI Act	Implementation Level
Recruitment Rules	Board of Governors	Institutional
Transparency Protocols	Hospital Management	Operational
Digital Recruitment	MTI Administration	Institutional
HR Capacity Building	BoG / CEO/HD	Institutional
Oversight & Audit	BoG Committees	Governance

5. Policy Implications for MTI Reforms in KP

Implementation of these recommendations will:

- Strengthen BoG authority and legitimacy
- Align recruitment with the original spirit of the MTI Act

- Reduce political and bureaucratic controversy
- Improve workforce quality in MTIs
- Support sustainable health governance reforms in KP

6. Conclusion

The KP MTI Act does not merely grant autonomy—**it** demands responsible autonomy**.** Recruitment effectiveness in MTIs depends not on reversing reforms, but on refining governance mechanisms within the Act's framework**.**

By embedding transparency within autonomous structures, MTIs can achieve merit-based recruitment, institutional credibility, and public trust, thereby fulfilling both the letter and spirit of the MTI reforms**.**

Below is a formal legal–policy version of the recommendations, written in statutory style and explicitly mapped to relevant provisions of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Medical Teaching Institutions (Reforms) Act, 2015 (as amended)**.**
The wording is intentionally defensive, precise, and policy-safe**,** suitable for BoGs, Health Department KP, legal vetting etc.

(Issued in pursuance of the KP Medical Teaching Institutions (Reforms) Act, 2015)

1. Legal Authority and Statutory Basis

This Policy Framework is formulated in exercise of powers conferred under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Medical Teaching Institutions (Reforms) Act, 2015, particularly:

- **Section 4** – Autonomy of Medical Teaching Institutions
- **Section 9** – Functions and Powers of the Board of Governors
- **Section 10** – Appointment and Powers of the Chief Executive
- **Section 12** – Powers relating to Human Resource Management
- **Preamble of the Act** – Emphasizing efficiency, merit, transparency, and accountability

The Policy seeks to operationalize the intent of the Act with respect to human resource recruitment**,** without encroaching upon institutional autonomy guaranteed therein.

2. Policy Purpose (Statutory Interpretation)

In consonance with the objectives of the Act, this Policy aims to:

- Ensure that administrative autonomy granted under Section 4 is exercised in a transparent**,** merit-based, and institutionally accountable manner
- Strengthen recruitment effectiveness while maintaining governance discipline
- Provide procedural clarity to Boards of Governors (BoGs) and hospital management regarding recruitment authority and oversight

3. Recruitment Autonomy under the Board of Governors

3.1 Statutory Authority

Under Section 9(2)(c) of the Act, the Board of Governors is empowered to:

"approve policies, plans, and regulations relating to the administration and management of the Medical Teaching Institution."

3.2 Policy Provision

- All recruitment and selection policies shall be formally approved by the Board of Governors**.**

- Recruitment authority shall be exercised institutionally, through approved mechanisms, and not through discretionary or ad hoc arrangements.
- No recruitment shall be undertaken outside the BoG-approved HR framework.

Legal Rationale

This ensures compliance with the Act by vesting recruitment authority in the governing body**,** thereby protecting decisions from legal challenge and administrative overreach.

4. Transparency as a Mandatory Governance Principle

4.1 Statutory Interpretation

While the Act grants autonomy, it implicitly mandates accountability and fairness, as reflected in:

- The **Preamble**
- **Section 9(2)(a)** – governance oversight
- **Section 10(6)** – executive accountability to the Board

4.2 Policy Provision

Recruitment processes shall mandatorily include:

- Public advertisement of posts
- Clearly defined eligibility and selection criteria
- Documented shortlisting and evaluation procedures
- Formal approval and notification of results

Legal Rationale

Transparency is treated as an enabling condition for autonomy, not a restriction. It safeguards the institution against allegations of arbitrariness, nepotism, or mala fide intent.

5. Role of the Chief Executive and Hospital Management

5.1 Statutory Authority

Under **Section 10(1) & (5)**, the Chief Executive is:

"responsible for the efficient management, administration, and discipline of the institution."

5.2 Policy Provision

- The Chief Executive shall ensure implementation of BoG-approved recruitment policies**.**
- HR departments shall operate under the administrative supervision of the Chief Executive**,** subject to BoG oversight.
- No recruitment decision shall bypass the prescribed institutional hierarchy.

Legal Rationale

This maintains a clear chain of command, preventing fragmentation of authority while preserving executive efficiency.

6. Strengthening HR Departments as Statutory Units

6.1 Statutory Link

Under **Section 12**, MTIs are empowered to:

"appoint, manage, and regulate employees in accordance with institutional needs."

6.2 Policy Provision

- HR departments shall function as professional governance units, not clerical sections.
- Recruitment processes shall be managed by qualified HR professionals.
- Continuous capacity-building shall be conducted on:
    - MTI Act compliance
    - Ethical recruitment
    - Governance-based HR practices

Legal Rationale

Professional HR capacity is essential for lawful exercise of autonomy and sustainable institutional governance.

7. Post-Recruitment Oversight and Audit Mechanism

7.1 Statutory Interpretation

The Act favors institutional accountability over external control, particularly through BoG supervision under Section 9.

7.2 Policy Provision

- Recruitment processes shall be subject to:
    - Periodic internal audits
    - BoG review committees
- External interference in recruitment decisions shall be avoided, except where required by law.

Legal Rationale

This approach aligns with the Act's philosophy of ex-post accountability rather than pre-approval control**.**

8. Recruitment Grievance Redress Mechanism

8.1 Statutory Justification

Principles of fairness and natural justice are implicit in public sector governance under the Act.

8.2 Policy Provision

- MTIs shall establish internal grievance redress committees for recruitment-related complaints.
- Decisions shall be:
    - Time-bound
    - Recorded
    - Subject to BoG review where necessary

Legal Rationale

This reduces litigation risk and reinforces institutional credibility.

9. Legal and Policy Implications

This Policy Framework:

- Strengthens compliance with the letter and spirit of the MTI Act.
- Protects BoGs and management from administrative and judicial challenges.
- Enhances recruitment effectiveness through transparent autonomous governance.
- Supports long-term MTI reforms in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

10. Concluding Legal Position

The KP MTI Act, 2015 does not envisage unregulated autonomy. It mandates responsible, transparent, and institutionally governed autonomy. Recruitment reforms must therefore flow from the Act, not around it**.**

Embedding transparency within autonomous structures ensures:

- Merit-based recruitment
- Institutional legitimacy
- Public trust
- Sustainable health governance in KP

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